

# CRUMBS FROM HIS TABLE

*By*  
RAMANANANDA SWARNAGIRI



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Tiruvannamalai  
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DEDICATION  
TO  
SRI RAMANA

O Thou Spiritual Guide of Guides! O Thou Teacher of Teachers! O Thou Sankara Incarnate! O Thou Rama, Krishna Incarnate! Thou who dost dispel the cloud of ignorance — nay, the arch-destroyer of the illusion, the *dehatma buddhi* — by mere sight; who dost manifest Thyself in the form of Sri *Sadguru* to Thy humble devotee, be pleased to accept this humble dedication to Thy Holy Feet, and lead me, O Thou Shining Light, on to my goal and make me one with Thee.

RAMANANANDA SWARNAGIRI



## PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION

On the insistence of several devotees we have great pleasure in now reprinting this precious gem of a book which has been out of print for over twenty years. Sri Bhagavan used to like this book and often asked some devotees to read it. We are confident that readers will derive both pleasure and benefit out of this little treasure.

*84th Jayanthi of Sri Bhagavan*  
*31st December, 1963*

**PUBLISHER**



## PREFACE

In December, 1936, I issued a small pamphlet containing some of the conversations I had had with Sri Ramana Bhagavan at Tiruvannamalai, as well as some which some of my friends had with Him in my presence. These are His spiritual teachings that I was able to pick up as they fell from His sacred lips during the few months I stayed at Sri Ramana Ashram in 1935. That the instructions reported were not only those imparted to me but also those conveyed to other enquirers explains to some extent the apparent inconsistency and perhaps illogical sequence in the questions and answers, and in some cases repetitions also. I have attempted in this book to weave them as much as I can into some order, but I am afraid a certain amount of mix-up and inconsistency (either in this book itself or other published or reported versions of Sri Bhagavan's teachings) is unavoidable, due to various reasons, which are: firstly, the enquirers belong to different schools of thought and varying stages of practice and progress, and the answers depend on the nature of their enquiry; secondly, Sri Bhagavan's attitude of indifference to assertions and affirmations; and above all, thirdly, the capacity of the enquirers to obtain a correct record of His answers and their subsequent ability to give good expression to them.

Though Sri Bhagavan has repeatedly said in His authenticated publications and in reply to enquirers that the method of "Enquiry" *i.e.*, "Who am I?" is *the easiest and the*

*most direct path* leading to salvation, He has also nowhere and at no time deprecated other methods and paths — *Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga* and so on — as will be seen from his reply to a query under the heading “Self-realization”.

Whether or not one were intent upon the quest of the Self or Truth or God, Sri Bhagavan’s directions to me, to enquire within, as to “Who I am”, appeared to be the most rationalistic and the first thing that I should do and know, rather than run after places of pilgrimage, which I otherwise contemplated, especially with the gift of free travel by rail that He has so kindly placed at my convenience. Remarking about a short trip to Tirupati Hills in August, 1936, which I had to take on account of compulsion from a brother of mine, Sri Bhagavan said I might do it, because I could afford it. The obvious meaning of the remark being, that these visits were unwarranted and that I need not do so, in spite of the availability of concession of free travel.

The uniqueness of His teaching consists in the fact of his insistence on the enquiry method from the very beginning, instead of waiting till eternity for the purification of body, mind and intellect. The enquiry straightaway gives one that mental quiet, as it were in a trice, which one does not get till after some years of Japa. Even such practitioners that know the meaning of ‘Gayatri’, the highest mantra, and repeat it a crore of times, admit this. If, on the other hand, one repeated just once the Gayatri Mantra with meaning and *bhava* instead of repeating “I will meditate thus, I will meditate thus,” *but remained still, confirmed in the meaning of the mantra*, namely:



*“The Power which induces one’s intellect in the various pursuits of life is the same as that in the Sun, which, by its illumination, removes the darkness of this earth and is the cause of the existence and growth of all living beings on earth,”* he would soon find himself as the light itself, bereft of body and form, perfectly still and thoughtless — a pleasurable experience indeed is this. What one would attain in this manner is also attained by merely probing the source of thought, the “I” thought, being the first thought, by asking “Who am I?” and waiting ‘still’ for an answer — *carefully guarding against obtrusion* of the sneaky intruder (the thought monkey). Sri Bhagavan’s teaching can be practised in addition to, and without detriment to, other practices, *and that from the very beginning*, with immense and incalculable advantage.

I issued, on the first occasion, a brief report containing the main instructions only and not the illustrative stories. I hoped that the taste of a few ‘crumbs’ would alone be sufficient to induce the readers to seek the bread of life itself at His hands, and serve my ambition to create such an interest in Him and His teachings. Since the issue of that leaflet, however, I have been urged by some of my friends and others to issue a more detailed account of my experiences, and especially more of Sri Bhagavan’s teachings. I am therefore issuing this now to satisfy their very sincere demand and to enable others, who have not had the opportunity of reading the first edition of the book, to do so now.

December 1937      RAMANANANDA SWARNAGIRI



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(1)

## VISIT TO SRI RAMANASRAMAM

On 23rd December, 1933 the writer visited Sri Avadhuta Swami<sup>1</sup> at Sendamangalam, Namakkal Taluk, Salem District (Madras State, South India). While going round the idol of Sri Dattatreya on the summit of the hill, where the Swami has his cave, he chanced to see a photo of a very young ascetic, who looked like a boy just out of school, not more than twenty years of age. The penetrating eyes and youthful appearance of the young *yogi* captivated him. He was told that the sage lived at Tiruvannamalai (North Arcot District, Madras State, South India) and was a perfect *Jnani*.

The author visited Sri Ramanasramam for the first time at 8 a.m. on Good Friday, the 30th March, 1934. He prostrated before Sri Ramana and remained in the hall till lunch, at about 11-30 a.m. Neither Sri Ramana nor any one else spoke. After lunch most of the visitors sat on the pial opposite to the Samadhi or Shrine of Sri Ramana's mother.

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<sup>1</sup> An *Avadhutha* is one who has discarded everything of the ordinary work-a-day world, symbolised perhaps by outward divestment of even a loin cloth, and means a self-realized ascetic characterised by highest spiritual freedom. But this word is now ordinarily understood to connote an ascetic who has discarded the loin cloth and goes about stark naked, whether self-realized or not; this taking precedence over realization. The writer went to see him, therefore, partly impelled by curiosity to know how one controls sex-desire and remains stark naked and partly to obtain his grace by taking *upadesa*.

The writer told a gentleman seated near him, that he was sorry that pollution<sup>2</sup> stood in the way of his obtaining any spiritual instruction from any of the saints or sages, for during the last few months the thirst for it had sprung up in him. He had gone to Sendamangalam last December and, just before commencing the journey, his sister-in-law gave birth to twins. Also, on his way to this place he heard at Mambalappattu that another sister-in-law had just given birth to a child. One Rao Bahadur Narayana Iyer, a retired accountant of the Madras Port Trust, said that he need not feel worried about pollution or anything else as, pollution or no pollution, Sri Ramana neither gave spiritual instruction (*upadesa*), nor had been given any by anybody else.

Because the author had recently visited the Avadhuta Swami in Sendamangalam, Mr. Narayana Iyer was inquisitive as to whether he knew of any miracles (*siddhis*) attributed to that Swami . He denied any such knowledge and remarked that he was impelled to go and see him, more to learn how to acquire sexual control, as the Swami is known to have moved in society for years without even a loin cloth, than to learn or to admire his so-called miracles. The writer added that he had heard that Sri Ramana and the Avadhuta Swami had lived together in Tiruvannamalai and if Sri Ramana could be persuaded to converse he could elicit from Him an accurate description of that Swami . The accountant, agreeing to this, conducted him to the hall where Sri Ramana was seated.

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<sup>2</sup> Amongst Hindus, one is said to be under pollution for the first ten days after the birth of a child to any of his agnate cousins.

On going into the hall, Mr. Narayana Iyer himself asked Sri Bhagavan if He knew the Sendamangalam Swami (otherwise known as Kalpattu<sup>3</sup> Swami). He replied that He knew him and characterised him as a good *vairagya purusha* (i.e. a person with very strong detachment). As this term is supposed to include every other quality needed to dub one a saint or Swami, the writer suggested to Mr. Iyer that no more questions were needed. He however would not stop there but asked Sri Bhagavan if He knew that the Avadhuta had worked any miracles. Sri Bhagavan replied in the negative; and Narayana Iyer prompted the writer to put some questions. Not knowing what questions to put, he hesitated, but as Mr. Iyer continued to goad him, he asked Sri Bhagavan if it was not a fact that both He and the Avadhutha Swami were doing *tapas* (penance) for some time at the same place and Sri Bhagavan replied that it was so, under a mango tree on the Hill. He was asked to put some more questions but the writer was unable to do so. Sri Bhagavan was all the while looking at him, as if awaiting to hear his questions. He could not, therefore, desist any longer and said, "I am desired to put some more questions to you and I am wondering what to ask."

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<sup>3</sup> Native of Kalpattu, a village near Mambalappattu Railway Station. This is also the writer's native village.

(2)

## NECTAR DROPS

Sri Bhagavan: “Who are you?”

*D:* I am Narayanaswami.

*B:* Is it the body, the mouth or the hands that represent the “I” you are talking about?

*D:* The mouth, the tongue, the body, all together constitute the “I.”

*B:* (Pointing to the disciple) Whose body is this?

*D:* *My* body.

*B:* So, you are different from the body? You are the possessor and the body is your possession?

*D:* I now realize I am different from my body, but I cannot however clearly see the line of demarcation between my body and my “Self.” I cannot see *Who I am*.

*B:* Go and put the question to your “Self” and you will know who you are.

*D:* To whom is the question to be put and how?

*B:* Put the question to your “Self,” trace the source from which the “I” springs and the answer will come to you.

The writer felt that, contrary to what Mr. Narayana Iyer and others said, namely that Sri Ramana Bhagavan was not in the habit of giving *upadesa* (spiritual instruction and guidance), He had actually given him something to work on. He was satisfied with this lesson and, having purchased a copy of *His Life and Teaching* (in Tamil), read it that very

night at the ashram itself. The more he read it the more he was attracted to Sri Bhagavan, and His example and teachings appealed to him more than any that he had heard of.

The next day, in company with some of his friends and a close relation, he visited a scholar learned in Sanskrit and Tamil, who was for some time a Sanskrit teacher in one of the Local Board High Schools and who was living close to most of the places where Bhagavan was reported to have spent his early life. When the writer came to a place where Bhagavan was said to have sat in the evenings, he took a small quantity of the earth from it and smeared it on his forehead (as is usual with Hindus when they revere a person) and dropped a bit of it into his mouth. He felt “the very ground on which such a holy person sat was sacred, His footprints were worth all the spheres that rolled in the heavens.” His relation immediately flew into a rage and protested against his deifying Sri Ramana, who, according to him, (as belonging to the orthodox school of philosophers) had contravened the injunctions of Manu (The Hindu Lawgiver) by performing the last rites of His mother. This is contrary to the established rule that an ascetic should have no more connection with his parents. Though not educated enough to be able to refute his arguments from ancient lore, the writer remonstrated with him that Sri Ramana was another Manu in the present day with all the authority to lay down codes for human conduct, but, in concentrating mainly on spiritual guidance, He was on a very much higher plane than Manu. Unfortunately, however, he added a curse to the protest, saying that his relative would soon reap the result of his



ignorant derogation of the Lord. Within less than ten minutes, on coming down to the plain, his relative tripped over quite a small stone and fell headlong on the ground. The writer was walking a few paces ahead and had turned the corner of a street, when he was recalled by a friend, to find that his relative had not only sustained an injury, but was lying unconscious in a hut, with one of his legs swollen from the fall. He ran to the spot, engaged a horse-cart and took him to the railway station, after rendering what first aid he could by dashing cold water on his face and giving him some water to drink etc., till he regained consciousness. The writer would like to leave his readers to draw their own conclusion on the connection between his curse and the immediate accident, inexplicable as it is to him even now.

The writer does not like miracle-mongering, nor does Sri Bhagavan claim any supernatural powers for himself, but there is no limit to the number of persons who have attributed such things to Him.

The writer visited Sri Ramana again on 27th May and 20th October the same year, staying for only two hours on the former date and for a day on the latter. Sri Niranjanananda Swami, the secular head of Sri Ramanasramam, casually remarked to him that if he desired to obtain the full benefit of Sri Ramana's Grace he had better make up his mind to stay in the ashram for a minimum of five days. He could neither grasp the real import of this suggestion nor was he very enthusiastic about such a stay then. He continued, however, to practise the "Who am I?" enquiry from the date he first saw Sri Ramana.

(3)

## HIS MESSENGER

On Sunday, 14th July, 1935 a gentleman, who is this writer's immediate superior officer, came to his house with a friend named Anandan (which means in Tamil, experiencer of bliss) and asked him if he could serve this friend as a guide to Sri Ramanasramam. This writer asked to be excused; however his superior was insistent and desired him to think over the matter and give him a final reply next Tuesday. On Tuesday this writer's superior offered to pay his railway fare to Tiruvannamalai and back, and at the time of the conversation it seemed to this writer that Sri Ramana himself in the person of his superior prompted him to go, to the extent of offering his fare. He therefore had no further hesitation in agreeing to visit Sri Ramanasramam and serve as a guide or rather *make serving as a guide to his friend a pretext for visiting Sri Ramana.*

He was therefore before Sri Ramana on the morning of Wednesday, 17th July, 1935. On the way, he was thinking that he could ask Bhagavan some questions to get further elucidation, but when he came to the ashram he was too shy and diffident to do so. One thing that frequently upset the tenor of his mind, or so he imagined, was living a married life and yielding room for lustful thoughts and actions. He dared not, however, put this question to Sri Bhagavan for

the reason that, if Bhagavan should reply that the remedy lay in quitting his house and cutting off all bonds of worldly life, he was not prepared to adopt it then. Besides this, the question itself seemed to him too immodest to put to such a holy person. Sri Bhagavan was not however to let him go so easily unsatisfied.

A young gentleman very soon came in and placed himself in front of Sri Bhagavan. The very first question he put, kneeling and weeping before Him, was: “You have roused my *Kundalini*<sup>1</sup> and as a result I have even resigned my job; but in trying to pursue the *Atma Vichara* (Enquiry into the Self), which Sri Bhagavan enjoins, I am troubled with what appears to me an obstruction. In my village I am frequently attracted by a young woman, living opposite to my house. I am unable to control my desire. What am I to do?”

Sri Bhagavan calmly asked him, “Who is attracted?” He replied “I am. Whenever I see her, my mind goes out to her and thoughts of being in her company etc., crowd into my mind.” Sri Bhagavan asked him to put the questions: “Who sees and who is attracted? Who is disturbed by lust? In whom do desires arise?” adding that the moment he put these questions he would find all these thoughts taking leave of him.

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<sup>1</sup>The divine *shakti* (power) supposed to lie dormant in uninitiated and less developed practitioners.

(4)

## SOME EXPERIENCES AND CONSECRATION

On the night between the 17th and 18th July, 1935, at 4 a.m., the writer sat for his usual meditation and as soon as he closed his eyes he had absolute internal quiet. This lasted for full thirty minutes, as his wrist watch showed after the experience. During this experience he felt as if a number of ants had been racing up his back and a mild and harmless fire was ablaze all around him, he himself feeling bodiless and merged with the light. The light was comparable to that of evening sunshine when there is also a drizzle. Tears had trickled down from his eyes. At the close of the experience he gave an exclamation and breaking from the meditation began to tell his beads in the usual way. He did not narrate this to anybody till about 8 a.m., when, due to the choking up of his throat and tears trickling from his eyes as before, he was unable to proceed with the comparison of the 1st and the 4th impressions of a few chapters of Mr. Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*. Sri Bhagavan, who noticed this choking of the throat and consequent throttling of the voice asked what the matter was. He then told his experiences of the early hours of the morning. Sri Bhagavan said that everything would be all right soon.

A little later when he came to the passage referring to Kumbakonam Kamakotipeetadhipathi Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya having referred Mr. Brunton to two holy persons, able to enlighten him on the question of *Atma-vidya*, of whom Sri Ramana was one, he desired to know who the other person was and was given to understand that the other person was the late Sri Ramananda Swami, then residing at Mahadanapuram, near Trichinopoly, as reported by Mr. K. S. Venkataramani (journalist and author) who accompanied Mr. Brunton to Chingleput to visit Sri Shankaracharya. As the writer lived very near Mahadanapuram and, as he had already told Sri Bhagavan that he had seen the Avadhuta Swami at Sendamangalam, Bhagavan asked him if he had also seen Sri Ramananda. He answered that he had not but, from what he now heard, he was anxious to do so, adding however that his books led one like himself almost to despair of ever attaining salvation, as he had spent the greater part of his life in a way which the Swami would consider irreligious and sinful, lacking in both knowledge of the *Vedas* and essential practices of a Brahmin, so that he was not fit even to moot the question of *mukti* (salvation). He longed to attain salvation, but this insistence on the study of a vast ocean of Sanskrit literature, or any literature for the matter of that, appeared to him a stumbling block. He was anxious to know whether there was any way out of this impossible condition at his age and in his state of life and, having found what seemed to be a possible solution, setting at rest all these doubts, at the hands of Sri Ramana, he was no more inclined to go and see anybody else.

Sri Bhagavan said that vast study or high education was not compulsory for Self-realization<sup>1</sup> and that sometimes it could prove more a hindrance than a help. A highly educated Pandit has a greater *samsara* (family) than an ordinary man, whose immediate obstacles to the quest of the “Self” only centre round his wife, children and a few relations and friends. If such a one can, by constant enquiry, break these bonds, he is well on the path to salvation, whereas a Pandit has, in addition to breaking the immediate ties of his relations, etc., to break also the doubts and despairs which the various books he has read present to him, and as a matter of fact at one stage of the path it would be necessary to strive to forget what he had read. He added that knowledge of Self is True Knowledge and incomparable to any knowledge gained by study, and that Self Knowledge or Self-realization is not to be obtained by any amount of study *but by practice only*. The writer cannot describe what consolation and relief this reassurance gave him.

The writer stayed in the ashram till Sunday, 21st July, 1935 and then he said that he would rather not go back to his job but wished to stay permanently with Bhagavan. Bhagavan replied that He was not bound by time and space, and therefore the writer need not worry where he stayed, obviously meaning thereby that merely for the purpose of obtaining His grace it was not necessary to remain there. As

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<sup>1</sup> *Cf.* The humble knowledge of oneself is a surer way to God, than deep researches after science.

the writer had read some letters, from persons in distant countries, who had not so far seen Sri Ramana, saying that they had guidance from Him day after day, he was easily persuaded to accept this assurance and returned to his job on the morning of the 22nd.

Before going to the ashram, a friend of his had given him a book of *Spiritual Instructions* by Sri Swami Brahmananda (of the Ramakrishna Mutt) and the following passage therein, on page 225, appealed to him so strongly, especially after his experience at the ashram, that as soon as he returned home he wrote to Sri Niranjanananda Swami of Sri Ramanasramam, that henceforth he had consecrated himself to the service of Sri Ramana:

Ordinary people understand by the term *Guru*, a person who whispers some *Mantram* into the ear of the disciple. They do not care whether he possesses all the qualifications of a true Master. But today such a conception is losing ground. It is now recognised that none but a realized soul is qualified to be a spiritual teacher. He who does not know the path himself cannot show it to others.

(5)

## LIVING WITH THE MASTER

In the early hours of 14th September, 1935, at 4 a.m., the writer was not able to obtain the usual internal quiet. He therefore mentally remonstrated with Sri Bhagavan that He had not showered His grace on him and that was why he was not able to consistently maintain his equanimity of mind. At that moment, however, he heard the still small voice within saying, “*if you feel disappointed you had better come back to me.*” He did not make up his mind what to do, but left home with a determination not to return, until he had some solace from some Swami and could get back good concentration. It struck him then that it might be possible to get something from Sri Ramananda who was so near his home and about whom Sri Shankaracharya had spoken so highly. He therefore left for that place the same evening. Having missed the Swami that night, he stayed with a friend and in the morning he had a bath in the river Cauvery. Soon after, when he sat for meditation on its bank, he not only had good meditation, but it lasted longer than usual. At about 11 a.m. he saw the Swami, who asked him, not what he had read, but what his experiences and difficulties were. When the writer narrated these the Swami remarked that it appeared to him that the writer had obtained *manolaya*<sup>1</sup> and should go in search of

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<sup>1</sup> For the meaning of this see Chapter 8.



a *Sad-Guru*. He desired him to concentrate on *Gayatri Japa*. The writer felt very happy in his presence and enjoyed internal quiet. When the writer asked him informally why, contrary to what he had stated in his book *The Hindu Ideal*, he had tolerated the writer (a modernised Brahmin, with short hair and lacking Sanskrit knowledge and orthodox Brahmanical daily observances), he said that he had only written his book to show the way to Self-realization, but that it did not mean that a person who had reached the stage the writer had, obviously due to past actions (*karmas*), should begin his education anew. His instructions were very illuminating and illustrative.

The writer returned home on Sunday night with the feeling that he would get some visible confirmation of the Maharshi's call, and sure enough on reaching his office on Monday he had a letter dated 14-9-1935 (the very date on which he had all the trouble and the response from within) from one of Bhagavan's long-standing disciples, which contained amongst other things, the following sentence:

By Bhagavan's grace, I hope you will make it convenient to come here at once, *at the earliest opportunity*, and earn His blessings in person.

This he considered a confirmation of the message from within, and he therefore took leave for a couple of months from his employer, in the hope that if, within this period, there was any tangible evidence of further progress he would completely break the ties of family, give up his job and devote himself entirely to Self-realization. His

mother, who was then 70 years of age, wept at the prospect of his leaving home, a step which appeared to her like desertion. He then prayed to Sri Ramana to enable him to console her, and a Tamil couplet came to his mind, the meaning of which is that just as it is impossible to put a chicken back into the shell of an egg out of which it has hatched, so also a soul that has come out of its shell of ignorance, can no more fall back into it. With the destruction of ignorance, with the destruction of the illusion that the body is the Self, the soul can never come back to birth and death.

(6)

## EARNESTNESS OR FAITH

(*Sraddha*)

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं

(Faith is essential for knowledge)

— *B. Gita Ch. VI, Sl. 39.*

When the writer visited Sri Ramanasramam last July, he saw an annotation of Sri Ramana's great work *Ulladu Narpadu* or *Forty Verses on Reality*, and desired to make a copy, but not having the leisure he left for home without doing so.

So, when he came back to the ashram this time, the first thing he did was to obtain this copy from Sri Bhagavan and write out a copy for himself. Seeing him doing this writing with earnestness (*sraddha*), though with a certain amount of difficulty and strain (due obviously to his not having been accustomed to squatting and doing continuous writing work), Bhagavan told a story of a *sannyasi* and his disciples, to two of the long-standing residents of the ashram and a few of the visitors who were then before Him, to illustrate what is called *sraddha*, *i.e.*, earnestness of purpose.

There was once a *Guru* who had eight disciples. One day he desired them all to make a copy of his teachings from a notebook he had kept. One of them, who had

lived an easy-going life before renouncing the world, could not make a copy for himself. He, therefore, paid a couple of rupees to a fellow disciple and requested him to make a copy for him also. The *Guru* examined the copy books one day and, noticing two books in the same handwriting, asked the disciples for an explanation. Both the writer and the one on whose behalf it was written told the truth about it. The Master commented that, though speaking the truth was an essential quality of a spiritual aspirant, yet that alone would not carry one to one's goal but that *sraddha* (earnestness of purpose) was also necessary and since this had not been exhibited by the disciple who had entrusted his own labour to another he was disqualified from discipleship. Referring to his making payment for the work, the *Guru* sarcastically remarked that "Salvation" costs more than that and he was at liberty to purchase it rather than undergo training under him. So saying he dismissed that disciple.

The tediousness of the process of copying might have deflected the writer from completing the book, but this story gave him not a little impetus to copy it entirely by his own hand and to endeavour strenuously and ceaselessly towards the goal sketched out therein. The story is told here to encourage other aspirants.

(7)

## CONTROL OF MIND

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः

(Mind alone is the cause of man's bondage and freedom)

— *Amritabindu Upanishad*

*D:* I have not yet learnt to control my mind so I intend to seek *ekantavasam* (life in solitude) in North India and want Sri Bhagavan's grace.

*B:* You have come all the way to Tiruvannamalai for *ekantavasam*, and that in the immediate presence and vicinity of Ramana Bhagavan, yet you do not appear to have obtained that mental quiet; you now want to go elsewhere and from there you will desire to go to some other place. At this rate there will be no end to your travels. You do not realize that it is your mind that drives you in this manner. *Control that first and you will be happy wherever you are.* I do not know if you have read Swami Vivekananda's lectures. It is my impression that he has somewhere told the story of a man trying to bury his shadow and finding that over every sod of earth he put in the grave he had dug for it, it only appeared again, so that it could never be buried. Such is the case of a person who tries to bury his thoughts. *One must therefore attempt to get at the very bottom from which thought springs and root out thought, mind and desire.*

*D:* When I spent an hour or two on the hill yonder, I sometimes found even better peace than here, which

suggests that a solitary place is after all more conducive to mind-control.

*B:* True, but if you had stayed there for an hour longer, you would have found that place too not giving you the calm of which you speak. Control the mind and even Hell will be Heaven to you. All other talk of solitude, living in a forest etc., is mere prattle.<sup>1</sup>

*D:* If solitude and abandonment of home were not required, where then was the necessity for Sri Bhagavan to come here in his seventeenth year?

*B:* If the same force that took this (meaning himself) here, should take you also out of your home by all means let it, but there is no use of your deserting your home by an effort of your own. *Your duty lies in practice, continuous practice of Self-enquiry.*

*D:* Is it not necessary to seek the company of the wise (the Saints and Sages)?

*B:* Yes; but the best *sat-sangam* is inhering in your “Self”. It is also the real *guhavasam* (living in the cave). Dwelling in the cave is retiring into your “Self”. Association with the wise will certainly help a great deal.

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<sup>1</sup> *Cf.* Men are continually seeking retreats for themselves, in the country or by the sea, or among the hills. And thou thyself art wont to yearn after the like. Yet all this is the sheerest folly, for it is open to thee every hour to *retire into thyself*. —Marcus Aurellius.

Run hither or thither, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the government of a superior. A fancy for places and changing of residence hath deluded many.

*Imitation of Christ, By Thomas a Kempis*

*D:* I appear to get the same stillness of thought by tracing the root of the *mantra* which I repeat, as I would, if I put the “Who am I?” enquiry. Is there any harm in my continuing the *mantra* in this manner or is it essential I should only use “Who am I?”

*B:* No; you can trace the root of any thought or *mantra* and continue to *do so till you have an answer to your query.*

*D:* What is the effect of *japas* or *mantras*?

*B:* Diversion; the mind is a channel, a swift current of thoughts and a *mantra* is a bund or dam put up in the way of this current to divert the water to where it is needed.

*D:* Some time, after the stillness of thought intervened, I used to hear first some sound resembling that which one would hear if he were in the midst of or near a rolling mill, and then, a little later, a sound like that of a steam-engine whistle. This was only during meditation when I was at home, but here the sound is heard at all times, irrespective of whether I am before you or am walking round the ashram. (*Note:* The present experience is that the sound is like that of a humming bee).

*B:* Ask who hears the sound. Repeat the question now and then.

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## CONTROL OF MIND VERSUS DESTRUCTION OF MIND

*D:* When I am engaged in enquiry as to the source from which the 'I' springs, I arrive at a stage of stillness of mind beyond which I find myself unable to proceed farther. I have no thought of any kind and there is an emptiness, a blankness. A mild light pervades and I feel that it is myself, bodiless. I have neither cognition nor vision of body and form. The experience lasts nearly half an hour and is pleasing. Would I be correct in concluding that all that was necessary to secure eternal happiness (*i.e.*, freedom or salvation or whatever one calls it) was to continue the practice till this experience could be maintained for hours, days and months together?

*B:* This does not mean salvation; such a condition is termed *manolaya* or temporary stillness of thought. *Manolaya* means concentration, temporarily arresting the movement of thoughts; as soon as this concentration ceases, thoughts, old and new, rush in as usual and even though this temporary lulling of mind should last a thousand years it will never lead to total destruction of thought, which is what is called salvation or liberation from birth and death. *The practiser must therefore be ever on the alert and enquire within as to who has this experience*, who realises its pleasantness. Failing this enquiry



he will go into a long trance or deep sleep (*Yoga nidra*). Due to the absence of a proper guide at this stage of spiritual practice many have been deluded and fallen a prey to a false sense of salvation and only a few have, either by the merit of good acts in their previous births, or by extreme grace, been enabled to reach the goal safely.

Sri Bhagavan then told the following story:

A *Yogi* was doing penance (*tapas*) for a number of years on the banks of the Ganges. When he had attained a high degree of concentration, he believed that continuance in that stage for prolonged periods constituted salvation and practised it. One day, before going into deep concentration, he felt thirsty and called to his disciple to bring a little drinking water from the Ganges; but before the disciple arrived with the water, he had gone into *samadhi* and remained in that state for countless years, during which time much water flowed under the bridge. When he woke up from this experience the first thing he asked for was 'water! water!'; but there was neither his disciple nor the Ganges in sight.

The first thing which he asked for was water because, before going into deep concentration, the topmost layer of thought in his mind was water and by concentration, however deep and prolonged it might have been, he had only been able to *temporarily lull his thoughts* and when, therefore, he revoked consciousness this topmost thought flew up with all the speed and force of a flood breaking through the dykes. If this is the case with regard to a

thought which took shape immediately before he sat for meditation, there is no doubt that thoughts which have taken deeper root earlier will still remain unannihilated; if annihilation of thoughts is salvation can he be said to have attained salvation?

*Sadhakas* (seekers) rarely understand the difference between this temporary stilling of the mind (*manolaya*) and permanent destruction of thoughts (*manonasa*). In *manolaya* there is temporary subsidence of thought-waves, and, though this temporary period may even last for a thousand years, thoughts, which are thus temporarily stilled, rise up as soon as the *manolaya* ceases. One must, therefore, watch one's spiritual progress carefully. One must not allow oneself to be overtaken by such spells of stillness of thought: *the moment one experiences this, one must revive consciousness and enquire within as to who it is who experiences this stillness*. While not allowing any thoughts to intrude, he must not, at the same time, be overtaken by this deep sleep (*Yoga nidra*) or Self-hypnotism. Though this is a sign of progress towards the goal, yet it is also *the point where the divergence between the road to salvation and Yoga nidra takes place. The easy way, the direct way, the shortest cut to salvation is the Enquiry method*. By such enquiry, you will drive the thought force deeper till it reaches its source and merges therein. It is then that you will have the response from within and find that you rest there, destroying all thoughts, once and for all.

This temporary stilling of thought comes automatically in the usual course of one's practice and it is a clear sign

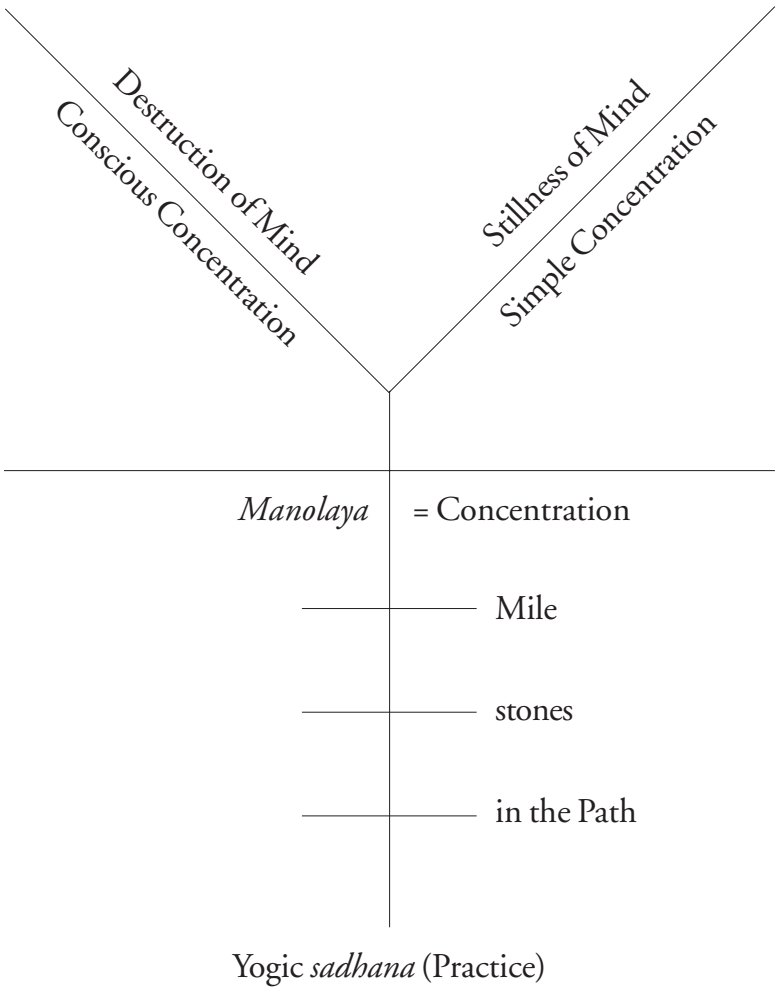
for the final goal of spiritual practice and being thus deceived. It is exactly here that a spiritual guide is necessary and he saves a lot of the spiritual aspirant's time and energy which would otherwise be fruitlessly wasted.

The writer now realized that it was to get this important lesson at the right point of his progress, that he was taken, even unknown to himself and against his will, to Sri Ramana, through the intervention of his superior. He had come exactly to the position where the road bifurcates, one side leading to destruction of thought (salvation) and the other to *Yoga nidra* (prolonged deep sleep). A way-shower or a road signpost was necessary at this stage and the way-shower must necessarily be in the shape of a personal *Guru, a realized soul*, and perhaps by sheer acts of merit in his past birth and no "known special merit" of his own in this birth, he was brought before such a realized soul, in the person of Sri Ramana, to obtain these instructions from him, failing which he would have been probably groping in the same manner as the sage on the banks of the Ganges, in the story narrated above. The following chart will, perhaps, illustrate this:

*Crumbs from His Table*

Salvation (*mukti*)

Deep Sleep (*yoga nidra*)



(9)

## SELF-REALIZATION

*D:* Can I get knowledge of the “Self,” that is can I experience direct realization of the “Self”?

*B:* Why? Who is there without a knowledge of the “Self”? Everyone has experience of the “Self”.

*D:* But I do not realize it.

*B:* The fact is that all the while you know the “Self”. How can the self not know the Self. Only you, the self, have got into the habit of thinking that you are this, you are that and you are the other. It is the wrong notion that produces or constitutes *viparita bhavana* of the Self at present, and that is why you say you do not know the Self. What is to be done is to get rid of that wrong notion of the Self. That then clears up the Self-knowledge or Self-realization.

*D:* How can I get rid of that *viparita bhavana*? Can any ordinary man get rid of it? If so, how?

*B:* Yes. That is possible and is being done. There are many ways — *Bhakti, Jnana, Karma, Yoga*, etc., are being adopted — all for the removal of this *viparita bhavana*. *But the main way is simple.*

*D:* But I am ignorant of the method and of the ‘Self’.

*B:* Who is ignorant of what? *Ask the question and pursue the enquiry as to who it is that is said to be ignorant.* Once you put the question, trying to probe into the ‘I’,

the 'I' disappears. *Then what survives is Self-knowledge or Self-realization.*

D: But how to get at that? Isn't a Guru's help needed? Isn't God's help needed?

B: Why? In practice all this is adopted. But on ultimate enquiry, *i.e.*, after reaching the goal, the method and means adopted are found to be themselves the goal. *The Guru turns out ultimately to be God and God turns out to be your own real "Self".*

D: But isn't the Guru's grace or God's grace necessary for one's progress in the *vichara*? (Enquiry).

B: Yes. *But the vichara that you are making is itself the Guru's grace or God's grace.*

D: I request you to bless me with your Grace.

The Maharshi remains silent for a while, showing that his very silent presence, in perpetual (*i.e.*, *sahaja*) *Samadhi*, is an ever present help, which it is for the thirsty questioner to quaff and quench his spiritual thirst with. Then he said:

B: Go on with your enquiry.

D: How? I don't know how to proceed.

B: Who doesn't know? You say 'I' and yet you say you don't know 'I'. Can anyone be ignorant of himself? Isn't that ludicrously impossible? If there were something else to be attained or known, then you might feel difficulty in attaining or knowing it. But in the case of the ever present, inescapable 'I', how can you be ignorant? You have constantly to fight out and get rid of your false notion of 'I'. Do that.

D: In doing so isn't a Guru's help necessary and useful?

*B:* Yes, to start you on the inquiry. *But you must yourself pursue your enquiry.*

*D:* To what extent can I rely on the Guru's Grace, in this? Up to what point is the enquiry itself to be carried on?

*B:* You must carry on this demolition of wrong idea by enquiry, till your last wrong notion is demolished — till the Self is realized.

*D:* How can I help others?

*B:* Who is there for you to help? Who is the 'I' that is to help others? First clear up that point and then everything will settle itself.

*D:* As for *Ishwara's* (God's) help in my effort, isn't that to be secured by prayer, worship, etc.? Won't that be helpful?

*B:* *Ishwara's* (God's) grace and worship for it etc., *are all intermediate steps adopted and necessary to be adopted so long as the goal is not reached.* When it is reached, God is the self.

*D:* What particular steps will be helpful?

*B:* That depends on the circumstances in each case.

*D:* Which path is best suited to me? Won't all help be provided by God?

*B:* *Bhakti, Karma, Jnana and Yoga, all these paths are one. You cannot love God without knowing Him nor know Him without loving Him. Love manifests itself in everything you do and that is Karma.* The development of mental perception (*Yoga*) is the necessary preliminary before you can know or love God in the proper way.

*D:* Can I go on thinking "I am God"? Is that right practice?

*B:* Why think that? In fact you are God. But who goes on thinking or saying “I am a man”, “I am a man”? If any contrary thought, for instance, that one was a beast had to be put down, then of course you might say “I am a man”. To the extent of crushing down the wrong notion that one is this or that, according to one’s erroneous fancies, to that extent the idea that he is not these but God or Self, *may be indulged in, as a matter of practice* but when practice is over, the result is not any thought at all (such as ‘I am God’) but mere Self-realization. That is beyond conceptual thought.

*D:* Doesn’t that all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God provide all that is needed for a man’s realization?

The enquirer’s inner thought was — “Should we always depend upon the whims and fancies of a Guru, however great he may be? If so, where is freedom of the Self and Self-reliance”.

Quick and straight as an arrow came the answer from Him as if He understood the enquirer’s inner trouble better than himself.

*B:* Do not think that this body is the Guru (pointing to his body).

*D:* I fear that Self-realization is no easy thing to reach.

*B:* Why stultify yourself by anticipating failure in your course. Push on. There you are. Self-realization will come to an earnest seeker in a trice.

## STORY OF JANAKA

In illustration of this, Sri Bhagavan once told the following story:



King Janaka was listening to a philosophical treatise by the State Pandit, wherein a passage occurred to the effect that a rider who had placed one foot upon the stirrup, contemplating realization, could realize himself before he lifted the other foot on to the other stirrup *i.e.*, that realization, when it does come, would be so sudden and quick. He stopped the Pandit from proceeding further, and desired him to experimentally prove that statement. The Pandit admitted that he was only a theoretician and was unable to impart practical wisdom. Janaka suggested that the text was either false or exaggerated, but the Pandit would not admit this.

Though he was himself not able to impart practical wisdom he stated that the text could not be false or exaggerated, as they were the words of the wise sages of the past. Janaka was annoyed with the Pandit and in a fit of rage condemned him to prison. He inflicted similar punishment on every Pandit who passed for a wise man and was unable to prove the scriptural text.

For fear of being imprisoned, some of the Pandits left the country in voluntary exile, and while two or three of them were fleeing through a thick forest, a sage with eight deformities (called Ashtavakra because of this — *Ashta* = eight and *Vakra* = bends) happened to meet them and, having learnt their plight, he offered to explain the text to the King and get the imprisoned Pandits released. Impressed by his bold assurance, they took him before the King. At the sight of the sage, the King stood up and saluted him with great reverence. Ashtavakra commanded him to release all the Pandits. Janaka thought such an

imperative suggestion could only emanate from one who had the capacity to set his doubts at rest and released them all.

The King and Ashtavakra then adjourned to a forest nearby. Janaka, then putting one step on the stirrup of a horse, asked Ashtavakra to prove the scriptural text. The sage asked him whether the position in which they stood to one another indicated the relationship of master and disciple. Janaka readily understood the meaning of this query, got down from the horse and, bowing before Ashtavakra, prayed to be taught.

Ashtavakra then told him that a disciple should surrender himself, *his possessions and all to his Master*, before being taught *Brahma Jnana*. *Janaka surrendered all*. Then Ashtavakra said: "All right!" Janaka became dazed and stood like a statue. Ashtavakra disappeared from the scene. Time passed by, and the citizens who were awaiting the return of Janaka, finding no sign of his approach, grew anxious and began to search for him. They came to where Janaka was still standing, and were surprised and dismayed to find him unaware of their presence and indifferent to their earnest enquiries. They looked out for Ashtavakra who, they thought, must be a charlatan who had worked some spell upon their King, and vowed vengeance on him. But as they were concerned with the King's condition and wanted to minister to him, they brought him to the city on a palanquin. The King, however, continued in the same condition.

The ministers entreated Ashtavakra to remove the alleged spell on the King and bring him back to his normal

condition; at the same time the ministers charged him with the responsibility for having wrought the spell. Ashtavakra treated their ignorant remarks with contempt and called upon Janaka who immediately saluted him and responded to his call. The ministers were surprised. Ashtavakra told the King that he was being maliciously accused by the people of having brought him to some sad plight and asked him to resume his normal functions, adding that *Brahma Jnana could be taught to competent persons only* and as he had successfully come out of the test, he would impart it to him. So saying he composed the Ashtavakra Gita, the main theme of which is: “*Brahman is not anything new or apart from one and no particular time or place is needed to realize Brahman,*” and concluded by saying “*Tat Twam Asi*” meaning “That Thou Art.” *That* is the Self, eternal and infinite.

The next morning the ministers saw the King call the assembly and perform his functions as usual. In the assembled court Ashtavakra asked the King if his former doubt cleared, as to whether *Brahma Jnana* could be had as suddenly and as quickly as mentioned in the scriptures, and if so to bring the horse and demonstrate the truth of it.

The King was all humility now and said: “Lord! Because of my immaturity, I doubted the correctness of the scriptural text. I now realize that every letter of it is true.”

The ministers thanked the sage.

OM! OM!! OM!!!

(10)

## OBSTACLES AND HATHA YOGA

*D:* People practising meditation etc., are said to get new diseases; at any rate, I feel some pain in the back and front of the chest. This is stated to be a test by God. Will Bhagavan explain this and say if it is true?

*B:* There is no Bhagavan outside you and no test is therefore instituted. What you believe to be a test or a new disease resulting from spiritual practices is really the strain that is now brought to play upon your nerves and the five senses. The mind which was hitherto operating through the *nadis* to sense external objects and thus maintaining a link between itself and the organs of perception is now required to withdraw from the link and this action of withdrawal naturally causes a strain, a sprain or a snap attendant with pain, which people term disease and perhaps tests by God. All these would go, if you would but continue your meditation bestowing your thought solely on understanding your Self or on Self-realization. *There is no greater remedy than this continuous yoga or union with God or Atman.* There cannot but be pain as a result of your discarding your long acquired *vasanas*.

*D:* *Hatha Yogic* practices are said to banish diseases effectively and are therefore advocated as necessary preliminaries to *Jnana Yoga*.

*B:* Let those who advocate them use them. It has not been the experience here. *All diseases would be effectively annihilated by continuous Self-enquiry.*

*D:* What about *pranayama*?

*B:* What about it? While I do not speak about it in terms of the well-known phraseology of *purakam*, *rechakam* and *kumbhakam* and of their *matras* (inhalation, exhalation and retention of breath in units of time) I have said that it can be used. *Mind and life-breath spring from the same source; if you stop the course of one, you have automatically stopped the course of the other.* Control of mind is easier than control of breath. The latter resembles the forcible milking of a cow and the former the cajoling of the cow by a feed of grass and caressing it by gently patting its back.

Sri Bhagavan one day told an anecdote from the life of Prabhulinga while speaking on the subject of *Hatha Yoga*, etc.

Prabhulinga, the founder of the Lingayat sect (now mostly prevalent in Mysore State only), was touring the land for the uplift of the spiritually minded. He met the famous Yogi Gorakhnath in Gokarnam (a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage on the West Coast of India, a few miles south of Goa). The Yogi welcomed him respectfully but was proudly conscious of his own extraordinary powers over the elements. He considered his guest more or less his equal, expressed pleasure at meeting him and on his greeting him asked him who he was.

Prabhulinga replied that he only who had destroyed his ego, root and branch, and realized “himself” could

know who he was and wondered what he could say to a nonentity, a person who clung to his perishable body.

Gorakhnath, who identified his body with his Self, replied: “That person alone who has gained the immortality of the body by the favour of Shiva and consumption of *Gulikas*<sup>1</sup> will never die. Therefore one who has not gained such immortality dies.”

Prabhu observed: You speak as if existence in an imperishable body is your real existence and the death of the body your death. Evidently you appear to think that the body itself is your Self. You can only be matched by the ignorant masses (*i.e.*, you are no better than an ignorant person, though you are a famous *Siddha*, a *yogi*). If the body be yourself, why do you say “my body”? Everyone speaks of his possessions as “my clothes, my gold etc.” Tell me if anyone identifies himself with the clothes, or the gold, etc., and says “I am the clothes, I am the gold, etc.”

Gorakh replied: Men say ‘I think’, ‘I walk’ etc. Please tell me what the ‘I’ signifies in such instances.

Prabhu: ‘I think’ signifies association with the faculty of thinking. Similarly also in other instances, association with the body, the senses and the faculties is meant. If, on the other hand, ‘I’ be identical with them how many *I*s are there? You are mistaking a superimposition for the reality.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gulikas* are some medicinal herbs, supposed to be available on the Sahyadri hills near Gokarnam and which, some people allege, the famous St. Xavier, whose body still remains unperished in Goa, had taken, and the properties of which are supposed to so energise the body as not to let it perish for hundreds of years.

Gorakh asked Prabhu to explain what is meant by saying “I lose my life”. Is there one life to lose another?

Prabhu said: Life-breath is the real meaning of the word ‘life’ whereas the Self is also referred to as ‘life’ figuratively. Why do you seek your own ruin by identifying yourself with the perishable body composed of flesh, blood, bones, fat etc., notwithstanding the scriptural statement that the SELF is EXISTENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND BLISS? One who, disgusted with this body, the thing responsible for the interminable recurrence of births and deaths, is intent upon obtaining freedom, will look at this body with the same disgust as one who has unwittingly trodden on loathsome offal on the path.

While the Wise pray to Shiva to free them from taking a body any more, just as a man would take medicine to rid himself of a malady once and for all, is it not a matter for wonder that you should seek to perpetuate the body by divine favour? Does not this correspond to a sick man taking medicine to perpetuate the malady?

Has even one such glorified body ever been born which has not met with death? There never was a case of a stone thrown up that has not come back to earth. *So also anything having a beginning must also have an end, some time or other.* Only if there was anything that was not born could it remain without death.

You have based the immortality of your body on the use of drugs and divine favour *on no other assumption* than that the days you would *live with this body* are interminable.

This assumption is untenable. Oh! You who are great in penance! Desire at least hereafter to obtain salvation.

Gorakh could not be persuaded and would not budge an inch from his ground; he challenged Prabhu to try cutting his body, handing him a sword, long, bright and sharp. His body could not be cut, nor was Gorakh able to touch an atom of Prabhu when he was, in turn, challenged to injure Prabhu, in spite of Gorakh having been told to call to his aid his own strength and that of his relations.<sup>1</sup> Gorakh, who was surprised at this, acknowledged Prabhu's superiority and begged to be taught *Brahma Vidya*.

Prabhu then expounded to Gorakh *Brahma Vidya* as follows:

“Gorakh, conceive not your body as your ‘Self’. Seek the In-dweller (the cave-dweller) and you will once for all rid yourself of the disease of birth and death. The cave is only your heart, the In-dweller thereof is called God and ‘I am That.’”

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously the strength of the qualities of lust, anger, passion, etc. which alone are born with one.



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## DREAM, SLEEP AND SAMADHI

*D:* How can one control dreams?

*B:* One who can control them during *jagrat* (waking state) can also control them while asleep. Dreams are only impressions which have been received in the waking state and are recalled to mind in the dream state (*i.e.*, semi-sleeping state as distinct from deep sleep — *sushupti*).

Referring to what he saw in dreams, the enquirer remarked, “I could not understand what they were. There were huge figures with monkey faces in my dream.”

*B:* The Self is not limited; it is the mind which produces a form that is limited; that which has got dimensions is the mind and it gives rise to dimensions in others. The real limitation is in the mind. The mind is not different from the Supreme Being. A gold ornament is not gold itself, but is also not different from gold. The mind is a wonderful power, a mysterious power (*shakti*) of the Supreme Being. It is after the rise of the mind that God, world and *jivas* (individuals) appear, whereas in sleep we are not aware of any of these three. That is the mysterious power of God. but although we are not aware of these in sleep, yet we know that we existed in sleep also. On the rising of the mind we awaken from sleep. Consciousness and unconsciousness are with reference to the mind only. In the wakeful state we identify ourselves with the mind. If now we find the real Self behind the mind, then we shall

not have these limitations. In the deep sleep state, what limitations were there?

*D:* None that I am aware of.

*B:* That which says I was not aware then is also the mind. In deep sleep you are one with the real Self. That which appears in the interval also disappears. The Self always remains, whether in sleep, dream or waking state. It is the substratum both of the waking state and the sleep state. The different states of dream, sleep and wakefulness are only for the mind. Trance and unconsciousness also are only for the mind; they do not affect the Self.

*D:* Will the Master say that there is no difference between the poet, the artist, the clerk and the engineer, etc.?

*B:* The difference is only in the mind: according to the predisposition of each, the differences exist. No two individuals are alike, due to *vasanas*. The ignorant mind is like the sensitive plate taking images of things as they appear, whereas the wise man's mind is like a clean mirror.

*D:* Is the Master here?

*B:* Who is the Master? You think there is the Master here. You see the body of the Master, but how does the Master conceive of himself? He is the Self or *Atma*. He sees everybody as himself. Only if there is a world apart from him could he see a world. If the Self is identified with the world then where would be the world? There has been no creation, no destruction, no preservation. That which is, is ever the Self, the *Atma*. These appear according to each one's standpoint, according to the maturity of the mind, and as you progress further and further these doubts will not arise.

That which exists is consciousness. Consciousness and existence are not different. Existence is the same as Consciousness, pure Consciousness, Absolute Consciousness. You say I am conscious of the body and so on, but pure Consciousness is beyond all this. It is Absolute Consciousness. There is no question of transition from unconsciousness to supreme pure Consciousness. Giving up these two, self-consciousness and unconsciousness, you inhere in the natural consciousness, that is pure Consciousness.

*D:* It is stated that the existence of the world is false, an illusion, *Maya*, but we see the world day after day. How can it be false?

*B:* By false it is meant that the conception of the world is a superimposition on reality, as the idea of a snake is superimposed on the reality of a rope, in darkness (in ignorance). That is *Maya*, illusion.

*D:* What is *Maya*? Illusion?

*B:* Seeing ice without seeing that it is water is illusion, *Maya*. Therefore saying things like killing the mind or anything like that also has no meaning, for after all mind also is part and parcel of the Self. Resting in the Self or inhering in the Self is *mukti*, getting rid of *Maya*. *Maya* is not a separate entity. Absence of light is called darkness, so also absence of Knowledge, Illumination etc., is called ignorance, illusion or *Maya*.

*D:* What is *samadhi*?

*B:* When the mind is in communion with the Self in darkness, it is called *nidra* (sleep), *i.e.*, the involution of the mind in ignorance. Involution in a conscious or

wakeful state is called *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is continuous inherence in the Self in a waking state. *Nidra* or sleep is also inherence in the Self but in an unconscious state. In *sahaja samadhi* the communion is continuous.

*D*: What are *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* and *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*?

*B*: The involution of the mind in the Self, but without its destruction, is *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi*. There are four obstacles in this, namely, vacillation of:

- i. mind
- ii. life breath or *prana*,
- iii. body, and
- iv. *drishti*.

In *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* one is not free from *vasanas* and does not, therefore, attain *mukti*. Only after the *samskaras* have been destroyed can one attain salvation.

*D*: When can one practise *sahaja samadhi*?

*B*: Even from the beginning. Even though one practises *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* for years together, if one has not rooted out the *vasanas*, he will not attain salvation.

*D*: People say that even a *Jnani* is not free from the effects of *prarabdha* (the matured past *karma*).

*B*: Yes; he does appear to others as if undergoing the results of his *karma*, eating the same as they do, sleeping and suffering from the ailments of the body. These aftereffects are just like the running of the flywheel by its momentum after the engine has stopped. But the *Jnani* is neither affected by this nor does he think that he is experiencing the pleasures and pains thereof because he has no thought of being the doer.

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## RESIGNATION AND RENUNCIATION

*D:* I have a good mind to resign from service and remain constantly with Sri Bhagavan.

*B:* Bhagavan is always with you, in you, and you are yourself Bhagavan. To realize this it is neither necessary to resign your job nor run away from home. Renunciation does not imply apparent divesting of costumes, family ties, home, etc., but renunciation of desires, affection and attachment. There is no need to resign your job, but resign yourself to Him, the bearer of the burden of all. One who renounces desires, etc., actually merges in the world and expands his love to the whole universe. Expansion of love and affection would be a far better term for a true devotee of God than renunciation, for one who renounces the immediate ties actually extends the bonds of affection and love to a wider world beyond the borders of caste, creed and race. A *sannyasi*, who apparently casts away his clothes and leaves his home does not do so out of aversion to his immediate relations but because of the expansion of his love to others around him. When this expansion comes, one does not feel that one is running away from home, but drops from it like ripe fruit from a tree; till then it would be folly to leave one's home or his job.

*D:* Can everybody see God?

B: Yes.

D: Can I see God?

B: Yes.

D: Who is my guide to see God? Do I not need a guide?

B: Who was your guide to Ramanasramam? With whose guidance do you see the world daily? *God is your own Self beyond body, mind and intellect.* Just as you are able to see the world yourself so also you will be able to see your Self if you *earnestly* strive to do so, your Self alone being your guide in that quest also.

## GOD WITH AND WITHOUT FORM

D: Whenever I worship God with name and form, I feel tempted to ask whether I am not wrong in doing so, as that would be limiting the Limitless, giving form to the Formless. At the same time I feel I am not constant in my adherence to worship of God without form.

B: As long as you respond to a name what objection could there be to your worshipping a God with name or form? Worship God with or without form till you know who you are.

(13)

## SOME SURPRISING INCIDENTS

One day when all the visitors went to the dining hall for the midday meal a Brahmin youth was ejected from there. At the sight of this the writer felt disinclined to sit down for his meal; however he consoled himself and took his food. He was, however, so badly upset by the incident that he did not take any of the *prasadam* (small gifts of eatables frequently distributed at the ashram, after having been presented to Sri Bhagavan and a small quantity thereof accepted by Him) given to him later that day. At about 3 p.m., a monkey came and sat opposite to him in the Hall, and he attempted to give it all the *prasadam* so far collected. Sri Bhagavan, looking at him, remarked that if he fed that one fellow hundreds of other idlers would pour into the ashram and it would be converted from a place of retreat for *sadhakas*, *Jnanis* and *Yogis*, to an idlers' asylum. Anyone connecting such a plain remark as this with the writer's mental attitude cannot but conclude that Bhagavan wanted to convey consolation to his disturbed mind and convince him that He has destined everything for everybody, and it was utterly useless for him to identify himself with such miseries and worry himself in vain over His actions.

2. The writer was about to put a question to Sri Bhagavan and just as he began doing so, Sri Bhagavan answered him

by referring him to page 73, para. 2 of Mr. Brunton's *Secret Path* and remarked that, as stated therein, speech only beclouded argument and disturbed the silent communication of thought.

3. Sri Bhagavan was correcting and aiding some youngsters of not more than ten years of age in memorising His Sanskrit work, *Upadesa Saram*, and the writer was laughing, so to say, up his sleeve, at the futility of coaching these youngsters who could not understand the A-B-C of this highly metaphysical poetry. Without the utterance of a single word, Sri Bhagavan turned to him and remarked that though these children might not understand the meaning of these poems then, yet they would be of immense help to them, and would be recalled with great relief and pleasure, when they came of age and were in difficulties.



(14)

## THE THIRD VISIT

The writer used to have always two conflicting desires, one to visit Sri Bhagavan as frequently as possible, the other to postpone it as long as he could till he felt he had some tangible evidence of progress. In the meanwhile, however, through some agency or other, he was pushed before Him, obviously through His grace. The first time it was through his immediate superior, the second was through the telepathic command, confirmed on the same day by a letter from one of His long-standing disciples, and this time it was again an officer in Government service who suggested that he would feel it a pleasure to visit the ashram in his company, or rather an indirect suggestion to him that he had better place himself before Sri Bhagavan at an early date.

This time he took leave for fifteen days and stayed with Sri Bhagavan. Conscious of his own retrogression and want of steadfastness in his *yama* and *niyama*<sup>1</sup> he did not sit or stand before Sri Bhagavan this time, as continuously as he used to do on former occasions. Sri Bhagavan would however peep into his room in His usual rounds at about 10 a.m. and 3-30 p.m. and make various enquiries. During this time he was living on coffee and rice-cakes in the morning, one or two handfuls of plain cooked vegetables in the afternoon and a cup of milk at night. About ten days after his arrival,

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<sup>1</sup> Moral discipline considered preliminary to spiritual practice.

one fine morning, the writer was accosted by Sri Bhagavan with the following query: “Is coffee and *iddly* all you need in the morning?”, the obvious meaning of this remark being that there was no need for such austerity on the part of His disciples, *i.e.*, for those who had taken to *vichara* (enquiry). For the further enlightenment of aspirants it might be stated here that Sri Bhagavan has often remarked that all that is required is that aspirants should take, *in very moderate quantities*, whatever food comes their way and not stipulate, discriminate or pick and choose in the matter of diet; that, in contrast to the claim of *hatha yogis* that *yoga* practice is necessary to ward off disease from the physical body and make it pure and healthy to help concentration etc. The enquiry method, if followed strictly as directed, *with absolute one-pointedness of mind, is capable of devouring all the germs of disease wherever and whenever they arise*. He would appear also to be of the view that for such an enquirer, *yama* and *niyama* will automatically come, as in His own case. He said that when He was staying in Gurumurtham for 18 months His diet was only one cup of milk-mixture for the whole day. His insistence is on *continuous one-pointed enquiry* and it is also apparent even to a beginner that such an enquiry, like *thailadhara* (unbroken flow of oil), would automatically ensure a steady *asana*, freedom from hunger and thirst and freedom from disease; only a beginner cannot easily obtain this state and has to contend with his vacillating tendencies.

During this visit the writer had another surprise from Sri Bhagavan. A well educated unemployed youth was regularly attending the ashram. He was so steady in his meditative

posture and so continuous for hours together that some, if not all, appeared almost envious of his rapid progress. Perhaps to set our doubts at rest, Sri Bhagavan was heard to remark one day that the boy was not meditating upon God or Self, but praying to Him (Sri Ramana) for His grace to get a job and added that worldly people desirous of obtaining fulfilment of their desires should seek them where they were available and that He could not do anything for his employment. "Do I give jobs to people here? I am a *sannyasi* without any possession or work." The youth who had heard most of the conversation, though he appeared outwardly oblivious to what was going on around him, acknowledged later that what Sri Bhagavan said was absolutely correct.

At the end of his stay, the writer took a trip to Tirupati, Kalahasti, etc. and Sri Bhagavan, who did not appear to look with favour on such tours by one who, for all purposes, appeared to be convinced of the efficacy of the 'Who am I?' enquiry method, and of the secondary value of worship of images, *japas* or *mantras*, etc., dismissed him with a simple "Yes, yes" when he took leave. This unspoken but well understood disapproval and the loftiness of His own teaching haunted the writer's mind all through his tour of the Seven Hills, the Papavinasam Falls, Kalahasti, the Sri Vyasa Ashram, Yerpedu, the Kailasanatha Konai (Waterfalls), the Nagari Buggi Temple and waterfalls, the Tiruttani Temple and so on. Therefore, when on his way home he was again standing before Sri Bhagavan, he was quaking. But fortunately, a smiling countenance and a remark from Sri Bhagavan, that they were just then talking about him and found him in the precincts so soon after the close of the talk, consoled him not a little.

(15)

## CONCLUSION

Before finishing this account of the writer's experiences and recollections of Sri Bhagavan's teachings for his own benefit and that of other aspirants, the writer would like to add one or two cautions against shallow and superficial impressions which some visitors to the ashram carry with them and which act sometimes as great pitfalls in one's spiritual practice.

A Tamil Pandit who was a visitor to the ashram about December, 1936 asked the writer why, with all his talk of Sri Bhagavan's universal love, the writer should choose not to take his food in company with the Maharshi and his other devotees, irrespective of caste, creed or race. The writer reminded him of the story of Sri Shankaracharya and His disciples and added that all the vehicles he sees, whether bullock cart, motor, tram or train, require some form of roadway, but while the bullock cart could pass over any road, mud or sand, if only the scrub was cleared, the motor car would require an up-to-date macadam road, and the railway engine costing over a lakh of rupees and moving at sixty miles an hour, would require not only two well laid rails, but also their fish-bolts tightly screwed, yet an aeroplane does not require a road of any kind; *it knows its path and goal and does not mind how it turns or twists in the air*; so also, as long as one has to move in this

world, one has to be bound by some law, some custom, whether that custom is agreeable or not to one at the particular period and as long as an equitable change cannot be introduced, it appeared to the writer that unless he were to be a party to the creation of chaotic conditions, he had to stick to some forms.

The writer was reminded also of an article that he had read ten years ago in connection with what Mohammed the Prophet is reported to have told his wife soon after he had his illumination (*Vide* page 13, *The World Liberator*, dated June, 1927, edited by George Chainey, 362 Ximeno Ave., Long Beach, California). Mohammed said: "That by the unspeakable special favour of Heaven he had now found it all out, was in doubt and darkness no longer, but saw it all. That all these idols and formulas were nothing, (*but*) miserable bits of wood; that there was one God in and over all, and we must leave all idols and look to Him. That God is great, and that there is nothing else great. He is the Reality. Wooden idols are not real; He is real."

The crown of all philosophies, the *Upanishads*, affirm over and over this one great ideal, the central ideal, and so does Sri Ramana. The writer's only prayer is that the misfortune that befell the idols of this country may not be repeated again by unripe and immature aspirants copying Sri Bhagavan's method of eating, *and not his otherwise continuous tapas for years without any thought of food or drink*. If such distinctions and differences distract our eye from the chief object of worship and adoration,

we should only reflect on what has happened in the past. This question had been openly mooted and with a certain amount of feeling of hatred of the so-called abortive custom the writer has had to quote this here. Sri Bhagavan is comparable to the aeroplane, but persons like the writer are no better than the best of the locomotives, which after all require and have to follow some path laid down for them.

There is also the danger of some aspirants paying no heed to the restraint of *jnanendriyas* and *karmendriyas* and to developing love for all beings, compassion, charity, humility and what not. Though Sri Bhagavan appears not to repeat these things *ad nauseam*, yet if one reads carefully all his short works (as brief as His spoken words are, but full of meaning), it will be apparent that instead of brushing them aside, He has enjoined a life of purity and charity. (*Vide* stanza 5 of the *Arunachala Ashtakam*, etc.) The need for this will also crop up again and again in the life and practice of aspirants, if one really sits down in earnest for the enquiry.

Sri Bhagavan, having become one with the Absolute, His one repeated insistence is to realize the Self. With Him “*To love God is to realize Him*”. Realization is *parabhakti*. Realization that God and Self are one would certainly lead to realization of the universality of the soul and remove all hatred, jealousy, war and what not. But before realizing this and conforming to His greatest teaching, it would be useless, nay injurious, to think and talk about minor details pertaining to the ordinary workaday world. If one misses

the central theme of His teaching, which is the same as any great prophet's teaching but made more plain, brief and straightforward, we miss the unique revelation of the Master, *born anew and enriched by the Universe, Sri Ramana the Great.*

It is obviously with a view to avoid jarring disputes and discussions that He disclaims any name, pronounces no dogmatic theories, calls on no one to worship any of the innumerable Gods of any religion: herein lies the affirmation of his *enriched experience of the Self*. A *sannyasi* came from somewhere near Madurai and asked Sri Bhagavan to put His name in a notebook intended to raise collections for a choultry or something. He asks: "What is my name?"

The Swami states: "Sri Ramana."

Sri Bhagavan: "You say so: *I have no name.*"

Put whatever question you like — just as one friend asked what happens to life after death — and you get a reply, "What happens to whom?" 'Who are you?' and 'Who dies?' 'You never die.'"

The writer was late one day in getting up from bed and missed prostrating before Sri Bhagavan the first thing in the morning. He, however, met Him on his way to the bathing tank and prostrated before Him. Sri Bhagavan asked him, "Why? Why this prostration of one material body before another? Who prostrates? Before whom? There is no Guru, no disciple. Realize who you are." His one attempt would appear to be to always bring home to His questioners, devotees and disciples the central theme of His realization, namely the identity of God and Self.

There are several more anecdotes, of an instructive character which have not been recorded herein for fear of enlarging this volume; and, as Sri Bhagavan is very sparing of his words, it would really be a hard task to collect voluminous material, however long one might attend the ashram and however eager one may be to collect all that falls from His lips; so if any aspirant has been stirred by the few episodes and conversations, which have been recorded here, the writer can only invite him in the words of the author of the *Katha Upanishad* (III: 14) to:

उत्तिष्ठत, जाग्रत, प्राप्यवरान्निबोधत

Awake! Arise! (and) Seek the Great One,  
Sri Ramana, the Great,  
Taste the bread of life at His hands,  
And obtain wisdom.

OM TAT SAT

*Sri Ramanarapanamastu*