

The Deathless State

-Bhagavan Ramana's death experience



Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi left his mortal body on 14 April 1950 at 8.47 pm. However, the passing of his physical body has no impact on his existence. He had attained Immortality, the deathless state, as a young boy of 16 years.

The body dies, but there is a deathless spirit in our hearts, which exists independent of the body. Bhagavan Ramana attained that Ultimate State of Supreme Bliss through his "death experience" and in just a few minutes he was transformed from an ordinary school boy into an immortal saint.

This incident which completely turned the course of his life took place on 16 July 1896 when he was living with his uncle in Madurai and studying in high school. He was alone in the upstairs room of his uncle's house when a sudden violent fear of death overcame him, in spite of good health. The shock drove his mind inwards and he said to himself mentally without actually framing the words: "Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies." He at once dramatized the occurrence of death. The breath was stilled, the heart stopped and blood froze, and the entire body became stiff like a corpse; yet he could

feel the full force of his existence apart from the body. He experienced that he was the supreme spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit cannot be touched by death. All this was not dull thought; it flashed through him vividly as living truth which he perceived directly, almost without thought-process. Fear of death vanished once for all.

There is something deep inside that exists even after the death of the body, that 'I' which is independent of the body, mind, intellect and also world; that One Being which remains after removing all these. Through the death experience he was granted the certainty he was not limited to the body, but he was the all-pervading and eternal Self - a state that cannot be put into words nor understood by our limited minds, but can only be experienced.

The undying spirit has neither birth nor death; it is the embodiment of peace, joy and happiness. It is beyond being and non-being. Bhagavan attained a state which is above being and non-being. All incarnations are a part of this world, but Bhagavan went beyond creation and he became bodiless, mindless and wordless also.



What is noteworthy is that without hearing about Brahman or the Immortal Self before, he was established in it naturally. Previous to that incident he had no knowledge of the deathless spirit and Supreme bliss that existed in his heart. He did not hear about it nor did he contemplate on it. He felt no direct interest in it, and was not consciously attracted to it much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it. Yet he reached that Ultimate state with the Grace of Arunachaleswara. It became clear to him that there is no connect at all between the body, mind, world and the immortal Self. He never read any spiritual texts but experienced this directly.

The Ultimate Knowledge, which the entire human race is pursuing and trying to achieve from time immemorial, through science, philosophy, intellectual exercises and rigorous spiritual practices, took him into its fold naturally and enveloped him, without any effort from his side. It released him from the body bound I and made him universal; and in just a few moments he became a *Sukhi* (Blissful One). There is no one other than Bhagavan Ramana in this world who attained this Supreme State without ever knowing about it, and neither hearing nor contemplating on it. This is a unique phenomenon in the entire spiritual history.

Why he was chosen for this Supreme state is a Divine secret probably known only to the Gods. It is beyond human understanding, and beyond human intellect.

Following his death experience, dependence on everything external dropped away. He became detached from the body, mind, surroundings, world and everything that was not his Being. Whether talking, reading, or doing anything else, he was always centered within, on that supreme self, and his absorption in it remained unbroken.

Immediately after, he was drawn from his home by the power of Arunachala where he stayed for the remaining 54 years of his life and graced mankind with his wisdom. Thousands came seeking his guidance, and experienced his love and compassion which extended to all living things including birds, animals and also trees. He was available to devotees at all times, day or night.

Though Bhagavan laid the greatest emphasis on self-enquiry and the path of *Jnana*, he was also a great devotee. His first act on arriving at Arunachala

was to rush to the temple of Arunachaleswara and totally surrender himself at the Feet of his Father. His identification with Lord Arunachaleswara was so complete that he never felt the need to visit the temple again.

If any attachment to anything could be said of him, it was truly an attachment to the Arunachala Hill. He loved it, said it was God Himself, the Spiritual Heart or Centre of the Earth. He loved wandering along its slopes, and once remarked there was not a spot on the Hill where he has not set his foot.

He left the physical body after enduring a terrible suffering caused by malignant tumour on the elbow of his left arm, silently and without complaint for over a year. He was totally unaware of pain, and would say that he was reminded that there is this body and it has two hands, and that there is a tumor on one hand only when he is told about it.

Moments before the end came; a group of devotees sitting outside the room where he lay began singing "Arunachala Siva". Bhagavan's eyes opened and shone. He gave a brief smile of indescribable tenderness. He gazed towards Arunachala and tears of bliss rolled down his eyes. One more deep breath and no more; no struggle, no spasm, no other sign of death, only that the next breath did not come. At that very moment, an enormous star trailed slowly across the sky and disappeared behind the holy Arunachala Hill; and many saw it at the same time in several parts of India.

He would repeatedly assure that while people said he is dying, he was not going away. "Where could I go? I am here" he would say implying that the end of his body will not interrupt the grace and guidance. Clearly he is the all-pervading and eternal Self.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaaya!

(Compiled from a transcription of Sadguru Nannagar's Discourse & other sources on Ramana Maharshi)

- Sreedevi p.

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