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LANGUAGE AS A TOOL FOR SELF-INQUIRY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English:
Composition

by
Alice Elizabeth Griffin
December 2004

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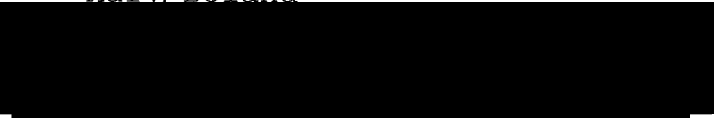
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December 2004

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I examine the rhetorical strategies used by a particular line of spiritual teachers in instructing students on their paths to enlightenment. This lineage of Ramana Maharshi focuses entirely on having students ask themselves, "Who am I?" Kenneth Burke's work in The Rhetoric of Religion is instrumental to my investigation. In addition, I made use of Stanley Fish's theories. Burke and Fish have both published theories on St. Augustine, whereby they analyze the saint's intentions and the motives behind his words. I employ these theories of Burke and Fish as I research how this lineage's rhetorical strategies change in order to address the various stages of a student's progress. Further, I apply a theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. In Course in General Linguistics, he theorizes that the world is perceived within one's mind, which is dependent on one's language system.

My thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter is an introduction and theoretical overview of Burke, Fish and Saussure. In the second chapter I detail the history of the lineage. Finally, in the third chapter I apply the theories of Burke, Fish and Saussure to the

work of this lineage. In conclusion, I attempt to analyze the various approaches of rhetoric in relation to what I see as desired effects. For example, I find that through the use of metaphors, analogies, parables and possibly the teacher's or student's own history with spirituality, and even their gender, language is an effective tool for self-inquiry.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I am examining how the areas of consciousness and language are implemented within the oral teaching tradition of the spiritual lineage of Ramana Maharshi. In addition, I examine how language is used by the teachers' consciousness to assist their students' development toward their own enlightened state of consciousness. In the case of teacher to student, clarity and comprehensibility of language are extremely important. Yet, at times, spiritual language fails to convey the teacher's intending meaning. In order to express their teaching, the teacher must rely on language symbols, for example, to point the student to a deeper understanding of the word "enlightenment." The way I will approach this examination is by observing the rhetorical strategies used by the lineage of teachers in instructing their students on their individual paths to enlightenment. I will explore how a spiritual text takes on new meaning each time it is read, since every interpretation is personalized, depending on the reader's level of comprehension in relation to the word symbols being used. I will investigate how the

response of the student varies depending on the teacher's rhetorical style. The study of metaphors, analogies, parables and possibly the teacher's or student's own history with spirituality, and even their gender, may support this research. I will examine each of these categories as examples to explain the power of rhetoric. Mainly, I will attempt to analyze the various approaches of rhetoric in relation to what I see as desired effects. I will look through the lens of well-known theorists, Kenneth Burke, Stanley Fish and Ferdinand de Saussure, to compare findings against the rhetoric of my chosen texts. I will employ their theories to my thesis as I research how these teachers' rhetorical strategies differ in order to address the various stages of a student's progress.

Burke's The Rhetoric of Religion and Fish's Is There a Text in This Class? are instrumental to my investigation. Each author has published theories on St. Augustine, analyzing the saint's intentions and the possible motives behind his words. Augustine played a large role in the development of rhetoric in the medieval period. He used rhetoric as a tool to persuade Christians to become more involved in their spiritual path and to make an earnest effort to be holy. He analyzed Biblical texts by mainly

discerning what type of rhetoric was applied. Augustine ". . . rejected Quintilian's notion that the rhetor must be a morally good man" (Corbett 498). Instead, he suggested that anyone could successfully preach Christian ideals if they mastered the skill of manipulation. Augustine's early work in the rhetoric of Biblical texts is the basis for the study of the rhetoric used in sermons and preaching alike.

Burke states that "St. Augustine noted the instructional function of rhetoric" and that ". . . once you treat instruction as an aim of rhetoric you introduce a principle that can widen the scope of rhetoric beyond persuasion" (Corbett 498). In Augustine's own text, it is evident through his writing that he is overcome with spiritual joy, by the rhetorical persuasion of scriptures. It is crucial to note that this joy is not easily written about since it only points to the spiritual experience. He writes, "Woe to those who keep silent about God; for where he is concerned, even the talkative are as though speechless" (53). Since spiritual language merely points to the teacher's theme, for example, of enlightenment, and cannot be conveyed completely through the use of words, then the student's capacity to comprehend must be through the use of symbolic inference. For instance, if a student

reads a spiritual text stating, "You are That," instead of, "You are that," the mystical symbolism of enlightenment is inferred by the mere capitalization of "That." In small case, the word "that" simply indicates a thing or a person, like "that car." Yet when capitalized, it linguistically represents an unqualifiable object to the student, for it becomes a symbol of the non-conceptual state they are aspiring to.

Burke suggests there is a double process of language that challenges the student to see, for instance, that the word "tree" is not actually the tree itself. When applying the double process theory to spiritual language, a certain transcendency is then placed on top of a word, such as grace. Since one does not "see" grace as one "sees" a tree, there is instead a certain confidence in the language symbol that allows the transcendent feeling of grace to define its meaning. At the same time, the student knows that the use of the word "grace" is only pointing to grace, but is not actually grace itself.

Saussure examines in his book, Course in General Linguistics, how language symbols or concepts take on new meaning within the structure of individualized language systems. For example, an individual perceives the world in

their mind. Therefore, Saussure believes that language is responsible for making the world which is contained within each person's mind. Based on this theory, without language, there would not be a world. In terms of spirituality, language can be a hindrance. Teachers are often pointing to what lies beyond language, possibly to this place that Saussure is also referring to, where there is no world or no illusion of one.

Another influential factor of how one comprehends spiritual language is based on their personal views. According to Fish, since who one is determines how a text is read, their understanding is based on their interpretation of that text. Moreover, Fish claims, "Interpretive strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read" (171). An example of how one's interpretations are influenced by their personal views is in the case of a reader who has had a religious experience or conversion, for everything they do will be viewed through this context. Fish writes of a baseball player who was put in a game due to a teammate's conjunctivitis. Since he might not have played that game if it were not for the teammate's eye infection, based on

his religious beliefs he interpreted the conjunctivitis as "divine intervention" (Fish 270).

Similar to Fish's views on interpretive communities is Burke's philosophy on identification, which is based on the theory that one forms identity through friends, occupations, activities, beliefs and values, etc. When two individuals are united through common ideas or attitudes, such as student and teacher, then identification between the two people occurs. This identification gives rise to unity, which is formed from identifying with one another and also between the reader and a text. If this unity is powerful, it in turn creates rhetorical persuasion. Along the same line, Saussure believes that the meaning of language is derived through communities.

The amount of persuasion found in a spiritual teacher's language must be effective, if they desire to convey their teachings within their interpretive community of students. Even if the teacher appears to lack patience when speaking to their student during a teaching, the impatient tone of voice itself may be the tool of persuasion. After all, the teacher's intention is to help guide the student. Yet, when the teacher only uses words to point in the direction of what they are referring to,

such as with the word "enlightenment" or "truth," then depending on the student's level of comprehension, confusion may set in. Dan White states the difficulty in expressing the inexpressible, "Spiritual teachers have continually stressed that words are only about truth, not truth itself. Truth cannot be known except through direct experience, through enlightenment" (IX). The student has to abandon the conceptualization of the intellect, in favor of the innate, to directly experience the teacher's intended meaning.

If the teacher's language is not understood, then the student will be lost in conceptualizing. White states, "And often language is a barrier to knowing the truth because there is confusion between beams of non-verbal intuition and that learned arbitrary framework called language" (IX). The spiritual student must understand that even though language is symbolic, ". . . symbols are always less than the realities for which they stand. As such, language constricts consciousness and places limits on understanding" (IX). Therefore, the student has to transcend language and its symbols to a state in which their perceptions are not filtered through the mind.

Walt Whitman wrote of such an unspeakable state, "When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot, my tongue is ineffectual on its pivots, my breath will not be obedient to its organs, I become a dumb man" (White 92). Even Paul the Apostle heard "unspeakable words" when ". . . caught up into paradise," (White 92), i.e., "paradise" representing an enlightened state of mind. Further, Dante wrote of the loss of words while in a spiritual state, "My vision was greater than our speech, which yields to such a sight" (White 92). Yet, the spiritual teacher does not view language as an obstruction like the student may. One spiritual teacher of the lineage states:

If you think that the "I" will stay with you after realization then you fail to understand the difference between the "I" that you use and the "I" that I use. That makes the difference! The "I" that most people use indicates ego, body, mind and senses. It indicates someone who is born. You consider yourself to have form and thus you want a name and the most basic name is "I." If you simply keep Quiet and do not look at the quietness or the form, or the name, then you

will see that some sort of Awareness is still there. (Poonja 118)

Consciousness and its ability to communicate through language are the two highest attributes bestowed on humankind. Consciousness is the state of being aware. It embraces the entire range of states of awareness, from self-aware, to aware of oneself in relation to the Universe, to consciousness being fully aware of its true, essential nature. Within the Vedic tradition, language provides the means to share and exchange within this range of consciousness, not only coarse ideas and perceptions of self-awareness rife with ignorant misconceptions, but also to the subtler ranges of awareness where social consciousness allows freedom, peace, equality and other high minded ideas. In this thesis, I will examine how a particular lineage of spiritual teacher's use of language helps students on their paths toward enlightenment. The next chapter will be an overview of the teacher's lives and how the lineage was established. In the final chapter, I will apply the theories of Burke, Fish and Saussure to certain works from these teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LANGUAGE AND LINEAGE

The lineage of Ramana Maharshi is unique as the entire focus is simply posing to oneself the question, "Who am I?" In this thesis, I will examine the relationship between student and teacher when posing this question of self-inquiry. Maharshi taught in India from the 1920s through the 1950s. Following Ramana's death in 1950, his student, H.W.L. Poonja, carried on these teachings until he passed away in the early 1990s. Near the end of Poonja's life, he chose an American student, whom he gave the name Gangaji, to offer these teachings to people in the West. The message conveyed by all these teachers is the same: recognize your essential nature and be freed from the negative emotions and mental trappings of the ego. Having engaged in studies of this tradition over the last few years, I find these teachers to be remarkably effective in the way they teach, using language as a tool for self-inquiry. This lineage is particularly suitable for study because it represents a specific and concise tradition, and due to the teachers having distributed their words widely in books, tapes and ongoing retreat sessions, it provides a

wealth of resources. Further, this research is important because it exemplifies the ideal, peaceful learning environment of a classroom, created by the teacher for their students to potentially flourish under.

This particular lineage of spiritual teachers loosely bases their teachings on the Vedas. The Vedas are books comprised of ancient Indian scriptures compiled around 3500 B.C. In comparison with other religious traditions this lineage is relatively unknown. For example, different sects of Tibetan Buddhists can trace their lineage back centuries ago. However, the origins of the Vedic lineage can only be traced back to the 1920s, when Maharshi began teaching. Students flocked to him at a small mountainside in India to sit in his presence and hear his teachings. He never once searched for students. His popularity grew strictly by word of mouth, since students were experiencing higher levels of comprehension than they had with other teachers. Those who sought him found his natural linguistic style better than others in teaching how to attain enlightenment. Generally, a teacher with strong linguistic abilities has the potential to capture their students' attention, thereby facilitating higher degrees of learning.

Ramana Maharshi Biography

Maharshi grew up the son of a lawyer in India. His father died when he was an adolescent. While he was a teenager he had a death experience which caused him to internally examine who dies. He came to the conclusion through a profound awakening, that the body dies, but the spirit, or God within, lives on. Instantly, his fear of death vanished. Around the same time, he had reoccurring thoughts of Arunachala, a hill in India. The Indian god, Shiva, has supposedly manifested as the hill so that people will have a chance to know God externally, if they have difficulty seeking God within (Osbourne 15). He ran away to Arunachala, never to return to his family, which was of a very high caste. He made Arunachala his home. Maharshi stopped speaking for a few years and dwelled in caves where he experienced deep meditative states. A neighboring meditator took to looking after him when he saw the brilliance emanating from the teenager. He was safe now from the young boys who would come and throw rocks at him while he meditated and also from the rats that ate the flesh from his legs. His caretaker force fed him for a long while until he regained awareness of his body and could care for himself. This man dedicated the rest of his

life to serving Ramana. Slowly, spiritual seekers found Maharshi and asked him to teach. There are many accounts of his mere presence putting people in a peaceful, blissful state of mind, leaving them utterly speechless (Osbourne 206). He taught many people how to attain such a state by finding God within. Of this lineage, he is the one who refers most to the Vedas, which he reportedly studied, along with other Indian texts. A lot of Americans came over on ships from 1930 to 1950 to study with him. Around this time a modest center was built for him at the foothill of Arunachala. Some of these wealthy Americans wanted to bring him back to the West, but he refused to ever leave the hill (Osbourne 25). He died there in 1950.

H.W.L. Poonja Biography

After Maharshi's death, one of his students, an Indian householder named H.W.L. Poonja, slowly gained a following and taught up until his own death in the early 1990s. He met Maharshi in 1944 after searching most of India for a spiritual teacher who could show him God. Maharshi stopped him in his tracks by silently gazing at him. Words were not necessary; Poonja left Maharshi's center knowing God. He stayed with him for a short while, then went back to his

job and family, still able to experience the God within, even without the physical presence of his teacher. With diligence, Poonja, or as he was more commonly referred to by his students, Papaji ("Papa" is simply the word father, "ji" is a title of respect), never turned back, insisting he has always known God from the silent moment in which Maharshi's eyes radiated into his. He expressed this state of mind until the day he died.

Papaji's mother was very religious and would take him to see many spiritual teachers. As a teenager he was drawn more to politics than religion and joined underground groups to force the British out of India. In disguise, he would shout anti-British sentiments from a platform in the middle of busy cities. He voiced just enough, then ran each time before getting caught (Godman 156). Eventually, he joined the British army with the hopes of learning their skills and their intentions toward the Indians. He planned on being an informative to the Indian movements but, soon after, realized that it would be impossible for India to ever beat the British, due to their large armies (Godman 198). While in the army Papaji experienced many visions of religious figures, such as Krishna, whom his mother loved dearly (Godman 223). This religious path became a more

important cause than the one to fight and conquer the British. As soon as he was able to leave the army, he did so, thus beginning his quest to find God.

Unlike his teacher, Ramana Maharshi, Papaji was a householder with three children. He worked different careers throughout his life, but the most prosperous one was offered to him right after meeting his teacher. He was asked to manage a mine in the jungles of South India. It required very little work on his part, with a lot of money. This gave him the opportunity to quietly rest and ponder the teachings he heard Maharshi give to seekers. Every weekend he went to Arunachala to visit him, though he would rarely talk to him (Godman 346). He just wanted to sit in his presence. By train it would take five hours or more each way to arrive at the center.

In interviews Papaji tells of how people began showing up at his work in the jungle to ask him philosophical questions. This was very odd since he was in a remotely isolated place with only himself and a mining crew of workers, who were not interested in spirituality. Like his teacher, Ramana Maharshi, he never sought students. Instead, students found him. The fact that students sought these two teachers is crucial to my study since it provides

evidence that these men were efficient teachers. In the case of such a teacher, their subject matter almost becomes secondary, as in the writing classroom. When the teacher's approach is authentic, then the student is drawn in and has a better chance at succeeding academically. In the case of Papaji, being sought out became a problem after awhile. He found he had to move from place to place, because he was constantly bombarded with people asking for his help. In his travels he eventually met very earnest students whom he wished to help and began giving teachings, at their request, in their hometowns. He eventually taught all over India and Europe. Often he was offered homes or land to build centers on, even his own island (Godman 450). He consistently refused until old age finally prevented him from traveling. At this point, he agreed to let his students build a modest center in Lucknow, India where he spent the rest of his life teaching and enjoying the nearby Ganges River.

Gangaji Biography

Prior to his death, Papaji asked one of his American female students, Antoinette Roberson Varner, now known as Gangaji, to spread the teachings in the West, where she has

been teaching for over ten years. A former cheerleader and Mississippi high school homecoming queen, Gangaji grew up with alcoholic parents. As a child, she was institutionalized for one year in a state mental hospital due to anxiety attacks. Social drinking was fashionable at the time, so her parent's alcoholism never factored into the psychologist's reports of possible causes of her anxiety. At the same time she was given prescription drugs to help her relax. During these early years, Gangaji was influenced by the dominant presence of Christianity in the South (Gangaji 45). Even though she is more influenced today by Eastern thought, the language she uses reflects this childhood influence. Often she uses the words "Heaven" and "Hell" as metaphors for her students to better comprehend her teachings.

Gangaji met her teacher, Papaji, in April of 1990. After searching many years for a spiritual way of life, but never feeling completely fulfilled, Gangaji ended up at Papaji's doorstep in Lucknow, India and was forever changed. Months before, her husband of nearly three decades had set out to find a true teacher in Asia. He, too, had spent much of his life searching for the perfect teacher, but was never satisfied. A man in America had

told them both about a teacher in India who was a true master. Gangaji's husband arrived in Lucknow looking for him, but to no avail. Then, after a day or two, while overlooking the city from his balcony, he spotted a flying kite. He felt it was a sign showing him where to find the teacher (Gangaji 124). He left immediately and found the house. Upon knocking, the door was answered with a warm greeting by Papaji who said, "I've been waiting for you" (Gangaji 126). Gangaji's husband stayed in meditation with him for a few weeks, and then went back to America. Not too much later, they returned to Lucknow together. Papaji opened the door and greeted Gangaji with the same message, "I've been waiting for you." She writes how after spending time with Papaji she noticed that he said that to everybody who entered his house (Gangaji 130).

Gangaji knew she had found her true teacher and did not want to ever leave him. She and her husband spent every day they were in Lucknow with Papaji. Daily he held teachings, which attracted many students from all over. Papaji created a learning environment that made it hard for students to leave. This only happens when the teacher is able to convey their teaching with such a precise clarity that the majority of students can comprehend, as in all

successful classrooms. Eventually, Gangaji and her husband had to return home to Hawaii due to their visas expiring. As soon as they landed in America, they made plans to return to their teacher (Gangaji 146).

The second time they appeared together at Papaji's doorstep he greeted them with, "Why are you back so soon?" (Gangaji 162). This shocked Gangaji and after feeling hurt by his coldness, she realized that this was her mistake that she had not truly listened to his teachings. She slowly awakened to the presence of God in herself, rather than relying on outward appearance, such as Papaji's physical form. He had taught her that doing so creates separation and duality, which is not a God-like state. In this state one sees everything as the presence of God, good and bad. Gangaji knew that if she truly felt Papaji's eternal presence, then she could feel it everywhere, with or without his physical form. Once he saw that her mind was opened enough for this understanding, he asked her to go back to the West and teach (Gangaji 171).

The methods of teaching vary greatly in accordance with the individual needs of each student. However, the main focus within this particular lineage is to peel away the layers of egoic labels that one places on them, by

asking the student who he or she really is. Thus, "life ceases to be problematic when it is understood that the ego is a social fiction" (Watts 198). One of the teachers in this lineage, Gangaji, shares many stories of her experiences with her teacher, Papaji, and of how he helped her realize her true nature. Yet, in relation to one's story, she states, "The only story worth telling is one that points to the end of the story" (Gangaji i). By "story" she means the stories of our egos, because the true nature of one's being does not have a story; it is silent. Ironically, to reach the silence of one's true being, a lot of stories have to be told and retold by these teachers in order for the student to comprehend his or her teaching. Of course, there is always a portion of the students who will never understand. One student states:

In a class of students, one may pass and all the others may fail. The teacher gives out the same knowledge, the same training to everyone in the class, but if only one student truly absorbs it and keeps it, is it the fault of the teacher?

The others were given the same teaching, but if they forgot it at the time of their exams, they have no one to blame but themselves. (Godman 177)

The more fully a student comprehends what a teacher says,
the more fully language serves its purpose (and the more
fully both student and teacher fulfill their respective
roles).

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I apply the theories of Kenneth Burke, Stanley Fish and Ferdinand Saussure to the texts of the Maharshi lineage. I found similar thematic passages to analyze. In format, Plato's Dialogues resemble these teachings. For example, the student poses a question which the teacher informally answers. At times the teacher and student argue logically with one another. Yet, at other times, the student poses question after question, even after the teacher has answered it the first time it was posed. Generally, the teacher offers an answer, which satisfies the student's inquiring mind. In circumstances such as these, when the student only hears the answer once, the teacher's language is rhetorically persuasive. Furthermore, in this chapter, I examine how persuasive this language is in helping students on their paths toward enlightenment.

Burke, Fish and Saussure each agree that language is derived through identification with communities. Therefore, as one reads a text, it is influenced by numerous factors that evolve from these communities, such

as values, beliefs, etc. Burke and Fish have published theories on St. Augustine's spiritual writings, of which I compare with the texts of this lineage. Further, Burke points out that the language used in certain spiritual texts is elevated in the sense that a double process of language occurs when a word's language symbol transcends its general, dictionary definition. Therefore, the rhetoric used by teachers can be highly influential based on the student's relationship to language.

Who Am I?

According to the lineage of Ramana Maharshi, through self-inquiry one's original, natural state of being is revealed. The essential question posed by the teacher to the student is to ask oneself, "Who am I?" This question creates a space in which the student turns their attention inward, pondering their existence. In the following passage, Maharshi's student questions his teaching of self-inquiry:

MAHARSHI: All things are like bubbles on water. You are the water and the objects are the bubbles. They cannot exist apart from the water, but they are not quite the same as the water.

STUDENT: I feel I am like froth.

MAHARSHI: Cease that identification with the unreal and know your real identity. Then you will be firm and no doubts can arise.

STUDENT: But I am the froth.

MAHARSHI: Because you think that way, there is worry. It is wrong imagination. Accept your true identity with the Real. Be the water and not the froth. (Full text of this appears as Appendix A)

The student has difficulty viewing their existence, or state of being, as anything beyond "froth," or mind.

Continuing on, the student still misinterprets Maharshi's dialogue:

STUDENT: But I took the idea from you that you want me to dive in.

MAHARSHI: Yes, quite right. It was said because you are identifying yourself with the froth and not the water. Because of this confusion, the answer was meant to draw your attention to this confusion and bring it home to you. All that is meant is that the Self is infinite, inclusive of all that you see.

(Full text of this appears as Appendix A)

Maharshi implies that he knows the student is confused. However, it is not his intention to confuse students, "On reading Maharshi's answers in general, he not only responds to the questions at different levels, but admits it in as many words and sometimes weaves his way in and out of the levels while warning people against confusing them" (Sharma 3). Metaphorically, the student states in this particular passage that he or she felt like "the froth" of the water. Maharshi points out that the froth is part of the water; there is not any separation. As with the body and the world, an individual believes they are two separate entities, but upon closer inspection, one finds they are the same. The student spoke in metaphor to Maharshi, who in turn answered in metaphor.

Gangaji addresses a similar question of self-inquiry, but advises the student in a different manner than Maharshi:

I am not asking you to remember who you are. I am asking you to put everything aside and discover what has never really been forgotten. See what has always been present. Just for a moment, don't think about who you are. Don't think about what you need, or what you didn't get, or what you should get. In this instant of

not thinking, truth is evident. The true teaching is everywhere. Just stop hoping for it to look a certain way, expecting it to speak or act a certain way, and you will hear it. It is everywhere. It is coming off every pine needle.

(11)

Gangaji's teaching on self-inquiry is very direct. Another example from one of her teachings is, "The truth of who you are has never been born, is not even subject to birth. It is what gives rise to birth, what is before birth. That is who you are" (78). In these examples, the student appears to perceive Gangaji's directness with greater clarity than the teaching style of Maharshi. Gangaji's rhetoric is more persuasive, since Maharshi's use of metaphor appears to confuse his student, instead of enlighten. For example, Maharshi tells the student to be the water, but Gangaji, in her direct approach, would tell the student that they already are the water. Maharshi's language suggests that there is a sense of having to become something, when Gangaji's language tells the student that they are already this something.

Metaphorically, in his text, Augustine uses the word "weight" to convey a sense of lightness to his readers (163). Burke states, "If a word is used metaphorically, the listener must know implicitly that it is not to be used literally" (284). As Augustine's "weight" implies lightness, the water metaphor, used by Maharshi and Gangaji, implies one's true nature. Further, Burke writes:

By selecting a religious image (in this case, the lineage's water metaphor) in which to convey the purely naturalistic sense of hush, the octave infuses the natural scene with hints of a wider circumference, supernatural in scope. If the scene (the water) is supernatural in quality, the agent (the student) contained by this scene will partake of the same supernatural quality. And so, spontaneously, purely by being the kind of agent that is at one with the kind of scene, the agent is "divine." The contents of a divine container will synecdochically share in its divinity. (8)

The language used by Maharshi and Gangaji is essentially the same, yet how it differs gives rise to

enormous or subtle changes in the students' interpretations, depending on their relationship to the words. Saussure writes, "Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (650). Thus, different meanings may be comprehended from similar teachings.

Parables

The structure of a parable is ". . . a narrative with a certain very specific syntactic shape (beginning-middle-end or situation-transformation-situation) and with a subject matter which allows for or encourages the projection of human values upon this material" (Tirrell 115). In other words, the parable's purpose is to teach a moral lesson so that the individual can understand the world in a better light, thus making it possible for one to be fully functional in society. The New Testament provides many examples of famous spiritual parables, or moral lessons, with which most are familiar. Likewise, within this Vedic tradition of teachers, parables are often employed in teaching lessons to students.

Maharshi tells a student a parable in which a man encounters a group of grieving fools who think one of them has drowned. The man notices that they merely miscounted and relieves their sorrow by recounting for them:

Hearing this they rejoiced at the prospect of finding their 'lost' comrade and accepted the method suggested by the wayfarer. While the kind wayfarer gave a strike to each of the ten in turn, he who got the strike counted himself aloud. 'Ten,' said the last man as he got the last strike in his turn. Bewildered they looked at one another, 'We are ten,' they said with one voice and thanked the wayfarer for having removed their grief. That is the parable. (Full text of this appears as Appendix B)

Maharshi is direct in his explanation of the parable of its relationship to his student:

From where was the tenth man brought in? Was he ever lost? By knowing that he had been there all the while, did they learn anything new? The cause of grief was not the real loss of anyone, it was their own ignorance, or rather, their mere supposition that one of them was lost. Such is

the case with you. Truly there is no cause for you to be miserable and unhappy. You yourself impose limitations on your true nature of infinite being, and then weep that you are but a finite creature. (Full text of this appears as Appendix B)

Maharshi explicitly tells his student that knowledge is not an added benefit of knowing your true self; rather, it is always there and will shine through once ignorance has been lifted. The fools miscounted due to their ignorance. This is a powerful parable to show the student how easy it is to overlook one's natural state when one is preoccupied with an ignorant state of being. Yet, in just one moment, if one is aware, then the ignorance will vanish. Awareness is represented in the parable by the wayfarer who gave the fools the strikes. "Bliss is not added to your nature, it is merely revealed as your true natural state, eternal and imperishable. The only way to be rid of your grief is to know and be the Self" (Godman 23-5).

Ignorance is a reoccurring theme that this lineage works hard to dispel. It alone is the problem. Maharshi is motivated to awaken this student from his or her ignorant state. He uses descriptions such as "finite

being" to sharply contrast with what an infinite being is, and even compares the student with the fools when he says "such is the case with you" in regard to the fools' ignorance. The rhetoric used by Maharshi in this piece is didactic in style, a style that reappears later in Papaji's teachings. This kind of rhetoric is persuasive when the teacher is talking to the student in this manner. The teacher already holds a higher position, one in which the student looks up to in the hopes of gaining knowledge.

The parable that Maharshi chose to share with his student creates a space where the student's sympathies are aroused as well as their imagination. However, ". . . reason and comparison allow the listener to differentiate himself or herself from both the portrayer and the portrayed in the story" (Tirrell 116). Therefore, the student gains enough perspective to see how the parable applies not only to the lives of the fools, but also to their own life. On the theory of storytelling as moral agency, Lynn Tirrell writes:

Although actually telling any particular story aloud is not necessary for moral agency, the practice of storytelling is necessary for it teaches us how to articulate people's lives. It

is through the articulation of events, motives, and characters that we become moral agents. One reason we tell stories is to see what sort of story we can tell; in these cases, telling a story is a sort of self-examination by self-exposure. Often we find out what we think by listening to what we say. Telling stories helps us to find out who we are. But stories don't just tell us who we are, or who we have been. Stories tell us what we are capable of, and so they tell us who we might be. (117)

The parable has the ability to influence people in ways in which can only better society. In this sense, Maharshi is a "moral agent" (117).. The negative side of a teacher telling a parable is the risk of insulting the student. For example, Maharshi's parable is meant to wake his student from an ignorant state. He tells the student that they are experiencing a "supposed ignorance," then goes on to compare the fools' similar state of mind. However, as long as the student is receptive to whatever the teacher says about their state of being, whether good or bad, a lesson will be learned. Once learned, the lesson could be

repeated to others for the benefit of society, or at least within interpretive communities.

Fish writes on interpretive communities:

When my colleague is in the act of construing his student's question ("Is there a text in this class?"), none of the interpretive strategies at his disposal are uniquely his, in the sense that he thought them up; they follow from his preunderstanding of the interests and goals that could possibly animate the speech of someone functioning within the institution, interests and goals that are the particular property of no one in particular but which link everyone. (146)

Therefore, when a student within the lineage's interpretive community listens to Papaji tell the following parable, they interpret it through a very specific lens, one that is particular to their own community:

I often tell a story about an enlightened sadhu (holy man) who fell asleep under a tree. When he awoke all the gods from heaven were sitting before him. They had not found peace in heaven so they all came to sit with him. If you have

found this peace within yourself, you will radiate it even when you are asleep. You won't have to do anything. It will do its own work by itself. Even the tree he slept under experienced the sadhu's peace. It flowered while he was asleep and showered him with petals when he awoke. This peace has no problems with language barriers. If you have it, all beings, all plants, all animals will experience it in some way. (98)

This parable reflects to this particular interpretive community that peace is found in any environment when one experiences a peaceful, harmonious state. Papaji points out that with peace, language becomes a non-issue; it benefits all. His imagery of the tree is vivid enough to believe that he saw this himself in a vision. Burke cites Samuel Coleridge's writing style as an ". . . inner vision that saw beyond things in their sheer physicality" (254). Therefore, when the student hears or reads this story, they gain an awareness that transcends the language, for the power comes through symbolically. Papaji's flowering tree is symbolic of peace itself. This is a good example of

Burke's double process theory, which suggests that the word "tree" is not actually the tree itself (9):

The quickest and simplest way to realize that words "transcend" non-verbal nature is to think of the notable difference between the kind of notable operations we might perform with a "tree" and the kind of operations we might perform with the word "tree." This double process allows us to arrive at a truer understanding of language." (10)

Through this double process of language, the tree in Papaji's parable points to an inner peace that is an enlightened state of being.

Conceptual Thought

Saussure's theory of how concepts take on new meaning within individualized language systems can be applied to this lineage's use of language. He, like other Structuralists, believes that ". . . one perceives the world in their mind" (665). Therefore, language "makes" one's world (665). Burke writes of how Augustine identifies God as a "Father," and himself as God's "son," thus corresponding with the idea of ". . . the self as an

individual user of symbols" (165). The lineage speaks on releasing concepts, by way of not identifying with them. Therefore, the student must restructure their worldview in accordance with the teachings. Gangaji states, "All I am ever saying, regardless of whatever words are used, is to be still. Let all concepts rest and dissolve" (60).

Maharshi quotes Socrates on the wisdom of being wordless to a student who claims to be ignorant, "Who says 'I am ignorant'? He must be the witness of ignorance. That is what you are. Socrates said, 'I know that I do not know.' Can it be ignorance? It is wisdom" (31). Socrates's quote negates itself. The negative creates a positive understanding in Maharshi's student. Burke writes, "There are no negatives in nature, every natural condition being positively what it is" (19). When the student states, "I know that I do not know," they are left with relief that it is okay to not know. This is the goal of this lineage's teaching; to not know. One must let go of all "knowing" (conceptualizing), in order to rest in the silence of one's natural state, where "knowing" is an innate quality.

Gangaji tells of her own mind's grasping of concepts:

When I first met Papaji in India, in a very humble room, I remember being overcome with the recognition that all my prior images of "heaven" and "bliss" and "the teacher" were worthless. God was alive and the bounty of heaven was undeniable in that room with mold on the walls, with screeches and stench coming from the street. It was different from my fluffy, pink, shiny Sunday school image. It was very good for my Western mind to be stopped in that way, and I can remember the subtlety of then attempting to make myself over to fit the new image. (71-2)

If the student is suppose to take an axe to the mind as Maharshi suggests, then there is no room for imagination to be at play. However, the advanced student understands that there is room for both the images and the non-image of the stillness, as Papaji recommends when he says to not kill the ego. The student knows that there is nothing to be killed for the ego is all part of the mind's display, which is in turn, God's display or play. (I will go into greater detail on this topic in the next section.) Gangaji

suggests to cut out all conceptual images of what Truth is, because images are of the mind:

I stopped wearing all makeup. I didn't look in mirrors. I liked the new humbleness and wanted to be finished with all Western ideals. One day Papaji looked at me and said, "Why don't you fix yourself up?" He saw so clearly how I was attempting to grasp an image of Truth and to look like that image. Then I saw that I had done that all my life. When a certain era would come in, I would attempt to fit into the image of that era, whether it was to look like a hippie, or to look spiritual, or to look like an intellectual—all the time knowing it was not quite the truth. Truth cannot be "looked like." It is wherever you are, in whatever form. It wears no lipstick and it wears bright red lipstick. It wears no clothes, and it is clothed in golden robes.

(71-2)

Since Structuralists, like Saussure, theorize language makes the world, then, without language, the world would disappear. This also suggests that the mind would disappear. If the student follows Gangaji's suggestion to

cut out all images or concepts, then the mind is silenced. Yet, Burke writes that even the "idea of 'Nothing' involves an image of 'something,' (a black spot, an abyss, etc.)" (19). However, this lineage suggests dropping all concepts, even ones of "Nothing" and "something." Gangaji states:

If you just hear the words, you may assume something in particular. If you happen to notice what the substance of words is, and that words themselves come and go, then you will know that words by themselves are not trustworthy or reliable. What these words arise in, however, what they point to, what they exist in, and what they return to is permanence itself—true, everlasting presence—here, now, and always. (56)

Gangaji explains that the concepts or words only point to something beyond what they apparently appear to represent. Burke writes of words transcending their known meaning:

Consider the word 'grace,' for instance. Originally, in its Latin form, it had such purely secular meanings as: favor, friendship, thanks, service. Once the word was translated from the realm of social relationships into the supernaturally tinged realm of relationships

between "God" and man, the etymological conditions were set for a reverse process whereby the theological term could in effect be aestheticized. (7-8)

Gangaji stresses in her dialogue that even though words are impermanent by nature, what they appear in is permanent, or eternal. Therefore, the language symbols, not the actual words, carries the transcendent feeling that define its meaning.

No Method, No Ego

There is a saying in this lineage: "No teacher, no method, no practice." However, the ego is the one who wants a practice or method. I have found similar themes of the teachers' implying that one should "kill" the ego, since as Maharshi states, "If the ego does not rise, the Self alone exists" (97). Maharshi gives this student a method out of the student's desire to have one. In this passage, he calls this the "direct method," whereby the student asks, "Who am I?":

Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego is no entity, it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself.

This is the direct method, whereas all other methods are done retaining the ego. The quest "Who am I?" is the axe with which to cut off the ego. (Full text of this appears as Appendix C)

This anti-method is the only kind of method that any teacher of this lineage will recommend. In the above passage, Maharshi tells the student, "Destroy the ego by seeking its identity." He continues repeating this theme, ending the teaching by giving the student the "axe" to cut off the ego, i.e., through self-inquiry. How a reader makes sense of this teaching depends on their background with this lineage. Fish's interpretive community model suggests that a reader well read in this spiritual community will impose his or her own interpretation on the text. He writes:

That is why it is so hard for someone whose very being is defined by his position within an institution (and if not this one, then some other) to explain to someone outside it a practice or a meaning that seems to him to require no explanation, because he regards it as natural. Such a person, when pressed, is likely to say, "but that's just the way it's done" or

"but isn't it obvious" and so testify that the practice of meaning is community property, as, in a sense, he is, too. (Fish 321)

Therefore, someone reading the teaching for the first time, thus being "outside" of the lineage's interpretive community, might have great difficulty in understanding the symbolism used by Maharshi and the text's overall significance. Likewise, from the teacher's perspective, they are usually unaware of the past histories of students, thus making it so that the teaching may not always be comprehensible for all. "Some students have a very easy time noticing the nature of awareness and are at ease with formlessness. For others, these words only connote abstractions" (Rothberg 8). With ease, Augustine writes of the results of his conversion to Christianity by stating, "To the healthy and pure internal eye, He is everywhere" (45). Further, on Augustine's conversion, Fish states:

God is everywhere not as the result of an interpretive act self-consciously performed on data otherwise available, but as the result of an interpretive act performed at so deep a level that it is indistinguishable from consciousness itself. (272)

A reader of both Maharshi and his student, Papaji, might have difficulty understanding why they each state seemingly conflicting views on killing the ego. For example, Papaji wrote in a letter to a student, "Do not be a killer to kill the ego. Let it live its life" (70). Yet, Maharshi recommends taking an axe to the ego. However, a student of this lineage's interpretive community knows that what Papaji meant does, indeed, correlate with what Maharshi teaches. Further, Papaji wrote the letter for a student who studied the teachings much longer than the one whom Maharshi spoke to. Once the labels are removed from the individual, then the ego is no longer a problem. It is just there doing what egos do. It is acknowledged by the student, but is not a hindrance to their spiritual development. The student reaches a place where the ego is transcended and can then be watched from the perspective of an observer, like one who watches a movie projected onto a screen. No matter what goes on in that movie, it is still just a movie to the watcher. Likewise, the ego is now a character in the movie of life, but the individual remains untouched.

Eternity versus Time

Time is defined by this lineage to be the place where ego plays in a limited way. (Note: limited consciousness in comparison to the eternal, ego-less, limitless, enlightened state of being.) In other words, in this world time is the stage and ego has the starring role. In terms of time and language, Saussure claims, "The only reality of a system is the reality it has for its present users: to this reality the past contributes nothing" (202). Maharshi uses language to address the issue of time:

The idea of time is only in your mind. It is not in the Self. There is no time for the Self.

Time arises as an idea after the ego arises. But you are the Self beyond time and space; you exist even in the absence of time and space. (Full text of this appears as Appendix A)

St. Augustine writes of how Eternal "silence" is the word of God (27). Augustine discusses the transient:

Thus much hast Thou given them, because they are parts of things, which exist not all at the same time, but by departing and succeeding they together make up the universe, of which they are parts. And even thus is our speech accomplished

by signs emitting a sound; but this, again, is not perfected unless one word pass away when it has sounded its parts, in order that another may succeed it. (89)

The student listens to the teacher's language in time. Yet, relative time is not experienced by the spiritual teacher, as Eternity is. Burke claims "People can understand and speak words in time, though God does not" (Burke 145). He further writes:

Alice's Wonderland nearly always has moments that illustrate dialectical subtleties. Recall the episode of the Cheshire Cat. It smiles. That is, so far as sheer "appearances" are concerned, certain motions, postures and the like take place, and these are interpreted as the signs of a smile. The smile is the "essence" of these material conditions, the "form" or "act" of the sheer motions. It is what the motions "mean." Then the cat disappears, all but its smile. The smile's "temporal" aspects vanish, leaving but their "eternal essence," their "meaning," thus transcending any visible details. (28)

The teachers of this lineage speak in an eternal language, out of ordinary time. Often, Gangaji states to students that she appears in their consciousness in time, in order to share teachings with them. On language and time, Burke states that "The eternal Word by which the world was created must have been in silence, for there was as yet no matter and time whereby the syllables could rise and fall in succession" (144).

Imagery

Gangaji is a very eloquent, persuasive speaker who carefully chooses the right metaphors and images to stress her points in order to help her student. Frequently, her language contains images of death. Out of the three teachers in this lineage, she speaks the most about the topic. Burke suggests the difference between stating the word "mortification" compared to the word "death" (206) is one of weakness. St. Augustine chose the weaker sounding "mortification" (63), yet Gangaji states fiercely to her student that "The body will rot" (45). In terms of imagery of rotting bodies, Burke states:

From the standpoint sheerly of imagery (once the idea of mortification has been reduced to the

idea of death, and the idea of death has been reduced to the image of a dead body rotting back into the ground), we now note a kind of "imagistic proto-fall," in the form of a pun, where God is shown creating a man out of the ground. Here would be an imagistic way of saying that man in his physical nature is essentially but earth, the sort a thing a body becomes when it decays; or that man is first of all but earth, as regards his place in the sheerly natural order. (207)

In Burkian fashion, Gangaji speaks to her students on the death of her mind and subsequent rebirth:

And the terror, unknown terror, known terror, the strategies of mind, the demons of the past, all came rushing in to be met. As in the moment of death, all rushes in to be finally met. There's no end to stopping—that's the good news. What there is an end to, and what can end before the end of your particular body, is the resistance to death, the resistance to stopping. This is absolutely possible, and it's discovered in the

instant of stopping. (Full text of this appears as Appendix D)

Further, Burke states:

In this sense, the account of man's forming ambiguously lays the conditions for his "return" to such origins, as God makes explicit later, when again the subject is the relation between man and the ground: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (207)

Burke claims that the "return" to one's origin does not imply the grave. He, like Gangaji, states that the body will rot, but the individual will not. They are both pointing to beyond the buried body, to the essence of one's true nature. Her narrative reflects the dual transcendent nature of spiritual language that only those within the interpretive community will understand in a broader context.

Ramana Maharshi, Papaji, and Gangaji each profess the same teaching, but through different appearances and life histories. Maharshi's physical appearance is that of a stereotypical Indian sage who simply wears a loincloth. Hence, his saintly look gives the impression of what an

Indian teacher "should" look like, who never leaves his dwelling, nor has a physical relationship with a partner.

On the other hand, Papaji is a nicely dressed householder who is an invited guest speaker at universities in India and Europe. His life reflects to students how he, too, is a householder, thereby showing them enlightenment is possible for all. Thus, they can have children and partners and still be liberated. They do not need to sit in a cave and meditate all day to be free.

As with Papaji, Gangaji's lifestyle, too, sets an example for her students, balancing a life of marriage and spirituality. Based on stereotypes, one expects someone named Gangaji to be a little Hindu woman. Papaji gave her this name, which she states she did not like when he gave it to her. Again, she shares her experience as a student with her students. She says she did not want to be associated with the filth of the Ganges River in India. She tells of the importance of being unattached to anything associated with the body. Being not only a female, but also an American draws students as well, contrasting with Maharshi and Papaji, both males and Indian. Perhaps Western students relate better to her Western persona. As with Papaji, she, too, shares with her students that

enlightenment is for everyone. Her autobiography's title reflects this, Just Like You. When each of these teachers speak, the words flow out effortlessly. Yet, they do not take credit for the teachings. Instead, they say Truth or God speaks. David Frawley writes:

Maharshi did not simply talk about self-realization or teach it as a mere theory, fantasy or emotion. He lived it. His teaching is also his Divine Word. It arose from the Divine Word in the heart and is not a product of human thought or ego, even Maharshi's. (129)

The invitation offered by this lineage is to awaken the student from ignorance and to invite them to recognize their natural state of being. This invitation alone carries mystery and persuasion. Rhetorically speaking, the student-teacher relationship works to the spiritual teacher's benefit, since they are the authority. Hence, Augustine's symbolic notion that he is the "son" to his "father" God (165). Burke writes:

Once a believer is brought to accept mysteries, he will be better minded to take orders without question from those persons whom he considers

authoritative. Mysteries are a good grounding for obedience. (307)

The lineage speaks to students about life's mysteries which have been debated for centuries. There is a significant difference between "listening" from the intellect versus "listening" by way of transcending language. Burke claims that Augustine's motivation enables him to listen through "love" or "will" (164), i.e., transcendence, instead of through his working mind, as occurs with the majority of students from this lineage. Power is contained in the teacher's language, thus provoking the curiosity of students, who are then eager listeners to a persuasive speaker. Naturally, with persuasion comes the social construct of hierarchical structures. Burke writes:

Mysticism is no rare thing. True, the attaining of it in its pure state is rare. And its secular analogues, in grand or gracious symbolism, are rare. But the need for it, the itch, is everywhere. And by hierarchy it is intensified. (332)

However, within this lineage, Burke's hierarchy is a non-issue. The teachers consistently claim that there are no

differences between them and their students. Yet, when viewed from outside their interpretive community, it appears to be the opposite, with the teacher holding the power. Upon listening to their teachings, one will find that they are not concerned with building a social structure. Instead, they are interested in sharing their teachings.

On spiritual influence, Fish writes of the Christian interpretive community:

Whatever one may think of this interpretive program, its success and ease of execution are attested to by centuries of Christian exegesis. It is my contention that any interpretive program, any set of interpretive strategies, can have a similar success. (170)

Yet, in some cases, the lineage's teachings are hindered by the limitations of language. I found that the only thing the teacher can do is reiterate their message in different ways until the student either appears to comprehend or else loses interest. Regardless, language is the vehicle that guides the student's spiritual search, initially attracting student to teacher.

In conclusion, I have found that through the various means of utilizing language, it proves to be a valuable and effective tool for self-inquiry. As a tool, language potentially allows one to investigate deeper meanings of existence, thus resulting in limitless possibilities of awakening from the limited egoic state of consciousness. The results of this thesis reflect how the lineage of Ramana Maharshi helps many attain higher, more awakened states.

APPENDIX A

RAMANA MAHARSHI: *TALKS WITH RAMANA MAHARSHI*,

CHAPTER THREE, PARAGRAPH 3 (23-24),

CHAPTER THREE, PARAGRAPH 2 (44)

STUDENT: I have read Who am I? While inquiring who the "I" is, I cannot hold it for any length of time. Secondly, I have no interest in the environment, yet I have hopes that I shall find some interest in life. MAHARSHI: If there is no interest, it is good.

(The interpreter points out that the student hopes to find some interest in life.)

MAHARSHI (con't): That means there are those vasanas (latent tendencies or impressions that cling to the individual). A dreamer dreams a dream. He sees the dream worlds with pleasures, pains, etc. But he wakes up and then loses all interest in the dream world. So it is with the waking world, also. Just as the dream world, being only a part of yourself and not different from you, ceases to interest you, so also the present world ceases to interest you if you awake from this waking dream and realize that it is a part of your self, and not an objective reality. Because you think that you are apart from the objects around you, you desire a thing. But if you understand that the thing was only a thought-form, you would no longer desire it. All things are like bubbles on water. You are the water and the objects are the bubbles.

They cannot exist apart from the water, but they are not quite the same as the water.

STUDENT: I feel I am like froth.

MAHARSHI: Cease that identification with the unreal and know your real identity. Then you will be firm and no doubts can arise.

STUDENT: But I am the froth.

MAHARSHI: Because you think that way, there is worry. It is wrong imagination. Accept your true identity with the Real. Be the water and not the froth. That is done by diving in.

STUDENT: If I dive in, I shall find..

MAHARSHI: But even without diving in, you are That. The ideas of exterior and interior exist only so long as you do not accept your real identity.

STUDENT: But I took the idea from you that you want me to dive in.

MAHARSHI: Yes, quite right. It was said because you are identifying yourself with the froth and not the water. Because of this confusion, the answer was meant to draw your attention to this confusion and bring it home to you. All that is meant is that the Self is infinite, inclusive of all that you see. There is nothing beyond It or apart

from It. Knowing this, you will not desire anything; not desiring, you will be content. The Self is always realized. There is no seeking to realize what is already—always—realized. For you cannot deny your own existence. That existence is consciousness—the Self. Unless you exist, you cannot ask questions. So you must admit your own existence. That existence is the Self. It is already realized. Therefore, the effort to realize results only in your realizing your present mistake—that you have not realized your self. There is no fresh realization. The Self becomes revealed.

STUDENT: That will take some years.

MAHARSHI: Why years? The idea of time is only in your mind. It is not in the Self. There is no time for the Self. Time arises as an idea after the ego arises. But you are the Self beyond time and space; you exist even in the absence of time and space.

APPENDIX B

DAVID GODMAN: *TEACHINGS OF RAMANA MAHARSHI*,
CHAPTER THREE, PARAGRAPH 2 (29-30)

STUDENT: Is not the realization of one's absolute being something quite unattainable for a layman like me?

MAHARSHI: Realization is not a knowledge to be acquired, so that acquiring it one may obtain happiness. It is one's ignorant outlook that one should give up. The Self you seek to know is truly yourself. Your supposed ignorance causes you needless grief like that of the ten foolish men who grieved at the loss of the tenth man who was never lost. The ten foolish men in the parable forded a stream and on reaching the other shore wanted to make sure that all of them had in fact safely crossed the stream. One of the ten began to count, but while counting the others, left himself out. 'I see only nine; sure enough, we have lost one. Who can it be?' he said. 'Did you count correctly?' asked another, and did the counting himself. But he too counted only nine. One after the other each of the ten counted only nine, missing himself. 'We are only nine,' they all agreed, 'but who is the missing one?' they asked themselves. Every effort they made to discover the 'missing' individual failed. 'Whoever he is has drowned', said the most sentimental of the ten fools, 'we have lost him.' So saying he burst into tears, and the others followed suit. Seeing them weeping on the riverbank, a

sympathetic wayfarer enquired about the cause. They related what had happened and said that even after counting themselves several times they could find no more than nine. On hearing the story, but seeing all the ten before him, the wayfarer guessed what had happened. In order to make them know for themselves they were really ten, that all of them had survived the crossing, he told them, 'Let each of you count for himself but one after the other serially, one, two, three and so on, while I shall give you each a strike so that all of you may be sure of having been included in the count, and included only once. The tenth missing man will then be found.' Hearing this they rejoiced at the prospect of finding their 'lost' comrade and accepted the method suggested by the wayfarer. While the kind wayfarer gave a strike to each of the ten in turn, he who got the strike counted himself aloud. 'Ten,' said the last man as he got the last strike in his turn. Bewildered they look at one another, 'We are ten,' they said with one voice and thanked the wayfarer for having removed their grief. That is the parable. From where was the tenth man brought in? Was he ever lost? By knowing that he had been there all the while, did they learn anything new? The cause of grief was not the real loss of

anyone, it was their own ignorance, or rather, their mere supposition that one of them was lost. Such is the case with you. Truly there is no cause for you to be miserable and unhappy. You yourself impose limitations on your true nature of infinite being, and then weep that you are but a finite creature. Hence I say know that you are really the infinite pure being, the Self. You are always that Self and nothing but that Self. Therefore, you can never be really ignorant of the Self. Your ignorance is merely an imaginary ignorance, like the ignorance of the ten fools about the lost tenth man. It is this ignorance that caused them grief. Know then that true knowledge does not create a new being for you, it only removes your ignorant ignorance. Bliss is not added to your nature, it is merely revealed as your true natural state, eternal and imperishable. The only way to be rid of your grief is to know and be the Self.

APPENDIX C

RAMANA MAHARSHI: *TALKS WITH RAMANA MAHARSHI*,

CHAPTER THREE, PARAGRAPH 4 (40-41) †

STUDENT: How to get rid of the mind?

MAHARSHI: Is it the mind that wants to kill itself? The mind cannot kill itself. So your business is to find the real nature of the mind. Then you will know that there is no mind. When the Self is sought, the mind is nowhere.

Abiding in the Self, one need not worry about the mind.

STUDENT: How to get rid of fear?

MAHARSHI: What is fear? It is only thought. If there is anything besides the Self, there is reason to fear. Who sees the second (anything external)? First the ego arises and sees objects as external. If the ego does not rise, the Self alone exists and there is no second (nothing external). For anything external to oneself implies the seer within. Seeking it there will induce no doubt, no fear—not only fear; all other thoughts centered round the ego will disappear along with it.

STUDENT: This method seems to be quicker than the usual one of cultivating qualities allegedly necessary for salvation.

MAHARSHI: Yes. All bad qualities center round the ego.

When the ego is gone, Realization results by itself. There are neither good nor bad qualities in the Self. The Self is free from all qualities. Qualities pertain to the mind only. The Self is beyond quality. If there is unity,

there will also be duality. The numeral one gives rise to other numbers. The Truth is neither one nor two. It is as it is.

STUDENT: The difficulty is to be in the thought-free state.

MAHARSHI: Leave the thought-free state to itself. Do not think of it as pertaining to you. Just as when you walk, you involuntarily take steps, so too in your actions; but the thought-free state is not affected by your actions.

STUDENT: So intuition alone matters; intuition develops, also.

MAHARSHI: Those who discovered great Truths have done so in the still depths of the Self. The ego is like one's shadow thrown on the ground. If one attempts to bury it, it will be foolish. The Self is only one. If limited, it is the ego. If unlimited, it is Infinite and is the Reality. The bubbles are different from one another and numerous, but the ocean is only one. Similarly, the egos are many, whereas the Self is one and only one. When told that you are not the ego, realize the Reality. Why do you still identify yourself with the ego? It is like saying, "Don't think of the monkey while taking medicine" -it is impossible. Similarly, it happens with common folk. When the Reality is mentioned, why do you continue to meditate

"I am Brahman" (I am God)? The significance must be traced and understood. It is not enough to repeat the bare words or think of them. Reality is simply loss of ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego is no entity, it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method, whereas all other methods are done retaining the ego. In those paths there arise so many doubts and the eternal question remains to be tackled. But in this method, the final question is the only one and it is raised from the very beginning. No sadhanas (spiritual disciplines) are necessary for engaging in this quest. There is no greater mystery than the following: Ourselves being the Reality, we seek to gain reality. We think there is something hiding our Reality, and that it must be destroyed before the Reality is gained. That is ridiculous. A day will dawn when you will yourself laugh at your past efforts. That which will be on the day you laugh is also here and now.

STUDENT: So it is a great game of pretending?

MAHARSHI: Yes. In Yoga Vasishtha it is said, "What is Real is hidden from us, but what is false is revealed as true." We are actually always experiencing the Reality only; still, we do not know it. Is it not a wonder of wonders?

The quest "Who am I?" is the axe with which to cut off the ego.

APPENDIX D

GANGAJI: *JUST LIKE YOU*,

CHAPTER THREE, PARAGRAPH 2 (47-48)

When I met my teacher, he recognized I was earnest and he held my face to death with a simple word: "Stop." I didn't hear him freshly, I thought I knew what he meant; it was stop "this" and stop "that." And he saw this and he said again, "Stop, stop, stop, stop, STOP, no...stop." And then I realized that to be in true relationship with this teacher, who had miraculously appeared as an answer to a genuine prayer, I had to listen and investigate what this means: "Stop." Really, what does it mean? The only way anything can really give up its meaning is if it is met fully. And so by the grace of the mystery of being, there was a stopping. And the terror, unknown terror, known terror, the strategies of mind, the demons of the past, all came rushing in to be met. As in the moment of death, all rushes in to be finally met. There's no end to stopping—that's the good news. What there is an end to, and what can end before the end of your particular body, is the resistance to death, the resistance to stopping. This is absolutely possible, and it's discovered in the instant of stopping.

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