

My Meeting With Ramana Maharshi

Papaji

Questioner: Today is Ramana's birthday. I'd like to ask you to say something about Ramana.

Papaji: This is a long story so I will tell you in a short version about my contact with him, and something of what came before also.

Ramana was the son of an advocate. He was studying in a mission school. In his boyhood, one day he was going to school on the day when the fees were due. He had taken money and was going to school to pay his fees. On the way he felt as though he were dying. He lay down on the road on the way to and began to inquire: "Who is dead? Who is dead? The body is lying here, but I see I am not dead. This body is dead and I am conscious that I am not dead." This was his experience. He found the Eternal Consciousness which never dies. The body may die, like clothes. Worn out clothes are thrown away and you get new ones to be worn again.

It started like this, but then he wanted to find out what it was. There was nobody to speak to him. After this experience he wanted to see what this experience was. He disappeared from the town of his parents. He had heard people speaking of a pilgrimage place called Mount Arunachala. He wanted to go there and he had the fees in his pocket. So he went to the railway station and the money did not cover the whole journey. He told the booking clerk, "Give me a ticket as far as my money goes." He bought a ticket to a place called Tirkalur, 20 miles short of his destination. He was wearing gold earrings, so when he got down at the station he was able to sell them to someone and to complete his journey.

He started meditation to locate what the consciousness was. For years he was not heard of. Sometimes he was going to beg for *bicksar*. No one knew who this person is. After many years people started going to him. When the light shines everyone is attracted. People from all over the world went to him and stayed. There are still people there. It was a forest on the slopes of this hill, and now it has become an international centre.

Many people were seeing him, many people were going to him, kings and presidents of other countries were going to him. I never knew because he was in the South of India and I was in the North. I was searching for a guru but somehow I didn't like any of them because I found only commercialization.

I went to the Himalayas. I went around to all the well known gurus. I went to Rishikesh, to Uttarpashi, to Tapawanum, to Haridwar. I also went to traditional gurus. I wandered by the bank of Ganga, to Kashipuri. I went down to the desert, down to the South - I went everywhere. Everywhere I went they wanted to initiate me and asked me to do *sadhana*.

When I had gone and sat with them my question was only, "Can you show me God? Have you seen Him? If you have seen Him, can you show me? What fees do I have to pay you? If you have not seen and you cannot show me, tell me straight forward that you have not seen Him and you cannot show me." But this much nobody dared to tell. They would say, "You have to sit down and do *sadhana*."

I said, "Why *sadhana*? When I go to a shop I have money in my pocket, he has the commodity I want. He will not tell me. 'You first meditate in front of the shop then I will give it to you.' Nobody will say this. If you have something give it to me and ask me any price, I will pay the price. I will serve you all my life."

But they would only say, "You have to go through a long *sadhana*." In Rishikesh a man had been doing *sadhana* for 50 years. He was pointing at me saying, "Look at this man!" Everyone was laughing. "This man is standing in an army dress. 'Show me God,' he says." They were mocking me. They were making a joke of me, standing asking them to show me God. "Is not something to be shown. He doesn't go through *sadhana*; he does not agree with *sadhana*."

There was one swami in Tapowan. He was very well known and very old, about 88 years old. But then I saw he was having a court case with one very poor *sadhu* just occupying a thatch hut. He said, "He is occupying my place. He doesn't vacate. I will get an advocate." He had plenty of land and this was only one man not harming anyone, only mediating alone. He was living there in a place ten feet by ten feet in one corner of the land. The swami wanted to make a wall there. Somehow I didn't like, he wanted to throw this *sadhu* out. When he has about ten acres of land why doesn't he allow him a space ten feet by ten feet. After all, he is a *sadhu*. He was bringing an eviction order and all that. I didn't like. I saw so many people like this and I returned back home. Very much disappointed and dejected I returned home. And the money that I had saved I spent already.

One day I was going to take lunch and I saw a man standing outside. I asked him, "If you want to take, come in and take food with me. And if you want monetary help I will help you. If you want food come in." He came in. I asked my mother to bring another plate of food and gave it to him. And then I asked him, "Are you a *sannyasin*? You must traveling throughout the country. Have you come across any person who is God-realized, who is enlightened and free? Have you seen anyone? If you have, give me the address; I will go to see

him." He gave me an address and I noted down for the first time the name of a town called Tiruvanamalai, and he told me how to get there. Then he went away.

I decided not to tell my wife or my parents what had happened. I went out to the town. I had no funds as I had spent everything in my search for a guru and my father would not give me any money. When I was walking in the town an old friend called out to me - we had done physical exercises together. "You have not been seen around here. I heard that you had joined the army and since then we have not seen you." I sat down with him and saw an old Punjab newspaper lying in his shop on the table, the Old Tribune was the name. Immediately my eye went to the wanted advertisements. It was written, they required one ex-army officer to work in our CBI stores to supply army supplies to some British shipment. They were contractors in Pishawar and one unit was going to Madras. I saw a man was advertising for an ex-army officer to serve in Madras. So I applied and they sent me money to cover my first class ticket, and gave me one month's time to report. I said to myself "I've got money now." With that money I went straight in search of Ramana Maharshi's ashram at Arunachala.

I got down at the railway station and booked a bullock cart, which was the local transportation. I went to the ashram, and left all my baggage outside. I was going to start my work in Madras so I had all my bedding with me. I left it outside and went into the hall where a man was sitting. As soon as I saw this man I recognized that it was the same man who had given me the address in Punjab. I became very angry with him. I didn't go to see him. I didn't even enter the hall. I just went to find another cart to go back to the railway station. There was a Parsi man there; his name was Thromji. Later on we became friends. He came to me and said, "You seem to be a North Indian." "Yes, I am," I replied. "Then how is it that you have just arrived and now you are going back?" I told him, "This man is a fraud! He met me just fifteen days ago in Punjab and he gave me his own address that he is a God-realized man." "No, no," he said. "It's not possible. You are making a mistake." I said, "How can I make a mistake? I am not mad. He is the same man. I am quite fit, both in body and mind. I cannot make such a mistake. In only fifteen days I cannot forget. He is the same man."

He said, "No. This man has not moved from this place in 50 years. You can ask anyone. Either you have seen someone else and you are mistaking the identity, or this man must have appeared to you through his own power to help you. We have heard of some three or four instances. So come with me, I will introduce you to the manager of this ashram and you can stay in the guest house." So he took me and insisted that I went there, and they give me a place to stay.

Then I went inside. He was not speaking to anybody. Everybody was quiet, but something was going on in this silence. For the first time I saw this happening without talking. Something was there; some vibration was there which

was entering into my heart. After about 10 minutes there was a bell for lunch. Maharishi got up, everybody got up - there were maybe 15 or 20 people there - and we all went in the hall to take lunch together. Then Maharshi went back to his hall alone; no one else followed him. After lunch Maharshi took rest, and then people came again in the hall at 2:30. I never knew this rule. So seeing him alone I went in straight away, but as I was going in the attendant stopped me. He said, "You come back at 2:30." Maharshi was looking and he signaled me to come in.

I went inside and asked him, "It was you wasn't it, who saw me and gave me your own address in Punjab?" He kept quiet. "If it was you why didn't you tell me? I wanted to see God. Why you didn't do it there, and why have you called me here? I have come here and you don't speak with me. I do not understand." Still he was silent. I said, "I do not understand your silence. Please speak to me." Still he was silent. Still he was silent, so I was not very happy.

I was in love with Lord Krishna since my boyhood. It was a constant force in my life. So I said, "Ok, this place is very nice, I like this place. This mountain is very beautiful, there are forests, there are monkeys, there are peacocks. I will live here. I will go to the forest and stay there." I went to the forest. I had a month before I had to join my duties and I had used up only five days. So I went to the other side of the hill for some time, knowing I could join my duties later on and knowing I was in a good place.

Then the time came for me to go, so I decided to go and prostrate before him and then to leave. I came to him. He was there again, and once again he was alone. Very few people went to see him, very few. He asked me, "Why didn't you come for so many days?" I was very proud. I said, "I have been playing with my God." "Very good, very well." He said. "You have been playing with God?" "Yes, I was. I have always been." "Do you see him now? Do you see him now?" "Not now," I said. "Not now. When I have vision I see him, sometimes in the night also. When I have vision I see him, not always. That's why I want to see him always."

Then he said, "God does not appear and disappear."

For the first time I heard this: "God is reality itself. God doesn't disappear. He is appearance itself. So what appears and disappears is only mental, is only imagination." I didn't like this philosophy that I was hearing. "The god appeared and disappeared. And the seer is still here, he who has seen god is still here. Find out who the seer is."

I had never been confronted at any time by anyone with this question before. Neither the living saints nor any of the past saints I had heard about could confront you like this, with this question: "Find out who the seer is. Find out who you are. That does not disappear. Always it is there, whether you are awake or dreaming or asleep. This seer is always there. Now you tell me who this seer is."

No answer came for this question but I had an experience to find out the source of 'I'. It worked in my case. On my first trip to the guru I found it. Actually the seer was always there; the source of 'I' was always there. He simply asked me to, "Find out who the seer is." That's what he said. In his presence I experienced the seer, what it was. It was so quick. My body was vibrating and became *One*. I did not understand this tremendous bliss, this tremendous happiness, this beauty, in just an instant.

This teaching is the ultimate teaching, which I try to present to you every day. I don't think any other teaching is worth striving for except to discover your own Self. Later on, if you need anything else you may go in search of it. Here and now find out who you are. This is the ultimate Reality, this is the ultimate teaching. I don't think any other teaching can surpass this teaching. Know your Self and then know the rest, if it is needed. This false appearance will disappear in the recognition of your own Self. This false appearance will not show up again when the Real is revealed to you. *That* has no form and no name; That has no geographical location anywhere, neither inside nor outside. This is Eternal Rest. Each of you is already in this. The only impediment is your preoccupation with something else, with something unreal. That is the only hindrance. Otherwise this Freedom, this Wisdom, this Beauty, this Love is always inviting you. You only have to turn your attention within your own Self and you see that you have always been free. This is your own nature.

There is no need to seek, no need to hunt it down anywhere else. It is already here. You only have to abandon the notion that, "I am bound. I am suffering. I am born. I have to die." This is simply a notion that you have entertained somehow, due to your unmindfulness. This will disappear instantly when you want it to, when you need it to, when you desire it, instantly this is here. You do not need to go and search for it - it is not an object to search for. It is your very inner nature. It is very close, closer even than your breath. When something is closer and nearer than the breath what effort do you need to meet it? It is so near, so dear, so intimate to you, but you are lost in fulfilling your desires with those things or people which are not worth making friends with. They appear and disappear - they are not permanent, they are not real. So what is the use of that hunt which is not abiding, which is not living, which is not eternal, which is disturbing? It's not wise to purchase disturbance for nothing. If you are a good buyer you will make a bargain for those things which do not disappear. That will be the real diamond, and having that you will not see your poverty.

I went away to Madras and joined my duty. They gave me a very good bungalow and a car. Every Saturday we had half day of work, and Sunday was a full day off. So I started coming every weekend for a day and a half. Whenever I got holidays I went there for some months. Then the partitioning of India was going to take place and some friends living permanently in the ashram

asked me which part of Punjab I belonged to, to the West or East? I said: "West, other side of the river." "Do you know that place is now Pakistan?" I was not reading any papers, nor interested in politics. I never knew anything. He asked me, "What about your family?" I said, "Everybody is in Punjab, in West Punjab. Nobody is in India except myself." He said, "Why don't you go and take care of them?" I said, "No, it's over now; my connection with my family is over. After seeing this man, I have no connection whatsoever with anybody."

He told Maharishi what I had said. So as I was going on my evening walk Maharishi was there with a few people. He asked Maharishi about my situation, that India was going to be partitioned and my family was in Pakistan. Maharishi asked me, "Why don't you go?" And I said, "It was a dream. It was a dream; I had a wife, I had children and I had parents, I have relations. It was a dream. My dream is over now." "Oh, very good if your dream is over. A dream is a dream, so why are you are afraid of a dream? If you know it is a dream go and see the dream then."

I saw he was winning a point and I wouldn't allow it. So I said, "No. Now I am physically attached to you, I have physical attachment. I cannot leave you. I want to stay with you. I'll let anything happen, whatever it is. I can't save anybody."

Then he looked at me and said, "I am with you wherever you are." These are the words in my mind. They helped me even when I left. There was no trouble for any of my family. I brought back them back to Lucknow in August of '47. There was no trouble. There was trouble all around but it was very safe for us. The guru, the master helps everywhere.