

SADHANAS
FROM
GURU VACHAKA KOVAI

[Spiritual Instructions of Ramana Maharshi]

SADHANAS FROM GURU VACHAKA KOVAI

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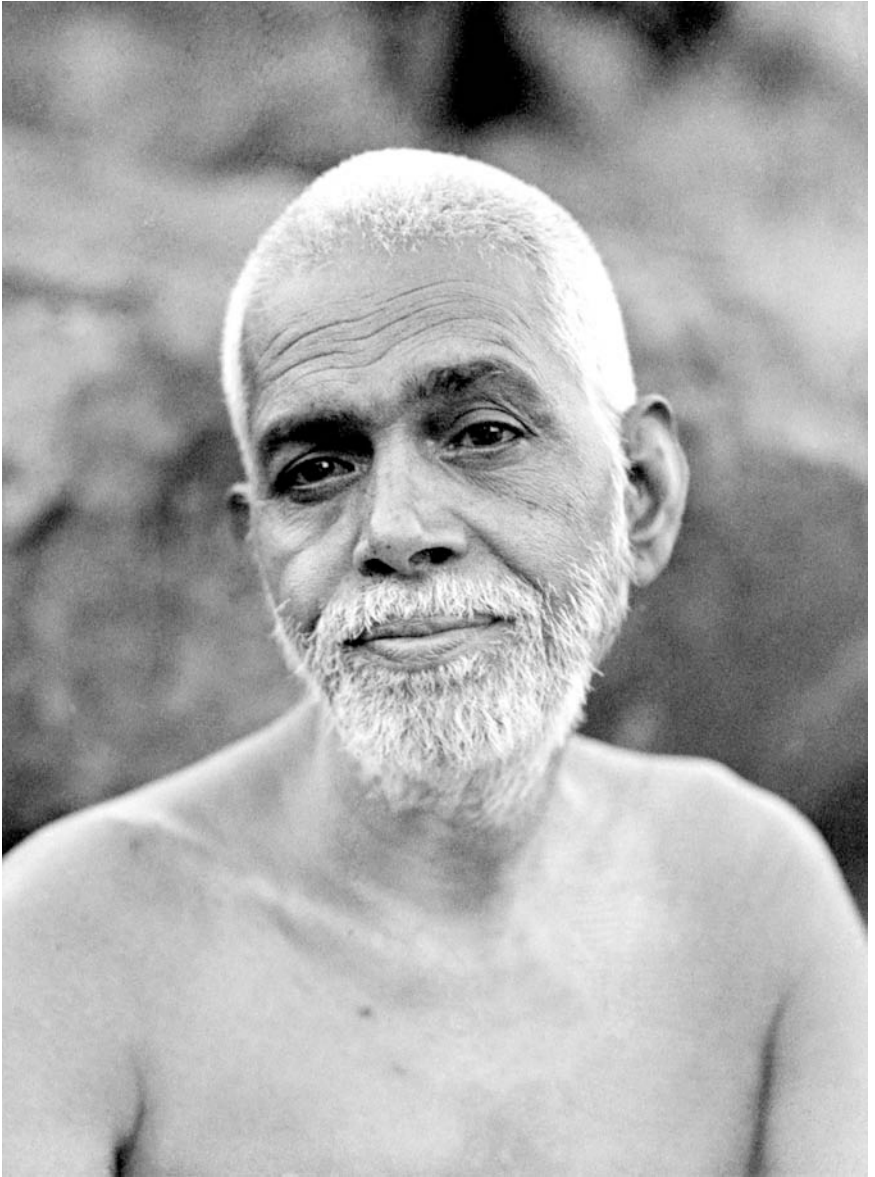
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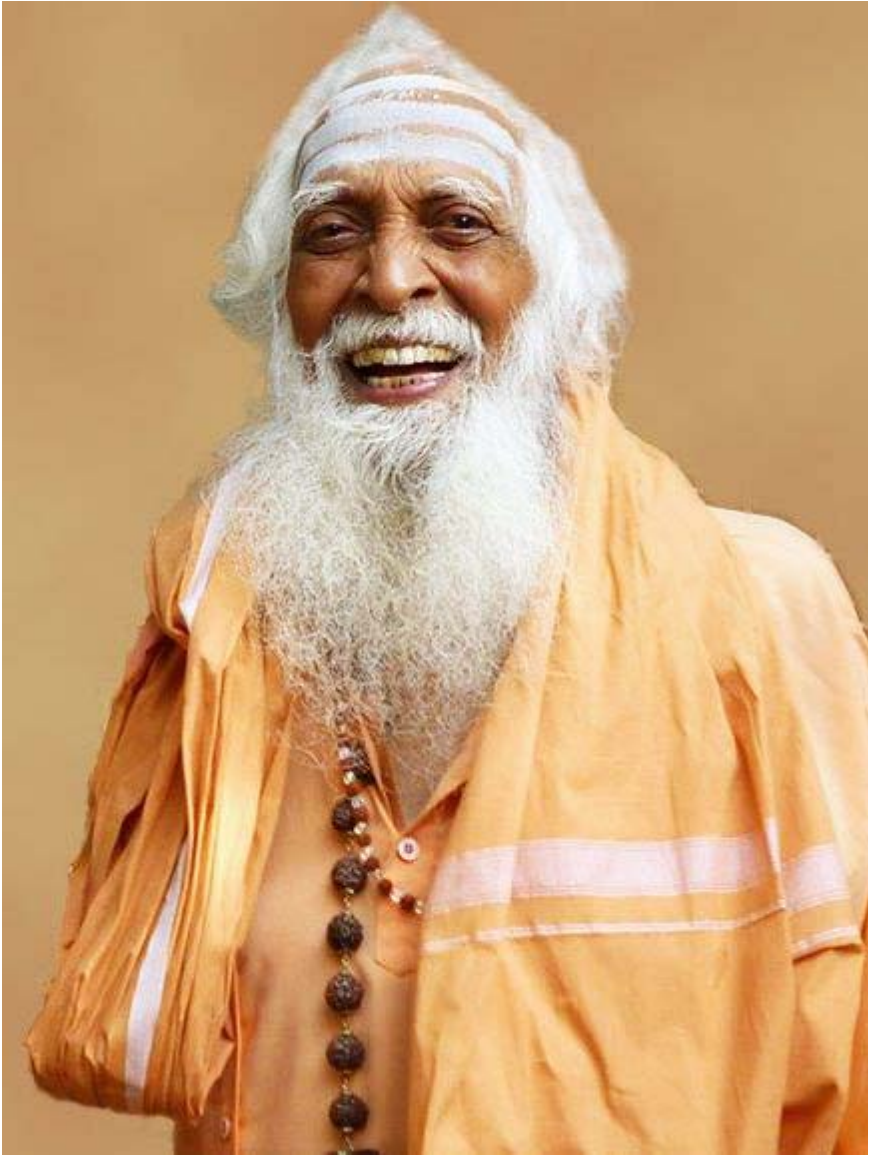
Dedicated at the holy feet of
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi,
the greatest luminary in the firmament
of spirituality in the recent past.

With respectful prostrations

– **Swami Shantananda Puri**



Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi



Sri Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Guru Vachaka Kovai is a Tamil poetical work wherein Muruganar, a close devotee of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi composed 1254 verses. An additional 28 verses were added by Bhagavan not at the end of the poetical work but in between certain verses. This denotes that Bhagavan had gone through the entire poetical work and wherever he felt some clarification or emphasis was needed, he added these verses.

Presumably the word ‘vachakam’ in the title was given by Muruganar in memory of the poetical works called vachakam composed by Manikyā Vachakar, one of the four doyens of saivite poetical devotees. This Guru Vachaka Kovai can be considered as the most comprehensive and authentic collection of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi’s sayings. People have associated Bhagavan’s name only with the Self inquiry as to “Who am ‘I’?”. Actually speaking, this work contains the teachings of Bhagavan regarding ego, vasanas, the truth of heaven and hell, Siva worship, siddhis or mystic powers, detachment, inner purity, Guru’s grace, Guru’s greatness, satsang, i.e. the company of holy men, the greatness of devotees, desirelessness, ending of doership, non action, indirect knowledge, good and bad deeds, illusion of the mind, evil of egotism, secret of karma, japa, bhakti, meditation on form, sadhana, renunciation, grace, cosmic consciousness, the formless, sahaja nishta, sahaja samadhi, mukti, keeping silence, etc.

The teachings are based on Bhagavan's answers to various questions posed by inquirers. The original name of Muruganar was Subramanya Iyer. Out of his love for Tamil, he changed his name to Mugavai K. Muruganar. He first came to Bhagavan in 1923 and the first look of Bhagavan transformed his entire being. The entire book carries the imprimatur of Bhagavan and hence they are highly authentic.

Muruganar stayed for several days on his first visit and during this period he had various experiences or vision and high ecstasy. He was always aware of Ramana Maharshi's supreme grace which transformed him into a divine poet. So many people like Sadhu Om, Michael James, etc. had tried to publish this book *Guru Vachaka Kovai* but only partially succeeded except Sadhu Om.

In compiling this book, I have depended mainly on *Guru Vachaka Kovai* published by Sri Ramanasramam. My humble pranams to Bhagavan Ramana and thanks to Sri Ramanasramam.

As usual with all my publications, D. N. Anand has been of great assistance in finalising it. The contribution of Deepti Ahuja is also substantial and unsurpassable. Owing to various ailments, I could not sit and write. I therefore used to lie down on my bed and dictate to Deepti everyday for an hour or so over the cell phone. She would straight away feed into her laptop all my talk wherever she was - either at Bombay, her headquarter or abroad. She took the dictation and has compiled the whole book.

I bless D. N. Anand and Deepti Ahuja profusely and wish that they make expeditious progress in their journey to liberation.

May peace and prosperity prevail in the whole world.

- **Shantananda**

Chapter 2

The Quest [The Ultimate Sadhana]

For those who have known the ultimate Truth i.e. those who have realised the pure undeluded Self, the entire world is just a mental image, an imagination projected by desire, but those who are ignorant of this take the world as real and enjoy it – it is considered as the Lord's creation. This entire world consists of trivial objects with names and forms which are perceived by the five senses. It is a mere appearance in the Self which is pure awareness. It is an image projected by the mind which is itself a thought arising in the Supreme Self, which is existence and is also aware of its own existence. Those realised souls who know the Self as pure awareness know that nothing else but the Self exists and this world is not real.

The one who does sadhana [spiritual practice], should not assume the world, which is a mere appearance, as real. It is only your own Self which is existence as also awareness that is real and can never cease to exist. One should not pursue appearances deeming them as real. One should always remain in one's true Self as existence-cum-awareness. The world, being false, has to disappear one day. It is only perceived by the illusive mind and not by the mind's source which is the Self. Hence this world can never claim any reality. Fear of this sansara [phenomenal world] is like being frightened by what looked like a snake which was actually only a rope appearing like a snake. The world appears only while awake. In the dream we may see a different world. In sleep, while

all thoughts cease one sees no world. So the world cannot be real. The mind just brings out the world from itself and again the latter disappears into the mind. It is just like a spider bringing out its web from its own mouth and later on withdrawing the web into itself.

When the mind is at rest, abiding within the spiritual heart, the entire mind enters into it and lies buried in it. The universe is split into various objects by giving them names and forms. When this world of names and forms disappears as in sleep, the ultimate reality namely Brahman alone [which is also the Self] abides. As these imagined names and forms conceal the reality, the ignorant man, in his delusion, sees an imaginary world of which he is afraid. The mind conceives one's body as also this impermanent world of names and forms. It makes them seem real and attractive. It promptly entangles one in a strong bondage of desire for these objects. The ever present pure awareness has only true existence while the world perceived by us is an illusion caused by the ego's imagination which results in consequent calamitous desires. This false world which cheats the minds of all has come to be because of our falling down from the Self instead of clinging to it.

Apart from the Self, nothing else exists. After all, all the ornaments made of gold, though they differ in names and forms, are ultimately gold alone. In a similar way, the entire world being an appearance in Self alone, it does not have any independent existence apart from the Self.

In this Chapter as also in the entire text, again and again, the unreality of the world and the reality of the Self alone are repeated in so many ways and directly also. This is only for emphasising the unreality of the world so that the mind may in due course be persuaded to leave the world and cling to the Self alone, which is the only reality. **This is the most important sadhana.**

When one realises and sees the Self, the world is absent and when one considers the world of names and forms as real, the Self which is existence- awareness-bliss remains concealed. It is just like a mason and his son seeing a granite dog in a building. The mason only sees the beauty of the granite and wonders at it while the son sees only the dog which looks real to him and he does not see the granite at all. The one who sees the granite, does not see the dog and the one who sees the dog, does not see the granite. It is the same with this world and the Self.

Maya is the delusive power of the Self and this world is nothing but a play of awareness of the Self through this Maya. A man deluded by the world, is able to get the light through the grace of the Self and then the world also merges into Him as the bright awareness bereft of names and forms. Only those people who have renounced the attractions of the world and all attachments and desires will be able to rejoice in their own Self of existence-cum-awareness and their mind gets released from the power of Maya and becomes pure. They can only understand the relative reality of the world. Those who have eliminated their ignorance and achieved

their goal of being with the one true entity who is existence, awareness and bliss, do not see the world as consisting of various objects with various forms. They consider this entire delusion as the gracious sport of one sole power which is part of that ultimate truth. The perfect jnani whose ego-bound body has been completely dispelled and who shines as that ultimate awareness of his existence views the world as an integral and indivisible part of that awareness.

One has to turn his extroverted mind inward and should drown the entire world in the great void (which is seen in the absence of the world). Thus the mega delusion vanishes. The next step after coming to the great void (maha shunya), is to drown the void also in the deep ocean of Self awareness and thus to destroy it once forever. Thus when one abides in the spiritual heart as simple existence-cum-awareness, which also shines as this world, then, this world becomes one with our Self; its frightening duality having disappeared.

The world does not have any existence apart from the Self which is existence-cum-awareness. It is only the ignorance which makes the body-bound ego see the world of names and forms as separate from it. When the body is false, naturally all the senses are also false. So whatever is perceived by the senses, are also false and not real. It is really pitiable to see the majority of people in their ignorance being tempted by the world and wandering aimlessly refusing to adopt the disciplines prescribed for permanent liberation. It only requires a little labour of love which will be rewarded substantially with plenitude by realising the ultimate reality.

For a tiny grain of pleasure we are prepared to neglect the heart from which all the delusive thoughts have arisen. It is amazing as to how most of the people prefer to play with treacherous thoughts neglecting the substantial reward of remaining rooted in the ultimate bliss of existence-cum-awareness. The real bliss of moksha cannot be experienced unless we refuse to be allured and tempted by the world. To imagine reality into this world of unreality, is a mere folly and it will be like an infatuated lover trying to foist chastity upon a prostitute. To fall and to be entangled in the false attractions of the world is only yielding to the animal weakness for sense pleasures. Those who are firmly entrenched in the Self will never be attracted by the false world. The question arises as to what we gain by giving up the world of immense worldly pleasures and seeking only the Self. The benefit of this final awareness is the descending of absolute peace within the heart and the bliss of one remaining in one's own natural state of existence. The objects of the world give us only momentary joy which is followed by pain or unhappiness.

When once we know our true identity as to who we are and thus abide in the supreme Self alone, we will be able to play our role in the human drama by tasting every pain and pleasure like all other creatures but not a bit being affected by it.

This is the ultimate Sadhana.

Chapter 3

Unreality of the world and the Ultimate Reality

Some people, because of their good karmas in their previous births are fortunate enough not to care for the pleasures of this world or the next. It is only those people who are able to abide in true awareness without any effort. Lord Buddha gave up his wealth, kingship, his beautiful wife and child and the palace the moment he saw how transient the world was. When a person sees as to how false and fleeting are the objects which bestow joy to the senses, he cannot afford to be still worldly-minded.

The appearance of the imaginary objects of the world proves that something is existent and no more. Our senses can only grasp certain dimensions of these objects for which they are equipped. They cannot grasp the real being behind it all and the substance. It is because of the maya [the power of illusion of the Supreme God] the unreal seems to be real and the real seems to be unreal. In the ultimate analysis, awareness alone exists and there is no world. We have to shun these mentally created illusions because of which we are drowned for ever in worldly pleasures. We should also destroy the false ego and the worldly vasanams [desires emanating from latent conditioning] and get them transmuted as the ultimate awareness.

The bondage and the liberation from the bondage resulting in mukti are both illusions. Thinking that there are many individual souls and some of them are bound and some others

are free is not true. One should always question as to who is born and who is bound. So long as there is no 'I' thought, as in deep sleep, there is no question of any 'others' – whether bound or free? The bondage or freedom is only a mental illusion. To illustrate this point there is a story. A shepherd with a herd of twenty sheep, after grazing his sheep in the forest used to bind them in a stake with a long rope which was also tied as a noose around the throats of those sheep, in a big shed in the forest. One day, when he came back at dusk to tie all the sheep so that they may not stray and get eaten away by wild animals at night, he found that one rope was missing and he could tie only nineteen sheep. As his house was fifteen kilometres away, it was not possible for him to go to the house and bring rope. He was in a quandary. At that time, an old man who was passing by understood the situation and advised him to tie the last sheep only by making gestures so that the sheep will imagine that it has been tied. The next morning when the shepherd came back, he untied the nineteen sheep and sent them out. As the last one was not tied at all, he made several attempts to push it out. But the sheep would not budge an inch. The same old man, who advised him the previous night, happened to pass by that way once again and he again advised him, "As you had tied the sheep only by gestures, please go through the imagined gestures of untying it." He did the same and the sheep went out. We are like the twentieth sheep imagining that we are bound and we are liberated subsequently. There was never a bondage and there was never a liberation. We were always free. There has been no creation [as the entire world is a mega illusion] and no dissolution. No one is bound and there is no

one who is a sadhaka striving hard for liberation. There is nobody to attain any mukti. This is the truth supreme. Note: This is called ajata vada [the theory of unborn]. In this very world the final truth has been expressed by Goudapada in his commentary [karika] to Mandukyopanishad, Adi Sankara in Viveka Chudamani and Srimad Bhagavatam in the eleventh Skanda.

Understanding correctly the nature of the Self and renouncing the non-self objects as non-existent and unreal is true wisdom. Any other knowledge is ignorance. The entire phenomenal world is non-Self and is a creation of the mind made up of sense perceptions only. This creates multiplicity while in the Self there is no duality. All these myriad objects in this world are all happenings in a dream drama and none of them is real apart from the seer. One should shun this dream world of names and forms and get rid of the delusion that they are all real. The universe appears to us only when we open our eyes and see. But when we close our eyes, it disappears. So turn away from this universe and search keenly for the Self within. There is no need of fearing future births. All objects disappear as objects and become the seer himself, when the seer ceases to be a perceiver of objects and becomes all. When separate identity vanishes, only the universal being remains.

This world is nothing but a thought of ours. Those liberated souls who live a spontaneous and thought free life, even though they may appear to dwell in a body bound and moved by fate, actually roam in the boundless space of true awareness in absolute freedom. From ancient times, it is

the one Reality that is unborn which appears as the billions seeming to be born in various species like man, bird, animals, etc. It is that one which experiences both good and evil (all created by that one) and then at last wins liberation. Like a man who runs out in the sun, sweats and pants and comes again to the cool shade, the foolish jiva rushes out into the world of enjoyment and growing tired turns within the heart and finally finds rest.

It is told that meditation on one's own Self is also the supreme devotion to the Supreme God, the ultimate reality. This is because even though they are spoken as two different items, both the meditation and the devotion are finally one only in substance. This is because it is the Lord himself who abides as our very Self. The Supreme Lord as true awareness stands alone. As there is nobody beside it, God cannot be known as this or that even for worship purposes. We are never separate from Him. It is the false thought, that we exist separately apart from the Supreme Lord that is the real bondage. One should destroy the thought of separateness as soon as it arises. The Self is the sole reality. The things like the worldly objects which we consider as existing do not exist in reality but that about which we do not know whether it exists or not, that alone exists. The ultimate reality is pure awareness without any objects and itself being the only subject it cannot be an object to be known. [Explanation: When there is an object, there has to be a subject to know. Here is only a thing which sees but there is no object to be seen. It sees others, but there is no object to be seen also. The final awareness alone is the only truth. It alone exists and that is fully aware of itself and there is no other object which can know this. In

other words, awareness which is the subject alone remains (a subject means that which can see the objects) without any other object which can know this subject.] When once one reaches this non-dual state where there is no 'I' or 'he', the ego mind disappears and one emerges as the pure self. This is the ultimate union with Siva, the ultimate reality.

Oh mind, do not be confused by this imaginary conceptual world. Abandon all thoughts of the world's objects, enter within and seek the source in the realm of pure awareness where Self only reigns and makes all the objects of the world shine. It is the perception through the senses which makes us think that the phenomenal world is real and thus the truth is distorted. The senses which perceive and ego the perceiver are all mere appearances and no more. Oh seekers, please tell me how real is the changing world? This appearance and disappearance of the phenomenal universe which look like real changes, are they real or are they mere appearances which come and go? Actually speaking, the Reality is ever changeless. The changes in the form of birth, growth, decay, death, names and forms, are all the creation of our mind. They do not affect the Reality.

The 'I' is false; 'this world' is false; the seeing of 'this world' by 'I' is false. The primal ignorance of maya which creates the triad of the knower, knowledge and known is also false. The sole Reality is the infinite inner space of Self awareness. The final and absolute truth is that there is pure awareness alone which is real. Unless this truth is learnt by the individual jiva, there is no way of getting out of this mega delusion.

Chapter 4

The Ego and Doership

The first impurity or the original sin of Christianity is only ego, i.e. considering the body as ourselves. Karma and maya both alike are the products and colleagues of this ego. Ego is their source and ego grows with them. Hence when the ego dies, karma and maya cannot survive.

Excepting the Self, nothing else exists in truth. Our considering the body as ourselves is a big delusion and as a result of this we are deprived of the solid non-dual bliss of immortality and we get entangled in the cycle of birth and death. It is the false identification with the body which makes one think that one is born and will die. For all the various demoniac qualities, ego is the basis, i.e. the wrong notion that the body is ourselves. This false 'I' is further strengthened by the sense of possession when we say 'my' 'mine'. Then peace can never be experienced. The body is a small part of this entirely false phenomenal world. What we call "birth" is a blunder in our thinking that we are the body. This can be known only when we reach the state of our true being and pure awareness. The liberation, the supreme bliss, the total renunciation, death and immortality and all the highest achievements are all the ending of the false illusion that I am the body.

The ego is restless and moving like a carriage wheel which rises and falls and suffers all the time. The Self is not the ego. It is the true unmoving central axle because of which

the entire carriage wheel of ego works. It is the ego that assumes the form of the world. There is a story of a stranger pretending to be the bridegroom's friend and living in the father-in-law's house. Initially, the bridegroom took it for granted that he was related to the father-in-law while the latter thought that he was the bridegroom's friend. When once an inquiry was started as to who that fellow was, the fellow ran away from the house. In the same way when once we start an inquiry, the ego vanishes. In the magic world created by maya, the false ego arises. Only when this ego dies, the experience of the Supreme Self is born.

As we love the false body of ours which is the source of every dire disease, we try all means for the preservation of the body. It is just like taking medicines to aggravate an ailment.

People are unnecessarily arguing about whether fate is stronger or effort is stronger and which will prevail. This unnecessary battle of words is out of our ignorance of the fact that we are unaware that the world and the ego both arise from the same source and as such the question of which is stronger does not arise. The false ego and its movements appear to do good deeds or bad deeds and suffer many mind-created pains. The basis or the support for all these is one true being which is Awareness.

When our actions in the waking state come to an end and we begin an utterly new life in the dream, it is the mind which assumes as 'I', an unreal body appropriate for the particular

dream. It is the ego which creates two separate worlds in the waking state and the dream state. It has nothing to do with the Self. When we start Self inquiry, the differences between the two worlds, namely the waking state and the dream state are not seen and the real knowledge arises. It is only till the real awareness comes and kills the false ego, that the mind of an individual proclaims its existence. It is just like the proud moon standing in the eastern sky till the sun appears. Whatever actions we do in a dream, have no relevance at all after we wake up. In the same way, all our actions done in the presence of the ego vanish and leave no trace when we wake up in Self awareness.

So long as one retains even a trace of individuality, he is still a seeker and not a realised soul even though his austerities and mystic powers may be wonderful. The one who seeks to attain the Self while at the same time cherishing this perishable body, is like trying to cross a river mistakenly considering a crocodile for a raft. Similarly, the body-based ego which still adheres to asramas [station of life like a bachelor, householder, etc.] or varnas [castes like Brahmin, Sudras, etc.] will not lead us to the desired goal. A person of ego can never become a true ascetic or a realised soul. Nobody can abide in the Supreme state of the Self unless the world which is perceived by the senses and the ego rising with them dies. Attainment of kaivalya or liberation is resurrection after death. When the body-bound ego dies, the true Self shines as the Supreme God. This is resurrection after death.

In order to dispel the ego's delusions and to realise that all actions are done by the Supreme Lord and nothing by us,

it is necessary that our sense of doership be removed. The unbroken and incessant meditation on the Self is the only means to annihilate the ego [responsible for all evils] as also the sense of doership. Only when the restless mind is rid of its illusion and merges in pure awareness then alone the ego subsides.

It is a waste of one's life and time to run in all directions searching for different goals. There can only be one goal, i.e. practising firm abidance at the feet of the Supreme Lord. This is also the eternal silence which alone can still the restlessness of the ego. When the mind is intoxicated with true love for the Supreme Lord [which may be called as Siva or Krishna or any deity], then He is the spiritual heart who kills the ego just like the flame destroys the moth in its flames. To see the presence of Lord Siva in the entire world including the five basic elements, sun, moon and every living being and service to them all is the real Siva worship. When once the imperfect Jiva [individual soul] bows his proud head at the feet of God and acknowledges that God alone is the real doer of all actions, the ego is overcome by the Siva awareness. Lord Siva chose Nandi the bull as his vehicle in order to teach us that we should look at all forms as the forms of God.

The ignorant aspirant imagines that the body is his own Self and so he thinks that he is born and then he dies. When this delusion goes, true immortality is gained. In order to escape the body's death one has to inquire "What is it that dies?" and "Who am 'I'?" This results in the death of the ego and immortality is gained. The false deceptive ego can be exterminated either by constantly inquiring "Who am 'I'?"

or else by constant remembrance of God. When thus the ego is destroyed, one reaches or one remains in the absolute awareness. This body-bound ego can be destroyed only by the Self inquiry “Who am ‘I’?”. It is the search as to “Who this ‘I’ is?” that wins the grace of God, annihilating the ego. It merges in the Being which is both grace and God. When once the ego disappears, no trace of any desire remains. The Self being ourselves which is ever present, it would be wrong to say that one attains the Self through Self inquiry. The Self inquiry removes the false ego.

When I am in sleep, the idea of ‘I’ disappears and I am not there. Thus anyone ceases to exist in sleep. The total absence of the ‘I’ thought is the supreme state of abiding as the Self.

If we love our body and cling to it, we lament when the body dies. Avoid this grief by truly loving your own Self because there can be no pain of separation. The one who grieves for the death of his wife or children, should first start praying to the Lord for the death of the ego. This will be the full and final death.

We water only the root of a tree and not the branches, stem and leaves. The service to the world is also worship of God for purifying the mind, which is a sine qua non for God realisation. Such service to the world helps the seeker by uprooting his ego more than it helps the world. By doing real service to the world, the ego disappears and one gets absorbed in God who is in the form of existence-cum-awareness.

All our eleven organs like the ear, eyes, mind, intellect, etc. will stop their activities permanently only when the ego dies. Hence we should not seek to control these organs one by one but annihilate the ego. When all the inner and outer organs leave all their activities and lie in absolute stillness then only we get the supreme state where the ultimate true entity shines bright. The conquest of the various elements like the earth, air, fire, etc. is only destroying the ego. As the body is made up of five elements, the attachment to this body should be dispelled.

Who is the perfect devotee or Bhakta? It is the courageous person who destroys the false ego by merging the 'I' thought just like a water bubble merging in the ocean.

Even though the only substance by which all the ornaments are made of is only gold, each ornament is given a different name and form like cup, earring, necklace, chain, etc. In the same way, in every kind of dharma we adopt the sole stuff which is self sacrifice. Self sacrifice means the destruction of the idea that "I am the body." Only through death one can attain moksha and not by any other means. Here death means not killing the body but killing the sense of 'I' and 'mine', i.e. the ego.

The ultimate true being has no beginning, no end, no change, no cause, no parallel and no other objects. This cannot be known by the false ego mind. Those who know these facts will be able to attain the highest goal.

The death of the ego occurs through confrontation with the Self. The painful dream of this phenomenal world will never disappear unless the mind is annihilated and all thoughts kept under check. The Lord who has looked after our needs today will surely continue to do it for tomorrow also. Hence, let us place all our burdens at His feet without bothering for tomorrow and live free from all cares. Whatever happens, every moment every thing is done solely by the Lord. Hence, whatever happens which may look to us as a dire calamity even, we should accept all that happens as God's will. So long as we accept that all actions are planned and executed universally by Lord's will, they will not bind you. Karma means the good and bad actions done in the previous birth. The results of reward for the good deeds and punishment for the bad deeds have to be experienced in the next birth. This is called binding of actions. Only those actions bind us when we begin to imagine that we are the doers of the action. There is an example given in the scriptures. Two young men from a village went abroad in search of a job and for earning money. For a number of years there was no information to their parents as to what happened to those friends. After several years a gentleman from the village who went abroad was commissioned by the parents to find out about the welfare of those two boys who had gone earlier abroad. He met one of them named Krishna and learnt that he had amassed a good amount of money and he would be shortly returning to his village to meet his parents. The other boy whose name was Rama had already died. The gentleman who went back with the news to his village was completely confused about the names of the two boys and he told the parents of Krishna

that their son had died long back. The parents of Krishna who was actually alive and shortly to return to his village were completely grief stricken and performed the funeral ceremonies as prescribed in the scriptures. The parents of Rama [who had really died] was informed wrongly that their son was alive and would be shortly returning. His parents began to celebrate the good news in their house and were daily expecting his return. Here the false news gave them an imagined joy while in the case of Krishna the false news left them all grief stricken. Neither the joy nor the grief were true but were products of their imagination. In the same way it is our imagination of the doership of the actions, which were universally planned and executed, which produced imagined calamities or joy.

The ending of doership or the destruction of doership results when we understand that we do not do anything at all and everything is done by the dreamer namely the Ultimate Reality. When we realise this position that we are not the doers, we get ineffable peace. All our calamities, dangers and sufferings, rise only from our ego namely the body sense. We are to be free from all sins of doership by asserting that I am not the body of flesh nor the senses, mind or intellect nor am I the nescience [the total ignorance at the level of the cosmic totality which covers each individual. The ignorance at the individual level is called as ignorance while at the totality level it is known as nescience.] All these objects are unreal and lack existence on their own. They are considered as apart and separated from the ultimate entity which is being and awareness.

The Lord alone who is sitting within the heart, is the real doer of all happenings. We have only to abide in the Self, still and unswerving. Then things will be happening spontaneously by themselves as ordained by the Lord. Those who have got this faith that the one who plants a tree will also water it and look after it will have no care as this is full surrender. Even if the tree dries up, you are not concerned at all. It is all the concern of the Lord, the doer. Further, even to think that we are servants of the Lord is also a blemish when once we have surrendered fully. We have only to remain egoless, silent and still, abiding as pure existence-cum-awareness. In the highest state of self surrender, there is no sadhana to be done as yoga and tapas and there is no question of our trying to become an instrument of the Lord. All these efforts are a blemish in the highest state. As the ego has no existence, it cannot be considered even as an instrument.

When the ego rises, the entire world and all the things rise along with it. If the ego dies, the world and all the things vanish. It is the Lord who sustains the Universe. We wrongly think that we are doing everything. It is like the statue in the temple tower thinking that it is bearing the weight of the entire temple. A traveller going in the train should keep all the luggage in the luggage rack of the train itself. He should not carry it on his head with all difficulty. When ego dies, we get the ultimate bliss. When ego goes, nothing of ours is lost and we need not be afraid. We need not be afraid and doubt as to what will happen if we abandon the individual self. Whosoever lets go the branch of the tree of ego, he is bound to reach the real Self.

When you actually search after what is contained in the ego, it finally means nothing. If at all it has got a meaning, it is like an imaginary snake which we see over the real rope. Until the false phenomenal world disappears, the Self which is a substratum remains invisible. It is just like our not seeing the real rope which is a substratum until our snake illusion goes.

The worship of the formless God is only for that person who has left behind the idea, "I am this form or this body". One who is still identifying himself with his own body and form, may worship only form even though one may think that one is worshipping the formless.

That which is the source of all imagines itself as the Supreme Being. This again is an illusion. [Explanation: A Supreme Being implies that there is multitude of other beings also and it is Supreme. This is not the fact. There is no multiplicity. The Ultimate Truth alone remains]. The source can only be attained after the ego is completely destroyed. When once the ego is utterly destroyed, one beholds the Truth and is able to view all this world as mere appearances. One gets the full conviction that everything is only the Self which is all pure awareness.

When all maya is gone, pure 'I' [the totality] alone shines in the heart of liberated souls. Thereafter, all their actions are bereft of slightest trace of doership. When once the seer is convinced that he is not the doer and everything is done at the universal level, that state is beyond all scriptural injunctions

and compulsions. But certain jnanis seem to perform some acts prescribed in the Vedas scrupulously. This is done only to set an example to other common men and to preserve the rules prescribed in the Vedas. The common people who are beset with the sense of doership may sometimes notice in the sage who is in his natural state, the signs of rajoguna, i.e. action. At that time we should not doubt his state. The false view lies with the beholders.

It is because of the false ego, this evanescent world seems real and permanent. When this ego dies, the Self abides as the substratum for the delusion of this phenomenal universe. The ego makes us think that bliss is found in the pleasing objects of the external world. If the ego dies the Self abides as the sole bliss, the ultimate substratum of every joy wherever found. The Self or Atman is eternal being as Awareness-Bliss. When the stream of thoughts starting with the thought "I am the body" has ceased and the mind is dead, being is experienced as universal awareness cum bliss. When the ego that "I am the body" dies all our troubles caused by illusions vanish once for all. Then the non-dual Self of pure awareness appears as "I,I". In the egoless state where we remain in our true nature of existence, that is in pure awareness, we are freed from the cycle of birth and death. This is the state of moksha known as Brahma Nirvana and Kaivalya.

When once the 'I' is gone, because of the merging of 'I' and 'He' in one, this union of 'I' and 'He' is silent and there is no speech or breath. According to the ancient sages, silent Samadhi, the ultimate goal of jnana, is the wholly egoless

state. Till we attain the silent stillness of being that ultimate Reality, our aim and effort should be to destroy the ego. The silence which follows after the death of the aggressive ego is called mukti. If we slip down from the silence through any negligence it is fall from bhakti. True bhakti means to merge the entire mind in the Self and to remain as Self alone.

The one who has known the truth and stands firmly established in knowledge through which all desires have been killed, such a one is the fire of knowledge, Indra, the God of death Yama himself, God of time, etc. The one who confronts and destroys the ego which is a demon through whose six senses sees and sustains the universe after destroying the demon – his Kumara, the sun God, the bringer of Supreme bliss. [Explanation: The mind is considered as the sixth sense. We have five senses of perception and five senses of action. The five senses of perception are eye, ear, tongue, nose, skin and the sixth sense is the mind. It is through the mind that we understand various things. It is mentioned in the Bhagvad Gita that the mind is the sixth sense].

Chapter 5

Self inquiry and Self

When the Self itself has become the world of numerous names and forms, some people are likely to ask how at all this ignorance arose that the Self itself has been transformed into the world. This is a wrong question. It is only the mind impelled by Maya [a delusive power of the Lord] sees the body and the world. The true Self knows no body. Since the Self of pure awareness cannot be called as the owner of the body or as an indweller; it is only when the 'I' which considers the body as the part of itself, the world of moving and non-moving objects appears even though it is not real. When actually, there is no other object to be seen besides the Self which alone exists, to call the Self as a witness is an error. As far as realised souls [liberated] are concerned, they have no body. Their being is a universal being and the individuality of their bodies has vanished. It is only the ignorant onlookers who are bound, still see their body as real and separate. As all the realised souls are one with the universal total awareness, the body is no more for them. So it is wrong to compare them and declare that one is a realised soul and others are not. As all the great souls [or the holy men who have realised] are the one Self alone, where is the need to go around in eager search of such great souls? In other words, there is no need to go in search of different masters of different competence. Within us [Self] is the body. He who thinks that he is inside the body makes a dire mistake. It is just like a man who mistakes the piece of cloth shown in the picture as the screen on which it is projected. The Supreme

Universal power is called as Self and is abiding in the heart of each being. When once the identification with the body is gone and the awareness of pure being alone remains, this state is of the Self.

Though the reality is one, all religions and philosophy speak of three different things – God, Jiva [individuals with bodies] and the world. This is because the normal minds of people accustomed to see outward cannot straight away understand the unity of the highest reality. The wise people know that there is only one soul and not as many souls as our bodies. In order to address the immature people, they may speak as if the individual souls are many.

There is a method to make the mind turn inward. The mind as at present can only absorb the external things, i.e. the world and its objects. By asking continuously as to “Who am ‘I’?”, the mind will turn inward directing it towards the Self. All our sufferings are due to perceiving the objects and not the subject which is the Self. By starting to look inward we will begin to taste the bliss of non-duality [in other words, the only reality called the Self].

The all pervading, all transcending, subtle, auspicious and eternal, is the Supreme God. When once the wandering mind is cleansed by merging it in its own source namely the Self, this state of pure awareness is called Sivahood also. When the mind ceases from further search as to “Who am ‘I’?”, in that state bliss supreme is experienced in the heart. This heart of bliss is called Siva also. If only the individual soul

merges itself in the Supreme Being's feet, the individual soul becomes Siva, the ultimate truth and the ego dies. Only the grand silence remains.

One should understand that the serene bliss can be found in the Self alone and not in this illusory life. So the life's goal should be to reach this final heaven of grace, the state of silence, also pure awareness [of its own existence]. The one who sees it, is himself destroyed without a trace as he himself merges in the awareness.

What is pure awareness? It is nothing but seeing the world as identical with the seer. When the mind is turned inside towards the heart and one recognises the world as a mere appearance and not as a substantial object it is called detachment. The only entity which remains is pure awareness and all bliss is only awareness. No pleasure can come out from any other place. It is only a mere delusion and imagination of the mind. There cannot be real joy from imagined objects.

Anybody who ignores the heart which is the home of every being but thinks that the 'I' is seated in one of the six centres like muladhara, etc. as elaborated in yoga, merges in that centre for a while but misses the true self knowledge leading to the eternal bliss.

We have two different hearts, one of them is made of flesh and it is physically on the left side of the chest. For spiritual practice, this heart is to be disregarded. The other heart is on the right side and is fit for cherishing spiritual progress.

Actually speaking, this is told for the understanding of people. Actually the heart of consciousness is both within and without. It is not to be thought of as an object in space or confined to the right side of the chest. Infact, later on it is said that the heart is present everywhere and is not either within or without. As we are conscious of the body, the mind is conceiving it as in or out.

The real heart's vast space which is full of love and bliss is the true 'I' or the 'Self'. One can reach the Self only if the mind is dissolved in the Self. We always return to the source from which we have come out, i.e. we are restored to our own true being. Enjoying now the natural bliss we abide unmoving in the heart. When the Self alone remains, it is the true state. This is the state of love because truth is love. All other states such as leading a God-like life in the heaven above are mere illusions.

The only science which is worth our learning is Brahmanvidya. It is a science of knowledge of ourselves and not of this world. The awareness of one's being which alone remains when all the illusions of the world vanish is actually the vidya. The ultimate essence of all the four Vedas when finally churned out of the myriad words of the Vedas, which will remove our ignorance, is the one word of silence emphasising the ultimate identity of the individual soul with the universal truth which may be called as Brahman, the Self or God.

The constant quest of inquiry as to "Who am 'I'?" is the one single idea which runs through many of the religions that

promise immortality. All the various faiths and all doctrines which men have propounded point out to only one goal which is the experience of this existence-cum-awareness. When one abides in pure awareness one sees no more the differences of time, space, seer, seeing and things seen. All rivers flow towards and merge into the infinite ocean. Even so all creeds and religions have one common goal namely, losing the self in the ultimate Sivahood. Hence, in the Self, there is no room for difference between religions. As many minds there are, so many creeds also exist. When the mind turns inward through Self inquiry, no creed survives as it is the state of non difference. The realised ones whose minds are free from all movements are truly happy just like a child holding on to the mother's lap and playing there fed well with the milk of bliss. Whatever creed we may believe in, we must turn inward with full faith instead of being engaged in hating and attacking the faith of others. There is no use of unnecessarily fighting by clinging to one doctrine or other. Instead, we should abide in clear silence inquiring as to "Who am 'I'?" The various disputes and arguments are mere conceits. Just as one string holds together a number of beads, the one Supreme God, ever-changeless, who dwells as the light within every being is the essence of every faith. It is only the differences in our mental maturity which has given birth to different religions. One should always see the essential oneness of the Supreme Entity in all these cherished religions.

The one who seeks the Lord within his own heart and sees him there clearly will always recognise him as the one who

is sporting as various objects of this entire fascinating world. The one who has realised the truth that God shines in all the beings of the world from the meanest to the highest can clearly see the loved presence of the Supreme in all. The person, who sees only with the physical eye, sees God only in beautiful objects. Yogis who practice yoga see Him inside their heart. The priests see Him in the sacred fire. The wise people have a thousand eyes and see the Lord everywhere.

The vision of the Lord which gives you joy destroys the thought that we are all bodies. When we become an eye of Grace, we can remain in pure awareness.

When we continue with the unceasing quest of “Who am ‘I’?”, it penetrates to the centre of ourselves and the ego fades away. The true reality rises as the universal ‘I’ and all diversities end. We have to raise the question “Who the questioner is?”. When all questions which are based on duality dissolve, this question “Who the questioner is?” becomes the grand atomic weapon which destroys the show of separateness from the Self.

One has to abide in calm solitude as existence-cum-awareness. Without doing this, if we search for the truth, it will be like searching with a torch light for a diver in deep waters. Those who do not dive deep into the heart and confront the innermost Self are like the students answering out of books and they are not true seekers of the Self. By constantly inquiring as to our source comes the knowledge which annihilates all illusion. Mere reading of books will

never result in true knowledge. After all, one cannot cook the picture of a vegetable and eat it. One has to get the vegetable directly and eat it.

Forgetfulness of the Self is real death. If we want to overcome the fear of death of the body, we must always remember the Self. For self inquiry, all times and all places are suitable. It is interesting on this occasion to remember an anecdote.

A foreigner who had completed his course in Shantiniketan long back went with his autograph book to Gurdayal Mallick who was second in command to Rabindranath Tagore. He wrote in the autograph book, "Forget yourself". The next day when he approached Rabindranath Tagore for his autograph, the latter looked at the previous page and then wrote, "Remember your Self".

The constant practice of Self inquiry as to "Who am 'I'?" is a real battle between the Gods and the demons. Every time a thought comes, do not allow the thought to be completed but ask yourself, "To whom do all these thoughts occur?" What now rises as 'I' in the body is only the mind. When we go on inquiring where from this 'I' thought has arisen in the body, it merges within the heart. When we go on thinking as to "Who am 'I'?", we are diving deep into the Self. The mind will sink into its source. The thought subsides. If in this way, day after day, we practise, the mind becomes pure and the quest becomes easy.

When a forest fire rages, many creatures are caught in it, struggle for breath and die. Even so, all vasanas rising from the perfect mind die unable to resist the pressure from the quest of the Self. When all our senses are subdued and all thoughts destroyed, we stand firmly rooted in our true being of awareness.

When a suffering person turns inward, inquiring “Who am ‘I’?”, the truth reveals itself, all confusion removed and he would remain in bliss and peace. All the great suffering and the tribulations which an individual soul undergoes is all due to the mind which is ignorant of the Self. Practice unceasingly the inquiry “To whom is this suffering?”. The reply comes, “I”. Again you inquire, “Who am ‘I’?” The source of all thoughts has to be found by keenly searching for “Who am ‘I’?” We will ultimately recognise that there is only one being and we all abide in Him. The present situation has arisen only because we have forgotten our true nature. We see everyday that desires result in increasing sorrows. The wise people renounce all desires, begin direct Self inquiry as to “Who am ‘I’?” and attain the infinite bliss of the Self. We ultimately want to reach perennial bliss which is obtained only when we recognise the Self within us. We can attain this bliss only through the path of Self inquiry by searching as to “Who am ‘I’?”. No other effort such as Karma however strenuously pursued can take us to the source of bliss. When we go on with the self inquiry, as to “Who I am”, the mind disappears and only true awareness remains and that is the stage of Aham Brahmasmi [I am that, i.e. the Supreme

Being]. All delusions spring from the self experience of the seer. When the mind ceases to be bewildered by the objects appearing outside and begins to look inward inquiring “Who am ‘I’?” it rests firmly in its ground which is the Self and which is our true being.

Self inquiry is the worthy pursuit. The immensity and the infinitude of the Self is only worth enjoying. The ego self is only worth giving up, then all sorrow will end. We will all merge back in our own source namely the Self of pure awareness. The only thing worth seeking is the pure existence-cum-awareness. The only thing which is worth continuous contemplation is the Lord’s feet; the only company worth joining in is the company of the holy men and the good. In pure awareness, nobody is bound by the restrictions of caste or family obligations. They are only for the false body and are worthless. All these rules and regulations do not exist for the true Self.

Our incessant Guru is our own Self and he is always teaching the mature disciples by only kindling the unbroken awareness of ‘I’ ‘I’.

In the mahavakyas, the word “thou” stands for the individual soul. We have to make a keen inquiry of this word “thou” which represents the individual soul. As a result of this inquiry alone, one can get liberation from this bondage which has been causing a lot of torture for us. This is the goal called mukti. It is for aiding this inquiry that the word ‘that’ and ‘art’ are added to the word ‘thou’.

One should not waste even a moment in other activities but practise meditation on the Lord. This is also the only way to dispel all desires. We have to contemplate on the Supreme Lord with an intense love and then only all our false desires can be destroyed and the Supreme awareness can rise in the heart. Let us never wait for a good day and for a good hour, etc. for doing our meditation. Any day is auspicious. Every planet and the conjunctions thereof are beneficial. Every hour is appropriate and fine for the worship of the Supreme Lord.

All attachments drag us into the mire of the world of senses and they are false. The mind has to be made still and should meditate on the Supreme and pure awareness out of which the immense bliss arises. It is the mind which creates the samsara [phenomenal world] by the sequence of remembering and forgetting. When once this world of birth and death and our consequent bondage is annihilated by keeping the mind still [without any thoughts], without any moment of remembering and forgetting, it is pure liberation or mukti.

There is no use of inquiring about as to how to measure the pure awareness of our existence shining in the heart. The mind which measures, time, space and things is all part of maya – an appearance without any existence as finally only the Self alone remains in which all things to be measured and measuring are all merged forever. The question of measuring itself does not arise. The question of measuring arises only as long as the ego and mind remain. There is no purpose in wandering endlessly searching for the Self

through strenuous study, listening and learning. Only when we surrender in love to the Lord who is the Supreme love we can reach and hold the Supreme state of Self awareness. One should see love, hear love, reach out and touch love and eat love. Love is the self awareness of itself. In other words, the entire universe is only the Self and has to be enjoyed through all the five senses as love embodied. The world is only the form and substance of love.

The confirmed idea that we are the bodies is ignorance. To understand that the ignorance cannot exist apart from the true awareness which is the Self is the one remedy to cure the ignorance. There is only one whole indivisible space but ignorant people imagine it to be cut up in different ways as the space inside the pots and the space inside the houses¹. It is really astonishing that people consider the one indivisible Self as divided into many individual souls. Identification with the body in waking and dream states raises walls which seem to divide the one all pervasive space into separate compartments. When once a person, through supreme devotion, gains his true being as awareness, he can recognise no other state.

Only where there is an ego, we see several separate objects and we talk of knowing some of them and not knowing some of them. Actually speaking, in the ultimate analysis,

¹There is a Sanskrit sloka which read as,

“Kumbho vinasatu, chiram samavasthitho vā
Kumbham barasya na cha kopi visesha leshah”

This means, “May the pot be destroyed this moment or let the pot remain for a long time to come, say hundred years even. Either way, the pure space which is inside the pot has no concern at all about it.”

where there is only one Self, there is neither knowing nor not knowing of objects as there are no objects at all separate from the Self. To say that we are doing sadhana to know our Self is really foolish because how can there be anybody who does not know himself. To remain as one's own Self is not a Sadhana at all. Knowing oneself and not knowing oneself are both sheer ignorance.

So long as one thinks that he knows some objects, one does not know oneself. When one gets the direct experience of the Self, the thoughts of 'knowing' and 'not knowing' both vanish. One has to be engaged in Self inquiry and finally abide in the Self. Until that time all these mistaken ideas prevail. When the spiritual heart full of awareness is the only reality, it means that the maya which creates the dense darkness [ignorance] is only a lie. Thus, maya being a product of the mind, how can it ever affect the individual at all? It is really strange. It is a foolish person who asks the question as to whether the mind gets purified only when the final truth dawns on him or whether the true knowledge comes because the mind has become pure. There are no two actions but only one. To such foolish persons no answer can be given.

When once we know that a dream is only a thought [imagination], similar is the waking state too. The dream experience looks as real as in the waking state. Only when we awake we realise that it was a dream drama. Similarly we have to wake up from the so called waking state when its reality too will be negated. The dreamer full of ignorance

feels lost and helpless, say, in some desert. He sees and seeks and finds at last his own home town in the dream and wakes up full of happiness. Such awakening is attaining moksha after suffering a lot in samsara. Both bondage and release [mukti] are mere concepts of the mind. When a man forgets the Self and thinks that he is only the body, he goes through innumerable births and deaths. In the end, by the grace of the Lord he remembers his Self and abides in it. This is like awakening from a dream after a lot of wandering.

‘I’ is present in every triad of seer, seen and seeing. But this ‘I’ is the ego and not the Self. The Self is the ground of seeing and all other actions. The reality behind the apparent seer, seen and seeing is the Self which is the basis for all triads. When once the Self alone remains, there is no other object and so the Self cannot be seen as there is nobody else to see it. When one seeks the seer and finds the Self, all these triads namely the seer, seen and sight disappear.

Duality is the source of fear. The ultimate cause of the desires for power and status is also duality. To be firmly established in the non-dual knowledge is the real courage. It is a victory over every foe in this false phenomenal world. When the seeker tries to realise the non-duality of the Self but fails again and again resulting in stopping all his efforts, it is then only that the Self shines in the heart as true awareness. As the Self is non-dual and nothing else remains other than the Self, it is both the goal as also the way. They are identical. It is told in the Bible, “I am the way, I am the destination.” In Hinduism also, in Vishnu Sahasranama one of the names

given to the God is “Margah” [the way]. We know that always God is the destination. Where the path and destination are identical, God is also the way.

It is absolutely wrong to say that certain people practising Self inquiry suffered from mental derangement. It is just like saying that some poor fellow died by drinking the immortal elixir of nectar. The sun’s light reveals one’s shadow but one’s shadow cannot hide the sunlight. When we are able to see the light within the heart, we need not bother about the darkness outside the heart. The various rituals are really helpful and worth observing. But if they obstruct in any way your Self inquiry, drop them all.

Many only read and get by heart the scriptures which declares, “The Self alone is to be known” and study all the commentaries and only very few seek the Self and experience the reality. The learned people who have never turned their minds within have no direct experience of the highest bliss. They feel that the bookish knowledge and the verbal wisdom they have attained is the ultimate knowledge. It is like an innocent girl bride thinking that the betrothal is a full conjugal union and is filled with joy. The real meaning of the teaching, “Know the Self” is only to give up the illusive knowledge of the non-self. There is only one Self which shines brightly in everyone.

So long as one thinks that there is a separate individual, one has to do deeds that are good or bad deeds and experience their results. Karma binds one with a sense of separateness

and doership. The individual souls look as if they are affected by their own past deeds good and bad resulting in pleasure and pain in their subsequent birth. These are all only dreams which arise and subside in the true Self of pure awareness.

Failing to know oneself and to drift from birth to birth is like the tenth man who counted others but forgot himself. This is a story which was often told by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Ten people crossed a river and when one of them counted them all to verify whether all have reached safe, he could only count nine people as he left himself. When he began to wail and weep, some passerby came and showed them all that there were really ten people.

The people see only the mind-projected world in sheer delusion. Taking it as 'real' has resulted because we have slipped down from our real nature of pure awareness. This proves that we are insane. We have to continuously watch our own self undeluded by whatever else may come and go. This forgetting for even one moment one's true nature as pure awareness will bring tremendous loss.

We all earnestly search for the bliss which shines in simple stillness so that we may one day achieve a joy of being the Self which knows no going and returning. Those who have not abided in the Supreme awareness of Being, the state of being only comes and goes. It is remembered while awake and forgotten while asleep. The ultimate Self cannot come and go. It is the permanent being and Self awareness. We are always the Self. Even to go searching for it outside and

trying to reach it as if the Self is something apart from us is really foolish. But as we have forgotten the Self and linked ourselves to the body, it appears that the Self which is 'me' is something far remote from me. So we have to search and abide in it forever without the sense of separateness. Our efforts to attain the Self realisation is like running hard to catch one's own shadow. It is so because one's self is the Self. It is not different from us. Where is the question of catching it?

When I look at an unmarried girl, she glances downward at the ground but when I look elsewhere, she looks at me and shyly smiles. In the same way, when we search for the light of the Self, considering it as an object, it cannot be seen. But when we do not look at it, then it shines.

The perfect sage is one who has realised that the Self is the embodied form of truth. When once we come into constant contact with a holy man who has already become one with the Supreme Being, with his attention always centered in the heart, the Self inquiry dawns and we stand permanently established in the Self as pure awareness and become immortal forever.

The various activities good and bad in the past births have ripened into fate in this birth. One can exercise greater effort at present in this birth and change one's own fate. We need not bother as to what good deeds of past birth bring joy now and what bad deeds bring pain and suffering. All these things can be overcome when the mind is completely dissolved in

that Ultimate true entity which is our own Self. When the mind merges in the Self, there is no more doer and no more enjoyer.

The complete rejection of the thought that “I am the body”, is the exhalation of the pranayama. The Self inquiry as to “Who am ‘I’?” is inhalation of breath. To firmly abide in the final truth is the true pranayama [the breath control]. The various means, namely karma, bhakti, yoga, jnana, are all only to inquire “Who has Karma, who lacks devotion, who is ignorant, etc.” Thus constantly inquiring, the ‘I’ which inquired disappears.

The essential meaning of Karma yoga is to do the inquiry as to who is this ‘I’ the doer who is doing this karma or activity. You will find that this is the doer-ego who is active. One has to destroy this doer-ego which is the source of action. Then only the self knowledge will be revealed. The subtle japa sound is actually you yourself. So by searching for who you are, you find your own true being. This time the japa once practised with effort will proceed automatically uninterrupted in the heart.

We all fail to penetrate the truth that God is awareness, is the temple or support of both the jiva as also the world. We shut up God for solemn worship in a man-made temple. Of what use it will be? We consider Lord Siva, the ultimate formless being of pure awareness as some other poor object of our senses. This is a mistake and this has come up because of our failure to inquire “Who am ‘I’?” and to find the Self.

Lord Siva is nothing but our own Self. We are able to realise Him only when we truly meditate on ourselves² as pure awareness.

Meditation is to get the inner conviction that everyone is only the Supreme Self. Self inquiry is making the mind abide firmly in the Self by automatically ceaselessly thinking of it till the false ego which has created all the illusion is destroyed. When we do continuous meditation where the mind becomes a no mind, in other words thought-free, the whole being abides in the Self; then knowledge dawns and nescience [ignorance] comes to an end.

If only we start a steady Self inquiry without wasting time, our life's purpose will be achieved. The sense of identification with the body vanishes and only the Supreme bliss prevails. There is no other sadhana than Self inquiry for controlling the mind. Any other method adopted may temporarily seem to control the mind but after a while the mind will spring up again.

The main teaching of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is that we are all thinking that we are the body. When once you begin to inquire as to who you are, you come to know that you are not the body. Thus, searching your identity, you should dive into your heart direct and stand established as that being. In philosophy as such and in Bhagavan's teachings, it comes very often that we should go inside and inside and dive into

² There is nobody who does meditation. Just be, that is meditation on ourselves. Meditation means finally there is no separate self. There is only one. What we were seeing was only a delusion.

the heart direct. This has rarely been explained in full. In early days, I used to shut my eyes and try to penetrate the darkness hoping to get deep into the heart. It never happened, it could have never happened. Our mind is always thinking of worldly objects. Leaving of all thoughts of these worldly objects and to ceaselessly think of the supreme entity, the Self inside the spiritual heart [again an imaginary point on the right side of the chest] which is used for facility of concentration is called turning our mind inward. To remain absolutely glued to the thoughts of the Supreme entity alone leaving off all other thoughts can be called as diving into the heart.

Never weep and wail yearning for the Lord, “Oh Lord, when shall I have your vision and gain the bliss of union with my Self.” We should know that the state of true awareness is ever present and it has never been away from you. The Self is not merely here, but, everywhere.

When once the mind is turned inward, abandoning all thoughts of the outside, we are returning to our home of infinite bliss. In other words, we have gone back the way we came. We are always free; perpetual bliss is our very nature. Still the mind wanders far in search of bliss because of our ignorance of who we are. When the mind stops all its movements then it sees itself as ‘Being’. The bliss enjoyed when the Being and awareness are blended together is the same as the Self.

By practise of Self inquiry, we have to dig out and cast away the ego. The Self inquiry is a divine weapon of silence. By

cutting this ego, by the practise of Self inquiry, the perennial fount of bliss is released. At first one has to renounce the sense of possessiveness, i.e. the sense of mine. It is this sense of mine which leads us in the path of greed. When once we renounce possessiveness, it proceeds to Self inquiry and destroys 'I' the ego.

It is foolish fancy to call the Self as a witness. When the Self alone is, the question of any other objects of which Self can be a witness does not arise. The Self being ourselves, is always there in us but we have to go in quest of it to find it. It is just like a princess being unaware of the necklace round her neck imagines that it is lost and after a long search finds that it is around her own neck.

The state of abiding in the Self is a natural state and hence it cannot go and come. That which is now non existent and comes into existence later cannot be the natural state. The Self has got no qualities and being still it does nothing. So awareness is not a quality of the Self nor an action of the Self. The Self is our being [existence] and is awareness. Whether the world perceived by us is real or unreal, we the knower are there as awareness present. Such being as pure awareness is the Self.

The ultimate reality can be attained only when we reach an awareness which has no movement and is incessant and unbroken. Being without a knower to be known is the purest form of the ultimate Lord. With movement comes separateness and individuality. The Ultimate Reality of the

transcendental state is perfect stillness of the mind where there are no thoughts. The entire world and beings are all only thoughts. To call this perfect stillness as the movement of the entirety is like calling a river which is already merged in the ocean as a river.

What is actually the primal ground whose being is mouna [silence] and the bliss supreme declared as the ultimate goal of jnana? When identity with the body is transcended, the Self as being awareness fills the universe everywhere.

Simple knowledge of what occurs in time, i.e. the past, present and the future is only relative knowledge and is not pure awareness. Relative knowledge is a product of the ego, which is a source of primal ignorance. Omniscience is being all things and seeing nothing besides the Self. True Omniscience is pure awareness.

We the ignorant people think that the knowledge of the various objects in front of us constitutes all the knowledge to be known. As we cannot know about everything, we feel that we know so little. When one makes the Self inquiry, when the whole and pure awareness comes, all the little knowledge of the objects disappears and only the pure awareness remains. We are getting various experiences from the various objects of the world like the beauty of an object, the delicious taste of other object, the revulsion from another dirty and ugly object, etc. Actually all these experiences are all but fragments of one Self experience only.

When the Self is realised and the mind is completely annihilated only the pure awareness remains as the Self. This awareness is beyond all thoughts as all the thoughts and their source namely the mind are all dead. To call this state as bliss which is the opposite of pain is wrong and misleading. When we reach this state, as the ultimate reality alone remains, there is nobody to describe that state of non experience.

No special efforts are needed to remove the body consciousness in the dream state. When through the means of Self inquiry body consciousness disappears in the waking state, it will automatically disappear in the dream state also. The unbroken and unceasing practice leads to a state of “deep sleep” in the waking state. Till this non-dual bliss continues to pervade, we have to persist in the Self inquiry.

One should sleep with full awareness of the Self and this is true eternal sleep. This bliss means that this is the Ultimate Reality which one attains by going in search of moksha and in that process, suffering from the various sharp arrows of pain, misery and anguish having been caught in the grand illusion of the world. On realisation, it is only a figurative method of telling that he sleeps with full awareness, full of the ineffable bliss.

We have to turn within and seek the Self in love and then only we will be able to feel the grace of the Self ever shining as ‘I’. We wrongly speak of being, awareness and bliss as three different things. They are all actually one when the Self alone is experienced. The Self being a pure awareness at all

times, it always remains. There can never be a non being for the Self [i.e. it can never cease to be present]. When the conceptual duality is no more and all the relative knowledge vanishes, the Self does not cease to be but is ever present as the pure Self.

Whether true or false, whether knowable or unknowable, whether pleasing or unpleasing, all are Brahman, the only Supreme and real entity [called also as the Self as individuals]. Faith, neglect, thought, thoughtlessness, likes and dislikes, knowledge and ignorance, all are Brahman and nothing else.

The state where nobody else is seen, nobody else is heard, nobody else is known, nobody else is to be known is alone the real cosmic consciousness. The non-dual infinite awareness is where the various objects have vanished and the falsity of seeing, hearing, knowing those objects has been destroyed. It is the purest bliss.

The only state free from all pain and all desires is the pure Self. Hence, when the false notion 'I am the body' dies, what abides is the Self alone which is only worth having. Mere verbal silence undertaken without inquiring "Who am 'I'?" is of no use and it is only a mental trick. The Self awareness rises only when the false sense that "I am the body" ceases.

The individual soul or jiva can never know the Self. When the separate individual self disappears, the Self abides as pure awareness. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi in his teachings

destroyed the distinction between time, place, Guru and disciple, and revealed the pure awareness as a sole reality.

One should know firmly that bliss is the very nature of the Self and all being is only bliss. Knowing this firmly, one should abide in the Self enjoying the Supreme bliss forever. Having found that Self alone is the highest bliss, the wise people abide as Self alone. Other people, who do not know this fact, they stay forever worldly minded. Only those who have experienced the union with the Self can understand its bliss. Those who have this experience know nothing but that and remain still like the honey bees who get lost in stillness having drunk the honey.

The true Self is a light of pure awareness. Then, can we know it as we know an object? When the false ego has disappeared and we abide in peace within, the Self shines by itself spontaneously. The eternal and perfect Self cannot be known as it is non-dual. No other knower apart from the Self exists. So the yoga [reunion] is being and awareness and not knowing something.

The true light of awareness is pure, subtle, egoless, non objective and silent. This tires and baffles the mind till the mind accepts 'I do not know'. This is the Self. [Explanation: The mind makes a big thing I know this; I know that, I know chemistry. But when the Self so far is concerned, the Self is such a thing that the mind is unable to see. The mind cannot see its own basis. The microscope cannot see itself. So finally it has to admit its inability and remain quiet and this

is annihilation of the mind. First the mind starts thinking, then diverting to other thoughts, then goes to dualism and non-dualism and then finally it gets tired and accepts defeat and remains quiet. This is when the Self is revealed].

By worshipping the non-self [the various conceptual Gods], one may gain all sorts of worldly benefits which are unreal. But eternal permanent state of awareness which is all bliss where no more re-birth takes place cannot be given by any lesser God than the Self alone. The various Gods whom we worship appear and disappear by turns. They do not remain eternally. The natural awareness which abides ever unchanging is the real Supreme God. To search for some other truth other than the Supreme one, i.e. the truth of the Self, is foolish and useless like the exploration in the barbers shop of all the hairs-cut and the rubbish lying on the floor without sweeping them away. To those who abide in the Self, loving it completely, bliss comes upsurging in various forms as love, the Supreme God [Siva], grace, awareness, peace or moksha. Bliss is the real nature of the Self.

Only when the Self is gained, a permanent perfect blissful state is attained. When only the Self exists, all desires vanish and no fear can exist. Whether in the park or in the house, this peace inside is one and the same. Like the space, the Self with its awareness is only one but manifests in various forms as God and jiva [individual soul]. It suffers no change in substance.

The various methods propounded by various masters like self inquiry, getting jnana, etc. are all only for the jiva [the individual soul] caught in the mega delusion. On the contrary,

the Self is eternally free and can never be bound nor has it any imperfection. The Self alone fills the entire universe and it can never be bound by the mirage of maya. It is the delusion we feel that we are bound. We should be calm and think clearly. Then we will see the truth. We unnecessarily suffer believing that we are bound by the body. Even during sleep when we are free from thoughts of separateness, our being abides intact and whole.

In my sight I only exist and you do not. In your sight, you only exist and I am not. In the sight of the Self, the Self alone exists and nothing else. I, you and all are nothing but the Self. When one is still without any thoughts including the thought “Whether anything exists or not”, that which is without form or name reveals itself as “I am”.

The only goal worth seeking is the Supreme bliss of Self awareness. Constantly remembering and abiding in the Self represent the fullness of life. Such a life of grace alone is a real life lived in full. This worldly life of false phenomena full of fear is a mega illusion and it is not authentic living. The entire phenomenal world has no reality. It is only an imagination of the mind. It is as false as a reflected image in a mirror. Whether the phenomena in the world appear or wholly disappear, does not matter to self awareness. The true self-luminous light is Being-Awareness which is the source of the mind. When all things have merged in the Self Being, which is the ultimate truth, nothing else abides but the Self.

When one is to get mukti, he has to give up all the three motives of life known as dharma [virtuous acts], artha [wealth] and kama [desires for enjoyment]. One does not

have to pursue thoughts of all other motives except the realisation of the Self and pursue mouna alone. These other values are neither efficient means nor ultimate ends. Only Self inquiry establishes one in peace and bliss and brings all other good things in its wake.

He who sees the many moving pictures in a cinema show fails to see the basic and the unmoving screen on which the pictures are shown. The one who sees the unmoving screen does not see the pictures moving on it. If in a cinema hall there is no screen, there can be no moving picture. But even when there is no moving picture, the screen continues to stand unmoving. Brahman or the ultimate reality is the unmoving screen. That is the real base. God, jiva and world are moving pictures. We should keep in mind that all the objects we perceive are mere appearances. They are all the play of maya, the power of illusion. The Self is the unmoving screen, the ground of being [mere existence]. We think we are the moving pictures and so we suffer. When all these movements of the mind completely cease, we abide in perfect silence. We always say that we are bound. We should enquire, "Who is bound?" and should shake off the thought of being bound. Then naturally, the thought of being released from bondage, i.e. liberation also goes away. Only our own natural being remains. This alone is mukti or liberation.

The goal is the final truth which is Self awareness. Finally reaching it results in the annihilation of the painful and repeated cycle of birth and death.

Chapter 6

Sadguru

The question arises as to what is the need for an outer Guru? This is because the mind is full of maddening and confusing thoughts and is unable to listen to the truth proclaimed eternally within the heart by the Ultimate Self. We may give up all our attachments and faults and practise all austerities but we cannot gain the ultimate bliss until we get a Guru and worship him.

In His planning for all the names and forms created, the Lord has also laid His plan for everybody attaining the mukti where the thought energy of the cosmic director masquerading as the various beings get merged into the thinker, that is the Supreme Lord. In His drama, the Lord provides for His liberation from the acting as the various beings by providing a Guru who can establish us in the Ultimate knowledge after freeing us from all attachment.

The one who attracts and directs all the people who come to him towards the Self and grants the ultimate Self experience becomes the Supreme Guru and one should cling to him considering him as another form of the only Self. The true Guru prescribes no discipline but persuades the disciple to be in continuous quest of “Who am ‘I’?” The true Guru is the same as the Self who is shining as all the objects and is immanent in all the objects as the sat and chit, i.e. existence and the awareness of existence. The Guru, though he is seemingly a human being like us, is the ultimate awareness

and hence he has no form. Those disciples who fail to see him as formless and continue to look at him as a body are the greatest of sinners. The Guru is one who, when people suffering from the bonds of their previous karmas approach him, is able to remove their bonds of sufferings and finally leads them to the bliss of liberation. The Guru is able, by his very glance of grace, to convert the jiva's rusted iron into the purest gold of constant awareness. A disciple should clear his doubts from him and should always cherish the darsan [coming face to face] of the Guru.

It is only the Guru who is able by his grace to lead each being which comes to him into that Supreme non-dual knowledge of the Self. The ultimate peace and bliss can be obtained by Guru's grace alone and not by any other means. One should therefore persistently ever seek to attain Guru's grace with a never waning enthusiasm and with a one pointed mind. We cannot have the ultimate bliss of liberation unless we get the grace of a good Guru. Unless one fully explores the meaning of the teaching of the mahavakyas, like "Tat twam asi [That thou art]", which comes out of the eloquent glance of the Guru, one cannot get enlightenment. It is always told that if we take one single step towards the Lord, then He takes nine steps towards us to accept us. This is the grace of the Lord expressed through the Guru and called as the Guru's grace.

I began to cry because in my delusion, I thought I was bound by maya. Then, the Guru appeared before me who was verily the Self and governed me. I owe everything to that Self. The mind is always devilish like a demon and it has to be

destroyed by the Guru with his sword of knowledge. Unless the mind is controlled, we cannot see the amazing dance of true awareness in the heart.

Just like an elephant which sees a lion in its dream which wakes it up from sleep, the seeker when he sees the Guru in his dreaming state wakes up from his sleep of ignorance.

We normally consider the food the Guru leaves on his plate as sacred and is called the left over [*uchishtam*]. Actually, the one bright word which comes from the perfect Guru's self experience is the real *uchishtam*.

It is the Supreme Being who appears and moves among us as our Guru. Though we may serve the Guru in every way through thought, word and deed, the highest goal is to rid ourselves of our ego through identifying ourselves with the Guru who is our Lord and master. Offering the ego as a food to the silent Guru and the experience of the pure 'I am' which we get as a Prasad from the Guru – this is the ultimate real significance of 'eating of the left overs'. The real prostration to the master is not falling on the ground and worshipping him. The stillness which precedes the death of the ego, with all its differences like master and pupil, God and man, is the real prostration to the master.

The service rendered to the Guru by the disciple should be full of respect and correct as per etiquette like a woman's service to her husband. Those who live humbly dedicated to the good Guru's feet are blessed and the ocean of love automatically wells up in them.

A true devotion itself becomes the fire of pure awareness which burns up all false desires to annihilate our potent vasanas or the latent tendencies from previous births which are the cause for all our desires and to bring out the real knowledge. The only spell or mantra is the devotion to the Guru's feet.

By inquiring "Who am 'I'?" one gains complete identity with the Guru who is also the Self. Then he loses his false individuality as a separate self. This disappearing of the ego is the real puja or worship to the master. While pursuing this path, one finds that this world composed of 'I' and 'this' is transformed into the Guru himself. This awareness of the Guru's presence everywhere is the real worship of the master. After surrendering to the Guru the body, mind and all possessions if we still continue to have the ideas of 'I' and 'mine', it is like taking back a gift once given. To avoid this sin, is the pure worship of the master.

The worship of the feet of the Guru is to control the mind from craving for the sensual pleasures and to abide in the Guru's feet only. Unless we cling to the feet of the Guru with all volcanic yearning and rely solely on his glance of grace, we cannot be free from all fears and be happy.

We get into a lot of calamities by mixing with worldly men afflicted with confused minds and babbling always on worldly matters. The best friendship is with those holy men whose minds have been destroyed and who abide in the pure silence of awareness.

He who is lucky to become the target of the grace of a Guru gains such greatness which cannot be described in words because of the power of self awareness from the Guru's glance, who is verily the transcendent and Supreme Being.

It is the Supreme Being Himself who likes to intermingle with his devotees whose faith is strong and concealing his real form appears in the guise of a Guru and with great love sports with them all.

We are all born and suffer only because we have failed to clinch firmly to the Self and abide there only. This separation from the Self is the only cause. This we learn only by doing service to the Guru and earning his grace.

A man who walks on this path may suddenly slip down through negligence or other cause from the strict vedic way but one should never disregard or transgress the Guru's injunctions.

A person who sins against God and offends Him will be able to get out of its consequences with his Guru's grace. But if one sins against his Guru and offends him, one cannot be helped even by God himself. A story comes in Raghuvamsa of Kalidasa. A disciple called Koutsa after finishing his Gurukula course again and again pressed his Guru to tell him as to what fees he should give for all the learning he had for years. Angered by this compulsion, the Guru asked him to bring fourteen crores of gold coins as fees for the fourteen subjects [vidyas] he had taught him. There is nobody whom

this poor disciple could approach to help him in this crisis. It is his Guru's grace alone which prompted him to go to King Raghu and beg for this amount to be given to his Guru. At last he succeeds in his attempt. This also applies to the wise holy men and the saints. When saint Durvasa was angered by the fact that King Ambarisha was insulted by his drinking a little sacred water before feeding the saint and his disciples and Durvasa tried to kill him, the Supreme Lord Himself sent his Sudarsana discus to save the King who was one of the greatest devotees of the Lord. When the Sudarsana chakra pursued Durvasa, all the Gods including Brahma, Siva and Vishnu expressed their inability to save him from the Sudarsana chakra. They advised him to go back to the devotee king himself and seek his protection. Even if it is a Guru or a great saint, if only he raises his hand against a sincere devotee of the Lord, he will not be allowed to do so but on the contrary he will be subject to such a misery as if his life will be at stake.

The sense of non-duality that Self alone remains and all the beings in the world are not separate from the Supreme Being should always remain in the heart but should never be expressed in action in the phenomenal world. Similarly one should never apply the sense of non-duality towards one's Guru saying that he is the same as his Guru as everything is Brahman.

When the mind is turned inward by constant contemplation of the Lord or Self, the ego becomes dead and the Self shines as the Being which is self aware. This Self appears as Guru transcending all form and features. God, Self, Guru and Grace are different forms of the one reality.

The deathless sages who have realised the ultimate save all the other people who bask in their light and makes them also immortal.

The one who obeys the wishes and commands of a great sage and serves him gains freedom from the bonds of maya and by the grace of the Supreme lives a life rich with all his desires fulfilled.

Any amount of commentaries and treatises cannot explain the final infinite reality called the Brahman. Still, it is only the Guru who can reveal the ultimate reality through his silence which is much more eloquent than any speech. When the Guru's compassionate eyes meet the eyes of his competent disciple, there is no need for any spoken words between them; the master's look alone is enough to bestow the light on his disciple. It is called the eloquence of silence. It is the Self which manifests in the human form as the Guru. All the teachings are transmitted by the Guru through his mouna.

When the illumined teacher and the keen inquiring disciple are both abiding in the state where the two minds have merged into one, in that silence, the true uninterrupted speech takes place. When a disciple reaches this highest state of Self knowledge, there is a steady stream of highest love which is also known as Bhakti that comes out of the true disciple. The Ultimate experience of the disciple is the same as the direct experience of the genuine Guru.

Chapter 7

Grace

If ever we hope to get liberation from this samsara [phenomenal world of the repeated cycle of birth and death] one has to seek and completely surrender himself to the grace of the Lord who can expel the ego once for all. This is also the way to overcome the prarabdha which is a result of our actions in previous births. We are surrounded on all sides by the nectar - like flood of grace and yet we suffer from delusion. It is like a fool standing in the middle of the Ganges and not knowing how to quench his thirst. We should desire for the grace of the Lord and we will automatically be free from all attachments. We have to practise the state of silence without any objects or thoughts. This is the true mental worship. We should not bother or be anxious about what this life or the life yet to come may offer us, and uncaring calmly for all afflictions as also undaunted by extreme penury, we should walk firmly guided by God's grace. Do not be anxious to know whether you have got God's abundant grace or not. The fact that you have started the self inquiry is sufficient proof of the grace of God.

The most important point we should note is that we cannot get realisation and bliss of true awareness by our own effort alone but only by the light of grace of the Lord. The final Self realisation is revealed only by Lord's grace and not at all by any mental effort. The Lord's grace can be obtained only through Self surrender at the Lord's feet.

When the true being begins to emerge slowly as awareness, numerous are its names. The first amongst these names is 'I'. Hence, 'I am' is also the name of the supreme God. The word 'I' is used at first to denote the body bound ego.

This 'I' appears and disappears later on through meditation and through Guru's grace we come to know that the real meaning of 'I' is the Self which is the source and support of the ego³.

Do not look for God's grace in attaining the worldly wealth. This grace is present even more in our perfect awareness free from all cares; the cares which are resulting from the forgetfulness of our Self. If all your desires are satisfied do not think that it is because of your merit and the sadhana done by you. It is the Supreme God's grace only which fulfils your desires. You cling with more and more love to the feet of the Lord. When all our efforts end in failure it is a lesson to us that it is only God's grace which can bring success and not any amount of our effort. Hence we should seek His grace by praying to Him and meditating on Him. It appears sometimes that God's grace which should fall on all alike avoids all the sinners. The universal Being avoids no creatures as the latter are all His forms. This lack of grace in

³ I means "Aham" in Sanskrit. Early morning immediately after deep sleep, you are unaware of your identity. Within a few minutes, the entire world of activity sneaks in. Hence, Aham is the base for the world. The entire world comes out of Aham. It is interesting to note how the word came about. 'A' is the first letter of alphabet in Sanskrit [the letter to be pronounced as with 'u' in umbrella and 'H' is the last letter in the alphabet. All the objects in the world are indicated by words which fall between the letters 'A' and 'H'. So the entire world is contained in Aham.

some cases is because we look outward and are interested in the objects of the world rather than looking inward.

One thing is definite that without the Guru's grace, the ego which is the root of all defects cannot be killed. Only by the Guru's grace one can know the pure awareness of the Self. It is only through Guru's grace that one can win the grace of God. This grace of God cannot come through any learning but through devotion and devotion only. Even in the path of self inquiry, devotion to the Guru, our spiritual guide amounts to devotion to God himself.

What is the true meaning of God's grace? When the ego dies and disappears on being investigated, the clarity of pure awareness alone remains. This is God's grace. When once the ego-knot between spirit and matter is destroyed once for all, having called a delusion so far, the grace shines as the true being. When one achieves his goal by means of self inquiry and gains the ineffable bliss of Samadhi, it is solely due to the grace of God, who is our innermost Self.

Chapter 8

Tips for practice or sadhana

It is also necessary that one's behaviour and conduct [including morals] should be impeccable and divine. When a man whose conduct is reprehensible takes up the study of scriptures, it is absolutely of no use. I can only correct my own mind and cannot correct or transform others. So one should not brood over others' faults. It only fouls one's own mind more and more. We should abandon all sundry controversies between dvaita [duality], modified advaita [vishishtadvaita] and advaita. We have to be after Self knowledge. We should continuously meditate on God and win his grace.

Mere bookish knowledge will not take us to liberation. Only when by some means or another, the mind is destroyed completely and a confirmed Self recognition comes, the learning is of absolutely any use. We have to experience in practice through meditation that mere study of various books, even if they contain the greatest of wisdom is of no use. The alternative to meditation of a particular object like the self is simply to remain still. "Be still and know that you are God," it is the teaching of the Bible. The Sufi masters like Jalal Rumi have repeated this very thing. The beginning of the yoga sutras of patanjali is "the way to the union with the Supreme being is to stop all thoughts – yogah chitta vritti nirodhah." Apart from this, the mind should have no other thoughts to think.

When once we abide in the Self alone, all the fictitious bondage to the non self snaps. For attaining the goal, one has to exercise discrimination or viveka where one is able to sort out the false from the truth, the permanent from the impermanent, and the Self from the non self. Thus freedom from desires occurs. There is a story to illustrate as to how discrimination of the self can be done. Michael Angelo, the famous sculptor of days of yore got some poor quality stone free of cost and he carved out a beautiful Christ out of it. Even the Pope visited him and praised him that even in his personal museum where all the oldest statues of Christ were kept, none of them equalled this in beauty. When somebody questioned Michael Angelo, as to how he was able to create such a beautiful Christ from the useless stone, Michael Angelo replied, "I never created a Christ. The Christ [the Self] was already there in that stone and every stone. I only chiselled out and removed the non- Christ portions from the stone and Christ alone remained." In the same way, if only we remove all that is non-self from us, what remains is only the Self. As the Self remains at all places remove only the non Self and the self shines bright.

Chapter 9

Desires

Firm abidance in the Self cannot come unless one is utterly without any desire. For all others, who still have some desires, the only way out is by longing for the Lord who ends all desires forever. The heart has to be surrendered solely to the Master's feet so that it will not continue to dance and jump about in a wild manner. Those who keep their hearts permanently turned towards God only just like the magnetic needle always set towards the north, can never lose their way in this samsara and they can easily cross this ocean of desires.

The highest bliss is to stop all movements of the mind; after all, the mind means no organ like the eyes or the ears but a conglomeration of thoughts. The way to gain this highest bliss of no-mind is desirelessness and to be free from all likes and dislikes. It is these desires which give rise to anger. When we desire to build a temple, and somebody hurts our ego, anger arises. Thus, desire is the origin of anger and many other sins. Even the desire for liberation, i.e. a state of pure awareness, amounts to moving away from perfection. Attachment to the body and its pleasures does not count as a proper conduct. Desire is the last to disappear by sadhana. In order to disentangle ourselves from the hard knots of life we should first understand that the Self is love itself. Only when one knows the Supreme love, moksha or liberation is gained. So love Supreme is identification with the one reality and not any desire. When desire ends, duality ends. Then

other faults like anger, greed, illusion, dogmatic faith, envy, etc. also end.

Desires are our sworn enemies and are the sole cause of our imagined bondage to birth and death. Pure being free from all desires is mukti. The one who never has a single thought of any desire for acquiring things that he lacks is happy and contented with whatever comes to him as destined by the Lord's will. If only one reaches this state he can never slip down from this state and suffer pain. If only we stand peaceful and bereft of any desire for the mirage like pleasures of this world or the next, we are sure to gain liberation and the transcendent bliss beyond the two worlds.

Because we are ignorant of the Self, the delusion of birth and death comes to us. Only through pure awareness one can dispel this delusion of birth and death. It is only the freedom from attachment which can end the cycle of birth and death.

When once we are very hungry, even the worst food tastes excellent. Just like that, even the keenest pleasure is only mental and comes out of the intensity of our own desires and not from the inherent nature of the objects which are tasted. It is like a dog biting a dried bone with its sharp teeth which results in blood coming out of the mouth, when it thinks, "This bone is excellent and tasty." As a common man is not aware of the bliss of Self awareness, he considers sex and other sensual pleasures as excellent. All their lives, they go after such pleasures and they are full of desires for these things even when they die. Instead of enjoying the pure

experience and bliss of the Lord alone, the ignorant people sport in the messy pleasures of the flesh. Desires for sense pleasures cannot be quenched by fulfilling them. The more we indulge in sense pleasure the more it will increase. In other words, instead of our eating food for keeping us alive, the food begins to consume us. In other words, it alienates us from our true being and thus slowly kills us. Those who are immature and desire for sense pleasures, satisfy themselves by indulging in them. They never seek or join the company of holy saints who have their senses fully under their control.

The desire for objects is being nourished in all our three bodies, the gross, the subtle and the causal. All these are the same but because of the desires they appear separate entities so long as the causal body lasts. Only when all these three bodies are burnt by the fire of knowledge we attain the supreme state of pure awareness. As long as the gross, subtle and the causal body [it is only ignorance and not any body] form the base for all desires, the vicious circle of false births and deaths will continue.

Chapter 10

Siddhis

To those devotees who are mad with an exclusive love for God, all the various mystic powers or siddhis come by themselves. But as the devotee's minds are completely absorbed in the all comprehensive love for God, they have no desire to acquire any siddhis or powers. If a seeker after moksha has any desires in his mind for the various mystic powers, the bondage of maya will tighten on him as his ego swells. Utter peace of mind is moksha. The various mystic powers arise only from movements of the mind. As in moksha the mind should have no movement at all. Such seekers cannot long for any powers. They are completely satisfied with the moksha's bliss and stillness of the mind. The true devotee does not care for the mystic or occult powers or for any other fruit in this world or the next. The devotees consider the love for God as the supreme end and as its own reward. They crave for more and more of that devotion.

The attainment of moksha and remaining as pure existence-cum-awareness, is the only real siddhi. It is the foolish mind which is confused that goes after acquiring miraculous powers. Even though there are many siddhis like making oneself invisible, etc. jnana siddhi tops them all. Those who have other siddhis yearn for jnana. Those who have gained jnana do not wish for any other siddhis.

An important note of warning here is that we should shun entirely the greed for the acquisition of mystic powers which will bar our way into the gates of liberation and bliss. If you think that it is a great achievement to attain the power to get every desire of yours fulfilled, you are wrong. The final state of inner peace where no thought arises is the best state to be attained.

Chapter 11

Sadhana [Penance or Tapas]

To abide in one's own Self and the supreme Awareness is the true tapas. True tapas or austerities [penance] is not to allow the mind to roam along with the five senses and suffering the consequences but to keep it merged in pure awareness. People do the tapas and other sadhanas as a matter of mere duty and as a result unaware of the sea of bliss surrounding them, consider themselves as steeped in sorrow. Sadhanas like Self inquiry are a happy journey to the goal of absolute bliss.

The birds in the air and the fish in the water leave no trail behind them so that nobody can perceive as to by what path they have journeyed. Similarly those who by intense sadhana have realised the Self do not leave any trail behind them. It is a pathless path. The people in the siddhanta path get their liberation by merging their individuality in the Lord's feet through intense bhakti or devotion. In the Vedanta way, we lose all sense of separateness and individuality by always abiding in the supreme awareness of the Self which is all bliss.

The way to attain pure bliss is to treat the entire world as God and all the beings as mere appearances like the dream of a person which is superimposed on the sheer existence.

When we reach the pure awareness where the awareness is aware of itself; that is the real state of peace.

The knowledge of the Self as the knower and to be aware of the division as the knower, known and knowledge is all wrong. The triad of the knower, known and knowledge has to be merged in the ultimate awareness of the Self. This is the real knowledge. Any other types of knowledge which we consider as real are all ego-bound concepts of the mind and one should not trust them.

The source of all objects, which exist, both moving and unmoving is the pure awareness which has never been born or created. The mind obsessed with delusion forgets its identity with the Self, which is existence-cum-awareness. It is lifeless and unreal and as it has forgotten its oneness with the Self, it looks elsewhere for some fictitious objects of awareness.

All these false appearances of the objects of the world are all a product of maya, a mega delusion. Those who have not searched and found out their real identity will finally perish by being deluded by these conceptual forms of all objects. Anything other than the pure existence and awareness is a product of maya. Maya or delusion consists in considering ourselves as the body alone. If only we observe and incessantly think of the pure awareness, the latter itself becomes our Guru [preceptor] and the final truth will be revealed by itself. This means to remain in the awareness of one's own existence.

What actually is mukti or liberation? It is the truth of the shining final Self where all the differences are destroyed

by our concentration on our awareness. As the existence is one alone and never two, true knowledge is not knowing something other than the Self. It is only the clarity and peace of mind when all the senses are freed from delusion and stand still. Awareness in the final analysis is only detachment from the objects of the world, purity and the inclination of the mind to be incessantly merged in thoughts of God. If one reaches this stage, he is free from all fears as there is no second object from which one has to fear. It is immortality and it is everything.

It is only by the gift of grace which flows from the Lord that the individual soul is freed from all its delusive sheaths and from attachment to the body. It is the Lord's supreme grace as also the Self inquiry as to "Who am 'I'?" that work together aiding each other mutually and finally achieve the state of oneness with the Supreme Self.

When we are in deep sleep, we do not see the world including our own bodies. Only that ever lasting existence which has neither a beginning nor an end is left and it is aware of itself. As the form and the ego are lost, it is almost Self realisation except for the fact that when we again get up from sleep, all the ignorance is awakened.

We only recognise this worldly life which rises from our ego. The destruction of the ego by an intense and incessant Self inquiry is what is known as Self attainment. In other words, the individual disappears forever and the totality called Self alone remains. Similarly, when the delusive dream of

the waking state etc. ends and we are fully awakened to the truth, the ego dies and the universal 'I' rises.

The individual soul, God and the world are all thoughts and with every thought the basic 'I' thought is mixed up. It is the 'I' which is the origin of every thought.

In every state in this world, when some desire gets fulfilled or the hatred and ill will against an object is dispelled, the temporary bliss which arises is the bliss of Self. In deep sleep, swooning, etc. it is the absence of these objects of the world known to the ego which is the cause of the ignorance prevailing in that state and not the absence of the Self.

It is the ego and not the atman or the Self which imagines a world in a dream and on being awakened it sees another world and nothing while asleep. The dream and the waking state are produced by the inborn vasanas i.e. the latent tendencies due to the conditioning in previous births. When these vasanas disappear, the fourth state of Self realisation shines brightly.

There is only one reality which remains forever and everywhere as Self revealed. Anything which appears in time and space as apart from the Self or reality is all a mere projection of the mind.

What actually it is to control and conquer the mind? It is only the death of the idea that I am the mind and leaving off all mental troubles and conflicts, abiding firmly in

Self awareness without any thought of either bondage or liberation.

Even in this worldly life we cannot succeed in our efforts without abundant faith. Hence, till one merges in the infinite ultimate bliss, one should continue his sadhana [practice] with all enthusiasm and faith. Whatever great sins we might have committed in the past, there is no need for us to grieve over those sins and to repeat that “I have been a sinner”. If only we plunge straight into our own being we reach the goal quickly.

We see some people who in this very birth and without exercising any effort, just by the force of divine grace alone attain the desire free pure awareness. You may be rest assured that all these people in their former births had done strenuous sadhana and unconditionally surrendered themselves to the grace of the Lord.

For those who are unable to plunge within the silent mind and discover the doer-ego, i.e. the ‘I’, there is an alternative method. They may mentally repeat some japa given by the Guru and listen to the subtle sound vibration. In other words, those who cannot reach the source of ‘I’ through the path of jnana may reach it by watching the source of the japa sound. For curing a dire malady, one must consume not merely the name of the medicine but the medicine itself. In the same way, the bondages will not snap by merely repeatedly saying, ‘I am Siva, I am Siva’, etc. If by turning inward one meditates unceasingly on this name ‘I’, by saying, ‘I-I’ this will itself take one to the ultimate source of ‘I’.

In essence, the supreme devotion and jnana [knowledge] are one and the same. Those who argue that one of them is the means to get the other or one of them is superior to the other, only shows that they have not understood either bhakti or jnana.

Some of the evolved souls may sometime seem to advise people that one or the other of these paths is preferable. This is only in order to prevent the ignorant seekers who are half way on one path from abandoning their own path and choosing the other.

One may think of the Self in any form he likes and he will be able to attain it in that very form. The humble ones who are content to be as they are, free from all thoughts, attain the formless state of pure liberation.

We should meditate on the infinite and indivisible space. Thus we can reach our goal. After meditating on this space, if we proceed beyond meditation to simply “be”, we will get liberated from all future births while others suffer endless births as mortals. If we want to attain immortality, without any fear of future birth and death, we should remain intensely in the eternal presence which neither rises nor sets. The past is dead and the future is still unknown. For action, the future is now. Those who meditate on time by identifying themselves with time and ultimately give up even that meditation attain immortality in this very world.

When we incessantly think of one object alone, we become that object. If we keenly seek the Self incessantly and think

of nothing else, the vicious cycle of birth and death ceases once for all and all thoughts come to an end.

As per the scriptures, the ultimate goal of all our austerities is perfect clarity and perfect peace. If instead of this a desire arises for some other fruit of boundless bliss, this is a wrong practice. We should stop it and come back to the straight practice. For instance, by controlling the breath also we can control the mind. You cannot control the breath forever and the mind control can remain only for a short while till the breath is controlled. When the breath control drops away, the mind again drawn by the old vasanas begins to wander in the wide world of delusion.

We have to do incessant practice of strict disciplines like japa, image worship, diet control, in order to drive out all the ancient vasanas [latent tendencies] resulting in desires and subsequent action. It also makes the mind one pointed and strong. Sadhana is indispensable as long as the triad of the subject, object and perception remain. So long as the triad continues to be present, you take it that the ego which is false and illusive still remains to be destroyed. The type of laziness, i.e. being still can only be attained through strenuous sadhana. The stillness shining as pure being is the Self, our true nature. The exact words as used by Bhagavan Ramana Manarshi are “Summa iru” in Tamil.

When an elephant sways and tries to take something or other on its trunk unceasingly, it is given an iron chain to hold in its trunk. Then it stops the swaying of the trunk. In the

same way if we hold to some form or name, the weak minds will be able to control their own illusive movements [i.e. thoughts]. The temptation and the movements of all our five senses will never subside until we taste the bliss inside.

An earnest seeker should never slip down from the heights of Self experience. It is not right for him to interfere in others' affairs at all. He should first seek himself and find out his real identity and then think of others if at all they exist. Never bother to notice others' faults and shortcomings. We should only notice their merits. Then our whole life will be pleasant and we will not get disgusted with others if we only notice their good points and merits. There have been several incidents where people tried to paint some people as thoroughly devilish but Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi used to extol their points of merit which others had not even noticed. Once a drunkard who was also a nuisance to many died. Some people carried the news to Bhagavan and expressed their relief with such a drunkard having died. Bhagavan retorted, "Do you know that this fellow who died used to take bath three times everyday and keep himself neat and clean at all times." That was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. When one Perumal Swami printed out some scandalous and infamous reports against Bhagavan and the devotees came to Bhagavan seething with rage and showing him the reports, Bhagavan coolly took out his pen and corrected the printing errors in the sheet and kept it down without any comment. The devotees were all disappointed in his lack of any reaction. This was Bhagavan Ramana.

Even though we may live in the world we should ensure that the world does not enter into and occupy our mind. After all a boat moves in the water but we should ensure that water never enters it.

The earnest seekers should first ensure by every means that their own self discipline is always maintained through devotion and detachment. Self discipline is our foundation. A super structure raised without a strong foundation has to collapse. The path of one who takes to renunciation is slippery. The slightest lapse will bring ruin. The one who goes on this path should be very alert to ensure that the mind is always kept pure and no impure thoughts ever break into their mind.

When a seeker's mind matures he renounces his family life as devoid of any taste unless his destiny intervenes in between. When a disciple in a good job wrote to my Guru asking whether he should resign his job and come away for taking of sanyas, my Guru replied in the following way, "A fruit falls from the tree automatically when it matures and does not tarry to take the permission of the tree as to whether it should fall now or later." The moment such doubts come, take it that the mind is immature and is not fit for renunciation at all.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the permanent merger in Awareness. Simply not seeing the phenomenal world is not the sign of Nirvikalpa. When once the mind is dead and never again rises so that all senses of difference are wiped out, that is true Nirvikalpa.

The restless mind moves with an incredible speed. Hence, it should be made to remain totally immobile. This is attaining actual immortality. Immortality means identification with the soul instead of with matter, time and space. To observe birth, death and other events remaining unmoved and aloof amounts to attaining immortality. Supposing there is a rose plant with a beautiful rose on the road side and if you are passing by it in your car, even before you notice there is a plant it vanishes from your sight. In case you travel in a helicopter, with much more speed than a car, you could only see perhaps the entire plant as a point and we may not recognise it even as a plant. On the contrary, if we stand still before the plant, we can see it extremely well. As the Ultimate reality is immobile, if we were to perceive it with our mind, it will not be possible because the restless mind moves with infinite speed and we will be unable to see the Ultimate Reality. On the contrary, if we were to make our mind still and immobile, we will be able to have a good perception of the Ultimate Reality or the Supreme God. The speedier we go, the less chance of perception. That is why we have to make our mind immobile if we want to perceive the Supreme God. The Upanishads declare that Self is a place where neither the mind nor the world can reach. “Yatra vagna gachchati, yatra mano na gachchati.” [Where the worlds do not reach, where the minds do not reach].

It is the five senses which are attracted by forms, by taste, etc. and hence become the home of every sorrow and pain. One has to restrain the mind from flowing into these senses. It will be like an ocean which becomes calm and tranquil instead of roaring with its tidal waves.

It is the mind's movements alone which give birth to every cruel pain and sorrow. The one who has conquered all thoughts and keeps still, sits like an emperor on the back of the majestic elephant [jnana]. Nobody can confront and overcome the mind. The best way is to ignore it as something false and unreal. Then the mind's movements will gradually subside. We who are totally ignorant will not be able to still and kill the mind. However much we may try, we fail and frustration results. A straight way is to recognise that the world which is seen by us and the one who sees the world are only the Self.

The body is insentient [i.e. without any consciousness] like the chair, the table, etc. The living and loving energy known as the ultimate being in self awareness is all consciousness. We are mixing the body and the soul together and attribute the qualities of the self with the body and vice versa. This is called a knot in the heart. When once this knot is cut asunder, the appearance of this false body no longer remains and only the conscious Supreme Being remains. When the knot is cut, the mind is still and in perfect equanimity and is unable to experience either pain or pleasure.

In order to find out the ultimate truth, we have to shun anger and desire. We have to destroy all the mega delusions which cause confusion. We should behave at all times with detachment, unattracted by the false wiles of the worldly objects. This is the real living and we should hold fast to it.

Those who have controlled their five senses so that they may not turn towards the worldly objects which seemed real

to them at one time and also those who have learnt to live without their mind being moved by the illusive waves of forms need not perform any more penance. Similarly those whose ego has been completely annihilated and who had transcended pleasure and pain seeing the entire world as the Self alone live the life of grace. They need not perform any penance at all.

When the ignorance is gone, the mind is filled with absolute peace. A fount of love arises inside which is true devotion. True devotees are those who are ever devoted to Self alone. Only they enjoy eternally the Supreme bliss.

Chapter 12

Self surrender

When we are aware of the Lord who is existence-cum-awareness dwelling in our heart, no thoughts can enter apart from the Lord's thoughts. This is called the Self surrender. It is the ego which wrongly claims what belongs to the Lord as 'I' and 'mine'. This crooked thinking of 'I' and 'mine' disappears when we unconditionally place our mind at the feet of the Lord. Then only the Supreme bliss prevails.

The mark of a true devotee is total surrender at the feet of the Supreme God. It is a state of perfect peace without any thought or prayers or plaints. Those people who have completely surrendered to the Supreme Lord placing all their life's burdens on Him and also now live a life of calm detachment shine in absolute purity. They alone possess true beauty. They alone enjoy true bliss. Only those people who dedicate their entire being to the service of the Lord are bestowed with attaining the Lord Himself here and now. This results in the disappearance of the ego and the awakening of the awareness that they are the universal reality. They rejoice in the transcendental bliss of the direct experience of the final reality.

It is the Lord who has become everything including the world and as such nothing remains apart from Him. Surrendering this false ego at the feet of the Lord is the sole mark of supreme devotion which leads to blissful peace and liberation. In reality, you are surrendering nothing to God

by giving yourself. When you belong to God Himself, what is there that you give to God? You are only restoring what you had stolen from Him back at His lotus feet. Just as it is told in a Christian prayer, always say, “I have no will of my own. It is thy will which is done everywhere.” The one whose mind rejoices in the divine will has no cause for fear. Note: The same prayer was also told in a song sung by Sri Ramakrishna. Whatever events may happen in your life allow them to happen as they will. Never attempt to interfere in those events. Instead of starting this or that, abide within in perfect peace as a witness to the events and nothing more.

Chapter 13

Hatred

The courageous man who is able to overcome all hate by love is the genuine holy man. The flimsy straw floats on the top of the flood while a heavy pearl sinks to the bottom. A man will be considered as high or low by his performance and actions and not by what he is and where he is. However hateful the enemies may be, we should always remember that all the undesirable things which the enemies do to you is all the Lord's will and the enemies have no hand in them. Hence, the hatred is as bad as attachment and has to be dispelled in toto.

A perfect man has to be perfectly humble in his behaviour. The ego should never rise even unawares. A man aspiring to be truly great and holy should never accept praises or homage from others. The one whose ego is fully destroyed remains humble before everybody. One should behold in all beings only one's own Self but should be the humblest of all even humbler than the humblest devotees. Then only we can reach the Supreme goal.

Chapter 14

Vasanas

The old vasanas form the real bondage and they have to be destroyed. The home of all vasanas is the mind and so it has to be destroyed by doing practice of remaining still without any thoughts. The thirst of the individual soul will be quenched only when all the vasanas die and direct experience comes. The one whose vasanas have all been annihilated is completely free from the thought that he is the body. Even in dreams, the confusions and the agitations of mind will not trouble him.

Those who are able to come face to face with the Supreme Lord's holy feet are able to shine brightly and all their bad vasanas disappear. The best forms of worship are to turn the mind inward and constantly do Self inquiry. We should remember the disastrous consequences of demoniac tendencies in our heart, remove them completely and cultivate only the divine traits which alone can take us to the Supreme goal. The good latent tendencies [vasanas] inherited from the previous birth will be helpful to us in our meditation so long as the bad vasanas are all removed. In the final state of freedom, both vasanas, good and bad, have to be wiped off. The actions of a sage are all disinterested and they are done without any sense of doership as there is no self interest. A sage whose vasanas have been completely expelled, would seem to perform many mighty tasks but in fact he does nothing at all and what he does is considered as inaction.

Chapter 15

Characteristics of a liberated soul

The one who is liberated continues to perceive the world like the rest of us in all its vast variety but he sees non difference in it. This actually means the following. When we the ignorant people look at a tiger, an elephant and a cow, we see all these three things in the three different forms and we consider them as separate from each other – a cow from a tiger and a tiger from a cow or an elephant. The individuality comes through the differences in perception of the different objects. When a liberated soul looks at the variety of the worldly objects, even though he also looks at a tiger and an elephant and a cow, he does not consider them as separate individual beings but as the Ultimate Reality, the Brahman. In other words, even though he sees different forms, he does not attribute individual separateness to them and he sees only the Brahman in all the forms. This is called non difference.

To ascribe duality to a realised liberated person is a blunder. In the pure sky of being, the individuality or separateness is seen only by the onlookers who are still bound by maya. The sage is the universal being in full awareness and not the body which perceive the world nor the witnessing mind which perceives the perceiver. Normally, when we look at an object, it is the various senses like the eye, ear, etc. which perceives the forms of the various objects like the tiger, elephant, etc. The senses only perceive the forms and cannot interpret them as to whether it is an elephant or a tiger or what it is. It only passes down the information that is gathered

to the mind, which refers to the archives called chitta and interprets that this form is called an elephant or this form is called a tiger, etc. Hence, the senses only perceive while the mind interprets. In this process, for the liberated soul, even though he may see the elephant, tiger, etc. individually, he does not take them as real and he takes them all as the Brahman enacting the role of a tiger or an elephant in the drama of the mega delusion. Thus, there is a difference in perception between the bound souls and the liberated ones. In the case of a liberated soul, he sees everywhere the Self alone which is pure awareness. Even though he may see different forms, he does not attribute any individuality and considers them all as his own self. When an ignorant person like us sees the objects of the world, his mind is aware that he is looking at the world and its objects through the senses and thus he is the perceiver. Because for a liberated soul the mind as also the body are negated as an illusion, and not a reality, neither he looks at the body as witnessing the objects nor does he consider the mind as the perceiver of the objects through the senses.

The one whose ego is annihilated is free from the three apparent states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. At that stage of Samadhi, we call it Turiya, the fourth state. Actually speaking, this Turiya state is not a state at all. It is our very nature. Over this nature, the others have been only superimposed. Just like sleep is superimposed on a person after he is awake for the whole day. This Turiya [the fourth] state is the most noble state which transcends all. The Turiya state may also be named as the grand sleep that knows no

waking. It is the eternal wakefulness untouched by slippery sleep.

The one who comes to know his real status as the Supreme Self alone and does not delude himself as the seer of outer objects, ignores and rejects all the mystic powers called siddhis and attains full blissful peace.

In the case of a man who sleeps in a bullock cart, it is all the same whether the cart moves, stops or has its bulls released. Similarly, a sage who has realised does not know any difference between work, meditation and sleep. They are all the same. A sage of steadfast wisdom is called a sthitaprajna. He does not know the difference between introverted and extroverted, as he shines and lives in one steady state of existence and awareness. He has no within or without. A man sleeping in his bed without any action may sometimes dream that he climbs uphill and falls head down into a pit. The dream looks so real but actually the dreamer does nothing. In the same way, the realised sage looks as if he is doing a lot of action but he is always sitting still, like the one who sleeps in the bed and dreams.

An ignorant man who is under the sway of his senses, perceives the entire world as consisting of various objects. As regards a realised soul, he sees only the substratum, the one awareness present and shining everywhere. The sage does not see the world as apart from the Self. For him, the entire phenomenal world of variety wholly disappears when considered as other than the Self. When the ignorant

people are aware of the whole world, the sage sees it as only awareness. He abides in it rich in bliss. Those, whose minds are merged and lost in one single entity of self alone, are never bewitched by this false phenomenal world. At that state, only the pure awareness exists without an 'I' or 'this'. For the sage whose doership has vanished, there are no more 'duties' to be performed. In his awareness, there is nobody else and no objects and hence such a person has no doubt or delusion. Those who live the life of pure awareness find no happiness in the trivial pleasures of the senses. The still and silent state of existence is the boundless and unbroken bliss of the Brahman [the Ultimate Reality].

The one who has reached the highest state of existence will never more forget the Self and be reborn. It is just like a river which has merged with the heaving ocean, which will never lapse again into separateness. The common men with forgetful minds who forget the Self will have to be born to die and die to be reborn. But those whose minds have died and merged into the Supreme Being abide above both birth and death. The one who has realised the Self is always free from all attachments. God himself walks by his side to guard and to protect him from all harm.

We actually see that even a realised sage is eating, engaged in work, accepting his prarabdha and suffering all pain. How can we call him a liberated soul freed from all the bonds of karma? Actually we only see as if that person is suffering but at no time he comes and tells us that he is suffering or he has suffered. For him, his body is like a wireless receiver

which only seems to speak and sing while somebody else is speaking and singing through the receiver.

Even though the realised sage has no doership and is thinking of the Supreme God at all times and seems to earn both merit [punya] and sin [papa], the punya or the merit actually goes to those people who praise the sage and the sin to those who condemn him. Both the merit and the sin do not create any reaction in the sage.

When a jivanmukta [liberated while alive] performs any actions, he does them in a trance-like stillness without any sense of 'I' or 'mine' just like a sleeping child swallows the food asleep while itself does not enjoy or recognise the food it swallows.

A porter hired to carry a heavy luggage heaves a sigh of relief when he puts down the luggage at the journey's end. Similarly the sage is happy when the time comes for him to shed the body.

What is this state of jivanmukti [liberation while alive] for which the jiva makes all efforts? It is to know the Self and be the Self and thus end the ego which arose because we have forgotten our own true being. When a man's doership is all gone, all his three karmas can be likened to three wives of the same husband who are all widowed when the person dies. One cannot say that only two of his wives were widowed and one was not.

Note: The three karmas are:

1. Prarabdha [which is the allotment in this birth for getting the punishment or reward].
2. The second one is Sanchita which is a reservoir of all accumulated karmas of the past which are to be allotted in future births in order to experience the punishments for bad deeds and the reward for good deeds.
3. The karmas done in this birth which will be transferred to the reservoir later on is called aagami.

The body which is the effect of karmas may not escape its prarabdha. In the case of a jivanmukta, the knot between body and awareness is snapped and thus he has gone beyond the reach of prarabdha. The senseless drunkard is so intoxicated that he does not know whether his clothes remain on his body or have fallen off somewhere. In the same manner, the Self realised sage does not know whether the transient body comes, stays or dies or leaves. He is not aware of his body at all. When a brown silk garment is burnt to ashes, it retains the form and it looks as if it is still the garment while it is not so. Similarly, the body of a jivanmukta [realised soul] which is free of ego does have an apparent form but his true life is hidden and is not apparent to all. The sage's silent and firm abidance as Self awareness after the ego is completely gone is the state of Brahman alone who is the Supreme bliss. This state of total absence of another, i.e. this experience no common man can understand. Nobody can comprehend his blissful state. The greatness of a realised soul is far beyond the reach of words. None but he himself can know his state of being. To experience it yourself, you should first shed

your own body consciousness. A realised soul who is abiding permanently in his Self, asleep but still awake, immersed in the ocean of supreme bliss will never lapse back into this ruinous world of illusion and suffer. The learned man who has had no experience of the Self sees and cherishes this false dream of the illusive world and remains only a scholar. The one who has gained the clarity of the Self is a knower and is far different from a scholar.

The seer who has realised the Being [the Self] sustains the world. A word from his mouth will prove a veritable source of strength, the path and the goal to those people who are groping in the darkness of ignorance. If we mistakenly think that inaction is the mark of a jnani then every helpless leper who is inactive because of his disability should be called a jnani. The real state of jnana is to rise far above all likes and dislikes and to act without a sense of doership.

The realised sages who are abiding in a thought-free state of mere being may do a thousand deeds and yet they are non-doers. They never consider themselves as the doers of these deeds. The sages have at last attained their natural state of being after great efforts. They may or may not follow the rules of outward discipline. But either way their conduct has a certain beauty. Even when the sages seem to act, these actions do not bind them by resulting in merit or sin. These seers are envy free, beyond all duality, ever at peace and alike in victory and defeat [i.e. no reactions to either]. Some people get a doubt as to how at all a person could perform any action when he has no sense of doership but we do see

that the liberated souls do perform deeds. The actuality is that as the sages are egoless, it is God Himself who performs these deeds through the bodies of these sages.

It is wrong to judge a jivanmukta's greatness by the miraculous powers [siddhis] which he possesses. The common people who are amazed by the miracles done by certain so called realised people cannot understand or know a really realised soul. The realised soul who knows that both the body and the world are only the awareness⁴ lives a life merged with the world. To other ignorant people he only appears as living in a body in the world. None should take a realised soul at his face value.

When a dreamer wakes up he finds all the events of the dream were false and laughable. Similarly the jnani finds that all the events of his life are mere concepts and appearances.

When one reaches the state of pure awareness he feels that he is no longer a weak mortal. The attainment of jnana has such powers that at its feet even Indra the king of heaven bows his head.

No one owns me. I own nothing. I am neither the slave nor the master. No duty binds me. I am neither the doer nor the enjoyer. Here I remember a story: Diogenes was a realised soul but a slave. His master was in need of urgent money and wanted to sell his slave. He took him to the slave market but

⁴Awareness is absolute. Awareness = not imagining. What we see in this world is actually in a dream.

as he was racked by a severe fever, had no strength to stand up and announce his slave to the potential buyers. Diogenes asked his master to sit down and agreed to stand by himself on the dais of the slave and to announce himself. He stood on the slaves' dais and proclaimed, "Here is a master for sale. Which among you slaves would like to purchase me?" This is the confidence of a liberated soul.

The realised soul who is established in Self awareness is neither elated by praise nor pained by abuse and scorn. Even after attaining the ultimate truth, the wise man looks in all respects like a common personality without any special traits in his behaviour. He behaves like any common man in the world and if you are to meet him on the road, you will not look at him a second time.

Just as when the sun shines in a very fierce manner and the heat tortures us, a cool mirage holds out the hope of coolness. Similarly, in this false illusive world, faith produces often prosperity and adversity which is like a mirage. The sage is neither elated nor depressed.

The householder when he realises that he is not the body which is family-bound is a more advanced renunciate than the ascetic who renounces all attachments.

Chapter 16

Suffering and Pain

One question which we often ask is, “Why God’s good devotees should get sufferings and afflictions?” Actually, it is not meant to hurt them but to strengthen and to make their devotion steady and permanent. The excellent devotees should not be agitated or shaken by these afflictions or ailments but they should take it as the divine grace sent down by God to fortify the mind and make it fit for final liberation.

All problems and sufferings arise only in the waking state, i.e. in the dream world which we consider as waking state. To find out where we came from and to go back to the same source is the best way to remove the ills and all evils. Here I remember a story. A boy was getting into a church with a lighted candle in his hand. A bishop who was coming out of the church asked the boy as to who lighted the candle. When the boy affirmed that he had done it himself, the bishop again quipped, “Wherefrom the light came into the candle when you lighted it?” The boy extinguished the candle and asked the bishop, “Sir, this candle was extinguished in your holy presence. Please tell me where the light has gone. The source from which it came is the same source where it has gone back.” The source from which the billions of beings in this world, all the galaxies, the sun, the moon and all the stars have come, is the one infinite source of the living and loving energy [we use the word ‘energy’ because there is no word in the dictionary to describe the nature of that ultimate Being of perpetual Awareness].

The ultimate Reality of every being is an ocean of pure bliss. Therefore suffering is like the blue colour of the sky – which is a mere illusion in our mind lacking all reality. Bliss alone is the sole reality. Suffering is a false creation of the ego-mind. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi has told elsewhere that while suffering is there, there are no sufferers. It means that suffering is a cap thrown on the road which a person takes and keeps it on his head and complains that it is too narrow and presses on his temples. Bhagavan himself is an example where during the more acute stage of cancer he never showed any signs of suffering or pain.

All the miseries and suffering is what one brings upon oneself by imagining that one is the body and not the Self. The ultimate reality i.e. the Self is the Sun which can never see the darkness of illusion. [The Creator asked the Sun as to why he was pursuing and teasing the lady darkness who had to always run away from him and complain to the Creator about the actions of the Sun. The Sun exclaimed in surprise and told him that he has never met the lady darkness at all and how could he be pursuing her. The same thing happened with the Self and the illusion of darkness.] The one who abides in the bliss of the Self sees in his life no trace of suffering, misery or pain. The misery comes by foolishly thinking that the body is the Self. When we destroy the thought ‘I am the body’ and we abide firmly in the knowledge of the Self, there cannot be any suffering, fear or anguish.

Chapter 17

Mouna

An earnest seeker after moksha should essentially have love for solitude. According to Bhagavan Ramana, solitude means the freedom from all attachments. The seeker should have freedom from vasanas, thoughts, memories and expectations. Unless one through sadhana knows oneself as the pure Self, one will be caught in the world's illusive bondage. In the absence of Self knowledge, it is impossible to live in this world of a variety of inviting temptations a life of non-attachment.

It is said that when the 'I' thought is wholly absent, there is absolute silence [mouna]. This mouna itself is the Self, the God and the individual soul is called the jiva and the world. It is the Self which creates, perceives and constitutes the world [as the material cause]. For this transitory and illusive world, the base or the ground is our body-awareness. The base or ground of this awareness is the firm solid unchanging ground of primordial silence. The Lord Himself when He came as Dakshinamurty expounded the ultimate wisdom to the various sages only through the eloquence of silence.

Until the grace of silence descends on a person and the wisdom dawns, any amount of rituals based on caste and creed cannot destroy the sense of difference and duality. In the language of duality alone [i.e. so long as we live and believe in duality] all the questions and answers arise. In non-duality, all questions subside. The Supreme bliss or the

Self experience as a result of self inquiry is only pure mouna [silence] wholly free from the false dualistic knowledge.

The mouna shining in the thought free pure mind is the only entrance into the realm of mukti. Hence, whatever path one may pursue, the final path is only mouna. A full surrender to the Lord is only this mighty mouna whereby inquiring, “Who am ‘I’?” the false ego dies and merges in the reality, the Self. The Lord controls the doer till the fruits of former actions are exhausted. Until then, no effort can change the course of things which have been already ordained by the Lord. At that time the wise course is to rest in mouna. The ego image moves reflected in the mind-waves. How to stop this movement and how to regain the mouna, the state of stillness? The answer is that we should not observe these movements but we should seek the Self instead. The seers declare that to abide in egoless true awareness is pure mouna. This thought free mouna means clinging to the Self.

The parāvāk or the transcendent speech has been defined by Bhagavan as the stillness wherefrom the ‘I’ sense rises and the silence from which the sound of mantra emanates and also rises. When the Supreme grace of the Lord reveals to a man his true being, he is overwhelmed by permanent bliss and disappears in the pure mouna. Unless the noise of thoughts subsides one cannot know the ineffable bliss of mouna. Those who have stopped all thoughts never slip from the firm mouna even in the midst of a clamour in the battlefield.

Chapter 18

Miscellaneous

The true teachings of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi based on his own experience is “Ajata Vada”[the theory of no birth or death].

Note: In a cinema film, the men or the animals seen were never born and were never to die. In the same way, in this cosmic dream drama of billions of beings run by the Supreme, nothing actually happened and no object ever existed. Hence, there is no birth, no dissolution and no bondage, no liberation and no liberated being. The entire thing is a mega delusion.

Sometimes in deep meditation, when a trace of ego is still left, the body may tremble sometimes or some unknown fear may come. When the ego dies and pure awareness alone remains, this quaking stops. Only stillness remains.

One should not debate as to whether heaven and hell exist at all. As long as this world exists and we consider our body as real, the heaven and hell also definitely exist.

For getting a good result, one has to see that the means are not evil as otherwise a bad means will corrupt a good end. One should definitely ensure that the means are definitely as pure as the goal. Deeds done under the motivation of desires or in fierce excitement will be categorised as evil. Those performed with a calm and pure mind lovingly are categorised as good deeds.

When once we say that we know a thing, it means we are limiting it. Defining and measuring is a mark of knowledge. The Ultimate Self cannot be known or measured. The purpose and the power of yoga is to end all the false knowledge gained through the senses.

A gem dug afresh from the mine will not have much shine until it is ground and polished. Similarly, without trials and tribulations, a real devotee cannot make progress.

As praise adds to the grievous error that one is only the body and not the Supreme Self, the wise men should reject all praise with a firm mind. The one who is vulnerable to others' praises and fails to defend oneself against them creates obstacles in the way of one's sadhana.

There is a rule that one should always approach the great and wise sages with love and reverence and not out of idle curiosity or in order to test them. Infact the rule says, when one goes to some wise masters, one should carry some handsome offerings. The offerings really meant true whole hearted love. The mighty masters who had the direct experience of the Self know only their own Self. Hence, the deluded mind of a common man cannot measure the supreme bliss which is beyond all phenomenal multiplicity. The great people and the saints shower their love and kindness on you, not because you are filled with virtues and sweetness but because those great people have forgiven and forgotten all your faults.

For those who abide as the mere 'I am' and entertain no other thoughts, it is best to worship the formless God. Till one is quite qualified for the worship of the formless absolute after getting rid of one's body sense, it is befitting that one should worship God with form. Those people who do not know the natural method of remaining absolutely still and contemplating reality by abiding in the Self, come under a spell of ignorance and Karma [action] and under that delusion, choose to meditate on any divine form like Siva, Rama, etc. But even those people, so long as they do it with love and devotion will automatically reach the supreme state of being the Self alone.

When we offer to our God with form both internal and external worship, we should remember all the time that He is present everywhere as intense awareness.

The study of the Vedas and the strict observance of their injunctions if they fail to bring us true firm and intense love for the Lord's feet, then all our effort has been of no avail and becomes infructuous. Those doing sadhana with their only goal being permanent abidance at the Lord's feet should live a very austere life such that the other worldly people should pity them rather than envy them.

All the creation, sustenance, etc. is all done completely according to the will of the Lord, His law, His plan covering all beings from the worms to the men and saints. We should seek no security from external sources but completely depend only on the divine mother like a child. The pure awareness

is the divine mother. We have to be persistently steadfast in serving the divine mother. Then, we become free from the maya or the mega delusion which makes us think that “I am the body”.

One should not meditate at intervals. One should abide in steady self awareness without a break. It is the mind which acts in all the roles as the seer or the perceiver, the object of perception and the act of perception. The best method is to turn the mind inside where the triad is lost and only the subject alone remains without any objects.

True fasting is not abstinence from taking food alone. To rid oneself of all mental cravings for self enjoyment is true fasting. Abidance in the Self is true worship. So this type of fasting and worship is most precious and can lead us to liberation.

Why should scriptures provide that we should always keep our body clean by taking bath three times and washing ourselves with mud, etc. whenever we go to the urinal, latrine, etc.? With all these cleansing, in the inner part of our body the bladder is always getting filled up with urine, while the intestines also get progressively filled up with faeces. So where is the question of cleanliness of the body by simply keeping the external body clean? The purpose of the injunctions of the scriptures is only to make us realise one day that this body is not fit for adoration and we will get disgusted and ultimately give off the love of the body. Thus the non-identification with the body is the ultimate purity.

Those who love this dirty body of flesh which turns clean food into filth are worse than the swine that feeds on filth. This is because the pigs and swine turn the filth into food while our body turns food into filth.

If we worship God for fulfilment of some material gains, it is only worship of the material ends and not God. If we seek the ultimate Self-realisation, we should completely rid ourselves of all thoughts of any gain for us.

As long as we regard an object as indispensable for us, enjoy it. If with maturity of mind we think that the object is not indispensable and we can afford to live without it, renounce it promptly. The dualist considers that enjoying the bliss is better than being the bliss just as we think it is better to be the honey bee than the honey itself which cannot taste itself. But the bliss of the Self is not like the honey. This is able to enjoy itself as we are all bliss.

From the story of Dattatreya who had twenty four Gurus from nature and learnt some lesson or the other from the serpent, from the spider, from an arrow smith, the python, the trees and the mountains; in the same way, we should consider the entire world as a centre for learning and the entire life itself as continuous learning.

Only the person who has realised the Supreme reality can save the world. If an ignorant man tries to help another it is only the blind leading the blind. The man of the highest

knowledge who is free from ego and remains steadfast as pure awareness can help others who are in suffering and seek his help, by giving them advise based on his own experience. This is only true compassion. One should not try to teach the highest truth to those who are still immature as those people might reject them as false because it contradicted their earlier beliefs. We have to be careful as to whom we teach the truth.

Aspects in relation to conduct:

- There are people who perform elaborate rites for their ancestors but they neglect their parents while they are alive. This is really a pity.
- When we deceive others we become our own foe and harm ourselves.
- Whatever we give in charity to other people is actually a charity to ourselves. Hence, we should give generous service to the people in the world.
- Those who are partial in their conduct by favouring some and by neglecting others, even if they worship God, this worship is futile.
- Not only one should avoid strong likes and attachments, but dislikes are also as destructive as likes.
- When a life leaves a body at the time of death, no body knows how to bring it back. Hence no body has the right to take the life from any creature.
- When strong and wicked people try to harm the weak people, the wise and virtuous ones comfort and protect the victim.
- The great people who are strong endure unflinchingly all the blows that may fall on themselves. But when they see

others being struck by sorrow or suffering they melt with pity for those weak people and try to console them.

- The wicked people consider other people as separate from them. They become cowardly and cruel and strike ruthlessly to kill. From ignorance springs the sense of otherness. From this springs fear. From fear springs cruelty. The only way to break this vicious circle is to gain knowledge and to shed all fear.

The body is insentient while the Self is all consciousness. We interchange these characteristics from one to another and consider the body as our self and consciousness. This admixture of the body and the spirit leads to the illusive ego which gives us sorrows. This interchange is called a knot in the heart. Unless we are able to cut asunder this knot no real bliss or peace can be experienced. To get peace is the greatest strength, the highest achievement and is also the life immortal.

The various changes and the consequent troubles arising therefrom can never touch the Self at all. The changes and flaws in earth, water, fire and air cannot affect the space which permeates everywhere. In the same way, the Self cannot be affected by any changes of the body, including birth and death. The same woman is considered by various persons in various manner as wife, mother, sister-in-law, niece and so on. But this woman remains the same and her form never changes. Jiva, world and God with different forms and names are all phenomenal. The Self is one and changeless.

Our eyes cannot see the glorious sun when the sky is covered with thick clouds. In the same way, when the mind is covered by a dense cloud of thoughts it is not possible to see one's own self. The Supreme Lord alone whose existence is not visible exists really. We individuals who seem to exist do not really exist at all. The experience of this non-being of ours is the highest knowledge.

Being the Self and looking at all things as the Self is real omniscience and not knowing more and more about the objects of the world. For those whose mind has not become one pointed the false knowledge acquired only serves to pile up sorrows. It does not help life at all. To the jnani all such knowledge of the objects of the world is mere hallucination. To him, who fondly imagines that he sees the world which has only a false appearance while the Self alone is bliss, the flood of relative knowledge is considered as omniscience.

The Vedas praise the Lord as all knowing. There is actually nothing to know. Hence, what is written in Vedas is only for those people who think that they know something. If once we realise the truth, i.e. the Lord who is plenary [means poorna or full] and forms all the beings, there is nothing to be known.

For a realised soul, true omniscience is the direct experience of the one non-dual self and nothing else. The entire universe which is perceived by a common man is all seen as the one Self by the realised soul. In a dream, all the things seen by us, which are after all thoughts, occur only within our mind. In

self experience while awake, we see the unity of all objects in this one self. This is true omniscience.

The one true state is to remain as being in Self awareness. The substratum of all that exists as the world is that one Supreme Being which is aware of its own presence. For instance, a chair exists in this room but it is not aware that it exists. That which is or exists and is aware of itself is the pure state of being. This is a non-dual state where nothing else exists apart from the Ultimate reality. When we wake up, we find that the dream state was a false appearance. In the same way, when we come to the Turiya state, the unreality of all the three states is known and they are false appearances. The fourth state [Turiya] is also called as Turiyatita, that is beyond the fourth. In other words the fourth state called Turiya and Turiyatita are one and the same in substance.

Note: This is a controversial subject and many do not believe in a Turiyatita state. Turiya state is considered as the ultimate by some.

The one who reaches the effortless state of eternal awareness and abidance in it; he has no further work to do in this earth. Such a one enjoys the perfect peace of bliss. He who lives in perennial bliss and self awareness assures all creatures not to have any fear from him. He himself knows no fear even from the God of death. If a dog barks at the sun, it does not offend or hurt the sun. Similarly, the insults of less cultured people will not touch the sage whose powerful light of wisdom shines bright like the sun.

When we chant the mantra of five syllables namely Namah Sivaya continuously, the ego dies and the steady flame of bhakti shines as our self experience and that is the stage of Sivoham [I am Lord Siva, the ultimate truth].

We in the eager search of truth roam all over the world looking for saints. When we examine, what all these saints teach, it is only pure awareness without any objects.

It is because our treacherous mind is fondly and eagerly searching all day for pleasures in alien objects we lose our inherent bliss. In thought-free sleep, we are very happy. If while awake also we remain egoless and thought-free we shall enjoy the bliss which is our very being. So long as other thoughts remain, there will also be the conscious thought of God. A thought-free state comes when all thoughts cease including thought of God. This thought-free state, i.e. pure awareness is true thinking.

The pure awareness of being is the transcendent state wherein both mind and breath find bliss. This state of grace surcharged with peace is also the medicine to the sick and restless mind and restores peace to the mind. Explanation: In other words, when you are in awareness the mind and breath remains still. There is bliss, no moment of happiness or sorrow.

When the sugar dolls are fashioned in various ways, as a slave doll and the master doll, there is no real difference between them as both are made of sugar only. Similarly, there are no different entities called jiva and Siva.

Who can be called the *astika* or the believer? The real believer is the awakened one who sees in his own pure mind the Self in its real nature as Being and Awareness.

We all desire to live but we do not know how to live. We believe that the illusive waking dream is life. We have to pierce this illusion and grasp the truth which is eternal life behind it.

In case I have found the Supreme Lord who is the source of my existence, He also appears with form. If I am bodiless and formless, there will be no awareness of anybody else. How could one say that God has form? The Supreme Lord [Siva] is only pure awareness and formless. It is only a devotee's prolonged and repeated meditation which bestows Siva with countless names, forms and attributes.

If anybody commits a wrong against a Self realised soul he will incur a heavy sin and it will be a heavy burden from birth to birth. There are cases where the worldly people sit in the presence of an evolved soul and yawn and snore in sleep. Such bad behaviour is thoroughly wrong.

It is only a *jnani* who can understand a *jnani's* nature. Others will only misunderstand it but will not know it as it truly is.

When once somebody could describe what the master taught and what we experience, the dense forest of desires and this world of senses is nothing but the silent heaven of pure awareness beyond speech. All such trivial experiences turn out to be only a dream.

Chapter 19

A summary of sadhanas which can be done to reach our ultimate goal

1. Ceaselessly think of the Supreme Lord who is also called as Self [atman] or Brahman [the Ultimate Supreme Reality who alone exists]. Even if this alone is done, we will reach our goal. According to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, the easiest way to think of the Supreme Lord incessantly is to resort to Self inquiry as to “Who am ‘I’?”.
2. Continuously doing the japa, i.e. the repetition of the mantra given by the Guru is the second method. In this method, by continuously doing japa, a day comes when the mantra disappears and the one who chants the mantra also vanishes. That is the stage when, the individuality is merged without trace in the universal totality which alone remains as existence-cum-awareness. The one advantage in the method of japa is that every syllable contains a particular type of energy so that fifty syllables in the alphabet represent fifty types of energy which can be used in our sadhana as also in our daily life.
3. Resorting to prayers is a panacea for all ills. It roots out the ego, dispels all vasanas, completely removes any other impediments or obstacles in the way of realising our goal.
4. Many of us do not know as to what is our goal in life and where we are heading for. It is essential that we fix our goal, love that goal and have full faith in that goal. The only worthy goal is the Supreme Lord or the Self.

5. It is essential that we get a live Guru for guiding us in this spiritual path. If you have got full faith and love alone for the Guru, that itself will take us to the goal. We should think that the Self alone has taken the form of the Guru in order to help us in our sadhana. One gets a Guru one deserves. When once we have a volcanic longing to get the Supreme Lord, the Guru and all other equipments required will come to us of their own accord drawn irresistibly by the longing itself.
6. Side by side with any sadhana we may do for reaching our goal, we may also use profitably the visualisation process. Here every day you give some auto suggestions to yourself that, "I am going to become the highest devotee. I shall certainly reach my goal very quickly." Side by side, we can also visualise that we are sitting like a sage with matted hair and deeply steeped in severe austerities.
7. The easiest way to get dispassion and detachment is to concentrate on our attachment to the Lord so that no time will be left to us for thinking of even detachment. The detachment will automatically take place. If you do not like the south of India and you want to abandon it, the better way is to be going on towards the north; then, automatically the south will recede. It is not possible for us to take the south of India in our hand and throw it into the Indian Ocean.
8. We can practise to be in absolute silence without showing any gestures nor resorting to communication through

writing for either a few days every month or one whole month or one whole year. It is not very difficult. At the behest of Bhagavan, I myself observed such a silence for one whole year in Ramanasramam and found no difficulty whatsoever. When once we practice the silence of the mouth, later on in due course, we may try to have silence of the mind also.

Bhagavan Ramana was a realised soul nonpareil.

His teachings are the Ten Commandments
from the mouth of the Supreme reality.

I bow to Ramana and His commandments
and pray to Him to bestow His blessings
on all the beings present
and yet to come in this world.

Hari Om.



His Holiness Sri Swami Shantananda Puri of Vasishta Guha, born in 1928, is a disciple of Parma Poojya Sri Swami Purushottamananda Puri of Vasishta Guha, Himalayas. Swamiji is a scholar par excellence in Vedic scriptures as well as in the puranic texts. His deep knowledge and lucid exposition of Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita and Ashtavakra Gita have made him a popular guide to spiritual aspirants. His simplicity, transparent deep faith in the divine force and absolute surrender to the Supreme have made him an ideal combination of Jnana, Bhakti and Vairagya. Swamiji's prodigious learning and deep devotion have reflected themselves in all his works, which are practical guides for inner personal experience and to raise oneself to a higher level of being.

This book has select sadhanas from Guru Vachaka Kovai, which is one of the most comprehensive and authentic collection of Ramana Maharshi's sayings. Revered Swamiji has given a beautiful summary of the original book, adding suitably his own experiences with very apt stories, etc. which has made this book easily understandable.