

*(Excerpts from)*  
***A Practical Guide***  
*to*  
***KNOW YOURSELF***

Conversations with Sri Ramana Maharshi  
Introduction & Notes by  
A.R. Natarajan<sup>1</sup>

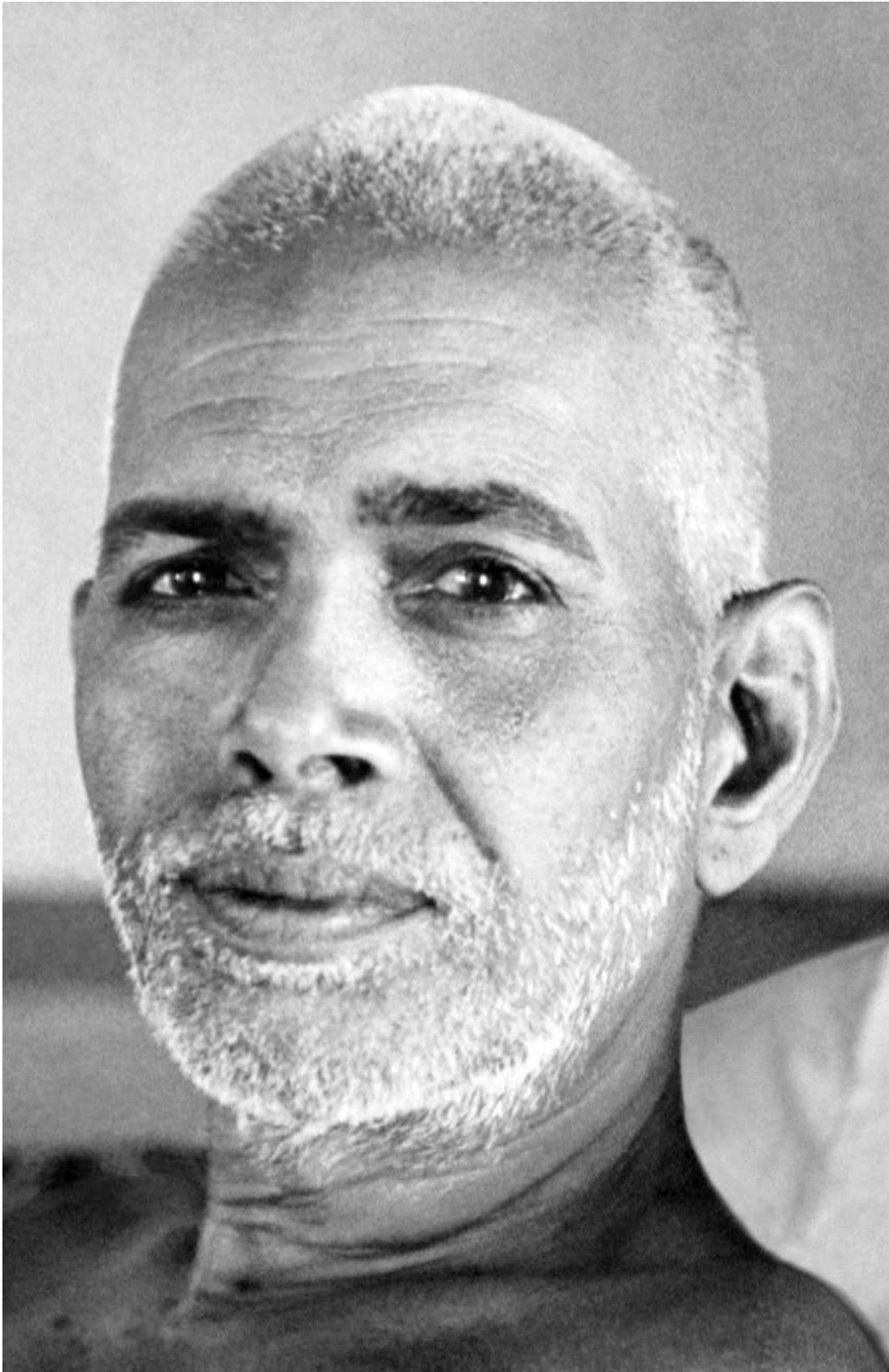
**Table of Contents**

Part 1.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	4
Thoughts.....	4
The thought-free, wholly silent mind.....	5
The art of living in the present.....	5
Investigation of the subject 'I'.....	5
Why is it wrong to identify with the mind?.....	6
The spiritual Heart.....	6
'I' – the first thought.....	7
The basic tools.....	7
Supplementary practices.....	8
The grace of the Sadguru.....	8
Confidence in assured success.....	9
Formal renunciation.....	9
Leaving things to the care of the Sadguru.....	9
Reincarnation.....	9
Destiny & free will.....	10
Miracles.....	10
How did Ramana teach?.....	10
The best gift to the teacher.....	11
The structure of this book.....	11
Of what use is self-enquiry?.....	11
Part 2.....	13
'I-I' - AWARENESS.....	13
Part 3.....	16
PRACTICE.....	16

( Publisher: Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning )  
<http://ramanacentre.com/>

---

1 Founder-President of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.



Sri Ramana Maharshi 1879-1950

## Part 1

Source: <http://ramanaway.org/book>

Submitted by ramanawork2012 on Wed, 2010-12-29 16:06

The sacred words of Ramana Maharshi are original and independent utterances like the Upanishads, based on his direct experience, and their message is for all. There is no doubt concerning the spiritual path which is left unanswered. While Ramana enriched and clarified all that is worthwhile in philosophic thought and practice, he has also given a distinct path, a straight path for Self-knowledge to dawn. The Ramana path is the path of self-enquiry or vichāra. He illumined and made available the science of the Heart.<sup>2</sup> While philosophic thought generally concerns itself with God, Self, the unknown, Ramana focuses attention entirely on the individual.

Though we think we are familiar with 'I', properly directed enquiry would reveal that the assumptions on which we proceed and things we take for granted are not valid. For, one would be examining, frontally, such questions as the nature of the mind, its relationship to the spiritual Heart, the true import of 'I', and whether it is confined to the body which we have taken it to be.

This selection of conversations between Ramana Maharshi and various seekers, their arrangement, and the editorial notes have been made with regard to the reader's need. The purpose is that it may serve as a practical guide to Self-knowledge. Such knowledge opens up for us our own natural, but hidden, happiness.

## INTRODUCTION

### Thoughts

What we know is activity, relationships, attachment to ideas. We feel dull, unwanted and out of place when left alone, when there is nothing to do. Aren't we scared stiff when there are no thoughts? For us thinking is natural. We carry a heavy load of purposeless thoughts, purposeless because they have no essential connection functionally to our daily life. There is also the load of the past with its hurts and failures, its experience brought into the present by thinking about those 'ashes of memory'. Escapist thoughts, wafting one away from the reality of the present, occupy the mental horizon. The mind is so crowded that it is like a village bazaar on the *shandy* day or a small railway platform on a day when trains are running late. There is no elbow room at all. Don't we want to be free from the stifling atmosphere of this mental babble? The answer is 'Yes' and 'No'. 'Yes' for the unwanted thoughts. 'No' for the thoughts we label as pleasant, happy memories, the rosy future. Whether we admit it or not we do not wish to be altogether free of thoughts. If we cannot be rid of unpleasant thoughts we would rather live with them than lose also the thoughts which we like to hug, which we hold dear. The fear of what would happen if we were to be thought-free

---

2 By the term 'Heart' Ramana points at our Be-ness, the Pure Consciousness. See topic below.

is strong and the stark reality of this fear cannot be overstated.

### **The thought-free, wholly silent mind**

It is precisely here that Sadguru<sup>3</sup> Ramana steps in with his direct experience of a state in which the mind is wholly silent; the state in which one is bubbling with joy. Ramana's life itself is the best example of what he is communicating, of what he is teaching. It gives one enough confidence, enough faith to make one give it a chance, to give it a try. The hope that we too may be able to share this beatitude is the starting point of this adventure. It is an adventure for, unless we have the courageous spirit, the determination and strong urge to find out, we can never get out of our old grooves. Nor can we look for a new way of life, a new approach to things which would make each moment beautiful. No radical transformation is possible unless one learns to live in the present, for all experience is in the present. This presupposes an ability to be free of thoughts, a capacity to cut off the mental movements to the past and to the future.

### **The art of living in the present**

We learn the art of living in the present from Ramana. He never tires of affirming that it is possible to do so because our natural state is one of silence. Thoughts are only on the surface when needed but deep down there is the overwhelming silence, the vast space uncluttered by any thought. By definition the natural state is also one's own state. It is not given and therefore one cannot be deprived of it. If so, the question would arise as to what obstructs our awareness of it. It is our ignorance of our true Self. The solution therefore is in Self-knowledge, in finding out the truth about oneself. Knowing oneself is the thing which alone matters. One's knowledge, however vast, is about objects, about the universe. In contrast one is ignorant about the subject, the seer, about the one on whom the whole world of the seen is dependent. Ramana would therefore emphasise the primacy of Self-knowledge as it holds the key to one's happiness. Why? Because it enables the discovery of one's own natural state. One might say that one is presently in the habitual state in which primacy is given to thinking. Happiness is located in objects, and one is afraid to be without activity and thoughts. Consequently restlessness is one's lot. In contrast in the natural state, the mind is totally silent, free of thoughts, but yet supersharp. Thinking and thoughts would be purely functional. There would be no thought hangovers or carry forwards. Happiness would be perceived to be inherent, to be within. As a consequence one would be immersed in peace, a peace which is undisturbed by activity.

### **Investigation of the subject 'I'**

For Self-knowledge one has to begin by enquiring about or paying attention to the subject 'I'. Necessarily it means withdrawing attention from the objects, which are its present focus, and turning it on itself.

Before going into the question of what the shifting of attention from objects to the subject means one needs to examine what we take the subject to be. Then the further

---

3 The 'True Guru', the rare teacher who embodies the Divine Power.

question of the fallacy, if any, in our assumptions has also to be enquired into. We take ourselves to be a particular name and form or we identify ourselves with the mind. One might ask what is wrong about these notions. Let us examine the three states of daily existence, waking, dream and sleep. So far as the waking state is concerned our assumption might appear to be correct. But what about sleep and dream states? As for the dream state though sometimes the identity remains the same as that of the waking state, it could well be and is often different. A rich and powerful king Somadatta may be Ponniah, a beggar in tattered clothes not knowing where his next meal would come from, and so on. The dreamer is not the one who is awake because the identity is different. As for sleep, the 'I' of the waking state is absent. There is no Shankar or Sri Devi to answer since the particular identity is absent. Can we really be that which we are not in two of our daily states of existence, dream and sleep?

The absence of the sense of individuality in sleep would also confirm one's doubt that there is more to us than our assumed individuality. For we cannot be that which comes and goes. There can be no break in consciousness.

The matter could also be looked at from another point of view. The assumption behind the idea that one is the body and or the mind is that both the body and mind are self-conscious. Taking the body first let us look at its state at the time of death. The body might be perfectly healthy, it might be young yet it is called a corpse the moment the life-force leaves it. Ramana would say that were it not so the body would get up while being taken for cremation or burial and protest. Ramana's reflection on this matter began at the age of twelve, when his father died. His father's body was there apparently as if in sleep but there was a difference, making him infer that his father's 'I' had left the body. Reference has already been made to the daily experience of sleep when there is no body consciousness. Ramana would say that the body would then be taken to be dead, but for the divine plan which continues the respiration at a low ebb.

### **Why is it wrong to identify with the mind?**

Where does the mistake lie in our identifying ourselves with the mind? Operationally our sense of existence is related to thoughts. Only thoughts give one the feeling of being alive, of being vital. The mistake here is that if one goes into the question, 'What is the mind?' it would be seen that there is no such independent entity as the mind. Ramana would drive home this point by his remarks like, 'Show me the mind and I will strike it down', 'Ask her if there is such a thing as mind. If so, what is its form? Does it have a moustache and a beard?'. Why are these statements made? It is because that which we call the mind is intangible. It is only the aggregate of thoughts with a central thought 'I am so and so'. At any given time the mind is this core thought and the associated thoughts on which its attention is focused. Thus it would be ever changing. One cannot be that which is intangible and always fleeting.

### **The spiritual Heart**

If one is not the body or the mind what is one's true identity? How is one to find it out? In the Ramana Way the key to everything is to be found in the spiritual Heart which is

different from the physical organ bearing that name. It is at once the seat of consciousness and the source of the mind. It is the primary energy source which utilises the mind and the body. This energy is transmitted through channels called 'nādis' from the Heart to the mind first and from there to the different parts of the body. It alone is self-luminous. The mind and the body only reflect its light of consciousness. "Just as the dynamo supplies the motive power to the whole system of lights, fans, etc., so also this primal force supplies the energy for the beating of the Heart for respiration, etc." More about its importance as a spiritual centre will be mentioned later.

The mind rises from the Heart on waking and subsides into it when sleep overtakes. Since its origin is from the Heart, the mind is naturally pure. It is like a wave in the sea of consciousness. However, when latent tendencies are there the mind cannot rest in its source but must perforce become externalized. This is what happens on waking. Then the pure mind first limits itself by identifying itself with a particular body and name and becomes defiled by its contact with objects. For convenience of understanding one might say that the mind comprises of two parts, the pure, 'I am', which represents its consciousness content, and 'so and so', which is inert and limiting. It is important to emphasise the mind's consciousness content, for it is this which makes it a bridge back to the Heart. Now our attention is almost exclusively on the portion which does not matter, the sense of separate individuality and the other thoughts arising from it. What is needed is to switch this attention on to the 'I am' by an appropriate method.

### **'I' — the first thought**

Another significant aspect of the mind which needs to be taken note of is that though the mind consists of thoughts only the first thought, 'I am so and so', really matters. Without the individual's attention the other thoughts cannot appear on the mental horizon and when such attention is withdrawn they disappear. Also, there is no inter-relationship between the other thoughts, but the thinker, the individual is "equally and essentially connected to all other thoughts". Therefore, when one is tackling the mind, when one is seeking to control the mind, attention has to be paid to this core thought; all other thoughts despite their bewildering variety are merely chaff.

### **The basic tools**

Ramana says that the most efficacious area for the control of the mind is the constant questing of the validity of our assumption about our identity by asking the question 'Who am I?'. Though the form is that of a question no answer, by way of denial 'I am not the body' or affirmation 'I am the Self', should be made. For they are mere concepts within the mind's framework. Provided one lets this doubt take over at all possible times then the true answer would be found from within, from the depth of one's being.

The other tool suggested by Ramana is to ask, 'Whence am I?'. Individuality comes on waking and goes while sleeping. Hence one should enquire about the mind's origin. Such enquiring would make for source-awareness so essential for merging in the Heart.

When one pays attention to the subject 'I' using these twin weapons one acquires the

capacity to be alert against thought intrusion. One notices quickly, if not immediately, the straying of attention away from the thinker. The warding off of thoughts is a preliminary necessity. When it is followed by sustained attention on the 'I', the mind becomes intuned and quiet.

It is important to remember that once the mind is intuned by attention to the subject then one should switch over from the intensive positive attitude, which sustains such attention, to complete passivity. "Being still" is what is needed. Along the way the repeated merging of the mind into the Heart itself acts as a spur for further effort. For "what one has experienced and knows to be the truth can neither be denied nor forgotten". The mind partakes more and more of consciousness till it gradually acquires the capacity to stay steadily at the source. Then the mind becomes silent. Mind as we know it would be dead. The externalizing of the mind and its swinging between action and laziness would end. Instead it would be internalised, pure and uncontaminated by thought. It would then reflect consciousness without distortion. Thoughts will rise when needed and subside. Action would be complete and perfect. It is a state of wakeful sleep for one is free of thoughts as in sleep and alertly active as when awake. When one becomes Self-aware, joy inundates as a ceaseless throb in the Heart.

Many, due to lack of experience of that state, are worried about being free of thoughts. It may be made clear, again, that the functions of mind, memory, reasoning, inference etc. would be very much there and that too with heightened powers, due to absence of distractions. The examples of the liberated ones of the past, who were abiding in that state of silence, should also help in getting rid of this fear. Ramana himself is an example of this, for he did whatever he did with an infectious enthusiasm, from the cutting of vegetables to clarifying the innumerable doubts of the seekers of truth. When one says that the mind would be a void and free it only means that the rubbish heap of purposeless and psychological thoughts would not be there.

### **Supplementary practices**

One has also to consider what would be the supplementary practices to help to quicken the process. Ramana recommends 'watching the breath with the mind'. Such attention if constant has the immediate effect of quietening the mind for both the mind and breath originate from the Heart. As the mind gathers enough strength to stay with the 'I', breath regulation by watching the breath would serve the purpose of a brake for a car or reins for a horse. However, Ramana does not recommend it as an exclusive method, for breath regulation may have the effect of lulling the mind. The danger of the mind being lulled into sleep is quite on the cards for the mind is either active and full of thoughts or asleep when it is without thoughts. However, what is needed is conscious effort to turn the mind within and make it stay inward till it is merged in its source.

### **The grace of the *Sadguru***

Where does grace of the *Sadguru* come in? Is it all a matter of the individual's effort only? Quite certainly 'No'. By Ramana's grace alone one is attracted to the direct path of self-enquiry incessantly stressed by him. In this path there is nothing to occupy the

mind, no rituals, no scope for philosophical dialectics, no unsaid or hidden nuances. It is all an open book. The mind revels in complications. To opt for a way which does not provide for avenues of relish to the mind cannot happen except by his grace. Also, in the inner journey, grace is very much in operation. Effort can be made only upto a point when inwardness is established. Thereafter, it is Ramana's grace which 'swallows one alive' and opens up a new dimension of living. It is Ramana's guidance from within that sustains in many dead-end situations and enables one to overcome listlessness and loss of interest. "Grace is thus the beginning and the end. Introversion is due to grace, perseverance is grace and realisation is grace".

### **Confidence in assured success**

Ramana also would advise that one should proceed with spiritual practice in the confidence of its assured success. "Others have succeeded. Why not you? Why stultify yourself by anticipating failure?". He would say that spiritual unfoldment is only a matter of discovering what is already there, the spiritual Heart and the natural state of silence. Since this state is one's own and not given one is sure to become aware of it when diligent practice and the *Sadguru's* grace interact.

### **Formal renunciation**

Many think that the abandoning of wife and children, giving up of jobs, renouncing of the world and the like are preconditions for attaining the goal. "Where is the time for spiritual practice in the busy work-a-day world? It is a full time task and duties leave no time for it". Ramana would never encourage such false logic for the world is in the mind. What needs to be tackled is the mind which one cannot leave behind. One can always make self-enquiry an undercurrent, sow the seed of doubt about the truth of our assumed identity. It is all a matter of proper use of the meditation time, and of idle-time. Ramana would say that one who wishes to bathe in the sea cannot say he would prefer to wait till the waves subside. Can such a person have a sea bath at all? He has to resolve to bathe in it as it is. He has to learn by himself or by proper instruction to duck under each wave till he acquires the skill to duck at a stretch wave after wave. Then the restless ocean holds no fear for him for he knows how to handle it.

### **Leaving things to the care of the *Sadguru***

This problem of duties and worries of the world can also be handled by learning to leave things to the care of the *Sadguru*. As one progresses in self-enquiry faith in the omniscience and omnipotence of Ramana grows. One begins by giving Ramana a particular power of attorney, when things go out of hand, and then a general power of attorney as the trust becomes complete. But one has to be clear about the implications of 'surrender'. One has to unquestioningly accept the unfolding of events, in the knowledge and certainty that Ramana knows best. Such confidence is never misplaced for he takes over completely the responsibility of guiding one along. The burden is Ramana's and he can well shoulder it.



## Reincarnation

One finds a lot of interest in the question of reincarnation. May be the underlying fact is the fear of reconciling oneself to the idea of the ending of one's existence. Since one identifies oneself with the body, the death of the body is so awesome. What happens at the time of death? The mind gathers the life-force and attaches itself to another body either subtle or gross before leaving the present one.<sup>4</sup> The *karmic* purpose of birth is for the fructification of the desires and attachments remaining in seed form. So long as the mind is not merged steadily in the Heart, birth and rebirth are inevitable. If one wishes to be free from this cycle one has to work for and attain steady Self-awareness. To do so is to find the true purpose of life, which is to enquire into the question 'For whom is the birth?' and find its answer in the freedom from its continuum.

## Destiny & free will

A related question of fate and free-will would also figure quite often in the conversations of seekers with Ramana. Here too Ramana would go into the root of the question, by asking one to find out the one to whom fate and free will relate. Thus one is taken back to the search for true identity. He would also recommend a way out of destiny's barbs and arrows, by suggesting that it can be overcome by surrender to the *guru*. Once one is able to accept the happenings of life as just, even the labelling of events into 'good' and 'bad' stops. Who can know better what is 'good' and what is 'bad' than the *Sadguru* himself? We do not know the total karmic picture while he does. Therefore, our judgement is fallible and short-sighted but his is clear sighted and in our best interest.

## Miracles

Many would be interested in miracles. Should a *jñāni* exercise these powers? Why do some *jñānis* perform miracles while others don't? Ramana classifies miracles into two categories - those which are natural to *jñānis* and those which are the product of the mind, which are performed to dazzle, to obtain name and fame. The second category are the unfortunate ones. Even a magician knows, while performing his tricks, that they are illusions. But a miracle worker, on the other hand, would himself be deluded into believing the reality of the illusion he creates. For, these *siddhis* are not means to Self-knowledge and one would remain ignorant despite possessing these powers. What needs to be remembered is that Self-awareness is the true miracle. As for the natural miracles of *jñānis*, they may or may not display these powers, depending on the divine plan. But it makes no difference. For it is equimindedness which marks out the *jñāni*.

## How did Ramana teach?

What was Ramana's way of communicating his teachings? For many years when he was staying in the caves of Arunachala he would hardly speak. There was no need. In the immensity of the silence in his presence the seekers' doubts would be clarified. Even in

---

4 The *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.4.3: "Just as a leech supported on a straw goes to the end of it, takes hold of another support and contracts itself, so does the self throw this body aside –make it senseless (stops identifying with it)– take hold of another support, and contract itself".

later years the silence was so compelling that there would be the necessary response in the seeker's mind. However, there were always occasions when Ramana would clarify by cryptic and direct answers. But before doing so he would generally give a piercing look of grace which enabled the questioner to grasp the full implication of the message. One could say that even now when he is not in the body, the power of the look has not diminished. One can feel it and benefit from his speaking eyes in his photographs. The light which radiates from those eyes stills the mind and helps in resolving the problems during practice. Ramana would also emphasise the need for remembering the inner presence of the *guru*. From the age of innocence he had himself received the guidance of Arunachala, the sacred hill, regarded as the embodiment of Lord Siva. Likewise, as the inner *guru* Ramana's guidance is open to all who can turn within and be sensitive to his presence.

### **The best gift to the teacher**

As one reaps the benefits, the joy of the path, one often ponders how the enormous debt due to Ramana can be repaid. He is the fullness of consciousness. What can one give him? Ramana himself has been queried on this. In reply he referred to a Tamil Vedantic work, '*Kaivalya Navaneetam*' which says that the best gift of the disciple to the *guru* would be to become Self-aware himself.

### **The structure of this book**

The conversations selected in this book are mostly from the period upto the mid-thirties. For those were the years when greater intimacy and freedom was possible for the seekers. They had Ramana all to themselves. The sole concern of many of them was to find out the truth. What a galaxy of questioners – Ganapati Muni, Kapali Sastri, Daivarata, Humphreys, Narasimha Swami, Paul Brunton, Ramanananda Swarnagiri and Cohen. There is so much to learn from their conversations. Unfortunately, to a large extent, they are like hidden treasures, like scattered pearls. For they are lost sight of in small pamphlets, in little known publications, in stray reminiscences, in books in which they form a small part. These have been strung together in order to harness them for the benefit of earnest seekers.

For the sake of completeness and when needed for the subject a few select conversations of later years recorded by Munagala Venkataramiah, Devaraja Mudaliar, Subbaramayya or in other publications of the Ramanasramam have been added.

At the beginning of each chapter brief notes have been given on the essential points which need to be kept in mind. The arrangement of the contents of each chapter and their order has in view the seeker's need. For the book's purpose is to serve as a practical guide on the path.<sup>5</sup>

---

5 This introduction and the two selections that follow it were uploaded to ramanaway.org, which has now disappeared. They are, in our opinion, an excellent summary of the subject and a recommendation to study the book itself. [vedanta,gr]

**Of what use is self-enquiry?**

One might well ask “Of what use is self-enquiry? What do I lose if I don’t practice it? What do I gain by diligent pursuit of it?” The answer lies in having a good look at our present life. Are we happy? Are we happy all the time or are we tasting continuously the bitter-sweet of life? Is our mind under our control? Can we relax and switch off thoughts? Are we free from their pestering demands? Where is the much yearned for peace of mind? Are we puppets of fate or its masters? Don’t we want to be free from all this endless activity which gives no time even to stop and stare? Each one knows in his heart of hearts the true answer. Hence the search for the way out which the Ramana path offers. For it is practice and experience oriented. As one travels along the way one learns to appreciate its beauty. The goal and methodology are clear. The goal is the discovery of one’s own true identity, to abide in the natural state. The means to reach it too are so explicit. Steadily, the fetters of the mind, the bondage to time is broken. Then we are that dynamic silence, that abundant joy.

A.R. NATARAJAN

Ramana Maharshi  
Shrine Opening Day.  
5th December 1991.

## Part 2

submitted by ramanawork2012 on Thu, 2011-01-06 06:57

### 'I-I' – AWARENESS

For convenience of understanding, what we take ourselves to be, the separate individual with a particular name and form, is termed the 'false - I'. What is false about it is the notion of limitation. In contrast the awareness of fullness of consciousness is termed as 'I-I', which is the real 'I'. Because we are in truth consciousness unbound by thought, unbound by any limitation. Again it is to be emphasised that one is not having two selves, the 'false' and 'real', but these expressions are for communicating the ideas about the need for search and about what happens on discovery of one's real nature. Ramana says that when one's attention is solely on the core of the mind, then the mind turns inward. Thereafter it is pulled within by the current of consciousness in the Heart. One might say that the false 'I' makes way for the real 'I'.

There is no break in the feeling of the real 'I' unlike the false 'I'. The latter is a phenomenon of the waking state only since it is absent in sleep. To indicate continuity and uninterrupted feeling, the expression used by Ramana is 'I-I'.

The spiritual Heart is ever existent. So it is called 'Swaroopa', the natural state. It is one's knowledge of it which is felt as 'I-I' continuously. It is experienced by the pure mind in the Heart. This feeling also exists always but can be felt only in a thought-free pure mind which reflects it.

During practice one has intermittent experience of it. When this experience becomes firm and steady it is termed '*jñāna*'. This Heart-throb is called '*sphurana*' in yogic parlance.



*Devotee*: You speak in very high terms of knowledge; I begin with the body. Is there any difference between the *jñāni* [the awakened one] and the *ajñāni* [the ignorant one] in bodily experience?

*Bhagavan*: There is. How can it be otherwise? I have often declared it.

*D*: Then the *Vedānta Jñāna* as spoken of and discussed is perhaps different from what is practiced and realised. You often say that there is the real meaning of 'I' in the Heart.

*B*: Yes, when you go deeper you lose yourself, as it were, in the abysmal depths, then the Reality which is the *Ātman* that was behind you all the while takes hold of you. It is an incessant flash of I-consciousness, you can be aware of it, feel it, hear it, sense it, so to say; this is what I call '*Aham sphoorti*'.

*D*: You said that the *Ātman* is immutable, self-effulgent, etc. But if you speak at the same time of the incessant flash of I-consciousness, of this '*Aham-sphoorti*', does that not imply movement, which cannot be complete realisation in which there is no movement?

*B:* What do you mean by complete realisation? Does it mean becoming a stone, an inert mass? The ‘*Aham-vritti*’ is different from ‘*Aham-sphoorti*’. The former is the activity of the ego, and is bound to lose itself and make way for the latter which is an eternal expression of the Self. In Vedantic parlance this ‘*Aham-sphoorti*’ is called ‘*Vritti Jñāna*’. Realisation of *Jñāna* is always a *Vritti* [mental wave]. There is a distinction between *Vritti Jñāna* or Realisation and *Swaroopa* the Real. *Swaroopa* is *Jñāna* itself, it is Consciousness. ‘*Swaroopa*’ is ‘*Sat-chit*’ [Be-ness Knowing-ness] which is omnipotent. It is always there self-attained. When you realise it, the realisation is called ‘*Vritti Jñāna*’. It is only with reference to your existence that you talk of realisation, of *Jñāna*. Therefore, when we talk of *Jñāna*, we always mean ‘*Vritti Jñāna*’ and not ‘*Swaroopa Jñāna*’; the ‘*Swaroopa*’ itself is *Jñāna* (Consciousness) always.

*D:* So far I understand. But what about the body? How could I feel this *Vritti Jñāna* in the body?

*B:* You can feel yourself one with the One that exists; the whole body becomes a mere power, a force-current; your life becomes a needle drawn to a huge mass of magnet and as you go deeper and deeper, you become a mere centre and then not even that, for you become mere consciousness, there are no thoughts or cares any longer – they were shattered at the threshold; it is an inundation; you, a mere straw, you are swallowed alive, but it is very delightful, for you become the very thing that swallows you; this is the union of ‘*Jeeva*’ [the individual] with ‘*Brahman*’, the loss of ego in the real Self, the destruction of falsehood, the attainment of Truth.<sup>6</sup>



*Mr.C.:* *Vivekachudamani* speaks of the ‘I’-‘I’ Consciousness as eternally shining in the Heart, but no one is aware of it.

*Bhagavan:* Yes, all men without exception have it, in whatever state they may be –the waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep– and whether they are conscious of it or not.

*C:* In the Talks section of ‘*Sat-Darshana-Bhasya*’, the ‘I’-‘I’ is referred to as the Absolute Consciousness, yet Bhagavan once told me that any realisation before *Sahaja Nirvikalpa* [Natural Thought-freeness] is intellectual.

*B:* Yes, the ‘I’-‘I’ Consciousness is the Absolute. Though it comes before *Sahaja*, there is in it as in *Sahaja* itself the subtle intellect; the difference being that in the latter the sense of forms disappears, which is not the case in the former.<sup>7</sup>



*C:* Does the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ lead to any spot in the body?

*B:* Evidently, self-consciousness is in relation to the individual himself and therefore has to be experienced in his being, with a centre in the body as the centre of experience. It resembles the dynamo of a machine, which gives rise to all sorts of electrical works. Not

6 Sad-Darshana-Bhasya & Talks with Maharshi pp.xx-xxi, Ramanasraman 1953, 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

7 S.S.Cohen, Guru Ramana. p,81.

only does it maintain the life of the body and the activities of all its parts and organs, conscious and unconscious, but also the relation between the physical and the subtler planes on which the individual functions. Also, like the dynamo, it vibrates and can be felt by the calm mind that pays attention to it. It is known to the *yogis* and *sādhakās* by the name of '*sphurana*' which in '*samādhi*' scintillates with consciousness.

*C:* How to reach that Centre, where what you call the Ultimate Consciousness – the 'I'-'I' – arises? Is it by simply thinking 'Who am I'?

*B:* Yes, it will take you there. You must do it with a calm mind – mental calmness is essential.

*C:* How does that consciousness manifest itself when the centre –the Heart– is reached? Will I recognize it?

*B:* Certainly, as pure consciousness, free from all thought. It is pure, unbroken awareness of your Self, rather of Being – there is no mistaking it when pure.

*C:* Is the vibratory movement of the Centre felt simultaneously with the experience of Pure Consciousness, or before, or after it?

*B:* They are both one and the same. But *sphurana* can be felt in a subtle way even when meditation has sufficiently stabilized and deepened, and the Ultimate Consciousness is very near, or during a sudden great fright or shock, when the mind comes to a standstill. It draws attention to itself, so that the meditator's mind, rendered sensitive by calmness, may become aware of it, gravitate towards it, and finally plunge into it, the Self.<sup>8</sup>



---

8 Ibid. pp. 82, 83.

### Part 3

(Submitted by ramanawork2012 on Thu, 2011-01-06 07:15)

#### PRACTICE

Till we become Self-aware, the sense of doership, the feeling that it is one's action, and that the results are dependent on it, is there to a greater or lesser extent. There is no recognition of the truth that the strength for action and responsibility for its success depends on God, on the grace of the *Sadguru*. It is for this reason that one finds Ramana emphasising the need for effort in the field of spiritual practice as well. Ramana does not encourage any lax attitude on the part of the seeker. He has to put in the necessary effort. Then the *guru's* guidance would certainly be there.

Another point which Ramana would make is that since the *guru's* guidance is essentially from within, practice alone would make for the alertness and sensitivity to be aware of the *guru's* help and support. Also "the more one meditates the more easy it becomes to meditate" for it becomes an undercurrent which goes on when one is not meditating but is engaged in some activity.

One has to be watchful against the dampeners of effort. The transformation resulting from steadfast practice may not be tangibly evident. For there are no set milestones on the way. This leads to impatience, listlessness and loss of interest. Hence we find Ramana assuring that God knows his business, which is to ensure the results at the appropriate time. One can proceed with the confidence that his effort is never a waster. If there is 'the steady impulse of determination' everything would come all right in the end.



*Devotee:* My mind keeps wandering. What should I do?

*Bhagavan:* Try to make it stick to a single thought.

*D:* If that be possible what remains to be done?

*B:* As soon as they come some want to be *jñānis*. They ignore the effort involved.<sup>9</sup>



Two ladies from Kumbakonam came. One of them said:

*D:* We want you to initiate us into something which will liberate us quickly.

Bhagavan was silent. After sometime, she said:

*D:* Kindly instruct. We have to catch the train.

She repeated this often. Bhagavan, the compassionate one, took no offence and said (addressing Muruganar):

---

<sup>9</sup> A.R. Natarajan (tr. & ed. Unforgettable Years, 'Rangan', p. 41.

*B:* Please ask them to find out for whom there is ignorance. (He added later) They are in such a hurry to catch the train, which is a must for them. If possible in the time they are here, they want a shortcut to 'moksha'. Is it something to be purchased in a shop?<sup>10</sup>



*D:* Swami, I do not want anything. Just give me liberation.

*B: (Laughing heartily)* Is liberation a commodity for sale? Have I secreted it somewhere? Renouncing everything is liberation. Is there anything separate for me to give?<sup>11</sup>



*D:* What is the best method of meditation? Some say that concentration on the centre of the eyebrows yields results quickly.

*B:* What is important is steadfast resolve. It does not make much difference if you concentrate on the tip of the nose, the centre of the eyebrows and so on. The really important thing is to pay attention to the source of the mantra. The sound emanates from the Heart. Keep your attention fixed on that. Perseverance alone counts. The more you meditate the more easy it becomes to meditate. At last it becomes natural.<sup>12</sup>



*D:* When an endeavour is made to lead the right life and to concentrate thought on our Self, there is often a downfall and break. What is to be done then?

*B:* It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every fall or breakdown. Gradually the obstacles disappear and your current gets stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is the thing required.<sup>13</sup>



*D:* Meditation is possible only with control of mind, which can be achieved only through meditation. Is this not a vicious circle?

*B:* They are interdependent; in fact meditation includes mind control, the subtle watchfulness against intruding thoughts. In the beginning efforts for control are greater than for actual meditation, but in due course, meditation wins and becomes effortless.

*D:* Your Grace is needed for it.

*B:* Practice is necessary, there is Grace.

*D:* In meditation are there words to be repeated mentally?

*B:* What is meditation but mental repetitions of a concept? It is a mental japam, which

---

10 Ibid. 'Santamma'.

11 'Subbalakshmi Amma', p.89.

12 N.N. Rajan, 'Leaves from the Diary', The Ramana Way, Dec. 1990, p. 10.

13 B.V. Narasimha Swami, 'Scenes from Ramana's Life - I', The Mountain Path Jan. 1980, p. 21.



begins with words and ends in the silence of the Self.<sup>14</sup>



Bhagavan told a story of a *sannyāsi* and his disciples to two of the long-standing residents of the *asram* and a few of the visitors who were then before him, to illustrate what is called *sraddhā*, i.e., earnestness of purpose.

*B:* There was once a *Guru* who had eight disciples. One day he required all of them to make a copy of his teachings from a note-book 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, noting 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, '*sraddhā*' (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.<sup>15</sup>



*D:* Bhagavan, I have been coming here for the past several years but still there has been no progress. I am just as bad a sinner as before.

*B:* There are no milestones on this path. How can you be sure how far you have travelled? Why don't you be like the first class passenger? He informs the guard about his destination, closes the door and sleeps soundly. That is all he need do. The guard will wake him up at the correct station.<sup>16</sup>



*D:* My efforts at abiding at the source of the mind have proved futile. Please bless me so that I may succeed.

*B:* What is the obstruction?

*D:* It is my deep rooted tendencies. Your grace is needed.

*B:* Your repeated effort is bound to erase them. Leave God's job to God. You have to do what is in your hands. When the time is ripe God's grace which is always operating would be felt by you also. Grace would work automatically. Keep three things in mind: (1) individual effort, (2) appropriate time and (3) God's grace. There is no need to remind God about his business which is to keep an eye always on our welfare. The

---

14 S.S. Cohen, Guru Ramana, p. 74.

15 Ramananda Swarnagiri, Crumbs from His Table, pp. 21, 22.

16 A.R/ Natarajan, Unforgettable Years, 'Krishna Bhikshu', p. 103.

mistake one is prone to make is to abandon effort under the mistaken impression that God's grace is absent. But one should not slacken, for God's grace is bound to operate at the ripe time.<sup>17</sup>

**End of Excerpts from  
A Practical Guide To  
Know Yourself  
by A.R. Natarajan**

Circulated as a service by:  
John Manetta, Beles 28 (Koukaki)  
117 41 Athens. Greece  
Phone [+30] 210 923 4682  
email: [jmanveda@otenet.gr](mailto:jmanveda@otenet.gr)  
website: <http://www.vedanta.gr>

### **Suggested reading**

( Same also available in Greek – see:  
[http://www.vedanta.gr/?page\\_id=404&lang=el](http://www.vedanta.gr/?page_id=404&lang=el) )

**Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi** – Munagala S. Venkataramiah (Swami Ramanananda Saraswati). This is the classic diary of dialogues with Sri Ramana covering the period 1935 to 1939 which includes among them a number of important answers regarding the essence of Sri Bhagavan's teaching. DOWNLOAD FROM:  
<http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/booksfordownload.html>

**The Path of Sri Ramana Part 1** – by Sri Sadhu Om. The Jnana aspect of the teaching. DOWNLOAD FROM:  
[http://www.happinessofbeing.com/The\\_Path\\_of\\_Sri\\_Ramana\\_Part\\_One.pdf](http://www.happinessofbeing.com/The_Path_of_Sri_Ramana_Part_One.pdf)

**The Path of Sri Ramana Part 2** – by Sri Sadhu Om. An exposition of the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi on God, the World, Bhakti and Karma. DOWNLOAD FROM:  
[http://www.happinessofbeing.com/The\\_Path\\_of\\_Sri\\_Ramana\\_Part\\_Two.pdf](http://www.happinessofbeing.com/The_Path_of_Sri_Ramana_Part_Two.pdf)

---

17 Ibid. 'Sishtla Subbha Rao', p. 122