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नमो भगवते श्री कृष्णाय

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Eternal Bhagavan
by Shantamma - Part IV
continued from the *Jan/Feb* issue

In the kitchen, there were no proper jars for foodstuffs and everything was kept in tins and pots which would leak and spill and make the floor in the kitchen mucky and slippery. Once I scrubbed the kitchen floor very carefully and Bhagavan congratulated me on the neatness in the kitchen. I sighed: "What is the use, Swami. People will come and spill the oil and scatter the flour and it will return to how it was before. We must have proper jars and containers." Ten days later they called me to the Hall. Attendants were opening wooden boxes and there were six beautiful jars. "You wanted jars, now you have jars. Take them to the kitchen," said Bhagavan. On inquiry it was found that some station master had booked them to the Ashram for no ostensible reason.

Such mysterious coincidences happened almost daily, both at the Ashram and in the homes of the devotees. Unless one is himself a witness, one cannot easily believe it, and I found it difficult to convince others that it all happened in front of me, so to say. Such things happen even now. The other day I was taking a lady visitor to the Ashram. I did not feel well and wanted to go home and have some change from eating the Ashram rice, but I stayed for the lady's sake, though I did not eat. That day Subbalakshmi did not stay for food, went home, made some wheat cakes, packed them in a leaf, brought them to the Ashram and gave them to me to eat. She told me that she did not know why and for whom she was baking the cakes until I ate them up. To me it was clearly Bhagavan's care, but can I convince others?

Once I had no money and badly needed some. I prayed silently to Bhagavan: "Ramana, how can I get hold of a little money?" On the third day a money order came for me from one Dr. Srinivasa Rao, whom I did not know. It seems he had been reading Bhagavan's life and on reading the name of "Shantamma" decided that it would be nice to send her some money.

Once we had to fry a big quantity of snake gourd. This vegetable is full of water and the usual way is to squeeze the water out of it to shorten the frying time, but Bhagavan said it should be fried with the water in it. So we sat near the fire, stirring the vegetable in the big iron pan with our long spoons. Suddenly he let go of his spoon and stared, motionless. When I looked at him, my mind stood still. Everything disappeared from before my eyes. After some time he moved and I also moved.

"The curry is noiseless; it is time to add the spices," he said. It could refer to cooking vegetables; it could also refer to his poem, "*Aksharanamanalai*," in which he addresses Arunāchala: "You drugged me with your charm and you took it all of your knowledge." When the curry of the mind is silent, then is the time to add the spice of wisdom.

One day there was talk in the Hall about one of Bhagavan's old devotees who had come under Sri Sai Baba's influence. Bhagavan said: "Once a man has surrendered his life here, he belongs here. Wherever he may go, he shall return. For him this is the door to liberation."

Once a devotee arranged for a big feast for all the inmates and guests of the Ashram. Bhagavan had a bad cold, and whenever he had a cold he would not take milk or curds or coffee. The people in the kitchen prepared some sweet pancakes served with almond milk. We were all sad that Bhagavan would not touch them. Chirnaswami was, naturally, anxious that the feast should go without a hitch and assured us that Bhagavan would relent. Raja raja started serving pancakes to Bhagavan, who asked him: "Are they sweet?"

"No," said Raja Iyer.

"Then put some pepper water," I had the almond milk in hand so I poured it over the cake. Bhagavan flared up: "What I ask for is rassam and you serve me milk? Go and get some rassam." We had to serve him rassam with one more pancake. He mixed it all up-sweet pancakes, almond milk and pepper water and ate this wonderful mixture! After having finished all, he continued complaining: "I ask for one thing and get another. I ask for plain cakes and get sweet ones; I ask for pepper water and get almond milk. You expect the swami to eat as he is told. You seem to know what this is best for your swami."

The next day Bhagavan refused to drink coffee. I gave up coffee too, as a penance, and a hard penance it was! A month passed like this. One day I burst out in tears before Bhagavan: "Swami, I did offend you, but there must be an end to punishment. Please have your coffee."

"No, do not think I gave up coffee to punish you. Why should I punish anybody? I gave up coffee because it does not agree with me. Ask the doctor, he will tell you. He advised me to avoid coffee." Then, turning to the audience, Bhagavan added: "It was the same on the hill. I did not take coffee, nobody would touch it and all would curse the swami for depriving them of coffee."

A few days later Janakiamma brought a huge pot of coffee and put it before Bhagavan. "What am I to do now? Coffee has come by itself; nobody asked Janaki to bring it. Now, if I do not drink it, nobody will touch it and Janaki will be sorry." He did taste some of Janaki's coffee and started taking it again soon after that.

You may ask what this storm in a pot of coffee has to do with liberation and realization. Those who have not lived through it cannot appreciate the deep spiritual effect of these anxieties and conflicts. Our 'I' would hurl itself against the rock of truth and the rock would not yield. The 'I' had to yield and in that yielding was the highest blessing. His anger would sometimes seem to shatter us to pieces, and blessed are they indeed who have seen in his wrath his utmost grace.

After serving for years in the kitchen, I became old, my heart got weak, and I could work no longer. I stopped going to the kitchen and I was wondering what to do next. I did not want to eat without working, nor had I any means to live on my own in Tiruvannamalai. So I wanted to go away to a near relative of mine, a doctor who had been inviting me to come and live with him. One night I dreamt that I was taking Bhagavan's leave and fell at his feet. He told me: "Why do you think of going? Who is there in this world to take care of you?" I disregarded the dream and left the Ashram. I reached the doctor's house on a Saturday afternoon. The doctor, who looked quite healthy, died suddenly on Sunday noon. I went to my own place at Ramnad. There too everything went wrong and I felt so miserable that my relatives bought me a ticket and put me on the train for Tiruvannamalai. I have no place in the world except at his feet, nor do I want any other.

To those who would taunt me by saying, "You were for so long with Bhagavan and still are subject to pain and sorrow," my answer would be: "Each time I was in trouble I experienced his grace. My greatest sorrows led me to the highest bliss. Bhagavan makes me and unmakes me; who am I, a simple old woman, to choose when all comes from him only?"

Ellam Ondre (All is One)
continued from the *Jan/Feb* issue
This 4 part series is available as *a single article*

MP3

In our Sep/Oct 98 issue we documented how Sri Bhagavan took particular interest in the study of this small Tamil book, Ellam Ondre. Below is the sixth and final chapter of the text.

Chapter VI - EGO

1. Oh ego, all the evils of the world are from you. To crush you, the kings make laws and the wise give lessons. In spite of their efforts from time immemorial, alas! you are yet alive; you simply go into hiding and reappear again and again. Can there be no end to you? Yea, it is surely approaching. Another Ego has started to kill you. It is the Universal Ego called "I am Brahman".

2. Eh! ego, think not that your enemy is of your kind. You are perishable whereas He is not. You are conceived as "I" because you always differentiate as "I", "you" and "he," but your enemy is free from this conceit. How? He harmonizes all differences, resolves all into Himself. Moreover, you feel enmity towards Him because he has arisen to kill you. But He has no ill-feelings towards you. How is this? Because you are not to be found in His presence. He regards you as a part of His limbs. Your loss in his proximity is the working of your own falsity; He would not think of killing you because you are of no consequence in His sight. Therefore, ego, you are His enemy, but He is not yours. More briefly put, you are your own enemy. Why? Owing to your greed you flaunted yourself before the Great One as you would elsewhere. Instantly, you were lost; therefore, the Universal Self obscures you by devouring you and then shines forth as All-light.

3. Eh! ego, the evils of your works have no limits. You are not content unless you are exalted above others and others are lowered before you. Endless are your desires, such as "By what title shall I gain honor?" "In what form shall I appear elegant?" "Do others bow to me? Do others obey me in silence?" "Do others say that no one excels me?" Alas! How short is your life! And yet to how much do you aspire! And how much evil you do! You have deluded yourself that there is happiness in such ideas and in differentiating yourself from all others. This is not to your good. Why not? Are not others also entitled to all these? What is your share in things which are common to millions and millions of others? Such being the case, do not desire in vain to rule over all. By your vain desire you bring about evil to yourself and to others. Listen to my friendly advice. Truly speaking, He whom you regard as your mortal enemy is your friend. He knows how to make you worthy of true greatness and blessings. Surrender to Him. This Universal Ego does not treat you as an enemy but is your greatest benefactor.

4. By no means can you discover what He will make of you unless you surrender yourself to Him. However much I may speak of it, you cannot understand. It is a matter of experience. Doubtless He will do nothing less than exalt you to His state. Therefore, be not perplexed about your future; directly surrender yourself. You can always turn away if joy does not arise above them and profit by surrendering to a Master? In your presence the world is an agreeable taste and ends with the satisfaction of hunger, so also surrender starts with delight and ends with Perfect Bliss, which lies beyond evenpleasure and pain. Therefore your goal, without doubt, is this Universal Ego (I-am-Brahman).

5. What will be your new name after surrender? There is no name besides yours. The Vedas laud you; the world praises you; the essence of religious teachings is yourself. Then what is your form? All forms are yours. There is no form which is not yours. What is installed in the temples of worship is you; what is described in the Vedas is you; festivities and celebrations are all for you. Now what can be your power? In your presence the world is active; each is what it is, because of you. Briefly said, all things glorify you and bear witness to your being. They are duty bound to do so. You would not have even dreamt that this will be your state. Start at once, be not self-conceted. This Universal Ego awaits you.

6. Do you wish to wake up from your dream or continue in it? How long will the dream images last? Be not idle, shake off your sleep, wake up! You are witnessing your own mental images and imagining more and more. It is all in vain. Just find out who it is that sees the visions. Do not delude yourself that you are these that rise and sink in you. Wake up. The instant you wake up you will know that waking is better than this dream. Get up! The Universal Ego waits to rejoice at seeing you awake.

7. Fear not the cessation of the present ego dream. Once you are awake you will enjoy the same all the more. You will no longer be deluded and will observe it with cheerful detachment, unconfused. The folly of all appearances will be understood and there will be no burdens. In dream your mental imagery assumes shapes. On waking you know the dream as just a dream. Do not mistake dream for the waking state. Know the dream as dream. For doing so, you must reach the state of "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego) and wake from the illusion of the ego.

8. I have instructed you for your good and not in my own interest. If you believe me, you should act upon what I have taught you. On the other hand, if you see no good in what I have said, then turn away from this ideal. How can I help you if my advice and all the advice of the saints do not make any impression on you? No state is higher than this. Believe me, it is for your good that you realize this truth; and through you others may realize the same. Be free from self-conceit. Start at once. Realize that the Universal Ego is your own.

9 Oh ego, see how you are a slave to all and therefore suffer. How pitiable is your state! All are hostile to you! When you say "for me only," all others will also contend "for me only, for me only". When you say "I am great," they protest, "Why? We are also." All are hostile to you. Owing to the troubles caused by others, your mental images increase a million fold. Should you not rise above them and profit by surrendering to a Master? Then all your enemies will befriended you. If you say to others, "All these are yours," everyone becomes your friend. There is only One who can make you that magnanimous and that is "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego).

10. I shall say one word only and this is not owing to my egoism. It is simply my duty. I do not say this word just for your or my good alone. It is for the good of all. The truth is "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego).

The Journey of My Heart
Passages from the Diary of a Pilgrim to Sri Ramanasramam
(part 9, continued from *Jan/Feb*)

MP3

January 20, 1983 - The Ox Cart Pradakshina

We began to recite the *Akshara Mana Mala!* together, but right at the invocation *Kunju Swami* stopped and said, "Bhagavan has written, '*Extend to me your hand of grace...*' One with Arunāchala, he addressed the Mountain as His equal! This is most rare. In virtually all devotional hymns, the invocation is a prayer to God for His grace. However, Bhagavan wrote, '*Extend to me your hand...*' Bhagavan was a real American!"

When we came to the first verse *Kunju Swami* paused to exclaim, "*Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the Heart, Oh Arunāchala* - all of Bhagavan's teaching is contained in the first verse!"

Our singing continued as one voice in an ecstatic mood as the ox cart bumped down the dirt road toward Adi Annamalai. Sri Arunāchala glowed in the light of dusk. The road was completely deserted and we were free to let our praise of Aru rise from the Heart.

Approaching the town we stopped singing and passed quietly through the village. "There is no hymn like "*Akshara Mana Mala!*," *Kunju Swami* said, "Bhagavan has compared it to the Vedas. Generally, the Vedas are listened to for the vibration of the sound. "Akshara Mana Mala" is similar. In this hymn, we press our demands on Arunāchala; we are on familiar terms with Aru! Bhagavan wrote the hymn as a woman to a man, Arus. See how clever he is! In the end he says, 'Although I have exposed You, You are My Lord! You must be gracious and accept me!'"

Outside of the town, our singing resumed. As our ox cart slowed atop Bhagavan's bridge we saw the large orange ball of the sun setting between the trees lining the road we had just traveled. With the horizon a bright pink and the crescent moon directly overhead in the cool, blue sky, it was a sight of divine beauty. Knowing this to be our last pradakshina, I drank in the scene with my eyes. *Kunju Swami* said, "In New York, you will not see the sunset." "I was just thinking the same thing," I said, "I was just thinking that I will have this be my sunset for the next five years."

We stopped and ate our fill of puffed rice, bananas, peanuts and candy and resumed our way. We also resumed our singing of the "*Marital Garland of Letters*". The mountain was now a dark silhouette against a golden and pink sky radiant with light. It deepened to pink, purple and then darkness as we jangled down the road in our ox cart concert.

"*Kunju Swami* does not like that you have said 'for the next five years,'" Ganesan relayed to me.

"What should I say then?" I asked.

"Our ox cart says you will come back sooner, and when you come back you will be a Tamil pundit!"

As our ox cart came up the road facing Skandasramam, *Kunju Swami* reminisced, "Bhagavan used to come up this road. The houses at night would be lit up, the doors and windows open, and people would be quiet, just like this. 'This is like the turiya state,' Bhagavan would say. 'All the doors of the senses are wide open, and yet the mind is quiet.'"

When we arrived back at the Ashrama *Kunju Swami* remarked we had done tapasya, laughing, as he stretched his legs to climb out of the cart. For me, this was anything but tapasaya, or so I thought!

Over dinner in Paul's room *Kunju Swami* told us two stories about the competition between someone and the sage Vasistha. In each contest the humility of the sage Vasistha brought him victory. The first was a competition to feed 1,008 people 'beneath' one's own station. In the second the challenge was to see who could bring the sun nearer the earth by virtue of his tapasya. The former contestant recited the various places where he had done intense tapasya and described his penances. Then, on the strength of his tapasya, he called the sun to come nearer. The sun advanced one mile. The sage Vasistha pondered deeply. He thought, 'I am a grihastha, I've done no penance to speak of, but once coming through the woods I stopped a while to hear the Vedas recited and expounded. This, I will consider my penance.' So thinking, he called on the sun to come near. The sun came down to earth, causing everyone to scatter. The immaculately pure wife of the sage, Arunditi, was unaffected, however. She hid the sun under her sari, then sent it back to heaven.

The point of the story, *Kunju Swami* concluded, is that you never need feel you have done no penance, for you have gone round Arunāchala, thinking and talking of Bhagavan! If anyone ever challenges you and asks what tapasya you have done, you can say you have done the greatest tapasya, giri pradakshina! There is no tapasya greater than this!

— by Evelyn Kaselow Saphier
(continued in the *May/June* issue)

The 119th Jayanti of Sri Ramana Maharshi

MP3

ON Sunday, January 3, 1999 Arunāchala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in New York City celebrated the 119th anniversary of the Maharshi's birth.

In spite of one of the severest downpours of rain in years, many devotees from the metropolitan New York City area, and others from neighboring states, ventured out that day to join together and remember the Master.

The day's program consisted of the recitation of many of Bhagavan's works, such as "*Upadesa Sarah*," *Akshara Mana Mala!*," "*Sri Arunāchala Pancharama*," the singing of bhajans led by several participants, the reciting of "*Arunachala Nivedanam*," composed and sung by *Babubai Parekh* (see the *next article*), a brief talk by Virat Bhatt, and a slide show of photos from Sri Arunachala taken by Eurico Saraiva of Portugal.

Tasteful and elaborate food preparations were once again organized by Savitri Mohan, who was ably assisted by women and men devotees alike.

A few families spent the night at the Ashrama, and throughout the weekend all the devotees assembled exchanged genuine warmth and friendliness, like a large family reuniting in their ancestral home after the passing of many years.

We would like to thank all the friends and devotees who participated and helped to make the function inspiring and memorable.

अरुणाच्छल निवेदनम्
Aruṇāchala Nivedanam

MP3

अरुणाच्छल हे स्मरमि त्वाम्
अरुणाच्छल हे नममि त्वाम्
अरुणाच्छल हे भजमि त्वाम् ॥ १ ॥

aruṇāchala he smarami tvam
aruṇāchala he namami tvam
aruṇāchala he bhajami tvam

त्वम् हि शरणम् त्वम् हि शरणम् ।
त्वम् हि शरणम् मे अरुणाच्छलम् ॥ २ ॥

tvam hi śaraṇam tvam he śaraṇam,
tvam hi śaraṇam me Aruṇāchalam.

पश्यामि विश्वम् तव चिस्मरणे:न
भवामि शान्ताम् तव संस्मरणेन ॥ ३ ॥

paśyāmi vīśvam tava cīsmareṇa,
bhavāmi śāntām tava saṁsmaraṇena.

तवास्ति रूपम् किम् अरूपम् ।
जानामि त्वम् हि शिवस्वरूपम् ॥ ४ ॥

tavāsti rūpam kiṁ arūpam
jānāmi tvam hi śivasvarūpam.

यदा त्तिर् बाह्या अखिला हि माया ।
अन्तर्गतिर् सा सदा सत्स्वरूपा ॥ ५ ॥

yadā vrttiṛ bāhyā akhilā hi māyā,
antargatiḥ sā sādā satsvarūpā.

समस्तविश्वम् तव ज्योति: रूपम् ।
कुरु माम् गुरो तव पादपुष्पम् ॥ ६ ॥

samastavīśvam tava jyōtiḥ rūpam
kuru mām gūro tava pādapuṣpam.

न दीपेनविना कदापि हि छाया ।
त्वया विना तिस्थति कुत्तर माया ॥ ७ ॥

na dīpenavinā kadāpi hi chhāyā,
tvayā vinā tiśtati kutra māyā.

हे ज्ञानज्योति त्वम् सर्वं ह्रदयम् ।
त्वम् अरूपो हि रूपम् हे ममात्म ॥ ८ ॥

he jñānajyōti tvam sarva hṛdayam,
tvam arūpo hi rūpam he māmātmam.

अरुणाच्छल हे स्मरमि त्वाम्
अरुणाच्छल हे नममि त्वाम्
अरुणाच्छल हे भजमि त्वाम्

— by B.Parekh (बनदेव पारेख)

Letters and Comments

MP3

I feel uncertain about how to practice Self-enquiry. I have tried a few times to ask myself who I really am. I have read the teachings, but I am not sure how to practice them. Could I hurt myself if I follow them wrongly? It is repeated often that pranyama is helpful; however, no instructions on how to practice pranyama have been given. Only that it is a means to an end, enquiry, and not an end in itself.

I have studied the teachings and endeavor to understand them in their original sense, without distorting them through simplification and wishful thinking (avoiding to read over the parts that I don't want to hear, but need to hear).

— Sincerely,
A seeker in the USA

You wrote that you feel uncertain about how to practice Self-enquiry. Although I believe that your sincerity and steady aspiration will ultimately result in your doubts being removed and the method being clarified, we can still offer a few simple suggestions which are only quotations from or paraphrasing of the Master's teachings.

First of all, we cannot deny our existence. This is the consciousness we call 'I'. To think deeply upon the origin of that 'I' consciousness, to search wherefrom it arises within us, its source, will not harm us. It can only result in peace and happiness.

If the mind cannot be stilled and applied to the investigation, Bhagavan does suggest several aids to help in mind control. Pranayama is an important aid and is recommended by the Maharshi to those who cannot readily control the mind. He has given explicit instructions on how to do pranayama. Below I quote from No. 54 in Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi:

Later on Sri Bhagavan said, "Control of breath may be internal or external.

"The antah pranayama (the internal breath-regulation) is as follows:

Naham chinta (I-am-not-the-body idea) is rechaka (exhalation).

Koham (who am I?) is puraka (inhalation).

Soham (I am He) is kumbhaka (retention of breath).

Doing thus, the breath becomes automatically controlled.

"Bahih pranayama (external control) is for one not endowed with strength to control the mind. There is no way so sure as that; or a sadhu's company. The external practice must be resorted to by a wise man if he does not enjoy a sadhu's company. If in a sadhu's company the sadhu provides the needed strength, though unseen by others. Pranayama need not be exactly as described in hatha yoga. If engaged in japa, dhyana, bhakti, etc., just a little control of breath will suffice to control the mind. The mind is the rider and the breath, the horse. Pranayama is a check on the horse. By that check the rider is checked.

"Pranayama may be done just a little. To watch the breath is one way of doing it. The mind abstracted from other activities is engaged in watching the breath. That controls the breath; and in its turn the mind is controlled.

"If unable to do so, rechaka and puraka need not be practised. Breath may be retained a short while in japa, dhyana, etc. Then, too, good results will follow."

To conclude, one must persist in the practice, in whatever manner that practice is understood to be. The Maharshi is the Guru. For those who persevere and yearn to realize the true purpose and meaning in life, He is still present and extends His help.

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please see the *Sri Ramana Satsang online* pages.

"*The Maharshi*" is a free bimonthly newsletter distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. You can subscribe to this newsletter's announcements *by email*. All back issues are available as *html pages* and in *Acrobat PDF* format from 2000 to the present. *Books, images, videos and audio CDs* on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found in the *eLibrary*, the *On-line Bookstore* pages and the Ashrama's *YouTube* channel.

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