

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

JANUARY TO DECEMBER - 2007

January

SIDDHI AND SIDDHA: The power to subvert natural law through *tapa* is known as *siddhi*. When a *tapasvin* acquires *siddhi*, he comes to be known as *siddha*. Any human being can become a *siddha* if he can overpower the urge to respond to sensory stimuli. Once a *siddha*, a human being can do whatever he wills. According to *Tantra*, only men have the biology to ignite *tapa* and acquire *siddhi*. Only human male has control over his reproductive organs. Plants, animals and women shed their seed during pollution, heat and menstruation whether they want to or not. Hence they cannot retain *rasa*. Unfettered by the cycle of nature, a man can restrain his sexual urges, retain *rasa*, ignite *tapa* and acquire *siddhi*. – *Devdutt Pattanaik*

SUBLIMATE DESIRES: Forced subjugation of desires can prove dangerous. In subduing desires, we allow them to make our subconscious mind home to unfulfilled desires. This, in turn, leads to mental distractions. The Lord says in the *Gita*, “Abstinence from food can keep sensual objects at bay, but not the desire or attachment to them.” The *Ashwagosha* says: “Your celibacy is of no avail if you are adulterous in mind”... Lure of senses increases with every additional consumption of sense-objects. Desire is like an internal chain reaction, which keeps repeating without a break. Fulfillment of one desire leads to many others. In fact, we do not consume objects of pleasure; rather it is the sense-objects that consume us... The solution to the problem is neither subjugation of desires nor free flow of desires... It is normal human tendency to forego an inferior object when given a superior object. God denotes eternal bliss. How can then any pleasure of the world compete with it? Desires and attachment to sense objects can be turned Godward by perception of Supreme within through Self-knowledge. – *Ashutosh Maharaj*

INSECURITY IN LIFE: Insecurity is the very basis of life. We like to believe that everything about life is assured and that life is in our hands; but it is not so. We try to seek security in many ways – in the form of money, power, relationships and many more... Most of the time our energy is wasted in thinking of our wife, husband, parents, friends and relations who give us security. But the truth is that no one can guarantee anyone security because the basis of everyone’s life is insecurity. When we deeply contemplate on this truth, real security which is God-awareness happens in us and we begin to enjoy deep and secure state within ourselves. – *Nithyananda Parmahansa*

GREATER UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE PROCESS OF NEGATION:

Those who love solving crossword puzzles know that the solution is found by the process of repeated negations. This process has its uses in almost all areas of research and understanding. God has laid out a supreme puzzle for us, challenging us to decipher His nature, while giving us many clues and hints through masters, books of revelation and most of all, through His own manifestations. Understanding through negation is the basis for the doctrine of *neti neti* – not this, not this – that sage Yajnavalkya uses in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* to describe Brahmn, the Absolute. – *Jamuna Rangachari*

HAPPINESS: The definition of happiness varies from person to person. It varies from one stage of life to another. Is it possible to arrive at a formula that conforms to everyone's definition of happiness? Mahatma Gandhi found an answer to this question in the first verse of *Isha Upanishad* that says: “**Renounce and enjoy.**” This was his reply to a western journalist who challenged him to reveal the secret of his happiness in just three words... The concept of renunciation is not the gloominess of self-denial but the extinguishing of the candle because dawn has arrived. It is an evolved mind that understands that it is better to need less than to want and have more...Genuine happiness is a state of contentment that comes with peace of mind. You will find happiness when you stop comparing your life and possessions with those of others. – *K.S. Iyer*

SURRENDER TO THE FACT THAT LIFE ISN'T FAIR: Life isn't fair. It's ever moving forward with numerous jerks, jolts and disappointments. Recognizing this sobering fact can be a very liberating insight. One of the mistakes many of us make is that we feel sorry for ourselves, or for others, thinking that life should have been more fair. When we make this mistake we tend to spend a lot of time wallowing and /or complaining about what's wrong with life. We sympathize with others discussing the injustices of life. One of the nice things about surrendering to the fact that life isn't fair is that it keeps us from feeling sorry by encouraging us to do the very best we can with what we have... The fact that life isn't fair doesn't mean that we shouldn't do everything in our power to improve our own lives or the world as a whole. When we do recognize that life isn't fair we feel compassion for others and for ourselves. And compassion is a heartfelt emotion that delivers loving-kindness to everyone it touches. – *Richard Carlson*

NATARAJA: Siva communicates the truth of life through dance. Dance is the symbol of life. It is impermanent, lasting as long as the dancer dances. It flows through space and time, unfettered by any dimension or moment. The wheel around the dancing Siva is the merry-go-round of worldly events. The ego is swept away by the wheel. Siva crushes the ego and dances on its back, offering an alternative. He balances himself on his right foot, indicative of the still *Purusha*, and swings his left leg, indicative of the ever-

changing *Prakriti*. His right hand comforts his devotees while his left hand points to the interaction of the left and right feet. The fire he holds in one hand is *tapa*, ignited by refusing to submit to worldly stimuli. The rattle-drum in the other is created with the downward-pointing triangle of matter separated from the upward-pointing triangle of the spirit. – *Devdutt Pattanaik*

FREE WILL AND FATE: Fate is the sum total of the effect of past actions which influence our present life. Exercise of free will in the past becomes our fate in the present... Fate or destiny is conventionally described thus: Whatever has to happen will happen and one can do nothing to change the course of events which are predestined. This is irrational. Once we accept that everything in life is dictated by fate, we will remain passive, adopting the path of least resistance. We need to look at obstacles as opportunities and overcome them rather than accepting them as our fate... Sri Aurobindo said that we are our fate through our actions. By relying on self-effort in the present, we can decide our fate. The *Gita* tells us to stand up and fight; this means not submitting to fate. Sage Vashishta told Sri Rama that fate or the effects of our past deeds is like a child and self-effort in the present is like a youth... In the *Mahabharata*, Bhishma says that exertion is greater than destiny... Life would become boring for a person if he knew his future. He would be left with no imagination, no will power and an unused intellect... Can the effect of bad *karmas* be reduced or obliterated? When a person surrenders to God, renounces the fruit of his actions and offers them to God, then, no fate operates for him. – *R. K. Langar*

ORIGIN OF NAMES ‘APARNA’ AND ‘UMA’ FOR GODDESS PARVATI

Sati, wife of Lord Siva and daughter of King Daksha, gave up her life as she was insulted by her father during the *yajna* performed by him. She was subsequently born to Himavan and Menaka as Parvati. She wanted only Siva as her husband, and to achieve that purpose she set out for doing *tapas*.

Parvati’s delicate frame was little fit for austerities; yet she renounced all comforts of life and got so absorbed in penance that she lost consciousness of her body. For months on end, she lived on roots and fruits alone. For some days her only sustenance was water and air. She also maintained herself on withered leaves for a long period of time. Finally, when she gave up even dry leaves, she came to be known as ‘Aparna’ – one who lives without leaves. Seeing Parvati’s body emaciated through severe *tapas*, her mother

while trying to prevent her from continuing the austerities, shouted: “U (no), Ma (give up).” That is how she got the name Uma.

(Excerpted from: *Ramacharitamansa* by Tulsidas and *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi*.)

CHANGE DIRECTION TO CHAGE LIFE: Change of direction does not mean escaping from life. It only means reforming one’s attitude. We are very much inclined to hold on to the reflection (*maya*) instead of reality. Our body, matter and all impermanent objects are the reflections of our non-dual existence, which is the truth. Whatever is viewed in a mirror is a reflection, not reality. Treating the reflection or shadow as real is the root cause of distress and agonies of life. A bird pecking at its image in the mirror is distressed and anxious. In fact, it was hitting upon the image of the other bird in order to harm that bird. It was using its full strength. Unfortunately, it was not able to understand that it was hitting its own reflection in the mirror. The bird was overcome by *maya*, and in the process, it injured its own beak. Like the bird that attacked its own reflection, every person is sitting in front of the mirror. They are viewing their reflections and fighting with them. They have not understood the opponent with whom they are fighting. Therefore, Mahavira said: “A percipient (a person who is able to perceive things correctly) lives a real life, but a non-percipient lives the life of illusion”... A percipient uses a thing in the perspective of its utility and necessity. He will avail everything on the basis of its utility and requirement only, disregarding his likes and dislikes...Change of direction means reformation of behavior. As long as one’s behavior and conduct remains unchanged, the change of direction (towards happiness) does not take place. The change of direction means change of behavior, and change of behavior means change of direction. – *Acharya Mahaprajana*

HUMILITY AND CHARITY: Humility does not mean humbleness. The humble person may not be egoless. He could carry a new kind of ego, of being humble. He goes on comparing. The ego has not changed; it has taken a new posture, more subtle. First the ego was gross. That is when you go on bragging about your achievements and possessions. One day you renounce all; but the bragging continues about what has been given up. Humility means a man who has understood all the ways of the ego...Charity does not mean you give and oblige the person to whom you have given. Charity is when you give with no idea that you are obliging anybody in any way. (Condensed from: www.osho.com)

RAMANA SANNIDHI MURAI

Ramana Sannidhi Murai by Muruganar, foremost among Sri Ramana devotees, is a masterpiece of Tamil literature. The work consists of 1851 stanzas. It is a devotional work like *Thevaram* and *Thiruvachakam*. It is sung in praise of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Three stanzas taken at random from the work show the author's devotion to his Master:

1. Oh! my mind! Melt yourself when you think of Sri Ramana; why? Because just as He, as Siva, once took as ambrosia the poison which came out of the ocean when churned, now, He, as Ramana, has taken unto His protection this worthless and fit-for-nothing man.

2. Oh! my mind! Prostrate yourself before Sri Ramana's feet and sing His glory because for the one grain of devotion you showered unto Him, He has heaped upon you tons and tons of His Grace.

3. I do not care for my relations. I do not want fame or name. I care not for learning or for wealth; Oh! Ramana! All that I want is that if I should be born again, I should be born in your mind and nowhere else and this is my only want and request. (Excerpted from: *Call Divine*, vol. 2, part-1)

THUS SPOKE SRI RAMANA: In order to avert suffering and sorrow, constantly meditate on the void, which is the space of consciousness (*chidakasa*), on the right side of the chest, where the spiritual heart is located. One not meditating in this way, remains *samsari* (a worldly individual), forever in bondage to worldly attachments, like the silkworm in its self-made cocoon.

GO WITH THE FLOW: When you happen to meet misfortunes, difficulties and harassments, it is okay to ask, "Why me?" "What have I done to get them?" "Why cannot my life be the way it was?" "Why has it changed suddenly like this?" This may be for a while or a little longer. Then it is time to shift gears and start accepting what you are faced with. You may be feeling that your situation is unfair, but it is reality, it just is. So instead of railing against it, try to embrace any good that might be hidden in it...Change all thoughts to empowering ones. Change the mindset of "I can't" to a mindset of "I can" and you will find the strength to face the challenge...Shift any catastrophising thoughts such as "This is THE worst thing that could happen to me" to "I have handled other challenges in my life, and I am sure I will survive this one. I will face all the problems that come my way"... The secret to moving on is to simply keep moving...one thought, one step, and one day at a time. – *Suzanne Zoglio*

TRANSCENDING KARMA AND RETRIBUTION: Homer wrote (*Iliad*): “No man or woman born, coward or brave, can shun destiny.” The great Tamil work *Kural* talks of the inexorability of fate and destiny. Sanskrit poet Bartruhari observes how one will get according to his capacity, which is determined by past actions (*karma*). He points out that a pot of certain size can be filled up only with a limited quantity of water regardless of whether it is dipped into a small well or a huge ocean...Scriptures are cited often as convenient excuses and alibis by fatalists and the indolent to explain away their ineffectiveness and failures. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that free will coupled with intelligent action and thought can, to a large extent, neutralize and make up for the limiting and binding effects of *karma* and destiny. The *Gita* (4.19 and 37) and Pantanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* (2.16) assure that intelligence (*jnanagnai*) can quell the impact of all *karma* whereby difficulties, which would otherwise have ensued, can be preempted. This intelligence is obtained by assiduous study, practice and application (*sadhana*) cultivating thus, a dominant free will within. Aeschylus (ancient Greek author) observes how even gods join in when a person is eager and willing. British poet Longfellow writes: “Let us then be up and doing / With a heart for any fate.” This is also the application of Henley’s concept in his *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” This indeed is the process of neutralizing, making up for and winning over the fetters of all *karma* and retribution. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

GOD – A VERB, NOT A NOUN: For an atheist, denying God means denying consciousness. To him, the world is simply matter and nothing more, and whatever you see as consciousness is only a byproduct of certain matter put together. Take those things apart and the byproduct disappears. It is just like a bullock cart: You take the wheels away, you take other parts away, and each time you can ask, “Is this the bullock cart?” And the answer will be, “It is not.” Bullock cart was only a combination. It had no existence of its own; it was a byproduct. That’s what Marx means when he says consciousness is an epiphenomenon [A secondary phenomenon accompanying and resulting from another.]: Remove the body, remove the brain, remove all that constitutes a man’s being – you will not find any thing like consciousness...To think of god as a person is just our imagination. When I say there is no god, I am denying personality of god. I am saying god is not, but there is tremendous godliness. This is an impersonal energy, pure energy. To impose any form on it would be wrong. The world consists of verbs, not of nouns. Nouns are a human invention – necessary, but after all a human invention. Look at this: You are seeing a flower; to call it a flower is not right, because it has not stopped flowering. It is still flowering; it is a verb, it is a flow. To call it a flower you have made it a noun. You see the river. You call it a river – you have made it a noun. It is rivering. It will be more accurate to the existential to say that it is rivering, flowing.

Everything is in continuity, continuous change; it is a continuum. There never comes a full stop. It comes only in language. In existence there is no full stop. The child is becoming a young man; the young man is becoming old; life is turning into death; death is turning into life... When you say 'god' you are using a noun, something static. When I say 'godliness' I am using a word for something alive, flowing, moving... Godliness is a totally different dimension: the greenness in the trees, the flowering of the rose, the bird in flight – all are part of it. God is not separate from the universe. The universe is vibrating, pulsating, breathing godliness. – (Extracted from: www.osho.com)

BARDO AND ISHAVASYA UPANISHAD: *The Tibetan Book of Dead is called 'Bardo'. When a person is about to die, the chief Lama holds his hand and chants the Bardo. It is similar to Ishavasya Upanishad slokas which say: "May this life enter into the immortal breath," chanted when a person dies. "This body will become ashes, you are not the body! The body is ending in ashes, but you are going to the other sphere – mingling with the vital breath." And then a message: "Remember, remember what we are doing here; remember what we are telling you, remember O Intelligence, remember that You are the Supreme Spirit, that you are free! Mingling with the immortal breath, go!"* – <http://spirituality.indiatimes.com>

SRI RAMANA SHOWERS GRACE ON A DEVOTEE

T.R. Rajagopal, a devotee from Vijayawada, has recorded as follows:

My financial affairs were a mess in 1947 due to losses in business. Friends, relatives and even my wife cold-shouldered me. I realised that in the last analysis one is really alone in life.

During this time of distress, in July 1947, I had a vivid dream in which a sage with divine effulgence appeared and assured me of his protection. I could identify him as Ramana Maharshi because I had seen his picture in *The Sunday Times*. I could give no credence to the dream. After all, I had not even visited him. Why should he care for me, an utter stranger? Who was this Rajagopal to him? I kept pushing away the urge to go to him, and resisted the pull of his luminous eyes. In the end he won.

On November 30, 1947 I left Vijayawada for Sri Ramanasramam. I did not have a single paisa. I ate whatever was given to me on the way and reached Bhagavan's presence on December 10. It was eight in the morning. Joy swelled in my heart as he gave me a piercing look. We exchanged glances, but I had to close my eyes as I was unable to bear the power of Bhagavan's eyes. I completely surrendered myself at his feet. A new confidence surged within me. I was certain that Bhagavan would protect me.

I returned and made earnest efforts to get a job. On February 19, 1948, while walking on Abids Road, Hyderabad, I came across my old friend Cheruvu Parthasarathi, who was Chief Accountant in A.P. Electricity Dept. To my surprise, he made affectionate enquiries and got me a job in Sirpur Paper Mills Ltd. on a salary of five hundred rupees per month. I settled down comfortably at Sirpur, Kagaznagar, Andhra Pradesh. Is it possible to explain the mystery of Ramana's protection? Why should he care? Yet he came into my life in a forlorn hour and made it beautiful beyond compare. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram).

New publication of the Kendram

FACE TO FACE WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI – containing uplifting and enchanting reminiscences of 160 persons, was released at Hyderabad by Sri V.S. Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, in the presence of Sri T.N. Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka. This 419-page book, with 18 pages of photographs, is available in the market. It can be had at 10 per cent discount from the Kendram's bookstall for Rs. 225 (Hardbound) or Rs. 180 (Paperback). For delivery by courier, a cheque or DD payable at Hyderabad in favour of SRI RAMANA KENDRAM for Rs. 255 or Rs. 210, may please be sent to Sri Ramana Kendram, 2-2-1109/A, Batakamma Kunta, Sivam Road, Hyderabad- 500013. Phone: (040) 274240.

SRI RAMANA REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI PRANAVANANDA

Swami Pranavananda (S.Narasimham before *sannyasa*), uncle of Dr. S.Radhakrishnan, former President of India, was a *munshi* in Police Training College and taught local languages to Europeans. Among others, he wrote *Ramana Maharshi Charitramu*, *Sri Ramana Stutipatalu* and *Sri Guru-Anugraha Avataramu*. He was the first to translate *Who am I?* into Telugu. He says:

Once I came to the Ashram from Gudivada [Andhra Pradesh]. Bhagavan asked me in a tone brimming with affection whether Kallaturi Seetharamaiah was all right. "Who is he?" I asked. "Dr. Kallaturi Seetharamaiah", said Bhagavan with emphasis and gave a detailed description about him. I was overwhelmed at the thought of his love and consideration for the devotees. This person had visited Bhagavan only once or twice earlier. He was not the one to talk freely with Bhagavan; he would only offer his respects and sit quietly in a corner.

A fortnight before Bhagavan's *mahanirvana* we were all having his *darshan* by filing past him in a queue. The *sarvadhikari* told me, "Bhagavan is looking at you intensely and you can take liberties with him. A doctor, Kaviraj, has been sent from Calcutta by Sri Rajendra Babu specially to treat Bhagavan. Kindly recommend the doctor to him." Accordingly, I made the request. Bhagavan said, "Will anyone safeguard after the dinner the leaf on which he has eaten?" I then realised that this body is like a leaf. When the purpose for which the body has taken shape is over, it will have to be thrown away as a leaf on which the food has been taken. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram.)

KARTHIKAI DEEPAM OR DEEPAM FESTIVAL

This grand festival, which stretches over a period of ten days is attended by lakhs of people every year. On the tenth day of the festival, a huge Deepam (lamp) is lit at the top of the hill

Arunachala. A large basin-like copper cauldron, kept on the summit of the hill, is filled with ghee. The light which is lit with great festivity at 6 p.m. is visible from a distance of almost 30 miles in all directions. In the early Tamil literature the phrase 'like a beacon on the top of the hill' was used as an illustration of widespread fame. This shows that the practice must have been in vogue from time immemorial. The origin of this tradition can be traced back to the legend of Ardhanareeswara. According to the legend, the Divine Mother Parvati came to Tiruvannamalai and did penance to be united with Her Lord. Lord Siva was pleased with the penance, and appearing as a column of dazzling light took Her into Himself. This merging of Sakti into Siva is represented by the Ardhanareeswara (half woman and half man) form.

This event occurred on the full moon day in the Tamil month of Karthikai, which generally runs from mid-November to mid-December. Ever since, it has been the practice to light a lamp at the top of Arunachala hill on this day every year, and worship the Lord.

According to another legend, the big cauldron is lit in commemoration of the episode of Lord Siva quelling the pride of Brahma and Vishnu by Himself appearing before them as a huge column of fire, which got consolidated as mountain Arunachala. According to a story in the *Sivapuramam*, once Brahma and Vishnu were arguing about their respective superiority. Suddenly they saw an endless column of fire beside them. They decided to find the limit of the column, agreeing that whoever reached the end of it would be

superior to the other. Vishnu started to dig the earth to find the root, and Brahma flew in the sky

to find the top. In due course of time, having failed in their mission, both returned to the earth. While Vishnu accepted his defeat, Brahma told a lie that he had reached the top and showed a flower, which he claimed he had got from Siva's head. Lord Siva appeared on the scene and rebuked Brahma for telling a lie. The huge column of fire, the form of Siva, eventually got frozen as mountain.

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

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

Other person's fault are before one's eye; one's own behind the back. – *Seneca*

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

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

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*

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 (*sisya*) to 'see'. It is not the result of an action. It happens at the right moment when pure Consciousness reveals itself. – *Ashtavakra Gita*

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

February- 07

VIRTUES OF SATSANGA

Satsanga is a gathering of like-minded people trying to hone their spiritual instincts. Any activity which puts one into association with the divine in any form qualifies as *satsanga*. The *Bhagavata* says that *satsanga* is the first step towards developing faith and devotion in God. It sharpens spiritual hunger and invites introspection and correction. Its primary motive is the awakening of God consciousness. It is the information centre and training place for the journey to the Lord. This ‘information’ may be disseminated in any form – spiritual talk, song, recitation, or even pure silence. Sitting in the presence of a realized soul who maintains perfect silence is the highest *satsanga* and confers amazing benediction. Ramana Maharshi hardly uttered words, yet devotees got immense benefit by just sitting and soaking in his divine vibrations. The vibrations of peace and goodwill generated through *satsanga* provide shade for souls weary with the heat and dust of worldly life. Ultimately, the purest and most distilled meaning of *satsanga* is company of Self or *sat*. When one acquires the attitude of constant awareness of God’s presence, it becomes the holiest *satsanga*. Life’s journey becomes not only less fearful but also infinitely more edifying and blissful. – *Shammi Paranjape*

The doyen of Hindi poets Tulsidas in his celebrated classic *Ramacharitamansa* describes at length the benefits of *satsanga*. In brief, he says: Association with the assemblage of holy persons is like dip into a pool which can transform even a crow into a cuckoo and a heron into a swan. Such a dip gives all the four rewards of human existence, namely, *dharma* (religious merit), *artha* (material riches), *kama* (sensuous enjoyment) and *moksha* (release from worldly bondage). He goes on to say: wisdom can dawn upon a person only through *satsanga*, which is the root of joy and blessings and which constitutes the very fruit and fulfillment of all endeavour. Just as the base metal is transmuted by the touch of the philosopher’s stone, a wicked can become virtuous through *satsanga*.

LEARNING FROM LIFE: To learn from life and from one’s experiences one must be open, receptive and flexible. All one needs is a child-like mind, a mind free from concepts and rigid ideas. With such a flexible mentality, wisdom flows from every side. It is said that Dattatreya had made 24 gurus during his wanderings. These were: earth, air, sky, water, fire, moon, sun, pigeon, python, ocean, archer, moth, snake, bee, spider, firefly, fish, deer, hawk, honey-gatherer, child, elephant, sparrow, and a courtesan – Pingala. He once said: All things in the world may be classed as either good or bad. The

good taught him what he must seek, and the bad taught him what he must avoid. – *Seema Burman*

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI TELLS THE STORY OF *MANIKKAVACHAKAR AND HIS TIRUVACHAKAM*

Manikkavachakar born in Pandya *Desa*, was sent to school very early. He read religious books, absorbed the lessons therein, and became noted for his devotion to Lord Siva. Having heard about his scholarship and *bhakti*, the Pandya king sent for him, made him his minister with the title of *Thennavan Brahmarayan* – Leaders among *Brahmins* in the South. Though he performed his duties as a minister with tact and integrity, he had no desire for material happiness and was always absorbed in spiritual matters. In course of time, he left his post in the king's court and became a monk.

While going from place to place, he came to Chidambaram, stayed there and started singing heart-melting songs. One day, Nataraja Himself went to the house of Manikkavachakar in the guise of a *brahmin* and said: It seems you have been singing hymns during your visit to sacred places of pilgrimage and that you are doing it here also. May I hear them? The great poet began singing in ecstasy, and the Lord in the guise of *brahmin* started writing them on palm leaves. Singing on and on, the monk completely forgot himself in the thought of his Lord and ultimately became silent. The *brahmin* quietly disappeared.

Next day, when the *dikshitar* (priest) came to the Nataraja temple for performing the morning *puja* he found a palm-leaf book in front of the Nataraja image. When the book was opened, it had on it the word *Tiruvachakam* and a note that the book was written, as dictated by Manikkavachakar. It was signed *Tiruchitrambalam*, i.e., Chidambaram, with the stamp of Sri Nataraja below. The temple priests were greatly surprised and sent word to Manikkavachakar. They showed him the book and the signature of the Lord and asked him to tell about the genesis of the book.

The great poet did not say anything but asked them to accompany him to the temple. Standing opposite the Lord, he told the priests, "Sirs, the Lord in front of us is the only answer to your question. He is the answer." Having said this, he merged into the Lord.

As he narrated the story, the Maharshi's voice got choked. Unable to speak any more he remained in ecstatic silence. (Excerpted from *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi*. The book is available at the Kendram's bookstore.)

SASTRAS, STOTRAS AND SUTRA: Pramahansa Nithyananda classifies spiritual literature into three categories. One is books of philosophy which tell us about life, death, what is *atman*, etc. These provide intellectual material. These are perceptions of individual philosophers. They are called *Sastras*. If internalized they can be very productive; otherwise they are just fodder to ego and create arrogance of knowledge. The second are songs in praise of God, meant to uplift the spirit in devotion. These are called *Stotras*. Third kind of spiritual literature is for those seeking solutions. These are the aphorisms, techniques to provide solutions. They are called *Sutras*.

RELEVANCE OF THE BIG AND THE SMALL: U.S. poet and essayist Emerson's poem 'Fable' refers to a quarrel between a mountain and a squirrel, which ends up with the squirrel saying: "If I'm not as large as you,/ You are not so small as I,/ And not half as lively,/ Talents differ, all is well and wisely put;/ If I cannot carry forests on my back,/ Neither can you crack a nut."... There should not arise any sense of pride over our position in life, the talents we possess or the nature of work we perform. Each one even at the lowest rung of the ladder has a role to play. It is not the size of the work done or the offering made that is material, but the spirit, the devotion, the dedication and the selflessness that goes with it. When the self diminishes, we begin to understand and appreciate the relevance and place of each expression of life in the scheme of the universe and a sense of closeness to and respect for all arises – whether big or small. Emerson in the poem meaningfully states: 'All is well and wisely put.' – *Surendra Narayan*

THE STARTING POINT OF SPIRITUAL QUEST: The universe is composed of waves. Living bodies are conglomeration of waves. We believe that our bodies are solid. It is not so. We think that our bones are solid. But bones have pores in them. Like the human body, the mind and intellect are also a series of waves. In comprehending the waves we do not comprehend anything that is beyond the waves, beyond the modifications. Unsurprisingly we have declared that there is no basic substance like the soul. The medium of knowledge does not allow us to posit the existence of a substance beyond the comprehension of the mind. We are so enmeshed in the world of modifications and waves that we are unable to see anything beyond. It is our limitation, which compels us to search for the soul, and this is the starting point of spiritual quest. – *Acharya Mahaprajna*

SWAMI RAMA EXPERIENCES SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Swami Rama (1925-96), a well-known spiritual figure, was ordained a monk in early childhood. He went to USA in 1969 and founded the Himalayan Institute to create a bridge between the ancient teachings of the East and the modern scientific approach of the West. The following is from his book *Living with the Himalayan Masters*. He writes:

Dr. T.N.Dutta, a prominent physician from Gajipur in U.P., came to see me at Nasik, where I was staying. He told me that he was very anxious to take me with him to Arunachala to have *darshan* of Maharshi Ramana. It was winter of 1949. My stay at the Ashram was brief, but very pleasant. During those days Maharshi Ramana was observing silence. There were several foreign students staying in the ashram. Shastriji, one of his prominent disciples, would give discourses and Maharshi Ramana would sit quietly.

There was one thing that I found in his presence which was very rare and which I seldom found elsewhere. For those whose hearts were open to that vice of silence which was perennially radiating in the ashram, just sitting near him was enough to answer any question arising from within. It is true that to be in the presence of a great man is the same as experiencing *savikalpa samadhi*. Maharshi Ramana did not have a physical guru. “He is the greatest and holiest man born on the soil of India within a hundred years’ period,” said Dr. Radhakrishnan. A glance of such a great man purifies the way of the soul.

According to Maharshi Ramana, contemplating on the single query, “Who am I” can lead the aspirant to the state of self-realization. Though this method of contemplation is the foundation stone of the philosophies of both the East and the West, it was revived again by Maharshi Ramana. The entire Vedanta philosophy was brought into practice by the Maharshi. “He put the Iliad* in a nutshell”: By knowing oneself one knows the self of all.

After five days’ stay in the spiritually vibrant atmosphere of Arunachala we came back to Nasik. My visit to Arunachala and the *darshan* of the Maharshi added fuel to the fire which was burning within me. “Renounce thee, and you will attain”: this echoed in my heart so powerfully that my stay at Nasik became more and more impossible. It was not easy for me to run away, abruptly leaving all the responsibilities – but one day the courage came to me, and I left Nasik for my Himalayan home.

I have firm conviction that no one can be enlightened by anyone else – but sages inspire and give inner strength, without which self-enlightenment is impossible. In today’s world human beings do not have any example to follow. There is no one to inspire them, and that is why enlightenment seems to be so difficult. Great sages are the source of inspiration and enlightenment.

*Iliad is a Greek epic poem attributed to Homer.

A DUTCH SCHOLAR'S TRIBUTE TO SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Sadhu Ekarasa (Dr. G.H. Mees, M.A., LL.D.) – a Dutch, came to the Maharshi in 1936. For him it was a case of deep devotion from the very first meeting. He writes:

When Kon-Fu-Tse met Wen-Poh-Hsuche-Tse, he did not speak a word. Then his companion, Tse-Lu, said, "Master, for a long time you have wished to see Wen-Poh-Hsuche-Tse. Why is it that you don't speak, now that you see him?" Kon-Fu-Tse answered, "One only needs to look at someone like him. There is no need for speaking. One must see a sage in order to experience him."

In the presence of the Maharshi, the same thing happened to me when I saw him for the first time, and during the many years that I visit him again and again, especially during the three years that I stayed near him almost without interruption. It is for this same reason I find it ever difficult to speak or write about the Maharshi, as I am often asked to do. For a sage who always lives in the realisation, St Dionysius's words hold good: "All that you may say about God is untrue, for God is beyond speech and therefore what you say about God relates to something else." Therefore, if in India someone asks me to speak or to write about the Maharshi, I am inclined to answer that the questioner ought to visit the Maharshi and see

for himself. Westerners have often asked me, "What exactly does the Maharshi do?" One should in fact answer, "The daily occupation of the Sage is to be himself." Because he really succeeds in doing so, the Maharshi makes such a great impression on many of his visitors.

The Maharshi effects drastic changes in the lives of many like me. That's what he does, and he does so by doing nothing at all. Often 'the great of this earth' feel like small schoolboys while standing before him. The late Maharaja of Mysore knelt humbly before him and stood motionless for a long time with tears in his eyes. He knelt once more and departed

without a word. If a man were to do the greatest deed in the world and come and sit in the presence of Ramana Maharshi he would realise that his deed was nothing compared to the perpetual deed of Self-realisation of the Sage.

If a man were to write the greatest book in the world and come and lay it as an offering before the Sage he would realise that the Sage was a greater Book, which is written from day to day, not with the medium of pen, ink and paper, without intermediation, and even without any conscious effort, in the inner being of all who care to come and read it. In

the case of other personalities it is always possible to make a distinction between theory and practice, or between spirituality and intellect on the one hand and action on the other hand. With the Maharshi no such distinction exists.

The Maharshi is above the spirit of time. His immortality stands out from his every word and look. It lives in the inner heart of all who have had the great privilege to come and sit in his presence. It is reflected only poorly in the books and articles that have been written about him. How could it be otherwise? No one can truly describe God or Truth. Even so, no one can truly describe a Son of God and an embodiment of Truth. After having studied the lives and ways of teachings of saints and sages of the world, it strikes one that Sri Ramana falls into a class of his own. No one has achieved God-Realisation merely by hearing a name of God. Sri Ramana received 'initiation' by merely hearing the name of Arunachala, pronounced only for the purpose of conveying information about a journey. Sri Ramana claimed his spiritual heritage without even having been told there was a heritage to claim. He is a Guru in the true sense of the word – the word means 'dispeller of darkness'. The Maharshi's way is as direct as it is simple. But it is so profound that it fails to reach the consciousness of many. Many come to him for something definite, or, in other words, finite. They do not understand that they stand in between the true Initiation into the Mystery of Being and themselves. Many times it has happened that visitors and resident disciples have asked the Maharshi to vouchsafe them initiation, grace, blessings or spiritual experience, and that he replied, "I am always giving it. If you cannot comprehend it, what am I to do?" In contradiction to gurus of a less exalted level, who are inclined to be aware of their spiritual superiority, Ramana Maharshi considers all beings to be potential *jnanis* with God-Reality shining within them, even if they are not aware of it. Some of his utterances run parallel to that of the eighth century mystic Hui Neng who said: "The only difference between a Buddha and the average man is that one realises what the other discards."

Sri Ramana proclaims that the Divine Heritage is ever there, waiting to be received; God-Reality is ever present within the Heart of all. The average man is inclined to pity the Sage, whom he regards as having foregone the pleasure of life. The Sage, however, pities his sympathizing fellow human beings, because the latter do not know what real happiness is. From the point of view of the restless worldly mind, which delights in movement and change, an unbroken stay of fifty years in one place seems to be a tremendous achievement. It is indeed unique. But surely Sri Ramana has never looked upon it as being in any way remarkable. He has attained the Great Magnet of the world, the centre of the Heart, and became as immovable as his Father, Lord Arunachala.

Extracts from his poem: *Heart's Homage to Sri Ramana*

To that incomparable Maharshi, the father and mother of all,
In whom Siva and the Goddess are ever united in Bliss,
To that Sage, whose presence delights the heart,
And whose *leela* is the wonder of all –
To him be offered mind, heart, body, – all creation!

* * *

If future generations will ask what was
The special note of Ramana the Sage,
I shall reply: If any, it is *certainty*;
The certain safety of a Rock, unmoved,
Unchallenged in a storm-swept sea,
The immovable solidity of a mountain
In an ever-wavering world of doctrines and philosophies,
Yea, truly art thou the Sage of 'Arunachala'!

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

GO WITH THE FLOW: When you happen to meet misfortunes, difficulties and harassments, it is okay to ask, “Why me?” “What have I done to get them?” “Why cannot my life be the way it was?” “Why has it changed suddenly like this?” This may be for a while or a little longer. Then it is time to shift gears and start accepting what you are faced with. You may be feeling that your situation is unfair, but it is reality, it just is. So instead of railing against it, try to embrace any good that might be hidden in it...Change all thoughts to empowering ones. Change the mindset of “I can't” to a mindset of “I can” and you will find the strength to face the challenge...Shift any catastrophising thoughts such as “This is THE worst thing that could happen to me” to “I have handled other challenges in my life, and I am sure I will survive this one. I will face all the problems that come my way”... The secret to moving on is to simply keep moving...one thought, one step, and one day at a time. – *Suzanne Zoglio*

TRANSCENDING KARMA AND RETRIBUTION: Homer wrote (*Iliad*): “No man or woman born, coward or brave, can shun destiny.” The great Tamil work *Kural* talks of the inexorability of fate and destiny. Sanskrit poet Bartruhari observes how one will get according to his capacity, which is determined by past actions (*karma*). He points out that a pot of certain size can be filled up only with a limited quantity of water regardless of whether it is dipped into a small well or a huge ocean...Scriptures are cited often as convenient excuses and alibis by fatalists and the indolent to explain away their ineffectiveness and failures. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that free will coupled with intelligent action and thought can, to a large extent, neutralize and make up for the limiting and binding effects of *karma* and destiny. The *Gita* (4.19 and 37) and Pantanjali’s *Yoga Sutras* (2.16) assure that intelligence (*jnanagnai*) can quell the impact of all *karma* whereby difficulties, which would otherwise have ensued, can be preempted. This intelligence is obtained by assiduous study, practice and application (*sadhana*) cultivating thus, a dominant free will within. Aeschylus (ancient Greek author) observes how even gods join in when a person is eager and willing. British poet Longfellow writes: “Let us then be up and doing / With a heart for any fate.” This is also the application of Henley’s concept in his *Invictus*: “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” This indeed is the process of neutralizing, making up for and winning over the fetters of all *karma* and retribution. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

The great remedy for the long-lasting disease of *samsara* is the enquiry, ‘Who am I?, to whom does this *samsara* belong?, which entirely cures it. – *Yoga Vasistha*

BURNING OF KAMA BY SIVA

Kama was asked by the gods to enchant Lord Siva. Kama’s presence filled the air with romance: Siva’s snow-capped mountain transformed into pleasure garden full of flowers, bees and butterflies. Flowers bloomed to greet Kama; they made offerings of pollen and nectar at his feet. Apsaras danced while Gandharvas sang, cheering Kama, who raised his sugar cane bow, drew his bowstring of bees and shot five arrows at Siva. The arrows stirred Shiva’s senses. He was not amused. He opened his third eye and let loose a fiery missile that set Kama ablaze and reduced him to ashes. Having destroyed the lord of sensory indulgence, the lord of sensory discipline resumed his meditation.

Siva’s *tapas* leaps out of his third eye. This eye stands vertical and is oriented neither to the left nor to the right. It transcends all standards and values; it looks beyond.

Siva's attention is inward. He uses the flames of *tapas* to burn all memories, desires, ideas, values and standards that crumple his *chitta*. In the light of the fire Siva sees the true nature of the self within. He experiences bliss – *ananda*. This *ananda* causes his phallus to rise.

In the following story, Rishis misinterpret Siva's erect phallus. They thought he is aroused by the enchantments of the material world. They failed to notice that, though Siva's manhood is aroused, his eyes were shut. The stimulus is not external but internal. The erect phallus, the *linga*, is self-stirred, a result of spiritual enlightenment. Siva passed by Rishis who were performing *yajna* in the forest. The wives of Rishis were aroused by Siva and pursued him. This angered the Rishis. They used the power of *yajna* to create a tiger, a venomous snake and a demon. Siva flayed the tiger alive, and wrapped the skin around him. He caught the snake and wound it round his neck like a necklace. Then, leaping on the demon's back, he began to dance. As he danced, the Rishis realized Siva was God and his dance was a visual discourse on the true purpose of existence – not to indulge the ego and change the world, but to discover the divine within with the help of the divine without. (Source: The *Siva* and *Skanda puranas*.)

Good habits result from resisting temptations. – *Anonymous*

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

It is now clear that science is incapable of ordering life. A life is ordered by values. – *Jawaharlal Nehru*

The purpose of our existence is to seek happiness. The highest happiness is when one reaches the stage of liberation, at which there is no more suffering. – *The Dalai Lama*

Happiness is not a destination; it is a method of life. – *Burton Hills*

The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing. – *Walt Disney*

Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm. – *Winston Churchill*

Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe. – *Saint Augustine*

Your duty is to BE, and to be this or that. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

One who desires worldly pleasures and the one who desires to renounce them, stand on the same footing, for they both nurture desire. – *Ashtavakra Gita*

THE MYSTERY OF MIND: Consciousness is enlightenment where the seeker subjectively realizes Truth and experiences absolute bliss. Science says consciousness is fundamental to knowing all about the world objectively. The mind identifies one to one's physical body whereas consciousness is one's true nature established in one's true self that illumines the mind. The mind though associated with consciousness all the time, cannot know it. This is called ignorance in spiritual parlance. This is why spiritual masters guide us to a state beyond mind towards experiencing the consciousness, our true nature. The very existence of mind is with either past or future and never with present, for in the present remains only existence. The mind thinks of only three-dimensional space whereas science today has a multidimensional approach. – *K. R. Manohar*

Not to have control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship, bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

There are three classes of devotees. The lowest one says, "God is up there", and he points to the heaven. The mediocre devotee says that God dwells in the heart as the "Inner Controller." But the highest devotee says: "God alone has become every thing. All things that we perceive are so many forms of God." – *Sri Ramakrishna*

RECOGNISE YOUR INDUALITY: With great eagerness and wonder you rush to see one Mahatma here and another Mahatma there! If you inquire, attain and know the *Maha-Atma* within your own heart, then every Mahatma is none other than that One [within you]. Whatever high and wonderful state of *tapas* one may have attained, if one still identifies oneself with an individuality, one is only an aspirant of, perhaps, an advanced stage. - *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

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SELF-REALISATION THROUGH BHAKTI: Total, unqualified and unquestioned faith in a higher force, in the conviction that this divinity is the repository of all solutions and succour, is the path of devotion. This involves singing His glory and attributes from the depths within. Known as *nama sankeertanam* or *namjaap*, this path extolled by even intellectuals as *Adi Sankaracharya*, is open to all...From a purely rational and practical point of view, this technique essentially involves generation of feelings of joy, liveliness, harmony and acceptance within. These verily neutralize and cleanse the psyche of the accumulated toxins and weaknesses...Even from a pragmatic view, this approach, when applied with inner conviction and a deep yearning, could serve to still mental toughness,

where the apparently sophisticated techniques may merely flounder. – K. Vijayaraghavan

SOFTWARE OF OUR MIND: We are driven by our unconscious, not by our rational mind as we wish to imagine. We call this software of emotion-filled memories that lie buried deep in our unconscious, *samskaras*. These are embedded memories of our past, sometimes of previous lives, that drive us into action in the future... Since *samskaras* are from the unconscious, we are unable to do anything to stop them, to control them or modify them. Unless, a big unless, we learn to penetrate the unconscious. We can penetrate the unconscious and dissolve our *samskaras* built by our mind since childhood. All we need to do is to bring ourselves into the present moment. In the present moment, no *samskaras* exist, as these are product of our past. In the present moment, we have neither regrets nor anticipation. We just are... Meditation leads us into the present moment. Meditation leads us into awareness of our *samskaras* and from there into their dissolution. Meditation gives us control over our life, taking it away from the embedded software of our mind. – Paramahansa Nithyananda

SAMADHI By S.S. Cohen

Suleman Samuel Cohen, an Iraqi Jew who was a qualified accountant, came to India in 1927 in search for the key to the mystery of life. He eventually adopted Sri Ramanasramam as his home in 1936. He died in 1980 and lies buried in the Ashram campus. The following is from his publication entitled *Advaitic Sadhana*.

The word *samadhi* has often been translated as 'trance' in English, which is highly misleading. Trance has a bad odour, and can by no means convey the idea of the pure consciousness which is vividly experienced in the heart in *samadhi*.

Samadhi is the experience of the pure, formless consciousness in the heart. The early experience of *samadhi* is vague and shaky, but it acquires firmness by practice. If the *samadhi* continues to be disturbed by thoughts, it is called *savikalpa*, in which, the world, as thoughts, is still feebly present. The next higher *samadhi* is the *nirvikalpa*, wherein the mind stands poised in the stillness of the Heart. When by constant practice *nirvikalpa samadhi* is turned into *sahaja*, Self-realisation or *jivanmukti* – the state of Liberation-in-life is said to have been achieved. The *jivanmukta* is permanently aware of his reality as consciousness-bliss.

Samadhi is the state of one's own true Self, in which all human endeavours find fulfillment. For him who has achieved it there remains nothing more to do or aspire for in life: he has realised his own truth, as the all, the soul of all, dwelling ever and ever in the hearts of all. And because this state is beyond common experience, it has been subject to so much speculation and unintelligent guesswork. Hence is the need for the above details.

(For many interesting and absorbing abstracts from the writings of Cohen, refer pages 78-84 in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a recent publication of the Kendram.)

VAIKUNTHA EKADASHI: *Ekadashi* refers to the eleventh day of the fortnight in a lunar month and is synonymous with fasting and abstinence. The *ekadashi* in the *Dhanurmasha shukala paksha*, waxing phase of the moon, is *Vaikuntha Ekadashi*, which falls in Dec.-Jan. each year.

The *Padma Purana* tells us about the beginning of *ekadashi*: During the *Satya Yuga*, *devas* and mortals were harassed by the *asura* Muran. Unable to bear his tyranny, the *devas* approached Lord Siva, who directed them to Lord Vishnu. The latter then went to battle with Muran. During the long battle, Lord Vishnu needed rest. He entered a beautiful cave, Himavati, to sleep. Muran wanted to seize this opportunity to strike the Lord. However, Shakti – Vishnu's female energy – emerged from the Lord's body as a beautiful damsel who fought and vanquished Muran. Lord Vishnu named this maiden *Ekadashi* and granted her a boon to deliver people from sins if they fast on this day... Muran represents the *tamasic* and *rajasic* attributes in us. The import of the *ekadashi vrata* is that one can overcome *rajasic* and *tamasic* tendencies through fasting. This helps us reach our ultimate destination, *Vaikuntha*, the stage of no *kuntitha* or dullness, stupidity and misery... It is said that it was on this day the *ksheerasagara manthana* or churning of the ocean took place. – *Sangeeta Venkatesh*

PROFESSOR ATREYA'S TRIBUTE TO THE MAHARSHI

Prof. B.L. Atreya, who was Head, Dept. of Philosophy and Psychology, Benaras Hindu University, had visited the Maharshi in March 1940. He records:

I had the privilege of being at the Ashram of Ramana Maharshi for a short time. This made a deep impression on my mind, a mind that has been moulded by a study of scientific and philosophic writings of the East as well as of the West. The greatest peculiarity of Ramana Maharshi's life in that although he has moulded and perfected

his personality on the lines of Advaita Vedanta, a purely Indian way of Self-realization, he is highly appreciated and resorted to by the Western seekers and by those Indians who have been educated on Western lines.

Ramana Maharshi's greatness is deeply founded. It is based on his actual living by the creed of the Advaita Vedanta, which holds that the reality is one without a second, that everything in this universe is but one Reality, which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. True to his creed, he regards nothing alien, none as other, no event as undesirable. For him the ideal is the real and the real is the ideal. He has no other relation with anybody but that of love. Love, affection, kindness, mercy etc., which are expressions of one and the same thing, and the feeling of unity with all, ever flow from him. *Jnana* is like *akasha* [the sky]. The supreme Self which is to be known through *sadhana* is like the ether. The various objects we see in the world as well as the souls are also like the ether. Therefore, who is to know which? What is to be known by what? The supreme realization is that there is no plurality. True knowledge is 'distinction-less'.

That knowledge is the Self, the light divine. That knowledge is Bhagavan Ramana. This is the secret of the Maharshi's unique greatness and consequent popularity. **The whole of humanity owes its homage to this great Sage amidst us.** (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

HAPPINESS IS WITHIN: Even with the biggest and the best of apples, people are not just able to keep the doctors away. Depression and dysfunction still ravage us because we generally confuse happiness with feeling good. Techniques of feeling good from food, sex or novelty are not the same as the 'art of living good', that is, how to live good the way you would want to live in accordance with your values. – *Vithal Nadkarni*

THE LAW OF KARMA: "As you sow, so shall you reap." The 'reaping' is implied across several life spans and not necessarily during the one in which 'sowing' is done. You are the architect of your future. Clearly, this law is a call for right action in order to ensure a bright future. As the law of *karma* is in operation, every rational individual would be motivated to carry out right action. – *Ravi Panwar*

SELF-KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SELF-ENQUIRY

The following are excerpts from *The Mountain Path* of July-October, 2006.

The first thought that arises in our consciousness is the sense 'I'. This makes us identified with the body. The mind is a bundle of thoughts whose basis is the 'I-thought'. When the consciousness of 'I' is identified with an object, 'I am such and such' becomes a thought. That which shines alone as 'I-I' is not a thought, it is our being-consciousness. We conventionally call it Self but really is has no name. It is the true source of our existence. The more we focus our attention on this sense of 'I', the more the mind subsides.

The aim of self-enquiry is to 'know' that by which everything else is known. The process of knowing implies a subject who knows. If we remain focused on the subject 'I' without the slightest intrusion of other objects including thoughts, that will pull us into the Heart where the pure consciousness shines free of all identification.

The physical body has no independent consciousness and is dependent on 'something' to give it life. The physical body cannot be called our real nature because it does not exist in sleep when our consciousness is identified with a dream body. In the state of sleep, the dream world presents to us an individual with whom we identify as our self and who interacts with others in a seemingly real world. For example, if I am attacked during sleep, I feel the anxiety and anguish which accompanies the assault. Suddenly, I wake up to realise that the episode was only a dream. What happened? Apparently there was my body which was solid and measurable; there was also somebody else (dream body) who appeared tangible and there was the painful reaction. Another example: in a dream state if we are chased by a dream tiger, in spite of all our study and analysis of the waking and dream state, we will run for our life. Why? Because the knowledge that it is only a dream will not be available to us during dream.

This world that we perceive during waking state, is also false like a dream – which can be called a “waking dream”. Because of our lack of insight, we fail to see the unreality of the world and therefore take it to be real and act in the world as if it were real. The one difference between the waking state and the dream state is the memory in the former which holds together the episodes in the waking state like a string so that we appear to be one coherent 'I' to whom various things happen. Each night when we enter a state of deep sleep there is no awareness of our body or mind. But as soon as we get up, our mind begins to function and we think 'I am this body'. With this identification the external world arises automatically through the five senses.

When we are dreaming, the experience is as real as that in the waking state. When we ‘wake up’ we realise those dream experiences were only a dream and have no reality. If we cannot wake up during the dreams when we are asleep, how then can we wake up in the midst of this “waking dream”?

Only when the *jnana* (knowledge) dawns, there is the revelation that I am totally free and not dependent for my existence. I am self-radiant awareness. There is nothing apart from myself to know myself. Self-knowledge is not like knowing objects; it is knowing and being at once.

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI PERFORMS A MIRACLE

T.R. Kanakammal author of *Cherished Memories*, has recorded the following:

One day when Shantammal (Cook at the Ashram) had just finished cooking food sufficient only for the Ashram inmates, a party of dozen or so guests, eager to have Bhagavan’s *darshan*, showed up. It was a hot day and the Ashram, in those days being on the outskirts of the town, was far from the nearest public place to eat. The approach of the lunch bell was imminent and Shantammal was in a quandary. What she had cooked would not suffice for both inmates and the newly arrived guests. Neither was there enough time to cook additional food. Even if none of the guests asked permission to have lunch at the Ashram, Shantammal was pretty sure that Bhagavan, in his characteristic way, would direct them into the dining hall with his stick at the sound of the bell. After mustering up the courage, she approached Bhagavan: “Bhagavan food has only been prepared for the inmates.” But Bhagavan did not even appear to have heard her. Shantammal went back to the kitchen and wrung her hands in despair, expressing her predicament to Madhava Swami. The latter replied, “Don’t worry, we will lay out leaves for everyone but serve only a little food as *prasad* to each.”

The bell rang and all were seated before leaf plates. Every time Shantammal went to the rice pot to take out rice, a sense of fear seized her. But lo and behold! the supply was inexhaustible. All ate to their heart’s content and everybody was served liberally. Still enough was left in the pot to feed a dozen over and above those who had eaten.

In the evening, Shantammal approached the Maharshi reverentially and said, “Wonder of wonders, Bhagavan! Today there was only enough food for the inmates, yet it turned out to be sufficient for a dozen visitors in addition and there was enough left to feed even a dozen more. What great *siddhi* Bhagavan displayed today! Bhagavan

answered, Oh! I remember you saying something about food before lunch.” Then in a seemingly casual manner, he asked, “Who did the cooking today?” Taking it to be a routine question, one that he often asked, she unsuspectingly said, “I did, Bhagavan.” At once he replied, “Then the *siddhi* is yours!”

Dr. K. Subrahmanian, the founder of our Kendram, refers to an instance where a similar situation was handled differently. He writes: On one occasion a large number of people came to the Ashram unexpectedly and they had to be provided lunch. One of the cooks went to Bhagavan and said, “We are worried because there isn’t enough food.” Bhagavan said, “Don’t worry. There will be enough.” My uncle was present in the dining hall along with others. Bhagavan looked at almost every one before he started eating. My uncle said that even before eating most of the people felt full. So each one ate very little and what had been prepared was more than enough.(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

SIVA AND SAKTI

How Siva destroys the world: Worldly truths seem conditional, relative to space, time and the opinions of people. Siva is God who is not interested in these worldly truths. He seeks *sat*, truth, that is permanent, absolute, unconditional. So he shuts his eyes to the world, refusing to let memories, desires, ideas and ego crumple his consciousness. Purification of *chitta* leads to enlightenment. With enlightenment comes *ananda*, tranquil bliss. In bliss, Siva transcends all desires. There is no urge to sense or respond. No *karma*, hence no *samsara*. The world ceases to be. All that exists is the *atma*, the uncrumpled pure soul, in self-contained isolation. Siva is therefore God who destroys the world.

How Sakti validates all existence: One is a sterile number. When there is only one there can be no love, no yearning, no union. Two are required to forge a relationship. Without the other, the self has no meaning. For *sat* to make sense there is need for *maya*, conditional worldly truths. For the stillness of the soul to make sense there is need for the restlessness of energy. The Goddess is Maya, embodiment of all delusions. She is Sakti, personification of energy. She is *Adi*, primal, as ancient and boundless as the soul. Depending on time, space and judgements of people she can be as wild and fearsome as Kali or as gentle and affectionate as Gauri. She is the world Siva shuts himself from. She will stir love in his heart, make him open his eyes and be part of worldly life. Love will

connect the divine inside with the divine outside. The yearning and union that follow will validate all of existence. (Source: *Myth = Mithya* by Devdutt Pattanaik)

CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATI MAHASWAMI was the head of Sringeri Mutt from 1912 to 1954. The Mahaswami's wisdom and scholarship were widely recognized and respected. He said: Self-knowledge alone enables one to abide in a state of inherent happiness. Self-knowledge is not possible so long as one erroneously foists the notion of the Self on the body. One must not lose sight of the fact that only in the human birth one can practise the spiritual path and evolve. He quotes *Kathopanishad* which asserts that one who does not attain Self-knowledge inspite of human birth has truly lost everything that is worthwhile. He adds that a person who wastes his life without effort to become Self-aware is not only a fool but also one who has committed suicide. An intelligent person must make every effort to be free from worldly entanglements and seek Self-knowledge. Wisdom demands that one should surrender to a Self-realised *jnani*, live according to his guidance and become liberated. One must make earnest and sustained effort for Self-knowledge. Some fundamental questions like 'Who am I?', 'Why this birth?', 'Is there any way out?' have to be asked. (Source: *The Mountain Path*, July-Oct., 2006.)

BELIEF IN BRAHMN IS SCIENTIFIC: Transcending all theologies and denominations, humankind had a conviction in a creator-divinity, such as Brahmnn. People accepted this with blind faith because it enriched their lives. Now we have remarkable support from quantum physics and modern cosmology that the oneness of spiritual traditions seems to be the same oneness that science is now pointing to. The idea that everything physical in this universe comes from one source is getting general acceptance among most physicists. In 2004, the Nobel Prize in physics was given for contributions towards the Theory of Everything which aims to show that considering all fundamental particles and fields that make up this universe you are nothing but different aspects of one single source... Have you ever imagined how vast the universe is? It's almost beyond our comprehension. Yet, the preponderance of evidences uncovered by cosmology point to a mind-boggling fact that this vast universe originated from a space much smaller than a pack of dust. In fact, from so small a space that we are as large compared to it as the universe is large compared to us. It now seems plausible that the oneness envisioned by the Theory of Everything existed at the inception of the universe in a tiny nugget of space. All these evidences give us reason to have confidence in the belief that everything in the universe comes from one source. The belief in Brahmnn is no longer a matter of blind faith; it is anchored in scientific reality. – *Mani Bhaumik*

RELEVANCE OF THE BIG AND THE SMALL: U.S. poet and essayist Emerson's poem 'Fable' refers to a quarrel between a mountain and a squirrel, which ends up with the squirrel saying: "If I'm not as large as you,/ You are not so small as I,/ And not half

as spry./ Talents differ, all is well and wisely put;/ If I can not carry forests on my back,/ Neither can you crack a nut.”... There should not arise any sense of pride over our position in life, the talents we possess or the nature of work we perform. Each one even at the lowest rung of the ladder has a role to play. It is not the size of the work done or the offering made that is material, but the spirit, the devotion, the dedication and the selflessness that goes with it. When the self diminishes, we begin to understand and appreciate the relevance and place of each expression of life in the scheme of the universe and a sense of closeness to and respect for all arises – whether big or small. Emerson in the poem meaningfully states: ‘All is well and wisely put.’ – *Surendra Narayan*

THE STARTING POINT OF SPIRITUAL QUEST: The universe is composed of waves. Living bodies are conglomeration of waves. We believe that our bodies are solid. It is not so. We think that our bones are solid. But bones have pores in them. Like the human body, the mind and intellect are also a series of waves. In comprehending the waves we do not comprehend anything that is beyond the waves, beyond the modifications. Unsurprisingly we have declared that there is no basic substance like the soul. The medium of knowledge does not allow us to posit the existence of a substance beyond the comprehension of the mind. We are so enmeshed in the world of modifications and waves that we are unable to see anything beyond. It is our limitation, which compels us to search for the soul, and this is the starting point of spiritual quest. – *Acharya Mahaprajna*

Meditate and realize that this world is filled with the presence of God. – *Shvetashvara Upanishad*

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

The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing. – *Walt Disney*

INDIVIDUALS AS SUBSETS OF A HIGHER SET: Just as hundreds of terminals connected to a supercomputer seemingly work independently even though their actual control lies in the supercomputer, we, as individuals, may seem to have diametrically opposite personalities but the seeds of these traits spring from the same higher source. So every one of us is connected in some way to the Supreme One. Our sense of separateness from each other and from God is due to the fact that in our mental and sensory perceptions, we feel limited by our own individual bodies. This is because we, as individuals, dwell at a much lower level of consciousness. Each individual consciousness is bestowed with an ego, which makes it feel that it has an independent existence. It

makes its own goals and lives its own life. But the source of all of its thoughts, aspirations and actions lies in the cosmic consciousness. – *Rajesh B Pande*

SAMSARA AND THE MIND: The living ghost of *samsara*, which is the creation of the mind and the cause of sufferings, disappears when one ponders over it...Just as the idea of a snake in the picture of a snake ceases to be entertained when the truth is known, *samsara* ceases to exist when the Truth is realized, even if it continues to appear. – *Yoga Vasisthta*

GET OUT OF YOUR MIND: Spiritual realization is everybody's birthright. It is not a talent like painting, music or dancing; it is not genius either. It does not matter whether you have a big mind or you are a mediocre. The important thing is that you take yourself out of the mind. The strange thing is that the more a person is intellectual, the farther he goes away from himself. When an ordinary man meditates, he comes to the same stage of blissfulness as Einstein or Bertrand Russell. The blissfulness will not be different; will not be richer for Einstein or Russell because they were great intellectuals. An uneducated Jesus or an illiterate Kabir became enlightened because enlightenment is not a talent; it is discovering your Being. And the Being of everyone is absolutely equal. (Source: www.osho.com)

Mind alone is the cause of liberation and bondage. – *Adi Sankara*

We need to find God, but He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. – *Mother Teresa*

Only in the depth of pure silence can we hear the voice of God. – *Mata Amritanandamayi*

The true meaning of renunciation is not renouncing the world but renouncing bondage. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

Our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world, as in being able to remake ourselves. – *Mahatama Gandhi*

The journey through life is never far from darkness, or light. There are times of grief or depression, pain, fear or guilt mixed with happier, sunnier times... But wherever you are, in shadow or light, the good news is that you have a light or a presence within. According to scriptures this always walks with you whether you are aware of it or not. – *Vithal C. Nadkarni*

A JATAKA TALE: A hare lived beneath a *bilva* tree. One day, as he lay down under the tree, he thought, “If the earth should be destroyed what would become of me?” Just then a huge ripe *bilva* fruit fell on the ground with a big thud. The timid hare got extremely frightened at the sound and thinking that the earth was collapsing, fled blindly without so much as looking behind him. Another hare saw him scampering in fright and asked the cause of his panic. “Don’t ask me,” the first hare said without looking back. “The earth is collapsing.” At this the second hare ran even more furiously. Then another hare caught sight of them running, and joined in the fray till thousands of hares were all fleeing together. A deer, a boar, a buffalo, a wild ox, a tiger, an elephant and many other animals saw them, and when told that the earth was breaking up, they too fled. They hastened not to view the scene, “but lent a willing ear to idle gossip, and were very worried and upset with foolish fear.” That is when Bodhisatva, reborn as a wise lion, intervenes. He persuades the unfortunate beasts that: “Only those who attain wisdom’s calm delight and virtue’s heights can get over fear and panic.”

The grace of guru is like an ocean. If the devotee comes with a cup he will get only a cupful. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the ocean: the bigger the vessel the more the devotee will be able to carry. It is entirely up to him. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be reached by the senses, or by austerity or sacred actions. He can be seen in the silence of contemplation, wherein the five senses are resting. – *Atharva Veda*

When one learns to forget all that one remembers, then in which language will the mind think? The thinker has nothing to think upon. Therefore, there is no thought and no mind. Only the Self exists with its majestic glory, which is simply beautiful and indescribable. – *Swami Rama*

APRIL- 07

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI – A DEVOTEE NARRATES SOME MIRACULOUS INCIDENTS

V. Kameswara Rao, a government employee, met Sri Ramana in the late 1940s, after revelation in a dream.

Once I had a dream in which a saintly old man with a radiant smile beckoned to him. I told my wife about my dream, but could not identify the saint I had seen. Could it be Ramana Maharshi, about whom I had read the book *Self Realization*?1

I asked a friend of mine, who often went to Sri Ramanasramam, whether he would take me with him and he agreed. We set off that very day, arriving at the Ashram next morning. We went to the hall and there on a couch sat the Maharshi, the saint of my dream. I felt that I was in the presence of God. I fell prostrate before Bhagavan (for this was the name my friend used in addressing him). A group of men and women were seated silently on the floor on either side of him. Close to him sat an elderly bearded man binding a small book. Bhagavan asked me whether I had had my coffee. So I went out, had my bath and breakfast. When I got back I found that Bhagavan himself was stitching the book. I wondered why he should do it, and then I noticed how carefully he worked at it and showed the bearded man how to do it.

As a government servant I had to pass an examination in a second language within a prescribed period. I decided to take it in Tamil, although I knew very little of the language. I was a bit worried about it and wanted Bhagavan's blessings for my success. When I told my problem to Bhagavan, he replied '*parava illai*' (don't worry), which made me feel very happy. He advised me to take the little book *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?) and read it with the help of a Tamil tutor. Next morning, I went and prostrated before Bhagavan and asked his permission to leave. He gave it but asked why I was in such a hurry. My friend expressed a doubt whether I would be able to go that day, in view of what Bhagavan had said; but I had to get back. I bought the books from the Ashram bookstall and went to the station to find a two-day strike on the railway. When we went back and told Bhagavan about it, he smiled.

Two days later when I asked for leave to go, he said, 'Very well'. This time we walked to the station and a cart followed us with our baggage. When we arrived, the train was already in but the cart was not yet in sight, so I thought I would miss the train. I went to the stationmaster and told him that this was my second attempt to leave the Ashram and asked him to detain the train for a few minutes till my baggage arrived; he agreed.

When I got home, I engaged a tutor and stayed at home during the summer recess of the law courts, for reading *Who am I?* in Tamil. The written test came along. I had to translate an English speech into Tamil. I cleared the test without much difficulty. Then there was the more frightening oral test in Madras, but it also was made very easy and I passed that too.

In February 1949, my eldest son had a severe attack of smallpox. After a few days the doctor warned me that many people were dying of it and the chances of

recovery were slight. I sat at the boy's bedside reading religious poems so as to keep his mind on God, since he was not expected to live. Then, the idea suddenly came to me to ask Bhagavan for his blessings. So I wrote to him: "I pray for your blessings on the suffering child and his parents." Early next morning my sister, who had been taking her turn sitting by the boy during the night, told us that she had a vision of Ammavaru (the spirit of smallpox) leaving our house and asking her to take care of the boy. I also received a letter from the Ashram stating, "*Prasadam* (sacred ash) is sent herewith with Sri Bhagavan's gracious blessings for your child laid up with pox." The letter thrilled me. But how did Bhagavan know that my son had smallpox? Anyway, my son survived and is in good health. My faith in Bhagavan increased enormously as a result of this, because it was a matter of life and death for my boy and Bhagavan gave him life. In March, 1949 a big ceremony was held at the Ashram for the consecration of the temple over the *samadhi* of Bhagavan's mother. I decided to go and take my wife and my mother with me. A car was waiting at the door to take us to the station. Suddenly I felt that I should not go. My wife and mother naturally protested. Everyone was annoyed but I merely said, "Perhaps Bhagavan doesn't want me to see the function. I am sorry but I can't help it."

At about nine o'clock that evening I received a telegram that the only son of my sister was dangerously ill with meningitis, and that I should send my mother there at once. I put her on the train together with my sister. On arrival, the sister wrote me a frantic letter saying that the case of my nephew was hopeless and the only chance of saving him, if at all, was to invoke the blessings of Bhagavan. So, I again wrote to the Ashram. In reply I received Sri Bhagavan's blessing for the child and his parents. My nephew recovered. We had to cancel my journey to Tiruvannamalai. If we had gone, the telegram would not have reached me, my mother and sister would not have gone in time, and I would not have written asking for Bhagavan's blessings. My erratic decision, prompted by something unknown to me, saved the child. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S GRACE: The secret of a realized soul does not lie in the methods chosen but in the grace of God. No methods, no meditation, no prayer can make one eligible for union with God. It is only when we yearn for, long for and pine for God, we will be called. Till then, we can wait and play our roles as best as we can in the cosmic drama. – *Rajesh B Pande*

THE GAME OF LIFE: Whether a game of cards is all about skill or chance has been a subject of debate for long. Many see in it a striking parallel to the question of determinism vs. free will: Are our lives governed by destiny – by the cards dealt to us – or is the outcome of the game a testimony to our efforts, that is, the manner in which we play those cards? Voltaire (French philosopher and writer) believed: Each player must accept the cards life deals him. But once they are in hand, he alone must decide how to play in order to win the game. S. Radhakrishnan echoed this thought when he wrote: Life is like a game of bridge...We did not invent the game or design the cards. We did not frame the rules and we cannot control the dealing. But we can play the game well, or play it badly. A skilful player may have a poor hand and yet win the game. A bad player may have a good hand and yet make a mess of it. In the game of life too, the element of chance may not be in our control, but our skills are. Indeed, having to play in a situation where you have little control is not limited to card games. – *Anshul Chaturvedi*

MILAREPA – THE GREAT YOGI OF TIBET

The following is a brief summary of the book *The Life of Milarepa*. *It is based on condensation of the book provided by Mrs. Pramila Arab, a spiritual seeker who lives in Habsiguda, Hyderabad. Sri Bhagavan himself had suggested to a devotee to read this book, which was something very unusual. **

The book stresses the guru and disciple relationship, and the craving required in the devotee to spend his whole life, if necessary, for the pursuit of knowledge.

Milarepa was born in 1052 AD. Four years after his birth his mother presented him with a sister who was called Peta. At that time he was already betrothed to a little girl called Zetsy. He grew up in comfort and was like any one of us, stricken with human tendencies of anger, hatred, vengeance and sorrow, but rose to become the greatest known saint of Tibet. When he was seven his father died leaving the family to the care of his uncle and aunt together with the property which was to be held in trust until he would manage his own affairs. Soon the greedy uncle and aunt usurped their property, and the mother along with the children were forced to work in the fields.

For getting reduced to rags from riches, Milarepa builds up strong resentment for the people responsible for it. Egged by his mother, he leaves home with a few of her jewels, to train himself in Black Arts to wreck vengeance and destroy those who

reduced them to pauperdom. He comes back, adept in the skill of launching hailstorms and in dealing with death and destruction. He selects his uncle's son's wedding as an appropriate time to have his revenge. Perched on the top of the hillock he launches his witchcrafts, killing thirty-five people and destroying the entire house.

As time went by, Milarepa gets filled with remorse for the deaths and damage caused by him and begins to long for true knowledge, which slowly becomes an obsession with him. Eventually he comes to the feet of his master Marpa, who knew beforehand about his great potential. Nevertheless, the master made him go through untold hardships to cleanse him of his past *karmas*.

Milarepa constructs houses for his master, carrying stones and sand on his back. But was repeatedly forced to tear down whatever he builds. After years of fruitless and backbreaking effort he was crazed with frustration. Milarepa bears everything willingly and patiently, as he knew that he has to pay for the bad *karmas* piled up by the practice of black magic, and waits for the higher teaching from his master. His master's wife showers motherly affection on him and tends him. But the master did not relent in imposing one hardship after another upon him. Fed up by the master's continued harsh treatment, he runs away with the help of Mrs. Marpa to get initiated by one of the senior disciples of his master. The master being afraid of losing his precious disciple relents and sends word for Milarepa to return. His master explained to him later that though his anger had risen like flood water, it wasn't like worldly anger. The outwardly harsh actions always came from higher considerations. The Master added: "Each time I overwhelmed you with grief, you had no bad thoughts about me."

The master gives initiation to Milarepa and settles him in a rock cave in which provisions were stocked up. The master periodically visited him to check on his progress. Milarepa sat in the cave for eleven months meditating with his body rigid, and a lamp on his head. While the lamp remained alight he would continue his meditation and rested only when it went out. During these months he realized the interdependence of everything in this world on everything else. He also realized that this very body could be the means of deliverance from rebirth. He comes to the conclusion that our life is a dividing line between the higher and the lower tendencies and it is up to us whether we progress upward or fall downward. One must make every effort using academic knowledge, reasoning and the practice of self-observation to discover the Truth or the Self.

All efforts must be prompted by compassion and determination that one's achievements will be used for the common good of mankind. Milarepa's other

thoughts were: Just as food itself and not the name of the food, is what satisfies appetite, so one must experience the Truth, not merely have an academic definition of it. Neither bodily comfort nor even bodily necessities should be allowed to stand in the way; every obstacle must be surmounted and every sacrifice must be willingly made.

Milarepa meditated for several years practising higher techniques of meditation acquired from his teacher, until the spiritual seeds of wisdom his master has planted in him began to shoot up in his heart.

Once, after meditation, Milarepa fell into a deep sleep and dreamt that his house was broken down, his mother dead and that his sister had become a roving beggar. He suddenly feels a longing to see his mother and sister and requested his master for permission to let him go home. The master tells him that if he goes now he may not see him alive again; so he teaches him the highest mystic truths known to him. He also manifests himself in various divine forms and shows psycho-spiritual powers, but warns him that these should never be demonstrated for the mere sake of showing off or of proving one's ability or for financial gains.

On returning to his house, Milarepa finds his dream completely true. As he gropes his way in his house, he feels the earth and his hand meets his mother's bones. His grief and longing for his mother becomes so intense that he goes into a deep trance for a week beside the heap of bones. During the trance he was able to commune with his mother's spirit.

After entrusting his mother's body to the undertaker for proper burial, he reaches a sure conviction of the utter impermanence and uselessness of worldly existence. With renewed resolve to seek the Truth, he goes looking for the cave his master had mentioned to him, far from the haunts of human beings, settles down to meditate, and subsists on soup made of nettles (a kind of water weeds). Several years of living on this diet reduces him to no more than a skeleton; his body shrinks and turns to a greenish colour. His clothes by this time had turned tatters, which he knotted up. Sometimes to ease the pangs of hunger, he placed the scroll his master had given him on the head and prayed to him.

During this period, 'The Transcendent' knowledge came to him and he began to comprehend on 'The oneness of All' which annihilates the subject and object

relationship. His mind reaches a stage in which there was no separateness and no distinction.

By this time, the pangs of Milarepa's hunger reached such intense heights that the physical pain and mental disturbances disabled him to continue his meditation. He realizes that it was time to read the scroll his master has given him to be opened in emergency. It was written on that scroll that at this time what was needed was good food as his nerves had changed to a new mode of function. As luck would have it, his sister Peta and his betrothed Zetsy make a visit to him, bringing with them nutritious food and provisions.

After further intensive practice of meditation, Milarepa began to develop certain powers like those of transforming himself into any shape he desired and of being able to fly through the air. The following is part of a discourse he gave to some of his relations who came to meet him.

“Within the Temple of the Body, within the breast where the altar is, the Horse of Mind is prancing about. What lasso [a rope with a noose at one end used for catching cattle] must be used to catch this horse? To what post must it be tied? What food must be given to it? The lasso is Singleness of Purpose; the Post is Meditation; its Food is the Guru's Teachings; its drink is Stream of Consciousness; and the Enclosure for it is the Void. For saddle use the Will; for bridle [the head gear used to control a horse, consisting of buckled straps to which a metal mouth piece and reins are attached] the Intellect. Its Rider is Mindfulness; the Helmet he wears is Altruism; his Coat is Learning and Contemplation. On his back is the shield of Patience and in his hand the Spear of Aspiration. By his side hangs the Sword of Intelligence. The Horse gallops along the broad Plain of Happiness with state of Buddhahood as its Goal, leaving behind attachments to things of the world.”

After reaching the slopes of Mount Everest, several followers joined Milarepa from time to time, of whom Rechung was the closest disciple, who also wrote his biography. Rechung writes how he met his guru. At that time, he says, he was a leper, an outcast from the society. In a vision Milarepa saw him and was told where to find him. Later, he got cured of his disease.

Milarepa's fame and respect among the people aroused the jealousy of a Lama who manages to get poisoned-cured administered to him. Knowing that he was to leave soon, Milarepa sends message to all those who had known him. A few days later he

became very ill. When a devotee begged him to take medical treatment, he replied that a yogi should use the illness to progress spiritually and be ever ready for suffering and death. He told him that he himself knew all the methods for overcoming illness and needed no interceder. The Lama who comes to know of Milarepa's serious illness goes to see him and taunts him saying that such a saintly person like him should not be seriously ill and he should distribute it among his disciples or to someone like him.

The Lama did not know that Milarepa had the power to transfer illness. And when he persisted, the latter did so. Immediately the Lama felt such a dreadful agony that he almost fainted and was filled with true repentance and with his head bowed down, he cried: "O Divine Master, I beg that you accept all my wealth and forgive my crime." Since his remorse was sincere, Milarepa readily forgave him and took back the pain and said: "All my life I never owned anything and now on my death bed what should I do with your worldly goods? The Lama became an ardent devotee and led a pious life established in Dharma.

Milarepa died at the age of 84. His final sermon was: "All worldly pursuits have one inevitable result – sorrow: gains end in losses, buildings in destruction, meetings in partings, births in deaths, and so on. Renounce all worldly aims and you will achieve the highest goal. Take the lowest seat and you will find yourself raised to a higher one. Dwell alone and you will find a friend!

"Retain perfect equanimity and your mind will be concentrated. Beware of the physical body, which is culprit indeed. In the ceaseless craving for food and dress, one can find no refuge from worldly worries. In the mental world, the mind is the culprit. On the frontier of intelligence and matter, the culprit is knowledge from experiences of senses, ever on its guard against its own downfall; it has no time to discover the nature of Truth. Keep to uncreated knowledge. Find the nature of Eternal Truth. Avoid subtle arguments. Hasten slowly and you will arrive the sooner. Renounce all worldly aims and you will achieve the highest goal. If you give up the idea of yourself versus rest of the world, you will become fit to offer your services to it. Think of the past, future and present as one, and accustom yourself to this idea. Beyond this there is more Truth. Learn from it."

The Great Master left behind his disciples to testify to the truth of the tale of his life. Many of them entered upon the Path to Enlightenment as a result of his example

and teaching. The great power of Milarepa, gained through much pain, suffering and self-discipline, suffused itself through out the world.

- This book by Prof. W.Y. Evans-Wentz of Oxford University was first published in 1928 by the Oxford University Press. It is now available in paperback, Rupa & Co., 2005, pp. 174, price Rs. 150.

** Refer, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, p. 54.

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The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing. – *Walt Disney*

The true meaning of renunciation is not renouncing the world but renouncing bondage. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

SPRITUALISM AND RITUALISM: Spiritualism deals with man's relationship with the Creator and leads one to super consciousness. Through meditation a spiritual practitioner begins to hear the celestial sound...Religion is a set of do's and don'ts and is supposed to help a person to move on the path of spiritualism provided it does not degenerate into meaningless ritualism. People often begin to mistake ritualism as an end in itself and thus they miss the wood for the trees... Spiritualism calls for a very hard and continuous discipline and permits no compromise, whereas ritualism is easy and convenient. It does not take long for a ritualist to become fanatic and bigot... Hinduism, it may be noted, is not a religion but a philosophy – a way of life; the heavy load of ritualism, which is overwhelming it, is the creation of half-baked preachers... A spiritual aspirant is never the worse for want of rituals. As the level of maturity goes up, rituals start losing their significance. A spiritual master may show some indulgence for rituals as concession for beginners, who may eventually become independent of the crutches of ritualism. – *M.D. Goyal*

ATMA-VICHARA AND DHYANA: Always keep the mind (attention) fixed in Self (in the feeling 'I') alone is called 'Self-enquiry' (*atma-vichara*); whereas Meditation (*dhyana*) is thinking oneself to be the Absolute (*Brahman*), which is *sat-chit-ananda* (existence-consciousness-bliss). - Sri Ramana Maharshi in *Who am I?*

MAY-07

SRI RAMANA'S CONCERN FOR THE SUB-HUMAN SPECIES – AN AMAZING ANECDOTE

By G. Sri Hari Rao

Mr. Rao, a staunch devotee of Sri Ramana, was till recently, Executive Director, Electronics Corporation of India, Hyderabad. He was editor of this magazine, which first appeared in 1981, for a number of years.

Dilip Kumar Roy, a musician and a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi, reportedly, had an argument with Mahatma Gandhi, on the quality of truly great music. Roy's contention was that to appreciate great music, one needs to have basic knowledge of music. Gandhiji, on the other hand, felt that a great piece of music should appeal to all whether or not they understood intricacies of the music. One tends to agree with Gandhiji. What is said regarding music is valid for anything truly great.

Sri Ramana Maharshi is truly great. He is *Jagadacharya* in the lineage of Veda Vyasa and Adi Sankara. He is the greatest of *Jnanis* of the modern times. He is also a true *Bhakta* – his devotion to the great mountain Arunachala, is legendary.

We ordinary mortals cannot unravel and comprehend Sri Bhagavan's greatness. His *Jnana* and *Bhakti* apart, many other dimensions of his life need to be noted and highlighted. His **compassion** and **concern** for all, including animals and plants, his **sympathetic awareness** and **forgiveness** for the frailties of the human behaviour, his **detachment**, his **sense of equality** for one and all, his **humour**, his **frugal habits**, his **commitment to perfection**, his special **affection** for women and children, his **ability to see good dimensions** even in the vilest, are indeed worthy of praise and emulation. The blessed ones who had the opportunity to sit at his feet and assimilate his words and actions from close quarters have recorded many of these dimensions. These bring to fore the true personality of Sri Raman – *The Maha Manav*.

The following account is from *Purushothama Ramana*, put together by V. Ganesan, a blessed person in terms of his lineage and proximity to Bhagavan. The

incident highlighting Bhagavan's compassion for the most neglected and despised, can not be comprehended by us mortals.

Bhagavan would very rarely go out before midnight, for answering nature's call. One night he had to go due to some sort of stomach disorder. The attendant, who was standing at a distance, noticing that Bhagavan took an unusually long time that day, went nearer to him in the dark. He heard a peculiar sound, like 'slop, slop'. Bhagavan was talking to someone: "Enough, enough! Are you not yet content?" The attendant saw Bhagavan uncomfortably seated, in an odd position and a dog most excitedly and vigorously licking him from top to bottom! The dog was thin and bony, stinking with sores, full of disease, and very ugly to look at. Lest the attendant should drive it away, Bhagavan pleadingly said: "He has been very keen in showering his affection on me all these days. Poor fellow! He was always driven away before he could do so. Today he caught me in the dark. His intense love to me has been conveyed by licking me to his heart's content!" Bhagavan got up with tears in his eyes, took leave of the dog, saying: "Porumada?" (Isn't it enough?) May I go now?" The next morning the dog was found dead. Did it die or a was liberated?

GET OUT OF YOUR MIND: Spiritual realization is everybody's birthright. It is not a talent like painting, music or dancing; it is not genius either. It does not matter whether you have a big mind or you are a mediocre. The important thing is that you take yourself out of the mind. The strange thing is that the more a person is intellectual, the farther he goes away from himself. When an ordinary man meditates, he comes to the same stage of blissfulness as Einstein or Bertrand Russell. The blissfulness will not be different; will not be richer for Einstein or Russell because they were great intellectuals. An uneducated Jesus or an illiterate Kabir became enlightened because enlightenment is not a talent; it is discovering your Being. And the Being of everyone is absolutely equal. (Source: www.osho.com)

We need to find God, but He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. – Mother Teresa

INDIVIDUALS AS SUBSETS OF A HIGHER SET: Just as hundreds of terminals connected to a supercomputer seemingly work independently even though their actual control lies in the supercomputer, we, as individuals, may seem to have diametrically opposite personalities but the seeds of these traits spring from the

same higher source. So every one of us is connected in some way to the Supreme One. Our sense of separateness from each other and from God is due to the fact that in our mental and sensory perceptions, we feel limited by our own individual bodies. This is because we, as individuals, dwell at a much lower level of consciousness. Each individual consciousness is bestowed with an ego, which makes it feel that it has an independent existence. It makes its own goals and lives its own life. But the source of all of its thoughts, aspirations and actions lies in the cosmic consciousness. – *Rajesh B Pande*

LORD MURUGA AND *THIRUPPUGAZH*

Muruga, the name of the warrior and adolescent God peculiar to Tamil Nadu, is deeply entwined in the spiritual philosophy and arts of the Tamil land. Muruga is also known as Subhramanya: ‘He who tends to the spiritual growth of the aspirant.’ *Skanda Purana* describes how he was born in a sacred pool: At one time, Lord Siva was deeply absorbed in the glory of his spiritual exuberance when the demi-god Kama (Cupid) made an attempt to drag His detached mind towards sensuality. Siva through the fire of austerity burnt Kama out of existence. Shakti who has been used as a pawn by Kama then made severe penance for gaining the grace of Siva. Soon, there emerged from Siva six flashes like lightning, five from the five senses and one from His mind.

The six flashes of light were the seed of Siva. They could not be contained by Shakti and reappeared as six babies. These divine babies floating on the pond were then suckled by the heavenly wet nurses, the six nymphs of the constellation Pleiades (Kritikas – hence another name of Muruga, Karthikeyan), who had come to the rescue. These were translations of Shakti’s power. Shakti, otherwise known as the cosmic Mother, rolled these six babies into one divine entity, maintaining the six faces and twelve arms.

It is said that the epithet Shanmukha (six faces of Muruga) symbolizes the six *charkas*, seats of consciousness within the human body. The symbolism of the six is also widely used in Muruga’s *yantra* for meditation and ritual. (This symbol of converged triangles is recognized in the West as the Star of David.) Besides this, the six faces of the God connote the six divine qualities of the Supreme Being, namely, Omniscience, Non-attachment, Omnipotence, Overlordship, Grace and Glory.

The shining spear of Muruga symbolizes the power of divine knowledge to destroy the demons of ignorance. His vehicle is a peacock. It represents his youthful glory. Muruga in the classical tradition is also known as Swaminatha – where the Son becomes the preceptor to the Father. Mythology has it that father Siva poses as ignorant of the OM and receives enlightenment about it from the son.

Thiruppugazh or ‘Holy Fame’, is a vast ocean of devotional Tamil songs on Muruga by Arunagiri-nathar, who was born in Tiruvannamalai in 15th century. Sri Ramana often attended *Thiruppugazh bhajans*. The song that moved him deeply and profoundly was *Suruthimudi Monanchol* (Prayer song 62). In prayer song 157 the poet echoes his vulnerability when he says: Oh God, give me the determination and dedication to remain constant in your worship, and to seek your lotus feet. (Adapted and abridged from *The Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 2007)

THE TRUE GURU

A guru is different from a teacher. *Guru* comprises two words, *gu* and *ru*. *Gu* means ‘darkness’; *ru* means ‘light’: that which dispels the darkness of ignorance is called guru. An enlightened master is also called Guru-deva (*Deva* means ‘bright light’).

You try your best to do something for the guru, but you cannot, because he doesn’t need anything. If he guides you, he is not obliging you, he is doing his work. He cannot live without doing his duty. As the sun shines and lives far above, the guru gives his spiritual love and remains unattached. Guru is not a physical being. Those who think of the guru as a body or as a man do not understand the pious word.

If a guru comes to think that his power is his own, then he is a guide no more. The guru is a tradition; he is a stream of knowledge. That stream of knowledge goes through many channels. Christ when he healed people said, “This is because of my Father; I am only a channel.”

No human being can ever become a guru except when he becomes a channel for receiving and transmitting the Power of Powers. And for that, he should learn to be totally selfless. Genuine gurus cannot live without selflessness, for selfless love is the very basis of their enlightenment. They radiate life and light from the unknown corners of the world. The world does not know them, and they do not want

recognition. Don't ever believe anyone who comes to you and demands: "Worship me".

Never forget that guru is not the goal. Guru is like a boat for crossing the river. It is very important to have a good boat, and it is very dangerous to have a boat that is leaking. But after you have crossed the river you don't need to hang on to your boat, and certainly don't worship the boat. Many fanatics think they should worship a guru. A guru should receive your love and respect – that is different from worship.

If my guru and the Lord both come together, I will go to my guru first and say, "Thank you very much. You have introduced me to the Lord." I will not go to the Lord and say, "Thank you very much, Lord. You have given me my guru." (Source: *Living with the Himalayan Masters* by Swami Rama.)

S.S. Cohen, a well-known devotee of Sri Ramana, says the following about the guru-disciple relationship: 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 sort. He was Supreme Detachment incarnate. The strict aloofness that 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, reform, guide and mature the disciples' consciousness than the guru's conscious interference. Without this detachment, the guru is bound to grow partial and discriminative. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

WAXING OF THE MOON: Daksha Prajapati gave twenty-seven of his daughters in marriage to Chandra, the moon-god, who was renowned for his beauty and virility. Chandra preferred the beautiful Rohini to the others. The neglected wives complained to Daksha, who threatened Chandra with dire consequences if he did not treat all his wives with equal affection, as is expected on any polygamous man. Chandra disregarded Daksha's threat. So he was cursed with a degenerative disease. As the days passed, he lost his potency, and began to wane. A terrified Chandra went to Siva, who let Chandra sit on his head. There, Chandra found the power to regenerate himself: his potency returned and he began to wax. A sobered Chandra decided to devote at least one night to each of his twenty-seven wives. And so it is that the moon waxes on the days he approaches Rohini and wanes on the days he moves farther from her. On the new moon night he has no wife by his side. On the day before, when he is just a crescent, the moon celebrates Siva-ratri, the night of

Siva, and takes refuge on Siva's locks, safe in the knowledge that he will wax once more. (Source: *Somanath Sthala Purana* quoted by Devdutta Pattanaik.)

BHAKTI AND FAITH: True *bhakti* or genuine faith, like poetry is the spontaneous flow of powerful things. However, *bhakti* and faith attain their fulfillment only when these get transformed into meaningful action referred to as 'works' in the Bible, which observes: "Faith without works is dead"...*Bhakti* and faith are not passive qualities, rooted in helplessness. These constitute the base which enables the aspirant to rid himself of the retarding forces within, propel them to levels of high energy, dynamism, focus and broadness in outlook, leading to high levels of accomplishment. Tyagaraja in his composition points out that the right path cannot be tread with deep knowledge of music alone but should include *bhakti* too. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

PRAYER – A SOURCE OF STRENGTH: Mahatma Gandhi once said: My strength comes from my prayer. I can do without food for many days but I cannot do without prayer even for a single day. Prayer for Gandhiji was an unfailing moral weapon – complete and effective to fight adversities of the inner and outer worlds. Through constant prayer he could feel unison with God, the source of all strength. Chanting *Ram naam* had been an infallible source of strength for him. And he continued to chant it throughout his turbulent political career, and died with the words *Hey Ram* at his lips. When one learns to forget all that one remembers, then in which language will the mind think? The thinker has nothing to think upon. When there is no thought and no mind, only the Self exists with its majestic glory, which is simply beautiful and indescribable. – *Swami Rama*

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

TIRUPPAVAI: This work by Aandala,* the only lady among 12 Aalvars – great devotees of Vishnu – who lived in Tamil land between 2nd to 8th century, contains 30 hymns. These provide a detailed account of the *vrata* or *nonbu* (Tamil) which Aandala undertook to have Lord Krishna as her husband. '*Pavai*' in Tamil refers to a girl, '*tiru*' stands for respect. The title of the hymns is a call to the slumbering girls to wake up and pray to the Lord. In these poems Aandala addresses her friends as the beautiful girls of *Brindavana* and asks them to take bath early in the morning so that they could get together and go to meet Sriman Narayana. Aandala tells her friends how worship should be done to secure His grace for destroying

their sins. The hymns describe how Aandala and her friends reach Krishna's place, and her telling the Lord that all she wanted was the boon that in all her seven births and forever she would be with Him and serve Him. Even today in the month of Margazhi (mid-Dec. to mid-Jan.) a large number of girls (particularly in Tamil Nadu), go to temples singing these hymns early in the morning... Commentators on *Tiruppavai* feel that through these hymns, Aandala gives a call to all the *jivas* who are bound to worldly objects, to think of God and meditate upon Him... These hymns have helped greatly to spread *bhakti* among common people. (Source: *Direct Path - Ramana Gyan*)

*An article on Aandala appeared in September 2006 issue of *Sri Ramana Jyothi*.

MUMUKSHA AND PIPAASAA: In *Vedanta*, the *sadhana* is to increase our thirst for the knowledge of the *atman*. This is termed as *mumuksha* – the desire to be liberated. Whereas, in *bhakti*, our thirst for the Lord, called *pipaasa*, has to be intensified. In both these paths, the worldly desires are substituted by the yearning for the 'higher', which finally takes us to the Supreme Goal. – *Swami Abhedananda*

FOUR PURUSHARTHAS: Scriptures and sacred texts identify goals of human life as *purusharthas*, which are broadly classified under four categories, namely, *Dharma* (seeking the values of life on which rests society and the world), *Artha* (seeking wealth as a means of security), *Kama* (enjoyment), and *Moksha* (liberation).

HOW TO LIVE LIFE WITH SUKHA- SHANTI: In any situation, do whatever you feel you should do without any regrets about the past, without any complaints in the present, without any expectation for the future, and importantly, without blaming and condemning anyone for anything – neither yourself nor the 'other'. - *Ramesh S. Balsekar*

SRI RAMANA REVEALS *ARHANAREESHWARA ASHTOTTARAM* THROUGH DREAM

By Akhila Ghosh

Mrs. Ghosh, who now stays at Rishikesh, belongs to Tamil Nadu. Her maternal uncle was a trustee of Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. The following is from her article in *The Direct Path-Ramana Gyan*, monthly journal of Shri Ramana Kendra, New Delhi.

In 1971, after visiting, by chance, Sri Ekambarnath temple in Kancheepuram, I wrote a poem which ended: 'I look to the skies and in the clouds forms an image of Ardhanareeshwara.' I do not know why I referred the name of this particular deity, as I had no earlier conscious association with it. In 1984, I got initiation from Swami Krishnananda of Shivananda Ashram. Shortly before the Swami got *mahasamadhi* in 2000, he directed me to Ramana Maharshi. I started visiting Shri Ramana Kendra at New Delhi, regularly. It was the year 2003 when the following miracle occurred.

While going somewhere in auto rickshaw Sri Ramana's face appeared to me. He smiled and asked, "There is no *Ashtottaram* to Ardhanareeshwara, is it so?" That was all. He disappeared.

That night, when I was asleep, names started coming to me in dream. I awoke and thought that I will write them down. Then I thought they are just two or three, I will sleep now and remember to write them in the morning. Then I fell asleep again. Then again the names started coming. So, for fear of forgetting, I woke up and began writing them down as they came *and in the order t they came*.

Like this, for six consecutive nights, it continued, till 108 names had appeared, in a definite order. I wrote them down as they came. Later, I wrote them down again, all neatly, sitting in Delhi Kendra shrine. It was around Shivaratri of 2003. Then for one month, whatever doubts I had about spellings, grammar, etc. were cleared 'automatically'. (When I thought of how to clear a particular doubt some person who had no idea of what I was thinking would suddenly come and show me some text and the same would be there, and the doubt would be cleared!) [On enquiry on phone, the writer told the editor that the person concerned was Sri Vishwanathan, *pujari* of the shrine at Delhi Kendra.] Like this, all my doubts were cleared, and a

few names were replaced by Bhagavan's instructions and in one or two instances, the order was changed.

Later my Sanskrit teacher [She was attending Sanskrit classes at the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi.], and other knowledgeable persons who saw it found no mistakes.

There are certain observations in regard to the structure of the *ashtottaram*: (i) All are double names, like 'Umashankaraya namah', (ii) Some ended with Shiva's name like the above and some with Devi's like 'Bhavaparvatyai namah'. (iii) The first 90 names are sets of nine each. These sets of 9 are in divisions of 4 and 5, the first 4 ending in Shiva's name and the second 5 ending in Devi's name. I find that in *Samhara Krama* of Sri Yantra, there are 4 Shiva Yuvati's pointing upwards and 5 triangles pointing downwards, representing Shakti.

I did not do any ordering. I merely observed the way Bhagavan ordered and dictated it! The last two sets of nine were collapsed together as 18 and were in graded pairs – first two ending in Devi's name and two in Shiva's, then as alternating name-ending till the end.

A wonder of wonders! The *dhyana shloka* also came after this. It also contains double names in a line but not joined as one word.

Now the *Ashtottaram* follows:

June – 07

EXPERIENCING SRI RAMANA – ENCHANTING NARRATIVES OF SOME FOREIGN DEVOTEES

Sri Ramana Maharshi is the unique shining stars on the spiritual firmament of our country, which is legitimately proud of the rich heritage of its saints, seers and sages from times immemorial.

Thousands, who had the privilege and good fortune of meeting Sri Ramana Maharshi during his 54 years' stay at Tiruvannamalai, also included scores of foreigners. Some of them have left dispassionate and illuminating accounts of the Maharshi's transmuting impact on them. Excerpts from these accounts, from the

book *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, are presented below.

It may be noted that many of these foreign visitors got attracted to the Maharshi through Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* (London, 1934), and had visited Sri Ramanasramam during 1935-49.

The moving reminiscences presented below, in the chroniclers' own words, have no particular order and are independent of each other.

Paul Brunton (Britain): There is something in this man which holds my attention as steel filings are held by a magnet. I cannot turn my gaze away from him. I become aware of a silent, resistless change taking place within my mind...The questions which I prepared with such meticulous accuracy drop away...My thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest. An untellable peace falls upon me and I know that there is nothing further I shall ask from life...The Maharshi's mysterious glance penetrates my thoughts, my emotions, my desires; I am helpless before it.

In this extraordinary peace, I find a sense of exaltation and lightness. Time seems to stand still. My heart is released from its burden of care. I enjoy an ineffable tranquility merely by sitting for a while in the neighbourhood of the Maharshi... A force greater than my rationalistic mind awes me until it ends by overwhelming me... I am perfectly aware that the sublime realisation which has suddenly fallen upon me is nothing else than a spreading ripple of telepathic radiation from this mysterious and imperturbable man... Again and again, the Maharshi's mind is imparting something to my own, though no words be passing between us.

This man has strangely conquered me and it deeply affects my feeling to leave him. He has grappled me to his own soul with unseen hooks that are harder than steel. He has taken me into the benign presence of my spiritual self and helped me, dull Westerner that I am, to translate a meaningless term into a living and blissful experience...

Mouni Sadhu (M. Sudouski) (Australia): All theories, all acquired knowledge fall into dust when standing face to face with the Maharshi. One gets peace that passeth all human understanding...Moments of inner experience with the Maharshi are so fraught with consequences that they may influence not only one but many incarnations.

His face is full of inspiration, unearthly serenity and power of infinite kindness and understanding. He reigns in silence...The glow, the reflection of the Real which I see through the Master illumines the mind. A wave of endless bliss surges through and overwhelms me. It carries me beyond thought, beyond suffering and grief, neither death nor change exist there, only infinite *being*. Time disappears – there is no need of it any more.

Sometimes when I sat near him absorbing the invisible radiation of his light, I thought: “To whom and when can I repay this bliss? Who is it that is taking away the burdens and debts of my life?”

In presence of the Saint the mind gets tuned to silence, and does not dare to indulge in endless questioning as it used to do... The invisible light emanated by the Maharshi brings about a total change in our opinions and in our appreciation of all the values of worldly life. In the presence of the Master, our mind ceases to be a hindrance to seeing Reality...I noticed for myself that questions and problems which sometime ago were unintelligible or postponed for later solution got solved themselves.

Light and life are constantly flowing through the eyes of the Maharshi with a majesty and intensity unimaginable to those who have not seen them. An incredible loving kindness radiates from them.

Being near the Maharshi one feels the presence of God as a matter of course – no arguments or proofs are necessary. The proximity of the Maharshi makes the effort of stilling the mind infinitely easier than it would be elsewhere...In some wonderful way, the Maharshi seemed to supervise the inner processes in us, just as the operator watches the working of a complicated machine, which he knows thoroughly. He mysteriously helps in inner experience but how still remains closed to me. A man emerges from these experiences greatly changed, and with a totally different conception about everything in the world. For myself, I call it the ‘spiritual alchemy of the Master’.

Wolter A. Keers (Holland): The mere sight of him made me tremble all over because I had come face to face with the Divine. This recognition affected me so much that my body shook involuntarily. As I gazed at him, I felt I saw God himself sitting there in human form. It was more radiating than anything I had ever seen before. God became manifest before my eyes, announcing his presence to me by radiating a blazing penetrating light that went through me like x-rays... It seemed

amazing that such an air of normality could prevail around someone who was radiating so much light and energy.

His grace silenced my mind, it filled my heart, and it took me to realms that were the way beyond the phenomenal... The light radiating from Bhagavan filled my being, sweeping away all my darkness in one stroke. His presence alone was enough to evaporate the usual mental flow of thoughts, ideas and problems... Bhagavan's immediate presence was overwhelmingly potent and nothing could distract or disturb me... There was a complete transformation, inside and out, and it all happened without a word being spoken. My experience of Bhagavan was pure happiness, beyond any verbal description.

Ethel Merston (France): It took me a few moments after entering the hall to know that I was in presence of the greatest teacher I have ever met... The peace in the hall drew me as nothing had before.

Once I had been mulling over a problem for three days without finding the solution. The fourth day, while sitting opposite to Bhagavan, and still harassed by the problem, Bhagavan suddenly turned his eyes upon me. After a moment, he asked one of his attendants to find him a book of *puranic* stories. Finding the passage he wanted, he handed over the book to one of his men who knew English and told him to read the story aloud. That story gave me answer to my problem.

The Maharshi could read our thoughts and convey thoughts silently and so powerfully that the vibrations would sometimes roll in waves down the hall almost hurting one by the force with which they impinged on the body, not only of the recipient, for whom the thought was meant, but on many of us sitting there... Just to sit in Bhagavan's presence was to realize or get a feeling of what true relaxation was and a quiet mind might mean. It did not mean shutting oneself away, isolating oneself, on the contrary it meant being with all, yet remaining within, being in the world and yet not of it.

Arthur Osborne (Britain): The graciousness of Bhagavan's reception melted the heart and awoke a feeling of guilt as to how great was the reward for so little effort made... He was Divine Grace in human form... For the first time in my life, I began to understand what the grace and blessings of guru could mean. I went about with a lilt of happiness in my heart, feeling the blessing and mystery of a guru, repeating, like a love song, that he was a Guru, the link between heaven and earth, between God and me, between Formless Being and my heart. I became aware of the enormous grace of his presence.

Regarding his wife Lucia's experience he writes: She entered the hall and sat down. Immediately, Bhagavan turned his luminous eyes on her in a gaze so concentrated that there was a vibration one could actually hear. She returned the gaze, losing all sense of time, the mind stilled, feeling like a bird caught by snake, yet glad to be caught.

Mercedes de Costa (America): As the Maharshi sat in the hall, 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... It would be impossible to describe the moment when Bhagavan looked directly down at me, his eyes looking into mine. 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 have never known what a smile was.

To write about my experience with Bhagavan, or all that his silences implied, is trying to put the infinite into an egg cup... 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 life time.

Duncan Greenlees (Britain): I saw the Maharshi. The radiant peace and calm like that of the mid day sky was something too real to question. My search was over even at the first glimpse. In a flash I had seen a Master... I had brought the usual list of questions to be asked. And before I broke my silence, the unspoken questions had solved themselves in their own irrelevance.

That stillness of eternal depth had somehow seeped into my heart. I had met a Master who could quell the waves with a silent word, 'Peace, be still!' I knew myself to be absolutely one with that incarnate Peace on the sofa, and therefore to be one equally with the Unmanifest in whose stillness he was so obviously poised.

Grant Duff (Britain): I do not know what happened when I saw the Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light. There could be no doubt about it, and all the accumulated doubts disappeared in the Radiance of the Holy One... There it did not take long to see that I was in direct contact with one who has passed beyond the boundaries of the senses and was indeed already merged in the Absolute of his true Self.

William S. Spaulding (America): As I sat in His presence, the most powerful impression was that of what I can only call an almost palpable ‘golden radiance’, the visual effect of a tremendous spiritual force. There was an intense and sudden radiation that seemed to flow from Him continually; and once having sensed this, words, questions, techniques of meditation etc. seemed to dissolve immediately.

Major A.W. Chadwick (Britain): To my metal Bhagavan was a magnet. I see him sitting in the hall completely detached, entirely unmoved by the happenings which seem so momentous to me, his face wreathed in the most lovely of smiles, and an expression of serenity and beauty on it which is impossible to describe, or even less to believe unless you have seen it yourself... One is inclined to get used to things and take them for granted. But there is no taking Bhagavan for granted, he is always surprisingly different, and that is one of the greatest wonders of his presence.

Maurice Frydman (Poland): 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 Bhagavan’s presence. My mind became quieter than before. I felt that I was coming nearer as time passed. Afterwards I used to think of him whenever I felt unhappy...As fire melts ice, so his affection made my worries melt and my struggle for life got transformed into a blissful living...In the Maharshi, the ultimate had revealed itself as the immediate, and the undreamt had become the actual.

S.S.Cohen (Iraq): 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. I became absorbed in the entrancing personality of this magnificent human magnet – Sri Ramana Maharshi...Bhagavan was a beacon of light in an otherwise impenetrable darkness, and a haven of peace. He was Supreme Detachment incarnate...Many of those who have had the inestimable privilege of a long stay with Bhagavan [as Cohen had] bear witness to the blessedness which his mere presence conferred.

* * *

The above narratives establish beyond all doubt that Sri Ramana was Divine in human form. The overwhelming peace that “passeth all human understanding” just by being in his proximity, as felt by the writers, is therefore no surprise.

Celestial vibrations impacted some chroniclers almost in a tangible manner. This is no wonder when one is face to face with “the Truth and the Light”, as Sri Ramana was perceived by Grant Duff.

Unspoken doubts and questions of the devotees got dissolved in Sri Ramana's presence, as the darkness evaporates before the sunlight. This again goes to testify his divinity.

It is indeed stupefying that, as noted by Wolter Keers, "such an air of normality could prevail around someone who was radiating so much light and energy", and who could transform those around him.

The Divine is beyond description. But those who had experienced bliss could not help expressing themselves in their own unique ways, as recorded in the text above.

MAHATMA GANDHI REFERS TO SRI RAMANA IN HIS LETTERS – SOME INSTANCES

The following extracts from the letters written by Gandhiji are from 100-volume set of *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, whose chief editor was Prof. K. Swaminathan, an ardent devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Letter dated October 22, 1938, to Brijkrishna Chandiwala:

"Chi Brajkrishna,

It would not do simply to assert that Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo are one-sided while I am all-sided. One who is one-sided and understands his mission and pursue it has merit. One who claims to be all-sided but is only experimenting has even less worth than broken almond shells. Only God knows where I stand. I am an aspirant while they are known to be, and perhaps are, realized souls. Anyway their followers attribute to them full self-realization." (Vol. LXVIII, p. 40.)

Letter dated July 29, 1939, to Amutul Salaam:

"Yes, it will indeed be good if you visit Ramana Maharshi." (Vol. LXX, p. 43.)

Letter dated October 22, 1939, to Munnalal G. Shah :

"Chi Munnalal

What a confusion reigns in your mind! Read your note again. In one place you say that you would go to Ramana Maharshi since I advise you to do so but later on say that you do not know where to go. I suggest only one thing. You should go straight from here to Ramana Maharsh's Ashram stay there for seven days and if you feel

no benefit by the end of that period either go to Pondicherry or return here straight.”
(Vol. LXX, p. 289.)

SURI NAGAMMA’S DIFFICULT DAYS AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM

Nagamma (1902-80), who is referred to as ‘Daughter of the Ashram’ by some devotees, acted almost like Sri Ramana’s secretary in regard to copying from scriptures, writings etc., where Telugu language was involved. For some time he also looked after the Ashram library. The following excerpts are from the write-up of Monika Adler (Co-founder of the Hungarian Ramana Group, lives in Budapest and visits the Ashram regularly.) published in *The Mountain Path* (April-June, 2007). Many details about Nagamma are also in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pages 88 to 94).

Encouraged by her brother, Nagamma began writing letters to her family. These 273 letters written in Telugu are a treasure trove of information about the happenings at Sri Ramanasramam during 1945-50. When Bhagavan learnt about the letters, he asked Nagamma to read out her letters in the Hall. Thus, she knew that Bhagavan’s blessings were with her, and she worked through the nights to record what she heard and saw during the days.

Once, all of a sudden, the *sarvadhikari* of the Ashram, Niranjanananda Swami, forbade her to continue writing letters and ordered her to hand them all over to him. Crying bitterly, Nagamma handed over the material to the *sarvadhikari*. Sri Ramana Maharshi usually did not intervene in personal conflicts in the Ashram. But his invisible help restored Nagamma’s hope. She did not enter the Ashram for ten days but sent Bhagavan a poem in which she begged for his help. Some of the closest disciples of Bhagavan, including Kunju Swami and Murganar, encouraged her to continue her letters. Gathering courage, Nagamma went to the Ashram again. Bhagavan received her warmly with a smile and recounted to her for an hour what had happened while she was absent. He gave details of what devotees and visitors had asked and what he had answered. Nagamma could not have received a stronger encouragement to continue her job.

Bhagavan showed the love of a father towards Nagamma. If she wasn't there at the usual time Bhagavan immediately asked: "Where is Nagamma?" Once, when they were preparing for a special occasion, Bhagavan kept saying during the day: "Nagamma will certainly be here. Nagamma wouldn't miss it."

Following the *Brahmanirvana*, Nagamma spent three more years in Tiruvannamalai. Then she became seriously ill and needed her family to look after her. After she recovered, she lived alone with her beloved guru in her heart. Visitors often came to her and she used to read out her letters to them. Once a year she visited the Ashram, usually on Bhagavan's birthday.

Delving into Kendram's history

SATSANGA PROGRAMMES OF OUR KENDRAM IN 1980's

The following announcement appeared in the first issue of *Sri Ramana Jyothi*, September 1981.

Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, meets every day of the week at the places mentioned below:

Sunday	9 to 10.30 a.m.	At Andhra Mahila Sabha Arts and Science College, University Road, Hyderabad.
Monday	6 to 7 p.m.	Residence of : Sri P. Mohan Rao, Hussaini Alam, Hyderabad.
Tuesday	6 to 7.15 p.m.	Residence of : Prof. Shiv Mohan Lal, Tarnaka, Hyderabad.
Wednesday	7 to 8 p.m.	Residence of : Sri R.J. Doshi, Opp. Old MLA Quarters, Hyderabad.
Thursday	6 to 7.15 p.m.	Residence of : Sri M.N. Dave,

Hyderbasti, Secundrabad.

Friday 6 to 7.30 p.m. Residence of : Dr. K. Subrahmanian,
Quarter no. 7, Central Institute of
English, Tarnaka, Hyderabad.

Saturday 6 to 7 p.m. Residence of : Sri C.V.K. Murthy,
DRDL, Quarter no.4/18
Kanchan Bagh, Hyderabad.

SRI RAMANA'S INGENUITY AS A BOY

The following anecdote as told by former Ashram president (T.N. Venkataraman), nephew of Bhagavan, was published in *The Mountain Path*, April-June, 2007.

One day, Bhagavan, along with his family, was travelling from Manamadurai to Ezhuvankottai where his grandfather was working as a *Peshkar*, an administrator, in the temple. It was a hot, sunny day. The roads were scorching hot. In those days, it was not common to wear footwear. Bhagavan's younger sister, Alumelu, 8 years younger to him, was finding it difficult even to place her feet on the road. Bhagavan had a perfect solution for this. He took the veins of the large leaves and stripped away the surrounding flat pieces of leaves. These veins were strong. He used these veins to stitch additional large leaves and created make-shift shoes for his dear sister to wear.

ASHTA DIGGAJAS OR LOK PALAS: The legend tells us that each of the guardians of the eight directions have mighty elephants and so they are called *Ashta Diggajas* or *Lok Palas*. The *Lok Palas* are also called *Ashtadhipalakas*. The eight directions along with their deities are: 1. North – Kubera 2. North-east – Easana 3. East – Indira 4. West – Varuna 5. North-west – Vayu 6. South – Yama 7. South-east – Agni 8. South-west – Niruriti. (Source: *Tattvaloka*, April, 2007.)

GO BEYOND JAGAT: Seekers of happiness in the external world of sense objects can gain only insignificant success in the field of sense enjoyments, whereas if the same effort is applied in the direction of constructive living, we can discover our identity with the Self. But due to extrovertedness of the deluded ego, we revel in the world of countless objects, called *jagat* in Sanskrit. Discriminative and careful seekers detach themselves from their false egocentric lives, and through the process of devotion to the Self, discover their real nature in the sunny fields of bliss that lie unrolled beyond the by-lanes of all physical, psychological and intellectual pursuits. – *Swami Chinmayananda*

PATH TO LIBERATION: As long as one is caught in the cycle of *samsara*, there is no chance to get relief from tensions and miseries. Knowledge of the impermanence of the body and the immortality of the soul is necessary to transcend *samsara*. Just as dreams are known to be false only when one is awake, only when true knowledge is gained will one understand that the world is illusory and transient and try to search for the permanent peace and bliss. It is very easy to misconstrue a metal piece to be a coin in darkness and continue to believe it to be so until light reveals its true nature. The light of *jnana* removes ignorance and enables one to comprehend the truth. – *K.V.S. Sastrigal*.

KNOWING GOD: In order to know ‘That’ which is immeasurable, timeless and eternal, the mind necessarily be totally vacant, totally free from all thinking and conceptualizing, including ideas about God. If the mind is not silent it can only be projecting its own desires and hopes. Silence can only mean freedom from past knowledge and experience, from both conscious and unconscious memory. Only then the mind will be able to receive the divine gift of the eternal. – *J. Krishnamurthy*

THE ALL PERVADING AND ALL CONSUMING *AVIDYA* OR *MAYA*

Our scriptures say that the world is impermanent. Everything here is in a state of flux. They go on to say that man spends his life chasing evanescent [Quickly fading from sight, memory or existence.] mirages until the day the death overtakes him. Mystics the world over have described life in this world as illusion, error, deceit, a play, and the interaction of pleasure and pain. As man frantically tries to obtain the pleasure, he little realizes that such pleasures are transient and often leave a sense of

vacuum in their wake. This happens because of *avidya*, which arises through perceiving what is not-self as self (*atman*).

It is from *avidya* that multiplicity arises, concealing the true nature of the undivided One (*Brahman*). It manifests actively by making things appear to be that which they are not, as in a mirage. It creates misapprehensions, misinterpretations and all kinds of false impressions. It manifests passively the ignorance of the One who underlies all diversity. *Avidya* has two interwoven aspects – concealment (*avarana*) of the real nature of *Brahman*, and the projection (*vikshepa*) of name and form. Since *avidya* is the power by which the illusion of the untrue is taken as true, *avidya* is also identified with *maya*.

Maya is a great wonder because it cannot be easily comprehended. This finite world is born out of *maya*. Due to non-understanding of the reality, misapprehension of the world of objects, emotions and thought is recognized and ultimately man gains permanently a secluded sense of individuality. Due to *maya* even those who have attained great heights in the mastery of the *Vedas*, *Sastras*, and the *Upanishads*, can become greatly agitated and lose their sense of balance out of lust and longing, when they find themselves face to face with material benefits and money. It may be noted that there is no difference between the learned and the animals in regard to empirical behaviour. Noticing a man with a stick in hand, animals try to run away, thinking that he would hurt them. But they go near another man who carries green grass in his hands. Similarly, even the wise man behaves like an animal, attracted to a great extent by comforts in the form of money.

Day in and day out, we consider our body as ‘I’ or the *atman*, and claim all that is correlated to the body, such as home, wife, son and daughter, movable and immovable objects, a ‘mine’, and get deluded to the core. This is the machination of *maya*. Even the wise and the learned and those who are proficient with the vision of the scriptures are so shrouded by *maya* that they cannot comprehend the Truth. They simply consider as real what is superimposed by delusion and attach themselves to its effects.

By realisation of the pure non-dual *Brahman*, *maya* can be destroyed in the same way as the illusion of the snake is removed by the discriminative knowledge of the rope. When the reality, *Brahman*, is perceived, the confusion that ‘I am the body’, ‘I am the mind’, and ‘I am the intellect’ disappears in the same way as the illusory snake vanishes completely with the cognition of the rope. (Source: *A Treasury of Mystic Terms* by John Davidson, and *Tattvaloka*, May, 2007.)

Being happy does not mean that everything is perfect. It means that you have decided to look beyond the imperfections. – Anonymous

Drop your lower self and let your higher self guide you. This is the meaning of yoga; being yoked to the higher self. – Swami Sukhabodhananda

Mind alone is the cause of liberation and bondage. – Adi Sankara

Only in the depth of pure silence can we hear the voice of God. – Mata Amritanandamayi

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are one who gets burned. – The Buddha

It takes only one person to change your life – YOU. – Anonymous

The best way to predict your future is to create it. – Anonymous

Although tendencies (*vrittis*) towards sense-objects, which have been recurring down the ages, rise in countless numbers like the waves of the ocean, they will all perish as Self-attention becomes more and more intense. Without giving room to the doubting thought, ‘Is it possible to destroy all these tendencies and to remain as Self alone?’, one should persistently cling fast to Self-attention.

- Sri Ramana Maharshi

JULY - 07

The following is from S.S. Cohen’s notes of the Maharshi’s replies to questions in the 1930s and 40s. Cohen says: The Maharshi always spoke in Tamil, except when the questions were put in Telugu or Malayalam, which 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 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. 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. That which comes and goes, rises and sets, is born and dies is 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 which is impossible to dispense with; 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.

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

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI'S IDENTIFICATION WITH ANIMALS – THREE ANECDOTES

1. This incident relates to a day in early 20's, when Bhagavan has just come down the Hill to stay near the mother's *samadhi*. One day, when as usual Sri Bhagavan was surrounded by the devotees, on listening some peculiar noise, he got up abruptly and went eastwards to the farthest fence. There an old monkey with a retinue of female monkeys was shouting and crying aloud – which Bhagavan alone could hear, perhaps because the cries were directed at him. He went near the crying monkey and listened to him

and then addressed him: “Thatha! What to do? I have been retained here. I could not come there. I also miss you all very much. You have come with the queens to see me, all the way from there, risking attacks by other herds of monkeys staying in these parts. How are you? How is your family? I am quite well here. Please go back and also take these queens safely. It is very good of you to have come to see me.” Bhagavan’s voice was choked and tears were rolling down his eyes.

2. There was a lame cat at the Ashram. It gave birth to kittens once every six months. People felt it was a great nuisance. Bhagavan was fond of her. One day she was sent nearly 20 miles away to a village through a visitor. After a few days she suddenly appeared in front of Bhagavan, who was visibly happy and said, “You have come back; I am happy! You have defeated them all. How cruel that you were sent away. Come, come!”

3. A sparrow refused to go out of the hall till she had audience with Bhagavan. Bhagavan listened to her and replied, “What can I do? They have disturbed you by throwing away your nest. They will not allow you to build again within the hall. So, please go and build it elsewhere.” The sparrow flew out, merrily! (This material has been collected by Sri Hari Rao, an ardent devotee and formerly editor of *Sri Ramana Jyothi*, from *Purushottama Ramana* by V. Ganesan.)

ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR REACHING THE STATE OF *SAMADHI*

The *Yogasutra* describes the practice of meditation as beginning with a firm and steady posture (*Asana*). The steadiness is reinforced by control of the breath (*pranayama*). Each movement of the breath, comprising an inhalation, exhalation, and cessation, is regulated and protracted. As the breath becomes ever subtler, external movement is brought to a virtual halt. The fixity of the gaze suggests that the meditator has also put an end to the activity of the senses. This is accomplished by a withdrawal (*pratyahara*) of the sensory organs so that there is no longer any interaction with sensory stimuli. These three practices, namely, *asana*, *pranayama* and *pratyahara*, go together with the requisite moral conduct. The *Yogasutra* provides details of the necessary moral principles, which comprise the first two steps of the eightfold yoga practice (*astang-yoga*).

The first step, *yama*, designates a series of ‘restraints’: not causing injury to living beings, non-covetousness, non-stealing, truthfulness, and continence. The second step, *niyama*, involves a series of ‘observances’: purity, contentment, austerity, study and devotion to the Lord. They constitute the foundation upon which meditation is based.

When the aspirant is thus prepared, he may then strive to achieve mastery of the mind. The mind is first fixed in concentration (*dhayana*), focused exclusively on a single object. It is only then that the “uniform train of thought”, characteristic of *dhayana*, can be developed. Adi Sankara likens this current of unbroken thought to the way oil pours: a fine, continuous stream. *Dhayana* culminates in *samadhi*, absorption. *Samadhi* occurs when all sense of separateness disappears. The one who meditates, the act of meditation and the object of meditation merge into one. The aim of meditation is to stop the fluctuations of the mind (*citta-vrtti-nirodha*) and ultimately, to be free from the bonds of *prakrti*. (Adapted and condensed from *The Mountain Path*, April-June 2007).

DR. K. SUBRAHMANIAN’S REMEMBRANCES OF SRI RAMANA Maharshi

The following incidents recorded by Dr. K.S., the founder of our Kendram, are from his papers at the Kendram.

1. Bhagavan had a cancer on his left upper hand and it was to be operated upon after administering anesthesia. Bhagavan rejected this stipulation and offered to undergo the operation without anesthesia. The operation over, the affected part was duly dressed, but profuse bleeding ensued. Then Bhagavan is said to have remarked to those around, who were greatly grieved at the sight: Why do you worry? It is a *Swayambhoo*!

2. Bhagavan’s compassion to the poor was unparalleled. A poor lady used to bring *dosasi* for Bhagavan every day. (She was doing this right from the day he arrived at Arunachala.) Even in her ripe old age, one day she got up the hill and stood before Bhagavan – offering a packet of *dosais* as was her wont. Bhagavan accepted the packet expressing his gratitude for the lady. When the Ashramites noticed this, they requested Bhagavan not to consume the contents – stale as they were, and jeopardize his health in the process. Normally, Bhagavan would share any edibles with those around him, but in this particular instance he felt that as they would be hesitant to accept if offered the same, he chose to

eat up the contents of the packet, all by himself! Bhagavan was always so condescending to the poor and he always stood by them.

3. It was Bhagavan's practice to go round Arunachala. In the course of such circumambulations, a poor person invariably used to offer him some rice mixed with buttermilk. On one occasion, it so happened that the person did not turn up as usual. Bhagavan beckoned the persons behind him to follow a different route. They could not question Bhagavan and were wondering why he was changing the route. Bhagavan made straight for that person's house to see if perhaps ill-health was the reason behind his inability to meet him as per his practice. Asked by Bhagavan, the person replied that as he did not have rice and buttermilk for the offering, he felt hesitant to meet Bhagavan and absented himself. Bhagavan immediately asked him to offer whatever he had. With tears rolling down his cheeks, that person said that barring some gruel there was nothing else that he could offer him. Bhagavan then joined his palms and drank the gruel delightfully, much to the surprise of those behind him and equally to the satisfaction of the person offering it.

4. Once Bhagavan noticed a lady standing near a wall outside the Ashram at the lunch time and enquired the Ashramites as to why she was so standing. In reply, he was told that the lady was in her period and was waiting for lunch, which would be served to her only after all others had it. Bhagavan felt sorry for this and directed that such practice should be discontinued forthwith and lunch served to such ladies also along with all others! Bhagavan once said that one should be even more sympathetic to the ladies in their period. His instructions were followed to the letter in this regard from then on.

5. An old lady used to visit the Ashram every day with a view to having Bhagavan's *darshan*. Her eyesight having been affected with the passage of time, she was unable to walk properly and was therefore advised not to come to the Ashram. Yet, she persisted in doing so and, in the process, one day she stepped on the leaves spread out in the dining hall for lunch, and fell down. The *sarvadhikari* of the Ashram shouted at her saying that it was for this reason she was asked not to come to the Ashram. The lady is stated to have replied, "Who can prevent me from having my Bhagavan's *darshan*?" Bhagavan then turned to the *sarvadhikari* and said, "What have you now got to say?"

CHITRAGUPTA: He is the record keeper of Yama, the god of death. To begin with, Chitrugupta was the scribe of gods, but later became record keeper for Yama, recording men's good and evil deeds in his great register. He reads the accounts when souls are brought before Yama for

judgment after death. ‘Chitra’ means a picture, an image, a record or an impression. The word is derived from *chit*, which refers to that part of the mind which retains a record of all deeds and thoughts. ‘Gupta’ means hidden. The name may thus be understood as ‘hidden record’, as is perhaps a reference to the mental record of all thoughts and deeds – good or bad – which are impressed automatically upon the mind during the course of life. According to the *Mahabhart*a (Anushasanparvam), Chitrugupta is a minister of *Kal*. His duty upon men’s death is to examine the account of the good and evil actions, which they may have performed while living. (Source: *A Treasury of Mystic Terms* by John Davidson).

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greatly agitated and lose their sense of balance out of lust and longing, when they find themselves face to face with material benefits and money. It may be noted that there is no difference between the learned and the animals in regard to empirical behaviour. Noticing a man with a stick in hand, animals try to run away, thinking that he would hurt them. But they go near another man who carries green grass in his hands. Similarly, even the wise man behaves like an animal, attracted to a great extent by comforts in the form of money.

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GIRIPRAKASHINA

The circumambulation of Arunachala (*giripradakshina*) has been prescribed as a panacea for all the ills of life. The Maharshi encouraged his devotees to make the nine-mile circuit, knowing for certain that the spiritual benefits of *giripradakshina* far outweighed any physical hardships to the devotee.

About the meaning and method of *pradakshina*, the Maharshi told the devotees: The letter ‘Pra’ stands for the removal of all kinds of sin; ‘da’ stands for the fulfillment of desires; ‘kshi’ stands for freedom from future births; ‘na’ stands for granting of deliverance through *jnana*.

One should go round either in *mouna* (silence) or *dhyana* (meditation) or *japa* (repetition of Lord's name) or *bhajan* (singing praises) and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy.

The Maharshi is also recorded to have said: Really, it is difficult to describe the pleasure and the happiness one gets by *pradakshina*. The body gets tired, the sense organs lose their strength and all the activities of the body become absorbed within. It is possible thus to forget oneself and get into a state of meditation. As one continues to walk, the body automatically gets harmonized as in the *asana* state, leading to improvement in health. Besides this, there are several varieties of medicinal herbs on the hill. The air that passes over those herbs is good for the lungs.

The Maharshi also says: Pilgrims become absorbed in their *atma* by walking with no other thought than that of God. The body becomes light and walks of its own accord. There will not be the feeling that we are walking. The *dhyana* that you cannot get into while sitting, you get into automatically if you go for *pradakshina*. If a person goes round the hill once, he will feel like going again and again. The more you go, the more the enthusiasm for it. It never decreases. Once a person is accustomed to the happiness of *pradakshina*, he would never give it up.

The Maharshi's *Five Hymns to Arunachala* are the ecstatic outpourings of a fully illumined sage united forever with his beloved, Arunachala. There is immense inspiration and guidance on the path in each and every stanza of these poems: "When I approach Thee regarding Thee as having form, Thou standest as a Hill on earth. If with the mind the seeker looks for Thy (essential) form as formless, he is like one who travels the earth to see the (ever-present) ether. To dwell without thought upon Thy (boundless) nature is to lose one's (separate) identity like a doll of sugar when it comes in contact with the ocean (of nectar); and when I come to realize who I am, what else is this identity of mine (but Thee), O Thou Who standest as the towering Aruna Hill."

The Maharshi often walked around the hill taking a whole day, several days or sometimes even a week. This came to an end in 1926 when he felt that the attention he attracted during *pradakshina* inconvenienced others.

(Source: Not available)

Prayer does not change things. It changes people and they change things. –*Sri Aurobindo*

Everyone prays when he is suffering. He does not pray when he is in comfort. If one prays when in comfort, how could he ever suffer? –
Kabirdas

The most manifest sign of wisdom is continued cheerfulness. – *Montaigne*

One who is of the opinion that money will do everything may well be suspected of doing everything for money. – *Benjamin Franklin*

The supreme tragedy occurs when theory outstrips performance. –
Leonardo Da Vinci

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts. – *Bertrand Russell*

Religion is about turning untested belief into unshakeable truth through the power of institutions and the passage of time. – *Richard Dawkins*

A HINT FOR SADHAKAS : When a *sadhaka* tries to meditate, the old *vishya-vasanas* come to swallow his *sadhana-sakti*. While he remains for a while absorbed in the joy that meditation on God gives him, the formidable foe from within rises to attack. The pessimistic fool gives up effort in despair, but the wise one does not. He covers the *antahkarana* absorbed in meditation with the powerful shield of the Name of the Lord and total surrender to Him. Thus, shielded by the Omnipotent Name, he remains safe and his meditation proceeds unhampered... Yield not to despair. Wrestle not with evil. Cultivate its opposite virtue, that is, take refuge in the Divine Omnipotent Name and taste the immortal Bliss. – *Swami Sivananda*

BODHI TREE: *Bodhidruma*, the Tree of Intelligence, was a peepul tree under which the Buddha (563-483 BC) attained *bodha* (enlightenment), after seven years of rigorous *tapas* under its shade. Hence, it is also known as the Tree of Meditation. The original tree was near Gaya in Bihar and a strip of it was taken and planted in the sacred city of Amrapoora in Burmah in 288 BC, which is said to be still in existence. (Source: *Splendour*, June 2007.)

ADD LIFE TO YEARS, NOT YEARS TO LIFE: Life can be a process of growing or ageing. Growing involves adding life to one's years and ageing means adding years to one's life. Life is fulfilling only if it is a process of growing. A few people grow up in life; the rest just grow old... One of the greatest secrets of life is that we are all born rich but become beggars. We don't search within ourselves for the treasures we hold within. We don't know ourselves. Socrates said, "Know thyself". The Vedas say, "Know thyself". Knowing ourselves is just not seeing ourselves as physical embodiments. The body is the peripheral – "Me". But the "I" that is "Self" is not peripheral "Me". The deeper "Me" is the soul, which is beyond the body and mind. This can be discovered through understanding, reflection and meditation, adding life to years. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

THUS SPOKE ADI SANKRA: The knower of the *Atman* does not identify himself with his body. He rests within it, as if within a carriage. If people provide him with comforts, he enjoys them and plays with them like a child. He bears no outward mark of a holy man. He remains quite unattached to the things of the world.

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*

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS: 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 enter the domain of the Lord. Forgiveness will also provide support to 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*

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MARKANDEYA: He was the son of Mrikandu *rishi*. On a request for a son, Lord Siva gave a choice to the *rishi* between a pious and intelligent child who would live up to 16 years, and one who would have longevity, but would be dull and wicked. The *rishi* chose the former. As Markandeya completed 16 years, Yama, the god of death, threw the *pasa* (rope) around him, but the clever boy embraced the Sivalinga icon. Hence, the *pasa* encircled the Linga also. The Lord became angry and kicked Yama away, who interpreted the boon to mean that Markandeya would always be 16 years old and thus immortal. Markandeya wrote the *Markandeya Puranam*. (Condensed from : *Tattvaloka*, June 2007.)

SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE: It is through self-knowledge (*atma jnanam*) that one discovers, stabilizes and dwells consistently on this strength within. Then one is no more moved or affected by the situations around – be it indifference, warmth, praise or censure. This also is the practical application of the concept of the *Gita* on being ‘satisfied within the self by one’s own self’ – *atmanyeva atmana tustah*.
K. Vijayaraghavan

DROP THE FEELING OF GUILT: One of the powerful things which causes stress is the feeling of guilt and regrets for past mistakes and failures. We keep thinking of the opportunities we have missed. We are often consumed by guilt for things we have done or said in the past. Sometimes this goes to such an extent that we even begin to hate ourselves! Guilt is

totally negative. It is the greatest sin you can commit. We have to understand that our past mistakes and failures are a part of our growing up. No one can evolve without making mistakes. You should accept past mistakes and get rid of any feelings of guilt. Regretting the past will only spoil the value of the present. Just learn from it, accept it and move on. If you accept what you are, the grip of negative mind will disappear... **Mind and bliss cannot stay together. It is either mind or bliss. So drop your mind and simply decide to walk the path of ecstasy!** – *Paramahansa Sri Nithyananda*

NEED TO PERSUADE AND DISSUADATE THE MIND: The mind is independent of the body, though connected to it. It seems to be encased in the body but has deeper significance and influence. It is the creator of your contentment or discontentment. It is the source of your fulfillment. It is the origin as well as terminus of all your interactions. When such is its influence and potential, should you not find out how the mind can be accessed and, if necessary, moulded in the most suitable manner? Gentle persuasions will work well to bring the mind on the track, provided you have adequate desire and willingness to do so. It is not necessary that you have the best of qualities – but your **wanting to have them** cannot be compromised. Once you **sincerely and seriously want** the qualities, acquiring them becomes smooth and pleasant. The two-fold effort necessary is – **persuasion** and **dissuasion**. Bad and wrong things should be dissuaded sternly – learn to say a big NO to yourself. And make an all out effort to persuade yourself gently and sincerely, again and again, to acquire good habits and qualities. Tell yourself repeatedly that: ‘It is my mind and it has to listen to me.’ The *Bhagavatam* tells us: ‘composure of the mind is the supreme yoga.’ You should not be thwarted by diffidence, self-condemnation or anything like that. Be confident. Rise like Hanuman. With clarity and proper evaluation, be ready to declare to the whole world: “Why only one? Ten such oceans I shall cross, if need be!” (Adapted from: *www.brahmavidya.org*)

THE POWER OF PERSEVERANCE – A STORY FROM PURANAS: King Bhagirath wanted to immerse the ashes of his ancestors in the sacred Ganga, flowing at the feet of Lord Vishnu, by bringing the river to the earth. For this, he undertook severe penance. Vishnu granted the boon to release Ganga. The King underwent severe penance again to please Lord Siva to tame the river before reaching the earth by capturing it in his locks and

releasing it slowly. Siva was also pleased by the penance. After Ganga reached the earth, Bhagirath charted its course by making it follow his chariot. Incidentally, water of the river destroyed the *ashram* of Maharshi Jahnu, who got annoyed and obstructed its flow. Again, the King did penance to please the Maharshi. His efforts bore fruit and the river started flowing again. Since Ganga came to earth through the Herculean efforts of Bhagirath it is called Bhagirathi, along with other names. And any endeavour with sincere and sustained efforts is called *Bhagiratha prayatna*.

ALL LIFE IS ONE: Every living thing is an elaboration on a single original plan. As humans we are increments – each one of us a musty archive of adjustments, adaptations, modifications, and providential tinkering stretching back 3.8 billion years. Remarkably, we are even quite closely related to fruit and vegetables. About half the chemical functions that take place in a banana are fundamentally the same as the chemical functions that take place in you. **It cannot be said too often that all life is one. That is, and I suspect will forever prove to be, the most profound true statement there is.** (Excerpts from the book: *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson, *New York Times* best seller.)

SOME HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

By Roy Eugene Davis

We are spiritual beings with unlimited capacities which have to be awakened...We have to have a radical shift of perspective by constantly remembering that ‘embodied life is always uncertain, like a drop of water on a lotus leaf’, and we should awaken to our true essence – Being or Self in us.

Let us remember that everyone is not destined to get self-realisation. The Lord says in the *Gita*: ‘Out of one thousand, one seeks the Truth; of those who seek, one here and there, perchance, realizes the Truth.’ But one can and should make sincere efforts in that direction.

A few practical suggestions for spiritual progress are: Speak the following words, with enthusiastic conviction – **I.** I want to experience the awakened spiritual consciousness! **II.** I choose to thrive, to flourish and be successful in

every way! **III.** I choose to have peace of mind and enjoy life! **IV.** I choose to awaken from all illusions and fulfill my spiritual destiny! **V.** I am committed to my choice and will do everything necessary to allow it to be fully realized. **Speak indecisively. Speak the words and be transformed.**

Pray sincerely for communion [sharing of intimate thoughts and feelings] with God. Just talk with God: “Lord, I do not know my mind but I love you and want to know you. Awaken my soul, open my mind, cleanse my spiritual sight, reveal to me the way you would have me go. Show me what to do. Have your way with me.” You can use your own words, your own thoughts, as your devotional ardour impels. As your awareness becomes elevated to higher levels of knowledge and experience of God, you will then know when to pray for results and when not to pray for anything but God’s grace.

Daily meditation results in mental calm and enlivens mental creativity, and enables us to see ourselves in a better relationship with the world.

(Excerpts from *The Book of Life*, published by Motilal Banarsidass.)

LIVE WITH A PURPOSE

If I can stop one heart from breaking,

I shall not live in vain.

If I can ease one life the aching

Or cool one pain

Or help one fainting robin

Unto his nest again

I shall not live in vain.

Emily Dickinson (U.S. poet)

**SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI REACHED THE GOAL
WITHOUT ANY EFFORT ON HIS PART**

The following piece is by C.V. Subramania Iyer, who was Assistant Director, Public Health, Madras, and a regular visitor to the Ashram.

Lord Arunachala chose Ramana as the suitable field or fitting vehicle through which He could manifest Himself. Lord Krishna says in the *Gita* (IV.7): “Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is uprising of unrighteousness, I myself come forth.” Even so, Lord Arunachala chose to manifest Himself as Ramana. Accordingly, without any effort on His own part and purely through Divine will Ramana had the unique experience whereby He understood clearly that the body is separate from the undying Self.

In all His subsequent activities, Sri Ramana was merely an instrument in the hands of an unseen power. Like an automaton, He left a note before leaving home to His brother wherein He referred to the call from His Father. He came to Tiruvannamalai and surrendered Himself completely to Lord Arunachala. He lost His separate individuality and realized that He was the one Self. When Bhagavan was once asked by a devotee why He regarded Arunachala as His Father, He gave no reply but just smiled.

It is a mistake to suppose that Sri Ramana performed severe austerities. To all appearances He was doing hard *tapas*. But He had already reached the goal without any effort on His part, for Arunachala had given Him His own seat. There was no need for Him to perform *tapas*. He sat silently without any effort on the Aruna Hill communicating by silence the Divine Call to the people of the world. (Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

AWAKENING THE *KUNDALINI* – THE VARIOUS STAGES

By Shri Shri Anandamurthi

Sadhana means **concerted**, **determined**, and **continuous** spiritual effort. Through constant practice the *kundalini* moves upwards from its original residence in the *muladhara chakra*, the lowermost *chakra*. By dint of

sadhana or intuitional practice, the sleeping divinity moves up to the *svadhisthana chakra*. This experience is known as *salokya*. It is the first stage of *samadhi*, which can be attained by sincere and constant practice under the guidance of a spiritual guru. In *salokya*, the *sadhaka* feels he is not alone; the Supreme Father is also there.

When the coiled serpentine crosses the *manipura chakra*, at the controlling point of the pancreas, the *sadhak* gets the feeling of *samipyra*, that is, of being close to the Supreme. In the first phase the feeling was “Where I am, He is also with me”. In the second phase one feels, “I have come very close, very near to Him”.

When the *kundalini* crosses the *anahata chakra*, the solar plexus, the *sadhaka*'s feelings are known as *sayujya*. It means “close contact, just touching”. In *salokya*, He is with you. In *samipyra*, you feel the proximity, the nearness; and in *sayujya* you experience it.

With more *sadhana*, when the *kundalini* crosses the *vishuddha chakra* (the throat), one experiences another subtler *samadhi* called *sarupyra*. Here the feeling is “I am one with Him” – not just close contact, but oneness, “I am one with the Supreme Cognition.”

With still more *sadhana*, when the sleeping divinity crosses the *ajna chakra* (between the eyebrows) at the controlling point of the pituitary gland, the *sadhaka* experiences a higher *samadhi* called *sarsthi*. Here the feeling is that “I” and “He”, the two entities have become one. “I am”, but “He” and “I” have coincided.

The last stage is when the *kundalini* crosses the crown of the head, at the controlling point of the pineal gland. This stage is called the *nirvikalpa samadhi* in *yoga* and *kaevalya* in *tantra*. *Kaevalya* means “only”, meaning only one exists. Here, the differentiation between “I” and “He” disappears. It is the supreme stage of *yogic sadhana*. (Excerpted from *spirituality.indiatimes.com*)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI AND MAHATMA GANDHI – THE MEETING WHICH COULD NOT TAKE PLACE

The following account, as given by the Maharshi himself, is from Suri Nagamma's *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, letter dated February 6, 1948.

“Yesterday, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya [younger brother of Sarojini Naidu] showed a photo of Mahatma and said, ‘It is a pity that there was never any meeting between Gandhi and Bhagavan.’

“Bhagavan: ‘ Some time ago, he came to Tiruvannamalai. A meeting had been arranged for him to be held on the road around the hill, beyond the Asramam. People here thought that he would come to the Asramam on his way back, but owing to the pressure of the crowds it was impossible, and he went away direct to the station. It seems that he very much regretted this afterwards. Shankarlal Banker was very much keen on bringing him here, and in 1938, when Rajendra Prasad and Jamanalal Bajaj came here and saw Skandasramam, they wanted to induce the Mahatma to stay there for some time. But it did not happen. If at Sabarmati, or at Wardha anyone said that he was mentally depressed, the Mahatma used to say, ‘Go to Ramanasramam and come back after a month’s stay there.’ When Ramaswami Reddiar went to see the Mahatma immediately after taking office as Chief Minister, Madras State, the Mahatma, it seems, asked him for how long he had been going to Ramanasramam. When he answered that he had been going there for over thirty years, the Mahatma said, ‘Is it so? I have tried thrice, but so far have not been able to go there.’ What could he do? How could he come here when he was not left alone for one moment?”

The same letter of Nagamma records the events which took place on January 31, 1948, the day next to assassination of the Mahatma.

“At 9.45 a.m. a newspaper reporter came and requested Bhagavan to give his views on the tragedy. Bhagavan, with his voice choked with emotion said, ‘For the Mahatma’s death in the tragic manner, every person’s heart is mourning. What is there in particular that I could say? Who is there who is not grieved? If I say something, you will publish it and then one after

another, people will come and ask me. What is the good of it? So saying, Bhagavan sent the reporter away and went for his walk. On his return *Vaishnava janato* was again being broadcast and tears fell from Bhagavan's eyes. At 4.30 p.m. all the ladies began to sing *Raghupati Raghava Rajaram*. With tears in his eyes Bhagavan signed us to continue. At 5 O'clock the conch shell blew and in view of the Mahatma's death a special *arati* was offered in the Mother's temple. When the sacred ash and vermilion powder were brought, Bhagavan took them with great reverence."

WHO AM I? SRI RAMANA ANSWERS THE QUERIES

The first person to whom Sri Ramana clarified his basic teaching in 1902 or soon after, was Sivaprakasam Pillai, a graduate in philosophy, employed in the Revenue Department of the Madras Presidency from 1900 to 1910, by answering the following 14 questions put by him.

Pillai: Swami, Who am I? How is salvation attained?

Ramana: By incessantly pursuing within yourself the inquiry 'Who am I?' you will know your true self and thereby attain salvation.

P. : Who am I ?

R. : The real 'I' or true self is not the body, nor the five senses, nor the organs of action, nor the mind, nor the breath or the vital force, nor even the deep sleep state where there is no cognizance of these.

P. : If I am not any of these, what then am I?

R. : After excluding each of the above, saying 'This is not I' that which remains is 'I'; and that is consciousness.

P. : What is the nature of that consciousness?

R. : It is *Sat Chit Ananda*, where there is not even the slightest trace of the thought 'I' at all. The only thing that exists is That.

P. : How we are to realize that Real?

R. : When the external objects vanish, the true nature of the seer of subject is realized.

P. : Can we not realize that while we see objects also?

R. : No. Because the seer and the seen are like the rope and the appearance of a serpent therein. Unless you get rid of the superimposed illusion of serpent, you cannot believe that what exists is only the rope.

P. : When will external objects vanish?

R. : If the mind, which is the cause of all thoughts and activities, vanishes, the external objects will vanish.

P. : What is the nature of mind?

R. : Mind is merely thoughts. It is a form of energy. When the mind sinks within the Self, then the Self is realized. When the mind issues out, the world appears, and the Self is not realized.

P. : How will the mind vanish?

R. : Only by pursuing the inquiry “Who am I”. Then we attain knowledge of realization of the Self...Whatever you do, do without egoism, that is, without feeling I am doing this. True *bhakti* is the surrender of the ego to the Self.

P. : Are there no other methods to make the mind disappear?

R. : Except inquiry there is no other adequate method. If the mind is lulled by other means, it keeps quiet for a while, but again jumps up and returns to its former activity.

P. : When will these instincts and innumerable self-preserving and other tendencies be subdued?

R. : The more you withdraw into the Self, the more they become pale, and finally leave you.

P. : Is it indeed possible to root out these tendencies, which have soaked into our minds in numerous births?

R. : Never give room to such doubts. But with firm resolve dive into the Self. The mind, constantly directed by the above inquiry, becomes dissolved and transformed in the end into the Self. Whenever you feel any doubt do not try to clear it; but try to know him who feels the doubt.

P. : How long should one go on with the inquiry?

R. : It is needed as long as there is the least trace of tendencies in the mind to create thoughts. Inquiry is needed right up to Self-realization. What is required is a continuous and uninterrupted ‘thought’ of the real Self.

P. : Is not all this universe, with what takes place therein, the result of Ishvara’s will; and if so, why should He will thus?

R. : God has no purpose. He is not fettered by any action. The world’s activities cannot affect Him. Like the sun which rises without any desire, purpose, or effort, yet as it rises numerous activities take place on this earth. The sun is not affected by such activity, as it merely maintains its nature, acts by fixed laws, has no purpose and is merely a witness. So it is with God. God has no desire or purpose in His acts of creation, maintenance, destruction, withdrawal and salvation, to which the *jivas* are subjected. The *jivas* reap the fruits of their acts in accordance with His laws (the laws of *karma* etc.). The responsibility for such fruits is theirs, not God’s. (Condensed from *Self Realization* by B.V. Narasimha Swami)

WAS SRI RAMANA’S BOYHOOD DEEP-SLEEP PHENOMENON A PRECUSOR OF HIS SAHAJA SAMADHI STATE IN LATER YEARS?

The only unusual thing about Sri Ramana Maharshi in his boyhood years was his abnormally deep sleep. Devaraja Mudaliar, a well-known devotee, has related in his diary how the Maharshi described it in a conversation at the

Ashram many years later on a seeing a relative who visited him. Sri Ramana said:

“Seeing you reminds me of something that happened in Dindigul when I was a boy. Your uncle, Periappa Seshayyar, was then living there. Some function was going on in the house and everyone attended it and then in the night went to the temple. I was left alone in the house. I was sitting reading in the front room, but after a while I locked the front door and fastened the windows and went to sleep. When they returned from the temple no amount of shouting or banging at the door or window would wake me. At last they managed to open the door with a key from the house opposite, and then they tried to wake me by beating me. All the boys beat me to their heart’s content, and your uncle did too, but without effect. I knew nothing about it till they told me in the morning...The same sort of thing happened to me in Madura also. The boys didn’t dare touch me when I was awake but if they had any grudge against me they would come when I was asleep and carry me wherever they liked and beat me as much as they liked and put me back to bed and I would know nothing about it till they told me next morning.”

The phenomenon of deep sleep is used as a standard example by *advaitins* to illustrate that pleasure and pain are in the mind alone. The real Self transcends the mind and is therefore unaffected by pleasure and pain. The proof of is that these are experienced only when the mind is functioning as in waking and dream states; and not when the mind is still, as in deep sleep.

According to Arvind Sharma, “The fact that Ramana Maharshi was a heavy sleeper takes on a special significance in a system of thought in which, in the state of *samadhi*, the ultimate reality is experienced as devoid of all distinctions. The fact that deep sleep is also devoid of all distinctions makes it analogous to the state of *samadhi*, and therefore helps identify the Maharshi as a potential *advaitin*.”

The difference between the deep sleep and *samadhi* state needs to be noted: in the latter case, one is aware of the Self and enjoys it, but not so in the former case. (Source: *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* by Arthur Osborne, and *Ramana Maharshi – The Sage of Arunachala* by Arvind Sharma.)

The best way to predict your future is to create it. – Anonymous

God does not ask your ability or inability, He asks for your availability. –
Anonymous

The who holds the ladder at the bottom is frequently of more service than the man at the top. – Swami Sivananda

Service to humanity is service to God. – Swami Vivekananda

Service before self is the highest value of life. – Mahatma Gandhi

A man is but the products of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes. –
Mahatma Gandhi

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. – Albert Einstein

When one door closes another opens. But often we look so long, so regretfully upon the closed door that we fail to see the one that has opened for us. – Helen Keller

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SELF-REALIZATION – WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

According to *advaita vedanta*, the knowledge of the ultimate reality is something which is received rather than had, as happened in the case of Sri Ramana Maharshi. This knowledge is not obtained in the way knowledge is normally obtained in the world where there exists a goal or object out there, and we undertake efforts to achieve it.

The Maharshi says: “You are already realized. This is what you have to realize.” ‘The realization chooses us’ or ‘we are already realized’ are two opposite ways of saying the same truth. If the window is closed and therefore we cannot have a view of the glorious mountain, we have

to open the window, and provided the weather cooperates, have a view of the mountain. We cannot create the glorious view, nor can we change the weather, though we can definitely pray for it.

The difference in the analogy needs to be noted: one, while the mountain is outside, the reality is inside us; two, one involves a physical action, the other requires a subtle and far more difficult action on our part.

The fact that the final outcome is not in our hand can be illustrated with the help of a homespun example. When we go to bed we cannot summon sleep. We can do what we can to invite sleep – by laying down in a comfortable bed, by closing our eyes, by playing our favourite music and so on. But we can never *go* to sleep, sleep *comes* to us. Thus, we can create conditions or generate circumstances to have realization, which will come on its own accord and by the grace of the Supreme, when we fully surrender to Him

Two simple examples to show as to how our efforts result in having the final outcome are: One, a big hall would provide an altogether different look when all the lumber inside is removed. The space we feel suddenly in the hall is being felt through the removal of the unwanted material and nothing more. Second, we do not create space when the earth is removed to have a pit. We simply throw out the unwanted earth and get the resultant space. Thus, as the Maharshi says, we are already realized, the *vasnas* (inherent tendencies) blocking the way have to be discarded, lock, stock, and barrel. All *sadhana* is only to achieve this end.

The doyen of Hindi poets, Tulsi Das, an outstanding *bhakta* of Lord Rama, in his celebrated *maha kavya Ramacharitamanasa* says: ‘That person alone can have realisation, to whom You chose to provide the same.’ Thus, whether you go via the *jnana* or *karma* route, complete surrender to Him is essential. So long as the *sadhaka* feels that he would achieve Him through his efforts, it would instantly attract an element of ego, obstructing the goal. It is, therefore, essential to surrender unconditionally and ask for His grace, which will help to block the ego to creep in through small crevices. Without annihilating the lower self firmly and fully, realisation would continue to evade us.

SRI RAMANA AND THE CASTE PROBLEMS

Voruganthi Krishnayya, biographer of Sri Ramana, has recorded the following three incidents.

1. Around about 1931 many Congress prisoners were released, because the British government had come to some agreement with Gandhiji. A brother of Vishwanatha Swami [an outstanding devotee of Bhagavan] came to the Ashram after his release from jail. Although he was a Brahmin, he sat down for food with non-Brahmins. The *sarvadhikari* objected that it was against the Ashram rules for a Brahmin to take food with non-Brahmins, and that if the visitor intended to break rules, let him break them elsewhere. The Congressman argued that for some years he had been taking food with all classes of people and as result of this he could no longer be considered to be a Brahmin. He flatly refused to sit with the Brahmins. The dispute had been going on for some time when Bhagavan entered the dining hall. When he was told what it was all about he told the *sarvadhikari*: The man denies being a Brahmin. Why do you force him to sit with Brahmins? Then he turned to the Congressman: ‘You too are wrong. Those people think that they are non-Brahmins, you do not. Why should you force yourself on them? I am the only one here who does not think of himself either as a Brahmin or a non-Brahmin. So come and sit by my side.’ The diners were so arranged that the Brahmins would sit in the southern half of the hall behind a screen and the non-Brahmins in the northern half. Bhagavan would sit facing west so that he could see both the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins. When the Congressman was invited to sit by Bhagavan’s side, he felt shy, and joined the Brahmins.

2. Once a non-Brahmin brought some *papads* from his house and distributed them to the non-Brahmins during the mealtime. The Brahmins were not served, for they could not touch non-Brahmin food. Bhagavan sat down and had a look around and noticed at once that the Brahmins were without *papads*. He would not touch his food until

somebody rushed to the market, brought some *papads*, fried and served them the Brahmins. Bhagavan would just not tolerate any distinction made between people for reasons of caste, yet in a very subtle way he respected an honest conviction. But as far as he was concerned, castes did not exist. Why, to him the world itself did not exist, although to the uninitiated he seemed to behave like a man to whom the world is altogether real.

3. Once, when Bhagavan was leaving the Hall at mealtime, somebody accosted him with a question: ‘Is a man’s caste determined by his birth or character?’ Bhagavan turned to him sharply and said: ‘Surely you ask such questions with a motive. You are looking for a quarrel in order to get people into trouble. You imagine you are going to mend the world with your questions. Who are you to meddle with the world? Look after yourself first. Do you know yourself; do you know what you really want? How can you know what the world needs when you are blind to your own true needs? First set yourself right.’

SWAMI LAKSHMAN JOO’ S VISIT TO THE MAHARSHI

The Saivite Master Swami Lakshman Joo Raina who passed away in 1991, is recognized as the last living pre-eminent exponent of Kashmir Saivism. The following letter written by him, obtained from the website www.ksf.org begins with a group photo in which he is shown with Bhagavan. The photo (not the letter) was published in *The Mountain Path*. To whom the letter was addressed, and its date are not known.

When I was in the twenties, some one told me of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Then and there I left Kashmir and went to South India. From Madras I took another train for Tiruvannamalai. There I took a cart and reached the blessed Sri Ramana ashram.

As I entered the Hall I saw Bhagavan seated on a sofa with his legs stretched. I was thrilled with joy on having *darshan* of Bhagavan, who asked

me to sit in front of himself. I sat and gazed at the Feet of Bhagavan and entered the blissful state of samadhi.

I felt those golden days were indeed divine. I used to go on Arunachala Hill with Bhagavan. Bhagavan used to sit on a rock and I would be seated at his Feet.

One day, I was overjoyed by the nearness of Bhagavan and composed these slokas to offer them to Bhagavan: There are four kinds of body: the gross (*sthula*), the subtle (*sukshma*), the causal (*karna*) and the void (*sunya*). Transcending these (four kinds of body) is the great Hill Arunachala, which is praised as the form of the all-knowing Supreme (lit. the form of the supreme Knower). We worship Sri Ramana, who blissfully abides in His own true nature (*swarupa*), which is named Arunachala, the foremost among the foremost of Hills. I take refuge at the feet of a great personage Maharshi Ramana who had realized his identity with the Lord. I utter the name of accomplished yogi Maharshi Ramana ceaselessly. I always contemplate on Maharshi Ramana, the realized soul. I offer my salutations to celestial being Maharshi Ramana, whole-heartedly.

When these *slokas* were placed before Bhagavan, he was so pleased that he explained them to the devotees who were seated in the Hall. Some of His devotees took a camera to take a picture of Bhagavan on Arunachala Hill. At that time Bhagavan addressed me: "Lakshmanjoo! Lakshmanjoo! Sit here by my side. This man is going to take a picture of us." I cannot express how Divine were those days of my stay at Sri Ramana ashram and how kind was Bhagavan to me.

I have received a copy of *The Mountain Path* where the photograph (at page 105) shows me seated near Bhagavan. Eleanor Pauline Noye, is also seen in the group-picture. She shed tears of joy when Bhagavan asked me to sit near him. Those were golden days for me when I was near Bhagavan, my Divine Lord!

Yours as ever, In the name of Bhagavan Ramana, Swami Lakshmanjoo

DIVE INTO TRANQUILITY: Peace is God manifest. One who cannot experience peace, fails to realize the bliss of life. Learn to imbibe

peace within. Sit quietly closing your eyes, in solitude. Try to keep away flickering thoughts and reflect on the following lines: **“I have seen enough of this mundane world. I have spent my life running after pleasure and material attainments. But where is happiness? Will my life be thus wasted? All my deeds turn out to be bondage. Dear God, bless me with Your grace. Bless me such that my life becomes meaningful. My wavering mind keeps me wandering forever remaining attached to all worldly matters. Bless me with strength and Your love. I do not pray for material attainments, but bless me with the divine wisdom.”** Reflecting thus, be at peace within. Keep worldly thoughts at bay. Slowly but steadily you will be filled with divine ecstasy... Don't rush off for your daily chores as soon as you wake up. Attempt the above method, closing your eyes, while still in bed. It will prove beneficial... We are so used to leading a restless life that peace continues to evade us. We tend to be in constant pursuit of external happiness, and fail to realize that peace actually resides within us. (Adapted from *www.narayansai.org*)

SRI RAMANA – THE MONUMENT OF SPIRITUAL GLORY

The following excerpts are from the foreword by Justice K. Sundaram Chetty of Madras High Court to B.V. Narasimha Swami's evergreen classic *Self Realization* (1931), the first biography of the Maharshi, whom he refers as the ‘living monument of spiritual glory.’

In the dispensation of Providence, it was my good fortune to have had access to a sage, who shines in the spiritual firmament as a bright star, guiding the restless and depressed way-farers along the path towards the haven of true and lasting happiness...The life and example of this great saint serve as a beacon light to warn us about the pitfalls in the path of worldliness and guide us on the safe path of spirituality... The mind, the arch-juggler, is to him a docile and faithful servant. His favourite sermon is, “Retreat within thine own self: seek the source whence the restless mind spins out an unceasing web of thoughts; brush aside the springing thoughts;

concentrate at the root of thought; and take repose in that stillness and quietude.”

Another gem of spiritual truth which this holy sage places for our gaze is: “Happiness is really an inner attitude, or a subjective realization of the mind, though many are under a misapprehension that it depends upon external conditions only.” The outer quest for happiness, he would say, will only be the game of ‘Hide and Seek.’ Real happiness is one that does not depend upon anything external to one’s self.

Know the ‘I’. That is how he would ask us to tackle the problem of life. The words are simple, but their conception has baffled many a brilliant intellect. Here again, he would say, the mere intellectual disquisitions [long and complex discourses] are hardly enough, but success lies in unflinching practice, with a sincere yearning for the attainment of the true purpose of life.

SRI RAMANA JNANAM

Giving up all notions about country, caste, and associated matters, always mediate upon the Self. I alone am. No one belongs to me, nor do I belong to anyone else. I can see no one who can call me his; neither can I see anyone who is mine. I am all alone. When one is able to see oneself with one’s inner eye as not the body, all desires vanish and one experiences perfect peace.

The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi

THE VOICE OF SILENCE: The voice of silence is supreme. It is beyond all levels of consciousness and all methods of communication. Learn to listen to the voice of silence. Rather than discussing scriptures and arguing with the sages, just enjoy its presence. Silence will give you what the world can never give you. – www.himalayaninstitute.org

Happiness does not come merely through human endeavour, but through grace of God and the Master, which must be sought earnestly. –

Swami Rama

STEP OUT OF THOUGHTS: Getting identified with the mind, you get bored and restless very easily. When you feel bored, you satisfy the mind's hunger by picking up a magazine, making a phone call, switching on the TV, surfing the web or going shopping and so on. Or you can stay bored and restless and observe what it feels like to be bored and restless. As you bring awareness to the feeling, there is suddenly some space and stillness around it, as it were. A little at first, but as the sense of inner space grows; the feeling of boredom will begin to diminish in intensity and significance. Feel the energy of your inner body. Feel the life that you are, the life that animates the body. The body then becomes a doorway, so to speak, into a deeper sense of aliveness underneath the fluctuating emotions and underneath your thinking. Become at ease with the state of not knowing. This takes you beyond mind because the mind is always trying to conclude and interpret. It is afraid of not knowing. So, when you can be at ease with not knowing, you have already gone beyond the mind. – *Eckhart Tolle*

THE THIRD EYE: The 'third eye' of Siva does not mean a crack in the forehead; it means that things that others cannot see became available to him. They will become available to you also, if you raise your inner *shakti* through *sadhana*. – *Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev*

THERE ARE NOT TWO, BUT ONLY ONE SELF: Sri Ramana had experienced an 'I' – a transcendental 'I' beyond the empirical 'I'. It does not mean that two 'I's' are involved in the process. We have for long identified ourselves with the body and the brain, and this has totally confused the true picture. In fact, the true Self is that out of which the sense of personal 'I' arises and into which it will disappear if we constantly pursue the enquiry Who am I? Sri Ramana told Paul Brunton, "If you could mentally follow the 'I' thread until it led you back to its source you would discover that just as it is the first thought to appear, so it is the last to disappear. This is a matter which can be experienced." The Maharshi added, "Unless and until a man embarks on the quest of the true Self, doubt and uncertainty will follow his footsteps throughout life."* And this is what is happening to most of us.

**A Search in Secret India*

Liberation cannot be achieved except by the perception of the identity of the individual spirit with the universal spirit. – *Adi Sankara*

Prayer is the most powerful energy one can generate. It is a force as real as the earth's gravity. – Alexis Carrel

The appearance of things change according to the emotions, and thus we see magic and beauty in them, while the magic and beauty are really in ourselves. – Khalil Gibran

SPIRITUALITY: It lies beyond the material world of proof, beyond what can be measured and counted. It is made up of inner life and brings purpose and meaning to life. When our spirituality is nurtured and vibrant, we get connected, go beyond our ego-centred lives by expanding our hearts with compassion towards all... A person may experience spirituality without being a member of any specific religious affiliation, and the most religious person may feel spiritually bereft... Part of our addition to the busyness of life is an attempt to prevent ourselves from thinking about our mortality, the inevitable fact of our own death, and make us forget the true purpose of our life, which spirituality alone can provide us... Our spirituality is our true essence. It is that part of our life which relates to our soul, which is connected to the Divine. – Alan Shelton

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI WAS A YATI AS ENVISIONED IN SANKARA'S YATI PANCHKAM

In *Yati Panchakam*, a set of five *slokas*, Adi Sankara spells out the following characteristics of the state of being of a *yati*, which had got frozen in Sri Maharshi.

The ascetic who is ever concentrating on the *atman*, having repudiated the world with men and material, thus achieving the *upanishadic* bliss of Self-awakening.

He takes his abode near or around a tree, and uses his two hands as the vessel for eating the food. For him there is no distinction between 'I'ness and 'this'ness, and he sees the play of one consciousness everywhere.

Though he expresses through the body, he has no subjective or objective ego-centric ideas. The body continues to wait on him and follows him like a

shadow. Nothing except the *atman* does he consider worthy to be reflected upon.

He does not pursue the external objects for delight. He restricts the sense organs and the mind from wandering outwardly and continues to experience the flood of bliss.

The glories of a *yati* are immense, beyond human computation. He never reacts either positively or negatively to the external world. He shuns extrovertedness, ever meditating on Sri Paramesvara. (Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, July 2007.)

GET ESTABLISHED IN VIRTUES: Once an old man told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside all of us between two ‘wolves’. One ‘wolf’ is evil, represented by various negative and harmful tendencies such as anger, envy, greed, arrogance, pride and egotism. The other ‘wolf’ is the good one, characterized by qualities such as compassion, humility, love, peace, generosity, etc. To his grandson’s question, ‘Which wolf wins?’ the grandpa simply replied. ‘The one you feed’...Through assiduous cultivation of the positive tendencies in oneself and through constant watchfulness over the evil, which continually springs up in human mind, one can obtain a happy state of living for oneself. Pantanjali in his *sutras* also exhorts the aspirant to cultivate and nurture contrary feelings and tendencies whenever the mind is overcome by harmful thoughts. This verily is the process of ‘neutralizing’ or weakening the ‘bad wolf’... The kingdom of God is within us, says the Bible. Discovering this and being established always in this state is indeed the art of life and living. – *K.Vijayaraghavan*

DISCOVER YOUR HIDDEN SELF: Franz Kafka (famous Czech novelist – 1883-1924) said: “ Life’s splendour forever lies in wait about each one of us in all its fullness, but veiled from view, deep down, invisible, far off. It is there though; not hostile, not reluctant, not deaf.” It’s a hidden majesty that can manifest itself with the right directive. Some beckon it with prayer, others through meditation and some via transpersonal achievement and work...It’s not at all essential to summon it by any name or right word. For Kafka, it was not obligatory to do any thing at all. “It is not necessary that

you leave the house,” he wrote. “Remain at your table and listen. Do not even listen, only wait, Do not even wait, be wholly still and alone. The world will present itself to you for its unmasking, it can do no other, in ecstasy it will be at your feet.” *Mukul Sharma*

A TIP FOR THE SEEKER: The seeker has to guard against the ‘single slip’ and should also plug the ‘leaking pot’, through identifying and eliminating those activities which leave negative impacts. Gandhiji epitomized this concept through the image of three monkeys – one closing its eyes, urging that retarding influences should not be seen, another with closed ears, exhorts that words which have a negative impact should not be listened to, and the third with its mouth shut, symbolizing the need to desist from uttering words or eating that food which are not in harmony with right living. Issues, which are incongruous with one’s vision and goal, should be identified and weeded out through observation, analysis and synthesis. This presupposes a healthy assertiveness and a positive yet firm ‘NO’ to invitations to commitments or involvements which may take us astray from the goal. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

ASK AND YOU SHALL GET: Ask. Believe. Receive. The effortless wish-fulfilment can be ascribed to the law of attraction, according to which everything which happens to you, good or bad, you attract to yourself. According to this theory, you can even manipulate objective physical reality, purely through your thoughts. But you have to stop dilating upon your failures as this could taint your thoughts with negativity. So be very careful about what you think. If you, for instance, say, ‘I will never have a great relationship’, you are giving an order to the universal genie: be prepared for the consequences. It is just-ask-and receive hypothesis. But there is a caveat. In order to attract the things you want in your life, you are urged to follow the strategy: your thoughts and feelings and your actions ostensibly have to fire simultaneously in the same direction, with all the force and sincerity at your command. For how it happens one can get a cue from the theory of inflationary cosmology propounded by physicists like Alan Guth, which says that the universe is a free lunch; and that everything pops out of nothing! – *Vithal C. Nadkarni*

KNOW THE REAL SELF: The raw material of intellectual knowledge is supplied by the sense organs. They can establish contact with gross things only. The mind works on the information supplied by the sense organs, and

the intellect organizes and arranges it. What we ordinarily call knowledge is adulterated knowledge. We value it because we have not been able to go beyond its limitations. Only when we arrive at a state of no-thought we will be able to understand what we really are. Thinking has a gravitational force and it is only when this force has been eliminated that we can realize the value of thoughtlessness. How to come out of the gravitational field of thinking? We are swamped with sounds, forms and bodies. They keep bombarding us and so we remain conscious of one thing only – our body. We cannot see beyond the body... How can the Self, which is beyond thinking, be known and realized or denied and disapproved by thinking? The Self is not an object in the world of thought. That is why all our attempts at discussing nature of the Self have failed. Only those who have raised themselves above the level of thoughts can know the Self. – *Acharya Mahaprajna*

THE POWER OF JAPA: Faith is one thing needed before taking up the practice of *japa*. It does not matter if at first your *japa* becomes mechanical. The beginner finds that his center of consciousness is continually shifting, and this is most difficult for every aspirant. With **infinite patience, one should struggle with one's practices whatever be the results at the beginning**. Imagine that along with each repetition of the name of your *ishtam* (chosen ideal) or of your mantra, your whole body, mind, and senses are becoming purified. This faith must be made very strong, because this is the idea underlying *japa*. The *ishtam's* name calms the mind and brings about helpful changes in the body... The effects of this practice cannot be known at once, but if it is continued for some time, **steadily and persistently**, you will be astonished to find that a great change has come over you. Through practice, the body, the mind, and the breath must be made rhythmic...Immediately after having sat down for meditation, let the devotee feel purity in body and mind. He should think he is pure and is becoming purer...Even if a great tempest is about to rise in your mind and sweep you off your feet, go on with your *japa*. If need be, repeat the Holy Name aloud or at least audible to yourself. Very often in a disturbed state, mental repetition is not enough... You should see that your *japa* becomes better and better in quality. You should do your *japa* consciously, intelligently, and have more and more of it as days pass. It takes time to be able to control

one's mind, and more time to be in tune with the Divine. So, the **aspirant must have infinite patience.** – *Swami Yatisvarananda*

October- 2007

RAMANA MAHARSHI AND THE PATH OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The following excerpts are from the foreword by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to the above-captioned book authored by Arthur Osborne.

The life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi have a special relevance to our age with its dominant mood of wistful reluctant skepticism. We are given here a religion of the spirit which enables us to liberate ourselves from dogmas and superstitions, rituals and ceremonies and live as free spirits. The essence of all religions is an inner personal experience, as individual relationship with the Divine. It is not worship so much as a quest. It is a way of becoming, of liberation.

The well-known Greek aphorism “Know thyself” is akin to the Upanishadic precept *atmanam viddhi*, know the Self. By a process of abstraction we get behind the layers of body, mind and intellect and reach the Universal Self...We sink into the measureless being that is without limitations or determination...The child is much nearer the vision of the Self. We must become as little children before we can enter into realm of truth. This is why we are required to put aside the sophistication of the learned. Sri Ramana Maharshi gives us the outlines of a religion based on the Indian Scriptures which is essentially spiritual without ceasing to be rational and ethical.

MEANING OF YOGA: Yoga, a Sanskrit word, is understood to mean union. This refers to the melting of human self with the divine or the cosmic power. Truly speaking, yoga does not mean union, it means uniting. Yoga is the process of uniting, not the end result of union. The

process of uniting helps transcend one's identification with the mind body system. The ever-blissful union of the cosmic energy with a human mind is *ananda yoga*. – *Paramahansa Sri Nithyananda*

In enjoyment there is fear of disease, in social position fear of a fall, in honour the fear of humiliation, in beauty the fear of old age... and while old age comes on, desires grow younger every day. – *Bhartrihari in Vairagya Satakam*

Where are the elements, where is the body, where is the mind, where is the knower, the means, the object of knowledge... where is anything, where is the world, where is the aspirant... the Self alone exists. – *Ashtavakra Gita*

It takes only one person to change your life – YOU. – *Anonymous*

God does not ask your ability or inability, He asks for your availability. – *Anonymous*

Life is a pilgrimage. The wise man does not rest by the roadside inns. He marches direct to the illimitable domain of eternal bliss, his ultimate destination. – *Swami Sivananda*

The joys available in the world are trivial and fleeting. – *Sai Baba*

Real peace appears within when mind is free from defilements. External objects can provide only short term and shifting peace. – *Anonymous*

Worrying is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere. – *Van Wilde*

It costs more to revenge injuries than to bear them. – *Thomas Wilson*

THE WORLD IS A DREAM: Except that waking is long and dream is short, there is no difference between the two. To the extent to which all the events, which happen in waking appear to be real, to the same extent even the events which happen in dream appear *at that time* to

be real. In dream, the mind assumes another body. In both waking and dream, thoughts and objects come into existence simultaneously.

– *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Special on Gandhi jayanti

THE MAHARSHI AND GANDHIJI

The following is from the book *Militant but Non-violent Trade Unionism - A Biographical and Historical Study* by M. V. Kamath and V. B. Kher, published by Navajivan Mudranalaya, Ahemdabad. Shankarlal Banker, referred to below, was a close associate of Gandhiji and was imprisoned with him for printing the latter's controversial articles in 1922 in *Young India*, of which Banker was the printer. The book records:

As we have seen, Gandhi had asked Shankarlal to involve himself in the propagation of *khadi*, but at one stage he began to have serious doubts about what his role should be in the scheme of things. It was at that stage that he received guidance from an altogether unexpected source: Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi! And this came about in the unlikeliest way. In 1934, Shankarlal was living at Mirjapur in Ahmedabad where he met a high-ranking officer of the German Air Force and a member, besides, of the German aristocracy. The officer was staying as a guest of Ambalal Sarabhai [a nationalist and a leading industrialist of that time], but took the occasion to call on Shankarlal and Anasuya. In the course of their conversation the officer happened to mention his interest in matters spiritual and philosophical and wondered whether either of them had heard of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. To their embarrassment neither Anasuya nor Shankarlal had heard of that saint of Tiruvannamalai. Somewhat surprised, the German officer said: "Do go and see him and get his *darshan*. He is a rare personality!" The fact that a member of the German nobility, a Baron and an officer of the German Air Force should have made that suggestion intrigued Anasuya, and she asked Shankarlal the next time he was down south on his regular tours, to find out more about Ramana Maharshi.

In the summer of 1935, Shankarlal was at Ootacamund, and after he spent a few days there he started his round of visits of *khadi* centres. It was his practice to look into the affairs of such centres in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and then move on to Wardha to report to Gandhi. He reached Madras via Tirupur. At Tirupur he invariably dropped in on an old friend, Mohanlal Purohit, manager of the Jeevanlal Aluminium Company [a leading business firm of that time]. Purohit not only took a great deal of interest in *khadi*, but was a great admirer of Gandhi and utilized Shankarlal's regular visits to discuss Gandhian philosophy with him. As luck would have it, on the day he called on Purohit he chanced to meet the editor of the Madras-based *Sunday Times*, Mr. M. S. Kamath. Kamath was a great devotee of Ramana Maharshi and Shankarlal promptly started to ply him with questions. Kamath thereupon suggested that Shankarlal should accompany him to Tiruvannamalai, and Purohit equally promptly lent his car for the journey. The journey from Tirupur to Tiruvannamalai took four hours and the party reached there around 7 p.m. At dinner time Shankarlal saw the Maharshi for the first time and noticed that the latter had a "lustre in his eyes".

The next morning Shankarlal joined other guests and visitors in the prayer hall where the Maharshi was present. He had plenty of things on his mind. As an inspector of *khadi* centres he had all sorts of problems to handle, but here, in the prayer hall, all anxieties seemed to vanish. As he later recorded: "Suddenly I began to experience a strange feeling of peace!... All the unrest appeared to vanish.... I remembered the line from the *sloka* Gandhiji used to recite to me in jail in 1922, that ended with '*tad brahma nishkalamahavi na cha bhoolasangah*' (I am that pure *Brahman* and not this body made up of *pancha bhootas* or five elements). I had the feeling that I was that 'pure Brahman' and the words 'Sivoham, Sivoham' raced through my mind. I was astonished at this phenomenon." Shankarlal wondered whence came those thoughts, considering that he was not a very spiritually inclined person. He attributed it to the environment he found himself in. To his surprise, Shankarlal experienced a feeling of "extraordinary self-confidence" and felt that the experience was real. As he took leave of the Maharshi he felt a great deal of peace and encouragement. When later that month he called on Gandhi, he narrated his experience to the Mahatma who not only expressed his joy but also suggested to Shankarlal that on the next occasion he should stay longer at Ramanashram.

In the summer of 1936, Shankarlal once again found himself at Tiruvannamalai and in the presence of the Maharshi. This time he made bold to ask the Maharshi: “What books should I read for spiritual progress?” The reply startled Shankarlal. “Books? Why books?” The Maharshi queried and repeated the words: “Why books?” Then the Maharshi added: “Make your heart pure and you are bound to see the light!” That was to make a lasting impression on Shankarlal’s mind and he kept thinking over it during his entire day’s stay at the Ashram. On the train that was to take him to Madras, Shankarlal later recorded that around 4 a.m. he suddenly woke up and saw the picture of Bhagavan floating before his eyes! As he wrote: “I opened my eyes fully, rubbed them, and wonder of wonders, I felt as if he was standing before me.... I had a continuous feeling of exultation and joy as if there was no need to think or have any anxiety about anything in the world!”

Shankarlal again reported this experience to Gandhi who recommended that Shankarlal visit Tiruvannamalai more often. Gandhiji also told him: “After listening to you, I have suggested to Rajendra Babu and Jamnalalji also to go there.” [They can be seen in group photo (no. 17) along with Bhagavan, in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.]

Shankarlal was back in Tiruvannamalai in the summer of 1937. This time he took with him pictures of famine-stricken people in Tirupur. He was seated in the prayer hall along with others as Bhagavan was talking of Self-realization and the bliss of the soul. This distressed Shankarlal who had seen starving people in Tirupur. How, he wondered aloud to his friend Dr. Syed [the person whose account is found in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 47-9], who was sitting next to him, how could one reconcile misery with the bliss of the soul? And he showed him the pictures of starvation he had brought with him.

Dr Syed did the unexpected thing. He went over to Bhagavan and placing the pictures in his lap said: “This gentleman here says when there is so much misery in the world, how can we think of the bliss of the soul?” Instead of being fazed by the question, Ramana Maharshi replied gently that while all effort should be made to help those in distress, one should not take individual credit for the act. The Lord alone was the saviour of the people.

Maharshi said that he often saw people who had not eaten for two or three days and they seemed to glow with some inner joy. “Where did that joy come from? Only the Almighty could give it to them!” When Shankarlal retrieved the snapshots and looked at them again, he was to observe what he had not noticed before! Those poor starving people engaged in breaking stones seemed to have smiles on their faces! For Shankarlal it was a revelation.

Shankarlal met the Maharshi the next day quite unexpectedly. This time he wondered how marvellous it would be if the Maharshi and Gandhi met. To which the Maharshi replied with a soft smile: “Distance does not exist!” When Shankarlal next visited Wardha, he repeated this conversation to Gandhi who said: “Haven’t you understood? Distance does not exist the way we think. I have written on the subject only three days ago!” Gandhi called for that article and read out to Shankarlal what he had written:

“And since thought is the root of speech and action, the quality of the latter corresponds to that of the former. Hence, perfectly controlled thought is itself the power of the highest potency and can become self-acting. That seems to me to be the meaning of the silent prayer of the heart. If a man is after the image of God, he has but to will a thing in the limited sphere allotted to him and it becomes. Such power is impossible in one who dissipates his energy in any way whatsoever even as steam kept in a leaky pipe yields no power.... In any one who has to organise vast masses of mankind for non-violent action, the full control described by me has to be attempted and virtually achieved. This control is unattainable save by the grace of God....”

In the summer of 1939, Shankarlal’s health was affected and he tendered his resignation as Secretary of the All India Spinners’ Association (AISA). He now turned his mind to spiritual matters. He was advised by Swami Atmanandaji and Swami Ramanandaji to devote himself to a life of *manan* and *chintan* – meditation and contemplation. He took to reading works like Sankara’s *Viveka Chudamani*. The swamis advised Shankarlal to withdraw his mind from all mundane activities and concentrate on spiritual study. So, after resigning from the AISA, Shankarlal was free from day-to-day work

though he continued to take interest in the labour movement. But should he indulge even in that activity? This bothered him.

Next time he was in Tiruvannamalai he had the privilege, in the very early hours of the morning, to watch Ramana Maharshi engaged in cleaning and chopping vegetables in the kitchen. He noticed that the Maharshi was going about his work with remarkable expertise. He even heard the Maharshi telling a devotee how to slice a pumpkin skillfully! It was, thought Shankarlal, a lesson for him, too. Do a job, do it well, and do it with complete detachment! He could not resist waking up the next day at 4 a.m. to go to the kitchen. This time he heard Bhagavan asking someone in Tamil: “Is Banker there?” When he was told that Banker was present and sitting outside, Ramana Maharshi came out with a ladle full of cooked lentils and looking quizzically at Shankarlal, invited him to taste it. “It is a bit hot. But I cooked it myself,” said the Maharshi by way of explanation. Shankarlal tasted it and exclaimed: “Why, it is very tasty!” At that the Maharshi broke into laughter and went back to the kitchen. At that point in time, Shankarlal was later to write, he had got the answer to the problem that was bothering him, about engaging himself in some activity even while engaged in spiritual pursuits. Wasn’t the Maharshi telling him by example, that to be working actively was as important as searching for spiritual bliss? Cleared were his doubts. He was never again to be bothered by them.

(Source: *The Maharshi*, July-August, 2007. This bi-monthly journal of Ramana Kendram, New York, can be obtained free of cost through internet by request to < newsletter@arunachala.org >

SRI RAMANA EXPLAINS THE STATE OF A *JNANI*

How a realized soul (*jnani*) does every thing without getting affected by it was explained by the Maharshi in reply to questions put to him from time to time.

The radio sings and speaks; but if you open it you will find no one inside. Similarly, the body speaks like the radio, there is no one inside as a doer. Various illustrations have been given in the books to enable us to understand how a *jnani* can act and live without a mind: the potter’s wheel goes on turning round even after the potter has ceased to turn it.

The electric fan goes on revolving for some time after we switch off the current. The *prarabdha* which created the body will make it go through whatever activities it was meant for; but the *jnani* goes through all these activities without the notion that he is the doer of them. The *jnani* weeps with the weeping, laughs with the laughing, plays with the playful, sings with those who sing, what does he lose? His presence is like a mirror which reflects the image exactly as it is; but remains unaffected by it.

It is hard to understand how this is possible. All explanations are for ignorant onlookers who think of the *jnani* as one with a body. One must therefore be a *jnani* to know a *jnani*. Bhagavan once narrated the following story of a *jnani* to drive home the point. [Refer *Spiritual Stories as told by Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 22-4.]

Kaduveli Sridhar was famed as a very austere hermit. He lived on the dry leaves fallen from the trees. The king of the country heard of him and offered a reward for any one who would prove his worth. A temple dancer agreed to it. She began to live near the recluse and pretended to attend on him. She gently left pieces of *pappadam* along with the dry leaves picked by the recluse. When he had eaten them, she began to leave other kinds of tasty food along with the dry leaves. Eventually, he took tasty dishes supplied by her. They became intimate and a child was born to them. She reported the matter to the king.

The king wanted to know if she could prove their relationship. She suggested a plan of action. Accordingly, the king announced a public dance performance by the *devadasi*. She appeared on the scene, leaving the child in charge of the sage at the hermitage.

The dance was at its height in the hall. At the hermitage, the child started crying for the mother. The father took the baby in his arms and went to the hall. As the lady was dancing with full involvement, he could not approach her, but the mother noticed the baby and the saint. As per the plan, she contrived to kick her leg in the dance so as to unloose one of her anklets. Just as she approached the saint in the hall, she gently lifted her foot and he tied the anklet. The public shouted and laughed. But the saint remained unaffected. Yet to prove his worth, he sang a Tamil song meaning: "For victory, let go my anger!/ I release my mind when it rushes away./ If it is true that I sleep day and/ night quite aware of my

Self,/ may this stone statue burst into two/ and become the wide expanse./” Lo and behold! The stone idol burst into two with a loud noise. The people in the hall were astounded.

Sri Bhagavan continued: Thus, he proved himself an unswerving *jnani*. One should not be deceived by the external appearance of a *jnani*. Referring to verse 181 of *Vedanta Chudamani*, Sri Bhagavan added: Although a *jivanmukta* associated with the body may, owing to his *prarabhda*, appear to lapse into ignorance, yet he is pure like the *akasa*. He always revels in the Self alone... All his actions should be taken to be divine manifestations on the plane of humanity. He lives only for the good of the world.

Regarding incomprehensibility of a *jnani*, famous Telugu writer Gudipati Venkatachalam records: “Bhagavan was always something of an enigma to me. This is not really surprising since mere devotees cannot comprehend the state of realized souls. There is no set standard for a *jnani*, no yardstick to judge him by. *Jnanis* cannot be understood because their minds have been destroyed. Sometimes we may feel that their actions have no rational explanation. But it is sheer ignorance to search for an explanation in apparent contradiction in the behaviour of a *jnani*.” (*Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp.140-1.)

FOR SUFIS, LOVE IS THE WAY TO GOD: The Sufi way is direct communion [sharing of intimate thoughts and feelings] and absorption in the Supreme with sheer love and devotion. Sufis believe that God is present in every human being but He is hidden from us by *khudi* or ego, what is called *aham* in Sanskrit. We need to overcome *khudi* before we can become one with the Supreme. The Sufis seek only the enchanting sight of the Beloved. This emotion is narrated by great Persian poet Rabia; “If I love thee for fear of Hell/ Put me in the fires of Hell/ If I love thee for the sake of Heaven/ Deprive me of this bliss for all times/ My love for thee is thine alone/ I yearn for thy communion/ Withhold not thy everlasting beauty from me.” Sufis lived a life of renunciation. They wore a dress made from coarse wool called *suf* and thence their name Sufi. It is believed that Sufism was brought to India by Khwaja

Mohiud-din Chishti of Ajmer... Fifteenth century well-known Hindi poet, Malik Mohd. Jayasi in his *maha kavya* entitled *Padmavat* asserts: We can enter *vaikuntham* only through love; without which we are a mere handful of dust. – *M.G. Kapahy*

YAJNAVALKYA: He studied in the *gurukulam* of his maternal uncle, Vaisampayana, who once could not attend an important conclave of great *rishis*. They cursed him to undergo the pain of *Brahmahatya* for his arrogance in not attending the meeting. Vaisampayana asked his disciples to do penance to wash off the ill-effects of the curse. Yajnavalkya boasted that he alone could do the penance and redeem his guru from the sin. The guru did not like the disciple's attitude and asked him to go away after giving back all the lessons he had learnt under him. Yajnavalkya vomited all the lessons he had learnt. The other disciples took the form of *tittiri* birds (sparrows) and swallowed all the knowledge. It came to known as *Tittiriya Yajur Veda* or *Krishna Yajur Veda*. Yajnavalkya left the ashram and undertook deep penance towards the Sun-god, who initiated him into the essence of a new *Yajur Veda*, which gained the name *Sukla Yajur Veda*. Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayini. The knowledge he transmitted to Maitreyi is recorded as *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. (Condensed from *Tattavaloka*, August, 2007.)

THE PERPETUAL TREADMILL OF LIFE THAT TAKES US NOWHERE: We are shackled to what seems like a treadmill that is powered by greed. It takes us from the pursuit of one worldly acquisition to another without any lasting satisfaction. All our energy is spent on protecting what we have or in acquiring what we do not have yet. We become so preoccupied that there is little time and energy left to strive for lasting peace and happiness, which alone will lead to an enduring sense of fulfillment. This is possible if we try to realize the Self within us by constantly meditating on the question “Who am I”? Socrates (469-399 BC) has said, “ Man know thyself. The unexamined life is not worth living.” – *Rajender Singh Ji*

BIRTH OF SUBRAHMANYA

The following story from the *Skanda Purana* tells us about the birth and glory of Siva's son, who according to many devotees, reincarnated as Ramana Maharshi in this *yuga*.

Taraka, an *asura*, had obtained a boon from Brahma that he could be killed only by a warrior who was seven days old. The *devas* realized that such a warrior could only be fathered by Siva. The gods begged Siva: Give us a child capable of fighting demons on the seventh day of his life." Siva agreed: "Take the essence of my austerities; from it will arise my son, the greatest war lord in the cosmos." He cast his energy into a fire, but *agni* could not bear its radiance for long. To cool it down, he gave its seed to *vayu*, who – having failed in this endeavour – plunged it into the water of Ganga, which started to boil. The terrible heat thus generated set fire to the reeds on the river bank. In that great blaze Siva's energy transformed into a radiant child, boy with six heads and twelve hands.

When the fire died out, six wandering nymphs called the Krittikas, found the baby beneath the embers and smoldering ashes, within the petals of a splendid lotus. They nursed him and took him to Siva.

The sight of this extraordinary child filled the gods with awe. He was given many names: Skand – the energetic emission, Mahasena – the great leader, Guha – the mysterious one, Shanmukha – the six faced one, Pavaki – the son of fire, Sarabhu – one born amidst the reeds, and Kartikeya – son of Krittika maidens.

Siva gave him a powerful lance, *vel*, a weapon; a rooster for his insignia; a peacock his vehicle – his *vahan*. He became Velan – the lance bearer.

Skanda is popularly known as Murugan – the boy god, in Tamil land. He is also known as Kumara – the eternal child. He is Subrahmanya – the helpful god. who stands atop mountains and protects mankind. He has two consorts – Devasena, the daughter of Indra, and Valli, the daughter of local tribes. According some, his wives are symbols of his army and weapons to which he is married.

According to Ganapati Muni, Bhagavan's going to Arunachala from Madurai, was re-enactment of the scene described by Adi Sankara in his

Subrahmanya Bhujangam, where Father Siva called, “Come hither, child” and, stretching out his arms, caught and clasped Kumara as he leapt up from his mother’s lap. Sri Ramana, in the similar fashion, left Madurai, his mother’s home, in response to the Father’s call, Arunachala Siva.

In *Ramana Ashtothra*, which is recited every day, the fact of Sri Ramana being an incarnation of Lord Siva’s son, occurs at six places.

November, 2007

FIND THE SELF WITHIN

One needs to deeply reflect upon the following statements of Sri Ramana Maharshi to absorb the message contained in them.

1. The enquiry “Who am I”? turns the mind introvert and makes it calm.
2. Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away other thoughts. Distraction of the mind is a sign of its weakness. By constant meditation the mind gains strength.
3. When we turn the mind inwards, God manifests as the inner consciousness.
4. Once the current of awareness of the Self is set afoot, it becomes everlasting and continuous by intensification.
5. The Self is like a pearl. To find it you must dive deep down into silence, deeper and ever deeper until it is reached.
6. The Self cannot be found in books. You have to find it for yourself, within yourself.

7. The enlightened one who has become one with the supreme consciousness, like a river that has become one with the ocean, takes birth no more in a body.

ACHIEVING THE GOAL: The path to the ultimate freedom is not for the faint-hearted, the unlit lamp or the ungird loin. It is for one who can patiently tread the labyrinthine stony path and the razor's edge, on the way to discovering, to the delight, in the end, that the 'disease' has been overcome and that the remedy in its various stages and processes, though frustrating and painful at times, has been, in the final analysis, educative, and rewarding by itself and also very much worth the effort made. –K. Vijayaraghavan

BENEFITS OF HEARTFELT *SATSANG*

Satsang helps in building up a magnetic centre of spiritual life; from such a centre flows energy which purifies and stabilizes our emotions. Traditionally, *satsang* is associated with the singing of *naam kirtan* invoking the Supreme. Such *kirtans* divert negative energy, producing circles of positivism which have multiplier and cascading effects. Such gatherings purify the gross physical, and help to heal body and mind as well. *Satsang* relieves us of

latent mental burdens; it creates positive patterns; it roots us to our own real self; it takes away our frustrations; it provides a surface for interaction; and above all it generates pure energies which purify us. It is on record that devotees of Chaitanaya Mahaprabhu took out a procession, chanting *hari bol*, and in that fervour of mantra, they went into ecstasy that reached a crescendo of a higher kind. – *Spirituality. indiatimes.com*

Eulogizing the benefits of *satsang*, the doyen of Hindi poets, Tulsidas, in his evergreen *Ramacharitamanasa* asserts: “*Satsang* is a moving Prayaga [at Allhabad], available to us at all places. Anyone who plunges into it with devotion secures all the four rewards of human existence, namely, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, during his life time.” He adds: “The result of immersion into the sacred water of this king of holy places is perceived instantly, turning crows into cuckoos and herons into swans. Let no one feel surprised to hear this statement. The glory of *satsang* is no secret as is clear from the lives of Valmiki, Narada, and Agastya. *Satsanga* is the root of joy and blessings. Through *satsang* the wicked get transformed, just as a base metal is transmuted by the touch of the philosopher’s stone.”

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI AND HIS FAMILY

Sri Ramana took immense interest in the construction of the temple built over his mother’s samadhi. Some may think that the temple was conceived and executed solely by his brother. We who were there at the time cannot help but have a different opinion. Whenever the temple architect was unable to decide on a matter relating to the construction, the *sarvadhikari* would send him to Bhagavan. Bhagavan would keenly listen to all the details, discuss the matter and then advise him accordingly. He took interest at every step.

Sages like Bhagavan are of a different order than the regular *sadhus* and swamis we often see. He could have close family members living with him without being affected in the least. Take the instance of Bhagavan’s mother. She once came and visited him on the hill in 1914, and during that visit she fell ill. When her condition turned critical, Bhagavan composed four stanzas supplicating Arunachala to save her life.

Sri Rama also looked after the welfare of all his subjects, including his near relatives. Sri Rama, or a Bhagavan, could do this without falling into the snares of *maya*. They were above *maya*, but they still served mankind.

Bhagavan wished to save his mother from future births and gave her liberation. Her faith in him was firm. She believed that only her son, the Maharshi, could save her, and in her old age refused to leave him even for a single day. He sat by her side and guided her to illumination during the final hours of her life.

See how natural everything was. Bhagavan's mother came, his brother came, and his sister would often visit. On occasion, he even looked after his brother's son, T. N. Venkataraman, when he was just a small boy. He would attend to the boy's needs just like any other uncle would. But did he think he was an uncle, a son, or a brother? No. He knew he was the Self alone.

Buddha once found himself in similar circumstances. His mother had died when he was young, so his mother's younger sister raised him. She also married his father, thus becoming his stepmother. After Buddha's enlightenment, his stepmother wanted to join his *Sangha*. Buddha at first refused to have a woman in the *Sangha*. His trusted disciple, Ananda, quietly moved near him and said, "How can you refuse the request of the very person who lovingly cared for you and raised you?" Buddha then softened his stand and accepted her, as well as some other members of his family.

There is no doubt that Bhagavan had a special affection for his mother, and he also showed a particular interest in the affairs of his brother's family. He never said that he was a renunciate detached from his family members. He had affection for his relatives in the same way he had affection for others, whether a child, a man, a monkey, or a cow. His actions were spontaneous and natural, and by watching him we learned how to live in the world. His example was the greatest teaching, and his divine presence far outweighed a lifetime of strenuous *sadhana*. Just to think of him, or sit in his presence, used to raise us to higher levels of beatitude. (Source: *My Reminiscences* by N. Balarama Reddy)

A FOREIGN DEVOTEE'S LOVE FOR SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

From a letter written to Arunachala Ashram, New York, by a devotee who could not attend Bhagavan's advent function on September 8, 2007.

I am recovering temporarily from a 'terminal illness' called life. I was admitted into the emergency room. They put me on a little bed with a curtain around it. I was sitting on the bed reading *Ramana Puraanam* when the doctor came in to tell me that the CAT scan did not look good and cancer in the lungs was a real concern. I asked a number of questions and checked in with myself to see what I was feeling. I knew I had to stay inside myself and not get pulled out. "Who am I" arose from within. It seemed for a while that I was one with that part of me that is... always. Amy had fallen away. I remained. I felt spacious and glowing and peaceful. After the doctor left, I looked down at the open book in my lap and read: "The world is a moving picture show of (sights and) sounds, driven along with a great hubbub by a whirlwind...."

I witnessed the faces of the nurses — one was my friend — and of the Doctor and I sensed the heaviness of their discomfort and worry. I felt a calm in the center of a storm. I saw the suffering of everyone and realized it was because we are identified with something so fleeting as our physical identities. There was compassion and love filling me up where I was expecting fear. This went on for at least a week. But one night I did experience a serious fear of dying. I let it be and felt it fully. And then it passed and once again I experienced my Self "Here" with or without me. So many things came up that I normally would react to. And I asked myself who is reacting to this. Whatever it was or is, I have been quite ill and seem to be recovering but not enough for journey to New York.

Note: I want to order more books. I hope there are many I have not yet read. I will be thinking about all of you on the 8th.

Namaste, Amy (Source: *The Maharshi*, Sep.- Oct., 2007)

SRI RAMANA SUPRABHATAM GETS WRITTEN MIRACULOUSLY

The following piece by Swami Shantananda Puri appeared in *The Ramana Way* (monthly journal of Ramana Centre for Learning, Bangalore) of July 2007.

In 1952, for the first time, while in Meerut (U.P.), I casually came to hear about the Maharshi from a friend. A deep longing arose in me to visit Tiruvannamalai. It got fulfilled in mid-1952 when I went south to visit my parents. Even though I have studied in a college at Tiruchirapalli (not far from Tiruvannamalai) between 1943 and 1947, nobody in my family or from outside had ever mentioned to me about the existence of Bhagavan. The scholarly communities of Tamil Nadu in those days refused to recognize anybody else as spiritually advanced other than the Sankaracharyas of main *Peetas*.

Myself and a friend of mine went to Sri Ramanasramam and stayed in the dormitory guesthouse for a couple of days. We used to sit in the temple of Mother and read loudly *Latitha Sahasranama Stotram* in order to attract the admiring attention of other visitors. We did no meditation or *japa*, nor did we read any books regarding Sri Ramana. Our spiritual antenna was in an embryonic stage of development.

My second visit was in 1989, but it was more like a picnic. In 1993, I came to Tiruvannamalai as a monk and stayed for three months in Athithi Ashram as I was afraid of approaching Sri Ramanasramam for free accommodation and meals. I did daily meditation regularly in the Ashram and attended the *poojas*.

In 1995, as a *sannyasi* I got myself locked up in a *moun mandir* at Hari Om Ashram, Nandiad, Gujarat – in a room without windows and without a single ray of sunlight ever penetrating inside. After nearly four and a half months of stay, sometime in July, while sitting in meditation, I heard a sweet voice commanding me, “You shall go to Sri Ramanasramam in November and do *sadhana* there for one year.” My inner instinct indicated to me that it was the very voice of the Divine Mother. I found myself asking the voice, “But I have heard that the Ashram would not allow anybody to remain for one year.” Again a crisp reply flashed to my mind, “Go and things will be done.”

The same day I wrote a letter to the Ashram narrating in detail the command from the Divine Mother. I requested that as possibly they might not be agreeable to grant me one year stay, they might permit me to stay for six weeks within which time I could locate other mutts or ashrams which could sponsor my shelter and food for the rest of the period. I ended my letter saying that as it was the command of the Divine Mother, it was for the latter to provide me with the wherewithal necessary for complying with the command. I had only mentioned that I was a great grand disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and was aged about sixty nine years, hailing from Vasista Guha Ashram in Tehri Garhwal, but deliberately refrained from mentioning that I was a Tamilian.

Surprisingly, a reply was received from the President of the Ashram admonishing me why I had restricted my request to stay for six weeks while the Divine command was for one year. The letter stated that permission was being granted for full one year starting from November 1995. This was surely the limitless compassion of Bhagavan Ramana which had worked. I read the letter several times and my eyes brimmed with tears. That entire night my mind was revolving around the kindness of Bhagavan on such an insignificant, unknown monk like me.

Slowly, steadily and imperceptibly Bhagavan had been spreading the net for me and he has now caught me. Can there be any logic or rationale behind the boundless compassion of Bhagavan Ramana? I can only weep silently and copiously every time I recollect the circumstances of my coming to Bhagavan's holy feet.

The President and Ashram authorities were extremely generous and loving towards me when I reached the Ashram in November 1995. Every minute of my stay in the Ashram was full of ecstatic delight. I spent my time in attending *pujas*, in meditation and reading books relating to Bhagavan, for the first time. In March 1996, the President of the Ashram suggested to me that I should contribute some article to the forthcoming *Advent Centenary Souvenir*.

As my grasp of the life, teachings and works of Bhagavan was mediocre I was unable to think of any subject on which I could write. The same evening when I was ruminating on the problem, Sri K. Natesan, an ardent devotee aged 84 years, who had lived with Bhagavan for a long time, came to my

room and asked what I was worried about. When I confessed my predicament, he suddenly exclaimed, “Swamiji, I will give you an excellent idea. In the South, gods have *suprabhata stotras*, which are sung in chorus every morning. There is no such *stotra* on Bhagavan. Why don't you try to write some *suprabhata stotras* on Bhagavan?”

Even though I was not a scholar of Sanskrit and had never written any poetry in Sanskrit or in any other language at any time earlier in my life, the idea was very appealing to me. It was years later that I realized that the entire episode had been planned and blessed by Bhagavan Himself as a part of his *leela* (sport).

At my request, Sri Natesan briefly narrated sequentially all the notable events in Bhagavan's life. Even a scholar would have hesitated to undertake the venture of composing *suprabhatam* on Bhagavan. Mine was a case of 'fools rushing in where angels fear to tread.'

That night when I sat down to compose the *suprabhatam*, the poem rolled out of my pen nonstop, effortlessly, to my utter surprise and unbounded joy. I did not stop even for one minute either to sort out the ideas or to choose a proper word or to set right the meter of the poem. I finished 17 or 18 stanzas in about one and a half hours. I was in real ecstasy. I had read how Bhagavan dictated through the mouth of Ganapati Muni a good part of *Uma Sahasram* in the Virupaksha cave. Now, 46 years after his *mahasamadhi*, Bhagavan himself had composed through me *Ramana Suprabhatam*. What an abundant grace that Bhagavan chose me as his stenographer while he dictated silently and invisibly!

The next night again, the event repeated itself and I could finish the balance stanzas in less than an hour. In the morning I handed over my manuscript to the President of the Ashram.

This suprabhatam finds first place in the Centenary Souvenir of 1996 and was also published as a separate book. A sample of seven verses out of the 26-verse suprabhatam is given below.

Oh! Lord Ramana, blessed son of Sundaram and Alagammal, foremost among sages, arise to bestow auspiciousness to the world.

Good Morning, Oh! Ramana the Supreme-Consciousness-Bliss. Flocks of birds and peacocks, as though unable to bear separation from you, are calling aloud. Cows, from their places in the cowshed, are mooing to welcome you.

Good Morning, Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. How many are capable of understanding your reality. You have assumed a human body by *leela* (sport); you have become the favourite child of the effulgent Lord of Arunachala.

Good Morning, Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. You have secretly incarnated in the guise of Bhagavan Ramana. Although, possessing only one face, you are verily the six-faced Subrahmanya, Lord Siva's son, even though you do not seem to possess the *sakti* weapon or mount the peacock.

Good Morning, Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. Flocks of birds sing your name in melodious voices. Lotus are glowing by the rays of the rising sun and devotees in groups wait for your *charanamrta*.

Good Morning, Oh! Bhagavan of Arunachala. The Vedic priests holding auspicious materials in their hands, are standing for your worship. Women singing hymns of praise, stand before you.

Good Morning, Oh! Ramana the Supreme-Consciousness-Bliss. Those who recite your *subrabhatam* everyday will be happy, and gain a vision of true knowledge. They will cease to identify with the body and will be released from the clutches of *maya*.

THE GITA JNANA: The very opening verse of the *Gita* refers to Kurukshetra where the Mahabharata war was fought as 'Dharmakshetra' to emphasize that it was a battle to establish Dharma in the world. Lord Krishna's teaching revolves round the need to face the situation squarely without seeking the easy way out. Arjuna wanted to follow the path of knowledge (*jnana*) by renouncing action (*karma*), refusing to fight, which was his duty. Arjuna took refuge in the fact that *jnana* was superior to *karma*, and thus by renouncing action he could avoid the bloodshed. Krishna removed this confusion saying that one could not choose the path to suit one's convenience. He pointed out that only after pursuing *karma yoga* (action performed as duty without attachment to result) that one

becomes eligible for *jnana yoga*, as the mind would have become purified to grasp Self-knowledge. – *K. Srinivasan*

ATMA-SAMADHI: Daily meditation will allow you to have inner glimpses of a thought-free state of mind. When you reach this state of mind, you will experience oneness with *atman*. This is called the state of *atma-samadhi*. If you can reach that state and hold it for one minute, then you start understanding the attributes of *atman*. Initially with effort and gradually in a natural manner, you will be able to reach this state, especially during meditation. Outside meditation, i.e., when you are on the material plane, reaffirm the realisation that “All is *atman*, all is *Brahman*.” – *Swami Tapovanam, guru of Swami Chinmayananda*

SELF-TRANSCENDENCE: Saint Manikkavachakar’s spiritual attainment was so fulfilling that he became immersed in total oneness with the Lord, and the *Tiruvachakam* is a faithful record of the stages by which this was made possible through sheer grace of the Lord. The saint poet acknowledges that when he neared the presence of God, the gradual understanding that the Lord is not only truth but also knowledge and infinity, remaining immutable and imperishable in His all pervasiveness, wrought a truly humbling effect in him. The genuine plea to the Lord to help him transcend his ego indicates the difficulties and hurdles that prevent one’s efforts to get disentangled from the limitations of ego. – *T. V. Venkataraman*

APPAR: Sixty three Saivite saints, known as *Nayanmars*, had devoted all their lives to Lord Siva and had triumphed against all the stresses and strains of their lives with unquestionable faith in the Lord. Among them was Appar (7th century), who composed numerous hymns in praise of Lord Siva, which became famous as *Thevaram* – a garland of divine words. He earned the title of Tirunavukkarasar – king of the sacred tongue. A devotee of Siva, called Sambandar, who was born during those days, affectionately called him as father and since then he came to be known also as Appar. He spent his whole life in visiting Siva temples and cleaning the temple environment, removing the thorny shrubs from the temple premises, with a small spade which he always carried with him.

Thevaram hymns are regularly sung in Siva temples. (Source: *Tattavaloka*, February 2007.)

THE DIVINE MOTHER

You are the mind, You are space, You are the wind, You are fire, You are the waters, You are the earth, nothing is other than You, greater than You. In order to project Yourself as the universe, remaining as Pure Consciousness-Bliss, You have taken the form of Siva's Consort. – From *Soundaryalahari* by Adi Sankara

Conditions are always good, never bad; we need to know how to make good use of them. The man who waits for conditions to improve may have to wait till eternity. – J. P. Vaswani

Anger or hatred is like fisherman's hook. It is very important for us to ensure that we are not caught by it. – Dalai Lama

Hating other, even enemies who harm you unprovoked, assures incessant sorrow. – *Thirukural*

This is the very perfection of a man, to find out his own imperfection. – St. Augustine

When a seeker merges in the beatitude of *samadhi*, he does not perceive time and space or name and form, the offsprings of *maya*. – Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Life is not a chore; it is a journey of discovery. – Anonymous

MEDITATION IS MEDICATION: Meditating on daily basis is the closest thing to an antidote to the ills of a stressful lifestyle. Meditation is therefore recommended to people with heart disease or other medical problems, as well to anyone who is trying to control emotional stress. People who practice meditation report an increased ability to cope with short and long-term stressful situations, as well as greater energy and enthusiasm for life, and

heightened self-confidence. How to meditate? (i) Ideally, one should meditate at the same time each day. (ii) Any clean, quiet corner of the house or office is fine. (iii) Wear loose, comfortable clothing, do slow motion stretching and deep breathing. (iv) You can assume a meditation posture or simply sit or lie in a comfortable position. It does not matter if you are in a chair or on the floor. (v) With eyes closed, scan your body from top to bottom sequentially, relaxing muscle tension with each breath (start with your toes and work up or vice versa). Repeat this three times. (vi) Sense the ebb and flow of the breath, without pulling or pushing it. (vii) Repeat a focus word or phrase with each breath, e.g., ‘so’ while inhaling and ‘hum’, while exhaling. (Source: *Theosophical Digest*)

DECEMBER - 2007

Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude. – Denis Waitley

With the kind help of the *sadguru* one should inquire: Who am I ? What is this world? What is the reality behind these? Only then will the turbulent mind be controlled and fixed in the practice of the firm *bhava*. In due course, all thoughts will disappear yielding place to Awareness of the Self. – Ribhu Gita

He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings, and all beings in his own Self, and looks on everything with an impartial eye. – The Buddha

GURU: *The Guru Gita* provides etymological derivation of the word ‘guru’. The root ‘gu’ stands for darkness, the root ‘ru’ stands for its removal. So the syllable ‘gu’ is darkness and the syllable ‘ru’ is light. Guru is the supreme knowledge that swallows the darkness of ignorance. Once we become wise we understand and fully accept that the pleasures which spring from external

objects are transitory and therefore ultimately a source of sorrow. Guru alone can make us imbibe the truth that the objects which the five senses record can give us short-lived fulfillment; lasting happiness cannot be gained through pursuit of worldly pleasures... Adi Sankara says: For all things subject to birth, birth in a human body is rare. Even rarer to obtain are strength of body and mind. Rare still is purity. More difficult than these is a desire to live a spiritual life. And rarest of all is to have a true teacher.

RECLINING SIVA'S SHRINE IN A. P.

Surutapalli village in Chittoor is home to a unique temple dedicated to Lord Siva. The *sanctum sanctorum* of this temple houses a majestic reclining *pratima* of Siva, with his head resting on the lap of his consort Parvati (Sarvamangala). He is seen with four arms, one holding the deer (*mirga*), another the elephant goad (*ankusham*), the third under his crown, and the fourth resting on his thigh.

Reclining Vishnu is a common sight, as Sri Ranganathaswami at Srirangam (Tamil Nadu) and Sri Padamanabhaswami in Tiruvananthapuram (Kerala), but Siva in a reclining posture with his head on the lap of Goddess Parvati is a rare sight. The *sthala purana* (legend) of this temple has a connection to the well-known story of *amrita manthana*. The first item to emerge from the process of churning was the dreaded poison called *halahala* or *kalakuta*. Both *devas* and *asuras* rushed to Lord Siva begging Him to protect them from the ill effects of the poison. Pitying them, the Lord swallowed the poison. Before it could go down further, Devi Parvati pressed the neck and the poison remained there permanently. This earned the names like Nilakantha and Kalakanta for the Lord. It is believed that after swallowing the poison, the Lord became tired and it is at Surutapalli that he lay down to rest on the lap of Goddess Parvati.

The temple built by Vijayanagar monarchs in 14th century has many unusual features, one of which is the two granite icons of Kalpavriksha or the mythological wish-fulfilling tree, and Kamadhenu, the divine cow, both auspicious symbols, placed on either side of the entrance. (Condensed from an article by Chitra Madhavan in *Tattvaloka*, Oct., 2007)

GURU VACHAKA KOVAI – THE GARLAND OF GURU’S SAYINGS

This massive poetical work contains 1,254 verses composed by great poet and outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It also contains 28 verses written by the Maharshi himself. These got written on an impulse when the Maharshi was shown a verse by Muruganar, and he felt inclined to compose a verse on the same topic. These verses have their own numbering system to distinguish them from Muruganar’s.

In the late 1920’s, Muruganar began to write down Bhagavan’s teaching statements. By 1939 the number of verses exceeded 800. Muruganar had never attempted to put the verses in any kind of order; he had simply composed a verse whenever he heard Bhagavan say something of interest that he thought should be preserved. Bhagavan entrusted the sequencing of these verses to Sadhu Natanananda (Natesa Mudaliar), who was a scholar. [His dialogues with Bhagavan are contained in *Upadesa Manjari* (Tamil). He is also the author of *Sri Ramana Darsanam*.] Natanananda placed the verses in three major subdivisions, entitled ‘Investigation into Truth’, ‘Meditation on Truth’, and ‘Experience of the Truth’. Within these groups he gave subheadings reflecting the contents of the verses. The result was sections such as ‘The Reality of the World’, ‘The Nature of Self and *Jiva*’, ‘The Heart’, and so on.

Guru Vachaka Kovai contains the largest collection of Bhagavan’s spoken teachings that was checked and revised by Bhagavan himself. Bhagavan was shown the manuscripts of *Day to Day with Bhagavan* and *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, but he never went through them with pen in hand, as he did with *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, revising the contents to make sure that they conformed to his teachings.

It is also important to note that teachings in this case were recorded in Tamil, the language in which they were originally spoken by Bhagavan. While Bhagavan usually spoke in Tamil when he answered philosophical questions, virtually all people, with the exception of Muruganar, chose to record his statements in some other language. For example, *Maharshi’s Gospel* and

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi were first published in English and later translated into Tamil.

According to Sadhu Om, an advanced devotee of the Maharshi, “if we want to verify the correct teaching of Bhagavan, the answer will be available in *Ulladu Narpadu*, *Upadesa Undiyar* or *Guru Vachka Kovai*, which are the true Sri Ramana *prasthanatraya* [the three fundamental texts of Sri Ramana’s divine revelation], and they indeed are a *prasadam* of his grace.”

Before printing *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, the proof copy which was sent to Ramanasramam, now in the archives of the Ashram, has Bhagavan’s extensive corrections scribbled all over it. These corrections show how Bhagavan improved the style of the poetry, the rhymes, and sequencing of the lines. Where deemed necessary, he crossed out the original and substituted words of his own to provide more accurate rendering of his statements. It appears that the whole exercise was inspired by Bhagavan, who prompted Muruganar to embark on this project and continue with it for many years.

It would be of interest to note that ‘Venkatavan’ is one of the names of Bhagavan that Muruganar frequently uses in his poetry.

(Condensed from David Godman’s article, *The Mountain Path*, Oct.- Dec., 2007)

HOW TO AVOID SUFFERING: Most of our suffering is due to committing the same old wrong again and again. Don’t we crave for something again and again? Don’t we get angry again and again? Don’t we feel jealous again and again? Don’t we act unwisely again and thus suffer again and again? There is a simple way to meet the situation. If you observe carefully you will find that the moment greed or anger or jealousy arises in the mind, the mind gets disturbed, agitated, frustrated, worried, anxious, threatened and insecure. The moment you see that the mind is disturbed become aware of it. When you are aware of it then you know what to do with it. (Excerpted from *Splendour*, July 2007.)

DO WE NEED A LIVING GURU? One idea prevalent among spiritual aspirants is that a living guru is necessary, and this causes confusion in the minds of many who sincerely wish to practise the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, but never had the opportunity of meeting him in his human form.

The Maharshi taught us that the real guru is within us. He taught us to turn our attention within, away from all forms, both human and otherwise. Therefore, though we should revere the Maharshi's human form, we should always remember that the only true way to revere him is to do as he advised us, namely, to turn our attention Selfwards. The true living guru is not merely a person currently living in human form, but is the ever-living reality, which exists within us eternally as our own true self. Only this ever-living guru can enable us to transcend the illusory duality of life and death. Therefore, if any human guru tells us that we need to have a guru who is currently living in human form, such a human guru cannot be real guru, because he or she is failing to emphasize that all we need do is to turn our mind within to know our own true self. – *Michael James*

WORDS AND MORE WORDS: Imagine for a moment that the tape you are listening to becomes silent and has no content for just one minute. What happens? Your mind races. Thoughts flood you. What has happened, you wonder. What has gone wrong? Why there are no words?... Nothing has gone wrong. Your mind cannot tolerate silence; that is all... There are two kinds of people. One who follow words and seek meaning behind them. Another, who ignore the meaning and seek the source of thoughts. Words soothe your superficial mind the same way as scratching an itch seems to provide some comfort. In actual fact it makes the problem worse. Be careful of scholars and philosophers who use highly complex language and words to propound their theories... When one really understands, one realizes that understanding happens when thoughts cease. Truth resides in silence. As you move inwards towards the source of words and thoughts, mind becomes still. This stillness leads to fulfilment. – *Paramahansa Sri Nithyananda*

BALANCE THE CHAKRAS THROUGH KUNDALINI PRAYANAM:

Chakra literally means a wheel or circle. In the human body energy flows through three main channels or *nadis*, namely, *sushumna*, *pingla* and *ida*. The last two start from the right and left nostrils, respectively. These move to the crown of the head and then course downwards to the base of the spine. These two *nadis* intersect each other and also with *sushumna*. These junctions of the *nadis*, called *charkas*, seven in all, regulate the body mechanism, are: 1. *Mooladhara chakra*: *Moola* or root is the *adhara* or source of support. From here, *prana* reaches energies to every nook and corner of the body. It is situated in the pelvis. Colour: red, sound vibration: 'lam'. 2. *Swadhishtana chakra*: This

controls the functions of reproductive and excretory organs. *Swa* signifies the vital force and *adhishtana* means abode. It is situated above the organs of generation. Colour: saffron, sound: ‘vam’. 3. *Manipura chakra*: Situated in the navel region, this *chakra* controls every organ below the diaphragm and helps to increase digestion and assimilation to maintain perfect health. Colour: red, sound: ‘ram’. 4. *Anahata chakra*: *Anahata* means unbeaten. Situated in the cardiac area this improves heart and lung function. Colour: green, sound: ‘yam’. 5. *Vishuddhi chakra*: This signifies purity and enables all the glands to function to their optimum and maintains perfect hormone balance. Colour: violet, sound: ‘ham’. 6. *Ajna chakra*: *Ajna* means command. Situated between the eyebrows, this *chakra* is vital in stimulating the pituitary gland and slowing down the ageing process. It has the shape of the crescent moon. Colour: silver white, sound: ‘om’. 7. *Sahasra chakra*: *Sahasra* means one thousand. This works towards mind and body balance and promotes total health. Colour: rising sun, sound: ‘mmmm’... Taking the most comfortable position, close your eyes and visualize each *chakra* and its colour as you inhale and chant the particular sound as you exhale. Regular practice of *Kundalini Pranayama* energizes and balances the *chakras* and brings about complete harmony in the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual energies. Each major *chakra* has a sound to activate the energy of that particular area and opens itself to receive maximum benefit from cosmic energies. – www.samarpanfinearts.com

KNOW YOURSELF AND REACH THE GOAL

The first and foremost of all thoughts, the primeval thought in the mind of everyone is the thought ‘I’. It is only after the birth of this thought that any other thought can arise. It is only after the first personal pronoun ‘I’ has arisen in the mind that the second personal pronoun ‘you’ can make its appearance. If we can mentally follow the ‘I’ thread until it leads us back to its source, we would discover that, just as it is the first thought to appear, so is it the last to disappear. This is a matter which can be experienced. It is possible to go inwards until the last thought ‘I’ gradually vanishes.

The sense of ‘I’ pertains to the person, the body and brain. When a man knows his true self for the first time, something else arises from the depths of his being and takes possession of him. That something is behind the mind; it is infinite,

divine and eternal. Some people call it kingdom of heaven, others call it soul, still others name it *nirvana* and Hindus call it liberation or *moksha*. You may give it what name you wish. When this happens a man has not really lost himself, rather he has found himself.

It is necessary for a man to analyse himself, because it has long been his habit to think as others think. He has never faced his 'I' in the true manner. He has not a correct picture of himself. He has too long identified himself with the body and the brain. Therefore, he should pursue the enquiry Who am I?

Unless and until a man embarks upon this quest of the true self, doubts and uncertainty will follow his footsteps through out his life. The greatest kings and statesman try to rule others, when in their hearts of hearts they know that they cannot rule themselves. Yet the greatest power is at the command of the man who has penetrated in his inmost depth. There are men of giant intellects who spend their lives gathering knowledge about many things. Ask these men if they have solved the mystery of man, if they have conquered themselves, and they will hang their heads in shame. What is the use of knowing about everything else when you do not know who you are?

Through deep reflection on the nature of one's self and through constant meditation, the light can be found. It is not easy to perceive one's progress in the spiritual realm. The time required for getting enlightenment depends on the maturity of the seeker's mind. The gunpowder catches fire in an instant, while much time is needed to set fire to the coal. (Extracts from Paul Brunton and Sri Ramana literature)

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REFRESHING REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By Robert Adams

Adams, an American, had a visionary dream of a small Indian figure, appearing at his bedside. He consulted Paramhansa Yogananda, who showed him the picture of Sri Ramana, which he recognized as the figure in the dream. He visited Sri Ramanasramam and was with Bhagavan for three years – 1947-50. His book *Silence of the Heart* contains Sri Ramana's teachings as viewed by him. [Yogananda had visited Bhagavan in 1935. His picture with Bhagavan can be seen in Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*].*

When I was 18 years old, I arrived at Bombay on my way to Tiruvannamalai. It was about 8.30 a.m. when I entered the hall and there was Ramana on his couch reading the mail. I sat down in front of him. He looked at me and smiled, and I smiled back. There were about 30 persons in the hall. The Maharshi asked me if I had eaten breakfast. I said, 'No'. He spoke some Tamil to the attendant, who came back with two giant leaves; one with fruits and one with some porridge and pepper. After I consumed the food, I just lied down on the floor. I was very tired.

The Maharshi had arthritis in the legs and could hardly walk at that time (1947). His attendants helped him to get up and he walked out of the room. When he came outside he said something to his attendants who motioned me to come. He guided me to a little shack that I might use while I was staying there. He came inside with me. I bet you think we spoke about profound subjects. On the contrary, he was a natural man. He was the Self of the

universe. He asked me how my trip was, where I was from, and what made me come here. Then he said I should rest. I laid down on the cot and he left.

I was awakened about 5 o'clock in the evening by Ramana himself, who had brought food for me. Can you imagine that? We spoke briefly. I ate and slept. The next morning I went to the hall. Everybody sat around just watching Ramana. He would go through the mail and at times may read it out loud, talk to some devotees, but his composure never changed. Never did I see elsewhere such compassion and love.

Then people started to come over to him asking questions. His replies were very succinct. They weren't like you read in a book. Apparently, what you read in a book is his reply to three or four people. They condense it all into one question and answer. People usually asked a question or made a statement. If he agreed, he would nod or say yes. That is it. If he didn't, he would offer an explanation in, may be, one or two sentences.

There were Muslims, Catholic priests and people from many races and nationalities at the Ashram. When I was there for a week or so, two of his disciples were jokingly arguing with him about something at a meal. I asked the interpreter what they were taking about. He said, "Ramana's couch is covered with lice, and he refuses to let us kill them. They climb over this body and legs and he doesn't care. We want to have couch fumigated, but he won't let us." The next day they tricked him. When he went outside for his morning walk, they sprayed the couch with DDT. When he came back he smelled the couch, smiled and jokingly said, "Someone has tricked me." He never got angry or mad; I don't think he knew what the words meant.

A couple of weeks later, there was a German lady who had come to the Ashram, and had made a donation. She was not happy for some reason and was complaining to Ramana, who just kept silent. I asked the interpreter, "What does she want?" The interpreter told me, "She wants her donation back. She wants to go home, back in Germany." Everything was going on in front of Ramana. When she started arguing with the manager of the Ashram, Ramana said in English, "Give back her donation and add 50 rupees to it", which was done and she left. This was his nature. He never saw anything wrong; he never took anyone out of his love no matter what they did. He loved everyone just the same.

Ramana used to quote from the scriptures; Jesus and Ramana said basically the same things. Jesus said, “Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” Ramana said, “The Self is within you. Search for and find it and awaken.” Jesus said, “Son I am with you always, and all that I have is yours.” Ramana said, “I can never leave you, I am always with you.” His compassion never left him.

In April 1950, I was in Bangalore to see Papa Ram Dass. When I was informed that Ramana has left his body, I went to Tiruvannamalai. The crowds had already started to come, thousands and thousands of people. So I climbed the hill and went into one of the caves, and stayed there for five days. When I came down the crowds had disbursed. He had already been interned. I enquired of his devotee who saw him last, “What were the last words he spoke?” The devotee said, “While he was leaving his body, a peacock flew on top of a wall and started screeching. Ramana asked his devotee, ‘Has anyone fed the peacock yet?’ Those were the last words he spoke.”

I have been to many teachers, many saints and many sages. I was with Nisargadatta, Ananada Mayi Ma, Papa Ram Dass, Neem Karoli Baba and many others, but never did I meet anyone who exuded such compassion, such love, such bliss as Ramana Maharshi. (Excerpted from *Western Seekers on Sri Ramana Maharshi* by A.R. Natarajan)

*I am thankful to Ramana Maharshi Foundation, UK, for information in the biographical note. Mr. Jacobs, President of the Foundation was with Mr. Adams for a few weeks before the latter died around ten years ago.

SOME POPULAR NAMES OF VISHNU: *Achyuta*: restrained, unfallen; *Aniruddha*: unrestrained; *Balaji*: eternal child; *Chakrapani*: wielder of the discus, lord of life’s cycle; *Datta*: divine gift; *Dhananjaya*: winner of cosmic wealth; *Dharmadhikari*: keeper of world order; *Garudadhvaja*: he whose insignia is an eagle; *Hari*: tawny [light to brown colour as is the colour of a lion’s body]; *Hayagriva*: horse-headed; *Hrishikesh*: lord of senses; *Janardana*: beloved of masses; *Keshava*: long haired; *Madana-Mohana*: he who could charm Cupid; *Madhava*: husband of mother-goddess; *Madhusudana*: killer of the demon Madhu; *Manmatha*: pleasing the mind; *Manohara*: one who captivates the mind; *Mukunda*: deliverer, liberator;

Muralidhara: flautist; *Narayana*: deliverer of mankind; *Padmanabha*: one with a lotus rising from his navel; *Panduranga*: radiant lord; *Parmathma*: cosmic soul; *Pradyumna*: conqueror; *Ramachandra*: as serene as the moon; *Ranganatha*: lord of colours; *Rishabha*: bull among men; *Shreenivasa*: he who lives with Shree, that is, Lakshmi; *Shreevastava*: on whose chest resides fortune; *Tirupati*: lord of goddess Shree, that is, Tiru; *Trivikrama*: he who covered the cosmos with three steps; *Vasudeva*: lord of elements; *Vamana*: dwarf; *Varadaraja*: the king who bestows boons; *Venkateshvara*: god of the hills; *Vishnu*: all pervader. (Source: *Vishnu* by Devdutt Pattanaik)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI ANSWERS QUESTIONS ON WILL POWER

The following answers by the Maharshi are to questions asked on June 7, 1937, as contained in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, entry 423.

Devotee: What are the means for getting will power?

Maharshi: Your idea of will power is success insured. Will power should be understood to be the strength of mind which makes it capable for meeting success or failure with equanimity. It is not synonymous with certainty of success. Why should one's attempts be always attended with success? Success develops arrogance and the man's spiritual progress is thus arrested. Failure on the other hand is beneficial, inasmuch as it opens the eyes of the man to his limitations and prepares him to surrender himself. Self-surrender is synonymous with eternal happiness. Therefore, one should try to gain the equipoise of mind under all circumstances. That is will power. Again, success and failure are the results of *prarabdha* and not only of will power. A man may be doing only good and noble actions and yet prove a failure. Another may do otherwise and yet be uniformly successful. This does not mean will power is present in the one and not in the other.

D. Is will power gained by divesting oneself of thoughts?

M. Rather by confining oneself to a single thought. Ultimately this will also disappear, leaving pure consciousness behind. Concentration helps one to achieve it.

D. So then, it is gained by directing the mind and concentrating it. The personality has nothing to do with it.

M. Personality is the root cause of external activities. It must sink for gaining the highest good.

We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give. –
Jack Herbert

All *sadhanas* are for getting rid of the delusion that you are the body. –
Sri Ramana Maharshi

Life is too short to be spent in fault-finding, holding grudges or keeping memories of wrongs done to us. – *J.P. Vaswani*

Envy is the ulcer of the soul. – *Socrates*

THUS SPAKE SRI Ramana: There are not two minds, a good mind and a bad mind. The mind is only one. Tendencies (*vruttis*) alone are of two kinds, auspicious (*subha*) and inauspicious (*asubha*). When the mind is under the influence of auspicious tendencies it is called a good mind, and when it is under the influence of inauspicious tendencies, a bad mind. However bad others may appear to be, one should not dislike them. Like and dislikes are both to be avoided.