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Ramana Yoga Sutras

By Sri Krishna Bikshu

Sri Ramana Maharshi wrote these Sutras at the request of some devotees to benefit their sadhana. Sri Krishna Bikshu (Voruganti Venkata Krishnaiah) was one of the early and ardent devotees of Bhagavan. He lived in the Ashram with Bhagavan for many years and wrote Ramana Leela, the life of Bhagavan in Telugu.

After talks on “Ramana Yoga Sutras” were given by Sri Krishna Bikshu at the Ramana Satsang, Hyderabad, these Sutras were published in Telugu in 1973 and then in English in 1980. We continue in this issue with sutra number five, along with its commentary.

V

“manasvam chinva”

Searching for one’s self with the mind

1. The self here, is one’s self, not the Atman which is beyond search. One’s self is a little entity; the search is to know whence that idea of ‘I’ arises, that is to say, who is this little self? In “Ulladu Narpadu” Bhagavan says, “The real Self does not say ‘I’; the body cannot say ‘I’; in between the two arises this thought ‘I’ which firmly clings to the body. If you search for its nature which is of a phantom devil, it disappears.” When thoughts disappear into their source, even this thought ‘I’ should also disappear. This ‘I’ thought is the primary thought, and the other thoughts cannot sprout without it.

2. This enquiry is sometimes based on the previously-mentioned practice of watching the breath. Normally, we are not able to catch up with the speed with which one thought succeeds another. It is as if the series of frames on the cinema reel succeed each other with such rapidity that we get the impression of one continuous picture. Therefore

it is only when we can slow down this mental process and are able to catch each single thought by itself that we can enquire about it. In slowing down thoughts, we have used the process of watching the breath. (We can also take the illustration of a slowed motion picture here, say, of horse racing.)

3. When a thought by itself appears, Bhagavan asks us to enquire with a searching mind to whom it arises. It is an intellectual affair, not a negation of all thought as some contend. We hold to the thought and try to follow it up by asking to whom it occurs. Obviously it occurs to the notional ‘I’, for the real ‘I’ has no thought. Bhagavan asks us to proceed and see whence that notion arises. It must necessarily be to the consciousness, that is to say, to the Atman where even the ‘I-thought’ does not exist. If one repeats this process continuously without any break, this process leads to the Atman. It is like a firebrand that burns other brands and itself too.

4. There is another slight modification. Instead of questioning to whom the thought occurs, enquire whence the thought

arises. We mean any thought, not the thought of 'I' only. All thoughts must arise from the consciousness and they are directed towards the world and all our ideas connected with it. If we try to cut across the connection with this world, only the consciousness remains; this is the Atman. In this process there is only one step: whence does this thought arise? In the previous paragraph we have talked of a process in which there are two steps: the first is searching for the source of each thought, and the second is searching for the source of the 'I-thought'.

5. These processes are called by Bhagavan the '*sarala marga*', or the straight and easy path. At any rate, they are easy for those who can turn their minds inward and away from the objects of the world. But if one, as a preceding step, follows the first path of watching the breath, it will be quite easy for anybody.

6. The point to note is, we do not negate thought as does the Sankara method. Sankara says, "When a thought occurs, dismiss it immediately." Here we do not do that;

we retain the thought and attempt to seek its source. I once asked Bhagavan how it is possible to trace the root of a tree all the while without remembering the trunk of the tree; how could we go to the source of the thought without holding on to the thought?" Bhagavan replied, "Practice and see."

Bhagavan compares this method to each enemy soldier coming out of the fort alone, when he can be easily killed; if one thought comes out, one can easily kill it. If all the warriors in the fort rally forth at once, it will be difficult to repulse them. Therefore, slow down the speed of the thoughts first, catch each thought and by seeking its source, destroy it.

In the supplement to "Ulladu Narpadu" there is a verse which lends support to the idea that this Self enquiry is performed without the mind. The matter is elucidated in the explanation of the next aphorism. In this aphorism it is clearly stated that it is the mind which carries on this Self enquiry. *(To be continued)*

Advent at Arunachala

You, your friends and family are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 115th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala.

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

In Nova Scotia, Canada

Sunday 4 September — 11:00 AM

Arunachala Ashrama

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

In Queens, New York City

Saturday 17 September — 11:00 AM

Arunachala Ashrama

86-06 Edgerton Blvd., Jamaica Estates, New York 11432 / Tel: 718.560.3196

In California, San Francisco Bay Area

Saturday 24 September — 11:00 AM

Malpitas Jain Temple

722 South Main Street

Milpitas, CA 95035 / Tel: 510.656.2752

The Four Gatekeepers to Moksha

Rama, there are four gatekeepers at the entrance to the Realm of Freedom (Moksha). They are self-control, spirit of enquiry, contentment and good company. The wise seeker should diligently cultivate the friendship of these, or of at least one of them.

VASISTHA continued:

With a pure heart and a receptive mind, and without the veil of doubt and the restlessness of the mind, listen to the exposition of the nature and the means of liberation, O Rama. For, not until the Supreme Being is realised will the dreadful miseries of birth and death come to an end. If this deadly serpent known as ignorant life is not overcome here and now, it will give rise to interminable suffering not only in this but in countless lifetimes to come. One cannot ignore this suffering, but one should overcome it by means of the wisdom that I shall impart to you.

O Rama, if you thus overcome this sorrow of repetitive history (samsara), you will live here on earth itself like a god, like Brahma or Vishnu! For when delusion is gone and the truth is realised by means of enquiry into self-nature, when the mind is at peace and the heart leaps to the supreme truth, when all the disturbing thought-waves in the mind-stuff have subsided and there is an unbroken flow of peace and the heart is filled with the bliss of the absolute, when thus the truth has been seen in the heart, then this very world becomes an abode of bliss.

Such a person has nothing to acquire, nor anything to shun. He is untainted by the defects of life, untouched by its sorrow. He does not come into being nor go out, though he appears to come and go in the eyes of the beholder. Even religious duties are found to be unnecessary. He is not affected by the past tendencies which have lost their momentum: his mind has given up its restlessness and he rests in the bliss that is his essential nature. Such bliss is possible only by Self-knowledge, not by any other means. Hence, one should apply oneself constantly to Self-knowledge—this alone is one's duty.

He who disregards holy scriptures and holy men does not attain Self-knowledge. Such foolishness is more harmful than all the illnesses that one is subject to in this world. Hence, one should devoutly listen to this scripture which leads one to Self-knowledge. He who obtains this scripture

does not again fall into the blind well of ignorance. O Rama, if you want to free yourself from the sorrow of samsara (repetitive history) receive the wholesome instructions from sages like me and be free.

In order to cross this formidable ocean of samsara (repetitive history), one should resort to that which is eternal and unchanging. He alone is the best among men, O Rama, whose mind rests in the eternal and is, therefore, fully self-controlled and at peace. He sees that pleasure and pain chase and cancel each other, and in that wisdom there is self-control and peace. He who does not see this sleeps in a burning house.

He who gains the wisdom of the eternal here is freed from samsara and he is not born again in ignorance. One may doubt whether such unchanging truth exists! If it does not, one comes to no harm by enquiring into the nature of life; seeking the eternal will soften the pain caused by the changes in life. But, if it exists, then by knowing it one is freed.

The eternal is not attained by rites and rituals, by pilgrimages nor by wealth; it is to be attained only by the conquest of one's mind, by the cultivation of wisdom. Hence, everyone—gods, demons, demi-gods or men—should constantly seek (whether one is walking, falling or sitting) the conquest of the mind and self-control which are the fruits of wisdom.

Self-control

When the mind is at peace, pure, tranquil, free from delusion or hallucination, untangled and free from cravings, it does not long for anything nor does it reject anything. This is self-control or conquest of mind—one of the four gatekeepers to liberation which I mentioned earlier.

All that is good and auspicious flows from self-control. All evil is dispelled by self-control. No gain, no pleasure in this world or in heaven is comparable to the delight of self-control. The delight one experiences in the presence of the self-controlled is incomparable. Everyone spontaneously trusts him. None (not even demons and goblins) hates him.

Self-control, O Rama, is the best remedy for all physical and mental ills. When there is self-control, even the food you eat tastes better, else it tastes bitter. He who wears the armour of self-control is not harmed by sorrow.

He who even while hearing, touching, seeing, smelling and tasting what is regarded as pleasant and unpleasant, is neither elated nor depressed—he is self-controlled. He

who looks upon all beings with equal vision, having brought under control the sensations of pleasure and pain, is self-controlled. He who, though living amongst all is unaffected by them, neither feels elated nor hates even as one is during sleep—he is self-controlled.

Enquiry

Enquiry (the second gatekeeper to liberation) should be undertaken by an intelligence that has been purified by a close study of the scripture, and this enquiry should be unbroken. By such enquiry the intelligence becomes keen and is able to realise the supreme; hence, enquiry alone is the best remedy for the long-lasting illness known as samsara.

The wise man regards strength, intellect, efficiency and timely action as the fruits of enquiry. Indeed, kingdom, prosperity, enjoyment, as well as final liberation are all the fruits of enquiry. The spirit of enquiry protects one from the calamities that befall the unthinking fool. When the mind has been rendered dull by the absence of enquiry, even the cool rays of the moon turn into deadly weapons, and the childish imagination throws up a goblin in every dark spot. Hence, the non-enquiring fool is really a store-house of sorrow. It is the absence of enquiry that gives rise to actions that are harmful to oneself and to others, and to numerous psychosomatic illnesses. Therefore, one should avoid the company of such unthinking people.

They in whom the spirit of enquiry is ever awake illumine the world, enlighten all who come into contact with them, dispel the ghosts created by an ignorant mind, and realise the falsity of sense pleasures and their objects. O Rama, in the light of enquiry there is realisation of the eternal and unchanging reality; this is the supreme. With it one does not long for any other gain nor does one spurn anything. He is free from delusion and attachment; he is not inactive nor does he get drowned in action; he lives and functions in this world and at the end of a natural life-span he reaches the blissful state of total freedom.

The eye of spiritual enquiry does not lose its sight even in the midst of all activities; he who does not have this eye is indeed to be pitied. It is better to be born as a frog in the mud, a worm in dung, a snake in a hole, than to be without this eye. What is enquiry? To enquire thus: “Who am I? How has this evil of samsara (repetitive history) come into being?” is true enquiry. Knowledge of truth arises from such enquiry; from such knowledge there follows tranquility in oneself; and then there arises the supreme peace that passeth understanding and the end of all sorrow.

(Vichara or enquiry is not reasoning or analysis: it is directly looking into oneself.)

Contentment

Contentment is another gatekeeper of liberation. He who has quaffed the nectar of contentment does not relish craving for sense pleasures; no delight in this world is as sweet as contentment which destroys all sins.

What is contentment? To renounce all craving for what is not obtained unsought and to be satisfied with what comes unsought, without being elated or depressed even by them—this is contentment. As long as one is not satisfied in the self, he will be subjected to sorrow. With the rise of contentment the purity of one’s heart blooms. The contented man who possesses nothing owns the world.

Satsanga

Satsanga (company of the wise, holy and enlightened persons) is yet another gatekeeper of liberation. Satsanga enlarges one’s intelligence, destroys one’s ignorance and one’s psychological distress. Whatever be the cost however difficult it may be, whatever obstacles may stand in its way, satsanga should never be neglected. For, satsanga alone is one’s light on the path of life. Satsanga is indeed superior to all other forms of religious practices, like charity, austerity, pilgrimage and the performance of religious rites.

One should by every means in one’s power adore and serve the holy men who have realised the truth and in whose heart the darkness of ignorance has been dispelled. They who, on the other hand, treat such holy men disrespectfully, surely invite great suffering.

These four—contentment, satsanga (company of wise men), the spirit of enquiry, and self-control—are the four surest means by which they who are drowning in this ocean of samsara can be saved. Contentment is the supreme gain. Satsanga is the best companion to the destination. The spirit of enquiry itself is the greatest wisdom. And, self-control is supreme happiness. If you are unable to resort to all these four, then practice one: by the diligent practice of one of these, the others will also be found in you. The highest wisdom will seek you of its own accord. Until you tame the wild elephant of your mind with the help of these noble qualities, you cannot have progress towards the supreme even if you become a god, demi-god or a tree. Therefore, O Rama, strive by all means to cultivate these noble qualities.

– From *Vasistha’s Yoga*, by Swami Venkatesananda

If Only It Were Chadwick

By Louis Buss

Louis Buss lives in London. He is presently engaged, both in England and abroad, in extensive research into the life of Major A. W. Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala).

My Grandmother's Luck

Unlike my mother, grandmother and assorted other female relatives, I have never been a great one for jumble sales. I could never see the fun of wandering round a noisy church hall, raking through piles of broken toys, old clothes, dog-eared paperbacks and scratched records, only to come away after a couple of hours clutching a cut-glass vase and a bobble hat. If you ask me, this sort of thing is only one step above rummaging around in skips or combing through rubbish heaps. Mind you, I have to confess that those female relatives of mine did get some real bargains in their time, with my grandmother, in particular, making some marvelous finds.

For similar reasons, I have always tried not to spend too much time on Ebay, that virtual church hall where all the jumble of Western consumerism is washed up in a vast, perplexing pile. I have always had a vague intuition that once I allowed myself to start poking around in there, I would get entangled in a strange twilight world of used car parts and football cards from which I might never battle my way back to normality. All the same, I have learnt that, for certain strictly regulated purposes, Ebay does have its uses. And it was for one of these – though I forget the details now – that I made one of my rare visits to the site last October.

When I'd done whatever it was I had to do, I returned to the search box and, almost without noticing that I was doing it, typed in the word 'Ramana' (and I sincerely hope that I took the trouble, out of respect for both grammar and Guru, to use a capital letter at the start of His name). It was by no means the first time I had fed that name into Ebay. In the past few years, my fingers have got into the habit of tapping that combination of keys in a sort of subconscious reflex, much as a love-struck teenager might absently trace her boyfriend's name on the cover of a book or the window of the school bus.

I can certainly never pass a search box of any sort without entering His name, so I already knew from experience what happens when you search Ebay for 'Items matching Ramana'. Having first checked that you didn't mean to search for 'ramona', whatever that may be, the site will present you with a menu of familiar items: copies of *Talks* and *Be As You Are*, possibly with *Who Am I?* or *Path of Self-knowledge* adding a touch of variety to the list. I certainly didn't hope that anything of real interest might have washed up in the virtual church hall since I'd last looked, and couldn't even have imagined what such an item might be. But on this one occasion my grandmother's luck must have been with me, because I struck pure Ebay gold.

At the top of the list was a second edition of *Self-Realization* dating from 1935. Now, although it is not unusual to find some older editions of Ramana books on Ebay, they tend to be from the 60s and 70s. This was something quite different. For this must presumably have been one of the very first publications ever brought out by Sri Ramanasramam, when Bhagavan was not only still alive, but still largely unknown in the wider world. This was less a book than a relic.

The idle interest with which I had started the search instantly gave way to avid, upright attention. The photograph accompanying the listing left no doubt that the book really was quite old, and had lived rather a rough life. The cover might once have been white, but was now a sort of dirty grey with a hint of cream. Prominent among the various smudges was the outline of a coffee-cup, a clear indication that this particular relic had not always been treated with the awe that it deserved. Otherwise, it was all very simple and plain, far more so than any modern publication. Just the title – 'SELF-REALISATION' and, in small lettering below, the words 'LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF RAMANA MAHARSHI'. The only decoration was further down, on the rim of that sacrilegious coffee cup ring - the shining 'Om' symbol of Sri Ramanasramam, exactly as we still see it on publications today.

I suppose I must have stared at that picture in wonder for a few moments, amazed that I should have happened upon such a treasure in that great virtual jumble sale. Then, eager for more details, I scrolled down the page to read

the item description, and mere wonder soon gave way to a sort of tortured excitement. Unfortunately, the listing has been removed from Ebay now, so I can't check exactly what it said. But here is a rough paraphrase of the description the seller had posted:

This book was sent to England from Tiruvannamalai, South India in August 1936. What makes it particularly interesting is the dedication from the sender on the opening page and the charming handwritten notes that accompany many of the illustrations.

If my grandmother, wandering idly round some village hall on a rainy Saturday morning, had suddenly uncovered a Shakespeare folio or a Picasso sketch amongst the jumble, she could hardly have felt more excited than I did at that moment. For this book had actually been sent back to England from the Ashram whilst Bhagavan was still alive. Furthermore, it must presumably have been sent by some English visitor or devotee at a time when He was still virtually unknown in the West. I was instantly desperate to know who that Mystery Devotee might have been. Above all, I felt an almost maddening urgency to know the contents of those handwritten notes.

It seems incredible to me now that I hesitated before clicking the 'Buy it now' button. But the asking price was £30, and I was not sure whether Bhagavan, with His famous frugality, would have approved of my spending such a princely sum on a rather tatty old book. But as the minutes passed, so my desperation to get my hands on the thing mounted. Looking back now, I realise that I would probably have been compelled to buy it if it had been priced at £300, let alone £30, so perhaps one could argue that it was more of a bargain than an extravagance. After all, who could ever really put a price on something so absolutely unique?

Anyway, in due course the inevitable happened. I went to bed a contented man, £30 poorer perhaps, yet immeasurably richer. Only the following morning did the agony begin, as I woke up to the awful realisation that I would have to endure the entire day without having the relic in my hands. Looking back at the listing, I found to my horror that the seller was proposing to send my treasure second-class, which meant that it might take five or six working days to arrive. This was clearly not

acceptable. By the end of the first hour, I was already drumming my fingers on the mantelpiece, and knew that by the end of six working days I would have drummed them to the knuckle. In my desperation, I even considered driving for hours to pick the book up in person, which would have cost me more in fuel than I'd paid for it in the first place. I resisted this madness, but wrote a desperate email to the seller, begging her to find some faster way to get the book to me. Eventually, after endless hours (or it may have been minutes) of silence, she wrote back assuring me it would be in my hands by Saturday.

Saturday morning saw me up early and mounting a watch on the garden gate. The postmen here in England have a special game they love to play, which involves creeping up to the front door in their socks and, whilst scrupulously avoiding all contact with bells and knockers, slipping a card through the letterbox saying how sorry they are to have missed you, because there was a parcel for you, but you will now have to wait twenty-four hours before you can pick it up. If they had played that trick on me now, it might have killed me. But fortunately, the postman arrived early that day and knocked in the traditional manner, and I was soon in possession of the fateful packet.

Opening it was like opening a time-capsule. The Ebay photograph somehow hadn't prepared me for just how old this book really was. But now, as I finally held it in my hands, my overwhelming impression was of something that was not only somehow very Indian and but also very 1930s. The simplicity of the rough hardback cover and the style of the typeface were redolent of the Great Depression, of valve radios, propeller planes and steam ships. This was somehow a shock to me. For some years now, through books like *Talks*, *Letters* and *Day by Day*, I have again and again visited the Old Hall in my imagination, to sit by Bhagavan's sofa and listen to the devotees asking Him questions, or to watch in awe as He sinks into silence, whilst Madhava Swami shoos the monkeys away or fiddles with the radio. That place has been so much the focus of my attention that it has seemed in a way more real to me than this faintly implausible dream of mobile phones and satellite navigation. Only now, as I stared down at the book and saw just how old-fashioned it was, did I finally accept that those glorious days were

half a century away, as distant as the age of steam, which, no matter how much certain romantics may long for it, can never come again. Whatever physical structures might remain, the Old Hall was gone, and the man who had once sat there in a loincloth was just another historical figure, a piece of public property like any other great man of the past, no more mine than Roosevelt or Churchill.

But, just as Bhagavan was sent tumbling away into history, He was paradoxically brought right into the present – for here was the book in my hands, a very concrete relic of that vanished age. I couldn't help feeling that it had somehow come to me straight from the Ashram of those

days, when that historical personage was still there, sitting all but naked on His famous sofa. It was as if, thanks to the vagaries of the postal system, it had taken an entire lifetime and more to complete its long journey from India to England. Now I was the first person to set eyes on it since the Mystery Devotee had sealed it in its envelope, and it breathed the atmosphere of the past so strongly that I felt I was almost there. It was as if I had been dreaming a dream of the Old Hall, where Bhagavan had given me His biography to read, and I had awoken to find I was still holding the dream-book in my hands.

(To be continued)

Ramana Satsangs

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted 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 — Nirupama & Ramesh (574-514-4766 / <neeru_2@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)

Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / arunahill@gmail.com)

Houston, TX — Kumar Saran (832-435-3761 / saran01@earthlink.net)

Los Angeles, CA — Natarajan and Indira Venkatesan (310-473-9441 / nvenky30@yahoo.com)

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