

Reflections

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*Society of
Abidance in
Truth*

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Why Reflections?

Reflections is a special publication of SAT.

The print version is intended for members of SAT to enhance their spiritual understandings and practices.

This on-line version is offered so that Reflections can be available to all.

*Reflections presents the actual teachings of
Ramana Maharshi in every issue.*

*Reflections presents enduring Wisdom from
ancient texts in every issue.*

*Reflections presents a transcript of satsang in every issue so that
aspirants can have the opportunity
to carefully study and reflect upon the teachings
given in these sacred events.*

So, read, reflect on what is here, and then dive within to realize.

Reflections

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Om Tat Sat

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Sri Ramana Maharshi

Invocation

There is neither creation nor destruction,
Neither destiny nor free will,
Neither path nor achievement;
This is the final Truth.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

The Wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi

From *Day by Day With Bhagavan*

22-3-46 Afternoon

Last night, Mr. Bose, his mother, Lady C. V. Raman and Swami Sambuddhananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, arrived here. The Swami quoted a verse from Bhagavad Gita, which says that one in a thousand succeeds and knows really the tattva or entity.

For some time Bhagavan kept quiet.

When the Swami wanted an answer, some of us could not help remarking, "What is your question? What answer do you expect?"

Dr. Masalawala even pointedly asked, "What is the motive behind this question?"

Thereupon, the Swami said, "I think our Bhagavan has attained Self-realization. Such beings are walking Upanishads. So I want to hear, from his own lips, his experience of Self-realization. Why are you all butting in and distracting us from the point and purpose of my question?"

After all this, Bhagavan said, "You say you think I have attained Self-realization. I must know what you mean by Self-realization. What idea do you have in your mind about it?"

The Swami was not pleased with this counter-question, but added, after some time, "I mean the atman merging in the param-atman."

Bhagavan then said, "We do not know about the Paramatman, or the Universal Soul, etc. We know we exist. Nobody doubts he exists, though he may doubt the existence of God. So, if one finds out about the truth or source of oneself, that is all that is required."

The Swami thereupon said, "Bhagavan, therefore, says, 'Know Thyself'."

Bhagavan said, "Even that is not correct. For, if we talk of knowing the Self, there must be two Selves, one a knowing Self, another the Self which is known, and the process of knowing. The state we call realization is simply being oneself, not knowing anything or becoming anything. If one has realized, he is that which alone is and which alone has always been. He cannot describe that state. He can only be that. Of course, we loosely talk of Self-realization, for want of a better term. How to 'realize' or make real that which alone is real? What we are all doing is, we 'realize' or regard as real that which is unreal. This habit of ours has to be given up. All sadhana under all systems of thought is meant only for this end. When we give up regarding the unreal as real, then the reality alone will remain and we will be that."

The Swami replied, "This exposition is all right with reference to advaita. But there are other schools which do not insist on the disappearance of triputi (the three factors of knowledge) as the condition for Self-realization. There are schools which believe in the existence of two and even three eternal entities. There is the bhakta, for instance. That he may do bhakti, there must be a God." Bhagavan replied, "Whoever objects to one having a God to worship, so long as he

requires such a separate God? Through bhakti he develops himself and comes to feel that God alone exists and that he, the bhakta, does not count. He comes to a stage when he says, 'Not I, but Thou'; 'Not my will, but Thy will.' When that stage is reached, which is called complete surrender in the bhakti marga, one finds effacement of ego is attainment of Self. We need not quarrel whether there are two entities, or more, or only one. Even according to dvaitis and according to the bhakti marga, complete surrender is prescribed. Do that first, and then see for yourself whether the one Self alone exists, or whether there are two or more entities."

Bhagavan further added, "Whatever may be said to suit the different capacities of different men, the truth is, the state of Self-realization must be beyond triputis. The Self is not something of which jnana or ajnana can be predicated. It is beyond ajnana and jnana. The Self is the Self; that is all that can be said of it."

The Swami then asked whether a jnani could remain with his body after attaining Self-realization. He said, "It is said that the impact of Self-realization is so forceful that the weak physical body cannot bear it for more than twenty-one days at the longest."

Bhagavan said, "What is your idea of a jnani? Is he the body or something different? If he is something apart from the body, how could he be affected by the body? The books talk of different kinds of mukti, videha mukti (without body), and jivan mukti (with body). There may be different stages in the sadhana. But in realization there are no degrees."

The Swami then asked, "What is the best means for Self-realization?"

Bhagavan: 'I exist' is the only permanent, self-evident: experience of every one. Nothing else is so self-evident (pratyaksha) as 'I am.' What people call 'self-evident' viz., the experience they get through the senses, is far from self-evident. The Self alone is that. Pratyaksha is another name for the Self. So, to do Self-analysis and be 'I am' is the only thing to do. 'I am' is reality. I am this or that is unreal. 'I am' is truth, another name for the Self. 'I am God' is not true.

The Swami thereupon said, "The Upanishads themselves have said 'I am Brahman'."

Bhagavan replied, "That is not how the text is to be understood. It simply means; "Brahman exists as 'I' and not 'I am Brahman.' It is not to be supposed that a man is advised to contemplate, 'I am Brahman, I am Brahman'. Does a man keep on thinking, 'I am a man, I am a man?' He is that, and except when a doubt arises as to whether he is an animal or a tree, there is no need for him to assert, 'I am a man.' Similarly the Self is Self, Brahman exists as 'I am,' in every thing and every being."

The Swami remarked; "The bhakta requires a God to whom he can do bhakti. Is he to be taught that there is only the Self, not a worshipper and the worshipped?"

Bhagavan: Of course, God is required for sadhana. But the end of the sadhana, even in bhakti marga, is attained only after complete surrender. What does it mean, except that effacement of ego results in the Self remaining

as it always has been? Whatever path one may choose, the 'I' is inescapable, the 'I' that does the nishkama karma, the 'I' that pines for joining the Lord from whom it feels it has been separated, the 'I' that feels it has slipped from its real nature, and so on. The source of this 'I' must be found out. Then all questions will be solved. Whereas all paths are approved in the Bhagavad Gita, it says that the jnani is the best karma yogi, the best devotee or bhakta, the highest yogi and so on."

The Swami still persisted, "It is all right to say Self-analysis is the best thing to do. But in practice, we find a God is necessary for most people."

Bhagavan: God is of course necessary, for most people. They can go on with one, until they find out that they and God are not different.

The Swami continued, "In actual practice, sadhakas, even sincere ones, sometimes become dejected and lose faith in God. How to restore their faith? What should we do for them?"

Bhagavan: If one cannot believe in God, it does not matter. I suppose he believes in himself, in his own existence. Let him find out the source from which he came.

Swami: Such a man will only say the source from which he comes are his parents.

Bhagavan : He cannot be such an ignoramus, as you started by saying he was a sadhaka in this line already.

24-3-46

I referred to Swami Sambhuddhananda's last question what to do with those who have

lost faith in God and who, if asked to find out their source, may say, 'Our parents are the source from which we spring.'

Bhagavan: Fancy a man saying our source is our parents.

I asked, "But what about a pure materialist, who does not believe in God. How are we to deal with him?"

Bhagavan: He will come gradually, step by step, to find out the source of 'I'. First, adversity will make him feel that there is a power beyond his control, upsetting his plans. Then, he will begin with rituals, ceremonial worship, and through japa, kirtan, dhyana, go on to vichara.

The Self Alone Is

Satsang

June 25, 2006

[N. signifies Nome; Q. signifies Questioner; “laughter” means that everyone was laughing, not just the speaker.]

Om Om Om

(silence)

Nome.: The Self alone is. Nothing else ever is. This is the simple Truth. For the Maharshi’s Grace and the continuous revelation of that Truth, we can never be too thankful. If you have doubts regarding the Reality, which ever is, or, if, through imagination, you assume the unreal to be real, inquire within yourself, “Who am I?” and thus know the Truth. When you know Reality, or the Truth, it is Reality that comprehends Reality, for there is no second.

There is only one Self. It is the Ever-existent. There is no other. Therefore, in Truth, there is no one in bondage and no bondage, no one aspiring to liberation and no separate state of liberation; nor is there a liberated individual.

Just the Self, of the nature of illimitable Being-Consciousness-Bliss, alone is. For His Grace and the continuous revelation of that silent Truth, we can never be too thankful. If there is a doubt as to what is real or who you are, inquire to know who you are, and, if, at any point, you have a question and wish to relate your own experience, please feel free to ask or to speak.

Q.: I was berating myself for trying to objectify the Self. Thinking it over, I reflected that there could be no alternative. The Self cannot be objectified, and nothing can be objectified. The other night, when you were joking with Advait (a young child), it seemed clear to me that, if something appears objectified, it only appears that way. That is what we can call “maya.” As you just indicated, there can be no alternative. I want to be sure that I am going in the right direction.

N.: Nonduality does not have an alternative. It is not one among many. It is that which alone exists. It can never be a known or unknown object. If you imagine objectivity, the objectivity is still only That—That misperceived through delusion. Yet the delusion, itself, does not have a separate existence. To resolve the nonexistent maya, and that is what maya is, that which is not, find out for whom it is.

It is evident that your Being is nonobjective. If “I” arises, the notion of existing as some kind of individual, an object will be imagined. The imagined object will always correspond in kind with definitions superimposed upon the individual who does not actually exist. Follow the Maharshi’s advice by inquiring, “For whom is this?” “Who am I?”

Questioner.: Your advice was the direction to inquire, “Who would be limited by it?”

N.: If we inquire, “Who is bound?,” we find no bound individual at all. We find just Brahman, just the Self. It is One Self (oneself). You don’t have another kind of Self.

Q.: We can never be too thankful.

N.: Sri Bhagavan has pointed out that our gratitude consists in our steady abidance in That as That, itself.

(silence)

Another Q.: Can you define abidance?

N.: It signifies an absence of misidentification. It means that the entire sense of your identity is the Self and not with what is not the Self, such as your mind, the body, or any object of the world.

Where identity is posited, so are reality and happiness. When your knowledge of happiness, its source and what it is, is steadily inward, when your knowledge of what is real is not being cast out on what is unreal, and when your sense of your identity is that which the "I" truly is, and not what one assumes it to be, such is said to be abidance.

Q.: So, it is to keep the knowledge of that.

N.: A steady, continuous, deep inquiry becomes steady abidance. The same Knowledge that is the abidance is in motion, so to speak, in inquiry. The end appears as the means.

Q.: I should consider it as that always.

N.: It is one Knowledge.

Q.: So, I should not go into delusion.

N.: If you inquire, within yourself to know who you are, you cut the very root of delusion, or illusion.

Q.: Yes.

N.: Simultaneous with the disappearance

of ignorance is the revelation of true Knowledge. If a piece of cloth covers this piece of wood (ed. note: Noma covers a portion of the wooden dais with his shawl), the removal of the cloth and the revelation of the wood are simultaneous. There is no delay, because the wood was always there as the substrate, merely covered. In a similar way, your nature, the Self, is eternal. The sign of Reality is that it is without beginning or end, and, therefore, unchanging. It is always perfectly there. The inquiry simply removes the illusion, the imagination, which is represented by the cloth in this analogy.

Q.: Ok. Yes, it is a magic show. (laughter)

N.: Who is the magician?

Q.: What if I find out I am the rabbit, the all?

N.: If you find that you are the rabbit, it is your duty to disappear. (laughter)

Another Q.: I understood that the ego is nonexistent, but what the ego did is to give itself a form that was obnoxious. My mistake is that I still hold on to form. What a relief it is to penetrate and see that. A friend of mine that I brought to satsang, seeing you for the first time, proceeded to get sick to her stomach, had to leave, and was nauseated on the way home. I gave her some books, but she read them as if they were novels and did not get anything from them. Yet, every time she visited us, she was interested in the energy we (ed. note: her husband and her) have. Now, while she is convalescing in our home, I told her she is welcome to join us or not as we read

spiritual texts together, and she has chosen to join us. The teachings have made her problems fall away. What a blessing. Some are open and some are dull. I was not open for a long time. Grace had a way of making itself known. My cup of thoughts became emptier, and the Heart shone.

Our “stories” of our problems are just not true and are not who we are. I see her pick up your book and contemplate upon it. How wonderful.

N.: (silent for a while) Observe for yourself what it is that actually brings about depth of Knowledge, or experience? Is it the lapse of time?

Q.: No.

N.: What are the factors that cause you to dive deep?

Q.: Self-inquiry. Everything becomes quiet. From that depth, Self-inquiry has a way of erasing everything the mind, the ego, may think that it is. The body goes away. The ego goes away. The daily life goes away. There is nothing left, and, in the beginning of that I was completely scared.

N.: Something is left.

Q.: There is not even a happy feeling left. Even that is not there in the present state.

N.: If, as you say, it no longer scares you, there must be a “you” that is left.

Q.: I got it. (laughing)

N.: The discrimination involved in inquiry is propelled by the intensity of one’s desire for Liberation. The purpose that one has, the earnestness with which one pursues,

naturally manifests as the perseverance and intensity with which one practices.

Discrimination manifests as detachment from the unreal. You are no longer drawn out.

Q.: By practice.

N.: All of these fuse together in practice.

Q.: The desire for Liberation, to know who I am, is of such importance. I become upset over not remembering to practice Self-inquiry. There was always one who was upset about this.

N.: It would be better to just inquire. The measurements, the distinctions, and the adventures of the person have the same degree of reality, of unreality, as the person herself. The adventures of a dream character have the same degree of reality as the dream character. When you wake up, how do you regard the dream character that you thought that you were, the dream activities, and the dream time? All of it becomes insignificant because it has no reality. The one thing that was invisible in the dream was the one thing that composed the entire dream, but it was not involved in that. That is your own Consciousness. It is the same now.

Q.: I listen to the recordings of satsangs over and over again. I always find that there was a point that I thought that I understood but which I really did not.

N.: This is the reason why the customary advice is to engage in ongoing listening, reflection, and to deeply meditate and thus be absorbed.

(silence)

Another Q.: I have been thinking about my attachment to work at my job. A body has a job. Identifying with that is on a much grosser level than the higher, bodiless and worldless level at which we were speaking on Friday night.

N.: How do you identify with the body? It is not you, so how do you identify with it?

Q.: Through imagination.

N.: Then, the association with its characteristics and activities is, likewise, just imagination.

Q.: Yes.

N.: When you do something through imagination, is it real?

Q.: (laughing) No. No. It did not create a mark.

N.: So, in what way can you say that you are attached?

Q.: Even during the entire time that I was driving around in circles, trying to get to...(ed. note: refers to a previous conversation in which he described how, due to road construction, he could end up driving around through detours in an attempt to get to a job appointment)

N.: The fate of everyone in samsara. (laughter)

Q.: (laughing) Yes, it was sort of like that! (laughter) I was not that frustrated. It was somewhat hilarious, I thought, while I was driving around in circles, while I was also thinking, "O my God!"

N.: At least you gave credit to where it is due. (laughter)

Q.: Yes, my God. (laughter) I guess it was my prarabdha karma.

N.: Were you going in circles?

Q.: No.

N.: Did your happiness depend on it?

Q.: It was not really dependent, but there is a preference.

N.: Your ability to discern what is preferable and what not is not necessarily an attachment. Confounding happiness causes suffering. Did you suffer?

Q.: I was driving down a different street than the street that I thought I was driving on and wondering how in the heck did they change the buildings! It was so confusing.

Another Q.: Did you really think that they changed the buildings?

Q.: No, not really, but I was really puzzled because all the roads were changed.

N.: Either you were confused about the directions or they changed all the roads and buildings. (laughter) Did you suffer as a consequence? Did you lose your happiness?

Q.: It was the third wrong turn, with each wrong turn resulting in ten more minutes of traffic, which ends up on a freeway jam-packed with cars. Even then, it wasn't so bad, yet I thought, "O my God, not on this freeway again!"

N.: Did you suffer?

Q.: Hmm.

N.: Did you believe yourself to be a body in a car going around in circles?

Q.: I was just trying to get there. I was not concerned with anything else.

N.: There were thoughts about that. Where were you during the whole experience?

Q.: (quiet for a while) I was not aware of where I was.

N.: Do you mean that you were not thinking about it?

Q.: Yes, that is what I mean.

N.: Is thinking Knowledge?

Q.: No.

N.: Whether you thought about it or not is rather insignificant. You might prefer to think about it, but absence of that thought does not mean absence of Knowledge. You may have preferred to arrive at the destination of your intention, instead of touring the same few blocks again and again, but that does not necessarily mean attachment. You must be free of attachment and ignorance. To be free of ignorance and attachment, you should discern what constitutes such. Then, inquire.

Q.: Without ignorance, things are very clear and space-like.

N.: Is the state of Self-Knowledge really a state? Is it a condition of the mind? Is it like waking, dreaming, or deep sleep?

Q.: I shouldn't say that it is, but, because I invest reality in my thoughts, that idea occurs.

N.: So, you must lend the reality to your thoughts, and, without doing so, they do not have even a semblance or appearance of

reality. This tells you something.

Q.: Yes. Not even a semblance.

N.: In Truth, there are no such things as thoughts. They have never been born. So, also, is it with this world.

Q.: I do not understand the connection. The thoughts have no semblance of reality.

N.: If they have no reality except that which is imagined, if they have no existence except that which is lent to them, they are, in themselves, nonexistent. They have not been born, been created, or come to be.

Q.: Oh.

N.: If thought has not come to be, the world, also, is likewise.

Q.: (quiet)

N.: The experience of the world is utterly dependent upon the state of the mind. You, though, of the nature of Being-Consciousness, are not in or of a state of mind. (silence)

Q.: Looking at my state now, it is different.

N.: In what way is it different?

Q.: It is more difficult to comprehend illusion or to think that it exists. It is clearer.

N.: Did your Existence become clearer? Did your Existence become clouded?

Q.: This is interesting, because I definitely believe that.

N.: What is the nature of the one who believes it?

If the Self is real, it ever is just as it is.

Clearer and clouded, closer or further away, is for someone. Who is this other one? When you say that you believe, what is the “I,” the source of your belief?

Q.: In that state, that is unquestioned. It is assumed to be something.

N.: Question it now. You say that it is assumed to be something, while it, itself, is the one who assumes. It is absurd.

Q.: Questioning it, I can’t see any location. Investigating what is the essence of me, it seems very space-like. I cannot define it as someone to have something, as I did in my statement.

N.: Like space, it does not actually become enclosed by anything else, does it? It pervades that something else, being inside and outside of it. It has no form of its own. There are no corners in space. If you imagine that there is a corner, you have only to dive into the corner to see what actually makes up the corner. The more you dive into it, the smaller the corner becomes.

Q.: That is clear.

N.: Likewise...

Q.: It is nothing more than...

N.: Imagination. It is just like that with the ego and the Self. If you imagine the Self to be individualized as an ego, inquire as to what that “I” is. Its “I-ness” or egoity vanishes. The Space-like, the abiding Reality, remains. It is of the nature of utmost clarity always. It never went around in a circle, whether that be on the highway or in the sam-sara. For that which was never bound, the Reality of Liberation is certain.

Another Q.: I was questioning what is suffering and do I have the capacity to actually suffer. The suffering is just as imagined as the one who dreams that he is suffering. The question if I can suffer is like asking if I can change my existence. It is clear that there is no way in which that can be done.

N.: (Silent for a long time) All kinds of suffering are needless, aren’t they?

Q.: There is no kind of suffering that is necessary.

Another Q.: (asked about illness or injury)

N.: The body is subject to pleasures and pains. If we think that we are the body, we suffer in those pleasures and pains. Our experience becomes limited, and our own Bliss is veiled. If we know that we are not the body, we don’t suffer even if there be pain. If you know that you are not the body and are detached from its pleasures and pains, you don’t have suffering, grief, and sorrow.

Q.: These are conditional on thinking of myself as a body?

N.: Thinking of oneself as the body and, therefore, contained within or imprisoned within the experiences of the body. So, then, you think that what happens to the body happens to you, but that is not true. When we see that it is not true, we realize that the sufferings have been needless. We were free the entire time.

Q.: So, therefore, it is not required.

Another Q.: In discriminating the real and the unreal and from where happiness derives, I often find myself leaving one corner exempt. For example, I can still feel disappointed if the body is unwell or if the job does not go well. Janaka was disappointed that the teaching from Astavakra did not take explicit verbal form as he had expected. It is Grace when the inquiry addresses that, too, and applies “neti, neti” to it, and that, too, is not exempt. It is not that there is no individual but there is a pain in the body, a job to do, an adventure that is taking a disappointing course. If I have given it all to the Guru, given it all to the Self, and want only the Self, that goes, too. Nothing is exempt.

N.: What would you want to exempt?

Q.: (laughing) I don’t think that I would want to exempt anything, but I find myself exempting things.

N.: Why? If you choose not to examine and negate something as being real when you have some intuition or knowledge that Truth is otherwise, why?

Q.: In some strange way, I had not wanted to do so until the point I let it go. I must still think that I was enjoying some sense of identity, reality, or happiness in the exempted area.

N.: Will you negate something as being unreal if you think that your happiness is connected with it?

Q.: That would cause some kind of conflict.

N.: You would have a conflict of interests. (laughter)

Q.: Yes, my interest would be in the happiness.

N.: So, there is not much mystery to this exemption.

Q.: It is not a mystery, but that is the way it seems to appear sometimes. The inquiry can put it all before the Absolute to see what stands the test of reality.

N.: Yes, whatever you say that you are bound by, that is what you appear to be bound by. That of which you wish to become free, that you, indeed, become free of. See with whom the determination rests. There is nothing obstructing the Realization of the Absolute. Obstacles or delays appear according to what you hold fast as being your happiness, being real, and being your identity.

If you are convinced, due to some bizarre idea, that your happiness depends on a certain idea or object, you won’t examine it, will you?

Q.: I will protect it from that examination.

N.: Because you know how fragile it is. You know that, by merely looking at it, it will be destroyed. Who is it that by his mere glance can destroy things? (laughter) That Siva is indwelling. That indwelling Siva is the highest Bliss. It is the Good.

Q.: As in the story about Astavakra, whenever it works correctly, the shift in knowledge is as quick as placing the other foot in the stirrup. It takes no time.

N.: It requires no time because the Knowledge, just as Existence, itself, is already existent. Hence, the Maharshi says that which is not eternal is not worth seeking.

We are not looking for an Existence or Knowledge that is not yet, or which needs to ripen or such. What you are seeking to know or to realize, as if it were unreal to be made more real, is actually the Reality, itself.

You know how fragile the false is. If you see the false as false, the ignorance as ignorance, it is destroyed then and there. Only the destructible is destroyed. The indestructible, which is the immutable, is never destroyed. In the indestructible lies your immortality. In the immutable lies your peace. Within lies your happiness. What is within is your Self. There is your happiness, the peace of the unchanging Absolute.

If you really know this, the “neti, neti” mentioned earlier by you applies to everything else. Then, you don’t hesitate to examine and inquire, because you know that, in doing so, you will always realize that which is happiest. Then, there are no exceptions.

Q.: Noticing the transience of things helps by taking some of the attractiveness out of it.

N.: Yes, because it is an intuition of your own nature. You yearn for that which endures because of your own everlasting nature. You attach yourself to something in the name of happiness because you know that happiness is your nature, but that happiness is realized by nonattachment and by the absence of ignorance. It is a simple thing.

(silence)

(Then followed a recitation in Sanskrit and English of verses from *Katha Upanishad*)

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

From *Yoga Vasishtha*

Vasishtha said: Rama, the boy who is afraid of the presence of a ghost, which is false, sees the form of the ghost in imagination. In the same way, the jiva, having no form at all, shines in the Self first. The idea of a jiva shines in the Self by means of the samskaras (tendencies) of the jiva previously repeated. Thus, the jiva is imagined in the Supreme Self as if one with vasanas (tendencies), though he is very pure, as if true, though he is utterly false, and as if one who is different from the Supreme Self, from which he is not different at all. The Supreme Self, imagining an individual self in itself, becomes the jiva. In the same way, by constantly thinking, the jiva becomes the mind. The mind thinking of the tanmatras (subtle elements) becomes the tanmatras...

Just as the composite kingdom of the mind is false in the Supreme Self, so the kingdom of the mind, which is the world, is false in the individual self, which is in the space of Consciousness. Really, nothing is born in the world, and nothing is dead. Only Brahman shines as the form of the world, as the forms of the town of the Gandharvas and such. Correct understanding tells us that the power of all the jivas from the Creator down to the average creature, is true as well as false. By ignorance, it appears to be true. By Knowledge, we know that it is false...

With the dawn of Knowledge, all differences will vanish. The ideas of the knower, the knowing, and the knowable are not different from Brahman. Thus, the differences of dual-

ism and “nondualism” are as senseless as the sky-flower or the horn of a hare and such. The spider is bound by itself by the threads with which it encircles itself. In a similar manner, the very personification of joy feels the bondage of duality by his own ignorance...

Seeing the greatness of this divinely ordained natural order (niyati), one should not commit the blunder of thinking that the creation is true. Creation, growth, and destruction are only of the mind. Thus, they are false and never true. It is due entirely to ignorance that the pure, all-expansive, only One, the endless Brahman, appears as if impure, false, limited, and as many. Ignorant people think that the water and the waves are different and mistake the rope to be a snake. They experience the differences, which, in Reality, are nonexistent. Just as, in the same person, one observes enmity as well as friendliness, due to difference in relationship, so in the solitary Brahman, one sees different powers and difference and non-difference as opposed to one another. If water is seen as divided into water and waves, and if gold is seen as divided into gold and ornaments, one sees them differently due to ignorance. Likewise is it with the attribution of a world with Brahman, which alone is.

From the SAT Archives

(The following letter, dated August 13, 1980, was written by Nome in response to correspondence from Shanti. Shanti had communicated about the death of someone close to her. She had also discussed her ideas about Jesus Christ and her desire to establish a forest ashram in the state of New York. She was already involved in studying the teachings of Sri Atmananda and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.)

August 13, 1980

Dear Shanti,

With the illusory rise of the ego, or individual, all objectivity arises, and with its demise it is realized that the Self alone exists and there has never been a single objective thing. In other words, only so long as an individual is mistakenly assumed to exist is there the appearance of differentiation. Upon the false assumption of individuality, objectivity or differentiation illusorily appears in the forms (or concepts) of mind, personality, a body, a world, etc. This gives rise to all sorts of dualisms such as life and death, higher and lower, sin and virtue, thought and consciousness, bondage and liberation, and you and I. As a result, the Ultimate Bliss, or Peace, of Absolute Being seems to vanish. Awakening to the Truth of no-ego, that is to say, the Self, which you always are, is the finding of the Silent Peace that was never really lost. Upon this Awakening, all differentiation, being an illusion, simply vanishes.

In Reality, I, the Self alone Am and there

is no “me.” I was not born, nor am I now living, nor will I ever die. I am not in a body, nor is there a body in “I.” I am not in the mind, nor is there a mind in “I.” I am supportless and eternally undefined. Bodyless and mindless, birthless and deathless, changeless and conceptless, I Am. This is just Being, but not individuality; just Consciousness, but not conscious of any thing; and Bliss, but not an experience.

The Absolute Realization that “the Self alone exists, the Self alone is Real” is the one and only complete answer to death. This Truth is alone eternal, and no transient concept can ever suffice in its place. Where there is form there is change and loss, but where the formless Truth is, there is no change, loss, fear, or sorrow. Of course, there are not really two “where’s” (samsara and Nirvana). This is just a manner of speaking. In Truth, there is only Absolute formless Being (Supreme Being), and neither “you” nor a “me” have ever come to be.

This being the case, the highest Truth should never be diluted in its expression to aspirants, even if they should request it. The excuse of the “need of relative half-steps” is not valid, because the Self is not far away but within, and one is never really other than the Self all along (as in the tenth man story). The piercing and liberating quality of Truth lies in its being incongruous with any concept the aspirant may cling to or misidentify with. To try to make Reality be in agreement with the aspirant’s concept is to dilute the Truth and delude the aspirant. To reduce the Infinite to concepts (the very same concepts that keep the aspirant bound!) would not be beneficial to

anyone. So, it’s far better to rely only on the Absolute, and honestly express it as well as words can when requested, even though this is apt to create a significant lack of popularity. There are none in bondage, none striving for salvation, and none liberated—this is the highest Truth.

The simple, non-conceptual Realization of undifferentiated Being, or the Self, is alone the Enlightenment of all sages. Although we speak of sages, this should not give rise to the concept of separate enlightened beings. Truly, there are no enlightened beings, just Being, which is Enlightenment. There is no such thing as a free individual, but rather Realization is freedom from the individual. One must see it as sages (the Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Atmananda, Buddha, Christ, Huang Po and countless other friends) see it, that is to say, from Reality. This leaves no room for “a sage” or “an enlightened being” and “others,” degrees and levels of Liberation, special functions in the world, etc. All of these suppose the existence of an individual entity, or ego, body misidentification, a belief in “a real world,” and different types of Enlightenment. But ego, individuality, a mind— call it what you will—is really nonexistent, and body misidentification is just basic ignorance. The fact that the notion of “a real world” is totally false is fundamental. When inquired into, the world is found to be utterly unreal, and formless Consciousness is found to be our only actual experience. There are certainly no degrees, levels, types, special conditions, etc. of Enlightenment, as Enlightenment is our true nature, the Self. Enlightenment is that which is innate, and not

any sort of experience or state that is attained. It is just eternal, silent Being.

This being the case, the concept of a special function is just that: a concept. If Christ thought he was Jesus, that he was born or died, that he had some sort of special function to perform, and believed in the existence of “others,” who were sinful on top of it, well, then, he would just be a dualistic ignoramus and not the Christ. If He really taught such conceptual nonsense, what kind of salvation would that be? If, from the tattered remnants of His sayings, we derive the sense that He Knows and Is the Truth, then He could not possibly hold any of the above concepts, but rather He Knows Himself as Christ Consciousness, God (I AM), or the Self. I do not need any scriptural quotes to verify what I say, for it is known by all as a matter of direct experience. However, there is plenty of substantiation in the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Thomas, and other Gnostic texts. The unity of all sages (East, West, in-between, and neither) is in the worldless Self, which is their Enlightenment and who they really are. No other “integration” is needed. “If you’ve seen one Buddha, you’ve seen them all.”

I have no conceptual discipline to practice in order to overcome imaginary conditions or influences, for I am That which is eternally free. I have no life story to tell, as I do not regard myself as a living entity. I have no extraordinary experiences to relate, for I have realized the Truth in which there is no experimenter. I have no mission or work to accomplish, for I rest in the magnificent perfection of Absolute Peace. I have no fear or suffering

regarding death, be it this body or any other, because I have realized who I am.

Real Peace is found within. If one looks for peace externally or in an environment, then when that external environment changes or disappears, the peace will disappear, as well. Upon close examination, it is revealed that even the experience of peace during the temporary appearance of that external environment was not as deep as it could have been. Supreme Peace is in the Self, and the sage knows himself as That. So, when the environment is favorable, his joy is not increased; and, when that environment disappears or becomes unfavorable, his joy does not decrease even in the least. Whether rich or poor, healthy or sick, living or dead, in the company of others or alone, in the country or in the city, he remains ever the same. Such Peace, or Shanti, is alone worth having, for it is eternal. If we were missing the senses, external environments would mean nothing to us. Now that the senses appear, should we misidentify and attach ourselves to one thing or the other? To Be as That which alone remains after the release of all else is undoubtedly Real Peace.

It is not my custom anymore to write, but out of a deep Love for you this has been shared. The I or Self of which I speak and in which I remain Silent, is your Self, your very Being. Without any other support, Realization of This is perfect Peace and Immortality. This Truth is identical with limitless and undying Love, which is the real basis of our friendship. Should you care to write to me, you may feel free to do so, and I will, of course, reply to you. Also, you are always welcome here,

should you ever wish to visit and share company in Atma. Your abiding in Truth always has my full support and your very Being my deepest Love - the Truth and Love in which we are not two, but One.

Ever yours as the Self,

Nome

Some Comments About Comments

(This article presents some recent correspondence from Nome in response to questions posed by an Italian woman who is endeavoring to translate the *Ribhu Gita* and the *Song of Ribhu* from English into Italian. Most of the correspondence deals with issues regarding translation, but one portion of it dealt with her inclination to present a commentary of some of the verses or to have some commentary be composed by a Swami said to belong to the "Advaita Giri" order whom she knows. Nome's response, reproduced below, elucidates what is involved in an accurate commentary on a holy text. The same points apply to one's own internal interpretation of scriptural passages in the course of one's spiritual practice, so this particular letter is reproduced here for the benefit of the readers.)

August 16, 2007

Dear Candy,

Om Namah Sivaya.

Namaste. Thank you for your messages.

The cover picture and printing style are very pleasant. The Orion nebula picture is an excellent choice.

A preface might be of some use, but usually such a preface would be a description of how the present (in this case, the Italian) edition came to be written and published.

Some people may, at first glance, not understand the verses and their significance. If they read the same verses again and again, each time meditating deeply upon their meaning, attempting by the strength of Self-inquiry to dive into the Truth revealed by Ribhu, they will eventually arrive at an experiential Knowledge of what he has taught. It would be inadvisable to cater to the intellects of such people in a manner by means of a commentary to make the verses more palatable to them, for this would actually hinder the spiritual maturation of those seekers. This is the first point to comprehend regarding commentary.

The second point regarding commentary is this: The one who produces a commentary must have a thorough comprehension of the teachings presented, the actual practices resulting in the Realization of the Truth of

those teachings, and first-hand continuous experience (Realization) of the identical state of Knowledge of Truth in which the original sage (in this case, Ribhu) abides. Any deviation from that will necessarily result in a corruption of the meaning, a limiting by concepts rather than a revelation of the Truth of the Self without conceptual definition. Dualism, however subtle, will creep into the commentary unless the above abidance is firm. Thus, in the name of performing a service, some disservice will also be done.

The third point of making a commentary is that it may also be useful to be familiar with possible misconceptions arising from ignorance born of lack of inquiry. Only someone who has actually practiced and realized will be readily capable of recognizing such and negate their potential appearance in a commentary.

The fourth point regarding a commentary is this: The *Ribhu Gita* and, especially, the *Song of Ribhu* are written in a very particular order. This applies to the chapters, the verses, and the order of the lines within each verse. The order is governed by the experience of true Knowledge by Ribhu, and one must actually have followed that meditation in order to perceive the reason for the sequence of presentation of the teachings by Ribhu and, in the Tamil version, by Bhiksu Sastrigal. This point also applies to what appears as if repetition in the texts. If one has not done so, then however erudite one may be or how much one has an affinity for the teachings, the commentary will fail to do justice to the original verses. Being well-known is irrele-

vant to the qualifications needed to clearly, correctly comment on a text such as *Ribhu Gita*.

With a commentary, it is also wise to determine the purpose of it before such is composed. To weaken the text, even in the altruistic guise of helping so-called “beginners,” is not wise at all. To merely reiterate the text is not actually beneficial. To interpret based on one’s preconception is delusive and not wise at all. When Adi Sankara composed a *bhashya* (commentary) on a text, he did so free of all such difficulties, so they remain illuminating for those diving into the sublime depths of the Upanishads and such.

This discussion could continue, but the above comments should suffice to explain why the addition of a commentary to your edition may be a poor choice. The text stands clear as it is.

It is true that Sri Ramana Maharshi uttered commentary upon the *Ribhu Gita* (*Song of Ribhu*). His comments are completely reliable and full of the supreme Knowledge. It is also true that I have offered commentary here at the SAT temple to seekers who, absorbing themselves in Ribhu’s teachings, were immersed in profound meditation and desirous of Liberation by Knowledge of the Self. Much, if not most, of those spiritual instructions were recorded, but they have not been transcribed, so I am unable to send you an example of such commentary at this time.

Now, for the questions related to translation. For such questions, it is best to supply the

verse and chapter number, which you have done in some of these cases.

Ribhu Gita, 3:29. “but” here has the sense of “only.” It does not mean “except.” There are different uses of this word “but” in English.

You are correct with the meaning: “The sensory organs are ever unreal.” The word “ever” means “always.” “Ever” would convey the sense of “never” only if preceded by the word “not.” The prefix “un” as in “unreal” does not have that effect.

“The Vedas are ever unreal.” The word “ever” still means “always.” To use the word “never” would contradict the meaning of the teaching by Ribhu. To understand why Ribhu has said this, you may wish to carefully re-read the introductions to both *Ribhu Gita* and *Song of Ribhu*. You must keep in mind for whom these teachings are intended. The seeker who receives these teachings should already have a full faith in the teaching of the Veda. That teaching’s aim is Brahman, and to realize the Self is Brahman, he or she will need to know the Self as it is, in its unborn, undifferentiated nature. For the unborn, there is no creation. If the world is unreal, without a trace of existence, that which appears in the world, even that which appears in the world to lift one beyond the world, is unreal. The un-divided essence remains, yet that is forever nonobjective, immutable, and cannot be differentiated. It is “I”-less and worldless. The term “Veda” in this case should be understood as referring to the scriptures and not the essential Knowledge that the Sanskrit root signifies.

I hope that the above helps. Please feel free to ask questions as you continue to translate the texts.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

(Following her positive response to the above letter, Nome also wrote the short message shown below.)

Dear Candy,

Namaste. I am glad that you understood. Yes, the verses in praise of Lord Siva and from the Upanishads would be fitting and fine before the contents. It is fine for you to ask these questions and to bring up these topics. Unless one asks, how is one to find the answer?

May you ever abide in That, as That itself, full of peace and bliss, utterly devoid of ego and delusion, absorbed in the immortal Truth revealed by all the sages and realized as the Self.

Ever yours in Truth,

Nome

