



The Maharshi

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

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

In the present issue, we continue with the next two chapters found in the manuscript — Chapter IX, “What are the Granthis?” and Chapter XII “Cosmogony and Saktaism.” In the Sri Ramana Gita of Ganapati Muni, these same chapters are titled “On Cutting the Knot”, which consist of 22 verses and “On Shakti”, with 35 verses.

CHAPTER IX

What are the Granthis?

14-8-1917

Kavyakantha: What are the *granthis* and how are they cut off, as referred to in the famous line:

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
कशीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥ ८ ॥

When a person realises Him in both the high and the low, the knots of the heart are loosened, his doubts dispelled and his karmas exhausted.

—Mundakopanishad, II.2.8

This has been the subject of doubt with several *bhaktas*. Will Maharshi please enlighten us on this matter?

Maharshi: *Granthis* is a knot. The knot of the heart ties two things together: the Supreme *Brahman* or *Atma*, and the appearance also of the *jiva* connected with a body. The location or contact between the body and *Brahman* is styled as the *granthis* or knot. It is by reason of that relation (or knot) that one gets the idea of a body, and the idea that he has or is a body. The body itself is inert, but *Brahman* is

of the nature of Consciousness. The relation between these two is inferred by the intellect.

When the body is active in the waking and dreaming states, it is so by reason of its being overshadowed or covered by the image or reflection of the pure *Chaitanya*, i.e., *Brahman*. When, however, one is asleep, or for other reasons inactive and unconscious (e.g., in faint or coma), such image or reflection is absent, and from this fact the place of the *Chaitanya* or *Brahman* in the body is ascertained or located. It is located in the heart (हृदयं), into which the soul or ego retreats in deep sleep, ceasing its conscious activity in all parts of the body. This heart is connected with a number of *nadis* (nerves) and the reflection of the *Chaitanya* on the heart spreads from the heart through these *nadis* or nerves into all parts of the body. The *Chaitanya* is subtle like electricity; and just as electricity, which in its manifest form is seen in lights, operates through solid material-like electric wires, so this *Chaitanya Jyoti*, or light of *Brahman*, moves from its subtle form through these *nadis* or nerves into the entire human frame. The sun, from its place in the heavens, illumines the entire solar system; so does *Chaitanya Jyoti*, or the light of *Brahman*, taking its place in the heart, illumine the entire human frame; and

when such *Chaitanya* pervades every part of this body, then does the embodied soul, the *jiva*, derive all its experiences.

There are various powers manifest in the different *nadis* or nerves according to the function performed by each tissue or organ into which they (the nerves) enter. All such powers, however, are the various transformations of the one *Chaitanya* that permeates the *nadis*. But there is one *nadi* called the *sushumna* which is specifically the *nadi* prominently connected with the manifestation of the *Chaitanya* itself. It is also termed *Atma-nadi* or *Amrita-nadi*. When man is operating through the other *nadis* alone, he derives the impression that the body is himself, and that the external world is different from him, and hence he is filled with *abhimanam* or *dehabhimanam*, i.e., ‘I-am-the-body idea’. When, however, he renounces these ideas (i.e., that the body is himself and that the world is different from himself) and expels the *abhimanam* (I-am-the-body idea) and enters on the enquiry into the Self, *Atma Vichara*, with concentration, then he is said to be “churning the nerves” (*nadimathanam*). By such churning, the butter of the *Atma* or Self is separated from the *nadis* in all parts of the body and the Self shines in the *Amrita* or *Atma-nadi*. Then is the Self or *Brahman* realised. Then one perceives nothing but the *Atman* (*Brahman*) everywhere.

Such a person may have sense objects presented to him and yet, even when receiving those impressions, he will receive them as himself, not as different from himself, which is the view of the ignorant. In everything that he sees, the ignorant one perceives form. The wise one

perceives *Brahman* inside and outside of everything that he sees. Such a person is said to be a *Bhinna-granthi*, i.e., the Knotless. For him the knot which tied up matter or body with *Brahman* has been severed. The term *granthi* or knot is applied both to the *nadi-bandha*, or physical knot in the nerves (something like the ganglia), and the *abhimana* or attachment to the body resulting therefrom. The subtle *jiva* operates through these knots of *nadis* when he perceives gross-matter. When the *jiva* retreats from all these *nadis* and rests in the one *nadi*, i.e. *Atma-nadi*, he is termed the *Bhinna-granthi*, or the Knotless; and his illumination results in his achieving Self-realisation.

Let us take the case of a red-hot piece of iron. Here, what was formerly the cold, black iron is now seen suffused with and in the form of fire. Similarly, the one dull, cold and dark *jiva*, or even his body, when overpowered by the fire of *Atma Vichara* (knowledge of the Self), is perceived to be in the form of the *Atman*. When a man reaches that stage, all the *vasanas* (tendencies), derived (it may be) from many previous lives and connected with the body, disappear. The *Atma*, realising that it is not the body, realises also the idea that it is not the agent performing karma or action and that, consequently, the *vasanas* or fruits resulting from such (antecedent) karma do not attach to it (the *Atman*). As there is no other substance besides the *Atman*, no doubts can trouble that *Atman*. The *Atman* that has once burst its knots asunder can never again be bound. That state is termed by some *Parama Sakti* (highest sakti) and by others *Parama Santi* (supreme peace).

Advent at Arunachala

You, your friends and family are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 114th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala. The program will include parayanams, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by prasada (lunch).

In New York City

Saturday 11 September — 11:00 AM

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

In Nova Scotia, Canada

Sunday 5 September — 11:00 AM

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

CHAPTER XII

Cosmogony and Saktism

Kapali Sastri's questions:

K: Both the ignorant man and the man of Realisation in their actual daily life perceive the experiencer, experience, and the objects experienced. How is the Realised one better off than the ignorant person?

Maharshi: Because the Self-realised sees the unity of the Real amidst the multiplicity of appearances, whereas the ignorant man only sees and succumbs to the appearance of plurality. The former sees himself, i.e., the experiencer, the objects experienced, and experience as one and the same Self, and the latter does not. To the latter, who does not see the Self, everything is different.

K: In the Real (in which these differences appear) is there energy (*Sakti*)?

Maharshi: Yes! The Real includes all energy (*Sakti*).

K: But is that energy, within the Real, active?

Maharshi: Yes. It is active in producing these worlds. The active energy needs and has a support (*asraya*). That support is inactive and changeless though energy is active and changing. This activity and change is termed the “indescribable illusion” (*maya*). Illusion is manifold. The apparent change, motion, or activity in the universe is itself an illusion. The Real cannot and does not change. The distinction between the Self and energy is an illusion. If the sense-bound person changes his angle of vision, that distinction disappears, and the One alone remains.

K: Is the energy (of the Real, the Supreme) that produces all these worlds changing and transitory or changeless and eternal?

Maharshi: The Supreme that changes by reason of His energy is yet changeless. This profound mystery, sages alone can unravel.

Change is activity (*vyapara*) and activity is termed energy (*Sakti*). The Supreme created these worlds by His energy (*Sakti*). Activity being twofold – evolving (*pravritti*) and withdrawing (*nivritti*) – the Supreme also withdraws these worlds by His energy (*Sakti*), as the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, IV.5.15 states:

यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्केन कं पश्येत्

Where, for one, everything has become *Atma* alone, what is there to be seen, and by whom?

In this passage relating to the activity of the Supreme in withdrawing (*nivritti*) the universe, first the

term “everything” (*sarva*) is used. That refers to the multiplicity of appearances which prevailed at the time when duality was experienced. The other term “became” (*abhut*) refers to some activity. The term “*Atma* alone” (*Atmaiva*) expresses the fact that all differentiating activity is finally withdrawn into the Supreme Self (*Atma*) only. Thus we have the high authority of the Vedas to show that one *Atma* alone exists forever and is Real and that all else is illusory and evanescent.

K: Can we know the Real (*Swarupa*) without its activity?

Maharshi: No, we do not know the unmanifest Real apart from its manifesting activity. Energy (*Sakti*), according to *Saktas*, has two names, the activity (*vyapara*) and support (*asraya*). Activity is creation, maintenance, reabsorption (*pralaya*), etc. The support is nothing but the Real, the Supreme (*Swarupa*). The Real is all, underlies all and needs the support of none. Such is the truth about the Real, its energy and activity. Multiform existence is the result of activity, and activity presupposes energy with the Supreme. When the Supreme is unclothed with energy, no activity arises, nor the Universe. In the endless whirl of creation and reabsorption, when reabsorption occurs, activity merges in the Supreme.

All human experience is impossible in the absence of energy (*Sakti*); no creation, no knowledge, and no triad can exist then. In the language of *Saktas*, *Sakti* (energy) is the Supreme, the one Real, and takes the name of activity (*vyapara*) in the act of creation, etc., and the name of Self (*Swarupa*) by reason of its being the support or *sine-qua-non* of activity.

If one considers that change (*chalana*) is the distinguishing characteristic of energy, then it must be admitted that we posit the existence of the Supreme Substance as that on which the play of energy or change takes place. That Supreme Substance is differently styled by different sets of persons. Some call it *Sakti* and others *Swarupa*; some call it *Brahman*, and others *Purusha*.

Reality (*Satya*) is to be viewed in two ways: first by its description and next by its nature or constitution, i.e., as the thing in itself. By description and name, that is, through speech, one tries to approach it and get an idea of it. But the Reality, as it is in itself, can only be realised; it cannot be expressed. The description given of it in the Vedas is:

यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते ।
 येन जातानि जीवन्ति ।
 यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति ।
 तद्विजिज्ञासस्व । तद् ब्रह्मेति ।

—Taittiriya Upanishad, III.1

To him, verily, he said: “Whence indeed these beings are born; whereby, when born, they live; wherein, when departing, they enter; That seek thou to know; That is *Brahman*.”

That Source, the maintenance, and end of all refers to its external attribute – activity, in order to give the learner an idea of it. But the thing as it is in itself must only be immediately (directly) realised (अपरोक्षनुभूति).

The wise (i.e., Vedantis) say that the basis or *sine qua non* of energy (*Sakti*) is the Self (*Swarupa*), and that its activity is its attribute. By inquiring into the cause or root of that activity, one reaches its basis, the Self. Substance and attribute, that is, Self and its basis are inseparable. Let any one try to separate them, his mind retires baffled from the task. It is always by its attribute of activity that the Self is made known and (from this point of view) the attribute, activity, is therefore associated always with the Substance, the Self. But this activity is (in reality, from the point of view of the Self-realised) not distinct from the Eternal Self. The distinction between substance and attribute is the result of illusion. If the illusion disappears, the Self alone remains.

Ravi Ramanan

ON August 14th at 2:46 p.m., surrounded by family members and devotees, Ravi Ramanan was absorbed into his Master, Bhagavan Sri Ramana. Ravi was the second son of the President of Sri Ramanasramam, Sri V. S. Ramanan, and his wife, Srimati Susheela.

Since Ravi landed in America, about 12 years ago, he was a source of inspiration and support to all devotees. Throughout his successful career, he often told us that whatever Bhagavan had given him belonged to Bhagavan’s devotees. Even without his saying this, it was clearly demonstrated by his generous deeds, which were numerous. Although residing in the USA, Ravi continued to be a dedicated, active player in the affairs of Sri Ramanasramam. He went to great lengths to obtain copies of photos taken of Bhagavan by Eliot Elisofon, owned by Time-Warner and archived at the University of Texas in Austin. He was also successful in persuading the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation to release Sri Ramana Maharshi’s photos from their archive in France. He, along with his wife Ranjani, was the editor of *Saranagati*, the Ashram’s online monthly newsletter. During the last few years, he guided web designers in shaping Sri Ramanasramam’s website (sriramanamaharshi.org). In every aspect of the Ashram he took immense interest. His guidance in administrative matters was always decisive and correct, coming as they were from a pure, totally dedicated heart. His early demise is not only a tremendous loss to his immediate family, but to the ever-growing family of devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi the world over.

Ravi had always told his family that at the age of 45 he would wrap up his commitments in America and together with his family return to Tiruvannamalai. On the threshold of his 45th birthday, his Master and Lord Sri Ramana, took him directly to His eternal abode, bypassing whatever noble plans of serving his Guru at Sri Ramanasramam Ravi had envisioned.



It was about two years ago when Ravi’s brain tumor was first detected. This was soon followed by major surgery and continued therapy. The existence of a tumor first became apparent on September 23, 2008, when he suffered a seizure and lost consciousness while exercising in the early morning. As he was losing consciousness, not knowing what was happening to him, he first thought of the uncertain fate of his wife and two daughters, but no sooner did that thought come than another overwhelming thought rushed in, formed in the following words of the second verse of Sri Ramana’s “Sri Arunachala Ashtakam”: “Kandavan evanenak krauttinul nadak, kandavan indrida nindradu kanden”, which means, “Who is the seer? When I sought within, I watched what survived in the disappearance of the seer (that is, the Self).” Sponta-

neously focusing on the import of these words, he experienced a flood of pure awareness filling his entire being. That was the beginning of his final journey on Earth, a journey he felt to be the direct grace of Bhagavan Ramana.

Everyone who had heard of Ravi's illness during these last two years was naturally saddened by the news. But those who went to visit him, surprisingly, came back inspired and encouraged. On seeing him we never felt any weakness of spirit, paucity of faith, or absence of complete surrender or devotion to Bhagavan. Ravi never allowed others to dwell on his illness or be inconvenienced because of it. As the months passed he became spiritually transformed and indrawn, yet sensitive to the concern and feelings of all his friends and relatives. Knowing his departure was imminent, he gave instructions to his family on every detail regarding where they should live, the girls' education and even the destination of his remains, which traveled within days to the foot of Arunachala.

All those present on Ravi's last day tell of the overwhelming experience of peace that flooded his room. They said it was like a surging wave that washed up on the shore of his consciousness and overflowed into the heart of everyone present. And some time after he had breathed his last and that wave of peace and joy receded, they found themselves left behind, standing, while Ravi, totally surrendered, was swept away into that eternal ocean of pure awareness.

On hearing of the seriousness of Ravi's condition, Swaminathan, Terry Sayre, and Sitaraman, from the San Francisco satsang, immediately flew Friday night to North Carolina. They reached Ravi's bedside just a few hours before his passing. Swaminathan and Terry sent the following report of that day.

The Final Day

14 August 2010, Durham, North Carolina

I think it must be very rare for someone to receive a 'send off' like the one Ravi got today. Dennis had mentioned that he strongly felt Bhagavan's peace in the hospital room and that Ravi had Bhagavan's grace to the fullest. Well, it was clearly evident today. About 30 people were in that small room singing "Ramana Sadguru" when his breath became more and more shallow and finally stopped. His face appeared calm during and after. His body looked so healthy and even the hair so intact despite

months of chemotherapy that I could have easily believed he was just resting on a Saturday afternoon. The end came at 2:46 PM. Many songs were sung during the day, including those from *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. After Ravi passed away, Susheela and Rammohan sang the entire *Ramana Puranam* from the *Sannidhi Murai*.

Bhagavan's Grace, His omnipresence, was very palpably present in the room. Even though this was a deeply personal time for all of Ravi's biological family, it seemed so amazing how each person present was somehow made to feel the reality that we are all children of Bhagavan and therefore brothers and sisters in one all-inclusive family. The welcome and warmth, the generosity extended to the members of the 'extended family' was admirable. There were several devotees from the Washington DC/Connecticut area, from North Carolina/Atlanta, and the three of us from California, besides several relatives, all of whom I did not know. In all there must have been 40-50 people who visited on that day. Following Bhagavan's example, Aruna, Sridhar and Shekar arranged for a sumptuous, multi-course lunch for everyone.

The entire family's dedication to Bhagavan's devotees was evident in the way each one came up and spoke to every devotee who visited during what rightfully ought to have been a few very personal hours filled with wrenching grief. This was especially true for Sundaram and Susheela, as the loss of a child is said to be the greatest grief of all. Bhagavan's Presence seemed to swallow up and include the human emotions of sorrow and grief that could be seen on the faces of those present. It seemed that the tears, the shocks felt through the room when Ravi took a particularly deep and loud breath, and the many other deep emotions one could read on the faces, voices, and postures of those present, were all so clearly also His Grace.

The dignity and gracious courtesy of all family members was so evident, over and over again. At one point the nurse came in to give Ravi a dose of morphine. She kindly explained to Sundaram what she was doing and why and then asked him who Ravi was. Although one can only guess his feelings, Sundaram's face, when he said, "He is my son," showed clearly he was very proud to be the father of Ravi, and he seemed to be comforting the nurse, telling her all is well, while she was attempting to comfort him. The children were particularly impressive.

Each showed composure and did not hesitate when asked to dip their finger in a small vessel of Ganga water and place it on the tongue of Ravi. It was as if Bhagavan Himself was instructing his children in the task, and guiding them on the proper way to perform their duty.

Ranjani, Ravi's wife, immersed in the feelings that surely only a wife and mother can know, had up until then been seemingly completely inwardly focused. When she heard me say to someone, from behind, that I would rather just stay in the room than go take lunch, she turned and by look and gesture alone lovingly made it very clear to me that declining to share in the food was definitely not an option. I then gratefully took part in the heavenly prasad provided to all.

When we arrived and throughout the day, Ranjani looked as one who, as you might imagine, was carrying a heavy weight, albeit with great dignity, not complaining but somewhat grim-looking. Afterwards, when I was standing in the hall just outside Ravi's room, she came up to me and shared a few affectionate words of kindness. Ranjani's composure and her dignified bearing during the day really captured my heart. I was so moved that when I was expressing this to her at the time of taking leave, I instinctively bent down and touched her feet.

I asked Anand, Ravi's elder brother, whether or not the family considered the possibility of taking Ravi to Arunachala during the last days. Apparently, Gururangan, Ravi's doctor throughout the illness, had visited Arunachala recently and even broached the same subject. But Ravi was too ill to make the trip and had said, "Arunachala is everywhere," or at other times, pointing to his heart, "Arunachala is here." It reminded me of what Ranjani had told us about Ravi's comment on reaching the hospital for the last time earlier this week: "I have had enough, and now I just want to go home." Anand also mentioned an experience that he had had a few weeks back when, in deep sadness he fell asleep one night, pondering Ravi's fate. During a dream he distinctly heard a voice say, "We have lived through numerous births, some of them for 100 years, others for even 200. How does it matter if we die at 40 in just one of them?" He said that since that night he felt that Ravi had Bhagavan's grace, and that lessened his sorrow. Indeed, he was probably the most composed among all the family members in the final moments, holding up Ravi's chin and fondly stroking

his hair. And just after the breathing stopped, Anand seemed to tower over the room, standing next to Sundaram and his brother Ganesan, with what may have even been a slight smile, his eyes beaming forth with great intensity and, it appeared, happiness.

Shortly after Ravi had passed on, Ranjani recounted the following. Ravi and Ranjani had gone to the Tirupati temple immediately after their marriage, when Ravi was 28 years old. Coming out of the temple, they prayed. Ranjani then asked Ravi what he had prayed for. Ravi responded, "To realize my Self in this birth." That answer surprised her somewhat. What remarkable sincerity! Moreover, Ravi would apparently often tell his family that he wanted to stop working when he was 45 years old and go back to Sri Ramanasramam. This was not something that his daughters, born and raised in the United States, were very keen about, but Ravi insisted. Ranjani said, "I don't know how he came up with the number 45, but as things turned out he has passed away just a few weeks shy of his 45th birthday." He has indeed gone to Bhagavan's eternal Ashram.

On our way back to California, Sitaraman told me a story that he had heard in Bangalore. When Ravi was in Bangalore as Managing Director of GE-India, his secretary applied for a loan from the company in order to finance the medical treatment of her sick uncle. The Human Resources Department concluded that she did not qualify for the money according to company policy. When Ravi learned about this, he walked up to his secretary with a blank personal check of his own and asked her to fill out any amount that she wanted. What generosity! And he would always comment about how wealth, power and position are all very transient.

There is another story that demonstrates the spiritual approach Ravi took with him even to the workplace. Before Ravi joined his current employer, Blackstone Corp., he interviewed with another company that was in an extremely competitive manufacturing business under intense cost pressure. When asked by the CEO of that company how he would prepare the company to survive and thrive, Ravi responded that, as Chief Operations Officer, he would work to transform the company from the inside, as a caterpillar becomes a butterfly. It struck me then that these could have been Bhagavan's own words of advice for anyone, whether running a company or simply for one's self.

Ravi's was a life lived to the fullest and with distinction in every way. He had an enormously successful professional career, yet he found time to be of so much service to Bhagavan's devotees – by participating in the management of the ashram, overseeing the revamp of the ashram website, working hard and successfully to procure negatives of old pictures of Bhagavan heretofore unavailable to the ashram archives from European and American photographers, and by being a great inspiration and support to all of Bhagavan's devotees who met him, whether in India, California or Connecticut. His external life is something that each one of us who knew him, and certainly his family, can be very proud of, while the manner of his passing clearly indicates how much his inner life was a recipient of Bhagavan's grace.

Ever since I heard about Ravi's sickness two years ago, but especially since yesterday morning, the following verse from Shankaracharya's "Bhaja Govindam" has kept haunting me:

Nalineedalagata jalamatitaralam
Tadvajjeevitamatisaya Chapalam
Viddhi Vyaadhyabhimaanagrastam
Lokam Sokahatam Cha Samastam
Bhaja Govindam... Bhaja Govindam

The water drop on the tip of the lotus petal has an extremely uncertain existence.
So also is this life ever unstable.
Understand that consumed by disease and conceit,
And riddled with pangs, is this whole world.
So chant (seek) Govinda...

Ramana Satsangs

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

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

Ann Arbor, MI — Nirupama & Ramesh (574-514-4766 / <neeru_2@hotmail.com)

Boston, MA — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / dklegon@comcast.net)

Connecticut Area — Prashanth & Shobana (860-691-1862 / vprashanth@msn.com)

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

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

New Jersey, Pennington — Nandini (609-730-8447 / nandinikapadia@yahoo.com)

San Francisco Area — Karthik & Sunita (510-656-2752 / sunita_parasuraman@yahoo.com)

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