

The Maharshi

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THE “SRI RAMANA GITA” OF B. V. NARASIMHASWAMI PART III

While B. V. Narasimhaswami was residing at the Ashram, around the year 1930, he appears to have taken up the project of recasting Ganapati Muni’s Sri Ramana Gita in its original conversational form. For a full introduction to this newly-discovered manuscript see the July/August 2009 MAHARSHI newsletter. In the present issue, we take up chapter four, titled “What is the nature of Jnana – Realisation”.

CHAPTER IV

What is the nature of Jnana – Realisation

On the 21st July, 1917, Kavyakantha queried the Maharshi again.

Kavyakantha: What is the “State of Jnana”? Is it the mental process ‘अहं ब्रह्मास्मि’¹ (I am Brahman), or the idea ‘ब्रह्माहम्’ (Brahman is myself), or the idea ‘अहं सर्वम्’ (I am everything), or the idea ‘सकलं ब्रह्म’ (Everything is Brahman); or is Jnana different from all these four ideas?

Maharshi: All these mental states, processes or ideas are certainly only the operations of the mind. But that which is termed Jnana is not a mental state or process. It is ‘स्वरूपावस्थितिः’, i.e., Being, remaining or existence in the Self as such.

Kavyakantha: Then, Sir, is not the Self – Atman or Brahman (God) – reached by the mind? In fact, while the *Mundaka Upanishad*, III, i. says एषोऽणुरत्मा चेतसा वेदि तव्यः (This subtle Self has to be known by the mind), द्रूष्यते त्वग्र्या

बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्म्या सूक्ष्म दर्शिभिः (It is to be seen by the sharp eye of the seers of the subtle), and the *Katha Upanishad* IV.ii. says of Brahmana: मनसैवेदमाप्तव्यम् (By the mind alone is this to be attained), while *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II.9. says यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह (Whence words retire baffled, as also the mind); and Brahman is repeatedly styled as अवागमनस गोचरम् (Not to be reached by speech or mind). How is this conflict to be reconciled and which is the truth?

Maharshi: All sets of texts are true. It is the mind that sets out on the enquiry into the nature of the Self. But in the course of its efforts to reach Brahman, it gets transformed and is seen to be Brahman. It ceases to have any separate existence.

(Requested later to elucidate this matter further, Maharshi said):

In a sense, it is by the mind you reach Brahman. But perhaps it will be better to stick to the more accurate expression that it is Brahman alone that realises itself, and that the mind as such does not. What realises is not the mind as such, but the mind transformed into Purna Prajna or “Cosmic Consciousness”.

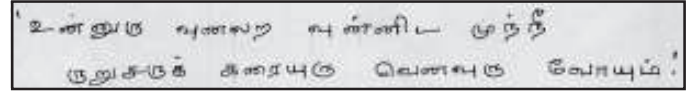
By way of analogy, we may take the case of a mighty river that flows into the ocean. The waters which formerly took the name of the “river”, later take the name of “Ocean”. One would not refer to the river as samudrakara nadi, i.e.,

1. The Sanskrit texts in this and the next paragraph are facsimiles of what Sri Ramana Maharshi wrote in the actual typed manuscript of B. V. Narasimhaswami. Besides writing the Sanskrit and Tamil text in the manuscript, he made handwritten English corrections as well. From paragraph four we substituted formal Sanskrit text.

the “river in the form of the ocean.” The mind is the separate, broken (khanda) entity which starts the enquiry; but as it progresses, it develops, alters its nature and form, and finally loses these and itself in the limitless, infinite, and undifferentiated (akhanda) ocean of Brahman. The mind may thereafter be referred to as brahmakara manas, i.e., the mind in the guise of the Absolute.

But perhaps it will be conducive to clarity if we briefly say, in popular language, that there has been manonasa, or the disappearance of the limited, finite mind and that Brahman is realized not by chitta vriti, i.e., mental operation, but by Purnattva or Swabhava Samstithi, the perfection of Self -realization.

Maharshi had elucidated this matter by another illustration in the third stanza of his “Arunachala Ashtaka”¹:



Which means, as addressed to God Arunachala considered as identical with Brahman:

Thinking of Thee without thinking (i.e., play of intellect), one's form melts away as that of a sugar doll entering the sea. *(To be continued)*

1. The following is a facsimile of the the Maharshi's Tamil handwriting. He wrote this verse into the BVN's typed manuscript.

A Day with Bhagavan

P. L. N. Sharma

IN 1932, I had the good fortune to attend a conference of cooperative organizations, which was held at Tiruvannamalai. It enabled me to see the holy Arunachala Hill and also pay a visit to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. When I saw him he was in his hall, reclining on a couch. The hall was clean and cool and the sofa was fully covered with colored shawls and a tiger's skin, but Bhagavan himself had only a loincloth on his body and nothing more. In the subdued light of the hall, his body shone like burnished gold and his eyes were luminous, full of flashes of some very intense inner life. The more I looked at him, the more his face seemed to be radiating a mysterious light, the source of which was somewhere deep within. I found myself unable to guess his mental state. I could not make out whether he was aware of the world or not, whether he saw me or not, whether he was in some yogic trance or in contemplation of something quite beyond my vision and knowledge.

The hall was full of silence, serenity and peace. About twenty people sat on the ground, apparently in deep meditation. When the bell rang for the midday meal, he invited us all with a nod of his head and we followed him to the dinning hall. In the dinning hall, orthodox Brahmins were sitting apart, behind a bamboo screen, while Bhagavan was sitting with non-Brahmins and some of the Brahmins who did not follow caste restrictions.

After food I was asked to clean the spot where I had eaten and take away the banana leaf that was used as a

plate. Anywhere else I would have taken it as a sign of disrespect. But I told myself that it may have been a necessary lesson and so I swallowed my pride.

The next morning I went again to the Ashram and sat near the door facing Bhagavan. Some government officer, accompanied by a retinue of peons, entered the hall and at once started telling Bhagavan how corrupt the government servants were, how they abused and misused their positions, how they quarreled and fought among themselves making the administration inefficient and unreliable, how he had been entrusted with the task of cleaning up the government machinery and how he was busy fighting against all the evils of the world. He complained that in his loyalty to his superiors, who had given him their confidence, and in his anxiety to make a success of himself, he had lost his peace of mind and had come to ask Bhagavan to make him calm and contented. It was clear that he thought himself to be a very important person whose request must be promptly met. After he had finished talking he looked expectantly at Bhagavan, as if saying: “Now it is your turn to show what you can do.”

Bhagavan did not even look at him. The hours were passing, but Bhagavan was completely silent. The officer lost patience, got up and said: “You are silent, Bhagavan. Does it mean that you want me to be silent too?” “Yes, yes.” Said Bhagavan, and that was all.

On the last day of our conference, all the delegates went in a body to Ramanashram and sat in the hall before

Bhagavan. Sri Veruvarupu Ramdas, the president of the conference, addressed Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, we are all social workers and disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. We have all sworn our lives to work for the removal of untouchability from our religion and customs. Be gracious to tell us what your views are on the subject.” Again there was no reply from Bhagavan. One could not even make out whether he had heard the question. The time was passing. The delegates were getting tired of sitting quietly and began whispering to each other. The situation grew embarrassing. Sri Yagnanarayana Iyer, the principal of Pachayappa College in Madras, got up and said: “Bhagavan, our question concerns worldly life. Perhaps it was improper to put it to you. Kindly forgive us.”

“There is nothing to forgive,” said Bhagavan, quite readily, and with a bright smile. “When the ocean is surging and carrying away everything before it, who cares what are your views or mine?” The delegates could not find much sense in the answer. Only the great events a decade later gave meaning to it.

On the fourth day of the conference I went to the Ashram all alone, with the intention of asking Bhagavan a personal question. I was told by others that in Bhagavan’s presence doubts get cleared spontaneously, without the need of a question and an answer. Nothing of the kind happened to me. On the three previous days I tried to

catch his eye, but could not. Several times I got up to ask a question, but was not encouraged and sat down again. On the fourth day I managed to address him, while he seemed to be looking into some infinity of space. “Bhagavan, my mind does not obey me. It wanders as it likes and lands me into trouble. Be merciful to me and tell me clearly how to bring it under control.” Even before I completed the question Bhagavan turned to me and looked at me affectionately. He spoke to me most kindly and his words sparkled with meaning: “All religious and spiritual practices have no other purpose than getting the mind under control. The three paths of knowledge, devotion and duty aim at this and this alone. By immersing yourself in your work you forget your mind is separate from your work and the problem of controlling the mind ceases. In devotion, your mind is merged in the God you love and ceases to exist as separate from Him. He guides your mind step by step and no control is needed. In knowledge, you find that there is no such thing as mind, no control, controller, or controlled. The path of devotion is the easiest of all. Meditate on God or on some mental or material image of Him. This will slow down your mind and it will get controlled of its own accord.”

Somehow I felt satisfied and there was deep peace in me when I looked at him for the last time.

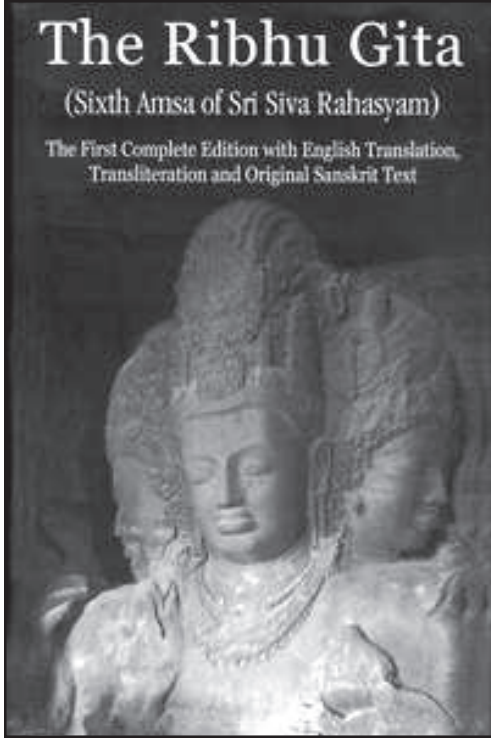
—*Ramana Smrti*

Plunge the Pure Mind into the Heart

ONE day it was suggested to Sri Maharshi that no spiritual progress could ever be made without sadhana, or discipline. After a pause he made these observations: “Mind it is that binds man, and the same mind it is that liberates him. Mind is constituted of sankalpa and vikalpa – desire and disposition. Desire is of two kinds – the noble and the base. The base desires are lust and greed. Noble desire is directed towards enlightenment and emancipation. Base desire contaminates and clouds the understanding. Sadhana is easy for the aspirant who is endowed with noble desires. Calmness is the criterion of spiritual progress. Plunge the purified mind into the Heart. Then the work is over. This is the essence of all spiritual discipline!”

During one of my visits I was seated at some distance from the Maharshi. There were many devotees in the hall and the usual silence prevailed. I remembered his injunction: “Plunge the pure mind into the Heart.” And decided to practice it then. I gazed at him and he gazed back at me. What followed was indescribable. His body seemed a glass case from which a blissful brilliance streamed out. More than half an hour passed this way. It was an experience unique and unforgettable. It confirmed Sri Ramakrishna’s statement that spiritual experience can be transmitted from one person to another in the manner in which material things are handed over.

—*Ramana Smrti*, Recorded by Swami Chidbhananda of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission



The Ribhu Gita

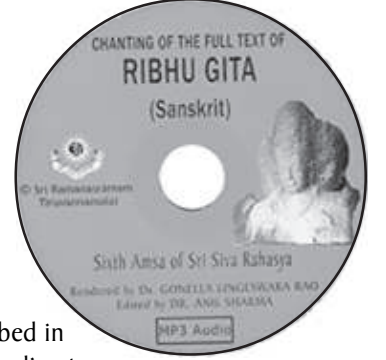
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The boy will have no next life

ONE Sunday, Mahalakshamma, an old lady from Vijayawada, attended the Hyderabad satsang and shared her experiences of Sri Ramanasramam. Among other things, she mentioned about a particular visit to the Ashram, planned by herself and her husband, to perform the annaprasana (first solid food feeding) ceremony for their child. Prior to this visit to the Ashram they had lost more than three other children in infancy. Since her husband had to attend some important work prior to the visit to the Ashram it was planned that she would reach the Ashram two days before her husband. Her husband would join her only on the date planned for the annaprasana.

On the day of her arrival she was given accommodation, and in the evening she was holding the child and walking in the ashram. On his way to the goshala Bhagavan stopped near the lady and patted the child. The child took hold of the thumb of Bhagavan and sucked on it. All the people around thought that the child was blessed to draw this special attention from Bhagavan. By night the child developed fever and the next day, in spite of best medical help, he passed away even before her husband reached the Ashram. That evening, after the husband arrived, the last rites were performed.

When the husband and wife were ready to go back to their place they went to Old Hall to take leave from Bhagavan. She stood before him to take leave. Tears were flowing from her eyes and she was unable to utter a single word. Everybody in the hall was watching. Tears were also flowing from Bhagavan's eyes and there was silence for sometime. Finally Bhagavan uttered these words: "Do not worry. The boy will have no next life."

She said that after hearing these words from Sri Bhagavan, the pain of losing a child, once again, which is the worst kind of suffering any mother could face, was gone, as if it was removed with a hand.

Ramana Sarma, Santa Clara, CA

Letters and Comments

I Know, But How To Break Free

I am struggling very deeply with Sri Ramana's main teaching of reaching happiness by asking 'Who am I?' I am wondering if someone would try to help me understand what is going on in me.

I have been meditating heavily on 'Who am I?' daily for the last seven years. I feel that mentally and somewhat spiritually I have become aware of the answer. Yet, I am in deep emotional pain and very depressed. I have been this way for three or four years now. I have no feeling of stability or security.

Mentally, I have realized that there is no 'me', that I am part of everything the senses perceive. Because of this I also feel that nothing matters. Not in the depressive sense, but rather nothing is better than something else. Everything is equal, is energy, and nothing is more important than something else.

I thought that having this awareness of what existence really is would open a world of internal happiness, I would feel secure continually and not feel the need for anything material – that there is no 'me' to satisfy.

Yet, I am very depressed. I have discovered that all of the people that I thought were my friends actually are not. A woman that was the love of my life and the most beautiful spirit I ever encountered just broke my heart a few months ago. I am in very great pain and confused from that. I feel very insecure and alone. I am very confused why I am not feeling good since becoming aware that there is no 'me'.

Logically, I can displace the depressive and unhappy feelings, because there is no 'me' to be feeling them. But, that logic does not make the pain go away. I feel like I cannot break out of my ego, even though I understand the 'me' who can't break out is not really something separate from everything else.

Can you tell me why I am not able to shake these bad feelings and feel God, even though I constantly know that there is no 'me'? I am beginning to feel that it is impossible for an individual on his/her own to break free from this existence. It seems that it is impossible to see oneself without looking into a mirror. So how can an ego truly know itself on its own? It

feels like a cat chasing its own tail, never able to actually grab it. It must be grabbed and given to the cat by someone else.

I truly believe in Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching and that unity with God can be found through the 'Who am I?' enquiry. I am hoping that you may be able to explain why I am feeling the way I am.

American Seeker

Your problem is not uncommon. Many aspirants read the teachings, are struck by their beauty and simplicity, understand them to be the ultimate Truth, but are still unable to experience that which they have so often read about — an ever-present pure awareness and joy. There are some who practice the teachings to the best of their knowledge and, after some years of not experiencing what they assume they should, give up all effort to realize the Self. The reason for this is essentially very simple and can be explained.

It is the ego or mind that gets depressed, frustrated and hurt. It is the same ego or mind that enjoys pleasures in life and craves to have them repeated. Believing that these experiences (or thoughts) of pleasure or sorrow constitute our existence always take us down the endless avenue of loss and pain, birth, death and rebirth.

If we feel unable to break loose from this revolving shackle of thoughts and wrong identification, we have to turn our attention to a Higher Power, to the Guru or God, and pray in all earnestness for release from suffering. We see that our efforts prove inadequate to give us peace or happiness. In all honesty, that is our actual experience. Therefore we must petition the Divine for help, accept what He ordains and learn from the lessons of life's experiences. By surrendering all unto Him — our losses, our depression, all that we believe we are — we come to realize that He alone exists and we are nothing. This is a sure way to salvation and happiness. If we do this, He will guide us, take over the entire burden of our lives, give us peace and make the conditions in our life conducive to spiritual progress and illumination. Countless devotees have taken to this path with success. Surrender and devotion are a sure way to salvation, and the Maharshi has recommended it to numerous seekers. Bhagavan has said that devotion is Jnana-Mata, the Mother of Jnana, Self-knowledge.

We should remember that those who have achieved

greatness in life, even by worldly standards, did so by applying a passionate, all-consuming effort to their chosen ideal. It is the same, or perhaps more so, for those who wishes to experience their true Self. The mental conditioning (vasanas) that have accumulated and influenced our activities for countless number of births, have to cease. Only then will the mind become calm and sink into its Source. This requires a constant, diligent effort on our part. To know the Self should be our sole interest in life, it should be our sole aim and goal. Ultimately nothing else should matter. That does not mean we should ignore our duties and responsibilities. As long as we experience the presence of an ego, we should perform our duties like a servant serving his master, with apparent interest, enthusiasm and love for all, but with total detachment.

You have already discovered having an intellectual understanding of a Universal Reality does not in itself give us the experience of that Reality. But Bhagavan Ramana has said that no effort ever goes in vain. Whatever effort we make is like a bank deposit in our account. It stays there, accrues interest, grows, and matures sooner or later. Like a swimmer caught in a raging river, we must exert all our energy to reach the shore and pull ourselves out of the turbulent waters before we drown. Those who have succeeded, says Bhagavan, have done so by perseverance. We must make this our life's goal and march forward, come what may.

Editor

What Does “Diving” Mean?

In the last issue of the Maharshi, the “hrdaya-kuhara-madhye” verse is translated by BVN as follows:

Within the cavity of the heart, pure Brahman, as “I, I” shines with immediacy as the Self (i.e., as the soul or inner core of our personality). Therefore either by seeking the Self, or diving in it, or by means of pranayama (breath control) let thy mind enter the heart. Take thy firm stand as Atman (i.e., be firm in Self-realization).

What does “diving” mean? Seeking seems to be Self-enquiry, and pranayama is clear. The Collected Works has a somewhat different translation where “diving” is subsumed into “seeking the Self”. Also it is curious that Bhagavan did not explicitly mention surrender in some form. Maybe all this is useless philosophizing but the question naturally arose when I read the translation and hence I ask.

California Devotee

There does seem to be a controversy about the “The Three Paths”, which is the title of chapter two of *Sri Ramana Gita*. This chapter is solely based on Bhagavan's famous “*hrdaya-kuhara-madhye...*” verse. The Sanskrit words ‘*majjata va*’ in the verse, translated as ‘diving deep’ or ‘diving in’ present some ambiguity as far as a separate path is concerned. It appears to indicate a separate path in the Sanskrit verse, but in translations from the Tamil or Telegu rendering of the same verse ‘diving in’ is not distinguished as a separate path, but rather an attribute of pursuing the enquiry or pranayama paths.

However, there is little doubt that Ganapati Muni took ‘*majjata va*’ to indicate a separate path. Otherwise he would not have titled the chapter “*margatraya-kathanam*” (The Three Paths). We know that Ganapati Muni intensely practiced mantra japa all his life. This was his method of tapas. Bhagavan instructed him to watch from whence the sound issues forth, and to do this is tapas. This may well be what the Muni understood to be the path of “diving in.”

This meaning of the verse has been elaborated upon in a 1973 pamphlet written by Krishna Bikshu, who also authored a detailed biography of the Maharshi, titled *Ramana Leela*. The pamphlet is titled *Sri Ramana Maharshi's Yoga Sutras*. In it he extracts nine sutras from the “*hrdaya-kuhara-madhye...*” verse and introduces a tenth sutra from Chapter V, verse 6 of *Sri Ramana Gita*. Krishna Bikshu had a close association with Bhagavan and was a sincere sadhaka and scholar in his own right. So we must give some credence to his commentary.

His explanation of the third path is inclusive of the path of devotion and surrender. Though this path is not implicitly mentioned in the verse, it can be inferred indirectly. It is easily corroborated with the Maharshi's verses in “Upadesa Saram” and “Ulladu Narpadu,” and the process is well understood by the majority of Bhagavan's practicing devotees. Since the third path is only indirectly posited in the verse, few have dared to delve into its meaning or comment on it.

All this may sound academic or ‘philosophizing’, as you say, but as long as we sincerely seek the experience of what Bhagavan taught, rather than mere intellectual understanding, we will certainly come to know his ever-present grace sooner or later.

Editor

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