



# REFLECTIONS

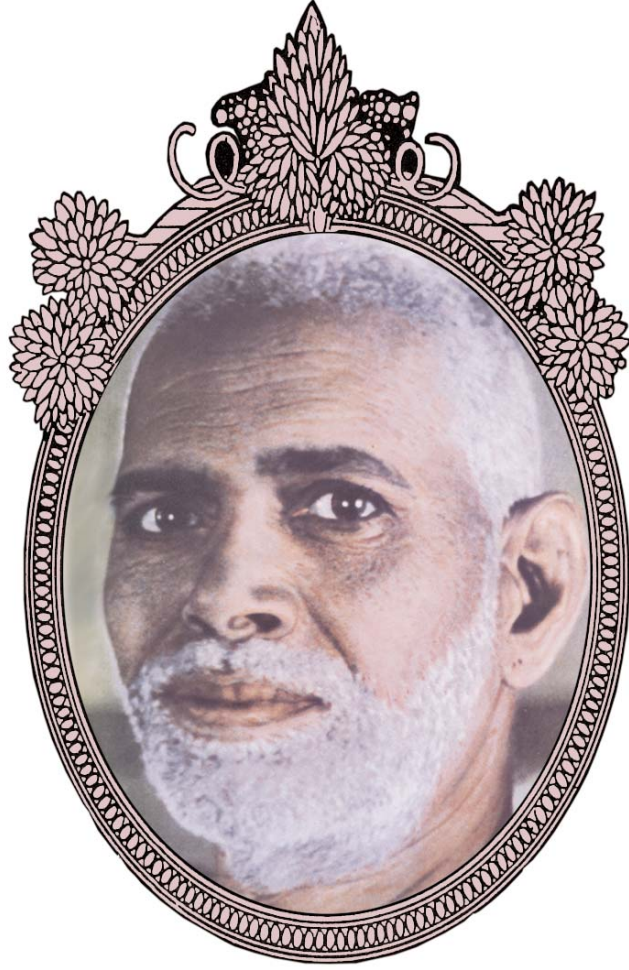
*October ~ November ~ December 2008*



SOCIETY OF ABIDANCE IN TRUTH







**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**



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## Invocation

*He is resplendent, having arrived at the Eternal, of the nature of Light, which chases away the darkness inside and outside. He strikes at the root of ignorance of those who bow down to him. Even when he perceives this universe, he is beyond it, on its other shore, shining. To that Sri Ramana, the Guru of the worlds and the slayer of grief, salutations.*

Ganapati Muni, "Sri Ramanacatvarimsat," verse 22

# *The Boundless Wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi*

(From *Day by Day With Bhagavan*)

15-6-46

When I entered the hall in the evening, Bhagavan was saying: "Everything we see is changing, always changing. There must be something unchanging as the basis and source of all this."

G. V. S. : What justification have we for imagining that the source of all this must be unchanging ?

Bhagavan: It is not mere thinking or imagining that the "I" is unchanging. It is a fact of which every one is aware. The "I" exists in sleep when all the changing things do not exist. It exists in dream and in waking. The "I" remains changeless in all these states, while other things come and go.

Dr. S. Mani, Assistant Director of Public Health at Madras, a frequent visitor, asked Bhagavan "But why should these things that is the world, appear?"

Bhagavan: To whom does it appear? You see, and so the world exists. Does it exist independently of the seer? Does it come and tell you, "I exist?" What proof is there of its existence except that you say you see or perceive it?

Another visitor said to Bhagavan: I want to have darsan of God. What should I do?

Bhagavan: First, we must know what you mean by "I" and "God" and by "darsan of God."

The visitor dropped the matter and said no more.

\* \* \*

17-6-46

Sri Gunaji, a retired Advocate who is now a naturopath at Belgaum, has been here for some days, massaging Bhagavan's legs for rheumatism, and, today, he sang a song he had composed in Hindi. He gave its meaning in English as: "I ask nothing of Thee, Lord ; but if Thou art disposed to grant me any favour, then take away this ego-sense, kill all my thoughts, destroy the world and let my mind be dissolved in the ocean of Self."

Bhagavan said, laughing: "You are not asking me to give but to take." And then he added: "There is nothing to give. If all this goes, that is the ego and the world created by it, the Reality remains. That is all. Nothing new is brought in. If the false goes, the true remains."

\* \* \*

19-6-46

A new comer called Gajendra Mehta asked Bhagavan about the state of the soul after death. He has just returned from Africa. He has been writing to Bhagavan for four years, but this is the first time he has come here.

Bhagavan: If you know the present, you will know the future. It is strange that people don't want to know about the present, about whose existence nobody can have any doubt, but are always eager to know about the past or the future, both of which are unknown. What is birth and what is death? And who has birth or death? Why go to birth and death to understand what you daily experience in sleeping and waking? When you sleep, this body and the world do not exist for you, and these questions do not worry you, and yet you exist, the same you that exists now while waking. It is only when you wake up that you have a body and see the world. If you understand waking and sleep properly, you will understand life and death. Only waking and sleeping happen daily, so people don't notice the wonder of it but only want to know about birth and death.

G. Mehta : Is there a re-birth?

Bhagavan : If there is birth, there must be not only one re-birth but a whole succession of births. Why and how did you get



this birth? For the same reason and in the same manner, you must have succeeding births. But if you ask who has the birth and whether birth and death are for you or for somebody distinct from you, then you realize the truth, and the truth burns up all karma and frees you from all births. The books graphically describe how all sanchita karma, which would take countless lives to exhaust, is burnt up by one little spark of jnana, just as a mountain of gun powder will be blown up by a single spark of fire. It is the ego that is the cause of all the world and of the countless sciences whose researches are so great as to baffle description, and, if the ego is dissolved by enquiry, all this immediately crumbles, and the Reality or Self alone remains.

\* \* \*

20-6-46

G. Mehta : If I am not the body, am I responsible for the consequences of my good and bad actions?

Bhagavan: If you are not the body and do not have the idea “I-am-the-doer,” the consequences of your good or bad actions will not affect you. Why do you say about the actions the body performs “I do this” or “I did that”? As long as you identify yourself with the body like that, you are affected by the consequences of the actions, and you have merit and demerit.

G. Mehta: Then, I am not responsible for the consequences of good or bad actions?

Bhagavan: If you are not, why do you bother about the question?

G. Mehta: Then, does that mean that if one has not the sense of “I do this” or “I am the doer,” one need not do anything at all?

Bhagavan: The question of doing arises only if you are the body.



## *Nirguna Brahman*

Satsang, September 30, 2007

Om, Om, Om

Nome: Nirguna Brahman, the quality-less, attributeless Brahman, is the solitary reality. That Brahman alone exists is the meaning of nonduality. It is said that all of this, the entirety of one's experience, ranging from subtlest thought to the forms of objects of the world, is saguna Brahman, Brahman with attributes, Brahman with qualities. There are not two types of Brahman. The meaning is clear. It is that all this is only Brahman, and Brahman alone exists.

The notion of differentiation of any kind arises entirely dependent upon the previous, purely imagined assumption of an individual "I." All the differences appear in the midst of that which is undifferentiated, starting with the notion of "I." All disturbance appears in the midst of that which is only peace, starting with the notion of "I," which is the supposition that there is some existent individual. It is an assumed misidentification. Likewise, all suffering, worry, fear, etc., in the midst of great Bliss appears, starting with the notion of "I." All bondage starts in the midst of immense freedom only with the notion of "I." How is it that this notion is imagined? For whom is it imaged?

The Maharshi taught that we should inquire as to "Who am I?" in order to realize conclusively the Self as being the solitary Reality. Who am I? If only this profound inquiry is made, the very root, or source, of all the illusions and of all differentiation proves to be nonexistent. With the root, or cause, absent, the effect is also absent. The individual and his lifetimes-long story both disappear because they are unreal. Brahman remains as Brahman alone has existed always. What is it that is real? Only the indefinable Brahman. What was all that that disappeared? Nothing but Brahman. And Brahman is invariable in its nature. Inquire, know the true nature of yourself, and thus abide in That as That.

This being realized, there is nothing further to be obtained. In that, all questions are answered, all doubts resolved, and all illusions are gone. Abandon the misidentification, if there be any, with the differentiated body, mind, and ego, and know the Self, the solitary Existence, just as it is. If, at any point, you have a question, please feel free to ask, or, if you wish to relate your own experience, please feel free to speak.

Questioner: When I am reliving something, daydreaming something, and I ask who is in this situation, the situation dissolves, yet I am still present. How do I distinguish, or deal with it, when the experience is first coming into my senses? The memory of the experience I can dissolve, but, when the experience is first occurring, how can I separate myself from that?

N: The same principle will work. The same delusion is also at work. If you cease to regard it as real and cease to misidentify as the individual character who is wrapped up in it, it will dissolve.

Q.: It is easier to do that when sitting here in the meditation hall and the experience is just happening in the mind, in my thought.

N.: Perhaps, you are in mediation all the time.

Q.: That is what I need to practice.

N.: You may not be bodily sitting, but, in a profound sense, you are in meditation all the time. The apparently vivid sense experience is not different from a dream. Before inquiring to rid yourself of the difficulties of a memory or a daydream, you could easily register the complaint that it seems so vivid and so real, though, upon a little inquiry, it is not so real. The same is true with sense experience. It is imperative that the misidentification with the body be relinquished in order to reach such freedom. If the “I am the body” conception is retained, you feel as if in the experience, and it is seemingly difficult to extricate yourself from the limitation of it. If the “I am the body” conception is destroyed, you are not in the situation.

Q.: Now or then.

N.: Now or then. At either time, the limited experiences are

just images appearing in you. If you further inquire as to who you are, the images cease, for they are not real. What remains is the actual Existence. Is this clear for you?

Q.: It may be after I listen to it a few more times on the CD.

N.: When you find yourself in some circumstance that seems limiting, overwhelming, overpowering, or in some way binding, first and foremost, know where your bliss is. Secondly, abandon the “I am the body” misconception. You can inquire further from there, but even with that much, see what your experience is like.

Another Q.: While reading the Karika of Gaudapada, people complained in the text, when there is no complaint. I skim quickly because it is not of interest, but they must have put that in there for some reason. When they put doubts and explanations, should I read thoroughly through that also or just dismiss it. Before, I would never read the commentaries because I love the truth as it is.

N.: The commentaries are only for the purpose of elucidating the nature of that truth. There can be no hard and fast rule as to whether you should or should not read a commentary. In the fourth chapter of Gaudapada’s Karika, he describes certain doubts or different viewpoints that can arise, and, in Sankara’s bhasya, or commentary, throughout the text, he brings up various questions or doubts that could arise for someone who is trying to meditate on the very truth that Gaudapada or the Upanishad just declared. Then, he gives an appropriate answer, showing the way to meditate or the knowledge that should be shining in one in order to eliminate that doubt. If you find it useful, read it. If you are already beyond that doubt, it is optional.

Q.: Also, thank you for this discourse.

N.: Ultimately, all the doubts and their answers are for one purpose, and that is the revelation of the Self, which is beyond doubt for anyone. Therefore, the answers, whether provided by Gaudapada or Sankara in his commentary, are really for the purpose of bringing about a cessation of misidentification and a clarity of knowledge regarding one’s true identity. In that case, the doubt is resolved and the question is answered at the deep-

est possible level. If commentaries upon a text are read as a form of guidance for meditation, they are generally of more use to the seeker of Truth than if they are read as a logical discussion about some topic.

Another Q.: I have been meditating on the mind and does it really exist. In my Existence, there is clearly no mind. It just does not occur in what I know is my essence. I was meditating: if it is not there, where is it? That is the only thing that is clearly real and existent, and the mind is not part of that.

N.: It is not part of That, but it is not apart from That.

Q.: That is the part I need to straighten out, because it does appear to be part of it, or it appears to be so different in its nature that it does not affect Existence at all.

N.: It does not affect Existence because it is so different in quality and in character, but does it exist on its own?

Q.: Hmm, no. It is like a cloud that does not exist without the sky.

N.: It is in the sky and of the sky, but you would not call the cloud the sky.

Q.: What is this that I think? How can I come up with something that truly does not exist on its own? I can not get a hold of the thing that I think is not real.

N.: Are you attempting to define the mind using the mind? If so, how will you get an accurate definition?

Q.: I think that is what I am doing. It is like trying to use the mind to understand itself, when it has no real capacity to do that.

N.: Yes, that is, the Maharshi says, the thief dressing as a policeman to catch the thief, which is himself. He is not apprehended. We could say that Consciousness plus thought, that is, Consciousness plus objectivity appears as a mind, which then says "I know." This that it knows could be anything. Can we then make an objective study of the mind which contains all the objectivity? If the inquiry is nonobjective in nature, what is left to the mind?

Q.: It is just sky.

N.: Vasishtha says that the mind is like the movement of wind in air. The air, or the sky, is representative of Consciousness. Is the wind made of anything but air? Does it have an existence separate from the air? No matter how fast it is, does it go anywhere outside of the air?

Q.: No, it does not become separate or have its own reality. Reality is always there.

N.: Consciousness, unmoving, vast, and infinite, is the real Self. The same Consciousness, regarded as moving, appears as a mind. In highest truth, the immovable does not move. Brahman is invariable. If you want to know the nature of the mind, you must actually inquire and not attempt to use the same mental processes that are said to constitute the mind to try to determine what it is. So, actually inquiring as to your nature, what can you say about your mind?

Q.: I do not have one.

N.: If you do not have one, is it elsewhere? Is there another space in which it can be?

Q.: No, there is not.

N.: So, to say that you are the witness of the mind and still regard the mind as existent is a first step, yet an important one. When the nature of the witness is realized to be infinite, undifferentiated Consciousness, that alone is found to exist, and there is no more question of a mind.

Another Q.: I had a very deep meditation on Friday. From that experience, I think that deeper knowledge, or lack of ignorance, is closer to Enlightenment. That I do not identify with an ignorant one is really so important. It all comes from that which one identifies. If the root is an ego, from there, a body and a world, or a mind and a world, spring. I know in my heart that I really have to know this. About a week ago, you were reading from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, and it was said that meditation should go on always, even when the body is not seated.

N.: Yes.

Q.: I can see that, the less ignorance I have, the more that is possible. If there is ignorance, I need to figure out the cause, I must put some energy into this, and stop doing that.

N.: You must trace its root, which is the false definition. All the ignorance is subsumed under the definition of ego—of “I.” Tracing it is part of meditation. When the ignorance vanishes, that is also meditation, is it not?

Q.: Yes, that is definitely meditation. No ignorance is automatic meditation.

N.: Then, mediation is the natural, interior Knowledge.

Q.: Yes, with the lack of ignorance, meditation goes on. Even though the mind may be occupied, all of the sudden, it just occurs, “Oh, what is really happening?” I discover that what is really happening is not the occupation of the mind, but something much deeper.

N.: The mind’s occupation with its own thoughts is never a concern for you, is it? You are always beyond the content, the presence, and even the absence of thought.

Q.: I was describing two different states: one is a recognition of something deeper...

N.: When you recognize what is deeper, does that which is deeper start just then? Does it commence with the recognition, or is it the recognition of what is already the case? Now, are there two of you—the one who has recognized the real Self and the other who becomes preoccupied and wakes up again?

Q.: The idea, in this particular case, is that there are two selves.

N.: Alright, but is there really an individual who becomes caught in the mind’s occupation and then frees himself from it? If he is caught, he must free himself of it. That is axiomatic, but is there really a second one? Is there anything constituting your identity except the immaculate, ever-free Existence?

Q.: In a certain sense, yes. When, with effort, it is investigat-

ed, it seems not to be there. When it is not investigated, it is just assumed that there is a box, wherever that imagined box is. You are saying that the box really is just total imagination and that the box is made of myself.

N.: Yes, you are right. If the individual is assumed, there is also everything that follows. If it is not assumed, the Reality is shining. Is there a place for that assumption to occur in the Reality? Can there be a box, as you call it, in the infinite space-like Consciousness?

Q.: That box is composed of ignorance, as some sort of boundary.

N.: It is ignorance, it is the potential for ignorance, and it is the one who is ignorant, without whom there can not be any ignorance, all in one.

Q.: How could there be two? In one second, it appears to be there, and, in the next second, it is gone.

N.: For whom does it appear to be?

Q.: It does not seem that it appears to be for the ego.

N.: Yet, when the one for whom it is is gone, that one is always gone.

Q.: (laughing)

N.: Is that not so?

Q.: Yes, that is true.

N.: So, for the ever-liberated one, there has been no bondage. The ego, which is but a false assumption, can not, in reality, assume itself.

Q.: Yes, that is clear from what you were just asking.

N.: Being-Consciousness is invariable and has no ignorance. It is what remains when everything is said to be gone. The real does not imagine the unreal. The unreal can not truthfully imagine itself. There is not a third alternative. There can not be something partially real and partially unreal, for that would be subject to discrimination that would divide the unreal from the real.



Examine your own experience. Ignorance cannot be supposed by the real Self, and it can not suppose itself. When, in your experience, you see that the ignorance is gone, what remains is actually what was always there all by itself. Nothing actually was created. So, in the highest sense, nothing is destroyed. The holy texts say that, because there is no non-enlightenment, there is no enlightenment.

Q.: I was thinking about these holy texts. The sages can really enjoy them because they understand from where they come, and for the aspirants, like myself, they push one in a direction where one must lose ignorance. That is where one really understands them.

N.: They thrust you in a direction in which you are called upon to abandon whatever misidentification that makes the truth revealed therein appear as not self-evident. Once the misidentification is irradiated, the Truth is self-evident.

Q.: One must be very introverted when he reads a holy book, because he must see how it applies and be able to identify his ignorance.

N.: There are many ways of reading sacred texts. The best is to do so in a state of profound meditation in which the inquiry regarding what your identity is is the focus while you are reading. Then, the descriptions of Reality, or Liberation, are entirely about you, and the elimination of some delusion is not so much about elimination of delusion for some other person at some other time, but it is the elimination of your own.

Q.: The holy books and talking with sages, including satsang here, is so absolute. There is no partial ignorance, no gradual steps to enlightenment, and no such thing as enlightenment. It comes from such a high place. I notice that, with every answer you give, just as in the holy books, even the smallest step is very deep. Just noticing that one is not the body is a very deep step.

N.: It is very deep. Consider all the consequences of that. As for association with the wise, whether in written form or verbal form or in silence, the Maharshi said that you catch the samadhi habit from them. Here, samadhi means sahaja, natural absorption.

Q.: They do not allow you to hold to ignorance. They can not take it away, for one must himself eliminate it, but they are the guiding light to that, and I think that is invaluable. If I take my mind to be myself, it is hard to notice anything beyond it, and I believe that to be my master. The sage says that I am not the body and not the mind.

N.: It becomes invaluable, for it is not just a verbal discussion. It is not a mere topic that two parties are thinking about. It is something far deeper. It is of the nature of direct, immediate experience. In the end, having discarded the body, mind, and such definitions, there is only one Light shining for itself.

Q.: Yes, the sage, who is not the body and not the mind stands as that.

N.: Likewise the one who questions him. There is neither a bound one nor a liberated one, neither a disciple nor a guru, neither an instructed nor an instructor; just one Light, shining for itself, exists. You answer your own question, and you yourself are the answer. That “you” is what I am.

Another Q.: I want to present an over-simplification of my experience.

N.: Not a simplification, but an over-simplification? (laughter)

Q.: In receiving absolute teaching, I could describe it as a mixture of an unmistakable ring of truth with a little bewilderment on my part. That is a simplification of the experience. They may both have liberating value, but, if I look to undo the bewilderment, I get the sense that each illusion is mutually supporting other illusions, somewhat like a structure of cards. There is nothing really holding it together. The bewilderment is an unnecessary focus on what this card is, or how this card works, and how these cards come into being. The sages always advise one to go for the bottom card and the foundation on which it appears. The bottom card is the assumption of an individual ego. The foundation is Being. If that is the direction, the cards will always be collapsing and there need be no question about what this card is, what that card is, and how it came to be. The bewilderment is swept aside, and what is left is the ring of truth,

pointing to the core of Being. It seems useful to me to have a reminder to myself to not become too focused on what is this card, what is that card, but to go to the core of the teaching.

N.: That is right.

Q.: There is no reason to wait. It is never too early to do that. Nothing else has to happen first.

N.: There is never a reason to delay one's spirituality. You never have to do something first, before you commence an inquiry to know your own nature. Your own Existence, the Self, is already there. If preparation were needed, it is the preparation. You can always inquire.

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English of the final chapter from the *Advaduta Gita*.)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om



## *From Yoga Vasishtha*

(Continued from previous issues)

3:96:63

The non-inert, indeed, mind, Rama, is not the cause of samsara, and the inert stone object is not the cause of samsara.

Neither the consciousness nor the inert is that from which the universe is, thus, Raghava. The mind is as if the cause of the appearance of the forms of the objects. (Or: The mind is the cause and the light for the forms of the objects.)

Other than the mind's attention, what is anything? For him who is of no mind, is there the universe?

Of all the beings born [the dissolution] (the summit) is in its complete dissolution.

Various actions and desires (wishes) entering, the mind is spoken of with various names, just as the one time is [spoken of] variously as points of time or seasons.

If the ego is not called the form of no-mind, [and if] the activities of the senses stir the body, that shall be what goes

toward life-giving.

These views (philosophies, darsan), indeed, are declarations of differences of (lit., in) the mind by speculation (logic, argument), here and there (at some place at some time) by the adherents of doctrines (propositions) and refutations, assuredly.

They, indeed, Rama, are not to be awakened and are not distinguished anywhere. All are the powers held in God and are found (are known) as omnipresent.

When as, indeed, to the pure, certainly consciousness, the inert power, as it were, has arisen (or appeared), however slight, then there is entrance into variety (manifoldness).

Just as from the spider the thread (fiber) is brought forth, [so] from the consciousness the inert, so from the ever-awakened (ever-expanded) Spirit (purusa), Brahman, prakrti (manifestation).

According (subject) to ignorance is there entrance into and establishment of conceptions of (regarding) the mind and the multitude of synonymous words, certainly, of the proponents (adherents). The differences are not here.

The jiva-s and the mind are not at all; the intellect, the ego, the multitude are thus known as and arrive at Consciousness (Consciousness is known as and reaches the intellect and ego multitude.) In the world, this is said to be intelligence, mind, and jiva (the individual). Regarding this clear Knowledge, there is, indeed, no dispute.

*(to be continued)*



## *From the Temple Archives*

[In the selections from correspondence in this article, some condensation of the questioner's messages has been made for the sake of conciseness. Discussion of pragmatic matters has also been deleted, indicated by ellipses. The first selection of correspondence here is from someone writing from India whose letters also appeared in a previous issue]

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Dear Nome,

In “Who Am I,” Bhagavan declares, “Giving one’s self up to God means remaining constantly in the Self without giving room for the rise of any thoughts other than that of the Self,” and “As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the place of their origin is non-attachment.” When does one recognize the need to act in some way if all thoughts are being “destroyed” as they arise? The practical need at the moment relates to the recognition that there is a recurring thought to return to the U.S. How to tell if this is coming from desire or from an inner “knowing” that this is the guidance of God (the Self). The rational mind says it is more practical financially, in terms of ease, and access to Bhagavan’s Asram and the Holy Hill, to remain here, but there is this movement that also feels like Bhagavan’s guidance to return soon. How to know when such is the case if all thoughts are vigilantly being destroyed? I find this urge to book a ticket comes very strongly at some moments but recedes if it is inquired into. What to do? Any guidance you can offer regarding this inquiry/practical decision making would be appreciated.

Namaste,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Giving one’s self up to God means relinquishment of all misidentification and the dissolution of the falsely assumed individuality, or ego. Remaining constantly in the Self signifies the non-recurrence of those misidentifications. It is Being, only as the Self (Being), which is abidance in the innate Knowledge of the Self. Only the Self knows the Self; there is no other to do so. Without giving room means that, in such Self-Knowledge, there is no scope for ignorance. Misidentification, from the ego “I” down to the “I am the body” concept, becomes impossible.

“Other than the thought of the Self” conveys multiple meanings. In Knowledge of the Self, which is the Reality or God, no thought, no other thought, and no “other” exists. In spiritual practice, one’s full focus should be on realizing the Self. Nothing else truly matters. Nothing else is actually real.

When, by inquiry, happiness, reality, and identity “return” to their true place, nonattachment is complete. The supreme nonattachment is the nonexistence of anything else than the one Self, which is of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss. Infinite, there is nothing to which it can ever be attached. This is also destruction of thought in the Knowledge that there is no such existent thing as a thought. The space-like Consciousness alone is real. To fully comprehend what is being indicated in these two paragraphs, inquire just as the Maharshi has instructed: Who am I?

Merely to temporarily stop thinking about some topic can be accomplished by many methods of concentration and even distraction. The thoughts, or ones similar to them, will eventually return. The inquiry is for the purpose of the inner revelation of the Self, the non-conceptual Knowledge of Brahman. In that alone lies complete freedom and lasting peace. Self-Knowledge transcends all mental modes, inclusive of those with thoughts, with few thoughts, and even without thoughts.

You may find it helpful to examine why the mind thinks the way it does. This will lead you to the perception of the definitions that are the basis of those thoughts. Then, inquire to discern your true nature free of such false definitions. This results in the destruction of vasanas.

You may also find it beneficial, when faced with pragmatic decisions, to consider what is most important for you, that is, the purpose of life. Thus, the actions will be based upon your best wisdom. This wisdom also leads to the freedom from misidentification with the body. Not being the body, you cannot be the performer of action.

Whether here or there, inquire to know yourself. Thus, the Perfect Fullness shines, and you are happy at heart.

Though I rarely, if ever, tell anyone what to do, I hope that you find what is stated above helpful.

May you ever abide in the Self, as the Self, free from every

idea, absorbed in the infinite, eternal Grace of Bhagavan.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This next message is from a “new devotee” of Bhagavan writing from another state.]

Friday, September 12, 2008

Loving greetings from . . . ,

I am a new devotee of Ramana Maharshi. I set aside an empty, freshly painted, medium size room for meditation and puja. I seek guidance and instruction in preparing the room properly, concentrated to Ramana Maharshi and his teachings.

Love, Light, Peace & Joy,

9/15/2008

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

The most important aspects of creating a meditation room, a puja room, a temple, etc., are the heartfelt devotion with which it is done and the depth of meditation and devotion that you experience in such a sacred place.

Of course, most devotees of Sri Bhagavan have a photograph of him on an altar before which they meditate or do puja. The items in that place are cared for with love as an expression of their devotion and their dedication to the meditation of Self-inquiry. At the SAT temple and in many other places, there are also symbols of Siva.

Many find it helpful to have a book or books of his teachings within reach to guide their meditations. For puja purposes, some recite the 108 Names of Ramana (contained in the Book of Daily Worship) or read/recite songs and/or stotrams (hymns).

In short, there are no hard and fast rules concerning the

external actions and objects. The intensity and depth of inquiry to realize Self-Knowledge are the essential ingredients. Continuity of practice is also important.

I hope that the above is helpful for you. If you visit California, you will be warmly welcome at the SAT Temple. May your inquiry be deep so that profound Self-Knowledge shines in you, that, by His Grace, you abide as the Self that you really are, of the nature of eternal Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome (for SAT)

[The same person responded with the following message.]

Monday, September 15, 2008 10:49 PM

Namaste Nome.

Thank you for your kind response!

After so many years on the path, seeking Truth, I'm being drawn to a greater simplicity of heartfelt devotion, a sincere opening and surrender to His Grace.

I will take your advice and keep the room very simple with a picture of Sri Bhagavan, a candle, incense, flowers and the book which leads me now, "The Essential Teachings of Ramana Maharshi." Amazing and penetrating visuals along with powerfully profound utterances! The picture of Ramana Maharshi on the front cover fills and awakens my entire being, when I gaze into His deeply penetrating, loving eye!

I would like to receive your guidance for initiating the first steps for entering into deep and intense inquiry to realize Self-Knowledge.

My search for Truth over the past 28 years has lead me to this moment of awareness and understanding, that my work for the rest of this incarnation and beyond is to "Be," abide as the Self, innate Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

Is it possible to come for a weekend to receive personal instruction and guidance from you? I look forward to the deepening of our connection for the awakening of True nature in service.



Yours sincerely, with love, appreciation and gratitude.

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Dear . . . ,

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. The preparation of your room as described by you seems very appropriate. May it be filled with illuminative meditation and deep devotion....

You may find it helpful to also read such texts of the Maharshi as *Who am I?, Truth Revealed (Saddarshanam)*, and *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Reading books such as *Song of Ribhu*, *Self-Knowledge*, etc., may also be beneficial . . . .

Yes, you would be warmly welcome to visit and ask any questions about Self-Knowledge and spiritual practice. As you can see from the calendar of events, when there is not a retreat, there are spiritual events every Friday and Sunday at the SAT temple. These are deep yet informal, and everyone is welcome, actually encouraged, to ask as many questions as they would like.

Self-inquiry starts and ends with your very Existence. Inquire to know this Existence as it is, free of any misidentification with the body, senses, mind, or ego-assumption. If you are aware of life and death and have ascertained with certainty the source of happiness, the necessary intensity will be there in you.

By the Grace of Sri Bhagavan, expressed in the intensity of inquiry and the steadiness of devotion, so absorb you that you abide in That, the Self, as That itself always.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This next set of message and response was the start of a series of questions and answers.]

Thursday, September 18, 2008

To Nome:

I've been practicing inquiry for about a year, and, over time, it has definitely deepened.... I had an experience of experience dissolving in your presence about a year ago. At first, the presentation of Society of Abidance in Truth caused a negative, angry reaction in my ego; a judgmental reaction. I think it was my ego's reaction to your egoless state.

Every time I watch a video of you on Youtube, I have this same experience of experience dissolving. My inquiry is just a process of trying to stop going out toward objects of desire or fear and, also, seeking the source, which is finding the place where thought is actually occurring, so duality can cease. It requires a good deal of trust. It gets easier with time, sometimes incredibly easy.

I feel that it is not necessarily within the power of my ego to realize its own nonexistence. I suppose grace has to come from outside, but there is no outside. Language can't convey. I guess I'll just keep quiet now. If you have any advice, from what you can gather of my maturity from this e-mail, feel free to reply. Maybe if 'you' are totally Self-Realized, a jnani, you can find the proper words of encouragement.

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. It is good that you are attempting to practice Self-inquiry.

As is explained in *Bhagavad Gita* and elsewhere, krodha (anger) is rooted in kama (desire), which is rooted in avidya (ignorance). One who knows this destroys the tendencies constituting the personality and its repetitive suffering.

If the source of happiness is ascertained to be within you, dissolution of desire and fear is natural. The root of duality is the ego-notion. None of this is truly you.

Grace transcends the ideas of inner and outer, of oneself and another, and its infinity is endlessly experienced by those who remain free of the ego.

In the inquiry "For whom is thought?" the objectifying outlook is abandoned, and the thought subsides, and, as one inquires "Who am I?" clear Knowledge of one's true identity

shines and the very sense of existence previously falsely associated with the thought returns to its origin, the Self. Therefore, question the definitions you imagine for yourself.

The ego, being an illusion, is powerless. It cannot know anything. The potency of spiritual practice derives from the Self, which is of the nature of Consciousness.

The consideration of whether or not Nome is a jnani is irrelevant to your inquiry. Sri Bhagavan has said that the realized can take care of themselves, and you should take care of yourself.

If you find what is said here helpful, make good use of it. If it is not understandable by you, you may discard it as so much prattle or set it aside to be picked up at a later time by you.

May the tendency to consider the illusory person as if real be relinquished by you, and, diving within, may you deeply inquire to know the true Self, of the nature of nondual Being-Consciousness-Bliss, and thereby abide in lasting peace and imperishable happiness.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This message is from the same gentleman who wrote earlier about establishing an altar.]

Thursday, September 18, 2008

Thank you Nome, for your kindness and consideration!

Until the books arrive, would you kindly instruct me on how one inquires? What is the process of Self-inquiry, the steps I can take to enter into a deep and intense state of Self-Knowledge? Please share the first few steps in this process.

What is meant by intensity of inquiry? Would you explain intensity of inquiry? What is it? How does one make the inquiry intense?

Thanks again Nome, for your precious service.

Love, Light, Peace & Joy,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Here is a brief response while the books are being shipped to you....

The initial instruction concerning Self-inquiry was alluded to in the final two paragraphs of my earlier response to you. That you exist there is no doubt. You must come to know this Existence as it is at the same depth that you now know that you exist. How do you know that you are? This knowledge does not depend upon sensory impressions, and you need not think that you are in order to know that you are. How do you know? Who, in truth, in this Being? Deeply wonder about this.

Always the Existence is, regardless of states of the body and the mind. It does not commence at the birth or cease at the death of the body. Thought never defines it. What is the real nature of this Existence? Ask yourself, "Who am I?"

What do you regard as yourself? Examine this. Inwardly trace the sense of "I," your sense of identity, to its source, and liberate it from the false association of the non-Self with the Self.

As for the steps of the practice, an Upanishad declares that the attempt to conceive of the path that the knowers of Truth have taken is like trying to trace out the footprints of the birds in the sky. The path is as formless as the end, itself, yet it does not lack precision. The end is the beginning, say the wise. The end, itself, appears as the means. There is no distance to traverse between the Self and you, for the Self is indivisible. Yet, Self-Knowledge is imperative. Therefore, Sankara states that it is he who strives who realizes. Detaching yourself from all else, intensely inquire to know yourself.

Consider for how long and in how many ways you have desired to be happy. Seeking it externally, it is not found, for it exists in fullness within you. Within means the Self. If you comprehend what has just been indicated, all the intensity of all the desires, including their inverted forms as fear, etc., remains focused on one thing, and that one thing is the Self. Thereby one becomes nonattached to and not afflicted by anything of the world, attains single-minded focus in meditation, and practices inquiry that is like a lamp inspecting darkness. In addition, it is

good to contemplate life and death, so as to use the diminishing remaining time most wisely. Self-Knowledge yields immortal Bliss.

I hope that you find the brief comments above helpful. After reading some of the teachings of Sri Bhagavan in the books that you ordered, what has just been stated here may make more sense or be seen in a deeper way. The best way to deepen spiritual practice is to actually practice the inquiry. Grace is always present. Turn your mind inward, and you will know it to be so.

May your inquiry be deep so that profound Self-Knowledge shines within you, so that, awake from the illusory dream composed of the conceptions of “I” and “this,” you abide as the Self, the nondual Brahman.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This next message is from the same seeker who previously wrote on September 18th describing the attempt to inquire and asking for advice.]

Sent: Friday, September 19, 2008 11:21 AM

To Nome:

Definitely what you wrote wasn't so much prattle. There is an element of being caught between a rock and a hard place. I was drawn to inquiry and even satsang at Society of Abidance in Truth, not because I was drawn to spiritual practice, but because I wasn't even remotely functioning in the outside world, ended up getting a diagnosis of ... the “illusory” person was horrible. Intellectually, I can say and even believe the words, “this is the illusory person”.... What I don't understand intuitively in Bhagavan's words, I accept as true. I attempt inquiry to the degree I understand. There are things my mind, the ego, the illusory person, I, definitely cannot understand about inquiry. You said the ego is powerless to know anything. Thank you so much for your reply. I did find it helpful, and not prattle. It's an odd irony that the illusory person is all I know mentally. It is all the words I say and think. I, my illusory person, noticed that you so

gracefully ignored all the things I think I am and spoke directly through words to the me that wasn't looking for approval. I have illusions of ego-lessness that are really my ego sometimes, but that illusory person is so desperately looking for approval.

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your response message.

Turning within, you will find that you actually know more than you think. In how many ways do you seek for happiness, such as by the approval mentioned by you? It is an intuition of your natural state and an unknowing search for yourself.

As love is far more fulfilling than any amount of approval, and as true Knowledge is infinitely deeper than any kind of thinking, your true Self is far more expansive and substantial than the ego notion and its attendant tendencies that form the illusory personality.

Trust in Sri Bhagavan, follow his teaching, and, with his Grace, dive within. Thus you will be happy at heart.

May your earnest inquiry be deep so that your real nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss is revealed within you.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[From the same seeker:]

Tuesday, September 30, 2008 4:48 PM

To Nome:

Two more things . . . I'm not expecting a response and am grateful for the previous two which probably sum up most of what I need to know. Two of the biggest worldly obstacles that come up are: 1. Not picking up on nonverbal communication, it appears I may never have romantic involvement with other people, which when my mind projects outward can really bother me, I'm not sure if I should take action about it (or what action to take) or just quietly subside and leave it all to

Bhagavan, God, etc. I suppose that is the answer. 2. Sometimes guilt for past actions comes up, and again I just attempt to surrender. I think your previous replies probably are all the verbal help I need, along with writings of Maharshi and company, but if you see some other piece of advice that would be helpful and want to give it, I'm all ears. Eternally grateful for helping me get a glimpse of the grace already present, which I attempted to surrender to. I will continue to trust Bhagavan's teachings, and attempt inquiry faithfully. Ever yours in truth.

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. If you determine within yourself the real source of happiness, the results will be very far-reaching. You will thus find deep, unwavering peace, nonattachment toward all objects and situations, and the bliss of abidance at the very source of wisdom and love.

If guilty about past actions, be sure that you abide in a state in which those actions cannot recur and the very definitions of the personality that were the cause of such errors have been destroyed.

It is axiomatic that you should act (with body, speech, and mind) toward others as you would wish them to do toward you. Just steadfastly observing this much yields significant depth and lightness of heart. With inquiry, you come to realize others as the Self.

With faith in Bhagavan and his teachings, earnestly practice the best that you are able. Grace is ever present, and its joyful fullness is found by those who, hearts full of love, spiritually practice in this way.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This is another message from gentleman who established an altar to Sri Ramana]

Tuesday, September 23, 2008 10:22 AM

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Dear Nome,

Namaste.

In the past few months, the passion has shifted, not so much a passion, but a relaxing of my whole existence for the awakening of my true nature. Here re-enters Ramana Maharshi, back into my life, with an entirely new and deeper understanding of what it means to Be.

I worked there for two years, but I never understood the teachings of Bhagavan. I was totally into the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and surrendering to Divine Mother. But...would always point to the sublime teachings of Ramana Maharshi! ... passed around 11 years ago of ovarian cancer, and, even during her difficult last years, she would talk to me about Ramana and how he endured great suffering and remained a great Light for all. It is amazing how Ramana Maharshi, is becoming more and more a strong influence and presence in my life today!

I've been chanting Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya, with good results. Is there a formal initiation or diksha given for mantra recitation?

Thank you Nome, for your patients and kind consideration.

Much Love, Light, Peace, Joy and Bliss of Being,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. In so many ways, you are called and reminded. The manifestations of Grace are numberless, and the Grace, itself, is infinite. You have only to earnestly practice what Sri Ramana has taught to abide in immortal Bliss.

Sri Bhagavan's diksha is mouna diksha, initiation of Silence, just as with Dakshinamurti in ancient times. Silence is that in which no "I" notion arises.

May your inquiry be profound, so that you realize That which transcends this universe, from which it is, for which it is,



by which it is, in which it is, in which it is resolved, and which, indeed, it is. That is the Truth. That is Brahman. That is the Self. Tat tvam asi (That you are).

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This is a message from a devotee of Sri Ramana, who, after meeting Nome in 1996 in Bangalore, has kept up some correspondence.]

Namasthe Sri Nome,

Om Namo Bhagavathe Sri Ramanaya.

Thank you for always graciously obliging and replying to my mails.

In the process of enquiry, can we directly turn the attention to the I feeling and try to hold onto the pure Self, thereby increasing the strength of the mind to hold onto itself?

Is the attention or holding onto the I itself enough for fructifying into deep enquiry and thereby diving within effortlessly?

Another query is that, while I am meditating in the normal way, sometimes, I am able to reach a higher plane in the head where the meditation is fruitful and more peaceful and fulfilling. There has been an experience in such a way. Is there any yogic interpretation on this?

Sometimes, if I do mediation, I tend to miss japa. Is that fine? Bhagavan, if I recollect, has said dhyana is better than japa. I don't prefer to do japa after dhyana.

I am not an advanced seeker, or, maybe I should not judge at all. I am just trying to practice while living in the world.

It is only grace that liberates, but, to reach that perfection, we need to apply effort, since I am living in this world and am stained by its impurities.

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Thank you for your message.

Yes, you can certainly directly inquire to know the Self. When you attempt to “hold on to the pure Self,” who is attempting to do so? Inquire into his nature. Are there two selves? It cannot be so. What is the significance of “I”?

There need not be any concern whether the diving within is attended with effort or seems effortless. With all of your effort, practice the inquiry to know yourself. That which is found to be the only Self, One without a second, is innate and natural, and abidance as that indivisible, real Being is referred to as effortless.

Regardless of whatever yogic experiences may occur in the course of sadhana, keep your focus on Self-Knowledge. For whom are these experiences? Thus, inquire.

Dhyana is subtler than japa. If, engaged in that which is more interior and subtler, you find that that which is less so drops off, it is alright. May your meditation be upon the nature of the meditator.

Practice earnestly, deeply, and continuously. There is no point in measurement. How could you measure the distance between you and your Self? Such distance is merely imagined. Abandon misidentifications and know the Self as the Self truly is. It is eternal.

If you relinquish the misidentification with the body, the idea of “living in the world” will vanish, even though the body will remain active. The bondage and suffering that are the consequences of that delusive idea disappear with it.

Grace is infinite and ever present. Those who apply their best spiritual efforts are absorbed in it. It is he who strives who, by Grace, is liberated from all of the imagined bondage and knows the real Self.

May your inquiry be deep so that your happiness and peace are full and remain always.

Ever yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Nome

[This is a lengthy message from another seeker who had not

written or attended satsang previously.]

Tuesday, September 30, 2008 6:22 AM

Dear Sir,

I have a few queries on self enquiry. I have read your phenomenal commentary Essence of Enquiry on Vichara Sangraham and thank you for clarifying many thoughts. This email is long, I'm sorry.

1. When I practice vichara as a meditational enquiry, focusing on the I-ness, this is definitely a deliberate thought, until, some time later, it sometimes becomes a feeling of being present in that particular moment and whatever it holds. But, is it necessary to hold on to that 'impure' thought of I as the scent to follow? In your book, 'without misidentifying the I with the body, without an I being the centre of one's speech or mind, one must enquire into this sense of I' and another from Bhagvan 'Not to abide in what is not the Self: should one not hold on to that impure sense of I and rather not fix on anything but just this light feeling of not being attentive to any perception or thought? But that is tough to hold. There is no anchor, and it slips away sooner rather than later. Or do I take it we constantly enquire and try to get behind the impure I?
2. As I make the effort to dive within (and the breath goes shallow), as active thoughts drop, and as I focus on the I-thought, I find myself in the effort to make that I-thought more subtle as there are constantly some perceptions popping up as objects. I was wondering if that effort was too intense and hindering me. So, on the question of effort, although I read that effort has to happen initially and later it is automatically effortless, what is the nature of this effort? Is it to be intense or seemingly effortless? I don't like this unsettling feeling of too much effort. Yet it is required? Or is effort also just a thought and should one just be quiet? If one asks the question and sits quiet, yet, isn't the mind leading one on in a certain direction? That is also a thought? Eventually, what is

one to do? Be quiet and be lead or make some effort, or is this question irrelevant and what is to happen will happen? Does the statement, although it was to a question on work '... your effort is the bondage....' have any bearing on the effort during vichara?

3. When I try and remember my I-thought during activities such as walking, cooking, even reading and listening, the I-sense doesn't go deep. Sometimes, I feel my body as I listen to somebody. Sometimes, I make a deliberate effort to feel the I-ness as a kind of formless power (not really a thought or a picture, more like consciousness powering this thing), but again the question arises, should I make an effort to visualize the I-sense as formless or should I just go with whatever I feel at that moment? On practicing meditational enquiry, formally sitting with eyes closed: I can't do this for more than two sessions, half an hour each. Should I force myself to increase it or again, take it as it comes? Effort? Or why worry? What is to happen will happen.
4. Since happenings happen whether we wish them or not, does it apply to all these above thoughts during vichara? The role of volition in vichara? Can't help wondering—does one have to be detached in one's efforts?
5. During some goof ups when I feel angry, should I work on both levels—vichara and practical understanding of the situation—to avoid the anger again (not that it is in my hands!) or does the practical understanding actually hamper, since it is through the mind? Should I just do vichara after such situations without dwelling practically (constructively, not being self-righteous) on the situation?
6. Asking the question 'Who am I?' as opposed to self attention as one reads in some books: Is there a difference?

I might be rambling, but some light might help.

Thank you for your patience.

Regards,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. In answer to your questions and comments:

The Self, which is indivisible Being, is devoid of individuality, or the ego. It is not a thought, and no thought is required to know it, just as the present knowledge of your own existence is not thought-dependent. It is to be realized by nonobjective Knowledge. Inquire to know, at the same depth that you know that you exist, the Self as it truly is, free of any misidentification. The Realization of the Self cannot be approached as if it were a topic of study, but is revealed by an inquiry into yourself. So, when thinking of the “impure I,” inquire for whom such appears. If the existence is assumed to be individualized, such is due to imagination, which is the delusive superimposition of the “I” notion upon the real Being of the Self. If an inquiry is made into the individualized existence, only the undivided Existence will be found to exist, completely devoid of that “I” notion or assumption of individuality.

The present moment in the waking state is as unreal as the present moment in a dream. Make your vision nonobjective if you wish to realize the Self.

That which comes also goes and cannot be the Reality. Who knows of the appearance and disappearance of what is objective, inclusive of any state of mind? Such is the inquiry.

Self-inquiry is inherently thought-transcendent. That which is thought-transcendent can alone be continuous. Self-inquiry is continuous. It is of the nature of Knowledge. The end, itself, appears as the means. If the inquiry is off the mental level, continuity is no longer in question.

Effort is the natural desire for happiness, which is an intuition of the natural state, turned inward to its source. Therefore, one will apply effort, whether spiritually or in a worldly way, until there is complete happiness. Sri Bhagavan said, “Where Atma-vicara ends, loka (world) vicara begins.” No one has ever been hurt by applying effort in practice, but there are many who should have applied themselves more. Realization is said to be

effortless, because the Self is only one and is the sole-existent Reality. So, there can be no question of anyone applying effort to it, for there is no such one. In addition, sahaja means innate and natural. By interpretation, it has come to include “effortlessness,” as well. The innate is not a state or condition of the mind, nor is it an event in time. To conceive of a requirement of absence of effort in practice and the presence of effort in Realization to make it steady, etc., is absurdly inverted and a result of non-inquiry. It is better to pursue the path shown by Sri Ramana. As for practice, one should practice with the intensity as if one’s happiness and immortality depend on it, for they do, as vividly demonstrated in the story of the Maharshi’s Realization or “death experience,” as it is sometimes called. Therefore, in *Advaita-Anubhuti*, Sankara declares that it is the one who strives who realizes. That one cannot be the ego, for it is unreal and does not realize anything. So, come to a profound comprehension of inquiry, effort and practice, and true Knowledge.

In the reference to “your effort” concerning action, the emphasis is on the concept of being the performer of action, which is based on the ignorance that is constituted of misidentification with the body. The inquiry that reveals freedom from the misidentification cannot possibly be an obstruction, as the Self cannot oppose itself, and there are not two selves.

Regardless of the activities of the body, you exist. What is this you? There is no need to visualize it. Even if such is done, for whom is that?

When, following the Maharshi’s instructions, you truly inquire, “For whom?” the sense of reality and identity return to their true place. Thus, the “this” aspect of your experience, from thought down to the idea of an existent world, is absorbed in “I” and is no longer imagined to exist. Then, inquire, “Who am I?” Individuality, being unreal, vanishes. Thereby, the Self knows itself by itself. Brahman alone knows Brahman.

You may find it more beneficial to trace your thoughts to the definitions that spawn them, and then inquire to determine the falsity of those definitions. “Volition” is merely another idea. The Self is free of both sankalpa (volition, fixed concept) and vikalpa (indecisiveness, doubt, differentiation, imagination).

When angry, who has stolen your own happiness? To be

angry or not is certainly up to you. The spiritually-minded person is one who no longer wrongly associates her happiness or lack of it with external situations. Avidya (ignorance) brings kama (desire), which results in krodha (anger) that results in more avidya, as is taught in the Gita and elsewhere. The bondage of ignorance is one's own imagining. The Liberation from all the imagined bondage is to be found within you, in Self-Knowledge.

As for the meaning of "self attention" that you have found in some books, you would need to ask the authors of those books what they mean by that phrase. It should be evident that Self-inquiry is not an activity of the mind, but a deeper Knowledge of oneself. Self-Knowledge is beyond the three states and the modes of mind that appear within those three states. The Realization of the Self must necessarily be of an identical nature as the Self, itself. Thus is nonduality. The Self is eternal. Is mental attention eternal? The Self is nonobjective. Is attention without an object? Whose attention is it? Who am I? Just so is the inquiry.

I hope that the above is helpful for you. If some part or another of it is not understandable to you, inquire as Sri Bhagavan instructs, and clarity will dawn. His Grace is always present. If you find this helpful and have more questions, please feel free to write again.

May your inquiry be profound so that you ever abide in the Knowledge of the Self, of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, and thus always dwell in happiness and peace.

Ever yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Nome

[From the same seeker:]

October 01, 2008 4:48 AM

Namaste Sir,

Thank you very much for taking the time to reply so clearly. I have understood what you are saying, I think. One must relentlessly inquire at any kind of perception of duality. So if I remem-

ber to inquire, say, when I am feeling tired, the genuine inquiry is important. If I feel body consciousness on inquiring, then I must inquire 'whose is this body'. The answer is not in any imagination of the mind. If I feel certain currents, then again I inquire. I trust the question, genuinely put and intensely asked, and just be silent. The effort is in asking genuinely, knowing what the Self is not and letting the mind be formless, if possible. If not possible, inquire again. I have to learn to trust the silence. Let me know if my understanding is correct. I know I have to rid myself of concepts. Maybe I have to stop reading; sometimes that prevents practice.

I have just a few more questions.

Sometimes I feel a kind of pulsation in the region of the heart. Then I inquire, 'who is feeling this?' But sometimes, I just hold onto the pulsation, since it eliminates thought. I guess I should relentlessly inquire rather than just holding onto it?

Sometimes, if a peace descends, there is still a duality. Does one continue to inquire and not be with that peace since duality is still there? In vichara, isn't there any place for peace until all duality is removed? Does the inquiry have to be relentless? In my experience, there is a kind of peace even with duality around in some form. Does it mean I have to keep inquiring, breaking the peace? Or, does the relentless inquiry lead to even more peace?

I take it that elimination of thoughts is not enough. It is the inquiry which is important? Or, have I got this wrong? Being still, does it automatically bring about a consciousness of the I? What exactly does 'being still' mean?

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Thank you.

Oct 1, 2008 Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

The Upanishad declares, "Where there is a second, there is fear." "A second" is any dualism, even the notion of "I" differen-



tiated from the Self, which is the basis for the illusory, objective “this.” Conversely, where there is no second, there is no fear. That is, inquire so to realize conclusively the unreality of duality, so that neither the concept of “I” nor any other concept rises ever again. The rise of such is also not real. The Reality is ever as it is.

Be they sensory perceptions or subtle experiences, they are for you. Without concerning oneself with the appearance or the disappearance of anything, gross or subtle, one should constantly inquire to know oneself.

If the objective illusion of the mind is abandoned as the mind turns inward, the mind loses its form and remains only as the Self, of the nature of unalloyed Consciousness.

Sri Bhagavan says (in *Who am I?*) that Silence is that in which no “I” arises. That is the perpetual Reality of the Self. It is undifferentiated. Thus, the *Dakshinamurti Dhyanam* begins with *mauna vyakhya prakatita parabrahma tattvam* (Revealing the Truth of the Supreme Brahman by “silent speech,” or by “eloquent silence.”)

Freedom from concepts results from inquiry. The books do not cause concepts or ignorance. Ignorance is conjured up in one’s own mind. Assuming you are considering the books that preserve the teachings of Sri Bhagavan, Adi Sankara, and other sages and the teachings preserved since the time of the Vedas, it would be silly to suppose that these holy books were written and so carefully preserved to give more concepts to anyone. Their intended purpose must be otherwise. You may find it better and wiser to put aside the concepts of the mind and, perhaps, the way in which you may approach such spiritual texts, rather than merely take an action of putting aside the books.

When the mind is concentrated on one thought, and, since all is in the mind, sensations are also a kind of thought, other thoughts temporarily subside. Yet, Self-Knowledge does not dawn thereby. If you inquire as indicated in the previous response to you, you will know yourself. That which is thus known you are. In that, you find that thought has no existence. Being-Consciousness-Bliss is homogeneous and unborn. For the unborn, there has been no creation, not even of thought.

True peace and actual inquiry are of the same nature. A state of *tamas* (inertia) will be destroyed by inquiry, but the

peace of the Self will be revealed only more deeply. If one leaves behind the idea of inquiry as some mental activity and no longer confuses modes of mind with Reality, the supreme Peace shines as the very Existence of the Self. That Knowledge is revealed by nonobjective inquiry. It is self-revealed.

Does thought actually exist that you ponder the retention of it or the elimination of it? Do thoughts declare their own existence, or do you assume that they exist? If the latter, who are you? The view is always according to the definition of the viewer. Know yourself. Any mental state, with thoughts or without thoughts, is not eternal and is not real. Sri Bhagavan says, "What is not eternal is not worth seeking." The Self is eternal. Know yourself.

The Maharshi has defined stillness as "the destruction of all name and form." It transcends that which is perceivable and conceivable. To remain free of misidentification, inclusive of the notion of "I," and free of any imagination of an existent thing, or "this," unwavering in Self-Knowledge and steadily abiding as the Self alone is "stillness." The Self is ever unmoving. One who truly knows the Self is the Self she knows.

Again, I hope that what has been mentioned here in response to your questions is helpful. If you decide that reading is not necessarily detrimental but can be helpful for you, as hopefully these messages are, you may wish to look at the SAT temple website [www.satramana.org](http://www.satramana.org) to see if there are books and such that contain spiritual instruction that may be beneficial for you.

May you ever abide in the Silence of the Self, That before which all words and thoughts turn back unable to grasp, the timeless Truth, so that you are at peace and happy always.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This is another in a series of messages from the seeker who had been practicing for a year]

Tuesday, October 21, 2008

I seem to be having an easier time keeping quiet, still. Even

a few times lately, seemingly clear of thoughts at all levels. I'm not qualified to evaluate these states, but to just continue, trying to surrender. I notice my inquiry is becoming more subtle, ceasing subtle efforts and levels of thought, and attempting to do it in the midst of activities, i.e., homework... There is definitely a depth as of late that wasn't there previously. Sometimes, I get carried away into thinking "Oh, I'm so close to Self-Realization." Although intellectually I see the error in such thought, maybe you would have some advice for these sorts of things, if I need it. It is become clearer that happiness is inside. Some of the big vasanas of seeking happiness outside are not so obvious. The pleasure, the bliss, of not needing anything and being immersed, in Self-happiness far exceeds anything from getting any kind of love or approval from others, any kind of experience. What a great revelation.

Ever yours in truth,

Dear . . . ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Yes, the more interior or subtler the experience, the more joyful it is. If you continue to inquire and to surrender to Bhagavan, you will find that your very Being is Bliss.

There can be no accurate measurement of distance between oneself and Realization, for the very nature of the Self is Realization. There is no chasm between the Self and yourself. Inquiry dissolves the illusory "I" notion, and the sole-existent Self remains.

If your intention to examine the vasanas to eliminate them is strong, what until then seemed not so obvious becomes blatantly clear.

Your own experience is showing you that it is wise to continue steeping yourself in the meditations on the source and nature of happiness. Bliss calls you inward to be absorbed.

Perhaps you already possess them, but you may find reading (slowly and meditatively) *Who am I?*, *Saddarsanam (Truth Revealed, Forty Verses on Reality)*, *Song of Ribhu*, and *Self-*

*Knowledge* helpful for your understanding and spiritual practice.

May your meditations continue to deepen so that you ever abide in the profound peace of the Self.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome



## *Announcements*

### ***Appreciation***

Thank you!

A warm thanks to all who help the SAT temple to thrive by performing devoted service during the temple seva days and at other times. A special note of thanks to Eric Ruetz, Raman Muthukrishnan, Ryan Shaw, Tim Frank, Myra Taylor, Kathy Rogers, Michael Polom, Clark Coffee, and Bob Haber.

### ***Web Site Enhancements***

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Raman Muthukrishnan, the SAT website ([www.SATRamana.org](http://www.SATRamana.org)) continues to expand and improve. If you have not visited it in awhile, be sure to do so to see all that there is on the site pertaining to Sri Ramana, the SAT temple, publications, recordings of satsang, pictures, downloads, and more.

### ***SAT Pledge Offerings***

Once each year, the SAT Board of Directors sends an appeal for a pledge of donations to help sustain the SAT temple and all that SAT does. Reading this issue, you probably received a request in the mail. If you have not already returned the pledge card, please, reflecting on the value of this teaching of Self-Knowledge and SAT's activities to support your own spiritual practice, make an offering of a pledge today.

### ***Publications in 2009***

If all goes smoothly, by Sri Bhagavan's Grace, SAT will be able to publish two more books to add to its list of publications of profound spiritual literature early in 2009. One book is Nome's English translation from the Sanskrit text of

*Saddarsanam* by Sri Ramana Maharshi. It includes the Sanskrit text in Devanagari, transliteration of the text, the English translation with numerous alternative translations, and explanations of the verses and dialogues pertaining to the same derived from transcripts of two Truth Revealed retreats. Though the introduction states that this book is not intended as a formal commentary, each phrase is explained with the clear, nondual Self-Knowledge teachings given by the Maharshi as the consistent focus throughout.

The other book is *Advaitadevatam* (God of Nonduality), which is a compendium of verses and texts from numerous sources, such as the Vedas, Adi Sankara, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Nome, and others. The verses and texts brim with nondual devotion and are focused on the significance of Siva, the Sivalingam and Lingodbhava, Dakshinamurti, Dakshinamurti, Ardhanarisvara, and other forms of God. If you have ever wondered about the deep meaning of the murtis in the SAT temple or in other temples, verses recited at pujas at the SAT temple or sung as bhajans and chants, or have been deeply touched by the Mahasivaratri celebrations and meditations in the temple, or if wish to inspire the devotion in your spiritual practice, this book will be beneficial for you. It contains more the 40 selections and includes pictures to enable the reader to easily observe the symbols that the texts allude to and describe.