

BRAHMAM ALONE EXISTS!

**(A Translation of the Original
"Unnadi Brahmamokkate")**



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“*Unnadi Brahmamokkate*”)

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JINNURU

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(A translation of the original “*Unnadi Brahmamokkate*”)

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“The material world and *Brahmam* (the Ultimate Reality/Eternal Truth) do not exist separately. *Brahmam* alone exists! When we are in ignorance, *Brahmam* itself is seen as the world. When *Brahmam* is seen as *Brahmam*, there is no world.”

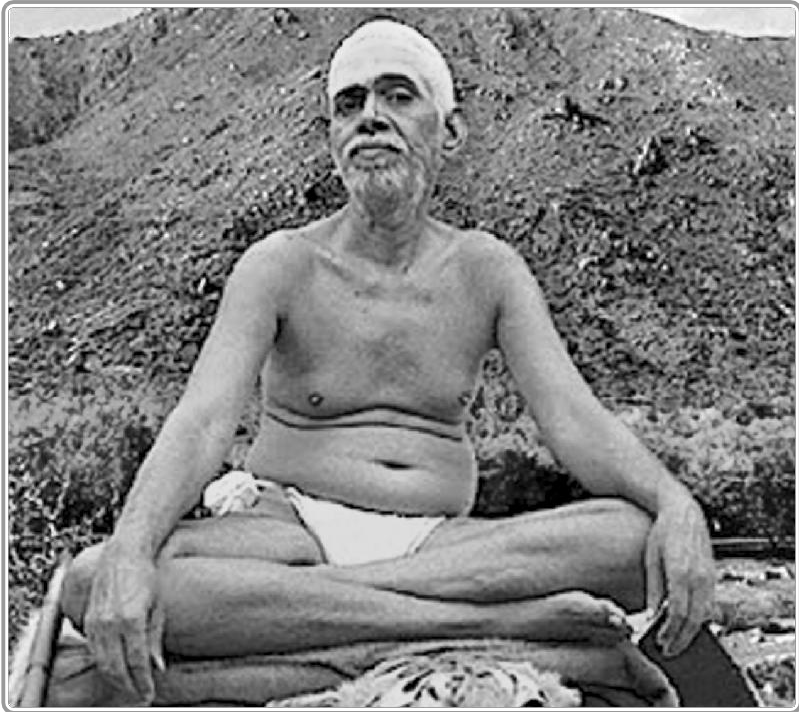
- **Sadguru Sri Nannagaru**



OBEISANCES TO THE GURU

*Dakshinamurthy samaarambham
Sankaraacharya madhyamaam /
Asmadaachaarya paryanthaam
Vande guru paramparaam //*

*Om Brahmanandham paramasukhadam
kevalam jnana murtim
Dvandvaateetam gaganasadrusham
tatvamasyaadi lakshyam /
Ekam nityam vimalamachalam
sarvadhee saakshibhootam
Bhaavaateetam trigunarahitam
sadgurum tam namaami //*



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SADGURU SRI NANNAGARU'S BLESSINGS

The spiritual discussions held in Kothagudem in the month of February 2010 have been successfully brought out in the form of the book “*Unnadi Brahmamokkate*”. K.V. Ramana Garu who compiled the text; J.S.V. Prasad Garu and Sudheer Garu, resident of Arunachalam, who have edited the content will always have the blessings of Lord *Arunachaleswara*. Prasad Garu provided valuable suggestions to Ramana garu in putting the book together. Prasad garu is highly educated, knowledgeable and a positive thinker. He is very committed and does complete justice to whatever work he is involved in. Ramana garu is close to my heart and belongs to the family of Bhagavan Ramana.

The goal of all spiritual aspirations (*yoga*) is to bring oneness in duality and that ONE alone is *Brahmam*. The words in this book will show the way to enlightenment and peace. This book will be an aid to many truth seekers in their efforts to attainself-realization.

My blessings to Lakshmi garu who helped in various ways in publishing this book.

Sri Nannagaru
Jinnuru



FOREWORD

Worshiping the traditional lineage of The *Gurus* should be our first and main purpose. The best way to show our reverence towards them is to recall and reflect on their invaluable teachings. As stated in *Sri Guru Gita* “The *Guru* is the primordial source for everything. There is no philosophy, no penance and no wisdom that surpasses the *Guru*. The supreme God himself manifests in a human body taking the name of ‘*Guru*’ and moves on the earth incognito”.

Sweet are the words of a few. Gracious are the looks of a few. Compassion is the nature of a few. The heart is filled with love in a few. Selfless is the love of a few. Humility is characteristic of a few. Priceless is the acquaintance of a few. Delightful is the company of a few. We may find some of the above qualities in a few people, but finding all the above qualities consolidated in one individual is unusual. One such remarkably great person is “Sadguru Sri Nannagaru”.

“For 50 years Ramana had been the central driving force of my life. His life and teachings have influenced me significantly. He bestowed me with inner sight. He molded me as a truth seeker”, these were the humble words of Bhupatiraju Venkata Lakshmi Narasimha Raju, who is addressed lovingly as Nannagaru by his devotees.

“Educating the illiterate and bestowing spiritual knowledge on them is my goal”, states Sadguru Sri Nannagaru, a *karma yogi* (tireless and selfless worker) whose *jnana yagnas* (spiritual discourses) continued ceaselessly.

I have been associated with Sri Nannagaru for over ten years. I experienced an undefinable peace in his presence during my first visit itself. Thereafter, the peace within me continued to grow whenever I met him. Gradually, as I listened to the words uttered by Sri Nannagaru, the *jijnaasa* (desire to know) increased.

We requested Sri Nannagaru to bless us with an opportunity to serve him by visiting our home, and those eagerly awaited blissful moments arrived eventually. He visited us in February 2010 at our home in Kothagudem to our great joy and blessed us with his priceless teachings. I placed before him all the questions that arose in me while reading the teachings of enlightened souls such as Ashtavakra, Janaka and Sri Sankara. Only a *jnani* (realized soul) can interpret for us the inner essence of another *jnani*. The inner essence in the teachings of those *mahatmas* (great souls) was imparted by Sadguru Sri Nannagaru in His unique style of instruction, in a simple language. This book is a written record of that instruction.

To state the purpose of this book in Sri Nannagaru’s words: “We came into this world with the

primary goal of realizing the Self. Hence, instead of tormenting the mind with worldly thoughts, we should pursue *sadhana* (spiritual practice) either through single pointed devotion, self-enquiry or other methods, to annihilate the mind and attain our original state, which is bliss. Irrespective of the path we pursue, we shall ultimately arrive at *jnana* (self-realization). You may think that you and God exist separately in the initial stage, but ultimately you will realize that everything is only God and you have no existence. In the interim, anything that appears apart from the *brahman* (supreme Self) is *samsara* (transient worldly state). The spiritual teachings of *Advaita* (philosophy of non-duality) should be practiced, through focussed listening, recollection and meditation, to be released from sorrow and to attain *Brahmananda* (Ultimate Bliss).” This book aims to present the teachings of Sri Nannagaru to spiritual aspirants and guide them on the spiritual path.

The book has 8 chapters; and each chapter contains many valuable teachings and insights. Sri Shankaracharya said in *Vivekachoodamani* “*Mananam* (recall and reflection) is a hundred times better than *sravanam* (listening)”. Hence, at the end of each chapter, the summary of that chapter has been given under the title “Points to remember and contemplate.”

My humble prostrations to the holy feet of Sri Nannagaru for giving me this priceless opportunity of compiling and editing his teachings into this book form.

The commissioner of endowments Sri J.S.V. Prasad garu took a lot of responsibility and played a key role in bringing Sri Nannagaru's teachings into this book form and molding it into a useful guide to truth seekers. I am especially grateful to him for participating in this *jnana yagna* (spiritual mission) despite his hectic work schedules in his official role.

Several others supported in various ways and were instrumental in bringing out the book in this beautiful form. Employees of Singareni institution Sri Ramana Garu, Sri Moulana Garu, and Sri Krishna Swami Garu helped with compiling the text; Sri Sudheer Garu and Srimati Swarajya Lakshmi garu offered excellent suggestions to improve the text; my wife Srimati Eswari is a constant support; and several other great souls helped in various ways in this *jnana yagnam* (spiritual mission). I convey my heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

Practicing and implementing the teachings of Sri Nannagaru is the only way we can repay Him. It is the only *gurudakshina* we can offer. It is my heartfelt desire and prayer that everyone should succeed in the effort.

K V RAMANA

Note from the translators:

- ★ We made a humble attempt to translate the original version of “*Unnadi Brahmamokkate*” from Telugu to English.
- ★ Sentences are all not always grammatical in the attempt to translate as close to the Telugu text as possible, with our primary focus on the essence of his teaching.
- ★ We attempted to keep the translation of words and spellings uniform across the chapters, to the extent possible.
- ★ We do not have the skills for professional editing; we apologize for any errors in our attempt to translate this priceless work.
- ★ We are grateful to Rohini, Sandhya, Usha and several others who encouraged us and gave valuable suggestions to fine-tune and complete the work.

Devotees of Sri Nannagaru Sunil and Sreedevi (Baby)

**OM SRI NANNA
PARAMAATMANE NAMAHA**



1. THE WORLD IS EQUAL TO A WEB OF ILLUSION

Kothagudam

7 February 2010

Question: *Prostrating to the lotus feet of Sri Nannagaru, may I request him to explain the subject-matter below.*

- 1) King Janaka said this in Ashtavakra Gita.
*aho cinmātramevāham indrajālopamam jagat
iti mama katham kutra heyopadeyakalpana
- Ashtavakra Gita 7-5*

Meaning :

I am solely a jnanaswaroopa (manifestation of Ultimate Truth). This world is equal to a web of illusion. So how and from where do the thoughts of acceptance and rejection come?

- 2) Nannagaru said yesterday “If we see a cinema shooting in progress, we will not feel like watching the cinema anymore”.
- 3) Sri Sankaracharya said “Brahmam is Truth and the world is myth”.

4) *This world is equal to a web of illusion and unreal, and as in a cinema all that is happening is not real – if we understand this through experience and not as a mere thought, how will this state be like?*

Sri Nannagaru :

1) *You have referred to the words from Ashtavakra Gita-*

“I am solely a jnana swaroopa (manifestation of Ultimate Truth). This world is equal to a web of illusion. So how and from where do the thoughts of acceptance and rejection come?”

The world is equal to a web of illusion. It is a fact, whether you are aware of it or not. Even if we don't know it, the world is still an illusion.

“I am solely a jnana swaroopa” – here *jnana* does not mean worldly knowledge. There is a Truth in our heart. That Truth is independent of time and space; and has no relation to our mind and body. When we are able to identify with the Truth, just as we now identify with our body and mind, we will attain *Jnana*. *Jnana* is not the worldly knowledge we usually refer to. If we discover something new with our mind, it is only worldly knowledge! Even though we are not aware of it, there is a Truth in our

heart, which is unrelated to the body and mind. We must become one with that Truth, and we should not be separate from that Truth. When we say “I” we are conscious of the body. If you experience the Divine Truth in your heart when you say “I”, it is *Jnaanaswaroopa*, the Ultimate Reality. This is not relative knowledge. The information that you gather with the mind is called material knowledge. While material knowledge will aid your understanding to some extent, it is not useful for Self-Realization. In *Bhagavata purana*, Prahlada says “All our education is limited to the body.” There is a saying “The sole aim of all skills and education is to earn your food/livelihood.”

Janaka says “*How and from where do the thoughts of acceptance and rejection come to me?*” Right now, we have no identification with the Truth. In case we have identification with the Truth, then that is *Jnana Swarupa* (Realized Self). Then there is nothing separate from us, and so there is no illusion of acceptance and rejection. What exists is only One! That One is perceived by us as many forms. Here, we must understand that when we have no identification with our true Self, we identify with what we are not. As long as we have that false identification, there will be *kalpana* (illusion). Acceptance and rejection are aspects of duality.

Truth is one. There is no duality in it. But we do not have the experience of that Oneness. So, we are in duality. Though we have made *Advaita*, the experience of Oneness, as our goal, we continue to live in duality. We are not able to perceive that Oneness in everyone. When we can perceive that Oneness, we will know ‘That’ as the Truth. We are now in the state of body consciousness. When I identify with my body, I see you also as another body. Thus, there are two and duality is created. We generally go through our life in duality. When Oneness is experienced, nothing exists apart from you. Then there is nothing to accept or reject. When we identify with what we are not, the feelings of acceptance and rejection arise.

That is why our sages say, see yourself first and then see the world; then the world will not appear separate from you. Then there will be nothing to accept or reject. Though everything is “One”, because of our body consciousness we perceive the world as separate from us. As long as we identify ourselves with the false entities called BMI (Body, Mind and Intellect), we are bound to have the feeling of acceptance and rejection. Neither of these three is the “I”. The divine presence in your heart is the true I / Self.

In deep sleep we are separated from the world, body, mind, intellect, our family, and everything else. In

deep sleep we are in Oneness, but we are not aware of it. When we have the awareness of that Oneness, then there is nothing to accept or reject. That is why deep sleep is also our guide. We don't lose our existence in deep sleep; we definitely exist. In the state of sleep, there is neither acceptance nor rejection. If that state of deep sleep can be experienced when we are awake, then there will be nothing to accept or reject. That is the state of *jeevanmukthi* (liberation from birth and death).

The mind arises when we wake up. The source of the mind is our true Self. As soon as the mind arises, we identify with the body, which is not our real self. We then indulge in accepting and rejecting. But when the mind is eliminated, we merge with the true Self in our heart. Then, even when we are awake, we have no thought of either accepting or rejecting the various objects, persons, and situations in this world.

2) *“If we see a cinema shooting in progress, we will not feel like watching the cinema anymore”.*

Ignorant people look at the painted faces and fancy clothes of the actors in a cinema and think that they are wonderful and beautiful. But when they see them in person during a cinema shooting, they realize that it is not real beauty but only make-up, and they lose their attraction

for them. Those who are in spiritual practice should avoid going to cinemas. It is not healthy for their senses and nervous system. Doctors also advise that it is not good to watch too much television as it can lead to heart problems.

Even in hotels, if we watch how food is prepared in the kitchen, we will not feel like eating there. In some places they knead the dough with their feet!

Once Vemana said “From birth to death, you are looking at the world; you must look within yourself”. One who is not accustomed to looking within cannot become a good *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker). He cannot overcome sorrow and attain bliss.

3) *You quoted Sri Sankaracharya, “Brahmam is Truth and the world is myth”.*

Sankaracharya stated an additional point, the third sentence in his quotation. “The world is also true as *Brahmam* (Ultimate Truth).” That is, the world is an illusion when seen as the world; but when the world is seen as the Divine manifestation, *Brahmam*, it is real.

A candy bird is made of sugar; but you see the form of the bird. The bird is real as sugar but it is unreal when seen in the name and form of a bird, which means it is a myth as name and form. Similarly, the world is also a myth in terms of names and forms.

Only Sankaracharya stated the third point; no one else tells this. The reason being the mind would go astray if they say the world is real. It will not turn inwards and become introverted unless it sees the world as unreal. Only after the mind merges with the Self, the world can be seen as *Brahmam* (divine manifestation). Until then it cannot be seen or experienced. What happens when the bubble in the ocean bursts? It merges and becomes one with the ocean. That bubble is real as the ocean; but it is unreal as a bubble. Similarly, the world is true as *Brahmam* but false as names and forms. If we look at the world as *Brahmam* we will not fall into delusion (maya). Names and forms are the source of all delusion. There are some bodies/persons in your house. Because you identify with your body and think it is real, the other bodies also appear real. Because you are attached to your body, you have attachment to the other bodies. When you lose fondness for your body, you will lose fondness for those bodies as well and become detached.

Name and form are the cause of disturbance and sorrow. If we stop looking at people in our house as names and forms, but see them as *Brahamam*, it will not make any difference to us even if that body dies, because they are *Brahmam* itself. All names and forms arise from the *Brahmam* and again merge with the *Brahmam*. When the names and forms disappear, you return to that original state of being that existed before the names and forms arose. If

one stops looking at the world as names and forms, and see it as *Brahmam* itself, there will be no cause for sorrow.

Every name and form is a cause of sorrow.

A human being comes into this world with a form; then he will be given a name. After that he will be involved in some activities; and he claims that he performed those activities. From that point the ego arises. He identifies completely with his form/body. When his boss at work tells him that he has done a great job, it brings him pleasure. The pleasure comes because he identifies himself with his body. Because he performs the task with his body, he takes pleasure from the praise for his task. When he realizes that he is not the body, he will not be affected, whether the boss praises or condemns him; he will be neither pleased nor unhappy. That is, he will not be disturbed by either the flattery or criticism that comes from this world. He then slowly becomes distanced and detached from the world.

The wave that arises from the ocean is true as water, but not true as a wave. The wave arises from the ocean and merges again in the ocean. It oscillates within the ocean; everything that happens is within the ocean itself. Likewise, the whole creation is happening in *Brahmam*. All the names and forms arise from *Brahmam* and merge in *Brahmam* itself.

You are fond of the children in your home. Why do you like them? You love your body and they are related to your body. As long as you are attached to your body, you will have attachment for all those related to your body. Because you believe your mind and body to be real, you believe that their minds and bodies are also real.

The relative knowledge that we acquire from college and universities contains three parts: the learner, that which is learnt, and the act of learning. How can these three be the truth? They are untruths, but all these appear as truth so long as we are not aware of our true Self. Bhagavan used to say “You may think the world is true; even though you believe it to be true, it is still untrue”.

Saadhana (spiritual practice) is not a normal and simple matter. You must first have love for the thing that you want to know and attain. You don't need to invest any money in *jnana* (Divine Knowledge), you just need the desire to know. *Sadhakas* (spiritual seekers) should have the desire to know the truth directly. Poets and writers give a lot of descriptions; and they don't come to the actual matter directly. But scientists don't do that; they have a direct approach. For example, to say “Lakshmi is beautiful”, poets will say “Beauty is walking on earth in the form of Lakshmi”. That is the poets' approach; they never say anything directly and clearly. Scientists like Newton and

Einstein, who have the intellect to grasp the actual matter directly, are also great devotees. They are not devotees to any name and form; they are devotees to the cosmic consciousness.

Newton said, “There is something that supports creation. You hold the tongs with your hand, but the tongs cannot hold your hand. That which supports creation can hold the creation, but the creation cannot hold That.”

Newton also said “*Brahmam* exists on its own”. You cannot find *Brahmam* with your mind. You may try to find it, but it does not reveal itself. Do not think that it does not exist, just because it has not revealed itself. The Divine Self is pure, focused and unique, and will not reveal itself until the seeker becomes equally pure and still, and completely surrenders to the Divine Self. For that spiritual practice must be done.

That which we are pursuing is not inanimate. An inanimate object is one which is not aware of its existence.

Ramana Maharshi did not know that something called *Brahmam* existed. He neither read any books nor did he hear about it. So how does the desire to know arise when you are not even aware of it? It means that he already completed some spiritual practice in his previous births.

The point is “Everything happens in its own time”. Every incident in our lives happens only when the time comes for it to happen. We should wait until that time comes. In the meantime, even if you worry, it will not happen. So, we should not spoil our health!

The ripened fruit falls from a tree. How much time does it take for the fruit to fall? The falling happens in a few seconds, but it takes several months for the fruit to grow and ripen. Similarly, our *sadhana* (spiritual practice) takes some time and its due course; as soon as the practice matures (is ripened), the mind will drop into the heart cave. It is said in the *Kathopanishad*, “*That* which you want to know should also want to reveal itself to you”.

*nā yamā tmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā
na bahunā s'rutena |
yamesvais.a vr.n.ute tena labhyastasyais.a ā tmā
vivr.n.ute tanū m̄ svā m̄ || 23 ||*

- *Katha Upanishad Verse 1.2.23*

“*Atma* cannot be attained by study of the Vedas, or by the intellect, or with knowledge. It will be attained only by the one whom it chooses/selects; and to that one the *atma* reveals its true nature.”

It means that *atma* will choose to reveal itself to you if you qualify for it. If you do not deserve it, it will not

be revealed to you. It is not enough that you think you deserve it. That which you want to know, should recognize that you qualify and deserve it. Though Ramana Maharshi did not know anything, it came into his awareness because the time had come. Our effort can go only upto the extent of acquiring the required qualification to know the Truth. Even after we qualify, we will not know it. The Divine Truth should reveal itself to us. This is the most crucial point, because the Divine Truth is not something that can be grasped by our intellect. *Brahmam* is not like the things that scientists grasp and understand using their intellect and intelligence.

We see pictures/images on a screen. The screen on which we see the images is real, but the images are unreal. In a cinema you are shown a scene where it rains heavily and the people in the cinema get wet, but the screen does not get wet. Similarly, all the emotions and reactions in this world will not touch *Brahmam*. When children see a fire or a storm on the cinema screen, they think it is real; likewise all the incidents that happen in the world seem real to us.

Spiritual seekers who lived in Ramana Ashram would visit the town and on their return they would tell Bhagavan about the incidents and quarrels that occurred there. Bhagavan would retort, “the problem is not the incident or quarrel that occurred, the fault is yours for going

there” It means that true seekers should not go to unworthy/ undesirable places; they should always be alert and use discrimination (always have discriminative knowledge). It is said in the *Kathopanishad*, “A true spiritual seeker should be as alert and careful (cautious) as one who walks on a razor’s edge.”

*uttisṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata |
kṣurasya dhārā nisṛjita duratyaya durgam
pathastatkavayo vadanti || 14 ||*

- *Kathopanishad Verse 1.3.14*

“Arise! Awake! Seek and find that excellent teacher and experience the *atma*. The path is sharper than a razor’s edge; it requires great effort to follow and stay on that path, and the goal is hard to reach, say the wise.”

The Divine Truth is not an object for discussion. It is to be experienced. For that the seeker should have the necessary discrimination and the wisdom to distinguish between mortal and immortal.

Sri Sankaracharya said “*Brahmam* is real and the world is illusion”. He also said, “the world is unreal in the form of the world, but it is true as *Brahmam*.” It is unreal as the name and form, but it is real as *That* which is the source of name and form. A necklace is unreal as a necklace, but it is real as gold. When in ignorance, *Brahmam* is seen

as the world; but when you attain ultimate knowledge *Brahmam* will be seen as *Brahmam*.

Question: *The world came out of Brahmam itself, is that not so?*

Sri Nannagaru:

There is no coming and going. It is wrong to say that the world came from *Brahmam*. When we are in ignorance, *Brahmam* itself appears as the world.

If you perceive the necklace as gold, then where is the necklace? The necklace did not come out of gold; the necklace is made of gold. Similarly, *Brahmam* is imagined by the mind as world. If the necklace comes out of gold, then there will be two things. In fact, both the necklace and the gold are only gold; one thing only. Out of gold a necklace has been created. When the idol of Lord Rama is carved out of wood, you will see Rama in the wood.

The plurality in the world gives rise to everything else including desire, anger, fear etc. If *Brahmam* is seen as *Brahmam* itself, then there is no world and there are no problems.

4) The wave is unreal as a wave, but the wave as water is real. The *Jnani* (realized Soul) sees the wave as water, but we see it as a wave. That leads to attachment and disturbances.

The candy bird is untrue as a bird but is true as the sugar syrup. But we do not see it that way. If we perceive it as sugar syrup, we will lose attraction for the bird. A *Jnani* sees things as they are, without the name and form. Thus, there is no attraction for external objects. So, it is said that “every name and form is a cause of sorrow”. Today these names and forms may seem to be good, but in consequence they will bring sorrow.

Sri Aravind Ghosh too had poetic tendencies. He is a philosopher and is also a qualified ICS. Referring to spiritual practice he once said, “Do nothing, Think nothing and Feel nothing that would be unworthy of the Divine Presence”. So, the fact of the matter is that you should not do wrong, you should not let wrong/bad thoughts or feelings come to you, because they become obstacles to your spiritual progress.



POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. The world is equal to a web of illusion. The fire and the storm that you see in a cinema appear real; similarly, all the happenings in the world appear real.
2. There is a divine Truth in our heart. It is unrelated to the mind and body. We should become one with that Truth; and that is *Jnanaswarupa* (manifestation of Ultimate Truth). Then there will be nothing apart from us; and the thoughts of acceptance and rejection will not arise.
3. *Brahmam* is real and the world is unreal; but the world as manifestation of *Brahmam* is real.
4. Every name and form is a cause of sorrow. It is these names and forms that bring suffering and disturbance to a person. If the world is seen as all-pervading *Brahmam*, there will be no place for sorrow.
5. Spiritual seekers should always have discriminative knowledge. They should be alert and very careful (cautious) during their quest for Truth.

2. THINKING OF SENSUAL OBJECTS IS EQUAL TO POISON

Kothagudam
7 February 2010

Sri Nannagaru :

As King Dasaratha was childless, he performed the “*Putrakameshti Yagna*” - a ceremonial worship and sacrifice to appease the Gods and bless him with children. Sage Rishyasringa assisted him with the procedure. In ancient lore, Rishyasringa’s hermitage is said to be in the town Sringeri and his samadhi (grave) is on a mountain there. Hence that place has been named Sringeri. Rishyasringa’s mother died when he was two years old. His father, Sage Vibhandaka was a great sage and ascetic. He did not want his son to go through the troubles associated with married life like him. Rishyasringa may develop a desire to marry after he grew up, and it would be difficult to curb the desire at that stage. So, he raised his son without letting him see any women. He did not involve him in any worldly activities and took care of all the household tasks like cooking, getting groceries etc. by himself. Thus, the Great Sage Vibhandaka raised Rishyasringa without letting him see any women.

During that time a great king called Romapaada was ruling over the kingdom of Anga. There was famine in the country and the king was distressed. Scholars well versed in the scriptures and Vedas advised him to find a way to bring Sage Rishyasringa into the kingdom, because his presence would bring rains wherever he went. This was due to the power of Rishyasringa's celibacy in addition to the blessing of the Gods on him. King Romapaada asked his priests and ministers to bring Rishyasringa to his kingdom. But they refused to go, fearing the wrath of Sage Vibhandaka. So the king dispatched women who were attractive and skilled in singing and dancing and brought Rishyasringa to his kingdom. The rains came as soon as he entered the kingdom of Anga. King Rompadha was very happy; and recognizing the greatness of Rishyasringa, he gave his daughter Santha in marriage to him.

Rishyasringa's father did not bring him up the right way. He thought he could avoid problems by keeping his son in ignorance. That is not correct. God's plan was different. Nothing is gained by rearing a child in innocence. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had a better way of training his disciples. He would explain the nature of lust and what it brings, and then teach them ways to overcome it. One should not think that desire will not arise if a person is brought up without seeing any women. These desires will arise naturally as soon as they see them.

We understand from the story of Rishyasringa that thoughts of sensual objects are like poison and the mind should be trained to remain undisturbed in the presence of all sensual pleasures and attractions even when they are within our reach. That is why a child should not be brought up in innocence. How can an innocent person become a *jnani* (a self-realized person)? If that is so, all children would have become *janis*. Similarly, suppressed desires will erupt and burst forth again at some point. There is no benefit in that.

Question: *But wasn't Buddha also brought up in a similar manner?*

Sri Nannagar:

Yes, Buddha was also brought up in a similar manner. His father brought him up in luxury. But Buddha saw the world and society eventually. His father could not stop him from going out and seeing the world. He thought his son may develop dispassion and renounce everything if he saw the world and took every precaution to keep his son away from the realities of the world. Buddha however, did go out into the world, and he saw old age, death, and suffering. Buddha immediately developed dispassion and detachment.

Children should not be brought up either like Rishyasringa's father or Buddha's father. How long can they

be kept in a haze? Buddha's father could not stop him from seeing dead bodies, and people in suffering. Likewise, Rishyasringa's father could not stop him from seeing women.

It is not right to think that there should be no attractions and sensual pleasures before you. Even when all the attractions and pleasures are within our reach, we should be aware that thinking of sensual objects is equal to poison and the mind should remain calm/undisturbed. That is *Sadhana* (spiritual practice). Nothing is gained if we grow up without knowledge of sensual pleasures or even by suppressing desires forcibly. It is not enough to just control/suppress the mind; it should be completely eliminated. Buddha evolved over hundreds of lives through spiritual practices. After he became Buddha no object in the world attracted him.

Question: *Every Jnani must have gone through several births like this, is that correct?*

Sri Nannagaru:

No one can become a *jnani* without effort and hard work through several lives. Buddha certainly accepted the theory of rebirth. However, rebirth and birth are only relative truths; these are not Absolute truth. In Absolute Truth there is no birth and rebirth. In Absolute Truth, birth,

death and rebirth, are equal to a dream. Mr. Radhakrishnan who is a great and learned scholar also did not understand this *Shuddhaadvaita* (pure non-dualism) and did not accept it.

Sri Shankaracharya's *Guru* is Govinda Bhagavathpada and his *Guru* is Sri Goudapada. Goudapada was born in Bengal and lived in Badri. He wrote *Karika* (commentary) on the *Mandukya Upanishad*. It is an extremely complex subject, like algebra in mathematics. There he wrote that human births, deaths, creation, matter, sensual objects, pleasure, pain are all *sapekshikaalu* (relative and unreal). These will appear real to those who see with *deha buddhi*(body consciousness); and they will know these are unreal when they attain the true state (*Ultimate Reality*). Radhakrishnan criticized this saying that if Goudapadha says everything is unreal, then his theory also must be unreal. Being in duality, Radhakrishnan could not comprehend that state of non-duality/advaita.

The theory stated by Goudapada is one hundred percent truth. It is called *Ajathavaadha* (statement without contradiction). *Ajatha Satruvu* (one without enemy) does not just mean that one has no enemies, it means that the enemy is not even born. Likewise, *ajathasiddhanta* implies there is no birth. Bhagavan used to say "You were never born. He who is born will die, and he who dies will be born. Why bother about him?" If you remain as *Atma* there

is no birth or death. When you realize the *Atma* you will know that you are deathless. You will know that birth and death are only a dream. You will also know that all your past lives are also a dream, and as worthless as a zero. If you remember this, you will benefit from it.

At night, if you have a dream that you are going through a lot of difficulties, will you worry even if you remember all that after you wake up? You will not worry because you know it is not true. Similarly, after you realize *Atma* you will know that your past lives are unreal. You have to experience *Atma*. It cannot be understood even if it is explained and discussed repeatedly. What Goudapada said is the truth, but it is hard to swallow it/accept it!

We are used to a certain way of life, so a person naturally feels agitated when he is told that it is all unreal. Bhagavan would say, “Nobody is forcing you to accept the subject, you can refuse to accept it”. “If you add six and four, the sum will be ten. That is reality. Just because you are not willing to accept that fact, how can it become untrue?” he would say. Though they listened to him out of politeness, many people could not accept his philosophy.

That is why, when we discuss this subject matter, we tell some interesting stories interspersed with these Truths. Even then *sadhakas* (spiritual seekers) get agitated and become fearful. They think: our *Guru* says that

everything we know is unreal, and we are unable to comprehend that which is the Truth. Thereby fear arises!

If Ramakrishna Paramahansa touched money, he would have a burning sensation all over his body. But Ramana Maharshi was not like that. When he was questioned whether he liked money, he would say he has neither like nor dislike. Even dislike causes pain. The *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) should neither accept nor reject the dualities like love/hate, like/dislike etc. This is called a neutral approach, and seekers should practice this.

Money and riches may or may not come, depending on fate. Sometimes you cannot earn money even if you work very hard and sometimes money comes without trying hard for it. Some people get gold medals in education but may not earn much money. They are useful only to teach others. Some earn lakhs of rupees with just basic education. We must understand that these things happen depending on each person's fate / destiny.



POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. Even when all attractions and sensual pleasures are within our reach, we should be aware/realize that thinking of sensual objects is equal to poison and remain mentally undisturbed/tranquil. That is spiritual practice.
2. It is not enough to suppress the mind; it is necessary to eliminate the mind completely.
3. Rebirth and birth are relative truths. These are not absolute truths. In absolute truth there is no birth or rebirth.
4. The *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) should neither accept nor reject the dualities like love/hate, like/dislike etc. The truth seeker should surely practice the neutral approach.

3. ELIMINATION OF MIND THROUGH SINGLE FOCUSED MEDITATION

Kothagudam
7 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to the lotus feet of Sri Nannagaru!*

Sage Ashtavakra said this :

*cintayā jāyate dukhami nānyatheheti niṣcayī
taya hī nah. sukhī śāntah. sarvatra galitasprahā
- Ashtavakra Gita 11-5*

Meaning:

When one realizes with certainty that suffering is caused only by our thoughts and nothing else, one becomes free of thoughts, and remains happy, peaceful, and untouched by anything.

There is a saying that “a pyre burns the dead body but worry burns one even in life”.

Please give your valuable advice and suggestions so that we embrace that great truth in our hearts, without any worries.

Sri Nannagaru:

Ashtavakra said that worry causes misery. So how do *sadhakas* (truth seekers) keep away from worrying? There is only one method for that. The mind cannot stay without thinking of something; that is its nature. The heart's nature is to beat; likewise, wind's nature is to move. The mind's nature is to always think of something or the other. A wise *sadhaka* (seeker) should not oppose it and try to control the mind by force. The mind should be handled skillfully by giving it the right incentive (food). The food for the mind would be to constantly meditate either on the *Guru*, favourite Deity, or the Divinity in the heart cave.

The mind resides in the brain and is always restless. In sleep however, it merges into the heart cave and becomes quiet. In the waking state, if you are constantly thinking of the *Guru* or the Divinity within, worldly thoughts naturally cease. When there are no worldly worries, then there is no more suffering. While meditation on God dilutes the mind, thoughts of the external world make the mind dense. Worldly matters cannot exist on their own. It is our thoughts that give strength and power to external matters. Instead of letting the mind go after the external world, if we can direct it towards the *Guru*, God or the Divinity within us; and if it is introverted, then worldly worries will be reduced.

There is a story to illustrate this. In the past, a demon appeared before a farmer and said that it would serve him on one condition. It must be constantly given some work; and if he cannot provide work, it would gobble him up. The farmer thought that he could get a lot of work done and agreed to this condition. He continuously gave it some work and it would instantly complete it and come back for more. It was difficult for him to find work for it all the time. Unable to handle this situation, he approached a *Guru* (spiritual teacher). On the advice of that *Guru*, he instructed the demon to keep going up and down a tall palm tree in his fields. The demon was thus occupied climbing up and down the palm. Our mind is also like that demon. If we don't engage it rightly, which is focussed contemplation on God, it will indulge increasingly in worldly thoughts and devour us.

The Divine Self within us is devoid of both name and form. Since we identify ourselves with a name and form, it is difficult for us focus and meditate on the nameless and formless. So, we can take the support of a name and form to keep the mind focussed and steady. Truth is formless; and we can reach that formless state taking the support of a form. Some great and purified souls like Ramana Maharshi have reached the formless state without any association with a form. We cannot imitate them in these practices.

When you constantly think about a particular thing, that thing gains strength, and it leads to sorrow. While it is only our mind's creation, it seems real to us. If you are thinking about your habits all the time, those habits will gain strength. From where do they derive strength? It is only from your continuous thinking. They don't have any strength/energy of their own. Instead, if you meditate on the *Guru*, God or the Divine Truth in your heart cave, your mind will weaken. By contemplating on that One Truth the mind will be gradually eliminated.

There is a secret here. Ramana Maharshi taught the path of "Self-Enquiry" to mankind. There is another simpler and easier path. That is "One-pointed meditation". The mind will be definitely eliminated even by this method.

For someone who cannot do self-enquiry or even one-pointed meditation, they are advised to watch their breath, like the demon that was asked to climb up and down a palm tree. The air keeps going in and coming out of the body involuntarily; inhalation and exhalation is ongoing and does not stop. Give the mind the task of watching the breath. The mind will be completely preoccupied with this and will not need any other work; and it will be gradually eliminated. This is called *pranayama* (control of breath). The primary aim of the *rishis* (sages) who taught *pranayama* is to discipline the mind. Physical well-being and such other results are only some additional benefits from *pranayama*.

Buddha gave a lot of importance to *pranayama*. The people who follow the path of *Yoga* first start with *pranayama*. This is also good. The mind can be controlled through *Pranayaama*. Sankaracharya said, “you are taking this indirect path because you are not able to solve this problem called the mind directly” On this topic, Ramana Maharshi used to say, “You say that the mind is thinking. The one who thinks is not you. Who thinks? It is the mind that thinks, and if you know that the mind is not you, there is nothing to worry about.”

In fact, “there is no mind to control, if the truth is realized.” But until then it is necessary to meditate with the mind, and one day we will realize that it does not exist. As we are body-bound, we are limited to a name and a form. But the Divine Truth does not have a name or form, therefore it is difficult to grasp it.

So, to answer your question, we cannot be without thinking of something. The calf will not give up eating dry grass. However, if it acquires the taste for green grass, it will slowly stop eating dry grass. Likewise, if we practice contemplating on either God or the *Guru*, the mind will turn inward and stop going outward. When the mind turns towards God and Divinity, just as the calf gives up on dry grass, the mind also gives up the habit of thinking about worldly matters. Just as the demon in the story cannot be

without some tasks to perform, the mind also cannot be without thinking about something or the other. That is why one is advised to observe one's breath, and that is *pranayama*. That anyway will not stop, and if it stops, you will be taken to the burial ground! As the *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) cannot stop thinking, they should think of "this" (Divine Truth) instead of "that" (world). That is, one should "meditate on God" instead of "meditating on worldly objects".

The renowned scientist Albert Einstein was once approached by a three-year old boy from his neighborhood with his slate and pencil. He asked Einstein to teach him mathematics; he wanted Einstein to teach him basic arithmetic like additions, subtraction, multiplication and division. Einstein gave him these lessons. The boy's family was not aware of this. The boy's father would give his son one dollar every week as pocket money. Instead of spending the dollar on himself, the boy gave it to Einstein for teaching him arithmetic. When Einstein asked him how he got the money, he said it was his pocket money from his father. Einstein valued this dollar greatly and saved it. Later the boy's father came to know about this, and he admonished his son for disturbing a great scientist and instructed him to stop bothering Einstein. He then apologized to Einstein and assured him that his son would not disturb him anymore.

Einstein responded saying, “You are free to stop your son from coming to me, but your son gave me a dollar and I will not return that. I kept it in my safe and will cherish it.” The boy’s father didn’t know about the dollar and was surprised. Einstein told him “You gave your son a dollar as pocket money. But he preferred to offer the dollar to his teacher for tutoring him and gave it to me, rather than spending it on something to eat. See how well he thinks? I will keep this dollar as a memento of your son’s *sraddha*(diligence and commitment) towards education”.

Einstein did not ask the boy to pay him that dollar as tuition fee, but the boy was committed to educate himself and he had a lot of respect and reverence for his teacher. If we have a similar reverence and devotion for the Divine Spirit, and *Sathguru*, the worldly thoughts will leave us.

Lord Rama gave gold coins to *Tanisha* (Sultan of Golkonda) to release his devotee Ramadasa from the jail. These were kept in Bhadrachalam as a remembrance. Later Aurangzeb captured the Golkonda Fort and jailed Tanisha. Tanisha also had to go through the same suffering that he put Ramadasa through when he jailed him. Aurangzeb was cruel and had no compassion for anyone. Still, Aurangzeb also had some good qualities that we can emulate. Aurangzeb was not addicted to pleasures; he ate food sparingly. But he would kill people. His soldiers would

destroy Hindu temples. So, some devotees in *Kasi* (Varanasi) hid the *Siva Linga* (the symbolic image of Siva) in a well. *Nandi* (name of the bull-Siva's escort) was left in its place in the temple. Aurangzeb's soldiers tried to destroy it with several blows. It resounded with great noise but did not break. They gave up with thereasoning that the Nandi outside the sanctum was not important. Nandi is totally focused on Siva and constantly meditates on Him, with no other thoughts. That is the answer to your question. Just as Nandi is focused on Siva, our mind also should be constantly focused on God. With this one-pointed meditation the mind can be easily eliminated.

Question: How come Lord Rama appeared before *Tanisha*?

Sri Nannagaru:

That appearance is also false! I am seeing you and you are seeing me. But *darshanam* (the vision of God) is different. The appearance of Lord Rama and handing over gold coins are all worldly matters; appearance is also related to the mind. *Tanisha's* vision of Rama did not happen through his self-realization.

Saint Ramadasa was not self-realized. He was a great devotee, but he does not have the stature of Gautama Buddha or Ramana Maharshi. The vision that *Tanisha* had did not come from self-knowledge. *Tanisha's* vision is as

real as his mind; and the mind is not true. If that vision is true, then his sorrow should have vanished completely. This is relative; the mind is unreal, so the desires that are fulfilled are also unreal. What is the source of these desires? Our desires arise in the mind; and they are only as real as the mind. These are all partial truths. Ramadasa is certainly a great devotee and deserves respect, but we cannot say that he is self-realized like Gautama Buddha and Ramana Maharshi.

Question: It is said that Sri Ramadas has attained *moksha* (liberation/self-realization)?

Sri Nannagar:

Those are all partial truths. It is said that Sri Ramadasa went to *Vaikunta* (the abode of Vishnu where *Vaishnava* devotees aspire to reach). *Vaikunta* is as real as the desire to reach it.

Question: For complete *moksha* (liberation), does one have to finally adopt *jnana margam* (the path of knowledge)?

Sri Nannagar:

Whatever path is chosen, one must finally come to the path of self-knowledge. Even if a person looks at oneself and God as separate, finally they will realize that “you are everything (God) and I don’t exit”.

Sri Ramadasa might have gone to *Vaikunta*, but it is not eternal liberation. The world is unreal and is likened to a rabbit's horn, which does not exist. The one who has a desire to go to different worlds is as real as those worlds itself. These are all called partial truths.

You have a body now; and when you go to *Vaikunta* you will be given a suitable body to enjoy that place. You will be offered worldly pleasures. We go to a cinema, but how long can we watch it? Likewise, how long will the ministerial positions last? They can go away at any time. *Vaikunta* is also like that.

Mahatma Gandhi would not eat anything after 8 PM. In 1927, he met *Paramacharya* (head of Shankara Math in Kanchi) in Bandar and was talking to him. When it was past 8 PM, one of his followers reminded him about dinner. But Gandhi wanted to continue talking to *Paramacharya*. He said, “We eat that food every day, but holy company will not be available every day, so it is okay to skip dinner for today”. While food gives strength to the body, holy company evolves the mind.

Question: Please advise how to practice one pointed meditation in the path of *karma* (righteous work)?

Sri Nannagaru:

In the path of *karma* you must remember only the goal you set for yourself. You can travel in the path of *karma* (righteous work), the path of *dhyana* (meditation), the path of *bhakti* (devotion), or the path of *jnana* (self-knowledge) - all these paths appear different to you. But the goal of all these paths is the same, the elimination of the mind! That is, to attain no-mind state! The goal is the same for all the paths. The *jnani*s (self-realized) prescribed these different paths so that you can choose the path suitable to your nature and aptitude. Some can work very hard, but if you ask them to think about something, they cannot do it; that is their nature. Einstein did a lot of research throughout his life. Several major organizations offered him leadership positions. He would respond saying that he had an aptitude for research, and it suited his nature, but administration is against his nature. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna spoke about *Swadharma* (work suitable to your nature and assigned to you) and *Paradharma* (work unsuitable to your nature and not related to you). He said *Swadharma* does not cause fear while *Paradharma* brings fear.

When Einstein passed away, the New York Times made this statement: “Mr. Albert Einstein left this world without regrets. He faced death calmly, quietly, bravely and modestly.”

What we need to understand here is that as long as we are alive, we should constantly strive to lead life in a way that in our final moments there will be no regrets, no sorrow, and no fear; and we leave this body peacefully and modestly, completely surrendering our will to God.

Scientists like Einstein and Newton are also *sadhakas* (great seekers of truth). If they did not have that logical intellect, they would not have discovered so many truths in Nature. That was possible only because of their single-minded focus.

Sri Ramana Maharshi's policy was to focus on the work you have come here for. That means our focus should be on that important task, to accomplish which we came into this world, and not on unnecessary matters. For example, we are here in Mr. Ramana's home in Kothagudem for holy company and spiritual discussions. We must complete the work we came for and depart. Why should we go into issues like how many people are there in Kothagudem, how many wards are in this region etc.? All these are unnecessary matters within this context. Surprisingly, we spend our time on these kinds of unnecessary things when we come into the world!

Remember this; we came into the world with the sole purpose of attaining self-knowledge / self-realization. So, instead of troubling the mind with external worldly thoughts, we should meditate on God single-pointedly to eliminate the mind.

POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. The misery in this world is caused only by our thoughts, and not by anything else.
2. The mind cannot exist without any thoughts; that is its nature. Thoughts of the external world make the mind dense. Instead, if you contemplate on the *Guru*, on God or the Divine Truth in your heart cave, your mind will weaken. With focussed meditation on the Oneness, the mind will be gradually eliminated.
3. If we have the same kind of devotion and commitment towards the *Guru*/Divine Spirit, like the little boy who came to Einstein to learn mathematics, thoughts on worldly matters will also disappear by themselves.
4. Just as Nandi is constantly focussed on Siva, our mind also should be constantly focussed on God. With this one-pointed meditation the mind can be eliminated easily.
5. Whatever path is chosen, one has to finally come back to the path of self-knowledge. Even if a person looks at oneself and God as separate, finally one will realize that 'I don't exist and

everything is you' (God). The goal of all the spiritual paths is the same, the elimination of the mind!

6. We came into the world with the sole purpose of attaining self-knowledge / self-realization. So, instead of troubling the mind with external worldly thoughts, we should meditate on God one-pointedly to eliminate the mind.



4. FORGET EVERYTHING TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THE SELF

Kothagudam
7 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to the lotus feet of Sri Nannagaru!*

(i) Sage Ashtavakra said this :

ācaksya s'r. n. u vā tā ta nā nā s' a strā n. yanekas' ah.
tathapi na tava svasthyam sarvavismaran. adr. te
- Ashtavakra Gita 16-1

Meaning:

Oh son! You may have heard of several scriptures and different versions of them. You may have discussed them countless times in various ways. How much ever you may try to debate and understand, until you forget all that knowledge, you will not attain peace and you cannot be established in the Self.

ii) Sage Ashtavakra emphasized the same point in another verse thus:

haro yadyupades. t. a te harih. kamalajo' pi va
tathapi na tava svasthyam sarvavismaran. adr. te
- Ashtavakra Gita 16-11

Meaning:

Even if Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, personally becomes your Guru, unless you forget everything, you will not obtain peace and you cannot be established in the Self.

- (iii) *To be asked to forget your wealth/ possessions, worldly relationships, worldly matters is okay upto an extent, but please explain why we are told to also forget the academic knowledge gained, all that has been learnt, debated and discussed; and that one cannot attain peace and be established in the self until everything is forgotten.*
- (iv) *Similarly, please explain why we are told that irrespective of the Guru's state, one cannot attain peace and be established in the self until everything is forgotten.*

Sri Nannagaru:

- (i) *Ashtavakra said, "You may have heard of several scriptures and different versions of them. You may have discussed them countless times in various ways. How much ever you may try to debate and understand, until you forget all that knowledge, you will not attain peace and you cannot be established in the Self."*

All our knowledge has been obtained by the mind with effort. The knowledge gained with the mind in that manner is not real experience/practical knowledge.

Whatever has been acquired with the mind is as real as the mind itself. To attain self-knowledge, everything that is unreal has to be discarded. Knowledge of scriptures is also a tendency. There are three kinds of tendencies – the physical, the worldly and the intellectual. A learned man's mind will be occupied with intellectual thoughts. Ramakrishna Paramahansa said that vultures fly higher than all the other birds and we wonder at the heights to which these birds go. To whatever heights they go, their sight will only be on the dead bodies in the graveyard. Similarly, those whom we consider as intellectuals, even though they are highly learned, their focus will only be on trivial worldly matters. Their sight will be limited to their intellectual learning and not on the Divine Truth/self-knowledge. They cannot cross the threshold of intellectual knowledge.

The tendency for intellectual knowledge is similar to the bodily and worldly tendencies. Anyone who gets into that routine will try to acquire more intellectual knowledge rather than looking within. One cannot remain established in the Self (*Atma Nishta*) when there is a strong tendency for intellectual knowledge. The gross, worldly and intellectual tendencies will keep the mind extroverted,

and will not allow the mind to turn inwards. If the mind is not introverted, it is impossible for a person to be established in the Self. That is why one has to forget everything to become established in the Self.

Hence, after learning everything related to seeking the truth from the scriptures, even the scriptural knowledge has to be forgotten. Removing every trace of tendency towards intellectual knowledge, self-knowledge should be gained only through experience.

- (ii) Ashtavakra reiterated/reinforced this in another sloka (verse). *“Even if Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, one of them personally becomes your Guru, unless you forget everything, you will not obtain peace and you cannot be established in the Self.”*

This means that the *Guru* shows the path, but the journey must be made by the *sadhaka*. Sage Ashtavakra repeatedly says that everything should be forgotten because in your search for truth you should not see anything else but the goal you want to attain. If you are reminded of something or the other all the time, your focus on the goal will be disturbed. Then you cannot remain established in the self. Your focus should be only on the *Atma* (Self) and not be distracted by anything else. If you are distracted, then *Atma* will not be revealed to you.

(iii) Then you said, “*To be asked to forget about wealth/possessions, worldly relationships, worldly matters is okay*”.

It is okay to have wealth or possessions but the thought that ‘I have all this wealth’ will bloat the ego. King Janaka had a vast kingdom, but he was never conscious about it. Leave aside sages (*sanyasi*) like Sage Ashtavakra and Ramana Maharshi; even though King Janaka ruled over a kingdom, he was also a total renunciate (*sarvasanga parithyaagi*). King Janaka is greater than these sages, because he did not lose focus on self-knowledge even when he was fully occupied with worldly affairs as a ruler. His senses were active, but he was not distracted from the *Self*. That is why he is immortal (*achyutha*). One of *Maha Vishnu*’s names is *Achyutha*. *Achyutha* means he who cannot be eliminated or destroyed.

Even though he was extremely busy with worldly affairs, King Janaka was never apart from the *Self*. A person can have a lot of possessions, but he should not identify with and be attached to those possessions. No object can harm a human being on its own. The mind is contaminated by thinking “this is mine”. Even if a realized person has possessions, these will not affect his steadfastness in any way. If those possessions are lost for some reason, the realized person will not feel even as much as a prick of

an ant's bite because he was not attached to the possessions even when he had them. If this happened to us, we would feel extremely miserable! It did not make any difference to King Janaka whether he had a kingdom or not, and he had no pain, because even when he had the kingdom, he knew it was not real. We think that kingdom, wealth and possessions are real, and so we feel miserable when we lose them.

Any kind of attachment that we may have for wealth and possessions will make the mind extroverted. King Janaka had no attachment to his kingdom. If we can be like him, we will not be troubled with whatever possessions that we may have.

You also stated, *“please explain why we are told to forget the academic knowledge gained, all that has been learnt, debated and discussed; and that one cannot attain peace and be established in the self until everything is forgotten.”*

To know, to discuss, to argue, to remember, to forget, all these are activities of the mind! We must overcome this mind through our *sadhana* (austerities/practice). The hurdle to our liberation is the mind itself; that is why knowledge gained is also worldly similar to wealth and possessions.

Sri Ramana Maharshi once remarked, “Language should be learnt to the extent that is required for our needs. While studying the scriptures, the language should not be given higher importance.” Education is similar to wealth. Education is useful only to make a living! That is the only goal! That is, we are using education to earn money.

Study of scriptures should be limited to the extent they are useful for self-realization, and then we should discard them. After you have climbed the stairs to reach the roof, you have to remove your foot from the last step and set it on the roof. If the feet remain on the stairs, how can you reach the roof?

Another example to explain this is getting on a boat to cross the river. After reaching the other bank you must leave the boat. Otherwise, how can you get to the shore?

In the same manner, Sage Ashtavakra says, the scriptures should be studied only to the extent required for experiencing the *Self*; and these should also be discarded to experience the *Self*.

- (iv) You also asked “*please explain why we are told that irrespective of the Guru’s state, one cannot attain peace and be established in the self until everything is forgotten.*”

Lord Hanuman (*Anjaneya Swami*) once respectfully told Sri Rama: “When I think I am the body, I am your servant; when I think I am a *jiva* (mortal being), I am *your amsa* (a spark of the Divine); when I think I am *atma* (the Self), you and I are One!” When you reach that state, there is no difference between the Teacher and follower.

Bhagavan used to say: “Whatever is in me is also in you; however, I have awareness of that while you don’t have the awareness.” Though the same Divine Spirit is present in everyone, it is still necessary to meet great souls like Ramana Maharshi because in their presence we are inspired to attain the same state that they have attained. That inspiration is important to experience the divine Self, hence holy company is necessary.

Einstein said, “To obtain holy company, to meet great souls, one must travel to the very end of the world if necessary”.

A person named Mr. Reddy used to live in Nellore before the 1930-40s. He was very rich and a bachelor. He also spent a long time in the company of Bhagavan. He was acquainted with Mahatma Gandhi, and he would meet Gandhi whenever he visited South India. Once Gandhi asked Reddy if he visited Ramana Maharshi’s ashram regularly. Reddy told him that he visited often and

would stay 2-3 months each time. Gandhi, pretending innocence, asked him, “It is said that there is something called *Atma*/Divine Spirit, and that it is present in everyone’s heart. The same thing that is in everyone’s heart is also present in Ramana Maharshi’s heart. So, what is so special about Ramana Maharshi that you are visiting him?”

Reddy responded saying “what you said is true; whatever is within us is also present within him. There is nothing special within him. But there is one difference. He is aware of what is within him, while we are not aware of what is within us. This is the difference! He is happy because he knows, while we are in sorrow because of our ignorance. To overcome that sorrow and to be inspired to know the Truth, we go and meet great Souls like him.” Gandhiji was pleased with that answer.

As long as we have body-consciousness, *Guru* (Teacher) is necessary; and we have to follow his instructions. When the Divine State is attained you will know that there is no difference between the *Guru* and you; but even after reaching that state, the respect for *Guru* should continue. We should remember that the *Guru*’s form helped us to attain that state. So, we should always respect the external *Guru*. We don’t know whether God exists or not. Is God saying anything to us? But *Guru* is certainly talking to us. So, *Guru* is greater than God and we cannot profess

oneness with *Guru*. If you attained liberation today, it happened only with your *Guru*'s support.

Even while we are earning money, it is already determined how we will lose it. The body is present now. It was born someday. On the very day it is born, it is already decided when the body will die. When we are about to die, the breath will stop only after our next birth is decided. Rebirth may happen after 4 years or 5 years, we cannot say when; however, it is already determined during our death in the previous life itself. Where, when and which family you should be born in, or whether you should be born as an animal, it is all decided based on the tendencies of that soul (*jiva*). You must be aware of the lady devotee who served Sri Ramana Maharshi. After she died, she was reborn as Cow Lakshmi, came back to Maharshi and attained liberation in his presence.

When we acquire wealth, we think it will not be lost. But while earning itself it is already determined when it will be lost. It may go in your lifetime or in the next generation. Kingdoms are also vanishing! The great Mughal dynasty perished after Aurangzeb. It was said that “the sun never sets on the British empire”, but it is gone now! In the same manner, the death of a body is decided on the day it is born. Similarly, all possessions in the world will perish someday. So, the impermanence of this world (the ever

changing trait) should be recognized, and our attention should be on the goal we are trying to attain and nothing else. Our focus should be only on the Divine Spirit that we want to attain; if we get distracted by anything else in the world, we cannot attain the divine spirit within.

Some people assume that they are working honestly but they will be rotting inside. While honesty is good, it should be natural. We should not dwell upon it constantly inside. People become arrogant comparing themselves with others, believing that they are better than them. Such people turn sour overtime. One feels that people who take bribes are better than those who are arrogant about their own goodness. Atleast such people are aware of their weakness and don't develop arrogance. Honest people are arrogant about their goodness. Genuinely good people are those who are not aware of their goodness. *Sadhakas* (spiritual seekers) should be sincere and honest; but it is wrong to criticize others and think of themselves as greater and better than others.

Sri Ramana Maharshi used to say. “you cannot remove all thorns from the road, rather you should protect your feet with footwear”. You cannot stop the rain, so you must go out with an umbrella”. It is good to be honest, but it should be natural, it should neither be artificial nor overdone.

Whatever goal you have set for yourself, whether you want education or riches, you cannot obtain that unless your mind is focussed completely on that goal. A seeker's mind should not be distracted by other objects. Look at little children in villages for example. When their mothers send them to the shop to buy coconut oil, they take a bottle and start from home in the morning. If they come across a street show or puppet show on the way, they stop to watch and don't return home even after half an hour or one hour. They watch the show until afternoon and then return with the coconut oil. Sometimes they even forget to get the coconut oil. We are like them. There are many attractions in the world. If we are attracted to even one of these, we will forget our goal! So, if the seeker is attracted by any objects other than his goal, he cannot reach the destination.

You read a lot of scriptures and philosophical books. By reading them and remembering the information found in them you will not experience the Self. Memorizing the scriptures will not bring you *jnana* (divine knowledge). The things learnt should touch our heart, and we should travel in the directed path. Without implementing the things learnt from the scriptures in practical life, you cannot obtain Self Knowledge. Memorizing the scriptures will only make you learned and intellectual. We obtained information about travel to Kasi, but after obtaining this information, instead

of preparing and starting on the journey, if you just memorize the details related to Kasi travel, will you reach Kasi?

Among those who came to Sri Ramana Maharshi, there were some innocent people. They would forget the purpose for which they came and would find fault with other devotees residing in the ashram. Bhagavan would respond to them saying “There is no use complaining to me. As you too have the desire to earn money, you are constantly remembering those who hoard money. Otherwise, why would you think of them? Subconsciously you have a desire for money. You can go and make friends with them, and they may share 10 percent of what they earn with you” he would tell them politely. He would never react or show irritation.

The great devotee Ramadas reproached Rama in his poems in some contexts. “I got a gold chain made for you, why are you not releasing me from this prison? Did your father or father-in-law get you this gold? I got it for you” he said. A *jnani's* (realized soul) approach would be different. Ramadas is a devotee, and devotees are in duality. While they are good, they see themselves and God as separate. *Jnani* is never like that, and *Jnani's* approach is not like that.

Buddha renounced his wife and kingdom but he never even had a thought that he left his wife or his kingdom. Real *vismarana* (forgetting) means when we give up something, that thing should never be remembered again.

Over a century ago there lived a generous person by the name Pattanattaar. He was also called *Navakoti Narayana* (Lord of nine crores). In the days when a bag of rice was sold for 3 rupees, he donated 9 crores / 90 million rupees, and his entire possessions. Such a person said “I have donated the entire 9 crores/ 90 million that I possessed, but I am unable to give up my attachment to the dog and bowl”. In his dying moments, his mind was not on God but on his dog and his bowl! After donating everything, he would beg for a living and give the leftover food from his bowl to a dog. He used to worry about who would feed the dog after his death. He would keep his begging bowl under a tree while going elsewhere but would worry that someone may steal it in his absence. These were the thoughts of the person who donated his entire possessions worth 9 crores / 90 million! He himself would say, this is my fate before my death: I am not able to get rid of thoughts about the dog and begging bowl. He lost the sense of understanding that ‘whoever is feeding me will also feed the dog’. With that came doership, and the thought “I am feeding the dog”.

Recently an elderly man joined an old age home. He visited me (Nannagaru) one afternoon. He lost his wife 10 years ago. He has two married sons, but his daughters-in-law don't take care of him. For 10 years, he had someone to cook for him, but the arrangement was not comfortable. He had a strong tendency for food but for 10 years he starved for good food. Now he is happy that he gets timely and good food at the old age home. He tearfully said that his daughters-in-law talk to him politely but never invite him home. The desire for food remained strong inside him. Earlier he did not have an option; now he is happy that he is getting what he wants.

The point to note here is that it is okay if desires are destroyed completely, but if they are forcefully suppressed, they will erupt again. Destruction of mind is different from suppressing the mind. Suppressed mind will suddenly become restless again. Hence, realized souls say that one should reach the no-mind state.

Other than the Divine Spirit, other than the deathless divine matter, other than that which is called *Brahmam*, if we think about or talk about any other matters, Bhagavan used to say, "Who asked you to think about all that?" He also used to say, "Who asked you to get involved in others' matters and judge them as good or bad?" If any devotees residing in Ramanaashram went to Tiruvannamalai

town to meet their acquaintances, discuss worldly matters, and tell him about it when they come back, Bhagavan used to say, “They are not at fault but you are at fault, who asked you to go there?” It means that other than the object of his goal, a seeker should forget everything else.

If we are thinking of and recollecting not only worldly matters, but even intellectual knowledge, the mind will not let us reach the goal! Intellectual knowledge will pull the mind backwards. So rather than going forward, we are going backwards. Tendency for knowledge will pull us back from spiritual practice. Moreover, the learned men also get habituated to honours and awards. These honours, awards, and titles bring our downfall. When these are conferred, the ego gets bloated and destroys people. They think ‘I have been awarded with “Padmasri” so there must be something special in me’. What is there that is special? They are polluted within. That is all!



POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. For the experience of the Self, we have to give up all that is false. Body consciousness, worldly attachments, and intellectual attachment will not allow the mind to turn inward. The focus should be on *Atma* only; if you are distracted by other matters, self-realization will not be attained.
2. Lord Hanuman once respectfully told Sri Rama: “When I think I am the body, I am your servant; when I think I am a *jiva* (mortal being), I am your *amsa* (a spark of the divine), when I think I am *atma* (the Self), you and I are One!” When you reach that state there is no difference between the Teacher and follower.
3. Bhagavan used to say: “Whatever is in me is also in you; however, I have that awareness while you don’t have the awareness.” In the divine presence of great souls, we are inspired to attain the same state that they have attained. To experience the divine Self that inspiration is important, so holy company is necessary.
4. Genuinely good people are those who are not aware of their goodness. *Sadhakas* (spiritual seekers) should be sincere and honest but should not think of themselves as greater and better than others.



5. BHAKTI IS LOVE, PARAABHAKTI IS JNANA*

*(*Bhakti (Devotion) is Love,
Paraabhakti (pure devotion that transcends all worldly
concerns) is Jnana (Self Enlightenment)*

Kothagudam
8 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to Sri Nannagaru!*

*Narada Bhakti Sutras (Principles of devotion
expounded by the great devotee sage Narada)*

- (1-15) *Different people described the qualities of a devotee in different ways.*
- (1-16) *Sage Parasara's doctrine/philosophy states that rituals lovingly performed in prayer to God becomes Bhakti (devotion).*
- (1-17) *Sage Garga stated that Bhakti (devotion) is listening to the stories about God.*
- (1-18) *Sage Sandilya stated that Bhakti (devotion) means to be in a state that is not contradictory to atmarati (enjoying the Divine Self).*

- (1-19) *According to Sage Narada, the qualities of Bhakti (devotion) include offering all our actions and practices to God and to be distressed when we forget God.*
- (1-20) *Do such devotees exist? There is no need to doubt that.*
- (1-21) *The best examples are the Gopikas in Vrajapuram (Brindavanam).*

In the Bhagavad Gita too, Lord Sri Krishna described the qualities of a Bhakta (devotee) in several slokas (verses).

In this background, we prayerfully request you to explain in detail about the higher state of bhakti (devotion), which is called Parabhakti, and which is different from the Bhakti popularly known in the worldly sense.

Sri Nannagaru:

Parabhakti (supreme and pure devotion which transcends all worldly concerns, and the devotee experiences the Divine as manifested in the entire universe) is equal to *Jnana* (Enlightenment / Divine Knowledge). The words *Parabhakti* and *Jnana* are synonymous.

Bhakti means Love.

When you express love for someone beneath you in stature, it is called compassion. When you express love for God, it is called *Bhakti* (devotion). That is the only difference. The love shown to someone whose intellect is lower to ours is kindness or compassion and the love shown to God is *Bhakti*.

You said: “*Sage Parasara stated that the rituals lovingly performed in prayer to God becomes Bhakti (devotion)*”.

We should have love and affection for God. Where there is fondness there is no difficulty. If you like God or if you have affection for God, it is *Bhakti*. Bhagavan’s (Sri Ramana Maharshi) theory is topsy-turvy in this context. He states, “If there is *Vibhakti* (viewing yourself and Divine as separate), you need *Bhakti*; if there is no *Vibhakti*, where is the need for *Bhakti*?” You think that you are separate from the Divine Self / True Self. Consequently, you need *Bhakti*. If there is no separateness what is the necessity for *Bhakti*? You may have affection for others, but what is the meaning of affection or *Bhakti* towards yourself? The individual, world and God are all manifestations of your Real Self! You need to have devotion for God because you see God as separate from yourself.

Where is the need for devotion to someone who does not leave God at any time? For someone who has no separation with God, there is no need for any specific *yoga* (spiritual practices). Everything is *Yoga* (Oneness) in that state!

We worship God with flowers. Worshipping God with noble qualities instead of flowers is real devotion. The Enlightened Self has no relation to good and bad qualities. Good and bad qualities are in our mind. The scriptures state that there is no relation between our qualities/traits and the Divine Spirit. A quality/personality trait is related to the mind, but not to the Divine Spirit. Spiritual seekers are however advised to develop good qualities, because these qualities aid a seeker in experiencing the Divine Self. So good qualities should be developed. God should be worshipped with noble qualities rather than with flowers! That is real *Bhakti* (devotion).

Worshipping with the words coming out of your mouth and worshipping with hands (actions) are different. Physically your mouth and hands are close to each other. However, there is a wide gap between words and actions. It is easier to praise with words than to work with hands. You must implement whatever you have learnt in life. Actions are better than words. If a person says to his mother, “you are a very good mother”, but if he does not give her loving care, does he really love and respect his mother? Through

the words coming from his mouth he says that she is a very good mother, but in implementation his behaviour is different. So how can we consider the words he utters are true? Similarly, instead of singing praises of God, following and practicing the good He has preached will qualify us for his Grace sooner.

You said: *Sage Sandilya stated that Bhakti (devotion) means to be in a state that is not contradictory to atmarati(enjoying the Divine Self).*

Getting rid of all matters that are hurdles to the experience of the Divine Self is *Bhakti*. *Rati* means enjoyment. A person generally thinks that wealth and power will give him comfort and enjoyment. Some people take pride in the leadership position and the top rank they attain. The enjoyment obtained from worldly wealth is not true happiness. That happiness will be gradually transformed into sorrow. The happiness we know is dependent either on objects or persons. If we are happy looking at our wealth and possessions, the loss of that wealth will lead us to sorrow. Recently a little girl named Vaishnavi was brutally murdered in Vijayawada, and then her father also died of sorrow. He was happy as long as the daughter was alive. When she died, the happiness turned into sorrow. That means, the happiness that is dependent on persons,

possessions, or positions, will change to sorrow in the course of time. “Joy” is not like that. The experience of happiness, which is not related to our body, to our position, and to worldly matters, and which we experience independently, is real “joy” or “happiness”. This joy will not turn into sadness or misery. Why not? Because joy is not dependent on your body or world; it is independent. “Enjoy” is transient, “Joy” is permanent. But everyone says we must “Enjoy”. Actually, we should not just enjoy, we should experience Joy.

Enjoyment is dependent on objects or persons, and that is temporary! In the course of time that enjoyment turns into suffering. But joy is not like that. There is no coming and going for Joy because it is independent of any external influences. If anyone attracted to worldly matters obtains pleasure from them, (have the illusion of enjoyment), over time these will cause their sorrows to be doubled.

Sometimes friendship with very rich people is also dangerous! While we will not benefit from their wealth, we will acquire their habits. Many people were ruined that way. The renowned Russian philosopher Leo Tolstoy said this about acquiring wealth, “You may possess a million acres of land, but in the end you only need six square feet of land to bury you!”

King Dritharashtra is aware of good and bad. But he listened to his sons and followed whatever they told him and was ruined! Despite knowing what is good, he could not do good. All those who have blind love for their children are nicknamed Drithrashtras. Those who are childless are more fortunate than those with worthless offspring.

What is the use of all the riches if there are no virtuous goals in life? An aimless life will be miserable even if you possess thousands of crores of rupees. A truth seeker should have a noble aim in life. A person with ideals may commit one or two wrongs out of ten, but a person without ideals will certainly commit all the ten wrongs out of the ten. So a truth seeker should have a goal.

You said: *Sage Sandilya stated that Bhakti (devotion) means to be in a state that is not contradictory to atmarati(enjoying the Divine Self).*

Here “rati” means experience. Eliminating the bad qualities that obstruct your experience of the Divine Self is *Bhakti*. Jesus Christ said, “If your eyes are obstructing your enjoyment of the Divine Self, pluck those eyes and throw them away. Rather than your entire body suffering in hell, what will you lose by getting rid of one sense organ?” Some people have to get their leg amputated from the knee

to treat an illness. If the infected leg is not removed, the whole body will become infected. So even if they lose a leg and become lame, they will go ahead and get their leg amputated to save the rest of their body.

Holy company of great souls can be obtained only as a consequence of your past good deeds, and everyone will not obtain that. In such holy company, a suitable atmosphere is created, which removes the hurdles to the enjoyment of the Divine Self.

You said: “According to Sage Narada, qualities of Bhakti (devotion) are to offer all our actions and practices to God and to be distressed when we forget God.”

This is all duality. This universe, the individual, and God are created by our mind. We love our children. Do we love them effortlessly or do we make an effort to love them? Our love for them is effortless. In the same manner, if you have effortless love for God, he will bless you with Self-Realization. God’s grace will come to those with unconditional devotion and not to those with conditional devotion. That means you should have love but there should not be any cause or reason for it.

Where there is love, meditation comes effortlessly. Some people struggle a lot to meditate. They

will impatiently wait for the specified time to be completed. Many people don't like meditation because it requires a lot of effort. In reality, there is no need for exertion in the quest for Truth. But until you reach that effortless natural state you will have suffering. In the initial stages, we make an effort and that is unnatural. There is some amount of suffering in that stage. Some people force themselves to sit for meditation. Who is it that meditates? The Self, which is the Divine Spirit, does not meditate; it is the mind that meditates. This requires effort; and that effort brings some suffering.

You said: *“According to Sage Narada, the qualities of Bhakti (devotion) include offering all our actions and practices to God and to be distressed when we forget God.”*

There are two kinds of devotion - *saralabhakti* (simple and pure devotion) and *viralabhakti* (devotion that is loud, showy, disturbed). Sage Narada says we should have *saralabhakti*. In *viralabhakti* there is forgetfulness. In *saralabhakti*, love for God is like the continuous flow of a river. Sage Narada said *Sarabhakti* is better than *viralabhakti*, because you will get positive results quicker.

The state of offering all actions and practices to God is the very state described by Lord Krishna in the

Bhagavad Gita “*Sarva dharman parityajya maam ekam sharanam vraja*” (Abandon all varieties of religion and duties and just surrender unto Me.) You should follow *Dharma* (prescribed way of life and rules) and you can also practice customs. But there is no fault in giving up those practices for my sake, He says. You have to care for your parents, but if you leave home to find God, it is not a flaw. Abandoning your parents is wrong but if you renounce all worldly ties to know God, it is not a fault.

You should not give up prescribed practices just to avoid or escape them. The great devotee *Prahlada* opposed his father’s directions and words. Why did he oppose him? He opposed his father because of his love for *Narayana* and his passion to know *Narayana* (God). So *Prahlada* cannot be faulted. Worldly practices and rules have to be followed; but giving them up for the sake of God is not a flaw. Gautama Buddha left his wife and infant son Rahul, but is he criticized as a bad man by anyone? Why is he not criticized? He renounced them in his quest for truth, and not because he had no love or compassion. He left them with the aim of attaining a higher and exalted state; that is all!

*sarva-dharmaṁ n parityajya mā m ekam s' haran. am vraja
aham tvā mi sarva-pā pebhyo mokṣhaviṣhyāmi mā s'huchah.*
- *Bhagavad Gita 18-66*

(Word Translation from other sources: Abandon all varieties of dharmas and simply surrender unto me alone. I shall liberate you from all sinful reactions; do not fear.)

There is no fault in giving up rules and practices for my sake, says Lord Krishna. The cow licks the calf clean as soon as it is born; just as we give a bath to clean a baby after it is born. Similarly, if we surrender to God, he will remove our impurities such as lust and anger; and purify our minds. If you focus on Him single-mindedly, He will clear out the bad qualities in you. Like well ironed clothes, He will clean and straighten you and then he will give you liberation. He cannot bestow liberation as long as there are impurities in us. Surgeons operate to remove any diseased parts from the body. If they leave the infection inside, how will the pain subside? Similarly, God will remove the impurities in you, and then give you liberation.

As stated by Jesus Christ, the secret here is, “You must know the truth and the truth only shall make you free.” Whether you follow the path of devotion or self-enquiry, finally you must find the Truth. There is a Divine Spirit in you, and you have to realize that. If you cannot do that for any reason, you will not attain Liberation!

Unless you identify and become one with the True Self, you cannot get rid of sorrow even if you do

charity, give large donations, or perform any rituals. The one who thinks “I am doing charity” is the ego, and he is the culprit.

Ramana Maharshi once told a story to exemplify the state of our charity and generosity. A person made an idol of Lord Ganesha with sugar candy/*jaggery*. He performed the *pooja* (worship) to this candy idol. As part of the worship, offerings of clothes, food, betel leaf etc have to be made, which is similar to showing respect and hospitality to a person. All these are the steps in a *pooja*. We should learn how to do *pooja* also.

So he had to offer food and sweetmeats. We make food offerings so that God will bless us with sufficient food for our body. Generally, we just place a sugar candy before God as offering. Who can cook sweet dishes everyday; it is hard work!! We just keep a tin of sugar candy and offer a small piece every day! This devotee did not have sugar candy to spare that day. So what did he do? He pinched a small piece of sugar candy from the idol of Ganesha itself and offered the same to Ganesha!

We must always remember that we are offering to God only those things that God had already given to us. We believe that we own what does not belong to us, which results in a bloated ego. To whom does all the wealth that

we possess belong? It is not ours; it belongs to God. When we give alms to the poor, we think “I am doing it” and “I am giving away my money”. That is the beginning of ego. You think you are giving it. But in reality, it does not belong to you. That is aggression! Gradually our mind is poisoned. Who gave this to us? God! Who are we giving it back to? God! If you are aware that the person who accepts charity is also the same God that resides in your heart, there is no harm. But if you think “I” gave and he accepted, you become contaminated, and ego will arise.

There will be conflicts between mothers and daughters also. If the daughter does not give proper care to the mother in her old age, the mother will remind the daughter all that she did for her saying “I gave you this and that”! Mothers and daughters have a lot of interpersonal issues, and these conflicts cause bondage. There is usually affection between sisters; but if one of the sisters becomes rich, her other sisters develop jealousy. She was one of us until now, but now she has struck gold, they think among themselves and become jealous of her. Why – because the trait jealousy already exists in them; and there is no investment required for jealousy! Hence, our own family members are our enemies!

The reason we are talking about jealousy here is because this is the most dangerous quality among all the

bad qualities. Even those who have performed long-term rigorous spiritual practices are not able to obtain the benefits of those practices because of the demon called jealousy! Lord Sri Krishna said “Give up jealousy and become qualified for Divine Knowledge like Arjuna” – Bhagavad Gita 9-11).

You said: Do such devotees exist? There is no need to doubt that.

They do exist here and there. We may not be aware of them. There are some realized souls who are not visible to the world. Supposing you have crores/million of rupees; even if none of us are aware of that, you are still a millionaire. Likewise, you are a millionaire even when we know that you are a millionaire. The fact that you are a rich person does not change whether others are aware of it or not. Similarly, there are some enlightened souls in the world, but they do not give discourses. They are neither heard nor seen. Those who give discourses become popular; Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi belong to this category. Some enlightened souls do not teach. Some people possess gold, but they don't make ornaments with it; but still gold remains gold (it is still valuable)!

There are some great souls who are self-realized but are unknown. They have realized the Ultimate Truth, but whether or not they share their knowledge is secondary.

Some doctors give very good treatment, but they don't teach others. They practice medicine very well, and they are good doctors. Some professors in medical college provide such excellent training that the students will not need to study further at home. It is the teacher's responsibility to create an interest in the subject and develop passion in the student.

What we know is very little and what we don't know is vast. The *gopikas* have unconditional devotion; that is the reason why their devotion became so popular. There is nothing that they ever desired from God, but they have devotion. That is why they became famous as true devotees. Their devotion is boundless and unconditional! That is, total surrender to God!

Parabhakti (supreme devotion) means *jnana* (enlightenment/Divine knowledge). *Parabhakti* is another name for *jnana*. In *parabhakti* there is no other thought.

Once, while speaking to Mr. Siris Subba Raju (an acquaintance), I (Nannagaru) shared with him a statement of Ramana Maharshi, that the universe, the individual and God are created by the mind. He asked, "how can it be said that God is also created by the mind?" What Bhagavan implies here is this: Do the world, individual and God exist in sleep? No! When do these three appear? They come into existence after you are awake. They come into

being when the mind arises; and they also subside when the mind subsides. From this, we know that they are creations of the mind. A truth seeker should use his mental faculties to whatever extent these are helpful. We should use the mind and intellect to go as far as they can take us. When it goes beyond the mind and intellect, we must depend on faith. There are people who lived for ten years even after the doctors treating them gave up hope. There are some cancer patients who were not expected to live more than six months but have lived for six years. But then we should not give up human effort supported by the intellect. After human effort is made, faith will continue to support us. Faith will make us eligible and deserving of God's Grace.

Some people say that they have struggled and worked very hard but the returns on their hard work are not adequate. With faith, God's grace will come to us. What more do we need? The grace of God is much more valuable than any material gains such as a packet of sweets. The sweets will be gone after you eat them; that is, the worldly desires fulfilled by God will only give you momentary happiness. But God's grace has no end. In spiritual practice, the support we get from faith is equal to the support from intellect. It is only faith that makes us deserving of God's Grace.

Here we need to understand that we should use our thinking faculty and intellect to whatever extent possible. When it gets beyond the grasp of the intellect, if we have constant faith in God, His grace will reach us. Faith is possible only with love, which is our devotion towards God.

Some people have intense devotion but they don't show it outwardly. They are like "filled pots" (self-contained or complete individuals). Great souls have defined that kind of devotion in several ways. Sankaracharya stated that "bhakti is merging with your true Self". Lord Sri Krishna said, "single-minded contemplation is bhakti".

When the saint Seshadri Swami folded his hands in prayer to the Arunachala Hill, Bhagavan said, "who is prostrating in prayer, and who is that who accepts the prostrations?" Bhagavan's meaning is that in oneness or non-duality there is no giver and receiver. Here Bhagavan is referring to *parabhakti* (supreme devotion). *Parabhakti* is divine knowledge. In *parabhakti* there is no thought of any other.

A *jnani*, enlightened soul, will not be without devotion, without compassion and without love. *Jnani* is a compassionate being.

POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. The love that we have for God is called *Bhakti* (devotion). *Parabhakti* is divine knowledge. In *parabhakti* there is no thought of any other.
2. Ramana Maharshi used to say, “If there is *Vibhakti* (separation – viewing yourself and Divine as separate), you need *Bhakti*; if there is no *Vibhakti*, where is the need for *Bhakti*?” You think that you are separate from God, consequently, you need *Bhakti* towards Him. Where is the need of *bhakti* for someone who does not leave God at any time?
3. In *viralabhakti* there is forgetfulness. In *saralabhakti*, love for God is like the continuous flow of a river. *Saralabhakti* is better than *viralabhakti*.
4. Truth seekers should cultivate good qualities. These qualities will aid them in experiencing the Divine Self /attain Enlightenment.
5. Instead of singing the praises of God, implementing and practicing what God has taught us will make us deserving of His Grace faster.

6. Getting rid of all the bad qualities that obstruct the experience of the Divine Self is *Bhakti*.
7. Seekers should have a noble aim in life. Even those with ideals will still make one or two mistakes out of ten. But those without any ideals will commit all the ten mistakes. That is why seekers should have a goal in life.
8. Our wealth and possessions belong to God. But we believe that these belong to us, so ego expands.
9. Unconditional devotion will bring you God's grace and blessings. That is, you should have love but there should be no cause or reason for it.
10. We should use our thinking faculty and intellect to whatever extent possible with faith in God. When it gets beyond the grasp of the intellect, we should depend on faith. Faith in God will make us deserving of His grace and blessings; and that grace from God is most valuable and endless.



6. UTTERANCE OF “I” SHOULD INSTANTLY ASSOCIATE WITH BRAHMAM (COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS)

Kothagudam

8 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to Sri Nannagaru!*

“I am *Brahmam*” (*Aham Brahmasmi*) is a universal statement.

(i) *Sage Ashtavakra said this:*

*Yena dr_s_tani parami brahma so'hami
brahmeti cintayet*

kimi cintayati nis'cinto dviti'yami yo na pas'yati

- Ashtavakra Gita 16-1

Meaning:

He, by whom Brahmam (Divine Cosmic Consciousness) is seen as other than himself, has to think “I am Brahmam”. He who goes beyond all thoughts and intellect, seeing nothing but the Self, what can he think about?

Sage and philosopher Sri Sankaracharya stated that the “the qualities of a realized soul are the ideals/goals for a seeker”.

At one time, "I am Brahman" was considered to be the medium for spiritual practice. However, when the Ultimate state is our goal, rather than saying "I am Brahman", should not the aim of a seeker be to transcend and go beyond all thoughts and intellect, seeing no duality? Please explain.

Sri Nannagaru:

You said: "*He, by whom Brahman (Divine Cosmic Consciousness) is seen as other than himself, has to think "I am Brahman"*".

This is very good! "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am *Brahman*) should be so natural that there should be no effort there. When there is effort, we will see *Brahman* as separate from us. Do we need effort and practice to think I am a body and I am a person? It is not required. Similarly, when you say "I" it should naturally associate with *Brahman* (Brahman should be felt instantly). Then nothing in this world will be seen as separate from *Brahman*.

Sri Ramana Maharshi made a statement about *Aham Brahmasmi*. No human being thinks, I am not a dog, I am not a donkey, I am not a pig; I am a human being. Why is that so? "I am a human being" is naturally our experience in all situations. Specifically reminding ourselves of this,

or thinking about it or meditating on it does not happen! But seekers meditate and dwell on the thought “I am neither this body nor this mind, I am the immortal Self”.

As long as the world is seen as apart from *Brahmam*, fear will not let go of any human being. Tigers would come near Ramana Maharshi, but he was never agitated. The reason is that he never thought of them as different from himself. This means that he was able to see the entire creation as *Brahmam* so naturally!

Swami Vivekananda used to say “Be courageous”. That is not suitable here. Those words are useful to inspire young men and women. This is of no use to spiritual seekers! When you say be courageous, it means that you have fear! When *Brahmam* is seen as the other, that is, in the state of duality, fear is natural! Vivekananda’s words were not related to absolute truth. He said these words with the aim to instill fearlessness in the youth. It is a partial truth.

As long as the world is seen as other than *Brahmam*, this will not be our last birth. It means we will have rebirth. Unless the mind is completely eliminated, we cannot see the universe as *Brahmam*. This is the real test for a seeker, and the most important aspect of spiritual practice. When we see any object as separate from us, the

desire to possess it arises. Along with that desire, the entire army including anger, envy, jealousy etc will follow. Just as the *tahsildar*, office boy and all the staff follow a collector (district magistrate) wherever he goes, so too these emotions come together. If there is no desire, emotions like anger, envy or jealousy will not arise!

As long as we see the world as different from us, fear will exist. For example, when we see a snake or a tiger, fear will come naturally!

This statement is very good; you can repeat it like a *mantra* (divine hymn) daily- “*He, by whom Brahman (Divine Cosmic Consciousness) is seen as other than himself, has to think “I am Brahman”*”. When you experience the body as “I”, where is the need to think “I am the body”? In the same way, when you attain the state of *Brahman* there is no need to think “I am *Brahman*”. That is, when you are not in the natural state of *Brahman* you are advised to dwell on “I am *Brahman*”.

We negate each thought saying I am not this body, I am not the mind, I am not the intellect; and in the end we say I am *Brahman*! Ramana Maharshi said this enquiry is like saying I am not a donkey, I am not a dog, I am not a pig, I am a human being. You can do introspection, but it is unnatural, he says.

You also said: *He who goes beyond all thoughts and intellect, seeing nothing but the Self, what can he think about?*

Other than one's Self – here Self means *Brahmam*. Ramana Maharshi used to say, rather than being as “I” be as the “Self”. We think of ourselves as “I”, which means we limit ourselves to the body and mind. So instead of being as “I”, be as the Self. Here Self means *Brahmam*. If you look at the world as the world, it means you have not yet reached “the no-world state”. Then desire also arises. When you see something other than yourself, you want to acquire it and desire arises. Controlling your desires is different from having no desires. If you need to control, it implies there is attachment to an object. Control is not necessary for those who stay as the “Self”. Ramana Maharshi used to say, “If *Brahmam* is realized, there is no mind to control.” Here *Brahmam* means the Divine and Pure Spirit. We call it *Brahmam*, and Jesus Christ calls it “truth”.

Overcoming the intellectual faculty means overcoming the world. One who has overcome the intellect is greater than one who has overcome the world. Even if you win over the entire world, how long will it remain in your hands/control? How long did the Mughal dynasty last; and how long did the British Empire last? Great empires

have crumbled and disappeared. Sage Valmiki said, “Nothing is too heavy for destiny!” In the flow of time everything has to pass away! A person may possess a hundred crores in rupees; and the person who acquired it may think, how can I lose this? He thinks it will last for several generations even if his descendants are idle and spend it. But when the time comes for it to go, it may go within hours. We will not know how and when it will go. It is said in the scriptures that when you earn money, it is already decided when it will leave you even before you earn it. The death of a body is already predetermined, in the very moment this body is born on the earth. Likewise, when somebody earns na thousand crores of rupees, it is already determined when he will lose it while earning itself. Even the body will go away! Gautama Buddha said, “This body is not yours; you will be separated from your body some day! When your body itself is not yours, what is it that belongs to you?” Buddha is a realized soul and has experienced *Brahmam*. When asked whether God exists or not, he would remain silent. If you have no happiness, what is the use of even telling you that God exists? If you have no happiness, there is no peace. What is the use of mere words? That is why he would remain silent. However, he is self-realized and attained the state of *Brahmam*. Jesus Christ called the state of *Brahmam* as the kingdom of heaven. Buddha called it the state of *Nirvana* (enlightenment). In the state of *Nirvana* the mind completely subsides.

“He who goes beyond all thoughts and intellect, seeing nothing but the Self, what can he think about?”

Who is the Self? *Brahmam!* It is said, don't live as “I” but live as the “Self”. Self means *Brahmam*. This is an excellent statement by Ashtavakra. There are several such gems in the *Ashtavakra Gita*. It is also called the *Ashtavakra Samhita* (treatise). Some *acharyas* (scholars) say that it is more profound than the Bhagavad Gita.

When there is nothing separate from you, there is also nothing to think about. You will not see anything different from you. When nothing is seen, the thought of being liberated from it will not even arise. Fear comes when you see others. But you are not afraid of yourself. Fear arises when a second object is perceived.

Whatever you are trying to know, you are already ‘That’. You may not be aware of it. However, you are identifying with whatever you are not, so it becomes necessary to tell you, ‘you are that’. In this context Bhagavan said, “We are identifying with that which we are not, so it becomes necessary to tell you are ‘That’. Otherwise, it is not necessary to say it. One who cannot reside in the Self, cannot overcome the world. They will have rebirth! Rebirth is certain for one who sees duality. If they do good deeds, they may enjoy the pleasures of a higher world or heaven.

Other worlds do exist; however, these are only as true as our mind. These are not absolute truth.

A person performs noble deeds with his ego, with the thought I am doing. He also wishes for the fruits of those deeds. To obtain the outcomes of those deeds, he will go to some higher world and enjoy the pleasures there! This is a dangerous situation. When he returns to the mortal world on earth, the *vasanas* (tendencies /impressions) related to those pleasures will stay with the person. These tendencies will give birth to new desires. One who has these tendencies, even if he is a seeker of the highest order, he cannot see the Truth. Even if he has glimpses of the Truth, he cannot remain in that state permanently. Here, we need to understand that unless all the *vasanas* are eliminated, the seeker will not attain Self-Realization. Even if there are momentary glimpses, it will not last. Hence, self-realization is not possible by studying the scriptures and philosophic treatises and trying to understand with the intellect. It is possible only with the elimination of *vasanas*.

You said: “*Sage and philosopher Sri Sankaracharya stated that the “the natural qualities of a realized soul are the ideals/goals for a seeker”.*”

Sadhanamulu (Qualities) imply that the attributes or characteristics that are present naturally in Lord Sri Rama are not present as naturally in us. We have to do *sadhana* or practice to develop them. *Sadhana* implies effort. Effort causes some amount of suffering. If you are making an effort, it means you are not in your natural state. You will be in your natural state only when you realize yourself. When you are not in your natural state, there will be some sorrow. The effort that is called *sadhana* is stressful and becomes the cause of your sorrow. For example, if we have pain in the knee, and if it does not subside with allopathy medicines, we try other options like homeopathy or ayurveda. We also go for physiotherapy and keep on trying something or the other. Man cannot be without making some kind of effort. But if there is no pain in the knee and if it is functioning normally, we will not have any thought about the knee, isn't it!

The point here is, when we are not in our natural state, we will continue to make some effort or the other! Nobody likes to do *sadhana*; why? Because that is not a natural state! But we cannot avoid it! When it is not natural, there will be some struggle and pain! Just as a body needs comfort (*swasthata*), the mind also needs comfort. If the mind is able to remain in its original source, comfort/peace will come. Health is our natural state. Nobody will question you, "why are you always healthy?" because health is our

natural state. Illness or bad health is only a temporary situation because it is unnatural. If you are in peace, no one will question you; but if you are disturbed, people will enquire after you. What Sankaracharya said is: that which is present naturally in an Enlightened Soul becomes the ideal or goal for a seeker. Some people are born rich; they are born “with a golden spoon in their mouth”. Some are born in a poor family, but even they can work hard and become rich. We don’t have to just sit and talk about the great qualities of Sri Rama. We too can become like Rama if we cultivate those qualities. There is no need to just sit idle thinking we don’t have any money while the other person is born rich and has *crores* (billions). If we try, we too can make *crores*.

You said: *At one time, it was thought that spiritual practice constituted realizing “I am Brahman”.*

Thinking is also *sadhana* (practice). When the state of *Brahman* is not in your experience, you can think “*I am Brahman*”. That is also *sadhana*.

No person is a *sarvajna* (all-knowing). Some people think they will be looked down upon if they say “I don’t know”, so they fabricate something and talk as if they know. It is not necessary that a person should know everything. Radhakrishnan once said, “If you ask me how

soap is manufactured, how can I tell you? Just for that reason, how can you call me useless?” Hence, a seeker should openly accept what he does not know and say it. A seeker should aspire to speak the truth and practice it.

Some doctors openly discuss the illness of their patients in the presence of others. But some patients are shy and feel embarrassed to talk when others are present; they will share their problems only in private. Shyness is also a mental activity. Because there is a mind there will be shyness. Sri Ramana Maharshi would sit wearing only a loin cloth. Many people including ladies would visit him, but he would have neither shyness nor hesitation. That is because he was in a no-mind state. In such a situation, we would feel embarrassed. When people from his village visited him, they would ask, “in our village you used to wear pants and shirt, you are wearing only a loin cloth now, why did you degrade yourself like this?” He would respond saying, “I did not make any specific effort nor did I take much time to be in this state. I became like this the very day I arrived in Arunachala!” Mind itself is shyness. Many do not know this. If there is no mind where will shyness come from?

There is a saying in English, “Face is the index of the mind”. If our mind is calm, our face will be pleasant. When the mind is disturbed, it reflects clearly on the face. When the mind is disturbed, rather than trying to divert the

mind by reading books, spiritual seekers will benefit more if they sit in front of the image of Sri Bhagavan for some time. If you do not have the habit of meditating, placing a photo of Ramana Maharshi conveniently within our vision and just gazing at him for some time will bring peace to us. Not everybody will have the habit of meditation. We also need not stress ourselves to look at Bhagavan's photo. We just have to look only as long as we can do it naturally and comfortably; and peace will certainly come. You will get better results than you would with meditation. Also, you need not force yourself to look at him. You should just see him as long as you can do that normally without stress. There is only peace in His presence! He had nothing else to give other than supreme peace. But we can share only our agitation and troubles with others. We don't have anything other than unrest. What can we do? We can only give what we have, from where can we bring and share what we don't have?

You also asked: *"..if the Ultimate state is our goal, rather than saying "I am Brahman", should not the aim of a seeker be to transcend and go beyond all thoughts and intellect, seeing no duality?"*

In fact, the thought "*I am Brahman*" is meant for transcending the faculty of intellect. Instead of thinking thus, if it is directly experienced, we will naturally transcend

the intellectual faculty. To aim at transcending the intellectual faculty and to avoid seeing otherness is also *sadhana*! It is a negative kind of *Sadhana*; it will be a little bitter! This is like controlling and directing a calf by beating it. If you tempt a calf by showing fresh grass it will follow you as directed, that is positive! It is not necessary to beat it with a stick; that is negative! When *Brahmam* is not in your experience, then the universe will appear as separate from you. As long as the seeker lives as the individual “I”, he will see the universe as the other. When he abides in the “Self”, that is, if he has experienced the Divine Spirit, everything will appear as manifestation of *Brahmam*.

The world and *Brahmam* (Divine Self) are not two separate entities; *Brahmam* alone exists! In the state of ignorance, the same *Brahmam* is seen as the world. Instead, if *Brahmam* is seen as *Brahmam* itself, then there is no world. *Brahmam* itself appears as the world. As we have not directly experienced *Brahmam*, we see the world as separate from *Brahmam*. *Samsaram* (transient worldly life) is not about people, everything that is seen as separate from *Brahmam* is *Samsara*.

For one who has overcome the intellectual faculties, there will be no material world. In our conscious state, when we are awake, we see the material world, but in deep sleep there is no material world. However, if we experience the material world as non-existent, even in the

waking state; that is, if we become aware of the entire universe as a manifestation of *Brahmam*; that is called “Objectless awareness”. That is the ultimate state for a seeker; and until a seeker reaches that state, rebirth is certain.

When we say everything is *Brahmam*, then this world is also *Brahmam*. Even when it is seen as the world, it is still *Brahmam*. Do we think the world is real or unreal? We think it is real because the actual Truth is not in our experience.

Once Swami Vivekananda was chased by a few monkeys on the streets of Kasi (Varanasi). After running some distance to escape, he remembered the words in the Upanishads (Vedic scriptures) – be fearless. He immediately stopped and bravely stood still with folded arms. When he stood still without running, the monkeys also stopped chasing. He was still and the monkeys were still. After two to three minutes, the monkeys went away. After that, wherever he went, he started teaching the youth to be brave. The statement “Be fearless” is like the maintenance dose (of a medicine).

When anything is seen as other than *Brahmam*, then desire will arise. When an object is seen as separate from you, how can you not have a desire to own it? You can control a desire after it arises; that is a different matter. But you cannot stop a desire from arising. After desires arise, you must again make an effort to control them!

POINTS TO REMEMBER AND COMTEMPLATION

1. *He, by whom Brahman (Divine Cosmic Consciousness) is seen as other than himself, has to think "I am Brahman".* Do we need effort and practice to think I am a body and I am a person? It is not required. Similarly, when you say "I" it should immediately associate with *Brahman*(only Brahman should be felt).
2. When we see any object as separate from us, the desire to own it arises. Along with that desire, the entire army comprising of anger, envy, jealousy etc will follow.
3. A person performs good deeds with his ego, with the thought I am doing. He also expects the fruits of those deeds. To obtain the outcomes of those deeds, he will go to some higher world and enjoy the pleasures there! This is a dangerous situation. When he returns to the mortal world on earth, the *vasanas* (tendencies /impressions) related to those pleasures will stay with the person. These tendencies will give birth to new desires. Self-realization is not possible by studying the scriptures and philosophic treatises and trying to understand with the intellect. It is possible

only with the elimination of the *vasanas* /
tendencies!



4. The world and Divine Self (*Brahmam*) are not two separate things; *Brahmam* alone exists! As we have not directly experienced *Brahmam*, we see the world as separate from *Brahma*.

7. YOU HAVE FREEDOM TO SEEK THE TRUTH

Kothagudam

9 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to Sri Nannagaru!*

The goal of a truth seeker is to directly experience Oneness/non-duality; and for that the mind should be eliminated. You said that the mind can be eliminated by single-focussed meditation.

Will we not remain stuck in duality by repeatedly saying “I am without name and form, I am Brahman”? Rather than thinking “I am Brahman”, is it not better to contemplate on the non-duality concept “There is only one; there is no other”?

If you introspect deeper, there is nothing in our hands, we have no freedom at all, and everything happens according to God’s Will. So, neither one-pointed meditation nor the ways to do this meditation are in our hands / control. It may be better to constantly remember and repeatedly recall that everything happens according to God’s Will. Please show us the right direction in this regard.

Sri Nannagaru:

Unless there is a tendency towards non-duality, oneness cannot be experienced. It must be cultivated over several births. Aside from the experience of non-duality, first there should be an inclination towards it. That innate disposition should be there. Unless there is *punyabalam* (strong merit), the tendency towards non-duality will not develop. It is also necessary to have performed noble deeds; and to have heard about the Divine Spirit. Whether the subject matter heard and imbibed is practiced or not, it will certainly aid and protect when the need arises.

Non-duality is our goal. In practical life however, we are in the context of duality; but our goal should be non-duality! Lord Sri Krishna explained how to practice that in the Bhagavad Gita. We see so many living beings in this world. For example, we see a cow, we see a dog, we see a tiger, we see a good man, we see a bad man, and we see different kinds of animals and people with different mentalities. God says we should stop looking at the minds of others and learn to look at Him who dwells in the hearts of all beings. God *Narayana* dwells in the heart of the good person and bad person alike. There is good and also bad in the world. In fact, this world also needs badness. To develop the goodness in good people, bad people are necessary. Truth seekers should have *thithiksha* (stoicism

or forbearance). Bad people will be useful to test the limits of our tolerance. Sri Sankaracharya gave a good explanation of *thithiksha* in his book *Viveka Choodamani*. He clearly states that *thithiksha* is the ability to endure all forms of suffering without grudge, resentment, bitterness, complaint, worry or weeping. (*Viveka Choodamani-24*)

The world itself means plurality. There will always be both good and bad in the world. As far as we are concerned, we should see a person who eats dog's meat and the person who eats a chicken equally in the same sense. God *Narayana* resides in all beings. To see the same God within us, in the dog, in the untouchable who eats dog's meat, in the cow, in the pure Brahmin, in the good person, bad person, and in all animate and inanimate objects, will help in experiencing non-duality/Oneness. We should not see the body and mind in living beings. We should see the divinity within. We should practice in this way to experience oneness/non-duality. Without doing that, the experience of oneness will not come.

The experience of oneness means the experience of *amruthaanubhavam*(immortal bliss). That supreme bliss is the state of immortality. There are *mrutham* and *amrutham*. *Mrutham* means mortality and death, *Amrutham* means deathless state. The experience of the immortal divine Spirit is *amruthaanubhavam*. There is no death to the one who has experienced this supreme bliss. He becomes a

mrityunjaya (one who has overcome death). While the body has death, he has clear awareness that he is not the body. Just as we identify with the body, he identifies naturally with the deathless spirit. Hence, he becomes a *mrityunjaya*. He is a *chiranjeevi* (immortal). He overcomes death while still in the body. Even when the body is dying, he will not suffer with the thought “I am dying”, because of his complete identification with the deathless spirit.

The mind should be definitely eliminated. Unless one reaches the no-mind state, the Divine Self cannot be experienced. There are many paths towards elimination of the mind. Among these, one is the path of *vicharana* (self-enquiry), and another is *ekachinthana* (meditating on a single object or single-focussed meditation).

If you like Lord Venkateswara, if you always think of Him and meditate on Him, other thoughts will stop coming to you. Though other thoughts come out of habit, these will recede because of the meditation on a single object. Constant meditation and remembrance of either God, or Spiritual teacher, or Divine Spirit, will put a stop to all the thoughts (other than those of God) that supply food for the mind. Then the mind will be gradually eliminated.

Self-enquiry is one of the paths for the elimination of mind. One-pointed meditation is another path. If you remove each strand from a thick rope, there will be

no rope left. Similarly, there are negative qualities in a seeker, like lust, anger, attachment, fear etc. If each of these qualities are eliminated one by one, there will be no mind left!

Lord Sri Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita (4-101) –
vita-raga-bhaya-krodha man-maya mam upasritah /
bahavo jnana-tapasa puta mad-bhavam agatah //

(Word Translation from other sources: Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, being fully absorbed in Me, and taking refuge in Me, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me—and thus attained transcendental love for Me – my divine love.)

He asked us to free ourselves from all these tendencies because there will be unrest and suffering as long as you have these in you. He advises us to stay free of all things that bring unrest and suffering, and are the cause of rebirths. The mind is a collection of thoughts. If all the thoughts are removed, there will be no mind left! We place wood in the stove, and then there will be fire. But, if we remove the burning wood one stick at a time, there will be no fire left. We can do this, since it is difficult to put out the fire all at once. There are several other pathways like this.

The mind will be gradually eliminated through one-pointed meditation, which is to constantly think about

the Divine Spirit, and to cut off food supply in the form of other thoughts to the mind. Even our body will die if we stop eating food for twenty or thirty days. You don't need to take poison for that. Similarly, if we starve our mind by denying it the nourishment of worldly thoughts, it will be eliminated. Hence one-pointed meditation also eliminates the mind.

Lack of food and sleep will lead to death. If we do *jaagarana* (stay awake) for a single night during *Sivarathri*, we cannot control our sleep the next day! Also, if we do *upavasam* (fast) on *Ekadasi* (11th day in Telugu calendar), we crave for food on *Dwadasi* (12th day). What kind of a fast is that? That is not the right way to fast. Our mental state when we fast on *Ekadasi* day should be the same as on the day we eat food. If not, the fact that one is fasting shows on the face! We should be equally composed and content on the day we do *upavasam* as on the day we eat.

Upavasam- “*Upa*” means near/close to, and “*vasam*” means to stay or to be – to be near. So *Upavasam* means to be near or close to the Divine Spirit; that is to abide or live in the Heart. Sri Ramana Maharshi advised moderation in food rather than starvation, so that the mind is not distracted by thoughts of food. Those who do *upavasam* (fast) will be meditating on food; while some people eat all the offerings made to God in the form of

varieties of fruits, sweets etc. on the day they fast. They eat all kinds of unnecessary stuff in the name of *upavasam*! The concept of fasting is to avoid eating anything that is cooked over a flame. But coffee cannot be made without flame! Fruits like apple and banana, however, can be consumed in moderation. Some people do waterless or no-water fasting; and they don't eat fruits or even drink water during the fast.

Fasting is unnecessary. It is enough if you are careful about what you eat. In case you want to fast, you can eat food not touched by fire, like fruits. Foods such as sweetened rice cake (though uncooked) can cause indigestion and should be avoided. Coffee and tea should also be avoided. Instead of hot milk, raw/unboiled milk directly obtained from milking can be consumed. Real fasting, however, is to stay close to the Divine Spirit in your heart.

Single-pointed meditation is one of the paths for elimination of the mind. For example, various formulas can be used to do a mathematical calculation. Srinivasa Ramanujan failed twice in the tenth class examination – not in English but in Mathematics. He is one of the greatest mathematicians ever born in India. How did such a great scholar fail in maths? In the past, the examination paper would have 12 mathematical questions and the students were expected to complete 10 of these to obtain 100 marks.

But if a student answered all 12 problems, they would get 120 marks out of 100. This was an old practice to evaluate students and has been discontinued.

Ramanujan would start with the first question and work on all the possible formulas. By then the time to complete the paper would be up, and the examiners would collect the papers. Even if the calculation was done using ten different formulas, the marks given for one question will be only 10! So, he would fail the test. As he was from a poor family, he had to work for a living. To qualify for a job, he was advised to complete 10th class at least (high school); so he somehow managed to get through. Later he obtained a job in the port of Madras. At work, he had to perform the tasks given to him by the officer there. He would complete those tasks quickly with the least involvement, and spend the remaining time working on mathematical calculations, rather than doing this in his personal time outside work. Finally, he was terminated from the job. He would always be working on some mathematical formulas, and not finding any useful vocation for him in our country, he was sent to London. He earned his academic degrees and doctorate there, and he became world famous. He succumbed to Tuberculosis at a young age, but his wife lived until recently for 98 years. The point here is that a great genius in mathematics could not get through a maths test!

You said: *Will we not remain stuck in duality by repeatedly saying “I am without name and form”, “I am Brahman”?*

Brahman (Supreme Self) is nameless, formless and actionless! However, we cannot meditate on the nameless and formless as long as we identify with a name and form. So, we can meditate on any one of the forms or images of God. For example, the image of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Sankaraacharya or any Spiritual *Guru* can be taken as a support for meditation. As long as you have *rupa buddhi* (identification with your form), constantly meditating with the support of a form, like the image of Lord Venkateswara, and repeatedly chanting that name, will slowly remove your identification with your own name and form. When we are detached from our own name and form, we are likely to have the experience of Self that is nameless and formless. While there is *roopabuddhi* and *nama buddhi* (identification with name and form), even if we are advised to meditate on the nameless and formless object, it is very difficult to do it.

Rajagopalachari said, if you have to cross a river and a boat is available, you can choose to either swim across the river or take the boat. Meditating on *Brahman* to reach the state of *Brahman* (Immortal Self that is nameless and formless) is like swimming across the river. Meditating on

a name and form to reach the nameless and formless state is like crossing the river with the aid of a boat. Whether you swim or take a boat, the goal is to reach the other bank of the river. But those who take the boat will have no stress or pain. It is advisable for those who have *roopabuddhi* and *nama buddhi* to take the support of a Divine name or form. Rare souls like Ramana Maharshi have attained liberation without the support of a name and form. Ramana Maharshi attained the state of *Brahmam* even without hearing anything related to *Brahmam*. We cannot imitate him in this respect.

Seekers who have *roopabuddhi* and *nama buddhi* (identification with name and form) remain in duality. Constant contemplation of *Brahmam* will make one *Brahmam*, but when there is identification with a name and form, it is not possible to meditate on *Brahmam*. Thinking and meditating are two different things. So, one should take the support of a holy person or a spiritual teacher (*Sathguru*) and with constant *japa* (repetition of His name) and *dhyana* (meditation on His form), slowly reach the nameless and formless state. The moment we are released from identification with name and form, then the *Brahmam* which already exists will be revealed. It is only name and form that keep a person in bondage. If a person has no identification with name and form, he has no bondage. Only when one identifies with a name and form, there will be

thoughts of “mine” and “others”. For one who has no identification with a name and form, there is no difference between mine and others. To say *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) is one thing and being ‘That’ is another thing. If we are just satisfied with saying it or thinking it, we will continue to remain in the state of duality.

You said: *Rather than thinking “I am Brahman”, is it not better to contemplate on the non-duality concept “There is only one; there is no other”?*

You can contemplate on the non-duality concept “there is only one, there is no other”; nothing wrong in that. But you cannot perceive it in the external world without first realizing it in your heart!

Without experiencing “Oneness” within the heart, we will not find it externally, even if we practice and make an effort. Fear will be removed, only when you become aware of the Oneness. By mere thinking that the Spirit within you and the Spirit within me is one and the same, are we able to get rid of fear? Why not? Because we are only thinking, and the act of thinking indicates that the mind is still present! When you truly “become” That, where is the need to think so? If you are doing it, where is the need to speak about it? Thinking is also part of *sadhana* (practice). It is not the final state; it is only a stage of practice.

Merely thinking that God is within him and God is within me too is different from having the *anubhooti* (experience). When there is thinking, it means that the mind has not been eliminated.

You also said: *“If you introspect deeper, there is nothing in our hands, we have no free will at all, and everything happens according to God’s Will”*

The statement that everything happens according to God’s Will is related only to your physical body. If we think everything happens according to God’s Will, then where is the need for *sadhana* (effort)? Lord Sri Krishna said we should make effort! In relation to the physical body, everything happens according to God’s Will and we don’t have the freedom. When should this body die, where the body should be on which day, and several such matters will happen according to God’s Will. For example, Mr. Ramana moved to Kothagudem five months ago, and we have been planning to visit him for the last four months but could not come now. Why? When we planned to come earlier, a meeting came in the way, then another meeting, and several other similar reasons did not make it possible to come until now. Though we planned earlier, we could come only now according to God’s Will!

God's Will means, whatever is related to the physical body, "everything is predetermined". His Will is seen in instances such as when and where you are born, your parentage, career and retirement, marriage, life partner, where you live, health, ill-health, the day and cause of death etc. So where is the power of *sadhana*? The body will take its course according to its fate. There may be both good and bad in your fate, and at the appropriate time, you will find yourself in either good or bad circumstances. All this happens externally! But your body's fate will not affect you if you have done *sadhana* and you are spiritually strong, and if you identify with God rather than with your body. When there is no pain, what will you lose even if your fate is very bad?

There is a disease in the knee, but if we don't feel the pain of that disease, we won't pay any attention to it! If you have an illness and the doctor tells you that it cannot be cured, you will request him to relieve you of pain, whether you are cured or not! You will think of a doctor only when you feel pain. Similarly, however bad the body's fate is, if you don't identify with it, it will not affect you. Whether people praise you or insult you, you will not feel anything. It is their ego which praises or insults, but you will not feel even that. There will be no thoughts about that.

Even when you are confronted with the most difficult situations possible in this world, if you have no body consciousness, it will not affect you. If you get rid of body-consciousness and attain identification with Self with the strength of your *sadhana*; in that state what loss can you incur due to bad fate? To whom is *prarabdha* (fate)? It is for the body! If you have no identification with the body, what can fate do to you? Sri Ramana Maharshi was afflicted with cancer due to the fate of his body. But he did not identify with that body, so the one who suffered from cancer did not exist.

Suppose we had a bad dream, why don't we worry about it after waking up? We know it is only a bad dream, so we don't worry. Similarly, your bad fate is also not real. Your statement "whatever has to happen will happen" is true in relation to the physical body. However, it will not affect you because of the strength of your *sadhana*. Otherwise, the effects of such situations will be severe. That is why *sadhana* is required.

You said: "*So, neither one-pointed meditation nor the ways to do this meditation are in our hands / control.*"

That means, in your opinion, even doing *sadhana* is also not in our hands. In fact, God gave freedom to a human being only here. A person has no freedom as far

as the body is concerned. But you have the freedom to either improve your mind or ruin it. You have the freedom to do *sadhana*.

Suppose you and your friend are faced with the same incident; and in that situation your friend may have less pain while you may have more pain; the difference is in how it is received. The pain will be lesser if there is strength of *sadhana*. We don't have the power and freedom to control the incidents that happen, but we have the freedom to choose how we respond to the situation.

For example, even if you have no desire for a certain position or authority, it will still come to you if it is in your fate. If it is not in your fate, you will not get it even if you have a desire for that position.

Do you think, or not? Even if the final decision is made by God, you must know that you have the freedom to think! The disease may or may not be cured, but you have the freedom to think about getting it cured. You must realize that! The disease may or may not be cured, and you may or may not get better. Whatever our fate is, we have the freedom to make an attempt; that is understood!

Question: Do we really have the freedom to think?

Sri Nannagaru:

You are asking good questions. We have no freedom as far as the body is concerned. Everything happens according to God's Will. But the seeker has freedom in the quest for Truth. Whether you succeed or fail in your quest for Truth will however be decided by God.

You do realize that you have freedom, don't you? Your mind is disturbed; hence you are trying to attain peace. Whether you find peace or not, you know that you have the freedom to try for it, don't you! But you don't have that freedom in relation to the fate of your body. This world is the only suitable place for our *sadhana*. All other worlds are either for enjoyment (as reward for good deeds) or they are lesser/darker worlds.

If you don't even have the freedom to search for Truth, why did Lord Sri Krishna preach the Bhagavad Gita? Lord Sri Krishna also said, "Arjuna, don't act just because I told you; you must ponder over my words before deciding on what you will do." If the seeker does not have the freedom to make that choice, why would God say that? You must refer to the last chapter in the Bhagavad Gita. Sri Krishna encouraged Arjuna to fight in the war because he had the disposition of a warrior. "I told you the facts. You should now think and decide whether to fight in the war or not", states Sri Krishna clearly in the last chapter of the Bhagavad

Gita (18-63). Why will he say that if that freedom does not exist?

Question: Ramana Maharshi had the death experience when he was sixteen years old. Is that death experience a result of his *sadhana* in previous births? Is our inclination towards the quest for Truth also based on the effort we made towards it in the past?

Sri Nannagar:

Sri Ramana Maharshi did not get the death experience by thinking about it. He did not even know about it earlier. Based on the merit he gained from past deeds, and his *sadhana* in the past births, God bestowed the gift of Self-Realization/Divine Wisdom on him. That was God's grace. Some people cannot grasp it even if they try very hard. This knowledge was the greatest blessing that came to Ramana Maharshi; and he is a boon to our country. He did not achieve anything by thinking about it.

Question: The question is whether thoughts also arise based on God's Will.

Sri Nannagar:

Fate is one hundred percent related to the body. As a seeker, if you do not have a role in the search for Truth, then why did Lord Sri Krishna advise Arjuna to think and act in the Bhagavad Gita? In that case why is the human

being given a brain/thinking faculty? If you just do what the One higher up tells you, why do you need a brain? Then you will be equal to a machine!

Question: It is said that the *Buddhi* (mind/intellect) is a consequence of our past deeds, is it not?

Sri Nannagaru:

Mind and intellect are related to the body. Even *karma* (action) is related to the body. Where is *karma* in sleep? Even a *jnani's* (realized soul's) body will go through its fate. Realized souls like Sri Rama Krishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi also suffered from cancer. That is their physical body's destiny, and they did not make any attempt to cure themselves.

You also asked: "*Please show the right direction on the best way to do single-focussed meditation.*"

The secret here is, single-focussed/one-pointed meditation is not easy. You should have love for it. Recently a little girl was brutally murdered in Vijayawada; and on hearing the news her father died of heart failure. He must have loved his daughter deeply for his heart to stop like that. He had a strong heart; a heart which hoarded hundred crores of rupees in toddy business. But his heart stopped, unable to bear the death of his daughter. If you have the

same amount of love for God, you will realize the Self. If you do not like single-focussed meditation, you cannot do it. There is an old saying, “if there is liking and willingness, there is no hardship in doing it”. When we are with someone we love, an hour will pass like a moment. If you like single-focussed meditation, it will come naturally. If you don’t like it, then single-focussed meditation is not possible. If you like *sadhana*, then it will not be difficult to do it.

If there is no freedom to think, God will not ask you to think. God is a *sarvagjna* (all-knowing). We should not add tails to him, which means that we are questioning his *sarvagjnatha* (status as all-knowing). If there is no freedom to think, how will you progress in *sadhana*? Einstein said, “Mistakes are part of learning”. You cannot learn to ride a cycle without ever falling. Even our scriptures mention that Sage Viswamitra failed several times; still he became a *Viswa* (universe) *Mitra* (friend) – friend of universe. Gandhiji too must have made some mistakes, but we cannot deny that he is a *mahatma* (great soul).

Question: Unrelated to the body, does a seeker have freedom to think in the context of his quest for Truth?

Sri Nannagaru:

You have the freedom only in the context of your quest for Truth. Why did God give us a brain if there is no need to think? If we did not have to think, then we are equal

to machines! Controlling one person is more difficult than managing a hundred machines. What is the reason? Machines cannot think, but a human being has the intellect to think.

Question: A person will naturally have some *vasanas* (tendencies) brought over from past lives. Will these pull us back, not allowing us to do single-pointed meditation?

Sri Nannagaru:

Those tendencies will keep coming. If a stray dog comes to your house everyday, you chase it away with a stick. It may continue to come for six months out of habit. Whenever it comes, if you chase it with a stick, then it will stop coming. These *vasanas* (tendencies) are like those dogs. The tendencies will turn into thoughts. If any thought arises, it means the tendency related to that thought is present in you. If you don't have that tendency, such thoughts will not come. It is our thoughts that grow and strengthen our tendencies in our mind.

However, if your mind is focused in single-pointed meditation, and you are not distracted by the thoughts, the thoughts will recede. Instead, if you let those thoughts dwell in your mind, they will settle down in the mind. The seeker who practices single-pointed meditation will not give place for other thoughts in the mind.

Question: In the case of Saint Vemana, he had a weakness for women earlier in his life and went after them. Until he was rid of that tendency, his thoughts did not turn toward Liberation, is it not so?

Sri Nannagaru:

If you take the case of Saint Thulasidas, he had extreme love for his wife. Once his wife casually told him that if he showed the same love that he had for her towards God Rama, he would have attained liberation. Though she said this casually, he took her words as truth; and he became a great saint. His wife did not know that he would take her words to heart, leave home, and write the *Ramayana* (story of Rama). She said it very casually, but that became true! Initially, Vemana's behavior too was excessive with regard to women, but over time he understood the pettiness and vulgarity of it. The lust for women was transformed into intense dispassion and devotion for God. He said, the worldly vision is gone, and the inner vision has come. This does not happen to everyone. It is the reward gained for the good deeds done over several births. Everyone who is like the earlier Vemana before his transformation will not become a *yogi* (mystic), it happens according to the merits gained by each person. Sage Valmiki was a murderer in his past, but all murderers will not become great sages. No need to go that far; even Ramana Maharshi's devotees would ask him, "We are struggling hard to experience the Inner

Self, but you attained it without doing anything!” He would respond to that saying, “Whatever you think is a great effort and struggle, I must have gone through that in past lives.” He never said that he came down from some higher world.

Single-pointed meditation is not that easy. You must have love for the Divine Spirit on which you are contemplating. That love should also be boundless and unconditional; there should be no expectations in that love. Conditional devotion will never sustain; unconditional devotion only will sustain. Lord Hanuman’s devotion is unconditional. Conditional devotion is also devotion, but it is of a lower level. Some devotees never ask God for anything because they don’t want to trouble Him. They leave it to fate saying it will come if it is in their fate; otherwise, it will not come. This is a good habit that truth seekers should cultivate.

Even fate can be erased with God’s grace. Something that happens according to fate is a general condition of nature, but there will be some exceptional situations also. We should not compare ourselves with such happenings. Those are very rare events. The death experience of Ramana Maharshi is one such unusual event. Truth seekers should follow the regular practices!

Remember one more point - among all those who realized the Self in this world, no two persons have attained

it in the same way. In the search for Truth, we cannot say how and when God will shower his Grace. Without His Grace and compassion, Self-Realization is not possible. That is a fact! Everything comes from there. The experience of the Self comes from there like a flood.

Some teachers say, “Even if you don’t know the answer, don’t leave the answer paper blank. Put in every effort to fill the paper and make it “black”. How else will the examiner get an opportunity to pass you? If you submit blank papers, how can the examiner help you?” Some drawing teachers say, “If you are asked to draw a crow, you must sincerely try to draw it to the best of your ability and write “crow” under it. The person marking your paper will then have the opportunity to pass you!”

So, we cannot stop making effort as long as the mind exists. Hence, we should sincerely make effort to the best of our ability, with faith in God. Then we will certainly receive God’s Grace.



Kothagudem
9 February 2010

Sri Nannagaru:

In principle, we will not attain Self-Realization unless we deserve it. Once we are qualified, it won't stop even if we reject it. Sri Ramana Maharshi attained Self-Realization in that manner! He did not ask for it! This applies not only to him, but to anyone! If you are qualified, Self-Realization will come in one second. If you do not deserve it, it may take hundreds of lives/births; we cannot say. Even if one percent of the tendencies remain in us, we will not qualify for Self-Realization. That is why total commitment is required in *sadhana* (search of Truth). As long as there is duality, there will be rebirth. Without oneness, we see the "I" as separate, the world as separate and God as separate - in plurality. When there is this separateness, you cannot avoid rebirths.

Question: What is *ahamvritti*?

Sri Nannagaru:

Ahamspurana means identification with *Brahmam* (Divine Spirit) within. *Ahamvritti* means identification with the mind and body. In *Ahamspurana*, the Divine Spirit is manifested. That is *spurana* (manifestation); this is *vritti* (tendency).

Question: Christians do not accept the concept of rebirth?

Sri Nannagaru:

There are several arguments on this matter. In our scriptures also, rebirth is not accepted in some contexts. Lord Sri Krishna says in the second chapter, neither you nor I exist. What exists is only one. That which exists can never be non-existent. That which does not exist can never come into existence. (*Bhagavad Gita 2-16*). So, there is nothing like rebirth. This is the absolute truth. Rebirth is only a relative truth. In the context of relative truth, Sri Krishna said, you and I have been through many births, and I remember them all. This is a relative truth; and the earlier statement is absolute truth. We are sitting and talking here, and that is a relative truth. When we look at it in the relative sense, rebirth seems to be real. After attaining the state of *Brahmam*, you will realize that the past lives are like dreams.

Family members are affectionate towards one another. But what is left after death? It is said in the scriptures – in the flow of a river, a wave will bring a few blades of grass together. These float together for some distance and then another wave will come and separate them. Similarly, a Truth seeker should recognize the fact that the persons in a family are brought together by fate. When their fate together ends, these persons will be separated. Hence, we

should not develop attachment towards anyone. It is attachment that holds a seeker in bondage. When we travel on a train, we share our food with co-passengers. When we reach our destination, they also help us with our luggage. We have a friendly chat while on the train and afterwards each one goes their own way, and we forget them. Similarly, we live together with the people in our home for some years and then each goes in their own way. Some people fight with each other and break up even when they are alive. We cannot even say whether people will stay together till they die.

Enlightened souls like Sri Ramana Maharshi will not be disturbed even if the world is destroyed in a deluge. The saint among scientists, Albert Einstein, was not disturbed when his wife said she would divorce him. The incidents that appear big to us probably appear very small to them. Generally, there is a difference in the maturity levels of great souls and ordinary human beings. When you look down from the top floor of a tall temple, people appear tiny. Similarly, the worldly incidents appear as petty to *yogis* (sages).

Ramana Maharshi clearly demonstrated this kind of *nirvikaarathwa* (sedateness/impassivity). Sometimes after a visit to Tiruvannamalai town, the ashram dwellers would start a discussion on the issues there, but Bhagavan

would not respond. If anyone asked why he did not respond to the issues that are discussed, he would say, “the matters you are discussing now are not useful for our *purogati* (inner development), so why discuss these?”

Question: Didn't Sri Sankaraacharya explain very clearly about the ultimate goal of life?

Sri Nannagaru:

Yes. At present however, the biggest problem for truth seekers is that most spiritual teachers today have not experienced the Divine Truth. They are not enlightened. They only have theoretical knowledge. We can easily guess that they are repeating words like parrots and that they don't have practical experience. They teach like school teachers. Sri Sankaracharya was not like that. For him everything came together to his advantage. He had complete awareness and understanding about the Divine Spirit. He was a scholar and had academic knowledge; and also had the language skill. He knew how to convey the subject matter to others. He had excellent skills in all the three aspects required to impart spiritual instruction to *sadhakas* (Truth seekers). For example, gold has beauty and colour but it does not have fragrance. It would be even more wonderful if it had fragrance also. Sri Sankaracharya is a great soul who is a blend of all the best qualities.

Question: Christians say that all those who are bad go to hell and those who are good go to heaven; and they say that is the final truth. How far is that true?

Sri Nannagaru:

That is also untrue. Will they stay there permanently? No one can remain permanently in anything that is false. That is a universal fact. You believe that which is not true as the truth; and you go through one, two, or three lifetimes (several lives) until you become aware of the truth. Though we believe the untrue as true, there will be a feeling of incompleteness in our mind. Even when you believe the untrue as true, it will not become the Truth. As long as we have that false belief, we are like slaves! Hence, no one is free in this creation until they realize the Truth. In this material world, people go through several disturbances that come and go in their external life. Good luck and bad luck are both a dream. We keep hearing about the existence of heaven and hell from people around us. All these matters are not useful for *sadhana* (spiritual practice). One who seeks Liberation should not think of such matters.

Question: Christians don't talk about *tattva* (Ultimate Truth) is that not so?

Sri Nannagaru:

No, they too speak about *tattva* (Ultimate Truth). There are scholars even among them. Their discourses are

mostly based on duality. Christ described *Atma* (Divine Soul) as the “kingdom of heaven”; he is describing the state of Liberation here. The kingdom of heaven is not some different world. It is a state. Gautama Buddha described that as *Nirvana* (state of tranquility and enlightenment).

It is difficult to comprehend non-duality. It is difficult for a human being to even have a tendency towards non-duality. After practicing it in several births, the concept of non-duality is understood with *Guru's* grace. Listening, contemplation, and meditation should be done constantly without weariness. You should listen often, and a passion for the Truth will develop as you listen more and more. Lord Buddha said, “don’t give up making your own effort and expect some distant Gods to come and help you; you must strive on your own.”

Some people stake their claim on ancestral hereditary properties, wait all their life for the death of elders in the family to take possession of those properties, and end up feeling cheated! In the end they will gain nothing from those properties. They don’t make any effort in their life to earn their living. Finally, they loose on both sides. Why should we give up our own effort expecting gains from somebody else? Hence, in the context of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), Buddha said that we should not give up self-effort. When we stand on our own feet, any gains from external

sources will not make much difference and there is nothing to lose even if we don't get anything! A *sadhaka* (truth seeker) should not wait for someone to come and do something for him.

A *sadhaka* should not have any expectation from anything in life. There is no disappointment for one who has no expectations. Disappointment will come only when there is expectation. When Ramana Maharshi was asked if he experienced fear in any situation, he said 'never'! He was not afraid even when a tiger came near him.

Our body is also our *Guru* (teacher). When we are careless about our health, the body will bring it to our notice through illness. Similarly, when we eat food, it will indicate to us as soon as hunger is satiated. If we continue to eat even after that, we succumb to diseases. In that manner, the body cares for our well-being, and like a *Guru*, cautions us every moment. But we overeat to enjoy the taste and that becomes a cause of illness.



POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

1. We should hear and know about the Divine Spirit. Even just knowing will certainly aid and protect us when the need arises.
2. In practical life we are in the context of duality; but our goal should be non-duality! To see God within all animate and inanimate objects will help in experiencing non-duality/Oneness.
3. Truth seekers should have *thithiksha* (stoicism / forbearance). Bad people will be useful to assess the limits of our tolerance. *Thithiksha* is the ability to endure all forms of suffering without a grudge, resentment, bitterness, complaint, worry or weeping.
4. For elimination of the mind, *vicharana* (self-enquiry) is one path, and *ekachinthana* (meditating on a single object) is another path.
5. The mind will be gradually eliminated through one-pointed meditation, which is to constantly think about the Divine Spirit, and to cut off food supply in the form of other thoughts to the mind.

6. It is advisable for those who have *roopabuddhi* and *nama buddhi* (identification with name and form) to take the support of a Divine name or form.
7. We don't have freedom in relation to the physical body. Everything happens according to God's will. But the seeker has freedom in his efforts towards the quest for Truth.
8. A Truth seeker should recognize the fact that the persons in the family are brought together by fate. When their fate together ends, these persons will be separated. Hence, we should not develop attachment for anyone. It is attachment which holds a seeker in bondage.
9. Though you believe the untrue as true, there will be a feeling of incompleteness. Hence, no one is free in this creation until they realize the Truth.

8. SUPREME AND CONSTANT BLISS COMES TO ONE WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS

Kothagudem

9 February 2010

Question: *Prostrations to Sri Nannagaru!*

(i) Sage Ashtavakra said:

āyāsatsakalo duh, khi nainam janati kascana
anenaivopades'ena dhanyah, praṇoti nirvṛtim
- Ashtavakra Gita 16-3

Meaning:

Everyone is miserable because of exertion, but not even one person is aware of this. The lucky person blessed with this instruction attains supreme peace.

(ii) vyaṇṇāre khidyate yastu nimes, onmeṣayorapi

tasya lasya dhuriṇ, asya sukham nanyasya
kasyacit

- Ashtavakra Gita 16-4

Meaning:

The one who finds even opening and closing of eyes very difficult, and one who is the foremost

*among those who are without any expectations,
that one will be in supreme and constant bliss.
Such bliss comes only to him and no other.*

*Please explain to us in-depth, the secret
knowledge in the above two verses from the
Ashtavakra Gita.*

Sri Nannagaru:

(i) Exertion or effort itself does not bring sorrow to a human being. When a man makes effort with his ego, he thinks “I am doing”. When you work, the egoistic thought “I am doing” should be put aside. Then there will be no pain and no sorrow.

Work should be done only to the extent necessary. You should not over do. When work is overdone, the body is fatigued. That will be a setback for the Truth seeker. Another aspect here is the thought “I am doing”, which also causes fatigue. A third aspect is to keep the mind away from expecting a result while doing a task. The mind should be focussed on the work, then we will not feel tired. That is *karma yoga* (spiritual path of action / purification through work).

In terms of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) Lord Sri Krishna advised seekers to act in moderation, in the Bhagavad Gita. Food should be taken in moderation to

nourish the body. When a *sadhaka* (truth seeker) depends on others for basic needs like food, he will become a slave and he will be subjugated to them. So, it is better to be self-reliant and earn your own livelihood. One should work to the extent necessary for sustenance in the worldly life and spend the remaining time to know God. This is the path of moderation.

Some people are naturally work-oriented. Sri Krishna advised such people to follow *Karma yoga*, the path of action, as it is their innate nature from birth. Arjuna belongs to this category. Hence, Krishna encouraged him to follow the path of action for purification and liberation. The point to remember here is that work by itself does not cause fatigue. The thought “I am doing” brings fatigue.

If you perform well in your office, and your supervisor compliments you for doing your job well, that praise brings you pleasure and some pride. The “I” exists in that situation. However, if you remain in the same state before you were praised and after receiving praise, then your mind will turn inwards. Your supervisor recognized your work as part of his responsibility. That is all! We should not take instant pleasure in such words. Similarly, in a different situation, if another officer insults you for not performing a task properly you should not feel sad. The point to note here is not to depend on other people and situations for our happiness at anytime.

This applies even in relation to a daughter. If a grown up daughter is completely dependent on the mother, even the mother will look down upon her. As discussed earlier, the real reason for our fatigue is the thought “I am doing”. A lawyer from a local court once interrogated Ramana Maharshi for an hour on a legal issue related to Skanda Ashram and Ramana Ashram. The lawyer said, “we gave you trouble for an hour, and you must be tired.” Bhagavan said, “I had no problem. I don’t mind if you interrogate me for one more hour. My mind is not involved in your inquiry. I am responding to you naturally.” We will be tired only if we think “I am doing”.

We should work to the extent necessary for our living and physical needs. If we don’t work, we have to depend on others even for our physical needs. That is not good.

Question: This should be viewed not from the perspective of worldly dealings, but from the mental perspective, is that correct?

Sri Nannagar:

Not from the mental perspective, it should be viewed in *paaramaarthika drishti* (spiritual/eternal perspective). If you think you are doing God’s work, you will not get tired quickly. For example, when you are

working in a government office, if you think it is God's work and do it, you will not be tired at all. If work is done with the egoistic thought "I am doing", rather than doing work for the sake of work itself, you will be tired quickly.

You also said, *"..Not even one person is aware of this matter. The lucky person blessed with this instruction attains supreme peace."*

Actually, if we understand even one statement made by Ashtavakra, we will experience peace. Understanding itself is *Yoga*. We are told about *Jnana yoga* and *Bhakti yoga*. Even understanding the teachings of Enlightened Ones is *Yoga*! If we don't have that understanding, we will not get *nischayajnana* (absolute/ definite knowledge / wisdom with conviction). If the food is not digested, how can it get into the bloodstream? The French say, to understand is more difficult than to read. It is more difficult to manage money properly than to earn money. It is more difficult to digest food than to eat it. This is the law of nature.

(ii) You then said, *"The one who finds even opening and closing of eyes very difficult, and one who is the foremost among those who are without any expectations, that one will be in supreme and constant bliss. Such bliss comes only to him and no other."*

This is onehundred percent true. It is an absolute Truth. There is expectation and there is non-expectation. You will be comfortable if you work without expectation on the outcomes or fruits of that work. If you have expectations on the outcome, you will get tired quickly. You will also feel sorrow. Whatever comes to us through desire and expectation will bring sorrow, and whatever comes without expectation will not bring sorrow.

Gandhiji wrote a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita and named it “*Anaashakti Yogam*” – the “*Yoga of Non-expectation*”. When there is no expectation, a person will not feel tired, whatever amount of work he does. Physical illnesses like blood pressure are consequences of our expectations from the world.

In the Bhagavad Gita, even Lord Sri Krishna said that you should work without expecting results, but he never said there will be no result for the work done. When you expect results, you will have fatigue and you will be stressed. Even if you have no desire for the result, whatever has to come will not stop. But by expecting the results, we will in addition become physically and mentally ill. A person who works without expectation will be comfortable even while doing work. But if there is expectation, mental stress will increase and that will lead to illness.

“The one who finds even opening and closing of eyes very difficult, and one who is the foremost among those who are without any expectations, that one will be in supreme and constant bliss.”

Opening and closing eyes happens automatically and naturally. Whatever work you do should also be done naturally. When God is pleased with the way we work, he will shower us with his Grace. However, when we have expectation there will be stress, and without expectation there will be no stress. One who works without expectation is equal to one who does not do any work. Gandhiji is a *karmayogi*, hence he named the Gita *“Anaashakti Yogam”* – the *“Yoga of Non-expectation”*.

Then: *“Such bliss comes only to him and no other.”*

A human being has no choice but to work. We should perform the task that is in our hands diligently and should not yearn for things that are not in our hands. The result is in the hands of God. He will decide on how much, when and where to give the result. We should not spoil the work that is in our hands by thinking and worrying about the work that is in God’s hands. You need not remind God about what he should give you. Even if you worked very hard, he may give you less now, and he may give that result to you in a future life. If he gives you all the result now, you may lose control and deteriorate! Some people do not have

discipline and have no control over themselves; and if such people are given a lot of money, that money itself will destroy them. There are some people who have too much money and develop bad habits. God will certainly grant you the results of your work. However, He will decide when and how to give it to you. In the meantime we should not think about it.

When Ramana Maharshi came to Arunachalam, he did not even get food initially. There was no coffee in the morning! Some old ladies would bring food in the afternoon around 2 pm, climbing all the way up the Hill! After the Ashram was set up at the foot of the Hill, several varieties of food items and sweets were offered every day. In that context Bhagavan said, “After coming to Arunachalam, in the initial days we suffered with hunger, now we suffer with indigestion. We cannot avoid pain either then or now.” Both hunger and indigestion are equally painful!

You also asked for an explanation of the statement, “*Effort will bring suffering*”.

Our natural condition is called the “effortless state”. That which comes with effort is artificial. Being healthy is our natural state, and when we fall ill it disturbs our natural state. Hence the illness will go away with medication. If illness is a natural condition, it will not go away even with medication.

Our *swaroop*a (True Self) is a natural condition. Effort disturbs the natural condition. The mind has to be put to use when effort is made. After the mind is eliminated, there is no such thing as effort with the mind. As long as there is a mind, we cannot stop ourselves from making effort. If you are established in your True Self there will be no need to make an effort. Because we are not stable in the True Self, we make effort and that is called *sadhana*. This *sadhana* will be stressful because it is not our natural trait.

If you are instructed by someone to do meditation, you will agree to do it, but you will not be peaceful. The meditating mind will be looking at the clock. Why? It is because meditation is not our natural state. Hence, we will feel the stress and pain. When we are not in our natural state, we cannot stop ourselves from trying to make effort. Meditation itself is *kalpitham* (illusion created by the mind). It has three aspects – there is a meditator, an object to meditate on, and the act of meditating. In this context, Ramana Maharshi once asked, “When you meditate, are you one or three? In the beginning you are one, but when you meditate, all the three materialize.” You must pay attention to this point. When we have an illness or disease, there is pain in some part of the body. When we are healthy, we are not conscious of any part of the body. If we are conscious of any part of our body, it is an indication of disease in that part. Are you conscious of your eyes? No!

When will you become conscious of them? If your eyes start burning, you will become conscious of them.

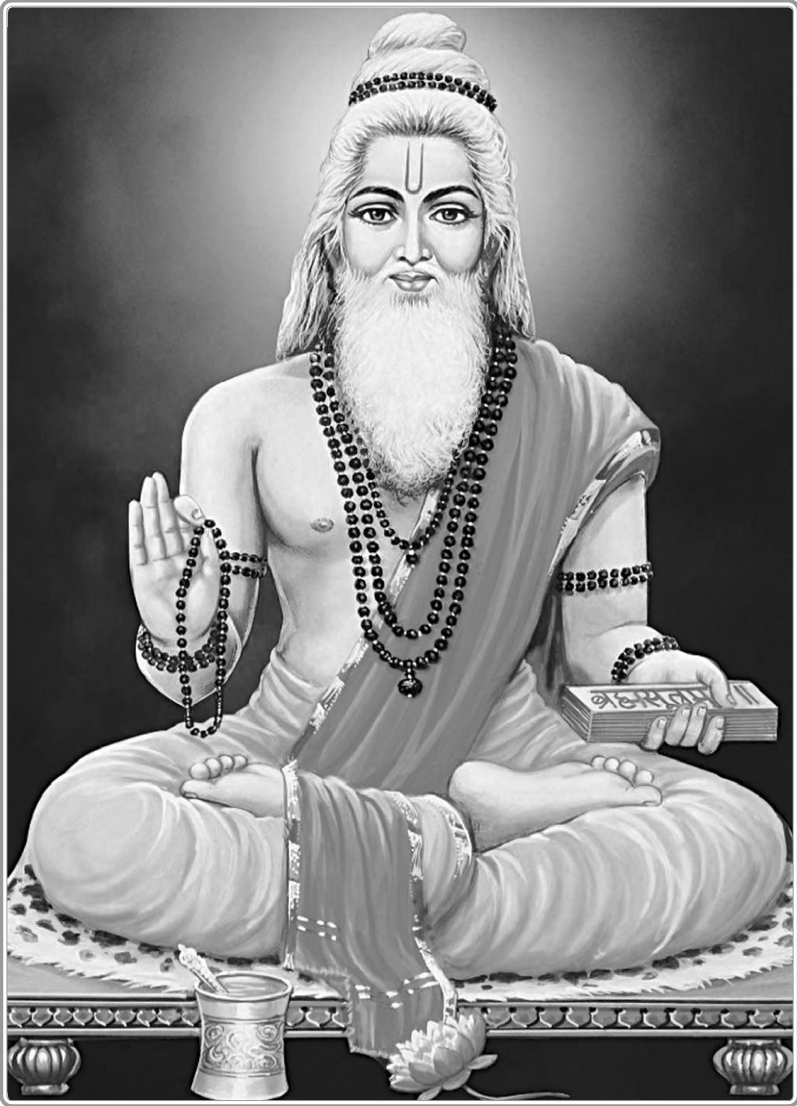
Dhyana (meditation) is a created activity. *Japa* (repeated chanting of a deity's name) is easier than *dhyana*. *Japa* leads to *dhyana*. We just need to have love for the *mantra* or for the name of the deity. What we think is our plan/will but what happens is God's Will!



POINTS TO REMEMBER AND CONTEMPLATE

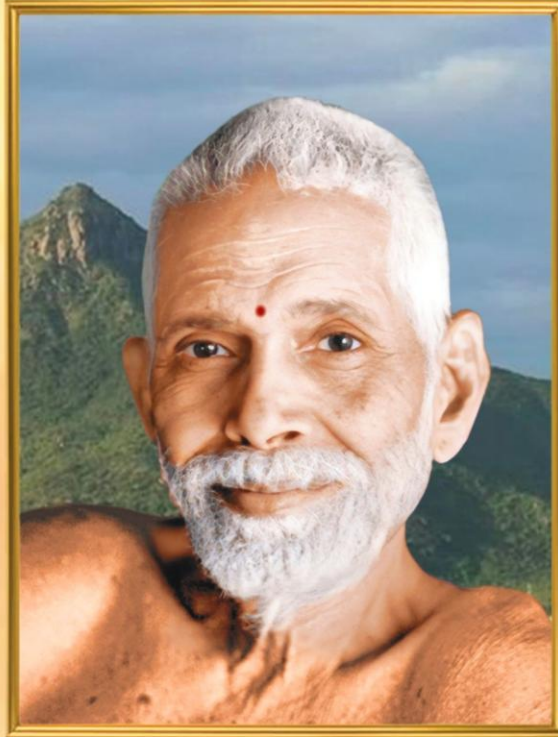
1. When you work, the egoistic thought “I am doing” should be put aside. You should not think of the results of action. That is *karma yoga* (spiritual path of action / purification through work).
2. Our happiness should not be dependent on other people and situations.
3. Our natural condition is called the “effortless state”. *Sadhana* is stressful because it is not our natural state.

**SRI RAMANAARPANAMASTHU
OM SRI NAANNA PARAMAATHMANE NAMAH**









**Sri Ramanakshetram
JINNURU**