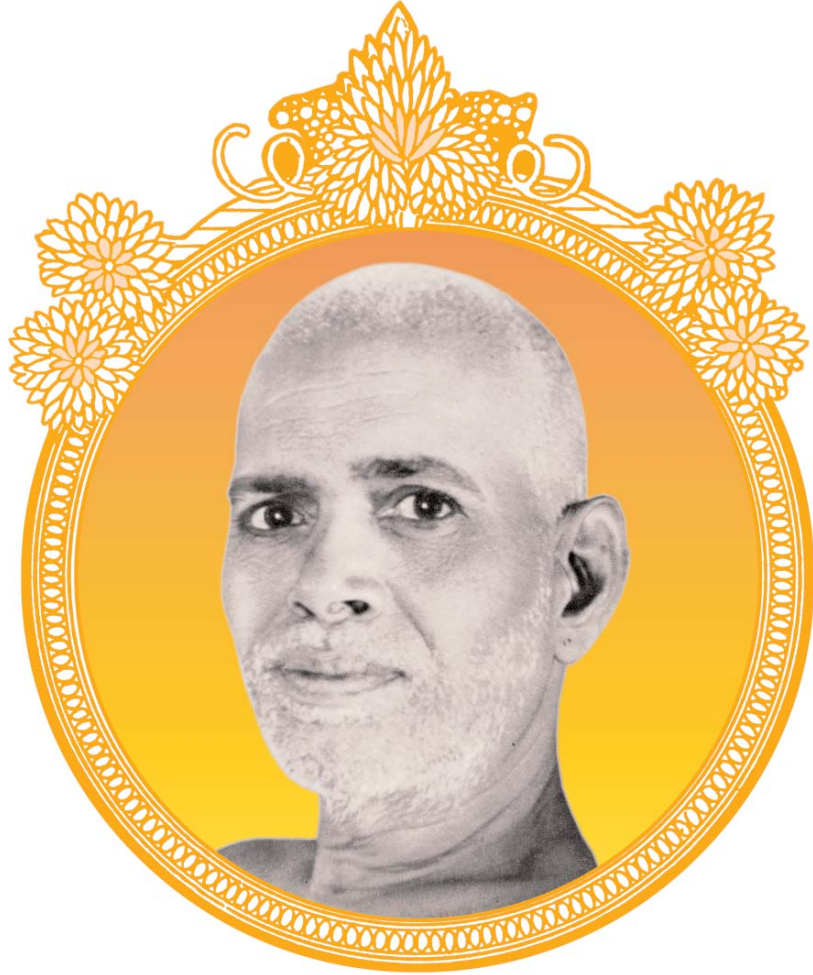


Reflections

October November December
2009



Society of Abidance in Truth



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

Contents

Invocation	3
Boundless Wisdom of Sri Ramana	4
Evening Meditation June 19, 2009	9
From Yoga Vasishta	19
Temple Archives	20
Our Hindu Heritage	39
Announcements	42

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Society of Abidance in Truth

1834 Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 USA

Ph: 831-425-7287 / e-mail: sat@cruzio.com

web: www.SATRamana.org

Invocation

As for ourselves, we have neither ignorance nor knowledge. Our Sadguru has made us realize who we really are.

- Jnanadeva (Amritanubhava, 8:1)

God himself becomes the devotee. The destination itself becomes the path, and the whole universe becomes one solitude.

- Jnanadeva (Amritanubhava, 9:35)

The wise one is naturally God Siva himself. So, not only does he worship while worshipping, but he also does the same while not worshipping.

- Jnanadeva (Amritanubhava, 9:49)

It has no end. It is resounding in itself. What bliss can be compared to this?

- Jnanadeva (Amritanubhava, 9:60)

The Boundless Wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi

(From *Day by Day With Bhagavan*)

22-7-46

D.: “. . . I find it difficult to believe in a Personal God. In fact, I find it impossible. But I can believe in an Impersonal God, a Divine Force which rules and guides the world, and it would be a great help to me, even in my work of healing, if this faith were increased. May I know how to increase this faith?”

After a slight pause, Bhagavan replied: “Faith is in things unknown, but the Self is self-evident. Even the greatest egoist cannot deny his own existence, that is to say, cannot deny the Self. You can call the ultimate reality by whatever name you like and say that you have faith in it or love for it, but who is there who will not have faith in his own existence or love for himself? That is because faith and love are our real nature.”

A little later, Ramamurti asked: “That which rises as ‘I’ within us is the Self, is it not?”

Bhagavan: No, it is the ego that rises as ‘I.’ That from which it arises is the Self.

Ramamurti: They speak of a lower and higher Atman.

Bhagavan: There is no such thing as lower or higher in Atman. Lower and higher apply to the forms, not to the Self or Atman.

Tayal: I do not always concentrate on the same centre in the body. Sometimes I find it easier to concentrate on one center and sometimes on another. And sometimes, when I concentrate on one center, the thought of its own accord goes and fixes itself in another. Why is that?

Bhagavan: It may be because of past practices of yours. But in any case it is immaterial on which center you concentrate

since the real heart is in every center and even outside the body. On whatever part of the body you may concentrate or on whatever external object, the heart is there.

K.M. Jivrajani, intervening, asked: Can one concentrate at one time on one center and at another time on another or should one concentrate always consistently on the same center?

Bhagavan: As I have just said, there can be no harm wherever you concentrate, because concentration is only a means of giving up thoughts. Whatever the center or object on which you concentrate, he who concentrates is always the same.

24-7-46

Bhargava: What is awareness and how can one obtain and cultivate it?

Bhagavan: You are awareness. Awareness is another name for you. Since you are awareness, there is no need to attain or cultivate it.

This was obviously a bit too much for Bhargava, and he was wondering how it was an answer to his question, but Bhagavan came to his help by adding: All that you have to do is to give up being aware of other things, that is of the not-Self. If one gives up being aware of them, then pure awareness alone remains, and that is the Self.

28-7-46

About 10:00 a.m. as I entered the hall, Bhagavan was telling a visitor from Jaipur, "What is the use of coming away from your house? You have left one home. This in another home. What can the home do? Nothing. It is the mind that does everything." After saying this he continued: "Immediately the question is asked, 'Then why did you come away from home?' I asked Bhagavan, "Why, did this man also ask that question?"

Bhagavan: No. He has not asked it. But I myself realize the inconsistency.

On previous occasions, Bhagavan has answered this question in the following way, “I came away because it was my prarabdha, and you will also go away if it is your prarabdha.”

17-8-46

This morning, a number of Gujerati visitors arrived here, evidently returning from Pondicherry, after darshan there on the 15th. One of them asked Bhagavan, “What is meant by Self-realization? Materialists say there is no such thing as God or Self.” Bhagavan said, “Never mind what the materialists or others say; and don’t bother about Self or God. Do you exist or not? What is your idea of yourself? What do you mean by ‘I’?” The visitor said he did not understand by ‘I’ his body, but something within his body. Thereupon, Bhagavan continued, “You concede ‘I’ is not the body but something within it. See then from where the ‘I’ arises within the body. See whether it arises and disappears, or is always present. You will admit there is an ‘I’ which emerges as soon as you wake up, sees the body, the world and all else, and ceases to exist when you sleep; and that there is another ‘I’ which exists apart from the body, independently of it, and which alone is with you when the body and the world do not exist for you, as, for instance, in sleep. Then, ask yourself if you are not the same ‘I’ during sleep and during the other states. Are there two ‘I’s? You are the same one person always. Now, which can be real, the ‘I’ which comes and goes, or the ‘I’ which always abides? Then you will know that you are the Self. This is called Self-realization. Self-realization is not, however, a state which is foreign to you, which is far from you, and which has to be reached by you. You are always in that state. You forget it, and identify yourself with the mind and its creation. To cease to identify yourself with the mind is all that is required. We have so long identified ourselves with the not-self that we find it difficult to regard ourselves as the Self. Giving up this identification with the not-self is all that is meant by Self-realization. How to realize, i.e., make real, the self? We have realized, i.e., regarded as real, what is unreal, the not-self. To give up such false realization is Self-realization.”

In the evening, after parayana, a visitor asked Bhagavan,

“How to control the wandering mind?” He prefaced the question with the remark, “I want to ask Bhagavan a question which is troubling me.” Bhagavan replied, after laughing, “This is nothing peculiar to you. This is the question which is always asked by everybody and which is dealt with in all the books like the *Gita*. What way is there, except to draw in the mind as often as it strays or goes outward, and to fix it in the Self, as the *Gita* advises? Of course, it won’t be easy to do it. It will come only with practice or sadhana.” The visitor said, “The mind goes after only what it desires and won’t get fixed on the object we set before it.” Bhagavan said, “Everybody will go after only what gives happiness to him. Thinking that happiness comes from some object or other, you go after it. See whence all happiness, including the happiness you regard as coming from sense objects, really comes. You will understand all happiness comes only from the Self, and then you will always abide in the Self.”

21-8-46

A visitor from Bengal asked Bhagavan, “Shankara says we are all free, not bound, and that we shall all go back to God from whom we have come as sparks from fire. Then, why should we not commit all sorts of sins?”

Bhagavan: It is true we are not bound, i.e., the real Self has no bondage. It is true you will eventually go back to your source. But meanwhile, if you commit sins, as you call them, you have to face the consequences of such sins. You cannot escape their consequences. If a man beats you, then, can you say, ‘I am free, I am not bound by these beatings and I don’t feel any pain. Let him beat on?’ If you can feel like that, you can go on doing what you like. What is the use of merely saying with your lips ‘I am free?’

The visitor also asked, “The books mention several methods for Self-realization. Which is the easiest and best?”

Bhagavan: Several methods are mentioned to suit several minds. They are all good. You can choose whatever method appeals to you best.

Later, Lakshmi (Sambasiva Rao’s sister) read before Bhagavan a few Telugu songs composed by her from

Bhagavan's Golden Jubilee. Bhagavan came here fifty years ago on Navami Tithi following Gokulashtami and, as this is Navami, the Golden Jubilee of His arrival according to tithi will be today, and hence she thought her songs could most appropriately be sung today. She began, however, reading in such a low key that after a few minutes Bhagavan asked her, "Are you able to hear it yourself?" Somebody suggested Nagamma might read the verses instead and so N. read them out aloud.

12-9-46

Casually going through T.P.R.s' notebook I came across an entry there—Mithya=Jagat; Brahma bhavam=Satyam.

As I remembered Bhagavan occasionally saying 'mithya' means 'satyam,' but did not quite grasp its significance, I asked Bhagavan about it. He said, "Yes. I say that now and then. What do you mean by real or satyam? Which do you call real?" I answered, "According to Vedanta, that which is permanent and unchanging, that alone is real. That, of course, is the definition of reality." Then, Bhagavan said, "These names and forms which constitute the world always change and perish. Hence they are called mithya. To limit the Self and regard it as these names and form is mithya. To regard all as Self is the reality. The Advaitin says jagat is mithya, but he also says 'All this is Brahman.' So it is clear that what he condemns is regarding the world as such to be real, not regarding the world as Brahman. He who sees the Self, sees only the Self in the world also. To the jnani it is immaterial whether the world appears or not. Whether it appears or not, his attention is always on the Self. It is like the letters and the paper on which the letters are printed. You are wholly engrossed with the letters and have no attention left for the paper. But the jnani thinks only of the paper as the real substratum, whether the letters appear on it or not."



Meditation

June 19, 2009

[This is a transcript of what was said during an evening meditation at the SAT temple. Of course, the long periods of silence are not transcribed.]

(Silence)

Om Om Om

(Silence)

N.: The Supreme Brahman is the Self, the only Self that actually exists. The nature of this is Being-Consciousness-Bliss, unlimited, undifferentiated, and free of beginning and end. To realize the truth of this, inquire so to know yourself.

The knowledge of yourself is nonobjective. The inquiry to know yourself is nonobjective in nature. It consists of the essential Knowledge. Inquire, determining your real Being with this nonobjective Knowledge.

If this does not seem immediately possible or complete, within the inquiry, negate the various misidentifications with the body, with the senses, with the prana, with the mind, including the intellect, and with even the notion of individuality. What will remain, the Knowledge remaining after the abandonment of such misidentification, will be naturally, innately, nonobjective. In the nonobjective, egoless Knowledge of yourself is found the infinite and the eternal.

Meditate by inquiring, one-pointedly, nonobjectively, “Who am I?” If it appears that there is anything else experienced other than the one Self, the Supreme Brahman, inquire, “For whom is the experience?” Whether it be of the senses and the body or something subtle or thought, for whom is this? Who am I? Inwardly remove the false definitions, the conceiving of the eternal in terms of the non-eternal, the infinite in terms of the finite,

the Self in terms of what is actually not the Self. Inwardly inquire “Who am I?” and know Brahman by the light of Brahman. If there is thought of anything else inquire, “For whom is this? Who am I?”

(Silent meditation)

Alright. If you would like to speak about your meditation experience, please feel free to do so.

Q.: When I started to meditate, the first thing asked was, “How am I actually inquiring? Am I doing it objectively or not?” What I found was there was somebody looking for something. There was someone who thought there was an answer to something, and I could see right away that it was not nonobjective, but that it is objective. So I asked myself, “How am I going to inquire without asking that question in such a way that there is a subject and an object in it?” The only place where I know to start from, to do it nonobjectively, is to start with “I,” and I have to figure out who I am in order to do that. That becomes the inquiry. It is so direct that it does not start looking anywhere; it just stays focused on “I.” I do not think I have ever figured out how to inquire this way until you said that instruction tonight. It is much closer than I thought it was.

N.: Much closer. The inquiry entirely consumes you, but it is not something done; it is not a mental mode. It is not a mental mode that is engaged in by someone. Of course, loosely, we often speak of turning the mind inward—inquiring—but, by experience, in essence, it is not a mental mode at all.

Q.: What I have been mistaking as inquiry for a long time is trying to produce some sort of mode. It is so far downstream from the inquiry that...

N.: I would not say that it is harmful, but it will not bring about the final fruit. The final fruit is found in the actual inquiry, “Who am I?” It is not, “What am I in relation to XYZ and ABC within the mind,” but, “Who am I?”

Q.: The instruction is so simple. If followed, it is the easiest thing to do, instead of doing the other thing. I just have to question why I would want to do anything other than that.

N.: Whatever else would be done, it would at best be ancillary, a limb of the inquiry but not the inquiry itself. In the inquiry, that is to say, in the essential Knowledge of the Self, is where there is direct experience of Reality—Self-Knowledge. It is immeasurably vast, ungraspable by any concept, and incomprehensible to an intellect. Yes, it is supremely simple because it is of an undifferentiated nature, and the practice or path consists of the very same substance as the end. All of the mental modes combined would not amount to even a speck of the actual vast Knowledge itself. The vast Knowledge is indeed simple—simple as Being is—unalloyed, undivided, with nothing between it and itself.

Another Q.: I am inquiring and I perceive an object and it is right there. I am right up against it. It is deceptive because of the proximity, but it is still an object.

N.: What is the object?

Q.: One of the mental concepts. I confuse the inside of the body and think that my consciousness is inside of there. If that were true, I would be surrounded by this stuff. It is that close and that deceptive.

N.: The deception is in the delusion of misidentifying. Your nature is really something completely transcendent of the body and not limited to a bodily location, but, through delusion, it seems as if the two are close, and, not only close, but the same. It is like holding a piece of colored cloth near a clear crystal so that you think that the clear crystal is the same color as whatever the cloth is—red, blue, etc. The crystal would not really become red or blue. It would still remain transparent.

Held in close proximity, through delusion only, they seem as if the same so that the attributes of the body are superimposed on your Existence. When you meditate, when you inquire, discern and distinguish between what is merely the body and what is your Self. As Sri Ramana often pointed out, the “I am the body conception” is the crux of ignorance. Indeed, the elimination of that misconception of, “I am the body,” “I am in the body,” and “I have the attributes of the body,” tends to bring about the dissolution of the ego, because the ego is left with no form to call its own.

You know about the outside of the body and the inside of the body. Are you mixing up the knower and the known?

Q.: Often.

N.: So, then, practice discrimination. Distinguish between the body, which is known, and the Consciousness, which is the knower. Practice this discrimination experientially. It will not do that much good if it remains something you think about. What is being spoken of is your own Being, your very Consciousness. That which is aware of the body right now is not the body. That which knows the inside of the body or the sensation of being within a body is not inside a body.

Ignorance tends to make for an inverted view, so that that which is very close to you, indeed identical with you, seems as if at a distance. This is the infinite and eternal Absolute, called “Brahman” or “God” or the “Self.” Similarly, ignorance makes those which are very far from you seem as if you are right up against them. Those are the thoughts, the body, and the sensations. Spiritual practice puts everything back in perspective. Is it clearer for you now?

Q.: Yes.

N.: Practice.

Another Q.: I was taking myself to be a body in a world. It is just thoughts that really create that. I was attempting to see what is really the essence of that. It is entirely dependent. Seeing that it is very dependent, it falls apart by just noticing what is actually aware of all of it. Without that belief in it, it is gone. But I still have too many misidentifications. So, once the meditation seems to be over, though there is something that goes deeper than the thought and the body, I still become confused.

N.: What determines when the meditation is over?

Q.: When I am no longer able to focus, or when I am focused on illusion. (laughter)

N.: Why does the focus change?

Q.: It is the belief in a body in the world.

N.: Alright. When you are absorbed in profound meditation, is this merely a matter of a change in focus, or is it a deeper knowledge? Is it just that you are not thinking about ignorance, or would the ignorance, even if conjured up in thought, then and there, seem patently absurd?

Q.: I have that belief, though, because that fog came up during this meditation. I thought, "This is just contrived by the mind."

N.: Which is contrived by the mind?

Q.: Something that its not there for. In other words, it makes up all this stuff and seems like it is in control, but its not always there for it. It is not always there, I should say, not for it, because it is always there for it.

N.: It comes and goes, so it does not truly exist. You who exist do not come and go. Where is the connection?

Q.: Only this belief in it. In that belief that happened during this meditation, it seemed so justified, yet it crumbles when it is questioned.

N.: Yes, within imagination, it seems as if solidified, though it is held up only by your own belief in it, like a dream. When you say, "I have so many misidentifications," what is the nature of the "I" who says that?

Q.: That I do not know. It is assumed to be something. My meditation broke it apart, but it seems entirely justified inside itself.

N.: Of course. You are lending reality to each idea. So, this seems so, this seems so, this seems so. The "seems so" comes from you. It can be projected on any amount of ideas or imagination without the source of it being altered in the least.

Q.: That is amazing. Is it true that noticing that source right then is part of meditation?

N.: Yes. The return of reality and identity to their source is meditation.

Q.: At the end of meditation, it felt very clear, but the cloud of illusion... I just need to be more fervent in discrimination. If the mind moves, it does not mean I move. When I identify with the mind, I think I move. A lot of times in meditation, a thought seems cohesive, and then, all of a sudden, it is gone. It does not even exist.

N.: Yes, when ignorance vanishes in the light of Knowledge, the thought forms it takes disappear, the belief in it disappears, and the very power or any reality to illusion also disappears. Its cause is gone. Stay with that which is nonobjective. This is "I," the one who lends reality, the one who seems as if individualized, but, when inquired into, is utterly non-individualized, not an entity at all, but just the infinite Consciousness. Shift, through the inadvertent ignorance, to the notion of being an individual or a mind, and you seem to move all over the place. Sankara compares that to sitting in a boat looking at the trees on a river bank and saying that the trees are moving. You, in your real nature, do not move. You cannot become other than the Existence that you are, which is unborn, formless, un-embodied, and attributeless. When meditation ceases, what else is that but the resuming of misidentification starting with this assumption of "I." Distinguish it right there and inquire.

Q.: It seems that there is not anything there when I inquire like that. There is all this creation in the mind, but the inquiry is not asserting anything.

N.: Yes, it is not asserting any kind of conception at all, but remaining in true Knowledge. It is not asserting "this is so," "that is so." It is not asserting "I am like this," "I am like that." It is not asserting "I am an "I," "I am a mind," "I am a body," "the world is real," and so forth and so on. The innate Consciousness, which is the real Self, has no such conception.

Q.: That is why inquiry can be done at any time.

N.: Yes, time and place are not factors. Inquire like this and know for certain that there is only one of you. There is no second self; just one Self.

Another Q.: What is the nature of a body?

N.: What did you want to know?

Q.: I just can not seem to get past that point. I am confused. What are all these bodies? Are they part of the Self?

N.: In as much as everything is only of the Self and there is no second existence, all the bodies are the Self. In as much as in delusion one thinks, “I am the body,” and limits his existence to a particular body, the body is said to be not the Self. On the one hand, it is the abode of birth, decay, and death and things that are transient, etc., that manufacture all kinds of suffering. On the other hand, it is a holy temple. You need to know the indweller. Though called the “indweller,” the Self is really beyond the scope of the body. So, on the one hand, it is a fragile thing to which one should have no attachment whatsoever. On the other hand, it is a divine gift or vehicle, and one should consider deeply the purpose of its life before it is over. On the one hand, the body is not the Self at all, but, in truth, the Self alone exists, and all bodies everywhere are yours.

Q.: You come to this through Self-inquiry?

N.: All kinds of wisdom come by turning within and inquiring to know who you are. If you turn within, inquiring “Who am I?” consistently, ardently, knowing that in doing so you will find the very source of happiness, you will also find that you will open the treasure of endless wisdom.

Q.: So many of my thoughts are superficial, and it really hurts me, yet, I know I conjure that up in the mind to guard against going totally crazy.

N.: Why not use your mind in a different way?

Q.: Suggestion please?

N.: You were just describing your thoughts and the futility of the kind of thinking in which you engage. No one forces you to think the way you think except you. You can undo the thinking. You can unlearn it very easily. Just find out why you think the way you think. If you deeply seek the reason for it, the search will lead you back to definitions about yourself, which shape all of your thinking. Then, if you inquire, you will liberate yourself

from those definitions, and your mind will be free to go back to its original state.

Q.: So, when one asks “Who am I?” he does not just start thinking with the mind what that is. I just allow something to come up, or maybe nothing will come up for awhile.

N.: We need not plan it beforehand. Just actually inquire. If you start thinking about it, such is no harm. As was stated earlier, there is no harm to think about these things. Filling your mind with spiritual thoughts can be helpful; it is just not the actual inquiry. It will not give the height or depth that is imparted in the teaching. But, if you are going to think, you might as well think about good things.

Q.: I am searching for a framework in which to operate.

N.: Do you know the source of happiness?

Q.: I am always searching for sensations.

N.: Yes, but what about the source of happiness?

Q.: I misidentify that.

N.: Do you really think happiness will come to you, let alone permanently, through bodily sensations?

Q.: Well, that has not been my experience, but I have postulated that many times.

N.: So, you have experimented quite a bit, all these years, with an uncountable number of sensations, and they have not made you happy. You can use the encyclopedia of your own experience to point you in the better direction. Do you know the purpose of life? Your life is not purposeless.

Q.: The thing that comes closest in my story is justice.

N.: What do you mean by justice?

Q.: Fairness, opportunity, no starvation, people have a place to sleep, some kind of security.

N.: These are all noble ideals. Where does their nobility stem from?

Q.: I read them in a book.

N.: Where did the book writer get them from? (laughter)

Q.: Dr. [Martin] Luther King.

N.: Where did he get them from?

Q.: He said he got it from God, but I do not know that to be the truth.

N.: You just like the fruit of it, but you are not sure of the root, is that it?

Q.: Yes. The just always felt to me the purpose and great highness. I do not know that to be the truth.

N.: What is true?

Q.: Real. It is an impact of what is happening. I am not sure I can explain it.

N.: Perhaps, you should find out more about that. What is real? What is true?

Q.: Going back to sensations, that has been my measurement.

N.: Your senses perceive such a small amount. How could you find what is true and real in that way?

Q.: Very little. I have not always known that. I was brought up in a very narrow thinking type of mode, strong suppression of emotions, and all that kind of stuff.

N.: All that is ancient history. You can not use that as an excuse for the present state of mind.

Q.: No, I do not want to do that. I am just telling you where I came from.

N.: Finding out what is true, what is real, is essential and has a lot to do with the ultimate or highest purpose of life. It has a lot to do with the source of all the things that are good, beautiful and virtuous, some of which you were describing. They have a source. Some call that source God, some call it the Self, and some call it Brahman. There are many other terms for it as well.

If you find out deeply within yourself, in full experience, what that source is, you will be fulfilling the purpose of life and you will find a happiness that never comes to an end.

I will give you a hint that is quite common in Advaita Vedanta teaching to finding out what is true. The first consideration regarding what is true, what is real, is that it is always, eternal, ever-existent. If something comes and goes, it is considered unreal. Only that which endures, without a moment's interruption—and is consequently beginningless and endless—is real. The only thing that is regarded as true about you is, likewise, that which is all the time, without a beginning or birth, and without an end or death. What comes and goes is just accidental and not true about you at all.

Not one of your sensations endures forever. They are very short-lived. What you have known through them is not at all the truth. If you want to know the truth, find that which is existent always, never interrupted, and not sporadic. How can you find that which exists always? Start with your own existence.

Q.: Is that the body?

N.: No. The body comes and goes. It has a birth and a death, and you are aware of it only in the waking state. It is not constant. You need to look for that which is constant, uninterrupted, and ever-existent. What has a beginning and an end is not true even in the middle; it is just a false appearance. What is truly real exists always and never becomes unreal even for a moment. Search your experience, outwardly, inwardly, and in any direction you like, and see if you can find that which always exists. Once you have found that, you will also have found the source of happiness that is perpetual, and this inquiry, this Knowledge, this Vedanta, will become very important to you. Then you will dive in to know that Existence first hand, permanently, and you will be at the very root of all that is good, true, and beautiful.

Q.: Thank you.

Om, shanti, shanti, shanti

Om, Om, Om (Silence)



From Yoga Vasishtha

(Continued from previous issues)

3:100:6

In Bhagavan alone, the omnipotent, indeed, for that, indeed, shines brightly (radiates resplendently), [and] the omnipresent (the all-pervading) causes the Shakti (power), her indeed, as spread out to shine (appear).

The power of Consciousness (Cit-shakti) of Brahman (or, from Brahman), Rama, is visible (appears) in the bodies, and the power of vibration (motion) (spanda-shakti) is in the wind. The inertia power (jada-shakti), then, is in a rock.

Just so, the power to flow is in water. Just so, the power of fiery energy (of light) is in fire. Just so, the power of the void (shunya-shakti) is in space. The power of existence is in abiding (firm, continued) existence.

The omnipotence of Brahman, indeed, is seen as going in the ten directions, as the power of destruction in complete destruction, and as the power of sorrow in sorrow.

[It is] the power of bliss in the joyful (in gladness), [and] just so, the power of valor (heroism) in a warrior and, in creations, the power of creation, [and], upon the end of the age (kalpa), [it is] as the all-powerful.

Just as the fruit, the flower, the tendril, the leaf, the branch, the twig (sprout, shoot), [and] the root are in the seed of the tree, so this tree abides in Brahman.

The appearance (illusion) of the controlling God being between (in the middle) of the mind and the inert is another named “jiva” (individual) (or, is otherwise named “jiva.”) Within Brahman, the mind is seen.

The differences of tree, creeper (tendril), a clump of trees (shrub), sprout, and a grain are the differences formed in the imagination of the ignorant. The nature of Consciousness is undifferentiated. (Or, The tree, creeper (tendril), a clump of trees

(shrub), sprout, and a grain differences and the undifferentiated Consciousness alone is the difference [between] forming in the imagination and being without ignorance.)

See that this Brahman alone is the Truth of “I” and the universe, Raghava. It is the Self, named “the omnipresent,” proclaimed [to be] eternal, and the great wondrous form.

That which is the power of thinking is said to be the mind, just as the error of [supposing] peacock feathers in the sky, just as the idea of a whirlpool in liquid (water, milk).

An appearance [and] of the nature of a small part, the mind is, therefore, the jiva (individual) in the Self. That mind, which has arisen as a form, is thinking itself.

In Brahman is that power. From that Brahman are that and this. “This, that, I,” thus, indeed, are distinctions born of illusion.



From the Temple Archives

[This message is in response to a seeker who asked about how to improve concentration in meditation and finished his question with: Every activity is predetermined by God. Are meditation and peace of mind also predetermined or am I able to control them? Please clarify.]

July 8, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Concentration upon the inquiry is proportionate to the intensity of the desire for Liberation. Self-Knowledge is peace. It is not predetermined, though it is perpetually existent, for the Self ever is, and the Self never is nonexistent. The inquiry, which is the deepest meditation, is always available. Dive within and realize.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[The following message is from a SAT member who lives at a distance. A few phrases have been omitted because they are not germane to the questions raised and for the sake of brevity. Nome's response follows.]

July 9, 2009

Namaste Nome,

Meditation is going well, but I am still working to build a more consistent strength of mind. What seems always critical is marshalling the alertness and presence to claim my identity as the mover of attention; otherwise, I slump into the lazy habit of an unquestioning follower of thoughts.

A dear friend is dying of cancer—only a few more days left. She brings a strength and a grace and lack of anxiety that seems to point to a deeper confidence, a confidence that I've not heard her talk about. I hold the Advaita bhava in my heart and remember that all this appears in Brahman alone.

I probably should be asking more questions. I am thoroughly hearing and contemplating the CD/DVD offerings of SAT and reading the *Gita*.

Many thanks and Aloha,

July 9, 2009

Dear ,

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Before birth, throughout life, and after death, Brahman is. That alone truly is. Appearances do not alter it in any degree. That is the formless, bodiless Self. That alone you are. That is the existence of all.

Observation of death can be a powerful reminder of immortal Being, the illusory character of worldly appearances and detachment from the same, the bodiless nature of the Self, and

the importance of intense, focused spiritual practice of Self-inquiry to realize the Self.

You are ever the unmoving Knower of all modes and states of mind, inclusive of attention and diffusion. The Knower is Consciousness. It should not be misidentified with any thought, mode, or state.

Listening and meditating, as well as reading the *Gita*, are beneficial.

May your meditations continue to deepen, and may you abide as the deathless Being-Consciousness-Bliss, in perfect peace.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This is a response to a seeker who expressed feelings of joy experienced while listening to recordings of satsang at SAT as he drove to work.]

July 15, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. Limitless happiness is innate. Being is, itself, Bliss. Self-Knowledge simply reveals the ever-existent Truth by its own Light. If you are able to visit SAT in California, you will be quite welcome.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[As can be inferred from this response, a seeker had raised questions about higher experience and samadhi, the loss of such experience, detachment from action, sorrow concerning personal problems, and a mental technique of the “redirection” of anger that he was attempting to use. This is Nome’s reply.]

July 15, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste.

Thank you for your several messages.

There are innumerable modes of mind. One self-luminous Consciousness knows all of them. Savikalpa means “with differentiation.” Nirvikalpa means “without differentiation.” Various yogis and rishis have employed these terms in various ways. For some, savikalpa signifies samadhi with some aspect of perception or thought, such as upon the indivisible nature of Existence, and such, while nirvikalpa is that in which all perception and thought is absent. In the short text entitled *Drg-drsya-viveka* (The Discrimination of the Seer and the Seen), Adi Sankara, the wondrous Acarya, defines savikalpa samadhi in terms of means of entrance, such as meditation on the unreality of the world, and such, and further delineates interior and exterior kinds of these, while nirvikalpa samadhi entails entrance without differentiation, with the essence of the samadhi being the same in all. The same description is found in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and is reiterated in the glossary of *Ribhu Gita* and the *Song of Ribhu*. Certainly, the distinctions and the questions regarding such do not arise in samadhi. Abide as the Self, and samadhi is found to be the natural, innate (sahaja) state.

Whenever the ego dissolves and in proportion to its dissolution, higher experience shines. If the ego emerges and in proportion to the misidentifications and attachments conjured up, the higher experience fades. First the ego is imagined, and the experience is considered objective rather than one’s very Existence. Then it becomes memory. Then, it fades, unless one practices. Therefore, Self-inquiry should be ardently practiced until the notion of individuality is impossible.

Along with detachment from action, detachment from the results of action, contemplation upon transience, and discrimination regarding happiness, the very idea of being a performer of action (kartrva), which involves misidentification with the body, senses, and mind, should be questioned.

It is beneficial to wisely examine in order to destroy the root cause, along with the manifest thoughts, etc., of “problems.” It is worthless to bemoan oneself, which involves the repetitive adherence to unexamined ideas, or to ascribe outer causes for one’s own imagined ignorance, bondage, or unhappiness. So, continue to inwardly discern the inner Bliss of Being that is the actual source of happiness and love. Truly discern ignorance as ignorance, and it will be gone.

While sadness or despair may be a starting place for spiritual aspiration, such as expressed by Rama in the opening portion of *Yoga Vasishtha*, it vanishes, along with the ideas constituting such, as soon as a deep inquiry commences, as expressed in the entirety of the remainder of that scripture and countless other texts.

Anger (krodha) is rooted in kama (desire) and avidya (ignorance). Destruction of the ignorant root is essential for freedom from it. Redirection of the anger, let alone, at the Maharshi, is not advisable. By doing such, the preposterous and presumptuous character of doing so may seem so starkly evident that it affords some relief from or temporary abeyance of the anger, but the causes will still be left intact to resume later, and, moreover, such redirection is fraught with far too many errors and delusions than can be elaborated upon here in this message. Destruction by true Knowledge is fruitful, and the fruit endures. If you must redirect, redirect the anger, or the intensity lent to the anger, at the anger, itself, intent upon no longer carrying on with such illusion.

The above answers a number of questions and points raised in your messages of the last three weeks or so. I hope that you find these answers and comments helpful.

May you abide absorbed in the Bliss of the Self, and, by the Grace of Sri Bhagavan, remain in the steady Knowledge of That, as That, itself.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[After an absence of more than twenty years, a seeker visited satsang again once or twice and sent a message, the gist of which can be inferred from the response.]

July 21, 2009

Dear ,

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

If you examine finely, you will observe that some kind of ego-dissolution is the cause of every deeper or higher experience, every freedom from fear, every shining of joy and peace, etc. Egolessness is the real Knowledge-essence. The Knowledge-essence is what makes any spiritual practice fruitful and is the root of all that is true, good, and beautiful. You are always welcome to attend satsang.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[A seeker had written: I have a question. Prior to consciousness, there is no appearance. The Self is prior to consciousness. When the appearance of being a body-mind organism goes back to the elements, the awareness is still the same. What is meant by the term "Parabrahman"?)

July 26, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

Parabrahma means, of course, Supreme Brahman. "Brahman" is without a direct translation into English, though we could say "the vast (literally, expansive) Absolute," in order to express some sense of its meaning.

As stated by you, the Self is prior to the awareness that conceives of objects, often referred to as the mind. Prior should be understood not only in time but as the Self's nonobjective nature, which is perpetual and entirely free of the awareness (mind, mental attention, etc.), and its imagined objects, be they gross (the world, senses, etc.), or subtle (thought, etc.). Indeed, it is only from the supposed position of a mind, or the misidentification as the individual "I," that one can speak of its appear-

ance and such. If, as Sri Bhagavan instructs, one inquires as to who is this “I,” the individuality or mind, being unreal, vanishes, and the Self alone remains. For this Self, which is unborn, there is no creation or appearance. The Self alone is real. This Self is Brahman and is also called Parabrahman. Thus the mahavakya-s (great aphorisms), Ayamatra Brahma (This Self is Brahman) and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). It is realized with the Supreme Knowledge innate to the Self that shines upon profound inquiry. That Knowledge is pure Consciousness. Thus: Prajnanam Brahma (Supreme Knowledge is Brahman). In this Knowledge, Being and Knowing are one and the same.

As with Dakshinamurti, regarding the Truth of the Supreme Brahman, the Maharshi’s Silence is most eloquent.

I hope the above is of some help for you.

May you ever abide in Brahman as Brahman, without the least trace of misidentification or differentiation, and thus be always happy and at peace.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[Part of a response to another seeker]

August 2, 2009

Dear ,

Namaste. Thank you for your message. Working in a way to help others is noble. Such can go on simultaneously with inquiry to know the Self.

The humble recognition that one is in need of Self-Knowledge motivates the introspective practice of Self-inquiry. Earnest application of the spiritual instruction within yields the joyful fruit of peace and happiness. The freedom for which you yearn is within you.

May your meditations be deep as you find the fountainhead of joy within, your true Self.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This is a response to a seeker who had temporarily fallen under the influence of the rhetoric of someone who disparages some spiritual leaders, teachers, etc. He had returned to calmness, yet said in his message, “I must go this road without any guru.”

August 4, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. It is good to see that your mind is calmer and expressive of the peace and love that are natural for you.

May I offer a friendly suggestion? As with any suggestion, you are free to accept or reject it. If you find it useful, it is yours. If you find it otherwise, you can dismiss it as being only so much prattle. You need not respond to it, though you may if you so desire.

Upon examination, one finds that how he approaches—the orientation of his mind—very much determines his understanding and experience. Just as one does not realize nonduality from concepts of duality, or arrive at happiness by increasing the causes of suffering, so one would not wish to use worldly or delusive ways of thinking, or mentalities, in the pursuit of his spirituality.

It is quite evident to many that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a Sadguru, which is a true Guru who reveals the Truth. Of course, his view of himself is only the sole-existent Self. Yet, for those of us who are ever grateful for his Grace and revelation of true Knowledge, he remains the Sadguru, as well. That a few websites decry him, that some supposedly have written nasty and false things about him, and that Sri Ramanasramam has been forced to defend itself in litigation (Sri Ramana was even called upon to be a witness!) for many decades are of no consequence. Why? It is because such samsaric activities are carried out by a few individuals who are delusively bound in their own dreams, and such has nothing to do with the vast Truth and the purpose of spirituality (let alone the purpose of Advaita Vedanta). I would recommend that you deeply pursue Sri Ramana’s teachings.

The approach to one's spirituality is very important. Therefore, at some point, you may find it beneficial to examine what approach aggravated your mind. It is not just a matter of what makes one a gullible victim of propaganda, though those who attempt to perpetrate such probably count on that mentality to wield influence and promote hysteria, so that even what is true, good, and beautiful is made to appear as if otherwise, and distorted false appearance is made to seem as if real. How does one formulate his opinions? Why does he formulate such opinions or use his mind in such a way? Is there any difference between that mentality and that of worldly-minded individuals who are not endowed with a spiritual practice? Is such helpful at all or even wholesome? Is judging others, let alone on what basis, helpful or antithetical to knowing oneself? Is not such actually utterly unrelated to spirituality? Is it necessary to mix such with one's practice? Is such contrary to the blissful wisdom one is attempting to realize? What is the cause of anger, frustration, fear, and hysteria? Is any good purpose served in ridiculing others or employing caustic expletives in one's speech? Would it be wiser to be thankful for whatever benefit comes from anywhere and dive within by inquiry? This list of questions could continue, but this much should suffice as an example of how it is possible to examine and question. Besides, as this body has Parkinson's Disease, it is nearing its limits for typing at this time.

So, the suggestion is twofold: Dive deep into the inquiry and Knowledge revealed by the Maharshi and question. Question much more than what you may be accustomed to, and be sure to direct your questioning to the workings of your own mind. In this way, that which is sublime unfolds.

Please accept apologies for the length of this message. At SAT, we always try to do our loving best for anyone who even once expresses interest in Sri Ramana and his teachings. If the above is not to your liking now, you may wish to consider printing it out and retaining it to read in the future.

May you abide in the joyful peace of the Knowledge of the Self.

Ever yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Nome

[From the same seeker came another message in which he said, “There are too many charlatans in the advaita field. I am concerned that the message is being delivered as clearly and as truly as possible, the way Ramana delivered it.” (Grammatical corrections have been made to this quotation.) He also wished that Nome would do something to refute the defamatory falsehoods stated by that disparaging person mentioned above that had upset him. Here is the response from Nome.]

August 5, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanya

Namaste. Thank you for your message. As mentioned earlier, if someone knowingly says falsehood about someone else and is refuted, he will just create another falsehood for he retains the same motivation. If a person uses the mind in such a way as to be susceptible to believing in such falsehoods, the refutation will not necessarily clear his confusion or doubt. Therefore, pursuit of such preservation of one’s good name is not truly worthwhile. In light of the eternal, what does it matter? Even in a mere ten thousand years, who will remember? Purnam (perfect fullness) and Ananda (Bliss) are within, so what does it matter? In the illimitable Brahman, what does it matter? Even in this mere vast universe, what does it matter?

Whether you think that there are charlatans or not is not significant. Is your purpose to gauge others or to inquire within yourself? Why waste time forming the mind into opinions about individuals who do not actually exist? Who will determine who is to be held in higher esteem and who not and upon what conceived basis? Ask yourself if such concerns do anything to eliminate the illusion of ego and bondage.

Anyone can put into practice that which Sri Bhagavan Ramana teaches and find the truth of it himself.

If anyone finds what SAT does helpful, he can avail himself of it as he pleases. If that is not so, one is free to look elsewhere. The same is so for any other place, event, teacher, etc.

May you abide in the unconditional happiness and peace of the Self.

Ever yours in Sri Ramana,

Nome

[From the same seeker: “I think what was happening to me was fear. The no-thing, awareness, is what is real. There is no claiming this fear, so what to worry. I apologize for such short sightedness. Peace and love always.” The reference to “your suggestion” in Nome’s response refers to a suggestion regarding health.]

August 6, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your suggestion.

As you may recall, Sri Ramana was known to make good use of everything. It is a lesson for all not only regarding physical matters, but spiritually as well. At your leisure, you may find it useful to review the messages sent to you, as well as what you wrote, to see how much more can be learned from such. The Maharshi said that Self-Realization is attained by destruction of vasanas (tendencies). So, hunt for the vasanas commented upon or implied, or expressed in what you wrote. Recognize them, discern the ideas composing them, and trace those ideas to their root definitions, which are the misidentifications. Then, destroy them with the inquiry (Who am I?).

For example, you mentioned fear. Fear is only in duality and is always fear of something known. Apart from the ideas constituting that known thing (state, condition, etc.), there is no emotion of fear. The same holds true of anger, etc. So, of what is the fear? Determine with precision that idea or those ideas. Then, trace inward as just described. By such Knowledge, which is of the nature of the essential inquiry, you truly and permanently free yourself of the fear, emotion, etc. The tendencies are not merely observed; they are destroyed, as darkness is in the presence of light. They become impossible. Likewise is it for moods, etc. The unreal is destructible. The vasanas are not real.

In addition to the discrimination regarding vasanas and freedom from them, other aspects were expressed, implied, or

demonstrated by example in the replies sent to you. You can search for and observe them and make them your own.

If there remain any further questions regarding how a person falls into delusion so that he misdirects the instruments of his body, speech, and mind and creates karma and such, you can refer to the *Bhagavad Gita* chapter 2, verses 62 and 63, which are best understood by reading Sri Sankara's commentary upon them. It may serve to explain the mentality of those whose activities agitated your mind.

May your inquiry be so profound that the very seed of illusion is found to be nonexistent, so that your peace abides forever.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[A response to a SAT member]

August 14, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanya

Namaste.

Clarity of knowledge regarding the Self is the cessation of ignorance, which is in the form of misidentifications and attachments, and its consequent suffering. Happiness is of your very Being. That is timeless. To conceive it as past, present, or future may still be regarded as partial, for the eternal Self is all-transcendent. Therefore, the Maharshi revealed Self-Knowledge and taught the nonobjective inquiry of "Who am I?" Whoever so steadily inquires knows the blissful Truth of the Self and is what she knows.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[This message is to another SAT member who had heard a speaker elsewhere state that women were not qualified for or were incapable of correctly reciting certain Vedic passages.]

August 18, 2009

Dear ,

Namaste. In light of our conversation on Sunday, here are a few additional points.

The purport of the Veda is supreme Knowledge. This is the Knowledge of Brahman, which is neither male nor female nor any other conception.

The Self is bodiless and is Brahman. It cannot be male, female, or any similar conception.

“The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.” That is, to know Brahman one ceases to misidentify with the body and such, including the attributes of such, and remains as Brahman; and only the bodiless Self can know itself.

Any interpretation of the scriptures that liberates one from imagined limitations (upadhi-s) is true. Any interpretation that maintains or extends the bondage is a misinterpretation, for the scriptures are for a divine purpose and not for binding one more to the delusions of samsara.

If the above is comprehended, the discrimination about what was said by the speaker to whom you were listening will be self-evident.

Now, for some speculative considerations:

Adi Sankaracarya may or may not have said what that speaker attributed to him. Supposing that such was said by him, the reason may be found in the passage cited if such can be located. For example, when Sankara says “just as” (yatha) and insets an example before saying “just so” (tatha), it is the exemplified that is the truth and no emphasis is placed on the validity or otherwise of the example. So, if he were to say, with an example conforming to the custom at the time, just as a woman does not recite the Veda, just so the mind cannot know the Self, it would be the latter that is the truth, and the former serves only the purpose of an example and does not at all indicate any kind of injunction.

Practical considerations at a given time, such as the requirement of one kind or tone of voice should not be considered of any spiritual weight for those endowed with a practice of jnana. Similarly, rules that define the performance of rituals in the karma khanda do not relate to those who practice the jnana khanda. The goal, purpose, practice, and qualifications for jnana are distinct from that of karma, with the exception that the karma can be considered purifying for the mind to prepare some seekers for jnana who have not entered the jnana marga directly. What is said of jnana is also true of bhakti; thus the incident of Jnanadeva causing the stone Nandi to recite the Vedas when he was challenged by those whose narrow minds had missed the intention of the Vedas.

Symbolic expression, also, must be understood and not misunderstood. When men and women are on either side of a temple, the significance is not the separation of the men and the women. For example, the murti of Siva (and his entire shrine) is on the left and that of the Devi is on the right (His left). The men and women worshippers are divided, according to the tradition of the temple, so that they are aligned to the murtis in that manner or so they, themselves, are in that configuration. Similar is it with the rest of what is in the tradition. It should be deeply understood for the benefit and not misunderstood for one's detriment.

To say that women cannot correctly recite is an absurdly useless statement. If mispronunciation is what is desired, there are plenty of men who can do a fine job of making a mess of a recitation! It is not an attribute that be claimed for women alone. If what is meant by "recite" is "knowledge," only the Unmanifested Brahman (Siva, symbolically male) in you can do so truly and correctly, and not the manifested or manifesting shakti, symbolically female.

The same holds true of Gayatri. That which is the vivifyer and illuminator of all the minds, the one to be worshipped, the Knowledge of which is secret from the ego and the worldly, which is to be known by those who identify as Brahman that courses through the three states and is the one Existence in all the triads, is obviously neither male nor female.

I hope that the above offers some further clarification for you.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[Here is a letter written by a seeker who had written a few times previously, obtaining answers to his questions. Nome's response follows. Grammatical changes have been made to the seeker's letter. The opening greeting by the seeker is, of course, very unusual, for Nome does not refer to himself as a "guru" but consistently refers to Sri Bhagavan as the Guru. It has not been deleted here because of the sincere sentiment expressed by the seeker.]

August 19, 2009

Namaste guruji. Many thanks for taking my questions. There is a song that goes, "torn between two lovers, feeling like a fool" that describes my current confusion. I understand when Sri Bhagawan says, "Go back to where you came from" as to follow the breath or "I thought" and see where they arise from. That is the Self-Brahman-Consciousness. So it is said in Mahavakya "aham brahmaasmi." According to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, "Follow the I-thought and remain in pure consciousness and beyond will take over." As he explains, I understood consciousness is temporary because it depends on the food-body. When it is no more, the consciousness merges into Absolute-Parabrahma. So, my confusion is this: Sri Bhagawan never mentions Parabrahma, but I am sure they both are talking about the same thing. All these different words—atma-self-consciousness-turiya-parabrahman-paramaatma—makes it hard for me, who am looking for the way home. Once and for all, tell me what is my home and how do I know I am not in the wrong house?

My second question is why is so much emphasis placed on getting out of the cycle of birth and death, when, in each life, we don't remember who or what or where we were in a previous life! If all this maya is God lila, so he can experience it all, why the "Who am I?" to stop or deny that? If I had a wish, I would tell God to give me many human lives with no ego to go with it and remembrance of Self in each one.

Third question: Why are kanchan (gold) and kaamini (women) called the main roadblock to Self-realization? What is the logical connection? Women I can understand because it keeps one rooted in body-consciousness—or the physical level, but how about wealth?

These are the questions occupying my mind for long time. I want to put them to rest before I come to the retreat, so that, when I am sitting with you, I am there completely without any monkey business from my mind to sidetrack me.

I hope this letter finds you in good health. My greetings to Saswati and the rest.

Namaste and thanks again.

August 18, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

There is only one Self, and that alone is the true abode. If you were required to select among several objects, a mistake could be possible, but the Self is nonobjective and, therefore, there is no multiplicity, choice, or division for it.

This Self is Brahman (ayamatma brahma, aham Brahmasmi, etc.). Inconceivable, but realized in Self-Knowledge, Saccidananda is a description of it. The very same Being is called Parabrahman to indicate its absolute nature, that that alone exists, and to indicate transcendence of any conception of saguna (with attributes) Brahman. In relation to the three states, it is called Turiya, and, describing it as beyond all states, it is called Turiyatita. It is the Self, Atman, but, if such is conceived by the seeker as jivataman (individual), he is instructed to know the Supreme Self (Paramatman), which alone is truly the Self. In relation to all the minds and thoughts, this same Consciousness is called the Witness, and in relation to the universe, it is known as God, the Supreme Lord, the All-pervading One, etc. To inquire into the nature of your very Existence and thus know it as it is, free from the least trace of misidentification, is essential.

If that is accomplished, the significance of all these terms and instructions is self-evident.

Citta, vijnana, etc., which perhaps may be better translated as mind, awareness or intellect, etc., being unreal, are connected with the other sheaths, and pass away, but the innate Consciousness (Cit), which is Being, is unborn and imperishable. I do not know if Bhagavan employed the term “Parabrahman” often or not, but certainly the *Ribhu Gita*, recited frequently in his presence and referred to by him often, uses the term hundreds of times.

In your wish, you say that you want to always know, or remember, the Self and to remain egoless. One who knows the Self is only the Self. Not having been born, he does not die. For that which neither is born nor dies, there is no rebirth. For this Self, there is no maya. Maya means that which is not. The Realization of such to be the case is its cessation. The assumption that one is an individual leads to the conception of embodiment and, from there, illusorily appears the entire samsara, like things imagined in a dream. The destruction, or abandonment, of that ego-notion is the end of the imagined cycle, which seemed so real in delusion, but which is found to be nonexistent in the light of Self-Knowledge.

If you accept that all at all times is the play (lila) of God, you should also consider that there is nothing with which God can play other than Himself. There is no second thing to limit God’s infinity or to appear within God’s indivisibility. So, God is the material and efficient cause of all ever, without actually becoming a cause at all. Uncaused and indivisible is God, so that God alone is, and it is only the mind’s conception that there is a play and such. To surrender the ego means the dissolution of even that mind. This is to give yourself up to your original source. God alone remains, the beginning-less and endless.

By “women, gold, etc.” in the scriptures is meant detachment. Attachment, born of confusion regarding the source of happiness, is the obstacle. Inert “gold” is not. A “woman” is not, unless the seeker of Liberation is a woman, in which case, she would want to disidentify from her body, just as a man would need to disidentify from his. With knowledge of the source of happiness (it is within, and within is the Self, thus Sat-Cit-

Ananda), one becomes nonattached to all things in the world and is at peace.

It is good that you raised these questions. You need not worry if any “monkey business” of the mind arises during the retreat. With the Maharshi’s teaching, all “monkeys” are cared for perfectly.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[A message was received from a seeker that expressed his questions and doubts about care for the body, desires, and fears. Here is Nome’s response.]

August 19, 2009

Dear ,

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

Namaste. Thank you for your message.

It is natural that every creature values its life. Transcendence of the bodily form and of the prana (animating life energy) and detachment, which are attained by Knowledge, are not antithetical to care of the body. However, whether or not the care is temporarily successful, and all bodies are transient, one is thereby [by the transcendent Knowledge] free of suffering.

To know that happiness is within and not dependent on anything else, such as things and circumstances, is the dawn of wisdom.

Yes, as the Upanishad proclaims, where there is duality, as it were, there is fear. Freedom from dualism is freedom from fear. Therefore, ardently inquire to know yourself.

If you are not already doing so, you may find it helpful to read, even a little, each day from teachings of Sri Ramana, Sri Sankara, or from books like *Self-Knowledge*.

May you abide in the deep Knowledge of the Self and thus be ever happy.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

[In response to several messages from a seeker who had recently attended satsang and to whom written answers had been given previously, too, the following message was sent. The nature of the questions can be inferred from the answers. The “retreat” referred to in the opening paragraph is the Sri Ramana Maharshi Self-Realization retreat held at the SAT temple, in which the spiritual instruction contained within *Atma Vidya* and *Upadesa Saram* was the focus.]

August 30, 2009

Dear ,

Namaste. Thank you for your numerous messages during the last ten days. Between the retreat just completed, other matters that required attention, and this body’s Parkinson’s Disease, which limits the dexterity required to type, this is the first opportunity to respond in writing.

With a little examination, it should be easily observable by you that the confusion and suffering in the mind are due to an undue emphasis on, or preoccupation with, the supposed individual and his desires (materially fulfilled or not). When this occurs, the mind provides turmoil for itself accompanied by sadness. Sense of proportion is lost, and the delusive tendency that conceives that such a state (both internal and external) will continue forever may be generated. On the far tail end, the angst and suffering may even become so manifested in one’s conduct that the behavior or communication lends itself to promoting the very thing feared or that one desires to avert. In addition, one sorrows over supposed lost opportunities while ignoring the present opportunity.

Turn inward and become peacefully nonattached in the understanding of the source of happiness. Thereby, the sense of proportion will return or be found anew. Reflect on what you have read, heard, and observed regarding happiness.

Consider how much “space” would be in your mind if you ceased to conjure up the clutter of the racing, yet circular, patterns of ideas that are illusorily fixated on the personality that is the outgrowth of the ego notion. Bemoaning one’s plight and wallowing in misplaced self-pity over one’s supposed incom-

pleteness are not to be equated with the self-critical examination to destroy misconceptions that proceeds to the inquiry that reveals the innate perfection. Discriminate when you use your mind for either and choose the wiser path.

Each seeker may feel that his bondage is the worst, his darkness the densest, his capacity the most inadequate, his path the longest, his obstacles the most difficult, his problems unique, etc. In truth, such is not so. Whatever you encounter in your experience and practice has been met by those who have trod the path before you. Having found freedom from the entire illusion, they hold forth their hands, as it were, and beckon you to join in the bliss, showing what is true and how to find it, rousing you from delusion's dream, revealing the fulfillment of the purpose of life, unveiling the Truth within you.

The ego is unreal. So, there is little point in cogitating over what kind of ego one supposedly has. Deeply inquire into who you are, and Self-Knowledge will dawn.

May you abide in the perfect fullness, which is Brahman alone, and know that alone to be your Self.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome



Our Hindu Heritage

Reincarnation & Karma. . .

Reincarnation and karma are fundamental beliefs in Hindu tradition. Hindus believe that the personality essence or impure mind enters and exits a multitude of bodies over eons of time until one reaches Enlightenment and rebirth ends. Karma is action, so to live a life filled with right karma or action is what one strives for in each birth so that the next birth will bring one closer to Enlightenment. The karma that one would engage in would be service to the guru, observing religious rites and practices, social service, expressing the true, the good, the beautiful (satyam-sivam-sundaram) with body, speech and mind.

“That atomic ethereal particle that possesses these memories and tendencies is known as the jiva; and it remains there itself, in the space where the dead body is. And they refer to it as 'preta' (departed soul). That jiva now abandons its ideas and what it had been seeing until then and perceives other things, like one dreaming or day-dreaming. After a momentary lapse of consciousness, the jiva begins to fancy that it sees another body, another world, and another life-span...At that moment, the jiva enters into the body of the male through the food eaten; it is then transferred to the female and delivered into this world, where it undergoes life again in accordance with the fruition of past actions. There it grows and wanes like the moon. Once again, it undergoes senility and death. This goes on again and again until the jiva is enlightened by Self-Knowledge.” - The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasistha)

“The physical body is only the creation of one's ignorant fancy, not real. There is no difference between the body and the ignorance. To think they are two—this indeed is samsara (repetitive history).” - The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasistha)

In Advaita Vedanta, personality is understood to be composed of tendencies of the impure mind (jiva) manifesting in misidentification with the body. The tendencies are born from the desires and fears of the jiva (embodied individual).

“Birth which arises from wish (desire) is not more real than the wish, like waves in a mirage. Just as the world and its creation are mere appearances, a moment and an epoch are also imaginary, not real. There is no essential difference between the experiences of this world and those of another; all this being the thought-forms in the infinite consciousness. They are like two waves in the same ocean.”

- The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasistha)

Carnate, of the flesh, can be only for the individual. To be embodied is bondage. In practice, the disciple examines the tendencies of the mind that bring about the belief of being an embodied individual, eliminates them through self-examination, and permanently abides in his true nature—Brahman. During

practice, including worship, study of the sruti and smrti, prayer and meditation, the disciple may experience doubt (the impure mind) regarding his nature, which is the rebirth of the impure mind forming the personality or jiva. The death of that impure mind brings about the experience of one's true nature. The birth, death, rebirth and re-death of the impure mind may occur moment by moment, hour by hour, life-time by life-time, or eons by eons until the final turning within of the pure mind, in which complete and final destruction of the notion of birth, death, rebirth, karma, time, embodiment, and individuality occurs, and Brahman alone remains.

“Jiva is like unto just a little agitation on the surface of the ocean of Brahman; or just a little movement of the flame of a candle in a windless room.”

- The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasistha)

“Nothing has ever been created anywhere at any time and nothing comes to an end either. The absolute Brahman is all, the supreme Peace, unborn, pure Consciousness and permanent.” - The Supreme Yoga (Yoga Vasistha)

Do Hindus worship God or Gods? . . .

Among the different schools of thought contained within Hinduism, there are said to be 330,000,000 deities or Gods, each representing different aspects or principles of God (Ishwara), while simultaneously representing God himself. Various forms of God known as murtis are used for worship and devotion among the different sects, and each sect has its chosen murtis for that purpose.

Among the various schools of thought, some may view God as monotheistic, the singular, supreme source of all manifestation. Others may view God as polytheistic, multiple Gods contained within a multiplicity of forces. Still others may view God as both monotheistic and polytheistic, believing that God is singular but manifests in a multiplicity of ways. Any of these approaches could apply, whether one is a dualist or a nondual-

ist. An example of the belief of both monotheism and polytheism would be to view Lord Shiva as the singular, Supreme God depicted in numerous Gods or deities, such as Dakshinamurti, Nataraja, Ardhanarisvara, or others, and, then, contained within each of these Gods, a multiplicity of aspects or principles of God, each aspect or principle being of the nature of God.

In Hinduism, any or all of these views may be embraced by the devotee, once again displaying the immensity of the woven tapestry of Hinduism as an ever-expanding sphere of experience of God within the infinite Consciousness, which is Brahman.

In Advaita Vedanta, the use of murtis can be polymorphic symbolism of God that is transcendent of both unity and duality, one and many. In ultimate truth, the devotee, the devotion, and that to which one is devoted are all only God, and God alone exists formlessly.



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, cleanup after events, cleaning the temple; Kathy Rogers: maintaining residential rentals, overseeing property repairs, organizing retreats, providing meals at retreats, cleaning the temple, arranging flowers; Michael Polam: maintaining the “meditation garden” behind the temple; Ryan Shaw: maintaining the temple grounds gardens; Tim Frank: vacuuming & cleaning the temple, cleanup after pujas and retreats, providing meals at retreats; Myra Taylor: vacuuming & cleaning the temple, providing Prasad after satsang, cleanup after pujas and retreats, providing meals at retreats; Raman Muthukrishnan: running the bookstore including mail order service, maintaining the website, providing Prasad after satsang; Sangeeta Muthukrishnan: helping with the bookstore mail order, organizing things around the temple and providing meals at retreats;

Clark Coffee: assisting with production of recordings; Wimala Brown: providing meals at retreats and Prasad after satsang; Jennifer Birnbach: providing Prasad after satsang; Dhanya Nambirajan: singing during special events, providing meals at retreats, 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: securing and maintaining safety at the temple, lighting candles at meditation events; Richard Clarke: providing incense for the temple and helping with book orders from India; Nome: temple grounds maintenance, writing books, administrative stuff, general help wherever needed including spiritual guidance; Sasvati: preparing books for publishing; Advait Sadasivan: providing play time at any time for anyone who wishes to play; Gnyana Prakash: temple cleaning; Pam Bartholomew: flower arrangements.

New Publications

Two new SAT publications *Saddarsanam and an Inquiry into the Revelation of Truth and Oneself* and *Advaita Devatam* have been released! The first includes the Sanskrit text accompanied by transliteration and English translation of this essential work composed by Sri Ramana Maharshi. This English translation includes multiple alternative meanings of numerous terms and phrases. This book also includes comments and discussions on each verse that elucidate the supreme Knowledge revealed and its application in spiritual practice. The second book is a compendium of verses by Sri Ramana Maharshi, Adi Sankara, Nome, Ganesh Sadasivan, and various Hindu scriptures that are focused primarily on forms of Siva in light of non-duality. If you have not yet obtained your copies, you may do so by purchasing them in the SAT Bookstore or ordering them online.

Upcoming Events...

The Self-Knowledge Retreat: November 11 through November 15. This retreat focuses on the Maharshi's "Saddarsanam."