

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya ॐ Om Namah Sivaya



Reflections



SAT Temple

July . August . September . 2021



CONTENTS

Origin of Spiritual Instruction with
Commentary by Nome: page 3

Letters From Sri
Ramanasramam: page 7

Satsang and Meditation with Nome:
page 9

Ever Yours in Truth: page 13

The Ribhu Gita: page 14

Introduction to Svatmanirupanam:
page 21

Subrahmanya-maṅgalāṣṭakam, Octet
of verses on auspiciousness of
Subramanya : page 31

Siva's Cosmic Dance (108 Karanas):
page 35

Unnadi Nityam
(Existence Eternal): page 38

Retreats at SAT: page 41



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Origin of Spiritual Instruction

(A Catechism of Instruction)

Chapter 2 Continued from Previous Reflections

(This commentary was taken from the May 2018, Self-Knowledge Retreat held at the SAT Temple.)

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

D.: What is the correct method of practice for the disciple to adopt and follow?

M.: In the first instance, it should be recognized that the Ātman, or the Self, is not something existing separate and distinct from the seeker, which he has yet to obtain, as it were, from without. Considering further that there is nothing loftier or more sublime than the object of his quest, which is identical with himself, he that would earnestly try to attain Liberation should initially proceed to discriminate between what is permanent and abiding and what is not. By this discriminative insight, he should know beyond doubt and free from misconception what he really is, i.e., in what his real Being consists. Realizing thus his true and natural state, he should remain changeless, firmly established therein. This is the correct method of practice, or sādhanā, and is called the Vicāra Mārga, which is pre-eminently instrumental in gaining direct and immediate knowledge of the Self.

N.: In the first instance, that is, at the very basis of your spiritual practice, it should be recognized that the Atman, or the Self, is not something existing separate and distinct from the seeker which he is yet to obtain as it were from without. What is it for which you are searching? Something that comes will also go; what appears will disappear. How could something else give you yourself? Such is not possible. The Self is not something to be obtained anew. It is already existing and existing within you.

Considering further that there is nothing loftier or more sublime than the object of his quest,

which is identical with himself: Self-realization is sublime for it is abidance as the very source of all happiness. It is abidance as the fountainhead of joy. The quest to realize it is truly holy. How important is it to realize the Self? How important is it for you to be at peace or to be happy or to gain immortality? How important is it to realize the Self? Without realization, one is but living and dying in an unreal dream. There is nothing loftier than the object of his quest. The object of the spiritual quest is Self-realization. It is referred to as the highest of the high because of its utterly non-dual nature, its absolute nature, there is nothing beyond it. If you realize the Self, there is completeness, and you yourself are the complete. So, first understand that what you are searching to realize exists within you as your true identity, and then recognize how important it is to realize it. The realization of the Self consists of Self-Knowledge. So, how important is it to know yourself? When something is vitally important, you tend not to forget it or overlook it.

Q: I can't believe that I have been fortunate enough to encounter this. Nothing in my previous years before I encountered this teaching ever really struck me, and it has taken me awhile to get over saying, "Really, they are talking about me?" It is ok to be amazed for a while, but then, at a certain point, I just have to take it seriously and start working towards it instead of being amazed by it. I can't believe Sri Bhagavan showed himself to me one day in a bookstore, and it started there.

N: If you are aware that you have been graced with such an opportunity, why not take full advantage of it? Resort to the teaching day and night not only in listening, reading and other means such as that, but inwardly verifying what is declared as the truth of yourself.

Q: I have to sweep a lot of garbage out of the way to get there.

N: Well if there is something to be swept, sweep away. (Laughter).

He that would earnestly try to attain Liberation should initially proceed to discriminate between what is permanent and abiding and what is not. Just that degree of discrimination, the ability to discern what is permanent and what is not, is sufficient to bring about a high level of detachment, a strong, interior spiritual practice, and a clarity of what the instruction actually is, a clarity regarding what the practice actually is. If the end is eternal, the means must partake of the same nature. If your practice is involved with what is transient, how will it bring about the realization of the eternal? If the practice is one of muddling around in the changeful, such as with thoughts and states of mind, including states of an absence of thought, how will that bring about the eternal realization?

What is permanent and abiding and what is not? What is ever-existent, changeless, and actually real? Turn inward upon your nature. What is permanent and abiding, and what is not? Discriminate. What you discriminate as being temporary or unreal will be jettisoned from your identity by such discrimination. For the adherence to illusion can continue only so long as you think that it is real, that it is enduring, that it is really so. What in you is permanent?

By this discriminative insight, he should know beyond doubt and free from misconception what he really is, i.e., in what his real Being consists. It is this discriminative knowledge, and not anything else, that brings about this certainty. Nothing else is sufficient for the task. If you discriminate regarding your identity as to what is permanent and accept only that which is changeless and permanent as your identity, as yourself, you arrive at a certainty regarding yourself that is free from any doubt, free from misconception. What else are doubts but misconceptions? What else is ignorance but misidentification, misconception regarding your nature? Note that the practice is one of knowledge. It is not something bodily, it is not something sensory, it is not something mental and

it is not something intellectual. It is that of knowledge. At what depth is the knowledge of your Existence?

Q: Only when there is duality we can know. Do the awareness and attention exist separately or are they the same? Awareness comes by paying attention inwards. Only when we know it is duality can we differentiate between duality and non-duality. When we talk about pure and impure mind, in that context, it is duality, and we can realize non-duality.

N: The duality is only apparent in the impure mind. In the pure mind there is no duality whatsoever for the pure mind is Brahman. The view of, there is purity and impurity, is only from the standpoint of impurity and not from the standpoint of the pure. Only from the position of the unreal does there seem to be a duality of the real and unreal. From the position of the real, no such duality exists

Q: But there is a clash of thoughts.

N: There is no clash with Consciousness. Consciousness just by itself is the Reality. It is non-dual. Nondual means there is no alternative to it. There is nothing else but it. What is not the absolute Existence does not exist at all. It is only from the imagined position of nonexistence that one can think of duality of real and unreal, existence and nonexistence. From reality there is only one always.

Realizing thus his true and natural state, he should remain changeless, firmly established therein. How is one to be established in the Self? Abandon all that is not Self, and the Self alone remains as itself. How to abandon the unreal? By the profound knowledge that the unreal is actually unreal. This is said to be establishment as the real or in the real. But it is just established in itself and so it is declared to be natural.

This is the correct method of practice, or sādhana, and is called the Vicāra Mārga, which is pre-eminently instrumental in gaining direct and immediate knowledge of the Self.

Direct and immediate knowledge is knowledge that does not require any other instrument for it to be known. It is Consciousness illuminating itself, not as any object, but just as it is. It is Being reposing in its own nature. There is nothing between you and your Existence. So it is said to be immediate. Observe that the practice is one of Knowledge, thought-transcendent, yet Knowledge. Discern. Discern and realize the supreme Truth.

One Self alone exists. It is Existence, and there cannot, in truth, be a multiplicity of existences. The Self is only one and ever the same, never undergoing any kind of modification. It is of an undifferentiated nature. There is no duality in it. There is no alternative to it. It is not particularized. It is not individualized. It just is as it is for all eternity. If it is never modified, and it is characterized by an absence of individuality. What, then, is the ego? This is the question that was asked of Sri Bhagavan

D.: What is the ego, or ahaṁkāra?

M.: The jīva, or individual being (which identifies its existence with that of life in the physical body), expressing itself as “I,” is called the ego, or ahaṁkāra. The Self, which is pure Consciousness, has no ego-sense about it. Neither can the physical body, which is, by itself, inert, have this ego-sense. In between the two, namely the Self, or pure Consciousness, and the inert, physical body, there arises most mysteriously the ego-sense, or “I”-notion, the hybrid, which is neither of them and flourishes as jīva, or individual being. This jīva is the root cause of all that is futile and undesirable in life. If, therefore, it is destroyed by any possible means, That which ever is alone remains resplendent. This, indeed, is Liberation, or Emancipation.

N.: Turn within and examine this sense of “I,” this supposition of existing as an individualized being. Your very existence is pure Consciousness and has no ego sense. What then is the ego “I”? It is not something inherent in the body. The body is inert, and it does not have any ego sense. The Self is not the ego and does not produce an ego. The

body is not an ego and does not produce an ego. What is this individual? It arises mysteriously, as he says, because of its illusory nature. The arising of something unreal is not a real occurrence. The Self remains ever as pure Consciousness, absolute Existence, or Brahman. What is it that arises between the two and seems to borrow the reality and identity of the Self and the form, the body? What is it that seems to tie the two together, the Self and the body? This individuality is the root cause of delusion. It is the beginning of ignorance, and ignorance leads to bondage, and being bound is a state of suffering. Such bondage and ignorance and suffering are futile and are undesirable. They run contrary to your natural state. The Being of the Self, which is Consciousness and Bliss, is real and exists always. If, by any possible means, you eliminate the assumption of individuality, the ego notion, then that which ever is alone remains resplendent. It is the one Self, the solitary Existence. This, he says, is Liberation. It is not liberation of the individual; it is liberation from the individual. By any possible means, destroy this false assumption of the ego, and there is liberation from all the imagined bondage. What are the means to bring this about? They are always that of Self-Knowledge. Whatever form the practice takes it is the knowledge essence that reveals the egoless nature of the Self.

What is this Knowledge that liberates one from all the ignorance, that liberates one from the ego notion? What is this Knowledge that results in the realization of that which alone exists, the Supreme Brahman?

Bhagavan says, Jñāna is the utter annihilation of the mind by making it realize its absolute identity with the Ātman, or the Self, by incessant practice of dhyāna (meditation) or vicāra (inquiry in quest of the Self). Utter annihilation of the mind is synonymous with that state of pure Being in which all effort (either to control or to direct it, which is necessary only if the mind is wayward or in any way subject to the influence of mundane existence) has finally ceased. Those who have attained that state never swerve from it. What is called Mauna, or Quiescence, is verily that state of pure Being.

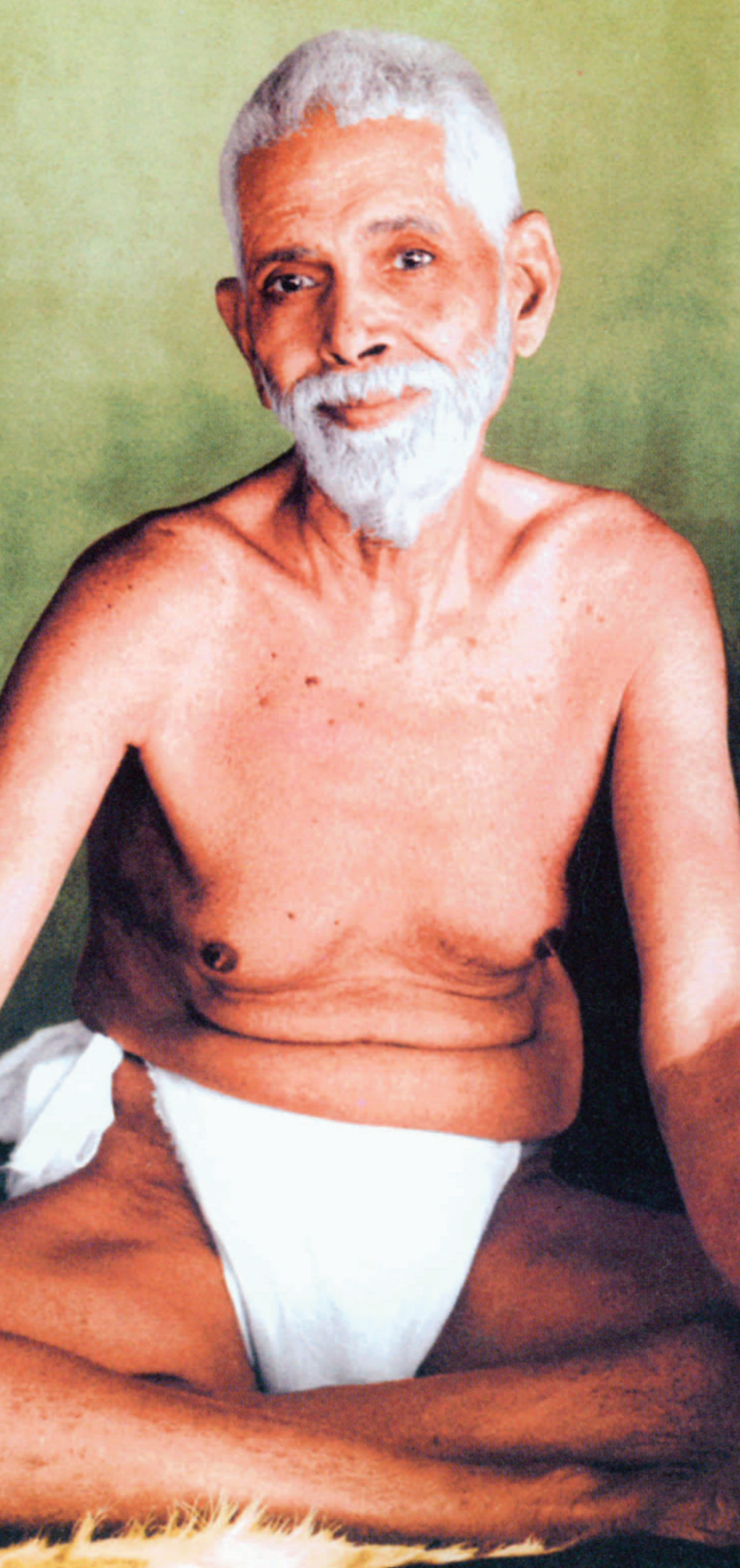
How to utterly annihilate the mind? You must cease to regard what it thinks as being true. How to absolutely annihilate the mind and realize its absolute identity with the Self? By tracing who the knower is, by tracing knowledge inward, non-objectively. What is the mind's real nature? To regard the mind as an existent entity, a knower, in addition to the infinite Consciousness, is the same false supposition as the belief in an ego entity. So then, annihilation of the mind means annihilation of the ego, and such annihilation is complete when it is recognized that there has never been any such thing as the individual mind or the individual ego.

The Ātman, or the Self, is pure Consciousness, and this Consciousness alone is the nature of the mind. Apart from that, it is utterly unreal. So meditate, inquire. Meditate on the nature of the meditator. Inquire into the nature of the inquirer, and let such inquiry be incessant. To be incessant, such inquiry must be beyond the realm of thought, for there is no such thing as a continuous thought. If the mind is under the influence of mundane existence, caught up in its own illusions, which through imagination are projected externally, then let there be an effort to control it to direct it wisely. If outward-turned, turn it inward. But when you realize the mind's true identity as just pure Consciousness, all such efforts cease. All outwardness becomes impossible.

Those who have attained that state never swerve from it. This is because they themselves

are the state. One thinks of oneself as an individual and turns inward to seek Self-realization. Seeking such Self-realization, the Self's own nature is discerned. What is other than you, what comes anew, will be lost. But what is you, is yours forever. Self-realization then is no longer regarded as a state, or an occurrence, or an experience, but rather the Self's own nature, just by itself, is the substance of realization. So he says, "Those who have attained that state never swerve from it." When your only identity is the Self, who would swerve from what? If your identity seems to be something other than the Self, inquire. Inquire into that very individualized being, and the individuality, being utterly false, will be relinquished, leaving that which alone exists shining in all its natural bliss. Because such is utterly free of "I" it is consequently free of "this." Without an ego, without a world, is the state called mauna, silence, or quiescence. It is that in which no "I" arises. If no "I" appears, how could anything else appear? There is neither "I" nor something else but just oneself. This is what is meant by a state of pure Being. Being is not an activity. One does not do Being. Being is not a mode of mind which would come and go. Being is Existence itself. By pure Being we mean Being as Being is, unalloyed with any concept of anything whatsoever. ॐ





from LETTERS FROM
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
**The Boundless
Wisdom of
Sri Ramana Maharshi**

The Holy Beacon (23)

November 29, 1947

When the Holy Beacon is lit on Arunachala, it is a sight well worth seeing. In the Asramam, in Bhagavan's presence, a big light is also simultaneously lit, sacramental offerings (prasadam) are distributed, and Aksharamanamali and other hymns are sung.

This year in particular, as there was no rain, the function went off very well. In the afternoon, from 3 o'clock onwards, the devotees started making preparations for the festival at the Asramam. In the Jubilee Hall, the floor was decorated with lime and rice powder floral designs, while hanging from the roof all around, were mango leaf festoons. On such occasions, the crowds which come to town for this Dipotsavam (Festival of Lights) usually visit the Asramam in the morning as they go around the hill; whereas in the evenings it is mostly the Asramites who are present at the Asram celebrations, and there is no crowd.

On this evening, when Bhagavan went out to the cow-shed, the attendants placed his couch in the open space facing the summit of the hill, spread the bedding on it and put a stool with all the things on it that Bhagavan usually has by him. Opposite the couch, a large shallow iron pan was placed on a high stool, ghee poured into it, and a wick placed in the center; flowers and garlands were strewn around it. Just as these preparations were nearing completion, Bhagavan came from the cow-shed with his attendants, and it was as though it were actually Lord Siva Himself

arriving on the scene. Spontaneously, those gathered there rose; Bhagavan seated himself on the couch and all prostrated before him. We then sat in rows, the men on Bhagavan's right, the women on his left, along the steps leading to the Hill. The space in front of Bhagavan was filled, not only with baskets of fruits brought by the devotees, but also with vessels of all sorts full of sweetmeats and other preparations. When the ghee brought by devotees was poured into the pan for kindling the light, the pan was overflowing. Camphor was then placed on the wick. The fragrance from the lighted incense sticks spread on all sides and created a holy atmosphere.

Bhagavan sat lovingly looking at all the devotees and related to those near him the significance of the Festival of Lights. He also pointed out the exact place where the light was to be kindled on the hilltop. After that, Veda Parayana began.

By the time the parayana was over, the sun had set. Soon, little lights in earthenware saucers were lit all round the hall and garlands of electric lights of many colors were switched on. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the lighting of the sacred beacon on the hilltop, and the attendants handed to Bhagavan a binocular with which he, too, was eagerly scanning the hill. While his gaze was concentrated on the summit of the hill, ours was concentrated on his divine face, for it was just a reflection of Arunachala.

With the firing of crackers at the temple, the light on the hilltop appeared. Immediately, the akhanda jyoti (uninterrupted) light, opposite Bhagavan was lighted. The Brahmins rose and chanted the mantra "no karmana naprajaya dhanena," and lit the

camphor; Kumkum and vibhuti were distributed, and then all the devotees sat down. After Bhagavan had partaken of a little fruit and some sweetmeats, the rest were distributed amongst the devotees. Immediately after that, the devotees divided themselves into two parties, one singing the hymn Aksharamanamali, and the other taking up the refrain "Arunachala Siva." After that, the five stanzas beginning with "Karunapurnasudhabhde" in Sanskrit and its equivalent in Tamil were recited.

Bhagavan sat resting his cheek on his hand, slightly reclining on the pillow—his characteristic pose. His face appeared as though mirroring his Self-illumination; what with his silence and his profound thought reflected on it. The moon rose in the east and cast its light on him as though seeking its light from him. I sat there, facing east, with my back against the almond tree. If I looked west, I had the light of the Arunachala Hill; if I looked ahead, I had the brilliant light of the moon; and if I looked to the right, I had the glowing light emanating from Bhagavan's face. What a sight it was, and how lucky I felt that I had the three-faced Light around me that night! I felt an inexplicable bliss and involuntarily closed my eyes.

On hearing the sound of the dinner bell, I opened my eyes. Bhagavan was looking steadily at me, and that look was more than I could stand; involuntarily my head hung down. Bhagavan smiled and entered the dining room, the devotees following him.

After the meal, with Bhagavan's permission, we, the devotees, started for the walk around the hill. I shall write to you about it sometime later. ॐ



Satsangs with Nome

No Mistake

October 4, 2020

Om Om Om
(Silence)

Nome: The Self is Brahman. There is no other Self, and, in Brahman, there is no other. Let there be no mistake regarding the true nature of Being, the ever-existent Existence, and thereby abide bodiless and egoless, free of all illusion. Let there be no mistake about your identity as Consciousness, the essential, inner knowledge that destroys all ignorance. Let there be no mistake regarding your true nature of Bliss and thus remain always serenely detached from the unreal.

Questioner: A saint who dedicated her life to her Guru from the age of seventeen until the end of her life and whom I admire and revere very much, wrote a book entitled, "Only Love." Strangely enough, I always felt that this was not a book that was meant to be read, for the title expressed everything that can be expressed with words. Love that transcends even the idea of love or the experience of love is so subtle and so solid. I want to express my gratitude to you since your words seem to be coming from that. Your words are not meant for my ears, or for the mind, but to the heart.

N.: Love is the very nature of the one who loves, and that which he loves is love itself. What else is love but the absolute oneness of Being. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says that love is for the Self. For the sake of the Self, anything or anyone is loved. What you love is always the Self. Just as Consciousness is



Knowledge, love is truly the Self. In such love, there is no other. In other-less devotion, one finds God.

Q.: Could you explain what, "Consciousness is Knowledge," means?

N.: How do you know that you exist? You do not require sense perception to know that you exist. Similarly, you do not require a mental conception to know that you exist. Turn inward, and determine the nature of that knowledge. It is not differentiated as knower, knowing, and known. It is Self-knowledge. That which knows the Existence is not apart from the Existence. In Self-knowledge, there is no differentiated individual. What alone is transcendent of all thought is Consciousness. It may be said that it knows all thought, but no thought knows it. How does it know itself? It is self-luminous Knowledge; that is, it is Consciousness.

Another Q.: You spoke of the necessity for supreme detachment from the unreal. What do I think detachment actually is? At a physical level, it is dropping some form or having an aversion for something. Whatever I drop I pick up again. That certainly cannot be supreme detachment. You say detachment from the unreal cannot be of some real thing that I can detach from. The more I think about it, the more it seems to be based in the clear knowledge that the unreal is actually unreal. How easily I detach from last night's dream is because I know that that was unreal, that was just a dream. Would you talk more about that supreme detachment.

N.: In the fourfold sadhana, which are known that as the requisites for Self-Realization, Adi Sankara has made it abundantly clear that vairagya, dispassion or detachment, follows viveka, discrimination. Discrimination is the sorting out of the real and the unreal, the eternal and the transient, and, ultimately, the Self and the non-self. If there is discrimination, there is also detachment due to the absence of confusion. Discrimination is Knowledge. Having discriminated and thus become clearly detached, one finds the Self, which is one without a second, one without anything other and is the nondual Reality. Nondual carries the sense of there being no alternative. Nothing touches the Self; the Self does not touch anything else. In the Self, for the Self, there cannot be anything else. This eternal truth is supreme detachment.

Q.: It is critical to continue meditation with discrimination. I become stuck sometimes measuring, thinking if this meditation is working. Maybe that is too much ego; maybe there is too much of "me" in that. Maybe I should just continue discriminating what is real from what is thought.

N.: How much is too much of "me"?

Q.: Any bit. A belief in an "I" that is separate. I keep trying to practice inquiry and discriminate the body, thoughts, and the I.

N.: Such inquiry, of course, does not include or does not have in it the ego notion, which one

is trying to transcend. Therefore, inquiry is always in order. Of all the thoughts, are there any that are you?

Q.: I find these thoughts, and somehow I think that I am in there. If I look closely, not even closely, I do not feel I am in there. I feel that occurrence did occur. There was an occurrence.

N.: Thoughts seem to occur to you. You are not an occurrence, so how can there remain confusion between the two -- thought and your Self. Similar is it with regards to the body. Is any part of the body yourself?

Q.: It would be silly to think of it. In fact, I just had a haircut.

N.: Did you lose part of your Existence? (laughter) Was Consciousness trimmed?

Q.: No. Neither would it be a certain organ or certain part of the body. It is just assumed to be somehow in the body.

N.: All ignorance, all misidentification, is like that. It is just a mere assumption.

Q.: But there is still an "I." I still feel "I;" that seems real to me. Not a "me," like an atom. When I have that sense of "I," it is self-evident.

N.: Is that always? Where is the idea of "I" during deep dreamless sleep?

Q.: It comes and goes. When you say, "To whom does it occur to?" it would be "I."

N.: Is the "I" for whom it occurs and the "I" that occurs the same or not? You exist always; if something comes and goes, it cannot actually be the Self. The same Self that "I-lessly" existed during deep sleep exists now. What seems to have changed, and what is it that yet remains unchanged?

Q.: Something is always there, but I just cannot say what it is. It is unthinkable, unspeakable.

N.: Yes. That which always is, is unthinkable, indescribable. It is known with nonobjective knowledge. It is the knowledge in which the Consciousness is the knower, the knowing, and the known.

Q.: Does that include a feeling that I cannot put into words?

N.: By feeling, do you mean a bodily sensation?

Q.: It is not even that. If somebody were to say to me, "What is this "I" we are talking about?" it is the same "I" everyone has; it is just something that I cannot explain.

N.: Yes. Everyone is that. Be certain not to misidentify or wrongly define what that is.

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English from the Chandogya Upanishad and in Tamil from the Song of Ribhu.)

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti



Know the Self

November 15, 2020

Om Om Om

(Silence)

Nome: Know the Self, know Brahman. How is one to know Brahman to know the Self? It is with inner vision, which is nonobjective vision. It is not inside the body or an attribute thereof. Brahman is bodiless, the same in all bodies, yet without a body. Thus is the Self.

It is not in the realm of thoughts or the mind. Brahman is transcendent of all that could possibly be thought of, and so is the Self. Brahman cannot be known by an approach that treats it as if it were an "it", "this", some object of knowledge. Likewise is it with the Self. Considering the Self in terms of "it," "this," etc. is delusion. Freedom from objectification is wisdom, is true Knowledge.

Brahman is all-pervasive, and you, the real Self, are all-pervasive as soon as the idea of being an embodied individual is abandoned.

Brahman is all-knowing, and so is the Self as soon as you realize you are the Consciousness which knows all minds.

Brahman is beginningless and endless, and, likewise, the Self is unborn and imperishable for the Self is not the body. As Brahman is always Brahman and is never not Brahman, so it is with the Self. What you are truly, you always are. You are the same everywhere yet location-less. You are the same always, unchanging, and timeless.

"Ayamatma Brahma", this Self is Brahman. As there is no other for Brahman, there is not another kind of self. Know Brahman, know the Self. Know the Self, and you know Brahman. It is the knowledge of identity, though one without a second and the only answer for the question "Who Am I?".

Questioner: Bhagavan says in a places both in Saddarshanam and Arunachala Pancharatnam, that "if Self-inquiry is done with a skilled mind," and he also says "with a keen intellect." What is the role and how far does keen intellect help when the mind also must be still in the inquiry.?

Nome: Where do you wish to go? Before considering how far such and such will take you, determine where it is that you wish to go. If it is to the Self, the Self is already right where you are, and the only approach to it can be a nonobjective one. Such nonobjective vision is also referred to as an inward-turned mind; for a mind that is turned inward soon loses its form, and, when the mind loses its form, it is revealed in its true nature to be only the one Consciousness. So, yes, turn the mind inward. Comprehend what is meant by inward, and dive deep.

Q.: In Saddarshanam, Maharshi says, "Seek refuge in the Self". However, when I contemplate on this, the concerns of the "I" seem important, as if "I" am going to achieve something".

N.: What are you going to achieve?

Q.: Whatever is not to my liking must be corrected.

N.: What is not to your liking? Or, stated another way, what is it that you truly like? What is it that is completely agreeable for you?

Q.: In that there must be complete faith. Though I know that, I still go outward.

N.: In search of what? For what are you searching? You are so certain it exists. How can such be called lack of faith? Yes, seek refuge in the Self, the conqueror of death. What is this Self, naturally immortal?

Q.: It is that which sees the thoughts.

N.: Beyond thoughts, there is only one thing, since multiplicity is a product of thinking. Beyond thought, there can be no multiplicity, no duality. Now, what if this is what you are? It is the naturally immortal one, the refuge, that in which you have faith. What if this is your Self? Then, the attributes of the mind and the body are not yours.

Q.: In action, there is a feeling of being the doer, and I get lost in it. I need to inquire and remove that doership idea.

N.: What is the nature of the one who knows he is lost? Are you the body? If you are not the body, how could you possibly be the performer of action? Knowledge of the Self is the significance of the sayings, "all his karmas come to an end," and "the knot of the heart is cut." You never do anything despite all that goes on, all that you do; you are never the one who does. Because you are, in reality, the Self, you are self-luminous. You do not stand apart from the Self that you would not know it. So, are you ever lost? Continue to inquire.

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English from the Chandogya Upanishad and in Tamil from the Song of Ribhu.)

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti



Correspondence with Nome

[This is a reply to a devotee in Singapore. The questions can be inferred from the answers.]

April 4, 2021

Dear ,

Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. That you are engaging in the inquiry to know the true nature of "I" is splendid.

It is, indeed, beneficial to read Yoga Vasishtha and Tripura Rahasya.

The question of how the world manifests can arise only if there is a world, only if there is a manifestation. Is there a world? Any explanation of illusion is as illusory as the illusion that it seeks to explain. If one inquires for whom is the manifestation, the perception or reflection, and thus abandons the objectifying tendency, the sense of reality and that of identity return to their source. Then, inquiring "Who am I?" with nonobjective, self-luminous Knowledge, Consciousness knows itself as it is.

Invariable, bodiless and unborn, in the Reality, for the Reality, there has been no creation of any kind.

Examine the misidentification that is implicit in any concept of a world, gross or subtle. It is the "I" notion, or ego, the false assumption of individuality. Self-inquiry, being of the nature of Knowledge, destroys this ignorance, and Reality, the Self, comprehends itself. Nonduality signifies no other and no alternative.

May you, with Bhagavan's grace, inquire deeply, so that you ever abide in the Knowledge of the Self, of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, and thus remain always happy and at peace.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

[In response to seeker who was attempting to surmount certain tendencies:]

May 4, 2021

Dear ,

Om Namoh Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Whenever the ego-assumption diminishes, deep experience shines forth. Whenever this assumption is given importance, the veil of delusion seems to encompass you, and suffering looms large. If you reflect on this, the way to proceed will be clear for you.

Considering the enormity and duration of the entire universe, of what importance is the personal entity? Brahman is still vaster and is eternal. Meditate on this.

Considering the profundity of Vedanta and Sri Bhagavan's Realization, of what importance is the personality composed of tendencies of limitation. The real Self is completely devoid of such ignorance. Meditate on this.

Remember why you are here, the purpose of your life, and dive inward, joyfully seeking the Knowledge of the Self.

If you wish to raise a question, your speech should be loud enough to be heard, and your mind should be quiet enough to listen. Then, the wisdom of the answer will abide within you.

Om Namah Sivaya
Ever yours in Truth,
Nome

The Ribhu Gita

Chapter 3, Verses 15-19

With Commentary by Nome from a
Boundless Wisdom Event held on
December 10, 2010 at the SAT Temple

the Ribhu-Nidagha Dialogue

Om Om Om

(Nome): Om Namah Sívaya. Let us deeply absorb the Bliss-revealing teaching that, in ancient times, Ribhu bestowed on his disciple Nidagha. It is a teaching of eternal Truth. Give your best attention, your best concentration, meditate, question if you wish, and be absorbed. Ribhu says:

15. All is illusory. The world is illusory. Likewise are the past, present, and future illusory. Any particular attitude of mind is unreal – utterly unreal. All is illusory. There is no doubt of this.

The purpose of Ribhu's instruction is to reveal Existence as it actually is, the Reality, for, in realizing such is the greatest Bliss. There is Reality – there is Existence; it is none other than the Self. The Self is not an object. It exists everywhere at all times, but it is not an object. Indeed, it exists in such a manner that it is beyond all space and time and all consideration of such. The Existence of the Self is, but all is illusory. What is meant by all is the entire objective sphere of experience, from your subtlest thoughts to the formed objects of the world, inclusive of the interactions between all of them. All is illusory is to show the Reality of pure Being, which is pure Consciousness. Because you think that you see all things, the real Existence seems as if hidden from you and, with it, its blissful nature. You seem as if bound in illusory limitations. Those limitations superimposed on the actual Reality appear as all this. It is a great joy to discover that the all in all this is illusory. If you can see that all is illusory, the real Existence – the supreme Reality – stands self-revealed, shining blissfully without any limitation or division whatsoever. The real Self, real Being, is the Existence of you

and the Existence of all, but, if you think in terms of all, you do not perceive it, just as if you think in terms of a particularized “you,” you do not perceive it. If you abandon all, “I” and “this,” by no longer regarding such as real, the Reality shines forth of its own to itself.

The world is illusory. To know the Reality, you must abandon all by finding out for whom it is. When you regard the world as unreal, as illusory, that leaves the entire focus solely upon the subject, yourself. By the declaration, “The world is illusory,” the path is shown. By making your vision nonobjective, by inquiring into the subject, having dismissed the world, the path is known, and the nature of Reality, which is world-less, is indicated at the same time. Is the world everything that you think that you experience? All of that can vanish, and Existence remains. Existence is the Self. Existence, unformed and unnamed, is the Reality, and one who know it abides as it, and he has no limitations, bondage or suffering.

Likewise are the past, present, and future illusory. The Reality of the Self is free from time. The Self is not an illusion; there is Reality. Search for Reality in that which is timeless. It is customary for the mind to either think of the past, the present and the future as solid and real – thinking about what has been, what might be and what is apparently going on right now – or to place emphasis on the present time – regarding the past as somewhat dissolved and the future as not yet having been formed. Some view all time as solid. Some view the present as having more reality than the past and the future. To realize the Truth, be free of both views, understanding that which is not in time at all and is the actual sublime Existence.

One portion of the mind is marked off, as it were, by itself, and that portion is conceived of as the present experience and the present time. Then, standing within that, as it were, which is an illusion, one looks backward at the past and forward into the future. To stand thus, within the mind’s definition, is an illusion. Consider your experience in a dream. In a dream, you might regard the past, the present, and the future as equally solid. The past seems to propel the present, the present seems to be what is going on, and the future seems to be inevitable and is regarded as fate. Within a dream, it may seem as if the past is dissolving, the future is not yet formed, and the present seems to be much more vivid. When you wake up, what do you think of all of those experiences of the past, present, and future? If you would regard the present as still existing or being more real, you would still be dreaming, would you not? When you abandon the entirety of it, then you wake up. It is similar for us now, when we abandon all three times – the idea of what has been, what is occurring, and what will be occurring – the Reality shines without obscuration. All is illusory. The world is illusory. Likewise are the past, present, and future illusory. If the world is an illusion, it is an illusion all of the time and not just in the past and the future, but momentarily real now. How do determine time? You do not actually sensorially perceive time, do you? It is an idea in the mind and generally associated with phenomena. The past is conceived in terms of images of what occurred or is remembered, of what your senses perceived. and you. The future is conceived in terms of what will happen; what will appear. The present is considered by what is sensed – what is seen, what is heard, what is touched, what is smelled, what is tasted --- and what is thought. If the world is an illusion and the Self is real, all forms of time – past, present, and future – are also unreal, and the timeless, the world-less, the all-less Reality is what is. You should know yourself as That.

He then says, Any particular attitude of the mind is unreal – utterly unreal. Emphasis is indicated by unreal, utterly unreal. How unreal is unreal? Utterly unreal means having not a trace, not a semblance, of actual existence. There is Reality, but this is unreal. What is unreal? Any particular attitude of the mind is unreal. An attitude may be understood as a particular disposition, particular temperament, any particular concept within the mind or any particular mode of the mind. If you think, “This world is real, and I am in it,” such is an attitude of the mind. Within the attitude can appear ever so many supposed experiences, ideas, and other attitudes.

It is a generic attitude that includes so many others. That attitude is unreal. The world is an illusion because it is something conceived in the mind. You may regard the perception or experience of an external world as an attitude of the mind and not the abiding truth. If you think of all, in the particular or as a whole, those are attitudes of the mind and not the real Existence, or real Consciousness. If you remember the past, anticipate the future, or think you are experiencing in the present, these are all attitudes of the mind. To see that they are attitudes of mind is excellent because you cease to regard them as objective realities and you are free from them thereby. Recognize the attitude of the mind is also unreal. So, the object is unreal because it is only an attitude of the mind, and the attitude of the mind is also unreal. The pure Existence, the pure Consciousness, remains.

All is illusory. There is no doubt of this. If, in your attitude of mind, you project and, thereby, accept the idea that there is something else, something other than the Self, your knowledge of reality is not certain. If there is something other than the Self, you may think that you know it, or you may think you do not know it, but you can never be certain about that. About thoughts and things, how can you ever be absolutely sure? Even if it is an idea, a mental attitude, that you have held for a long time, it can come into doubt. Maybe it should come into doubt. If though, you turn our vision inward to realize the Self, which is quite transcendent of all, there is real certainty. There is a solidity to that Knowledge that nothing else can match. For one who dives within to know the Self, the statement, "All is illusory. There is no doubt of this," becomes self-evident experience. Inquire within, examining your experience, in order to verify what Ribhu reveals. Everything is illusory because it is mutable. There is no doubt. Do you really think anything lasts forever? If it is a thing, certainly not. You can be quite certain of this. That all is an illusion and not the real Self, all being known by you, but not independently existing, in your experience, apart from you, of this you can be quite certain. Of this there is no doubt, for anyone who is truly inward turned. If you start with these understandings and pursue them to their natural conclusion by inquiring within, 'Who am I?' you find the Self alone exists, and anything else – even the idea of anything else – is utterly illusory, having not a grain of truth in it. The Truth, the Reality, stands by itself.

16. Differentiation in thought and differentiation of the world are entirely effects of ignorance. The several millions of universes are all Brahman. Be of this certitude.

There is one Existence, which is the undivided Consciousness. Differences are entirely illusions conjured up only by ignorance. First, you imagine differences in thought, and, then, those same differences are imagined in the world. Differentiation in thought, and differentiation of the world are entirely effects of ignorance. Brahman is the singular Reality; indivisibility is its very nature. It can no more be divided than you can be divided from yourself. First, there is a differentiation in thought, and, then, with the additional mental attitude of a world being real, there is differentiation of a world and the things in it. What actually is there? It is only due to being ignorant of Brahman – of your real Self – that you take different thoughts to be existent, imagine the divisions in those thoughts to be real, and correspondingly view a differentiated world. All of that differentiation of thought and the world is but ignorance. Effects of ignorance; Ignorance is the cause, and the effect is always of the same nature as the cause. If the cause is ignorance, the effect is mere ignorance. Why is it called "ignorance"? It is because it is not true knowledge. Differentiation is an effect of ignorance. There is not one drop of it that is real. If you would abandon ignorance, cease to conjure it up for yourself and cease to adhere to it, what would be found to be existent? The differentiated world, the delusion that there is a world and there are differences in the world, the delusion that there is the difference between the

world and you and the differences in the world, is entirely ignorance. What really exists? Consider how many thoughts there are, how many kinds of thoughts, and even the subtle notion that thought really is there, wherever “there” is supposed to be. All those differences are only ignorance. Ignorance is not something solid or real. It is made of the stuff of imagination. If all the differentiation imagined in thought, including the idea that there is differentiated thought, and if all the differentiation in the world, including the idea that there is a distinct separate thing as the world, is ignorance, what is true Knowledge? If all that is ignorance, what actually exists? This verse is meant to prompt the revelation of this inside you.

The several millions of universes are all Brahman. Be of this certitude. There is immeasurable space and immeasurable time and, in this context, innumerable worlds in apparently endless galaxies - a universe, and, further, stretching beyond the boundaries of conception to consider universe, upon universe, upon universe, with all their time and space, places, worlds, and realms, living beings, things and all the interactions between them - millions of these, countless universes, and all of them, through and through, are just Brahman. There is no differentiated world or differentiated thought. Whether you see all these universes as externally manifesting or realize them to be the cosmic play of the mind, the truth is that all is only Brahman. The very word “Brahman,” absolute, carries a sense of vast, extensive, or expansive. By interior inquiry, leave behind the “I am the body” conception and the differentiations of the world and the mind and realize Brahman. It is the timeless, infinitely vast Reality, which is the solitary substance in all the universes, that you realize as your very Being. It is not just that you are a part of it; the particular “you” disappears entirely in such Knowledge, and the infinite, eternal Reality, Brahman, is realized as your only Existence. The immaculate perfection of this is indescribable, yet it is blissfully realized, if you simply inquire beyond any attitude of difference in the mind, to know your Self. If you identify your own Self with Brahman, that is, as the Self, you will naturally see all, at all times, as that same Self. It is in this manner that you arrive at the certitude to which he refers. It is the certitude of the self-existent Brahman.

Incomprehensible is the nature of your Existence. You cannot think of what you truly are. You can experience this Knowledge in such a way that it is continuous, steady, and complete. This inquiry, “Who am I?” is no small thing. It is not merely a personal discovery of a deeper sense of oneself or something similar. It is quite beyond the small speck of one particular person for a short time in this universe. That which is quite beyond is really you. To think otherwise is illusion. To be done with illusion, inquire.

The entire inquiry is spurred from something deep within you that is not of the mind. It is guided and illumined by that very same thing that is not the mind, and it ends that which is not the mind. If you give your mind to it, the mind is consumed in it. The active ingredient is already beyond the mind. That is the real Knowledge that is inherent in pure Consciousness. If the mind thinks about it, there is no harm, but the Knowledge itself, the inquiry itself, takes you beyond such thinking. The play of the mind is a small differentiation that is only an effect of ignorance. Inquiry consists in becoming free from ignorance. Much of it involves discerning ignorance just as ignorance, at which point you cease to conjure it up or to adhere to it. When that happens, you can no longer be regarded as ignorant, and your own nature shines.

17. All the good in all three worlds, the development of good and bad qualities, and the wise words of all the Gurus are all Brahman. Be of this certitude.

The three worlds are usually spoken of as heaven, earth, and the netherworld, but we may also understand the three worlds as the three realms of experience - gross, subtle, and causal - which correspond to the waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. All that is good in them, whatever is good in the waking state, whatever is good in the dreaming state, and the good

that is felt in the deep sleep state, is entirely Brahman. Not that Brahman should be viewed as limited to such, but know that, when you experience good in the waking state, that goodness belongs to Brahman. When you dream of such, that belongs to Brahman. When, in deep sleep, without differentiated thought and the world, you feel good, that good belongs to Brahman.

You must discern that all good has one nature, one source. The development of good and bad qualities; By what power do the good qualities come about? From some great source, the same that is the good in the three worlds, they come. When you develop good qualities, shining with what is true, good, and beautiful, what is the source of them? What is the real substance in them that appears as qualities attributed to persons or things? If you can see all the good as such, what about all the bad qualities? Do the bad qualities stand apart, independent from Brahman, and have an existence therefore equal to Brahman because they can stand apart? It is not the case. The development of bad qualities is ultimately for the same purpose as the development of good qualities. When you develop good qualities, they are developed in wisdom. When you develop bad qualities, which lead to misery and suffering, they are developed in ignorance. The purpose behind them is the same. The substance, the only existence in them, that is molded into the various qualities, is the same. One who develops good qualities is more likely to turn inward and realize what that Existence is, while one who develops bad qualities is not likely to see it, because he will not turn inward. What you perceive as the good qualities in things and persons and what you conceive as the bad qualities of such are one singular, undivided Existence manifesting differently according to the degree of wisdom or delusion. The Existence is everywhere the same. If it were not so, if there were something that could stand apart from Brahman, it would mean that it was equal in power to Brahman. If there were another apart from and equal in power to Brahman, Brahman would most certainly not really be Brahman, which signifies the absolute, boundary-less, infinite the Reality.

And the wise words of all the Gurus are all Brahman: When you listen to, read, and contemplate the teachings of wise Gurus, what is the substance of their word? What is the meaning of their speech? What is its purpose and its aim? What is its power? Brahman is the Guru; Brahman is the spiritual instruction.

If you are looking to the form of such good and bad qualities and actions, there can be no equating. They are completely antithetical to each other, and the one who follows one will not comprehend the other, and the one who follows the other will not comprehend the one. Here is declared the highest Truth, which is the indivisibility of the Reality. It is an all-comprehensive view, a view that declares, in Truth, that the ones who wallow in ignorance and declare ignorance do not exist as such. All is illusory. What actually is there? What actually exists? Right in the place where you think there is good, there is That existing. Even right where you think there is bad occurring, there is, in highest Truth, only That existing. Not that you should equate the bad quality with the That-ness itself; but rather the bad quality is entirely an illusion and it is only That, the one universal Existence, that is misconstrued into such ignorant proportions.

Brahman alone exists. Realize its significance by inquiry, and you find immortal, indestructible Bliss.

Brahman is God, beyond any conception of God. Brahman is God, as God knows God to be and not a human conception, That incomprehensible Knowledge is Brahman. The wise words of all the Gurus are all Brahman. That is why they liberate They shine with the power of Brahman. The source of the words, the Guru, is only Brahman. The Guru is Brahman. The Knowledge revealed or instructed is Brahman; even the very words that are used to explain it are, in highest Truth, only Brahman.

Be of this certitude. To know all, without exception, to be Brahman is the blissful Knowledge; it is knowing truly. To be absorbed in the undivided Brahman is to have understood the

Guru's instruction. One who has certitude, the complete faith in the instruction, the word of the Guru arrives rapidly at this conclusion that Brahman alone is, because it is the Truth and because the Guru has said so.

18. The sublime and the vile, the best and the mediocre, the sacred Omkara (the letters or sound of Om), and "a" the first letter, as well, are all Brahman. Be of this certitude.

The sublime and the vile. The sublime is that which shines with what is true, good, and beautiful, and tends towards luminous Bliss. The vile is just the opposite; it is what all deplore. The only substance really present, whether shining wisely in that which is sublime, shining lovingly or, that which is despicable and vile, which no one should embrace, in the final analysis, is the one Brahman. One who knows this is at peace at all times, unaffected by the passage of any event.

The best and the mediocre: Whether it is the best thing or the poorest thing, well accomplished or not very well accomplished at all, whatever it is and whatever way it appears, however your experience seems to be, whatever seems to be showing in your experience – Brahman alone is what exists as such. Not that Brahman becomes those things, but right in the place where those things appear to be, Brahman alone actually is.

The sacred Omkara: since the time of the Vedas, this sacred syllable has been in use, repeated with great devotion. Om. What is its significance? What is its meaning? What is its vibration? Only Om. Om is only Brahman. Om is conceived of as being all-comprehensive and all-pervading, the beginning and the end of all. What is it? Only Brahman.

And "a" the first letter: In the Sanskrit alphabet, the letter "a," is first. It is considered integral to every other letter, even if it appears invisibly so, in combination with them. What appears as all the language based on "a" is only Brahman. What is the starting point, the first letter? Only Brahman. Brahman is the beginning and the end, the highest and the lowest, everything at all times.

Be of this certitude. How can you be of this certitude that all this is Brahman? It is by finding out that your own Self is Brahman. If you distinguish your own self from Brahman, other things are seemingly differentiated, as well. If the seer is found to be undifferentiated, all that is seen, all this, is found to be the same.

19. Whatever appears in this world, whatever is observed in this world, and whatever exists in this world are all Brahman. Be of this certitude.

Whatever appears in this world, whatever is observed in this world, and whatever exists in this world: At first, the world and what is in the world are regarded as mere appearance, a passing show within the mind. Then, unless inquired into, one thinks that he actually observes those things, as if they had their own existence. Then, thirdly, one thinks those things are. Or, you may trace the verse inwardly thus: Whatever appears, whatever you regard as existing out there, whatever is observed; that is, you recognize the world is in the mind alone – it is just an observation of the mind, or a play within the senses; and whatever exists, meaning that it is joined to your own nature. Whatever that is in the world, in whichever way you view it, all of that is only Brahman. So, whatever appears in this world, whatever is observed in this world and whatever exists in this world are all Brahman.

Be of this certitude. How can you be sure that everything of this world is Brahman? If the knower of the world, which is yourself, is Brahman, all the known corresponds to the knower. If the knower is Brahman, the known is Brahman, and, as there is no division or two kinds of

Brahman, there is simply Brahman. If you distinguish the knower as an individual, the world seems as if something other, and what appears in the world seems to be something other. If the knower is mistaken to be the senses or the body, objects are regarded as seen, appearing, observed, and existing. If we are not bodies and not the senses, not the mind – not even the mind in its subtlest form, in the form of “I” – if we are not any of these things but are only Brahman – for Brahman is all, which must include us – then, we lose our “us”-ness, our “I”-ness, such being just the differentiation of ignorance – and all that is found to exist is only Brahman. Nothing was there before. Nothing will be there hereafter. Nothing else exists even now. One eternal Brahman is the Truth. By the light of Brahman, meditate upon Brahman, inquiring by the power of Brahman, to know Brahman.

Om Namah Sivaya

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om ॐ



Do we ever pick up a SAT publication, go directly to the text itself, and pass over the introduction or preface? The introductions in SAT publications are abound with nonduality and spiritual instruction, and worthy of reading. Reprinted here, is the introduction to Svatanirupanam, The True Definition of One's Own Self, a SAT publication. It is a jewel of Advaita Vedanta. It is a meditation in itself, and, along with the text, highly recommended. It is a beacon of Reality appearing in a dream.

Introduction to Svatanirupanam by Nome

Being is. Being alone is. The Self is the Absolute, and That is the only Reality. Such is eternally the Truth. Such is the final conclusion of Advaita Vedanta.

This Svatanirupanam (Definition of One's Own Self), authored by the great sage of Advaita Vedanta, Adi Sankara, is a concise text of this enlightening teaching. As the title declares, it is the teaching regarding the true definition of the Self. The Self is itself Brahman, the vast, formless Absolute, and any contrariwise conception of it is merely delusion. So, this teaching is an exposition of what is truly the Self. As there are not actually two selves, for the true Self is the ever-existent and a false self is never-existent, and since one being the object of another is impossible, this teaching is of the nature of one's own Self. The teaching is the revelation of the Self for the purpose of Self-Realization for those who earnestly inquire to know within themselves the answer to the question, "Who am I?"

The nondualistic teachings expressed here by Sri Sankaracharya, the great spiritual teacher Sankara, are of an eternal nature. This is so not only because of the timeless meaning or content of these teachings, dealing as they do with the Self that transcends all time, space, and objectivized illusion, but also because they form the very core and the original quintessence of Advaita Vedanta, which is the final, highest Knowledge. Advaita Vedanta is itself the very

essence of Sanatana Dharma,¹ the teachings of eternal Truth. The very same teachings are found in the Upanisad-s, which are the wisdom portion of the Veda-s, which are perhaps the most ancient extant scriptures. These very same teachings of Self-Realization and of the Self-inquiry that results in this Realization have been taught more recently with superlative clarity by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Indeed, the pure emphasis on the Knowledge of one's own Self found in this Svatanirupanam is extremely reminiscent of the teachings given so graciously by the Maharshi, teachings which, when comprehended and thoroughly practiced, unfailingly yield Liberation from all of the imagined bondage. The resultant silent peace and illimitable bliss, of the very nature of the Being-Consciousness that is the Self, are ineffable. It is wondrous that, though transcendent of words and thoughts, the Truth is so clearly revealed by the great sages. The records of their teachings are veritable, inextinguishable lights that have been preserved and handed down for ages. Those who are graced to receive such are blessed, indeed.

These teachings of the Svatanirupanam, which are intended to bring Liberation from the bondage of ignorance, are of Self-Knowledge. This Knowledge is that of Consciousness itself by Consciousness itself. Consciousness is identical with Being, so this Knowledge is that of Being itself. It is something utterly non-bodily and non-sensory in nature. It is also non-mental in nature. Knowledge through the senses or through thoughts may be regarded as indirect or as just of the nature of ignorance. Such ignorant "knowledge" is based on the erroneous notions of an "I" to be a knower or experiencer, a "this" or an existent objective thing, and the relation between them. Such dualism or triadic notions are characteristic of ignorance. True Knowledge is characterized by nonduality. In true Knowledge, there remains no notion of individuality, or an ego, no matter what attributes may be further superimposed on that notion, such as a thinker, a sensing entity, an embodied entity, and so forth and so on. In True Knowledge, there re-

mains no notion of a “this,” whether such a world or realm of objectivized experiences or notions be conceived of as permanent or temporary, as of matter or of thought, as material in character or from a divine source, as providing happiness or providing suffering. Truly, the actual experience of all those who conclusively realize the Self is as found in Ajata Vada, or the teaching of No-creation. The Self is unborn and imperishable, timeless and everlasting, locationless yet omnipresent, ever immutable, undergoing no modification or phase ever. It never gives rise to an “other.” Of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, One without a second, of the nature of the Reality that ever is just as it is, it alone exists. This is Nonduality, to be realized directly by a thorough inquiry to know oneself. For those who are ardent in the pursuit of this inquiry, who are desirous of Self-Realization, and who are keenly aware of the inestimable, inner value of this teaching of Nonduality, the Svatanirupanam has been composed many centuries ago by Adi Sankara.

Sri Sankara commences this sacred work by offering salutations to his Guru, revealing how the glorious state of Self-Realization is simultaneously one of utmost humility, for it is devoid of ego. That which is the Guru, which is manifested as instruction and experienced as grace, is the power that destroys duality, which is a product of erroneous perception. The destruction of such ignorance, and its consequence of imagined duality, is Liberation from all bondage and suffering, which are unbearable as they run contrary to our true nature of Bliss, just as ignorance is contrary to Knowledge, and egoism is contrary to real Being. The sacred ash, mentioned by Sri Sankara and so familiar to those who are devoted to Siva, represents, as Sri Ramana Maharshi has explained, the residuum of unalloyed, nondual Being, or pure formless Existence, after the utter destruction of all the forms of illusion and delusion by the fire of Knowledge. In the second verse, Sri Sankara again praises his Guru, relating how pure compassion alone is the motivation for such sages to bestow their gracious teachings and

loving assistance to destroy all doubts as to the nature of Reality, which is the true nature of oneself. The instruction is about the actual experience of Nonduality. This Nonduality signifies the indivisible, immutable, eternal Reality just as it is, which is the significance of the term “That” in such ageless Advaita Vedanta teachings as, “Tat Tvam Asi,” meaning, “That you are.”

Sri Sankara then proceeds to expound the Nondual teachings, setting the exposition in the form of a dialogue between a gracious, wise Guru and an ardently inquiring disciple. The disciple is described as scorched by the fire of samsara. Samsara is the repetitive cycle of birth and death, or illusion, characterized by sufferings of various kinds. Suffering is due to illusion, commencing with an “I,” or individual, to which is attributed various forms of misidentification such as the mind, the senses, the body, and attachment to the things of the world. The illusion is the result of delusion, or ignorance, the fundamental basis of which is the ignorant notion of an existent, individual entity, or ego. That which is alone destructive of ignorance is Knowledge, and so by Self-Knowledge the disciple is enlightened by the Guru. That is, the Guru, who is the Self, reveals the same Absolute Self as the Self of the disciple. The Self then reposes in itself and is said to have realized itself. The ego has no part in such Realization, as something that is unreal cannot at all realize That which alone is ever real. The disciple’s preparedness to absorb such teachings so as to realize the Self is constituted by what Sri Sankara refers to as “all practices.” This may be understood as referring to sadhana chatustaya, the four requisites or four means of spiritual practice. These are viveka or discrimination; vairagya or detachment; the sextet of essentials of sama or tranquility and peacefulness, dama or self-control, inclusive of control of the senses, uparati or renunciation and withdrawal from the external, titiksha or forbearance and fortitude, sraddha or sincere faith inclusive of the clear understanding and the unwavering determination to find out the Truth revealed by the scripture and the Guru

in which one has faith, samadhana or profound, concentrated, formless meditation; and the fourth requisite of mumukshutva or the intense desire for Liberation. By an aspirant endowed with such practices, the teachings regarding the true definition of one's own Self are fully absorbed.

As did Sri Ramana Maharshi, Adi Sankara immediately reveals the fact of one's Existence. You are, and you know that you are. Such knowledge is identical with what is known, that is, your own Existence, and does not rely on any other means of knowing, such as thought or sense perception. It is not possible to doubt your existence, for if you did, surely the doubter's existence would still be taken for granted. The ultimate nature of that doubter can only be Existence itself. Existence is irrefutable. That Existence is Brahman, the solitary knower, of the nature of Consciousness. So, whether there is the idea of "I am" or the idea of "I am not," Brahman is, and that Brahman is alone the Self. The Self is only Brahman. The idea of oneself being different from Brahman in any manner or degree whatsoever is merely delusion, such delusion being the cause of suffering. The delusion is simply misidentification.

Thereafter, Sri Sankara describes how to discern the Self, utilizing discrimination to distinguish it from the sheaths that appear to cover it. It is a process, proceeding from gross to subtle, of freeing oneself from misidentification. This reveals one's real Being, which is Consciousness and which is Bliss itself. This Being-Consciousness-Bliss is before all and has no birth. It is after all and has no death. It is changeless and thus formless. It is always unaffected, and thus the Bliss of the Self is as ever-existent and invariable as Being itself is, as Consciousness itself is. Yet, it is only when one actually inquires to know oneself, liberating one's identity from the misidentification with all that constitutes the veiling sheaths, that the ever-effulgent Self shines in Knowledge of the Self.

In commencing an inquiry to know the Self, even if it first appears to the spiritual aspirant that there is nothing in his experience other than what constitutes the five sheaths,

from the causal through the intellectual and mental to the prana and the body, there still exists one who is the knower, or experiencer, of these. All of these sheaths are objective to the Self, the innermost Consciousness. All of these are not one's actual Existence. The knower can never be a known or unknown object. The knower, the Self, is ever-existent and, being nonobjective, can only be formless without the least trace of any of the attributes of the known.

The object of experience will always correspond to the identity of the subject. So, if the subjective identity be that of the misidentification with the body, an objective world will appear to be the experience. Similarly, if the identity is composed of misidentification with the mind, thoughts, modes, and states of mind will be the corresponding object. Upon inquiry, though, one recognizes the previously assumed subjective stand to be merely objective as well. This inquiry is revealed in the Taittiriya Upanisad, and the same inquiry to find the real Consciousness free of superimposed objective attributes of the sheaths is taught by Sri Sankara. Tracing the sheaths inwardly, the prana is the subject of the body, while prana is the object of the mind. The mind, though, is also an object of the intellect, and both are objective to the causal sheath. Still, there is one for whom all these are objective. Since that is interior to, or transcendent of, all that is gross and subtle, all that is manifest and even that which is unmanifest, all that can be conceived and even the absence of conception, there is nothing beyond it. That can never change its nature to become an object of experience. It is always existing as pure Consciousness, the self-effulgent illuminator of all. It knows all, yet none knows it, as the Self is always of the nature of pure, immutable Consciousness. It can neither be an object of something else nor can it be divided within itself as subject and object, "I" and "this." It may be regarded as that which experiences all, but nothing else experiences it. In saying so, Sri Sankara does not give any validity to the object of experience, nor yet to the notion of an individual experiencer, but rather emphasizes the

reality of Consciousness. It can neither be perceived nor conceived, but is realized as itself by itself. That is the true Self, transcendent of the entire universe, dependent upon which is the universe, in which the universe appears, yet in which there is not actually ever a universe, since this Self is of the nature of homogeneous, undifferentiated, immutable Consciousness. Therefore, that alone is the sole-existent Reality for all eternity. Realizing the nonobjective nature of the Self is the way to Liberation from the bondage of illusion.

This Self is Brahman. Being the Reality and nonobjective, it is pure Existence of a completely formless nature. It is thus always attributeless. Therefore, as the Self is not this or that and never becomes this or that, but is always just Being, the Realization of the Self, or Self-Knowledge, which in nonduality must necessarily be of the identical nature as the Self which is realized or known, is only Being. It is not becoming or being this or that. It is simply Being, which is neither a thing nor an activity. This is clearly and abundantly taught by Sri Ramana Maharshi, and the very same is elucidated in verse eighteen of the Svatmanirupanam by Adi Sankara, the wondrous Acarya (Acharya, spiritual teacher) of Advaita Vedanta.

What is an object, be it gross or subtle, is not directly experienced. Such is experienced through some instrument or means of perception or conception. A gross object depends upon the body from which to perceive, the senses by which to perceive, the prana to enliven them, and the mind to cognize the senses. This occurs only in a particular state of mind, such as the waking state for waking state, objective experiences. A subtle object, that is, an object of thought, requires less to be experienced, but still requires a mind in a particular state. From a higher perspective, both what appears as gross and what appears as subtle, what appears as internal within the mind and what is imagined to be external due to misidentification with the body, are entirely within the mind. The waking state of mind constitutes the waking state experiences, just as a dreaming state of mind

constitutes the dream state experiences. Misidentified within the state, the experienter is perplexed and all of it seems real, though actually the invisible, indivisible Consciousness is alone real and all-pervading. However the experiences are viewed, they can-not wisely be regarded as directly experienced, yet Consciousness, which is one's very Existence, is always directly experienced or known, without being dependent on anything else in order to be or to be known.

The apparent, temporary existence of an object, anything regarded as "this," is contradicted by its nonexistence at another time. Everything born is subject to death. All that is created is also destroyed. The attributes of a body at one time are replaced by different or antithetical ones at another time. Thought along one line may be contradicted by contrary thinking at another time. All that is "this" is subject to change and destruction, and one who misidentifies with such does not find firm, lasting peace. Such peace is inherent in the changeless. The changeless is the Existence of the Self. It can never be disturbed by changeful phenomena and can never be contradicted by mental conception, for it is transcendent over matter and thought, is neither created nor destroyed, and is utterly nondependent. This Absolute Reality, is, as Sri Sankara states in verse 19, "not beyond Awareness." That is, it can be known as Consciousness itself. This is Supreme Knowledge, with no division into knower and known, and no separate relation or activity of knowing. All three are one and the same in this Nondual Self-Knowledge. It is Consciousness conscious of itself, yet not as an object. It is Existence reposing in itself, self-luminous and free of all misidentifications. Such is direct experience.

That Self is Brahman, which as the Kenopanisad (Kena Upanishad) declares, is known yet not known, which though not known (objectively) yet is known. In verse 20, Sri Sankara declares the definition of Brahman to be Reality-Knowledge-Infinity. It is Reality, for Being alone exists always, without modification. That which never undergoes

modification, which is self-existent, and which never ceases to be, is Truth or Reality. Knowledge is as explained above and, as such, is pure Consciousness. Thus, Supreme Knowledge is Brahman. That which is without form and thus boundaryless, which is undifferentiated and thus partless and indivisible, which is timeless and eternal, and which has no limitations whatsoever is signified by “Infinity.” That which is Reality-Knowledge-Infinity is alone the Self, for this Self is only Brahman.

In verses 20 and 64, Sri Sankara declares that satyam-jnanam-anantam, Truth-Knowledge-Infinity, is the very definition of Brahman, or the Supreme Self, thus graciously providing a description of the ineffable. The Taittiriya Upanisad declares the very same, and, in his commentary upon it, Sri Sankara elucidates the significance of these adjectives of Brahman. The Truth, or Reality, is that which never changes its nature, while the mutable should be recognized by the wise as unreal. If the real nature of Being is Consciousness, it is ever that, and thus the nature of the knower can never become other than what it is or bear any of the attributes of the known. Knowledge signifies Consciousness itself, which, being formless and egoless, is not an individual knower. The Knowledge is, therefore, transcendent of both knower and known, and it is thus not the relation of those assumed poles, or dualistic cognition. If the Self would be regarded as an individual knower, it would be limited, and, therefore, Liberation would become impossible. The Knowledge that is Liberation is free of such a false assumption of individuality. Similarly, if the Self would be regarded as the known, there would need to be another to know it, but there is no one else to know the Self. The Self is not inert, and it is the experience of all that Consciousness is the most interior, the true meaning of “I,” and does not require another to know it. Furthermore, in that commentary, Sri Sankara declares that Consciousness is the unchanging Reality and the unlimited, for it is neither the known nor the knower just mentioned. So, it is all-knowing, and the all-knowing is the all-blissful.

That is, the Self is the Consciousness that knows and is the bliss of all beings everywhere for all time. Finally, Sri Sankara declares that the nature of Infinity is to be “not separate from anything,” having no other. The Self is infinite in terms of space because it is not born of anything, having no form. It is infinite in time because it not created, but ever is. It is infinite in “substance” because it is identical with all. A differentiated thing is limited. Likewise, a differentiated idea is limited by both time and other ideas, as well as by its own form. The Self, though, is undifferentiated and thus limitless. That Self is Brahman, known to be the cause of all things, time, space, and all else. It is the cause of infinite space and is all-pervading. It is not a thing or a product of anything else and is without end in terms of time. Because there is nothing different from the Self, the Self is infinite in “substance.” That Truth-Knowledge-Infinity is Reality and is absolute.

With misidentification with the sheaths, the nature of the Self is veiled. Mistaken to be an individual limited to the body and the mind, the Supreme is then seen as the Lord, as explained in verse 21. The individual being, or jiva, seems different from the Lord, or Isvara. They seem different in their attributes, and their attributes are regarded as determining their nature. In such ignorance, the jiva (individual) is assumed to be completely different in nature (unqualified duality), different with something of the Lord, who is the source, within the jiva (qualified duality), or similar in nature but with some difference such as magnitude, power, knowledge, etc. (qualified nonduality). With the negation of the misidentifications constituting the limitations of the jiva, the differences utterly vanish, being unreal. The one Self that had appeared as the Lord and the individual is realized just as it truly is, without any distinctions. The absence of the individual leaves only the Self, the Absolute, existing without any duality whatsoever. This is unqualified nonduality, or pure Advaita.

From the worldly-minded perspective, when all is seen as subject to change and contradiction, being perishable and unsta-

ble, it may seem that there is nothing absolutely real, nothing truly existing. If, instead, one wisely inquires to know oneself, one finds the Self to be beyond all that is subject to change. The Self and its Knowledge are most certainly beyond the worldly viewpoint. What is beyond all that is changeful and not subject to contradiction is Brahman. This is seen by the seers of Truth, by the rishis (sages) of the Veda-s and throughout all time. Sri Sankara brings forth not newly appearing ideas, for what appears will disappear, but rather elucidates eternal Truth. Always, the nature of the Self is the same, and that Self is the Self of all. Always, the suffering of living beings is caused only by ignorance characterized by misidentification, and always freedom from ignorance and suffering is by Knowledge, the Knowledge of the Self. Always the Reality, which is Brahman, is as it is. As it was, so it is, and so it will be always.

Though the Self exists always, shining as never-diminished Consciousness, the seeker of Self-Realization must reflect and deeply meditate upon the spiritual Truth expressed in the aphorisms of the wise sages, the teachings regarding the Self being That, in order to realize it. Otherwise, this Absolute Self seems to remain beyond the scope of one's experience, even though it is one's very Existence. By a deep inquiry into the meaning of the teaching, inquiring to know "Who am I?" and by the Grace of the Master, which is beyond measure, Sri Sankara declares, one attains "a direct Awareness, in an instant, of the Self." The Knowledge of the Self is not time-bound. The Self, itself, neither comes nor goes, and its Realization, therefore, can never be quick or slow, for time does not exist in the Self. Moreover, it would be ridiculous to define or attempt to measure the Realization, which is of the nature of Reality and not an event that would occur to some individual, by the measurements and definitions of the unreal. In addition, the Reality of the Self is ever present, and, the moment ignorance is removed, it is known to be there without any delay. Whenever ignorance is removed, to the extent it is removed, to that extent the Self shines unobscured. When the superimposi-

tion is negated, That which truly exists and which was the substrate of the superimposed, alone remains. Since That was existing the whole time, both during the imagined bondage and in the revealed Liberation, it is not an attainment, and the Realization, being nondual and thus of the identical nature, is not an attainment, though all illusion and the sufferings of samsara are abolished. In his commentary upon the Taittiriya Upanisad, Sri Sankara says that the Self does not truly fall into the categories of attainment and non-attainment, realization and non-realization, as if there were different states for the Self. The Self is itself—in its own state always, as the Maharshi has declared—and the ego, being unreal, cannot have a real state. Sri Sankara states that one cannot attain oneself, for the Self is unlimited and identical with all, so Realization consists of the discovery through Knowledge of what is actually always true, just as, in the proverbial story of the tenth man, no one was lost or regained, but there was relief from all concern when right Knowledge dawned. Therefore, certitude of Knowledge is what is needed, while depth of inquiry is the means for it. Grace is ever present and is experienced proportionate to one's diving within. Therefore, Sankara has said in this Svatmanirupanam, "...reflecting upon the meaning of the aphorism, by the greatness of the Grace of the Master, one attains a direct Awareness, in an instant, of the Self."

The aspirant is blessed with the instruction of, "You are That." Prior to Self-inquiry, the "you" (that is, one's sense of "I") is confounded with the body, the senses, and the mind. Consequently, the "I" is considered to be an experiencer and the performer of the activities of the body, as explained in verse 25. As for "That," it is considered to be the omniscient Absolute, the very cause of the entire universe, which is truly Consciousness. Upon Self-inquiry, the Self is recognized as the Witness, which is Consciousness that is distinct from the body, the senses, the mind, and the ego. As for That, it is known by direct experience as immaculate Consciousness, which has no conditioning of any kind ever, as in-

destructible, as being without duality or anything else whatsoever, and as transcendent of the universe. With such inquiry, one arrives at true Knowledge by emphasis upon Consciousness itself, discarding the apparently different or contradictory attributes of the “I” and the Absolute (“That”). Since the most ancient times, the sacred Knowledge of the most profound wisdom has been taught by revealing the identity of the “I” and the “That.” The instruction is “That you are,” and the “are” or identity can be realized by the inquiry that reveals what the “I” truly is. Thus, by the inquiry, “Who am I?” is the profound Knowledge of the Self realized, and abidance in this Knowledge is freedom from all sorrow.

In verses 39 through 43, Adi Sankara extols the importance of the Guru, pointing out that purity of mind, performing religious practices such as rites, and engaging in other spiritual activities will not in themselves suffice for the highest good. In the relationship with the Guru, which is not a relationship as between two embodied beings, there occurs the dissolution of the ego of the disciple. The Guru abides as Brahman itself, the impersonal, bodiless, egoless Self, with no confusion regarding the Truth. By the Guru’s wise, compassionate, gracious instruction, the disciple loses his individual identity, or ego. That which the Guru is, That which is the Self, That which is Brahman, alone remains. Next, Sri Sankara extols the Veda-s, proclaiming them to be the very pronouncements of the Supreme Lord and of a beginningless nature. This beginningless Knowledge is the Knowledge of the eternal, Absolute Self, which is beginningless, and this Supreme Lord is none other than the Self itself. Specifically, Sri Sankara refers to that portion of the Veda-s that treats of the Supreme Knowledge, which is Nonduality and of which this Svatmanirupanam is a reiteration. Indeed, Sri Sankaracharya states that all that is written concerning this Knowledge, no matter how wonderful, is only a restatement of the original Knowledge.

For one desirous of the Supreme Knowledge of the Self, this reliance on the Veda-s is

one of four crucial validations of one’s understanding, as described by Sri Sankara in other works of his. The first, already mentioned, is the sruti, or the Veda-s. The second is smriti, or “remembered works” constituted of those scriptural or spiritual texts that come after the Veda-s. The disciple may view his own Guru’s instructions as belonging to what is mentioned thus far. The third is deep reasoning, which is of the nature of discrimination, the essence of which is inquiry to know the Self. The fourth is one’s own direct experience. Only when one’s knowledge coincides with all four of these criteria, validated by all four, can the knowledge be regarded as true. This safeguards the seeker from mistaking self-created ideas or transient experiences for Truth and from misinterpreting the holy texts, as well. The Veda-s provide the ancient root of eternal Truth, the smriti-s provide the details of instruction, discrimination and inquiry provide the clear understanding, and one’s own direct experience ensures that such does not remain as indirect, objectified knowledge. In Vivekacudamani, The Crest Jewel of Discrimination, Sri Sankara describes these four validations as holy texts, deep reasoning inclusive of meditation on the Supreme, instruction by the Guru, and direct, inner experience.

Nonduality is Truth. Dualism is merely a superimposition upon the Truth. The Reality is never superimposed. Rather, the unreal, the illusory, is superimposed, through ignorance, upon the Reality, as Sri Sankara explains in verse 52. Therefore, utter Nonduality is not an idea superimposed upon a real duality. Rather, unreal duality is merely superimposed, by imagination, upon Nonduality. Nonduality is the Truth established by the Veda-s and other sacred texts that declare the Supreme Truth, such as this Svatmanirupanam. These holy books contain a sacred message that might not otherwise be understood. They do not confirm existing ignorance, but rather reveal Knowledge that transcends and destroys such ignorance. One does not require such holy works to learn of dualism, because one already

knows of such dualism by worldly experience in the samsara. The texts are composed to reveal something not gained by worldly experience and not to be known by worldly means. That something is Nonduality. As long as duality subsists, suffering will be experienced. Such suffering is intolerable because it is contrary to one's true nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss. For the sake of happiness, one seeks the true definition of oneself. With such Knowledge, one knows Being as it is, and in Nonduality, one is what one knows. Thus, there is the unalloyed, limitless Bliss of Being, which is as continuous and unending as ever-existent Being itself is.

The Self is blissful, Absolute Being, yet, in ignorance, it is assumed to be a limited individual entity, or jiva. This is described in verses 56 through 62. The jiva, being a product of ignorance, is unreal, or may be regarded as a misperception of what is real. If the individual entity, or ego, were really such, it would always be such, as a thing does not actually change its nature. If it is real, it is ever real. If it is unreal, it is ever unreal. The transient does not become the eternal, and the eternal does not become transient. The nonobjective does not become a thing, and an object does not become the transcendent Consciousness. The homogeneous, undifferentiated, and nondual does not become split, differentiated, and dual, and vice versa. The real Consciousness does not become an unreal thought, and an unreal thought does not become, or attain to, the real Consciousness. Therefore, if individuality be the real nature of the individual, it will always be so, but then there would be no Liberation possible, as it is agreed by all that Liberation is the egoless state. Without Liberation, there would be no permanent peace and happiness. A state lacking in peace and characterized by unhappiness runs contrary to one's nature. So, such peace and happiness are sought. They are to be found within. Within is the Self. The Self is real, and thus ever-existent. One need only know the Self as it truly is and not misconstrue it to be an ego-entity in order to abide in the lasting peace and happiness of the Absolute Reality, for igno-

rance regarding such is the cause of all that is of the nature of suffering and futility. Therefore, Self-Realization is what is necessary. The Self that is to be realized must be innately egoless. That Self will never change its nature. Its Realization, or Knowledge of itself, is the experience of permanent peace and happiness. What then is the individual? This is the inquiry to be made by the seeker of Self-Knowledge. Upon such inquiry, this falsely assumed individuality vanishes, leaving the residuum of egoless Being, which was the only real identity or Existence the entire time. The true nature of the individual is, thus, only the real Self, which has no attribute of individuality whatsoever.

By Knowledge alone does the misidentification with the body and the delusion of samsara vanish. This cannot be accomplished by any bodily means. Ignorance is not a production of the body, and Knowledge, also, is not a bodily production. Ignorance has no valid cause, though it seems to rise from the "I." Yet, when one inquires into this "I," its "I"-ness vanishes, being unreal, and along with it vanishes ignorance, which is unreal. As for true Knowledge, it inheres in the Self. The effects of ignorance cannot be reasonably considered its cause. The effect is the samsara, of which the misidentification with the body is a pivotal factor. If the effects be traced to their cause, and that causal "I" be inquired into, what remains is oneself, the Self, alone, one without a second.

Sri Sankara declares that Self-Knowledge alone is necessary. The path to such Knowledge consists of Knowledge, the primary means for which is the practice of Self-inquiry. That which is the active ingredient in any practice resulting in deeper spiritual experience is Knowledge. Without it, no deeper experience is forthcoming. Yet, Knowledge itself can stand alone. As stated in verse 70, it requires no other assistance, just as the brilliant sun does not require some other help to dispel darkness. The inquiry to know oneself is all-sufficient for the elimination of the darkness of ignorance and the revelation of the Absolute.

Sri Sankara proclaims that the relation between the objects of experience (inclusive of the world and thought, the gross and the subtle) and the real Existence is like that of an imagined snake superimposed upon a rope. The rope alone is, even when, in dim light, it is misperceived as a snake. The snake is never actually born, nor does it have any reality at all, other than that of the rope. The rope never changes its nature. It neither projects a snake nor changes into a snake. So it is with the Self and the imagination of anything else. This is the true purport of the essence of the Veda-s and all the other texts and teachings that declare the highest Truth.

In verses 72 and 73, Sri Sankara explains that, in relation to all that is objective, the Self is the silent witness. The witness is attributeless and formless. Its ultimate nature is pure Being, unmodified Consciousness, nondependent Bliss. In meditating upon the Self as the witness, no reality is to be attributed to the witnessed. The meditation is a return of happiness, identity, and reality to their true abode, and that is the uncreated Self. The witnessed is unreal, like a snake imagined where there is only a rope. As the rope alone exists and there never is really a snake, so it is with the Self and the non-Self. As the rope truly has no connection to the snake, that is to say the snake is only the rope though the rope is not at all ever a snake, so the unchanging Self is ever as it is and is never attached to unreal things.

In expedient teachings employed to assist the aspirant, maya, or illusion, is the reason given for the appearance of the Self as an experiencer, the performer of action, and such and the corresponding objects of such. However, as explained by Sri Sankara, maya itself does not actually exist. What is, is only Brahman, and nothing other than That ever comes to be. This Truth is seen by the seers of Truth, as the Real ever is and the unreal never is. Brahman is all that ever is. What seems to be a universe is only Brahman and not anything else. One who knows Brahman, therefore, knows all that there truly is, and this is true Knowledge. To aid the seeker, Sri Sankara further teaches that same Brahman

to be the cause of the universe, for, since the effect cannot be of a different nature than the cause, and since it is only illusion that makes it appear otherwise, such understanding leads to true Knowledge.

Verses 80 through 83 continue to instruct along these lines, revealing how all—the Guru, the disciple, and the entire universe—are only the Supreme Reality. Yet, in order to ensure that this profound instruction is not consumed within the context of the previous ignorant conception of the world being real in any way, he negates the idea that the universe is real. Viewed in highest Knowledge, the three statements, “The world is unreal,” “Brahman alone is real,” and “The universe is Brahman alone,” all have the identical significance. This is to be known by an inner, experiential inquiry. Without such inquiry, these aphorisms, and how their meanings are identical, remain a mystery.

Between “I” and “this” is displayed all delusion. The direct means of realizing the Truth, the true definition of one’s own Self, is to hold on to the “I” and inquire to determine what it is. The answer to such inquiry is never an objective conception. The only answer, as Sri Ramana Maharshi explained, is the nature of the inquirer himself. From verse 84 onward, Sri Sankara, speaking as the Guru, describes in detail this essential inquiry into the “I,” revealing the Self’s freedom from the body, senses, ego, and all else. After instructing in the manner of inquiry, he again reveals the ajata (no-creation) teaching of complete Nonduality, going beyond even the apparent distinctions of ignorance and knowledge, making clear that Brahman, the Self, alone is. The Guru’s instruction finishes with descriptions of the sublime, exalted, indivisible state of the realized sages who know this unalterable Truth without an alternative.

Thereupon, in the context of the dialogue, the disciple, having deeply meditated upon all that was taught by the Guru until no more contradictions to it could possibly arise in his mind, describes his own direct experience. This portion of the text is cast in

the first person, for the “I” has been realized as the true Self, and nothing else remains of his “I.” The aspirant who reads these lines should observe that these statements in the “first person” are made by one who has already realized the Truth of them by deep inquiry, and they are presented as such. It would not be wise to use such statements as a surrogate for the actual practice of inquiry, for such would not eliminate the ego. When the ego is gone, its illusory existence destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, what is described in the remainder of the Svatmanirupanam is one’s own direct experience, the natural state. The descriptions are those of complete detachment, of the vast and universal view of the Self, and of identity with Being-Consciousness-Bliss. In verse 110, the term, “uhapoha” is customarily interpreted as positive and negative reasoning or consideration of the pros and cons of a topic being contemplated. In the verse, “inquiry” is added, so that the interpretation is that of an inquiry into the pros and cons or an inquiry using positive and negative reasoning. These terms may also be understood as comprehending, reasoning, and inquiry, which is the process of absorbing the teachings of Nonduality; or as examination, removing, and inquiry, which is descriptive of the process of examination of ignorance composed of misidentification and attachment, the removal of such, and the inquiry into the nature of what remains of the “I” upon such removal. Thereafter, the disciple continues to describe, in the “first person” indicative of direct experience, the nature of the Self in both cosmic and attributeless terms, as the infinite, as the eternal, as that which is all, as the essence, and as the utterly transcendent. He abides as identical with the Self and its Realization. No more is there the conception of a self to realize, a Self to be realized, the movement toward Realization and a state of Realization. Being alone is, and it is the Self, free of the division of realizer and realized. Being is itself the Realization. Toward the conclusion of his description, the disciple glorifies the Guru again and again, for there is in him no ego to claim his experience.

The Svatmanirupanam concludes with a re-statement of the ajata vada (teaching of no-creation, no-birth), the Truth of which is realized by all who abide in Self-Knowledge—the state of Kaivalyam, the state of being That which alone is—as well as a final exhortation for you, who are reading this, to deeply reflect on these teachings about your own true Self.

In order to aid the seeker in obtaining a thorough comprehension, wherever alternative translations of a word or phrase are possible, such has been included in the word-by-word translation, though, in a few instances, they have been incorporated into the final, running English translation, as well. Terms and phrases in parenthesis are supplied to clarify the meaning of the preceding word or phrase, while terms and phrases placed in brackets indicate an insertion by the translators considered necessary to render the passage comprehensible in English. As the two editions of Sri Sankara’s Sanskrit text that served as the original basis of the present English text differ at points, the translators have chosen those portions of each that seemed most consistent with the rest of the text. With those passages in which the two editions differ significantly and the text would seem to allow for either meaning to be appropriate, both versions have been given in the translation. Any mistakes that may appear herein are entirely the fault of the assistant translator and do not reflect any flaw in the flawless original text or in the meticulous, devoted, selfless work of the primary translator, the late Dr. H. Ramamoorthy.

May this English translation of the Svatmanirupanam serve the same intention of the Sanskrit original composed by the wondrous sage, Adi Sankaracharya. May He be pleased with what is here. May this be an offering to Him.

May this presentation of the ancient teachings pertaining to the inquiry resulting in Self-Knowledge serve the same intention as the liberating teachings of this inquiry by my ever-gracious Guru, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. May He be pleased with what is here. May this be an offering to Him. May this be an offering to Brahman.

॥ सुब्रह्मण्यमङ्गलाष्टकम् ॥

॥ subrahmanya-maṅgalāṣṭakam ॥

Octet of verses on auspiciousness
of Subramanya

महासेनाय मान्याय महादेवसुताय च ।

महापातकसंहर्त्रे स्वामिनाथाय मङ्गलम् ॥ १ ॥

mahāsenāya mānyāya mahādeva-sutāya ca ।
mahā-pāta-ka-saṁhartre svāmināthāya
maṅgalam ॥ 1 ॥

1. The commander of a large army, the
venerable, and the son of the Great Lord, the
destroyer of great sins, to the chief of gods,
may auspiciousness be.

षडाननाय देवाय मुनीन्द्रवेषधारिणे ।

गजाननकनिष्ठाय गौरीपुत्राय मङ्गलम् ॥ २ ॥

ṣaḍānanāya devāya munīndra-veṣa-dhāriṇe ।
gajānana-kaniṣṭhāya gaurī-putrāya
maṅgalam ॥ 2 ॥

2. The one with six faces, the Lord, one who
appeared as the chief of sages (Sri Ramana),
the younger brother of the elephant-faced
(Ganesa), to the son of Gauri,
may auspiciousness be.





वज्रहस्ताय वीराय कुक्कुटध्वजधारिणे ।
वेदसाराय वेद्याय कार्तिकेयाय मङ्गलम् ॥ ३ ॥

vajra-hastāya vīrāya
kukkuṭa-dhvaja-dhāriṇe ।
veda-sārāya vedyāya kārṭtikeyāya
maṅgalam ॥ 3 ॥

3. With thunderbolt in his hand, the hero,
holding a flag with a cock, the essence of
Veda-s, the one to be known, to Karttikeya
(fostered by six Krittika-s),
may auspiciousness be.

साधुमानसमित्राय दुष्टमानसवैरिणे ।
शरणागतपालाय श्रीवल्लीशाय मङ्गलम् ॥ ४ ॥

sādhū-mānasa-mitrāya
duṣṭa-mānasa-vairiṇe ।
śaraṇāgata-pālāya śrī-vallīśāya
maṅgalam ॥ 4 ॥

4. The friend of [people with] good mind,
the enemy of [people with] wicked mind,
the protector of those who take refuge
[in him], to the Lord of Sri Valli,
may auspiciousness be.

जैगीषव्योपदिष्टाय शिवज्ञानप्रदायिने ।
सच्चिदानन्दरूपाय ब्रह्मनिष्ठाय मङ्गलम् ॥ ५ ॥

jaigīṣavyopadiṣṭhāya śiva-jñāna-pradāyine ।
saccidānanda-rūpāya brahma-niṣṭhāya
maṅgalam ॥ 5 ॥

5. He who instructed [sage] Jaigishavya bestowing the knowledge of Siva, of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, to the one abiding in Brahman, may auspiciousness be.

शक्तिहस्ताय स्कन्दाय महाशक्ताय हेतवे ।
निरालम्बाय शुद्धाय निर्विकल्पाय मङ्गलम् ॥ ६ ॥
śakti-hastāya skandāya mahā-śaktāya hetave ।
nirālambāya śuddhāya nirvikalpāya
maṅgalam ॥ 6 ॥

6. With spear in his hand, Skanda (the one who dries up the ignorance of his devotees), the great able one, the cause [of all], the supportless, the pure, to the one without any distinguishing characteristics, may auspiciousness be.

गुहाय गुह्यरूपाय गुह्यतत्त्वार्थदर्शिने ।
सदाश्रमविलासाय सुब्रह्मण्याय मङ्गलम् ॥ ७ ॥
guhāya guhya-rūpāya
guhya-tattvārtha-darśine ।
sadāśrama-vilāsāya subrahmaṇyāya
maṅgalam ॥ 7 ॥





7. The one who was reared in a secret place/dweller in the heart cave, whose nature is hidden, who reveals the meaning of the secret tattva (Truth), the one shining forth in SAT Ashram, to Subrahmanya (one who is dear to those devoted to Brahman), may auspiciousness be.

अजाय नित्यमुक्ताय निराकारचिदात्मने ।
सन्मन्दिरनिवासाय सुब्रह्मण्याय मङ्गलम् ॥ ८ ॥

ajāya nitya-muktāya nirākāra-cidātmane ।
sanmandira-nivāsāya subrahmaṇyāya
maṅgalam ॥ 8 ॥

8. The unborn, the ever-Liberated, the formless Consciousness-Self, the one who resides in SAT Temple, to Subrahmanya, may auspiciousness be.

– by Ganesh Sadasivan



Siva's Cosmic Dance



CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS REFLECTIONS

The 108 karanas, as described in the fourth chapter of the Natya Shastra (a Hindu treatise on the performing arts), are synchronized dance movements with each posture displaying a particular mood. They are performed to spiritually enlighten the spectators. The Natya Shastra states that one who performs well the karanas created by Mahesvara will be freed of sin and go to Mahesvara. A few Hindu temples exhibit the karanas in the gopuram, the entrance tower to the temple. Lord Siva or Parvati are depicted displaying the karanas.

A number of interpretations are written regarding the karanas, however, there is no universally accepted analysis, leaving each person free to interpret the karanas in a manner that most inspires him or her. Here, we introduce an interpretation by Janane Sivakumar to accompany the production of the 108 paintings of the karanas as painted by her mother, Anandhi Muthukumarasamy, and adorn the walls in the Lotus room of the SAT Temple. Her interpretation is garnered from the descriptions of the movements as found in the 3 volume set of "Karanas, Common Dance Codes of India and Indonesia," by Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam, M.A., Ph.D. Each painting is numbered and titled.

Anandhi uses quartz crystals, 24k gold foil, and metallic paints to adorn each painting, yet, due to the limitations in the medium of photography, the images presented here are not able to capture the sparkling characteristic of each painting, which give them a stunning quality. *(Continued in subsequent Reflections.)*



26. Nikuñcitam

Once inquiry reaches its zenith, one ultimately realizes that he himself is that tranquil destination.



28. Ardhamattalli

Rather than pointlessly searching for happiness in bodily pleasures, put effort into discovering the fulfilling ocean of bliss and love.



27. Mattalli

Through persistent inquiry, one becomes the embodiment of divine love, mesmerizing even the God of Love.



29. Recitanikuṭṭakam

The Guru, who is the embodiment of Grace, lovingly and affectionately leads the devotee to Liberation.

Alternative meaning:

In the way that a parent lovingly cares for her child, the Guru's grace tenderly looks after the devotee.



30. Pādāpaviddhakam

As the importance of the “I” notion diminishes, one becomes engrossed in the dance of divine love.

(The interpretation for this pose came about through some research and finding that it is a reenactment of Sri Krishna’s rasa leela with the Gopis. Sri Krishna’s rasa leela is the dance of divine love.)



31. Valitam

True Beauty shines forth when one casts aside the tendency to endlessly satisfy the ego.

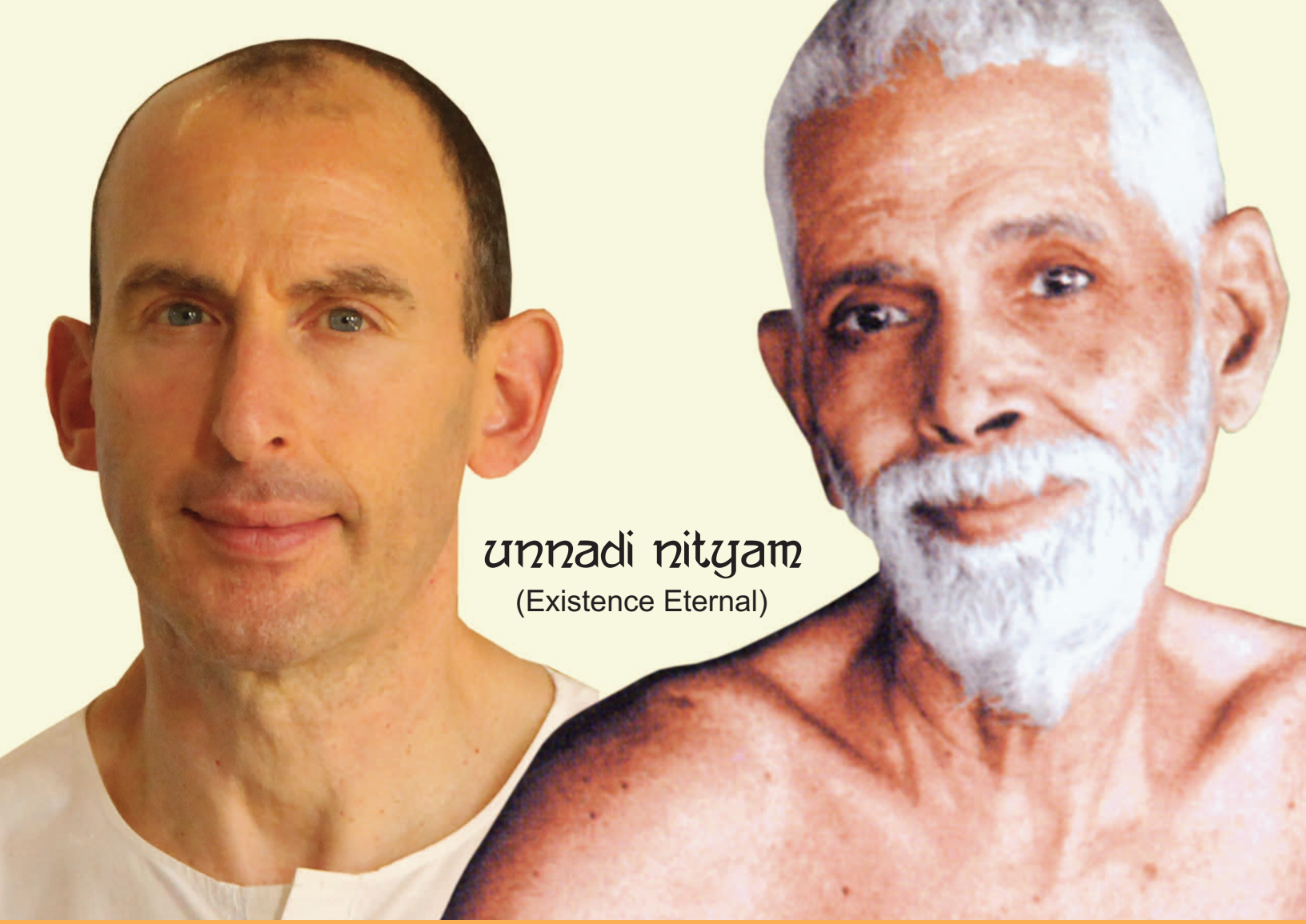
Note:

(The text briefly references the beauty of this pose. As a result, my interpretation mainly focused on the beauty aspect.)

More Offerings to God and Guru

Right: Simultaneously, while creating the 108 Karanas, Anandhi paints a mandala upon the Lotus Room ceiling. This is a work in progress.





unnadi nityam (Existence Eternal)

unnadi nityam-buṇḍaka vunnaṭu-leruke-munnadi
ullamu nīpai-yuñciti veṅkaṭa ramaṇa, tiruveṅkaṭa ramaṇa
[unnadi..]

Can there be awareness of one's being without there being eternal Existence?
(Since Existence is not different from Bhagavan or one's spiritual heart, how to attain it? -)
I remain with my heart abiding in You, Venkata Ramana, Holy Venkata Ramana!
Venkata Ramana: Bhagavan Ramana's birth name, Lord Venkateswara

nīvaṇṭini nā sarvamu; nīvaṇṭini nijagamyamu
nīvaṇṭini ādhāramu-neppuḍu śrī ramaṇa
kānaṇṭivi kāyambulu; kānaṇṭivi kośambulu
kānaṇṭivi kartayu bhoktayu kāñciti o ramaṇa
[unnadi..]

Sri Ramana, you are everything for me, the real destination (also: destination that
is Reality),

and the basis for existence. O Ramana, I observed from your revelation that I am not
any of the
bodies, nor the (five) sheaths, nor the doer-enjoyer of actions.

ne-nevvaḍa ne-nekkaḍa; ne-putṭina coṭekkaḍa
ne-naṇigina nijamakkaḍa nammiti śrī ramaṇa
ā satyame ne-nityamu; ā jñāname sarvasvamu
ānandame ānandamu ayyiti o ramaṇa
[unnadi..]

Sri Ramana, I have full faith that upon enquiring “Who am I? Where is this I?
What is the
birthplace of I?”, the ego-I falls and truth dawns then and there. O Ramana,
that Sat / Existence
thus realized is indeed who I always am, that Jnana / Knowledge-Awareness is what
appears as
everything, and thus I become an unending outpouring of Ananda / bliss.

maruvanu mā guruni māṭa; vadalanu sajjanula bāṭa
viḍuvanu nā nija-tattvamu viśayamu-lennainā
śaraṇamu sadīśvarāya sadguru nomi-vai
karuṇato mamu kāpāḍutu velicāvā devā
[unnadi..]

I will not forget our Guru’s instruction (“tat-tvam-asi”), I will not stray from the
path of sages
(atma vichara), and I will not diverge from my true nature (Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman),
even when
any number of external objects may appear. I surrender to you O Divine Ramana,
manifesting
as Lord Sadishvara and Sadguru Nome* and constantly protecting us with your Grace!

PS: I must share an example of how all words are only His grace, always. It is very clear to me that I could never write anything myself, these words just came together without (or despite) intellectualizing. The final stanza can translate as "I surrender to you O Divine Ramana, manifesting as Lord Sadishvara and Sadguru Nome.." or "I surrender to you O Divine Sadishvara, manifesting as Sadguru Nome.." In either instance, I was uncertain how Nome Guru, always manifesting complete and deep humility, would receive writing about this one-ness (though scriptures do affirm that Guru is Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara), but for some strange reason I could never get myself to change them. Then my answer came, in three different ways!

1. Sri Ribhu said through Friday meditation: Guru is Consciousness, as are Hari/Brahma/Shiva/Gods.
2. Just in the past one week, two of the SAT devotees separately mentioned how, in their experience, Lord Sadishvara and Nome Guru are one and the same
3. Nome Guru approved the song before it was performed at the Bhajans, and that means everything.

Viswanath Poosala

ఉన్నది నిత్యం*

ఉన్నది నిత్యంబుండక వున్నటులెరుకేమున్నది
ఉల్లము నీపెయుంచితి వెంకటరమణా, తిరువేంకటరమణా
[ఉన్నది..]

నీవంటిని నా సర్వము; నీవంటిని నిజగమ్యము
నీవంటిని ఆధారము-నెప్పు డు శ్రీ రమణా
కానంటివి కాయంబులు; కానంటివి కోశంబులు
కానంటివి కర్తయు భోక్తయు కాంచితి ఓ రమణా
[ఉన్నది..]

నేనెవ్వడ నేనెక్కడ; నేపుట్టిన చోటెక్కడ
నేనణిగిన నిజమక్కడ నమ్మి తి శ్రీ రమణా
ఆ సత్యమే నే నిత్యము; ఆ జ్ఞానమే సర్వస్వము
ఆనందమే ఆనందము అయ్యి తి ఓ రమణా
[ఉన్నది..]

మరువను మా గురుని మాట; వదలను సజ్జనుల బాట
విడువను నా నిజతత్త్వము విషయములెన్నెనా
శరణము సదీశ్వరాయ సద్గురు నోమివె
కరుణతో మము కాపాడుతు వెలిచావా దేవా
[ఉన్నది..]

*Telugu script of the song has been added in case precise pronunciation and script are needed - IAST transliteration, while alright for singing, did not fully match with the way people normally write in Telugu. -V.P.

(This song was presented at the SAT Temple during the Sri Sadisvara Mandiram Pratishtha, June 20, 2021. -ed.)

SAT Retreats 2021

In SAT retreats, Self-Knowledge and Self-inquiry meditation, the means of inquiring within to know the true Self, are taught, with ample time to ask questions as the teachings are given, so that you can clarify and deepen your understanding and experience. SAT retreats are very thorough in their presentation and provide a tremendous amount of spiritual guidance. The experience of attending retreats is profound and very helpful for spiritual development. All of SAT's retreats are taught by Nome, a sage who practiced the inquiry for steady abidance in Self-Realization. He places no emphasis on himself but keeps the focus of the instruction entirely upon Self-Knowledge and Self-inquiry, turning the aspirants' attention fully inward, for it is in this way that meditation, Self-inquiry, and Self-Knowledge truly open for one.

Recommended readings for the retreats are the works of Sri Ramana Maharshi, **Ribhu Gita** and **The Song of Ribhu, Self-Knowledge**, the writings of Sri Sankara (Adi Sankara), such as those contained in **Svatmanirupanam** and **Advaita Prakarana Manjari, Avadhuta Gita, Ash-tavakra Gita, Saddarshanam and an Inquiry into the Revelation of Truth and Oneself, The Essence of Spiritual Instruction**, and **The Quintessence of True Being**. Familiarizing yourself with or studying these books will enable you to obtain even more from the retreats, which are an experiential immersion in the essence of Advaita Vedanta. All of these books and similar nondualistic literature are available from SAT.

Vegetarian meals are provided during the retreats. During retreats, lunch and dinner are served on Friday, three meals are served on Saturday, and two meals are served on Sunday. SAT does not provide special meals for those with unique dietary concerns.

The Self-Realization Retreat: Aug. 20 - Aug. 22, 2021

This retreat focuses on Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings contained within **Atma Vidya, Ekatma Pancakam**, and other short texts, with spiritual instruction about these teachings, and much time for silent meditation. This retreat is an immersion in the fusion of Knowledge and devotion.

The Truth Revealed Retreat: Nov. 12 - Nov. 14, 2021

This retreat is focused on nondual Self-Knowledge as revealed by Sri Ramana Maharshi and consists of an in-depth explanation of the teachings contained in Sri Ramana Maharshi's **Saddarshanam** (i.e., **Sat-Darshanam, Truth Revealed, Forty Verses on Reality**). There is also much time for the participants to silently meditate upon this quintessential, profound, Blissful Knowledge for the revelation of the Truth within.

ONLINE RETREAT REGISTRATION AVAILABLE!

End of sign-up date is
one month prior to commencement of each retreat.
Please visit the link below to register for retreats at the SAT Temple:
<https://satramana.org/web/events/retreats/retreat-application-form/>
Or, visit the SAT website at: satramana.org › Events › Retreats

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya
Om Namah Sivaya