

MEDITATION AND SELF-ENQUIRY

In dealing with the teachings of Sage Ramana Maharshi, one occasionally comes across pieces of advice which seem to contradict each other. To recognise the real meaning of such apparent inconsistencies one has to keep in mind one main principle of the sage; he never discouraged the visitor in his own spiritual endeavour, whatever the outer form may be. As he knew that the sincere seeker after Truth is always guided from within, and that his inclinations to particular practices not only indicate the degree of his spiritual maturity, but at the same time, in most cases, are also the means best suited for the person concerned. He never advised a questioner to drop whatever practice he had followed up to that point; he only showed, if necessary, how to make it more effective.

When he stressed again and again the superiority of investigation or Self-enquiry compared with all other methods, he was not motivated by a kind of bigotry, but did it because there is a very important reason behind it which is rocklike and insurmountable; all other methods of spiritual practice have to keep the personal 'I' to be practised, Self-enquiry which is the investigation into this 'I', is the best possible method to remove it.

According to Sage Ramana Self-enquiry is the only direct method; others are meant for those who cannot take to the investigation of the Self. This path is the highest of all and is suited only for advanced aspirants. Those who follow other paths will not be ripe for this until they are advanced on their own paths. Thus it is really by grace, whether *guru* (spiritual guide) or Self-awareness, that they are brought to this highest path. Of course, they may have practised the other paths in previous existences and thus may have been born ripe for this one; others try different methods and after progressing finally turn to Self-enquiry. But the last stages of all paths are the same; which pertains to surrender of the personal 'I'.

Meditation means many things to many individuals and ranges from quiet brooding on a concept or an ideal to the beatitude of the highest spiritual contemplation. But in the method of spiritual practice propounded by Sage Ramana it strictly means, whatever the method, the attempt is to still the thinking faculty, the perpetually-surgings waves of the mind, in order that the calm ocean of pure awareness, from which they rise and on which they move, may be experienced.

To beginners this mind control appears to be a formidable feat, yet Sage Ramana encourages them to go ahead and practise, at all possible opportunities available in order to make a beginning. He constantly dings into us the inspiring notion that we are already Self-realised and that, if we are not aware of it, the obstruction to that awareness should be removed by investigation or Self-enquiry which is as logical as it is simple.

To hear it direct from him this 'Self-knowledge', rather the way to Self-knowledge, is 'the easiest thing there is'; but, judging from the questions constantly asked of him, and later of his disciples, there appears to be the need for much spade work before its central idea takes a firm hold on the seeker. Sage Ramana's obvious meaning seems to be that, even apart from the psychological effectiveness of the method of Self-enquiry, preoccupying the mind with a single theme to the exclusion of all others, if doggedly practised, will not fail to produce beneficial results. It will tend to reduce the oscillations of the thinking processes, and thus render the mind amenable to concentration on the supremely important work which is to follow, which by itself is a splendid achievement. Finding the answer to the query 'Who am I?' is not the immediate burden of the practice in the beginning. Stability and fixity of the restless, mercurial mind is the first aim, and this can be achieved by constant practice and by frequently pulling oneself back to the subject of the meditation whenever the mind strays away.

When the mind has attained an appreciable degree of concentration it will be time to think of the answer. Some spiritual aspirants are fortunate enough to begin with a mind already accustomed to concentration, either naturally, or by training, or through intense fervour, so that they are able to go straight to the application of the Self-enquiry, and thus make a more or less rapid progress, according to the intensity of their determination, without much strain. For Sage Ramana tells us that mental calmness, that is, controlled mind, is essential for a successful meditation.

The next idea in the Self-enquiry seems to be that wherever, and for however long, one may search for the answer in meditation, one will certainly not find it in the physical body; for no part of it is intelligent enough to stand the test of analysis or answer the call. Even if the meditator takes his body as a whole and confers on it his name, say, Krishna or Peter, sooner or later he will discover that it is only his mind which is responsible for this as well as all other thoughts and sensations. Thus diligent search and keen observation eventually lead to the mind as the perceiver, desirer and enjoyer of a world which is entirely its own thoughts; for the mind cognises naught but its own ideas.

The final idea, one gathers, refers to the most vital stage of the Self-enquiry, when the foregoing fact has become a settled conviction and the seeker unabatingly continues his inquiry, this time no longer into the insentient body, but into the very nature of the mind, from which he has discovered the 'I' thought to have arisen. Meditation has by then taken a firm grip and has turned from an erstwhile painful and apparently fruitless effort to a joyful, eagerly and a looked forward to performance, which can no longer be abandoned or even slackened. The thinking processes have by now considerably slowed down and with it, naturally, the restlessness of the mind. Profound peace and inner joy impel more frequent and longer meditation, which in turn reduces thinking still further, till the moment of full maturity is reached, when all of a sudden all thoughts completely cease, and the meditator, the 'I', having nothing to disturb or preoccupy him, spontaneously finds himself in his pure Being, which is the Absolute State or Substratum.

And what is that Self in actual experience? Sage Ramana tells us that it is the Light which ever shines in the Cave of the Heart as the flame of the Consciousness 'I' 'I' – the eternal and blissful *Sat-chit-ananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss). This is the answer to a Self-enquiry and its fulfilment. The 'I', which has carried out a determined and protracted search into its own nature, has at long last found itself to be not other than the Pure Mind, the immaculate Being, which is eternally wrapped in blissful stillness. This is *Turiya* (the fourth state beyond awake, dream and sleep) or *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self). There remains nothing more for one to achieve but to consolidate this state into the permanent experience of *Sahaja Nirvikalpa* (natural state of absorption in the Self with no concepts), which is the Great Liberation.

Spiritual aspirants are urged to take courage from the personal assurance of Sage Ramana and the testimony of those who have found the ultimate peace, and to relentlessly continue their efforts however sterile they may appear to be at the start, and have strong faith in the belief of the descent of divine grace in their endeavour to crown themselves with the greatest of all crowns, that of supreme enlightenment.

Sage Ramana had delved deep on these topics to respond to the queries of spiritual aspirants. In the following pages some conversations with the sage in relation to spiritual practice, meditation and Self-enquiry as recorded by Sri S S Cohen and in other resources are reproduced.

Disciple: *What is the difference between meditation (dhyana) and investigation (vichara)?*

Maharshi: Both amount to the same. Those unfit for investigation must practise meditation. In meditation the aspirant forgetting himself meditates 'I am Brahman'

or 'I am Siva' and by this method holds on to Brahman (the Absolute) or Siva. This will ultimately end with the residual awareness of Brahman (the Absolute) or Siva as being. He will then realize that this is pure being, that is, the Self. He who engages in investigation starts by holding on to himself, and by asking himself 'Who am I?' the Self becomes clear to him. Mentally imagining oneself to be the supreme reality, which shines as existence-consciousness-bliss, is meditation. Fixing the mind in the Self so that the unreal seed of delusion will die is enquiry. Whoever meditates upon the Self in whatever bhava (mental image) attains it only in that image. Those peaceful ones who remain quiet without any such bhava attain the noble and unqualified state of kaivalya, the formless state of the Self.

D: Meditation is more direct than investigation because the former holds on to the truth whereas the latter sifts the truth from the untruth.

M: For the beginner meditation on a form is more easy and agreeable. Practice of it leads to self-enquiry which consists in sifting the reality from unreality. What is the use of holding on to truth when you are filled with antagonistic factors? Self-enquiry directly leads to realization by removing the obstacles which make you think that the Self is not already realized. Meditation differs according to the degree of advancement of the seeker. If one is fit for it one might directly hold on to the thinker, on to *Brahman* (the Absolute) or Siva. This will ultimately end with the residual awareness of *Brahman* (the Absolute) or Siva as being. He will then realize that this is pure being, that is, the Self. He who engages in investigation starts by holding on to himself, and by asking himself 'Who am I?' the Self becomes clear to him. Mentally imagining oneself to be the supreme reality, which shines as existence-consciousness-bliss, is meditation. Fixing the mind in the Self so that the unreal seed of delusion will die is enquiry. Whoever meditates upon the Self in whatever *bhava* (mental image) attains it only in that image. Those peaceful ones who remain quiet without any such *bhava* (mental image) attain the noble and unqualified state of *kaivalya* (the state of oneness), the formless state of the Self.

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- D:** *There is no way found to go inward by means of meditation.*
- M:** Where else are we now? Our very being is that.
- D:** *Being so, we are ignorant of it.*
- M:** Ignorant of what, and whose is the ignorance? If ignorant of the Self are there two selves?
- D:** *There are not two selves. The feeling of limitation cannot be denied. Due to limitations....*
- M:** Limitation is only in the mind. Did you feel it in deep sleep? You exist in sleep. You do not deny your existence then. The same Self is here and now in the wakeful state. You are now saying that there are limitations. What has now happened is that there are these differences between the two states. The differences are due to the mind. There was no mind in sleep whereas it is now active. The Self exists in the absence of the mind also.
- D:** *Although it is understood, it is not realized.*
- M:** It will be by and by, with meditation.
- D:** *Meditation is with mind. How can it kill the mind in order to reveal the Self?*
- M:** Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away other thoughts. Distraction of mind is a sign of its weakness. By constant meditation it gains strength, that is to say, the weakness of fugitive thought gives place to the enduring background free from thought. This expanse devoid of thought is the Self. Mind in purity is the Self.
- D:** *What is dhyana (meditation)?*
- M:** It is abiding as one's Self without swerving in any way from one's real nature and without feeling that one is meditating.
- D:** *What is the difference between dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (the state of absorption in the Self)?*
- M:** *Dhyana (meditation) is achieved through deliberate mental effort. In samadhi (the state of absorption in the Self) there is no such effort.*
- D:** *What are the factors to be kept in view in dhyana?*
- M:** It is important for one who is established in his Self (*atmanishtha*) to see that he does not swerve in the least from this absorption. By swerving from his true nature he may see before him bright effulgences, or hear unusual sounds, or regard as real the visions of gods appearing within or outside himself. He should not be deceived by these and forget himself.

- D:** *How is meditation to be practised?*
- M:** Meditation is, truly speaking, *atmanishtha* (to be fixed as the Self). But when thoughts cross the mind and an effort is made to eliminate them the effort is usually termed meditation. *Atmanishtba* (to abide in the Self) is your real nature. Remain as you are. That is the aim.
- D:** *But thoughts come up. Is our effort meant to eliminate thoughts only?*
- M:** Yes. Meditation being on a single thought, the other thoughts is kept away. Meditation is only negative in effect in as much as thoughts are kept away.
- D:** *If a form is given I can meditate on it and other thoughts are eliminated. But the Self is formless.*
- M:** Meditation on forms or concrete objects is said to be *dhyana* (meditation), whereas the enquiry into the Self is *vichara* (Self-enquiry) or *nididhyasana* (uninterrupted awareness of being).
- D:** *There is more pleasure in dhyana (meditation) than in sensual enjoyments. Yet the mind runs after the latter and does not seek the former. Why is it so?*
- M:** Pleasure or pain are aspects of the mind only. Our essential nature is happiness. But we have forgotten the Self and imagine that the body or the mind is the Self. It is that wrong identity that gives rise to misery. What is to be done? This mental tendency is very ancient and has continued for innumerable past births. Hence it has grown strong. That must go before the essential nature, happiness, asserts itself.
- D:** *How is dhyana (meditation) practised - with eyes open or closed?*
- M:** It may be done either way. The point is that the mind must be introverted and kept active in its pursuit. Sometimes it happens that when the eyes are closed the latent thoughts rush forth with great vigour. It may also be difficult to introvert the mind with the eyes open. It requires strength of mind to do so. The mind is contaminated when it takes in objects. Otherwise, it is pure. The main factor in *dhyana* (meditation) is to keep the mind active in its own pursuit without taking in external impressions or thinking of other matters.
- D:** *Bhagavan, whenever I meditate, I feel great heat in the head and, if I persist, my whole body burns. What is the remedy?*
- M:** If concentration is made with the brain, sensations of heat and even headache ensue. Concentration has to be made in the Heart, which is cool and refreshing. Relax and your meditation will be easy. Keep your mind steady by gently warding off all intruding thoughts but without strain. Soon you will succeed.
- D:** *How do I prevent myself falling asleep in meditation?*
- M:** If you try to prevent sleep it will mean thinking in meditation, which must be avoided. But if you slip into sleep while meditating, the meditation will continue even during and after sleep. Yet, being a thought, sleep must be got rid of, for the

final natural state has to be obtained consciously in *jagrat* (the waking state) without the disturbing thought. Waking and sleeping are mere pictures on the screen of the native, thought-free state. Let them pass unnoticed.

D: *What is to be meditated upon?*

M: Anything that you prefer.

D: *How do I meditate?*

M: Concentrate on that one whom you like best. If a single thought prevails, all other thoughts are put off and finally eradicated. So long as diversity prevails there are bad thoughts. When the object of love prevails only good thoughts hold the field. Therefore hold on to one thought only. *Dhyana* (meditation) is the chief practice. *Dhyana* means fight. As soon as you begin meditation other thoughts will crowd together, gather force and try to sink the single thought to which you try to hold. The good thought must gradually gain strength by repeated practice. After it has grown strong the other thoughts will be put to flight. This is the battle royal always taking place in meditation. One wants to rid oneself of misery. It requires peace of mind, which means absence of perturbation owing to all kinds of thoughts. Peace of mind is brought about by *dhyana* (meditation) alone.

D: *Is the practice of concentration between the eyebrows advisable?*

M: The final result of the practice of any kind of *dhyana* (meditation) is that the object on which the seeker fixes his mind ceases to exist as distinct and separate from the subject. They, the subject and object, become the one Self, and that is the Heart.

D: *Why does not Sri Bhagavan direct us to practise concentration on some particular centre or chakra (subtle centers of energy in the body)?*

M: *Yoga Sastra* (Yoga scriptures) says that the *sahasrara* (the *chakra* located in the brain) or the brain is the seat of the Self. *Purusha Sukta* (a part of Rig Veda which is the oldest Hindu scripture) declares that the Heart is its seat. To enable the *sadhaka* to steer clear of possible doubt, I tell him to take up the thread or the clue of 'I'-ness or 'I am' ness and follow it up to its source. Because, firstly, it is impossible for anybody to entertain any doubt about this 'I' notion. Secondly, whatever be the means adopted, the final goal is the realization of the source of 'I am'-ness which is the primary datum of your experience. If you therefore practise Self-enquiry, you will reach the Heart which is the Self.

D: *I practise hatha yoga (the yoga of postures) and I also meditate 'I am Brahman (the Absolute)'. After a few moments of this meditation, a blank prevails, the brain gets heated and a fear of death arises. What should I do?*

M: 'I am Brahman (the Absolute)' is only a thought. Who says it? Brahman (the Absolute) itself does not say so. What need is there for it to say it? Nor can the real 'I' say so. For 'I' always abides as Brahman (the Absolute). To be saying it is only a thought. Whose thought is it? All thoughts are from the unreal 'I', that is the 'I'-thought. Remain without thinking. So long as there is thought there will be fear.

- D:** *As I go on thinking of it there is forgetfulness, the brain becomes heated and I am afraid.*
- M:** Yes, the mind is concentrated in the brain and hence you get a hot sensation there. It is because of the 'I'-thought. When the 'I'- thought arises fear of death arises simultaneously. With regard to forgetfulness, so long as there is thought there will be forgetfulness. First there is the thought 'I am *Brahman* (the Absolute)', then forgetfulness supervenes. Forgetfulness and thought are for the 'I' thought only. Hold on to it and it will disappear like a phantom. What remains over is the real 'I' and that is the Self. 'I am *Brahman* (the Absolute)' is an aid to concentration since it keeps off other thoughts. When that one thought alone persists, see whose thought it is. It will be found to be from 'I'. From where is the 'I'- thought? Probe into it, the 'I'- thought will vanish, and the supreme Self will shine forth of itself. No further effort is needed. When the one real 'I' remains alone, it will not be saying 'I am *Brahman* (the Absolute)'. Does a man go on repeating 'I am a man'? Unless he is challenged, why should he declare himself a man? Does anyone mistake himself for an animal that he should say, 'No, I am not an animal, I am a man'? Similarly, *Brahman* (the Absolute) or 'I' being the only existing reality, there is no one there to challenge it and so there is no need to be repeating 'I am *Brahman* (the Absolute)'.
- D:** *Why should one adopt this self-hypnotism by thinking on the unthinkable point? Why not adopt other methods like gazing into light, holding the breath, hearing music, hearing internal sounds, repetition of the sacred syllable om or other mantras (sacred syllables repeated in meditation)?*
- M:** Light-gazing stupefies the mind and produces catalepsy of the will for the time being, but it secures no permanent benefit. Breath control temporarily benumbs the will but it is not permanent. It is the same with listening to sounds, unless the *mantra* (sacred syllables repeated in meditation) is sacred and secures the help of a higher power to purify and raise the thoughts.
- D:** *We are advised to concentrate on the spot in the forehead between the eyebrows. Is this right?*
- M:** Everyone is aware - 'I am'. Leaving aside that awareness one goes about in search of God. What is the use of fixing one's attention between the eyebrows? It is mere folly to say that God is between the eyebrows. The aim of such advice is to help the mind to concentrate. It is one of the forcible methods to check the mind and prevent its dissipation. It is forcibly directed into one channel. It is a help to concentration. But the best means of realization is the enquiry 'Who am I?' The present trouble is to the mind and it must be removed by the mind only.
- D:** *I do not always concentrate on the same centre in the body. Sometimes I find it easier to concentrate on one centre and sometimes on another. And sometimes when I concentrate on one centre the thought of its own accord goes and fixes itself in another. Why is that?*
- M:** It may be because of past practices of yours. But in any case it is immaterial on which centre you concentrate since the real Heart is in every centre and even outside the body. On whatever part of the body you may concentrate or on whatever external object, the Heart is there.

D: *Can one concentrate at one time on one centre and at another time on another or should one concentrate always consistently on the same centre?*

M: As I have just said, there can be no harm wherever you concentrate, because concentration is only a means of giving up thoughts. Whatever the centre or object on which one concentrates, he who concentrates is always the same.

D: *Some say that one should practise meditation on gross objects only. It may be disastrous if one constantly seeks to kill the mind.*

M: For whom is it disastrous? Can there be disaster apart from the Self? Unbroken 'I, I' is the infinite ocean. The ego, the 'I'-thought, remains only a bubble on it and is called *jiva* or individual soul. The bubble too is water for when it bursts it only mixes in the ocean. When it remains a bubble it is still a part of the ocean. Ignorant of this simple truth, innumerable methods under different denominations, such as yoga, *bhakti* (devotion), karma, each again with many modifications, are being taught with great skill and in intricate detail only to entice the seekers and confuse their minds. So also are the religions and sects and dogmas. What are they all for? Only for knowing the Self. They are aids and practices required for knowing the Self. Objects perceived by the senses are spoken of as immediate knowledge. Can anything be as direct as the Self - always experienced without the aid of the senses? Sense-perceptions can only be indirect knowledge, and not direct knowledge. Only one's own awareness is direct knowledge, and that is the common experience of one and all. No aids are needed to know one's own Self.

18th June, 1936

1. **A retired District Superintendent of Police started thinking of the life contemplative after his 60th birthday. He found meditation a serious affair and approached a disciple for guidance; but the latter advised him to place his difficulties before the Master, which he did today.**

Visitor: *Bhagavan, whenever I meditate, I feel great heat in the head and, if I persist, my whole body burns. What is the remedy?*

Maharshi: If concentration is made with the brain, sensations of heat and even headache ensue. Concentration has to be made in the heart, which is cool and refreshing. Relax and your meditation will be easy. Keep your mind steady by gently warding off all intruding thoughts, but without strain – soon you will succeed.

1st July, 1936

2. **A visitor, long before he got attached to this Ashram, used off and on to fall into a sort of trance in which he saw not the Self but a sky-like blank, and told Sage Ramana about it.**

M: He who sees the blank is the Self.

V: *Meditation is possible only with control of mind, which can be achieved only through meditation. Is this not a vicious circle?*

M: They are interdependent: in fact meditation includes mind control, the subtle watchfulness against intruding thoughts. In the beginning efforts for control are greater than for actual meditation, but in due course, meditation wins and becomes effortless.

V: *Your Grace is needed for it.*

M: Practice is necessary, there is Grace.

V: *In meditation are there words to be repeated mentally?*

M: What is meditation but mental repetitions of a concept? It is a mental *japam* (repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally), which begins with words and ends in the silence of the Self.

A visitor is experiencing great difficulty in meditation when he fights with what he imagines to be his ego. He went to the Sage Ramana for verification.

V: *In my meditation I try to eliminate the wrong 'I', but so far without success.*

M: How can 'I' eliminate itself? All you have to do is to find its source and abide in it as your real Self. Your efforts can extend thus far, the Beyond will take care of itself.

V: *Bhagavan, you always say that the Self is ever present: if I am present then why do I not feel it?*

M: Do you not now feel that you exist? Your doubt is whether you will ever continue to exist. Why should you have any doubt? A little thinking will convince you that the destructible part of your being, the body, is a mere machine, a tool in the service of the indestructible, the mind, which is the all-in-all, the knower and the master – you yourself. Your doubts and difficulties arise from your thoughts, which perceive the body and mistake it for yourself. Stop the thoughts, which are your enemy (the ego or the 'I'-thought), and the mind will remain as your pure being, the immortal 'I'. That is the best way of eliminating the ego.

2nd January, 1937

3. Visitor: *I am taught that Mantra Japam (repetition of a sacred syllables either mentally or orally) is very potent in practice.*

M: The Self is the greatest of all *mantras* (sacred syllables repeated in meditation) and goes on automatically and eternally. If you are not aware of this internal *mantra*, you should take to do it consciously as *japam* (repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally), which is attended with effort, to ward off all other thoughts. By constant attention to it, you will eventually become

aware of the internal *mantra* (sacred syllable repeated in meditation), which is the state of Realisation and is effortless. Firmness in this awareness will keep you continually and effortlessly in the current, however much you may be engaged on other activities. Listening to *Veda* (the great scriptures of the Hindus) chanting and *mantras* (sacred syllables repeated in meditation) has the same result as conscious repetitions of *japam* – its rhythm is the *japam* (repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally).

5th July, 1936

4. Visitor: *How to prevent falling asleep in meditation?*

M: If you try to prevent sleep it will mean thinking in meditation, which must be avoided. But if you slip into sleep while meditating, the meditation will continue even during and after sleep. Yet, being a thought, sleep must be got rid of, for the native state has to be obtained consciously in *jagrat* (the waking state) without the disturbing thoughts. Waking and sleeping are mere pictures on the screen of the native, thought-free state. Let them pass unnoticed.

27th July, 1942

5. A Chief Engineer of Railways from North India stayed in the Ashram for over a month to have a first hand guidance in meditation.

Eng: *I am a beginner in meditation. I pray Bhagavan to guide me. You exhort us to go on enquiring 'Who am I?' May I know where it will lead me?*

M: It is not mere asking; you must go into the meaning of it. Many meditate on certain centres in the body till they merge in them, but sooner or later they will have to enquire into their own nature, which is unavoidable. Then why not straightaway concentrate on yourself till you merge in its source?

E: *Yes, for twenty years I have been concentrating on certain chakras (subtle centers of energy in the body) and have been seeing things and hearing sounds, but I got nowhere nearer the Truth. Now shall I go on asking 'Who am I' as soon as a thought arises in my mind?*

M: Quite so. So long as you are not disturbed by outside thoughts dwell on its meaning. The aim is to reach the root of the 'I'-sense, through constant suppression of the mental processes...

10th November, 1936

6. V: *As far as I can see it, it is impossible to realise the Self until one has completely succeeded in preventing the rushing thoughts. Am I right?*

M: Not exactly. You do not need to prevent other thoughts. In deep sleep you are entirely free from thoughts, because the 'I'-thought is absent. The moment the 'I'-thought rises on waking, all other thoughts rush out spontaneously. The wisest thing for one to do is therefore to catch hold of this leading thought, the 'I'-thought, and dissect it – who and what it is – giving thereby no chance to other thoughts to distract one. There lies the true value of the *vichara* (Self-enquiry) and its efficacy in mind control.

19th February, 1937

7. A visitor asked:

V: *What meditation (dhyana) is the best?*

M: The best meditation is that which continues in all the three states. It must be so intense as not to give room even to the thought 'I am meditating'. As waking and dream states will thus be fully occupied by it, deep sleep may also be deemed to be an undifferentiated *dhyana* (meditation)....

12th February, 1936

8. In the evening Mr. C. asked Sage Ramana:

C: *Bhagavan speaks of samadhi (the state of absorption in the Self), trance. I take it to mean total loss of body consciousness. I am afraid I shall never be able to attain it. I find it hard to send myself to sleep even. Is it necessary before Self-realisation?*

M: (laughing) You have to take chloroform in that case. *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) is itself the state of the Self. What do you understand by total loss of body consciousness? You do not imagine it to be falling into a sort of catalepsy or deep sleep. In *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) the mind is in *jagrat*, but, being free from thoughts, it enjoys the bliss of *sushupti* (deep sleep), in which the mind is withdrawn. In *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) the mind is so alert that it experiences *Brahman* (the Absolute). If it were not so fully awake, how would it know *Brahman* (the Absolute)? In fact it itself becomes *Brahman* (the Absolute). Does trance convey that idea? If not, it is a wrong word for *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self).

C: *Do Karma yogis (persons who are selflessly devoted to work) and Bhaktas (devotees) also pass through samadhi (the state of absorption in the Self)*

M: *Samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) is merging in the Heart through concentration and mind control. *Karma* and *bhakti* (devotion) yogis also attain *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) if they practise. In fact most of them attain *mukti* (liberation) eventually by the *vichara* (Self-enquiry) method.

15th July, 1936

9. *Mr. C. reads the "Forty Verses" of Sage Ramana to himself in the Hall. Verse 30 fascinates him. He reads it aloud and says: 'From this verse I understand that the quest must start with the mind and not the Heart, but Bhagavan always speaks of the Heart, perhaps as the last stage in the practice.'*

M: Quite so: it has to begin with the mind turned inward to oppose the rushing thoughts and to understand the location of the 'I'. When the mind eventually sinks in the Heart, undisturbed bliss is overwhelmingly felt. There is then feeling which is not divorced from pure awareness, i.e., head and heart become one and the same.

C: *In verse 266 of Vivekachudamani (Spiritual text, 'Crest Jewel of Spiritual Wisdom' by Sankaracharya) Sri Shankaracharya says that Brahman (the Absolute) can be realised by Buddhi, the subtle intellect, which means that the intellect can be of great help; in fact indispensable for Realisation.*

M: The word '*buddhi*' is rightly translated as the subtle intellect, but here it means the cave of the Heart. Nevertheless the subtle intellect can also realise *Brahman* (the Absolute) and is therefore of utmost importance. (Reads aloud verse 266:) "In the cave of the *Buddhi* (subtle intellect) there is the *Brahman* (the Absolute), distinct from gross and subtle, the Existence Absolute, Supreme, the One without a second. For one who lives in this cave as *Brahman* (the Absolute), O Beloved, there is no more entrance into a woman's womb."

30th July, 1936

10. *Mr. C. Vivekachudamani (Spiritual text, 'Crest Jewel of Spiritual Wisdom' by Sankaracharya) speaks of the 'I'-'I' Consciousness as eternally shining in the Heart, but no one is aware of it.*

M: Yes, all men without exception have it, in whatever state they may be – the waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep, – and whether they are conscious of it or not.

C: *In the Talks section of Sat-Darshana-Bhashya (Vasishta Ganapati Muni's inspired Sanskrit translation of Sage Ramana Maharshi's Ulladu Narpadu or Forty Verses on Reality) the 'I'-'I' is referred to as the Absolute Consciousness, yet Sage Ramana once told me that any realisation before Sahaja Nirvikalpa (natural state of absorption in the Self with no concepts) is intellectual.*

M: Yes, the 'I'-'I' Consciousness is the Absolute. Though it comes before Sahaja (one's natural state), there is in it as in Sahaja (one's natural state) itself the subtle intellect; the difference being that in the latter the sense of forms disappears, which is not the case in the former.

C: *Bhagavan, you said yesterday that there exists in the human body a hole as small as a pinpoint, from which consciousness always bubbles out to the body. Is it open or shut?*

M: It is always shut, being the knot of ignorance which ties the body to consciousness. When the mind drops in the temporary *Kevala Nirvikalpa* (the state of remaining without concepts) it opens but shuts again. In *Sahaja* (one's natural state) it remains always open.

C: *How is it during the experience of 'I'-'I' Consciousness?*

M: This Consciousness is the key which opens it permanently.

11. *Mr. C. Does the enquiry "Who am I?" lead to any spot in the body?*

M: Evidently, self-consciousness is in relation to the individual himself and therefore has to be experienced in his being, with a centre in the body as the centre of experience. It resembles the dynamo of a machine, which gives rise to all sorts of electrical works. It not only maintains the life of the body and the activities of all its parts and organs, conscious and unconscious, but also the relation between the physical and the subtler planes, on which the individual functions. Also, like the dynamo, it vibrates and can be felt by the calm mind that pays attention to it. It is known to the yogis and *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) by the name of *sphurana* (*throbbing, vibration or pulsation*), which in *samadhi* (the state of absorption in the Self) scintillates with consciousness.

C: *How to reach that Centre, where what you call the Ultimate Consciousness – the 'I'-'I' – arises? Is it by simply thinking 'Who am I'?*

M: Yes, it will take you up. You must do it with a calm mind – mental calmness is essential.

C: *How does that consciousness manifest itself when that centre – the Heart – is reached? Will I recognise it?*

M: Certainly, as pure consciousness, free from all thought. It is pure, unbroken awareness of your Self, rather of Being – there is no mistaking it when pure.

C: *Is the vibratory movement of the Centre felt simultaneously with the experience of Pure Consciousness, or before, or after it?*

M: They are both one and the same. But *sphurana* (*throbbing, vibration or pulsation*) can be felt in a subtle way even when meditation has sufficiently stabilised and deepened, and the Ultimate Consciousness is very near, or during a sudden great fright or shock, when the mind comes to a standstill. It draws attention to itself, so that the meditator's mind, rendered sensitive by calmness, may become aware of it, gravitate towards it, and finally plunge into it, the Self.

C: *Is the I-I Consciousness Self-Realisation?*

M: It is a prelude to it: when it becomes permanent (*Sahaja*), it is Self-realisation, Liberation.