

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI –
A STUDY**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN PHILOSOPHY

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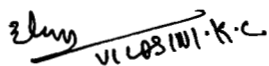
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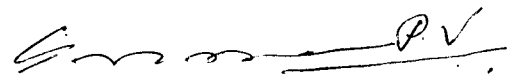

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "The Philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi - A Study" is a record of the original study and research carried out by Smt. Vilasini, K. C., Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, under my guidance and supervision, and submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy.



Dr. P.V. Unnikrishnan
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PREFACE

The present study entitled "THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI - A STUDY" is the outcome of the research work undertaken by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut. This study is an attempt to analyse the teachings of the great sage, Maharshi Ramana, in the background of the Upanisadic philosophy.

I express my heart-felt gratitude to my supervising teacher Dr.P.V.Unnikrishnan, Reader, Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut for his valuable guidance and help during the entire period of my research work. It is his kind co-operation and goodwill that enabled me to materialise my research project.

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To Ramana,
The self supreme revels in
the Hearts of all

INTRODUCTION

Vilasini. K. C. “The philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi - a study” Thesis.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Prelude

India has a glorious spiritual tradition. It is a chosen land—a land blessed with the guiding presence of many Sages and Saints. The great tradition of India has endowed her with a place of honour among the nations of the world. The term tradition stands for the timeless, eternal truth handed down by the seers to the seekers from the distant past. The tradition which began in the pre-historic times is still current and fresh since it is kept alive by Sages and Saints who are born here from time to time. They are the embodiments of the greatest ideal of life, the fruition of Indian culture. They kindle the spiritual insights in man and guide the earnest seekers through the right path. They keep the torch of spiritual tradition burn and pass on to the successors just as they have received it. During the early part of 20th century the great Indian tradition is upheld and sanctified by Maharshi Ramana, the Sage of Silence, who is adored as the greatest Sage of modern India. Arunachala Ramana, as he is popularly known, is the modern representative of the tradition. He not only promoted our tradition but carried its glory to its zenith. Carl Jung,

hailed Ramana as:

a true son of the Indian earth. He is genuine, and in addition to that, some thing quite phenomenal. In India he is the whitest spot in a white spot. . . . What we find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana is the purest of India; with its breath of world-liberated and liberating humanity, it is a chant of milleniums. This melody is built up on a single, great motif, which, in a thousand colourful reflexes, rejuvenates itself with in the Indian spirit, and the latest incarnation of which is Sri Ramana Maharshi himself.¹

The exalted place which Sri Ramana occupies in our tradition can be discerned from the following statement of Sri Aurobindo: "Ramana was a Yogi of remarkable strength and attainments and that his tapasya had won glory for India."² He characterised the Maharshi 'as Hercules among Yogis'.³ Sri Raja Gopalachari in his speech on the occasion of opening ceremony of Pathalalingam shrine, the earlier abode of Sri Ramana, remarked: "Sri Ramana Maharshi has kept India's spiritual glory alive in our generations. He had in his own way made the name of India respected by the wise and enlightened men spread all over the

world even as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and other Saints did in former times.”⁴

The spiritual tradition of India finds its fullest expression in the life and realisation of the sage. Viswanatha Swami, the former editor of the Journal, ‘The Mountain Path’, wrote: “The Sage’s attainment is not only a fulfilment of the ancient tradition but also a reconstitution and renewal of it for the benefit of modern seekers who can now test in practice and find for themselves the truth that the spontaneous glow of ever present self is the greatest Tapas.”⁵ The appearance of a man of the spiritual calibre of Ramana is a rare phenomenon. T.M.P. Mahadevan remarks: “It is not often that a spiritual genius of the magnitude of Ramana visits on earth. But when such an event occurs the entire humanity gets benefitted and a new era of hope opens before it.”⁶

1.2. Maharshi: The Saint and Philosopher

The Maharshi and his teachings are unique in several respects. Though his teaching is simple and most direct, for a beginner on the path of self-knowledge it may appear to be a riddle. This apparent contradiction is due to several factors.

Firstly Ramana is the most original thinker and what he taught is the result of his steady rootedness in the self. He neither attempted to interpret the teachings of the scriptures nor wrote elaborate commentaries on them. His aim was to show the simple path of self discovery. He attained the supreme state of self abidance without being formally initiated into Sanyasa. He had not studied any scriptures. The only religious book that he read was 'Periya Puranam'⁷ But later when he went through these books he found that they confirmed what he had already realised. He expressed this on one occasion thus:

I had read no books other than Periyapuranam, my Bible lessons and bits of Tayumanavar or Tivaram. My notion of God (or Iswara as I called the Infinite but Personal Deity) was similar to that found in Puranas. I had not heard then of Brahman, samsara etc. I had no idea then that there was an essence or Impersonal real underlying everything and that myself and Iswara were both identical with it. At Tiruvannamalai, as I listened to Ribu Gita and other works, I picked up these facts and discovered that these books were analysing and naming what I had felt intuitively without analysis and name. In the language of the books I should

describe my mental or spiritual condition after awakening, as suddha manas or vijnana, i.e., the intuition of the illumined.⁸

His realisation was spontaneous and he had not undergone any spiritual discipline (Sadhana) preliminary to it. The following statement of his discloses this truth "Some times I would sit with my eyes closed and some times with them open. I still do. But I know no mantra or yogic exercises and would not have any use for them if I did."⁹

Secondly, silence is the core of Sri Ramana's teachings. Silence implies cessation of all mental activity. It is pure awareness beyond the comprehension of the mind. Silence as a discipline for the attainment of spiritual experience was enjoined in the scriptures. Sri Sankara emphasises the necessity of the control of speech for a spiritual aspirant in his instruction that "the first means to yoga is control of speech."¹⁰

Sri Ramana is the embodiment of the self. Hence the silence of Ramana is the silence of the self, for self is silence. T.M.P. Mahadevan observes "Maharshi seldom talks. He believes, like the Sages of Yore, that the self is best taught in silence. Silence is the language of the spirit and speech can give only a distortion of truth. The absolute self which is beyond speech and thought can not be attained through these. It is

realised in the still silence where the storms of words and waves of thought have ceased."¹¹

The preliminary discipline of silence enforces control of speech to limit mental activities. Silence as a discipline is forced and artificial. The silence of the self is natural. Ramana states: "Mouna as a disciplinary measure is meant for limiting mental activities due to speech. If mind is otherwise controlled disciplinary mouna is unnecessary. For mouna becomes natural."¹² As his supreme silence is incomprehensible to many, out of his infinite compassion, he came down from that supreme state to instruct his disciples by narrating stories, writing verses and explaining intricate philosophical problems. It was to instruct Ganapathi Muni, the great Sanskrit Scholar and poet, that he first broke his silence. The instruction given to Muni constitutes the first oral teaching of the sage. Since then Ramana assumed the role of universal teacher, "who pierces through the dense darkness prevailing in human heart not only by the word of mouth but also by virtue of grace imparted by his beneficent glance"¹³ Thus it was Muni who made Ramana and his teachings available to all. It is right to say that "all generations of Ramana disciples and devotees must remain indebted to Muni because it was for his sake

and seeing his spiritual hunger and ripeness that Ramana broke his silence of eleven years and gave oral upadesa"¹⁴

Thirdly Ramana had initiated no institutions in his name to propagate self knowledge. Prof. K.Swaminathan remarks: "So egoless was the Maharshi that he took no pains to establish any dharma or found a new Sanga."¹⁵ He never allowed people to collect funds in his name for any purpose what so ever. But if anything comes on its own it was acceptable to him. The construction of the Asram in his name, he attributed to the work of divine plan. He said on one occasion "These constructions were not done on my authority, but were treated by those who did it as their own work. I did not tell them to build nor did I prevent them. In this manner Skandasram, virupaksha cave and Sri Ramansrama came into being."¹⁶

Fourthly, Ramana never professed himself as the guru and was reluctant to recognise anybody as his disciple. He said "The person may call himself my disciple or devotee. I do not consider any one to be my disciple. I have never sought Upadesa from any one nor do I give ceremonial Upadesa. If the people call themselves as my disciples I do not approve or disapprove. In my view all are alike"¹⁷ For Ramana all

are self and all are self-realised. Master and disciple imply duality and duality is illusory. He says as long as there is individuality Guru is necessary for realisation. When the self is realised there is neither Guru nor disciple for "Guru is none other than the self."¹⁸

Maharshi, like the Upanisadic sages speaks out of the fullness of his own experience. The words of Ramana have the same ring of authenticity and directness of the upanisadic teaching. Atma Vidya or the knowledge of one's own self is the theme of the Upanisads. Ramana exhorts us to find out who we are. Knowledge of oneself or knowledge of the knower should be the prime concern of the individual. On the contrary if the self is known everything else is known. Mundaka upanisad consider knowledge of the self as "the basis of all knowledge."¹⁹ Ramana exposes the futility of all knowledge which excludes the knowledge of the self as follows: "Is it not ignorance to know all but the all knowing self? When the latter, the substratum is known, knowledge and ignorance both disappear."²⁰ It is found that the teaching of Sri Ramana is in concurrent lines with the Sruti. Sri Ranganathananda Swami observes:

We gain immortality by search for truth. That is the Atma Vidya of the Upanisads, whose message we find glowing in the teachings of the Maharshi Every word he spoke is charged with the wisdom of atma Vidya. In the Upanisads we have the same great utterance which bring to us the description of this great experience. But they are all literature. Today's humanity can see it realised in the personality of Bhagavan. He exemplified the great teaching 'I am that'.²¹

Sri Ramana taught through precept and by example the age-less truth of non-dualism, which is the penultimate state of man's intuitive experience. He categorically asserts that advaita alone is the enduring truth and systems which speak of difference are the off-springs of the ego which will disappear when maya ends. Guruvachka Kovai expresses the truth in the following verse:

Many and various are the creeds
 Crowning them all advaita stands
 Supreme as silent pure awareness
 Destroying and Surviving the Unreal
 Ego, the deadly seed from which
 Grow all these difference twixt creeds.²²

The teaching of Ramana transcends all temporal limitations as the truth he revealed has a timeless character. It is relevant not only in the present day world characterised by self-interest and unbearable greed for material gains, but for all ages to come. He says that the ego is the source of all the trouble that we commonly attribute to the world and when the ego is apprehended every thing is in its proper place. No one can correct the ways of the world but can correct himself. If he looks at the world from this renewed perspective he can understand that fault lies not in the world but in us, as our ego. The comment of Maharshi is "as you are so in the world."²³

1.3. The Philosophy of Ramana

It is difficult to delineate the philosophy of Ramana from his life since they are inextricably connected. His life itself constitutes his philosophy. The theoretical exposition of a doctrine is not the aim of his teaching. On the other hand it is absolutely practical. It is intended to guide the seekers of truth to the ultimate goal of self knowledge. His teaching is based on his own intuitive experience of the truth which is called self-realisation. Ramana the infinite self, assumed the human form "to free vedic heritage from the morass of dry polemics and to reveal the

simple and straight path of self-enquiry based on his own direct experience"²⁴

Sri Ramana represents the advaita tradition of vedanta. Kavya kanta Ganapathi Muni²⁵ hails him as the third Acharya of Vedanta tradition, next to Vyasa and Sankara. To quote "The Seat of honour reserved for the most worthy, once occupied by the great Vyasa who classified the Vedas, and later by Sankara of high wisdom who dispelled the darkness from the world now awaits thee, oh Master....."²⁶ His teaching corroborates with the upanisadic non-dualism. Advaita or non-dualism is the creed which maintains that the self alone is real, the world is unreal if it is considered apart from the self and the individual self is nothing but the absolute self itself.

Ramana exhorts one to find out his natural state. By 'natural' Ramana means: "one's abidance in one's own nature as a flame of knowledge after completely discarding sense objects"²⁷ The individual is not the body, mind or the senses. He is pure awareness which is one and the same in all. Ramana declares that, "that which exists is awareness"²⁸ Hence all are fundamentally one. This truth is not realised as long as the mind is engrossed in outer forms. The mind must be turned inward to

the source of one's being. Ramana suggests self enquiry as the best method for turning the mind inward.

What constitutes self-enquiry? Self enquiry is the enquiry into the subject. 'I'. 'Know thyself' is the ancient injunction given to man. Sri Ramana gives a new orientation to this simple spiritual teaching. He asks one to find out who he really is. 'Who am I' is the fundamental problem to be solved. When this is done nothing else remains to be done. Because it governs the life and destiny of the individual. The individual has to find out that he is the deathless 'I' and not the mortal body as he takes himself to be. The 'I' is beyond any change and it is not affected by old age and death. When this is known everything is known. Thus all problems revolves round the central 'question who am I'. Sri Ramana never allowed to deviate from this crucial problem. As long as this basic problem is not tackled the so-called knowledge hitherto accumulated by man proves to be quite meaningless. Enquiry 'who am I' is the final remedy that he suggested for all maladies of life.

The unity of Being, the accessibility of one's being and practical path to realisation constitute the essential teaching of Sri Ramana. Maharshi proclaims the unity of all existence in his declaration that we

are all awareness and this realisation is not a future state to be attained. It is here and now. But as long as man identifies himself with his body effort is necessary to remove the obstacle to the realisation of his true nature. Thus the path suggested by Sri Ramana is the path of Self enquiry, or the enquiry 'Who am I'. His whole teaching can be condensed into a single word 'Be'. 'Be still' is the message of Maharshi. By the term 'still' Maharshi does not mean passivity or inactivity. On the contrary it is the most active state, the state of one's true 'being or 'I am'. He says stillness here means "Being free from thought"²⁹ The state of 'I am' is one's natural state of bliss. Muruganar expresses this truth in the following verse:

"What our Master clearly teaches
 By way of great, good, powerful tapas
 Is only this and nothing more
 Be Still
 Apart from this mind has no task to do or thought to think"³⁰

The philosophy of Ramana is universal in its import. He is the universal teacher and his teaching is meant for the entire humanity. "Universal because his teaching could be practised by all seekers of truth regardless of their religious affiliations, regardless of geographical locations, regardless of any circumstances."³¹

1.4. The objectives of the study

The present study is an attempt to throw some light on the magnificent personality of Sri Ramana the peerless sage of modern India. It also tries to show that though the sage appears much later in the history of our land, he belongs to the tradition of the classical sages of India. Further the study tries to present the philosophy of Maharshi comprehensively covering the different facets of his teachings. Though a good number of books are available on the subject, majority of them give only a piece meal account of his philosophy. Some books are biographical depicting the Reminiscences of their authors of the Maharshi, yet others are compilations. There are also independent commentaries on the major works like Upadesa saram and Ulladu Narpadu. The present study intends to bring out the philosophy Ramana comprehensively touching almost all the salient features of his teaching.

1.5. Plan of the Study

The present study enunciated in the title 'Philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi - A study' is an attempt to elucidate the philosophy of the sage in the light of the study of his works and recorded conservation. The second chapter titled 'Ramana: Life and Mission' is divided into four

quarters. The first quarter gives a brief sketch of the life of Ramana. The second quarter reveals the magnificent personality of the sage. The third quarter gives birds eyes view of his works. The fourth quarter brings out the significance of Maharshi's teaching.

The Third chapter titled 'The Nature of the Self' gives an exposition of Ramana's philosophy of self in the back ground of Upanisadic non-dualism. Maharshi accepts the Upanisadic definition of self as existence-consciousness and bliss (sat-cit-ananda) Upanisadic descriptions such as self is self effulgent self is infinite, self is pure, self is the heart and so on find room in the philosophy of Maharshi. Further, the Maharshi's unique interpretation of the self as "awareness" calls for special attention and that also is undertaken in this section .

The fourth chapter titled 'Soul, World and God' gives an analysis of what is said to 'the not-self' by the vedantins. The seeker of truth should understand through discrimination that the self alone is truth and the knowledge of the world and God is not knowledge, but ignorance Ramana is of the view that the self alone is truth and the soul, world and God are not real.

The fifth chapter titled 'Self Enquiry and Realisation' is focussed on Ramana's unique method of self enquiry. The enquiry 'who am I' is a holistic method since it comprehends all other methods such as Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana. The whole philosophy of Ramana centred round the problem of self identity which can be translated in the form of the enquiry 'who am I'. Since the question 'who am I' is capable of silencing every questioner it is characterised as the supreme weapon of Ramana. The query 'who am I' is directed towards the questioner himself. The seeker is urged to find out his own identity before he seeks to solve the problems of the world. This is the master question because here in lies the solution to all problems of life.

The concluding chapter presents a summary evaluation of the foregoing discussion and points out the universal validity of Sri Ramana's message.

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RAMANA : LIFE AND MISSION

Vilasini. K. C. "The philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi - a study" Thesis.
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Chapter II

RAMANA : LIFE AND MISSION

Every world teacher makes his appearance on earth to fulfil some specific missions. The mission of Sri Ramana, "the splendor in human form"¹ is to lead humanity from the darkness of ignorance to the light of self-knowledge. According to him the only useful purpose of man's life is to turn inward and find out who he really is. The one who lacks the initiative to do so, is called as the killer of his own self. He says "Every one is committing suicide. The eternal, blissful, natural state has been smothered by this ignorant life. In this way the present life is due to the killing of the eternal positive existence. Is it not really a case of suicide."²

2.1. A Biographical Sketch

Venkataraman, who later came to be known to the world as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, was born on 30th December 1879 at Tiruchuzhi, a village in Ramanathapuram District in Tamil Nadu. He was the second son of Sri Sundaram Iyer, a pleader at Tiruchuzhi and Alagammal a devout and pious lady. His early education was at Tiruchuzhi. He was not an outstanding student but was very intelligent

and had a remarkable memory. He had a good physique and was more interested in sports than in studies.

Nothing pertaining to the greatness of his later life was evident in his childhood. Except his long spells of sleep nothing extraordinary was found in the behaviour of this child. However the emotional fervor, when he first heard the name 'Arunachala', and devotion he felt when he read 'Periyapuranam' are worth mentioning. The former he recalled is one of his hymns to Arunachala. "look ! there it stands as if insentient. Mysterious is the way it works; beyond all human understanding. From my unthinking childhood, the immensity of Arunachala had shone in my awareness. But even when I learnt from some one that it was only Tiruvannamalai, I did not realise its meaning. When it stilled my mind and drew me to itself and I came near, I saw that it was stillness absolute."³

The event that took him away from the empirical pursuit was, what he called, 'the death experience'. Through this experience he realised that he is the deathless immortal 'I' and not the perishable body. It took place in 1896. One day he was sitting in the first floor of his uncle's house. He was in good health but a sudden fear of death caught hold of

him. He turned his mind inward, and thought: "Now the death has come. What does it mean, what is it that dying. This body dies."⁴ He enacted death. He stretched his body, limbs and held his breath and kept his mouth closed. He continued his enquiry "Well... this body is now dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to the ashes. But with the death of the body am I dead? Is the body I? This body is silent and inert. But I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' with in me, apart from it. So I am the spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit that transcends it can not be touched by death. I am therefore the deathless spirit."⁵

The awareness of 'I' as the deathless spirit transformed his entire being. He lost his interest in studies and his attitude towards friends and relatives totally changed. He became humble and meek. He could no longer get along with the old ways of life. Absorption in the self became unbroken and continuous. On 29th August 1986 he set out his journey 'in search of his father' to Arunachala, the hill of the holy Beacon and arrived there on 1st September 1986. Then onwards Arunachala became his permanent abode. He never stirred out of that place even once in his life. He occupied several caves and places in and around the hill. The cave in which he stayed for a longer period is the Virupaksha cave, the

cave named after a sage. During the earlier period of his stay at Arunachala Ramana maintained complete silence and was indifferent even to the needs of the body. The fame of the young ascetic spread far and wide and scholars, genuine seekers of truth and curious visitors were drawn to him. The life in the cave was found to be miserable due to the scarcity of water and to the growth in the number of visitors. He shifted to Skandasram, an asram constructed on the hill by a devotee named Kandaswami. From there Ramana moved to the Southern slope of the hill, the place of his mother Alagammal's Samadhi, and he stayed there permanently. An asram now known as 'Ramanasramam' came to exist informally as a thatched shed in December 1922. The eminent personalities who called on Ramana include Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. Mahatma Gandhi, though not visited Ramana, used to send people to Ramasram for the recharging of their spiritual energy. Narayana Guru made a visit to the Sage in 1917 while Ramana was in Skandasram. Overwhelmed by the steady self abidance (Sahaja Nishta) of the sage Guru wrote Five Stanzas in Sanskrit called 'Nirvrtti Panchakam' and placed it as his offering to Ramana. After reaching his Asram at Varkala he wrote another five stanzas, 'Municharya Panchakam' and sent it to Ramana. His attendant

Kunjuswami reveals: "He used to refer to Sri Bhagavan as a Raja Sarpam"⁶ (King Cobra).

Prominent among the learned seekers who came to the sage were the great Sanskrit poet and scholar, Kavya Kanta Ganapati Muni and the Tamil poet and scholar, Kannappa Muruganar. "They were like the two eyes of Ramana."⁷ Ganapathi Muni was a man of severe austerities but he was unhappy because he had not experienced the fruition of his penance. He sought Ramana's guidance over the nature of Tapas and the clarification given by Ramana was as follows: "If one watches whence this notion of 'I' springs, the mind will be absorbed into that. That is Tapas. If a mantra is repeated, and attention directed to the source whence the mantra sound is produced, the mind will be absorbed in that. That is tapas."⁸ Muni understood that the teaching is original as it come directly from the sage's intuitive experience. Impressed by the instruction and overwhelmed by the loftiest spiritual stature of the Sage he proclaimed to the world that the Sage should then onwards be addressed as 'Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi'. The letter he wrote to his disciples to this effect reads

I have obtained as my Guru a supreme sage who lives in a cage in Arunachala, known as Brahmana Swami. He is a great visionary, an epitome of all good qualities, 'one who deserves the name of Bhagavan Maharshi. I have abridged his name to Ramana in a brief and beautiful manner. Accordingly through my letter I have informed my disciples and well wishers that they should also call him Ramana."⁹ His work 'Ramana Gita' gives an exposition of Ramana's teaching. It is in the form of question and answers and is divided into 18 chapters containing three hundred verses.

Muruganar came to Ramana first in September 1923. Muruganar was the ideal disciple who had completely surrendered to Ramana. Sri Sadhu Om, an ardent disciple of Ramana, gives a picturesque description of the relation between Ramana and Muruganar: "Just as milk begins to flow spontaneously from the udder of a mother cow as soon as she sees her calf, so the compassionate divine will to pour forth his teachings surged in the heart of Sri Bhagavan as soon as Muruganar came to him."¹⁰ Muruganar elicited from the sage works like Atma Vidyakirtanam, Upadesa Undiyar and he recorded Ramana's oral teachings under the title 'The Garland of Guru's Sayings.' It represents

the authentic record of the Maharshi's teachings. 'The Garland' presents a systematic statement of Maharshi's teachings in the form of Tamil verse. It has the stamp of authority for two reasons. Firstly each statement noted down by Muruganar was shown to Maharshi for approval. Secondly Sri Muruganar was so egoless that he acts only as a spokesman of Sri Ramana. "Therefore, if any one wants a single text of Sri Bhagavan's teaching in which clear expositions of all the various secrets of spiritual wisdom that should be known by the world are gathered together that one text is Guru Vacaka Kovai."¹¹

Ramana's Biography would not be incomplete unless we refer to the name of a western devotee, Paul Brunton, the British Journalist, who introduced the sage to the Westerners through his famous book 'A Search in Secret India'. It was published in 1934,

2.2. Sri Ramana, the person

There is some thing exquisite and fascinating about the personality of Ramana. He was very simple and quite unassuming. He never considered himself superior to others. This trait of his personality can be deciphered from his statement that "people call me Maharshi and treat me like this. But I do not see myself as a Maharshi. On the other hand

every one is a Maharshi to me.”¹² This also shows Maharshi’s unity of vision since an ‘other’ is non-existent for him. Another remarkable feature of the Maharshi was his captivating glance which emanated spiritual force capable of inducing a state of peace and silence in those who are present before him. Many eminent personalities have left behind the records of the ineffable experiences they have had in the presence of the sage. Swami Chidbhananda wrote: “I gazed at him and he gazed back at me. What followed was indescribable. His body seemed a glass case from which a blissful brilliance streamed out. More than half an hour passed in this way. It was an experience unique and unforgettable. It confirmed Sri Ramakrishna’s statement that spiritual experience can be transmitted from one person to another in the manner in which material things are handed over.”¹³

The sage diffused a rare kind of peace and tranquillity which is subtle but intense, and it is felt by every one. Many a question remained unasked in his presence because the devotees have either forgotten to ask the questions or they found no need to arise them since questions themselves have been dissolved before all absorbing the personality of the sage. Paul Brunton reports such an experience in his work “A Search in Secret India.”

My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to grip me more firmly. But aware of the silent resistless change which is taking place within my mind. One by one, the questions which I have prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not seem to matter whether I solve the problems which have hitherto troubled me. I knew only that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest."¹⁴

All persons who have had the good fortune of being in the presence of the Sage had reported the mental transformation that he had brought about in them. Prof. Kunjan Raja wrote, about his experience thus: "What produced on me a great impression is the repose, the unruffled calmness that prevailed in the place as a result of the presence of the Maharshi. He seldom spoke. There was always a look of serene joy in his face, some times it glowed up into a luster of bliss at times I noticed that he rose into a state of Samadhi or trance. But that look of blissful peace was always there."¹⁵

The other distinguishing traits of his personality are his equal treatment of all and his easy accessibility. All man, irrespective of their caste, sex or scholarship, received his love. He saw the same life in all though he recognised the differences in their outer forms. Maharshi's equal vision is reflected in the following Reminiscence of a devotee. "To me there is no distinction. Grace is flowing like the ocean ever full. Everyone draws from it according to his capacity."¹⁶ He was freely available to all at all times. He entertained no hours of privacy. Anybody can approach him at any time. Ganapathi Muni gives a beautiful picture of Maharshi in the following lines: "In speech he is extremely soft, in look cool and compassionate, his face is like a full bloom lotus, his mind is shorn of lustrous like the moon in day light; he shines in the Heart like the Sun in the sky."¹⁷

2.3. Ramana and Arunachala

The relationship between Sri Ramana and Arunachala is mysterious. He was familiar with the word Arunachala from his early childhood. But then he had no clear idea of what it actually meant. He declared that he and Arunachala are inseparable. He expressed his passion for the hill thus "This hill is like my home. Whenever I am in

Arunachala I forget myself."¹⁸ For him Arunachala is the visible form of the supreme self. He calls it "the top of the spiritual axis of the earth."¹⁹

Arunachala is the nameless, formless supreme self that shines in every one's heart as 'I'. He stated "What do you think it is? Is it just a hill of rocks? How can it be? Arunachala is the self itself. It stands as the form, full of Grace."²⁰ He explains how the hill came into being. As human beings identify themselves with their bodies the supreme self chooses to identify itself with this hill so that human beings may receive his grace. Though it appears as the hill, it is the supreme self which guides the seekers to the state of egoless freedom.

Sri Ramana calls Arunachala by various names, such as his father, mother, God, Guru and also as his own self. His identification with the hill is so complete that Ramana and Arunachala are regarded as identical. Arunachala is the self in the form of the hill and Ramana is the same self in human form. In the 90th verse of 'Akshara mana malai' he discloses their oneness by addressing the hill, 'Ramana'. The identity is conclusively established by the occurrence of the celestial phenomenon at the time of the Mahanirvana of the Sage. It is reported that at the moment he gave up his body a luminous star appeared on the South east

corner of Arunachala and passed over to its summit and then disappeared.

2.4. Who is Arunachala Ramana

Sri Ramana was a man of steady wisdom (Sthithaprajna). Descriptions of a Jivanmukta found in the Upanisads, Bhagavad Gita, Vivekachudamani and other religious classics suit best to Ramana. T.M.P. Mahadevan observes: "No better example of the ideal of Sthithaprajna or gunatita can be found in Ramana. There he was unconcerned and yet concerned with everything. He would weep when some one wept and yet his weeping left no sorrow behind. He could be happy on hearing some welcome news and yet there was no attachment to what the news conveyed. He would read the news papers, and know about all that happened, and yet there was around him an atmosphere which was far above where news occur and events happen. Thus he was a living example of the Sthithaprajna-one to whom blame and praise were the same, heat and cold were identical."²¹

He had clearly revealed his true stature to his devotees on several occasions. Once it was in the form of an answer given to a query raised by one devotee. The question was 'who is Arunachala Ramana'. His reply

was in the form of a verse which read thus: "In the recesses of the lotus shaped hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu there shines as pure intellect (Absolute consciousness) the Paramatman who is the same as Arunachala Ramana. When the mind melts with love of Him, and reaches the inmost recesses of the Heart wherein He dwells as the beloved, the subtle eye of pure intellect opens and He reveals Himself as pure consciousness."²²

On another occasion Ramana confirmed the vision of a devotee assuring him that He is the formless self. To quote Sri Ramana "You wanted to see my form. You saw my disappearance. I am formless. So that experience must be the final truth."²³ He also declared before the Judge who visited him in connection with a law suit, that he is not bound by the rules of caste (varna) and status in life (asrama), since he transcends them (athiyasrami). The following statement reveals that he never considered himself as the body: "Why limit Ramana to a figure of five or six feet tall. Ramana is universal."²⁴ On another occasion he told Kavyakanta that "The sun, the moon and all the stars have their being in me and the sun himself goes around my lips."²⁵ Though the life which he led appears to be quite ordinary, the above mentioned statements are sufficient to reveal his true stature. He never identified himself with the body and hence he transcends all the rules that bind the ordinary

mortals. He ever abided in the self. The ever bodiless, nameless, formless self assumed the form of Ramana of Arunachala to reveal the truth of Self-knowledge to humanity.

2.5. Ramana, the Sage of Silence

The tradition pictures Dakshinamurati²⁶, the first preceptor, as the symbol of Silence. He is depicted as the youthful teacher "who teaches the knowledge of Brahman in silence"²⁷ to the four aged disciples who are themselves sages. In modern times the same mode of enunciation of truth can be seen in the life and teachings of the sage of Arunachala, who is regarded as the embodiment of silence. Sri Ramana taught mainly through silence and silence constitutes his essential teaching. His life itself was an exemplification of the Upanisadic teaching, 'Atman is Silence'.

Silence is pure awareness, the state of 'I am'. Silence is truth, bliss and peace. The self is silence. It is a state of stillness which is beyond thoughts and words. It is beyond description. The Upanisads try to give a negative description of it as 'not this', 'not this' and then remained silent'. Brahadaranyaka upanisad for instance states "that the self is not this, not this. It is incomprehensible for it is not comprehended."²⁸ The truth,

'Brahman is silence' is conveyed through a dialogue between the teacher and the disciple. The disciple requested the teacher to teach him the nature of ultimate truth. In reply the teacher says "I am teaching you indeed but you do not understand, silent is the self."²⁹ This inexplicable nature of the truth is indicated by the term silence.

Sri Ramana points out that language is effective only in the relative realm of phenomena and it fails to communicate transcendental experience. Language, of course, is an effective medium of communication. It is used to communicate with 'the other'. The need for communication arises only when there is a sense of separateness or feeling of otherness. Language implies a division between subject and object, the knower and the known. When the subject and object are one language becomes superfluous. Language is a tool of the intellect. It can function only in the plane of ordinary understanding . Mystical experiences are beyond the comprehension of the intellect. Ramana states:

In the realm of duality

Alone questions and answers

In non-duality they are not.³⁰

Language is useful as the indicators of reality. They have an instrumental value because though they do not provide any direct experience of the truth, they serve to point out the truth. Words are only pointers to truth and after showing the direction they turn back. Ramana remarks that even the scriptures are useless in the ultimate sense. For him silence is the best expression of Reality. By silence he does not mean mere inhibition of speech; it is the natural stillness of the mind. In 'Marital Garland of letters' Ramana declares that verbal silence is not the real silence. He asks "standing like a stone unblossoming is this true mouna."³¹ Silence is the perfect egoless state.

Sri Ramana shows how language and silence are related. He shows that silence is the original source of words. Language springs from silence and sinks back into silence. He explains how does speech originate. "There is abstract knowledge whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So word is the great grandson of the original source."³²

Therefore, according to Sri Ramana silence is the most effective language. "What one fails to know by conversation extending to several years can be known in a trice in silence or in front of silence."³³ He makes

a comparison between oral lectures and silence. Lectures are less effective and will not produce any lasting good. But the effect produced by silence is permanent and it may benefit the whole humanity. The following statement of Sri Ramana brings out the differences between the two thus: "What do you think of a man listening to a harangue for an hour and going away without being impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits in a holy presence and leaves after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better. To preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending forth intuitive forces to play on others"³⁴

It is important to note that silence can not be interpreted in a negative way. It does not stand for inactivity for it refers to reality. On the contrary it is the most potent form of work. For Ramana silence is the loudest teaching and it forms the highest instruction. Just as reality can be analysed from the two stand points of immanence and transcendence with reference to the world silence can also be analysed from these two stand points. In its immanent aspect silence form the source of language for language originates, exists and merges in silence. In its transcendent aspect silence transcends speech and thought.

According to the sage silence is the eternal flow of words. Silence is the eternal language where hearts speak to the heart. Words cause obstruction to this perennial flow of language. He says "Silence is ever speaking. It is the perennial flow of language. It is interpreted by speaking for words obstruct the mute language."³⁵ The Maharshi illustrates the nature of silence comparing it with the flow of electricity. Just as obstruction in the flow of electricity causes the lighting of a lamp or working of a fan, the eternal flow of silence is obstructed by words.

Words can not convey the silence of the self which is beyond the reach of mind and thought. Hence Ramana says:

If of yore, the first teachers revealed it
 through unbroken silence
 Say who can reveal it in spoken words.³⁶

2.6. Works of Ramana Maharshi

Sri Ramana was neither a prolific writer nor an expounder of a consistent system of philosophy because neither of them was the aim of the sage, "He was not a philosopher and had no system of thought to expound. He was a Jivanmukta indicating the way to self-realisation and guiding men thereto in 'silence'.³⁷ He did not write much and what ever

he wrote, was to meet the specific demand of his devotees. The sage remarks: "Some how it never occurs to me to write a book or compose a poem. All the poems I have made were on the request of some or other in connection with some particular event."³⁸ Most of his writings are in Tamil. He has also written in Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam. His writings include prose treatises, hymns or devotional songs, and translations. Self enquiry (Vichara Sangraha) and 'Who am I' are the two prose works attributed to the Maharshi.

Works of Ramana can be classified into two categories, namely, Devotional works and Expository texts. However it is important to note that the devotional works of Maharshi are more contemplative than devotional. Maharshi being a contemplative sage devotional poems are limited in number. They include The Five Hymns to Arunachala. The expository texts include Upadesa Saram, Forty Verses on Reality, self enquiry, and 'Who am I' and some other smaller poems.

2.6.1. Devotional Songs: The Five Hymns to Arunachala

The five hymns to Arunachala are the inspired lyrical poems. They written about the year 1914. They represent a beautiful blend of fine

poetry, autobiography, mysticism, devotion and profound metaphysics.

All hymns except one were written in Tamil. These Five hymns include:

1. Arunachala Aksharamanamalai (Marital Garland of Letters for Arunachala).
2. Arunachala Nava Mani Malai (The Necklet of Nine Gems for Arunachala).
3. Arunachala Padigam (The Eleven Verses on Arunachala).
4. Arunachala Ashtakam (The Eight Verses on Arunachala).
5. Arunachala Pancaratnam (The Five Verses on Arunachala)

2.6.1 (i) Arunachala Akshara mana malai

This was the first and most famous of the Five hymns composed by Maharshi. While Ramana and his devotees were staying in the Virupaksha cave they lived on the food they begged from the town. Some of the devotees requested Ramana to compose a devotional song so that it can be sung while going for biksha. Although at first he did not agree with the idea, one day while going round the hill he composed the poem spontaneously as if divinely inspired. It consists of 108 hymns and they are arranged in the alphabetical order. Though the poem is highly

devotional, profound metaphysical truths are also found embedded in it. Imagining himself as the lady love, the poet portrays the different shades of feeling that passes through her love laden heart - the untold love, her pang of separation, her complaints and remorse and finally the bliss that results from the union with her lover.

Arunachala is the supreme self, the true import of 'OM'. He calls it variously as the magnet that attracts the iron filings of devotees and holds them fast, the ocean of grace in the mould of a mountain, the gem of fire sparkling all around etc.

2.6.1 (ii) Arunachala Navamanimala

This poem consists of nine verses of various meters. Here also the theme is love and devotion. In the second verse he explains the three syllables constituting Arunachala. Syllables A-ru-na stands for existence consciousness and bliss which is the nature of the non-dual self. It also implies the identity of the individual self with the supreme self, the import of the upanisadic text Tat-tvam-asi.

2.6.1 (iii) Arunachala Padigam

It consists of an invocatory verse and ten other slogas, all in the same metre. Each subsequent verse of the poem begins with the last word of the previous verse. It is also devotional containing a biographical note. Arunachala Padikam and Arunachala Ashtakam were composed as if divinely inspired. Here is the exact words of Maharshi.

The only poems came to me spontaneously and compelled me, as it were, to write them without anyone urging me to do so, are eleven verses to Arunachala and eight stanzas to Arunachala.³⁹

In this poem Arunachala is described variously as the love in the shape of the hill, the sun of suns, ocean of Grace, the pure one, the transcendental self taking the form of Arunachala, the magnificent Arunachala that shines within the heart etc. From these expressions it becomes clear that for Ramana Arunachala is the non-dual self which is the Supreme Reality.

2.6.1 (iv) Arunachala Ashtakam

All the stanzas of this poem are in the same metre. This poem is purely philosophical in its import. It also involves a personal element.

The poet describes the mysterious relationship he had with Arunachala from his early childhood. The poem is remarkable for its originality and for the use of beautiful imagery.

2.6.1 (v) Arunachala Pancaratnam

This poem is a Sanskrit composition of Maharshi. It was written 1917 at the request of Sri Ganapathi Muni. These five verses are the real gem of Ramana literature. They are highly philosophic in their import and also poetic. This hymn contains the quintessence of Sri Ramana's teachings. Ganapathi Muni characterise it as "the essence of vedanta, brief like aphorisms, but all comprehensive with hidden meaning."⁴⁰

2.6.2. Expository Texts

Self Enquiry, Who am I, Upadesasaram, Forty verses on Reality are the major expository texts.

2.6.2 (i) Self Enquiry

During the year 1900-1902 while Ramana was living in the Virupaksha cave, a devotee named Gambiram Seshayya sought his guidance in spiritual matters. The main subjects of his interest were the philosophy of Vivekananda and Raja Yoga and the questions he put to

Ramana were mainly concerned with these topics. The replies to these questions were on slips of paper and it covered not only those subjects but he was very keen in drawing Seshayya's attention to the path of self enquiry. These slips containing the answers were preserved and later copied by the devotee in his note book. These notes form the content of the work 'Self Enquiry' (Vichara Samgraham).

The text 'Self Enquiry' contains the first instruction of Ramana on the path of self enquiry or the enquiry 'Who am I'. "Though it is not an exclusive Ramana way treatise it was for the first time after his realisation that Ramana explained the royal path of self enquiry 'Who am I?' to any seeker. In this sense it is a very important document to which one can refer for understanding the experience of Ramana."⁴¹

'Self enquiry' discusses not only the path of enquiry or vichara recommended by Ramana as the direct path to self knowledge, it deals with other methods like meditation, breath control etc. A close study of the text reveals that the main topic of discussion is the path of self enquiry and the other methods suggested may help the seekers to pursue their own chosen path.

2.6.2 (ii) Who am I

The text 'Who am I' is the most popular prose work of Ramana. It comprises answers of Ramana to questions of Siva Praksan Pillai, an earlier devotee, in the year 1902. It has a unique position because it presents the original teachings of Ramana in its pristine purity. Ramana himself recommended its perusal if any one wanted a correct presentation of his teachings. It consists 13 questions and published in 1925. Ramana himself rewritten it in the form an essay.

The title of the book itself indicates its theme, which is the problem of self identify. At the outset itself it deals with the question 'Who am I'. It is stated that the 'I' is not the body, senses, prana and the mind. The mode of doing the enquiry 'Who am I' and the way to ward off intruding thoughts are also given. Ramana asserts that other than enquiry there is no adequate means to control the mind.

Upadesa Saram and Forty Verses on Reality

'The 'Forty verses on Reality' and 'Upadesa saram' are the two major philosophical poems. Sri. Muruganar is instrumental in eliciting from Ramana his true teachings in the form of these two works. "Upadesa undiyar and Ulladu Nampadu were received by Sri Muruganar

in answer to his prayers beseeching Sri Bhagavan to reveal whatever should be revealed to mankind according to the will of His grace, these two works contain the true correct and authentic teachings of Sri Bhagavan."⁴² 'The Forty Verses on Reality' is called Ramana's Siddhanta Sastra and Upadesa saram, the Sadhana sastra. These two poems give a clear exposition of his teachings. The thirty verses and forty verses are indeed the scripture of Advaita and of the Jnana Marga of Self enquiry."⁴³

2.6.2 (iii) Upadesa Saram

The origin of the poem is connected with the legend of Lord Siva. Ramana Sannidhi Murai (Homage to the presence of Ramana) one of Muruganar's works, contains a portion depicting the divine lilas of the Lord Siva and the other Gods of the Hindu pantheon. Here all Gods are described as the embodiments of Sri Ramana. The last part of it should contain the instruction of Siva. At this stage Muruganar requested Sri Ramana, the embodiment of Siva, to compose the 'upadesa' portion. "In answer to this prayer of His devotee, Sri Bhagavan began to sing the upadesa as given by the Lord Siva to elevate the tapasvins from the state of mind in which they were at that time and thus the work upadesa undiyar came into existence."⁴⁴

Upadesa saram contains the quaint essence of vedanta. He makes his own intuitive experience as the basis of its teachings. Scholars acclaimed it as the contemporary upanisad. It contains 30 verses originally written in Tamil and Maharshi himself translated it into Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam. The Tamil version is called upadesa undiyar and the Sanskrit version is called Upadesasaram. Many scholars have written commentaries on it. The first half of the poem is devoted to the discussion of the traditional paths like Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Yoga and concludes that abidance in the self is true karma, bhakti, jnana and yoga. The second part deals with his own teaching namely the enquiry 'who am I' and concludes his teaching by stating the true nature of tapas. "Thus holding fast to the awareness of one's own faculty of introspection and to remain as the self, verily is sound penance."⁴⁵

2.6.2 (iv) Ulladu Narpadu (Forty Verses on Existence)

Forty verses on existence is composed at the behest of Sri Muruganar. He wanted to bring out the salient features of Ramana's teaching in the form of a philosophic treatise containing forty verses for the benefit of the seekers of truth. In 1928 Ramana started composing verses now and then and Muruganar began to arrange them according to

the train of ideas contained in them. The verses which did not fit into the main theme were deleted and he requested Ramana to compose new ones to make the required forty. "In this way, due to the perfect cooperation between the Guru and the disciple, within three weeks Sri Bhagavan and Sri Muruganar formed the work Ulladu Narpadu, which is the crest jewel of all advaita Upanisads."⁴⁶

The poem Ulladu Narpadu is a classic on vedanta in Tamil. It is profound in its meaning and brief and precise in its exposition. The wisdom of the whole upanisads is contained in it. Since the work is doctrinal it is called Siddhanta Sastra. Ganapathi Muni states:

Though the text is very brief and terse it contains in a nutshell the secret of profound works of philosophy and yoga. It is aphoristic. Though there is no refutation of any other system of thought in it, yet all other trends of thought have been very skillfully relegated as immature. Its reasoning touches alike the core of one's heart, be he learned or ignorant. Though there is virtually no quotation in it from any work of scriptural authority, yet this treatise shines as an epitome of the essence of traditional teaching.⁴⁷

Muni rendered the poem verse by verse into Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit version of it is called Sad-darsanam. 'Sad' means the truth and 'darsanam' means its perception. The work has many translations and commentaries. Sri Ramana himself rendered it into Telugu and Malayalam. Telugu and Malayalam translation are in prose and they are entitled 'Unnadi Nalupadi' and Sad-darsanam respectively.

The name Ulladu Narpadu' or 'Forty Verses On Existence' gives a clue to the theme of the poem. The Tamil word 'ulladu' means that which exists, the Reality. In these forty verses the sage had touched all the salient features of his teaching. He also stressed the value and efficacy of the method of self enquiry.

2.6.2 (v) The Supplement to Forty Verses

The verses that were set aside while compiling 'Forty verses on Reality' find their place in 'The supplement to forty verses on Reality'. It also includes translations from other scriptures. These two works, Forty verses on Reality and 'The supplement to forty verses', present the teaching of Maharshi in its comprehensive form.

2.6.2 (vi) Ekatma Pancakam

This is the last poem composed by Maharshi. It is composed in 1947. It was written at the insistence of Suri Nagamma. The original composition was in Telugu and later he translated it into Tamil. The theme of the poem is the non-dual self. The poem is written from the ultimate stand point of advaita. He affirms that the self alone exists and one is always the self.

Apart from these poems he has also written certain minor poems like Song of the Poppadam, Self Knowledge, Nine Stray verses, Complaint to stomach. Apology to Hornets, Reply to Mother, etc.

2.6.2 (vii) The Song of Poppadam

The song of poppadam is composed in a humorous vein. In it he explains the practice (sadhana) of self enquiry under the symbolism of the recipe for making poppadam.

2.6.2 (viii) Self Knowledge

In the opening verse of the poem Sri Ramana declare that self knowledge is the easiest of all human endeavours. Thus he convinces the spiritual aspirants of the accessibility and availability of self knowledge.

2.6.3. Translations

He selected forty verses from Bhagavad Gita and rendered it into Tamil under the title 'The Song Celestial'. He also prepared a Malayalam version of it. From Agamas he translated Devi kalothara and he also translated the essential part of 'Sarva Jnanothara' namely Atma Sakshatkara. He extracted a few verses from 'Vichara sagara', a Tamil work which is a translation from the Hindi original and compiled it under the title Vichara Mani Mala.

He rendered into Tamil the works of Sankaracharya like Vivekachudamani, Atmabodha, Dakshinamurti, stotra and Guru stuti. He also added an invocatory verse to his Tamil rendering of Sankara's Atma Bodha.

2.7. The Relevance of Ramana

The study of the life and teachings of a teacher or philosopher would necessarily involve a discussion on the relevance of his teachings in the context of the present society. Such a discussion will bring to light certain implication of his teachings, namely, its practical applicability and the benefit that is derived from his teaching. That is, how far he had succeeded in ameliorating man's conditions. Viewed from this

perspective one can undoubtedly say that Ramana's method of root cause treatment goes a long way in curing the diseases that afflicts the modern man. The remedy he suggested does not have a cosmetic effect, but it eradicates the disease itself. It is significant not only in the context of the present society but for all generation to come. The sage and his teachings transcend all boundaries specified by time and space.

The life and the realisation of the sage is significant for the following reasons. It gives hope and promise to man that the ideal can be made real here and now. Through his life and teachings he gives assurance to mankind that self realisation, which is the highest of all accomplishments, is not only possible for all but it is the easiest thing to attain if one is serious and earnest in his efforts. Ramana the embodiment of the ideal is the source of inspiration and guidance for the seekers of truth. It also equips man to lead a richer and fuller life. He teaches us how to live meaningfully and effectively in this world. Hence the life and teachings of the sage serves to fulfil both the aspirations of man namely mundane and supra mundane.

Prompted by the apparent indifference of the sage to the day today affairs of the world some people may ask what is the use of the sage to

his fellow beings. This doubt is anticipated by Vinobhabhave in his remark that, "Some people may ask what was the greatness about Ramana Maharshi. Of what use was he to his fellow beings? My reply to them is: Ramana Maharshi was in such an exalted spiritual state that his very presence was enough to bless the whole world like that of the sun by its mere presence given us light and life."⁴⁸

Maharshi's clarification that "the help through realisation transcends all help through words thoughts and deed"⁴⁹ is itself sufficient to remove the misunderstanding.

Further, the sage is neither indifferent to what happened around him nor inactive as he appeared to be. He was always active. He compares his stillness to the apparent stillness of a fast rotating top. Dr. Carl Jung points out the significance of the sage in his statement "life and teachings of Sri Ramana are not only important for the Indians but also for the westerner. Not only do they form a record of great human interest, but also a warning message to humanity which threatens to lose itself in the chaos of its unconsciousness and lack of self control."⁵⁰

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THE NATURE OF SELF

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Chapter III

THE NATURE OF SELF

3.1. Indifference to Theoretical Discussion

Upanisadic seers attach greater significance for imparting the knowledge of the self to the well qualified disciples than to a mere speculative discussion on its nature. Though they approach the concept of self differently there is no apparent difference in their exposition of its nature. This is due to the fact that the nature of the self is non dual. For instance in *Isvasya upanisad* we have a direct definition of the self as "all pervasive, pure, bodiless, without wound, without sinews, taintless, untouched by sin, omniscient, ruler of mind, transcendent and self-existent.¹ On the other hand an indirect description is also available like: "He is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the life of life and the eye of the eye."² Whatever be the method of teaching, the aim of the sages was to provide a clear and lucid exposition of the self. Ramana being a great sage (Maha rishi) of modern times tries to explain the nature of self in simple language rather than by using abstruse, speculative and theoretical terms. He neither wanted to establish a doctrine of self nor tried to quote upanisadic passages to

substantiate his words. His teaching was solely based on his own deep intuitive experience of the self. He discouraged all theoretical discussions as mere speculations since it would not serve any purpose to the genuine apprehension of the self. To Ramana the subject matter of theory and speculation is the not-self and it will not hold good in the realm of self. The Maharshi states this in his own style as follows:

The intricate philosophy of different schools is said to clarify matters and reveal the truth. In fact they create confusions where no confusions need exist. To understand anything there must be the self. The self is obvious. Why not remain as the self? What is the need to explain the non-self . . . Why should confusion be created and then explain away? Ah! Fortunate is the man who does not involve himself in this maze!³

This distaste for theory and discussion is found expressed through out his writing. His intention is to provide a straight path to the seekers of truth which will take them directly to their goal without any detours avoiding much waste of time and energy. Yet it has a profound metaphysical basis. The philosophy of non-dual self from the foundation

of his teaching. The theoretical elaboration of the truth is given to assist the quest for truth because without the theoretical grasp of the truth spiritual striving or effort is ineffective.

3.2. The Maharshi and the Upanisads

At the outset of the study of the concept of self in the philosophy of Ramana we can find its striking similarity with the upanisadic concept of self in its exposition as well as in the illustrations. The upanisads teach the reality of the non-dual self and also the identity of the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness. Taittiriya upanisad for instance states "He who is here in the person and he who is yonder in the sun-he is one."⁴ Ramana is not familiar with the concepts like Brahman and Atman and their identity. His emphasis is rather on the real nature of the 'I'. According to Him man's real nature is the self, the reality which is one without a second. Reality is the self and it is non-dual in its nature. (He calls reality by various names such as 'I am' (Existence consciousness) 'I-I' [denotes its continuous nature] Sat—cit—ananda (Being consciousness and bliss) the Heart(the spiritual centre), Turiyatita (transcending the fourth), sahaja (natural state) swarupa (real form) and so on. The name he frequently used is the self. The non-duality of the self

is stated in several upanisadic passages. "For where there is duality as it were, there one sees the other, one smells the other, one tastes the other, one speaks to the other, one hears the other...."⁵ Absence of twoness means absence of difference. It admits of any difference from objects of similar and dissimilar nature. The self is simple, indivisible, partless and eternal. Since it is partless it does not admit of any difference arising from itself. Katha upanisad states "there is no diversity here what so ever."⁶ The Maharshi confirms the non-duality of the self in the following verse " You are the one with out a second, the sole, real being, O Arunachala."⁷

3.3. Knowledge of the Self

The two factors involved in the process of knowing are comprehension and discrimination. Comprehension is knowing an object through a mental mode. No knowledge is possible if there is no modification of the mind corresponding to the object. In other words knowledge is the result of the manifestation of consciousness through appropriate mental mode. In this sense the self is in comprehensible because the self is the source of knowledge. It transcends the mind and intellect.

Discrimination involves negation of the non-eternal or transient things. Through the faculty of discrimination the not-self is eliminated and the negation of the not-self leads to the affirmation of reality. The self is that which remains after the negation of the not-self. Sri Ramana says discrimination enable us to “discard the seeing (abhasa) as transitory and to hold fast to the eternal truth.”⁸

3.3.1. The self is incomprehensible

There are many ways of understanding a thing. One way is to define a thing and bring out its characteristics. Logically a definition involves predication of certain characteristics which distinguishes one species from another species that come under the same genus. The self is incomprehensible due to following reasons.

- (1) It is indefinable: A definition states the genus and differentia of the thing defined. The self is indefinable since it can not be brought under any genus and no qualities can be predicted to it. The self is without any characteristics. It is free from all qualities. To define a thing is to limit it and separate it from everything else. The self includes all and transcends all.

- (2) The self is beyond space and time: Objects that are in space and time have names and forms and they can be understood by referring to space and time. The self is nameless and formless and hence it is not limited by space and bound by time.
- (3) The self can not be brought under any of the categories like substance, attribute, cause, effect, number, etc. It is not a substance having certain attributes.
- (4) The self transcends causality: The self is neither the cause nor the effect of any thing. It is beyond the causal relation.
- (5) The self is beyond the mind and intellect: All concepts belong to the realm of mind and intellect. Our thoughts and words are incompetent to explain the nature of the mind.

The incomprehensible nature of the self is made explicit in several upanisadic passages. Taittiriya for instance, states "the self is that from which words return without attaining it."⁹

The self is beyond the comprehension of the intellect. Upanisad describe its incomprehensible nature through the negation of all attributes and characteristics. It is described as "neither gross nor fine

neither short nor long, neither glowing red (like fire) nor adhesive (water). It is neither shadow nor darkness; neither space or time, unattached, without taste without smell, without eyes, without ears, without voice, without mind, without radiance, without breath, without measure having neither within nor with out."¹⁰

The Upanisads are replete with such negative descriptions. Even the description, Sat-cit-ananda which expresses the essential nature of self is inadequate to express its nature fully. Sri Ramana points out that "Even though we usually describe the reality as sat, cit, ananda, even that is not a correct description. It can not really be described. By this description all that we endeavour to make it plain is that it is not asat, that it is not jada, and that it is free from all pain."¹¹ The Tejobindu Upanisad goes even to the extent of saying that the supreme can not be even called by the name atman. "The supreme eternal atman is devoid of the name atman and its meaning and also its nature as existence-consciousness-bliss."¹²

This does not mean that the supreme is a void or non-entity. Sri Ramana says "the self is supreme knowledge and not empty nothingness."¹³ When every thing is negated what remains is not void.

The one who negates all can not negate himself. The self is beyond all negation. In 'The Garland of Guru's Sayings' Muruganar reports the statement of Maharshi thus:

Brahman, the one without a second
 Has for his being primordial bliss,
 No blank, though seeming void
 The plenitude of Being awareness
 This is the sole reality.¹⁴

The negation enjoined does not negate the self, but the not-self.

3.3.2. Elimination of Not-Self

Knowledge involves discrimination also. Through discrimination one eliminates false knowledge and it leads to true knowledge. The seeker should learn to discriminate between the eternal and the non-eternal nature of things. That which exists for the three periods of time - past, present and future, alone is true. Continuity of existence is the nature of the real. Things which are subject to change and modification are not real. They come into existence and pass out of existence. Self alone is true, for self alone exists continuously. Mandukya Upanisad says "All that is past present and future is verily Om:"¹⁵ The knowledge of the

eternal and ephemeral nature of things, enable one to discriminate the self from the adjuncts like body, mind, senses, etc. which are the not-self. The following sruti text shows the necessity of discrimination. "One should increasingly separate Him from one's body like stalk from the Munja grass.¹⁶ The non-discrimination of self from the body or the not-self is the cause of false identification of the self with the body and consequent miseries. Discrimination is possible by looking into the essential nature of the self. The essential nature of the self is given as existence - consciousness and bliss. The not-self has no being in the absolute sense, it is inert and is the cause of misery. The self is simple and indivisible, pure, without qualities and exists in the three periods of time. The not-self is gross, made up of parts, composed of gunas, subjected to changes and modifications. It is impure, it is the seen, the object. The not-self is always dependent. That which is bound as cause and effect, beginning from gross universe to primary avidya belong to the realm of the not-self. Sankara states "know that all these, maya and its effects, from the mahat up to the body are asat and of the nature of the anatman like a mirage."¹⁷

The three bodies namely gross, subtle and causal should be discriminated and negated as not-self. Sri Ramana points out that self is not the three bodies.

Gross body

The self is not the gross body which is made up of many parts. The gross body is "that which is composed of the five Mahabhutas (elements) after they have undergone the process of Panchikarana; born as a result of good actions of the past, the tenement to earn the experiences of sukha, dukha and the like and subject to the six modifications namely "is born, grows, changes, decays and dies."¹⁸ Sri Ramana points out that this body is only a possession, it is meant for the owner. As a house is built for a person to live in it, the gross body is intended for the atman. The Chandogya upanisad refers to this body as the city of Brahman. "Now here in this city of Brahman, is an abode."¹⁹ It is the medium through which one experiences the pleasures and pains during the waking state. The body is not the self because in deep sleep one exists with out the body. If the individual is one with the body he cannot exist with out it. But in deep sleep (Susupti) he exists with out identifying himself with the body. One can separate himself from what is external to him.

The subtle body

The subtle body is not the self. The subtle body consists of five organs of knowledge, five organs of action, five pranas, five subtle elements, manas and buddhi. The subtle body is the experiencer of fruits of actions. Subtle body is active during sleep. It is material in its nature. The subtle body is not the self because it is made up of many parts and it is insentient.

The causal body

The self is consciousness itself. It is not the causal body which is characterized by beginningless ignorance. "That which is inexplicable, beginningless and is in the form of avidya (ignorance of reality) the cause of the other two bodies (subtle and gross), ignorant of one's one real nature (self) free from duality or division—is the karana sarira or casual body"²⁰ The casual body manifests itself in deep sleep (susupti). In susupti all the activities of the mind and body are dissolved. Absence of all kinds of knowledge is a characteristic of this state. It is testified by the statement of all those who have awoken from the deep sleep in the form 'I did not know anything'. Subtle body is the cause of the other two bodies. During deep sleep man identifies himself with the causal body.

The causal body is the adjunct (upadhi) of the self till it realises its true nature.

The Maharshi negates the three bodies as 'I' in his statement that: "The gross body which is composed of the seven humours (dhatus), I am not; the five cognitive sense organs, viz. the senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell, which apprehend their respective objects, i.e., sound, touch, colour, taste and odour, I am not; the five conative sense-organs, viz. the organs of speech, locomotion, grasping, excretion, and procreation, which have their respective functions speaking, moving, grasping, excreting, and enjoying, I am not; the five vital airs, prana, etc, which perform respectively the five functions of in breathing, etc. I am not; even the mind which thinks, I am not; the nescience too, which is endowed only with the residual impressions of objects, and in which there are no objects and no functioning, I am not."²¹

The sage categorically asserts that we are not the bodies. If we are body we are affected by time and space. One is the eternal consciousness which is not bound by space and time. "We are the same now, then and for ever."²² The 'I' is the 'sat' that exists, without any break in past, present and future. The Maharshi says "the body, sense, mind, life

(prana) and ignorance (avidya or susupti) are all insentient and not the real. I am the Real (Sat)."²³

Empirical statements like "I went", "I came" etc. are due to the wrong identification of self with the body. Body is taken to be the 'I' and actions, such as coming and going which belong to the body, are attributed to the self. He says that the body is not the 'I' for the following reasons: Firstly, the body is the source of all misery. The self is the source of supreme happiness. Secondly, the self exists in three periods of time – past, present and future. The body has no existence before its birth and ceases to exist after its death. That which did not exist in the past and which ceases to exist in future has no existence in the present also. Thirdly, the self is pure consciousness, the body is inert. It has to be revealed by the consciousness. Hence Ramana asks us to give up the false motion that the self is the body.

Give up the thought that this frail body
Is the self. Pursue the self which is eternal bliss.....²⁴

3.4. Nature of the Self

After the preliminary discussion of what the self is not to remove the primary nescience or the notion. 'I am the body' he dwells, at length

on the nature of the self by giving its essential nature as Being-consciousness-bliss (sat-cit-ananda). The Garland of Guru's sayings gives the essential nature of self as:

Awareness – bliss non dual bright
Beyond all difference is true Being.²⁵

The terms Being, Consciousness and Bliss do not indicate the qualities of the Self. The self is free from all qualities. No qualities can be predicted to it including qualitylessness. The terms sat-cit-ananda implies that the self is not non existent, not unconscious and not unhappy. To quote “Sat denotes being beyond sat and asat, cit beyond cit and acit, ananda beyond bliss and non-bliss”²⁶ Further the three terms do not indicate the three separate entities but would refer to the one non-dual self. In fact being is not different from consciousness and consciousness from being. For, there can not be consciousness without being and being without consciousness. Being with out consciousness is not being, and awareness, without being is not awareness. And Being-awareness implies bliss also.

The upanisads defines the self by stating its essential characteristics as Being-consciousness and bliss (Sat-cit and ananda). This is called the essential definition. Another way of describing the self is also found in

the upanisads. It is by stating the temporal or accidental qualities. 'That from which all things are born, that by which, when born they live, that into which, when departing, they enter. That seek to know. That is Brahman"²⁷ This definition states the relation of the self to the world. The essential definition transcends the accidental definition.

3.4.1. The Self is Sat

Reality, according to Ramana, is that which is. He used the Tamil word 'Ulladu' to Characterise Reality. Its Sanskrit equivalent is 'Sat'. The term 'sat' means existence. Reality is existence and it is the self. For him the self alone exists. It remains ever 'as it is'. The self alone is real. This gives rise to the problem of the distinction between the real and the unreal. The sage's decision on the issue is "That alone is real which exists by itself, which reveals itself by itself and which is eternal and unchanging."²⁸ The criterion of the real is -

- a. It must have an independent existence. It should be self existent and self supporting.
- b. It should be self revelatory. It must be capable of revealing both itself and others.

c. It should be eternal and unchanging.

Continuity of existence, existence without break, is the essential feature of the real. It should not be subjected to change and modifications. Gita expresses the truth in the following statement "Of the unreal there is no being, the real has no non-existence."²⁹

The unreal is that which exhibits opposite features of the real. That is, it comes into existence and passes out of existence; hence it is transitory. It is subjected to the six fold modifications namely, Existence (Astitva) birth (janma), growth (vardhana), maturity (viparimana), decay (apakshaya) and death (vinasa). It is inert or unconscious. On the basis of above distinction it is easy to conclude that the self alone is real, since the self alone is selfsubsistent, eternal, permanent and unchanging.

Sri Sankara gives the characteristics of the real (vastu) and distinguishes it from the unreal (avastu). For him "the supreme Brahman is characterised by truth knowledge and bliss; and this is the only Reality."³⁰ Unreal is the ignorance which is the cause of the universe; that which shows the opposite characteristics of the real and which is sublated in due course.

What is proved to be unreal like the silver in a mother of pearl is called the unreal (avastu). What remains without any change in the three periods of time like the mother of pearl itself is called the real (vastu). Sri Ramana calls the self, the reality, the real (vastu) and for him the self is the only thing that is entirely real. He says even for the ordinary man self is the most real thing. It is so real "as the gooseberry in one's own hand"³¹

The Garland of Guru's sayings which forms the accurate record of Maharshi's teaching states:

The ever abiding self alone
Exists apart from that supreme
Being awareness, nothing exists"³²

Ramana says that "the reality was, is, and will be. It is changeless"³³ Sruti is emphatic in its declaration about the existence of the absolute. It states "in the beginning it was existence alone, one only, without a sound."³⁴ The sat alone exists before the creation of the world, at the time of its existence and after its dissolution. The self alone is and the world is not.

3.4.2. The Self is Cit

The Maharshi is categorical in his assertion that the self is pure awareness. The reality is not bare existence, it is consciousness also. Sruti refers to it as 'Prajnana'. "Prajnanam Brahman."³⁵ It is not consciousness of some thing, it is consciousness itself. Consciousness is not a quality of the self. The self is without any qualities. The self is not a substance having the quality of consciousness. It leads to the dualism of substance and attributes. Consciousness is not an action of the self as it would make the self the agent of an action. The self is not agent, and consciousness is not action. It is the very being of the self. Being is consciousness and consciousness is being. Being and consciousness are identical.

He says that "consciousness is always self consciousness. If one is conscious of anything he is conscious of himself. Unconscious existence is impossible. It is a contradiction. It is not existence."³⁶ Maharshi says that without reality existing there can not be awareness of Reality. Existence and awareness are not two things. Existence is awareness or that which exists is awareness alone. He clarifies it further in one of his conversations thus

Sat (Being) is cit (knowledge), also cit is sat, what is, is only one. Otherwise the knowledge of the world and of one's own being will be impossible. It denotes both being and knowledge. However, both of them are one and the same. On the other hand, be it sat only and not cit also, such sat will only be insentient (jada). In order to know it another cit will be needed; such cit being other than cit can not be. But it must be. Now taking cit to be sat, since sat is Jada, cit also becomes Jada which is absurd. Again to know it another cit is required, which is also absurd. Therefore sat and cit are only one and the same."³⁷

Sri Ramana says that existence and consciousness are not two different things. "As there is no other being to know that which is, that which is, is consciousness."³⁸

The sage points out that there exists no other consciousness than 'sat' to know it. Hence the sat is also cit and one is that consciousness. That which exists is the 'I' or the self. Since 'I' is the only reality there can be no consciousness other than 'I' to know it. Hence the 'I' is consciousness alone. In other words existence of 'I' and consciousness of it are not two different things. I am awareness alone.

All empirical knowledge involves a distinction between the knower and the known. The objects presented to the senses become an object in relation to a subject. The objects are regarded as the seen in relation to the sense of sight which is the seer. The sense of sight becomes the seen in relation to the mind which is the subject. The mind becomes the seen and the consciousness becomes the seer. Maharshi points out that the self can never become an object of knowledge. To view it as an object is to make it an insentient object which needs another subject to reveal it. The self is the seer, the real subject and He calls it "as the eye behind the eye of mind."³⁹ The Maharshi states that self cannot be regarded as the seen since the difference between the seer and the seen is only relative. All dualism of subject and object, seer and the seen, knower and the known are to be transcended. This is made clear by the following statement. "Although we are said to be the 'knower' because we know all and not the known because we are not known by anything else, we are said to be the knower only in relation to the 'known' objects. In truth what is called the known is not apart from us. So we are the reality that transcends these two" (the knower and the known).⁴⁰ The self is beyond the triads of seer, seen and seeing, knower, knowing and knowledge. The

self is neither knowledge nor ignorance. It is beyond knowledge and ignorance.

The Maharshi states that the self is the source of knowledge. It is the basis of ignorance also. Maharshi makes it clear that knowledge and ignorance are co-relative. One can not exist apart from the other. Ramana says: "There is no knowledge apart from ignorance and there is no ignorance apart from knowledge."⁴¹ True knowledge is knowledge of the self. Relative knowledge or empirical knowledge is rooted in Avidya. The Mundaka upanisad speaks about two kinds of knowledge, lower knowledge (apara vidya) and higher knowledge (paravidya). All empirical knowledge is classed among lower knowledge. The knowledge of the self is the higher knowledge. As lower knowledge is impossible without nescience it is stated that knowledge can not exist apart from ignorance. In the same manner without awareness no knowledge of ignorance is possible. The self which is pure awareness is the basis of both knowledge and ignorance and it transcends both.

There is nothing worth the name knowledge other than self-knowledge. Ramana reminds us of the supremacy of self knowledge in Atma Vidya thus:

O what avail knowing things
 Other than self? And if the self is being known
 What other things there to know.⁴²

Thus the sage warns modern man of the futility of all empirical pursuits at the cost of saving knowledge, the knowledge of the self. Sruti states "It is through by which the unheard of becomes heard, the unthought becomes thought, the unknown becomes known."⁴³

Analysis of Experience

Like all other Vedantins Ramana recommends an analysis of the different states of experience to find out the real nature^{of} 'I.' An analysis of the three states of experience, namely, waking, dream and deep sleep, reveals that the real nature of the self is 'cit' or consciousness. The self, the pure awareness is the substratum which underlies these three states. In Mandukya Upanisad we find an analysis of these different states of experience.

Waking State

In the waking state the self identifies itself with the gross body and the cognition is affected through the senses. In this state the mind and sense organs function. The self in this state experiences objects of sense

which are external and is involved in them through the body and the senses and its enjoyments are gross. The self in the waking state is called 'viswa'. Consciousness exists though directed towards objects.

Dream state

In the dream state the subtle body is active and the mind conjures up things from within. Here the objects of experience may vary from that of the waking state but consciousness persists. The self in this state is called 'taijasa'.

Deep Sleep

In the state of deep sleep neither the internal nor the external images exist. Consciousness or awareness alone persists. When the person wakes up from his sleep he recalls that he had a sound sleep and that he was conscious of nothing. This is the recollection of what he had actually experienced in deep sleep and it serves as a testimony to the consciousness of his existence during sleep. Sri Ramana says: "Daily in deep sleep when ego is merged one never ceases to exist. This happens in every body's case due to the knowledge that one exists even during sleep.⁴⁴ Self in deep sleep is called 'prajna'.

The analysis shows that while these states and their content change, the self alone remains as an unchanging witness of these states. In the waking state the sense organs function but in dream they do not. Yet the self is. In deep sleep the mind does not function but the self stands as a witness. The self should not be confused with these states. These states are the states of the ego. The self underlies these states but also transcends them. The self is not in the three states but the three states are in the self. Panchadasi compares the witness consciousness to a lamp placed in dancing hall of a theatre. The light reveals all, the patron, the dancer and also the audience. The light continues to shine even when they are all absent and will reveal their absence also. In the same manner the self remains as an unchanging witness of the three states of the ego. Consciousness or awareness is the only truth and these states are phenomenal appearances superimposed on the self. Sri Ramana says "The 'I' or existence that alone persists in all the three states is real."⁴⁵

A person may pass from one state to another. Yet he has the intuition of his identity. He knows that he is the same person who had slept, dreamt and now recollects his experience when he is awake. Though the adjuncts with which the self is associated in the three states vary, the self which is consciousness is uniformly present in all the three

states. The Brahadaranyaka explains the nature of this witness self through the simile of a fish which swims alternately to both the banks of a river without touching them and without being affected by the current. In the same way the self remains unchanged without being affected by the states of waking, dream and deep sleep.

The fourth-Turiya - The real state is referred to as turiya. The Mandukya Upanisad gives a description of the fourth state thus: "They consider the fourth to be that state which is not conscious of the internal world, nor conscious of the external world, nor conscious of both the worlds, nor a mass of consciousness, nor conscious, nor unconscious, which is unseen, beyond empirical dealings, beyond the grasp (of the organs of action) uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, whose valid proof consists in the single belief in the self, in which all phenomenon cease and which is unchanging, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the self, and that is to be known."⁴⁶

The Maharshi accepts the traditional analysis of the different states of consciousness. He explains it further in his own way by calling the fourth as the state of waking sleep. It is called waking sleep (Jagrat susupti) because the characteristics of both the states are present in this

state. In this state the mind does not function and at the same time one is conscious of his experiences. "It is neither sleep nor waking but intermediate between the two. There is awareness of the waking and the stillness of sleep. It is called jagrat-susupti. Call it wakefull sleep or sleeping wakefulness, or sleepless waking or wakeless sleep. It is not the same as sleep or waking separately. It is atijagrat (beyond wakefulness) or atisusupti (beyond sleep). It is the state of perfect awareness and of perfect stillness continued."⁴⁷

He asks us to bring about sleep even while one is awake. That is one should be indifferent to the working of the mind and body. This state transcends the states of waking, dream and deep sleep. It is the source of all thoughts. It is not dullness but it is bliss. It is not transient but eternal. Maharshi states: "For one who seeks waking, dreaming or sleep there is a state beyond these three, a wakeful sleep, a fourth state called turiya. But because this turiya state alone is real and the three apparent states are illusory, the 'fourth' state is indeed the transcendental state."⁴⁸

Maharshi says that the turiya is the natural state of the self. In relation to the three states it is the fourth, but in reality it is the only state.

Hence it is turiyatita or the transcendental state. In one of his conversation he says: "...because we call these three as avasthas, we call the fourth state also turiya avastha. But it is not an avastha, but the real and natural state of the self. When this is realised, we know that it is not a turiya or fourth state is only relative, but turiyatita or transcendental state called the fourth state."⁴⁹

Consciousness or awareness is the only real state because it is the only state that exists for all times. Waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states are transient so they are not real. Consciousness alone is real. It is the screen on which all these states appear and disappear. The state of pure awareness or turiya state is the real state. Waking state is similar to the dream state but the only difference is that it lasts longer than dream. A person who abides in the self has transcended the three states. For him the three states are not real. The twentieth verse of Upadesa saram states that which exists in all the three states is 'I-I'. This is the real import of I. The 'I-I' is the state of unbroken awareness. The awareness alone exists.

3.4.3. The self is bliss or ananda

The true nature of self is bliss. It is the seat of supreme happiness. Ramana says "Happiness is the very nature of self"⁵⁰ One's true being is

bliss. Bliss is eternal and imperishable. The Garland of Guru's sayings of Muruganar states:

Bliss is the very nature of the self

Self is the infinitude of Bliss

All Being is but Bliss.⁵¹

Sri Ramana points out that all men without exception seek happiness. This search for happiness is a proof of the bliss inherent in man. "One's search for happiness is an unconsciousness search for his true self"⁵² Happiness is eternal and ever present. It is natural to man. If it were not natural the desire for it does not arise. If headache is one's natural state of health nobody will try to get rid of head ache. Similarly if misery is natural to man no attempts are made to get out of it. To quote Ramana: "If head ache was natural to human beings no one would try to get rid of it. But every one who has head ache tries to get rid of it, because he had known a time when he had no head ache. He desires only that which is natural to him. So too he desires happiness because happiness is natural to him. Being, natural it is not acquired."⁵³ Sri Sankara explicitly states that bliss is the 'Svalaksana' of the self. It is not only natural to atman, it is its distinctive feature.

The Maharshi points out that the self is the source of happiness. Happiness lies within and not without. Hence it does not reside in sense objects. Due to ignorance man thinks that he derives happiness from outside. His search for happiness is similar to the search of a musk deer for musk. Thinking that the musk is outside it goes on searching for it. But it is really inside it. To quote Muruganar:

Those who can not see that Bliss is
Their own self-nature roam bewildered
Like the musk-deer in the forest.⁵⁴

Happiness does not depend on external conditions like wealth or fame. Sri Ramana says that if one's wealth or other possessions determines his happiness then it is reasonable to say that increase or decrease in happiness may be directly proportional to the increase or increase in his possessions. If his possessions increase his happiness also increases and if it decreases happiness also decreases. If he is devoid of any possessions his happiness also becomes nil. But this is not true to fact. For in deep sleep man is divested of all possessions including his body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Moreover every one loves sleep and makes good preparation to get a sound sleep. In sleep every body enjoys undiluted happiness. Deep sleep is said to be the Bliss of

Brahman. This shows that happiness is inherent in man and it is not caused by any external factors.

The satisfaction of a desire brings happiness. The happiness is really derived from within. Sri Ramana says that when desired objects are obtained the mind returns to the self and it derives satisfactions from within. "It is the happiness inherent in the self. That happiness is not alien and afar. You are diving into the pure self on occasions which you consider pleasurable. That diving reveals the self existent bliss."⁵⁵

Happiness derived from sense objects is relative happiness. It is called pleasure or joy. Sri Ramana says: "When there is contact of a desirable sort or memory thereof, and when there is freedom from undesirable contacts or memory thereof, we say there is happiness. Such happiness is relative and is better called pleasure."⁵⁶ This joy or pleasure is only a reflection of the infinite bliss of the self. It forms only a fraction of the absolute bliss of the self. The Upanisad says "This is his greatest bliss. On a particle of this very bliss other creatures live"⁵⁷ The bliss of the self when compared with material happiness is unsurpassable. Taittiriya Upanisad gives a calculus of bliss. The Upanisad makes one human bliss, that is the bliss enjoyed by a man who is in his prime youth

and enjoying all riches, the unit of measurement of happiness. It is stated that the one bliss of human fairies is hundred times greater than the one human bliss. The one bliss of divine fairies is hundred fold greater than that of human fairies. In the same manner it increases by hundred times as we pass from lower to higher forms such as Pitrs, Ajnana Devas, Karma Devas, Devas, Indra, Brahaspathi, Prajapathi and Brahma. Thus the joy of Brahma is one human joy multiplied by ten hundreds. The joy of Brahma comes only a small fraction of the Bliss of Brahman.

Sri Ramana points out that there are no different types of happiness. The bliss of the self alone exists, the bliss enjoyed by all beings from lowest to the highest is the bliss of the self. There are no grades in happiness. The difference is only in the degree of manifestations of the supreme bliss. There is no distinction of lower and higher, in the supreme bliss.

The self is the seat of love. Love is bliss. Every thing is dear only because of the self. Things like money, wife, children, profession, etc. have no intrinsic value. Man loves his wife and children, money, etc. not for their sake but for the sake of the self. They are dear because of the self. The self is dearer than all objects in the world. This is revealed in the

instruction of Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi. 'Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear but a husband is dear for the sake of the self. Verily, not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but a wife is dear for the sake of the self. Verily, not for the sake of the sons are the sons dear but sons are dear for the sake of the self verily, not for the sake of all is all dear but all is dear for the sake of the self.⁵⁸ All human love is for the sake of the self. Sruti declares that self alone is dear and nothing else. The self is the most lovable. Sankara says "supreme bliss is inherent in atman, for it is said to be the dearest of all."⁵⁹

Sri Ramana says that bliss is not something to be attained. We are always bliss. There is nothing to be achieved. What is needed is the removal of ignorance which makes one think that he is other than bliss. There are several passages in the Upanisads which describe the blissful nature of the self. Taittiriya states "...for truly, beings here are born from bliss, when born, they live by bliss and into bliss, when departing, they enter."⁶⁰

3.4.4. The Self is Self-effulgent

The self is self-luminous. It is self revealing. It is proved by the absence of any doubt or contrary knowledge about one's own existence.

For every body says "I am" and nobody says "I am not". This assertion is not possible if the self is not-self-revealing. Sri Ramana says that the self shines like the sun illumining everything not being illumined by anything.

The self luminous nature of the self is expressed in the following verse of The Garland of Guru's sayings:

Bright and clear, self-luminous
 Like the sun, the heart-Heaven shines
 This is the self eternal.⁶¹

Consciousness is self revealing by its very nature. Ramana says that a lighted lamp is necessary to see things which are placed in a dark room. But to see a man who is in the same room no lamp is needed. His existence is self revelatory in the sense that if any one calls out his name his response would be immediate and one can infer his presence from his response. Sri Sankara says: "As a lighted lamp does not need another lamp to manifest its light, so atman, being consciousness itself, does not need another instrument of consciousness to illumine itself."⁶²

Consciousness is not only self-revelatory, it illumines all other things. It is the supreme effulgence, it permeates the entire universe and

animates it. Sri Ramana compares the self to the sun. Like the sun it illumines every thing without being illumined by anything. "O self supreme, O' Mount of light whose spreading light engulf all things shines as the sun "63 Due to this power of illumination Upanisads calls it as light of lights. . . "It is pure, and is the light of lights."64 Consciousness illumines everything including the sun. "Realise that to be Brahman by the light of which luminous orbs like the sun and moon are illumined; but which can not be illumined by their lights and by which everything is illumined."65

The light of consciousness shines eternally. The physical lights like sun and moon etc. may rise and set while the self shines eternally. Sri Ramana says "the self shines without rising and setting."66 There are several upanisadic texts which extol this power of illumination. "The sun shines not there, nor the moon and the stars, there lightning shines not, where then could this fire be? Everything shines only after that shining light. His shining, illumines all this world."67

Brahadaranyaka gives a lucid exposition of this truth in the form of dialogue between Yajnavalkya and king Janaka. The king asks the sage what serves as the light for a person? The sage answers that it is the sun

that serves as the light for a person. In the absence of sun, the moon serves as the light. Fire becomes the light in the absence of moonlight and in the absence of fire the speech becomes the source of light. When the speech itself has stopped the sage says it is the self that serves as the light. "The self, indeed, is his light said he, for with the self, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns"⁶⁸

The light of consciousness illumines both light and darkness, both knowledge and ignorance. The knowledge of the forms , 'I know something' and 'I do not know anything', are both revealed by consciousness. Consciousness shines in every one as 'I'. "The light of the self shines as 'I-I'. In each living being"⁶⁹

Sri Sankara expresses the same truth in a single verse which is in the form of question and answers. "What is your light in day time, it is the sun and at night it is the lamp. All right now tell me what is the light to see the sun and the lamp.' It is the eye. When the eye is closed what is the light." It is the intellect. What light illumines the intellect? The I am in you who is the supreme lord, is the light, the light of all lights"⁷⁰

3.4.5. The Self is Ajatha

The self is eternal. It has no origination. As it has no origination it has no extinction. For whatever has come into being must pass out of being. Birth, growth, change, death, decay, etc. are the attributes of the body. It is natural to body because body is composed of parts. What is composed of parts will be subjected to decomposition. The self being partless and indivisible it is not subjected to any change and modification. Death, birth, etc are phenomenon appear on the self.

Sri Sankara says: "Birth, death, growth, old age, etc., are the attributes of the body and speaking moving about etc., are its functions.⁷¹ These attributes are superimposed on the self. In truth the self has neither beginning nor end, neither death nor birth. Sri Ramana's is of the view that;

There is no creation, no destruction.
None bound, none seeking, striving
Gaining freedom. Know that this
Is the Truth Supreme.⁷²

Thus Ramana establishes beyond doubt that the self is Ajatha. This is the supreme truth. Muruganar says that Ajatha is the truth taught by Sri

Ramana because it is based on his intuitive experience of the ultimate truth. He states:

To meet the needs of various seekers
 Master Ramana did expound
 various doctrines. But we have
 heard him say that his true teachings
 Firmly based on his own experience.
 Is Ajatha.⁷³

All texts of Vedanta ascertain the nature of self as Ajatha. Vivekachudamani for instance states "It (the atman) is not born; it does not die, it does not grow or decline; it does not change. It is eternal. Even if the body is destroyed, it does not become extinct even as space does not become extinct on the destruction of the pot which enclosed it."⁷⁴

Sruti asserts "The intelligent self is neither born nor does it die. It does not originate from any thing, nor did anything originate from it. It is birthless, eternal, in decaying and ancient. It is not injured even when the body is killed."⁷⁵

The self is the most ancient one. It exists before the birth of the body and will never cease to exist after the death of the body. It is immortal.

3.4.6. The Self is Infinite and perfect

The self is the fullness of Being. It is perfection itself. All are contained in it. No thing can exist apart from it. The Upanisadic text says "That is full, this is full. From fullness fullness proceeds. If we take away the fullness of fullness even fullness remains."⁷⁶ Bhagvad Gita also refers to this fullness of being when it compares the self to the ocean.

The self is infinite. It is incapable being delimited by space and time. It transcends spatial and temporal limitations. There is nothing beyond or apart from it. Hence there exists no 'other' from which it can be distinguished. If there is an 'other' it would not be infinite. It includes all and transcends all. The Upanisads uses the term 'Bhuma' to characterise the self. It means the self is infinite. Sri Ramana reiterates the infinite nature of the self by calling it as Bhuma. He says "Bhuma is the supreme. It is indefinable and indescribable. It is as it is."⁷⁷ The self is infinite and eternal. Sruti says: "The infinite is that where one does not see anything else, does not hear anything else, and does not understand anything else. Hence, the finite is that where one sees something else, hears something else, and understands something else. That which indeed is the infinite, is immortal. On the other hand, that which is

finite, is mortal."⁷⁸ Bhuma is the source of all happiness. Bliss can be obtained only from the Bhuma and not from any finite objects. "That which indeed is the infinite, that is joy. There is no joy in the finite. The infinite alone is joy... ." ⁷⁹

3.4.7. The Self is the substratum

The self is the substratum of the phenomenal appearance. It is the source of everything. There exists nothing other than the self. The seer, seeing and the seen are nothing but the self. The world constituting, name and form is nothing but the self. Sri Ramana compares the self to a screen where the pictures of world show is projected. The screen alone is real, the pictures are not real.

As on a screen a wonderous picture
On you, fair Mount, is all this world
Formed and sustained and then withdrawn.⁸⁰

The Maharshi make use of the simile of gold and various ornaments made from gold to explain the relation between self and the world. The various ornaments have no reality of their own. They are mere names and forms. In truth they are gold alone. The names and forms are superimpositions. In the same manner the names and forms are

superimposed on the self. The self alone is the truth. The knowledge of diversity is ignorance. Yet ignorance is not apart from the self. "Are the ornaments different from the gold which is real."⁸¹ The ornaments can not exist apart from the gold. The self is the substratum of the entire phenomenal appearance. The Upanisads brings out, the relation of the world to the self through several similes like—thread and cloth, ocean and wave, gold and ornaments, rope and snake, silver and nacre etc. The cloth cannot exist apart from the thread, the wave has no existence apart from the ocean. In the same manner the world has no separate being apart from the self. The Chandogya explains it through the dialogue between Uddalaka and his son Svetaketu. "...As by knowing a lump of gold all things made of gold became known; all transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only, gold as such is the reality."⁸² It is ignorance to conceive of the one self, which is the sole reality as many and varied.

3.4.8. The Self is Pure

Ramana states that the self is pure. It is not tainted by the objects of the world. As rope is not affected by the superimposition of the false notion of snake on it, the self is not affected by the notions of agency,

enjoyment and suffering superimposed on it. Just as all the happenings of the world take place in the presence of the sun yet sun is unaffected by them, the self though all pervasive, is not affected by the sorrows and suffering of the world. Sruti says "just as sun, which is the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by the ocular and external defects, similarly, the self, that is but one in all beings, is not tainted by the sorrows of the world, it being transcendental"⁸³

The self is free from all sins and suffering. It is free from birth, old age and death. Eternity and purity are its essential nature. Sri Sankara states: "I am verily is that supreme Brahman which is eternal, stainless and free, which is one indivisible and non dual, and which is of the nature of bliss."⁸⁴

3.4.9. The Self is the Heart

Sri Ramana used the term Heart to refer to ultimate reality. The self is called Heart. It is the seat of consciousness. It is the consciousness itself. It is the core of one's being. Ramana points out that by heart he does not mean the physiological, blood pumping organ which is on the left side of the human body. This spiritual heart is considered to be on the right side of the chest. Truly speaking no location can be assigned to

it in the body because heart is not an organ. It is the self, pure consciousness which is eternal and all pervading. It is indivisible, without parts, form or shape. It has no inside and outside, right or left. Only the body admits of locations such as inside or outside. We cannot say that self is in the heart, but self is the heart. All are in the self only. But as long as man identifies himself with the body and the body is taken to be the 'I' a centre from where the 'I' arises must be admitted. The heart is regarded as the source of 'I thought'.

There are several upanisadic passages which refer to the self as heart. Chandogya Upanisad states "This self which is such surely exists in the heart. Of that this is verily the derivation: It is in the heart. Therefore that is called the heart."⁸⁵

With respect to the location of the spiritual heart, Maharshi says that it is confirmed by his own intuitive experience of it. He says 'the Heart of which I speak is on the right. It is my experience. No authority is required.'⁸⁶ Referring to this experience the sage once said that though all the functions of the body including the blood circulation had stopped he was fully aware of the working of the spiritual heart on the right. "All the time I was feeling that the Heart centre on the right was working as

well as ever. The state continued about fifteen or twenty minutes. Then suddenly something shot out from the right to the left resembling a rocket bursting in air. The blood circulation was resumed and normal condition restored Heart is thus the centre of the body."⁸⁷

Man's habit of pointing to the right side of his chest when he says 'I am' also support the view that the location of the spiritual heart is on the right. The Maharshi says "It is an unerring intuition that makes him refer to himself, to the Heart which is the self, in that way. His act is quite involuntary and universal; that is to say, it is the same in the case of every individual."⁸⁸

Ramana states that the Heart is the centre so long as one thinks that he is in the body. In fact body and the world are in the heart only. There is nothing separate from it. Heart is not an object of meditation. It is the seat of realisation, the self. The Sanskrit term for the Heart is hrdayam. The term is split into hrt + ayam which means this is the centre. Supplement to Forty Verses on Reality states:

In the interior of the heart-cavern the one
Brahman alone shines as 'I' 'I'.⁸⁹

Heart is the source of consciousness. The Ever bodiless, nameless, formless self shines in the heart. To quote:

Ever as 'I' in the Heart you dance
Hence are you called the Heart.⁹⁰

The same truth is expressed in the invocatory verse of Forty verses on Reality. He says reality is the heart and to know it one must abide in the Heart. Sruti proclaims that the heart is the seat of the self and the whole universe contained in it. "The self that is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great, is lodged in the heart of every creation."⁹¹

3.4.10. Self is awareness

The Maharshi's account of the Reality or the self would reveal that he places more emphasis on the conscious (cit) aspect of the self. Maharshi is categorical in his assertion that which exists is awareness alone⁹² and this is reiterated in all his writings and recorded conversations. In the invocatory, verse of the 'Forty verses on Reality' he expresses this truth "with out awareness of Reality, can reality exist."⁹³ What is implied here is that one's existence is discerned from the consciousness of his existence. It can be explained by the statement. 'I am'. When some are says 'I am'' it implies that he knows that he exists.

That is he is conscious of his existence. The truth of his existence is revealed by his consciousness. Further Ramana has made it clear that existence and consciousness are identical. He states "The pure Being is Reality. The pure Being can not be otherwise than consciousness. Other wise you cannot say that you exist. Therefore consciousness is the reality."⁹⁴

Further more, Ramana states that to know Reality is to abide in it. Here the term knowledge does not imply the knowledge of something, for the self is knowledge itself. Here knowing is Being. That is to know the self means to become aware of one's identity with it. To quote: "The very state of being the self was stated previously as knowing the self...know this to be the abidance as the self."⁹⁵ The state of self abidance is a state of absolute silence.

The self, the existence-consciousness-bliss alone exists and nothing is separate from this all comprehensive unity. Muruganar says:

Like the indispensable Sruti
Sustaining and pervading all
The seven notes, or like the moveless
Screen on which so many movies
Move, the self unflawed and moveless
Abides as that which is.⁹⁶

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THE INDIVIDUAL SELF WORLD AND GOD

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Chapter IV

THE INDIVIDUAL SELF WORLD AND GOD

4.1. The Self and the ideas of Reason

The foregoing discussions on the Maharshi's view on the self ascertains its essential nature to be non-dual. This denial of duality seems to be inconsistent with facts of experience. Dualities like death and birth, happiness and misery, success and failure prosperity and adversity are parts of one's daily life. Unity and diversity are opposed to be each other and they may not go hand in hand. It is an either or issue and not both. Ramana points out that the opposition between the two will continue until the unity is grasped. It is the mind or intellect that experiences the duality. The discursive mind fails to grasp the essential unity underlying the multiplicity. In its eagerness to comprehend and explain the multiplicity, the things of experiences are categorised into subject and object, the knower and the known. The all comprehensive unity is seemed to be split into subject and object, Jiva and the world. Jiva becomes the subject in relation to the world, which is the object of experience.

A third entity namely God came into being, as the cause of origination, sustenance and dissolution of the two. Guru Vacaka kovai expresses Ramana's view on this as follows:

Though Reality is one
 All schools concede at first three
 Entities, God, Jiva and World
 Because outward looking mind
 Discursive can not straight way face
 The unity of Being.¹

The unity of the self can be understood only when the intellect has given way to intuition. In his introductory note to Sureswara's commentary on Taittiriya Upanisad, R. Balasubramanian remarks: A person who is involved in duality is assuredly under the spell of ignorance; and such a person has no Brahman intuition. To one who has attained Brahmin intuition there is no duality.² The Maharshi clarifies this truth by means of a beautiful simile. A person looks at a granite dog sees either the stone or the dog which is carved in it. He can not perceive both. When he enjoys the figure engraved in it he is sure to miss the stone, the substratum and when he scrutinize the stone its hardness thickness etc he will overlook the image. In the same way the ignorant perceives the

variety and not the unity. A man of knowledge knows no duality but only unity.

The view of Sri Sankara on this issue is: . . . And before obtaining the instruction about the unity of the self as in "That thou art" it is nothing incongruous to talk from that point of view in terms of such differences as are implied by subjects and objects. But once the unity of the self is accepted, there will surely be an end to all empirical dealings. . . .³

Ramana says that God, world and soul are mere conceptions of the mind. They have no independent existence. If they are real they must exist in sleep also. He asks "Does the body say 'I am the body'? You say 'this is the world', 'this is the body'. So these are only your conceptions.⁴ God, world and soul are mere appearances like silver in a mother of pearl. They can remain separate as long as the ego functions and when the ego is merged in its source their appearance ceases and self alone remains.

The individual self

The self is pure awareness. Sruti declares that, "Brahman is truth, knowledge and infinite"⁵ (Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahman). The

supreme consciousness conditioned by Upadhi (adjunct) is Jiva or individual soul. Jiva is the self endowed with a psychophysical organism. This form the adjunct of Jiva. Thus Jiva is a complex of spirit and matter. The self due to delusion caused by ignorance forgets its true nature and identifies itself with a body. This false identification gives rise to the illusion 'I am the body' or Dehatma-buddhi. The self identified with the body is called the ego. Sri Ramana says "the 'I' consciousness which arises in respect to the body is referred to variously as self conceit, egoity, nescience, maya, impurity and the individual soul."⁶

Ignorance or avidya is the cause of false identification and consequent limitation of the self to the body. Avidya has two aspects - Avarana or concealment and projection or vikshepa. The real nature of the self is hidden and 'I am the body' and 'world is real' knowledge is projected. Sri Ramana says the pure sattva mind because of nescience forgets its true nature and gets transformed into the world under the influence of Tamoguna. And the influence of Rajoguna gives rise to the feeling 'I am the body' and 'the world is real'. Sri Ramana says, "Avarana does not hide the Jiva entirely; he knows that he is, only he does not know who he is."⁷

The Maharshi says that an 'I' or 'I am' is felt by every body. The body is insentient or unintelligent. Hence it can not say 'I'. The self is pure consciousness. It shines eternally with out beginning and end. The 'I' notion has no continuity. It rises and sets. I rises on waking and sets in sleep. It is neither the inert body or conscious self. Unlike the body it appears to be conscious yet it is not eternal and unchanging. The ego shares the characteristics of the body and self.

The ego is not a real entity and its existence is only imagined. Since it is a spurious entity Ramana compares it to a ghost. The ego functions as a link between inert matter and conscious self. Therefore it is called Chita Jada granti, knot of matter and spirit. In Forty Verses on Reality He states" The insentient body does not say 'I'. The ever-existent consciousness is not born (This can not say I) The 'I' of the size of the body springs up between the two; it is known as chit-Jada granthi (the knot which ties together the sentient and insentient) or bondage, individuality, ego, subtle body, samsara, mind, etc."⁸

Sri Ramana says that the subtle body or ego is posited to explain the connection between insentient body and the self luminous self. The subtle body is a composite of five subtle elements and the reflected light

of the self. The insentient ego appears to be conscious due to its association with the self. This can be illustrated by the example of a heated iron ball. The iron ball appears to be hot because of its association with fire. Heat, the property of fire is super imposed on the iron ball. In the same manner the unintelligent ego shines by the reflected light of the self. Sri Sankara explains this phenomenon by means of a beautiful simile. "As the rows of the cloud which arise from the sun's rays conceal the sun and appear themselves, so too ahamkara which arises from the atman (as its upadhi) hides the atman and shines itself."⁹

The ego has no form of its own. It identifies itself with a body and assumes the size and shape of the body. It can function only by clinging itself into a body. Forty verses express this aspect of Jiva thus: "Grasping a form (body) it rises; grasping a form it stands; grasping a form it eats and waxes; leaving a form it grasps another form"¹⁰

The ego assumes innumerable bodies in the course of its phenomenal existence. Maharshi says the ego is like a worm which leaves one hold only after it catches another.¹¹ The transmigratory nature of Jiva is taught by the following upanisadic passage:

"Just as a leech (or caterpillar) when it has come to the end of a blade of grass after having made another approach (to another blade) draws itself together towards, it so does this self, after having thrown away this body, and dispelled ignorance after having another approach (to another body) draw itself together (for making the transition to another body).¹²

4.2.1. The ego and the five sheaths

The ego since it is devoid of any form it assumes the form of the body. Sri Ramana states that "The body it assumes includes five sheaths."¹³ The five sheaths (kosas) are the food sheath (annamayakosa), the vital air sheath (pranamaya kosa), the mental sheath (manomayakosa), the intellectual sheath (vijnana mayakosa) and the bliss sheath (anandamaya kosa). Sheaths (Kosas) are so called because they act as coverings hiding the self. The ego is the vijnamaya kosa.

Annamaya kosa: Physical body is called Annamaya kosa. It is born of food and sustained by food. Its constituents are flesh, blood and excreta.

Pranamaya kosa: The body functions because of prana. The five pranas (prana, apana, vyana, udana and samana) and the five organs of action combine to form the pranamaya kosa or the sheath of the vital force.

Manomaya kosa: The sheath of the mind is called manomaya kosa. The mind and organs of perception together constitute the manomaya kosa. "That which give rise to the ideas of 'I' and 'mine' with regard to one's body, house and so forth is the mind sheath"¹⁴

Vijnanamaya kosa: Intellect is the faculty by which one becomes conscious of one's knowledge. Buddhi and the five organs of perception combine to make vijnanamaya kosa. The Jiva or the 'I thought' is the vijnanamaya kosa. The reflection of consciousness in buddhi is the cause of Jiva or individuality.

Anandamaya kosa: It is the sheaths of bliss. It is not the bliss of Brahman. It is avidya or nescience which is the root cause of transmigration.

The five sheaths can be re-arranged into three bodies namely Gross, subtle and causal. Annamaya kosa is the gross body. The pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya kosas combine to form the subtle body of Jiva. The subtle body accompanies Jiva into its next birth. The anandamaya is the causal body. The Gross, subtle and causal bodies are the apparatus through which the Jiva derives worldly experiences in its different states of consciousness. During the waking state the gross

body functions and it experiences the gross objects of the world. In dream the gross body does not function. It experiences subtle impressions and is associated with the subtle body. In deep sleep, Jiva enjoys peace and remains as a witness to the functioning of the mind and senses. Ramana states that the five sheaths are not the self. He states "these are sheaths and not the core, which is interior to all these. It lies beyond waking, dreams and deep sleep." That is the reality and consists of true bliss. (nijananda).¹⁵

4.2.2. The self and the individual self

The self is the source of the ego. From absolute consciousness arises the consciousness 'I' and 'I' consciousness give rise to body consciousness. The ego and I are one in essence. The ego is the one pure, eternal, indivisible consciousness. If it is conceived as something finite and limited it becomes the ego. Sri Ramana says: 'I-'I' is the self. 'I am this' or 'I am that' is the ego. Shining is always there. The ego is transitory. When the 'I' is kept up as 'I' alone it is the self."¹⁶ The self is the reality underlying the ego. It has no independent existence. It can not exist apart from the self. Sri Ramana says "as spark proceeds from fire, individuality emanates from the Absolute self. This spark is called

the ego."¹⁷ Similar idea is found expressed in the following sruti text: "As from fire fully ablaze, fly off sparks in their thousands that are akin to the fire, similarly "O! good looking one from the Imperishable originate different kinds of creatures and into It again they merge."¹⁸ Sri Ramana uses the simile of ocean and the bubbles formed on the surface of it to explain the relation between the self and ego. He says that the 'I'-'I', the unbroken awareness is like the vast ocean and the ego is just like a bubble on it. As the bubble has no separate existence ego can not exist separately. The bubble also is water and it mixes with water when it is broken. Even while it remains as a bubble it is water itself. In the same manner the ego is the self only and when its source is thought it merges in the self.

In the state of ignorance, the egos are taken to be many. Just as bubbles are many and ocean is one, the self is one and egos are numerous. Sruti text expresses this truth thus: "Just as fire, though one, having entered the world assumes separate forms in respect of different shapes, similarly, the self inside all beings, though one, assumes a form in respect of each shape; and (yet) it is outside."¹⁹

The self is permanent and the ego is transitory. The self is pure and unaffected by the happenings of the world. But the ego is afflicted by desire and worldly attachments. The upanisad throws light on this truth by the parable of the two birds" which runs as follows: "Two birds, companions (who are) always united, cling to the self same tree. Of these two, the one eats the sweet fruit and the other looks on with out eating."²⁰ The self remains as an unmoving witness while the ego is caught up in samsara and enjoys the pleasurable or miserable fruits of his past actions. The upanisad also says that when it sees the self, it realises that it is the self itself and is freed from all the self imposed miseries (because it loses its sense of separateness and individuality).

In truth the ego has no objective reality at all. It is an unreal appearance. If it were real it must appear in sleep also. The ego functions in the states of waking and dream and not in the deep sleep. The ego rises on waking and says 'I' and subsides in sleep. As it has no continuity, it is not real. If the ego is real we have to admit the existence of two selves. Ramana asserts that the self is one and non-dual. He calls the ego a phantom, having no existence of its own. Because of its elusive nature the sage compared it to ones own shadow. Any amount of effort to bury one's shadow is proved to be a failure. But at the moment the

attention is turned to the source of light the shadow disappears. Similarly if the reality of the ego is enquired into it will automatically be vanished. On the other hand if its reality is accepted it will give all sorts of unnecessary troubles. An intense enquiry into its source will give a death blow to the ego. " . . . when sought it takes its flight this shapeless and ghostly ego! Thus should you know."²¹

Maharshi brings home this elusive nature of the ego by means of a parable relating to a marriage function. A stranger, who was not invited by the bride's and bridegroom's people came to participate in the function. The bride's party, thinking that this person is a man of importance belonging to the groom's party treated him with special regard. The groom's party also thought that he would be a very respectable man belonging to the bride's party and treated him with due respect. After some time suspicion arose about his identity and enquiries are made about his whereabouts. He was quick to sense the trouble and he made his escape from the scene. The ego is like the imposter of this parable. If enquiry is not made into its true nature it will persist under the pretext of the real self. When enquiry is made asking 'who is this I', it will vanish leaving no trace behind.

The ego is the cause of the world of phenomenal existence. When the ego rises the whole world emerges and when the ego sets the whole world vanishes. Hence Ramana 'says that the ego is the cause of all. "If the ego is, all else is. If the ego is not, all else is not. The ego, verily is all.'²²

The whole world is the creation of the ego. It is the author of the entire empirical existence. Maharshi shows that all empirical pursuits are futile since it is based as an illusive foundation. As the foundation itself is imaginary the whole structure is bound to be illusory. "It is the ego that is the cause of all the world and of the countless sciences whose researches are so great as to baffle description, and if the ego is dissolved by enquiry all this immediately crumbles and the reality or self alone remains."²³

4.2.3. The Predicament of the individual

The ego is the source of all miseries. The limitation of the self to the body constitutes bondage. Having been deluded by the conceit 'I am the body' man considers himself to be the finite, limited individual subjected to death and birth. He regards himself to be limited by space and time and is governed by the law of causation. Due to delusion

caused by beginningless ignorance he becomes one with the bodies (Gross subtle and causal) and super imposes the qualities of the body on the self. The attributes of the body such as death, birth, growth etc. are super imposed on the self and consequently he is subjected to fear and grief. Empirical usages like 'I am a man', 'I am born', 'I will die', I grow old are the result of this superimposition. He imagines that the self is the doer and enjoyer of (fruits of) actions. Agency enjoyment etc. are the characteristics of the mind and they are superimposed on the self. He thinks himself to be a helpless, finite, limited, transmigrating individual person.

Sri Sankara compares this predicament of the individual to the pathetic condition of silkworm which is trapped in the web made out its own saliva. The web instead protecting the insect turned out to be the cause of its own destruction. In the same manner Jiva under the delusion caused by avidya is subjected to untold miseries.

Jiva is the self itself. It is infinite, eternal and perfect. All these limitations are self imposed. Jiva considers itself to be the body and magines that he is separate from the self. The whole misery is due to the sense of separation. If the original source is gained affliction ceases.

Ramana makes this clear by means of an example: "The waters of the ocean evaporate, form clouds, condense into water, fall as rain, and again through various streams and rivers reach the ocean. In the same manner one identifies himself with the body, he regards him as the separate self and when the source is sought the false identification ceases peace prevails."²⁴ The predicament of the individual caught up in the false notion 'I am the body' is beautifully pictured by katha upanisad by contrasting it with the unified vision of a man of wisdom. To quote: "As water rained on an inaccessible heights dispersed on (lower) hilly regions, similarly one who perceives the selves separately runs after them only . . . As pure water poured on pure water becomes verify the same, so also does become the self of man of knowledge who is given to deliberation."²⁵

4.2.4. Karma and Samsara of Jiva

Sri Ramana says that "the egoity is the root cause of the illusory tree of samsara."²⁶ The false identification with the body gives rise to attachment and from attachment springs desire. Prompted by desire individual performs various kinds of actions. Thus ignorance (avidya) desire (kama) and action (kama) form a chain to bind the Jiva to the

wheel of repeated birth and death. Every action produces certain consequences. Good leads to good and evil leads to evil. Brahadaranyaka declares: "The doer of good, becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action. . . a person consists of desires. As is his desire, so is his will, as is his will, so is his deed he does, whatever deed he does, that he attains.'²⁷

Sri Ramana points out that action and its fruit are "like cause and effect."²⁸ The interrelation between cause and its effect is made possible by God. He gives fruits of actions according to the nature of one's action. God selects the sequence of experiences that a person must undergo in his life time. Sri Ramana says : "Individual human being have to suffer their karma but Iswara manages to make the best of it for his purpose. God manipulates the fruit of karma. He does not add or take away from it. A human being subconscious state is a ware house of good and bad karma. Iswara chooses from this ware house what will best suit the person's spiritual evolution at the time whether pleasant or painful."²⁹

Karma is the law of action and reaction. Every action has a two fold effect. It produces either happiness or sorrow immediately. It is called the direct and immediate effect of action. Actions also produce

their impressions or vasanas which will prompt the individual to perform similar acts in future. Vasanas are impressions or predisposition left behind by an action. They will remain in buddhi and will fructify in due course. These vasanas are said to be the cause of future births. The Maharshi says that the impressions (Samskaras) are retained in the heart in their seed form at the time of death and due to this individual is born again and again. "Just as the big banyan tree sprouts from a tiny seed, so do the jivas and the whole universe with name and form sprout up from the subtle Samskaras."³⁰

The accumulated impressions of various actions are so vast that it is impossible for him to exhaust them in a single span of life. They will lie latent in him and accompany him to his next life. The remaining impressions wait for fructification in the next life or lives. Thus in order to exhaust the fruit of his karma the individual has to be born again and again. Thus law karma makes rebirth inevitable.

The subtle impressions of his action accumulated by a Jiva can be classified into three categories namely sanchita karma, prarabdha karma and agami karma.

The total amount of impressions accumulated by the individual is 'called Sanchita karma. It is the stored up latent impressions of karma. They will fructify in a future life or lives of the Jiva. "The result of actions performed in (all) previous births which are in seed form to give rise to endless crores of births (in future) is called sanchita (accumulated) karma."³¹

The portion of karma that has begun to bear fruit in the form of events in the present life is called prarabdha karma. Though the result of past karma are unlimited he can experience only a small portion of it in the present birth. That portion of the results of his action experienced in this birth is called prarabdha. "Having given birth to this body, the actions which give results in this very world in the form of happiness or misery and which can be destroyed only by enjoying or suffering them is called prarabdha karma."³² Prarabdha karma is of three categories namely personality desired (ichha) with out desires (anichha) and due to others (Parechha). Those who have realised the self will not accumulate any impressions of action done by them since they have no ichha prarabdha.

The impressions of karma that the jiva is now accumulating as a result of the actions of his present existence is known as agami karma. Jiva is the doer and enjoyer of actions. He has the freedom of will to perform action. He engages in innumerable actions till the body dies. The karmas he newly performed in this life are called agami karma.

Sri Ramana in his own characteristic style explains the three types of karma and shows their difference by means of a simile:

That which has already begins to bear fruit is classified as prarabdha karma (past action) that which is in store and will later bear fruit is classified as sanchita karma (accumulated action). This is multifarious like the grain obtained by villagers as barter for cress (greens). Such bartered grain consists of rice, ragi, barley etc some floating or, others sinking in water. Some of it may be good, bad or indifferent. When the most potent of the multifarious accumulated karma begins to bear fruit in the next birth it is called prarabdha of that birth.³³

The individual goes on performing and consequently he is accumulating the subtle impressions of his actions. These are factors which build his inner nature. They also possess a retributive force which

produce favourable or unfavourable situation. Karma can be either righteous or unrighteous. Hence the impressions of karma are of two types namely merit and demerit. They are capable of producing favourable or unfavourable experiences for the doer.

Man is accountable for his action since he has freedom to choose the course of his action. He is responsible for the enjoyment and suffering that attend to his life. They are the results of his own actions. He can not escape from the consequences of his actions. It is the inviolable moral law which says 'as you sow so you reap'. Righteousness is the cause of happiness and unrighteousness is the cause of misery. There is no unmerited loss or gain.

Individual or Jiva is the sum total of his own actions of past, present and future. He is the maker of his own destiny by his thought and actions. He alone is responsible for what he is now and is the builder of his future. Past continues in the present and the present conditions shape the future events. But Sri Ramana makes it clear that the law holds good as long as the conceit. 'I am the doer, I am the enjoyer persists. "So long as there is the doer he must reap the fruits of his action."³⁴ If there is no doer no one is bound by karma. When the sense of doership is renounced karma will fall off automatically.

4.2.5. Karma, destiny and free will

Every one wants to be free, free to do what one wants to do. No one likes to be fettered in any way. What does it mean when one says that he is free? It means that he has the power to do every thing as he wills. But the problem is that he is not absolutely free. His freedom is curtailed by several factors. The problem of destiny verses free will is a matter of much discussion among metaphysicians and religious thinkers. The central question is whether human beings are free in what they do. Or are they determined by external forces beyond their control. The problem can be settled if and only if the term 'fate' is properly understood. Sri Ramana maintains that destiny or fate refers to the result of one's own past action. As long as one identifies himself with the body he is bound by his activities. He has to go through a series of preordained experiences which are the consequences of his previous thoughts and actions. Muruganar says:

As long as one thinks that one is
 A separate being oneself
 One has perforce through such attachment
 To do deeds good or bad and earn
 And experience their results.³⁵

Ramana accepted the validity of the law of karma. But it has only a limited application. The law operates so long as the sense of separateness exists. When one realises his self the law becomes inoperative. He is of the view that "Every act and experience in a person's life is determined at birth and that the only freedom one has to realise that there is no one acting and no one experiencing. However, once one realises the self there is no one left to experience the consequences of actions and so the whole structure of karmic laws then became redundant."³⁶

Ramana is of the view that destiny pertains to the body alone. The experiences that it has to undergo are determined when it came to existence. But man is free not to identify himself with the activities of the body. He says "the body will go through the actions rendered inevitable by prarabdha and a man is free either to identify himself with the body and be attached to the fruits of its actions or to be detached from it and be a mere witness to its activities."³⁷

Thus Ramana points out that destiny and freedom are interlinked. Fate can not arise with out free will. Our actions shape our destiny. They are related as cause and effect. They are the corollary of individuality. If the sense individuality is lost either through enquiry or surrender both

destiny and freedom are transcended. He says that the purpose of discussing this question is to transcend them. He asks to find out to whom fate and free will matters. If one is able to find out the source of free will and fate, the problem of fate and free will disappears and peace prevails. Destiny or fate can be controlled by man's own efforts.

He says: "there are only two ways to conquer destiny or be independent of it. One is to enquire to whom is this destiny and discover that only the ego is bound by destiny and not the self and that the ego is non-existent. The other way is to kill the ego by completely surrendering to the lord, by realising one's helplessness and saying all the time 'Not I but thou oh lord!' and giving up all sense of I and mine and leaving it to the lord to do what he likes with you."³⁸

Ramana reminds us that the disputation regarding dominance of fate or free will pertains to those who consider themselves as the body. A jnani, the one who has realised his true being, never engages himself in such disputations. In the Forty verses on Reality Ramana maintains: "Disputation as to which prevails over the other fate or free will, are those who have no knowledge of the self, which is the ground of both fate and free will. Those who have realised this ground are free from

both. Will they be caught by them again."³⁹ A jnani is one who has established in the self. He has transcended the duality of fate and free will and ever abides in eternal peace. He is not bound by his action as he has abandoned the sense of doership. Whatever he does is for the sake of others. Gita states: The fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes."⁴⁰ As the realised person has ceased to identify himself with the body three types of karma - Prarabdha, Sanchita, agamī, ceases to be operative in his case. But it is said that a Jnani also has to experience the prarabdha. Ramana maintains that a self realised person is free from all bonds of karma though from the onlookers point of view he appears to experience prarabdha. The following statement of his clarifies this. He says "you are now under the impression that you are the body so you think that the jnani also has a body. Does the jnani say he has a body? He may look to you as having a body and doing things with the body, as others do. The burnt rope still looks like a rope, but it can not serve as a rope if you try to bind anything with it. So long as one identifies with the body, all this is difficult to understand. That is why it is sometimes said in reply to such questions, 'the body of the jnani will continue till the force of prarabdha works itself out, and after prarabdha is exhausted it will drop of."⁴¹ The supplement to Forty verses on Reality clarifies this fact

through a beautiful simile. He says "know that just as none of a man's wives can remain unwidowed on his death so when the doer is gone none of the three forms of karma can survive."⁴²

Sri Ramana says the self is eternally free, it is never bound. bondage is the outcome of the limitations of the self to a body. It is the ego that feels to be bound. As the ego is false, the sense of bondage is also false. But the feeling that one is bound is useful because it leads men to undertake the enquiry leading to the realisation of the non-existence of bondage. The ego itself is bondage and is afflicted by bondage.

4.3. The World

Sri Ramana discouraged all kinds of theoretical discussions about the nature of the world. He is of the view that all disputes about the reality or unreality of the world is futile. Such disputations will never end and it would delay the quest for truth which is the most urgent vocation of man. For Him the foremost duty of a man is to turn his attention inward and find out who he is. Instead of this, he says, people are anxious to know the reality of world, God etc. His discontent is found expressed in the following statement: "The world which you say real is mocking at you for seeking to prove its reality while of your own reality

you are ignorant."⁴³ His instruction is "Let the world bother about its reality or falsehood. Find out first about your own reality. Then all things will become clear"⁴⁴ Ramana's attitude to such theoretical speculations is clearly expressed in the following verse: "'The world is real'. 'It is an illusory appearance,' 'the world is intelligent', ' it is not', 'the world is happiness' 'it is not' Of what 'use is it to argue thus'? The state of egolessness is acceptable to all where, in leaving the world and understanding oneself, one is freed from the notions of unity and duality"⁴⁵ All disputations are based on the ego. The egoless state is his natural state, the state of bliss. The Maharshi urges men to put in all efforts to win the egoless state which is very dear to all.

Although the Maharshi is reluctant to entertain theoretical speculations about the nature of reality he sometimes does involve in such discussions. This is to convince the seekers of the reality of the self by exposing the unreality of the world of experience. He takes up the issue like the theory of creation, the appearance of the world, the similarity of the world of experience to dream experience etc. Finally he shows that the world is nothing but the self.

4.3.1. The theory of creation

According to Ramana the purport of the scriptures is to teach the nature non-dual self and show us that we are that. In order to guide all the grades of seekers of truth different theories are taught in them. According to him Ajatha is the highest truth. But all are not able to grasp this absolute truth. Some may ask "How can we ignore the solid world we see all around us."⁴⁶ To them the similarity between dream experience and waking experience is pointed out and they are told that the world is similar to a dream. They are taught the theory of simultaneous creation. That is, creation of the universe is simultaneous with our perception of it. There are still others who are not able to grasp even this truth. They are puzzled by these theories and explanations. They are the less qualified ones. They may ask "how can all geography, all maps, all sciences, stars, planets and the rules governing or relating to them and all knowledge be totally untrue."⁴⁷ They are given the theory of gradual creation. That is God has created this universe. Ramana says that "All these theories are only to suit the capacity of the learners."⁴⁸

The main purpose of scriptures, says Ramana, is to expose the illusoriness of the world as such and to reveal that the unique supreme

spirit is the only reality. They have built up the theory of creation with this sole end in view. Hence Ramana asks us to refrain from analysing the world and its principles (tattvas). Instead one should embark on an intensive enquiry into one's true nature.

Remana's view on the nature of the self is to be understood from two different standpoints, the stand point of non-dual experience and also from the point of view of relative experience. Ramana holds that 'Ajatha' is the highest truth. There is neither creation nor destruction. There is nothing other than the self. The world has never come into being. He says "it is the Jnani's experience that nothing comes into existence and ceases to exist because the self alone exists as the unchanging reality."⁴⁹

But from the stand point of the seeker of truth, for that matter for all men, the world is an experienced fact and hence it is taken to be real. The opening verse of the 'Forty Verses on Reality' admits this fact in the statement that, 'because we see the world'. It means that the world is experienced by all and it is taken to be a real entity existing outside. The false identification of the self with the body, makes him think that he is his body and other individuals are also taken to be their bodies. He believes in the objectivity and reality of the world. He is misled by the

reality of sense objects and runs after them. This belief in the reality of the world is an obstruction to the realisation of truth. He has to be reminded of the unreality of the world of names and forms. Sri Ramana says "There is no alternative for you but to accept the world as unreal if you are seeking the truth and truth alone."⁵⁰ If the seeker is thus convinced of the unreality of the world he will naturally turn inward and seek his true being. Such a quest would end in the realisation of his self. A realised person sees nothing separate from him. The whole universe is perceived as his own self. For him the world is real since the self and world are non-different.

Sri Ramana clarifies this by making use of the simile of the paper and letters printed on it. Man notices the script alone in exclusion to the paper on which it is printed. When his attention is lost on the script alone he has to be reminded that the paper is the substratum and the real thing. The perception of letters apart from the paper is illusory. The letter and the paper are to be viewed together as one organic whole. In the same way the self which is the source of all is forgotten and the world of name and form is regarded as external and real. The individual has to be instructed that all this external universe is unreal and the self on which names and forms appear alone is real. A Jnani looks upon the world as

the self. For him it is immaterial whether the universe continues to appear or not.

4.3.2. The World is unreal

The sage denies reality to the world of experience. According to Vedanta the real is that which exists by itself. It must be permanent and unchanging. Reality is self-revelatory. When judged by these standards the world is found to be unreal. Ramana says "A dependent, unself-conscious, ever changing world can not be real."⁵¹ The above statement brings the following facts.

Firstly, it shows that the world is not self-existent. If it is self-existent it must appear in one's sleep also. The world depends on mind for its existence. The world appears when the mind rises on waking and it disappears when the mind subsides in sleep. The appearance and disappearance of the world is concomitant with the rising and subsidence of the mind. It shows the dependent nature of the mind. As it is dependent on the mind for its existence, it has no reality of its own.

Secondly, it states that Continuity of existence is one of the characteristics of the real. The world has no continuity. It exists in the state of waking and not during sleep. If it is real it must appear in sleep

also. The existence of the 'I' is continuous and it is proved by the statement 'I slept well.'" But he is not aware of the world of experience.

Thirdly, it maintains that the reality is beyond change and modifications. The world is characterised by change. If something undergoes change, it is no more the same thing. The things that are in time and space and subject to change. They are divisible. The reality is timeless and space-less. It is indivisible.

Fourthly it points out that world is not self revelatory and its existence is to be revealed by consciousness. It cannot be said that the world exist though not conscious of itself because unself conscious existence is impossible. The world neither exists by itself nor conscious of itself. Ramana expresses the nature of the world thus: "Perpetual change, a continuous, interminable flux."⁵² He concludes that such a world can not be regarded as real.

Now from the foregoing discussions it follows that the world is unreal .What is meant by the word 'unreal'. Does it imply complete non-existence? Here the term unreal is not used to indicate a totally non-existing entity like the son of a barren woman or a flower in the sky. They are mere words having no reference to facts. Whereas the world is a fact

and not a mere word. In Vedanta the word unreal does not mean non-existence or *asat*. It is used to indicate a false appearance. The world is unreal in the sense that it is an illusory appearance of the real.

4.3.3. The world as an appearance

Ramana considers the world as just an appearance in the Self. The Sanskrit term for the world is *Loka* which etymologically means what is seen. Sri Ramana says "the world is only *Loka*" (what is perceived is the world).⁵³ This shows that the world is an appearance like the appearance of a snake in a piece of rope. Muruganar states:

The world, like snake in rope, thief in
A stump, mirage in air, has no
Real existence, seeming to be,
Mere appearance, is its nature.⁵⁴

The one indivisible, nameless, formless self appearing as the world of name and form is what is implied by the term *maya*. It is the principle which superimposes the world on Brahman. Sri Ramana says "Maya is that which makes us regard as non-existent the self, the reality, which is always and everywhere present and all pervasive and self-luminous, and as existent the individual soul (*Jiva*), the world (*Jagat*), and God (*para*)

which have been conclusively proved to be non-existent at all times and places."⁵⁵

Maya may be described as the power which makes the real appear as something other than what it really is. It makes the existent, non-existent and the non-existent, existent.

Ramana clarifies it through Muruganar thus:

It is maya false alone which makes
The real seen unreal, the unreal
Seen real⁵⁶

Maya cannot be described as either real or unreal. As it is a fact of experience it cannot be dismissed as unreal. It is not real also because it vanishes at the dawn of knowledge. It is a contradiction to say that it is both real and unreal. The nature of maya can not be determined by means of the categories of the mind. Hence the nature of maya is indeterminable (anirvacaniya).

Maya has two aspects. It causes obstruction to the presentation of the real and also it projects the unreal. The real nature of the self is concealed and in its place the world of diversity is projected. The power of concealment is called avarana sakti and the power of projection is

called vikshepa sakti. The concealment and projection takes place simultaneously. The ignorance which conceals the real nature of the rope creates the illusion of the snake in it. The entire universe is the creation of the projecting power of maya.

Maya is the creative power of the self. It is called Sakti. It is also called prakrti, avidya etc. Maya is beginningless but it ends with the advent of knowledge. As light dispels darkness, knowledge, dispels ignorance. Dissolution of ignorance is called self realisation. Sri Ramana says maya is something which is not. As it stands for manifestation of reality, Maya is reality. Maya is not falsehood. He says:

Maya is not falsehood, although it has the appearance of it, but the active side of reality. It is the maker of forms in consciousness and form means variety which causes illusion.... all variety is in consciousness and no where else, it is only in mind. One Jiva finding another Jiva, forgets its identity with it and thinks of it as separate from itself. But the moment it turns its attention on its own nature as consciousness, and not as form, the illusion of diversity or separateness breaks, as a dream breaks when waking take place."⁵⁷

4.3.4. The world as the creation of the mind

Sri Ramana says that the world is only a projection of the mind in the state of waking. The world exists in the states of waking and dreaming and not in deep sleep. The existence and non-existence of the world is simultaneous with the emergence and subsidence of the mind. This shows that the world is only a creation of the mind. The mind is but a series of thoughts and what is called mind is nothing but thoughts. These thoughts are not external. They have their origin in the 'I thought'. Hence the whole world is within and not without. He is pinpointing this truth in the following questions: "Is the world within you or without you. Does it exist apart from you? Does the world come and tell you I exist."⁵⁸

The creation and absorption of the world by the mind is similar to the production and withdrawal of a spider's web. "Just as the spider emits the thread out of itself and again withdraws it into itself, like wise the mind projects the world out of itself and again resolves it into itself."⁵⁹

The Maharshi states that the world has no objective existence and it can be reduced to the five fold sense objects. What is called the world is the five fold sensation experienced through the respective senses. It is the mind that experience them through the senses. We can say, one sees and

hears through the mind. If the mind is inattentive to the things presented to the senses, no experience is possible. The Upanisadic statement that "they say, my mind was else where, I did not see it, my mind was else where, I did not hear it. It is with the mind, truly, that one sees, It is with the mind that one hears"⁶⁰ makes clear the role played by the mind in acquiring knowledge. Without mind no experience is possible. Therefore Ramana asks, is there a world without a mind. In the Forty Verses on Reality he states "The world is but the five fold sense objects, which are the results of the five senses. Since the mind perceives the world through the senses, is there a world without the mind."⁶¹ Thus Ramana concludes that the world is nothing but the creation of the mind. All phenomena consisting of names and forms are of the nature of mind. All that appear outside are in reality inside.

The whole world emerges from the mind. Just as the tree is potentially present in the seed the whole universe exists in the mind. The mind has no independent existence. The Heart is the source of the mind. Hence the Heart comprises all. This is expressed in Ramana Gita thus: "The universe is only in the mind and the mind is nothing but the Heart. Thus the entire universe culminates in the Heart."⁶²

In the Arunachala Ashataka¹ the sage describes picturesquely how a single vasana starts from the heart and how it develops and ramifies into this vast universe. The tendencies that lie embedded in the heart get reflected in the light of the self and are expanded and projected as the outside world. How this process takes place? This is made clear in one of his conversations.

Though it is only one, yet by its wonderful power it gets reflected on the tiny dot 'I' (the ego) otherwise known as ignorance or the aggregate of latent tendencies, this reflected light is the relative knowledge. This according to one's prarabdha (past karma now fructifying) manifests the inner latent tendencies as the outer gross world and with draws the gross external world as the subtle internal tendencies. Such power is called the mind in the subtle plane and brain in the physical plane. This mind or brain acts as the magnifier to that Eternal being and shows it forth as the expanded universe. In the waking and dream states the mind is outward bent, with the mind as the medium, the one Supreme Being seems diversified in the waking and dream states and remains withdrawn in the deep sleep state or swoon etc. Therefore you

are only that and cannot be otherwise. What ever the changes, the same one Being remains as yourself, there is nothing besides yourself.⁶³

The projection of the world by the mind is similar to a cinema projection. When the projector light passes through the film, pictures falls on the screen, being magnified by the lenses of the camera. The projector light stands for the self, the film for the vasanas or latent tendencies. The five senses act as the lenses of the camera. The latent tendencies are enlarged and made gross by the five senses. The latent tendencies, the subtle thoughts, when projected out through the five senses by the light of the self appear as the gross world consisting of names and forms. This projection is not possible without the light of the self. As cinema projection is impossible in the absence of the projector light, the world would cease to appear if the tendencies are not illumined by the self. The power of prarabdha rotates the film reel of one's tendencies and corresponding to these tendencies individual experiences a world.

Thus what is perceived as existing outside is really within. The Garland of Guru's Sayings states;

All that the mind perceives once lay
 Buried within the heart. Know well
 That names and forms are an old tale
 Re-told, old latent vasanas now
 Becoming manifest.⁶⁴

The comparison of world projection suits cinema projection in another way also. In the case of cinema show the pictures projected on the screen are visible only in the reflected light. In the same manner the world pictures are visible only in the reflected light of the self. Just the pictures projected in the screen are not visible either in utter darkness or in bright light, the world pictures are not visible in the darkness of the ignorance of sleep or in the luminosity of self knowledge.

4.3.5 World as a dream

Sri Ramana points out the similarities between waking experience and dream and concludes that both are identical. Both are the creations of the mind. The only difference is that the waking state can be called a dream of longer duration. He says "All that we see is a dream, whether we see it in the dream state or in the waking state. On account of some arbitrary standards about the duration of experience and so on we call

one experience dream experience and another waking experience. With reference to Reality both the experiences are unreal."⁶⁵

The world of experience is compared to a dream for the following reasons: The individual considers all the experiences of the waking state to be real and objective. Nobody can deny reality to the world of experience. In the same manner all dream experiences are real so long as one is engrossed in his dream. The mind cannot deny reality to dream while dreaming and it can not deny reality to waking experience while one is awake. The unreality of the dream experience is understood only when one wakes up from his dream. In the same manner the unreality of the world of experience is revealed when one is awake to his self. When the self, the substratum is known, the waking experience also appears to be like a dream. This is the significance of comparing the world of waking experience to a dream.

All dream objects are taken to be real in dream. For instance if when the dreamer feels thirsty, dream water would quench his dream thirst. The illusoriness of dream objects is not revealed till the illusoriness of dream itself is not found out. The same is also true of the world. 'Atma-Bodha', likens the world to a dream. "The world, filled with

attachments and aversions, and the rest, is like a dream: It appears to be real as long as one is ignorant, but becomes unreal when one is awake."⁶⁶

The sage illustrates the unreality of the world by using three popular similes together. The first simile he takes up is the wrong perception of the snake in a rope and is told that the perception of the world is similar to the illusory perception of the snake. Here the wrong knowledge of the snake disappears when the person understands the real nature of the object. The appearance of the snake vanishes when the right cognition (of the rope) takes place. One may object by pointing out that this simile may not hold good in the case of the world. The world of appearance continues even after it is known to be a false presentation.

In order to convince the doubter the simile of the mirage is given. The mirage is a false appearance. The mirage water continues to delude the perceiver though it is known to be illusory. Like the mirage water, the world continues to manifest itself. Sri Ramana points out that the persistence of an appearance may not serve as a proof of its reality.

The objector may raise another objection. He may argue that the appearance of the world is not similar to the appearance of a mirage. The

water in a mirage is not useful for quenching our thirst. But unlike it the things of our experience serve several purposes. The sage makes it clear that a phenomenal appearance can not be regarded as real on the basis of its utility. Here he brings in the simile of a dream. Dream wants are satisfied by dream objects. On that account dream objects cannot be regarded as real. In the same way reality can not be granted to the objects of waking experience. In deep sleep both these experiences are proved to be false. The realised sage alone can recognise the unreality of waking experience just like the non-discriminative realises the unreality of dream objects in the waking state. Sri Ramana makes it clear that all these illustrations are meant to direct the seeker's mind to the one reality underlying all phenomena.

Thus Maharshi shows that the world is an unreal appearance having no objective existence at all. Yet some people may argue that the world is objective and is real. Their arguments are based on the assumption of the objective existence of time and space. They assume that time and space are objective realities and world exists outside, in time and space. The sage examines their arguments and shows that all of them are baseless.

The first argument is that, the non-existence of the world of experience during one's sleep does not disprove the reality of the world. They point out that the world is experienced by other individuals except the one who slept. Hence one can not deny reality to the world. Maharshi observes that the evidence of the so called witnesses is not an evidence at all. These witnesses were also a part of the world. The world including the witnesses were absent in his sleep. Sri Ramana asks "Does one become aware of others in his sleep."⁶⁷ When their reality itself is doubtful how can he can prove the reality of the world on the strength of their evidence.

Another argument for the objectivity of the world is that the world appears to be the same for all observers. The sage maintains that the uniformity of experience is due to the non-difference of observers. There is only one observer in all of them.

Sri Ramana says that space and time are not objective realities. He says that neither space nor time is real. Space and time can not exist apart from the 'I'. "Do time and space exist apart from us. If we are body we are affected by time and space. But are we the body? We are the same now then, and for ever."⁶⁸

Space and time are subjective forms. They come into being after the rise of the ego. In deep sleep neither time nor space exists. The ego rises on waking, it creates the world and locates it in time and space. Hence it is reasonable to say that space and time have no reality of their own apart from the ego. Individual feels that he is bound by space and time. Maharshi is of the view that it is an illusion. It is caused by the idea of 'I am the body'. The body is in time and space. Space is an illusion. No distinction between outside and inside exists. Without this, the world can not exist as an objective reality. Since no outside exists no persons or things can exist in that outside. All arguments for the objectivity and reality of the world would take for grant the existence of things and persons in space. This is the creation of the ego. The 'I' sense being limited to his body, the seer imagines the other persons as being limited to their bodies. Thus the notions of you and he come into being. The sage says that the notions you and he are the necessary corollaries of the notion, 'I am the body'. 'You' and 'he' stand for the world. When the feeling 'I am the body' ceases, 'you' and 'he' also would cease to exist.

Forms appear because of the ego, the primary ignorance. When one tries to see the one who sees the world, then the world and its seer would vanish and the self alone remains.

The self is the reality underlying the world. But the world of appearance conceals the self. In the case of rope snake illusion, the perception of the snake obstructs the perception of the rope. In the same way the perception the world conceals perception of the self. As long as one perceives the world and conceives it to be real, the self is not realised. This fact is expressed in the following verse:

By this world, That world is concealed
 And this world is by that concealed
 Name and forms one sees, or else
 One sees pure Being - Awareness Bliss.⁶⁹

The world appearance will continue to conceal the self until unreality of the world of appearance is known. The self is non-existent for whom the world is real in the same way the rope is non-existent for him who perceives it as a snake.

4.3.6. Self that Substratum of the world

The sage points out that the problem is one of difference in the perspectives. The one who sees the self does not see the world and the one who sees the world does not see the self. But he who has realised the self knows that the self is the substratum of the world and that the world

of name and form is not apart from the self. The self is the permanent substance that underlies the phenomenal appearance of names and forms. In Forty Verses on Reality the Maharshi makes this point clear by using the simile of gold and ornaments made of gold. He asks "Are the ornaments different from the gold which is real."⁷⁰ Ornaments are many and varied but in reality they are gold only. Are the ornaments are not different from the substance gold, the world of names and forms are not apart from the self.

The Sruti states that the effect is non-different from the cause "... by knowing a lump of earth all things made of earth became known, all transformations has speech as its basis and it is name only, Earth as such is reality."⁷¹ Sri Sankara expresses the truth when he states "this entire universe which is due to ajnana appears to be of many forms, all that is Brahman only."⁷²

The world and the self are related as figure and its ground. Sri Ramana says that the self is like a screen where many pictures appear and disappear. The screen alone is real, the pictures are unreal. As pictures are projected on the screen, the names and forms are projected on the self. On the screen fire appear to burn buildings, water seems to

destroy things. Yet these events make no difference to the screen. In the same way the self, the substratum, is not affected by the events take place in this world.

The Garland of Guru's Sayings *śātras*:

.... Supreme Awareness - Being
 A lone abides, the ground, the screen
 The world of triads is but picture
 Moving on the screen.⁷³

Sri Ramana points out that as the pictures can not exist apart from the screen the world is not independent of the self. When one's attention is on the pictures, the screen remains unnoticed. And if he attends to the screen alone he can know that the pictures are only shadows. If one understands the truth that the self is the substratum of the world and the world is only a play of shadow, he may not be deluded again by it.

4.3.7. World is nothing but the Self

Sri Ramana points out that all discussion about illusion is due to difference in the perspectives. Maharshi says there is no such thing as unreal from another standpoint.⁶² If the angle of vision is to be changed to one of knowledge, the whole world is found to be nothing but self.

"Change your angle of vision to one of Jnana and then find the universe to be only Brahman."⁷⁵ The self is the ground of the world. The world is unreal if it is considered as constituting of mere names and forms and it is real if it is perceived as pure consciousness. The phenomena are real as the self and unreal apart from the self.

The world of phenomena are only passing appearances. They do not exist independent of the self. We objectify the universe and consider it as located outside in space and time. This delusion hides our true nature and projects the untrue. When the self is known all other unreal things would disappear leaving behind the knowledge that they are not other than the self. Muruganar says:

Like the bright flame by smoke is concealed
 A awareness is by names and forms
 Concealed, when by Her Grace light comes
 The world is seen as bright - Awareness
 Too, not a mere cloud of names and forms.⁷⁶

The sages who have established in the self sees the world as pure awareness. For them everything is the self, and nothing but the self.

4.4. The Concept of God

4.4.1. God – a Philosophical Understanding

Philosophers and religious thinkers have given various arguments to prove the existence of God. The important arguments for the existence of God are the first cause argument, the ontological argument, teleological argument and moral argument. All these arguments are untenable as they are the fabrication of the ego. The argument from first cause which posits God as the first cause involves contradiction since the idea of an uncaused cause itself is self contradictory. Since Ramana decries all types of discussions and disputations he attaches little importance to such arguments. He says "why worry about the existence of God. We do not know whether God exists or not. Let God worry about His existence."⁷⁷ A man should know 'who he is' before he tries to know God and world.

Maharshi's statement about the nature of God seems to involve contradiction. Sometimes he speaks of God as personal. At other times he asserts that God is impersonal. He says "if you have a body, why not God also have one."⁷⁸ He also stated that God is the self, the pure being awareness. "God is personal. He is always the first person, the I. Because you give precedence to worldly things, God appears to have receded to

the background. If you give up all else and seek him alone, He will remain as the 'I', the Self."⁷⁹ The contradiction seen in Maharshi's statement is only superficial and it is due to the difference in the perspective from which he discusses the question. From the standpoint of non-dual experience the self alone exists. It never suffers any change. The self never becomes God, world and soul. There is nothing but the self and all are He himself. But from the empirical standpoint God exists as a real entity. Sri Ramana says "Iswara, the personal God, the supreme creator of the universe does exist. But this is true only from the relative standpoint for those who have not realised ultimate truth, who believe in the reality of individual souls. From the absolute standpoint the sage cannot accept any other existence than the impersonal self, one and formless"⁸⁰

Ramana says that as long as the individuality persists the world appears to be real and one is justified in pre-supposing the existence of an all knowing and all powerful being. Thus the idea of God is relative. It is related to world and souls. This is made clear in the following statement thus: "Because the world is seen we have to infer a common cause (a Lord) possessing unlimited powers to appear as the world of diversity."⁸¹ Man naturally is inclined to seek causes for things to explain them. Since we are experiencing the world, a cause is assumed to exist for the origin,

sustenance and dissolution of the world. T.M.P. Mahadevan while commenting on the text says: "The manifold universe can not be the product either of an inert substance or of a limited sentient being. It requires as its basis and origin an omniscient and omnipotent being. That is what we call God."⁸² The Vedanta sutra deals with the same idea in the 2nd sutra "That (is Brahman) from which (are derived) the birth etc. of this (universe)."⁸³ While commenting this text Sankara says "That omniscient and omnipotent source must be Brahman from which occur birth, continuance and dissolution of this universe that is manifested through name and form, that is associated with diverse agents and experiences . . ."⁸⁴

The reality is the self and when it is conceived in relation to the world is called God or Iswara. Ramana says "Brahman is called Iswara in relation to the world."⁸⁵ God is all inclusive. The all embracing nature God is indicated when he say: "God means Samashti - all that is plus being." "The all, the variety, the individual is in each case unreal."⁸⁶ The 'Being' here refers to Brahman the reality, 'the all' represents the world.

Iswara is the self in association with maya. He is the material and efficient cause of the world. If He were only an efficient cause he would

become a limited God; limited by matter which is an independent reality. Matter has resistance and hence he would not be free to fashion the world according to His will. His will may be limited by the constitution of matter. The self is devoid of attributes but it appears to be endowed with empirical attributes. All perfection, metaphysical and moral, are ascribed to him. Qualities of omnipotence, omniscience, etc. are attributed to him. He is the supreme person who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. All things proceed from him, stay in him and finally resolve into Him.

4.4.2. Immanence and transcendence of God

God is both immanent and transcendent. He is within the world yet rises above it. He is immanent in the world because he pervades in everything, both animate and inanimate. The Upanisad says "All this, what ever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God."⁸⁷ In Gita the Lord says "I am the self residing in the hearts of all beings, and I am the beginning and the middle and also the end of (all) beings."⁸⁸ Ramana stresses the immanence of God when he says "Iswara is immanent in every person and in every material object through out the universe"⁸⁹ He is also transcendent; He has in him none of features of the world. He is

unaffected by anything that take place in the world. All activities of the world take place in the presence of the sun. But none of the affairs of the world would affect the sun. In the same manner living beings are engaged in different activities being determined by their karmas. But God is not affected by these actions. This transcendent nature of God is discussed in 'who am I' thus:

Without desire, resolve, or effort, the sun rises and in its mere presence, the sun-stone emits fire, the lotus blooms water evaporates, people perform their various functions and then rest. Just as in the presence of the magnet the needle moves, it is by virtue of the presence of God that the souls governed by the three (cosmic) functions or the five fold divine activity perform their actions and then rest, in accordance with their respective karmas. God has no resolve, no karma attaches itself to Him. That is like worldly actions not affecting the sun, or like the merits and demerits of the other four elements not affecting all pervading space.⁹⁰

Ramana says that God's will is inscrutable. No motive, will or desire can be attributed to him.

4.4.3. God is the inner controller

God is the inner controller of the entire universe. God controls and directs beings from within. Sri Ramana says "God is in all and in the seer. Where else can God be seen? He cannot be found outside. He should be felt within."⁹¹ The Upanisads expresses this truth in the following text". He who dwells in all beings, yet within all beings, whom no beings know, whose body is all beings, who controls all beings from within, he is yourself, the inner controller."⁹²

4.4.4. God, the Moral Governor

God is the Lord of Karma. It is He who distributes fruits of actions to the doer according to his karma. There is absolute justice in the apportionment of reward and punishment because it corresponds the moral worthiness of the agent. God's decision is not arbitrary but it has reference to the good and evil produced by the agent. He rewards the virtuous and punishes the wicked..

In the opening verse of Upadesa saram the Maharshi states "The results of action flow according to the law of the creator."⁹³ Suri Nagamma records Sri Ramana's explanation of this verse in Her Letters as, "He gives the phala (fruits) to each person according to his karma

(actions). That means Iswara is only an agent. He gives wages according to labour done. That is all without sakti (power) of Iswara this karma (action) will not take place. That is why karma is said to be Jadam (inert).⁹⁴ God is regard as the phala data (dispenser of fruit).⁹⁵ God controls the life and destiny of individuals. Muruganar states

The Lord controls the doer till
The fruits of actions are
Exhausted. Until then no effort
can change the course of things ordained
None can oppose what is ordained
By God Omnipotent⁹⁶

4.4.5. God, a Phenomenal Appearance

God is real in relation to the world of plurality. He is regarded as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. But the world itself is an unreal appearance from the point of view of non-dual self. Hence the reality granted to God can not be regarded as ultimate. The sage says "Soul and God are only mental conceptions."⁹⁷ It has no objective existence. It depends on the 'I' thought. If God is an objective reality it must appear in sleep also. Maharshi asks "If God be real why does He not shine forth in your sleep also?"⁹⁸ The sense of separateness or

individuality is the originator of the idea of God. If individuality persists God exists. In the absence of individuality God does not exist. "If the individual has form the Lord also appear as having form. If one is formless Sri Ramana asks how and by whom can their forms be seen?"⁹⁹ Sri Ramana says, "Iswara, God, the creator, the personal God is the last of the unreal forms to go. Only the absolute being is real. Hence, not only the world, not only the ego, but also the personal God are of unreality. We must find the absolute."¹⁰⁰

4.3.5. God is the Self

Ramana says that God is nothing other than the self. He perceives no difference between the two. This is made clear in one of his conversations, "The absolute being is what is. It is the self. It is God. Knowing the self, God is known. In fact God is none other than the Self."¹⁰¹ He says that knowing oneself is knowing God because God is one's own self. In The Forty Verses on Reality he says, "completely losing the ego and seeing the self is finding God, for the self is not other than God."¹⁰²

Ramana says that soul, world and God are non-different. They are one in essence. Muruganar says:

World, Jiva and God are the three
 Mind shaped entities, are made up
 Of the one Sole Being- awareness.¹⁰³

The sage maintains that the world, soul and God would remain as three separate entities as long as the ego lasts. If the ego merged in its source either by enquiry or surrender the ever existent Self alone shines. He states: "If by ourselves you mean your body, there is a creator; but if you mean the pure Self then there is nothing but It. If you objectively see a universe then you are bound to see many things besides yourself and postulate a God, the creator. Body, God and World rise and set together from and into the Self. If God is apart from you, the Self, then He must remain a Selfless Go, that is non-existent."¹⁰⁴

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SELF ENQUIRY AND REALISATION

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Chapter V

SELF ENQUIRY AND REALISATION

5.1. Meaning of Realisation

The word 'Sakshatkara' literally means "realisation in which one put the thing before the eyes and the mind assumes the form (Akara) of the object which is evident to the senses."¹ It also refers to a state of experience consequent of an intense enquiry for a prolonged time. It is a fact of experience that in our day to day life we often enquire into a thing or an object with an idea about the nature of the object, the purpose to be fulfilled after attaining the object etc. The realisation of the object is largely dependent on the terms of reference of our enquiry. In scientific reasoning we are accustomed to enquire comparatively definite problems and realisation discloses the facts that are already existing yet hitherto unknown.

At first it may appear that the enquiry of the self and realisation of the self is analogous to the enquiry and realisation of empirical objects. A rational understanding of realisation reveals that the realisation of the self differs from the realisation of empirical facts in certain respects. Firstly, all enquiries involve a division between subject and object, the

one who does the enquiry and the object that is enquired into. Further, the subject, the enquirer does not come under the purview of enquiry. All empirical enquiries which exclude the self are enquiries of the not self and they do not yield genuine knowledge. Sri Ramana states that all sciences and philosophies are the explanations of the not self. All enquiries should culminate in self enquiry. To quote "All sciences must end in self. Self is their finality."² The knowledge of the self alone is the real knowledge. The Garland of Guru's Sayings States;

The knowledges that ignores the self
The knower and holds as true the field
Perceived, is but illusive folly.³

In self enquiry the apparent division between subject and object disappears in the non-dual experience of the self.

Secondly, self realisation is not a new accomplishment. It is the realisation of the ever present awareness. Awareness alone exists : We are for ever Awareness pure.⁴

5.2. Ramana on Realisation

Realisation according to Ramana is the realisation of one's true being as pure awareness. He states: "Realising one's truth as the truth of

that reality and merging into it, is true realisation."⁵ It is the realisation of the state of 'I am'. It is the state of Silence. The thoughts 'I am this', 'I am that' "I am so and so are born of false identification. Realisation essentially involves cessation of the identification of the self with not self. Self enquiry or atma vichara is the method suggested to end the false identification and to establish one in his natural state. Self enquiry is the inquiry into source of the first person feeling 'I'.

Although Maharshi suggested some forms of rational exposition of realisation, fundamentally he is of the view that realisation is an ever present awareness. The self is always aware. There is no moment when the self is not. It is a fact of experience that everybody is aware of his existence. He asks "once we admit our existence how is it that we do not know our self."⁶ The self is always realised. It is not a future state to be attained Maharshi makes this clear in the following statement: "You are the atma (self) and that is sakshat (here and now) also. Where is the place for kara (accomplishment) in it."⁷ Realisation is one's inherent nature. If it is something new it will not be permanent and may be lost in due course.

The Maharshi states that: The self is here and now. But this realisation is obscured due to false identification of the self with the not

self. Individual identifies himself with the body and consider himself to be the finite, limited self, subjected to birth and death. He is caught in the delusion of doership and is bound by actions here and here after. He becomes a victim of suffering on account of the ignorance of his blissful self. All efforts are meant to remove ignorance. Ignorance is the wrong knowledge in the form of false identification. If this ignorance is removed, the ever present, self alone remains. The sage remarks "Atma Sakshatkaram is only anantma nirasam (giving up of not self)."⁸ It is further clarified in his statement that "Realisation is the removal of the obstacle to the recognition of the eternal immanent Reality."⁹ The upanisad states that if the veiling of the ignorance is removed the self reveals itself as "the moon getting freed from the mouth of Rahu."¹⁰ We have so far regarded the unreal as real and the real as unreal. This wrong attitude is to be given up to attain knowledge.

Ramana states that the talk of realisation itself is false for two reasons. Firstly, the term realisation implies realising the realised. He asks how can we make real that which is already real. To quote "In a sense the speaking of self realisation is a delusion. It is only because people have been under the delusion that the non-self is the self and the

unreal the real that they have to be weaned out of it by other delusion called self-realisation, because actually the self always is the self and there is no such things as realising it. Who is to realise what, and how, when all that exists is the self and nothing but the self.¹¹

Secondly, the term realisation implies the existence of two selves – the one to realise and the other to be realised. He is emphatic in his declaration that there no two selves. He never admits dualism during one's search and non-dualism on attainment. One is always the self. He says "The theory that in practical life duality prevails, whereas non-duality prevails in the (spiritual) attainment, is false. Whether one is still anxiously searching for the self, or has actually attained it, is not other than the 10th man."¹²

The ever present reality of the self is conveyed through the story of the 10th man in Vedantic texts. The ten fools in the story, due to ignorance, lamented over the death of their companion who was ever with them and is never lost. Similarly due to the delusion caused by the forgetfulness of the ever present self one thinks that the self is bound and efforts are to be made to realise it.

5.3. Paths to realisation

From the stand point of non-dual experience, both bondage and liberation are mere concepts of the mind. Bondage and liberation belong to the ego. The ego is responsible for the thoughts 'I am bound', 'I am to be realised' etc. When one enquires 'who is bound' and 'who wants to be liberated', both the thoughts will disappear. The man of realisation is free from every kind of activity and inactivity. Sri Ramana states: "having reached his real state the exalted yogi... has nothing to do' or achieve in his world."¹³ But the false identification in the form of I am the body is the cause of the feeling 'I am bound' and the consequent suffering and it can be removed by proper spiritual efforts. To attain perfection various kinds of spiritual disciplines are enjoined in the scriptures. These disciplines are known by the name 'Yoga'. Yogas are the various ways of spiritual attainment.

The term 'Yoga' is derived from the verbal root 'yuj' meaning to bind together, to yoke etc. It has many connotations such as union, conjunction etc. The term yoga is a general name for the various paths of unification. There are mainly four yogas—Karma yoga or the path of union through work, bhakti yoga or the path of union through love and

devotion, Raja yoga or the path of meditation or psychical control and jnana yoga or the path of union through knowledge.

The term yoga is also used to denote the goal of yoga namely the realisation of the absolute reality. This aspect is revealed in the Lord's statement that ". . . when by seeing the self by the self one remains contented in the self alone . . . when one experiences absolute bliss which can be intuited by the intellect and which is beyond the senses, and being established (thus) this person surely does not swerve from Reality."¹⁴ A very simple expression of the same truth is found in *Upadesasaram*. "Absorption into the source" or core of existence (or the Heart) is what the paths of karma bhakti, yoga and jnana teach"¹⁵

Sri Ramana says that the word yoga implies prior separation and later union. Yoga is meant for the one who is under the illusion of viyoga or separation. To quote:

All sadhanas are called yogas. eg. Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, Ashtanga yoga. What is yoga. Yoga means union. Yoga is possible only when there is viyoga. The person is now under the delusion of viyoga. This delusion must be removed. The method of removing is called yoga.¹⁶

Maharshi states that all these paths are essentially one and all are capable of leading to the goal. The method one chooses depends on his temperament and latent tendencies (vasanas) of past lives. Each person is born with certain impressions (Samskaras) of past lives. Depending on one's impressions or dispositions one method may appear to be more appealing than the other. There is no hard and fast rule about the method to be followed by a spiritual seeker. To suit different grades of seekers scriptures prescribed different methods of discipline. Ramana's statement, that "Each of them will appeal to some as the best and easiest. That according to their pakva or fitness"¹⁷ highlights this individual variation.

5.4. Path to realisation- The Ramana way

The aim of all spiritual practices, according to Him, is to reinstate one to his natural state of 'I am'. It is called natural because it is not acquired. It is the state of self abidance without the least trace of ego. One's natural state remains concealed due to his false identification with his body and consequent 'I am the body' notion. This in turn gives rise to a multitude of thoughts. The externalisation of the mind in the form of thought waves is the cause of the forgetfulness of one's natural state and

its discovery is possible by turning the mind inward. Sri Ramana makes clear the meaning of the ⁱⁿ term in the following statement. "Not letting the mind go out but retaining it in the heart is what is called 'inwardness' (antar mukha) Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as "externalisation (bahir mukha).¹⁸ Self enquiry is the best method by which the extroverted mind can be turned inward and fixed at its source.

Sri Ramana suggested self enquiry as the most effective means for self abidance. By self enquiry he means the firm fixing of attention on the 'I' thought and tracing it back to its source. Tracing the 'I' to ^{the} place of its emergence and abiding there is self enquiry.

Surrender is also recommended as an effective means for self knowledge. He says there are only two methods—either one should hold on to the 'I' thought or ego till it merges in its source or surrender completely to God so that he will have no individual will of his own. The extinction of ego is the outcome of both enquiry and surrender. In surrender the devotee understand that God or Self alone exists and there is no 'I' to act. In self enquiry the aspirant enquiries into the source of 'I' and knows that the 'I' has no separate existence. The extinction of the ego is the aim of both enquiry and surrender. Sri Ramana remarks "There are

only two ways, one is looking into the source of 'I' and merging into the source - the other is feeling 'I am helpless myself. God alone is all powerful and except throwing completely on him, there is no means of safety for me, and thus gradually developing the conviction that God alone exists and the ego does not count. Both methods lead to the same goal. Complete surrender is another name for Jnana or liberation.¹⁹

5.5. Self enquiry and the Four yogas

Karma yoga (yoga of action) Bhakti yoga (the Yoga of devotion) Raja Yoga (the Yoga of mind control) Jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge) are the four yogas traditionally recognised. The extinction of the ego is the goal of the yogas. The yoga of action exhorts one to act with complete non-attachment. The aspirant is asked to renounce the sense of doership and enjoyership. The path of Bhakti demands complete self surrender so that the individual will cease to exist. Raja yoga seeks to separate the self from the not self through the control of psychic forces and shows that the self is neither the agent or enjoyer of actions. The path of knowledge shows that knowledge is the means of realising one's identity with the supreme. All these methods pre-suppose a doer, the one who does karma, Bhakti, yoga and knowledge. The task of the follower of the path

of enquiry is to find out who the doer is. Sri Ramana is of the view that unless the doer is traced out all these spiritual efforts (sadhanas) are incomplete. The Maharshi remarks:

Karma, bhakti, yoga, jnana
are but enquiring 'who has karma'
Who lacks devotion? Who stands
Alienated? Who is ignorant?
Enquiring thus, the enquiring 'I'
Disappears. Firm abidance
As the self is the only truth.²⁰

5.5.1. Karma Yoga

Karma yoga is the yoga of action. This yoga is based on the fact of intense activity which is the characteristics life in this world. To live is to act. Man can not remain inactive even for a single moment. Inactivity is the very denial of life. Bhagavad Gita states "None, verily, even for an instant ever remains doing no action."²¹ The activity, which is natural, is to be properly directed to the best of our advantage. Karmayoga is that discipline which help us to free ourselves from the bonds of Karma by performing actions in the right manner.

Actions are the cause of both bondage and liberation. Actions done with selfish motive, with the sense of doership binds the doer. Work performed with the attachment is a schakle, but detached actions do not affect the doer. Actions are capable of producing their results. Actions also produces impressions (Samskaras). Impressions (Samskaras) are the cause of further actions and their fruits. Individual find himself in the cycle of repeated birth and death due to his own action done with attachment. But if they are done with complete non attachment without the sense of 'I' and 'mine', they have no fettering effect.

Act at the same time do not identify oneself with the act, is the injunction of the yoga of action. Misery is due to attachment and not due to work. Individual should work but should not be defiled by the work. Actions are not to be abandoned. But the feeling of doership is to be given up. Karma Yoga teach us how to give up attachment to actions. The following verses of Gita gives the essence of karma yoga: "Therefore , remaining unattached always perform the obligatory duty for by performing (one's) duty, with out attachment, a person attains the highest."²²

Ramana says that Karma yoga is that yoga in which one does not arrogate himself the function of the being the actor.²³ He asks to get rid of the feeling of doership of actions and consequent attachment. One should adopt the attitude of an actor on the stage while performing his duties: "He dresses and acts even feels the part he is playing, but he really knows that he is not that character but some one else is real life."²⁴

Karma Yoga is the action done with out the sense of doership. Ramana says the enquiry of 'whose karma is it', 'who is the doer' is the easiest way to renounce the feeling of doership "Let us first understand what karma is, whose Karma it is and who is the doer. Analysing them and enquiring into their truth one is perforce obliged to remain as the self in peace."²⁵

5.5.2. Bhakti yoga

Bhakti yoga is the path of love and devotion. In his Bhakti aphorisms sage Nrada says that "Bhakti is the supreme love of God."²⁶ Maharshi states "What is Bhakti" To think of God. That means: only one thought prevails to the exclusion of all other thoughts. That thought is of God which is the self or it is the self surrendered unto God.²⁷ The thought flow is naturally directed toward sense objects. This should be

withdrawn and directed to God. Ramana Gita defines Bhakti as "Love unbroken like a stream of oil is termed Bhakti."²⁸

Bhakti involves the worship of both the saguna and nirguna aspects of the Absolute. Both these ways will lead to the attainment of the highest goal. Gita recognises both these forms of devotion but maintains that worship of the unmanifested is difficult for a devotee due to his identification with the body. For them, Gita recommends the worship of a personal God. The Maharshi is of the view that : "Under what ever name and form the Omnipresent nameless and formless reality is worshipped that is door to realisation."²⁹

The core of bhakti is surrender. The devotee surrenders his will to the supreme saying 'Lord thy will be done, I am thine you are mine'. He offers himself to God. His individuality, the sense of separate existence is lost. He comes to know that he is a mere tool in the hands of the supreme. Ramana says "surrender consists in giving up oneself and one's possessions to the Lord of Mercy. Then what is left over for man?" Nothing - neither himself nor his possessions."³⁰ Surrender is complete only if it is unquestioning. He must abide by the will of God. He should not ask this or that from God. In Bhagavad Gita the Lord reminds of the

importance of surrender by declaring that he can be attained only by those who have completely surrendered to him. "Having your mind fixed on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me and bow down to me. By concentrating your mind and accepting me as the supreme goal, you shall surely attain me who am thus the self."³¹ If one has truly surrendered he would not make any complaints over his misfortunes. Sri Ramana says God knows what is the best for his devotees. He asks us to leave every thing to the Lord. Then the individual's cares and worries will be taken over by the Lord. That is Bhakti, that is surrender.

Sri Ramana says the very idea of surrender itself is illusory. It is based on the false sense of separation that exists between the devotee and the Lord. This is made clear in one of his conversations "All talk of surrender is like Pinching jaggery from the jaggery image of Lord Ganesa and offering it as naivedya to the same Lord Ganesa. You say you offer your body, soul and all possessions. Were they your's you' could offer them? At best, you can say, 'I falsely imagined till now that all these which were your's were mine. Now I realise they are your's. I shall no more act as if they were mine. And this knowledge that there is nothing but God or self, that I and mine don't exist and that the self exists is jnana."³²

In the highest form of devotion the devotee loses his identity and perceives God in every thing. The highest forms of devotion (para bhakti) is not distinct from supreme knowledge .Sri Ramana states that there is no differences between jnana and bhakti. Complete effacement of the ego is the goal of enquiry and surrender. When the ego is surrendered it is merged in its source. "If you merge in the source there will be no individuality left. You will become the source itself. In that case what is surrender" Who is to surrender to whom" This constitutes devotion, wisdom and investigation."³³

5.5.3. Raja yoga

Raja yoga is the path advocated by Patanjali. The metaphysics of Sankhya philosophy form the basis of the yoga discipline. The system admits the reality of two fundamental principles, prakrti and purusa. Prakrti, the material cause of the world, is unconscious in its nature. Purusa, the conscious principle is pure, simple and changeless. All objects of the world (both physical and psychical) are the result of the evolution of Prakrti. The three Gunas of Prakrti, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are in perfect equilibrium and when this equilibrium is disturbed by the presence of Purusa evolution takes place. The first evolute of prakrti is

mahat, from mahat emerges ahamkara, from ahamkara other evolutes of manas, five sense organs, five organs of action, five subtle elements emerge successively. The five gross elements are formed out of the five subtle elements. The Mahat, though unconscious, appears to be conscious due to its power to reflect the consciousness of purusa. Being reflected in buddhi purusa gets identified with it. Because of this identification with the evolutes of prakrti it appears to under go pain and suffering. Thus identification of self and not self is the cause of bondage and this is called ignorance. The ignorance can be removed by the apprehension of the non-relation between prakrti and purusa. Patanjali says "The conjunction of the perceiver and the perceivable is the cause of the "Avoidable."³⁴ The conjunction is to be severed by knowing that the seer is independent of seen and is not at all affected by the modifications of the seen.

The discipline formulated by yoga to achieve this end is the control of psychic forces. In this yoga Aphorisms Patanjali gives the definition "yoga is the restraint of mental operation."³⁵ Mental modifications are thought waves. These modifications are enumerated as five, namely, right knowledge, Indiscrimination verbal delusion sleep and memory, continued practice (abhyasa) and cultivation of dispassion are the ways suggested to stop modifications. "The practice is the effort for

steadiness"³⁶ "non-attachment is the controlling consciousness of a person who has no craving for visible and scriptural enjoyment."³⁷ The discipline designed for the practice consists of eight steps and it is called ashtanga yoga. These steps are yama (restraints) niyama (observances) asana (posture) pranayama (breath control). Prathyahara (with drawal of senses) dharana (concentration) dhyana (contemplation) and Samadhi (absorption). The definition of the terms as given in the text, is as follows: "Concentration is the confinement of the mind in a place", "Meditation is the continuation of the cognition there in" and "The meditation itself, having the manifestation of truth alone as if devoid of its own form, is spiritual absorption."³⁸

Sri Ramana says that yoga aims at controlling the activities of the mind. This is the aims of all spiritual practices. He remarks "Patanjali's first sutra is applicable to all systems of yoga."³⁹ But the effect of control (nirodha) is temporary. This is made clear in one of his conversations thus: "Yoga teaches chitta vrtti nirodha. But I say atma vichara. This is the practical way. Chitta vrtti nirodha is brought about in sleep, swoon or by starvation. As soon as the cause is withdrawn there is recrudescence of thoughts. Of what use is it then? In the state of stupor there is peace and no misery recurs when stupor is removed. So nirodha

(control) is useless and can not be of lasting benefits."⁴⁰ Jnana aims at the annihilation of the mind. The meanings of the terms Yoga and jnana are stated by the sage as follows. "The practice of stilling the mind through breath control (pranayama) is called yoga." "Jnana is the annihilation of the mind in which it is made to assume the form of the self through the constant practice of dhyana or self enquiry."⁴¹ Yoga involves the forcible control of mind. It can be regarded as a violent method. Vichara is a safe and pleasant method. He compares jnana "to the subduing of a turbulent bull by coaxing it with green grass, while yoga is like controlling it through the use of force."⁴²

5.5.4. Jnana yoga

Jnana yoga is the path of union through knowledge. It is the way of realising one's identity with the supreme through discriminative knowledge. The seeker on the path of self knowledge has to discriminate between the eternal and non-eternal, the self and the not-self. The not-self is to be negated by the knowledge that the self alone is the eternal truth (Nitya Vastu) and the not self like body, mind, intellect etc. are non-eternal (anithya). When he thus able to detach the self from the not-self, the knowledge is dawned on him. The word 'knowledge' is used to

indicate the method and the goal. Ramana says "jnana implies method also because it ultimately results in realisation."⁴³ The nature of true knowledge is given in Gita as "that is knowledge which is the knowledge of the field and the knower of the field."⁴⁴ Knowledge (jnana) is the true understanding of the not self and the self (Kshetra and kshetrajna).

As a method it enjoins discrimination and non-attachment as the preliminary disciplines of Vedantic enquiry. The upanisadic passage "The means for the attainment of the other world does not become revealed to the non-discriminating man"⁴⁵ reveals the importance of discrimination in the scheme of spiritual practice. He should also be able to discern the eternal and ephemeral nature of things. Non-attachment is another prerequisite for a seeker in his pursuit of truth. Non-attachment is the basis of all yogas. The follower on the path of wisdom should practice austerities to make the mind pure and one pointed. A pure and one pointed mind alone can serve as the best instrument for the seekers in his quest for truth. The upanisad says "one who has not desisted from bad conduct, whose mind is not concentrated, whose mind is not free from anxiety can not attain Self knowledge."⁴⁶

The four fold discipline prescribed by Sri Sankara are the following:

- a) The discrimination between the real and the unreal (Nityanita Vastu Viveka).
- b) Non-attachment to fruits of action here and hereafter (Tha mutratha phala bhoga viraja))
- c) Six assets – serenity of mind, self-control, fortitude, dispassion, faith in the words of the scripture and the preceptor and having the goal constantly in the mind (Samadamati shadkka sambathi).
- d) Hanking after liberation (Mumukshutva).

Gita also shows the necessity of the cultivation of the virtues like humility, non-injury, forbearance, non-attachment, sense control etc. for the seeker on the path of wisdom. “He attains peace, into whom all desires enter as waters enter the ocean, which filled from all sides remains unaltered.”⁴⁷

After acquiring the necessary qualification the seeker should approach a teacher, who is a knower of truth, for instruction about the truth. The necessity of a teacher to impart the truth is emphasised in all

vedantic literature. Sruti states 'For knowing that Reality he should go, with sacrificial faggots in hand only to a teacher versed in vedas and absorbed in Brahman.'"48

For the realisation of truth scripture prescribes the three fold discipline of hearing (Sravana) reflection (manana) and contemplation (Niddhidhyasana) Sri Ramana clarifies their meaning thus "by Sravana knowledge dawns, this is the flame. By manana, the knowledge is not allowed to vanish, just as the flame is protected by a wind screen. So other thoughts are not allowed to over whelm the right knowledge. By niddhidhyasana the flame is kept up to burn brightly by trimming the wick. When ever thoughts arise, the mind is turned inward to the light of knowledge. When this becomes natural, it is samadhi."49

The path of enquiry gives a new interpretation to this discipline. "The enquiry 'who am I' is hearing (sravana). The ascertainment of true import of 'I' is reflection (manana). The practical implication is each case is contemplation (niddhidhyasana). Being as I is absorption (Samadhi).50

By continuously meditating on the truth individual becomes established in the self. The sage says that Jnana is the firm abidance in the self.

5.6. Self enquiry – Meaning

Enquiry may mean an investigation into some thing or about something. The term self enquiry thus may mean an enquiry about the self or enquiry into the self. But self enquiry is not an enquiry about the self because this makes the self an object of knowledge. The self is not an object to be known. It is the true subject, the real seer. He calls the self “the eye behind the eye of mind which sees the eye and other senses.”⁵¹

The term self enquiry does not mean an enquiry into the self because it gives rise to the question ‘who is doing the enquiry’? Is it the mind or the self? The mind can not do the enquiry for two reasons.

Firstly, the mind is incapable of knowing the self. The self transcends both the mind and the intellect. Secondly, the mind can not be used to kill the mind. Ramana remarks that employing the mind to kill the mind is like making the thief the policeman. He may pretend to catch the thief but will not do it because he himself is the thief.

Enquiry is not done by the self which is existence.-Consciousness itself. The self is ever attained, ever blissful and eternally free. Hence it is unnecessary for the self to make any enquiry. Thus it is found that

enquiry is impossible for the mind and unnecessary for the self. The following verse clarifies this point.

“It is Arunachala alone,
The self by which the self is known.”⁵²

Here knowing the self is being the self or self abidance.

An examination of Maharshi’s own terminology for self enquiry is sufficient to remove this ambiguity. He named it as the enquiry ‘who am I’, an interrogation capable of arousing an attitude of doubt about one’s own identity. In this question ‘who am I’, the ‘who’ suggests enquiry and ‘I’ stands for the self. The enquiry taught by Ramana would mean self attention, attention to the first person feeling ‘I’. It is called self-enquiry because here the attention is on what we commonly regard as the self.

In the method of enquiry recommended by Ramana the mind is to be turned in ward. The mind when it is turned inward is devoid of thoughts. Such a mind is called the dead mind (Mrtamanas). The mind when it is extroverted would results in thoughts and objects, and when introverted it becomes the self.

Maharshi gives the following illustration to make this idea clear.

When the room is dark a lamp is necessary to illumine the eyes to cognize objects. But when the sun is risen, there is no need of a lamp, and the objects are seen, and to see the sun no lamp is necessary, it is enough that you turn your eyes towards the self-luminous sun. Similarly with the mind. To see the objects the reflected light of the mind is necessary. To see the Heart it is enough that the mind is turned towards it. Then the mind loses itself and the Heart shines forth.⁵³

In the state of ignorance objects are experienced through the mind, which is the reflection of consciousness. When this mind is introverted and fixed on 'I', it is not the mind, which is a reflection, it is the conscious aspect of the self. The inturned mind which is devoid of thoughts sees its source, namely the Heart and becomes that. It is stated in Atma Vidya that

When the mind free of thoughts turns inward,
Annamalai appears as my ownself.⁵⁴

Self enquiry is the central theme of the Maharshi's teachings. Its meaning is clearly stated in all his writings and recorded conversations

Upadesasaram and Ulladu narpadu, the two philosophical poems gives the meaning thus –

Where from this I thought a arise? If one enquires thus, it vanishes. This is self enquiry⁵⁵ “without mouthing the word ‘I’, to seek with the mind turned inward as to whence the ‘I’ rises is, verily, the path of knowledge.”⁵⁶

The tracking of I to its source by constant vigilance is called self enquiry. In the enquiry ‘who am I’ the attention is unswervingly fixed on the subjective feeling ‘I’. The feeling ‘I’ is not allowed to spring up. The Garland of Guru's Saying states:

The method of self enquiry is
 To turn the outward going mind
 Back to its source, the Heart, the Self
 And fix it ever there, preventing
 The rising of the empty I.⁵⁷

The enquiry ‘whom am I’ shows the way to get out of the whirlpool of thought processes by paying attention to the subject, to whom thought relates. The factor of paying attention is very significant in the quest. Ramana points out that it is individual’s own attention that

gives life to his thoughts. If attention is focussed on the 'I thought', it will get separated from other thoughts. Exclusive attention on; 'I thought' make it merge in the fullness of consciousness. Just as a stick used for burning funeral pyre is itself consumed by fire', the thought 'who am I' destroys all other thoughts and "it will itself be destroyed in the end."⁵⁸ The question 'Who am I' really means "what is the source or origin of the ego."⁵⁹

Self attention is not a mental activity. "Attending to the self is nothing but abiding as the Self, and hence it is not a doing but being"⁶⁰ What is done by the mind is an action. Attention to second and third person objects is done by the mind. Attention to first person is not an action; it is abiding in the self, a state of being still.

5.7 The necessity of enquiry

Almost all of us proceed on the assumption that we are fully aware of ourselves. A little enquiry is suffice to convince us the folliness of this assumption. One is aware of his existence in the state of waking. In deep sleep he is not at all conscious of 'I'. If one knows thoroughly and intimately about himself, why he is not aware of himself in deep sleep. One's identity changes in dream and disappears in deep sleep. Enquiry

'Who am I' will provide a final solution to the problem. Enquiry reveals the truth that the entity which changes its identity is the ego and not the real 'I'. The real 'I' is the deathless, changeless, eternal consciousness.

The source of sorrow is the mistaken identity, the illusion that I am a limited being. This illusion is due to lack of enquiry (avichara) and Sri Ramana is of the view that enquiry (vichara) is the only antidote to it. If the one slackens self investigation, the investigation of not self will take its place. He advises us to do enquiry for two reasons. Firstly, self is the only thing that is worthy of knowing. Secondly, self enquiry is the most direct means of realising the self by removing the ego. He exposes the worthlessness of life with out taking any initiative for self enquiring thus: "Of what use is this birth without the power of self enquiry"⁶¹

Ramana says that with out enquiry one can not attain the egoless state and with out attaining the egoless state no one can attain immortality. Muruganar states "How else, But through ego's death can one Gain immortality"⁶² No spiritual practice is complete without the dissolution of I. The dissolution of 'I' is called realisation. Enquiry into the source of 'I' is the safest means to annihilate the 'I'.

5.8. Qualification of the Seeker

The Sage takes a more egalitarian attitude towards the problem of the fitness of the seeker of truth who adheres to the Ramana way. He asserts that all those who are earnest to find out the truth are fit for self enquiry. The book let 'Spiritual Instruction' at the out itself gives the characteristic of an earnest disciple as follows: "An intense longing for the removal of Sorrow and attainment of Joy and an intense aversion for all kinds of mundane pleasure"⁶³ The aspirant should possess a burning desire for self attention. Desirelessness (Vairagya) and discrimination (Viveka) are spoken of as the two indispensable requirements of a seeker. Ramana states: "The one who feels utter distaste when his mind has to move among sense objects and who is conscious of the transitoriness of the body is said to be a competent one for self enquiry."⁶⁴ The meaning of the term desirelessness is made clear in 'who am I'. "Desirelessness is refraining from turning the mind towards any object...not seeking what is other than the self is detachment or desirelessness."⁶⁵ Discrimination is the power to discern the eternal and the non-eternal, the self and the not self. The aspirant should have a firm distaste for sense objects, and "the discrimination between the Real and the 'unreal' leads to distaste for the transient"⁶⁶ Sri Maharshi assures that any one who is diving deep with in

himself with desirelessness can attain the self. Those who are desireless and keen on self attention can perform the enquiry 'who am I'.

5.9. The enquiry who am I – its novelty

The term self enquiry is found discussed in many of the ancient scriptures. Vivekachudamani for instance states that enquiry is the means of knowing the real nature of things. "The conviction of truth is seem to arise only from enquiry."⁶⁷ In yoga vasishta the sage Vasishta characterises "Self enquiry as the great medicine which is capable of curing the unending misery of samsara."⁶⁸

In the upanisads it is stated that the self must be sought. The actual process of the enquiry is not discussed in the sastras. The method of enquiry set forth in the upanisad is that of negating the not self. It is the method of 'not this', 'not this' (net, neti) That is the gross body, prana, mind, intellect etc., are negated as the not self and what remains after all these being rejected is regarded as the self.

According to Sri Ramana the traditional method of the elimination of the not-self is regarded as an intellectual process and it can not go beyond the mind. Further the mind can not negate anything by thinking 'I am not this', 'I am not this'. On the other hand the not self can be easily

discarded by holding on to the 'I' thought. In the traditional method thoughts are attended to and not the thinker. If attention is focussed on the thinker, thoughts will become weak for want of attention and finally 'they will subside. Latent disposition (vasanas) will become weak due to inattention and they could not manifest themselves as thoughts. At the dawn of knowledge they will automatically be destroyed.

The negative method of 'not this' 'not this', prescribed in the upanisad's negates the body prana etc as not 'I'. One can eliminate every thing except the subject, the enquirer. To quote "the one who eliminates all the not-I can not eliminate the I. To say 'I am not this' or 'I am that' there must be the I."⁶⁹ One should investigate, the 'I' asking 'who is it' and 'what is it?' The seeker who practises self enquiry or enquiring 'who am I' gives attention to the 'I' by asking 'who am I' and 'whence am I', which are the two methods suggested by Ramana. He clings to the 'I thought' excluding all other thoughts. This self attention alone is the renouncing of the five sheaths. Elimination of the five sheaths is the result of self attention and consequent self abidance. Attention of the 'I' involves the negation of the not-self

Ramana is of the view that the method of elimination found discussed in the sastras is to guide the seekers of truth. The truth can not be shown. It can only be indirectly pointed out through this intellectual process. The seeker should get an intellectual conviction that the body, mind, prana, intellect etc are the not-self. This conviction is a preliminary requisite for enquiry. This is the basis from which springs the spirit of enquiry. In Self enquiry the individual fixes his attention on 'I' consciousness and not on the five sheaths.

5.10. The method of enquiry

Maharshi starts from the most immediate datum of one's experience the awareness of one's own existence. Every body has the feeling 'I am'. It is the core of one's being. He observes "Every body says 'I am', nobody can deny his existence because the feeling of 'I' is always there."⁷⁰ In the feeling I am, 'I' denotes existence and 'am' stands for consciousness (cit) This existence consciousness (I am) is one's true state. The first thought that emerges, from this 'I am' is the 'I thought' or the ego. The 'I' thought sustains all other thoughts. The mind is only a series of thoughts. For destroying all thoughts we need not look into each and every thought. It would be worthless as the scrutiny of a garbage.

However much we scrutinize thoughts they will never get subside. But enquiry into the nature of 'I' destroys all thoughts including the 'I thought'. Just as the beads of a rosary will fall down when the thread is cut, likewise when the thought 'I' is annihilated all the thoughts will get destroyed. Ramana states "the I existing you and he also exist. If by investigating the truth of the I, the I ceases, you and he will also cease and will shine as the one"⁷¹ What is needed is the destruction of the 'I thought' and its destruction is possible only by investigating its source. In Forty verses on Reality, the necessity of seeking the source of I is expressed thus: "Without seeking and attaining the place whence I emerges how is one to achieve self extinction."⁷²

The enquiry who am I and whence am I

The modes of enquiry suggested by Ramana are the enquiry 'Who am I' and 'whence am I'. They are not independent methods but are complementary to each other. In the mode 'who am I' the aspirant focuses his attention on the feeling, 'I', asking what is it that shines as 'I am'. 'Who am I' means what is the truth of me. This question 'who am I' kindles a spirit of enquiry in the aspirant with out which no investigation is possible. It also arouses a doubt about one's own identity. 'Who am I'

enquiry is the axe which cuts at the root of false identification and consequent illusory concept 'I am the body'.

The enquiry 'whence am I' means from where does the ego emerge? It is an enquiry directed toward the source of the ego, the place of its rising. Sri Ramana 'explains that the ego has its daily birth on waking and its subsidence in sleep. The rising and setting points to the place of its origin. The 'I' can be traced back to its source by fixing attention on it.

The sage points out that the ego rises from and sinks back to consciousness. The ego is not a separate entity. The truth of the ego is discovered only if an investigation is made into its source. Such an enquiry will make it merge in the place of its origin namely consciousness. When the 'I' is merged, the real I flashes forth as "I" "I" Maharshi says 'Enquiring who am I with in the mind and reaching the heart, the I collapses. Instantly the real I appears (as 'I' 'I').⁷³

5.11. The nature of enquiry

Two illustrations are used to clarify the actual process of enquiry. The aspirant on the path of enquiry should persistently, unswervingly

hold on the 'I' thought till the end of enquiry. The persistent effort and its subsequent success is illustrated by making use of the simile of a dog tracing its master. The master's scent is an unfailing clue for it. By holding onto the scent the dog succeeds in finding out its master. In the same way 'I thought' provides the clue and constant attention on it will unmistakably lead one to the heart.

Both relentless effort and one pointed attention are inevitable to dive deep into the heart. This diving into the heart is analogous to the diving of a pearl diver into the sea : "Like the diver who dives to recover what has fallen into deep water, controlling speech and breath, and a keen mind, one must dive deep into himself and find whence the I emerges."⁷⁴ The one pointed attention of the pearl diver is on the jewel and its recovery. Similarly, the aspirant has to fix his mind keenly on the rising place of the 'I'. Sri Ramana humorously remarks that the seeker must be as single minded as a monkey whose attention is always fixed on the object on which it has set his mind.

The Maharshi points out that if the seeker is keen and persistent in the quest his breath would stop automatically. The energies operating through out the body gets in drawn and is united to the mind. This

makes diving easy. If breath does not stop by itself the seeker is advised to watch the breathing process. When this watching is steadily kept up the breath would slow down and automatically be stopped. Then the mind becomes quiet and can be devoted to the quest.

The determination to find out the self is the dynamic element in the quest. Without this, diving into the Heart is not possible. When the seeker has persisted long enough in the quest a power rises from within and takes possession of his mind. It takes him straight to the Heart. That is, the mind is reduced to the state of pure Consciousness and it begins to shine in its pure form, as formless I. The sage calls the formless consciousness as 'I am' or 'I' to distinguish it from the ego which has the form 'I am this'.

5.12. The fruit of self enquiry

In self enquiry the ego is traced back to its source, namely the Heart. The death experience of Sri Ramana provides an illustration of the technique of this enquiry. Intense fear of death drove his mind to the source and he instantaneously knew that death and birth belong to the body alone and that 'He' is the deathless awareness. The attention of Ramana was solely fixed on himself to know 'what is it that dies' and

'what is it that exists'? He recommended this self attention as the spiritual discipline (sadhana) of enquiry. The enquiry is practised by using two questions, 'who am I?' and 'whence am I?' They are invisible weapons of the Ramana path. The proper use of those method will cause the destruction of the mind. By means of these two methods the attention is exclusively fixed on the 'I thought'. As other thoughts are not attended to they may get annihilated for want of attention. When attention is intensified the 'I thought' or ego merges in its source. Now the seeker experiences a void created by the absence of ego. The 'I thought', he has been holding on till now is lost and he thinks that he is now reduced to a state of 'nothing'. At this point the seeker is consoled that he is not the void he is the one who experiences the void. When the ego dies out the individual does not cease to exist. What happens is that he 'has really found himself' for he ceases to be the limited individual. The sage says: "Since the self shines without there being anything else to know or to be known, it is knowledge. It is not nullity. Thus should you know."⁷⁵ The seeker is advised to enquire 'to whom there is void'. The truth now flashes forth, he directly experiences his existence consciousness as 'I am'. The aspirant who started the enquiry 'who am I' or 'whence am I' now attains the self.

In the initial stages of enquiry the individual can experience only the removal of the ego. that is the feeling 'I am this', 'I am that' vanishes and I am alone remains. The aspirant now attains a state similar to sleep. It is similar to sleep because his ego ceases to function yet he is fully conscious of his existence. This state is called Jagrat susupti (Sleep while awake). The state of 'I am' can be experienced in the interval between two thoughts and also after the end of one's sleep but just before waking up. "Ego in its purity is experienced in the interval between thoughts or two states."⁷⁶ With the strength of practice one can cognise the rising of the ego. That is how the adjunct 'I am that', 'I am this' mixes with pure 'I am'. Those who do not have the strength of practice cannot cognise the rise of the ego. When the diving deep is intensified the ability to abide in the state of 'I am' is achieved and with repeated practice self abidance became easy. The seeker now understands that the ego is not the true 'I' and the ego should be destroyed at the place of its rising. The destruction of ego alone is liberation.

The practice of self inquiry would result in the conscious merging of the ego in its source. Such merging may take place in the state of deep sleep, swoon etc. but the individual is not conscious of it. Due to his

latent tendencies the mind may revive again. Conscious merging of this mind in its source leads to conscious immortality.

5.13. Enquiry – an illustration

Sri Ramana often uses the simile of Cinema projection to clarify the process of self enquiry. Sri SadhuOm, the close associate of Muruganar and an ardent disciple of the Maharshi, gives a beautiful illustration of the process of enquiry in his book entitled 'The Path Sri Ramana Part I' by the example of a reflected ray of light. The sunlight that falls on a broken piece of mirror that lies in open space, gets reflected and this reflection falls on the wall of a dark room. The man who is sitting in this room now sees objects by means of the reflected light. In course of time he feels disgusted with seeing objects by this reflected light and decides to find out the source of the ray of light. He fixes his attention on the beam and moves along the straight line of the beam and reaches the place where the mirror lies. As he is at the source of the reflected light, now he is not able to see things with the reflection. He experiences an emptiness created by the non-existence of the reflected light. The sun here stands for the self which is self-luminous in nature and the reflected light stands for the ego, which is the reflection of the self. The disinterestedness of the man to see

objects corresponds to the disinterestedness of the seeker on the path of enquiry to attend to things other than self. The eagerness to see from where the reflected light comes corresponds to the eagerness of the seeker to see the source of the ego. The fixing of the attention of the man to see the source of the reflected light can be compared to the one pointed attention on the 'I' thought to know its source. The man finally reaches the mirror and this corresponds to diving within and reaching the source of the 'I' thought. When the aspirant is so close to his source, the ego ceases to emerge. At this stage he experiences an emptiness created by dissolution of the ego. Just as the man in the open space experienced a void due to the absence of light, the seeker now experiences a void. At this great conjuncture he is guided by the Guru, who reminds him that the dissolution of the ego alone is liberation.

5.14. The effect of self enquiry

Ramana Gita, an authentic record of Sri Maharshi's teachings, gives an account of the effect of enquiry on the body. As long as man identifies himself with the body a place is assigned to the rising of the 'I' thought. The rising place of the ego or the source of consciousness in the body is regarded as the Heart. The body is insentient. Consciousness rises

from the heart and it flows to Sahasrara. From there it flows down to the body through nerve channels. The flow of consciousness to the various parts of the body through nerve channels can be compared to the flow of electricity through the wires. Just like electricity is transmitted through the wires, consciousness spreads the entire body through nerve channels. It is due to this spreading of consciousness that one becomes conscious of his body. The consciousness pervades the entire body and the body is regarded as the self, 'I am the body' idea springs up. This is called bondage or knot. This knot is of two forms - the knot to the nerves and the knot of attachment. The knot to the nerves pertains to the prana and the knot of attachment pertains to the mind. The knot of attachment can be severed only by the annihilation of the mind. Since the source of prana and the mind is the same when the knot of attachment is broken, the knot to the nerves is also severed. The knot of attachment is the basic one and it can be severed only at the dawn of knowledge. The disconnecting of the knot in such a way that it will never revive again is called cutting of the knot.

When one enquires single mindedly does the ego or knot really exist he comes to know that such a knot has never come into being. The ego is ever non-existent, the I am alone is the truth, that which really

exists. The attainment of knowledge that the knot or bondage is non-existent constitute the permanent cutting of the knot.

When the attention is focussed on the 'I' by two devices 'who am I' and 'whence am I' the consciousness scattered through out the body turns back and gets collected in the supreme channel only. This is called the churning of the nadis. When the consciousness is withdrawn from the other channels and is concentrated in the supreme channel alone, then the link with the body is cut and the individual abides in his true state. The one whose knot is cut will never becomes bound again. This is a state of supreme power and peace.

The annihilation of the ego by enquiring 'who am I' is the only way for realising the truth that both bondage and liberation are false. The Ramana way of self attention establishes one in his natural state of bliss, which is the state of real waking. Our real waking state is one in which there is perfect self consciousness and we are aware of nothing apart from the Self. The Maharshi states that this is like waking up from a wandering dream.

....And in the end remember and becomes
 The self, know this is only like
 Awakening from a dream where in
 One has wondered all over the world.⁷⁷

Therefore our natural state, the state of real waking, alone, is the reality. To remain in this state of absolute bliss even without the thought of bondage and liberation in the true service that one can render to Guru Maharshi gives a picture of the rapturous state of self abidance in the following verse: How can the great joy which transcends both bondage and liberation be described. Those who remain thus at all times without any effort on their part are embodiments of purity....⁷⁸

5.15. Obstacles to enquiry

Though self inquiry is extolled as the safest, direct and infallible method for self knowledge, serious obstacles may come in the way of this quest. The first hurdle that has to face is the rising of thoughts. Due to latent tendencies numerous thoughts may arise and this may cause obstruction to the quest and the seeker may experience a sense of defeat and discouragement Sri Ramana consoles the seeker and advises him to continue the enquiry 'who am I' in spite of these disturbing thoughts. He says when such thoughts arise the seekers without trying to complete the thoughts should revert his attention from thoughts to the thinker. In the booklet 'Who am I' he gives instruction regarding the course of action to be followed in the event of such difficulties: "When other thoughts arise

one should not pursue them but should enquire "To whom has this thought arisen? It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should enquire with diligence, "To whom has this thought arisen?" "The answer that would emerge would be to me" ...There upon if one enquires "who am I", the mind will go back to its source, and the thought that arose will become quiescent, with repeated practice in this manner, the mind will develop skill to śāy in its source.⁷⁹

Sri Ramana says that it is like capturing a fort by laying a siege to it. As and when the soldiers come out they were put to death until the fort is captured. Thoughts when they arise should be destroyed at the place of their origin. Muruganar expresses this idea this.

From the mind's fortress held by foes
 Innumerable memories, one by one
 They issue, with wonder weapon
 Of Self enquiry slay each thought
 As it comes out into the open
 Till at last you have retrieved
 The citadel of your own Heart.⁸⁰

Another risk involved in the quest is that self attention may lead to temporary subsidence of thoughts. The seekers may mistake it as the true silence of the self. This temporary stilling of the mind is called manolaya and it is different from the destruction of the mind (manonasa) which is the aim of enquiry. In temporary lulling of the mind the thought waves are stilled for the time being but it may rise up again. To quote Ramana "the laya or temporary lulling and annihilation are two different states. The lulling of shorter as well as longer duration, being temporary, the mind emerges again. The annihilated mind never emerges again."⁸¹ He instructs the seeker to pursue the enquiry 'who am I' if he is overpowered by such stillness. He should enquire 'to whom this quietness occur'. Ramana warns us about the danger of manolaya. Unless the seeker is alert he may fall to the trap of a long trance. In order to bring home the danger of manolaya the Maharshi used to tell the story of a yogi who practised austerities on the banks of Ganges. It is told that the yogi immediately after expressing his wish for some water went on a long trance. When he woke up from his trance after a lapse of several years the first thought that occurred to him is the thought of water Maharshi advises the seeker not to fall into manolaya. Destruction of the mind or manonasa alone is the goal of enquiry.

5.16. Self enquiring – misconcepts and clarifications

The term self enquiry is wrongly understood as the seeking of the one 'I' to realise another 'I'. A division is made between ego and the self, the lower and the higher self; the one seeking to realise the other. The Maharshi emphatically denies this. He asks are there two 'I's in you? The feeling of duality is some thing imaginary. In fact no duality is experienced by any one.

“Are there two selves, the seer and the seen

The experience of all is that the self is one.”⁸²

The ego is not a separate entity. It is only a reflection of the self. The analogy of sun and the moon is given to explain the relation between the self and the mind. Every body knows that sun is self luminous and the moon shines by the borrowed light of the sun. The self is pure consciousness itself, but the ego is insentient. It appears to be conscious due to the reflection of consciousness.

a) Self enquiry is not introspection

In the method of self enquiry the attention of the aspirant is directed inward to the source of the 'I' enquiring from where does this 'I' arise? But this 'looking with' in should not be taken to mean introspection. Sri

Ramana is not concerned with the content of the mind. Hence the enquiry 'who am I' is not considered as a tool for analysing the content of the mind. It is a technique that redirects our attention from thoughts to the thinker.

b) The enquiry 'Who am I' is not a mental questioning

'Who am I' is not to be mistaken as mental questioning. It involves the intense activity of the mind to keep it steadily fixed in its source. Again Ramana makes it clear that 'who am I' is not a mantra. It is not meant for any mental repetition as the repetition of sacred syllables (Japa).

c) Self enquiry is not an intellectual activity

Mind and intellect can not know the self. The self transcends the intellect. Intellect is useful for the analysis of the not-self. Sri Ramana says that, "Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for the 'I-I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime fact and not reason."⁸³

d) Who am I is not meant for an answer

Some seekers would expect a reply to the question 'who am I' in the form 'I am not the body', 'mind', 'intellect' etc and 'I am Atman'. The

Maharshi reminds us that no answer can be anticipated from the enquiry 'who am I' because it would defeat the very purpose of enquiry. To enquire means to fix attention on 'I' to find out its source.

e) Self enquiry is not concentration on the heart centre

Some people misinterpreting Maharshi's teaching ;try to concentrate on the right side of the chest which is regarded as the heart centre. This is not what Ramana recommended. Heart is the seat of pure consciousness in the Physical body but is not itself physical. References to Heart, Heart centre etc. occur in all his writings and recorded conversation. But no where he mentions that self enquiry must be done by concentrating on the centre.

f) Self enquiry is not the rejection of thoughts

In self enquiry the seeker need not reject thoughts one by one as and when it arises. Some people after rejecting one thought by the question 'Who am I' may wait for another thought to come up. This is not the correct form of enquiry. If one clings to the 'I thought' the other thoughts will automatically be vanished,

g. Self enquiry is not a difficult method

Some seekers may complain that the enquiry 'who am I' is a difficult method. Sri Ramana calls it as the easiest of all the methods. The self is with in every body. The individual is asked to dive within. The sage asks what can be easier than going to oneself. He reminds us that it is a joyous endeavour. He asks to pursue enquiry enthusiastically, earnestly and Joyously.

Some may hesitate to do enquiry due to negative thoughts like 'I am impure', 'I am not ready for enquiry' etc. The sage reminds us that it is futile to wait for the day when we become pure. It is as futile as the waiting of a man for the tides to calm down to take a bath in the sea. He says that we need not seek virtues. They will come on their own accord when we progress along the path of self enquiry.

5.17. The Uniqueness of the method of self enquiry

Sri Ramana recognises the efficacy of all traditional spiritual disciplines for the attainment of self knowledge. He even encouraged people to follow their own chosen path, if they are so inclined, due to their long habit or natural disposition. He says:

Each should be allowed to go in his own way, the way for which alone he may be built. It will not do to convert him to another path by violence. The Guru will go with the disciple in his own path and then gradually turn him into supreme path at the ripe moment.⁸⁴

He never dissuaded people from continuing their own course of spiritual effort because he knows that it is dangerous to revert people suddenly to the path of self enquiry which is the direct path. He would remark that when a car is going at a great speed the sudden applying of break would result in disastrous consequences. If every body is asked to follow the path of self enquiry it would result in the loss of faith in their chosen path with out switching over to this direct path.

Remana's replies that 'all paths would equally take to the goal' can not be regarded as ultimate. For him self enquiry alone is the direct path to liberation. All spiritual practices ultimately lead to the enquiry which alone will lead to the path of self abidance. To quote "one pointedness is the fruit of these methods. They ultimately lead to Atma Vichara."⁸⁵

The Maharshi emphatically states that self enquiry is the direct, simple and the easiest of all spiritual practices. Atmavidya proclaims

“For loosening karma's bond and ending birth, This path is easier than all other paths.”⁸⁶

In Upadesa Saram Ramana characterizes it as “the direct path of all.”⁸⁷ Self enquiry is direct because here the enquiry is directed towards the person who does the enquiry. He begins the enquiry by questioning the identity of ‘I’. All other methods are based on the false division between subject and object. They ignore that sense of oneness.

In self enquiry the attention is on the subject. The idea of one’s separate identity is constantly questioned. Ramana Gita states” “Other paths strive to attain some thing, self enquiry seeks the one who makes the effort.”⁸⁸

Further, the attainment of the goal is delayed due to the assumptions of separateness. The four yogas of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana are based on the assumption that the self is afflicted by certain defects and efforts are to be made to remove them. The yogi of action assumes the self to be the doer of actions and thinks that he is bound to suffer their effects. He tries to overcome them by doing actions in the proper way. The yogi of devotion is tempted to think that he is other than God and has to be united to him by devotion. The yogi of mind control

thinks that the self is separated from Reality and seeks union by mind control. The yogi of right understanding thinks that the self is in ignorance and want to remove that ignorance. These notions are illusory and no such individual self exists. When the self is known it is found that it was never bound but is ever free. The seeker of the self starts with this knowledge. When by quest the ego dies it is found that neither these defects nor their remedies have any place in the egoless state. The quest for self (self enquiry) includes all the yogas..

The goal of enquiry is the destruction of the mind and this is achieved easily and quickly. All the other methods are considered to be indirect since they require the retention of the ego. The problem of tackling the ego remains to be solved and the final goal can be attained only when the ego is tackled. Maharshi says that they are all time consuming and round about ways to the goal. These methods are effacious in much as they help to purify the mind and make it one pointed. For such a mind self enquiry becomes easy.

Ramana states that whatever method one follows at last he has to resort to self enquiry if the goal is to be reached.

Whatever the path one may choose, the 'I' is inescapable, the 'I' that does 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 'I' must be found out. Then all questions are solved.⁸⁹

All spiritual effort presupposes the doer the one who makes the effort. One must find out who the doer is. The spiritual practice is complete only if the doer is known. This indicates that ultimately every one has to follow the enquiry 'who am I'. He asks "if in the end all methods lead to self enquiry and if realisation is possible only through enquiry why should not one take to enquiry now itself."⁹⁰

The path of enquiry is holistic, unitary and all comprehensive. It is unitary as it assumes no division between the subject and the object, the ego and the self. This method is all an comprehensive are since it includes all other spiritual practises. Sri Ramana says "The enquiry into the self is inclusive of all-faith, devotion, Jnana, Yoga and all."⁹¹ All these methods resolve themselves in the end to the path of self enquiry.

The restrictions relating to place, person or time are not applicable to self enquiry. Any place or any time is ideal for the practice of Self enquiry. The Garland of Guru's Sayings:

....must constantly remember
 The self. For self enquiry then
 There is no fixed rule of time or place
 ...no time and no place is deemed
 Unfit for self enquiry.⁹²

No external preparations are necessary as in the case of Puja, Japa and dhyana. Anybody can follow the path of enquiry. The Maharshi states "Regulation of life such as getting up at the fixed hour, bathing, doing mantras, japas etc observing ritual all these are for pupil who do not feel drawn to self enquiry or are not capable of it. But for those who can practise this methods all rules and disciplines are unnecessary."⁹³

Self enquiry is the one infallible method of spiritual practice. It will make one undoubtedly established in the self if he is earnest and sincere in his efforts. Ramana assures "Earnest effort never fail Success is bound to result."⁹⁴

More over the quest for self is highly rewarding since he can feel the inner bliss at the earlier states of the quest. Ramana encourages the seekers by his repeated assurance that "Many have cast the inherited tendencies. Believe it. they did so because they could."⁹⁵

Further, he promises "Relief from all sorrows and never ending joy"⁹⁶ all those who pursue self enquiry wholeheartedly. Ramana Gita extols self inquiry as the highest of all accomplishments and also as the cure for all sorrows. It is praised as the most purifying act and as the most meritorious deed.

The method of self inquiry assumes great importance in the context of life's transience. Human life is not only precious but it is very short. Sruti states: "All life without exception is short indeed."⁹⁷ The goal of life can be attained only if efforts are made in the right direction. The direct path of self enquiry saves time, it avoids detours by entering straight to the problem to be solved. It takes man directly to the goal.

Finally, this method is the best suited one to the rational and scientific temperament of modern man. The ancient path of enquiry is now made available to all. The direct path of self enquiry can be regarded as the consummation of all spiritual practices hither to trodden

by the sastras. Thus Ramana enriched and clarified all that is worth while in upanisadic thought and practice through this method of enquiry. He gave a new life and meaning to the traditional wisdom. Sri Sadhu Om remarks: The method of self enquiry fulfils the objective of the sastras and thus revitalising them."⁹⁸

Ramana on Guru, Grace and Effort

Ramana like all other teachers of Vedanta recognised the necessity of a master for a seeker of self knowledge. As long as the individual identifies himself with his body the guidance a master is needed to shed this false identity and find out the truth. Ramana says that "So long as you consider yourself as an individual a Guru is necessary to show you that you are not bound by limitations and that your nature is to be free from limitations."⁹⁹ He makes no distinction between God, Guru and the Self. They are identical. Individual considers himself as the body and consequently he thinks of Guru as a person existing outside him. Ramana says that Guru is within. It is the self. Guru is not only within and but also without. From the exterior he gives a push to the mind to turn inward; and the from the interior he pulls the mind towards the self and helps the mind to achieve quietness. That is Grace."¹⁰⁰

Ramana is of the view that grace of the guru is inevitable for the realisation of truth. Grace is always presents. The following statement shows that importance of grace for the fruition of spiritual effort: "Realisation is due to the masters grace more than teachings, lecture and meditation etc. They are only secondary aids whereas the former is the primary and the essential cause."¹⁰¹

Ramana also reminds the seeker that the master can not bestow realisation on the seeker. He cannot reach the goal unless he puts in necessary effort. He says "your effort is a sine quanon. It is you who should see the sun. Can spectacles and the sun see for you? You yourself have to see your true nature."¹⁰² Effort is needed to ward off intruding thoughts and fix the mind in the self. Beyond this no effort can be made. The Maharshi states: "Effortless and choiceless awareness is ¹an¹esreal nature One can not reach it without effort, the effort of deliberate meditation. All the age long vasanas carry the mind outward and turn it to external objects. All such thoughts have to be given up and the mind turned inward. For that effort is necessary for most people."¹⁰³

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CONCLUSION

Vilasini. K. C. “The philosophy of Sri Ramana Maharshi - a study” Thesis.
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CONCLUSION

Man's nature is pure consciousness which is all pervasive and all inclusive. This is the truth taught by the scriptures. Sri Ramana discovered and confirmed the truth by means of his experience. The advent of Ramana is to remind us that we are not the body as we think ourselves to be. We are all awareness. Truth is nothing but the self. The self alone exists. In his declaration that all are the self¹ he emphasises the fundamental unity of all existence which is the key note of the scriptures. All are essentially one and hence there are no others in his view. Realisation of this essential oneness of all beings demolishes all man made barriers and brings men closer narrowing the gulf existing among nations. All quarrels, rivalry, blood shed in the name of religion, nationality, etc. are proved to be irrelevant. Sri Ramana says "It is utter folly to go on wrangling among ourselves, because we were one in the beginning and shall be one again in the end. Also; this oneness is so thrillingly real that one may say if x wants anything from y, then y can hardly decline because in giving to x, y only gives to himself in the last analysis."¹

But this unity cannot be actualised as long as the sense of separateness or individuality persists. Ramana advises us to give up 'I am the body' idea or 'dehatma buddhi'. The notion 'I am the body' and consequent doership is the cause of all troubles that afflict mankind.

6.1. Self-alienation, and misery

Happiness is said to be the natural state of man. Peace and contentment are his true states. The paradox is that instead of being happy and content he finds his life to be one of miseries. He lives in a state of tension, strife, fear, distress and conflict. He is neither at peace with himself nor with others. Sri Ramana points out that the sense of separateness or alienation is the cause of all afflictions. The individual identifies himself with the body and thinks himself to be a limited being separate from other beings. This separate entity is called the ego. This mistaken identity, identification with a particular name and form and thinking 'I am so and so' is the cause of trouble. Raman warns us that identification is some thing unwarranted and asks us to give up this false identify.

Sri Ramana says "so long as there is a sense of separation, one will be afflicted by thoughts. If the original source is regained

and the sense of separation is ended, there will be peace. Consider what happens when a stone is thrown up: it leaves its source, is projected up, tries to come down and is always in motion until it regains its source, where it is at rest . . . Thus you see that where there is separation from the source, there is agitation and movement until the sense of separation is lost. So it is with yourself. Now you identify yourself with your body and think that you are separate. You must regain your source before this false identification can cease and you can be happy.²

Self alienation or separation from the source is the cause of misfortunes and 'returning to the source' is the remedy suggested by Ramana. Self attention or attention to the first person feeling 'I' is the way to regain the source. Sri Ramana says that man's attention is always externalised, centered on second and third person objects. Unless and until the mind is turned inward and fixed on 'I', peace and happiness can not be attained. Ramana recommends a simple practice of self alienation to restore man to his natural state of abundant peace. To the query "Is there any way to escape from the miseries of the world"?, Sri Ramana categorically asserts that there is a way and the only way to end all

misereries. This is the enquiry who am I. "There is only one way and that consists in not losing the self under any circumstances. To enquire who am I is the only remedy for all the ills of the world. It is also perfect bliss."³

6.2. The importance of self knowledge

The primary task of the individual is to know who he is. Ramana says "The only useful purpose of present birth is to turn within and realise it. There is nothing else to do."⁴ The paramount duty of the individual is to know his true nature and abide as such. He never allowed people to deviate from the central question. He always redirects man's attention to the essential basic question of his own existence.

People are generally interested to know about what happens after death, about past lives and the state of Jnanis etc. Ramana would discourage such enquiries by pointing out the futility such questions. He is of the view that such discussions will lead men away from the goal. Ramana would dissuade them by remarking 'Why do you seek to know the state of others, even if it be of Jnanis. What do you gain by knowing about others? You must know your nature.'⁵

Ramana would always draw one's attention to the essentials, to what is immediately known. The natural inclination of the mind is to seek what is unknown and non-essential, irrelevant to the primary task entrusted with him. He used to remind people 'to mind the business for which they have come'. This instruction though it appears to be simple, is highly significant. It implies that everybody is here for the fulfilment of a higher purpose. The realisation of one's true nature or the knowledge what one is, is the primary duty of every individual. It is the only mission for which he has come. Instead of attending to what is essential if we go on enquiring the non-essentials we miss our mission in life. Hence Ramana reminds us of the need and urgency of knowing our true nature.

Ramana emphatically declares that all knowledge with out the knowledge of the self is sheer ignorance. Ramana exhorts us to find out who the knower is. With out knowing the knower all knowledge is futile. Unless the basic question remains unanswered all that we profess to know is mere ignorance. If the basic question is answered nothing there remains to be unanswered. Maharhi's usual answer to any question was to find out who the questioner is and then ask questions'. The implication is that if the enquiry is directed toward the questioner, the

questioner himself dissolves along with his questions. And finally the individual will be restored to his natural state. Ramana says "To remain with out question or doubt is your natural state."⁶

Self knowledge is the highest pursuit of life. Ramana asks what is the use of conquering the whole world if one does not know who he is. Ramana unmaskes the emptiness of the so-called great achievements of great emperors in his statement that:

The greatest king and states men try to rule others when in their hearts of hearts they know that they can not rule themselves. Yet, the greatest power is at command of the man, who has penetrated to his innermost depth. There are men of giant intellect who spend their lives in gathering knowledge about many things. Ask these men, if they have solved the mystery of men, if they have conquered themselves and they will hang their heads in shame. What is the use of knowing about everything else when you do not know who you are? Men avoid this enquiry about true self but what else is there so worthy to be undertaken.⁷

Thus Ramana brings home the meaninglessness of all pursuits - whether scientific, philosophical, religious or social - if they are not rooted in the knowledge of the self.

Self realisation through self enquiry constitutes the essential teaching of the sage. Though his teaching is mainly practical in its orientation, a theoretical exposition of the truth is also given to assist the understanding and practice of quest. The truths of vedanta form the metaphysical basis of the quest. The metaphysical teachings become superfluous if the seeker is not earnest and sincere in his quest. Mere theory without practice is futile and unproductive.

Sri Ramana maintains that the self, pure consciousness alone is the truth. From this pure consciousness arises 'I' consciousness and from I consciousness emerges body consciousness. What is called the world is a mere thought projection. When devotees asked which path they should follow to attain self knowledge his reply was 'Go back the way you have come' Meaning of this instruction is that thoughts must recede back and sink in consciousness. Consciousness is the source of one's being. The whole universe emerge from consciousness which is the ground of one's being.

6.3. Reflections on the mind

The sage topples down the general belief that mind is the repository of power, energy etc. and from it we derive vitality and zest for life. Mind is considered to possess the powers of thinking, inferring, reasoning, discriminating etc. But Maharshi says that the mind is not the source of these powers. The primary source is the spiritual heart of which the mind is only a reflection.

Maharshi, is very analytical in his treatment of 'mind'. Mind is only a collection of thoughts. All these thoughts revolve round the thought 'I' which is the basic thought. It is the core of individuality. All thoughts belong to I. They can not exist without 'I'. The nature of mind can be understood by holding on to the 'I' thought and tracing back it to its source.

Maharshi is very categorical in his assertion that thoughts have no power of their own. They derive their power and strength from the fact of paying attention to them. Thoughts do not arise unless one attends to them. If the attention is on the thinker, the thought 'I', the other thoughts will vanish for want of attention. The mind then turns inward and experiences the inherent Joy. The purpose of the enquiry 'who am I' is to

turn the mind inward. Self enquiry is tracing the 'I' thought to its source by focussing attention on it. The 'I thought' is of the nature of rising and setting hence it points to a place from where it rises and into which it sets. The I thought rises and sinks into the self which is called the Heart. When the source of ego is enquired into, it will merge back to the source of its origin namely consciousness.

Self enquiry destroys the false notion 'I am the body' and automatically reveals one's true nature. It is this false identification which conceals one's true identity. He says "The idea that one is the body must be uprooted. A flower has to blossom before the bees can enter it. If the petals are closed how can they enter it? similarity if the false notion of individuality is not uprooted how can self knowledge be attained."⁸ Dissolution of the ego or the sense of separate identity is the aim of enquiry. One can not attain self knowledge while he retains his individuality. Sri Ramana says trying to attain self knowledge while holding on to 'I am body idea' is like trying to cross the river on a crocodile. The enquiry into the one's true identity, into the source will lead to the realisation that he is the fullness of consciousness. There all conceptions end in the awareness of the self.

6.4. Effort, Grace and Surrender

Relentless effort at self enquiry is the first requirement for the attainment of the goal. Ramana calls for a total involvement in the quest by using all the inner resources of the individual. He reminds him of the transitoriness of life saying "Remember that your next breath may be the last, focus your attention on self enquiry."⁹ Effort must be made and it should not be given up under any circumstances until the end is achieved. He used to say perfection of effort leads to perfection of result. Sadguru's grace also plays a major role. The inter weaving of Grace and effort gradually leads to self abidance. Constant vigilance at self attention and the grace of Sadguru, interplay to yield the fruit of self knowledge.

Surrender is giving oneself to God or Guru. The disciple must have complete faith in the Guru and accept the wisdom of Guru with out any question. He has to accept the course of events as they turn up with out any question. The disciple must have complete faith because he knows that the Guru knows best of what how and when of things. When the disciple has this total confidence, the Sadguru takes over the charge of protecting him.

Self enquiry and surrender are not two alternative ways of Ramana path. Ramana would say surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of his being, one's source within. That makes you seek the source and merge in it. He would say, "Surrender takes effect only after enquiry."¹⁰

6.5. Realisation – Its Impact

Moksa is not some thing to be attained at a future date. It is a present awareness of oneness, wholeness and egoless freedom which is our true nature.

The inquiry 'who am I' makes one ever abide in the consciousness of his being. Awareness of his true being gives him the initiative to lead a richer and fuller life. His dealings with other people become more healthy and natural. He begins to view things and persons from an entirely new perspective. He is at Peace with himself and with others. Love flows from him naturally and spontaneously. "In the realisation of our true nature, there are no others; There is nothing but love in our relationships consequently there is no envy, hatred misunderstanding in our dealings with other people."¹¹ He radiates peace and happiness

around him. At the wake of self knowledge the individual is no more the limited person, he becomes the fullness of consciousness.

Thus Ramana combines work and wisdom, nullifying the distinction between secular and spiritual endeavours through this method of self enquiry. It provides him zest and enthusiasm for life. He feels free from the burdens of life. He abides in the self ever enjoying the bliss inherent in him.

Ramana shows that in order to get liberation one need not run away from the world. True "renunciation is always in the mind and not in going to forests or solitary places or giving up ones duties."¹² The ego is the one obstacle and if it is rooted out one can experience the happiness inherent in him. He says: "Retirement must be from one place or state to another. There is neither the one nor the other apart from the self. All being the self retirement is impossible or inconceivable."¹³

Sri Ramana points out that self realisation is the greatest help that one can render to society. He says "The help through realisation transcends all help through words, thought and deeds, etc."¹⁴ The world is benefitted by the mere presence of a jnani. The welfare of the world is

the very purpose of their birth. "A self realised being cannot help benefitting the world. His very existence is the highest good."¹⁵

Their presence gives strength to the virtuous, restores dharma and renews life on earth. The mere presence of a Mahatma is a source of strength and inspiration to men. "The physical activities of selfless workers for the good of the humanity need not always be regarded as their own original and unaided work. They are frequently inspired by the spiritual forces generated on the super-physical planes by great sages and saints not perceptible to the physical senses of mankind."¹⁶

The greatest service that a self realised person can render to the society is that he helps the earnest seekers to establish themselves in their natural state. Ramana says "Association with the sages who have realised the truth, removes material attachments. These attachments being removed, the attachments of the mind are also destroyed. Those for whom attachments of the mind are destroyed become one with that which is for ever motionless. They attain liberation while yet alive. Cherish therefore the association with such sages."¹⁷

The number of such realised persons who are world teachers will get multiplied in the manner of the plantain tree as described by the sage.

"Just as a plantain true produce shoots at its roots before yielding fruits and perishing, and the shoots being transplanted do the same, so also the original primeval master of antiquity, Dakshinamurti, who cleared the doubts of his Rishi - disciples in silence. The Guru is the shoot of that Dakshinamurti."¹⁸

Sri Ramana's message is individualistic in its import. His call is to the individual and not the masses. He reminds each individual of the need of knowing his true Being. Great treasure is lying hidden in the inner recesses of one's heart. He says "first open your own box examine its content, count your riches and don't sit there crying I am a penniless, and miserable."¹⁹ His injunction to man is to look within and find out who he is. If that is known man feels free of all troubles that afflicts him. The creator is doing excellent job. He knows how to look after the world.

The sage is very sceptical about the idea of helping others and improving the conditions of the world without self-improvement. He reminds us that before proceeding to help others and solve the problems of the world one should know who he is. The sage asks - "How are you going to help others with out knowing yourself? First of all put your

house in order . . . first try to know who are you in reality, Are you the human body before me now. Know this before you try to help others."²⁰

The Sage's intention is to call man's attention to the primary error of taking oneself to be the body. The noble ideas of social service, helping others etc. are based on this mistaken identity. If the falsity of the notion 'I am the body' is found out by enquiry, his true identity is known. Then who remains there to help others and who is there to receive the assistance. He says that, as long as the notion 'I am the body' exists, differences in outer forms are bound to exist. He says that the sincere works of the social workers to remove class distinctions only resulted in adding some more classes to the already existing ones. Inequalities do exist as long as the ego is not rooted out. Before trying to help others what one needs to do is to win the egoless state. Sri Ramana says "The best way for one to serve the world is to win the egoless state. If you are anxious to help the world but think you can not do so by attaining the egoless state, then surrender to God all the world's problems along with your own."²¹

Sri Ramanas' verdict is "self reform automatically brings about social reform. Confine yourself to self reform social reform, take care of

itself."²² The sage maintains that the attitude of social workers and towards social service is faulty. They go on reforming the world without effecting any reform in themselves. He calls for a change in their attitude. He says reform must begin with ourself.

In order to improve the conditions of the outer world the individual should improve himself. Maharshi says that if every body is working for his own perfection it would lead to the perfection of the world. Hence he ridicules the idea of reforming the world without putting in any effort to win the egoless state, which is one's natural state.

6.6. Maharshi's teaching is matchless

Each world teacher may have a particular mission behind his advent in this world. Each one makes his own contribution depending upon the time, place and need of the hour. Sri Ramana says "teaching of sages are suited to time, place, people and other surroundings."²³ Hence they fulfil their mission in their own peculiar way and it is improper to compare one world teacher with another. It is usual to compare the teachings of the sage with that of Sankara. The Mahrshi's response to such a comparison is: "Maharshi's teaching is only an expression of his own experience and realisation. Others find it tallies with Sri Sankara."²⁴

To compare Ramana with Sankara or with any of the modern teachers is to see him in the wrong perspective. The ultimate truth is eternal and immutable. The truth remains the same but approaches to it may vary depending on the changing conditions of the society. Like all other world teacher's Sri Ramana reveals a new approach to the eternal truth. His approach is unique and original. One devotee observes:

" . . . He had not the support of any accepted thesis on the subject. The enquiry was his own, the way discovered was his own. He discovered much later that he had come to the same conclusion that the scriptures and the experiences of others in the same line had arrived at from time immemorial."²⁵

6.7. The Eternal Message

Ramana is timeless and his teaching is eternal. The timeless character of Ramana and his message is vouch safed in his proclamation that "they say I am dying but I shall be more alive than before."²⁶ The flame of spiritual awareness kindled by the Maharshi did not come to an end with the death of his bodily form. It will continue to glow more brilliantly in the years to come. Ramana is eternal because he is the self, being established in the self he has attained immortality. His message

also has the timeless character because having rooted in the self what he has taught is the eternal truth. The message he communicated through silence is more powerful than all the scriptures put together. It will become more and more eloquent with the passage of time.

He assures his continued guidance in his statement "I am not going away. I am here. Where I can go."²⁷ The relationship between guru and disciples is a continuous one. If some has one received his grace he can not escape from the tiger like grip of Ramana. He guides the seekers who have received his grace and those who evoke his grace to take up the inner quest. The prey can never escape from the 'tiger's jaw'. He holds the prey tightly and let it go only when it is ripe and ready for the highest goal. Ramana and his message will live till the end of human race.

6.8. Sri Ramana, the Upanisadic Sage of Modern India

The core of what Maharshi taught is the wisdom of the Upanisads. He never based his teaching on the upanisads nor he derived inspiration from them. And what Maharshi had done is not a restatement of the upanisadic doctrine. His teaching is based on his steady self abidance. It derives its authority from his direct experiences of the truth. For a Jnani

no authority other than his experience is need. He is the higher authority. The scriptures describe and name what he himself had experienced.

Sri Ramana constructed no system of thought. He neither founded any religion nor effected any change in the existing ones. His words are not expository but relevatory. He does not belong to a particular religion or particular school of thought. He is a jnani of the highest order and is not bound by any 'isms'. Every word he uttered is like a mantra and every word is Scripture. He is a sage who belongs to the classical tradition of India, yet thoroughly modern. Paul Brunton observes: "The serene figure of this living Sage brings the legendary figures of his country's ancient rishis nearer to me."²⁸ The method he discovered is thoroughly scientific suited well to the needs of modern man.

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APPENDIX - A

IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE MAHARSHI

Sl. No.	Events	Year
1.	Birth at Tiruchuzhi	1879 Dec. 30
2.	Enlightenment	1896 July 17
3.	Reached Arunachala	1896 Sept. 1
4.	At Gurumurtham	1897
5.	Virupaksha years	1899-1916
6.	Meeting of Ganapathi Muni with Ramana	1903
7.	Ganapathimuni proclaimed and christened as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi	1907
8.	Second death experience	1912
9.	Visit of Narayana Guru	1917
10.	Period at Skandasram	1916-1922
11.	Moved to Mothers Samadhi at the southern slope of the hill	1922
12.	Ramasramam (beginning)	1922 Dec.
13.	Meeting of Muruganar	1923
14.	Paul Brunton met the Sage	1931
15.	Mahasamadhi	1950 April 14

APPENDIX - B

LIST OF IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS RECORDED

Sl. No.	Important conversation	Year
1.	Conversation with Humphry's recorded in the psychic gazette	1911
2.	Ramana Gita	1913-1917
3.	The Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi	1935-1939
4.	The Garland of Guru's Sayings	1923-1950
5.	Day by Day with Bhagavan	1945-1947
6.	More talks with Ramana Maharshi	1935-1950
7.	Letters to Ramanasram	1945-1950

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