Photos : D. Thiyagarajan

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

In this November issue we conclude the personal account of the District Court Judge, T.S. Anantha Murthy who spent ten days with Bhagavan in April of 1937. Thirty-five years later he recounted his experiences in a book published under the title, *The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (see p. 3).

Also in this issue, we continue to look at how best to make use of Bhagavan's inquiry in the digital era (see p. 9).

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to https://sriramanamaharshi.org or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org.

In Sri Bhagavan,
Saranagati

Calendar of Ashram Events

5th Nov (Sat) Sani Pradosham
7th Nov (Mon) Fullmoon Annabhishekam
8th Nov (Tues) Mastan Day
9th Nov (Wed) Annamalai Swami Day
14th Nov (Mon) Punarvasu
21st Nov (Mon) Pradosham
27th Nov (Sun) Karthigai Festival Begins

5th Dec (Mon) Pradosham
6th Dec (Tues) Bharani Deepam, MAHA DEEPAM
7th Dec (Wed) Full moon day
11th Dec (Sun) Punarvasu
16th Dec (Fri) Dhanur Masa Commences,
21st Dec (Wed) Pradosham
7th Jan (Sat) Sri Bhagavan's 143rd Jayanti
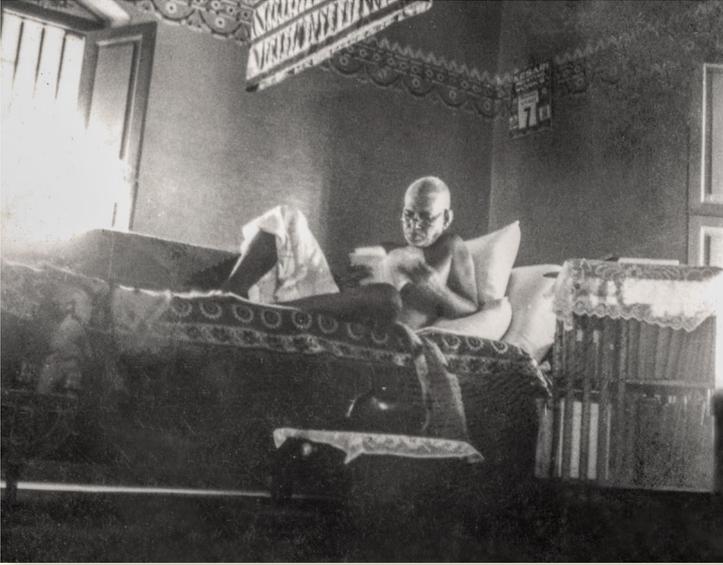
IN PROFILE

T.S. Anantha Murthy (Part II)

In the first part, we saw how the district court judge T. S. Anantha Murthy and his wife came to Sri Ramanasramam to see Bhagavan at the end of March 1937. The Judge was discreet and often waited for moments when few devotees were around. Altogether he spent ten days in the Master's presence during which time he received all that he could have dreamed of. He also made casual observations about life in the darshan hall and the old dining hall which at that time stood where Bhagavan's Shrine stands today:

At about noon, devotees began to disperse one after another. Only visitors like me and my wife remained in the hall. At about 11 am the lunch bell was heard. Sri Ramana got up from his seat, picked up his stick and walked into the dining room. My wife and I and some other guests followed him and sat in front of the plantain leaves spread on the floor by the attendants. There were more guests than on the previous night. Some were women. Among men, some were Christians, one was Muslim and others were foreigners. All castes of Hindus were represented as Sri Ramana's habits were cosmopolitan. Cooks and servers were,

however, all Brahmins. Among the cooks, there was a woman cook. All were old devotees of the sage and they had volunteered to serve in the ashram by way of spiritual sadhana. Sri Ramana was seated on a raised platform and a leaf was spread out in front of him.

When all the guests were seated, the servers began to serve the midday meal. Echammal had brought cooked rice from her house. She served a handful of it on Sri Ramana's leaf and then served small quantities of it to the other guests. She had been permitted to perform this service, and I learnt that she had been doing so for many years. Her ancient story was ascertained by questioning some of the attendants. She was old in years, was dignified and quiet and did not speak to anyone. After serving the food she had brought, she went back to town to take her own meal.

Though there was complete informality in the dining room, every guest ate their food respectfully, with periodic glances up at Sri Ramana. The orthodox Brahmins did not like to mingle with non-Brahmins and so were made to sit in an adjacent room where the same articles of food were served to them. The midday meal was simple, consisting of rice, pickles, vegetable curry, chutney, sambar, and buttermilk. All had finished their meal within fifteen minutes and Sri Ramana stood up and walked out into the courtyard to wash his hands and feet. He then went into the hall and reclined on the sofa. His attendants closed the doors and asked visitors not to disturb him.

After Judge Anantha Murthy and his wife had taken rest in the guest room, they returned to the darshan hall at about 4 pm:

We humbly prostrated before the sage, who was seated on the sofa. Devotees began to arrive and the hall was filled up within a short time. Three or four Brahmin pundits arrived, prostrated to Bhagavan, sat down on the floor and began to chant sacred verses just as they had done on the previous evening. As soon as they started to chant, Sri Ramana changed his posture and sat motionless. His lustrous eyes were open and he appeared as though he was staring into infinity. To borrow Paul Brunton's metaphor, Sri Ramana's bright eyes looked like two stars. Everyone in the hall listened to the Veda Parayana in perfect silence. The chanting ended, as on the previous evening, with the recital of the following shanti mantra, namely, Aum sam no mitrah sam varunah Aum shantih, shantih, shantih.

When the pundits stood up, prostrated to Bhagavan and departed the hall, Bhagavan picked up his stick and went out to take his walk. The ladies went home while female guests went by ashram bullock cart to town to spend the night there. The men remained
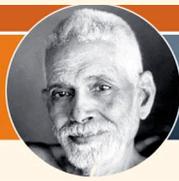
and gathered at the appointed time for dinner. After the supper was finished, Bhagavan returned to the hall. Anantha Murthy writes:

I entered the hall and sat for meditation. A large petromax light was brightly illuminating the hall as on the previous night. After some time, I felt the need to put a question to Bhagavan. I stood up and noticed that Sri Ramana was sitting with his eyes closed. His benevolence gave me the courage to approach him. When I went near the sofa with folded hands, he looked up. I assumed that he had accorded me permission to put a question. I then asked, "Sir, may I know what is meant by saying that 'Atman is light'? May I know if Atman looks like the petromax lamp which is burning in this hall?" Sri Ramana was pleased to give me the following reply in English: "Atman is not a light like the petromax lamp. It is called 'light' because everything else becomes known through It."

These simple words in English cleared my doubt. Bhagavan then fell silent. I walked out of the hall and retired to the guest room for the night.

At 9 am the next morning, the Judge had returned and was sitting in the hall only a few yards away from Bhagavan, who was in a samadhi state on the sofa. Other devotees were sitting on the floor with their eyes closed:

We all watched the sage, who was effortlessly sitting absorbed in the Self. To watch him was a great inspiration. An old Brahmin pundit, who was till then sitting with his eyes closed, stood up and walked toward Sri Ramana's sofa. The pundit was clad in a silk upper anga-vastram and a dhoti beneath his waist. He wore two diamond rings on two of his fingers of the left hand. He had diamond-set earrings as well. His tall forehead was marked by vibhuti stripes and there was also a big kumkum mark between his eyebrows. A well-built old man, he loudly addressed Sri Ramana in Telugu and spoke with a stentorian voice: "Swamiji, many men and women are now sitting before you in order to get instruction. You do not speak even one word. They too do not put any questions to you. They are all silently sitting to learn something. What are you teaching them? What are they learning from you? Please explain this secret to me."

Bhagavan neither lifted his head nor opened his eyes. He gave no discernible indication that he had even heard the question. The Judge continues:

All of us were eager to hear any reply the sage might give. The questioner stood for five minutes hoping that the sage would respond, however, Bhagavan continued to sit with his eyes closed as before. The old pundit started to speak again and said in Telugu:
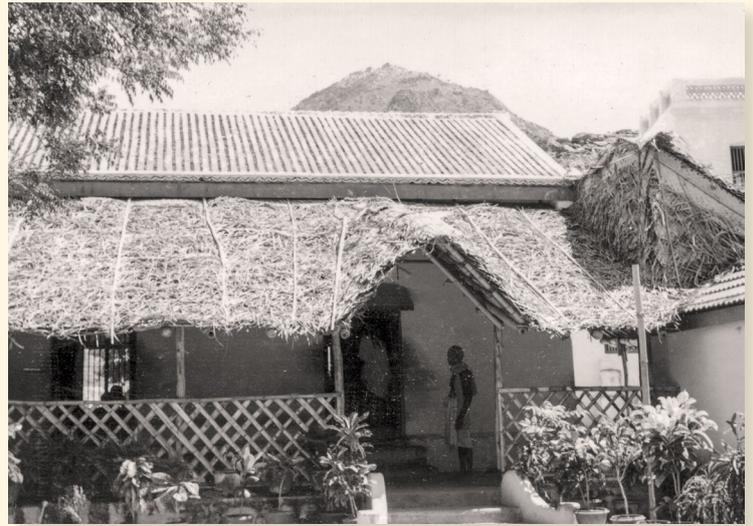

The Old Hall, ca. 1937

"My two questions have not been answered by you, Swamiji, nor can I discover the answer on my own. Please explain the matter by word of mouth." After having thus spoken, he continued to stand before the Master. Sri Ramana opened his bright eyes, looked at the old pundit and replied in Telugu as follows: "What are you asking me? Is there anyone here to teach others?" Unable to give an answer to the questions put by the sage himself, the Telugu pundit said: "If it is so, why are so many men and women sitting patiently in front of you? What profit do they derive by sitting in this hall?"

Sri Ramana, with a slight smile on his serene face, gave the following instructive reply in Telugu, "The question must be put there. Why are you putting that question here?" When he used the noun 'there', the sage stretched his hand towards the assembled devotees. When he used the noun 'here', he turned his hand towards himself. Such were his answers. From his gestures, I realized a profound secret. Other devotees assembled in the hall must have also realized the same thing: Sri Ramana had no notion that he was a teacher or a Guru. Likewise, he had no idea that the men and women sitting in the hall were ignorant and that they needed enlightenment. From the sage's point of view, everyone in the hall was Brahman, Atman. His drishti was that of a knower of Brahman. Knowers of Brahman have Brahman Drishti.

On another day, Anantha Murthy approached Sri Bhagavan and begged him to explain a verse from the *Kathopanishad*: "It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to; this Self of that seeker reveals Its true nature."

He asked Bhagavan to explain the significance of the verbs *vivrunute* and *vrunute* which he added
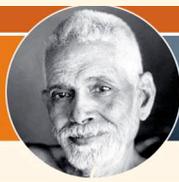
had been commented on at great length by ancient commentators. Sri Ramana was pleased to explain the matter in the following manner:

"This verse means that God will disclose his form to the devotee who surrenders himself completely. God is not partial to anyone. God confers His grace on all who surrender themselves to Him. God is the Atman in everyone."

Anantha Murthy writes:

Sri Ramana's succinct exposition of this complex verse solved my doubts.

Anantha Murthy then continues his account:

I stayed for ten days at Ramanasramam, even though I had gone there with the idea of staying only for three days. My wife could not stay for so long a period because our children had to be looked after in Bangalore. They were all young boys in 1937. So, she returned to Bangalore after three days. The Sarvadhikari generously permitted me to continue my stay in the ashram.

One morning I was sitting in the hall and meditating in the presence of the sage. A verse of the Kenopanishad *which had long baffled my understanding came to mind. The verse runs thus: "It is really known when it is known in and through every modification of the mind, for by such knowledge one attains immortality. By Atman one attains real strength, and by Knowledge, Immortality."* (Kenopanishad, 2-4) *I told him in English that I had difficulty comprehending this verse and that I needed his help. Since I knew the verse by heart, I recited it. Sri Ramana heard it with attention. He wanted to read the verse in the text itself but as I did not have the book with me at the time, he asked his attendant to go to the Ashram library and get a copy of it. The attendant, who knew Sanskrit, went to the library*

and brought it. Sri Ramana gave it to me and directed me to show him the verse. I found the verse and showed it to him. He read the verse silently and looked at me. I said that I had two difficulties in relation to the verse, first, on whether or not every vritti of the mind was Brahman, as indicated in the first half of the verse, and second, whether or not physical strength was attainable by one who realizes the Atman, as indicated in the second half of the verse. He replied as follows: "Yes, everything is Brahman. Every vritti of the mind including grief and sorrow is Brahman. Every kind of strength, including physical strength, will be obtained by a person when he realizes his Atman."

Anantha Murthy concludes his account with additional encounters he had with Bhagavan:

One day when practising meditation in the hall along with other devotees, I could not concentrate and I discovered that unwanted thoughts were disturbing my serenity. I desired to bring it to the notice of the sage and to learn how to surmount the difficulty. I went near the sofa and said in English, "Bhagavan, my mind is not steady today. What is to be done?" The sage raised his head and recited the following verses from the Gita:

"One should raise oneself by one's Self alone; let not one lower oneself; for the Self alone is the friend of oneself, and the Self alone is the enemy of oneself" (Ch 6, v 5). "From whatever cause the restless and unsteady mind wanders away, from that let him restrain it and bring it under the control of the Self alone" (Ch 6, v 26).

After quoting these verses for my guidance, the benevolent sage, in his infinite mercy, added the following English comment: "These two verses contain all the necessary instructions for gaining serenity of mind. All efforts must be made to become effortless." He then closed his eyes.

On the last day of Anantha Murthy's stay at

Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Pancha Deepagni Lehyam

Pancha Deepagni Lehyam

Pañcadī pāgṇipā rēlañ sukku/pagarmiḻagu jīrakantip piliyu māgum añjumvagaik korupalamā yāṉa tūḻai/yaḍuppiṉmēr paḍipāḷir palameṭ ṭāgum eñjupaṉai vellamiṭ ṭeritta pāgi/leḍuttiṭṭuk kāṟpaḍiyā neyka landu viñjutēṉ paḍiyaraikkāl viṭṭuk kūṭṭi/vēḷaikkuk kazhañjukoḷḷa vilagum mandam

pañca dīpāgṇipār ēlam sukku/pagarmiḻagu jīrakam tippiliyum āgum añjumvagaikku orupalamāyāṉa tūḻai/aḍuppiṉmēl paḍipāḷil palam eṭ ṭāgum eñjupaṉai vellam iṭṭu'eritta pāgil/eḍuttu'iṭṭuk kālpaḍiyā neykalandu viñjutēṉ paḍi'araikkāl viṭṭuk kūṭṭi/vēḷaikkuk kazhañjukoḷḷa vilagum mandam

Ingredients (35 gms of each of the following): cardamom, dry ginger, black pepper, cumin seeds, rice pippali; plus milk (1 padi), palm jam (8 phalam), ghee (1/4 padi), and honey (1/2 padi)

Preparation: Take the above weight of herbs, clean well and grind to a powder. Mix well with milk and boil. Add milk to palm jam and mix ghee and honey. This powder can be eaten once a day.

Benefits: Remedy for flatulence, indigestion, constipation, or loss of appetite. —
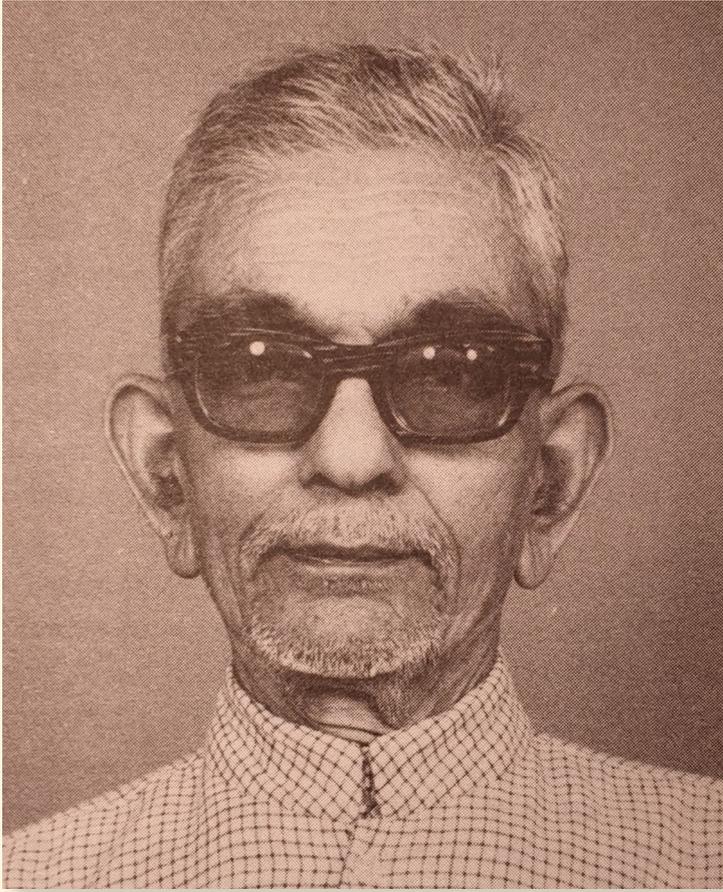
T.S. Anantha Murthy

Ramanasramam, he had an encounter with Bhagavan in the dining hall that had bearing on his chronic health condition:

I took my breakfast sitting in front of Sri Ramana. Other guests were also present. The usual breakfast of idli, sambar and hot coffee was finished in short order though Bhagavan sipped his coffee slowly. On that morning, one or two fried vadais were served. I imagined that fried vadais were indigestible for me, given

my digestive troubles, and so I told Sri Ramana that I was afraid to eat them. That was the first time I had the courage to talk to him in the dining hall. The sage looked at me with his delightfully pleasing eyes and said, "You will digest them. You may eat them." Then my fears fled and I ate the vadais without suffering any indigestion.

After breakfast, the Judge purchased a photo of Bhagavan from the bookstall and wanted Bhagavan to bless it:

I went into the hall and prostrated to Sri Ramana, who was seated in the jagrat state. I was surprised that there was no one else in the hall. I told him that I had purchased his photo and that I desired to receive it from his hands. Having said so, I gave the photo to him. He graciously stretched out his hands, took it from me and looked at it for half a minute without saying anything. He was pleased to give it back to me. I received it with great satisfaction. Then, I wanted to obtain his blessing before leaving. So, I went near him once again and stood for a minute looking at him. I addressed him in English, saying, "Bhagavan, I have enjoyed great peace in your presence. Permit me to return to Bangalore. May I know if I can receive your help when I reach Bangalore? I pray for your benediction."

The benevolent sage dramatised the parting scene. He sat up vertically on the sofa and with a kind but loud tone, said in English: "What? Is there time, place or distance for me?" After putting this question to me, he reclined on the pillows of the sofa and closed his eyes. His words and gestures were charming, instructive and benevolent. They indicated perpetual compassion and love for all who pray for his aid. His gracious words are ringing in my ears, even after thirty-four years.[1] —

(series concluded)

1 *The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* was published by T.S. Anantha Murthy in 1972.

Announcement: Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage
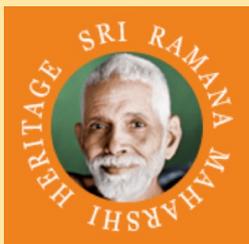
Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage (SRMH) is a newly created 501 (c) (3), registered non-profit in the United States. The organization's purpose is to preserve Sri Ramana Maharshi's heritage and to serve devotees who are drawn to the life and teachings of Bhagavan. The new entity's objectives are aligned with those of Sri Ramanasramam in India. Devotees in the United States who wish to donate towards and participate in Sri Ramanasramam's charitable initiatives in India can learn more by visiting the website: https://www.srmh.org/ or by sending an email to: sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com. —
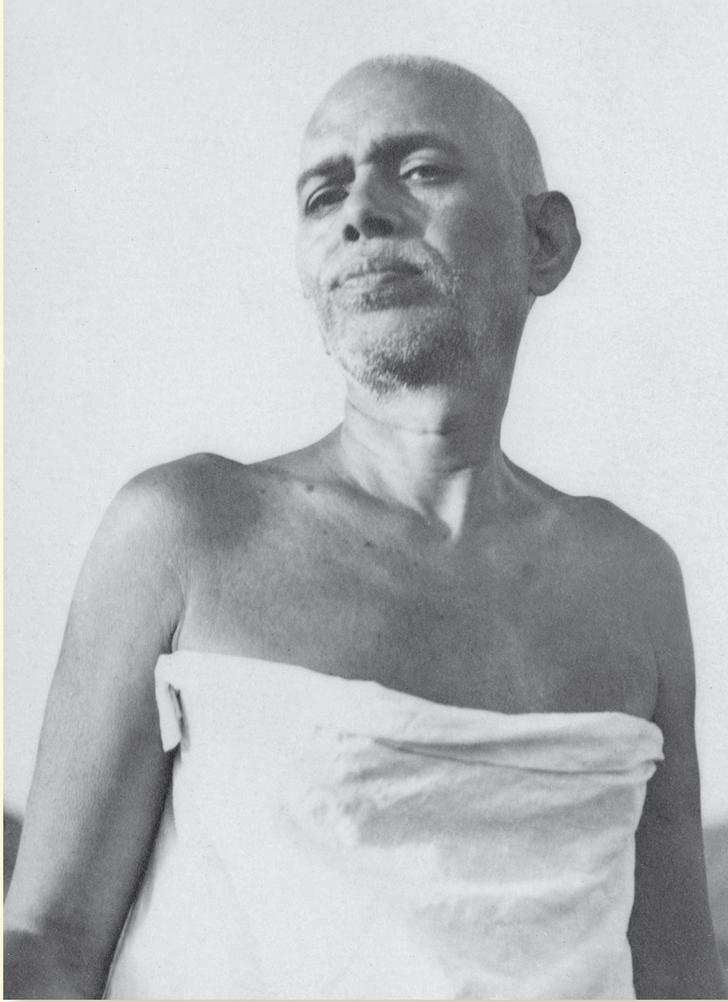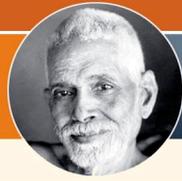
RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Bhagavan's Inquiry:

### Distinguishing the True from the False in the Age of Information (Part II)

We began the first part inquiring about *the Name that cannot be named* and how we might come to know the Self in light of the complexity of the digital era. We looked at how Bhagavan's inquiry interfaces with the digital reality of our world where social media algorithms take advantage of built-in vulnerabilities within the human psyche and keep us gravitating to our devices. We saw how false online narratives have a six times greater chance at proliferation than truthful ones, and how algorithms select information according to what increases user activity.

What are algorithms, after all? Derived from the name of the ninth-century Persian mathematician, Al-Khwarizmi, algorithms are sequences of detailed instructions guiding a computation. In the super-computing modern world, they have become advanced. In the social network setting, algorithms prioritise which content a given user will want to see by the likelihood that they will want to see it, which, as we saw last time, selectively presents the user with information he or she will likely agree with. In the first segment, we saw how algorithms unintentionally corral us into filter bubbles and insulate us from alternative views, polarising members of contrasting information silos. If we are evolutionarily hard-wired to give greater importance to negative messages, as neurologists tell us we are, algorithms may have the effect of nudging users toward extreme content over time. If every imaginable hypothesis can be found on the internet, each with numerous adherents, filter bubbles seem to reinforce confirmation biases prompting users to continue believing widely debunked theories. We came to see increasingly that the internet is far from infallible, is not the Oracle of Truth we thought it to be.

We also saw that the manner in which the human community arrives at consensus has fundamentally shifted in the digital era. If formerly cultures arrived at 'truth' consensually, i.e., according to what a threshold number within a respective community held to be true, in the present digital tribe of billions, the fractional percentage that get on board with a dubious theory can link up online, form a virtual community, and establish a narrative that really could not have gotten traction even just two decades ago. If the way we are evolutionarily hard-wired is getting short-circuited by the new social arrangement, we began to see in the first segment how widespread division within and across nations, within families and across communities is born of a pervasive lack of agreement on basic questions such as the shape of the earth. When a new theory circulates, we go online to see what others are saying about it. Establishing a given hypothesis based on a threshold consensus from the 'local community' of billions is tricky because we have no experience— evolutionarily speaking—of life in a community of
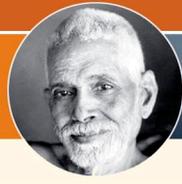
that scale. Therefore, our perceptions regarding long-standing verification mechanisms in respect of what is true or false can be easily skewed.[1]

Architecture of the Ego

In the first segment, we saw how the mechanism at work in algorithmic manipulation reflects basic functioning of the ego. The architecture of a filter bubble mimics that of the ego. Filter bubbles have fixed boundaries and establish firm limits on what they allow in. In general, ego only knows what is available within its own confines and is not keenly aware of the context within which it is situated. Algorithm driven opinions are similarly mediated discursively within a closed system, lacking self-reference and context. They operate within the frame of what is already known and are unable to see beyond their own boundaries. Their points of reference are inflexibly contained within the bubble itself. By contrast, intuitive knowledge born of *vichara* is self-aware and present to its surroundings. It possesses the potential for new ways of seeing and pans back to survey the full range of present conditions without getting bogged down in identification with them. Conceptual knowledge within a filter bubble is represented by a string of facts, images, labels and names, whereas intuitive knowledge is conscious of itself and what is beyond it. Filter bubbles invariably prompt us to cling to models of the world that conform to the views of its inhabitants and shun the views of those outside it. Intuitive knowledge is all-encompassing awareness that transcends the representational function of the mind and is thus global and unattached to views.[2]

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1 The Harvard psychiatrist and Ramana devotee, Dr. Carlos Lopez writes: 'Social media algorithms uncannily resemble a recent neuroscience paradigm called "predictive coding". The brain consumes 20% of the body's total metabolic energy output and in order to use energy efficiently, manages a complex information processing circuitry. While algorithm based computerised technology mimics the brain in processing immense amounts of data per millisecond, it is not meant to mimic the innate wisdom of the body's evolutionary biology (and instead, for instance, in the interest of increasing user activity, eschews information towards emotionally laden processing circuits such as the limbic system). Daily engagement with algorithm based social media can have devastating biological and psycho-social effects, especially in the developing brains of children, adolescents and young adults.'

2 Those drawn to extreme filter bubbles may suffer, among other things, psychological predispositions to addictive behaviour or social/cultural displacement (perhaps compounded by excessive device use) or deficits in psychological resilience born of early life trauma.

The Moksha Element

Here we may recall the classical teaching on the *object of human pursuit* as composed of four requisites (*purusharthas*), namely, *dharma, artha, kama,* and *moksha. Dharma* is ethical life and moral development; *artha* governs wealth, prosperity and comforts of life; *kama* is sense enjoyment and psychological well-being; and *moksha* is the transcendent dimension concerned with queries into a realm beyond this world, i.e., God, spirituality and ultimate freedom.

In the digital era, the first three largely remain intact, but the fourth has atrophied. In this context, *moksha* should not be seen only as the final goal, namely, realisation, but as the lens through which we view all of experience. Our views and opinions should be scrutinised through the prism of *moksha*, i.e. measured in the context of the larger frame of transcendence beyond this body and this world. This is one of *vichara's* key benefits, namely, to bring the transcendent divine dimension to bear on all our daily concerns, which include not only our fierce attachment to algorithmically driven opinions but the vexations that come with daily living. The *moksha* element puts into sharper focus existential questions about life, death and the reason to live, lightening our burden. Bringing the transcendent to bear on all our dealings helps us shake off the encapsulating power of former assumptions and fixed views that limit the range of our understanding.

The tradition teaches us about the *moksha* element and the *vichara* moment when, for example, Arjuna consults Lord Krishna on the battlefield at Kurukshetra. Though Arjuna does not know it, his moral dilemma is born of limiting views. When the Lord illumines him with a transcendent frame for viewing the human predicament, his dilemma is resolved, and he is able to act. Here, Arjuna is the archetypal human person and Kurukshetra is the battlefield of life we all face. It is Arjuna's *vichara* that invokes the *moksha* element in the form of the Charioteer, who frees him from his conflict.

We see a similar moment in the Arunachala story when Vishnu in the form of a boar pauses after one hundred years of digging into the earth to discover
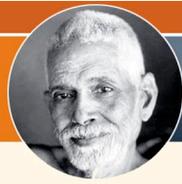
the lower limits of the Pillar of Fire. The text says, he 'humbled himself and sat in meditation.' He began to inquire meaningfully into what the mighty pillar might actually be. His *vichara* led him to see that the Column of Light was the very Light of Awareness Itself, Its limits beyond any physical discovery, beyond any comprehension of It by the thinking mind.

Egoic Identification

The first step in *vichara* is overcoming the assumption that tightly held views can take us there. *Vichara* overrides engaged thought, especially in its overtly conceptual form, which cuts us off from the direct experience of the Divine. Questioning, by contrast, helps us penetrate appearances in the thinking mind and pierces the veils that prevent us from seeing things as they are. *The Name that cannot be named* is that experience beyond words and labels. Thinking or philosophising about it or culling input from the vast troves of information on the internet cannot match a quiescent mind. Bhagavan tells us:

All the texts say that [...] one should render the mind quiescent; once this has been understood, there is no need for endless reading. In order to quieten the mind, one has only to inquire within oneself what one's Self is. How could this search be done in books? One should know one's Self with one's own eye of wisdom.[3]

Direct experience can be unsettling as it leads us down the rabbit hole of the unconscious into the opaque mysteries of intuitive wisdom. Conceptual thought by contrast feels safe. It is lucid and bright and would seem to insulate us from the more daunting dimensions of life, not least of all, from discovering what we truly are and that all we cling to is without enduring substance. *Vichara*, by contrast, is not for the timid of heart, but helps us see through the comfort that distracting thought offers, born of its veiling power to shield us from the uncomfortable facts of life. In the meditation setting, we see that defilements and karmic imprints are not hidden away accidentally. Rather, at our peril, we deliberately employ compulsive thinking as one of the devices to keep the lid on anything that might be uncomfortable. The inner silence that *vichara* elicits, however, is the daring path that allows the unconscious to become conscious. Bhagavan tells us:

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3 *Who Am I?* §23.

Silence is the ocean into which all the rivers of all the religions discharge themselves... It is the speech of the Self. What one fails to know by conversation extending several years can be known in a trice in Silence... That which Is, is Silence.[4]

The tastelessness that comes with intensive *vichara* is one of the built-in resistances we have toward it, namely, the temporary disenchantment that comes with seeing directly that there is no small self and that the personality we cling to and call ourselves is but a collection of mental and physical functions of the mind and body. The law of change and the flow of changing conditions makes it clear that there is no earthly human security. We avoid the temptation to make thought a refuge by cultivating the psychological strength and the spiritual courage to face facts about our lives and the world around us.

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4 *Talks,* §594, §246; *Letters,* 3 Sept, 29 Nov 1947.
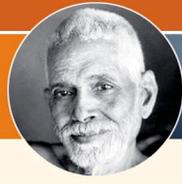
Vichara is the means for freeing us up from our egoic identification which includes attachment to filter bubbles. Egoic identification is mostly born of distracting thoughts in the mind. *Vichara* leads us to clear recognition and acceptance which in turn leads us to emerge from our digital cocoons. Like the internet, the mind is a network and has its own 'algorithms' designed to attract the user's attention. It draws on its vast resources of memory and its unlimited capacity for imagination to generate captivating internal media (which invariably includes reverie about the future and reminiscences about the past). This is what we call distraction. *Vichara* is intended to lead us out from distracting thoughts in favour of the mind's higher functioning. Egoic identification is nothing more than diversion and non-essential thinking. Since Bhagavan tells us there is no ego, and nothing substantial to be identified with, egoic identification can be seen as the mind's failed struggle to be present to conditions day in and day out:

You must exist in order that you may think. You may think these thoughts or other thoughts. The thoughts change but not you. Let go the passing thoughts and hold on to the unchanging Self. The thoughts form your bondage. If they are given up, there is release. The bondage is not external. So no external remedy need be sought for release. It is within your competence to think and thus to get bound or to cease thinking and thus be free.[5]

Vichara is all about upsetting the apple cart of egoic identification. If *vichara* is designed to lead us to the ultimate goal, it can also be used to lead us to the next step toward the goal. We don't have to reach the goal all at once but can proceed step by step, making use of 'applied *vichara*' in a gradual process of egoic attrition.

5 *Talks,* §524.

Inquiring into the Deathless

At this point we might ask, *Are all truths born of filter bubbles? Is there a Reality beyond filter bubbles?*

Bhagavan would respond by saying, *Find out who you are first, then take up these questions.* In other words, make use of *vichara* as the penetrating means for transcending egoic identification which would include the entanglements of the thinking mind as it relates to filter bubbles. In Bhagavan's inquiry, we do not have the luxury of abdicating our role as devotees but with every step, must responsibly take stock of our circumstances—inner and outer—acknowledging moments when we become overconfident in our personal views.

Vichara guides us toward taking responsibility for life's hardships rather than conveniently blaming our troubles on those outside our filter bubbles. Clinging to views, opposing those who hold alternate views or bending reality to suit our clung-to narratives is the stuff of egoic identification. For Bhagavan, more important than knowing whether the earth is round or flat is developing the capacity to disengage from worldly views. *Vichara* is just the tool for such disengagement. It brings the *moksha* element and helps us sift through mundane opinion to reveal genuine faith.

Vichara is not about seeking answers but about reframing the questions in order that we live them fully. Bhagavan's teaching is not something to *know* but something to *do*, something to put into practice. It is not that we need to know everything about what ails us. Bhagavan never advised us to get to know a lot about what we are discarding. Rather, we just discard it. The same applies to what is not Self—we just let go of it. As for combatting algorithmic entanglement, there are simple practical interventions: r*egulating device use, digital fasting, increased face-time interactions,* and *ongoing inquiry into filter-bubble driven opinions and views.*
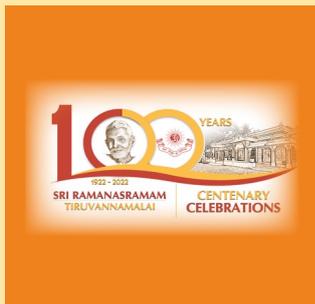
Announcement: Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary Year
(September 2022 - December 2023)

Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary celebrations called, *Ramanasramam: The Next One Hundred Years,* which began 1st Sept 2022 and will continue over a 16-month period until Jayanti, 28th Dec 2023. It is recorded in one place that Bhagavan came down the Hill to stay permanently 'about one week' before Jayanti which fell that year on 3rd January 1923. If so, this means the Ashram would have been established with Bhagavan's arrival around the 28th of Dec 1922. Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan invites devotees to send their suggestions for this Centenary Year to him directly at <posrm@gururamana.org>. —
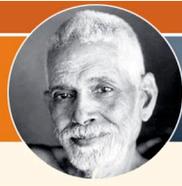
Following Bhagavan, we bring inquiry into every aspect of our lives, not least of all, in the face of cultural decline. Amid a plethora of personalised information where truth is established by click preference, perfectly conformed to our hidden desires and longings, we have come to question whether the True Name can be known—*or if It even exists.* If we are following a life of *sadhana* offline, still we are 'downstream' from the social effects of algorithms used in social media which have altered the cultural landscape and unwittingly caused alienation within communities, families and in individual hearts, especially among youth.[6]

Bhagavan's inquiry is a life raft. In making use of it, we stand a chance at seeing clearly what is happening to us. If samsara was hard to push back on in Bhagavan's time, it is more difficult in an era where narcissistic impulses are not only collective and universal (as they have always been) but have now been engineered into the very machinery of modern communication.

In the excess of names flooding the logosphere, what is the True Name? And how would we recognise it if we chanced upon it? Bhagavan responds:

The Guru's silence is vaster and more emphatic than all the sastras put together... His silence is the highest expression of the realised non-duality which is after all the true content of the Vedas. Though he instructs his disciples, he does not pose as a teacher, in the full conviction that teacher and disciple are mere conventions born of illusion. And so, he continues to utter words... But the other speech lies beyond thought. It is transcendent speech (para vak).[7]

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6 Studies of feral children (i.e. children reared by animals) show that while having normally functioning brains, they are unable to develop healthy human cognition after a certain age. The same would apply to children 'reared' on heavy digital device use. Beyond a certain age, they might be unable to develop healthy human relationship skills.
7 *Talks,* §398, §449, and §68.

Theorising about the True Name may be satisfying but it is not liberating. It is understandable that we might mistake reflection on the teaching for true knowing, but true knowing, Bhagavan tells us, only comes when the sense of a separate self is removed. The True Name cannot be an object in the universe nor mere content in any model of the universe but is rather the Container of the model. Nothing lies outside It. And yet, what does it mean to talk of a model? Is it not just another conceptual convention of the discursive mind?

The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. Why? Because in naming it, it becomes something else. The *Unnameable is the eternally real but naming is the origin of only particular things and not the ultimate.* In other words, that which can be named does not exist ultimately and unconditionally; that which exists ultimately and unconditionally cannot be named.

Conclusion

Where does all this trouble originate? How did we get into this mess? What we are talking about here is the human condition, the challenge for every incarnation in a human body. If all organic systems possess a fundamental tendency toward stabilisation (*homeostasis*) and all physical matter is governed by the property of gradual decline into disorder (*entropy*), then conflict will arise for any species endowed with reflexive language and self-aware consciousness.

We have alternatives as to how we meet this conflict, one of which is just pretending it is not there; another is forthrightly inquiring into it. If we look at it directly, perhaps the greatest concern is how pervasive it is, affecting billions around the globe.


Bhagavan's Handwriting: Sannidhi Murai's 'Decad of Miracle' (v. 5)

வியர்வு கொள்ளவிம் மேதினி வாழ்க்கையில்
வெற்றுவிழற் கிறைத்திட்டு
மயர்வு கொண்டுள மீனமக வாசையாம்
வலையிடை யகப்பட்டேற்
குயர்வு கொண்டமெய் யுணர்வுர வாட்படை
யுதவிவேங் கடவீர
னயர்வு நீங்கிட வாண்டுகொண் டருளிய
வற்புத மறியேனே.

Viyar-vu kolla-vim medini vaazhk-kaiyil/Veru-vizharkku irai-tittu Mayarvu kondu-ula manai-maga vaasai-yaam/Valai-yidai agap-pat-terkku Uyarvu konda-mei unar-ura vaat-padai/Udavi Venkata veeran Ayarvu nee-ngida aandu-kondu aruliya/Arpudam ari-yene.

Toiling and sweating in this worldly life is like passing water in a wasteland. Caught in the net of bondage by spouse, children and possessions, warrior Venkata, embodying the highest knowledge of reality, gave me succour, and as if with an army of swordsmen cutting me free of the burden and fatigue, he graciously conquered me. How did this miracle happen? —
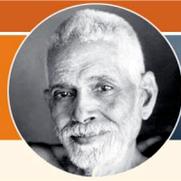
It is not that the internet is a bad guy or that we should not use it—it offers great opportunities for the spiritual search. But our imperfect nature is having an adjustment problem in the face of machine intelligence that is powerful beyond our capacity to responsibly manage it in the short-run. We should therefore be aware how we use the internet—*and how it uses us*—for example, as a wilful veiling and distraction in the manner of the first alternative. The second alternative is the one Sri Ramana recommends, where we do not deny the reality of the human condition but look to its roots. By such inquiry, Bhagavan tells us, we come to see that while the personality and all we cling to as 'ourselves' does in fact die along with the body, we are *not* that.

The Name that cannot be named is beyond names. The space between *namer* and *objects named* is neither an object nor the subject, neither concerned with outcomes nor any future event, but is outside time, beyond strategies of gain and loss.

It's not that there's no Name. It's just that we cannot *know* it until we *become* It. At the same time, Bhagavan tells us, *we already are It.* Yet we persist in the illusion of bondage and lose sight of it. *The Unnameable is the eternally real* and remains so, even in a world beset by algorithmic entanglement.

Can we just see all this for what it is? Can we just be aware of what has been perpetrated upon us—*be aware of what we have perpetrated upon ourselves*—and take steps to protect ourselves? If the outlook is not 100% positive, at least we don't have to blame anyone. This is just humanity being human.

The egoic riddle has always been the same, even if now it has been taken to a new level. A Pali saying, *appamado amathapadan* ('awareness is the path to the deathless,') reminds us that the means for *solving* the egoic riddle is also ever the same, namely, to stay true to the path of Bhagavan's inquiry, even to the last breath. —

(series concluded)

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Deepavali

Deepavali, the Festival of Lights, was celebrated with puja on the early morning of the 24th October in Bhagavan's Shrine followed by fireworks just outside. Deepavali (or Diwali) is the day Lord Rama, his wife Sita Devi and brother Lakshmana returned to their homeland after 14 years in exile. It is also the day Lord Krishna defeated the demon Narakasura. —

SRI RAMANASRAMAM