

V.GANESAN

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PREFACE

Every human being seeks happiness, and seeks it repeatedly too. This is because what we really seek is happiness that is unlimited and permanent. This begs the obvious question: Why do we seek happiness? Why don't we instead, seek sorrow or suffering? The answer is both profound and simple. We seek happiness because it is our natural state. Just as we seek to get rid of illness and return to our natural, healthy state, so do we seek to get rid of suffering and return to our natural, happy state.

But, how do we go about it? Most of us seek unlimited happiness with a conditioned, and therefore, limited mind. We seek permanent happiness from the world and its objects, the very essence of which is impermanence. Finally, and tragically, we seek it in a future that forever eludes us like the receding horizon.

It follows, as surely as night follows day, that we can never, ever, find eternal happiness with our limited mind, in an impermanent world, and in a non-existent future. But then, how else can we find our way to the summit of the mountain of eternal joy?

Commonsense tells us that whenever we attempt the ascent of an unknown mountain, it is only wise to rely on experienced guides and detailed maps. The guides in our case are the Self-realised sages. Our maps are their teachings. This is so, because sages are the only ones who have explored spiritual heights. They are also, the only ones who have conquered the peak of eternal happiness.

So what do the sages have to tell us? The practical wisdom of the sages, and the precious insights mined from intimate contacts with them, is precisely what Sri Ganesan reveals, in this profound book, *Drops from the Ocean*.

N. S. Venkataraman
Nochur, Palakkad
September 1, 2005

EDITOR'S NOTE

A sage whom Sri Ganesan met recently told him, “God is like a huge, gushing, sacred river. Seekers need to bathe in it. We saints are like bathing *ghats* that have well built steps to help people reach the river and bathe safely in it.”

Sri Ganesan goes on to write, “As seekers, we should humbly receive the profound statements of sages without interference from the dissecting brain’s rigid iron walls. These statements then, will instantly become our own state of experience.”

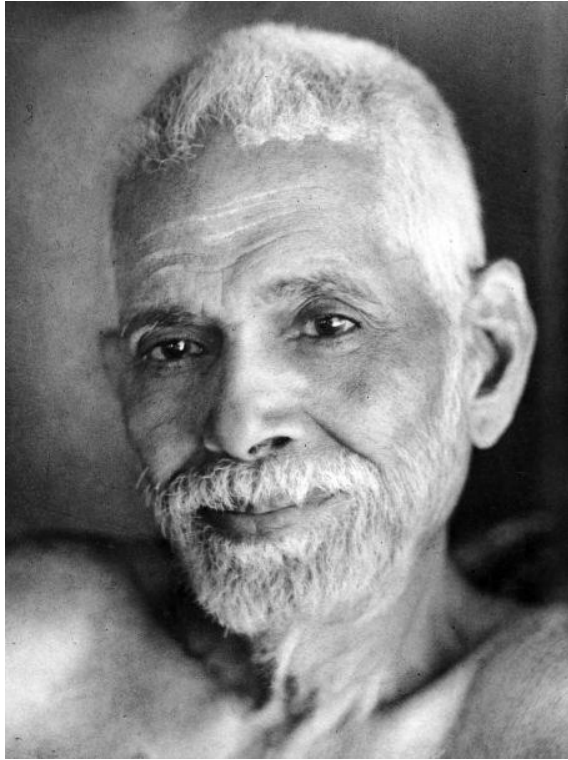
In this book, Sri Ganesan shares experiences and insights that have risen from his intimate contacts with sages, saints and the ripe, old devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. From many of its passages it is clear that as Bhagavan once said, “There are no *jnanis*. There is only *jnana*.”

A word about the structure of this book. The drop symbol ‘●’ appears after certain passages. It is a suggestion to stop reading for a moment, and in stillness, experience the truth of what you have just read. Do contemplate on these precious drops. They are then, sure to penetrate the lotus of your Heart and make it blossom in daily bliss and blessing.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my friends, Vasudevan and Amarnath, for their invaluable assistance in editing, designing and laying out this book. I also thank Sri Charanbir Singh Bedi and Sri S.P. Janarthanan, without whose generosity, this book could not have been printed.

Sarvam Sri Ramanaarpanamastu

**Suresh Kailaash
Chennai
September 19, 2005**



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

HOW AND WHY

It all started in March 2005, in holy Hardwar. I was paying homage to the sacred mother, Ganga Mata. The divine mother not only activated my heart to write, but also graciously gave the title, *Drops from the Ocean*.

The ancient Hindu texts proclaim that when mother Ganga chose to descend from heaven to earth, in all her majesty and force, she was received in the locks of the disheveled, matted hair of Lord Siva. Her mighty flow disappeared inside it and not a drop could come out. The Lord, out of compassion to redeem suffering humanity from its sins, then permitted her to flow on earth. One drop was thus, let

out of his hair. Hence, one of Mother Ganga's names is Alakananda. What we now see as the huge flow of the Ganges, is just a drop from the Lord.

Lord Siva, Arunachala Siva, the Self, is the OCEAN.

Has not Bhagavan declared, "This is Arunachala, the ocean of grace"?

May Ganga Mata bless us all so that these drops penetrate into the Heart. May father Arunachala's ocean of grace inundate each one's Heart.



THE BEGINNING OF SADHANA

The joy of sharing the truth is unparalleled. Sharing brings about explosions. Talking only explains matters. Answers, likewise, give the listener only a false satisfaction of having cleared the doubts. Answers never solve our problems. Whereas, true sharing totally dissolves the form of the problem itself. Heart to heart communication is true sharing, though sometimes done only through words. Answers appeal to the brain. Sharing goes straight to the heart!



Dissolution takes place in the heart only when the listener experiences the clarity of the sharer. Experience transcends mere intellectual understanding and ignites an explosion in the listener. Like camphor that burns without leaving any residue, this explosion too, leaves no residue of understanding or non-understanding. Both get blown away in this explosive experience.



Sat sang alone can bring about such explosions! During and after this explosion, what reigns is only silence. Silence is only in the Heart. In fact, silence is the Heart itself. Descending from the head to the Heart is the beginning of *sadhana*, says Bhagavan. *Sat Sang* with saints and saintly people brings this silence about, and with effortless ease too. True happiness is there only in this silence.



THE DIVINE CHILD

G. Ramaswamy Pillai, a very early devotee of Bhagavan, once made him laugh and laugh. A discussion started on who was greater – Siva or Sakti. Pillai said, “He is contained in SHE!” Sakti lovers were happy. He said, wait a minute “But, there can never be a SHE without a HE!”. That made Bhagavan go into peels of laughter. Is not Bhagavan SIVA and SAKTI like Arunachala ?



The mystery as well as the beauty of God’s creation is that there is the male and female aspect, not only in human beings, but also in animals, birds, plants and trees.



The portrayals of Siva and Sakti in the scriptures emphasise the validity of this truth. In a seeker's journey towards the Truth, the static male aspect and the dynamic female aspect, with their combined functioning, play a vital part in bringing the seeker's efforts into full fruition!



The divine Mother holds the key to the kingdom of the eternal Father. The divine Teacher reveals this secret. Whoever wakes up to this eternal Truth, is the divine child.

Arunachala is the divine Father! Ganga Mata is the divine Mother! Guru Ramana is the divine Teacher!

And we? We are the divine child!



THE GATEWAY TO HIS KINGDOM

To gain true clarity we only have to turn to our own experience. Gathered knowledge on clarity is coming to us from without and is ever subject to change. Alterations, changes and modifications are the realm of the world. *Prakriti*, that which is ever in motion, is the Sanskrit word for such a realm of changes. But *Purusha*, our own Self is motionless, unchanging.



We experience changes in our waking and dream states. But is there ever any change in the state of deep sleep? The deep sleep state is like a physician's sample, a freely, available

doorway to the state of stillness, the Self. The 'I' changes, every moment too, into 'me' and 'mine'. These are the two branch-roots that sprout into the tree of multiplicity. The 'I AM' is ever unmoving, changeless and without content. The 'I' contains and equips itself with a name, form, thoughts and a world. All these put together is this 'I'. It appears in our waking and dream states. It disappears in our experience of deep sleep. Which means it rises and sets. Its essence is therefore, impermanence.



The 'I AM' is ever there. This experience of 'I AM' is absolutely changeless from one's childhood to old age. In the waking state 'I AM' is there. In the other two states of dream and deep sleep too, 'I AM' is there. The states alternate and change, but the experience of 'I AM' is ever felt through all these changing states.



So, what is the gateway to experience the glory and truth of 'I AM'? We can truly experience and have a real taste of it by delving into and honouring the God given gift of deep sleep. "One is *a/ways* in deep sleep only", says Bhagavan. Plunge within and experience it. You are then firmly rooted in 'I AM', the kingdom of God.



DIVING INWARDS

The world is only a conglomeration of God made things and man made things. In this collection of things or objects, you, the individual, are the only subject perceiving them. It is relevant to note that the Sanskrit word for 'world' is *lokaha* – *lokyatey iti lokaha* –that which is seen is the world.



Seen by whom? For whom? You. It is you the subject, who is capable of looking and seeing. It is also you who say, “There is a world”. The world does not come and announce, “I am the world”. That is why Bhagavan says, “The world is *in* you; not the other way about”. The moment your attention is withdrawn from objects, either consciously as in meditation

during the waking state, or unconsciously as in deep sleep, the world is *not* there. But *you* are always there, whether the world is seen on waking, or not seen in sleep. The seen therefore, depends on the seer. The seen always changes! You, the seer, are forever there.



“Plunge within”, “go within”, “dive inwards”. These powerful commandments of Bhagavan, have to be necessarily put into practice. To begin this inward journey, we have to first withdraw our attention from that which is seen. Such withdrawal, in toto, is difficult, indeed. Therefore, first train yourself to consciously withdraw your attention from man made things. Initially, this can be easily achieved by shifting such attention to God made things.



Withdraw yourself from seeing, listening to and indulging in man made things. Instead, let your attention be on God made things like nature - birds, animals, waves, the winds... This is purely to gain efficiency and fluency in your power to consciously withdraw your attention inwards. Through this practice, withdrawing your attention totally inwards away from both God made and man made things, becomes as natural and effortless as one's own breathing.



This most essential process of withdrawing within, is symbolically represented in traditional texts as a tortoise withdrawing its head and limbs when encountering any form of danger. Likewise, as aspiring seekers, we too should withdraw our attention from the real life danger of the world with all its attractions and distractions.



DISSOLVING KARMA

T.P. Ramachandra Iyer (TPR), was an efficient lawyer. He represented the *ashram* in court cases from 1938. In the latter half of the 1940s, he retired from his profession and came to stay with Bhagavan in the *ashram* for good. He also had the golden opportunity of serving Bhagavan as one of his personal attendants till Bhagavan's *mahanirvana*. During this period he had many intimate dialogues with him, mostly when they were together while walking, or resting at night inside the hall.

During TPR's last days, I had the privilege of winning his confidence and making him live in the *ashram* premises. He was given Chadwick's cottage. He was very kind to me and shared with me unrecorded reminiscences of many events that took place in the presence of Bhagavan. Two of these, I call *The TPR Formulas*.



TPR Formula – I: While walking on the hill, TPR asked Bhagavan whether it was ever possible to totally eradicate one's *karma* or fate, summarily, in this birth itself. "Oh, yes," replied Bhagavan. "It can be done, one hundred percent, if you do as I tell you!". TPR readily agreed.

"The totality of one's *karma*," said Bhagavan, "is divided into two: (i) the past, i.e., memories of incidents, success, failure, change, pain, pleasure, growth and decay, etc. (ii) the future, i.e., desires of impending ambitions, achievements, plans and their executions, etc. If one is prepared to completely

erase the past, that is, all that has happened to one till this present moment, then fifty percent of one's *karma* will be warded off!" TPR interrupted and asked, "what about the other fifty percent?"

Bhagavan smiled graciously and said, "If you have succeeded in giving up the past, that is, fifty percent of your *karma*, you will yourself realize that the remaining fifty percent is also destroyed. Simultaneously. With past and future erased, there will only be the NOW!"

"How does one achieve this almost impossible act of completely eradicating the past?" pleaded TPR. The ocean of grace and compassion that Bhagavan ever is, replied, "Accept and see without any trace of doubt or reaction, that whatever has happened up to the present moment is only through God's injunction. One will then get tremendous energy to totally erase one's past, on the valid ground and inner understanding, that no one through one's effort can ever change one's past".



TPR Formula – 2: On another occasion, TPR asked Bhagavan, “Bhagavan! It happens to all and at many a time too. Two friends get entangled in heated arguments on a commonly accepted issue. Each sincerely feels that his stand is correct and most assuredly the other is wrong. A stalemate results. In such cases, how can the issue be resolved to the satisfaction of both? Or is there no practical method at all to settle such tussles?”



Bhagavan replied, “Yes, there is! It is very easy too!” He continued, “Since both are sincere, and are not arguing for argument’s sake, if you completely give up your standpoint for a moment, and accept the other’s point of view as your own, then there will be clarity in your mind. If possible, both should adopt or be persuaded to adopt, this method. If the other refuses, it doesn’t matter. You adopt it. You will then experience a release from the stalemate. This change in you

will release the other too from the stalemate. Neither of you will be arguing any more.”



In the 1930s, a manager at the *ashram* who often bossed over others arrogantly, once pounced on a diminutive inmate and roared, “Do you know who I am?” This pious person boldly and firmly replied, “Isn’t that the sole purpose for which both of us have come to live in Ramanansramam?” The angry manager at once recognized his folly. Both went to Bhagavan, narrated what had happened and prayed for his forgiveness. Bhagavan gave a smile of acceptance and amusement.



TWO SECRET PRINCIPLES

On another occasion, TPR pleaded with Bhagavan to save him from the grips of the world, the *samsara*. He said that however much he turned his mind inward, the pull of his commitments to the activities of life, was insurmountable. He wanted a way to tide over all these physical involvements.

Bhagavan turned to him and with great love said, “Be like the tiniest chip of wood that is thrown into surging flood.”



“The external life of action and daily involvement, in this world, is unavoidable, both to the spiritual aspirant and to the worldly man,” explained TPR. “Assuming importance for oneself, all men strive for name and fame. Thereby, they meet with problems and strife. One should clearly understand that true spirituality is not avoidance of action, but involving oneself in action without giving importance to oneself. That is, one should be like dust thrown into an onward rushing flood while indulging in any action. The sense of being the actor is to be given up and not the action itself.”



According to TPR, Bhagavan has pointed out two practical ways to erase the importance given to the actor. “Do not react to any action that takes place in, by, and around you. Act but do not react is one secret principle. The other, is to be aware that things and actions, in and around you, happen *through* you and are not done *by* you.”



I spent months staying with these two principles, waiting for them to reveal their true significance. They did reveal their real worth. Waiting for however a long time it takes and thus getting an unshakeable clarity in oneself, is a revelation or explosion.



CHOOSE TO BE FREE

In a game of dice, the rules are there, the coins are there and the reward for the winner is there. These are common to all, and at all times. Yet, how cleverly one plays to win the game, is entirely different. One is free to play any way one wants within this fixed framework. Destiny is like the former, fixed and common to all. But freewill is always beyond the dictates of destiny.



Like a successful player who abides by the rules and regulations of the game and makes good use of his coins to get

the happiness of winning, one's freewill is ever independent of the dictates of destiny. For, destiny is bound to time while freewill is ever in the now. And beyond time!



Bhagavan was repeatedly asked about the problem of destiny and freewill, the apparent and eternal opposites. His answer, typically, offers not just a solution, but once and for all dissolves the problem. He said, “Destiny pertains to the body and is indisputable. But find out whether you are the body.” He also said, “Man has only one freewill. That is to choose not to identify with one's body.”



We don't need to make a Herculean effort to drop the 'I am the body' idea. In fact, every night during deep sleep, identification with the body drops off naturally and effortlessly. God, out of compassion, has given everyone the experience of

both destiny and freewill. He has also given us the freedom to identify with the body and be in bondage or by not identifying with it and be free.



To constantly identify with the body is the fate of the common man. A saint or sage is ever free, for he has dropped all identification with his body. Choose to be a saint, a sage. Choose not to be a mere man. This is the essence of freewill. You are ever free to choose to be FREE.



ATTENTION WITHOUT CONTENT

The seed of true spirituality is imbedded in our daily living itself. God, in His impartial nature, has given the spiritual potential equally to every human being. By paying true and deep attention to this gift of God, man is transformed into God instantly and with greatest ease too! How truly it is said, “God made man in His own image.”



Look at the waking and deep sleep states. They seem to be opposites. Pay deep attention to them, individually.

‘Attention’ – which includes the discursive intellect – goes beyond intellect, logic, sensation and intuition. The totality of all these is ‘attention’. ‘Attention’ is “NOW” – it is a ‘happening’ state. It is not a state that has ‘happened’ or is going ‘to happen’. To see and accept “things as they are” is the essence of ‘attention’.



There are various contents in waking consciousness. Deep sleep on the other hand, is totally devoid of contents. It remains purely as consciousness. Intellect can cognize only the contents. Therefore, it is baffled when looking at the deep sleep state where there are no contents at all. Shift your attention for a moment from the content filled waking state to the contentless, deep sleep state. Which is more peaceful and acceptable? Deep sleep of course! That’s why each one of us prepares our bed so carefully, every night.



These contents are nothing but those that are thrown into our consciousness by destiny. Choose not to identify with destiny. Instead, bring the contentless state of deep sleep into the waking state. Attention is always without content. “Attention paying attention to attention” is freewill, freedom and the silence of meditation. YOU ARE THAT!



THE SUPREME TRUTH

Anything that has a beginning and an end is not *satyasya satyam*, the supreme truth. Time has a beginning and an end. So too, do space and causation. That is, the world is a projected fact – *lokyatey iti lokaha* – that which is seen is the world. It needs a seer to see it and always has a beginning and an end. In fact, every night in deep sleep, the world disappears, and appears only on waking. The world is thus, only a conglomeration of time, space and causation.



One's body too, is subject to these three impediments. It is born and one day, it will die. Its sex, its caste, its religion, its position in society, its success or failure in life, all depend on the layers of causation.



The world and body are not the only things that are subject to time, space and causation. Even one's mind is regulated by these three limitations. The mind, which according to Bhagavan is nothing but 'bundles of thoughts,' rises when we wake up or dream. It vanishes when we are in deep sleep. So, it too has a beginning and an end. No scripture denies the phenomena of the world, the body and the mind. They are phenomena i.e., appearances, The Reality is the Seer the Self.



There cannot be any form of seen without the seer. While everything that is seen has a beginning and an end, the seer is unchanged, unaltered and always there. The seer's beginning and end is unknown. Therefore, if the seen is asserted as factual reality, *satyam*, the ever existing seer is truly *satyasya satyam*, the supreme Truth. It is the basis and ground on which the partial truths of the world, body and mind, come and go.



Turn inwards and pay attention to the seer, always. This is Bhagavan's message. You are the ever vibrating, supreme Truth, the ever witnessing seer. If we identify with the seen we shall fall into the grip of destiny. Bhagavan entuses us seekers to identify ourselves with the supreme Truth, the seer. Seeking the truth is another name for freewill. Being the Truth, one tastes the eternal nectar of FREEDOM!



BE A YES – MAN

In 1960, Mother Krishna Bai of Anandashram, Kerala, told me something that totally altered the course of my inner life.

“Refrain, consciously, from using negative terms, expressions and judgements. To begin with, stop saying ‘no’ as an answer. For instance, if you want to say ‘no’ to you friend’s invitation to accompany him to his house, train yourself to say, ‘I will come tomorrow’, and abide by that commitment.



Totally convert yourself from being a no-man to a yes-man. This is advised to make your mind lose its hold on you. The mind's strongest tong, and the main root by which it subsists, is negativity. By abstaining from using any form of negative expression in your daily life, fifty percent of your insurmountable obstacles in spiritual *sadhana* are fully overcome. This makes you stronger to pursue further *sadhana* with less hindrances.”



Here is an exercise for you. Find out why you say ‘no’, as an answer at all. From where within you do such negative responses sprout?



The mechanical answer ‘no’ is unavoidable but harmless. How? If someone says, ‘today is Sunday,’ when it is actually Saturday, one can correct it by saying, ‘no’. This is not

negativity as the 'no' only serves to correct an error (reply's essence is on the importance of asserting the factual truth). This does not affect or afflict the psyche of the person.



The calculated, psychological 'no,' based on personal want or cleverness with which we avoid responsibilities, circumstances and commitments, is harmful and affects our psyche. Any form of psychological 'no' or negative expression, leaves a scar in our psyche. This is called *samskara* or marked, past tendency, in Hindu terminology. Such accumulated *samskaras* take grosser roots, get arranged and settle as our *prarabdha karma*, actions to be executed in our present birth. It is this that involves us in continuous action.



By not saying 'no' and by not using any form of negative expression in our daily life, fifty percent of our *prarabdha karma*

is instantly and spontaneously warded off, asserts Mother Krishna Bai.

So, always be a yes-man. Initially, this will look impossible, irksome and unwanted. But if we pursue this diligently, we will positively experience our daily life becoming lighter, less burdensome.



THE ROOT IGNORANCE

There cannot be any dream, without entering into sleep. Otherwise, it will be a continuation of the same waking state, extended to the night as well. The total darkness of sleep is the screen on which the dream drama is projected.



The dream is an intermediate state between waking and deep sleep. Dreams occur to everyone, perhaps every day. In the waking state, the gross world, body and mind, are clearly experienced. In deep sleep, none of these three are cognized. In dreams, all the three are there but like shadows.



Causation, space and time are also there in the dream. But they have a different texture as compared to the waking state, even though the illusion of similarity-of persons, scenes, objects and occurrences—is positively felt. We have therefore to look deeply into these three experiential states. We need moreover to stay with each state, unmoved, till it reveals its true nature. This is a must for all seekers. Only, before venturing on this inner expedition, we should have the faith that this is truly a spiritual exercise.



What is the waking state? Look deeply. Find out what is its basis and on what it is projected. As we already saw, the total darkness of sleep is the ground on which dreams are projected. Bhagavan says, “Total ignorance is the screen on which the waking drama is enacted,” and the deepest, strongest and heaviest root-ignorance, is the ‘I am the body’ idea. “Has any one seen the world without having a body?” questions Bhagavan.



The vital difference between waking and deep sleep is that, whereas consciousness of the subject, objects and the world is present in the former, it is totally absent in the latter. Hence, in deep sleep, the feeling of darkness or nothingness dominates. While it is the feeling of brightness or seeing everything that dominates in the waking state.



In deep sleep, though consciousness of objects is absent, the truth of our being as Awareness is there. The deep sleep state, thus, goes to prove that there is a *satyasya satyam*, a supreme Truth, beyond the object-ridden, waking state's consciousness.



When we pay attention to deep sleep, where consciousness is fully absent, we experience that we are still alive as Being-Awareness. We thus wake up through our own experience, to the existence of this truth of Being-Awareness. This Being-Awareness is the eternal reality, the real screen, on which the drama of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, come and go.



Not knowing this, that is, not being the Being, is the root ignorance on which the waking dream is projected. Bhagavan

teaches us that if we wake up from this dream of root ignorance which we presume to be the waking state, that is *mukti*, freedom. Once thus awakened, we are forever as 'I AM', in the now.



YOU ARE THE LIGHT

If we close our eyes and turn our attention outwards, there is darkness. Any effort to turn outwards is the mind's doing. But if our attention is turned inwards, there is light. This inward look with closed eyes is a spiritual exercise that is not dictated by the mind. As such, the mind can neither register it nor know it. That is the reason why many do not notice this natural, profound state which is within our reach at all times.



The *Vedas*, the Hindu sacred scriptures, adore the Self within each one of us, as more brilliant than millions of suns. Sages confirm and affirm this truth. Man's mind refuses to believe it, for it is not graspable by its tongs-the intellect, and the sensations received through the five senses. *Sat sang* helps us to go beyond our mind and its dictates. It helps us to turn eagerly to the scriptures and their living symbols, the sages and saints, for light on the Knowledge that liberates.



Bhagavan Sri Ramana, the perfect *jnani* who lived in our midst till very recently, says out of his own experience, "Pure light is consciousness. The subject, the cognizer, functions both as light and objects seen. If the light, i.e., the subject or consciousness is beheld, then, no objects will be seen. Pure light alone will remain." This is in consonance with what the scriptures say.



This light is not a mystery. It is always there within all of us. Bhagavan constantly advised us to turn our attention on this light within, by saying, ‘Dive within, plunge within’. Jesus Christ said, “Be a light unto yourself”. You are that light only, the *agni* of Arunachala, the *jnana* of Bhagavan. When we close our eyes and look within, there is a glow that comes neither from outside nor from inside. It is the brilliance of the light of the Self.



Since we are not accustomed to it, initially, it will look dim and dull. On prolonged attention to it, the light will glow, and most naturally. This is not a miracle! Practice though, is essential to focus our attention inwards and BE the light. Do not imagine a light. Also, do not ignore seeing the light, assuming it to be one’s imagination. We have to be most attentive and inwardly totally alert to see this happening. This is a spiritual experience – is not a thing of the intellect and the

mind. The mind and intellect are the medium but not at all the source of it.

This light, unlike a flame, has no form. Just be aware of the luminosity pervading your being. You are the Light.



FROM GROSS TO SUBTLE MIND

“Our notions about ourselves are a mixture of truth and untruth or error.” So say the sages.



Initially, each one of us feels positive that we know ourselves. It does not go home even if a great sage points it out. Only when our gross mind is turned into a subtle one, can we

perceive and acknowledge that we do not know ourselves as we truly are.



The following passage quoted from *Maha Yoga*, gives a picturesque demonstration of the gross mind's situation and how the great sage of Arunachala subdues it, thus turning the questioner's gross mind into a subtle one.

“Once a few followers of a faith which vehemently condemns the use of idols, came to the sage and started questioning him. Their aim was to obtain from him, an admission that it is wrong to worship God in an idol. Their spokesman asked the sage, “Has God any form?” Bhagavan replied, “Who says God has form?” The questioner then said, “If God is formless, then is it not wrong to worship Him in an idol?” The sage said, “Let God alone. Tell me if you have a form or not?” The questioner promptly answered, ‘Yes, I have a form, as you see.’ The sage said, ‘What? Are you the body, which is about three and a half cubits in height, dark in colour

and mustachioed and bearded'? 'Yes', came the answer. 'Are you this in dreamless sleep also?' 'Of course! For on waking, I find myself to be the same.' 'Also when the body dies?' 'Yes.' 'If so, why does not the body say to the people when they are preparing to take it away for burial, "No, you must not take me away. This house is mine and I want to remain here"?' Then the disputant realised his error and said, 'I was wrong; I am not the body, I am the life that dwells in it.'

"Then the sage explained, 'Look here, until now you quite seriously believed that this body is yourself; but now you see that you were wrong in this; understand that this is the *initial ignorance*, out of which grows inevitably *all* the ignorance that enslaves men. So long as this primal ignorance remains, it does not matter much whether you regard God as formless or having form. But, when this primal ignorance goes, then, with it will go all the rest'."



Bhagavan diagnoses this disease – our bondage to desire and fear – as stemming from the root ignorance that the body is the self. This is confirmed by the observation that desire and fear arise because of the body. The assumption that we are the body is untrue. Being is the Self. You are That. *This* is the Truth.



THERE ARE NO OTHERS

In the 1940s, a staunch devotee of Bhagavan, who was also a hard working ashramite had to leave the ashram. He felt too abashed and embarrassed, to see Bhagavan and take his leave. The other ashramites were helpless in persuading him to stay as he had left unnoticed the previous night.

TPR was accompanying Bhagavan during his usual morning walk on the hill. Assuming that Bhagavan did not know what had happened the previous evening, TPR told him that this ashramite had left under undesirable circumstances. TPR

did so with a sincere, heavy heart for he loved this person very deeply. Bhagavan stopped walking and turned towards TPR and said, in a harsh and uncompromising tone, “Just because some one has slipped down one foot, remember sir, you have not moved even an inch up. Beware! Beware!”

Though Bhagavan’s voice had a tinge of pain and anguish, these words were spoken with such sternness and authority that TPR got a shock and was almost knocked down to the ground. Seeing his pitiable condition, Bhagavan became mellow, turned back and continued walking with his usual, calm and measured strides. Seeing that TPR had not yet got back his composure, Bhagavan told him with great love and affection, “There are no others. One takes the body to be oneself. Hence, one treats others also as bodies. These is only ‘I AM’. When attention is turned inward to ‘I AM’, these so called bodies, minds, worlds, good and bad actions, are found to be not there. Attention turned inwards, there prevails only the Truth. Turned outward, there is nothing but untruth. ‘I AM’ is the head of the coin. ‘No others’ is the tail of the same coin.

You are thus, ever the Truth. Plunge within and be the Truth, always.”



After a pause Bhagavan continued, “How does one see a fault in the other? The appearance of the other is taken to be true, which itself is an error. Added to that, one sees a fault in him. That is, one already knows what a fault is, which means the mistake is born only in the one who cognizes. One then shifts it to the other on the back of spurious proofs based on one’s valid or invalid reasoning. Who is corrupt now? Who is at fault now? Who is the culprit now? So, turn every outward movement inwards. Be the silence, your true Self, every moment. Now, where is the room for any division?”



Silence swallows all forms of division –perfection and imperfection, right and wrong, good and bad. Stillness is the true ‘I AM’. *Aruna* + *achala* = Being + Stillness. ‘I AM’ is the silence! ‘I AM’ is the now! ‘I AM is the Self!



BEYOND TIME

The ancient *rishis*, seers of Truth, did in-depth research. What they fully experienced they later pronounced in statements as in the *Upanishads*. When they declared that, time is unreal and an illusion, it was not just their opinion. It was derived after deeply pondering over time. They experienced and measured the shortest as well as the longest unit of time. And with the minutest precision!



A *yuga* is one of the longer divisions of time. There are four *yugas*, the *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali*. All the four together are known as a *chaturyuga*, the duration of which is twelve thousand divine years. A divine year is equivalent to three hundred and sixty human years.

Krita is four times as long as the *Kali* age, *Treta* is three times as long and *Dwapara* twice as long. Thirteen thousand human years form a *Kali yuga*. Of these, five thousand years are still left.

Seventy one *chaturyugas* make one *manvantara*. Fourteen such *manvantaras*, with their twilight period, make a *kalpa* of four hundred and thirty two million years. A *kalpa* is one day of Lord Brahma, the creator. A night of Lord Brahma is also one *kalpa*. He lives for one hundred such years. Brahma's life span is one day for Lord Vishnu. He too, lives for one hundred years. After that, *pralaya*, dissolution of the entire creation, is brought about. Then, fresh creation begins once again!



The *rishis* also meticulously measured the shortest unit of time. For us now, a second according to our clock is the smallest unit. The ancients had divided such a unit into one hundred mini-units. And further divided this mini-unit into hundred micro-units. Such minutest divisions go on. Yet, each such mini and micro unit has an individual name. This means, that the *rishis* had actually measured and experienced the shortest unit of time. Their derivations are thus, not imaginary, but a scientific marvel indeed!



After experiencing time, by way of measuring both its extremes, the *rishis* arrived at the deeper truth, that time as such, totally disappears in deep sleep, thereby nullifying the validity of time itself. Their finding, “Time is unreal”, is truly a scientific revelation. When Bhagavan was once confronted with the question, whether his teaching of Self-enquiry was scientific, he replied, “What can be more scientific than affirming the real and rejecting the unreal!”

“The seer, the Self, is real. Time is unreal,” So declare
the scriptures and the sages. How true it is!



THE NATURE OF THE MIND

The ancient *rishis* also microscopically examined the exact content of what we generally call the mind. As a result, they found that it has four modifications –*chitta*, *buddhi*, *manas* and *ahankara*. *Chitta* is the mind's intelligence aspect, *buddhi* its need to understand, *manas* its thought and *ahankara* its ego. These four modifications constitute what we call as mind.

Though they differ subtly in content and in expression, they act instantly and so swiftly together that to decipher the nuances in their differences is very difficult. But when pointed attention is paid to them, the variations can be clearly grasped.



A person is walking on a lonely footpath and deeply contemplating an important project. Suddenly, his attention¹ is drawn to a glittering object on the path. It makes him want to understand² what the glittering object is. Then, a thought³ rises to find out whether it is a piece of gold. So he bends down and picks up the object. To his utter disappointment⁴ he finds out that it is only piece of waste paper. (¹*Chitta* = attention, ²*buddhi* = need to understand, ³*manas* = thought and ⁴*ahankara* = action.)



The scriptures enjoin a seeker to submit and surrender the mind, *manas*, at the holy feet of the Lord. An ancient Tamil saying declares, “*Chittam pokku Sivam pokku*” meaning, if one is influenced only by *chitta* or attention, one’s movements are safe, as they are directed without distortion towards Lord Siva, the Truth.



In the first two subtle variations of the mind –attention and the need to understand –there is no danger of distortion. Distortion occurs in the next two variations, thought and action. The thought aspect of the mind comes into being only in the third stage of the variation. Of course, it then extends itself to the action aspect, resulting in good or bad consequences that affect the person.



A modern seer challenges serious seekers by posing the question, “Can you stop your mental movement at the state of attention and need to understand without allowing thought to arise at all?”



Take a look at these two, precious quotations: “Surrender *manas*, the thought aspect, to the Lord.” “Move, influenced only by *chitta*, the attention aspect”. If we consider these quotations deeply, we will then clearly understand that *manas* and *ahankara* cause outward movements, while *chitta* and *budhi* are inward movements of the mind. The outward movement plunges one into the unreal, into untruth! The inward movement reveals the real, the Truth.



KEEP A NIL BALANCE

Krishna Bhikshu, author of Bhagavan's biography in Telugu, records that once an ardent devotee, in utter desolation, reverently approached Bhagavan and pleaded with him, "Bhagavan! I am a very great sinner. You alone can purify me. Hence, I surrender all my demerits and sins at your holy feet." Bhagavan looked at him graciously and to the surprise of all said, "Surrender to me all your merits as well!"



On another occasion, a very staunch devotee who was a wealthy merchant, stood before Bhagavan and said in all sincerity “Bhagavan! I surrender all my possessions at your holy feet.” With all love, Bhagavan smiled at him and said, “Surrender the possessor too!”

Is that not the true surrender?



In arithmetic, if a man has one hundred cows, and if forty of them are sold to others, there will be a balance of sixty cows. The method of deduction is very simple. But, in accountancy, the presentation of numbers – credit and debit – is simultaneous and not deductible. If either one of them is more, the lesser number is not deducted immediately from it. In arithmetic, only the remaining balance is shown. But in accountancy both the numbers continue to be presented as they are!

Our life is more comparable to the mode of accountancy, than to the mode of arithmetic. For example, life

is filled with *punyam*, merits, and *paapam*, demerits. If the amount of *punyam* is more than *paapam*, the lesser number of *paapam* does not get deducted and thus, annulled. The effects of both have to be experienced, either in this life or in the lives thereafter. There is no escaping from it. As long as they are there, rebirth is unavoidable, till both are exhausted, completely.



Bhagavan's path of wisdom assures us that our present birth can and should be made the last one. All we need to do is awaken ourselves to our nature that is the the Self within, through the practice of Self-enquiry. The key to liberation is to totally give up the 'I am the body' idea. The attainment of this, spontaneously and instantly, annuls the cycle of births and deaths. *Moksha* or liberation is assured here and now!



Now, let's take a fresh look at the above cited two profound statements of Bhagavan. "Surrender to me all your *punyam* as well" (in addition to surrendering your *paapam*). "Surrender the possessor, too" (in addition to surrendering your possessions). A nil balance of no *punyam*, no *paapam* –a totally empty state –can certainly be brought about through the grace of Bhagavan's look, touch and word. Fortunate are we, who even now are assured of such a nil balance just by following his direct path of Self –enquiry.



WHEN TWO BECOME ONE

The Greatness of Arunachala, *Arunachala Mahatmayam*, a mythological narration of the emergence, splendour and spiritual significance of this sacred center, the Heart of the Earth, states that once, the mother goddess Parvati, playfully closed Lord Siva's eyes by placing her palms over them. This caused great devastation in the cosmos as it was Siva's open eyes that constantly protected creation. She recognized her folly and chose to punish herself by staying away from the Lord and doing penance, as expiation for her sin. Lord Siva blessed

her by saying that at Arunachala he would reabsorb her, into himself. This unification –two merging into and as ONE –took place here!



Bhagavan has pointed out, “The mind which sprouts from the Self, wanders about externally. But when posed with the question “Who am I? It merges back into its source of emergence, the self. This total merging takes place at Arunachala with the greatest ease. That’s why it is acclaimed as the holiest of the holy places!” The mind is the active principle, *Sakti*, the mother goddess. The Self is the silent principle, *Shanti*, the supreme father, Lord Siva.



T.K. Sundaresa Iyer records, how in 1948 His holiness Shankaracharya of Puri Govardhana Mutt, had his doubt cleared by Bhagavan, while being seated in front of him. He quoted a

passage from the *agamas*, a branch of Hindu scriptures, “*Hara Gauri samyogat avachhaayaa yogaha*”, and wanted an explanation for the term *avachhaayaa yogaha*. Bhagavan said, “The one Being–Consciousness which projects all these creations out of itself, sustains and withdraws them again, back to itself. Having swallowed all the projections of creation, it itself dances as the ocean of bliss, the reality or substratum of all that IS, was and shall be! This eternal dance of the ‘I, I’ is referred to, here.”

The Sankaracharya was immersed in the experience of spiritual splendour, conferred on him by Bhagavan’s presence and words of wisdom!



By asking, ‘Who am I?’ and seeking its own Source, the ego ‘I’ gets merged in the Self ‘I, I’. When we inwardly raise the question ‘Who am I?’ this merger –the mind dissolving in the Self –takes place in our Heart, the seat of Arunachala. We thus

re-enact the legend of Parvati, the mother goddess, merging with Siva, the supreme father!

The eternal dance of 'I,' getting totally dissolved into the supreme 'I, I' goes on!



GIRI PRADAKSHINA: THE UNWINDING

When an intimate devotee of Bhagavan, soulfully told him that he was finding it very difficult to cope with mundane life, the mountain of munificence looked at him deeply and said, “Go along with the current. Don’t try to swim against the flow of the river. All that is happening is what a higher power has

already enjoined. Human efforts to change it or alter it to one's advantage amounts to going against His writ. Acceptance of it is a natural movement and defiance of it, wholly unnatural. Surrender is nothing but total acceptance of it. Then it becomes the burden of the higher power and no more yours! Everything is perfectly all right as it is. Realise it! Go along with it to its natural completion.”



When Krishna Bhikshu narrated the above to me, I sought further clarification from him. He said, “Has not our Bhagavan clearly told us that our natural state is happiness? And that thinking is not natural to us? When we go along with the dictates of our thoughts, for certain, we go against God's injunction. Such resistance in our past lives accumulates as *samskaras*, latent tendencies. *Guru's* grace –by look and sacred instructions –quickens the exhaustion of these stored up *samskaras*. In this life, our suffering itself is proof enough that

we have accrued vast *samskaras*, that are yet to be expiated. Out of compassion, the *guru* expedites the process of their completion. That is why Bhagavan said, “Go along with the current!”



I asked Krishna Bhikshu to explain with example. He continued, “You know, Bhagavan has always approved of our doing *giri pradakshina* of this Holy Hill. How do we do it? Clockwise, isn’t it? The scriptures prohibit us from doing it anti-clockwise.

Do you know why? Accruing of *samskaras* is like the winding process of a steel coil. But it is anti-clockwise. Now, please understand, thinking or thought is the root of every *samskara*, whether there is less or more of it! Bhagavan has said that thinking is *not* our nature. Therefore, *samskaras* get coiled up in an anti-clockwise bundle. When we do *giri pradakshina* correctly, that is clockwise, the process of unwinding is

powerfully given effect to. This dissolves our *samskaras* and finally reduces them to a nil balance.”



I asked Krishna Bhikshugaru why we should blindly follow the clockwise system. He said that he himself had put this question to Bhagavan. This was Bhagavan’s reply. “Have you observed the movement of the planets around the sun, the macrocosm? And, have you noticed the blood circulation in our body, the microcosm? Both are clockwise movements only!”

Let us move clockwise, flow with the current, submit to the Divine Will!



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO EXPERIENCE

Sometimes, some people argue thus: “Where is the necessity for practice, *sadhana*, since the Truth already is – ever realised and ever existent?” The counter question is are they established in Truth? If they are, they would never make such statements. None of the sages, including Adi Sankara, Ramakrishna Pramahansa and Bhagavan, ever said so. Only armchair scholars and philosophers, who are neither so ripe that the fruit falls at the sight of the *Sat-Guru* nor have the

patience to steadily ascend the ladder of *sadhana*, make such lazy and flippanant statements. The following dialogue from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, throws greater light and clarity on this subject.



Bhagavan: To know that there never was ignorance is the goal of all the scriptural teachings. Ignorance must be of one who is aware. Awareness is *jnana*, wisdom. *Jnana* is eternal and natural. *Ajnana*, ignorance, is unnatural and unreal.

Devotee: Having heard this Truth, why does not one remain content?

Bhagavan: Because latent tendencies, *samskaras*, have not been destroyed. Unless the *samskaras* cease to exist, there will always be doubt and confusion, *sandeha* and *viparita jnana*. All efforts are directed to destroying doubt and confusion. To do so, their roots must be cut. Their roots are the *samskaras*. These are rendered ineffective by practice as prescribed by the *guru*. The *guru* leaves it to the seeker to do this, so that he

might himself find out that there is no ignorance. This is the stage of the hearing of the Truth, *sravana*. This is not firm, *dhrda*. For making it unshaken, one has to practice reflection, *manana*, and one-pointedness, *nididhyasana*. These two processes scorch the seeds of *samskaras*, so that they are rendered ineffective.

Devotee: How long one should practice, do *sadhana*?

Bhagavan: That long till this doubt persists!



Like our breathing, the practice to remain in and as the Self should be continuous and unwavering. Patience and perseverance are the price a seeker has to pay, untiringly, steadily and cheerfully.



ATTEND TO YOUR BUSINESS

It was the period when TPR was accepted in the hall as one of Bhagavan's attendants. There was already an array of devout attendants like Krishnaswamy, Rangaswami, Sivanandaswami,. Vaikuntavasar, Sathyananda Swami, Venkataratnam and others. Being a reputed lawyer, and well-read in philosophy and religious literature, TPR told me that he

always had problems because of his accumulated information and fixed notions and argumentative mind.



Once, he noticed a particular devotee, coming to the hall, at eight in the morning, the appointed hour, along with the others. As soon as he sat in front of Bhagavan, he would fall sleep. At eleven, when Bhagavan arose for lunch, he would be woken up. At two in the afternoon, he would promptly be there. But again he would fall into deep slumber. This was happening for three or four continuous days. Noticing this, TPR felt pity for the sleeping man, who he thought, was losing the great opportunity of taking full advantage of the grace and presence of Bhagavan. Instead of telling that person directly, lest he should take offence, he went near Bhagavan and told him, in elaborate detail, all that was taking place every day. Bhagavan, as if deeply interested, asked TPR whether he was noticing this every day. “Not only every day, Bhagavan, I have noticed this, without fail, at every session, too!”

Bhagavan who seemed to be listening sympathetically, suddenly became very stern, and in a rather harsh tone pulled up TPR saying, “*Vanda velayai paarumoyi*”, meaning, “Attend to the business for which you have come”.



After a while Bhagavan went on to say, “Who said one cannot grasp or be a recipient of grace, presence or the teaching, while in sleep? But one who is awake and yet distracted from paying attention to these, positively denies oneself the benefit of receiving the blessing. The loss is not for the sleeping man but for you who lost it on all these four days due to inattention caused by distraction. Beware! Attend to your own business. The only purpose in life is to be the Self. All other activities are a waste of time. Your only business in this life is to realize the Self, here and now, thereby cutting asunder the cycle of births and deaths”.



Was this precious *upadesa* from Bhagavan meant only for TPR? Are they not directed to each one of us by the compassionate master? So, let us wake up and dedicate ourselves to the business for which we came. Here and now.



THE CENTRE FOR UNLEARNING

Having taken a university degree in philosophy, TPR was very proud of his capacity to intellectually grasp and understand all technical terms found in the scriptures and in religious literature. His pride of his deep knowledge exhibited itself when Bhagavan was once explaining about consciousness. He barged in and said, “Bhagavan! There is not one but many states of consciousness, like unconsciousness, sub-consciousness,

supra-mental consciousness and divine consciousness. Also, the scriptures talk of seven layers of consciousness – three above, three below, and human consciousness!”

Before TPR could harangue any further, Bhagavan raised his voice, and said, “That which IS, is only one consciousness. One should get rooted in it, in one’s own Heart. Let one first get established in it and then see whether other states of consciousness are there or not. One’s inner experience is the basis for all such statements, not mere theoretical or intellectual assertions!”



TPR said he had received many such knocks from Bhagavan, which in effect plunged him into deep, inward *sadhana*. Yet, there were moments in his life, even while living so closely with his *guru*, when doubts assailed him. These doubts were due to imperfect understanding of scriptural tenets. When I asked him whether he could give me an

example, he narrated the following, “I was repeatedly confronted with the inbuilt contradiction in the scriptures between knowledge and wisdom. Is all knowledge contained in the scriptures so useless that one can attain wisdom only by going beyond it? This was my constant and deep doubt. Once, I put this doubt before Bhagavan”.

Bhagavan turned towards me and said calmly, ‘This Arunachala is the centre for unlearning. Everything one has learnt has to be given up here as the final culmination to spiritual perfection. Unless one has learnt something, how can one be advised to unlearn? Scriptures equip one with learning. So, does unlearning denote rejecting or removing the scriptures from memory? Never. On the contrary, unlearning means releasing oneself from the mere intellectual knowledge of the scriptures and plunging oneself into the experience of it. That is, making it one’s own and not keeping it outside of oneself’.



It is similar to a sportsman, initially learning a game and all its nuances, theoretically. When he masters it and matures into a renowned sportsman, everything he learnt theoretically is put into perfect action. Such expression of ease in action is original and exclusive to him.



Arunachala makes one perfect by giving the cream of all scriptures as one's own experience wherein, theoretical learning is transcended. This spontaneous transcendence is termed as 'unlearning'. Learning may give one the Knowledge that is power but 'unlearning' culminates in the Knowledge that liberates. Bhagavan never involved devotees in work, for, he said they are already filled with work done. Nor did he give them mental work, but let them unwind in their own way. One unwinds and unlearns. The tangled state that the mind is, gradually loosens up and when the knot is removed, it vanishes. It is true Knowledge – *Mukti*.



GIVE UP THIS LIFE

In, 1936, Paul Brunton, in the presence of Bhagavan, raised a number of important questions. Bhagavan's answers were all centered on the Self. Brunton grumpily remarked, "Bhagavan always speaks from the highest standpoint!" Bhagavan gave a gracious smile and said, "People would rather not understand the simple and bare truth – the truth of their everyday, ever present and eternal experience! This truth is that of the Self. Is there anyone not aware of the Self? They would not even like to hear about It, the Self, whereas, they are eager to know what lies beyond – heaven, hell and

reincarnation. Because they love mystery and not the bare Truth, religions pamper them, only to bring them around to the Self. Wandering hither and thither, one must return to the Self only! Then, why not abide in the Self, even here and now?"



The scriptures say, "*Pramado vai mrtyuhu*", meaning inattention is death. This obviously means attention is life. Inattention means, giving importance to the non-self, that is, the body, mind and world. Attention means paying total attention to the Self. Bhagavan puts it beautifully, "Attention paying attention to attention is attention". He further states, "Such attention paid to the Self, leads one to wisdom".



Turning our attention inwards is true 'attention'. Whereas, turning it outwards to the body, mind and World is 'inattention'. For, when we are caught up with the outside, we

lose touch with the Self. We are perfectly attentive when we abide as Self. Loss of attention to the Self keeps us in ignorance and confusion. That is, the full effulgence of Life is absent. This is what the *Upanishads* call as ‘death’. Not knowing the Self is ‘inattention’. Consciously turning inwards to the Self is ‘attention’.



Jesus Christ said, “To live with me is like living near the fire; and, to be away from me is to be away from the Kingdom of God.” Here, “To live with me” means ‘attention’. While, “to be away from me” is ‘inattention’.

Bhagavan too, once quoted Jesus Christ, “He that loses his life, finds his Life !” When you give up the life of ‘inattention’ – which is ‘death’ – you find the Life of ‘attention’ – which is “LIFE”.



Another great saint said, “Pay full attention to LIFE and not to the modes of living!” Outward attention drains our spiritual energy, whereas inward attention enriches us with peace, quietude and bliss.

Hence, Bhagavan repeatedly emphasised, “Plunge within” ! “Be the Self” !



I AM HERE

“The Self can remain without the body, but the body cannot exist apart from the Self,” declares Bhagavan.



The principle, the truth of one's life, of one being alive, is termed as the Self. One is alive before deep sleep, one is alive during deep sleep and one continues to be alive after waking up

from deep sleep. Whereas, the body is missing in deep sleep! It is said that the clue to the mystery of life, and therefore, to the mystery of death, is squarely available, if the deep sleep state is properly understood. For instance, Bhagavan affirms that there is absolutely *no* difference between the deep sleep state and death. Except for the fact, that in the former we wake up in the same body, and in the latter in a different body. Thus, deep sleep and death are pointers to the truth of our immortality, our true state.



Why is there so much emphasis on deep sleep? The answer is that it is the only state wherein we can see the truth for ourselves and experience that the body is *not* there in deep sleep, whereas, life continues to be there. In the waking and dreaming state, the body is positively cognized. In these two states, the superimposition of the 'I am the body' idea obstructs us from experiencing the Self, as it ever IS. The deep sleep state helps us to experience the bodylessness. The body is absent, but we are there. We are ever there. It is the body which

makes us mortal. Bhagavan teaches us that we are not the body.



Bhagavan's death experience revealed to him the Truth that even after the death of his body he was vibrantly alive as Awareness. Light dawned on him that Awareness is the sole existing principle on which the body, mind and world are projected, like moving pictures on a screen. Before the death experience, he saw in a flash that he was Awareness. During the death of body too, he experienced this Awareness. Even after the death experience was completed, he continued to be in this same Awareness for fifty four years. No wonder that, before he dropped the body, when devotees expressed anguish, he clearly assured, "Where could I go? I AM always here!"



Bhagavan saw the eternal Truth in all its nakedness at the tender age of sixteen, and lived that Truth for fifty four long years, only to prove to us that as Awareness he continues to BE. Hence, he is adored as the *Maharshi*, meaning, the great seer! As 'I AM', Awareness, he is ever here in our Heart!



Since deep sleep and death are synonymous, Bhagavan's assurance, "I AM here" is still true. If we only analyse and duly wake up to the truth of deep sleep, we too will be established in Awareness, as Awareness. For eternity.



FREEDOM FROM SUFFERING

As seekers, we should constantly remind ourselves of the basic realities of our existence. If this is not possible, we should do so at least on those occasions when we are besieged by lack of clarity and confusion. Much of this confusion rises from our assumptions, accumulated knowledge and the views of others. These are obviously in the realm of thoughts. These are *not* the basic realities themselves. Releasing ourselves from thoughts about them is the first step, and perhaps the last step, we need to take to arrive in the realm of Truth.



Nisargadatta Maharaj once said, “Pain is physical. Suffering is mental. Pain is thus, unavoidable. But suffering is always avoidable!” To understand this profound statement is to understand the basic realities of our existence as they relate to our body and mind.



For instance, take the lives of sages and saints like Jesus Christ and Bhagavan. Both their bodies experienced intense pain caused by untold tortures. For Jesus, it was through being nailed on the cross. For Bhagavan, it was through the most painful form of cancer, osteo sarcoma. Both died or had to drop their bodies due to these cruel inflictions. This is recorded history. But did either Jesus Christ or Bhagavan suffer at all during those three days and fourteen months? Most assuredly they did not. They themselves asserted as much.



What is suffering? It is a deep mental reaction to physical pain. Once Major Chadwick asked Bhagavan, “Bhagavan, last night when I was going around your room, I heard you make moaning sounds like ‘aah, hoon’. But, people say you have no pain. Which is true?” Bhagavan replied, “Yes, the body has pain and it makes sounds. But what I have got to do with it? Am I the body? Is there any suffering at all?” If we ponder over this revealing reply of Bhagavan, it will clarify Maharaj’s profound statement. For both Jesus Christ and Bhagavan, there was no mental recording of any form of pain as suffering.



One has a body which can be seen. But has anyone ever seen the mind? The mind is a phantom. When questioned, it disappears. Thus, the mind itself being non-existent, all its derivations are equally untrue and unreal. Pain is a physical reality. Suffering is a superimposition and hence, unreal. All

forms of suffering dissolve and disappear when one gets rooted in the 'I, I', the inner silence, through the quest 'Who am I?'



So, though pain and body are there, suffering and mind are *not* there. The body is inert. It doesn't say there is suffering. It is the phantom mind which subjects one to the idea of suffering by saying, "I suffer from pain". Dislodge the mind and there is no more suffering.



WISDOM OF THE HEART

Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni adores Bhagavan's direct teaching as *hridaya vidya*, wisdom of the Heart. While defining happiness, Bhagavan clearly states, "When the mind merges in its source, the Heart, the Self, there is bliss, *ananda*."



Bliss is not a result of long and assiduous *sadhana*. It is there every moment the mind dips into the Heart. This happens naturally to all at all times. No one is excluded from the experience of bliss. The turning inward of the outgoing mind and merging it into its source, the Heart, is continuous *sadhana*.



The *Vedas* compare the spiritual Heart to a fully blossomed lotus flower. Bhagavan, has amplified this fundamental Truth thus, “Each one of us is endowed with this spiritual Heart on the right side of the chest. The one on the left side is the physical heart. The spiritual Heart, in all of us, remains as a lotus bud in its inverted position – the petals are closely knit and are yet to open. Whenever the mind gets introverted and goes within, the inverted bud turns around and comes to its right position. This can be experienced as a soothing feeling of inner comfort by the seeker. When one pursues Self-enquiry and thus releases oneself from the grip of

the mind, one petal of the lotus of the Heart opens. This gives happiness. This is the true spiritual experience.

Every time one takes a dip within and reaches this inner silence, one petal opens. The more the seeker takes a dip, the greater and vaster depths of peace he enjoys. For a fully realized being, the Heart lotus is fully blossomed and never reverts back to the bud state. All spiritual practices are aimed at opening up these petals. No external activities can open these petals. Only the inward quest of merging the mind in the Heart makes the Heart lotus blossom. Hence, a seeker should always plunge within, go within and dive within.”



Meditation is a continuous, inward process. It should go on constantly. Praying to Bhagavan or one's *guru*, either by taking his name or by having a glimpse of his comely form – even if it is only in the form of a picture – one should take the plunge within. One's effort to plunge within activates the latent and inherent grace of the *guru* and opens up a petal of the

Heart lotus. Effort and grace are thus, simultaneous. Both come to complete fruition in the Heart.



Another name for the Heart is grace. Effort invoking this grace is the same as the mind merging in the Heart or the Self. This is *hridaya vidya*, the wisdom of the Heart.



SURRENDERING THOUGHTS

Devotee: How can the rebellious mind be brought under control?

Bhagavan: Either you seek its source so that it may disappear, or surrender so that it may be struck down. Thoughts are eliminated by either holding on to the root-thought 'I', or by surrendering oneself unconditionally to the higher power. These are the only two ways for Self-realization.



Raise the question “Who am I?” inwardly, and reach the source of all thoughts – one’s own Self – and be the Self which is the ultimate Truth. This is *jnana marga*, the path of wisdom. Or surrender unconditionally to the higher power. This is *bhakti marga*, the path of surrender. According to tradition, this is the accepted method of these two royal ways. Usually, it is taken for granted that the latter is the easier of the two paths. But is it so? There are people who say the latter is far more difficult. It is also said *bhakti* is the mother of *jnana*. Bhagavan’s Self-enquiry is direct, straight and simple.



When thought, a vibratory movement, involves itself with happenings, persons and things that have already taken place, it is called the past or memory. Based on that acquired knowledge, when thoughts project themselves through desires and plans to be fulfilled, it is called the future. In short, both past and future are merely thoughts, unreal and non-existent. This constant movement from the past to the future, creates an

illusion as if it takes place in the present. If pointed attention is paid to the present, we will realize that no movement at all takes place in the NOW!



To be in the NOW, actually and factually, is to *not* manufacture thoughts of the past and future. This means we should remain without any form of mental, vibratory movement. Vibratory movements are noises echoed in the mind. The present, the NOW, is total stillness and silence.



Giving up thoughts of the past and future is surrender. To remain in the NOW is thus, true surrender. Burning off of all movements towards the past and the future, in the flame of the motionless NOW, can take place only in the silence of the Self. Dissolving the noises of the mind into the silence of the Self is surrender.

Surrender is the supreme state where past and future, the two unreal states, dissolve into the timeless Now. *Jnana marga*, the path of wisdom, is where there is no 'I'. *Bhakti marga*, the path of surrender, is where there is no 'me' and 'mine'.



THE PATH OF WISDOM

It was Viswanatha Swami who revealed to me the depth of Bhagavan's work in Tamil poetry. He not only applauded the greatness of his poems, but also divulged their hidden spiritual meaning. He said, "We have to meditate on each and every word uttered and written by Bhagavan. It will then reveal, most assuredly, its true significance and take us to spiritual clarity and inner ecstasy." I requested him to give me an example so that I

too could follow his example and enjoy such spiritual fulfillment!



He then shared the following with me. “You know, the very first verse in *Aksharamanamalai*, the *Marital Garland of Letters*, is enough to exemplify this. The Tamil words used by Bhagavan are, ‘*Arunachalam yena ahamey ...*’ This means ‘Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the Heart, oh Arunachala’, or ‘Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who dwell on their spiritual identity with Thee’. Both the alternatives indicate that we should have the surrendered attitude that holding Arunachala *in* our Heart will give us Self-realization.”



Viswanatha Swami continued, “It can also be read as, ‘ahamey Arunachalam yena...’ This second interpretation is

really very profound! It means meditating on Arunachala *as* one's own Heart (not *in* one's Heart), instantly destroys all forms of ego-movement. The word Arunachala is split as *aruna* + *achala*, which means, Self + Stillness. Externally it is the sacred red mountain. Absorbed internally, it is one's Heart, the seat of the Self. Has not Bhagavan in the second verse of his *Five Stanzas to Arunachala*, ecstatically adored it as, 'Heart is thy name, oh Arunachala'? And, again, in the sixth verse of his *Eight Stanzas to Arunachala*, exclaimed, 'Thou art thyself the Self-luminous Heart'?

Arunachalam Yena Ahamey – meditating on Arunachala *in* the Heart – is *bhakti marga*. *Ahamey Arunachalam Yena* – meditating on Arunachala *as* one's own Heart is *jnana marga*."



“Bhagavan once explained the deep meaning of the word, *aham*. ‘A’ is the first letter in the Sanskrit alphabet and ‘ha’ the last letter. Thus, the single word *aham*, symbolically encompasses whole of existence. Hence, *aham* or the entire

existence is Arunachala. How profound it is!” Saying this, Viswanatha Swami went into ecstasy and took me too, into that state.

So let us merge in the meditation, “Self is Arunachala!”



DISSOLVING IN ONENESS

During one of our walks near the foot of the hill, TPR was in an exalted, happy mood. He was humming Bhagavan's *Upadesa Undiyar*. When he came to the fourth verse, he started repeating it a few times. Suddenly, his face filled with joy and he uttered aloud, "*Ondril ondru*" which literally means, better than the previous. He repeated it again and again. I asked him what he was trying to convey.

Instead of directly answering my question, TPR said, "There are great advantages when one lives in close proximity with the *guru*. For the *guru* will sometimes, suddenly come out

with something unique, a never before heard aspect of the Truth!”



After a long pause he continued, “The usual meaning of this verse, as contained in all publications, is, ‘This is certain: worship, incantation, meditation are performed with body, voice and mind respectively, and are in an ascending order of value’.

But that morning, Bhagavan turned to me when we were walking on the hill and said, ‘The catch words in this particular verse are *Ondril ondru*. Its meaning is given in all translations as if meditation is better than incantation and incantation is better than worship. It is true, *ondru* in Tamil means ‘one’. But the deeper meaning of it is, merge, dissolve. Therefore, *Ondril ondru* truly means, if the seeker merges or dissolves oneself totally in any one of these methods – worship, incantation or meditation – that itself will fully emancipate him. Dissolving one’s ego, one’s mind in the Self, is the crux of all

spiritual effort. So, the verse means that, worship, incantation, meditation are performed, respectively, with body, voice, mind. Each one of these methods is equally effective *if one dissolves oneself totally*, in any one of them. This is certain'.



TPR continued, “An assurance is needed only when one wants to emphasise a secret or when a rare meaning is expounded, isn’t it? All the methods are equally meritorious, that is, each one is efficacious. Then, where is the need to give an ascending or descending order of value to them? Merging the outgoing mind in the Self is all that is needed of a seeker!”

Let us meditate on this never before heard aspect of Truth graciously uttered by Bhagavan.



LIFE OR LIVING?

The content of mind is thoughts. Bhagavan shows us that, “Mind is only a bundle of thoughts”. Its domain, field of activity, is time, space and causation. Its veritable mode of operation is in cause and effect. In general, this means all forms of dualities and pairs of opposites like good and bad, right and wrong, beginning and end. It is the power of the mind that projects the seer, the seen and seeing. However, the real nature of the mind is subtler than ether, and hence, inscrutable. That is why no one, except a *jnani*, is able to exactly understand what the mind truly is. The Sanskrit word for man is *manusha*,

meaning, one who possesses a mind. The scriptures, sages and saints, while proclaiming that the mind is a non-existent phantom, in the same breath, also confirm that it has *alakilaa atishaya sakti* meaning that the mind has immeasurable, infinite and wondrous power. (Consider : is it not the mind that has taken man to the moon?)



The mind and body are merely offshoots of the imperceptible, motionless Self which is Life itself. This life is the white screen on which the moving pictures of the body and mind come and go. They are the play of one's modes of living. Let us remember here, the guiding counsel of a recent saint, "Life is more important than living!"



In our daily existence, we experience waking, dreams and deep sleep. In our waking and dream states, our body and

mind, the two offshoots of the Self are there. In deep sleep, they are not there, but, one continues to be alive! That is, *life* is there, but *not* the aspects of living. The Self is there, not the body and mind! Experiencing this Truth in our life is the first, sure step towards unravelling the mystery of our Being!



To have a quicker and clearer understanding, we should notice the fact that in the realm of the body and mind, additions, subtraction, changes, alterations, coming and going are there. While the body grows, decays and dies, the mind is subject to ignorance, knowledge, change and alteration. The Self, the ever-existent principle, is not touched by those changes of body and mind.



Right from one's birth, through growth, illness and old age, one's feeling of oneself as 'I' remains unchanged. The body

and mind change. But the feeling of 'I' never changes! No addition, subtraction or alteration is ever possible or felt in the Self. For it is *achala*, motionless, and *aruna*, the sole solid solitary being.



Let not your attention be on mere living. Let it be on life itself. Never lose yourself in what you were or how you should be. Always BE AS YOU ARE. This is the fundamental teaching of Bhagavan.



IN STILLNESS IT SHINES

In the tenth verse of his *Eleven Stanzas to Sri Arunachala*, Bhagavan adores the grandeur and splendour of his *guru*, Lord Arunachala, thus, “I have discovered a new thing! This hill, the lodestone of lives, arrests the movements of anyone so much as thinks of It, draws him face to face with It, and fixes him *motionless like Itself*, to feed upon his soul *thus ripened*. What a wonder is this! Oh souls! Beware of it and live! Such a destroyer of lives is this magnificent Arunachala, *which shines within the Heart!*

This is, perhaps, one of the most important verse of Bhagavan giving as it does the most direct insight into the Truth.



The three important and practical aspects that are revealed here are (I) *motionless like Itself* (ii) *thus ripened* and (iii) *which shines within the Heart*.

- (I) *Achala* means motionless, still. This is the real form of Arunachala. The mountain is its gross form. Not only is it without any movement, it also transforms all movements of the soul, into its own nature of stillness. Thus, stillness as the foundation for spiritual perfection, is clearly brought out by Bhagavan.
- (II) The next important step for attaining Self-realization is to remain without movements of the mind. This will effectively lead to the of ripening of the soul.
- (III) “The only purpose of life is to attain the Self”, says Bhagavan. When the mind is stilled, it reverts back to

its source, the Heart or the Self, from which it sprouted. In swooning, deep sleep and death, such merging takes place, but only unconsciously and temporarily. In the state of Self-realization, the merging is complete and total like a river joining the ocean. This state of Self-realization is not a time-bound end of *sadhana*, but an ever existing Truth in the ever-flowing NOW. That is why, Bhagavan uses the continuous present tense, “shines”.



Whenever we remain in a state where mind does not oscillate and we are yet consciously aware of the Self shining in the Heart, we experience the state of Self-realization. Such experiencing takes places only in the NOW. The NOW being true reality, it knows no difference between a moment and eternity, both of which belong to the realm of unreal time. It is as it is!



“*Summa iru*” or “*Be still*” is the greatest of all direct and practical teachings of our beloved master, Bhagavan.



THE THREE TIER APPROACH

Bhagavan would accept a new pencil or pen, only when the old one was completely exhausted or totally damaged. He would then take a piece of paper and scribble a few times with the new one to see whether it was working properly. TPR told me, “Most of us, on similar occasions, sign our own names, write *Om* or some god’s name. So, I was very inquisitive, to know what he scribbled. On a few such occasions, Bhagavan,

the ocean of compassion, permitted me to see what he wrote. I will reveal that secret to you now. Even those who were close to him did not know about it. Either he wrote, *Arunachalavaasi*, meaning, one residing in Arunachala, or *panilenivaadu*, meaning, one without any work.



He scribbled either one of these in Malayalam script. Venkataratnam, Salem Rajagopala Iyer and I, his educated attendants, learnt to read and write Malayalam, as Bhagavan was interested in that south Indian language. He used to tell us, 'You have a system, called short-hand writing, isn't it? Likewise, Malayalam alphabets are very easy to write down fast as most of them have oval formations only, like the letter 'O'. One need not raise the pen in between writing two alphabets. Like a chain, all alphabets can be joined effortlessly, thus saving time and energy.' Whenever he wanted to note down any passage, be it in Sanskrit, Tamil or Telugu, the other three languages in

which he was equally proficient, he would use only Malayalam alphabets.”



Arunachalavaasi means one residing in Arunachala. Bhagavan, who did not identify with anything in the world, including his own body and mind, chose to identify himself with Arunachala through an open declaration, “I am an Arunachalavaasi!” And how true the declaration is! Our glorious master stepped into Arunachala on September 1, 1896, and for fifty four years, till he dropped the body in April 14, 1950, he did not stir out of this holiest of holy places!



Just as the verbal teaching that he expounded are the highest expressions of *para vidhya* and *apara vidhya*, instructions to the mind, his gapless staying in Arunachala and identifying himself as *Arunachalavaasi*, are his direct instructions

for us to put into practice, *physically*. Likewise, his true, direct teaching for every seeker, *spiritually* is, “Dive within”, “Be still” and “Be as you are”.



Therefore, it is only apt that serious spiritual seekers take up a three tier approach to his unique teaching to realize the Self. (i) *Physical*: Stay in Arunachala and thus become an *Arunachalavaasi* (ii) *Mental*: Understand and practice Self-enquiry, ‘Who Am I?’ (iii) *Spiritual*: Be absorbed in Silence.



THE ONLY ACTIVITY

Bhagavan is Arunachala in human garb. In 1911, when Frank Humphreys saw him seated on a rock at Virupaksha cave, he saw him as God and spontaneously uttered, “God radiated from his body terrifically!” Arthur Osborne declared that Bhagavan by his immaculate existence in Arunachala as Arunachala, the Self, proved Jesus Christ’s statement, “My Father and I are one”. The greatness of Bhagavan however, lies more squarely in his declaring that the Truth in which he was effortlessly established is the true state already existing in each one of us.



For this truth to become explicit, the only requirement essential is one-pointed attention to oneself. This practice is essential, *not* for attaining the Truth in which, one is already rooted. It is for giving up the only obstacle for such realisation, viz., the wrong notion that, “I am in bondage.”



Panilenivaadu, one without any work. This second scribbling of Bhagavan, comes in handy to complete the three tier move. Staying in Arunachala has two dimensions: (i) staying within the radius of thirty miles of the hill, Arunachala, and (ii) staying within one’s Heart all the time, wherever one may be geographically located. Either way, one has to awaken oneself to the awareness that one IS, and thus, ever in Arunachala. Arunachala = *Aruna* + *achala* = Being + Unmoving.

Those who are fortunate to be able stay within the radius of 30 miles, around Arunachala, will have to fall in line with the second injunction, *Panilenivaadu*, one without work. Any involvement in any form of activity pulls our mind outward,

thus plunging us into an endless chain of commitment to activity. In the fourth verse of *Upadesa Saram*, Bhagavan clearly declares, “But action leaves behind the seed of further action, leading to an endless ocean of action; not at all to liberation”.



In *Letters From Sri Ramanasramam*, Bhagavan comes out with a most beautiful statement, which many may not have noticed. “You want to know what Bhagavan would like best? What Bhagavan likes best, is to remain silent without doing anything. What I like is to know who I am and to remain as ‘I AM’ with the knowledge that what is to happen will happen, and what is not to happen will not happen. Is that not right? Do you know understand what Bhagavan likes best?”



Meditate, contemplate, go within and be in silence. For a resident of Arunachala, this is the only activity to be engaged in.

As T.K. Sundaresa Iyer put it, “A resident of Arunachala should plunge within, be in the silence imposed by the Self and not indulge in self-imposed silence”! Bhagavan calls such inner silence, “continuous activity”. To remain in such inner silence, like a flame in a windless space, a lot of spiritual energy is needed.

So, pray, be an *Arunachalavaasi*! Be a *panilenivaadu*!



THE EXPERIENCE OF SAINTS

The extraordinary beauty of leading a truly spiritual life, lies in getting the same spiritual experiences that saints and sages have had. The lives of sages and saints within the past two thousand years are replete with repetitions of almost the same experiences, though they happened many centuries apart.



Take for example, the lives of saints Vipranarayana and Tulsidas. Each one was, to begin with, an ordinary man revelling in the sensual pleasures of married life. On one occasion, their wives spurned them with almost identical

words, “If only you had turned the same burning attention to God for the happiness you repeatedly long for from my body, you would have attained him long back!” On hearing these words of wisdom, their desire got directed towards divine devotion. Instantaneously, Vipranarayana was transformed as saint Vipranarayana and Tulsidas blossomed into saint Tulsidas. These are but two examples out of the innumerable. And how remarkable they are! If we contemplate deeply on this, a true spiritual experience will dawn, and instantly too.



The only essential for such a spiritual experience to occur in our life, is to grasp the essence and deep truth underlying the following three symbolic delineations:

- (1) *Hot ice cream*: Ice cream is a product of concentrated chilling and freezing. Can heat have any place there at all?
- (2) *You cannot have the cake and eat it too*: If one eats the cake, the palm which held it will obviously become empty!

(3) *The boat to Yaazhpaanam*: When we cross the sea from southern tip of India to northern tip of Sri Lanka, at a particular place, we can see the Indian shore but not the shore of Sri Lanka. When the boat moves a little further, the coast of Sri Lanka can be seen but not the Indian coast. From this we have the ideogram, *the boat to Yaazhpaanam*.



These analogies are especially true when it comes to spiritual life. One can either have the variety of the world or the solitary silence of the Self! Never ever, the two together! The freedom of choice is always ours. Thus, an extraordinary and beautiful spiritual experience, as experienced by saints through centuries, awaits us at our inner threshold even now.



'I AM' IS THE TRUTH

In the ninth verse of Bhagavan's *Bhagavad Gitaasaaram*, it is declared, "The unreal has no existence whatsoever. And, reality is never non-existent."



Recently, a young seeker, who for the first time, had had a brief experience of reality, wrote to me "By some grace, I

was able to have a glimpse for a very brief period. It made me look at things, in and around, as they ARE. Now I realize, how in those moments there was no outwardly difference, whatsoever. But I also realized, that the mind then pretended to create inwardly, as if all forms of differences did exist. Yet, as my attention in the quest was unwavering, I felt a state transcending the mind, in which energy was gathered in a sustained manner. It carried me to the experience of Awareness *per se*, as you call it. This energy even guided me to moderate my food intake yesterday, and I felt complete fullness of the stomach! This inward spiritual explosion, as you always put it, for the first time in forty four years, enabled me to be Awareness *per se*! Is this the state that Bhagavan calls the Self, the Heart, the 'I AM?'"



Reality is not an ideal, theoretical state. The very idea that reality can be attained only after long sadhana and at a

future date is a mistake. The Truth or reality always exists. And it exists within every being. Sages are those who pay attention constantly to this reality that ever exists as 'I AM' within. Truth is not a newly invented reality for the sage. Therefore, the ignorance of a spiritual seeker refers only to his *not* paying attention to the Truth that is ever shining within. The moment introspection takes place, Truth reveals itself.



When we turn our attention within, which actually means a moment of total denial of identification with our body and mind, an explosion takes place. Such an explosion need not necessarily result in the kind of colossal transformation that happened to Bhagavan or to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It can be on the other hand the experience of a very simple revelation as quoted above. Such explosions happen to all of us. Unfortunately we do not take notice of it. For us to be aware of such explosions we need to pay full attention, inwardly. Conversely, not paying attention is the only reason why reality

doesn't reveal itself. Explosions take place in the core of the Heart revealing the Truth that one is the ever existing reality.



A MOTHER'S TALE – I

Till very late in the 1940s, our family was staying in a house situated on the main road, called Big Street, in Tiruvannamalai town. From my childhood, I was very attached to my mother. When all the other members at home went to the *ashram* to be with Bhagavan, I always preferred to be with my mother with only the two of us at home. During such sessions, I have observed my mother go out of the way and feed with great care, love and attention, a few mad *sadhus* and

beggars who were ignored, insulted and even beaten up by others.

Once I asked her why she was so kind and attentive to such people. Though my mother's reply initially stunned me, later on it took me to a different dimension of joy and contentment.

“One day, when I was helping the elderly lady-cooks in the *ashram* kitchen, Bhagavan came there. It was forenoon. He stopped, looked pointedly at me and said, ‘Sages and saints come to Arunachala, putting on various disguises. The mask, with which they often shun public attraction and adoration, is that of a mad person or a beggar. So, whoever comes and knocks at the door should forthwith be attended to and fed well. Such loving care bestowed on them, accrues great spiritual merit, the merit which is attained only after prolonged penance’. I knew on that day that Bhagavan had initiated me into a very special, spiritual ritual!”



The strange spiritual ritual, as it were, into which my mother was initiated by Bhagavan, had another dimension too. It was not merely the unknown, unrecognized, strange-looking *sadhus* and beggars who were fed by her. Recognized and reputed renunciates also received alms from her hands. Whether they stood outside the house or were seated inside, she fed them sumptuously with her usual attitude of worshipful reverence.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, quite often used to tell me, “In those days, when people looked down upon this beggar and drove him out with disdain, your mother would invite me home by sending your sister, the little girl Lakshmi, to fetch me from the Dakshinamurti shrine near the *ashram* and feed this beggar with great joy and delight!”



I recollect a significant happening that took place in the 1970s. By then, I had come to the *ashram* on a permanent basis. In the *ashram* cow shed, the newborn calves, were all

mysteriously dying one after the other. The veterinary doctor was not able to diagnose the malady and prevent this calamity. This pained all of us, especially my mother. One day, this chain of mysterious deaths suddenly stopped. All of us were naturally delighted. But no one, including the veterinarian, could figure out how or why.

Later we came to know. The previous day my mother had given a *sadhu* alms at our house. This *sadhu*, before leaving the house, gave my mother a very attractive, medium sized, bronze statue of a cow to keep in the *pooja* room. Consequently, my mother had started doing *pooja* to it! Today, the life saving statue is still there.



A MOTHER'S TALE – II

My mother's last days in the local government hospital were unforgettable ones. I used to do my work in the *ashram* from half past three in the morning to eight at night. Then I would go to the hospital, stay with her, attend to her needs and keep her company. Those days, we were often left alone and undisturbed. She was suffering from cardiac asthma, a very painful and fatal disease. Whenever I cried, on seeing her

suffering from breathlessness, she got very angry with me. “Is this all that you have learnt from the teachings of Bhagavan and after having lived with me for so many years? Am I the body? The body may suffer, or may not suffer. How are we concerned about that? I am the Self. So too are you, my son. The moment of witnessing death, either of oneself or that of a dear one, is a great opportunity for one to get established in enlightenment! I bless you! Let your attention be on Awareness, always”. Following my mother’s words, I keenly observed her during her last moments. She passed away, fully conscious, and with a beautiful smile on her face! Thus, on that eventful day, she blessed me by helping me drop whatever little attachment that I had for the world!



About three days before her death, a reputed doctor residing in the town, along with the government doctor, examined my mother. They took me aside and told me that my mother’s condition was very bad. She needed intensive care

and advanced treatment. These were not available locally. They suggested that I take her to Madras, Vellore or Pondicherry. After they left, my mother called me and asked me what the doctors had said. I told her the truth. She held my hands and with tears in her eyes, pleaded with me, “I want you to make two promises to me. Under no circumstances should you go back on these.”

My mother was and still is my *upa-guru*, the one who helps and directs one to the *sadguru*. I swore to her sincerely that I would fulfill my promises. I asked her humbly what she wanted me to do. She said, “Don’t take this body while it still lives, away from Arunachala. Secondly, don’t permit the doctors to give sedatives and put me in an unconscious state”. I promised to adhere to her instructions.

However, I requested her to explain her strange demand. She said, “One day, when I was assisting the lady cooks in the *ashram* kitchen, Bhagavan came in and specifically turning his attention on me, said, ‘One should die consciously. If one dies consciously, one is blessed to have no more births. On the other hand, dying unconsciously is a sure sign of having

another birth and entering into another body.' Therefore my dear son, give me the chance to die consciously. You already know from Bhagavan's *Collected Works* that by staying within the radius of thirty miles of Arunachala, one is assured of enlightenment! Please see that I leave this heavy burden of a body, as enjoined by my beloved master”.

By Bhagavan's grace, despite stiff resistance, I succeeded in keeping my mother's sick and suffering body at Arunachala and let her to be Absorbed in Arunachala at Arunachala.



WITH NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ – I

Ever since I was introduced to the great sage, Nisargadatta Maharaj, perhaps in 1975, I used to go regularly to listen to his words of wisdom. He took to me with filial affection, though I have always regarded him as one of the greatest *jnanis* I have come across.

Instead of reaching punctually as I normally did, one day for certain unavoidable reasons, I could go to his presence only an hour late. I saw expressions of irritation on the faces of his audience! What happened next was so astounding that I would rather quote the diary entry I made on that day: “9-2-'79. Reached Maharaj's place by 11.30. Mr. & Mrs. Sapre were there. Immediately Maharaj directed Mrs. Sapre to put a huge cushion and requested me to be seated on it. He then applied *tilak* and perfumes and garlanded me. He also gave me gifts. He

even prostrated before me. He said, ‘This is how in Bharat a *jnani* greets another *jnani*.’ I prostrated immediately at his feet. Then he told me that as soon as I reach the *ashram* I should start giving talks. I am both amazed and puzzled.” I am ashamed to admit that I could fulfill this specific commandment only after a lapse of eleven years.

He then told me, “Sri Ramana Maharshi is my brother. So, you are like my grandson. In our culture, only the grandfather should give gifts to the grandson. Not the other way around. Therefore, never bring me gifts like garlands and fruits, and never ever, bring me money!” He even instructed his family members that no one should prevent me from coming in and seeing him, at any time, any day. Another day he told me, “We are three brothers, Ramana Maharshi, J. Krishnamurti and I. We teach the same truth, but in different languages, that’s all!” Maharaj was ever the spiritual emperor. Indeed, doesn’t *maharaj* mean king?



In 1975, a devotee in Bombay took me out in her car, saying that she was taking me to a great saint! It was my very first encounter with Maharaj. He was gracious enough to shower his blessings on me through a deep, long look of compassion, wisdom and silence. He suddenly addressed me, “A seeker should look down upon the ‘I am the body’ idea, like an orthodox Brahmin looks down upon a non-vegetarian dish.” He repeated the statement thrice. His silent presence, his look of grace and his words of wisdom, put me into a state of ecstasy. For the first time in my life my body and mind were fully immersed in silence and stillness for a long, long time. It was a real miracle that Maharaj performed that day. It was not only a spiritual one, but as subsequent events proved, a physical one, too.



From my childhood, I have had a strong aversion to any non-vegetarian dish. Its colour and odd odour nauseated my very being.

On the evening of the same day I met Maharaj, my close friend invited me for dinner. His Muslim family was a large one. It was also one of the wealthiest in Bombay. My friend had turned a strict vegetarian. There was a large dining table around which the family members sat. The table was strewn with an enormous quantity and variety of non-vegetarian food. This was a surprise to me as I had never expected to be offered food at a non-vegetarian table!

While I sat viewing the large spread, I suddenly noticed that my life-long aversion to non-vegetarian food had dropped off by itself! I did not feel even the least bit of aversion, not to speak of throwing up! Instead I felt at home. Ever since, even during my many tours abroad, I have noticed that I can look at all food with an equal eye, though, I am still a very strict vegetarian. Thanks to Maharaj's miraculous grace, the body-idea had dropped. And along with it had dropped, my aversion to dead body food!



WITH NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ – II

Maharaj gave daily talks between ten and twelve noon. He spoke in Marathi, his native language. These talks were translated into English by a few of his close followers. As days progressed, professors in philosophy and psychology from all over the world, and especially from the USA, flocked to Maharaj's residence in Mumbai. All were welcome. Maharaj spoke spontaneously. Questions and answers sessions were

enlivening and spiritually very enlightening. Though he was illiterate, his responses to questions and doubts put before him, came straight from his Heart and fully corroborated the scriptures. It was a daily marvel to listen to Maharaj's scintillating and original replies, soaked as they were in wisdom.

In the evening, Maharaj conducted sessions in which only Marathi speaking seekers were allowed. In these sessions a Marathi scholar would read out a passage from saint Jnaneshwar's commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, *Jnaneshwari*. Maharaj would then expound on its spiritual significance as borne out by his own experience. A few years after my close association with him, he pointedly told me one day to come to that evening's session. I was thrilled!



When I reached his residence, there was already a big crowd. Maharaj signaled me to sit in the front row, opposite to him. He bent down and told me in Hindi, a language I partially understand, "Listen to every word I speak!" He then gave a

torrential talk on a verse from the Gita in Marathi, for nearly an hour! I listened to every word that dropped uninterruptedly and forcefully from his lips. It was a scintillating experience.

As soon as the veritable Niagara of words came to an end, Maharaj bent down to me and smilingly posed the question, “Have you understood everything I said? Did you grasp its meaning?” A solemn but very firm reply burst forth from my Heart, albeit through my mouth, “Yes, Maharaj! I have understood completely and thoroughly every word you uttered.”

Maharaj lifted me up, embraced me and said, “Yes! I know. That’s why I invited you. I wanted to make you experience that dimension of listening, which is beyond the realm of the brain, mind and ego. Purely the Heart’s language! True sharing is this Heart to Heart language! You’re blessed my child! Be happy!”



I forthwith understood what J. Krishnamurti used to tell his audience, before commencing every talk of his, “Sirs! Please *listen* to what the speaker says. Do not accept what he says. Also, do not reject what he says! Simply, *listen!*”



WITH NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ – III

Nisargadatta Maharaj's answers to spiritual questions were not the usual repetitions of scriptural statements. Nor were they merely excellent explanation of this own experiential state. They were impregnated with a spontaneous and immediate spiritual power that instantly put listeners into a here and now state! For instance, when asked what the difference between awareness and consciousness was, his answer was, "When awareness catches hold of an object, it

becomes consciousness!” I call such answers atom bomb answers! When one *listens* to it, one is instantly transported from one’s conditioned consciousness to a totally unconditioned, here and now state.



As early as our first meeting, Maharaj had categorically told me about the filial relationship between the two of us. One day, when out of ignorance I overstepped the boundaries, he proved to me how unconditionally supreme he was in keeping it.

It was Maharaja’s birthday. Out of my devotion for him, I took fruits, flowers, garlands, and clothes on a plate. Inadvertently, I had also put on the plate, a sealed envelope containing fifty–one rupees. When all had left, I placed the plate in front of Maharaj and prostrated before him. My devotion to him brought tears of joy and I lay prostrate for a long time. Maharaj put his hand on my head and affectionately asked me to get up. He looked pleased and accepted all my

offerings. But suddenly, he clapped his hands. His daughter-in-law came up. He told her something in Marathi. After some time she brought an envelope and gave it to him. Maharaj blessed me repeatedly and gave me permission to leave. When I was leaving, he gave me this envelope and said, “Remember, I told you on the very first day itself that only the grandfather should give gifts to the grandson. Open the envelope I have given you only after you reach home. Not before!” When as bid by Maharaj I opened the envelope at home, I found fifty one rupees in it!



After two years, I took my younger brother who was working in Mumbai at that time, and his family, to Maharaj. My brother presented a plate with many offerings. Despite my pleading with him not to offer money, he included a sealed envelope containing one hundred and one rupees. Maharaj did exactly what he had done to me. Without opening my brother’s envelope, he gave another one to my brother and

asked him to open it only after he had reached home. Of course, when my brother opened it, he found one hundred and one rupees! The grandsons had disobeyed and erred. But the glorious grandfather had rectified their mistakes through acts of grace. Acts, that one's mind rushes to label as miracles.



WITH MOTHER RAMA DEVI

Mother Rama Devi of Mangalore was a great saint. I had the privilege of receiving the Mother's blessings when she visited Ramanasramam in 1960. Her teaching is rooted in *advaita* and pure devotion.

The author of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Munagala Venkataramaiah, who was then an inmate of the *ashram*, guided me to approach the lady saint with devotion, faith and

understanding. He said, “To our knowledge, after the great Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, it is only Mother Rama Devi who spontaneously enters into *bhava samadhi*. This is an ecstatic state where the body stays still for a long time, exuding spiritual grace effortlessly! Witness that splendour this evening when her devotees conduct the bhajans.”



It was a thrilling spiritual experience to see the Mother go into *bhava Samadhi!* The devotees were singing *bhajans*. Suddenly, the Mother who was seated in deep meditation, got up and started dancing fiercely. The *bhajan* was in worship of the divine goddess, Durga, who had fought and killed the demon, Mahishaasura. When the verses described the fierce fight, Mother Rama Devi enacted it vividly. Though her eyes were closed, her movements were full of perfect rhythm, incomparable splendour and extraordinary beauty. After slaying the demon, she stood in *bhava Samadhi*, triumphant, still, and fully absorbed in the Self! Witnessing that

resplendence, I felt a different dimension in my consciousness open up.



Later, I was very fortunate to have a long and exclusive audience with her. There were only the two of us. From among the many important spiritual secrets disclosed to me on that day by Mother Rama Devi, I want to share with sincere seekers one very important revelation –the Mother principle.

She told me, “The mother is so sacred that even the greatest of renunciates –Adi Sankara, Pattinathar and Bhagavan –came and attended on their mothers during their last days. Bhagavan even gave enlightenment to his mother! The mother-son relationship is not merely a karmic connection. It is a true spiritual link. Actually, every mother is great since she gives the soul to the child in its sixth month when it is still in the womb. Till, then, it is merely a biological, fleshy growth. Only after that, does it become a human being. Have you ever thought about it?

The mother, while carrying the baby, is the only human being who has two souls, simultaneously, in a single body. A mother's gift is thus, the greatest gift. No man can ever have this honour. The mother-principle assumes the highest importance in a spiritual seeker's life. This is a spiritual secret. Worship your mother and your spiritual aspirations will surely be crowned with success!" I bowed down repeatedly to the great mother principle, sitting in front of me with a human form and name, Mother Rama Devi!



Later, I came to know that in the Hindu scriptures, which prescribe rituals for all important occurrences in human life, it is stated that before six months of pregnancy, if a miscarriage takes place, no rituals need be performed. But if this happens after the sixth month, full ritualistic ceremonies have to be performed by the father of the child as if a fully grown child had died. It proved to me that the soul enters the foetus in the sixth month. This knowledge humbled me and

gave me a deep insight into the physical and spiritual glory of the mother principle. I instantly remembered the profound declaration of Swami Ramdas, “The sun, the cow and one’s own mother – the three physical aspects of God – are available to all human beings!”



Recently, I came across a profound passage from the sacred statements of Prophet Mohammad. Someone asked the Prophet, “Who has the greater right over children, the mother of the father?” He answered, “The mother’s right is greater than the father’s”. He was asked this three times. And each time, his answer was the same. The fourth time he said, “The Father’s right comes next.” “Why do you give the mother three rights to the father’s one?” The Prophet replied, “Your mother carried you for nine months in her womb and then, gave birth to you. After that she gave up her sleep for you, suckled you, carried you in her arms and cleaned you. For years she cooked for you, fed you and served you food. She did your laundry.

When you were forty, fifty, sixty, she still followed your progress with interest. Your father sowed you in your mother's womb, provided for your food and made sure you had clothes to wear. Can this be compared with your mother's role?" The questioner went on, "Well, I wonder if I could ever repay my mother for all her help and service, however much I do for her".

The Prophet replied, "You cannot repay so much as one night's due!"

"But, suppose I carry my mother on my back, clean up after her, cook for her and feed her. Suppose, I attend to her as long as she lives?" "There will still be this difference between you. Your mother looked after your life even before you were born, while you can do so only until she dies!"



WITH MOTHER KRISHNA BAI

Mother Krishna Bai of Anandashram is perhaps the most unrecognized saint of our times. She hid herself tactfully and completely behind the glorious form of her *guru*, Swami Ramdas. Yet, when I approached him for practical, spiritual guidance, Swami Ramdas himself directed me to her. The complete and compassionate saint that Swami Ramdas ever is, drowned me in the ocean of love which adorned the human form of mother Krishna Bai!



In 1960, when I had given up the world and came for good to Bhagavan's *ashram*, I felt I needed spiritual guidance. I approached my teacher, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer. He directed me

specifically to Swami Ramdas, in far off Kerala. When I reached Anandashram, Swami Ramdas directed me to the holy mother, his spiritual consort. I am purposely mentioning all these details so that seekers have the right understanding that, once one has stepped into the river of spirituality, one should allow oneself to be tossed around, hither and thither, like a ball in a game of soccer. This is because the teaching need not necessarily be only through verbal, textual and scriptural statements. It can be through shocks, beatings, disappointment, and even, failure and pain.



When I knelt before mother Krishna Bai, eagerly waiting to receive her spiritual instructions, she bent and touched my head. Then, came the bomb, “It is unfortunate that you are born in the family of a very great saint!” After a pause she hardened her voice and said, “People will tell you that you are already realized, as you are born into Bhagavan’s family. They may say that those born in a saint’s family, up to seven

generations before and seven generations after, are already granted liberation. They may even quote the scriptures in support. But don't believe any one of them. God is always very impartial. His holy feet, or Self-realization, can be earned only through arduous *sadhana*. Every being, including those born in a saint's family, has to start *sadhana* from point zero. No one can begin it from point forty, fifty, or sixty. And never, ever, from point hundred!"



The form of grace that she ever IS, continued, "You have been entrusted to me by Swami Ramdas, my *guru*. I will guide you. Your *sadhana* is to bring back to Ramanasramam, all those old devotees of Bhagavan who have left and are now staying outside Arunachala. Go in search of them and bring them to live again in the *ashram*. Your *sadhana* is to attend to all their needs and look after them throughout the rest of their life. I will be with you, supporting you in this strenuous *sadhana*. So start

from zero. I will take you to hundred. The work of completion is my duty. Don't worry about it. I am always with you!"



For the next twenty nine years, I had no need to go to her for further instructions. The work entrusted to me absorbed my whole attention. I was happy all through my *sadhana*. However, in 1989, I went to her when she was bed-ridden. She made me stay with her for two months, showering her affection and blessings on me. One day, she called me and asked, "How many old devotees of Bhagavan did you look after?" "Nearly sixty of them. Not only did I attend on them, I also carried their dead bodies to the burial ground and either cremated or buried them." "How many are still left?" "Only two!" "Who are they?" "Kunju Swami and Ramaswami Pillai," I answered. She looked immensely pleased. When I prayed to her to shower her blessings on me, she fondly touched my head and said, "It is my responsibility to take you to final emancipation. Be assured, I am with you always. Pursue Self-

enquiry. You are very near the goal. Be happy. There is some more work to be done by you. Remember, completion of your freedom is my task! I bless you, my child!”



Kunju Swami dropped the body in 1992. Three years later, in 1995, Ramaswami, Pillai died. I interred his body in the tomb. The same day, after the ceremonies were over, an inner voice commanded me to stay alone and intensify my *sadhana*.

From whom else could the commandment be? Except from the divine mother?



WITH SAI MIRCHANDANI

In those days I had to travel to the big cities of India to gather advertisements for the *ashram* journal, *The Mountain path*. On one of those tours, I was in Mumbai. Influential devotees of Bhagavan would introduce me to industrialists who, on their part, used to fulfill my requirements. This was a routine that I had to follow as the journal's managing editor.

One day, I had to meet the head of one of India's biggest industrial houses. He was the most imposing and impressive business personality I had ever met. Nervously, I broached my subject. He was very blunt, "Don't bother about the advertisement. It is done. Now, please tell me about Ramana Maharshi." My five-minute appointment got extended to an

hour! He was so moved listening to the direct teaching of Bhagavan's Self-enquiry that he wanted to go deeper into it. Instantly, we became close friends. He invited me to take a ride with him in the evening to visit his *guru*, a Sufi saint.



The saint's name was Sai Mirchandani. When we reached his residence, it being time for supper, the saint invited us to join him. Noticing a sense of hesitation, he said, "All pure vegetarian dishes only!" I felt very close to him, as if I knew him for decades. From his plate he gave me a portion of what he was eating. For me it was *prasad*, consecrated food. The moment I ate it, I had an experience of tremendous ecstasy. The saint smiled at me and said, "It is Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's *prasad*, not this *fakir's!*"



After dinner, we had a wonderful *sat sang*. What a great *mahatma* he was! One of the many important, spiritual revelations he made that day is of such significance, that all earnest seekers can still follow it and be benefited.

Sai said, “The *Maha Kumbhamela* which takes place once in twelve years, starts within a month from now at Allahabad. I would like you to go and participate in it. Very great *mahatmas* will come for that sacred occasion. It is my keen wish that you should receive all their blessings. Many who roam about naked on the snowy peaks of the Himalayas will be there. The blessings of these *siddha purushas* are very effective. You should receive them all!”



I wondered, “How am I to know who is a *mahatma*, who is a *siddha purusha*, and who is a *jnan?* Millions of people will be coming to participate in this mammoth celebration. I might go to a saintly-looking person who might turn out to be charlatan. I might ignore an uncouth beggar and he might be a

siddha purusha. I do not have the capacity to identify them. So then, where is the question of my seeking and obtaining their blessings?”

He laughed aloud and replied, “You are putting the cart before the horse my dear brother! Did I ask you to seek them, identify them, and then get their blessings? No, no! Just move through the huge, thickly packed crowds. All the *mahatmas*, *siddha purushas* and *jnanis* present there will bless you profusely. We sages and saints have only one work to perform –to bless the earnest seeker. You may not know them, but every one of them will know you. They cannot but bless you! So, go to all these spiritual and religious congregations. The blessings of the *mahatmas* will fill you up and equip you with the spiritual energy you need to pursue your *sadhana* and effortlessly reach its successful culmination. *Mahatmas* can’t but bless the earnest seeker!”



WITH YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR

It is a fallacy to believe that great sages and saints walked on this earth only during ancient, Vedic times. Even now they are everywhere. Not just in India. Only, we have to have the eyes to see them and the ears to hear them. God's assurance,

according to *Srimad Bhagavatham*, is that he will be accessible in the present, dark age of *Kali yuga*, in the form of sages and saints.



Yogi Ramsuratkumar, a great *siddha purusha*, lived in our midst till as recently as 2001. He often declared, “This beggar has three masters –Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi and Swami Ramdas. My father gave them the work of preaching and teaching. He didn’t give that work to this beggar. Instead he gave this beggar the duty of alleviating the physical, mental and spiritual suffering of earnest seekers.” Many have witnessed the compassionate way in which he helped hundreds of suffering souls, mostly in the physical and mental realms. I would like to share how he once alleviated my spiritual suffering.



J. Krishnamurti was a great spiritual mentor who lived amongst us till 1986. For many years I was blessed to attend all his talks, including his last talk, in Chennai.

As a beginner approaching J. Krishnamurti's teaching, I was faced with two hurdles. (i) He employed unconventional terms. (ii) He rejected all forms of spiritual technique and even exhorted his listeners not to follow any scripture, *guru* or God.

I put my problems before Yogi Ramsuratkumar, who was himself, a great admirer of this modern sage. He listened attentively, and with a brilliant smile said, "Krishnaji is for non-believers. For us believers there are any number of masters to follow. But for genuine non-believers, what is the recourse? Hence, Krishnaji chooses terms that are different, yet completely acceptable to non-believers," After a pause, he added, "I assure you, Krishnaji gives us the same essence as any of the great masters. But he couches it in opposite terminologies!"



As I sat transfixed, and puzzled over his explanation, Yogi Ramsuratkumar narrated a page from his own life history. “My master, Swami Ramdas, emphasized that everything is in the Name. When I read J. Krishnamurti with equal reverence and interest, I found that he said there is nothing in the Name. I was perplexed with these two differing and diametrically opposite statements. I also knew that both these utterances came from great masters. But by now, Swami Ramdas had passed away.

So, I sought Krishnaji to get this clarified. I went to Madras. But Krishnaji had gone to Rishi Valley. I went there. I could not meet him. He then went to Bombay. I followed him. There also, I could not meet him. He returned to Madras. I too, relentlessly followed. I was keen to get my doubt cleared by this living master. In Madras, I was told I could not meet him.

Early one morning, I waited in the garden of Vasant Vihar, where he was residing, hoping that he would come down and meet me. What happened after that, I can't describe as dream, vision or reality! But this is what happened. Krishnaji

came straight to me. I prostrated fully before him. After some time, he lifted me up affectionately and put both his hands on my shoulders tenderly. I could not speak a single word as I was in a state of spiritual awe, physical wonder and mental exhilaration! He said in his ever-sweet voice, “Both of us say the same thing!”



I was in ecstasy. My doubt was eradicated. Yes! Both the statements, “Name is everything” and “Name is nothing”, convey in essence, the same Truth. *Purna*, total Presence, and *sunya*, total Absence mean exactly the same, single, indivisible Oneness!”



Having received this inspiring clarification from the incomparable *siddha purusha*, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, I plunged again into reading both J. Krishnamurti and Bhagavan Ramana.

It was not surprising that I stumbled across a plethora of striking similarities. These not only gladdened my heart, but also widened my understanding that all masters speak the same Truth, though in different languages!

The *Upanishads* too, proclaim this same truth, “*Ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti*”. It means, “Truth is one. Sages speak of it differently!



WITH KRISHNA PREMI MAHARAJ

“Rejoice in being conscious of Awareness. This is the essence of *sat-chit-ananda*, Awareness – Consciousness – Bliss”, says Krishna Premi Maharaj, a *mahatma* who lives in Paranur, a village near Thiruvannamalai. In obedience to his *guru's* instructions, he travels through the year, throughout India, expounding the story of Lord Rama, the *Ramayana*, and the story of Lord Krishna, *Srimad Bhagavatham*. When I looked

at this great saint with reverence, he continued, “Sayings of *mahatmas* and scriptural utterances abound with Truth. They are not statements but states to be directly experienced by the seeker!”



“The scriptures say that the non-moving, all-powerful *Brahman*, the ultimate Truth, expresses itself as *sat-chit-ananda*. What does it mean? Since the whole, the *Brahman*, permeates all that exists, nothing is left out without containing these three aspects of the ultimate Truth.

How? Let us take a simple, everyday example. When one is attracted to an object, how exactly does the act of attraction to the object take place? Let us view ice cream as the object. The ice cream is there. It exists. You recognize it as ice cream. You are conscious of it. And you like it immensely. You enjoy the bliss of eating it. So even in an inert object like ice cream, *sat-chit-ananda* is explicitly experienced! It exists (*sat*), you are conscious of it (*chit*), and you enjoy it (*ananda*).

Thus, in many aspects of daily life too, the experience of *sat-chit-ananda* is revealed. With this understanding, let us go deeper within and rejoice in *sat-chit- ananda*. You are thus always soaked in *sat-chit-ananda*. If you fully grasp this simple fact, you would have taken the first step to being established in Truth!”



On another day, the *mahatma* was compassionate enough to freely talk to me. He said, “Even for serious seekers there exists a doubt. How did the all-pervading whole, the *Brahman*, get caught up as an individual soul within a human body? The explanation is very simple.

Consider: There is a large wall. You draw a small circle on it with a colour chalk. Having drawn it you wonder, ‘How did the wall come inside this circle?’

First of all, you defiled the wall by drawing a circle on it. This is the same as taking your body to be your Self. The wall was already there. It did not come into the circle. The

superimposed demarcation of limiting yourself as the body has caused all the confusion.

Actually, there is no room for any confusion as the Self alone exists, and always too! Fully cognize that whenever you are not conscious of the body, as in deep sleep, you continue to exist as the Self. The Self is the only continuous Truth. All the rest are *partial* truths.



Pay full attention to the ‘I AM’ and not to ‘I am this name and form’. Give up your identification with the body and all problems are instantly solved. You will then be constantly established in the Self. Bhagavan authoritatively declares that Awareness is the ‘I AM’. Experience it by remaining as the Self, always. Give up the ‘I am the body’ idea.” This inimitable saint still lives in our midst. How fortunate we are!



FROM STATEMENTS TO STATES

“*Aano bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah*”, says the *Rig Veda*. It means, let noble thoughts come to us from everywhere.

The *ananda* aspect of existence is always there in every being, although it is apparently hidden. The *sat* and *chit* aspects need the clarity of the waking state. The *ananda* aspect though, is instantly experienced in deep sleep as it surges from within like water gushing forth from a spring. Bhagavan gave great importance to focusing attention on experiencing the *ananda* aspect of deep sleep.



Bhagavan has stated, “One is ever in deep sleep only”. Experiencing this state, where the world is not seen, prepares us for plunging into a deeper state and realize the Truth. In more than ninety places in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Bhagavan cites the example of deep sleep. He thus drives home the importance of experiencing our own true state of silence, *ananda*, stillness, peace, fullness and non-duality. These are available to everyone in deep sleep, daily. The moment our attention is fully directed to the *ananda* aspect of deep sleep, we have won half the battle. And this happens purely due to the *guru’s* grace.



There is a person known as the ‘walking–no–talking’ Swami, who goes round Arunachala Hill whenever he happens to be there. It is pure joy, just to look at him. Alone he dances, around the mountain – day and night! (This Swami left his body some ten years ago).

Once, I confronted him saying, “Swami! You are ever immersed in *Ananda* (bliss). Why don’t you give us that *ananda* in which you are always soaked and saturated?” He burst out laughing. Then he gesticulated in a powerful way, pointing his hand towards Arunachala, as if to convey, “What else is there, except *ananda* ? That which IS, is only *ananda*. Every one is submerged only in it, as if under a deluge of water. Also, who is to give *ananda* and to whom?” He laughed again.

Waves of ecstasy reigned and looking at him, instantly filled me with bliss! This experience of bliss was the direct blessing of the ‘walking-no-talking-Swami’. And, it happened without a word being uttered by him.



Recently, in August, 2005, at Nagore, the only Sufi center in India, where I am told Sufi masters still live, my friend and I were blessed to be in the presence of a Sufi master.

In his presence, we were transported as it were, into a different world of *ananda*. I expressed to him our great joy to

be in the proximity of a true Sufi master. In all seriousness, he said, “God is an enormous, gushing, sacred river. Seekers need to bathe in it. We saints are like bathing ghats with well built steps to help them reach the river and safely bathe in it. Plunging within into one’s Heart, is synonymous with taking bath in the river. The *guru’s* instructions are the ghats. *Ananda* or bliss is God, the river.”



As seekers, we should humbly receive the profound statements of sages without interference from the analytical mind. These statements then, will instantly become our own state of experience.

Let statements come to us from any one, from anywhere and in any form. Let us make them into our own states. By listening to them in silence!



WITH THE SAINT OF MALLIYOOR

In September 2005, I had the good fortune to meet Malliyoor Shankaran Namboodiri in the company of N.S. Venkataraman and other devotees. This eighty five year old saint was the priest of a small Ganesha temple in his village. In his youth, an incurable disease struck him. As advised by his *guru*, he went to the Guruvayoor temple and did a complete exposition of *Srimad Bhagavatham*, an ancient scripture that tells the stories of Lord Vishnu. Consequently he was

completely cured! In gratitude, he dedicated his life to the Lord and to expounding the *Bhagavatham*. To date, he has completed *Bhagavatha Sapthaaham*, a traditional telling of the story in seven days, two thousand two hundred times. People now throng to him to receive his blessing. The saint however says, “I do not know why they all come to me. I am but an ordinary devotee of the Lord.”



When I was introduced to the saint, he remarked, “How blessed you are to have been touched by Sri Ramana Maharshi! The only good fortune that we householders who live with worldly entanglements enjoy is the visit of gifted souls like you. We who are bound will not go to visit such great souls. They come to bless us.”

When with great reverence I asked him to bless me, he replied, “It is you who have to bless me. In *Bhagavatham*, king Prithu says, ‘I always seek the blessing of saints. I speak in front of them not to show off my knowledge, but to get corrected by

them.’ This is our attitude. Some speakers begin the talk by saying, ‘I am here to tell you...’ That very moment we can be sure that they know nothing.”



Venkataraman briefly explained to him Bhagavan’s teaching of surrender and Self-enquiry. The saint then quoted a verse from *Bhagavatham* and explained, “In deep sleep there is no personal ‘I’. Still, there exists another ‘I’. Who is that ‘I’? He is the Self. He is God. He can be realized only when the mind is purified through devotion and dedication. We have heard about how our eyes get the power to see treasures hidden beneath the earth when magic colliryum is applied to them. So too, when one gains subtlety through devotion and the *guru’s* blessings, the Truth or *vastu* is seen within oneself clearly and directly.”



The saint then insisted on us having *chaaya*, Malayalam for tea. At this, Venkataraman, punning on the word *chaaya*, quoted a verse from the *Bhagavatham* that says that those people who take refuge in the Lord's shadow, *chaaya*, in Sanskrit, will have no worldly attachments! Appreciating the pun, the saint laughed and laughed. Seeing this most remarkable laughter welling up in waves on the saint's childlike face, all of us were inundated in laughter and ecstasy.



Later, the saint too regaled us with a pun. "In Kerala, there were many followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi during his lifetime. I am very happy today to get this *Sat sang*. Today is really a holy day." This was a pun on the word 'holiday' since that day was a declared holiday. He continued, "The day on which one meets a devotee of the Lord is truly a holy day. Otherwise for us, there is only contact with worldly people. Rarely do true devotees come." Before leaving, when I asked him for some spiritual instruction, he replied, "Who am I to give

upadesa, instruction? What can I talk? In the Malayalam language the word *samsaram* means both 'talk' and 'bondage'. Some great person, with a keen sense of humor must have given the word *samsaram*, which in Sanskrit means *only* bondage, the meaning 'talk' in Malayalam. So talking itself is the cause for bondage –*samsaram* is the cause for *samsaram*!”

Isn't this a great *upadesa* from the venerable, childlike saint of Malliyoor?



BHAKTI IS JNANA MATA

Bhagavan approved of two methods to attain Self-relation. Ask 'who am I?' and realize that there never is a separate 'I', and that the Self alone exists. Or surrender the 'I' and 'me' to the higher power with the conviction 'Not me, only God exists'. In both methods, annihilation of the individual 'I' is the final attainment. These two paths are like the two sides of the same coin.



Generally, the path of surrender or devotion is taken as the easier of two. In fact, there is no definite line separating

these two paths, the path of wisdom or *jnana* and the path of devotion or *bhakti*. They complement each other. In the life of a seeker, utter devotion and surrender predominate at one time. At other times, subtle ecstasy is invoked through a profound statement of pure wisdom.



“*Bhakti is jnana mata*”, said Bhagavan. This means, devotion is the mother of wisdom. Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s teaching is acclaimed as pure *bhakti marga*, and that of Bhagavan Ramana as *jnana marga*.



The *mahatma*, Krishna Premi Maharaj once aptly put it, “Ramakrishna Pramahansa was a fully realized, pure *jnani* within, but preached the *bhakti marga*. Whereas, Bhagavan was a fully ripened, pure *bhakta* within. But his teaching is the

highest *jnana marga*. In the experience of inner felicity, both *jnana* and *bhakti* are the same.”



On September, 1, 1896, the very first day of his arrival in Arunachala, Bhagavan, then a youth of sixteen years, surrendered himself fully and completely to Arunachala, saying, “Father! I have come at Thy bidding. Thy will be done!” The rest of his life of fifty four years at Arunachala was a steady stream of complete surrender.



“There is a higher power which is looking after every one, leave it to Him. He will take care of you as well.” This was Bhagavan’s reply when a devotee cried over his life’s travails.



In *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, it is recorded, “The *aarti* plate offered to Sri Arunachaleswara, was brought to Bhagavan by the *ashram* devotees. Bhagavan took a little *vibhuti*, sacred ash, and applied it to his forehead, saying in an undertone, ‘*Appavukku pillai adakkam,*’ meaning ‘the son is beholden to the Father’. His voice seemed choked with emotion as he spoke. The expression on his face proved the ancient saying. ‘*Bhakti poornathaya jnanam,*’ which means, the culmination of devotion is wisdom”.



For Bhagavan, Arunachala was the father! For all of us true seekers, Bhagavan is the father! As seekers, we are all beholden to him, in past, present and future!



WHAT IS, IS GRACE

Bhagavan, writing about the grace of Arunachala, declares, “It draws one to itself and making him like itself, it swallows him alive.” Similarly, a seeker who has been drawn to Bhagavan is like a bird that is caught up in the tiger’s mouth. It is said that the tiger is the only wild animal from which its prey can never escape. Bhagavan is the fiercest tiger in the spiritual woods.



Bhagavan used to quote a most ordinary, everyday happening. “Having swallowed the food, what else do you do? Isn’t it god, as fire in the stomach, who does the actual act of digesting in the form of perfectly created digestive organs?” Even when our physical system can successfully operate only through His grace, is it difficult for our brains to accept that only God can accomplish the most intricate, complicated and incomprehensible act of perfecting us spiritually? Bhagavan has repeatedly said, “God, *guru* and Self are synonymous.” So, having fallen into his net of grace, we should trust Bhagavan to complete the job of perfecting us spiritually.



The common belief is that grace is obtained only after strenuous effort, that it has to come from somewhere above and beyond, that one has to deserve it, that it has to choose one, and so on. But Bhagavan asserts, “Grace is within every human being, It is the state of true being, true awareness, devoid of otherness. It is the Self. Your very desire for grace is

due to grace that is already within you. Grace is that which always exists”.



That which eternally is, is the ‘I AM’. It is our innermost nature and is available to us at all times. This pure ‘I AM’ in each one of us is grace. Bhagavan identifies grace with the *guru*. Grace as our inner *guru* pulls us inwards, while grace as our outer *guru* pushes us into the Self. The transformation of the seeker into an adept is done by this operation of grace.



But grace seems hidden to the common man. Why? According to Bhagavan, grace is not manifest because of ignorance. With perseverance, it becomes manifest.

As Bhagavan clearly explains, “Grace is necessary for the removal of ignorance. But grace is there all along. Grace is the Self. It is not something to be acquired. All that is necessary, is to know its existence. For example, the sun is brightness only.

It does not see darkness. Only others speak of darkness fleeing away on the sun approaching. Similarly, ignorance also is a phantom and not real. Because of its unreality, once its unreal nature is found it is removed. Again, the sun is there and also bright. You are surrounded by sunlight. Still, if you would know the sun, you must turn your eyes in its direction and look at it. So also, grace is found by practice alone although it is here and now”.



Seekers who feel that they strive, but without success, only have to remember Bhagavan’s reassurance. “God, *guru* and grace are really one and identical. He that has earned the grace of the *guru* shall undoubtedly be saved and never be forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the jaws of a tiger will never be allowed to escape. Nevertheless, the disciple, for his part must unswervingly follow the path shown by the master”.



So, let us joyfully dive within and merge the mind in the Heart. Let us surrender to the holy feet of the *guru* who ever throbs as 'I, I', in the Heart! Let us, in stillness and silence, BE the Self!



DROPS *from the* OCEAN



The author of this book, V.Ganesan, grew up till the age of fourteen in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. After the *mahanirovana* of Bhagavan in 1950, Ganesan went on to get a master's degree in philosophy. Then he came for good to Sri Ramanasramam to look after the old devotees of Bhagavan as his *sadhana*. As a result, he was able to absorb reminiscences of Bhagavan that had never been recorded before. In addition to this, his close contacts with sages like Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Nisargadatta Maharaj and J. Krishnamurti, helped him to deepen and widen his understanding of the essence of Bhagavan's teachings. This book flows from clear waters that he has imbibed in his almost seventy years of spiritual life, inundated by Arunachala's ocean of grace. Earnest and serious seekers can meet the author for *sat sang*, at his cottage 'Ananda Ramana', Tiruvannamalai, between 10:00 and 11:00, every morning.

-S.P. Janarthanan, Bangalore