

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

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REMOVAL OF FALSE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY: The seer (the person who sees) and the object seen are like the rope and the snake. Just as the knowledge of the rope, which is the basis, will not be felt unless the false knowledge of the illusory serpent goes, so the realisation of the self, which is the basis, will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

IN LIGHTER VEIN – Two episodes: 1. Some American devotees, seated at a distance from the Maharshi because of the crowd, asked him whether they could move forward so that his grace will be upon them. The Maharshi replied that he had no objection to their moving forward but his grace was available for everyone irrespective of proximity. The devotees nonetheless, pushed forward and almost came near him. After sometime, one of the devotees requested the Maharshi to place his palm on his head so that he can receive the grace in full measure. An amused Maharshi said, “Next you might ask me to sign a bond and take me to court if you imagine that the grace has not worked.” The entire gathering burst into laughter...**2.** A scholar approached Kanchi Paramacharya and boasted that he was an expert on the *Gita*. The seer asked him if he could spare time to hold a three-day course at the local temple. The scholar assented. On the first day 50 persons came to hear him but the attendance dwindled subsequently. The scholar met the Paramacharya and said, “What sort of town is this? No one seems to be interested in the *Gita*. On the first day there was a crowd of 50, second day 25 and on the third day there were only two persons to listen to me!” With a twinkle in his eye the seer remarked, “Why fret? When Krishna spoke the *Gita* there was only one person to listen to him!” – *Murali A Raghavan*

GARBHA, DANCE OF THE POT: Ancient Indians revered the pot. It was the symbol of the womb, the *garbha*, or it sustained human life. The pot was equated with the mother;

it was the symbol of divinity. A pot or *kalash* filled with water and sprouts and crowned with green leaves and fruits became the symbol of abundance and good fortune. It was worshipped over 3000 years ago. It is still being worshipped today. The gods had a pot that overflowed with grain and gold. It was called *akshaya patra*. They also had a pot brimming with *amrit*. Women are a combination of *akshaya patra* and *amrit*, holding in their bodies the promise of abundance and immortality for the family. Without a women, a family perishes; the family tree withers...In autumn as the rains recede and crops are harvested, three things come together on nine nights of *navaratri*: the pot, the women, and the field. In the centre of the field, the pot is placed filled with water and sprouts , and around it women dance in circular formation. They bend down and clap as they thank the earth and the cosmos, and energise it with their happiness. This is *garba*, the dance of earth-womb. The circular formation of the dance is a reminder of the horizon, the rim of the divine pot, the world we live in. We live in a cosmic womb, just as deities in the temple are enshrined in the *garba griha*, a detailed endorsement by the metal pots placed on the top of the temple dome. – *Devdutt Pattanaik*

PUSALAR NAYANAR

By Sethu Ramaswamy

When Pallavas ruled the south with their capital at Kanchipuram, there lived a learned Brahmin, called Pusalar. For a long time he had a consuming desire to build a temple for his beloved Lord Siva. He knew exactly how he would build it; the plans and the architectural designs being clearly visualized in his mind. He went about trying to collect funds for his ambitious project, but failed to raise the money needed. He therefore decided that he would build the temple without stone, brick or lime, in his heart.

His plans were complete in all their details. He had collected mentally all the necessary material. The outer quadrangle (*prakaram*) which went right around the temple was built, and the inner quadrangle leading to the sanctum sanctorum with pillars beautifully sculptured was complete. The roofs had floral designs and the walls depicted scenes showing the greatness of Siva and his marriage to Parvati. His children Ganapati and Kartikeya had separate shrines.

The high *gopuram* was magnificent. It had taken him a long time to complete this huge temple. Now it remained only to fix an auspicious date and time to install the Sivalinga

with all pomp and splendor, with rituals of Vedic chanting, mingled with music from *veena* and *nadaswaram*.

He looked into the almanac and fixed an auspicious date and time for the installation. Strangely, the then Pallava king had also built a temple for Siva in Kanchipuram. He had also fixed the same date and time as Pusalar had for the installation of the Sivalinga.

The night before the installation, the Lord appeared in a dream to the king and told him that a great devotee of mine named Pusalar has built a temple for me in Tiruninravoor and I have to be present there when he installs me in the *garbha graham*. Therefore, you must change your installation to another day.

The king woke up and made preparation to go the place where Pusalar lived, and enquired about the new temple built by him. But everyone denied having knowledge of any new temple. The king then approached Pusalar and found him sitting in deep meditation. Hearing the noise of a multitude of people, who had accompanied the king, he opened his eyes and saw the king himself standing before him. The king with folded hands said, “Swami, the Lord came to me in dream and told me that you have built a temple for him and you are going to perform *kumbhabhisheka* today, and he has asked me to postpone my installation to another day.”

Pusalar was stunned. His heart overflowed with happiness. “O! My Lord has blessed me.” He cried in great joy. Then he told the king, “The temple of my beloved Lord is in my heart. Since I had no funds and means to build the temple for Him, which was my intense desire, I have mentally built a temple for Him in my heart and today the auspicious hour is nearing installation of the Sivalinga.” Saying this he went into a state of blissful *samadhi*.

The king prostrated before him and left for his capital. Pusalar then, as scheduled, installed the Sivalinga in the sanctum sanctorum of his heart and performed the *kumbhabhisheka* amid Vedic chanting and music from *mangalavadyams*.

The Pallava king built a Siva temple at the place where Pusalar had meditated. It is called Tiruninravoor, or the place where the Lord stood. – Condensed from *Ramana Gyan – The Direct Path*, September-October, 2010

THE SOUND OF SILENCE: All masters come upon a great piece of music in the silence of their souls long before they put it down as composed work. Hence they crave to be in deep silence for long stretches of time. All beautiful music exists as *anhada* or

unheard in eternity. Sometimes, the abstract sound of eternity, a continuous hush running through all Creation is given a name like Aum. Another name for Aum is the musical note 'Sa'. The *tanpura*'s simple drone connects you to the eternal sound of the Sa. When very fine tuned, the Sa, symbolizing Siva, exudes a magic that has a spiritual resonance. It is referred to as a 'celestial note', but identified as the third note or Ga, of the octave. 'Ga' is the *swayambhu gandhar* or self-manifested third note, produced on its own. Like the cosmic third eye of intuitive knowledge, its ambience awakens great vistas of awareness of music, and is to be heard to be believed. – *Bindu Chawla*

THE MEDITATIVE WAY

By Surendra Narayan¹

Meditation and meditative practices find a prominent place in all religious traditions in different names and forms. Their patterns and types vary widely. Certain forms of meditation are also prescribed for limited and mundane purposes like relieving high blood pressure and ulcers in individuals who have to operate in high pressure jobs causing nervous tension.

Different teachers suggest different ways for meditative practices, varying in form and content. These variations may even cause confusion. Yet, if we look carefully we discover that in all the practices runs the same teaching of the necessity for detachment, of the need to separate our consciousness from the body, feelings and thoughts, and to go to a level beyond.

According to the dictionary, to meditate is to dwell on anything in thought, to turn and revolve any subject in the mind. And meditation is described as a close and continuous thought.

Meditation is an active process like the flow of a river. It is both the way and the goal, the two must go together. The path and the submit merge into one. The quality, content, depth and intensity of awareness, however, continue to change as one moves on. And because meditation is also the way, the purification of one's life is a necessary condition for progress.

What is basically needed is not repression but watchfulness and close observation of the movement of feelings and thoughts and modifications of the mind. Through watchfulness and observation come a growing realisation of the true nature of things and this leads to a natural, spontaneous decline and then a ceasing of the wayward tendencies of the senses and the mind.

It would be useless to expect to deepen our meditation without achieving some measure of dispassion and that purity of consciousness which lies above the domain of mere sensory perceptions. ‘The self of the matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet. One must disappear; there is no place for both.’

Meditation is a way of life and there cannot therefore be two separate states of consciousness – one in the early morning meditation and another during the daily round of desires, struggles and competition. The meditative way is not an escape from life or a dreamy living with eyes half closed, unconcerned with what is happening within and around us. It is living with full awareness and attentiveness; only the vision has changed from the periphery to the centre, from division to unity, from separativeness to integrity, like the many pieces of stone that go to form a lovely mosaic.

A meditative life is lived in openness, not behind closed doors. At one time or at a certain stage it may call for seclusion so that we may more easily plunge into the glorious depths of our innermost being, but afterwards it must be manifested in the world outside. As Sri Krishnaprem² explains: A quiet, artificially arranged period of special effort is as useful to the beginner as is a quiet, secluded space for him who would learn to ride a bicycle. But the aim of the cyclist is to be able to ride in safety in the busiest traffic and the aim of the yogi is similarly not to enjoy himself in a private place of his own but to master his psychophysical vehicles so that he can ride them serenely in the midst of the roar and bustle of life.

Yoga and meditation are often used as synonymous terms and perhaps rightly so. United to pure *buddhi*, moving among sense-objects yet with the senses free from attraction or repulsion, the yogi demonstrates the skill in action; so is the meditative life. Yoga is dynamic power, peace, and love; and so is meditation. ‘*Samsara* is Nirvana, and Nirvana is *Samsara*,’ says a Buddhist teaching. The culmination of meditation is wisdom and wisdom is the fullness of living.

1. International Vice-President, (1980-95), Theosophical Society, Chennai, after retiring as Chairman,

Central Board of Direct Taxes. He lives in New Delhi.

2. For his reminiscences of the Maharshi, see *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 291-2.

HOW THEY FELT IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MAHARSHI – EXPERIENCES OF DEVOTEES

The Maharshi is beyond words. He was divinity in human form. How the persons felt transformed and elevated in his presence is narrated below by those who had the rare fortune to be before him. Renowned Bengali poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya wrote after meeting him: Eternity has worn a human face/ Contracted to a little human span/ Lo, the immortal has become a man/ A self-imprisoned thing in time and space.*

Paul Brunton¹: In his presence I become aware of a mysterious change taking place with great rapidity in my heart and mind. The old motives which have lured me on begin to desert me. The urgent desires which have sent my feet hither and thither vanish with incredible swiftness. The dislikes, misunderstandings, coldness and selfishness which have marked my dealings with many of my fellows collapse into the abyss of nothingness. An untellable peace falls upon me and I know that there is nothing further that I shall ask from life...I find a sense of exaltation and lightness. Time seems to stand still. My heart is released from its burden of care...I gradually become aware of the benign radiation which steadily percolates into my brain. I enjoy an ineffable tranquility merely by sitting for a while before the Maharshi. I am perfectly sure 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. It is clear that his mere presence provides many with spiritual assurance and emotional felicity.

Again and again, I am aware that the Maharshi's mind is imparting something to my own, though no words may be passing between us. Spiritually my life is nearing its peak. I rest in the lap of holy bliss. I have attained a divine liberty and an almost indescribable felicity. My heart is remoulded in rapture...The spiritual radiations that emanated from him were all-penetrating. He possessed a deific personality which defies description. The subtle and silent flavour of spirituality which emanated from him can never be recorded.

Prof. Banning Richardson²: In the presence of Ramana Maharshi I felt an inward joy which suffused my consciousness, and made thinking seem superfluous. I had come into

touch with spirituality of the finest type. When I was in the presence of the Master I was so filled with joy and peace that the desire to ask questions disappeared.

Grant Duff³: I do not know what happened when I saw the Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me, I felt that he was the Truth and the Light. It did not take me 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. Never perhaps in world history was the Supreme Truth – *Sat* – placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude.

Dilip Kumar Roy⁴: I sat down near him on the floor and meditated, my heart heaving with a strange exaltation which deepened by and by into an ineffable peace and bliss which lasted for hours and hours. Words seem utterly pale and trite the moment you want to describe an authentic spiritual experience, which is vivid, throbbing and intense. I cannot say why he moved me to my depths through his gaze. The peace provided by it was as unaccountable as it was delectable. I saw indeed a man, who in his exterior was anything but distinguished, far less handsome or captivating, and yet he was so compelling and disarming. I shall never forget how deeply stirred I was when I saw his austere yet kind face. The Maharshi emanates the perfume of spiritual peace as the flower emanates fragrance from its petals. I realised for the first time what is really meant by the word ‘sacred’.

Justice Chandrasekhara Aiyar⁵: When he fixes his keen gaze on us, it looks as though he is seeing the inner clockwork of a mechanism in a transparent case; and you get the feeling that a mild current of grace is flowing into you from him. He is a veritable storehouse of spiritual energy and wisdom. He radiates peace or *shanti*. He belongs to a superlative category of his own. To be in his presence is by itself a stirring experience in elevation of the soul; to receive a few words of counsel from him is a rare blessing; to be the recipient of his benediction is to be assured of a special fortune.

Eleanor Pauline Noye⁶: As I entered the hall, I felt the atmosphere filled with Sri Bhagavan’s Purity and Blessedness. One feels a breath of the Divine in the Sage’s presence. When He smiled it was as though the gates of Heaven were thrown open. His look of Love and Compassion was a blessing that went straight into my heart. I was immediately drawn to him. One feels such an uplifting influence in His saintly presence and cannot help but sense His extraordinary spirituality. His silent influence of love and light is more potent than words could ever be. I do not think there is another like Him on

earth today. To see Him is to love Him. As I looked upon Sri Bhagavan's serene face and into His eyes, my soul was stirred. His loving solitude made me feel quite at home; and when He smiled my joy knew no bounds. At the feet of the Lord of Love, peace and happiness garlanded me and enriched my life.

(To continue)

*Complete poem is at p. 63 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, published by the Kendram. For references 1 to 6, see, *ibid*, serial nos. 1, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

By Dr. Mithin Achi*

I became a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna when at college in Mangalore and used to frequent Ramakrishna Mission. In 1995-96, I had a vision of Parmahansa reclining on a sofa wearing only a *kaupina*. I asked, "Why are you wearing only a loincloth, Thakur?" He just smiled.

In the year 2000, I was introduced to Ramana Maharshi through the book *Timeless in Time* by A.R. Natarajan. I was very much attracted to his philosophy and was surprised in my subsequent research to find a photo of Bhagavan resembling that of the vision of Sri Ramakrishna I had in a loin cloth. My devotion to Arunachala increased year by year but I never had a chance to go and see it.

In 2008, I learnt about Sri Nannagaru [A renowned devotee of the Maharshi] while surfing on the internet about Sri Ramakrishna. I wondered whether I would meet him any day. When I heard that he was coming to Hyderabad, I decided to go and hear him at Satya Sai Nigmagam. I reached the hall at 2.00 pm and took my seat at the back. There was an animated chatter amongst the devotees who suddenly became quiet when the Guru came.

I saw the man amidst his followers on the podium delivering one of the greatest speeches I have heard about *advaita*. His words were not dry but carried with them the conviction of personal experience. I instantly felt I was in the presence of a master. During his talk the sun set behind him in the upper storey windows and I concentrated on that. I felt an uncommon peace. And then there was the silence.

He just looked at the huge gathering with piercing but benign gaze. There was a stunning pin-drop silence in the entire hall. It was more powerful than his speech. Every eye was riveted on him. The breath seemed to have been sucked out from one's being and replaced with silent power. In every eye was a light of calmness and in every heart a feeling of bliss. I realized with conviction that he was really a *mahapurusha*. And then the spell broke.

At the end of the *satsang* I decided to test the great man by sending mental waves asking him to acknowledge my presence. He was surrounded by countless devotees who wanted to touch him and speak with him. I stood right in front of the podium and was hoping and wishing that he sees me. He did not. 'Acknowledge me. I have come for you.' I told him mentally. He looked at everyone else but me. I decided to leave the place with a slightly bruised ego and thought that perhaps we did not share a relationship. While coming out of the hall a thought struck me that he is indeed a great *purusha* and I should try again, keeping my arrogance and ego aside. I went inside with vigour and climbed the podium. I reached the crowd that was surrounding him whence suddenly there was an opening and I saw the master looking at me with a smile on his lips. He beckoned me closer and patted on my right cheek. I was stunned and immediately bowed down low before him. The place where he touched me tingled with sensation the entire day.

I do not know if it was his touch or my destiny, but within a month I laid my feet on holy Arunachala soil and got an accommodation in the Ashram. In the morning *Giri pradakshina* I noted with sadness that the peak of Arunachala was shrouded in the clouds. I prostrated to it and asked it to show me its form. Finally the cloud cover lifted. I saw Arunachala for the first time. It was the Elephant *darshan* near Adi Annamalai. I was scared and awed. After that I made my way to the Ashram. I went to Bhagavan's *samadhi* and circumambulated happily. Finally I had come home.

*An orthopedic surgeon at Habsiguda, Hyderabad. His research article 'The Antipode of Arunachala' in the *Mountain Path*, Oct.-Dec. 2010, is valuable. He is a painter of good standing. His email is <arunachalaheart@gmail.com>

REMINISCENCES OF NAGAI AH V. CHITTOR

A legendary Telugu actor, known for his films *Bhakta Pothana* and *Bhakta Thyagaraja*, visited Bhagavan in the 1930s.

When my wife died, the whole world looked bleak to me. Everything seemed like an arid desert with no oasis in sight. I would be reading the *Gita* over and over again. The slightest thought of my wife would sink me into deep sorrow. To overcome it I would let my friend force me into giving music concerts. One day I left my house, and wandering here and there, reached Ramanasramam. To me it was like entering the heaven on earth. The atmosphere of profound peace which surrounded the Maharshi and which enveloped the place sank into me. At long last, my mind knew some rest.

The majestic silence of Bhagavan ended my suffering and my self-concern about the bereavement. Paul Brunton¹ and I became friends, and time passed happily.

One day a friend spotted me and cajoled me into accepting a recording programme for his film. I told him that unless the Maharshi gave his consent, I would not budge. I had not spoken a single word to Bhagavan all this while nor had he to me. But there was some imperceptible yet strong bond of love between us. To leave the majestic master who had filled my heart with peace was unthinkable. Still the seeds of desire had been sown. I was looking for an opportunity to get the Maharshi's permission. When the permission was sought, he said, "Yes, you can go. There is still a lot of work for you to do." I could not comprehend the implications of the statement at that time. The recording assignment took me to the film world where name and fame came to me in a big way.

I would have withered away unhonoured and unsung but for the grace of Bhagavan Ramana. He poured new life into me. The Maharshi had an uncanny perception of each person's need and would lead one along the path best suited to that person.

1. His wonderful reminiscences of Bhagavan are at pp. 13-23 in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* from which this article has been excerpted.

Increase in subscription rate of Sri Ramana Jyothi (SRJ)

As a matter of policy, the subscription rate of SRJ, monthly journal of the Kendram, is kept low. However, to cover a big increase in cost of paper and printing, we are forced to raise the annual subscription from Rs 40 to Rs 50, and life subscription (15 years) from Rs 400 to Rs 500, with immediate effect. Subscribers who have paid less than Rs. 500, are requested to kindly help the Kendram by sending the balance payment through a draft or cheque payable at Hyderabad, at the Kendram address, along with their names and subscription nos., to the Managing Editor, Sri Ramana Jyothi.

When the mind wonders, you have to have a God-figure to depend upon, someone to surrender your passions and ego. He will certainly come to your help. – Swami Virajeshwara

And remember, no matter where you go, there you are. – Confucius

Tale up one idea and make that idea your life – think of it, dream of it, and live that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of your body be full of that idea. This is the way to success. – Swami Vivekananda

Before the reward there must be labour. You plant before you harvest. You sow in tears before you reap joy. – Ralph Ransom

This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel. – Horace Walpol

Persons dedicated to sense gratification cannot understand that I am situated in everyone's heart and that the entire universe is not different from Me; it emanates from Me. Indeed, they are just like persons whose eyes are covered by fog. – Srimad Bhagavatam

Ignorance is the failure to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent, the pure and the impure, bliss and suffering, the Self and non-Self. – Patanjali Yoga Sutra

FEBRUARY 2011

YOU AND THE WORLD: Live in the world but don't let the world live in you. Remember that the world is a beautiful dream, because everything is changing and disappearing. If you become detached you will be able to see how people are attached to things of little value or importance, and how much they are suffering. And you will laugh at yourself because you were also in the same boat before. – *Osho*

SANI BHAGAVAN: The word Sani means one who moves slowly. Sani or Saturn takes about 30 years to revolve round the sun. It is the second largest planet in the solar system after Jupiter. According to mythology, Sani's parents are Sun god and Chaya Devi, a goddess of shadow. He is the elder brother of Yama, god of death and justice. He is depicted in dark colour, clothed in black, holding a sword or arrows and mounted on a black cow. Sanisvara temple at Tirunallar in Puducherry is famous. The Deonor temple of Sanisvara in Mumbai is also popular. – Excerpted from *Tattvaloka*, Oct., 2010

GITA AND RENUNCIATION: Renunciation is at the core of spiritual life. The literal meaning of renunciation is 'abandonment' and 'rejection'. However in the *Gita* it does not mean abandoning the duties and becoming a recluse to lead a monastic life. Renunciation in the *Gita* does not refer to renunciation of action but being *in action* with a detached mind and without thought of worldly gain – devoting all actions to God only. This dedication is the most important component of renunciation...Actions must not be renounced because there are problems in executing them. Once we know what is good, we must, with all sincerity and without concern for success or failure, engage ourselves whole-heartedly with conviction in performing the action. Not being attached to the consequences of an action helps one psychologically to perform it most efficiently. – *Ashok Vohra*

THE THIRD EYE: Siva literally means auspicious, propitious, and benevolent. The logical derivative – opening of Siva-Netra signifies destruction of illusion (*maya*) and dawn of enlightenment... Meditation is the prayer of remembrance of the Lord, and this brings physical, mental and spiritual vitality within us. Despite faltering, an infant never abandons attempts for sitting, standing and walking, though he is consistently encouraged by parents and others closer to him. The same applies to the disciple. When

the seeker is sincere in efforts, 'grace' marks are given by the Lord; the third eye opens, delusions disappear and the reality is realised. – *Tejinder*

PITFALLS OF KNOWLEDGE: Taking undue pride in knowledge could be disastrous. Pride of knowledge keeps us from realizing God. When we are overcome by pride in our knowledge, we are not prepared to listen to anyone. We think we are right and expect everyone else to think so too. We judge everything by the touchstone of our intellect and try to force our views and ideas on others. Pride of knowledge also deters us from our inner journey... When we meditate, if we block the door by standing in it, God cannot enter. The more we empty ourselves of our ego, the more God's grace can enter us. – *Rajinder Singh Ji*

SUBRHAMANYA GOES TO SOUTH: One day sage Narada brought the divine fruit of knowledge to Mount Kailasa. The first recipient is Siva, who gives it to his spouse Parvati. She, in turn, wants to split the fruit of knowledge between her two sons, Skanda/Murugan (other names of Subrhamanian) and Ganesha. Since the fruit cannot be divided, a contest is set up: the first one to circumambulate the universe is the winner. While the martial artist Murugan goes round the world on his peacock, the roly-poly Ganesha tiptoes around his divine parents! His logic proves to be unbeatable: Siva and His consort are the ultimate source of reality. Ganesha gets the fruit of divine knowledge and his disappointed brother leaves his snowbound home to settle down on Palani Hill, near Madurai. – *Vithal C Nadkarni*

SILENCE: SOME SUTRAS – No practice seems of more value than silence. It gives the impression of a latent force. It secures deference. A judicious reserve clothes a person with an air of mystery... Choose to listen rather than talk. Aim at speaking to purpose rather than often. Reflect before speaking. Be silent when you feel too great a desire to talk. Know how to speak by silence. – *Subhash C. Shah*

ANGER: It is a sudden impulsive and forceful emotion with destructive potential. An angry person loses wisdom, balance and control over the self. Anger is destructive of both worldly and spiritual life. Uncontrolled anger is akin to insanity. According to the *Gita*, lust, anger and greed are three gateways to hell. Anger is the outcome of a very strong unsatisfied desire. The greatest remedy for anger is delay. When angry we are advised to count up to ten, before we speak. If very angry, count up to hundred. The idea is to put a break on the flow of anger. – *Siluveru Sudharshan*

MAHAVIDYAS: Tantric literature features the ten *Mahavidyas* as Kali, Tara, Lalita, Tripurasundari, Bhuvanesvari, Chinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Baghalaamukhi, Mathangi and Kamalathmika. These are all projections of the one great Goddess. They represent both the stages of consciousness of the microcosm (individual) and the stages of evolution of the macrocosm (the universe): Kali – the void before creation; Tara, the first movement towards it; Sodasi, the creatrix; Bhuvanesvari, nourishing the world; Chinnamasta, Bhairavi and Dhumavati, destroying its *rajasic* qualities and replacing it with *sattvic* qualities; Baghalaamukhi, who conquers and confers mastery over others; Mathangi, who purifies; and Kamala who enriches the world. The Dasa-mahavidyas are the feminine path to enlightened consciousness and they represent the power focused in all feminine attributes. They hold tremendous social relevance because they render the discriminating rules of society meaningless and irrelevant. – Excerpts from Priya Ramachandran’s article in *Tattvaloka*, Oct., 2010

HOW I CAME TO SRI MAHARSHI

By T. Chenna Kesava Rao*

From my early age, while at my maternal grandfather’s house, I was associated with a society of *bhajans*. After my degree in civil engineering, I got a job with the National Coal Development Corporation Ltd. (Coal India Ltd. at present).

On a transfer from Singroli coal fields to another coal field near Chandrapur (Maharashtra), I had to pass through Allahabad junction. At a bookstall at this railway station, I saw a book entitled *The Teachings of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi in his Own Words* by Arthur Osborne. The book had a photo of Bhagavan at the cover page, which greatly attracted me. I purchased the book. It was the year 1972.

While working at the Chandrapur coal fields, I had some personal problems which I was not able to solve. While reading the book I had purchased, I happened to read what Bhagavan had told his mother when she had come to Tiruvannamalai for the first time to take her son back home. Bhagavan was in *mauna* in those days and he had written the following message to his mother: ‘Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as hard as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what

you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent.' I followed this advice of Sri Bhagavan and felt peace.

In 1982, I sought voluntary retirement and came to Hyderabad and got settled here. I began to visit Sri Ramanasramam now and then and also attended spiritual discourses. In 1991, I learnt about Sunday *satsangs* of Sri Ramana devotees at Gandhi Centenary Hall, opposite Engineering College, Osmania University. I started attending these *satsangs*, and also those held at the residence of Dr. K.S.

When the present building of the Kendram was coming up, I was associated with its construction work. I follow the advice of Bhagavan to his mother and I am quiet happy and peaceful.

*A senior devotee of our Kendram, who retired as an executive engineer.

HEART FELT TRIBUTES TO BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA Maharshi

Munagala Venkataramaiah, author of the classic *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* begins his English translation of the book *Tripura Rahasya, singing glory of his Lord as follows, pouring his heart out.**

Salutations to Sri Ramana – the living monument of Eternal Truth! The direct proof of the Inexpressible! May Thy Holy Feet lead me to the Sanctuary of Sri Tripura! Blessed be Thy Holy Feet! Blessed be Thy Presence! Blessed Thy dear ones! Blessed all that relate to Thee!

Blessed be the Mother Earth on which Thou art!
Blessed be the Universe going around Thy Centre!
Love of Manika Vachakar personified!
Essence of Gods and sages taken shape!
Solace of the Forlorn! Refuge of the Oppressed!
Help to the Meek! Voice of the Mute!
Splendour of all! Reincarnate of the Vedas!
Hail to Thee! Thine is the Glory!
Oh, Signpost of Peace! Limit of Ananda!

*The book is a publication by Sri Ramanasramam, Triuvannamalai. Sri Ramana considered *Tripura Rahasya* as one of the greatest works on advaita philosophy.

SRI RAMANA RELATES THE STORY OF ALWARS – THE GREAT VAISHNAVITE SAINTS

By V. Ganesan¹

Viswanatha Swami² once told me about Bhagavan's love and knowledge of *Divya Prabandham*³ and how he would relate the following thrilling story of the Alwars. He would say that even a professional actor could not match Bhagavan's fine gestures and dramatics, while telling the story. The story is:

One evening, Poigai Alwar, on his pilgrimage, reached Tirukoilur⁴ and took shelter in a very small and narrow room. It became dark and he had just enough space to stretch himself. After some time another man arrived and asked whether he could come in. Poigai joyously got up and accommodated him, not knowing who he was, saying: 'Space for one to lie down, but enough for two to sit up!' After some time a third man came and wanted some space to stay. The two occupants gladly got up and welcomed him, saying: 'Plenty of space for one to lie down, for two to sit up and for three to stand!' The three did not know each other, but were exchanging ecstatic descriptions of the Lord. Lord Vishnu who had tricked the three saints to meet, created a sudden dense darkness and very heavy rain, entered the small room.

The three saints immediately felt the new Presence which caused no physical congestion but heightened their jubilation. They wanted to see who he was. So, Poigai in his ecstasy sang a song which meant: 'With the earth as the vessel, the ocean as oil, the sun as the flame, and my verses as the garland, I offer (*puja*) to the holy feet of the Lord who has the lustrous wheel, in order to get rid of the ocean of my miseries.'

Listening to this verse, Bhatatu, the second Alwar, out of joy, composed his verse, which meant: 'With love as the vessel, my faith as the oil, and the joy-filled mind as the wick, I have lit the lamp of *jnana* to Lord Narayana.' And Lo! They all witnessed the grandeur of the Lord Vishnu standing very close to them. Pey, the third Alwar, was thrilled and sang the following: 'Today I have seen my ocean-blue Lord, His golden form and His golden Wheel, which wins all battles.'

The three saints recognised each other and were thrilled to know that it was Lord Himself who had made them meet in that place only to revel in His name and Glory sung by them! – *Atulyanateswarar Temple, Kumbhabhishekam Souvenir*, Sri Ramanasraman, 2003

1. A grandson of Bhagavan's brother, a well-known devotee, who has written extensively about Bhagavan.
2. He was a distant relative of Bhagavan and was brought up by the Maharshi's mother. He fully surrendered himself to Bhagavan in 1923, and till 1950 spent most of his time either with him or with Ganapati Muni. He was a scholar of Tamil and Sanskrit. He is the author of the famous *Sri Ramana Ashtotra*, 108 names of Bhagavan.
3. It is a collection of 4000 passionate hymns of 12 Alwars saints (5-8th century), compiled by Nathamuni in 9th or 10th century.
4. It is 33 km. from Tiruvannamalai on the bank of South Pennar River. It falls within the spiritual aura of Arunachala. It is famous for its temples. 'Koil' in Tamil means temple.

BREATH CAN REJUVENATE: Breath is life; hence the better we breathe the better we live. To breathe slowly is to prolong youthfulness and life... Air is nourishment and requires time to be digested, just like any liquid or solid food in the digestive tract. Each slow and deep breath rejuvenates us in the sense that it revitalizes our tissues. If we can manage to practice slow and deep breathing several times a day, we will eventually influence our unconscious breath. The more we prolong and repeat our practice, the more the unconscious respiration will slow down and deepen permanently even during sleep. It is worthwhile to persevere. Therefore, let us breathe slowly and deeply, each time we think of it. – *Anandmurti Gurumaa*

THE PATHLESS PATH: Transcend the personal mind and find the universal mind. The personal mind is tied to the ego, which is forever swinging from pleasure to pain and back again. But if you look at awareness when there is no pleasure or pain, when the mind is calm, while simply existing, a fascinating journey begins. You have taken the first step on the pathless path. This is not to dismiss the other path, the one that takes you away from home into a retreat, ashram, or holy place. When you arrive at such a place, two things usually happen. You soak up the peace; enjoy the contrast

with your busy life at home. At the same time you notice how loud your mind is, how much chaos it has absorbed. So these holy places can only suggest what pathless path is about...The true seeker after truth discovers, sooner or later, that truth was seeking him all along. – *Deepak Chopra*

VAMANA PURANA: This *purana* praises both Vishnu and Siva. It has 96 chapters. It reveals the story of Andhakasura, an ancestor of Mahabali. The devotion of Prahlad to Vishnu, Durga's manifestations to destroy demons and birth of Lord Subrahmanya are also highlighted in this *purana*. The splendour of Mahabali, his *yajna* to get a position higher than Indira, how Vishnu became Vamana, a dwarf, and sought three steps of land, and how the king Mahabali was sent to *patala loka* are described in detail. – Excerpted from *Tattavaloka*, Oct., 2010

Take up one idea and make that idea your life – think of it, dream of it, and live that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of your body be full of that idea. This is the way to success. – *Swami Vivekananda*

Ignorance is the failure to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent, the pure and the impure, bliss and suffering, the Self and non-Self. – *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*

The mind is a great slayer of the Real; let the disciple slay the slayer. – *Madam H.P. Blavatsky*

There is no darkness but ignorance. – *William Shakespeare*

***Bhakti* is the attitude of the mind and *jnana* is the attitude of the intellect. Both flow towards the Lord.** – *Anonymous*

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come. – *Rabindranath Tagore*

Silence is the speech of the spiritual seeker. – *Baba*

HOW THEY FELT IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MAHARSHI

In continuation of the last issue, the devotees record the transformational impact of being face to face with the Maharshi, Divinity in human form.

K.S. Ramaswami Sastri¹: When we sat before him, time rolled on while we were oblivious of its course. Each felt a sense of inner release and was happy as a bird sailing through the vast expanse of the sky. The inner Fullmoon of Divine Rapture rose in the sky of the hearts of all. I felt that I was predestined into His presence and went into stillness of the night, moving away from him physically, but feeling drawn nearer to him in spirit like a steamer borne against the wind.

Dr. K.C.Varadachari²: In April 1937, I had the good fortune of beholding face to face. This *darshan* of the Sage is an experience in itself. It is not capable of being described. So casual yet pregnant, so very unobtrusive yet deeply significant, pleasant, deeply penetrating and inspiring somewhere in the depth.

Duncan Greenlees³: I saw the Maharshi. It did not take me long to be sure that I was in front of one who had solved life's problem for himself. The radiant peace around him proved it beyond all cavil. The calm, like that of the midnight sky, was something too real to question for a moment. In a flash I have seen a 'Master'. I knew he was what the books call a 'jivanmukta'. Please don't ask me how I knew for I cannot answer that. It was just one knows that water is wet and the sky is blue. It could not be denied – self-evident is the word.

Prof. Subbaranayya⁴: I had *darshan* of Bhagavan in the hall. As our eyes met, there was a miraculous effect on my mind. I felt as if I had plunged into a pool of peace, and with eyes shut, sat in a state of ecstasy for nearly an hour.

Prof. Swaminathan⁵: My first *darshan* of the Maharshi on September 20, 1940, was the most memorable event of my life. My repeated visits to the ashram thereafter kept me (as spells of sound sleep keep one) in health, happiness and taut efficiency. The pure happiness I enjoyed was that of a child when it sits securely in its mother's lap.

Souris⁶: For me, being in Bhagavan's presence was like being in heaven. If I am to write how Bhagavan impressed me, all the vocabulary I can command in the three

languages I know would not suffice. When a word issued from his lips – generally he did not speak much at all – it was just as astonishing as it would be if words had come forth from an inanimate idol. When he looked at us, his sight like an arrow, pierced right into the deepest recesses of the heart.

Viswanatha Swami⁷: In my first *darshan* of Bhagavan at the Skandasram, the very sight of him thrilled me. Something very subtle, seemingly with its centre in that body, shone forth, without limitation, engulfing everything else. I felt swallowed by it. his look and the smile had a remarkable spiritual charm. When he spoke, the words seem to come out of abyss. I sensed something very lofty and sacred about him. In his vicinity, mind's distractions were overpowered by an austere and potent calmness. In his presence the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced.

Wolter Keers⁸: The mere sight of him made me tremble all over because I had come face to face with the divine. Here before me was a human form that seemed to be made of light itself. God became manifest before my eyes, announcing His presence to me by radiating a blazing penetrating light, a light that went right through me like x-rays. The light radiating from Bhagavan filled my being, sweeping all my darkness in one stroke. Effort seemed redundant when his presence alone was enough to evaporate the usual mental flow of thoughts, ideas and problems. Whatever transformation took place in his presence happened of its own accord, not because he desired or willed it. Darkness was exposed to light and it ceased to be dark. Light did not orchestrate it in any way. It simply expressed its inherent nature. If you ask me how this worked, my answer is, 'I don't know.'

Mouni Sadhu⁹: All theories, all acquired knowledge fall into dust when face to face with the Maharshi. One gets peace that is beyond all human understanding. 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?' 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...He mysteriously helps in spiritual experiences. I call it the 'spiritual alchemy of the Master.' (To continue)

Nos. 1- 9, relate to serial nos.18,19,26,41,43,50,57,69,&71,respectively, in the book *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.

TOTAL FAITH ESSENTIAL FOR HIS GRACE TO FLOW – A PARABLE

The following story is from Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa:

A girl used to carry milk to a priest in a village. To reach his house, the milkmaid had to cross a river with the help of a boat. One day, the priest who worshiped daily with the offering to God of fresh milk scolded the girl for her late arrival. “What can I do?” She said, “The fault lies with the boatman who came late.” The priest said in a tone with some superiority in his advice, “People have even crossed the ocean by repeating the name of God, and you can’t cross this little river?” The milkmaid took him very seriously. From then on she brought the milk punctually every morning. The priest became curious about it and asked her how it was that she was never late any more.

“I cross the river constantly repeating the name of the Lord.” She replied, “just as you told me to do, without waiting for the boat.” The priest didn’t believe her and asked, “Can you show me, how you cross the river on foot?” So they went together to the water and the milkmaid began to walk over it. Looking back, the girl saw that the priest had started to follow her and was floundering in the water.

“Sir!” she cried, “You are uttering the name of the Lord, yet all the while you are holding up your clothes from getting wet. That is not trusting the Lord!” – *The Internet*

BASIC TRUTHS: Who is wise? Who always finds something to learn from others. Who is strong? Who is capable of dominating himself. Who is wealthy? Who knows the treasure he has – his days and hours of life, which can change everything which goes around him. Who deserves respect? Who respects himself and his neighbour. – *The Internet*

IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE: Through persistence even a rope could cut a hard stone. *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali define ‘stable practice’ as that sustained over a prolonged period; that which is pursued without a break, with devotion and consistent right action, leads to solid foundation (*dridha-bhumih*) for tranquil achievement. With right practice even an humble person can reach the highest goal of self-realisation. But one has to remember that deep practice is not a piece of cake. It does require energy,

passion and commitment. *Hathayoga Pradipika* lays emphasis on enthusiasm (*utsaha*) and luster (*tejas*) of practice coupled with daring and faith. – *Vithal C Nadkarni*

FEELING GOOD: ‘The more you Feel Good, the more happy and easy your life will be.’ If you feel good more often, you are likely to have an increase in overall happiness. This is common sense. ‘Feeling good’, as opposed to ‘Not Bad’ or just plain ‘Bad’, significantly increases the chance that you will make better decisions. Every decision you make carries with it short term or long term consequences, which will either make your life easier and happier or make it harder and less enjoyable. – *The Internet*

THE SUFI WAY OF MIND CONTROL: This method is known as Gibberish meditation. It appears to be very strange, but is very effective. The word ‘gibberish’ comes from the Sufi master Jabbar, who used this technique to clear the mind of clutter. Here one gets rid of gibberish or garbage from the mind by closing the eyes and uttering nonsense sounds – any sound or words, so long as they make no sense. Just speak continuously any language that you don’t know. As the mind thinks in terms of words, Gibberish helps to break up this pattern of continual verbalization. Just sit in deep silence, stillness and relaxation. Go inwards, deeper and deeper, just like an arrow. Penetrate all the layers and hit the centre of your existence. This technique is also a wonderful tool to get rid of anger and frustration. – *Swami Chaitanya Keerti*

March – 2011

Manolaya and manonasa: These are ‘temporary stilling of mind’ and ‘permanent destruction of thoughts’, respectively. The former may last even for a long period of time, thoughts which are temporarily stilled, rise up as soon as the *manolaya* ceases... Though stillness of thoughts is a sign of progress towards the goal, yet it will not lead to the final goal, which is fully reached through self enquiry. Here one will drive thought force deeper till it reaches its source and merges therein. Persistent and deep self enquiry is therefore essential. Sri Ramana once told the story of a person who had attained a high degree of concentration through penance. One day before going into deep concentration, he felt thirsty and asked for drinking water. However, before the water arrived he had gone into *samadhi*

and remained in that state for a long period of time. When he woke up the first thing he asked for was ‘water’, because that thought was upper most in his mind before going into *samadhi*. – *The Ramana Way*, Nov., 2010

ARUNACHALA SAINTS – GUHAI NAMASIVAYA

If we look a few hundred feet down the hill from Virupaksha Cave, we will notice a small wall compound. When one enters the compound through a small *gopuram* there is a cave that was occupied by a yogi called Guhai Namasivaya. The cave and the few buildings that surround it bear his name. Namasivaya was born around the year 1548 in Karnataka. His spiritual nature became evident at an early age. Feeling a longing to receive the grace of the Lord, he embarked upon a search that led him to Sivananda Desikar, a famous guru at Sri Sailam, who belonged to the Virasaiva sect.

Virasaivism is an offshoot of Saivism. Its followers – Virasaivas are also known as Lingayats on account of the immense importance they attach to Linga. For them, Linga is not merely a physical object, it is synonymous with *chaitanya*, or consciousness. In their philosophy, the term Linga can be equated with the *Parabrahman*. It is often conceived as a mass of light or a column of blazing fire. Lingayats have attachment to Arunachala.

The goal of Virasaivas is attainment of oneness with Siva. Their guru whispers the mantra Nama Sivaya in the right ear and the disciple is given a physical linga, called Ishtalinga, to be worn on the body and to be worshipped three times a day. In the Virasaiva tradition, it is not permitted to worship Siva in any other form except that of the Istalinga. They are therefore forbidden from worshipping forms of Siva that have been installed in temples.

Namasivaya’s guru commanded him to go to Arunachala. In his journey to Tiruvannamalai he was accompanied by Virupaksha Deva, who lived in the famous Virupaksha Cave for a long time. When he died there, his body transformed itself into *vibhuti*, that is still kept in the cave and *puja* is done to it every day.

Namasivaya moved into a cave on the lower slopes of the eastern side of the hill and spent his life in the cave and thus acquired the title ‘Guhai’, which in Tamil

means 'cave'. He composed a four-line verse each day in praise of Arunachala. He must have composed thousands of verses in praise of the mountain, but very few of them have been preserved. Although he spoke Kannada as his mother tongue, he thoroughly mastered Tamil. His principal poem, Arunagiri Antadi, is often used as a text in Tamil schools to illustrate the intricacies of the *venba* metre. Sri Maharshi remarked on many occasions that this metre was reputed to be most difficult to compose in; Ganapati Muni once confessed that the *venba* metre was so difficult, he was unable to utilize it.

In addition to composing verses, Namasivaya also performed *pradakshina* of the mountain and repeated the word Nama Sivaya. In several of his verses he encourages people to take up these practices and, in addition, to think continuously of Arunachala.

When Namasivaya became very old, he got a *samadhi* pit made for him. Before lowering himself into it, he composed a verse saying: 'I will no longer bear this delusive body, which is dwelling place of 360 diseases. Lord Arunesan, who wears in his locks the holy waters and the waning moon, may wipe out at once this birth. I have found refuge at the feet of our father, Lord Sonagiri.'

After saying these words, he descended into the *samadhi* pit and seated himself in the full-lotus position. Then, utilising a practice he had mastered during his days as a Siva Yogi, he gave up his life by sending the *pranas* out of his body via the *bramarandhra*, at the top of the head. His disciples erected a Linga on the spot, where daily *puja* is conducted till the present day. – Condensed from www.davidgodman.org

NARADA PURANA: It is in the style of a dialogue between sage Narada and Sanat Kumara, son of Brahma. The text is in two parts. The first, with 125 chapters highlights the essence of 17 *mahapuranas* and the glory of Vishnu. The second deals with the location and stories connected with places of religious significance and pilgrimage. This *purana* also contains famous stories that occur in other *puranas*. Excerpted from the *Tattavalok*, September 2010

MEDITATION: It is experiencing and enjoying the inner void. It is witnessing the various conditions of the mind and releasing oneself from the clutches of the mind. To understand meditation, we need to cultivate our alertness and have a

sharp inner vision – as the Buddha has said, “Sharpen your observation like a bowman sharpens his arrow.”... Luminous presence of an enlightened master creates a highly charged field of consciousness paving the way for seekers to travel far more easily and faster. – *Anandmurti Gurumaa*

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Dated: March 30, 2011

Sd/- CVK Murthy

HOW THEY FELT IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MAHARSHI

In continuation of the last two issues, the devotees record the transformational, inspiring and uplifting impact of being face to face with the Maharshi, Divinity in human form.

Swami Desikananda¹: I went to the Ashram and sat before the Maharshi. I found that I could easily concentrate in his presence and had progressively longer spells of undisturbed meditation such as I never been able to achieve before anywhere else.

Ethel Merston²: Just to sit in Bhagavan’s presence was to know what true relaxation and a quiet mind means... He conveyed 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.

M.A.Piggot³: Suddenly I became conscious that the Maharshi’s eyes were fixed on me. Never before had I experienced anything so devastating. What I went through in that half hour, by way of self-condemnation and scorn for the pettiness of my own life, would be difficult to describe. In the light of perfection all

imperfections were revealed...When the Maharshi turned his head and smiled I felt as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance in our midst.

Ramanadasa Sadananda⁴: I stood before Sri Ramana at the Virupaksha cave. Never having felt such a bliss before, I could not think, speak or do anything except to feel dumb-founded. Contagious was his bliss. His mere proximity filled even the unhappy among us with joy and peace.

Papaji⁵: As he looked at me and gazed into my eyes, my whole body began to tremble and shake. A thrill of nervous energy shot through my body. My nerve ends felt as if they were dancing and my hair stood on end. Within me I became aware of the spiritual heart. It was an extraordinary experience. It totally surprised me when it happened.

F.H.Humphreys⁶: Everyone who comes before him is an open book, and a single glance suffices to reveal to him its contents.

P.V.Karamchandani⁷: So surcharged with the spirituality was he that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of bliss, ecstatic meditation. As usual he did not speak with me. I was also silent. But the vibrations that emanated from him were celestial. When his gracious gaze fell upon me, my whole being vibrated with ecstasy.

N.O.Mehta⁸: I instinctively felt that here was India at its highest; for here was the deepest realization of the Reality transcending all mundane factors and bringing peace which surpasses all understanding. We were in a world totally different from the one we had left behind.

Roda MacIver⁹: I was expecting a man walking down the hill, but when the Maharshi appeared, I could not believe that I was watching a glorious sunrise unfold. I was overawed and humbled by this display of utter magnificence. Standing in the glow of that radiant presence, some thing shifted inside me, some new awareness manifested that I had never had before. I was caught by him and in that moment my soul became his.

Srimat Puragra Parampanthi¹⁰: I saw the Maharshi in December 1949. His spiritual presence was dynamic and clearly perceptible. I felt suddenly the

presence of a spiritual power, which was ambient and edifying. The atmosphere of the hall was distinctly attuned to a higher will and power which influenced the entire gathering. The Maharshi's greatness is too vast – too immense to be captured within our mental orbit. Just a part of his spiritual self, a tiny fraction of it is visible to us, and we rejoice in the partial vision of him because we are in the dark and bound by the sad limitations of our senses.

Swami Chidbhavananda¹¹: Being seated in his presence was more than sufficient. Occasionally he spoke, but his silence was what I sought and prized every time I went to him. A purified enquirer makes a rich harvest of the blissful calmness that prevails in his presence.

Swami Rama¹²: In the Maharshi's presence I found something that is very rare and which I seldom found elsewhere. Just sitting near the Maharshi was enough to find answers to questions arising from within. A glance of such a great man purifies the way of the soul.

Atmakuri Govindacharyulu¹³: I sat down near the Sage's feet and began to gaze at his countenance. Suddenly he turned his gaze upon me and I could not stand it. My hair stood on end and an unknown force began to rise throughout my frame. That smile stirred me deeply and made me tremble like one who has passed through a blazing fire. I could not bear to look at that face radiant like a sun. He is an ocean of peace. Whoever gathers at his feet will not fail to be blessed from a drop from his unfathomable ocean of tranquility. (Concluded)

Nos. 1- 13, relate to serial nos.74,77,79,87,90,92,98,120,126,141,152,170 & 185, respectively, in the book *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.

STORY OF SRI RAMANA'S BIRTH

Ganapati Muni, a great scholar and an ardent devotee of Sri Ramana, started writing Bhagavan's biography in English. He could write only three chapters. A few extracts from these are as follows:

The hero of our history, Sri Ramana Maharshi combines in himself the peace and harmony of Buddha, the logic and skill of Shankra, and the capacity of the great sages of yore to discover new truths.

Ardra darshan day (falling in Dec./Jan.) is to the Saivites, a specially holy day. On this day Lord Siva is said to have appeared before devout worshippers such as Gautama Muni, Vyaghrapada and Patanjali. Hence it is celebrated with much fervour. The Saiva religious texts declare that people attain salvation if they have *darshan* of Lord Nataraja on this day. Such was one *Arudra darshan* day on Monday 30th December, 1879, when a great sage was born. He embodied in himself great peace, rare excellence of penance, wonderful dispassion, immense compassion, flawless wisdom, pure conduct, and who is an example to the entire human race.

The first son born to the couple, Sundaram Iyer and Azhagammal was Nagaswami. The second son was Venkataraman. We could say that bright days dawned in Sundaram Iyer's house from the time this second son was conceived. From what Azhagammal said later, it is learnt that she experienced a peculiar pain in the abdomen during this pregnancy, not usual among ladies in the family way. It was a pain, however, of good augury. That must have been due to the entry of this brilliant Being into her womb. It seems that Azhagammal developed at that time a wonderful lustre which she had never had before. People who had witnessed it used to talk about it.

On December 29, 1879 well past midnight, hence it was December 30, when Bhoominatha deity was re entering the village temple after the festivities, there in the house a male child was born. The mid-wife with poor eye sight saw a wondrous light in the confinement room. She told the mother of her wonderful vision and said, "He who is born today in your house must be a Divine Being." Thought this event created much wonderment at that time, its implications were forgotten by the inmates of the house, because the child grew up no different from ordinary children.

The child was named as Venkataraman (after the family deity Venkatachalapathy of Tirupati) on the eleventh day after his birth. One of his biographers says that he was initially named Venkateswara Sarma, which was subsequently changed to Venkataraman, while admitting him to the primary school. – *Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. 1

SPIRITUALITY: Those who perpetuate ritualism and read holy gospels like a cookery book – without cooking the dish – are unable to take much advantage of

spiritual inheritance. However glorious or greatest their master may be, if these followers fail to improve their spiritual lot during present life, they need to introspect what benefit accrued to them from greatness of their Gurus...The creation has to be imperfect if it is to continue. The moment it becomes perfect it will cease to exist. Therefore, great masters are not mandated to interfere with working of the creation. They urge seekers to research 'within' laboratory of human body by meditative concentration to seek answers to their questions. Spirituality cannot be taught but caught. – *Tejinder Narang*

NEED FOR MODERATION: This yoga is not possible, O Arjuna, for one who eats too much, or who does not eat at all; who sleeps too much, or who keeps awake. But, for the one who is moderate in eating, recreation, working, sleeping and waking, this yoga of meditation destroys all sorrow. A person is said to have achieved yoga, the union with the Self, when the perfectly disciplined mind gets freedom from all desires, and becomes absorbed in the Self alone. – *The Gita*

JAMANALAL BAJAJ SEEKS GUIDANCE FROM THE MAHARSHI

Bajaj, treasurer of the Indian National Congress, who was very close to Gandhiji, visited the Maharshi in 1938, along with Dr. Rajendra Prasad, (later President of India), at the instance of the Mahatma. The following excerpts are from the entry of August 14 and 18, 1938, in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

Bajaj: How is the mind to be steadily kept right?

Maharshi: There is a difference in the intellect of man and animals as man in his attempt to fulfill his desires extends his vision far and wide and yet he turns away dissatisfied. He now begins to think and reason. The intellect itself realises its own dependence upon a Higher Power and its inability to reach the same. So it must annihilate itself before the goal is reached.

Bajaj: A *sloka* is quoted which means, "I do not desire kingdoms, etc. Only let me serve Thee for ever and there lies my highest pleasure." Is that right?

Maharshi: Yes. There is room for *karma* (desire) so long as there is an object apart from the subject (i.e., duality). There can be no desire if there is no object. The state of no-desire is *moksha*. If one knows that Bliss is none other than the Self, the mind becomes inward turned. If the Self is gained all the desires are fulfilled.

Bajaj wanted to know how steadfastness could be secured.

Maharshi: What is wanted for gaining the highest goal is loss of individuality. The intellect is co-extensive with individuality. Loss of individuality can only be after the disappearance of *buddhi*.

Bajaj: How is one to get the strength necessary to overcome the obstacles which beset one's path?

Maharshi: By means of devotion and company of sages.

Bajaj: Loss of individuality was just before mentioned as a pre-requisite to *moksha*. Now devotion and association with the wise are advised as the methods. Is there not individuality implied in them, e.g., in 'I am a *bhakta*', 'I am a *satsangi*'.

Maharshi: The method is pointed out to the seeker. The seeker has certainly not lost his individuality so far. Otherwise the question would not have arisen. The way is shown to effect the loss of individuality of the seeker. It is thus appropriate.

Bajaj: Is the desire for *swaraj* right?

Maharshi: Such desire no doubt begins with self-interest. Yet practical work for the goal gradually widens the outlook so that the individual gets merged in the country. Such merging of the individuality is desirable and the related karma is *nishkama* (unselfish).

Bajaj: If *swaraj* is gained after a long struggle and after terrible sacrifices, is not the person justified in being pleased with the result and elated by it?

Maharshi: He must have in the course of his work surrendered himself to the Higher Power whose might must be kept in mind and never lost sight of. How then can he be elated? He should not even care for the results of his actions. Then

alone the *karma* becomes unselfish. [It may be noted that the Mahatma was not in Delhi to take part in the Independence celebrations. He was in Bengal to take care of those who were affected by the turmoil of the partition.]

Bajaj: Is there any Power on earth which can bestow Grace on Its devotees so that they may grow strong to work for the country and gain *swaraj*? (Sri Maharshi remained silent. This, He later said, signified that such was the case.)

Bajaj: Is not the *tapasya* of the ancient *mahatmas* of the land available for its present-day inheritors?

Maharshi: It is, but the fact must not be overlooked that no one can claim to be the sole beneficiary. The benefits are shared by all alike. (After a pause) Is it without such saving Grace that the present awakening has come into being? (Here Sri Bhagavan said that before His arrival in Tiruvannamalai in 1896, there was no clear political thought in India. Only Dadabhai Nauroji had become an M.P. [House of Commons.])

Before leaving the Ashram on 18th August, Dr. Rajendra Prasad asked the Maharshi: “I have come here with Gandhiji’s permission and I must return to him soon. Can Sri Bhagavan give any message for him?” The Maharshi said, “*Adhyatma sakti* is working within him and leading him on. That is enough. What more is necessary?”

(In the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, photo page no. 17 shows Bhagavan with Jamanalal Bajaj, his wife and daughter on one side and Dr. Rajendra Prasad on the other side.)

HOW I CAME INTO BHAGAVAN'S FOLD

By P. Upendra*

I have only a vague recollection of having seen a framed picture of Bhagavan in someone's house I visited in early 50's, when I was student at Nizam College, Hyderabad. I did not know then whose picture it was but the beautiful face of Bhagavan has remained etched in my memory to this day.

After my sister's marriage in 1960, I learnt from my brother-in-law that his father B. Srinivas Rao took *sannyas* and joined Ramanashramam at Tiruvannamalai. It seems, Bhagavan did not approve of this. But as Rao remained adamant, Bhagavan allowed him to stay at the Ashram. Rao was very good in English and knew typewriting. Bhagavan therefore entrusted him the task of bring the post from the post office and put before him and helping him in sending replies to the mail received. When Rao took a vow of silence, he came to be known as Mouni Srinivas Rao or only 'Mouni'. There are many reference to him in *Day by Day with Bhagavan*. Though my brother-in-law visited his father and had *darshan* of Bhagavan, he did not develop much interest in Bhagavan's teachings or philosophy. Strangely, I too then had no curiosity or interest to know more about the Maharshi.

In 1985, I happened to meet a cousin of mine who had a spiritual bent of mind. We used to discuss many things about Hinduism, Buddhism and spiritual practices. One day, for no apparent reason, he gave me *Self Realization* by B. V. Narasimha Swami. This biography of Bhagavan changed the course of my life and my entire approach. Bhagavan's advice to know who you are, made me delve deep into my soul and truly learn about the Self. I knew that I have found my Master and Guru. Thereafter my search began to find more books on Bhagavan's teachings. One day when I walked into a small bookshop in Gandhi Gyan Mandir, Sultan Bazaar, I noticed *Ramanashrama Lekhlu* by Suri Nagamma. It was a God sent. I devoured the book from page to page. I somehow procured a small picture of Bhagavan and practiced meditation and offer *puja* every day.

I retired from service in 1993, and I came back to Hyderabad. I started asking my friends and relations about the Maharshi, and learnt about Ramana Kendram, which held *satsangs* at the Gandhi Centenary Hall, Osmania University Campus. I got introduced to Dr. K.S. It was a pleasure meeting him. His very gentle nature and humility made a deep impact on me. Thereafter I regularly attended the weekly *satsangs*, more often to listen to his talks on *atma vichara*. It was a joy to hear him speak. His exposition of Sri Ramana's thoughts made a deep impression on my mind.

I consider myself very fortunate that Sri Bhagavan chose me to shower his grace on me.

* Retired Asst. Director, Intelligence Bureau, Govt. of India.

Man alone has the power to transform his thoughts into physical reality; man, alone, can dream and make his dreams come true. – Napoleon Hill

All change is not growth, as all movement is not forward. – Anonymous

We do not find God because we are searching for Him everywhere, and not within where he dwells for ever. – Swami Sivananda

As the heat of fire reduces wood to ashes, the fire of knowledge burns to ashes all karma. Nothing in this world purifies like spiritual wisdom. It is the perfection achieved in time through the path of yoga, the path which leads to the Self within. – Gita

The search for wisdom is a great challenge; to act on wisdom is an even greater challenge. – Anonymous

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AWAKEN THE SHAKTI IN YOU: *Shakti* represents the primordial cosmic energy, referred to as Devi – the one who creates, preserves and destroys. Yoga gives us practices required to awaken the dormant energy that lies dormant in the *muladhara chakra*, whereas Siva resides in the *sahasrara chakra*, at the top of the head. When *Shakti* and Siva unite, we experience spiritual awakening and feel uplifted. The transformation that happens in a person's life when the *kundalini* gets awakened is phenomenal. The entire life's purpose should not be sensual gratification and fulfillment of worldly desires. There is something infinitely higher hidden in you, waiting to be revealed. – *Anandmurti Gurumaa*

RITUALS: I am against rituals when a person performing them does not have his heart in them and they are carried out just as a formality. Even gestures in rituals should not be empty. They should be alive and spontaneous. Otherwise, deep down you know this is just a formality you are performing. And if this is the feeling inside, what is point of going into it. I am against rituals because they have killed the religion in the world. Let us pray with all its paraphernalia, but let the prayer arise from our heart. It should not be repeated like a parrot. We should get involved into a ritual whole and soul, with our mind fully devoted to it. – *Osho*

GETTING OVER WEAKNESSES – BHAGAVAN’S ADVICE TO VISWANATH SWAMI: “Once I asked Bhagavan as I how I could rise above my animal existence. He replied with great compassion, ‘It is only by awakening a power mightier than the senses and the mind that these can be subdued. If you awaken and nurture the growth of that power within you, everything can be conquered. One should sustain the current of meditation uninterruptedly. Moderation in food and similar restraints will be helpful in maintaining the inner poise.’ He added, ‘So long as you identify yourself with the body, you can never escape sex thoughts and distractions.’” – *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 172

SMALL THINGS CAN MATTER IN SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

By K. Vijayaraghavan

The steps to ‘victory over oneself’ and thus to true spiritual progress would vary from person to person, depending upon the individual make-up of personality. While contemplating these steps to progress, the intelligent aspirant would also comprehend the importance of even those, which would appear on first sight, as only minor or inconsequential. He would know that these often go to make the needed difference between tangible accomplishment and stagnation.

Even minutiae can come to the aid of earnest seekers in all aspects of human excellence. For instance, in diagnosis, for the medical professional, even simple and otherwise passable symptoms, could prove to be tips of the iceberg. Sportsmen, scientists, musicians and artists would also certify how their attention to and care of details, have proved to be of immense help. Similarly, in one’s spiritual journey,

while listing particular ‘dos and don’ts’ as particularly applicable to himself, the aspirant would find how the end result is directly related to even those things which may appear not directly connected to his objective. Simple regulation in food, sleep and lifestyle and also exercises capable of easy performance could prove to be the catalysts for the needed breakthrough. One could get immense benefit even from simple walking (termed rightly as ‘nature’s best medicine’), especially when done in the right manner and with awareness of ‘things bright and beautiful’, which abound all round. Attitudinal changes could actually help to dissolve various stresses and psychic impressions, as if in a jiffy.

Many and varied are such ‘small’ things. Evolving priorities and checklists thus for himself, the seeker would also be guided in the knowledge that stages in many types of progress are marked by patience and the need to ‘allow things to hasten slowly’. Doubtless, small things sometimes, and perhaps often, could prove to be big! –*The Economic Times* [It is important to note that Bhagavan often prescribed ‘moderation in food’ as an essential prescription for a *sadhaka*. And it is here that many of us fail miserably.]

STILLING THE EMOTIONAL MIND: Abandoning without any exception or residue all the desires born of the desire-will and holding in control from all ends, one should gradually withdraw into stillness by the Buddhi held in steadiness, and, making the mind abide in the Self, he should not think anything at all. – *The Gita*

IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE: All the matter around is actually arrangements of atoms. Atoms have a structure. An atom consists of a nucleus made of protons and neutrons, and electrons which go round seem to have no structure. Protons and neutrons are made of smaller particles called quarks, which are one-dimensional strings made up of an infinite number of sub-quarks all around the string. Though the same vibrating strings constitute all matter, they resonate at different frequencies, depending upon how gross or subtle the matter is. The difference between the gross physical body and the subtler mind is only in the difference in the frequency of vibrations. Silence is basically vibrations with the highest frequency. Everything is born out of silence. There is scientific truth in the expression, ‘When a thought is released from the seat of silence, a mere wish becomes a command to the universe.’ – *Avyakta*

BHAGAVAN ENJOYS A PRANK: One night when Bhagavan, after supper, was resting on his cot in the verandah outside the old hall, Chadwick was sitting behind his back. Chadwick stealthily and unnoticed, fanned Bhagavan from behind. When he turned and looked, Chadwick withdrew the fan and remained still. When Bhagavan turned his face to normal position, Chadwick resumed fanning again. Bhagavan turned round and Chadwick stopped. Bhagavan was wondering how he got the breeze. Chadwick then laughed out and Bhagavan joined in the laughter. – *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (31-3-1945)

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *Jagarat* – it is the stage in which we are awake and the five sense organs and mind are active. The most significant aspect of this state is the capacity of an individual to recognize a thing which had been cognized some time back, whether through vision, taste, smell, sound or feel. *Swapna* – it is the dreaming stage in which the individual enjoys the five objects of senses while all the five sense organs are at rest and only the mind is working. Dream is the imitation of the experiences of the wakeful stage with some modifications and is created out of material supplied from the waking stage. Mind itself is the seer and seen. *Sushupti* – it is the stage of deep sleep, the mind being at rest along with the five senses. In this state the individual is not aware of his worries or reassurances. *Turiya* – it is the stage of transcendental consciousness where the individual experiences ultimate reality and truth. This state is beyond the experience of the five senses and is indescribable and incomprehensible by the mind. – *Sreeram Manoj Kumar*

WHO IS WISE? In Plato's *The Apology*, the all-knowing oracle at Delphi declares Socrates the wisest person. Socrates is puzzled by this, since many others around are well known for their extensive knowledge. Socrates, we are told, is wise because he, unlike others, does not consider himself wise...While intelligence, cleverness or the ability to appear dynamic is something a person is born with, wisdom is not... The essence of wisdom is discernment – discernment of right from wrong, just from unjust, wholesome from destructive, truth from delusion and so on. Wise people are usually regarded as compassionate towards others, and content in themselves. – *Marguerite Theophil*

ORIGIN OF *TRIPURA RAHASYA* OR THE MYSTRY BEYOND THE TRINITY

Major Chadwick, an outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana, in his foreword to the book says, “*Tripura Rahasya* was considered by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi as one of the greatest works that expounded advaita philosophy. He often quoted from it and regretted that it was not available in English. As a consequence, Sri Munagala Venktaramaiah [Author of the celebrated *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*] took up the translation work in 1936.”

The author in his Introductory Note gives the origin of the book as follows:

Jamadagni, a Brahmin saint, lived in the forest with his wife Renuka and his sons, of whom Parasurama was the youngest, the most valiant and the best renowned. The country was then ruled by a certain clan of Kshatriyas. Some of them came into clash with Parasurama but fared the worse. They dared not challenge him afterwards. Their rancour, however remained. They seized the opportunity when Parasurama was far away from the hermitage, attacked his saintly father and killed him. On the son’s return, the mother narrated the unprovoked murder of the saint; she also desired that her husband’s body should be cremated on the banks of the Ganges and that she might as a *sati* mount the funeral pyre.

Parasurama vowed that he would clear the earth of the Kshatriya vermin. He placed his father’s corpse on one shoulder and took his living mother on the other and set out along to the Ganges. While passing through a forest, an *avadhuta*, by name Dattatreya, saw Renuka and stopped the young man who carried her. The *avadhuta* addressed Renuka as Sakti incarnate of unparalleled might and worshipped her. She blessed him and told him of her life on earth and her resolve to end it. She also advised her son to look to Dattatreya for help when needed. Parasurama went on his way and fulfilled his mother’s desire.

He then challenged every Kshatriya in the land and killed them all. Their blood was collected in a pool in Kurukshetra, and Parasurama offered oblations to his forefathers with it. His dead ancestors appeared and told him to desist from this bloody revenge. Accordingly, he retired into mountains and lived as a hermit.

Hearing on one occasion of the prowess of Rama, his wrath rekindled and he came back to challenge him. Rama accepted his challenge and got better of him.

Parasurama returned crest-fallen and on his way encountered Dattareya [foremost in the line of divine teachers incarnate on earth] who instructed him the truth, as contained in the book *Tripura Rahasya*, a small select portion of which is as follows.

“What is known as mind is, after all, always like a restless monkey. So the ordinary man is always afflicted with troubles. Everybody knows that a restless mind is the channel of endless troubles; whereas one is happy in sleep in the absence of such restlessness. Hearing with a distracted mind is as good as not hearing, for the words serve no useful purpose, resembling the fruit-laden tree seen in a painting.

Appropriate effort must follow right discussion; for a man profits according to the zeal accompanying his efforts.

No practical work will be done if people spend all their lives in vain discussions alone. Therefore, one should discard aimless talk and begin immediately to accomplish the highest aim of life.

Men earn their food, gods their nectar, pious ascetics the highest beatitude and others their desires, by individual exertion alone.

Where, when, how and what profit was ever gained by any man who without engaging in action was taken up with dry polemics [Art or practice of engaging in controversial debate].

Men can never escape from Maya, without His grace. Therefore, worship the Primal Cause of the universe as the starting point; be devoted to Him. He will soon enable you to succeed in your attempts to destroy the illusion.

Scriptures say that the Primal Cause is an intelligent principle, and we know that action always originates from an intelligent source alone. The world is thus traced to its creator who differs entirely from any agent known to us. Judging from the magnitude of the creation, His power must be immeasurable in the same proportion as the unimaginable vastness of the creation. Such a one must also be able to protect and elevate His own creatures. Surrender therefore unreservedly to Him.

If the Lord of the world be pleased, will anything be withheld from the devotee? The Supreme Lord has infinite mercy for His devotees, and has unlimited powers.

Surrender yourself directly and unhesitatingly to Him. He will ordain the best for you and you need not ask for it.

Fools are taken in by the notion of giving a body to the transcendental Being. Still, if devotees worship and contemplate Him with a body, according to their own inclinations, He shows them Grace, assuming such a body. For, He is unique and fulfils the desires of His devotees. Nevertheless, He is pure intelligence and His consciousness is absolute and transcendental. If one is unable to comprehend this pure state, one should worship God in the concrete form which is most agreeable to him. In this way, too, one is sure to reach the goal, though gradually.” (The book has been published by Sri Ramansramam, Tiruvannmalai.)

SRI RAMANA CURES THE CANCER

By Suri Nagamma*

In February 1976, I had a surgical operation for cancer in Madras. Thereafter I went to Bangalore and Bombay for rest and recuperation. In February 1977, pain developed behind my left arm and gradually extended up to the neck. After about a month, the pain increased greatly and a lump appeared in the place where I was originally operated on. I returned to Bombay for treatment. Here experts declared that the lump was cancerous. There was excruciating pain despite sedatives.

As there was no hope of cure by medication, I prayed to Bhagavan day and night to give me strength to bear the pain. I also wrote some appealing verses. Prayer and meditation were my only refuge. My strength was decreasing gradually and I became almost bed ridden. At that juncture, Ashram president T.N. Venkataraman and his wife, who happen to be in Bombay to see their son, who was working there as Controller of Defence Accounts, called on me along with their son. He was practicing homeopathy as hobby and was also a great devotee of Bhagavan. As allopathic doctors have given up the case as hopeless, we readily consented to try homeopathic treatment. He prepared the medicine that night itself and started the treatment. That was on Sunday, 15th May 1977. In less than a month there was distinct relief from pain and I could go out for a walk.

It was due to his devotion to Bhagavan or Bhagavan's grace working through him, the lump became smaller and smaller, and the pain gradually decreased. Day by day I gained strength and began to move about freely as of old. Devotees in Bombay who had seen me earlier were emphatically of the opinion that the cure was nothing sort of a miracle. The eminent doctors of Bombay who had examined me before could hardly believe as to how the cure came about. – *The Continuing Story* by A.R.Natarajan

*One of the very eminent devotees of Bhagavan. Her reminiscences are at pp. 88-94 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.

WHY DO WE SHOUT IN ANGER? When people are angry, the distance between their hearts increases a lot. To cover this distance they shout so that they reach out to the others. The angrier they are, the stronger they will have to shout to hear each other. When not in anger, people talk softly. Friends when nearer to each other, can talk in whispers. When we love a person, talk can even take place heart to heart, without a word being spoken. – J. Ujwal

THE HALLOWED PRESENCE OF THE MAHARSHI

By Major A.W. Chadwick*

When I saw him surrounded by an ever-increasing crowd of devotees, my mind got drawn back to my early days in the Ashram [1935 onwards] when the Maharshi's hall was more than sufficient even on the most crowded days. Things were much simpler then and there were none of the restrictions, which have grown with the increasing numbers. We could come and go as we liked and it was then often possible to find the master alone, and we could talk with him intimately. We little realised then how lucky we were! It all seemed so natural and just as it should be. But in spite of all the changes that have taken place in recent years, the Maharshi remains just the same. His body may appear older, the approach to him may seem more difficult, but it is merely a change in setting. The essential, the "I", the realised-soul shines through it all, apparent to all but the most blind, with growing luster.

I have often marvelled how Bhagavan seemed to change. He takes on an entirely different form on different occasions. I do not know if others have experienced it too. But sometimes when I walk into the hall I see my mother come back to life, sitting in front of me. The same expression of welcome, the same loving interest in the look with which I am regarded as I take a seat. Yet why should I be surprised? Is he not universal? Does he not take all forms if we were only pure enough in mind to see it?

* * * *

We do not really want Self-realisation, however much we persuade ourselves that we do. Because if we really want it, we have it already. There can be no doubt about that! But we want to have bliss and keep the ego at the same time, an impossible combination. The ego itself is nothing but desire, the desire for separate existence. And yet we, in our foolishness, are trying to find bliss in a state which is nothing but desire.

It is not chiefly for Self-realisation that the majority of people flock to Bhagavan. It is because in his presence they find peace. Problems miraculously solve themselves or cease to exist; the strength to go back to the world and tackle life is secured. People having experienced this phenomenon spread the news and the numbers that flock the Ashram grow steadily. And especially there will be vast numbers at this festival of *jayanti* which we celebrate this year on December 18, for on such occasions Bhagavan is magnificent; seated on his couch like an emperor on his throne, his fan held stiffly before him like a scepter, he emanates tremendous power and grace. And just to be in his presence at such times is a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

When I see Bhagavan seated there in his glory I think of the lad of scarcely seventeen years running away from his home in Maduari. What a contrast, and what an unexpected development. He, like the majority of *jnanis*, has always been retiring, disliking any kind of publicity. The darker and more repulsive the retreat, the better it suited him, for there, surely, he felt people would leave him alone to enjoy undisturbed the surpassing bliss of the Self. But it was not to be. And how lucky we are that things have turned out in this way. – *Sunday Times*, Madras, December 12, 1948

*A British army officer who came to Ramanasramam in 1935, after getting captivated by Bruton's *A Search in Secret India*. His reminiscences of Bhagavan are at pp. 110-16 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram.

MUSIC OF THE SOUL: Tension is triggered when we stretch ourselves beyond our mental, physical and financial capacities. When what we expect to happen does not happen, frustration leads to tension. This in turn leads to compression of the spiritual heart, which is the foundation of *bhakti* or devotion that connects us to our soul. To overcome stress, we need to release tension and come to enjoy a serene and a tranquil life...Devotion and love lubricate the soul and absence of friction makes possible the creation or discovery of the rhythm of the soul that is reflected in the cosmic rhythm. The rhythm we experience creates in us positive, divine thoughts within, like a series of air bubbles rising up to oxygenate fish in a fish tank. We enjoy these patterns of thoughts which bring about a serene, tranquil, blissful and calm state of mind in us. *Bhajans, kirtans*, and other devotional renderings lead one to experience joy and peace and could well lay the foundation to progress on the path of bliss-attainment. Therefore, sing, dance and experience joy, for the life is beautiful. – *Shri Nimishananda*

UNDERSTANDING THE MIND: Our mind is agitated because we have problems. The mind has projected these problems. There are no problems apart from the mind. A mind that is caught in conflict cannot be tranquil. A man who is hanging on to passion and who has suppressed it, held it down, how can such a man have a calm and still mind? By looking into yourself deeply, opening all the cupboards and drawers of the mind and understanding them, the mind becomes quiet. Silence is difficult and arduous. It is not something that you can experience by reading a book, or by retiring into a wood. You have to be burningly aware – aware of your speech, your snobbishness, your fears, anxieties, and sense of guilt. And when you die to all that, then, out of that dying comes the beauty of silence. – *Jiddu Krishnamurthi*

THREE TYPES OF SPACE: 1. *Bhuta aakash* or outer space in which the universe exists. 2. *Chitta aakash* or the world of impressions, thoughts and dreams that exist in our mind. 3. *Chida aakash* or the sky of consciousness that is all-permeating, everywhere – consciousness, the basis of all Creation, that is Divine, that which knows all. – *Sri Sri Ravi Sankar*

DO YOUR DHARMA AND BE PEACEFUL

By Dr. K Subrahmanian

A *sannyasi* sitting at the bank of a river saw a scorpion struggling to come out of the water to save itself. While helping it to come out, the scorpion stung him. But he did not fail in his effort to save it, and tried once again to help it come out of the water. Second time also it stung the *sannyasi*. As he could not bear the pain, he dropped it. When he was trying to save it for third time, a person standing nearby said, “You must be very stupid. You have been stung twice yet you continue to take the risk of being stung for the third time.” The *sannyasi* replied saying, “The dharma of a scorpion is to sting. My dharma is to save. I cannot fail to do my dharma, whatever be the consequences.” This is an extraordinary statement. If you want to help someone you help him because it is your dharma to do so. Do not expect anything in return. By doing good to others we are doing good to ourselves. Bhagavan used to say, “When you are doing good to someone; when you are giving something to another person, you are giving it to yourself.”

When I give something to another person, my credit balance increases. This is called *punya*. You may insult me, other people may not know, but there is some higher power which knows what I really feel. If I do something for publicity, if I do some thing in order that I might become famous, that is not correct. If I do something silently, quietly, without expecting anything in return, the Lord of the universe will give me something that nobody else can give. That is peace.

When you have peace, what is the need for anything else? And when you don't have peace, what is the purpose of having everything else in the world? When a man has *shanti*, he can live on the minimum. Even though I may have crores, if I don't have *shanti*, what is it that money can do? That is why they say, seek Him first, He will give you all that you need. The Lord says in the Gita, ‘those who think of me and me alone, those who surrender to me completely, I look after their needs. It is my responsibility.’ That was the life of Bhagavan. That was the life of Sri Ramakrishna. That was the life of all the sages and saints. – *From recorded talks of Dr. K.S.*

I am impartial to all. Those who give Me their heart's love are in Me, as I am in them...All those who take refuge in Me, whatever their birth, race, gender,

or caste, will attain the supreme goal; this realisation can be attained even by those scorned by society. – *The Gita*, 9. 29 & 32

What we habitually say in our heads, we usually end up saying with our lips, which ultimately direct our feet. – *Anonymous*

A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within. – *R. W. Emerson*

For those who have cleansed their sins by austerities, for those who are calm, for those who are not bound to the cravings of the body, and for those who seek liberation, to such worthy people I (Sankara) compose this teaching on the Self. – *Atmabodha, Verse 1*

Atmana vindate viryam* – By the knowledge of the *atman*, an individual gets infinite energy. – *Kena Upanishad

You cannot change your future, but you can change your habit, and sure, your habits can change your future. – *Bernard Shaw*

REMEDY FOR ALL ILLS: There is one sovereign remedy for all ills – God; Trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever happens as His dispensation, regard whatever you do as His service; keep *satsang*, think of God with every breath and live in His presence. Leave all your burdens in His hands and He will see to everything. There will be no more problems. – *Anandamayi Ma*

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SELF IS PURE CONSCIOUSNESS: You are pure consciousness, pure existence, and this body is mortal. In Self-awareness there is immense joy and in not knowing the Self there is lot of pain and suffering. Be a witness. Just be a watcher, a seer; be aloof from all the paraphernalia of the world and the body. Then you really enjoy. Otherwise, you can continue to suffer. – *Anandamurti Gurumaa*

SOME TIPS FOR A SADHAKA: It is an established fact that ‘small’ things and ‘minutiae’ (small and precise details of something) go to bring about the fulfillment, that would eventually give the feeling of real completion of the objectives envisaged...On the issue of effective time management, besides observations of the *Hitopadesa* on how even small things ‘add up’, the *Bible* emphasises on the need to make the most of every opportunity, by ‘redeeming the time’. Samuel Johnson also observes on the ‘present value of single minutes’ and how one should ‘endeavour to let no particular time fall useless to the ground’. Besides such guidelines on time management, great concepts applicable to the particular individual should be reflected upon by him, introspected and allowed to ‘sink in’. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

SRI RAMANA SAVES FROM JAWS OF DEATH – TWO INCIDENTS

By V. Ganesan

Subbalakshmi¹, wife of Dr. M.R. Krishnamurthi Iyer², the first doctor attached to the Ashram, narrated to me the following two incidents portraying how Bhagavan’s grace became available to her and her brother.

1. When I had given birth to my third son, I had severe fever due to a viral infection. So, I was brought to Tiruvannamalai from my village. Thenamma, a kitchen worker, living near our house, was also proficient in indigenous medicine. She felt my pulse and concluded that I was sinking fast and would not last even for minutes. She rushed to the Ashram and told Bhagavan, “Our Dr. Krishnamurthi Iyer’s wife is dead.” Bhagavan retorted, “How do you know?” She replied, “I felt her pulse and I am pretty sure about it.” Bhagavan put His palm on His cheeks and

exclaimed, “Ha, Is she gone?” My brother who was in the village, when informed, came and was crying aloud. My husband was praying in front of Bhagavan’s portrait that I be saved by His Grace and vowed to do a *bhiksha* to the *sadhus* and inmates of the Ashram on my survival. In such a state of sadness and confusion, suddenly I opened my eyes and was surprised over the commotion around me. Coolly and calmly I asked, “What is all this?” I came to know that it was nothing short of a miracle that I came back to life!

2. Sometime after this, my brother, on his return to the village, became bedridden with a carbuncle on his neck. In those days it was considered a fatal disease. When the local doctor had given up hope, my husband’s service was requisitioned. He himself being a doctor knew the seriousness of the disease. He went straight to Bhagavan and said, “My brother-in-law is suffering from carbuncle; I am going to the village to treat him. I seek your blessings.” Bhagavan replied, “Yes, Yes! Go.” When my husband reached the village the disease was already sixteen days old and my brother was in excruciating pain. Praying to Bhagavan, my husband touched the affected portion to examine it. Immediately, the carbuncle opened, to the great amazement of the local doctor and others! Everyone acclaimed it as a ‘miracle’. My husband alone knew the secret. It was purely Bhagavan’s *anugraha* that saved my brother. – *The Continuing Story* by A.R. Natarajan

(It may be noted that the Maharshi was much against miracles. He once said, “A magician deludes others by his tricks, but he himself is never deluded. A *siddha* who manifests his *siddhis* is inferior to the magician as he is deceiving others as much as himself.” The ‘miracles’, which used to happen from time to time looked like coincidences, and if brought to Sri Ramana’s attention he would just laugh them away. Sri Ramana would use the term ‘Automatic Divine Action’ for the ‘miracles’ and he made the devotee believe that he had no part to play in the matter.)

1.& 2. Their reminiscences are at pp. 315 and 344-5 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram.

GOD: God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. Therefore wanting to see God as something or someone separate from you is an illusion. God is not an object

of senses, but the feeling, the presence, the sound of silence, the light of life, the essence of the world and the taste of bliss. God is to be felt in the depth of your heart. He cannot be perceived through your senses or through the mind, for he is the Seer. As space, He is everywhere, and everything is in space. Nothing can touch space. Nothing can destroy space. And you cannot see space as a separate object. –
Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

SIVANANDA LAHARI

By A.S. Padmanabhan

Adi Sankara shares his joy of abiding in the Lord in 100 stanzas of this poem.

In many places, Sivananda Lahari impresses us as relaxed conversation between the poet and his Lord. Adi Sankara shares his waves of bliss with the readers as he praised Lord Siva in the verses. The author compares our fickle mind to a monkey (v. 20) and an unruly elephant (v. 97) and pleads with the Lord to bind both with the strong rope of devotion and bring them under his control. In another verse he warns us that our search for flowers to be offered at the God's feet is in vain and all that is necessary to please him with the precious flower of our mind.

In the fifth verse he describes himself as one unfamiliar with any *sastra*, mode of worship or any fine arts to please the Almighty in his court. Yet he is sure that the God in his infinite mercy will shower his grace upon him!

In verse 27, we find Almighty having Golden Meru in his hand, Kubera in attendance, and his divine abode endowed with the Kalpa tree, Kamadhenu, and the Chintamani gem. (These three are supposed to fulfill every wish). All that the poet has to offer is his cluttered mind. He pleads that it may be accepted.

Verse 87 is a contrasting teaser. The Lord is too poorly equipped to offer anything to Sankara. After all, his food is poison, his ornaments the snake, the garment – animal hide, and vehicle – the bull. After this gentle tease, the author says that Siva can grant him unswerving devotion at his feet.

Far from being the liquidator, the Lord is universal benefactor who lodged the *halahala* in his throat to ensure welfare of all the beings born and unborn. (v. 31)

In verse 61, Sankara gives five examples of *bhakti*: seeds of the Ankola tree blown by the wind and fallen on the ground gradually inch their way back towards the parent tree. None knows what prods them. It goes on its own to join the source and grow with it. Iron particles get drawn to the magnet without anybody's help. The chaste woman's mind, words and action are all centred around her husband. All water bodies from the clouds find their way to the sea on their own. The creeper grasps the nearest support and grows upwards. All these happen naturally and are not laboured. Similarly, our mind should seek the Lord forever on its own, eschewing other thoughts.

According to 63rd stanza, the occupation of the mind with the thought of God need not necessarily be attended by elaborate ceremony or ritual. Though there is no direct reference to the hunter Kannappa, it is easy to infer from the word *vanachara* (the forest dweller) what weighed with Sankara. The hunter may have offered his worn-out sandals as kusa grass, a mouthful of gargled water for bathing the icon, and remnants of food eaten as oblation. Yet he got a vision of the Lord and became the crest-jewel among devotees.

All that is necessary is constant reverential and affectionate remembrance of God without any expectation of reward. – Condensed from *Tattvaloka*, February, 2011

NEED FOR SELF SURRENDER: Complete self-surrender means that you have no further thought of 'I'. This is impossible in the beginning. Partial surrender is certainly possible for all. In course of time that will lead to complete surrender. What the *bhakta* [devotee] calls surrender, the man who does *vichara* [enquiry] calls *jnana*. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

DEVOTION AND KNOWLEDGE: *Bhakti* and *jnana* are as inseparable as two sides of a coin. The easiest way to start is with *bhakti* or surrender to the Supreme and acquire *jnana*. *Bhakti* is the mother of *jnana*. *Bhakta*'s longing ends at achievement of divine love whereas *Jnani*'s longing starts as a simple means of enquiry on Truth. The self of both is emptied, as attachments are surrendered to the love of the transcendent, and the Truth of eternity. *Bhakta* uses *nama japa* to help turn attention away from the world, while a *jnani* contemplates on teachings obtained by his guru to do the same. *Bhakta* enters the Supreme through self-surrender while a *jnani* expands and become one with Him through Self-enquiry. *Bhakta* shuns doer-ship while *Jnani* shuns both doer-ship and enjoyer-ship. The

ignorance to recognise our true nature and origin has made us fall into the whirlpool of *samsara*. By *jnana* one can overcome ignorance and attain salvation for which *bhakti* is necessary. – *Sreeram Manoj Kumar*

BREATHE PROPERLY AND BENEFIT: When we breathe our lungs transfer oxygen into our blood. This oxygen is necessary for life's building blocks – our cells. When we breathe out, carbon dioxide and other metabolic wastes are removed from the blood and put back into the air. Through maximizing each of our breaths in and out, we can increase the oxygen and minimize the wastes in our blood...Sit up straight, allowing lungs to fully expand with each breath in. Relax, and breathe in deep and slow, to count of four, watching your chest rise up as you fill the lungs, and then hold it for a count of two. Slowly release the toxins out to another count of four. The goal is 6 breaths per minute. Practicing this one hour per day will increase the blood oxygen levels, leading to overall health. Proper breathing also connects us to our spiritual self. It is interesting to note that the word 'spirit' is derived from the Latin word 'spiritus' which means breath. When we breathe properly, mental confusion is cleared away, our intuition is awakened, and we feel a sense of clarity and purpose. – *The Internet* [The great importance of supplying oxygen to lungs becomes manifest when we learn that every hour our heart pumps over 270 liters of blood.]

NEED FOR AN ISHTA DEVTA: The very scientific objectivity that once compelled us to question the existence of God has now, by way of advanced physics and cosmology, begun to unravel evidence that tends to support the belief in some form of transcendent power, a universal architect. An impartial appraisal of the warp and weft of physical reality reveals that woven through out the universe is an abstract intelligence that is akin to a Creator and Sustainer, in the sense meant by Brahmn in Indian thought. Vedic *rishis* realised that the Supreme Consciousness was too abstract to be popular. They reasoned, since everything in nature is God's creation, it might be simpler to connect with Brahmn through an icon of personal choice (*ishta devta*). This is the genesis of the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses. – *Mani Bhaumik*, a US-based physicist, is author of *Code Name God*.

DISCOVER DIVINITY WITHIN: Rouse yourself to behold Divinity that is in you. First you wake up from inertia and dullness; then the human in you wakes up;

thereafter the Divinity in you becomes evident...The space around you is not dead space; it is filled with energy and intelligence. That energy and intelligence is divinity. It is everywhere, inside you as well as outside you. You can experience that enormous energy when you go deep in meditation...A perturbed mind can never go close to God. When you experience depth, then the truth will automatically dawn on you. **The most relaxing and comfortable place is in you.** – *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*

ENEMIES WITHIN: There is often a lack of harmonious coexistence among the different aspects of one's conscious, subconscious and unconscious states of mind. While consciously one may have 'decided' to be organised and effective, the subconscious and unconscious, which have evolved over the years, may have 'decided' otherwise. It is also possible that the promptings and enthusiasm of the conscious are not powerful enough. The way out of the impasse lies in weakening the impact of the unhealthy aspects within, while at the same time, empowering those of the healthy and life-supporting one, which too, happily are inherent. The approach to resolving the problem lies in identifying and later reshaping, modifying, and where necessary weakening those conflicting forces, so that the 'uneasy companionship' of all aspects within give way to their peaceful coexistence and compatibility. This is the process of what the Gita (VI.6) terms as *atmanyeva atmanah jitah*. In this 'victory over oneself' lies the capacity of the aspirant to act as his own ally, as conceived by the Gita (VI.5). – *K. Vijayaragavan*

BE LIKE A GRAPE VINE: Some of us while doing a kind deed, expect a reward. Some keep track of everything they do, feeling deep down how they get their 'debt' repaid at some later date. The best like a grape vine give without any remembrance of what they have done. They pass on to the next act, as the vine passes on to bear another cluster of grapes. – *Marcus Aurelius*

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JNANA SAMBANDHA AND SRI RAMANA

Jnana Sambandha, was a very great saint who sang profusely in praise of Lord Siva. His original name was Aludaya Pillayar. As soon as he drank the milk given by the goddess, *jnana sambandha* (contact with knowledge) was established for him and

he came to be known as Jnana Sambandha Nayanar. He like Sri Ramana became a *jnani* without the usual relationship of guru and disciple.

When Sri Ramana as a boy left Madurai, Atulyanateswarar Temple of Arayani Nallur and Veeratteswarar Temple of Kilur in Tirukoilur were key places in his advent to Arunachala. In the Arayani Nallur Temple he held the effulgent light of the Divine, which the child saint Jnana Sambandha had experienced in the same holy shrine some 1500 years before him.

When Jnana Sambandha was travelling to Arunachala from Arayani Nallur, he was stripped of all his possessions and was resigned to complete the remaining journey clad in a loincloth. Similarly, Sri Ramana in making the same pilgrimage, was obliged to dispense with his last possession, a pair of earrings, in order to secure the money with which to make the train fare for the remaining segment of the journey to Arunachala. He, like Jnana Sambandha resigned himself to the humbleness of a loincloth. But whereas Jnana Sambandha was required to spend only a small period of time in his loincloth, Sri Ramana chose to pass remainder of his earthly life in a loincloth. Whereas Jnana Sambandha came to the world to regenerate faith and fervour of Siva's devotion, Sri Ramana came to impart the knowledge of the Self.

Both the great saints established father-son relationship with the Lord. In his hymns Sri Ramana calls himself son of Arunachala; child-saint Jnana Sambandha sings of the Lord as his Father. – *Aryani Nallur Atulyanateswarar Temple, Kumbhabhishekam Souvenir*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai.

WIDEN YOUR PERSPECTIVE: A human being is part of a whole, called the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. – *Albert Einstein*

UNFOLDING THE SPIRITUAL SELF

By Sheel Vardhan Singh

Yoga teaches us that this body is essentially an instrument for realising the ‘Param Atman’. Besides the physical body, there is an immensely powerful yet soft and gentle ‘spiritual body’. To build a spiritual body is a goal. The challenge is of making this concept actionable. Here yoga as a discipline and as a ‘body of knowledge’ comes to our help.

Though conceptually, the spiritual body would be one ‘established in its pure pristine self’, we can utilise its outward manifestations and try to achieve them. Thus, a well-developed spiritual body would manifest in this world with the following attributes: i. Calm, ii. Serene, iii. Magnetic, iv. Efficient, v. Dynamic, vi. Tranquil, vii. Joyous, viii. Pure, ix. Disciplined, x. Graceful, xi. Physically fit, xii. Focused, xiii. Constantly learning and improving.

This list is not exhaustive. It is just a means to understand that the deep within when the spiritual body will evolve what would be its manifestations in the outer physical world. So, the output would be the list stated above. What would be the inputs needed to nourish the spirit so that the spiritual body develops? Yoga and ‘yogic living’ give us ‘tools’ to nourish our spiritual self. The list here is: i. Mantra, ii. Japa, iii. Asana, iv. Pranayama, v. Pratyahara, and vi. Dharana.

Also develop, i. Vivek or discrimination, ii. Vairagya or non-attachment, iii. Always make a conscious ‘sttavic’ choice, iv. Complete listening, and v. Considered speech. These would lead to an output of calm, serene, emotionally stable, physically fit and a magnetic personality, which is constantly learning and improving itself.

The ‘mantra’ breaks the emotional, mental and physical knots or barriers within. The vibrational powers of mantra make the spirit free-flowing. The ‘jap’ of ‘guru mantra’ pervades the spiritual self and connects the spirit of the self to a very powerful source of energy and intelligence. The ‘asanas’ done with awareness make the body a more efficient machine. The ‘pratyahara’ leads to the journey within and ‘dharana’ leads to a focused efficient mind. – Abstracted from *The Times of India*

GRATITUDE – MOTHER OF VIRTUES: The heart should always beat in gratitude. The basic fabric for thought should be, ‘Grateful for...’ For what you are grateful is immaterial. Gratitude is the way to create abundance. Our thoughts create our reality. We can be abundant-minded by being grateful for what we have.

No matter how little we have, we are rich if we are grateful. No matter how much we have, we are poor if we are ungrateful. A heart laden with gratitude need not go in search of abundance. Instead, abundance will flow in our lives. Be grateful even for difficult times, for they helped you to mature. Be grateful for the mistakes, for they taught you lessons. Aspire for the diamond ring, but be grateful for the fingers. The proof of right approach is in the happiness it delivers. Gratitude sustains happiness. Complaining to someone or in your thoughts, creates misery. Gratitude is the way to bliss. It is the master key to our spiritual evolution. *Avyakta* – info@frozenthoughts.com

SRISAILAM: The origins of this temple are lost in antiquity. The [Skanda Purana](#) has a chapter called **Srisaila Kandam** dedicated to it, which points to the ancient origin. The shrine is situated on Rishabhagiri, one of the Nallamalai hills sprawling amidst dense forests in Kurnool district of A.P. It is regarded as one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. The temple is dedicated to Mallikarjuna and his consort Bhramaramba Devi. According to the 16th century stone inscriptions in the temple, a princess named Chandravati worshipped Lord Siva at the temple offering garlands of jasmine (Malle) flowers daily, and eventually married him. Hence the name Mallikarjuna (one who is worshipped with Malle flowers). River Krishna flows majestically touching the foot of the hallowed hill. The temple, bounded by a wall, which is 20 feet high, six feet wide and 2120 feet in circumference, was rebuilt around 1404 by a Vijayanagar king. – Abstracts from *Splendour*, March, 2011

***RUDRASTAKAM* – EIGHT ENCHANTING, EMOTION-FILLED *SLOKAS* IN PRAISE OF LORD SIVA FROM *RAMACHARITMANAS* OF TULSIDAS**

I adore You, the ruler of the whole universe, eternal bliss personified, the omnipresent and all pervading Brahm, manifest in the form of Vedas.

I worship Lord Siva, shinning in his own glory, devoid of material attributes, undifferentiated, desireless, all-pervading consciousness, having nothing to wrap about Himself except ether or enveloping ether itself. I bow to the Supreme Lord, who is devoid of form, transcendent and extra cosmic, beyond speech, understanding and sense perception, terrible yet gracious, the seed of mystic syllable OM, the ruler of Kailash, and abode of virtues.

I adore the all-merciful Sankara, the universal Lord, who is loved by all and yet unfathomable, who is possessed of a form white as the snow-clad Himalaya, and radiant with the beauty of a myriad Cupids, whose head sparkles with the lovely

stream of the Ganga, whose brow is adorned by the crescent moon, and neck coiled by serpents.

I worship the Lord of all, who has tremulous pendants hanging from His ear lobes, who is possessed of the beautiful eyebrows and large eyes, who has a cheerful countenance and blue speck on His throat, and who has a lion-skin wrapped around His waist and a garland of skulls around His neck.

I take refuge in Bhavani's spouse, the supreme Lord, terrible, exalted, intrepid, indivisible, unborn and invested with the glory of a myriad suns, who roots out the three-fold agony and holds a trident in His hand and who is accessible only through love.

Who is beyond number, ever blessed, bringing about universal destruction at the end of each round of creation, a source of perpetual delight to the virtuous, Slayer of demon Tripura, Consciousness and Bliss personified and dispeller of delusion. Be propitious, my Lord, be propitious, O Destroyer of Cupid.

So long as they worship not the lotus-feet of Uma's lord, there is no happiness nor peace nor cessation of suffering for men either in this world or in the next. Therefore, be propitious, my Lord, dwelling as You do in the heart of all living beings.

I know not Yoga, nor Japa, nor ritual. I simply bow to you at all times and at every moment, O Sambhu! Pray, protect me, my Lord, miserable and afflicted by suffering attendant on old age and birth (and death) as I am, O Lord Sambhu.

Whatever you do, make it an offering to me – the food you eat, the sacrifices you make, the help you give, even your suffering. *The Gita*, 9:26-8

The language of the Veda itself is *shruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. – *Sri Aurobindo*

What you are to do when you are placed in the world? Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and there will be no more trouble for you. Then

you will come to know that everything is done by His will. – Ramakrishna Paramahansa

The infinite is the source of joy. There is no joy in the finite. Only in the infinite there is joy. – Chandogya Upanishad

There is sorrow in finitude. The Self is beyond time, space and objects, it is infinite and hence its nature is absolute happiness. – Adi Sankaracharya

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SOME PROVEN BENEFITS OF MEDITATION: 1. Lower oxygen consumption. 2. Decreased respiratory rate. 3. Increased blood flow and slower heart rate. 4. Deeper level of physical relaxation. 5. Decreased muscle tension. 6. Enhancement of the immune system. 7. Greater control over thoughts. 8. Help in focus and attention. 9. Improvement of learning ability and memory. 10. Increased emotional stability. 11. Increase in ability to solve complex problems. 12. Greater harmony in body, mind and spirit. – *The Internet*

MAINTAIN RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Sreeram Manoj Kumar

Righteousness is the unifier and sustainer of social life. The code of righteousness is meant to help us to regulate our lives in this world – just as we need a constitution, written or otherwise, that helps us make the framework of the governance of a country or an institution.

The constitution of a country in some parts could become out of context over a period of time and amendments may become necessary. On the other hand, the rules of righteousness evolved by our *rishis* over centuries are relevant in any context and are eternal.

That which elevates is righteousness. It leads us to the path of glory. Righteousness is the heart of ethics. Bhishma, lying at the bed of arrows, tells Yudhishtira that whatever creates conflict is non-righteous and whatever puts an end to conflict and brings about unity and harmony is righteousness. Anything that helps to unite all and generates love and universal brotherhood is righteous. Anything that creates disagreement and disharmony is non-righteous.

‘*Dharmo rakshati rakshita.*’ An incident during the Mahabharata war illustrates this. In the thick of combat Arjuna sees a blurred vision, like a figure exuding a flame-like radiance, in the opposite camp. At the end of the day an intrigued Arjuna asks Vyasa, “What was that blur of light, a figure, I think, I could see in the opposite camp?” Vyasa asks, “Son, did you notice the figure holding a trident?” Arjuna says, “Yes, I could see a trident in the hand.” Vyasa says, “He is none other than Maha Rudradeva; He is helping you since the war which you Pandavas are fighting is *dharmic*.” Arjuna asks, “If Siva wants to assist me in the war, why is He in the Kaurava camp? What is He doing there?”

Vyasa tells Arjuna that Maha Rudradeva does not tolerate *adharma*. He is there to deter those who have supported *adharma*. He is known for destruction; by His mere presence in their camp He is sucking all the vigour of the warriors on that side. Hence Kaurava warriors who were known for their strength now seem weak, snapped of energy. Vyasa tells Arjuna that whatever is done in righteousness, the support to that act comes from all sides.

Vyasa says in the Mahabharata: ‘Do not forsake your code of righteousness out of desire, being overwhelmed by fear or greed, or even when threatened with death, as righteousness is eternal, whereas being happy or unhappy is momentary.’ – Adapted from The Speaking Tree in *The Times of India*

REPROGRAMMING THE GENETIC CODE

By Gita Krishna Raj

All living creatures are made of cells. Inside the cells are the packages of the chromosomes that contain a single long strand of DNA (genetic information) that is divided into genes (sections of DNA). The information stored in the genes helps to determine the traits like eye and hair colour, height, and so on. Genetics play only a small role in these things, may be 30% or less.

The DNA is housed inside the nucleus of every cell. The nucleus is simply the memory location. It is the cell wall that is the actual brain that helps unlock the protein sleeve to help the gene manifest. Thus we are not the helpless victims with a predetermined fate decided by the genes inherited from our ancestors. While the genes definitely determine our characteristics, we have a great deal of control over the final determination in most cases because we get to choose what we unlock.

The interaction of an individual with the outside world affects the cells' perceptions. This triggers their interaction within their environment and causes a second by second reprogramming of the individual genetics. This reprogramming can result in beneficial changes or detrimental ones, entirely depending upon the thoughts and emotions of the individual at every second of experiencing life. Positive thoughts are good for health and well being, while negative thoughts are detrimental. We have scientific proof of how an individual's thought and emotions can change him physically. In fact, Norman Cousins has titled his book as: 'Your beliefs can become your biology.' **The 70 billion cells that create our body are literally listening to every thought we think, and respond accordingly.** – Condensed from *Frozen Thoughts*, March 2011

NEED FOR CONSTANT SPIRITUAL RENEWAL: To be successful and happy in all departments of life, we need spiritual renewal every day. Prayer, meditation on holy thoughts, and reading of inspirational works lead one back to God. If we thus renew spiritual strength on a regular basis, we will be an effective witness for Him who is the source of all strength. – *E.M. Payler*

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD: It is a part of Yajur Veda. It contains discussion of Universal Consciousness through a dialogue between father – Varuna, and son – Bhrigu, with reference to the five *koshas*, namely, the *annamaya kosha* – the physical layer, *pranamaya kosha* – the energy-astral body, the *manaomaya kosha* – the mental layer, which triggers all senses of knowledge, *viganmaya kosha* – which causes the mind to distinguish and discriminate, and *anandmaya kosha* – the state of bliss, which lies beyond thought and desire. Two legends are associated with the origin of the word *Taittiriya*. One, to curb the pride and argumentative nature of Yajnavalka, his guru Vaishampayana asked him to throw up all the knowledge he has gained. The other disciples were directed to take the form of *taittiriya* or partridges and eat up the leavings, a metaphor for digested knowledge. Second, the guru was

so proud of Yajnavalka that he asked his disciples to acquire knowledge like Yajnavalka in the spirit of the *taittiriya* bird, which is focused on searching for food. – *Pranav Khullar* <khullar.pranav@gmail.com>

OUR PRIME MOVER: During meditation, the mind experiences progressively less excited states of thought until one transcends thought completely, to arrive at its source. The mind is like a body of water: choppy on the surface, silent and stable at its depth. When we experience only the ‘noisy’ surface level of thinking, difficulties abound. If we could anchor the surface mind to its vacuum state – if we could enliven the stability inherent at the depth of consciousness – we would be insulated from ‘the winds of change.’ The growth of inner silence is the basis of spiritual unfolding and material success... The world is as you are. If you are anchored to the silent blissful state of consciousness, everything you do becomes joyful... Handle that one thing – consciousness – by which everything else is handled. – *Lane Waggoner*

KNOWING THE SELF

By Prabhakar V Begde

Very few of us are really keen to find out the real Self hidden within to ascertain one’s true identity. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states, “Whosoever departs from this world without having realised his own inner world, to him life has been of no service. It remains unlived, like unrecited Vedas, or any other undone deed.”

“It seems to me ridiculous,” said Socrates, “when I am not able to know myself, to investigate irrelevant things.”

In Self-awareness there is immense joy. The Self is *chetna*, supra-consciousness, the knowledge of pure existence. All the pain and misery is a result of not knowing the Self. The divine manifests itself only when we subject ourselves to certain disciplines. The divine operates in us, but it requires an effort to make it shine forth.

As life outreaches matter, so does the mind outreaches life. There are forms of life without consciousness but there can be no consciousness without life. The mind is an animal of a rudimentary character. As humans, we have the play of

intelligence. Intelligence frames concepts and ideals, and means for realisation. Conditioning of the mind is the most important theme of Indian philosophy and the first step towards Self-realisation.

The body is called *kshetra*, the field, and within it dwells the owner of the body and the Supreme Lord, who knows both the body and the owner of the body. Perfect knowledge of the constitution of the body, of the individual soul, and of the Super-soul is known as *jnana*. To understand both the soul and the Super-soul as one, yet being distinct, is knowledge. According to the *Gita*, one who studies the subject matter of the field of activity as well as the knower of the field can attain knowledge.

The prayer of every heart is outlined in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad thus: ‘*Asato maa sadgamaya,/ tamso maa jyotirgammaya,/ mrityorma amaitamgamaya.*’ – ‘Lead me from unreal to the real./ Lead me from darkness to light./ Lead me from death to immortality.’ – *Times of India*

ALWAYS BE IN GRATITUDE: I asked my Master once: “When difficulties come, what do you do?” He smiled and said, “I thank God.” I asked him again, “When you are ill, and have suffering and pain, what do you do?” The answer was still the same: “I thank the Lord!” I asked the third time: “When you are passing through the storm of life, what do you do?” Again he said, “I thank the Lord.” Whenever I tell people about the ‘thanksgiving therapy’ they ask what therapeutic value can thanks giving have? According to medical research, positive emotions like love and gratitude enhance the immune system. Our attitude has a direct bearing on our immune system. Positive feelings of gratitude and joy release endorphins into the blood stream. They stimulate the dilation of the blood vessels and relax the cardiac muscle. On the other hand, emotions such as anger, grief and bitterness are known to dump high levels of adrenaline in the blood. This constricts flow of blood into the heart. It slows down the movement of white cells which fight disease and strengthen our immunity system. An expression of gratitude acts like a mental and spiritual tonic. When you are thankful, you affirm God’s goodness and grace. It makes you receptive to the Lord’s blessings. – *Dada J P Vaswani* (For his stimulating reminiscences of Bhagavan, see *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 221-23.)

SRI RAMANA SHOWERS GRACE ON A DISABLED DEVOTEE

By K.S. Naidu

After retirement from service I stayed at Vizag, where my wife would often visit the house of Jogarao, who had retired as an engineer in All India Radio. There she saw a photo of the Maharshi and got greatly attracted to it. She would visit the house again and again only to have a look at the picture of Bhagavan. Jogarao's wife told her that her husband happened to go the Ashram while in service at Bangalore, and had taken *bhiksha* sitting near Bhagavan. Since then he became a devotee of Bhagavan and stopped reading English novels and gave up smoking. He started learning Sanskrit and began reading scriptures. My wife got *Ulladu Narpadu* and many other books about Bhagavan, mostly in Telugu, which she read many times over.

One year after retirement, for the first time we both went to the Ashram in 1996, and stayed for three days. This stay transformed my wife. Thereafter we visited every year and stayed for a week – my wife spending most of her time in the meditation hall. In 2002, as we were denied accommodation due to the Deepam rush, we decided to stay elsewhere. When we visited the Ashram, Dr. Srinivas Murthy recognised me and gave me the register to enter my name. In the presence of so many persons waiting for accommodation I could not talk and went to the allotted room wondering that something was wrong somewhere. After two hours I was called to the office and told that as the accommodation was given by mistake, I had to vacate. I readily agreed. But then I was told that it was Bhagavan's grace that the key was given to me, I could stay for three days.

In 2004, my wife had a fall in the house and her first and second vertebrae in the neck were broken in four pieces. While in hospital waiting for the operation she would keep Bhagavan's photo by her bedside. When four or five doctors were discussing her case, she had a vision of Bhagavan's face entering the face of Kailash Rao, the senior doctor. It was a rare surgery and it went off successfully, only due to Bhagavan's grace.

My wife was advised total rest and was confined to bed with a frame tied. It took her six months to sit up. Later she felt courage and decided to visit the Ashram, and with all her disabilities she could climb the hill and go up to Skandasram. She insisted on performing *pradakshina*, which she completed in

five hours. It was totally unbelievable. This was indeed amazing because in the house she could not walk a few yards steadily.

Now we visit the Ashram every year. As she cannot keep her neck in balance, she has to wear a band except while sleeping. Once she enters the Ashram she gets transformed and it works like a tonic to her. It is only Sri Bhagavan's grace that she is able to visit the Ashram almost like a normal person. – Naidu's Mobile: 08912799521

REMINISCENCES OF RAMANI AMMAL

Since her childhood she had a spiritual bent of mind. She says:

My chosen deity in childhood was Lord Krishna. In my youth I would see Krishna and other familiar deities in my dreams. At the age of 16 or 17 I saw a strange sage-like person coming down a hill and was captivated by his grandeur. I later came to realise he was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. At this young age, while reading *Jnana Vasishtha*, I experienced as if I was enveloped in a bright white light.

In 1946, I got from Kumaraswami Raja, the then chief minister of Madras, who was a cousin of mine, Suddhananda Bharati's Tamil biography of Bhagavan, *Ramana Vijayam**. I opened the book and as soon as I saw Bhagavan's photograph, I became speechless. As I read the book, my eyes kept closing involuntarily, and I was drawn within. After reading the book, I seriously thought of leaving home, and have *darshan* of the Maharshi.

Because of my intense desire, my younger brother was moved to help me. He was a very pious person. With his help I secretly left home and reached Tiruvannamalai. But I got overcome by a feeling of guilt for running away from home and bringing a bad name to my reputed family. When I arrived, I was told that Bhagavan was near the well. When I came near the well, I saw a thatched shed next to it and all I could see in it was a flaming fire. It was only after a few minutes that I saw Bhagavan emerging from those flames. Afterwards I realised that Bhagavan had bestowed upon me the great boon of *jyoti darshan*. When I went to the hall, Bhagavan told me, "You have come

home. Why don't you sit down?" Coming from a family where women never go out, and having never gone out myself, I did not know how to behave in a group. I sat down right in front of Bhagavan and not in place reserved for women.

For three days I sat in front of Bhagavan and all the while the feeling of guilt for running away from the home haunted me. On the third day, I heard Bhagavan telling someone, "I also ran away from my home and at the railway station I was frightened because anyone could have identified me as a runaway, caught hold of me and sent me home. I felt like a thief." When Bhagavan narrated this, it completely wiped out all my guilt feelings from that moment onwards. Bhagavan later said that sometimes you have to do a wrong thing to achieve the ultimate right thing.

Bhagavan's look was real magic. You need not do anything but just look into his eyes, which would transform you into *samadhi*. Everyone in the hall used to feel Bhagavan was looking at them alone. This was the true experience of each one of us. In his inimitable way he was giving the glance of grace to each and everyone seated in the hall.

Once while I was seated in the hall, slices of some fruit were brought by a devotee and placed before Bhagavan. A monkey walked in. Though the attendant was unwilling to oblige the monkey, upon Bhagavan's behest he gave him a piece. Receiving it, the monkey bounded away, but another soon came in, evidently informed by the former. A piece was given to him and he soon went away. A third one came for his share! Bhagavan gave him a piece saying, "All right, now don't go and inform any other, or else these people here will be angry with me." This fellow left with his share and followed Bhagavan's *adesa* (command) to the letter, as there were no further claimants from his class.

Bhagavan was a real taskmaster. He used to quietly move around to various places within the ashram without notice. So every place had to be kept neat and clean because Bhagavan was very particular about cleanliness. He was also particular about punctuality.

One day, I returned to the ashram after visiting Patala Linga, and having Arunachleswara's *darshan*. I related to Bhagavan the dilapidated condition of the Patala Linga shrine. He enquired about the elephant tied nearby and then asked whether I had received *prasad* at the main shrine. I realised that I was carrying the *vibhuti* all along in my palm without offering it to Bhagavan, and

now respectfully held it out to him. Like a child, he picked a tiny amount from that and applied to his forehead.

Doubts vanished in Bhagavan's presence. When doubts came to mind, they dissolved, even before the question could be formulated. – Abstracted from *Arunachala's Ramana*, vol. III

* For reminiscences of Suddhananda Bharati see, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 262-3.

LIVE BEYOND THOUGHT

By D. Samarender Reddy*

Ye who live in the cells of your brain
Live not your life thus in vain.
The "I" around which we hover
Is nothing but thought over and over.
Our life is but a drama of thought
By which joys and sorrows are wrought.
Thought may seem inescapable
But sages say we are capable.
If we stay in its grip
We are sure to trip.
Life is fleeting and short
Escape the tyranny of thought.
There is a life yet beyond thought
Whether you believe it or not.
For such a life aspire
Ere you soon expire.

* A medical doctor who works at Hyderabad. Email <samarender.reddy@yahoo.com>

KASHMIR SHAIIVISM: Its basis is that there is only one ultimate reality, the Self-luminous eternal Being called Paramshiva, who abides in the form of *sat-chit-annad*. The entire objective universe that is perceived through senses is permeated by the rays of pure consciousness or *chit-shakti*, which is inherent in and inseparable from Him. Paramshiva and the individual are one. To

consciously realise Self through meditation is the essence of the doctrine of Kashmir Shaivism. – *Anup Taneja* [Reminiscences of Swami Lakshman Joo Raina, last living pre-eminent exponent of Kashmir Shaivism are at pages 370-1 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. www.ksf.org

PRADAKSHINA: Typically, after the prayers are offered to the deity, the devotee starts *pradakshina*, having the deity on his right side. On completion of the *pradakshina*, the devotee stands in front of the deity and slowly turns around in a motion that resembles the earth spinning on its own axis, at least three times. This is called *atma pradakshina*. The minimum number of *pradakshina* of the deity is: one in case of Ganesha, two in case of Siva, three in case of Vishnu and six in case of Durga. – *Arun Ganapathy*

SAY GOODBYE WITH GRACE: Death should be a peaceful acceptance, a loving entry into the unknown, a joyful goodbye to the old friends, to the old world. There should not be any tragedy in it. Zen master Lin Chi was dying. Thousands had gathered to listen to his last sermon. But he was simply lying down – joyous, smiling, not saying a single word. Somebody reminded him, “Lin Chi, you have to say your last words.” He said, “Just listen.” And on the roof two squirrels were running, screeching. He said, “How beautiful,” and died. This was his message: don’t make things small and big, trivial and important. Everything is important. There is nothing which is great or small; it all depends on you, what you make of it. – *Osho* [Robert Adams, who was with Bhagavan for three years (1947-50) records: “While Bhagavan was leaving the body, a peacock flew on the top of a wall and started screeching. Sri Ramana asked his attendant, ‘Has anyone fed the peacock yet.’ These were his last words.” – *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 360.]

Spiritual evolution occurs as the result of removing obstacles and not actually acquiring anything new. – *David R Hawkins*

No matter what sort of difficulties one may encounter, how painful may be the experience, if we lose our hope, that’s our real disaster. – *The Dalai Lama*

For I have learnt to be content, whatever the circumstance...I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives within me. – *The Bible*

Our quest, our earth walk, is to look within, to know who we are, to see that we are connected to all things, that there is separation only in the mind. – *Lakota Seer*

Spiritual life is the genius of India. – *S. Radhakrishnan*

SEARCHING FOR GOD

- By Rabindranath Tagore

I have been seeking and searching God for as long as I can remember, for many many lives, from the very beginning of existence. Once in a while, I have seen him by the side of a faraway star, and I have rejoiced and danced that the distance, although great, is not impossible to reach. And I have travelled and reached to the star; but by the time I reached the star, God has moved to another star. And it has been going on for centuries.

The challenge is so great that I go on hoping against hope... I have to find him, I am so absorbed in the search. The very search is so intriguing, so mysterious, so enchanting, that God has become almost an excuse – the search has become itself the goal.

And to my surprise, one day I reached a house in a faraway star with a small sign in front of it, saying, "This is the house of God." My joy knew no bounds – so finally I have arrived! I rushed up the steps, many steps, that led to the door of the house. But as I was coming closer and closer to the door, a fear suddenly appeared in my heart. As I was going to knock, I became paralyzed with a fear that I had never known, never thought of, never dreamt of. The fear was: If this house is certainly the house of God, then what will I do after I have found him?"

Now searching for God has become my very life; to have found him will be equivalent to committing suicide. And what am I going to do with him? I had

never thought of all these things before. I should have thought before I started the search: what am I going to do with God?

I took my shoes in my hands, and silently and very slowly stepped back, afraid that God may hear the noise and may open the door and say, "Where are you going? I am here, come in!" And as I reached the steps, I ran away as I have never run before; and since then I have been again searching for God, looking for him in every direction, and avoiding the house where he really lives. Now I know that house has to be avoided. And I continue the search, enjoy the very journey, the pilgrimage. – *The Internet*

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

JULY - 2011

THE GATEWAY TO BLISS

By Jaya Row

Meditation is the highest spiritual technique that needs to be practised diligently and devotedly. The essential prerequisite is a calm mind. A mind burdened with desires and attachments is unable to take off into subtler realms of concentration and meditation. Entitled 'The Yoga of Meditation', chapter 6 of the *Gita* elucidates meditation as the final gateway to Self-realisation.

The Lord begins with the definition of a *sannyasi*. Renunciation is not giving up enjoyments, abandoning one's duties and escaping to a sage sanctuary. He describes a *sannyasi* as one who does what one ought to do, fulfills one's duties and responsibilities fully, without depending on the fruit of action. A *sannyasi* has offloaded the bulk of his desires and is in contemplation of the Higher Self. He is fit for meditation and embarks on the path of deep reflection and focus on Reality.

Step by step, Sri Krishna takes us through the preparatory disciplines as well as disqualifications for meditation. One must have a balanced contact with the world – neither too much nor too little. Every activity must be carefully supervised by the

intellect so that no desire interrupts the subtle practice of meditation. He then gives the test of enlightenment. A realised soul is one who feels one with everyone; who sees his Self as the Self in all beings and thus, in the end he worships God not in a temple, church or mosque, but in every living being. Thereafter, he lives in Atman, whatever his lifestyle. It is pointless to declare love for God when you cannot connect with His image everywhere.

Arjuna, like us, is afraid of leaving the safe confines of his present existence to discover the unknown realm of the Infinite. He asks the Lord what the fate is of those who commit themselves to a spiritual life but die before realisation. Sri Krishna gives a fitting reply to reveal one of the most insightful laws of life. He says, “One who is righteous will never come to grief – either now or in the future.” Your efforts will not go in vain. You will carry forward the credits to your future life. Thus, the diligent seeker reaches Brahman in due course, based on the quantum and quality of the efforts put in by him. – Condensed from *Times of India*

WE CREATE OUR LIFE: Whatever happens we create. We sow the seeds. But we sow the seeds unconsciously, that is why we think that some accident has happened. Accidents never happen, nothing is ever accidental. It is cosmos, it is not chaos. We sow the seeds of one kind of flower and we expect some other kind of flower, so when the flowers come we are frustrated. But flowers come through the seeds, not our wishes. So always remember: whatever has happened to you, you have been the cause of it. – *Osho*

ARUNACHALA: *Arunodaya* is that which you see before sunrise, it is red. *Aruna* also means red. Arunachala means the red hill. The hill was a big column of fire. If it were a column of fire we could not approach it. So, Bhagavan says, out of compassion for us, it has become a hill. One can go near it; otherwise we could not have gone near it. – *Dr. K.S.*

MIRACULOUS CURE BY SRI RAMANA – TWO EPISODES

By Kapali Sastry

Mahadeva Iyer, a devotee, was ailing in Madras from persistent hiccups for nearly a month. His daughter wrote to Bhagavan, sincerely appealing him to bless her father and give relief to his distressing ailment. On receipt of the letter, the Maharshi told

me to write to Iyer that paste of jaggery mixed with dried powdered ginger, if taken, would immediately cure the trouble. Then turning to his personal attendant, he said, “We had some readymade paste of this medicine. Can you find it?” The attendant immediately produced it. The Maharshi took a dose of it himself, and distributed the same paste among those around him. When he asked me not to forget to write to Iyer, I said in jest, “Why, Bhagavan, Iyer is already cured. Bhagavan has taken medicine for him!” And Bhagavan gave a broad laugh. I wrote to Iyer as directed, but the next day’s post brought a letter from his daughter saying that her father was relieved of his ailment at 1 p.m. on the previous day. It was exactly the hour when Bhagavan had taken the paste.

While going round the hill with Bhagavan, we got a word that supervisor Ramaswami Iyer was taken ill suddenly and was dying. The Maharshi immediately changed his route and went to the place where Iyer was lying. He was having violent palpitation of the heart. The Maharshi sat near him, placing his hand on his head. Within five minutes, Iyer got up and looked quite normal. But the Maharshi sat on; he did not get up even after an hour. We were perplexed. I had some almond oil brought with me from Madras to be given to Ganapati Muni. It was rubbed on the Maharshi’s head. Soon after, he got up and we returned to the Ashram. Later when I asked him what had happened, he said, “Well, Iyer got up and I sat down. I was conscious when the oil was rubbed; it was pleasant and I sat on.” – *The Continuing Story* by A.R. Natarajan

(It may be noted that the Maharshi was much against miracles. He once said, “A magician deludes others by his tricks, but he himself is never deluded. A *siddha* who manifests his *siddhis* is inferior to the magician as he is deceiving others as much as himself.” The ‘miracles’, which used to happen from time to time looked like coincidences, and if brought to Sri Ramana’s attention he would just laugh them away. Sri Ramana would use the term ‘Automatic Divine Action’ for the ‘miracles’ and he made the devotee believe that he had no part to play in the matter.)

BUILDINGS AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM: The years 1936 and 1937 saw a spurt of building activities at the Ashram. A new dining hall and an adjoining large kitchen were constructed to the north of the old dining hall. These were declared open by Bhagavan himself on September 1, 1938. A large store room was also constructed just

to the east of the new dining hall. The Vedapatasala which was situated in a thatched shed west of the old hall, where the present dispensary is situated, was shifted in 1938 to a pucca single storeyed building to the east of Bhagavan's hall. Ashram's office, bookstall and Bhagavan's bathroom were also constructed during this period. Municipal engineer, Thathachari, arranged for the water connection from the main pipe line supply from the nearby Samundram lake. In 1942, the Ashram got its electric supply. Vaidyanatha Sthapathy was entrusted with the construction the Mother's Temple. At times the *sarvadhikari* would not have enough funds to pay the weekly wages to the sculptors, so he would send devotees like T.K.Sundaresa Iyer to the visiting devotees to request them to give their donations beforehand. The stones for the Mother's Temple were mostly taken from Vaira Kunru, a small hillock about one kilometer from the Ashram. Vaidyanatha Sthapathy was a Sanskrit scholar. He also loved classical music. Bhagavan had great love and affection for him. When Rajagopalachari, the then chief minister of Madras, visited the ashram, and saw the superb handiwork of the Sthapathy, he wisely thought this art should not vanish and so started a college for sculpture at Mahabalipuram, near Madras, and appointed Vaidyanatha Sthapathy as its principal. – Abstracted from *Arunachalas's Ramana*, vol. III

THREE KINDS OF KARMA: *Sanchita* or accumulated karma is the sum of all the total fruits, good or bad, obtained during past births. We may find a person who does not care for others and yet living a good life; the present situation that he seems to be enjoying for the good deeds done in his past life. If he is troubling his fellow beings in this life he is sure to live a miserable life in his future births. This is how karma works. *Prarabdha* karmas are a part of *sanchita* karma allotted to us which influence our life in the present incarnation. It cannot be avoided. No body has power to change what has been allotted, just as a shooter has no control over the arrow that has left his bow. *Agami* karmas arise from deeds that would be performed during the course of this life time by an individual, the reward of which will be added to the *sanchita* karma. – *Sreeram Manoj Kumar*

THE THRICE MARVELLOUS – SRI RAMANA

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

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

Upon a narrow couch you see him sit,
Vision of tenderness, grace and calm;
Upon the finite compass of His Palm,
He holds the secret of the Infinite.

You are the light that never pales,
The beacon-light that never fails.
You are the comfort which endures,
The constant kindly touch that cures.

You are a huge horizon bent
Over a world of discontent.
O human body thrice divine!
How very silently you shine.

Give me thy high-illuminated grace,
Make my heart your dwelling place.
Increase my silence and my power,
Be with me every fleeting hour.

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

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI – A TRIBUTE

By Alan Jacobs*

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is now universally regarded as a great world teacher and is admired and regarded and quoted as the ultimate authority when it comes to questions of Advaita Vedanta.

Tradition proclaims that every thousand or more years, a Supreme Guru of the highest caliber, appears on this planet to set a new agenda for the coming millennium. This is Divine Grace, to assist all those perplexed men and women trapped in *samsara* – the endless cycle of suffering births and rebirths – and wishing to wake up and free themselves from this bondage.

The revered Adi Sankara was the last to fulfil this historic mission in the years between the 7th and 8th centuries. In his commentaries of *Brahma Sutras*, he lucidly codified the ancient Non-dual Vedic and Upanishadic knowledge into a systematic form. Now Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has appeared, upholding the teachings of Sankara, but bringing certain important innovations for this current millennium and the generations to come.

Primarily, the Maharshi has made the great secret of Self-Enquiry or *atma vichara* easier and brought it into the open, making it readily available for all, and not kept as a secret to be revealed only to the initiated Brahmin pupils of traditional gurus. Sri Bhagavan let his teaching encompass the Western world, as well as Asia, leading to be recognised as a true *jagadguru*.

The Maharshi was able to transmit his *jnana* of non-dual self, Self-knowledge, through Silence – a rare spiritual power, following the precedent set by the divine primeval [earliest time in history] Guru, Lord Dakshinamurti, who is deemed a manifestation of Lord Siva. The Maharshi could readily converse with the birds and animals, a unique gift possessed by only a few saints.

He lived an impeccable life without any trace of blemish on his noble character, and was a veritable ocean of love, devotion, wisdom and compassion to all who came into his orbit.

By his ineffable presence and Teaching, the Maharshi created a global renaissance of interest in the high doctrines of Advaita Vedanta. He started a wild forest fire that is remorselessly burning down much of the dense forest of *samsara* that is trapping mankind. – Excerpts from *Mountain Path*, April- 2011

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DWELL IN TRUTH: We tend to get caught in sense-illusion. We feed illusions and mistake that for fulfillment. The minute what we expect to achieve does not happen, it makes us feel disturbed. Our sense organs of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight keep us occupied all through the life, and we are unable to look beyond them. We get caught in a whirlpool of being happy or sad due to ignorance of our real Self. When the mind becomes disinterested and free and sinks into a secret serenity, when its consciousness becomes illuminated, it gladly accepts whatever happens. By **constant** and **conscious reminders** one could work towards dwelling in the permanent truth of *sat-chit-anand*. – *Tripti Bhupen*

AWAKE AND REACH THE GOAL

By A.S. Rajaram

In Ramana literature much importance is given to an analysis of the three states (*Avasthatraya*), namely, *sushupti* (deep sleep), *swapna* (dream) and *jagrat* (wakefulness). The Maharshi has repeatedly stressed that throughout the waking and dream states one attends only to second and third persons, and consequently one experiences endless misery. But in the deep sleep, when one does not attend to any second or third person, one does not experience any misery. The fact that one experiences happiness during deep sleep in the absence of any external objects, indicates that happiness lies not in the objects but in us, the first person or subject.

The dream state is unreal. However, when we dream we fully believe that we are seeing an external world composed of persons and things extended in time and space, substantially similar to the waking world. The dream is taken to be a reality until we

wake up. In fact, the continuance of the dream depends on our believing it to be real. It is only when we wake up that we are able to see that it was only a dream and that there was no external world, but it was only a mental image.

The waking state is the same as the dream state except that the former is long and the latter is short. Just as waking happiness seems real while awake, so does the dream while dreaming. In both waking and dream states thoughts, names and forms occur simultaneously. To awaken from the dream of this waking state is the dawn of knowledge or the real waking. The Maharshi says, forgetting Self, mistaking the body for Self, taking innumerable births, and at last knowing the Self and being the Self is just like waking from a dream of wandering all over the world.

The state of deep sleep is one of happiness. There is no misery. The sense of want, of pain etc. arise only in the waking state. What is the change that has taken place? One is the same in both, but there is a difference in happiness. Why? Because the mind has arisen now. This mind arises after the 'I' thought. In deep sleep one exists without ego, then one is free of doubts. Only in the waking state, ego arises and one has doubts. Only if one keeps wide awake and alert while persisting in one's quest of knowing one's true Self, will one succeed in getting rid of one's bondage.

There was no 'I' thought in deep sleep, whereas it is present now. The true 'I' is not apparent and the false 'I' is parading. This false 'I' is the obstacle to one's acquiring right knowledge.

Turiya is the fourth state, which transcends all the three states. It is real and permanent. 'To remain in this state (of the Self), having attained the supreme bliss, which is devoid of both bondage and liberation, is truly to be in the service of the Lord.' (*Upadesa Sara* – verse 29). This is our only duty. – Condensed from *The Direct Path*, Jan.-Feb., 2011

It is interesting to note what Major Chadwick writes in this regard. He says: "I found Bhagavan's teaching on dreams hard to understand and would often question him on the subject. The waking state seemed to me continuous, going on from day-to-day. I awoke into the same world each day whereas my dreams were always different. However, Bhagavan never accepted this distinction and repeated that the criticism only arose in the waking state and never in that of dreams. Then I myself had a dream: I was having an argument with somebody on the subject of dreams and in the course of this I said, 'Whatever you say, Bishop Berkeley was right, things are only in the mind, there is no reality outside that. Things do not exist; so dream and waking

experience must be exactly the same. They are only mental concepts.’ ‘You say that now’, the other replied, ‘but you would not talk like that in a dream.’ And then I woke up. The whole thing was intensely vivid. The dream was so real that I never questioned it to be anything but the waking state. The two were exactly the same.” – *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 111-2

HOW I CAME TO SRI RAMANA

By I.S.R. SARMA*

It was the year 1986. I used to go to Ramakrishna Math in the evenings from my office on cycle. Sometimes I felt physically weak to go there and used to wonder whether I could attend some *satsang* nearer my place of stay. At that time I was staying near the Arts College railway station. One day I happened to visit the library of Ramakrishna Math, and found *Sri Ramana Jyothi* on the table. Then I learnt that *satsang* was being held on all Sundays at Gandhi Centenary Hall opposite Engineering College, Osmania University campus. I really felt happy. That being a Saturday evening, next day, i.e., Sunday morning I attended first *satsang* at 9 a.m.

A few devotees sat on the floor, chanting Arunachala Siva followed by *dhyanam*, and the rest was as usual as at present. The surprise was that I sat behind a person whose body colour was nothing but gold and whose face was full of brightness. Later I came to know he was Dr.K.S., founder of the Kendram. Really I felt how lucky I was. One more lucky incident, after the *satsang*, a tall aged-person wearing *lungi* and shirt, came to me and asked my introduction. He was none other than Rajeswar Rao garu father of our senior devotee Srihari Rao. After I gave my name, he introduced me to Dr. K.S. He gave me his residential address and asked me to visit his home as and when I was free. Later I came into contact with many senior devotees like, Ramanaiyah, Yadaiah, Krishna Murthy, Krithivasan, Kesava Reddy, and Dr. Narasimha Rao. Really I am very lucky to have worked along with them in those days. From the beginning, I very much liked the simplicity and devotion of these devotees.

Late, I attended *satsangs* held at the residence of Dr.K.S. on Fridays, without fail. I came close to Dr.K.S. I discussed many matters (spiritual and family) with him. His advice was always wonderful. One year he selected me as treasurer of the Kendram’s

committee. Finally, I would add that I am a small frog thrown by Dr. K.S. into the mouth of a big cobra, namely, Sri Bhagavan.

* Served as an executive in a pharmaceutical company in Hyderabad.

AVOID SELF-CONDITIONING: An old fable tells about a frog in a pond. Another frog arrives from the ocean. The first frog asks about how big the ocean was. “The ocean is very large, the pond is very very small compared to it,” the second frog responds. The first frog cannot imagine anything bigger than the pond it has always lived in. It felt that the second frog was the biggest liar ever...Being comfortable within our ‘boxes’ we tend to get circumscribed by the present situation. We have to get inspiration to stretch beyond our existing horizons and explore the unseen and unknown. We have to break the barriers we have created...Once we settle in an outlook, we believe we cannot change our fundamental patterns, beliefs or personalities. We feel generally resigned to our ‘inadequacies’ and assume that this is the way we will always be. Such thinking becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because we find its validation everywhere we look. This is self-conditioning. – *The Internet*

IS ARUNACHALA HOLLOW? In answers to many questions of Paul Brunton, Bhagavan answered as follows: “The *puranas* say so...In visions I have seen caves, cities with streets, etc. and a whole world in it...All the *siddhas* are reputed to be there...Kailas is on the Himalayas. It is the abode of Siva. Whereas this Hill is Siva Himself. All the paraphernalia of His abode must also be where He Himself is... Everything depends on the viewpoint of the individual. You yourself have seen hermitages, etc., on this Hill in a vision. You have described such in your book [*A Search in Secret India*]...Just as you have said in *Secret Egypt*¹, ‘The mystery of the pyramid is the mystery of the Self,’ so also the mystery of this Hill is the mystery of the Self.” – *Talks* dated Jan. 23, 1936, pp. 124-5.

1. The reference is to Brunton’s book *A Search in Secret Egypt* (1935), which Bhagavan must have read. The book refers to many strange powers encountered by Brunton during his stay in Egypt. Brunton says, “In ancient times Egypt was the chief centre of magical knowledge and practice excelling even India.” The book shows Brunton’s continued fascination with occult powers.

VISHISHTA ADVAITA: It was expounded by Ramanuja. It talks of a personal God who is one and only one (non-dual), but *vishishta* – one with unique attributes.

Ramanuja explained that Brahmn itself has manifested as *jivatmas* and *prakriti*, who along with these two modes formed the *Tattva Traya* – the three fold doctrine of Vishishta Advaita philosophy that established an organic relationship on oneness of the universe and individual souls along with Brahmn. Individual selves are sparks of the divine and the world is no illusion. This philosophy is an integral part of Vaishnavism, which says that Narayana is Supreme Truth. He is easily approachable and responds to the devotee’s loving devotion. The philosophy is theistic [belief in the existence of a creator who intervenes in the universe] and says Brahmn is the union of Vishnu and Lakshmi (Sri), the father and mother elements, respectively. – *Sangeeta Venkatesh*

THE SPEAR: Goddess Parvati once presented a spear-like weapon called Vel to her son Kartikelyan so that he could vanquish the demon called Soorapadam. The Vel was an embodiment of *Shakti*. According to the *Skand Purana*, the demon changed into a mango tree to evade detection. But the alert Kartikelyan (also called Murugan) hurled his Vel and split the mango tree into two – one half becoming the rooster and the other turned into a peacock. Murugan used the peacock as his vehicle and the rooster as an emblem on his battle flag. In many Murugan temples in Tamil Nadu the Vel is the *mulamurti* or presiding deity. It is considered to be an iconic representation of Murugan in his totality for all purposes of ritualistic worship. The occasion when Murugan received the Vel from his mother is celebrated by Tamils across the world as Thaipusam. This festival which occurs in the Tamil month Thai (Jan.-Feb.), is a special day for worship of Lord Murugan, when offerings are made to the Lord for eradicating the ills afflicting the devotees. Some devotees taking part in the festival processions, pierce their skins, tongue or cheeks with Vel skewers in a show of loyalty to the Lord. – Abstracts from *The Speaking Tree*, May 8, 2011

Make your mind one-pointed in meditation, and your heart would be purified. – *Gita*, 6.12

There is only one journey: going inside you. – *Rainer M Rike*

If you have the same degree of interest in attaining the Self-knowledge, mediation and Self-bliss as you have in attaining material objects, you would have no difficulty in crossing the *samsara sagara*. – www.ashram.org

The wise man controls his thinking, the fool is controlled by it. –
James Allen

Real knowledge, like everything else of the highest value, is not to be obtained easily. It must be worked for, and more than that, it must be prayed for. – Thomas Arnold

The virtue of all achievements is victory over oneself. Those who know this victory can never know defeat. – A. J. Cronin

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AUGUST – 2011

PEACOCKS LISTEN TO SRI RAMANA

It was about 10 a.m. Bhagavan was on the sofa in his usual reclining posture. There was a large crowd in the hall. Nobody spoke. Then two peacocks walked into Bhagavan's presence – one white and the other multi-coloured. Understanding the Bhagavan's silent wish, the attendant put handful of grains for the 'visitors'. The coloured peacock began to peck away at the 'prasada' while the white one stood watching the other feeding himself. Suddenly, the white one flew at the other end and drove the other peacock away from the food. The one, thus driven, looked at Bhagavan, and one could easily feel the appeal and the silent query in the bird's attitude.

Bhagavan smiled and spoke to the mischief-maker, as a loving mother would to her mischievous little son, "Come here. You have your share. Why do you trouble him?" Everyone in the hall was intently watching the scene. The white one took a few dignified steps towards Bhagavan and gazed at him with shinning eyes. Bhagavan extending his hand, said softly, "Yes, eat your share. Let him alone. Go. Go." Obediently, the white peacock retraced his steps to his share of food, while the other which had, all the time, stood at a distance, came back to his share of the

grain. Nobody spoke. Silence had become more silent. Everybody, including the peacocks understood. – *The Call Divine*, Jan., 1955

PRANAYAMA: *Prana* represents the energy responsible for life force, and ‘*ayama*’ means control. So, *pranayama* loosely means breath control. Five types of *prana*, located at different place in the body are responsible for keeping it healthy. They are: *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*. *Pranayama* helps us remove negative energies. The five *koshas* – *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vigyanmaya* and *anandmaya*, within us, are also purified. In *pranayama*, exhaling is a must before inhaling...*Mulbandh*, *Uddiyan Bandh* and *Jalandhar Bandh* are three important *bandhas*. The rectum is held upward in the first. In the second case, the stomach is held inwards after exhaling, and for the third, the chin is bent forward, touching the chest...In *pranayama*, the breath is held back as long as it is required and is to be released slowly. The normal ratio between *puraka* (filling), *kumbha* (retaining) and *rechaka* (releasing) is 1:4:2. – *Yogacharya Surakshit Goswami*

TIMELESS PRESENCE OF SRI RAMANA

By Master Nome*

Silence, Absolute Silence, Eternal Silence. This is Sri Bhagavan’s Presence. Sri Bhagavan’s Presence is the Presence of Siva Himself, the Reality of Brahman itself. The effect of His perpetual Silence is impossible to measure as the Silence itself is beyond all mental conception. His every word, glance, and motion is permeated by this Silence, yet the Silence itself is indefinable, ungraspable, in terms of body, speech and mind. In this Silence, delusion evaporates and illusion vanishes.

His Grace is unbounded. It operates in countless ways incomprehensible to the mind. His Grace knows no impediments, because of its omnipotence and its omnipresence. By Grace alone is liberation from the bondage attained. By Grace alone is there realization of the true Self. By Grace alone does meditation occur and the profound enquiry, ‘Who am I?’ succeed in awakening one from the dream of ego with its illusory world-appearance. By Grace alone devotion arises in the heart. By Grace alone is there freedom, happiness and peace. The Grace of the Guru pierces illusion’s bubble-like dream in inexplicable ways. It is always blissful and liberating. It reveals itself as direct experience and shines as revelation. It displays

itself as myriad lessons of wisdom, the essence of which is always the Knowledge of oneself. Sri Bhagavan manifests His Grace in many ways prior to one's knowing anything about Him – Unasked Thou givest.

The entire delusion is said to be the outward-turned mind, which appears as attachments and mis-identifications. Turn it inwards. It is essential. It is the most important thing to be done. By His Grace it is accomplished. Self-effort is needed. When self-effort meets with Grace, the highest good results. I placed myself in His hands. When the heart's consecration is made, Grace which is always present, reveals itself wondrously. The intensity yielded the yearned for freedom, and miraculously His Grace made known to me a complete cure for the supposedly incurable disease. He is the immaculately perfect One, and the all-accomplishing One.

Who am I? If only the answer to this is known, there is then nothing more to be known or attained. He said, "The enquirer himself is the answer and there can be no other answer." The utter absence of individuality, of the ego, is essential. "The ignorance is identical with 'I' thought. Seek the source and it will vanish." How is the elimination of the individual 'I' to be brought about? We have only to ask the question 'Who am I?' not merely verbally, but at the same deep level that we wish to experience bliss and peace.

No shadow of doubt or confusion can withstand the radiance of the sun of Bhagavan, more dazzling than a thousand suns and consuming the universe in His splendour. His Wisdom, His Grace, His Presence is all the Reality itself. In His great cosmic display of Grace – Nataraja's dance – Sri Bhagavan makes Himself known in ever so many ways according to His own time. It is beyond intellectual analysis. Our illusory bodies, unreal corpses in themselves, are to be regarded just as mere instruments in His hands, so that His truth and Grace should be known. – Extracts from: *Centenary Souvenir Commemorating the Advent of Bhagavan Sri Ramana at Arunachala*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai.

*Nome (b. 1955) teaches Advaita Vedanta as contained in teachings of the Maharshi at the Society of Abidance in Truth (SAT), which maintains a temple for Non-dual Self-knowledge in California. The Internet provides a detailed account of SAT.

AVADHUTA GITA

(Song of the Free)

It is a text of Vedanta representing extreme Advaita. It is ascribed to Dattatreya, who is regarded as an incarnation of God. Many *puranas* contain references to him. According to the *Markandeya Purana* he was born of highly spiritual parents – Atri and Anasuya. Very early in life he renounced the world and devoting himself to the practice of yoga, attained the highest state of liberation. Avadhuta means a liberated soul, one who has shaken off all worldly attachments. He seeks nothing, avoids nothing. Having realised that he is the infinite Self, he lives in that vivid realization, like Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The book has 271 *slokas*, divided into eight chapters, which breathe the atmosphere of the highest experience of Brahman. It does not go into philosophical arguments to prove the oneness of reality, but is content to make the most startling statements, leaving the seeker of Truth to imbibe them and be lifted from illusion into the blazing light of Knowledge. The following *slokas* have been chosen at random from the book:

1. The whole of Vedanta is the Supreme Knowledge that I am by nature the formless, all pervasive Self.
2. One should not consider the quality of scholarship. A worthy person should recognize only the essence. Does not a boat, though devoid of beauty and vermilion paint, nevertheless ferry passengers?
3. He who attains the Supreme, is beyond the need of any prescriptions given by the scriptures. Upon attaining the Highest, he goes beyond all injunctions and prohibitions. Realising himself as the Absolute, he may act in even an apparently wrong way.
4. Why do you weep, friend? You have no age. Why do you weep, friend? You have no mind. Why do you weep, friend? You have no senses. I am the nectar of Knowledge, homogenous Existence, like the sky.

5. I have no body or bodilessness, nor have I intelligence, mind, and senses. How shall I speak of attachment and detachment? I am free from disease – my form has been extinguished.

6. Never do I have father, mother, family, caste, birth and death. How shall I speak of affection and infatuation? I am free from disease – my form has been extinguished.

7. The Self transcends all, is indivisible and all-pervading. It is free from stain of attachment. It is without day and night and is all-pervading. Why do you, Who is the identity in all, grieve in your heart?

8. The Supreme is without divisibility and indivisibility. The Supreme is without activity and changeability. If there is only one indivisible, all comprehensive Absolute, how can there be worship, how can there be austerity?

9. The destroyed and the undestroyed are both false. The born and unborn are both false. If there is only one indivisible, all-comprehensive Absolute, how can there be the perishable and the imperishable?

10. The Supreme Self is indivisible, of the form of sky. It is the Truth, pure and stainless. Thus, how can there be difference and non-difference, bondage and freedom from bondage, transformation and division?

11. A sage is one whose intelligence is unsmitten by lusts, who is self-controlled, gentle, and pure, who possesses nothing, who is indifferent, who eats moderately, is quiet and steady, who is friendly to all, is compassionate and wise, and has taken refuge in Me. – *Avadhuta Gita of Dattatreya* by Swami Ashokananda, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai

UNIQUENESS OF BHAGAVAN

By Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

Bhagavan was unique in that He was not unique. What struck even a casual visitor to the Ashram was Bhagavan's naturalness. There was nothing which would make others think that there was some unnaturalness about Bhagavan. Once in his presence, one would be convinced in one's own heart that one was in the presence of the non-dual reality. He was an open book for all at all times. So far as Bhagavan was concerned, there was no privacy. Any one could walk in at any time in the Hall where he sat and slept. He was accessible not only to humans but also to animals. Squirrels used to play with him. The cow Lakshmi used to walk in at her own pleasure. The monkeys used to come without any let or hindrance. There was no distinction between a maharaja of old days who visited him and the rustics who wanted to have his *darshan*.

Of what is referred to in advaita as *sadyomukti*, instant release, we had a glowing example in Sri Ramana. One does not know what led to this instantaneous illumination. All of a sudden, the experience came without his inviting it. Now, this is unique; the entire history of sagehood holds no parallel. The non-dual Self which knows no death and no birth came to Sri Ramana in a flash; but did not vanish like a flash, it remained as his *sahajashiti*.

Ordinarily, a study of scriptures comes first and then experience. But in the case of Bhagavan, experience came first and only later an acquaintance with what scriptures teach. He listened to the readings from scriptures and then told that his own experience confirmed what the texts state.

People would come with long list of perplexing questions. When they came and sat before Bhagavan they forgot all about them. I happened to be present when Paul Brunton came. He had written out the questions. He sat for a long time without opening his mouth. The friend who had come with him had to prompt him. It was only then that he read out his questions. This was not an isolated case. This was the daily experience.

No one could have thought some years ago that Bhagavan's influence would be felt so strongly. In Europe and America there are seekers, who when they get even a glimpse of Bhagavan's teachings feel that they have turned a new leaf in their lives.

What is, again, significant in Bhagavan's teachings is that it involves no mystification. There is nothing by way of creed. It is an open book of wisdom from which one could draw according to one's capacity.

You have to make use of the mind. It is in *jagarat* that you have to perform the *sadhana*, not in sleep. We have to work this out during moments of wakefulness. And what functions in wakefulness is the mind which is to be made use of. Enter into the heart with your mind. The direct road is Self-enquiry, which leads one to the heart. But if that becomes impossible for the moment, then adopt the technique of surrender. If even for this your mind is not ready, practice *pranayama*. Begin with the practice of regulating the breath.

Bhagavan says, 'I' thought is the first of all thoughts. All other thoughts arise after the 'I' thought. Only later on, 'this', 'that' and 'the other' arise in the mind. Trace the source of the I-thought and the practice will reveal to you that the I-thought arises from the Self. We must not delude ourselves by imagining that it is easy. It requires preparation, constant practice; it requires all other *sadhanas*. But along with those *sadhanas* the enquiry can be practised. – Excerpted from *Mountain Path*, July, 1975

THE GRACE: It is beyond the laws of causality and karma. It is something showered on a person seemingly undeserving. Bhagavan's Grace is always there in plentitude; we have only to be receptive to it, surrendering ourselves completely to its unhampered operation. As Bhagavan is immortal His boundless Grace is ever experienced all over the world by his devotees. – *Mountain Path*, April, 1976

WHY MIND CONTROL IS NECESSARY? A devotee asked Bhagavan, "Why do we need to need to meditate? I say it is my mind – then should it not listen to me and meditate itself when I tell it to? Why does it keep running all the time?" The Maharshi kept silent at that time. At about the same time, a squirrel had given birth in the ashram. Unfortunately, a few days later, the mother squirrel was eaten up by a cat. The Maharshi took care of the baby squirrels by keeping them in a cage which was kept in the hall. After a few days the cat came in the hall. It so happened, that the baby squirrels rushed out of the cage. The Maharshi got up, and hurriedly put all of them back in the cage and locked the door. He then turned to the devotee, who had asked the question a few days back, and calmly said, "These little squirrels do not have the maturity to know the dangers of outside world. When they get the maturity, they will go and hide by themselves. It is the same thing with the mind. Our mind

does not know that if it goes to the outside world, there is nothing but suffering. It keeps running in ignorance. When it gets the maturity, it will go inside itself. Until then, it is our job to put it inside with effort – which we do in meditation.” – *Direct Path*, March-April, 2011

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

HOW I CAME INTO BHAGAVAN’S FOLD

By M.V. Satyanarayana¹

During my college days, I came across T.M.P. Mahadevan’s booklet on Bhagavan. The brief biographical sketch triggered a thought to compare the divine inspiration of Bhagavan with that of the mathematical genius S. Ramanujan.²

My father was a school teacher, who would make all the children sit in a semi-circle and teach us to recite verses from *Gita* and Pothana’s *Bhagavatam*. I also learnt some Sanskrit from traditional pundits. During my post-graduation days, I was introduced to a mathematics professor, who hailed from a family devoted to the study of Vedanta. I accepted him as my academic mentor and spiritual guru. It was my good fortune that I attended a Vedanta camp in which he lectured on *Sankara’s* commentary on *Gita*. Yet, there have been doubts, doubts and doubts. I was seeking and looking for clarifications! A frustratingly restless and tiresome journey!

Though a resident of Chennai all along, no thought about Tiruvannamalai occurred to me. A senior professional friend, a Sri Ramana devotee, used to tell now and then that he would take me to Tiruvannamalai. Yet, the visit was not falling in place. One fine day in March 2006, when I had crossed 45 years, I accompanied him to Tiruvannamalai for which I am eternally grateful to him.

In the *Dakshinamurthi* temple adjacent to Ramanasramam, he recited aloud the first verse of *Dakshinamurthi sthothram* of Adi Sankara. I was thrilled and surprised to

hear that verse. Earlier, several of my attempts to read and understand the *sthothram* were not successful. I couldn't progress and the *sthothra* book was lost amidst other books!

On my return from Tiruvannamali, this lost book surfaced from the bookshelf. And as I began to read with the help of commentaries, the verses began to unfold for me to grasp! I am very poor at memorizing, but now I could memorize all the ten verses. It was amazing! (It seems, the *Dakshinamurthi sthothram* is one of the early Tamil translations of Bhagavan). The *sthothram* essentially summarises the content of the *Mandukya Upanishad*, which addresses the question Bhagavan used to ask repeatedly, 'Where were you in deep sleep?' Myself and my two sons recite the *sthothram* every Thursday in front of *Dakshinamurthi* in my *pooja*.

This *sthothram* along with Bhagavan's 'Who am I?' and *Aksharamanamalai* provided me an access to realms of Advaita in the path of Bhagavan's 'Self-enquiry'.

I am grateful to another colleague of mine who had much earlier presented to me a set of Ramana literature in Tamil, which facilitated my understanding of the methodology of 'Self-enquiry'. Bhagavan has been kind to call me and my family to take us into his fold!

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2. The comparison is with respect to the inspiration they had. The boy Venkatraman had no formal education in Vedanta, but he himself discovered the great truth that he was not the body, based on an inspiration from 'Arunachala'. Ramanujan used to discover amazing mathematical results. When asked how that was possible, he said the Namakkal Mother was giving him the results. Several of these results could not be obtained with the mathematics that was existing at that time and had to wait for 70 years or so for the development of certain advanced branches of mathematics, to be proved to be true.

THE BATTLE INSIDE US: One evening an old man told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside all of us. He said, "My son, the battle is between the two wolves. One is Evil – It is anger, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is Good – It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence,

empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.” The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf wins?” The old man simply replied, “The one you feed.” – *The Internet*

SATSANG: Bhagavan used to say, the easiest thing, the best thing is *satsang*. It is like sea breeze. You don't have to do anything when there is *satsang*. It just elevates you to a higher level without effort. It is not an exaggeration. For example, ten or twenty people join together and recite *Upadesa Saaram* or Hare Rama. During those five or ten minutes you are taken to a different world altogether. And during that period something happens to you, which you cannot explain. Bhagavan says *satsang* is very very important. When like-minded people get together then the force of the Lord works through them; and each one benefits from this. Unless we are lucky we can't get *satsang*. – Excerpts from talks of Dr. K.S.

FOCUS ON BREATH: The most effective technique for meditation is attentiveness to the natural process of breathing. The simplicity of this technique causes many a beginners to ignore it; yet in its very simplicity lies much of its greatness. Attention to breath permits a gradual transition from technical practice to utter stillness. Breath is one of the most natural focal points for attention. The more deeply one concentrates on it, the more refined it becomes, until breathing is automatically and effortlessly suspended in breathlessness: the meditator, the act of concentration, and the object of concentration, become one. – *Swami Kriyananda*

IT IS ALL IN THE MIND: Human beings suffer more than other creatures because most of their suffering is mental and is often self-created. They can choose to lead the life in any way they want. At any moment one can either make himself or herself joyful or miserable. Your mind is not a solid state, it is fluid. You can make it acquire any shape you like. You can generate ecstasy or misery out of the mind. If you wish, this moment you can make your life heaven or hell. The choice is yours. There was a *sadhu* who was nearing his death. He told everyone that he is going to heaven. Other *sadhus* looked at him and asked, “How do you know that you are going to heaven? You do not know what is God's mind.” The *sadhu* replied, “I don't care what is God's mind. I know what is on my mind, I am going to heaven and that is all.” – *Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev*

TIPS FOR JAPA: 1. The most effective time is early dawn and dusk, when *sattva* or purity is predominant. 2. Regularity is vital, and while doing the *japa*, you must have the *bhava* or emotion that Atma, Iswara, Devata and mantra are one. 3. During

japa, visualize your *ishta devata*, chosen deity, looking at you with compassion. 4. When mind wonders too much, do verbal *japa*. As the mind becomes steady, do mental *japa*. 5. *Japa* generates heat in the body. Hence an *asana* is important for a serious *sadhak*. Use a woollen or *kusa* grass mat to sit on. 6. *Sattvik* food is essential for generating purity of thought. As you eat, so you think. Eat light. – st.editorial@timesgroup.com

THE POWER OF INTENTION: If you think of your body as a physical object, you will cooperate with ageing, because what is ageing, except a physical object wearing out? If you believe that time is your enemy, ageing has gained another ally. If you accept that your genes are fixed, it would take away your freedom to change. You can change your body through consciousness, because despite its physical appearance, your body is the product of consciousness, to begin with. There is no difference between a thought and a molecule in the brain. Each intention sends signals to every cell in the body, causing the cell to change. Therefore, the most natural way to achieve change is through the power of intention. – *Deepak Chopra*

KEEP COOL AND BE HAPPY: The external world hardly cares whether you are laughing, crying, bored or suffering, but your internal world is always in your hands. Make it beautiful and extraordinary. Never waste a single moment of life in boredom and depression. These negative factors slowly choke off the bliss of your soul along with peace, contentment and creativity. Even if you are caught in a traffic jam, relax and enjoy the respite from driving. Resolve that, ‘I will now convert this traumatic situation into a blissful one.’ Then, evolve by chanting a mantra, singing a *bhajan* or praying for someone who you think is suffering. Don’t worry about the traffic ahead or behind. Till the traffic moves, you can not move, anyway! So, just relax and use the time to touch your inner core; accept the traffic jam as inevitable. If you have the habit of losing your cool in traffic jams, sorrow becomes your constant companion. Even if the delay means that you will miss an important appointment, don’t allow this to stress you because it saps your enthusiasm and power to overcome obstacles. – *Shri Nimishananda*

He who is persistent will realise God. So try your best to make meditation a regular experience in your life. – *Pramhansa Yogananda*

It is strange that in our prayer we seldom ask for a change of character, but always for a change in circumstances. – Maharshi Mahesh Yogi

The greatest gift of life is the dream of a higher life. – S. Radhakrishnan

Exhale and inhale according to your fullest capacity at least ten times. It will help you to calm down passive and negative moods. – Swami Rama

Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance. – Confucius

As the heat of a fire reduces wood to ashes, the fire of knowledge burns to ashes all karma. Nothing in the world purifies like spiritual wisdom. – The Gita

Life is like a mirror. It will reflect only what you have put into it. – Anonymous

SEPTEMBER – 2011

CONTENTMENT IS THE KEY: How many times we miss God's blessings because they are not packed according to our expectations! When you were born, God gave you this whole world as your birthday gift. Consumed by the preoccupation of begging, most people leave this planet without ripping open the gift wrapper of this providential gift called LIFE. A Master does not add any riches to you, but reveals the riches that you already have. Please open your box and see. 'More' will read as 'More' any time you read it and hence you never reach it. 'Enough' will read as 'Enough' any time you read it, and hence you do not have to wait any other moment to experience it. While success depends on the acquisition of the 'more', happiness is in the recognition that you already have 'enough'. Success is in aspiring to add more to the box; happiness is in appreciating the treasure that is already in the box. Switch off the focus light on your troubles. Switch on the focus light on your blessings. – info@frozenthoughts.com

SRI RAMANA – THE *JNANI*, WITH CONCERN FOR ALL

Sri Ramana was unique in every respect. It is difficult to find in recorded history a person who throughout his life remained *totally* unaffected by six deadly enemies of every human being, namely, *kama*, *krodha*, *mada*, *lobha*, *moha*, and *matsariya*. No worldly object could attract or distract him. Even the usual warning to be beware of *kanchan* and *kamini*, which Ramakrishna Parmahansa has also mentioned, never mattered for him. After the *mahashakti* descended on him in July, 1896, he remained *jivanmukta* and *sthitaprajna*, in the fullest sense of the terms, throughout his life. He cannot be described. God is beyond description. No adjectives will ever be adequate for him.

Sri Ramana's concern for the devotees

It has rightly been stated that none was equal to Sri Ramana, but he considered all to be his equals. His concern for others was legendary. Kunju Swami, his attendant for 12 years, records in his biography of Bhagavan: 'An old woman living near Arunachaleswara Temple and some other elderly people in the town had decided that they would eat morning food only after Bhagavan's *darshan* at the Skandasram. One day the lady devotee could not come. Bhagavan asked her the next day as to why she had missed a day. She answered, "Realising my infirmity you gave *darshan* from near my house, while you were sitting on the rock near the ashram, brushing your teeth." She added, "I am not able to climb the hill everyday, I would now have your *darshan* from my house." From that day onwards, even when the weather was bad, Bhagavan brushed his teeth sitting on that rock. This proved convenient to many other elderly devotees who wanted to have his *darshan* but were unable to climb the hill.' He adds:

'Once it became necessary for me to go to my place in Kerala. I had just enough money to buy the train ticket, but no extra money to buy food on the way. That afternoon a devotee unexpectedly brought a lot of *pooris* and served them to Bhagavan and others in the ashram. We were surprised to see that Bhagavan, who normally did not take more than two *pooris*, happily accepted six from the devotee.

When the serving was over, he ate only one of the six and neatly packed and tied the remaining five with his own hands, and gave the packet to me.'

Krishna Bhikshu, a well-known Andhra devotee records: 'When I arrived at the ashram, Bhagavan, looking at me lovingly, and earnestly enquired, "Have you had your food yet?" To my reply that I had it in the town, he said, "You could have had it here."' He adds that when he stayed at the ashram, Bhagavan would ask him where he made his bed and what he used as a pillow, and so on.

Sadhu Trivenigiri, who was on the ashram staff for long, writes: 'One day, when Major Chadwick was down with fever, Bhagavan asked, "How is he now?" When I replied that I did not know and had not seen him, he directed me to go and see him. He added, "He left his country and travelled thousands of miles, staying with us and making us his own. Should we not take care of him and look after his needs?"'

Sri Ramana's indulgence for the under-privileged

Sri Ramana's biographies are filled with his indulgence for the under-privileged. Once, he himself narrated the following incident to his well-known devotee – Suri Nagamma:

'When I was in the Virupaksha Cave, we used to change over to the Mango Cave during summer, as there was no water at the former. Here, at midday, some women of the low castes, with heavy loads of grass on their heads and very tired, used to come in search of water. As soon as they came to the cave they would throw down their bundles, bend down and say, Swami, Swami, first throw a tumbler full of water down our spines. I would throw water on them as desired, to make them recover from their exhaustion. Then, making a cup of both the hands they would drink stomach-full of water, wash their faces, take some rest and depart. They alone could experience the happiness of it all. I knew they would be coming at that hour and so I used to wait with the water. What could they do? Being of low caste, they were not allowed to go near the tank and there was no water anywhere else. The heat was unbearable. They could not have food unless they sold the grass and got some money. They had children at home. They must reach home quickly to look after them. What could they do, poor people! They used to come to the cave in the hope that the Swami will supply water to them.'

Prof. K. Swaminathan provides a touching account as to how Sri Ramana would shower grace on those belonging to the lowest rung of the society. In his words: ‘Once in the 1940s, I was sitting outside the hall with many devotees. Bhagavan was reclining on a couch. A group of learned pundits was discussing passages from the Upanishads with great enthusiasm and profundity. All, including Bhagavan, appeared to be attentively listening to the interesting discussion when, all of a sudden, Bhagavan rose from the couch, walked some distance and stood before a villager who was standing looking lowly with palms joined. All eyes turned to Bhagavan and the villager who was standing at a distance. They appeared to be conversing. Soon Bhagavan returned to his couch and the discussion was resumed.’

‘Being curious to know why Bhagavan had to go out to meet a villager, I slipped away from the discussion and caught up with the villager before he left the ashram. He told me that Bhagavan was asking why I was standing so far and also asked my name, about my village, what I did, and about my family, etc. I enquired, “Did you ask him anything?” The villager replied, “When I asked him how I could earn his blessings, he asked whether there was a temple in my village and the name of the temple deity. When I told him the deity’s name, he said, go on repeating the name of the deity and you would receive all the blessings needed.” I came back to Bhagavan’s presence, but lost all interest in the discussions. I felt that the simple humility and devotion of a peasant had evoked a far greater response from our Master than any amount of learning. I then decided that though a scholar by profession, I should always remain a humble, ignorant peasant at heart and pray for Bhagavan’s grace and blessings.’

Sri Ramana’s love for animals

Human beings apart, Sri Ramana was no less considerate to the animals. Prof. K. Subrahmanian has put on record the following: ‘Bhagavan treated animals and birds with great affection and concern. Sometimes a couple of monkeys would walk into the meditation hall. Some devotees used to get agitated. Bhagavan would gently call the monkeys and give them cashew nuts or groundnuts. They would go away screeching with delight. Sometimes a squirrel would scramble up the couch. Bhagavan would fondle it and give it whatever was available and it would leave without disturbing anybody. Similarly, a peacock would come and get some puffed rice from his hand.’ He has also mentioned the following episode:

‘Once an ashram deer was attacked by some animals and the wounds turned from bad to worse. Bhagavan sat near the deer, held its face in his hand, looking at its tearful eyes. The *sarvadhikari* of the ashram asked my uncle who was standing close, to look after the deer and relieve Bhagavan. Bhagavan heard this but did not make any response, and sat there till the deer breathed its last.’ [There is a *samadhi* for the deer near that of the cow Lakshmi.]

Another famous devotee, Major Chadwick, says in his biography of the Maharshi: ‘Bhagavan was invariably kind to all animals. Snakes and scorpions were never allowed to be killed. For dogs he always had a tender spot. At one time a small puppy would always relieve itself near the office. The *sarvadhikari* got furious and tried to drive it out of the ashram. Bhagavan came to its rescue saying that if some child did the same thing nobody would be angry, and the puppy was only a child and knew no better. He seemed specially to love monkeys and often said that in many ways they were better than human beings. He would often give directions that they should be fed, and encouraged them in many ways to the annoyance of the management to whom they were a great nuisance.’

Regarding monkeys, Roda MacIver, a Parsi devotee, writes: ‘Attendant Krishnaswami would beat monkeys who played mischief in the hall or tried to stealthily take away the fruits. Once Bhagavan told him, “It is not the monkeys that are receiving your beatings. It is I. The suffering is mine.” When some devotees complained to Bhagavan about their trouble with the monkeys, he said, “All this land was once a jungle in which the monkeys could roam about freely. It has been their natural habitat for centuries. We are trespassers. Is it fair to complain? Why not put up with a little inconvenience.”’

What Einstein said about Gandhiji would in no less measure apply to Sri Ramana: ‘Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.’

All references and quotes are from *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram.

ENJOY BLISS OF THE SELF: What happiness can you get from things extraneous to yourself? When you get it, how long will it last? If you deny the ego

and scorch it by ignoring it, you will be free. If you accept, it will impose limitations on you, and throw you into a vain struggle to transcend them. To be the Self that you really are is the only means to realise the bliss that is ever yours. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

NEED FOR PRAYER AND SURRENDER: We are wrong when we blame others for our misery. It is all our own making. But we must enter within ourselves, introspect and eradicate from our minds all lurking impurities, by prayer and surrender to God. Our own ungoverned temper is all along the main cause of our misery. None can disturb our mind, or cause us unhappiness, if we are true to the supreme Self within us. Let us give up fretfulness and pride. We are here to enjoy bliss and peace. *Amritam* is before us; we reject it and go after filthy water. The only penance for the mind to cure its improper thinking, worked by evil passions, through constant repetition of the glorious Name of God. So repeat *Ram Nam* constantly. – *Swami Ramdas* [For Swami's reminiscences of Bhagavan, see pp. 223-4 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*]

JOURNEY OF SELF-INQUIRY: Self-analysis reveals that the foremost of all thoughts, the primeval thought in mind of every individual is the thought 'I'. It is only after the emergence of the 'i-thought' that arises from the ego, that countless other thoughts arise. True spiritual *sadhana*, according to Sri Ramana Maharshi, lies in tracing the 'i-thought' to its source through Self-enquiry by constantly reflecting on the question 'Who am I?' The ego, having no basis, vanishes like a ghost when sought from within through sustained inquiry. At night you may imagine that there is ghost because of the appearance of shadows. A close observation, however, reveals the ghost is really not there, and what is thought to be a ghost is merely a tree or lamp-post. The same is the case with the ego; as long as one does not observe it closely through deep meditation, it appears to be real and continues to haunt the *sadhak*, creating all sorts of delusions. The dissolution of the 'i-thought' in pure consciousness marks the culmination of *sadhana* where the *sadhak* experiences oneness with the eternal Self. – *Anup Taneja*

UNBURDEN THE EGO: When a person carries baggage more than his capacity to carry weight, his face becomes distorted in pain. Similar is the case when one's personality carries the heavy load of ego and self-interest. This creates a barrier

between the person who carries the baggage and others around him. He becomes unpopular, unpleasant and emotionally volatile. The more selfish we are, higher is the probability that we become complicated. Only selfless action can deliver peace and bliss. If we need peace let us not find fault with others; we need to identify our own pitfalls first. If we cut down our heavy baggage of ego and self-interest a bit, it won't be difficult to realise the vastness within us and find joy in life. – *Arup Mitra*

SWAMINARAYAN SECT: It was founded in 1802 by Ghansham Pande, who belonged to U.P., but got settled in Gujarat during his pilgrimage across India. His followers worship him as Bhagavan Swaminarayan, whom they consider as manifestation of Narayana, the Supreme Being. The sect is known for its opulent-looking temples across the world. The largest Hindu temple outside India, in London, belongs to this sect. Patels of Gujarat form the core of this movement. The sect is totally bhakti-focussed, with full devotion to Swaminarayan. Their temples have idols of important Hindu gods, but in the central shrine one would find the idol of Swaminarayan. The followers of this sect must be strict vegetarian and perform daily *puja*, *aarti*, and offer food to the deity. – Abstracts from *Speaking Tree*

BASICS OF SRI RAMANA GYANAM

The following is from Lakshman Sarma's *Ramana Paravidyopanishad*. Sarma came to the Maharshi in the late 1920s and spent most of his life translating the Maharshi's teachings into Sanskrit and commenting on them in Tamil and English. The Maharshi closely supervised his Sanskrit translation of *Ulladu*

Narpadu. Other than Muruganar, he was the only person to have received private lessons by the Maharshi on the intent and meanings of his works. Sarma wrote most of his works under the name 'Who'. When asked, he said, 'I wrote what I had learnt from Sri Bhagavan and Sri Muruganar, so I felt, Who wrote it.'

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

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

When, forgetting the Self, one thinks that the body is oneself and goes through innumerable births, and in the end remembers and becomes the Self, knows that this is only like awakening from a dream wherein one has wandered all over the world. Whoever obtains awareness of the Real Self, for him this worldly life comes to an end.

If during the quest of one's own Self, the mind turns outwards on account of its attachment to objects of perception, the seeker should turn it inwards again. He should bring the mind back again and again and re-engage it in the quest. There must be a resolve to become aware of the truth of oneself by means of the question, "Who is he that has this attachment to objects of perception?" The answer to this question is not an intellectual conclusion. The correct answer to it is only the experience of the Real Self. The quest of the source of the soul is named as 'The Great Yoga'. All other types of yogas are included in it, and may be used as auxiliaries, if found suitable.

By the practice of meditation mental strength will be intensified. Therefore, meditation is an aid to the quest. After first achieving stillness of the mind by meditation, the valiant aspirant must seek the truth of his own Self. Just as a woman, suffering intolerably in her father-in-law's house, obtains peace in her mother's house, so the mind, harried by *samsaric* (worldly) sufferings, wins peace by returning to the source: the Real Self.

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

For him that is established in the supreme state, desires do not arise, because the desirer, the ego, has ceased to exist. The sage in that state is ever contented, as if he has obtained simultaneously enjoyment of all possible desires in one stroke. – *Power of the Presence* by David Godman, part 3

REPENTENCE: Often nothing requires more courage than the admission of one's fault. We dread the bald admission that we are in the wrong. Not only individuals but also communities and nations face this dilemma. Repentance brings a new beginning; it means starting all over again. It results in behaviour change. It brings humility and a desire to set things right. Repentance is our constant teacher. – *M.P.K. Kutty*

IDEAL OF KARMA YOGA

By Swami Vivekananda

All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal...It is freedom as I understand it. Everything that we perceive around us is struggling towards freedom, from the atom to the man...It is under the impulse of this tendency that the saint prays and the robber robs. When the line of action taken is not a proper one, we call it evil; and when the manifestation of it is proper and high, we call it good. But the impulse is the same, the struggle towards freedom. The saint is oppressed with the knowledge of his condition of bondage, and he wants to get rid of it; so he worships God. The thief is oppressed with the idea that he does not possess certain things, and he tries to get rid of that want, to obtain freedom from it; so he steals...The freedom loved by the saint leads him to the enjoyment of infinite, unspeakable bliss, while that on which the robber has set his heart only forges other bonds for his soul.

There is to be found in every religion the manifestation of this struggle towards freedom. It is the groundwork of all morality, of unselfishness, which means getting rid of the idea that men are the same as their little body. When we see a man doing

good work, helping others, it means that he cannot be confined within the limited circle of 'me and mine'. There is no limit to this getting out of selfishness... Supposing this absolute unselfishness can be reached by a man, what becomes of him? He is no more the little Mr. So-and-so; he has acquired infinite expansion...and the attainment of this infinite expansion is indeed the goal of all religions and of all moral and philosophical teachings...Karma-Yoga is the attaining through unselfish work of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action, therefore, retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal. – *The Internet*

If you want to reach a state of bliss, then go beyond your ego and the internal dialogue. Make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. These are the three things the ego is doing all the time. It's very important to be aware of them every time they come up. – Deepak Chopra

The time early in the morning, one and a half hours before sunrise, called *brahma muhurta*, is ideal for spiritual activities. – *Bhagavata Purana*

To look upon life as an evil and treat the world as delusion is sheer ingratitude. – S. Radhakrishnan

Just as the sky is stained by dust, smoke and clouds, so also the pure self with the qualities of *maya* is soiled by them. – *Yoga Vasistha*

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act, but a habit. – Aristotle

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

By practising *prayaschitta*, repentance, a soul gets rid of sins, and commits no transgressions. – *Lord Mahavira*

HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

N.A. Mohan Rao*

One day in 1950, after I had written my eighth standard annual exam, my mother, reading the newspaper, looked up and told me that Ramana Maharshi had passed on. That was the first time I heard of Bhagavan. She said the Maharshi, who always maintained *mouna*, taught that one should ask oneself 'Who am I?', and that was the way to *moksha*. Those words had a magical effect on me and have remained with me to this day. I somehow felt that that teaching must have a deep spiritual meaning, unintelligible to me at the time, but that, if circumstances favour, I should try to grasp it when I grew up.

For decades I forgot all about the Maharshi, but I became profoundly interested in religious philosophy. Around 1966-67, I read Swami Krishnananda's *The Realisation of the Absolute*. It helped me gain an insight into the concept of Advaita and the broad framework of its practice. But I still lacked the knowledge at the nuts-and-bolts level that I was after. And so my sporadic efforts at meditation never really took off.

In September 1992, I was abruptly drawn to the cult of Sai Baba of Shirdi. Around this period, I chanced upon some books on Bhagavan's life and teachings. I avidly read those books, and tried to practise Self-enquiry. I could make no headway whatever, and was disappointed. I returned to the Sai Baba line. I soon discovered that Sai Baba's central teaching was identical to Guru Yoga enunciated in the Guru Gita of *Skanda Purana*. I pursued this line in all seriousness for some years. It had changed my emotional make-up considerably. Meanwhile, my interest in Bhagavan did not wane.

My first visit five-day visit to Ramanasramam was in 1994, after my voluntary retirement. I visited Bhagavan's and Mother's *samadhis*, the Old Hall, did *giri-pradakshina*, went up the hill to see Skandashram and Virupaksha ashram, visited Arunachaleswara temple, and bought some books from the Ashram bookstall. For the next two or three years, I took to a serious study of these books, while still

pursuing my accustomed practice of Guru Yoga. I read and re-read some of these books as daily *parayana*. Soon, I felt myself being totally won over by Bhagavan's teachings. I visited the Ashram once again in 1996, and then in 2003, each time staying for about 4-5 days. My latest visit was in November, 2010.

Around 2004, I heard of Sri Nannagaru of Jinnuru, well known as a savant [a learned person] and a great expositor [a person who explains complicated ideas or theories] of Bhagavan's teachings. I had his *darshan* in Hyderabad and started attending his discourses now and then. In one of the discourses in 2006, I found the gathering, consisting mostly of ladies, chanting the Sanskrit *Upadesa Saram* from memory. The melodious singing captivated me, and I felt ashamed that I, who felt proud of my little learning of Bhagavan's teachings, was no match to their devotion. In the next few weeks, I learnt *Upadesa Saram* by heart. Soon, I studied its meaning, and wrote an article on it, which now forms part of the four-language version of *Upadesa Saram* published by the Ashram. The book was released on Bhagavan's *Aradhana* day this year, which fell on April 30.

Thus started my association with the Ashram as an author. I was a regular subscriber to the *Mountain Path*, from around 1992. I used to marvel at the quality of articles in the journal, and wondered if I would ever be able to write even one article like that. It has been divine dispensation that over half-a-dozen of my articles have found place in the journal in the past three years. I take to writing because it seems to bring clarity to my comprehension. When the articles are accepted for publication, I take it that my comprehension is validated.

When I look back on how I came to be so totally wedded to Bhagavan's teachings, I find it difficult to pinpoint a single cause. Surely, my mother's words in the year of Bhagavan's *nirvana* must have laid the seed, and acted subconsciously all through. But I cannot forget the role of all those friends whose association and informal suggestions led me to the different schools of thought. Though each of these events appear disparate when it occurred, they all now seem parts of a deftly co-ordinated plan by the Sadguru to bring me ultimately to where I belong.

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DO NOT FORGET THE SELF: This world, a vast and harmful illusion that hoodwinks and ravages the intellect of all, has arisen through nothing other than the mistake of *pramada*, which is abandoning one's true nature instead of remaining merged with it. The reason why the state of Brahman has become different from you is nothing other than your deceitful forgetfulness of the Self. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

KARMA: There are three types – 1. **Prarabha**, means begun; the action that is already manifesting and is yielding its effects right now. You cannot avoid it or change it, as it is already happening. 2. **Sanchita**. It can be burned off by spiritual practices before it manifests. 3. **Agami**. It is the future karma of action; that which has not yet come and which will take effect in the future. If you commit a crime, you may not get caught today, but live with the possibility that one day you may get caught... No good action will yield a bad result and no bad action will bring a good result. This is the law of karma. As you sow, so shall you reap...The mind which is full of different impressions leaves this body but the impressions await suitable situations to come back. So the last thought is very important. Whatever you do in your life, in the last moment your mind should be free and happy. – *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*

WORSHIP OF SIVA IN THE FORM OF FIVE ELEMENTS

Fire: At Tiruvannamalai, the Lord appeared as a column of fire, got frozen and is known as mountain Arunachala. Sri Ramana used to say that Arunachala is embodiment of the Lord. Some details and the legend attached to it are in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 410-1.

Space: At Chidambaram the Lord is worshipped as the formless Being. The temple here is known as Akasa (sky) Lingam. Here, Siva as Nataraja is performing 'aananda tandava', cosmic dance of bliss in the hall of consciousness (*Chit Sabha*). This apart, there is a

golden garland hanging in space. It just literally hangs in the air without any idol or deity to adorn. This garland is the symbol of Chidambaram Rahasiyam.

Air: At Srikalahasti temple in A.P., the Lord is worshipped as air. Here the lamp in the inner sanctum is constantly flickering despite the lack of air movement inside. The air-linga can be observed to move even when the priests close off the entrance to the main deity room, which does not have any windows. One can see the flames on several ghee lamps flicker as if blown by moving air. The *Linga* is white and is considered *swayambhu*, or self-manifested.

Water: At Tiruvanaikka, near Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, Siva is worshipped as Jambukesvarar, which is famous for the *jala* or water aspect of the Lord. The sanctum sanctorum is situated on the historic island of Srirangam, which is formed between river Cauvery and Coleroon (Kollidam). The *Linga* enshrined here is always surrounded by water. Even in summer months some amount of water is always seen here.

Earth: At Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, the Ekambareswarar Temple has a huge *Linga* called Prithivilingam. The temple here covers an area of 23 acres and its *gopuram* is one of the tallest in South India. Temple's inner walls are decorated with an array of 1008 Siva Lingams. It is believed that Paravati worshipped Siva in the form of a *Lingam* improvised out of sand, under a mango tree. Legend had it that the Vegavati river overflowed and threatened to engulf the *Lingam*. But Parvati or Kamakshi embraced the *Lingam*. The Lord touched by the gesture materialized in person and married her. – *The Internet*

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT FROM ULLADU NARAPADU OR TRUTH REVEALED

1. The Supreme Being, the one ultimate Cause of the universe, manifests Himself as many which do not exist apart from Him.
2. The world is really synonymous with the mind.
3. Worship under name and form is only a means to realize one's absolute identity with the Nameless and Formless.
4. He alone who has realized the Self in the Heart has known the Truth.

5. The changeless, infinite Self transcends time and space, which are relative to the body and the mind.
6. To the ignorant, the 'I' is the self limited to the body; to the wise the 'I' is the Self Infinite.
7. To the ignorant the world is the sole, self-existent reality; to the wise that formless, Infinite Being which underlies the world is the one Reality.
8. God is none other than the Self. To see the Self, having destroyed the ego, is to see God; all else is but a vision of mind.
9. The Lord shines as the source of the mind. To turn the mind within towards that Source and to abide therein steadfastly is the only way to seek the Lord.
10. Since with the rise of the ego all else rises and with its subsidence all else subsides, to destroy ego through Self-enquiry is alone true renunciation.
11. Association with the sages leads one to Liberation. Such association should therefore be cherished. Along with the practice of Self-enquiry, such association is more potent than any other *sadhana*.
12. The loss of 'body-am-I' consciousness is the one aim of every *sadhana*, by whatever name it may be called.
13. One obtains true happiness and peace through surrender to the Lord Supreme, Who is the stay and support of all.
14. The Heart which is the Seat of the Self lies towards the right in the chest. It is different from the muscular organ situated towards the left.
- 15 Through incessant practice of *Soham-bhavana*, desires and *vasnas* are destroyed.
16. He alone who has conquered the senses is the *Jnani*, the Hero.
17. Apparently active, the *Jnani* is not engaged in any act.
18. For the practice of yoga, academic learning is as much a hindrance to a scholar as family attachments are to a layman.

19. If the aim is to realise the Self by destroying the ego, to engage in verbal wrangling about the nature of the world is in vain.

20. Absolute surrender to the Supreme Lord, whereby 'I' and 'mine' are destroyed, is the one means to realise Immortality. – *Truth Revealed – Sad Vidya*, Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai

WANDER LUST

By D. Samarender Reddy*

Ye who wander
Searching, searching
For friendships and knowledge
And things
That put you in touch
With your soul -
When the soul
Is with you and as you.
In all your journeys
Do you really have to wander,
I wonder.

Ye who wander
The avenues
Of thought and feeling
What do you
Hope to gain there.

That is not already yours
For the scriptures say
'That thou art',
Do you really have to wander,
I wonder.

* A medical doctor who works at Hyderabad. Email <samarender.reddy@yahoo.com>

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM GANDHIJI

For over decades, I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God. As I am a believer in God, as I never for a moment lose faith in Him, as I content myself with the joy and sorrow that He wills for me, I may feel helpless, but I never lose hope. As days pass, I feel this living presence in every fibre of my veins. Without that feeling I should be demented. There are so many things that are calculated to disturb my peace of mind. So many events happen that would, without the realisation of that Presence, shake me to foundation. But they pass me by, leaving me practically untouched.

He is most elusive. He is nearest to us, if we would but know the fact. But he is farthest from us when we do not want to realise His omnipresence. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach and grasp of reason. He defies reason. Faith is essential in the matter. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are outside the purview of reason. The realisation is preceded by an immovable faith.

Truth gives perennial joy. Truth is knowledge also. Again it gives bliss. Where there is no truth there can be no knowledge. That is why the word 'chit' or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge there is bliss. There sorrow has no place. Hence, we know God as 'Sat-Chit-Anand'.

I have been a willing slave to the most exacting Master all my life. His voice has been increasingly audible, as years roll by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour.

He has saved me often against myself and left me not a vestige of independence. The greater the surrender to Him, the greater has been my joy. Before one is able to listen to that voice, one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, and when the Inner Voice that speaks, it is unmistakable.

Realisation is the final fruit of constant effort. The human lover sacrifices his all for his beloved. But the quest for truth calls for even greater concentration than that of the human beloved. There is joy ineffable [too overwhelming to be expressed] in store for the aspirant at the end of the quest. Still, very few of us are as earnest as even the human lover. Such being the facts of the case, what is the use of complaining that the quest of Truth is an uphill task? The human beloved may be at a distance of several thousand miles; God is there in the tabernacle [Shrine] of the human heart, nearer to us than the finger nails are to the fingers. But what is to be done with a man who wanders all over the wide world in search of treasure which, as a matter of fact, is buried under his very feet?

We must completely surrender ourselves to Him in a spirit of utter self-effacement. It is for God to take our broken barge across the stream, but it is for us to put in our best effort. It is for us to plug the hole in its bottom, or if the water gets in the boat, to throw it out. In that case, the barge will keep floating despite the hole. But it will float only when there is God's hand behind it. The man must make an endeavour and for the results depend on God's grace. We along with poet Newman should continue to pray: Lead kindly light lead/ Amid the encircling gloom/ Lead thou me on/ The night is dark and I am far from home/ Lead thou me on/ Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see/ The distant scene; one step is enough for me. – *Abstracts from Gandhiji's writings*

CARRYING A CROSS: In a village in Italy, a devout Christian was always bewailing his lot. He found the weight of his cross too heavy to bear. One night, before going to sleep, he sincerely begged God to reduce his burden. Then he had a dream; the Lord led him to a warehouse and said, "Go ahead and change it." The man saw crosses of all sizes and shapes, with names of their owners. He picked up an average-size cross – but when he saw the name of an old friend written on it, he left it aside. Finally, he chose the smallest cross he could find. To his surprise, he saw his own name written on it. – *Paulo Coelho*

FORGIVENESS: It is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness. By forgiving those who wrong us, not only do we create the right environment for harmony and peace, we also promote

physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Forgiveness is an act of love. It has the power to heal. Forgiveness creates the possibilities of release from an unfair or unpleasant past. It takes us from the escalator of revenge, providing an escape from gradual and total ruin. To forgive is to put down heavy baggage from one's back. It is setting oneself free from the bonds of hatred. – *M.P.K. Kutty*

PRASHNA UPANISHAD: It comprises answers to six questions posed to sage Pippalada by his disciples. It is a part of *Atharva Veda*, which was composed by a group of sages called Angiras and Atharvanas. Here the fourth question takes the aspirant into the analysis of the three states of human consciousness, especially the dream-state and dreamless deep sleep. When all other senses are withdrawn, the mind is the perceiver and the perceived in the dream state, as it recreates the impressions of the waking state. It is finally in the dreamless sleep that the mind too get absorbed back into the *atman*. Another question relates to *Shabda brahmn*, wherein the mystic syllable Aum – *pranava*, controller and life giver of *prana*, being the primordial [existing from the beginning of time] sound to be meditated upon. Meditation on the *pranava* as the *bija mantra* outlined by sage Pippalada here and in the *Mandukya Upanishad* was later developed into an entire philosophy of *Shabada Tatava* by Patanjali and Bhartrihari. – *Pranav Khullar* <khullar.pranav@gmail.com>

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE: French scientist Luc Montagnier, the 2008 Noble Prize winner (medicine), has shown that it is possible to replicate DNA. Deep and regular meditation helps in rejuvenation of the body by helping reproduce good DNA. Meditation is like an elixir [a medicine supposed to be able to prolong life indefinitely]. Deep meditation is basically focusing the mind on a single thought for a long time. Scientific studies have shown that meditation helps in delaying the process of ageing. A Harvard University study showed that meditation directly affects genes by switching them on and off to combat the bad effects of free radicals which are produced when we are emotionally and physically stressed. – *Anil K Rajvanshi*

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ATTACHMENT TO BREATH: When you get attached to your breath, you always want to listen to your breath. This attachment can give you enlightenment. Spend one full day paying attention to your breath. Your breath is your life. But we never get attached with our breathing. If you can use the power of attachment to get attached to your breath, like a yogi who only lives with his breath, you never lose time, you will always be fully present. – *Swami Brahmdev*

LIVE A FULL LIFE: We do not have to go to the foot of Himalayas to attain inner peace. We also do not need to renounce everything before attaining quietude. Inner peace is all about coping. If we are self-sacrificing and wise, we will remain calm and tranquil despite the provocations we face. There are many ways to cultivate and build on inner peace. We could set some time aside daily for prayer and meditation. We could spend quiet time in the garden, in silent communication with plant and trees...Life is uncertain; it is unpredictable. It is also unfair, it seems...The reward for inner strength is inner peace. Right here, in your living room, your workplace, in your family you will find inner peace. We do not have to look too far. Once we learn to cope, the going will be easier. – *Janina Gomes*

HOLISTIC MEDITATION

By A.R. Natarajan

A devotee asked Sri Ramana that he has been meditating for years, yet had to force myself to do it. Please guide as to how I should meditate. Even those who were inmates of the Ashram would express their disappointment to Sri Ramana that their meditation often ended in sleep. Wherever we turn to ‘Talks’ this sorry state is repeated.

The problem is that we have lost spontaneous interest in meditation, and are hanging on to it for want of an alternative. If after years of effort at an inner life, one is back to square one, or rather thinks he is back, then somewhere along the line he has missed on the essentials. For, in the spiritual field, as in any other field, *sadhana* if properly directed should produce results.

What exactly has gone wrong? Let us ponder over our life. Is it not that we are often caught up in boisterous activity in life: jumping out of bed for going to work, hurrying to catch a flight or train, finding time for social calls, enjoying T.V. and so on? It is an endless list of things we want to do. Would this not be a far cry from the contemplative and reflective way of life? Should we be caught up in this business of trying to chew too much, or nibbling at different things, concerning ourselves with ‘others’? If we only care to look we can readily see how loaded we are with purposeless thoughts and actions. Proper

management of time is not only a virtue in the field of business but in all walks of life. More so in the spiritual life; where it is of utmost importance. We need a constant look at our daily doings to prune away wastage of time on non-essentials, and to find time for the inner life, which fortunate karma has opened up for us. Once the heat of mental pressure is off, there would be time for cool-headed meditation. Having found the time, we have to remember constantly, our essential nature. The forgotten truth that the Self is ever blissful, that it is the fullness of consciousness that has to be recalled time and again.

The need is to steer clear of compartmentalizing of meditation, of treating it as a thing apart. It is generally regarded as one of the jobs on hand to be attended to. This takes the joy out of it. Why not treat all free time as meditative time? Why not utilise the idle time for it? Then the meditative mood becomes a constant undercurrent, pulling us to the magnetic zone of the spiritual heart within.

We unnecessarily subject ourselves to negative thoughts such as ‘Self-knowledge is difficult’, ‘it is not for me’, ‘it will take too long’ ‘it is beyond me’ and so on. Sri Ramana says it is precisely ‘the thinking of hindrances that forms the hindrance’.

Finally, there is the paramount need of being aware of the presence of Sadguru Ramana within and without. He will surely come to our rescue but not on our terms. He knows what is best for us. Let us have full faith in His grace flowing to us in course of time. If our faith does not waiver, we are sure to succeed. – Condensed from *The Ramana Way*, June 2011

PURIFYING THE SOUL: Just as a healthy environment is needed for our well-being, so it is with the soul. To grow a plant you need to water its roots. In the same way to cultivate the soul you have to provide for its nourishment. Though the soul is ever peaceful and pure, during many births due to numerous karmas, it has gathered a layer of dirt which needs to be removed. Three elements to keep the soul fresh and healthy are: fellowship with nature, silence, and *satsang*. Walking through the forest soothes the nerves. A stroll at the river bank makes one reflective. Sitting at the hill top makes one still... Silence is a great purifier. It creates circles of pure energy. Silence heals. In the present whirlwind life style, the soul feels suffocated and yearns for silence...*Satsang* includes being in the guru’s presence along with other devotees and sharing knowledge of sacred scriptures. It also means group *kirtan*, chanting or prayer, reading and viewing of scriptures and life stories of truly great persons. *Satsang* purifies like nothing else. – *Aruna Jethwani*

EXPERIENCE SPIRITUALITY: Material world is a snake that clutches body/mind and consequently the soul. Without Divine intervention, human frame is helpless to shackle it

itself from the pulls of physical and mental entrapments and continues to suffer in the spinning wheel of karmic creations. If the world is a dynamic dream and the human life a passing illusion, what is the purpose of living on this physical plane? Fortunately, man is blessed with grace for experiencing spirituality and self-realisation. – *Tejinder Narang*

FEEL DIVINE WITHIN YOU: Our ability and capability is that we have possibilities to change, but if we are not conscious of our abilities, how can we use them? We are slaves to our habits, likes and dislikes. Discover your slavery. If you don't want to live like a slave, then involve yourself with the Divine. Always feel the Divine within you. We feel so many things inside us. When we remember someone, we feel that person. Feel the Divine is living inside you. This is your mantra. If one can practise this for ten minutes every day, the Divine involvement would begin. Practise a little bit to listen to your heartbeat. It is the Divine who is walking in the inner garden. – *Swami Brahmdev*

THEVARAMS: These are devotional hymns of Siva saints Appar, Sambandhar and Sundarar, who lived between sixth and eighth centuries and are celebrated as the Nayanars. The *thevarams* are treasurers of wisdom and knowledge. They are literary expressions of *bhakti* characterized by a mystical fervour of intense love of a personal God. They are either melodious outburst in moments of supreme rapture, or quiet prayers with heart, filled with love and devotion. – *Sivanandini Duraiswamy*

Prayer is when you talk to God; meditation is when you listen to God. – *Diana Robinson*

To handle yourself use your head, to handle others use your heart. – *Anonymous*

Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. – *Shakespeare*

God can be realised in many ways. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by wooden stairs or by bamboo stairs or by a rope. You can also climb up by a bamboo pole. – *Ramakrishna*

In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

Life is a challenge, meet it! Life is a dream, realise it! Life is a game, play it! Life is love, enjoy it! – Sai Baba

A SAINT PERCEIVES SRI RAMANA’S PASSING AWAY IN DISTANT NORTH:

A book on a north India’s great saint entitled, ‘The Divine Reality of Baba Neeb Karori’ records as follows: One day while Baba was talking to people at Haldwani, a town in U.P., he suddenly became absorbed in deep thought and remained silent for some time. Then he said faintly, “Give me a spoonful of water to drink. He is in great agony.” People around him could not understand what the matter was, but poured two spoonful of water in Baba’s mouth. After some time two tears fell from Baba’s eyes and he said, “Ramana is no more. India has lost a great saint today.” This was at the same time when Bhagavan had left his physical body at Arunachala. – *Direct Path*, July-Aug., 2011

NO MORE JUDGMENTS: Despair and dejection are among the most common emotions that we come to face in our daily lives. These emotions rise as a result of our own judgmental approach. We have an inbuilt judicial system that conducts its own trials. The act of prosecution begins as soon as something unfavourable happens or when our ego gets hurt...Contentment is a state of realisation. Living without passing a verdict either on people, circumstances or oneself is deliverance from unhappiness and despair. – *Deepak Ranade*

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THE SELF AND THE MIND: To see an object that is in the dark, both the eye and the light of a lamp is required. To see the light only, the eye is enough. Our intellect is of no use to realise the Self. To see the external objects, the mind and the reflected light [*chidabhasa*] which always arises with it are necessary. To see the Self, the mind has simply to be turned inside and there is no need of the reflected light. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

LOOKING AT THE DIVINE EYE

‘**Tirukkannokkam**’ or ‘Looking at the Divine Eye’ are from 1851 verses of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. Here the venerable Muruganar invents a new game for girls: *kannokkam*, looking into the eyes of Bhagavan in order to attain liberation. In every verse, as sampled below, the great poet exhorts devotees to take up this practice.

He is the *siddha* who performs the dance of supreme *jnana* and bestows upon us the life of grace, saying ‘See, this great and vastly spacious world is mere a trick of sight!’, thus rendering heaven, earth and the nether world

a prey to the supreme firmament of true *jnana*! With him who bears an eye on his forehead with Venkata, let us play *kannokkam*!

You whose tresses are dark and fragrant! The sun of *jnana*, Venkata, came as the rain of grace to save the languishing crop of the souls of his devotees. In order that the darkness of ignorance that subsists in the cavity of the Heart-bud may be destroyed, with him let us play *kannokkam*!

Like the sweet ripe fruit and its taste, like the song and its tune, inseparably, he merged with me, and took me over through his love. Locking our eyes with his in such a way that the breath and the mind subside more and more through subtle inward enquiry, with Venkata, let us play *kannokkam* – *Mountain Path*, July, 2011

NO SEPARATENESS: Vedanta says there is only One. If you see separateness, it is your delusion. Just as one ray of light reflects into seven different colours, you see distinctions and demarcations because you view the world through the prism of your body, mind and intellect. You see maximum separateness when you identify with your body. See the world through your mind and your circle of love expands to include your family. Rise to the intellect and you see oneness among your compatriots. Merge with Atman, the Spirit within, and all differences vanish. – *Jaya Row*

LOVE: Life is a journey and the human being is the vehicle. The best fuel for a successful completion of this journey is love. But one cannot get love without first giving love. That is the law of Nature. In existence, giving comes before receiving, sowing comes before reaping. But we are unaware of this. We seek and hope to get without wanting to give, which does not happen. – *P.V. Vaidyanathan*

GURU'S FEET: Why do we focus on the guru's feet? It is to cultivate humility, to banish the ego. Keep visualizing the feet of the guru; surrender to his wisdom and learn to acquire knowledge. By doing so, you can teach yourself to completely overcome suffering and doubt. The guru's feet will help access divine energy and bring you incredible peace. You will be transformed. – *Bhaskaran Pillai*

THUS SPOKE VIVEKANANDA: 1. All the powers in the universe are already ours. It is we who have put our hands before our eyes and cry that it is dark. 2. We are what our thoughts have made us. So take care about what you think. Words are secondary. 3. When an idea exclusively occupies the mind, it is transformed into an actual physical or mental state. 4. We reap what we sow. We are makers of our own fate. None else has the blame, none else has the praise. 5. There is no help for you outside of yourself. You are the creator of the universe. Like the silkworm you have built a cocoon around yourself. Burst your own cocoon and come out as the beautiful butterfly, as the free soul. – *The Internet*

TRIPUNDRA ON THE FOREHEAD: In Sanskrit, *tri* means three and *pundra* means one who is released. The three lines symbolise the soul's three bondages: *anava*, *karma*, and *maya*. Some say they represent the three *gunas* – the lower line representing the *tamo*, the middle *rajas*, and the top *sattva*. The *tilak* indicates the power of Shakti through *sadhana*, which can take the *sadhaka* beyond the three *gunas* or *turiya*, which is the state of *trigunatita* – beyond the *gunas*. The holy ash used for the strips is obtained from the *homa* after the burning of wood, ghee and herbs, is a reminder of the temporary nature of the physical body and the urgency to strive for spiritual attainment. One who wears a *tripundra* on the forehead is expected to chant the mantras

of the Divine at the time of application and understand their meaning. – *The Speaking Tree*, Sunday supplement

FEEL THE PRESENT MOMENT: When walking just try to walk; don't do anything else. While walking, the mind would do a thousand other things. Reject them. Move with every step. Just walk. Be aware of what is going on – now the left leg, now the right, is moving. Feel every moment consciously. Remain with the moment; don't allow your mind to move anywhere else. If the mind moves because of old habit, bring it back. If the mind continues to move, don't say, "It is impossible. I cannot do it." No. Bring your mind back once again. Try again. Sooner or later you will begin to feel some moments, howsoever rare they are, when you will feel the taste of the present. And once you feel the taste of the present, you are just near the door of Existence. You can enter it. Just remain in the present: you can understand it intellectually; you may even feel that it is okay. But the intellectual understanding will not help. Rather, it may be deception. You will have to just do it. Thinking is of no help. When you take a shower, feel every drop falling on you. Forget everything else. Just feel the present. Even the morning bath can become a deep meditation. – www.osho.com

SWAMI SIVANANDA'S ADVICE TO *SADHAKAS*

Service is the highest thing on earth. Service will make you Divine. Service will give you cosmic consciousness.

You will have to kill your egoism. You will have to extract oil from your bones and burn it for six months. Then only you can attain Self-realisation.

There is no incompatibility between *Jnana* and *Bhakti*. You cannot divorce one from other. You should be adept in singing the Lord's name. There must be *ruchi* or taste for the Lord's name.

Japa yoga is of fundamental importance. Repetition of Lord's Name overhauls all vicious *samskaras*. All vices are removed through *japa* and *kirtan*. For the practice of Vedanta, you must have the *sadhana chatusthaya* – *viveka*, *vairagya*, *sama*, *dama*. etc. But in *Bhakti*, all impurities are destroyed

by *Kirtan*. The *Bhaktas* have a single prescription, 'Repeat the Lord's Name'. Sing His praise. Do not do parrot-like repetition, but actually feel the impact.

Even a little meditation of Brahma *satyam, jagan mithya* must be ingrained in every cell. The world is unreal. But the *Maya* is tempting. It makes you forget the Reality. The function of *Maya* is to make the real appear as unreal and the unreal appear as real.

When you begin to meditate, even if you have no success, you must persist. Regularity is of paramount importance. You must have a conviction that you can get nothing from this world; then only will your mind would turn inwards.

You should try to find out the *Atman*. Discipline the senses. Discipline the eyes. Have moderation in food.

Even to eradicate the bed-tea habit may be difficult once it get entrenched. Then, how much more difficult would be to eradicate the vicious *Samskaras* accumulated over many births.

Every day, analyze how far you have developed. What is the strength of your discrimination and dispassion?

Again and again, hammer the mind with spiritual ideas and it will develop a taste for spiritual practice. Mere intellectual study will not help you. You have to practise.

All Yogas are combined in *Japa*. By repetition of the Lord's Name, impurities are destroyed, oscillation of the mind is stopped and veil of ignorance is removed. – Condensed from *Splendour*, July, 2011

SOME ELEVATING THOUGHTS: Everyone has the same God element. None is inferior or superior to anyone else. Some have evolved to higher realms through rigorous practices, contemplation and meditation...Everything is temporary. Everything has a definite lifespan. Once we accept this truth, there is no room for egocentric expressions...Everything has a perfect reason. We cannot understand the reason from our level of consciousness. Our inability should not be

interpreted as cosmic deficiency. Cosmic perfection is incomparable...Invariably we are victims of our conditions. Hence it is important to touch our base with our own consciousness; our real Self. – www.mohanji.org

WE ARE NOT THE DOER

By Sreeram Manoj Kumar

The cause of bondage is identifying Self with body and mind, both of which are not eternal. The Self is non-doer; it is just a witness. Only the ignorant considers the Self as doer. A person who is aware of this truth is able to evolve to higher realms.

The sentence, ‘I am not the doer, Providence alone is the doer’ means that my wisdom and the thinking capacity that is in me would not have been possible if the One present in all of us is not guiding my thoughts. I am not the actor, writer or performer – someone is acting, writing or performing through me; that one is the Cosmic Self, whatever name we might wish to assign to that Power.

Tons of praise may come your way from those who appreciate creative work produced by your efforts. And the praise may sometimes make you feel proud. Yet it makes sense to let all the praise reach the One who is guiding you...You don’t have to imbibe non-doership; it should be as naturally present as hunger is. Never forget that you are just a seer or witness.

In the making of a pot, we have the potter, the clay and the potter’s wheel. Here the potter is *abhinna karana* or undifferentiated cause. The clay is *unpadana karana* or essential cause, and the potter’s wheel is *nimita karana* or instrumental cause. The potter’s wheel cannot take credit for the pot. The credit goes to the potter and clay. A potter can choose any potter’s wheel he wishes. Similarly, in our lives we are all like the potter’s wheel in the hands

of the great Potter, the Supreme. Neither are we potter nor clay; the Supreme is all three.

What is so special in having an attitude of non-doership? At the gross level it will keep ego in check. At the subtle level, it will not let you become the *bhokta*, the enjoyer. Eventually, the attitude of non-doership would put an end to the cycle of birth and death. – *The Speaking Tree*

A FOREIGN DEVOTEE PRAISES ULLADU NARAPADU (SAT-VIDYA)

Grant Duff Douglas Ainslie (1865-1948) was a Scottish poet, translator and diplomat. His uncle was Governor of Madras Presidency in 1880's. He came to Bhagavan in 1935. He was instrumental in hastening the visit of Prof. K. Swaminathan to Tiruvannamalai. In his 'Introduction' to *Sri Ramana Gita* he says, "Never perhaps in the world's history was the supreme Truth-Reality *Sat*, placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude. Here and now, through no special merit of our own, we may approach Reality." In his article in the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* entitled 'My visit to the Maharshi – The Greatest Event in My Life', he says, "He sees and knows everything about all those who come before him. He is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness." His insightful 'Preface' dated 26th October, 1935, to Ramanasramam's publication *Truth Revealed (Sat- Vidya)* is reproduced below:

We of the Western world have mostly come to regard the mind, mental activity, as the highest possible experience of reality. True, a few mystics here and there have uttered vague hints as to modes of existence surpassing the functioning of the mind, but even a Boehme [A German mystic], a Swedenborg [A Swedish philosopher who had spiritual awakening], speedily loses himself in a symbolism which leaves the reader nonplussed. Western mystics fly away from us into the empyrean [Space]: but the Eastern stands by us to the end, expanding in minute detail the supremely difficult theme of how to acquire liberation from the shackles of the flesh. The East has wisdom and is willing to teach if we will hearken [Listen].

One of the chief reasons why the whole quest is so difficult from the Western viewpoint is just this: The mind must be used both to illuminate the path and to destroy itself, once purpose is effected.

To say with the Maharshi in the treatise that ‘knowledge of diverse objects is ignorance’ is to go in the opposite direction to all the teaching we had from childhood. It is an immense statement and asks elaborate proof if it is to convince. But the mind, here as elsewhere, is our only instrument available for achieving this proof and the first point to realise is that the mind is quite ready and willing to do so, if we allow it. The mind is like a mirror, ready to reflect whatever is put before it with perfect indifference as to its truth or falsity.

In the twentieth verse of the treatise many readers will be reminded of an utterance of Jesus in the New Testament, though Jesus is neither so explicit nor so scientific as the Maharshi, perhaps because he was addressing an audience that would not have comprehended the basic truth that God is no other than the Self. Therefore Jesus uses his own name instead of the Self and so satisfies those simple minds with an external object for their worship. But the Maharshi says here: “The empirical ego falls a prey to the Infinite.”

Verse twenty-three contains a profoundly significant statement: “It is not the body which proclaims itself as ‘I.’” Every baby knows that it is not I when it first becomes aware and talks of ‘baby wants this, baby wants that.’ Then its elders, far less wise than the baby, come and tell the baby that baby’s body is baby’s self, and, hearing nothing but this on all sides, baby becomes more and more convinced of this falsehood, until having attained what are called ‘years of discretion’ the baby now a grown man is ready to trounce and denounce anyone who is so bold as to affirm that the body is not the Self, from the belly-band inwards!

Why is this? Because as explained in verse twenty-four and following verses, there arises what the Indians call the *jiva* and we, for want of a single word, *the individual soul*. It has no reality but is potent as an illusion ensnaring all who have not been enlightened, in the cycle of births and deaths. Even among those who have been enlightened, this illusion is apt to persist in some of its many forms varying in mode with each person.

The doctrine of Karma is accepted in this treatise for those who remain bound in the trammels [Hindrances or restrictions] of the body, a bondage which endures just so long as a man considers himself bound.

Finally, in verse forty, the whole fabric of form and formlessness is hurled to the ground and utterly destroyed with the statement that such thoughts are due to the empirical *ego* or '*individual soul*'. Once we have divested ourselves of this false notion, that is the end of our troubles: Salvation has been found. "Therefore, realize yourself."

Such is the Message of the Maharshi and such is Reality, and such are we all, as soon as we *know*. But the word 'knowledge' is deceptive as used among us in the West and often denotes mere lip-service without any realisation, or at best imperfect realisation. Once the path is found it must be followed to the end, which is also the middle and the beginning.

COHEN FINDS HIS KEYS: S.S. Cohen, an outstanding foreign devotee of Bhagavan, first visited the Ashram in February, 1936. He wanted to open his box to present fruits to Bhagavan and change clothes after his long journey, but could not locate keys of his suitcases. He dumped the luggage in the room allotted to him and rushed to the hall and sat before Bhagavan in a dazed condition wondering what to do. Joy and peace suffused his being. He had a delightful sense of purity in the proximity of Bhagavan. Within a few minutes, keys just fell into his lap. He was simply astounded. The devotee who was aware of the problem and who had come to his rescue, later told him, that he rushed to the station, thinking Cohen might have left the keys at the station. There the station master gave him the keys stating that after the train had stopped, and when a new passenger got in, he found the keys on the berth, got down hurriedly from the train to hand over the keys to the station master, who in turn, trusting that the keys belonged to some foreigner who had just then alighted, was waiting for someone to come and claim them. These were claimed by the devotee and given to Cohen. – *Guru Ramana* by S.S. Cohen

IS EVERYTHING PREDERMINED?

By Devaraja Mudaliar

One afternoon I was sitting opposite Bhagavan with a fan in my hand in the old hall, and said to him: "I can understand that the outstanding events in a man's life, such as his country, nationality, family, career or profession, marriage, death, etc. are all predestined by his Karma, but can it be that all the details of his life, down to the minutest, have already been determined? Now, for instance, I put this fan that is in my hand down on the floor here. Can it be that it was already decided that on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, I shall move like this and put it down here?"

Bhagavan replied, "Certainly." He continued: "Whatever this body is to do and whatever experiences it is to pass through was already decided when it came into existence."

Thereupon I naturally exclaimed: "What becomes then of man's freedom and responsibility for his actions?"

Bhagavan explained: "The only freedom man has is to strive for and acquire the *jnana* which will enable him not to identify himself with the body. The body will go through the actions rendered inevitable by *prarabdha* (destiny based on the balance sheet of past lives) and a man is free either to identify himself with the body and be attached to the fruits of its actions, or to be detached from it and be a mere witness of its activities."

This may not be acceptable to many learned people or philosophers, but I am sure I have made no error in transmitting as above the gist of conversation that took place between Bhagavan and me. Though this answer of Bhagavan may upset the apple-cart of our careful reasoning and calculations, I am satisfied that what Bhagavan said must be the truth. I also recall in this connection the following lines which Bhagavan had once quoted to me, from

Thayumanavar: “This is not to be taught to all. Even if we tell them, it will only lead to endless discussion.”

It may be well to remind readers that Bhagavan has given his classic answer to the age-old question ‘Can freewill conquer fate?’ as follows in his ‘Forty Verses’: “Such questions worry only those who have not found the source of both freewill and fate. Those who have found this source have left all such discussions behind.”

The usual reaction of Bhagavan to any such question would be to retort: “Who is it that has this fate or freewill? Find out that and then this question will not arise.” – *The Maharshi*, Jan.-Feb., 2011

KRISHNA BIKSHU – AN OUTSTANDING ANDHRA DEVOTEE OF BHAGAVAN

Krishna Bikshu (Voruganti Venkata Krishnaiah) (1904-81) was a lifelong bachelor who held a degree in law, a profession that he scarcely practiced, preferring a life dedicated to spiritual pursuits. A man of sharp intellect and prodigious learning, he authored several books. His *Ramana Yoga Sutras*, based on his talks at the Ramana Satsang, Hyderabad, was first published in Telugu in 1973 and later in English in 1980. His other works that merit mention are: *Sukti Sudha* (Supplement to Forty Verses), a summary of *Ramana Lahari* and *Tripura Rahasya* – all in Telugu, and *Sri Ramana Gita* in English. He wrote *Sri Ramana Leela*, the Telugu biography of Bhagavan, in the immediate presence of Bhagavan who went through every page of it. To our knowledge his magnum opus [A large and important work], *Anasuya Ramayana*, a complete and faithful translation in Telugu of Valmiki’s *Ramayana* is yet unpublished.

In 1929, he came in contact with Ganapati Muni and was won over by the Muni’s great spiritual power and spiritual radiance. This led him to Bhagavan, whom he first visited on 17th May, 1929. From 1931 on, he committed himself solely to Bhagavan and practice of his teachings.

In 1945, when his mother died at Nellore, on the same day Echammal died at Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan observed, “Poor Krishnaiah, he lost both his mothers on the same day!”

Krishna Bhikshu reached his Master’s feet in 1981 on the very day and month of Bhagavan’s birth in 1879! Just before his death at 6.05 a.m., December 30th, he joined his brother Dr. O. Ramachandraiah in chanting Arunachala Siva from 3.40 to 5.20 a.m. – *The Maharshi*, March-April, 2011

God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. – *Reinhold Niebuhr*

Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate mind on the present moment. – *The Buddha*

Continuous search for what the mind is, results in its disappearance. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Blessed is one who knows himself and commands himself, for the world is his, and love, happiness and peace walk with him wherever he goes. – *Robert Heinlein*

Just as the sky is stained by dust, smoke and clouds, so also the pure Self in contact with the qualities of *maya* is soiled by them. – *Yoga Vasishtha*

God sometimes does try to the utmost those whom He wishes to bless. – *Mahatma Gandhi*

You should meditate constantly upon God and pray to Him for Divine Love. You should resolve in your mind the thought that there is nothing in the world you may call your own. – *Ramakrishna Parmahansa*

The path to the Unmanifest is very difficult for embodied souls to realise by efforts at meditation. But quickly I come to those who offer me every action with undaunted devotion. – *The Gita*

LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY: We become strikingly aware that life’s lessons are to be learnt on daily basis...We so badly want things to be predictable; we want all our choices to be good ones. But we also claim we

long for transformation. Certainty and comfort are hardly conducive to transformation. The one certainty is that life is uncertain. We often live as though nothing would change, but it does. A helpful practice to develop comfort with uncertainty is found in the approach ‘present moment, wonderful moment’. It encapsulates the Buddha’s teaching that life is available only in the present moment. – *Marguerite Theophil*

CHANGE AND CHANGELESS: Change is the basic truth of our existence. Nothing is certain or permanent in life except change. The entire cosmos is changing every moment. Sorrow and joy, upswings and downswings are all part of the process of change. Every moment we are being created and recreated...The super consciousness pervading the cosmos is beyond change. It holds the basic notes of music which is emerging like bubbles in an ocean. Once we recognise that basic note, it is possible to see similarities in diversity...Once the mind looks inward and starts experiencing notes that are basic to all the music around, the permanence becomes prominent. And it is that state of mind which can claim ‘This is That’. – *Arup Mitra*

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AVOID CONFUSION: The only reality is the Self. To be identified with the body and to seek happiness is the same as wanting to cross a river on the back of a crocodile thinking that it is a tree trunk. The identification with the body occurs due to extroversion and to the fact that the mind wanders. To continue in this state is to constantly sink deeper in spiritual ignorance, where peace will never be found. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

SRI RAMANA BESTOWS MUKTI ON A CROW

In early years of the present Ramanasramam a spring was discovered near the old hall. Devotees placed a dried tree stump on the ground at the centre in order to support themselves when gathering water. Once they found a crow sitting on top of the stump for three days without leaving. On the third day, Kunju Swami told Bhagavan about the crow, who immediately rose from the

couch and walked outside. Going close to the crow he enquired. “What is the matter”? The crow slowly opened its eyes. Bhagavan asked the attendant to bring his *kamandalu*, and holding the crow in one hand he poured a few drops of water into the beak. Immediately after this, the crow breathed his last in Bhagavan’s hands. Bhagavan arranged and supervised the construction of a small *samadhi* for the crow¹. When someone remarked that the crow must have been a great soul waiting for Bhagavan’s touch, he replied, “Yes, It appears so.” (*One Hundred & Twenty-five Year of Grace*, Ramanasramam, 2004)

We find a different version in T.R. Kanakammal’s *Cherished Memories*: One day, Bhagavan was sitting in the verandah with some devotees. Suddenly a wounded crow flew in at great speed and fell at Bhagavan’s feet, who picked it up and stroked it gently. When the crow died in his hand, Bhagavan said, “Some *siddha purusha* has left his body today”, and gave instruction for entombing the crow. Pranavananda (uncle of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan), who was on the scene broke into tears and said, “Bhagavan, did you not grant liberation to Jatayu in the last *yuga*? Now you have done the same for a crow.” Hearing this, the devotees were moved by Pranavananda’s devotion to Bhagavan, who himself looked on silently as though he accepted everything. (*Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, p. 307)

1. The tomb of the crow is on the northern side of the compound near the old hall.

PRAYER: The real purpose of prayer is to elevate us from physical to spiritual. It is silent yearning of the soul for oneness with the Lord. Prayers, when the heart is absent and lips are moving, have limited result and satisfy our egos only, or help in giving vent to the stress of daily life. The real prayer is done in solitary intimacy with the Lord. It might have tears of emotional turbulence of the heart – a blessed sadness of separation from the heavenly father. Prayer provides spiritual strength to the mind for abiding in ‘Thy will’. It thus reduces severity of distress and to that extent the course of life stands altered. It is the change within that brings change without. – *Tejinder Narang*

BUDDHA’S EIGHT-FOLD CODE OF DISCIPLINE: The first code is *Samyak darshana*. It means that each one of us should have a philosophy of life that will help us to progress. The second is *Samyak sankalpa*, that is, determination that ‘I will do it. I must do it.’ The third is *Samyak vak*, that is, while expressing himself one must have proper control over himself. The fourth is *Samyak ajivika*, that is, one should have a clean occupation. The fifth is *Samyak vyayama*, that is, the regular exercise to keep the body strong and supple. The sixth is *Samyak karmanta*, that is, when one starts a task, he should finish the work properly and in a nice way. The seventh is *Samyak smriti*, that is, a memory which takes a comprehensive and not a compartmentalized view. The last is *Samyak samadhi*, that is, proper suspension of mind, avoiding all thoughts during meditation. To attain the Supreme Bliss, adherence to these eight disciplines is a must. – www.speakingtree.in

NARADA: In the classical tradition, Narada is more famous as a musician and a great devotee of Vishnu who spread the *bhakti* path through songs across the three worlds. He is also associated with the book on law called *Narada-smriti*. In the folklore and traditional theatre, however, the arrival of Narada spells trouble. He is the sage who travels between the realms of gods, demons, and humans, gossiping about what he has seen, and willy-nilly creating trouble. – *Devdutt Pattanaik*

INFINITE POTENTIAL: God made every one of us in His image and gave us the freedom to realise our potential. But we have forgotten the source of our Being. We are infinite in our potentiality, for within the soul lies the greatest treasure of all – God. By concentrating within we can directly feel the Divine bliss. Through meditation we can know that we are God. All we have to do is to focus our attention within. Every time we feel limitations we have to close our eyes and say to ourselves, ‘We are the Infinite.’ And we will see what power we have. We have to pray God, ‘O Father, break the boundaries of the little waves of our life that we may join the ocean of Thy vastness.’ – *Silveru Sudharshan*

BOUNCE BACK: We are after all co-travellers on the voyage of life. Just think, what would have happened if life did not survive the thousands of

trials and errors that have gone into the making of it? To succeed like Edison after the 1000th trial in making the electric bulb is akin to all the other experiences of life – repeated failures, perseverance and success. We might only be a hit away from striking gold, so we need to keep at it, no matter how discouraged we are and feel. – *Janina Gomes*

THE RIGHT APPROACH TO WORK: Your motto in life should be to strive, to struggle. Work well accomplished is the joy of life. Your business lies in action alone. When you work in a spirit of renunciation, the world returns your courtesy. Wealth and prosperity are at your door. You ought not to take work as a drudgery or burden. The most laborious undertaking pursued in the right spirit is found to be all play. – *Swami Parthasarathy*

THE COMPANY WE KEEP: The impact of company we keep, on our mental state and our actions, is tremendous. You can begin to feel intense love for God only when you come in contact with those who are experiencing such love...The destructive power often tends to become more powerful than its constructive counterpart. The mind has to move against the gravitational force. If there is an urge nothing is impossible, and the urge has to be nurtured in a sustainable manner. The restlessness has to be accompanied by patience. If we remain satisfied with what we have achieved, there cannot be any progress towards God. Restlessness is therefore essential to expand our horizons, and the good company we keep ignites the urge in us. – *Arup Mitra*

SRI RAMANA IS BHAGAVAN: EXPERIENCES OF DEVOTEES

God is beyond words. No words would ever be able to describe Him. He can only be felt. How? The test is simple. One would feel total peace – an indescribable peace, by being close to Him. In His presence, no questions, doubts and thoughts would distract one's mind. Further, the peace secured is beyond words and makes one fulfilled and consumed. In that situation one feels *kritkriya* – there being no need for any thing more to be achieved in life. About the Godhood of Sri Ramana, those who had the good fortune of being in His presence have expressed themselves according to their capacity to find words to record their experiences, as given below. (Page nos. indicate

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

Paul Brunton: The Maharshi emanates [sends forth] the perfume of spiritual peace as the flower emanates fragrance from its petals...The peace overwhelms me. I know that there is nothing further that I shall ask from life...In the extraordinary peace, I find a sense of exaltation and lightness. Time seems to stand still. My heart is released from the burden of care. (pp. 13-23)

Justice Sundaram Chettiar: His very presence generates an atmosphere of peace. (pp. 27-8)

Grant Duff: The moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light. I was in direct contact with one who has passed beyond the boundaries of senses and was merged in the Absolute. (pp. 29-30)

Justice Chandrasekhar Aiyar: The Maharshi was the veritable [genuine] storehouse of spiritual energy. He radiates *shanti* or peace. To be in his presence is by itself a stirring experience in the elevation of soul. (pp. 34-5)

Eleanor Pauline Noye: When He smiled it was as though the gates of Heaven were thrown open...At His feet happiness garlanded me. (pp. 35-6)

Ella Maillart: He implants a lasting peace in the centre of every heart...He is a link between the unknowable ultimate and man. (p. 40)

Duncan Greenlees: My mind was caught and held in that peace in a blissfulness it had never known before. He is greatness incarnate. (pp. 52-6)

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya: Eternity has worn a human face/ Contracted to a little human span/Lo, the immortal has become a man/ A self-imprisoned thing in time and space. (pp. 63-4)

Balarama Reddy: Just to think of him or sit in his presence used to rouse us to higher levels of blessedness...The Divine power of his presence was something remarkable, entirely outstanding. (pp. 69-72)

S.S. Cohen: Joy and peace suffused [gradually spread through] my being. Never before had I such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man. He was a beacon light in an impenetrable darkness. (pp. 78-84)

K.K.Nambiar: I felt an indescribable sense of calmness settling over me...He was a mighty spiritual magnet, Divinity in human form. (pp.84-8)

Arthur Osborne: The Maharshi was Divine Grace in human form. For the first time in my life I understood what the grace and blessings of a guru could mean. (pp. 94-102)

Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya: As our eyes met, there was a miraculous effect on my mind and I felt as if I had plunged into a pool of peace. I sat in a state of ecstasy [overwhelming feeling of great happiness] for nearly an hour. (pp. 102-9)

Major Chadwick: It is impossible to describe or even believe what the Maharshi was, unless you have seen it yourself. (pp. 110-16)

Prof. K. Swaminathan: The pure happiness I enjoyed was that of a child when it sits securely in its mother's lap. (pp. 117-22)

Akilandamma: The gracious power that prevailed in that holy place numbed the mind so effectively that the visitors to Bhagavan's room were automatically silenced. (pp.127-9)

Swami Madhavatirtha: While in the presence of the Maharshi, my breath seemed to stop for a while and my mind was elevated into some spiritual realm of unutterable peace and happiness. (pp.146-50)

Kunju Swami: As Bhagavan's gracious look was fixed on me, all my confusions ceased and I experienced a peace and bliss [perfect happiness], I had never experienced before. (pp. 150-54)

Chhaganlal V. Yogi: The light of the Maharshi's eyes was suffusing my consciousness. Even without being aware of it, his silent gaze brought about a subtle but definite transformation in me. (pp. 161-6)

Viswanatha Swami: In the Maharshi's presence the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced. (pp. 171-3)

Wolter Keers: The light radiating from the Maharshi 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. (pp. 196-201)

Mouni Sadhu: Being near the Maharshi one feels the presence of God as a matter of course – no arguments or proofs are necessary. (pp.205-9)

Pascaline Mallet: To look into his eyes was to be caught up into bliss that is beyond understanding. (pp. 212-3)

M.A. Piggot: When he smiled I felt as if all the flowers in the world had poured their fragrance into our midst. (pp. 218-20)

Ramanadasa Sadananda: Contagious [spread by direct or indirect contact] was his bliss! He sends forth beams of light of *jnana* by his mere proximity and fills even the unhappy with joy and peace by his very presence. (pp.230-2)

F.H. Humphreys: The Maharshi's body was not of man; it was an instrument of God from which God was radiating terrifically. (pp.245-7)

Dr. P.V. Karamchandani: The vibrations which emanated from the Maharshi were heavenly. His spirituality completely enveloped us and our minds attained a state of blissful meditation. (pp.253-6)

V.Kameshwar Rao: When I sat before the Maharshi, I felt that I was in the presence of God. (pp. 267-9)

T.K.Sundaresa Iyer: A life-giving current flowed from the Maharshi, charging all those nearby. (pp. 285-9)

N.O.Mehta: In the presence of the Maharshi, we were in a world totally different from the one we had left behind. (pp. 295-6)

Santha Rangachary: There was an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power about the Maharshi, which completely overwhelmed me. (pp. 317-20)

Srimat Puragara Parampanthi: The Maharshi's spiritual presence was dynamic and clearly perceptible. It touched me and I felt suddenly the presence of a spiritual power taking me to a higher plane. (pp.326-7)

N. Ponniah: Nothing seemed more enjoyable in this world than to sit in silence in the holy presence of the Maharshi. I felt a sort of electric charge – an unusual vibrating sensation. (pp. 337-8)

Morarji Desai: One gets transformed by his very presence. (pp.352-3)

T.S. Anantha Murthy: Sri Ramana was Brahman in human form. Spiritual illumination was enshrined in him. (pp. 376-7)

Suzanne Alexandra: The Maharshi is a king of yogis. The splendour of his Realisation radiates like a sun. He lifts you far above the world. (pp. 377-9)

K. Vithoba Kamath: The Maharshi radiated spiritual splendour through sublime [unparalleled] silence. (pp. 390-1)

Atmakuri Govindacharyulu: The Maharshi is an ocean of peace. He rules all through silence. (pp. 393-4)

Shanti: In the Maharshi's presence, the mind becomes calm and tranquil of its own accord. Doubts and questions became few and finally vanished. (pp. 408-9)

The above provides a brief glimpse of how the divinity of the Maharshi impacted the devotees. Words would fail to grasp the greatness of Sri Ramana – the Supreme incarnate in human form, who always kept an appearance of a humble and run-of-the-mill person. Grant Duff, a British scholar, noted in 1935: 'Never in world history was the Supreme Truth placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude.' We bow to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

- The book is available from Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai

GO FOR THE HIGHER: We can choose between the lower and the higher in most choices in life. Use intelligence to discriminate the lower from the higher. Like the child who outgrows his attachment for the existing toys to a

more exciting, new toy, your inner being should evolve to renounce the lower and embrace the higher. – *Frozen Thoughts*, July, 2011

BHAKTI – ELEVEN DO'S PRESCRIBED BY RAMANUJA: *Abhyasa* (practice) continuous thinking of God; *Viveka* (discrimination); *Vimoka* (freedom from everything else and longing for God); *Satyam* (truthfulness); *Arjavam* (straight forwardness); *Kriya* (doing good to others); *Kalyana* (wishing well-being to all); *Daya* (compassion); *Ahimsa* (non-injury); *Dana* (charity); and *Anavasada* (cheerfulness and optimism). – *The Internet*

STAYING IN INNER SILENCE

By V. Ganesan

To remain in Inner Silence, undisturbed by thoughts, is essence of wisdom extolled in scriptures and by sages and saints. Such Inner Silence is already in us, which we experience in deep sleep. Scriptures point out that what one experiences in deep sleep, one should consciously experience in waking hours also.

Paul Brunton asked Sri Ramana Maharshi: “What is unique about your teaching? How is it different from other methods?” Sri Ramana replied, “Other methods are based on the mind. This teaching does not depend on the mind. On the other hand, it transcends the mind.” On another occasion, Bhagavan explained it further thus: “In all other paths, the final goal is projected as target and they postulate a method to achieve the target. In Self-Enquiry the target comes and hits the tip of the arrow! That is, the goal, the end, swallows the beginning.”

The Buddha declared: “There is suffering.” The Vedas declare: “There is only *ananda*.” Sages affirm that there is no conflict in these two statements. If one identifies oneself with the body, undeniably there is suffering. But, if one turns within and experiences the Inner Silence, there is only *ananda*.

The ignorance is of two kinds: 1. Forgetfulness of the truth – that one is ever the Self. 2. Obstacles to the knowledge of the Truth – that one is ever the Inner Silence (Self) alone. Both ‘forgetfulness’ and ‘obstacles’ are in the

realm of thoughts. Thoughts are remanifestation of the predispositions already remaining in seed form. They give rise to diversity, from which all problems arise. If we remove the impurities of our minds, the Truth in all its splendour will shine forth.

To remove 'ignorance', one has to hear the Truth repeatedly, until one's knowledge of Truth is complete. This is referred to as *sravana*. To remove 'doubts' one should oneself reflect on what he has heard, repeatedly. This is *manana*. To remove the 'wrong identity' of the Truth with the body, mind and world, one's mind must become one-pointed in pursuance of Truth. This is *nididhysana*.

Bhagavan said that *sravana* removes the illusion of the Self being identified with the body, *manana* makes it clear that wisdom of the Self is the Truth, and *nididhyasana* reveals the Self as being eternal, infinite and blissful. When all these are accomplished, the obstacles are at an end and the 'Inner Silence' in all its brilliance, is experienced. – Excerpts from the *Tattvaloka*, September, 2011

A PRAYER

By D. Samarender Reddy*

Body and mind

Are tools given thee -

They are not of thy making.

Your eagerness

To use them

Is the cause

Of this world

And all the trouble

Contained therein.

Tell the toolmaker
"O generous one,
I am done with these tools
And have no further need for them
Please take them back -
Since you are the one
Who fashioned them
You alone know
What is their proper use."

*A medical doctor who works in Hyderabad.
Email <samarender.reddy@yahoo.com>

THE GRAND ILLUSION

By Rajiv Vij

We see the world from our limited perceptual framework. The human mind is severely restricted by what it can perceive through the senses. What we hear is limited by the frequencies our ears can process – dogs can hear many higher frequencies and hence have a very different perception of the same sounds. Our sight is limited by the light frequency our eyes can relate to; since pit vipers can sense heat from infra-red rays they must construct the same world rather differently. If we had a different receiver mechanism, we would be hearing other frequencies and seeing in new ways.

With scientific knowledge, we know that many things are not what they appear to be – the sky is not blue, only the scattering of the blue light absorbed by the atmosphere makes it appear so; the moon does not rise in the

night; and the house we live in is not stationary but rotates with the earth. Essentially, we see, hear and process what we can and not what reality is.

Truth realisation is not easy. Besides the difficulty, our perceptions are further clouded by our personal thoughts and emotions. A Buddhist verse says: “Is anything on earth universally and unanimously recognised as beautiful? For a lover, a beautiful woman is an object of desire; for the hermit, a distraction; for the wolf, a good meal.”

What is truth, then? Everything in the universe is made up of energy. All beings are manifestations of the same energy. This vital force breathes life into every living being and sustains every cell and organism. It is like an enormous field of colourless and odourless energy which encompasses everything and every being that we can imagine.

What appears solid is only so because of the frequency of wavelengths that our senses are capable of perceiving. Our minds create a three dimensional world from this continuum of free-flowing energy, comprising electrons and neutrons.

We are limited to noticing the individual parts of the creation. As a result, the trees, animals, humans and other objects seems disjointed from us. ‘I’ as an individual does not exist, never existed, never will be – the sense of ‘I’ is merely a perception of our limited mind.

From Einstein we know that matter and energy are interchangeable; they are essentially one. When broken down to the barest form, all matter is the same energy. We can break a glass jar into pieces, but each piece, however small, will still be glass. Similarly, know that God is in each one of us, and we are part of the same whole. This knowledge can set us free.

As we make a conscious effort to stay connected with this realisation, we become better equipped to playing the roles of our life – businessman, teacher, wife, father and friend – with happiness and peace. This connection lets us be like an actor who plays her role on stage with great sincerity but stays conscious of the fact that she is really not the character she is playing – and thus not overly identify with the fortunes and misfortunes of her given role! Source – *Speaking Tree*

Note: A well-known book on everyday science entitled *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson, records: “Everything in the world 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.*”

‘Cans’ create success and ‘can’t’s’ create failures. – *Anonymous*

Life is like a game of cards. The hand dealt to you represents determinism; the way you play is free will. – *Jawaharlal Nehru*

There is no such thing as failure – the real failure is lack of action. – *Anonymous*

True wisdom comes to us when we realise how little we understand about life, ourselves and the world around us. – *Socrates*

You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts. – *Khalil Gibran*

Men occasionally stumble over truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened. – *Winston Churchill*

Every great and commanding moment in the annals of the world is the triumph of some enthusiasm – *Emerson*

Prayer is not to be used as a ‘spare wheel’ to be pulled out when in trouble; it should be made the ‘steering wheel’ to direct us through out. – *Anonymous*