



Reflections

SAT Temple

April.May.June.2016

“You must discern ignorance as ignorance for as long as you retain it you will think it valid.”

(Nome, Satsang, February 14, 2016)

“How will it be possible for one to know oneself without releasing the misidentifications that currently bind or obscure him? And how will it be possible to thoroughly release such misidentifications unless they are discerned as being such rather than being assumed to be one’s actual nature, which is the Absolute Self?”

(Nome, Introduction to: The Four Requisites for Realization and Self-Inquiry)

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Sri Bhagavan brilliantly demonstrates acute discrimination in His narration of His death experience when in His uncle's house. His death story is about discrimination, for just as bhakti is the mother of jnana, so, also, viveka is the mother of vichara. He describes deep, perceptive, thought-free discrimination and the subsequent jettison of the individual. Bhagavan says: "...with the death of this body am I dead?" "...I am spirit transcending the body." "...this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth, which I perceived directly, almost without thought process."

Adi Sankara lists discrimination first in His Vivekachudamani regarding His requisites for realization. Lord Krishna says, "And do thou also know Me as Kshetrajna (knower of the field) in all Kshetras (field, body, matter), O Bharata. The knowledge of Kshetra and Kshetrajna is deemed by Me as the knowledge." (Gita, XIII, 2) He says, "They who by the eye of wisdom perceive the distinction between Kshetra and Kshetrajna, and the dissolution of the cause of beings—they go to the Supreme. (Gita, XIII, 34) In Katha Upanishad (I.ii.6), Yama says, "The means for the attainment of the other world does not become revealed to the non-discriminating man who blunders, being befooled by the lure of wealth. One that constantly thinks that there is only this world, and none hereafter, comes under my sway again and again."

The intelligent know that Self-revealing inquiry is possible only through thought-free discrimination and that it is paramount to the Knowledge that absolute, impersonal Existence alone is. For the sages' brilliant wisdom we are forever grateful.

This quarter, devotees were absorbed in gratitude during two special events at SAT: Mahasivaratri on March 7 and the Nondual Self-Inquiry Retreat on March 11-13.



verses from **Siva Samhita**

Trans. By Rai Bahudur Srisa Chandra Vasu

The Jnana alone is eternal; it is without beginning or end; there exists no other real substance. Diversities which we see in the world are results of sense-conditions; when the latter cease, then this Jnana alone, and nothing else, remains. (Ch. 1, v. 1, Existence one only.)

The One Entity, blissful, entire and all-pervading, alone exists, and nothing else; he who constantly realizes this Knowledge is freed from death and the sorrow of the world-wheel. (Ch. 1, v. 87, Absorption or Involution)

All desires and the rest are dissolved through Gnosis (Jnana) only, and not otherwise. When all (minor) tattvas (principles), cease to exist, then My Tattva becomes manifest. (Ch. 2, v.54, The Jivatma)

Only the Knowledge imparted by a Guru, through his lips, is powerful and useful; otherwise it becomes fruitless, weak and very painful. (Ch. 3, v.11, The Guru)

He who contemplates on Sunya (void or vacuum or space), while walking or standing, dreaming or waking, becomes altogether ethereal, and is absorbed in the Chid Akasha. (Ch. 5, v. 47, A Secret)

The great Void, whose beginning is Void, whose middle is Void, whose end is Void, has the brilliancy of tens of millions of suns, and the coolness of tens of millions of moons. By contemplating continually on This, one obtains success. (Ch. 5, v. 161, The Raja Yoga)

He is the Yogi, he is the true devotee, he is worshipped in all the worlds, who contemplates the Jivatma and the Paramatma as related to each other as "I" and "Am," who renounces "I" and "thou" and contemplates the Indivisible; the Yogi free from all attachment takes shelter in that contemplation in which, through the knowledge of superimposition and negation, all is dissolved. (Ch. 5, v.174, The Rajadhiraj Yoga)

For readings by Nome during this event, please follow the link below to the issue of Reflections April, May, June 2015:
http://reflections.satramana.org/Reflections_AprMayJun2015.pdf

Flame: Freepik.com



**Absorbed in Siva, devotees
prepare for Mahasivaratri . . .**









**Absorbed in Siva, devotees
worship Lord Siva . . .**









**Absorbed in Siva,
devotees partake of
Siva's prasadam.**

The first and foremost of all the thoughts that arise in the mind is the primal "I"-thought. It is only after the rise or origin of the "I"-thought that innumerable other thoughts arise. In other words, only after the first personal pronoun, "I," has arisen, do the second and third personal pronouns (you, he, etc.) occur to the mind; and they cannot subsist without the former.

For the subsidence of the mind there is no other means more effective and adequate than Self-Inquiry. Even though by other means the mind subsides, that is only apparently so; it will rise again.

- Who Am I?, 1955

The Nondual Self-Inquiry Retreat





from LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM

The Boundless Wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi



“There can be ananda (joy) only if there is dukkha (sorrow). It is only if a thing is known as dukkha then ananda can be known. If dukkha is not realized, how can ananda be realized? So long as there is one who knows, these two will exist....”

(126) Questions with Half Knowledge

June 28, 1947

A few days back, a meeting of the Vysya Sangam was held in this town. A number of prominent Vysyas from Andhra State attended it. Two days back, all of them came to the Asramam in the morning, and one of the chief men amongst them addressed Bhagavan thus: “Swami, God has become jiva. Will the grief that the jiva suffers affect God or not?”

Bhagavan did not give a reply immediately but remained silent. The questioner waited for a while and asked, “Swami, shall I wait until you give me a reply?” “Who is it that is asking the question?” said Bhagavan. “A jiva,” he said. “Who is that jiva? What does he look like? Where was he born? Where does he get dissolved? If you enquire and find out, he who is known as jiva will be found to be God himself. Then, it will be known whether the grief experienced by the jiva will affect God or not. When that is known, there will be no trouble at all.” “That is what we are unable to know,” said the questioner. “There is no effort required to know one’s Self. You exist during sleep, but all the things in the world that you see are not visible then. When you wake up, you see everything. But you existed then and exist now (during sleep and while awake). That which comes on you in your wakeful state should be thrown out,” said Bhagavan. “How are we to throw it out?” enquired the other. “If you remain as you are, it will go out of its own accord.



Your nature is to be. If you see the Reality as it is, the unreal will go away as unreal,” said Bhagavan. “What is the method by which this can be seen?” asked the questioner. “By enquiring, “Who am I?” and “What is my true state?” said Bhagavan. “How am I to enquire?” asked that questioner. Bhagavan kept silent.

The questioner waited for a reply for a while and then, saying, “Yes, this is the method,” he touched the feet of Bhagavan despite the objections of the attendants and went away with all the members of the Vysya Sangam. After they had left, Bhagavan said to those sitting near him, “Don’t they know the reply? They just wanted to test me. They felt that their work was over when they touched my feet. What more do they require?”

A rich Reddi from Nellor who happened to be there said, “Ananda is said to be Atma. Ananda is free from sorrow. If so, when the jiva experiences Ananda, will he be free from sorrow?” Bhagavan replied, “There can be ananda (joy) only if there is dukkha (sorrow). It is only if a thing is known as dukkha then ananda can be known. If dukkha is not realized, how can ananda be realized? So long as there is one who knows, these two will exist. Vastu (the thing that is) is above sukha and dukkha. Even so, that vastu is known as sukha because Sat is above sat and asat. Jnana is above jnana and ajnana, Vidya is above vidya and avidya. The same thing is said about several other things. So what is there to say?” said Bhagavan. The same idea is expressed in stanza 10 of Unnadhi Nalubadhi. ॐ



“In Vedanta, your nature is declared to be Saccidananda—Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

What does it mean? It is Existence, but not a thing. It is Consciousness, but not a thought-form or a state of mind. It is Bliss, but not a mood and most definitely uncaused.”



Of What Existence?

Satsang, November 22, 2015

Om Om Om
(Silence)

Nome: Of what Existence is all this, apart from which there is no all this? Of what Existence is your Self, apart from which there is no other self. It is formless, unmodified, changeless forever, without beginning and without end. Inquire deeply, “Who am I?” and find That, the Absolute Existence —Brahman—to be yourself.

By what Light is known all that is perceived and conceived, through your senses, and through your mind? It is unchanging Consciousness, undifferentiated and nondual. Inquire deeply, “Who am I?” and find that That alone exists and that alone is the Self, apart from which there is no other self.

What Bliss is it that is reflected or expressed in myriad joys? It is perfectly full and everywhere existent. It is transcendent of birth and death. Inquire deeply, “Who am I?” and find that Bliss to be yours, indeed, to be you.

By whose Grace is all this known, self-revealed? Inquire “Who am I?” and find that One to be dwelling within you, to be dwelling as you. What is it that is worshiped? What is it that is meditated upon? What is it about which you listen, reflect, and deeply meditate? Only your own true Self. Cease to misidentify as a body or as an individual, that is, as an ego, and what is being indicated is self-evident.

Questioner: I have read about spiritual development presented as if in quite separate steps. First, to contemplate Brahman as given by the scriptures. Then, emphasize the Existence of Brahman as unquestionable because that conviction arises when contemplating the scriptures and the teachings of the sages. It seems self-evident. Then, as if a third step, realizing “I am,” in the sense of “I exist,” as included in that all-inclusive Brahman. Is that kind of artificial separation possibly of use?

N.: From where does the sense of certainty that is present in all three stages derive?

Q.: There’s a ring of truth that comes from listening to the sages or contemplating the scriptures. That ring of truth arises deep within.

N.: What is the nature of within?

Q.: It must be what those scriptures are talking about.

N.: So, certitude in Brahman comes from Brahman, just as the certitude in one’s own Existence. Did reading and studying that give you greater certainty?

Q.: Well, like a renewal.

N.: Then it is good.

Another Q.: I noticed a tendency of self-importance. At work, somebody said there's a defect in what I did, and sadly, for some time, I was trying to defend myself. My mind was getting entangled in those thoughts. I could see that the whole time could have been joyful. I am hoping to I put in effort and, once and for all, remove this problem.

N.: Yes, can you see that your joy is equal to the diminishing of the ego?

Q.: Yes.

N.: Egolessness is perfect happiness. The ego alone obstructs or veils the happiness in one's experience. Indeed, in highest truth, it is the ego alone that suffers and not you. So, apply effort in diminishing the ego. How do we diminish something that does not actually exist? It is true Knowledge; devotion gives rise to it.

Q.: The feeling of "I" is there.

N.: What is it? Examine it closely and keenly. What is signified by "I"? There is Existence, which is undoubted and always. There is the individuality, which is assumed, appearing and disappearing, having no actual substance. These two should not be equated.

Q.: No. You said "through devotion." I take the ego to be significant. You said, "Perceive the insignificance and worthlessness of it. I take it as significant. So, I am making happiness dependent upon whatever image I have of that.

N.: Is any image of the ego your Self? Is that truly your Self? Devotion is constituted of the dissolution of the separate identity of the devotee. What is the meaning of "I"? The individuality or ego, which seems so important in ignorance, in wisdom is found to be utterly unimportant. After all, how important can something be if it does not actually exist? It is just a supposition, a mere assumption born of imagination. When such imagination seems as if solidified, that is, you lend it reality, suffering is the result, due to the bondage of such limitation. Treat it as insignificant, utterly unimportant, and your suffering dissolves along

with the bondage. Realize that there is no such thing as an ego, that the one Self alone is and is your Self, and suffering is gone forever. Yes, apply more effort, wisely.

Another Q.: I try to dismantle these things from a variety of manners, through devotion, through inquiry, and clear reflection that this is all based on just not knowing any better. Once I know better, then I cannot make the same mistakes that I made in the past. Reflecting on when you speak of reality, identity, and happiness, those have to be in place completely, in order to permanently be done with that ignorance. All of those things I endeavor to utilize for freedoms.

N.: If there is complete sincerity of purpose, and that consistently so, you will have the freedom you desire.

Another Q.: The final phrase of the first verse of Saddarsanam, "he became," keeps recurring for me. Is there an implication that what we call the relative plane is an occurrence, that what we call the relative plane is the constant reflection of that occurrence?

N.: What is indicated in that verse of Saddarsanam is that the Existence, which is absolute, is solitary. If we think that there is all of this, all of this is actually only That. So, there really has not been an occurrence. If we think it has occurred, the only substance to it is still only That, the undifferentiated Existence. The Existence cannot be known as it is objectively. It must be realized with nonobjective Knowledge. If we think of it as you described, or we think of it as images or as reflections or as expressions, however we think of all this, for whom is the perception? Without knowing the nature of the "I" through and through, the nature of "this," which is dependent upon the "I," is still in question. If we do realize the nature of "I" by profound inquiry, there remains nothing other to be called "this." If the "I" has been born, then "this" has been created. For the unborn, there is no creation. Have you been born? Not your body, but you; have you been born? If you are not born, you are the ever-existent. The ever-existent is immutable, for any change would indicate a kind of

destruction. You are the ever-existent and changeless. Therefore, what else could there be? This is realized by a steady, profound inquiry as to what, in truth, you are. If you are a perceiver, there is the perceived. If you are a conceiver, there is the conceived. If you are the body, there is a world. If you are not the body, what can be said of the world? If you are not a perceiver, what can be said of the perceived? If you are not a conceiver, what can be said of everything that is thought of? One undifferentiated Absolute Existence exists. That is Brahman; that is what you are; that is all that you are. If you realize this, you are at peace, you are the Peace, always.

Another Q.: Let's say objectification has happened; but really, that hasn't happened at all. Maybe, it looks like ignorance, but really it isn't ignorance at all.

N.: In the sastras and in spiritual instruction, there are various descriptions of illusion, of ignorance, which are there for the purpose of eradicating the illusion, destroying the ignorance. It is not to be mistakenly believed that the ignorance or the illusion actually exists. After all, it is an illusion, not a reality.

Q.: That verse dissolves that, because any appearance would be just That, not an objective world.

N.: There is nothing else to be a cause, whether material or efficient, whether of substance or the intelligence acting upon it, to prompt it. There is nothing else to constitute the cause. The effect is only the cause. If the cause is undifferentiated Existence, how can the effect be differentiated?

Q.: (laughter) At the time, it seems differentiated though.

N.: The time also is not real.

Q.: (laughter) At a certain level, there is an introversion that has to occur, but it seems that it starts with that realization of what's really there and then the inquiry into what it is, what I am.

N.: The conviction in Existence is innate; it is already there for everyone. Of course, in spiritual practice, if you can clarify the view of what you are attempting to attain, Brahman or the real Self, it is helpful. Having clarified the view, inquire, so you can experientially know it as it is. Again, for whom is any occurrence? For whom would the ignorance appear?

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English of verses of the Tejobindu Upanishad.)

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

(Then followed a recitation in Tamil from Chapter 18 of the Song of Ribhu.)

Who am I?

Satsang, November 29, 2015

Om Om Om

(Silence)

Nome: "Who am I?" Answer that question, and Brahman is known. Answer that question, and Brahman knows Brahman. "Who am I?" There cannot be an objective answer to this question. You, yourself, are the answer to this question.

So who are you? That which you are, you are always. What about you is always? Whatever is always, without birth and without death, is unchanging. The body cannot possibly be the answer. Changeful, being born, perishing, that is not what you are. If you are not the body, what are you?

In Vedanta, your nature is declared to be Saccidananda—Being-Consciousness-Bliss. What does it mean? It is Existence, but not a thing. It is Consciousness, but not a thought-form or a state of mind. It is Bliss, but not a mood and most definitely uncaused.

If you are not the body, who are you? The attributes, activities, and conditions of the body do not belong to you. Who are you? The changeful forms of thought and changeful states of mind, objective and not self-luminous, cannot be you. "Who

am I?" The very supposition of individuality, of existing as an ego, appearing and disappearing, cannot be you, for it is not always.

Who you are is not a thing, not an activity, not a mode of mind, and not an occurrence. Likewise is it with the nature of Self-Realization. What you are not can be said; what about what you are? Hence, the ancient silence of Dakshinamurti. Even when it is said that you are Saccidananda—Being-Consciousness-Bliss, what does it mean? Certainly not the words, sat-chit-ananda; that's not what is indicated. Certainly not corresponding thoughts.

Inquire deeply within yourself, "Who am I?" Make your vision nonobjective and come to know your Self as you are. In this is found transcendent freedom and peace. In this is found what is beginningless and endless. In this is found Brahman, other than which nothing exists. Every distinction, every differentiation, between "I" and "this"; every differentiation concerning the individual, God, and the universe, is based on definitions of what you are. Are they true? Inquire deeply and find the undifferentiated Reality, which always is just as it is.

Questioner: Your discourse serves to distinguish the process of self-inquiry from any other kind of questioning. It sets the stage for a penetration beyond which the mind is capable. I think of the Maharshi's assurance, that having done one's utmost, a higher, deeper power will take over. That's very assuring, because it doesn't seem that the mind could ever accomplish the goal.

N.: You are not the mind.

Q.: The ego's erroneous; it's not just unreal, it's wrong. The Maharshi points out that not only does every individual see his own world, but it's colored by desires and other concepts. So, the ego is definitely to be dismissed, because it's not only unreal, it's wrong, too. It seems that it is setting the stage. I wonder how useful that kind of understanding is, the setting the stage idea, rather than think, "How can I ever achieve what is being suggested?"

N.: With what do you hope to understand?

Q.: That higher power, that deeper reality, must be relied on, because there's nothing I can see ob-

jectively that could accomplish that. Subjectively, I can't know what that capability is, but I can trust in it.

N.: The capability lies in the knower himself. When you try to know something else, the something else is inert, and you bring light to it. Self-Knowledge is self-luminous. There is no difference between the knower and the known in Self-Knowledge. What was mentioned on Friday night is that not only is the ego unreal, but all the tendencies or concepts derived from it are invalid.

Q.: So, all the objective details would be included as invalid. That sense of overcoming the apparently insurmountable, another aspect of it that I felt on Friday, is to realize that all those invalid attributes and concepts just plain don't count.

N.: How could there be an insurmountable obstacle to your Self?

Q.: No, there cannot.

N.: There are not two of you.

Q.: If something should appear on the screen of the mind, I don't lose any points by it, so to speak. They just don't count. I don't have to feel that I've fallen a step back, because they don't count.

N.: More importantly, who has fallen a step back? You spoke of setting the stage; for whom? The individual is assumed, taken for granted, in all these views. Is it real? If it seems to exist, inquire into the nature of that existence. You will find that the individuality, being completely false, vanishes, because it is unreal.

Another Q.: On Friday night, the question was, "What is inquiry?" and you kept revealing what it actually is. A few weeks back, you posed a question to me, and I started to answer it. And you said, "Don't think about it." I put that to use today, when I got to the point where I knew I wasn't actually inquiring, but I couldn't penetrate beyond it. I said to myself, "Don't think about it to get the answer." There's something really potent about that word

“who.” It has a way of turning my outward view inward. There definitely is not an objective answer to that question. When I meditate along with you, I can do it much better than I can on my own. I just need to do that and not think about it.

N.: You can think about Vedanta all you like. It is just that it is not a substitute for the actual inquiry.

Q.: It's not satisfying.

N.: That which reveals your true nature, the Self as it is, alone satisfies fully.

Q.: I've had a taste of that, many times. I want that continuously.

N.: Who is the taster?

Q.: The taster is the one who knows.

N.: The one who knows is not objectively known and is innately, continuously existent.

Q.: So you're pointing to me to look at what I know is continuous already.

N.: Existence ever is; nonexistence never is. Know the nature of this Existence.

Another Q.: Even the function of knowing is not present in deep dreamless sleep, or in Samadhi with no phenomena.

N.: Or we may say that there is knowing but nothing objectively known.

Q.: Yes.

N.: Knowing without an object is the real nature of the knower, or pure Consciousness.

Q.: Yes.

N.: To identify yourself as pure Consciousness and not as of anything of the known, is essential.

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English of verses from the Tejobindu Upanishad.)

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

(Then followed a recitation in Tamil from Chapter 18 of the Song of Ribhu.) ॐ



From The Ramana Way

The following articles appear in the June 2015 issue of “The Ramana Way,” a monthly publication produced by the Ramana Maharshi Center for Learning in Bangalore, India. RMCL has been producing monthly publications entirely devoted to Sri Ramana and His teaching since the early 1980’s. Sri A.R. Natarajan dedicated his life and his family’s life to the cause of Bhagavan Ramana. Sri A.R. Natarajan was absorbed in the lotus feet of His Master in 2007. His daughter, Dr. Sarada Natarajan, continues in his legacy, keeping the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and “The Ramana Way” alive for all Ramana devotees. May the devotion and wisdom from which these articles are written “jump” off the pages and into your heart. Please visit them at: www.ramanacentre.com



Editorial

by Dr. Sarada

Thought is its own subject and its own object. The show of the mind goes on eternally with itself as the actor, itself as the audience and itself as the theatre. Yet, we never tire of this show. We are not

bored. We do not wonder about its purpose or meaning.

We see a beautiful sight and, after a while, a not-so beautiful sight. We register both the sights. These sights are “seen,” it seems, by our eyes, but the images of these sights are only in the mind. We are well aware of this. This is true of every input that we receive from our sense organs. All the experiences that we have are nothing but thoughts, mental images. All these we term as “objects.”

There is, we know, one who is continuously aware of these objects, although we rarely, if at all, pay attention to that one and hardly acknowledge the presence of this entity that watches and is aware of the multitude of changing mental experiences. Ramana calls this entity the “subject” or the “I-thought.” It is the feeling of “I” which remains with us unbroken throughout our waking experiences and in our dreams as well. We are not conscious of its existence in deep sleep and hence cannot say that it exists then, how-

ever, we do concede that there must have been some witness of the darkness or the non-knowing of sleep which enables us to report, “I did not know anything then” even as we are able to say that I “knew” this or that while awake.

In this manner, to facilitate our understanding, Ramana classifies the mind into two aspects, one the “subject” or the “I-thought,” which is a constant, and the rest being “objects,” which are perceived by and known to the “subject” and which are ever changing. He further labels the objects for us as “thoughts.” And he affirms that the mind is nothing but thoughts. Since all thoughts are linked to the “I-thought,” he brings us to the understanding that this is the core of the mind.

From this, it is amply clear to us that all objects are thought. If we look upon the experiences happening in our mind as a stage show that we are witnessing, obviously the actors are all only thoughts. These actors take entries and exists one after another. Some event happens apparently “outside” of us, but we draw the event within by paying attention to it and converting it into thought-images in our minds. And then we watch the event in our mind. We add some colors to it, we change the lighting, we make the event good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant. We change the backdrop.

We place the event in the context of our own experience and understanding. Based on our memory we tell ourselves, “This is how so-and-

so always behaves towards me.” We never see an event in itself. We always add or take away something from it and then store this image we have created of the event in our memory for us to recall when we wish to. This is our own very special stage show. We direct it with our prejudices, our likes and dislikes. And this is the show called “our life.”

Should we change this? Should we try to make our continuous inner reporting and recordings more accurate? Should we cease to add colors, to change backdrops, to mix background music? We could do so, and it would no doubt improve the quality of our lives. The picture would get clearer, giving us great satisfaction. It would come closer to the picture that is “outside,” and, hence, we would be in greater harmony with the “outside,” which we call the “world.”

Yet, that is not the task laid out to us by Ramana. Why? Because, no matter how clear or beautiful, it would still remain only a picture. What is real? What is most intimate to us? Surely, it is not the pictures that we see, fuzzy or clear, for they are constantly passing. Should we not try to understand that which gives substance to these pictures, the subject, the “I”? What would be the purpose of our lives if we have never seen the face, never recognized, never even striven to see the one who holds all the threads, the one who, in fact, is so dear that all else is dear only on account of that one, the “I”?

Thinking thus, when we begin to investigate into our own nature, when we strive to see who in fact we are, we find the guidance that Raman lovingly gives us being lighted up by our own experience. Instead of simply stating that the mind alone constitutes our lives, we begin to see this for ourselves. We begin to actually face the fact that we live in our minds alone, that every experience is only a thought for us, and, hence, the experience is totally immaterial. It is what we “think” about it that matters.

This we recognize, slowly to begin with, as in all practice, but gradually the awareness comes to us more and more insistently that the “out there” does not matter at all. It is only the “in here” that not only gives reality to the “out there” but also paints its own picture of it, a picture radically different from those that others paint although in apparent synchrony with those. No one else can

ever design what picture I have painted within me, nor grasp the full import of it even if I describe it. Hence, each of us lives only in our own mental worlds.

When one has fully recognized that this is only a mental show, the need to modify the external world would totally drop off as it makes no difference to the inner world in any case. Funnily enough, the need to change the internal world would also fade away as it makes no difference at all to the external world. In fact, the world would become acceptable exactly as it is. More importantly, one’s attention would shift to the “creator” of this world and the purpose of the creation.

Having realized for oneself the truth of the proposition that, in this world show of the mind, it is thought which is the show, thought which is the stage, thought which is the seeing, and thought alone which sees, as well, one would begin to wonder more and more deeply as to why the show needs to go on and on.

What indeed is the purpose or the role of the “I,” also a thought, though the primary thought? It assimilates thought images, stores thought images, modifies thought images, recalls thought images and continuously tries to communicate the nature of these images to a world that it thinks is outside! Is it not completely obsessed with itself and nothing else at all? Is it not serving only its own purpose of seeming to perform some very important tasks but, in effect, doing nothing but continuously classifying, documenting, and viewing its own thought-library? Is this the end that we seek? Never mind, as we never wish to mind the mind. Why not allow the “I” to be? Why should we probe into its nature? Why should we startle ourselves with the meaninglessness of endless mentation? Why not remain happy with our lot? If we are happy, who could ever persuade us to turn the searchlight back upon ourselves? It is only because we are not happy, no matter how conducive and beautiful the circumstances in which we are placed, it is only because there is a continuous restlessness within us which can find no solace until it has reached its own fullness, that we are shown a path to this true meaning, to the ultimate goal of life.

Thus, if we are filled with a yearning to experience our Self as it is, without being constantly seen through a screen of thoughts, no matter how

beautiful the screen, then the question, “Who am I?” begins to haunt us in earnest. Surely, though perhaps slowly, the question keeps returning to us and gradually governs our life. All experiences take us back to this liberating question. The repeated rising of this question in our consciousness graciously pounds the sense of doership persistently until the illusion of individuality is completely eroded. Every time identity raises it hood, the question, “For who are these experiences, these thought?” comes to one’s aid to quell the rising identity. The question, “Who am I?” naturally follows suit allowing moments of silence to be revealed. These moments would then gradually spread out into longer and longer stretches until one is unwaveringly established in the Self.

If one’s sense of doership is completely destroyed, how will one be able to perform any actions? Would not one become totally useless? Is this why Raman asks of Arunachala,

“Ruining my livelihood, with mud in place of food,

Who was it who stuffed my mouth,
Arunachala!”

(v. 88, Arunachala Aksharamanamalai)

If one is cocooned in the belief that the world cannot carry on without one’s contribution, then all that can be said is that one is very sadly mistaken. Although every individual does appear to impact the world positively or negatively by his or her actions, the undeniable truth is that the world simply goes on regardless of the existence or non-

existence of any individual. What then is our role? Ramana says the only work of a spiritual aspirant lies within. In actual fact, Arunachala is the only Actor. Even the work of the sadhaka “within” is advised as a concession to the apparent existence of the false sense of a separate “I.” This “work” would continue until one is established in the awareness that there is really none apart from the Self, from Arunachala, and all “work” “within” and “without” is nothing but the gracious power of Arunachala.

As Sri A.R. Natarajan quotes from Isanya Jnana Desikar:

*In my identity with the body,
I had the sense of “I” and “mine”
In three states of waking, dream and sleep.
By Your gracious love, this sense has
Vanished like a dream.
You made me turn to You.
O Arunachala, You who burn like a flame,
You burnt away my Self-forgetfulness.*

Indeed, when this happens there would be none left to declare this truth. Yet, the truth pours itself out as a spontaneous divine expression as it has manifest in the words of Ramana. It is for that state of undivided bliss that we pray when guided by loving grace to pray:

*“You-I” difference do destroy, unite with
me, give me joy, forever, by your grace,
Arunachala!”*

(v. 56, Arunachala Aksharamanamalai)



Isanya Jnana Desikar

by A.R. Natarajan

*You are the Lord, the Guru,
Intelligence, the law, our Goal.
You are absorbed in the Self, and
You abide as the Self, which is everything,
With nothing separate from it.
O Supreme Infinite Siva!
You shine within the devout as
The Self that is awareness.*

-Verse 66

Isanya Desikar was born in 1750 in a small village in Rayavelur to a pious couple Tiruneelakanta Desikar and Uma Parvati belonging to the local farmer community. When he learnt that his father was planning his marriage he quit the house with the blessing of his mother and proceeded to Chidambaram. There he found his guru in a local saint Sri Mouna Swami. By his intense penance he developed many "siddhis," supernatural powers. After several years at Chidambaram, he proceeded to Sikkal where he came under the influence of another Siddha Ugandadi Jnana Desikar. Under his guidance he used to remain in Nirvikalpa Samadhi for long spells. Suddenly, he moved to Arunachala where he remained until his Mahasamadhi in 1829.

Guru Namasivaya found his guru in Annamalai but had to migrate to Chidambaram under the guidance of his guru. Jnana Desikar's case was the reverse. He found his guru in Chidambaram, but ultimately migrated to Arunachala where he found the fruition of his tapas.

His most famous work is "Swanubhava Stotra Pamalai," "The Garland of Hymns of Self-experience." The garland is 117 verses. In these verses, we find his intense devotion to Arunachala.

*In my identity with the body,
I had the sense of "I" and "mine"
In three states of waking, dream and sleep.
By Your gracious love, this sense has
Vanished like a dream.
You made me turn to You.
O Arunachala, You who burn like a flame,
You burnt away my Self-forgetfulness.*

In some of his verses, we find a strong Advaitic input. A few of these verses are extracted below:

Lord, Guru and Father! My friend residing in the Heart! Flawless gem! King who dances in the dancing hall of the Heart! True friend! Omnipresent plentitude! Eternal flawless bliss! Destroyer of bondage! Supreme yogi instructing like a Guru! How great You are!

The Vedas, the Guru's teachings and the experience of one's own Self are all one in the vision of that light which forms the substratum and which gives light to the sun, the moon and fire. In the Heart, where there is neither day nor night, the light is experienced as the Supreme Siva.

No amount of learning can teach one to give up the ego. The best course is to catch hold of what is real, without any support. He who is fully conscious is really God; He is the real nature of one's own true state. The experience is silence; it cannot speak.

They are truly great who live without the mind. Is there anything other than the Self? The state of Sat-Chit-Ananda, alone is real. Those who are in nishtha, without any activity, they alone are realized.

It is sheer delight to speak of Lord Aruna, the light, who is unborn, beginningless and endless, unbroken, infinite space. It is sheer delight to say the Lord Aruna, the Light, is the source of giving light to the sun, the moon, and fire. The moment when one realizes the Self by diving within, You become the face on the mirror. O personification of grace! What else needs to be known other than You who are omnipresent and who possess all?

Isanya Desikar foresaw the exact time when he would have to drop his body and noted it on a palm leaf found later. At the appointed time, he sat in meditation, ready to leave his body. His loyal householder devotee, who had looked after his body for most of the lifetime, asked him in distress, "What about my fate?" To this Desikar replied, "Has not your family ripened as a bunch?" Immersing himself in samadhi, Jnana Desikar dropped his body. His body has been interred in the present Esanya Mutt in Tiruvannamalai under the bilva tree in the spot from which he used to stand and gaze at Annamalai. ॐ



Ever yours in Truth

Correspondence between Nome and seekers.

(Names of seekers are ommitted to preserve their privacy.)

November 17, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. Though I am not familiar with the videos mentioned by you, I am glad to know that you are inspired by them.

That which Sri Bhagavan graciously reveals, and is, is undoubtedly supreme, the most profound among all that is profound, the highest of the high, the clearest of the clear, beyond any comparison or contrast, immeasurable, and beyond which nothing else exists.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

December 1, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Indeed, the universe does not revolve around the ego, which is quite insignificant and utterly unreal. The universe may be said to be doing pradakshina (circumambulation) around the Self, which pervades and transcends all and which alone is real.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[In response to a seeker's questions about subtle experiences, love, and Nome's experience:]

December 2, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. The answers to the questions you have posed can be found in various SAT Publications, such as Timeless Presence, Ever Yours in Truth, One Self, and Self-Knowledge. In addition, you may find that which can be read, listened to, and watched at www.SATRamana.org to be helpful.

May you ever abide in the Knowledge of the Self, which is completely devoid of the ego notion and its associated sankalpas, the quintessence of Being, the very source of all wisdom and love, and eternally undifferentiated, and thus dwell in happiness and peace always.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[A seeker wrote expressing gratitude and asking about love, the ego, and illusion. Here is the reply.]

December 7, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Whether or not you regard all things as illusory, who is the knower of such? It is better to inquire to know the Self than to attempt to arrive at a definitive objective conception of the world, for the view of the latter corresponds to the identity of the former.



The ideas of "it," "this," etc. are merely imaginary. One Self exists and alone is real.

Certainly, all that shine as true, good, and beautiful, because of which they are dear, have their source in That.

There is no need to bewilder your mind with thoughts of what the unreal ego can or cannot do. Discern its nature.

In the clarity of Self-Knowledge, there is serene freedom from all illusion and the deep bliss of Brahman.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

In the course of an email, a seeker asked, "How can I guide my actions in the right manner?" This is Nome's reply

December 10, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

The mind pursues whatever is regarded as a source of happiness and tends to retain or adhere to whatever is regarded as important and real. Actions follow the way of thinking. Finely, thoroughly discriminate the source and nature of happiness, the purpose of life, and what is real, and your actions will naturally be directed wisely.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

Another seeker asked, "What is the process of going deeply into inquiry?" Nome replied:

December 23, 2015

Dear ,

Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Deep inquiry is indicated by the return of identity to the Self alone, in Knowledge that is

transcendent of thought, accompanied by the dissolution of the ego (the false assumption of individuality) and the abandonment of ignorant tendencies. The approach should be characterized by an ardent desire for Self-Realization.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

In the course of an email, a seeker wrote, "To Master Nome, if he can please guide out of his natural compassion: How is a sadhaka to distinguish between yearning and frustration when he's in a deluge of grief? They both seem to "feel" alike..." Here is the response.

February 3, 2016

Dear ,

Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Yearning for Self-Realization, or God, is an intuition of one's natural state. Yearning for or desiring an object is merely an ignorant misconception about the source and nature of happiness. Grief is also such a misconception based on misidentification. Frustration is the same ignorance with more egotism.

The obstacles to inquiry and to Knowledge of the Self, which is happiness itself, are not real. Likewise are the ego, objects, and the delusive notions. If you earnestly endeavor to inquire, that which is real will become clear to you and self-evident. Such sincere, whole-hearted effort never goes in vain.

May you ever abide in the Knowledge of the Self and thus be happy and at peace always.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

The same seeker wrote again, and this is the further reply.

February 3, 2016

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

You may find it beneficial to reread the previous response.

It is axiomatic that the means and the end must be of the same nature to be fruitful. Does the Self, which is Brahman, suffer or grieve? If not, does a second self exist? If the Self is only one and indivisible, for whom, and by whom, is the grief? If such is only the illusory ego, which is unreal, the destruction of which is the purpose and experience of sadhana, what can you discern from this?

If, devoting yourself, you deeply inquire, as Sri Bhagavan instructs, to know the Self, of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, there will be no frustration, all suffering will cease, grief will vanish, yearning will be fulfilled, and, abiding in That, as That, bliss and peace will alone forever remain.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[A Ramana devotee in Korea wrote a few years earlier to request permission to translate the Song of Ribhu into Korean. On February 6, 2016, a package arrived that contained a beautifully printed book into which was inserted this note:]

Dear Nome,

At last, I published the Song of Ribhu. This month, I went to Tiruvannamalai. I offered a few copies to Sri Ramana Maharshi. A few days ago, I came to Korea. Thank you very much for allowing me to publish. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Krishnadass

[Nome's reply:]

February 6, 2016

Dear Sri Krishnadass,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. The copy of your Korean translation of Song of Ribhu arrived today. It is quite evident

that you have exercised great care in your endeavor to publish this sacred book, and the result is splendid. It is a blessing for Korean-speaking seekers of Self-Realization. May you ever abide in That, as That, as revealed by Sri Bhagavan, Ribhu, and other sages, and thus dwell in happiness and peace always.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[To which Krishnadass wrote:]

Dear Nome,

Because of your Grace, I did that.
I am very sorry, to delay.
Thank you for your good mind.

In Ramana,
Krishnadass

[A seeker described a spiritual experience that he had and requested guidance. Here is the response.]

February 6, 2016

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

The answer to your question requires keen discrimination. Bliss and Oneness are of the nature of Existence. Existence is the Self. The Self is of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Sat-Cit-Ananda). Eternal and infinite, the Self is unborn, imperishable, and bodiless.

The idea of "being here" is an illusion due to the ignorance that misidentifies the body with the Self. From the viewpoint of being an embodied individual, that which is one's very Existence is imagined to be a state removed from oneself. So, delusion makes what is objective seem to be oneself and what is the Self seem to be objective, what is not the Self appear to be the Self and what is the Self appear to be other than oneself, the unreal to be real and the real to be unreal.

It is wise to inquire to know oneself. For whom are these various experiences?

What appears disappears; whatever is gained is lost. This is so for everything, every thought, and every state of mind. You exist before, during, and after all that is such. What is the nature of this “you”?

That which may be felt as power in the course of spiritual practice is found to be peace in Realization. After all, can there be anything more powerful than the Absolute Reality (Brahman)? Yet, power is conceived in relation to the differentiation of something “other.” The “other” appears as such only with the misidentification with a body and the erroneous belief that the senses can determine reality. Who is to have power over what? The “naturalness” has its root in the Self, the innate Existence.

Therefore, seek the Knowledge of the Self. It is the very essence of all spiritual experience; it transcends the limitations of any experience.

If one has faith, or conviction, in this Knowledge, even if such seems to be very small, it will suffice to remove the illusion, seemingly large and solid. That which alone remains, God, One without a second, is truly the Self. That alone exists; That alone is real, eternally.

If, upon reflection and meditation upon what is expressed here, more questions arise for you, please feel free to write again.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[A seeker asked about Brahman and God Siva, Sri Ramana and grace, and meditation and inquiry. Nome replied:]

March 5, 2016

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Brahman, Siva, and the Self, refer to the same one, indivisible absolute Reality. Distinctions such as saguna and nirguna are conceived by the mind and may be employed as expedient teachings to prompt the earnest seeker to deeply inquire to realize this Reality, the Self. Similar are the symbols, etc. pertaining to Siva. That which is found to be the Self, upon the removal of ignorance, which is the limitation, of the jiva is the very same Being as is found, upon the removal of illusion, which is the limitation, of God. Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman) is the same Knowledge as Sivo'ham (I am Siva).

Bhagavan's identity is solely the Self, Brahman. He says that Grace is of the Self and is far too subtle, and therefore far too potent, to be conceived in thought, much less perceived by the senses. Nevertheless, there is knowledge of its existence within.

Self-Knowledge is of one kind alone. That is also the nature of meditation. The distinctions and differences are imagined in and by the mind, which also is unreal.

Words and thoughts, expressions and ideas, may appear as if many, but pure Being is only one, and this one Being is the Knowledge.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome



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Bilva Trees for the SAT Temple

Four Bilva tree saplings were offered to the temple from Aravind Sivasubramanian and Shermilla Shunmugham. Once they mature, their leaves will be used in pujas. Om Namah Sivaya!

There was once a truthless, cruel-hearted hunter living in the forest. Every day he would go to the forest to kill deer and commit thefts. He never engaged in any virtuous act.

On the auspicious day of Mahasivaratri, he went out hunting. Coming to a lake, he collected some water in a vessel, climbed a nearby tree, and waited for an unsuspecting animal to come and drink from the lake. He did not notice that the tree he had climbed was a Bilva tree and that beneath the Bilva tree was a Siva lingam.

After some time a gentle hind came to quench her thirst and the hunter prepared to shoot her with his bow and arrow. As he drew his bow, he accidentally knocked the vessel holding the water and some water fell down on the Siva lingam beneath him along with some Bilva leaves. Unknowingly, the hunter had worshipped Siva in the first quarter of the night of Mahasivaratri. As a result, his heart became a little purified by this act. Meanwhile, the deer, who was startled by the movement in the tree, looked up and saw the hunter with his bow and arrow. The doe said, "O Malevolent one, in case my flesh could appease you I am sure to earn merit. But first let me take care of my children, and then I will return to be food for you and your family." To reassure the hunter of her return she said, "The earth remains stable with the truth. The oceans remain with the power of the truth, the streams of water flow because of the truth. Everything is founded on truth." The hunter did not accept the hinds proposal, thus the frightened hind spoke again. "If I do not return to you after visiting my abode, then I should earn the sin of an ungrateful person or the sin earned by becoming inimical to the Guru or the sin earned by someone moving against dharma." The hunter, whose heart had been softened a little by the accidental worship,

In Hindu tradition, the Bilva tree is considered a sacred tree of which the leaves are used in puja, particularly during Mahasivaratri. The trifoliate leaf is symbolic of the trinity Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. There are many mystical interpretations for this sacred tree and its trifoliate leaves. It is said that those who meditate upon Lord Siva in the form of the linga at the root of the Bilva obtain Moksha.

The following abbreviated story appears in the Siva Purana, Kotirudra Samhita, chapter 40. Suta narrates a story to the assembly of sages about the Bilva tree, a hunter, and Mahasivaratri. It is a story about virtue, redemption and the immense Grace of the Lord.*

and developing faith in her words, let her go on the condition that she would return the next day and allow him to take her body as food for him and his family.

Later that night, the sister of the deer came looking for her. Once more the hunter took aim and once more, without being aware of it, the water and the Bilva leaves fell down upon the Siva lingam. Again, unknowingly, the hunter had worshipped Siva in the second quarter of the night. The doe, startled to see the hunter, asked, "O forest roamer what are you doing?" The hunter said, "I am going to kill you to satisfy the hunger of my family." The doe said to the hunter, "My fawns are in the house. I must entrust them to the care of my husband, and then I will return." The hunter said, "I do not believe you." The doe said, "If I do not return, I shall earn the sin of one who backs out of his words or the sin earned by one who after repenting commits the same sin again." The hunter's heart was further purified by his unwitting worship of Siva, and he allowed this deer to also go and tend to its young, provided it returned the next day to provide him and his family with food.

In the third quarter of the night, a stag, the mate of the first deer, came in search of her, and again the unwitting worship by the hunter took place as he took aim with his bow and arrow for the third time. The stag heard the sound and asked the hunter, "What are you doing?" The hunter replied, "I am going to kill you and feed my family." The stag replied, "You will derive the best satisfaction from me, for a person's body, if not used for the welfare of others, is of no avail. But, I must return home and entrust my young ones to their mother. Then I will return to you." By this time, the hunter's heart was beginning to melt due to the unknowing worship. He said to the stag, "O stag, every animal that came here has gone after promising in the manner that you have done now. They have not yet come. You, too, are in distress now and want to go under false pretext. How shall I carry on my livelihood?" The stag said, "One who tells a lie, all his merits are washed out in a moment. The entire universe including the mobile and immobile beings is steady thanks to truth. If I do not return I shall earn the sin of one who gives false witness or the sin of one who fails to do good in spite of his being competent to do so." Upon hearing the plea of the stag, the hunter allowed the stag to go also for the same rea-

son and under the same conditions as the previous deer. Later, when the three deer met together, they discussed who should go and offer themselves for the hunter's food. Even the children offered to give their lives. Finally, the whole family decided to surrender to the hunter together, for none of them could bear to live without the others. Thus, they set off towards the lake with heavy hearts.

When they arrived at the Bilva tree where the hunter was waiting for them, the hunter immediately prepared his bow and arrow for the kill. He took aim for the fourth time, but in the same accidental manner as before, worship in the fourth quarter of the night took place unknown to him. This final, unwitting worship brought about a complete change of heart in him, and his heart overflowed with compassion for the innocent deer. Thereafter, his sins were reduced to ashes in a trice. Tears filled his eyes at the thought of all the animals he had killed in the past, and slowly he lowered his bow. Greatly moved by the selfless action of these animals, he felt ashamed and allowed the whole family of deer to leave unharmed. Siva became delighted at the change in the hunter and revealed his form to him. Siva said, "O hunter, I am delighted at this Vrata (vow or religious observance). Ask for a boon." The hunter fell at Siva's feet saying, "Everything has been attained by me now."

At the same time, having viewed Siva, the deer bowed in reverence to Him relieved of the curse (that made them appear as deer) and attained Heaven.

Such is the purity and spiritual power of the Bilva tree that even with performing the rites in utter ignorance and without his knowledge or conscious effort, the cruel-hearted hunter was delivered from his past bad karma by the grace of Siva and the Bilva tree and attained complete identity with the Lord.

*Ref.: Siva Purana, ed. By Prof. J.L. Shastri, Motilal Banarsidass; Siva Mahapurana, trans. Shanti Lal Nagar, Parimal Publications. ॐ

Upcoming Special Events

Chitragupta Day: April 22, 2016

Adi Sankara Jayanti: May 11, 2016

Sri Sadisvara Mandiram Pratishtha Day: May 14, 2016

Self-Knowledge Retreat: May 27-29, 2016

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Om Namah Sivaya