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THE DIRECT SADHANA

by Dr. M. Sadashiva Rao

Self-enquiry is the sadhana or spiritual practice that Sri Bhagavan, in his infinite grace, has made available to all seekers. Many aspirants who take up this sadhana get disheartened when they meet with difficulties at the very beginning of their practice and give it up, attributing their difficulties to the advanced nature of the sadhana. In reality, initial difficulties are common to all sadhana involving meditation and concentration. Every aspirant will experience them when they attempt to make a drastic change from the long-accustomed habit of looking outwards at the world to one of looking inward, keeping the mind tranquil and free from thoughts. Once the aspirant makes this change, Self-enquiry is found to be easy and simple.

HOW to make this change? In the recorded talks, Bhagavan has given brief directives on how one should develop the habit of looking inwards and cultivate a thought-free mind. The full implications of these directives and a few subsequent steps of the sadhana proper are described in this article.

“The mind is by nature restless. Give it peace. Make it free from distractions and train it to look inwards. Make this a habit. This is done by ignoring the outer world and removing the obstacles to peace of mind!”

Restlessness of the mind, the main obstacle to this sadhana, is caused by a rush of thoughts created by preoccupation with the outer world and its distractions. It is necessary to develop the habit of ignoring the outer world, of removing from the mind the thoughts created by it, and of looking inwards. It is necessary, therefore, to develop vairagya which Bhagavan defines as: “*loss of interest in the non-self*”.

Interest in, or devotion to, the Self or God within can be developed only if interest in everything else is lost. The same is implied in Bhagavan’s words:

“*Drawing-in the thoughts, restraining them and preventing them from going outwards is vairagya. Fixing them on the Self is sadhana or abhyasa (practice).*”

Vairagya and abhyasa are both essential for the sadhana. Vairagya turns the mind away from the outer world and makes it look inwards. Abhyasa fixes the mind on the Self. Says Bhagavan: “*Only after perfect vairagya, the mind becomes steady.*”

However, vairagya does not mean giving up of one’s duties and responsibilities in the outer world. Says Bhagavan: “*Give up thoughts, you need not give up anything (else).*”

A Thought-free Mind

A thought-free mind, in addition to vairagya, is a *sine-*

qua-non for the sadhana. Thoughts are created by vasanas, or hidden tendencies of the mind. These are mostly vishaya vasanas related to objects of sense gratification and can be easily removed from the mind by the steady silent quest of “Who am I?”. The mind turned inward concentrates one-pointedly on the single thought. If, with mind introverted, one concentrates on the single thought ‘I’ one at first finds a series of stray thoughts rising up to drive out the single thought. The stray thoughts are born of vishaya vasanas. In this context, Bhagavan says:

“All that is inside will have to come out. There is no other way than to pull up the mind when it goes astray.”

The coming into the open of hidden vasanas in the form of thoughts, far from being an obstacle, gives the required opportunity to remove the vasanas from the mind.

Removing Vishaya Vasanas

Three different methods of preliminary practice for clearing the mind of its vishaya vasanas are given here:

The first and the usual method is carried out during the initial practice of one-pointed concentration. As stray thoughts come to the mind, one after another, each thought is rejected or thrown out with a firm will. One should not play with the thought, as this generates other thoughts, and this will go on ad infinitum. The thought must be thrown out of the mind forthwith and the mind more intensely concentrated on the single thought ‘I’. One-pointed concentration can now proceed with little interference from stray thoughts. This is where vairagya or lack of interest in the outer world has its value. With progress in the sadhana, vairagya becomes perfect and stray thoughts will seldom interfere.

The second method of removing vishaya vasanas from the mind is carried out without wasting time set apart for the sadhana. Bhagavan tells a devotee much plagued with stray thoughts: *“If you are able to be without any thoughts while awake, it is enough.”* This is valuable advice. The practice of keeping the mind free from stray thoughts in leisure hours helps to keep the mind thought-free during the sadhana. This practice is best carried out with the mind extroverted (as in normal activities) and with eyes open to the world. It brings about, at the same

time, a gradual loss of interest in the outer world. One-pointed concentration can be carried out with eyes open without being disturbed by what is seen.

The third and the most effective method is satsang. It involves no special efforts on the part of the aspirant. Close contact with a Sadguru (one who has realized the Self) inhibits vishaya vasanas, promotes introversion of the mind and permits one-pointed concentration to proceed smoothly. Even a place hallowed by the Sadguru will have the same effect. The aspirant should practice under this most potent influence as long as possible. Bhagavan asks:

“If association with Sages is obtained, to what purpose are the various methods of self-discipline?”

Deep Meditation

When the aspirant acquires, through the practices described, the ability to remain thought-free, one-pointed concentration on the single thought ‘I’ proceeds undisturbed. The thought ‘I’ must be as abstract as possible. It should not be associated with any other thought, such as ‘Who am I?’, ‘I is the ego’, etc., as such thoughts delay going into deep meditation. A devotional feeling that ‘I’ represents pure Being or the Self or God helps. With practice, the concentration on ‘I’ becomes more intense and the mind gets fully introverted. This is deep meditation and Self-enquiry proper. For sustained practice, certain other conditions are also necessary. The aspirant should be seated comfortably with back and head erect and body relaxed. Eyes may be kept closed or open. There should be no undercurrent of hurry or anxiety whatever. Under these propitious conditions, the thought ‘I’ occupies the whole mind, which now becomes sattvic and embodies the Pure ‘I’ or Pure Awareness. Bhagavan has given valuable advice in this context:

“On waking from sleep, but before becoming aware of the world, there is (experienced) the Pure ‘I’.”

If this is recalled to memory and concentrated upon, he says, one can meditate with eyes open without being disturbed by the world phenomena. He says further:

“This (Pure ‘I’) is the only passage to the Self-Luminous Supreme Being.”

If deep meditation succeeds in holding on to the Pure ‘I’ it would be a short-cut to reach the Heart since it is the Self. The reason why Bhagavan calls Self-enquiry a direct

path will now be clear. The thought 'I', representing the individual being or ego, gets lost smoothly and rapidly in the Pure 'I', or the Supreme Being. With meditation on a mantra of the Name of God, further time and efforts are involved.

Sinking of the Mind in the Heart

The sinking of the mind in the Heart can be clearly felt and recognized. Bhagavan has explained it in these words:

"The thought-process that is struck by reason of swoon, sleep, excessive joy, consuming sorrow, fear, etc., enters its own place, namely, the Heart. The person is not then aware of this entry into the Heart, whereas in samadhi he is clearly aware of such entry."

Samadhi is the state that ensues when the mind sinks in the Heart. Explaining its occurrence in deep meditation, Bhagavan says:

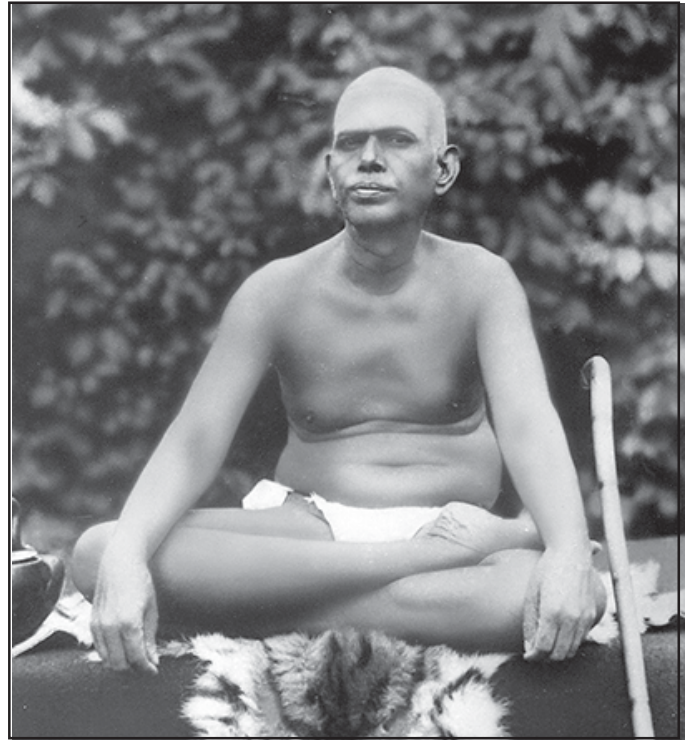
"What really happens is that the thinker (mind), the object of thinking 'I' and thought (one-pointed concentration) all merge in the One Source (the Heart) which is consciousness and bliss."

The triads (triputi), described as "knower, known and knowing" and as "meditator, object of meditation and the process of meditation," cease to exist (in consciousness) when the mind sinks into the Heart. The direct experience of the Self, says Bhagavan, is "going beyond duality and triads." Going beyond the triads cannot be known by the aspirant when it occurs. But loss of the sense of duality between his individual being and the Self can be clearly felt. It is the union of the individual being (mind or consciousness) with the Supreme Being (Pure Consciousness). It is a thought-free state and a moment of great bliss and exultation for the aspirant. The experience lasts only for a moment since the mind comes out of the Heart owing to the pull of the vasanas, and the sense of duality revives.

Abidance in the Self

The sinking of the mind in the Heart for the first time is a great moment for the aspirant as it brings Guru's Grace to support all his further efforts. On this Bhagavan says:

"Guru's grace is really inside you, in your Heart; and the moment you effect subsidence or merger of the mind in its Source (the Heart), by any of the methods, Grace rushes forth spouting as from a spring within you."



When this happens, the aspirant will, of his own accord, surrender himself completely to the Guru. With guru's grace, the aspirant continues to practice deep meditation to the point of sinking the mind in the Heart until it becomes effortless and spontaneous. It becomes possible for the aspirant to hold on to the Heart during his waking hours and carry on his worldly duties. This is still not a permanent merger of the mind in the Heart, but only a temporary subsidence, for the vasanas still persist. Bhagavan calls this "*Abidance in the Self*". He says:

"One should abide in the Self without the sense of being the doer, even when engaged in work born of destiny like a mad man."

Abidance in the Self helps to remove vasanas from the mind. Apart from the loss of the sense of doership, it has a profound influence on the character and outlook of the aspirant who gains perfect equanimity to meet any situation.

Samadhi

In the beginning, sustained efforts are required to go fully into the samadhi state. In the sadhana of Self-enquiry samadhi is not a state of mental blank or unconsciousness, as the English word "trance" may suggest. It is a state of intense wakefulness with an overpowering feeling of perfect Bliss. It is the Real State called jagrat-sushupthi, underlying the three states of waking, dream and deep

sleep. It cannot be described in words. *Ribhu Gita* contains a unique description of it. In the earlier stage of the practice of samadhi, thoughts intrude. This is called savikalpa samadhi; there is still a sense of duality or differentiation between one's own being and the Supreme Being. This passes on into nirvikalpa samadhi when there is no duality and no thought. The Self is experienced as a vast expanse of pure consciousness, a waveless ocean of awareness pure. However, these are temporary states and so the mind reverts to duality when samadhi ends. One must practice either savikalpa or nirvikalpa samadhi regularly while leading an active life in the world so that the

sahaja samadhi of the Jnani may result. He says:

"Realization must be amidst all the turmoils of life."

In sahaja samadhi all the vasanas are lost and the mind has merged permanently in the Self without any possibility of reversion to duality. Thoughts, words and actions are fully possible. This is the supreme state of inherence in the Self which is all-pervading and all-powerful. Says Bhagavan:

"It is very seldom that a person can realize his True Being without the Grace of the Guru."

—*The Mountain Path*, Oct. 1976

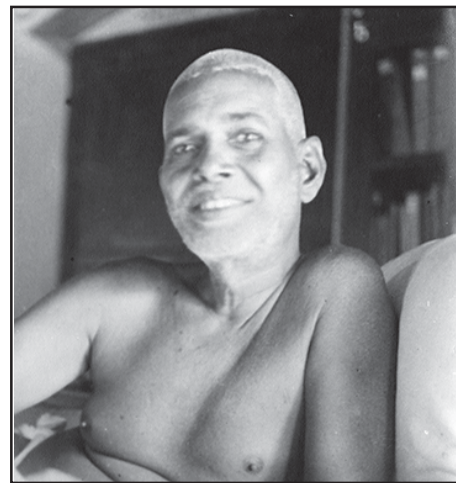
Darshan and Worship

by A Devotee

IT was eternal uninterrupted darshan; the light was upon his face and the divine presence pervaded the very air around him. Compassion brimmed in his wide-open eyes, where the light flashed like miniature suns. His ascetic form ensouled infinity and held it in a pulsing, trembling awareness that drew awe and adoration. The sweep of his unfathomable gaze awoke spontaneous worship and evoked self-offering. His apparent unconcern belied the great love that worked invisible wonders in the soul that sought truth. The calm and repose of his being reflected transcendence, and his utter detachment revealed the Supreme Soul.

His presence was peace and tranquility poised in eternal light and pure being. The eternal, the transcendent, was revealed in the limited, the transient. The transient was lit with the splendor and fire of the transcendent. It was as though the starry heavens had come down to blaze by day. The peace of the tranquil night sky was everywhere. The very air rippled with ecstasy and delight.

A vast ocean of peace emanated from that frail ascetic form. Then the form dissolved, leaving the shores of the ocean visible.



— *The Mountain Path*, Jan. 1980

IF you have any doubt about the truth, or if you want to support it by your intellectual skill or learned lore, by all means study the several books. But if you have no doubt about the truth and only want to realise it in actual experience, all that trouble is unnecessary. If a cook wants to serve a tasty dish to another, he has to know what thing and how much of each thing go into its composition and how they have to be prepared and mixed in proportion and so on. The person who is asked to relish it need not have that knowledge. So leave the dialectics of our philosophy to the learned among us. You may confine yourself to the practical enjoyment of the peace and joy of the Self.

— *Sri Chandrashekara Bharati Swaminah*

My Heart Opened

by *Diana Batista Jimenez*

I wanted to share with you all the experiences of my first trip to the Ashram in India and to Arunachala. Nothing could have prepared me for this adventure into my SELF. As I walked into the Ashram, took my sandals off, observed the people, monkeys, and peacocks, went up the first flight of stairs, and when I looked up there was the mountain, Arunachala! I took a deep breath praying, 'O Arunachala, here I am. Do as you wish, guide me.' I went into Bhagavan's shrine and I prostrated praying again, 'O Bhagavan, here I am. You have brought me here, do as you wish, guide me.' My prayers were instantly answered as the energy of this holy place took over my being, guided me and maintained me in a state of wonder and surrender during my entire stay.

As I woke up every morning a pull in my heart set in. Lord Arunachala, come! I wanted to get to the Ashram to be closer to Arunachala, to give praise, pray and meditate. The magnificence of Arunachala cannot be described in words. Every time I looked up to Arunachala, my whole being wanted to merge with this Holy Mountain, Shiva. What a mysterious and magnetic presence! I learned I was not alone in this reverence for Arunachala, as I saw others, just like me, doing the same, immersed in the same energy. Arunachala Shiva! Om Namah Shivaya! Lord of Knowledge, come! Lord God of gods, come!

I would walk into the Old Hall and sit down to meditate. As Bhagavan's presence completely absorbed me, I learned He is alive, ever-present! His Silence was able to quiet my mind, body, and emotions. Om Namah Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya! Jai Bhagavan! Lord of Peace, come!

Then, very subtly, I would hear the song of Arunachala Shiva and be drawn into the shrine, sit down to absorb the devotion with which the devotees have been singing this song day after day, for years! My heart opened, devotion mist came out and was lifted to the heavens; I was filled. It sounded like the angels singing.

Since I have come to Bhagavan, listening to the Vedas

in America always has had a healing and powerful effect on me, even more so when they were chanted live. But listening to the Vedas chanted by the Veda Patasala boys at the Ashram had the effect of enabling me to have deep concentration, or I

should say, I reached a no-thought state. The pujas followed and, with the continued chanting and the sounds of the bells, supported this state of grace. After the afternoon Vedas, all I could handle was food and sleep. The dark night has fled, come! Blue-throated Lord, come! Crown of the Vedas, come!

I went to the Skand Ashram cave with Shunya. As we were walking, I saw the steps that Bhagavan took for his daily walks on Arunachala; I could not believe I was walking on the very same steps He walked. My heart skipped a beat! I sensed Bhagavan's presence everywhere in the Ashram and on the Hill.

The energy of the Ashram and Arunachala has no comparison to any holy place I have visited. The mixture of the hustle and bustle of the city, cows, monkeys, peacocks, temples, lingams, heat, beggars, sadhus, the spiritual environment, energy, devotion – I took it all in. Nothing bothered me, everything was so normal to me. Not even uncomfortable! My body did not suffer from the long Pradakshina walks or climbing up to the caves. The state one reaches in Arunachala is a miniscule sense of THAT which IS.

Bhagavan and Arunachala have come! They have established in me a shrine, continuing the work of destroying my ego. Now back home, the Self-enquiry has become stronger and I remain awaiting that Blissful Silence to come . . .

His Peace, Love and Silence,
Diana Batista Jimenez



Two Lights That Illumined Our Lives

IT was with shock and sadness that we received the news in November of the sudden demise of two lights that illumined our lives – Srimati Rajalakshmi and her son, Arunachalam Viswanathan. They were both absorbed in the Feet of Bhagavan within a span of five days! First Viswanathan on November 6th, followed by his mother on November 11th.

Rajalakshmi was the last living devotee with memories from the early years of Sri Ramanasramam through her close association with the Maharshi in the 1920s and 30s. Rajalakshmi's mother passed away when she was only 3 years old. From then on, her grandmother, Venuammal, the sister of Echammal, raised her as a daughter. Venuammal, like her sister, devotedly served the Ashram and took special care of Bhagavan's Mother during her last illness in Skandasramam. Rajalakshmi began to accompany her grandmother daily to the Ashram from 1923 to the mid-1930s. After marriage she regularly visited the Ashram and took all her children to have Bhagavan's darshan. Bhagavan treated her like a daughter of the Ashram and she addressed him as Tatha from her childhood.



When her son Viswanathan finally realized the full extent of his mother's association with Bhagavan and the innumerable graces He bestowed upon her and Venuammal he was unable to contain his

enthusiasm. Any new revelation Viswanathan gleaned from conversations with his mother, he would immediately call or write to us in detail about these wonderful experiences. He was like that of a poor man living in a mud hut, one day digging into the floor and finding a pot of gold that was sitting unknown under his feet all the time. Such was his enthusiasm to share those wonderful tales of experiences and teachings he heard from the fortunate lips of his dear mother. Many of these stories can be found in volume number 2 and 4 of the 2008 *Mountain Path* magazine.

Every year he has been visiting his daughters in Virginia, and last September 8 and 9 Viswanathan stayed in our Arunachala Ashrama in New York. On September 9th we celebrated Bhagavan's 121st Anniversary of his Advent at Arunachala. The highlight of that day's program was the description he shared of his mother's close association with Bhagavan.

When we talked to him on the phone before he returned to India in October he expressed the desire to have English subtitles edited into the 1-hour video interview done of his mother describing her experiences



with Bhagavan-Ramana. We are in the process of having his wish fulfilled and to ensure that his genuine devotion and dedication lives on well beyond our mortal frames.

Jayanti

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 138th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's birth.

The programs will include parayanams, bhajans, talks and arati, followed by prasad (lunch).

In Queens, New York City
Saturday 6 January – 11:00 AM
Arunachala Ashrama
86-06 Edgerton Blvd., Jamaica Estates,
New York 11432 / Tel: 718.560.3196

In California, San Francisco Bay Area
Saturday 13 January – 11:00 AM
Fremont Senior Center
40086 Paseo Padre Pkwy, Fremont, CA 94538
Tel: 510-656-2752

Worries Do Not Belong To You

Questioner: Worries of worldly life trouble me much and I do not find happiness anywhere.

Maharshi: Do those worries trouble you in sleep?

Questioner: No.

Maharshi: Are you the same person as you were in sleep, or not?

Questioner: Yes.

Maharshi: So, it proves that worries do not belong to you. Those who believe the mind to be real will not be able to subdue it. In the state wherein the mind appears to be real, the thief cheats by putting on the

dress of the policeman. Hence, we must know how to destroy the mind by knowing its real nature.

People ask me how to control the mind. It is but a bundle of thoughts. How will the mind which is a collection of thoughts come under control by a thought of controlling it? Therefore, reach its source. Seek the Atman. All misery will come to an end if you introvert your mind. If you feel that jagat (the world) is created by the imagination of the jiva, then that imagination must be given up. If you think that God has created the Jagat (world), then surrender to Him all your responsibilities and leave the burden of the whole world to Him.

— Recorded by Swami Madhava Tirtha

Ramana Satsangs in the USA and Canada

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in or near large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Birmingham, AL — Sai Kand (205-441-6859 / kandsai@yahoo.com)

Boston, MA — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / annaklegon@gmail.com)

Canada, Ottawa — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / madhupaddy@rogers.com)

Canada, Toronto — Thiru (416-876-1942 / thirusivasamy@hotmail.com)

Canada, Vancouver — Akash (778-321-4499 / eternalshiva@hotmail.com)

Canada, Victoria — Saibish (250-818-2875 / saibish@gmail.com)

Chicago Area — Jean-Luc & Rita (719-480-3530 / blueskyvalley@mac.com)

Connecticut Area — Aruna & Ram (860-284-0078 / rsankaran2000@yahoo.com)

Chapel Hill, NC — Ranjani Ramanan (919-338-2551 / ranjanil@yahoo.com)

Detroit, MI Area — Murali & Kalpana (248-210-7543 / muralk@hotmail.com)

Dublin, Ohio — Abilash & Madhavi (614-789-9058 / mungamuru@hotmail.com)

Florida, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Robinson (954-600-1967 / arunahill@gmail.com)

Florida, Tampa — Rohit (813-766-0145 / rohitkvaidya@yahoo.com)

Florida, Palm Coast — Shriram & Rekha (904-347-3434 / ssmarathemd@gmail.com)

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

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

New Jersey, West Windsor — Gurunath & Leena (609-273-6216 / gsnetravali@hotmail.com)

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Puerto Rico — Rosa & Scott Mathewson (787-531-5295 / rosilinm@hotmail.com)

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Washington, D.C. Area — Uma & Santosh (301-528-5526 / uma_santosh@hotmail.com)

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