

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

JANUARY TO DECEMBER -- 2006

January - 2006

THE BOOK WRITTEN AT THE BEHEST OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI (Part-IV)

The first part, which appeared in October, mentions how Sri Ramana prompted Paul Brunton to write the book – The Secret Path. Some more abstracts from the book are given below:

A BREATHING EXERCISE TO CONTROL THOUGHTS: The exercise consists in slowing down the rhythm of breathing to a point below the normal rate. The precise point cannot be prescribed here as it varies with different persons. The average healthy person breathes approximately fifteen times each minute. Using both nostrils, begin by exhaling very slowly, then inhale gently and then hold the breath for a moment, then breath out again. Practice this with full attention and with closed eyes. It is of critical importance that the student should **pour all his consciousness into** his breathing until he seems to live in it for the time being.

This exercise is to be practiced by the beginners for five minutes – no longer. Advanced students may extend the time successively to ten, fifteen and twenty minutes as they progress.

A slow, regular and quiet effort alone is called for; there should be no straining and no violent deep breathing. It is essential that all muscles are fully relaxed. The student may consider himself successful when the breath rhythm flows so gently and effortlessly that if a feather were held before the nostrils it would not move.

This exercise is based on the simple fact that breathing is a medium between the mind and the body, because it supplies arterialized blood to the brain. To diminish the cycle of breath is to curtail the supply of blood to the brain, and therefore to retard the cycle of thoughts. “Breath is the horse and the mind is the rider.” say the Tibetans. Thus the tension and relaxation of the brain, the uprising and disappearance of thoughts correspond in peculiar harmony with the cycle of breathing and can be brought under control.

The effect upon the student of consciously dropping the rhythm of his breathing will be a pleasant and relaxed mood, a calming of the constant vibration of thought, a pouring of oil upon the troubled sea of life, and more abstracted mental condition. The concentration of his attention will cause him to forget the other things in the act itself. He will steep himself utterly in the changed breathing process, will blend his mind with it and submerge all other thoughts into watching it, and would become temporarily transformed into a subtler person, more sensitive person. Such a stage immediately, but follows after weeks of regular and sincere practice.

The power of this single exercise over the mind can hardly be appreciated by those who have never practiced it. It restores a harmonious rhythm to the human machine. It can transform an agonized heart into a heart at peace with the world.

This exercise may also be used at other times. If and when your self-control is threatened by violent passions or disturbing emotions, of whatever kind, immediately resort to the practice of this breathing exercise until the danger has passed. Its effectiveness under such conditions would be found quite remarkable.

For the purpose of the self-enquiry, however, this breath-control is only to be practiced by the student immediately after the meditation exercise has ended. [The meditation exercise referred to here is intense and sustained introspection on the question Who am I? Through the *vichar marga* we have to convince our self that we are not the body which is covering our Real Self. Similarly we should not confuse our self with our senses and intellect. We have to remind our self again and again that we are the Higher Self, that is, the Super Consciousness or *Atman*. The point has been discussed in some detail in our last issue at pp. 27-8.] *To be continued...*

DR. K.S. SPEAKS TO THE DEVOTEES

Dr. K. Subrahmanian, the founder of our Kendram, whose memorial day is being observed on January 11, was a spiritually elevated soul. His memoirs of Sri Ramana Maharshi were published in February 2004 issue of this magazine. The following are abstracted from his address at the Kedram twentyfive years ago, on January 16, 1981. He said:

I. There is no place for impatience in spiritual life. As Sri Ramakrishna said, “A stone may break at the tenth stroke, but the previous nine strokes had their effect.” When a screw or bolt gets stuck, many people try to loosen it, but may fail, and an altogether new comer, who comes later may succeed. We may certainly give credit to the new comer but the unseen contribution of the previous many should not be lost sight of.

The honour of liberating our country went to Mahatma Gandhi. But previous to him many ardent patriots perished in the attempt. For instance, Nayana [Kavya kantha Ganapati Muni] was ever burning with patriotic zeal to see that our country is liberated from the foreign yoke. When somebody referred it to Bhagavan, he said, “Is Nayana an ordinary man. How can his *sankalpa* go ever in vain?” What Nayana desired in 1936 materialised in 1947, with the dawn of Independence. So no effort goes waste and therefore an aspirant should never get disillusioned.

II. Our ancestors used to meditate soon after waking up, performing *puja*, read scriptures and then take up their regular work. But nowadays the newspapers reach us even before we get up and we start reading them soon after waking up. Usually they report about thefts, cheatings, murders, rising prices and numerous other upheavals in the society. On reading them our minds which are already restless become more agitated and cynical.

It is therefore better that we meditate soon after we get up and then go through the papers, if need be. We should also not rush to read them soon after *puja*, but only after a while when our

minds are steadied to accept all the unpleasant news that they may report, with indifference and detachment.

III. Dakshinamurthi is the great master who taught in silence through his *chin mudra*. Language however rich is always a poor medium to explain the Truth. Nothing could be more ludicrous than speaking for hours on ‘Silence’. But as we have not yet risen to the level required, some introductory talk may be necessary in the initial stages. However our aim should be Meditation and little talk – silence and no speeches; because great truths flash only in Silence.

(The above found in the Kendram’s old papers does not mention the chronicler’s name.)

SRI RAMANA RESTORES EYE SIGHT OF HIS DEVOTEE - JANAKI MATHA’S GRAND SON

Padma Sitapati, daughter of Janki Matha of Tanjor who was a mystic and an outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana, records as follows:

My mother had instilled deep love and reverence for Bhagavan in me. I had visited Bhagavan innumerable times since my childhood days.

My three-year-old son Janakiramana developed high fever and lost his eyesight. It was a tragedy we could not bear. My mother came to my house and said. “Don’t be afraid. The God of gods and protector of our family, Sri Ramana, will restore the eyesight. Your heartfelt prayer will surely fructify.” These soothing words did not sink in. “How could the eyesight come back?” I thought. Yet out of regard for my mother, I wrote a letter to Bhagavan explaining my predicament and seeking his intervention. A reply came: “By the Grace of Sri Bhagavan child Janakiramana’s eyesight will be fully restored.”

My father Dr. Ganapati Iyer was with us treating my son. As the months rolled by our faith, except that of my mother, faltered in the face of the stark reality. We began to question her ‘blind faith’.

It was the day of Karthikai Deepam. My mother performed an elaborate *pooja*. As she came out of the *pooja* room she said, “Padma, Sri Ramana, our Sri Ramana has restored your son’s eyesight. Take him to Siva’s temple this evening.” Half-heartedly we went to the temple. To our amazement and abundant joy my son prattled, “Amma! I see Bhagavan before my eyes. I can see.” Tears of joy streamed down my cheeks.

My mother ordered us to go to Ramanasramam to express our gratitude to Bhagavan. Bhagavan was seated on the sofa when we entered the hall. He listened to the whole story as if he had no part at all in restoring the eyesight. This was Bhagavan’s way; he would never take credit for his miracles.

In the evening, I again went into the hall and sat near Bhagavan. As it became dark my son said, “Amma, I can see only Bhagavan’s body, not his face.” Bhagavan heard this and questioned me. I had to tell him that even though my son could now see clearly during the day, he still suffered partial night blindness. Bhagavan looked at my son and told him, “Ramana, look at me properly. You can see Bhagavan’s head.” By saying this, he completed the miracle wrought by him. My son could see Bhagavan fully, clearly and normally. His night blindness too got cured. (Source: *Unforgettable Years* by A.R. Nataraja

STORY OF AN IRAQI JEW WHO BECAME A LIFE-LONG DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA (part – I)

S. (Suleman) S. (Samuel) Cohen, an Iraqi Jew, was a qualified accountant. He came to India in 1927 in search of the key to the mystery of life and worked in Bombay for a few years before joining the Theosophical Society at Madras, where he heard of Maharshi and read some of his books. This worked as magic and he adopted Sri Ramanasramam as his home in 1936. He died in 1980. He is the author of Guru Ramana, Reflections on Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi and Residual Reminiscences of Ramana. He lies buried within Sri Ramanasramam campus, an honour bestowed on very few devotees.

It was then the Ashram's custom to honour the new comer by giving him his first meal in a line directly opposite the Maharshi's seat. After food, someone announced that the Maharshi was coming to the hall. I rushed there. Behind me calmly walked in the tall, impressive figure of the Maharshi with leisurely though firm steps. I was alone in the hall with him. **Joy and peace suffused my being, never before had I such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man.** After a while, I saw him looking at me with large penetrating eyes, rendered divinely soothing by their child-like innocence. **I became absorbed in the entrancing personality of this magnificent human magnet – Sri Ramana Bhagavan.** It is needless to say that from that day Ramanasramam became my permanent home.

A few days after my arrival, I sat in the hall almost alone after the Maharshi's return from breakfast. He saw a leather-bound book by my side and asked me, "What book is that?" taking it, I guessed, for a scriptural manual. I answered that it was a notebook. He chuckled and said to the interpreter: "*Vellai Karan* (the white man) does not move about without a notebook." This opening encouraged me to broach the subject of sex. I said, "Last night Mr. Brunton and myself had a heated discussion on the question of sex and marriage, especially as it affects the spiritual life, What does the Maharshi think about it?" The Maharshi kept silent for a moment and remarked, "As far as *sadhana* is concerned, *brahmacharya* means dwelling in *Brahman*," leaving me to take it as I willed.

I constructed a hut for my residence near the Ashram in March 1936. I hardly stayed in it in the daytime: my mind was wholly fixed on the Master. So I spent my days and a part of my nights in the hall, where the Maharshi lived and slept. There I quietly sat and listened to the visitors' talks with him and to his answers, which were sometimes translated into English, particularly if the questioner was a foreigner or a North Indian. His answers were fresh and sweet. His influence was all-pervasive in his silence not less than in his speech.

To the serious-minded, Bhagavan was a beacon light in an otherwise impenetrable darkness, and a haven of peace.

Bhagavan was the most liberal of gurus. At no time did he consider the need to frame rules and regulations to control the lives of his disciples; nor did he believe in a common, enforced discipline, for he himself had attained the highest without them. He left his disciples completely free to mould their lives as best they could. This physical freedom considerably helped me to tide over the first few difficult months of my new existence.

The years 1936-1938 were very blissful indeed. We could gather around Bhagavan's couch, speak to him intimately as to a beloved father, tell him our troubles without let or hindrance. Bhagavan related to us stories yielding to transportation of emotions when he depicted a scene

of great *bhakti*, or great human tragedies to which he was sensitive to the extreme. Then he shed tears, which he vainly attempted to conceal.

Some stories are memorable like that of Kabir who had *siddhis* yet he earned his livelihood by weaving, which was his profession. One day, when Kabir was working on his loom, a disciple entered in great excitement and said, “Sir, there is a juggler outside who is attracting large crowds by making his stick stand in the air.” Thereupon Kabir, who like all true saints discouraged the display of jugglery, wanting to shame the man rushed out with a big ball of thread in his hand and threw it in the air. The ball went up unwinding till the whole thread stood still stiff in mid air. The people including the juggler were stunned in amazement, and Bhagavan’s eyes acted the amazement, while his hand stood high above his head in the position that of Kabir when he threw up the ball.

On another occasion, Bhagavan recited from memory a poem of a Vaishnava saint, in which occurred the words ‘Fold me in thy embrace, O Lord’, when the arms of Bhagavan joined in a circle round the vacant air before him, his eyes shone with devotional ardour, while his voice shook with stifled sobs which did not escape our notice. It was fascinating to see him acting the parts he related, and be in such exhilarated moods as these.

The notion that the guru always watched his disciples continued lurking in my mind. But as I discovered later, Bhagavan was doing nothing of the kind. **He was Supreme Detachment incarnate.** The strict aloofness which appeared to me at first as sheer callousness on the part of the Maharshi, turned out across the years to be more potent in its action to purify, guide, reform and mature the disciples’ consciousness than the guru’s conscious interference. Without this detachment, the guru is bound to grow partial and discriminative.

Renunciation or surrender is the cornerstone of *sadhana*, and with the Maharshi it was the completest. There were a number of deluded devotees who tried to ingratiate themselves with him, but Bhagavan never deviated from the neutrality in his spiritual attitude towards them. Answering spiritual questions he always did, but he never attempted consciously to give Self-realisation to any in all the 14 years of my contact with him, either by touch or mental projection or any other means.

Early mornings I went alone for *Giri pradakshina* – an eight-mile trek around Arunachala hill, which took me almost three hours to accomplish. This had its own special benefits. At that early hour I generally was in a walking meditation mood, particularly as I expressly made a habit of it. Another factor to a successful *pradakshina* and, to me, the greatest, was the determination at the very start not to retrospect – not to look back upon the past – throughout the walk. I would never allow memory to ruin my calmness. Each time I caught memory sneaking in, I immediately brought my attention to the rhythm of my footsteps till the mind regained its restful state. The partial fatigue experienced in the latter half of the journey automatically induced this mental rest without much effort.

Speaking of retrospection, *sadhakas* must be warned against the tricks of memory. It cannot be too often recommended to them to forbear looking into the past with its trials and errors, acts of omission and commission, regrets, fears, passion, love and hatred, personal tragedies etc. Everything is dust, everything transitory, including the seemingly indissoluble human ties, more so wealth and fame, are thus not worth a moment’s regret. Nothing is changeless and lasting but the natural state of Pure Being.

Three years rolled by. The Master used to pass by my hut almost everyday. Often he took shelter from the midday sun on my verandah for two or three minutes, during which I made myself scarce, in order not to inconvenience him, till one day I foolishly placed a chair for his

use on the sly, which made him once and for all boycott the verandah. Despite his full knowledge of our adoration for him, he was extremely sensitive to the slightest trouble which might ensue from him to us, or, for that matter, to any one: thus placing a chair for him, or expecting him everyday at a fixed hour, he interpreted as interfering with my rest, hence the boycott.

After three years' stay at the Ashram, I got Bhagavan's permission to go on a *yatra* to the South. He smiled approval and enquired about the date and time of my starting, and whether I had made arrangements for my stay in the various places of my visit. Extremely touched by his solicitude, I answered that I was going as a *sadhu*, trusting to chance for accommodation. *To be continued ...*

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi – Enchanting and uplifting reminiscences of 160 persons* – a forthcoming publication of our Kendram.)

Be in this world but not be of this world. – *Ramakrishna Paramahansa*

The tragedy of human history is decreasing happiness in the midst of increasing comforts.
– *Swami Chinmayananda*

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, “thank you”, that would suffice. –
Meister Eckhart

A man is happy so long as he chooses to be happy. – *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

Most people are as happy as they make up their minds to be. – *Abraham Lincoln*

I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think. – *Socrates*

To understand completely is to forgive completely. – *Anonymous*

The Supreme dwells within the lotus of the heart. Those who reach His splendid Feet dwell endearingly within unearthly realms. – *Thiruvalluvar*

He who hates no single being, is friendly and compassionate, free from self-regard and vanity, patient, contented, ever devout, fixed on me in heart and mind, is dear to me. –
Bhagavad Gita

***Jnana* is neither given from outside nor from another person. It can be realised by each and every person in his own Heart. The *jnana* Guru of everyone is only the Supreme Self who is always revealing its own truth in every Heart through the being-consciousness ‘I am. I am.’** – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Mountains have peaks and valleys. Learning to enjoy the peaks and valleys is a part of wise living. It is foolish to say – I will enjoy only the peaks and not the valleys. When you enjoy both the success and failure then you are an integrated person. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

If the mind, which is the cause of all objective knowledge and all actions, subsides, the perception of the world will cease. Just as the knowledge of the rope will not be obtained unless the knowledge of the snake goes, so the realization of the Self will not be obtained unless the perception of the world, which is a superimposition, ceases. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

THE URGE TO ACCUMULATE OBSTRACTS LIBERATION: The nature of the mind is always to accumulate. Mind is a gatherer, always wanting to gather something. With the gathering you may make a living. With this gathering, may be you can enhance the physical quality of life around you; but this gathering – it does not matter how much you gather – is incapable of liberating you, taking you closer to your Ultimate Nature. It does not matter what you accumulate; the constant need to accumulate shows that there is insufficiency. Grace cannot descend on you till you are empty and have got rid of your habit to accumulate, including the habit to acquire knowledge and wisdom. If one brings sufficient awareness, then through constant *sadhana* the vessel becomes totally empty. Awareness empties the vessel, *sadhana* cleans it. If you become empty enough for the Grace to descend, then Realisation is not far away; it is here to be experienced. – *Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev*

Enlightenment is our ego's biggest disappointment. – Swami Yogananda

LIVE LIKE A SHIP IN THE OCEAN: A ship in the ocean moves freely, performing its job of carrying goods and persons from place to place. It faces all oceanic turmoil calmly; ensuring that the water, which makes it move does not enter into it. We will also perform the best by keeping ourselves afloat in the *maya* of *samsara*, not allowing it to engulf and make us sink or jeopardize our performance. – *N. K. Agarwal*

HAPPINESS: The reason why you are unhappy is because you are focusing on what you do not have rather than on what you have right now...You stupidly squander so much energy trying to rearrange the world...What makes you happy or unhappy is not the world and the people around you, but the thinking in your head...So if it is happiness that you seek you can stop wasting your energy trying to cure your baldness, or build up an attractive body or change your life style or personality. You could change every one of these things and still be unhappy. – *Anthony De Mello*

SPIRITUAL ESSENTIALS: The first phase of the spiritual path is to subject yourself to a scrupulous and ongoing character assessment...When obstacles crop up on the spiritual path, a good practitioner does not lose faith but has the discernment to recognize difficulties for what they are – just obstacles, and nothing more. It is in the nature of things that when you recognize an obstacle as such, it ceases to be an obstacle. Taking an obstacle seriously, it gets empowered and solidified and becomes a real blockage. – *Sogyal Rinpoche*

CONSCIOUS BREATHING: Conscious deep breathing is one of the most simple ways to calm and integrate the mind and body. The first step towards the breath to be your ally is to become aware of it. The next step is to make subtle shifts that will allow breath easier and deeper. As your breath becomes balanced, your mind becomes balanced. As your steady and

deep breath becomes a way of life, your body and mind become robust and serene at the same time. It is likely that you will not always be aware of your breathing. Therefore, I suggest that you set aside times to practice and focus upon breath. I like to practice slow deep breathing when I am working on the computer, when driving on long stretches of open road, and as a way to begin meditation. – *Robert Sgovio*

SEEING NOT LOOKING: When we look, we look at the surface. When we see we see in depth. That is the difference between looking and seeing. We live in an age of looking. We look with curious eye at other people's affairs. We look at what is not really our business... To see is to go beyond the surface of things. Seeing is also closely linked with seeking. The person who seeks God hopes to "dwell in the house of the Lord all days of her life.", to "taste the sweetness of the Lord" and to "seek His face" (Bible)... There is also a difference between true seeking and false seeking. When our seeking is true, we see the Truth. Some people seek and never find. They seek in the wrong places, and put their trust in the wrong things and people... To set one's hope in what is passing and impermanent is to look things only at the surface. **The more we chase the tangible, the more the intangible slips through our figures...** If we begin to see, we seek and find. God who is invisible cannot be experienced by those who only look, but can be experienced by those who 'see' Him in all His creation. – *Janina Gomes*

THREE ASPECTS OF KARMA: The process of *karma* starts as soon as a thought to perform an action enters one's mind. It then translates into action in the form of speech or physical activity or both. *Karma* is thus performed by the mind in thought, by tongue in speech or by the body in action... The *Gita* classifies *karma* under three categories – *karma*, *vi-karma*, and *a-karma*. *Karma* is right action. It contributes to happiness here and hereafter. *Vi-karma* or wrong action is performed with the intention of doing harm to others and results in suffering in this life or in future lives. *A-karma* is non-action, action that does not produce any reaction and, therefore, ceases to bind one to *samsara* and leads to *moksha*. [Sri Ramana is the example of a person performing *a-karma*.] ...

Karma, *vi-karma* and *a-karma* are not to be distinguished by the action itself, but by the intention or motive behind that action. For example, if one may give in charity, perform austerities and *yagnas* with the motive of acquiring fame or favours, then these seemingly right actions would be categorized as *vi-karma*. On the other hand, one may even kill, but with good intentions, then the *karma* would be considered right action; and if it is done in support of *dharma* it could even fall into the category of *a-karma*... To achieve the highest perfection of human life – total freedom – *moksha* from misery – we must perform only *a-karma*. *A-karma* can be achieved in two ways: First, by performing action without desire for the fruits of that action, the fruits being dedicated to the Lord, and second, by total renunciation of all action as in the state of *samadhi*. However, one must be careful and not confuse non-action with laziness or escapism, as that would amount to being in *tamas* (mode of ignorance.) – *Parmarthi Raina*

February – 2006

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The first part, which appeared in October, mentions how Sri Ramana prompted Paul Brunton to write the book – The Secret Path. Some more abstracts from the book are given below:

THE AWAKENING TO INTUITION: When the student has finished his breathing exercise he is ready for the next stage. If he has done the breathing exercise properly (see last month's issue in this regard), he will catch the mind like a bird in a net, its constant flight stopped, its restless activity quiet, so that it lies within the net of breath-control without a flutter of its wings.

The next step is to withdraw the mind from concentrating upon the breath and turning it to intuition. The student would begin by reverting to the question with an attitude of search. But this time the interrogation is addressed not to the body, desires or thoughts, but to the mysterious darkness which environs his mind. *Who am I? Who is this being that dwells within this body?* Let him address these silent questions to himself slowly, with eager and earnest attention, and with utter concentration of soul. Then let him wait for a few minutes, meditating quietly and without effort on these questions.

Thereafter, let him make a silent, humble request, a half-prayer if he wishes, directed to the Overself [*Atman*] in the very center of the being, to reveal its existence to him. The words in which he formulates this request may be his own, but they should be simple, brief and direct. Let him ask as if he were addressing an intimate friend and a true one. "Ask and it shall be given unto you," was the direction of Jesus.

Having made the request or silently uttered the prayer, let him pause and wait expectantly, even confidently, for a response. There should be a profound humility in his soul when he is asking for the divine revelation to come to him. Humility is the first step on the secret path – and it will also be the last. For before the divinity can begin to teach him through its own self-revelation, he must first become teachable, that is, humble.

A intelligence quotient and ability are admirable things and adorn a man, but intellectual pride puts a strong barrier between him and that the higher life which is ever calling to him, though silently. The intellectual proud sit upon their puny pedestals and wait to be worshipped, when all the while there is a deity in the deeps of their heart who is worthy to receive worship.

It is the hardest task to realize one's own littleness, ignorance and vanity. Yet it is the greatest of attainments for it leads directly to that finding of the divine life which is promised to all who would lose the personal life.

People are complicated, intellects are complicated, not life. Therefore I say: Treasure in your heart and carry in your mind the memorable saying of Jesus that "Except ye become as a little child ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

During the pause which follows the student's silent request, he should suspend his thoughts as far as by adopting the attitude of "listening-in" for a response. After waiting for two or three minutes, he may repeat his request and then pause again. After the second waiting for three or four minutes, he may repeat it for the third or final time. Then he should wait patiently, expectantly, for a period of about five minutes, his body still, his breathing slow and quiet, his mind becalmed. This ends his meditation.

The key to a correct understanding of this stage is in remembering that it is the subconscious reaction to your conscious effort which is now all-important. The conscious practice of mental quiet has been useful in sharpening attention; it is like ringing a doorbell, now you must wait for the subconscious to make its appearance. Do not over strain, do not overdo; give the Overself [*Atman*] some credit for intelligence of its own, for action of its own.

If you are not prepared to exercise patience while working silently for this revelation, you defeat any possibility of success.

Patience is important. We must wait humbly for the revelation of the Infinity which is within man. Until that sacred hour we are poor orphans. Those who introduce any element of impatience into their period of mental quiet are merely handicapping themselves.

The Overself's voice is first heard like a soft breath, and the student must pay all heed to it. The gentlest stirrings within the heart must receive his full and undivided attention, he must look upon them with respect and veneration as ambassadors from the higher realm. These quiet monitors are but heralds of a dynamic force which is yet to come and which will transfuse and interpenetrate his body with heavenly power.

Within every single one of us lies well upon well of spiritual peace untapped, of spiritual intelligence untouched. From time to time whispers come to us from this second self, whispers that urge us on to practice self-control, to take the higher path and to transcend selfishness. We must heed those whispers and exploit those rare moments. The object of the mental quiet here is to enter into a realm which psychologists call as the subconscious.

The response of awakening intuition may come the first time this exercise is practiced, or it may not come until after several weeks or even months of daily practice.

You may considerably assist your development at this stage by beginning to watch yourself at odd times during the day. You may stop yourself, almost unexpectedly, and observe what you are doing, feeling, saying or thinking, letting your observation be made in a detached, impartial and impersonal spirit.

"*Who* is doing this?"

"*Who* is feeling this emotion?"

"*Who* is speaking these words?"

"*Who* is thinking these thoughts?"

Put silent questions to yourself as often as you wish, but put them abruptly, suddenly, and then wait expectantly, quietly, for some intuitive inner response. So far as you can, drop all thoughts during this pause. Such introspective inquiry need not occupy more than a minute or two at odd times. The calm and peaceful breathing may profitably be induced in conjunction with this exercise in self-observation and self-enquiry.

In this manner you will begin to break up the complacent attitude which accepts the body-based outlook. And to free yourself from the illusion that the outer person is the complete being of man. The practice of suddenly observing oneself, one's desires, moods and actions, is specially valuable because it tends to separate the thoughts and desires from the sense of selfhood. Indeed it might be said that the three practices, (i) self observation, (ii) daily quiet, and (iii) calm and peaceful breathing, are complementary. All aim at overcoming the strong tendency towards complete identification with the body.

Turn your mind repeatedly to **that** which is the silent spectator within yourself, and fix it there. This inward turning is a mental process, an intellectual activity based on an attitude of self-enquiry. You must begin to ride the horse of mind and drive it in an inward direction.

There is an unknown and unnoticed gap between every two thoughts, between every two breaths, wherein man pauses momentarily for the flimsiest fraction of a second. During that pause, which flees by with such immeasurable rapidity, he returns to his primal self and rests anew in his real being. If this were not so, if this did not happen thousands of times everyday, man could not continue to exist and his body would fall dead to the ground. The Overself is the hidden source of man's life. These constant returns to the Overself enable man to "pick-up" the life power which he needs for living. These tiny fragments of time are experienced by everyone but recognized at their true value by very few.

Once you fix your attention upon the question "Who am I" and attempt to pursue its solution with all the ardour you can command, a time will come one day, during your half-hour practice of mental quiet, when you shall be so deeply engrossed in this effort as to be largely unmindful of what is around you.

To obtain access to one's own soul is not such a rare feat as it may seem. The artist, when he abstracts his mind from external surroundings in the rapt absorption of his art, does it. He touches ecstasy in a minor measure, forgets himself in his work. It is in this state that geniuses have achieved their finest creations, their best work.

The writer who gets lost in reverie over his theme, his mind sunk so deeply in a single train of ideas that he fails to recognize things, persons or events that are about him. Similarly, the musician rapt in the ardour of musical composition, is unconsciously practicing meditation. But you who follow the path of self-enquiry, are to do it **consciously**.

"Silence is God", says a French writer. Yes, but silence of body, of thoughts, of desires – not merely aural [relating to ear or sense of hearing] silence. In this sublime moment God is

beginning to take possession of your soul; all you have to do is to practice the utmost self-surrender.

Those who spend the years soliciting some intimation or revelation from the august guest within, will with time receive a rich reward. A single glimpse of that mysterious stranger takes the trouble out of our life and puts it under our feet. One hallowed word from his divine lips bestows a bliss which melts our smaller self in cosmic joy.

We have covered our divine nature with thoughts and desires; therefore we must proceed to uncover it if we want to know it. Thinking is a heavy veil flung over the beautiful face of the divinity within us. Raise the veil a little by letting the mind come to rest and you will perceive somewhat of a beauty you can never forget.

We must empty ourselves if we would be filled. When the mind has poured out all its thoughts, a vacuum is created. But this can last only a few seconds. Then, a mysterious influx of divine life will enter. It is in this state of conscious cessation of thoughts that the truth of one's self, hidden from us by the activity, desires, and thoughts, becomes revealed in its sublime and spiritual grandeur.

We must experience ourselves, as we really are – not as prisoners in the body, as captives in the cage of thought or fettered by fleeting passions.

The whole art of meditation and concentration consists of unlocking our chains and arising as free spirits. *To be continued...*

STORY OF AN IRAQI JEW WHO BECAME A LIFE-LONG DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA (Concluding part)

S. S. Cohen, an Iraqi Jew, was a qualified accountant. He came to India in 1927 in search of the key to the mystery of life and worked in Bombay for a few years before joining the Theosophical Society at Madras, where he heard of the Maharshi and read some of his books. This worked as magic and he adopted Sri Ramanasramam as his home in 1936. He died in 1980. He is the author of Guru Ramana, Reflections on Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Residual Reminiscences of Ramana. He lies buried within Sri Ramanasramam campus, an honour bestowed on very few devotees.

The following is in continuation of the first part which appeared last month.

During my leisurely tour in south India, I visited temples and stayed in holy places for long or short durations, as the spiritual mood took me. Everywhere I was well received. Wherever I went, Bhagavan's name acted like a charm, particularly as I had adopted the Indian dress from the beginning (1936), lived in Brahmin streets, and ate Brahmin food. I even for the time discarded the wearing of footwear, bathed in Hindu bathing tanks and attended evening temple worship with the smearings on my arms and forehead.

During my *yatra* I used to plunge in reflections on Bhagavan's blissful silence and calm repose. The stillness of his mind haunted me everywhere I went. I felt his influence in the depth of my

soul and I cried: “O Bhagavan, how mighty you are and how sublime and all-pervasive is the immaculate purity of your mind! With what tender emotions do we, your disciples, think of your incomparable qualities, your gentleness; your serene, adorable countenance; your cool, refreshing smiles; the sweetness of the words that come out of your mouth; the radiance of your all embracing love; your equal vision towards one and all, even towards stray animals!”

The influence of the Maharshi on genuine seekers, who leave the world behind and turn pilgrims on the path of the Absolute, is indeed great; for such aspirants touch a sympathetic chord in his soul, evoking spiritual responses of great magnitude. A close friend of mine once related to me his experience when a brief talk with the Master made him stop his fruitless pursuit of the ‘occult’ and take to the path of knowledge (*jnana*). In the words of my friend:

“I was convinced that the Maharshi spoke from direct, valid experience and I made up my mind to speak alone with him, before the hall got filled with devotees. It was eight in the morning. Bhagavan had just entered and had hardly settled in his usual place, when I drew near his sofa and squatted on the bare floor. Nothing, I knew, gave greater pleasure to the Maharshi than to listen attentively to his devotee’s spiritual difficulties and give his advice. This knowledge encouraged me to explain to him slowly and briefly in clear, simple English the agitations of my mind. After I finished, he remained pensive for a few seconds and then, in the same language but with considerable deliberation, said: Yes, you are right; all preconceptions must go, practice alone will show you where the truth lies. Apart from the words which he uttered, I was suddenly gripped by an overwhelming urge to surrender unreservedly to him to guide me in my spiritual hunger. My fate and all that I was, passed from that moment into the sacred hands of Bhagavan forever.”

The constant influx of visitors was of some help in that it afforded the much-needed relaxation to an otherwise tense life. Secondly, the peculiar problems which visitors brought with them were a useful study – study of human mind and the endless ills to which it is subject. The problems of the mind and conditions which give rise to them are infinitely more numerous than the variety which the physical universe presents to the human sense. Moreover, watching the masterly way Bhagavan tackled these problems was *sadhana* in itself. Rationality was the very essence of his arguments whilst the ultimate answer to all the questions was always the same, namely, ‘Find out who you are’, He first met every questioner on his own ground, and then slowly steered him round to the source of all problems – the Self – the realisation of which he held to be the universal panacea.

Psychologists deal only with the working of the mind, but Bhagavan goes to the source, the Self itself. **It was a wonder that all visitors were agreeably impressed by him, sometimes even without comprehending the drift of his ideas.**

People take *siddhis* as the sure sign of Perfection, but few understand the subtle influence of the truly Perfect person, who without the deliberate use of miracles, works out the transformation of the people who come into contact with him, more so the genuine disciples, whom he actually turns into *muktas*, or well on the way of *mukti*, something which external *siddhis* are totally incapable of.

Many of those who have had the inestimable privilege of a long stay with Bhagavan bear witness to the blessedness which his mere presence conferred upon them.

The following brief extracts are from Cohen’s notes of Bhagavan’s replies to questions in the 1930s and 40s. He says: Bhagavan always spoke in Tamil, except when the questions were put in Telugu or Malayalam, when he answered in the same language. The visitors who knew

none of these languages received answers through an interpreter in English. Although the Maharshi could read and understand English well, he did not prefer to speak in it.

The Real is ever-present, like the screen on which the cinematographic pictures move. While the picture appears on it, the screen remains invisible. Stop the picture and the screen will become clear. All thoughts and events are merely pictures moving on the screen of Pure Consciousness, which alone is real.

In a cinema-show you can see pictures only in a very dim light or in darkness. But when all lights are switched on, pictures disappear. So also in the floodlight of the Supreme *atman* all objects disappear.

Think of God, attachments will gradually drop away. If you wait till all desires disappear, before starting your devotion and prayer, you will have to wait for a very long time indeed.

It is every intelligent man's experience that evil doing recoils on the doer sooner or later. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' means that you should love him, because he is your Self.

Fate is overcome by *jnana*, Self-knowledge, which is beyond will and Fate.

That which comes and goes, rises and sets, is born and dies in the ego. That which always abides, never changes and is devoid of qualities is the Self.

Pain and pleasure are to the ego, which is itself imagined. When the ego disappears through a constant enquiry into its nature, the illusion of pleasure and pain also disappears, and the Self alone remains.

Habits create the false notion that thinking is a permanent institution, with which it is impossible to dispense, but enquiry and discrimination will blast this fallacy. None succeeds without effort and the successful few owe their victory to perseverance.

We are so accustomed to objectivity that we have lost the knowledge of ourself simply because the Self cannot be objectified. We are the Self, yet we ask how to know the Self.

I have never said that there is no need for a guru. All depends on what you call guru. He need not be in a human form. Dattatreya had 24 gurus. The Upanishads say that none but a guru can take a man out of the jungle of intellect and sense perceptions. Did I not sing hymns to Arunachala? Guru is God or the Self. First a man prays to God to fulfill his desires. A time comes when he will no more pray for the fulfilment of material desires but for God itself. God then appears to him in a human or non-human form to guide him to Himself in answer to his prayer and according to his needs.

Meditation includes mind control, the subtle watchfulness against intruding thoughts. In the beginning, efforts for control are greater than for actual meditation, but in due course, meditation wins and becomes effortless.

Heart is the seat of *jnanam*. It is represented in the physical body by a hole smaller than the smallest pinpoint, which is always shut. When the mind drops down in *kevala-nirvikalpa* [A high level of *samadhi*] it opens but shuts again after it. When *sahaja* [The highest level of *samadhi*] is attained it opens for good. The former is like the mental bucket under the water, which can be pulled out any moment. The latter is like the river that has linked up with the ocean from which there is no return.

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi – Enchanting and uplifting reminiscences of 160 persons* – a forthcoming publication of our Kendram.)

SRI RAMANA'S GRACE FLOWS TO A DEVOTEE – AN EPISODE

The following occurrence relates to a devotee at our Kendram – P. Ramanna, formerly Chief Engineer (Constructions), South Central Railway, who has recorded it.

As a student of 8th class at Madanapalle, I first heard of Sri Ramana Maharshi from my illustrious teacher, Sri Krishna Sastry, who had *darshan* of great masters like Sri Ramana and Sri Aurobindo at their ashrams. He would go into raptures describing spirituality and inner peace and the sanctity and serenity of the ashrams. He would say that the Almighty, out of compassion, deputed preceptors and saints to enable mankind to develop a taste of spiritual bliss, and to work for their salvation.

I was inclined towards spirituality in a small measure, but most of my time and effort went to studies and in efforts to acquire the means of livelihood. I visited many places of worship during long span of my career, but my desire to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana and be in his presence, remained unfulfilled.

About three years ago, Prof. Laxmi Narain who lives in Habsiguda, where I reside, mentioned that we missed each other for a few days as he was away visiting Sri Ramanasramam. He gave me some details of the life and the pursuit at the Ashram and mentioned about the existence of Sri Ramana Kendram at the Sivam Road. Soon after I visited the Kendram along with him. Later I have been visiting the place to enjoy peace and tranquility, in Bhagavan's presence and in the company of the devotees of the Kendram. I also acquainted myself with the life and thoughts of Bhagavan through talks I heard and the literature at the Kendram.

In March 2005, Sri Bhagavan's Grace drew me to Tiruvannamalai, along with my friend Kumba Chinnaiah. We stayed at the Ashram for a couple of days. This aroused in us the query *Who am I?* and we found that there is no easy answer for self-discovery except through constant and intensive questioning and self-analysis.

During our stay we took the opportunity to pray at the famed Arunachaleshwara Temple where Sri Ramana did *tapas* for many months after reaching Tiruvannamalai. We also visited the Virupaksha Cave and the Skandasram which were abodes of Sri Bhagaven for more than two decades. In these places we felt an aura of spiritual fragrance with everlasting memories of what is heard and seen of Sri Ramana.

From the Ashram book stall we purchased a few books, a CD and two photos of Sri Ramana – one big and one small. At home, I put the photographs in a brief case at a place where I do my little *pooja*. Now I relate my experience of how my wife and myself were saved by Sri Bhagavan's Grace.

On 6th June, 2005 evening, my wife and I went to Somajiguda for shopping. Due to sings of likely rain I was not very keen to go, but I agreed to save disappointment to my wife. Before getting out of the house, for no particular reason, I happen to open my brief case where

Bhagavan's photos attracted my attention. As thoughts about Bhagvan came to my mind, I respectfully kept the small photo in my pocket. We started by car. On the way, when it started raining I found it inconvenient to drive. I also wanted to avoid driving in the rush hour traffic. So I parked the car in Railway Officer Rest House near Sangeet theatre and took an auto for the onward journey.

While returning by auto we were caught in a heavy down pour. The auto lost its balance and bumped straight into the back of a stationary car parked by someone on the road. This happened despite my noticing the car in front and cautioning the auto driver about the impending danger. Due to heavy impact of collision the car went up and came down on the road, the auto capsized and fell on its side. We were in a state of shock. In the turmoil, my wife's head got stuck into the gap under the protective rod on the ride side of the auto and struck the road. Both my legs got entangled in some gap in the auto body. When I looked towards my wife, the sight shattered me, as she was bleeding profusely from the head.

A few minutes passed like that without any attention to our plight. As the rain slowed down a bit, some good souls came to our help. The auto was pulled up and we were retrieved. In spite of her bleeding my wife was conscious. We were helped to reach the nearest hospital at Secundrabad. My wife's face got badly swollen with visible cuts below the eyes. A scan was taken, eyes checked and wounds cleaned. To our great relief there was fracture in the skull or of the facial bones. I had only superficial bruises. My son and daughter-in-law and my daughters and son-in-laws, who were informed joined us. The cuts on my wife's face were sutured. We stayed in the hospital only for two days and came home with greatly reinforced faith in Sri Ramana whose Grace flowed to us and saved us from serious injuries.

I know of many cases where in similar or graver situations, people have come to greater grief. Recently, an aged friend of mine who was in a road mishap and was apparently normal, went to bed happily after dinner which was short-lived. He was found in coma the next morning, which continues. Sri Ramana was on our side to take care of us. Glory to Sri Ramana Bhagavan!

SRI RAMANA – NEITHER A PERSON NOR A CONCEPT

V. Ganesan, Managing Editor, The Mountain Path wrote the following in the Preface to Bhagavan Sri Ramana – A Pictorial Biography, published by Sri Ramanasramam:

A *Jnani* such as Bhagavan Ramana is neither a person nor a concept, but the truth of pure existence; thus to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana is to be awakened to the truth of one's own existence. *Darshan* need not necessarily be physical; any association with the Master is sufficient to bring one into the living presence of *Truth* and *Light*. To think, to talk, to read, or to focus one's attention on him, is a great support on the path...Sri Bhagavan's life in all its simplicity and purity is a movement in silence...His life is not a chapter in history to be recorded, nor is it restricted by any geographical location. His life is a perennial flowing stream, refreshing and purifying those who partake of its bounty.

THREE ASPECTS OF KARMA: The process of *karma* starts as soon as a thought to perform an action enters one's mind. It then translates into action in the form of speech or physical activity or both. *Karma* is thus performed by the mind in thought, by tongue in speech or by the body in action...The *Gita* classifies *karma* under three categories – *karma*, *vi-karma*, and *a-karma*. *Karma* is right action. It contributes to happiness here and hereafter. *Vi-karma* or wrong action is performed with the intention of doing harm to others and results in suffering in this life or in future lives. *A-karma* is non-action, action that does not produce any reaction and, therefore, ceases to bind one to *samsara* and leads to *moksha*. [Sri Ramana is the example of a person performing *a-karma*.] ...

Karma, *vi-karma* and *a-karma* are not to be distinguished by the action itself, but by the intention or motive behind that action. For example, if one may give in charity, perform austerities and *yaganas* with the motive of acquiring fame or favours, then these seemingly right actions would be categorized as *vi-karma*. On the other hand, one may even kill, but with good intentions, then the *karma* would be considered right action; and if it is done in support of *dharma* it could even fall into the category of *a-karma*...To achieve the highest perfection of human life – total freedom – *moksha* from misery – we must perform only *a-karma*. *A-karma* can be achieved in two ways: First, by performing action without desire for the fruits of that action, the fruits being dedicated to the Lord, and second, by total renunciation of all action as in the state of *samadhi*. However, one must be careful and not confuse non-action with laziness or escapism, as that would amount to being in *tamas* (mode of ignorance.) – *Parmarthi Raina*

SPIRITUAL ESSENTIALS: The first phase of the spiritual path is to subject yourself to a scrupulous and ongoing character assessment...When obstacles crop up on the spiritual path, a good practitioner does not lose faith but has the discernment to recognize difficulties for what they are – just obstacles, and nothing more. It is in the nature of things that when you recognize an obstacle as such, it ceases to be an obstacle. Taking an obstacle seriously, it gets empowered and solidified and becomes a real blockage. – *Sogyal Rinpoche*

March-06

**THE BOOK WRITTEN AT THE BEHEST OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI
(Concluding part)**

The first part, which appeared in October, mentions how Sri Ramana prompted Paul Brunton to write the book – The Secret Path. The following is the concluding part of abstracts from the book. It may be noted that the author has used the word ‘Overself’ for Atman.

THE AWAKENING OF THE OVERSELF: The awakening to spiritual consciousness is something which cannot be developed by a mechanical and measured system alone. *Grace* is the essential pre-requisite for enlightenment. Yet you cannot supply it. Grace may fall on a man who has lived what the world may call a sinful life, and change his heart, mind and consciousness very rapidly. Grace may withhold itself from a man who has spent twenty years reading books after books on religion and philosophy. Yet for all this it is not an arbitrary force;

it possesses its own laws and ways of working. To obtain this grace we must ask for it. We may even have to force down on our knees, at unexpected hour of day or night, to pray that the Light be granted to us. If you feel an urge to weep when praying for the Overself's Grace, then let the tears flow as copiously as they come forth. Do not hold them back. There is great spiritual merit in weeping for the visitation of a higher power.

When Grace arises from our own Overself, the latter sets up a certain urge in the heart and begins to lead our thoughts into certain channels. We begin to be dissatisfied with our life as it is; we begin to aspire to something better and we commence a quest for a higher truth. We must cast ourselves prostrate at the feet of the Real Self and pray for its grace. When the fire of divine aspiration awakens in our heart, we may know that some modicum of Grace has been granted to us. We who are servants of that high king must wait upon his mood. Grace is a gift, a favour to be received from the god within. The spirit takes its own time. Matthew Arnold, a famous British poet says: We cannot kindle when we will / The which in the heart resides... The ripening of the soul for the profound experience of union with the Overself takes place gradually as does the ripening of fruit. The Overself makes no demand of man other than he opens his inner eyes and perceive its existence.

Once we push the gate of the mind slightly ajar and let the light stream in, the of life becomes silently revealed to us. Find yourself – your Overself, and you will begin to find the meaning of life and begin to unveil the mystery of the universe.

Those who have taken the peep through the door of our own being, are dumbfounded. Man as a spiritual being possesses a capacity for wisdom which is infinite; a resource of happiness which is startling. It is the indestructible element in him, the silent and eternal witness, to whom he must render homage. It is a light which no power can extinguish.

THE WAY OF DIVINE UNITY: There are some temperaments which will find it difficult to take up the path of introspective self-analysis. One way out to help the student is to select a paragraph or fragment from any ancient or modern book which make most appeal to the student and ruminates mentally over it, reverently trying to suck out its meanings. Let him do this with the utmost slowness, with the utmost absorption which he can muster, holding the heart and the mind to the chosen passage, while the words vibrate in his soul. Don't read the words alone; read the thoughts behind them.

Concentrate as you read. Read slowly by letting each word to sink into your consciousness. And as it sinks let its meaning pass into your mind also. The basic thing is to concentrate on some phrase or verse, that the student is able to experience within his mind in a powerful way, that echoes deeply within the chambers of his soul. He must choose such passages as have this effect upon him, even though other persons might find only words in them. He must feel the presence of an element of inspiration quite apart from the literary value of the piece or poem.

[The choice of the inspiring words to be pondered over is likely to differ widely. A small piece from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi which appears to be useful is given here as an example. "The best of us at his very best is a tiny little thing and utterly helpless. And yet we are not so

helpless the moment we know that we are sparks from the Divine which is within us. God is above us all to guide and protect us. If we make ourselves instruments of His will, we should never have anxious moments. Life is a perpetual struggle against strife, whether within or without. Hence the necessity of realizing peace in the midst of strife. It is wrong to expect certainties in this world, where all else but God is an uncertainty. Fullest life is impossible without an immovable faith in a living law, in obedience to which the whole universe moves. Without that faith we are like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty. It is for God to take our broken barge across the stream, but it is for us to put in our best efforts. It is for us to plug the hole in its bottom, or if the water gets into the boat, to throw it out. In that case, the boat will keep floating despite the hole. But it will float only when there is God's hand behind it. The man must make an endeavour; the result will depend upon the Grace of God.]

The student might get equal results by listening to music composed by great masters. The essential thing is to profit by the exalted mood.

THE GOSPEL OF INSPIRED ACTION: The active self must be fed by the spiritual sources of the deeper self. Our lives must find the golden mean. We must dwell awhile in mental quiet each day, without losing the capacity for practical work. We must put a proper balance upon the mystical and material elements of our nature. Whoever will follow the path outlined here will find this balance without strain.

The man who takes to the higher life is not necessarily emasculated of human talent. It is false to believe that because he derives his wisdom by direct awareness from a deeper source, he need lose the ability to think logically, to manage both men and affairs, and to take his place in the active world. To inspire one's daily life with strength drawn from faith in the divinity within, is surely to become a better performer, and not a worse.

Few know that the late Lord Leverhulme [Head of the Unilever Ltd.], could relax anywhere at will and put himself into a serene state of reverie. In the midst of the most gigantic tasks he frequently availed himself of this power.

Meditation gradually liberates a soul-force in a man of which he was not previously aware, and which eventually becomes the greatest inspirer of his activities. This is a truth that men like Abraham Lincoln, Prince Shivaji, the emperor Akbar and King Asoka believed in and acted upon it and triumphed.

SPRITUAL HELP IN MATERIAL AFFAIRS: Man is a miniature universe in himself. His Overself constitutes the sun and his personal self plays the part of the moon. Just as the moon borrows its light from the sun, so does his personality borrow its self-consciousness and its vitality, its thinking power and its feeling power, from the central luminary, the Overself. Men who live only by their personal self's wisdom are like men who work at night by moonlight because there is no sun. A man who has never seen the sun cannot be blamed for thinking that

no glory can exceed that of the moon. The man who lives by the wisdom of the Overself can see the contribution of the personality by placing a secondary value upon it.

Begin by looking upon the Overself as an ever-present Intelligence with whom you may commune. Whatever your problem is, do not limit your efforts to an intellectual solution only. Do not depend upon the unaided reason alone. Take your difficulty into the white light of the Overself and there you will find the right guidance that will finally settle it for you.

As often you feel troubled, pained, perplexed, tired or tempted, first practice the breathing exercise for two or three minutes, then put yourself the question:

To whom is this trouble arising?

To whom this pain is troubling?

To whom has this temptation come?

- The question may be formulated, as the case may be. And after putting the appropriate silent question to yourself, pause, still your thoughts so far as you can, and repeat the “listening-in” process mentioned before.

This practice opens up your consciousness to contact with the Overself, and surrounds it with the latter’s protection.

When the trouble arises we must refuse to accept the suggestions of despair or doubt which pour in upon the mind; instead we should calm our breathing and turn instantly in thought and inquire: “To whom has this trouble come?”

The undeniable effect of unpleasant persons, irritating circumstances and unexpected disappointments can be nullified by making the effort to reach the divine center of our being.

THE EPILOUGE: The crying need of the world today is not for a change of the head but a change of the heart. The feeling of goodwill will be the best insurance of universal peace.

God could, if He willed, heal all the sorrows of this planet in an instant of time. But that would be to transform us into automatons, to turn us into machine-made angles. Man, if he is to grow God-like, must do so of his own free will. And the guarantee that he would do so is the presence of the divine spark within himself.

Social distress, economic anxiety, political chaos – all these are the physical consequences of the lack of spirituality in the world. If there is a message the whole world is waiting for, it is an East-West message, a gospel of Inspired Action!

Each one of us who practices the inner way as described in the book can become a disseminator of the true light, can change himself and thus becomes fit to change others.

May Peace Be With You!

TALKING ABOUT OTHERS – SOCRATES’S ADVICE

The following anecdote relates to celebrated Greek philosopher Socrates (469-399 BC).

One day Socrates met an acquaintance who ran up to him excitedly and said: “Socrates do you know what I have just heard about one of your students?” “Wait a minute” said Socrates. “Before you tell me I would like to conduct a little test. It is called the Triple Filter Test. The first filter is Truth. Have you made sure that what you are going to tell me is true?” “No.” said the man, “Actually I just heard about it.” “All right” said Socrates, “so you don’t really know if it is true.” Now let us try the second filter, Goodness. “Is what you are going to tell me about my student something good?” No, on the contrary...” Socrates continued, “You want to tell me something bad about him, even though you are not certain it is true.” The man shrugged, embarrassed. Socrates continued, now we apply the third filter – the filter of Usefulness. Is what you are going to tell me about my student is going to be useful to me?” “No, not really...” Socrates concluded, “If what you tell me is neither True nor Good nor Useful, why tell it to me at all.” – *L.R. Sabharwal*

SRI-AUROBINDO-DEVOTEE’S TRIBUTE TO SRI RAMANA

Dilip Kumar Roy of Sri Aurobindo Ashram was a well-known personality of his time. He was a musician and has authored many books. He was a *bhakta*. Sri Ramana’s famous quote, “*Bhakti is jnanamata*” (the mother of *jnana*) was in reply to his question whether Sri Ramana advocated *jnana* and disparaged *bhakti*. He writes:

I first heard of Ramana Maharshi when I was a member of the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. I asked Sri Aurobindo about the Maharshi and he wrote back that he was a yogi of remarkable strength and attainments, and that his *tapasya* had won ‘glory for India.’ On another occasion he characterised him as a ‘**Hercules among the yogis.**’ So I longed to pay a visit to Ramanasramam.

When I arrived at the Ashram, I felt a deep malaise. How could I hope to get peace and inspiration from the Maharshi if I had failed to get it at the feet of my own Guru, who was surely no less great? Yet I felt sincerely that I had done well in coming to seek inspiration from the great yogi who was venerated by spiritual aspirants of every category.

I entered the hall of the great sage, where he has been living a singular life, blessing all, but belonging to none, interested in everything but attached to nothing. He gave the impression of Siva, the great God of compassion, living a blissful, free and open life, with no walls of ego to cabin the summit vision. What I saw impressed me deeply, though I find it far from easy to portray what I saw or rather experienced. Here was a man who lived like a god, supremely indifferent to all that we worldlings clamour for without cease. Dressed in a bare *koupin* (loincloth) he yet sat ensconced in grandeur of plenary peace and egoless bliss which we could but speculate upon, yet never fathom.

I touched his feet and then, without a word, sat down near him on the floor and meditated, my heart heaving with a strange exaltation which deepened by and by into an ineffable peace and bliss which lasted for hours and hours. Words seem utterly pale and banal the moment you want to describe an authentic spiritual experience, which is vivid, throbbing and intense.

Later, as I reclined, bathed in peace, in an easy chair under the stars at which I gazed in an ecstasy of tears, I felt deeply grateful towards the Maharshi. I recalled a pregnant saying of his: “Just be. All is in you, only a veil stands in between. You have only to rend the veil and then, well just be.” I had found this favourite remark of his rather cryptic till now. But at this moment I understood for the first time and wrote a poem in homage to the Maharshi.

The Maharshi’s self-obliviousness was enchanting for me. **Greatness sat easily on him as beauty on a sunset cloud, but with a devastating effect.** All our ideas as to how the great should act seem to be dismissed by him with a smile of simple disavowal. I saw with my own eyes day after day during my five-day stay at the Ashram of this unique sage, the like of whom I am sure is not to be met within this vast world.

I have never in my life of varied experience and wide travelling met a man so utterly indescribable and yet so profoundly moving. I cannot say why he moved me to my depths with eyes where no soft light of emotion presided, and yet it bathed me when I met his gaze with a peace that I find as unaccountable as it was delectable.

The Maharshi has not the slightest use for pretentiousness and self-importance. He is for no trappings either of speech or learning.

I saw indeed a man, who in his exterior was anything but distinguished, far less handsome or captivating, and yet – how shall I put it – he was so compelling, and withal, so disarming! I shall never forget how deeply stirred I was when I saw his austere yet kind face in the light of electric lamps. The peace I felt reminded me of the startled, though unvoiced query, of Paul Brunton [No. 1]: “Does this man, the Maharshi, emanate the perfume of spiritual peace as the flower emanates fragrance from its petals?”

I sang songs more than once in his presence. And everytime I was ravished by his kind glance and bewitching smile. **I realised for the first time what is really meant by the word ‘sacred’.**

Mysticism can become a “state of mind achievable in almost any activity of life, if the activity is raised to a suitable level of perfection.” – Abraham Maslow, famous psychologist.

The world is too much with us. – William Wordsworth

A harvest of peace is produced from a seed of contentment. – American proverb

We should focus on what we have and offer gratitude to God for providing all that we have instead of worrying about what we don’t have. Whether we want to keep bagging for more or be thankful for what we have is a choice that we make. It is a choice between happiness and sorrow. – Sri Nithyananda

Knowing others is wisdom; knowing the Self is enlightenment. – Lao Tsu

How can we get to where we are going if we do not know where we want to go. – Ronald Mann

PROBE DEEPER TO REACH THE TRUTH: A newly appointed official was informed that the villagers have achieved an excellent potato crop. He inspected field after field and found them covered with green leaves. “What, just leaves! But where is the crop?” he exclaimed. The

villagers laughed and said, “ Sir, potatoes grow underground; above the ground you find only leaves. Dig into the soil and you will find potatoes everywhere.” In the same way, we tend to take a superficial view of things; we should go deeper to know the truth. Probe deeper – Truth will reveal itself. *Acharya Mahaprajna*

FOUR FORMS OF MIND: When the mind is filled with thoughts, it is called *manas*. When it contemplates, it is called *chitta*. When it makes decisions, it is called *buddhi*, intellect. When it takes the form of ‘I’ ness, it is called *ahamkara*, ego. Together these four functions are called *antahkarana*, or inner psychic instrument. – *Swami Muktananda*

THINKING MAKES THE DIFFERENCE: Our thoughts are our own creation. We make them real by cooperating with them. If we withdraw our support they will dissolve. We simply have to observe our thoughts and not get haunted by them. A lion made of wood is real to a child, but to grown-ups it is a piece of wood. For the child, the wood is concealed, revealing only the lion. The grown-up may also enjoy the lion but he knows it is not real. For him the wood is real, not the lion. In the same way, to a realized soul, the entire universe is nothing but essence, the “wood” that comprises everything, the Absolute Brahman or Consciousness. – *Mata Amritanandamayi*

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: It is precisely the pursuit of happiness that prevents happiness from happening, and until this realisation happens, the pursuit must go on... The Buddha said that enlightenment led to the end of suffering. It is interesting that the Buddha has used negative perspective – end of suffering – rather than the positive one of joy or ecstasy. It is the experience of all of us that sudden end of intense pain has brought about an intensity of relief that was much more acceptable than any positive pleasure or joy... For the poor, happiness can only mean sufficient money to provide the minimum of food, clothing and shelter. But among those who are reasonably comfortable in life, it is the destiny of a few to look for their happiness beyond what the flow of life could bring in... Ultimately, happiness means not something in the flow of life, it is the attitude to life. – *Ramesh Balsekar*

THE GREAT MALAYALEE FESTIVAL ONAM: Onam is celebrated to mark the annual return of the spirit of the king Mahabali to his kingdom, and in commemoration of his benevolent rule and his sacrifice. The festivities are intended to ensure the king that his people are happy and to wish him well. – *The Times of India*. (It is said that the word *balidan* – sacrifice, recognizes the event when the king Bali agreed to give three steps of land to Lord Vishnu, and made the supreme sacrifice knowing that he would be wiped out.)

POWER OF WORDS: In *Message from Water* Masaru Emoto describes his experiments with ordinary water. He bottled water in different containers and labeled them – Love, Hate, Greed, Compassion, and Terror. To each bottle of water he spoke everyday for ten minutes in line with its label; he projected his thoughts with awareness on them. To water labeled ‘love’ he spoke on love with love; to the one labeled ‘terror’ he spoke on terror with terror. At the end of the month he froze the water in these bottles separately and studied the frozen crystals of each under a microscope. The crystals of water labeled ‘love’ shone brilliantly like diamonds; those labeled ‘terror’ seemed misshapen and fearsome. Water responded to Emoto’s thoughts and words. Water constitutes more than 80% of our body system. We can imagine the power of our own words, and those of others upon the body system. – mail@dhyanapeetam.org

For most of us God is a dustbin. Whatever we do well we take credit for it. Anything that goes wrong we blame God for it. – *Paramahansa Nithyananda*

RIGHT BREATHING: To breath properly, when you inhale your abdomen should come out, not your chest. When you exhale, your abdomen should flatten. You should also breath deeply, slowly and completely. By breathing properly you can use your breath to help relieve pain, boost energy, clarify and quienten the mind, relieve tension, lessen the intensity of symptoms, relax, calm and sooth the body and boost the immune system as well. – *Cynthia Perkins*

PRAYER AND SURRENDER: It has been rightly said that “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” Prayer and surrender to God have been regarded as the unfailing means to obtain solutions to even vexatious problems and crises. *Bhagawad Gita* exhorts, “ Leaving aside all obligations, take refuse in Me alone. Do not grieve; I shall liberate you from all sins.” Almost in an identical tone comes the assurance from the *Bible*: “Fear thou not for I am with thee... I will help thee...I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” It is when one is faced with severe difficulties and where things seem to go all-wrong that one begins to rely on a force, far beyond all mortal limitations. Here, one’s cares and uncertainties are transferred to a higher power, which is the repository of all knowledge and solutions. From a purely rational and practical point of view, this approach, when it also goes with an abiding desire and capacity for hard work, obtains for the aspirant the needed response: peace, enthusiasm and confidence. The age-old saying that “faith can move mountains” is after all not entirely a fanciful or impractical concept. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

SPIRITUAL ESSENTIALS: The first phase of the spiritual path is to subject yourself to a scrupulous and ongoing character assessment...When obstacles crop up on the spiritual path, a good practitioner does not lose faith but has the discernment to recognize difficulties for what they are – just obstacles, and nothing more. It is in the nature of things that when you recognize an obstacle as such, it ceases to be an obstacle. Taking an obstacle seriously, it gets empowered and solidified and becomes a real blockage. – *Sogyal Rinpoche*

ANIMALS AND BIRDS MOURN PASSING AWAY OF SRI RAMANA

The following event which happened at the time of Sri Ramana’s mahasmadhi at 8.45 p.m. on 14th April 1950, and which seems to have gone unnoticed, has now been recorded by A.R. Natarajan and Dr. Sarda based on their interview of Ranganathan, washermen at Sri Ramanasramam, who says:

At the time of Bhagavan’s *mahasmadhi* I saw the amazing star moving across the sky. But what touched me deeply was the sight of the animals and birds in the Ramanasramam weeping at that moment. I saw cows, monkeys, dogs, and peacocks having tears brimming from their eyes. (Source: *The Ramana Way*, December 2005)

April 06

**SRI RAMANA : THE SELF SUPREME – A LIST OF
UNPRECEDENTED TRIBUTES PAID TO SRI RAMANA**

The following encomiums bestowed on Sri Ramana Maharshi appear to be beyond the extraordinary. It seems doubtful whether any other person in recorded history ever got similar adulations in his lifetime or within a few decades thereafter. The writers have attempted to describe in myriad ways the indescribable Truth, which Sri Ramana was. The Maharshi exemplifies Einstein's historic tribute to Mahatma Gandhi: "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." No wonder that the Maharshi is envisioned by the contributors as the highest pinnacle of Truth and Wisdom towards which humanity will strive to move for generations to come.

The figure at the end of each entry is the page no. of the forthcoming book of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad. The publication entitled Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi contains reminiscences of 160 persons who had the privilege of meeting Sri Ramana. The book is likely to be available in the first week of May 2006.

A spiritual superman, 18

He is eloquent enough without opening his lips, 20

Possesses a deific personality which defies description, 21

The silent flavour of spirituality emanating from him was unstoppable, 21

Each phrase that fell from his lips seemed to contain some precious fragment of essential truth, 21

A visitor from another planet, 22

A being of another specie, 22

Best philosophers of Europe could not hold a candle to him, 22

A pure channel for the higher power, 23

A spiritual torch, 23

Immortality stands out from his every word and look, 25

I had come in touch with spiritualism of the finest type, 27

His very presence generates an atmosphere of peace, 28

He was the Truth and the Light, 29

He is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness, 30

Hercules among the yogis, 31

Greatness sat easily on him, 32

Provides peace which is as unaccountable as it is delectable, 32

His detachment was as complete as it was perfect, 33

Nothing seems to possess the power to disturb his super poise, his marvellous tranquility and peace, 33

He represents a very perfect instance of the Ego-less state, 34

He is a veritable storehouse of spiritual energy and wisdom, 34

His silence is more eloquent than his speech, 34

To be in his presence is a stirring experience in the elevation of the soul, 35

When he smiled it was as though the gates of heaven were thrown open, 35

He is an ocean of tranquility, 37

Peace in his presence passeth all understanding, 37

He touches you by a fourth-dimensional touch, 37
He is a living example of knowledge without which the humanity of today is but a pitiful joke, 40
He relies on action-less action and carries on a wordless teaching, 40
He renders the Truth demonstrable, 41
He is a perfect example of a jivanmukta, 41
He is a mahadhi – the man of the highest intellect, 42
His omniscience is constant and remains undiminished, 42
The world-intoxicated mind becomes subdued, calm, and purified in his holy presence, 43
The darshan of the Sage is an experience in itself, not capable of being described, 44
His greatness is based on his actual living by the creed of Advaita Vedanta, 46
The whole humanity owes its homage to this great sage, 47
A divine master endowed with all spiritual and human qualities, 48

His silence is more eloquent, more effective, more far-reaching than the sermons of any number of teachers put together, 48
He is the greatest of modern sages of India, 49
He is a sublime example of what a sage ought to be, 50
He is like the rivers and mountains, the common property of mankind, 50
He was a consummate artist in life, 52
If not God himself – for He is omnipresent – the Maharshi is at least Greatness incarnate, 54
The Maharshi's grace can plunge the ordinary man in the ecstasy of timeless Omnipresent Being, 55
His very presence among us is a benediction, 55
A silent look or an encouraging word from him will do more good than all the sermonic literature of the world, 57
It is easy to remember but impossible to know the Maharshi, 58
Whether indifferent or sympathetic, in either case the world gains by him, 58
Whatever may be written about the Maharshi, there is no such thing as knowing him, 59
Divinity and grace radiated from the countenance of the Sage, 62
Being with him is being elevated, 69
The Divine Power of his presence was something remarkable, entirely outstanding, 70
Just to think of him or sit in his presence would raise us to higher levels of blessedness, 70
In Sri Ramana the sublime majesty of the divine life stood and moved in all simplicity, 75
In the Maharshi the ultimate had revealed itself as immediate, and the undreamt had become the actual, 76
He was a beacon light in an otherwise impenetrable darkness and a haven of peace, 79
He was Supreme Detachment incarnate, 79
Renunciation was the 'completest' with him, 80
His mere presence conferred blessedness upon those near him, 82
My heart was being irresistibly attracted as though by a mighty spiritual magnet towards that divinity in human form, 85
For the first time in my life, I began to understand what the grace and blessings of a guru could mean, 97
He was Divine Grace in human form, 98
He was indeed the universal guru, 98
His graciousness awoke a feeling of guilt as to how great was the reward for so little effort made, 99
His face was wreathed in the most lovely smiles, with an expression of serenity and beauty on it which is impossible to describe, or even believe unless you have seen it yourself, 115

He was a perfect Impersonality like the sun in the sky or like the unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber, 118

The Supreme Lord has assumed a human body as an act of grace and resides at Arunachala under the name of Ramana, 126

Gurus like the Maharshi are manifestations of God in human form. To relieve and redeem the suffering of mankind, the Lord occasionally comes down to earth and manifests in a physical form, 143

I know no other beauty comparable to the beauty of the Maharshi, 144

If I have to write how the Maharshi has impressed me, all the vocabulary I can command in all the three languages I know would not suffice, 146

In the presence of the Maharshi my breath seems to stop for a while and my mind got elevated into the spiritual realm of unutterable peace, 147

The Maharshi truly represents in himself the University of Spiritual Education, 150

He was so great yet so simple, 159

For the first time I fully understood the significance of darshan [of a sage], 163

The Maharshi undoubtedly was one of those rare mahatmas who had the power to banish the suffering through his presence, merely through giving darshan, 166

His look and smile had a remarkable charm. When he spoke, the words seem to come out of an abyss. In his presence the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced, 172

The mere sight of him made me tremble all over because I had come face to face with the divine, 197

Effort seemed redundant when his presence alone was enough to evaporate the usual mental flow of thoughts, ideas and problems, 198

How can his smile be described, it contained the whole world, 200

The Maharshi is unimaginable and therefore indescribable, 200

He was a bomb that exploded the myth of my life, 200

He enabled me to realize the timeless, unimaginable, unthinkable 'I am', 200

Whatever transformation took place in his presence, happened on its own accord, not because he desired or willed it. Darkness was exposed to light and ceased to be dark. Light did not orchestrate it in any way, 201

His face is full of compassion, unearthly serenity and power, of infinite kindness and understanding, 205

He reigns in silence, 205

The Maharshi's spiritual alchemy could transmute the hard materialism into something pure and noble, 206

He is like the highest tribunal of our conscience, the Father Confessor whose very presence purifies us of all sins, 207

Being near the Maharshi one feels the presence of God as a matter of course – no arguments or proofs are necessary, 207

The Maharshi seems to supervise the inner processes in us just as an operator watches the work of complicated machinery, which he knows thoroughly, 207-8

The Maharshi is the sun whose rays of grace fall and dance on the minds and hearts that are open, 209

The Maharshi is a God-man who has annihilated his mind and is therefore a perfect stillness and bliss, 209

The Maharshi has condensed in himself the immortal, the eternal, 210

The Maharshi's touch was the touch of the immortal, which elevates you and make you feel that you are also someone worthwhile, 210

He was the very personification of the infinite, of the divine, 210

Every word he spoke was charged with the wisdom of atma vidya, 210

The Maharshi is a tremendous spiritual dynamo who enters our hearts even without our knowing it, 211

The Maharshi is the form of satyam, sivam, sundaram, 212

In front of the Maharshi, for the first time I knew the meaning of Eternity. I got caught up into bliss that passeth understanding, 212

The Maharshi was living in a sphere beyond the limitation of time and space, 213

Undoubtedly, merely to be in his presence is the greatest help that one could possibly receive, 213

He conveyed thoughts silently and so powerfully that the vibrations would sometimes roll in waves down the hall almost hurting the one by the force with which they impinged upon the body, 216

Sri Bhagavan is unique, peerless, 217

In the light of his perfection, all imperfections were revealed, 218

When the Maharshi turned his head and smiled I suddenly felt as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance into our midst, 219

You may read all the sastras in the world, but what you will gain is nothing as compared to the few words you listen from the Maharshi, 222

Sri Ramana was the highest reality and the cream of all scriptures in the world, 226

The Maharshi was beyond body consciousness, beyond all attributes, and beyond all dualities, 227

He belonged to everyone and everyone to him, 227

In the Sage of Arunachala I had discerned the unique sage of the eternal India, 230

He was the divine magician, 231

Many people have experienced happiness in his presence even without a word being spoken, 232

His body was not of the man; it was an instrument of God, 246

Everyone who comes to him is an open book, and a single glance suffices to reveal its contents, 246

You can imagine nothing more beautiful than his smile, 246

It is strange what a change it makes in one to have been in his presence, 247

The praise of the Maharshi like that of Sri Krishna is delightful and beneficial to worldly-minded as well as to those seeking liberation, 252

The Maharshi was the personification of emancipation, 252

His solemn presence lifted us beyond our body and mind to our true Self, 252

His life is a study in divine illumination based on dynamic silence, 252

All worries of the world simply melted in his presence like ice before fire, 252

He was himself the quest and the find, 253

So surcharged with spirituality was he that spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us, 254

He was a saint of colossal spiritual magnitude, 254

The vibrations that emanated from him were celestial, 255

His impact made me feel that I must have done something in the course of my life to deserve this unique blessing, 262

Sri Ramana was the substratum of the universe and the most glorious avatar that has been witnessed till now, 264

When I went to the hall I felt that I was in the presence of God, 267

When he smiled it seemed that I have never before known what a smile was, 283

To write my experience with him is like trying to put the infinite into an eggcup, 284

I saw life differently after I had been in his presence, 284

He gave us a tangible demonstration of God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, 287
I felt that he was India at its highest, bringing peace that surpasses all understanding, 295
It is astonishing how Sri Ramana's presence and his usual and apparently humdrum activities cast such a magic spell over all those who are blessed to come near him, 296
His personality was super human and God-like, 297
His chief language was radiant silence, 299
His darshan remains an unforgettable experience, 299
When the Maharshi appeared before my eyes, I couldn't believe that I was watching a glorious sun unfold, 302
His majestic silence ended my suffering and my self concern about my bereavement, 305
The Maharshi was not a person who knew Brahman; he was Brahman himself, 314
He was a jivanmukta, 317
He is more than all other gods or prophets so far incarnated on the earth, 317
There was about him an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power, which simply overwhelmed me, 319
In the presence of the Maharshi, speech seemed redundant, 319-20
We sat and sat and looked and looked. No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very live experience in which each one of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness, 322
He was a yogi of the highest order, a mystic of the supreme realisation, who radiated the living presence of divinity, 326
His greatness is too vast – too immense, to be captured within our mental orbit, 327
He was serving the best interest of mankind in his own unobtrusive and silent ways, 332
Nothing seemed more enjoyable in this blessed world than to sit in silence in the holy presence of the Maharshi, 337
Darshan of the Maharshi is a singular experience, which words can hardly describe, 338
He was the living incarnation of the divine reality in human form, 340
His body seemed a glass case from which a blissful brilliance streamed out, 342
He was not an ordinary master but a Universal Sadguru, 343
He is the link to the formless Being, 344
One gets transformed by his very presence, 353

A TELUGU VIDVAN RECORDS HIS EXPERIENCE OF STAY AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM

G.Lakshmi Narasimham translated into Telugu *Five Hymns to Arunachala and Reality in Forty Verses*, works of Sri Ramana.

My contact with Bhagavan began in 1930, and I spent a continuous period of three years at Sri Ramanasramam. It was a great blessing.

I was a science graduate. I had learned about the atomic structure of the universe and how the matter finally resolves into energy, and that the mind also is a form of energy. So the entire world of the mind and the matter, when traced to its source, is one uniform Energy or God, or whatever you choose to call it.

This was the attitude of my mind when I first went to Sri Ramanasramam. Bhagavan was then translating his *Ulladu Narpadu* into Telugu. After completing it he gave the manuscript to

me and said, “You are an Andhra: see if there are any grammatical mistakes in it.” It was this translation which made my mind turn inwards and set it on the right path.

The essence of what Bhagavan said in my talks with him was: “You say that on final analysis all that I see or think or do is one; but that really comprises two notions: the all that is seen; and the ‘I’ that does the seeing, thinking and doing, and says ‘I’. Which of these two is the more real, true and important? Obviously the seer, since the ‘seen’ is dependent on it. So, turn your attention to the seer who is your ‘I’ and realize it. This is the real task. Up to now you have been studying the object, not the subject. Now find out for what reality this ‘I’ stands. Find the entity which is the source of the expression ‘I’. That is the Self, the Self of all selves.”

This direct, simple teaching was like a tonic to me. It swept away the unrest and confusion that till then had haunted my mind. It is, of course, the essence of *Ulladu Narpadu* and the central theme of all Bhagavan’s writings. The simplicity of it made me burst out, “Then Bhagavan, Self-realization is very easy, just as you say in the poem *Atma Vidya!*”

Bhagavan smiled and said, “Yes, yes, it seems so at first, but there is a difficulty. You have to overcome your present false values and wrong identification. The quest requires concentrated effort and steadfast abidance in the Source, when reached.” However, while warning me, he also added words of solace: “But don’t let that deter you. The rise of the urge to seek the ‘I’ is itself an act of Divine Grace, for which one has to pray.”

Once my mother said to Bhagavan, “You are God, kindly help me.” He replied, “I, a God – I am only a believer in God’s existence. Don’t say I am God. Then everyone will try to pick a hair of mine.”

My three-year old son suffering from acute liver ailment was taken to the Ashram for a few days but died after two months. The incident was brought to Bhagavan’s notice. When Bhagavan appeared in dream to a close relation, he asked Bhagavan: “The child died even though he was brought to you.” Bhagavan replied, “So many clients come to the lawyer in your family. Does he not always say, “I will do my best.”? Does he always win the cases? So is the case with God also.

When a devotee failed in his attempt to get a suitable bridegroom for his daughter, he sought Bhagavan’s help. He was given a Tamil verse for chanting a certain number of times daily. The verse was a prayer to Siva to take Parvati as his consort. After a month or two the devotee succeeded in celebrating his daughter’s marriage.

My daughter was also of marriageable age and I thought of following the same device. For getting Bhagavan’s clearance in the matter I wrote down the verse on a piece of paper and showed it to him saying whether there was any mistake in it. Bhagavan saw through it and asked, “Why do you want this? You need not do all these things. When the time comes, the bridegroom himself will come and take her away by hand.” I gave up the idea; and my daughter was married as predicted by Bhagavan.

In December 1930, my brother’s newborn daughter was brought to the Ashram for being named by Bhagavan. The two names familiar to him were Lakshmi and Saraswathi. So, looking at the baby Bhagavan said, “Why not give her the name Saraswathi?” When told that there was already one Saraswathi, he named her Bala Saraswathi (*Bala* means younger).

Bhagavan insisted on *parayana* (repetition of sacred texts). He felt that though one may not be able to understand them in the first instance, gradually the ultimate meaning would flash by itself. Bhagavan also said that writing once is equivalent to reading ten times.

In the early 1930s, a dog called Jackie fell sick. Bhagavan arranged a soft bed for it in the hall and was tending it affectionately. After a few days it got more sick and started emitting a bad smell. It made no difference to Bhagavan’s attention on it. Finally, it expired in his hands.

It lies buried in the Ashram precincts, with a small monument over it. (Source: Forthcoming publication of the Kendram as mentioned before.)

SRI RAMANA – NEITHER A PERSON NOR A CONCEPT

V. Ganesan, Managing Editor, The Mountain Path wrote the following in the Preface to Bhagavan Sri Ramana – A Pictorial Biography published by Sri Ramanasramam:

A *Jnani* such as Bhagavan Ramana is neither a person nor a concept, but the truth of pure existence; thus to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana is to be awakened to the truth of one's own existence. *Darshan* need not necessarily be physical; any association with the Master is sufficient to bring one into the living presence of *Truth* and *Light*. To think, to talk, to read, or to focus one's attention on him, is a great support on the path...Sri Bhagavan's life in all its simplicity and purity is a movement in silence...His life is not a chapter in history to be recorded, nor is it restricted by any geographical location. His life is a perennial flowing stream, refreshing and purifying those who partake of its bounty.

THREE ASPECTS OF KARMA: The process of *karma* starts as soon as a thought to perform an action enters one's mind. It then translates into action in the form of speech or physical activity or both. *Karma* is thus performed by the mind in thought, by tongue in speech or by the body in action...The *Gita* classifies *karma* under three categories – *karma*, *vi-karma*, and *a-karma*. *Karma* is right action. It contributes to happiness here and hereafter. *Vi-karma* or wrong action is performed with the intention of doing harm to others and results in suffering in this life or in future lives. *A-karma* is non-action, action that does not produce any reaction and, therefore, ceases to bind one to *samsara* and leads to *moksha*. [Sri Ramana is the example of a person performing *a-karma*.] *Karma*, *vi-karma* and *a-karma* are not to be distinguished by the action itself, but by the intention or motive behind that action. For example, if one may give in charity, perform austerities and *yagnas* with the motive of acquiring fame or favours, then these seemingly right actions would be categorized as *vi-karma*. On the other hand, one may even kill, but with good intentions, then the *karma* would be considered right action; and if it is done in support of *dharma* it could even fall into the category of *a-karma*...To achieve the highest perfection of human life – total freedom – *moksha* from misery – we must perform only *a-karma*. *A-karma* can be achieved in two ways: First, by performing action without desire for the fruits of that action, the fruits being dedicated to the Lord, and second, by total renunciation of all action as in the state of *samadhi*. However, one must be careful and not confuse non-action with laziness or escapism, as that would amount to being in *tamas* (mode of ignorance.) –
Parmarthi Raina

SRI RAMANS HELPS DEVOTEE TO WIN A BET – AN EPISODE

K.K. Nambiar was Chief Engineer, Highways, Madras Presidency. The following story is from his book *The Guiding Presence of Sri Ramana*, which contains his reminiscences.

In 1944, I with my family went to Tiruvannamalai for Bhagavan's *darshan* and stayed with my friend, who was a Sub-divisional Magistrate. When I was talking about my faith in Bhagavan and how he looks after his devotees, my friend said, "Let us see about your journey back to Madras. Getting accommodation in the connecting train at Villupuram is always a gamble." I said I had no worry, as Bhagavan would take good care of us. At this he interjected, "Let us have a bet on this." We alighted at Villupuram and waited for the connecting train. When the train arrived, I went past all the upper class compartments, but could find only two berths for my family of five. I was all the while praying to Bhagavan. Musing to myself, I felt like walking up to the front end of the train and found a first class bogie, completely shuttered, being towed to Madras. I ran back along the platform and spoke to the Ticket Examiner. When the railway official opened the bogie, we found a compartment with all the six seats at our disposal. I repeated 'Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya'. Later, my friend did acknowledge that he lost the bet.

MAY –2006

THE GLORY OF GURU

The following is an abstract from the talk delivered by Dr. K. Subrahmanian, the founder of our Kendram.

Sri Ramana Maharshi says: you cannot understand the greatness of a guru. You cannot describe his greatness in words. The guru's greatness is beyond thoughts and words. The moment you are in the grip of a guru, he looks after you in ways that you cannot imagine. The Maharshi goes on to say that when you accept someone as your guru, you must realize that your guru himself is God. If a guru comes to you, it is not because of your intelligence and effort, it is because of the extraordinary grace of the Lord. What can a guru do you can never understand. Once you accept some one as your guru, you must surrender to him without any question. He will give you strength to face all the problems of life cheerfully. Guru *kripa* is something that you can never understand. All of us think that if we succeed, it is because of our great effort, our great intelligence and luck. The Maharshi says that if you succeed do not attribute to your great effort. Effort of course is very necessary. Do what you have got to do, to the best of your ability. But the *phala*, the fruit is given by him. Sometimes, it won't be given to you. Why is it not give, you cannot understand? There is no way in which you can understand these things. But accept everything as his will. Do not attribute motives to him. Do not think he is angry with you. Guru's compassion is always there. If occasionally we have problems, it is because of various reasons. But he is there all the time. Whether we are conscious of it or not, the guru is there, trust him. What we have to do, we must do to the best of our ability; thinking all the time that we are instruments in his hand. Whether we succeed or fail, he is always with us.

NARAYANA IYER REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

R. Narayana Iyer did personal service to Sri Ramana. He wrote a number of articles in The Mountain Path under the pen name Vishnu. When he first went to Sri Ramana as a young man, he was a modernist and a freethinker.

In 1929, when employed as Sub-Registrar at Chetput, a town 30 miles from Tiruvannamalai, I was an out-and-out skeptic with no religion in me, scoffing in my references to *sadhus*, *sannyasis* and *swamis*, whom I considered impostors and parasites on society, who exploited the credulous folk for personal ends.

My only friend and constant companion was Dr. Ramakrishna Iyer, son of Lakshmi Ammal, a friend and playmate of Sri Bhagavan in his boyhood days at Tiruchuzhi. He was well acquainted with Bhagavan and an occasional visitor to the Ashram. He once asked me to accompany him to Tiruvannamalai during the festival of *Karthikai Deepam*.

The pomp and pageantry of the temple festival had no attraction for me, yet I agreed, not wishing to hurt my friend's feelings. However, I requested him to let me stay with my parents, who had gone for the festival and were staying persons huddled in a small house in the town, I consented to stay at the Ashram, which was less crowded. On the way, I repeated my opinion about the so-called holy men and said to Dr. Iyer, "I will not come in or join in any of your 'foolish acts'. If by chance I meet your *Swami*, I will not prostrate before him. I mean no insult but I cannot do what is against my conviction."

We walked in. A man in a white loincloth, a towel suspended on his shoulder, a *kamandalu* in one hand and a walking stick in another, stopped in his walk on seeing us. My friend hastened his steps and I slowly followed. He was greeted very kindly and was asked about the welfare of his mother and brother. Out of courtesy I looked at the Maharshi. What a wonderful face and what a welcoming smile; bewitching, fascinating and a powerful look too!

In a moment I was at his feet on the gravel ground! I soon regained my self-possession and felt ashamed. With a pleasing smile he said, "You have a couple of days' leave, is it not so? You can stay in the Ashramam." I dared not say anything. I was dazed. Soon I recovered and wanted to find out if he had written any books. I got a copy of *Reality in Forty Verses* in Tamil. I tried to read the first stanza. I could not follow. The words seemed too closely packed and somehow jumbled together to form a stanza. I was flabbergasted. "What", thought I, "can he not say what he has to say in some intelligible language?" Someone nearby said that it had been arranged that the Maharshi himself would explain to us the *Forty Verses* that night.

At night, the Maharshi sat on a dais inside a shed containing his mother's *samadhi*. About half a dozen of us were seated on the ground before him. A solemn stillness pervaded the air. There was absolute silence. Maharshi read the first stanza. The mere reading of the stanza made the meaning as simple as simplicity itself! Stanza by stanza he read and explained in a voice that was so sweet and melodious and coming as though from 'somewhere'. The climax came. Explaining one verse he said, "God cannot be seen with our eyes or known by our sense perceptions. This is what is meant by the saying: To see God is to become God." A stalwart person with a severe expression named Dandapani Swami, interposed: "Is Bhagavan saying this out of personal experience?"

The question asked bluntly with such naiveté was answered with equal candour: "Else would I dare to say so?" What takes so much time to think flashed upon me in a moment. God cannot be known by our sense faculties. The only way was to become God. If God were to appear before one in flesh and blood here He is. My body experienced a thrill from somewhere deep down in me. Again and again, thrill after thrill quivered and shook my frame. I went out to compose myself.

Well, I seemed caught in a net! The more I was with him; the more I wanted to be with him. But I was shortly transferred to Arni, another town within the same radius of thirty miles. Here I missed the company of the doctor friend. Losing all delight in all other things, I turned the monthly visits to the Ashram to weekly ones, coupling Sundays with other holidays. And I was always welcome to the Ashram.

Sri Bhagavan had his head shaved once a month on the full moon day. Natesan was the barber who used to do this service. Bhagavan sat on a stool and Natesan would stand and shave him. Once Sri Bhagavan suggested to Natesan in all seriousness that it would be more comfortable for the barber to sit on the stool while he himself would sit on the floor!

I used to translate from Tamil to English Bhagavan's replies to letters received by him. I had made friends with the attendants, Madhavaswami, Satyanandaswami, Krishnaswami, Rangaswami and others. They did not protest when I gradually introduced personal services to Sri Bhagavan, such as massaging his legs, fomentations, etc.

There were occasions when his muscles became rigid or painful. After his work like cutting vegetables and directing the task of the kitchen workers in the early hours of the morning, he would be on his couch in the hall sitting there or just reclining like a statue cut in alabaster or like one posing for a painter or sculptor. Sitting in this manner all day made his muscles hard and inflexible and so he required some massage. Thus, by slow degrees a sort of familiarity and intimacy grew up between Bhagavan and me.

Once I asked, "Bhagavan, you left your home in Madurai where your relatives had been treating you with love and kindness and spending money upon your education. You misappropriated their money for your train fare to Tiruvannamalai. You sneaked your way to the railway station so as not to be noticed by anyone. You posed yourself as a pilgrim who had lost his kit. Was all this straightforward and proper?" He was silent for a while and then replied, "This can be explained. It is said in the Kural that even falsehood is akin to truth when it is unblemished good and harms none."

I once told Bhagavan, "I have been here for many years. People meditate and get into *samadhi*. I close my eyes for a minute and the mind travels round the world ten times and so many long forgotten things come up." Upon this he said, "Why do you concern yourself about others? They may meditate or sleep and snore. Look to yourself. Whenever the mind goes astray bring it back to the quest."

Once a few very learned Sanskrit scholars were seated in the hall discussing portions of the Upanishads and other scriptural texts with Bhagavan. I felt in my heart, how great these people are and how fortunate they are to be so learned and to have such deep understanding and ability to discuss with our Bhagavan. I felt miserable. After the pandits had taken leave, Bhagavan turned to me and said, "What?" looking into my eyes and studying my thoughts, "This is only the husk! All this book learning and capacity to repeat the scriptures by memory is absolutely of no use. To know the Truth, you need not undergo all this torture of learning. Not by reading do you get the Truth. **Be Quiet** that is Truth. **Be Still**, that is God."

Then very graciously he turned to me again, and there was an immediate change in his tone and attitude. He asked, "Do you shave yourself?" Bewildered by this sudden change, I answered trembling that I did. "Ah", he said, "For shaving you use a mirror, don't you? You look into the mirror and then shave your face; you don't shave the image in the mirror. Similarly, all the scriptures are meant only to show you the way of Realization. They are meant for practice and attainment. Mere book learning and discussions are comparable to a man shaving the image in the mirror." From that day onwards my long-standing sense of inferiority vanished once for all

Once I cried and told the Maharshi that I knew nothing about Vedanta nor could I practise austerity, being a householder. I prayed to him to help me by showing the Reality or the way to it. I also frankly told him that his method of Self-enquiry was too hard for me. He then graciously said, “You know *Ulladu Narpadu* [Truth in Forty Verses]. It imparts Pure Truth, deals with it and explains it. Go on reading it verse by verse. The words of the verses will in course of time vanish and Pure Truth (*sat*) alone will shine, like the snake relinquishing its skin and coming out shining.”

One day I felt puzzled by the teaching that everything in the world is *maya* or illusion. I asked Bhagavan how with the physical existence before our eyes we can all be unreal and non-existent? Bhagavan laughed and asked me whether I had any dream the previous night. I replied that I saw several people lying asleep. He said, “Suppose now I ask you to go and wake up all those people in the dream and tell them they are not real, how absurd would it be! That is how it is to me. There is nothing but the dreamer, so where does the question of dream people, real or unreal, arise; still more of waking them up and telling them that they are not real. We are all unreal, why do you doubt it? **That** alone is real.” After this explanation I never had any doubt about the unreality of the objective world.

About the *jivanmukta*, Bhagavan said, “The *jivanmukta* is one without any thoughts or *sankalpas*. The thought process ceases completely in him. Some Power makes him do things. So he is not the doer but the one who is made to do.”

Bhagavan’s compassion has graced my life many times – On the day my wife died, it rained in torrents. I was afraid that the cremation would be delayed. Bhagavan sent some Ashram workers to help me. When Bhagavan was told that the rain was too heavy for the funeral, he said, “Go on with it, never mind the rain.” When the body was taken to the cremation ground, the rain stopped, and after the body was burnt to white ashes, it started raining again. In 1942, I wanted to get my daughter married. I had a suitable boy in mind but he raised some objections. Anxiously, I showed his letter to Bhagavan, who said, “Don’t worry, it will come off.” Soon afterwards the boy himself came and the marriage was celebrated.

It is our greatest fortune that the Supreme Consciousness appearing in the garb of a human body graciously undertook to come down to our level of understanding and bore the tremendous task of imparting to us the *atma vidya*. **The contact and impact that I have had with Bhagavan have been such as to make me feel that knowingly or unknowingly I must have done something in the course of my lives to deserve this unique blessing.** (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* – the forthcoming publication of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad.)

HOW SRI RAMANA COPES WITH THE WISH TO BRING THE DEAD SON BACK

P.V. Sastri, an Andhra lawyer, came to Sri Ramana in 1945 in the aftermath of death of his 23-year-old married son.

The event was so terrible and caused such grief that I thought I would not survive it. I neglected practically all my worldly duties for some time. Later, I got somehow attracted to Sri Ramanasramam and went there with my whole family. Having read about Sri Krishna’s bringing His guru Sandipani’s son back to life, we were so mad as to think to get our son restored to life by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

We reached Tiruvannamalai and entered the hall where Bhagavan used to sit. Our one idea was to beseech him to bring our son back to life; but despite our intense desire we found that we could not open our mouths to speak. We simply sat silent till Bhagavan rose for dinner

and everyone went out. Then we too went back to the place where we stayed. We went to the hall again in the afternoon with the same purpose but with the same result.

In this way, we went to the hall each morning and afternoon continuously for seven days to implore Bhagavan to bring our son back to life but we could not utter a word in his presence. On the eighth day we talked it over together after coming out of the hall and decided that it was no use staying any longer since our purpose had not been fulfilled, and we decided to leave next morning.

At this time, a gentleman Subbarao met us. He was formerly a pleader at Nellore and had come to Tiruvannamalai and settled down as one of the resident devotees. We became friends perhaps because I also was a pleader. He asked me what we were talking about, and I told him the whole story. I admitted that we felt peace in Bhagavan's presence, but the moment we left the hall our grief bursts out again like a volcanic eruption; and yet, we were unable to speak out and put our desire before Bhagavan.

Subbarao promised to take us to Bhagavan next day and introduce us to him. We agreed. The next day, on being introduced, we told Bhagavan about our grief and in a general way asked for his help. Bhagavan nodded his head and said, *Seri, Seri* (All right, all right), but we still found ourselves unable to talk any more, still less to tell him what it was that we really wanted. Again, we felt constrained to sit there speechless. That evening we decided to leave, since even the intervention of Subbarao had not helped us. But Sri Ramana would not let us go. A thought occurred to me that I should buy some books published by the Ashram. When I went to the bookstall, the gentleman in charge was in meditation but opened his eyes immediately and asked us to come in. On being questioned by him, I repeated the whole story. He said that the Maharshi was capable of bringing the boy back to life, but since the boy was a highly religious and a devout young man he would have gone to better regions and would not like to come back to us. I assured him that he loved us so much and we loved him so much that he would really come back, if it were possible. The gentlemen then put me another question.

"Suppose Bhagavan brings him back to you and then both of you die, what will the position be then?" This question dispelled the thick cloud of illusion that had enveloped us and at last we saw that our attempt to get our son back was sheer madness. I felt at the time and feel even now that it was not the bookseller talking to me, but really Sri Bhagavan was speaking through him.

We abandoned the hope of getting our son back to life and also our plan of leaving immediately. We stayed for about twelve more days. The rest of our stay at the Ashram was only for the purpose of obtaining peace. Sri Ramana's 'all right' had been meant to help us in the only way in which a realized guru will help. His grace was bestowed on us and he began to work silently in our hearts to remove the thick clouds of sorrow and end the volcanic outbursts of grief. He began to instil peace and develop real knowledge in us. Silently and slowly the grace is still working in that direction. We were blessed with his grace and felt uplifted in the right way. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* – the forthcoming publication of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad.)

THREE ASPECTS OF KARMA: The process of *karma* starts as soon as a thought to perform an action enters one's mind. It then translates into action in the form of speech or physical activity or both. *Karma* is thus performed by the mind in thought, by tongue in speech or by the body in action...The *Gita* classifies *karma* under three categories – *karma*, *vi-karma*, and *a-karma*. *Karma* is right action. It contributes to happiness here and hereafter. *Vi-karma* or wrong action is performed with the intention of doing harm to others and results in suffering in this life or in future lives. *A-karma* is non-action, action that does not produce any reaction and, therefore, ceases to bind one to *samsara* and leads to *moksha*. [Sri Ramana is the example of a

person performing *a-karma*.] *Karma, vi-karma* and *a-karma* are not to be distinguished by the action itself, but by the intention or motive behind that action. For example, if one may give in charity, perform austerities and *yagnas* with the motive of acquiring fame or favours, then these seemingly right actions would be categorized as *vi-karma*. On the other hand, one may even kill, but with good intentions, then the *karma* would be considered right action; and if it is done in support of *dharma* it could even fall into the category of *a-karma*... To achieve the highest perfection of human life – total freedom – *moksha* from misery – we must perform only *a-karma*. *A-karma* can be achieved in two ways: First, by performing action without desire for the fruits of that action, the fruits being dedicated to the Lord, and second, by total renunciation of all action as in the state of *samadhi*. However, one must be careful and not confuse non-action with laziness or escapism, as that would amount to being in *tamas* (mode of ignorance.) – *Parmarthi Raina*

SRI RAMANA HELPS DEVOTEE TO WIN A BET – AN EPISODE

K.K. Nambiar was Chief Engineer, Highways, Madras Presidency. The following story is from his book The Guiding Presence of Sri Ramana, which contains his reminiscences.

In 1944, I with my family went to Tiruvannamalai for Bhagavan's *darshan* and stayed with my friend, who was a Sub-divisional Magistrate. When I was talking about my faith in Bhagavan and how he looks after his devotees, my friend said, "Let us see about your journey back to Madras. Getting accommodation in the connecting train at Villupuram is always a gamble." I said I had no worry, as Bhagavan would take good care of us. At this he interjected, "Let us have a bet on this." We alighted at Villupuram and waited for the connecting train. When the train arrived, I went past all the upper class compartments, but could find only two berths for my family of five. I was all the while praying to Bhagavan. Musing to myself, I felt like walking up to the front end of the train and found a first class bogie, completely shuttered, being towed to Madras. I ran back along the platform and spoke to the Ticket Examiner. When the railway official opened the bogie, we found a compartment with all the six seats at our disposal. I repeated 'Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya'. Later, my friend did acknowledge that he lost the bet.

The mind of the *jnani* never leaves *Brahman* (that is, Self). But the mind of the ignorant one (*ajnani*) is such that wandering in the world it suffers, and turning back to *Brahman* for a while enjoys happiness. What is called the world is nothing but thought. When the world disappears, that is, when there is no thought, the mind experiences bliss (*annanda*); when the world appears. It experiences misery. – Sri Ramana Maharshi in *Who am I?*

CHRIST COMPARED WITH SRI RAMANA: " Indeed that is the charm about Christ; when all is said, He is just like a work of art. He does not really teach one anything, but by being brought into His presence one becomes something." Quoted from Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* by K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, who was Chief Justice of the former Padukottah State (Tamil Nadu).

THINK IT OVER: “The mind seems to conspire against itself.”

“We are all strangers to ourselves by claiming everything ours except ourself.”

The above is from the contribution of C.S. Bagi who was Principal of Lingaraj College, Belgaum, Karnataka. He says: “Whatever may be written about Sri Bhagavan there is no such thing as knowing Him. Remembrance is all.” He adds, “ Every adjective we employ to portray Sri Bhagavan does more justice to our own sentiments with regard to Him rather than describe him, because he is indescribable.”(Source: *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*.)

MAHARAJA OF COCHIN’S TRIBUTE TO SRI RAMANA

The following is from Introduction to Malayalam biography of Sri Ramana Maharshi by Appunni. It was written by His Highness Rama Varma Appan Tampuran, Maharaja of Cochin (Kerala).

• There is no limit to the surging rise or to the subsiding tranquility of the mind. Nor is there any limit to its powers to chastise or control and to confer a blessing. The mind is indeed the cause of both happiness and misery, of enjoyment and of liberation. If it is recognised that *samsara* is nothing but a work of the mind, then the mystery of the cycle of births and deaths will be revealed.

The search for the mind has to be made within oneself. Self-knowledge can never be achieved and realised through scholarship. The path to Self-realisation is not easily accessible and it is extremely difficult to tread. For this, faith and devotion and an ardent aspiration for liberation are essential.

Self-realization dawned all at once for the Maharshi. The light of the Self shone forth suddenly like the flash of lightning. The Supreme Lord of the universe lifted him with His sacred hand and established him at the very centre and source of Being, Awareness and Bliss. It is perhaps on account of this we find in much of the teachings of the Maharshi, ultimate knowledge revealed rather than the path leading to it, giving preeminence to the end rather than to means.

• The sorrows of the distressed, the doubts of earnest seekers, the disbelief of the sceptics who come to test him, and the pride of the high and mighty, verily perish in the mere presence of the Maharshi. His sacred abode confers peace and even induces spiritual trance which yields the Bliss of Self-realisation.

The praise of the Maharshi like that of Sri Krishna is delightful and beneficent alike to the worldly-minded sunk in the whirlpool of egoistic attachment and wallowing in the ditch of blind infatuation, as well as to those who seek liberation. It is indeed our good fortune to live during the lifetime of such a distinguished and great Sage. Blessed are the devotees who spend their time in his presence.

The life of the Maharshi is not the biography of an individual but radiance of the universal self; not the expression of body’s acts but manifestation of the Spirit within. (Source: *Fragrant Patels*, published by Sri Ramanasramam. It can be obtained from the Kendram’s bookstore.)

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An argument is an expression of temper whereas a discussion is an expression of logic. –
Shiv Khera

WHY WE WANT TO TALK? We talk when we cease to be at peace with our thoughts. And when we can no longer dwell in the solitude of our heart we seek the talkative through the fear of being alone. The silence of aloneness reveals to our eyes our naked selves, which we want to escape. – *Kahlil Gibran* (1883-1931) Lebanese poet and philosopher.

JUNE 2006

SRI RAMANA'S KITCHEN GARDEN PARTY

T.R.A. Narayana was manager in a large British firm in Madras. He heard of Sri Ramana during a train journey in 1948.

I was on a tour of small towns. As Parthasarathi, my assistant, and I were boarding the train at Villupuram to go to Tiruvannamalai, we noticed a young man trying to enter the compartment. He was so fat that he heaved his bulky body this way and that, while another man on the platform, obviously his servant, pushed him in through the door.

When the train had run for some minutes, the man came to us and introduced himself as Ratilal Premchand Shah of Gondal [Gujarat], the only son of a rich merchant of the place. Cursed with so much fat in his body from his tenth year, now at twenty five, he was a huge mass of flesh and misery. He told us that while he was asleep at night, he saw an ascetic smiling and beckoning him. This persisted for a long time, and stood clearly before his mental eye after he woke up. Two days later his wife was reading a Gujarati magazine. Looking over her shoulders he saw the picture of the ascetic he had seen in his vision. He came to know that the ascetic was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. He at once went to his father and arranged for his journey to Tiruvannamalai with the trusted family servant. He felt sure that his suffering would end as soon as he reached Bhagavan; the smile and the beckoning in his vision by Bhagavan had given him that firm faith.

Parthasarathi had seen Bhagavan many times before and had also read a good deal about him. He and Ratilal talked about Bhagavan during the whole two-hour journey. I was apparently reading an English novel but heard their conversation with interest and attention.

About 5 p.m. on that day, when Parthasarathi and I entered the Ashram, we came to the veranda where about fifty people including Ratilal and his servant were sitting. Bhagavan was not on his couch. After waiting for some ten minutes and finding that Bhagavan had not come to his seat, Parthasarathi suggested that we could in the meantime go around and see the *goshala* and other places in the Ashram.

While returning from our brief tour of the Ashram, we heard a child like voice say “*Chee, asatthe!* (Fie, you creature!).” We observed movement among the leaves of the brinjal, lady’s finger and other plants in the kitchen garden. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey and a squirrel and Bhagavan who was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. Bhagavan was holding a small paper packet in his left hand and was picking groundnuts from it with his right-hand fingers to feed the goat, the monkey and the squirrel and himself, by turns. His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey, which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel’s lips. As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the eating. All the four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. We saw all the four only as good friends despite the differences in their forms. No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight.

The nuts over, Bhagavan threw the paper away and said: “*Pongoda!*” (Go away, you fellows!), just as any old man speaking to his grandchildren. The goat, the monkey and the squirrel left and Bhagavan got up. We hurried away, feeling guilty of trespassing into the Divine, but not sorry.

Soon after, Bhagavan came to his couch. His eyes were fixed on something far above and beyond anything on earth. They were like screens which shut the material world off from the light which was burning behind them. Sparks of light shot out through the fibres of the screen at times, sparks which cooled the eyes on which they fell, pierced the gross coverages and lighted the wick inside them.

Bhagavan reclined on the pillow on the couch, supporting his head on his left palm. We all sat down to look at his face. We sat and sat, and looked and looked. **No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very live experience in which the innermost being of each one of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness which was Bhagavan.**

My mind kept recalling that scene: how the goat had snuggled to Bhagavan’s breast in perfect confidence in his love for it; how the monkey had grinned in joy and how Bhagavan had returned the grin as both bit the nut; how the squirrel had peered with its pinhead eyes into Bhagavan’s dream-laden ones and scratched his nose tenderly with its tiny paw. The vision of the Supreme Spirit underlying and overlaying the sense perception was spiced with the lovely sight of the groundnut party in the kitchen garden.

Bhagavan got up from the couch. We also got up. It seemed tacitly understood that we were to leave. We left. I felt a hitherto unknown peace and joy inside me; the faces of the others also showed a similar condition.

I saw Ratilal and his servant get into their bullock cart at the Ashram gate. There was a new spring in Ratilal’s movements. Bhagavan’s promise in the vision appeared to be moving in the right direction.

In 1953, I was in Rajkot staying in a lodge. One day, while in the dining hall, a man of about thirty accosted me, “Don’t you recognise me. I am Ratilal of Gondal. You remember the *darshan* of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, five years ago.” I looked at the man again. He was thin but strong. His face glowed with health and happiness. I shook his hand heartily. He spoke again, “Sri Bhagavan fulfilled his promise wonderfully well. I am now managing our family business. I have a son two years old.”

My mind went back to the kitchen garden and the four friends at the groundnut party. . (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* – forthcoming publication of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad.)

A JOURNALIST REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

Santha Rangachary was a journalist. She served on the editorial board of *The Mountain Path* during 1980-88.

I desperately needed a confidante, an adviser, somebody preferably outside the family, and out of the blue the name of Ramana Maharshi came to me. His was the only name I had ever heard my father – a stubborn, intolerant sceptic – mention without any adverse suffixes. I decided, therefore, to write to the sage asking him directly: “Please, I beg of you, help me with my temper problem.” Within a week I received a reply signed by the *sarvadhikari*, containing the Maharshi’s message that if I myself made a constant and earnest effort to overcome my temper I would rid myself of it, and that he sends me his blessings.

My first reaction to that letter was one of astonishment at being treated like a grown up, since I had always been told what to do, guided, instructed, warned but never challenged except on a Sports Day. And here was this great Guru telling me: “It is your temper, isn’t it? So, you yourself deal with it.” He had simply batted the ball back to my court in the nicest possible way by treating me as an individual in my own right. I rather liked that.

Ramana Maharshi entered my life again a year or so later when my sister took our family on a pilgrimage. We were to stay at Sri Ramanasramam only for two days. But as it turned out, we stayed for the whole week and I wept like a lost child when we had to leave. The visit was a shattering experience for me. I do believe I literally fell in love with Ramana Maharshi. I was in a daze, a trance, my tongue was gone, my mind was gone, I was in a state of dumbfounded ecstasy. This love, which had been awakened, was the kind which totally bypasses the physical plane and creates an awareness of a different kind of consciousness which can only be described as a mindless rapture, pure joy. It is an unlocated, pervasive state of being sparked off by some kind of recognition and it stays with you, and you are never the same again.

When we went to Sri Ramana’s hall, my mother, brother and sister went ahead and quickly disappeared into the hall. I hung back, unaccountably apprehensive. Then, as I at last composed myself and got to the door and looked in, I saw reclining on a sofa, a golden-brown figure with the most radiant countenance I had ever seen before or since and, as I stood there riveted to the spot, the Maharshi looked at me. When I remember it even now, more than forty years later, tears come to my eyes as they did then. I stood there, God knows how long, just looking at that face. Then, as in a trance, I moved forward deliberately towards him and touched his feet. Fighting my way through the disapproving glance that followed, as devotees were not allowed to touch Bhagavan, I made my way to a place near the window.

Once seated, I let my tears flow. I remember I spent a good part of that morning wiping my eyes. They were not tears of grief nor were they tears of joy. Maybe they were for something which I saw in the Maharshi fleetingly and which I also want and shall forever seek. Yes, I cried for myself then and I still do it now.

Never before had I seen in a human countenance a more intense, inward life and yet one which remained so transparent and childlike. There was about him an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power, which simply overwhelmed me. I was conscious of people sitting all around me but was totally incurious about them. After an hour or so of silence I suddenly felt like singing. Without hesitation or embarrassment, I lifted my 12 year-old voice in a rendition of Tyagaraja’s *Ninne kori Yunnanura*, keeping time softly with my fingers on my knee. After a few minutes, I threw myself with another gush of abandon into *Thelisi Rama Chintana*. As I began the *anupallavi* which exhorts the mind to stay still for a moment and realise the true essence of the name of Rama, I saw the Maharshi turn his eyes upon me with

that impersonal yet arresting look of his, my heart soared and I thought: 'I want to be here for ever and ever'.

For three hours every morning and every evening my vigil in the hall continued for seven days. I sat in my seat near the window, still and thought-free, just gazing at the Maharshi. Occasionally somebody would ask a question and the Maharshi would turn and look at him, and you got the feeling that the question had been answered. Or, somebody would ask for the meaning of a particular phrase in a Sanskrit or Tamil stanza and the Maharshi would answer softly, briefly.

The Maharshi was not a man of many words. His long years of practised detachment from people made him absolutely brief in speech. His knowledge of classical Tamil religious literature was considerable; he could himself compose verses and he did. His enlightenment had not been directed by a Guru but had come from his Self-consciousness. His most effective form of communication was intra-personal through the sense of sight and the medium of silence. He was very much a human being, who laughed and joked occasionally, but he could suddenly plunge deep into himself while sitting in a hall full of people and rest in that stillness of spirit, which as he himself said, was being in God.

One afternoon, somebody showed the Maharshi some verses. The Maharshi read them and made a brief comment. In those eloquent silences that punctuated his brief remarks, one seemed to feel unspoken thought flowing around the room touching and drawing everybody into its illuminating course. That was a strange experience to me. **In the presence of the Maharshi, speech seemed redundant.** I was totally and blissfully satisfied just being in his presence.

That whole week I practically did nothing else but sit in the hall. I had never before spent so many days talking so little, just sitting around so much, or so lost in a single-minded pursuit of the Maharshi.

I shall not claim that my whole life was transformed after this meeting. No. I went back to school and then to college, got married, set up a house, had children, started a journalistic career of my own. My *grihastaram* became my main preoccupation. But my visit to Sri Ramanasramam had done something to me. It left a mark on my mind and heart. The picture of the Ashram and of the Maharshi was always in my mind like the background curtain of a stage. Whenever I was tired or dispirited or perplexed, the wish to go to Sri Ramanasramam would possess me like hunger. Even when I was so busy that I did not know whether I was coming or going, a sudden look at a picture of the Maharshi hanging on the wall would momentarily root me to the spot and my mind would suddenly go blank. Whenever I feel I want to go away somewhere, away from home, family, friends, books, mistakes, fears, sorrows, my mind automatically turns to Sri Ramanasramam. And my body follows. I make the journey to Tiruvannmalai, walk into the Ashram, enter the hall, and I am 'home' and totally at peace.

Every human being has really only one guru like one mother. Some are fortunate enough to meet their gurus; some pass them by, like ships in the night. I stumbled upon mine when I was twelve; I now stand alone in myself. In a sense I am twelve-going-on thirteen all over again, standing on another threshold, remembering, waiting. . (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* – forthcoming publication of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad.)

TIME STANDS STILL WHEN MIND STOPS: Sages of ancient India measured time through the concept of *kshna* (). This is the time between the two thoughts. This is the time and space that the Buddha referred to as *sunya* (). It is no-mind zone, in which you touch

base within yourself. It is the present moment in which you come face to face with the divinity within yourself, recognizing the cosmic energy that you are part of. In the case of an average person in whom the mind is constantly active, desires and thoughts pour out without a stop; the time between two thoughts is very small, very very small. In case of an enlightened being, who is in no-mind state [as Sri Maharshi] *kshna* is infinite. Our constant effort has to be to lengthen our *kshna* or *sunya* as much as possible. – *Swami Nithyananda*

GREAT AWAKENING, THE RAMANA WAY: When some one asked the Buddha whether he was god, angel or saint, he replied simply: “I am awake.” The root of the word Buddha – *budh* – means to awaken and to know. This is what Sri Ramana said time and again: Get awakened to the fact that you are not the body, with which you insistently confuse yourself, ignoring the Real Self. The knowledge of the Real Self will dawn upon us if we persistently introspect on the question of all questions, namely, WHO AM I?

MIND AND INTELLECT: The mind comprises impulses, feelings, likes and dislikes. It behaves like a child. The intellect is the thinking equipment, which reasons, discriminates and judges. It is the adult in you. The adult must control the child. The mind may also be compared to the flowing water and the intellect to its banks. The banks control and direct the flow of water in the field. The land gets irrigated as long as the water flows within the banks. But when the banks are weak and yield to the pressure of water and the water loses its course, the blessing turns into curse. Similarly, when the desires of mind are too many and powerful, and the intellect is weak, the individual yields to the pressure of the mind, resulting in disastrous consequences. Hence the way to control the desires is to strengthen the intellect, pitch up an ideal and work for it. – *Swami Parthasarathy*

WHAT IS KSHETRA (क्षेत्र): Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*: “O Arjuna, this body is akin to a field.” In Sanskrit, field is *kshetra* – farmland – innocent and pure, for it takes on whatever character the farmer chooses to give it. A handful of grain turns into an harvest. We can choose to create a garden that will delight the heart of all those who visit it, or turn it into a dumping ground for people to come and unload their garbage. Sri Krishna calls this body a field because it can help us accomplish whatever we choose. We can entrap ourselves in mundane activities or we can withdraw ourselves and concentrate on developing our inner self. Whatever we sow, we will harvest later. – *Swami Muktananda*

SELF REALISATION IS BEYOND TECHNIQUES: Once an aspiring Zen disciple, would meditate long hours every day. When his master asked him the purpose of the meditation, he answered that it was to become an enlightened being like the Buddha. The Master grabbed a brick and started rubbing it on a rock. In answer to the disciple’s query, the Master told him that he wanted to polish the brick into a mirror. “How can you make a mirror by polishing a brick? Asked the disciple. The Master’s reply was a counter question: “How can you become a Buddha by practising meditation?” The moral of the story is that techniques and methods are not of great consequence in the spiritual domain. The most common form of technique that is given to a seeker of Truth is mantra or *japa*. The disciple sits with the eyes closed and repeats the words that are given to him by the Master. But it is basically a form of self-hypnosis that lulls the seeker into a pseudo-peaceful state which can easily be taken for real peace. A seeker can also get trapped by attractive yet illusionary visions and sounds that are basically projected by

his unconscious mind during meditation. In fact it is easy to get lost in this ‘spiritual jungle.’ Sri Ramana Maharshi never laid down or prescribed a particular posture, or *japa*, or ritual, or procedure for realizing the Truth. His emphasis was on intensive introspection, interiorization, *atma vichara* through the question *Who am I?* which will lead to realize the Higher Self. – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

SRI RAMANA – NEITHER A PERSON NOR A CONCEPT

V. Ganesan, Managing Editor, The Mountain Path wrote the following in the Preface to Bhagavan Sri Ramana – A Pictorial Biography published by Sri Ramanasramam:

A *Jnani* such as Bhagavan Ramana is neither a person nor a concept, but the truth of pure existence; thus to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana is to be awakened to the truth of one’s own existence. *Darshan* need not necessarily be physical; any association with the Master is sufficient to bring one into the living presence of *Truth* and *Light*. To think, to talk, to read, or to focus one’s attention on him, is a great support on the path...Sri Bhagavan’s life in all its simplicity and purity is a movement in silence...His life is not a chapter in history to be recorded, nor is it restricted by any geographical location. His life is a perennial flowing steam, refreshing and purifying those who partake of its bounty.

THE ETERNAL COSMIC SPIRIT: Science tells us that the apparently solid world we live in is actually made up of many small molecules. All observable matter is no more than insubstantial fields of energy moving in a great void. And all objects and all living things have no substance except as bundles of energy. All our possessions, objects, passions, ideals and our mortal bodies, are destined to be deserted by the spirit as it moves, undeclared towards an unimagined destination. The cosmic Creator, nameless and formless, is a great stream of cosmic energy in which every living soul is a tiny droplet. Awareness about these facts will result in a new consciousness in us and make us humble. If we can learn how to find the glory of the Great Spirit within ourselves, it will be the triumph of inner spirituality and the end of noisy religiosity. – *Murad Ali Baig*

THE TIGHT SHOE THERAPY: Some one has suggested that the best way to forget all your troubles is to wear very tight shoes. At the end of the Mahabharata war, Kunti requests Lord Krishna for a seemingly bizarre boon: “May we always be in trouble, O Lord, so that we may never cease to think of you!” This reminds us of a couplet (*doha*) of a great Hindi poet who says: That happiness be dammed which makes me forget His name / I am beholden to that adversity, which makes me constantly remind His name. – *V.C. Nadkarni*

HUMILITY: The starting point of all spiritual progress is the admission that one is full of base instincts, that one is floundering in darkness and is also stagnant and one prays to the Supreme for Light. The great Hindi poet Kabir in one of his couplets says: “I am a sinner over many births and am filled with toxin from head to foot. You are the queller of all afflictions; therefore uplift me.” The Upanishdic aphorism says: “*Asato ma sat gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrietyo ma amirtam gamaya.*” (*Brihadaranayaka Upanishad*). It means: “Lead me from

unworthy to those with subsistence and merit, from darkness to light, from inactivity to ever widening thought and action.” – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

He who wants to know himself and yet pays attention to his body is like a man who trusts a crocodile to take him across a river. – *Anonymous*

Those who want to succeed will find a way, those who don't will find an excuse. – *Leo Anguila*

Meditation is alchemy: it can transform base metal into gold. – *Osho*

NEED FOR RIGHT APPROACH AND ACTION: Our problems are not due to ignorance, but inaction. Endowed with virtues of discrimination humans know how to evolve a right approach to life. Yet some people act throwing principles and duties to winds, some are cornered into situations, often of their own making, where they feel that they have to carry things to their bitter end, come what may. Duryodhana in the *Mahabharata*, for example, says: *jaanaami dharmam na me pravritti, jaanaami adharmam na cha me nivritti*, meaning, “I realize what is right but I am helpless to engage myself in it; I realize what is wrong but I am unable to disengage myself from it.” Crises of conscience, vacillation, confusion, inability to find a way out and helplessness arise in consequence of lack of right priorities within. One's observations and inferences in life would enable one to analyse issues in the right perspective. From this could follow synthesis, obtaining for oneself truths and principles to live by – those which can mould and guide all aspects of one's life. This verily is the process of getting the basics right and thereafter meeting head-on the demands of life and living. This is also the theme underlying the concept of ‘putting the horse before the cart’. The *Gita's* concept of *yogastah kuru karmani*, meaning “establish yourself in the truth and thereafter do your work.” (II.8), has to be kept in mind. – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

LET US RECOGNISE OUR INCONSEQUENTIALITY AND INSIGNIFICANCE: How important is our whole planet in the intergalactic context? Clearly not very. Our little planet is in orbit around a very typical and average kind of star of which there are billions, on the rim of a very typical and average kind of galaxy of which there are also billions, which is part of a very typical and average kind of galaxy-super cluster of which there are more billions in a universe that itself is considered to be one among an infinity of multiverses. – *Mukul Sharma*

SOME SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS

Our task is to establish the contact between us and God. For this constant introspection is needed on the question Who am I?

The existence of God within makes even the control of mind possible. Let no one think that it is impossible because it is difficult. It is the highest goal, and it is no wonder that the highest effort should be necessary to attain it.

Experience teaches us that silence is an essential part of the spiritual discipline for the seeker.

Selfless activity is a step towards the attainment of Divinity.

JULY- 2006

A SPANISH AMERICAN EXPERIENCES SRI RAMANA

Mercedes de Acosta, a Spanish American who came to Sri Ramana in 1938, was a Hollywood socialite and scriptwriter for films. Long after meeting Sri Ramana she wrote the book *Here Lies the Heart*, which was dedicated to: *Thou Spiritual Guide – Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, the only completely egoless, world detached and pure being, I have ever known.* She writes:

A Search in Secret India by Paul Brunton had a profound influence on me. In it I learned for the first time about Ramana Maharshi, a great Indian saint and sage. It was as though some emanation of this saint was projected out of the book to me. For days and nights after reading about him I could not think of anything else. I became, as it were, possessed by him. I could not even talk of anything else. Nothing could distract me from the idea that I must go and meet this saint. The whole direction of my life turned towards India. I felt that I would surely go there. I had very little money, far too little to risk going to India, but something pushed me towards my goal. I went to the steamship company and booked myself one of the cheapest cabins on the S.S. Victoria.

In Madras I hired a car, and so anxious was I to reach the Ashram that I did not go to bed and travelled by night, arriving about seven O'clock in the morning. I was very tired as I got out of the car in a small square in front of the Arunachaleswara Temple. The driver explained he could take me no further. I turned towards the Ashram in the hot sun along the two miles of dust-covered road to reach the abode of the Sage. As I walked that distance, deeply within myself I knew that I was moving towards the greatest experience of my life.

When I first entered the hall, I perceived Bhagavan at once, sitting in the Buddha posture on his couch in the corner. At the same moment I felt overcome by some strong power in the hall, as if an invisible wind was pushing violently against me. For a moment I felt dizzy. Then I recovered myself. To my great surprise I suddenly heard an American voice calling out to me, 'Hello, come in.' It was the voice of an American named Guy Hague, who had already been with the Maharshi for a year. He came towards me, took my hand, leading me to a place beside him. I was able to look around the hall, but my gaze was drawn to Bhagavan, who was sitting absolutely straight looking directly in front of him.

His eyes did not blink or move. Because they seemed so full of light I had the impression they were grey. I learned later that they were brown, although there have been various opinions as to the colour of his eyes. His body was naked except for a loincloth. As he sat there he seemed like a statue, and yet something extraordinary emanated from him. **I had a feeling that on some invisible level I was receiving spiritual shocks from him**, although his gaze was not directed towards me. He did not seem to be looking at anything, and yet I felt he could see and was conscious of the whole world. Hague whispered, "Bhagavan is in *samadhi*." After I had been sitting for sometime, Hague suggested that I go and sit near the Maharshi. He said, "You can never tell when Bhagavan will come out of *samadhi*. When he does, I am sure he will be pleased to see you."

I moved near Bhagavan, sitting at his feet and facing him. Not long after this Bhagavan opened his eyes. He moved his head and looked directly down at me, his eyes looking into mine. It would be impossible to describe that moment and I am not going to attempt it. I can only say that at that time I felt my inner being raised to a new level – as if, suddenly, my state of consciousness was lifted to a much higher degree. Perhaps in that split second I was no longer

my human self but the Self. **Then Bhagavan smiled at me. It seemed to me that I had never before known what a smile was.** I said, “I have come a long way to see you.”

There was silence. I had stupidly brought a piece of paper on which I had written a number of questions I wanted to ask. I fumbled for it in my pocket, but the questions were already answered by merely being in his presence. There was no need for questions or answers. Nevertheless, I asked, “Tell me, whom shall I follow – what shall I follow? I have been trying to find this out for years.” Again there was silence. After a few minutes, which seemed to me a long time, he spoke, “You are not telling the truth. You are just using words – just talking. You know perfectly well whom to follow. Why do you need me to confirm it?” “You mean I should follow my inner self?” I asked. His response was, “I don’t know anything about your inner self. You should follow the Self. There is nothing or no one else to follow.”

I asked again, “What about religions, teachers, gurus?” He said, “Yes, if they can help in the quest for the Self. Can a religion, which teaches you to look outside yourself, which promises a heaven and a reward outside yourself, be of help to you? It is only by diving deep into the spiritual Heart that one can find the Self.” He placed his right hand on his right breast and continued, “Here lies the Heart, the dynamic, spiritual Heart. It is called *hridaya* and is located on the right side of the chest and is clearly visible to the inner eye of an adept on the spiritual path. Through meditation you can learn to find the Self in the cave of this Heart.”

I said, “Bhagavan, you say that I am to take up the search for the Self by *atma vichara*, asking myself the question ‘Who Am I?’ May I ask who are you?” Bhagavan answered, “When you know the Self, the ‘I’, ‘You’, ‘He’, and ‘She’ disappear. They merge together in pure Consciousness.”

To write about my experience with Bhagavan, to recapture and record all that he said, or all that his silences implied is trying to put the infinite into an egg cup. On me he had, and still has, a profound influence. I feel it presumptuous to say he changed my life. My life was perhaps not so important as all that. But **I definitely saw life differently after I had been in his presence**, a presence that just by merely ‘being’ was sufficient spiritual nourishment for a lifetime.

Before I bid a sorrowful farewell to Bhagavan, he gave me some verses he had selected from the *Yoga Vasistha*. These contained the essence for the path of a pure life: (i) Steady in the state of fullness, which shines when all desires are given up, and peaceful in the state of freedom in life, act playfully in the world, O Raghava! (ii) Inwardly free from all desires, dispassionate and detached, but outwardly active in all directions, act playfully in the world, O Raghava! (iii) Free from egotism, with mind detached as in sleep, pure like the sky, ever untainted, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!

When I returned from India, undiscerning people saw very little change in me. But there was a transformation of my entire consciousness. And how could it have been otherwise? I had been in the atmosphere of an egoless, world-detached and completely pure being.

IRONIC AWARENESS: ‘Ironic awareness’ means being aware of the irony and paradox of life in matters of everyday life. This phrase originated as a term of literary criticism. In the context of spirituality, ironic awareness enables one to live life robustly, knowing well that we live in the shadow of death; to respect money, knowing fully well that it can be the root of misery; to enjoy the world, despite knowing that the world is an illusion. It involves understanding the play of *maya* and being amused by it, rather than being overwhelmed by it. Adi Sankara prays to the Lord to pardon his three sins: “I have clothed You with form, knowing

that You are without a form; I have described Your qualities, knowing that You are attribute-less; and I have visited the shrines knowing full well that You are omnipresent.” The great acharya was only illustrating his ironic awareness. Sankara, who established *advaita*, also has scripted many hymns in praise of deities.

Ironic awareness should be differentiated from hypocrisy, which is rooted in falsehood and cunning; ironic awareness is rooted in truth and wisdom. It is also different from cynicism. Oscar Wilde described a cynic as one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Ironic awareness is to know the value of everything and the price of nothing.

Conflict among various sects arises essentially because of a lack of ironic awareness. A classic case is belief in God as the formless (*nirguna upasana*), and God with form (*saguna upasana*). Both can be equally wrong and steeped in ignorance. Swearing by God with a specific, exclusive form inhibits the mind. To insist too narrowly on the formless can also inhibit the mind. The ‘formless’ itself becomes a form. A spiritual aspirant must train to see and appreciate equally diverse points of view. Such appreciation must rise from informed perception.

Another case is of apparent conflict among votaries of *bhakti*, *jnana*, and *karma*. For a robust mind, that is, a mind strong in ironic awareness there is no conflict whatsoever in the three approaches because he can “see One in Many and Many in One”. Such a mind answers the description of the person “who does not trouble the world and who is not troubled by it.”

Ironic awareness is the ability to reconcile in an informed, instinctive way the opposite sides of the coin, so as to be able to see both sides in each side. This involves perceiving the essential unity even as you wonder at and enjoy the diversity.– <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

INCREDIBLE POWER OF PRAYER: Prayer is an earnest hope or a wish, a request for help or expression of thanks made to God. Petition is that kind of prayer which begs for determinate objects. Supplication is when things sought are indeterminate. Imploration is a solemn representation of the grounds on which we dare to ask a favour. Thanksgiving is the returning of thanks for benefits received. Amongst all the means of salvation recommended by Jesus Christ, the first place is given to prayer. God makes innumerable promises to the person who prays – ‘Cry to me and I will hear you’; ‘Ask and it shall be given to you’; ‘Seek and you shall find’; ‘Knock and it shall be opened to you’. The prayer of one who *humbles himself* shall pierce the clouds. The prayer of a *humble soul* penetrates the heavens and presents itself before the throne of God. Families that pray together stay together. - <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

TAP THE DIVINE CORE WITHIN: Doing good is not enough, being good is far more important. We may donate to charity to create a good impression or gain publicity. We help somebody hoping for a favour from him later. So we must carefully examine the attitude with which we give. We need to share our talents, time or wealth with others expecting nothing in return. The scriptures tell us that nobility is the doorway to Divinity. Selflessness, noble thoughts and emotions take us closer to Divinity. Sages ask us to rise above ourselves and pray for the people around us and for the welfare of the world. When we engage in this kind of selfless prayer regularly, it purifies us and helps to establish us in a state of nobility. When we are established in a state of nobility, we draw close to Divinity. As we draw closer to Divinity we are enveloped in bliss and contentment. We have tapped the Divine core within. - <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

LAKSHMAN SARMA'S *SRI RAMANA PARAVIDYOPANISHAD*

Sarma who came to Sri Ramana in the late 1920s, spent most of his life translating the Maharshi's teachings into Sanskrit. Sri Ramana closely supervised his Sanskrit translation of *Ulladu Narpadu*. Other than Muruganar, he was the only person to have received private lessons by Sri Ramana on the intent and meanings of his works. His Sanskrit work *Sri Ramana Paravidyopanishad* (1950), contains teachings of the Maharshi, a few of which are:

The man who has not experienced his own real Self, thinking 'I am this body' sees himself as 'I', the first person of grammar. He sees another person whom he calls 'you', and refers to a third person as 'he'. These three distinct persons are not real. They are seen on account of the false notion, 'I am the body'. When the ego-soul is lost as a result of quest of the real Self, only that Self, consciousness alone, will shine.

Just as one who has become wise to the truth of the mirage may again see the mirage without being deluded, so too the sage, seeing this world, does not think of it as real, as does the ignorant one.

When, forgetting the Self, one thinks that the body is oneself and goes through innumerable births and in the end remembers and becomes the Self, knows that this is only like awakening from a dream wherein one has wandered all over the world.

If during the quest of one's own Self, the mind turns outwards on account of its attachment to objects of perception, the seeker should turn it inwards again. He should bring the mind back again and again and re-engage it in the quest. There must be a resolve to become aware of the truth of oneself by means of the question, "Who is he that has this attachment to objects of perception?" The answer to this question is not an intellectual conclusion. The correct answer to it is only the experience of the real Self.

The quest of the source of the soul is named as 'The Great Yoga'. It is the yoga of action, the yoga of devotion, the yoga of restraining the mind and also the yoga of right awareness. By the practice of meditation mental strength will be intensified. Therefore, meditation is an aid to the quest. After first achieving stillness of the mind by meditation, the valiant aspirant must seek the truth of his own Self.

Just as a woman, suffering intolerably in her father-in-law's house, obtains peace in her mother's house, so the mind, harried by *samsaric* (worldly) sufferings, wins peace by returning to the source: the Real Self.

To create empty space in a room one only has to remove the encumbering, unwanted lumber. In the same way, to realise the Self, nothing more is needed than the removal of false knowledge that I am the body.

For him that is established in the supreme state, desires do not arise, because the desirer, the ego, has ceased to exist. The sage in that state is ever contented. *In the end the writer says:*

To that supreme one, the Self of all creatures, who became our Guru, Sri Ramana – let there be thousands of *namaskarams* until the extinction of the ego is secured.

ANANDA YOGA

By Paramahansa Nithyananda

Ananda means bliss. It is not joy. *Ananda* is beyond joy. Joy is what you feel through your senses, based on an outer object – music, a fragrance, a beautiful sight, physical touch and so on. When you feel joy without sensory inputs, not even inputs of forms of God, just from your inner core – your soul, it is *Ananda* – bliss!

Yoga literally means union: the union of the self with the divine, union with the cosmic power. It is cessation of the mind, to take it beyond the mind, to be one with the existence. The blissful technique to unite you with the divine is *ananda* yoga. Here, the very path the very travel is ecstasy. It is not something you find at the end, you find it all along the way.

The very living is bliss when you go without a goal; only for the purpose of enjoying the path. You cannot look at God as a goal. You cannot run towards God. In the inner world the logic is very different. Goals are not achieved by running towards them. Zen masters say: When you stop seeking you will find it. Seeking makes you tense; it makes you miss your purpose.

Just look at all your guilt, mistakes, and failures; just look with deep acceptance. Even if you cannot accept, accept that you cannot accept. You will then relax; guilt will drop from your mind. If your mind is tense, it can never stop. Only when you relax it you can cease. You have to stop being goal-oriented. If you accept what you are, what is, the mind will lose its roots. Mind and bliss cannot stay together. When mind is, bliss is not. It is either mind or bliss. So drop your mind and simply decide to walk on the path of ecstasy! (Source: *The Economic Times*)

IS INSTANT ENLIGHTENMENT POSSIBLE?

Jed Mckenna author of the book *Spiritual Enlightenment: The Damnedest Thing*, concludes: “The truth is that enlightenment is neither remote nor unattainable. It is closer than your skin and more immediate than your next breath.” Indians have recognized and appreciated this fact thousands of years ago. The famous story of king Janaka and Ashtavakra, narrated by Sri Ramana himself refers to this conclusion.

Sri Ramana was a magnificent actor. He would dramatize the role of the individuals involved in the story told by him. Once he narrated in a most dramatic and thrilling manner the story of Janaka and Ashtavakra. Having read in the scriptures that the Self could be realized in the interval between a rider putting one foot in the stirrup and raising the other foot for mounting the horse, the king summoned all pandits in his kingdom, who having failed to answer the king satisfactorily, brought the great sage Ashravakra to save themselves.

The Sage asked the king to follow him alone with a horse outside the city, where he asked Janaka to place one foot in the stirrup and then said, “ Now comes the supreme condition, you must surrender yourself. Are you willing? Janaka said, “Yes.” From that moment Janaka stood transfixed with one foot in the stirrup and the other dangling in the air, apparently like a statue. (Here Sri Ramana imitated the posture of Janaka.) King’s people seeing him in that state begged the Sage to show grace. Then the Sage said, “Janaka, why are you like this? Ride home on the horse.” He rode home and obeyed the Sage in everything like a bonded slave.

[The catch here is the high spirituality of king Janaka and the great guru Ashtavakra involved in the story, which are almost impossible to find. Then we have the well-known fact of Sri Ramana himself securing enlightenment instantly in July 1896, when he was a student at Madurai; and this he got without a guru to guide him.]

(The full story of king Janaka is in *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi* published by Sri Ramanasraman. It is available at the Kendram's bookstore.)

The mind when it goes out become *dwaita*; when you hold on to it, it is *advaita*. – *Anonymous*

The nature starts rewarding a pure and peaceful mind immediately. – *Anonymous*

A heart-felt prayer is not a recitation with the lips. It is a yearning from within which expresses itself in every work, every act, nay, every thought of man... We have to cultivate illimitable patience if we will realize the efficacy of prayer. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

Sri Aurobindo warns against complacency to all those who are under the impression that *sadhana* is a smooth affair. He says: *Sadhana* is an adventure of the highest order. Normally, when one follows a spiritual path one had to say good-bye to all physical comforts and to go through mental and moral conflicts which can only be described by the word 'excruciating.' But the path has its own reward of abiding peace, a harmonious and integrated personality, and eventually the enjoyment of bliss, which is beyond words.

MULTIFACTED SRI KRISHNA: Krishna is an irrepressible child, prankster; enchanting flute player, graceful dancer; irresistible lover; brilliant warrior, vanquisher of foes; one who left a broken heart in every home; and astute statesman and kingmaker; thorough gentle man; yogi par excellence; and a colourful incarnation. When it came to teaching, Krishna spoke of all kinds of ways, but highlighted the path of devotion a bit more than others. Not because it is better than something else, but simply because he saw that most people were more capable of emotion than any thing else. [Emphasizing the importance of *bhakti* Ramana Maharshi has said that it is *jnanamata* – mother of *jnana*.] – *Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudeva*

EXPERIENCE YOUR INNER SPACE: We are all the time running after material objects. Most of us are not even aware that deep within each of us exists an inner space, that is, silence. We can experience it only by going inward. We must appreciate the fact that the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts. It consists of your ideas about everything and everybody. Regarding the latter, just be friendly with everyone without having any past memories and ideas about them. Just behave the way you would when you meet the person for the first time. Life will then be joyful. Your inner space will simply expand. You will be able to actualize your entire potential. When thoughts arise, whatever they may be, try to watch them as a witness. You will see that your awareness increases slowly (you may even find that it is frustratingly slow), but persistent and sincere efforts would pay, and the number of thoughts would gradually decrease. You would then, after a (long) period of time, become aware of the inner space within, which is pure bliss. – *Paramahansa Sri Nithyananda*

THE MIDDLE PATH: One day the Buddha was sitting under a tree, practising severe austerities. A group of singers passed by singing: "O singer, don't draw the strings of your lute too tightly lest they break; don't slack them so much that they will not make music. The

Buddha instantly realized that his body was like a stringed instrument. By severe self-denial he was defeating his purpose. The same would be the result if he over indulged himself. He understood that he must keep to the middle path. – *Swami Muktananda*

DRIVE OUT THE EGO THROUGH SAMARPANA: Material achievements in terms of wealth, power, education, fame and social status provide satisfaction to most people, but they engender a feeling of superiority in an individual, and unleash the venomous ego that poisons the mind. It is similar to a situation where a rope lying on the ground in the dark is mistaken for a snake; and once the darkness is dispelled, the rope alone remains and the snake disappears. Likewise, lack of understanding of the existence of the Almighty misleads us to reckon ourselves as being supreme and all-powerful. When the realization dawns on us of the presence of the One who is infinitely powerful, the veil of “I-ness” gets lifted from our minds. For truth-realisation, one needs *samarpana* or surrender to the Almighty for all deeds and results. Every time the feeling of “I-ness” surfaces in your mind, you need to endeavour to overcome it by chanting the name of the Universal Master, and constantly remind yourself that the success that you have achieved is by the Grace of the Supreme Lord. It is with years of regular and sincere practice of *samarpana* that one can reach the desired state of mind, unruffled by any gain or loss. – *Amitava Basu*

VIRTUES OF SOLITUDE: There is something so very special about solitude that it can't really be described. You have to experience it, to realize what it is all about. Solitude sets you in an introspective mood and takes you on a plane beyond the mundane. When you are alone, only then you see a certain special perspective; without any intruding voice throttling yours. For, in your aloneness your constant companion, that inner voice, takes charge. And like other supposed companions it doesn't let you down nor does it let go of you. Just give importance to that inner voice and see the way it guides you, nudges you, enriches you... Since ages men have moved away from the madding crowd, into caves, islands, forests, and jungles to seek respite from daily distractions, to be by themselves. No amount of meetings and more meetings could have produced something as valuable and insightful as what has emerged from reflections brought on by confinements. Today we are in such a pitiable condition that even if one wants to, one cannot afford to retreat for peace, quiet, and solitude. Where is the inclination or time or the social sanction to go into such phases? Even if you can't move physically away, then do so at the mental level. It's all in the mind. It can take away from the daily disappointments and hurl us into a world where there is less friction and turmoil. **Savour Solitude and be at peace within and without.** – *Humra Quraishi*

Silence is not only the absence of sound but also the stillness of the mind. – *Anonymous*

August - 2006

BASICS OF YOGA OF PATANJALI: The eight limbs of Patanjali yoga are: *yama*(), *niyama*(), *asana*(), *pranayama*(), *pratyahara*(), *dharana*() *dhyana*(), and *samadhi*(). Abstaining from evil-doing is *yama*. *Niyamas* are purity, contentment, *tapas*, study and devotion to God. *Asana* or right posture is important so that the body does not become a stumbling block in the natural flow of life force during meditation. *Pranayama* is controlling the *prana* or

breath. The body slows down and we benefit physically by adding days and years to our lives (it is said our breaths are counted and not years). *Pranayama* sends the vast mass of energy stored at the base of the spinal cord upwards to the crown of the head. *Pratyahar* is withdrawing attention from the objects of sense organs. Like the lotus that remains submerged in the muddy waters but keeps its leaves and flowers unstained by mud. *Dhyana* is fixing the consciousness in the heart, which is on the right side of the chest. Unbroken (like the flow of oil from one vessel to another) and intense *dhyana* changes into *dharna* and the body consciousness evaporates. The consciousness of self melts into the larger consciousness and becomes one with cosmos. Finally, one attains *samadhi*, a state of absolute peace. The Buddha calls it *shunyata* (). We know it as *ananda* (bliss). It has also been called as cool radiance of a million suns. After attaining *samadhi* the tiny drop (*atman*) merges with the mighty ocean (*Brahman*). – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

SELF-EFFORT – BASIS OF SELF-REALISATION: EXTRACTS FROM *YOGA VASISTHA*

The great sage Vasistha tells Rama: In this world whatever is gained is gained only by self-effort; where failure is encountered it is seen that there has been slackness in the effort. This is obvious. What is fate is fictitious. Self-effort, O Rama, is that mental, verbal and physical action which is in accordance with the instructions of a holy person well versed in the scriptures. It is only by such effort that Indra became king of heaven, that Brahma became the creator, and the other deities earned their places.

Self-effort is of two categories: that of past births and that of this birth. The latter effectively counters the former. Fate is none other than self-effort of a past incarnation. There is constant conflict between these two in this incarnation; and that which is more powerful triumphs.

There is no power greater than right action in the present. Hence, one should take recourse to self-effort, grinding one's teeth, and one should overcome evil by good, and fate by present effort.

The lazy man is worse than a donkey. One should never lead to laziness but strive to attain liberation, seeing that life is ebbing away every moment. One should not revel in the filth known as sense pleasures as a worm revels in pus.

One who says: "Fate is directing me to do this" is brainless, and the goddess of fortune abandons him. Hence, by self-effort acquire wisdom and then realize that this self-effort is not without its own end, in the direct realisation of the truth. If this dreadful source of evil named laziness is not found on earth, who will ever be illiterate and poor? It is because laziness is found on earth that people live the life of animals, miserable and poverty-stricken.

As the effort so is the fruit, O Rama: this is the meaning of self-effort, and it is also known as fate (divine). When afflicted by suffering people cry 'Alas what tragedy' or 'Alas, look at my fate', both of which mean the same thing. What is called fate or divine is nothing other than the

action or self-effort of the past. The present is infinitely more potent than the past. They indeed are fools who are satisfied with the fruits of their past effort (which they regard as divine will) and do not engage in self-effort now.

Sometimes it happens that a farmer's efforts are made fruitless by a hailstorm; surely, the hailstorm's own power was greater than the farmer's effort and the farmer should put forth greater effort now. He should not grieve over the inevitable loss. If such grief is justified, why should he not weep daily over inevitability of death. The wise men should of course know what is capable of attainment by self-effort and what is not. It is ignorance however to attribute all this to an outside agency and to say that God sends me to heaven or to hell or that an outside agency makes me do this or that – such an ignorant person should be shunned.

O Rama, self-effort is based on the knowledge of scriptures, instructions of the preceptor and one's own effort. Fate (or divine dispensation) does not enter here. Hence, he who desires salvation **should divert the impure mind to pure endeavour by persistent effort – this is the very essence of all scriptures.**

THE POWER OF PRAYER: What is the purpose of prayer? Once the mind gets stilled even temporarily, power is derived from the eternal self within us. This power can be utilized to give worldly benefits. Inner power rushes like a mighty current and can be diverted into any channel you wish. This is how prayers lead to the achievement of desires and also elevation from suffering. Indirectly, this power is infused in the particular God whose worship appears to give the desired effect...An individual is capable of becoming an achiever through the instrument of prayer. Out of all the factors which inculcate plus power to the conscience, meditation or concentration has maximum force and speed. Prayer implies the process of constant struggle for purification of the conscience, to steady and still the mind... *Japa, kirtan, bhajan*, charity, pilgrimage and fasting have benefits through inducing calmness in the mind. The supreme method of prayer is however complete concentration of the mind...Real prayer will sharpen intelligence, give proper and timely guidance in day-to-day actions, show correct path in all directions, restore mind-peace, infuse power to think correctly and attain goals with greater speed and efficiency, while elevating one to higher levels of consciousness. – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

THE ETERNAL HELLO: Like a flock of homesick cranes flying back to their mountain nests, we are all pilgrims on life's journey. We keep journeying, never arriving. There is always a further bend along the road to negotiate or another road to travel...There are many goodbyes we have to say before we can say our "eternal hello"...Every transition in life is the closing of one door and the opening of another. Few of us are prepared for life's transitions. Part of us is comfortable with the journey, but another part resists the inevitable...Life is full of transitions. Learn to grow through them. Spiritual maturity comes when we learn to say our goodbyes fully so that we can say our own "eternal hellos". – *Janina Gomes*

The last word of science is the first word of spirituality. – Einstein

AN UPADESHA

Sow an action and you shall reap a habit

Sow a habit and you shall reap a character

Sow a character and you shall reap a destiny.

(William James – 19th century teacher at Harvard.)

Contentment and bliss go hand in hand. – Anonymous

Only loving devotion for or clinging love of God can manifest the Bliss of Selfhood. The loving knowledge of God's majesty is called *bhakti*. By such a *bhakti* only the true nature of *jiva* as happiness and bliss is fully manifested. – *Brahma Sutra* 3.2.18-9.

Every teaching must be put into practice. Recognizing its truth in theory will not help us. When a hungry man stands before a table with food items, he must eat the food and not only think about the nutritive values of the food items... The mind is a tool and a means. The mind can reflect the Truth but cannot experience it. It has to be shut out to experience the Self. We have to function with the help of the mind to oust the mind itself. – *Mouni Sadhu* author of the classic *In Days of Great Peace* published by Sri Ramanasramam; available at the Kendram's bookstore.

SRIMAT PURAGRA PARAMPANTHI TALKS ABOUT SRI RAMANA

Parampanthi was a renowned swami of his time. He has authored many books including *Advaita and Modern Physics*, *The Cardinal Doctrines of Hinduism* and *The Meaning and Mystery of Reincarnation*.

I saw Sri Ramana for the first time on December 10, 1949. I saw a tall, lean man in loincloth; the limbs were well proportioned and well knit and long; the skin was smooth and glowing and the quivering head was inclined towards the right side. There was a white bandage on the left arm, which had been operated upon to remove a tumour. His eyes shone with kindness and love, his face was lit up with a beatific smile of benediction. I saw before me **a yogi of the highest order – a mystic of the supreme realisation, who radiated the living presence of divinity within and without.**

The next morning I saw him again. His ever-smiling face was completely free from the ravages of illness, which was slowly, and steadily ruining his body. **His spiritual presence was dynamic and clearly perceptible. It touched and inspired us and simultaneously took us to the high and rare sphere of spirituality. I felt suddenly the presence of a spiritual power, which was ambient and edifying and which raised the expectancy of all to a high pitch. The atmosphere of the hall was distinctly attuned to a higher will and power which influenced the entire gathering.**

All eyes were fixed on the Maharshi. I wanted to know how and by what irresistible force it had been possible for persons – young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple, belonging to different races and religions – to gather at the feet of this great *yogi*. I wanted to know how and why the stubborn diversity has transformed into unity here – the persistent dissimilarity into perfect harmony – the ‘many-ness’ into oneness!

I realised that it had been possible solely due to the unifying presence of the Maharshi. He was not only the preacher of truths of unity and oneness, of identity of man and God, of spiritual brotherhood of mankind – irrespective of caste or creed, race or position – he was the living symbol of these truths. That was why his all-embracing personality had become the centre of universal truth and the unifying force cementing diverse races and religions into a harmonious concord.

Our narrow understanding cannot fully comprehend him; his greatness is too vast – too immense to be captured within our mental orbit. Just a part of his spiritual self, a tiny fraction of it is visible to us and we rejoice in the partial vision of him because we are in the dark and bound by the sad limitations of our senses.

He has passed away, yet he lives perpetually in the evergreen memory of his thousands of devotees the world over, in his own undying gospels and messages which will continue to uplift, inspire and guide all along the right path towards the right and highest goal – God-realisation. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, the Kendram’s publication.)

A GANDHIAN SOCIAL WORKER MEETS SRI RAMANA

K. Arunachalam hailed from Madurai. He served as chairman of the Madurai Khadi Board.

In the summer of 1932, I was working with a group of young men in the slums of Bangalore. I had been to my village in Madurai district and was returning to Bangalore to resume my work in the Gandhi School run by the Deena Seva Sangh. On my way back, as suggested by a friend, I stopped at Tiruvannamalai to have Ramana Maharshi’s *arshan*. I reached the Ashram and went to the hall where the Maharshi was seated on a sofa. In a corner of the hall, on the top of a cupboard, I saw an eighteen-inch statue of Mahatma Gandhi. I sat in front of the Maharshi along with several others in meditation. A few were reading silently some religious literature. The Maharshi himself was in *samadhi*. Some were reciting *slokas* in a soft melodious tone. On the whole, the atmosphere was an elevating one.

I sat in silence for hours together. When it was time for the night meal, all the devotees got up and walked towards the adjoining dining hall. I also went with them. After the meal some of us went back to the hall. I decided to sleep in the hall as some others did. I could not sleep because I was inquisitive to know what the Maharshi would do.

He got up from the sofa at 3 O’clock in the morning and walked towards the pond. After the essential morning routine he had a dip in the pond. He changed his *kaupina* (loincloth) and washing the used one, let it dry outside. Then he walked back to the hall and reclined on the sofa. After sometime, he got up, went to the kitchen and joined the group that was cutting vegetables. He supervised the breakfast and ate with the visitors and Ashramites.

During the daytime there was a stream of visitors who prostrated before the Maharshi. Sometimes he opened his eyes and blessed them with a smile. Occasionally he spoke a few words. When the daily newspaper arrived, he glanced through its pages. Most of the time his eyes remained half closed. There was a calm peace in the whole environment that surpassed all

understanding. I sat silently watching and enjoying the holy presence of the Maharshi and spent a full three-day period like this.

Before leaving, I asked the Maharshi whom to follow. He enquired about what I was doing. I gave him an idea of the slum-settlement work in Bangalore and told him how we were engaged in *harijan* uplift and prohibition work. He blessed the work and asked me to continue it in the manner in which Mahatma Gandhi wanted such work done. I asked the Maharshi for his autograph. He did not agree but he wanted the *sarvadhikari* who was standing nearby to write my name. When I gave him my name without initial, the *sarvadhikari* asked my father's name. The Maharshi immediately said, "How can Arunachala have a father?" And he laughed.

I requested the Maharshi to clear a doubt of mine. He showed his willingness by a broad smile. Taking courage, I posed the following problem: "The Maharshi by his example directs his followers to keep quiet, but Mahatma Gandhi whose statue is here, by his own example, goads everyone to be continuously active." The Maharshi's face broadened with an unparalleled smile. He asked, "Who told you that I am sitting quiet?" I replied in all humility that I had seen it with my own eyes. He said, "Why do you think that what you are seeing with your physical eyes is the truth?" I had no answer for this question. I took leave of him and left for Bangalore.

In 1951-55, during my tour of the southern United States I came in touch with a group of Whites who were deeply involved in the desegregation movement. They did not differentiate between one and another whether black or white. I found in the study room of the leader of this group a photo of Ramana Maharshi, whom he had never seen. He revealed that it was the Maharshi's teaching that was a driving force in all his activities undertaken for bringing about equality between the two races – the Whites and the Coloured. He evinced a deep interest in the Maharshi's mode of self-enquiry for self-realisation. Now I understood the true import of the *Gita's* teaching: "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is a *yogi* who has accomplished all action." (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, the Kendram's publication.)

WHY 'GOOD' PERSONS ALSO SUFFER: Why do bad things happen even to good-people? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Religions are hard pressed to find a convincing answer to these questions because the existence of evil, suffering and pain is incompatible with omnipotent, omniscient and completely benevolent notion of God. If the creator of the universe has all positive virtues and no negative attributes then there cannot be any evil or suffering in the world. The doctrine of *karma* offers a satisfactory solution to the riddle of suffering. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says: The seeds sown yield according to their kind. The earth does not in any way interfere in the process of growth. God also puts human beings in different positions according to their *karmas*. God is not responsible for the evil, suffering and pain. Evil as well as good, are the outcome of one's own *karmas* of three types. *Sanchita karmas* or accumulated actions from past lives as well as in this life are those whose fruits have yet to be reaped. *Prarabdha karmas* are those which have started yielding results. *Agami karmas* are the future actions. It is possible to avoid the consequences of *sanchita karmas* and abstain from *agami karmas* through religious practices and *sadhana*. But one cannot possibly abstain from the consequences of *prarabdha karmas* which have become operative. We have to live with the negative or positive outcome of these *karmas*. We alone and not God are responsible for the outcome. – *Ashok Vohra*

INNOCENCE AND SIMPLICITY PAYS: Nandanar, the great Tamil Shaivaite saint, born as an outcaste peasant finally obtained the respect of, and imparted lessons on divinity to his own

high caste landlord and a vast following. When the gates of the temple in the town of Chidambaram, were opened to him by priests, the simple and noble soul merged with the Lord of his dreams. Indeed, often those driven by simplicity and innocence have that contentment and serenity which is unknown to the ambitious, the famous and the affluent! – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

THE SOUL: The soul can be compared to the four-dimensional space-time continuum that Einstein created as part of his general theory of relativity, as against the three dimensions of space that ruled our mindset from the time of Isaac Newton up to the beginning of the 20th century. The soul according to the Buddha is nothingness. It is a creative emptiness that resonates with the music and dance of divinity. It is nothing and has nothing. So it carries the music of the spheres, the celestial symphony fully and faithfully. – *S.H. Venkatramani*

SECURING FREEDOM FROM MIND

The following piece is by German author Eckhart Tolle who authored the famous *The Power of Now – A guide to spiritual enlightenment*. It is a summary of his two methods of mind control.

First method – Start listening to the voice of your head as often as you can. Pay particular attention to any repetitive thought patterns, those old audiotapes that have been playing in your head perhaps for many years. This is “watching the thinker,” by being a witness to your thoughts. When you listen to that voice listen to it impartially. That is to say, do not judge or condemn what you hear; for doing so would mean that the same voice has come in again through the back door. When you listen to a thought, you are aware not only of the thought but also of yourself as the witness of the thought. Thus a new dimension of consciousness has come in. As you listen to the thought, the thought loses its power over you and gradually subsides because you are no longer energizing the mind through identification with it. This is the beginning of the end of involuntary and compulsive thinking. When a thought subsides, you experience a discontinuity in mental stream – a gap of “no mind.” At first the gaps will be short, a few seconds perhaps, but gradually they will become longer. When these gaps occur, you feel a certain stillness and peace inside you. This is the beginning of your natural state of felt oneness with Being, which is usually obscured by the mind. With sustained practice, the sense of stillness and peace will deepen. In fact, there is no end to its depth. As you go more deeply into this realm of no-mind, as it is sometimes called in the East, you realize the state of pure consciousness.

Second method – Instead of “watching the thinker,” you can also create a gap in the mind stream simply by directing the focus of your attention into the Now. Just become intensely conscious of the present moment. In your everyday life, you can practice this by taking any routine activity that normally is only a means to an end and giving it your fullest attention, so that it becomes an end in itself. For example, every time you walk up and down the stairs in your house or place of work, pay close attention to every step, every movement, even your breathing. Be totally present. Or, when you wash your hands, pay attention to all the sense perceptions associated with the activity; the sound and feel of the water, the movement of your hands, the scent of the soap, and so on.

The single most vital step on your journey towards enlightenment is to disidentify from your mind. Every time you create a gap in the stream of mind, the light of your consciousness grows stronger. One day you will catch yourself smiling with the voice in your head, as you would smile at the antics of a child. This means that you can no longer take the content of your mind all that seriously, as your sense of self does not depend on it.

[It is important to note that our tendencies are extremely deep-rooted. The method only provides the direction. It would require utmost patience, perseverance and constant practice even for achieving a moderate amount of success.]

EVERYTHING IS SPIRITUAL: Seek to understand rather than judge... Everything and every person is on an evolutionary path: all vibrating at different rates. Like energy attracts like energy. This a universal law. It is a law of physics. It is a law of magnetism. Our thoughts are electromagnetic and attract like energy. We are responsible for our thoughts. We should ask ourselves whether we are polluting our environment with our thoughts... What we project to others will surely come back to us, and keep us bound in density, or free us to experience the infinite light within... Everything is made of the same energy, just vibrating at different rates. We call this Energy Spirit. Everything is spiritual. – *Sunday Times of India*.

HOW HUMANS ARE DIFFERENT – A PARABLE: Once a man went to Heaven and God told him that he was lucky to have a human form. The man asked God, “Why are humans so special?” God showed the man insects, birds, lizards and other creatures. “Notice that they all have their heads turned down towards earth.” Humans can look up. They are the only ones that can lift their sights from the world to see God in the spiritual realm above. Human beings are blessed with a special faculty to gain spiritual knowledge. That opportunity is offered to every human being, but few make use of it. One needs to meditate to make full use of the gift. By meditating daily we can achieve union with God and realize that we are part of God. By meditation on the inner Light and Sound of God, we can slowly and steadily achieve true happiness and fulfillment. – *Sant Rajinder Singh*

THE RIGHT SPEECH: Sanskrit poet Bartruhari says – “ Only that speech that bears refinement, uplifts and is charming. All other ornaments constantly perish. The ornament of good speech is actually the real ornament.” The great Tamil poet Valluvar has observed, “Humility and pleasant speech go to make one’s ornaments; all others do not matter.” The *Bible* likens pleasant words to a honeycomb, sweet to the soul... Though silence is golden, one should not shrink from speaking when the occasion calls for it. The *Ramayana* portrays Rama not only as *mridubhashi* (one who talks softly) but also as a *poorvahbhashi* (who talks before, taking the initiative to commence a conversation)... The clue to evolve stable, enduring, endearing and consistent approach in speaking is contained in the *Bible*: “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

SELF REALISATION: It is false to speak of realisation. What is there to realize? We are not achieving something that we did not have before. If, for example, we dig a well and create a big pit, the space in the pit has not been created by us. It was always there. We have just removed the earth that was filling the pit. Similarly, we have to throw out all the age-long *samskaras*

which are inside us. When all of them have been given up, the Self will shine alone. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

The first step towards conquering stress is to accept that it is not created by external events so much as by how we deal with them. – Dadi Janki

SEPTEMBER-2006

DANCE YOUR WAY TO GOD: Quantum physics has proven that the atom is made up of elements that are static and moving at the same time. A picture taken of this phenomenon reveals the resemblance it bears to the dancing deity – Nataraja. Scientists are proving that every atom is vibrant. The whole cosmos is actually dancing with joy; enjoying and celebrating every moment! Only man is still holding on to his prestige and ego... Dance is the ultimate technique to break free of the ego, to break free from the identity that man holds close to his heart. Dancing breaks your conditionings. You do not need to use the mind to dance; you dance from your Being. Dance is the outward expression of the inner joy when you fall into the joyous path.

Just like when you clap your hands and the birds fly off from the trees, so also, when you sing and dance in the name of the Divine, your *karmas* fly away from you; you are liberated from them... When you dance with your Being, you are so total and near to God. *Vaishnavism* made a big contribution to recognize dance as a way to reach God. Its followers do *nama sankirtam* i.e. singing and dancing for hours together, in the name of God. In Sufism, the mystic sect of Islam, the basic techniques for expressing bliss are dancing and whirling... Meera, Chitanya, Ramakrishna and many others danced in ecstasy. Chitanya says dancing is the best way of spreading bliss and joy. Ramakrishna says that dancing is the ultimate technique to drop your ego. Don't hold back; just dance your way to God! – *Swami Nithyananda*

ANDALA (GODA) – MIRA BAI OF SOUTH INDIA

The following is excerpted from the article of Dr. Kamal Shivkumar in the March-April issue of *Direct Path – Ramana Gyan*, bi-monthly journal of Shri Ramana Kendra, Delhi.

When Buddhism and Jainism were spreading their wings in the South, the *Vaisnava* and *Saiva* saints started the *Bhakti* movement. The former saints were called Alvars () and the latter Nayanmars (). Alvars, twelve in all, lived in Tamil land from second to eighth century A.D. They were titled Alvars because of their deep devotion (*bhakti*) to God. ('Andal' is from the word 'Alndal' i.e., deep into *bhakti* forgetting oneself). Among the twelve Alvars, Andala was the only woman. Alvars spread the message of *bhakti* to the masses through their devotional Tamil hymns to Lord Visnu. The Alvars, revered for their unflinching devotion to Lord Visnu, are worshipped as a part *amsa* () of Visnu. For example, Bhudatalvar is considered His *gada* (), Tirumalaisaialvar as His *sudarsana* () and Kulasekharalvar as His *koustubha* (). Andala is worshipped as Bhudevi, the

goddess Lakshmi. The hymns composed by the Alvars were compiled by Nathamuni (824-924 A.D.) under the title *Divya Prabandham* ().

It is said that Andala as a new born was found by Periyalvar or Visnuchitta near a Tulsi plant while he was watering it. Both he and his wife considered her a divine gift to them. She was named Goda, as she was thought to have emerged out of earth (Bhudevi). She was also called Kodai which in Tamil means garland of flowers. The pretty Kodai grew up in a religious surrounding. Visnuchitta used to narrate to her stories of Lord Krishna from the *Bhagavatam*. Kodai listened to them with rapt attention and considered herself as a *gopi* of Vrandavan. She loved the Lord deeply and made up her mind in her childhood itself to marry only Krishna.

Vishnuchitta used to offer worship to Lord Visnu through flowers from his garden. But before these were taken to the temple by him, Kodai wore them secretly and looked at her reflection in a well and felt sure that she was quiet suited as a bride to Lord Krishna. One day, while doing so, she was caught by her father who felt very sorry for what she was doing and did not take the garlands to the Lord. That night the Lord appeared to Visnuchitta in dream and desired to have the garlands for worship as worn by Kodai. Visnuchitta was struck with wonder and carried out the Lord's order everyday. He called Kodai as Andal, which means "she who rules" – and she ruled over the heart of Narayana Himself.

As time passed, Kodai grew into a beautiful damsel. As her father started the search for a groom, she told him firmly that she would marry none other than the presiding deity, Lord Ranganatha in the temple of Srirangam. She strongly believed that the Lord would appear before her and marry her. As nothing like that happened, she began to grieve beyond measure. Her father was greatly disheartened to see her worried, and to consol her started telling her the legendary history of 108 principal shrines (Divya Desam) where Lord Vishnu presides. She felt extremely happy to learn that her Lord Ranganatha's

dwelling place, Srirangam, was the first and the foremost of all the Divya Desams. Visnuchitta's elaborate account of Srirangam brought solace to her heart.

When her Lord did not present Himself to her, she thought of observing a *vrata* named *pavai nonbu*. Details of this are described in her work *Tiruppavai* in thirty hymns, which are still sung by young maidens during the Tamil month – *Margazhi* (mid-December to mid-January), to have husbands of their choice. She also sang the *Nacciyar Tirumoli* which consists of 143 hymns where she narrates her marriage with Sri Ranganatha and expresses her longing for Him.

When despite her earnest prayers the Lord failed to appeared, Andal felt overwhelmingly sad. Looking at the agony of his daughter, Visnuchitta became very unhappy and beseeched the Lord fervently to fulfill her wish. That very nigh Lord Ranganatha appeared in his dream and told that He would marry Kodai at Srirangam and that he should bring her there. Then the Lord appeared in dreams of those who were in-charge of the Srirangam temple to bring Visnuchitta and his daughter to the temple with due respect. He also appeared in the dream of Pandya King Vallabha Deva and asked him to bring Kodai from Srivilliputtur in a decorated palanquin. Kodai too dreamt of her marriage with the Lord, as she disclosed it to her friends.

The Pandya King sent a palanquin decked with pearls for Kodai and appropriate vehicles for others to travel to Srirangam. Dressed up like a bride, Kodai gleamed like Mahalakshmi. The marriage party set off towards the shrine of the Lord. Many more anxious to see the wedding joined them on the way. The big procession was received by the Pandya King and his ministers at the *mandapam* in front of the temple. Kodai got down from the palanquin and went inside the temple and stood in front of the deity. She then stepped on the snake bed of the Lord and nearing the Lord embraced Him, and disappeared in Him. (March 2004 issue of this journal also carried a story about Andala.)

SRI RAMANA'S LESSON TO A DEVOTEE

A European devotee who preferred to remain anonymous has recorded as follows:

Sri Bhagavan is unique, peerless. One gracious and understanding look from him and a few sympathetic words from him had always meant oceans to the earnest seeker, to the aspiring pilgrim. And which sincere voyager has gone to him and returned empty-handed?

The intellectual quibbler might have got a short shrift from him. The dry philosopher might have found in him a steel wall. The eternal doubter would have returned from him not any better. But those who have unreservedly surrendered themselves to the pursuit of truth have never failed to find in him a great guide. Sometimes the sought-for guidance would come through an answer given to somebody's question. Sometimes it would be provided through a direct monosyllabic answer. And sometimes it would come through an actual experience. These experiences are intimate and are provided only for the personal spiritual advancement of the particular aspirant. It is, therefore, not usually considered necessary to take the world into confidence regarding such an experience. But since I have been invited to write on how Sri Bhagavan has been helping the aspirants, I venture to refer to just one experience of mine.

Once I was going on the eastern side of the hill in full belief and confidence that I had unreservedly surrendered myself to Sri Bhagavan. Suddenly, I saw a leper woman walking towards me. Her face was terribly disfigured by the disease. Her nose had been completely eaten away and in its place were found two holes. The fingers on her hands had all gone. She advanced towards me, and extending the stumps of her hands asked me to give something to eat. The sight of her disgusted me, frightened me. My whole frame shuddered with terror that she might touch me. Overcome with repulsion, I hastened to move away from her.

Suddenly, I heard the voice of Sri Bhagavan coming clear and ringing from across the mountain. It said, "To surrender to me is to surrender to every one, for the Self is in every one." Hearing this, I regained my poise and offered the leper woman the plantains that I had in my bag.

In a few minutes, I saw myself standing before not the disfigured woman but before a tall old man with white long hair and beard. The man looked like a *rishi* and was smiling. When the thought of prostrating before he *rishi* entered my mind, I saw before me the old leper woman again. I bowed, happy at heart though somewhat confused in mind and then resumed my walk up the hill. I have cited this as just one of the ways through which Sri Bhagavan teaches, guides and helps. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, the Kendram's publication.)

THE COSMIC SOUND: The first manifestation of the infinite Spirit was through the cosmic sound vibration. The closest utterable human approximation of this creative sound is **Om**. At the

very root of the universe is the creative energy or holy vibration identified as **Om**. The opening of the gospel according to St. John says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. All things were made through Him...” In the Vedas this has been called *Shabda Brahman*.

Om as the sound symbol of the Absolute is also called *anahata*, which means that the creative word vibration was not produced on account of any friction. It is self-created, a total field of energy, neither blind, nor mechanical but profoundly intelligent. Scientists contemplate this as the quantum event, infinitely interconnected, self-organising and profoundly intelligent to be the central idea, the blueprint, and the element of the universe.

The cosmic sound as the ocean of energetic vibrations produces a unique rhythm in all objects and creatures, which makes them distinctly different despite an essential inherent unity. Chanting and meditating on mantra **Om** tunes us with divine vibration and divine light and elevates our encased consciousness to the level of ultimate existence beyond all dualities of delusion. – *M.N.Kundu*

MUNDAKO UPANISHAD – A BRIEF SUMMARY

In Mundako Upanishad () Sage Angira () answers questions of *rishi* Saunka () in 64 verses. The sage makes the distinction between ‘lower’ knowledge – which one would interpret as either intellectually grasped or ritualistically gathered – and the ‘higher’ knowledge which one would interpret as the spiritual experience itself, beyond the web of mind. The Sage differentiates between the transitory character of the materialistic path and its fleeting benefits, and the potentially permanent nature of the path of renunciation which he saw as prerequisite to attain real happiness. This distinction lies at the heart of this Upanishad.

Sage Angira says: Two birds live together, each friend of the other, on the same tree... One eats the sweet fruit of the tree and the other simply looks on. The first bird is the *jivatma* (), the finite self, eating and thereby experience both pleasure and pain. The observer bird, the Real Self () witnesses the turbulence alongside, quietly nudging us back to the “real-reality”, while we search for the elusive musk fragrance, not knowing that it emanates from us only. [It may be noted that *Jiva* while identifying with the body is *jivatm*.; it is *Paramatama* when we succeed in disassociating it from the bodily senses.]

Sage Angira was double-edged in his use of the word ‘mundaka’ which etymologically refers to a person who has shaved off his head. In the larger sense, the Sage also meant to expound this *jnana* in such a way that it would shave off the many layers of ignorance which cover us all, to enable to see ourselves as being One with the Universal Self. – *Pranav Khullar*

[*Satyameva jayate* () – Truth alone triumphs, which forms part of our national emblem, is a part of the first verse of the *shloka* 3/1/6 from this Upanishad, which forms part of the *Atharva Veda*].

SOMETHING IS MISSING: In truth there is nothing but God. Everything that exists, whether physical or spiritual, is simply a highly limited expression of its Creator, somewhat like each one of your thoughts and actions is a little expression of you. The infinite light of God is overwhelming, filling every space. Left unmuted, this all encompassing light would make it impossible for anything else to exist, just like a ray of light cannot exist as a separate entity

within the body of the sun. So in order to allow for Creation in all of its limitless details and forms, God had to conceal His own infinite light. This concealment is what enables us to be. And more, it allows us to experience ourselves as real, solid, and the center of our universe. This 'Big Lie' – this core illusion of aloneness and solidity – is what allows us to exist as separate and unique human beings. In its raw, unrectified state, it cuts us off from the truth. But ultimately we see through the walls, transcend the illusion, and fulfill our potential as uniquely magnificent expression of the Divine.

We often feel something missing – a void. This void, this missing, hovers at the edge of our consciousness, bringing with it an essential longing for something more. The subtle awareness of the void pulls us relentlessly towards the next high, the next success, the more exciting relationship, and the bigger, flashier toy. The feeling it triggers like sadness, depression, anxiety or dissatisfaction drives us to eat too much, drink too much, work too much, spend too much, need too much and so on. But if you are willing to stop running and rushing and listen, you can begin to explore the secret of the void. The music of the void () can stir you and open your heart. It can speak to you and tell where you are destined to be – a Deeper Level of Life. In Hebrew each letter of the alphabet has a gematria, a numerical equivalent. Whenever the letters of one word are numerically equivalent to the letters of a different word, it points to a secret relationship between the two. It is fascinating to know that the Hebrew word for void, *challal*, is exactly numerically equivalent to the word *chaim*, which means life. The message is simple. You can begin to reconnect with what has been concealed from you, the part of you that is most truly and infinitely alive. – *Shifra Hendrie*

We are not punished for our sins; we are punished by our sins. – *The Buddha*

I believe in God, only I spell it Nature. – *Frank Wright*

None are so old as those who have outlived enthusiasm. – *Henry Thoreau*

Real power and authority is authority over the self. – *Anonymous*

GOD IS BEYOND COMPREHENSION: The human mind is not capable of grasping the Universe. We are like a little child entering a huge library. The walls are covered to the ceilings with books in many different tongues. The child knows that someone must have written these books. It does not know who or how. It does not understand the languages in which they are written. But the child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books – a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only dimly suspects. *Albert Einstein*

TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of the Self is the one direct means for emancipation. As fire is necessary for cooking, so without knowledge of the Self there can be no emancipation. Action or *karma* cannot destroy ignorance – knowledge does. The Supreme Soul appears finite on account of ignorance. But when that ignorance is destroyed, verily that one *Atma* or Soul shines by itself like the Sun when the clouds are dispelled. – *Atma Bodha of Adi Sankara*

SRI RAMANA – THE SUPREME INCARNATE

By Swami Rajeswarananda

Swami Rajeswarananda, born in Madras, a great devotee of Sri Ramana, got his name as a *sannyasi* of the Ramakrishna Order. He edited *The Call Divine* during its first twelve years. He was mentor of Prof. T.M.P.Mahadevan who was Head, Department of Philosophy, Madras University, and a well-known devotee of Sri Ramana. He authored *Erase the Ego and Teachings*. He writes:

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is no concept in mind and no form in matter. He is no theory in name nor practice in form. He is the substratum, the berock of Truth in all names and forms. He is the life in all individuals and the only light in all souls. He is the Divine Presence in one and all. He is the Basic Principle, the fundamental fact in our everyday existence.

He is not external to us but ever present in us though we might fail to realize Him as such. He is awake in us while we are asleep. He is the very embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss () ever and ever. We cannot see Him anywhere but can see (realize) Him everywhere. He is the wisdom of the wise, the strength of the strong, the brilliance of brain and the illumination of soul. He is the real “I”, the One in all our apparent “I-s” of many.

He is the Supreme Consciousness that includes and transcends all the lesser forms of consciousness. He is the absolute and lives in the Infinite. He is the eternal rooted in Immortality. He is the Centre of an infinite circle without a circumference. He is the harmony and peace in the melody of the cosmos. He is the Seer in all sights, the hearer in hearing, and the knowledge in knowing.

He sees without eyes, speaks without tongue, hears without ears and thinks without mind. He is far, He is near. He is the means and He is the end in the goal of life. He is the underlying Unity in the midst of all diversities that exist on the surface. He is immortal and eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient.

poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya reflects the same feeling poetically:

Eternity has worn a human face,
Contracted to a little human span,
Lo, the Immortal has become a man,
A self-imprisoned thing in time

(Source: *The Call Divine* and *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*.)

‘I AM’ IS EVER UNSHACKLED

By V Ganesan

Once a devotee told Sri Ramana that too much emphasis was being given to the discarding of ‘I-am-the body’ idea, and this was impossible for him since he was always aware of the body and its creature comforts. Sri Ramana replied, “You cannot give up the I-am-the body

consciousness without being first aware of it. The giving up of the idea should take place by the grace of God, and by your own efforts it will be very difficult.”

That which is presented to our limited understanding by the body-mind complex we take for truth. We have no other means of appreciating the truth. The body-mind complex supplies all our experience and remains the only means or approach towards transcending it. The mind-intellect recognizes or accepts known entities and is baffled by or rejects unknown ones. In Saiva Siddhanta the body is considered the ‘temple’ in which the Lord is enshrined. Neglect or torture of the body is condemned. The weak cannot attain the *Atman*. The physical body (*annamya kosha*) is neither to be despised nor neglected, says the scriptures.

To a body-minded votary the idea of transcending it is hard to envisage and he is baffled. Sri Ramana says that it is better to be confused than ignorant or indifferent. A state of confusion may induce us to trace its source, in an attempt to clear it up. In this way we may arrive at the understanding that we cannot solve the problem by our own effort and that the Grace of God or Guru is necessary.

This becomes the incentive for *sadhana* through Self-inquiry or through devotion or surrender, whichever suits our temperament. We dive deep to seek an answer and ultimately we come to know that by understanding which it is possible to transcend this complexity. Truth can be realized through intuitive experience. ‘I-am-the-body’ idea will become extinct only on Self-realisation. This is possible through Grace, but Grace is vouchsafed only to those who have made the necessary effort.

According to Sri Ramana the transcendence of the ‘I-am-the-body’ idea can be best achieved through constant and deep self-enquiry (*vichara*) “Who am I?” “To whom is this problem.” This inquiry is the best means for removing the false belief of selfhood. (The author, a *sadhaka* of great merit and an outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana, is grandson of Sri Ramana’s brother.)

Whenever I climb I am followed by a dog called ‘Ego’. – *Friedrich Nietzsche*

Life must be understood backward, but must be lived forward. – *Soren*

Kierkegaard

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It is choice, not chance, that determines your destiny. – *Jean Nidetch*

The thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work. – *Harry Golden*

Other man’s fault are before our eye; one’s own behind our back. – *Seneca*

RAMANA PURANAM

***Ramana Puranam* is a single verse of 540 lines. Sri Ramana himself was involved in the completion of this work.**

In 1920s and early 1930s Muruganar composed a series of poems that were published in 1933 under the title Sri Ramana Sannidhi Muari. Though the structure of this work parallels the Tiruvachakam of the great Tamil saint Manikkavachakar, its contents primarily praise Bhagavan rather than Siva. In the first poem of Tiruvachakam, which is entitled ‘Siva Puranam’, Manikkavachakar praises Siva in the most effusive and devotional manner. Since the initial published version of Sri Ramana Sannidhi Muari had no introductory poem that corresponded to ‘Siva Puranam’, Muruganar decided that he ought to compose one for the next edition of the book. After writing 200 lines of it in Bhagavan’s presence, sometime in 1938, a doubt arose in him about what he should call this particular poem. His initial idea was to entitle it ‘Ramana Puranam’, but he was not fully convinced whether this was appropriate. Deciding to postpone his decision on this matter, he put aside his papers and went for a walk. When he returned, he was astonished to discover that Bhagavan had gone through the papers and written ‘Ramana Puranam’ at the top of every single page. Not only that, Bhagavan himself had personally completed the poem by adding more than 300 lines of his own.

When the next edition of the book was being prepared for the press, Muruganar inserted a footnote that indicated which lines were composed by him and which by Bhagavan. After correcting the proofs, Muruganar handed over the copy to Bhagavan and requested him to check it. Bhagavan, who noticed the footnote, at once turned to Muruganar and said, “So! Only this portion is Bhagavan’s, is it? These words had a shattering effect on Muruganar. He fell at Bhagavan’s feet and sobbed, “Bhagavan! What a grave mistake I have made! Please forgive me. I have not done anything at all. It is all your work. Every single line of poetry owes its existence to your infinite grace.” And the footnote was removed.

The more-than-three hundred lines that Bhagavan composed for this work comprise a body of work that is longer than any of his poetical compositions. In this Puranam, Muruganar praises Bhagavan and tells us how Bhagavan bestowed his grace on him. A small sample from this 540-line poem is produced below:

He removed the defects of the wandering ego-mind

Shaped me into a comely form

Through the purification of my consciousness

Kindled the flame of *jnana* for my salvation’s sake

Bathed me in his blissful gaze

And became my Lord and Master.

Victory to the holy feet

Of the Divine Player
Who lovingly made me his own
Destroying my age-old *vasanas*
So that their powerful hold was abolished.

You [Bhagavan] concealed yourself within me
Like the oil within a sesame seed
So that your presence within me
Could not be clearly discerned.
The King, who is my very life
Through his grace that is the truth
Free of the feelings of rejoicing and aversion
Appeared as a unique sage
In the city of Arunai
To save me from death
This world is a moving picture show
Of sights and sounds.
It is like an insubstantial mirage
That appears as a pool of water
To those who suffer
Tormented by their desire for water.
You are the Supreme Being
The perpetually radiating sun of the Self
Which is the true reality
Impossible to reject or deny
Shinning out in the darkness of ignorance
As the light of *jnana*

The 'I am' of even he

Who denies your existence.

(Source: *The Mountain Path* – July-Oct. 2006 and *Cherished Memories* by T.R.Kanakammal. The book is available at the Kendram's bookstall.)

THE VEDAS – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Rig Veda which is the oldest and the most voluminous, is assigned the first place among the four Vedas. This Veda is wholly in the form of verses addressed to gods such as *Agni, Varuna, Usha, Savitur, Mitra, Maruti, Vishnu* and so on. This Veda has 1017 poems called Suktas () which means 'well said'. Each of the Suktas has a number of verses called Riks () which means 'hymns in praise'.

The authors of this Veda were great seers and Risis() which means 'the great poets'. They sang of the powers of the nature in the language that was known to the ordinary men and which could be understood by them. For example, Maruts, sons of god Rudra, are handsome, and decorate themselves with various ornaments. The Asvins are a pair of gods always together in a chariot. They are also physicians

. The Rig Veda is essentially Nature poetry. Among the objects of the nature, cows and rivers are very prominent. The Vedas also describes the ways of social living. The marriage rites have been created on the pattern of the marriage of Soorya's daughter, which it details. This Veda has reference to very large number of stories that must have been current among the people at that time. The stories relate how gods came to the rescue of men in response to their appeals. The largest number of the stories centre round the twin gods

Asvins. Then there are stories about Indra and how he helped men against their enemies in battles.

This Veda begins with a Sukta on Agni and also ends with it. The Sukta though pertaining to Agni has a universal appeal: Let all men meet and think with one mind. Let all hearts unite in love. Let the goals be common. May all live in happiness with a common purpose. A sample of *riks* from this Veda is annexed.

The Yajur Veda is entirely a work of rituals. Its name comes from the root 'Yaj'() which means 'to worship'. The Veda describes various acts that go with the rituals. The Veda has a large number of short passages related to *yajna*. For example: O Agni, be though wakeful; I offer to thee with devotion, protect us; Be united with our prayers; O wise one, be an unfailing guardian to this folk; Drive apart the foes with all thy strength. A large number of stories and anecdotes explain the value of the various objects and acts that come within the rituals. *Yajanas* like *Somayagna*(), *Vaajapeya* (), *Rajasooya* () *Ashvamedha* () are made known to us in all their procedural details.

The Saama Veda is a collection of chants: the word *saaman* means to chant. All mantras in this Veda, except 75, are from Book VIII and IX of the *Rig Veda*. These have been put to music. The music is greatly conducive to the spiritual evolution of the self and seeking grace of

God. This being the special virtue of this Veda, Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, “Amongst the Vedas, I am *Saama Veda*.”

The Atharva Veda. It is named after the great *rishi* Atharvan, who is said to be the eldest son of Brahma. Some of the main chapter heading in this Veda are: Charms to cure diseases and possessions by demons of disease; Prayers for long life and health; Hymns to goddess earth; Glorification of the sun; *Prana* – life or breath, personified as the supreme spirit; Prayer to *Kala* (time) personified as primordial power; Charms to secure prosperity in the household, field, business, etc.

The above refers to the main text of the Vedas called *Samhita* (). In addition, each Veda has a part called *Braahmana* (), which mentions a number of rituals and how they should be performed. This is followed by the part known as *Aaranyaka* (), which was talked about in the forest. It enlightens us about the obscure and distant imagery contained in the Vedas. *Upanishads* () come towards the end of the *Aaranyakas*. Being the end portion of the Vedas they are also called *Vedanta* (), *anta* – final part of the Veda. Their main theme is philosophical enquiry into the nature of the Self or *Atman*. Of the 12 major Upanishads, two which form part of the *Rig Veda* include *Aitareopnishad* (), five which belong to the *Yajur Veda* include, *Brahadaranyaka*, (), *Ishovasyopnishad* () and *Kathopnishad* (), two which pertain to *Saama Veda* include *Kenopnisad* () and three which are attached to the *Atharva Veda* include *Mundakopnishad*. The word Upanishad means to sit down near (*upa*-near, *ni*-down, *sad*-sit): the instructions contained in these scriptures were learned by being close to the Guru.

Annexure – A sample of mantras from the Rig Veda

May we imbibe in ourselves the choicest effulgence of the Divine Creator. Let Him activate our intellects and direct our thoughts aright.

Let the Creator of the universe take away all our evils and miseries and whatever bliss may come to us.

Lord of creation existed in the very beginning. He is the sole Lord of creation. He supports earth. Sun and heaven. There is no other than Him, worthy of our worship.

He is sole being and dispenser of life and strength. He is worshipped by the whole world and everybody obeys His command. Immortality and death are His shadows. Which God other than Him should we worship?

He is the sole being of the breathing, living and the moving world by His greatness. The Lord who rules over the two-footed and four-footed creation alone is worthy of our worship.

He who holds the earth and the sun, He who is responsible for all the pain and pleasure, He who is the Creator of universe alone is worthy of our worship.

O’ Lord, nobody else is greater than You. You only surround all the created things. May we be more prosperous and happy?

(Source: *Survey of Sanskrit Literature* by C. Kuhan Raja, *The Vedas* by Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, and Internet.)

THINK IT OVER: The word ‘difficulty’ is the greatest difficulty...Do not keep track of what you have done in the past. It’s better to let go and grow without worrying about what happened in the past and also what will happen in the future...Enlightenment is not a step by step growth process. It is a quantum phenomenon. Live moment to moment in the present, without worrying about past and future. It’s a quality not a quantity to be added to your life. – *Swami Nithyananda*

WHAT IS REALITY? Reality is not with forms and names. That which underlies these is the reality. It underlies limitations, being itself limitless. It is not bound. It underlies unrealities. It transcends speech. It is beyond expressions, ‘existence, non-existence’, etc. The radiance of consciousness-bliss, in the form of one awareness shining equally within and without, is the supreme and blissful prime reality. Its form is silence and it is declared by *jnanis* to be final and unobstructable state of true knowledge [*jnana*]. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

COMPASSION (): Compassion is defined as the spiritual consciousness of another person’s pain, and a feeling of unselfish tenderness directed towards them. Compassion is the divine impulse that stirs within us when we come across someone’s ignorance or pain. As we make the effort to let compassion be our guide – instead of our self-centred judgment of a situation or a person – we find ourselves being rocked in the cradle of our divine heart. When the compassion we feel for someone is genuine, we experience the light of dharma, of righteousness, or right action shining within ourselves. So, this virtue called *daya*, *karuna* or compassion, is filled with great wisdom... Can compassion ever be taught? It can only be lived out. It is out of compassion that the Master draws a disciple to his heart...There is a big difference between pity and compassion. When we feel pity, we put ourselves in the other person’s place. We think, if we had an accident, or were sick, we would want someone to help us. Bearing that in mind we go and help another. In cases like these, the mind does not expand into a greater awareness. The blessings of compassion are much greater than the pale imitations produced by pity. In compassion, the heart literally moves with love and the one who inspires it receives love, and healing too. Compassion takes on another person’s misery without strings attached and gives the one who is suffering consolation. – *Gurumayi Chidvilasananda*

MATRUBHUTESWARA: It is the name of the deity in the Mother’s shrine at Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, and also in the ancient temple at Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil rendering of the name was *Tayumanavar*. It means ‘God that became Mother’. When Sri Ramana installed a lingam on his mother’s samadhi, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni (an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and an ardent devotee of Sri Ramana) named it *Matrubhuteswara*. Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya in his *Reminiscences* has said the following in this regard: It is related in the Puranas that when a woman devotee was in the throes of child-birth and no mid-wife was present to attend on her, the Lord Himself appeared as Mother and brought about a safe delivery. So the Lord came to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*. Likewise when the world was replete with *maya* and was in sore need of the gospel of self-enquiry, the Lord taking form as Mother helped in delivery of Bhagavan who is the very embodiment of that gospel. It is most fitting

therefore that mother should come to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*. (Source: *The Mountain Path*, July-Oct. 2006.)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI ANSWERS

Q. Though Janaka was a *jnani*, he was a ruling monarch, but his Guru, Yajnavalka, who was also a *jnani*, renounced the world. Why was this so?

A. All happens according to the destiny of each *jnani*. Krishna was an enjoyer of pleasure whereas Sukdev was an ascetic. Janaka and Rama were kings while Vasishta was a believer in activities. All of them were *janis*. Their inner experience was the same while their external lives were in accordance with their respective destinies.

Source: *Padamalai* – Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi recorded by Muruganar, edited by David Godman. The book is available at the Kendram's bookstall.

MAURICE FRYDMAN'S EXTRAORDINARY DEVOTION TO SRI RAMANA

Frydman (1900-76), a Polish Jew, was working as a research engineer in France when the then Diwan of Mysore, struck by his originality and drive, brought him to Mysore. He effected improvements in the *charkha* and earned the name 'Bharatananda' from Mahatma Gandhi in recognition of his intense love for India. He first met Sri Ramana around 1935. He writes:

Just six months after I came to India, I was left alone and had no friends. The person whom I loved died and I had nothing to attract me in life. Quite accidentally, just for fun, I dropped in at Tiruvannamalai. I went direct to the Swami and remained there for two hours. Then I understood that I had met someone, the like of whom I had never met before. I did not then know what was meant by words like the Maharshi and Bhagavan. I had no preconceived ideas and yet I felt that there was something extraordinary in that man. I was told about his teachings but they were far too high for me. I did not understand what they meant but I felt a strong affection for him, just as a dog would have towards his master.

Afterwards, whenever I felt worried, I used to go to the Ashram, and sit in his presence. In the early days I would be asking questions, but later when I began to visit him more and more, discussions with him grew less and less. Then I began to visit him almost every month. I knew no *sadhana* or *dhyana*. I would simply sit in his presence. To my questions, the Maharshi would say, "Find out who you are." I could not make out anything, but all the same I felt happy. Slowly, some change came in me.

Just as the egg grows and hatches only with the aid of the warmth of the mother, I was getting into shape slowly and steadily in his presence. My mind became quieter than before. Previously it was unhappy and dissatisfied, now a kind of security and peace began to be felt spontaneously. I felt that the Maharshi was coming nearer and nearer as time passed. Afterwards I used to think of him whenever I felt unhappy. His affection was always there and as fire melts ice so his affection made my worries melt and my struggle for life got transformed into a blissful living.

It was the immense privilege of the writer to meet a few gigantic spiritual men, but nobody ever produced on him a deeper impression than Ramana Maharshi. In him the sublime majesty of the divine life stood and moved in all simplicity. The ultimate had revealed itself as the immediate, and the undreamt had become the actual.

The burning regret, which many probably share with me, is that full advantage was not taken of those happy and precious days when he was with us physically also – eating, talking, laughing, welcoming all, open to all. The reality was there – in abundance for taking, but we enclosed ourselves in timidity, in false humility, in self-deception and false excuses. We took a cupful when the ocean was at our feet.

In one of his letters to Sri Ramanasramam Frydman wrote:

“The Maharshi is with me not only when I think of him but also when I am not thinking of him. Otherwise, how do I live?”

A.R. Natarajan records in his book Timeless in Time:

Frydman was childlike in nature and would put frank questions with freedom. Once he asked with dramatic gestures, “Why should not the ego be cut down with one stroke and destroyed so as to give supreme bliss to the devotees?” Then Sri Ramana broke out into laughter and asked Frydman to hold out his ego so that he could strike it down. Everyone including Frydman joined in the laughter. “Yes, now I understand”, said Frydman.

S.Bhanu Sharma writes in Ramana Smrti:

In 1935, I happened to work in Bangalore under a Polish engineer, Maurice Frydman, who was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. In 1937, one of his Dutch friends Dr.G.H.Mees, a scholar, told him that he was not able to get clarification on certain points on Indian philosophy, despite all efforts. Frydman suggested to him to go to Tiruvannamalai and meet Sri Bhagavan, and I was to accompany him in the mission. Dr.Mees noted down all his questions. We arrived at about 8.30 a.m. and sat down in the hall in front of Bhagavan. Several devotees were putting questions and Bhagavan was answering them. Dr.Mees kept silent. At 10.45 a.m. I reminded him about his questions. He said that he no longer had any doubt on any of his points.

G.V. Subbaramayya records in his book Sri Ramana Reminiscences:

Many Western visitors came for the *jayanti* celebrations of 1936. One of them, Maurice Frydman, a Polish Jew of subtle intellect, plied Bhagavan with ingenious pleas for practical guidance for self-realisation. Bhagavan followed his arguments with keen interest but kept silent all the time. When pressed to say something, Bhagavan quoted from the Bible, “Be still and know that I am God”, and added a rider that the Lord said, “‘*know*’ and not ‘*think*’ that I am God.”

Extracts from Frydman’s poems:

I am at the end of the tether and can’t break the cord
All my going ahead is a deceitful dream,
All my thinking not true, all my feeling not pure,
All my doing not right, all my living not clear.

I am tied to myself by myself through myself,
The knot out of reach, I am in your hands.
There is a Heart and a mind, and a body and soul
Waiting for you. You will come when you choose,
And whatever you like you are welcome to do.

Heavy with the mud of many lands I was flowing lazily,
Making obstacles of myself out of my unholy accumulations.
Suddenly I awakened to the freshness of endless beauty,
And felt the eternal environment of endless peace.
My beloved I have found you, and yet never were we separated,
Every drop of my being is you and yours is the force of my flow,
Never are we apart and yet I always strive after you.
The flow of creation will go on with me or without me,
Only do not make me forget that I am none and that you only exist and create in ever-changing
mobility.

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, recent publication of our Kendram.)

Special on Gandhi Jayanti

WHAT IS GOD? HOW DO WE BENEFIT FROM IT?

The following excerpts are from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi.

God is spirit without body and is, therefore, visible only to the eye of faith. If there are no evil thoughts troubling our mind and no fears but constant cheerfulness in our heart, there is an indication of God's presence in ourselves.

God is the hardest taskmaster. He tries us through and through. And when we find that our faith is failing or our body is failing us and we are sinking, he comes to our assistance and somehow or other proves to us that we must not lose our faith and that He is always at our beck and call, *but on His terms and not our terms.*

God is most elusive. He is nearest to us, if we would but know the fact. But He is farthest from us when we do not want to realize His omnipresence. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. Faith is essential in this matter.

God is nearer to us than the fingernails are to the fingers. But what is to be done with a man who wonders all over the wide world in search of treasure which, as matter of fact, is buried under his very feet?

If we completely surrender ourselves to God's will and really become ciphers and voluntarily give up the right of choice, then we would not have any wear and tear. We must surrender to Him in a spirit of utter self-effacement.

It is for God to take our broken boat across the stream, but it is for us to put in our best efforts. It is for us to plug a hole in its bottom, or if the water gets into the boat, to throw it out. In that case, the boat will keep floating despite the hole. But it will float only when there is God's hand behind it. **The man must make an endeavour and the result depends on God's grace.**

THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL: Isn't amazing that we never think of death as a real possibility in our own lives? Coping with death – whether dealing with the possibility of one's own death or that of a loved one – remains one of the greatest challenges of our lives. In the *Mahabharata*, once Yudhishtira (while in the forest) goes to quench his thirst in a pond that was in the territory of a *yaksha*. The *yaksha* had tested several people including his four brothers, and they all had failed to answer his questions satisfactorily. Now, it was Yudhishtira's turn. One of the questions the *yaksha* asks of Yudhishtira was: "What is the greatest wonder in this world? Yudhishtira replied (to the *yaksha's* satisfaction): "Although many people are dying everyday, we don't want to realize or think about our death. Is not the hope that we'll be living forever, the greatest wonder of the world? – *Jamuna Rangachari*

THANKSGIVING: If you start focusing on lack and limitations, you will start experiencing them in your life. If you focus mostly on abundance you will experience those in your life. It is your choice. The giving of thanks, the expression of gratitude, is a truly magical tool. A tool you have, literally, at the tip of your tongue. You would be hard pressed to say that there is nothing in your life you can be thankful for. Sit down and make a list of all the good things, of all the abundance you have in your life. Think about the clothes you wear, the food you eat, the roof you sleep under, the family and friends you are blessed with. Give thanks for the many blessings you already have in your life, and they will increase. Make every day of your life thanksgiving to God, teachers and all those who deserve thanks. – *John Cali*

The higher Self in you is the God the Supreme. Creating a best friend relationship with your higher Self can provide immediate and insightful help for the challenges of everyday living. – *Susan Lupton*

NOVEMBER-06

CONSTANT MEDITATION AND RELEASE

By T.R. Kanakammal

Kanakammal, a great devotee of Sri Ramana was persuaded by V.Ganesan to record her memories about Bhagavan. The original Tamil version as recorded by her was translated into English by a devotee of our Kendram, Lalitha Krithivasan. This book entitled *Cherished Memories* is available at the Kendram's bookstall. Kanakammal has also narrated some of her reminiscences in the video *Guru Ramana*, which, again, is available at the bookstall. Recent publication of the Kendram *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* contains a write-up on Kanakammal at pages 289-91.

Once an earnest seeker came, prostrated in all humility to Bhagavan and asked, “Bhagavan has said that the real nature of the Self can be attained only by constant *dhyana*. But how is it possible for one like me saddled with official responsibilities and the management of household affairs? If a major part of one’s life is spent managing these, where is there time for *atma vichara*, much less uninterrupted *dhyana*? What is the way out? I beseech Bhagavan to enlighten me on this.”

Looking at him compassionately, Bhagavan said: “ Suppose you leave your house with the resolve of coming to the Ashram and on the way you meet a friend. You greet him, exchange pleasantries and then take leave of him and proceed to the Ashram while your friend goes his way. Now you don’t go away with your friend but rather continue towards the Ashram. The thought of coming to the Ashram is so fixed in your mind that whomsoever you happen to meet on the way is spoken to in the proper way and parted with in order that you may fulfill your original intentions. Likewise, if the **mind is deeply engaged in meditation** after doing whatever has to be done, the mind will return to meditation. By engaging the mind before starting work and after finishing it, even while working, it will automatically acquire the ability to do the necessary job while staying in its natural state. In the course of time this becomes in-built, habitual and natural, and one no longer feels the lack of being engaged in constant meditation.” (Source: *The Mountain Path* July-Oct. 2006)

[The critical and necessary condition has been put in bold letters, a state not at all easy to achieve. Further, the time taken to acquire the state mentioned in the para may take years of sincere and sustained *sadhana*.]

THE GREAT GURU SRI RAMANA, WHO SPOKE THE LANGUAGE OF SILENCE

Ramana Maharshi has been considered as an incarnation of Sri Dakshinamurti – a manifestation of Lord Siva as the Silent Guru. The impact of Sri Ramana’s silence as perceived and described by those having the good fortune of being in his presence, is sampled below.

Dr. Lt. Col. P.V.Karamchandani who attended on Sri Ramana during his last days writes: “We visited Sri Ramana with a sense of curiosity and an indefinable sense of expectation. We made our obeisance and sat by his feet. We did not speak a word; nor did he. No speech seemed necessary. So surcharged with spirituality was he that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of blissful, ecstatic meditation.”

Swami Topovanam, the guru of Swami Chinmayananda says: “I climbed the hill and saw the Maharshi there. The Maharshi looked lovingly into my face. That was all. He spoke but Silence. Not a word passed between us. A supreme, dynamic and divine Silence prevailed. An hour passed by, all in Silence. He rose for his meals (*bhiksha*). I too rose from my seat, bowed again and walked down the hill. The divine Silence sank deeper and deeper into me at each step! I was full – full with the Silence.”

J.P. Vaswani, Head, Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Pune, who meet the Maharshi in 1939 records: “Sri Bhagavan’s teaching was silence. Many came to him – many from the East and some from the West. They came bringing a hundred questions and a hundred doubts in their hearts, but no sooner did they enter into his purifying presence than their minds were stilled. They were filled with a strange feeling of peace. They forgot their questions and their doubts. His silence was so profound. His silence was so sublime. His silence was so unique. Sri Bhagavan says, “The guru’s silence is more vast and more emphatic than all the scriptures put together.” Sri Bhagavan’s silence was not passive. His silence was utter and complete. It was the silence of the head and the heart put together. It was the silence of feeling and emotions and thoughts. We may stand in silence, but our minds are scattered and within us there is all the time the noise of unruly passion. Within us there is the clamour of conflicting desires. The master’s silence was deep. It was the silence which is the depths of the realised soul.”

Chhaganlal V. Yogi, a businessman from Bombay, who authored the Maharshi’s biography in Gujarati entitled *Sri Ramana Mahima* mentions an incident to exemplify the Maharshi’s silence: “Bhagavan’s language was that of silence. Once a Collector and a Deputy Collector came for his *darshan*. The Collector narrated at length a the *sadhanas* he had done and all the spiritual literature he had read. After him the Deputy Collector told his equally long story. Bhagavan continued to remain in silence even after the speeches were over. The Collector said in an aggrieved voice, “We have been speaking for a long time. Please tell us something. Anything, however brief, will do.”

Bhagavan spoke saying, “All this time I have been speaking to you, in my own language. What can I do if you won’t listen to it?” The Collector, an intelligent man, caught the meaning of Bhagavan’s cryptic reply. Suddenly overpowered by devotion, he fell at his feet. Both the visitors sat before Bhagavan in silent meditation. They got the peace they were looking for and departed satisfied.”

Bhagavan used to say, “The state that is beyond speech and thought is called *mauna*. Silence is eternal speech. It is the perpetual flow of language; it is the supreme language.”

Another Gujarati devotee, Swami Madhavatirtha, who authored *The Life and Teachings of Ramana Maharshi* (original Gujarati) notes: “The silence of the sage is constant and exercises uninterruptedly its benign influence, whether the sage appears to be outwardly aware of the world or not.”

T.M.P. Mahadevan who was head Department of Philosophy, Madras University, writes, “The Maharshi seldom talks. He believes that the Self is best taught in silence. He says, ‘Silence is ever speaking, it is the perennial flow of language.’ For the benefit of those who cannot understand the language of Silence, the Maharshi sometimes talks, but he warns at the same time that questions and answers lie within the region of *avidya*.”

Syed M. Hafiz, Head, Department of Philosophy, Allahabad University, says, “The Maharshi’s silence is more eloquent, more effective, more far-reaching than the sermons of any number of teachers put together.”

K.S. Venkataramani, adviser to the former Alwar State in Rajasthan states, “Maharshi’s silence ambushes your hundred doubts.”

Justice N. Chandrasekhara Iyer of Madras High Court found the Maharshi's "silence more eloquent than his speech."

Paul Brunton, a British journalist, whose classic *A Search in Secret India* made the Maharshi famous the world over says: "I have taken shorthand notes of the discourse of the Sage. I might even print the record of his speech. But the most important part of his utterances, the subtle and silent flavour of spirituality which emanated from him, can never be reported."

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a recent publication of our Kendram.)

Real power and authority is authority over the self. – *Anonymous*

When the mind moves even a little, that is *samsara* (worldly bondage); when the mind abides firmly and motionlessly (in the state of Self) that is *mukt* (liberation). – *Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Remember, growing older is mandatory, growing up is optional. – *Anonymous*

Wisdom dawns where egotism ends. – *Anonymous*

There are no short cuts to any place worth going. – *Anonymous*

What looms over us is no dark fate but our own past. – *S. Radhakrishnan*

SELF-REALISATION: To achieve self-realisation one has to turn one's gaze and attention inward, away from the material world to the inner essence of being. "Whether one is a yogi or *bhogi*; whether one is a sannayasi or a householder, he alone will truly happy and will verily enjoy, who is absorbed inwardly in Brahm", said Adi Sankara in the *Bhaja Govindam*. It is *maya* or illusion that creates the universe and spreads before the mind the vast paraphernalia of the objective world. *Maya* is *nartaki* or enchantress who entices the intelligence and traps the senses. Every material thing is a decoy to make you lose your way to the spirit. It's like chasing mirages one after another. The more you clear the clutter of worldly desires and negative thoughts the more space is created for spirit to surface and roam free. – *Shammi Paranjape*

Do not overlook negative actions merely because they are small; however small a spark may be, it can burn down a haystack as big as a mountain. – *The Buddha*

FASTING IN JAINISM: Fasting has long been considered an integral part of Jainism. Many Jains fast on a regular basis, especially during eight days of Paryushan. For jains, fasting is often a very public act. Fast breaking is a big celebration. The association of fasting with the ability to endure pain and suffering has meant that those who practice it are revered and respected. The community comes to hear the person having a long period of fasting and enquire about his health... When I was on an eight-day fast, I found that after a couple of days the stomach packs up and closes shop as if it were going on a holiday. After the fast I realized that the

achievements I once considered as mine were somewhat illusionary. For example: Was it right to be fasting and at the same time wondering what you would like to eat for your next meal? Was it right to be fasting and continue to be burdened by personal and professional pressures? Was it right to let the lethargy and tiredness dull my personality?... Fasting is not about achieving material goals or fighting feelings. It is about achieving spiritual goals and controlling feelings. It is an inward personal journey, not a prize-winning race. Fasting can help us to renew ourselves and to rekindle our energy to new heights. – *Hiten Shah* www.jainspirit.com

SRI RAMANA STUTI-PANCHAKAM

These five songs in praise of Sri Ramana were composed by one Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer who came to Sri Ramana when he was in the Virupaksha Cave. These are among the earliest hymns (1900-01) in praise of Sri Ramana. Venkataramana Iyer was supposed to hail from a place (village) called Satyamangalam in Tamilnadu. When enquired at that place no body could identify a person by that name. Iyer stayed with the Maharshi just a week, but with such intense love that he earned the grace of the Maharshi, which he expressed in the following words:

By his gracious look he gave a slap on the cheek as it were and seemed to say, “Oh pious Venkataramana, what is the use of prolonging wasteful speech? See for yourself, that is, experience realisation.” A select small sample from the five songs is given below:

1. Leaving Kailasa, his abode, in compassion he came down on earth to Tiruchuli; not content to remain even there, eagerly he came to Arunagiri.
2. He grew unmindful of the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal), surpassed the three states (waking, dream and deep sleep), went beyond the three qualities (*sattva, rajas* and *tamas*) and transcended the three attainments (*salokya, sarupya* and *samipya*).
3. Certainly, Ramana is my kind master, guide and lord. Let us surrender to him, fall at his feet and dance in rapture.
4. Sri Ramana is gracious God shining forth like a never-setting but rising sun, the Perfect Master, who leads one to liberation.
5. Undoubtedly he is the sage enlightening the world! Lord Ramana before us is the very incarnation of Siva, with the ever-flowing Ganga.
6. Sri Ramana is the ever-existent Reality, untainted Lord of Knowledge, the Light revealed in Pure Love.
7. Sri Ramana grants prayers of anyone who with humility beseeches. “Ramana Maharshi! Grant me, grant me thy grace!” He showers His grace abundantly.

Then Venkatarama seeks Sri Ramana’s grace in the following words:

1. O Ramana, the pure! Make me your own without testing me. You are indeed the Supreme Being.
2. O my dear Lord, dwell in the cavity of my heart in unison with me like salt in water.
3. Make me your own by overpowering the specter of my mind struggling in the open jaws of the cunning senses with their evil propensities.

4. With the sword of pure knowledge strike down the cruel demon of ignorance now ruling as ego in the body.

5. Pray, place our feet on the head of Venkataramana, who stands praying fervently before you, praising you with your Name tasting nectar-sweet on his tongue.

(Source: *Sri Ramana Stuti Panchakam*. It is available at the Kendram's bookstall.)

THE POWER OF FOREGIVENESS: Forgiving others can benefit us physically, mentally and spiritually. Feelings of anger, hatred and vengeance cause damage to both the mind and the physical body. If we know this, we may think twice before sending out the boomerang of anger. Further, when we act out of anger, we may set in motion a chain of violence from which we find it hard to escape, resulting in an even worse situation than the original injury... The password to God's abode is love. God is love and only love can reside in God's domain. Thus, for us to be fit to re-enter our eternal home, we must become all love. Anger and hatred are alien to the land of God. Forgiveness is the remedy for anger and this will help us re-enter the domain of the Lord...Through forgiveness will provide improvement in our meditation. We know how difficult it is to still the mind; we can maintain a calm mind by forgiving others. Moreover, love and forgiveness inspire others to love and thus we make the world a happier place for all to live in. – *Rajinder Singhji*

WHAT IS REALITY?

Reality is not with forms and names. That which underlies these is the reality. It underlies limitations, being itself limitless. It is not bound. It underlies unrealities. It transcends speech. It is beyond expressions, 'existence, non-existence', etc. The radiance of consciousness-bliss, in the form of one awareness shining equally within and without, is the supreme and blissful prime reality. Its form is silence and it is declared by *jnanis* to be final and unobstructable state of true knowledge [*jnana*].

– *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

MATRUBHUTESWARA: It is the name of the deity in the Mother's shrine at Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, and also in the ancient temple at Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil rendering of the name was *Tayumanavar*. It means 'God that became Mother'. When Sri Ramana installed a lingam on his mother's *samadhi*, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni (an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and an ardent devotee of Sri Ramana) named it *Matrubhuteswara*. Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya in his *Reminiscences* has said the following in this regard: It is related in the Puranas that when a woman devotee was in the throes of child-birth and no mid-wife was present to attend on her, the Lord Himself appeared as Mother and brought about a safe delivery. So the Lord came to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*. Likewise, when the world was replete with *maya* and was in sore need of the gospel of self-enquiry, the Lord taking form as Mother helped in delivery of Bhagavan who is the very embodiment of that gospel. It is most fitting therefore that mother should come to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*.

(Source: *The Mountain Path*, July-Oct. 2006.)

THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL: Isn't amazing that we never think of death as a real possibility in our own lives? Coping with death – whether dealing with the possibility of one's own death or that of a loved one – remains one of the greatest challenges of our lives. In the *Mahabharata*, once Yudhishtira (while in the forest) goes to quench his thirst in a pond that was in the territory of a *yaksha*. The *yaksha* had tested several people including Yidhishtira's four brothers, and they all had failed to answer his questions satisfactorily. Now, it was Yudhishtira's turn. One of the questions the *yaksha* asks of Yudhishtira was: "What is the greatest wonder in this world?" Yudhishtira replied (to the *yaksha's* satisfaction): "Although many people are dying everyday, yet, we refuse to realize or think about our death. Is not the hope that we'll be living forever, the greatest wonder of the world? – *Jamuna Rangachari*

FACE TO FACE WITH RAMANA MAHARSHI : AN APPRECIATION

By Surendra Narayan

Sri Surendra Narayan who retired as Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Government of India, served as International Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Chennai, for 15 years, till 1995.

This beautiful book of 419 pages, ably compiled and edited by Prof. Laxmi Narain, a publication of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, is truly, as mentioned after caption of the book, a collection of 'Enchanting and Uplifting Reminiscences of 160 Persons' about Sri Ramana Maharshi.

As one goes through this book one is at once struck by the wide vision, deep thoughtfulness and clarity of purpose which have gone into the masterly selection of pieces for this inspiring and absorbing compilation of reminiscences.

Two features need special mention. Firstly, the reminiscences cover a very wide spectrum of persons. These, among others, include eminent professors of philosophy and Sanskrit, Heads of religious / philanthropic institutions, politicians, scholars, journalists, engineers, lawyers, doctors, judges, social workers and many others falling in the category of, often much neglected, 'the common man'. As one goes through the list of those whose reminiscences find place in the work, one notices that a significant number of helpers, attendants and cooks in the Ashram have been wisely included therein, for these have had the privilege of being closest to the Maharshi in the course of their so-called routine household chores.

Secondly, one joyfully notices that each reminiscence is not just as eulogy, a tribute, an expression of deep respect or reverence or even an outpouring of devotion at the feet of the Maharshi, but contains a message or a teaching or an inspiration for leading a purer life, a life of care and love for others, above the narrow, separative sense of 'me' and 'mine' and 'yours' – the small 'I' of the divisive mind.

Prof. B.L. Atreya records: "Ramana Maharshi's greatness is deeply founded. It is based on his actual living by the creed of *Advait Vedanta*, which holds that the Reality is one without a second; that everything in the Universe is but one Reality... True to his creed, he regards nothing alien, none as other, no event as undesirable...Love, affection, kindness, mercy etc., which are

expressions of one and the same thing, and the feeling of unity with all, overflow from him...The supreme realization is that there is no plurality.” This perception of oneness of all life was once pointed out in his own unique way by the Maharshi when, as a devotee once asked him in what way should he serve others, the Maharshi responded through a query: “Who are the others?”

In her reminiscence, Lokamma, a kitchen worker at the Ashram, refers to a powerful statement by the Maharshi against any sense of plurality, when he said, “The Ashram gives food to all and makes no difference. There are no untouchables here. Those who do not like it may eat elsewhere...What is the difference between man and man? Is it not correct to see God in all?” This reminds us about the verse in the *Gita* which says – ‘Sages look equally on a Brahmin adorned with learning and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste.’ The Vedas proclaim, ‘*Tat twam asi*’, ‘That thou art!’.

Swami Ranganathananda says: “He (the Maharshi) exemplified the great teaching ‘I am That’. Bhagavan says that this experience is easy to come by. It is easy. There are no gymnastics to go through. It is *just changing the centre of our awareness* – one may add, from the lower level of the ego (body and the mind) to the deeper level of an egoless state of pure consciousness.”

A.S. Panchapagesa Ayyar, belonging to the Indian Civil Service of pre-independence era, writes: “I was first attracted to the great sage Ramana by reading his book ‘Who Am I?’. I liked immensely his clear exposition of the matter...that the real ‘I’ is not the gunny-bag of the body or the Decca muslin of the mind or the spider web of the ego, but something above and beyond all this, viz., the *atman*. He said to one and all, ‘Look within’.”

B. Sanjiva Rao, an eminent educationalist of the pre-independence era, records : “He (the Maharshi) states that the Egoless state is the natural, the real state, that the Ego-state is the unnatural and false state. In the Egoless condition, the true ‘I’ stands apart from the apparent reaction of the mind. The Sage watches the movement of the mind with the same objective detachment and impartiality as the scientific investigator of a physical phenomenon.” Rao then goes on to add, “The Ego is the atom of the psychic world. If the disintegration of the atom has given us so much power, what may not be accomplished by annihilation of this ego self?”

Dwelling in that changed centre of the Egoless state of pure consciousness mentioned above, does not mean indifference or neglect on one’s duties and responsibilities in the world. Instead, it means discharging them more efficiently and carefully, without the ‘self’ coming in. The Maharshi was a living example of this, as recorded by Dr. C. Kunhan Raja: “While he appears unconcerned with things around him, he was not only attentive but also alert... the very fact that the Maharshi makes enquiries about the visitors, looks into his correspondence, pays attention to the cleanliness and tidiness of his environment, keeps certain programmes in his daily routine and sticks to them with punctuality, shows that to him the physical world is an integral part of the Reality.”

Dwelling in that changed centre of awareness leads one away from a concern for oneself to care and love for others. Arthur Osborne’s reminiscences contain this dimension of the Maharshi,

“Who called nothing as his. He never asked for anything. He refused to have any special consideration shown to him. He refused to have an electric table-fan because the devotees would not benefit equally.”

Subbalakshmi Ammal, serving in the kitchen, mentions that when she gave some extra attention to serving *rasam* to the Maharshi slowly into his palms, he stopped it, observing, “When she serves me slowly, she makes others wait”. She adds, “The law that what cannot be shared must not be touched was supreme in his way of dealing with us. Separative and exclusive feelings are the cause of ‘I’ and therefore the greatest obstacles in the realization of the Self.” She significantly mentions, “Our life in the Ashram was a

School of Yoga, and a hard school too. Through the trifles of daily life he taught us Vedanta both in theory and practice. Bhagvan would make the small tasks of daily life into avenues that lead to light and bliss.”

An instance may be mentioned here in the context of changing the centre of one’s awareness : Natesa Iyer, who served for long in the Ashram and who once watched the operation performed by the doctor on the Maharshi arm to remove the cancerous growth, says, “Bhagavan’s behaviour through the operation showed very clearly that the body was just something that he was wearing.”

Sri Ramana took care to try to help who came in contact with him to rise to purer levels of consciousness, above the ‘self’. It would be pertinent to add here a piece from Swami Madhavatirtha’s reminiscence which states, “The Maharshi never wanted to impose Hindu ideas on those who would not appreciate them. If Christians and Muslims came to him for advice he would propound the essential mystical teachings of their own religion and ask them to strive for union with their own particular chosen God.”

Each piece in this compilation is an inspiration for nobler living. They guide us to live our everyday lives, not as mere physical entities, but as unseparated fragments of the Divine – caring, affectionate and pure in thought, word and deed. Purity comes as we try to rise in our consciousness above selfishness, self-identity and self-centeredness.

A remarkable feature of this wonderful book is that the reminiscences have been so widely selected and interspersed between the more serious and the less serious that one never loses interest and remains deeply absorbed in reading them – losing track of time.

This elevating and yet interesting book should find its place in the hands of all who wish to lead their everyday life happily and in peace, with a clearer vision of their own identity and of all life that surrounds them. Pythagoras in his *Golden Precepts* wrote – “Take courage, the race of man is divine!”

SWAMI YOGANANDA VISITS SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

The following is from *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Swami Yogananda, who met the Maharshi in November 1935. He writes:

Before leaving South India, I made a pilgrimage to the holy hill of Arunachala to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi. At his ashram the sage welcomed us affectionately and pointed to a nearby stack of *East-West* magazines. During the hours that we spent with him and his disciples, he was mostly silent, his gentle face radiating divine love and wisdom.

To help suffering humanity regain its forgotten state of Perfection, Sri Ramana teaches that one should constantly ask himself: “Who am I?” – the Great Inquiry indeed. By stern rejection of all other thoughts the devotee soon finds himself going deeper and deeper into the true Self, and the sidetracking bewilderments of other thoughts cease to arise. The illumined *rishi* of South India has written:

Dualities and trinities on something do hang,

Supportless they never appear;

That support searched for, they loosen and fall.

There is the Truth. Who sees that never wavers.

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THE WATCHMAKER ANALOGY: If one were to open up a watch and look at the complicated mechanism of gears and cogs inside, one could easily tell that it was designed and built by someone who was at least intelligent enough to understand the way it was put together and how it will function in future. Here we have not only a complex system but also a purpose in building the watch. Similarly, if one were to look at life in its various forms one could easily tell that it was designed and built by an intelligent designer. A creator. But then one may well ask where is the purpose element? Well, if one were to open the watch and show it to a bunch of cave dwellers, would they be able to tell there was any purpose behind the arrangement? Obviously not. – *Mukul Sharma*

MY BELOVED BHAGAVAN

By Swami Ramdas

The Swami was the founder of the Anandashram, Kanhangad in Kerala. He authored the book *In Quest of God*.

What shall I say to Him who towers high
A veritable Everest of spiritual glory –
A resplendent sun who sheds light on all
He is our soul, our life and sole refuge.
The sage par-excellence dwells on the Sacred Hill
Arunachala – the abode of holy ones – the Rishis.
His compassionate eyes pour forth nectar on all He sees
Drowning us in a sea of joy and ecstasy.

He belongs to the dizzy heights
Still he stands firm on this earth of ours.
Lo! Thy grace drew me to Thy feet
And I came to Thee a vagrant and a beggar.
The instant my head touched Thy holy feet
The fever of my soul left me forever.
Then Thine eyes, redolent with Thy Infinite Grace
Tenderly looked on me and I was thrilled.
I stood before Thee – a figure of pure bliss
Fully bathed in Thy divine halo.
Now, I am Thy child – free and happy.
Thou art my Mother, Master and Friend, my only Beloved.
All glory to Thee! All glory to Thee!

STORY OF AMRAPALI OF VAISHALI: Once the beautiful Amrapali saw a young monk. Mesmerized by his calm and attractive presence, she followed him. Unable to attract his attention, she spoke, “Sir, what use is life of an ascetic if it wastes your youth?” And she requested the ascetic to accept her hospitality. The monk thought for a moment and said, “I will ask my master and come to you.” Then he took out a ripe mango from his bag and gave it to her with the instruction to preserve it till his return. Amrapali tried all methods to keep the mango fresh, but failed. After seeking his guru’s permission, the young monk returned to her. Passionately infatuated, she approached him. The monk asked the lady to show him the mango left with her. She did so; but the mango had decayed, emitting foul odour. Now Amrapali asked the monk, “Sir, of what use is this rotten fruit to you?” The monk slowly removed the mango-stone from the fruit. Showing her the rotten skin, he asked, “Where has the beauty, aroma and taste of the fruit gone? But the mango-stone is intact.” Of what use is this mango-stone, argued the courtesan. The monk smilingly explained, “The mango-stone is the most useful. As a seed, it has the potential to regenerate a new body. This mango-stone signifies the eternal soul. Recognise this truth, Amrapali. You could not save the decay of this *amraphal*, how long can you protect your own body from disintegration?” Amrapali was speechless; it was as if she has been awakened from a deep sleep. Moved, she asked for forgiveness of the young monk. She renounced the life of a courtesan and joined the Buddha Order. – *P. Venkatesh*

It is choice, not chance, that determines your destiny. – Jean Nidetch

The thing that overcomes hard luck is hard work. – Harry Golden

Other man's fault are before our eye; one's own behind our back. –Seneca

SRI RAMANA AND SRI RAMA ARE ONE AND THE SAME – TWO INCIDENTS

1. *Suri Nagamma, an outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana is well-known for her 273 letters, written in Telugu during 1945-50, to her elder brother. The book Letters from Sri Ramanasramam containing them is available at the Kendram's bookstall. Nagamma in a way acted as Sri Ramana's secretary in regard to copying from scriptures, writings etc. where Telugu language was involved. She records as follows:*

2.

A lady from Andhra at the Ashram could sing melodiously. She began singing devotional songs composed by reputable Andhra pandits substituting the word Rama with Ramana. As the songs were pregnant with meaning and she was an accomplished singer, everyone felt happy. When asked, she said she herself had written the songs.

Some devotees asked her to write down the songs for translation into English. She showed the songs to Bhagavan and requested him to get them translated. Bhagavan merely handed them over to Munagala Venkataramiah [author of the famous book *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*], who happened to be there at the time. Venkataramiah asked me to explain the meanings of some difficult Telugu words. I agreed to do so, and also told him that some elders wrote these songs about Rama long ago. He straight went to Bhagavan, who smilingly said, "Oh! Is that so? When I noticed the language and the great ideas behind them I thought that ancient scholars must have composed them. What does it matter? When people come here they feel like writing or singing something. Poets write on their own; others copy the writings of someone else and substitute Ramana for Rama. **The words Rama and Ramana are one and the same.** So what do you say? Will you carry on with the translation?" Asked Bhagavan. All kept quiet.

3. *Santanam Iyengar was headmaster in a high school at Tanjore and served as an accountant at the Ashram after his retirement. He writes:*

4.

I happened to read Swami Ramtirtha's booklet *The True Atma*. That set me thinking. Don't the scriptures emphasize the need for a *sadguru* for attaining Self-knowledge? Where could I find such a *sadguru*? I knew only one recourse and that was to pray to Sri Rama, my chosen deity. I prayed, "Oh Lord, please lead me to a *sadguru* who is blemishless like you."

One night I had a rapturous dream. I saw two cottages surrounded by a forest situated in front of a hill. In one of the cottages a divine person was seated in *samadhi*. I heard a voice urging me to go there saying, "He is Ramana Maharshi, a true *jnani* for whom you have been yearning."

This dream made such a strong impression on me that at the earliest I proceeded to Tiruvannamalai to surrender at the feet of Sri Ramana. Wonder of wonders, what I saw before my eyes was the exact reproduction of my dream. Bright stars formed a halo behind Sri Ramana's head. **This convinced me that there was no difference between 'Rama' and 'Ramana'**, a conclusion which has been with me ever since.

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram.)

COMPASSION (): Compassion is defined as the spiritual consciousness of other persons' pain, and a feeling of unselfish tenderness directed towards them. Compassion is the divine impulse that stirs within us when we come across someone's ignorance or pain. As we make the effort to let compassion be our guide – instead of our self-centred judgment of a situation or a person – we find ourselves being rocked in the cradle of our divine heart. When the compassion we feel for someone is genuine, we experience the light of dharma, of righteousness, or right action shining within ourselves. So, this virtue called *daya*, *karuna* or compassion, is filled with great wisdom... Can compassion ever be taught? It can only be lived out. It is out of compassion that the Master draws a disciple to his heart... There is a big difference between pity and compassion. When we feel pity, we put ourselves in the other person's place. We think, if we had an accident, or were sick, we would want someone to help us. Bearing that in mind we go and help another. In cases like these, the mind does not expand into a greater awareness. The blessings of compassion are much greater than the pale imitations produced by pity. In compassion, the heart literally moves with love and the one who inspires it receives love, and healing too. Compassion takes on another person's misery without strings attached and gives the one who is suffering consolation. – *Gurumayi Chidvilasananda*

The best way to cheer yourself is to cheer up somebody else. – *Mark Twain*

Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. – *Ignersoll*

Good habits result from resisting temptations. – *Anonymous*

Like a crystal of salt taking refuge in water, or the wind becoming motionless in the sky, he who takes shelter in Me through body, mind and act, becomes one with Me. – *Marathi saint Jnaneshwara*

Remember, growing older is mandatory, growing up is optional. – *Anonymous*

What looms over us is no dark fate but our own past. – *S. Radhakrishnan*

MATRUBHUTESWARA: It is the name of the deity in the Mother's shrine at Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, and also in the ancient temple at Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil rendering of the name was *Tayumanavar*. It means 'God that became Mother'... When Sri Ramana installed a lingam on his mother's *samadhi*, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni (an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and an ardent devotee of Sri Ramana) named it *Matrubhuteswara*. Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya in his *Reminiscences* has said the following in this regard: It is related in the Puranas that when a woman devotee was in the throes of childbirth and no midwife was present to attend on her, the Lord Himself appeared as Mother and brought about a safe delivery. So the Lord came to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*. Likewise, when the world was replete with *maya* and was in sore need of the gospel of self-enquiry, the Lord taking form as Mother

helped in delivery of Bhagavan who is the very embodiment of that gospel. It is most fitting therefore that mother should come to be worshipped as *Matrubhuteswara*. (Source: *The Mountain Path*, July-Oct. 2006.)

THE GREATEST WONDER OF ALL: Isn't amazing that we never think of death as a real possibility in our own lives? Coping with death – whether dealing with the possibility of one's own death or that of a loved one – remains one of the greatest challenges of our lives. In the *Mahabharata*, once Yudhishtira (while in the forest) goes to quench his thirst in a pond that was in the territory of a *yaksha*. The *yaksha* had tested several people including Yudhishtira's four brothers, and they all had failed to answer his questions satisfactorily. Now, it was Yudhishtira's turn. One of the questions the *yaksha* asks of Yudhishtira was: "What is the greatest wonder in this world?" Yudhishtira replied (to the *yaksha's* satisfaction): "Although many people are dying everyday, yet, we refuse to realize or think about our death. Is not the hope that we'll be living forever, the greatest wonder of the world? – *Jamuna Rangachari*

Real power and authority is authority over the self. – *Anonymous*

When the mind moves even a little, that is *samsara* (worldly bondage); when the mind abides firmly and motionlessly (in the state of Self) that is *mukti* (liberation). – *Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*

SONG GARLAND TO THE RED MOUNTAIN (ARUNACHALA)

A 100-verse song titled **Sonasaila Maalai** was written by Sivapraksa Swamigal, an accomplished 17th century Virasaiva poet and scholar. He had a strong connection with Tiruvannamalai, where he had a guru, whom he visited regularly. His father, Kumaraswami Desikar, used to come to Tiruvannamalai from Kanchipuram every year for the Deepam festival. The Swamigal died when he was only thirty-two years, but in his short span he composed many Tamil works, an important one of which is *Prabhulinga Leelai*. It chronicles the life and deeds of Allama Prabhu, a 12th century Virasaiva saint and teacher. A reference to the greatness of this saint by Sri Ramana himself is found in Talk no. 334 in *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*.

Sonasaila Maalai is said to have been composed in a single *pradakshina* of the mountain Arunachala. Each of the 100 verses in praise of the Lord Siva falls in two parts. The first part is a plea for the Lord's grace in the face of the author's self-avowed unworthiness. The second part is a daring image in which the nature and attributes of Lord Siva are compared and contrasted with those of the Mountain, which is the Lord's earthly-manifested form. Much emphasis is placed throughout upon the fact that, unlike the Siva of the temple cult, Arunachala is available to all without restrictions of any kind. It was an attribute which appealed deeply to Sivaprakasa, who, as a Virasaiva would have rejected the elitism of the temples and their cult.

Sivaprakasa's erudition is apparent throughout the text with numerous references to the Puranic literature, the lives of 63 Siva saints, and legends and the folklore of Arunachala itself.

In particular, the various mountains which feature in the Puranic stories like Mount Meru (the fabulous mountain at the centre of the earth), Mount Mandra (which the *devas* and *asuras* used to churn the Ocean of Milk), Mount Pothiyam (the abode of sage Agastya, the father of Tamil), the Eastern and Western Mountains behind which the sun is said to rise and set, and even the Mount Kailash, (the very home of Lord Siva), are found lacking when compared with the majesty of *Sonasaila*, the Red Mountain. How could any mountain in the physical realm, however glorious, compare with one which is the very embodiment of Lord Siva?

Each verse of the song ends with a stirring refrain that never lets us forget that *Arunachala* and *Siva*, eternally, are one: *Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord*.

The 100th verse of this song is produce below for the devotees to relish:

You it is that grant your grace
to those who praise you,
that they may gain learning
and the noble ornament of fame,
noble wealth, and children,
that like a fine jewel adorn
the householder and his mate,
and finally liberation's high estate.

Through your great, supernal grace
you show yourself to all the world
that those who from the righteous path
have strayed, forgetting you, may see
and hold you in their thoughts,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

(Source: *The Mountain Path*, Advent 2005 and Deepam 2006)

JNANA AND BHAKTI

In reply to Dilip Kumar Roy's query whether Sri Ramana advocated jnana and disparaged bhakti, Sri Bhagavan replied " Bhakti is jnanamata". At another place Sri Bhagavan says: "To long for happiness is bhakti. To long for the Self is jnana." Close relationship between bhakti and jnana is presented below:

Jnana and *bhakti* are like two sweets made out of the same sugar, of which you can choose whichever you like.

Giving up ‘mine’ is *bhakti*; giving up ‘I’ is *jnana*. The *bhakta* gives up all his possessions; the *jnani* gives up the very possessor of the possessions.

Bhakti is tuning the mind towards God. Self-enquiry, the path of *jnana*, turns the mind to its own inner essence, which is the Self.

In *bhakti* one is disgusted with one’s individual self and feels one’s nothingness or unimportance and fixes one’s mind on the Higher Power. When the mind at last becomes fully aware of the Higher Power it is awed by it and gets absorbed into it. This is total surrender of the ego. The man no longer is; God alone is. In Self-enquiry the subject sets out in search of himself. He who seeks must exist.

It is *jnana* to know that the Master is within you, but to commune with Him is *bhakti*.

When the love of God or Self is manifest it is *bhakti*; when it is in secret it is *jnana*.

To know the Self as bliss is *jnana*; efforts to uncover this natural bliss are *bhakti*.

One-pointed thought of God is *bhakti*. One-pointed experience of Self is *jnana*.

(Source: *Fragrant Petals*, Sri Ramanasramam. The book is available at the Kendram’s bookstall.)

DESTROY THE ENEMY WITH LOVE: After the American Civil War was over; President Lincoln reached out in friendship to the Southern States. His ideas, as always, were to be “with malice towards none, with charity for all.” Most of his colleagues didn’t see it that way. One of them told him frankly that these people were the very enemy they had been bent on destroying till only a week earlier. Lincoln’s response was: “Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?” (Source: *The Economic Times*)

PROFOUND VEDIC STATEMENTS ()

Brahmn is Supreme Consciousness ()

I am Brahmn ()

That Thou are ()

The Self is Brahmn ()

The One willed to become many ()

Truth is One but the wise call it by different names ()

I go for refuge to God who is One in the silence of eternity, pure radiance of beauty and perfection, in whom we find our peace. –Yajur Veda

ORDER AND DISORDER: A physically ordered state can be transformed to a disordered state if the cause for the order is weakened. Ice when heated loses order, because rise in temperature agitates the molecules, thus weakening the interactions among them. It is easy to convert an ordered state into a disordered one; however, the reverse is not always true. Similarly, an ordered person can be disordered once he loses internal strength. Of course, some degree of order or discipline can be induced in a person by external means. However, it lasts only until the external induction is effective... A liquid when cooled may transform either to an ordered state or a disordered state of the solid, depending on the manner of cooling. If the cooling is slow, the resultant state would be likely to be an ordered state because the constituent atoms will find enough time to organize themselves. However, if the rate of cooling were fast, the resultant state would be again a disordered state. Similarly, an unorganized person can be organized depending on the manner and means of transformation. – *G. S. Tripathi*

Subtlest of the subtle, greatest of the great, the *atman* is hidden in the cave of the heart of all beings. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

SRI RAMANA’S SILENCE

Paul Brunton in his classic *A Search in Secret India* has written that Sri Ramana’s ‘silence and reserve were habitual. One could easily count the number of words he used in a single day.’ Another close devotee Visvanatha Swami writes: ‘People may get a false impression of Bhagavan if they read a book like *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Bhagavan frequently remained completely silent for days. The daily schedule in the Ashram was so fixed that Bhagavan automatically did what was necessary at the appropriate time without a word spoken.’

EFFORTLESS MEDITATION: It is a state of pure spontaneous perception. It is a state of being, of non-doing, where one remains in a state of complete rest and ease and therefore does not deliberately direct the mind to any specific object, internal or external. – *Swami Madhurananda*

TRUE KNOWLEDGE: True knowledge is that state in which there is neither knowledge nor ignorance. Knowledge of outside objects is only ignorance. Self which shines as the sole Reality is right knowledge. The luminosity of the Self is dependent on nothing else because while manifesting everything it is not manifested by any other thing. This knowledge is not any knowing at all, but only Being the Self. - *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Don't look at another's wife; but if you see her, regard her, according to her age, like your mother, daughter, or sister; if you love her, then purify your thoughts about her. – *Nagarjuna – Great Buddhist philosopher and saint, who lived in the area now known as Andhra Pradesh in first century AD.*

You are not the physical body but pure Consciousness. Remaining in the state of pure Consciousness is liberation. The guru can point the way but cannot give liberation from the limited identification of a separate body; it is for the student (*sishya*) to 'see'. It is not the result of an action. It happens at the right moment when pure Consciousness reveals itself. – *Ashtavakra Gita*

OVERCOMING ANGER: Anger is 'concentrated desire'. When our desire is thwarted we burst into a rage. The *Gita* says: In one who dwells longingly on sense objects, an inclination towards them is generated. This inclination develops into desire, and desire begets anger. Anger generates delusion, and delusion results in loss of memory. Loss of memory brings about the destruction of discriminative intelligence, and the loss of discriminative intelligence spells ruin to a man. – *Swami Budhananda*

We are what we think. All that we are arises from our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. – *The Buddha*

What you think, what you feel, you create...The world outside you is the result of what you think, what you feel. – *J. Krishnamurti*

As one grows spiritually, one's thoughts become more powerful and influence the person towards whom they are directed. If a letter of condolence is written with deep, sympathetic and affectionate thoughts, it becomes a messenger of comfort and strength as it reaches the person to whom it is addressed. Sometimes, a letter of advice and blessings written by an evolved person to an aspirant who needs support and strength serves as an actual talisman. – *Surendra Narayan*

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI TELLS A STORY

One of the devotees who had heard of the verses written by the Maharshi about the deliverance of Lakshmi, the cow, approached the Maharshi and said, " Swami, we see that

animals and birds are getting deliverance in your presence; but is it not true that only human beings can get moksha? Sri Maharshi replied with a smile, “It is stated that a great saint gave moksha to a thorn bush,” and told the following story:

A *jnani* by the name of Umapathi Sivacharya lived in Chidambaram. He was a poet and also a pandit. As he was in a transcendental state of spirituality (*athita sthithi*), he did not pay much attention to the usual *brahminical* practices. The *dikshitar*s of the place became angry with him and forbade him from living in the village and even visiting the temple. He lived in a small hut built on a raised ground outside the village. A low caste man called Samban used to supply him with all that he required and also helped him in a general way. One day when Samban was carrying a bundle of firewood to the hut, *Iswara* Himself met him on the way in the guise of the *dikshitar* in charge of the temple. He wrote a verse on a palmya leaf and gave it to him, telling that it was to be handed over to Sivacharya.

Samban gave the verse to Sivacharya who found in it the words, “*Adiyarkkadiyen Chitrabalavanan*”(the servant of the devotees, the Lord of Chidambaram). He was overwhelmed with devotion and a thrill passed through his body as he read the verse. The gist of the verse was: ‘It is your duty to give initiation to Samban regardless of his caste.’

In obedience to the order of the Lord, he initiated Samban in the order of *sannyasa*, though he belonged to the lowest caste. In due course he gave *nayana diksha* (transmission of Power through the eyes) to Samban, immediately after which he merged into holy light. Sivacharya himself was immensely surprised at this occurrence. Enemies of Sivacharya complained to the king that Sivacharya had burnt Samban to death for some mistake he might have committed. When the king came there with his retinue to enquire into the complaint, Sivacharya showed the verse of Lord Nataraja and said that he gave initiation to Samban who vanished thereafter in the form of a divine light (*Jyoti*). The king was surprised and asked Sivacharya if he could likewise give initiation and *moksha* to the thorn bush nearby. “Yes. What doubt, is there?” said Sivacharya. Accordingly, he gave *nayana diksha* to that thorn bush and that too immediately disappeared in pure light (*jyoti*).

The king was still more astonished at that and said, “This looks like some black magic. You said this note has been written by Lord Nataraja. Let us go and ask Him.” Sivacharya pointed out that there was a ban on his entering the temple. The king said that would not matter as he himself was accompanying him. Accordingly, they started for the temple together along with all the people who have gathered at the scene. After they entered the temple, when *aarathi* (waving of light) was offered to Lord Nataraja, it was found that Samban and the thorn bush were standing on either side of the Lord. The pandits were greatly surprised and out of fear and remorse, fell at the feet of Sivacharya requesting him to pardon them for all their faults. Samban was subsequently brought back to the village with due honours.

(Source: *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi*. The book is available at the Kendram’s bookstall.)