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Jnaneswar Teaches His Father Vithoba

The following is the first-person account of Manu Subedar's visit to Sri Ramanasramam. It includes the text of a dialogue between Jnaneswar and his father that Bhagavan graciously read out for the benefit of Manu Subedar and all sadhakas. Bhagavan highly recommended the study of this dialogue to his devotees.

In 2001, on the occasion of the 121st Jayanti of Bhagavan Ramana, Sri Ramanasramam published this text in a pocket edition.

For over three years I resisted the invitation of my friend, Mr. Shankerlal Banker, to go to Ramanasramam. I pleaded with him that I was not ready, that "If I went into a very large shop, I would feel ashamed to come out with my hands empty." At last I decided that I would pay a visit and I prepared myself for about two months prior to that visit by reading nothing else except those two very outstanding books, viz., the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Avadhuta Gita*. After finishing some work, which I had at Cochin, I set out for Tiruvannamalai. I decided that I should ask a few questions in order to solve some of my doubts and framed some questions.

I was alone in a railway car from Katpadi and wanted to go over my questions and revise them, if necessary. As I formulated each question, I found that I knew the answer! So when I went and had the *darshan* of the Maharshi, I had really no questions to ask. I permitted myself to observe others and to absorb the elevating atmosphere of the Ashram.

I presented to the Maharshi a commentary on the *Gita*, a great Marathi classic, by the sage Jnaneswar, which I had rendered in English after eight years of effort. He was much pleased with it. I had with me extra copies of the *Avadhuta Gita* and the *Ashtavakra Gita* published by the Sastu Sahitya Mudranalaya Trust of Ahmedabad, of which I am the chairman. I presented these also to the Maharshi. I mentioned that I had been reading these books and I drew his attention to the very first verse in the *Avadhuta Gita*, which is as follows:

"It is only through the grace of God that, in men with knowledge, is born a desire to experience cosmic unity (*Advaita*), a desire which protects them from the great dangers of *samsara*."

I further pointed out that most of the matter in these books was for the advanced *siddha*, i.e., the adept. For new seekers, who were attempting to learn, there was not much direct guidance.

With infinite compassion in his eyes, the Maharshi looked at me and instructed one of his followers to bring a book. This was the *Maha Bhakta Vijayam* of Nabhaji. Bhagavan opened the book and began to read. (I noted with awe that the book opened exactly at the page where he intended to read.)

This is a discourse between Jnaneswar Maharaj and his father, in which the young son, who has achieved Realization, is discussing with his father, who is still

afraid, still seeking, and still groping. The father had gone to the forest to practice asceticism.

Highly impressed with the brilliance of Jnaneswar and his siblings, the king desired to meet Vithoba, their father. He therefore sent his own messengers to bring Vithoba to the kingdom, but the latter refused to come. Then the children went to visit their father and Jnaneswar Maharaj, getting on the lap of his father, engaged him in conversation, at the end of which he persuaded his father to come back with him to the city.

The Maharshi seemed to relish reading the discourse. Those who were present thoroughly enjoyed the reading and I discovered that I was given exactly what I needed. I am forever grateful to the Sage for what he taught me. The best teacher is he who takes you from where you are to the next stage. It is not the totality of the teacher's knowledge that the pupil must consider, but the appropriateness of that which is imparted at the proper moment.

Discourse between Jnaneswar and His Father

With respect and childlike affection Jnaneswar climbed onto the lap of his father and requested him to return to the capital and meet the king. The following dialogue ensued.

Father: Does one taste again what has been vomited once, even if it is some delicious dish? Should not the righteous ever stick to their word? Having retired from the world, can I go back there, mix with the undiscerning crowd and love them or adore the king? The forest shall ever be my abode and the world, yours. So go back and live happily in the world.

Jnaneswar: Why do you live in the forest?

Father: My son, what profit or pleasure is there hereafter for me to obtain by going back to the world? Going back there, far from being an aid, will only be a hindrance to salvation. This forest, free from the society of all people, is alone fit for *mouna nishta* (silent faith) and hence I live on these slopes.

Jnaneswar: The *Brahmanishta* (devotion to Self) that you are doing, while still full of such distinctions as city and forest, is like one trying to shut out a vision of the heavens by covering it with a canvas instead of closing one's eyes; like a small bird thinking to bear the impact of thunder with its tiny feet; like one trying to acquire virtue while engaging in acts of vice; like a

hardhearted man yearning for the sight of God, and like one achieving *jnana nishta* (firm faith with knowledge) without getting rid of the ego sense. In that *nishta*, which transcends all distinctions, can there be any idea of duality?

Father: So long as the notion "mine" persists, the ego sense and perception of duality as 'this and that' will not disappear. It is *nirvikalpa nishta* (single devotion) that drives away all notions of duality. Such *nishta* can be obtained only by freedom from all *sankalpas* or desires and freedom from all society. So I am here because the forest solitude is the proper place for *mouna nishta*.

Jnaneswar: Knowing one's Self and being that Self alone is *Brahmanishta*, and not living in forests.

Father: Even though one may know the Self in the presence of one's Guru, is it not necessary to stay in solitude to remain fixed in that Self?

Jnaneswar: True *jnanis* realized that *ajnana* (error) will not be destroyed, nor the sense of "I" and "mine" be got rid of by living alone in a forest and doing penance, and therefore practiced *nirvikalpa samadhi*, with a firm mind, ignoring all such distinctions as city and forest, home life and asceticism. If that is so, why should you oppose home life and live in this forest?

Father: If those who have seen the *sakshi* (witness) and become one with the Self, who is the witness of all, remain in family life, it will hamper their practice of *samadhi*, and they will lose their experience of realization of the Self. Therefore, those who have attained the bliss of the *sahaja* (spontaneous) state will not entertain, even in a dream, the desire to engage in family life.

Jnaneswar: *Sahaja nishta* (spontaneous realization) consists in being free, both from desires and aversions. Can hating the town and loving the forest be such *nishta*?

Father: How can one carry on with the affairs of the



world who has no desires either to do or not to do? And what is the use of living in the world if one is not fit to engage in the affairs of the world? One should not at all remain in a place where one would be a prey to many difficulties arising from the desire to cater to the comforts of this body. Such catering can be compared to celebrating the marriage of a corpse.

Jnaneswar: If one who has given up all desires to engage in any activity, engages in the practice of *sama-dhi*, is not that practice also an activity, and why should not he who has this occupation have also the activity of the family?

Father: Even if *samadhi* is an activity, it will remove all thoughts and anxieties. On the other hand, domestic business will create all kinds of thoughts and worries and cause grief always.

Jnaneswar: When one is *Sat Chit Ananda* (three fold Self) himself, why should one engage in *nishta sadhana* (practice with faith)?

Father: Do not the wise say that *Brahmanishta* (devotion to Self) consists in realizing while awake, the sleep state? If we don't so realize, can irresistible bliss flow from *samadhi*?

Jnaneswar: While the Vedas say that proper bliss con-

sists in watching like a spectator the diversions of the senses during the waking state, the activities of the mind during dream and the state of nothingness or blank during sleep, and that the state described as sleep during waking consists in being like a kite's shadow (which while touching anything is not attached to it), can you imagine that to be in a blank state as during sleep is real bliss, and that it is the state called sleep during waking?

Father: Waking and dream conditions will plunge one into the affairs of the world and render one a prey to the wild beasts of sense organs. Hence, only that *sama-dhi* where all affairs of the world cease and where there is total void as during sleep, is the proper *samadhi*.

Jnaneswar: The best *samadhi* is not to be a mere blank but, like meeting blow with blow, to engage in the affairs of the world and check the sense objects and be indifferent to them by opposing them with the sword of steady *jnana* (realization of unity), like Janaka.

Father: Only Suka, who got rid of all attachments, was able to conquer the monkeyish mind, which had accumulated within it many *vasanas* (deep set desires) during countless generations, and not Janaka, who, without being in the sleep-like state, had steady *jnana* that he was Brahman.

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Celebrated in New York City

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*The Nova Scotia Ashrama will conduct their program on Sunday, 29th August, at 11:00 a.m.
For more information or accommodation, please call (902) 665 2090.*

Jnaneswar: Only Janaka secured annihilation of mind and was able to do what he pleased with his mind, and not Suka who gave up all external attachments and betook himself entirely to life in forests.

Father: It is only by inhering in the Seer that one can get rid of the seen. How can one get rid of the seen by being in the seen? If to cure a man of poison, poison is administered to him, will not death be the result?

Jnaneswar: As we administer one poison as an antidote against another poison, he alone is wise, who establishes imperturbable *jnana* against the dangers of the sense organs, both external and internal, and not he who is always in *nishta* filled with fear lest at any time the wild beasts of sense objects should come and attack him. This latter will realize only his fear and never the supreme bliss of Brahman.

Father: What would not the sense objects do to one in family life, when they are capable of subjecting to grief even those who have become ascetics and are always absorbed in *nishta samadhi*? Can a dried leaf that has fallen into a turbulent flood keep still in one place?

Jnaneswar: The sense organs will bring down one who has not attained firm *jnana*, however long he may remain introverted, and cause him grief. Like a big rock that has fallen into a flood and remains there unmoved, one must remain unmoved, however numerous be the sense activities that come to one, and whatever be the unbearable grief they cause. It is only such a one that can experience the bliss of Brahman. The ignorance of one that is not steadily fixed in *jnana* will never disappear.

Father: However steady one may be fixed in *jnana*, he is sure to be engulfed in the darkness of *maya* (worldly illusion) unless he is always absorbed in meditation of Brahman, giving up all society.

Jnaneswar: It is only if there is such a thing as *maya* apart from Brahman, one would have to get rid of it by being always in *nishta*. Like saying 'one's shadow will fight with one,' you have pointed to a nonexistent *avidya* and an ego and declared that we must always be in *nishta*. As the only result of fighting with an unreal shadow will be exhaustion, you will have only endless trouble if you don't stay quiet in *mauna* (silence), realizing the unreality of *maya*, but go on eliminating, saying, "Not this, not this".

Father: How is one to attain *sahaja jnana* (spontaneous knowledge) without eliminating the unreal, becoming

one-pointed in mind, and remaining a mere *sakshi* (witness), unmoved by all that takes place.

Jnaneswar: The more we eliminate the unreal things as "not this, not this," the more sense objects will go on appearing, like winged white ants that swarm out from an ant hill. The more we try to make the mind one-pointed, the more will the mind get disturbed like a repressed ball rebounding. The more you remain a *sakshi*, the more will the delusion "I am the body," etc., assert itself like the curly tail of the dog resuming its bent shape, however much we try to keep it straight. So it is the majestic bliss of Brahman to realize by the *jnana* (realization) of enquiry, that one is himself Brahman, and *avidya*, alias ego, and *maya*, alias unreality, are entirely illusory like the appearance of silver in the mother of pearl.

Father: Is it possible to conquer the grief-causing sense objects and to become one with the all-pervading blissful Self by not doing any other *sadhana* but merely realizing as the result of *jnana vichara* that one is himself Brahman?

Jnaneswar: If even a live cow cannot kill a tiger, can a dead cow do so? Similarly, what can the sense objects do to the Self, which is eternal, free from all defects, which extends everywhere and is of the nature of bliss? As even a fat cow will be afraid to face a tiger, sense objects will not dare to come before a *jnani*, who by steady *jnana* has attained perfection. But even if they do, they will be extinguished, as the cow by the tiger.

Father: What if the *jnani* (he who knows), by mixing with *ajnanis* (the ignorant) should get entangled in sense objects, yield to disturbances of the mind and become entirely sorrow stricken, like a chaste woman becoming unchaste by mixing with prostitutes?

Jnaneswar: The steadfast chaste woman will maintain her chastity in spite of the company of any number of prostitutes. The unsteady one will find occasion for erring even without any evil company. Similarly, the firm *jnani* will never lose his perfect realization though surrounded by any number of *ajnanis* (erring ones). The unsteady one will lose his *jnana*, even when in solitude.

Father: How can one become a *sahaja jnani* (one who has spontaneously realized) if engaged in domestic affairs?

Jnaneswar: Though the *jnani* (sage) mixes with *aj-*

nanis and acts many parts with them, he will ever remain the experiencer of the supreme bliss, just as a *brahmin* though acting the part of a scavenger on the stage, and behaving accordingly, ever remains only a *brahmin* without becoming a scavenger.

Father: However firm the *jnana* or the spiritual insight of a man may be, unless he contemplates at least for some time every day that he is Brahman, it is very difficult for him to become a *Brahma jnani*.

Jnaneswar: Is it necessary for the *brahmin*, who is acting the part of a scavenger, to frequently think that he is a *brahmin*? Will he become a scavenger if he does not think so? Are sacred strings necessary to distinguish one, whom the entire world knows to be a *brahmin*? After the annihilation of the ego, “I”, should one still retain the knot of the ego consciousness and go on meditating “I am Brahman”? As the world-known *brahmin* is adored as a *brahmin* by everybody, even when he does not wear sacred strings, one who has renounced notions of “I” and “mine” will always be respected by all and will always be enjoying the supreme bliss of Self, even if he does not practice any meditation.

Father: Even if one is equal to *Jagadish* (the Almighty), if one does not daily practice the meditation “I am Brahman,” he will undoubtedly become an *ajnani*. The ego sense, which identifies one with body, etc., will

never vanish.

Jnaneswar: If one holds the light in his hands and asks darkness to remain, will it remain? Similarly, if, after vanquishing the ignorance that one is the body or its internal organs, after one has attained the knowledge that one is the Supreme itself, will *ajnana* remain even if it is bidden to remain? If one holds the cat in one’s hand and asks the parrot to talk, will it talk? After realizing that self, *Iswara* and the world, etc. are all unreal, will *maya* come, even if it is invited? The eunuch will stand ashamed to declare himself a man before a woman who knows his impotence. Similarly, to one who has recognized beyond all doubt, in the presence of his Guru, that Brahman alone is real while *maya* is unreal, that Brahman is transcendent of all thoughts while *maya* consists of desires and aversions, and that one is Brahman and Brahman is one’s Self, where is the desire or aversion, bondage or freedom, birth or death, country or forest, charity, penance, renunciation or family life? Can the power of *maya* avail even a bit against one who is in the world, like the eye of a dead sheep (which seems as if it can see while it does not)? Can it turn him again into *ajnana* (error)? Please consider deeply.

Thereupon Vithoba agreed to leave the forest and return home.

Testimony

G. V. Subbaramayya

THAT the mere thought or remembrance of you suffices to still the mind and harmonise the heart, I hereby testify.

That your invisible presence, spreading a spell of Silence, resolves all doubts, dissolves all distractions, charms away all unhappiness and radiates peace and bliss, I hereby testify.

That your angelic countenance and radiant look breathes compassion on all, I hereby testify.

That you who were incarnate in a mortal mould are in truth the embodiment of Truth itself, the supreme God walking on this earth, moving and suffering with us all to sanctify and save all souls, I hereby testify.

That you are the quintessence of all greatness and goodness, of all knowledge and wisdom, of all merit and worthiness, I hereby testify.

That you are all Gods, all Prophets, all Sages, indeed, all beings and all worlds, rolled into ONE, I hereby testify. O Self of self!

— Ramana Pictorial Souvenir, 1967



Quotations and Conversations

*Found in the
Ramana Pictorial Souvenir, 1967*

All that an aspirant need know

“If the mind becomes introverted through enquiry into the Source of *aham-vritti* (‘I-thought’), the *vasanas* become extinct. And in the absence of the reflecting medium, the phenomenon of reflection, namely, the mind, also disappears, being absorbed into the Light of the one Reality, the Heart. That is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant need know.”

Deluded into the belief

“Just as water in a pot reflects the enormous sun within the narrow limits of the pot, so the *vasanas* or latent tendencies of the mind of the individual, acting as the reflecting medium, catch the all-pervading, infinite Light of Consciousness, arising from the Heart and manifest in the form of a reflection, the phenomenon called the mind. Seeing only this reflection, the *ajnani* is deluded into the belief that he is a finite being, the *jiva*.”



‘It’ never abandons you

Devotee: Bhagavan, is it not indulgence in rhetoric when you say “*karuna purna sudhabdhe*” (Ocean of nectar full of grace)?¹ Where is the grace when we see misery and suffering all over the world?

Bhagavan: No, it is just plain, absolute Truth. You must understand the nature of suffering. Is it not grace that ‘It’ never abandons you? Even if you want it to, ‘It’ will not.

It is the Vastu

“Consciousness is always Self-consciousness. If you are conscious of anything you are essentially conscious of yourself. Unself-conscious existence is a contradiction in terms. It is no existence at all. It is merely attributed existence, whereas true Existence, the Sat, is not an attribute, it is the Substance itself. It is the *Vastu*.”

“Am I not earnest or fit for it?”

Devotee: Bhagavan, it is said that when Bhagavan’s

mother was in her last moments, Bhagavan placed one hand on her heart and another on her head and remained like that for a long time, and that this caused her final liberation. Why can that not be done for me too? Bhagavan has no attachment to mother or kith or kin.

Bhagavan: It happened. That is all. I did not have a thought or plan to do it. Somehow an idea flashed and it was executed.

Devotee: Am I not earnest or fit for it?

Bhagavan: Are you?

Devotee: What was the process?

Bhagavan: You see, birth experiences are mental. Thinking is also like that, depending on *samskaras*. Mother was made to undergo all her future births in that comparatively short time.

Do some such thing for me

Devotee: Bhagavan, it is said that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa put his palm on the head of Swami Vivekananda and that the latter had transcendental experience. Could you not do some such thing for me.

Bhagavan smiled and said: Yes, scriptures speak of such *dikshas* (initiations) and *hashta diksha* is one of them. But that too is a limitation. When a mighty river runs overflowing its banks, why divert it into a particular channel? Let all those who are thirsty drink to their hearts’ content and capacity.

Good to break a coconut

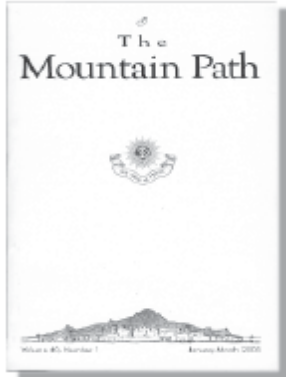
Offering a coconut and breaking it before a God is a time-honored custom widely observed. The late Lakshmi Ammal of Tiruchuli who was a playmate of Bhagavan in his boyhood days once stood before him and was struggling to tear the fibres from the coconut so that it could be broken. Sri Bhagavan asked her what she was doing. She said, “It is Vijayadasami today and I thought it good to break a coconut before Bhagavan.” He took the coconut from her hands, cleared it of the fibre and broke it before himself, while Lakshmi Ammal stood helplessly watching and amused. One must visualize the scene to appreciate the humor. There is food for thought also.

1. Arunachala Pancharatna, verse 1

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Ramana Satsangs

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

Ann Arbor, MI — Gayatri & Mohan (734-623-7199 / cedararbor@yahoo.com)

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 / dklegon@rcn.com)

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