

Guru Nanak Japji

“The Philosophy of Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi”

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TO

THE SADHUS OF ARUNACHALA

¹ The original editor inserted ““The Philosophy of Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi”

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Uthishtatha Jagrata Prapya Varan Nibodhata.

Arise, Awake, Approach the Great Ones and get understanding.

THE² PHILOSOPHY OF BHAGAWAN SRI RAMANA MAHARISHI

THE Bhagawan's utterances are more in the nature of applied science than of Philosophy. What he says is not what he has discovered by a study of several books on religion, Philosophy and Theology. In fact, there is no pretension to erudition or scholarship in him. Nor has he learnt from any Guru either, the doctrines on which his Philosophy is based or the practice which he advocates. It is so simple to understand and easy to follow that it may at once be stated here.

Man is self-conscious, self-luminous supreme bliss. It is the real state of man and is the Truth. When I look around me, I see objects of different types, whose existence is known or is cognised by me only through the agency of the mind. But mind alone will not be able to give me that perception because behind the mind there is some power without the help of which neither the eye can see nor the ear hear, nor the mind sense the seeing or hearing. This is easy enough to understand because even the organs of sense which are very useful for the acquisition of objective knowledge, depend for their useful and effective functioning, on the mind as well as on that which illumines the mind. The basic idea underlying all these experiences is that there is a consciousness which sees, hears ... in other words experiences. And what is that? When I say, I see, I³ hear; I think; and I meditate; there is a being denoted by the word "I" which on examination and introspection, is found to elude the grasp. Everything with which I become associated in all life's activities, such as eating, drinking etc., or thinking, feeling etc., is a manifestation in which the integral part is the mind. Hence, it must be obvious that the whole external world around me is but a projection of my mind. Without that mind I cannot have useful relations with the external world and I become aware of the world only as my mind pictures it to me. Again it will be observed that I am using the expression "to me" ... as if I am different from the mind. And that is the secret of the Bhagawan's teaching. The more you dive deep into yourself the more clearly does the "I" in you begin to appear and yet a point is reached when you will be forced to ask "what is the source of this I" "where is its origin?" and this enquiry, mind you, can only be undertaken with the help of the mind. Whereas the mind has until now taken "You" into the external world to such an alarming degree that you had come to believe that the body is you, the mind is you, the world is you, now you find the mind helping you in withdrawing you into the depths within you to find the source of the "I". It is found that in your search for the source of the "I", the I-ness disappears, and there is left then no "I", no you, and in fact, it is only a state of being, in which there is no differentiation of separateness ... neither you nor I nor the world as separate entities. It is, as is evident (a state of) self-realisation.

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Man is essentially Atma, Paramatma, the Supreme Reality or Parabrahmam whatever name one may like to use to⁴ define the ultimate source and reality behind the universe. That Atma is one that pervades the whole universe and is in me and in everyone. This sentence too, though intelligible, is not wholly correct, because pervading “in me” does not bring out the truth correctly. It will be more correct to say that Atma is this entire universe of which I and you are a part. The realised person has a feeling of one-ness with the whole world whereas we, because of the mind, see the diversity.

The idea may perhaps be comprehended in this way. When I sleep, a deep and dreamless sleep, I am unaware of the world’s existence, I do not even exercise the thinking faculty and yet all the time I exist. When after such a refreshing sleep, I wake up, I say I had a good sleep. Who had? Which is the I in me that had enjoyed the good sleep? At this point it is necessary to make an analytical examination of the process of waking or awaking or awakening. All the time I was in sleep, the I, or a “I” in me, was enjoying, was functioning in its own true sphere but the mind was absent, was not conscious of either the body or the external world. At the first moment of waking, the mind appears and simultaneously the Ego or I which identifies itself with the body and yet even now in the waking state, that “I” which was there while the body was asleep, is there. The latter “I” is the Atma, the self-luminous and self-conscious eternal one. It is its light with which or in which the mind and Ego appear. The Atma is ever there and its light is reflected in the mind which gives birth to the Ego or I-ness in me. Without that light shining through the mind the Ego cannot manifest. In fact, it is said that when mind first appears it is like a clean mirror⁵ and is in a pure or sattvic state. As by its own sakti or power, it manifests in conjunction with Ego or I, what was a clean mirror or sattvic, becomes combined with the egotistic or rajasic state and then follows the whole train of externals, body, mind, world and so on. A simile may help the understanding of the subject.

In a cinema show, we see the picture. The picture is seen by us in consequence of the film but the film alone will be of little use for our seeing the picture, unless there is the light too. The film not merely projects the picture but it also transmits light by whose illumination the picture becomes visible to us, although we are but hazily aware of the existence of the light or reflected light on the screen when the picture is on. Thus, the eternal Atma, self-luminous, all-conscious is my real being; as my mind and Ego arise almost simultaneously (as a result of Maya or whatever may be the reason for it. This is a separate subject for study), these two see the world as a separate entity and react to the world’s or body’s pleasures and pains identifying itself (I) with the body (or

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World). In truth, however, these do not exist as separate entities as is evident from the fact that these are creations of, or projections of the mind.

In order therefore, to be free from these pains and pleasures, if not also, for the acquisition of real knowledge of self, it is necessary to obliterate first the peculiar modifications of the mind and seek the source of the 'I' by which process not only is the mind brought under control but it is utterly destroyed, leaving the Atma in its natural ("Telugu passage omitted here") sahaja), self-luminous, all-conscious and supreme bliss state.

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The practice is intended for self-realisation, to find the ultimate reality, that is in man, to seek the imperishable, undying, immortality of man. The Bhagawan has in one place (sat-vidya) stated that it is easy of accomplishment, while some others who apparently tried to follow the method, found it rather a difficult one. "This, however, is not to say that the achievement is other than supremely difficult." So said Mr Grant Duff. The question whether it is easy or difficult largely depends upon the individual. A strenuous, undistracted attention to the goal to be achieved, steadfast and steady perseverance in the practice ought to smoothen the path and quicken the pace. It is said also that previous accumulations of prejudices, or predilections, ties (or bondage) or udaseenatha, indifference to what happens, are also factors which will govern individual cases but (to one like me) it gives little guidance, for if I fail in my effort, I have only to console myself that I have in the past accumulated a storage of effects of bad deeds ... being however absolutely ignorant of what those deeds were or when they were done. Anyhow, there is the thing, concerning which even a sceptic need not have any doubt. Association with the good and virtuous is a great aid. Oft-quoted verses readily will come into the mind which speak of the benefits of the company of the wise and the holy. We are unquestionably aided by the holy adepts and what is called Grace is regarded as another essential factor for achievement.⁷ Such grace is really obtainable only from the pure and holy. What is the nature of that grace and how it works, is for the present, beside the purpose. When in the midst of a crowd a woman touched the hem of the garment of Jesus Christ and she became whole and free from her sickness, we generally and naturally attribute what she got to the grace or holiness of Jesus Christ but he, however attributed her cure to her own faith. It was her faith that made her whole. Similarly Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi points to what is in

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you, for any and every accomplishment you may have had. That which is in you is the ultimate Reality, the God, the Atma and that which is sick, diseased is the body and so when the fullest faith is placed on this Atma, on God which is the root, the strength, the support, the life of all that lives, that faith works the miracle. The worker of the miracle may sometimes be unaware that he did it but the body which received the grace or benefit of the grace of the holy naturally thinks the other man did do a miracle. The body's ailments are many but the body is not the real "I". In fact, in one discourse in which the subject of rebirth came in for discussion, he asked how there could be rebirth, when in reality there is no birth meaning thereby that death affects or happens only to that with which man wrongly identifies himself and not to the real existence that man fundamentally is.

We have to be, as we really are, in that state of our fundamental or natural existence (Sahaja Stithi). As already stated the Raja sic Ego or 'I' is responsible for the great drama of life, with its cravings, desires, pleasures and pains and so on. The world of these events is a creation of the mind and⁸ is Tamasic or Jadam, full of inertia. Our endeavour must therefore be to get rid of or rather get away from the Jadapadhartham, in the gross world and this is the first step. If the mind is allowed to have its way over the body and its whims and fancies, we are in matter, gross matter.

So, the mind must be withdrawn from it and it must be directed to an examination of how it, the mind itself, works. It is seen that desires and thoughts are but emanations of the mind. Still the mind. No thoughts will arise. It is the Ego 'I' which is the starting point of these thoughts. The next step is to see that 'I' or Ego. When the mind is, by constant practice, kept absolutely still, as each thought arises, there is the birth of the 'I' and, therefore, the Bhagawan enjoins upon the seeker after truth an incessant enquiry through the agency of the mind, to find out or determine the source from where this 'I' arises. After stilling the mind, the experience is that of a blankness or vacancy (Soonya) and it is said there is even a Maha Soonya (great void). You are asked to be a gate keeper sitting alert at the gateway of the mind. Immediately a thought arises, stop it. Let this process go on. It makes no difference whether it is a good thought or a bad one, which arises, you must stop all thoughts. In that condition the mind is in a Sathvic state, appearing in the reflected light of the Atma. It is however true to say that when after reaching that point of the gatekeeper, the mind's help is sought to dive deeper far inside, to find the source of the 'I', there is no reflection of light, as Atma shines in its own pure and pristine glory. This is the true state of man (Sahaja Stithi) ("Telugu passage omitted here"). The 'I' has disappeared and there is

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only an 'oneness' which⁹ transcends all personal qualities or attributes. The dew drop has fallen into the shining sea. The ONE and only LIFE lives.

It must be clear from, the above description of the practice inculcated by the Bhagawan, that a man becomes a jnani a self-realised being by this easy method of tracing the "I" which constantly and at every step in life appears, to its original source and in the process the "I" disappears and the mind is destroyed. Existence alone remains. That the mind is destroyed seems to be rather too much to believe, as at first sight it appears to us that if the mind is destroyed there seems nothing else that can remain. It however is not the case. The mind has all along been the instrument, and that a useful instrument in all our investigations and it perishes when its purpose is over. The process is likened to a faggot. If we wish to burn a thing, we put firewood over it and around it and apply fire. The firewood is the instrument for burning the thing and in the process of burning that thing, the instrument *viz.*, the firewood is itself burnt out. So also in the case of the mind. It was used to subdue the waves that constantly arose in the mind and to rip off all its emanations and when that is accomplished, the mind too ceases to be, it has become a transparent glass, as it were.

A noticeable feature of this practice or process is that it is not encompassed by injunctions such as those relating to posture or to time or to the fitness of the individual. It is not that you should bathe at a particular time or sit cross-legged or utter a mantra. This is not to say that these points are to be disregarded altogether. The point is that you are incessantly practising the enquiry. The enquiry is pursued irrespective¹⁰ of the events happening around you. As was said once, be aware of that consciousness in you at all times and under all conditions, which was there when you were soundly asleep. That awareness during waking state is the thing to be achieved. When once you have reached that stage of fulfilment, there is no more (Bhranthi; illusion), no more desires, no more doubts. As the Upanishad says the knot (of attachment) is severed and all doubts vanish.

It is possible that one who starts on the path is prompted to do so, not in the search of the reality but owing to a desire for a thing or acquisition of some power. Every honest and earnest effort must have its reward and he may get it. As all yogas must ultimately lead to the same final consummation, the aspirant becomes a Jnani and the result of it all is that what he desired, he may get but it will not give him pleasure. His will be a sort of indifferent attitude towards it.

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To sum up, the practice consists in incessantly putting a question to oneself “who is this I in me” “Where is its source” and in obtaining an answer to it be vigilant that no thoughts arise. Be fully awake and be always on the alert that all mental processes viz., thoughts are suppressed. No reason to be dispirited or discouraged in as much as, the same mind which led you into or created for you, the outside world, will with a little coaxing and effort help you in finding the answer to your questions.

Although it may seem that there is only a vacancy or (Soonya) when the mind is stilled, yet into that very vacancy or void the same mind will penetrate, to reveal the self-luminous (Swayam Prakasam (“Telugu passage omitted here”). The teaching of the Bhagawan has been beautifully and succinctly summarised¹¹ by him and here are his own words. *Ch.II.V.2 of Ramana Gita.*

(“Telugu passage omitted here”)

“In the interior of the cavity of the heart, the one Supreme Being is ever glowing with the self luminous emanation “I–I”. To realise Him enter into the Heart with one-pointed mind, by quest within, or diving deep or control breath and abide with the Self of Self.”

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The philosophy as well as the practice enjoined have been set forth above and yet there are many, many points which arise to the intellect in man, demanding solutions. First, what is the uniqueness in this practice? It is the one path to which every one will sometime or other be led and therefore better to begin at once. There is the verse in the *Bhagawadgitha*, Chapter IX. V. 22.

(“Telugu passage omitted here”)

“To those who worship me alone thinking of no other, to those ever harmonious I bring full security.”

Another¹² verse says that those who seek the Lord are of four types—(“Telugu passage omitted here”), (“Telugu passage omitted here”), (“Telugu passage omitted

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here”), (“Telugu passage omitted here”). Artho, Jijnasu, Artharathi, Jnani. Without reference to these texts, there are also numberless persons who want the grace of God. There are also those who follow the Raja-Yoga, Hatha-Yoga, Mantra-Yoga, Laya-Yoga and so on. When carefully analysed everyone of these persons is a seeker. If you concentrate or meditate on the heart-centre or the eye-brow centre, constant practice in such meditation makes you one with that centre. The question will still arise to you, “Who am I”. Similarly meditation on Rama or Krishna or a mantra will lead to the same state of oneness with the object of meditation and it cannot stop there till again the real bliss within is experienced.

The enquiry “who am I” is the Bhagawan’s own discovery and it does not mean he has nothing to say about other methods. With reference to the control of the mind, he in fact, notices that for certain persons it is a very difficult task and to them control of breath as a means to control the mind is recommended. Even Hatha Yoga may be of help to some type of persons. One other feature of the Bhagawan’s teachings is this: In the quest for the source of the “I” within, we have to enter the heart and in the Ramanagitha it is laid down that he enjoins on the seeker, three steps. (1) Enter into the heart with one-pointed mind; (2) dive deep; or (3) control the breath (vide the sloka cited supra). Deep concentration often times is accompanied by control of the breath and this is the experience of everyone adopting any form of yoga. If one turns the mind inwards to find the source of the “I”, he holds his breath. What is called Kumbhaka is actually being done – in the moment of¹³ that tense expectation to find the origin, when unexpectedly you feel you are yourself the self and you abide in the self, the search being thus over.

Similarly, other regulations relating to posture, diet, solitude and silence, good company are all unquestionably aids. It would indeed seem strange why there should be laid down these regulations, in as much as, when you take up the course or begin the search, you will automatically seek silence and solitude, you don’t like to gossip, you don’t have relish for dainty dishes and will be content with what you get and as you gain strength and courage in the quest, you will sit upright and steady and not sit like an idle man huddled in a corner. In other words, the earnestness and diligence which characterises your search prepare the ground and far from obstacles coming in, will facilitate the journey on the path.

In certain schools of esotericism, it is said that when you tread the path of yoga (it does not matter what branch of it) there are as it were, cross-currents set up as a result of previous karma and consequently the neophyte encounters obstacles of different sorts in the initial stages. The Bhagawan rejects this theory and says that when

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the karma is working out, it takes place of its own accord and not because you have taken to yoga. According to him, what matters it, what event happens, when once you have put your foot firmly on the path, your concern is to find the source of the "I" and you ought not to be deflected from that pursuit. Yet another way of understanding the same is this and it was mentioned when one night a man came to the Bhagawan and laid bare the terrible troubles and sufferings he was undergoing.¹⁴ "You have got Bhakthi, devotion to God and you believe He is your Saviour and friend. Having bundled up all your sufferings and trouble you have put the bundle at His feet (or not meaning irreverently, on His head) and He being a true friend and saviour, has taken over the burden, the responsibility. After this, why should you worry? If your devotion is truly sincere and of high pitch, thought of suffering or worry cannot arise in your mind. On the other hand, I should say you should feel very much relieved, as you have transferred your burden on to another's shoulder."

A person in that stage should feel indifference to the objects and events which would affect the equipoise of the ordinary man of the world. If troubles do come, understand they are the results of something that has gone by; the troubles are not origin-less; there must be a cause which produced them, although we may not see or know what that cause was. When you see two railway waggons moving along the rails in the shunting yard of a railway station you may not see the engine but you are certain that an engine must have given the momentum for the vehicles to move. There is hardly any use fretting over the troubles; they lose their power to cause pain by your indifference. Udaseena is an appropriate word for such a stage and is constantly used in the discourses.

An Udaseena is calm, unruffled, unaffected in all conditions and under all circumstance. He is 'indifferent' to the happenings around him, in the sense that they do not hurt him; he is not oppressed in his mind, by those happenings; nor is he elated. When you are striving to go to the source of¹⁵ the 'I' other matters are of little concern to you and you do necessarily arrive at this "indifferent" stage and therefore, whether it is bhakthi yoga that you follow or any other, this "Udaseena" attitude must and will come to you.

I have called this, an attitude – in fact, it is a stage. And, what of the goal? Books have given description and seers and saints have recorded their experiences when the final discovery has been made. Unless one has such an experience, one can only translate or paraphrase what others say they felt at the final discovery: the 'I' vanishes

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and self shines in its own splendour. But of one thing, we may be sure, that all agree in calling it a state of perpetual Bliss or Anandam and Anandam,—Happiness is what every one really desires and strives after, whether in every act of his he is conscious of it or not.

THE NAME

A few words may be said now about Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi. None of these is the name which his parents gave him or he assumed. His name at birth was Venkataraman. Ramana was the name which one of his profound and ardent disciples adopted in his references to him, the other two names indicating the deep reverence in which his numerous disciples regard him, and at the same time signifying the spiritual eminence which he has attained. The word Maharishi means the great Seer. In olden times, it meant that the holder of that title, lived the highest of spiritual life; his concern in the world was to help its upward march in evolution, without having any self-interest. One¹⁶ may recall to mind the stanza in Vivekachudamani in which Sankaracharya refers to existence of great ones.

(“Telugu passage omitted here”)

“Those Great Ones who have attained peace and who themselves have finished swimming across the fearful ocean of births and deaths, exist and move about for the good of the people, as does the Spring. They liberate mankind without any motive.”

If he who from his 16th year is a dweller of woods and made severest penance and underwent all sorts of ordeals and has shown an utter disregard to the attractions of the world, for nearly half a century; been leading a life of purity, simplicity, cheerfulness and more than all, has helped vast numbers of people in understanding the riddles of life and in solving many of its problems ... if this person is not a Maharishi who else is? Some well meaning friends have expressed disapproval of the disciples addressing Ramana Maharishi as Bhagawan. To the latter, or atleast to most of them he is a Bhagawan ... even a God. The word Bhagawan is not, as some think, exclusively applicable to Iswara, the unknowable God or to the Avatars. Rishi Agasthya was styled Bhagawan. He was referred to in the Ramayana as Agasthyo Bhagawan Rishi. In Bhrigu Varuni conversation, the father or Guru is addressed similarly, Athihi Bhagavo Brahmeti (“Telugu passage omitted here”) (Taittiriya Upanishad).

Moreover, words show the warmth of affection, and depth of reverence; tomorrow, another disciple of emotional nature may begin to address him as “Beloved

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or Saint or Saviour” and so on. After all, when we go to such a holy being¹⁷ we go to draw inspiration for our benefit and not to dwell on what other people do, think or say. Our hearts must go into raptures, leap into ecstasies on seeing the halo of the Bhagawan.

I may also add that the word Bhagawan is most appropriate in this case. I wonder how many persons there are in the world today who have realised the self, as Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi has. The height of a mountain or even of a tree is not your estimate of it but what it really is. The attainment of the Bhagawan is not easily perceived by all. Even in days of old, the same was the case.

We, of course now, say how fortunate were those who were born when Lord Krishna was on earth or when Jesus Christ was here. I suppose when They were on earth, there were plenty of men and women who not only did not recognise their greatness but were even hostile to them. All that one need say now is that one should not miss the opportunity of visiting the great spiritual saviour of humanity. An Englishman in one of his writings observes that if you do not pay a visit to Tiruvannamalai and see the Bhagwan, you will repent for the omission, that is, you will blame yourself for not seeing him.

And finally, Venkataraman is dead; he died in his 16th year when he said “do not search for this” ... meaning Venkataraman’s body. The transformation has taken place. The student was dead. The saint arose out of him and he bore no name and we now call him

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OM OM OM

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