

The Maharshi

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The “Sri Ramana Gita” of B. V. Narasimhaswami

THE following text is from an unpublished manuscript on *Sri Ramana Gita* that has recently surfaced in Sri Ramanasramam. The manuscript contains typed and handwritten pages by B. V. Narasimhaswami, the author of *Self Realization*.

While BVN was residing at the Ashram, around the year 1930, he appears to have taken up the project of recasting *Sri Ramana Gita* in its original conversational form. Some of the answers in this new manuscript appear to be quite lengthy compared to the versified text composed by Ganapati Muni. It is unlikely that BVN had access to any notes taken on the occasion of the questions put to the Maharshi between the years 1913 and 1917, so we can only assume, as he explains in his introduction, that the elucidations further developed by the Maharshi in this new version must have come from subsequent questions for clarification put by BVN himself.

Many years after BVN’s preparation of this manuscript (which includes 36 typed legal-size sheets, reproduced from 25 handwritten pages, and 18 handwritten pages never put into typed format), someone began typing up an edited version of the first and second chapters, five pages in all. For whatever reason, this short-lived project also ceased and the manuscript was stored away. After BVN had typed some of his handwritten chapters, he gave a number of these pages over to Bhagavan to read, correct and fill in the required Sanskrit text, for which he left adequate space.

One such Sanskrit text beautifully written by Bhagavan on these pages is his famous verse describing the means to enter the Heart (reproduced on page 2), which is verse two of Chapter II in *Sri Ramana Gita*. This verse constitutes the basis for that chapter, titled “The Three Paths”.

We do not know why BVN never completed this project, or how these manuscripts came to be filed away and forgotten, buried in an uncataloged library cabinet of the Ashram. Perhaps someone knows and will come forward with the information. We do know, however, that after his stint with the Maharshi, BVN travelled north, visited

Shirdi and became a staunch devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. He built a temple dedicated to Baba in Chennai and spent the remainder of his life propagating his message throughout South India. BVN’s Samadhi tomb lies behind the temple he built in Chennai. We can assume with the arrival of Baba in his life, his initial impetus to complete this new format for the *Sri Ramana Gita* faded or was forgotten. His manuscript leaves out five of the eighteen chapters of *Sri Ramana Gita*: chapters 8, 10, 11, 17, 18.

There is no doubt that Ganapati Muni’s eight hundred verses in *Sri Ramana Gita* are the distillation of all the dialogues he chose for the book. Nevertheless B. V. Narasimhan’s idea to recreate those chapters in their original conversational form has a singular value for those aspirants who were not present – this includes all of us – on those days when the questions were asked and answered by the Sage. In this unpublished manuscript, we can possibly gain greater insight into the Muni’s versified answers, discover teachings of the Master not covered in *Sri Ramana Gita* and have an opportunity to discern the extraordinary talent of the illustrious poet-disciple who composed this inspiring text.

Introduction by B. V. Narasimhaswami

Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, often referred to by all as Nayana, addressed six questions to Maharshi on the 29th of December 1913, and his example was followed by others four years later. The answers obtained from Maharshi were embodied in Sanskrit verse by Ganapati Sastri, and the resulting book was named by him *Sri Ramana Gita*. These verses appear to read better in their natural and original form of easy, unconventional conversation, and hence the original form is sought to be restored here. This may be taken to be fairly accurate. Information gleaned from the Maharshi by subsequent questions has been added in some places.

CHAPTER I

Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri: For Moksha (release from the bondage of samsara) sadhana (i.e., means to be adopted for practice) has to be considered. Some seem to opine that all that is necessary is Satyaa-satya viveka, the (careful) discrimination between what is ultimate truth or reality and what is not such truth or reality. Is that sufficient? Or is it necessary to adopt other means also?

Maharshi: Moksha is release from bondage; bondage is really ignorance; and ignorance can only be expelled by enlightenment. If the expulsion is to be complete and permanent, the enlightenment also must be complete and permanent. That is, one must always remain realizing That. Remaining in the realization of That is termed Atmanishta. This alone removes all bondage, that is, secures Moksha.

K. G. S.: But is not viveka the means to secure Atmanishta?

Maharshi: Viveka is the discrimination of the (eternal) Real from the unreal. It helps to secure vairagya, dispassion or freedom from emotions such as joy, sorrow, etc., which disturb the placidity and equanimity of one's mind, and thus viveka proves to be a useful and a necessary preparation for attaining Atmanishta, i.e. firmness in Jnana (Enlightenment.) The knowledge of Satya or the Real secured by viveka (discrimination) is not the same as (but only the basis of) Jnana (Enlightenment) or Atmanishta (i.e., firm self-realization). The former is still in the stage of chitta-vritti, an intellectual process, while the latter is not that at all, but is intuition, something in which the chitta (mind or intellect) has ceased its activities. The former state still retains the duality of reality and unreality, and the

contrast between the two. In the latter, i.e., the state of the Jnani, all contrasts and duality are swallowed up and there is only ineffable Realization. The intellectual viveki knows and reasons mediately (paroksha). The intuitive Jnani feels the truth, the Real, directly and immediately (aparoksha). The Jnani is not like the intellectual viveki. He regards the Jagat (Visvam), i.e., the phenomenal universe, as unreal, or as in no way different from himself, the Self.

K. G. S.: Is sastra charcha, the study and exploration of scripture, sufficient to attain Moksha, or should one seek the aid of a Guru and practice meditation (i.e., upasana) to attain Jnana (realization)?

Maharshi: Mere scriptural learning is insufficient. Certainly, practice of meditation and concentration is needed for realization. But what does that term upasana (practice) imply? It means that the aspirant is still conscious of his separate individuality and fancies himself to be making efforts to attain something – some Jnana not yet known to be himself. He ultimately arrives at the truth, the realization that all the time (including the time of practice) he has been (as he is and will be) himself the Self – beyond the concept of time. Though it is that state of realization (Sahaja Sthithi), or natural state of the Self that has been throughout all the time of practice (as nothing else exist), he calls it 'upasana' or practice of meditation, because his realization is not yet perfected; he, the thinker, or the subject, fancies he is going through a process of thinking or meditation upon an object, viz. Ishwara. When perfected, his state is termed Jnana, or Sahaja Sthithi, or the Atman, or Swabhava Samsthithi, or Sthitha Prajna-tvam. It may be described further as the state when vishaya

“ हृदय कुहर मध्ये केवलं ब्रह्म मात्रं
 ब्रह्म ह मिति साक्षा दात्म रूपेण भाति ।
 हृदि विश मनसा स्वं चिन्वता मज्जता वा
 पवन चलन रोप्या दात्म निष्ठो भवत्वम् ॥”

In the interior of the Heart-cave, Brahman alone shines in the form of the Atman with the direct immediacy as I, I. Enter into the Heart with questing mind or by diving deep within or through control of breath and abide in the Atman

jnanam, i.e., knowledge of the objective world, the non-self, has been entirely effaced and nothing remains but a blaze of consciousness of the Self as the Self (Swabhava Samsthithi).

K. G. S.: Does the aspirant after he attains firm Enlightenment (Sthitha Prajnatvam) retain a sense of his personality (self-consciousness)? Is he aware then that he has attained perfectly firm Enlightenment; and does he perceive that (1) from the entire effacement of his knowledge of the objective world or non-self, or (2) from perfection of his Enlightenment (Prajnatvam)?

Maharshi: Yes, the perfectly Enlightened, the fully attained Jnani, the Self-realized, certainly realizes himself as such. There can be no doubt there. Doubt or uncertainty is for the mind or intellect, and has no place in that perfection of Realization or Enlightenment. Perfection is seen (1) by a negative sign, the cessation of all vasanas, i.e., tendencies of the mind to act in consequence of previous 'attached karma' (action), and (2) by the positive sign of his incessant consciousness (Chidatmakaratha), which is also termed 'Mownam'. As for perfection of Jnana, the distinction is often drawn between Jnana and Vijnana, the latter referring to realization. The Jnani is said to be not merely Jnana-Swarupa, i.e., of the nature of Enlightenment, but also Swatmarama or Anandamurti, which means that he is experiencing and enjoying the Self as Jnanam or Anandam. But this is a dualistic metaphor. In point of fact, that which is (Sat), is but one. There is no separate thing as its enjoyment, or an object, or a quality for it to enjoy. But thought has to be expressed to others 'in matter-moulded forms of speech' and so we proceed into finer and finer analysis by means of similes, metaphors, etc., even as the Reality defies expression. On account of the use of such figurative language, however, the question is raised whether the Jnani experiences or realizes his Jnanam. What remains after all elimination is best described as Sat, that which is, Chit, consciousness or illumination, and Anandam or happiness – all three terms referring to one and the same substance. That is really not existence, nor illumination, nor happiness, nor substance, nor personality as we conceive them now. But these are the expressions or ideas which suggest to us that Supreme State, that goal, "Sa kashtha sa para gatih," That is Supreme, That the highest goal. (*Katha Upanishad* I-3-11)

K. G. S.: Well, the Jnani knows himself as such, i.e., as the fully attained. But can others know him to be such, and if so, by what indication?

Maharshi: Yes, it can be known. The mark by which perfect realization is indicated is Sarvabhuta Samattva, which means equality or sameness toward all. When one finds the same Atma or Self in all the various moveable and immoveable objects and his behaviour indicates the sense of equality, that constitutes the hallmark of the Jnani, Gunatita, Brahman, etc., as he is variously called. Equality means here, in practice, the accordance of treatment appropriate to each, without undue preference or undue avoidance as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

32. *He who, through the likeness of the Self, O Arjuna, sees equality everywhere, be it pleasure or pain, he is regarded as the highest yogi. (Chap. VI)*

24 & 25. *Who is the same in pleasure and pain, who dwells in the Self, to whom a clod of earth, stone and gold are alike, who is the same to the dear and the unfriendly, who is firm, and to whom censure and praise are as one, who is the same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings – he is said to have transcended the qualities. (Chap. XIV)*

K. G. S.: Does the practice of yoga culminating in samadhi (absorbed concentration or ecstasy) serve only the purpose of Self-realization or can it be utilized to secure also other and lower objects, such as the attainment of temporal ends?

Maharshi: Why, samadhi (i.e., the Yogi's perfect concentration) serves both purposes – Self-realization and the securing of lower objects.

K. G. S.: If one starts his practice of yoga and develops samadhi (absorbed concentration) to secure lesser objects, and before attaining these attains the greater object of Self-realization, what happens about the lesser objects? Does he attain these also or does he not?

Maharshi: He does. The karma (or effort) to reach lesser objects does not cease to produce its result and he may succeed in achieving these even after securing Self-realization. Of course, on account of such realization, there will be no exultation or joy at the lesser successes. For that which feels emotion, the mind, has ceased to exist in him as such, and has been transmuted into Prajna, Cosmic Consciousness.

(To be continued)

Aham and Aham-Vritti

IN fourteen chapters of the Maharshi's Gospel, Sri Ramana Maharshi answers the full range of doubts that could arise in any seeker that aspires to tread this royal path to eternal freedom. These pointed and well articulated questions are said to be primarily the work of Maurice Frydman. The Maharshi had once commented that Maurice did not ask the questions of the Maharshi's Gospel for his own benefit, implying that these recorded dialogues have an inherent value of benefit for generations of earnest seekers the world over. The book, which covers relevant topics and explanations not found elsewhere, was first published in 1939, on Sri Ramana's 60th Birth Anniversary.

Bhagavan Ramana did not just resuscitate the ancient path of Self-enquiry, he, from his own experience, expounded on every aspect of it, clarifying and molding it into an undisputable rational formula that any deep thinking mind can easily grasp and follow. In addition to this, he infused it with his grace and his guiding personality to assist those who follow his path and take refuge in him.

One chapter of particular interest in Maharshi's Gospel is Chapter 6 of Book II, titled "Aham and Aham-Vritti." In it, twenty questions are put to the Maharshi in which he says at one point, "If the mind becomes introverted through enquiry into the source of aham-vritti (the 'I-thought'), the vasanas become extinct, and in the absence of the reflecting medium, the phenomenon of reflection, namely, the mind, also disappears being absorbed into the light of the one Reality, the Heart. This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs to know."

In spite of this unassailable statement, the questioner continues to dissect the process of how an enquiry into the 'I-thought', which is inherently unreal, can reveal the Reality. The Master patiently answers him, eloquently covering every point of doubt. Contemplating these sublime answers, imbibing their innate truth and experiencing the Essence is certainly the foremost duty of every devotee of the Master.

Aham and Aham-Vritti

D. How can any enquiry initiated by the ego reveal its own unreality?

*M. The ego's phenomenal existence is transcended when you dive into the Source wherefrom arises the *aham-vritti*.*

*D. But is not the *aham-vritti* only one of the three forms in which the ego manifests itself? *Yoga Vasishtha* and other ancient texts describe the ego as having a threefold form.*

*M. It is so. The ego is described as having three bodies, the gross, the subtle and the causal, but that is only for the purposes of analytical exposition. If the method of enquiry were to depend on the ego's form, you might take it that any enquiry would become altogether impossible, because the forms the ego may assume are legion. Therefore, for purposes of *jnana-vichara*, you have to proceed on the basis that the ego has but one form, namely that of *aham-vritti*.*

*D. But it may prove inadequate for realizing *jnana*.*

*M. Self-enquiry, by following the clue of *aham-vritti* is just like the dog tracing its master by his scent. The master may be at some distant, unknown place, but that does not at all stand in the way of the dog tracing him. The master's scent is an infallible clue for the animal, and nothing else, such as the dress he wears or his build and stature, etc., counts. The dog holds on to that scent undistractedly while searching for him, and finally it succeeds in tracing him.*

*D. The question still remains why the quest for the source of *aham-vritti*, as distinguished from other *vrittis*, should be considered the direct means to Self-realization.*

*M. The word 'aham' is itself very suggestive. The two letters of the word, namely A (A) and H (HA), are the first and the last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The suggestion intended to be conveyed by the word is that it comprises all. How? Because *aham* signifies existence itself.*

Although the concept of 'I'-ness or 'I-am'-ness is by usage known as *aham-vritti*, it is not really a *vritti* like the other *vrittis* of the mind. Because unlike the other *vrittis* which have no essential interrelation, the *aham-vritti* is equally and essentially related to each and every *vritti* of the mind. Without the *aham-vritti* there can be no other *vritti*, but the *aham-vritti* can subsist by itself without depending on any other *vritti* of the mind. The *aham-vritti* is therefore fundamentally different from other *vrittis*.

So then, the search for the source of the *aham-vritti* is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego but for the very Source itself from which arises the 'I-am'-ness. In other words, the quest for and the realization of the source of the ego in the form of *aham-vritti* necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms.

D. Conceding that the *aham-vritti* essentially comprises all the forms of the ego, why should that *vritti* alone be chosen as the means for Self-enquiry?

M. Because it is the one irreducible datum of your experience; because seeking its source is the only practicable course you can adopt to realize the Self. The ego is said to have a causal body, but how can you make it the subject of your investigation? When the ego adopts that form, you are immersed in the darkness of sleep.

D. But is not the ego in its subtle and causal forms too intangible to be tackled through the enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti* conducted while the mind is awake?

M. No. The enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti* touches the very existence of the ego. Therefore the subtlety of the ego's form is not a material consideration.

D. While the one aim is to realize the unconditioned, pure Being of the Self, which is in no way dependent on the ego, how can enquiry pertaining to the ego in the form of *aham-vritti* be of any use?

M. From the functional point of view, the form of the ego or its activity (whatever you may call it is immaterial, since it is evanescent), has one and only one characteristic. The ego functions as the knot between the Self which is pure Consciousness and the physical body which is inert and insentient. The ego is therefore called the *chit-jada granthi*. In your investigation into the source of *aham-vritti*, you take the essential *chit* aspect of the ego: and for this reason the enquiry must lead to the realization of the pure consciousness of the Self.

D. What is the relation between the pure consciousness realized by the *jnani* and the 'I-am'-ness which is accepted as the primary datum of experience?

M. The undifferentiated consciousness of pure Being is the heart or *hridayam* which you really are, as signified by the word itself (*hrit + ayam = heart am I*). From the heart arises the 'I-am'-ness as the primary datum of one's experience. By itself it is *suddha-sattva* in character. It is in this *suddha-sattva svarupa* (that is, uncontaminated by *rajas* and *tamas*), that the 'I' appears to subsist in the *jnani*...

D. In the *jnani* the ego subsists in the *sattvic* form and therefore it appears as something real. Am I right?

M. No. The existence of the ego in any form, either in the *jnani* or *ajnani*, is itself an appearance. But to the *ajnani* who is deluded into thinking that the waking state and the world are real, the ego also appears to be real. Since he sees the *jnani* act like other individuals, he feels constrained to posit some notion of individuality with reference to the *jnani* also.

D. How then does the *aham-vritti* function in the *jnani*?

M. It does not function in him at all. The *jnani's lakshya* is the heart itself, because he is one and identical with that undifferentiated, pure consciousness referred to by the *Upanishads* as the *Prajnana*. *Prajnana* is verily *Brahman*, the Absolute, and there is no *Brahman* other than *Prajnana*.

D. How then does ignorance of this one and only Reality unhappily arise in the case of the *ajnani*?

M. The *ajnani* sees only the mind which is a mere reflection of the light of pure Consciousness arising from the heart. Of the heart itself he is ignorant. Why? Because his mind is extroverted and has never sought its Source.

D. What prevents the infinite, undifferentiated light of Consciousness arising from the heart from revealing itself to the *ajnani*?

M. Just as water in the pot reflects the enormous sun within the narrow limits of the pot, even so the *vasanas* or latent tendencies of the mind of the individual, acting as the reflecting medium, catch the all-pervading, infinite light of Consciousness arising from the heart and present in the form of a reflection the phenomenon called the mind. Seeing only this reflection, the *ajnani* is deluded into the belief that he is a finite being, the *jiva*.

If the mind becomes introverted through enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*, the *vasanas* become extinct,

and in the absence of the reflecting medium the phenomenon of reflection, namely, the mind, also disappears being absorbed into the light of the one Reality, the Heart.

This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs know. What is imperatively required of him is an earnest and one-pointed enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*.

D. But any endeavor he may make is limited to the mind in the waking state. How can such enquiry conducted in only one of the three states of the mind destroy the mind itself?

M. Enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti* is, no doubt, initiated by the *sadhaka* in the waking state of the mind. It cannot be said that in him the mind has been destroyed. But the process of Self-enquiry will itself reveal that the alternation or transmutation of the three states of the mind, as well as the three states themselves, belongs to the world of phenomena which cannot affect his intense, inward enquiry.

Self-enquiry is really possible only through intense introversion of the mind. What is finally realized as a result of such enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*, is verily the heart as the undifferentiated light of pure Consciousness, into which the reflected light of the mind is completely absorbed.

D. For the *jnani*, then, there is no distinction between the three states of mind?

M. How can there be, when the mind itself is dissolved and lost in the light of Consciousness?

For the *jnani* all the three states are equally unreal. But the *ajnani* is unable to comprehend this, because for him the standard of reality is the waking state, whereas for the *jnani* the standard of Reality is Reality itself. This Reality of pure Consciousness is eternal by its nature and therefore subsists equally during what you call waking, dreaming and sleep. To him who is one with that Reality, there is neither the mind nor its three states, and therefore, neither introversion nor extroversion.

His is the ever-waking state, because he is awake to the eternal Self; his is the ever-dreaming state, because to him the world is no better than a repeatedly presented phenomenon of dream; his is the ever-sleeping state, because he is at all times without the 'body-am-I' consciousness.

D. Should I then consider Sri Bhagavan as talking to me in a waking-dreaming-sleeping state?

M. Because your conscious experience is now limited to the duration of the extroversion of the mind, you call the present moment the waking state, whereas all the while your mind has been asleep to the Self, and therefore you are now really fast asleep.

D. To me sleep is a mere blankness.

M. That is so, because your waking state is a mere effervescence of the restless mind.

D. What I mean by blankness is that I am hardly aware of anything in my sleep; it is for me the same as non-existence.

M. But you did exist during sleep.

D. If I did, I was not aware of it.

M. You do not mean to say in all seriousness you ceased to exist during your sleep! (Laughing). If you went to sleep as Mr. X, did you get up from it as Mr. Y?

D. I know my identity, perhaps, by an act of memory.

M. Granting that, how is it possible unless there is a continuity of awareness?

D. But I was unaware of that awareness.

M. No. Who says you are unaware in sleep? It is your mind. But there was no mind in your sleep? Of what value is the testimony of the mind about your existence or experience during sleep? Seeking the testimony of the mind to disprove your existence or awareness during sleep is just like calling your son's evidence to disprove your birth!

Do you remember, I told you once previously that existence and awareness are not two different things but one and the same? Well, if for any reason you feel constrained to admit the fact that you existed in sleep be sure you were also aware of that existence.

What you were really unaware of in sleep is your bodily existence. You are confounding this bodily awareness with the true Awareness of the Self which is eternal. *Prajnana*, which is the Source of 'I-am'-ness, ever subsists unaffected by the three transitory states of the mind, thus enabling you to retain your identity unimpaired.

Prajnana is also beyond the three states, because it can subsist without them and in spite of them.

It is that Reality that you should seek during your so-called waking state by tracing the *aham-vritti* to its Source. Intense practice in this enquiry will reveal that the mind and its three states are unreal and that you are the eternal, infinite consciousness of pure Being, the Self or the Heart.

Silence and Effort

By M. Anantanarayan

WE cannot conceive of sadhana except as effort. But the time comes when it is clearly seen that effort, even of the most subtle and inward kind, is will or speech; and how can 'noise' produce Silence? After this it is difficult to make effort – but it is equally difficult to escape from the climate of this realisation! Bhagavan once said that we could proceed inward only up to a point, “Then the beyond will take care of itself.”

The interval between thoughts is vital, but the thought of the interval is itself a thought! If the electric fan slows down of itself, the separate blades are seen. I somehow feel that all this is so easy, direct and simple that I am astonished that people spend hours on abstruse problems of intellect-created metaphysics. Surely paintings of food don't satisfy hunger!

I cannot forget the graciousness of Bhagavan to me so long as I have a memory and it functions as such.

Testimony

By G. V. Subbaramayya

THAT the mere thought or remembrance of you suffices to still the mind and harmonise the heart, I hereby testify. That your invisible presence, spreading a spell of Silence, resolves all doubts, dissolves all distractions, charms away all unhappiness and radiates peace and bliss, I hereby testify. That your angelic countenance and radiant look breathes compassion on all, I hereby testify.

That YOU who were incarnate in a mortal mould are in truth the embodiment of Truth itself, the supreme God walking on this earth, moving and suffering with us all to sanctify and save all souls, I hereby testify.

That you are the quintessence of all greatness and goodness of all knowledge and wisdom, of all merit and worthiness, I hereby testify.

That you are all Gods, all Prophets, all Sages, indeed, all beings and all worlds, rolled into ONE, I hereby testify, O Self of self! —*Ramana Pictorial Souvenir, 1967*

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Ann Arbor, MI — Mohan & Gayatri (734-623-7199 / cedararbor@yahoo.com)

Boston, MA — Abhirami and Venkat (508-358-1144 / vshash@gmail.com)

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