
RAMANA MAHARSHI

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The Ultimate Truth or Reality

The Self is the only Reality that always exists, and it is by the light of the Self that all other things are seen.

What really exists: *Atman* alone exists and is real. The threefold reality of the world, the individual soul and God is, like the illusory appearance of silver in mother-of-pearl (or nacre), an imaginary creation in the *Atman*. They appear and disappear simultaneously. The Self alone is the world, the "I" and God. All that exists is but the manifestation of the Supreme.

Concentration of mind is common to both Knowledge and Yoga. Yoga aims at the union of the individual with the universal, the Reality. This Reality cannot be new. It must already exist now, and does exist.

Reality—or its emanation, the Higher Self—is simply the loss of the ego. It destroys the ego's dominance by seeking its identity. Since the ego is not a real entity, it will automatically fade away and Reality will shine by itself.

There is no greater mystery than this: we being the Reality, we seek to obtain it. We believe that there is something that hides our Reality and that we must destroy it to reach it. That is ridiculous. The day will come when you will laugh at the efforts you made to reach Reality. That which will be at that time is already here and now.

The real is always present, like the screen on which the cinematographic images move. As long as the image appears on it, the screen remains invisible. When the image ceases, the screen becomes visible. All thoughts and events are simply images moving on the screen of Pure Consciousness, which is the only real thing.

Misery does not exist in Reality but only in mere imagination.

No one doubts his own existence, though he may doubt the existence of God. If he discovers the truth about himself, he discovers his own Source, this is all that is required.

Since Truth is extremely subtle and serene, the bliss of the Self can only manifest in a subtle and steady mind through assiduous meditation.

There is no Truth. There is only the truth within each moment.

Faith is in things unknown, but the Self is self-evident. Even the greatest egoist cannot deny his own existence, that is, he cannot deny the Self. You can call Ultimate Reality by any name you like and say you have faith in it or love for it, but who is there that does not have faith in his own existence or love for himself? That is because faith and Love are our true nature.

Ultimate Truth is so simple; it is nothing more than being in the pristine state, Pure Consciousness, one's natural and original state. This is all that needs to be said. Only mature minds can grasp the simple Truth in all its nakedness. Pure Consciousness, which is the Heart (the centre of the Self), includes everything, and nothing is outside or apart from it. That is the Ultimate Truth.

The Self is here and now, it is the only Reality. There is nothing else.

A Higher Power: All is God

That point at which all religions meet is Realization, not in a mystical sense, but in the most mundane, everyday sense. And the more mundane, everyday and practical the better, on the fact that GOD IS ALL, and ALL IS GOD.

God assumes any form imagined by the devotee through repetition of thoughts in prolonged meditation. Though he thus assumes infinite names, only the formless Consciousness alone is God.

There is nothing wrong with God's creation. Mystery and Suffering exist only in the mind.

God illumines the mind and shines within it. God cannot be known through the mind. One can only turn the mind inward and merge it into God, who manifests as the inner consciousness. "I Am" is the name of God, which is none other than the Self or Self. Everyone is seeing God always. But they don't know it.

A Higher Force is guiding you; you are directed by it. It knows what to do and how to do it. It is enough to surrender to yourself. To surrender is to surrender to the original cause of the Self. Do not delude yourself into imagining that this Source is a God outside of you. The Source is within you! Surrender to it. That means you have to seek the Source and merge into it.

Surrender to God will never be complete as long as the devotee asks the Lord for this or that.

The Grace of God is that He shines in everyone's heart as the Self; that power of Grace excludes no one, whether he is kind or not. To see God without seeing the Self means that one sees only a mental image. Only he who has seen the Self has seen God, for he has lost individuality and then sees only God.

There is one who rules the world, and his post of watchfulness is to take care of the world. He who has given life to the world knows how to take care of it also. He carries the burden of this world, not you. Lay your burden at the feet of the Lord of the Universe who is always victorious and achieves everything. Remain at all times steadfast in the Heart, in the Transcendental Absolute. God knows the past, the present and the future. He will determine the future for you and do the work. Whatever needs to be done will be done at the right time. Do not worry. Remain in the Heart and surrender your actions to the Divine.

The power that created you, also created the world. If it can take care of you, it can also take care of the world. If God created the world, it is His business to take care of the world, not yours. The phenomena we see are curious and amazing, but the most wonderful of all we do not realize, and that is that one, and only one, unlimited force is responsible for (a) All the phenomena we see; and (b) The act of seeing them.

Only that which exists by itself, which reveals itself by itself, and which is eternal and immutable, is Real.

The Search for the true Self

Instead of indulging in mere speculation, devote yourself here and now to the Quest for the Truth that is always within you.

Unless and until a human being embarks on this Quest for the true Self, doubt and uncertainty will follow in his footsteps throughout life. The greatest kings and statesmen try to rule others, when in their heart of hearts they know that they cannot rule themselves. However, the greatest power is at the command of the human being who has penetrated to the innermost depths.

The world is so unhappy because it ignores the true Self. The true nature of the human being is happiness. Happiness is innate in the true Self. The human being's search for happiness is an unconscious search for his true Self.

The true Self is imperishable; therefore, when a human being finds it, he finds a happiness that does not come to an end.

Self-inquiry is the process and also the goal

The normal self is the mind. The mind is with limitations. But pure Consciousness is beyond limitations and is attained by the investigation of the "I".

To immerse the mind there is no other more effective and suitable means than Self-inquiry. Even if the mind submerges by other means, that is only apparently; it will emerge again. When the mind becomes unidirectional and thus acquires strength and staying power, it easily attains perfection in the method of Self-enquiry in search of the Self, which becomes the only infallible and direct way to realize the absolute Self that we truly are. This method is not only the process, but also the goal. "I am" is the goal and the ultimate reality. To cling to it with effort is *Self-enquiry*, when it is spontaneous and natural it is *Realization*.

Who am I?

Can a human being possess two identities, two selves? To understand this question, it is first necessary for the human being to analyze himself. Because he has long been in the habit of thinking as others think, he has never confronted his "I" in the true way. He has no correct image of himself; he has been too long identifying himself with the body and the brain.

Therefore, I say to you to pursue this inquiry, "Who am I?".

The search for "Who am I?" ... ends in the annihilation of the illusory "I" and the Self that remains will be as clear as a wild gooseberry in the palm of your hand.

The question "Who am I?" is not really meant to elicit an answer, the question "Who am I?" is meant to dissolve the questioner.

No matter how many thoughts occur to you, if with keen alertness you were to ask immediately-as each individual thought arises-whom it has occurred to, you would then find that it is "me." If you then ask "Who am I?" the mind becomes introverted and the emerging thought also collapses.

Every living being longs to be always happy, untainted by pain; and everyone has the greatest love for himself, which is due solely to the fact that happiness is his true nature. Therefore, to realize that inherent and immaculate happiness which, in

fact, you experience daily when the mind is subjugated in deep sleep, it is essential that you know yourself. For the attainment of such knowledge the inquiry Who am I? for the search for the Self is the best means.

The mind will be stilled only by the inquiry "Who am I?" The thought "Who am I?", destroying all other thoughts, will finally be destroyed like the stick used to remove the funeral pyre. Then, Self-Realization will arise.

You have to ask yourself the question "Who am I?" This inquiry will lead in the end to the discovery of something within you that is behind the mind. Solve that big problem and you will solve all other problems.

Since any other thought can occur only after the arising of the thought "I" and since the mind is but a bundle of thoughts, it is only through the inquiry "Who am I?" that the mind is immersed.

By ceaselessly pursuing within yourself the inquiry "Who am I?", you will know your true Self and thus attain "Salvation".

You are already That which you seek: the Real Self (*Atman*)

You are Consciousness. Consciousness is another name for you. Since you are Awareness, there is no need to attain or cultivate it. All you have to do is to stop being aware of other things, that is, the not-Self. If one ceases to be aware of them, only Pure Consciousness remains, and that is the Self.

We go round and round in search of *Atman* saying, "Where is *Atman*? Where is it?" until at last the dawn of *jnana drishti* [the vision of knowledge] is reached, and then we say, "This is *Atman*, this is me." We must acquire that vision.

Once that vision is gained, there will be no attachment even if one mingles with the world and moves in it.

Truly there is no reason for you to be miserable and unhappy. You yourself impose limitations on your true nature as an infinite Self and then weep because you are but a finite creature. Then you undertake this or that sadhana to transcend the non-existent limitations. But if your own sadhana assumes the existence of limitations, how can it help you transcend them? That is why I say know that you are really the infinite and pure Self, the Absolute Self. You are always that Self and nothing but that Self.

The Self cannot be found in books. You have to find it for yourself, within yourself. Dive deep into the chambers of your Heart. Discover the real and infinite "I". Rest there in peace forever and become identical with the Supreme Self.

Is any proof of one's Self required? Simply remain aware of yourself and everything else will be known.

The place where there is not even the slightest trace of "I", it is only the Self.

Forgetting your true nature is true death; remembering it is rebirth.

If you hold this feeling of the Self long enough and strongly enough, the "false self" will vanish leaving only the unbroken consciousness of the real and immanent "I", the consciousness itself.

You are the Supreme Self and yet, believing yourself separate from it, you strive to unite with it. What is stranger than this? The Self or Self is here and now, it is the only Reality. There is nothing else.

Happiness is innate in the true Self

Pleasure and pain are only aspects of the mind. Your essential nature is happiness. You identify yourself with the body and mind, feel their limitations and suffer. Realize your true Self to open the tent of happiness. That true Self is the Reality, the Supreme Truth, which is the Self of all the world you now see, the Self of all selves, the Real One, the Supreme, the Eternal Self, as distinct from the ego or the bodily idea for self.

Almost all mankind is more or less unhappy because almost no one knows the true Self. True happiness lies only in Self-Knowledge. All else is fleeting. To know one's Self is to be blissful always.

There are no different happinesses. There is only one happiness, which includes the internalized happiness when one is "awake" to reality as it IS, the happiness of all kinds of creatures, from the lowliest animal to the highest brahman. That happiness is the happiness of the High Self. Happiness enjoyed in the waking state is a second-hand happiness, derived from true happiness.

Happiness is not to be sought in solitude or in crowded centers. Such happiness is relative and is better called pleasure or satisfaction. True happiness is in our essential nature, it is in the Self. We are not wrong in desiring it. The mistake is to seek it outside when it is within.

In none of the innumerable objects of the mundane world is there anything that can be called happiness. It is through lack of wisdom that we imagine that happiness is obtained from them. On the contrary, when the mind is externalized, it suffers pain and anguish. Explorers seek happiness in finding curiosities, discovering new lands and taking risks in adventures. They are exciting. But where is the pleasure to be found? Only within. Happiness is not to be sought in the outside world.

You must realize your Self to open the reservoir of Pure Happiness. Unless you are happy, you cannot give happiness to others.

The ego is the mind turned outward: the false "I" (other names: the thought "I", the individual being, or the individual soul)

The mind turned inward is the Self; turned outward, it becomes the ego and the whole world. Cotton turned into various garments receives different names. Gold turned into various ornaments receives different names. But all garments are cotton and all ornaments are gold. The one is real, the manifold are merely names and forms.

Of all the thoughts that arise in the mind, the thought "I" is the first. It is only after this arises that the other thoughts arise. It is after the appearance of the first personal pronoun that the second and third personal pronouns appear; without the first personal pronoun, the second and third would not exist.

Happiness is not something that can be obtained, you are always Happiness. This desire [for Joy] is born of the feeling of incompleteness. For whom is this feeling of incompleteness? Ask yourself. In deep sleep you were blissful. At this moment you are not. What has come between that Happiness and this non-happiness? It is the ego. Seek its Source and discover that you are Happiness.

There is only the Self. When you try to trace the ego, which is the basis of the perception of the world and everything else, you discover that the ego does not exist at all and neither does all this creation that you see. All unhappiness is due to the ego. With it comes all your problems. If you would deny the ego and burn it away by ignoring it, you would be free.

All bad qualities are centered in the ego. When the ego disappears, Realization results by itself. There are no good or bad qualities in the Self. The Self is free from all qualities. Qualities belong only to the mind or ego. See who it is that doubts, who it is that thinks; it is the ego. Hold it; other thoughts will be extinguished, the ego will remain pure. Look at the Source from which the ego arises and dwell in it. That is pure consciousness.

All the scriptures without exception proclaim that to attain Salvation, the mind (ego) must be subdued; and once one knows that control of the mind (ego) is one's ultimate goal, it is useless to make an endless study of them.

One must seek the root of the ego and destroy it. By constantly keeping the attention on the Source, the ego dissolves in that Source like a salt doll in the sea.

The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The mind is fattened by new and innumerable thoughts arising, which have their root in the primary ego-thought. Therefore, it is foolish to try to kill the mind by means of the mind. To ask the mind to kill itself is like turning the thief into a policeman. It will go with you, it will pretend to catch the thief, there will be many investigations, but no arrest will ever be made. The only way to do it is to find your Source and hold on to it. Then the mind will vanish by itself.

That is the ego that goes up and down periodically. But you exist always. What is beyond the ego is consciousness: the Self.

It is the ego that is the cause of the whole world and of the innumerable sciences whose inquiries are so great as to stupefy all description, and if the ego is dissolved by inquiry all this immediately falls apart and only the Reality or the Self remains.

When we have an "enemy" it hates the ego (our individual self), which we, as seekers, want to kill; thus, like the anvil to the goldsmith, the "enemy" is, in reality, a friend.

There must be a subject to know good and evil. That subject is the ego. The Source of the ego is God. The phenomenal existence of the ego is transcended when you immerse yourself in the Source from which the thought "I" arises.

The mind is the consciousness that has placed limitations on itself. You are originally unlimited and perfect. Later you assume the limitations and become the mind or ego. When you are not awake you only see your mind, which is simply a reflection of the light of pure consciousness arising from the Heart.

What is called mind is a wonderful power that exists in the Self. It projects all thoughts. If we put aside all thoughts and observe, we see that there is no mind that remains separate; therefore, thought itself is the form of mind. Apart from thoughts, there is no mind and no ego. Without seeing the origin of Light-the true form of self-the ordinary human being sees different things through the mind and is self-deceived. His true nature is that of the infinite spirit. The feeling of limitation is the work of the mind.

How does one get rid of fear? Ramana: What is fear? It is only a thought. If there is anything apart from the Self, there is reason to fear. Who sees things apart from the Self? First the ego arises and sees objects as external. If the ego does not arise, there is only the Self and there is nothing external, there is no second thing. Because anything external to oneself implies the existence of the seer within. To seek it there will remove doubt and fear. Not only fear, all other ego-centered thoughts will disappear along with it.

Our identification with the mind and body, i.e., the ego, is the main reason for our inability to know ourselves as we really are. Simply abandon all seeking, turn your attention inward and sacrifice your egoic mind to the One Self that radiates in the Heart of your own Being.

If we see the Self as the ego, we become the ego. If we see it as the mind, we become the mind. If we see it as the body, we become the body. It is thought that manufactures the various sheaths. The shadow on the water seems to tremble, who can stop the movement of the shadow? If it were to stop trembling, I would not see the water but only the light behind it. The ego is the thought of "I". The real "I" is the Self.

Pay no attention to the ego and its activities, instead, see only the light behind it.

The human being must abandon the personal egoism that binds him to this world. Abandoning the false self is true renunciation.

Mentalism: The body as a projection of the mind

The body is but a mere projection of the mind, and the mind is but a poor reflection of the radiant Heart, our self-consciousness. The body dies, but the spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. Truly, you are Spirit. The body, projected by the mind, originates in turn, in the Spirit.

It must be clearly understood that there is no soul that comes and goes, but only the thinking mind of the individual, which makes it appear so. On whatever plane the mind acts, it creates a body for itself, in the physical world a physical body and in the dream world a dream body, which gets wet with the dreamed rain and sick with the dreamed sickness.

You are the witness of the three bodies: the dense, the subtle and the causal, and of the three times: past, present and future, and also of this Void. In the story of the tenth man, when each one counted and thought there were nine, each one forgetting to count himself, there is a stage when they think one is missing and they do not know who he is; and that corresponds to the Void. We are so accustomed to the notion that everything we see around us is permanent and that we are this body, that when all this ceases to exist we imagine and fear that we have also ceased to exist.

Turn the mind inward and cease to think of yourself as the body; then you will come to know that the self is always happy. In this state you experience neither sorrow nor misery.

The human being who has the feeling that the body is himself cannot worship God as if he were formless; whatever worship he does will be worship only in form, not otherwise.

The departed are happy. It is the bereaved who grieve for the person who died. One's own existence is self-evident with or without the body. Why, then, should one wish for bodily chains to continue? Let the human being seek his underlying Self, let him die and be immortal and happy.

Apart from the body, is there the world, has anyone seen the world without the body? The fact is that you are not the body. The Self does not move but the world moves in it. You are only what you are: Mind.

The states of wakefulness, dream sleep and deep sleep

Wakefulness is long and sleep is short; apart from this there is no difference. Just as waking events seem real while awake, so do those in a dream while dreaming. In dream sleep, the mind acquires another body. In both waking and dreaming states with dreams, thoughts, names, and forms occur simultaneously.

Apart from thoughts, there is no independent entity called the world. In deep sleep there are no thoughts and no world. In the waking and dream sleep states, there are thoughts and there is also a world. Just as the spider pulls the thread of the

web from within itself and draws it back into itself, so the mind projects the world outside itself and draws it back into itself.

What is not present in deep dreamless sleep is not real.

Meditation

The main factor in meditation is to keep the mind active in its own pursuit without absorbing external impressions or thinking about other matters. Meditation is clinging to one thought. That one thought alone drives away other thoughts; distraction of the mind is a sign of its weakness; by constant meditation it gains strength.

When there are thoughts, it is distraction; when there are no thoughts, it is meditation. Meditation applies the brakes to the mind, helps the concentration of the mind. Then the mind is free from thoughts and is in the meditated form.

Meditation depends on the strength of the mind. It should be incessant even when one is busy at work. To devote a particular time for it is meant only for beginners. An advancing human being will begin to enjoy the deepest bliss whether he is at work or not. While his hands are in society, he keeps a cool head in solitude.

Like the practice of breath control, meditation on the forms of God, repetition of mantras, restriction of food, etc., all these are but helpful ways to still the mind.

You can go on reading any number of books on meditation. They can only tell you "Realize the Self." The Self cannot be found in books. You have to find it for yourself in yourself.

Countless *vishaya-vasanas* (subtle tendencies of the mind in relation to objects of sense gratification), coming one after another in rapid succession like ocean waves, agitate the mind. However, they are also stilled and finally destroyed by the progressive practice of *Atma dhyana* or meditation on the Self.

There are no hindrances to meditation. The very thought of such hindrances is the greatest impediment. See what helps you to keep all other thoughts away and adopt that method for your meditation.

Don't meditate, be. Do not think that you are, be. Do not think of the Self, you are!

Silence is more powerful than speech

There is a state in which words cease and silence prevails. True silence is really endless speech.

Silence is a perpetual language. Speech is always less powerful than silence. Ordinary talk hinders that heart-to-heart talk.

Someone realized sends out waves of spiritual influence in his aura, which attract many people to him. However, you can sit in a cave and maintain complete silence.

In silence you are in intimate contact with your surroundings. Language is only a means of communicating one's thoughts to another. Silence always speaks. When one remains without thinking, one understands the other through the universal language of Silence.

Silence is also conversation, it is endless speech. Vocal speech obstructs the other speech of silence. When the mind, concentrated and completely focused, knows the supreme silence in the heart, this is true learning.

You are looking for the silence of the mountain. But you are looking for something outside. This silence is accessible to you now, within the center of your own Self.

Silence is Truth. Silence is bliss. Silence is peace. And therefore, Silence is the Self.

Inner Stillness

To be still is what is called wisdom-perception. To be still is to resolve the mind into the Self. Telepathy, knowing past, present and future events and clairvoyance do not constitute wisdom-perception.

Let us accept the ever-open invitation of Stillness, savour its exquisite sweetness and heed its silent instruction.

Eating, grooming, toileting, talking, thinking, and many other body-related activities are work. How is it that only performing a particular act is [considered] work? To be still is to be always engaged in work. To be silent is to be always talking.

If one is denigrated or reviled, the remedy is not to return the insult or to resist. It is simply to remain still. This Quietness will give peace to the insulted, but it will unsettle the offender, until he is driven to admit his error to the insulted party.

All the texts say that to attain liberation one must still the mind; therefore, their conclusive teaching is that the mind must be still; once this is understood, there is no need for endless reading. To still the mind, one has only to inquire within oneself what the Self itself is; how could this search be made in books? When the mind, which is the cause of all knowledge and all actions, is stilled, the world will disappear.

Witnessing events

You must remain a witness to what happens, adopting the attitude, "Let the weird things happen, let's see!" This should be one's practice. Nothing happens by accident in the divine scheme of things.

Take refuge in the silence. You can be here or there or anywhere. Fixed in silence, settled in the "I" within, you can be as you are. The world will never disturb you if you are well established in inner Stillness. Gather your thoughts within. Discover the center of thought and discover its self-balance. In storm and turmoil keep calm and silence. Watch the events around you as a witness. The world is a drama. Be a witness, introverted and introspective.

The phenomenal world

As you are, so is the world. Turn your vision inward and then the whole world will be filled with the Supreme Spirit.

Wanting to reform the world without discovering oneself is like trying to cover the world with leather to avoid the pain of walking on stones and thorns. It is much simpler to wear shoes.

Is it the world that says I am real, or is it you?

This phenomenal world is nothing but thought. When the world disappears from our sight, that is, when we are free from thought, the mind enjoys the Bliss of Being. On the contrary, when the world appears, i.e., when thought occurs, the mind experiences pain and anguish.

The Lord of the Universe carries the whole burden of this world. You imagine that it is you who do so. You can turn all your burdens over to His care. In whatever you have to do, you will be instrumental in doing it at the right time. Do not think that you cannot do it unless you desire it. Desire does not give you the strength to do. All strength is from the Lord.

We are in our Self. We are not in the world. The world is not outside of us.

Sufferings

When you, in your waking state, mistakenly identify yourself with the body, you see the world outside, and its sufferings become visible. When in your deep sleep you are not aware of the world and its sufferings, they do not affect you. When he remains as the Self, as in deep sleep, the world and its sufferings will then be non-existent. Therefore look within, see the Self! Then there will be an end of the world and its miseries.

The only way to eliminate suffering is to know and be the Self. How is it possible that it is unattainable?

One suffers because of the idea that the body-which is never oneself-is "I"; all suffering is because of this delusion.

You do not like your own suffering. How can you inflict suffering on others?

Ignorance: identification with the impermanent

Eliminate the ego and *Avidya* (Ignorance) will disappear. Seek it, the ego vanishes and only the real Self remains.

The fact is that you are ignorant of your blissful state. Ignorance ensues and veils pure Bliss. All efforts are directed only to remove this ignorance. This ignorance consists only in false knowledge. False knowledge consists only in the false identification of the Self with the body, with the mind, and so on. This false identity must disappear and then the Self remains.

There is no attainment of the Self. If the Self were to be obtained, that would mean that the Self is not here and now, but must be obtained as something new. What is obtained as something new will also be lost, it is impermanent. What is not permanent is not worth striving for. Thus there is nothing new to gain, only one thing to lose, that is, ignorance. That is all.

Direct and indirect (or relative) knowledge

Sensory perceptions can only be indirect and not direct knowledge. Only one's own consciousness is direct knowledge.

Without knowing the knower, all the knowledge one accumulates cannot be valid. Whatever name or form we adore, it leads us to the knowledge of the nameless and formless Absolute. To see the true Self in the Absolute, to immerse oneself in It and be one with It, this is the true knowledge of Truth.

Relative knowledge belongs to the mind and not to the Self. Therefore, it is illusory and not permanent. Take a scientist, for example: he formulates a theory that the earth is round and proves it on an incontrovertible basis. When he falls asleep, the whole idea vanishes; his mind goes blank. What does it matter whether the world is still round or flat when he sleeps? Then one sees the futility of all such relative knowledge.

If the mind, which is the instrument of knowledge and the basis of all activity, becomes submerged, then the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases. One must go beyond relative knowledge and abide in the Self. True knowledge is such experience, and not learning on the part of the mind.

There is no duality. Relative knowledge is due to the ego, it requires a subject and an object, whereas Self-consciousness is absolute, it requires no objects. Remembering is also relative, it requires an object to remember and a subject to remember. When there is no duality who is going to remember what?

You know that you know nothing. Discover that knowledge and let it be intuited by the sign of the equality of all beings.

For those who have attained Self-Knowledge (knowledge of the Self) without obstructions, the world is seen merely as an imagination that causes bondage.

Only the experience of Silence is real and perfect knowledge.

You can never really be ignorant of the Self; ignorance is merely a formal ignorance... Know then that true knowledge does not create for you a new Self; it only removes "ignorant" ignorance. Absolute bliss is not added to your nature; it simply reveals itself as its true and natural, eternal and imperishable state.

Time is irrelevant to the path of knowledge

Time is only an idea. There is only Reality. Whatever you think it is, that's what it feels like. If you call it time, it is time. If you call it existence, it is existence, and so on. After you call it time, you divide it into days and nights, months, years, hours, minutes, and so on. Time is irrelevant to the path of knowledge.

The guru or spiritual teacher

If you observe the consciousness constantly, this same consciousness becomes the guru who will reveal the Truth.

The Grace of the guru is like an ocean. If one comes with a cup, one will only get a full cup. It is no use complaining about the meanness of the ocean. The bigger the vessel, the more he can carry. It is entirely up to him.

MASTER is he who has meditated on God alone, has thrown his whole personality into the sea of God and there drowned and forgotten it, until he has become only an instrument of God; and when his mouth opens, he speaks the words of God without effort or forethought; and when he lifts a hand, God flows through it again, to work a "miracle."

If you keep working with the available light, you will find your Master, for he himself will be looking for you.

Do not think too much about psychic phenomena and the like. Their number is legion; and once faith in the psychic thing is established in the Heart of a seeker, such phenomena have done their work. It is not worth while to have clairvoyance, clairaudience and the like, when far greater enlightenment and peace is possible without them than with them. The Master assumes these powers as a form of Self-Sacrifice.

Jnana (knowledge) is given neither from the outside nor from another person. It can be realized by each and everyone in his own Heart (the center of his Self). The *jnana Guru* of all is only the Supreme Self who is always revealing his own truth in each Heart through the Self-consciousness "I am". The bestowal of true knowledge by him is the initiation into *jnana*. The Grace of the guru is only that Self-consciousness which is the true nature of oneself. It is the inner consciousness by which he is ceaselessly revealing his existence. This divine *upadesa* (spiritual instruction) is always naturally occurring in everyone.

Fate and Free Will

All the activities and events through which a body must pass are determined at the moment of conception.

These controversies about which is superior, destiny or free will, arise only for those who do not look at the root of both. However, if one knows the Self, the root and cause of both, he transcends them and will never again have thoughts about either.

Those who know that what they have to experience in their present incarnation is only what is already destined in their *prarabdha* karma (the part of one's karma that is to be performed in this life), will never be disturbed by what they have to experience. They know that all experiences are imposed upon one, whether one wants them or not.

The "Ordainer" (Higher Power, God...) controls the destiny of souls according to their past actions, their '*prarabdha* karma'. What is destined not to happen, will not happen, even if you try with all your might. What is meant to happen, will happen, whatever you do to prevent it. This is certain. Therefore, it is better to understand it, to remain silent.

There is no creation or destruction, no destiny or free will, no path or achievement. This is the Ultimate Truth.

Karma and the cycle of birth, death and rebirth (*Samsara*)

The essence of karma is to know the truth of oneself through the inquiry "Who am I, the doer, who starts doing karmas?".

Unless the doer of karmas, the ego, is annihilated by inquiry, the perfect peace of supreme bliss, which is the result of *karma yoga* or the spiritual path of action, cannot be obtained.

If there is birth, there must not be only one rebirth, but a whole succession of births. Why and how have you had this birth? For the same reason and in the same way you must have successive births. But if you ask who has the birth and whether birth and death are for you or for someone other than you, then you realize the Truth and the Truth burns up all karmas and frees you from all births (*Samsara*).

The books graphically describe how all the accumulated karma of previous births (*ranchita karma*), which would take countless lifetimes to exhaust, is burned away by a tiny spark of *jnana* (knowledge), just as a mountain of gunpowder will be blown into the air by a single spark of fire.

After the death of the physical body, the mind remains inactive for some time, as in a dreamless sleep in which it remains without a world and thus without a body. But it soon becomes active again in a new world and in a new body—the astral—until it assumes another body in what is called a rebirth or reincarnation.

But the *jnani*, the self-realized human being, whose mind has ceased to act, is not affected by death. The mind of the *jnani* has ceased to exist; it has fallen never to rise again and cause births and deaths. The chain of illusions has been broken forever for him. It should now be clear that there is neither real birth nor real death. It is the mind that creates and maintains the illusion of reality in this process, until it is destroyed by Self-realization.

It is true that we are not slaves and that the Self has no bondage. It is true that one will eventually return to his Source. But in the meantime, one who commits "sins," as some call them, will have to face the consequences of said sins. There is no escape from the consequences.

Every act must have its consequences. If something comes to you by reason of karma, you cannot avoid it. If you take what comes, without any special attachment, and without any desire for more of the same or a repetition of it, it will not harm you by leading to more births. On the contrary, if you enjoy it with great attachment and naturally desire more of the same, it is bound to lead to more and more births.

At the very least, on the day of one's birthday, one should mourn one's entry into this world (*Samsara*). Otherwise, to glorify and celebrate it is like taking pleasure in adorning a corpse. To seek oneself and to merge into the Self, that is wisdom.

As long as the feeling "I am doing" exists, one must experience the result of one's acts, whether good or bad. How is it possible to erase one act with another? When this feeling is lost then nothing affects the human being. Unless one realizes the Self, this feeling of being the doer will never disappear.

Until Realization there will be karma, i.e., action and reaction. After Realization there will be no karma and no world.

Active life: worldly affairs

However evil other people may seem to you, it is not right to hate or despise them. Likes and dislikes, love and hate should be equally avoided. Nor is it proper to let the mind often rest on objects or matters of worldly life. As far as possible, one should not interfere in the affairs of others.

When you realize your true grateful, joyful and effortless nature, it will not be inconsistent with your ordinary activities of life.

Keep alive the remembrance of your true nature, even while working, and avoid the rush that makes you forget. Do this deliberately. Do not imagine that it is you who is doing the work. Think that it is the underlying current that is doing it.

Identify yourself with the current.

It is not necessary to give up the life of action. You can go on with your duties. Meditation, done in the right way, is the induced mental current that will continue to flow even in the midst of your work.

People often approach Maharshi with the question of the compatibility of spirituality with an active domestic or social life. He asks them, "Wasn't Rama spiritually advanced, and wasn't he leading a householder's life?"

There is no conflict between work and wisdom.

Struggle is inevitable: perseverance is the key to success

If one wants to remain in the thought-free state, struggle is inevitable. One must struggle to break through before regaining one's original primary state. If one succeeds in the struggle and reaches the goal, the enemy, namely thoughts, will sink into the Self and disappear completely.

Everyone must, by his own effort, follow the path shown by God or the Guru and attain liberation. One can know oneself only with one's own eye of knowledge, and not with that of another person.

Ishta-devata and the Guru are helps, very powerful helps on this path. But an aid to be effective requires also your effort. Your struggle and your perseverance is a sine qua non. It is you who must see the sun. Can the glasses and the sun see for you? You yourself have to see your true nature. It doesn't take much help to do so!

No one succeeds without effort. Those who succeed owe their success to perseverance.

A social service

Self-reform automatically brings about social reform.

Until you attain the state of *jnana* (knowledge) and thus awaken from *maya* (ignorance), you should do social service by relieving suffering whenever you see it. But even then you should do it without *ahankara*, that is, without the sense of "I am the doer", but with the feeling of "I am the instrument of the Lord".

Having brought one's family in consonance with the community, he should make his family prosperous to ensure the prosperity of the community.

Freedom

The only freedom a human being has is to strive and acquire *jnana* (Self-knowledge) which will enable him not to identify himself with the body. The body will go through the inevitable actions due to *prarabdha karma* and a human being is free either to identify himself with the body and become attached to the fruits of his actions (of the body), or to detach himself from it (of the body) and be a mere spectator of its activities.

What are sins? Why, for example, does a person overindulge in drinking? Because he hates the idea of being bound, bound by the inability to drink as much as he wants. He is fighting for freedom in every "sin" he commits. This struggle for freedom is the first instinctive action of God in the mind of the human being.

The very fact that we desire liberation shows that freedom from all bondage is our true nature. It does not have to be acquired anew. All that is needed is to get rid of the false notion that we are bound.

It is up to you to think and become bound or to stop thinking and become free.

Success and failure

Willpower should be understood as the strength of the mind, which makes it capable of facing success or failure with equanimity. It is not synonymous with certain success. Why should one's attempts always be accompanied by success? Success breeds arrogance and, therefore, halts the spiritual progress of the human being. Failure, on the other hand, is beneficial insofar as it makes him open his eyes to his limitations and prepares him to surrender. Surrender, self-control of oneself, is synonymous with infinite happiness.

Spiritual progress: wisdom

Calmness is the criterion of spiritual progress. Immerse the purified mind in the Heart. Then the work is finished.

The degree of freedom from unwanted thoughts and the degree of concentration on a single thought are the measures of spiritual progress.

Not to seek what is other than the Self is detachment or absence of desire; not to leave the Self is wisdom.

To serve humanity

The best way to serve the world is one's own liberation from the ego. If you are anxious to help the world and you think you cannot do it by freeing yourself from ego, put all the world's problems, along with your own, in God's hands.

Humphreys: Master, can I help the world? Ramana Maharshi: Help yourself and you will help the world.

Your own Self-realization is the greatest service you can render to the world.

To correct yourself is to correct the whole world. The Sun is simply bright. It corrects no one. Because it shines, the whole world is full of light. Transforming yourself is a means to give light to the whole world.

Your own self-realization is the greatest service you can render to the world.

Whatever you give to others you are giving to yourself. If this truth is understood, who will not give to others?

Paul Brunton discovered that Maharshi's way of helping others was through a discreet, silent and constant flow of healing vibrations to troubled souls (egos), a mysterious telepathic process that science will someday have to account for.

Self-understanding

It simply proposes a form of self-analysis, which can be practiced independently of the ancient or modern theories and beliefs one may hold, a form that will ultimately lead the human being to true self-understanding.

The ever-present goal

If there is a goal to reach, it cannot be permanent. The goal must always be there. We try to reach the goal with the ego, but the goal exists before the ego. That which is the goal is before our birth, that is, before the birth of the ego.

Yoga is to prevent the mind from changing, which is acceptable to everyone. That is also the goal of all. The method is chosen according to one's own aptitude. The aim for all is the same. However, different names are given to the goal just to suit the preliminary process to reach the goal. Bhakti, Yoga, Jnana are all the same.

The essence of the message is: Pursue the self-inquiry "Who am I?" relentlessly. Analyze your whole personality. Try to find out where the thought of self begins. Continue your meditations. Keep directing your attention inward. One day, the wheel of thought will slow down and an intuition will mysteriously arise. Follow that intuition, let your thinking stop and it will eventually lead you to the goal.

When the goal is reached, when you know the knower, there is no difference between living in a house in London and living in the solitude of a jungle.

Brotherhood based on equality is the supreme goal of human society.

Realization: what is to be realized?

Realization is nothing new to be acquired or a new faculty. It is already there, but obstructed by a screen of thoughts (ego). All our attempts are directed at lifting this screen and then Realization is revealed.

We speak vaguely of Self-Realization, for lack of a better term. But how can one realize or make real that which is the only real thing? All we need to do is to abandon our habit of considering as real that which is unreal. All religious (spiritual) practices are meant only to help us do this. When we stop considering the unreal as real, only Reality will remain, and we will be That.

There is no real birth and no real death. It is the mind that creates and maintains the illusion of reality in this process, until it is destroyed by Self-realization.

The "I" gets rid of the illusion of "I" and yet remains "I". Such is the paradox of Self-realization. Those who have attained Realization see no paradox in it. Consider the case of the worshipper. He approaches God and prays to be absorbed in Him. Then he surrenders himself in faith and by concentration. And what remains afterwards? In place of the original "I", the

surrender leaves a residue of God in which the "I" is lost. That is the highest form of devotion or surrender and the summit of detachment.

The state of Realization, as we call it, is our nature, it is not achieving something new or reaching a distant goal. It is simply being what you always are and what you have always been, without knowing anything or becoming anything. It is simply to remove all camouflage.

It is Realization and firm adherence to that which always exists that deserves the name *siddhi* or true attainment. On the other hand, the "attainment of miraculous powers" is like attaining them in dreams. When one wakes up, what will become of them, will human beings who have set aside the unreal and established themselves in the Real be confused by these "powers"?

Suffering is the path to God-Realization. Good thoughts drive away evil thoughts. They themselves must disappear before the state of Realization.

The Realization of Truth is the same for both Easterners and Westerners. True, the path to it may be more difficult for those who are absorbed in worldly life, but still one can and must overcome.

Realization or Liberation is about getting rid of the delusion that we are not realized or liberated. It is the cessation of all thoughts and mental activity. Thoughts are like bubbles on the surface of the sea.

It is false to speak of Realization. What is there to realize? The real is as usual. We are not creating anything new or achieving anything we did not have before. The illustration given in the books is this. We dig a pit and create a huge pit. The space in the pit or well has not been created by us. We just removed the dirt that filled the space there. The space was there then and it is also there now. Similarly, we simply have to discard all the long-standing *sanskaras* [innate tendencies] that are within us. When all of them have been surrendered, the Self will shine alone.

The seat of Realization is within and the seeker cannot find it as an object outside him. That seat is bliss and is the core of all beings. That is why it is called the Heart (the centre of the Self). The only useful purpose of the present birth is to turn inward and realize it. There is nothing else to do.

The Sage and his incessant activity

A Sage helps all mankind without mankind knowing it.

The Sage has no thinking mind and, therefore, there are no "others" for him.

Non-action is ceaseless activity. The Sage is characterized by eternal and intense activity. His Stillness is like the apparent Stillness of a rapidly spinning gyroscope.

Pure mind is itself *Brahman*; therefore *Brahman* is nothing else but the mind of the Sage.

There is no mind to control if you realize the Self. With the mind gone, the Self shines forth. In the realized human being, the mind may be active or inactive, the Self remains for him.

He who has realized the Self no longer has a body. For others, he still has a body, but this is only an external appearance. Everything is difficult to understand, as long as one identifies with the body.

Humility

To the extent that we behave with humility, to that extent good will result.

If the ego is exalted, everything else will also be exalted; if it calms down, everything else will also calm down. The deeper the humility with which we behave, the better it will be for us. If only the mind is kept under control, what does it matter where one is?

A smiling peace

He who lives in the spirit lives in perennial peace. It is a happy peace, a smiling peace, but one is not lost in it. One is also aware of the suffering around him and of the world in general.

When you return there, you will have this peace that you now feel. But its price will be that from now on you will discard the idea that you are this body or this brain. When this peace flows within you, then you will have to forget yourself, because you will have given your life to THAT!

Peace is the inner nature of humanity. If you find it within you, you will find it everywhere. If one's mind has peace, the whole world will seem peaceful.

Peace is your natural state. It is the mind that obstructs the natural state. Peace can only reign where there is no disturbance, and the disturbance is due to the thoughts that arise in the mind.

We are always peace. To get rid of the idea that we are not peace is all that is required.

You and I are the same. You are the Self now and you can never be anything else. Throw your worries to the wind, turn inward and find Peace.

When by happy fraternity with each other human beings obtain supreme peace, then this whole Earth shines like a house. When by their mutual respect and noble feelings they obtain great peace and harmony, then the whole world shines as the one abode of the whole human family.

Universal Love

He who knows the secret of true love finds the whole world filled with Universal Love. When you truly feel this equal love for all beings, when your Heart has expanded so much that it embraces all creation, you will certainly not want to give up this or that person. You will simply abandon secular life as a ripe fruit falls from the branch of a tree. You will feel that the whole world is your home.

Whatever is done with Love, with righteous purity and with peace of mind, will be a good deed. Whatever is done with the taint of selfish desire and with uncontrolled agitation of the mind cannot be classified as a good deed.

The end of all wisdom is Love, Love, Love.