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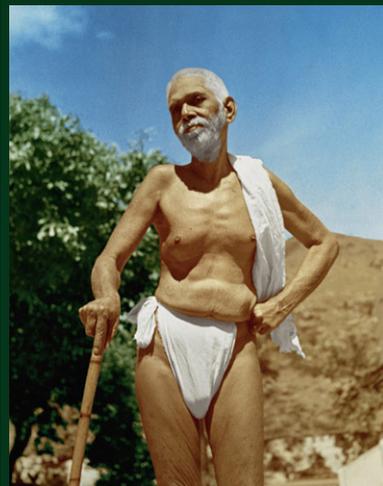
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BHAGAVAN RAMANA

by

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PREFACE

THE present essay was originally written for a book on *The Saints*; and it appears as General Introduction in a work on Bhagavan entitled Ramana Maharshi and His Philosophy of Existence. As it is felt that this essay may be of interest to the general readers, it is being issued separately also in the form of a booklet.

May Bhagavan accept this offering!
Aradhana Day T. M. P. MAHADEVAN May 5, 1959.

INVOCATION

O Vinayaka, who wrote on a scroll (*i.e.*, the slopes of Mt. Meru) the words of the Great Sage (*i.e.*, Vyasa) and who presides at the victorious Arunachala, do remove the disease (*i.e. maya*) that is the cause of repeated births, and protect graciously the great Noble Faith (*i.e.*, the *Upanisadic* philosophy and religion) which brims with the honey of the Self.

This a prayer to Lord Ganesa, the Remover of all obstacles, composed by Bhagavan Sri Ramana. Reference is made to the *Puranic* story that Ganesa served as a scribe to Vyasa and wrote down the *Mahabharata* and His Grace is here invoked for the protection of the *Vedanta* philosophy. The printed Tamil verse is a facsimile of Bhagavan's own handwriting.

BHAGAVAN RAMANA

THE Scriptures tell us that it is as difficult to trace the path a sage pursues as it is to draw a line marking the course a bird takes in the air while on its wings. Most humans have to be content with a slow and laborious journey towards the goal. But a few are born as adepts in flying non-stop to the common home of all beings - the supreme Self. The generality of mankind takes heart when such a sage appears. Though it is unable to keep pace with him, it feels uplifted in his presence and has a foretaste of the felicity compared to which the pleasures of the world pale into nothing. Countless people who went to Tiruvannamalai during the life-time of Maharshi Sri Ramana had this experience. They saw in him a sage without the least touch of worldliness, a saint of matchless purity, a witness to the eternal truth of *Vedanta*. It is not often that a spiritual genius of the magnitude of Sri Ramana visits this earth. But when such an event occurs, the entire humanity gets benefited and a new era of hope opens before it.

About thirty miles south of Madurai there is a village Tirucculi by name with an ancient Siva temple about which two of the great Tamil saints, Sundaramurti and Manikkavacakar, have sung. In this sacred village there lived in the latter part of the nineteenth century an uncertified pleader, Sundaram Aiyar with his wife Alagammal. Piety, devotion and charity characterised this ideal couple. Sundaram Aiyar was generous even beyond his measure. Alagammal was an ideal Hindu wife. To them was born Venkataraman - who later came to be known to the world as Ramana Maharshi - on the 30th of December, 1879. It was an auspicious day for the Hindus, the *Ardra-darsanam* day. On this day every year the image of the Dancing Siva, Nataraja, is taken out of the temples in procession in order to celebrate the divine grace of the Lord that made Him appear before such saints as Gautama, Patanjali, Vyaghrapada, and Manikkavacaka. In the year 1879 on the Ardra day the Nataraja Image of the temple at Tirucculi was taken out with all the attendant ceremonies, and just as it was about to re-enter, Venkataraman was born. There was nothing markedly distinctive about Venkataraman's early years. He grew up just as an average boy. He was sent to an elementary school in Tirucculi, and then for a year's education to a school in Dindigul. When he was twelve his father died. This necessitated his going to Madurai along with the family and living with his paternal uncle Subbaiyar. There he was sent to Scott's Middle School and then to the American Mission High School. He was an indifferent student, not at all serious about his studies. But he was a healthy and strong lad. His school mates and other companions were afraid of his strength. If some of them had any grievance against him at any time, they would dare play pranks with him, only when he was asleep. In this he was rather unusual : he would not know of anything that happened to him during sleep. He would be carried away or even beaten without his waking up in the process.

It was apparently by accident that Venkataraman heard about Arunachala when he was sixteen years of age. One day an elderly relative of his called on the family in Madurai. The boy asked him where he had come from. The relative replied "From Arunachala". The very name 'Arunachala' acted as a magic spell on Venkataraman, and with an evident excitement he put his next question to the elderly gentleman, "What! From Arunachala! Where is it?" And he got the reply that Tiruvannamalai was Arunachala.

Referring to this incident the Sage says later on in one of his hymns to Arunachala : ‘Oh, great wonder! As an insentient hill it stands. Its action is difficult for anyone to understand. From my childhood it appeared to my intelligence that Arunachala was something very great. But even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai I did not understand its meaning. When, stilling my mind, it drew me up to it, and I came close, I found that it was the Immovable.’

Quickly following the incident which attracted Venkataraman’s attention to Arunachala, there was another happening which also contributed to the turning of the boy’s mind to the deeper values of spirituality. He chanced to lay his hands, on a copy of Sekkilar’s *Periyapuranam* which relates the lives of the Saiva saints. He read the book and was enthralled by it. This was the first piece of religious literature that he read. The example of the saints fascinated him; and in the inner recesses of his heart he found something responding favourably. Without any apparent earlier preparation, a longing arose in him to emulate the spirit of renunciation and devotion that constituted the essence of saintly life.

The spiritual experience that Venkataraman was now wishing devoutly to have come to him soon, and quite unexpectedly. It was about the middle of the year 1896; Venkataraman was seventeen then. One day he was sitting up alone on the first floor of his uncle’s house. He was in his usual health. There was nothing wrong with it. But a sudden and unmistakable fear of death took hold of him. He felt he was going to die. Why this feeling should have come to him he did not know. The feeling of impending death, however, did not unnerve him. He calmly thought about what he should do. He said to himself, “Now, death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.” Immediately thereafter he lay down stretching his limbs out and holding them stiff as though *rigor mortis* had set in. He held his breath and kept his lips tightly closed, so that to all outward appearance his body resembled a corpse. Now, what would happen? This was what he thought : “Well, this body is now dead. It will be carried to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death, of this body am I dead? Is the body I? This body is silent and inert. But I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the ‘I’ within me, apart from it. So I am the Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit”. As Bhagavan Sri Ramana narrated this experience later on for the benefit of his devotees it looked as though this was a process of reasoning. But he took care to explain that this was not so. The realization came to him in a flash. He perceived the truth directly. ‘I’ was something very real, the only real thing. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. From then on, ‘I’ continued like the fundamental *sruti* note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. Thus young Venkataraman found himself on the peak of spirituality without any arduous or prolonged sadhana. The ego was lost in the flood of Self-awareness. All on a sudden the boy that used to be called Venkataraman had flowered into a sage and saint.

There was noticed a complete change in the young sage’s life. The things that he had valued earlier now lost their value. The spiritual values which he had ignored till then became the only objects of attention. School-studies, friends, relations - none of these had now any significance for him. He grew utterly indifferent to his surroundings. Humility, meekness, non-resistance and other virtues became his adornment. Avoiding company he preferred to sit alone, all-absorbed in concentration

on the Self. He went to the Minaksi temple every day and experienced an exaltation every time he stood before the images of the gods and the saints. Tears flowed from his eyes profusely. The new vision was constantly with him. His was the transfigured life.

Venkataraman's elder brother observed the great change that had come upon him. On several occasions he rebuked the boy for his indifferent and *yogi*-like behaviour. About six weeks after the great experience the crisis came. It was the 29th of August, 1896. Venkataraman's English teacher had asked him, as a punishment for indifference in studies, to copy out a lesson from Bain's Grammar three times. The boy copied it out twice, but stopped there, realizing the utter futility of that task. Throwing aside the book and the papers, he sat up, closed his eyes, and turned inward in meditation. The elder brother who was watching Venkataraman's behaviour all the while went up to him and said : "What use is all this to one who is like this?" This was obviously meant as a rebuke for Venkataraman's unworldly ways including neglect of studies. Venkataraman did not give any reply. He admitted to himself that there was no use pretending to study and be his old self. He decided to leave his home; and he remembered that there was a place to go to, *viz.* Tiruvannamalai. But if he expressed his intention to his elders, they would not let him go. So he had to use guile. He told his brother that he was going to school to attend a special class that noon. The brother thereupon asked him to take five rupees from the box below and pay it as his fee at the college where he was studying. Venkataraman went downstairs; his aunt served him a meal and gave him the five rupees. He took out an atlas which was in the house and noted that the nearest railway station to Tiruvannamalai mentioned there was Tindivanam. Actually, however, a branch line had been laid to Tiruvannamalai itself. The atlas was an old one, and so this was not marked there. Calculating that three rupees would be enough for the journey, Venkataraman took that much and left the balance with a letter at a place in the house where his brother could easily find them, and made his departure for Tiruvannamalai. This was what he wrote in that letter : "I have set out in quest of my Father in accordance with his command. This (meaning his person) has only embarked on a virtuous enterprise. Therefore, no one need grieve over this act. And no money need be spent in search of this. Your college fee has not been paid. Herewith rupees two."

There was a curse on Venkataraman's family - in truth, it was a blessing - that one out of every generation should turn out to be a mendicant. This curse was administered by a wandering ascetic who, it is said, begged alms at the house of one of Venkataraman's forbears, and was refused. A paternal uncle of Sundaram Aiyar's became a *sannyasin*; so did Sundaram Aiyar's elder brother. Now, it was the turn of Venkataraman, although no one could have foreseen that the curse would work out in this manner. Dispassion found lodgement in Venkataraman's heart, and he became a *parivrajaka*.

It was an epic journey that Venkataraman made from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai. About noon he left his uncle's house. He walked to the railway station which was half a mile way. The train was running fortunately late that day; otherwise he would have missed it. He looked up the table of fares and came to know that the third-class fare to Tindivanam was two rupees and thirteen annas. He bought a ticket, and kept with him the balance of three annas. Had he known that there was a rail-track to Tiruvannamalai itself, and had he consulted the table of fares, he would have found that the fare was exactly three rupees. When the train arrived, he boarded it quietly and took his

seat. A Maulvi who was also travelling entered into conversation with Venkataraman. From him Venkataraman learnt that there was train-service to Tiruvannamalai and that one need not go to Tindivanam but could change trains at Viluppuram. This was a piece of useful information. It was dusk when the train reached Tiruccirappalli. Venkataraman was hungry; he bought two country pears for half an anna; and strangely enough even with the first bite his hunger was appeased. About three o'clock in the morning the train arrived at Viluppuram. Venkataraman got off the train there with the intention of completing the rest, of the journey to Tiruvannamalai by walk.

At daybreak he went into the town, and was looking out for the sign-post to Tiruvannamalai. He saw a sign-board reading 'Mambalappattu' but did not know then that Mambalappattu was a place *en route* to Tiruvannamalai. Before making further efforts to find out which road he was to take, he wanted to refresh himself as he was tired and hungry. He went up to a hotel and asked for food. He had to wait till noon for the food to be ready. After eating his meal, he proffered two annas in payment. The hotel proprietor asked him how much money he had. When told by Venkataraman that he had only two and a half annas, he declined to accept payment. It was from him that Venkataraman came to know that Mambalappattu was a place, on the way to Tiruvannamalai. Venkataraman went back to Viluppuram station and bought a ticket to Mambalappattu for which the money he had was just enough.

It was sometime in the afternoon when Venkataraman arrived at Mambalappattu by train. From there he set out on foot for Tiruvannamalai. About ten miles he walked, and it was late in the evening. There was the temple of Arayaninallur nearby, built on a large rock. He went there waited for the doors to be opened, entered and sat down in the pillared hall. He had a vision there - a vision of brilliant light enveloping the entire place. It was no physical light. It shone for some time and then disappeared. Venkataraman continued sitting in a mood of deep meditation, till he was roused by the temple priests who were wanting to lock the doors and go to another temple three quarters of a mile away at Kilur for service. Venkataraman followed them, and while inside the temple he got lost in samadhi again. After finishing their duties the priests woke him up, but would not give him any food. The temple drummer who had been watching the rude behaviour of the priests implored them to hand over his share of the temple food to the strange youth. When Venkataraman asked for some drinking water, he was directed to a Sastri's house which was at some distance. While in that house he fainted and fell down. A few minutes later he rallied round and saw a small crowd looking at him curiously. He drank the water, ate some food, and lay down and slept.

Next morning he woke up. It was the 31st of August, 1896, the *Gokulastami* day, the day of Sri Krishna's birth. Venkataraman resumed his journey and walked for quite a while. He felt tired and hungry. So he wished for some food first, and then he would go to Tiruvannamalai, by train if that was possible. The thought occurred to him that he could dispose of the pair of gold ear-rings he was wearing and raise the money that was required. But how was this to be accomplished? He went and stood outside a house which happened to belong to one Muthukrishna Bhagavatar. He asked the Bhagavatar for food and was directed to the housewife. The good lady was pleased to receive the young sadhu and feed him on the auspicious day of Sri Krishna's birth. After the meal, Venkataraman went to the Bhagavatar again and told him that he wanted to pledge his ear-rings for four rupees in order that he may complete his pilgrimage. The rings were worth about twenty

rupees, but Venkataraman had no need for that much money. The Bhagavata examined the earrings, gave Venkataraman the money he had asked for, took down the youth's address, wrote out his own on a piece of paper for him, and told him that he could redeem the rings at any time. Venkataraman had his lunch at the Bhagavata's house. The pious lady gave him a packet of sweets that she had prepared for Gokulastami. Venkataraman took leave, of the couple, tore up the address the Bhagavata had given him - for he had no intention of redeeming the ear-rings - and went to the railway station. As there was no train till the next morning, he spent the night there. On the morning of the 1st of September, 1896, he boarded the train to Tiruvannamalai. The travel took, only a short time. Alighting from the train, he hastened to the great temple of Arunacalesvara. All the gates stood open - even the doors of the inner shrine. The temple was then empty of all people - even the priests. Venkataraman entered the *sanctum sanctorum*, and as he stood before his Father Arunacalesvara he experienced great ecstasy and unspeakable joy. The epic journey had ended. The ship had come safely to port.

The rest of what we regard as Ramana's life - this is how we shall call him hereafter - was spent in Tiruvannamalai. Ramana was not formally initiated into *sannyasa*. As he came out of the temple and was walking along the streets of the town, someone called out and asked whether he wanted his tuft removed. He consented readily, and was conducted to the Ayyankulam tank where a barber shaved his head. Then he stood on the steps of the tank and threw away into the water his remaining money. He also discarded the packet of sweets given by the Bhagavata's wife. The next to go was the sacred thread he was wearing. As he was returning to the temple he was just wondering why he should give his body the luxury of a bath, when there was a downpour which drenched him.

The first place of Ramana's residence in Tiruvannamalai was the great temple. For a few weeks he remained in the thousand-pillared hall. But he was troubled by urchins who pelted stones at him as he sat in meditation. He shifted himself to obscure corners and even to an underground vault known as *Patala-lingam*. Undisturbed he used to spend several days in deep absorption. Without moving he sat in *samadhi*, not being aware of even the bites of vermin and pests. But the mischievous boys soon discovered the retreat and indulged in their pastime of throwing potsherds at the young *Svami*. There was at the time in Tiruvannamalai a senior *Svami* by name Seshadri. Those who did not know him took him for a madman. He sometimes stood guard over the young *Svami*, and drove away the urchins. At long last he was removed from the pit by devotees without his being aware of it and deposited in the vicinity of a shrine of Subrahmanya. From then on there was some one or other to take care of Ramana. The seat of residence had to be changed frequently. Gardens, groves, shrines - these were chosen to keep the *Svami*. The *Svami* himself never spoke. Not that he took any vow of silence; he had no inclination to talk. At times the texts like *Vasistham* and *Kaivalyanavanitam* used to be read out to him.

A little less than six months after his arrival at Tiruvannamalai Ramana shifted his residence to a shrine called Gurumurtam at the earnest request of its keeper, a Tambiransvami. As days passed and as Ramana's fame spread, increasing numbers of pilgrims and sight-seers came to visit him. After about a year's stay at Gurumurtam, the *Svami* - locally he was known as Brahmana-svami - moved to a neighbouring mango orchard. It was here that one of his uncles, Nelliappa Aiyar traced him out. Nelliappa Aiyar was a second-grade pleader at Manamadurai. Having learnt

from a friend that Venkataraman was then a revered *Sadhu* at Tiruvannamalai, he went there to see him. He tried his best to take Ramana along with him to Manamadurai. But the young sage would not respond. He did not show any sign of interest in the visitor. So, Nellyappa Aiyar went back disappointed to Manamadurai. However, he conveyed the news to Alagammal, Ramana's mother.

The mother went to Tiruvannamalai accompanied by her eldest son. Ramana was then living at Pavalakkunru, one of the eastern spurs of Arunachala. With tears in her eyes Alagammal entreated Ramana to go back with her. But, for the sage there was no going back. Nothing moved him — not even the wailings and weepings of his mother. He kept silent giving no reply. A devotee who had been observing the struggle of the mother for several days requested Ramana to write out at least what he had to say. The sage wrote on a piece of paper quite in an impersonal way thus : “In accordance with the *prarabdha* of each, the One whose function it is to ordain makes each to *act*. What will not happen will never happen, whatever effort one may put forth. And what will happen will not fail to happen, however much one may seek to prevent it. This is certain. The part of wisdom therefore is to stay quiet.”

Disappointed and with a heavy heart, the mother went back to Manamadurai. Sometime after this event Ramana went up the hill Arunachala, and started living in a cave called Virupaksa after a saint who dwelt and was buried there. Here also the crowds came, and among them were a few earnest seekers. These latter used to put him questions regarding spiritual experience or bring sacred books for having some points explained. Ramana sometimes wrote out his answers and explanations. One of the books that was brought to him during this period was Sankara's *Vivekacudamani* which later on he rendered into Tamil prose. There were also some simple unlettered folk that came to him for solace and spiritual guidance. One of them was Echammal who having lost her husband, son, and daughter, was disconsolate till the Fates guided her to Ramana's presence. She made it a point to visit the Svami every day and took upon herself the task of bringing food for him as well as for those who lived with him.

In 1903 there came to Tiruvannamalai a great Samskrit scholar and *savant*, Ganapati Sastri known also as Ganapati Muni because of the austerities he had been observing. He had the title *Kavyakantha* (one who had poetry at his throat), and his disciples addressed him as *nayana* (father). He was a specialist in the worship of the Divine Mother. He visited Ramana in the Virupaksa cave quite a few times. Once in 1907 he was assailed by doubts regarding his own spiritual practices. He went up the hill, saw Ramana sitting alone in the cave, and expressed himself thus : “All that has to be read I have read; even *Vedanta sastra* I have fully understood; I have done *japa* to my heart's content; yet I have not up to this time understood what *tapas* is. Therefore I have sought refuge at your feet. Pray enlighten me as to the nature of *tapas*.” Ramana replied, now speaking, “If one watches whence the notion ‘I’ arises, the mind gets absorbed there; that is *tapas*. When a *mantra* is repeated, if one watches whence that *mantra* sound arises, the mind gets absorbed there; that is *tapas*.” To the scholar this came as a revelation; he felt the grace of the sage enveloping him. He it was that proclaimed Ramana to be *Maharshi* and *Bhagavan*. He composed hymns in Samskrit in praise of the sage, and also wrote the *Ramana-Gita* explaining his teachings.

Ramana's mother, Alagammal, after her return to Manamadurai, lost her eldest son. Two years later,

her youngest son, Nagasundaram paid a brief visit to Tiruvannamalai. She herself went there once on her return from a pilgrimage to Varanasi, and again during a visit to Tirupati. On this occasion she fell ill and suffered for several weeks with symptoms of typhoid. Ramana showed great solicitude in nursing her and restoring her to health. He even composed a hymn in Tamil beseeching Lord Arunachala to cure her of her disease. The first verse of the hymn runs as follows : ‘Oh Medicine in the form of a Hill that arose to cure the disease of all the births that come in succession like waves! Oh Lord! It is Thy duty to save my mother who regards Thy feet alone as her refuge, by curing her fever.’ He also prayed that his mother should be granted the vision divine and be weaned from worldliness. It is needless to say that both the prayers were answered. Alagammal recovered, and went back to Manamadurai. But not long after she returned to Tiruvannamalai; a little later followed her youngest son, Nagasundaram who had in the meanwhile lost his wife leaving a son. It was in the beginning of 1916 that the mother came, resolved to spend the rest of her life with Ramana. Soon after his mother’s arrival, Ramana moved from Virupaksa to Skandasramam, a little higher up the hill. The mother received training in intense spiritual life. She donned the ochre robe, and took charge of the Asrama kitchen. Nagasundaram too became a *sannyasin*, assuming the name Niranjanananda. Among Ramana’s devotees he came to be popularly known as Chinnaswami (the Younger Swami). In 1920 the mother grew weak in health and ailments incidental to old age came to her. Ramana tended her with care and affection, and spent even sleepless nights sitting up with her. The end came on May 19, 1922, which was the *Bahulanavami* day, in the month of *Vaisakha*. The mother’s body was taken down the hill to be interred. The spot chosen was at the southernmost point, between Palitirtham Tank and the Daksinamurti Mantapam. While the ceremonies were being performed, Ramana himself stood silently looking on. Niranjanananda Swami took his residence near the tomb. Ramana who continued to remain at Skandasramam visited the tomb every day. After about six months he came to stay there, as he said later on, not out of his own volition but in obedience to the Divine Will. Thus was founded the Ramanasramam. A temple was raised over the tomb and was consecrated in 1949. As the years rolled by the Asramam grew steadily, and people not only from India but from every continent of the world came to see the sage and receive help from him in their spiritual pursuits.

Ramana’s first Western devotee was F. H. Humphrys. He came to India in 1911 to take up a post in the Police service at Vellore. Given to the practice of occultism, he was in search of a *Mahatma*. He was introduced to Ganapati Sastri by his Telugu tutor; and Sastri took him to Ramana. The Englishman was greatly impressed. Writing about his first visit to the sage in the *International Psychic Gazette*, he said : ‘On reaching the cave we sat before him, at his feet, and said nothing. We sat thus for a long time and I felt lifted out of myself. For half an hour I looked into the Maharshi’s eyes, which never changed their expression of deep contemplation.... The Maharshi is a man beyond description in his expression of dignity, gentleness, self-control and calm strength of conviction.’ Humphry’s ideas of spirituality changed for the better as a result of the contact with Ramana. He repeated his visits to the sage. He recorded his impressions in his letters to a friend in England which were published in the *Gazette* mentioned above. In one of them he wrote, ‘You can imagine nothing more beautiful than his smile.’ And again, ‘It is strange what a change it makes in one to have been in his Presence!’

It was not all good people that went to the Asrama. Sometimes bad ones turned up also - even bad *sadhus*. Twice in the year 1924 thieves broke into the Asrama in quest of loot. On the second of

these occasions they even beat the Maharshi, finding that there was very little for them to take. When one of the devotees sought the sage's permission to punish the thieves, the sage forbade him, saying : "They have their *dharma*, we have ours. It is for us to bear and forbear. Let us not interfere with them." When one of the thieves gave him a blow on the left thigh, he told him : "If you are not satisfied you can strike the other leg also." After the thieves had left, a devotee enquired about the beating. The sage remarked, "I also have received some puja," punning on the word which means 'worship' but is also used to mean 'blows'.

The spirit of harmlessness that permeated the sage and his environs made even animals and birds make friends with him. He showed them the same consideration that he did to the humans that went to him. When he referred to any of them, he used the form 'he' or 'she' and not 'it'. Birds and squirrels built their nests around him. Cows, dogs and monkeys found asylum in the Asrama. All of them behaved intelligently - especially the cow Laksmi. He knew their ways quite intimately. He would see to it that they were fed properly and well. And, when any of them died, the body would be buried with due ceremony. The life in the Asrama flowed on smoothly. With the passage of time more and more of visitors came - some of them for a short stay and others for longer periods. The dimensions of the Asrama increased, and new features and departments were added - a home for the cattle, a school for the study of the *Vedas*, a department for publication, and the Mother's temple with regular worship, etc. Ramana sat most of the time in the hall that had been constructed for the purpose as the witness to all that happened around him. It was not that he was not active. He used to stitch leaf-plates, dress vegetables, read proofs received from the press, look into newspapers and books, suggest lines of reply to letters received, etc. yet it was quite evident that he was apart from everything. There were numerous invitations for him to undertake tours. But he never moved out of Tiruvannamalai, and in the later years out of the Asrama. Most of the time, every day, people sat before him. They sat mostly in silence. Sometimes some of them asked questions; and sometimes he answered them. It was a great experience to sit before him and to look at his beaming eyes. Many did experience time coming to a stop and a stillness and peace beyond description.

The golden jubilee of Ramana's coming to stay at Tiruvannamalai was celebrated in 1946. In 1947 his health began to fail. He was not yet seventy, but looked much older. Towards the end of 1948 a small nodule appeared below the elbow of his left arm. As it grew in size, the doctor in charge of the Asrama dispensary cut it out. But in a month's time it reappeared. Surgeons from Madras were called, and they operated. The wound did not heal, and the tumour came again. On further examination it was diagnosed that the affection was a case of sarcoma. The doctors suggested amputating the arm above the affected part. Ramana replied with a smile : "There is no need for alarm. The body is itself a disease. Let it have its natural end. Why mutilate it? Simple dressing of the affected part will do." Two more operations had to be performed, but the tumour appeared again. Indigenous systems of medicine were tried; and homeopathy too. The disease did not yield itself to treatment. The sage was quite unconcerned, and was supremely indifferent to suffering. He sat as a spectator watching the disease waste the body. But his eyes shone as bright as ever; and his grace flowed towards all beings. Crowds came in large numbers. Ramana insisted that they should be allowed to have his *darsana*. Devotees profoundly wished that the sage should cure his body through an exercise of supernormal powers. Some of them imagined that they

themselves had had the benefit of these powers which they attributed to Ramana. Ramana had compassion for those who grieved over the suffering, and he sought to comfort them by reminding them of the truth that Bhagavan was not the body : “They take this body for Bhagavan and attribute suffering to him. What a pity! They are despondent the Bhagavan is going to leave them and go away - where can he go, and how?”

The end came on the 14th of April, 1950. That evening the sage gave *darsana* to the devotees that came. All that were present in the Asrama knew that the end was nearing. They sat singing Ramana’s hymn to Arunachala with the refrain *Arunachala-Siva*. The sage asked his attendants to make him sit up. He opened his luminous and gracious eyes for a brief while; there was a smile; a tear of bliss trickled down from the outer corner of his eyes; and at 8-47 the breathing stopped. There was no struggle, no spasm, none of the signs of death. At that very moment, a comet moved slowly across the sky, reached the summit, of the holy hill, Arunachala, and disappeared behind it.

Ramana Maharshi seldom wrote; and what little he did write in prose or verse was written to meet the specific demands of his devotees. He himself declared once : “Somehow, it never occurs to me to write a book or compose poems. All the poems I have made were on the request of someone or other in connection with some particular event.” The most important of his works is *The Forty Verses on Existence*. In the *Upadesa Saram* which is also a poem the quintessence of *Vedanta* is set forth. The sage composed five hymns to Arunachala. Some of the works of Sankara like *Vivekacudamani* and *Atma-bodha* were rendered into Tamil by him. Most of what he wrote is in Tamil. But he wrote also in Sanskrit, Telugu, and Malayalam.

The philosophy of Sri Ramana - which is the same as that of *Advaita-Vedanta* has for its aim Self-realization. The central path taught in this philosophy is the inquiry into the nature of Self, the content of the notion ‘I’. Ordinarily the sphere of the ‘I’ varies and covers a multiplicity of factors. But these factors are not really the ‘I’. For instance, we speak of the physical body as ‘I’; we say, ‘I am fat’, ‘I am lean’ etc. It will not take long to discover that this is a wrong usage. The body itself cannot say, ‘I’ for it is inert. Even the most ignorant man understands the implication of the expression ‘my body’. It is not easy, however, to resolve the mistaken identity of the ‘I’ with egoity (*ahankara*). That is because the inquiring mind is the ego, and in order to remove the wrong identification it has to pass a sentence of death, as it were, on itself. This is by no means a simple thing. The offering of the ego in the fire of wisdom is the greatest form of sacrifice.

The discrimination of the Self from the ego, we said, is not easy. But it is not impossible. All of us can have this discrimination if we ponder over the implication of our sleep-experience. In sleep ‘we are’, though the ego has made its exit. The ego does not function there. Still there is the ‘I’ that witnesses the absence of the ego as well as of the objects. If the ‘I’ were not there, one would not recall on waking from one’s sleep-experience, and say; “I slept happily. I did not know anything”. We have, then, two ‘I’s’ - the ‘pseudo-I’ which is the ego and the true ‘I’ which is the Self. The identification of the ‘I’ with the ego is so strong that we seldom see the ego without its mask. Moreover, all our relative experience turns on the pivot of the ego. With the rise of the ego on waking from sleep, the entire world rises with it. The ego, therefore, looks so important and unassailable.

But this is really a fortress made of cards. Once the process of inquiry starts, it will be found to crumble and dissolve. For undertaking this inquiry, one must possess a sharp mind - much sharper than the one required for unravelling the mysteries of matter. It is with the one-pointed intellect that the truth is to be seen (*drsyate tu agraya buddhya*). It is true that even the intellect will have to get resolved before the final wisdom dawns. But up to that point it has to inquire - and inquire relentlessly. Wisdom, surely, is not for the indolent!

The inquiry 'Who am I?' is not to be regarded as a mental effort to understand the mind's nature. Its main purpose is 'to focus the entire mind at its source'. The source of the 'pseudo-I' is the Self. What one does in Self-inquiry is to run against the mental current instead of running along with it, and finally transcend the sphere of mental modifications. When the 'pseudo-I' is tracked down to its source, it vanishes. Then the Self shines in all its splendour - which shining is called realization and release.

The cessation or non-cessation of the body has nothing to do with release. The body may continue to exist and the world may continue to appear, as in the case of the Maharshi. That makes no difference at all to the Self that has been realized. In truth, there is neither the body nor the world for him; there is only the Self, the eternal Existence (*sat*), the Intelligence (*cit*), the unsurpassable bliss (*ananda*). Such an experience is not entirely foreign to us. We have it in sleep, where we are conscious neither of the external world of things nor of the inner world of dreams. But that experience lies under the cover of ignorance. So it is that we come back to the phantasies of dream and of the world of waking. Non-return to duality is possible only when nescience has been removed. To make this possible is the aim of *Vedanta*. To inspire even the lowliest of us with hope and help us out of the Slough of Despond, is the supreme significance of such illustrious exemplars as the Maharshi.

SRI RAMANASRAMAM, TIRUVANNAMALAI.

IDEALS AND ACTIVITIES

Sri Ramanasramam, where Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi lived and taught his Eternal Message of *Advaita Vedanta*, is situated in a picturesque spot on the western end of the sacred town of Arunachala - Tiruvannamalai - and the air of calm, peace and beauty that prevails in the noble buildings that constitute the Asramam, where several activities are carried on, has to be experienced to be believed.

The entire Asramam is an ideal spot for calm and quiet meditation. People of all nationalities look upon it as their own home.

Devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi who have not been in touch with the Asramam since His *Mahanirvana*, have been making constant enquiries about the work of His Asramam ever since. In response to such enquiries, we bring to their notice that Sri Ramanasramam is functioning as in the days prior to Sri Ramana Maharshi's *Mahanirvana*. The normal activities of the Asramam are as follows:

1. Sri Ramanasramam is saturated with the Benign Grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana; and the greatest benefit that it has been conferring on his devotees of all religions is Mental Peace, Bliss and Happiness.
- The chief aim of the Asramam is to give every possible aid to devotees who seek the said benefits. Many devotees gather in the morning and evening for silent meditation and prayer and they get all the help and convenience they need.
2. *Puja* is performed at the *Mahasamadhi* of Sri Bhagavan both in the morning and in the evening and also to that of Sri Bhagavan's mother, Sri Mathrubhuteswarar.
- 3 *Veda Parayana* (Chanting of *Vedas*) is done regularly every day both in the morning and evening. Devotees gather both times at the Shrines at the time of *Arathi* (Waving of Lights).
4. The old Hall in which Sri Bhagavan used to sit, is a very inspiring place and devotees gather there for meditation.
5. The room in which occurred the *Brahma Nirvana* of Bhagavan is a very sacred place for one and all of His devotees.
- 6 Study groups meet in the new Hall and discuss Sri Bhagavan's teachings.
7. To give wider publicity to the teaching of Sri Bhagavan the Asramam is publishing a quarterly *The Mountain Path*. which goes to distant parts of the world.
8. The devotees of Sri Bhagavan visit the Asramam from far and near and they are accommodated at the Asramam and every effort is made to make their stay comfortable, so that they may enjoy the peace of Sri Bhagavan's Being that pervades the Asramam.
9. The *Veda Patasala* is a limb of the Asramam and the boys who study there have free education, boarding and lodging. They are taught the Yajur Veda, Sanskrit literature and English, Tamil, Mathematics and General Knowledge.
10. The SRI CHAKRA (*Meru Prasthara*) which Sri Bhagavan consecrated by His Touch is located within the precincts of the Mother's Shrine and is offered special *puja* on all Fridays, the full-moon day and the *Masa Pravesa* Day (The 1st day of Tamil Month). The devotees of Sri Bhagavan are very keen in participating in these *pujas* and obtaining the benefit of the worship.
11. The *Gosala* is maintained as of old in an ideal condition. Milk supply for the needs of the Asramites and the visiting devotees is made adequate and self-supporting.
12. The Asramam kitchen functions as of old, catering to about 75 inmates and visiting devotees and a number of poor people.
13. The Free Dispensary runs as of old and the doctor gives his unstinted honorary services three days in a week.
14. The Asramam is also active in bringing out new publications and reprinting the old, in all languages. The spoken words of Sri Bhagavan, which were recorded then and there, are being published. Price lists on application.
15. The Asramam has an excellent Library of 4,000 to 5,000 books in various languages on philosophical and religious subjects for the free use of the devotees.
16. Every effort is being made to make the Asramam a centre wherefrom the message of Sri Bhagavan will radiate.
17. The Asramam is run purely out of the voluntary contributions of the devotees.

May His benign Grace be ever upon one and all.

SELF - ENQUIRY

(VICHARASANGRAHAM)

OF

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

A new translation by
DR T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, M.A., Ph.D.
from the original Tamil



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INTRODUCTION

The present work in prose consists of forty questions with answers covering the entire range of spiritual disciplines required for the gaining of release (*moksha*). The questioner was Gambhiram Seshayya, one of the early devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was a Municipal Overseer at Tiruvannamalai about 1900. Besides being an ardent Ramabhakta (worshipper of Rama) he was interested in the study and practice of *Yoga*. He used to read Swami Vivekananda's lectures on the different yoga's as also an English translation of the *Rama-gita*. For resolving the difficulties which he came across while studying these books and in his spiritual practices, he approached Bhagavan Sri Ramana from time to time. Bhagavan, who was only twenty-one years old, was then living in Virupaksha cave on Arunachala Hill. As he was keeping silent at the time not because of any vow taken but because he was not inclined to talk - he wrote out his answers to Seshayya's questions on bits of paper. These writings over the period 1900-1902 were later copied in a note-book by Seshayya. The material thus gathered was published by Sri Ramanasramam under the little *Vichara-sangraham* which literally means 'A Compendium of Self-Enquiry.' A digest of the teaching contained in this work was later printed in English bearing the title 'Self-Enquiry'. In that English version, the questions were omitted and the substance of Bhagavan's teaching was given, classifying it in twelve short chapters with appropriate headings. The present English translation is of the entire original text *Vichara-sangraham* as it is in Tamil. The *Vichara-sangraham* has unique value in the sense that it constitutes the first set of instructions given by Bhagavan in his own handwriting.

A careful study of the instructions given by Bhagavan here will reveal that they are based on his own plenary experience as confirmed by the sacred texts which were brought to his notice by the early devotees and which he perused for the purpose of clearing the doubts that arose in the minds of the devotees. In the course of his instructions, Bhagavan makes use of such expressions as, 'the scriptures declare', 'thus say the sages,' etc.; he also cites passages from texts like the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vivekachudamani* and once he mentions by name the *Ribhu Gita*. But it is quite clear that these citations are offered only as confirmations of the truth discovered by Bhagavan himself in his own experience.

The basic teaching is that of Advaita-Vedanta. The plenary experience of the non-dual Self is the goal; enquiry into the nature of the self is the means. When the mind identifies the self with the not-self (the body, etc.), there is bondage; when this wrong identification is removed through the enquiry 'Who am I?' there is release. Thus, Self-enquiry is the direct path taught by Bhagavan Ramana. The 'I-experience' is common to all. Of all thoughts, the 'I-thought' is the first to arise. What one has to do is to enquire into the source of the 'I-thought'. This is the reverse process of what ordinarily happens in the life of the mind. The mind enquires into the constitution and source of everything else which, on examination, will be found to be its own projection; it does not reflect on itself and trace itself to its source. Self-discovery can be achieved by giving the mind an inward turn. This is not to be confused with the introspection of which the psychologists speak. Self-enquiry is not the mind's inspection of its own contents; it is tracing the mind's first mode, the 'I-thought' to its source which is the Self. When there is proper and persistent enquiry, the 'I-thought' also ceases and there is the wordless illumination of the form 'I-I' which is the pure consciousness. This is release, freedom from bondage. The method by which this is accomplished,

as has been shown, is enquiry which, in Vedanta, is termed *jnana*, knowledge. True devotion (*bhakti*), meditation (*dhyana*), and concentration (*yoga*) are identical therewith. As Bhagavan makes it perfectly clear, not to forget the plenary Self-experience is real devotion, mind-control, knowledge, and all other austerities. In the language of devotion, the final goal may be described as the resolution of the mind in its source which is God, the Self, in that of technical yoga, it may be described as the dissolution of the mind in the Heart-lotus. These are only different ways of expressing the same truth.

The path of Self-enquiry is found difficult by those who have not acquired the necessary competence for it. The mind should first be rendered pure and one-pointed. This is done through meditation, etc. So, the various paths, in their secondary sense, are auxiliaries to the direct path which is Self-enquiry. In this context, Bhagavan refers to three grades of aspirants: the highest, the medium, and the lowest. For the highest type of aspirants, the path prescribed is Vedanta enquiry; through this path, the mind becomes quiescent in the Self and finally ceases to be, leaving the pure Self-experience untarnished and resplendent. The path for the medium is meditation on the Self; meditation consists in directing a continuous flow of the mind towards the same object; there are several modes of meditation; the best mode is that which is of the form 'I am the Self'; this mode eventually culminates in Self-realization. For the lowest grade of aspirants, the discipline that is useful is breath-control which in turn results in mind control.

Bhagavan explains the difference between *jnana-yoga* (path of knowledge) and *dhyana-yoga* (path of meditation) thus: *jnana* is like subduing a self-willed bull by coaxing it with the help of a sheaf of green grass, while *dhyana* is like controlling it by using force. Just as there are eight limbs for *dhyana-yoga*, there are eight for *jnana-yoga*. The limbs of the latter are more proximate to the final stage than those of the former. For instance, while the *pranayama* of technical yoga consists in regulating and restraining breath, the *pranayama* that is a limb of *jnana* relates to rejecting the name-and-form world which is non-real and realizing the Real which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Realization of the Self can be gained in this very life. In fact, Self-realization is not something which is to be gained afresh. We are already the Self; the Self alone is. It is ignorance that makes us imagine that we have not realized the Self. When this ignorance is removed through Self-knowledge, we realize our eternal Self-nature. One who has gained this realization is called a *jivan-mukta* (liberated while living). To others, he may appear to continue to tenant a body. For the benefit of those others it is stated that the body will continue so long as the residue of the *prarabdha-karma* (that karma of the past which has begun to fructify in the shape of the present body) lasts, and that when the momentum is spent the body will fall and the *jivan-mukta* will become a *videha-mukta*. But from the standpoint of the absolute truth, there is no difference in *mukti*. What needs to be understood is that *mukti* or release is the inalienable nature of the Self.

This, in substance, is Bhagavan Sri Ramana's teaching in the *Vichara-sangraham*.

University Of Madras.
November 15, 1965.

Note to the Eighth Edition

The earliest edition of this work in Question-Answer form, I have come across, is dated 1930, published by A. Shivalinga Mudaliyar and V. Subrahmanya Achari and printed at Saravana Bava Press, Madras. This bears a foreword by Muruganar which is dated June 16th, 1930. It is mentioned in the foreword that it was Natanananda that edited the work in Question-Answer form. In his preface, Natanananda observes that the work contains the teachings given in writing by Bhagavan Ramana to Gambhiram Seshayya in the years 1901-1902. It is in the Question-Answer form that this work is included in the 'Collected Works' in Tamil, in its early editions, published by the Asramam. In the third edition published in 1940, as well as in subsequent editions, the *Self-Enquiry* appears in the form of a digest. In the footnote that occurs at the end of the Publisher's Note, it is stated that the manuscript copy given by Gambhiram Seshayya's brother was edited by Shivaprakasam Pillai, and was put into Question-Answer form by Natanananda.

Madras
January 18, 1971.

SELF - ENQUIRY

(VICHARASANGRAHAM)

OF

BHAGAVAN SRIRAMANA MAHARSHI

INVOCATION

Is there any way of adoring the Supreme which is all, except by abiding firmly as that!

1

Disciple: Master! What is the means to gain the state of eternal bliss, ever devoid of misery?

Master: Apart from the statement in the *Veda* that wherever there is body there is misery, this is also the direct experience of all people; therefore, one should enquire into one's true nature which is ever bodiless, and one should remain as such. This is the means to gaining that state.

2

D: What is meant by saying that one should enquire into one's true nature and understand it?

M: Experiences such as "I went; I came; I was; I did" come naturally to everyone. From these experiences, does it not appear that the consciousness "I" is the subject of those various acts?

Enquiry into the true nature of that consciousness, and remaining as oneself is the way to understand, through enquiry, one's true nature.

D: How is one to enquire: “Who am I?”

M: Actions such as ‘going’ and ‘coming’ belong only to the body. And so, when one says “I went, I came”, it amounts to saying that the body is “I”. But, can the body be said to be the consciousness “I”, since the body was not before it was born, is made up of the five elements, is non-existent in the state of deep sleep, and becomes a corpse when dead? Can this body which is inert like a log of wood be said to shine as “I” “I”? Therefore, the “I” consciousness which at first arises in respect of the body is referred to variously as self-conceit (*tarbodham*), egoity (*ahankara*), nescience (*avidya*), *maya*, impurity (*mala*), and individual soul (*jiva*). Can we remain without enquiring into this? Is it not for our redemption through enquiry that all the scriptures declare that the destruction of “self-conceit” is release (*mukti*)? Therefore, making the corpse-body remain as a corpse, and not even uttering the word “I”, one should enquire keenly thus: “Now, what is it that rises as ‘I’”. Then, there would shine in the Heart a kind of wordless illumination of the form ‘I’ ‘I’. That is, there would shine of its own accord the pure consciousness which is unlimited and one, the limited and the many thoughts having disappeared. If one remains quiescent without abandoning that (experience), the egoity, the individual sense, of the form ‘I am the body’ will be totally destroyed, and at the end the final thought, *viz.* the ‘I’-form also will be quenched like the fire that burns camphor.¹ The great sages and scriptures declare that this alone is release.

D: When one enquires into the root of ‘self conceit’ which is of the form ‘I’, all sorts of different thoughts without number seem to rise; and not any separate ‘I’ thought.

M: Whether the nominative case, which is the first case, appears or not, the sentences in which the other cases appear have as their basis the first case; similarly, all the thoughts that appear in the heart have as their basis the egoity which is the first mental mode ‘I’, the cognition of the form ‘I am the body’; thus, it is the rise of egoity that is the cause and source of the rise of all other thoughts; therefore, if the self-conceit of the form of egoity which is the root of the illusory tree of *samsara* (bondage consisting of transmigration) is destroyed, all other thoughts will perish completely like an uprooted tree. Whatever thoughts arise as obstacles to one’s *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) - the mind should not be allowed to go in their direction, but should be made to rest in one’s self which is the *Atman*; one should remain as witness to whatever happens, adopting the attitude ‘Let whatever strange things happen, happen; let us see!’ This should be one’s practice. In other words, one should not identify oneself with appearances; one should never relinquish one’s self. This is the proper means for destruction of the mind (*manonasa*) which is of the nature of seeing the body as self, and which is the cause of all the aforesaid obstacles. This method which easily destroys egoity deserves to be called devotion (*bhakti*), meditation (*dhyana*), concentration (*yoga*), and knowledge (*jnana*). Because God remains of the nature of the Self, shining as ‘I’ in the heart, because the scriptures declare that thought itself is bondage, the best discipline is to stay

1. *i.e.*, without leaving any sediment.

quiescent without ever forgetting Him (God, the Self), after resolving in Him the mind which is of the form of the 'I'-thought, no matter by what means. This is the conclusive teaching of the Scriptures.

5

D: Is enquiry only the means for removal of the false belief of selfhood in the gross body, or is it also the means for removal of the false belief of selfhood in the subtle and causal bodies?

M: It is on the gross body that the other bodies subsist. In the false belief of the form "I am the body" are included all the three bodies consisting of the five sheaths. And destruction of the false belief of selfhood in the gross body is itself the destruction of the false belief of selfhood in the other bodies. So inquiry is the means to removal of the false belief of selfhood in all the three bodies.

6

D: While there are different modifications of the internal organ, viz. *manas* (reflection), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitta* (memory) and *ahankara* (egoity), how can it be said that the destruction of the mind alone is release?

M: In the books explaining the nature of the mind, it is thus stated: "The mind is formed by the concretion of the subtle portion of the food we eat; it grows with the passions such as attachment and aversion, desire and anger; being the aggregate of mind, intellect, memory and egoity, it receives the collective singular name 'mind', the characteristics that it bears are thinking, determining, etc.; since it is an object of consciousness (the self), it is what is seen, inert; even though inert, it appears as if conscious because of association with consciousness (like a red-hot iron ball); it is limited, non-eternal, partite, and changing like wax, gold, candle, etc.; it is of the nature of all elements (of phenomenal existence); its locus is the heart-lotus even as the loci of the sense of sight, etc., are the eyes, etc.; it is the adjunct of the individual soul thinking of an object, it transforms itself into a mode, and along with the knowledge that is in the brain, it flows through the five sense-channels, gets joined to objects by the brain (that is associated with knowledge), and thus knows and experiences objects and gains satisfaction. That substance is the mind". Even as one and the same person is called by different names according to the different functions he performs, so also one and the same mind is called by the different names: mind, intellect, memory, and egoity, on account of the difference in the modes - and not because of any real difference. The mind itself is of the form of all, i.e. of soul, God and world; when it becomes of the form of the Self through knowledge there is release, which is of the nature of *Brahman*: this is the teaching.

7

D: If these four - mind, intellect, memory and egoity - are one and the same why are separate locations mentioned for them?

M: It is true that the throat is stated to be the location of the mind, the face or the heart of the intellect, the navel of the memory, and the heart or *sarvanga* of the egoity; though differently stated

thus yet, for the aggregate of these, that is the mind or internal organ, the location is the heart alone. This is conclusively declared in the Scriptures.

8

D: Why is it said that only the mind which is the internal organ, shines as the form of all, that is of soul, God and world?

M: As instruments for knowing the objects the sense organs are outside, and so they are called outer senses; and the mind is called the inner sense because it is inside. But the distinction between inner and outer is only with reference to the body; in truth, there is neither inner or outer. The mind's nature is to remain pure like ether. What is referred to as the heart or the mind is the collocation of the elements (of phenomenal existence) that appear as inner and outer. So there is no doubt that all phenomena consisting of names and forms are of the nature of mind alone. All that appear outside are in reality inside and not outside; it is in order to teach this that in the Vedas also all have been described as of the nature of the heart. What is called the heart is no other than *Brahman*.

9

D: How can it be said that the heart is no other than *Brahman*?

M: Although the self enjoys its experiences in the states of waking, dream, and deep sleep, residing respectively in the eyes, throat and heart, in reality, however, it never leaves its principal seat, the heart. In the heart-lotus which is of the nature of all, in other words in the mind-ether, the light of that self in the form 'I' shines. As it shines thus in everybody, this very self is referred to as the witness (*sakshi*) and the transcendent (*turiya* literally the fourth). The 'I'-less supreme *Brahman* which shines in all bodies as interior to the light in the form 'I' is the Self-ether (or knowledge-ether): that alone is the absolute Reality. This is the super-transcendent (*turiyatita*). Therefore, it is stated that what is called the heart is no other than *Brahman*. Moreover, for the reason that *Brahman* shines in the hearts of all souls as the Self, the name 'Heart' is given to *Brahman*.² The meaning of the word *hridayam*, when split thus '*hrit-ayam*', is in fact *Brahman*. The adequate evidence for the fact that *Brahman*, which shines as the self, resides in the hearts of all is that all people indicate themselves by pointing to the chest when saying 'I'.

10

D: If the entire universe is of the form of mind, then does it not follow that the universe is an illusion? If that be the case, why is the creation of the universe mentioned in the Veda?

M: There is no doubt whatsoever that the universe is the merest illusion. The principal purport of the Veda is to make known the true *Brahman*, after showing the apparent universe to be false. It is for this purpose that the Vedas admit the creation of the world and not for any other reason.

2. "In the hearts of all individual souls that which shines is *Brahman* and hence is called the Heart" - *Brahma Gita*.

Moreover, for the less qualified persons creation is taught, that is the phased evolution of *prakriti* (primal nature), *mahat-tattva* (the great intellect), *tanmatras* (the subtle essences), *bhutas* (the gross elements), the world, the body, etc., from *Brahman*: while for the more qualified simultaneous creation is taught, that is, that this world arose like a dream on account of one's own thoughts induced by the defect of not knowing oneself as the Self. Thus, from the fact that the creation of the world has been described in different ways it is clear that the purport of the Vedas rests only in teaching the true nature of *Brahman* after showing somehow or other the illusory nature of the universe. That the world is illusory, every one can directly know in the state of realization which is in the form of experience of one's bliss-nature.

11

D: Is Self-experience possible for the mind, whose nature is constant change?

M: Since *sattva-guna* (the constituent of *prakriti* which makes for purity, intelligence, etc.) is the nature of mind, and since the mind is pure and undefiled like ether, what is called mind is, in truth, of the nature of knowledge. When it stays in that natural (i.e. pure) state, it has not even the name 'mind'. It is only the erroneous knowledge which mistakes one for another that is called mind. What was (originally) the pure *sattva mind*, of the nature of pure knowledge, forgets its knowledge-nature on account of nescience, gets transformed into the world under the influence of *tamo-guna* (i.e. the constituent of *prakriti* which makes for dullness, inertness, etc.), being under the influence of *rajo-guna* (i.e. the constituent of *prakriti* which makes for activity, passions, etc.), imagines "I am the body, etc.; the world is real", it acquires the consequent merit and demerit through attachment, aversion, etc., and, through the residual impressions (*vasanas*) thereof, attains birth and death. But the mind, which has got rid of its defilement (sin) through action without attachment performed in many past lives, listens to the teaching of scripture from a true guru, reflects on its meaning, and meditates in order to gain the natural state of the mental mode of the form of the Self, i.e. of the form 'I am *Brahman*' which is the result of the continued contemplation of *Brahman*. Thus will be removed the mind's transformation into the world in the aspect of *tamo-guna*, and its roving therein in the aspect of *rajo-guna*. When this removal takes place the mind becomes subtle and unmoving. It is only by the mind that is impure and is under the influence of *rajas* and *tamas* that Reality (i.e. the Self) which is very subtle and unchanging cannot be experienced; just as a piece of fine silk cloth cannot be stitched with a heavy crowbar, or as the details of subtle objects cannot be distinguished by the light of a lamp flame that flickers in the wind. But in the pure mind that has been rendered subtle and unmoving by the meditation described above, the Self-bliss (i.e. *Brahman*) will become manifest. As without mind there cannot be experience, it is possible for the purified mind endowed with the extremely subtle mode (*vriddhi*) to experience the Self-bliss, by remaining in that form (i.e. in the form of *Brahman*). Then, that one's self is of the nature of *Brahman* will be clearly experienced.

12

D: Is the aforesaid Self-experience possible, even in the state of empirical existence, for the mind which has to perform functions in accordance with its *prarabdha* (the past karma which has begun to fructify)?

M: A Brahmin may play various parts in a drama; yet the thought that he is a Brahmin does not leave his mind. Similarly, when one is engaged in various empirical acts there should be the firm conviction “I am the Self”, without allowing the false idea “I am the body, etc.” to rise. If the mind should stray away from its state, then immediately one should enquire, “Oh! Oh! We are not the body etc.! Who are we?” and thus one should reinstate the mind in that (pure) state. The enquiry “Who am I?” is the principal means to the removal of all misery and the attainment of the supreme bliss. When in this manner the mind becomes quiescent in its own state, Self-experience arises of its own accord, without any hindrance. Thereafter sensory pleasures and pains will not affect the mind. All (phenomena) will appear then, without attachment, like a dream. Never forgetting one’s plenary Self-experience is real *bhakti* (devotion), *yoga* (mind-control), *jnana* (knowledge) and all other austerities. Thus say the sages.

13

D: When there is activity in regard to works, we are neither the agents of those works nor their enjoyers. The activity is of the three instruments (i.e., the mind, speech, and body). Could we remain (unattached) thinking thus?

M: After the mind has been made to stay in the Self which is its Deity, and has been rendered indifferent to empirical matters because it does not stray away from the Self, how can the mind think as mentioned above? Do not such thoughts constitute bondage? When such thoughts arise due to residual impressions (*vasanas*), one should restrain the mind from flowing that way, endeavour to retain it in the Self-state, and make it turn indifferent to empirical matters. One should not give room in the mind for such thoughts as: “Is this good? Or, is that good? Can this be done? Or, can that be done?” One should be vigilant even before such thoughts arise and make the mind stay in its native state. If any little room is given, such a (disturbed) mind will do harm to us while posing as our friend; like the foe appearing to be a friend, it will topple us down. Is it not because one forgets one’s Self that such thoughts arise and cause more and more evil? While it is true that to think through discrimination, “I do not do anything; all actions are performed by the instruments”, is a means to prevent the mind from flowing along thought *vasanas*, does it not also follow that only if the mind flows along thought *vasanas* that it must be restrained through discrimination as stated before? Can the mind that remains in the Self-state think as ‘I’ and as ‘I behave empirically thus and thus’? In all manner of ways possible one should endeavour gradually not to forget one’s (true) Self that is God. If that is accomplished, all will be accomplished. The mind should not be directed to any other matter. Even though one may perform, like a mad person, the actions that are the result of *prarabdha-karma*, one should retain the mind in the Self-state without letting the thought ‘I do’ arise. Have not countless *bhaktas* (devotees) performed their numerous empirical functions with an attitude of indifference?

14

D: What is the real purpose of *sannyasa* (renunciation)?

M: *Sannyasa* is only the renunciation of the ‘I’ thought, and not the rejection of the external objects.

He who has renounced (the ‘I’ thought) thus remains the same whether he is alone or in the midst of the extensive *samsara* (empirical world). Just as when the mind is concentrated on some object, it does not observe other things even though they may be proximate, so also, although the sage may perform any number of empirical acts, in reality he performs nothing, because he makes the mind rest in the Self without letting the ‘I’ thought arise. Even as in a dream one appears to fall head downwards, while in reality one is unmoving, so also the ignorant person, i.e., the person for whom the ‘I’ thought has not ceased, although he remains alone in constant meditation, is in fact one who performs all empirical actions.³ Thus the wise ones have said.

15

D: The mind, sense-organs, etc., have the ability to perceive; yet why are they regarded as perceived objects?

M:

| | <i>Drik</i> (<i>Knower</i>) | <i>Drisya</i> (<i>Known object</i>) |
|----------|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | The seer | Pot (<i>i.e.</i> the seen object) |
| Further, | | |
| 2 | The eye organ | Body, Pot, etc. |
| 3 | The sense of sight | The eye organ |
| 4 | The mind | The sense of sight |
| 5 | The individual soul | The mind |
| 6 | Consciousness (the Self) | The individual soul |

As shown in the above scheme, since we, the consciousness, know all objects, we are said to be *drik* (knower). The categories ending with pot are the objects seen, since they are what are known. In the table of ‘knowledge: ignorance (i.e. knower-known)’ given above, among the knowers and objects of knowledge, it is seen that one is knower in relation to another; yet, since that one is object in relation to another, none of those categories is, in reality, the knower. Although we are said to be the ‘knower’ because we know all, and not the ‘known’ because we are not known by anything else, we are said to be the ‘knower’ only in relation to the known objects. In truth, however, what is called the ‘known’ is not apart from us. And so we are the Reality that transcends those two (the knower and the known). All the others fall within the knower-known categories.

16

D: How do egoity, soul, self, and *Brahman* come to be identified?

3. Like those who listen to a story with their attention fixed elsewhere, the mind whose residual impressions have worn away does not really function even if it appears to do so. The mind that is not free from residual impressions really functions even if it does not appear to do so; this is like those who while remaining stationary imagine in their dreams that they climb up a hill and fall therefrom.

M:

The example

The exemplified

(1) The iron-ball

Egoity

(2) The heated iron-ball

The soul which appears as a superimposition on the Self

(3) The fire that is in the heated iron-ball

The light of consciousness, *i.e.* the immutable *Brahman*, which shines in the soul in everybody

(4) The flame of fire which remains as one

The all pervading *Brahman* which remains as one

From the examples given above, it will be clear how egoity, soul, witness, and All-witness come to be identified.

Just as in the wax-lump that is with the smith numerous and varied metal-particles lie included and all of them appear to be one wax-lump, so also in deep sleep the gross and subtle bodies of all the individual souls are included in the cosmic *maya* which is nescience, of the nature of sheer darkness, and since the souls are resolved in the Self becoming one with it, they see everywhere darkness alone. From the darkness of sleep, the subtle body, viz. egoity, and from that (egoity) the gross body arise respectively. Even as the egoity arises, it appears superimposed on the nature of the Self, like the heated iron-ball. Thus, without the soul (*jiva*) which is the mind or egoity that is conjoined with the Consciousness-light, there is no witness of the soul, viz. the Self, and without the Self there is no *Brahman* that is the All-witness. Just as when the iron ball is beaten into various shapes by the smith, the fire that is in it does not change thereby in any manner, even so the soul may be involved in ever so many experiences and undergo pleasures and pains, and yet the Self-light that is in it does not change in the least thereby, and like the ether it is the all-pervasive pure knowledge that is one, and it shines in the heart as *Brahman*.

17

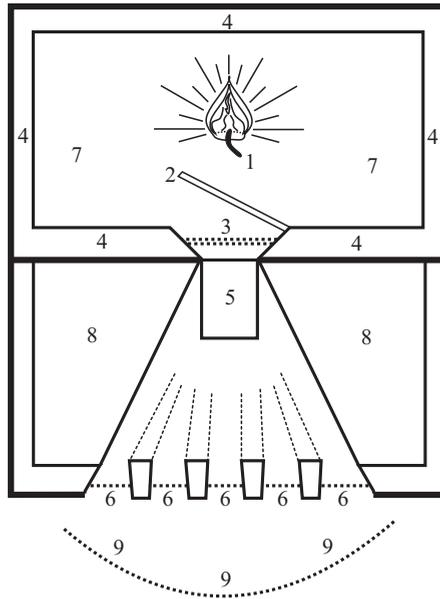
D: How is one to know that in the heart the Self itself shines as *Brahman*?

M: Just as the elemental ether within the flame of a lamp is known to fill without any difference and without any limit both the inside and the outside of the flame, so also the knowledge-ether that is within the Self-light in the heart, fills without any difference and without any limit both the inside and the outside of that Self-light. This is what is referred to as *Brahman*.

18

D: How do the three states of experience, the three bodies, etc., which are imaginations, appear in the Self-light which is one, impartite and self-luminous? Even if they should appear, how is one to know that the Self alone remains ever unmoving?

M:



The Example

- (1) The Lamp
- (2) The door
- (3) The door-step
- (4) The inner wall
- (5) The mirror
- (6) The windows
- (7) The inner chamber
- (8) The middle chamber
- (9) The outer court

The Exemplified

- The Self
Sleep
Mahat-tattva
Nescience or the causal body
The egoity
The five cognitive sense-organs.
Deep sleep in which the causal body is manifest
Dream in which the subtle body is manifest
Waking state in which the gross body is manifest

The Self which is the lamp (1) shines of its own accord in the inner chamber, i.e., the causal body (7) that is endowed with nescience as the inner wall (4) and sleep as the door (2); when by the vital principle as conditioned by time, karma, etc., the sleep-door is opened, there occurs a reflection of the Self in the egoity-mirror (5) that is placed next to the door-step - *Mahat-tattva*; the egoity-mirror thus illumines the middle chamber, i.e., the dream state (8), and, through the windows which are the five cognitive sense-organs (6), the outer court, i.e., the waking state. When, again, by the vital principle as conditioned by time, karma, etc., the sleep-door gets shut, the egoity ceases along with waking and dream, and the Self alone ever shines. The example just given explains how the Self is unmoving, how there is difference between the Self and the egoity and how the three states of experience, the three bodies, etc., appear.

19

D: Although I have listened to the explanation of the characteristics of enquiry in such great detail, my mind has not gained even a little peace. What is the reason for this?

M: The reason is the absence of strength or one-pointedness of the mind.

20

D: What is the reason for the absence of mental strength?

M: The means that make one qualified for enquiry are meditation, *yoga*, etc. One should gain proficiency in these through graded practice, and thus secure a stream of mental modes that is natural and helpful. When the mind that has in this manner become ripe, listens to the present enquiry, it will at once realize its true nature which is the Self, and remain in perfect peace, without deviating from that state. To a mind which has not become ripe, immediate realization and peace are hard to gain through listening to enquiry. Yet, if one practices the means for mind-control for some time, peace of mind can be obtained eventually.

21

D: Of the means for mind-control, which is the most important?

M: Breath-control is the means for mind-control.

22

D: How is breath to be controlled?

M: Breath can be controlled either by absolute retention of breath (*kevala-kumbhaka*) or by regulation of breath (*pranayama*).

23

D: What is absolute retention of breath?

M: It is making the vital air stay firmly in the heart even without exhalation and inhalation. This is achieved through meditation on the vital principle, etc.

24

D: What is regulation of breath?

M: It is making the vital air stay firmly in the heart through exhalation, inhalation, and retention, according to the instructions given in the *yoga* texts.

D: How is breath-control the means for mind-control?

M: There is no doubt that breath-control is the means for mind-control, because the mind, like breath, is a part of air, because the nature of mobility is common to both, because the place of origin is the same for both, and because when one of them is controlled the other gets controlled.

D: Since breath-control leads only to quiescence of the mind (*manolaya*) and not to its destruction (*manonasa*), how can it be said that breath-control is the means for enquiry which aims at the destruction of mind?

M: The scriptures teach the means for gaining Self-realization in two modes - as the *yoga* with eight limbs (*ashtanga-yoga*) and as knowledge with eight limbs (*ashtanga-jnana*). By regulation of breath (*pranayama*) or by absolute retention thereof (*kevala-kumbhaka*), which is one of the limbs of *yoga*, the mind gets controlled. Without leaving the mind at that, if one practises the further discipline such as withdrawal of the mind from external objects (*pratyahara*), then at the end, Self-realization which is the fruit of enquiry will surely be gained.

D: What are the limbs of *yoga*?

M: *Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi.* Of these -

(1) *Yama*:- this stands, for the cultivation of such principles of good conduct as non-violence (*ahimsa*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*), and non-possession (*apari-graha*).

(2) *Niyama*:- this stands for the observance of such rules of good conduct as purity (*saucha*), contentment (*santosha*), austerity (*tapas*), study of the sacred texts (*svadhyaya*), and devotion to God (*Isvara-pranidhana*).⁴

(3) *Asana*:- Of the different postures, eighty-four are the main ones. Of these, again, four, viz., *simha, bhadra, padma, and siddha*⁵ are said to be excellent. Of these too, it is only *siddha*, that is the most excellent. Thus the *yoga*-texts declare.

(4) *Pranayama*:- According to the measures prescribed in the sacred texts, exhaling the vital air is *rechaka*, inhaling is *puraka* and retaining it in the heart is *kumbhaka*. As regards 'measure', some texts say that *rechaka* and *puraka* should be equal in measure, and *kumbhaka* twice that measure, while other texts say that if *rechaka* is one measure, *puraka* should be of two measures, and *kumbhaka* of four. By 'measure' what is meant is the time that would be taken for the utterance

of the *Gayatrimantra* once. Thus *pranayama* consisting of *rechaka*, *puraka*, and *kumbhaka*, should be practised daily according to ability, slowly and gradually. Then, there would arise for the mind a desire to rest in happiness without moving. After this, one should practise *pratyahara*.

(5) *Pratyahara*:- This is regulating the mind by preventing it from flowing towards the external names and forms. The mind, which had been till then distracted, now becomes controlled. The aids in this respect are (1) meditation on the *pranava*, (2) fixing the attention betwixt the eyebrows, (3) looking at the tip of the nose, and (4) reflection on the *nada*. The mind that has thus become one-pointed will be fit to stay in one place. After this, *dharana* should be practised.

(6) *Dharana*:- This is fixing the mind in a locus which is fit for meditation. The loci that are eminently fit for meditation are the heart and *Brahma-randhra* (aperture in the crown of the head). One should think that in the middle of the eight-petalled lotus⁶ that is at this place there shines, like a flame, the Deity which is the Self, i.e. *Brahman*, and fix the mind therein. After this, one should meditate.

(7) *Dhyana*:- This is meditation, through the 'I am He' thought, that one is not different from the nature of the aforesaid flame. Even, thus, if one makes the enquiry 'Who am I?', then, as the Scripture declares, "The *Brahman* which is everywhere shines in the heart as the Self that is the witness of the intellect", one would realize that is the Divine Self that shines in the heart as 'I-I'. This mode of reflection is the best meditation.

(8) *Samadhi*:- As a result of the fruition of the aforesaid meditation, the mind gets resolved in the object of meditation without harbouring the ideas 'I am such and such; I am doing this and this'. This subtle state in which even the thought 'I-I' disappears is *samadhi*. If one practises this every day, seeing to it that sleep does not supervene, God will soon confer on one the supreme state of quiescence of mind.

28

D: What is the purport of the teaching that in *pratyahara* one should meditate on the *pranava*?

M: The purport of prescribing meditation on the *pranava* is this. The *pranava* is *Om* consisting of three and a half *matras*, viz., *a*, *u*, *m*, and *ardha-matra*. of these, *a* stands for the waking state, *Visva-jiva*, and the gross body; *u* stands for the dream-state *Tajasa-jiva*, and the subtle body; *m* stands for the sleep-state, *Prajna-jiva* and the causal body; the *ardha-matra* represents the *Turiya* which is the self or 'I'-nature; and what is beyond that is the state of *Turiyatita*, or pure Bliss. The fourth state which is the state of 'I'-nature was referred to in the section on meditation (*dhyana*): this has been variously described - as of the nature of *amatra* which includes the three *matras*, *a*, *u*, and *m*; as *maunakshara* (silence syllable); as *ajapa* (as muttering without muttering) and as the *Advaita*-

4. The aim of *yama* and *niyama* is the attainment of all good paths open to those eligible for *moksha*. For more details see works like the *Yoga-sutra*, *Hathayoga-dipika*.

5. *Siddhasana*: Left heel should be placed over the genital organ and over that, the right heel. Fixing one's gaze between the eyebrows one's body should be motionless and erect like a stick.

6. Although it is true that the lotus in the crown of the head is said to have a thousand petals, it also may be described as having eight petals because each of these eight consists of 125 sub-petals.

mantra which is the essence of all mantras such as *panchakshara*. In order to get at this true significance, one should meditate on the *pranava*. This is meditation which is of the nature of devotion consisting in reflection on the truth of the Self. The fruition of this process is *samadhi* which yields release which is the state of unsurpassed bliss. The revered Gurus also have said that release is to be gained only by devotion which is of the nature of reflection on the truth of the Self.

29

D : What is the purport of the teaching that one should meditate, through the 'I am He' thought, on the truth that one is not different from the self-luminous Reality that shines like a flame?

M: (A) The purport of teaching that one should cultivate the idea that one is not different from the self-luminous Reality is this: Scripture defines meditation in these words, "In the middle of the eight-petalled *heart-lotus* which is of the nature of all, and which is referred to as *Kailasa*, *Vaikundha*, and *Parama-pada*, there is the Reality which is of the size of the thumb, which is dazzling like lightning and which shines like a flame. By meditating on it, a person gains immortality". From this we should know that by such meditation one avoids the defects of (1) the thought of difference, of the form 'I am different, and that is different', (2) the meditation on what is limited, (3) the idea that the real is limited, and (4) that it is confined to one place.

(B) The purport of teaching that one should meditate with the 'I am He' thought is this: *sahaham: soham; sah* the supreme Self, *aham* the Self that is manifest as 'I'. The *jiva* which is the *Shivalinga* resides in the heart-lotus which is its seat situated in the body which is the city of *Brahman*; the mind which is of the nature of egoity, goes outward identifying itself with the body, etc. Now the mind should be resolved in the heart, i.e. the I-sense that is placed in the body, etc., should be got rid of; when thus one enquires 'Who am I?', remaining undisturbed, in that state the Self-nature becomes manifest in a subtle manner as 'I-I'; that self-nature is all and yet none, and is manifest as the supreme Self everywhere without the distinction of inner and outer; that shines like a flame, as was stated above, signifying the truth 'I am Brahman'. If, without meditating on that as being identical with oneself, one imagines it to be different, ignorance will not leave. Hence, the identity-meditation is prescribed.

If one meditates for a long time, without disturbance, on the Self ceaselessly, with the 'I am He' thought which is the technique of reflection on the Self, the darkness of ignorance which is in the heart and all the impediments which are but the effects of ignorance will be removed, and the plenary wisdom will be gained.⁷

Thus, realizing the Reality in the heart-cave which is in the city (of *Brahman*), viz. the body, is the same as realizing the all-perfect God.

In the city with nine gates, which is the body, the wise one resides at ease.⁸

7.If meditation in the form 'I am Shiva' (*Shivoham bhavana*), which prevents the thought going outwards, is practised always, *samadhi* will come about.- *Vallalar*.

8. In the city that has nine false gates, He resides in the form of bliss. *Bhagavad gita*.

The body is the temple; the *jiva* is God (*Shiva*). If one worships him with the 'I am He' thought, one will gain release.

The body which consists of the five sheaths is the cave, the supreme that resides there is the lord of the cave. Thus the scriptures declare.

Since the Self is the reality of all the gods, the meditation on the Self which is oneself is the greatest of all meditations. All other meditations are included in this. It is for gaining this that the other meditations are prescribed. So, if this is gained, the others are not necessary. Knowing one's Self is knowing God. Without knowing one's Self that meditates, imagining that there is a deity which is different and meditating on it, is compared by the great ones to the act of measuring with one's foot one's own shadow, and to the search for a trivial conch after throwing away a priceless gem that is already in one's possession.⁹

30

D: Even though the heart and the *Brahmarandhra* alone are the loci fit for meditation, could one meditate, if necessary, on the six mystic centres (*adharas*)?

M: The six mystic centres, etc., which are said to be loci of meditation, are but products of imagination. All these are meant for beginners in *yoga*. With reference to meditation on the six centres, the *Shiva-yogins* say, "God, who is of the nature of the non-dual, plenary, consciousness-self, manifests, sustains and resolves us all. It is a great sin to spoil that Reality by superimposing on it various names and forms such as Ganapati, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesvara, and Sadashiva", and the Vedantins declare, "All those are but imaginations of the mind". Therefore, if one knows one's Self which is of the nature of consciousness that knows everything, one knows everything. The great ones have also said: "When that One is known as it is in Itself, all that has not been known becomes known". If we who are endowed with various thoughts meditate on God that is the Self we would get rid of the plurality of thoughts by that one thought; and then even that one thought would vanish. This is what is meant by saying that knowing one's Self is knowing God. This knowledge is release.

31

D: How is one to think of the Self?

M: The Self is self-luminous without darkness and light, and is the reality which is self-manifest. Therefore, one should not think of it as this or as that. The very thought of thinking will end in bondage. The purport of meditation on the Self is to make the mind take the form of the Self. In the middle of the heart-cave the pure *Brahman* is directly manifest as the Self in the form 'I-I'. Can there

9. We shall meditate on that which, existing in the form of self, is the *atma-tattva*, is effulgent, and which residing in all living things always says "I", "I". To seek for a God outside, leaving the God residing in the cave of the heart, is like throwing away a priceless gem and searching for a trivial bead.

be greater ignorance than to think of it in manifold ways, without knowing it as aforementioned?

32

D: It was stated that *Brahman* is manifest as the Self in the form 'I-I', in the heart. To facilitate an understanding of this statement, can it be still further explained?

M: Is it not within the experience of all that during deep sleep, swoon, etc., there is no knowledge whatsoever, i.e. neither self-knowledge nor other-knowledge? Afterwards, when there is experience of the form "I have woken up from sleep" or "I have recovered from swoon" - is that not a mode of specific knowledge that has arisen from the aforementioned distinctionless state? This specific knowledge is called *vijnana*. This *vijnana* becomes manifest only as pertaining to either the Self or the not-self, and not by itself. When it pertains to the Self, it is called true knowledge, knowledge in the form of that mental mode whose object is the Self, or knowledge which has for its content the impartite (Self); and when it relates to the not-self, it is called ignorance. The state of this *vijnana*, when it pertains to the Self and is manifest as of the form of the Self, is said to be the 'I'-manifestation. This manifestation cannot take place as apart from the Real (i.e. the Self). It is this manifestation that serves as the mark for the direct experience of the Real. Yet, this by itself cannot constitute the state of being the Real. That, depending on which this manifestation takes place is the basic reality which is also called *prajana*. The Vedantic text "*prajnanam brahma*" teaches the same truth.

Know this as the purport of the scripture also. The Self which is self-luminous and the witness of everything manifests itself as residing in the *vijnanakosa* (sheath of the intellect). By the mental mode which is impartite, seize this Self as your goal and enjoy it as the Self.

33

D: What is that which is called the inner worship or worship of the attributeless?

M: In texts such as the *Ribhu-gita*, the worship of the attributeless has been elaborately explained (as a separate discipline). Yet, all disciplines such as sacrifice, charity, austerity, observance of vows, *japa*, *yoga*, and *puja*, are, in effect, modes of meditation of the form 'I am Brahman'. So, in all the modes of disciplines, one should see to it that one does not stray away from the thought 'I am Brahman'. This is the purport of the worship of the attributeless.

34

D: What are the eight limbs of knowledge (*jnana-ashtanga*)?

M: The eight limbs are those which have been already mentioned, viz., *yama*, *niyama*, etc. but differently defined.

Of these -

(1) *Yama*:-This is controlling the aggregate of sense-organs, realizing the defects that are present in the world consisting of the body, etc.

(2) *Niyama*:- This is maintaining a stream of mental modes that relate to the Self and rejecting the contrary modes. In other words, it means love that arises uninterruptedly for the supreme Self.

(3) *Asana*:- That with the help of which constant meditation on *Brahman* is made possible with ease is *asana*.

(4) *Pranayama*:- *Rechaka* (exhalation) is removing the two unreal aspects of name and form from the objects constituting the world, the body etc., *puraka* (inhalation) is grasping the three real aspects, existence, consciousness and bliss, which are constant in those objects, and *kumbhaka* is retaining those aspects thus grasped.

(5) *Pratyahara*:- This is preventing name and form which have been removed from re-entering the mind.

(6) *Dharana*:- This is making the mind stay in the heart, without straying outward, and realizing that one is the Self itself which is existence-consciousness-bliss.

(7) *Dhyana*:- This is meditation of the form 'I am only pure consciousness'. That is, after leaving aside the body which consists of five sheaths, one enquires 'Who am I?', and as a result of that, one stays as 'I' which shines as the Self.

(8) *Samadhi*:- When the 'I'-manifestation also ceases, there is (subtle) direct experience. This is *samadhi*.

For the *pranayama*, etc., detailed here, the disciplines such as *asana*, etc., mentioned in connection with *yoga*, are not necessary. The limbs of knowledge may be practised at all places and at all times. Of *yoga* and knowledge, one may follow whichever is pleasing to one, or both, according to circumstances. The great teachers say that forgetfulness is the root of all evil, and is death for those who seek release;¹⁰ so one should rest the mind in one's Self and should never forget the Self : this is the aim. If the mind is controlled, all else can be controlled. The distinction between *yoga* with eight limbs and knowledge with eight limbs has been set forth elaborately in the sacred texts; so only the substance of this teaching has been given here.

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D: Is it possible to practise at the same time the *pranayama* belonging to *yoga* and the *pranayama* pertaining to knowledge?

M: So long as the mind has not been made to rest in the heart, either through absolute retention (*kevala-kumbhaka*) or through enquiry, *rechaka*, *puraka*, etc., are needed. Hence, the *pranayama* of *yoga* is to be practised during training, and the other *pranayama* may be practised always. Thus, both may be practised. It is enough if the yogic *pranayama* is practised till skill is gained in absolute retention.

10. Death or *Kala* is the giving up on this earth of the contemplation of the Self which should never be given up even the least bit. - *Vivekachudamani*.

D: Why should the path to release be differently taught? Will it not create confusion in the minds of aspirants?

M: Several paths are taught in the Vedas to suit the different grades of qualified aspirants. Yet, since release is but the destruction of mind, all efforts have for their aim the control of mind. Although the modes of meditation may appear to be different from one another, in the end all of them become one. There is no need to doubt this. One may adopt that path which suits the maturity of one's mind.

The control of *prana* which is *yoga*, and the control of mind which is *jnana*¹¹ - these are the two principal means for the destruction of mind. To some, the former may appear easy, and to others the latter. Yet, *jnana* is like subduing a turbulent bull by coaxing it with green grass, while *yoga* is like controlling through the use of force. Thus the wise ones say: of the three grades of qualified aspirants, the highest reach the goal by making the mind firm in the Self through determining the nature of the real by Vedantic enquiry and by looking upon one's self and all things as of the nature of the real; the mediocre by making the mind stay in the heart through *kevala-kumbhaka* and meditating for a long time on the real, and the lowest grade, by gaining that state in a gradual manner through breath-control, etc.

The mind should be made to rest in the heart till the destruction of the 'I'-thought which is of the form of ignorance, residing in the heart. This itself is *jnana*; this alone is *dhyana* also. The rest are a mere digression of words, digression of the texts. Thus the scriptures proclaim. Therefore, if one gains the skill of retaining the mind in one's Self through some means or other, one need not worry about other matters.

The great teachers also have taught that the devotee is greater than the *yogins*¹² and that the means to release is devotion, which is of the nature of reflection on one's own Self.¹³

Thus, it is the path of realizing *Brahman* that is variously called *Dahara-vidya*, *Brahma-vidya*, *Atma-vidya*, etc. What more can be said than this? One should understand the rest by inference. The Scriptures teach in different modes. After analysing all those modes the great ones declare this to be the shortest and the best means.

D: By practising the disciplines taught above, one may get rid of the obstacles that are in the mind, viz. ignorance, doubt, error, etc., and thereby attain quiescence of mind. Yet, there is one last doubt. After the mind has been resolved in the heart, there is only consciousness shining as the

11. Seeing everything as Real according to the Scripture: I am Brahman -one only without a second.

12. Of all *Yogins*, only he who rests his unwavering mind and love in me is dear to me.- *Bhagavad-gita*.

13. Of the means to release only *bhakti* (devotion) may be said to be the highest. For, *bhakti* is constant reflection on one's own Self.- *Vivekachudamani*.

plenary reality. When thus the mind has assumed the form of the Self, who is there to enquire? Such enquiry would result in self-worship. It would be like the story of the shepherd searching for the sheep that was all the time on his shoulders!

M: The *jiva* itself is Shiva; Shiva Himself is the *jiva*. It is true that the *jiva* is no other than Shiva. When the grain is hidden inside the husk, it is called paddy; when it is de-husked, it is called rice. Similarly, so long as one is bound by *karma* one remains a *jiva*; when the bond of ignorance is broken, one shines as Shiva, the Deity. Thus declares a scriptural text. Accordingly, the *jiva* which is mind is in reality the pure Self; but, forgetting this truth, it imagines itself to be an individual soul and gets bound in the shape of mind. So its search for the Self, which is itself, is like the search for the sheep by the shepherd. But still, the *jiva* which has forgotten its self will not become the Self through mere mediate knowledge. By the impediment caused by the residual impressions gathered in previous births, the *jiva* forgets again and again its identity with the Self, and gets deceived, identifying itself with the body, etc. Will a person become a high officer by merely looking at him? Is it not by steady effort in that direction that he could become a highly placed officer? Similarly, the *jiva*, which is in bondage through mental identification with the body, etc., should put forth effort in the form of reflection on the Self, in a gradual and sustained manner; and when thus the mind gets destroyed, the *jiva* would become the Self.¹⁴

The reflection on the Self which is thus practised constantly will destroy the mind, and thereafter will destroy itself like the stick that is used to kindle the cinders burning a corpse. It is this state that is called release.

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D: If the *jiva* is by nature identical with the Self, what is it that prevents the *jiva* from realizing its true nature?

M: It is forgetfulness of the *jiva*'s true nature; this is known as the power of veiling.

39

D: If it is true that the *jiva* has forgotten itself, how does the 'I'-experience arise for all?

M: The veil does not completely hide the *jiva*;¹⁵ it only hides the Self-nature of 'I' and projects the 'I am the body' notion; but it does not hide the Self's existence which is 'I', and which is real and eternal.

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D: What are the characteristics of the *jivan-mukta* (the liberated in life) and the *videha-mukta* (the liberated at death)?

14. Though the obstacles which cause the bondage of birth may be many, the root-cause for all such changes is *ahankara*. This root-cause must be destroyed for ever.- *Vivekachudamani*.

15. Ignorance cannot hide the basic 'I', but it hides the specific truth that the *jiva* is the Supreme (Self).

M: 'I am not the body; I am *Brahman* which is manifest as the Self. In me who am the plenary Reality,¹⁶ the world consisting of bodies etc., are mere appearance, like the blue of the sky'. He who has realized the truth thus is a *jivan-mukta*. Yet so long as his mind has not been resolved, there may arise some misery for him because of relation to objects on account of *prarabdha* (karma which has begun to fructify and whose result is the present body), and as the movement of mind has not ceased there will not be also the experience of bliss. The experience of Self is possible only for the mind that has become subtle and unmoving as a result of prolonged meditation. He who is thus endowed with a mind that has become subtle, and who has the experience of the Self is called a *jivan-mukta*. It is the state of *jivan-mukti* that is referred to as the attributeless *Brahman* and as the *Turiya*. When even the subtle mind gets resolved, and experience of self ceases, and when one is immersed in the ocean of bliss and has become one with it without any differentiated existence, one is called a *videha-mukta*. It is the state of *videha-mukti* that is referred to as the transcendent attributeless *Brahman* and as the transcendent *Turiya*. This is the final goal. Because of the grades in misery and happiness, the released ones, the *jivan-muktas* and *videha-muktas*, may be spoken of as belonging to four categories - *Brahmavid*, - *vara—variyan*, and *varishtha*. But these distinctions are from the standpoint of the others who look at them; in reality, however, there are no distinctions in release gained through *jnana*.

OBEISANCE

May the Feet of Ramana, the Master, who is the great Shiva Himself and is also in human form, flourish for ever!

16. If there is prolonged meditation that the worlds are an appearance in me who am the plenary Reality, where can ignorance stand?

Spiritual Instruction

OF

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

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TIRUVANNAMALAI (S. INDIA)
FOREWORD TO THE ORIGINAL TAMIL VERSION

The Tamil-speaking world knows the life-history and the spiritual instructions of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi well through the books which have already come out. He shines in the resplendent Arunachala Hill (Tiruvannamalai) as the sun of knowledge which destroys the sorrows of those who worship him. In this book named *Upadesa Manjari* (bouquet of spiritual instructions) Sri Natanananda, a true devotee of his, who serves and praises him by laying at his lotus feet many garlands of songs, has brought out Bhagavan's words heard by him at different times. They consist of questions and answers comprising four chapters entitled *upadesa* (instruction), *abhyasa* (practice), *anubhava* (experience) and *arudha* (attainment). I humbly request devotees to accept this small book which offers wholesome food for the spirit.

VISWANATHAN
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
2-2-34

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INVOCATION

I seek refuge at the sacred feet of the blessed Ramana, who performs the entire work of creation, preservation and destruction, while remaining wholly unattached, and who makes us aware of what is real and thus protects us, that I may set down his words fittingly.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK

Worshipping with the instruments (of thought, word and body) the sacred lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the very embodiment of the beginningless infinite supreme Brahman, the *Satchitananda* (existence, consciousness, bliss), I have gathered this bouquet of the flowers of his instructions (*upadesamanjari*) for the benefit of those who are foremost among the seekers of Liberation and who are adored by learned persons, in order that they might adorn themselves with it and attain salvation.

This book is an epitome of the immortal words of that great soul, Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose teachings entirely dispelled the doubts and wrong notions of this humble person even as the sun dispels darkness.

The subject of this book is that eternal Brahman which shines as the pinnacle and heart of all the *Vedas* and *Agamas*.

That incomparable Self-realization (*atmasiddhi*) which is praised by all the Upanisads and which is the supreme good to be sought by all noble aspirants (*brahmavids*) is the theme of this work.

CHAPTER 1

INSTRUCTION

(*Upadesa*)

1. *What are the marks of a real teacher (Sadguru)?*

Steady abidance in the Self, looking at all with an equal eye, unshakeable courage at all times, in all places and circumstances, etc.

2. *What are the marks of an earnest disciple (sadsisya)?*

An intense longing for the removal of sorrow and attainment of joy and an intense aversion for all kinds of mundane pleasure.

3. *What are the characteristics of instruction (upadesa)?*

The word '*upadesa*' means : 'near the place or seat' (*upa* - near, *desa* - place or seat). The Guru who is the embodiment of that which is indicated by the terms *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda* (existence, consciousness and bliss), prevents the disciple who, on account of his acceptance of the forms of the objects of the senses, has swerved from his true state and is consequently distressed and buffeted by joys and sorrows, from continuing so and establishes him in his own real nature without differentiation.

Upadesa also means showing a distant object quite near. It is brought home to the disciple that the Brahman which he believes to be distant and different from himself is near and not different from himself.

4. *If it be true that the Guru is one's own Self (atman), what is the principle underlying the doctrine which says that, however learned a disciple may be or whatever occult powers he may possess, he cannot attain self-realization (atma-siddhi) without the grace of the Guru?*

Although in absolute truth the state of the *Guru* is that of oneself it is very hard for the Self which has become the individual soul (*jiva*) through ignorance to realize its true state or nature without the grace of the *Guru*.

All mental concepts are controlled by the mere presence of the real *Guru*. If he were to say to one who arrogantly claims that he has seen the further shore of the ocean of learning or one who claims arrogantly that he can perform deeds which are well-nigh impossible, "Yes, you learnt all that is to be learnt, but have you learnt (to know) yourself? And you who are capable of performing deeds which are almost impossible, have you seen yourself?", they will bow their heads (in shame) and remain silent. Thus it is evident that only by the grace of the *Guru* and by no other accomplishment is it possible to know oneself.

5. *What are the marks of the Guru's grace?*

It is beyond words or thoughts.

6. *If that is so, how is it that it is said that the disciple realizes his true state by the Guru's grace?*

It is like the elephant which wakes up on seeing a lion in its dream. Even as the elephant wakes up at the mere sight of the lion, so too is it certain that the disciple wakes up from the sleep of ignorance into the wakefulness of true knowledge through the *Guru's* benevolent look of grace.

7. *What is the significance of the saying that the nature of the real Guru is that of the Supreme Lord (Sarvesvara)?*

In the case of the individual soul which desires to attain the state of true knowledge or the state of Godhood (*Isvara*) and with that object always practises devotion, when the individual's devotion has reached a mature stage, the Lord who is the witness of that individual soul and identical with it, comes forth in human form with the help of *sat-chit-ananda*, His three natural features, and form and name which he also graciously assumes, and in the guise of blessing the disciple, absorbs him in Himself. According to this doctrine the *Guru* can truly be called the Lord.

8. *How then did some great persons attain knowledge without a Guru?*

To a few mature persons the Lord shines as the light of knowledge and imparts awareness of the truth.

9. *What is the end of devotion (bhakti) and the path of Siddhanta (i.e., Saiva Siddhanta)?*

It is to learn the truth that all one's actions performed with unselfish devotion, with the aid of the three purified instruments (body, speech and mind), in the capacity of the servant of the Lord, become the Lord's actions, and to stand forth free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. This is also the truth of what the *Saiva-Siddhantins* call *para-bhakti* (supreme devotion) or living in the service of God (*irai-pani-nitral*).

10. *What is the end of the path of knowledge (jnana) or Vedanta?*

It is to know the truth that the 'I' is not different from the Lord (*Isvara*) and to be free from the feeling of being the doer (*kartrtva, ahamkara*).

11. *How can it be said that the end of both these paths is the same?*

Whatever the means, the destruction of the sense 'I' and 'mine' is the goal, and as these are interdependent, the destruction of either of them causes the destruction of the other; therefore in order to achieve that state of Silence which is beyond thought and word, either the path of knowledge

which removes the sense of 'I' or the path of devotion which removes the sense of 'mine', will suffice. So there is no doubt that the end of the paths of devotion and knowledge is one and the same.

NOTE: So long as the 'I' exists it is necessary to accept the Lord also. If any one wishes to regain easily the supreme state of identity (*sayujya*) now lost to him, it is only proper that he should accept this conclusion.

12. *What is the mark of the ego?*

The individual soul of the form of 'I' is the ego The Self which is of the nature of intelligence (*chit*) has no sense of 'I'. Nor does the insentient body possess a sense of 'I'. The mysterious appearance of a delusive ego between the intelligent and the insentient, being the root cause of all these troubles, upon its destruction by whatever means, that which really exists will be seen as it is. This is called Liberation (*moksha*).

CHAPTER II

PRACTICE (*Abhyasa*)

1. *What is the method of practice?*

As the Self of a person who tries to attain Self-realization is not different from him and as there is nothing other than or superior to him to be attained by him, Self-realization being only the realization of one's own nature, the seeker of Liberation realizes, without doubts or misconceptions, his real nature by distinguishing the eternal from the transient, and never swerves from his natural state. This is known as the practice of knowledge. This is the enquiry leading to Self-realization.

2. *Can this path of enquiry be followed by all aspirants?*

This is suitable only for the ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods according to the state of their minds.

3. *What are the other methods?*

They are (i) *stuti*, (ii) *japa*, (iii) *dhyana*, (iv) *yoga*, (v) *jnana*, etc.

(i) *stuti* is singing the praises of the Lord with a great feeling of devotion.

(ii) *japa* is uttering the names of the gods or sacred *mantras* like *Om* either mentally or verbally. (While following the methods of *stuti* and *japa* the mind will sometimes be concentrated (*lit.* closed) and sometimes diffused (*lit.* open). The vagaries of the mind will not be evident to those who follow these methods).

(iii) *dhyana* denotes the repetition of the names, etc., mentally (*japa*) with feelings of devotion. In this method the state of the mind will be understood easily. For the mind does not become

concentrated and diffused simultaneously. When one is in *dhyana* it does not contact the objects of the senses, and when it is in contact with the objects it is not in *dhyana*. Therefore those who are in this state can observe the vagaries of the mind then and there and by stopping the mind from thinking other thoughts, fix it in *dhyana*. Perfection in *dhyana* is the state of abiding in the Self (*lit.*, abiding in the form of ‘that’ *tadakaranilai*).

As meditation functions in an exceedingly subtle manner at the source of the mind it is not difficult to perceive its rise and subsidence.

(iv) *yoga*: The source of the breath is the same as that of the mind; therefore the subsidence of either leads effortlessly to that of the other. The practice of stilling the mind through breath control (*pranayama*) is called *yoga*.

Fixing their minds on psychic centres such as the *sahasrara* (*lit.* the thousand-petalled lotus) yogis remain any length of time without awareness of their bodies. As long as this state continues they appear to be immersed in some kind of joy. But when the mind which has become tranquil emerges (becomes active again) it resumes its worldly thoughts. It is therefore necessary to train it with the help of practices like *dhyana*, whenever it becomes externalised. It will then attain a state in which there is neither subsidence nor emergence.

(v) *jnana* is the annihilation of the mind in which it is made to assume the form of the Self through the constant practice of *dhyana* or enquiry (*vichara*). The extinction of the mind is the state in which there is a cessation of all efforts. Those who are established in this state never swerve from their true state. The terms ‘silence’ (*mouna*) and inaction refer to this state alone.

NOTE: (1) All practices are followed only with the object of concentrating the mind. As all the mental activities like remembering, forgetting, desiring, hating, attracting, discarding, etc., are modifications of the mind, they cannot be one’s true state. Simple, changeless being is one’s true nature. Therefore to know the truth of one’s being and to be it, is known as release from bondage and the destruction of the knot (*granthi nasam*). Until this state of tranquillity of mind is firmly attained, the practice of unswerving abidance in the Self and keeping the mind unsoiled by various thoughts, is essential for an aspirant.

(2) Although the practices for achieving strength of mind are numerous, all of them achieve the same end. For it can be seen that whoever concentrates his mind on any object, will, on the cessation of all mental concepts, ultimately remain merely as that object. This is called successful meditation (*dhyana siddhi*). Those who follow the path of enquiry realize that the mind which remains at the end of the enquiry is Brahman. Those who practise meditation realize that the mind which remains at the end of the meditation is the object of their meditation. As the result is the same in either case it is the duty of aspirants to practise continuously either of these methods till the goal is reached.

4. *Is the state of ‘being still’ a state involving effort or effortless?*

It is not an effortless state of indolence. All mundane activities which are ordinarily called effort are performed with the aid of a portion of the mind and with frequent breaks. But the act of communion with the Self (*atma vyavahara*) or remaining still inwardly is intense activity which is performed with the entire mind and without break.

Maya (delusion or ignorance) which cannot be destroyed by any other act is completely destroyed by this intense activity which is called ‘silence’ (*mouna*).

5. *What is the nature of maya?*

Maya is that which makes us regard as non-existent the Self, the Reality, which is always and everywhere present, all-pervasive and self-luminous, and as existent the individual soul (*jiva*), the world (*jagat*), and God (*para*) which have been conclusively proved to be non-existent at all times and places.

6. *As the Self shines fully of its own accord why is it not generally recognised like the other objects of the world by all persons?*

Wherever particular objects are known it is the Self which has known itself in the form of those objects. For what is known as knowledge or awareness is only the patency of the Self (*atma sakti*). The Self is the only sentient object. There is nothing apart from the Self. If there are such objects they are all insentient and therefore cannot either know themselves or mutually know one another. It is because the Self does not know its true nature in this manner that it seems to be immersed and struggling in the ocean of birth (and death) in the form of the individual soul.

7. *Although the Lord is all-pervasive it appears, from passages like “adorning him through His Grace”, that He can be known only through His grace. How then can the individual soul by its own efforts attain self-realization in the absence of the Lord’s Grace?*

As the Lord denotes the Self and as Grace means the Lord’s presence or revelation, there is no time when the Lord remains unknown. If the light of the sun is invisible to the owl it is only the fault of that bird and not of the sun. Similarly can the unawareness by ignorant persons of the Self which is always of the nature of awareness be other than their own fault? How can it be the fault of the Self? It is because Grace is of the very nature of the Lord that He is well-known as ‘the blessed Grace’. Therefore the Lord, whose nature itself is Grace, does not have to bestow His Grace. Nor is there any particular time for bestowing His Grace.

8. *What part of the body is the abode of the Self?*

The heart on the right side of the chest is generally indicated. This is because we usually point to the right side of the chest when we refer to ourselves. Some say that the *sahasrara* (the thousand-petalled lotus) is the abode of the Self. But if that were true the head should not fall forward when we go to sleep or faint.

9. *What is the nature of the heart?*

The sacred texts describing it say:

Between the two nipples, below the chest and above the abdomen, there are six organs of different colours¹. One of them resembling the bud of a water lily and situated two digits to the right is the

heart. It is inverted and within it is a tiny orifice which is the seat of dense darkness (ignorance) full of desires. All the psychic nerves (*nadis*) depend upon it. It is the abode of the vital forces, the mind and the light (of consciousness). (*See Appendix to Reality in Forty Verses 18 -19*).

1. These are not the same as the Chakras.

But, although it is described thus, the meaning of the word heart (*hrdayam*) is the Self (*atman*). As it is denoted by the terms existence, consciousness, bliss, eternal and plenum (*sat, chit, anandam, nityam, purnam*) it has no differences such as exterior and interior or up and down. That tranquil state in which all thoughts come to an end is called the state of the Self. When it is realized as it is, there is no scope for discussions about its location inside the body or outside.

10. *Why do thoughts of many objects arise in the mind even when there is no contact with external objects?*

All such thoughts are due to latent tendencies (*purva samskaras*). They appear only to the individual consciousness (*jiva*) which has forgotten its real nature and become externalised. Whenever particular things are perceived, the enquiry “Who is it that sees them”? should be made; they will then disappear at once.

11. *How do the triple factors (i.e., knower, known and knowledge), which are absent in deep sleep, samadhi, etc., manifest themselves in the Self (in the states of waking and dreaming)?*

From the Self there arise in succession

(i) *Chidabhasa* (reflected consciousness) which is a kind of luminosity.

(ii) *Jiva* (the individual consciousness) or the seer or the first concept.

(iii) Phenomena, that is the world.

12. *Since the Self is free from the notions of knowledge and ignorance how can it be said to pervade the entire body in the shape of sentience or to impart sentience to the senses?*

Wise men say that there is a connection between the source of the various psychic nerves and the Self, that this is the knot of the heart, that the connection between the sentient and the insentient will exist until this is cut asunder with the aid of true knowledge, that just as the subtle and invisible force of electricity travels through wires and does many wonderful things, so the force of the Self also travels through the psychic nerves and, pervading the entire body, imparts sentience to the senses, and that if this knot is cut the Self will remain as it always is, without any attributes.

13. *How can there be a connection between the Self which is pure knowledge and the triple factors which are relative knowledge?*

This is, in a way, like the working of a cinema as shown below:-

| CINEMA SHOW | SELF |
|--|---|
| 1/ The lamp inside (the apparatus) | 1/ The Self |
| 2/ The lens in front of the lamp | 2/ The pure (sattvic) mind close to the Self. |
| 3/ The film which is a long series of (separate photos). | 3/ The stream of latent tendencies consisting of subtle thoughts. |
| 4/ The lens, the light passing through it and the lamp, which together form the focused light. | 4/ The mind, the illumination of it and the Self, which together form the seer or the Jiva. |
| 5/ The light passing through the lens and falling on the screen. | 5/ The light of the Self emerging from the mind through the senses, and falling on the world. |
| 6/ The various kinds of pictures appearing in the light of the screen. | 6/ The various forms and names appearing as the objects perceived in the light of the world. |
| 7/ The mechanism which sets the film in motion. | 7/ The divine law manifesting the latent tendencies of the mind. |

Just as the pictures appear on the screen as long as the film throws the shadows through the lens, so the phenomenal world will continue to appear to the individual in the waking and dream states as long as there are latent mental impressions. Just as the lens magnifies the tiny specks on the film to a huge size and as a number of pictures are shown in a second, so the mind enlarges the sprout-like tendencies into tree-like thoughts and shows in a second innumerable worlds. Again, just as there is only the light of the lamp visible when there is no film, so the Self alone shines without the triple factors when the mental concepts in the form of tendencies are absent in the states of deep sleep, swoon and samadhi. Just as the lamp illumines the lens, etc., while remaining unaffected, the Self illumines the ego (*chidabhasa*), etc., while remaining unaffected.

14. *What is dhyana (meditation)?*

It is abiding as one's Self without swerving in any way from one's real nature and without feeling that one is meditating. As one is not in the least conscious of the different states (waking, dreaming, etc.) in this condition, the sleep (noticeable) here is also regarded as *dhyana*.

15. *What is the difference between dhyana and samadhi?*

Dhyana is achieved through deliberate mental effort; in *samadhi* there is no such effort.

16. *What are the factors to be kept in view in dhyana ?*

It is important for one who is established in his Self (*atma nista*) to see that he does not swerve in the least from this absorption. By swerving from his true nature he may see before him bright effulgences, etc., or hear (unusual) sounds or regard as real the visions of gods appearing within or outside himself. He should not be deceived by these and forget himself.

NOTE: (i) If the moments that are wasted in thinking of the objects which are not the Self, are spent on enquiry into the Self, Self-Realization will be attained in a very short time.

(ii) Until the mind becomes established in itself some kind of *bhavana* (contemplation of a personified god or goddess with deep emotion and religious feeling) is essential. Otherwise the mind will be frequently assailed by wayward thoughts or sleep.

(iii) Without spending all the time in practising *bhavanas* like 'I am Siva' or 'I am Brahman', which are regarded as *nirgunopasana* (contemplation of the attributeless Brahman), the method of enquiry into oneself should be practised as soon as the mental strength which is the result of such *upasana* (contemplation) is attained.

(iv) The excellence of the practice (*sadhana*) lies in not giving room for even a single mental concept (*vrutti*)

17. *What are the rules of conduct which an aspirant (sadhaka) should follow?*

Moderation in food, moderation in sleep and moderation in speech.

18. *How long should one practice?*

Until the mind attains effortlessly its natural state of freedom from concepts, that is till the sense of 'I' and 'mine' exists no longer.

19. *What is the meaning of dwelling in solitude (ekanta vasa)?*

As the Self is all-pervasive it has no particular place for solitude. The state of being free from mental concepts is called 'dwelling in solitude'.

20. *What is the sign of wisdom (viveka)?*

Its beauty lies in remaining free from delusion after realising the truth once. There is fear only for one who sees at least a slight difference in the Supreme Brahman. So long as there is the idea that the body is the Self one cannot be a realizer of truth whoever he might be.

21. *If everything happens according to karma (prarabdha: the result of one's acts in the past) how is one to overcome the obstacles to meditation (dhyana)?*

Prarabdha concerns only the out-turned, not the in-turned mind. One who seeks his real Self will not be afraid of any obstacle.

22. *Is asceticism (sanyasa) one of the essential requisites for a person to become established in the Self (atma nista)?*

The effort that is made to get rid of attachment to one's body is really towards abiding in the Self. Maturity of thought and enquiry alone removes attachment to the body, not the stations of life (*asramas*), such as student (*brahmachari*), etc. For the attachment is in the mind while the stations pertain to the body. How can bodily stations remove the attachment in the mind? As maturity of thought and enquiry pertain to the mind these alone can, by enquiry on the part of the same mind, remove the attachments which have crept into it through thoughtlessness. But, as the discipline of asceticism (*sanyasasrama*) is the means for attaining dispassion (*vairagya*), and as dispassion is the means for enquiry, joining an order of ascetics may be regarded, in a way, as a means of enquiry through dispassion. Instead of wasting one's life by entering the order of ascetics before one is fit for it, it is better to live the householder's life. In order to fix the mind in the Self which

is its true nature it is necessary to separate it from the family of fancies (*samkalpas*) and doubts (*vikalpas*), that is to renounce the family (*samsara*) in the mind. This is the real asceticism.

23. It is an established rule that so long as there is the least idea of I-am-the-doer, Self-knowledge cannot be attained, but is it possible for an aspirant who is a householder to discharge his duties properly without this sense?

As there is no rule that action should depend upon a sense of being the doer it is unnecessary to doubt whether any action will take place without a doer or an act of doing. Although the officer of a government treasury may appear, in the eyes of others, to be doing his duty attentively and responsibly all day long, he will be discharging his duties without attachment, thinking ‘I have no real connection with all this money’ and without a sense of involvement in his mind. In the same manner a wise householder may also discharge without attachment the various household duties which fall to his lot according to his past karma, like a tool in the hands of another. Action and knowledge are not obstacles to each other.

24. Of what use to his family is a wise householder who is unmindful of his bodily comforts and of what use is his family to him?

Although he is entirely unmindful of his bodily comforts, if, owing to his past karma, his family have to subsist by his efforts, he may be regarded as doing service to others. If it is asked whether the wise man derives any benefit from the discharge of domestic duties, it may be answered that, as he has already attained the state of complete satisfaction which is the sum total of all benefits and the highest good of all, he does not stand to gain anything more by discharging family duties.

25. How can cessation of activity (nivritti) and peace of mind be attained in the midst of household duties which are of the nature of constant activity?

As the activities of the wise man exist only in the eyes of others and not in his own, although he may be accomplishing immense tasks, he really does nothing. Therefore his activities do not stand in the way of inaction and peace of mind. For he knows the truth that all activities take place in his mere presence and that he does nothing. Hence he will remain as the silent witness of all the activities taking place.

26. Just as the Sage's past karma is the cause of his present activities will not the impressions (vasanas) caused by his present activities adhere to him in future?

Only one who is free from all the latent tendencies (*vasanas*) is a Sage. That being so how can the tendencies of karma affect him who is entirely unattached to activity?

27. What is the meaning of brahmacharya?

Only enquiry into Brahman should be called brahmacharya.

28. *Will the practice of brahmacharya which is followed in conformity with the (four) orders of life (asramas) be a means of knowledge?*

As the various means of knowledge, such as control of senses, etc., are included in *brahmacharya* the virtuous practices duly followed by those who belong to the order of students (*brahmacharins*) are very helpful for their improvement.

29. *Can one enter the order of ascetics (sanyasa) directly from the order of students (brahmacharya)?*

Those who are competent need not formally enter the orders of *brahmacharya*, etc., in the order laid down. One who has realized his Self does not distinguish between the various orders of life. Therefore no order of life either helps or hinders him.

30. *Does an aspirant (sadhaka) lose anything by not observing the rules of caste and orders of life?*

As the attainment (*anusthana*, lit. practice) of knowledge is the supreme end of all other practices, there is no rule that one who remains in any one order of life and constantly acquires knowledge is bound to follow the rules laid down for that order of life. If he follows the rules of caste and orders of life he does so for the good of the world. He does not derive any benefit by observing the rules. Nor does he lose anything by not observing them.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCE

(*Anubhava*)

1. *What is the light of consciousness?*

It is the self-luminous existence-consciousness which reveals to the seer the world of names and forms both inside and outside. The existence of this existence-consciousness can be inferred by the objects illuminated by it. It does not become the object of consciousness.

2. *What is knowledge (vijñana)?*

It is that tranquil state of existence-consciousness which is experienced by the aspirant and which is like the waveless ocean or the motionless ether.

3. *What is bliss?*

It is the experience of joy (or peace) in the state of *vijñana* free of all activities and similar to deep sleep. This is also called the state of *kevala nirvikalpa* (remaining without concepts).

4. *What is the state beyond bliss?*

It is the state of unceasing peace of mind which is found in the state of absolute quiescence, *jagrat-sushupti* (*lit.* sleep with awareness) which resembles inactive deep sleep. In this state, in spite of the activity of the body and the senses, there is no external awareness, like a child immersed in sleep¹ (who is not conscious of the food given to him by his mother). A yogi who is in this state is inactive even while engaged in activity. This is also called *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi* (natural state of absorption in oneself without concepts).

1. The acts of sleeping children like eating and drinking are acts only in the eyes of others and not in their own. They do not therefore really do those acts in spite of their appearing to do them.

5. *What is the authority for saying that the entire moving and unmoving worlds depend upon oneself?*

The Self means the embodied being. It is only after the energy, which was latent in the state of deep sleep, emerges with the idea of 'I' that all objects are experienced. The Self is present in all perceptions as the perceiver. There are no objects to be seen when the 'I' is absent. For all these reasons it may undoubtedly be said that everything comes out of the Self and goes back to the Self.

6. *As the bodies and the selves animating them are everywhere actually observed to be innumerable how can it be said that the Self is only one?*

If the idea 'I am the body' is accepted¹, the selves are multiple. The state in which this idea vanishes is the Self since in that state there are no other objects. It is for this reason that the Self is regarded as one only.

1. The idea that one is one's body is what is called *hrdaya-granthi* (knot of the heart). Of the various knots this knot, which binds together what is conscious with what is insentient, is what causes bondage.

7. *What is the authority for saying that Brahman can be apprehended by the mind and at the same time that it cannot be apprehended by the mind?*

It cannot be apprehended by the impure mind but can be apprehended by the pure mind.

8. *What is pure mind and what is impure mind?*

When the indefinable power of Brahman separates itself from Brahman and, in union with the reflection of consciousness (*chidabhasa*) assumes various forms, it is called the impure mind. When it becomes free from the reflection of consciousness (*abhasa*), through discrimination, it is called the pure mind. Its state of union with the Brahman is its apprehension of Brahman. The energy which is accompanied by the reflection of consciousness is called the impure mind and its state of separation from Brahman is its non-apprehension of Brahman.

9. *Is it possible to overcome, even while the body exists, the karma (prarabdha) which is said to last till the end of the body?*

Yes. If the agent (doer) upon whom the karma depends, namely the ego, which has come into existence between the body and the Self, merges in its source and loses its form, will the karma which depends upon it alone survive? Therefore when there is no 'I' there is no karma.

10. *As the Self is existence and consciousness, what is the reason for describing it as different from the existent and the non-existent, the sentient and the insentient?*

Although the Self is real, as it comprises everything, it does not give room for questions involving duality about its reality or unreality. Therefore it is said to be different from the real and the unreal. Similarly, even though it is consciousness, since there is nothing for it to know or to make itself known to, it is said to be different from the sentient and the insentient.

CHAPTER IV

ATTAINMENT (*Arudha*)

1. *What is the state of attainment of knowledge?*

It is firm and effortless abidance in the Self in which the mind which has become one with the Self does not subsequently emerge again at any time. That is, just as everyone usually and naturally has the idea, 'I am not a goat nor a cow nor any other animal but a man', when he thinks of his body, so also when he has the idea 'I am not the principles (*tatwas*) beginning with the body and ending with sound (*nada*), but the Self which is existence, consciousness and bliss', the innate self-consciousness (*atmaprajna*), he is said to have attained firm knowledge.

2. *To which of the seven stages of knowledge (jnana-bhoomikas)* does the sage (jnani) belong?*

He belongs to the fourth stage.

3. *If that is so why have three more stages superior to it been distinguished?*

The marks of the stages four to seven are based upon the experiences of the realized person (*jivanmukta*). They are not states of knowledge and release. So far as knowledge and release are concerned no distinction whatever is made in these four stages.

* The seven *jnana bhoomikas* are:-

1. *subheccha* (the desire for enlightenment).
2. *vicharana* (enquiry).
3. *tanumanasa* (tenuous mind).
4. *satwapatti* (self-realization).
5. *asamsakti* (non-attachment).

6. *padarthabhavana* (non-perception of objects).

7. *turyaga* (transcendence).

Those who have attained the last four *bhoomikas* are called *brahmavit*, *brahmavidvara*, *brahmavidvariya* and *brahmavid varistha* respectively.

4. *As liberation is common to all, why is the varistha (lit. the most excellent) alone praised excessively?*

So far as the varistha's common experience of bliss is concerned he is extolled only because of the special merit acquired by him in his previous births which is the cause of it.

5. *As there is no one who does not desire to experience constant bliss what is the reason why all sages (jnanis) do not attain the state of varistha?*

It is not to be attained by mere desire or effort. Karma (*prarabdha*) is its cause. As the ego dies along with its cause even in the fourth stage (*bhoomika*), what agent is there beyond that stage to desire anything or to make efforts? So long as they make efforts they will not be sages (*jnanis*). Do the sacred texts (*srutis*) which specially mention the *varistha* say that the other three are unenlightened persons?

6. *As some sacred texts say that the supreme state is that in which the sense organs and the mind are completely destroyed, how can that state be compatible with the experience of the body and the senses?*

If that were so there would not be any difference between that state and the state of deep sleep. Further how can it be said to be the natural state when it exists at one time and not at another? This happens, as stated before, to some persons according to their karma (*prarabdha*) for some time or till death. It cannot properly be regarded as the final state. If it could it would mean that all great souls and the Lord, who were the authors of the Vedantic works (*jnana granthas*) and the Vedas, were unenlightened persons. If the supreme state is that in which neither the senses nor the mind exist and not the state in which they exist, how can it be the perfect state (*paripurnam*)? As karma alone is responsible for the activity or inactivity of the sages, great souls have declared the state of *sahaja nirvikalpa* (the natural state without concepts) alone to be the ultimate state.

7. *What is the difference between ordinary sleep and waking sleep (jagrat sushupti)?*

In ordinary sleep there are not only no thoughts but also no awareness. In waking sleep there is awareness alone. That is why it is called awake while sleeping, that is the sleep in which there is awareness.

8. *Why is the Self described both as the fourth state (turiya) and beyond the fourth state (turiyatita)?*

Turiya means that which is the fourth. The experiencers (*jivas*) of the three states of waking, dreaming

and deep sleep, known as *visva*, *tajasa* and *prajna*, who wander successively in these three states, are not the Self. It is with the object of making this clear, namely that the Self is that which is different from them and which is the witness of these states, that it is called the fourth (*turiya*). When this is known the three experiencers disappear and the idea that the Self is a witness, that it is the fourth, also disappears. That is why the Self is described as beyond the fourth (*turiyatita*).

9. *What is the benefit derived by the sage from the sacred books (Srutis)?*

The sage who is the embodiment of the truths mentioned in the scriptures has no use for them.

10. *Is there any connection between the attainment of supernatural powers (siddhis) and Liberation (mukti)?*

Enlightened enquiry alone leads to Liberation. Supernatural powers are all illusory appearances created by the power of *maya* (*mayashakti*). Self-realization which is permanent is the only true accomplishment (*siddhi*). Accomplishments which appear and disappear, being the effect of *maya*, cannot be real. They are accomplished with the object of enjoying fame, pleasures, etc. They come unsought to some persons through their karma. Know that union with Brahman is the real aim of all accomplishments. This is also the state of Liberation (*aikya mukti*) known as union (*sayujya*).

11. *If this is the nature of Liberation (moksha) why do some scriptures connect it with the body and say that the individual soul can attain Liberation only when it does not leave the body?*

It is only if bondage is real that Liberation and the nature of its experiences have to be considered. So far as the Self (*Purusha*) is concerned it has really no bondage in any of the four states. As bondage is merely a verbal assumption according to the emphatic proclamation of the Vedanta system, how can the question of Liberation, which depends upon the question of bondage, arise when there is no bondage? Without knowing this truth, to enquire into the nature of bondage and Liberation, is like enquiring into the non-existent height, colour, etc., of a barren woman's son or the horns of a hare.

12. *If that is so, do not the descriptions of bondage and release found in the scriptures become irrelevant and untrue?*

No, they do not. On the contrary, the delusion of bondage fabricated by ignorance from time immemorial can be removed only by knowledge, and for this purpose the term 'Liberation' (*mukti*) has been usually accepted. That is all. The fact that the characteristics of Liberation are described in different ways proves that they are imaginary.

13. *If that is so, are not all efforts such as study (lit. hearing) reflection, etc., useless?*

No, they are not. The firm conviction that there is neither bondage nor liberation is the supreme purpose of all efforts. As this purpose of seeing boldly, through direct experience, that bondage and liberation do not exist, cannot be achieved except with the aid of the aforesaid practices, these efforts are useful.

14. *Is there any authority for saying that there is neither bondage nor Liberation?*

This is decided on the strength of experience and not merely on the strength of the scriptures.

15. *If it is experienced how is it experienced?*

‘Bondage’ and ‘Liberation’ are mere linguistic terms. They have no reality of their own. Therefore they cannot function of their own accord. It is necessary to accept the existence of some basic thing of which they are the modifications. If one enquires, ‘for whom is there bondage and Liberation?’ it will be seen, ‘they are for me’. If one enquires, ‘who am I?’, one will see that there is no such thing as the ‘I’. It will then be as clear as an *amalaka* fruit in one’s hand that what remains is one’s real being. As this truth will be naturally and clearly experienced by those who leave aside mere verbal discussions and enquire into themselves inwardly, there is no doubt that all realized persons uniformly see neither bondage nor Liberation so far as the true Self is concerned.

16. *If truly there is neither bondage nor Liberation what is the reason for the actual experience of joys and sorrows?*

They appear to be real only when one turns aside from one’s real nature. They do not really exist.

17. *Is it possible for everyone to know directly without doubt what exactly is one’s true nature?*

Undoubtedly it is possible.

18. *How?*

It is the experience of everyone that even in the states of deep sleep, fainting, etc., when the entire universe, moving and stationary, beginning with earth and ending with the unmanifested (*Prakriti*), disappear, he does not disappear. Therefore the state of pure being which is common to all and which is always experienced directly by everybody is one’s true nature. The conclusion is that all experiences in the enlightened as well as the ignorant state, which may be described by newer and newer words, are opposed to one’s real nature.

May this book consisting of the words of experience, which have come out of the lotus heart of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, shine as a lamp of true knowledge to illuminate the true minds of those who have renounced (the world).

BLESSINGS

May the world be blessed for long with the feet of Guru Ramana who abides as that silent principle which absorbs all of us and remains by itself as the root of the three principles (soul, world and *Iswara*).

Who Am I? (Nan Yar?)

The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

Translation by
Dr. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN
From the original Tamil



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Introduction

“Who am I?” is the title given to a set of questions and answers bearing on Self-enquiry. The questions were put to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi by one Sri M. Sivaprakasam Pillai about the year 1902. Sri Pillai, a graduate in Philosophy, was at the time employed in the Revenue Department of the South Arcot Collectorate. During his visit to Tiruvannamalai in 1902 on official work, he went to Virupaksha Cave on Arunachala Hill and met the Master there. He sought from him spiritual guidance, and solicited answers to questions relating to Self-enquiry. As Bhagavan was not talking then, not because of any vow he had taken, but because he did not have the inclination to talk, he answered the questions put to him by gestures, and when these were not understood, by writing. As recollected and recorded by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, there were fourteen questions with answers to them given by Bhagavan. This record was first published by Sri Pillai in 1923, along with a couple of poems composed by himself relating how Bhagavan’s grace operated in his case by dispelling his doubts and by saving him from a crisis in life. ‘Who am I?’ has been published several times subsequently. We find thirty questions and answers in some editions and twenty-eight in others. There is also another published version in which the questions are not given, and the teachings are rearranged in the form of an essay. The extant English translation is of this essay. The present rendering is of the text in the form of twenty-eight questions and answers.

Along with Vicharasangraham (Self-Enquiry), Nan Yar (Who am I?) constitutes the first set of instructions in the Master’s own words. These two are the only prosepieces among Bhagavan’s Works. They clearly set forth the central teaching that the direct path to liberation is Self-enquiry. The particular mode in which the enquiry is to be made is lucidly set forth in Nan Yar. The mind consists of thoughts. The ‘I’ thought is the first to arise in the mind. When the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ is persistently pursued, all other thoughts get destroyed, and finally the ‘I’ thought itself vanishes leaving the supreme non-dual Self alone. The false identification of the Self with the phenomena of non-self such as the body and mind thus ends, and there is illumination, Sakshatkara. The process of enquiry of course, is not an easy one. As one enquires ‘Who am I?’, other thoughts will arise; but as these arise, one should not yield to them by following them, on the contrary, one should ask ‘To whom do they arise?’ In order to do this, one has to be extremely vigilant. Through constant enquiry one should make the mind stay in its source, without allowing it to wander away and get lost in the mazes of thought created by itself. All other disciplines such as breath-control and meditation on the forms of God should be regarded as auxiliary practices. They are useful in so far as they help the mind to become quiescent and one-pointed.

For the mind that has gained skill in concentration, Self-enquiry becomes comparatively easy. It is by ceaseless enquiry that the thoughts are destroyed and the Self realized - the plenary Reality in which there is not even the ‘I’ thought, the experience which is referred to as “Silence”.

This, in substance, is Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi’s teaching in Nan Yar (Who am I?).

Who Am I?

(Nan Yar?)

As all living beings desire to be happy always, without misery, as in the case of everyone there is observed supreme love for one's self, and as happiness alone is the cause for love, in order to gain that happiness which is one's nature and which is experienced in the state of deep sleep where there is no mind, one should know one's self. For that, the path of knowledge, the inquiry of the form "Who am I?", is the principal means.

1. *Who am I?*

The gross body which is composed of the seven humours (dhatus), I am not; the five cognitive sense organs, viz. the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell, which apprehend their respective objects, viz. sound, touch, colour, taste, and odour, I am not; the five cognitive sense-organs, viz. the organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion, and procreation, which have as their respective functions speaking, moving, grasping, excreting, and enjoying, I am not; the five vital airs, prana, etc., which perform respectively the five functions of in-breathing, etc., I am not; even the mind which thinks, I am not; the nescience too, which is endowed only with the residual impressions of objects, and in which there are no objects and no functioning's, I am not.

2. *If I am none of these, then who am I?*

After negating all of the above-mentioned as 'not this', 'not this', that Awareness which alone remains - that I am.

3. *What is the nature of Awareness?*

The nature of Awareness is existence-consciousness-bliss

4. *When will the realization of the Self be gained?*

When the world which is what-is-seen has been removed, there will be realization of the Self which is the seer.

5. *Will there not be realization of the Self even while the world is there (taken as real)?*

There will not be.

6. *Why?*

The seer and the object seen are like the rope and the snake. Just as the knowledge of the rope which is the substrate will not arise unless the false knowledge of the illusory serpent goes, so the realization of the Self which is the substrate will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed.

7. *When will the world which is the object seen be removed?*

When the mind, which is the cause of all cognition's and of all actions, becomes quiescent, the world will disappear.

8. *What is the nature of the mind?*

What is called 'mind' is a wondrous power residing in the Self. It causes all thoughts to arise. Apart from thoughts, there is no such thing as mind. Therefore, thought is the nature of mind. Apart from thoughts, there is no independent entity called the world. In deep sleep there are no thoughts, and there is no world. In the states of waking and dream, there are thoughts, and there is a world also. Just as the spider emits the thread (of the web) out of itself and again withdraws it into itself, likewise the mind projects the world out of itself and again resolves it into itself. When the mind comes out of the Self, the world appears. Therefore, when the world appears (to be real), the Self does not appear; and when the Self appears (shines) the world does not appear. When one persistently inquires into the nature of the mind, the mind will end leaving the Self (as the residue). What is referred to as the Self is the Atman. The mind always exists only in dependence on something gross; it cannot stay alone. It is the mind that is called the subtle body or the soul (jiva).

9. *What is the path of inquiry for understanding the nature of the mind?*

That which rises as 'I' in this body is the mind. If one inquires as to where in the body the thought 'I' rises first, one would discover that it rises in the heart. That is the place of the mind's origin. Even if one thinks constantly 'I' 'I', one will be led to that place. Of all the thoughts that arise in the mind, the 'I' thought is the first. It is only after the rise of this that the other thoughts arise. It is after the appearance of the first personal pronoun that the second and third personal pronouns appear; without the first personal pronoun there will not be the second and third.

10. *How will the mind become quiescent?*

By the inquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'who am I?' will destroy all other thoughts, and like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization.

11. *What is the means for constantly holding on to the thought 'Who am I?'*

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire: 'To whom do they arise?' It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, "To whom has this thought arisen?". The answer that would emerge would be "To me". Thereupon if one inquires "Who am I?", the mind will go back to its source; and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source. When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense-organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called "inwardness" (antar-mukha). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as "externalisation" (bahir-mukha). Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self

which ever exists will shine. Whatever one does, one should do without the egoity "I". If one acts in that way, all will appear as of the nature of Siva (God).

12. *Are there no other means for making the mind quiescent?*

Other than inquiry, there are no adequate means. If through other means it is sought to control the mind, the mind will appear to be controlled, but will again go forth. Through the control of breath also, the mind will become quiescent; but it will be quiescent only so long as the breath remains controlled, and when the breath resumes the mind also will again start moving and will wander as impelled by residual impressions. The source is the same for both mind and breath. Thought, indeed, is the nature of the mind. The thought "I" is the first thought of the mind; and that is egoity. It is from that whence egoity originates that breath also originates. Therefore, when the mind becomes quiescent, the breath is controlled, and when the breath is controlled the mind becomes quiescent. But in deep sleep, although the mind becomes quiescent, the breath does not stop. This is because of the will of God, so that the body may be preserved and other people may not be under the impression that it is dead. In the state of waking and in samadhi, when the mind becomes quiescent the breath is controlled. Breath is the gross form of mind. Till the time of death, the mind keeps breath in the body; and when the body dies the mind takes the breath along with it. Therefore, the exercise of breath-control is only an aid for rendering the mind quiescent (manonigraha); it will not destroy the mind (manonasa).

Like the practice of breath-control, meditation on the forms of God, repetition of mantras, restriction on food, etc., are but aids for rendering the mind quiescent.

Through meditation on the forms of God and through repetition of mantras, the mind becomes one-pointed. The mind will always be wandering. Just as when a chain is given to an elephant to hold in its trunk it will go along grasping the chain and nothing else, so also when the mind is occupied with a name or form it will grasp that alone. When the mind expands in the form of countless thoughts, each thought becomes weak; but as thoughts get resolved the mind becomes one-pointed and strong; for such a mind Self-inquiry will become easy. Of all the restrictive rules, that relating to the taking of sattvic food in moderate quantities is the best; by observing this rule, the sattvic quality of mind will increase, and that will be helpful to Self-inquiry.

13. *The residual impressions (thoughts) of objects appear wending like the waves of an ocean. When will all of them get destroyed?*

As the meditation on the Self rises higher and higher, the thoughts will get destroyed.

14. *Is it possible for the residual impressions of objects that come from beginningless time, as it were, to be resolved, and for one to remain as the pure Self?*

Without yielding to the doubt "Is it possible, or not?", one should persistently hold on to the meditation on the Self. Even if one be a great sinner, one should not worry and weep "O! I am a sinner, how can I be saved?"; one should completely renounce the thought "I am a sinner"; and concentrate keenly on meditation on the Self; then, one would surely succeed. There are not two minds - one good and the other evil; the mind is only one. It is the residual impressions that are of two kinds - auspicious and

inauspicious. When the mind is under the influence of auspicious impressions it is called good; and when it is under the influence of inauspicious impressions it is regarded as evil.

The mind should not be allowed to wander towards worldly objects and what concerns other people. However bad other people may be, one should bear no hatred for them. Both desire and hatred should be eschewed. All that one gives to others one gives to one's self. If this truth is understood who will not give to others? When one's self arises all arises; when one's self becomes quiescent all becomes quiescent. To the extent we behave with humility, to that extent there will result good. If the mind is rendered quiescent, one may live anywhere.

15. *How long should inquiry be practised?*

As long as there are impressions of objects in the mind, so long the inquiry "Who am I?" is required. As thoughts arise they should be destroyed then and there in the very place of their origin, through inquiry. If one resorts to contemplation of the Self uninterruptedly, until the Self is gained, that alone would do. As long as there are enemies within the fortress, they will continue to sally forth; if they are destroyed as they emerge, the fortress will fall into our hands.

16. *What is the nature of the Self?*

What exists in truth is the Self alone. The world, the individual soul, and God are appearances in it. Like silver in mother-of-pearl, these three appear at the same time, and disappear at the same time. The Self is that where there is absolutely no "I" thought. That is called "Silence". The Self itself is the world; the Self itself is "I"; the Self itself is God; all is Siva, the Self.

17. *Is not everything the work of God?*

Without desire, resolve, or effort, the sun rises; and in its mere presence, the sun-stone emits fire, the lotus blooms, water evaporates; people perform their various functions and then rest. Just as in the presence of the magnet the needle moves, it is by virtue of the mere presence of God that the souls governed by the three (cosmic) functions or the fivefold divine activity perform their actions and then rest, in accordance with their respective karmas. God has no resolve; no karma attaches itself to Him. That is like worldly actions not affecting the sun, or like the merits and demerits of the other four elements not affecting all pervading space.

18. *Of the devotees, who is the greatest?*

He who gives himself up to the Self that is God is the most excellent devotee. Giving one's self up to God means remaining constantly in the Self without giving room for the rise of any thoughts other than that of the Self. Whatever burdens are thrown on God, He bears them. Since the supreme power of God makes all things move, why should we, without submitting ourselves to it, constantly worry ourselves with thoughts as to what should be done and how, and what should not be done and how not? We know that the train carries all loads, so after getting on it why should we carry our small luggage on our head to our discomfort, instead of putting it down in the train and feeling at ease?

19. *What is non-attachment?*

As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the very place of their origin is non-attachment. Just as the pearl-diver ties a stone to his waist, sinks to the bottom of the sea and there takes the pearls, so each one of us should be endowed with non-attachment, dive within oneself and obtain the Self-Pearl.

20. *Is it not possible for God and the Guru to effect the release of a soul?*

God and the Guru will only show the way to release; they will not by themselves take the soul to the state of release. In truth, God and the Guru are not different. Just as the prey which has fallen into the jaws of a tiger has no escape, so those who have come within the ambit of the Guru's gracious look will be saved by the Guru and will not get lost; yet, each one should by his own effort pursue the path shown by God or Guru and gain release. One can know oneself only with one's own eye of knowledge, and not with somebody else's. Does he who is Rama require the help of a mirror to know that he is Rama?

21. *Is it necessary for one who longs for release to inquire into the nature of categories (tattvas)?*

Just as one who wants to throw away garbage has no need to analyse it and see what it is, so one who wants to know the Self has no need to count the number of categories or inquire into their characteristics; what he has to do is to reject altogether the categories that hide the Self. The world should be considered like a dream.

22. *Is there no difference between waking and dream?*

Waking is long and a dream short; other than this there is no difference. Just as waking happenings seem real while awake, so do those in a dream while dreaming. In dream the mind takes on another body. In both waking and dream states thoughts, names and forms occur simultaneously.

23. *Is it any use reading books for those who long for release?*

All the texts say that in order to gain release one should render the mind quiescent; therefore their conclusive teaching is that the mind should be rendered quiescent; once this has been understood there is no need for endless reading. In order to quieten the mind one has only to inquire within oneself what one's Self is; how could this search be done in books? One should know one's Self with one's own eye of wisdom. The Self is within the five sheaths; but books are outside them. Since the Self has to be inquired into by discarding the five sheaths, it is futile to search for it in books. There will come a time when one will have to forget all that one has learned.

24. *What is happiness?*

Happiness is the very nature of the Self; happiness and the Self are not different. There is no happiness in any object of the world. We imagine through our ignorance that we derive happiness from objects. When the mind goes out, it experiences misery. In truth, when its desires are fulfilled, it returns to its own place and enjoys the happiness that is the Self. Similarly, in the states of sleep,

samadhi and fainting, and when the object desired is obtained or the object disliked is removed, the mind becomes inward-turned, and enjoys pure Self-Happiness. Thus the mind moves without rest alternately going out of the Self and returning to it. Under the tree the shade is pleasant; out in the open the heat is scorching. A person who has been going about in the sun feels cool when he reaches the shade. Someone who keeps on going from the shade into the sun and then back into the shade is a fool. A wise man stays permanently in the shade. Similarly, the mind of the one who knows the truth does not leave Brahman. The mind of the ignorant, on the contrary, revolves in the world, feeling miserable, and for a little time returns to Brahman to experience happiness. In fact, what is called the world is only thought. When the world disappears, i.e. when there is no thought, the mind experiences happiness; and when the world appears, it goes through misery.

25. *What is wisdom-insight (jnana-drsti)?*

Remaining quiet is what is called wisdom-insight. To remain quiet is to resolve the mind in the Self. Telepathy, knowing past, present and future happenings and clairvoyance do not constitute wisdom-insight.

26. *What is the relation between desirelessness and wisdom?*

Desirelessness is wisdom. The two are not different; they are the same. Desirelessness is refraining from turning the mind towards any object. Wisdom means the appearance of no object. In other words, not seeking what is other than the Self is detachment or desirelessness; not leaving the Self is wisdom.

27. *What is the difference between inquiry and meditation?*

Inquiry consists in retaining the mind in the Self. Meditation consists in thinking that one's self is Brahman, existence-consciousness-bliss.

28. *What is release?*

Inquiring into the nature of one's self that is in bondage, and realising one's true nature is release.

SRI RAMANARPANAM ASTU