



The Maharshi

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THE SRI RAMANA GITA OF B. V. NARASIMHA SWAMI PART VI

While B. V. Narasimhaswami was residing in Sri Ramanasramam, around the year 1930, he took 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 reproduce Chapter VII along with its footnotes, titled "Self-Enquiry, Competence and Constituents", which is the same title used in Sri Ramana Gita, published by Sri Ramanasramam. Because of this chapter's length, its conclusion will be printed in our next issue.

CHAPTER VII

Self-Enquiry, Competence and Constituents

Among the disciples of Sri Ramana Maharshi was the local fund-overseer K. Vidyananda Iyer (son of Krishna Iyer, belonging to Bharadwaja Gotra), who had served in Tiruvannamalai in 1914. He came back in 1917 for a short rest. At that time he wished to elicit Maharshi's views on certain matters of practical interest for the guidance of himself and other disciples, mainly relating to orthodox members of the Hindu community, and partly on matters of ultimate and wider interest.

K. V.: Revered Sir, may I know (1) what *Atma Vichara* is, (2) what benefit one derives from it, and (3) whether the same benefit may not be obtained otherwise, i.e., without such *vichara*?

Maharshi: What are you doing now? You are asking questions. That is, you are entering on a *vichara*, or enquiry. So *vichara* is clear enough to you. But your question is, and you wish to know, about *Atma Vichara*,

i.e., the enquiry about *Atma*, the Self. The term 'enquiry' being clear to you from your own questioning, you wish to know then what *Atma*, or the Self, is. You are yourself enquiring about the Self, about the Self in you, or putting the same idea in the first person, you are asking "what is my self? What is the enquiry about my self?" This is that enquiry, the enquiry now being made. This is just what happens. The Maharshi explained more fully to others, commenting on his stanza in "Ulladu Narpadu" (Reality in Forty Verses).

37. The contention, "Dualism during practice, non-dualism on Attainment," is also not true. While one is anxiously searching, as well as when one has found oneself, who else is one but the tenth man himself?

You are really, yourself, the Self all the while, yet you do not realize it. Just like a group of ten men who set out on a journey and crossed a river and then counted their number after crossing. Each man counted the group, omitting to count himself. They all found to

their horror that they numbered only nine. Yet they could not make out if any one had been washed away by the river. They took the help of a kind and intelligent passerby who learnt of their mental distress at their fancied loss of the tenth man of their group. The wise friend counted them afresh, giving each a stroke as they filed before him. As he struck the tenth man, the group was happily surprised to discover their tenth man was not missing. Where was the tenth man all the while that they bemoaned his loss? He was there, the very person that loudly lamented the loss of himself. It is just so with you. You say, “What is the Self of myself? Please discover it for me by an inquiry into the Self, *Atma Vichara*.” Well, well, you are that very Self that you seek. All that you have to do is to not lament and create a fuss over matters external to you, but to look at yourself, to realize yourself, the Self. You are, I repeat, the Self. You are that which you set out to seek. Your enquiry begins and ends with yourself, the Self. At first you begin in apparent darkness, you end in Realization, in Light.

This is *Jnana Vichara*. This is also termed *Jnana Vimarsa*, or *Jnana*.

You see, *Jnana Vichara* is feeling your way up to your fount and source, the realization at each step of what you are. People often misuse that phrase. If someone is found to be reading the Vedas, Sastras or *Kaivalya Navaneetam*, or some other similar book, they say he is doing *Atma Vichara*. It is no such thing. Mere study of Sastras, mere booklore is not *Atma Vichara*. One can and often does go through numerous books, a whole library perhaps, and yet comes out without the faintest realization of what he is. His memory may be crammed with apt quotations from scriptures describing Brahman, or he may even know about the insufficiency of scripture study for realization, e.g.:

This Atman is not to be attained by (mere) recitation of the Vedas, or by keenness of intellect, or by extensive hearing of Scripture. Only to him whom it chooses will Atman disclose its own Self.

—*Katha Upanishad*, II, v. 23

This mere learning (*pandityam*) is not the same as realization and often proves of no service to its possessor. Why, in some cases, it even renders a disservice? Egotism develops with study, and whether pride (*darpa*) and egotism (*ahankara*) are developed by real learning (*pandityam*) or by superficial study makes little difference, for they both prove serious obstacles to progress.

The Maharshi later contrasted the difference between the pandit and the illiterate in his “Ulladu Narpadu Anubhandam” to the disadvantage of the latter, thus:

34. For men of little understanding, wife, children and such others, comprise the family. Know that for the learned, in their mind itself, there is the family of countless books as an obstacle to yoga.

35. What avails (all) the learning of those¹ who do not seek to wipe out the letters (from the book of life),² by enquiring ‘Whence is the birth of us who know the letters?’ They have (verily) acquired the status of a gramophone. What else are they, tell (me), O Arunachala!

36. It is verily those not learned that are saved rather than those for whom, in spite of all their learning, the ego has not subsided yet. (For) the unlearned are saved from the unrelenting grip of the devil of self-infatuation; they are saved from the malady of a myriad whirling thoughts and words; they are saved from (the travail of) running after wealth. Know that it is not from one indeed (but from many an ill) that they are saved.

This *ahankara* (egoism), or sense of a separate self in one’s Self, has to be wrecked and sunk to the

1. Literally: the knowing of letters by those.

2. According to the Hindu conception, to which the original text makes an implicit reference, the script of destiny is on one’s forehead. “Wipe out the letters”, therefore, means transcend the destiny of karma.

bottom of the bottomless ocean. How? Seek its root, and then you root it out; enquire into the origin of this separate-seeming entity and it proves unreal. It has no reality, except as part and parcel of the Unity of the Real. As a result of your enquiry, the seeming or only apparent 'I' (*Atmabhasa*) is dissolved (*leena*) like the salt-doll. A salt doll made of salt was originally the salt of the ocean. If immersed in the waters of the ocean it disappears, and what remains is the water alone.

Numerous other illustrations are given of this truth in the Scriptures. For example, the individuality of the river water exists only so long as it flows on the riverbed, but when you trace its origin or its destination, the identity disappears and you have only water or the ocean as the remaining truth. Similarly, drops of honey retain their separate individuality only when they are on the tree or flower from which they are gathered. The individuality of the honey is not discernible in time or space in the bee's hive or in the vendor's hands. Similarly, taking the human *ahamkara* (ego) with the body-idea, the same ego has passed through numerous bodies of various insects, reptiles, quadrupeds and other human forms before attaching itself to the present particular human body. Ultimately, all these forms get transformed into the matter of the Universe.

So says Uddalaka Aruni to his son Svetaketu, in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, after each of his nine illustrations: तत्त्वमसि श्वेताकेतु (*Tat Tvam Asi Sveta-ketu*) "You (first thought of as a separate ego) are That! (the one Sat or Brahman)," O Svetaketu. The ego is but an image of the *Atman* (Brahman). What remains therefore when the "I", the separate ego, is thus dissolved? The pure *Atman* present in all, everywhere. That is to be realized. Vide *Chandogya Upanishad*, 62 *Prapatatha*, *Kanda 8, 9, 10*, etc.

Your next query is 'What use is *Atma Vichara*?' No rational being acts without a purpose and an object. Everything he does or omits to do is to secure happiness and avoid pain or sorrow. Now, you have put this question as to the purpose of *Atma Vichara*.

Why? The making of the enquiry by this very question gives you pleasure. The soul derives a pleasure in its very existence and in the exercise and resting of its faculties. The soul is conscious, its nature is thought, learning facts of theories; its nature is brought into play and it derives pleasure. Even the prospect of pleasure is pleasure – a sort of reflection. The reflection of the sun in the focus of a lens placed under solar rays exhibits the properties of light and heat from the sun. So this image or reflection known as *jiva*, this ego, is but the image of the great Brahman's *Chaitanya* locked up in a small focus of this human lens. It is naturally drawn by its affinity to its source and realizes supreme bliss in the act of realizing its nature, its identity with the One Reality.

By this very act, all its sorrows cease (सर्वक्लेश-निवृत्ति). This is the fruit of *Atma Vichara*. This is mentioned in the true philosophical sense. Joy and pain (सुखः दुःखः) are the attributes of the *buddhi* (intellect) or the *ahankara* (ego). When by *Atma Vichara* you realise you are not that sheath, where is pleasure or pain for you? Your real nature transcends all such feelings as pleasure and pain. So the benefit of your *Atma Vichara* is tangible, in the fact that you escape from all the ills and sorrows of life. What more can man desire? (To be continued)

Sri Ramana's Children's Ashrama

in Nova Scotia

The Children's Ashrama program
will be conducted this year on

July 19 - 23

Those interested in attending should contact

Darlene

at

(902) 665.2263 or

darlene.karamanos@gmail.com

Remembering Kanakammal

By Marye Tonnaire

Marye Tonnaire is an ardent devotee who lives at Sri Ramanasramam, India. For two years she worked with the translators of Smt. Kanakammal's Commentary on Arunachala Stuti Panchakam and Upadesa Nun Malai, a 700 page book. She moved closely with Smt. Kanakammal for a number of years.

Isn't it the sign of a good mother when each child feels that he or she is the special, preferred child? Those of us who moved closely with Kanakammal all have stories that confirm this feeling. We all felt that she had signaled us out, giving us special attention and extra loving care.

I had been seeing Kanakammal since the early 1980s and was drawn to her, but at the time our paths did not cross. In those days I was rather shy to approach old devotees, even to ask to be introduced to them. I would always wait until Sri Bhagavan provided me with an opportunity to spontaneously interact with one of them. When I read about Kanakammal in *Moments Remembered* and then read her own *Cherished Memories*, I was thrilled to discover the beauty of her relationship with Sri Bhagavan and the depth of her understanding of Sri Bhagavan's way. But still no direct contact occurred until several years later when I was asked to bring Kanakammal in the taxi with me to Chennai where I was taking a flight back to Europe. After leaving me at the airport, the taxi would then take her to her relatives' house in the city. That evening we didn't speak at all, but she gave me such a warm smile when the taxi arrived at her cottage and she got into the front seat and then again when I was dropped off at the airport.

Sri Bhagavan brought us together a few years ago when my friend Joelle, from France, who had a very special rapport with Kanakammal, invited me to attend classes that Amma was going to give on Sri Bhagavan's original works and scriptural translations that make up the Tamil Parayana we sing at 6:30 in the evening. In the classes Kanakammal would go through the commentary that she had written in Tamil based on Muruganar's explanations to her. Kanakammal had apparently held classes for Indian people in previous years and now her class would be translated into English.

The first year, somehow, I didn't feel the motivation to attend regular classes in the morning. It was enough for me to just sit in the Samadhi Hall next to Kanakammal in silence when she would come for puja and parayana in the evening. Once when I returned from France with a message from Joelle that I delivered to her in the ashram, she grasped both of my hands, looked me in the eyes and said in English, "What about Marye? I want to know about Marye." I was thrilled. At that moment she fully captured my heart.

When Joelle came back to Tiruvannamalai the following year, I decided that this time I would join the class. I soon regretted that I hadn't started earlier. We were a small, core group of ladies — Aparna, Dolly, Punita and Minakshi. Joelle and I were the only foreigners, though sometimes Rumi would join us and also some other visitors. Kanakammal would speak in Tamil, but we had the blessing of Aparna's outstanding English translation.

During that time I went almost daily into Kanakammal's compound, placed my chappels out on the veranda under her window and had my first glimpse of her sitting in her chair perfectly groomed, draped in a starched, light colored sari with an aura of deep contemplation surrounding her. She reminded me of my grandmother in some ways. When I would peep in through the window she would see me, smile and say, "Vango, Vango" (Come, Come). Then we would greet and I would sit on the floor and lean against the wall. As she knew that I had undergone back surgery, she always insisted that I take and sit on the stool that she used to keep next to her chair. As I took my place I would look up at the photo of her as a young lady



Marye Tonnaire, Kanakammal, and Mrs. Arparna Krishnamuthy

in her early 20s and think about how fortunate she was to have come to Sri Bhagavan at that time.

Sometimes I would arrive late to class and once she started laughing and said, “She is Totakacharya.” When I expressed my ignorance of who Totakacharya was, I immediately got the story. Totaka was a devoted disciple of Adi Shankara, but the other disciples all looked down on him as being quite dull. Once when Adi Shankara waited for Totaka to arrive before he would begin his daily discourse, the other disciples became impatient and complained about having to wait for someone who didn’t have the intellectual capacity to grasp the subtle points of the scriptures. When Totaka finally arrived, he was brimming over with bliss and dazzled the disciples by uttering a few concise stanzas in Totaka metre that confirmed his complete grasp of the subject matter.

This was our class: the commentary on Sri Bhagavan’s works was interwoven with many colorful stories from various scriptures and puranas, stories that brought the saints and sages to life, right into that small room. This was interwoven with her own experience of Sri Bhagavan, Muruganar and other senior devotees. At those times Bhagavan came alive and filled the room with his Divine Presence. Through her eyes, which were always fixed on the Master, she gave us a precious glimpse of those golden days. I was thrilled when she told us once, with a twinkle in her eye, that sometimes it was stressful for her in those days, particularly when the road was filled with water during the rainy season and snakes would wind around her legs while she was walking to the ashram, or when bandicoots and monkeys would come into her house through the openings and sometimes even make off with some clothing that had been left to dry. But then all of the difficulties she was experiencing would immediately vanish as soon as she set foot into the Old Hall and plunged into Sri Bhagavan’s graceful presence. Even though most of these experiences are recorded in *Cherished Memories* or have appeared in the *Mountain Path*, her speech would flood the room with the divine consciousness and bliss of Sri Bhagavan, as if he were with us then and there, showering his grace. Aparna’s talent as a translator was such a boon for those of us who are not proficient Tamil speakers. She would give an instantaneous English rendition of what was sometimes a long stretch of Tamil discourse, without even a blink of hesitation. This “seamless” English rendition

made the experience even more intense, allowing all present to equally share these sublime moments.

Kanakammal used to delight at my attempts at communicating with her in Tamil. She would speak very slowly as if I were a child, and then laugh. Every time she would see me in the ashram she would take both my hands and say “*Eppadi Irukinga?* (How are you?) And I would reply, “*Nallarukku* (fine) *Eppadi Irukinga?*” Then I would sit down next to her in the back of Sri Bhagavan’s Samadhi Hall. When she could no longer sit on the floor because of leg pain, I would sit with her along with some other devotees in the New Hall where a chair was placed for her use. At first she felt that she should not sit on a chair in the Samadhi Hall. Only later on she accepted to sit on a chair in the Samadhi Hall.

No matter how many people were around her, or how noisy it got, she was always even-keeled. If I came and sat with her she was happy, and if not, she was also happy. She didn’t expect anything from us. Sitting next to her I felt a deep silence, which inspired me in my own meditation. Whenever we would say to her how lucky she was to have been in Sri Bhagavan’s presence while he was in the body, she would also reply, “But his presence is just as strong now, if not stronger.”

She always pushed us inward to grasp the essence of our being, the Atman or Self, or *Summa irruku* (Be still and know that ‘I am’). She didn’t want us to complain about life’s difficulties and problems. She said that like the dobi (washer man) who beats out the stains on dirty cloth, the Presence of the Guru drives away the individual self (ego) so that the Atman can be released and shine forth in all its glory. She firmly adhered to the fact that prayer to Sri Bhagavan was the ultimate solution to any of our problems and difficulties. She always insisted that the illusory individual cannot do anything on his own and only through complete surrender (saranagati) to Sri Bhagavan, our Sadguru, and with his grace can we do our sadhana.

Kanakammal was very strict that we should follow Bhagavan’s direct path, and once she took me to task about my tendency to be overly attracted to rituals. She was rather strong about insisting that I had come here to do Atma Vichara and that I should not deviate from the path. But at the same time she never missed evening puja at the ashram unless she was ill, out of Tiruvanmalai, or

there was a heavy downpour. She liked to visit temples also. Once she and I were part of a group that went to Tirukoilur, and she was so enthusiastic, like a young girl, as we visited the different temples there. Another time she took me aside during one Navarathri celebration in the ashram and said, "Come to my house tomorrow morning, I want to make you a Suvasini in Sri Bhagavan's presence." She had Revati, her niece, decorate me in the traditional way and then gave me a sari, blouse and bangles. I'll never forget that blessed morning sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan's photograph in her house. I was moved to tears.

I feel privileged to have witnessed her passing and can just say that I had touched her body at that time and felt waves of bliss going through me that pushed out any trace of sadness that I could have felt. What a beautiful end she had! It was a testimony to her utter and supreme devotion to Sri Bhagavan. She just walked into Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi on Jayanthi day before the puja started with her eyes fixed on the lingam and then dropped to the floor. Some devotees immediately carried her outside near the meditation hall where we sang "Arunachala Siva". Where she actually left the body is not important. I think she was already absorbed in her beloved Master when she arrived at the ashram and then just took those few steps towards his shrine for our sake. She was surrounded by Sri Bhagavan's devotees, and on that never-to-be-forgotten day she gave us a final class in total devotion and surrender.

Her last words to me the night before in the Samadhi Hall were "Eppadi irrukinga?" I replied, "Nalarukku."

Then I asked, "Eppadi irrukinga?" and she said, "Nalarukku. I believe so. Everything is good."

OM Shanti Shanti Shanti OM

You Were With Me

Susri Dhiruben Patel, is a retired professor and popular Gujarati novelist who, like her mother, received guidance and grace from Bhagavan back in the 1940s. She had not visited Sri Ramanasramam since 1950, the year of Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi. Encouraged by devotees to make the pilgrimage to Tiruvannamalai and feeling Bhagavan's call, Dhiruben traveled to Sri Ramanasramam in 2007, at which time she wrote the following poem.

A video interview of her can be viewed on Sri Ramanasramam's website:

<http://sriramanamaharshi.org/devoteesinterview.html>

You Were With Me

After fifty-seven years
I enter your Ashram once again.

I do not miss you
Because you were with me
All the while.

But Bhagavan, where are your squirrels,
Or their children of the twenty-seventh generation?

Surely they miss those peanuts
And the touch
Of your lotus-soft fingers.
Perhaps You have also been with them
And the peacocks screaming from high.

You cannot be away from them
Or from any other place.
You are the Universal Consciousness,
Existence and Joy eternal, O Ramana!

An Invitation

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in observing
The 60th Mahanirvana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
on **Saturday 15 May at 11:00 a.m.**

ARUNACHALA ASHRAMA, BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI CENTER
8606 EDGERTON BLVD, JAMAICA ESTATES, NY 11432

*The program will include recitations, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by prasad (lunch).
For more information call: (718) 560-3196 or write: ashrama@arunachala.org*

Letters and Comments

There is no need to meditate

I found the last issue of The Maharshi very enlightening, particularly in the dialogue with Mr Cohen, ending with the sentence “There is no need to meditate”.

The reason is that my personal experience points in that same direction. The “I-I” feeling rarely sets in when I am deliberately sitting to meditate. More often it comes spontaneously during activities like driving or walking. Could you please comment on that?

Devotee from Brazil

It is true that the Maharshi said, “There is no need to meditate.” But what he said prior to this is in fact the enquiry that leads to the state in which “there is no need to meditate.” the Maharshi said, “Who is the meditator? Ask the question first. **Remain as the meditator.**” Until one remains solely as the meditator and experiences the whole creation as one undivided, Pure Consciousness, one must make an effort to still the mind and plunge into the inner depths of one’s being. Being conscious of an awareness during activities is a sort of practice in detachment, but one must plunge that individual awareness into heart and experience the One Universal Reality pervading, both within and without, eternally. Until that state is known we must meditate, or consciously turn inwards and merge in our Source. -Editor

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)

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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