

The Maharshi

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The “Sri Ramana Gita” of B. V. Narasimhaswami Part II

While B. V. Narasimhaswami was residing at the Ashram, around the year 1930, he appears to have taken up the project of recasting Sri Ramana Gita in its original conversational form. For a full introduction to this text – also chapter one – see the July/August 2009 MAHARSHI Newsletter. In the present issue we take up chapters two and three from BVN’s manuscript.

CHAPTER II

The Swami’s Verse

On a certain day during the winter of 1915, Sri Ramana was sitting in Skandasramam. Before him sat Jagadeesa Sastri, a young man well-versed in Sanskrit who had previously (and has since) composed Sanskrit verses. On that day Jagadeesa Sastri wrote on a piece of paper, as part of the first line of a stanza, the words ‘*Hridaya Kuharamadhye*,’ and his mind, in spite of effort (or perhaps on account of it), could not proceed further and he did not complete it. Then Maharshi asked, “What is it you are writing?” Sastri handed over his paper.

Maharshi said, “Go on. Complete the verse.”

Sastri replied, “I am trying, but my mind refuses to work.”

Maharshi then took up the verse, and then and there completed the verse as given below. The verse was taken later to Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri at Mandassa, who later incorporated it into his *Ramana Gita* as Chapter II. In fact, this, strictly speaking, is the *Ramana Gita*, as it was sung (or was a song composed) by Sri Ramana.

The Stanza runs thus:

*hridaya kuharamdhye kevalam brahmamatram
hyahamahamiti sakshadatmarupena bhati
hridi visa manasa swam chinвата majjata va*

pavanachalanarodhadatmanishtho bhava tvam

It means:

Within the cavity of the heart, pure Brahman, as “I, I” shines with immediacy as the Self (i.e. as the soul or inner core of your personality). Therefore either by seeking the Self or diving in it or by means of pranayama (breath control) let thy mind enter the heart. Take thy firm stand as Atman (i.e. be firm in Self-Realization).

Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri on a later occasion requested the Maharshi to explain fully the meaning of the term “Heart” and the facts stated about it, for the purpose of Self-realization. Maharshi’s reply is embodied in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

The Chief Aim of Life

7-7-1917

The year 1917 was full of philosophical interest to the disciples at the Ashram. Kavyakantha had now come back to Tiruvannamalai after his trips and was anxious to use this opportunity to place before the Maharshi doubts and difficulties often experienced by the disciples in their effort to understand the scriptures and to elicit the exact drift of his teachings. He invited leading disciples to come forward

and place all their difficulties before the Maharshi, so that he might gather all the replies into one volume of Sanskrit verse and name it 'Sri Ramana Gita'. As each set of these questions was put and replies elicited, Kavyakantha took them down first in 'sutra' form (i.e., as aphorisms), and almost immediately rendered them into Sanskrit verse. The *Sri Ramana Gita* was thus ready before the end of 1917 and it was translated into Telugu and Tamil by Vellore S. Narasimhayya, now known (i.e., since his adoption of sannyasa in 1927) as Pranavananda. These translations were printed and published only in 1923.

On the 7th of July of that year, the questions were begun by one Ganjanana¹, a young man full of fervid devotion. He hailed from North Kanara District of the Bombay Presidency and was well versed in Sanskrit. *Srimad Bhagavatam* and Maharatta and Canarese songs relating to Sri Krishna and Sri Rama were the delight of his heart. He was here at Arunachala for a few months and attached himself to Kavyakantha and the Maharshi, and composed a "Vibhaktijashtaka" of eight stanzas in praise of the latter. He lived on begged food, leading an austere life of a bhikshu. When Maharshi and the disciples started on their Giripradakshinam (circumambulating the Arunachala Hill on foot), Gajanana would be a very prominent figure, as he would sing devotional songs and dance frequently in ecstasy. He used his opportunities of being near the Maharshi to remove his own doubts as to the Jnana Vichara Marga, i.e. the path of Self-enquiry, leading to Self-realization.

His first question to Sri Ramana Maharshi (reminiscent of the central question in *Srimad Bhagavatam* by King Parikshit to Sri Suka Maharshi) was: "In this samsara, or whirl of births and deaths undergone by the jiva (the soul), what is the chief thing a man has to do?"

Maharshi: Well, your question is what you as a man should do in regard to your karma, action; and it asks about the most important duty. You wish to arrange duties in the order of their importance, and this importance is based on the value, to you, of the fruits of each karma. So, in short, you are inquiring into your appropriate karma and the value of its fruits. Now, does not the karma and its importance depend plainly on the individual who is to perform the karma and reap the fruit? If so, then, as a preliminary to this investigation, first inquire who is the

person who does the karma and tastes the fruit. In other words, start the inquiry "Who am I?" for yourself: i.e., the inquiry into yourself which, almost immediately becomes the inquiry into the Self, with a view to attain Self-knowledge or Self-realization.

This is therefore man's chief duty.

Gajanana: Again, Revered Sir, what briefly are the means to attain this Self-realization; and as for the means already suggested, namely the inward inquiry, or the grand pratyagdrishti, how are we to attain that?

Maharshi: Well, briefly put, the means to attain Self-realization are these: First, the mind should be withdrawn from its objects; the objective vision of the world must cease. Secondly, the mind's internal operations also must be put an end to. Thirdly, the mind must thereby be rendered characterless (nirupadhika) and must continue characterless firmly; and lastly, it must rest in pure vichara, contemplation or realization of its nature, i.e. itself. This is the means for pratyagdrishti or darsana, also termed antarmukham, the inward vision or inquiry.

Gajanana: How long has one to go on with his niyama, disciplinary regulation (such as regulation in quantity and quality of food, sleep, exertion, etc.)? Is he to adhere to them till he attains Yoga Siddhi (i.e. till he achieves success in his yoga)? And do they prove useful right up to the end of the course?

Maharshi: Yes, the spiritual aspirant in his onward career of yoga is helped by such disciplinary regulations. Once he attains success and reaches his goal, the regulations drop off by themselves.

Gajanana (adverting to the answer to his first question, asked again): Revered Sir, as for the goal that is attained by firm, characterless vichara mentioned just now, cannot the same goal be attained by mantra japa, repetition of mantras (sacred syllables)?

Maharshi: Yes. If the mantra japa is unbroken and performed with an undeflected current of attention and with due faith, equal success is achieved. Even the mere Pranava² Japa would suffice. You see that by such a japa (of either the Pranava or other mantras) the mind is deflected from its operations regarding the objective world; and then, by identifying oneself with the mantra, one attains the (nature of) Atman.

(To be continued)

1. Described as Daivarata in *Sri Ramana Gita*.

2. Pranava is the short monosyllable OM and almost invariably forms part of every mantra.

Maurice Frydman

By Dr. M. Sadashiva Rao

"He (Maurice Frydman) belongs only here (to India). Somehow he was born abroad, but has come again here."
— Sri Ramana Maharshi

Maurice Frydman, also known as Bharatananda, passed away in Bombay on the 9th of March, 1976. He was a selfless and saintly person who had made India his home for five decades.

Maurice was a great intellectual who was loved for the qualities of his heart by everyone who came into close contact with him. He was born in Poland 1902 of Jewish parents. His father was an apothecary (pharmacist) whom he lost early in life. His mother brought up him and his sister. He had his schooling in Poland and learnt the Russian and German languages along with Polish. After finishing high school, he migrated to Paris to qualify as an electrical engineer. He took up work as a research engineer in a large firm, manufacturing electrical machinery. In France, he had to learn French and later on he learnt English and could write chaste English as most Polish who take to this language do. In India, he learnt to speak Hindi fluently. The present writer came into close contact with Frydman in 1953 and worked with him for about twelve years.

As a Research Engineer, he had a large number of patents under his name. From early youth he had great interest in India and its spiritual personages. When he was working in the French engineering firm, Sir Mirza Ismail, then Dewan of Mysore, visited the firm. Frydman met him and asked him a number of questions about India. Sir Mirza asked Frydman whether he was interested in coming to India to organize a firm for manufacturing electrical machinery. Frydman agreed promptly and so came to India to organize the firm now known as the Mysore Electrical Industries Ltd. He worked as the technical head of this manufacturing firm on a good salary for a few years. During this period he often visited Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and sat at his feet. Many of the questions published in *Maharshi's Gospel* (1939) were put by him, and they elicited detailed replies from the Maharshi.

It was during this period that he was attracted to

Mahatma Gandhi and began to visit him in Wardha and made many improvements in the charkha (cotton spinning wheel). Gandhiji gave him the name 'Bharatananda' in view of his great love for India. Frydman is known by this name in the Gandhian and Sarvodaya circles. When Frydman came to know that his mother and sister had died in the war, he lost all links with his mother country.

Owing to his spiritual leanings and this tragedy, Frydman began to wear the ochre robe of a sannyasi. But he soon gave up the ochre robe as a mere superficial symbol. When he became a sannyasi, he stopped drawing his salary from the firm he was serving. This nonplussed the Mysore Government authorities. But, they were not willing to lose his services as they had a high regard for his abilities and integrity. They kept his salary apart for payment at a later date. When Frydman took the final decision to resign, they paid him the entire amount of the arrears of his salary. This large amount of money he distributed to the most needy of his workers who had looked after him when he was not drawing his pay, and walked out empty handed as a true sannyasi. When asked by the writer how he managed to get on without any money, he replied that his friends always helped him in kind of their own accord. His needs were very little.

Frydman wore khadi churidars and kurta which he used to stitch himself. Even the yarn for the cloth, he used to spin himself. He also used to stitch his own leather footwear.



Frydman worked for some time in the small princely state of Aundh near Poona. He had become an intimate friend of Sri Apa Pant, formerly High Commissioner for India in London and son of the Rajah of Aundh. Apa Pant's high tributes to Frydman are contained in his autobiographical book entitled *A Moment of Time* (Orient Longman, 1974). Apa Pant relates that he met Frydman in Bangalore in 1937. Within half an hour of meeting each other they became friends and within six months Frydman resigned from the factory and went to Aundh to work from the grass roots for Aundh's new democratic federation of its seventy-two villages. Pant says that people like Frydman do not get into history books but their influence on events and individuals, operating simultaneously at different levels of consciousness, is incalculable.

It was Frydman who in December 1937 took Apa Pant to Tiruvannamalai to meet Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He recalls the Maharshi's calm gaze '...seeing all and seeing nothing,' and his grace reaching him to the farthest corner of the Old Hall among a couple of hundreds of devotees, dissolving his ego in an awareness of unbounded peace and deep silent joy.

After the passing of Gandhiji and the Maharshi, Frydman migrated to Varanasi and took up work in the Rajghat School. He then went to Bombay to work in the All India Khadi and Village Industries Board (later the Khadi and Village Industries Commission) set up by the Government of India in 1953. Many of the members of the

Board were his erstwhile coworkers and valued his services.

It was in 1953 that the writer came into close contact with Frydman. When asked by the Khadi Board to organize a Research Institute for village industries, the writer accepted this difficult task with great hesitation. Maurice Frydman helped him over a period of several months to make the Research Institute a success.

Frydman was deeply interested in J. Krishnamurti and his teachings. He used to arrange for his lectures and also translated his books into French. He understood clearly that Krishnamurti's teachings were basically the same as those of the Maharshi but worded differently. His regard for the Maharshi was deep and lasting. This is expressed clearly in the last brief article of his in the April 1976 number of *The Mountain Path*, where he bewails the fact that he and many others merely played on the fringe of the ocean of Bhagavan's grace and never took the plunge. He had a large portrait of the Maharshi hanging on the wall next to his bed in his small spartan room and practised meditation regularly.

Frydman was essentially a karma yogi. Towards the end of his life he did great service to the sadhakas of the jnana path when he tape recorded the talks in Marathi of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, a jnani belonging to the Navanath Sampradaya, starting from Dattatreya. He took great pains to translate and publish them in the book *I am That* for the benefit of spiritual aspirants on the path of Self-enquiry. — *Mountain Path, No. 1, 1977*

Maurice Frydman – His Last Illness

Maurice Frydman was in Bombay during his last illness. Except an old lady, his close friend, who herself was an invalid and much older than him, there was no one to attend on him. A professional nurse had a dream in which an old man in a loin cloth urged her to go to Maurice Frydman and attend on him in his last days. The next day, moved by curiosity, she went to Maurice and offered her professional services. The offer was turned down. Disappointed, she started walking out of the house. Lo! when she lifted her head she saw the face of the 'old man' of her dream in the picture hanging on the wall, over the exit door. It was Bhagavan Ramana. She again came back into the room and told Maurice the story of his Master requesting her to take care of him. Then Maurice gladly agreed. Till the last moment of his earthly life Maurice was most peaceful and serene, in body and mind. — *Moments Remembered*

Readiness

By *Bharatananda*

The burning regret which many, probably, share with me, is that full advantage was not taken of those happy and precious days when He was with us physically also – eating, talking, laughing, welcoming all, open to all. Reality was there, in abundance and for the taking, but we enclosed ourselves in timidity, in false humility, in self-deprecation and false excuses. We took a cupful when the ocean was at our feet.

Now He is still with us, but no longer so easily accessible. To find Him again we must overcome the very obstacles which prevented us from seeing Him as He was and going with Him where He wanted to take us. It was

tamas and rajas – fear and desire that stood in the way – the desire for the pleasure of the past and fear of austere responsibility of a higher state of being. It was the same old story – the threshold of maturity of mind and heart which most of us refuse to cross. ‘Ripeness is all’, He used to say, and now ripeness is the condition of finding Him again.

We ripen when we refuse to drift, when striving ceaselessly becomes a way of life, when dispassion born of insight becomes spontaneous. When the search ‘Who Am I?’ becomes the only thing that matters, when we become a mere torch and the flame all-important, it will mean that we are ripening fast. We cannot accelerate that ripening, but we can remove the obstacles of fear and greed, indolence and fancy, prejudice and pride. He is there and waiting – timelessly. It is we who keep Him waiting.

Bring the Mind Under Control

RAMA asked: But, Holy sir, how can one restrain this wheel of cosmic illusion which revolves with such tremendous force?

VASISTHA replied: O Rama, the mind is the hub around which this vicious cycle revolves, creating delusion in the minds of the deluded. It is by firmly restraining that hub through intense self-effort and keen intelligence that the whole wheel is brought to a standstill. When the hub’s motion is stopped the wheel does not revolve: when the mind is stilled, illusion ceases. One who does not know this trick and does not practice it, undergoes endless sorrow; the moment the truth is seen, behold! the sorrow comes to an end.

The disease of the perception of this world-illusion is not cured except through the mastery of the mind. Hence O Rama, abandon all other activities like pilgrimage, gifts and austerities, and bring the mind under your control for our ultimate good. This world appearance abides in the mind, even as there is space within the pot; if the pot is broken, the illusory division of space vanishes and if the mind ceases to be, the concept of a world within the mind also ceases to be. Even as an insect trapped within the pot attains freedom of movement when the pot is broken, you will also enjoy freedom when the mind ceases to be, along with the world-illusion contained in it.

Live in the present with your consciousness externalized momentarily, but without any effort: when the mind stops linking itself to the past and to the future it becomes no-mind. If from moment to moment your mind dwells on what is and drops it effortlessly at once, the mind becomes no-mind, full of purity. It is only as long as the mind continues to be agitated that it experiences diversity of its own projection or expansion, even as rain falls only as long as there are clouds; and it is only as long as the infinite consciousness limits itself into the finite mind that such agitation and expansion take place. If consciousness ceases to be the finite mind, then know that the very roots of cyclic world-illusion (of birth and death) are burnt and there is perfection.

—*The Supreme Yoga*, Translated from the *Yoga Vasishtha* by Swami Venkatesananda

Maharshi's Teachings and Modern Scientific Thought

By K. K. Nambiar

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has taught us that eternal happiness is one's real nature and the best way for realizing it is for the Self to be itself. In other words, one has just to be. Abiding as the Self, which is pure Consciousness, is the greatest happiness, perfect and permanent. Any other form of so-called happiness, obtained from external sources is illusory and evanescent. It might go the way it came. So, the pursuit of the Self by the continuous quest "Who am I?" is the safest and surest way to dispel ignorance and remain as the Self.

I had once approached Bhagavan and asked him about the different locations suggested for concentration in various srutis, e.g., between the eyebrows, tip of the nose, heart center, muladhara, etc. Bhagavan who was reclining on the couch, got down and took out a copy of *Sri Ramana Gita*, from the rotating shelf nearby and opened it right on the page containing the sloka:

"If the Heart be located in anahata chakra, how does the practice of yoga begin in muladharas?"

In yoga shastra, anahata charka is the fourth center, and muladhara is the first and lowest of the six centers in the spinal cord.

It looked like a miracle when the book opened on the right page; but such experiences are common to devotees of Sri Bhagavan. He added in Malayalam, "Why should one desirous of coming to Tiruvannamalai first go to Kasi (Banaras) or Rameswaram and then come here? Why not go straight to Tiruvannamalai instead of the long detour?"

I felt a great sense of remorse when Sri Bhagavan had to point out this sloka from *Sri Ramana Gita* to me. Though I had with me a sacred treasure, a volume of *Sri Ramana Gita* in Malayalam in Sri Bhagavan's own handwriting, given to me with his blessings, I had not closely studied it, or tried to put into practice the instructions contained therein.¹ The whole of the fifth chapter entitled "Hridaya Vidya" deals with the technique of meditation and elucidates points regarding the respective functions of nerve centers, nadis, etc.

Also, at the daily veda parayana at the Ashram in Sri Bhagavan's presence, the verse appearing in the

Mahanarayana Anuvakam at the end of "Purushasuktam" underlines the above instructions:

The Hridayam (the heart which is the place of meditation) resembles an inverted lotus bud. A span below the throat and above the navel...

So, the continuous quest Who Am I?, guided by the grace of Sri Bhagavan, who is always with us, will lead one to the heart center, the seat of Consciousness, which is neither within nor without, all pervading and eternal. This supreme awareness is all that IS, and abiding therein is the ultimate goal.

Let us now have a look at recent developments in scientific knowledge. At one time the world around us was supposed to consist of matter, made of molecules and atoms. Physicists chased them further and broke them down to nucleus, electrons, quanta, waves, particles, and fields. Einstein said that the universe of our experience consists of matter and energy in a space-time-continuum. He established the famous equation $E = mc^2$, where c is a constant representing the velocity of light. Matter and energy became interchangeable. Max Planck, famous for his quantum theory, added a further dimension to this, stating that it is consciousness that is fundamental and that matter is a derivative of consciousness. As a corollary even space and time are only concepts of our consciousness. Thus scientists are veering round to the conclusion that since every object is a sum of its qualities and these qualities are perceived by us, the whole objective universe of matter and energy, atoms and stars does not exist except as a construction of consciousness.

Yoga Vashista says: "All things that exist everywhere are experienced by us; there is nothing here anywhere which has not been experienced by us."

Bhagavan has told us that the world as such is not real. It is real as Brahman or Consciousness. The world we see and experience with our senses is a product of the mind; the mind is a part of the ego, which rises from Pure Consciousness, which is the same as Reality. One has to realize That and just Be. — *Ramana Smriti*

1. This whole episode dealing with my dream in 1936 in which Sri Bhagavan asked me for a notebook to write a Malayalam translation of Sri Ramana Gita has been fully dealt with in an article contributed by me in the Golden Jubilee Souvenir, published by Sri Ramanasramam. [It was subsequently incorporated into the author's book of reminiscences, titled The Guiding Presence.]

Advent at Arunachala

All are invited to join us in celebrating the 113th anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala.

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

In Nova Scotia Canada

Sunday 6 September — 11:00 AM

1451 Clarence Road

Bridgetown, Nova Scotia B0S 1C0

Tel: 902.665.2090

In New York City

Saturday 12 September — 11:00 AM

86-06 Edgerton Blvd.

Jamaica Estates, New York 11432

Tel: 718.560.3196

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted 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 (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

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

Boston, MA — Abhirami and Venkat (508-358-1144 / vshash@gmail.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@gmail.com)

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