

The Maharshi



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ADVAITIC SADHANA

Advaitic Sadhana is the title of the book which was written by S. S. Cohen and published by Motilal Barnarsidass in 1975. S. S. Cohen spent his formative years (the 1930s and 40s) at the feet of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Sri Ramanasramam, and he also resided in the Ashrama during the last years of his life. His body was interred within the Ashrama premises in 1980 and he is ceremoniously remembered each year on his *samadhi* day, May 27.

Since Sri Ramanasramam already publishes four of his books (*Guru Ramana*, *Forty Verses*, *Reflection on Talks* and *Srimad Bhagavata*), it was decided to contact the publishers of *Advaitic Sadhana* to also make this instructive work available to seekers, for whom it was especially written. S. S. Cohen wrote the first eight chapters of this book while residing in Sri Ramanasramam during the 1940s. He watched as numerous seekers – particularly the foreigners – arrived at Sri Ramanasramam without the spiritual foundation necessary to gain the greatest benefit from the Divine presence of the Master. In eight short chapters, Cohen summarizes the essential principles that should be cultivated by the seeker desirous of realizing the Truth.

The second and third sections of *Advaitic Sadhana* provide translations and short commentaries on two illuminating spiritual texts, the *Mandukya Upanishad* and *Atma Bodha* of Adi Shankara.

Sri Ramanasramam is currently in the process of preparing *Advaitic Sadhana* for publication. The first and second chapters follow.

I

THE QUALIFIED DISCIPLE

THIS is the age of shortcuts. Time has shrunk and space more so, and the dual inconvenience has affected men's moods and temper. Even the supreme Knowledge has nowadays to be given in massive doses and has to produce quick results too, or they will have none of it.

In olden days *Brahmajñāna* (the knowledge of the

Absolute) used to be imparted by the *R̥ṣis* (Self-realised sages) to their *sannyāsi* (world renouncer) disciples *only* over a number of years. Staying with the Guru in seclusion, often in the forest, for the whole of the period was a prerequisite for many good reasons, which the disciples could not question. Now we cannot do that: time presses and our patience has, likewise, suffered contraction, so has our appreciation of the quest and the prize at issue.

Besides, the culture which most of us have inherited is too extroverted and too aggressively intellectual to

permit us to understand within a short time what it all means to be a *sādhaka*, a practical aspirant for a truth of which in our homes and colleges we were given an inkling. We are apt, moreover, to bring with us scraps of knowledge gleaned from a wide reading of miracle-ridden theology and ‘occultism’, including an endeavour to accommodate the Vedānta inside them. The result is that we return from the Guru (the qualified Teacher) and his Ashram with our doubts still in our heads, uncleared, and our minds, about truth and untruth, still befogged.

It is necessary at the outset to understand that it is not possible to hound out *avidyā* (the primeval ignorance arising out of the sense-perceptions) with a half-hearted approach, with scanty faith, with a mind weighed down by preconceptions, stubborn worldliness, fixed ideas and inordinate haste. These do not qualify for the supreme Knowledge (*Jñāna*), which exacts a steady, unwavering, whole-hearted discipline.

Authentic seekers are humble and modest in their expectations and do not, as a rule, lay down conditions in advance of their yogic practice, nor fix time as to their possible attainment of the Goal, but surrender themselves unreservedly to their *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) and to the guidance of the Teacher, unmindful of the results.

The seeker of the Absolute must have no object in life but the persistent pursuit of the Absolute, to which he bends all the power of his soul. To approach it in any other attitude, say with motives not strictly spiritual, or with a surfeited, insubordinate intellect, or to expect the Absolute to bend and yield its secrets in the first week or first month for one’s own sake, for the sake of one’s worldly achievements, illustrious ancestry or community, denotes a lack of the most elementary qualities that make one eligible for it. Eclecticism likewise has no place in this path: its application is poor, its understanding diffused, so are its spiritual yearnings.

It will be observed that this approach attacks the object, that is the world appearance, from two fronts — the one by investigation, which helps distinguish the sentient, changeless seer from the insentient, ever-changing seen, the body; and the other by *dhyana* (meditation), which suppresses the seen and reveals

the seer. With the former we dialectically expose the fallacy and worthlessness of the sense data and, thus, demolish the foundations over which we have been accustomed to raise the false structure of our knowledge, and with the other we dive deep into their substratum to find the subject as he is in himself, the owner of the senses, who is the absolute Reality.

Śaṅkara gives a picturesque description of the aspirant who qualifies for this knowledge and his approach to the Self-realised Teacher in ancient times:

“We shall now explain the method by which Liberation is attained for the benefit of those who aspire for it and who desire to know this method with full faith.

“This means to Liberation, namely, Knowledge, should be explained again and again until it is firmly grasped to a pure *brahmana* (seeker of Brahman, the absolute) disciple who is indifferent to everything that is transitory; who has given up the desire for a son, for wealth and for this world and the next; who has taken to a life of *sannyasa* (renunciation and asceticism) and has control over his mind and senses; who possesses compassion and all the qualities of a disciple enjoined by the scriptures, and who has approached the Teacher in the prescribed manner and has been examined in respect of his profession, conduct, learning and parentage.”

(*Upadeśasāhasrī*)

II

NECESSITY OF SĀDHANĀ

The unsteady of mind has no knowledge of the Supreme; nor has he meditation. To the unmeditating there is no peace; and to the unpeaceful how can there be happiness?

(*Bhagavad Gītā*, II, 66)

THESE lines are a philosophy of life in a nutshell: they guide him who desires to live in peace with the world and with himself, as well as him who is bent upon taking the pilgrim’s staff in search of the truth absolute and the freedom for which his soul yearns. They tell the former that peace is unattainable without mental steadiness, and the latter that mind control through meditation is absolutely essential to attain that Knowledge which alone can give release.

The mind, which is the only instrument of knowledge man possesses, is usually never at rest and too entangled in the object of desire it perceives and in the duties, responsibilities and attachments which these impose upon it, to know how to release itself from them. The help of the Master becomes necessary to show the way out of the sense mess and into the aloneness of the Being (*kaivalya*), of the pure mind itself, which is all purity and tranquillity. This is the supreme knowledge to which the following lines refer:

“I know this mighty Being, who shines effulgent like the sun beyond darkness. One triumphs over death only by knowing Him. There is indeed no other way to Liberation.”

(*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, III, 8*)

To “triumph over death” discipline of the mind (*sādhanā*) is, therefore, necessary. As in deep sleep the subject enjoys the massive bliss of *kaivalya* when he sees no sights, hears no sounds, and is completely free from thoughts, so must the yogi in the waking state withdraw into the *kaivalya* of himself through meditation to attain the knowledge of the Being or Self, which is the supreme Liberation. This method is called *jñāna mārga* (the path of knowledge) or *jñāna yoga* (the yoga of knowledge). In no system is the practice made so easy and safe as in this yoga, because, first, it is dialectical and, secondly, it is free from the dangers, which often result from misdirected practices which interfere with the natural functions of the body, or with supersensible forces lying beyond the control of the subject himself.

Jñāna yoga, also called *Advaitic sādhanā* (non-dualistic discipline), is the direct path to Liberation. The process can be summed up in only three words: *Empty your mind*. In dreamless sleep the mind is totally empty of thoughts, plunged as it is in the bliss of its own native state, the pure consciousness (*cit*). But waking is the state of thinking, which projects the worlds of time and space and covers the being, like the dust that covers a clean mirror. In order therefore to perceive this effulgent Being, thoughts have to be arrested; the mirror of the mind has to be cleared of its dust. This is called *Turīya* (the Fourth State, to distinguish it from the other three states of waking, dreaming and deep

sleep), which experiences the blissful aloneness of *susupti* (deep sleep) in the full view of the waking (*jāgrat*), when the senses and the faculty of cognition are present but rendered inactive by practice. Its other name is *samādhi*, the ecstasy of self-cognition.

It goes without saying that the first attempts to arrest the onrush of thoughts appear frustrating, sometimes even painful, but success is sure to result from persistent efforts. Constant practice releases the mind from its inhibitions, its habits, memories, fear, suppressed longing, anxiety, etc., and establishes a free flow of the *dhyānic* current at the same time every day, if regularity in the practice is scrupulously maintained.

Those who find it difficult to restrain the mind from the very start take to *japa* (repetition of a mantra, or holy name) which is soothing and awe inspiring, preparatory to meditation. The reduction of thoughts to a substantial degree is indispensable for entering the state of *samādhi* and, as this cannot be achieved without mind control, all other methods have eventually to pass into *dhyāna* (meditation), when the mind will be able to stand “like the jet of a lamp that is protected from a breeze” (Patañjali). The *japa* will by then have ceased to be repeated orally, but will have turned into the silent *ajapa*, the serene quietude in the Heart which is the end and aim of *dhyāna*.

Other means of subduing the thinking faculty, such as drugs, breath control to obtain the cataleptic state of *laya*, interference with the uvula and the frenum lingui, etc., do not concern us here. Genuine *sādhakas* (practising yogis) avoid short cuts which may land them in dangerous situations. *Dhyāna* and *vichāra* (meditation and investigation), if done steadily, will not fail to take them safely to the glorious Self. It is not by stupefying or over-exciting the cerebral cells, nor by circumventing the century-old discipline, but by purifying and controlling the mind that the vision of Reality can be ensured.

(to be continued)

23. The beneficent work of the self-inhering divine grace is finished when the inward-turning of one's mind increases in strength day by day.

—*Tripura Rahasya, Chap. XV*

PEACE IN THE VALLEY

HINDU GURU'S PHILOSOPHY HELPS ASHRAM THRIVE IN RURAL NOVA SCOTIA

By PAUL PICKREM

The Chronicle Herald, which is the daily provincial newspaper for Nova Scotia, Canada, featured the following article under the above title in their June 19, 2006 edition.

CLARENCE — Clarence is an idyllic Annapolis Valley community, nestled into the side of the North Mountain, stretching about 20 kilometres along the valley floor between the mountain and the Annapolis River.

It is known for rolling orchards, lush green pastures dotted with cattle, round hay bales and grand old farmhouses.

It is also known as the location of Arunachala Ashrama, a spiritual retreat founded in 1972 that is dedicated to the teachings of a Hindu guru, Bhagavan Sri Ravana Maharshi. A 150-year-old farmhouse, barn and an old school, which has become a temple, are part of the ashram that has attracted spiritual seekers from around the world. Two other ashrams are located in India and New York.

Bharath Krishnaswami and his wife Keerti Agrawal left the bustling city life of San Diego, Calif., to make their second journey to Clarence and the ashram. They both left engineering jobs in the wireless telecom industry because they say they are looking for something more, something spiritual. They have been in Clarence for over a month and are enjoying the daily spiritual practice and rural life in Nova Scotia.

"There's something about this place," Ms. Agrawal said in an interview on Saturday. "It's so open. It feels so pure."

The couple said they are enjoying the openness of the people they meet as well. They said the guru, who lived in southern India from 1879 until 1950, was very open and accepting of all people and that resonates with their desire to be loving and compassionate to everyone.

Twice weekly the couple volunteers at a nearby seniors complex, teaching yoga and visiting with residents. "Each one has a story to tell," Ms. Agrawal said of the seniors who she says have blessed them so much. "To me old age has always been so beautiful," Mr. Krishnaswami adds. "We just spend time talking to them, holding their hands and looking into their eyes."

Darlene Delisi Karamanos is a Valley resident who has been associated with the ashram for 30 years. It is a place where people come to have a deeper spiritual experience by focusing on their inner stillness, she said in an interview on Thursday. But she adds that work is worship too and visitors can help with chores and in the community like Ms. Agrawal and Mr. Krishnaswami.

Ms. Karamanos also said the ashram experience is available to seekers of all faiths. "Labels don't apply," she said. That is evident when one sees a picture of Saint Francis mounted in the house beside a picture of the guru. In another room, an artist's rendition of Jesus sits beside a rendition of a Hindu goddess. "It's the most beautiful picture of Jesus I have ever seen," said Ms. Agrawal.

The library shelves are crowded with books on religion and philosophy that include Christian, Buddhist, Bha'i and Hindu scriptures.

"We are all looking for peace and lasting happiness," Mr. Krishnaswami said. "We have different ways of finding it."



Keerti Agrawal and her husband Bharath Krishnaswami have travelled to the tiny Annapolis Valley community of Clarence from San Diego, California. They are enjoying life at Arunachala Ashrama, a spiritual retreat in rural Nova Scotia dedicated to the teachings of a Hindu guru.

VISION OF SIVA AT MOUNT KAILASH

By SIVANI

ONE night during my stay at Manasarovar, I was in the grip of a strange fear. It appeared to have started with a simple upset stomach and worked itself up to uncontrolled proportions that left me weakened in both body and mind. By nightfall I felt tired, miserable and worried. Noticing my restless condition, my co-pilgrims reassured me there was nothing to worry about and they said it was probably the effect of rarefied atmosphere, climatic changes and the desolate landscape. Nevertheless my fear remained.

When after dinner my roommates fell asleep, I sat there on my bed wide awake, fumbling for security. Accommodation at the guesthouse was on a sharing basis, with five pilgrims to a room. It was a small room and the window and door were tightly shut at night to keep out the cold. This left little ventilation and in this stuffy room I began to feel claustrophobic. In the blackness of night, I could see through the window snowflakes falling gently. Now and then I heard the ominous howling of wild dogs. Several times I got up and went out for fresh air, but it was too cold to stay there for any length of time and I would soon return indoors only to be tortured by this inexplicable fear. It was a mystery to me why this was happening. It was the fear of doom and my mind went berserk imagining all sorts of tragic scenarios. The loud breathing and snoring of my roommates put me somewhat at ease. I wished that someone would wake up and keep me company, and was tempted to wake up everyone to rescue me from this terrible fear. But better judgment prevailed, for I felt none could save me from this predicament.

I checked the time every so often. Each minute seemed endless. While the hours passed slowly I was drowned in agonizing fear. All was silent and still. It was midnight and a long night to pass. I could bear it no longer. In desperation, at last, I turned to the Lord and cried out from the bottom of my heart: "Save me Siva, from this agonizing fear. Help me, please!" I pleaded and clung to Him like one drowning. Like someone possessed, I ran my fingers feverishly over the *japa mala*, chanting His holy name. I prayed with an intensity quite unknown to me.

Sometime between three and four o'clock I must have fallen asleep. At long last a reprieve from my mental anguish.

Then I had a dream. I dreamt I was at Sri Ramanasramam, inside the New Hall where the stone couch and statue of Bhagavan are seen. The place was brightly lit and there was an air of much activity, people coming and going. A gentle hand ushered me to a spot where I saw Sri Bhagavan seated on the ground, leaning against one of the tall stone pillars. As we see in some of His photographs, Bhagavan Ramana was looking far away, beyond the beyond. I was so overwhelmed being in His presence that to prostrate before him never crossed my mind.

"Look intently at the Guru," a voice whispered. "You will see him blessing you!" An aura of immense peace suffused the hall while Bhagavan sat in rocklike silence. I looked on spellbound. Oh, what a radiance! What a storehouse of compassion! I stood there in awe and rapture. Then a thought crossed my mind: 'Bhagavan is looking far, far away. Will He not glance my way and bless me with His gracious look?' Reading my mind and in His infinite kindness, Bhagavan slowly turned His gaze and rested it on me. Our eyes met. A luminous light appeared, like an orb as cool as the moon. I was engulfed in that splendid light, in Divine peace and ecstasy. I had no sense of body or mind and experienced unspeakable peace, immersed as I was in that Supreme Light.

Even upon waking that brilliant light and that supreme peace lingered in my consciousness. The feeling of fear that issued from my subconscious was instantly extinguished by this divine dream. I found eternal shelter in this divine vision. With His intrinsic greatness, His gentle look and benign smile, Bhagavan blessed me. To this day, this blessed vision remains ever fresh.

In the morning my fellow pilgrims were surprised to see a remarkable transformation in me. "Tell us what medication you took to have acquired an air of well being overnight," they asked. I smiled, but said nothing. People say one should not disclose the experience of Divine dreams immediately because its effect will diminish. With Bhagavan's blessing I was able to reach Mount Kailash in the best of health and spirits and obtain the blessings of Siva.

— *Tiruvannamalai, 2004*

70. When the Supreme Devi is well pleased with the worship of the devotee, She turns into *vichara* in him and shines as the blazing Sun in the expanse of his Heart.

— *Tripura Rahasya, Chapter II*

Advent at Arunachala

All are invited to join us in celebrating the 110th anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala.

The program will include recitations, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by prasada (lunch).

In New York City

Saturday 9 September, 2006 — 11:00 AM

Arunachala Ashrama, 86-06 Edgerton Blvd., Jamaica Estates, NY 11432

In Nova Scotia, Canada

Sunday 3 September, 2006 — 11:00 AM

1451 Clarence Road, Bridgetown, NS B0S 1C0 / Tel: 902.665.2090

Bay Area, California

Sunday 16 September, 2006 — 11:00 AM

Jain Temple

722 South Main Street

Milpitas, CA 95035

For information contact Swami and Sangeetha at 510-979-1679 / nachiketas@hotmail.com

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Ann Arbor, MI — Mohan & Gayatri (734-623-7199 cedararbor@yahoo.com)

Connecticut Area — Prashanth & Shobana (860-691-1862 / vprashanth@msn.com)

Dublin, Ohio — Abilash & Madhavi (614-789-9058 / mungamuru@hotmail.com)

Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / arunahill@earthlink.net)

San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-979-1679 / nachiketas@hotmail.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-257-5589 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)

Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)

Toronto, Canada — Krishnan & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)

Vancouver, Canada — Zoya (604-921-9692 / zoyaonline@yahoo.ca)

THE MAHARSHI is a free bimonthly newsletter distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. The newsletters are also delivered attached to an e-mail as a PDF. To subscribe, send your request to "newsletter@arunachala.org". This issue and all back issues are available at "http://www.arunachala.org". Books, videos and audio CDs on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found on this Web site.

Letters and Comments

I have a question, I hope you can help me with. I'm really thinking as to what is it at the core that will develop a person spiritually. Is it believing in a God? Is it praying? Is it meditation? Is it renunciation? Is it love? I know that one thing can lead to other things. Loving other living beings unconditionally will lead to renunciation of the ego, for instance. Meditation is also some form of renunciation of the mental noise.

I have read one of Paul Brunton's books and he seems to have been with Ramana Maharshi for some time. Paul Brunton claims in one of his books that stillness is the real and only key and that everyone who states otherwise is fooling themselves. So in stillness we reach God which dwells in the core of our being. But then again Aldous Huxley says that, basically, renunciation is the way. Jesus says that love will take you all the way to God's Kingdom. Nisargadatta Maharaj says that you only need to dwell on the feeling of 'I Am'.

I have been really confused. So I looked in the *Bhagavad Gita* on www.yoga-age.com. In chapter XII it says: "For knowledge is better than constant practice, meditation is superior to knowledge, renunciation of the fruit of action to meditation; final emancipation immediately results from such renunciation." From this I understood that meditation is NOT the best way, even though a lot of gurus claim it to be the only way! Instead I read here that renunciation is the very best way!

Looking into 'renunciation' more I found in chapter V: "Renunciation of action and devotion through action are both means to final emancipation, but of these two devotion through action is better than renunciation." And in the same chapter: "The illuminated sage regards with equal mind an illumined, selfless brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcaste who eats the flesh of dogs."

Now, don't all these quotations in conclusion say that renunciation is better than meditation, and that renunciation in its most pure form is through loving other living beings unconditionally? Then we are back to Jesus, who states that God is Love, and that loving other living beings as your own self is the way to God's Kingdom.

Doesn't this mean, that Jesus was right, and that

LOVE IS THE WAY — the very best way?

Seeker from Denmark

Yes, Jesus was right. Love is the way. Our essential nature is only Love. We must connect with it and experience it to know it. Whatever method helps you connect with that ever-present love, follow that.

"The word killeth, but the Spirit giveth life". Connect with your spirit, the one Self and be free. Then only can you truly love all as your self.

The Bible also says "Be still and know that I Am God," and God told Moses "I Am That I Am". Books, teachers, discussions, cannot give you that experience. You have to find it in yourself by yourself. Make earnest, prayerful efforts to do so. You will succeed by the Grace of God or the Guru. Editor

Guru Purnima Program

Mahanyasa Purvaka Rudrabhishekam

Saturday 8 July, 2006

8:00 AM to 2:30 PM

You are cordially invited to attend the Mahanyasa Purvaka Rudrabhishekam on the occasion of Guru Purnima, The ceremonies will be led by Sri Vishnubhatla Murthy.

8:00 AM to 9:30 AM

Taittiriya and Mahanarayana Upanishad Parayanam

10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Mahanyasa Parayanam

11:00 AM to 2:30 PM

Rudrabhishekam with Ekadasha Rudra Parayanam

Prasad will be served at the conclusion of the worship.

Arunachala Ashrama

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