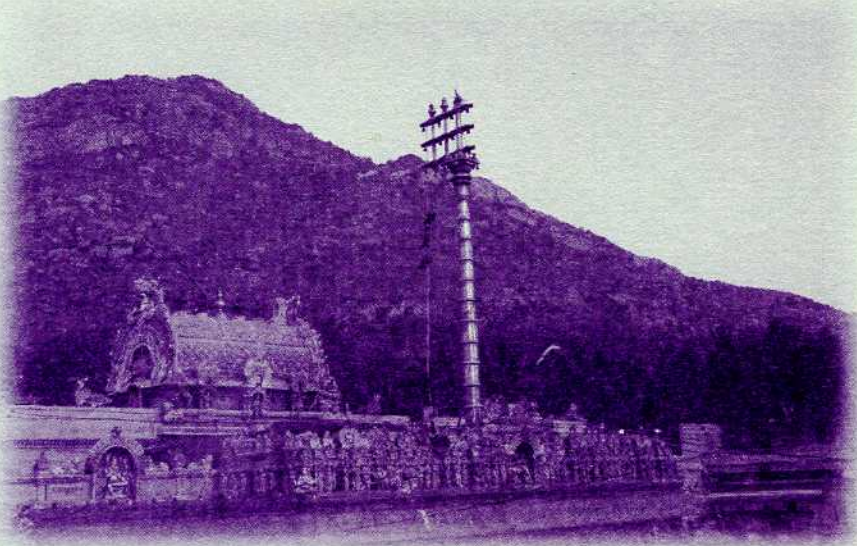


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Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi, from Kunju Swami's notebook

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Mukundaraj Samadhi

Mukundaraj

Paramamrita

Essence of the Eternal Elixir

HANS (SAUTAMALI) TURSTIG
AND JOHN GRIMES

Mukundaraj was a Sanskrit scholar, a Sage, endowed with miraculous powers, a follower of Sri Adi Sankaracarya's philosophy of *Advaita*, a yogi of the *Natha Pantha*, and the spiritual preceptor of prince Jaitrapala (Jayantpal). His Guru was Harinath. The honour of being the first Marathi poet to simplify the Vedanta philosophy of Self-knowledge goes to Mukundaraj (c. 1128 - 1200 CE). He composed verses in simple Marathi. Before Mukundaraj, *Advaita* teachings were forbidden to anyone not knowing Sanskrit as well as to non-*brahmins*. Thus, he laid the foundation for a gradual evolution of social justice in Maharashtra as well as making available the Vedantic teachings to everyone.

Mukundaraj was a Deshastha *brahmin* probably born at Pauni in the Bhandara district. His samadhi is in Ambejogai, Maharashtra, though the exact date of his birth is not certain. He is reputed to have

lived during the reign of Prince Jayantpal and eventually became a tutor to the prince. Jayantpal had a strong desire to experience the Self and had asked every ascetic that propounded the theory of Vedanta to teach him. It so happened that Mukundaraj paid a visit to the prince and was, as usual, asked to show the prince the Self. Unlike the many ascetics that preceded him, Mukundaraj succeeded where the others had failed. Tradition has it that he asked the prince to keep staring at a camel and, at the same time, drink a cupful of milk without the least idea of the camel in his mind. The prince tried his best but had to confess that he could not do so. It was impossible, he said, to gaze at the camel and, at the same time, to keep the idea of it out of his mind. Mukundaraj retorted that the mind must be controlled before the Self could be realised. The prince then realised what learning of Vedanta entailed and Mukundaraj lived for a long time at the capital as a tutor to the prince.

Vivekasindhu and *Paramamrita* are the only two works of Mukundaraj that we know of. The former, written in the ovi metre, has eighteen chapters and 1671 verses and is considered the first major book on Vedanta in the Marathi language. Mukundaraj is thought to be the first Maharashtrian to compose verses in the ovi metre. The *Paramamrita* contains fourteen chapters and 303 verses. This work was composed at the request of Prince Jayantpal. Mukundaraj says at the end of the seventh chapter: "Jayantpal, son of Ballal who was the son of Narisimha, had this work prepared. Just as the whole universe has obtained the benefit of bathing in the Ganges, by virtue of the good luck of Bhagiratha, so the whole world is blessed with this work on account of Jayantpal."

Mukundaraj's samadhi is located at a distance of two miles from Ambejogai (about 200 miles east of Mumbai in the middle of Maharashtra) on the slopes of the Balaghat range, and the hill adorned by the *samadhi* is known as Mukundaraj Hill. By its side flows the river Banaganga. The tops of the hills are always clad with dense forests and in the rainy season, when streams come trickling down the valley from the hilltops, the view is bewitching. The samadhi, situated inside a tunnel, is approached by a flight of nearly 100 steps. A spring

emanating out of the rocks, close by the samadhi, is considered to be a *tirtha* (place of pilgrimage). In the western side buildings have been provided that are generally used by pilgrims. In the plains below, a huge *sabha mandap* (meeting hall) measuring nearly 4,000 square feet has been erected by his devotees. In this *mandap* a small shrine of Vitthal Rukhumai has also been installed. The samadhi has become a place of assemblage for people on *vadya ekadasi* every month when kirtans and bhajans are arranged. In Margasirsa, a fair attended by over 30,000 persons is held in honour of Mukundaraj.

Paramamrita

Essence of the Eternal Elixir

I shall now tell you how to be able to acquire that basic secret wisdom, without the understanding of which there cannot be anything gained, in which one must keep one's mind concentrated, that wisdom in which the yogi is constantly immersed.

I shall clearly convey to you the very essence of this wisdom like the elixir churned out of the ocean or butter from milk so that you may give up the various spiritual practices that are based on mere concepts and which are, therefore, only an exercise in futility so long as there has not been a clear understanding of the significance of the awesome pronouncements of the Great Sayings of the Upanisads (*mahavakyas*).

Who can understand the extent of the seeker's misery so long as he has not clearly understood and experienced the true nature of the Absolute? Those poor souls who have accepted the shackles of physical penances and mental disciplines have in reality entangled themselves in doubt and indecision. How can they ever hope to cross the ocean of worldly life (*samsara*)? Worship, pilgrimages, charities, sacrifices, mantra and tantra practices can only provide time-bound results. Prayers and penances cannot bring about liberation unless there is Self-knowledge.

Pure wisdom – Reality – cannot shine forth until the basic unity of multiplicity and the non-dual Absolute is clearly assimilated, and there is an unblemished understanding of the nature of illusion (*maya*), which is the cause of the apparent difference between the two. How can there be any question of liberation so long as the identification with the body as a separate entity or doer is not destroyed through a proper comprehension of the terms ‘Thou’ and ‘That’ in the *mahavakya* “That Thou Art”?

How can there be liberation unless there has been a) instruction on Vedanta from the lips of the Guru; b) meditation on the Guru’s words; and c) total absorption in the Guru’s teachings?

Rules of conduct laid down by the shastras (scriptures) are only meant for a smoother working of the social structure. The seeker should seek instruction from the Guru regarding the essence of Vedanta, whereby one would realise that state of liberation, which is prior to thought and word. And when, in that state of liberation, there is the union of the individual (*jiva*) and the Lord (Siva), the state of duality disappears.

When the Absolute with the help of its primordial energy externalises Itself as the multi-faceted manifestation, the aspects of creation, sustention, and dissolution of the manifested universe happen in Consciousness. Whatever has form and shape and is, therefore, perceptible to the senses is to be rejected as being really Real, and that which is unseen and remains as the witness is to be recognized as the Reality. Know That to be the Reality, which is prior to the arising of Consciousness, which is termed the all-knowing, all-controlling Absolute.

That Reality is the witness of everything. It cannot be measured by any criterion, it has no specific place of abidance: it is all-pervading, limitless, unknowable. That Reality is what remains when everything that is illusory is rejected. It is Itself pure wisdom, pure bliss, self-evident. That Reality is all by itself, the original fullness of possibility,

the Plenum, prior to witnessing of all that is created, maintained, and dissolved. The Absolute Reality is totally apart from all aspects of manifestation: Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the maintainer of the universe), and Rudra (the destroyer) and the Primeval Power (*Shakti*). It is pure Brahman. It is only in this perspective that Reality is to be apprehended — it will not be comprehensible by any other means and practices based on ignorance and duality.

The superficial meaning of the term '*Tvam*' (Thou) is conveyed by that which is governed by *maya*. The true meaning of the term '*Tat*' (That) is pure non-dual Brahman, which cannot be experienced except after due discrimination. A clear conscious perception of the true meaning of the term 'That' is indeed liberation itself. The same sight in both eyes, the same sound in both ears and the same word on both lips — similarly, when one sees the same meaning in both '*Tat*' (That) and '*Tvam*' (Thou), Brahman is attained, which is beyond duality. Just as the difference between the space in a pot and the space in a house disappears when both are broken, so also the duality disappears when both terms are withdrawn. The apparent difference between the two is only because of the illusion of *maya*. As soon as the false is seen as false, only Reality remains.

The wisdom of the Self is *Advaita*, that is non-duality, but it is obviously to be acquired in apparent duality so that the duality disappears in due course when one remains firmly in that wisdom. Instead of looking ahead as one usually does, one must look back and seek the Source in order to realize one's true Being.

'Looking back' is to be interpreted in the sense that the eye can see the objects in front but it cannot see itself; if one wants to see one's own eyes, it can be done only by the mind, the mind can be seen only through the intellect, and it is Consciousness that can witness the intellect.

What one sees from this transformed perspective is nothing tangible but an all-pervading Oneness, where there is an absence of

maya and non-wisdom — something immeasurable which one can know only by experiencing it. That wisdom of the Absolute is self-evident, like a solid mass of profound bliss, the realisation of which brings the end of conceptualizing.

I shall tell you how to acquire that wisdom by which you shall have perpetual peace and contentment. But one must first find out precisely who or what it is that is doing the seeking. The only thing you know as a matter of certainty is the fact I AM, I exist. But you do not know who this 'I' is. My friend, why have you forgotten your Self? Who are you, and where have you come from? Indeed, have you really gone anywhere or come from anywhere? You have never even thought of considering this matter on these lines.

Are you the body, or is it you who have the body? You are the subject and the body is your object. It is you who have the knowledge of the body and indeed that you wear this body like a garment. Although you have acquired this body as a covering made of five elements, you have identified yourself with it and you strut about as an individual. Be clearly aware that this body is an object and that you are quite apart from it, and thus give up this mistaken identity with the body.

You are aware of the constitution of your body, that a) the hair, skin, veins, flesh and bones (the solid part of the body) represent the earth; b) saliva, urine, blood, marrow and semen (the five fluid materials) represent water; c) hunger, thirst, laziness, sleep, and sex represent fire; d) moving, running, resisting, relaxing, and contracting (the five kinds of activity) represent air; and e) desire, anger, grief, greed, and fear (the five qualities) represent space. The physical body, with these twenty-five parts, qualities, and activities has six natural changes: it is conceived, born, grows, matures, becomes old, and finally dies. You know the colour and form of this body, and the name it has been given. How then can you identify your Being with the body that is something other than you? You, as Being – Consciousness – are formless, whereas you can see the form of the body. In the waking state it is Consciousness that acts through the body and has various

experiences through the senses. The feeling that you have a particular name and form belongs to the mind, and you, as the knower of the body and the mind are apart from both.

Although you are apparently seen as the manifestation of the internal organ (*antahkarana*) — mind, intellect, discrimination, and ego — nevertheless you exist prior to the manifestation of these five constituents of the subtle body. It is Consciousness that is there first — spontaneous, Self-effulgent. The one who is aware of the rising passions and emotions is the mind, and it is the intellect which discriminates and decides; that which purposefully concentrates on the decisions of the intellect is the operational centre; and the one who accepts the doership of actions is the ego. It is you who are aware of this five-fold analysis of the internal organ because you are the Self-awareness or Witness or Atman. The thread is made out of cotton though it is different in appearance. Similarly, mind, intellect, discrimination, and ego may appear to be different but all arise from the same Source — Being, Consciousness, Reality.

The breeze is the cause of the ripples on the water, and the twist in the cotton is the cause of the thread; similarly, *maya* is the cause of the appearance of the subtle body. When the cause is removed, both the ripples and the thread disappear; similarly, with the arising of Self-wisdom and the removal of ignorance, *maya* becomes exposed and disappears. When the ripples and the water, or the thread and the cotton, unite — the duality disappears. Similarly, when the mind merges into Consciousness, the sense of duality disappears.

The mental or psychological structure of a person is the subtle body and the relevant condition is the dream state that is based on desire. Mind works through the senses, and such desires that remain dormant in the mind manifest themselves in the dream state as objects and desires that have been experienced earlier. The manifestation of the dream world occurs because of that very spark of Consciousness that illuminates the internal organ, just as the heat that heats a metal in sunlight is the quality of the sun. It is this Consciousness that has made

manifestation possible. If Consciousness were to disappear, there would be no manifestation to perceive, and you would be in your original state of the fullness of the Potential, the Absolute. If you are able to reject as illusion without any substance all that you see and experience in your Consciousness, then you will be immersed in what remains as Reality. Consciousness will remain merged within Itself without movement.

The shadow shows the shape, form, and parts of the original body but is really without substance; similarly, the one who says "I do not know" is an illusion. There is the prior one who knows or witnesses the other one who says, "I do not know." The fact of not-knowing was known not to ignorance but to wisdom. That wisdom to which the non-knowing was known is Atman. Make no mistake about it. Even if one believes that one does not have Self-knowledge, this very fact could not have been known in the absence of knowledge. I know that I do not know. Therefore, ignorance as such is an illusion: if you know that you do not know why do you unnecessarily involve yourself in the concept of ignorance? This ignorance is itself the causal body of which the physical body and the subtle body are the instruments.

Listen now to the symptoms and the quality of deep sleep. Various concepts based on the events in the waking state, arise in the mind and reflect themselves in the dream state. But when Consciousness, which is the substratum for both the waking state and the dream state, suspends its operation, then comes the state of deep sleep — total non-knowledge. This non-knowledge is true knowledge because it is the absence of both knowledge and ignorance, which are both interrelated opposites. When Consciousness re-emerges into movement, the deep-sleep state forgets its true nature and again identifies itself with the individual entity and accepts the world as real. When, however, ignorance gets discarded, Reality shines just as gold remains in its purity when the impurities are destroyed in the fire. After ignorance has been destroyed and Self-knowledge has come about, that which sees the physical, the subtle, and causal bodies as a witness, is the supra-causal body — this is the *turiya* state. When through Self-knowledge the working bodies and the causal body are

demolished, the supra-causal body itself cannot survive: when the effect is destroyed, the cause cannot survive.

That changeless state wherein one is aware of one's Self-existence in *Parabrahman*, is Liberation, Reality. Meditation along these lines results gradually into firm conviction, and then one experiences the hollowness of the world. When both knowledge and non-knowledge disappear, then will dawn that Knowledge which is the Absolute Reality. One must recede into the Source whence springs all knowledge. That source is Reality, the immeasurable Potential, the Absolute into which Consciousness ultimately merges itself.

That Reality which is Self-effulgent cannot have a seer to see it as an object. Reality, therefore, cannot be a void: it is neither Consciousness in movement nor manifestation nor ignorance but the fullness of pure wisdom, the limitless possibility, beyond comprehension. You are that Reality, the Absolute, the fullness of possibility that has gobbled up even the concept of the Void, that Self-effulgent Source of everything. It is this Reality that you should understand yourself to be: independent, pure, the witnessing principle whose clear image it is impossible to visualize.

You are that Reality where all that is illusory has been absorbed, where the duality of a 'Thou' cannot survive; and so the terms 'That' and 'Thou' have become superfluous.

First convince yourself about your true nature as has been expounded so far, and then adopt the regular practice as follows: find a quiet spot, sit quietly, calm and relaxed; check the outward flow of thoughts. With an attitude of renunciation towards all that is manifest, the mind should be turned inwards, away from the sense objects, to the core of the Heart. Then give up gradually your identification first with the gross physical body and then with the subtle body and the causal body, and let your mind be one with space. Release your attention, smoothly and effortlessly, from the gross senses and let it merge with Consciousness. Whenever one's attention strays, it should

again be brought back into the vacant mind smoothly and gradually, so that with patience the period of concentration becomes longer and longer. Whatever object the mind becomes attracted to, let your discrimination reject it as illusory and worthless. It is only in this manner that the mind will soon give up its flights of fancy and remain in quietude.

Until the mind naturally remains in Consciousness, persistent but gentle persuasion is necessary to make it drop whatever it tends to get involved in, and return to its Source. As you keep watching your mind and discover yourself as the witness, nothing else can appear on the screen of your Consciousness: two things cannot occupy your mind at the same moment.

When you understand that anything with a shape and form is, by its very nature, a hollow shell without substance, and that what is real is formless — the light of Consciousness — you will be immersed in the depth of Reality. When the mind gets absorbed in Consciousness, all objects disappear from the mind.

Do not put yourself in the position of the person who suddenly wakes up in the deepest dark of the night and thinks he has become blind. Do not get yourself enveloped in the darkness of ignorance; see all manifest phenomena as an illusion, and remain peacefully in Reality. Dive within and find out where thoughts arise. Seek the source of all thought — it is this Source, Consciousness, which must seek and acquire Self-knowledge: it can only happen.

Imagine for a moment that everything that is now manifest, including one's own body, has suddenly disappeared. Where precisely is it that the resulting nothingness would be registered? All that remains is 'I'-Consciousness: inside and outside, there is nothing other than the nothingness of the Void, which is the fullness of Being. That on which Consciousness has arisen must surely be prior to Consciousness. Understand beyond any doubt that it is this Source of Consciousness that you are in Reality. It is in Consciousness that everything appears including your sentience — the 'I Am' sense

of presence and the internal organ consisting of mind, intellect, discrimination and the ego. Once this fact is clearly apprehended, nothing can remain other than the Self.

Whenever you think, it is the mind that does the thinking; when the 'me' is involved in the thinking, it is the ego; when you are quiet, the very quietude is in Consciousness itself. Consider this: if you could have remained absolutely quiet, would any mnemonical recollection have ever sprouted? Would there have been any wish, any desire? If you could have remained absorbed in the Consciousness, would you have been troubled by thoughts? Would there have been any cause then to identify yourself with the body as a separate individual? Therefore, my friend, that wherein all ignorance disappears is a totally different dimension. If there were not something called pure knowledge, the Totality of all possibilities, where would the ego have arisen? This pure and perfect knowledge — neither knowledge nor non-knowledge — is not aware of itself. It becomes a witness only when a movement in Consciousness presents some manifestation to witness.

Giving up your identification with the body if you would remain quietly absorbed in the sense of the Totality — in the 'I AM' — without attachment, you will know all that is to be known. When you thus remain immersed in Consciousness, the personal, identified consciousness, having lost the power of *maya*, will itself take you to its Source, which is what you Are — Reality. In that state, there is no duality of any kind, all interrelated opposites have been naturally superimposed into nothingness. All there is, is pure knowledge, pure Being, pure Subjectivity. One cannot hold it, one cannot drop it, one cannot say it is, one cannot say it is not. Indeed, it cannot be something to be felt to BE and to remain in.

Hold on to the sense of 'I AM' to the exclusion of everything else. The mind being thus silent, will shine with a new light and vibrate in the Totality. When you keep 'I AM' feeling in the focus of awareness and watch yourself ceaselessly — when there is continuous witnessing of all movements in Consciousness — the conscious and

the unconscious will for a time play the game of hide-and-seek until finally the two become one and the one becomes the Totality. The individual then merges in the witness, the witness in pure Being — who is there then to take a measure of that ecstasy? ▲

Pearl Beyond Price

Ana Ramana

Tell me, my dearest one,
who were you before the stories,
before you fell into form?
Who are you now?
What worry is it shrouds you
from your truth?
Lure me into your deepest heart
for that is surely where I'll meet you.
Hold up your imagined wounds
to the light.
Let love seep through.
Let it drench you
in the sheer, unsullied beauty
that bore and blossomed you.
Immerse yourself in its golden glow.
Absolve yourself of any darkness.
Unleash the radiant grace
that is your birthright.
Stop at nothing, my loveliest child.
Let your passion for your true self
unfurl the perfect pearl
that is you.
Why keep on roaming,
my sweetest creature,
in the dream world?
Take my hand.
Let true love carry you home.