

HUNTING THE 'I'

according to
Sri Ramana Maharshi

By
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Preface

Sri Ramana Maharshi is well known wherever there is a longing for a life of Wisdom and Love, of inner Freedom. The Sage of Arunachala was an embodiment of such a higher life and a living proof that the longing for the highest Truth is no escapism for weaklings from hard facts to soft dreams, but the entrance to true Reality.

Sri Ramana Maharshi and his message need neither backing nor propaganda; they have found their silent way all over the world to those hearts that were ripe and ready for them. However, for the Centenary of the Master's birthday we wanted to bring out something which will show that the Secret of the Sage of Arunachala is not at all exhausted, but that still again and again new perspectives are opening themselves to the searching soul.

In the auspicious atmosphere of the Sacred Hill things seem to arrange themselves. Thus, it happened that V. Ganesan, M.A., made the suggestion, the German authoress Lucy Cornelssen, resident of Sri Ramanasramam, provided the material. Prof. K. Swaminathan and Sri Viswanatha Swami were kind enough to go through the typescript and offer useful suggestions, and Jim Grant, a young American devotee, took great care in touching up the representation.

So... where is 'the doer'?

'Hunting the I' goes out to the public as a small example of the great Truth: Things happen; men are merely means, to make them happen ...

May the blessings of the Star of Arunachala go with this humble gift to the reader!

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I

THE LONE STAR

To view Chidambaram, to be born in Tiruvarur, to die in Benaras, or merely to think of Arunachala is to be assured of Liberation.

(Talks, 448)

THE SETTING

The map shows India as a triangular peninsula in the south of Asia. Jutting into the sea, south of the vast Ganges plains, is the Deccan plateau. With thousands of kilometres of railways and thousands of kilometres of metal-roads, carrying bullock carts as well as the most modern motor-traffic-vehicles, there seems to be little difference between this Indian Deccan and any other civilised part of the world.

The content of this book will soon reveal, however, that 'India' means still unknown areas, hidden depths beneath the surface of our everyday world, and, strange to say, these begin very near the soil under one's feet.

There is a certain mountain, belonging to the Eastern Ghats, about 200 km south-west of Madras, named Arunachala, meaning 'Hill of Fire' or 'Hill of Dawn'. The *Puranas* claim that it is the most ancient mountain on earth. Folklore, legend, fairy-tale? Well, geological research has confirmed the 'fairy-tale'. It is generally agreed nowadays that originally the Deccan was not part of the main body of Asia, but represents the remnant of a continent now lost in the depths of the ocean stretching out over Malaysia to Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Celebes and the Philippines. The Himalayas are said to have arisen only in a later period, and the connection by the great plains between the gigantic geological formation and the Deccan to have been created by the sediments of the huge rivers coming down from those mountains.

Thus the feet of the Hindus, children of this country, and those of the foreign travellers do not touch merely rocks and sands and mud, but their minds are given to a long and awe-inspiring history of civilisation over many centuries, and their

very hearts feel here the touch of a deeper mystery, though wrapped up for ever in the silence of an inscrutable past.

Nevertheless this unfathomable silence is not dead. Time and again this living mystery gives birth to great souls, who know something – if not of the secret of this lost continent, yet of the secret of its Spirit, which is the secret of Man.

Here in this region appeared once the great Sankara. It is generally held he lived between A.D. 788 and 820, but tradition has it that he flourished already about 200 B.C. was born at Kaladi, on the west coast in Malabar.

An equally famous religious teacher was Ramanuja. Whereas Sankara was the great logician, Ramanuja was the great intuitionist, who stressed the theistic aspect of the *Upanishads*. He was born in 1027 A.D. a few miles west of Madras.

While the great work of Sankara was to draw out of the rich religious tradition and compose the philosophy of Advaita-Vedanta, the 'One without a Second', Ramanuja put against it Visishtadvaita, qualified non-dualism.

The opposite interpretation to Sankara was set forth by the Kanarese Brahmin Madhva. He was born in 1199 A.D. some 60 miles north of Mangalore and stood firm for an unqualified dualism.

Why, only three poor philosophers within a period of 400 years, long ago ... what is there extraordinary in it? Well, there were many more of them, in each century. What we want to point at is that philosophy means in India not only theoretical and logical thought of scholars, but living religion, the life of the soul. It is the teaching of these famous Three which represents the living spirit of the man in the street and in the office, the woman before her small house shrine, up to the present day. It is not in their brains only, but in their blood and their life, because it is the secret of the Deccan, the land, lost in the sea.

This is also particularly the secret of Arunachala, the Hill of Light. In the language of the *Puranas*, it is the Heart of the World, and the ancient legend of its origin goes like this:

Brahma, the Lord of creation, and Vishnu, the divine sustainer of it, were quarrelling about their status, as to which one of them was the greater. As their discussion grew heated, things in the universe got into disorder, and the minor deities fell in fear and anxiety. Finally they resorted to Lord Siva, the All-powerful, for aid. Between the quarrelling Gods there appeared suddenly a gigantic pillar of light, the sight of which dumbfounded them for a moment. Out of this light came a mysterious Voice:

“He who shall find the upper or the lower end of Me shall be deemed the greater one.”

Immediately both of the antagonists put themselves to work. Vishnu took the form of a boar and started to dig deep into the soil in search of the lower end of the column of light. Brahma transformed himself into a swan and soared higher and higher.

Neither of them arrived at an end of the apparition. Vishnu, catching the idea that the mysterious Voice might have a deeper meaning, gave up and sat down, to find it in the depth of meditation.

Brahma, troubled by the idea that Vishnu might have been successful, became envious, and when there came falling just then a heavenly flower, he grasped it and decided to pretend that he had found it on top of the magic light.

Vishnu, thus being deceived, complained to Lord Siva, asking why He had bestowed on Brahma the Grace of success. Thereupon Siva revealed Himself in the pillar of Light, and, blessing both of them, declared:

“I am Siva; I am Brahman, the mystery of the universe, and thus *Atman*, the mystery of beings. Nobody can reach Me by his own endeavour. But to those who surrender wholeheartedly

to Me, to them I reveal Myself. You ask Me to stay on earth for being worshipped. Well, I shall stay here as Arunachala, the Hill of Light, and when during Autumn the Moon shall arise on the horizon at the same hour when the Sun is setting, there shall be a huge fire lit on the summit, radiating far around. To those who see the Light and meditate on it as the symbol of enlightenment I shall grant the highest Truth.”

Thousands of Indian legends and parables are at the same time veiling and revealing the living Truth about God, Man and World. In this legend of Arunachala, Brahma stands for *buddhi*, the reason, Vishnu for *ahamkara*, the ego of man, Siva for *Atman*, the secret of man's true Nature. Neither reason nor ego can, of their own talents, reach the Supreme *Atman*, the supreme Self, the true nature of man; they have to submit. Only then the *Atman* reveals Itself.

This is the teaching of Arunachala...Siva, the Hill of Dawn, the Dawn of Wisdom. It is also the teaching of Arunachala Ramana.

Who is Sri Ramana, the Maharshi of Arunachala?

Another Voice of the Spirit of the land, lost in the sea, calling the spirit of the 20th century.

When India got her independence, she stressed her intention to play her part in the concert of nations as a secular state like all others, but did not proclaim any particular theoretical ideal. More gifted than others, she was able to personify her national intentions in a Triple Star of contemporary great souls: Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo, each of them a national and social beacon-light who at the same time stretched out a hand in friendship towards the world.

Let us remember: Swami Vivekananda laid the foundation of the first nationwide organisation for the social uplift of the suffering masses at home, simultaneously carrying abroad the rich spiritual heritage of his country, which was then practically unknown outside India.

Mahatma Gandhi brought the precious gift of national independence to his tortured native country by the proclaimed idea of non-violence, living himself as a personality of the highest human standard, so that the world bowed down to him in veneration when he laid down his very life in the service of his people.

Sri Aurobindo, too, who retired finally for the greater part of his life to Pondicherry in the South, had been very active in the struggle for national freedom, before he took his eminent place beside the other two by his Maha-yoga and his immense literary work, in which he propagated a Divine Life on earth as the goal of human evolution. A noble vision indeed!

The precious gifts of Gandhiji and Swami Vivekananda are present everywhere in modern India and form her life and blood, as it were. The radiance of the Triple Star of great souls, surely a national symbol as worthy as it is meaningful, covers the subcontinent... the mysterious land, lost in the sea... as an invisible triangle spreading from northeast to northwest and to the far south.

But during the time of that heroic and spectacular struggle, when those great souls did *tapas* and offered their very lives as *yajna* for the sake of the many who could not help themselves, the spirit of the hidden depths had already silently embodied itself in another great soul.

When Mahatma Gandhi's political career as such might be said to have begun, with the founding of the Natal Indian Congress, at his instance and with his active co-operation in Durban in May, 1894, when Swami Vivekananda had his marvellous success at the World Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893, the boy Venkataraman, the later Maharshi Ramana, was still a schoolboy, more fond of games than of mathematics and English Grammar. When on his return in 1897 the Swami started his triumphal tour in the same region

of South India and prophesied in one of his speeches that South India was going to take a leading part in the spiritual regeneration of the world, that in the 20th century there was going to rise in South India a flood of *atmic* power, which would inundate not only the whole of India but the entire world, that same boy Venkataraman, then in his seventeenth year, had already given up school, home and family, past and future, name and personality, and was living lost in the unfathomable Silence of Arunachala, the most sacred Siva lingam, and in contemplation of the Great Experience that had led him there.

He never went abroad to preach the ancient wisdom of his race to the world like Vivekananda; he did not fight for political Independence like Gandhiji; he did not even dream of a future Divine Life on earth like Sri Aurobindo. His was a quite different way.

Those three Great ones form for ever the Triple Star who dedicated their lives to the uplift of the millions of their people. He remained a Lone Star, living the life of man's true nature, a silent model for each individual who feels the agony of this age, when man seems to have forgotten his true nature. He remained the Lone Star of Arunachala, pointing steadily in the same direction, like the polaris, guiding the individual and therewith mankind to its highest destination.

THE SAGE

We know quite well, at least those among us who are interested, that sages and saints cannot be understood by a study of their life, because sagehood and sainthood are not related to the person with the name and form or to the family and circumstances. Nevertheless, whether we are aware of it or not, we look with interest for traces in the outer life stories of those rare beings.

The childhood of Ramana Maharshi was as 'normal' as possible, as if already here, in the beginning, we should be reminded of the basic truth that the *jnani is not the person whom we meet, but the Reality*.

Born about a century ago, on the 30th December, 1879, as the second son in a middle-class Brahmin family, the boy, named Venkataraman, did not show the least trace of any extraordinary piety or spirituality, though sometimes there was a hint of this in his extraordinary deep sleep. However, most healthy children can be transported without awakening them. His capacity for learning was more than average, but his interest and application for it was less. He decidedly preferred outdoor games.

When he was 12 years old, he lost his father and was sent away with his elder brother from their birthplace, Tiruchuzhi, to relatives living in Madurai. It was there that it happened, the one event for which he was born, which had nothing to do with his past or his surroundings.

Two incidents which happened as a kind of foreboding were not taken at all as anything unusual:

One day young Venkataraman met an elderly relative who arrived from a journey. Asked from where he had come, he answered:

“From Arunachala.”

The boy knew the name, as every Hindu in the South knows it. Still he felt a thrill, because he had from his childhood a feeling that Arunachala was something indescribably great. With excitement he enquired:

“Where is that?”

The traveller marvelled a bit about the sudden agitation of the boy and answered:

“Why, don’t you know that Arunachala is Tiruvannamalai?”
Tiruvannamalai is the town at the foot of the hill.

Of course he did, and to be reminded of the fact cooled down that strange excitement. The small incident was soon forgotten.

Readers who believe in coincidence rather than in *karmic* network will not be very impressed by that meeting, and may be still less to learn that the boy soon after that came across the *Periyapuranam*, which he had not seen before. He went through the stories of the 63 Saivite saints of Tamil Nadu, and they awoke a deep devotion in his young heart. Never had he seen anything like that in his round of everyday life: waking up, eating, school, games, sleeping. The life of an average Hindu family is regulated by the performance of certain daily rites and others on certain particular occasions. There are stories of gods and asuras, of heroes and ascetics, but they were old stories, nice to listen to, and quickly forgotten. Suddenly the saints in that *Periyapuranam* were living beings in a living world quite different from that of his own.

Something within the boy that had been dormant was waking up.

However, even this went soon to sleep again. To a child, and even to an adult, the habitual influence of everyday-life is much stronger, more ‘real’, than the reality of the Beyond.

However, only a few weeks later, one day in July of 1896, the boy was sitting listless before his lessons. All of a sudden his

lazy mood was overwhelmed and wiped out by an alarming onset of the fear of death. This was not a mental interpretation of something vaguely felt but something so urgent and 'real' that he did not think of resisting or of calling for help. He knew he had simply to submit.

Many years later the Maharshi talked about that to some devotee:

"The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies'. And I at once dramatized the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out stiff as though *rigor mortis* had set in and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered. 'Well then', I said to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body, am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means, I am the deathless Spirit'. All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without any thought process. 'I' was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that 'I'. From that moment onwards, the 'I', or Self, focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on. Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the 'I' continued like the fundamental sruti note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. Whether

the body was engaged in talking, reading, or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'. Previous to that crisis I had no clear perception of my Self and was not consciously attracted to it. I felt no perceptible or direct interest in it, much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it."

Though this report is close to what happened, it may leave the reader somewhat disappointed, because it might look rather like an interpretation of something which is beyond the mind, which is the means of interpretation. We can leave it alone. The central point of the Great Experience is striking and quite clear: *it is a revelation of true Identity.*

The boy Venkataraman was not prepared in any way for an experience of this kind. He knew practically nothing about mysticism, or about religious ideas or concepts. Therefore no visions interfered, no deities, nothing could offer itself as an interpretation. His whole consciousness was focussed on the one and only undiluted fact in this incident... the clear revelation of his true identity.

However, there is another report by Sri Ramana of this strange hour, to be found in the diary of a close devotee, Devaraja Mudaliar. He noted it under the date of November 22, 1945:

"When I lay down with limbs stretched out and mentally enacted the death scene and realised that the body would be taken and cremated and yet 'I' would live, *some force, call it atmic power or anything else, rose within me and took possession of me.* I was reborn and I became a new man."

Here is mentioned another, most important feature of the great event: "Some force rose within and took possession" of the experiencer.

Many mystics of all climes and centuries have known this extraordinary experience of Venkataraman, but to all of them it came as a religious experience, caused, recognised and interpreted according to certain preconceived religious assumptions.

Venkataraman did not know anything like that. Thus it seems that we have in his experience not another 'variety' of mystic experience, but the original 'absolute' form of all revelations of this kind, uncoloured by any personal psychological adjuncts.

One may wonder and ponder how such a rare and strange thing could have occurred to an 'ordinary' schoolboy like Venkataraman. Though the fact as such may be extraordinary, it need not necessarily be a miracle. The miracle rests with the boy; it lies in the fact that he was able to observe and recognise in an almost scientific way what was happening to himself and to remain for ever in that new dimension of consciousness which had opened itself before him in this Great Experience.

The attempt to understand this central event of the life of Arunachala Ramana, here and now, would be very difficult, because for the time being we have no experience of our own to compare with his. We may get at something later on and then shall return.

One would expect that the boy Venkataraman would have talked to his elders about this strange 'Death'-experience. He must have felt that there were no words available to transmit the 'reality' of the event. But they soon discovered of their own that the boy was not any more the same as before. They saw that he tried to behave the way they expected him to, but the result was poor. He seemed to be indifferent to whatever food was put before him, having lost all likes and dislikes. He avoided his comrades and games. He gave himself quietly to the task before him, and had obviously lost even the little attention which he had shown previously for his lessons. Teachers and elders got alarmed.

The elder brother tried teasing, calling him 'Yogiraj' and the like. When one day he cast aside his books and was about to lose himself in meditation, the elder one broke out:

"I wonder what such a one as you has to do at all with school and books and so on..." Venkataraman had cared little

all these days for his brother's endeavour to correct him, but this remark went home. Was not the brother quite right? Lessons, teachers, books... what were they to him, after what he had gone through? And like lightning it flashed through his mind: 'Arunachala!'

He opened his eyes, gathered his books, and, preparing to leave the room said: "I have to attend a special class in physics..."

"Then please take five rupees with you and pay my fee in the college!"

Those five rupees did not reach the college at all. Venkataraman took the needed Railway fare, immediately got into a train and disappeared.

At dawn on September 1st 1896, he entered the great Arunachaleswara Temple and stood before the most sacred Lingam.

Thereafter he lost himself in a permanent silent contemplation of his new Identity, first in several places connected with the temple, and later on in the caves of the Hill.

As his life before his Great Experience had been the life of an 'ordinary' schoolboy, his present life seemed to be that of an 'ordinary' sadhu, to be known from his typical credentials ... the loincloth, a certain type of name, sometimes a vow of silence.

In the case of the young Brahmana Swami of the Hill, each of these signs was misleading. According to the Hindu society, even the sadhu who has left his former society-status has only exchanged it for another one, that of the traditional sadhu.

For some years the young Swami of the Hill did not speak; people took it that he was observing *mouna*, silence. But behind *his* silence there was no motivation, no *tapas* at all. He simply did not feel any motive to speak and considered the curious questions of visitors after his name, family and place not worth answering.

As a rule, the genuine sadhu has a regular initiation into his new way of life, particularly when he is a Brahmin by birth. The Swami of the Hill never thought of that. Once a member of a certain Math entreated him that, since he had been born a Brahmin, he should respect the rules of yore and take the prescribed initiation into *sannyasa*. The young ascetic remained silent, and the *sannyasi* left him to himself to think over the matter, promising to return for his decision.

Before him, an old man had passed the cave and left some books behind, announcing that he would take them back on his return. Now the young sadhu picked up one of the books to take a look at it. It opened at a page which showed the ancient promise of Lord Siva: "Whoever shall live in a circle of 3 *Yojanas* around this Hill shall be sure to get liberated even in the absence of initiation."

When the *sannyasi* returned, the young hermit showed him those lines, against which the admonisher could say nothing more.

In the course of time, a famous poet, himself a well known guru, came to see the young nameless Swami of the Hill. He confessed to having a certain spiritual problem and received an answer which thoroughly satisfied him. In his enthusiasm, he composed on the spot a Sanskrit hymn on the youthful sage, in which he named him Ramana, and he ordered his own disciples to address him henceforth as 'Maharshi'. Thus the nameless Swami of the Hill got the name which would make him famous all over the world.

However, he himself, after having lost his boyhood name, never again used any name, not even to sign a legal document.

A name stands for a person. He was not the person. Belonging neither to caste nor *ashrama* (stage of life), he was an *atiasrami*, beyond any classification.

He was Satchidananda, the Bliss of Conscious Being.

Ramana Maharshi lived 54 years in the shade of Arunachala. The first half of them was spent in its caves, the last half in an Ashram at the foot of it which had grown round the samadhi of his mother. He wrote some small treatises, his main work being *Ulladu Narpadu, Forty Verses on That which is, Upadesa Saram, Essence of Instruction* and *Five hymns on Arunachala*, and translated some texts which he considered important and useful for those who were following his advice. For several years conversations with visitors were jotted down and these offer the best commentary to the concentrated teachings of his writings.

But though there is nothing in his teachings which cannot be found in the scriptures, he was not teaching that wisdom of the rishis of yore, nor did he need it for testifying to the truth of his own. His teaching was an attempt to transmit to seekers the Truth, as he had found it in his own Great Experience, thus testifying to the truth and value of the scriptures.

Since this experience by its very nature evades being caught in the net of language, he considered his most efficient 'teaching' to be Silence. For 'Silence' is not only the true nature, but also the true 'language' of *Atman*, the mystery of Man.

However, for transmittance there must be a receiver, tuned to the same wavelength. Thus his teachings in words, the gist of which is given in the following pages, are meant in the first lines as preparing the searching soul for the initiation into the Silence of its true Identity.

The master came at his own time; he went when his time was over.

The instrument, brought forth by the Spirit of the ancient land, lost in the sea, to call the man of the 20th century, broke down on April 14th, 1950, destroyed by an incurable sarcoma. At that moment, a radiant meteor arose in the east, climbed slowly up to the zenith, and disappeared behind the sacred Hill.

The Lone Star of Arunachala had gone, but he left us his Voice... and his Silence.

II

HUNTING THE 'I'

‘What is the use of Self-Realisation?’

“Why should you seek Self-Realisation? Why do you not rest content with your present state? It is evident that you are discontent with the present state. This discontent is at an end if you realise the Self.”

(Talks, 487)

INVESTIGATION

Are you happy?

When you reply with the counterquestion 'What is happiness?' that means that you have already observed how brittle, how transient and short-lived your so-called happiness is.

But maybe what we have in mind was not happiness at all, but only pleasure?

'Pleasure' means the fulfilment of some desire or the removal of something unpleasant. But experience teaches that, after one desire has been fulfilled, two other ones will emerge, and after something unpleasant has been removed, something else of a similar kind will present itself and obstruct our intention to enjoy ourselves. We try and try again to change circumstances and conditions; is it not our birthright to be happy?

It is.

Then why have we to struggle and to fight and still miss it?

Because of a single error of ours: We do not know ourselves properly, and by that same error everything else is spoiled. Nor do we know what happiness is.

Real happiness needs no struggle nor endeavour, no reason nor cause; it is inherent in the real 'I'. However you and I, we live on a wrong 'I', as it were. That is the mistake which has to be removed before we can claim our birthright on real happiness.

So says Ramana, the Maharshi. And he advises us to dive deep into ourselves with the question: 'Who am I?'

Don't expect an answer to it; there is none, because every possible answer which might come to our mind is wrong. However, he promises us that one day, provided our perseverance and patience keep us on the path, there will emerge a real 'I' the identity of the Great Experience, and

together with it the true happiness, which is Satchi-dananda, the Bliss of Conscious Be-ing.

Somebody asked Sri Ramana:

“When we start this enquiry, who is doing it?”

Sri Ramana’s answer: “The Self does no *vichara*. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The ‘I’ about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As the result of the enquiry the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist.”

(*Day by Day*, 21.11.45.)

But there are people who feel unable to attack the wrong idea of themselves immediately. They want first to be shown an intellectual approach. There may also be some who do not even know how to ‘go within’. To those we recommend first that they take a closer look at their own ‘person’, at that which they take as ‘I’.

You say: ‘I sit, I walk’, obviously taking the body as ‘I’, because it is the body that sits or walks.

But don’t you also say; ‘I think, I believe, I decide’, etc.? This ‘I’ seems rather to be of the nature of the thinking mind!

And what about your being glad or sad, elated or depressed? Isn’t it an ‘I’ of some sort of feeling? And at another time there emerges an ‘I’ which is intending something, planning, designing, an ‘I’ which seems to be sheer willing?

The conclusion seems to be: ‘I’ means all this together as my body-mind-person.

‘My?’ Whose? By looking at these ‘I’s quite frankly, we see that this body-mind-person also is not ‘I’, but ‘mind’. So whose? Where is the ‘I’ to be found in this case?

A strange whim of language?

Let us consider the body. It cannot be ‘I’, because everybody talks about ‘his’ body. Apart from that, it has been born without having asked its ‘I’ beforehand, and it shall die without asking its ‘I’ whether it agrees to it or not. And in between it is living

upto its appointed hour without any consideration for its 'I', a mere biological phenomenon, a product of this planet, and it seems rather presumptuous to say even 'my' body. Moreover 'my' body does not at all obey me, its 'I'. Does 'my' thinking mind do that? The answer is: 'No, on the contrary.'

Thus it seems that thinking, feeling and willing are functions of the body, or, to be more specific, of its brain, a biologically reacting mechanism which serves the body properly without needing an 'I' for that purpose.

But still there seems to be an 'I', because we are conscious of it vividly even now, at this moment, when it appears to lose its last foothold!

Hold it!

Keep very quiet and observe: This 'I' does neither think nor will; it has no qualities, is neither man nor woman, has neither body nor mind; it has no trace of the 'Person' which you had in mind during your previous questions about the 'I'. It simply is conscious of itself as 'I am'. Not 'I am this', 'I am that'; only 'I am'.....

But beware: It's not you who has this 'I'...Consciousness as an object, but this Consciousness is your real 'I'!

This pure be-ing 'I am' is the first glimpse of the real 'I', the Self, which is by nature Pure Consciousness.

When your attention is keen, then you will discover simultaneously that there is not now and never has been a wrong 'I'. It has always been the same 'real I', only your mind has covered it up with the idea which it has about your 'person'.

There are other opportunities, when we could experience this pure 'I' consciously. One such is during the tiny gap between two thoughts, when the attention has given up its hold on one thought and not yet caught the next one. But since we never tried our attention is not trained this way, and we will hardly succeed in the attempt.

There is a better chance to catch it between sleeping and awaking. It is very important to try it, if you are serious in your hunting the 'I'. Take care of a few conditions: Try at night just before you fall asleep to keep as the last thought your intention to catch as the first thing of all on waking in the morning the experience of your true 'I'.

Another condition: You should take care not to awaken too abruptly such as by an alarm clock, and also not to jump headlong into your daily morning routine. The moment you awake, don't stir, but remember your intention from last night.

You will succeed after a few attempts. And what is possible once even for a moment can be extended by practice.

This experiment gives you the advantage that you now know the aim of your endeavour. It will help you in your further *sadhana* like leavening in the dough.

Ramana Maharshi named it the transitional 'I' and stressed the importance of this experience again and again.

"The 'I'-thought is only limited 'I'. The real 'I' is unlimited, universal, beyond time and space. They are absent in sleep. Just on rising up from sleep, and before seeing the objective world, there is a state of awareness which is your pure Self. That must be known." (*Talks*, 311).

"The Self is pure consciousness in sleep; it evolves as 'I' without the 'this' in the transition stage; and manifests as 'I and this' in the waking state. The individual's experience is by means of 'I' only. So he must aim at realisation in the way indicated (i.e., by means of the transitional 'I'). Otherwise the sleep... experience does not matter to him. If the transitional 'I' be realised the stratum is found and that leads to the goal." (*Talks*, 314).

'I'-thought and 'this'-thought are both emanations from the same Light. They are related to *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* respectively. In order to have the Reflected Light (pure *sattva*) from *rajas* and *tamas*, it must shine forth as 'I – I', unbroken

by 'this'-thought. This pure state momentarily intervenes between sleep and waking. If prolonged it is cosmic consciousness. This is the only passage to the realisation of the Self-shining Supreme Be-ing." (*Talks*, 323)

"Why is not that pure 'I' realised now or even remembered by us? Because of want of acquaintance with it. It can be recognised only if it is consciously attained. Therefore make the effort and gain it consciously." (*Talks*, 314).

This transitional 'I' is a moment of pure awareness, which is aware only of itself as 'I', pure Identity in itself. Extended by practice it becomes *turiya*, the 'fourth' of the normal states of consciousness, the three others of which are the waking state, dream and deep sleep. The waking state is consciousness in movement, caused by sense perceptions and the activities of the mind. In dreaming, consciousness is also moving under the impact of dream-creations of the mind. In deep sleep, consciousness is at rest, no thoughts, no pictures, no activity of any kind. That means it is pure Consciousness. So it would be Realisation, if we only would know how to become aware of it. However we cannot; deep-sleep consciousness is covered up by dullness. But since out of this 'unconsciousness' the transitional 'I' can arise in the shape of pure awareness of itself, as has been shown, we think there must be a bridge between deep sleep and the waking state.

There is none; and none is necessary. Actually there is only one awareness underlying the three states of consciousness, being their very substance and at the same time transcending them. It is called *turiya*, the 'fourth', in relation to the 'three states', but in itself *turiyatita*, 'beyond the fourth'. Because of the *turiya* being the substance of the other three states, we can become aware of the transitional 'I' and in the same way we can realise *turiya* as our true nature: Pure awareness, never waking or sleeping, never being born or dying.

“*Turiya* is only another name for the Self. The three states appear as fleeting phenomena on it and sink into it alone. Aware of the waking, dreams and deep sleep states, we remain unaware of our Self. Nevertheless the Self is here and now, it is the only Reality.” (*Talks*, 353).

Somebody asked: ‘Relatively speaking, is not the sleep state nearer to Pure Consciousness than the waking state?’

Ramana Maharshi: “Yes, in this sense: When passing from sleep to waking the ‘I’-thought must start; the mind comes into play; thoughts arise; then the functions of the body come into operation; all these together make us say that we are awake. The absence of all this evolution is the characteristic of sleep and therefore it is nearer to Pure Consciousness than the waking state.”

But one should not therefore desire to be always in sleep. In the first place it is impossible, for it will necessarily alternate with the other states. Secondly it cannot be the state of bliss in which the *jnani* is, for his state is permanent and not alternating. Moreover, the sleep state is not recognised to be one of awareness by people; but the sage is always aware. Thus the sleep state differs from the state in which the sage is established.

“Still more, the sleep state is free from thoughts and their impression to the individual. It cannot be altered by one’s will because effort is impossible in that condition. Although nearer to Pure Consciousness, it is not fit for efforts to realise the Self.

“The incentive to realise can arise only in the waking state and efforts can also be made only when one is awake. We learn that the thoughts in the waking state form the obstacle to gaining the stillness of sleep; stillness is the aim of the seeker. Even a single effort to still at least a single thought even for a trice goes a long way to reach the state of quiescence. Effort is required and it is possible in the waking state only. There is the effort here; there is awareness also; the thoughts are stilled; so there is

the peace of sleep gained. That is the state of the *jnani*. It is neither sleep nor waking but intermediate between the two. There is the awareness of the waking state and the stillness of sleep. It is called *jagratsushupti*. Call it wakeful sleep or sleeping wakefulness or sleepless sleep or wakeless waking...it is not the same as sleep or waking separately. It is the state of perfect awareness and of perfect stillness combined." (*Talks*, 609).

To reach *turiya* we have first to scrutinize the three states. In the waking state there is perceiving, thinking, discriminating, and choosing, liking and disliking, desire and fear, memory and anticipating, all of them moving round a perceiving centre 'I' and caused seemingly by outside objects. In dreams we experience almost the same without outer promptings, the whole picture, causes and effects, created by our imagination. In deep sleep there is nothing; at least we do not remember anything. But Identity is not wiped out, otherwise a Johnson who went to sleep might awake as a Benson. How can we bring this Identity from deep sleep up into the waking state? How can deep Silence survive in turbulent noise?

We have to use our control of that biologically acting mechanism, the brain. We do it more or less automatically during the waking state.

Think of your own room or office. While moving around you 'see' the furniture, because you have to avoid stumbling over it, but you do not see it consciously; the act of perceiving is cut short after the initial stage.

There is music coming out of a radio or transistor. Usually it is similar to the aforesaid while you have to do some work: you hear it, but not consciously; you cut short the act of listening after the first stage.

Somebody might tell you something. You not only hear it but you are listening attentively to grasp the meaning. If you are not interested, you register the news to your memory... or

not... and go on with your task. You have perceived the event, but it has not made an impression on you, has not altered your quiet state of consciousness. You cut it short after the second stage.

This attitude of aloofness, of detachment, has to be kept and practised as often as possible throughout the day.

Because the moment you are perceiving something and re-acting on it, being interested or emotionally involved, positively or negatively, you have covered up the silent, neutral, pure, witnessing 'I' by the reactive aggressive, personal 'I'.

Accordingly the *sadhana* of hunting the 'I' includes the practice of attention to our own perceiving, with the purpose of cutting it short just before the stage of reacting sets in. In practising this kind of detachment the seeker will soon get to a state of pure awareness, which is no longer 'perceiving'.

To 'perceiving' in the customary meaning of the term belongs 'grasping', i.e., reacting; it has an object and is an act within time and space. Pure awareness has no object and is beyond time and space. It is the highest wakefulness without all the other characteristics of the waking state.

This is one means to carry over the absolute Silence of deep sleep into the absolute, the pure awareness of the waking state. Sri Ramana Maharshi named it the sleepless sleep, the wakeful sleep or sleepwaking.

MEDITATION

In dealing with the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, one occasionally comes across pieces of advice which seem to contradict each other. To recognise the real meaning of such apparent inconsistencies one has to keep in mind one main principle of the sage: he never discouraged the visitor in his own spiritual endeavour, whatever the outer form may be. Because he knew that the sincere seeker after Truth is always guided from within, and that his inclinations to particular practices not only indicate the degree of his spiritual maturity, but at the same time, in most cases, are also the means best suited for the person concerned. He never advised a questioner to drop whatever practice he had followed up to that point; he only showed, if necessary, how to make it more effective.

When he stressed again and again the superiority of investigation compared with all other methods, he was not motivated by a kind of bigotry, but did it because there is a very important reason behind it, rocklike, insurmountable: all other methods of *sadhana* have to keep the personal 'I' to be practised: *vichara*, the investigation into this 'I', is the best possible method to remove it.

Meditation, as a yoga practice almost a parlour game nowadays, was also foremost among the subjects about which questions were put before Ramana Maharshi. His answers point, as usual, to the way already mentioned... how to make it most effective.

The purpose of meditation is known: Quieting the restlessness of the mind, also the method, fixing the attention on one thought only, until finally this thought also vanishes. Ramana Maharshi's interpretation of meditation is different:

“Meditation is your true state...now. You call it meditation, because there are other thoughts distracting you. When these thoughts are dispelled, you remain alone, i.e., in the state of meditation free from thoughts; and that is your real nature which you are now attempting to gain by keeping away other thoughts. Such keeping away of other thoughts is now called meditation. When the practice becomes firm, the real nature shows itself as the true meditation.” (*Talks*, 310).

Somebody utters doubt: ‘Meditation is with mind. How can it kill the mind in order to reveal the Self?’

The answer keeps in line with the former one: “Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away other thoughts; distraction of mind is a sign of weakness. By constant meditation it gains strength, that is to say, its weakness of fugitive thought gives place to the enduring background free from thoughts. This expanse devoid of thought is the Self. Mind in purity is the Self.” (*Talks*, 293).

Another question: “Shall I meditate on ‘I am Brahman?’”

(‘I am Brahman’ is one of the four Great Sayings or *Mahavakyas* of the *Upanishads*.)

“The text is not meant for thinking ‘I am Brahman’. ‘I’ is known to everyone. Brahman abides as ‘I’ in everyone. Find out the ‘I’. The ‘I’ is already Brahman. You need not think so. Simply find out the ‘I!’” (*Talks*, 266).

The same question turns up repeatedly.

“‘I am Brahman’ is only a thought. Who says it? Brahman himself does not say so. What need is there for Him to say it? Nor can the real ‘I’ say so, for ‘I’ always abides as Brahman. To be saying it is only a thought. Whose thought is it? All thoughts are from the unreal ‘I’, i.e., the ‘I’-thought. Remain without thinking. So long as there is thought there will be fear.” (*Talks*, 202).

So what should one think of when meditating?

“What is meditation? It is the expulsion of thoughts. You are perturbed by thoughts which rush one after another. Hold on to one thought so that others are expelled. Continuous practice gives the necessary strength of mind to engage in meditation.

“Meditation differs according to the degree of advancement of the seeker. If one is fit for it one might directly hold the thinker, and the thinker will automatically sink into his source, namely Pure Consciousness. If one cannot directly hold the thinker one must meditate on God; and in due course the same individual will have become sufficiently pure to hold the thinker and sink into absolute Be-ing.” (*Talks*, 453).

The natural consequence of this answer would be:

‘What then is the difference between meditation and investigation?’

The answer is:

“Both amount to the same. Those unfit for investigation must practise meditation. In this practice the aspirant forgetting himself meditates ‘I am Brahman’ or ‘I am Siva’; thus he continues to hold on to Brahman or Siva; this will ultimately end in the residual Being as Brahman or Siva, which he will realise to be the Pure Being,... the Self.”

“He who engages in investigation starts holding on to himself asks ‘Who am I’ and the Self becomes clear to him.” (*Talks*, 172).

Here we have one of the above mentioned ‘contradictions’: Though seemingly undermining such meditation by this method of enquiry, Ramana Maharshi himself recommends meditation on ‘I am Brahman’. But at the same time his answer contains the clue to the method, showing to convert meditation into self-enquiry: ‘Forgetting himself...’

The following quotation can be taken as a summarizing by Ramana Maharshi of the technique and effect of meditation:

“To be in one’s natural state on the subsidence of thoughts is bliss; if that bliss be transient, arising and setting... then it is only the sheath of bliss (anandamaya kosha), not the pure Self. What is needed is to fix the attention on the pure ‘I’ after the subsidence of all thoughts and not to lose hold of it. This has to be described as an extremely subtle thought; else it cannot be spoken of at all, since it is no other than the Real Self. Who is to speak of it, to whom and how?”

“This subtle mental state is not a modification of mind (called *vritti*). Because the mental states are of two kinds: One is the natural state and the other is a transformation into forms of objects. The first is the Truth, and the other is according to the doer. When the latter perishes, the former will remain over.

“The means for this end is meditation. Though meditation is with the triad of distinction (the meditator, the meditated object and the meditation), it will finally end in pure awareness (*jnana*). Meditation needs effort; *jnana* is effortless. Meditation can be done, or not done, or wrongly done; *jnana* is not so. Meditation is described as ‘doer’s own’, *jnana* as the ‘Supreme’s own’.” (*Talks*, 624).

The only answer consistent with his Great Experience is:

“Who is the meditator? Ask that question first. Remain as the meditator. There is no need to meditate.” (*Talks*, 205).

Thus far we have considered meditation as a sheer technique with the purpose of getting the process of automatic thought under control. But according to Ramana Maharshi it means more i.e., our true nature. However, no special technique whatsoever can reveal our true nature to us as long as there is our wrong ‘I’ as the motive power behind our acting in everyday-life.

In all kinds of spiritual practice there is the principle: ‘The *siddhi* of the sage is the *sadhana* of the *sadhaka*’, which means that the seeker after truth has to mould his own

behaviour according to the behaviour of the sage, whom he looks upon as his guide or teacher. Of course not like the hypocrite, who merely pretends, but in order to get at the inner attitude, the motivation of the master's behaviour. Our present pattern of acting is the result of a lifelong egocentrism which has penetrated all our feeling, thinking and acting, our so-called mind. To get rid of it, it is not enough to sit daily for some time in meditation. Because even when we are already advanced in this technique in a certain degree by practice and able to put the thought-process at rest, it is merely a trick. The ego-mind has realised, as it were, that we insist on being quiet, and it yields to be 'the meditator', for the time being. Because it 'knows' quite well that when the habitual time of meditation is over it will be free again to roam about as usual.

If we do not resolve to attack the deadly enemy in every nook and corner of our daily life, we shall never get rid of this ghost which we have pampered unconsciously for so long. But what is the means?

We can analyse ourselves, find out our personal shortcomings and weaknesses, and try to overcome them one by one. It is a very tedious and long process, and the result rather poor. Can we expect our enemy, the ghost... 'I', to commit suicide to please us?

Or we can take refuge in the wise Patanjali and adopt the first two steps of his Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama* and *Niyama*.

Yama represents the five *Mahavratas*, the 'great vows' of self-restraint: non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, continence and abstemiousness. They are not only meant in their gross sense, but in subtler ways also. Thus non-violence means not causing injury in thought, word or deed; truthfulness, avoiding not only sheer lies but exaggeration as well and making false impressions on others. Halftruths are worse than whole lies. Honesty does not only mean non-stealing, but covers at the

same time the possession of things in a quantity exceeding our momentary needs and not entertaining desires for things we don't need.

Brahmacharya is not confined to sexual continence in acting, word or thought. Its real meaning is the quest for Brahman, to live and find our happiness only in Brahman. Abstemiousness means freedom not only from greed, but from all desires.

These five *yamas* are completely obligatory for any one undertaking the yogic path, and they are important for any one who wants results of his meditation practice.

The *niyamas* are rather positive directions in so far as they demand abidance in the right, while the *yamas* lay stress on the renunciation of the wrong. The five *niyamas* are: purity, external and internal, contentment, *tapas*, concerning body, speech and mind, study of scriptures and surrender to God.

Practising these yogic virtues sincerely would certainly bring some improvement in the course of time, but it will not root out the enemy, the personal 'I', because again it is just the same 'I' which is practising them. Maybe it will even become stronger, a 'yogic I', as will be seen later. So what can we do?

There is only one way to overcome the ghost...to watch it. Do not fight, do not resist. Only try to watch it, quietly but ceaselessly. In other words, develop an unconcerned witness-consciousness towards men, things and happenings without, but particularly towards yourself within. It means to carry on the calmness of the mind gained in your meditation to cover your whole day. You will distinctly feel it as an undercurrent of peace and detachment.

Of course, as soon as you succeed, the ghost-'I' will immediately try to hide itself in this witness-consciousness at the feeling 'I am the witness'. This again is only a thought. But to be the witness without any I-consciousness is the pure mind at the threshold of Reality.

While following the transformation of your personal 'I' into the impersonal 'witnessing', you cut at the root of all your 'personal' shortcomings, vices and weaknesses, your passions and evil habits, because the root of all this unpleasant 'you' is just that personal 'I'. Try to imagine yourself in the mood of the 'unconcerned witness' described above, and you will see that in that state it is impossible to think or act in a negative way, because in that mood you are, though only momentarily, beyond the personal 'I'. Your *sadhana* is to keep yourself permanently in the state of 'detached witnessing' of all and everything, including the personal 'I' when and wherever it should try to raise its head.

In the silent Light of being witnessed it cannot survive. Such 'witnessing' will soon grow into pure Awareness, aware only of Itself.

In the words of Ramana Maharshi: "The Truth is that the Self is constant and unintermittent Awareness." (*Talks*, 454).

And in another context: "The essence of mind is only Awareness or Consciousness. When the ego, however, dominates it it functions as the reasoning, thinking or sensing faculty. The cosmic mind being not limited by the ego, has nothing separate from itself and therefore is only aware. This is what the Bible means by 'I am that I AM'." (*Talks*, 188).

OBSTACLES AND PITFALLS

Hunting the 'I' means trying to overcome the only obstacle before Awakening to the Truth... but how many faces it has!

The one which soon will betray itself as a great deposit of obstacles is the so-called mind, with its main qualities, restlessness and dullness.

The cardinal remedy has been mentioned: To develop an attitude of unconcerned witnessing, watch the restless thoughts and the rushing torrent will slow down; recognize, watch your laziness, and it will sneak away.

The method works, but actually it means to treat the symptoms, leaving the disease, which seems to be the mind, undisturbed.

Have a closer look. Try to locate this opponent to the most important decision of your life, your search for the Self. Where does the mind come in?

Ramana Maharshi says:

“There is no entity by name mind. Because of the emergence of thoughts we surmise something from which they start. That we term ‘mind’. When we probe to see what it is, there is nothing like it. After it has thus vanished, Peace will be found to remain eternal.” (*Talks*, 239).

Then are thoughts, feelings and will produced by the brain?

No. Science dropped that hypothesis, which it once held, and declared the brain to be a sheer receiving and reacting organ.

Western psychology talks about subconscious regions within the individual as the source of much material for the so-called mind; but there is also assumed a vast ocean of a collective consciousness, which contains an infinite mass of concepts and ideas, subtle urges and passions, holy and unholy, and which is ceaselessly sending out

corresponding signals that can be caught by anybody who is just tuned in as a receiver. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the fact that important inventions and striking new ideas have turned up in different brains at the same time.

Ancient eastern tradition took notice only of the seeming independence of thoughts, ideas, etc., from the thinking person and developed an intricate theory of their 'roots'...latent past impressions, hidden tendencies and suppressed desires... calling them *vasanas*.

Since we have no direct access to the depths of subconscious where the *vasanas* are stored, we can only treat the symptoms, as it were, the thoughts and pictures, concepts and ideas, which rise into our consciousness. And it is enough when we treat them in the way already mentioned, watching them quietly as they arise and disappear on their own.

Meditation without an object brings up more of them than the habitual waking state. *Vasanas* from a depth of unconsciousness which is not touched even by meditation will be settled by dreams. It seems to be the explicit purpose of the dream state to deal with inaccessible *vasanas* and render them harmless. We need not worry about them as obstacles to our *sadhana*; to treat their 'offsprings' as and when they appear will do to make them ineffective. After all, they cling to the personal 'I' only; when that disappears in the search for the Self they too dissolve once and for all.

Looking out for other obstacles, we meet another one which can trouble us a lot, our changing moods.

We are aware, that they change, much to our annoyance: sometimes we are restless or inclined to flare up, at other times we feel dull or even depressed, and sometimes we seem to be the very embodiment of harmony, peace and happiness itself. Of course, there always seems to be some reason for it.

And this idea is wrong.

For in respect to this change of mood, we are merely a biological phenomenon, an organism, simply reacting to some cosmic influence.

The Western concept of creation goes along the line of origin, evolution, decline and destruction, whereas Indian thinkers of yore did not allow a creation out of naught. Nothing remains always nothing; something cannot come out of nothing. Thus they preferred the theory of an infinite cycle of an alternately manifest and unmanifest universe.

Sattva, corresponding to Light, peace and harmony; *rajas*, communicating heat, movement, passion and wrath; and *tamas*, which means dullness, ignorance, stagnation and depression are three *gunas* (qualities) of nature itself, which are in perfect balance among each other during the age-long unmanifested period of the dormant universe; its manifestation into another period of activity starts by a disturbance in the balance of the three *gunas* and is kept in motion by them.

They cause the rhythm in which the universe is swinging, and there is absolutely nothing which can withdraw from their influence. Beyond the *gunas* is only Absolute Consciousness, because it is beyond nature.

We are not asking the Western reader to accept all and every Eastern theory about God, Man and World uncritically, merely because they are Eastern. We ask him, however, in this case, to examine this concept of the three *gunas* applied to himself, and he will soon be convinced of its validity, at least as working-hypothesis.

Don't all of us know morning-awakenings when we are in a truly happy...or miserable...condition, without finding a particular reason for it? And at other times, aren't our poor presumptive 'reasons' found limping behind?

The insight into the true nature of our 'moods' as the play of the *gunas* will be of great advantage in our *sadhana*, insofar as it undermines effectively our long cherished feeling of

individuality. Aren't joy and sorrow, happiness and misery, suffering and high elation the very 'stuff' of our souls? Where is our individuality, if all this is superimposed on some quite impersonal changes, caused regularly by the rhythmic change in the balance of the three *gunas*?

But how can we get control over this amazing mystery, which reveals itself suddenly as a cosmic power far beyond the reach of our poor personal 'I'?

Again there is nothing which can be done immediately against the working of the *gunas* on us. But we can renounce the desire to seek and find and even invent reasons for the changes in our conditions, bodily, mental and spiritual. We can watch the coming and going of the *gunas* and each time just make the best out of them.

Having once realised the true nature of your moods as being the result of the play of the *gunas*, you take them no more seriously than you take the rain or the wind. They are not yours, still less 'you'. They will pass by. This is the way to become a *gunatita*, one beyond the *gunas*.

The Self does not know any obstacles; all of them are obstacles only to the *sadhaka*, the practising personal 'I'. And there are general rules to be applied to all of them alike:

Learn that the body-mind-combination is your instrument. You keep it functioning, but do not ask it about its 'standard', neither with respect to the body, mind or spirit. It is indispensable as an instrument for your spiritual intentions, but absolutely, uninteresting in any other respect.

Don't try to attain something! *Sadhana* is meant to remove only. Deny reality to everything, including yourself. It is not you who realises the Self; the Self reveals only itself. To whom? To Itself only.

Don't fight against your 'I'! Every resistance is strengthening the 'I' because the motive-power behind resistance is 'Will'!

Don't suppress either! Because a suppressed thought, feeling or intention is bound to rebound!

Only watch yourself, without reacting, either positively or negatively. In becoming the observer, you are no longer the 'thinker'; you are going to become first 'the witness', and thereafter pure 'witnessing', which is not any more 'you', but completely impersonal. Then you are practically unassailable by obstacles.

Pitfalls are only a peculiar sort of obstacles, insofar as they usually come in disguise, and in advanced stages, when the alert awareness of the *sadhaka* tends to relax.

The most harmless among them is the idea that, though we are not responsible for all the misery of the world...famine, wars, suffering...we feel compelled to try to stop it. The problem often takes the shape of the question to the sage:

'How can the sage be happy in his Realisation in the face of the desolate conditions of the world? What is he going to do to alter it?'

The questioner never seems to think how many powerful saints and sages have walked this globe throughout the centuries without being able to 'help' it. If there is a Higher Power behind the life of the individual, should it not also know what to do in the case of the world? Is it waiting for and depending on you or me for that purpose?

Maybe suffering and misery are just the means to remind man that his destiny is higher than that of settling comfortably in this world as his home; a happy person is seldom keen to question his or her situation. Of course everybody should stretch out a helping hand to everybody in need with whom he comes in contact, and that is just what all saints and sages have done, and every *sadhaka* will do, when he is keen to remove his ego...I. If only everyone would try to care for poverty and misery in his immediate surroundings, all the misery of the world would have been removed long ago!

Why is it not done?

To be busy, theoretically, with the social reform of a country or the world is only too often the means to escape from the responsibility to reform oneself first.

There is another rather harmless mistake which happens regularly to beginners. Many of them are blessed with various glimpses of the higher life, which they have entered. These carry the stamp of a genuine change of consciousness, and of course the *sadhaka* is happy, and convinced that he has made real progress. There is no harm in it, because he soon has to face the fact that his 'experience' is fading away, never to return. When this happens again and again, he learns to understand these sparks as what they are, glimpses from another dimension which want to teach him to discriminate between, the different dimensions but which also lure him on in his spiritual endeavour. They only become a pitfall, when he, by vanity or impatience, gets stuck in one of them, taking it for final Realisation. Then his further progress is blocked.

The mark by which this pitfall is recognised is 'I have realised...' This 'I' can only be a 'wrong I', because it is not the 'I' that realises.

The duty of the *sadhaka* is to watch himself ceaselessly; he has to know what is going on within himself. There is a serious risk in doing this only when he looks too much at others. When he does, his 'personal I' at once makes comparisons; and the result will be: 'I am holier than thou'.

With this idea he gives his 'personal I' a strong chance to develop into a 'spiritual I', which is much worse than his original quite ordinary 'I', strengthened by all his previous spiritual effort. The result is a spiritual pride, the worse the more advanced the *sadhaka* has become, because his attainments, serve only to confirm his 'right' to be proud of his success.

But even if he perceives the gentle Voice from within, warning him against this trend going on in him and reminding him of the secret of real 'attainment', silent humility, and even if he is quite prepared to accept the warning, there is still the risk that the cunning ego now is concealing itself behind his pride in his humility!

There is only one remedy against these and all other pitfalls on the Path to Realisation: Alert Awareness, relentlessly focussing on the treacherous ego...I.

Luckily the *sadhaka* is not left alone in his secret struggle against himself on his lonesome journey towards his high destination. How could he ever reach It. Were It not already within himself? And It never fails to send signals of warning when the traveller is nearing a pitfall or has even been caught by one due to inadvertance.

His is a journey like that in fairy-tales, when the hero has to go through many adventures, to fight against many enemies and even demons, to win the princess at the end. The further he proceeds, the mightier the obstacles.

The most cunning pitfall on the path of the *sadhaka* is the last one, hidden in Realisation Itself.

The first Revelation of the Self is temporary. "Jnana, once revealed, needs time to steady itself." (*Talks*, 141).

The danger is not in the sliding back; it is natural to most *sadhakas* and is met quite naturally by continuing one's practice faithfully, which in its turn will lead to further Revelations of the Self until finally there is no *sadhaka* left, but the Self only.

If, on the other hand, the *sadhaka* tries to 'hold on' to that first Revelation, in spite of his Inner Guide warning him, (Who is holding on?), then the ego...I slinks again in where the Self is veiled again and distorts the Revelation of the Self into the cry of victory: 'I have realised!'

Blindfolded by the Bliss of the final 'success' ('whose success?') he never stops to scrutinize his condition and thus never finds out the truth: That he became a *yogabhrastha*, one who has fallen out of his yoga, his 'union'.

The new and definitive disguise of his ego...I is 'the Guru', and this last and most powerful pitfall never releases him, because he never recognises that he is its victim.

There are nowadays many whose Guru-pitfall caught them even much earlier on their path.

III

MAYA

Maya is that which makes us regard as non-existent the Self, the Reality, which is always and everywhere present and all-pervasive and self-luminous, and as existent the individual soul, the world and God, which have been conclusively proved to be non-existent at all times and places.

(Spiritual Instruction.)

THE SNAKE IN THE ROPE

In modern civilisation man is no longer at the centre as Man; he is brought up to be a useful tool serving the process of production. To further this purpose his training is aimed at an intense development of his intellect. There would be nothing to object to in this process if the intellect would be kept within the limits of its own sphere. The realm of theoretical knowledge only so far as it is leading to practical application. That may include scientific thought, but it is a poor and even dangerous guide in question of the hidden truth of Man, World and God, which are to be discovered only by faculties far subtler than those of the biologically reacting mechanism of the brain. Still the human mind has also tried to usurp this higher dimension for itself; the various systems of philosophy are the results.

The dominating Hindu-philosophy of to-day is the *Advaita-Vedanta*; and Ramana Maharshi is considered the most prominent figure representing this philosophy.

'*A-dvaita*' means 'not two', the 'One without a second'. There is only One principle, Brahman, essence and substance of all and everything; diversity is merely appearance. Brahman as the ultimate nature of man is called *Atman*, the Self, merely for convenience's sake; *Atman is Brahman*. The world too is Brahman; to see it as the world of diversity is *Maya*, illusion.

The idea of *Maya* is the point where the antagonists of *Advaita-Vedanta* attack the system as showing inconsistency against its principle of *A-dvaita*, *Maya* being 'second' to account for diversity, which cannot be included in 'the One'!

Ramana Maharshi supported Sri Sankara and the *Advaita*-system:

“The tantriks and others of the kind condemn Sri Sankara’s philosophy as *Maya*-path without understanding him aright. What does he say? He says: (1) Brahman is real; (2) the universe is a myth; (3) Brahman is the universe. He does not stop at the second statement but continues to supplement it with the third. What does it signify? The universe is conceived to be apart from Brahman, and that perception is wrong. The antagonists point to his illustration of ‘the snake in the rope’. In dim light one can think a coiled rope to be a snake. This is unconditioned superimposition. After the truth of the rope is known, the illusion of the snake is removed once and for all.

“But they should also take into account the conditioned superimposition, i.e., ‘the water in the mirage.’

“The mirage does not disappear even after we know it to be a mirage. The vision is there, but the man does not run to it for water. Sri Sankara must be understood in the light of both these illustrations. The world is a myth. Even after knowing it, it continues to appear. It must be known to be Brahman and not apart.

“The antagonists continue. With the conditioned as well as the unconditioned illusions considered, the phenomenon of the water in a mirage is purely illusory because that water cannot be used for any purpose, whereas the phenomenon of the world is different, for it is purposeful. How then does the latter stand on a par with the former?

“A phenomenon cannot be a reality simply because it serves a purpose or purposes. Take a dream for example. The dream-creations are purposeful; they serve the dreampurpose. The dream-water quenches dream-thirst. The dream-creation, however, is contradicted in the two other states. What is not continuous cannot be real. If real, the thing must ever be real, and not real for a short time and unreal at other times.

“So it is with magical creations. They appear real and are yet illusory.

“Similarly the universe cannot be real of itself...that is to say apart from the underlying Reality.” (*Talks*, 315).

And: “*Maya* is used to signify the manifestation of the Reality. Thus *Maya* is only Reality.” (*Talks*, 20).

But these explanations do not make Ramana Maharshi a philosopher. His Great Experience was not a result of a study of *Advaita*-philosophy, but the basic-event which enabled him to confirm that great intuition of yore.

He simply states what he sees and that is the same as Sankara and the ancient Rishis had seen and which everybody will see who follows his Path up to the end. That behind the appearance of the forms is the true nature of the world as Brahman. However, all their explanation and deductions cannot prove their vision, as long as he who doubts cannot see what they see. And he cannot see it as long as both of them use different ways of perceiving. No logical.. philosophical... demonstration can prove what the realized one sees: That the Self is not only his true nature, but also that of the world. And he perceives it as distinctly as ‘a fruit on the palm of his hand’.

That was the reason, why Ramana Maharshi used to divert the conversation as soon as it was convenient, when it had turned to *Maya*. Actually the problem, *Maya*, is no problem at all, being no obstruction in the Path.

When Suka, the son of the sage Vyasa, realized the Self, he did not believe either himself or his father, who confirmed his achievement, because he felt that he had not yet solved the riddle of the world as *Maya*. Thus his father sent him to Janaka, the royal sage.

King Janaka put him to several tests, which the youthful Suka passed in the calm and composed way of a real sage. Accordingly King Janaka confirmed his Self-realisation. Suka remonstrated: ‘But there is still the problem of *Maya*...’

King Janaka smiled. “Drop it!”

The same moment Suka 'saw' that the Truth of the world was the same as his own Truth.

In Reality in Forty Verses, v.3, Ramana Maharshi answers the problem in a similar way:

“ ‘The world is real’... ‘No, it is a false appearance’; ‘The world is sentient’... ‘No, it is not’; ‘The world is happiness’... ‘No, it is not’... ... what is the use of such disputes? That state is agreeable to all in which, ignoring the world, one knows one’s Self, abandoning both unity and duality, and the ego-sense is gone.”

Realisation of the Self does not mean finding the solution to each and every intellectual problem, but leaving them behind. The Self does not see any problem. It is always the restlessness of the mind that creates problems, in order to have a reason to be busy in the attempt to solve them.

ON GURUS, SIDDHIS, SANNYASA

It is the mind, that creates questions and goes in search of answers. It takes some time until it realises this fact and gives up, but meanwhile it interferes continuously in the natural expansion of the seeker's spiritual dimension. Until then question after question emerges, and Ramana Maharshi stood patiently day by day against the flood. A collection of his replies to stray questions is given in the last chapter. However, the three themes mentioned in the heading above may ask for a treatment in some detail.

There is a widespread hunting for the guru. And a lot of so-called gurus make quite a good business out of the distorted ideas about the guru and his function that are prevalent everywhere. Who then is a guru?

“The *sastras* say that one must serve a guru for twelve years for getting Self-Realisation. What does the guru do? Does he hand it over to the disciple? Is not the Self always realized? What does the common belief mean then? The man is always the Self and yet he does not know it? He confounds it with the non-self, viz., the body etc. Such confusion is due to ignorance. If ignorance be wiped out the confusion will cease to exist and the true knowledge will be unfolded. By remaining in contact with realised sages the man will gradually lose the ignorance until its removal is complete. The eternal Self is thus revealed.

“The disciple surrenders himself to the master. That means there is no vestige of individuality retained by the disciple. If the surrender is complete, all sense of individuality is lost, and there is thus no cause for misery. The eternal being is only happiness. That is revealed.

“Without understanding it aright, people think that the guru teaches the disciple something like ‘*Tatwamasi*’ and that the disciple realises ‘I am Brahman’. In their ignorance they conceive of Brahman as something more huge and powerful than anything else. With a limited ‘I’ the man is so stuck up and wild. What will be the case if the same ‘I’ grows up enormous? He will be enormously ignorant and foolish! This false ‘I’ must perish. Its annihilation is the fruit of *gurusewa*, the service to the guru. Realisation is eternal and it is not newly brought about by the guru. He helps in the removal of ignorance. That is all.” (*Talks*, 350).

The real guru is one who has realised the Self. But how can we recognise him? He does not talk about himself; he behaves exactly as everybody else; and if he does not, there is reason to be cautious. There is only one quality by which he is revealed in his silence as well as in his talk.

If you are ready for him, he will meet you without any searching for him on your part. And only then can you be sure that he is the guru *for you*.

Meanwhile, you are not without guidance from without. The inner guidance sends signals, as it were, ceaselessly...a certain sentence in a book, a smile of an infant, the beauty of a flower or a sunset all of them can become the means for a sudden understanding, one of the minor enlightenments which adorn the path of the sincere seeker after Truth. All of them could become his or her Guru. The famous ancient saint Dattatreya said of himself that he had 24 Gurus, including inanimate objects.

Even the first quest after the meaning of life is already prompted by the inner, the real Guru. There is a beautiful experience of Moses, preserved in the tradition of Islam. When he complained, “O Lord, where shall I seek to find thee?” he heard the answer, “Thou wouldst not seek Me if thou wouldst not already have found Me!”

Who is it that is in search for the guru? The longing is certainly prompted by the Self, as is indicated also in the answer to Moses' prayer. But it is the 'personal I' that goes out 'hunting the guru'. It is not punishment when he has to suffer the disappointment of catching the wrong one, but an experience which will teach him the proper way...to trust and wait!

If you want by all means to have an outer guru, you will get exactly the kind of guru that corresponds to the stage of your development. That usually means a rather low type, because a guru of a higher standard is of no use to a disciple of limited understanding; the receiver has to be tuned to the wavelength of the transmitter for receiving, and vice versa. Thus even *if* there is a meeting with a Realised Soul, the guru need not refuse the disciple, because the disciple will not even perceive the presence of Greatness, since his inner senses are still clouded. He will be like the man who went in search for Chintamani, the celestial gem that fulfils every desire, who found it and threw it away when he saw a colourful pebble.

Of the worst kind among the many 'gurus' nowadays are those who are deliberately exploiting those hunting for a guru. Their method of catching the trustful ignorant is often a mystifying show of ceremonies, incantations, dark hints, and even threats of black magic powers, with references to tradition. Sri Ramana Maharshi says about these means:

"The books say that there are so many kinds of initiations. They also say that the guru makes some rites for him with fire, water, *japa*, *mantras*, etc., and call such fantastic performances, *dikshas*, initiations, as if the disciple becomes ripe only after such processes are gone through by the guru.

"The most potent form of work is silence. However vast and emphatic the *sastras* may be, they fail in their effect. The guru is quiet and peace prevails in all. This silence is more vast and more emphatic than all the *sastras* put together..." (*Talks*, 398).

But when the fake-guru is clever enough, he may even feign this attitude also.

Another type of self-styled guru may not only deceive the would-be disciple but also himself. He might have some intellectual knowledge of the Truth and be able to teach the same as far as this limited knowledge goes. The sincere seeker after Truth will, one day or other, by the silent Grace of his inner guidance recognise the limitation of the would-be guru and leave him... perhaps for another one, or perhaps he has ripened enough in the meantime so that he will now recognise the Voice of the Inner Guru...the Self...and accept It unreservedly. Or he might follow the way of Dattatreya and learn to see the Guru in all and everything, which amounts practically to the same.

Now there is the strange fact that Ramana Maharshi himself refused to be 'the Guru' of his devotees...or to be exact, he never initiated any of them in the traditional way. Some of them are known to have left him, though they loved and worshipped him, because they thought themselves unable to proceed spiritually without an outer guru. How is this strange attitude of his to be understood? Did the sage shun the responsibility which the guru is expected to take over in respect to his devotee? According to tradition, the guru who accepts a disciple also takes over his karma, bad as it may be.

No. Sri Ramana Maharshi was only being consistent; he lived what he taught...the realisation of the One without a second! When there is only One, Brahman, where is the place for guru and disciple? A guru presupposes a disciple, a disciple a guru; they are invariable 'two'.

Can there be two Selves, the one guiding the other? True guidance is possible only when the Self of the guru and that of the disciple is one and the same Self.

The real function of the guru, higher and more efficient than his teachings, is his power of contact, removing the ignorance of the disciple by direct transmission.

This is of course possible only when the guru has himself realised the Truth. This power is so 'real' that Ramana Maharshi always gave the greatest importance to *Satsanga*, the contact with highly advanced souls, because their purity, wisdom and compassion are contagious like health and peace.

This is the actual danger of surrender to a 'wrong' guru...that his cunning, his vanity and selfishness are just as contagious. Even the experience of everyday-life shows the danger of evil company; though it is usually taken as an evil example only. But even in that case the bad influence goes deeper. It is immediately contagious like a disease.

May the Inner Guru protect us!

This mysterious land, lost in the sea, granting the gift of the supreme Truth to those who find the path into its hidden depths, also still keeps many of the secrets of magic techniques and powers, called *siddhis*. The number of seekers after these secrets will probably outnumber those who are in search after Truth. Though it is widely known that Ramana Maharshi did not appreciate such tendencies, usually connected with *yoga-sadhana*, now and again he was asked about the position of *siddhis* within the frame of the search for the Self. Once he declared:

"The Self is the most intimate and eternal Being whereas the *siddhis* are foreign. The one requires effort to acquire, the other does not.

"The powers are sought by the mind which must be kept alert, whereas the Self is realised when the mind is destroyed. The powers manifest only when there is the ego. The Self is beyond the ego and is realised after the ego is eliminated. Where is the use of occult powers for a Self-realised Being?

“Self-Realisation may be accompanied by occult powers or it may not be. If the person has sought such powers before Realisation, he may get them after Realisation. There are others who have not sought such powers and have attempted only Self-Realisation. They do not manifest them.” (*Talks*, 597).

Among the visitors of the sage was Mr. Evans-Wentz, the wellknown Tibetologist. He too asked for an explanation on the value of occult powers. Ramana Maharshi replied:

“The occult powers are only in the mind; they are not natural to the Self. That which is not natural, but acquired, cannot be permanent and is not worth striving for.

“They denote extended powers. A man is possessed of limited powers and is miserable; he wants to expand his powers so that he may be happy. But consider if it will be so; if with limited perception one is miserable, with extended perceptions the misery must increase proportionately. Occult powers will not bring happiness to anyone, but will make him all the more miserable!

“Moreover what are these powers for? The would-be occultist desires to display the *siddhis* so that others may appreciate him. He seeks appreciation and if it is not forthcoming he will not be happy. He may even find another possessor of higher powers. That will cause jealousy and breed unhappiness.

“Which is the real power? Is it to increase prosperity or bring about peace? That which results in peace is the highest perfection (*siddhi*).” (*Talks*, 20).

The root-idea in Sri Ramana’s attitude to the phenomenon of ESP, or extra sensory perception, as *siddhis* nowadays are scientifically labelled, is easily discovered.

ESP-experience belongs to the ‘personal I’. The teachings of the sage of Arunachala revolve around “hunting the ‘I’” until it submits. To seek and attain *siddhis* means to strengthen it. That settles the matter once and for all.

Sannyasa was in ancient India the fourth and last of the *asramas*, the stations of life. The first of them was represented by the boy, who was sent to live as a *brahmachary* with the guru, to serve him and be trained in the scriptures. The second stage was his life as a householder, after an early marriage, in which he carried out his duty to those around him and made his contribution to the collective. When his sons were settled and his daughters married, he was free to retire. However his was not the idea of retirement to a comfortable life of enjoying the well-earned fruits of a life of work and trials. The third stage of the *asramas* was a quiet life of renunciation 'in the woods', *vanaprastha*, in meditation and prayer, in longing for enlightenment.

These first three periods conformed to custom and convention, but the last one, *sannyasa*, the total renunciation was expected to assert itself at its own time and under its own conditions.

This fact was behind Ramana Maharshi's somewhat enigmatic reply to a question as to whether the questioner should embrace *sannyasa*:

"If you should, you would not have asked."

The traditional idea about *sannyasa* is explained in Narada's sermon to 'Yudhisthira in *Bhagavatam*, book 7, chap. X... XII:

"The *sannyasi's* whole endeavour should be directed towards the discovery of the true Self at the point of contact between deep sleep and the waking state. He should look upon both bondage and freedom, birth and death, as unreal. He should not read profane books nor live by any profession, nor indulge in polemics, nor take side in a partisan spirit, nor accept disciples, nor do much reading, which would divert his mind from his spiritual practice, nor make speeches, nor undertake any responsible work. After attaining enlightenment he may continue to behave as before or alter his ways as will suit his

convenience. To give no signs by which other can recognise his attainment, he retains his usual mode of life or pursuit...”

Sri Ramana Maharshi never encouraged people who thought of assuming formal *sannyasa*, though he hereby seemingly contradicted himself. When pointed out that he himself had cut all connections with his family life and home, he simply replied that it is a matter of karma. Discussing the subject, he saw the motivation...in most cases it is escapism, due to disappointment with a weary and unsuccessful life. Almost as often it is a matter of self-importance. Being in modest or even poor circumstances, you are nobody; as a *sannyasi* you are somebody...at least in the eyes of some people. There might be a third motive with a minority...impatience. They are not satisfied with the slow rate of their spiritual progress.

All three kinds of motivation, and all others as well, respond to the promptings of the ego-I. Therefore Ramana Maharshi gave the typical reply:

“Why do you think you are a householder? If you go out as a *sannyasi*, a similar thought that you are a *sannyasi* will haunt you. Whether you continue in the household, or renounce it and go to the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thoughts. If you renounce the world, it will only substitute the thought ‘*sannyasi*’ for ‘householder’ and the environments of the forest for those of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there. They increase in new surroundings. There is no help in the change of the environment. The obstacle is the mind. It must be gotten over whether at home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? Therefore why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now...in whatever environment you may be.

“The environment never abandons you according to your desire. Look at me. I left home. Look at yourselves. You have

come here leaving the home-environment. What do you find here? Is this different from what you left?" (*Talks*, 34).

As an answer to another question he replied:

"*Sannyasa* is to renounce one's individuality. This is not the same as tonsure and ochre robes. A man may be a householder; yet, if he does not think he is a householder, he is a *sannyasi*. On the contrary a man may wear ochre robes and wander about; yet if he thinks he is a *sannyasi* he is not that. To think of *sannyasa* defeats its own purpose." (*Talks*, 427).

"*Sannyasa* is meant for one who is fit. It consists in renunciation not of material objects but of attachment to them. *Sannyasa* can be practised by any one even at home. Only one must be fit for it." (*Talks*, 588).

It is the sovereign wisdom of this mysterious land, lost in the sea, in the 20th century just as it was millenniums ago, when it was expressed in 'Manu's Law for Sannyasins':

"He should not wish to die, nor hope to live,
 But await the time appointed, as a servant awaits his wages.
 He must not show anger to one who is angry.
 He must bless the man who curses him.
 He must not utter falsehood.
 Rejoicing in the things of the spirit, calm,
 Caring for nothing, abstaining from sensual pleasure,
 Himself his only helper,
 He may live on in the world, in the hope of eternal bliss."

Thus *sannyasa* is neither showy, nor brilliant, nor very attractive a path, but just the one on which Truth is likely to meet the wanderer, provided he is a true *sannyasi*.

IV

THE VOICE OF NATURE

..... to think is not your real nature.

(Talks 184).

THE BIRTH OF MAN

The natural history of man is a register of facts and their interpretation in the form of theories. The seeker after the truth of himself is not interested in discussions about the latter. He clings to facts and takes the liberty of interpreting them according to his own light.

We take for granted the statement of the rishis of ancient India that before anything else was, there was Absolute Consciousness. It is in and beyond everything that is, and will be, when everything else has disappeared. We consider as the biological means of contact between that Absolute Consciousness and living beings their brain and nervous system whose development means a growing capacity of partaking more and more of that Absolute Consciousness.

We also agree with the statement of natural science that man as a biological phenomenon, having gone through many previous steps, is now at the highest rung of the scale of animal life.

But where, in the course of his 'evolution', is the moment when he *left* the line of his animal ancestors to become human?

It seems that natural science has never found an adequate answer to this question. To the scientist, man is still merely a mammal, as all his highly developed 'human' capacities can be retraced to his animal heritage, the difference being only one of degree. As natural science teaches, animal life in its earliest stage is completely ruled by instinct, an inborn mechanism of reaction regulating its primitive needs and activities. Living by instinct alone implies that the creature has no consciousness either of himself or of its surroundings. Still there is the taking in of food, there is procreation, both of which grant without doubt even in

this earliest stage a sense of satisfaction, which must be *felt consciously*...or not at all! Thus 'feeling' is the first stirring of 'consciousness' within that simple network of nerves which precedes the genesis of the brain in higher forms of life. Moreover, these same most primitive living beings do not take in all and everything for food, but seem to choose. Thus there *must* be a sense of dim discrimination even in their instinct. Is not 'discriminating and choosing' the basic feature of 'thinking', kept up even to the highest stage of scientific and technical thinking?

The last of the faculties latent in the stage of instinct behaviour is the will, being nothing else than the inborn urge for *acting*. As urge it is pure instinct, which means unconscious to the creature; when it becomes conscious, it is 'will'.

By the application of feeling, thinking and acting during numberless ages, those earliest forms of life developed that brain and nervous system meant to be the biological mechanism of conscious reacting. But we can find no definite borderline between human and animal life, neither physically, physiologically nor in their ways of behaving, not even in his faculty of ESP, extra sensory perception, since this too shows itself clearly in animals, where it has been the object of experimental examination.

Let us drop these strange facts for the time being and start anew from another angle. We jump to the rich magic culture of the Ice Age, dated about 50,000 years back. The way of life is still the same as millions of years before...the tribesmen are hunters and fishers, their wives collect wild fruits and vegetables. But there is something more. Only recently, in the beginning of the 20th century, huge natural underground caves were discovered accidentally in Spain and France. The walls of these caves are covered with the most wonderful drawings of the wild animals of that time, 50,000 years back, bears and stags wild horses and bison. All of them are hit by arrows or boomerang,

and in some places there are men hunting them. Evidently these pictures...thousands of them in more than a hundred caves...represent the amazing artistic skill of the magicians of hunting tribes, with the purpose of conjuring up success for planned hunting trips.

But for whom was the magician summoning up, not only by his paintings but also by his magic dance, the footprints of which are still to be seen where there is mudground in the deep recesses of some of these natural caves?

These marvellous pictures represent the correspondence of the living with their deceased, with the purpose of asking for hunting assistance. The people of the Ice age considered those big caves as the dwelling realm, the 'Hades', of their deceased.

Here we touch the thread which will lead us back to a widely disputed problem, the origin of religion.

To find the answer, we have to go backwards another 50,000 years. Those people of the European Ice Age are considered as the immediate ancestors of the present whiteskin race. There were other types of primitive men before them. The latest of them, about 50,000 years before the Ice Age, was called the Neandertalman, after the spot in Germany, where the first skeleton of his kind was discovered. It is known that he was already acquainted with the use of fire and that he buried his dead. This last fact seemed to allow the conclusion that he already had some ideas about 'religion', in the form of a life after death, particularly because there were found in the burialplaces food-stuffs, weapons and other 'personal' belongings of the deceased.

However, we cannot accept this conclusion, when we hold on to the leading idea, that the 'evolution' of man means evolution of his consciousness.

Man as a biological phenomenon belongs without doubt to the species of mammals. Like all other higher animals, man was quite conscious about almost everything related to his

material needs and his environment, in short, the conditions for his survival. He felt sure in his primitive life, because he felt himself able to deal with all possible material situation.

But there was *one* problem which he was unable to solve, which left him helpless and stunned, the problem of the deceased. Because to him they were *not* dead. They returned regularly to life in his dreams. They spoke to him and moved about; they demanded things or even threatened.

These early tribesmen did not discriminate distinctly between their dreams and their waking-states, as missionaries know who have worked among contemporary tribesmen, and as mothers know about their small children.

The experience of the return of the 'living dead' was the first problem which the man of Neandertal and others of his state of development could not solve. They responded with dread and fear, and they reacted as they did to all and every challenge to their existence, in the most practical way, they removed the dead out of sight. *To prevent their return* they let them have with them all those things which might have prompted them to return, and in some cases the skeletons have been found fettered hand and foot.

Here the consciousness of early man, which was still that of an animal, touched for the first time a world 'beyond', though it was merely beyond his intellectual understanding.

The 'magic culture' of the Ice Age is the first stage of further development of consciousness due to this situation. The men of this later period dared to face the 'fact' of the 'living dead' and to use them for practical purposes.

By practising this kind of relationship with the 'beyond', the magician of these groups of tribesmen developed at the same time their own sensitivity to other invisible powers and presences, which means their ESP (extra sensory perception). Some 20,000 years more, we find that they had left the 'Hades' of the deceased,

the big natural caves, and painted their magical pictures on any prominent rocks or hillsides. That can mean that they no longer relied only on the spirits of the dead, but that they had become conscious of the presence of other powerful spirits, too...in hills and trees and stones, in rivers and certain plants.

Natural science has called this period 'Animism', which means 'imparting conscious life' (to nature).

To restate briefly the facts:

For millions of years, the consciousness of human beings functioned merely in sensory perceptions and in reacting to them in the same primitive ways as did the mammals, along the lines of their physical needs. As the first sign of something else, we noticed that they started to bury their deceased, due to a fear of something which was beyond their control... the dream... phantoms of the dead. Really it was a reaction to some ESP, hinting at a certain expansion of their field of consciousness. That developed rather quickly, compared with the slow, pace before, into the broad 'magic' culture, when man, or at least a certain type of man attained to some control over this phenomenon. By further expansion this led to the period of Animism.

Though this world of spirits and powers was certainly to him a very 'real' beyond, though he feared and shunned it, he was not too much concerned about it, because it was still the domain of the magician only. The magician was the man appointed to deal with this 'beyond' on behalf of the group, for even among these otherwise rather advanced tribesmen *nobody was as yet clearly conscious of himself as an individual*. Everyone felt himself... and this also only as a person among and related to other persons. He had a certain idea about himself as 'this' body with 'that' name and such and such a position within the group... but there was no definite *feeling* of 'I' in him. We can observe this state of consciousness in those few tribes of aborigines who are still living in some remote corners or reservations of this globe.

The next step of development is rather surprising. After the period of Animism declined, there followed a short transitional period of agriculture before an outburst of highly advanced urban civilizations in many parts of the world, for example, in Egypt, in Sumer and Akkad, in the Indus Valley! All this within a few centuries, after millions and millions of years.

What has happened?

The brain and nervous system of the species 'man', the organ of his contact with Absolute Consciousness, had become ready for *the experience of Identity*. He discovered a genuine *reflexive feeling* of a real 'I'.

With this event man left the line of his animal ancestors. This was 'the Birth of Man', no animal knows itself as 'I'.

Millions of years man had existed as one creature, among all others out of what his surroundings had granted him. Now he separated himself as 'I' from all and everything else as 'not-I' in order to rule over it. Demanding more and more from it, insatiable, he was a changed being, that would change his world, finally to what it is now.

Of course, this could not have been a matter of a certain date in history. It took a period of several centuries, as we mentioned already, during the so-called Stone Age.

When it happened the first time that one of these tribesmen of the Stone Age became conscious of his real 'I', it might have happened to one of the magicians, because they were certainly always among the most advanced ones in intelligence and more still in their knowledge of the world of extra sensory experience. However, in the course of those centuries, more and more of the group members got this knowledge of their real Identity spontaneously, because the brain and nervous system of these people of the Stone Age were ready. Nevertheless, what actually happened was strange.

There was the experience of a powerful mysterious genuine 'I' *within...* timeless, spaceless.

But that arose within a consciousness that until then had been occupied by a lot of objects and ideas, by feelings and thoughts, and dominated by a concept of the 'person' and his dread of the unknown beyond. We have no evidence whether there were then and there any who confronted the new experience as the boy Venkataraman did and accepted it *as it is*. We know only the result... a new kind of man, *who had split that experience*. They covered up the mysterious real 'I' with their 'person' and pushed the extra sensory character of the whole into the beyond, as 'God'.

Thus the Birth of Man happened in the shape of 'Man and his Religion'. The outer evidence of that is that all those early contemporary great urban civilizations were theocracies, governments based on religions, temples and priestcraft!

Nevertheless all this is not yet the whole of the story. Among those who got blessed with the new experience in the course of those centuries, there were some who did *not* cover up as completely as others the real 'I' with their 'person'. The veil, which they too put between the pure consciousness of Identity and their personal relative consciousness remained transparent, as it were. They tried quietly to analyze the experience; they discovered conditions by which it became possible to repeat it deliberately. They found out a state of mind which was not any more thinking, but being silently aware. Thus they were able to retrace the adulteration and to return to the source of the experience and recognise it as *That which is*.

There are documents about this available already from the third millennium B.C. in Egypt, testifying to the inner development side by side with the birth of civilizations. Thus we get from the beginning *two* parallel lines of further development of man: the *extroverts*, collectively *creating*,

sustaining and destroying one civilization after the other, and on the other side the *introverts*, the saints and sages, who lived their quiet and unobtrusive lives as timeless models testifying to *the path of the individual to his highest destination*.

While the names of kings and conquerors, of scholars and priests are sunk in oblivion, the 'evolution' of Consciousness continued its development in the shape of Wisdom and Love. About the year 1000 B.C. the Wisdom of the Beyond exploded in the great Scriptures of the cultures that were flourishing at that time... the *Vedas* in India, the *Bible* in Asia minor, the *I Ching* in China.

About 500 years later there appear within a short period the Master souls, teaching the Truth of man: the Buddha Sakyamuni in India, Confucius and Lao Tse, soon followed by Chuang Tse in China, Zarathustra in Persia, the forerunners of Socrates in Greece. Should not the strikingly simultaneous events in that 6th and 5th century B.C. point to the fact that this was a kind of zenith in the 'evolution' of man?

500 Years later appeared Jesus Christ, another 500 years later Mohammed, while after another 500 years there followed a glowing sunset, as it were. There was a glorious outburst of the highest mysticism in Christianity as well as in Islam. Master souls taught the Great Experience in Zen Buddhism. The same Truth was expounded as *Advaita-Vedanta* in Hinduism.

Since then almost 1000 years passed by without any event of a similar spiritual value. Does it mean definite spiritual decline?

Let us take it rather as a hint that the time of organised, even of a collective form of, worship has run out. As we shall show presently, in contemporary mankind each individual is called upon to face the beyond within himself, without priest, without church and ceremonies, simply in his own nature... and all alone. The way he responds to the challenge decides the happiness or misery of his further life.

I AND GOD

When Darwin published 'The Origin of Species' (1859) and the passionate discussions about it were at their height, the most important support for his shocking theories about this 'biological evolution' came from a quite unexpected scientific quarter, the field of embryology. Scientists of that branch discovered that it is difficult to discriminate whether a three-months' embryo is that of a man, a dog or a bat. Later on a human foetus shows the disposition to develop gills like a fish, still later a tail and the growth of hair all over the body like an ape.

These amazing facts compelled natural scientists to the conclusion that the development of the human foetus in the womb was repeating exactly the development of the human race as a whole. The German scientist Haeckel formulated the fact as a 'Biogenetic basic Law' (Biogenetisches Grundgesetz): 'The biological development of the individual repeats the biological development of the species'. The discovery proved almost as sensational as Darwin's.

Of course, scientists started immediately to follow the surprising parallel further on beyond the birth of the child. But they were disappointed; there seemed to be no continuation. Accordingly they dropped the sensational theory of a 'recapitulation', though of course the facts of the prenatal states remained as did the 'biological basic law' too, though since then in a limited form.

Actually, the interesting parallel does not at all stop at birth. The cause of the failure to perceive it was a wrong application of the time-factor. Since we have developed in the 20th century a special psychology of the child, we can now see very clear hints in the child's behaviour parallel to the stages of race-development.

There are distinct features related to the faculties and behaviour of earliest tribes, and later on to those of the Ice Age and those of the Stone Age. We can clearly see that *the infant is not conscious of a genuine 'I'*. When it talks about itself it uses its own name: its toy is not 'my' toy, but 'Ganesh's' toy, 'John's' toy. When it starts to use 'I' and 'mine' this means no genuine 'I'-*feeling*; the child has merely learnt to imitate a use of language by the adults, that everybody points to himself as 'I'.

At any case, since the most sensational step in the development of the human race was the revelation of the true Identity of man, the parallel event in the biological development of the individual must show itself convincingly, if the theory of recapitulation is to be proved valid.

It does. Just as in the history of the tribesmen the experience of the genuine reflexive 'I' happened of its own, when brain and nervous system were ready for it, just so it turns up exactly at the time of the biological maturity of the individual... during puberty and adolescence.

It is a serious mistake to ascribe the unstable mental and psychological balance in the particular period to the psychological condition alone. Much more powerful is the claim of the beyond, which is going to penetrate the consciousness of the individual with another dimension, namely with *turiya*, the experience of the awakening of the individual to its true nature. There need not be a problem at all in the situation; it could be a most wonderful high time, if we would only *know* what is going to happen. The other young people too would respond to the hidden challenge as young Venkataraman did. In his case, the great event forced itself on him in a rather violent form, as Death-experience, since he too was in no way prepared for it. This has happened to other mystics, too, but it is not inevitable, as it is a *natural* event, which may happen quite undramatically *where there is no resistance*.

Since we do not know about this great gift which nature has in store for the time of biological maturity, those of each growing generation of children are left to themselves to fill their consciousness with concepts and ideas of themselves as 'persons' as with all sorts of desires, fears, anxieties and so-called general knowledge. When the brain and nervous system are biologically ready to respond to the most wonderful challenge of life, the petty individual consciousness is occupied otherwise. *It resists, though unconsciously.*

This is the higher, the real problem of puberty.

Unconsciously young people themselves give evidence of this situation. It is exactly the age in which man is most interested in understanding the meaning of life and world and his position in it, and in many cases still in the form of 'I and God'... just *because* his is the inner situation of *the tribesmen of the Stone Age*, immediately before the great change of consciousness.

Luckily in missing this chance of being transformed into the real Man he is not missing it for ever.

Let us return for the last time to the mysterious parallel between the development of the collective and that of the individual.

On his way through millions of years, the 'animal' man first developed his *emotional* capacities, and later on his *thinking* faculty and his *will* along with his *extra sensory perceptions*. The revelation of his genuine reflexive 'I' had been the last event, the zenith of his 'evolution', his awakening from his 'dream' of animal life to his reality as a human being.

In the parallel line the newborn individual, during his prenatal nine months' development had gone through an indefinite amount of millions of years. After being born, it belongs still for a short period to the stage of instinct-life: it shows 'feeling' only in the shape of bodily contentment or discontent. After a few weeks it displays early sense perceptions,

and a little later it begins to 'discriminate and choose', practising thus the basic features of 'thought'. In its third year it gets 'obstinate', which only means that its natural urge for activity has become conscious as 'will'. Thus childhood up to maturity is the period in which the individual develops its functions of feeling, thinking and willing. However this 'evolution' is a sheer biological one, as unconscious as the 'evolution' of the race has been, and completely directed by the organic development of brain and nervous system.

The crowning event of this strictly 'biological evolution' is in both lines; the tribal and the individual, the awakening of the genuine reflexive *feeling* of 'I', the *knowledge of the true Self*. In both cases this 'purpose' of evolution seems to have gone astray. To be more exact, *the experience has remained incomplete*. The real 'I' did not 'break through', but generally only managed to 'sink in'. It mixed up with the 'personal I' to produce that kind of hybrid, that queer knot between true and false, which is still considered the 'real' centre of the personality of Mr. Everybody.

How could that happen?

Well, it is obviously neither accidental nor a mistake, but an inevitable interstate, the reservoir of the two main-forms of human existence on this planet... the raising and destroying of civilisations by the *collective extroverts*, and within their frame the silent and lonesome journey of the *introvert individual* to the Great Experience of man's highest Truth.

However, with this generally incomplete biological 'crowning event', the mysterious parallel between the collective and the individual evolution has not yet reached its end. To elucidate the further lines of collective evolution would take us far away, and it can be dropped, since the accent of this treatise is on the individual.

Although the 'breakthrough' of the mature individual consciousness into the new dimension of *turiya* seems to be

meant, it is undoubtedly not the rule but the exception. The rule is the 'knot' between the 'real' and the 'false' I, between the newly gained reflexive consciousness and the biological 'unconsciousness' of the past childhood.

What follows is a *second recapitulation* of 'evolution', a repetition of the pattern, *but it should be lived this time in the full light of conscious awareness of what happens*. After puberty and adolescence have settled, there follows a period of about one decade between 25 and 35 in which *emotional* life is predominant in the individual. It is the time of matrimonial and family happiness. During the next decade, between 35 and 45, interests amplify, views and aims expand. The intellect, the *thinking* mind, takes over.

At the end of the *first recapitulation*, there waited the 'crowning event', the birth of reflexive consciousness, but even when it was recognised, as by introverts, it was usually not at once permanent. This *second recapitulation* should be lived and experienced in order to *stabilize* the newly discovered reflexive consciousness. *This is the true meaning of life 'in the world'*.

When this is truly seen and done, man reaches at that age a second stage of maturity. When this is followed up in the proper spirit, then it will grant him *the fulfilment* of That, of which the change in his consciousness of puberty was the spiritual promise... the Great Experience of his true nature. But this time it will be complete.

Such is the teaching of the Voice of Nature. It is still the same teaching which was granted as intuition to the sages of ancient India, who gave it the shape of the *asramas* (stages of life).

The facts have been discovered and registered by natural science of the 19th and 20th centuries; the interpretation is ours... the intuition of those, who witnessed the life of Ramana, the Lone Star of Arunachala, the embodiment of this wonderful Saga of the true Man.

V

AWAKENING

Vichara, investigation, is the process and the goal also. 'I am' is the goal and the final Reality. To hold on to it with effort is *Vichara*. When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation.

(*Talks*, 390).

RETURN TO THE SOURCE

Indian spiritual tradition teaches four ways of approach to the great Awakening, called Self-Realisation. These approaches are not only different, but even seem contradictory: *Jnana-marga* (the path of knowledge), *bhakti-marga* (the path of devotion), *karma-marga* (the path of action), and *yoga-marga* (the path of re-union). Appearance is deceptive here. Not only is there no contradiction, but they actually have to be practised side by side to serve their purpose, as will be shown.

Yoga-marga has practically no place in the teaching of Ramana Maharshi, though he knew it well and did not deny its usefulness. He considered the yogic techniques for *sadhana* as a round-about way.

Some visitor asked: “Is a *jnani* different from a yogi?”

The answer: “*Srimad Bhagavad Gita* says that a *jnani* is the true yogi and also the true *bhakta*. Yoga is only a *sadhana* and *jnana* is the *siddhi*.”

Question: “Is yoga necessary?”

“It is a *sadhana*. It will not be necessary after *jnana* is attained. All the *sadhanas* are called yogas, e.g., Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, *Jnana* yoga, Ashtanga yoga. What is yoga? Yoga means ‘union’. Yoga is possible only when there is *viyoga* (separation). The person is now under the delusion of *viyoga*. This delusion must be removed. The method of removing it is called yoga.”

Question: “Which method is the best?”

“It depends upon the temperament of the individual. Every person is born with the *vasanas* of past lives. One of these methods will be found easy for one person and another method for another. There is no definiteness about it”. (*Talks*, 580).

In fact yoga as well as *bhakti*, or Love, presupposes 'two'... one, who is practising, to attain the other, God or Self. *Jnana-marga* on the other hand *starts* with the knowledge of the goal... there is only One without any other. Hence the seeming contradiction among the paths, the stress which is laid by some *Advaita-Vedantins* on the fact, that Ramana Maharshi was a strict *jnani*. He was, but he was not at all exclusive concerning the *sadhana*, as will be seen.

Jnana (Knowledge) is the term for both, the way of practice and the goal, the final awakening to the Truth. Knowledge... of what? Is not *dvaita*, two, subject and object implied here also?

Already here, in the beginning, one has to beware against a pitfall. In the case of *jnana*, Knowledge does not mean 'something', in this case *to know is it be*. The Knowledge of the Self does not 'belong' to some 'I' as 'my' knowledge; it is pure Awareness, aware only of itself.

How can we get at It? 'By adopting our philosophy', replies the strict *Advaitin*.

But philosophy is only of the mind. If you give yourself up to the study of Advaita-Vedanta, you may convince your *intellect* of its logical correctness. But this knowledge is not *jnana*. It is the result of the *thinking mind*; *jnana* is the Truth revealed, when the mind has *stopped* thinking. Thus, if the philosophy of Advaita does not satisfy you, don't worry. The true *jnana-sadhana* is 'hunting the I' until you reach the mysterious 'I am that I am' by which the Supreme Power revealed Itself to Moses. (Exodus 3, verse 14.) This method was already known to the ancient sages, but later neglected. Ramana Maharshi did not pick it up at random. When he awoke in his Great Experience to the real 'I', the Self, he recognised once and for all that 'personal I', belongs to *another dimension of consciousness* than the true I. He also recognised that to find its source and hold on the wrong 'I' was *the way* to get beyond this relative consciousness into the pure Awareness of *turiya*, that Knowledge which is Be-ing.

Some important details of the *sadhana* for this have been treated in a previous chapter.

In the quotation mentioned above, Ramana Maharshi pointed at the fact that the different methods of *sadhana* are meant for the different temperaments of individuals. Though brain and nervous system, our biological reaction mechanism, are basically the same for all, there are slight differences in the way that thinking, feeling and activity are balanced among themselves. Some people are of an emotional type; in others intellectual tendencies are predominant; still others find satisfaction only in activity.

As soon as somebody is attracted by the idea of spiritualizing his way of life, he will choose the method of his *sadhana* accordingly. The intellectual will prefer *jnana-marga*, the emotionally inclined will take to *bhakti-marga*, the active person to *karma-marga*.

However, as has been shown with *jnana*, the matter is not as simple as it seems. Just as the Knowledge of *jnana* is not intellectual knowledge, so the love of the *bhakta* to a deity is 'his' love in the beginning. The work or karma of the active person in the course of his *sadhana* is also no longer 'his' work. Just as the *jnani* has to transcend himself, so have the *bhakta* and the *karmi*, because it is not the 'personal I' that succeeds in the end. Though it starts on the great adventure, it does so only to get lost during the journey.

Still there is no harm in starting accordingly to one's liking. What matters is to start at all, and that *seems* only to be intended by the 'person'. Actually it is prompted already by the Inner Guide, the Self, which will go with you up to the Goal, because It *is* the Goal.

Thus the *bhakta*, the emotional *sadhaka*, starts with his love for his chosen deity. He is seldom interested in the Self, because there is no concept of the Self. 'It is as It is...' How can

you love such ‘something’? He wants some *body* to love, and Hinduism has many lovable deities. He is free to choose the child Krishna, to be caressed and pampered and looked after, or the young cowherdboy, to passionately adore him as did the Gopis; he may take refuge from the toil and suffering of life in his love of Devi, the Mother of the Universe, or throw himself at the Feet of Siva-Mahadev. He may approach his Beloved as servant, as lover or as friend: he will be happy in the experience that he is accepted.

But one day or other... what is Time to the Gods?... his *Ishta devata* will meet him in the shape of man... the Guru,... asking: ‘What kind of love are you offering and to whom? Isn’t it *you* who *enjoy* your love? You think you surrendered yourself to the Lord. Who then is there now to ‘love’ Him?’

“Surrender consists in giving up oneself and one’s possessions to the Lord of mercy. Then what is left for the man? Nothing... neither himself nor his possessions. The body liable to be born and to die having been made over to the Lord, the man need no longer worry himself about it. Then birth and death cannot strike terror. The cause of fear was the body; it is no longer his; why should he fear now? Or where is the identity of the individual to be frightened?

“Thus the Self is realised and Bliss results. This is then the subject-matter: freedom from misery and gain of Happiness. This is the highest good to be gained. Surrender is synonymous with Bliss itself. This is the relationship.” (*Talks*, 567).

To a devotee who hankered after a vision of the Beloved:

“Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as *you* please, it is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden; you have no

longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *bhakti*." (*Talks*, 450).

What actually happens is this: The *sadhana* of the *bhakta* consists in holding on to the Presence of his *Ishta Devata*, his chosen God. To *feel* this Presence at all times and under all circumstances is his happiness, in which he finally *loses his self-conscious, personal I*. What remains is Love, and so 'Love is God'. His mind is no longer 'mind', but has become his 'Love', which is Ananda, the bliss-aspect of the final Satchidananda, the Bliss of the Awareness of pure Be-ing.

The term 'karma' demands some definition. Carried over from ancient times, it originally meant a path of *ritual worship*. This is certainly also a working *sadhana*, akin to the *bhakti*-path, though without the passionate feeling connected with that. However, other meanings of the term have now overgrown the original one. A very important meaning of karma denotes the connection of cause and effect, with regard to the hypothesis of rebirth. In our present context, we use still another meaning, namely 'activity', or work in the general sense.

Now the person who can be termed as predominantly of an active character is usually not particularly interested in spiritual matters; he will be rather extroverted, turned without. However, in a broader sense, *everybody* has to be active be it for his maintenance and that of his family, be it even only to keep his body alive and going, as with a saint or a sage. This activity can become a serious obstacle in the spiritual path of the *jnani* as well as of the *bhakta*.

"The difficulty with karma arises when the man thinks that he is the doer. This is the mistake. It is the Higher Power which is behind everything and man is only a tool. If he accepts that position, he is free from troubles, otherwise he courts them. Take for instance the figure in a temple tower, where it is made to appear to bear the burden of the tower on its shoulders. Its

posture and look are a picture of great strain while bearing the very heavy burden of the tower. But think! the tower is built on the earth and it rests on its own foundations. The figure (like Atlas bearing the earth) is a part of the tower, but is made to look as if it bore the tower. Is it not funny? So is the man who takes on himself the sense of doing.” (*Talks*, 62).

“Actions form no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion ‘I am the doer’. Leave off such thoughts and let the body and senses play their role unimpeded by your interference.” (*Talks*, 46).

“The feeling ‘I work’ is the hindrance. Enquire, ‘Who works?’ Remember, ‘Who am I?’ The work will not bind you. It will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce work. Your effort is the bondage. What is bound to happen, will happen.

“If you are destined to cease working, work cannot be had even if you hunt for it. If you are destined to work, you cannot leave it; you will be forced to engage in it. So leave it to the Higher Power. You cannot renounce or hold as you choose.” (*Talks*, 286).

In analyzing the quotations, it becomes clear that the hindrance which karma may put up is not the work in itself, but the attitude towards it, the *self-will* behind it.

The *will* is the third aspect of our biological reaction mechanism and the strongest element in the ‘personal I’. Karma *marga*, performed as the attempt to renounce self-will, is a powerful means to overcome it, provided it does not take the shape of *resistance*. For resistance is just the way to strengthen the ego-I. ‘Who is it that resists?’

So how should we act?

Most work is done with some purpose in view, either for oneself or for somebody or something else. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, considered by many as the scripture in the praise of action, says in Chap. II, Verse 47:

'Your concern is only with action, not with its fruit. *Be not motivated by the fruits* of actions, but do not cling either to inaction.'

The fact is that there is no 'personal' actor at all. Action calls for re-action, which means that further action will go on without 'my' or 'your' intention, as it did ages ago during our instinct-period.

Thus the goal of the karma yogi is to realise that the meaning of life is not 'to do', but 'to be'... pure Be-ing, and It will be revealed to him in the same Great Experience as in the case of others following the *jnana-marga* and *bhakti-marga*.

Ramana Maharshi used the illustration of 'acting as the actor on the stage': he plays his part in full attention, devoting his whole capacity to the task in hand, but knowing all the while that he is not the king or the beggar of his role, but somebody else.

We too have to be aware that as the 'person' we have to act our part on the stage of life, remembering all the time our true nature as pure Be-ing, the Self.

Going beyond *thinking* by *jnana*, beyond *feeling* by *bhakti*, beyond *self-willed action* by *karma marga* means going beyond that 'I' which was from the very beginning, the birth of a genuine reflexive Identity, a 'wrong I'; it means nothing more or less than returning to the Source of Pure Consciousness. Thereafter...

"Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the Beyond will take care of Itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reach It." (*Talks*, 197).

Here finally we meet the Great Experience of Ramana, the Maharshi, in Its second aspect, as the pure *Power of the Beyond, Sakti*. "Some force, call it *atmic* power or anything else rose within me and took possession of me. I became a new man." (*Day by Day*, 22.11.45).

'I' and 'God' melted again into the One without a second that they always had been, beyond name and form, time and space... the divine mystery of Man.

To get this experience we have to *transcend* the biological status of the 'thinking mammal', which alone we are, according to the teachings of our natural sciences. And inadvertently they help to keep us bound by this status, *because only by this deep ignorance about our true Nature* are we blind towards those negative ways in which we are misused by our 'worldly' civilisation.

However, there *are* ancient teachings in almost all traditions which talk of the *true* man and that his deepest nature is divine. And there *are* men like Ramana Maharshi who *live* their lives not as the biological phenomenon only, which they too are by birth, but as their divine Reality.

Let us not speculate about the future, as to whether or not there will be a change for the better in the desolate conditions of the present world-civilization. For the time being there seems to be no way out of the disaster. At least we do not see any.

Who sees?

We do not know. We know naught but one thing... the gentle divine Voice deep in the recesses of our heart, asking us to return to the Source. It tells us that It is our own Voice, calling us out of a stage of consciousness which degenerated into crowded thinking, distorted feeling and feverish activity, calling us out of our biological dream of waking, dreaming and deep sleep into *turiya*, Absolute Consciousness, there to find our real, our divine Nature of *Satchidananda*, the pure Be-ing (*sat*), blissfully (*ananda*) aware (*chit*) only of Itself.

Another dream of weakling who dare not face the abyss of the absolute naught?

Who cares? We met Ramana, the Maharshi, the sage of Arunachala, the embodiment of the wonderful Saga of the true Man!

THUS SPAKE RAMANA

You see, the one eliminates all the not I cannot eliminate the 'I'. To say 'I am not this' or 'I am that' there must be the 'I'. This 'I' is only the ego or the 'I'-*thought*. After the rising up of this 'I'-thought, all other thoughts arise. The 'I'-thought is therefore the root-thought. If the root is pulled out, all others are at the same time uprooted. Therefore seek the root-'I', question yourself 'Who am I?', find out its source. Then all these will vanish and the pure Self will remain over. (*Talks*, 197).

Only the annihilation of 'I' is Liberation. But it can be gained only by keeping the 'I'-'I' always in view. So the need for the investigation of the 'I'-thought. (*Talks*, 139).

There is only one 'I' all along; but what rises up from time to time is the mistaken 'I'-thought; whereas the intuitive 'I' always remains Self-shining, i.e., even before it becomes manifest. (*Talks*, 139).

The 'I'-thought is only limited 'I'. The *real* 'I' is unlimited, universal, beyond time and space. They are absent in sleep, and before seeing the objective world, there is a state of awareness which is your pure Self. That must be known (*Talks*, 311).

Soul, mind and ego are words. There are no real entities of the kind. Consciousness is the only truth. (*Talks*, 245).

Just on waking from sleep and before becoming aware of the world there is that pure 'I'—'I'. Hold it without sleeping or without allowing thoughts to possess you. If *that* is held firm it does not matter even though the world is seen. The seer remains unaffected by the phenomena. (*Talks*, 196).

How is the ego to be destroyed? Hold the ego first and then ask how it is to be destroyed. Who asks this question? It is the ego. Can the ego ever agree to kill itself? This question is a

sure way to cherish the ego and not to kill it. If you seek the ego you will find it does not exist. That is the way to destroy it. (*Talks*, 615).

Your duty is *to be*; and *not to be this or that*. 'I AM THAT I AM' sums up the whole truth. The method is, summed up in 'BE STILL'. What does stillness mean? It means 'destroy yourself'. Because any form or shape is the cause of trouble. Give up the notion 'I am so and so'. (*Talks*, 363).

The ego is like one's shadow thrown on the ground. If one attempts to bury it, it will be foolish. The Self is only one. If limited, it is the ego; if unlimited it is the Infinite and is the Reality. (*Talks*, 146).

'I am that I am', 'I am' is God... not *thinking*, 'I am God'. *Realise* 'I am' and do not *think* 'I am'. '*Know* I am God'... it is said, and not 'Think I am God'. (*Talks*, 354).

The mind is by nature restless. Begin liberating it from its restlessness; give it peace; make it free from distractedness; train it to look inward; make this a habit. This is done by ignoring the external world and removing the obstacles to peace of mind. (*Talks*, 26).

Is it the mind that wants to kill itself? The mind cannot kill itself. So your business is to find the real nature of the mind. Then you will know that there is no mind. When the Self is sought, the mind is nowhere. Abiding in the Self, one need not worry about the mind. (*Talks*, 146).

Mere book-learning is not of any great use. After realisation all intellectual loads are useless burdens and are thrown overboard as jetsam. Jettisoning the ego is necessary and natural. (*Talks*, 28).

It is in the mind that birth and death, pleasure and pain, in short, the world and ego, exist. If the mind is destroyed all else are destroyed too. Note that it should be *annihilated*, not just made latent. For the mind is dormant in sleep. It does not know anything. Still, on waking up you are as you were before.

There is no end of grief. But if the mind be destroyed the grief will have no background and will disappear along with the mind. (*Talks*, 195).

The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts arise because there is the thinker. The thinker is the ego. The ego, if sought, will vanish automatically. The ego and the mind are the same. The ego is the root-thought from which all other thoughts arise. (*Talks*, 195).

To imagine *Muladhara* at the bottom, the Heart at the centre or the head at the top or over all these is all wrong. In one word, *to think is not your real nature*. (*Talks*, 184).

Is not 'I am' also a thought?... The egoless 'I AM' is not a thought. It is Realisation. The meaning or significance of 'I' is God. The experience of 'I am' is to 'BE STILL'. (*Talks*, 226).

Inward seeking is the path to be gained by man's intellect. The intellect itself realises after continuous practice that it is enabled by some Higher Power to function. It cannot itself reach this Power. So it ceases to function after a certain stage. Then the Supreme Power is still left there all alone. That is Realisation; that is finality; that is the goal. (*Talks*, 502).

It is thus plain that the purpose of the intellect is to realise its own dependence upon the Higher Power and its inability to reach the same. So it must annihilate itself before the goal is reached. (*Talks*, 502).

Why is intellect developed? It has a purpose. The purpose is that it should show the way to realise the Self. It must be put to that use. (*Talks*, 644).

The mind becomes peaceful for a short while and again emerges forth. What is to be done?... The peace often gained must be remembered at other times. That peace is your natural and permanent state. By continuous practice it will become natural. That is called the 'current'. That is your true nature. (*Talks*, 303).

People think that freedom (*moksha*) is somewhere yonder and should be sought out. They are wrong. Freedom is only knowing the Self within yourself. Concentrate and you will get it. (*Talks*, 31).

‘Be still and know that I am God’. To be still is not to think. Know, and not think, is the word! (*Talks*, 131).

Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind; such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in the forest but still be unable to control his mind. He cannot be said to be in solitude. *Solitude is a function of the mind*. A man attached to desire cannot get solitude wherever he may be; a detached man is always in solitude. (*Talks*, 20).

You can never find the mind through mind. Pass beyond it in order to find it non-existent. (*Talks*, 473).

All thoughts are inconsistent with realisation. The correct state is to exclude thoughts of ourselves and all other thoughts. *Thought is one thing and realisation is quite another*. (*Talks*, 30).

It must be clearly understood that meditation is not prohibited in the absence of *asanas* or prescribed times or any accessories of the kind. (*Talks*, 17).

There is no *jnana* as it is commonly understood. The ordinary ideas of *jnana* and *ajnana* are only relative and false. They are not real and therefore not abiding. The true state is the non-dual Self. It is eternal and abides whether one is aware or not. (*Talks*, 499).

Jnana, once revealed, takes time to steady itself. The Self is certainly within the direct experience of everyone, but not as one imagines it to be. It is only as It is. (*Talks*, 141).

Experience is said to be temporary or permanent. *The first experience is temporary* and by concentration it can become permanent. In the former the bondage is not completely destroyed; it remains subtle and reasserts itself in due course.

But in the latter it is destroyed root and branch, never to appear again. (*Talks*, 95).

There is no investigation into the *Atman*. The investigation can only be into the non-Self. Elimination of the non-Self is alone possible. The Self being always self-evident will shine forth of itself. (*Talks*, 78).

Jnana-marga and *bhakti-marga* are one and the same. Self-surrender leads to realisation just as enquiry does. Complete self-surrender means that you have no further thought of 'I'. Then all your *vasanas* are washed off and you are free. You should not continue as a separate entity at the end of either course. (*Talks*, 31).

Surrender unreservedly. One of the two things must be done: either surrender because you admit your inability and also require a Higher Power to help you; or investigate into the cause of misery, go to the source and merge into the Self. Either way you will be free from misery. God never forsakes one who has surrendered. (*Talks*, 363).

Surrender is to give oneself up to the original source of one's being. Do not delude yourself by imagining such source to be some God outside you. One's source is within oneself. Give yourself up to it. That means that you should seek the source and merge in it. (*Talks*, 111).

If on the other hand you merge in the Self there will be no individuality left. You will become the Source itself. In that case...what is surrender? Who is to surrender and to whom? This constitutes devotion, wisdom and investigation. (*Talks*, 208).

The 'Gita' starts saying that you are not the body, that you are not therefore the doer. So one should act without thinking that oneself is the actor. The actions go on despite this egolessness. The person has come into manifestation for a certain purpose. That purpose will be accomplished whether he considers himself the actor or not. (*Talks*, 643).

How do we know that actions are ours or not?... If the fruits of actions do not affect the person, he is free from action. (*Talks*, 40).

The one infinite Unbroken Whole (plenum) becomes aware of Itself as 'I'. This is the original name. All other names, e.g., OM, are later growths. Liberation is only to remain aware of the Self. The *Mahavakya* 'I am Brahman' is its authority. *Though the 'I' is always experienced, yet one's attention has to be drawn to it.* Then only knowledge dawns. Thus the need for the instruction of the Upanishads and of wise sages. (*Talks*, 92).

The ultimate Truth is so simple. It is nothing more than being in the pristine state. This is all that need be said. (*Talks*, 96).

Reality is one only. How can it be realised? Realisation is thus an illusion. Practice seems to be necessary. Who is to practise? Looking for the doer, the act and the accessories disappear. Moreover, if Realisation is not present here and now, how can it, newly got, be of any use? Realise what is present here and now. The sages did so before and still do that only. Hence they say that it looks as if newly got. Once veiled by ignorance and later revealed, Reality looks as if newly realised. But it is not new. (*Talks*, 439).

Dvaita and *Advaita* are relative terms. They are based on the sense of duality. The Self is as It is. There is neither *dvaita* nor *advaita*, I AM THAT I AM. Simple Be-ing is the Self. (*Talks*, 433).

One's efforts are directed only to remove one's ignorance. Afterwards they cease and the real Self is found to be always there. No effort is needed to remain as the Self. (*Talks*, 66).

The Truth is that the Self is constant and unintermittent Awareness. The object of enquiry is to find the true nature of the Self as Awareness. Let one practise enquiry so long as separateness is perceived. Once realisation arises there is no further need for enquiry. The question will also not arise. Can

awareness ever think of questioning who is aware? Awareness remains pure and simple. (*Talks*, 454).

The Self is known to everyone but not clearly. You always exist. The Be-ing is the Self. 'I am' is the name of God. Of all the definitions of God, none is indeed so well put as the Biblical statement 'I am that I am' in Exodus 3, Verse 14. None is so direct as the name JEHOVAH... I AM. The Absolute Be-ing is *what is*... It is the Self. It is God. Knowing the Self, God is known. In fact God is none other than the Self. (*Talks*, 106).

There is a state beyond our efforts or effortlessness. Until it is realised effort is necessary. After tasting such Bliss, even once, one will repeatedly try to regain it. It is as difficult for a *jnani* to engage in thoughts as it is for an *ajnani* to be free from thoughts. (*Talks*, 141).

Reality is simply the loss of the ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because ego is no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method whereas all other methods are done only retaining the ego. In those paths there arise so many doubts and the eternal question remains to be tackled finally. But in this method the final question is the only one and it is raised from the very beginning. No *sadhanas* are necessary for engaging in this quest. (*Talks*, 146).

Effortlessness while remaining aware is the state of Bliss, and that is Realisation. (*Talks*, 295).

In a sense, speaking of Self-realisation is a delusion. It is only because people have been under the delusion that the non-Self is the Self and the unreal the Real that they have to be weaned out of it by the other delusion called Self-realisation, because actually the Self always is the Self and there is no such thing as realizing it. Who is to realize what, and how, when all that exists is the Self and nothing but the Self? (*Day by Day*).

Free-will and destiny are ever-existent. Destiny is the result of past action; it concerns the body. Let the body act as may suit

it. Why are you concerned with it? Why do you pay attention to it? Free-will and destiny last as long as the body lasts. But Wisdom (*jnana*) transcends both. The Self is beyond knowledge and ignorance. Should anything happen it happens as the resultant of one's past actions, of divine will and other factors. (*Talks*, 193).

Free-will holds the field in association with individuality. As long as individuality lasts so long there is Free-will. All the scriptures are based on this fact and they advise directing the Free-will in the right channel. Find out to whom Free-will or destiny matters. Abide in it. Then these two are transcended. That is the only purpose of discussing these questions. To who do they arise? Find out and be at peace. (*Talks*, 426).

Yoga implies prior division and it means later union of one with the other. Who is to be united with whom? You are the seeker, seeking union with something. That something is apart from you. You are aware of the Self. Seek it and be it. That will expand as the Infinite. Then there will be no question of yoga, etc. Whose is the separation (*viyoga*)? Find it. (*Talks*, 211).

He who instructs an ardent seeker to do this or that is not a true Master. The seeker is already afflicted by his activities and wants Peace and Rest. In other words he wants cessation of his activities. Instead of that he is told do so something in addition to or in place of his other activities. Can that be a help to the seeker? (*Talks*, 601).

Love postulates duality. How can the Self be the object of Love? Love is not different from the Self. Love of an object is an inferior order and cannot endure. Whereas the Self is Love, in other words, God is Love. (*Talks*, 433).

Turn your vision inwards and the whole world will be full of the Supreme Spirit. The world is said to be illusion. Illusion is really Truth. Even the material sciences trace the origin of the universe to some primordial matter... subtle, exceedingly subtle. (*Talks*, 199).

God is the same both to those who say the world is real and to their opponents. Their outlook is different. You need not entangle yourself in such disputations. The goal is one and the same for all. Look to it. (*Talks*, 199).

The Bible says 'Be still and know that I am God'. Stillness is the sole requisite for the realisation of the Self as God. (*Talks*, 338).

Brahmacharya is 'living in Brahman'. It has no connection with celibacy as commonly understood. A real *Brahmachari* finds Bliss in the Brahman which is the same as the Self. Why then should you look for other sources of happiness? In fact the emergence from the Self has been the cause of all the misery. (*Talks*, 17).

When there is contact of a desirable sort or memory thereof, and when there is freedom from undesirable contacts or memory thereof, we say there is happiness. Such happiness is relative and is better called pleasure. (*Talks*, 28).

But men want absolute and permanent happiness. This does not reside in objects, but in the Absolute. It is Peace, free from pain and pleasure... it is a neutral state. (*Talks*, 28).

This is the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven mentioned in the Bible and this world are not two different regions. 'The Kingdom is within you' says the Bible. So it is. The realised being sees this as the Kingdom of Heaven whereas others see it as 'this world'. The difference lies only in the angle of vision. (*Talks*, 609).

Nirvana is Perfection. In the Perfect State there is neither subject nor object; there is nothing to see, nothing to feel, nothing to know. Seeking and knowing are the functions of the mind. In *Nirvana* there is nothing but the blissful pure consciousness 'I am'. (*Talks*, 406).

GLOSSARY

<i>Advaita</i>	Non-duality, the philosophy of the 'One without a second'.
<i>ahankara</i>	the 'personal I'.
<i>Arunachala</i>	a Hill in the eastern Ghats, famous place of pilgrimage. Arunachaleswara the Lord of Arunachala, the great temple at the foot of the hill.
<i>asanas</i>	yogic postures.
<i>ashrama</i>	1) stage of life, 2) hermitage.
<i>ashtanga yoga</i>	the yoga of the eight 'limbs'.
<i>atiasrama</i>	beyond the four ashramas.
<i>Atma</i>	the Self.
<i>asura</i>	a demon
<i>Brahma (m)</i>	God as Creator.
<i>Brahman (n)</i>	the Absolute.
<i>brahmacharya</i>	the first of the four ashramas, celibacy.
<i>bhakta</i>	one who follows the path of surrender.
<i>bhakti</i>	the path of surrender.
<i>buddhi</i>	intellect.
<i>chintamani</i>	the celestial gem which fulfils all wishes.
<i>chit</i>	Absolute Consciousness.
<i>diksha</i>	initiation.
<i>dvaita</i>	dualism.
<i>gunas</i>	three fundamental qualities or tendencies of nature, underlying all manifestations; sattva, rajas and tamas.
<i>guru</i>	spiritual teacher or master.
<i>guru-sewa</i>	service to the guru.
<i>jagrat-sushupti</i>	waking-sleep.
<i>japa</i>	repetition of the Name of God or of a mantra, orally or mentally.
<i>jnana</i>	the path of knowledge.
<i>jnani</i>	one who follows the path of Knowledge.
<i>karma</i>	1) action, work, 2) destiny.

<i>karma-marga</i>	the path of either ritual worship or, simply, activity.
<i>Maharshi</i>	great rishi (a sage).
<i>Mahatma</i>	a great Soul, a Master.
<i>Mahavakya</i>	the four 'great sayings' of the Upanishads.
<i>Mahavrata</i>	great vow.
<i>mantra</i>	cosmic soundforms, used for japa, prayer and meditation.
<i>marga</i>	a spiritual path of practising.
<i>math</i>	abode of sadhus.
<i>maya</i>	illusion.
<i>mouna</i>	silence.
<i>moksha, mukti</i>	Liberation.
<i>muladhara</i>	the lowest of the yogic centres (chakras) of concentration, supposed to be situated at the base of the spine.
<i>niyama</i>	disciplines of the second of the eight 'limbs' of yoga.
<i>puranas</i>	sacred books.
<i>rajas</i>	one of the three <i>gunas</i> : the principle of activity.
<i>rigor mortis</i>	rigidity of death.
<i>sadhaka</i>	a seeker after truth.
<i>sadhana</i>	a path towards liberation.
<i>sadhu</i>	ascetic.
<i>sannyasa</i>	total renunciation, the fourth of the varnasramas.
<i>sastra</i>	scripture.
<i>satsanga</i>	association with good and wise souls.
<i>sattva</i>	one of the three <i>gunas</i> ; purity, etc.
<i>satchidananda</i>	Be-ing, Consciousness, Bliss: Bliss, (ananda) of conscious (chit) Be-ing (sat).
<i>siddhi</i>	1) supernormal powers, 2) realization.
<i>Siva</i>	the supreme Lord.
<i>sruti</i>	Vedas.
<i>tamas</i>	one of the three <i>gunas</i> : ignorance, darkness.
<i>tapas</i>	religious austerities.
<i>Tat twam asi</i>	That thou art (Mahavakya).
<i>turiya</i>	the fourth state, the witness-consciousness.

<i>turiyatita</i>	beyond turiya, Absolute Awareness.
<i>Ulladu Narpadu</i>	Forty verses on That which <i>is</i> , title of the main work composed by Ramana Maharshi.
<i>Upadesa Saram</i>	Essence of Instruction; title of another main work of Ramana Maharshi.
<i>Upanishads</i>	the youngest part of the Vedas.
<i>vanaprashtha</i>	the third of the varnasramas, 'life in the woods'.
<i>varnasrama</i>	The two coordinate systems (varna and asrama) of Ancient India. The varna systems classified society based on individual dispositions and laid down responsibilities of each group towards society as a whole. The asrama system laid down the stages in individual life keeping in view one's relationship with society and at the same time providing the best likelihood in any stage for individual fruition towards Moksha.
<i>vasanas</i>	predispositions and tendencies of the mind, due to experiences of former life.
<i>Vedas</i>	the Scripture of Hinduism, revealed to the ancient Rishis.
<i>vichara</i>	investigation into the nature of the Self.
<i>Vishnu</i>	the divine preserver of the universe.
<i>viyoga</i>	separation.
<i>vritti</i>	movement of thought.
<i>yama</i>	the first of the eight 'limbs' of Yoga.
<i>yogiraj</i>	'king of the yogis'.
<i>Yojana</i>	one yojana = 8 miles.