

THE 'I' – THOUGHT

The 'I'- Thought also known by the names of me, ego-personality, or the old man is none other than a unique attribute or characteristic of God or *Brahman* (the Supreme Being, the Absolute). We can define God by the characteristics of being spaceless and timeless or that which is the manifest and the unmanifest. Now nothing can find expression or manifest itself in the state of timelessness and spacelessness. Hence, the creation of this world of time and space and everything seen in this manifest world other than Awareness, are the unique attributes or characteristics of God. The inherent attributes or unique characteristics of God can only find expression in the manifest world of time and space which are the two prime requisites for these unique characteristics of God to express themselves.

The reasons behind the space time creation of the world, is a wisdom well known to the ancient sages and is now explained, as communicated to the author by Sage Ramana. The Absolute, characterised by being in a state of timelessness and spacelessness has within it inherent the many unlimited unique characteristics and the pure Awareness that we are. These unique characteristics like the Sun, the Moon, the 'I'- Thought, the plants and so on can only find expression when manifested as unique forms and sequenced as a set of events having a start and a finish in space and time, and further the Absolute is aware of them via Awareness which manifests and gives life and expression to forms like the human body or other beings like the Angels and the Devas in a world bound by space and time. Hence, the core reason for the creation of a space time world, appearance of the 'I'- Thought, another unique characteristic of the Absolute in it, expression of us as the universal Awareness, the many timed sequence of events and the unlimited expression of the many unique characteristics of the Absolute, all of which has a start and an end. Until this hidden wisdom and esoteric knowledge filters into us, the practicing of 'Who Am I' and for us to continue to be consciously aware of our unique and natural outlook of Awareness will be a task almost next to impossible as the 'I'- Thought (the *AhamVritti*) will continue to rule incessantly over all our habits, outlook and actions.

For the Absolute to undertake the aspect of knowing and observing its ever increasing unlimited unique characteristics, a proper mechanism has to be provided. Even though these forms and events which constitute these unique characteristics appear on the universal screen of pure Awareness, this in itself is not sufficient for this process of knowing to take place. Hence the mechanism consisting of the *atmic* (of or pertaining to the Atma or the light of consciousness) principle, the intuitive aspect, thoughts of the mental plane, the feelings and emotions of the astral plane and the physical body from the physical plane the Earth combined together in the human body is through which we as pure Awareness act, providing the mechanism for the function of knowing to be performed. This is how the aspect of being aware is undertaken or the function of knowing of God's unique characteristics is undertaken. Now, the moment we switch to the 'I'- Thought which is only a thought in Awareness, the very limited function of ownership of this mechanism of knowing by the 'I'- Thought comes into play. The moment this switch occurs and appears to persist throughout our waking and

dream state, the special characteristics of distinguishing belonging to our reality as Awareness changes to the characteristic habit of judging which belongs to the old man the 'I'- Thought, and thus we lose touch with our true and real nature of Awareness. It is interesting here to note that all the sages in ancient India attained Self-realisation and knew about their real nature only by knowing the real nature of the 'I'- Thought (*AhamVritti*), how the switching occurs and the persistent hypnotic effect of the 'I'- Thought on us.

All these unique characteristics do not find any meaning unless there is the aspect of Awareness to observe them. Hence God or the timeless spaceless being expresses its unique attributes or characteristics in a manifest world of time and space, which are seen by Awareness, which is our own true reality. A unique characteristic function of this Awareness is that it is at all times undertaking the function of being aware of these unique characteristics of God in time and space. When we observe very closely, we being this Awareness - this is the function of knowing these attributes or characteristics of God we undertake at all times and in every moment when functioning in an active state in the human body.

A very important point to be observed here is that God is being this Awareness we are and God is also being all these unique attributes or characteristics in this world and it is not the other way around that these unique characteristics or Awareness is being God. A very important aspect of spiritual practice is drawn from here and can be very clearly observed that this Awareness we are and all the manifest unique characteristics are none other than God. Hence it is the manifestation or presence of God only both as this Awareness and all Gods attributes seen in this manifest world.

Now the Awareness also inherits itself and manifests in a human body for one lifetime and undertakes this function of knowing these unique attributes or characteristics of God like light of the Sun, the day night cycle, the awake-dream-sleep cycle, the minerals, the trees, the lakes and the seas and so on. As we understand this aspect more, one can see and one observes and one is aware that this 'I'- Thought is also one of the attributes or unique characteristic inherent in the space-time world. This unique characteristic of ego-personality is observed by us via our own reality of us being the pure Awareness. However, the interesting part is that forgetting we are this Awareness of God having the prime function of knowing and becoming aware of the unique manifested characteristics of God, we switch and assume ourselves to be the old man, the ego-personality or the I- Thought and then we begin our search towards Self-realisation or trying to know what our reality is.

This 'I'- Thought then takes over as being our reality instead of Awareness and then uses the various attributes related to the body like the five senses, the memory, the physical organs and carries on with its own agenda and activities. That is why the teaching of Sage Ramana is very unique as during his physical incarnation in a human body, the Sage focussed on one main aspect of overcoming the 'I'- Thought which is at the very root of all of one's assumed activities and through which one will straight away know one's reality of pure Awareness.

Hence at all times to know we are this Awareness having the prime function of observing the unique characteristics of God in time and space and not slipping into and behaving as the 'I' – Thought is the true conscious aspect of practicing 'Who am I.'

Based on the discussion so far, our true being, our own true reality is this Awareness having the prime function which cannot be changed, that of being aware of all these unique manifest characteristics of God, and that this body apparatus is used as a means for this purpose.

Hence in reality this memory, the five senses, the aspect of seeing, speaking and so on is that belonging to Awareness and not to the 'I'- Thought, which also is none other than a unique attribute or characteristic of God. As a spiritual exercise one can clearly see this in oneself. The second perspective to keep in mind is that this Awareness and all these attributes or unique characteristics is the one and same God in its manifest form as can be clearly observed from the explanation so far.

Based on the principle of contradistinction as explained in the chapter 'Practicing Who Am I', for example the contradistinction of night is day, male is female and so on, the contradistinction of God or *Brahman* (the Supreme Being, the Absolute) is the ego-personality. As God is being both this Awareness and the attributes or unique characteristics that manifest in time and space, it is interesting to note that the ego-personality does not call itself God or that which it is not. When we put the question to the ego-personality it identifies itself with the body and calls itself by a name Bill or Mohan and so on but it does not call itself God, being the contradistinction of God it then sets off on a journey to know what God is and to attain a state of illumination. This limited characteristic of 'I'- Thought is contained within the unlimited Awareness which is our reality and which we are. Hence, once the correct reason of the presence of 'I'- Thought is known, it should assist one to know one's real nature of Awareness and consciously live in it. Also another very important point to understand here is that we are Awareness, the very eyes of God through which the function of being aware of Gods unique characteristics in space and time is undertaken, and we are not God itself. A big gulf and a veil exists in this understanding of thinking that we are God in contrast to the understanding that our reality is this Awareness, and God is being this Awareness and also all the unique attributes or characteristics of God that manifest in this space time creation.

The above discussion in relation to the 'I'- Thought was transmitted to the author by Sage Ramana while in meditation on 25th May 2013 morning, and was written down as put to him by the Sage immediately straight away after the meditation. This has been written exactly as communicated by the Sage without the mincing of any words by the author.

Sage William Samuel has given a beautiful example of us behaving as the swinging pendulum; the ego - personality in contrast to our reality of pure Awareness. The swinging pendulum has long been used to picture dualism. Its simple swing is a graphic depiction of bound together opposites (good-evil, first-last, etc.). Dualism's sundry pairs (there must be a million of them) are clearly comprehended intellectual *opposites*, *one* at one side of the pendulum swing, the other at the other, and they comprise the basis for mankind's unceasing

struggle from birth till death (still another duality). All human activity may be likened to this swinging pendulum. If you will, consider 'past' on one side of the swing and 'future' on the other. **Humanity, going about its daily affairs, is constantly making plans for the future (one side of the swing) based on the memory of past experiences (the other side of the swing). This planning and calculating, you see, ranges from side to side, back and forth, to and fro for as long as humanity is concerned with time, and now we will try and explain in effective detail *how* to extricate oneself from this maze.**

The Pendulum Illustration

Now, reader, I ask that you visualize a *special* pendulum. It is hanging very still. On the bottom of the pendulum, at the disk, shines a bright, white light. *Picture this pendulum as immovable, a pendulum that no power on earth can move, change, alter, or harm.* Now, visualize a *second* pendulum superimposed directly over the immovable pendulum - this second pendulum, however, is an *unreal, imaginary facsimile*. The pseudo-pendulum differs from the real one in two respects; it is *not* immovable and can swing from side to side in the manner of an ordinary pendulum, and it contains no white light. Where the white light exists on the genuine pendulum, the pseudo-pendulum has a clear *prism* instead.

We have all seen sunlight shining through a prism wherein the light was broken into the colors of the spectrum - from red at one extreme to violet at the other. In your mind's eye, give the phantom pendulum a slight swing and imagine its movement in slow motion. You will see the white light from the immovable pendulum come shining through the swinging prism broken down into the rainbow colors of the spectrum; the swinging prism changes from red at one peak of its swing to violet at the other, back and forth from red to violet to red again, changing to all the colors, back and forth, again and again, until the pendulum stops. When it has stopped, the unrefracted white light re-emerges and the phantom pendulum vanishes.

The colors are equally divided along the swing; therefore, half of them appear when the pendulum is to the right of center, the other half are to the left of center. It is paramount that we understand that the white light of the *immovable* pendulum is the 'substance' (the basis in being) for all the colors seen on the prism of the imaginary pendulum's swing, and we see that the imaginary pendulum's *movement* causes it to appear as the many colors of the rainbow, its color at any particular moment depending on where it happens to be along the swing.

Reader, I haven't the slightest idea if one would actually see the pendulum change into all the colors of the spectrum if one were to swing such a prism to and fro before a bright light. I am only asking that you *picture* such an event. There is no complexity intended here; this is an uncomplicated and simple picture you are being asked to imagine in your mind's eye, but hopefully it will serve to illustrate the still center from which the age-old enigma of dualism springs. It will allow us to explain a number of metaphysical 'mysteries' that have puzzled the world for generations.

We return to the illustration. Notice, when our attention is on the swinging disc, changing from color to color, we are but barely aware of the real white light behind it, unmoving and unchanging. We see the swinging arc grow smaller as the prism slows and the changing

colors increase in intensity (because the prism is closer to the white-light-real), until finally we become fully conscious of the unchanging pendulum and its transcendent white light. Then the pseudo-pendulum vanishes into the brilliance of the white light.

Now, with this in mind, we return to the 'here and now.' Reader, we know **this present NOW is the time of comprehension, the time of experience, the time of concrete Awareness.** Stretching infinitely in one direction of not-now is the 'past,' and in the other is the 'future.' How much more is this NOW than all the dreams of the future! There is no "tangibility" or 'sound' or 'warmth' in the future-not-now, but they are here and NOW! The past is not NOW; only the now is now - a TRANSCENDENT NOW, infinitely above and beyond the not-now, past or future.

We place this NOW into the picture of the swinging pendulum. This present, transcendent NOW corresponds to the *unchanging* white-light pendulum. In our great concern with the swings of the pseudo-pendulum between the past and future, this happy NOW is hardly noticed; even when it is fleetingly observed, the magnitude of its transcendent nature remains unnoticed. NOW is the Real, the 'white light,' while the not-nows are the swings of the not-real. Furthermore we see that NOW is the light which is the total light of all the colors on both sides of the spectrum! We see that the centered NOW is infinitely more than a "real" between two 'unreals,' for it is being all there is to the entire duality. We even see that the unreals are *not unreal*, but incomplete views, refracted views, segmented and divided views of a vacillating view of the Center-Real.

We find a 'center' for every apparent duality. The 'change' demanded of is our own individual change of interest from the extremes to the 'center.'

Heretofore, we have been attempting to go from one extreme to the other: from the bad to the good; from agony to ecstasy; from the sick to the well; from the bound to the free; from lack to affluence; from unreal to real. Now listen: the attempt to *get* 'good' only pushes the phantom pendulum away from the center-real and necessitates a swing in the other direction as well. **The search for one extreme makes the discovery of its opposite inevitable. The longing for wealth brings an equal and corresponding fear of poverty, without fail.**

Now let us use the pendulum illustration to get down to the basic misinterpretation, that we may be able to 'lay the axe to the root.' None of these illustrations means anything beyond the academic unless we are able to put ourselves *into* them. If we can do this we are more likely to examine the points of the illustrations and, most important of all, *try them out.*

Listen with the Heart: the belief, the judgment, that there is an ego-identity, an 'I'-Thought here who *contains* Life, Consciousness, Awareness (they are all the same) is the belief that *creates, constitutes and IS* the pseudo-pendulum itself. The judge (the believer) and the *swinging* pendulum are IDENTICAL! (Reader, I do not mean a judge-container somewhere ELSE. If one exists at all, even in belief, it exists HERE where THIS consciousness is presently perceiving these words, if I - not others - if *reader-I* construe reader-self, right here, as other than simple Awareness ITSELF!). It means if you look upon an object and look upon it as being anything else other than a unique characteristic of the Absolute and the Absolute is being this very unique characteristic, then any other view other than this leads to the pseudo 'I' - Thought, the judge, being well and truly active.

But what makes this pendulum swing? Why is it ever swaying between mountain and valley, good and evil, life and death, male and female? Why? The answer is so simple that it causes the ego personality to scream in contemptuous disbelief. The old man the 'I'- Thought will argue with it and deny it until the cock crows thrice. The primary force that sends the old man, the phantom, the pseudo-identity, swinging its miserable, light-refracting way between its own self-created opposites is 'this is good and that is bad; I like and I don't like; I want, I don't want.' It is as simple as this!

Personal judgment is the action that sets the pendulum into its sundering, fatiguing, aging motion from extreme to extreme. The judge IS the swinging pendulum itself, whereas IDENTITY-BEING-I is Awareness, the immovable, unchanging Center Light! The very instant we misconstrue Identity to be a possessor of facts, a container of opinions, in lack or in wealth, in sickness or in health, we find ourselves engaged in a primary concern with the fragmented minutiae, the spectrum, while, **in fact, we are ever the unchanging Awareness of Transcendent Wisdom!**

We understand this, we say, but our understanding is only theory until we stop making judgments and holding opinions, until we let go our identification as anything but the Center Light!

Again, what is this Center Light? **It is opinionless, motiveless, judgeless, desireless Awareness.** It is the same consciousness that comprehends these words, *divested* of that nothing-identity who says, 'This is good and that is bad.' It is this Consciousness-of-Being, here and now, simply being conscious of being without condemning everything on the face of the earth, without having judgmental opinions of this or that, without desire to acquire or get rid of, without motives for every action. Primarily, it is the end of the swinging pendulum and his 'I like and I hate.'

Poverty and Wealth in the Light of the Pendulum Illustration

Suppose we label one swing of the pendulum 'poverty' and the other 'wealth.' You may prefer the metaphysical terms 'lack' and 'affluence.' When one finds oneself on the negative side of the swing, suffering impoverishment of one sort or another, then one's desire and all actions are directed towards rushing oneself to the other side. If one should consider oneself already there, then one wants to stay there or go higher.

Totally *overlooked* in this transaction - trans-action - is the stilled, unchanging pendulum at the Center, the white light Center which is being all there is to all the colors on both sides of the swing. **We choose to call this 'center' SUFFICIENCY. Sufficiency is already the fact of every appearing. THIS is our identity, and THIS is where our interest (attention) stays; THIS is the REAL!**

Notice that Sufficiency appears within the world of images directly between the extremes of poverty and wealth, exactly as NOW appears centered between 'past' and 'future.' NOW is NOW and so is SUFFICIENCY! Look around reader; is there not a lot of sufficiency for every image to appear just as it appears? How could it be appearing if this were not so? Is there not sufficiency for this very Awareness we are to be aware this very instant? Of course there is, and there will always be this *sufficiency* of all that is necessary. SUFFICIENCY is the Identity, not wealth, not abundance, not superfluity.

Reader, can you see that if you have been seeking wealth, health, positive, good, right, real, life, truth, wisdom, that you have merely been trying to gather in and lay claim to one half of the pendulum swing, the half judge-you have considered 'good'? Now can you see that your successes in this direction only made the pendulum swing farther in the opposite direction? Now can you see that the good half of the swing is no better (or worse) than the opposing swing? Is it not apparent that both sides, the desired and the detested, are but the REAL white light being viewed from a silly swinging position by a sillier oscillating misidentification?

What to do? Rest as SUFFICIENCY. You are this NOW! There is no wait! After we take hold of it to enjoy it and be it, we find it grows into a TRANSCENDENT Sufficiency we never dreamed existed! Oh, I tell you that Kings and Potentates would gladly surrender all their riches for this Truth we perceive here this instant! Center-Sufficiency transcends the wealth of all mankind as surely as sunlight exceeds a single color of the spectrum!

There is no effort involved in ending all this foolishness; there is only to stop the effort of taking those actions intended to fulfill the desires personal judgment creates in the first place. **When we stop playing the role of judge, we stop our incessant oscillating twist ups and downs, highs and lows;** or to be more to the point, 'we stop flip-flopping like a flapping flock of fools!'

Tranquility in the Light of the Pendulum Illustration

Now we come to Tranquility. **This Deific Peace-beyond-comprehension is no more the opposite of human misery than Sufficiency is the counterpart of poverty.** The Deific Peace is *overlooked* in one's mad scramble to move from one's blue misery to the opposite of that misery which one thinks is red-hot peace. It is red-hot, all right, but it isn't Peace.

Again, visualize the imaginary swinging pendulum and its spectrum of color, superimposed over the Transcendent white-light. Suppose we liken the blue moods of pain, agony and depression to the blue end of the spectrum; the much desired and sought after 'feelings' of elation and happiness to the red side of the spectrum. When the old judge opines as to how his identity is on the unhappy side of being, filled with agony, woe and want, what does it most desire? To move to the *other* side of the spectrum, to exchange its blues for happiness. Then, with the help of sundry processes of intellect (based on its memory of past events, its knowledge of causes and effects, and ten thousand other calculations), it performs those actions designed to move its blue concept to the desirable half of the spectrum. Needless to say, its actions have the judge moving from one side to the other, sliding up and down, back and forth, flopping like a fat fish out of water only to discover he cannot have red hot happiness without acquiring cold blue agony in the bargain. Where is the rope with only one end?

The human desire to seek happiness, wealth, wisdom or any extreme, good or bad, is the attempt to slide from one side of the spectrum OF THE SELF to the other. Inevitably, this is to slide *past* the undivided, white-light CENTER, barely aware that it exists. Had there been no *desire*, there would have been no refracting swing of an imaginary identity. We end the desire and return to the center.

An interesting question was put to Sage William in relation to this discussion -

QUESTION:Mr. Samuel, I think I understand what you are saying here, but it seems to me this means that I must experience the total of the negatives before I can enjoy the total of the positives. Am I right? I base this question on the fact that my Identity is the white light which is broken down into all the colors of the spectrum.

ANSWER:This has nearly missed the point entirely. Listen again to the tender thing we are trying to say, though I know there hardly seem enough new words to say it. You are correct when you perceive that the white light (Centered-Tranquility-as-Identity) is being all there is to 'happiness' and 'sadness,' the positives and the negatives, *but these opposites do not even exist outside their creation by personal judgment.* They exist *in belief* only when (if) the 'light' is divided into a spectrum of good and evil *by an opinion maker* otherwise all these are the unique characteristics of the Absolute and the Absolute is being all these unique characteristics. This division is the unavoidable consequence of our playing the role of a judge, the 'I'- Thought or the ego-personality.

UNJUDGED, the center light (Identity) consciously remains the transcendent Identity of all the colors of the judge's spectrum.

So it is, we find Tranquility infinitely more, *more* than an emotionless, desireless, unconcerned 'midway' between the loathed and loved as the *judge* thinks of it. To our amazement, we discover the proverbial Peace beyond comprehension. **We live in the Light of total Tranquility as Tranquility and step out of the judgmental spectrum, free of the 'I'- Thought or the old man's self-created world of conflicting dualisms.**

The Center

Tranquility is the unchanging, white light Identity. Judgments of Identity as other than this Unchanging Identity yield their dualistic pairs - ecstasy, happiness, elation, joy, etc., opposed by agony, misery, depression, dejection, despair and disease. Our effort has been very often an unconscious effort to seek out the opposite of our judgmental misery. In so doing, we have overlooked the Peace-beyond-understanding, the Peace which *appears* to rest midway between the sundry judgments of *feeling*, but which is inescapably and unavoidably present, right here, right now, even as NOW is ever here, ever the fact of being. And we have seen that Now is ever NEW and RENEWING; exactly so, this Identity-being-us is ever NEW and RENEWING, never aging, running down, wearing out or collapsing.

I tell you this 'center' called Tranquility is so much more than 'ecstasy' and all the rest of the world's judgments of 'good' rolled into one that they are not even in the same ball park. Consider how transcendent the white light is to the individual colors of the spectrum - even more than all the colors judged 'good.' Yes, even more than all the colors called good and evil put together!

Diving further into the mechanism of operation of the 'I'- Thought, Sri Sadhu Om in his book 'The Path of Sri Ramana Part One' explains that the feeling 'I am' is the experience common to one and all. In this, 'am' is Awareness. This Awareness is not of anything external, it is the Awareness of oneself. This is Awareness. This Awareness is 'we'. 'We are verily Awareness', says Sage Ramana in 'UpadesaUndhiyar (The Essence of Instruction)' verse 23. This is our 'being' (that is, our true existence). This is called 'that which is'. Thus in 'I am', 'I' is existence and 'am' is Awareness. When Self, our nature of existence-consciousness, instead

of shining only as the pure Awareness ‘I am’, shines mixed with an adjunct as ‘I am a man, I am Rama, I am so-and-so, I am this or that’, then this mixed awareness is the personality. This mixed awareness or consciousness can rise only by catching hold of a name and form. When we feel ‘I am a man, I am Rama, I am sitting, I am lying’, is it not clear that we have mistaken the body for ‘we’, and that we have thus assumed its name and postures as ‘I am this and I am thus’? The feeling ‘this and thus’ which has now risen mixed with the pure Awareness ‘I am’ is what is called body awareness or body consciousness. The feeling ‘I am a man, I am so-and-so’ is only body consciousness. But the Awareness, ‘I am’ is not body awareness; it is the very nature of our ‘being’.

The consciousness ‘I am this or that’ is body consciousness that rises from our ‘being’. It is only after the rising of this body consciousness, the mixed awareness (the first person), that all Thoughts, which are the knowledge of second and third persons, rise into existence.

‘Only if the first person exists, will the second and third person exist...’

{UlladuNarpadu (Forty verses on Reality), verse 14 by Sage Ramana}

This body consciousness, the first person is called our ‘rising’ or the rising of the personality. This is the primal mentation! Hence -

‘Thinking is a mentation; being is not a mentation!...’

{AtmaVicharaPatikam (Eleven verses on Self-enquiry), verse 1 by Sri Sadhu Om}

The pure existence-Awareness, ‘I am’ is not body consciousness; this Awareness is our nature. ‘I am a man’ is not our pure Awareness; it is only consciousness of our body.

Sage Ramana has given answers to questions of spiritual aspirants and devotees related to the entire spectrum of how the ‘I’- Thought projects itself and functions in relation to the human body. If one were to understand and absorb the very core meaning of the answers given by the Sage, reflect upon the meaning and knowledge, consciously put it into practice in one’s life, this in itself is alone sufficient for a devotee to reach the state of abidance in one’s true nature of Self-Awareness. Following is a collection of the answers Sage Ramana has given which deal with the very heart of the way we are always in the clutches of the old man the ‘I’- Thought and the means to overcome it. If one were to truly surrender one’s ‘I’- Thought to the Sage and embark upon the quest as outlined in these answers given by the Sage, then that in itself is more than enough to cover all the spiritual guidance one may ever need and at the same time lead to Self-realisation and breaking the cycle of *karma* (it is the concept of ‘action’ or ‘deed’, understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect i.e., the cycle of birth and death) and rebirth of the ego-personality. Following is the store house of spiritual wisdom related to the ‘I’- Thought given by Sage Ramana in the form of answers given to specific questions raised to the Sage. In the following question/answers, D denotes the devotee and M (maharshi or great Sage) stands for Sage Ramana.

D: How can any enquiry initiated by the ego reveal its own unreality?

M: The ego’s phenomenal existence is transcended when you dive into the Source wherefrom arises the *aham-vritti* (‘I’ - Thought).

- D:** But is not the *aham-vritti*(‘I’ - Thought)only one of the three forms in which the ego manifests itself? *Yoga Vasishtha*(a renowned sacred text which expounds the path of knowledge or *jnana yoga*)and other ancient texts describe the ego as having a threefold form.
- M:** It is so. The ego is described as having three bodies, the gross, the subtle and the causal, but that is only for the purposes of analytical exposition. If the method of enquiry were to depend on the ego’s form, you may take it that any enquiry would become altogether impossible, because the forms the ego may assume are legion. Therefore, for purposes of *jnanavichara*(enquiry leading to Self - knowledge), you have to proceed on the basis that the ego has but one form, namely that of *aham-vritti*(‘I’ - Thought).
- D:** But it may prove inadequate for realizing *jnana*(knowledge, especially knowledge of the real Self).
- M:** Self-enquiry by following the clue of *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)is just like the dog tracing its master by his scent. The master may be at some distant, unknown place that does not at all stand in the way of the dog tracing him. The master’s scent is an infallible clue for the animal, and nothing else, such as the dress he wears, or his build and stature etc., counts. The dog holds on to that scent undistractedly while searching for him, and finally it succeeds in tracing him.
- D:** The question still remains why the quest for the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought), as distinguished from other *vrittis*(thought waves, modification of the mind) should be considered the direct means to Self-realization.
- M:** The word ‘*aham*’ (‘I’)is itself very suggestive. The two letters of the word, namely A (*A*) and h (*HA*), are the first and the last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. The suggestion intended to be conveyed by the word is that it comprises all. How? Because *aham*(‘I’)signifies existence itself. Although the concept of ‘I’-ness or ‘I-am’-ness is by usage known as *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought), it is not really a *vritti*(thought wave, modification of the mind)like the other *vrittis*(thought waves, modification of the mind) of the mind. Because, unlike the other *vrittis*(thought waves, modification of the mind) which have no essential interrelation, the *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)is equally and essentially related to each and every *vritti*(thought wave, modification of the mind) of the mind. Without the *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)there can be no other *vritti* (thought wave, modification of the mind), but the *aham-vrittican* subsist by itself without depending on any other *vritti*(thought wave, modification of the mind) of the mind. The *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)is therefore fundamentally different from other *vrittis*(thought waves, modification of the mind). So then, the search for the source of the *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)is not merely the search for the basis of one of the forms of the ego but for the very Source itself from which arises the ‘I-am’-ness. In other words, the quest for and the realization of the source of the ego in the form of *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought)necessarily implies the transcendence of the ego in every one of its possible forms.
- D:** Conceding that the *aham-vritti* (‘I’- Thought) essentially comprises all the forms of the ego, why should that *vritti*(thought wave, modification of the mind) alone be chosen as the means for Self-enquiry?
- M:** Because it is the one irreducible datum of your experience; because seeking its source is the only practicable course you can adopt to realise the Self. The ego is said to have

a causal body, but how can you make it the subject of your investigation? When the ego adopts that form, you are immersed in the darkness of sleep.

D: But is not the ego in its subtle and causal forms too intangible to be tackled through the enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti* ('I'- Thought) conducted while the mind is awake?

M: No. The enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti* ('I'- Thought) touches the very existence of the ego. Therefore the subtlety of the ego's form is not a material consideration.

D: While the one aim is to realise the unconditioned, pure Being of the Self, which is in no way dependent on the ego, how can enquiry pertaining to the ego in the form of *aham-vritti* ('I'- Thought) be of any use?

M: From the functional point of view, the form, activity or whatever else you may call it (it is immaterial, since it is evanescent), the ego has one and only one characteristic. The ego functions as the knot between the Self which is Pure Consciousness and the physical body which is inert and insentient. The ego is therefore called the *chit-jadagranthi* (the knot between the Self, which is pure Consciousness or Awareness and the body which is insentient). In your investigation into the source of *aham-vritti* ('I'- Thought), you take the essential *chit* (pure Consciousness or Awareness) aspect of the ego; and for this reason the enquiry must lead to the realization of the pure consciousness of the Self.

D: What is the relation between the pure consciousness realised by the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self) and the 'I-am'-ness which is accepted as the primary datum of experience?

M: The undifferentiated consciousness of Pure Being is the heart or *hridayam* which you really are, as signified by the word itself (*hrit* + *ayam* = heart am I). From the heart arises the 'I-am'-ness as the primary datum of one's experience. By itself it is *suddha-sattva* (pure goodness) in character. It is in this *suddha-sattvasvarupa* (form of pure goodness, the form of uncontaminated purity), that the 'I' appears to subsist in the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self).....

D: In the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self) the ego subsists in the *sattvic* (pure) form and therefore it appears as something real. Am I right?

M: No. The existence of the ego in any form, either in the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self) or *ajnani* (a person who is ignorant of one's true nature) is itself an appearance. But to the *ajnani* (a person who is ignorant of one's true nature) who is deluded into thinking that the waking state and the world are real, the ego also appears to be real. Since he sees the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self) act like other individuals, he feels constrained to posit some notion of individuality with reference to the *jnani* (sage, one who has realised the Self) also.

D: How then does the *aham-vritti* ('I'- Thought, the sense of individuality) function in the *jnani*?

M: It does not function in him at all. The *jnani's* (sage, one who has realised the Self) real nature is the Heart itself, because he is one and identical with the undifferentiated, pure consciousness referred to by the *Upanishads* (a collection of Hindu spiritual writings following from the Vedas, its last section of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) as the *prajnana* (full consciousness).

Prajnana(full consciousness) is truly *Brahman*, the Absolute, and there is no *Brahman* other than *prajnana*(full consciousness).

D: How then does ignorance of this one and only Reality unhappily arise in the case of the *ajnani*(a person who is ignorant of one's true nature)?

M: The *ajnani*(a person who is ignorant of one's true nature) sees only the mind which is a mere reflection of the light of Pure Consciousness arising from the heart. Of the heart itself he is ignorant. Why? Because his mind is extroverted and has never sought its Source.

D: What prevents the infinite, undifferentiated light of Consciousness arising from the heart from revealing itself to the *ajnani*(a person who is ignorant of one's true nature)?

M: Just as water in the pot reflects the enormous sun within the narrow limits of the pot, even so the *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives)or latent tendencies of the mind of the individual, acting as the reflecting medium, catch the all-pervading, infinite light of Consciousness arising from the heart and present in the form of a reflection the phenomenon called the mind. Seeing only this reflection, the *ajnani*(a person who is ignorant of one's true nature) is deluded into the belief that he is a finite being, the *jiva*(the individual soul).

If the mind becomes introverted through enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’-Thought), the *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives)become extinct, and in the absence of the reflecting medium the phenomenon of reflection, namely, the mind, also disappears being absorbed into the light of the one Reality, the heart.

This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs to know. What is imperatively required of him is an earnest and one-pointed enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’-Thought).

D: But any endeavour he may make is limited to the mind in the waking state. How can such enquiry conducted in only one of the three states of the mind destroy the mind itself?

M: Enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’-Thought)is, no doubt, initiated by the *sadhaka*(a spiritual aspirant)in the waking state of the mind. It cannot be said that in him the mind has been destroyed. But the process of Self-enquiry will itself reveal that the alternation or transmutation of the three states of the mind, as well as the three states themselves, belong to the world of phenomena which cannot affect his intense, inward enquiry.

Self-enquiry is really possible only through intense introversion of the mind. What is finally realised as a result of such enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’-Thought), is verily the heart as the undifferentiated light of Pure Consciousness, into which the reflected light of the mind is completely absorbed.

D: For the *jnani*(sage, one who has realised the Self) then, there is no distinction between the three states of mind?

M: How can there be, when the mind itself is dissolved and lost in the light of Consciousness? For the *jnani*(sage, one who has realised the Self)all the three states

are equally unreal. But the *ajnani*(a person who is ignorant of one's true nature) is unable to comprehend this, because for him the standard of reality is the waking state, whereas for the *jnani*(sage, one who has realised the Self)the standard of Reality is Reality itself. This Reality of Pure Consciousness is eternal by its nature and therefore subsists equally during what you call waking, dreaming and sleep. To him who is one with that Reality, there is neither the mind nor its three states, and therefore, neither introversion nor extroversion.

His is the ever-waking state, because he is awake to the eternal Self; his is the ever dreaming state, because to him the world is no better than a repeatedly presented phenomenon of dream; his is the ever sleeping state, because he is at all times without the 'body-am-I' consciousness.

D: Should I then consider Sri Bhagavan as talking to me in a waking-dreaming-sleeping state?

M: Because your conscious experience is now limited to the duration of the extroversion of the mind, you call the present moment the waking state, whereas all the while your mind has been asleep to the Self, and therefore you are now really fast asleep.

D: To me sleep is a mere blankness.

M: That is so, because your waking state is a mere effervescence of the restless mind.

D: What I mean by blankness is that I am hardly aware of anything in my sleep; it is for me the same as non-existence.

M: But you did exist during sleep.

D: If I did, I was not aware of it.

M: You do not mean to say in all seriousness you ceased to exist during your sleep! (Laughing). If you went to sleep as Mr. X, did you get up from it as Mr. Y?

D: I know my identity, perhaps, by an act of memory.

M: Granting that, how is it possible unless there is a continuity of Awareness?

D: But I was unaware of that Awareness.

M: No. Who says you are unaware in sleep? It is your mind. But there was no mind in our sleep? Of what value is the testimony of the mind about your existence or experience during sleep? Seeking the testimony of the mind to disprove your existence or Awareness during sleep is just like calling your son's evidence to disprove your birth! Do you remember, I told you once previously that existence and Awareness are not two different things but one and the same? Well, if for any reason you feel constrained to admit the fact that you existed in sleep be sure you were also aware of that existence. What you were really unaware of in sleep is your bodily existence. You are confounding this bodily awareness with the true Awareness of the Self which is eternal. *Prajnana*(full consciousness), which is the source of 'I-am'-ness, ever subsists unaffected by the three transitory states of the mind, thus enabling you to retain your identity unimpaired. *Prajnana*(full consciousness)is also beyond the three states, because it can subsist without them and in spite of them. It is that Reality that you should seek during your so called waking state by tracing the *aham-vritti* ('I'-Thought) to its Source. Intense practice in this enquiry will reveal that the mind and

its three states are unreal and that you are the eternal, infinite consciousness of Pure Being, the Self or the Heart.

D: Is it possible to know the after-death state of an individual.

M: Some are born immediately after, others after some lapse of time, a few are not reborn on this earth but eventually get salvation in some higher region, and a very few get absolved here and now.”

D: I do not mean that. Is it possible to know the condition of an individual after his death?

M: It is possible. But why try to know it? All facts are only as true as the seeker.

D: The birth of a person, his being and death are real to us.

M: Because you have wrongly identified your own self with the body, you think of the other one in terms of the body. Neither you are nor the other is the body.

D: But from my own level of understanding I consider myself and my son to be real.

M: The birth of the ‘I’- Thought is one’s own birth; its death is the person’s death. After the ‘I’- Thought has arisen the wrong identity with the body arises. Thinking yourself the body, you give false values to others and identify them with bodies. Just as your body has been born, grows and will perish, so also you think the other was born, grew up and died. Did you think of your son before his birth? The thought came after his birth and persists even after his death. Inasmuch as you are thinking of him he is your son. Where has he gone? He has gone to the source from which he sprang. He is one with you. So long as you are, he is there too. If you cease to identify yourself with the body, but see the real Self, this confusion will vanish. You are eternal. The others also will similarly be found to be eternal. Until this truth is realised there will always be this grief due to false values arising from wrong knowledge and wrong identity.

D: Let me have true knowledge by Sri Bhagavan’s Grace.

M: Get rid of the ‘I’- Thought. So long as ‘I’ is alive, there is grief. When ‘I’ ceases to exist, there is no grief. Consider the state of sleep!

D: Yes. But when I take to the ‘I’- Thought, other thoughts arise and disturb me.

M: See whose thoughts they are. They will vanish. They have their root in the single ‘I’- Thought. Hold to it and they will disappear.

D: What happens to the created ego when the body dies?

M: Ego is ‘I’- Thought. In its subtle form it remains a thought, whereas in its gross aspect it embraces the mind, the senses and the body. They disappear in deep slumber along with the ego. Still the Self is there; similarly it will be in death. Ego is not an entity independent of the Self in order that it must be created or destroyed by itself. It functions as an instrument of the Self and periodically ceases to function. That is to say, it appears and disappears; this might be considered to be birth and death. Relative knowledge pertains to the mind and not to the Self. It is therefore illusory and not permanent. Take a scientist for instance. He formulates a theory that the Earth is round and goes on to prove it and establish it on an incontrovertible basis. When he falls asleep the whole idea vanishes; his mind is left a blank; what does it matter if the world remains round or flat when he is asleep? So you see the futility of

all such relative knowledge. One should go beyond such relative knowledge and abide in the Self. Real knowledge is such experience and not apprehension by the mind.

Reflection - The root of thoughts is ego, *ahamkara* ('I'- maker wherein 'I' is the doer; the separative ego-sense which makes each being conceive of itself as an independent personality). The ego pertains to all waking activities, the consciousness, the intellect. In deep sleep where is the 'I'? The intellect is still, the body is still, and yet the Self is there. It is the waking activities that veil the real Self by making the ego – the false self – appear as the real Self.

To say 'I am not the body' but 'I am the Self' is still not correct. There is no thought of 'I' in true Being. The personality (*antahkarana* - instruments of inner perception) is a medium. It is what we call the *Sukshma* (the subtle body, the light body of form consisting of *manas* - mind, *buddhi* - intelligence and *ahankara* – ego) and acts as a medium between the body and the Self. It can turn to the body or to the Self, merging into either. Let us discover if all thoughts can be traced to one thought as their base of operations. Do you not see that the thought or idea of 'I' – the idea of personality – is that root thought? The 'I'- Thought is not pure: it is contaminated by association with the body and senses. See to whom the trouble is, then the other thoughts will cease.

D: Yes, but how to do it, that is the whole problem?

M: Think, 'I-I-I' and hold onto that one thought to the exclusion of all others. The ego has its source in the Self and is not separate from it. Hence, the ego must be retraced in order for it to merge in its source. The core of the ego is called the Heart.

D: From where does the ego arise?

M: Soul, mind, ego are mere words. There are no true entities of the kin. Consciousness is the only truth.

D: Are ego and the Self the same?

M: **Self can be without the ego, but the ego cannot be without the Self.** Egos are like bubbles in the ocean. Impurities and worldly attachments affect only the ego; the Self remains pure and unaffected. When the individual goes, the desires also go.

D: How to get rid of egoism?

M: Just see it for what it really is, that will be enough. It is the ego itself which makes an effort to get rid of itself, so how can it die? If the ego is to go, then something else must kill it. Will it ever consent to commit suicide? So first realize what the true nature of the ego is and it will go of its own accord. Examine the nature of the ego: that is the process of realization. If one sees what one's real nature is, that itself will get rid of the ego, Until then it is just like chasing one's own shadow; the more one advances the more distant is the shadow. If we leave our own Self, then the ego will manifest itself. If we seek our true nature, then ego dies. If we are in our own reality, then we need not trouble about the ego.

Seek your source. Find out where the thought 'I' springs from. What object can we be surer of and know more certainly than our Self? This is direct experience and cannot be described further.

If the present 'I' goes, the mind is known for what it is - a myth. What remains is the pure Self. In deep sleep the Self exists without the perception of the body or the world, and happiness reigns.

D: If I turn to look who I am I do not find anything.

M: How did you remain in your sleep? There was no 'I'-Thought there and you were happy. Whereas there are thoughts flowering in the wake of the root-thought 'I' in the *jagrat*(the waking state),and these hide the inherent happiness. Get rid of these thoughts which are the obstacles to happiness. Your natural state is one of happiness as was evident in your sleep.

D: I do not know anything of my sleep experience.

M: But you know that it was happiness. Otherwise you would not be saying 'I slept happily'. When there is no thought, no 'I', and nothing in fact except yourself, you are happy. That is the whole Truth. This is exactly what is conveyed by the *Mahavakya* (The Great Saying)*Tatvamasi*(You are That). Find your Self: and then 'That' is known.

D: Do memory, sleep and death affect the 'I'?

M: These three attributes and modes pertain to the false ego. There is confusion due to non-differentiation between the false 'I' and real 'I'.

Vivekachudamni ('The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination', is a famous Sanskrit poem ascribed to Shankara and it expounds the Advaita or Nonduality Vedanta philosophy) makes it clear that the artificial 'I' of the *vijnana kosha* (it is the sheath of the intellect and intuitive knowledge or wisdom which gives us the discriminative capability that helps to differentiate between virtues and vice, good and bad, right and wrong, truth and untruth and is a part of the subtle body) is a projection and that one must look through it to the true principle of 'I'.

D: What is the ego-self?

M: The ego appears and disappears; it is transitory, whereas the real Self-abides permanently. The mind is of the ego and the ego rises from the Self.

The sacred bull *Nandi* (a white bull with a black tail, the mount of Lord Siva, symbol of the powerful instinctive force tamed by Him) represents the ego, *jiva*(the individual soul). It is always shown in our temples facing the deity, and with a flat circular stone at its rear. This stone altar is where sacrifices are offered and it all symbolizes that the ego must be sacrificed and always be turned towards the inner God.

Learn what the *jiva*(the individual soul) is. What is the difference between *jiva*(the individual soul) and *Atman* (Self within, identical with Brahman or the Absolute)? Is *jiva*(the individual soul) itself *Atman* or is there any separate thing as *Atman* (Self within identical with Brahman or the Absolute)?

D: What is prostration?

M: It means the subsidence of ego.

D: What is subsidence?

M: To merge into the Source. God cannot be deceived by outward genuflection and bowing. He sees if the ego is there or not.

D: Once I was very self-reliant, but in old age I am afraid. People laugh at me.

M: Even when you said you were self-reliant, it was not so you were ego-reliant. If you let the ego go, you will achieve real Self-reliance. Your pride was merely the pride of the ego. So long as you identify yourself with the ego, you will perceive others as individuals too, and then there will be room for pride. Let that drop, and you will drop others' egos too, leaving no more room for pride.

So long as there is a sense of separation, one will be afflicted by thoughts. If the original source is regained and the sense of separation is ended, there will be peace. Consider what happens when a stone is thrown up: it leaves its source, is projected up, tries to come down and is always in motion until it regains its source where it is at rest. Or look at the waters of the ocean: they evaporate, form clouds which are blown about by winds, condense into water, and fall as rain. The waters roll down the hilltops in streams and rivers until they reach their original source, the ocean, at which point they are at peace. Thus you see that where there is a sense of separation from the source, there is agitation and movement until the sense of separation is lost. So it is with yourself. Now you identify yourself with your body, and think that you are separate.

You must regain your source before this false identification can cease and you can be happy. Gold is not an ornament but the ornament is nothing but gold. Whatever shape the ornaments are, there is only one reality, i.e. gold. It is the same with our bodies and Self. Reality is the Self. 'To identify oneself with the body and yet seek happiness, is like attempting to cross a lake on the back of an alligator. The identification with the body is due to extroversion and the wandering of the mind. To continue in that state will only keep one in an endless tangle and there will be no peace. Seek your source, merge in the Self and remain as one.'

The body is a necessary adjunct of the ego. If the ego is killed the eternal Self is revealed in all its glory. The body is the cross, and Jesus the Son of Man is the ego, or the 'I am the body' idea. When he is crucified he is resurrected, a glorious Self, Jesus, the Son of God! 'Give up this life if thou wouldst live.'

D: What of evil conditions, birth and death, for instance?

M: First the ego comes in; its sprouting is our birth, but really we do not die.

It is wrong to say 'we see' for if you try to find out who sees, that seer disappears. 'I' is the subject and all other thoughts comprise the object, that is mind.

Were you aware when you were fast asleep last night? No! What is it that now exists and troubles you? It is the 'I'. Get rid of it and be happy.

The ego-ridden mind has its strength sapped and is too weak to resist the torturing thoughts. The egoless mind is happy in deep, dreamless sleep. Clearly, therefore, bliss and misery are only modes of mind, but the weak mode is not easily exchanged for the strong mode. Activity is weakness and consequently is miserable; passivity is strength and therefore blissful. The dormant strength is not apparent and therefore we do not avail ourselves of it.

Creation is to be considered in two aspects: the Creator and the individual soul. It is the latter which causes pain and pleasure irrespective of the former. Pain and pleasure have no reference to fact but only to mental concepts. Kill the personality and there will be no pain or pleasure but only the natural Bliss which persists eternally.

D: What happens to the created ego after the body dies?

M: Ego is the 'I'-Thought. In its subtle form it remains a thought, whereas in its gross aspect it embraces mind, senses and the body. They disappear in deep sleep along with the ego, but still the Self remains. It will be the same in death. Ego is not an entity independent of the Self in order that it might be created or destroyed by itself. It functions as an instrument of the Self and periodically ceases to function, i.e. it appears and disappears as birth and death.

D: How can I control the mind?

M: The mind is intangible. In fact, it does not exist. The surest way of control is to seek it, then its activities will cease.

See the mind. On being sought, it will disappear. The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts arise because there is a thinker. The thinker is the ego. The ego, if sought will vanish automatically. The ego and the mind are the same. The ego is the root- thought from which all other thoughts arise. Dive within. You are now aware that the mind rises from within. So sink within and seek. You need not eliminate the wrong 'I'. How can 'I' eliminate itself? All that you need do is to find its origin and abide there. That is as far as your efforts can extend. Then the Beyond will take care of itself. You are helpless there; no effort can reveal it.

Our analyses are ended, that is, so far as the intellect goes, but they are not enough. Eliminating the 'not I' is not enough. The process is only intellectual. The truth cannot be directly pointed out, hence the process. Now begins the real inner quest. The 'I'-Thought is the root to be sought now as its source. Find out who it is and abide there.

D: Is the analytic process merely intellectual or does feeling predominate?

M: The latter.

The personal 'I' is a reflection of the real Self in the mind. Ask yourself the question, 'Who am I? The body and its functions are not 'I'. Enquire further. The senses and their functions are not 'I'. Going deeper, the mind and its functions are not 'I'. The next step is the question, 'From where do these thoughts arise?' Thoughts are spontaneous, superficial or analytical. Who is aware of them? Their existence and operations become evident to the individual. Analysis leads to the conclusion that individuality operates as awareness of the existence of thoughts. This is ego. Enquire further, 'Who is this "I" and where does it come from?' Do sleep analysis. 'I am' underlies the three states – sleep, waking and dream.

After discarding all that is not-Self, we find the residue – the Self Absolute. Both world and ego are objective and must be eliminated in the analysis. Eliminating the unreal, the Real survives. To accomplish this, eliminate the mind, which is the creator of the dualistic idea and of ego. Mind is one form of life-manifestation.

The individual cannot exist without the Self, but the Self can exist without the individual.

D: Is this method quicker than developing qualities thought to be necessary for salvation?

M: All bad qualities are tied up in the ego. When the ego is gone, realization is self-evident.

D: What is the object of one's life?

M: The object is to understand who is that 'I' contained in you 'my'.

D: I realize intellectually that I am part of the great 'I', the Universe.

M: Then are there two 'I's'? Realize that you are not part, but the whole.

D: What is the reason of this apparent duality of selves which exists?

M: When you are sound asleep, do you think of duality, part or whole? Duality exists only when are awake. What became of the world when you were asleep? That 'I' existed in all three states, and it is that which you want to know. The thoughts about life's purpose or purposelessness do not arise and trouble you during sleep.

There was once an elephant which was often teased by its keeper. One day the keeper had an accident and fell. The elephant could have killed him on the spot, but it did not. Later however, the keeper dug a big pit in the forest and killed the elephant. Chudala used this story to illustrate Sikhidhvaja's error. Even as a king, Sikhidhvaja had *vairagya* (renunciation, non-attachment, indifference towards sensual objects and enjoyments) and could have realized the Self if only he had pushed his *vairaga* (renunciation, non-attachment, indifference towards sensual objects and enjoyments) to the point of sacrificing the ego. But he did not, and instead went to the forest and followed a strict regime of tapas for eighteen years. Even after all this effort he did not improve. He had made himself a victim of his own creation. Chudala advised him to give up the ego and realize the Self, which he did and was emancipated. It is clear from Chudala's story that *vairagya* (renunciation, non-attachment, indifference towards sensual objects and enjoyments) accompanied by ego is of no value, whereas having possessions in the absence of ego does not matter.

D: I want to find the real 'I' and always be effortlessly in touch.

M: It is enough that you give up the individual 'I' and no effort will be needed to gain the real 'I'. Do not think that there is any such difference between you and the Self; then surrender yourself to Him, merge yourself in Him. There should be no reservations, as you cannot cheat God.

D: How can I get rid of fear?

M: What is fear? It is only a thought. When there is nothing besides the Self, there is no reason to fear. Who sees anything else? The ego arises first and sees an object; if the ego does not exist, then the Self alone does, and there cannot be a second. On finding the source within, there will be no doubt, no fear, and all other thoughts centring around the ego will disappear along with the ego. Weakness or strength is in the mind. The Self is beyond mind.

D: How can I develop?

M: Why go on pruning the ego? That is just what it wants – to be the centre of attraction.

The false ego is associated with objects; the subject alone is the reality. The world is seen in the light reflected by the mind. The moon shines by the reflected light of the sun. When the sun has set, the moon is useful for seeing things, but when the sun rises no one needs the moon, even though it is visible in the sky. So it is with the mind and Heart. The mind is used for seeing objects.

The Self is there whether you search for it or not. The cessation of false identification reveals the Self which is eternally existing. This is called realization. The blankness is the evil result of searching the mind. The mind must be erased out of existence. See who the thinker is, who the seeker is. Then abide as the thinker, the seeker, and all thoughts will then disappear. That ego is pure ego purged of thoughts. It is the same as the Self.

I AM is the ocean and the individual egos are bubbles in it. Bubbles pass away.

Reflection - According to Sage Ramana, on the physical plane Earth, every conscious activity of the human mind or body is centred on the assumption that there is an ‘I’ who is doing something. The common factor in ‘I think’, ‘I remember’, ‘I am acting’ is the ‘I’ who assumes that it is responsible for all these activities. Sage Ramana called this common factor the ‘I’- Thought (*aham-vritti*). Literally *aham-vritti* (‘I’- Thought) means ‘mental modification of ‘I’. The Self or real ‘I’ never imagines that it is doing or thinking anything; the ‘I’ that imagines all this is a mental fiction and so it is called a mental modification of the Self. Since this is a rather cumbersome translation of *aham-vritti* (‘I’- Thought) it is usually translated as ‘I’- Thought.

Since the individual ‘I’- Thought cannot exist without an object, if attention is focused on the subjective feeling of ‘I’ or ‘I’ with such intensity that the thoughts ‘I am this’ or ‘I am that’ do not arise, then the individual ‘I’ will be unable to connect with objects. If this Awareness of ‘I’ is sustained, the individual ‘I’ (the ‘I’- Thought) will disappear and in its place there will be a direct experience of the Self. This constant attention to the inner Awareness of ‘I’ or ‘I am’ is called Self-enquiry (*vichara* i.e., enquiry into the nature of the Self, Truth or the Absolute) by Sage Ramana and he constantly recommended it as the most efficient and direct way of discovering the unreality of the ‘I’- Thought.

Sage Ramana often pointed out that traditional meditations and yoga practices necessitate the existence of a subject who meditates on an object and such a relationship sustained the ‘I’- Thought instead of eliminating it. According to the Sage such practices may effectively quieten the mind, and may produce intermittent blissful experiences, but cannot culminate in Self-realization because the ‘I’- Thought has not been isolated and deprived of its identity.

D: We have read several books on philosophy, and are attracted by *Vedanta* (end or culmination of the Vedas), it is the philosophy of the *Vedas*, contained in the *Upanishads* (a collection of Hindu spiritual writings following from the Vedas, it is last section of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge that expounds

the theory of non-dualism). So we read the *Upanishads*, *Yoga Vasishtha* (a renowned sacred text which expounds the path of knowledge or *jnana yoga*), *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God, a sacred Hindu scripture comprised of 700 verses in which Lord Krishna instructs his disciple Arjuna on the nature of the universe, God, and the supreme Self) etc., We try to meditate, but there is no progress in our meditation. We do not understand how to realise. Can you kindly help us towards realisation?"

M: How do you meditate?

D: I begin to ask myself 'Who am I?', eliminate body as not 'I', the breath as not 'I', the mind as not 'I' and I am not able to proceed further.

M: Well, that is so far as the intellect goes. Your process is only intellectual. Indeed, all the scriptures mention the process only to guide the seeker to know the Truth. The Truth cannot be directly pointed out. Hence this intellectual process. You see, the one who eliminates all *thenot I* cannot eliminate the 'I'. To say 'I am not this' or 'I am that' there must be the 'I'. This 'I' is only the ego or the 'I'-Thought. After the rising up of this 'I'-Thought, all other thoughts arise. The 'I'-Thought is therefore the root-thought. If the root is pulled out all others are at the same time uprooted. Therefore seek the root 'I', question yourself 'Who am I?'; find out its source. Then all these will vanish and the pure Self will remain ever.

D: How to do it?

M: The 'I' is always there - in deep sleep, in dream and in wakefulness. The one in sleep is the same as that who now speaks. There is always the feeling of 'I'. Otherwise do you deny your existence? You do not. You say 'I am'. Find out who is.

D: Even so, I do not understand. 'I', you say, is the wrong 'I' now. How to eliminate this wrong 'I'?

M: You need not eliminate the wrong 'I'. How can 'I' eliminate itself? All that you need do is to find out its origin and abide there. Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the beyond will take care of itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reach it.

D: If 'I' am always - here and now, why do I not feel so?

M: That is it. Who says it is not felt? Does the real 'I' say it or the false 'I'? Examine it. You will find it is the wrong 'I'. The wrong 'I' is the obstruction. It has to be removed in order that the true 'I' may not be hidden. The feeling that I have not realised is the obstruction to realisation. In fact it is already realised; there is nothing more to be realised. Otherwise, the realisation will be new; it has not existed so far, it must take place hereafter. What is born will also die. If realisation be not eternal it is not worth having. Therefore what we seek is not that which must happen afresh. It is only that which is eternal but not now known due to obstructions; it is that we seek. All that we need do is to remove the obstruction. That which is eternal is not known to be so because of ignorance. Ignorance is the obstruction. Get over this ignorance and all will be well.

The ignorance is identical with the 'I'-Thought. Find its source and it will vanish.

The 'I'-Thought is like a spirit which, although not palpable, rises up simultaneously with the body, flourishes and disappears with it. The body-consciousness is the wrong 'I'. Give up this body consciousness. It is done by seeking the source 'I'. The body

does not say 'I am'. It is you who say, 'I am the body!' Find out who this 'I' is. Seeking its source it will vanish.

D: What is the nature of the mind?

M: The mind is nothing other than the 'I'- Thought. The mind and the ego are one and the same. The other mental faculties such as the intellect and the memory are only this. Mind (*manas*),intellect (*buddhi*),the storehouse of mental tendencies (*chittam*),and ego (*ahamkara*- 'I'- maker wherein 'I' is the doer; the separative ego-sense which makes each being conceive of itself as an independent personality);all these are only the one mind itself. This is like different names being given to a man according to his different functions. The individual soul (*jiva*) is nothing but this soul or ego.

D: How shall we discover the nature of the mind, that is, its ultimate cause, or the noumenon of which it is a manifestation?

M: Arranging thoughts in the order of value, the 'I'- Thought is the all-important thought. Personality-idea or thought is also the root or the stem of all other thoughts, since each idea or thought arises only as someone's thought and is not known to exist independently of the ego. The ego therefore exhibits thought activity. The second and the third persons (he, you, that, etc.,) do not appear except to the first person (I). Therefore they arise only after the first person appears, so all the three persons seem to rise and sink together. Trace, then, the ultimate cause of 'I' or personality.

From where does this 'I' arise? Seek for it within; it then vanishes. This is the pursuit of wisdom. When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature, it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is the direct path for all. The mind is merely thoughts. Of all thoughts the thought 'I' is the root. Therefore the mind is only the thought 'I'.

The birth of the 'I'- Thought is one's own birth, its death is the person's death. After the 'I'- Thought has arisen; the wrong identity with the body arises. Get rid of the 'I'- Thought. So long as 'I' is alive there is grief. When 'I' ceases to exist there is no grief.

D: Yes, but when I take to the 'I'- Thought, other thoughts arise and disturb me.

M: See whose thoughts they are. They will vanish. They have their root in the single 'I'- thought. Hold it and they will disappear.

D: How can any enquiry initiated by the ego reveal its own unreality?

M: The ego's phenomenal existence is transcended when you dive into the source from where the 'I'- Thought rises.

Reflection – Sage Ramana says – 'You must distinguish between the 'I', pure in itself, and the 'I'- Thought. The latter, being merely a thought, sees subject and object, sleeps, wakes up, eats and thinks, dies and is reborn. But the pure 'I' is the pure being, eternal existence, free from ignorance and thought-illusion. If you stay as the 'I', your being alone, without thought, the 'I'- Thought will disappear and the delusion will vanish for ever. In a cinema-show you can see pictures only in a very dim light or in darkness. But when all the lights are switched on, the pictures disappear. So also in the floodlight of the supreme *atman* (Self within, identical with Brahman or the Absolute) all objects disappear.'

The mind creates an ego, a seemingly complete, autonomous individual self, which, although illusory, seems to be the reality of one. This is the state known in Hinduism as *ajnana* (without knowledge it is a state of consciousness that lacks perception of reality, and is thus the cause of suffering or ignorance), in Christianity as 'original sin', in Islam, in its more violent form, as *kufir* (concealing the Truth) or 'denial', in its milder form, recognizing the Spirit as real but believing the ego also to be real, as 'shirk' or 'association' (of other with God).

This is the obstruction to Self-realization. Therefore it has to be removed. That is why the Masters say that Self-realization is not something new to be achieved but an eternally existent state to be discovered or revealed. Therefore they compare it to an overcast sky - the clear sky does not have to be created, only the clouds covering it to be blown away; or to a pond overgrown with water-lilies - the water is there all time and only has to be revealed by clearing away the plants that have overgrown it.

In the early stages of practice attention to the feeling 'I' is a mental activity which takes the form of a thought or a perception. As the practice develops the thought 'I' gives way to a subjectively experienced feeling of 'I', and when this feeling ceases to connect and identify with thoughts and objects it completely vanishes. What remains is an experience of being in which the sense of individuality has temporarily ceased to operate. The experience may be intermittent at first but with repeated practice it becomes easier and easier to reach and maintain. When self-enquiry reaches this level there is an effortless Awareness of being in which individual effort is no longer possible since the 'I' who makes the effort has temporarily ceased to exist. It is not Self-realization since the 'I'-Thought periodically reasserts itself but it is the highest level of practice. Repeated experience of this state of being weakens and destroys the *vasanas* (tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives) which cause the 'I'- Thought to rise, and, when their hold has been sufficiently weakened, the power of the Self destroys the residual tendencies so completely that the 'I'- Thought never rises again. This is the final and irreversible state of Self-realization.

This practice of self-attention or awareness of the 'I'- Thought is a gentle technique which bypasses the usual repressive methods of controlling the mind. It is not an exercise in concentration, nor does it aim at suppressing thoughts; it merely invokes awareness of the source from which the mind springs. The method and goal of self-enquiry is to abide in the source of the mind and to be aware of what one really is by withdrawing attention and interest from what one is not.

Now, what is this 'I'-Thought (the ego)? Is it the subject or the object, in the scheme of things?

In as much as it witnesses all other objects in the waking and dream states, or at any rate we think that it does so, it must be considered to be the subject. On realising the Pure Self, however, it will be an object only.

Whose is this 'I'-Thought (the ego)? This investigation forms the *vichara*(enquiry into the nature of the Self, Truth or the Absolute).

'I-thought' and 'this'-thought are both emanations from the same light. They are related to *rajoguna*(the quality of restlessness, desire and passion) and *tamoguna*(the quality which generates inertia, laziness, indifference, darkness, resistance and ignorance)respectively. In order to have the Reflected Light (pure *sattva* - the quality of calmness, goodness and purity), free from *rajas* and *tamas* it must shine forth as 'I-I', unbroken by 'this'- thought. This pure state momentarily intervenes between sleep and waking. If prolonged it is cosmic consciousness, or even *Isvara*(the supreme personal God of Hinduism from whom is the birth, continuation, and dissolution of the universe). This is the only passage to the Realisation of the Self-shining Supreme Being.

D: You say one can realize the Self by a search for it. What is the character of this search?

M: You are the mind or think that you are the mind. The mind is nothing but thoughts. Now behind every particular thought there is a general thought, which is the 'I', that is yourself. Let us call this 'I' the first thought. Stick to this 'I'- Thought and question it to find out what it is. When this question takes strong hold on you, you cannot think of other thoughts.

D: When I do this and cling to myself, that is, the 'I'- Thought, other thoughts come and go, but I say to myself 'Who am I?' and there is no answer forthcoming. To be in this condition is the practice. Is it so?

M: This is a mistake that people often make. What happens when you make a serious quest for the Self is that the 'I'- Thought disappears and something else from the depths takes hold of you and that is not the 'I' which commenced the quest.

D: What is this something else?

M: That is the real Self, the import of 'I'. It is not the ego. It is the Supreme Being itself.

D: But you have often said that one must reject other thoughts when one begins the quest but the thoughts are endless. If one thought is rejected, another comes and there seems to be no end at all.

M: I do not say that you must go on rejecting thoughts. Cling to yourself, that is, to the 'I'- Thought. When your interest keeps you to that single idea, other thoughts will automatically get rejected and they will vanish.

D: And so rejection of thoughts is not necessary?

M: No. It may be necessary for a time or for some. You fancy that there is no end if one goes on rejecting every thought when it rises. It is not true, there is an end. If you are vigilant and make a stern effort to reject every thought when it rises you will soon find that you are going deeper and deeper into your own inner self. At that level it is not necessary to make an effort to reject thoughts.

D: Then it is possible to be without effort, without strain.

M: Not only that, it is impossible for you to make an effort beyond a certain extent.

- D:** I want to be further enlightened. Should I try to make no effort at all?
M: Here it is impossible for you to be without effort. When you go deeper, it is impossible for you to make any effort.

If the mind becomes introverted through enquiry into the source of *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought), the *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives) become extinct. The light of the Self falls on the *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives)and produces the phenomenon of reflection we call the mind. Thus, when the *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives) become extinct the mind also disappears, being absorbed into the light of the one reality, the Heart.

This is the sum and substance of all that an aspirant needs to know. What is imperatively required of him is an earnest and one pointed enquiry into the source of the *aham-vritti*(‘I’- Thought).

- D:** My mind cannot be made steady by any amount of effort. I have been trying it since 1918.
M: The Sage quoted from *UpadesaSaram*(A thirty verse Sanskrit poem composed by Sage Ramana): ‘Merging the mind into the Heart certainly comprises meritorious duty (*karma* - it is the concept of ‘action’ or ‘deed’, understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect i.e., the cycle of birth and death), devotion (*bhakti*), yoga and supreme wisdom (*jnana*).’ That is the whole truth in a nutshell.
- D:** That does not satisfy my search for happiness. I am unable to keep my mind steady.
M: The Sage quoted again from the same book: ‘Continuous search for what the mind is results in its disappearance. That is the straight path.’
- D:** How to search for the mind then?
M: The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts have their root in the ‘I’- Thought. The Sage quoted; “Whoever investigates the origin of the ‘I’- Thought’, for him the ego perishes. This is the true investigation.” The true ‘I’ is then found shining by itself.
- D:** This ‘I’- Thought rises from me. But I do not know the Self.
M: All these are only mental concepts. You are now identifying yourself with a wrong ‘I’, which is the ‘I’- Thought. This ‘I’- Thought rises and sinks, whereas the true significance of ‘I’ is beyond both. There cannot be a break in your being. You, who slept, are also now awake. There was not unhappiness in your deep sleep. Whereas it exists now. What is it that has happened now so that this difference is experienced? There was no ‘I’- Thought in your sleep, whereas it is present now. The true ‘I’ is not apparent and the false ‘I’ is parading itself. This false ‘I’ is the obstacle to your right knowledge. Find out wherefrom this false ‘I’ arises. Then it will disappear. You will be only what you are - *i.e.*, absolute Being.
- D:** How to do it? I have not succeeded so far.
M: Search for the source of the ‘I’- Thought. That is all that one has to do. The universe exists on account of the ‘I’- Thought. If that ends there is an end of misery also. The false ‘I’ will end only when its source is sought.

Reflection – One of the very difficult aspects in the practice of Self - enquiry is convincing oneself that one has to get rid of what one presumes oneself to be the 'I'-Thought. It is only then one will start focussing beyond the 'I'- Thought to the source from where it arises.

According to the Sage the state of equanimity is the state of bliss. The declaration in the Vedas (the four ancient, most sacred, authoritative and revealed Hindu scriptures of India) 'I am This or That', is only an aid to gain equanimity of mind.

D: So, it is wrong to begin with a goal: is it?

M: If there be a goal to be reached it cannot be permanent. The goal must already be there. We seek to reach the goal with the ego, but the goal exists before the ego. What is in the goal is even prior to our birth, i.e., to the birth of the ego. Because we exist the ego appears to exist too.

If we look on the Self as the ego then we become the ego, if as the mind we become the mind, if as the body we become the body. It is the thought which builds up sheaths in so many ways. The shadow on the water is found to be shaking. Can anyone stop the shaking of the shadow? If it should cease to shake you would not notice the water but only the light. Similarly take no notice of the ego and its activities, but see only the light behind. The ego is the 'I'- Thought. The true 'I' is the Self.

D: If 'I' am always, here and now, why do I not feel so?

M: That is it. Who says it is not felt? Does the real 'I' say it or the false 'I'? Examine it. You will find it is the wrong 'I'. The wrong 'I' is the obstruction. It has to be removed in order that the true 'I' may not be hidden. The feeling that I have not realized is the obstruction to realization. In fact it is already realized and there is nothing more to be realized. Otherwise, the realization will be new. If it has not existed so far, it must take place hereafter. What is born will also die. If realization is not eternal it is not worth having. Therefore what we seek is not that which must happen afresh. It is only that which is eternal but not now known due to obstructions. It is that which we seek. All that we need do is remove the obstruction. That which is eternal is not known to be so because of ignorance. Ignorance is the obstruction. Get over the ignorance and all will be well.

The ignorance is identical with the 'I'- Thought. Find its source and it will vanish.

The 'I'- Thought is like a spirit which, although not palpable, rises up simultaneously with the body, flourishes and disappears with it. The body-consciousness is the wrong 'I'. Give up this body-consciousness. It is done by seeking the source of the 'I'. The body does not say 'I am'. It is you who say, 'I am the body'. Find out who this 'I' is. Seeking its source it will vanish.

D: How to do it?

M: The 'I' is always there - in deep sleep, in dream and in wakefulness. The one in sleep is the same as that who now speaks.

There is always the feeling of 'I'. Otherwise do you deny your existence? You do not. You say 'I am'. Find out 'who is.'

- D:** I meditate *neti-neti*(not this - not this. An Upanishadic expression meant to convey that the ultimate Reality is neither this nor that, it is beyond all description. In meditation, you gently dismiss thoughts, images, concepts, sounds, and distractions by applying the principle of neti-neti or telling yourself, 'Not this. Not this').
- M:** No - that is not meditation. Find the source. You must reach the source without fail. The false 'I' will disappear and the real 'I' will be realized. The former cannot exist apart from the latter.

There is now wrong identification of the Self with the body, senses, etc., You proceed to discard these, and this is *neti*. This can be done only by holding to the one which cannot be discarded. That is *it* (that which is).

- D:** When I think 'Who am I?' the answer comes 'I am not this mortal body but I am *chaitanyaatma*(Self of consciousness).' And suddenly another question arises, 'Why has *atma* come into *maya*(The illusion by which the world is seen as separate from the ultimate Reality)?' or in other words, 'Why has God created this world?'
- M:** To enquire 'Who am I?' really means trying to find out the source of the ego or the 'I'- Thought. You are not to think of other thoughts, such as 'I am not this body'. Seeking the source of 'I' serves as a means of getting rid of all other thoughts. We should not give scope to other thoughts, such as you mention, but must keep the attention fixed on finding out the source of the 'I'- Thought by asking, as each thought arises, to whom the thought arises. If the answer is 'I get the thought' continue the enquiry by asking "Who this 'I' is and what is its source?"
- D:** Am I to keep on repeating 'Who am I?' so as to make a *mantra* (sacred syllable repeated in meditation) of it?
- M:** No. 'Who am I?' is not a *mantra*(sacred syllable repeated in meditation). It means that you must find out where in you arises the 'I'- Thought which is the source of all other thoughts.
- D:** How to attain the Self?
- M:** Self is not to be attained because you are the Self.
- D:** Yes. There is an unchanging Self and a changing one in me. There are two selves.
- M:** The changefulness is mere thought. All thoughts arise after the arising of the 'I'- Thought. See to whom the thoughts arise. Then you transcend them and they subside. This is to say, tracing the source of the 'I'- Thought, you realise the perfect 'I-I'. 'I' is the name of the Self.
- D:** Shall I meditate on 'I am *Brahman*' (*ahamBrahmasmi*) (*Brahman* - the Supreme Being, the Absolute)?

M: The text is not meant for thinking 'I am *Brahman*'. *Aham*('I')is known to everyone. *Brahman* (the Supreme Being, the Absolute)abides as *aham*('I')in every one. Find out the 'I'. The 'I' is already *Brahman*. You need not think so. Simply find out the 'I'.

D: Is not discarding of the sheaths (*neti-neti* - not this - not this. An Upanishadic expression meant to convey that the ultimate Reality is neither this nor that, it is beyond all description. In meditation, you gently dismiss thoughts, images, concepts, sounds, and distractions by applying the principle of *neti-neti* or telling yourself, 'Not this. Not this'), mentioned in the *sastras* (the scriptures)?

M: After the rise of the 'I'- Thought there is the false identification of the 'I' with the body, the senses, the mind, etc., 'I' is wrongly associated with them and the true 'I' is lost sight of. In order to sift the pure 'I' from the contaminated 'I', this discarding is mentioned. But it does not mean exactly discarding of the non - Self, it means the finding of the real Self.

The real Self is the infinite 'I'. That 'I' is perfection. It is eternal. It has no origin and no end. The other 'I' is born and also dies. It is impermanent. See to whom the changing thoughts belong. They will be found to arise after the 'I'- Thought. Hold the 'I'- Thought and they subside. Trace back the source of the 'I'- Thought. The Self alone will remain.

D: It is difficult to follow. I understand the theory. But what is the practice?

M: The other methods are meant for those who cannot take to the investigation of the Self. Even to repeat *ahamBrahmasmi*(I am *Brahman* - the Supreme Being, the Absolute)or think of it, a doer is necessary. Who is it? It is 'I'. Be that 'I'. It is the direct method. The other methods also will ultimately lead everyone to this method of the investigation of the Self.

D: I am aware of the 'I'. Yet my troubles are not ended.

M: This 'I'- Thought is not pure. It is contaminated with the association of the body and senses. See to whom the trouble is. It is to the 'I'- Thought. Hold it. Then the other thoughts vanish.

D: Yes. How to do it? That is the whole trouble.

M: Think 'I, I', and hold to that one thought to the exclusion of all others.

D: No doubt the method taught by *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) is direct. But it is so difficult. We do not know how to begin it. If we go on asking, 'Who am I?', like a *japa* (repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally) or a *mantra* (sacred syllable repeated in meditation), it becomes dull. In other methods there is something preliminary and positive with which one can begin and then go step by step. But in *Bhagavan's* method, there is no such thing, and to seek the Self at once, though direct, is difficult.

M: You yourself concede it is the direct method. It is the direct and easy method. When going after other things that are alien to us is so easy, how can it be difficult for one to go to one's own Self? You talk of 'Where to begin?' There is no beginning and no end. You are yourself in the beginning and the end. If you are here and the Self somewhere

else, and you have to reach that Self, you may be told how to start, how to travel and then how to reach.

Suppose you who are now in Ramanasramam ask, 'I want to go to Ramanasramam. How shall I start and how to reach it?', what is one to say? A man's search for the Self is like that. He is always the Self and nothing else.

You say 'Who am I?' becomes a *japa*(repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally). It is not meant that you should go on asking 'Who am I?' In that case, thought will not so easily die. In the direct method, as you call it, in asking yourself 'Who am I?', you are told to concentrate within yourself where the 'I'- Thought, the root of all other thoughts, arises. As the Self is not outside but inside you, you are asked to dive within, instead of going without. What can be more easy than going to yourself?

But the fact remains that to some this method will seem difficult and will not appeal. That is why so many different methods have been taught. Each of them will appeal to some as the best and easiest. That is according to their *pakva*(perfection or maturity)or fitness. But to some, nothing except the *vicharamarga*(the path of enquiry into the nature of the Self, Truth or the Absolute) will appeal. They will ask, 'You want me to know or to see this or that. But who is the knower, the seer?' Whatever other method may be chosen, there will be always a doer. That cannot be escaped. One must find out who the doer is. Till then, the *sadhana*(practices, both physical and mental on the spiritual path)cannot be ended. So eventually, all must come to find out 'Who am I?'

You complain that there is nothing preliminary or positive to start with. You have the 'I' to start with. You know you exist always, whereas the body does not exist always, for example in sleep. Sleep reveals that you exist even without a body. We identify the 'I' with a body, we regard the Self as having a body, and as having limits, and hence all our trouble.

All that we have to do is to give up identifying the Self with the body, with forms and limits, and then we shall know ourselves as the Self that we always are.

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 ocean infinite, the ego, 'I' - Thought, remains only a bubble on it and is called *jiva*, *i.e.*, individual soul. The bubble too is water; 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* (it is the concept of 'action' or 'deed', understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect *i.e.*, the cycle of birth and death)..... 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 (*pratyaksha* - direct perception). 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, as is the common experience of one and all. No aids are needed to know one's own Self, *i.e.*, to be aware.

The one Infinite Unbroken Whole (plenum) becomes aware of itself as 'I'. This is its original name. All other names, *e.g.*, OM, are later growths. Liberation is only to remain aware of the Self. The *mahavakya*(The Great Saying)'I am Brahman' is its authority. Though the 'I' is always experienced, yet one's attention has to be drawn to it. Only then does knowledge dawn. Thus the need for the instruction of the Upanishads and of wise sages.

Reflection – Sage Ramana has given two methods, however both are closely related to overcoming the 'I'- Thought, these being Self - enquiry or Self - surrender. Sage Ramana often equated the practices of surrender and enquiry either by saying that they were different names for the same process or that they were the only two effective means by which Self-realization could be achieved. According to Sage Ramana the subjective awareness of 'I' was a valid and direct route to the Self. He never discouraged his devotees from following other practices like devotion (*bhakti*), but he pointed out that any relationship with God (devotee, worshipper, servant, etc.,) was an illusory one since God alone exists. True devotion, he said, is to remain as one really is, in the state of our true nature of pure Awareness in which all ideas about relationships with God have ceased to exist.

The second method, of surrendering responsibility for one's life to God, is also related to self-enquiry since it aims to eliminate the 'I'- Thought by separating it from the objects and actions that it constantly identifies with. When following this practice, whenever one becomes aware that one is assuming responsibility for thoughts and actions - for example, 'I want' or 'I am doing this' - one should try to withdraw the mind from its external contacts and fix it in the Self. Sage Ramana did say that complete surrender of the 'I' by this method can be an impossible goal for many and so he sometimes advised his followers to undertake practices such as thinking of or meditating on God or the Guru either by constantly repeating his name (*japa* - repetition of the name of God or a sacred syllable either mentally or orally) or by visualising his form, if this was done regularly then the mind would become effortlessly absorbed in the object of meditation. Once this has been achieved complete surrender becomes much easier, and the 'I'- Thought is reduced to manageable proportions and with a little self-attention it can be made to sink temporarily into the Heart. The final dissolution of the 'I' takes place only if the self-surrender has been completely motiveless. If it is done with a desire for grace or Self-realization it can never be more than partial surrender, similar to a business transaction in which the 'I'- Thought makes an effort in the expectation of receiving a reward.

The Sage also describes how, in what is really a later stage, the *vichara*(enquiry into the nature of the Self, Truth or the Absolute) is used

more directly to deal with thoughts as they rise: “Even when extraneous thoughts sprout up during such enquiry, do not seek to complete the rising thought, but instead deeply enquire within, ‘To whom has this thought occurred?’ No matter how many thoughts thus occur to you, if you would with acute vigilance enquire immediately as and when each individual thought arises as to whom it has occurred, you would find it is to ‘me’. If then you enquire ‘Who am I?’ the mind gets introverted and the rising thought also subsides. In this manner, as you persevere more and more in the practice of Self-enquiry, the mind acquires increasing power to abide in its Source.”

“Since every other thought can occur only after the rise of the ‘I’- Thought, and since the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts, it is only through the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ that the mind subsides. Moreover, the integral ‘I’-Thought, implicit in such enquiry, having destroyed all other thoughts, gets itself finally destroyed or consumed, even like the stick used for stirring the burning funeral pyre gets consumed.”

Self-enquiry practice, as the Sage enjoins, is the most purely *advaitic*(relating to the doctrine of non-dualism)method, since its quest of the Self never admits the duality of seeker and sought. This means that it is the most central and direct and the least affected by the character of the religion in which it is used.

At the highest level and for some maybe the easiest way from the start, depending on their temperament and spiritual qualifications, would be to ignore thoughts and let them pass over like waves in the sea. Under the waves all is quiet. Sage Ramana says: “If one fixed the attention on the Self or the Heart and ignored all thoughts which come up, remembering that they do not really affect one, the mind will be controlled. Just as by holding one’s breath it is possible by practice to withstand the onslaught of one wave after another, so it is possible to get over any number of thoughts if one can hold on only to the ‘I’.”

D: Kindly instruct me as to how the mind may be controlled.

M: There are two methods. The one is to see what the mind is; then it subsides. The second is to fix your attention on something; then the mind remains quiet.

The questioner repeated the question for further elucidation. The same answer was returned with a little more added. The questioner did not look satisfied.

D: Men of the world that we are, we have some kind of grief or another and do not know how to get over it. We pray to God and still are not satisfied. What can we do?

M: Trust God.

D: We surrender; but still there is no help.

M: Yes. If you have surrendered, you must be able to abide by the will of God and not make a grievance of what may not please you. Things may turn out differently from what they look apparently. Distress often leads men to faith in God.

D: But we are worldly. There is the wife; there are the children, friends and relatives. We cannot ignore their existence and resign ourselves to Divine Will, without retaining some little of the personality in us.

M: That means you have not surrendered as professed by you. You must only trust God.

D: *Swamiji*(title of respect for a spiritual master), I have read Brunton's book '*A Search in Secret India*', and was much impressed by the last chapter, where he says that it is possible to be conscious without thinking. I know that one can think, remaining forgetful of the physical body. Can one think without the mind? Is it possible to gain that consciousness which is beyond thoughts?

M: Yes. There is only one consciousness, which subsists in the waking, dream and sleep states. In sleep there is no 'I'. The 'I-thought' arises on waking and then the world appears. Where was this 'I' in sleep? Was it there or was it not? It must have been there also, but not in the way that you feel now. The present is only the 'I'- Thought', whereas the sleeping 'I' is the real 'I'. It subsists all through. It is consciousness. If it is known you will see that it is beyond thoughts.

D: Can we think without the mind?

M: Thoughts may be like any other activities, not disturbing to the Supreme Consciousness.

D: Can one read others' minds?

M: The Sage as usual told him (the devotee) to find his Self before worrying about others. 'Where are others apart from one's own Self?' asked the Sage.

D: How shall we correlate the higher experience with the lower experience (meaning spiritual experience with mundane affairs)?

M: There is only one experience. What are the worldly experiences but those built up on the false 'I'? Ask the most successful man of the world if he knows his Self. He will say 'No'. What can anyone know without knowing the Self? All worldly knowledge is built upon such a flimsy foundation.

D: How to know the 'Real I' as distinct from the 'false I'.

M: Is there anyone who is not aware of himself? Each one knows, but yet does not know, the Self. A strange paradox. The Master added later, 'If the enquiry is made whether mind exists, it will be found that mind does not exist. That is control of mind. Otherwise, if the mind is taken to exist and one seeks to control it, it amounts to mind controlling the mind, just like a thief turning out to be a policeman to catch the thief, i.e., himself. Mind persists in that way alone, but eludes itself.'

D: How did the wrong identity arise?

M: Due to thoughts. If these thoughts are put an end to, the real Self should shine forth of itself.

D: How are these thoughts to be ended?

M: Find out their basis. All of them are strung on the single 'I-thought'. Quell it; all others are quashed. Moreover there is no use knowing all except the Self. If the Self is known all others become known. Hence Self-Realisation is the primary and sole duty of man.

D: How to quell the 'I-thought'?

M: If its source is sought it does not arise, and thus it is quelled.

D: Where and how to find it?

M: It is in fact the consciousness which enables the individuals to function in different ways. Pure Consciousness is the Self. All that is required to realise the Self is to 'Be Still.'

D: What can be easier than that?

M: So *AtmaVidya* (knowledge of the Self) is the easiest of attainment.

D: How do you answer the question, 'Who are you?'

M: Ask yourself the question, 'Who am I?'

D: How does this silent power work?

M: Language is only a medium for communicating one's thoughts to another. It is called in only after thoughts arise. Other thoughts arise after the 'I'- Thought rises and so the 'I'- Thought is the root of all conversation. When one remains without thinking one understands another by means of the universal language of silence.

Silence is ever-speaking. It is a perennial flow of language which is interrupted by speaking. These words I am speaking obstruct that mute language. For example, there is electricity flowing in a wire. With resistance to its passage, it glows as a lamp or revolves as a fan. In the wire it remains as electric energy. Similarly also, silence is the eternal flow of language, obstructed by words. What one fails to know by conversation extending to several years can be known instantly in silence, or in front of silence - *Dakshinamurti* (a manifestation of Lord Siva who brought some learned sages to an experience of the Self through the power of his silence) and his four disciples are a good example of this. This is the highest and most effective language.

D: I practise hatha yoga and I also meditate 'I am Brahman'. 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*' (*ahamBrahmasmi*)(*Brahman* - the Supreme Being, the Absolute) is only a thought. Who says it? *Brahman* (the Supreme Being, 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 Supreme Being, 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*' (*ahamBrahmasmi*) (*Brahman* - the Supreme Being, the Absolute), and 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*’ (*ahamBrahmasmi*)(*Brahman* - the Supreme Being, 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*’. 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 Supreme Being, 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*’ (*ahamBrahmasmi*)(*Brahman* - the Supreme Being, the Absolute).

The following is a conversation between a devotee {who appeared to have studied the *Upanishads* (a collection of Hindu spiritual writings following from the Vedas, its last section of Vedic literature that emphasizes the path of knowledge) and *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God, a sacred Hindu scripture comprised of 700 verses in which Lord Krishna instructs his disciple Arjuna on the nature of the universe, God, and the supreme Self)}, and Sage Ramana on how to overcome the ‘I’-Thought:

D: How to realise the Self?

M: It is already realised. One should know this simple fact. That is all.

D: But I do not know it. How shall I know it?

M: Do you deny your existence?

D: No: how can that be done?

M: Then the truth is admitted.

D: Yet, I do not see. How shall I realise the Self?

M: Find out who says ‘I’.

D: Yes. I say ‘I’.

M: Who is this ‘I’? Is it the body or someone besides the body?

D: It is not the body. It is someone besides it

M: Find it out.

D: I am unable to do it. How shall I find it?

M: You are now aware of the body. You were not aware of the body in deep sleep. Still you remained in sleep. After waking up you hold the body and say ‘I cannot realise the Self’. Did you say so in your sleep? Because you were undivided (*akhanda* – unbroken or unceasing) then, you did not say so. Now that you are contracted within the limits of the body you say ‘I have not realised’. Why do you limit your Self and then feel miserable? Be of your true nature and happy. You did not say ‘I’ in sleep. You say so now. Why? Because you hold on to the body. Find out where from this ‘I’ comes. Then the Self is realised. The body being insentient cannot say ‘I’. The Self being infinite cannot say ‘I’ either. Who then says ‘I’?

D: I do not yet understand. How to find the ‘I’?

M: Find out where from this ‘I’ arises. Then this ‘I’ will disappear and the infinite Self will remain. This ‘I’ is only the knot between the sentient and the insentient. The body is not ‘I’, the Self is not ‘I’. Who, then, is the ‘I’? Wherefrom does it arise?

D: Where from *does* it arise?

M: Find out.

D: I do not know. Please enlighten me.

M: It is not from without. It is from within. Where does it come from? If elsewhere you can be led there. Being within, you must find it out yourself.

D: From the head?

M: Does the concept of 'head' arise after the 'I' or does 'I' arise from the head? If 'I' be in the head why do you bend it when sleep overpowers you? 'I' is ever constant. So also must its seat be. If the head bends at one time and is erect at another time how can it be the seat of 'I'? Your head is laid flat in sleep. When awake it is raised up. Can it be the 'I'?

D: Which is it then?

M: 'I' comes from within. When asleep there is no 'I'. Just before waking there is 'I' - Thought.

D: The heart-knot is said to be between the eyebrows.

M: Some say 'between the eyebrows'; others 'at the coccyx', and so on. All these are from the standpoint of the body. The body comes after the 'I' - Thought.

D: But I cannot divest myself of the body.

M: So you admit that you are not the body.

D: If there is pain in this body, I feel it; but not if another body is injured. I cannot get over this body.

M: This identity is the cause of such feeling. That is the *hridayagranthi*(knot of the heart).

D: How is this knot to go?

M: For whom is the knot? Why do you want it to go? Does it ask or do you ask?

D: It cannot ask; I am asking.

M: Who is that 'I'? If that is found the knot will not remain.

D: The knot is concomitant with the body. The body is due to birth. How is rebirth to cease?

M: Who is born? Is the Self born? Or is it the body?

D: It is the body.

M: Then let the body ask how its rebirth may cease.

D: It will not ask. So I am asking.

M: Whose is the body? You were without it in your deep sleep. After the 'I' - Thought arose the body arose. The first birth is that of 'I' - Thought. The body has its birth subsequent to 'I' - Thought. So its birth is secondary. Get rid of the primary cause and the secondary one will disappear by itself.

D: How is that 'I' - Thought' to be checked from rising?

M: By Self-quest.

In relation to understanding how the 'I'- Thought functions and its ultimate dissolution following are some verses from 'Sri Ramana Gita' as given by Sage Ramana.

On Cutting the Knot –

1. The nexus of the body and the Self is called the *granthi*(the knot between the Self, which is pure Consciousness or Awareness and the body which is insentient). It is only by this connection with the Self that one is aware of the body.
2. This body is insentient. The Self is pure Awareness. The connection between the two is deduced through the intellect.
3. O child, enveloped by the diffused light of pure Awareness, the body functions. Owing to non-apprehension (of the world) in sleep, (swoon) and so on, the location of the Self has to be inferred.
4. Even as the subtle forces like the electric current pass through visible wires, the light of Awareness flows through a *nadi* (nerves, channels) in the body.
5. The effulgent light of pure Awareness, taking hold of a centre, lights up the entire body as the Sun illumines the world.
6. Owing to the diffusion of that light in the body....., one has experience in the body. That centre of radiation the sages say, is the Heart.
7. From the play of forces in the *nadis*(nerves, channels) one infers the flow of the light of Awareness.
8. As the light pervades the entire body, one gets attached to the body, mistakes the body for the Self and regards the world as different from oneself.
9. When the discerning one renounces attachment and the identification of himself with the body and pursues one-pointed enquiry, a churning starts in the *nadis*(nerves, channels).
10. With this, the Self gets separated, and, alone, shines forth.
11. When the effulgent light of Awareness shines, nothing else shines except the Self.
12. Anything that appears before such a *jnani*(Sage, one who has realised the Self) has no separate existence. He knows the Self as clearly as the ignorant one his body.

13. He for whom the *atman*(Self within, identical with Brahman or the Absolute) alone shines, within, without and everywhere, as (clearly as) objects to the ignorant, is called one who has cut the nexus.
14. The nexus is two-fold; one the bond of the *nadis*(nerves, channels), the other mental attachment. The perceiver, though subtle, perceives through the bond of the *nadis* (nerves, channels) the entire gross world.
15. When the light, withdrawn from all the other *nadis*(nerves, channels), dwells in one nadi alone, the bond (between Awareness and the body) is severed and the light abides as the Self.
16. As a heated iron-ball appears as a ball of fire, this (body) heated in the fire of Self-enquiry shines as the Self.
17. The old *vasanas*(tendencies or habits of the mind due to the experiences of former lives) pertaining to the body, (mind and so on) are destroyed. Being free from body-consciousness one never has the sense of doership.
18. Since such a one has no sense of doership, his *karma* (it is the concept of ‘action’ or ‘deed’, understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect i.e., the cycle of birth and death), it is said, is completely destroyed. As nothing but the Self exists, no doubts arise for him.
19. Once the knot is cut, one is never bound again. This is considered the state of power supreme and peace Supreme.

Let us now understand how the above process as explained in the verses by Sage Ramana occurs in the human body of an advanced spiritual aspirant.

Exactly at the moment of waking up from sleep, a consciousness ‘I’ swiftly shoots up like a flash of lightening from the Heart to the brain. From the brain it then spreads throughout the body along the nerves. This ‘I’- consciousness is like electrical energy. Its impetus or voltage is the force of attachment with which it identifies a body as ‘I’. This consciousness, which spreads with such a tremendous impetus and speed all over the body remains pure, having no limiting association attached to it, till it reaches the brain from the Heart. However, its force of attachment is so great, and the time taken by it to shoot up from the Heart to the brain is extremely short being less than one millionth of a second, ordinary people are unable to notice or perceive it in its pure condition, devoid of any limiting association. This pure condition of the rising ‘I’- consciousness is what was pointed out by Sage Ramana when he stated, ‘In the space between two states or two thoughts, the pure ego (the pure condition or true nature of the ‘I’ - Thought) is experienced’, in ‘Maharshi’s Gospel’, Book One, chapter five, titled ‘Self and Individuality.’

This ‘I’-consciousness spreads from the brain at a tremendous speed throughout the body, the nerves (*nadis*) act as the transmission lines, just like wires transmit electricity. The mixing of pure consciousness ‘I am’, after reaching the brain, with the limiting association of ‘I am this, I am so-and-so, I am the body’ is what is called bondage or the knot. This knot has two forms, the knot of bondage to the nerves and the knot of attachment. The connection of this power, the ‘I’- consciousness, with the gross nervous system is called ‘the knot of bondage to the

nerves', and its connection with the causal body, having its form as the latent tendencies, is called 'the knot of attachment'. The knot of bondage to the nerves pertains to the breath (*prana* - vital energy or life force that sustains the body), while the knot of attachment pertains to the mind.

'Mind and breath, which have thought and action as their respective functions, are like two diverging branches of the trunk of a tree, but their root (the activating power) is one.'

{UpadesaUndhiyar (The Essence of Instruction), verse 12 by Sage Ramana}

As the source of both the mind and the breath (*prana* - vital energy or life force that sustains the body) is the same being the Heart, when the knot of attachment is severed as a result of the mind subsiding through Self-enquiry, the knot of bondage to the nerves is also severed. In *raja yoga* (the royal path of physical and mental control, It uses eight systematic steps to control body and mind to attain union with god), when the knot of bondage to the nerves is made to subside by breath-control, the mind thus controlled is made to enter the Heart from the brain (*sahasrara* - the highest psychic centre located in the brain), since it reaches its source, this results in the knot of attachment also being severed.

'When the mind which has been subdued by breath-control is led (to the Heart) through the only path (the path of knowing Self), its form will die.'

{UpadesaUndhiyar (The Essence of Instruction), verse 14 by Sage Ramana}

However, as the knot of attachment is the main one, unless it is made to subside by knowing Self, even when the knot of bondage to the nerves is temporarily removed in sleep, swoon, death or by the use of anaesthetics, the knot of attachment remains unaffected in the form of tendencies, habits and predispositions, which constitute the causal body, these tendencies do not die even after the death of the physical body, and hence rebirths are inescapable. **This is why Sage Ramana insisted that an aspirant reaching a stage where there is a temporary absorption of the 'I'- Thought, one should not stop there, but the mind or 'I'- Thought so absorbed should be led to the Heart in order to attain the state of natural and permanent absorption in the Self in which one sees no difference between oneself and the world and remains with full use of human faculties.** In this state the aspirant also experiences a permanent subsidence of the 'I'- Thought and mental tendencies. In the body of such a Self-realized aspirant (*sahajajnani*), the coursing of 'I'- consciousness along the nerves, after the knot of attachment has subsided, is like the water on a lotus leaf or like a burnt rope, and thus it cannot cause any bondage. Hence, subsidence of the knot of attachment is indispensable for the attainment of the natural state, the state in which one's tendencies subside completely.

The nerves (*nadis*) are gross, but the current of Awareness or the power of consciousness that courses through them is subtle. The connection of the 'I'- consciousness with the nerves is similar to the connection of electrical power with the wires; it is so unstable that it can be connected or disconnected in a second. It is an experience common to everyone that this connection is broken daily in sleep and reconnected in the waking state. When this connection is effected, body-consciousness rises, and when it is broken, body-consciousness is lost. Here one must understand that body-consciousness and world-consciousness are one and the same.

Unless there is body consciousness there can be no world consciousness. Interesting to note that the 'I'- Thought only persists when body consciousness is there. However knowing of the unique characteristics of God also arises and is possible via body consciousness wherein our true nature of pure Awareness utilises the various instruments provided like the five senses, emotions, feelings, thoughts etc.; what Sage Ramana is pointing out here is that knowing of the unique characteristics of God by us (pure Awareness) can continue to function in this state of body and world consciousness even in the absence of the 'I'- Thought as a result of practicing 'Who Am I'.

Hence, just like one's clothes and ornaments are daily removed and put on, so too this knot is a secondary and a transitory entity hanging loosely to an individual. This is what Sage Ramana referred to when he stated 'We can detach ourselves from what we are not.' Disconnecting the knot in such a way that it will not come into being is called by many names such as 'the cutting of the knot' or 'subsiding the mind', and so on. 'In such a way that it will never again come into being' means, attending to the 'I'- Thought using the enquiry 'Does it in truth exist at present?' This is possible by knowing and experiencing that our real nature is that of pure Awareness and all this seen and experienced is none other than the unique characteristics of God that find expression only in the space-time creation. As a result of consistent vigilance and practice of this, one gains the experience that God alone is present and manifests at all times being us as Awareness and being these unique characteristics present and active in the space-time creation. This leads to a gradual (intermittent experiencing) to actually dissolution of the 'I'- Thought. Hence in this way when the query is made whether the 'I'- Thought has ever really come into being, there takes place the dawn of knowledge, the real waking, where it is clearly and firmly known that no such knot has ever come into being, and 'that which exists' alone ever exists, and that which was existing as 'I am' is ever existing as 'I am.' When one rises to the level of both attaining and experiencing of this Self-knowledge in which this knot or bondage which is the 'I'- Thought subsides permanently and does not rise again is the permanent disconnection of the knot.

On the morning of 21 June 2013 (6:10 am at the time of writing) Sage Ramana communicated to the author while in morning meditation – The moment we wake up in the morning a flash occurs of very recent events and activities like for example our actions of the day before, as a result of this flash from memory we switch to the 'I'- Thought. Now the moment this switching of outlook being that of the 'I'- Thought occurs, all the associated network that of habits, karmic actions, personal judgment we as the 'I'- Thought are associated with comes into being and have this outlook, we undertake a pattern of familiar thoughts and actions and thus we pass the day. Now on the other hand as this flash from memory occurs if we were to look upon the 'I'- Thought as being an image, a presence and only a mere thought on the screen of pure Awareness and strongly bring into our focus **that this 'I'- Thought is no more than a unique characteristic of the Absolute** then immediately we will find that only by this means alone the 'I'- Thought recedes in the background and consciously we function from the outlook of our true nature that of Awareness. This is the true method of 'Practicing Who Am I', as the waking cycle starts immediately after the sleep cycle has come to an end. Only by conscious practice can we get a glimpse of the vast difference between behaving as the silly old man the 'I'- Thought and that of our true nature of pure Awareness. Hence stop pursuing and behaving as the 'I'- Thought instead switch to the outlook of one's true nature of pure Awareness, it is only then we are living our life to its fullness.