

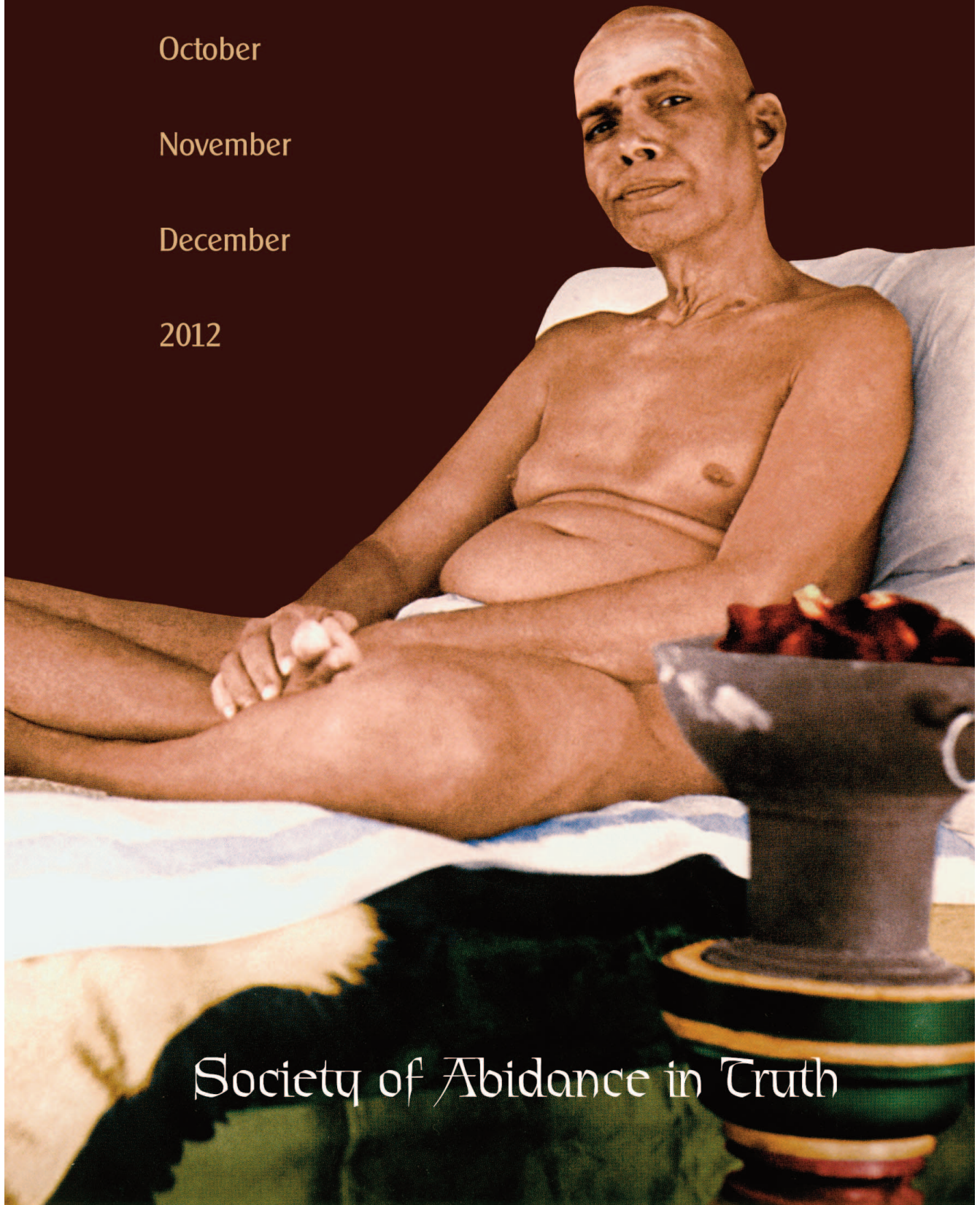
Reflections

October

November

December

2012



Society of Abidance in Truth

Invocation

*Glory to the Guru who is a mass of Existence-
Consciousness-Bliss!*

*Glory to the supreme Guru, the motionless,
the peaceful!*

Glory to the Guru, the eternal, the attributeless!

Glory to the supreme Guru, the taintless!

Glory to the Guru, the pure, infinite expanse!

*Glory to the supreme Guru, pervasive as that
which is subtle!*

Glory to the Guru, the perfectly full and nondual!

Glory to the supreme Guru, the undivided!

The Song of Ribhu, 44:20

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The Boundless Wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi

(From Letters from Sri Ramanasramam)

August 22, 1946

Arpana (Offering)

“ . . . Arpana means that the mind gets merged in the Self and becomes one with it. It means that it should become devoid of all vasanas. And that will not come about unless there is self-effort and God’s Grace. God’s force cannot get hold of you and drag you into itself unless you surrender completely. But where is the question of our surrendering? The self itself is to be surrendered. Until one can accomplish that, one should go on struggling unceasingly. It is only after trying again and again that one may, finally, succeed in the effort. Once you succeed, there is no going back. That is the proper course . . . ”

After that, he explained to us about Visishtadvaita: “When some devotees sang in terms of Advaita, some commentators twisted the meaning, interpreting it in terms of Visishtadvaita. That is all; it is nothing else. That is also the opinion of all the ancients. After all, what exactly is meant by Visishtadvaita? That which is Visishta (distinguished) and best is Vishnu. That is Ishwara, Sadasiva, Brahma and all. That which is, is only one. Some Vaishnavaites give it a name and shape and do not admit that there could be any Sayujyam (absorption in the Supreme Being) except by way of living in the same world (Salokyam), in the same vicinity (Sameepyam), and the same form (Sarupyam) as the Supreme Being. They say, arpana, arpana (offering, offering). How can there be arpana unless there is a thing called ‘I’? Complete surrender cannot come about unless one knows who one is. If you come to know that, you will realize that what remains is only one thing. The mind which is the ‘I’ submits of its own accord. and that is the real arpana (surrender),” said Bhagavan.

August 23, 1946

Sadhana-Sakshatkaram (Practice-Manifestation)

The day before yesterday a learned man who came from Madras, began at 3 p.m. to question Bhagavan thus: "Was there a period at any time when Bhagavan did Sadhana?" Bhagavan said, "Sadhana? Sadhana for what? What is there to do sadhana for? Sitting like this is itself sadhana. I used to sit like this always. I used to close my eyes then; now I keep them open. That is the only difference. What is now, was then also. What was there then, is also here now. Sadhana is necessary only if there is a thing other than "I," Self. Sadhana is required only for one who does not look towards the Self which is permanent, but is deluded by looking at the body etc., which are transitory and delusive; but not for one who sees the Self and so does not see anything else different. And what else is sadhana for?"

Someone asked, "Then why is it that many books say that no one can attain jnana without a Guru?" Bhagavan said, "Yes. For those who, because of the action of their minds, are deluded into believing that they are the bodies, a Guru and sadhana are necessary to get rid of that delusion." Another person asked, "People say that those who have received upasana can attain the physical manifestation of the favorite God and other blessings by sadhana. What is the meaning?" Bhagavan said, "That which is present at all times is sakshath (manifest). The person "I" is always present (sakshath). Then what is karam? That which is the cause is karam, So sakshatkaram (manifestation) means the knowledge that that which is true, that which is permanent and that which is the cause of everything is one's own Self. And they say that God will descend from somewhere and manifest himself if the Self which is ever existing, creates a shape according to its own desires, and meditates on it. You give up the Self which is existing at all times and at all places, and do sadhana with the hope that some God from somewhere will manifest Himself. They say that God just descends and again just disappears. You give up the Self which is always existent and strive for this transient vision, obtain boons and thus multiply the mental struggles and strivings. There will be no trouble at all if one simply remains as one is," said Bhagavan.

Though Bhagavan was teaching us so clearly that sakshatkaram means only the good state and the good ideas beyond the owner's thought, I felt it a great pity that we were not able to understand it. While I was thus thinking, someone asked,

“That state of exalted thought and existence which is above the owner’s mental plane is natural and possible only for people like Bhagavan, but is it possible for ordinary people like us without sadhana?” Bhagavan said, “Certainly it is! Sadhana is necessary but for what purpose? His Self is there at all times and at all places. So there is no need to try and get it from somewhere else. Sadhana is only to get rid of the bodily and other illusions which are in the way of the self standing up as Self. This delusion arises only by thinking that this bodily world is real, instead of looking at the Self, which is real. Sadhana is only to get rid of this illusion. Otherwise, why should there be sadhana for the Self to Attain its own Self? He who has realized his own Self does not recognize anything else.”

August 24, 1946

Brahman is real: The World is an illusion

Sometime ago a new arrival to the Asramam asked Bhagavan something in English, which I could not follow, being ignorant of the language. But Bhagavan replied in Tamil, and I give below his reply to the extent that I am able to grasp.

Bhagavan said, “The question arises: It is said that Brahman is real, and world an illusion; again it is said that the whole universe is an image of Brahman. How are these two statements to be reconciled? In the sadhak stage, you have got to say that the world is an illusion. There is no other way, because when a man forgets that he is the Brahman, who is real, permanent and omnipresent, and deludes himself into thinking that he is a body in the universe which is filled with bodies that are transitory, and labours under that delusion, you have got to remind him that the world is unreal and a delusion. Why? because, his vision which has forgotten its own Self is dwelling in the external material universe and will not turn inward into introspection unless you impress on him that all this external, material universe is unreal. When once he realizes his own Self, and also that there is nothing other than his own Self, he will come to look upon the whole universe as Brahman. There is no universe without his Self. So long as a man does not see his own Self which is the origin of all, but looks only at the external world as real and permanent, you have to tell him that all this external universe is an illusion. You cannot help it. Take a paper. We see only the script, and nobody notices the paper on which the script is writ-

ten. The paper is there, whether the script on it is there or not. To those who look upon the script as real, you have to say that it is unreal, an illusion, since it rests upon the paper. The wise man looks upon both the paper and script as one. So also with Brahman and the universe.

“It is the same in the case of the cinema. The screen is always there; the pictures come and go, but do not affect the screen. What does the screen care whether the pictures appear or disappear? The pictures depend upon the screen. But what use are they to it? The man who looks only at the pictures on the screen and not the screen itself, is troubled by the pains and pleasures that occur in the story. But the man who views the screen, realizes that the images are all shadows and not something apart and distinct from the screen. So also with the world. It is all a shadow play,” said Bhagavan. The questioner took leave and went away, happy at the reply.



Satsang

Never Was There a Time

April 8, 2012

Om Om Om

None: Never was there a time when you were not. There will never be a time when you cease to be. Existence without beginning or end has been revealed by Sri Bhagavan to be the very nature of the Self. It is necessary then, to discern Existence, itself, so that you remain in blissful immortality, free of the least trace of misidentification, which manifests as the anxious thought that takes the form of unhappiness.

Existence never becomes nonexistent, so there is no before existence or after existence. Existence is eternal. That which is eternal Existence is what you are. What you are you are always. What has a beginning and an end is not Existence itself. What has a beginning and an end, a creation and a destruction or a birth and a death, cannot be your very Existence. What is not

your very Existence is not truly yourself at all. Inquire so that Existence knows itself as it is.

If we are bodies, then we have a beginning and an end, in space and in time. But are we bodies? If you are not the body, then, by the same light, you are not embodied, for your Existence is not one thing at one time and another thing at another time. Existence always simply exists. That is pure Being. It is absolute, utterly nondependent, transcendent of every name and form, and free of definition in terms of the perceptible and the conceivable.

What is it within you that never began? What is it within you that will never end? That which begins and ends, that which has a before and after, is neither you nor truly yours. Existence alone is itself. Existence alone can know itself. Existence belongs to Existence alone. The unreal does not possess the Real. The Real does not possess the unreal. The unreal never becomes the Real. The Real never becomes the unreal. The Reality, Absolute Existence, Brahman, alone exists. This is yourself, your true identity. Innate to this is blissful immortality. Discriminate what is eternal and what is not eternal, knowing that to be eternal which actually exists. Discriminate between the eternal and the non-eternal, recognizing that the eternal alone can be what you actually are. (silence).

What begins cannot be you. What ends cannot be you. Unborn, unending: such is truly your Self. Make every effort to realize this conclusively, so, with certainty, you abide in Supreme Peace. (silence).

Questioner: Master, I have a question regarding tracing back the thoughts. I get one set of thoughts that I focus on, and then I trace it back to the source. When I trace it back to the source, I see a separate "I image" of mine. Then, I don't have enough arguments. I start with arguments when I get to the source that you don't exist without me, my light, and you don't exist in deep dreamless sleep. So, those arguments suffice for a while, but those thoughts come up again. So, tracing it back and deducing arguments, maybe my arguments are not powerful enough to take that train of thoughts to its source.

N: For whom do the thoughts appear?

Q: To “I”.

N: What is the significance of that? What is the meaning of “I”? All the thoughts refer to yourself, supposedly. They are utterly dependent on the one who knows them, who appears to think them, whether they are occurring for the first time or they are recurring. Wonder, inquire, “Who is this I?” Can he be a thinker? There is no need to think that he is not a thinker. Inquiry is deep, interior knowledge, in which the “I-ness” of the “I” vanishes. All the reasonable arguments are expressions of something beyond every argument. They are a way of pointing out something that is nonobjective and inconceivable. That something is what you truly are. (silence).

Q: Master, you taught me a few times, to not identify with anything perceivable or anything conceivable. The argument—even continuous arguments within the train of thoughts is not as important as the inquiry.

N: They are auxiliary. To the degree that they are helpful, use them. The actual inquiry, though, means to abide as that to which the arguments point. If you accept with faith or conviction the arguments presented by Vedanta that negate everything else, what is that Reality, what is that pure Existence in you, that remains after all that can be negated has been negated. What is that? (silence).

Q: The things somewhere out there are still in Consciousness, and, when they exist, they borrow their existence from me. So, they have some reality to them, too, right? Since they borrow the existence from me for a while, for a few minutes or a few hours, they have existence, too?

N: How do they manage to do that? In order for them to become borrowers, they must exist already. Do they have such separate existence to begin with? When it is said that they have a borrowed existence, the emphasis is on the Reality, on the un-modifiable, imperturbable nature of Reality, and that that is all that ever is, and is not intended to give rise to the idea that actual borrowing has occurred. It does not mean that the perceived and the conceived have some kind of existence to them, some degree of separate reality, even in the least. The meaning

is clear. There is only one Absolute Existence, which is changeless forever. Where appears all that one imagines as the perceived and conceived, right there is actually only this Absolute Existence, or Brahman. There is nothing else. It is just like a rope imagined to be a snake. You may say that the snake has a borrowed reality, but is there a snake at all? The only thing there is the rope. There is not a trace of “snake-ness” in it.

Q: Why would we belong to time and space and causality? Why would Consciousness need to experience itself through different body-minds, through thoughts and feelings, to know itself?

N: I don't know. Why? (laughter). You are the one who has come up with the theory that it is doing this. (laughter).

If we imagine any kind of differentiation, we have to also imagine reasons for that differentiation. If we inquire, “For whom are the differences?”, “For whom is the differentiation?”, the sense of reality, as well as the identity, returns to its rightful state in which there is no differentiation whatsoever. Then, there is no need to explain how or why the differences came to be, because they did not come to be. Otherwise, one will ascribe all kinds of motives to Consciousness, much in the way that one ascribes all kinds of attributes and activities to God. But how does God see God? In other words, know Consciousness as it is, by the light of Consciousness, and then see if there are differences to explain.

Another Q: It cannot be defined. It is obvious. It is so close, it is I. When I try to describe it, I create a distance, and that distance is artificial. In spite of that, there are descriptions in poetry and art and Upanishads and Gitas to describe the indescribable. These descriptions, I assume, are silent descriptions of itself.

N: Yes, so for this reason, Silence is most eloquent. The same Silence resounds through the words of the Scriptures. It is their potency to describe the utterly indescribable, which is another sign of Grace. (silence). The reality remains ineffable, beyond description.

Q: Lila is one of the ways of describing it.

N: We can give it any name we like.

Q: That is a nice name. That is a soft, playful way to see it, and not so heavy or problematic. I can play with it, more than it's a problem, I have to seek in it, I am going to conquer it. It is not a fight; it is more like a letting go, a state of being.

N: Where the "I" vanishes, there the Truth shines. As far as the descriptions are concerned, to one who abides "I-less" in the Knowledge of the Self, all the descriptions are as much use as a pond when everywhere there is a flood.

Another Q: I approached today's satsang, as if it were the last satsang I was ever going to go to. So, I asked myself what is the most important thing that I would desire out of the last satsang. It's Self Realization. When I listened to your discourse, I listened for just what do I need to know. That is just to inquire. I started to inquire to see if there is actually someone who is not realized. Does that one actually exist? That requires the assumption of individuality. Without that, there is not an unrealized state. The one who would supposedly be Self-realized is that same apparent individualized one. If I ask myself if I am that one that is going to be Self-realized, he doesn't exist either. Then, the question is, "Who am I?" That's the eternal satsang.

N: Sat has no beginning or end. Sat means Reality, Being, Existence, Truth. What does the second half of the word, satsang, mean? Association. What does it mean to associate with the Truth?

Q: Eliminate the ego.

N: If the ego is eliminated, it is an association of One Existence, which is Sat. (silence). Of course, there is Satsang in the common use of the word, which is also precious. It is the invaluable opportunity to be in the company of the wise. That should always be sought and never neglected. One should not trade that opportunity for anything else. Within that time of satsang, one slips into the Eternal, the Timeless, and proceeds from the unreal, asat, to the real, Sat, which is also to go from darkness to light and from death to immortality.

Another Q: How can we come from mortality to immortality? Is it that only the immortality is real?

N: The mortality is illusion born of imagination. Realization of Truth puts that imagination to an end. The non-eternal is realized to be nonexistent, and one's own Self is realized to be the Eternal alone. In this way, the Immortal attains itself.

Q: In the deception, immortality comes through the ego, misidentification, ignorance and false concepts. That borrows the identification from the so-called outside. There is I and you and the division, the duplicity that exists in relation with the senses.

N: All of that illusion arises only after the primary delusion of "I," "I am the body." Then, there are others: I, you, he, she, it, the world, etc. If we trace these to their source, we find that all these others, the perception of such, the differences and such, depend entirely on the definition of the "I." Clarifying that definition, or un-defining it, to leave it in its natural state, is liberation from the illusion. The illusion is never created by the illusion; it is one's own delusion. Likewise is it with bondage and suffering of any kind. These do not come to us from external sources. They appear within us until such time as we know our Self, in which case, illusion, delusion, bondage, suffering, and the rest of it disappear.

Q: Yes, but that happens when the body manifests as a baby, and it starts relating with the mother. Then, the mother seems to be outside, and it creates all these delusions of "me" and "other than me" and the world, my necessities, and.

N: Yes, but as for you, were you born?

Q: No, but after I am matured, I inquire and I awake from that state and find that I am not really born. Not everyone becomes aware. It requires effort because I was misled by a set of circumstances.

N: Or your belief in them.

Q: I believe in them.

N: So, you were not misled by circumstances. You were misled by your own mind's beliefs.

Q: Yes. That is why it is so important to be in satsang and inquire back to the Truth, erase all this delusion, and force out so-called necessities.

N: It is like awakening from a long dream.

Q: Yes. I read in a book that the ego has to mature enough so that it can fall by itself.

N: That is like saying that the snake must grow old enough so that we can realize it is only a rope.

Q: Yes. Somehow, I thought that it exists, and I was misidentified with that ego for so many years until I started to inquire. I peel the onion, and the hollowness appears.

N: Such is the manifestation of Grace and one's own effort.

Another Q: When I hear that Reality is Bliss, it reminds me not to look for happiness or its nature incorrectly. In your theme today, you seemed to eliminate the need to be attached to things that would ensure survival, as if to have persistent existence. For example, to be well thought of, I could think of it as a survival attachment, acquisitiveness, even when it is meaningless.

N: There were people around many hundreds of thousands of years ago. Do you think their reputation matters? (laughter).

Q: But they may have thought that it helped them survive at the time.

N: They may have had that idea, or they might have been free of it. Who can say? But does it matter at all now?

Q: Not at all.

N: Not to you, and not to them. Existence has not ceased. If we think of them as their bodies, we think that they are long gone. If we know Existence beyond the body, they have neither come nor gone. To be well-thought of or ill-thought of is the same. It is of absolutely no consequence. (silence).

Q: If assured of nondependent existence, timeless, wouldn't that also just eliminate all of that?

N: (silence). If you are timeless Existence, without beginning or end, what does it matter what the state or condition of the body is? Or to what would you be attached? What would be the meaning of good name and bad name or any other worldly attachment? (silence). Does Brahman care what you think of it? You are that Brahman, timelessly existing. The perishing of everything else is inevitable. Only that which has no beginning is free of an end. Everything about the so-called person has a beginning and an end. It is rather short-lived in the scheme of things. Existence is absolute, of the nature of pure Consciousness, without beginning and without end. Realize yourself to be that, and, at peace, what worry do you have? Detach yourself and disidentify from all else, and find yourself to be just That, the Absolute Existence, which is peace, itself. (silence). Realize this for your survival. (laughter.)

Another Q: Yea, I had a minor survival issue. The perspective that you just gave definitely blows out the perspective that I had. I made a mistake of eating dinner at a restaurant after fasting. I paid a price for that. Breaking a fast on restaurant food is not the ideal way to go. I still have not recovered from it. The perspective that you gave, the vastness of it, I didn't have that in the midst of that. I can see more clearly now that approaching that way would blow away the attachment to the body, any attachment at all. Pain or whatever would actually just make it more intense.

N: If there is pain in the body, it is natural to take all kinds of steps to relieve that pain. You also know very well that there will come a time when there is pain that cannot be relieved or sickness that cannot be remedied. As certainly as the body was born, it will perish. Such is inevitable. The answer for that lies in this Knowledge of what in truth you are. The body eats food; you should gobble up this wisdom.

Q: Yes, that is the only food that is worthwhile eating!

N: The body fasts from food; you should fast from misidentification. (silence.) If we think that we are bodies or that we are embodied, the pain, decay, death etc. of the body will cause us suffering. These are just in the natural course of events, and it is not meant for us to suffer thereby. The suffering is purely due

to ignorance, thinking that we are this thing or that we are within these sensations. We are not. Sensations come and go. The body comes and goes. The entire universe comes and goes. The absolute Existence of the Self does not come and does not go.

The Self ever remains in its own nature, its own place, as it were. It does not leave that place, and it does not return to that place. Existence is that place. (silence.) If you truly, deeply know this with heartfelt conviction, you are not dismayed or perplexed at any time. You remain eternally as you are, which is the perfect fullness of happiness that is of such a nature that it cannot be perceived externally but shines in its own self-luminosity within you. (silence). Also, try eating at home next time. (laughter.)

Another Q: I am exploring the path of bhakti. There is a pull to it and a feeling of being guided in that direction. The Maharshi offers prayers, such as, "I am helpless, God alone is all powerful, and, except by throwing myself on Him, there is no safety for me. I think that the idea is that, in that form of bhakti, I am unable to bring about Realization; however God can. I would like to hear your thoughts about this.

N: What do you want to know?

Q: If my understanding of the method and what the Maharshi is offering seems accurate.

N: As the ego is helpless, what recourse do you have but to throw yourself entirely upon the Supreme?

Q: The other idea that is being looked at is... that's funny, it vanished right now. There is peace that comes with that prayer, a deep peace. I suppose part of it is a trust and part of it is a statement of truth that the ego cannot bring about Realization.

N: (Silence.) One should devote himself to such a depth that the nonexistence of the ego becomes self-evident and so that he loves exclusively the Self without other. Thus, duality is erased from his mind. Supreme devotion is to remain absorbed, so that neither the idea of "I" nor any other idea can arise.

Q: I am looking at surrendering to God the idea of when or how realization will happen, or even if. In the discussion with

the Maharshi, the aristocratic woman said the longing is enough. Part of the surrender for me is just putting it all in God's hands. There is a trust that realization is happening and will happen, and, in this practice, there is the sense that even letting go of the attachment, just putting it in God's hands when, if, and how it will happen.

N: Yes. If everything is placed in God's hands, so that you hold nothing as your own, everything will work out fine. (Silence.) After all, who else is carrying all anyway? So, we can say that one's surrender or devotion is merely a deep recognition of the fact. Though I said "merely" to indicate simply, it is no trifling thing.

Q: Yea, it does feel like its own form of Realization, realizing that God is in charge.

N: First, God is in charge. Then, God alone is.

Q: The inquiry path isn't really appropriate for me. Part of the Grace of the Maharshi is that he does offer various paths depending on where the individual is in his process.

N: Practice to the best of your ability in the manner that most appeals to your heart. Do not bother to formulate opinions about other practices or paths, not even in relation to yourself. Be too busy practicing to formulate such opinions. That is best. Alright.

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

(Silence)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

(Then followed a recitation in Tamil from chapter 23 of the Song of Ribhu.)



Satsang

Illimitable

June 3, 2012 Satsang

Om Om Om

Nome: Your nature is illimitable Existence and not the body. This infinite Existence is eternal and not an embodied individual. (silence)

You are actionless and not the body. You are not inactive either, for you are not an embodied individual.

Your Existence is formless and ever existent. It is not the body and not an embodied individual.

This Existence that you are is without condition or state and is transcendent of even the boundaries of life and death, for this which you are is not the body and not an embodied individual.

You are Siva and not a jiva. You are not the body, and you are not an embodied individual.

If you imagine yourself to be an individual, and thus take up embodiment as the form of imagination called delusion, there are degrees of bondage, limitation according to the definitions ascribed to that individual, to that state of embodiment. If you take the Maharshi's teachings, the quintessence of Advaita Vedanta, to heart and inquire so as to actually know what your nature is, then, not being the body and not being an embodied individual, you find that you are ever free and that Liberation is the innate state.

As a body, you are very small in this universe. As an embodied individual, you are truly nonexistent. As the illimitable Existence that you are, you are the Reality, supreme Brahman, God. This has not a trace of embodiment in it. You are not the body, and you are not an embodied individual.

If just this much is clearly ascertained through an interior inquiry as to "Who am I?", what bondage could remain or what confusion could there be? You are not a body, and you are not

an embodied individual. That is the fact. Inquiry within yourself verifies for yourself this fact. (silence). Free of the body, free of the ego, and without any such false definition, who could describe or even conceive of the illimitable Being that you truly are? (silence)

Deham naham, koham, soham. The body is not I; who am I? He, That, am I.

Q.: Master, I have a question regarding the knower. I exist in consciousness and bliss, but when I come to the realm of time and space, I see a form—wife, friend, etc., and I have a relationship with that form. There is a seer and seen. The seer and seen come and go. In the realm of time and space, the seer is required, right? Otherwise how to see? To see, I have to connect the two points of the seer and the seen. To do that I have to be a knower, right? Further, I am the perceiver. In my investigation, how should I proceed?

N.: If we are bodies, we are in time and space, and appear as an individualized knower, or an experiencer, in that time and space. Such is the hallucination. But are we bodies? Free from the body, where is time? Where is space? Where are relations, actions, perceiver, doer, etc.? All these rest on a false supposition regarding the nature of the seer.

Again the seer and the seen are but false images. They are not the substrate or the reality. In an analogy given by Sri Bhagavan, there is a king in a movie. Before that king is enacted a play in the same movie. Neither the king, the seer, nor the play, the seen, is real. The only real thing, referred to as the substrate, is the solid screen. The rest has actually no existence. Just so is it with the experiencer and the objective experience. The individualized knower and all that is objectively known are like the movie image of the king and the play. What is real?

If you cease to misidentify with the body and as an embodied individual, which is but a false assumption, the Reality will reveal itself to itself. It is spaceless. It is timeless. It is as it is, always.

Q.: I have an experience in the dream. There is no body, but still an “I,” but not the universal “I.”

N.: You have a dream body, and then you see a dream world

with dream time and dream space. Without the dream body, without imagining yourself as the dream character, what happens to that dream world, dream time, dream space? (silence)

Q.: Master, but every perception is a creation, right?

N.: We imagine it to be so.

Q.: Creation is always in time and space?

N.: Time and space are also part of the creation. Is there a creator? (silence)

Say that the Supreme Lord of all creates everything, and you stay out of it. (laughter) Let the Supreme Lord take care of it. You have nothing to do with it. Or, realize that all of the creation is within the creator, and it is differentiated as such according to individuality. Rising above individuality by inquiry, "Who am I?," there is no creation, much less time and space.

Q.: Nothing is outside the knowledge, and knowing is Consciousness?

N.: Alright. Consciousness has no form. How will form arise in the formless? How does change occur to that which is without modification? It does not. As you want to know how to deal with time and space, look at the definition being ascribed to "I." It is not the timeless, spaceless Self. Some other identity is being taken up, as it were. Then, the differences and doubts begin.

Q.: The way I do the investigation now is that I am the perceiver, and I am not in time and space, but I slip down again and again.

N.: What is the nature of the one that slips down?

Q.: He is sometimes there and sometimes not there. Eating, sleeping, and dreaming, he comes and goes.

N.: Alright. He comes and goes, but your existence does not come and go. So, what can he have to do with you? How can he be your identity?

Q.: I believe existence either experiences or shines. My interpretation of something that I read is, in deep sleep, existence is by itself as pure Existence, but, for shining as consciousness,

my life is required. To experience the world, “I,” but not the “I-less I,” is required?

N.: How many “I”s are there?

There is Existence, which is Consciousness. They are two terms for one and the same Reality. To say that “it is” and to say that “it shines” means the same thing. If you assume another identity of an embodied individuality, you appear to come to the world. Then, you appear to be a perceiver, and then there are endless doubts about what is perceived. Turn inward toward the very point that you take to be your identity. Right there is the root of clarity.

Q.: I will investigate that. Pure existence exists by itself, like in deep sleep, but what about the knowledge? When I wake up, then only I can know.

N.: Does the knowledge come and go?

Q.: Knowledge is steady.

N.: True Knowledge is steady, indeed. True Knowledge is identical with your Being. True Knowledge is of the nature of Consciousness, and Consciousness does not come or go at any time. It is not like the content of the waking state. That is not knowledge; that is ignorance. Likewise, it is not the content of the dream state. That is obviously not knowledge, for it is just illusion. It is not even the content characterized by an absence, or a blank, of deep dreamless sleep. Your Existence, of the nature of pure Consciousness, transcends all of that. (silence)

Q.: Existence-Consciousness has to be objectless. So, in the waking state, if I want to be happy, I have to be unattached to mind, body, and senses.

N.: Just as you were in deep sleep. You must be as if in waking deep sleep.

Q.: There are no objects in deep sleep.

N.: There are no objects now.

Q.: That I have to comprehend. I will investigate.

N.: Even now, Being is objectless. Even now, Consciousness

is undifferentiated. Likewise, bliss is abiding in its perfect fullness. If it seems in your experience as if otherwise or modified in some way, inquire into the definition of the one who perceives the difference. All differentiations rest in him. Inquiring into him, the idea of embodiment is abandoned, and individuality proves to be entirely a false assumption. Sacchidananda is the only Reality. Investigate in this way. (silence)

Q.: One more question regarding perception. When I see a thing, there is perception, and, immediately, there is a small gap, and concepts, subtle thoughts, come. The instruction I read was to not identify with the concepts, but just follow the perception. Perception is more real in the waking state.

N.: Is it? Compare it to dream state. In the dream, you have perception and conception, outwardly perceiving things sensed and inwardly conceiving others, perhaps a moment afterward, or so it appears. But, what really are the outside and the inside, the perceived and the conceived? Isn't all of that just your thought in different forms, the shakti which is called the mind? The waking state is no different. In the dream, you do not feel that you were dreaming, but you feel that you are awake. While dreaming, someone tells you to never mind your ideas and just stay focused on percepts. When you wake up, what do you think of all that? (laughter)

Reality is neither perceptible nor conceivable. If you feel that you perceive something, isn't this conceived from the position of the body with the senses? Without a body, beyond the senses, what perceptions are there? There is illimitable Existence, infinite Consciousness, but that dream is no more. (silence)

Q.: If I question the perceiver, my assumption is that if I am the questioner, the perceiver is my thoughts.

N.: Do thoughts have any real knowing power of their own? Are not all of them lit up by something that is not a thought? We should not mistake that something for a thought. It is that which knows all thoughts and is known by none of them. That something is of the nature of Consciousness. Every definition, every limitation, such as being a perceiver and such, imagined for the Consciousness is just a thought of such. We should not mix up

the Consciousness with such thought. Without thinking of it as like this or like that, what is the nature of your Consciousness?

Q.: It is aware, and it is present.

N.: It is aware. Yes, it knows, but there is nothing else for it to know. It alone is. It is present as much as it is ever existent, and it is eternal. What perception could be eternal? What is not eternal is not worth seeking, said the Maharshi. Knowing this, who would chase after dream perceptions? (silence)

Another Q: It seems so important to know that I am not this body. Yet, many things tie me to thinking that I am this body. It is only my belief in the reality of these things.

N.: Is it that the belief in the reality of these things ties you to the body, or is it that the misidentification reasserting itself makes you think that those things are real?

Q.: Yes, the misidentification.

N.: If it were the things that were the cause, you would need only to rearrange the things, and all should be fine.

Q.: I have tried that.

N.: Does that work?

Q.: No. (laughs) It is a pattern. It wouldn't matter if it is work or play. If I change the outer circumstances, from work to play, still there is misidentification with the same. Just the names have changed. What are these things that tie me?

N.: If you misidentify, work or play does not make much difference?

Q.: No, it seems like the same thing.

N.: If you don't misidentify, and you stand bodiless in your true nature, does work or play make a difference?

Q.: No. Now, it seems obvious; how can I be a body? Yet, anytime I have a desire to accomplish something or to achieve a goal --- usually they give me a goal at work.

N.: Usually, you engage in an activity to accomplish some end. Knowing where happiness is, one remains detached from

those actions. Knowing that you are not the body, you remain a non-doer, even while the body performs the actions required of it. They hire that body to accomplish a set of actions. The employment contract does not specify that you delude yourself.

Q.: No, (laughs) although typically there is a lot of delusion in it.

N.: They don't specify that you misidentify. (silence) With misidentification, even the least action appears binding. Free of the "I am the body" misconception, no activity is binding. (silence)

Q.: It seems to be misplaced happiness.

N.: Your entire experience pivots on what you regard as your identity. If you abide in the Knowledge of yourself, you remain happy at all times, for the very nature of your Being is bliss. If you misidentify, there are desires and fears, fears being the inverse of the desire. All of this is because you think that the happiness has gone elsewhere. You think that the happiness has gone elsewhere because of the identity you have assumed. Actually, the happiness is there at all times. It is your very Existence. (silence)

Q.: Because I misidentify, I have to remove those landing places, where I think there is a spark of happiness, if I do this. I have a lot of things to do, and I feel relief when they are done.

N.: Because of the subsidence of desire. Now, there is so much to do, and you wish that you were done. Later, perhaps much later, all will be done, and you will wish that you had something to do. (all laugh). It is best be entirely free of that identity.

Q.: All of this pertains to the body. It is the nature of the body to have something to do or not to do.

N.: There is the body, and there is action and inaction. You, in your true Existence, are quite beyond both sides. You are neither an active body nor an inactive body. (silence) From the position of freedom from the body, even if there is much set before you to accomplish, it is as if all were already accomplished.

Q.: Because there is no outward-going.

N.: Yes. Indeed, realizing that you are not the body and not the ego, realizing the Self, is accomplishing that which has to be accomplished. (silence)

Another Q.: Sometimes, when I see this identification with the body or ego, there is a reflex to step back from it and witness it, in order to disidentify from it, but now I see that that is also identification with the body. Seeing it at all is identification with the body. Correct?

N.: Regarding yourself in any way as a definition is what is meant by misidentification. When you say you witness it, what do you mean?

Q.: I am just seeing a tendency to catch myself and then back up from it. This is just imagination.

N.: To where do you back up?

Q.: I am recognizing that it is none of that. There is no body (laughs) and there is no idea of any of that.

N.: Yes. In the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, there is the term “sakshi,” which means witness. It signifies the infinite, unformed, unborn Consciousness. When we speak of it in relation to all else, the emphasis is not on the witnessed as if such were real. The emphasis is on the reality of the Consciousness. It is the witness not only of your body but of all bodies, not only of your mind but of all minds. It is of the universal nature.

Q.: But, the attention is not on that body, is it?

N.: Not on any of the bodies whatsoever.

Q.: There is no directed focus. It is the substrate.

N.: The question to ask yourself is: are you the body? (silence) If you truly see that you are not the body, every perspective that includes the “I am the body” conception melts away.

Q.: In an instant?

N.: Even the idea of “instant” melts away. Such is an idea of doing and not doing.

Q.: Never to return?

N.: When ignorance is seen as ignorance, it never returns. If it returns, it means that one needs more thorough and deeper inquiry.

Q.: Yes. I think that the misidentification comes with a state. Does it? All states represent identification with the body?

N.: Yes. According to one's misidentification, a state appears. So, if you misidentify with the body, the waking state appears. If you misidentify with the dream body, you are in a dream world. If you misidentify with any kind of subtle body, you experience a subtle world.

Q.: It is none of any of that, because there is no focus at all; there is no seeing.

N.: The Self is not any kind of body. Not being any kind of body, there are no objects for it. This does not necessitate the disappearance of objects for the senses, for the senses are part of the body. This is transcendent Knowledge, not sense perception, which is obviously transient and included with the body.

Q.: Sense perception will always be there?

N.: No, it is not eternal.

Q.: Hmmm, that is interesting. I thought that it was transcended, as well.

N.: Just as you are not the body, you are not the senses. You are not a sensing entity either.

Q.: But still the senses are so perceived in what they sense.

N.: The senses are always the perceived. That which is the witness of them is known as the knower. Your senses are obviously not permanent. They vanish in sleep, and they disappear once and for all in death.

Q.: But they exist in a location of the body

N.: If you take them to be real.

Just as the knowledge of being bodiless is not a bodily condition, likewise transcendence of the senses is no particular mode of the senses or sensory activity. So, if you know yourself

as the Being-Consciousness-Bliss that you truly are, seeing and not seeing, hearing and not hearing, touching and not touching, etc. are all the same.

Q.: That's the transcendence.

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English of verses from the Ashtavakra Samhita.)

(silence)

Om Om Om

(Then followed a recitation in Tamil of verses from Chapter 27 of the Song of Ribhu.)



From The Ramana Way

The following articles appear in the June 1988, vol. 8, no. 4, issue of "The Ramana Way," a monthly publication produced by the Ramana Maharshi Center for Learning in Bangalore, India. They have been producing monthly publications entirely devoted to Sri Ramana and His teaching since the early 1980's. Sri A.R. Natarajan dedicated his life and his family's life to the cause of Bhagavan Ramana. Sri A.R. Natarajan was absorbed in the lotus feet of His Master in 2007. His daughter, Dr. Sarada Natarajan, continues in his legacy, keeping the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and "The Ramana Way" alive for all Ramana devotees. May the devotion and wisdom from which these articles are written "jump" off the pages and into your heart. Please visit them at: www.ramanacentre.com

Homecoming

By Kumari Sarada

The horse trotting slowly suddenly breaks into a canter as it views the homestead, happily speeding up, it is the home-stretch. The weary footsteps going 'clip, clop, clip, clop' change

into a brisk ‘clip, clop, clip, clop’ in a fresh burst of energy, and the steps are cleared two at a time to ring the bell, it is home. The tired limbs joyously spring on the bed and stretch themselves, sweet, sweet rest. To come home is to return to the sanctuary of rest. This homecoming is twice blessed, one, as a harbour from the wearisome world of continuous activity and the other in itself, in the joy that it brings. And all beings eventually return to their home, their source, the bird to its nest, the river to the sea. Bhagavan writes in His “Arunachala Ashtakam”:

“The waters rise up from the sea as clouds, then fall as rain and run back to the sea in streams; nothing can keep them from returning to their source. Likewise, the “I,” rising up from you, cannot be kept from joining you again, although it turns in many eddies on its way. A bird which rises from the earth and soars into the sky can find no place of rest in mid-air, but must return again to earth. So, indeed, must all retrace their path, and when the “I” finds the way back to its source, it will sink and be merged in you, O Arunachala Ocean of Bliss!”

The continuous search for happiness by all beings is a longing to return home. So is the daily slipping into sleep. In sleep one is closer to home. Because the “I”-thought, the identity, that rises from the Self and assumes for itself an independent status is minimal in deep sleep. The mind is practically nonexistent for there are no thoughts. One may say that the identity, the “I”-thought exists only in seed form, to sprout again into a gigantic tree with various associated thoughts on waking. When there are no thoughts, no mind really to think of anything, one is close to the source, to the Self, and its natural happiness is experienced. However, as identity continues in the seed form of “unknowingness” (which is why one declares that one knew nothing while sleeping), one is not aware of the shining of the Self.

On waking one becomes aware of all things, one feels that one “knows” about all experiences. However, one does not enjoy while waking that sense of repose that is experienced in sleep. Because, immediately on waking the ‘I’-thought associates itself with a multitude of thoughts and moves further and

further away from a recollection of its true nature, from repose in it. It resumes its search for happiness in objects without and continues in its cycle of successes and failures unmindful of the spring of bliss welling up from within. Even those who are intellectually convinced that the source of joy is the Self are assailed by doubts in the face of multitudinous external pulls. They may begin to wonder, "If the subject is continuous and unchanging and if happiness springs from the subject and not from objects, why is that happiness is not stable and unbroken like the subject? Why is it that one is happy while undergoing some experiences and unhappy while undergoing others? Does that not imply that it is the experience that causes happiness and not the experiencer? In this circumstance one must again clarify to oneself, through reasoning to begin with, the fact that happiness is subject-dependent.

As we have already seen, happiness can be experienced even in the absence of objects, as in sleep. It is also true that happiness is sometimes experienced through objects. What then is the common factor in these two experiences of happiness? Not the object. It is only the subject that is common and hence must be the source of happiness. Then why is it that happiness is not always experienced? Simply because one is not always aware of the source of happiness, one is not attuned to it. It may be that one loves to eat chocolates but if one is made to eat a chocolate when under chloroform or in sleep the experience would produce no joy. One may love the fragrance of incense but if one has a nasal block no amount of wafting in the air could make one happy, for one would be totally unaware of the very presence of incense. The same is true for the bliss of the Self. The Self shines forth always as unbounded bliss, but if one's attention is turned away from it, how would one know of that joy? When a desire for an object or a given experience arises, attention is turned away from the subject on to the object, turned away from the source of happiness. There is unhappiness. When a desire is fulfilled, thought of the object ceases and automatically, even if it be only for a split second, attention rests, naturally on the subject, the Self. Happiness results. If attention is continuously on the subject instead of on objects, happiness would be continuous, too. Joy is apparently elusive only because it is wrongly perceived to be dependent on ob-

jects that change. However, it springs from the unchanging subject. An understanding of the subject is, therefore, the real clue to tap into the source of happiness. Who is the subject? Who is the experiencer living life's experiences? Who am I? Do we really know ourselves? Strange though the question seems, it is nonetheless of supreme importance to every one of us. Because it would be absurd to go through life without knowing ourselves. Who is it then who lives? We would not know! But how can one presume that one does not know oneself? It may be argued that most people do know themselves, it is only people with psychological problems or those suffering from amnesia who do not know themselves. In answer a friend once pointed out that the very fact that lectures about Self-Knowledge are well attended and books on the subject also popular indicates peoples' desire to know themselves, or, at least, to know themselves better. The yearning to find out who one is manifests itself in people from varying cultures and with many faceted approaches to life. And even those who presume to know themselves if questioned deeply on the subject would find themselves at a loss to define themselves in terms other than the physical, social and mental identity. So the question "who am I?" is of vital importance to every one of us as an impetus to discover our own true nature.

Meditations on Teaching

by A.R. Natarajan

Ishta Devata and Guru are aids—very powerful aids on the path. But an aid to be effective requires your effort also. Your effort is sine qua non. It is you who should see the sun. Can the spectacles and the sun see for you? You yourself have to see your true nature.

- Sri Ramana, Talks, 1978, p. 30

Spiritual life is an interplay of grace and effort. What are their relative roles for the success of spiritual endeavor? We find the Maharshi stressing, at every opportunity, effort vigilant and

ceaseless effort. The reason for this is not far to see, for one is already neck-deep in grace. A spiritual aspirant can be sure of one thing—the constancy of the Sadguru’s grace. It need not be asked for, since it is already given unasked. Yet, we find devotees pestering Ramana for grace and getting repeated assurance about it from Him. This is understandable, for the actual working of grace is intangible. One is unaware of its operation. Major Chadwick once asked Ramana why there was no evident change in him in spite of his being in the physical proximity of Ramana, an inmate of the Ashram. Ramana pointed out though the change would undoubtedly be there it was not felt because it was not measurable. Guru’s Grace is there all along the way, aiding effort by sustaining the strengthening of the spiritual mood. It cannot be present some times and absent at other times since it springs from the Sadguru, whose very nature is grace. In a manner of speaking therefore one can take for granted the invigorating flow of Ramana’s grace, extending protection and guidance in one’s weak moments, in moments of despair and in every situation.

Since grace is already available in abundant measure, to those linked to a Sadguru, what has to be focussed is the effort required, the other factor in the search for truth. It is only through effort, through meditation, through self-inquiry that one awakens to the flow of grace. Hence Ramana says that grace is vouchsafed only for those who put in the necessary effort. Grace is active for them.

If there is no “vichara” grace becomes dormant. Yet, again there is so much emphasis on practice in the Ramana Way, because what matters is the experiencing of the natural state of bliss for oneself and remaining steadfast in it. This experience has to be earned by hard practice. God though “kinder than ones own mother” does not spoon feed one with experience. One may ask why? It is only for those who have completely surrendered their individual volition that the Sadguru can take over completely. Such persons are rare. For the rest actions are performed with a dominant sense of doership. So long as one acts with the feeling that it is the individual effort which matters, the responsibility of finding out the truth also rests squarely on oneself. In fact, we are constantly engaged in some action or the

other since our restless nature would never let us relax in peace. One might say that Ramana is only drawing pointed attention to the necessity of putting one's will power to the best possible use for discovering the natural state.

Since effort is of paramount importance, Ramana would gently remove all dampeners in the form of negative thoughts. The first thing which is to be tackled is the repeated expression of fear that one cannot do justice to sadhana when caught up in the turmoil of daily life. Ramana would encourage one to get over this false notion by pointing out that if only one keeps steadily at meditation, even if it be for a little while, then life would no longer be strife and worry ridden. The mental environment of one's functioning would change when the peace generated by the meditation is felt in the background of work. Then, the imaginary distinction and classification of actions as "worldly duty" and "sadhana" would gradually disappear. This happens as our true meditative nature surfaces more and more.

The second negative stumbling block which one has to deal with is the feeling that spiritual life is too tough and is therefore not worth attempting. Here again we find Ramana doing His best to dispel such ideas and consequent handicaps. When some one asked Ramana whether we must give up lust and anger, Ramana humorously replied "You give up thoughts, you need not give up anything else." Here one has to remember that in the Ramana Way one does not discard habits and thoughts one by one. One goes to the root, one deals with the individual to whom these habits pertain and to whom these thoughts arise. If the core is tackled, one does not have to scorch separately each tendency one by one. They dry up when through self-attention one learns to push within and stay at the source. This brings on to the basic issue of what is the effort about which Ramana is talking. The effort referred to here is to hold on to the core "I"-thought and to ward off the distraction of other thoughts. The mind has to be gathered together by practice. Attention presently given to other thoughts by the "I" has to be turned on itself—seeing the mind with the mind. Attention has to be sustained until peace, alert peace, prevails.

One might ask how long is there the need for effort? So long as the mind is becoming externalized, until such time as the mind has not acquired the strength to remain sunk in the Heart,

effort would be inescapable. One would find that along the way the mind experiences the peace and contemplation of the natural state. Then as Ramana told Cohen one should learn to switch off the positive attitude required for effort. The consciousness behind the mind would take over, and the need for effort would cease. One would have arrived at the destination, the natural state.



Announcements

Thank You . . .

The selfless service we do here to help maintain the temple is prompted by the love we have in our hearts for this teaching. We do not desire acknowledgement for such. We would, though, like to thank all of the folks who perform service at our temple...

Bob Haber: keeping the bathrooms clean, watering plants, sweeping the walkways & parking lot, cleanup after events, cleaning the temple, set-up for events, helping with flower arrangements; Tim Frank: vacuuming & cleaning the temple, cleanup after pujas and retreats, providing meals at retreats, transcription; Myra Taylor: vacuuming & cleaning the temple, providing prasad after satsang & atmotsava, cleanup after pujas and retreats, providing meals at retreats; Raman Muthukrishnan: running the bookstore including mail order service, maintaining the SAT website, mastering recordings of events at SAT, providing prasad after satsang; Sangeeta Raman: helping with the bookstore mail order, organizing things around the temple, providing meals at retreats, providing prasad after satsang & atmotsava, leading kirtans at atmotsava; Wimala Brown: providing meals at retreats and prasad after satsang; Dhanya Nambirajan: singing during special events, providing meals at retreats, providing prasad after satsang, cleanup after pujas; Ganesh Sadasivan: organizing special events including singing, recitation, and chanting; Eric Ruetz: editing and mastering all recordings of satsangs and special events, providing meals at retreats, securing the temple; Jim Clark: lighting candles at meditation events,

flower arranging, preparing meals at retreats; Richard Clarke: helping with book orders from India; Nome: temple grounds maintenance, writing books, administrative stuff, general help wherever needed including spiritual guidance; Sasvati: preparing books & Reflections for publishing, maintaining residential rentals, overseeing property repairs, flower arrangements, maintaining temple gardens; Advait Sadasivan & Janani Chandran: providing play time at any time for anyone who wishes to play, helping out when asked; Tristan Mzhavia: assisting with flowering the murtis and lighting candles, cleaning the temple, transcription; Sheila Hillman, providing prasadam after atmotsava and satsangs; Jay Hiremath: transcription; Carol Johnson: transcription; Anandi Muthukumarasamy: providing prasadam after atmotsava; Sabiha Vyas: providing prasadam after satsang and at retreats; Scott & Prema Roney: helping with the yardsale fundraiser; Sivakumar Chandran: helping with the yardsale fundraiser.

If you would like to transcribe satsangs and other events at SAT, please contact Sasvati at: sasvati@att.net

Transcribing these events is a wonderful opportunity to dive deep into this supreme teaching and it is also a beautiful service to preserve these precious teachings in printed form for many years to come.

It is perfect for those who live at a distance and would like to engage in service.



Upcoming Special Events

Truth Revealed Retreat: November 14 - 18, 2012

Karthikai Deepam: November 27, 2012

Arudra Darshanam: December 28, 2012

Sri Ramana's Jayanti: December 30, 2012



Sri Sadisvara Mandiram

Everything we do at SAT has the direct purpose of evoking devotion in the heart and inducing the immediate experience of the Self. This purpose is fulfilled by all the events held at SAT—satsangs, meditations, Ramana darshanams, atmotsavas, temple sevas, special events, retreats, and publications. This purpose is also fulfilled by the design of the Temple itself including the deities and symbols used throughout the Temple for worship and meditation. SAT has the good fortune of already housing the Temple deities Dakshinamurti, Nataraja, Lingodbhava, Ardhanariswara, and Lingam, which are worshipped regularly at SAT events. To complete the Temple, deities Ganesha and Subramania (Skanda) are to be added. Devotees endeavor to build a proper shrine for these deities downstairs in the front entry to the temple. The “Sri Sadisvara Mandiram” would also include Nandi and an additional Lingam to the one that is already situated in the Inner Shrine outside the Satsang Hall. In addition, murtis of Ribhu and Adi Sankara will take their place in the Satsang Hall near the front Ramana altar next to the dais.

The “Sri Sadisvara Mandiram” will provide an atmosphere in which devotees visiting the temple may experience puja, engage in pradakshina, listen to vedic chanting, read scripture, and worship.

To find out more about this holy endeavor and if you are inspired to sponsor this project, visit the SAT website at:

satramana.org and then click on “Sri Sadisvara Mandarim” located in the sidebar menu.

Om Namah Sivaya