

Sri Ramana Tampa Jayanti Retreat

Morning Readings

Sri Dakshinamurti and Sri Ramana

By Sadhu Arunachala (Major A. W. Chadwick)

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has often been compared to Sri Dakshinamurti, who sits silent under the banyan tree on the north slope of Arunachala, and there is much ground for this comparison. Moreover, it is more than just a comparison. Actually, the two are identical, although their bodies may to us, bound by the limitations of time and space, seem different.

Sri Dakshinamurti has retreated to an inaccessible vastness no longer to be reached by humans, and we can only surmise that this is because he found the world unworthy and unable to understand his silent instruction, whereas in the form of Sri Ramana he was always most accessible and explained to one and all the meaning of this silence; if they did not listen, well, the seed would bear fruit on some future occasion. Nothing was ever wasted: for him there was no time and so there could be no disappointment.

Strangely enough Bhagavan (as we all used to call Sri Ramana) once found himself in the proximity of the Silent Guru. He had gone off on a ramble about the slopes of the hill when he saw a very large banyan leaf lying in his path. So struck was he by this that he set off in search of the source. At length he came within sight of an uncommonly large tree, which he thought must be the one for which he was looking. But he could not reach it, his way was blocked by a wall of sheer rock; at the same time he was attacked by a swarm of wasps whose nest he had unwittingly disturbed. Thus realizing that he was not intended to proceed, he returned. Ever after he discouraged his disciples who proposed to explore this mystery from going in quest of the same spot. "You will not succeed in any way," he would tell them. And though occasionally some would ignore his advice, nobody ever did succeed in getting a glimpse of the enormous tree.

Both Sri Dakshinamurti and Sri Ramana taught exactly the same teaching that can be fully expounded in silence. As soon as words are used we are in the realm of the relative and for Bhagavan there was no relative. It was only a fictitious appearance on Reality which is One (Advaita).

"Make an effort to be without effort," he would say. In fact don't do anything, because, actually there is nothing to do. The whole trouble with us all is this constant doing. By associating ourselves with all sorts of actions and circumstances we place apparent limitations on the Illimitable. How can speech do more than point out to us our mistake? It can tell us only to 'be', not to be this or to be that, because being this or that is back again in the realm of limitation and it is just exactly here that he is trying to make us understand that we are wrong.

And is there really any method of reaching that which is eternally and forever here and now? Yes, Sri Ramana taught Self-enquiry. Find out who is this eternal and ever-conscious being that you really are by inquiring 'Who am I?' But that was all. In other words, 'Just be yourself,' and to be yourself you must get behind phenomena to the Eternal Witness and this can only be done by Self-enquiry.

However, sometimes Sri Bhagavan would expound philosophy by the hour to clear the doubts of his many visitors, yet he always explained that this was actually quite unnecessary. There was only one thing to know and to do. Silence was best. Once when he saw me puzzling over the intricate division and recombination of the elements in an Advaitic treatise that he had told me to read, he turned to someone sitting before him and said: "Tell him not to worry over all that; that is for those people who demand that sort of thing, who want an analytical explanation of everything. Let him read the rest which he can understand."

Sri Ramana has stated explicitly that he himself never at any time did any sadhana. "Sometimes I would sit with my eyes closed and sometimes with them open - I still do. But I know no mantra or yogic exercises and would not have any use for them if I did." And it is certain that he never taught any of these things. He told us how to set about Self-enquiry and advised certain rules of life that would facilitate this, but that was all. He says in the little book *Who Am I?*: "Regulation of diet, restricting it to sattvic food taken in moderate quantities, is of all rules of conduct the best, and is most conducive to the development of sattvic qualities of the mind. These in their turn assist us in the practice of Atma Vichara or enquiry in quest of the Self." For the mind is the product of the food we eat, he explained; purify the food and the mind automatically becomes pure. Again: "Likes and dislikes, love and hatred are equally to be eschewed. Nor is it proper to let the mind rest often on the affairs of worldly life. As far as possible one should not interfere in the affairs of others. Everything offered to others is really an offering to oneself; and if only this is realized, who is there that could refuse anything to others?" Let me quote once again: "If the ego rises; all else will arise, if it subsides all else will also subside. The deeper the humility with which we conduct ourselves the better for us. If only the mind is kept under control, what matters it where one may happen to be?"

It all sounds so simple put like this, and yet how many of us succeed? No question here of going off and taking sannyasa, for as he says: "Renunciation is not discarding external things, but the cancellation of the uprising ego." And this can quite possibly be done more effectively in the world and in the midst of family life. For to the determined seeker some opposition is good; it gives him something to work on and keeps him alert, just as the aeroplane needs the opposition of the air to hold it aloft.

Bhagavan was always very definite in pointing out that liberation is not some far off after-death experience. It is here and now for all of us always. Just drop the false association with limitation. Nothing new will happen, and we shall then see that we have been all along the Self that we were searching for. Sri Ramana was no missionary trying to drive people along a definite track. Did he not know far better than we that everything would come to fruition at its proper time; there was no forcing it.

A certain number of people were bound to come to him, and a few were able to remain permanently; it was just their karma. Once when a visitor was taking leave and with tears complained that he could not remain any longer, Bhagavan remarked in a very matter of fact way that if everybody who came remained, there would not be any room for anybody.

For a person who believed in reforms and all sorts of charitable activity, his advice was: "First help yourself and then you may be able to help others. How can you possibly do any good to others when you yourself are still only seeking for the Good?" Such activity amounts to starting out at the wrong end.

People who never came to him have often said that his was a negative philosophy, but this is only ignorance of the truth. He was a dynamic force himself and he never advised the inaction of inertia. "Do, but do not associate yourself with the doer. Be the witness always," was his message. Things will undoubtedly go on, and as long as we imagine ourselves to be the body we will naturally believe that we perform its various activities ourselves. It is absolutely useless to sit back and say: "I am not the body, so there is no need to do anything;" this is only a catchphrase of intellectualism. We do not really believe it to be true, so it only reveals our hypocrisy. When we do actually know the Truth we shall never talk like that. For the real sannyasin, he has said, there is no difference between solitude and active life, as he does not regard himself as the doer in either case.

Sri Ramana's message is for one and all; and so no one, whatever his occupation, need say that he has no time. For his teachings are to be practised now and always, whatever we may be doing, whether working or resting, eating or sleeping.

At the end of *Catechism of Enquiry* [*Self-Enquiry*], it is said:

It is within our power to adopt a simple and nutritious diet and with earnest and incessant endeavour to eradicate the ego, the cause of all misery, by cancelling all mental activities born of the ego (i.e., the idea 'I am the doer'). Can obsessing thought arise without the ego, and can there be illusion apart from such thought?

And in these few words are summed up the whole of the teaching of the great Sage of Arunachala, who was in fact none other than Sri Dakshinamurti in mortal form. And even now, though Sri Ramana has left his body, where is the difference? Does he not exactly come up to the definition of Sri Dakshinamurti as given by Sri

Sundararaja Sarma in his commentary on the Slokas of Sri Sankaracharya? Sri: Maya Sakti, Dakshin: perfect, Amurti: formless, or 'the ever perfect, invisible power,' as one might term it.

The first verse of the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* by Sri Sankaracharya declares the same:

I bow to Sri Dakshinamurti in the form of my Guru; I bow to him by whose grace the whole world is found to exist entirely in the mind, like a city's image mirrored in a glass; though like a dream, through Maya's power it appears outside; and by whose grace again, on the dawn of Knowledge it is perceived as the everlasting and non-dual Self.

But of a truth the Self is one. When we have reached that state of knowledge, when we live in the Self alone and see the world for what it is, we too shall find that both Sri Dakshinamurti and Sri Ramana are and ever have been enthroned in our hearts. Let us pray earnestly that the dawn of that day may be near at hand.

Final Talks

Annamalai Swami

Chapter 1

Annamalai Swami: Mind is just a shadow. Attempts to catch it and control it are futile. They are just shadows chasing shadows. You can't control or eliminate a shadow by chasing it or by putting a shadow hand on it. These are just children's games.

Ram Tirtha once told a story about a small boy who ran down the street, trying to catch up with the head of his shadow. He never managed because no matter how fast he ran, the shadow of his head was always a few feet ahead of him.

His mother, who was watching him and laughing, called out, 'Put your hand on your head!'

When the boy followed this instruction, the shadow hand caught up with the shadow head. This was enough to satisfy the boy.

This kind of advice may be enough to keep children happy, but it won't produce satisfactory results in the realm of *sadhana* and meditation. Don't chase your shadow thoughts and your shadow mind with mind-control techniques because these techniques are also shadows. Instead, go back to the source of the shadow-mind and stay there. When you abide in that place, you will be happy, and the desire to go chasing after shadow thoughts will no longer be there.

Bhagavan often told the story of a man who tried to get rid of his shadow by burying it in a pit. This man dug a hole and then stood on the edge of it in such a way that his shadow was cast on the bottom of the hole he had just made. After lining it up in this way, he started throwing soil on the shadow in an attempt to bury it. Of course, no matter how much soil he put in the hole, the shadow still remained on top of it.

Your mind is an insubstantial shadow that will follow you around wherever you go. Attempts to eliminate or control it cannot succeed while there is still a belief that the mind is real, and that it is something that can be controlled by physical or mental activity.

Question: But this shadow mind must still be eliminated by some means.

Annamalai Swami: When Self-realisation happens, mind is no longer there. However, you do not get Self-realisation by getting rid of the mind. It happens when you understand and know that the mind never existed. It is the recognition of what is real and true, and the abandonment of mistaken ideas about the reality and substantiality of this ephemeral shadow you call the mind.

This is why Bhagavan and many other teachers kept bringing up the analogy of the snake and the rope. If you mistake a rope on the ground for a snake, the snake only exists as an idea in your mind. That idea might cause you a lot of worry and anxiety, and you may waste a lot of mental energy wondering how to avoid the snake or kill it, but this fact remains: there is no snake outside your imagination. When you see the rope, the substratum upon which your false idea of a snake is superimposed, the idea that there is a snake, and that it is real, instantly vanishes. It is not a real snake that has disappeared. The only thing that has disappeared is an erroneous idea.

The substratum upon which the false idea of the mind has been superimposed is the Self. When you see the mind, the Self, the underlying substratum, is not seen. It is hidden by a false but persistent idea. And conversely, when the Self is seen, there is no mind.

Question: But how to give up this false idea that the mind is real?

Annamalai Swami: The same way that you give up any wrong idea. You simply stop believing in it. If this does not happen spontaneously when you hear the truth from a teacher, keep telling yourself, 'I am not the mind; I am not the mind. There is no mind; there is no mind. Consciousness alone exists.' If you have a firm

conviction that this is the truth, one day this firm conviction will mature to the point where it becomes your direct experience.

Consciousness alone exists. If you generate a firm conviction that this is the truth, eventually this firm conviction will become your own direct experience.

Consciousness alone exists. That is to say, whatever exists is consciousness alone. Keep this in mind and don't allow yourself to regard anything else as being real. If you fail and give even a little reality to the mind, it will become your own false reality. Once this initial wrong identification — 'I am the mind, the mind is real' — has happened, problems and suffering will follow.

Don't be afraid of the mind. It's a false tiger, not a real one. Something that is not real cannot harm you. Fear and anxiety may come to you if you believe that there is a real tiger in your vicinity. Someone may be making tiger noises as a joke to make you afraid, but when he reveals himself, all your fears go because you suddenly understand that there never was a tiger outside your imagination.

Question: One can have a temporary experience of the Self, the underlying reality, but then it goes away. Can you offer any guidance on how to stabilise in that state?

Annamalai Swami: A lamp that is lit may blow out if the wind is strong. If you want to see it again, you have to relight it. But Self is not like this. It is not a flame that can be blown out by the passing winds of thoughts and desires. It is always bright, always shining, always there. If you are not aware of it, it means that you have put a curtain or a veil in front of it that blocks your view. Self does not hide itself behind a curtain. You are the one who puts the curtain there by believing in ideas that are not true. If the curtain parts and then closes again, it means that you are still believing in wrong ideas. If you have eradicated them completely, they will not reappear. While these ideas are covering up the Self, you still need to do constant *sadhana*.

So, going back to your question, the Self does not need to stabilise itself. It is full and complete in itself. The mind can be stabilised or destabilised, but not the Self.

Question: By constant *sadhana*, do you mean self-enquiry?

Annamalai Swami: Yes. By strength of practice; by doing this *sadhana*, this veil will be removed completely. There will be no further hindrances. You can go to the top of Arunachala, but if you are not alert, if you are not paying attention, you may slip and end up at Easanya Math [a Hindu institution at the base of the hill].

You have to make an enormous effort to realise the Self. It is very easy to stop on the way and fall back into ignorance. At any moment you can fall back. You have to make a strong determined effort to remain on the peak when you first reach it, but eventually a time will come when you are fully established in the Self. When that happens, you cannot fall. You have reached your destination and no further efforts are required. Until that moment comes, constant *sadhana* is required.

Question: Is it important to have a Guru at this stage, this period when constant effort is required?

Annamalai Swami: Yes. The Guru guides you and tells you that what you have done is not enough. If you are filling a bucket with water, you can always add more if there is still space. But when it is completely full, full to overflowing, it is pointless to add even a single drop. You may think that you have done enough, and you may believe that your bucket is full, but the Guru is in a better position to see that there is still a space, and that more water needs to be added. Don't rely on your own judgement in this matter. The state you have reached may seem to be complete and final, but if the Guru says, 'You need more *sadhana*,' trust him and carry on with your efforts.

Bhagavan often used to say, 'The physical Guru is outside, telling you what to do and pushing you into the Self. The inner Guru, the Self within, simultaneously pulls you towards itself.'

Once you have become established in the inner Guru, the Self, the distinction between Guru and disciple disappears. In that state you no longer need the help of any Guru. You are That, the Self.

Until the river reaches the ocean it is obliged to keep on flowing, but when it arrives at the ocean, it becomes ocean and the flow stops. The water of the river originally came from the ocean. As it flows, it is

merely making its way back to its source: When you meditate or do *sadhana*, you are flowing back to the source from which you came. After you have reached that source, you discover that everything that exists — world, Guru, mind — is one. No: differences or distinctions arise there.

Non-duality is *jnana*; duality is *samsara*. If you can give up duality, Brahman alone remains, and you know yourself to be that Brahman, but to make this discovery continuous meditation is required. Don't allocate periods of time for this. Don't regard it as something that you do when you sit with your eyes closed. This meditation has to be continuous. Do it while you are eating, walking, and even talking. It has to be continued all the time.

Final Talks

Annamalai Swami

Chapter 3

[A devotee who came to Annamalai Swami had so much pain in one of his legs, he found it very difficult to sit comfortably on the floor. After Annamalai Swami had observed the difficulties the man was having, he made the following remarks:]

Annamalai Swami: Though the body is needed for *sadhana*, one should not identify with it. We should make good use of it, and look after it well, but we should not pay too much attention to it.

There are so many thoughts in the mind. Thought after thought after thought; they never stop. But there is one thought that is continuous, though it is mostly subconscious: 'I am the body.' This is the string on which all other thoughts are threaded. Once we identify ourselves with the body by thinking this thought, *maya* follows. It also follows that if we cease to identify ourselves with the body, *maya* will not affect us any more.

Maya is fundamentally non-existent. Bhagavan said that *maya* literally means 'that which is not'. It is unreal because everything that *maya* produces is an outgrowth of a wrong idea. It is a consequence of taking something to be true that is not really true. How can something that is not real produce something that is real? If a barren woman says that she has been beaten by her son, or that she has been injured by the horns of a hare, we would rightly take her to be deluded. Something that does not exist cannot be the cause of suffering or of anything else.

Maya may appear to be real, to have a real existence, but this is a false appearance. The truth is: it is not real; it has no existence at all.

How to get rid of this 'I am the body' feeling and of the *maya* that is produced by it? It goes when there is *saman bhava*, the equanimity or equality of outlook that leaves one unaffected by extreme opposites such as happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and pain. When *saman bhava* is attained, the idea 'I am the body' is no longer present, and *maya* is transcended.

Question: Is the body to be regarded as unreal, as 'not me'? What attitude should I have towards this body and all the sensory information it provides me with?

Annamalai Swami: By itself, this body is *jada*, inert and lifeless. Without the mind, the body cannot function. And how does the mind function? Through the five senses that the body provides.

Mind and body are like the tongue and teeth in the mouth. They have to work in harmony with each other. The teeth do not fight with the tongue and bite it. Mind and body should combine in the same harmonious way.

However, if we want to go beyond the body, beyond the mind, we have to understand and fully accept that all the information the senses provide is not real. Like the mirage that produces an illusory oasis in the desert, the senses create the impression that there is a real world in front of us that is being perceived by the mind. The apparent reality of the world is an illusion. It is merely a misperception. When the mind perceives a snake where in reality there is only a rope, this is clearly a case of the senses projecting an imaginary image onto a real substratum. This, on a large scale, is how the unreal appearance of the world is projected by the mind and the senses onto the underlying reality of the Self.

Once this happens, we see the superimposition, the unreal names and forms we have created, and we forget about the substratum, the reality that underlies them. Many examples are given by our teachers and by our spiritual books. If you see a carved wooden elephant, for example, at some point you forget that it is only wood. You see the form of the carving, and your mind gives that form the name 'elephant'. While your mind is registering this name and this form, you are no longer registering the object as a block of wood. It is the same when you see jewellery made out of gold. You see a shape, call it a ring or a necklace, and while you are studying the form, you temporarily forget the substance it is made of.

Self-enquiry is the process by which attention is put on the substratum instead of on the names and forms that are habitually imposed on it. Self is the substratum out of which all things appear to manifest, and the *jnani* is the one who is continually aware of the real substratum. He is never deluded into believing that the names and forms that are perceived by the senses have any real existence.

Whatever we see in this room, for example that picture of Bhagavan over there, is unreal. It has no more reality than the objects we perceive in our dreams. We think we live in a real, materially substantial world, and that our minds and bodies are real entities that move around in it. When the Self is seen and known, all these ideas fade away and one is left with the knowledge: Self alone exists.

Question: If I regard all the people that I see and meet as unreal projections, what do I base my moral sense on? I can go around killing them or robbing them without feeling guilty because I would know that they are just characters in my dream.

Annamalai Swami: Everything that we perceive is *maya*, an unreal dream, but one should not then think, 'Since everything is unreal, I can do what I like'. There are dream consequences for the bad acts committed in the dream, and while you still take the dream to be the reality, you will suffer the consequences of your bad behaviour. Do no evil and have no hate. Have equanimity towards everything.

[Annamalai Swami then turned to a devotee who had been sitting motionless, with his eyes closed, in front of him.]

If you sit in meditation for a long time, without moving the body, the mind gets dull and tamasic. Even moving the toes while sitting is a good way of getting rid of the *tamas*. Mirabai used to dance and sing. That's a good way to meditate. *Giri pradakshina* [walking around Arunachala] is also good. It's walking meditation.

The Unity of Surrender and Self-Enquiry

by Prof. K. Swaminathan

One of Ramana Maharshi's most frequent comments was that there were only two reliable methods for attaining Self-Realization; one could either pursue Self-enquiry or one could surrender. An almost equally common statement was that *jnana* and *Bhakti* are ultimately the same. This second statement is usually interpreted to mean that whichever of the two paths one chooses to follow, the ultimate goal and the culminating experience will be the same. It is generally assumed that the two paths do not converge until the moment of Realisation is reached. However, if Ramana Maharshi's teachings are correctly interpreted, then it will be seen that the paths of surrender and Self-enquiry merge before Realisation, and that in the higher levels of practice, if one follows the path of surrender, then one's *sadhana* will be the same as that of someone who has chosen the path of Self-enquiry. This may seem very radical at first sight, but this is only because of the general misconceptions that many people have about Ramana's teachings on the true nature, meaning and practice of surrender. In order to eliminate these misconceptions, and to clarify Ramana's attitude and approach to surrender, it will be helpful to examine some of these commonly held ideas in the light of Ramana's statements on the subject, firstly to show how unfounded most of these ideas are, and secondly, by eliminating them, to illustrate the profundity of Ramana's real teachings.

The most convenient starting point for this enquiry is the relationship that exists between Ramana Maharshi, the Guru, and the thousands of people who call themselves his devotees. There is a long tradition in this country of people accepting certain teachers as their gurus, and then proclaiming immediately that they have surrendered to them. In most cases, this surrender is only a statement of intent, or at best, there is a partial surrendering to this new authority figure in the hope of acquiring some material or spiritual reward. Ramana's opposition to this type of religious bribery was quite clear, and it is best summed up in the following statement: "Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether he appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but command to Him.

You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything to Him; His is the burden, you no longer have any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *Bhakti*". (Talks, p.425). This statement, typical of many that he made is a categorical refutation of the idea that one can surrender to one's God or Guru, and yet demand that the God or Guru fulfills one's desire; or solves one's problems. Despite this often repeated refutation, it is probably true to say that the majority of Ramana's devotees both believe that they have surrendered to Ramana, yet at the same time, would not hesitate to approach him with their personal and material problems, especially if the perceived need required an urgent solution. In Ramana's teachings on surrender, there is no room for stray desires, and no room for expectations of miracles, no matter how desperate the situation might appear to be. Ramana says:

"If you have surrendered, you must be able to abide by the will of God and not make a grievance out of what may not please you." (Talks p.115)

Under Ramana's strict interpretation of absolute surrender, the only appeals which might qualify for approval are those where the devotee approaches the God or Guru with the attitude "This is your problem and not mine; please attend to it in any way you see fit." This attitude bears the marks of partial surrender, for it fulfills the bare minimum requirements of Ramana's definition of true surrender. On this level of surrender, there is no longer any expectation of a particular solution; there is simply a willingness to accept whatever happens. It is interesting to note in this connection that although Ramana clearly stated that devotees who wanted their problems solved were not practicing true surrender, he did admit that surrendering one's problems to God or to the Guru was a legitimate course of action for those who felt that they could not stick to His absolute teaching of complete surrender. He was once asked, "Is it proper that one prays to God when one is afflicted by worldly ills?" and his answer was

"Undoubtedly." (Talks, p.501). This admission that the Guru may be approached with personal problems should be seen as an extension of, and not a contradiction of his teachings on absolute and unconditional surrender. For those who are not ready for complete surrender, there is this intermediate practice of surrendering one's problems to the external "Higher Power." It is not a dilution of his notion that surrender must be complete and total to be effective, it is more an admission that for some devotees, such a massive step is impractical without some lesser intermediate stage.

If we can reach this point where we accept that we cannot ask Ramana to solve our problems and still claim that we have surrendered, then we move forward a few steps in our understanding of his teachings, but if we then try to put our new understanding into practice, we immediately encounter a new and apparently insoluble problem. The problem is that the desire to surrender is in itself a desire which we want fulfilled, and since, according to Ramana, true surrender cannot be accomplished without complete desirelessness, the presence of this desire in us is sufficient to prevent true surrender from taking place. It is the paradox of effort which is inherent in nearly all forms of *sadhana*. Simply stated, the problem is that there is a perception that there is an individual self which wants to extinguish itself so that the state of Realisation will be revealed, but anything which this individual self tries to do to eliminate itself merely prolongs its own existence. If one sees spiritual practice as something that one *does* to attain Realisation, then there is no solution to this problem; there is no solution because the whole problem stems from the totally false assumption that this individual self has a real existence. The first path along the path to true surrender is not to throw oneself at someone's feet and say "I surrender," it is the cultivation of the awareness and the understanding that there is no individual self to surrender, and that this individual self never at any time had, has, or will have any real existence. When Ramana said on several occasions: "Who is to surrender what and to whom?" (Talks, p.176), he was trying to drive home this fundamental point that without this understanding that there is no individual self, then all spiritual practices are done under false pretences, and that meditation, surrender or self-enquiry done without this constant awareness are merely exercises in self-deception. The best illustration of this point that I have come across appears in a recent publication called *The Secret of Arunachala*. In it, a devotee remarked to Ramana that a certain fellow devotee must be well advanced on the spiritual path because he meditated for eight to ten hours every day. (Page 73). "Oh," replied Ramana, "*he* meditates, *he* eats, *he* sleeps. But who is meditating, eating, sleeping? What advantage is there in meditating for ten hours a day if in the end that only has the result of establishing you a little more deeply in the conviction that it is you who are meditating?"

This aspect of Ramana's teachings, that one is already realised here and now, is widely ignored when it comes to practice, but its importance cannot be overstated. Rama.na has said: "The removal of ignorance is the aim of practice and not acquisition of Realisation." (Talks p.322). The most fundamental piece of ignorance is that there exists an individual self who is going to do *sadhana*, and that by doing *sadhana*, this individual self will disappear or be merged in some super-being. Until this concept is eliminated on the mental level, it is not an exaggeration to say that one is wasting one's time in attempts to surrender or to enquire 'Who am I?' Correct attitude and correct understanding of this matter are of preeminent importance if the application of Ramana's teaching is to be successful.

Returning now to the practice of surrender, and bearing in mind the necessity of maintaining the right attitude with regard to the nonexistence of the individual self, there remains the problem of how to surrender since the mere desire to surrender invents an illusory person who is going to surrender. The key to this problem and the key to all problems connected with the practice of Ramana's teachings is to bypass the mind and move to the realm of being. One cannot truly surrender without escaping from that vast accumulation of ideas and desires we call the mind, and according to Ramana, one cannot escape or destroy the mind by any kind of mental activity. Ramana's solution is to let the mind subside to the point where it disappears, and what remains when the mind has subsided is the simple, pure being that was always there. In a conversation in *Talks*, Ramana gives the following illuminating answer. He says:

"It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's being One's source is within oneself. Give yourself up to it. That means that you should seek the source and merge in it." (Talks, p.175).

This is an immensely profound statement which not only sweeps away many of the myths that surround the practice of surrender, it also shows an indication that the route to the rediscovery of the Self is the same whether one chooses to label it "surrender" or "self-enquiry". If we examine this statement closely, it is possible to extract three important conclusions regarding Ramana's attitude and approach to surrender. Firstly, there is no external deity or manifestation to whom one must surrender; secondly, the source of one's being is within us; and thirdly, and most importantly, true surrender is to go back to the original cause of one's being and remain firmly and continually rooted there.

If this is translated into terms of practical advice, then surrender comes down to two words, being and stillness. In *Talks* Ramana says: "Your duty is to be, and not to be this or that, 'I am that I am' sums up the whole truth. The method is summed up in 'Be still'." (Talks, p.333). The stillness and the being which Ramana speaks co-exist with each other and reveal themselves in their full radiance whenever interest in one's thought stream dries up. Thus, for Ramana, the practice of surrender is to find within oneself this feeling of beingness and surrender oneself completely to it. On this level of surrender, practice consists of giving up wrong ideas by refusing to give them attention. Ramana's statement that "The removal of ignorance is the aim of practice and not acquisition of Realisation" (Talks, p.322) is extremely relevant in this connection, for it is only wrong ideas that separate us from a full awareness of our natural state. This final stage of surrender is simply a giving up of attachment to ignorance by bypassing the mental processes which cause and perpetuate it. The practice is the fruit of the conviction that there is nothing to surrender, for by denying attention to the mental processes, one is finally surrendering the erroneous idea that there is an individual self to surrender.

When one attempts to practice this conviction by putting attention on the feeling of being that is within us, thoughts and desires will initially continue to flow at their normal rate, but if attention is maintained over a period of time, the density of thoughts decreases, and in the space between them, there emerges the clarity, the stillness and the peace of pure being. Occasionally this stillness and this peace will expand and intensify until a point is reached where no effort is needed to sustain the awareness of being, the attention merges imperceptibly with the being itself, and the occasional stray thoughts no longer have the power to distract.

When this point of surrender has been reached, all the ignorant misperceptions which constitute the illusory ego have disappeared, but this is not the final state of Realisation, because the misconceptions are only in suspension, and sooner or later, they will emerge again. Ramana has stated that the final, definitive elimination of ignorance is a matter for Self. He says that effort can only take one to a certain point, and then the Self takes over and takes one to the goal. In the case of surrender, the initial effort is the shifting of one's attention from the world of thoughts to the feeling of being. When there is no attention on it, the mind subsides revealing the being from which it came, then in some mysterious way, the Self eliminates the residual ignorance and Realisation dawns. Ramana summed it all up very neatly when he said: "Just keep quiet and Bhagavan will do the rest." (*Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, p.147).

This shifting of attention is the ultimate act of surrender. It is an acknowledgement that the mind, its concepts and desires are all ignorance, and that involvement in and attachment to the ignorance is all that prevents a full awareness of Reality. It is an acknowledgement that nothing that is understood or believed is of any use; that no belief, theory, idea or mental activity will bring one any nearer to Realisation. It is an acknowledgement and a final acceptance of the idea that all striving and all notions of attainment are futile and illusory. This simple shifting of attention constitutes the culmination of surrender, because it is the final surrendering of the ignorant notion that there is an individual self to surrender. It is the final acceptance in practice of the conviction that there is only attachment to wrong ideas and that this attachment can be severed by refusing to give these ideas any attention. This final level of surrendering ignorance represents the full flowering of Ramana's teachings on surrender, and any less absolute interpretation merely entangles us in the meshes of the ignorant ideas he was striving so hard to eliminate. It is admitted that as a concession to weakness, he occasionally permitted and approved lower levels of surrender such as devotion and worship, but for those who could comprehend

and practice his more absolute teachings, he would be satisfied with nothing less than the total unconditioned surrender which is implied in the practice of being and the detachment from ignorance.

Bearing this in mind it will now be constructive to have a closer look at the practice of self-enquiry, and to focus attention on the large overlap that exists between enquiry and surrender. Ramana's advice on self-enquiry was clear, simple and direct, but like his advice on surrender, it has often been misunderstood and misrepresented.

The easiest way to avoid errors is to remember three simple but fundamental tenets of Ramana's teachings; firstly, that we are all Realised here and now, and that the only purpose of sadhana is to remove the idea that we are not; secondly, there is no individual self to extinguish, because the individual self never at any time existed; and thirdly, no amount of mental sadhana is helpful because the mind cannot do anything except extend the frontiers of its own ignorance. If an awareness of these points is continually maintained, then the most obvious errors in practice can be avoided. One immediately sees that concentration on a point in the body is counter-productive because it involves mental effort. One can also eliminate the idea that self-enquiry is a mantra or an exercise in self-analysis because both of these approaches involve mental activity. On a more subtle level, if one maintain an awareness that the individual self at no time ever exists, then one can avoid the dangerous but often deeply-rooted notion that self-enquiry involves one self looking for another self.

To cut through the entanglements of these and similar misconceptions, and to find out what positive practical advice Ramana had to offer on self-enquiry, one cannot do better than go back to the words of Ramana himself. In *MMaharshi's Gospel*, he says that "The purpose of self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source" (p.48) . The purpose of this focusing is the same as that which has just been outlined for the practice of surrender. According to Ramana, the mind is only a collection of ignorant ideas, and unless one steps completely outside this mental realm by keeping attention on the being from which the mind emerges, then the ignorance and the wrong ideas will inevitably continue. It is important to note that Ramana never explains self-enquiry as a practice by which an individual self is eliminated, he always phrases his advice to indicate that when one looks for the source of the mind or the ego, then both disappear, and it is discovered that neither of them ever existed. This stepping outside the mind is as crucial to an understanding of self-enquiry as it is to an understanding of surrender.

In a passage in *Talks* he says:

"The fact is that the mind is only a bundle of thoughts. How can you extinguish it by the thought of doing so or by a desire. Your thoughts and desires are part and parcel of the mind. The mind is simply fattened by new thoughts rising up. Therefore it is foolish to attempt to kill the mind by means of the mind. The only way to do it is to find its source and hold on to it." (p.463).

This finding the source and holding on to it is the beginning, end and purpose of self-enquiry. The precise method is simple and well known. When thoughts arise, one does not allow them to develop. One asks oneself the words, "To whom do these thoughts occur?" And the answer is "To me," and then the question occurs, "Then who am I? What is this thing in me which I keep calling 'I'?" By doing this practice one is shifting attention from the world of thoughts to the being from where the thought and the thinker first emerged. The transfer of attention is simply executed, because if one holds on to the feeling "I am" the initial *thought* of 'I' will gradually give way to a *feeling* of 'I', and then sooner or later, this feeling "I am" will merge into being itself, to a state where there is no longer either a thinker of the thought.

'I', or a feeler of the feeling 'I am'; there will only be being itself. This is the stage where attention to the feeling of "I am" has merged with the being from which it came, so that there is no longer the dualistic distinction of a person giving attention to the feeling of "I am". There is only being and awareness of being.

If this practice is done persistently, then the verbal redirection of attention soon becomes redundant; as soon as there is the awareness of attachment to a particular thought, then attention is immediately switched back to the being from which the thoughts and the imaginary thinker came. It is important to stress that the verbal preliminaries of asking "Who am I?" or "To whom do these thoughts occur?" are simply tools to redirect the attention, the real self-enquiry begins with the subsequent witnessing of the

disappearance of the thoughts, and the re-emergence of being as the mind subsides into temporary abeyance. Ramana summarized this very succinctly when he said in *Talks*: "*Abhyasa* (spiritual practice) consists of withdrawal into the self every time you are disturbed by thought. It is not concentration or destruction of the mind, but withdrawal into the Self". (p.464). Since, in Ramana's terminology the terms being and Self are virtually synonymous, what he is describing here is the practice of withdrawing into being and remaining there, undisturbed by the transient distractions of thoughts. This practice may be viewed from two perspectives. In the higher levels of surrender:, maintaining awareness of being can be seen as a surrendering of wrong ideas, including the wrong idea that there is someone to surrender, whereas in self-enquiry, one reaches this same point of being by actively discarding thoughts, and by tracing back the feeling of "I am" until it finally subsides into the being from which it came. Though the two descriptions might appear to be describing two completely different approaches, particularly in the preliminary stages, if the practices of surrender and enquiry are persistently and earnestly pursued, then the two approaches finally merge imperceptibly into the single practice of being. To surrender false ideas is simply to be and that same state of being is the point where thoughts and the idea of a thinker disappear. This point, this state of being, is beautifully described in *talks* when Ramana says:

"It is the state of perfect awareness and perfect stillness combined. It is the interval between two successive thoughts, and the source from which the thoughts' spring Go to the root of the thoughts and you reach the stillness of sleep. But you reach it in the full vigour of search, that is with perfect awareness." (p.564).

This point which Ramana describes so graphically is the point of convergence between the path of self-enquiry and the path of surrender. The final, definitive detachment from ignorance has not yet happened, for this final elimination is a matter for the Self. Until that elimination takes place one can only be, and once the awareness of being is maintained effortlessly, then the being of surrender in which one has given up all ideas, is the same being which results from witnessing the disappearance of the "I thought". This state of being is still a stage of *sadhana*, for it lacks permanence, and the mind is liable to reassert its dominance at any time. However, it is the final stage, and as such it is the purest and deepest level of both surrender and self-enquiry. It is a state which belongs neither to the world of ignorance nor to the Absolute Reality, but somehow, mysteriously, according to Ramana, it provides the link between the two.

When Ramana said on one occasion, "Do not meditate, *Be*, do not think that you are, *Be*", (*Secret of Arunachala*, p.73), he was summarising the whole of his practical teachings, because for Ramana, it is only in this state of effortless awareness of being that the final Realisation will be revealed.

The Maharshi of Arunachala

by Sadhu Ekarasa (Dr. G. H. Mees)

When Kon-Fu-Tse met Wen-Poh-Hsuch-Tse, a sage from the South, the first did not speak a word. Then his companion Tse-lu said, "Master, for a long time you have wished to see Wen-Poh-Hsuch-Tse. Why is it that you don't speak now that you see him?" Kon-Fu-Tse answered, "One only needs to look at someone like him and Tao is. There is no need for speaking". (from Chuang-Tse, Chap. XXI).

In the presence of the Maharshi the same thing happened to me twelve years ago when I saw him for the first time and during the many years that I visited him again and again, especially during the three years that I stayed near him almost without interruption.

It is for this same reason that I find it ever so difficult to speak or write about the Maharshi, as I am often asked to do. It is not so very difficult to write about the course of the Maharshi's life or about his teachings. Both of them differ very little from those of the earlier great sages that Hinduism has produced, although in some respects the Maharshi himself is unique. It is certainly much easier to invent the image of a great sage and write a story about his life and works than to give a description of a living sage. Such a creation is produced by emotional, intellectual, moral and cultural forces, whereas the important element which makes a human being a sage does not lie within these aspects of the human soul, but deeper in the essence which forms the ground of the spiritual. As long as attention is fixed on emotional, intellectual, moral and cultural life, there is a permanent contradiction which expresses itself in duality of life and works, of that which is introvert and that which is extrovert, of theory and practice, of speaking and doing. However, as soon as the essence has become the basis, which is only the case with a real sage, who is Holy (which means "wholly"), there can no longer be any question of a contradiction. The essence is the unity of these contradictions that rule the lives of ordinary mortal beings, and in it these contradictions simply disappear. For visitors who have enough insight to perceive something of this essence, this unity of contradictions in the sage is exactly that element that makes such a mighty impression on them. Anybody who is honest with himself is aware of a contradiction between his being and his actions, between his inside and the outside which he shows to the world by his actions. With a sage he experiences that being and doing, that spiritual aspirations and practical life can be one, and this cannot but make a mighty impression upon him. Others, who are less honest with themselves and consequently are not disturbed by these contradictions, are probably more struck by a novel in which the life of some historical saint is set out in detail, written from the emotional and moral points of view but lacking the essence.

However what has been said above is nothing but words for the essence is just that which is beyond words and can't be put into words. It is exactly that factor which one cannot describe, which one can only feel for oneself. One must see a sage in order to experience him if only his eyes are able to see!

For a sage who lives in the realization, "I and my Father are One", St. Dionysius' words hold good: "All that you may say about God is untrue, for God is beyond speech and therefore what you say about God relates to something else." Therefore, if in India someone asks me to speak or to write about the Maharshi I am inclined either to answer that the questioner ought to visit the Maharshi and see for himself, or to do what Sri Sankaracharya did when somebody asked him to describe the real ecstasy. Sri Sankara sat quietly down and communicated the ecstasy by merely getting absorbed in it without any further word.

In Europe, however, neither of these answers will do. Under the circumstances, it would be unfair to suggest to people to go to India to see the Maharshi. Those very few to whom it is given by destiny to see him will be led to him of themselves. As for the demonstration, it would in almost all cases produce an effect, since it could be understood as mere pose, meaningless in itself, for in Europe people go to each other to talk. The speechless absorption in some spiritual or super-spiritual state is so little known that to do so in the company of other people would be entirely misunderstood. Even in church "talking" is going on nearly the whole service; the mind is kept busy without interruption with sentimental, moral and spiritual images. A sage, however, possesses the calm of the Seventh Day of Creation: "God blessed and hallowed the Seventh Day by having rest on that day, after creating all things to perfection."

It is in this way that sages advise their disciples to do nothing a state of mind reflecting the calm of the Seventh Day. Read, for instance, what was said by Laotse 2,500 years ago and by Chuang two centuries later

about and you find it is just the same as what the Maharshi teaches now. This “doing nothing” does not at all mean that one should do nothing! On the contrary, Divine Inactivity is the opposite of laziness, one of the “seven deadly sins” which kills a man’s spirit or keep him dead. Laziness is the sin of not striving upwards, of indifference to higher life, and it brings spiritual death with it.

The inactivity of the Sages of China, the rest on the Seventh Day of Creation, is that which the Maharshi calls the “Natural State”. This natural State has nothing to do with the state of relation to the natural world propagated by the “back-to-nature” supporters, but is rather the state of mind in which no fall is possible. This is a state of perfect inner rest and equilibrium, in which there is no striving whatever, and which in normal life may include the greatest activity. This comes to light in the 6 verses chosen by the Maharshi from Yoga-Vasishtha. They contain instructions given to Prince Rama by his Guru, Vasishtha, and are found in Upasanthi Prakarana in “The Story of Sunya and Pavana”.

“Having enquired into (the nature of) all the states, (wakeful, dreaming and deep sleep), and ever holding steadfastly at heart to that State Supreme which is absolute and which is free from illusion, play in the world, O Raghava, the hero! You have realized That in the heart which is the Substratum of truth of all utterances. Therefore, without ever abandoning that (right perspective), play in the world just as you like.” (Forty Verses, Supplement 26).

“As one with feigned enthusiasm and joy, with feigned excitement and hatred, as one taking feigned initiative and making a feigned effort, play in the world, O Raghava, the Hero!” (Forty Verses, Supplement 27).

It is one of the wise traditions of Hinduism to look upon life as a Divine play Lila. For the sage, in whom Maya, the world of appearances, and GodReality have become one, who experiences GodinAction and GodinBeing as a Oneness of which he himself forms a natural part, Maya becomes Lila, or Divine play. To engage in this play consciously and to enjoy it from the Centre of peace, described above as Inactivity and rest and the Natural State, is recommended by the sages. As a matter of course one should know and follow the rules (the conditions mentioned by Vasishtha) in order to be able to play and enjoy the play.

I am often asked, mainly by Westerners, “What exactly does the Maharshi do?” One should in fact answer, “The daily occupation of the sage is to be Himself. Because he really succeeds in doing so, the Maharshi makes such a great impression on many of his visitors. Not only does he demonstrate the Natural State, but in doing so he is perfectly natural a man without any pose, without a mark. The Maharshi effects drastic changes in the lives of many like me. That's what he does, and he does so by doing nothing at all. In no way does he force anything on anyone, He doesn't even offer me advice regarding any problem of life. The world bristles with advisors, but with all their advice they are unable to solve world problems or personal difficulties. Their method is to try to get improvement from outside, which is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The method of the sage, on the other hand, is that improvements come from within, from the Essence that is the Supreme quality and to let the improvements manifest themselves outwardly quite spontaneously and naturally, without any interference.

Concerning the Maharshi's daily life, until recently it was entirely public. Visitors surrounded him night and day and he was ever inclined to pay attention to them and to answer their questions, provided they were sincere and their questions lay in the sphere of the spirit. In fact he was never alone. At night people slept in his room on mats on the floor, as is the Indian custom. Now that he has become old, the administrative head of the ashram community that has grown up around him has made some rules, so that Maharshi is to be left alone for some hours after lunch and during the night. The Maharshi himself has never asked for such protective measures. He is one with all people in a very real way.

Until a few years ago, the Maharshi got up at 3 a.m., to cut vegetables in the Ashram kitchen and prepare them for the meals of the coming day. Day now begins in Ramanasramam before dawn with the recitation of some part of the Yajur Vedas by Brahmins, whose hereditary occupation it is to do so. This recitation is done in the hall where the Maharshi spends the day on his couch. By this chant orthodox Hinduism honours the sage, who himself is beyond any sectarianism or religious differences. Before sunset the recitation is repeated together with other texts. People in great number – usually hundreds, and even thousands during the time of temple festivals in town are always present at the recital. Every day the Maharshi reads the incoming and outgoing mail Letters from Ramanasramam are written by a Secretary and signed by the administrative head of the Ashram. The Maharshi never signs anything. More than 50 years ago he gave up his, name and possessions. . He answers questions when they arise; glances through Tamil and English newspapers; he corrects translations

of writings and reads proof sheets. All the while many people sit cross-legged in the Hall, men on one side, women on other. Small children walk about Visitors among them are nearly always a few Europeans sit quietly meditating or in their own way profiting by the presence of the Maharshi. Frequently visitors or inmates of the Ashram sing devotional songs and sometimes concerts are given, all as offerings to the Maharshi. Occasionally the Maharshi gets absorbed in contemplation. The usual expression "getting absorbed" is actually not correct, for there is no question of getting into and later returning from a special state. There is but one state for him, the Natural State, and he appears to be in this state continuously. He is usually addressed as "Bhagavan", which means "Divine Being". He takes little notice of the crowd that surrounds him. Peacocks, dogs, monkeys and other animals go to him; even an old cow visits him at regular intervals. There is always something in store for them, the offerings of fruit, nuts and cakes which are put at his feet and which are always distributed amongst those present. The Maharshi refuses to take anything special or more than what others get.

Sometime "important visitors" arrive - learned men, Maharajas, men of name, well-known politicians, globetrotters, captains of industry and so on. The management will, perhaps, for the most "distinguished" amongst them, put some extra carpet on the floor or pay special attention to them. Not so the Maharshi; he treats all the same way. At best he may be somewhat friendlier to those who come from far away. Often "the great of this earth" feel like small schoolboys while standing before him. They get quite new experiences which radically alter their understanding of the sage. The late Maharaja of Mysore, the biggest State of South India, a very devout and orthodox Hindu, knelt humbly before the Maharshi and stood motionless for a long time with tears in his eyes. He knelt once more and departed without a word.

Once a visitor asked the Maharshi what he thought about the ignorance and sufferings of the modern world. The Maharshi answered, "The world is but an ocean of delight", though he went through much suffering during his early years in Arunachala. He remained for some time in a dark cave with his body covered with vermin, and was almost always alone, exposed to the teasings of mischievous youngsters.

Moralists sometimes think of sages as escapists who avoid their social duties. It is not so. A sage is not one who has been put on the defensive by the difficulties of life, but one who has hidden farewell to the world, not because of its sorrow and crudity, but because it is not True Life! Even the joys of worldly life are painful in comparison with the beatitude of real life. The average man is inclined to pity the sage, whom he regards as having foregone the pleasures of life. The sage, however, pities his commiserating fellowman, because the latter does not know what real happiness is. The average man either thinks that a sage is one who has strayed from the path and is abnormal and unnatural, or else sees him as a fairly harmless lunatic. In either case, it is clear to him that there is something wrong with the Sage's mind. A few people humbly admit that they have not as yet progressed as far as the sage, and that it will be a long time before they acquire the same wisdom. The sage, on his part, considers all his fellowmen as potential sages; he is aware of no difference between others and himself. The mystic Hui Neng of the eighth century A.D. made the remark that the only difference between a Buddha and the average man is that the one realizes what the other discards. The Maharshi has often said the same. When someone asked him, as Swami Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna, "Have you seen God?" The Maharshi replied, "Is there anybody who hasn't seen Him? To the sage, God is the only Reality. He is the Beginning and the End.

If we don't see Him in the midst of all experiences, and consequently lose our Natural State symbolized in the Holy Bible as the garden with the Arbor Vitae (Tree of Life) wherein Adam walked with God by his side it is our own fault. The prodigal son may at any time return to his Father.

RAMANA SAD-GURU

by Arthur Osborne

There was always some mystery about the *upadesa* or spiritual guidance of Sri Bhagavan. He did not give *diksha* or initiation in the usual way of laying on hands or giving the disciple a mantram to repeat. However, that did not mean that he ignored the necessity for initiation. On the contrary, he explicitly stated that a mantram picked up casually would not be effective but that the user must be duly initiated into it by one with authority. It also did not mean that he was unconcerned with the guidance of aspirants. In fact that was the one thing he was obviously concerned with. He did not approve of questions of theory asked for mere mental gratification, but questions of *sadhana* or practice he always answered fully and graciously. There was no air of indolence at the Ashram but an intense activity, one might say the activity of a spiritual factory, with the devotees engaged in *sadhana* and Bhagavan supervising and guiding each one with meticulous though silent care.

All knew that they were the disciples and he the Guru. In private he spoke to them as the Guru and sometimes gave instructions for their *sadhana*. In each case the *sadhana* under his guidance dated from some act or word of initiation, usually concealed, perhaps like that described in the Foreword to this book. When asked whether he was a Guru and gave initiation he always avoided a direct reply. Had the reply been 'no', he would most certainly have said 'no'. But had he said 'yes' he would immediately have been besieged by demands for initiation and would have been driven to make a distinction between true devotees and those who visited him without submitting in their heart and seeking his guidance. And his compassionate love was too great and his wisdom too shrewd to act in a way that would lead some to think that he ranked them higher than others. Indeed, he did not, since he saw the Self in all.

When asked whether he gave initiation, Bhagavan's most usual reply was that there are three types of initiation : by speech, by look and by silence. This left the burden of understanding upon the enquirer. It is an old tradition, the three types being symbolised by the bird, which needs to sit on its eggs in order to hatch them, the fish which needs only to look at them, and the tortoise, which needs only to think of them. Initiation by silence is most natural to the *Jnana-marga*.

Some formalists did indeed leave and seek initiation elsewhere and Bhagavan said nothing to detain them. Those with understanding remained. He said to one of them, Major Chadwick: "If it had been necessary for you to seek a Guru elsewhere you would have gone away long ago."

He was the Sad-Guru, the *jivan-mukta*, the perfect Jnani for whom there are no others but only the Self and therefore no relationship can be postulated. He sometimes reminded his devotees that the outer Guru is only a form taken out of consideration for the disciple's ignorance and serves to turn him inward to discover the inner Guru, who is the Self.

Normally, Spiritual Masters have written openly about theory but have been more reserved about the technique they prescribed, lest any should attempt it without due authorisation and do themselves harm. Bhagavan, however, proclaimed the path openly in speech and writing. This innovation accords with the silent initiation that he was bringing to the world. On any who turned to him in their heart the silent initiation might descend, in whatever place they might be, and any such could learn from the books the technique to be used. Indeed, Bhagavan has sometimes reminded devotees that even the journey to Tiruvannamalai is only illusory, the real pilgrimage having to be made in the heart, and has referred them to the published accounts of the path to be followed.

This leads on to another question: whether the direct path opened by Bhagavan was for his lifetime only or is still open to those who seek. A Guru is necessary for every seeker, as Bhagavan himself said; he added, however, that the Guru need not necessarily take human form. When he said this it applied only to a very rare case, but his guidance has made what was true for him true for his devotees also. His whole work differs from the normal mode of spiritual guidance. Throughout the ages there have been parallel initiatory streams flowing to the Ocean, each within its own banks, but now, at the end of the *Kali Yuga*, many have petered out in the desert or marshes or dwindled to a trickle, and it is to this state of affairs that Bhagavan has brought the reply with a life-line thrown out to all who turn to him. If the method is unusual, it is only necessary to remember that it is Bhagavan who is the doer, and then to object would be to make oneself ridiculous. It would be like the Jews

who rejected Christ because he did not come in the form they expected. And if Bhagavan could dispense with the usual mode of initiation and guidance during his lifetime, why not afterwards? The conditions which called for the innovation still exist.

There are, moreover, positive indications that the guidance still exists.

When asked once whether a *jivan mukta* continues to perform any function after physical death, Bhagavan replied that in some cases it is so.

When his physical death was imminent and devotees complained that he was leaving them without guidance, he replied: "You attach too much importance to the body," indicating thereby that his discarding it would not put an end to their guidance.

In reply to a question by Dr. Masalavala, retired Medical Officer of Bhopal State, Bhagavan replied, as recorded by Devaraja Mudaliar in 'Day by Day with Bhagavan': "Guru is not the physical form, so the contact will continue even after the physical form of the Guru vanishes."

Before his death he said: "They say I am dying, but I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here." This is a simple doctrinal statement, because the *Jnani* is universal and there is no here or there for him, no coming or going, in the Here and Now of eternity; but it was always Bhagavan's way to make a doctrinal statement which, together with its universal truth, would answer the particular needs of the devotee. Though we may leave him in our blindness, he cannot leave us, for he is the Self.

Right up to the end Bhagavan showed an interest in the continued publication of the books, revising a new edition during the last few weeks of his life. And yet the very purpose of the books was to spread the knowledge of *vichara*, the path of Self-enquiry, and if that was to be no longer accessible there would be no further need for them.

Bhagavan approved a will that was submitted to him. one of whose terms was that the Ashram should be maintained as a spiritual centre when he was no longer in the body. Whatever the devotees may do, this is Bhagavan's achievement; the centre is the radiation of the Guru.

His devotees know that he is still the Guru. They have felt the continuance of a guidance not only as potent but as subtle and detailed as before. For those who seek to turn to him it is best to say as he did to those who questioned the heart centre of which he spoke - that it is not discussion that is needed but trial. Let them invoke his Grace and strive in the way he prescribed and they will find out for themselves whether the Grace and guidance of the Guru are forthcoming.

That desolate night when a brilliant star trailed slowly across the sky at the very moment of his leaving the body, there was neither the frantic grief nor the despair that had been expected, but instead all were assuring each other that he was still there. Each one felt in his heart the continued Presence. Those whom one had thought would need consolation were able to console others.

That whole night the body that Bhagavan had worn and discarded was exposed to the view of the devotees in the Ashram hall. There was grief and weeping, but underneath it there was a strange peace that only Bhagavan himself could have implanted.

Few had realized how beloved he was in the neighbouring town of Tiruvannamalai, but all through the night vast crowds came and passed through the Ashram hall in grief and awe, to have a last *darshan* of the now lifeless face. Long processions walked to and from the town singing 'Arunachala-Siva'.

In the days that followed, the strong conviction of his continued Presence bore up the devotees and held most of them together. A committee of them was formed to run the Ashram affairs together with the former Sarvadhikari.

The silent meditation and the morning and evening chanting of the Vedas continue before the *Samadhi* of Bhagavan as they did in his bodily presence. Now as then, access is for all, whatever their caste or religion. The spiritual support that comes in sitting before the *Samadhi* is not only as strong but as sweet and subtle as it was before the bodily presence.

To all those who turn to Bhagavan in their hearts the response is even more immediate, the support more powerful. Not only that (for that is true wherever they may be) but the spiritual revitalisation that they used to derive from a visit to Tiruvannamalai still continues, even though the beloved face is hidden.

Devotees from the surrounding towns and from distant places still look forward to the possibility of a visit, as they did before. Seekers after Divine Grace and Guidance come as in the past. The shrine is a centre whose potency is growing, not diminishing. And many envy those who beheld the beauty of the bodily form.

Bhagavan always bade us seek the Inner Guru. The love that we bore to the outer Guru helped us to do so, and yet, in a way, it impeded. Now he has taken up his abode in our heart. More than ever, we have to discard our impurities in order to discover Him, the Self, the Essence of our Being; more than ever he assists us to do so.

He is the Sad-Guru who teaches in silence. Dakshinamurthi (Arunagiri Yogi) dwelt on the north slope of the sacred Arunachala Hill ready to give the potent silent *upadesa* to any who came, but the spot was inaccessible. Sri Ramana is Dakshinamurthi. He has made accessible what was hidden, for now the Grace radiates from his *Samadhi*; the Direct Path that had been withdrawn has been brought back.

The body's death has, perhaps, brought about one change. He always said: "Ask yourself, 'Who am I?'" but he also said, "Submit to me and I will strike down the mind." Now the quest of the Self in the heart and submission to Bhagavan in the heart have become the same. The fusion of *Jnana* and *Bhakti* has become more perfect.

"Who can ever find Thee? The eye of the eye art Thou, and without eyes Thou seest, Oh Arunachala.

"From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart, didst draw me gently into Thine. Such is Thy Grace, Oh Arunachala.

"I have betrayed Thy secret workings. Be not offended! Show me Thy Grace now openly, Oh Arunachala."
(*Aksharamanamala*, Verses 15 and 97-98.)

The Uniqueness of Bhagavan

by T.M.P. Mahadevan

Bhagavan was unique. He was unique in that he was not unique. What struck even a casual visitor to the Ashrama was Bhagavan's naturalness. He did not impress any one as if he were non-natural, even supra-natural. There was no affectation at all in Sri Ramana. Let me illustrate what I mean. In South India sadhus refer to themselves, while speaking, in the third person. They would say 'this was walking' or 'this wants to go there' while referring to themselves. They would not use the first person singular 'I'. But Bhagavan quite naturally used to say 'I go', 'I walk', 'I sit' and so on. One who has the experience of the plenary illumination constantly, naturally, has no use for such affectations. And always he used to behave in the most natural manner. There was nothing which would make others think that there was some unnaturalness about Bhagavan. But yet once in his presence there was no need for prompting from outside. One would be convinced in one's own heart that one was in the presence of the non-dual Reality. Now, this was an experience that almost everyone had in the presence of Bhagavan.

He was an open book for all at all times. He did not make any distinction between what is private and what is public. So far as Bhagavan was concerned, there was no privacy. In those days, devotees used to be with him in the small meditation hall all day and night. We used to sleep in the same hall where we used to sit during daytime. And he was a silent witness to all that happened around him. Any one could walk in at any time. He was easily accessible not only to humans but also to animals. Squirrels used to play with him. The cow Lakshmi used to walk in at her own pleasure. The monkeys used to come into the Ashram without any let or hindrance. Bhagavan remarked about a trespassing cow, "Who is to be taken to task? If you had no fence and the cow walked in through your garden, who was responsible for this, you or the cow?"

Bhagavan's love and grace knew no limits. In his presence there was no high and no low. All were the same. There was no distinction between a Maharaja of old days who visited him and the rustics who wanted to have his *darshan*. He could understand the language of the mute creation. In earlier days when he was on the Hill Arunachala, the monkeys used to go to him for arbitration. This shows how Bhagavan taught the plenary experience to others — the experience which makes no distinction between one level of creation and another.

Others might think that Bhagavan practised austerities during the early years of his stay in Arunachala, that his *Mauna*, silence, was deliberate, that his sitting posture for days and weeks in the sub-terranean temple was *sadhana*, but some of us have heard him say that all this was not *tapasya*, although it seemed to be so. The time factor did not enter into the realisation of Bhagavan. There was no earlier preparation; there was no evolution thereafter. Of what is referred to in Advaita as *sadyomukti*, instantaneous release, we had a glowing example in Bhagavan Sri Ramana. One does not know what led to this instantaneous illumination. There was no growth, no procedural technique, no yogic meditation, no other *sadhana*. All of a sudden, the experience came without his inviting it. Now, this is unique; the entire history of sagehood holds no parallel. A boy at school who had no particular interest in spirituality, who was not even a brilliant boy in studies, that such a lad should, all of a sudden, become transformed into a sage, I think, is unique. And what was the nature of the realisation? It admitted no stages, required no effort. It was all complete. Completeness, fulness was there when Sri Ramana had in a trice solved the mystery of death. Nachiketas had to go to Yama, wait at his house for three-days and nights, and put to him questions. The fear of death was only an occasion for solving the mystery. The non-dual Self which knows no death and no birth came to Sri Ramana in a flash; but that did not vanish like a flash, it remained as His *sahajasthiti*.

I am not saying that the process of meditation has no place in *sadhana*, but that what one gains through the method of thought-control, emptying of mind, is not the plenary experience of the non-dual *Atman*. In the case of Bhagavan this pinnacle- was gained without the least conscious effort. That is his uniqueness. Ordinarily, a study of scripture comes first and then experience. But in the case of Bhagavan, experience came first and only later an acquaintance with what scriptures teach. It was when scholarly devotees came to him and wanted some doubt or other to be cleared that he listened to the readings from scriptures and then told them that His own experience confirmed what the texts taught.

The great scholars, both traditional and modern, were astounded at the simple words that fell from the lips of Bhagavan. Ganapati Sastri was one instance. He was a master of Sanskrit. He was a great teacher. He practised *mantra-sadhana* all through his life. He was accepted as a *Guru* by a large number of disciples. But he was tormented and went to Sri Ramana. It was Ganapati Muni that announced to the world the greatness of Sri Ramana, finding the culmination of his earlier *sadhana* in Bhagavan.

Elsewhere, I have tried to compare these three great teachers of *Advaita*: Dakshinamurti, Sankara and Ramana. Dakshinamurti is the *Adi Guru*, the first preceptor. He sat beneath the banyan tree, a youthful figure surrounded by elderly disciples, and instructed them in the language of silence. Most of us cannot understand the language of silence. So, Dakshinamurti rose from His seat beneath the banyan tree and broke His silence. He appeared in the form of Sankaracarya. He is constantly going around this world, rousing it from its slumber.

All the great ones who came after him, whether they would acknowledge it openly or not, are but reflections of this form of Sankara. In the form of various masters it is Sankara that is moving in this world. It is the same Sankara that appeared to us as Sri Ramana.

The times have changed. The present world can be saved neither by the *Guru* who is seated in a particular place nor by the one who is perpetually moving about. The *Guru* who is required for our times is neither the one who keeps absolute silence, nor the one who, speaks profusely. We had this need satisfied in the *avatara* of Sri Ramana. He did not move out of the limits of Arunachala. He did not talk profusely or read extensively. Day in and day out, most of the time, he was in silence. People used to come with long lists of perplexing questions formulated in their minds; some of them, lest they might forget, used to write out those questions. But what happened? When they came and sat before Bhagavan they forgot all about those questions. I happened to be present when Paul Brunton came. P. B. had seen other saints in India. He had written out the questions which he wanted to ask. He sat there for a long time without opening his mouth. The friend who had come with him had to prompt him. It was only then that he read out his questions. This was not an isolated instance. This was the daily experience. The questioning mind was silenced in his presence.

And what is the quantum of his “writings”? But they are so potent that even a single line could transform the lives of people. Here, we have a middle course between silence and speech. Silently but surely the influence of Bhagavan is felt. No one could have thought some years ago that the influence would be felt so strongly in the capital of our country. But this is what is now happening all over the world. In Europe and America there are seekers, who when they get even a glimpse of Bhagavan’s teachings feel that they have turned a new leaf in their lives.

What is, again, significant in Bhagavan’s teaching is that it involves no mystification. There is nothing by way of creed. It is an open book of wisdom from which one could draw according to one’s capacity. There is no narrowness or parochialism of any sort in the Master’s teachings.

All the teachings of all the sages are put in a capsule form in this single sloka, *Hridayakuhara-madhye* which says that in the cave of the heart *Brahman* shines. He made known to sadhakas the *bardavidya*. He was the one who discovered that the spiritual heart is the Self itself. The hridaya is the non-dual spiritual Self. The ‘I’ is manifest in the region of the hear; When a person refers to himself he points to the right side of the chest. The ‘I’ shines in the heart; the Self is manifest in the cave of the heart. This manifestation of the Self in the form

of 'I' is direct, immediate to every one. It does not require any belief, or faith or creed. One need not read *Sastra* to realise it, one realises it every moment: And the *Upanishads* tell us that in deep sleep one goes into it. Thus, one cannot deny oneself however much one might try. In a famous verse Sankara says 'It is this 'I' which is immediately, directly experienced in the region of the heart by every one; but this Self is not realised to be the non-dual *Brahman* on account of ignorance. There is no realising the Self. Because the Self is real, you cannot realise or make it real. What is to be done is to unrealise the unreal. We imagine that this world is real, while in fact it is not. Today the scientists are approaching Vedanta through science. Nuclear physics tells us that even in the hardest piece of matter there is no hardness. If you can accept the evidence of the physicist that what you regard as a concrete piece of matter is not concrete after all, then from a higher level is there anything which is unintelligible or impossible in the proclamation of the Sage that the entire world is Maya? Maya does not mean that there is no reality. In fact, the Self is the real and the world is only an appearance. And so, Bhagavan tells us that this *Aham-spburana*, the 'I'-manifestation, is a pointer that, if we are judicious enough to discern the truth, we shall realise the identity of the Self with *Brahman*. This is what we have to experience. Self-realisation is no more than this. It is losing the individuality in the non-dual Reality. How is one to gain this? What is the way? *Hrdi visa*. Enter into the heart. Use the mind, but there is a stage where you have to transcend the mind and be what you are always. You can throw off your body; it is difficult to throw off your mind. It is with you all the time you are empirically conscious. You have to make use of it. It is in *jagrat* that you have to perform the *sadhana* not in deep sleep. We have to work this out during our conscious moments, moments of wakefulness. And what functions in wakefulness is the mind, which is to be made use of. Enter into the heart with your mind. The direct road is Self-enquiry. It is by Self-enquiry that you have to reach the heart. But if that becomes impossible for the moment, then adopt the technique of surrender. If even for this your mind is not ready, practise *pranayama*. You begin at the physical, vital level. Bhagavan says in the *Upadesa Saram* that the source of both the vital principle and the mind is the same. By controlling the vital principle you can control the mind. Begin then with the practice of regulating the breath.

You will find the mind settling down through the practice of *pranayama*, and then you will be ready for the right royal road. Very often people consider *jnana-yoga* to consist in intellectual analysis. This is not so. It is not intellectual speculation. Up to a point the mind can go; but there it stops. Bhagavan has taught a simple mode by which one goes beyond mind. What is that mode? The 'I'-thought is the first of all thoughts. All other thoughts arise after the I-thought. Only later on 'this', 'that' and 'the other' arise in your mind. Trace the source of the I-thought and the practice will reveal to you that the I-thought arises from the Self. Because we may not have either the competence or the time to go through the *Sastras* and discover the path ourselves, this technique is taught to us as it can be pursued by one and all at any time. This certainly is not an easy path. We must not delude ourselves by imagining that it is easy. It requires preparation, constant practice; it requires all the other *sadhanas*. But along with those *sadhanas* the enquiry can be practised. And if the Grace of the Guru is there, we will be helped on this road faster than we may imagine.

When I Was a Little Girl

by Kitty Osborne

When I was a little girl our lives, in fact our whole world centred around the old hall. The Samadhi hall of course had not been built yet...it was a dusty piece of ground with a few sleeping dogs and strutting peacocks; what is now a window opposite Bhagavan's couch was another door and we all gathered in the hall to be with Bhagavan. Sometimes, in fact often, there were long periods of silence but often too there was talk...just chat and lots of laughter. Bhagavan loved good joke and was at times very funny. The thing I remember most vividly is how we all came to Bhagavan with our stories, our problems and our bits of gossip from home. Mostly the conversation was in Tamil which my brother and sister and I spoke pretty well as we had learned it the way children do...with ease and speed. However in kindness to the foreigners everyone sometimes spoke English. There was David McIver... my uncle David, Major Chadwick whom I liked because he always treated us children with respect and kindness, there was Miss Merston whom to be honest I did not like, but in fairness I have to say that was entirely mutual and she positively loathed me, and then there were my parents, Mr. Cohen from Baghdad and also mysterious Czech Mr. Mazach (no idea of the correct spelling) but we lived in his house for a couple of years and now it is a bakery and restaurant. And there was Uma Devi the Polish lady as well as the American Rappolds and any number of others. Of course the regulars in the hall included Viswanathan, Venkatramiah, Devaraj Mudaliar, Dr. TNK., who took almost all the photos as he was the only person allowed by Chinnaswami to use a camera in the ashram, and any number of others. As children, in spite of being the only English ones around, were not a bit conscious of being in any way different to any other children as by and large I think children are far less colour or background conscious than adults and anyway most of us were sand or dust coloured most of the time.

Everyone showed Bhagavan their letters, either from home about family or if they were of significance in any other way, and Bhagavan took a keen interest in it all. He knew who was related to whom and would explain obscure connections to others who were perhaps not so well up in family associations. He had a light voice, which runs in his family I think, but it was quite distinctive. That is the time when my mother brought to Bhagavan a letter from me in school when at the end I asked to be remembered to Bhagavan and he memorably said, "If Kitty remembers Bhagavan then Bhagavan will remember Kitty." That remark of his has helped me through many of life's vicissitudes in times to come.

Every morning he read the newspapers and Mouni Swami would bring in the post. Some letters were obviously private but some would be discussed with everyone. We all liked to get into the act when things of general interest were on the agenda. If the conversation turned to matters of philosophy or someone's personal problems Bhagavan would sometimes refer to some book from His revolving bookcase which is now kept in His Samadhi room. At 9 or 10 o'clock Bhagavan would go for a walk up the hill for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour or so. Once apparently He and His attendant decided to walk on to Skandashram so they were late back. The monkeys around the hall went crazy! There was screaming and anxiety and worry until he got back and they could relax. Bhagavan also went for a walk on the hill at about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. The rest of the time he sat on His couch and the hall was either full of chat as I have said, or filled with the impenetrable special silence that could surround Him and make him as aloof as the sun.

Bhagavan loved to hear the Vedas and when the pujaris came in and sat near his couch and started to sing, then he sat up straight and listened with intense concentration.

Our relationship with Bhagavan was unusual in many ways. Although we told him news and gossip and felt he was our friend, indeed our best friend; yet still there was a feeling of deepest respect and awe in his presence, we weren't scared but we were definitely wary. Every word he uttered, however lightly, was sacred and

freighted with meaning. Sometimes when he spoke to one person, someone else sitting in the hall and having no part in the conversation would hear the same words and sense a message in them for himself. If he gave anyone a hint, however light about what to do or how to be, then they would be well advised to listen and obey. Even then his touch was so light and subtle that one person in a room full of people might get a message and know it was for him, while the rest just carried on with whatever they were discussing and not realise that anything momentous had happened.

I never heard of Him repeating advice or instructions. Only all of us whose lives revolved around Bhagavan and the old hall knew that his least word was important and could be ignored only at peril. Nothing that Bhagavan said or did was trivial and we were all aware of this at all times. I think we all felt that if he knew what was happening in our lives then we were blessed somehow.

That is why perhaps I am so uncomfortable now when I hear people obviously making up things that Bhagavan purportedly said. After all either he is our Sad Guru whose every word is sacrosanct or he was an elderly gentleman sitting on a couch who can be misquoted at will and we are all wasting our time. When someone makes up a Bhagavan statement and then someone else repeats it as fact and eventually it finds its way into print and becomes gospel, I feel that is not just wrong, but also stupid and dangerous. To use Bhagavan as a way of bolstering one's own beliefs is completely the opposite of what Bhagavan taught about denying the ego.

But back to the old hall.

We would tell Bhagavan if we repainted the front door, if someone's sister bought a new mat, if someone got a job he had been hoping for...just everything. We took leave of him before going anywhere and greeted him when we got back. To this day I take leave of Bhagavan before going on a trip and try to go to the old hall first thing when I get back. Once a man came to tell Bhagavan he was going for a job interview to Trichy or somewhere. Bhagavan said "So far" but in a negative sort of way. The man went and found that the meeting had been changed to another town and when he got there it was cancelled. He came back and told Bhagavan...and all of us all about it. Bhagavan didn't say anything but everyone thought why hadn't the man listened to Bhagavan in the first place?

Bhagavan never performed miracles, but every word he spoke had meaning. I have told this story before but it seems apposite to mention again the bullock cart driver who came to see Bhagavan when his wife died and it was in the middle of the monsoon season and every day was one where the rain poured down. He couldn't afford to have her cremated under cover and he was at a loss, not knowing what to do except come to Bhagavan with his trouble. Bhagavan looked out of the window and said... just as anyone might...“It may clear up this afternoon.” It was enough for the bullock cart driver who went home and made preparations and enough the weather cleared up. He cremated his wife and the rain bucketed down again.

This story made such a deep impression on me because even then we had heard of dramatic gurus who would shout at the weather in order to loudly control the rain or the sun as the case might be. Our Bhagavan never did anything like that...every time anything supernatural happened it might just as well have been any ordinary comment by any ordinary person. But even as children, being without being told and without, as far as I remember, ever discussing it, we knew that one word from Bhagavan could change the world...just as we knew he would never speak that word.

These quite noisy and happy times in the hall were great fun. My brother and sister and I would show Bhagavan our toys and he would inspect them gravely, giving as much attention to a doll which could open its eyes as he did to a question of deep philosophical meaning; but when the story and chat time were over we knew at once. Bhagavan would turn away and into himself and an immediate quiet descended in the hall. When Bhagavan was quiet like that no one spoke.

We were not the only ones who loved to sit in the hall to be in Bhagavan's company. There were all the animals as well, coming and going in between the people. The dusty dogs came in and did namaskaram before

Bhagavan's couch. They all did it but I can't remember ever thinking that was unusual, which actually I suppose it was. The monkeys rarely came inside, they mainly chattered to him through the window but the peacocks would come and dance for him...it was so beautiful. The squirrels would come to the door and look around nervously, then make a dash for his lap to get some puffed rice or peanuts. Lakshmi the cow came sometimes as Bhagavan was her special friend, but usually he went to visit her in the cowshed. A rabbit came once I was told but I never saw it, neither did I see the visiting crow but one way and another we all...human and non...loved his company and to be in his presence and be blessed. Perhaps even the mosquitoes, spiders and beetles were blessed!

I never really learned to meditate properly although I deeply admire people who can do it. My parents could meditate for hours but I always thought of something I just had to tell Bhagavan. Nowadays what I tend to do is go and sit in the hall and silently tell Bhagavan everything I think he would care to know. I tell Him the news of my home and family and ask His advice on various matters where I need help. Often the answers pop into my head as I sit there and I am so grateful for His wisdom and counsel. Of course I could be deluding myself but I truly hope and think not.