

THE HEART

There are two very unique activities taking place within a human being. These need prime consideration and understanding from a functional perspective for an individual. One aspect or unique characteristic of the Absolute is the 'I'- Thought the contradistinction or being distinctly opposite to the Absolute also known as the not-Self. When the 'I'- Thought is active it utilises and latches onto endless forms and tries to associate functions with each form it associates with, thus creating an artificial kingdom of its own and holds a magical spell over the individual appearing to cover the Reality or pure Awareness. An interesting point to note here as Sage Ramana has very clearly explained, this 'I'- Thought is the primal thought which is at the base or centre of every other thought which arises in association with the many innumerable objects the old man or not-Self or the 'I'- Thought associates itself with. The 'I'- Thought and each of the associated thoughts so arising from it also constitute none other than the unique characteristics of the Self.

Now the other aspect in an individual is the true aspect of our real nature that of pure Awareness, which actually is the life behind the 'I'- Thought, and this Awareness undertakes the activity of discerning and distinguishing all the names, forms, actions and events, this includes everything which we call as the unique characteristics of the absolute manifest in the space-time world.

Hence, until a sincere and prolonged effort is made by us to shift back and consciously function (not unconsciously) as our true nature that of Awareness utilising and knowing the function of distinguishing rather than judging which belongs to the 'I'- Thought the aspect of achieving the function of practicing 'Who am I' is next to impossible to achieve.

It is only when the 'I'- Thought is looked upon as a unique characteristic of the Self by us the pure Awareness an aspect of the Heart as described and explained by Sage Ramana, this pure Awareness being the very screen on which all the unique characteristics of the Self including the prime unique characteristic of 'I'- Thought appear, and due to which the life and all activities persist in the space time manifestation. Unless we undertake this advice and act upon it the magical spell of the 'I'- Thought that I am so and so with a name and a function and not pure Awareness cannot be broken. When we do take up this practice it is not long before an experience that there is no 'I'- Thought, it has actually gone - is experienced, and the other side of us being as pure Awareness our true nature, and that we can function with it with the total absence of the 'I'- Thought is experienced.

Now we take our discussion further to gain a deeper understanding of what is termed as the Heart by Sage Ramana. According to the Sage, the Absolute or God characterised by the attributes of spaceless and timeless is the Heart. Now when we come down to the level of space time creation then us being the pure Awareness which manifests in space and time and is also connected to the spaceless timeless God or the Absolute, and in this pure Awareness which is the screen on which appear and manifest all these unique characteristics

of the Absolute, then for our purpose of understanding this pure Awareness in the space time manifestation is the Heart.

Also according to Sage Ramana the holy mountain Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai also called Lord *Shiva* (The all-pervasive supreme Reality; also, one of the Hindu trinity of gods, who carries out the act of destruction or dissolution), is the symbolic representation of the Heart on the physical plane Earth. In the ancient past going back many thousands of years before Christ during the formation of the ancient Hindu civilisation which is the period of evolution just after the Atlantean period (refer to details on the chapter on Evolution), Arunachala was a column of fire emanating from Earth which then gradually condensed into the holy mountain which represents the symbol of Shiva. The holy mountain has remained unchanged since times immemorial and to this day is the same. It has remained as the centre of transmission of pure spiritual knowledge to the human race over the centuries. Many Sages are buried in and around the holy Arunachala. This is also a proven fact as exemplified by the life of Sage Ramana as the Sage has written many hymns and verses in praise of Arunachala and dedicated his life to the holy mountain. Following is one such stanza composed by Sage Ramana in relation to his reverence for the holy mountain.

'O Red Hill (Arunachala)! All this (world-appearance), which is a picture, rises, stands and subsides only in You. Since You dance eternally (in) the Heart as (the Real Self), they (the Sages or Jnanis) say that Your name itself is Heart, (Hridayam).'

{Sri . Arunachala Pancharatnam (The five Gems in praise of Sri Arunachala) Verse 2 by Sage Ramana}

Even to this day when devotees visit the holy hill, it gives the same peace, tranquillity and bliss as it has always given. The author urges the reader to visit Sage Ramana ashram in Tiruvannamalai and experience first-hand for themselves what has been stated above.

Sage Ramana has answered a whole variety of queries and doubts about the Heart spanning a period of 50 years raised to him in the form of questions by devotees and visitors. The Sage has given answers which removed not only any doubts in the mind of the questioner, but also gave clarity about what is the Heart and what method one must follow to be one with the Reality the Heart. Such queries and answers given by the Sage have been covered in detail throughout this chapter. Following are some of the answers given by the Sage about the Heart. In the following question and answers, D denotes the devotee and M (Maharshi or great Sage) stands for Sage Ramana.

Knowing the Heart

- D:** *Sri Bhagavan* (commonly used name for God; a title used for one like Sage Ramana who is recognized as having realized his identity with the Self) speaks of the Heart as the seat of Consciousness and as identical with the Self. What does the Heart exactly signify?
- M:** The question about the Heart arises because you are interested in seeking the source of consciousness. To all deep thinking minds, the enquiry about the 'I' and its nature has an irresistible fascination. Call it by any name, God, Self, the Heart or the seat of

Consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this, that Heart means the very core of one's being, the Centre, without which there is nothing whatever.

D: But Sri Bhagavan has specified a particular place for the Heart within the physical body, that it is in the chest, two digits to the right from the median.

M: Yes, that is the centre of spiritual experience according to the testimony of Sages. This spiritual Heart-centre is quite different from the blood-propelling, muscular organ known by the same name. The spiritual Heart-centre is not an organ of the body. All that you can say of the Heart is that it is the very core of your being. That with which you are really identical (as the word in Sanskrit literally means), whether you are awake, asleep or dreaming, whether you are engaged in work or immersed in *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self).

D: In that case, how can it be localized in any part of the body? Fixing a place for the Heart would imply setting physiological limitations to That which is beyond space and time.

M: That is right. But the person who puts the question about the position of the Heart, considers himself as existing with or in the body. While putting the question now, would you say that your body alone is here but that you are speaking from somewhere else? No, you accept your bodily existence. It is from this point of view that any reference to a physical body comes to be made.

Truly speaking, Pure Consciousness is indivisible, it is without parts. It has no form and shape, no 'within' and 'without'. There is no 'right' or 'left' for it. Pure Consciousness, which is the Heart, includes all; and nothing is outside or apart from it. That is the ultimate Truth.

From this absolute standpoint, the Heart, Self or Consciousness can have no particular place assigned to it in the physical body. What is the reason? The body is itself a mere projection of the mind, and the mind is but a poor reflection of the radiant Heart. How can That, in which everything is contained, be itself confined as a tiny part within the physical body which is but an infinitesimal, phenomenal manifestation of the one Reality?

But people do not understand this. They cannot help thinking in terms of the physical body and the world. For instance, you say, 'I have come to this ashram all the way from my country beyond the Himalayas.' But that is not the truth. Where is a 'coming' or 'going' or any movement whatever, for the one, all-pervading Spirit which you really are? You are where you have always been. It is your body that moved or was conveyed from place to place till it reached this ashram.

This is the simple truth, but to a person who considers himself a subject living in an objective world, it appears as something altogether visionary!

It is by coming down to the level of ordinary understanding that a place is assigned to the Heart in the physical body.

D: How then shall I understand Sri Bhagavan's statement that the experience of the Heart-centre is at the particular place in the chest?

M: Once you accept that from the true and absolute standpoint, the Heart as Pure Consciousness is beyond space and time, it will be easy for you to understand the rest in its correct perspective.

D: It is only on that basis that I have put the question about the position of the Heart. I am asking about Sri Bhagavan's experience.

M: Pure Consciousness wholly unrelated to the physical body and transcending the mind is a matter of direct experience. Sages know their bodiless, eternal Existence just as the layman knows his bodily existence. But the experience of Consciousness can be with bodily awareness as well as without it. In the bodiless experience of Pure Consciousness the Sage is beyond time and space, and no question about the position of the Heart can then at all arise.

Since, however, the physical body cannot subsist (with life) apart from Consciousness, bodily awareness has to be sustained by Pure Consciousness. The former, by its nature, is limited to and can never be co-extensive with the latter which is infinite and eternal. Body-consciousness is merely a monad-like, miniature reflection of the Pure Consciousness with which the Sage has realised his identity. For him, therefore, body-consciousness is only a reflected ray, as it were, of the Self-effulgent, Infinite Consciousness which is himself. It is in this sense alone that the Sage is aware of his bodily existence.

Since, during the bodiless experience of the Heart as Pure Consciousness, the Sage is not at all aware of the body, that absolute experience is localized by him within the limits of the physical body by a sort of feeling-recollection made while he is with bodily awareness.

D: For men like me, who have neither the direct experience of the Heart nor the consequent recollection, the matter seems to be somewhat difficult to grasp. About the position of the Heart itself, perhaps, we must depend on some sort of guesswork.

M: If the determination of the position of the Heart is to depend on guesswork even in the case of the layman, the question is surely not worth much consideration. No, it is not on guesswork that you have to depend, it is on an unerring intuition.

D: For whom is the intuition?

M: For one and all.

D: Does Sri Bhagavan credit me with an intuitive knowledge of the Heart?

M: No, not of the Heart, but of the position of the Heart in relation to your identity.

D: Sri Bhagavan says that I intuitively know the position of the Heart in the physical body?

M: Why not ?

D: (Pointing to himself) It is to me personally — that Sri Bhagavan is referring?

M: Yes. That is the intuition! How did you refer to your finger on the right side of the chest? That is exactly the place of the Heart-centre.

D: So then, in the absence of direct knowledge of the Heart-centre, I have to depend on this intuition?

M: What is wrong with it? When a schoolboy says ‘It is I that did the sum correctly’, or when he asks you, ‘Shall I run and get the book for you’, would he point out to the head that did the sum correctly, or to the legs that will carry him swiftly to get you the book? No, in both cases, his finger is pointed quite naturally towards the right side of the chest, thus giving innocent expression to the profound truth that the source of ‘I’-ness in him is there. It is an unerring intuition that makes him refer to himself, to the Heart which is the Self, in that way. The act is quite involuntary and universal, that is to say, it is the same in the case of every individual.

What stronger proof than this do you require about the position of the Heart-centre in the physical body?

The State of Egolessness

‘Where the ego rises not, there we are That. But how can that perfect Egolessness be attained, if the mind dives not into its Source? And if the ego dies not, how can our Natural State be won, wherein we are That?’

{UlladuNarpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 27 by Sage Ramana}

The Source of the mind, that from which the mind takes its rise, which is here indicated, is the Heart, is to be tentatively regarded as the Own Abode of the Self. Of course the absolute Truth is that the Self is Itself the real Heart. Here Sage Ramana refers to the Egoless State as our Natural State, because there we are what we really are, namely the Pure Consciousness, the Heart. That the ego must be got rid of is the one thing on which, as the Sage tells us, all religions are agreed. They differ only in regard to the nature of the State of Deliverance. Once a question was put to the Sage: ‘Which of the two views is correct, the one that says that God and the soul are one, or the opposite one?’ The Sage said: ‘Get to business on the agreed point, namely that the ego must be got rid of.’ Hence the essential teaching is that which tells us how to get rid of the ego; all else is of less importance.

According to Sage Ramana the pure Awareness the Heart alone is Existence or pure Consciousness, in contrast the world has no existence of its own. This is stated by the Sage as follows -

‘The world and the mind arise and set together as one; but of the two the world owes its appearance to the mind alone; That alone is real in which this (inseparable) pair, the world and the mind, has risings and settings: that Reality is the one infinite Consciousness (the Heart), having neither rising nor setting.’

{UlladuNarpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 7 by Sage Ramana}

We are thus reminded of a fact not unknown to us, but of which the importance has till now escaped us. The world begins to appear just when the mind comes into being, after remaining merged and lost in sleep, it continues to appear only so long as the mind continues to function, it disappears with the mind when the latter is dissolved in sleep, it is seen again only when the mind comes again into being on waking. When the mind is lost in sleep, there is no world-appearance. From this it follows that neither the mind nor the world is real. This is so, not only because they do not appear continuously, but also because they have no existence of their own, independently of the Reality the Heart, in which their risings and settings take place. Here also

the standard of Reality as defined by the older Sages is clearly accepted and applied. It may perhaps be contended that the world does not appear only because there is no mind or senses to perceive it. The answer is very simple. It is true that in sleep there is no mind; but WE are there. And if the world were real, what is there to prevent its appearing to US? That there is no mind or sense-organs in sleep, is no reason for the world not being seen. The real Self the Heart does not need any medium to see whatever is real. The sacred lore tells us that Awareness (our Reality) is the very eyes of the absolute or God, by which alone the mind and the senses are able to perceive, the world and all the unique characteristics of the Absolute in it. We do not see the world in sleep, because the world does not exist. The Sage has also said the same thing in a different form.

'The world is not other than the body, the body is not other than the mind; the mind is not other than the Primal Consciousness; the Primal Consciousness is not other than the Reality; That exists unchanging, in Peace.'

{Guru Vachaka Kovai (The Collection of Guru's Sayings), verse 99 by Sri Muruganar}

The question may be asked how we can be sure of the existence of the Reality, which is here said to be the Source from which mind and world arise, and into which they set. The answer is that this unreal pair cannot appear and disappear without something real in which they can have their risings and settings.

Whether personality is real or not can be known from what Sage Ramana tells us as follows:

'The body, which by itself is inert, does not say 'I'; the real Consciousness has no rising nor setting. But between these two there arises a spurious being, an I, which assumes the size and shape of the body; this itself is the mind, (serving as) a knot between consciousness and the inert (body); this is conditioned existence, the ego, bondage and the subtle body; this is the real nature of the (so-called) soul.'

{Ulladu Narpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 24 by Sage Ramana}

The Sage tells us here that the Heart the real Consciousness is beyond time and therefore neither rises nor sets. It is like the sun, which relative to the earth does not move, the sunrise and sunset we speak of are due to the movements of the earth. So too the Heart the Reality shines constantly, the rising and setting of the ego are ascribed to it. The ego-sense is discontinuous; it rises and sets. Apart from the ego-sense there is no individual soul. It shines during waking and in dream, and sets in sleep. This little self is therefore not to be identified with the Reality the Heart. Nor can it be identified with the inert body. What then is this little self? The Sage tells us here that it is a hypothetical being, compounded of the light of Consciousness and the body, the result is this incongruous being called the individual soul, which says, 'I am so-and-so'. Because of the light of Consciousness associated with it, it appears conscious; but at the same time it is indistinguishable from the body, which has no consciousness of its own. Because of the two incongruous elements of which it is composed, it is described as the knot between the Reality the Heart and the body. That is why the little self is manifest as the ego-sense, which has the form of the thought 'I am this body'. Now, the thought 'I am this body' is the primary thought. It is like a thread on which all the other thoughts are strung. Hence the ego is indistinguishable from the mind. In fact the mind is but an expanded form of the ego. Hence the Sage tells us that the mind and the

subtle body are the same as this hypothetical little self, which is none other than the ego. Conversely we can say that the little self is not other than these.

We thus learn that the so-called soul is nothing but the ego, which is due to a confusion of two elements which are distinct and can never mix, because one of them the body is non-existent, being a mere mental image. There can be a real mixture only if *both* the elements be real. The mixing up of the two, explains the Sage, is like a marriage contracted by a bachelor in a dream, where the bridegroom is real, but the bride is not; when the dreamer awakes, he finds himself as much a bachelor as before. Hence the real Self who is the Reality the Heart did not really become limited, It never really became the soul or little self, the Heart was not really married to the body. Thus it is made clear that the individual soul has no real existence. All those questions that relate to that soul are meaningless, because they assume the existence of a soul. There is only one real Self, the Pure Consciousness, which is beyond time.

That the world ceases to appear on the attainment of Self-realisation is also asserted by Sage Ramana in the following -

'I shall now state clearly the profound secret which is the supreme essence of all Vedant: Understand that when the ego dies and the real Self is realised as the One Reality, then there remains only that real Self, who is Pure Consciousness (the Heart).'

{Ulladu Narpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 23 by Sage Ramana}

We shall now see what we can learn about the Heart from the Sage's Revelation. The real Self the Heart in the Egoless State is none other than the Reality, called 'Sat' that which *is*. This *Sat* (Existence) is also *Chit*, Consciousness. For nothing is real that does not exist in its own right. Whatever has no consciousness can exist only by consciousness. That is why the Sage says that the world is mental. The Heart, we have seen, is the one indubitable Reality. And It always remains as pure Consciousness, as the Heart, beyond the three states.

We shall now see why the Heart is said to be consciousness, instead of saying that It is conscious. The explanation is very simple, though of very great importance. The mind is unconscious, but poorly and fitfully so. Its consciousness fails utterly in sleep. There must be some Source, wherefrom the mind receives consciousness. This Source is therefore the Original Consciousness the Heart, which shines constantly, unlike the mind. Because Its Consciousness never fails, therefore Consciousness or being the Heart is Its very nature. And this meaning is expressed by saying that the Self the Heart - the Source here meant - is Consciousness. We find the teaching in the ancient lore also. The real Self the Heart is described in one of the *Upanishads* (the last phase of the development of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) as 'endless Consciousness'. The purpose of this description is, says Sage Sankara, to differentiate It from the consciousness or knowing of objects that goes by the name of knowledge among human beings.

Consciousness, therefore, is not to be understood as a mere attribute of the real Self or the Heart, but as Its very essence. This Consciousness is manifest as the 'I am', the 'Pure Awareness' as the common factor of all thoughts and of all perceptions. This truth is clearly expressed in the *Aitareya Upanishad 3.1.2 and 3.1.3* where the Self the Heart is called *Prajnanam* (consciousness of the true knowledge of God), which means Consciousness. In its purity, uncontaminated by mixing up with the unreal sheaths, or with their changing states, it is the real Self. The common notion that knowledge or awareness is an attribute or quality, is

just the reverse of the above teaching. Consciousness is not a quality; It is the very substance of Reality the Heart, and Reality is real solely because It is Consciousness. Consciousness alone exists; there is nothing else. It is often styled the supreme Consciousness, to differentiate It from the mind and intellect. This Supreme Consciousness, say the Upanishads (the last phase of the development of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge), existed alone in the beginning when all this universe did not exist. It created out of itself the bodies of creatures, and Itself entered into them *as soul*. This becoming or creation is not to be taken as an event that happened actually; we shall see that presently. The purpose of these stories of creation in the ancient lore is to convey in a graphic manner the teaching, that the Self in us is just the Reality the Heart that there is *no* individual soul.

If creation actually took place, it would follow that the Reality was broken into parts. That is absurd, as we have seen before. This is what the Sage tells us 'The Reality is neither broken into parts, nor does It suffer limitation. It only *seems* to be so. The mind causes the appearance of parts, by falsely identifying It with bodies of sheaths and thus limiting It. The mind imagines the Reality (the Heart) as finite, thinking itself to be finite. These limitations and divisions are in the mind alone. But the mind has no existence apart from (the Heart or) the Self. A jewel made of gold is not *quite* the same as gold, because it is gold with a name and a form super-added. But it is not other than gold. Mind is just a mysterious power of (the Heart) the Self, by which the One Self appears as many. Only when the mind rises, do the three - God, the soul and the world - appear. In sleep the three are not seen nor thought of.' This is just what is known in *Advaitic* (the teachings about oneness, non-duality) metaphysics as the *Truth of Non-becoming - Ajati-Siddhanta*

That the One Self the Heart alone is true, and all else is superimposed on It by ignorance, has been clearly stated by the Sage in many ways, and on many occasions. The Heart is the Real Consciousness, and the persons and things of the world appear by the ascription of names and forms to It. This is expressed in the following -

'The Self (Heart) who is Consciousness is alone real, and nothing else. All so-called knowledge, which is manifold, is only ignorance. This ignorance is unreal, since it has no existence of its own, apart from the Consciousness which is the Self (the Heart), just as the unreal jewels made of gold have no existence apart from the real gold.'

{Ulladu Narpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 13 by Sage Ramana}

Every alien thought that arises in the Quest and is quelled adds to the mind's strength, says the Sage, and thus takes the seeker one step nearer to the goal. When the seeker has persisted long enough in the Quest, and the power from within has arisen and taken possession of the mind, the Heart is quickly reached, that is to say, the mind becomes reduced to the state of pure Consciousness, the Heart, and begins to shine steadily in its pure form, as the formless 'I', the Sage calls this formless Consciousness the 'I am I - The Heart' to distinguish it from the ego-sense which has the form of 'I am this (body)', that implies the cessation of the ego-form, the finite ego the personality is swallowed up by the infinite Self, with the finite ego are lost all the imperfections and limitations which beset life, desire and fear are at an end, as well as sin and accountability. The real Self the Heart was never subject to these, they belonged to the ego and they do not survive the ego. In the Egoless State the Self abides in Its own glory, the Sage that has thus found the Self the Heart, having shed the ego, is not an individual, though he may appear as such to immature disciples and to the rest of the world. Sage Ramana recommends meditation of the pure 'I am' or 'I' as an equivalent of the Quest.

A question was put to the Sage Ramana 'Does the Sage see the world as others do?' The Sage replied 'The question does not arise for the sage, but only for the ignorant. He puts the question because of his ego. To him the answer is. Find out the Truth of him to whom the question occurs. You ask the question because you see the sage active like other men. The fact is, the sage does not see the world as others do. Take for an illustration, the cinema. There are pictures moving on the screen. If one goes up to them and tries to seize them, he seizes only the screen. And when the pictures disappear, the screen alone remains. Such is the case with the sage.' The same question is answered by the Sage as follows -

'The world is real, both to the ignorant and to the Sage. The ignorant one believes the Real to be co-extensive with the world. To the sage the Real (the Heart) is the formless One, the basic Substance on which the world appears. Thus great indeed is the difference between the sage and the ignorant one.'

{Ulladu Narpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 38 by Sage Ramana}

Here the Sage begins by saying that, superficially considered, the ignorant one and the Sage are alike. For they both say that the world is real. But it is here pointed out that what the Sage means by the words is quite the opposite of what the other means. The ignorant one takes the world to be real as such, with all its variety of name and form, and has no idea that the basic Reality the Heart which is like gold to the jewels made of it - is the Substance that is real as opposed to the forms that are unreal. The Sage rejects the unreal part of the world and takes as real only the Substratum, the formless Pure Consciousness, the Self the Heart, which is unaffected by the false appearances. 'The Self is real,' says the Sage, 'not the world, because it exists alone in its State of Purity as the Pure Consciousness (the Heart), without the world. The world cannot exist without the Self.'

The following cautions and instructions are from the *Guru Ramana Vachana Mala, Sadhakacharaprakarana*.

'Forgetting (the Self) is verily Death; therefore for him that is out to conquer Death by the Quest, the one rule to fulfil is not to forget.'

'The pot sinks, because it takes in water. Timber floats, because it does not. He that is attached becomes bound. He that is not, is not bound, even if he is in the house.'

'One should overcome misfortunes with faith, courage and serenity, remembering that they come by God's grace, in order to give strength.'

'Indifference all round, with the mind serene (sunk in the Heart), without desire and without hate, is the beautiful way of life for *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants).'

'What is called fate is nothing but actions done by oneself before. Hence fate can be wiped off by suitable effort.'

'What is done (from the Heart) with peaceful and pure mind is righteous action; whatever is done with the mind agitated and from desire is wrong action.'

‘To be unattached and at peace (which is the nature of the Heart), resigning all burden to God the Almighty, is the highest *tapas*(austerity).’

‘As the grains that remain at the base of the pivot in a handmill are not crushed, so those that have taken refuge in God (the Heart) are unaffected even by great misfortunes.’

‘As the magnetic needle swerves not from the north, so those that have their minds devoted to God (the Heart) do not swerve from the right path through illusion.’

“Never give way to anxiety, thinking ‘When shall I attain this State?’ It is beyond space and time, and therefore is neither far nor near.”

‘Pervading everything by Its own nature, the Self (the Heart) is ever free. How can It be bound by *Maya*(transitory manifestation in time and space)? So do not give way to despair.’

“The notion ‘I am an unstable soul’ has arisen by letting go one’s immovable Nature (which is the Heart). The *sadhaka*(spiritual aspirant) should cast off this notion and rest in the Supreme Silence (of the Heart).”

‘This is the device for overcoming the capricious nature of the mind. Look upon all that is perceived and on the perceiver as the real Self (the Heart) .’

‘As a thorn that is used for taking out a thorn, should be thrown aside, so a good thought, that is useful for driving out an evil thought, should also be given up.’

‘As one dives into the sea with a (heavy) stone and takes out pearls, so one should dive with non-attachment into the Heart and gain the Self.’

Heart and Self-enquiry

The word *hridayam* meaning Heart has been often used by Sage Ramana when communicating about the Self. According to the Sage the Heart or Self is the source from which all appearances manifest and there is no particular location or centre for the Heart. Those who follow ‘I am Brahman (the Absolute)’, and ‘*neti-neti* (not this, not this)’ believe that either by affirmation or negation the Heart can be discovered by the mind. The belief that the mind by its own activities can reach the Self or the Heart is the root of most of the misconceptions about the practice of Self-enquiry.

In relation to the origin of ‘I’-thought, the Sage in some of the answers given to such queries says the ‘I’-thought rises to the brain through a channel which starts from a centre called the Heart-centre in the right-hand side of the chest and when the ‘I’-thought subsides as in sleep it goes back to this centre. Also when the Self or the Heart is consciously experienced for example when in a state of deep meditation, there is a tangible awareness that this centre is the source of both the mind and the world. However, in the true quest for the Heart the Self according to Sage Ramana these explanations only hold meaning from an I- thought perspective where the devotee is more akin to the feeling ‘I am the Body/’ and were only schematic representations which were given to individuals who persisted in identifying with their bodies. The Sage has said that the Heart is not really located in the body and that from the highest the absolute standpoint it is equally untrue to say that the ‘I’-thought arises and subsides into this centre on the right of the chest; the Absolute or God characterised by the

attributes of spaceless and timeless is the Heart and this is the teaching of the scriptures and the living experience of Sage Ramana.

The statements made by the Sage "Find the place where the 'I' arises" or 'Find the source of the mind' do not mean that one must concentrate on a particular center in the body when practicing Self-enquiry. Conscious experience of the Heart what one may term as Self-realisation as a result of Self-enquiry according to Sage Ramana is not achieved by concentrating on a particular part of the body which is the Heart centre, instead one must pay attention to the 'I' thought and meditate on the Heart 'as it is'. The Heart 'as it is' is not a location, it is the Self and one can only be aware of its real nature by being it. It cannot be reached by concentration.

According to the Sage the experience of the Heart or Self does contain an awareness of this centre, but concentration on this centre is only an aid to self-realisation and this in itself will not result in the experience of the Self. In the silence alone of the Self the Heart the Reality is realised.

Following are the answers given by the Sage raised by spiritual aspirants in relation to such queries –

D: You have said that the Heart is the centre of the Self.

M: Yes, it is the one supreme centre of the Self. You need have no doubt about it. The real Self is there in the Heart behind the *jiva*(individual soul) or ego-self.

D: Now be pleased to tell me where it is in the body.

M: You cannot know it with your mind. You cannot realize it by imagination when I tell you here is the centre (pointing to the right side of the chest). The only direct way to realize it is to cease to fantasise and try to be yourself. When you realize, you automatically feel that the centre is there.

This is the centre, the Heart, spoken of in the scriptures as *hrit-guha*(cavity of the Heart), *arul*(grace), *ullam*(the Heart).

D: In no book have I found it stated that it is there.

M: Long after I came here I chanced upon a verse in the Malayalam version of *Ashtangahridayam*(an Ancient Hindu medicine text book),the standard work on *ayurveda*(Hindu medicine), wherein the *ojassthana*(source of bodily vitality or place of light) is mentioned as being located in the right side of the chest and called the seat of consciousness (*samvit*). But I know of no other work which refers to it as being located there.

D: Can I be sure that the ancients meant this centre by the term 'Heart'?

M: Yes, that is so. But you should try to have rather than to locate the experience. A man need not find out where his eyes are situated when he wants to see. The Heart is there ever open to you if you care to enter it, ever supporting all your movements even when you are unaware. It is perhaps more proper to say that the Self is the Heart itself than to say that it is in the Heart. Really, the Self is the centre itself. It is everywhere, aware of itself as 'Heart', the Self-awareness.

- D:** The Heart is said to be on the right, on the left, or in the centre. With such differences of opinion how are we to meditate on it?
- M:** You are and it is a fact. *Dhyana* (meditation) is by you, of you, and in you. It must go on where you are. It cannot be outside you. So you are the centre of *dhyana* and that is the Heart.

Doubts arise only when you identify it with something tangible and physical. Heart is no conception, no object for meditation. But it is the seat of meditation. The Self remains all alone. You see the body in the Heart, the world is also in it. There is nothing separate from it. So all kinds of effort are located there only.

- D:** You say the 'I'- Thought rises from the Heart-centre. Should we seek its source there?
- M:** I ask you to see where the 'I' arises in your body, but it is really not quite correct to say that the 'I' rises from and merges in the Heart in the right side of the chest. The Heart is another name for the Reality and it is neither inside nor outside the body. There can be no in or out for it, since it alone is.

- D:** What is the Heart referred to in the verse of *UpadesaSaram*(A thirty verse Sanskrit poem composed by Sage Ramana)where it is said, 'Abiding in the Heart is the best karma, *yoga*(spiritual paths or practices),*bhakti*(devotion),and*jnana*(knowledge of Self)?'
- M:** That which is the source of all, that in which all live, and that into which all finally merge, is the Heart referred to.

- D:** How can we conceive of such a Heart?
- M:** Why should you conceive of anything? You have only to see from where the 'I' springs. That from which all thoughts of embodied beings issue forth is called the Heart. All descriptions of it are only mental concepts

- D:** There are said to be six organs of different colours in the chest, of which the Heart is said to be two finger-breadths to the right of the middle line. But the Heart is also formless. Should we then imagine it to have a shape and meditate on it?
- M:** No. Only the quest 'Who am I?' is necessary. What remains all through deep sleep and waking is the same. But in waking there is unhappiness and the effort to remove it. Asked who wakes up from sleep you say 'I'. Now you are told to hold fast to this 'I'. If it is done the eternal being will reveal itself. Investigation of 'I' is the point and not meditation on the Heart-centre. There is nothing like within or without. Both mean either the same thing or nothing.

Of course there is also the practice of meditation on the Heartcentre. It is only a practice and not investigation. Only the one who meditates on the Heart can remain aware when the mind ceases to be active and remains still, whereas those who meditate on other centres cannot be so aware but infer that the mind was still only after it becomes again active.

In whatever place in the the body one thinks Self to be residing, due to the power of that thinking it will appear to the one who thinks thus as if Self is residing in that place. However, the beloved Heart alone is the refuge for the rising and subsiding of that 'I'. Know that though it is said that the Heart exists both inside and outside, in absolute truth it does not exist both inside and outside, because the body, which

appears as the base of the differences 'inside' and 'outside', is an imagination of the thinking mind. Heart, the source, is the beginning, the middle and the end of all. Heart, the supreme space, is never a form. It is the light of truth.

D: Is proximity to the Guru helpful?

M: Do you mean physical proximity? What is the good of it? The mind alone matters. The mind must be contacted. *Sat-sanga*(association with spiritually oriented people) will make the mind sink into the Heart. Such association is both mental and physical. The extremely visible being of the Guru pushes the mind inward. He is also in the Heart of the seeker and so he draws the latter's inward-bent mind into the Heart.

D: What are *asanas*(postures or seats)? Are they necessary?

M: Many *asanas*with their effects are mentioned in the yoga *sastras*(scriptures). The seats are the tiger-skin, grass, etc. The postures are the 'lotus posture', the 'easy posture' and so on. Why all these only to know oneself? The truth is that from the Self the ego rises up, confuses itself with the body, mistakes the world to be real, and then, covered with egotistic conceit, it thinks wildly and looks for *asanas*(seats). Such a person does not understand that he himself is the centre of all and thus forms the basis for all.

The *asana* (seat) is meant to make him sit firm. Where and how can he remain firm except in his own real state? This is the real *asana*.

Attaining the steadiness of not swerving from the knowledge that the base (*asana*) upon which the whole universe rests is only Self, which is the space of true knowledge, the illustrious ground, alone is the firm and motionless posture (*asana*) for excellent *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self).

D: In what *asana* (seat) is Bhagavan usually seated?

M: In what *asana* (seat)? In the *asana* of the Heart. Wherever it is pleasant, there is my *asana*. That is called *sukhasana*, the *asana* of happiness. That *asana* of the Heart is peaceful, and gives happiness. There is no need for any other *asana* for those who are seated in that one.

D: The *Gita* (Song of God an Indian holy scripture) seems to emphasise karma yoga, for Arjuna is persuaded to fight. Sri Krishna himself set the example by an active life of great exploits.

M: The *Gita* starts by saying that you are not the body and that you are not therefore the *karta*(the doer).

D: What is the significance?

M: It means that one should act without thinking that oneself is the actor. Actions will go on even in the egoless state. Each person has come into manifestation for a certain purpose and that purpose will be accomplished whether he considers himself to be the actor or not.

D: I wish to get *sakshatkara*(direct realization) of Sri Krishna. What should I do to get it?

- M:** What is your idea of Sri Krishna and what do you mean by *sakshatkara*(direct realization)?
- D:** I mean Sri Krishna who lived in Brindavan and I want to see him as the *gopis*(his female devotees)saw him.
- M:** You see, you think he is a human being or one with a human form, the son of so and so, whereas he himself has said, 'I am in the Heart of all beings, I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all forms of life.' He must be within you, as he is within all. He is your Self or the Self of your Self. So if you see this entity (the Self) or have *sakshatkara*of it, you will have *sakshatkara*(direct realization)of Krishna. Direct realization of the Self and direct realization of Krishna cannot be different. However, to go your own way, surrender completely to Krishna and leave it to him to grant the *sakshatkara*(direct realization)you want.
- D:** Through poetry, music, japa, bhajans(devotional songs), the sight of beautiful landscapes, reading the lines of spiritual verses, etc., one experiences sometimes a true sense of the all-pervading unity. Is that feeling of deep blissful quiet in which the personal self has no place the same as the entering into the Heart of which Bhagavan speaks? Will undertaking these activities lead to a deeper *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self)and so ultimately to a full vision of the real?
- M:** There is happiness when agreeable things are presented to the mind. It is the happiness inherent in the Self, and there is no other happiness. And it is not alien and afar. You are diving into the Self on those occasions which you consider pleasurable and that diving results in self-existent bliss. But the association of ideas is responsible for foisting that bliss on other things or occurrences while, in fact, that bliss is within you. On these occasions you are plunging into the Self, though unconsciously. If you do so consciously, with the conviction that comes of the experience that you are identical with the happiness which is truly the Self, the one Reality, you call it realization. I want you to dive consciously into the Self, that is the Heart.
- D:** God seems to be known by many different names. Are any of them justified ?
- M:** Among the many thousands of names of God, no name suits God, who abides in the Heart, devoid of thought, so truly, aptly, and beautifully as the name 'I' or 'I am'. Of all the known names of God, the name of God 'I' - 'I' alone will resound triumphantly when the ego is destroyed, rising as the silent supreme word (*mouna-para-vak*)in the Heart-space of those whose attention is Selfward-facing. Even if one unceasingly meditates upon that name 'I-I' with one's attention on the feeling 'I', it will take one and plunge one into the source from which thought rises, destroying the ego, the embryo, which is joined to the body.
- D:** You say that even the highest God is still only an idea. Does that mean that there is no God?
- M:** No, there is an *Iswara*(God).
- D:** Does he exist in any particular place or form?
- M:** If the individual is a form, even Self, the source, who is the Lord, will also appear to be a form. If one is not a form, since there then cannot be knowledge of other things, will that statement that God has a form be correct? God assumes any form imagined by the devotee through repeated thinking in prolonged meditation. Though he thus assumes endless names, the real formless consciousness alone is God.

With regard to his location, God does not reside in any place other than the Heart. It is due to illusion, caused by the ego, the 'I am the body' idea, that the kingdom of God is conceived to be elsewhere. Be sure that the Heart is the kingdom of God.

Know that you are the perfect, shining light which not only makes the existence of God's kingdom possible, but also allows it to be seen as some wonderful heaven. To know this is alone *jnana*(knowledge of Self). Therefore, the kingdom of God is within you. The unlimited space of *turiyatita*(beyond the four states, i.e. the Self), which shines suddenly, in all its fullness, within the Heart of a highly mature aspirant during the state of complete absorption of mind, as if a fresh and previously unknown experience, is the rarely- attained and true *Siva-loka*(the kingdom of God), which shines by the light of Self.

D: Should I not have any idea about God?

M: Only so long as there are other thoughts in the Heart can there be a thought of God conceived by one's mind. The destruction of even that thought of God due to the destruction of all other thoughts alone is the unthought thought, which is the true thought of God.

Reflections

1. Sage Ramana says - 'That the physical Heart is on the left it cannot be denied. But the Heart of which I speak is not physical and is only on the right side. It is my experience, no authority is required by me. Still you can find confirmation of it in a Malayali *Ayurvedic*(Hindu medicine) book and in *Sita Upanishad*.'

Reflection -This is an authoritative statement on Sage Ramana's own experience, which in its practical aspect is of little help to the meditator. The locus of the Heart, whether to the right or to the left, need not worry us (see reflection 9 below), because when one is in it, that is, in *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self), not only the chest but the body and the whole world disappear. When *dhyana*(meditation)matures,the Heart automatically reveals itself without any special effort to seek its corresponding place in the physical body.

2. According to Sage Ramana - 'The *jiva*(individual soul)is said to remain in the Heart in deep sleep, and in the brain in the waking state. Heart is not the muscular cavity which propels blood. It denotes in the *Vedas*(the great scriptures of the Hindus) and the scriptures the centre whence the notion 'I' springs. Does it spring from the ball of flesh? It does not, but from somewhere within us, from the centre of our being. The 'I' has no location. Everything is the Self. There is nothing but the Self. So the Heart must be said to be the entire body as well as the universe, conceived as 'I'. But to help the *abhyasi*(one who practises)we have to indicate a definite place in the universe, or the body, for it. So this Heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But in truth we are everywhere; we are all that is, and there is nothing else.'

Reflection -Heart therefore has no locus at all. Its other names are Self, 'I', being, pure mind, and so on. It is called Heart due to its being the source from which the universe rises. In the last note we observed that in *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self)Heart reveals itself as completely independent of any place. Then why does Bhagavan locate it in the right chest? He does not locate it in the flesh and bones of the right chest, but only in consciousness at the level of that region, much as we locate the levels of certain objects in space as corresponding

to those of certain parts of our body. Nevertheless, because this consciousness has direct relations with the body, it must have a point of contact with it, a switchboard, so to say, in the subtle counterpart of the body, from which it switches the body off and on. This switchboard is felt in *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self)in the subtle counterpart of the right chest.

To the highly critical mind there appears a contradiction in the statements of the Sage, who, on the one hand makes Heart to be everywhere and nowhere, and on the other fixes it in the right chest, from which (as in the next text) the *sushumnanadi*(a nerve embedded in the core of the spinal cord and runs from the base of the spine to the brain)rises, and where the *jiva*(individual soul)retires in sleep. The apparent contradiction is due to the perception of the body, which has to be related to the mind, or the intelligent principle which acts and perceives through it. The mind has thus to be shown in a dual aspect, the one as the pervader of the body, and thus hypothetically limited to its shape, and the other as limitless and free. More of this in the next item.

3. As stated by Sage Ramana - ‘Atma is the Heart itself. Its manifestation is in the brain. The passage from the Heart to the brain might be considered to be through the *sushumna*(a nerve embedded in the core of the spinal cord and runs from the base of the spine to the brain), or a nerve (*nadi* -energy channel) with some other name. The Upanishads(the last phase of the development of Vedicliterature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) speak of *pare leena*, meaning that the *sushumna*or such *nadis* (energychannels)are all comprised in *Para*, i.e., the *Atmanadi*(the channel of the Self). The Yogis say that the currentrising up to*sahasrara* (highestenergycentre located at the crown of the head)(brain) ends there. Thatexperience is not complete. For*jnana*(knowledge of Self)they must come to the Heart. *Hridaya* (Heart) is the Alpha and Omega.’

Reflection -From the Heart the body sprouts. The energy, life and consciousness - the only prime elements of the body and likewise of the universe - stream out of the Heart by the first channel, or *nadi*(energy channels), straight to the head, from which they run down to all parts of the body through various *nadis*. We need not give names to the *nadis*(energy channel)to avoid conflicts between the locations and names given by one authority and those given by another. Names and forms are the cause of the world illusion, so they are also in metaphysics. Sage Ramanasimply wishes to indicate these facts about the distribution of life and consciousness to the remotest points in the body through *nadis*(energychannel), beginning with the *Para nadi*, so that one may know the function of this *nadi*in the attainment of *jnana*(knowledge of Self). Because all the *nadis* (energychannelsfrom the body end in the *sahasrara*(highestenergycentre located at the crown of the head), the *Kundalini*(the primordial cosmic energy located in the individual)*yogi*(one who practises Yoga), the *Hatha*(Science ofyogawhich purifies the wholephysical body)*yogi*, and in fact all yogis who practise *pranayama*(control of Breath)take the *sahasrarato* be the terminal point of their *sadhana*(attending to Self); whereas the *Dhyana*(meditation; one-pointed state of mind)*yogi*(one who practises Yoga), also called *Raja*(royal path of meditation in which union is achieved through concentration ofmind)*yogi*(one who practises Yoga), *Vichara*(enquiry into the nature of the Self, Truth, Absolute)*yogi*(one who practises Yoga)and so on adds one more stagefor the complete and absolute Emancipation. This last stage runs through the *Para nadi*, also called *Amrita nadi*(the channel of the Self), because, being of the purest *sattva* (pure, unadulterated quality), it is extremely blissful and leadsstraight to the Heart.

‘Its manifestation in the brain’ needs some explanation. It is common experience that when people speak of the mind, they always imagine it to be the brain itself, and scientists, who are so sure of themselves, make matters worse when they declare the brain to be the thinker, which is of course wrong, because the brain is as insentient and as incapable of thinking as any other part of the body. If the whole is insentient, so are the parts. This error is due to the manifestation of the *jiva*’s (individual soul) activities through the cerebral tissue, which is as it were its telegraph office, which transmits to it all the signals received from the various sense organs and the nervous system. But the home of the *jiva* (individual soul) is the Heart, which is the cosmic storehouse of all the creative impulses. To this home the *jiva* (individual soul) returns with the senses when it retires from the body in sleep, in what is known as ‘death’ and, finally, for good in *mukti* (liberation).

4. As per Sage Ramana - ‘The Heart is not physical; it is spiritual *Hridaya*=*hrit* + *ayam*, which means ‘that is the Centre’. It is that from which thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved. Thoughts are the content of the mind and they shape the universe. The Heart is thus the centre of all. It is said by the Upanishads (the last phase of the development of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) to be Brahman. Brahman (the Absolute), is the Heart.’

Reflection - This text is the quintessence of the Vedas (the great scriptures of the Hindus). Thoughts rise from, subsist in, and dissolve into the Heart: ‘they shape the universe.’ This statement makes the substance of the universe to be nothing but thoughts, a mere mental vapour.

‘Thoughts are (the products as well as) the content of the mind’ is significant, inasmuch as it makes the mind not simply *manas* (mind), but the consciousness which produces, contains, and perceives the thoughts, synonymous with the Heart or Brahman (the Absolute). Sage Ramana often equates the pure mind with Brahman (the Absolute), which is as it should be. *Manas* (mind) may be rendered as intellect or as a bundle of thoughts and sensations, or perhaps the processes of thought. Sometimes mind is also used in the sense of *manas* (mind). At all events one will do well to remember this dual meaning of MIND and avoid confusion.

That ‘the Heart is the centre of All’ does not mean that it is not also the circumference. Sage Ramana makes it in this text the container of all thoughts, that is, of the universe centre, circumference, as well as all that comes in between them:

‘Verily as space is boundless, so is the ether within the Heart. Both heaven and earth, fire and air, the sun and the moon, also the lightning and the stars, and whatever is, as well as whatever is not in the universe - all are within this vacuity (Heart).’

(*Chandogya Upanishad*, IX, i. 3)

5. Sage Ramana says - ‘How to realise the Heart? There is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self. He is the Self. The Self is the Heart. When asked who you are, you place your hand on the right side of the chest and say ‘I am’, thereby you unknowingly point out the Self. The Self is thus known’

Reflection -Here we have a pointer to the locus of the Heart in the body, rather in the subtle ambience of the body. It is instinctive in us to use the right hand rather than the left in pointing to our own person. Why do we not for the purpose place the hand on the head, cheeks, or, say, the spinal cord for the matter of that, the legs or feet instead of the right chest alone? Unless there is an immediate relation between this part of the chest and the 'I', we would not straightaway and as a matter of course, drive direct to it when we wish to stress our identity. When we want to indicate the mind or the thinking agency we point to the head, but for the 'I' we point to the chest. Isn't that a clear admission of the superiority of the Heart over the brain? The Heart is the 'I', the totality of Being, whereas the brain is the seat of its thoughts only.

Pointing exclusively to the chest to indicate one's person has yet another weighty significance. It automatically excludes the other parts of the body from being the 'I', as witness the fact that we resent a reference to the nails, hair, the bodily secretions and excretions, etc., as being our 'I', in fact we instinctively know that even the ribs and flesh of the chest are not the 'I', notwithstanding our demonstrating them as such. We take the body as a whole for 'I', yet in detail we deny it. This anomalous behaviour of our mind in this respect is so glaringly obvious that nothing but wrong habits keep us blind to it. Anomalies multiply as we probe deeper into the relation of the body to the consciousness. That is why *vichara* enquiry is insisted on in this path to expose the ridiculous inconsistencies of our beliefs and attitudes, so that by correcting them we may attain to the truth of ourselves and of the world around us.

6. According to Sage Ramana - 'The Cosmic Mind, being not limited by the ego, has nothing separate from itself and is therefore only aware. This is what the Bible means by 'I am that I Am'.'

Reflection -The Cosmic Mind is equated in *Advaita* (the teachings about oneness, non-duality) and by Sage Ramana with Brahman (the Absolute), since it is "only aware". It will be readily observed that this Mind has nothing to do with the Cosmic Mind of the Western mystics, which has its own significance - whatever that may be - different from that of the Advaitic Brahman (the Absolute). Biblical Jehovah is written in Hebrew YHWH, which is derived from the verb HAYA (to be), and means EVER IS, 'I AM THAT I AM,' or BEING, exactly as *Advaita* (the teachings about oneness, non-duality) means by Brahman (the Absolute) or SAT.

7. As stated by Sage Ramana - 'The mind now sees itself diversified as the universe. If the diversity is not manifest, it remains in its own essence, that is, the Heart. The Heart is the only Reality. The mind is only a transient phase. To remain as one's Self is to enter the Heart. Entering the Heart means remaining without distractions.'

Reflection -The mind turns into the universe. When it perceives the universe, or diversity, the latter impresses itself on its pure surface, so that its attention is constantly centred on the diversity and not on itself. If the diversity is eliminated, the mind will perceive itself in its essence, its own naked purity. Then it is said to have entered the Heart- in fact it is itself the Heart. This is its undisturbed state, the reposeful state of *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self).

The covering of the mind by thoughts is evidently ‘a transient phase’, because the thoughts themselves are transient, very unstable, and can thus be wiped out by practice. The mind itself cannot be wiped out, because the wiper will be the mind itself. If the mind wipes out the mind, the residue will still be the mind. Thus the mind is indestructible.

8. As per Sage Ramana - ‘There is the peaceful mind which is the supreme. When the same becomes restless, it is afflicted by thoughts. Mind is only the dynamic power (*shakti*) of the Self. There is no difference between matter and spirit. Modern science admits that all matter is energy. Energy is power or force (*shakti*). Therefore all are resolved in Siva and Shakti, i.e., the Self and the Mind.’

Reflection -After explaining the identity of Self and Mind, this text ends by making them Siva and Shakti, which may impress the dualists with the wrong notion of their being separate principles, as Spirit and Matter respectively, which is far from Bhagavan’s intentions. In the beginning of the text the ‘peaceful mind’ has been identified as the Supreme, that is, the Self itself. So Self and peaceful mind are convertible terms. But when, for some reason, the mind becomes ‘restless’ or active, it manifests energy: the energy which is inherent in it turns into perceptions, thoughts, sensations, which are the phenomena, the universe. This is interpreted by the *Shaktas* (worshippers of the goddess, called Shakti or Devi, in India) as the creation of the ‘dynamic’ Shakti, as distinguished from Siva, the ‘static’ peaceful mind which is experienced in *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self). This is the whole truth about Spirit and Matter. They are one and the same consciousness. The knower (or mind) develops activity inside himself, the sensations of seeing, smelling, hearing, thinking, etc., and starts enjoying the show, as if it occurs outside him. Then he is bewildered about a world and its creator -God and His *Shakti* (power or dynamic force animating all of creation), and so on. This then is the nature of the energy which science proclaims to be the constituent of the ‘physical’ universe, the atoms. The Self is thus not only the *source* of all cosmic energy, but the Cosmic Energy *itself*. Siva is then Shakti itself.

Note - In the following D stands for the devotee and M stands for the Maharshi Sage Ramana

9. **D:** ‘Should I meditate on the right chest in order to meditate on the Heart?’
M: “The Heart is not physical. Meditation should not be on the right or the left. It should be on the Self. Everyone knows ‘I am’. It is neither within nor without, neither on the right nor the left: ‘I am’ - that is all.”

Reflection -The noteworthy point in this text, apart from what we have already discussed, is that meditation should not be made on the physical chest, whether right or left, for that is not the Heart at all. The ‘I’ is spaceless, completely free from the association of direction or laterality. It is simply ‘my being’ or ‘I am’, and nothing else. This sense of pure being should be our direction in meditation and if we are unable to catch it in the beginning we have to try again and again till we succeed. Being present all the time in us, the intuition for it grows rapidly, like a once-known-but-forgotten language. We will catch up with it after some initial hesitation, which is unavoidable. This is one of the best-cues the Master has given us on how to recognise once again our long-forgotten essence.

10. **D:** ‘How can the world be an imagination or a thought? Thought is a function of the mind. The mind is located in the brain. The brain is within the skull of a human being, who is an infinitesimal part of the universe. How then can the universe be contained in the cells of the brain?’

M: ‘So long as the mind is considered to be an entity of the kind described, the doubt will persist. But what is mind? Let us consider. What is the world? It is objects spread out in space (*akasha*). Who comprehends it? The mind. Is not the mind which comprehends space itself space (*akasha*)? Considering it to be ether of knowledge (*akasha* or *jnanatattva*), there will be no difficulty in reconciling the apparent contradiction. *Rajas* (activequality), and *tamas* (dullness) operate as gross objects, etc. Thus the whole universe is only mental.’

Reflection -The question comes from a teacher of philosophy who seems to be at sea - greatly confused even in the formulation of the question. On the one hand he identifies man with his body, as ‘an infinitesimal part of the universe’, that is, the mind with the brain; and on the other he ‘locates’ the mind in the brain, making the one different from the other. In that case, Bhagavan asserts, ‘the doubt will persist,’ the problem will remain insoluble. If the brain is the mind then there will be no end to ignorance and no end to arguments. How, for example, can the insentient brain think, create, understand, smell, taste, etc.? How can Shakespeare, Gandhi and Sage Ramana Maharshi be pieces of corruptible flesh? How do immaterial thoughts emanate from the material brain cells, and what is the relation between them? and so on. But if the mind is located in the brain, as the question puts it, then there is much hope for a solution. It will then conform to the yogic experience that the mind or the individual consciousness resides in the brain, as it has already been explained in Reflection 3 of this section. The individual is not the cerebral tissue, but the intelligent being, the consciousness which dwells in it and uses it as its instrument. Consciousness itself is pure *akasha* (ether), in which the world spreads as it appears to do in space, which itself is ether. Thus the world is nothing but consciousness or mind. That the objects appear soft or hard, hot or cold, small or big, yellow or green, sour or sweet is due to the senses which are functions of the same mind; and the world consists of nothing but what the senses give out of themselves. ‘Thus the whole universe is only mental.’ The variety of qualities which the senses inflict on our perceptions as objects are the *gunas* (the three basic qualities of nature that determine the inherent characteristics of all created things) of which Sage Ramana speaks. Thus in the manifested universe there exists nothing but qualities superimposed on the Consciousness.

More about the Heart

D: There are six centres mentioned in the Yoga books; but the *jiva* (individual soul) is said to reside in the Heart. Is it not so?

M: Yes. The *jiva* (individual soul) is said to remain in the Heart in deep sleep; and in the brain in the waking state. The Heart need not be taken to be the muscular cavity with four chambers which propels blood. There are indeed passages which support the view. There are others who take it to mean a set of ganglia or nerve centres about that region. Whichever view is correct does not matter to us. We are not concerned with anything less than ourselves. That we have certainly within us. There could be no doubts or discussions about that.

The Heart is used in the Vedas (the great scriptures of the Hindus) and the scriptures to denote the place whence the notion ‘I’ springs. Does it spring only from the fleshy ball? It springs within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The ‘I’ has no location. Everything is the Self. There is nothing but that. So the Heart must be said to be the entire body of ourselves and of the entire universe, conceived as ‘I’. But to help

the practiser (*abhyasi*) we have to indicate a definite part of the Universe, or of the Body. So this Heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But in truth we are everywhere, we are all that is, and there is nothing else.

D: Heaven and hell - what are they?

M: You carry heaven and hell with you. Your lust, anger, etc., produce these regions. They are like dreams.

D: The Gita says that if a man fixes his attention between the eyebrows and holds his breath he reaches the Supreme state. How is that done?

M: You are always in the Self and there is no reaching it. The eyebrow is only a place where attention is to be fixed (seat of meditation - *upasanasthana*).

D: You have spoken of the Heart as the seat of meditation?

M: Yes, it is also that.

D: What is Heart?

M: It is the centre of the Self. The Self is the centre of centres. The Heart represents the psychic centre and not the physical centre.

D: What is the Heart?

M: It is the seat (if such could be said of it) of the Self.

D: Is it the physical Heart?

M: No. It is the seat wherefrom 'I-I' arises.

Mr. T. K. S. Iyer, a devotee, was speaking of the *chakras* (subtle centers of energy in the body) Sage Ramanasa said: Atman (the Self) alone is to be realised. Its realisation holds all else in its compass.

D: How to realise the Heart?

M: There is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self. For no one admits that he ever stands apart from the Self. He is the Self. The Self is the Heart.

D: It is not clear.

M: In deep sleep you exist; awake, you remain. The same Self is in both states. The difference is only in the awareness and the non-awareness of the world. The world rises with the mind and sets with the mind. That which rises and sets is not the Self. The Self is different, giving rise to the mind, sustaining it and resolving it. So the Self is the underlying principle.

When asked who you are, you place your hand on the right side of the breast and say 'I am'. There you involuntarily point out the Self. The Self is thus known. But the individual is miserable because he confounds the mind and the body with the Self. This confusion is due to wrong knowledge. ***Elimination of wrong knowledge is alone needed. Such elimination results in Realisation.***

D: How to control the mind?

M: What is mind? Whose is the mind?

D: Mind always wanders. I cannot control it.

M: It is the nature of the mind to wander. You are not the mind. The mind springs up and sinks down. It is impermanent, transitory, whereas you are eternal. There is nothing but the Self. To inhere in the Self is the thing. Never mind the mind. If its source is sought, it will vanish leaving the Self unaffected.

D: So one need not seek to control the mind?

M: There is no mind to control if you realise the Self. The mind vanishing, the Self shines forth. In the realised man the mind may be active or inactive, the Self alone remains for him. For the mind, the body and the world are not separate from the Self. They rise from and sink into the Self. They do not remain apart from the Self. Can they be different from the Self? Only be aware of the Self. Why worry about these shadows? How do they affect the Self?

Sage Ramana further explained: The Self is the Heart. The Heart is self-luminous. Light arises from the Heart and reaches the brain, which is the seat of the mind. The world is seen with the mind, that is, by the reflected light of the Self. It is perceived with the aid of the mind. When the mind is illumined it is aware of the world. When it is not itself so illumined, it is not aware of the world. If the mind is turned in towards the source of light, objective knowledge ceases and Self alone shines forth as the Heart.

The moon shines by the reflected light of the sun. When the sun has set, the moon is useful for revealing objects. When the sun has risen, no one needs the moon, although the pale disc of the moon is visible in the sky.

So it is with the mind and the Heart. The mind is useful because of its reflected light. It is used for seeing objects. When it is turned inwards, the source of illumination shines forth by itself, and the mind remains dim and useless like the moon in daytime.

D: How to reach the Heart?

M: Where are you now that you want to reach the Heart? Are you standing apart from the Self?

D: I am in my body.

M: In a particular spot, or all over?

D: All over. I am extending all over the body.

M: Wherefrom do you extend?

D: I do not know.

M: Yes. You are always in the Heart. You are never away from it in order that you should reach it. Consider how you are in deep sleep and in the waking state. These states are also not yours. They are of the ego. The consciousness remains the same and undifferentiated all through.

A question about the Heart was raised.

Sage Ramana said that one should seek the Self and realise it. The Heart will play its part automatically. The seat of realisation is the Heart. It cannot be said to be either in or out.

D: Did Bhagavan feel the Heart as the point of Realisation in his first or early experience?

M: I began to use the word after seeing literature on the subject. I correlated it with my experience.

Mr. Cohen had been cogitating on the nature of the Heart, if the 'spiritual Heart' beats; if so, how; or if it does not beat, then how is it to be felt?

M: This Heart is different from the physical Heart; beating is the function of the latter. The former is the seat of spiritual experience. That is all that can be said of it. Just as a dynamo supplies motive power to whole systems of lights, fans, etc., so the original Primal Force supplies energy to the beating of the Heart, respiration, etc.

D: How is the mind to dive into the Heart?

M: The mind now sees itself diversified as the universe. If the diversity is not manifest it remains in its own essence, that is the Heart. Entering the Heart means remaining without distractions.

The Heart is the only Reality. The mind is only a transient phase. To remain as one's Self is to enter the Heart.

Because a man identifies himself with the body he sees the world separate from him. This wrong identification arises because he has lost his moorings and has swerved from his original state. He is now advised to give up all these false ideas, to trace back his source and remain as the Self. In that state, there are no differences. No questions will arise.

All the *sastras* (scriptures) are meant only to make the man retrace his steps to the original source. He need not gain anything new. He must only give up his false ideas and useless accretions. Instead of doing it he tries to catch hold of something strange and mysterious because he believes that his happiness lies elsewhere. That is the mistake.

If one remains as the Self there is bliss. Probably he thinks that being quiet does not bring about the state of bliss. That is due to his ignorance. The only practice is to find out 'to whom these questions arise.'

Dr. Syed: Sri Bhagavan says that the Heart is the Self. Psychology has it that malice, envy, jealousy and all passions have their seat in the Heart. How are these two statements to be reconciled?

M: The whole cosmos is contained in one pinhole in the Heart. These passions are part of the cosmos. They are *avidya* (ignorance).

D: *Kundalini* (the primordial cosmic energy located in the individual) is said to be of the shape of a serpent but *vrittis* (thought or activity of the mind) cannot be so.

M: The *Kundalini* of *jnanamarga* (the path of right knowledge) is said to be the Heart, which is also described in various ways as a network of, of the shape of a serpent, of a lotus bud, etc.

D: Is this Heart the same as the physiological Heart?

M: No, *Sri Ramana Gita* defines it as the origin of the 'I-thought'.

D: But I read that it is on the right of the chest.

M: It is all meant to help the *bhavana* (imagery). There are books dealing with six centres (*shadchakra*) and many other *lakshyas* (centres), internal and external. The description of the Heart is one among so many *lakshyas* (centres). But it is not necessary. It is only the source of the 'I-thought'. That is the ultimate truth.

D: May we take it to be the source of the *antahkaranas* (Internal instrument such as mind, intellect, ego and the subconscious mind).?

M: The inner organs (*antakaranas*) are classified as five: (1) Knowledge - *Jnana*; (2) Mind - *Manas*; (3) Intellect - *Buddhi*; (4) Memory - *Chitta*; and (5) The ego - *Ahankara*; some say only the latter four; others say only two, namely (1) *Manas*, mind and (2) *Ahankara*, the ego; still others say the *Antahkarana* is only one whose different functions make it appear differently and hence its different names. Heart is thus the source of the *Antahkaranas*.

There is the body which is insentient; there is the Self which is eternal and self-luminous; in between the two there has arisen a phenomenon, namely the ego, which goes under these different names, mind power (*sakti*), life current (*prana*), etc. Seek your source; the search takes you to the Heart automatically. The *antahkaranas* are only ideas (*kalpana*) to explain the subtle body (*sukshmasarira*). The physical body (*sarira*) is made up of the elements: earth, air, fire, water and ether; it is insentient. The Self is pure and self-luminous and thus self-evident. The relation between the two is sought to be established by positing a subtle body, composed of the subtle aspects of the five elements on the one hand, and the reflected light of the Self on the other. In this way the subtle body which is synonymous with the mind, is both sentient and insentient, *i.e.*, *abhasa*. Again, by the play of the pure quality (*satvaguna*) on the elements, their brightness (*satva* aspect) manifests as the mind (*manas*), and the senses (*jnanendriyas*); by the play of *rajas* (active quality), the *raja* (active) aspect manifests as life (*prana*) and limbs (*karmendriyas*); by the play of dullness (*tamas*) the *tama* (dark) aspect manifests as the gross phenomena of the body, etc.

Dandapani, a resident devotee now on a North Indian tour, sent an extract from the Modern Psychological Review which stated that the dynamic centre of the Heart is on the right and not on the left whereas the physical organ is on the left. Conversation followed on that subject.

M: The *yoga marga* (a path or way often used to indicate a particular spiritual path) speaks of the six centres each of which must be reached by practice and transcended until one reaches *sahasrara* (highest energy centre located at the crown of the head) where nectar is found and thus immortality. The yogis say that one enters into the *paranadi* (the channel of the Self) which starts from the sacral plexus whereas the *jnanis* (persons who have attained Self-knowledge) say that the same *nadi* (energy channel), starts from the Heart. Reconciliation between the seeming[y

contradictory statements is effected in the secret doctrine which distinctly states the *yogic paranadiis* from *muladhara*(one of the psycho-energetic centers of the subtle body at the base of the spine),and the *jnanaparanadiis* from the Heart. The truth is that the *paranadi*(the channel of the Self)should be entered. By yogic practice one goes down, then rises up, wanders all through until the goal is reached; by *jnana* (knowledge of Self). *abhyas*(constant and determined practice)one settles down directly in the centre.

With reference to the location of the Heart centre on the right side of the human body, Sage Ramana said -

I had been saying all along that the Heart centre was on the right, notwithstanding the refutation by some learned men that physiology taught them otherwise. I speak from experience. I knew it even in my home during my trances. Again during the incident related in the book *Self-Realisation* I had a very clear vision and experience. All of a sudden a light came from one side erasing the world vision in its course until it spread all round when the vision of the world was completely cut out. I felt the muscular organ on the left had stopped work, I could understand that the body was like a corpse, that the circulation of blood had stopped and the body became blue and motionless. Vasudeva Sastri embraced the body, wept over my death, but I could not speak. All the time I was feeling that the Heart centre on the right was working as well as ever. This state continued 15 or 20 minutes. Then suddenly something shot out from the right to the left resembling a rocket bursting in air. The blood circulation was resumed and normal condition restored. I then asked Vasudeva Sastri to move along with me and we reached our residence.

The author has also experienced on many occasions the vibrations of the spiritual Heart-centre on the right side of the chest. These experiences in particular were observed in meditation during the period from 1993 to 2000 when the author underwent the experience of rising of cosmic current (called Kundalini in ancient scriptural literature). Following are just two of the many experiences the author had in relation to the spiritual Heart-centre. On 27 January '97 between 6:07 - 7AM in morning meditation while in a deep state of *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self)the author constantly felt the vibration in the spiritual Heart and the following was transmitted to him – One is constantly exposed to an ever set of changing circumstances (set apart by space and time). The vibration which helps to move through these ever changing set of circumstances (and as an impartial observer upon Self-realisation) is the vibration coming from and directly connected to the Self in the Heart. This is the linking thread. When overwhelmed by an ever changing set of circumstances including thoughts, thinking, doing, activity, deeds, actions, happening, feelings, emotions and so on, one becomes the victim, when one overcomes these by strong will one is the victor, and when one attaches to the never changing impartial vibration originally flowing from the Self in the Heart not from the mind or any of its levels, then one becomes the impartial observer and one in reality is only attached and loves the real Self in the Heart, not anything else. In the end the spiritual aspirant becomes one with the Self, all happenings and principals thus dissolve in the Self. Thus everything else becomes secondary and of course is transitory in nature except the revelation and attachment with the Self becomes primary, which is the true never dying vibration. The principal and the source of the principal merge. On another occasion on 3 August '97 in morning meditation and in deep *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self)in the middle of the meditation period (about 6:30AM) the author experienced the vibration in the Heart-centre. Total silence engulfed the entire body during these moments. The stillness was very serene and is beyond description. In a sudden flash of thought it was revealed – the Overself our spirit that which resides in the lotus of the heart as the *Upanishads*(the last phase

of the development of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) say— this Centre or Heart-centre it is here where all the other regions or levels subside within us i.e., Astral, Mental, Causal, Buddhic, and Atmic, the Etheric and the physical body are projected in the aura and the physical body and the other regions manifest partially extended as emotions feelings reactions which is the Astral part, thoughts the Mental part... and so on up to the highest level of the higher nature -Atmic part. One can formulate no feelings about this particular experience or view until one undergoes such an experience. This is the seat from where thoughts flow and emotions are countered. Hence the location of the spiritual Heart-centre with reference to the physical body can be verified by personal experience.

The Upanishads (the last phase of the development of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) say that 101 *nadis* (energy channels) terminate in the Heart and 72,000 originate from them and traverse the body. The Heart is thus the centre of the body. It can be a centre because we have been accustomed to think that we remain in the body. In fact the body and all else are in that centre only.

D: How can the all-immanent God reside in the Heart?

M: Do we not reside in one place? Do you not say you are in your body? Similarly, God is said to reside in the Heart. The Heart is not one place. Some name is mentioned for the place of God because we think we are in the body. This kind of instruction is meant for those who can appreciate only relative knowledge. Being immanent everywhere, there is no place for God. Because we think we are in the body, we also believe that we are born. However, we do not think of the body, of God, or of a method of realization in our deep sleep. Yet in our waking state, we hold onto the body and think we are in it. *Paramatman* (the highest Self, the Absolute Self) is that from which the body is born, in which it lives and unto which it resolves. We, however, think that we reside within the body, hence such instruction is given. The instruction means, 'Look within.' The Heart is not physical. Meditation should not be on the right or the left. Meditation should be on the Self. Everyone knows 'I am'. Who is the 'I'? It will be neither within nor without, neither on the right nor the left. 'I am,' that is all. The Heart is the centre from which everything springs. Because you now see the world, the body etc., it is said that there is a centre for them called the Heart. But when actually in it, the Heart is neither in the centre nor at the circumference as then there is nothing else.

Heart and the Reality - Ramana Gita

Following are some verses from Sri. Ramana Gita as given by Sage Ramana, which take one not only to the very core of understanding about the Heart but if put in practice lead to consciously knowing the Heart and not returning to the outlook of the 'I'- Thought.

1. That from which all thoughts of embodied beings issue forth is called the Heart. All description of it are only mental concepts.
2. The 'I'- Thought is said to be the root of all thoughts. In brief, that from which the 'I'- thought springs forth is the Heart.

3. This Heart is different from the blood-circulating organ. 'Hridayam' stands for hrit 'the centre which sucks in everything', and ayam 'this' and it thus stands for the Self.
4. The location of this Heart is on the right side of the chest, not at all on the left. The light (of awareness) flows from the Heart through sushumna to sahasrara.
5. From there, it flows to the entire body, and then all experiences, of the world arise. Viewing them as different from the Light, one gets caught up in samsara.
6. The sahasrara of one who abides in the Self is nothing but pure Light. Any thought that approaches it cannot survive.
7. Even when an object, owing to its nearness, is sensed by the mind, it is no hindrance to yoga, as the mind perceives no differences.
8. The state in which awareness is firm and on-pointed, even when objects are sensed, is called sahajasthiti. The state in which objects are absent is called nirvikalpa Samadhi.
9. The whole universe is in the body and the whole body is in the Heart. Hence all the universe is contained in the Heart.
10. The universe is nothing but the mind, and the mind is nothing but the Heart. Thus the entire story of the universe culminates in the Heart.
11. The Heart is to the body what the sun is to the World. The mind in sahasrara is like the orb of the moon in the world.
12. As the sun gives light to the moon, even so this Heart gives light to the mind.
13. A mortal absent from the Heart perceives only the mind, just as the light of the moon is perceived at night in the absence of the sun.
14. Not perceiving that the true source of light is one's own Self, and mentally perceiving objects as apart from oneself, the ignorant one is deluded.
15. The jnani present in the Heart sees the light of the mind merged in the light of the Heart, like moonlight in daylight.
16. The wise know that the superficial meaning of prajna is mind and its true meaning is the Heart. The Supreme is nothing but the Heart.

17. The notion that the seer is different from the seen is only in the mind. For those that abide in the Heart the seer and the seen are one.
18. The thought process, arrested during swoon, sleep, excessive joy or sorrow, fear and so on, goes back to its source, the Heart.
19. The ignorant one does not know that at such times thought has entered the Heart, but one in *samadhi*(the state of absorption in the Self) knows it. Hence arises the difference in names.

Conclusion

Coming to the conclusion of this chapter in one's journey to becoming consciously aware of the Reality one comes across the knowledge that everything in the space time creation is none other than being a unique characteristic of the Absolute and these unique characteristics are discerned and known by pure Awareness. When one comes to the understanding that the 'I'-Thought is one of the most unique characteristics that manifests in the time space creation then the focus shifts to the 'I'- Thought itself rather than being involved in what the 'I'-Thought itself does with the objects it is associated with using thoughts and emotions.. It is also realised at this point that the 'I'- Thought is the prime thought.

Now once the focus shifts to the 'I'- Thought itself then one directly is able to reflect upon and understand that the 'I'- Thought itself rises from is sustained by and is dissolved in the Heart. Thus a conscious direct connection of understanding and realisation is made with the Heart. When this effort is sustained then it finally leads to becoming consciously aware of the Heart or pure Consciousness and one's outlook shifts to that of the Heart instead of the 'I'-Thought.