



The Maharshi

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THE SRI RAMANA GITA OF B. V. NARASIMHASWAMI PART IV

While B. V. Narasimhaswami was residing at the Ashram, around the year 1930, he appears to have taken up the project of recasting Ganapati Muni's Sri Ramana Gita in its original conversational form. For a full introduction to this recently-discovered manuscript see the July/August 2009 MAHARSHI newsletter.

In the present issue, we take up chapter five, titled "What is the the Hridaya (Heart or Centre)?" In BVN's typed manuscript, the Maharshi makes English corrections and fills in the required Sanskrit text, quoting from scriptures wherein it is mentioned that Brahman is described as hridaya. In fact, throughout this chapter he writes in his beautiful script the word 'हृदयं' (hridayam, heart) no less than nineteen times. In the second verse of the "Arunachala Pancharatnam" the Maharshi declares: "Thou art the inner Self, who dancest in the Heart as 'I'. Heart is Thy name, Oh Lord!" In this chapter he describes how this Heart is to be understood and experienced.

CHAPTER V

What is the Hridaya (Heart or Centre)?

On the 9th of August 1917, Sri Ramana Maharshi sat up at night in the Skandasramam. Kavyakantha and other bhaktas had gathered at his feet. For the benefit of all, Kavyakantha requested the Maharshi to explain fully 'the Heart' (हृदयं) mentioned in his poem composed in 1915. [See Sep/Oct 2009 Newsletter].

Maharshi thus answered: 'हृदयं', i.e. the Heart (or Centre), is that from which all thoughts spring. A description of it is given in various passages of the Vedas: पद्मकोशप्रतीकाशगं हृदयंचाप्यधोमुखं । अधोनिष्ठावितस्त्यान्ते नाभ्यामुपरितिष्ठति ॥ *Narayanopanishad, XIII.2*

The above comparison of the Heart to the plantain bud or lotus bud and various other physical descriptions¹ are given to assist the yogi's practice of meditation.

1. The Upanishad compares it also to the leaf of the Aswatha tree (*ficus religiosa*).

How do we proceed to trace all thoughts to their source, you may ask. Well, let us discover if all thoughts could in the first place be traced to some one thought as their base of operations, and let us then go deeper and find the source of the basic thought. Is there then any such basic or fundamental thought underlying all other thoughts? Do you not see that the thought or idea 'I' – the idea of personality – is such a root thought?

For us, Maharshi explained later, whenever any thought arises, these questions arise and should be raised by the aspirant aiming at Realisation: 'Does this thought exist independently of any person thinking, or does it exist only as the thought of a person, and if the latter is the case, to whom does it arise?' The answer is: 'This thought arises only as a person's thought and this thought arises in me.' So the 'I' idea may be regarded as a stem from which other thoughts branch forth.

Next let us see the root source of this (stem). But how? Dive deep in ecstatic concentration within yourself (i.e.

within the 'I' thought) and perceive its source. There is nothing there to perceive in or through the senses. You have no guidance from sensation and rationalization for this search. But if you have the right intuition, the Centre 'हृदयं' is immediately felt and the above or former 'I' which inquired disappears into this 'the centre'. Thus, 'हृदयं' or the heart centre is the source of the 'I' thought and of everything else.

The term 'हृदयं' (Heart) is however persistently identified by some who practice yoga with one of their six centres² चक्रं (*chakram*), i.e., their fourth centre called the अनाहत चक्रं (*anahata chakram*) situated in the chest. These yogis admit that 'हृदयं' denotes the source or abiding place of the personality. Well then, if these yogis wish to trace or promote the development of their personality or soul from its source or abiding place to its highest reach, as they profess to do, they should start its course from अनाहत चक्रं (*anahata chakram*), whereas they invariably start their course from मूलाधारं (*muladharam*) which they style their first chakra. Hence one is perhaps well advised to confine the term 'हृदयं', i.e., 'the Centre', to the Universal Centre or Brahman.

Brahman is often indicated in scripture as 'अयं हृत्' (*ayam hrit*), two words which make up 'हृदयं'³ (*hridayam*) when conjoined. Even the practicing yogi does not identify the 'हृदयं' (Heart) or अनाहत (*anahata*) with the organ forming the centre of blood circulation (with its auricles and ventricles), and in the above stanza (vide Ch. II) the Heart 'हृदयं' is not used in a physiological sense, but rather as a metaphor and refers to the centre of consciousness. There is no harm, however, in taking 'हृदयं' to indicate an actual spatial region as is done in various parts of the scripture. There, 'हृदयं' is said to be on the right side of the chest (not on the left where the blood propeller is situated). From it radiates the sushumna nadi (or nerve),

2. Corresponding perhaps to nerve ganglia running parallel to the spinal cord.

3. Scripture passages in which Brahman is styled 'हृदयं': अयं हृदि स्थितस्साक्षा सर्वेषा मविशेषतः । तेनैव हृदयं प्रोक्तं रिशवस्संसारमोचकः ॥ in *Brahma Gita Suta Samhita* [This (the Self) exists clearly in the hearts of all without exception. By that (Self) alone 'this is the center' is declared. It, the liberator, from the bonds of worldly illusion, itself based on सवा एष आत्मा हृदि तस्यैतदेव निरुक्तं हृद्यमिति तस्माद्धृदयम् [Verily, that Self is (abides) in the heart. Of it the etymological explanation is this. He who knows this goes day by day into the heavenly world.] (*Chandagyopanishad*, VIII:3:3)

up which the current of consciousness or light goes to sahasrara (the thousand petalled – evidently referring to the brain with its numberless cells). From that sahasrara the light of consciousness passes again (evidently through the nerves) to all parts of the body and thereby the outside world is experienced by one. But if the experiencer views the experienced object as something distinct from himself, i.e., from the Self, then he is caught up in the whirl of samsara, the wheel of metempsychosis, or chain of births and deaths. The sahasrara (i.e., brain) of the Atma Nishta, i.e. the Self-realizer, is pure light or enlightenment. If any flitting or passing desires approach it, they perish therein immediately. They have no soil to flourish upon there. The sankalpas or seeds of desire that occur in the Atma Nishta, staying in pure light or suddha sattva, are referred to in the Upanishads as getting parched or fried. Such a seed भृष्टबीजं (*brishatabijam*) does not give birth to fresh vasanas (tendencies) or karma (action), as they consume themselves, "nor leave a wrack behind."⁴ This expression is frequently found in other Upanishads, in *Vasishtha* and the works of Sri Sankaracharya, but this reference will suffice.

With the pure light mentioned, outside objects विषयाः (*vishayaha*) are sensed or experienced, and their impress received. But, if these impressions are colored or swallowed up in the prevailing non-differentiation of the perfected yogi (Self-realized one), his yoga or Self-realization is not marred thereby. Even when receiving outside impressions, the yogi maintains his consciousness of the unity of existence; and it is this state of central consciousness with a (so to speak) peripheral experience of objects (the central light swallowing up the peripheral rays), that is called Sahaja Sthiti. But when the yogi completely shuts out cognizance of outside objects, his state is described as Nirvikalpa Samadhi, i.e., pure concentration, or the Absolute Consciousness without attributes or characteristics.

4. *Muktikopanishad*, II:61, 62

(a) मलिना जन्महेतुस्स्या शुद्धजन्मविनाशनी

(b) पुनर्जन्मां कुरं त्यक्त्वा स्थितिं संभृष्टबीजवत्
which means:

(a) The vasana, if impure, results in fresh births; if pure, results in destruction of, i.e. release from, rebirth.

(b) As in the case of fried seeds, sprouting into fresh births is avoided.

What are these objects which constitute the external universe? The entire universe or macrocosm is found in man, the microcosm. The entire man is found in the Heart, or Ultimate Centre. Ergo, the entire universe is found within that Centre, the Heart 'हृदयं'. Again, looked at in another way, the external world does not exist without the mind perceiving it. That is, unless a mind perceives and notes the existence of the worlds, how is that existence to be posited? And the mind does not exist without the Centre 'हृदयं'. Ergo, the entire world of experience ends at the Centre. The respective positions of the Heart (the Centre) and the mind may be illustrated by an analogy. What the sun is to the solar system – the origin of all, the supporter of all, and that which lights up all – that, the Centre (i.e., the Heart, or that which has intuition), is to man. What the moon is in the external universe, casting a delectable but uncertain light, incapable of creating or sustaining real life or throwing clear light on all objects, that the mind is when it works in or with the brain (sahasrara). Just as the moon borrows its light from the sun, so does the mind derive its power of knowing from the Centre, or Heart. It is when man has no intuition or illumination from that Centre or Heart, that he sees the mind as the only basis of his conscious activity, just as one may have, at night (i.e., when there is no sun), to be content to work by moonlight. At such a time the man is

ignorant (पामर, pamara), as he does not see the source of all light (i.e., consciousness), viz. the Real, the Atman, but sees objects with the help of the mind alone, and sees them as different from himself; hence, he wanders as in a maze. The Jnani, on the other hand, stationed in the Centre, sees within it the mind, no doubt; but that mind is of as little significance to him as the moon when seen in daylight. The term Prajna has for its superficial denotation (Vachyartha) the mind, but it is in reality, i.e. in its essential content (lakshyartha), the Centre (हृदयं), the Heart. Brahman is naught but that. To those who perceive with the help of the mind only, the difference of seer and seen exists, but to those at the Centre, they are one and the same.

Now, as for the advice given in the second half of the stanza (i.e., Chapter II) that one should enter into the Self in the Heart, there are, apart from spiritual enlightenment, other instances of the mind disappearing into the Centre by reason of deep sleep, excessive emotions of joy, sorrow, terror, rage, catalepsy, possession or coma. These also strike the mind and drive it into its source. However, in these states, there is no illumination or even awareness of one's individuality, whereas in the condition of Samadhi, the Self-realization achieved by the yogi, one has such awareness and illumination. That is the difference between Samadhi and the above mentioned states.

(To be continued)

The Nature of the Heart

TALK NO. 205. Mr. Cohen had been cogitating on the nature of the heart: if the 'spiritual heart' beats, how; or if it does not beat, then how is it to be felt?

M.: This Heart is different from the physical heart; beating is the function of the latter. The former is the seat of spiritual experience. That is all that can be said of it.

Just as a dynamo supplies motive power to whole systems of lights, fans, etc., so the original Primal Force supplies energy to the beating of the heart, respiration, etc.

D.: How is the 'I-I' consciousness felt?

M.: As an unbroken awareness of 'I'. It is simply consciousness.

D.: Can we know it when it dawns?

M.: Yes, as consciousness. You are that even now. There will be no mistaking it when it is pure.

D.: Why do we have such a place as the 'Heart' for meditation?

M.: Because you seek consciousness. Where can you find it? Can you reach it externally? You have to find it internally. Therefore you are directed inward. Again the 'Heart' is only the seat of consciousness or the consciousness itself.

D.: On what should we meditate?

M.: Who is the meditator? Ask the question first. Remain as the meditator. There is no need to meditate.

T. R. Kanakammal

A blessed soul was absorbed in the Master in the same manner she had lived her eighty-eight years: totally surrendered and prostrate at His feet.

T. R. Kanakammal was perhaps the last living devotee who left all worldly attractions behind to reside in the holy presence of Sri Bhagavan before his mahasamadhi in 1950. She first remembered seeing His beatific smile on a visit to him when she was eight. From that time onwards she was completely captured in the net of His grace. At the age of 13 she declared to her parents that she would never have any interest in family life and pleaded with them not to get her married. Her pleading failed and she was married the same year, but before the event she extracted a promise from her father that if at the time she came of age and was expected to join her husband, he would not force her to do so if she wished otherwise. And she had the same vairagya a few years later when the time arrived.

Her parents were very pious people and eventually allowed her to go and live by the side of Sri Ramanasramam in the year 1946 when she was in her early 20s. Since then Tiruvannamalai has been her residence and Bhagavan Ramana her sole anchor and support.

On Jayanti morning, January 1, 2010, Kanakammal entered Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall from the door near the well, opposite the dining hall, walked up to Bhagavan's Samadhi and was looking at the Lingam. She then shivered a moment and then dropped to the floor. She did not say anything to anyone but simply gazed at the Lingam of the Maharshi, while it was washed in preparation for the grand puja that was about to take place, commemorating the 130th birth anniversary of Sri Ramana. How fitting an end for one who knew no other in her long life than Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

Kanakammal was an inestimable source of inspiration to the legions of devotees who would seek her presence. She left us her reminiscences (Cherished Memories, in English) and several other books which shed light on the teachings of Bhagavan.

What follows are some transcribed reminiscences from a videotaped interview taken in 1999.



How to Speak?

I would sit silently before Bhagavan. I was unable to ask him questions but I would listen attentively whenever he answered others' questions. After all, even if I asked him, the replies would be the same. Occasionally, when I felt like putting a question to Bhagavan, something within me would ask, 'Would Bhagavan know about your doubt only if you asked him? Is he not within you also? Is it necessary to put your doubts in words?' Such thoughts would prevent me from speaking out. But again, I would observe devotees like Devaraja Mudaliar, G. V. Subbaramayya, Sambasiva Rao and others conversing freely with Bhagavan and wonder: 'These people are so free with Bhagavan, then why not me too?'

In those days, Bhagavan was sitting in the Jubilee Hall. I would enter from the Old Hall and Bhagavan would be able to see me only after I turned into the Jubilee Hall. A wall would obstruct his view until then. In the Old Hall, I would muster courage and resolve that I would definitely speak to Bhagavan on that day, but the moment I turned into the Jubilee Hall, all my courage would evaporate. I would almost feel something tangibly dropping away from me, as if something were being emptied out. My walk would slow down considerably. Beyond a point, I would practically have to drag myself towards Bhagavan. To compound matters, on some such days Bhagavan would look directly at me. I could not bear it when Bhagavan

looked directly at me. The intensity of his gaze would push me inwards. In such situations, I would just prostrate and sit down quietly, not even bothering to go up front near him. Bhagavan's look would push me inside and I would sit quietly there for the whole day. This is what would happen to me again and again in His presence.

Eager to talk to Bhagavan I sought the help of Anandammal, who often sat next to me. "I want to talk to Bhagavan," I told her, "but I am unable to bring myself to do so. However, despite the absence of words, I still get the peace and satisfaction that I would if I talked to him. What should I do?" Anandammal smiled and remained silent.

The next day I wanted to go for a pradakshina around Arunachala. As I could not go alone, Anandammal would accompany me. When I went to take Bhagavan's permission at about 5 a.m., no one else was present. I thought that this would be my best opportunity to speak to Bhagavan. As I prostrated before him, I thought, 'What do I ask him?' On such occasions I would think, 'What do you know? What will you ask this divine being at whose very sight you become tongue-tied?' All my questions would then remain bottled-up inside me. On that day, somehow mustering courage, I managed to speak out, "Bhagavan! I am going for pradakshina." I did not know what else to say. Bhagavan, who was reclining on the sofa came forward towards me and said, "Uh! What?" I then realized that although I requested permission to go for pradakshina, no sound had come from my mouth. Only my lips had moved. Again, I tried telling Bhagavan, with the same result. Bhagavan then said, "Oho! So you are going for the pradakshina? Who is accompanying you?" Anandammal, who had come to the hall by then and was standing beside me said, "Bhagavan, I am going." Bhagavan said "Very good! Very good!" and gave a beatific smile. Thus, despite several opportunities to do so, I was never able to speak to Bhagavan. So how could I ask him anything? And what was I to ask? Some people told me to ask him whatever doubts came to me in my sadhana, but then it would occur to me that if we do sadhana the way Bhagavan asked us to, then there is absolutely no room for doubt. Such doubts are only on account of our own mistakes in not following Bhagavan. Thus, I never asked Bhagavan any questions.

Look of Grace

This incident took place when Bhagavan had moved into the New Hall. During those days, the front row closest to Bhagavan was reserved for important people, although Bhagavan did not know about it. There was a specific, unspoken seating arrangement and others who occupied those places would even be asked to go and sit elsewhere. On this day, Rani Mazumdar and myself were sitting by the window at the end of the hall when we noticed that the front row was empty. Rani suggested that the two of us could sit there close to Bhagavan. I agreed. The front row began at the pillars closest to Bhagavan's couch. In order to give people room to move about, no one could sit right beside the couch. On seeing the two of us, a Telugu lady called Kameswaramma also came and sat next to us in the front row. The three of us were directly facing Bhagavan.

As soon as we had settled there, Bhagavan began looking directly at me. Unable to bear the intensity of his direct look, I immediately closed my eyes. How long I remained like that I do not know, but sometime later I opened my eyes and found Bhagavan seated motionless looking at me just as before. Again I closed my eyes. Sometime later, Mauni Srinivasa Rao came with the day's mail. Hearing Bhagavan talk to him, I opened my eyes. However, I was still in the same state that I was in when my eyes were closed and whatever was happening didn't really register in my mind. After attending to the correspondence, Bhagavan got up to leave for the cow shed. I got up along with everybody else but again without any real awareness of my surroundings.

Kameswaramma, who had been sitting next to me, hugged me and said, "Kanakamma, you are extremely fortunate. Ever since you sat there, Bhagavan has been steadily looking directly at you up until when the Mauni came with the mail. You have got everything. Bhagavan has given you all that you need." So saying, she hugged me close to her. But I was in no state to give a reply. I just told her, "Tears are streaming down my eyes. I don't know what to say." The waves of peace coming over me kept me from talking.

The Power of Bhagavan's Presence

Several prominent personalities and people of high social standing, wealth and prestige would visit Bhagavan. Seated inside the hall, when I observed them coming to meet

Bhagavan, I could see that they were very conscious of their status, position and power. Their walk and bearing would clearly display such a consciousness. However, the moment they crossed the doorway into the hall and walked into Bhagavan's presence, there would be a remarkable transformation in their behavior, almost like from that of a tiger to a kitten. Without being told anything, they would automatically fold their hands and stand bowed in respect before Bhagavan. We may see a form sitting on the couch, but the real Bhagavan is the spiritual force that radiates everywhere and subdues everybody's ego, even as they enter his presence. Everyone has to remove their ego and leave it outside, as it were, and sit quietly in Bhagavan's presence.

Another thing about Bhagavan was that his look would never vary irrespective of whether the person was a long-standing devotee or somebody visiting casually for the first time. It is we who interpret his looks according to our own state of mind. There would be no differentiation in his looks. Still, everybody could tell what he wanted to convey by his look. Such was the characteristic of Bhagavan's look, and it was unique to him.

His Continued Presence

The wonder of Bhagavan is this: at least, people like us were fortunate to see Bhagavan in the body and live with him. Our attraction to Bhagavan was greatly enhanced by being able to observe him in daily life. But even if one goes to Sri Ramanasramam today, one can see devotees enter the hall with tears in their eyes, prostrate before Bhagavan and meditate, for how long even they do not know. Whenever they learn about some old devotee of Bhagavan who is still alive, they immediately seek them out and tell them, "You have been so fortunate to live and meditate in Bhagavan's physical presence. We get such peace of mind even in our short and infrequent stays here." For people like us who have lived with and enjoyed the physical presence of Bhagavan, being devoted to him is no great deal. What happened to me would have happened to you also, had you been there in my place.

Today, I find people who have never seen Bhagavan physically, never heard his voice or listened to his upadesa, sit in the Old Hall or the Samadhi Hall, oblivious of themselves, often shedding tears, and going round the hall as if impelled by some unseen force. What gives these people their experiences? As Bhagavan always said, "Is

this body Bhagavan?" When somebody expressed sadness at having to go back home from the Ashram, Bhagavan said, "What am I to do? You say that this body is Bhagavan. I say that it is not. Now, if you insist, what am I to do?" To others, he would say, "Look! He says he is going to a place where I am not." These new devotees of Bhagavan are proof of all he told us.

In those days, one could count the number of devotees on one's fingers. Today, there is not enough space in the meditation hall and we have devotees sitting in the Samadhi Hall and the Mother's Temple. A new dining hall has become necessary. It is Bhagavan's wonderful shakti that draws people here and keeps them here. After all, it is said that one gets moksha when one even thinks of Arunachala. There is hardly a person who does not long to return to Arunachala even as he is departing after a visit. He would leave wondering when he would have the next darshan of Bhagavan. Only now he refers to Bhagavan's samadhi rather than his physical body.

It was at Arunachala that goddess Ambika became one half of Lord Shiva. Hence, at Arunachala the meditations of women will definitely attain fruition. Also, there are no temples for the mothers of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, but Bhagavan himself had a temple built for his mother Alagammal at Arunachala. Nobody can say how big the Ashram will grow in the future.

In fact, Bhagavan's power and influence have grown stronger since his Mahasamadhi. Muruganar once said, "Bhagavan's real power will be seen not now, but only a few hundred years after his physical body is no more. But we will not be around to see those days."

Just as Bhagavan used to guide devotees when in his body, he continues to guide people who come to him in the same way, in accordance with each person's temperament. Immediately after Bhagavan's mahasamadhi, even I used to wonder how I could continue to stay at the Ashram. While most devotees left the Ashram then, they all came back, just like the birds to the "pai maram" [palm tree]. Today, the number of devotees has multiplied a hundred times over. Everywhere we have Ramana Kendras and Ramana Bhakta Sabhas. I don't have the competence even to speak about Bhagavan's shakti. See, these people are so eager to videotape me speaking about Bhagavan. Isn't this also Bhagavan's doing?

Cessation of Mental Activities

Mr. Cohen, a resident disciple, was speaking of yoga method.

Maharshi remarked: Patanjali's first sutra is applicable to all systems of yoga. The aim is the cessation of mental activities. The methods differ. So long as there is effort made towards that goal it is called yoga. The effort is the yoga.

The cessation can be brought about in so many ways:

(1) By examining the mind itself. When the mind is examined, its activities cease automatically. This is the method of jnana. The pure mind is the Self.

(2) Looking for the source of the mind is another method. The source may be said to be God or Self or consciousness.

(3) Concentrating upon one thought to make all other thoughts disappear. Finally that thought also disappears; and

(4) Hatha Yoga.

All methods are one and the same inasmuch as they all tend to the same goal.

It is necessary to be aware while controlling thoughts. Otherwise it will lead to sleep. That awareness, the chief factor, is indicated by the fact of Patanjali emphasising *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi* even after *pranayama*. *Pranayama* makes the mind steady and suppresses thoughts. Then why develop further? Because awareness then is the one necessary factor. Such states can be imitated by taking morphia, chloroform, etc. They do not lead to Moksha because they lack awareness.

—*Talks No. 191*

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in a few places in or near 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 — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / dklegon@comcast.net)

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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