The Teaching of

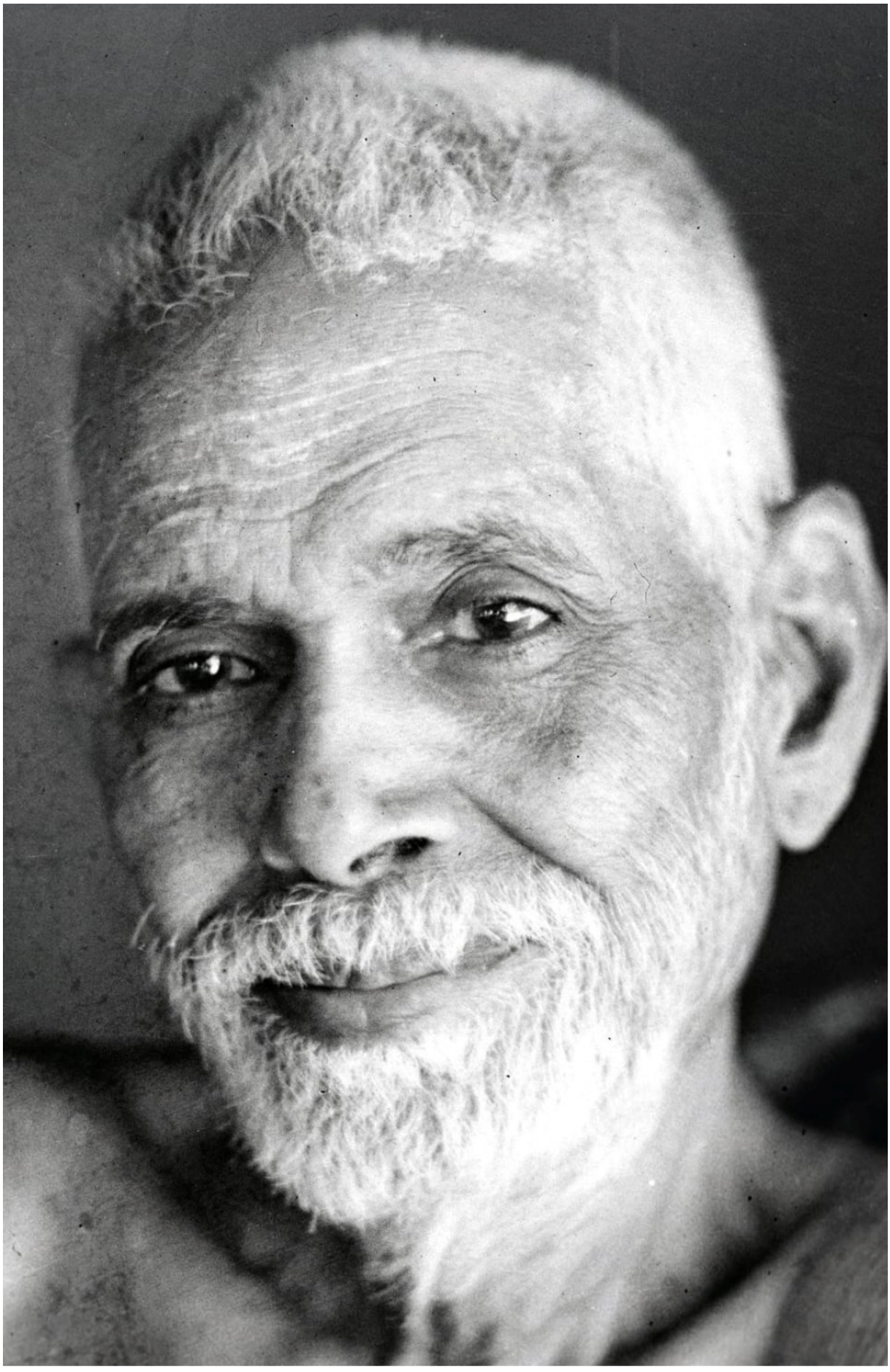
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

The Silent Sage of Arunachala

This book is about the life and teachings of Ramana Maharshi – the man regarded by many as the greatest spiritual master of modern times.

Each quote and story sheds invaluable light on the uniqueness of "Bhagavan". Many write-ups in the book bring out the Maharshi as a perfect being, notwithstanding the overpowering and debilitating tendencies inherent in human beings. His attributes as recorded make us feel that the enlightened sage, an individual of steadfast wisdom, as envisioned in the scriptures, is not a mere concept but the reality authenticated by Maharshi.
The encomiums bestowed upon Ramana by the chroniclers make the reader recall Einstein's historic tribute to Mahatma Gandhi: "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

Im Herzen der Wirklichkeit – Ramana Maharshi erreichte eine Tiefe der spirituellen Erfahrung und Einsicht, die alle religiösen Bekenntnisse und philosophischen Systeme transzendiert. In dieser einzigartigen Zusammenschau seiner wesentlichen Aussagen erfährt man, wie man sein wahres Selbst finden kann, das frei von allen inneren und äußeren Beschränkungen ist. Die Antworten des berühmten Meisters erläutern das wirkliche Wesen von Ich, Welt und Gott auf eine unnachahmlich konkrete Weise, wie sie nur den wirklich ‚Erleuchteten' zu Gebote steht.
Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) wurde von seinen Schülern „der stille Weise vom Berg Arunachala" genannt, zu dessen Füßen er fast sein ganzes Leben verbrachte. Er ist der Begründer des modernen Advaita Vedanta und gilt als einer der bedeutendsten indischen „Heiligen" der Neuzeit. Zu seinen Lebzeiten pilgerten Weisheitssucher aus aller Welt zu ihm, darunter auch Mahatma Gandhi und Paramahansa Yogananda, und viele spirituelle Lehrer unserer Zeit berufen sich auf ihn.



Ramana Maharshi (Maharshi bedeutet „Großer Weiser“, Geburtsname Venkataraman Iyer) (* 30. Dezember 1879 in Tiruchuli im südindischen Tamil Nadu; † 14. April 1950 in Tiruvannamalai, Indien) war ein indischer “Guru“ und gilt als der größte Weise des 20. Jahrhunderts. Ramana Maharshi lebte schweigend, antwortete aber auf Fragen spirituell Interessierter. Er war ein Vertreter des Advaita-Vedanta (Non-Dualität) und empfahl Ratsuchenden, die nach einer Übung fragten, die Methode Atma Vichara, die Ergründung des Selbst auf Grundlage der Frage: „Wer bin ich?“. Zahlreiche heutige spirituelle Lehrer sehen in ihm ein Vorbild.

Ramana Maharshi was probably the most famous sage of the twentieth century both in India and the rest of the world. He was renowned for his saintly life, for being fully realized, and for the powerful transmissions that often occurred to visitors in his presence. In 1896, at the age of 16, he had a "death-experience" where he became aware of the true Self. This resulted in a state that he later described as "the state of mind of Iswara (the personal God) or the jnani (enlightened / awakened / liberated being)". Six weeks later, he left his uncle's home in Madurai, and journeyed to the holy mountain Arunachala, in Tiruvannamalai, where he remained for the rest of his life.

He attracted devotees that regarded him as an avatar of Shiva and came to him for darshan ("the sight of God"). Ramana Maharshi approved a number of paths and practices, but recommended self-enquiry as the principal means to remove ignorance and abide in self-awareness.

The basic truth and core message of his powerful teaching contains an unimaginable treasure for all people who are ready for it, and can be summarized as follows... YOU ARE NOT THE BODY.
In other words ...

THERE IS ONLY ONE

AND YOU ARE THAT!

THE INFINITE VASTNESS OF

PURE CONSCIOUSNESS

LOVING AWARENESS

LIMITLESS BEING

ETERNAL LIFE

THE SELF.

Einen 16-jährigen Jungen in Südindien packte an einem ganz normalen Nachmittag im Jahre 1896 aus heiterem Himmel eine unerklärliche Todesangst. Er kämpfte nicht dagegen an, sondern gab sich hin und beobachtete, wie der Körper in eine Starre verfiel. So stellte sich die Erkenntnis ein: Der Körper stirbt, aber das Bewusstsein wird vom Tod nicht berührt. Was dem jungen Ramana Maharshi, der zu einem der größten spirituellen Lehrer aller Zeiten werden sollte, an diesem Tag widerfuhr, blieb als Einsicht bestehen. Er selbst schilderte die Empfindungen, die jene Erfahrung damals begleiteten:

„Jetzt ist der Tod gekommen, was bedeutet das?
Was stirbt? Der physische Körper stirbt.
Ich hielt den Atem an. Nun gut, sagte ich mir, wenn dieser Körper stirbt, werden sie kommen, ihn zur Verbrennungsstätte bringen und er wird zu Asche. Aber wenn der Körper tot ist, bin ich dann auch tot? Ist der Körper das Ich? Er ist leblos und ich fühle mich unabhängig von ihm. So bin ich also todloser Geist, jenseits des Körpers, der Leben und Tod unterworfen ist. Dieses alles spielte sich intensiv in meinem Innern ab. Die Einsicht durchfuhr mich, ich erkannte es ohne jeden Denkvorgang: Ich war die Wirklichkeit, das einzig Wirkliche dieses augenblicklichen Zustandes. Ich empfand es als mächtige lebendige Wahrheit unmittelbar und ganz unumstritten: Ich bin unsterbliches Bewusstsein.
Die Todesfurcht verschwand ganz und endgültig.
Sie war ein für alle Mal ausgelöscht.
Diese bewusste und unmittelbare Gegenwart des Selbst, die vom physischen Körper vollkommen unabhängig ist, hat mich seitdem nicht wieder verlassen. Von diesem Augenblick an forderte das Selbst in machtvollem Zauber alle Aufmerksamkeit. Ich blieb von dieser Zeit an völlig im Selbst versunken.“

On an ordinary afternoon in 1896, a 16 year old boy in southern India was suddenly overcome by an inexplicable fear of death. He did not fight against it, but observed how the body fell into a rigid state. And there was the realization:
The body dies, but consciousness is not affected by death.
What happened to the young Ramana Maharshi, who was to become one of the greatest spiritual teachers of all time, remained as an insight. He himself described the impressions that accompanied the experience at that time:

"Now death has come, what does that mean? What dies? The physical body dies. I held my breath. I said to myself, 'Well, if this body dies, they will come, take it to the cremation site, and it will become ashes.' But if the body is dead, am I also dead? Is the body the 'I'? It is lifeless and I feel independent of it. So I am deathless spirit, beyond the body, which is subject to life and death. All of this was going on inside me. The insight passed through me, I recognized it without any thought process: I was the reality, the one and only of this current state. I found it to be a powerful living truth, immediately and completely uncontroversial: I am immortal consciousness. The fear of death completely disappeared. It was wiped out once and for all. This conscious and immediate presence of the Self, which is completely independent of the physical body, has not left me since. From that moment on, the Self, in powerful magic, called for all attention. From then on, I remained completely absorbed in the Self."

"It was about six weeks before I left Madura for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. I was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. I seldom had any sickness, and on that day there was nothing wrong with my health, but a sudden violent fear of death overtook me. There was nothing in my state of health to account for it, and I did not try to account for it or to find out whether there was any reason for the fear. I just felt 'I am going to die' and began thinking what to do about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or my elders or friends; I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then. The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.' And I at once dramatised the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out stiff as though rigor mortis had set in and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered. 'Well then,' I said to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body, am I dead? Is the body 'I'? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process. 'I' was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that 'I'. From that moment onwards, the 'I' or Self focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination.

Fear of death had vanished once and for all.

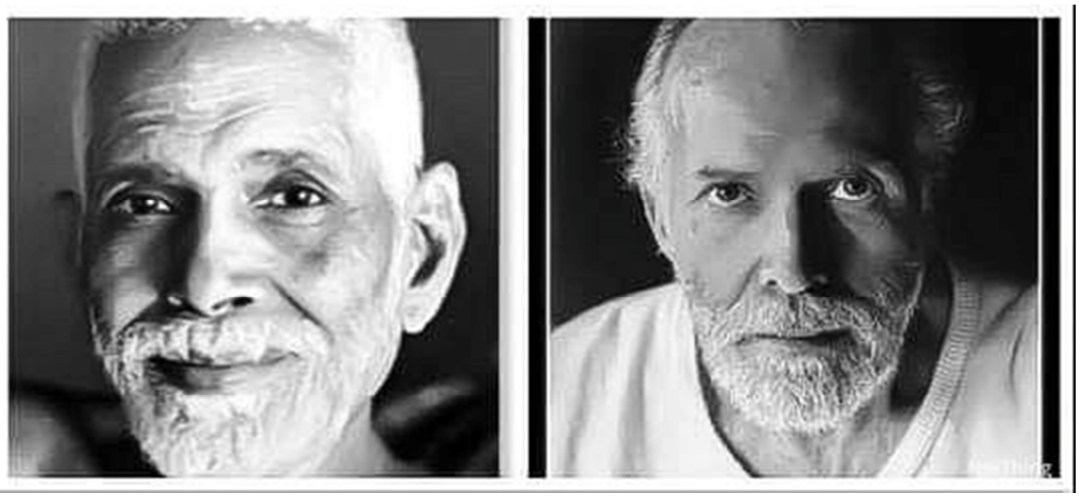
Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on. Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the 'I' continued like the fundamental sruti note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. (The monotone persisting through a Hindu piece of music, like the thread on which beads are strung, represents the Self persisting through all the forms of being.) Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'. Previous to that crisis, I had no clear perception of my Self and was not consciously attracted to it. I felt no perceptible or direct interest in it, much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it."

When Ramana was sixteen years old, he was living with his uncle. All of a sudden, he felt sort of light-headed, he went into his uncle's room, and he thought he was going to die, but he wasn't afraid. He welcomed death, so-to-speak. He lay down on the floor and crossed his arms on his chest, his blood pressure went down, and he felt like he was dying, he was leaving his body. And he said to himself, "If this is how it is to die, it's not bad." But instead of dying, he became absorbed in absolute reality, in consciousness.
He wasn't sailing through the universe. He was not in the universe, the universe was in him. He was the universe. He was the source of all phenomena. He had this realization. His essence was in the trees, the mountains, people, animals, everything. Pure awareness. He was totally aware of everything at the same time, omniscience. Then for some reason, he came back to the body. He became body-conscious again.

I had a similar experience when I was fourteen years old but it's different, being brought up in New York City and having a spiritual experience. In India they realize what it is. In New York they want to put you into a psychiatric ward.

I have been to many teachers, many saints, many sages. I was with Nisargadatta Maharaj, Anandamayi Ma, Papa Ramdas, Neem Karoli Baba and many others, but never did I meet anyone who exuded such compassion, such love, such bliss as Ramana Maharshi. Of all the sages that I have met in my travels, Ramana is the purest soul I've ever met.

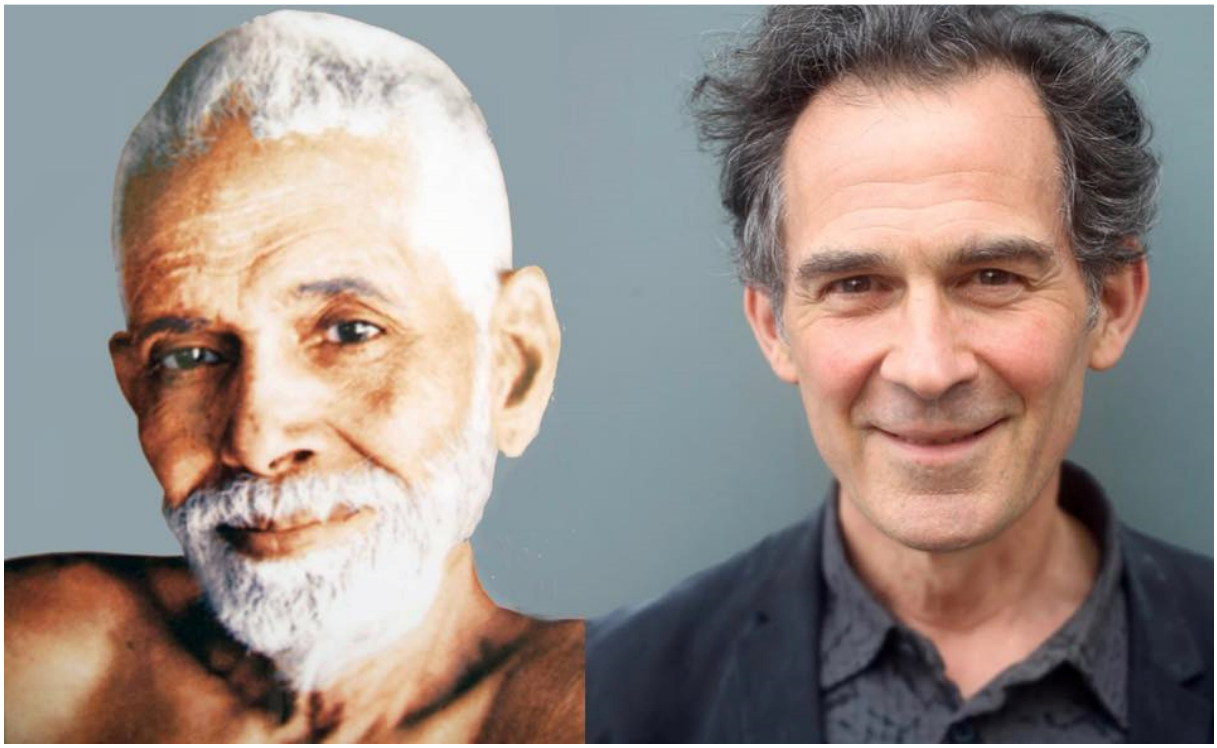
Robert Adams



As a compassionate concession to people's difficulties and objections, all the great spiritual and religious traditions have enumerated various disciplines and practices to refine and prepare the mind for its eventual subsidence in its source or essence. Ramana Maharshi bypassed all these progressive means and went directly from his current experience to the essential nature of his mind, thus resurrecting the Direct Path for our age. This is the age of the Direct Path.

As the mind sinks deeper into the experience of being aware, it – in most cases gradually – loses its limitations.
As a 16 year old, Ramana Maharshi was a regular school boy with no interest in spirituality... He went home one night and was overcome by the fear of death, just out of nowhere. It was such a strong fear that he thought he was dying. So he lay down on the floor and said to himself, "I'm dying! What's gonna happen to me!? What happens to awareness when the body dies?" And this question took his mind on exactly the same inward-facing path that we travel through. The only difference is that for him it happened spontaneously. In other words, he spontaneously engaged in the process of self-investigation. The other thing that was unusual about his case is that when he lay down and mimicked with his body the posture of death and asked himself the question "Who am I?", he was taken directly to the source. It wasn't a question of "flowing down and down and down in ever widening rings of being" (Rumi), he went straight to his essential irreducible nature and in that moment realized that it has no limitations, that it is completely without limits, that it is not something that is in time and space, and thus is immortal, that it wasn't born and doesn't die, that it doesn't – in other words – share the limits and destiny of the body.
That is sudden enlightenment. And it's very rare.

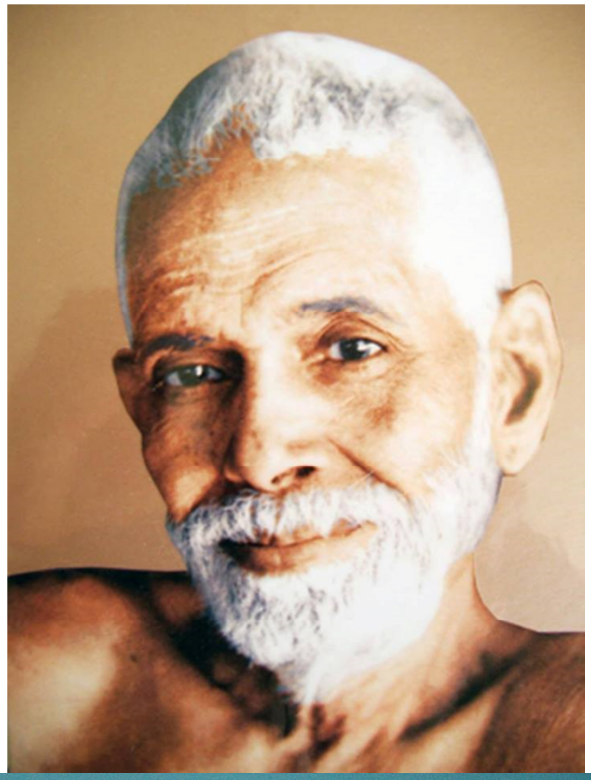
Rupert Spira

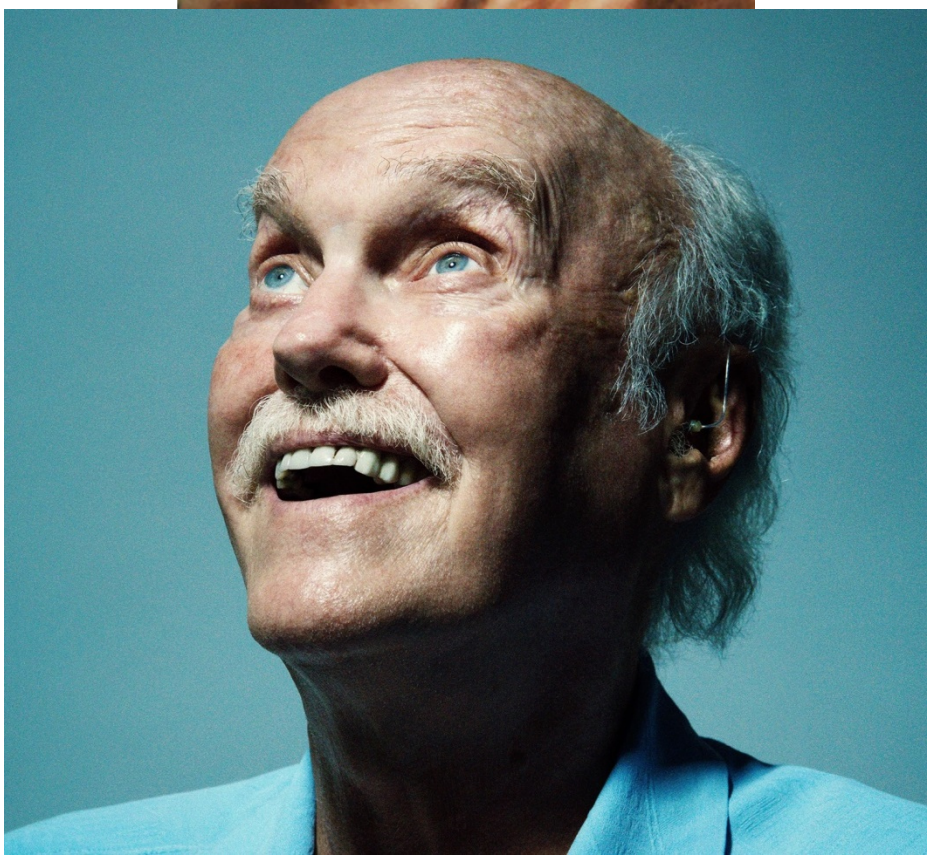


It is rare for someone
to give the highest teaching on earth in silence.
It is rarer still
that even the mere photograph of someone
radiates so much grace
that by just looking at it,
thousands of people feel themselves
to be in the presence of purity and truth
having never met the person.

"Ramana Maharshi ... That picture ...
Oh boy, yam-yam-yam."

Ram Dass





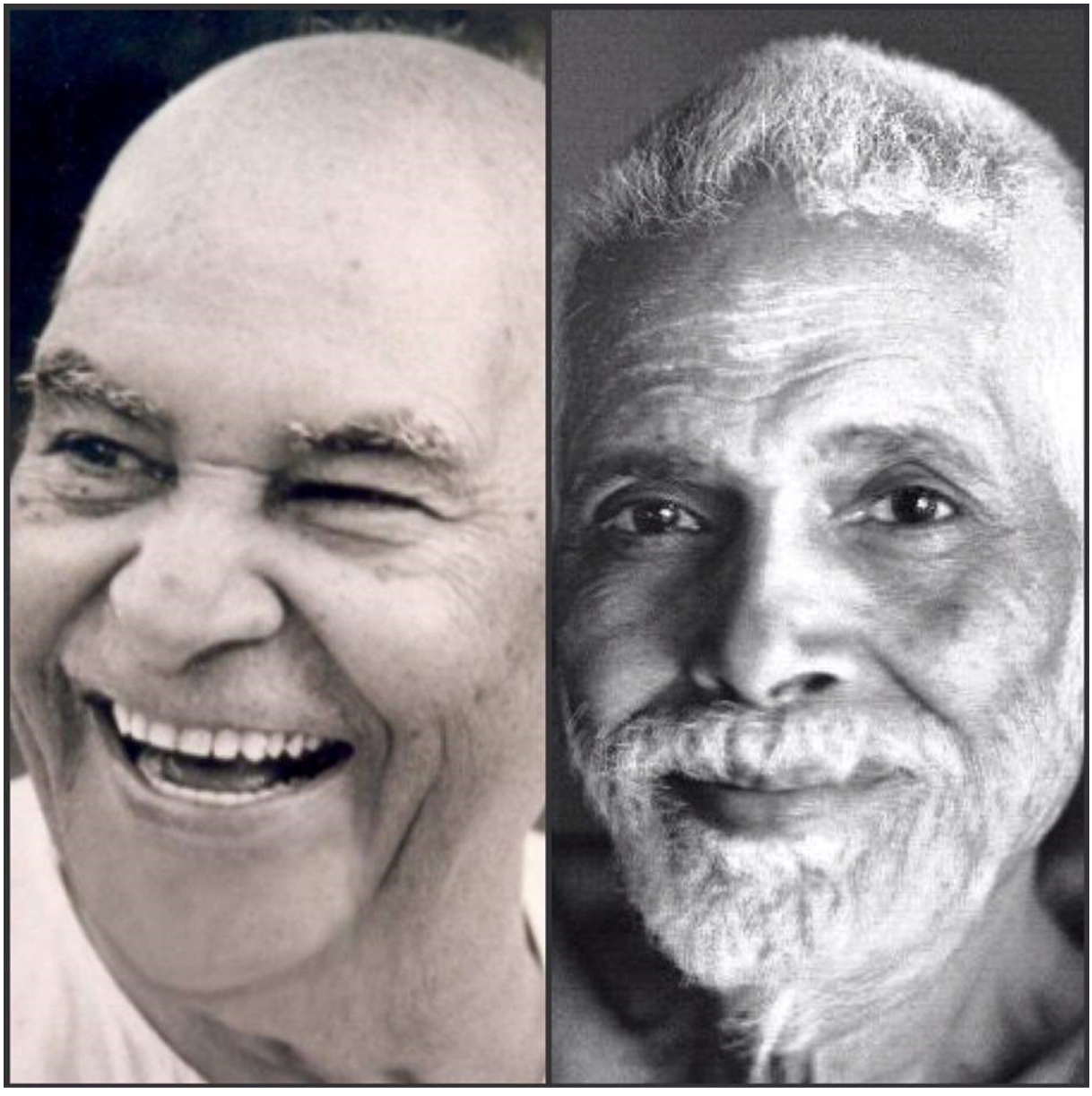
At first I was shocked when somebody told me they had my photo on their desk, and I said, "What for?" But then I remembered... There's a particular photo of Ramana Maharshi that has incredible light coming through his eyes. I still have it.
When that picture was taken, Ramana Maharshi asked the photographer,
"Is there enough light?" ... And the photographer said to him, "You are the light!"
I remember, years ago, looking at that photo, and feeling, sensing, that deep stillness and peace and aliveness. But I also knew that it was not the form I was looking at. That was in me, I could see the reflection of that peace and aliveness in the photo. So it was a self-recognition, it acted a little bit like a mirror. What this mirror shows is not the outer form, it mirrors the inner essence. Something comes through the eyes that points to that. It is recognized by something in you. It has nothing to do with the person whatsoever. So what you sense is your own essential reality, reflected back to you by somebody who is free of all the stuff that usually covers it up. There's a line in "A Course in Miracles", an expression of the awakened consciousness, that line says, "I have nothing that you do not have."
I'm now quite happy with people looking at my photo or looking at me – as long as they don't think they're looking at a person. The person is there on the surface, it's not important. You could say it's the window frame, but important is the light that comes through the window. The moment you recognize it, it's in you – pure awareness, unconditioned consciousness. You transcend the personal in yourself and in the 'other'. So you see yourself in the 'other'. You're not conceptualizing, you're sensing the one being/consciousness.

Eckhart Tolle

Papaji's first meeting with Ramana Maharshi

Papaji: "Have you seen God? And if you have, can you enable me to see him? I am willing to pay any price, even my life, but your part of the bargain is that you must show me God."

Ramana Maharshi: "No. I cannot show you God or enable you to see God because God is not an object that can be seen. God is the subject. He is the seer. Don't concern yourself with objects of senses. Find out who the seer is. You can't see God because you are God."



Meeting of Ramana Maharshi and Paramahansa Yogananda
In the words of Yogananda, the meeting went like this:

"Before leaving South India, I made a pilgrimage to the holy hill of Arunachala to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi. The sage welcomed us affectionately. During the hours that we spent with him and his disciples, he was mostly silent, his gentle face radiating divine love and wisdom.

To help suffering humanity regain its forgotten state of Perfection, Sri Ramana teaches that one should constantly ask himself: "Who am I?" The great inquiry indeed. By stern rejection of all other thoughts, the devotee soon finds himself going deeper and deeper into the true Self, and the sidetracking bewilderments of other thoughts cease to arise."

Yogananda asked the following questions...

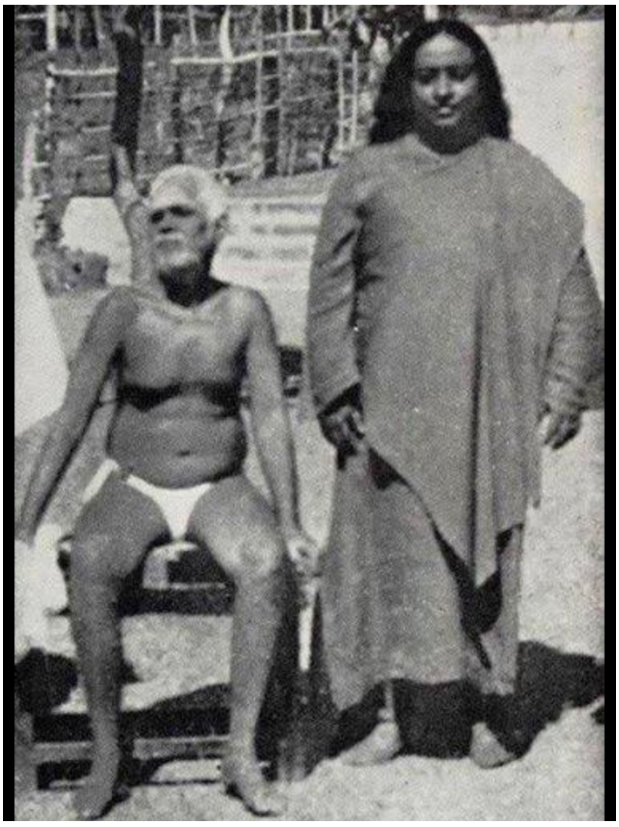
Yogananda: "Why does God permit suffering in the world? Should He not with His omnipotence do away with it at one stroke and ordain the universal realisation of God?"

Maharshi: "Suffering is the way for realisation of God."

Yogananda: "Why should there be suffering?"

Maharshi: "Who suffers? What is suffering?"

Yogananda: No answer.



"He (Ramana Maharshi) is a yogi of remarkable strength and attainments. He is the Hercules among the yogis." (Aurobindo)

Thelma Rappold, an American woman, had come to India and travelled all over to find a guru. She landed in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, where she learnt about Sri Ramana, and was with him during 1947-50.

"On my way to Sri Ramanasramam, when I was in a state of reverie, Sri Ramana appeared to me as a sort of dream. When I actually saw him, it was the same face that I had seen in my reverie. I was really, really shocked. When I sat in his presence, I felt that my little ego had slipped away. I opened my heart and let those beautiful waves enter into me. It seemed that the so-called problems I thought I had just vanished. I went through a cleansing process. It always amazed me how Sri Ramana sat absolutely quiet and motionless, yet his eyes were so penetrating. When I had questions, I did not verbalize them, because it wasn't necessary; the questions were answered almost immediately. It was our means of communication. It was a mind-to-mind connection. When I first met Sri Ramana, he told me: "You are what you are – accept it. When the time comes to give it up, do it with grace." As the years went by, I kept trying to 'open' as much as possible. I recognized that we all choose our suffering because we do not open up and accept what life brings; we don't find out 'who' it is that is experiencing the suffering. I had never, at any previous time in my life, really let go and tried to just 'be'. When we can do this, love just pours out. At the Ashram, I had found my true home and teacher. It was as if I had lived several life times in those few years that I was with him. The person who came to him in the beginning was not the same person that left. I had understood how to open up the power locked within me."

When He smiled, it was as though the gates of Heaven were thrown open. I have never seen eyes more alight with Divine Illumination – they shine like stars. His look of Love and Compassion was a benediction that went straight to my heart. It is not necessary for Him to talk, His silent influence of love and light is more potent than words could ever be. I do not think there is another like Him on earth today. To see Him is to love Him. As I looked upon Sri Bhagavan's serene face and into His eyes which beamed with mercy, my soul was stirred. Everyone who comes to him is blessed; the inner peace which is His is radiated to all. His loving solicitude made me feel quite at home; and when He smiled, my joy knew no bounds. The most blessed experience of my life was my stay at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. What tribute can a candle pay to the sun? Words cannot express the infinite love and tenderness we experienced during those days beside Him. He seemed to clasp us to his bosom as a mother clasps her child. Sri Bhagavan treated his body as something apart from him. As the body grew weaker, his face became more radiant, his eyes shone like two stars. He was ever abiding in the Self. A few days before he passed away, he remarked, "They say I am dying, but I shall be more alive than before." Now he is all pervading. Internationally renowned psychologist Dr. C. G. Jung of Zurich has said, "What we find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana is the purest of India with its breadth of world-liberated and liberating humanity, it is a chant of the milleniums."

Eleanor Pauline Noye

"When I was three years old, there was one American lady, Eleanor Pauline Noye, I became very fond of her, so I would always go and sit on her lap, and the Brahmins do not like to see their children to be touched by a westerner. It's pollution. But I never knew all that. I'd go and sit on her lap. And there was so much of opposition, and Bhagavan noticed this. One day, when I came running to Bhagavan, he looked at me and said, "Ganesha, your Noye is seated there, go and sit on her lap."

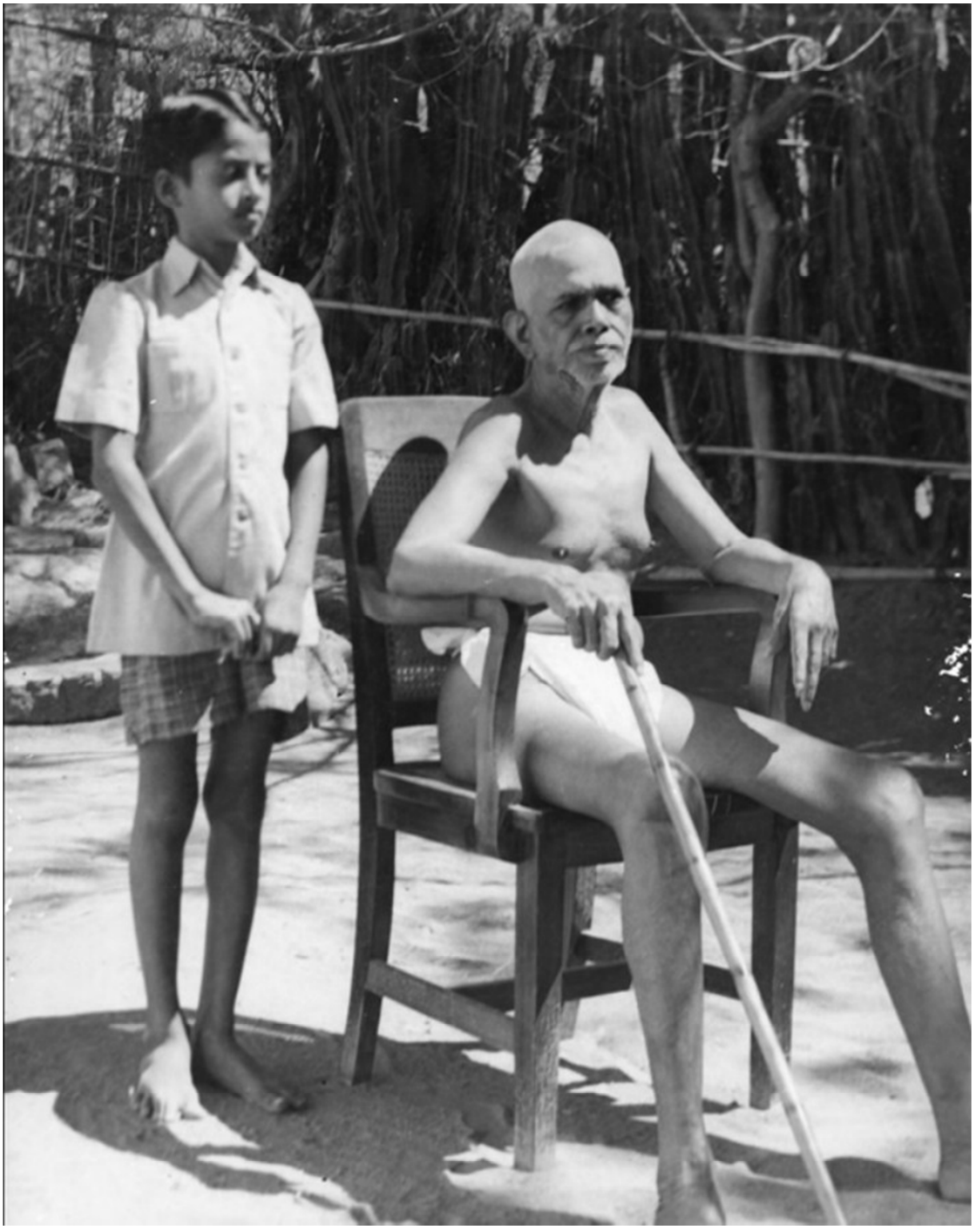
Everyone is Ramana Maharshi in the Heart.
That is the uniqueness of Ramana Maharshi.
Everyone will be Ramana Maharshi.

There is one verse which they sing in the ashram every Saturday...
"Ramana Satguru, Ramana Satguru, Ramana Satguru..."
This was written in 1902 or 1903. And this is the famous song sang by every Tamil knowing devotee of Bhagavan. So they would sing even when Maharshi was in the body, in his presence. And suddenly, Muruganar (devotee) one day noticed: Bhagavan was also singing. After the poem was over, he said to him, "Bhagavan, this is in praise of you, and you are also joining us." Ramana said, "What to do? There is only one Ramana Satguru for all. He is in the Heart."
In the last moments, the senior most devotee Muruganar, who was feeling that Ramana Maharshi was going to die, cried before Bhagavan in the nirvana room. Bhagavan said, "I have told you many times, if you identify Ramana Maharshi with this body, you are going to be disappointed." But Muruganar replied back, "I know that, Bhagavan, but still... I'm not able to accept." ... "Do you know, Muruganar, why you are identifying again, again and again Ramana Maharshi to this body?" Ramana pointed to his body. "Because you have not released yourself by identifying with your body as Muruganar." That was Muruganar's final initiation.

All religions advise you and train you to search for truth, to search for God, to search for happiness. Maharshi revived back the oldest tradition, that you are already happy. Since your attention has been turned

outside, you find misery. Now turn back the attention on yourself. So happiness is Maharshi's teaching. Happiness is our real state. It is 100 % true. You are timeless, and when you experience timelessness, you are always happy."

Sri V. Ganesan (Ramana's grand nephew)



"Bhagavan's philosophy is not totally new. But what was great about the Maharshi was: he lived it. In the present day, he lived it. Here is a person who lived like an ancient Rishi. That's the greatness of Bhagavan.

We all felt absolutely natural in his presence. Totally at comfort and natural. In the presence of Bhagavan, we felt all natural. So natural. That explains also why the birds, animals, everything, they all were so close to him.
One day, as a boy, I was in the old meditation hall. Lakshmi the cow, whenever she felt like seeing Bhagavan, she'd just come. She would come close to him. He used to talk to her. The hall was full. Quite a few people were there. She just came to Bhagavan, just stood by him for a few minutes, and quietly went back.
He did not exclude anything.

When Hitler was marching, he appeared unstoppable. One westerner asked Ramana in the old hall, "Bhagavan, this is happening, what is going to happen to the world?" Bhagavan usually keeps quiet in such matters, you know. He doesn't get on. But seeing the seriousness, the concern of this westerner, he said,

"Look, there is a Creator. He'll take care of his creation."

Sitting in the old dining hall, I observed. He used to quietly watch – I have seen that – that everybody gets their share. Not in a demonstrative manner. Just one look, one gesture.

He was beautiful. His complexion, as they used to say, was bronze to gold. And he had some magnetic personality, apart from the eyes that everybody talks about.

Bhagavan's major surgery was in December 1949, on his left arm. Dr. Raghavachari – in those days he was the leading surgeon of South India

– came from Chennai with a complete medical team. A removal of Sarcoma (tumor) was performed. The main thing was Bhagavan's expression, Bhagavan's look on the face. Withdrawn, on the distant horizon. Same look, absolutely. You cannot see anything in the face. Pain or nothing, no expression. Same absolutely serene face we saw. Absolutely. I went to see him (Dr. Raghavachari)... Impressive personality, tall, very elegant gentleman. I asked him, "Sir, you performed an operation on Bhagavan. What was your impression, Sir?" He slowly, calmly said, "For such a major surgery, general anaesthesia was required. Bhagavan refused. At least a local anaesthesia, that he permitted. With local anaesthesia we performed the major surgery. So throughout, he was alert and awake. There were absolutely no changes. No change in his face throughout the surgery." Then he added also, "I'm a harden surgeon. Throughout my life, I've seen so much. Blood, suffering, pain, and all that. But this was a revelation to me – that a human being can transcend the body. That day, I could see this in Bhagavan."

You know the picture where you see Bhagavan walking apparently in a rainy day, with an umbrella. Close to the well, just behind him the wall and the mural there. Wall and mural reflection is there (in the puddle of water on the ground), but Bhagavan's reflection is not in the picture. It's amazing, it's not a photoshop picture. It's a true photograph. Look! He is not the body. Where is the body there? He is not there.

(See the photo on the next page...)

Amazing. In this modern times, such a human being has lived with us. In the very recent past."

Sri V. S. Mani (Ramana's grand nephew)

"When he was 12 years old, his father passed away. When all his relatives were weeping and he saw his father's body lying there, he was puzzled. He said, "Why is everyone saying father is gone when he is just lying here?" People said, "No, no. This is just your father's body, your father has gone." So he was puzzling over this. He came to the conclusion, "I clearly know the 'I' in me, but my father's 'I' has left his body." That thought was like a seed in his mind.
And a few years later, when he was 16, he was just supposed to be doing some homework in a room upstairs in the house, and he suddenly got an intense fear of death. And generally, for most of us, when we get a fear of death, our mind goes outwards because we're attached to family, friends, possessions, so many things. We start thinking about all these things because this is what we fear to lose. But in his case, instead of thinking about anything outward, he thought about the "I". What happens when this body dies? What happens to "I"?"

(Michael James)

"...And he went with the flow. He looked at himself, tried to find out what it was that was dying and what would remain after the death, and within a few minutes, he had somehow reverted to his primal state, which is beyond birth and death, in which he remained for the rest of his life." (David Godman)

"The intense fear of death made his mind turn in to try to find out what the 'I' is, and what would happen to the 'I' when the body dies. His body was just lying there, motionless like a corpse, and very intensely his mind went inwards, focusing its entire attention on 'I', and then he had a clear experience of what 'I' actually is." (Michael James)

"He realized that his real nature is deathless, and it was so powerful – that insight, that seeing – that it really drove his mind away, and it never really returned as ego again." (Mooji)

"In Hindu parlance he had 'realised the Self'; that is to say, he had realised by direct experience that nothing exists apart from an indivisible and universal consciousness which is experienced in its unmanifest form as beingness or awareness and in its manifest form as the appearance of the universe.
Only the unmanifest Self exists. If you believe to the contrary, then that means that you identify with a particular mind and a particular body that arises in a particular place and disappears at a particular time. Bhagavan said, that's your problem. He said, so long as you identify yourself as a person occupying a body with a mind, then you're going to be subject to all the constraints that that limiting idea imposes on you. He said, it's quite possible to rid yourself of this idea, and that's all it is, just a wrong idea, and whence that idea that you are someone or something is completely eradicated, then what remains is unmanifest reality, and that's what you always were, that's what you always will be.
Bhagavan said he was fully aware of the Self even when he was asleep.
I think, that's one of the key signs.
He said, enquiring "Who am I?", I saw the one who sees disappear, leaving that alone which stands forever.
Bhagavan said, hold on to this 'I', watch it disappear, and you'll be amazed of what disappears with it. First of all, the idea that there is a world out there separate from you will disappear, and secondly, he said, the idea of time and space. Whence your 'I' disappears, the world as an object disappears, time and space disappear.
What Ramana is saying is that if you get rid of the one who sees, then that which is seen also disappears. If there is no perceiver, there is nothing to be perceived either. And whence both of them go, you find out who you really are and what the world really is (the Self).
What Bhagavan is saying is that if you see something as separate from yourself, then that's the wrong cognition, the wrong perception. He says that if everything that you see you know directly to be your own Self and as not separate from you, in the sense that there's no 'I' inside you perceiving something out there, he said, that's the correct understanding, the correct experience of the world. So long as you imagine that you're in a body looking at the world, you're going to suffer.
People came to him – curious, interested seekers – and if you follow the progression of their stories, there's always a moment when they say, "And then

he looked at me, and then I got quiet.", or, "Then he looked at me and I got peaceful and happy." There was something about this man that calmed people's minds and made them happy, that made them peaceful, that made them want to come back for more.

One day at Blackwell's in Oxford, a book quite literally fell in my lap. Somebody on the other side of the shelf pushed his book through and on my side, a book plopped out into my lap – and that was my first Ramana book in my hands."

(That's how it all started for him.)

David Godman

"I was just emerging from high school, exams were over. On a package railway ticket, I was roaming through South India. As the train steamed through the countryside at a halting speed, most of the passengers in my compartment suddenly peered through the windows in great excitement and bowed reverently to an elaborate temple beyond.
Inquiring about it, I was told that it was the Tiruvannamalai Temple.
Thereafter, the talk of my fellow travellers turned to Ramana Maharshi.
The word 'Maharshi' conjured up in my mind ancient forest retreats and superhuman beings of divine glow. Though I was at that time a convinced atheist, I was deeply drawn to visit the Maharshi's Ashram.
I chose to take the next available train to Tiruvannamalai.

At the Ashram, I was told that the Maharshi was in the hall and anybody was free to walk in and see him. As I entered, I saw on the couch an elderly man, wearing but a loincloth, reclining against a round bolster. I sat down at the very foot of the couch.

The Maharshi suddenly opened his eyes and looked straight into mine: I looked into his. A mere look, that was all. I felt that the Maharshi was, in that split moment, looking deep into me – and I was sure that he saw all my shallowness, confusions, faithlessness, imperfections, and fears.

I cannot explain what happened in that one split moment.
I felt opened, cleaned, healed, and emptied! A whirl of confusions: my atheism dropping away, but scepticism flooding into question, wonder, and search. My reason gave me strength and I said to myself, 'It is all mesmerism, my own foolishness.' Thus assuring myself, I got up and walked away.

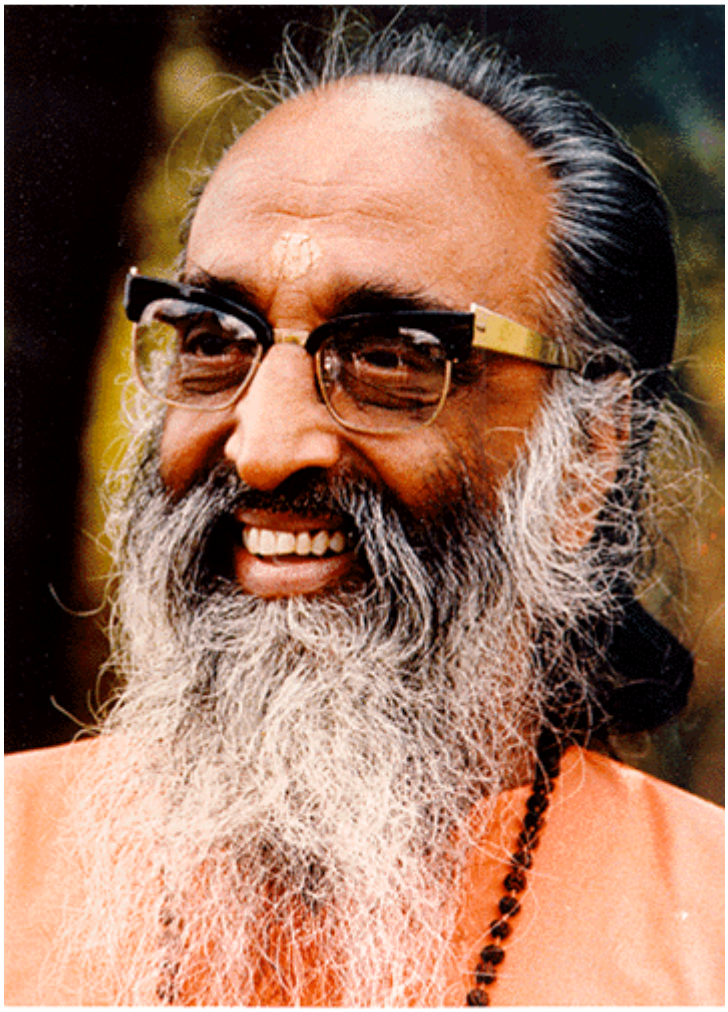
But the boy who left the hall was not the boy who had gone in some ten minutes before. After my college days, my political work, and after my years of stay at Uttarkashi at the feet of my master Tapovanam, I knew

that what I gained on the Ganges banks was that which had been given to me years before by the saint of Tiruvannamalai on that hot summer day – by a mere look.

Sri Ramana is not a theme for discussion; he is an experience; he is a state of consciousness.

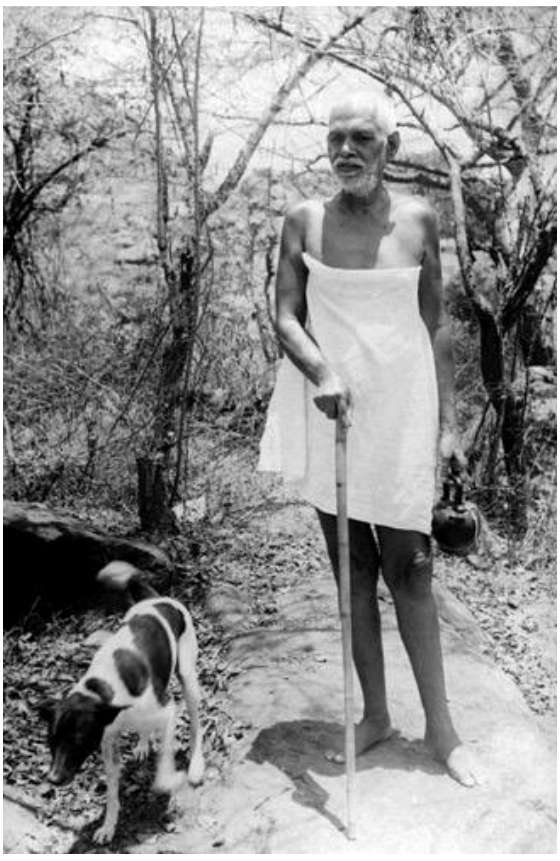
Sri Ramana is the highest reality and the cream of all scriptures in the world. He was there for all to see how a Master can live in perfect detachment. Though in the mortal form, he lived as the beauty and purity of the Infinite."

Swami Chinmayananda (Balakrishna Menon)

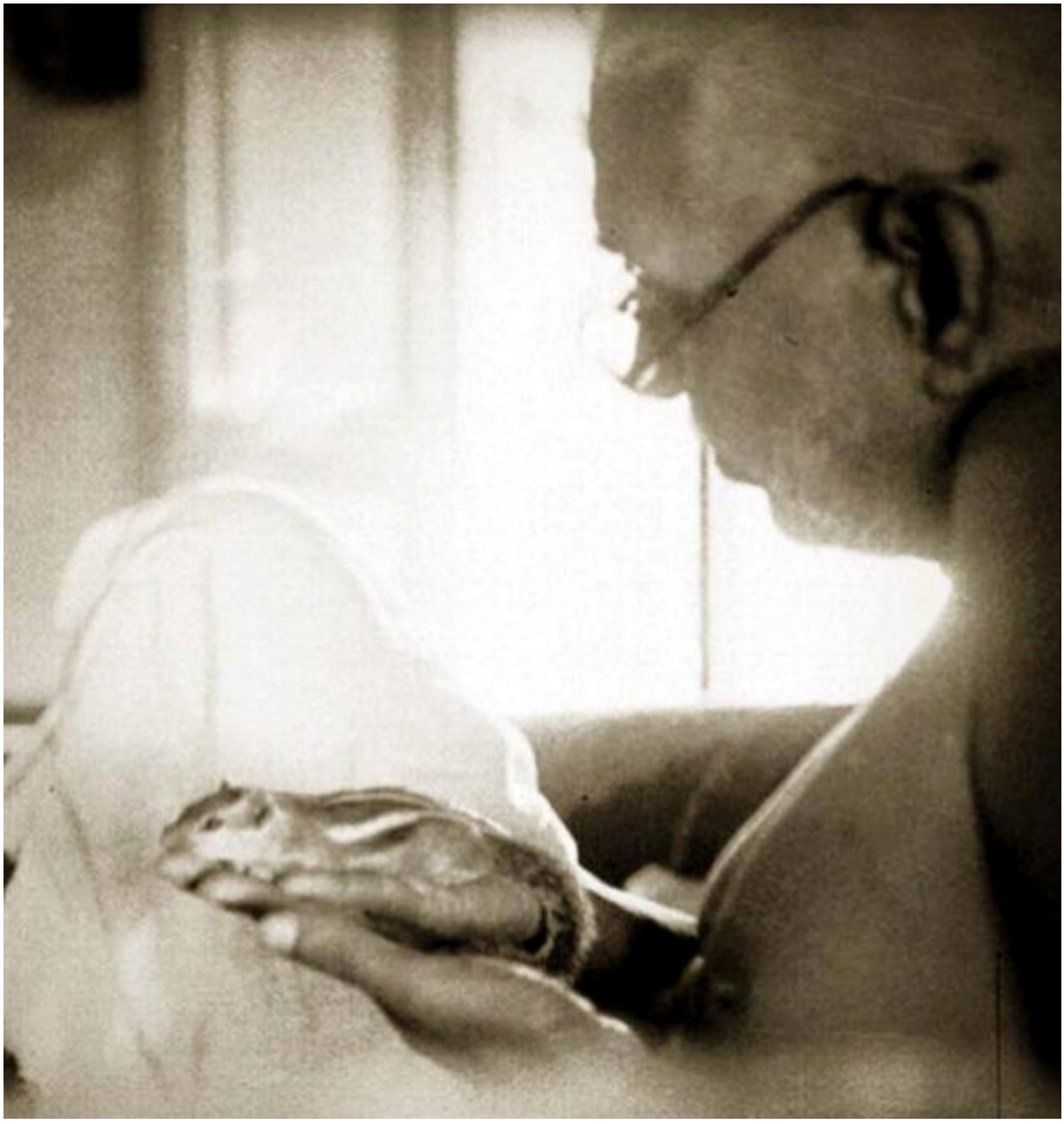


All animals were peaceful and calm in his presence. The amazing thing is that he pacified even the deadliest ones, such as a cobra. Bhagavan was invariably kind to all creatures. Snakes and scorpions were never allowed to be killed. The respect he showed to all animals was most striking. He really treated them as equals. It is magnificent that he treated even insects as he treated human beings. A dog used to sleep next to Bhagavan, and there were two sparrows living at his side in the hall. Even when people tried to drive them away, they would come back. Once he noticed that the dog had been chased away. He remarked: "Just because you are in the body of a human, you think you are a human being, and because he is in the body of a dog, you think him a dog. Why don't you think of him as a Mahatma, and treat him as a great person?" Bhagavan would gently call the monkeys and give them cashewnuts or groundnuts. They would go away screeching with delight. Squirrels used to run in and out of the hall window, over his couch and even his body. He would feed them with whatever was available and fondle them. Their chief ambition seemed to be to make nests behind his pillows so that they might bring up their families under his protection.

Jackie the dog was brought to the ashram when he was very young. He never mixed with other dogs, nor did he play much. Instead, he lived the life of a sadhu. He would sit in front of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi on an orange cloth that had been provided by a devotee, and stare intently at Bhagavan's eye. Because Bhagavan had a lot of love for him, and because he always behaved in such an exemplary fashion, he was always very well looked after... Whenever prasad [food that has been offered to God in a ceremony, then distributed to devotees] was distributed, Jackie would not eat until Bhagavan began to eat his own portion. On such occasions, he would watch Bhagavan's face intently. As soon as Bhagavan put a morsel into his mouth, Jackie would start to eat his own portion. I remember one incident concerning Jackie that occurred while Bhagavan was sitting by the well, surrounded by devotees. Jackie was sitting with the devotees, looking intently at Bhagavan, when a stray dog entered the ashram through the back gate. Jackie, distracted by the newcomer, began to bark. Bhagavan gently chided him by saying, 'You just close your eyes. You just close your eyes. You just close your eyes. If you do this, you will not be able to see the dog.' Jackie obeyed at once but some of the rest of us continued to look at the stray dog. When I saw what was happening, I laughed and remarked, 'This is a good teaching. It is not only for Jackie, it is for everyone.'



In the roof of the Old Hall, squirrels would build nests. Once, some new-born squirrels dropped on Bhagavan's sofa. Their eyes remained yet unopened and the size of each baby may not have been more than an inch; they were very red in colour with fresh flesh, absolutely tender to touch. The mother squirrel ignored them. Now what to do? How to feed and attend to such tender things? The baby squirrels were in the palm of Bhagavan. Bhagavan's face glowed with love and affection for them. While there was a question mark in the faces of those who surrounded Bhagavan, He Himself was happy and cheerful. He asked for some cotton to be brought. He made a soft bed for them. He also took a bit of cotton and squeezed it to such a tiny end, the end portion looked like a sharp pin. He dipped it in milk and squeezed milk into the tiny mouths. At regular intervals, Bhagavan repeated this act of compassion. He tended them with great care and love till they grew up and ran around. They did not run away, only ran around their 'Mother'. Kinder far than their own mother!



When Annamalai Swami was staying at the Ashram of Sri Raman Maharshi, he was given charge of constructing more buildings for the Ashram. Annamalai Swami was sometimes troubled by sexual thoughts but somehow he used to avoid the thoughts. Amongst the construction workers, there were some very attractive females and occasionally, Annamalai Swami was attracted to them. Once he expelled all the female workers so that he can avoid them. But Raman Maharshi stressed him to employ them. Once he told Ramana Maharshi that he doesn't want Moksha (Liberation) but he wants to get rid of the desire for women. Ramana Maharshi laughingly said, "All saints are striving only for this." But one afternoon, Annamalai Swami was sitting in his room, when he saw a beautiful woman going to meet Ramana Maharshi. After some time when that woman came out of room, Annamalai Swami was totally captivated by her beauty and lust.

Suddenly Ramana Maharshi came out and asked Annamalai Swami to stand on a particular rock and Maharshi started conversing with him. The sun was at its peak and Annamalai Swami was not wearing any sandals. So soon his feet started burning from heat but he could not change his feet as it was an order from Maharshi.

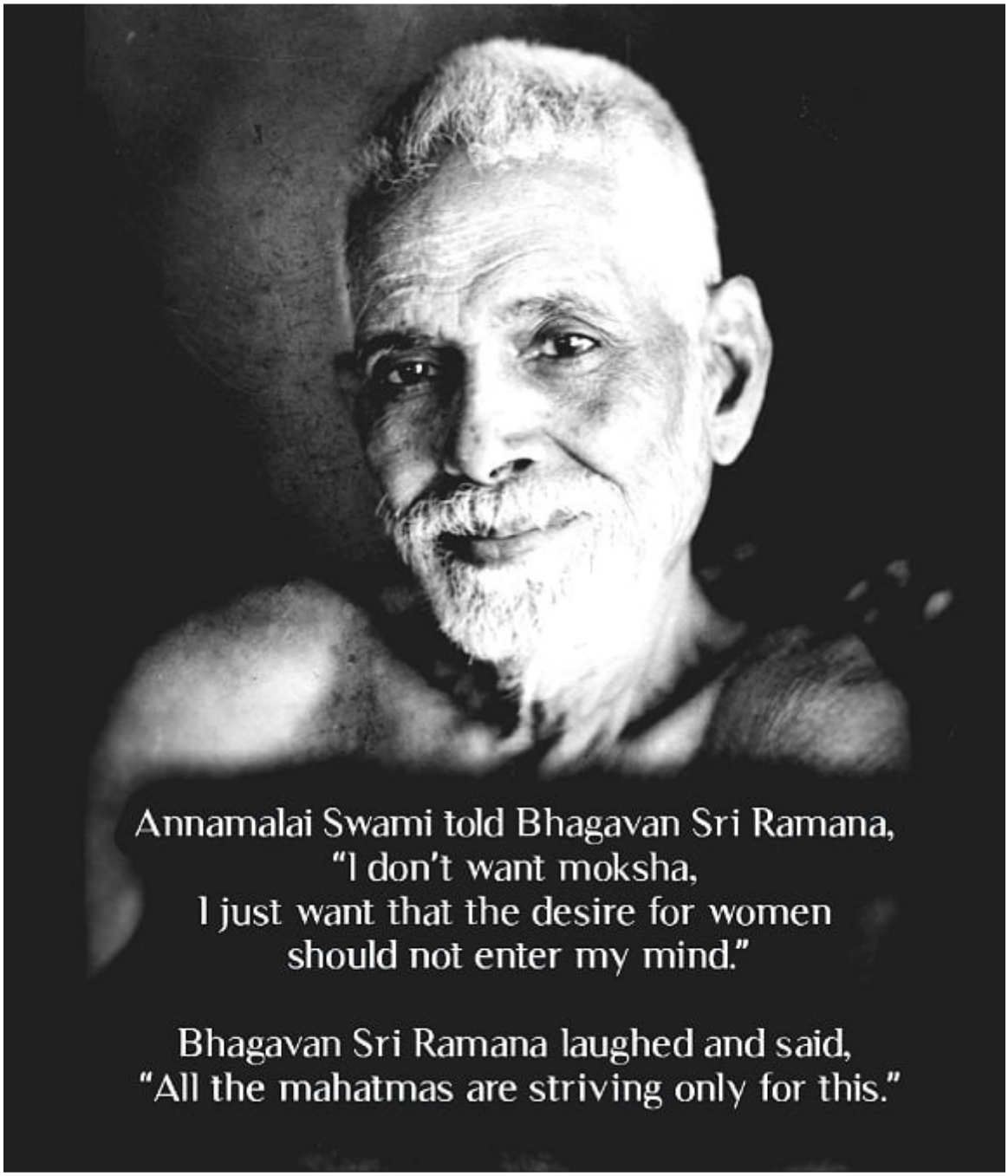
The pain in his feet started increasing and suddenly a thought arose in him that the pain he is experiencing has replaced the sexual desire. As the thought entered his mind, Ramana Maharshi abruptly ended conversation and left him.

After some days, Annamalai Swami was again disturbed by sexual thoughts to the extent that he could not eat or sleep properly for three days. At last, he thought of taking Maharshi's help.

Maharshi advised him:

"Why you pay attention to thought? Why don't you meditate? To whom does this thought come? The thought will leave you on its own accord. You are not the body nor the mind, you are the Self.

Meditate on your Self and all desires will leave you."


Annamalai Swami told Bhagavan Sri Ramana,
"I don't want moksha,
I just want that the desire for women
should not enter my mind."
Bhagavan Sri Ramana laughed and said,
"All the mahatmas are striving only for this."

In 1947, I went to Ramana Maharshi. I was only 18 years old. After spending around three days talking with him, I settled down with the devotees in the hall. I used to sit at the right side of the hall against the wall, watching all the people come in. There were devotees, disciples, and seekers. The devotees were always the same. They never said much. They were immersed in themselves. The disciples and the seekers often quarreled with each other. I recall a particular Indian who was very quarrelsome with the disciples, and he used to find fault with everybody. He would go to Ramana and say, 'So and so is doing this, so and so is doing that.' And Ramana would tell him, 'Remember the reasons why you came here and keep silent.' The reason, of course, was to find the Self, and not to interfere with anybody else. But there were all kinds of incidents going on. Sikhs came, Hindus, westerners, Buddhists, Zen Buddhists. Some people were practicing hatha yoga. All these things were happening in front of Ramana. But it didn't faze Ramana one bit. I recall a westerner, I'm trying to think of his name... Henry Wells, from Scotland. He apparently had read a lot of books about Ramana, and this was his first visit. He came into the hall and I watched his first encounter. He ran over to Ramana, prostrated himself on his stomach, and started going crazy. His feet were shaking, and he was chanting. The devotees wanted to pick him up, and Ramana said, 'Let him stay'. When he came out of it, he told Ramana, 'At last, I have found you. You are my father, my mother, my son, my daughter, my friend.' And Ramana just smiled at him. I said to myself, 'Someone this enthusiastic... let's see what happens, if it lasts.' The days went by and he kept prostrating himself every day for about a month. Then he finally stopped, and he just sat down like everybody else. After about two months or so, he started looking around the room at everybody, and he began to complain: that this wasn't right, that wasn't right. I just sat and watched all these things going on. After about six months of being there, he started to find fault with the management. At that time, Ramana's brother was managing the ashram. He started to whisper to the other disciples, but, of course, the devotees would have nothing to do with this. It was the disciples and the seekers. He started spreading rumors. He hardly ever talked to me. I guess I was too young. He was about forty-five years old. Around the seventh month of his stay, he came over to me one day and he asked me, outside the ashram, 'Do you think Ramana is really enlightened?' I just smiled at him. I didn't answer. I walked away. This man started getting devotees to fight against each other and to rebel against the rules of the ashram. Around the eighth month, he saw me again and told me, 'Do you think it is right for Ramana to stand naked like this? Let's buy him some clothes and dress him up, so when some Westerners come, they won't be frightened.' I told him what Ramana said: 'Remember the reason for which you came.' A couple of days later, I didn't see him in the hall. A second day passed and I didn't see him. Then a third. On the fourth day, I enquired, 'What happened to him?' The person he was living with said, 'Oh, Henry packed his suitcase and went back to Scotland'. Nobody ever heard from him again. The point of the story is this: If you realise the reason why you came, you'll be interested in one thing, awakening. That will dominate your life. Nothing else will. You will not be concerned with what somebody else is doing, and you will be at peace with yourself and everybody else. Everything is preordained anyway. Everything is karmic. So what's going to happen will happen, whether you like it or not. So why get insulted? Why get your feelings hurt? Be at peace.

Robert Adams

The great sage Anandamayi Ma visited Ramana Maharshi at his ashram

"Here is the sun, we are all the stars in daytime", were the spontaneous words uttered by Sri Ma Anandamayi, when She stood solemnly in front of Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi shrine in 1952.

Ma Anandamayi laid the foundation stone at Sri Ramana Bhagavan's Samadhi, Tiruvannamalai, November 1952. This is an excerpt of an article written by SS Cohen: Her very Presence silently exhaled the perfume of Purity and joyful innocence which pervaded and won all hearts. Her childlike, guileless laughter, the hope She instilled in the minds of the troubled questioners, the deep sympathy and understanding with which She met their suffering, gave immense solace and turned sorrow to happiness and at times to tears of relief.

On 5th November, 1952, Ma arrived at the Ashram.

Ma had come specially to Sri Ramanasramam to lay the foundation stone for the construction over the Samadhi of Sri Bhagavan. She went round the Ashram to see the places sanctified by the Holy Presence of Sri Ramana Bhagavan in His life-time. Before His Samadhi, She reverently stood with folded hands and enquired about how the sacred body had been buried. Those who were present on that occasion still remember and recollect the meticulous and measured way She handed over brick after brick to lay the foundation.

Even when the traditional purna kumbha was offered to Her at the entrance of the Ashram, Ma graciously remarked: "Why all this? Do you do all these when a daughter comes to her father's house?!"

She then strewed flowers over the foundation stone to the joy of all present.

Then She made the eight mile pradakshina of Arunachala Hill by car. Later that evening, She delighted the Maharshi's disciples by leading the bhajan in calling the name of Bhagawan: "O Bhagawan! Eh Bhagawan! Ha Bhagawan!" for about 10 minutes, suitably changing the modulation of the tune and the words of the appeal at each call. Her delicate pure voice made the glory of Her Spiritual State all the more captivating.

The following morning, as Ma was about to leave, the managing committee approached Her and with folded hands begged Her to visit the Ashram again, to which She smilingly replied: "I AM NOT GOING ANYWHERE: I AM ALWAYS HERE. THERE IS NO GOING NOR COMING - ALL IS ATMAN." These words very much reminded us of the very words of our Divine Guru Sri Ramana Bhagavan.

India abounds in sages and saints. Ma Anandamayi occupies a special place in the spiritual hoary of India. Genuine seekers from the west and east flocked to Her for

spiritual enlightenment. Her gracious motherly love captivated the hearts of millions. She shed light, since She was the great Light Itself. Ma dropped Her body only to live in the hearts of devotees eternally.

We pay humble homage to this Light of Lights, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi!

*Reprinted from the Oct. 1982 issue of "The Mountain Path,"
published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, India.

JAI MA! JAI BHAGAWAN!

Ramana Maharshi says, “The ‘I’ removes the ‘I’ yet remains the ‘I’.” It means the I-consciousness-presence removes the I-person-belief and thereafter remains the unmixed and impersonal I-consciousness. This is the paradox of Self-realisation. This ‘I’ that removes the I-person does not even have to touch the I-ego. When a lion enters a room, he doesn't ask those there to pack their things and leave. There is only emptiness remaining. Such is the power of true understanding.

Mooji

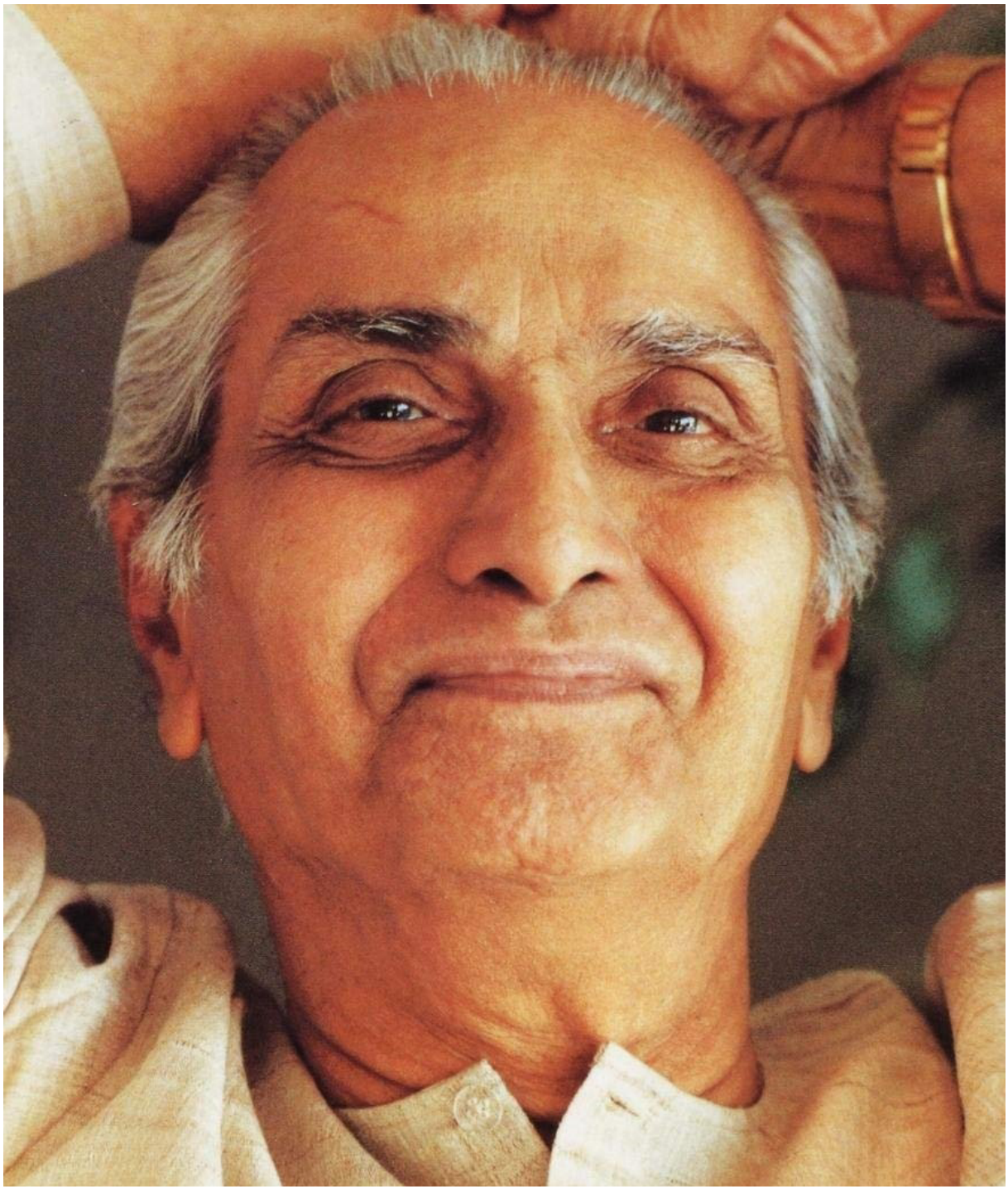
I uttered the word 'I'
But Balyani held his hand to my mouth.
I asked Huang Po if he could hear the stream...
'There is only the hearing', he said.
I found William Blake naked in the park...
'Do you see how, through perception, the infinite gives birth to itself?', he asked.
'He's right', Ramana said,
'The universe is born every moment
Through the portal I Am.'
And later, when I suggested we rest,
'I am always at rest', he smiled.

Rupert Spira

What is the final bottom line of acceptance and surrender? That there is truly no "me" who can do anything. There is really, truly no "me". Nothing happens, unless it is the will of the Source, the will of God. The sense of personal doership is an illusion. This is the final understanding.

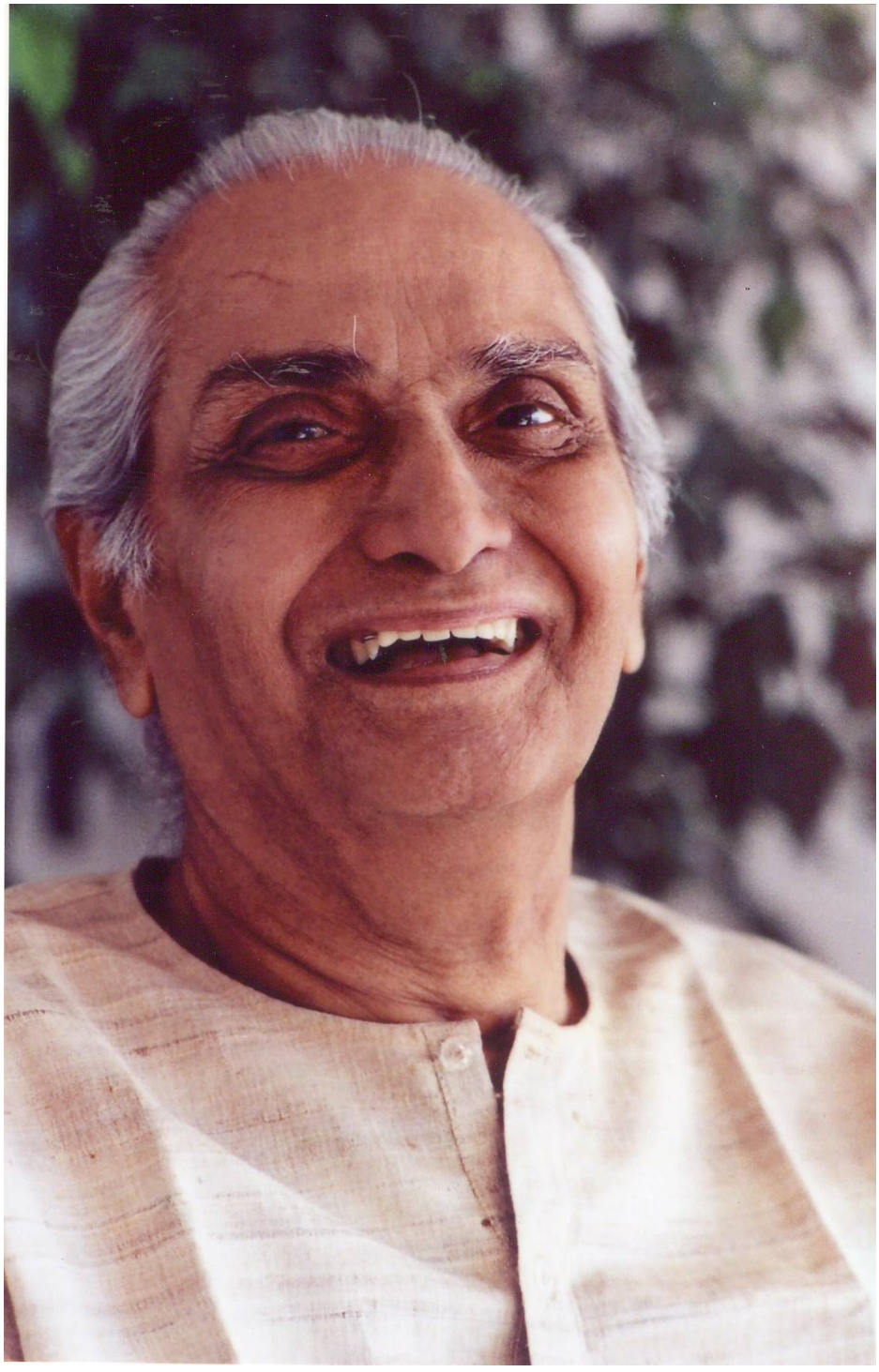
Ramesh Balsekar

**(Advaita teacher; disciple of Nisargadatta Maharaj and lover of Ramana Maharshi...
From early childhood, Balsekar was drawn to the nondual teaching,
particularly the teachings of Ramana Maharshi.)**



"The final truth, as Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj and all the sages before them have clearly stated, is that there is neither creation nor destruction, neither birth nor death, neither destiny nor free will, neither any path nor any achievement. All there is, is Consciousness."

from 'Who Cares?' by Ramesh Balsekar



“Sri Ramana Maharshi is a true son of the Indian Earth. He is genuine, authentic and, in addition to that, something quite phenomenal. In India, he is the whitest spot in a white space. What we find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana is the purest of India with its breath liberating humanity. It is a chant of milleniums, the melody is built upon a single Motif which, in a thousand colorful reflexes, regenerates itself within the Indian spirit and the latest incarnation of which is Ramana Maharshi. The life and teachings of Sri Ramana are not only important for India, but also for Westerners. They form a record of great human interest.” – Carl Gustav Jung

When Miguel Serrano asked Dr. Jung about his book entitled
"The Undiscovered Self", what he meant by the Self, he was told,
“The Self is a circle, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. And do you know what the Self is for the Western man? It is Christ (Christ-consciousness), for Christ is the archetype of the hero representing man’s highest aspiration.”

Sri Ramana lived an impeccably saintly life. He owned nothing. He was a natural celibate. And he was available to seekers at all times of the day and night. No one was ever turned away, charged an admission fee, or asked for a donation.

Though Sri Ramana is no longer teaching through a body, his presence is still felt by those who are actively trying to put his teachings into practice. His loving and liberating power still flows into those who follow his practical advice. The purity of his life and the simplicity of his practical message continue to attract followers who see in him the culmination of the timeless message of true liberation.

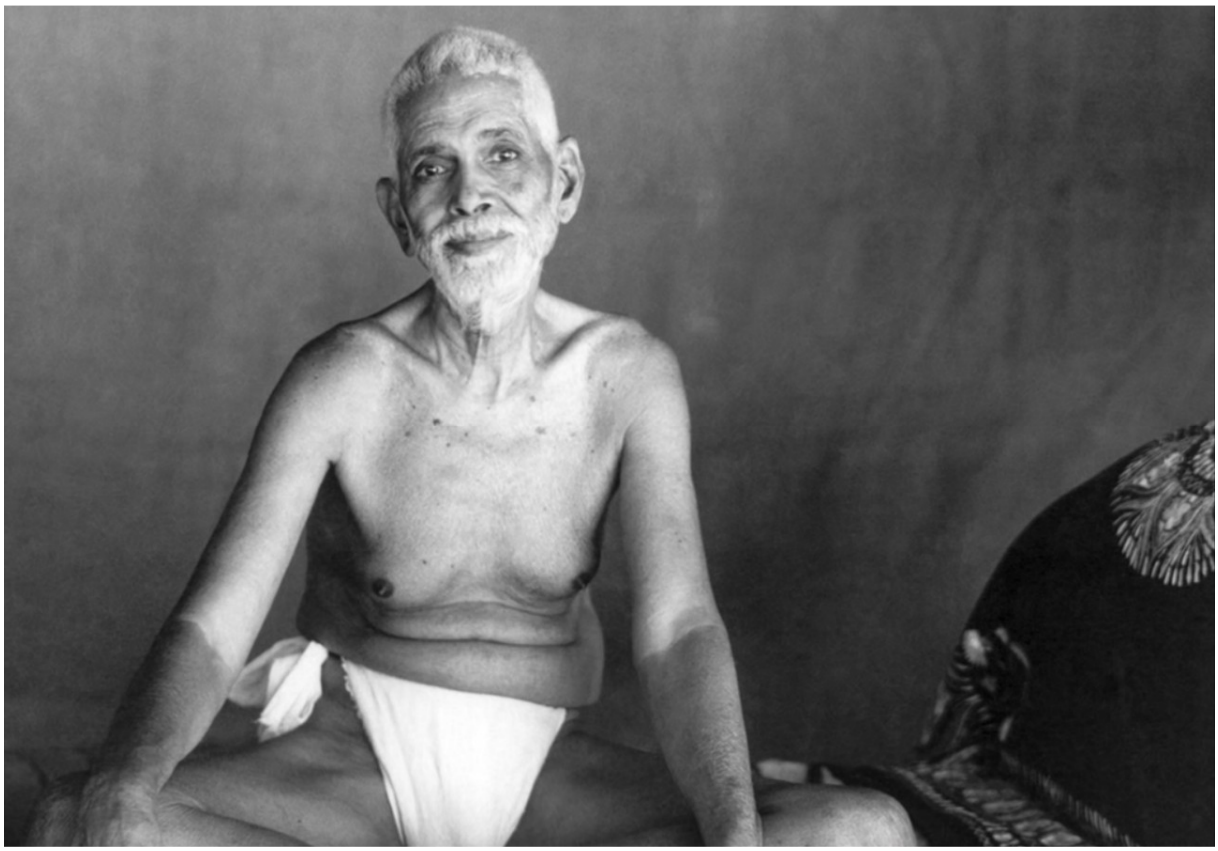
Though he never founded an organization or felt any compulsion to take his teachings to a wider audience, he has, in the decades since he passed away in 1950, attracted an expanding circle of admirers and followers who still feel the power of his presence and who are inextricably drawn to his powerful and liberating teachings.

(When he was young, shortly after his self-realization,)
Ramana became oblivious to the needs of his body.
Insects ate away his thighs
but the bliss of his inner experience was so intense,
he never noticed the disintegration of his body.
After 3 years of living like this,
he began a slow return to physical normality,
a process that was not completed for several years.

Sri Ramana spoke very little. His verbal teachings were only given out to those who were unable to understand his silence. To those who wanted a verbal presentation of his teachings, at the highest level that could be expressed in words, he would say that consciousness alone exists, not as an individual experience, but as an underlying substratum in which all beings and physical phenomena appear and disappear.

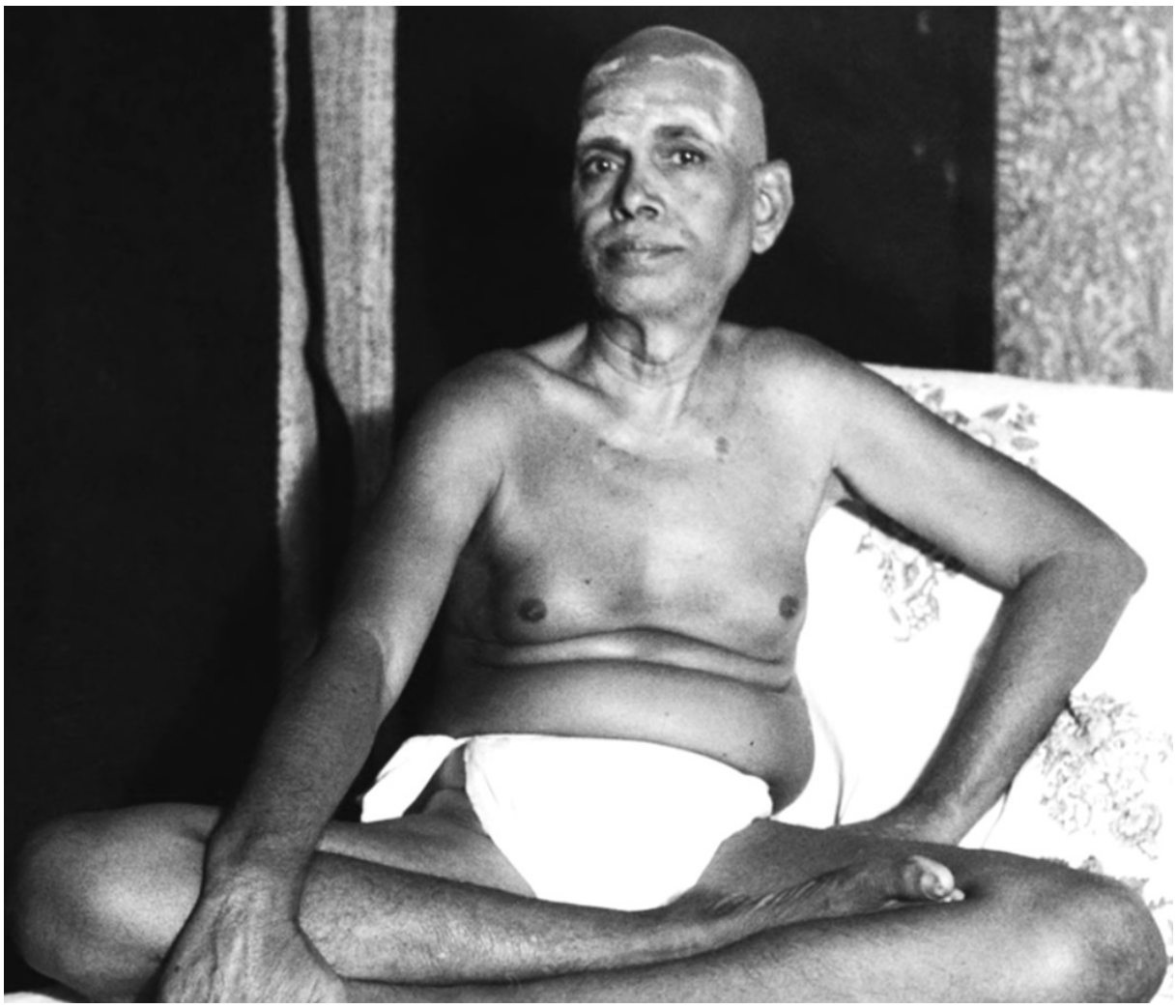
Bhagavan in his early days was sitting in the Arunachala Temple compound either under a tree or in a flower garden or in the vehicles' mandap or here and there without caring for his body. People who were coming and going, used to say, "He is sitting like a jada (dull-witted person); he must be a mad fellow," and they never paid any attention to him. And Bhagavan has told us several times that he used to be amused at such talk and wish such madness would overtake all people. Not only that, when under the instructions of the Sarvadhikari, Kunjuswami was serving Bhagavan as an attendant, he found Bhagavan's body and head were shaking and faltering and so, when there was no one else there but close disciples, he asked Bhagavan, "Bhagavan, although only in middle age, strangely enough, has a shaking of the head and of the body necessitating the aid of a stick for walking. What could be the reason for it?" Bhagavan replied, it seems, with a smile, "What is there so strange in it? If a big elephant is tied down in a small hut, what else will happen to that hut except troubles of all sorts? This is the same." Do you see what profound meaning there is in those words? Without revealing this meaning to all people, he says humorously now and then, "Do you see? While all of you have two legs, I have three."

Robert Adams: "His head started shaking and I also asked about this... "Why do you have this weakness?" I found out later his head was shaking for the last forty years. He again explained to me that when he had his experience when he was sixteen years old, it was like putting an elephant in a hut. What happens when you put an elephant in a hut? The hut shakes all over. It breaks to pieces."



Ramana Maharshi was a miracle of health. Really, it's amazing. From age 16 to 20, he sat in caves and ate almost nothing. His daily food intake consisted of a half-cup of random donations. Even when he started eating normally, he ate whatever people gave him, without concern for dietary balance or nutritional content. His devotees loved him dearly, but could never persuade him to eat complete meals. He only consented to eat if everyone got an identical portion, even when there were hundreds of people milling around. From age 16 to 70, he wore nothing but a loincloth, in weather ranging from 10c - 40c (50F - 104F). He helped people at all hours of the night, and barely slept. In his sixties, he developed arthritis, and eventually was diagnosed with cancer. This was in the 1940s, when he received hundreds of visitors each week. He no longer entered samadhi because he didn't have time, and was exposed to constant commotion. Many devotees say this was the cause of his body breaking down. Others give spiritual explanations: He was taking on the karma of his visitors, or simply giving an external warning that he'll leave the body soon. Whatever the reason, he was the picture of health until the 1940s. And he lived to age 70 in 1950, when life expectancy was 35 in India and 65 in the U.S.

(Jay Matthews)



It happened, Ramana Maharshi was dying.

On Thursday April 13th, a doctor brought Maharshi a palliative to relieve the congestion in the lungs, but he refused it.

"It is not necessary, everything will come right within two days," he said. And after two days, he died.

At about sunset, Maharshi told the attendants to sit him up. They knew already that every movement, every touch, was painful, but he told them not to worry about that. He was suffering from cancer – very painful. Even to drink water was impossible, to eat anything was impossible, to move his head was impossible. Even to say a few words was very difficult. He sat with one of the attendants supporting his head.

A doctor began to give him oxygen, but with a wave of his right hand, he motioned him away.

Unexpectedly, a group of devotees sitting on the verandah outside the hall began singing Arunachala-Siva – a bhajan that Maharshi liked very much. He liked that spot, Arunachala, very much; the hill he used to live upon – that hill is called Arunachala. And the bhajan was a praise, a praise for the hill. On hearing it, Maharshi's eyes opened and shone. He gave a brief smile of indescribable tenderness. From the outer edges of his eyes, tears of bliss rolled down.

Somebody asked him, "Maharshi, are you really leaving us?"

It was hard for him to say, but still he uttered these few words:

"They say that I am dying – but I am not going away.
Where could I go? I am always here."

One more breath, and no more. There was no struggle, no spasm, no other sign of death: only that the next breath did not come.

What he says is of immense significance – "Where could I go? I am always here." There is nowhere to go. This is the only existence there is, this is the only dance there is – where can one go? Life comes and goes, death comes and goes – but where can one go? You were there before life.

Osho

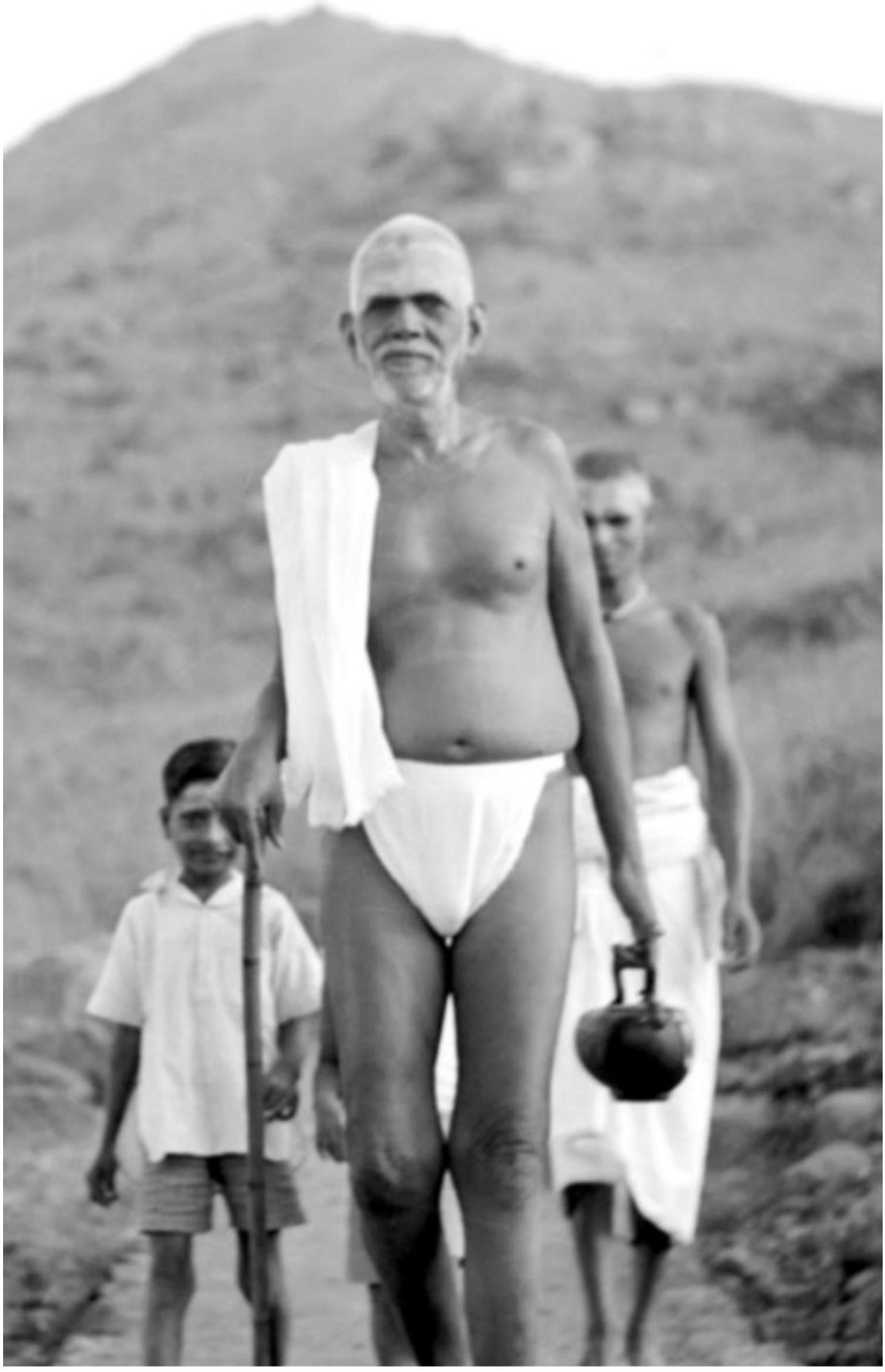
From the day Ramana Maharshi set foot in Tiruvannamalai, he remained continuously for fifty-four years. In 1949, a lump began to grow on the lower portion of his left upper arm. At first, the lump was very small but grew bigger after two operations, bleeding profusely and continuously, and proving to be cancerous. All kinds of treatment were tried, including radium application, but in vain. Even after the fourth operation, which was done on December 19th, 1949, the disease was not cured. Ramana Maharshi was unconcerned and indifferent to the suffering. Instead, he sat (like a spectator) watching the disease waste the body. Crowds came in large numbers and Ramana insisted they should be allowed to have his darshan. Devotees wished the sage would cure his body through supernormal powers, but the Maharshi never exhibited even the slightest interest in siddhis.
Even during the period of great torture caused by the disease, Bhagavan comforted the devotees whenever they were worried about this health. He remarked:

'The body itself is a disease that has come upon us.
If a disease attacks that original disease, is it not good for us?'

...and remarked to another devotee lamenting over his illness:

'Oh! You are grieving as if your Swami were going away?
Where to go? How to go? Going and coming is possible for the body,
but how can it be possible for us?'

No-one was prevented seeing him till the end which came at 8.47 p.m., Friday, April 14th, 1950 (he was 70 years old). Earlier that evening, the sage gave darshan to devotees. All present knew that the end was near and they sat singing Ramana's hymn to Arunachala with the refrain Arunachala-Siva. The Maharshi asked his attendants to make him sit up. He opened his luminous, gracious eyes for a while; there was a smile; a tear of bliss trickled down from the outer corner of his eyes; and at 8.47 p.m., the breathing stopped. There was no struggle, no spasm, none of the signs of death. It is said that at that very moment, a comet moved slowly across the sky, reached the summit of the holy hill Arunachala, and disappeared behind it.



Question:

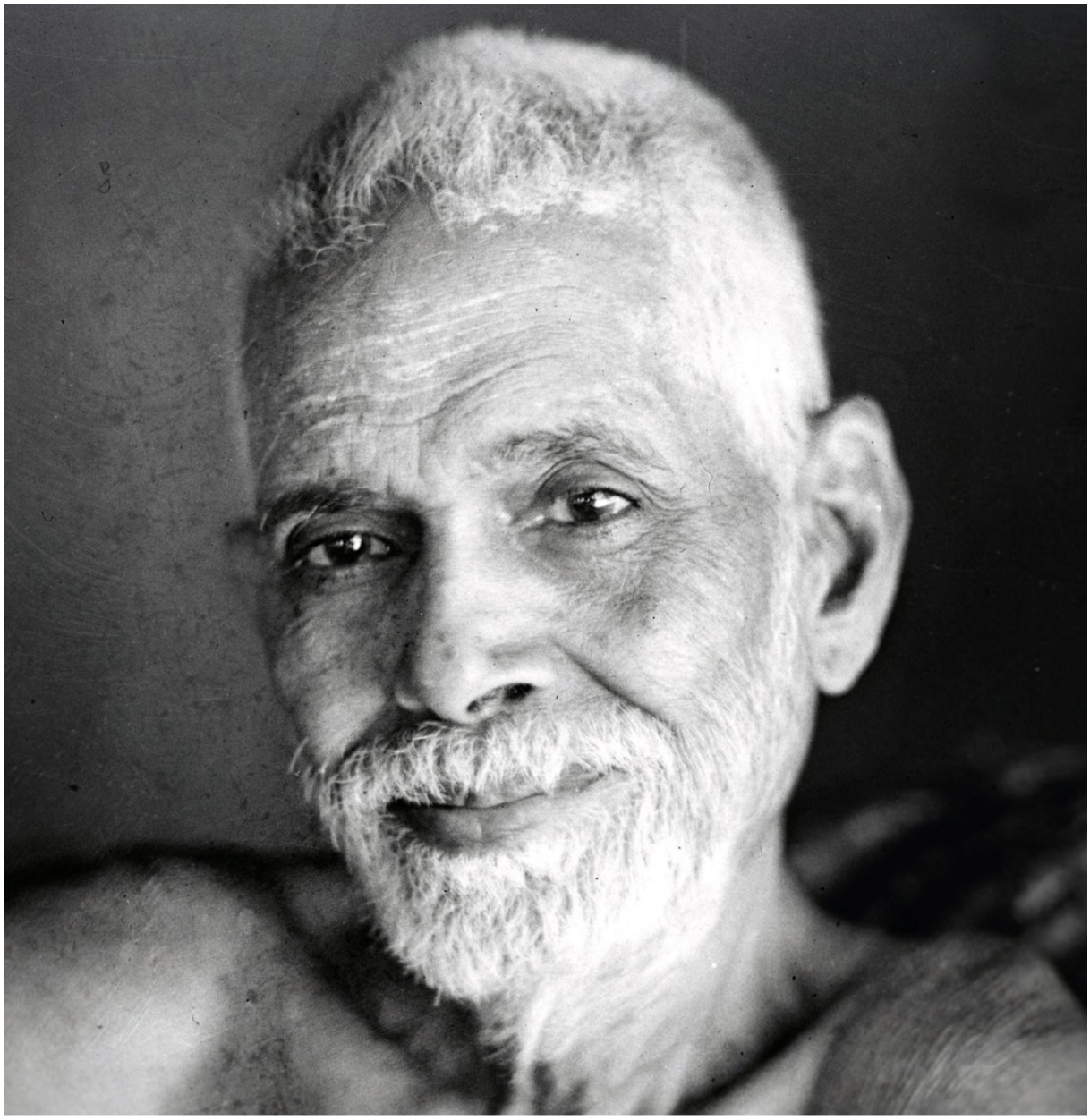
“Ramana Maharshi died.
What difference does it make to him?“

Nisargadatta Maharaj:

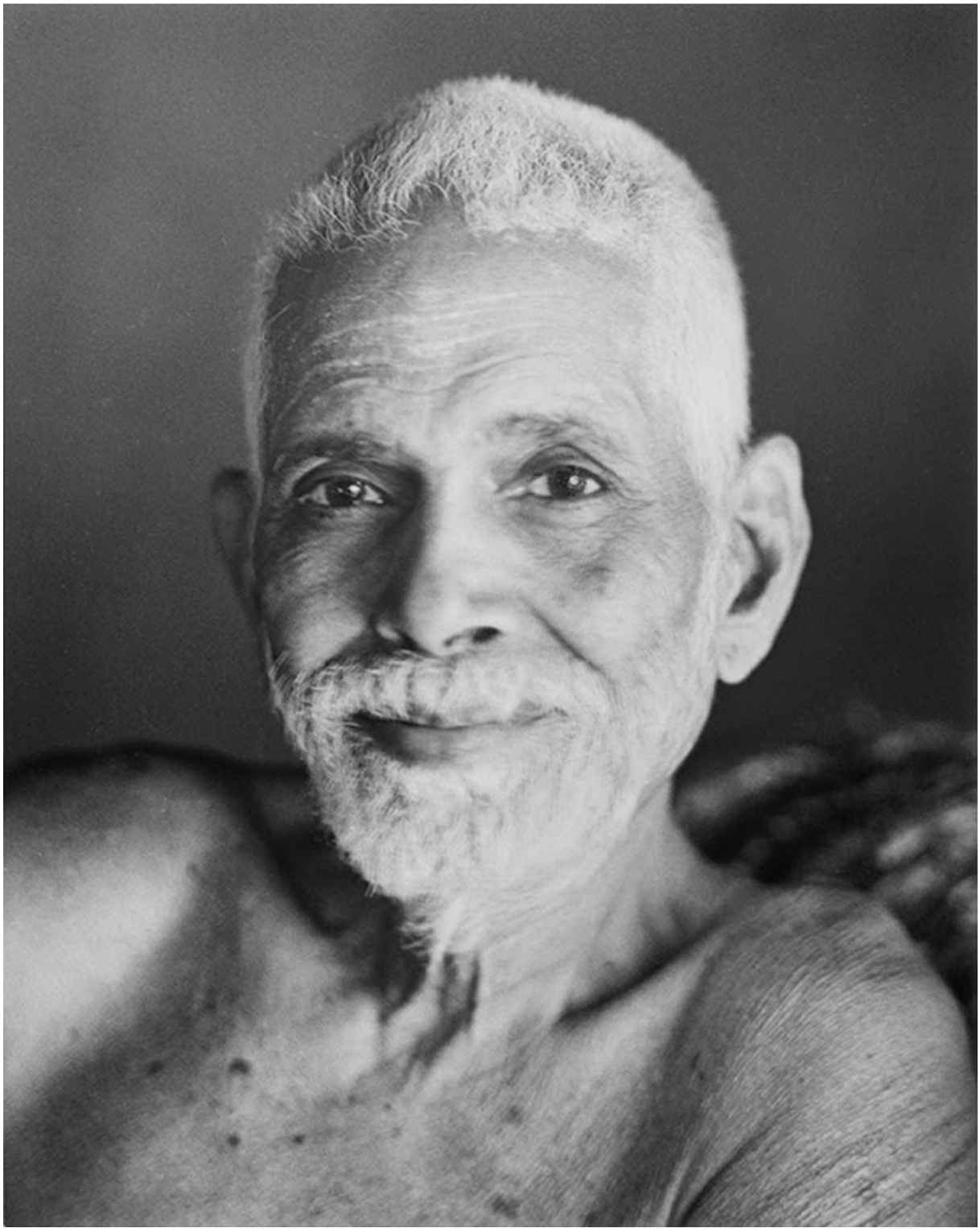
“None whatsoever.
What he was, he is – the ultimate Reality.”

Men love existence
because it is eternal awareness,
which is their own Self.
Why not then hold on to the
pure awareness
right now, while in the body,
and be free from all fear?

Ramana Maharshi

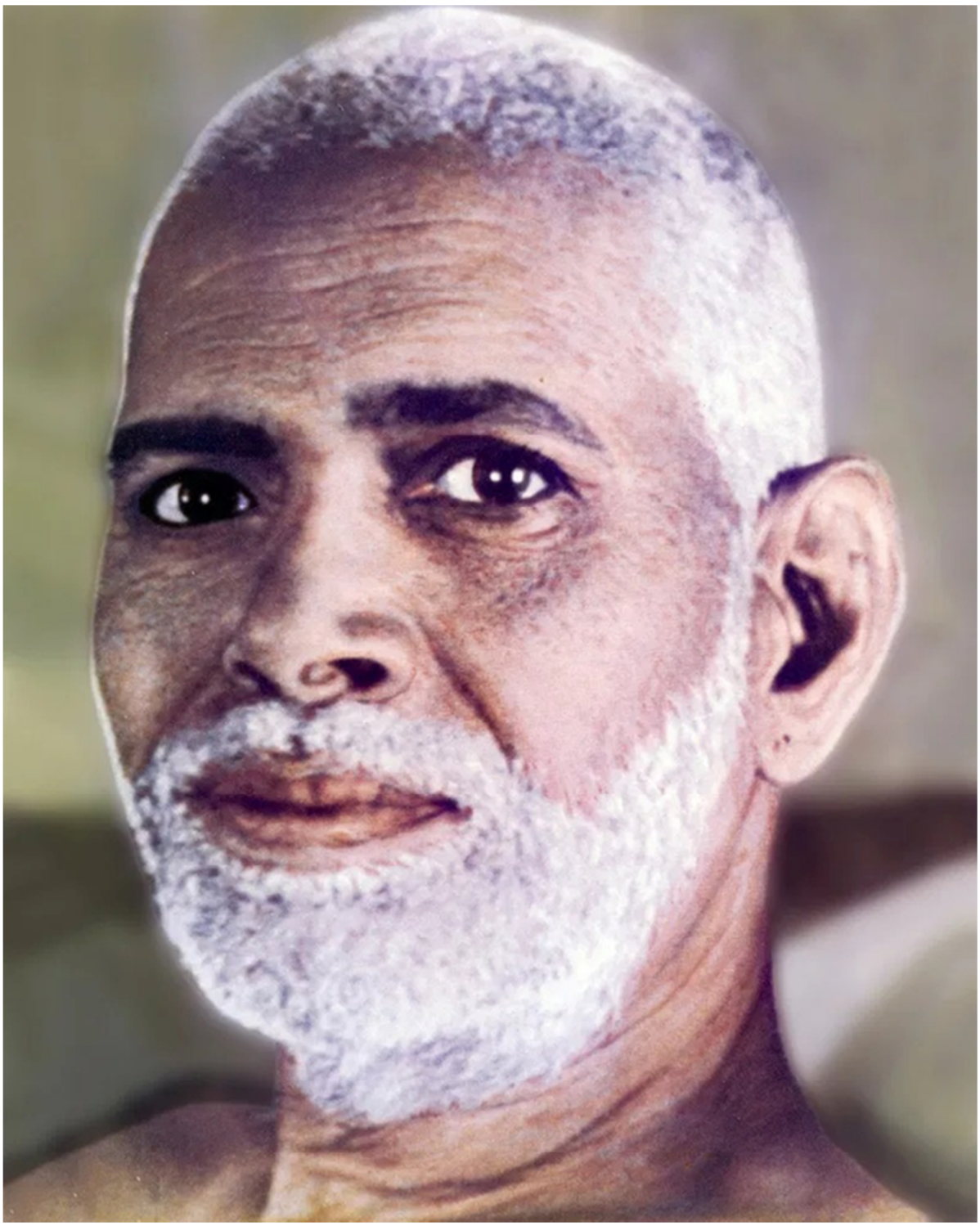


Nearly all mankind is more or less unhappy
because nearly all do not know the true Self.
Real happiness abides in Self-knowledge alone.
All else is fleeting.
To know one's Self is to be blissful always.

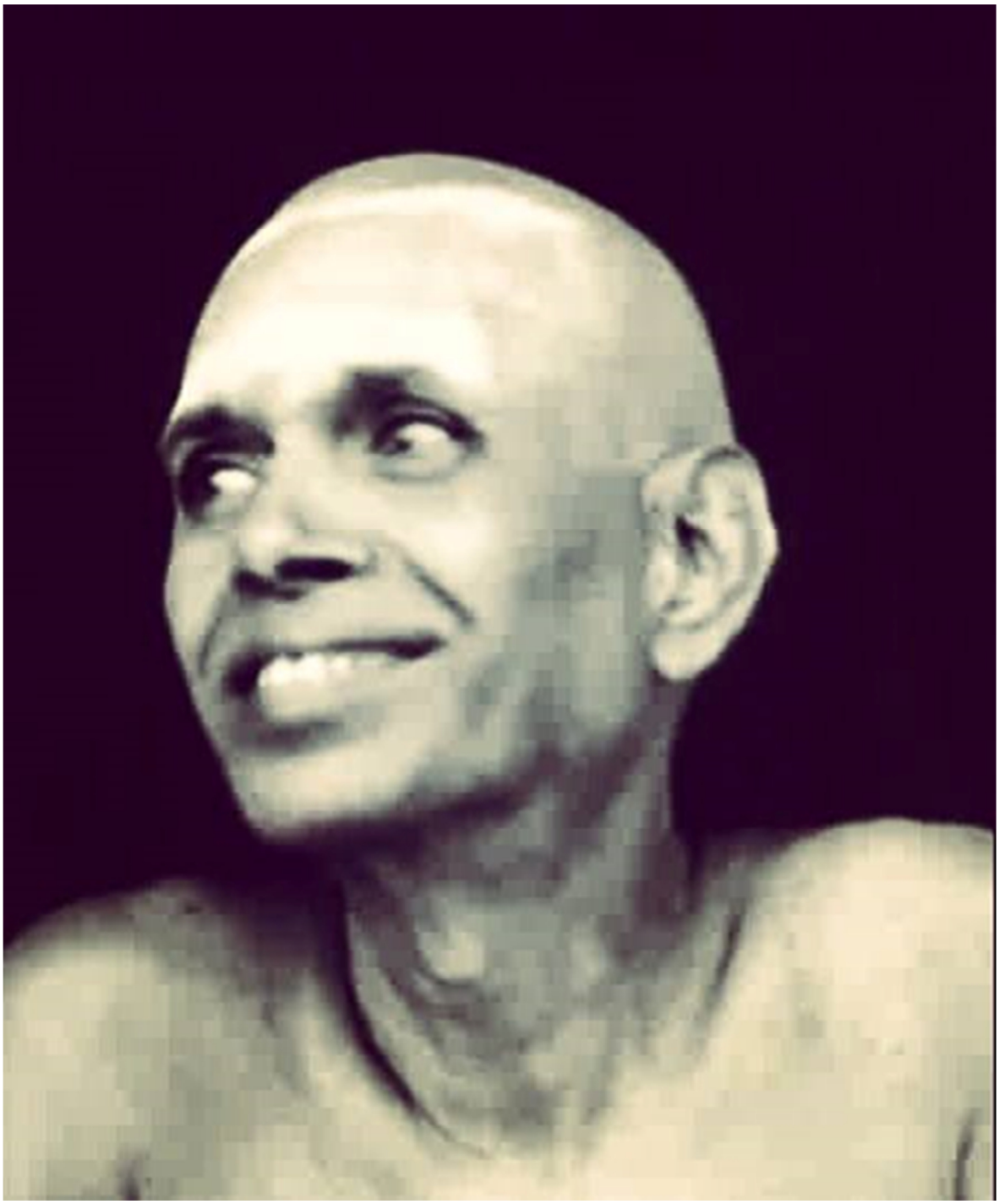


Discover your undying Self and be immortal and happy.

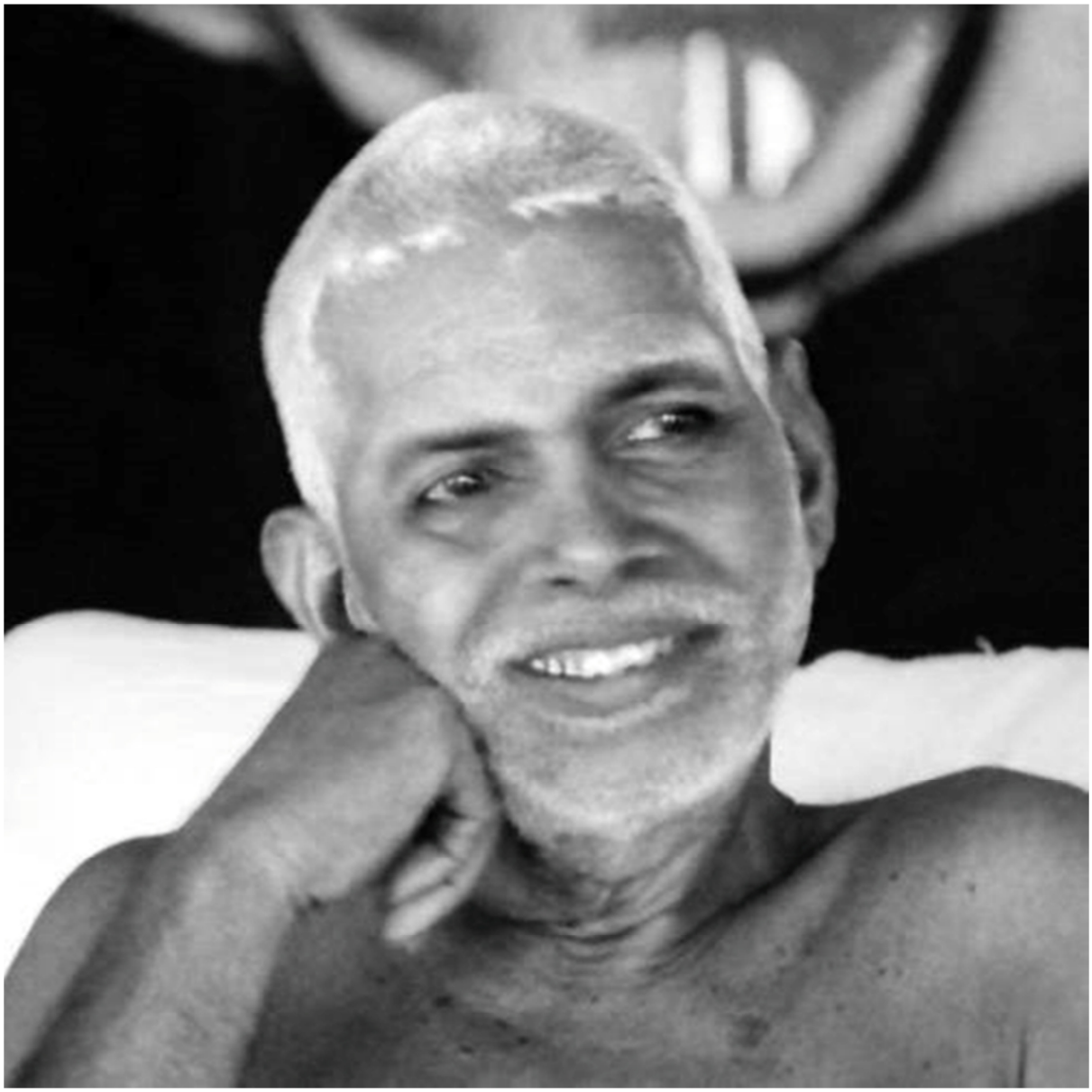
If one realizes at heart
what one's true nature is,
one will find that it is bliss
without beginning and end.



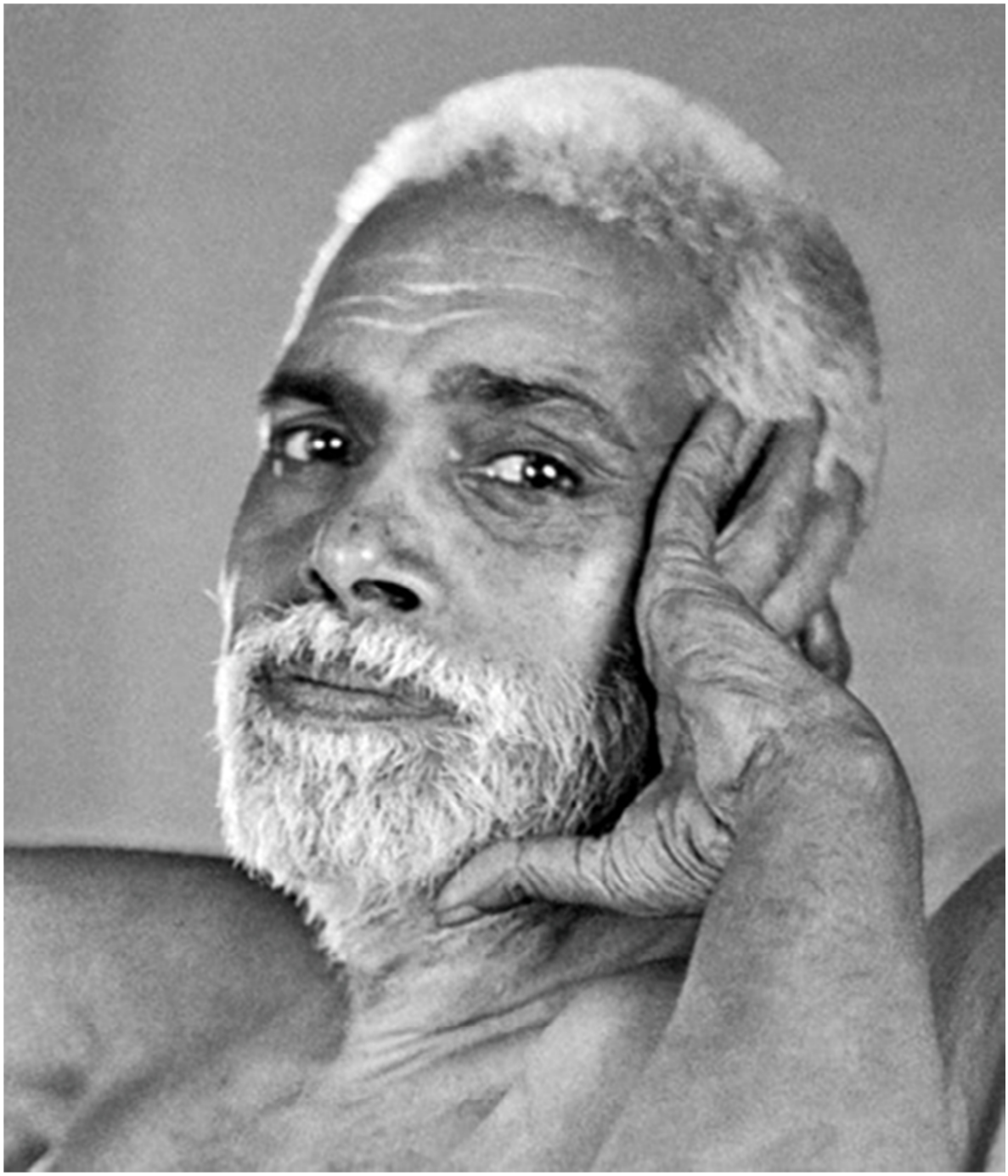
Happiness is inborn in the true Self.
The true Self is imperishable;
therefore, when you find it,
you find a happiness
which does not come to an end.



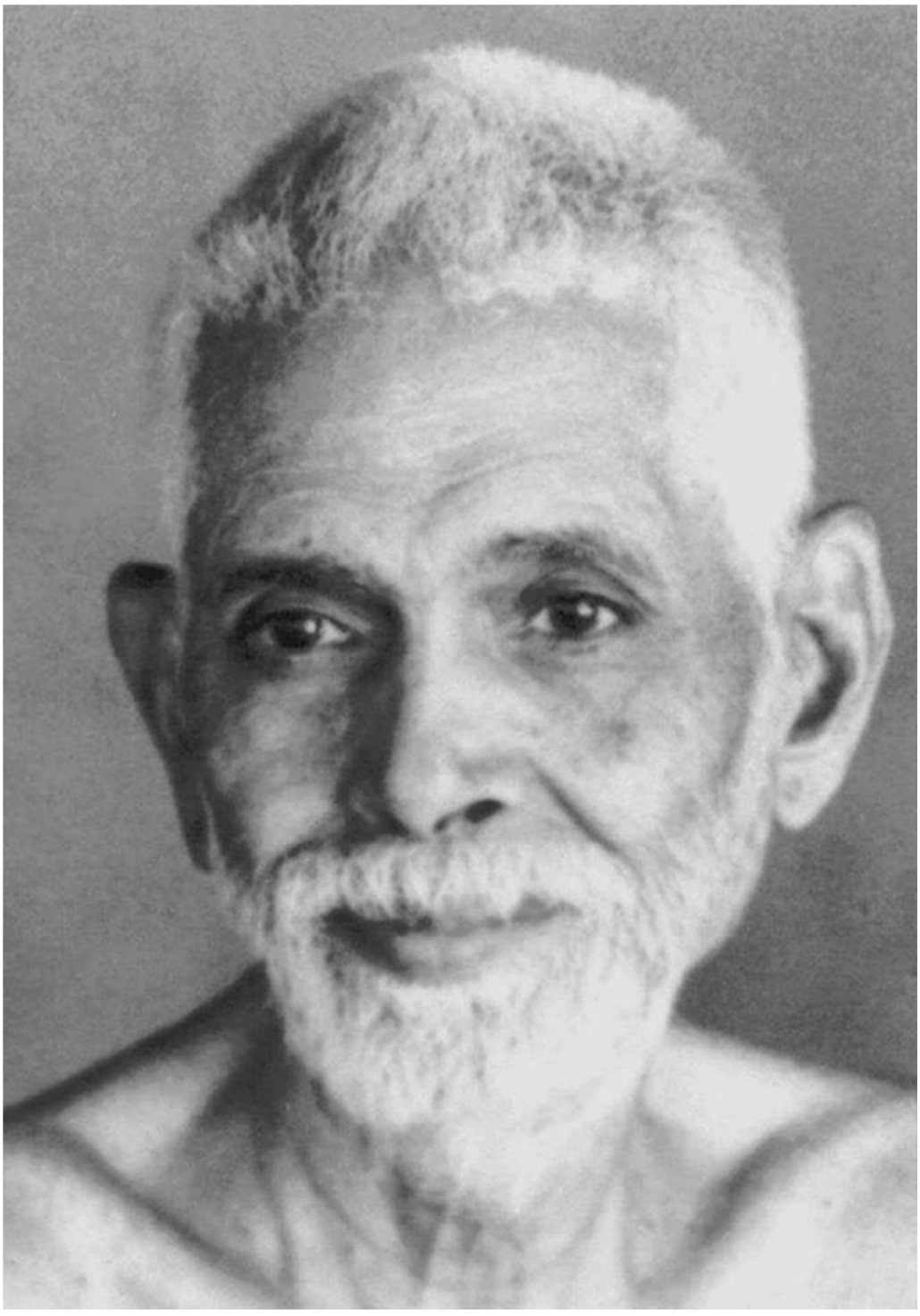
Turn the mind inward and cease thinking of yourself as the body; thereby you will come to know that the Self is ever happy. Neither grief nor misery is experienced in this state.



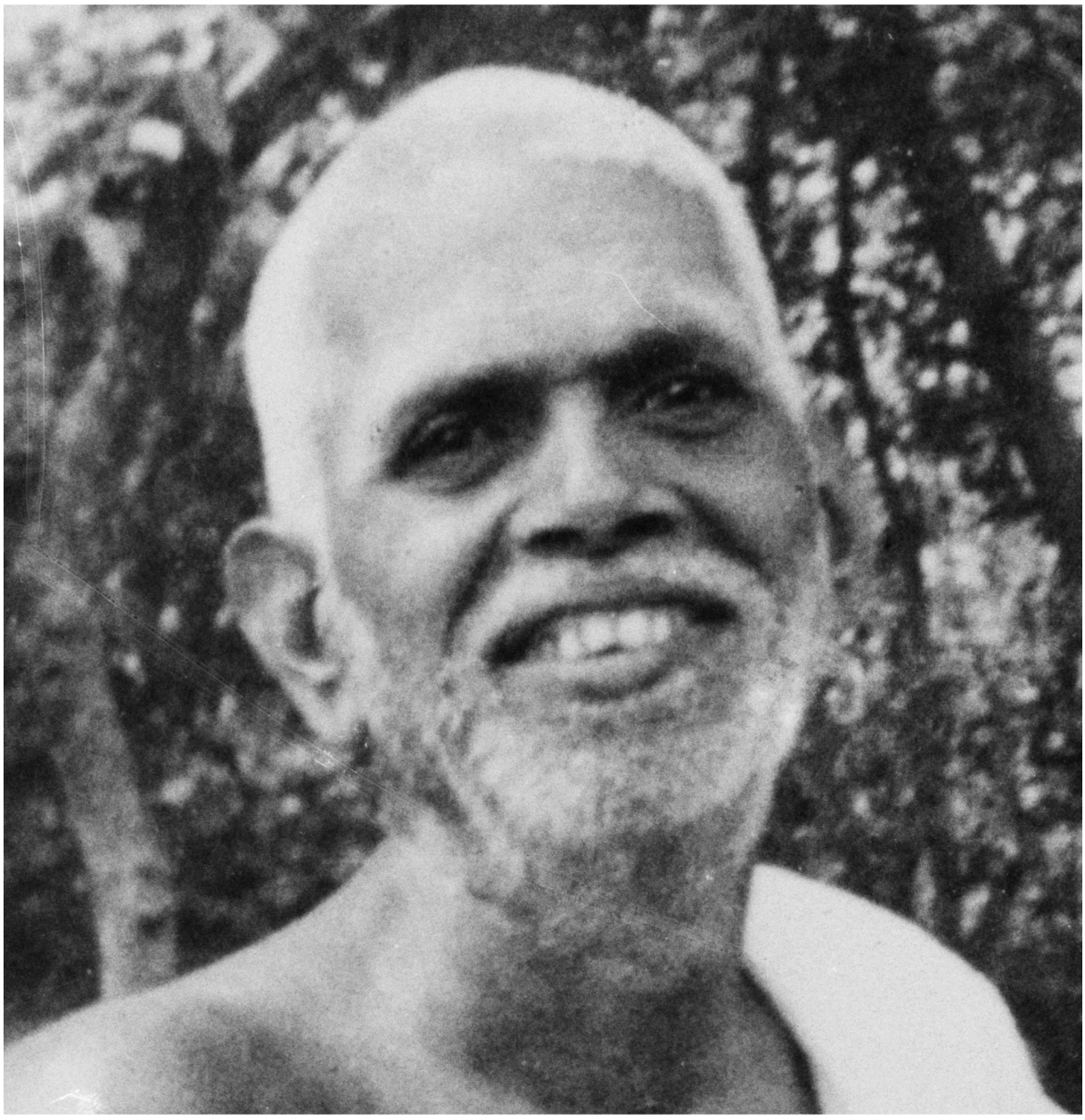
Progress is for the mind
and not for the Self.
The Self is ever perfect.



You are perfect;
so abandon
the idea of imperfection
and need for development.

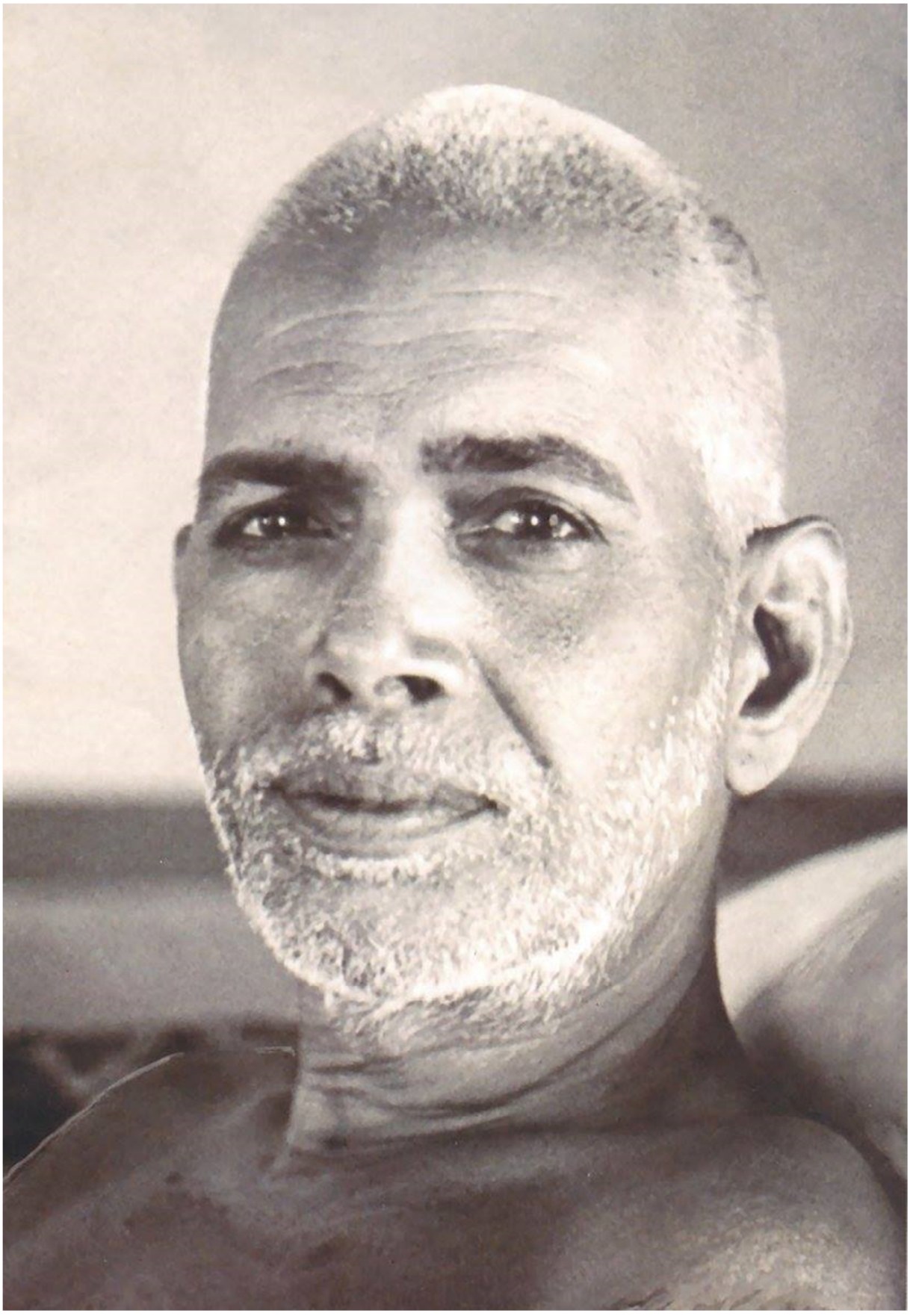


The greatest error of a man is to think
that he is weak by nature, evil by nature.
Every man is divine and strong in his real nature.
What are weak and evil
are his habits, his desires and thoughts,
but not himself.

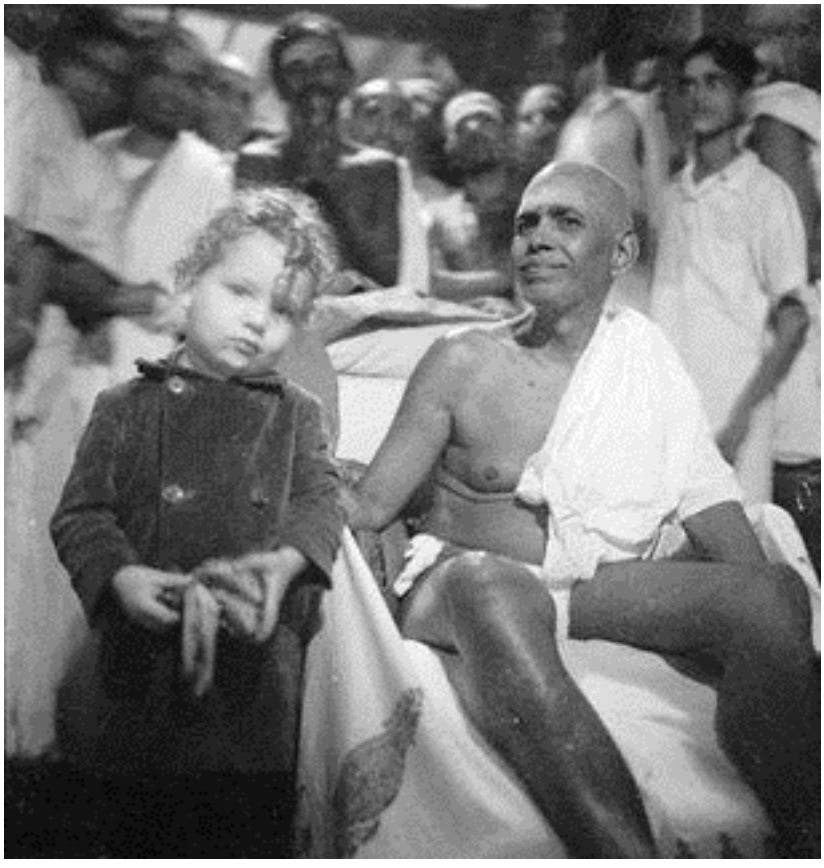


There is only the One.
There is no I, no you,
only the one Self
which is all.

Knowing the Self, God is known.



I cannot show you God
or enable you to see God
because God is not an object
that can be seen.
God is the subject.
He is the seer.
Don't concern yourself
with objects of senses.
Find out who the seer is.
You can't see God
because you are God.



Distracted as we are by various thoughts, if we would continuously contemplate the Self, which is itself God, this single thought would in due course replace all distraction and would itself ultimately vanish; the pure Consciousness that alone finally remains is God. This is liberation.

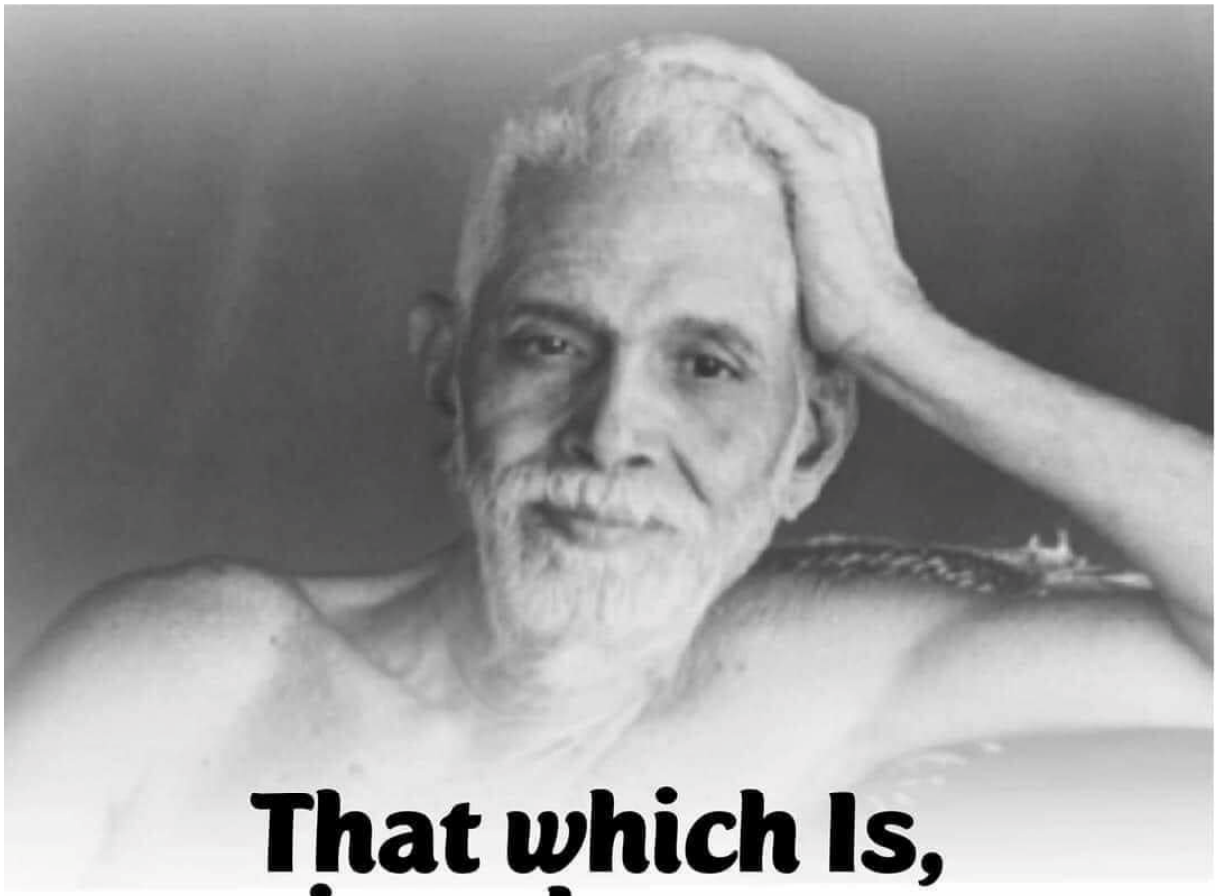
Seeing God
without seeing the Self,
one sees only mental image.
Only he who has seen himself
has seen God,
since he has lost individuality,
and now sees nothing but God.

All are seeing God always.
But they do not know it.

There is no one who has not seen God.
God vision is natural to all.
Ignorance is only the non-awareness
of the truth of this natural Self-experience.
As wrong knowledge, ajnana, is only ego,
which is the attachment to the body,
loss of ego is itself the attainment of God.
Knowing oneself is knowing God,
knowing God is only being God.
Since Self-realization is God-realization,
Self and God are not two different things.

(Is God personal?)

Yes, he is always the first person,
the I, ever standing before you.

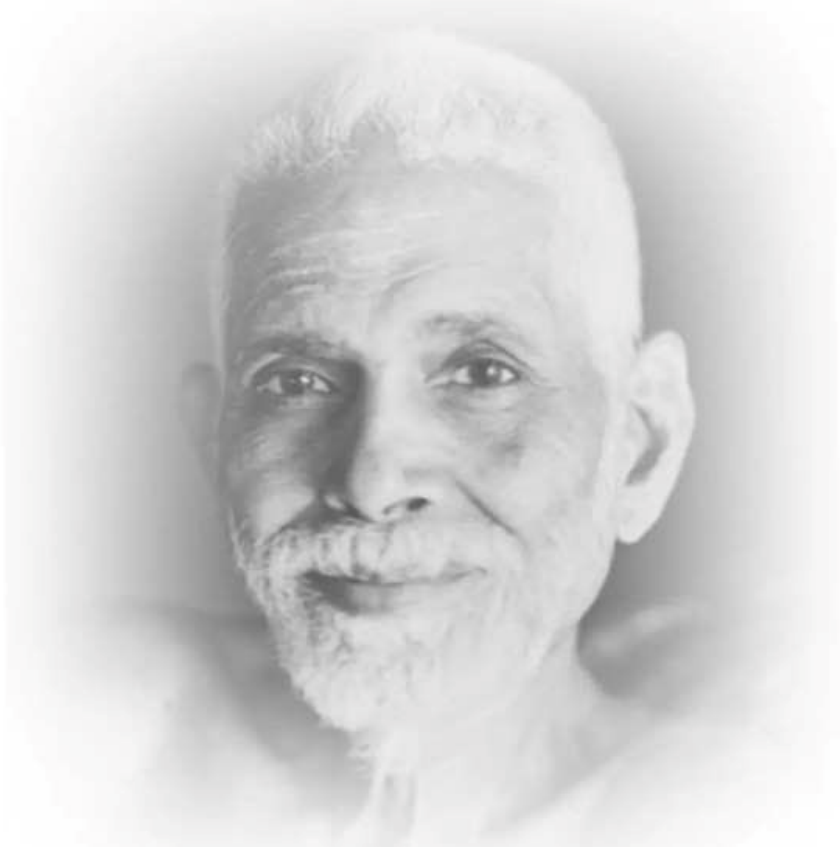


That which Is, is only one.

Some call it Shakti, some Shiva,
some Vishnu, some Jesus and some Allah.
People give it whatever names they like.
What does it matter
if the names they give are different?
That which Is, is only One."

Sri Ramana Maharshi

God dwells in you, as you.
We all have to return to the source.
We have gone outward.
Now we must return inward.

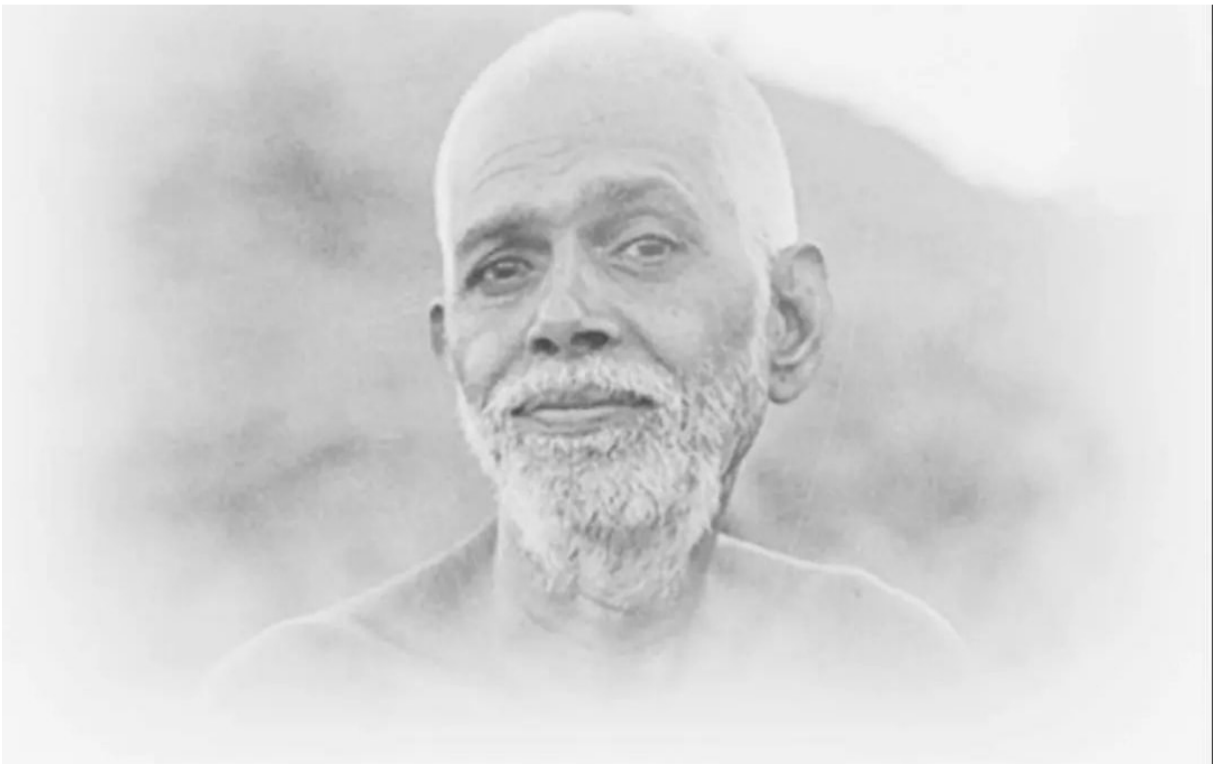


What is God ?

Your question
itself contains the answer:
What is, (is) God.

Sri Ramana Maharshi

The source of everything
is one's own Self
and if one realizes the Self,
one will not find anything
different from the Self.

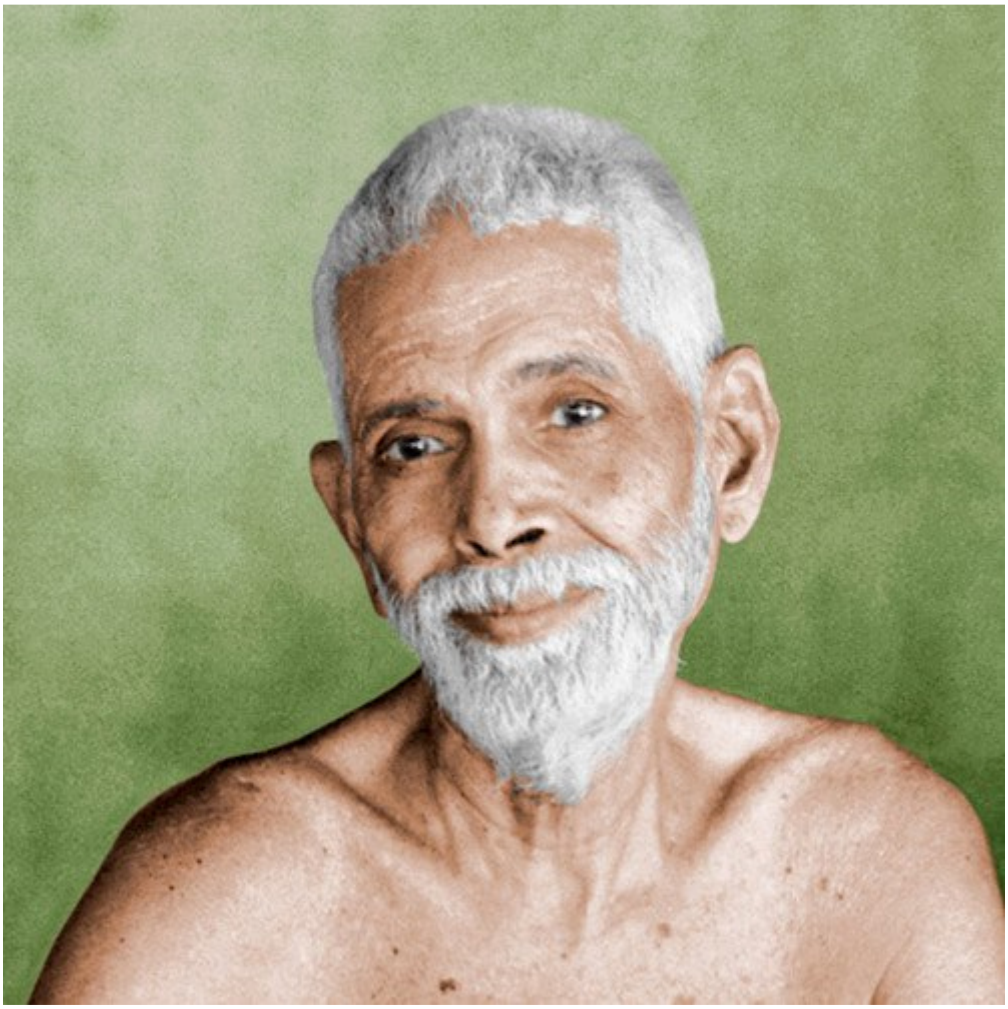


'Realise the Self within you'.

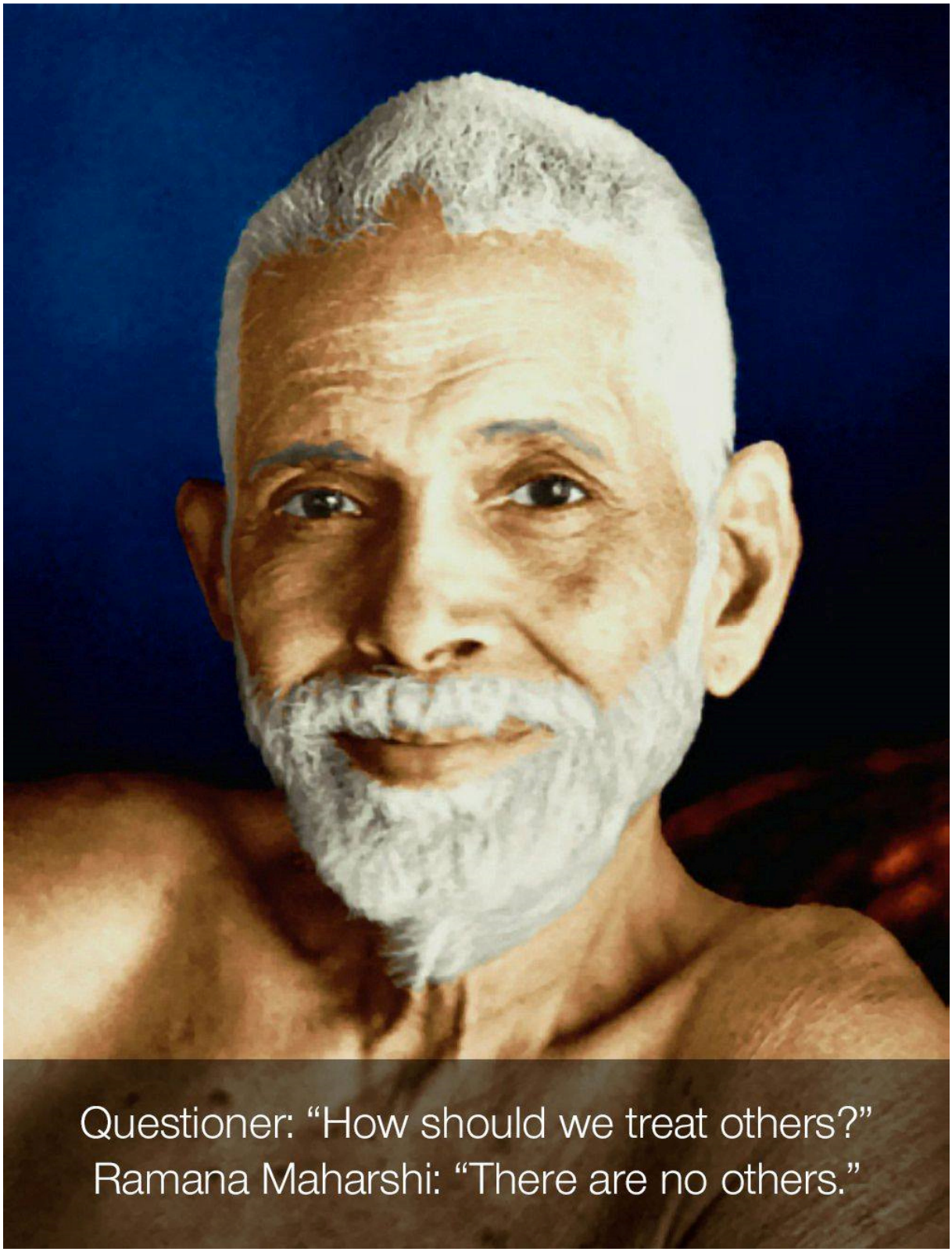
The Self cannot be found in books.
You have to find it out
for yourself, in yourself.

Sri Ramana Maharshi

It is every intelligent man's experience
that evil-doing
recoils on the doer
sooner or later.
Why is this so?
Because the Self is one in all.
When seeing others,
you are only seeing yourself
in their shapes.
'Love thy neighbour as thyself'
means that you should love him
because he is your Self.



All that one gives to others
one gives to one's Self.
If this truth is understood,
who will not give to others?



Question: "Does one who has realized the Self lose the sense of "I"?"

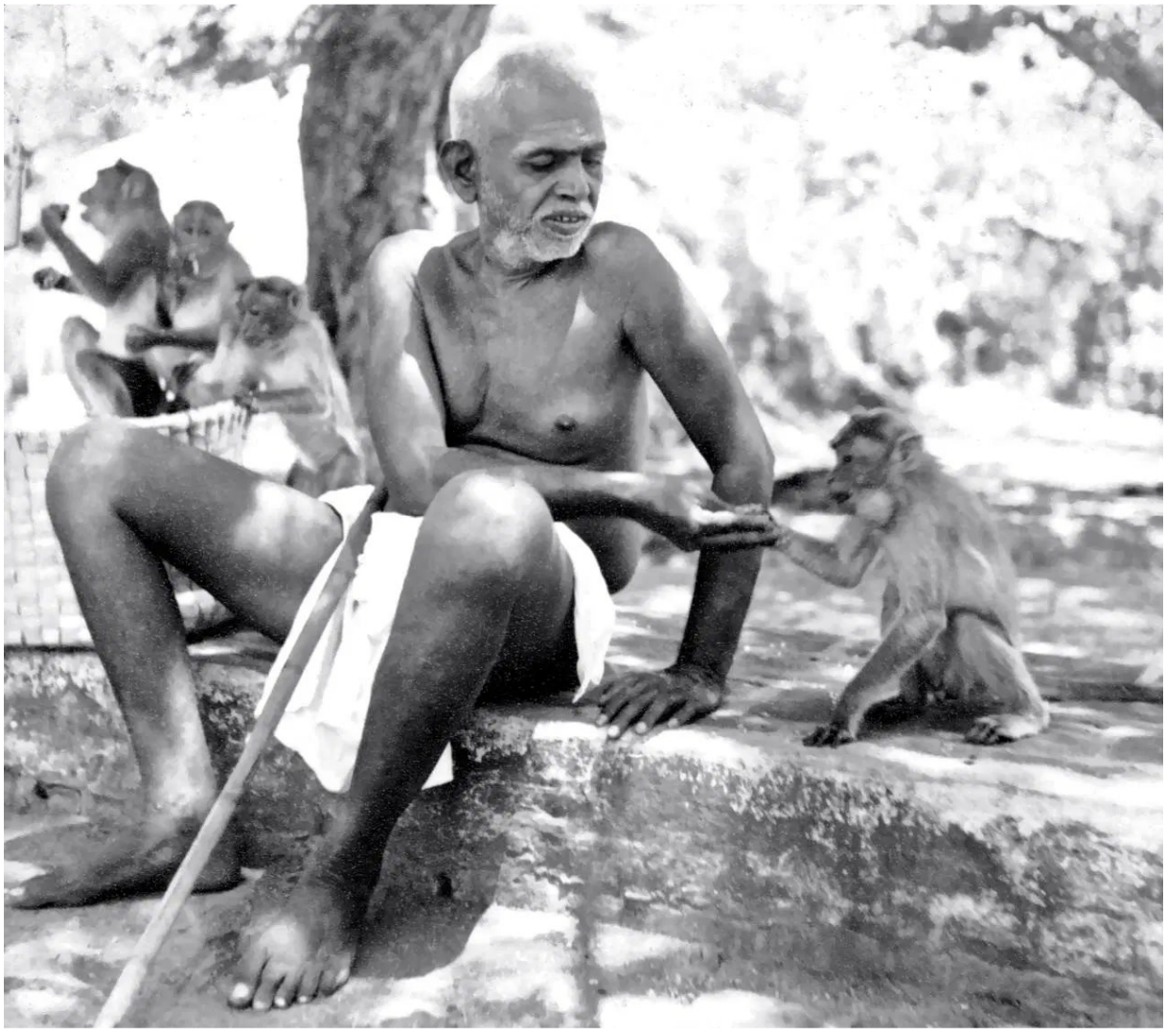
Ramana Maharshi: "Absolutely."

Question: "Then there is no difference between yourself and myself, that man over there, my servant. Are all the same?"

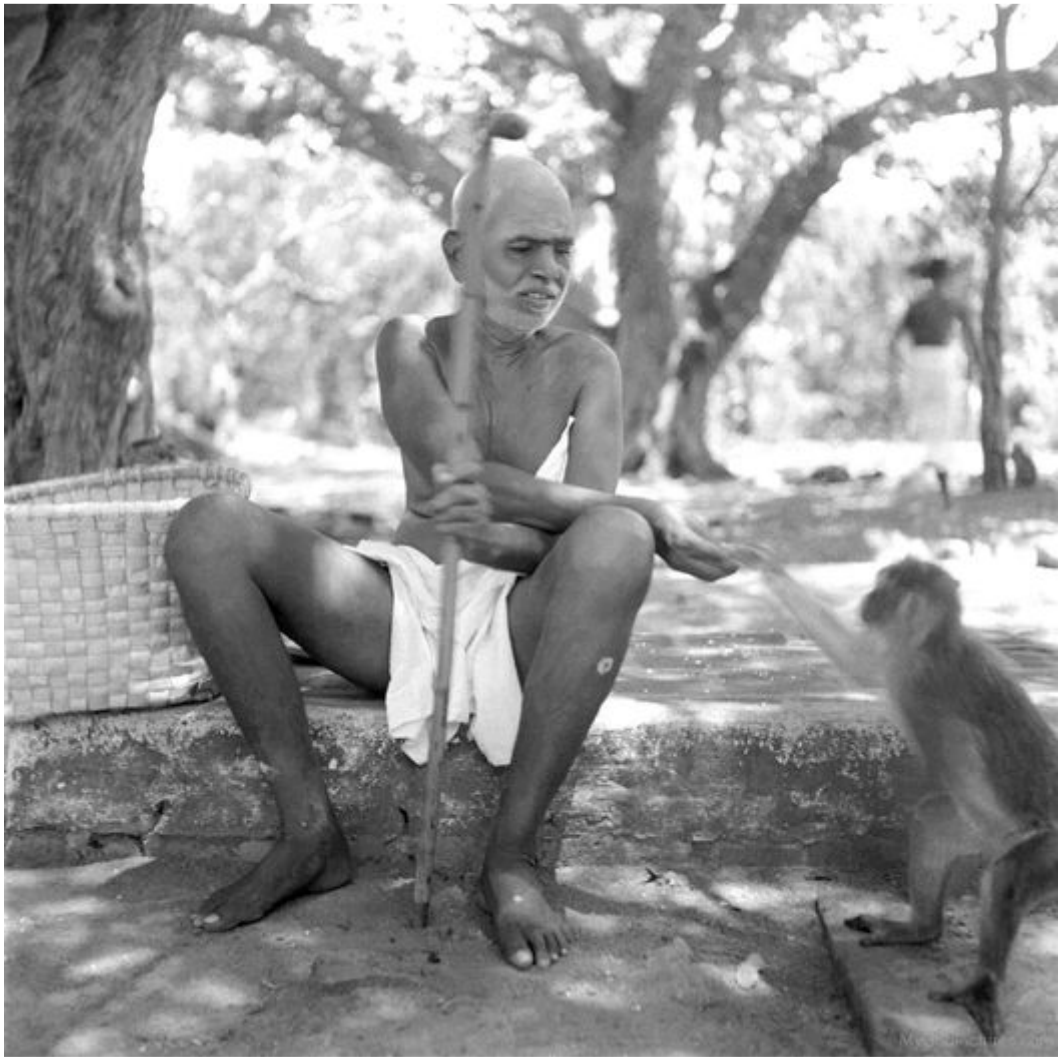
Ramana Maharshi: "All are the same, including those monkeys."

Question: "But the monkeys are not people... Are they not different?"

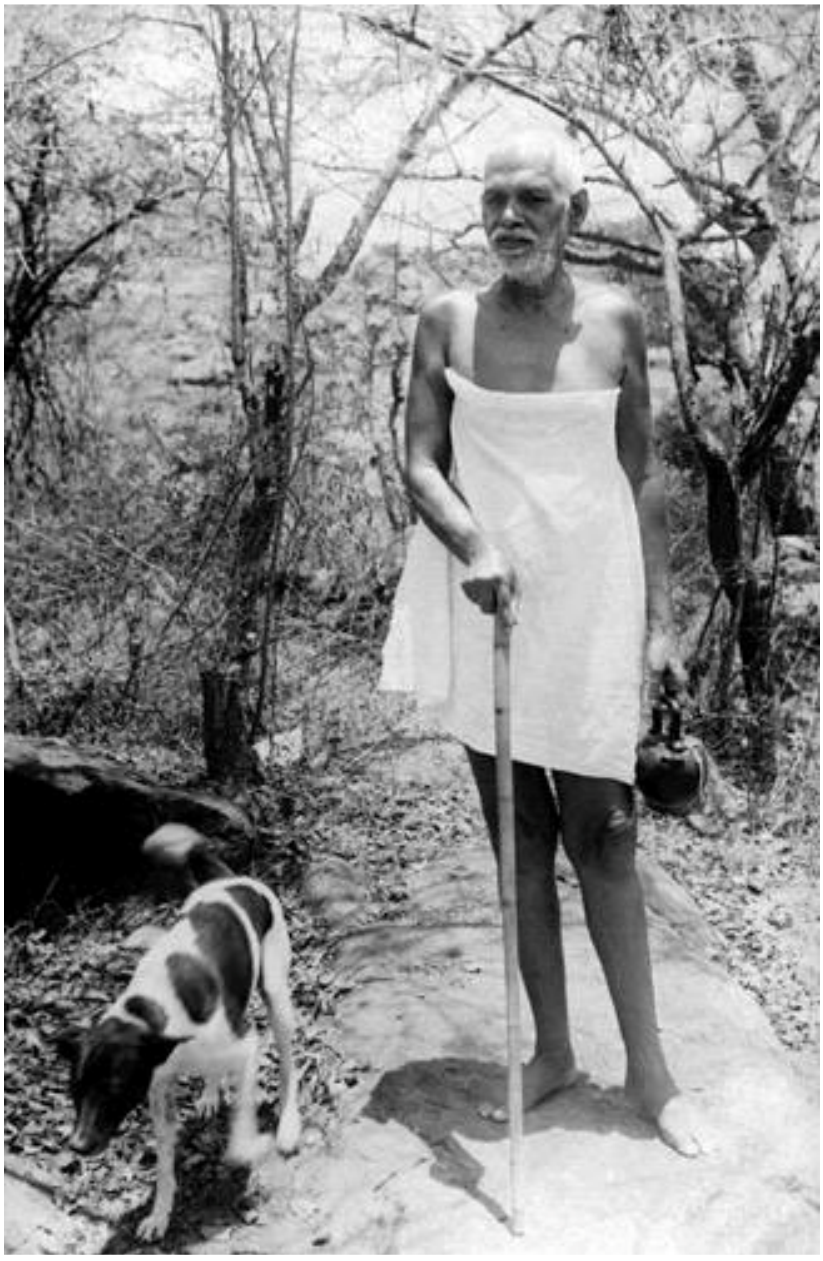
Ramana Maharshi: "They are exactly the same as people.
All are the same in One Consciousness."



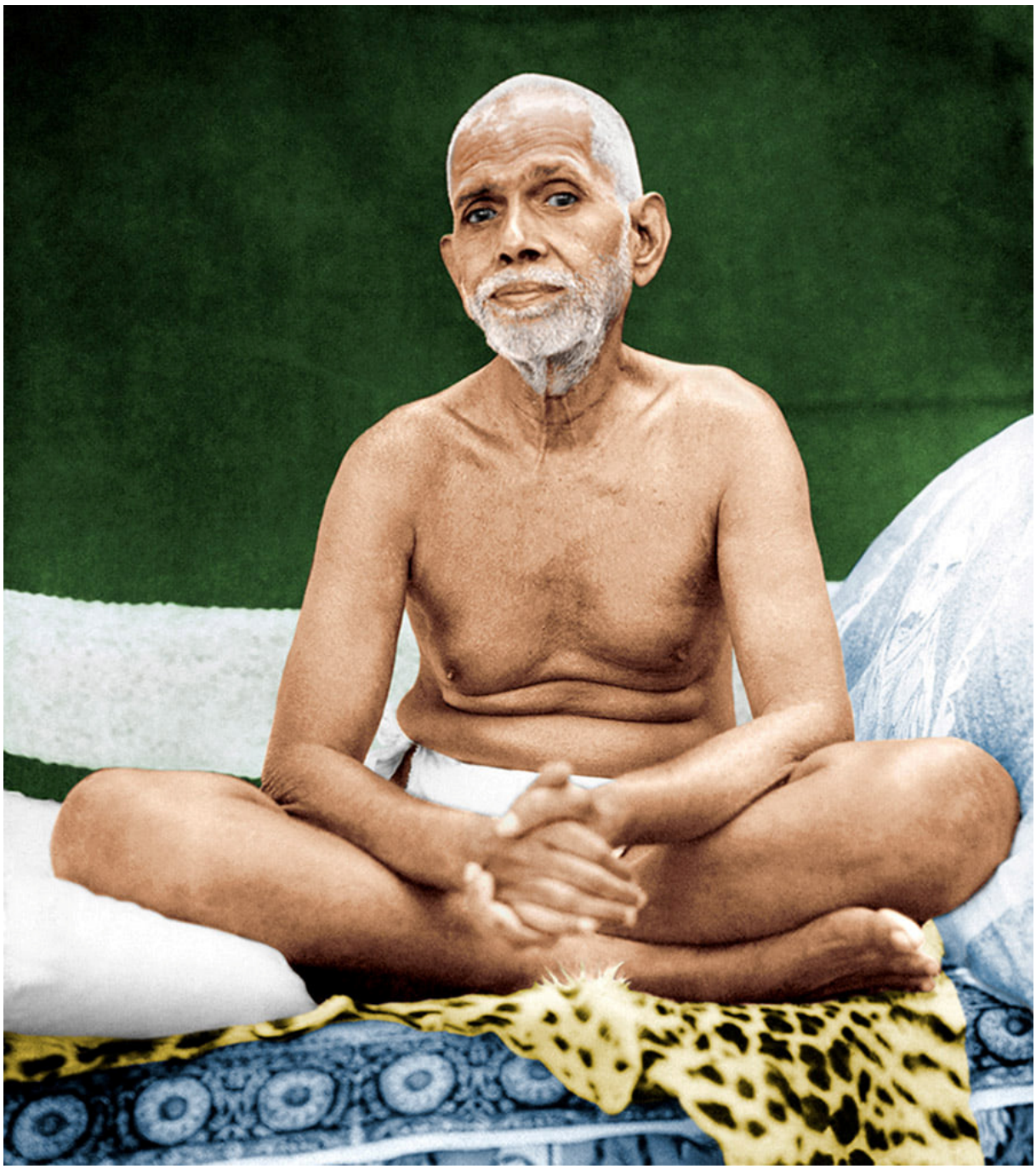
Animals wear the animal body
and humans wear the human body.
We all wear different bodies
like different shirts,
but in reality
we are all
the same
Being.



Don't say, "It's going around."
Say, "She is going around."
Aren't animals living beings
and in reality the Self as well?

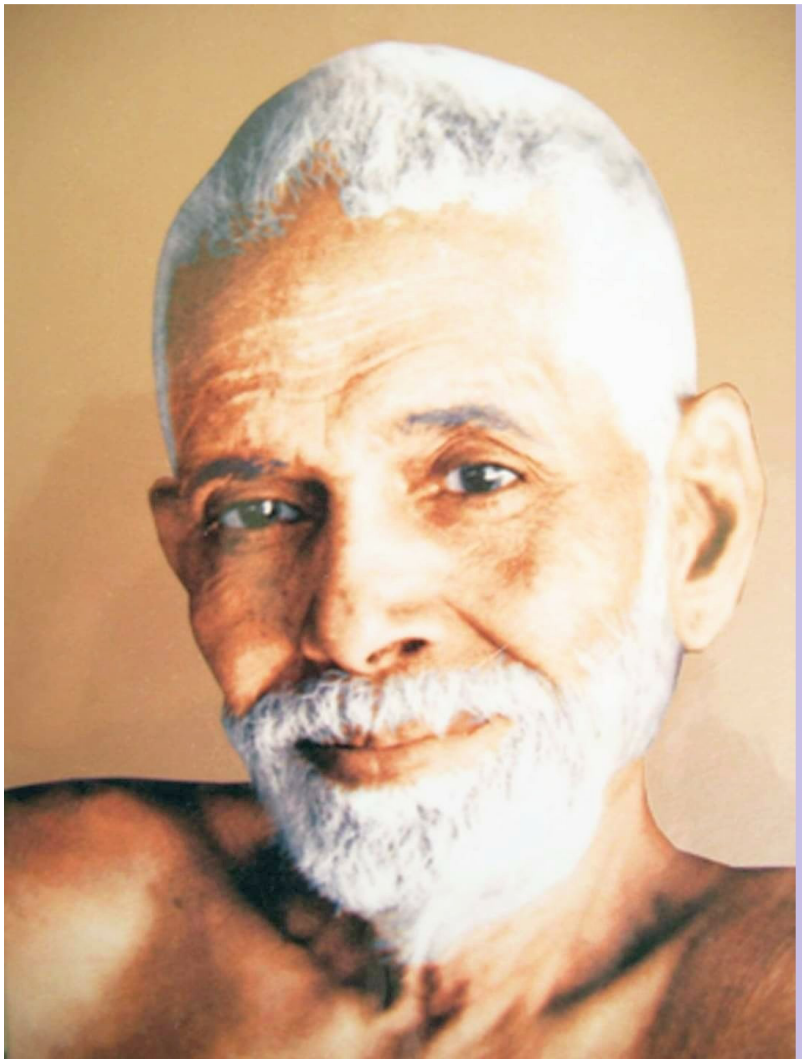


Whatever the changes,
the same one Being
remains as yourself.
There is nothing besides yourself.



If there is anything
besides the Self,
there is reason to fear.
The ego arises
and sees objects
as external.
If the ego does not rise,
the Self alone exists,
so there is no second
and no fear.

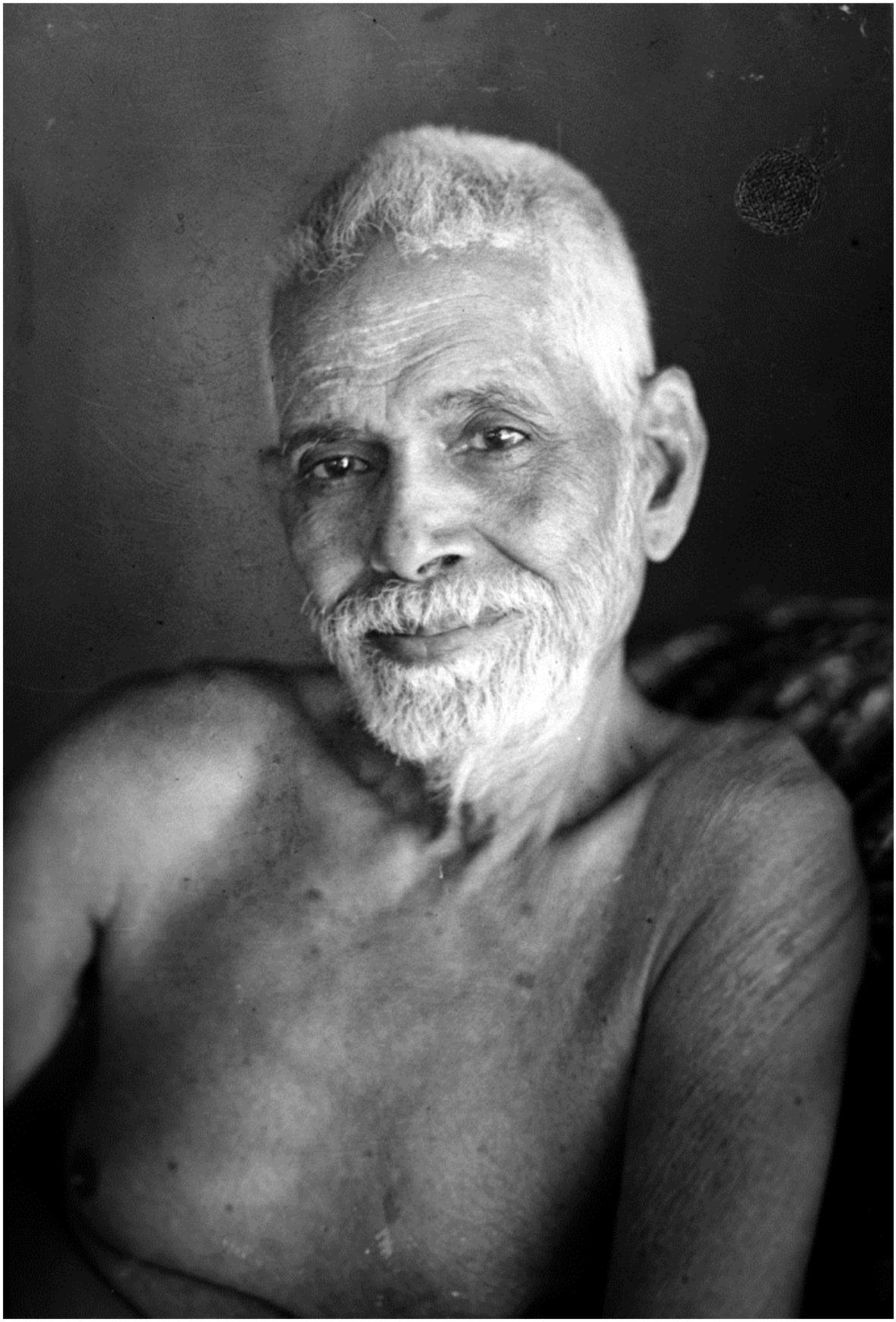
Consciousness alone exists and is real. The threefold reality of world, individual soul and God is, like the illusory appearance of silver in the mother of pearl, an imaginary creation in the Self. They appear and disappear simultaneously. The Self alone is the world, the 'I' and God. All that exists is but the manifestation of the Supreme.



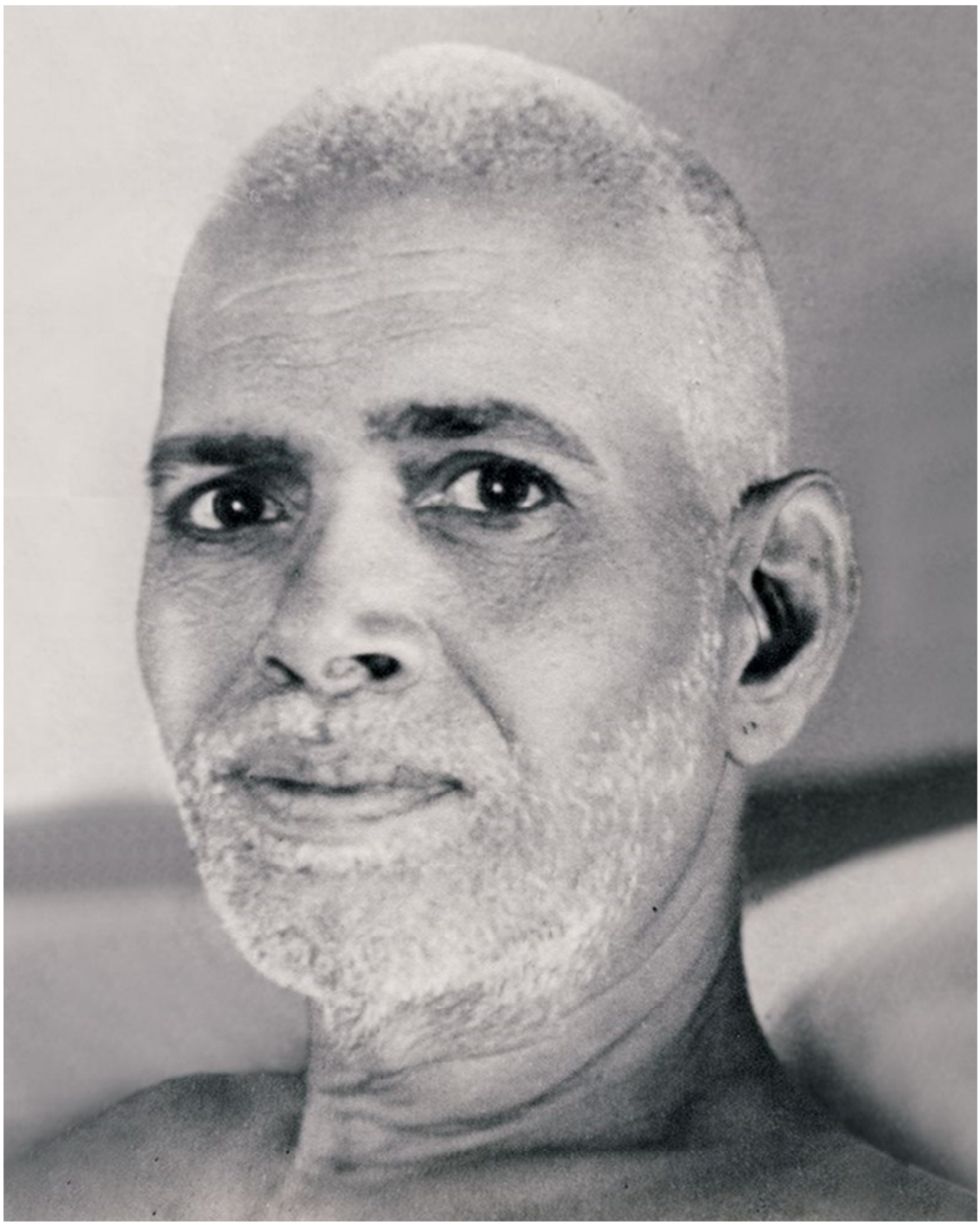
"ISVARA, GOD, THE CREATOR, THE PERSONAL GOD IS THE LAST OF UNREAL FORMS TO GO; only the Absolute Being is real. Hence not only the world, not only the ego, but also the personal God are of unreality. WE MUST FIND THE ABSOLUTE— NOTHING LESS."
Bhagavan Sri Ramana

All these universes, humans, objects, thoughts and events
are merely pictures moving on the screen of
pure Consciousness, which alone is real.
Shapes and phenomena pass away,
but Consciousness
remains forever.

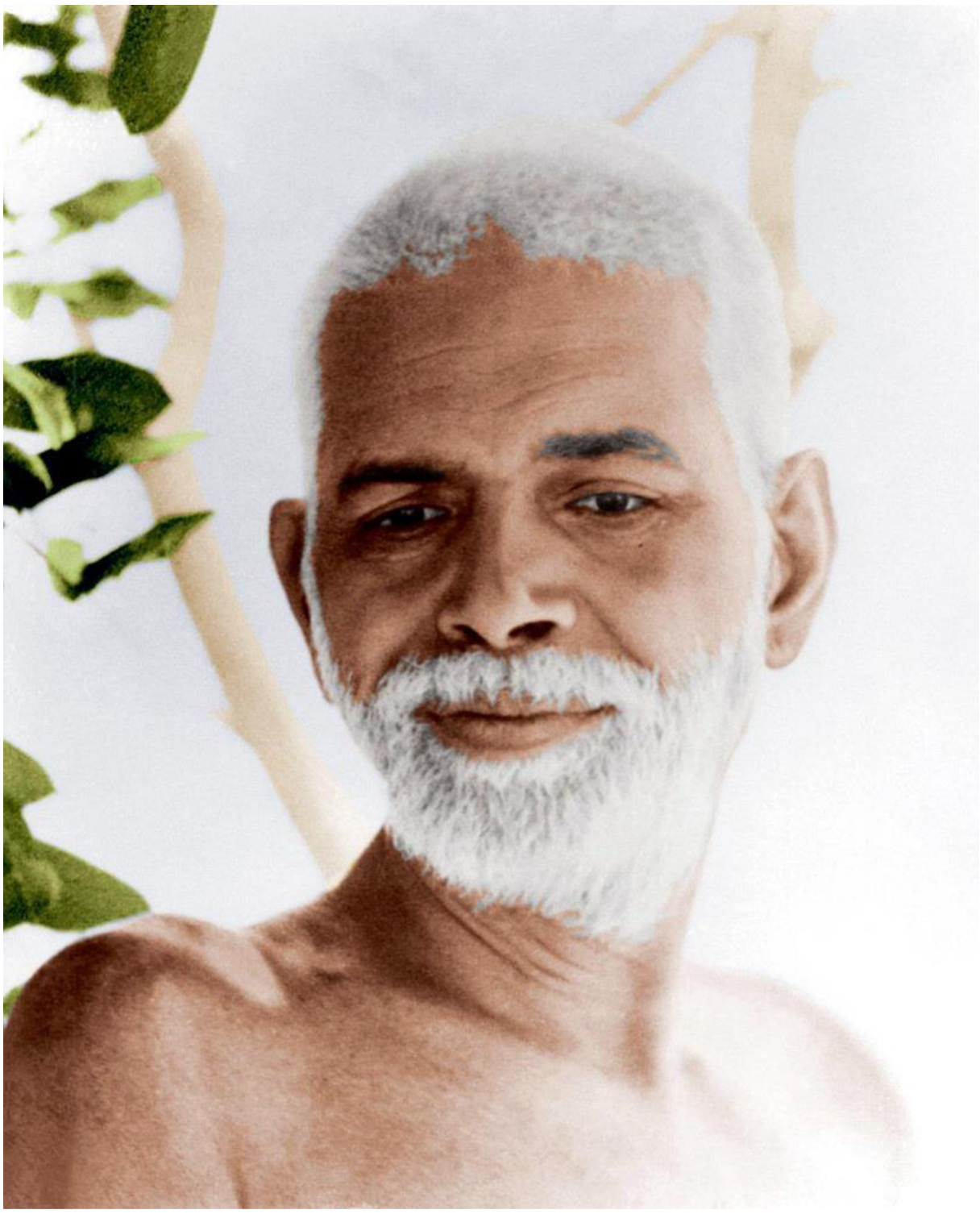
Consciousness was pre-existent and will survive the body.



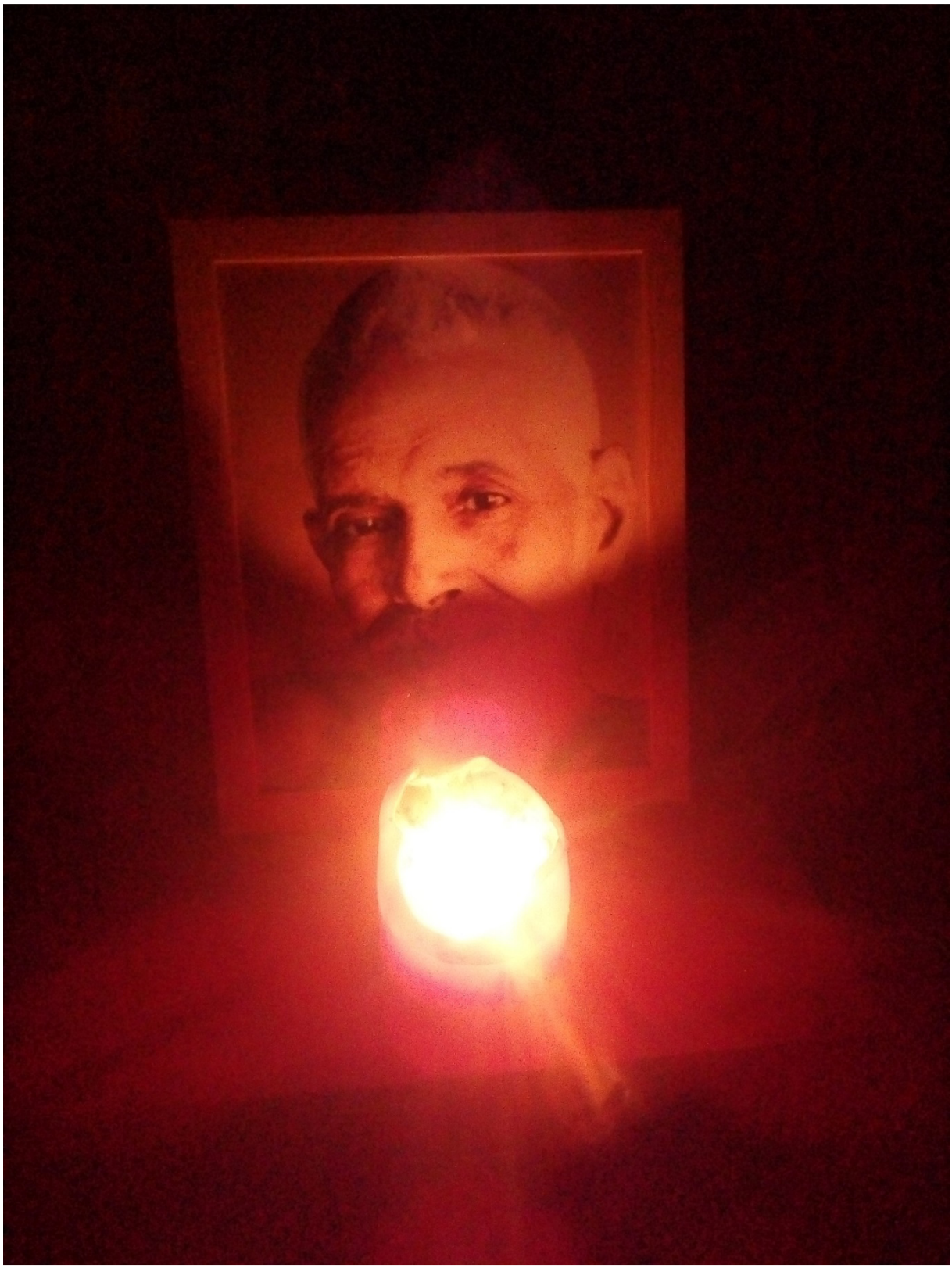
When a pot is broken, the space inside is not.
Similarly, when the body dies, the Self remains eternal.



The body dies,
but the spirit that transcends it
cannot be touched by death.



The dead are fortunate.
It is only those who are left behind who feel miserable.



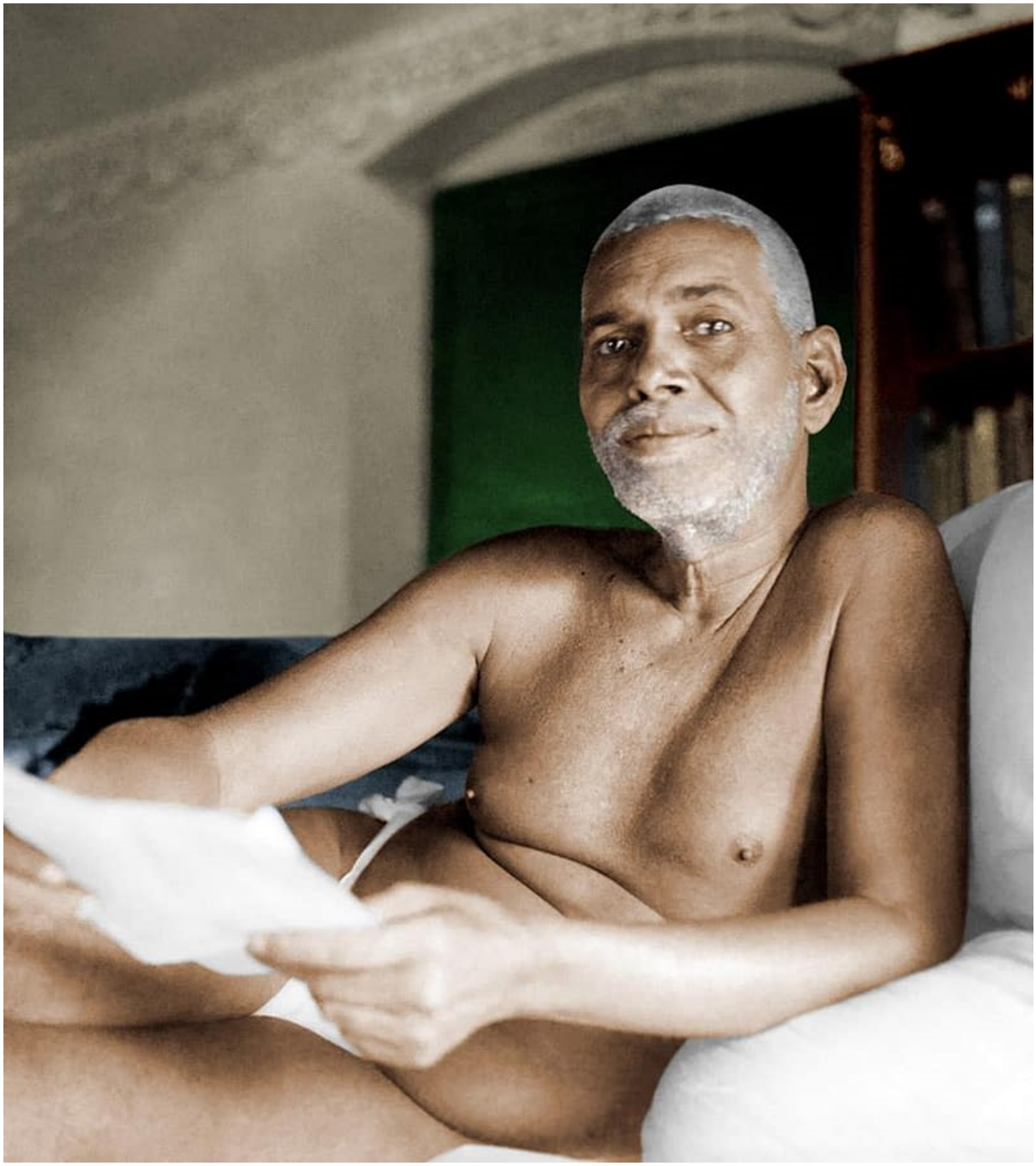
Deathlessness is our real nature.

Why fear death?
Death cannot mean non-being.

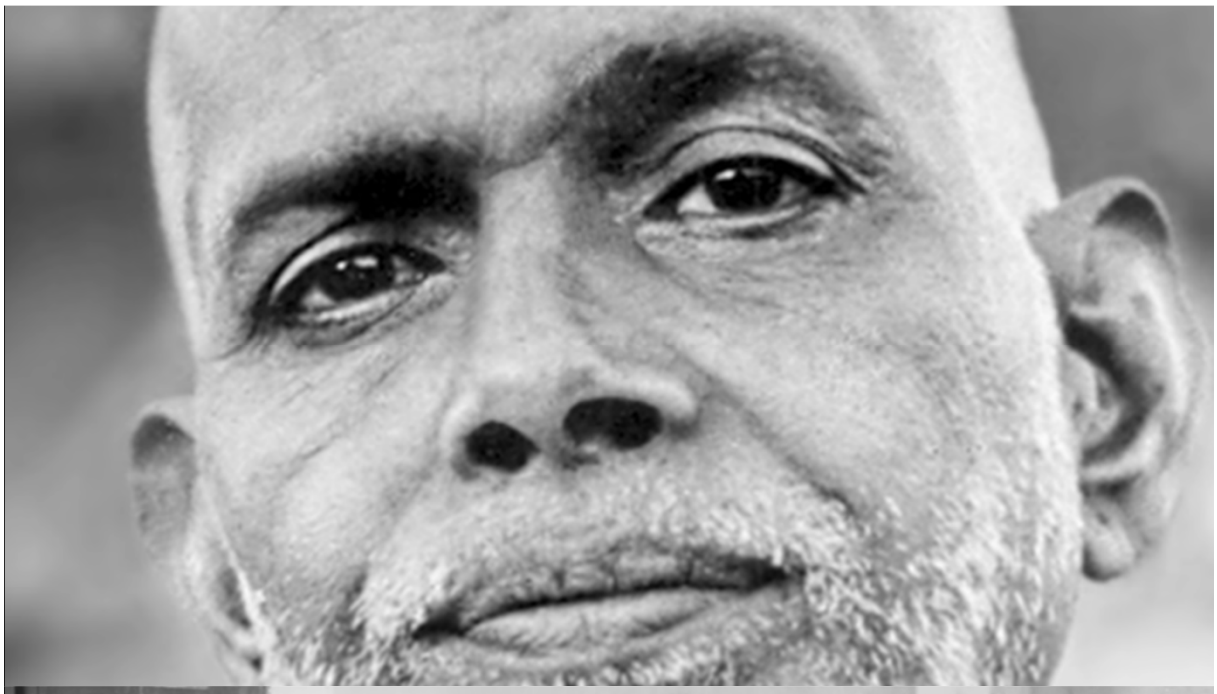
Why do you love sleep, but not death?

Everyone is aware of the eternal Self.
He sees so many dying but still believes himself eternal.
Because it is the Truth.

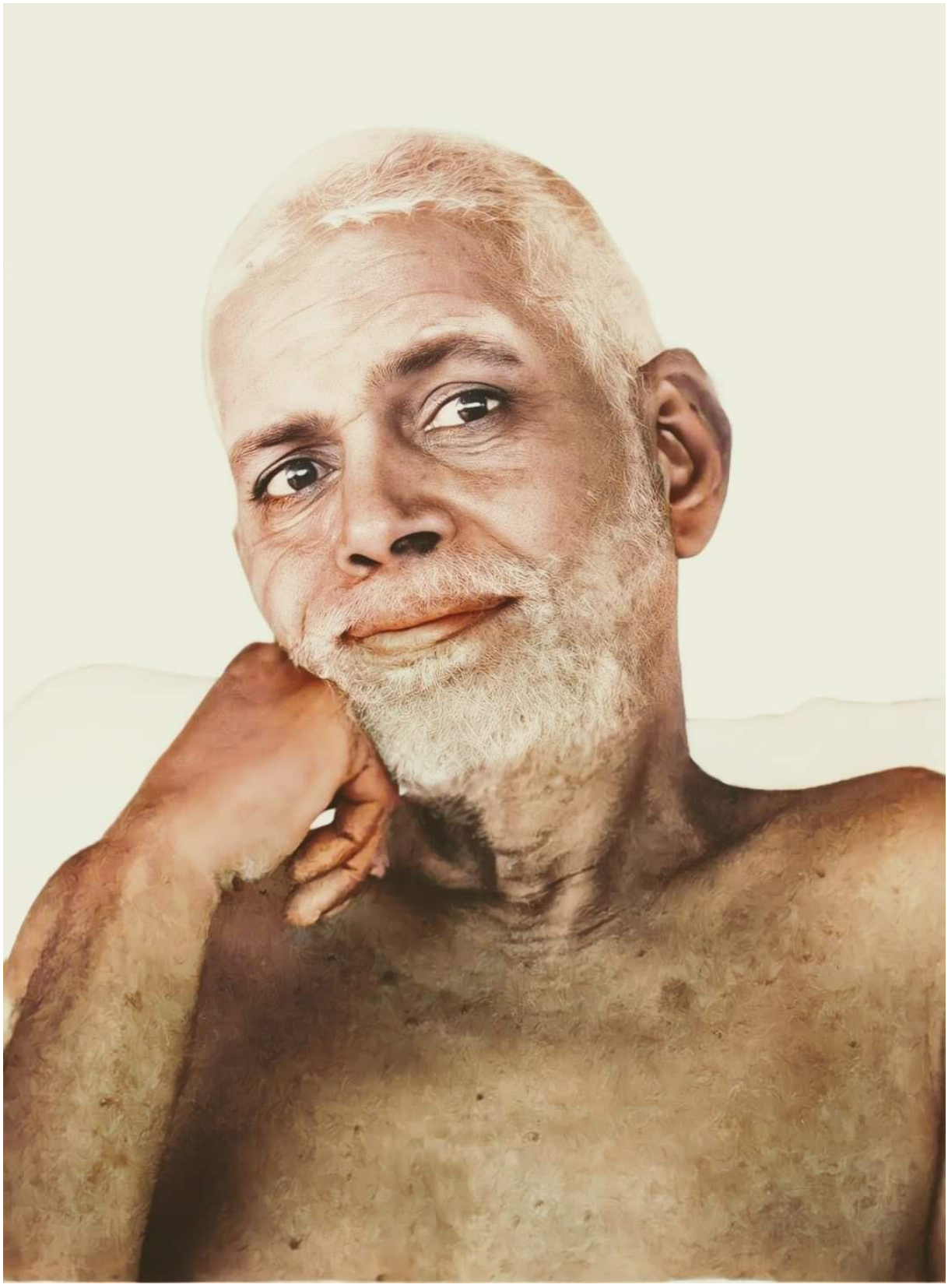
Unwillingly the natural Truth asserts itself.
The man is deluded by the intermingling of
the conscious Self with the insentient body.
This delusion must end.



He who is able to see
his own Self by knowledge and wisdom
will not be moved by whatever conflicts may come about.
He will look upon the sorrows and happiness
of the world as mere acting on a stage.
In his view, the whole world is a stage.



We must play our parts on the stage of life,
but we must not identify ourselves with those parts.



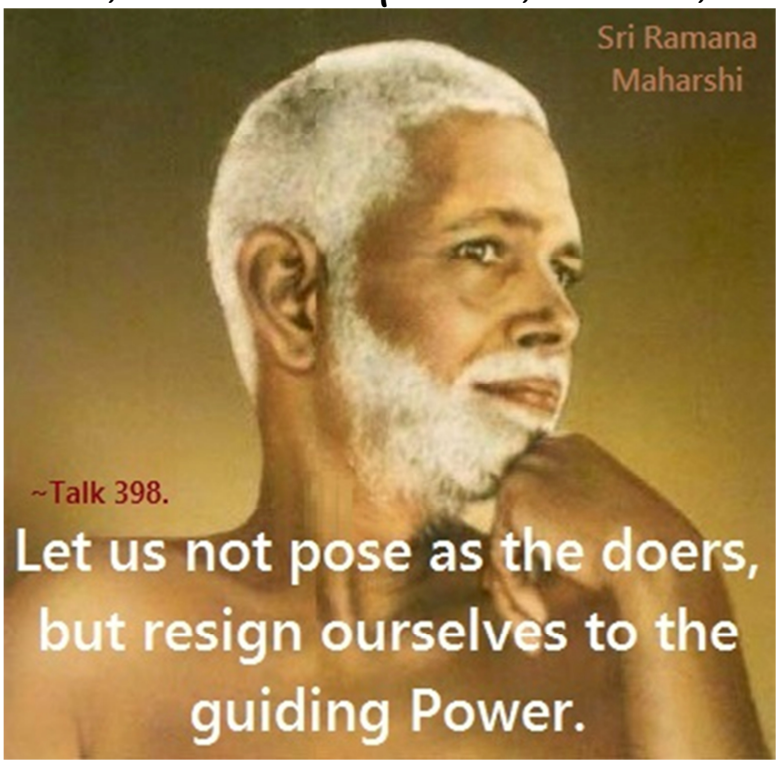
Questioner:
I have committed sexual sin.

Ramana Maharshi:
Even if you have, it does not matter
so long as you do not think afterwards that you have done so.
The Self is not aware of any sin
and renunciation of sex is internal, not merely of the body alone.

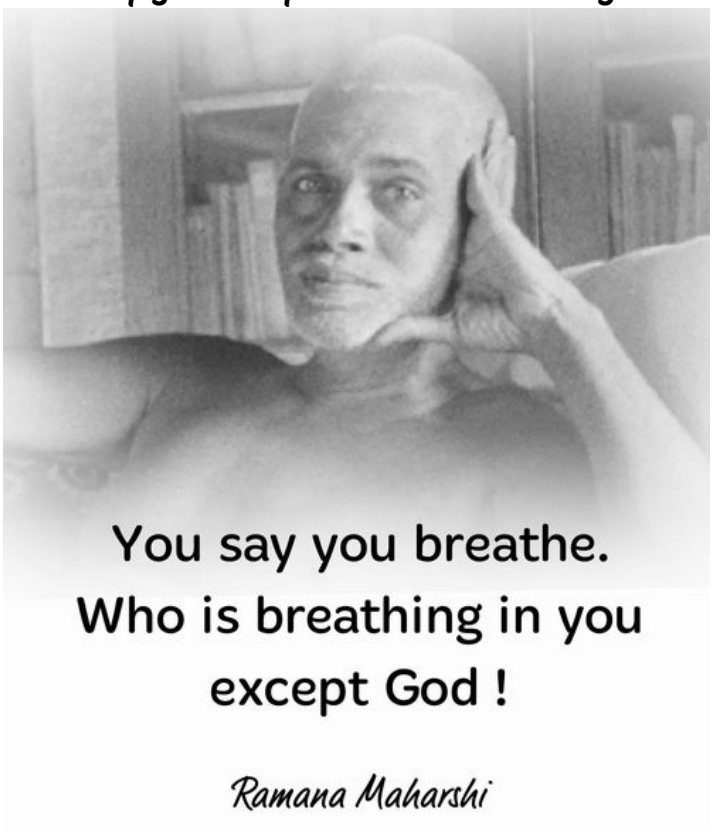
Questioner:
I am carried away by the sight of the breasts of a young woman neighbor
and I am often tempted to commit adultery with her. What should I do?

Ramana Maharshi:
You are always pure.
It is your senses and body which tempt you and which you confuse with your real Self.
So first know who is tempted and who is there to tempt.
But even if you do commit adultery, do not think about it afterwards,
because you are yourself always pure.
You are not the sinner.

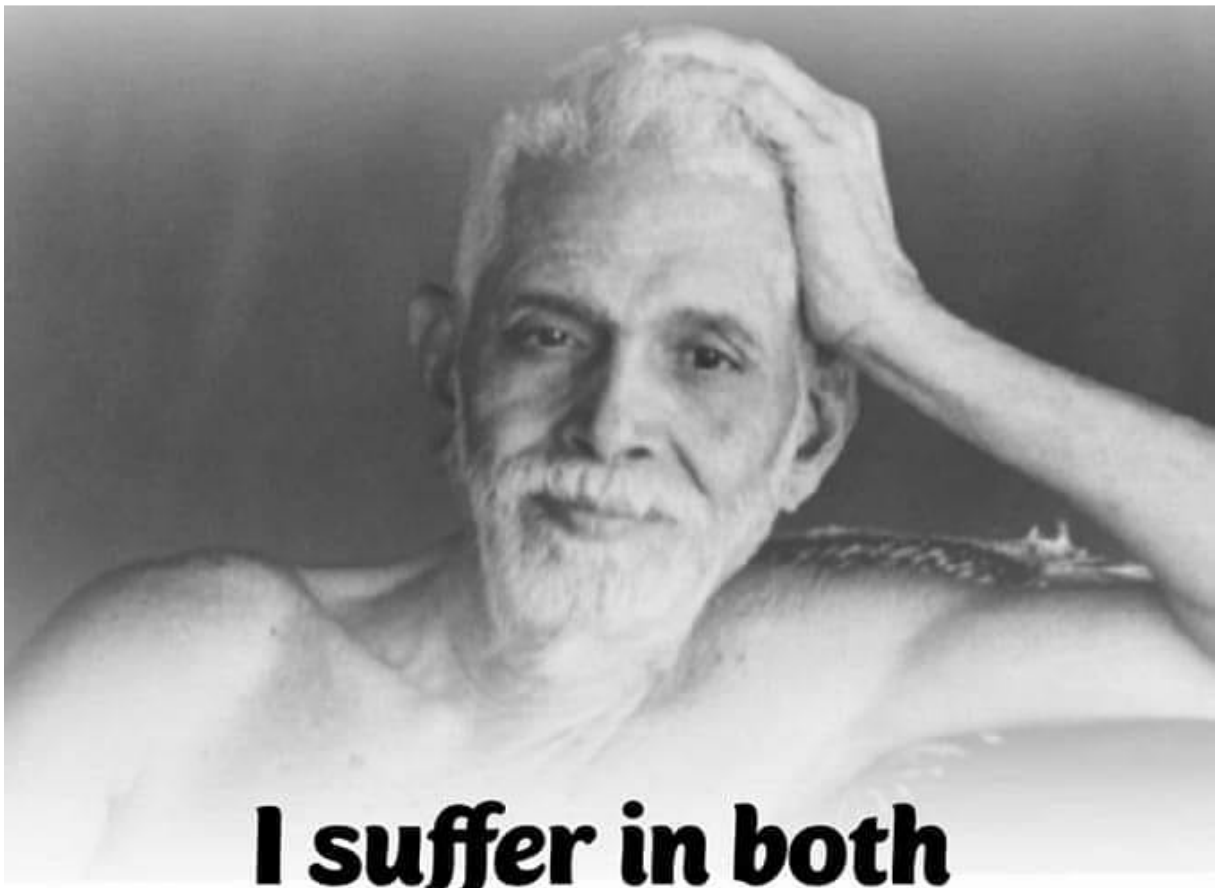
The present difficulty is that man thinks he is the doer. But it is a mistake. It is the higher power which does everything and man is only a tool. If he accepts this position, he is free from problems; otherwise, he attracts them.



A higher power is leading you; let it. It knows what to do and how to do it. Trust it. Keep quiet and see whether your body's actions are not spontaneously guided by an unfathomable Higher Power.



He who thinks he is the doer is also the sufferer.



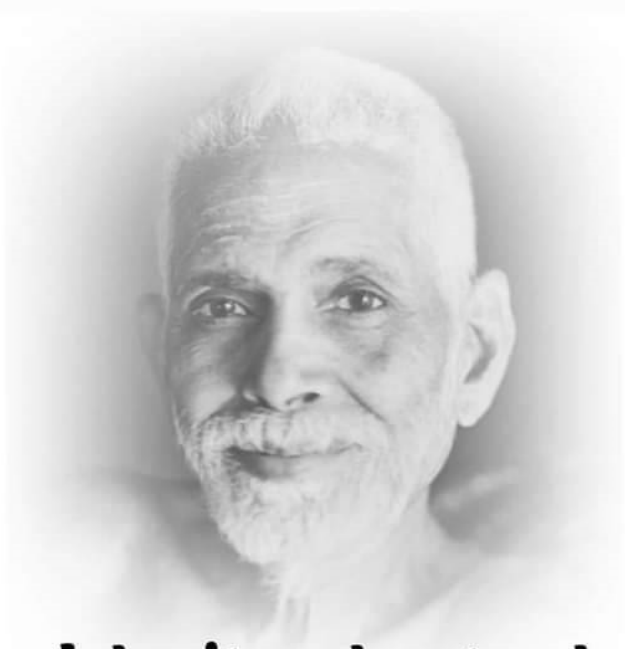
I suffer in both mind and body.

You say the mind and body suffer.
But do they ask the questions?
Who is the questioner?
Is it not the one that is beyond
both mind and body?

Sri Ramana Maharshi

(When someone was talking of doing this and that...)

Why do you think that you are the doer? There lies all the trouble. It is quite absurd, as it is obvious to all that (the) 'I' does nothing. It is only the body that acts, 'I' is always the witness. We so associate ourselves with our thoughts and actions that we continually say, 'I did this or that,' when we did nothing at all. Concentrate on being the witness and let things take their course. They will go on anyhow, you cannot prevent them.



I don't understand what work I should do and what not.

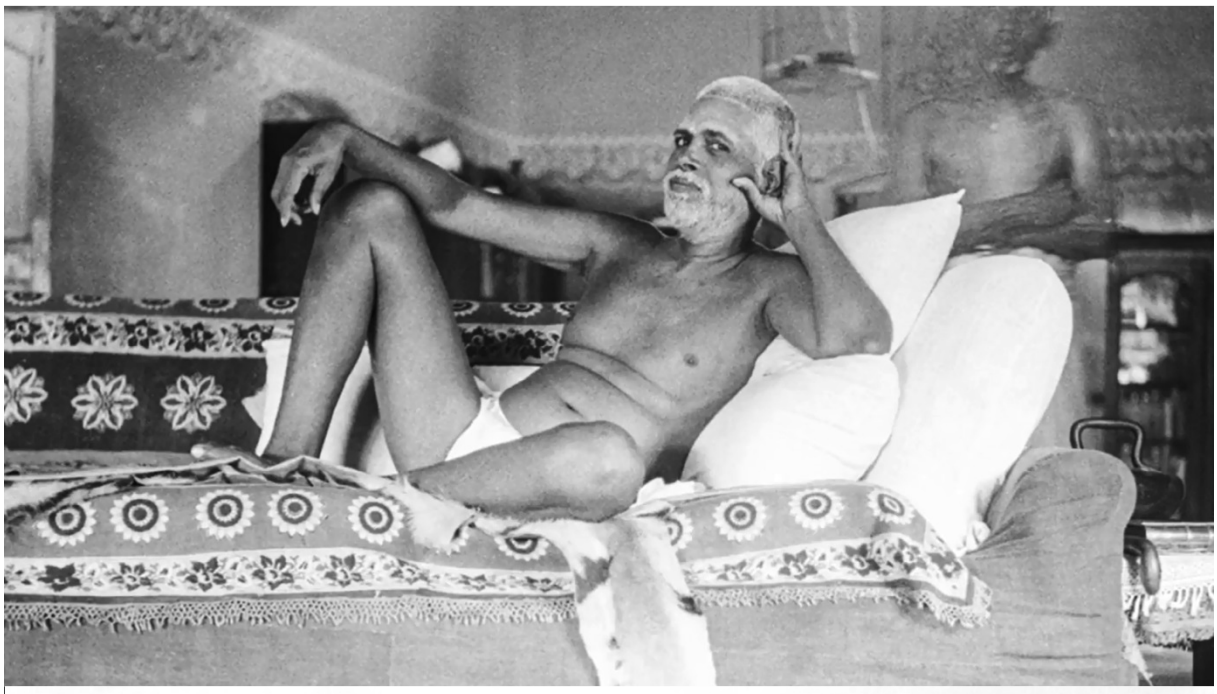
Don't bother.
What is destined as work to be done
by you in this life will be done by you,
whether you like it or not.

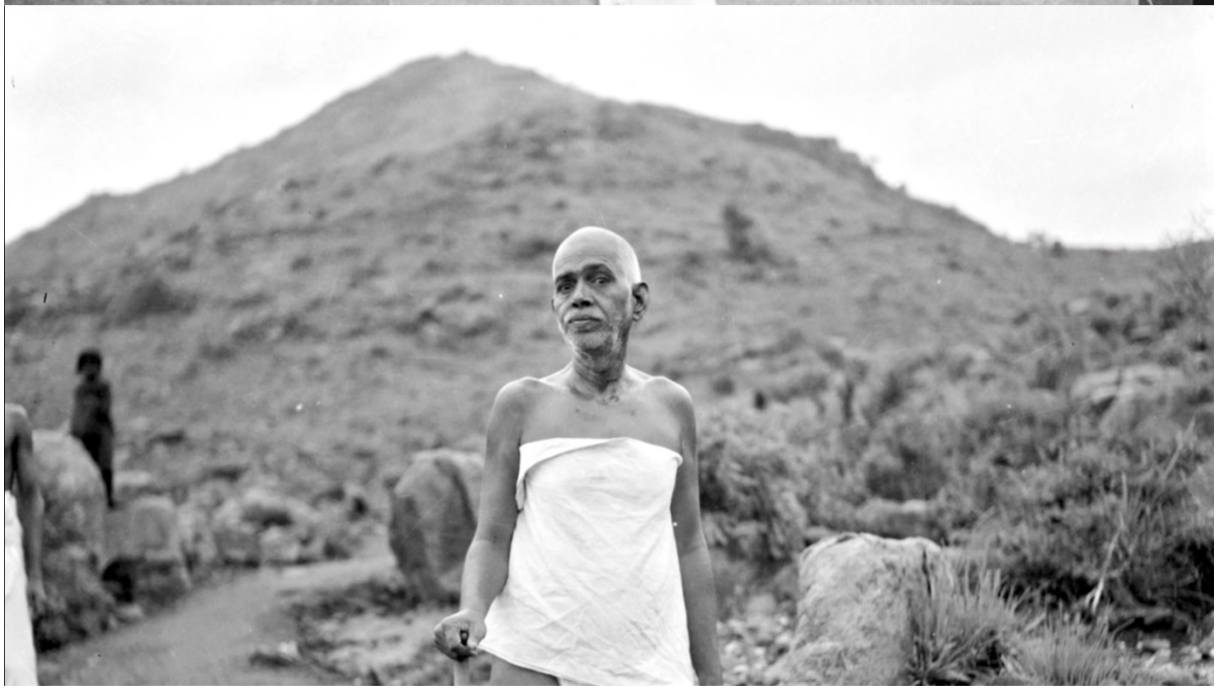
Sri Ramana Maharshi
Day by Day with Bhagavan, 3-1-46

Your hands may do the work,
but your mind can remain still.
You are that which never moves.

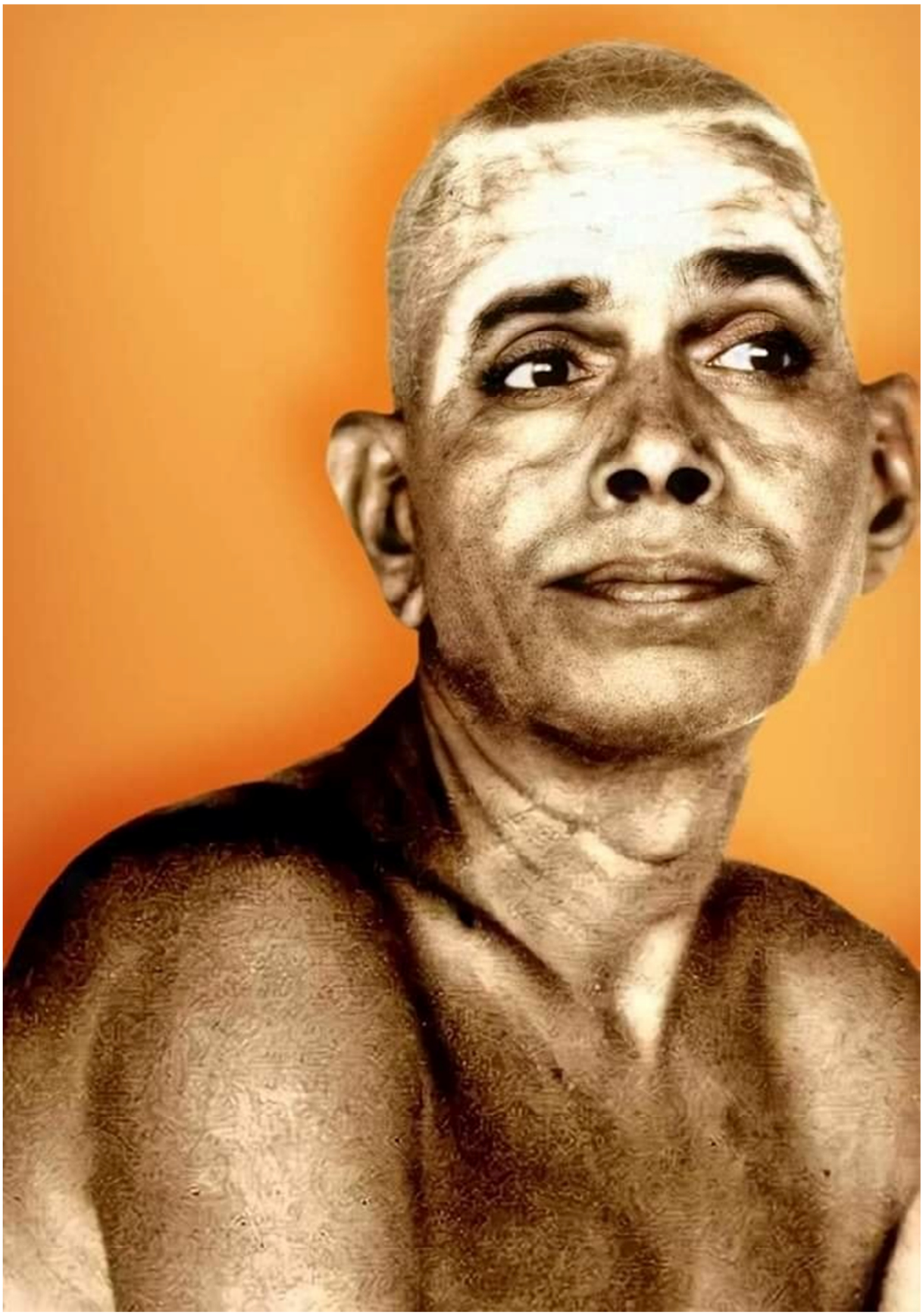
The fact is
that you are not the body.

The Self does not move.
The world moves in it.

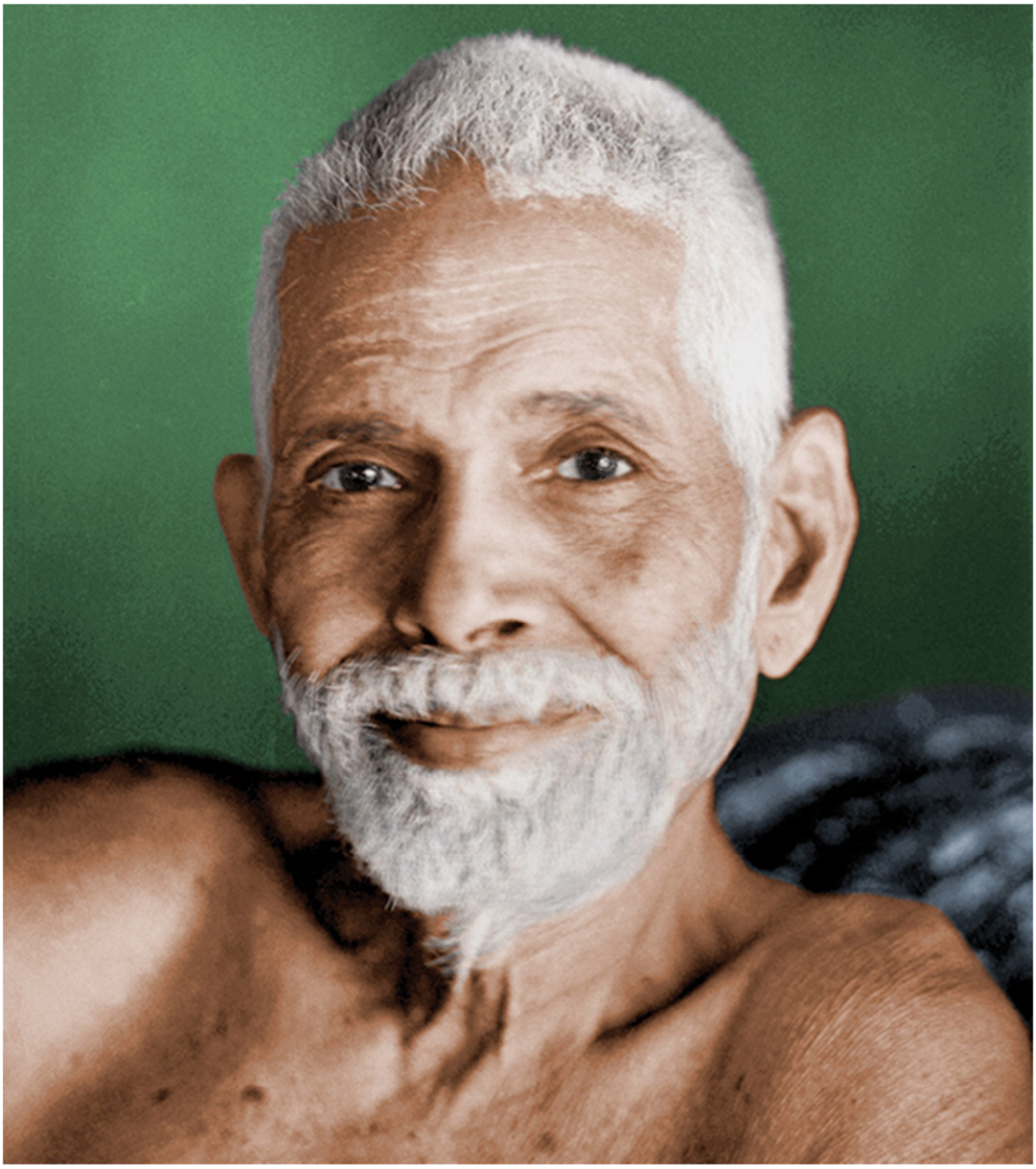




The elimination of thoughts is wisdom.

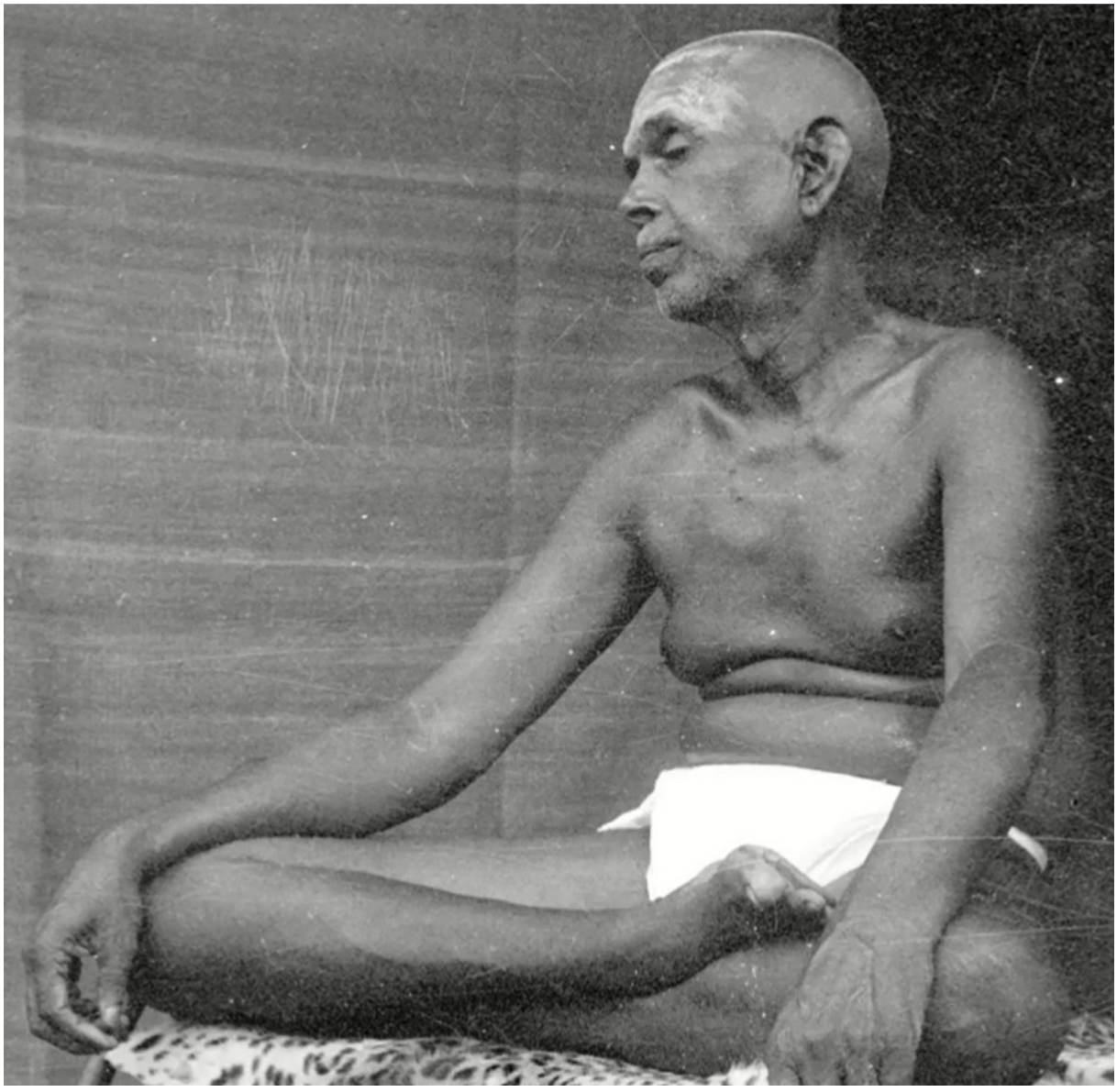


When all thoughts are stilled,
Pure Consciousness remains over.
To bring about peace means
to be free from thoughts and
to abide as Pure Consciousness.

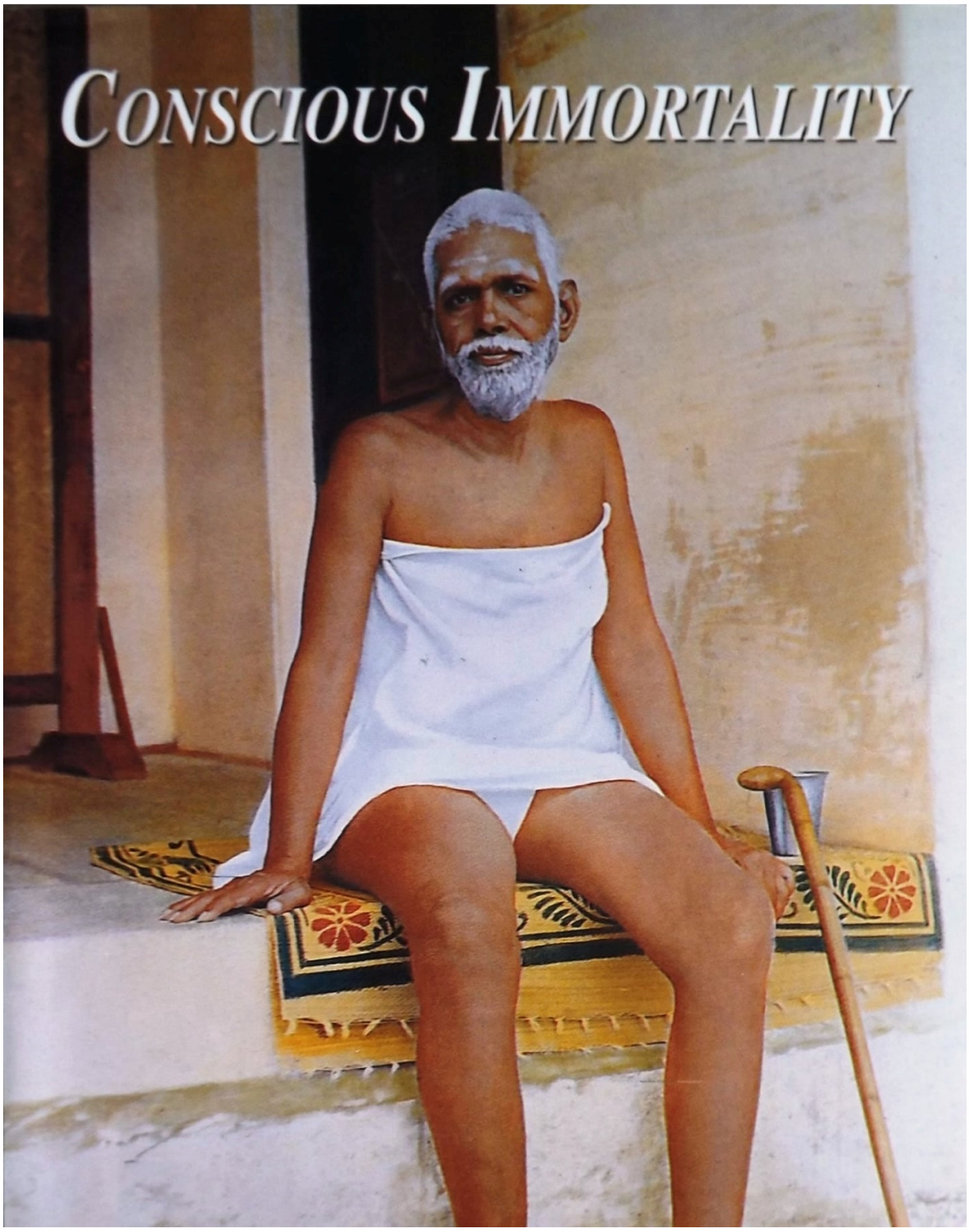


If you are free from thoughts
and yet aware,
you are That Perfect Being.

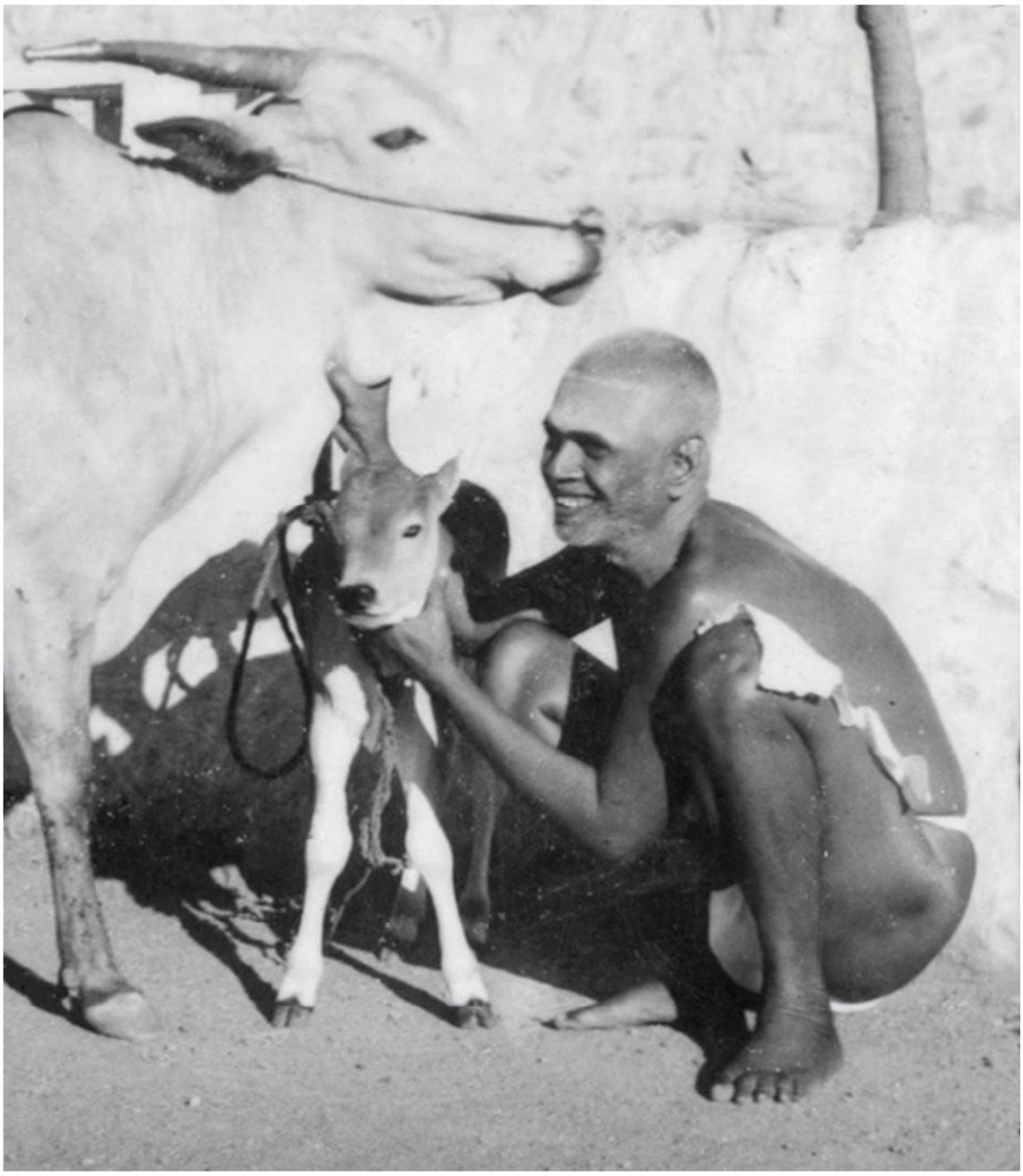
The degree of the absence of thoughts
is the measure of your progress towards Self-Realisation.



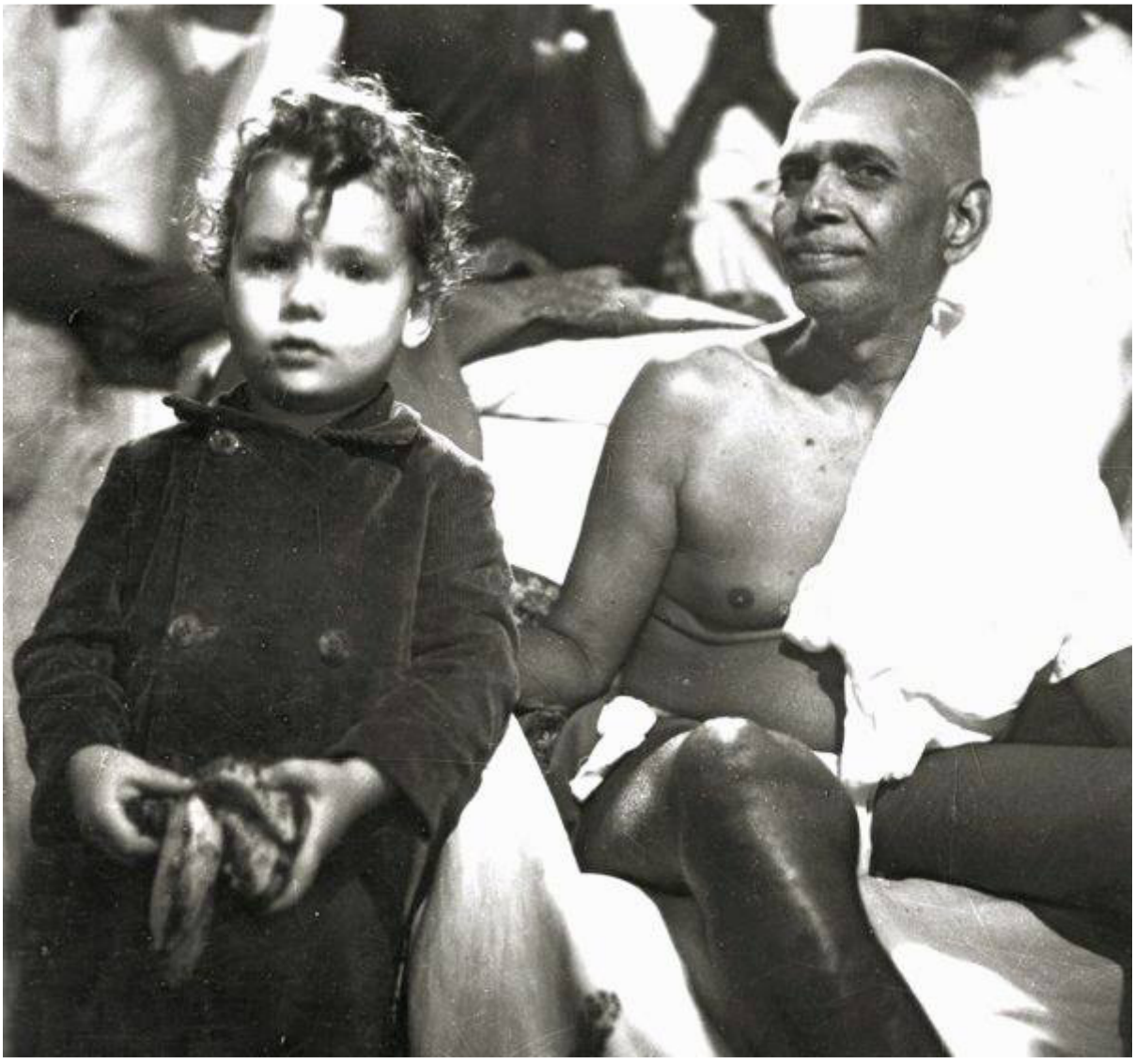
In Samadhi,
there is only the feeling 'I AM'
and no thoughts.



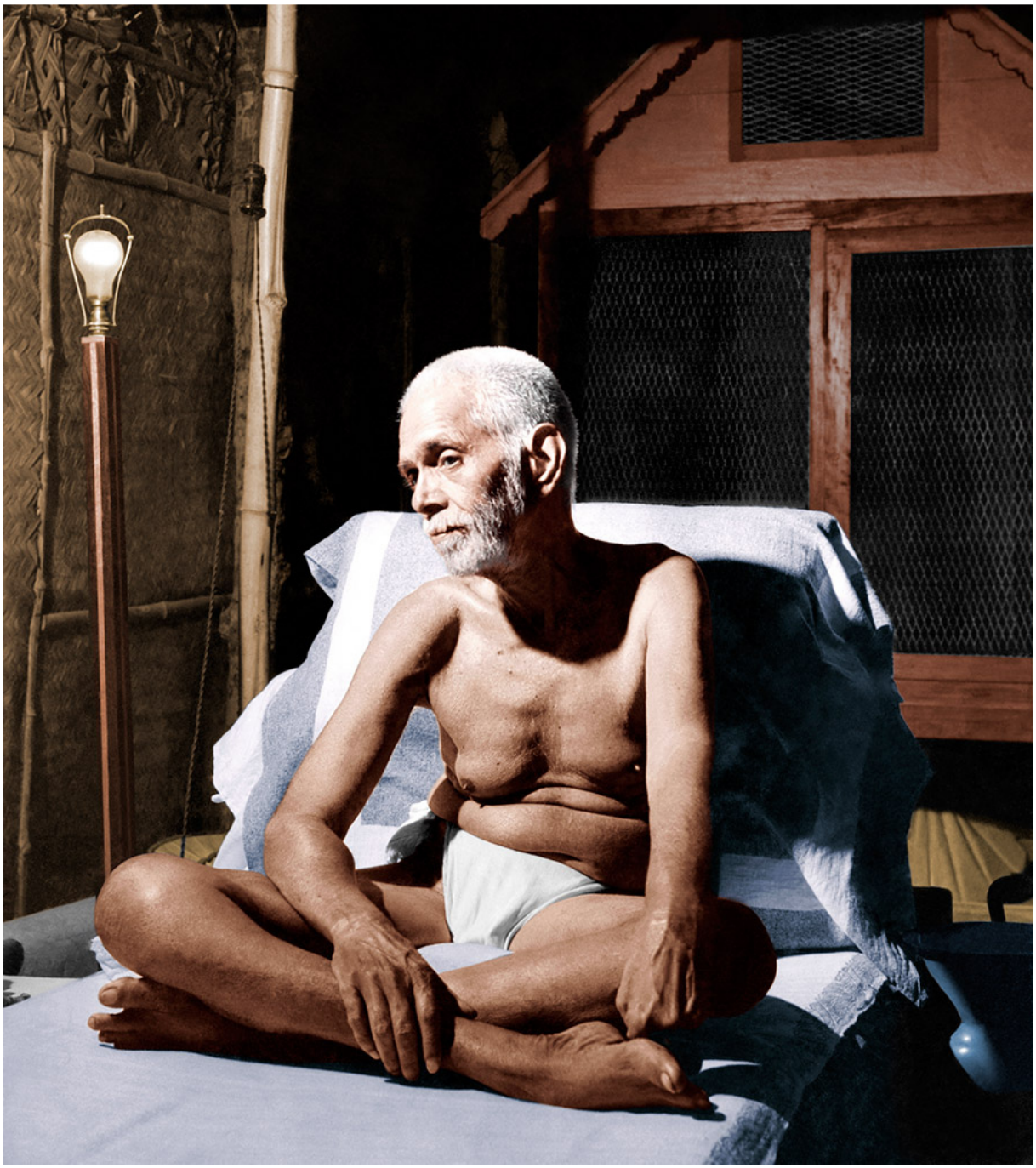
All thoughts are sorrowful.
Even pleasurable thoughts
are also sorrowful
because it takes one's attention
away from the Self,
which is undiluted Happiness.



Don't believe your thoughts.
'I am the body' is a thought.
'I am the mind' is a thought.
'I am the doer' is a thought.
Worry is only a thought.
Fear is only a thought.
Death is only a thought.

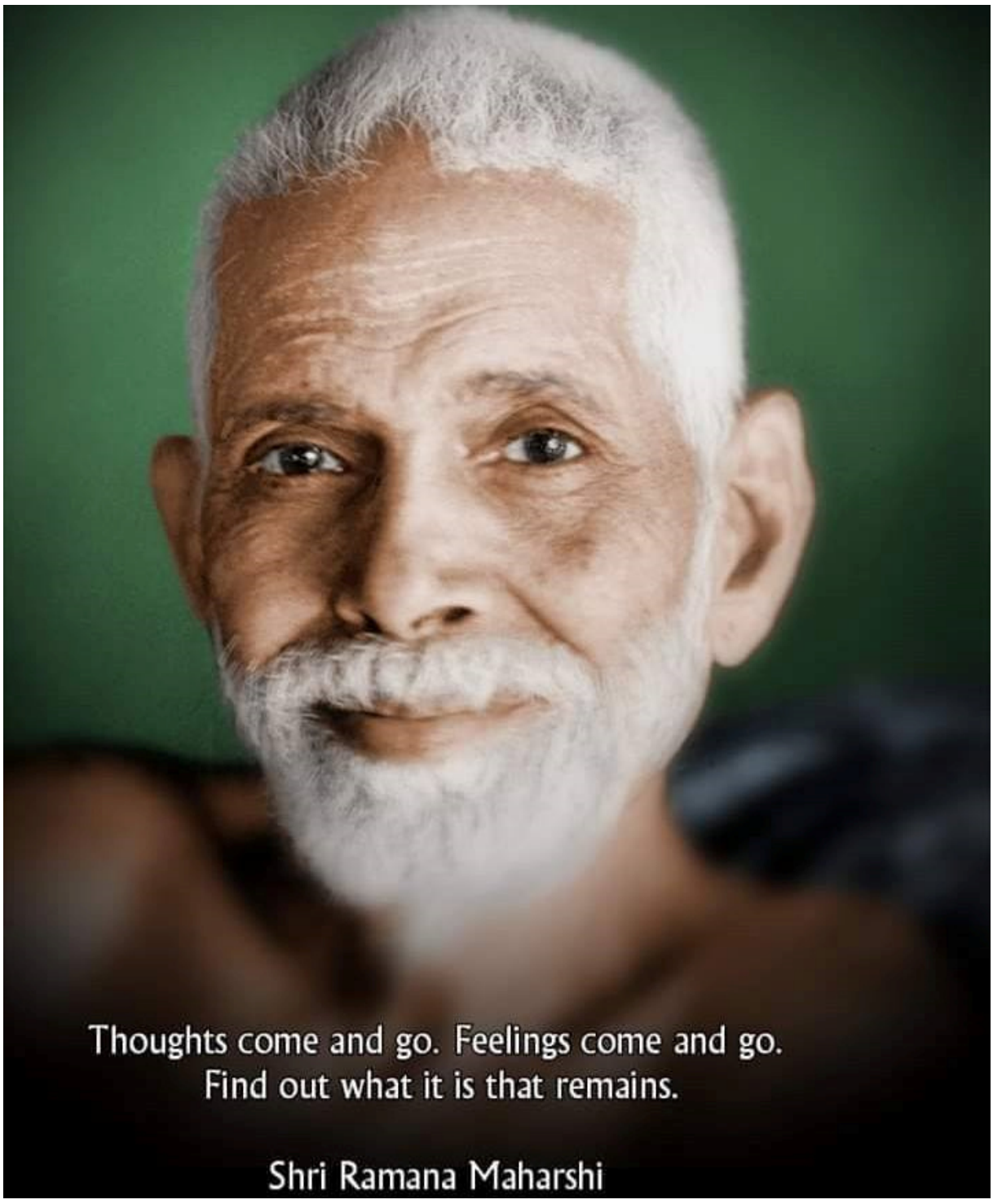


All fear is nothing more than thoughts. If there is only one, there cannot be a second to be afraid of. If we look to our Self, as it is one, there is nothing else to be afraid of. To think that there is something outside ourselves is the cause of fear, but if we are firmly rooted in our own Reality, then there will be no fear, no doubt and no undesirable qualities, as all these are centred around the ego.



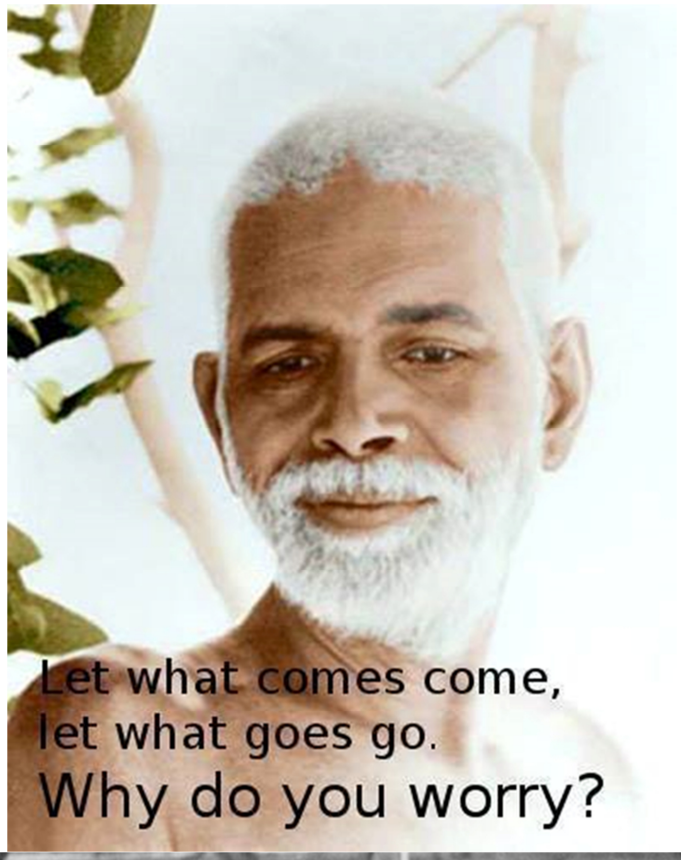
What comes will also go.
What always is will alone remain.

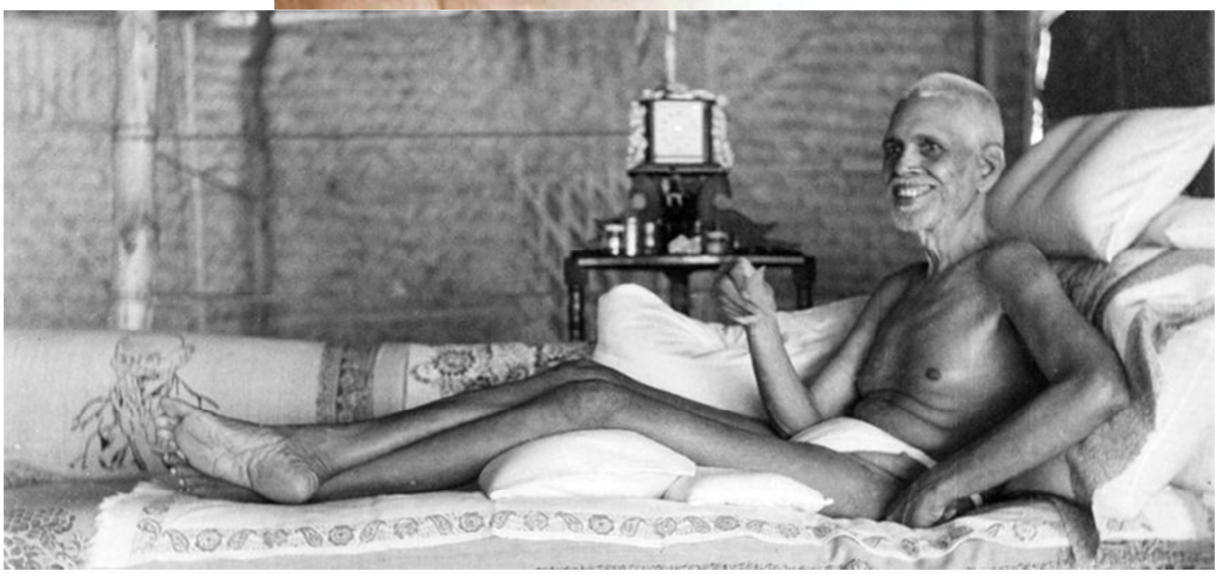
Let come what comes,
let go what goes.
See what remains.



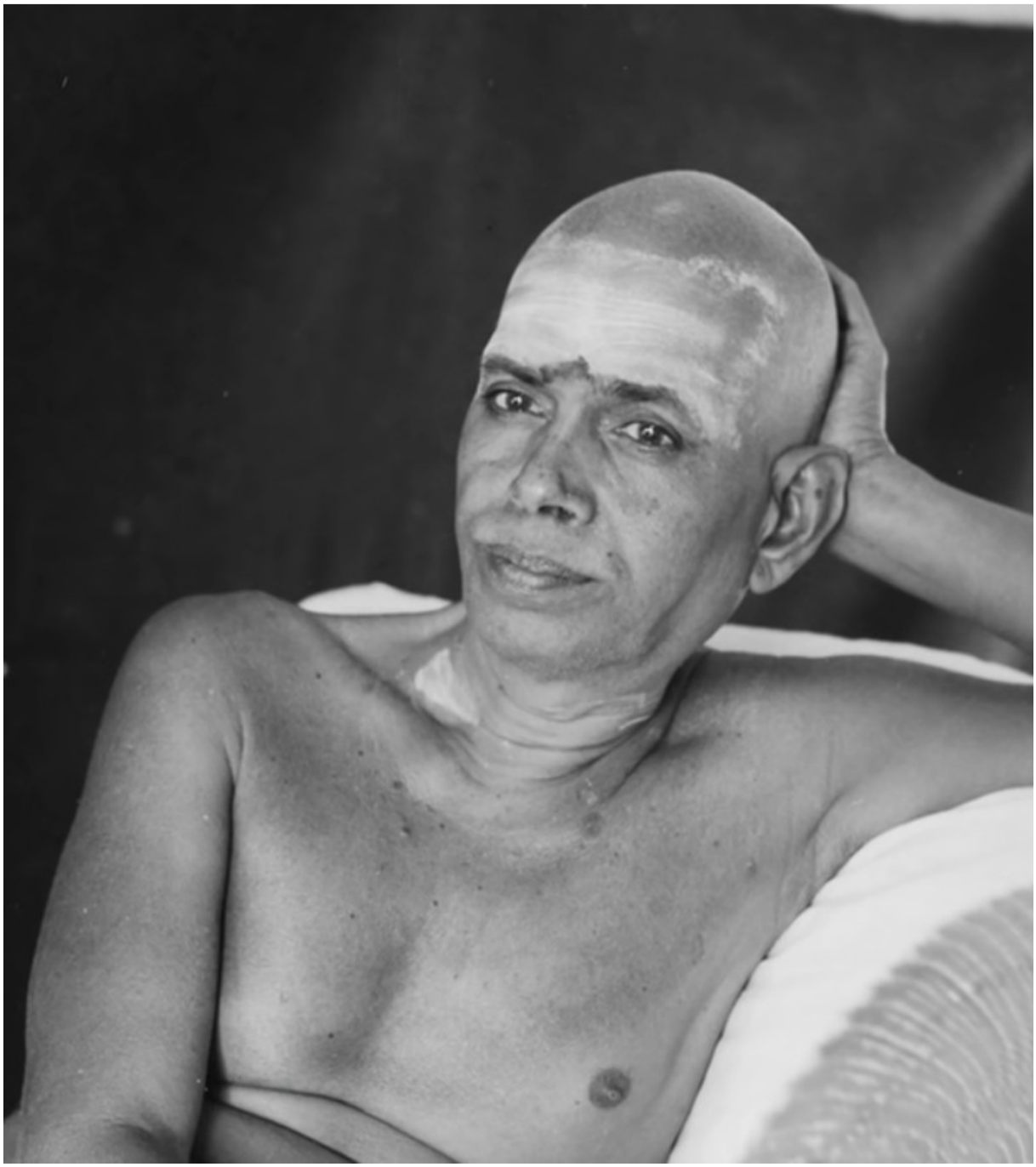
When all goes, only the Self remains.

Remove the obstacles and the Self remains.
Those who see this
are those who see Wisdom.
They are never in doubt.

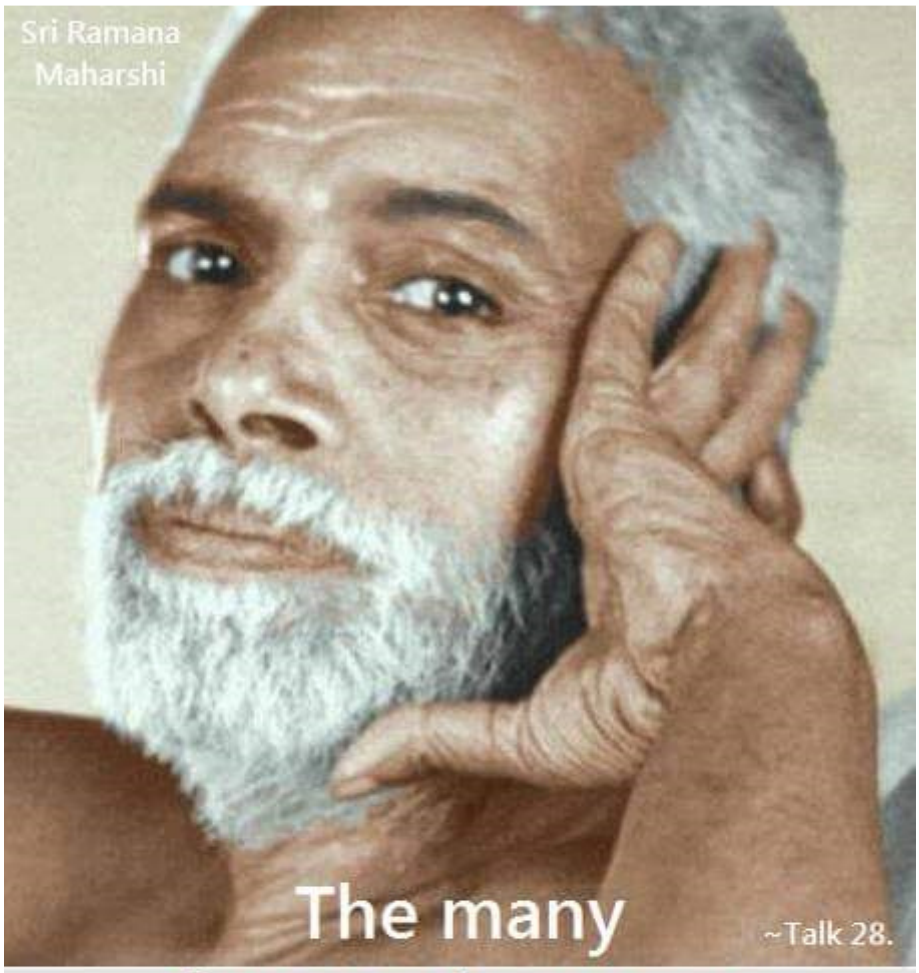




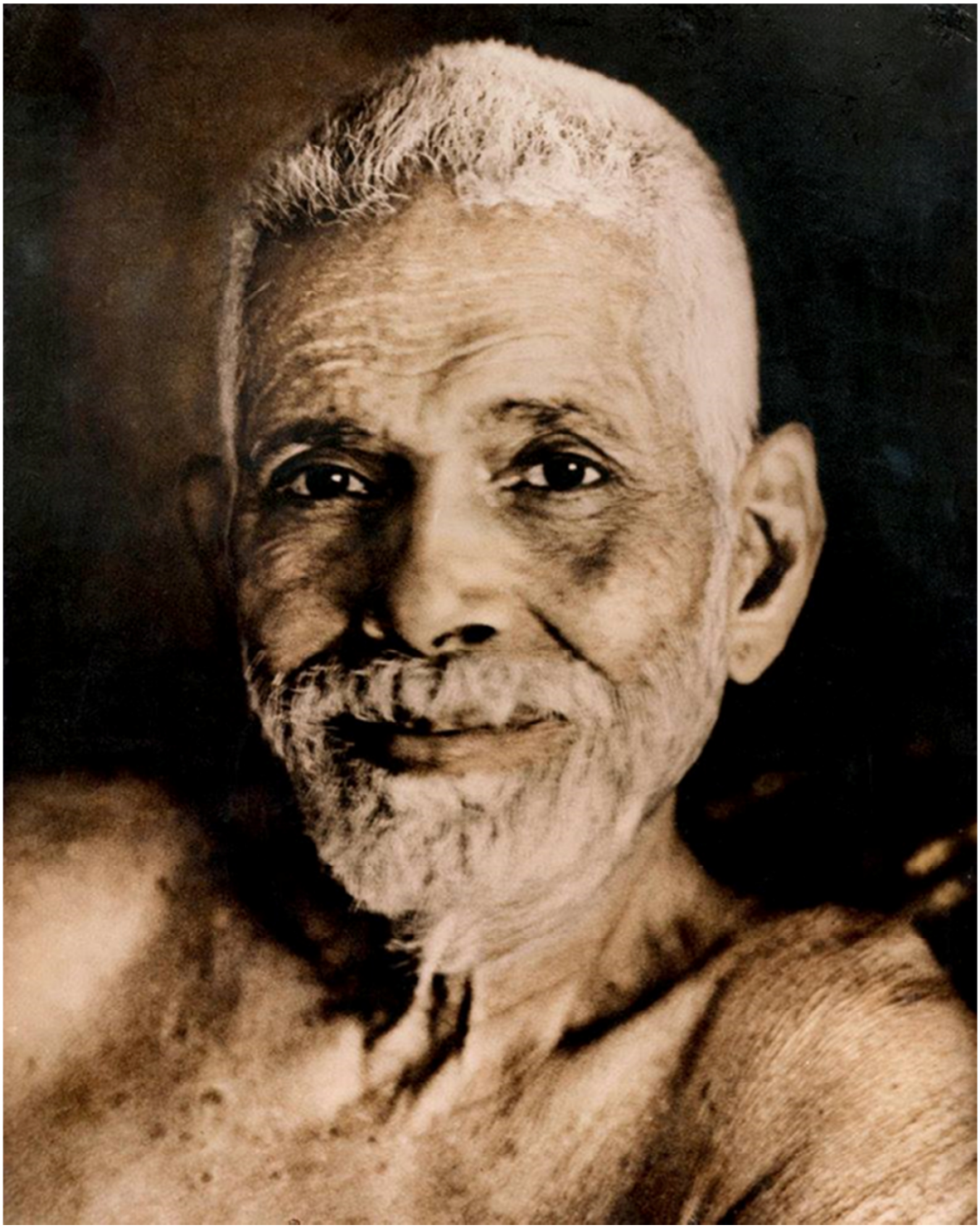
That alone is real
which exists by itself,
which reveals itself by itself
and which is eternal and unchanging.



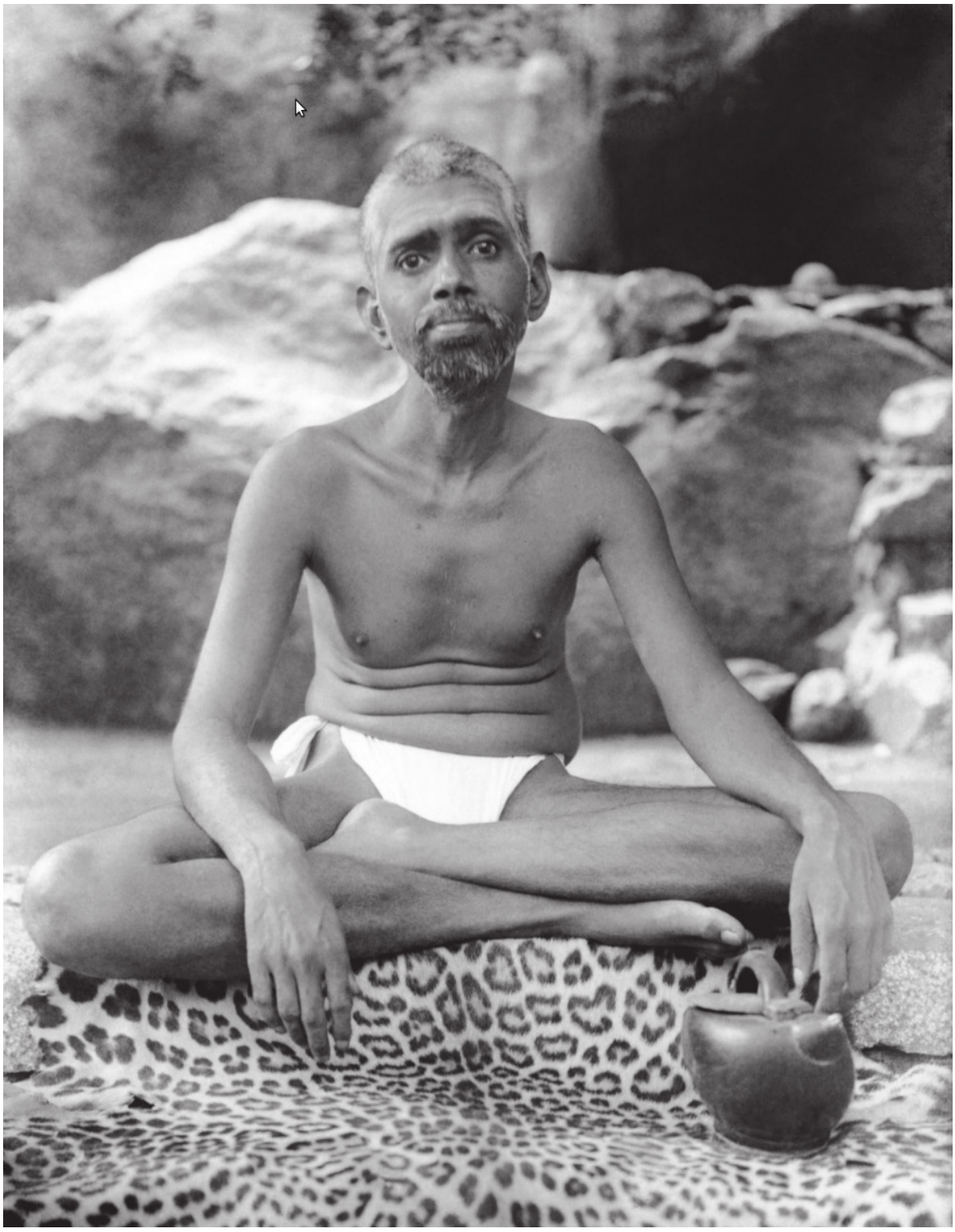
Everything we see
is changing, always changing.
There must be something unchanging
as the basis and source of all this.



The thoughts change but not you.
Let go the passing thoughts and
hold on to the unchanging Self.

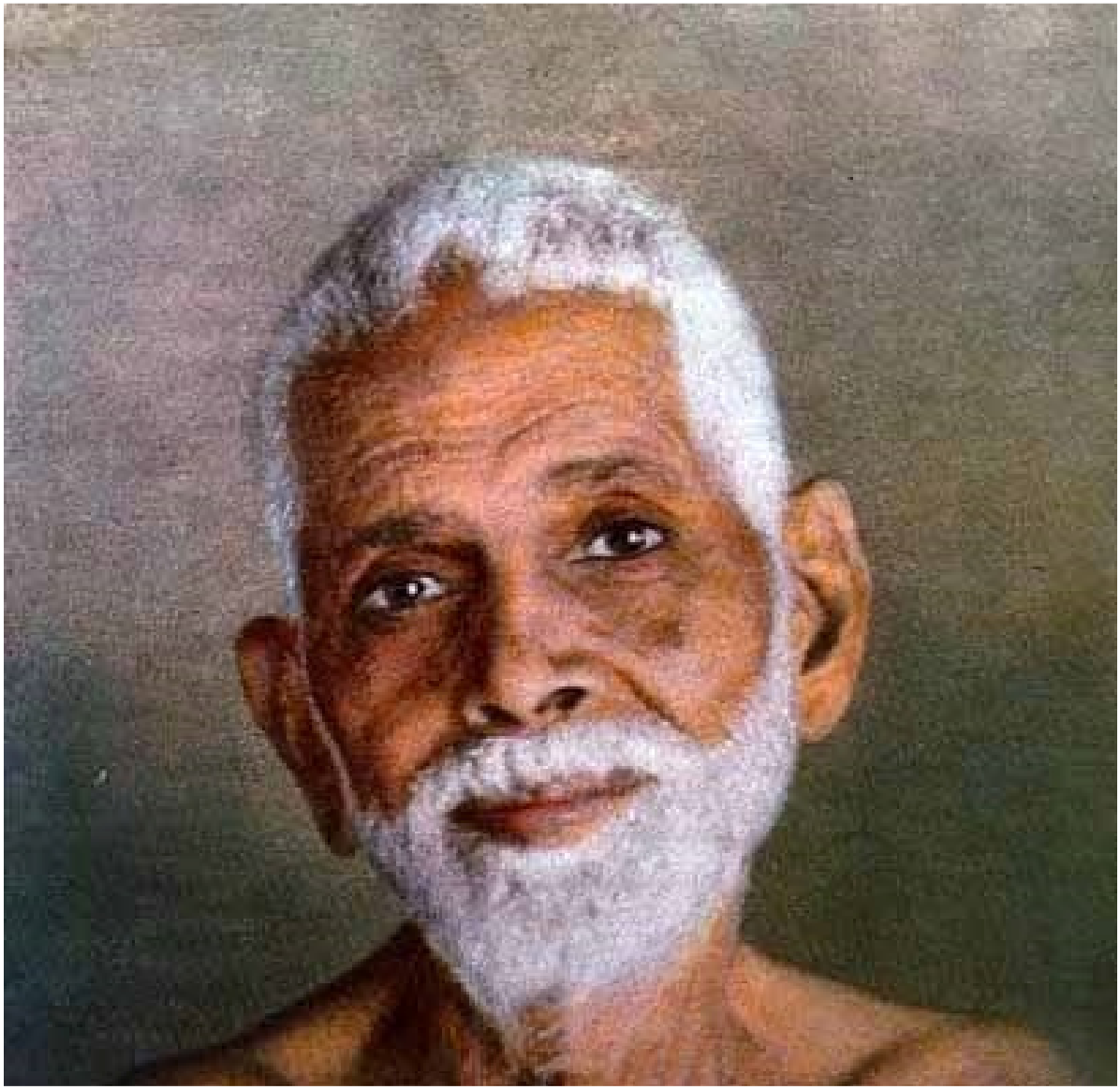


It is only the body that has changed.
You have not changed.

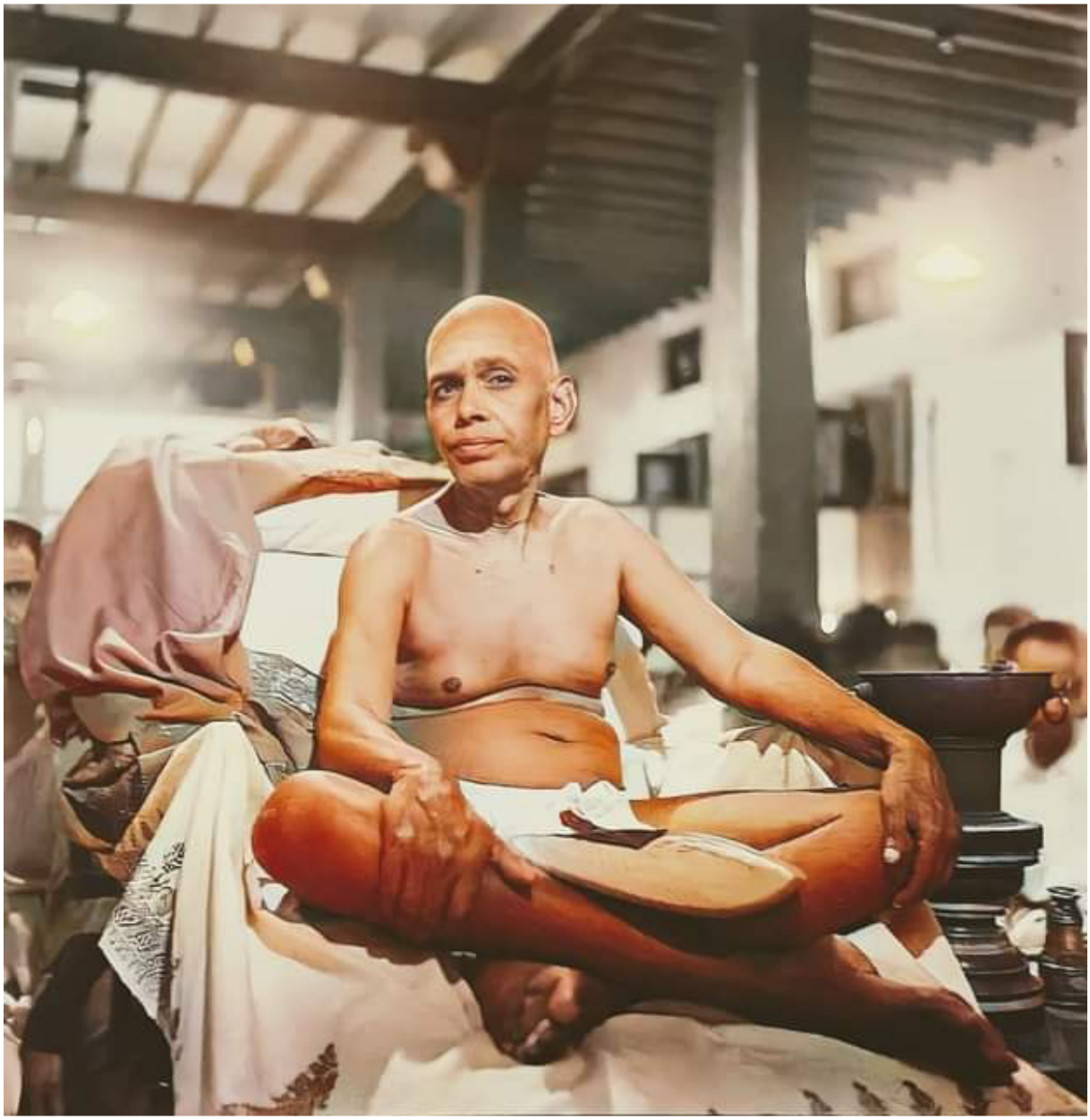


You are not the body.
You are Pure Consciousness.

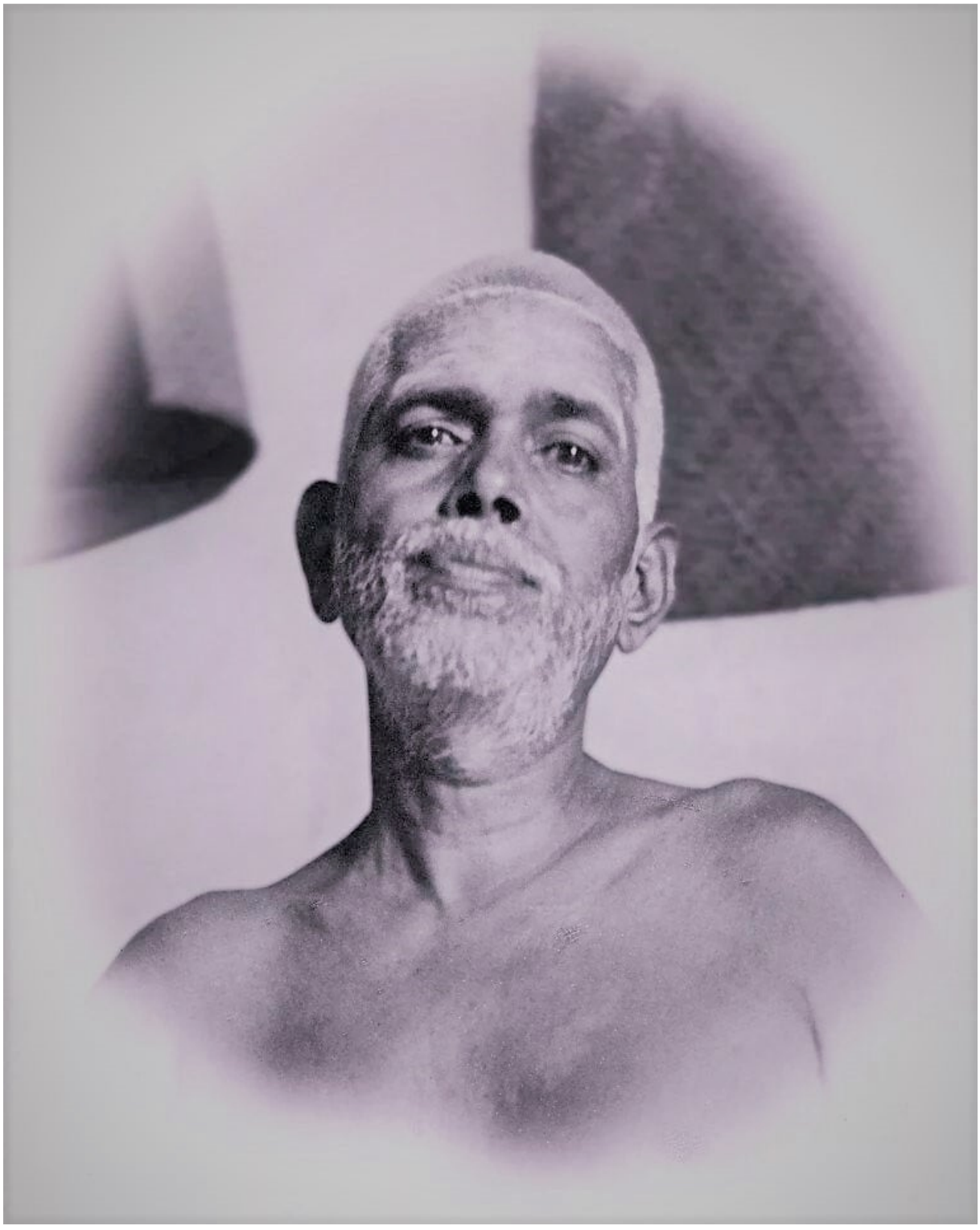
You are Awareness. Awareness is another name for you. Since you are Awareness, there is no need to attain or cultivate it. All that you have to do is to give up being aware of other things, that is, of the not-self. If one gives up being aware of them, then Pure Awareness alone remains, and that is the Self.



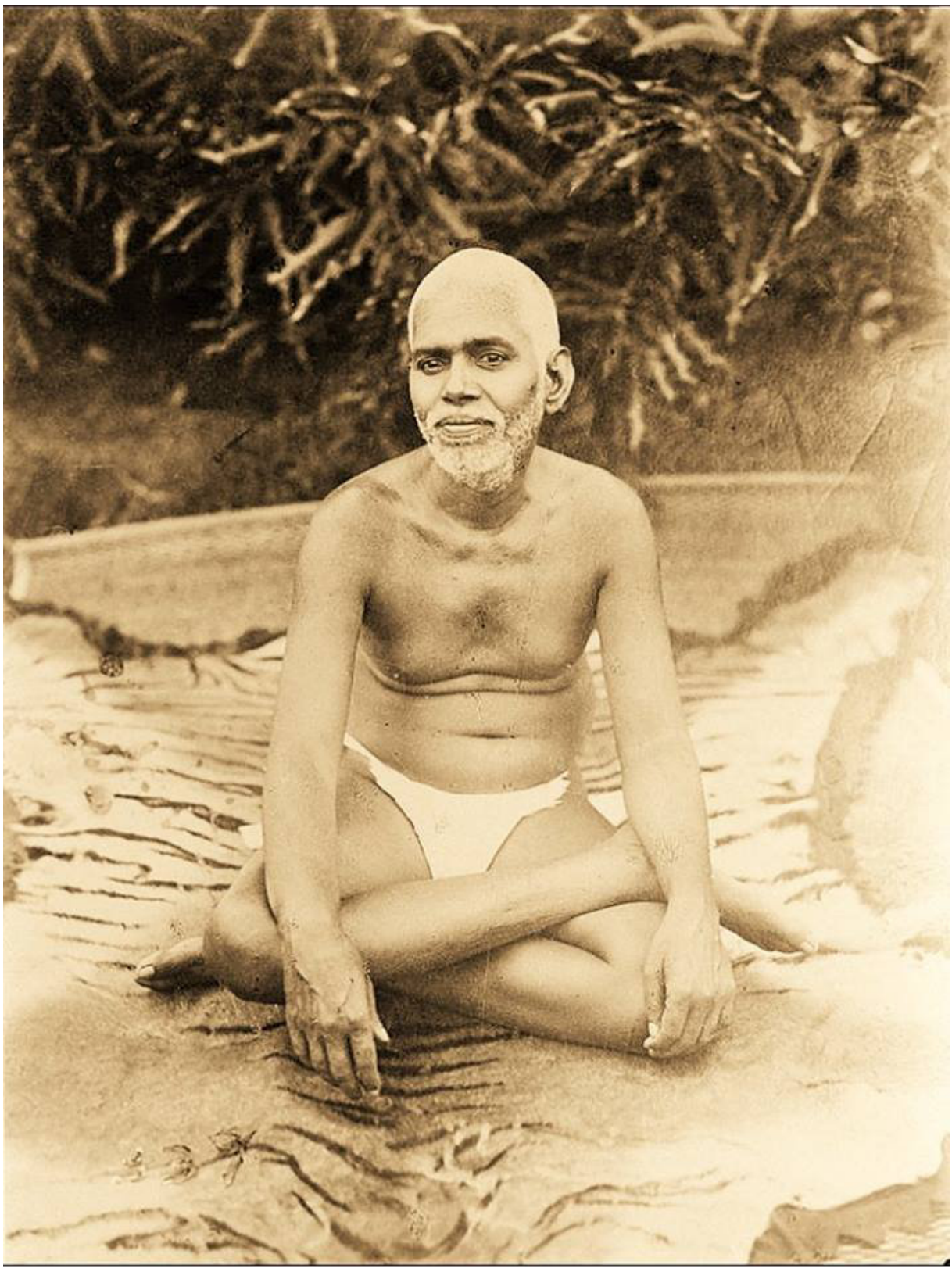
We have forgotten the Self
and imagine that the body or the mind is the Self.
It is this wrong identity that gives rise to misery.



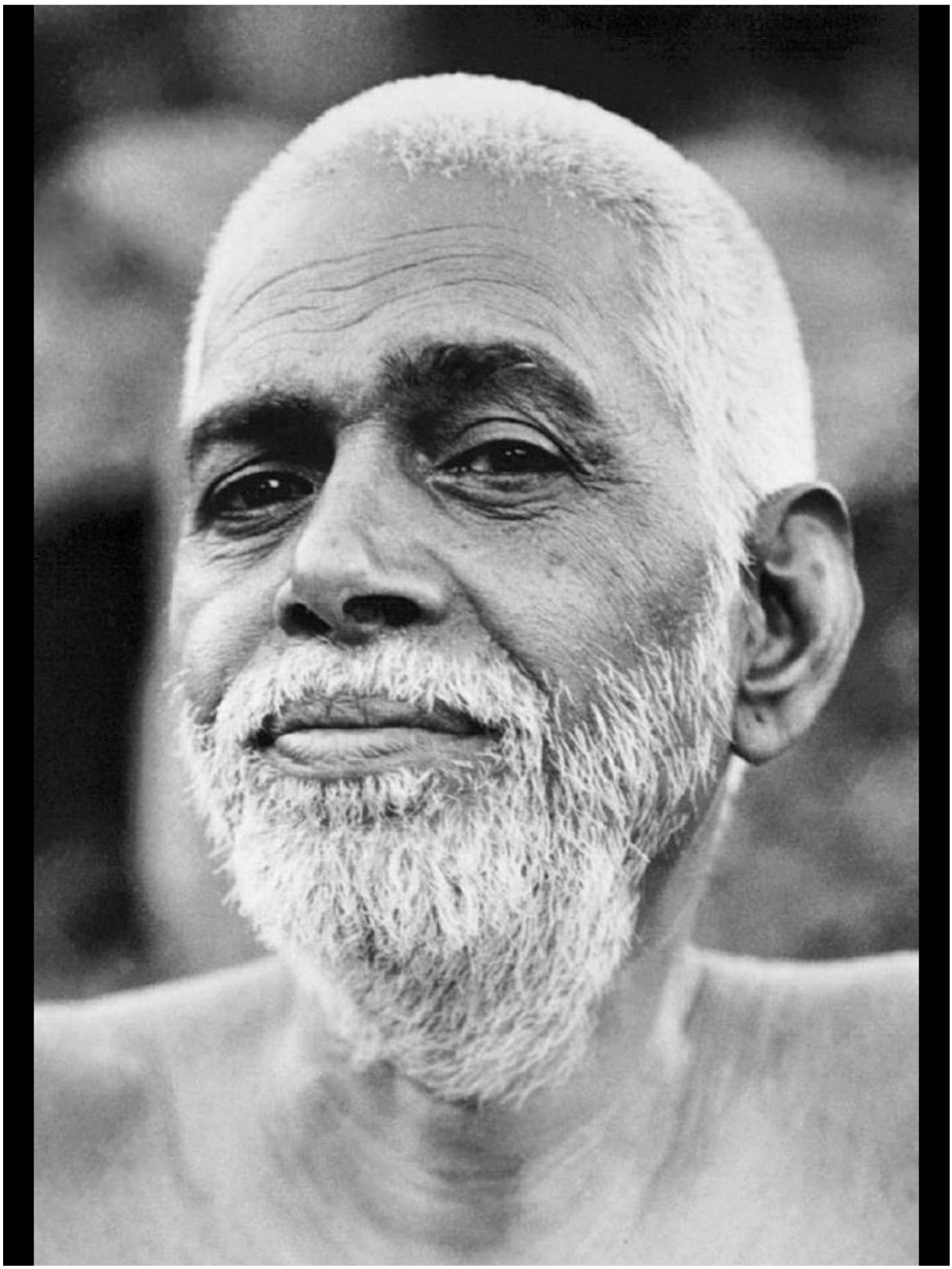
Our identification with the mind and body
is the chief reason for our failure
to know ourself as we truly are.



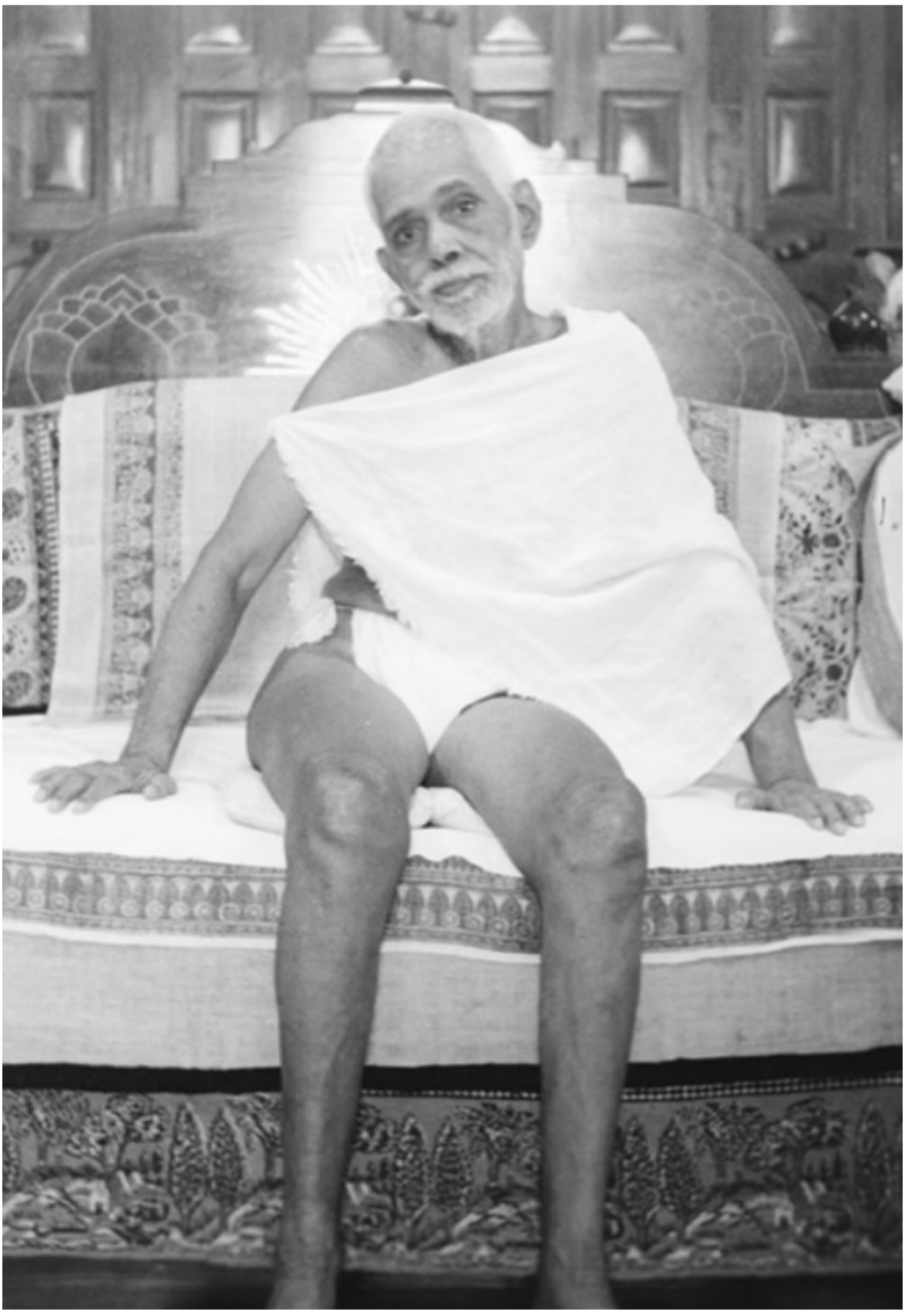
The wrong “knowledge” of 'I am the body'
is the cause of all the mischief.
This wrong “knowledge” must go.
That is realization.



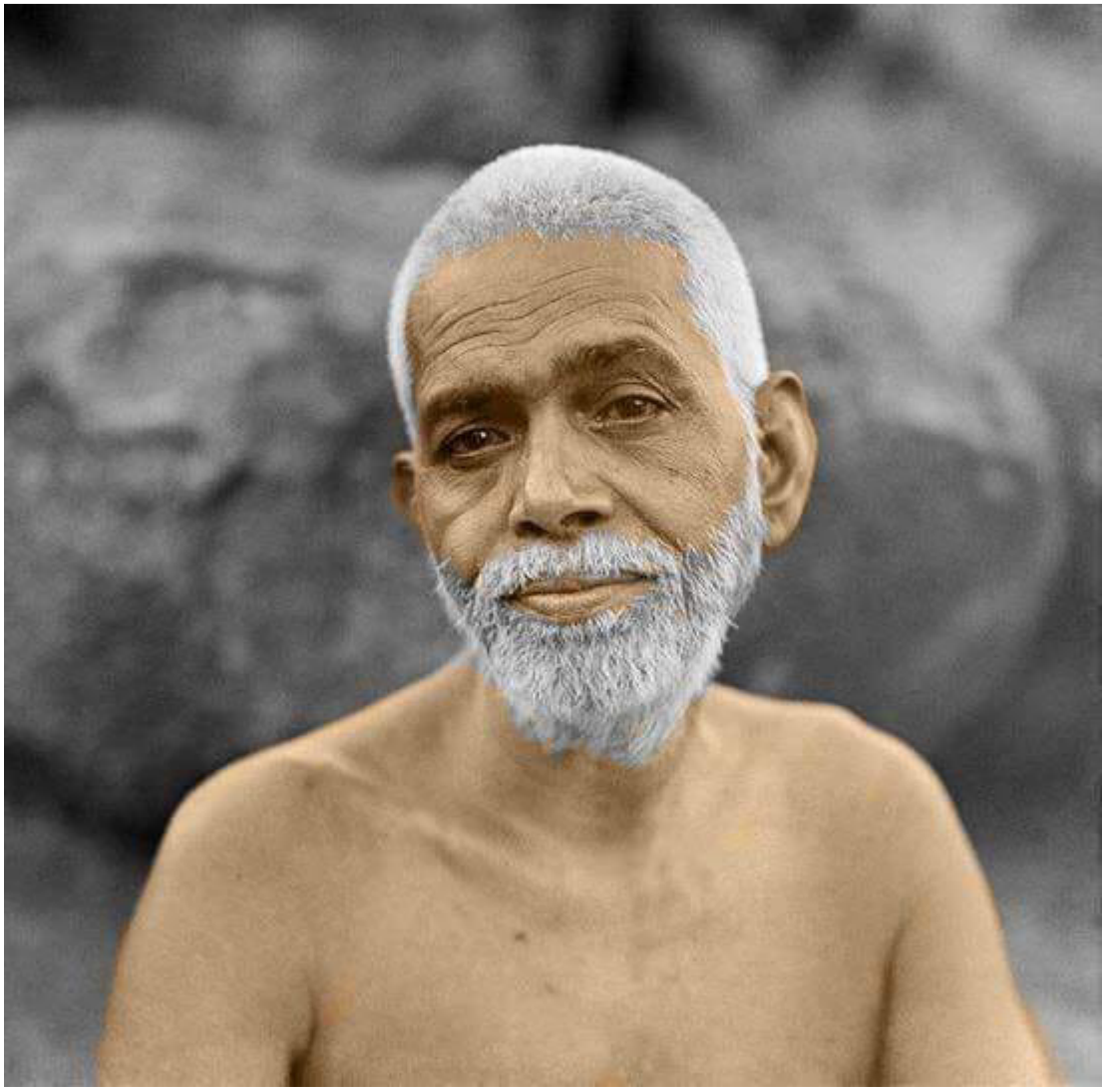
To identify oneself with the body
and yet to seek happiness
is like attempting to cross a river
on the back of an alligator.



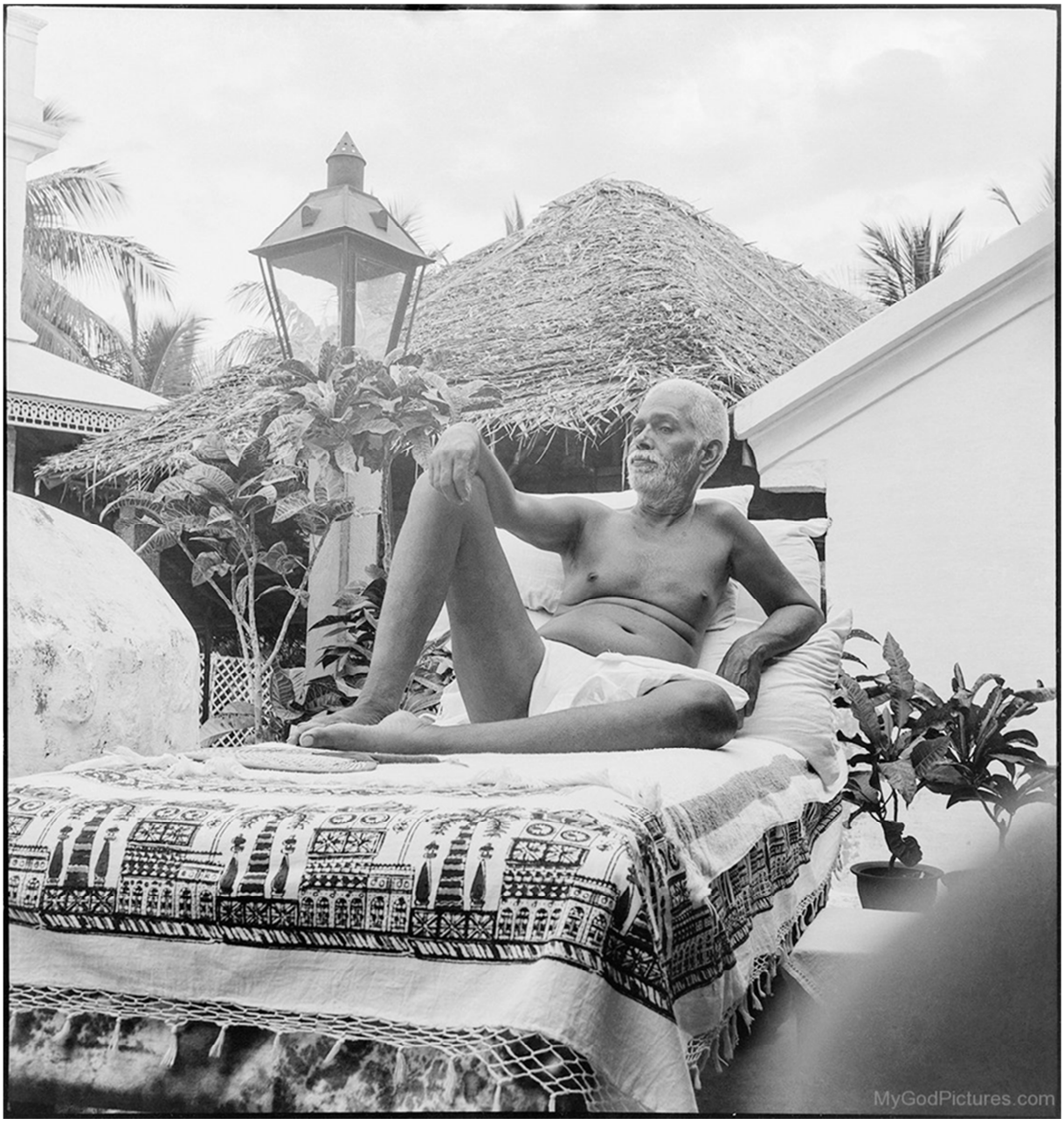
Those who have realized the Self by direct and immediate experience clearly perceive beyond all doubt that the phenomenal world as an objective, independent reality is wholly non-existent.



Seeing this mind-projected world in sheer delusion,
then taking it as real,
and swerving from the Truth Sublime,
of One's Own Being
as Pure Awareness;
one but proves oneself to be insane.

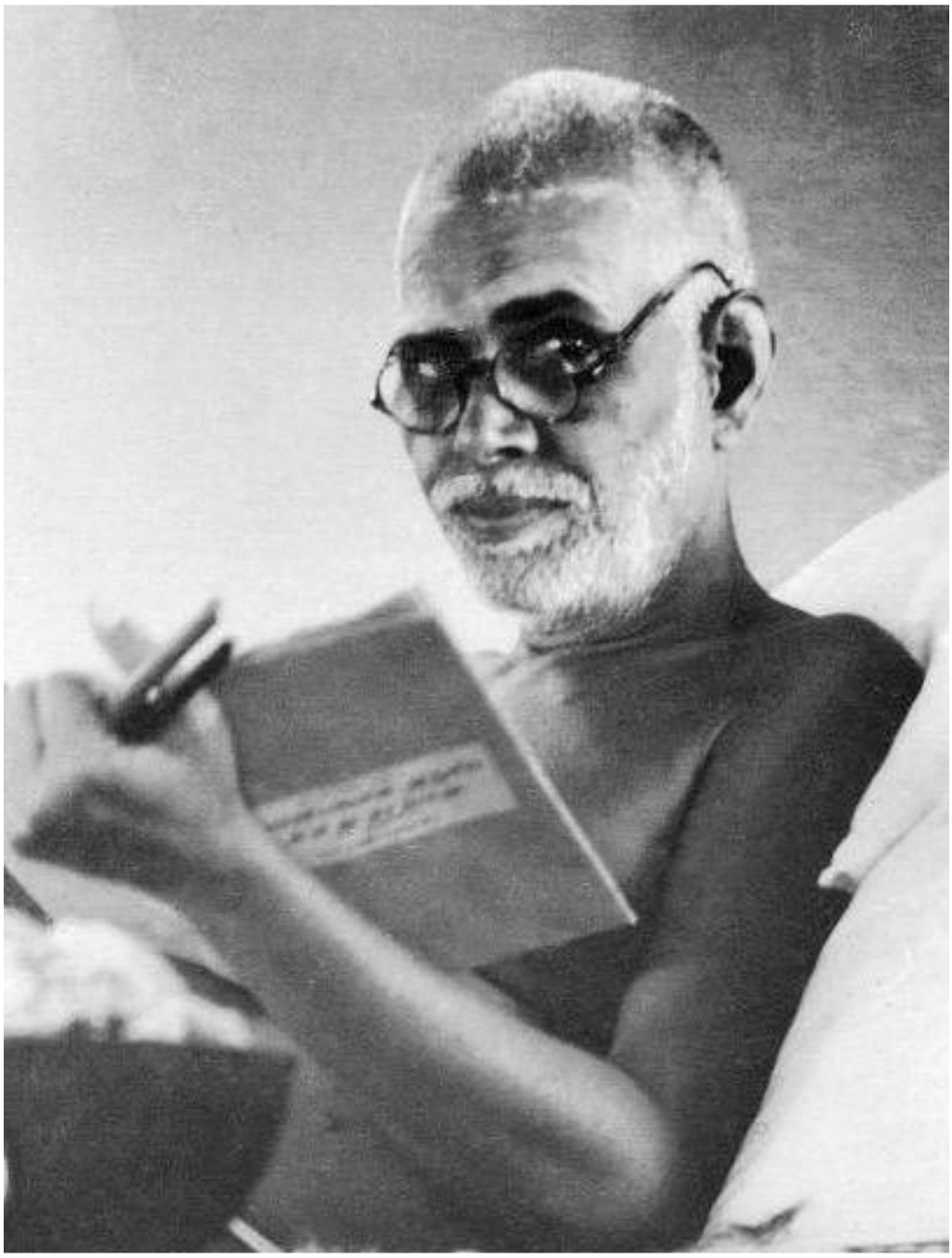


When you see
that the mind invented everything,
all will vanish.
The good will vanish,
the evil will vanish
and you will remain as you are.

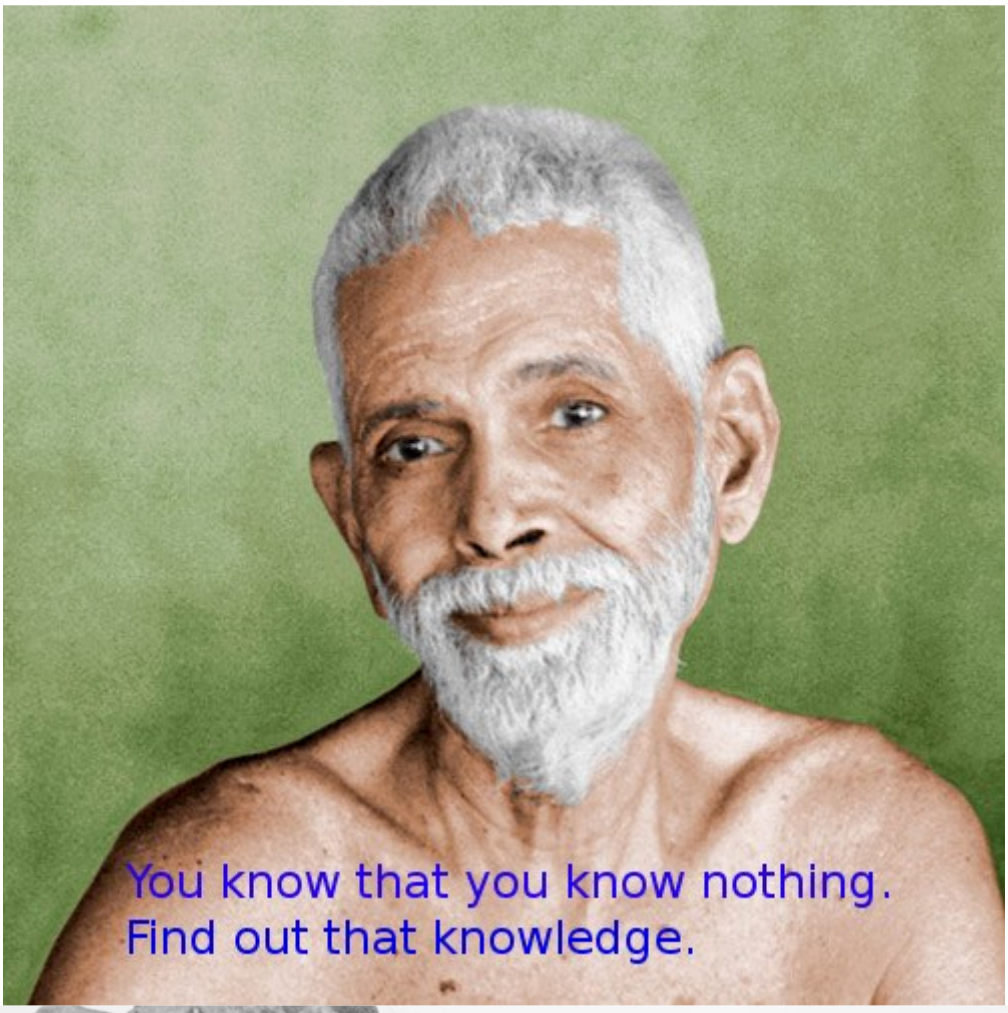


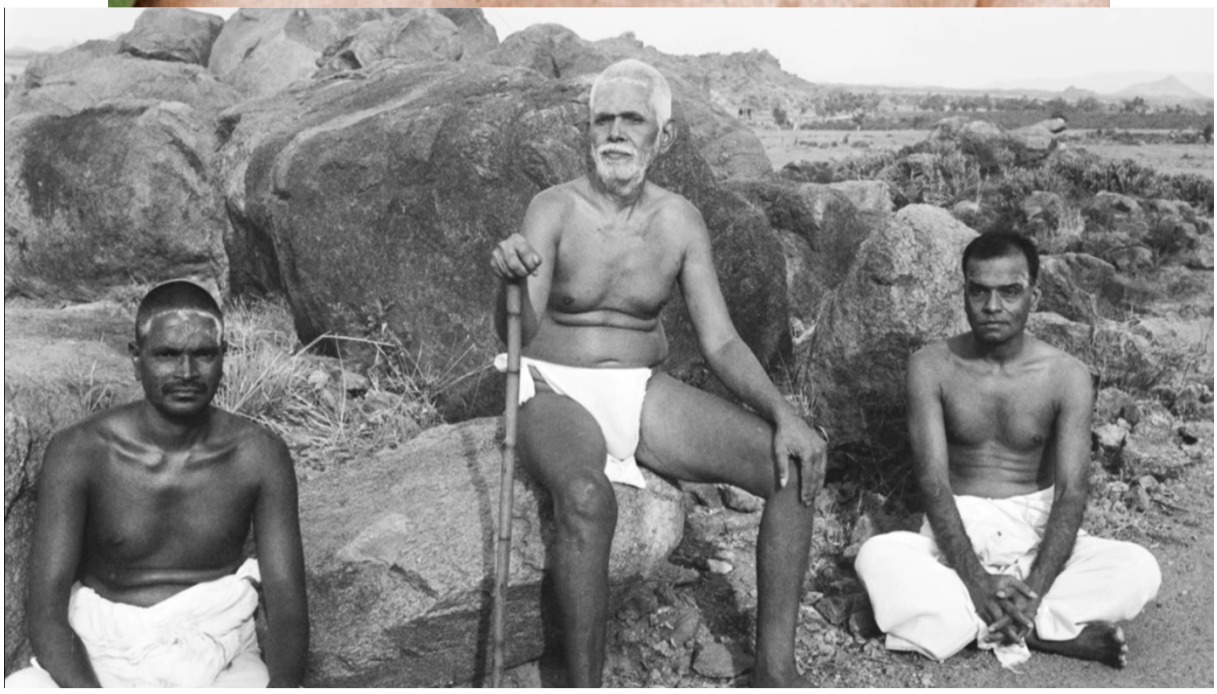
Eventually, all that one has learnt will have to be forgotten.

Education is learned ignorance.

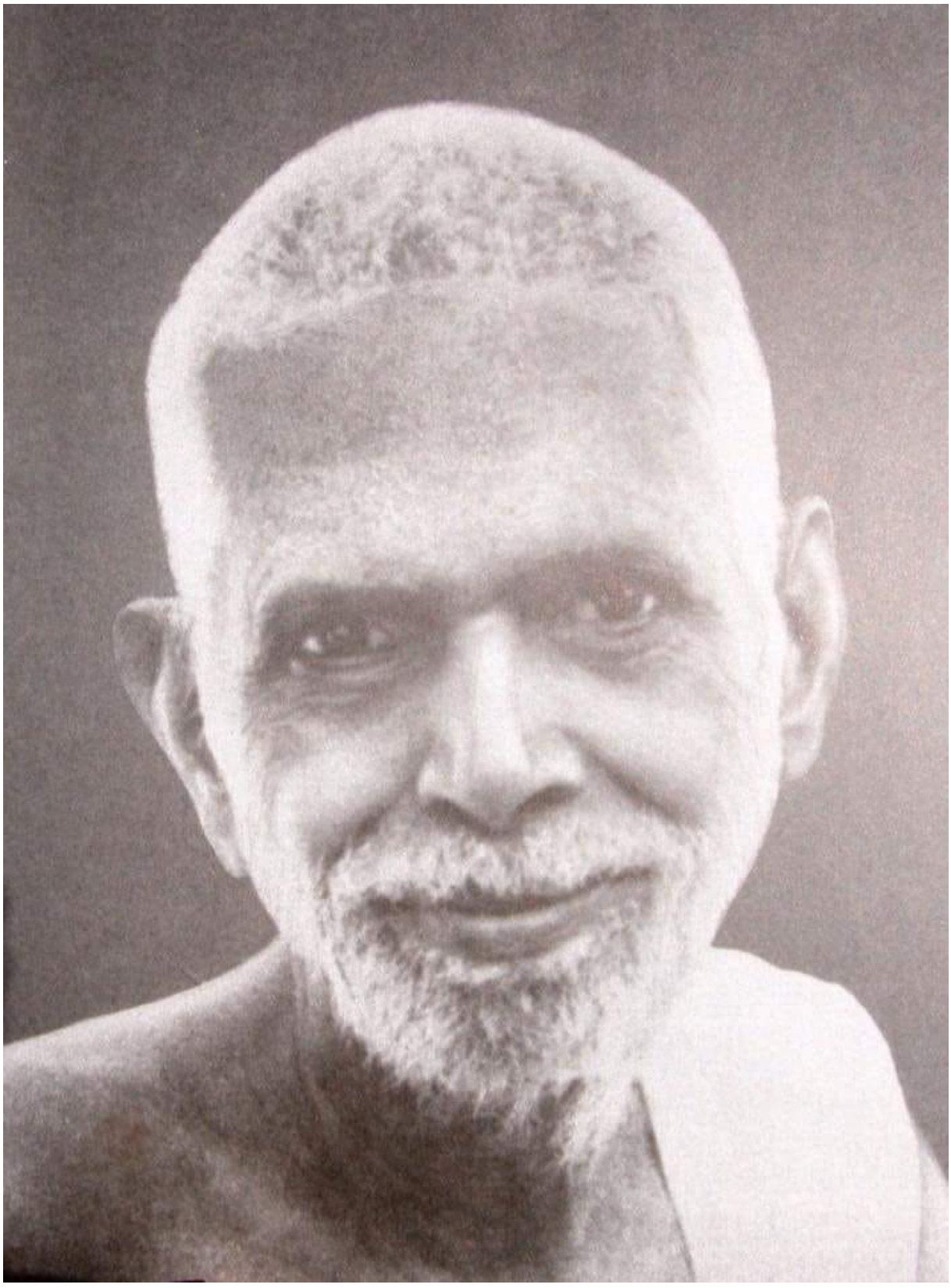


Until you know who you are,
all your knowledge is learned ignorance.

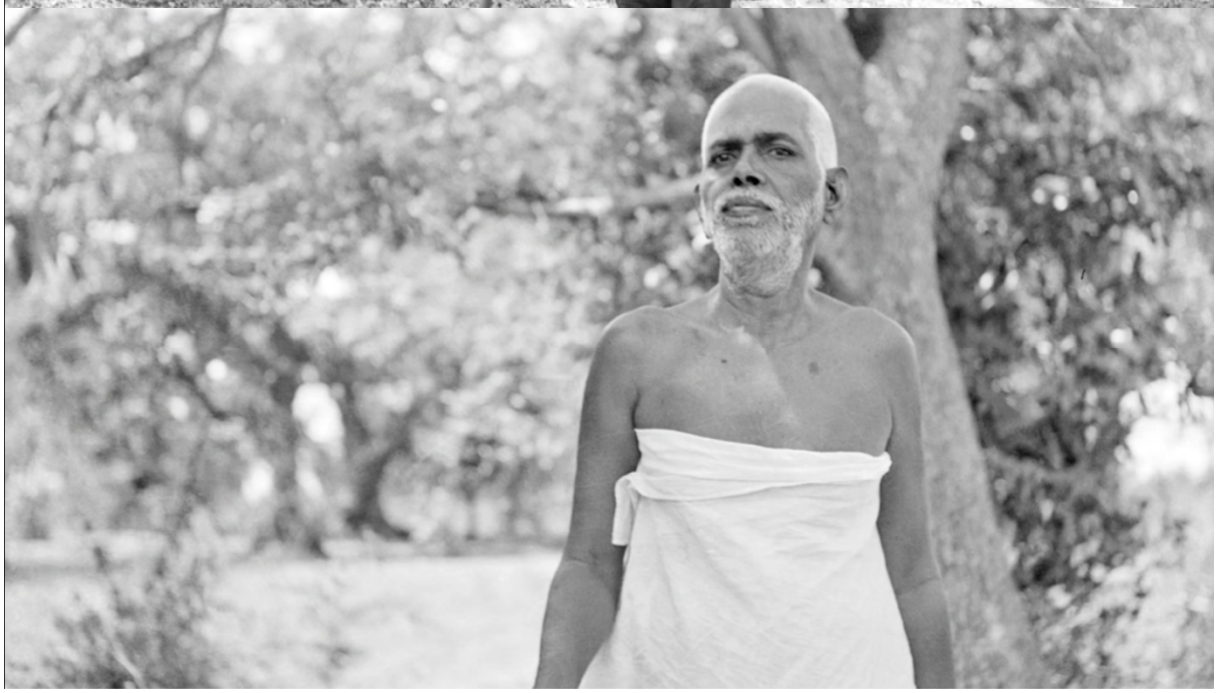




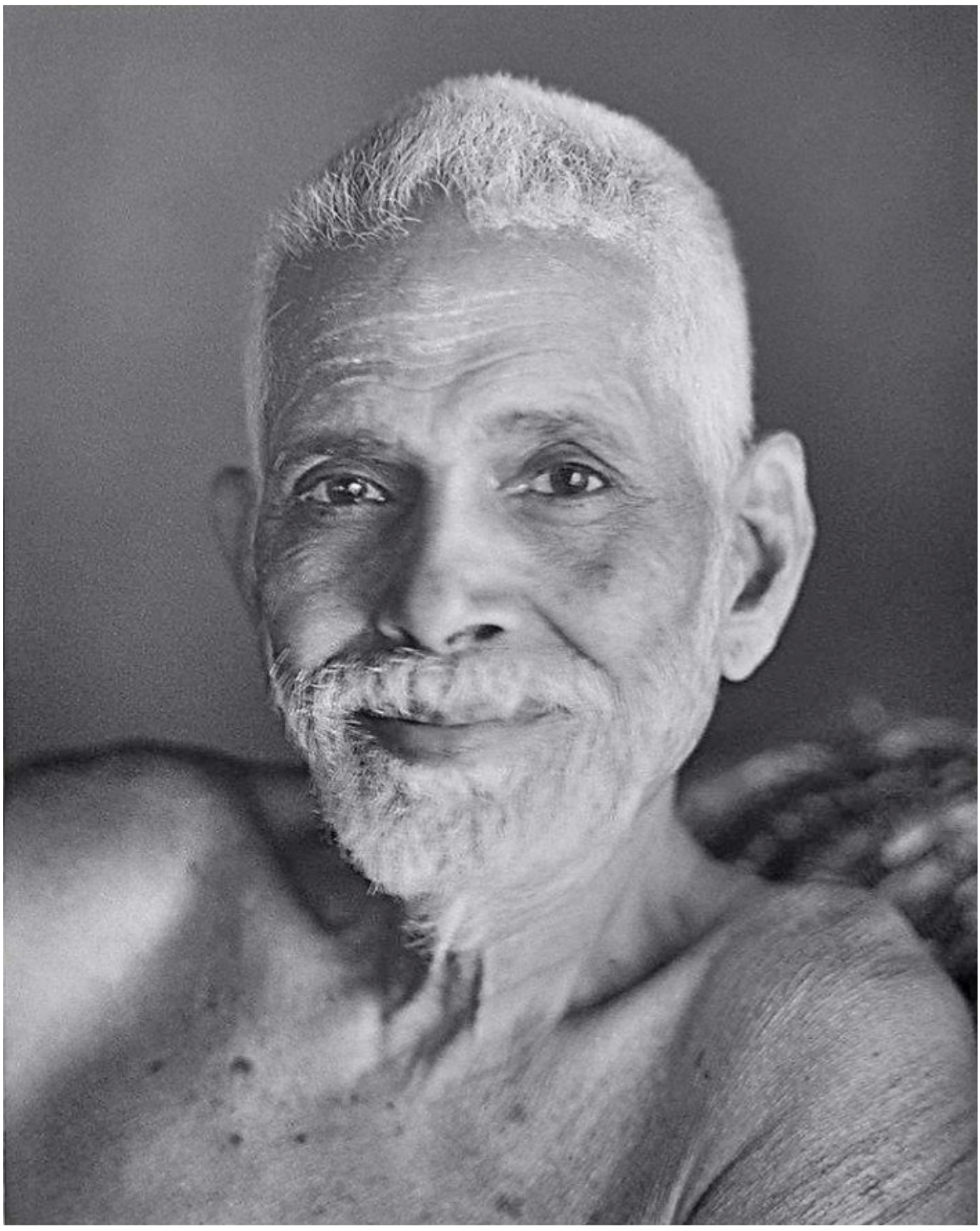
Without knowing the knower,
all the knowledge that one gathers cannot be valid.



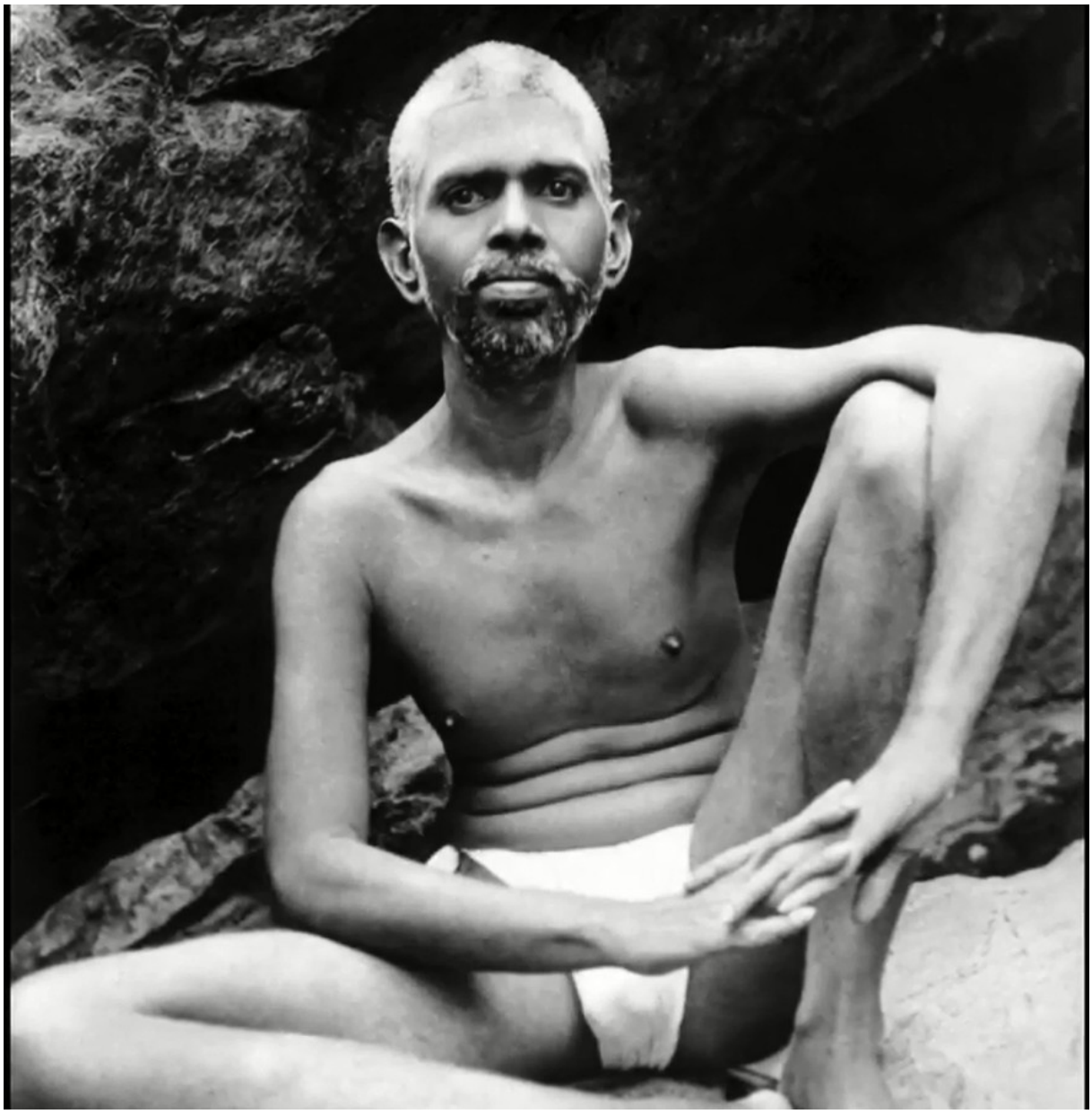
Of what avail is knowing things other than the Self?
And the Self being known, what other thing is there to know?
That one light that shines as many selves,
seeing this Self within as Awareness' lightning flash;
the play of Grace; the ego's death; the blossoming of bliss.



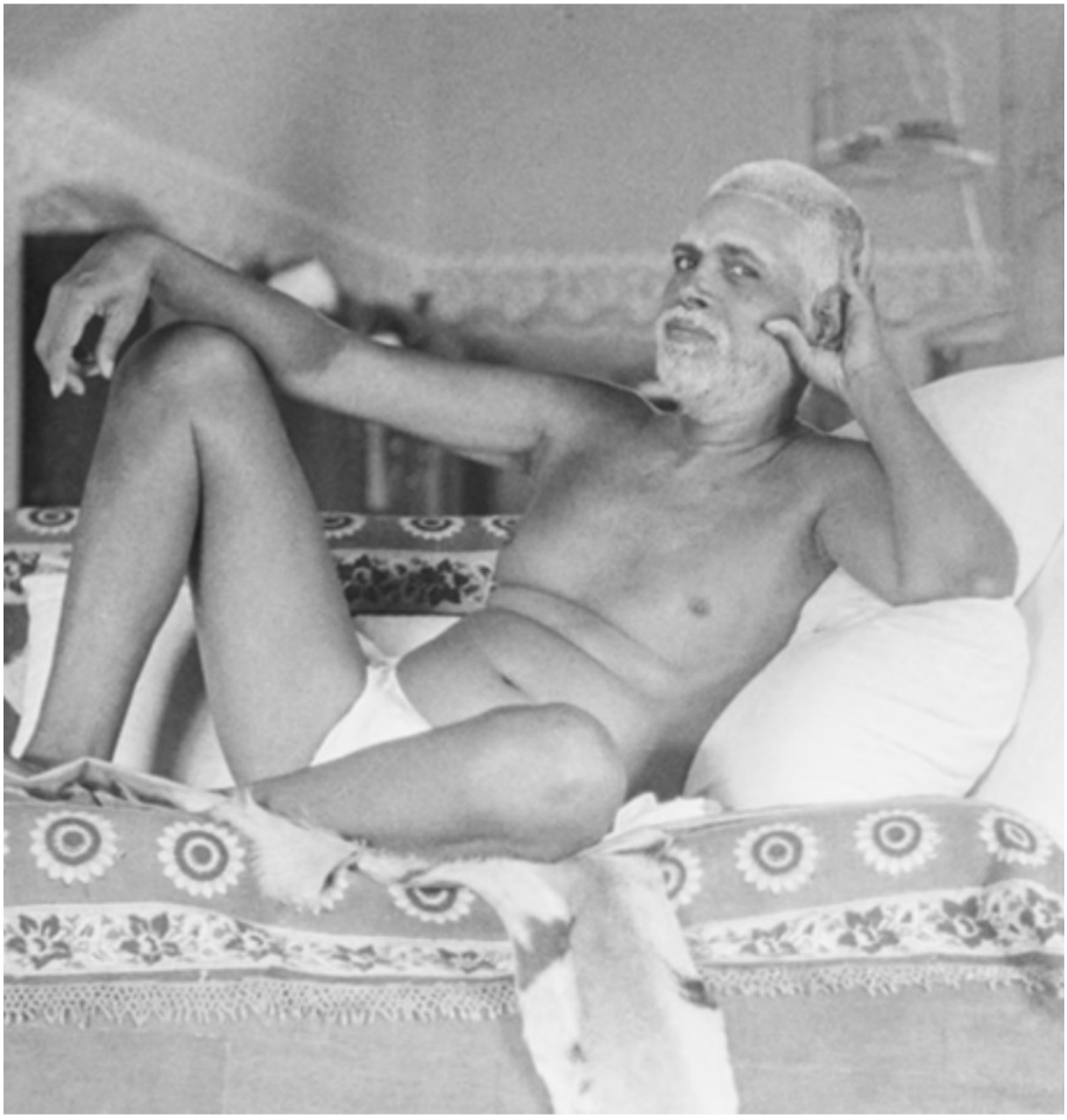
Does one require proof of one's own being?
Only remain aware of yourself and all else will be known.



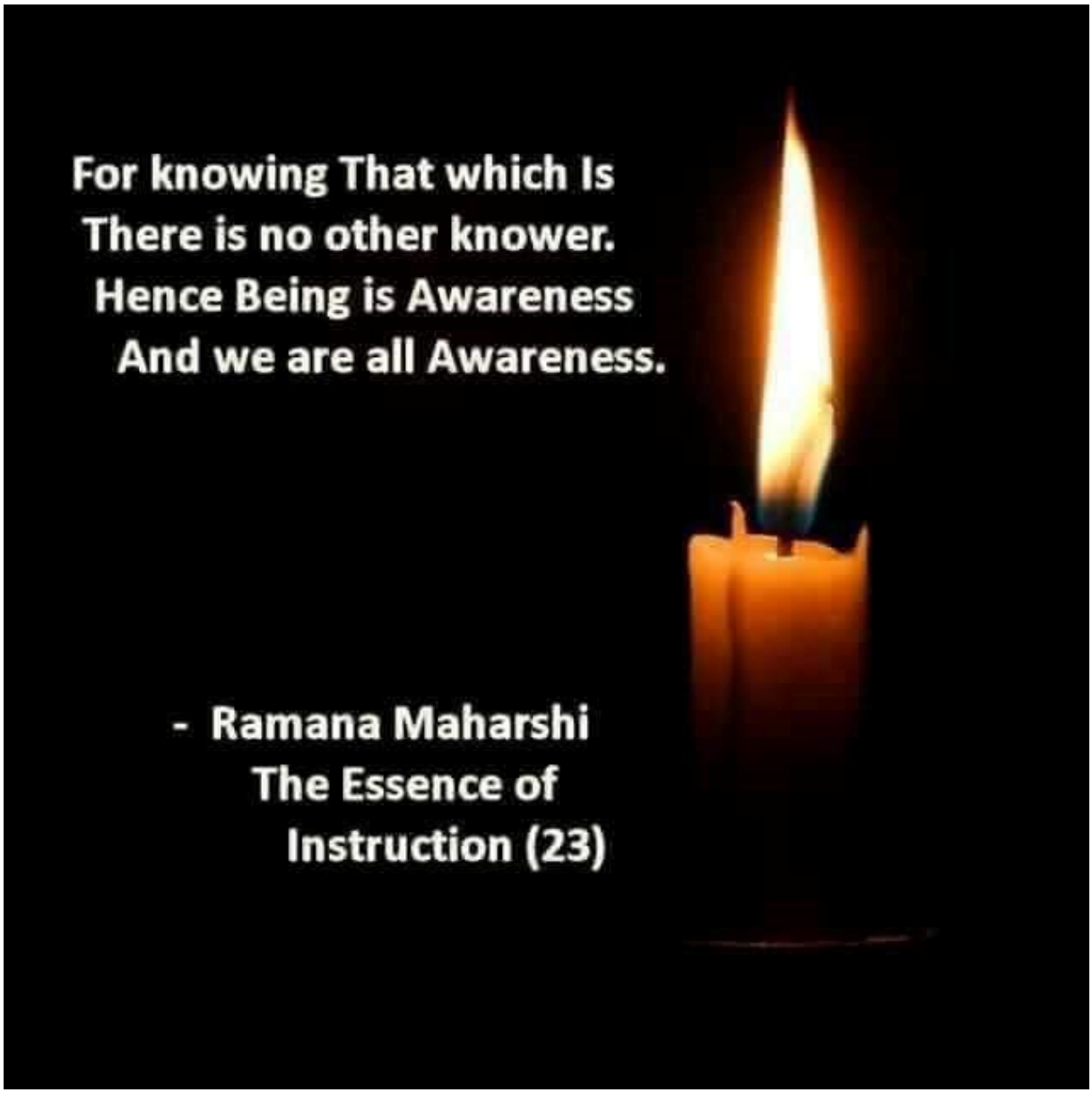
You know that you are.
You cannot deny your existence.
For you must be there in order to deny it.
This pure existence is understood by stilling your mind.



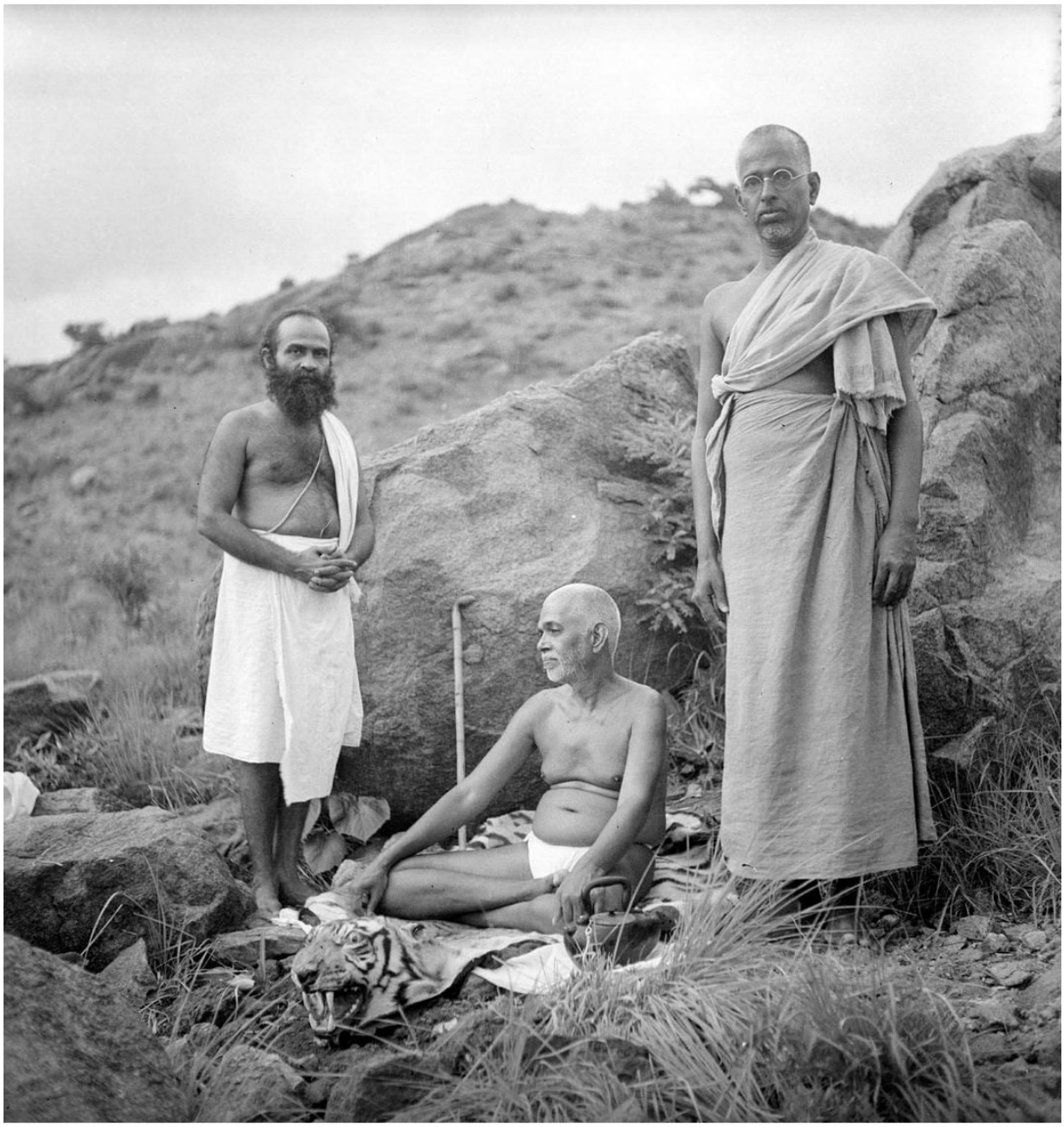
Knowing the Self is being the Self, and being means existence, one's own existence. No one denies one's existence any more than one denies one's eyes, although one cannot see them. The trouble lies with your desire to objectify the Self, in the same way as you objectify your eyes when you place a mirror before them. You have been so accustomed to objectivity that you have lost the knowledge of yourself, simply because the Self cannot be objectified. Who is to know the Self? Can the insentient body know it? All the time you speak and think of your 'I', yet when questioned, you deny knowledge of it. You are the Self, yet you ask how to know the Self. Where then is God's leela and where is its cruelty?



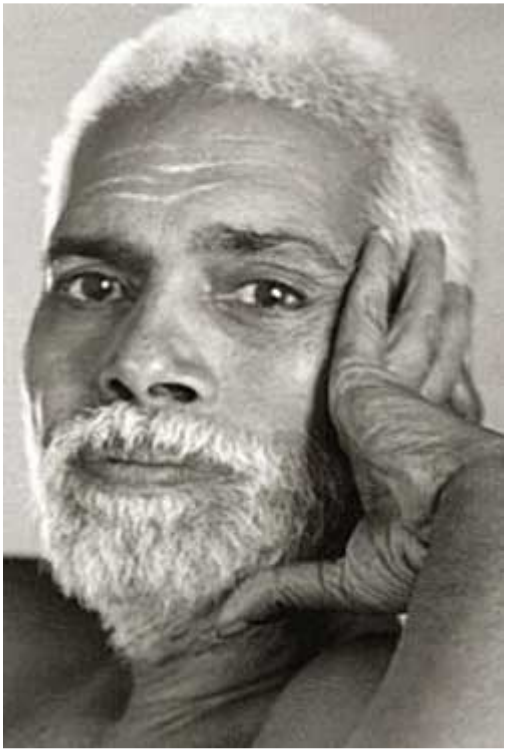
No one can deny that he exists. That existence is consciousness. To realize the truth, you have only to remove the obstacles which are in the way of realization. It is rather a question of unlearning and not learning anything new. Only get rid of the body idea, that is unlearning. It is to remove the erroneous idea that the body is the Self. This is the primary fault. This is to be obliterated. Realizing one's true nature and being aware of one's identity is Self-realization or God-realization.



Everyone knows 'I am!'
No one can deny his own being.
The emergence of thought is the root of all mischief.
Find from where thoughts emerge.
Then you will be able to abide in the ever-present inmost Self
and be free from the idea of birth or the fear of death.



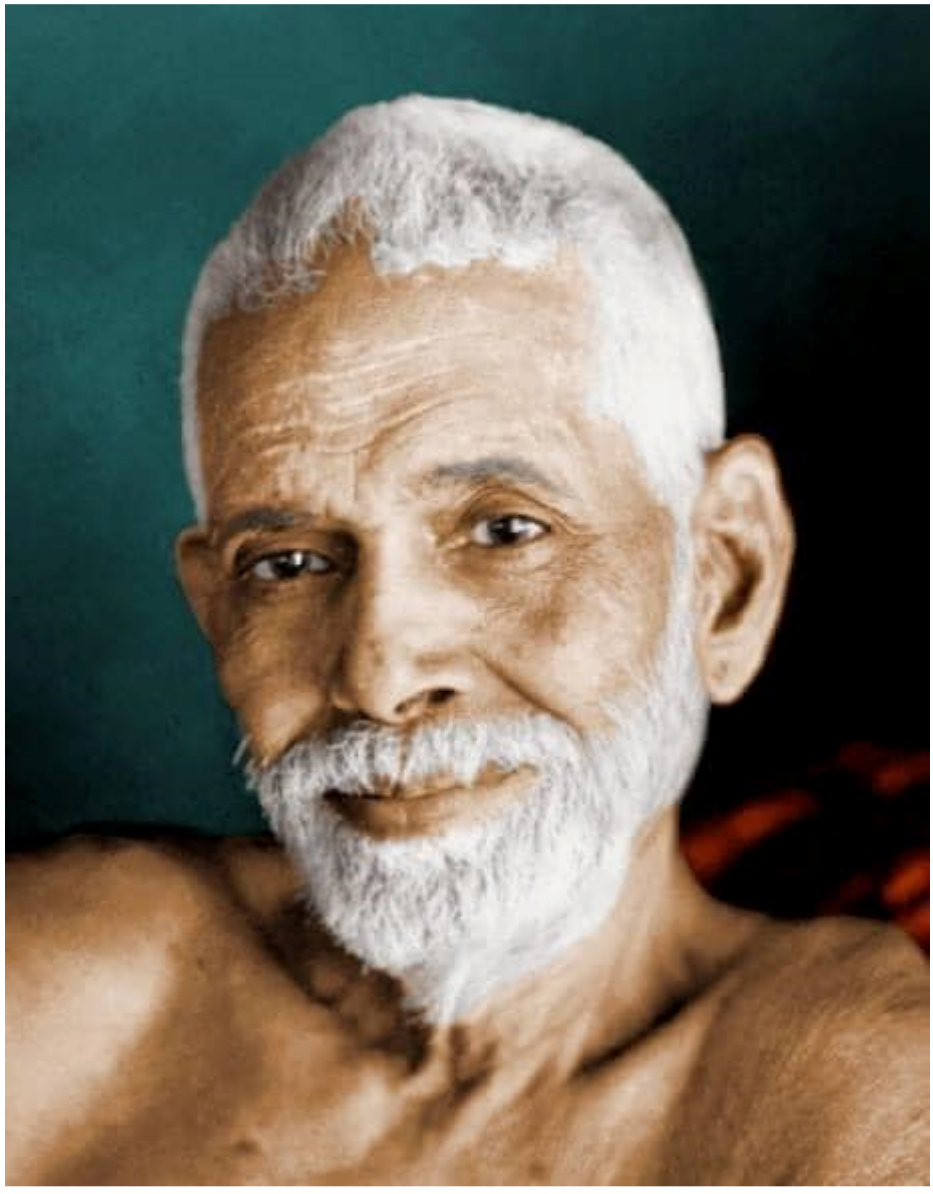
When I come to know
that I was never born,
I shall never die.
Death is for one who is born.
I was never born.
I have no body
and so
I shall never die.
I am everywhere;
where am I to go
and where am I to come?
When a man's mind is dead,
he will not die again.



You who intend to celebrate the birthday, first ascertain as to whence you were born. The day that we attain a place in that everlasting life which is beyond the reach of births and deaths is our real birthday. Even on these birthdays that occur once a year, we ought to lament that we have got this body and fallen into this world. Instead we celebrate the event with a feast. To rejoice over it is like decorating a corpse. Wisdom consists in realising the Self and in getting absorbed therein.

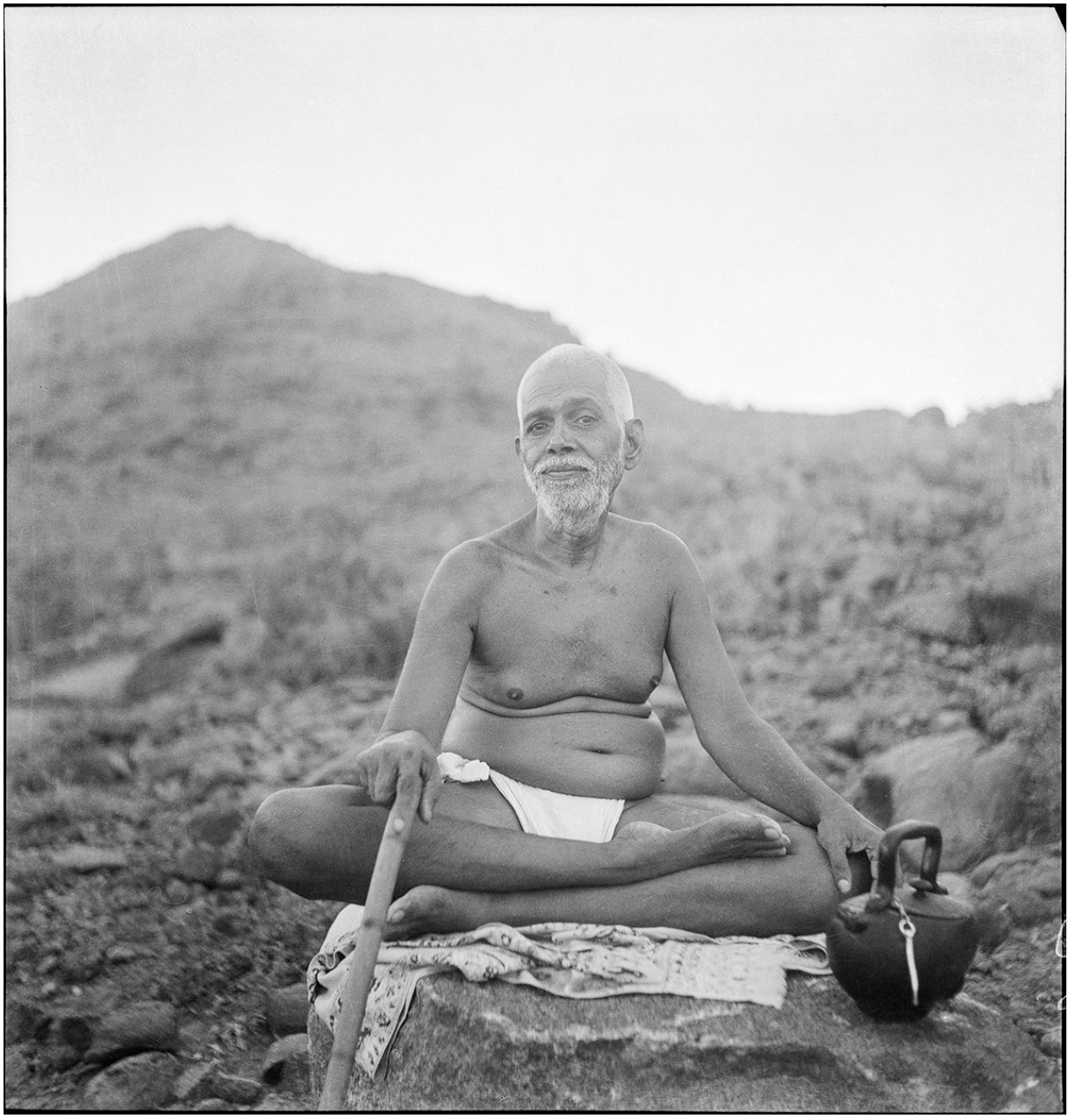
When we ride in a carriage, do we feel that we are the carriage?

All the trouble arises
if one thinks one is the body.
If one rejects that thought,
then, like the sun,
one will shine everywhere
and be all-pervading.



You are already that which you seek.

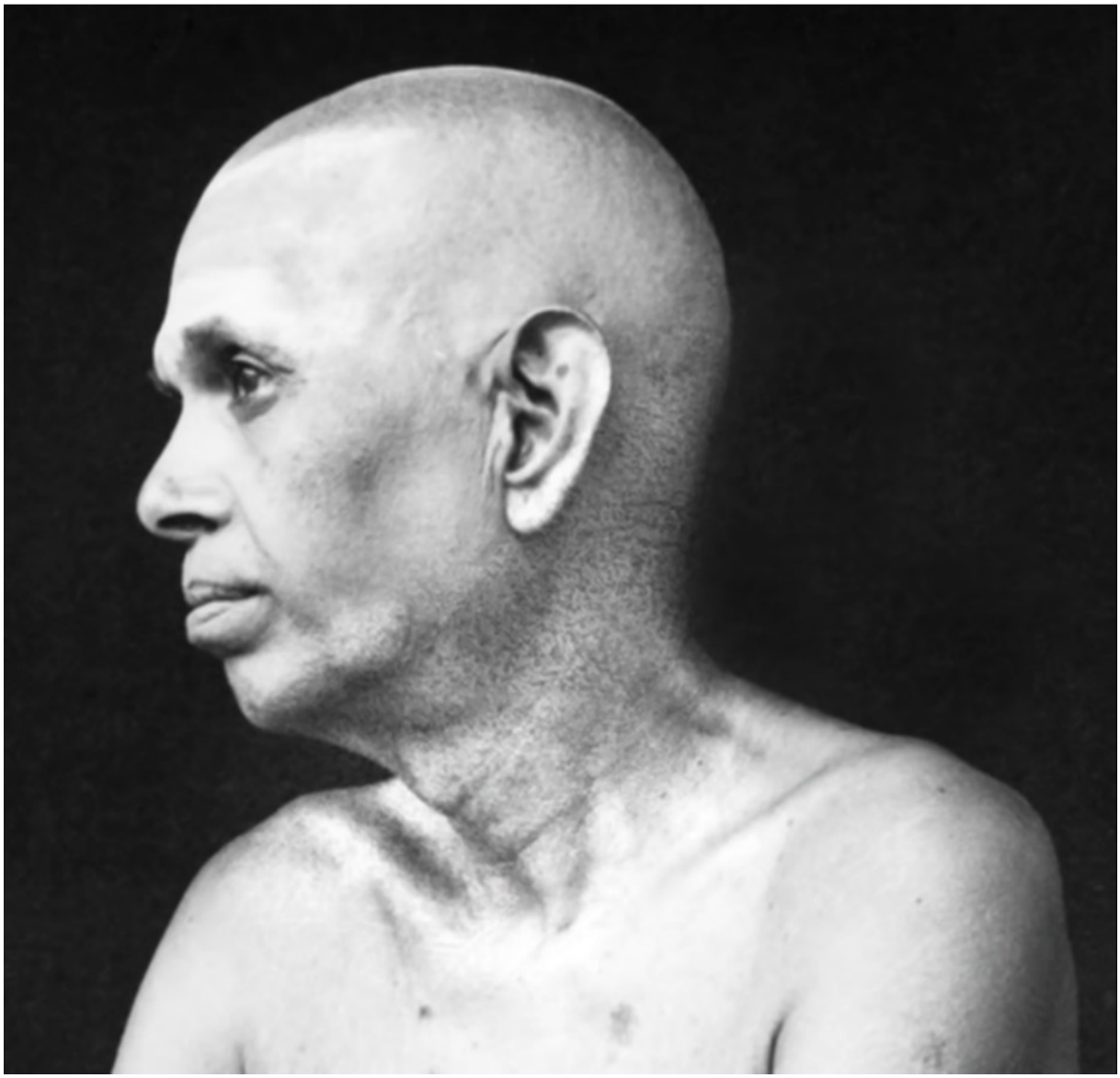
What is Bliss but your own Being?
You are not apart from Being
which is the same as Bliss.
You are now thinking
that you are the mind or the body
which are both changing and transient.
But you are unchanging and eternal.
That is what you should know.



We are so engrossed
with the objects or appearances
revealed by the light
that we pay no attention
to the light.

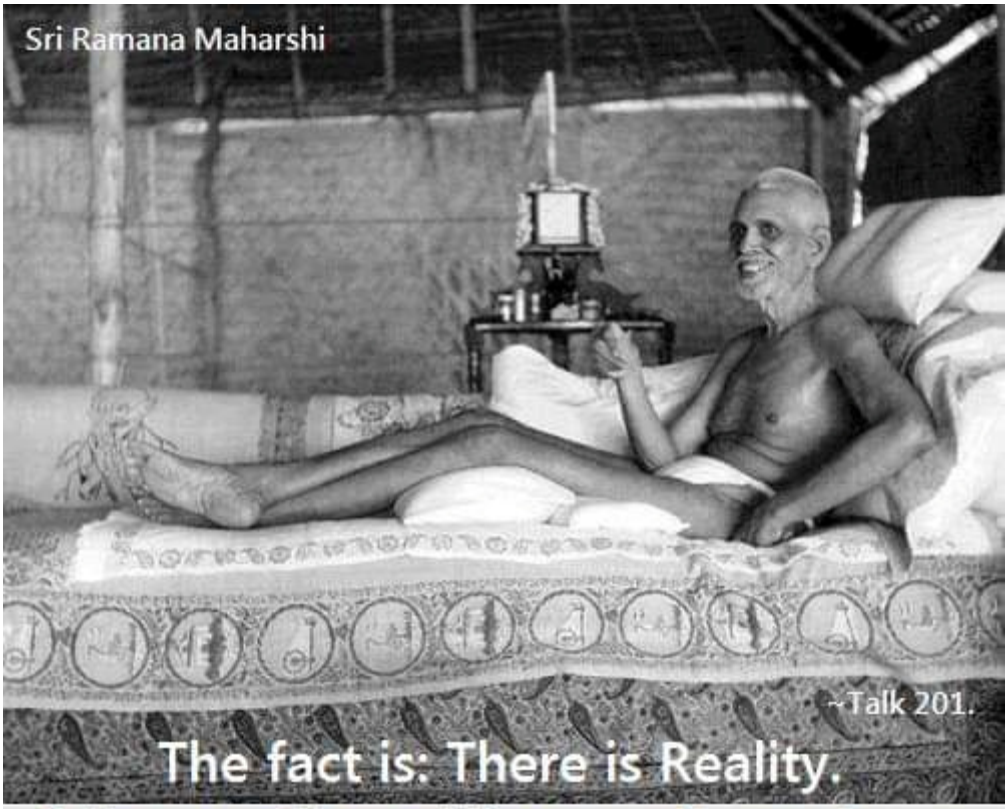
Concentrate on the seer and not on the seen,
not on the objects, but on the light which reveals them.
All that you see is false and the seer alone is true.

Oh miserable and extroverted people,
failing to see the seer, you see only the seen!
To dissolve duality
by turning inwards instead of outwards
is alone blissful.

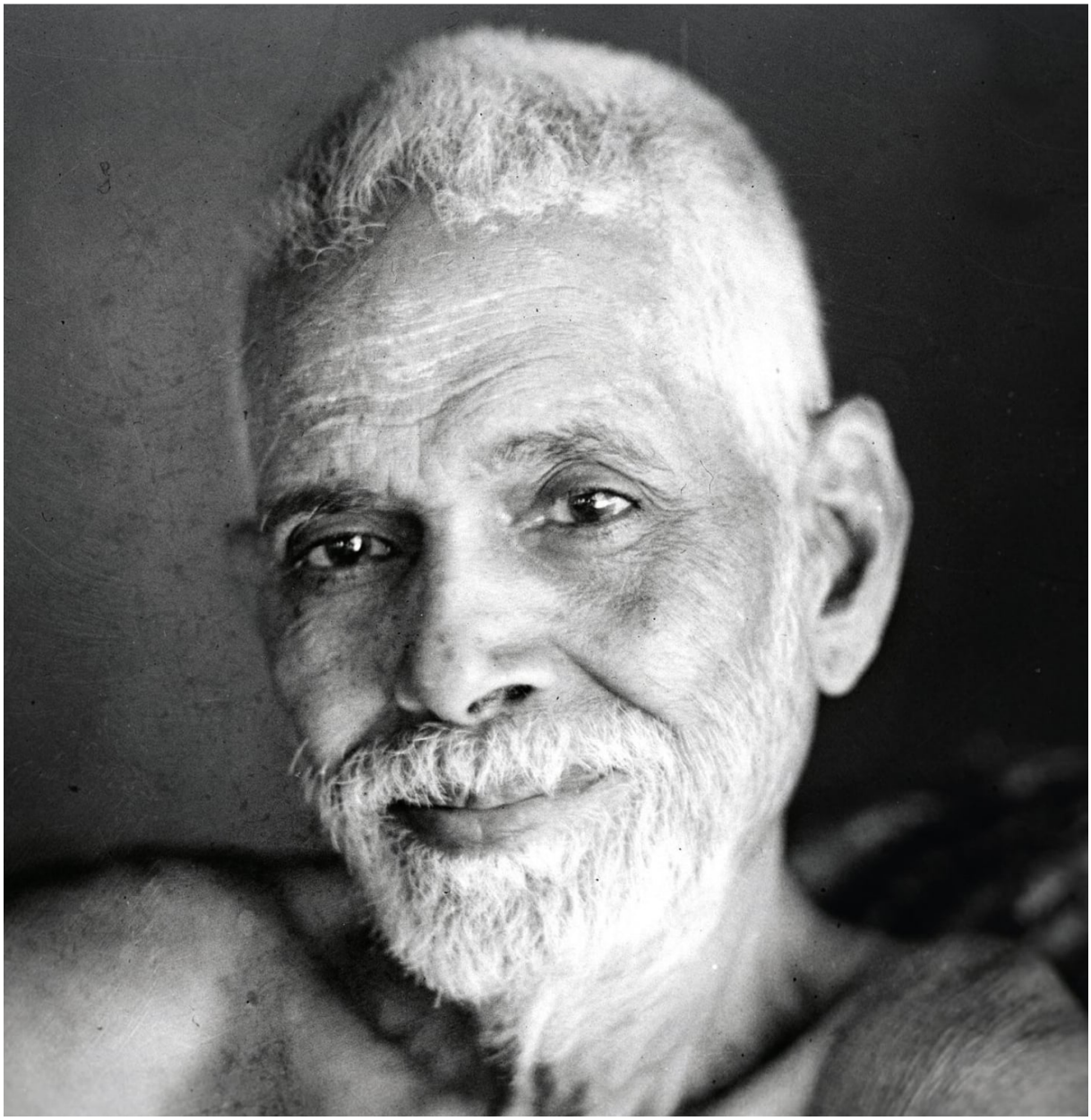


The Self is the one Reality that always exists,
and it is by the light of the Self
that all other things are seen.

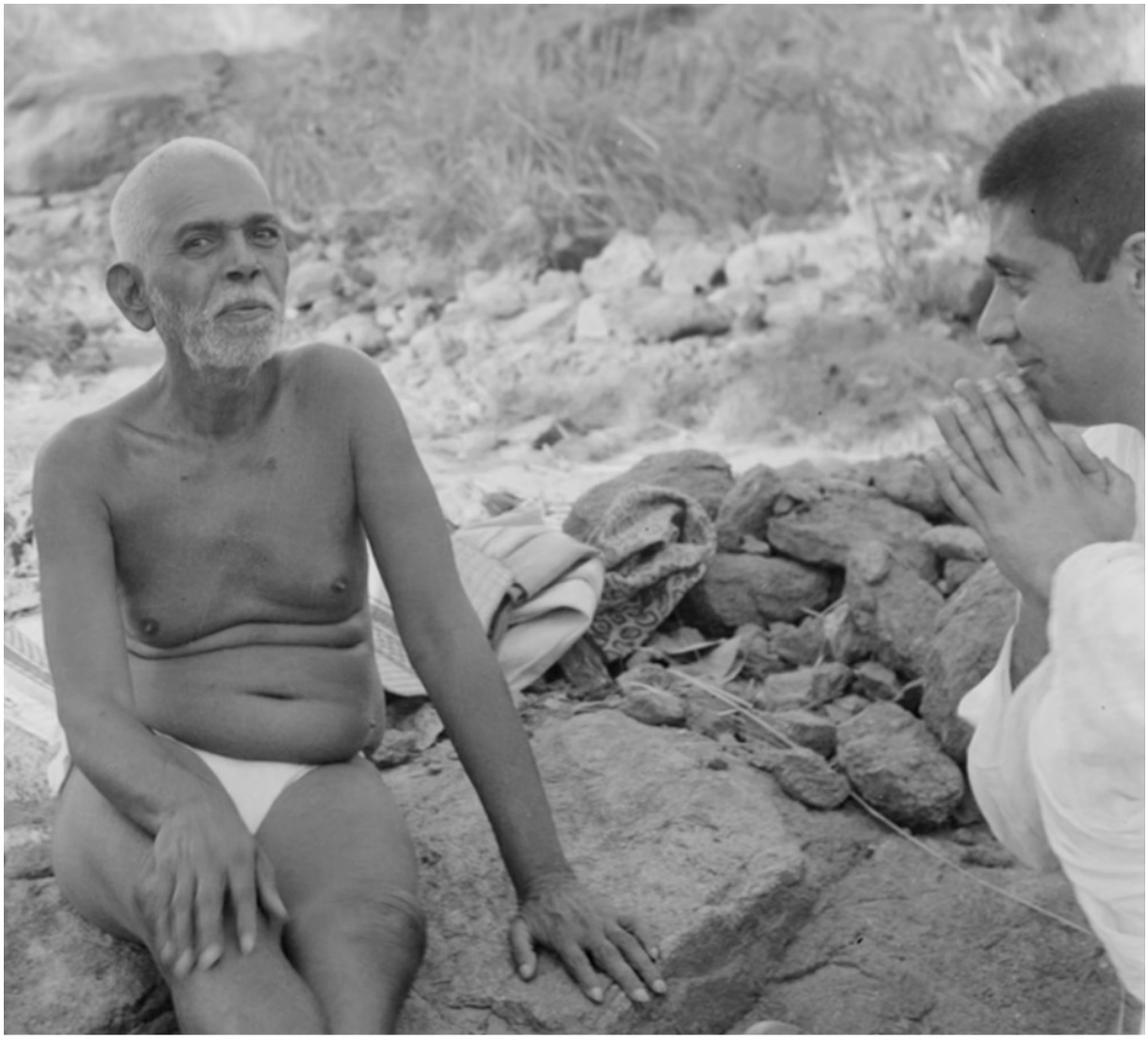
All metaphysical discussion is profitless unless it causes us to seek within the Self for the true reality. All controversies about creation, the nature of the universe, evolution, the purpose of God, etc., are useless. They are not conducive to our true happiness. People try to find out about things which are outside of them before they try to find out 'Who am I?' Only by the latter means can happiness be gained.



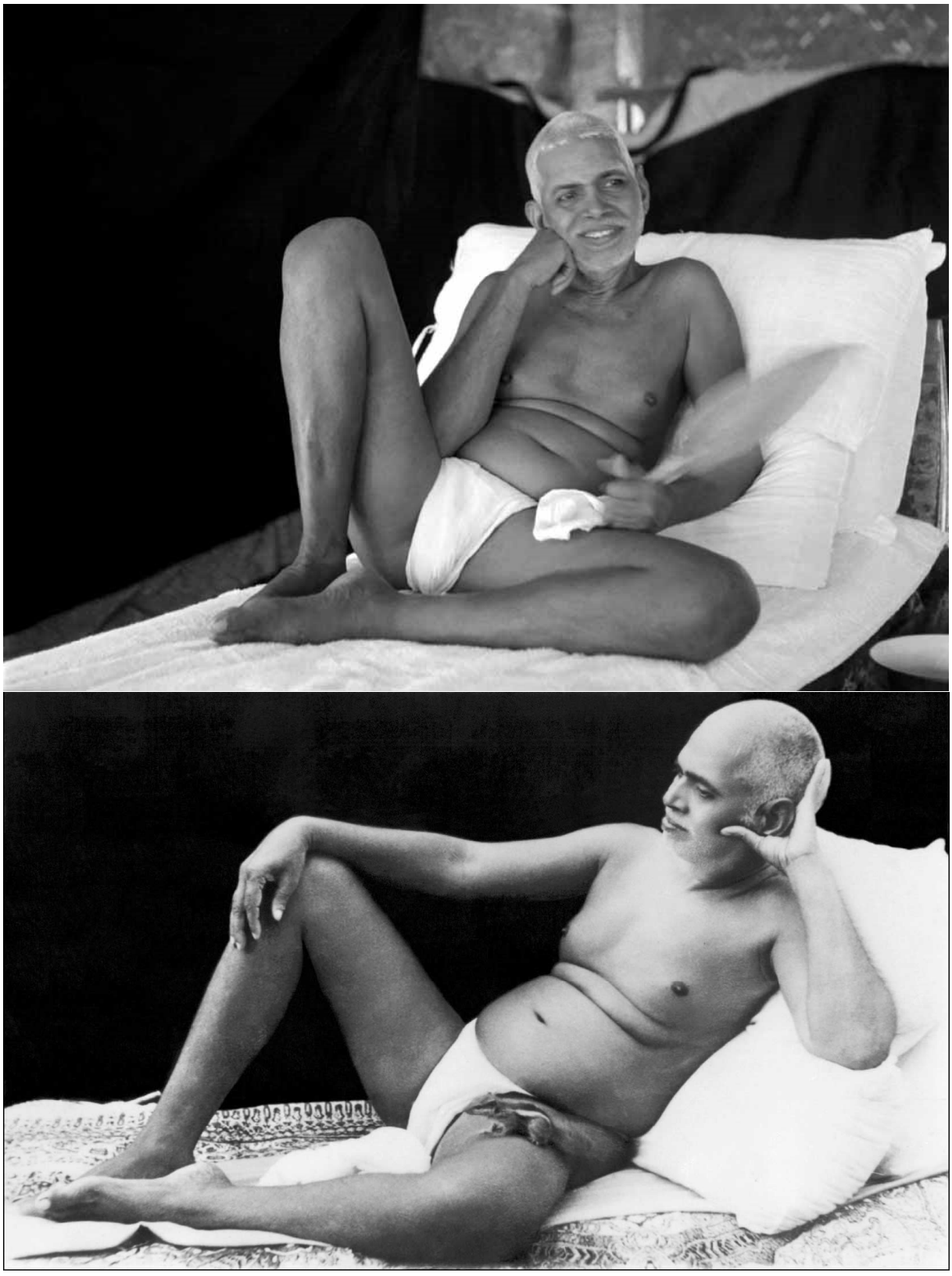
Sense-perceptions
can only be indirect knowledge
and not direct knowledge.
Only one's own awareness
is direct knowledge.



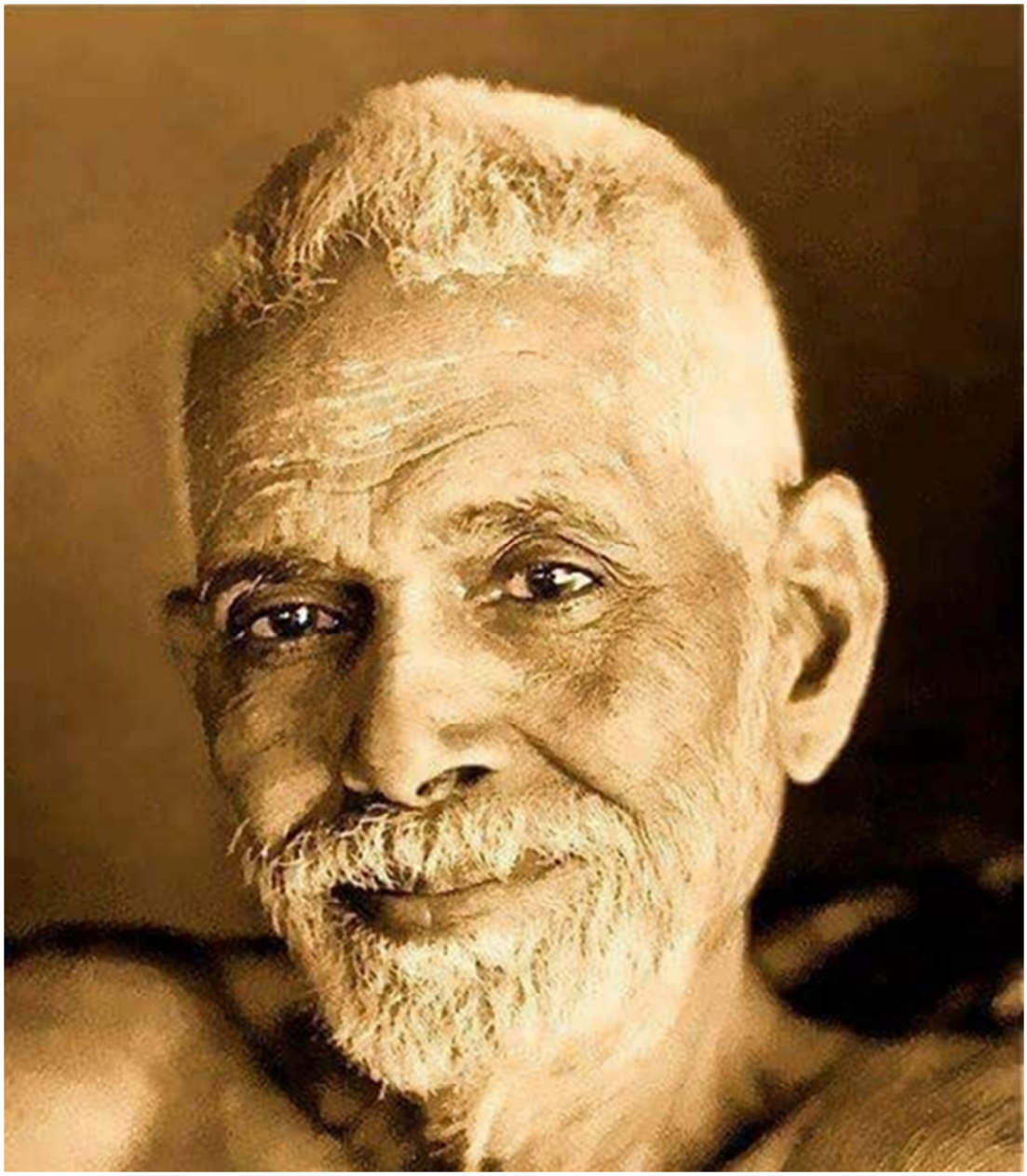
Fortunate is the man
who does not lose himself
in the labyrinths of philosophy,
but goes straight to the source
from which they all rise.



There can be satisfaction
only when you reach the source;
otherwise, there will be restlessness.

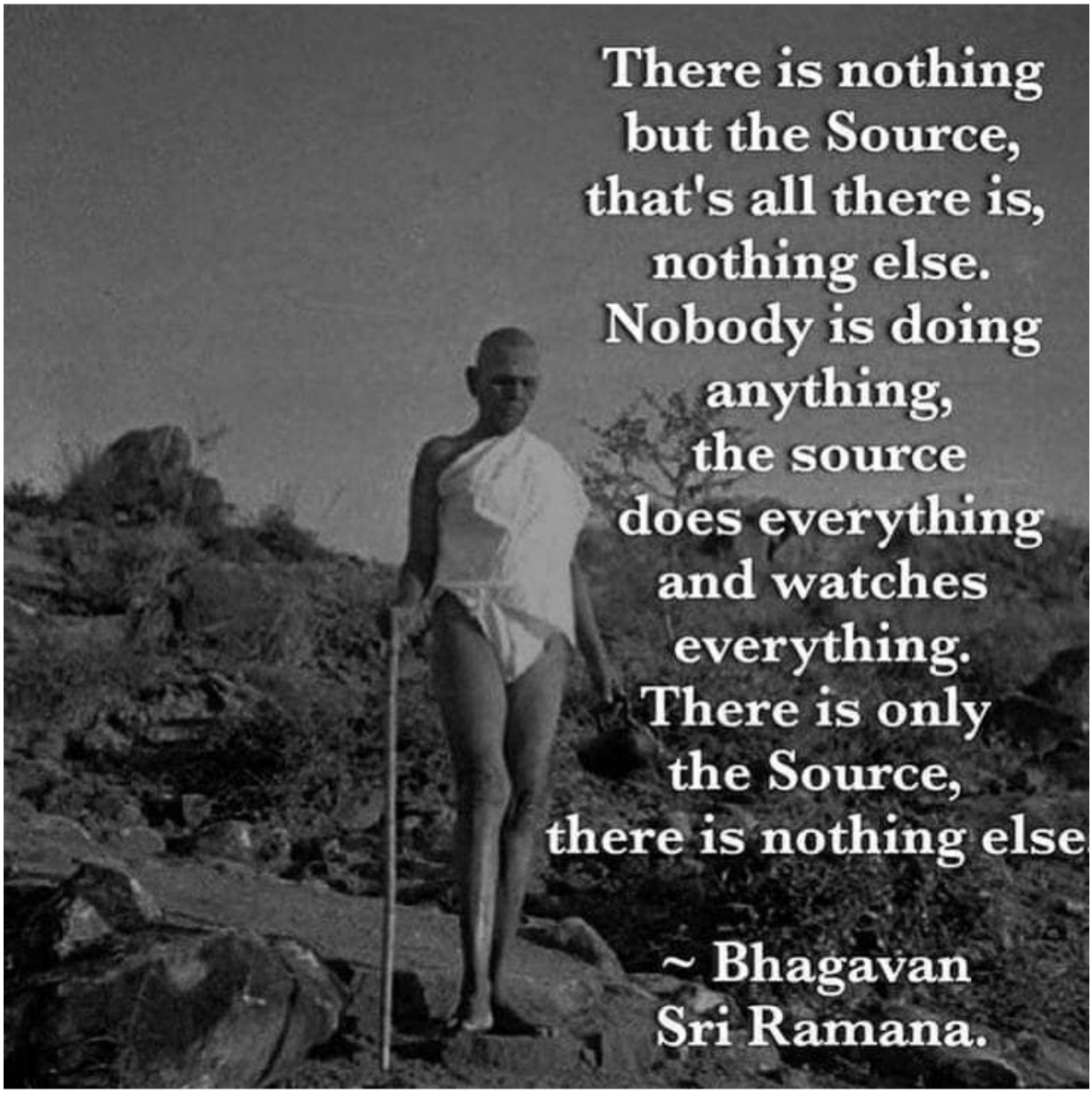


Trace the ego to its origin,
and you will reach that undifferentiated happy Source,
a state which is sleepless sleep.
The Self is ever there.
The Self remains ever the same, here and now.
There is nothing more to be gained.
Because the limitations have wrongly been assumed
there is the need to transcend them.

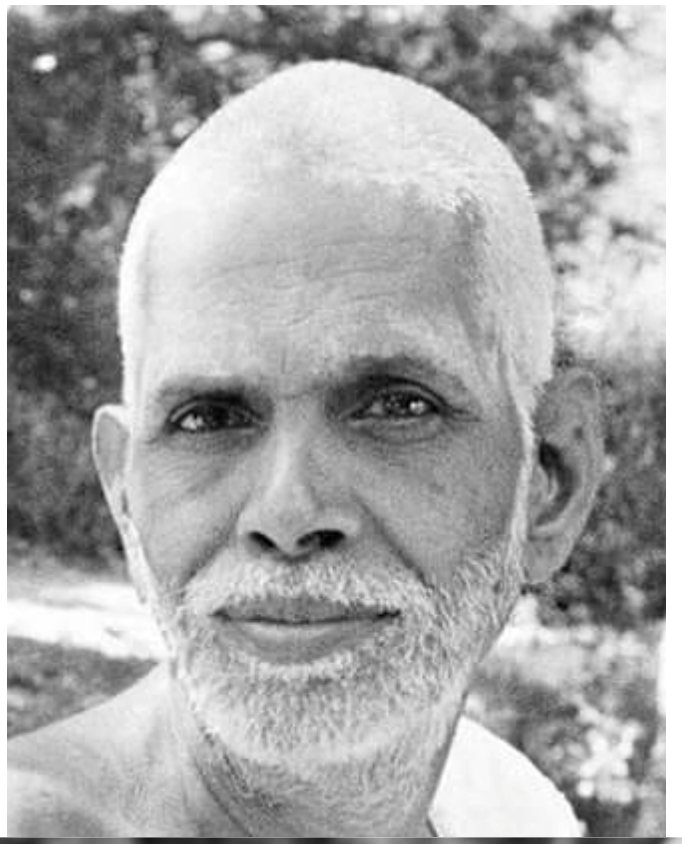


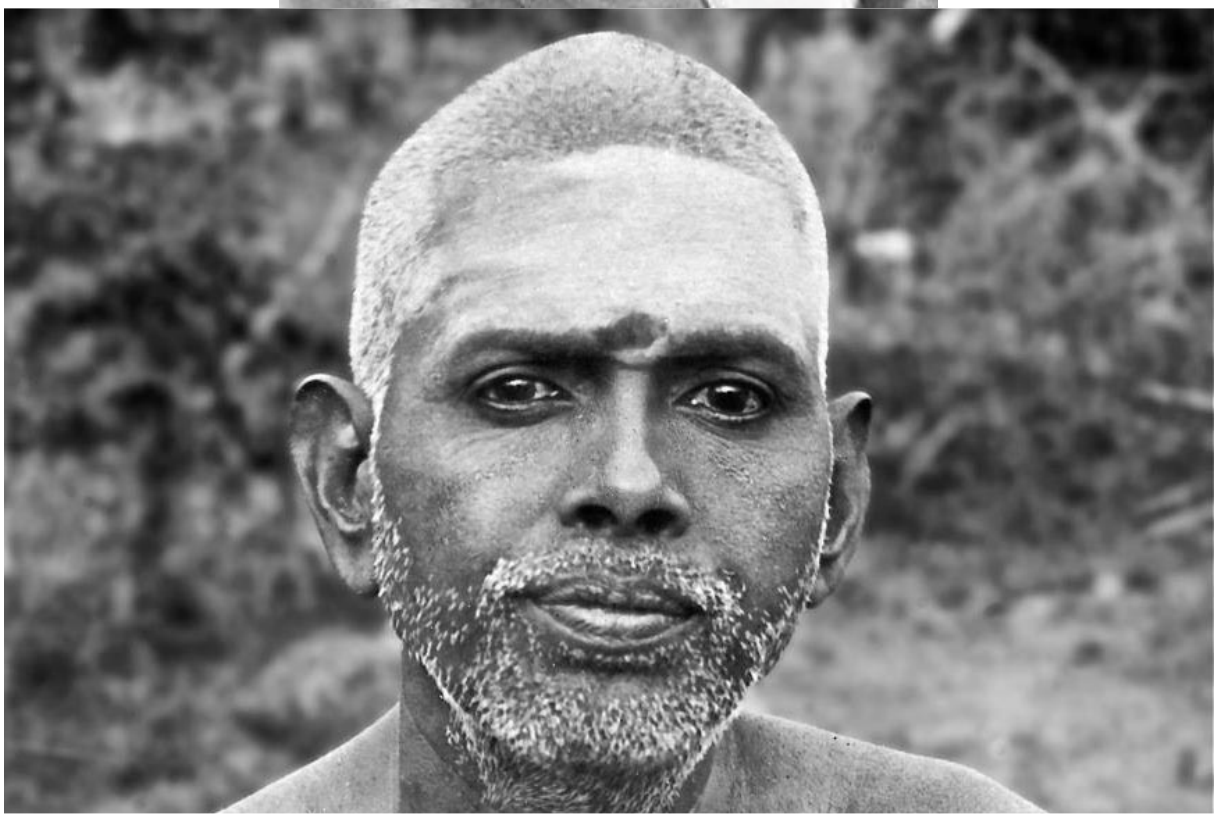
Satisfaction can only be
when the ego mind
merges at the Source,
the Self;
For the Self is
Imperishable, Perfect.
It is always as it is.

Everything is the Self.
There is nothing but that.
So the Heart must be said
to be the entire body of ourselves
and of the entire universe, conceived as 'I'.

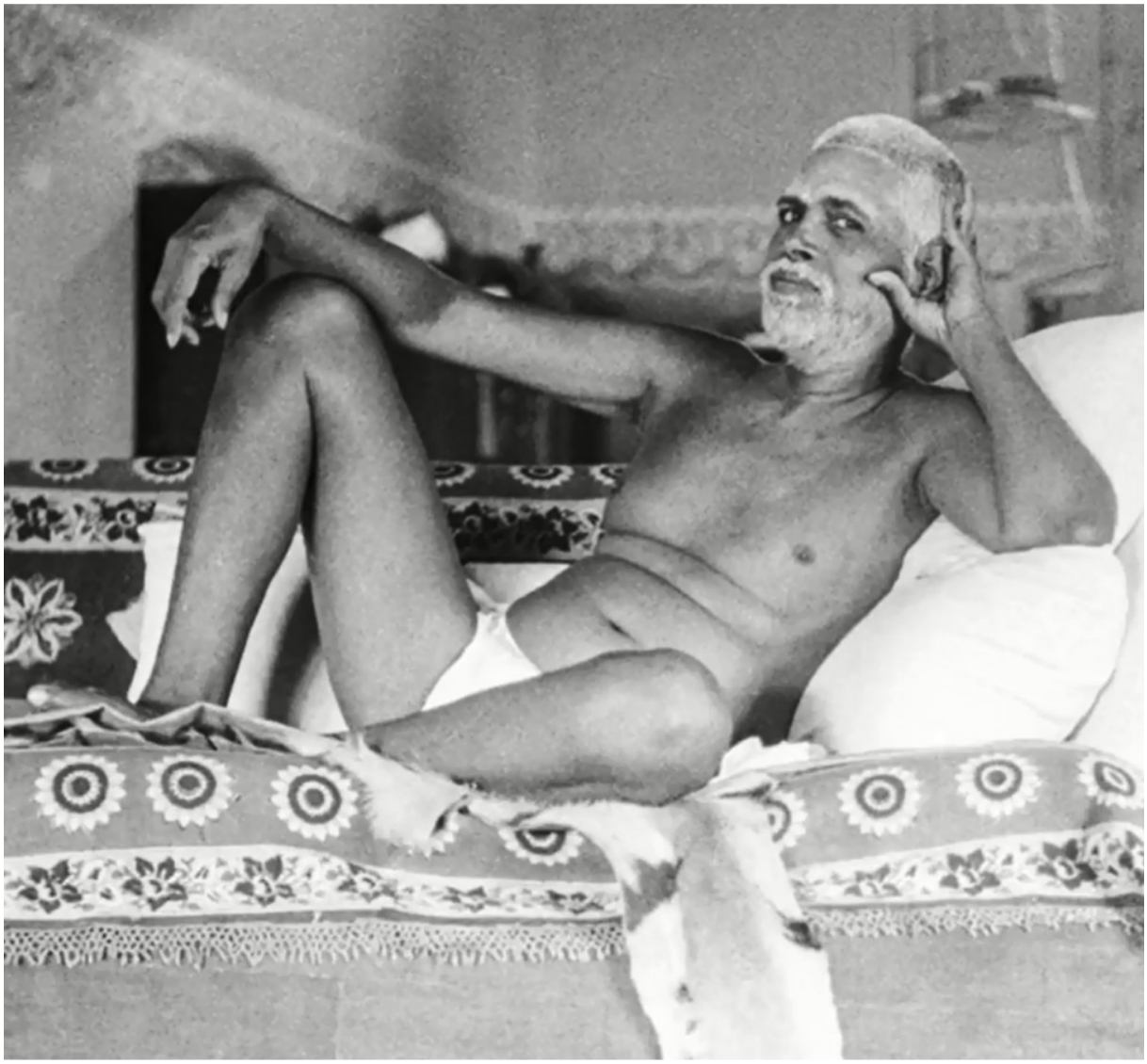


You impose limits on yourself.
Then you get displeased to be only a limited creature. Then you begin spiritual practices to transcend these non-existing limits.

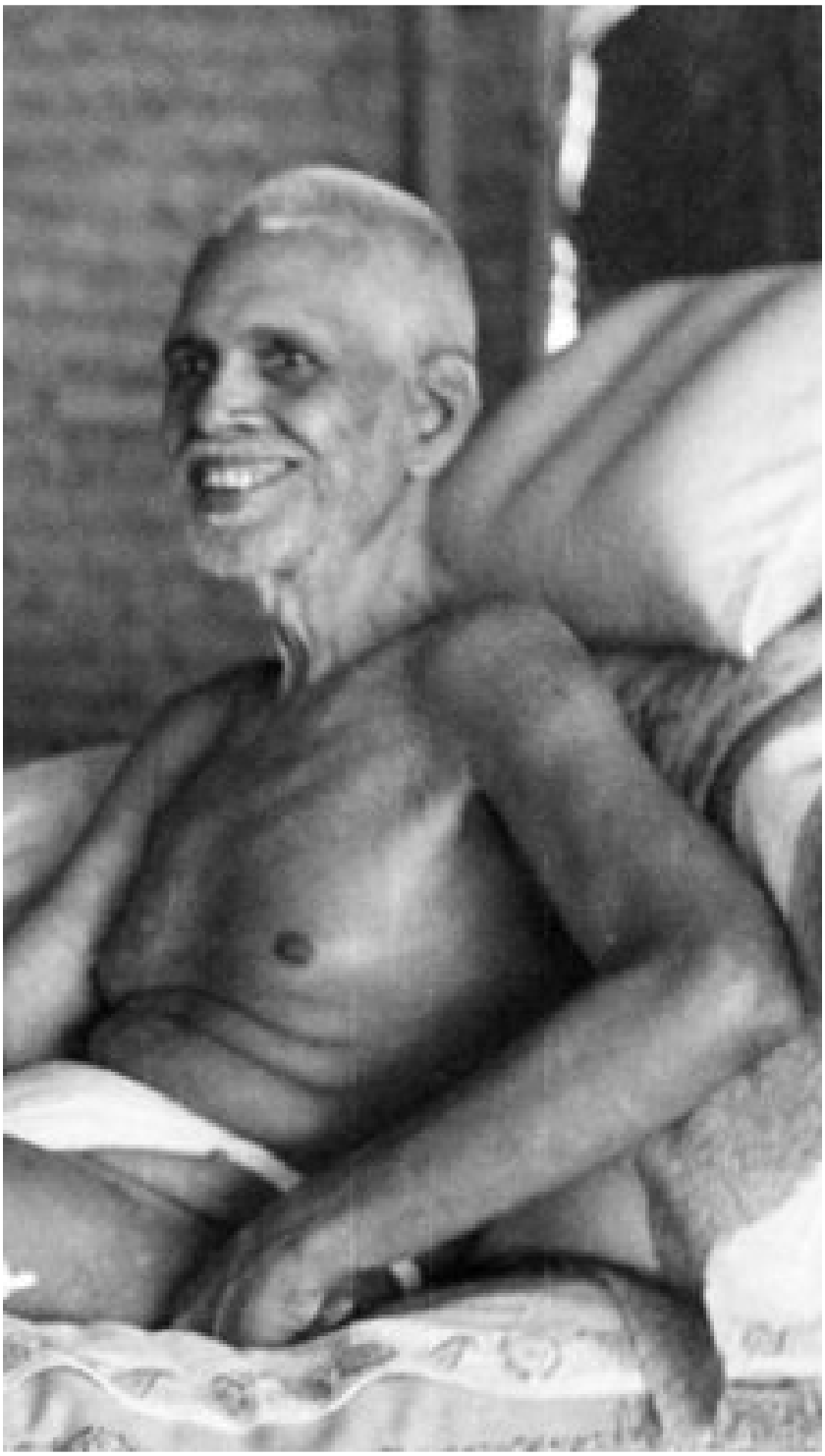




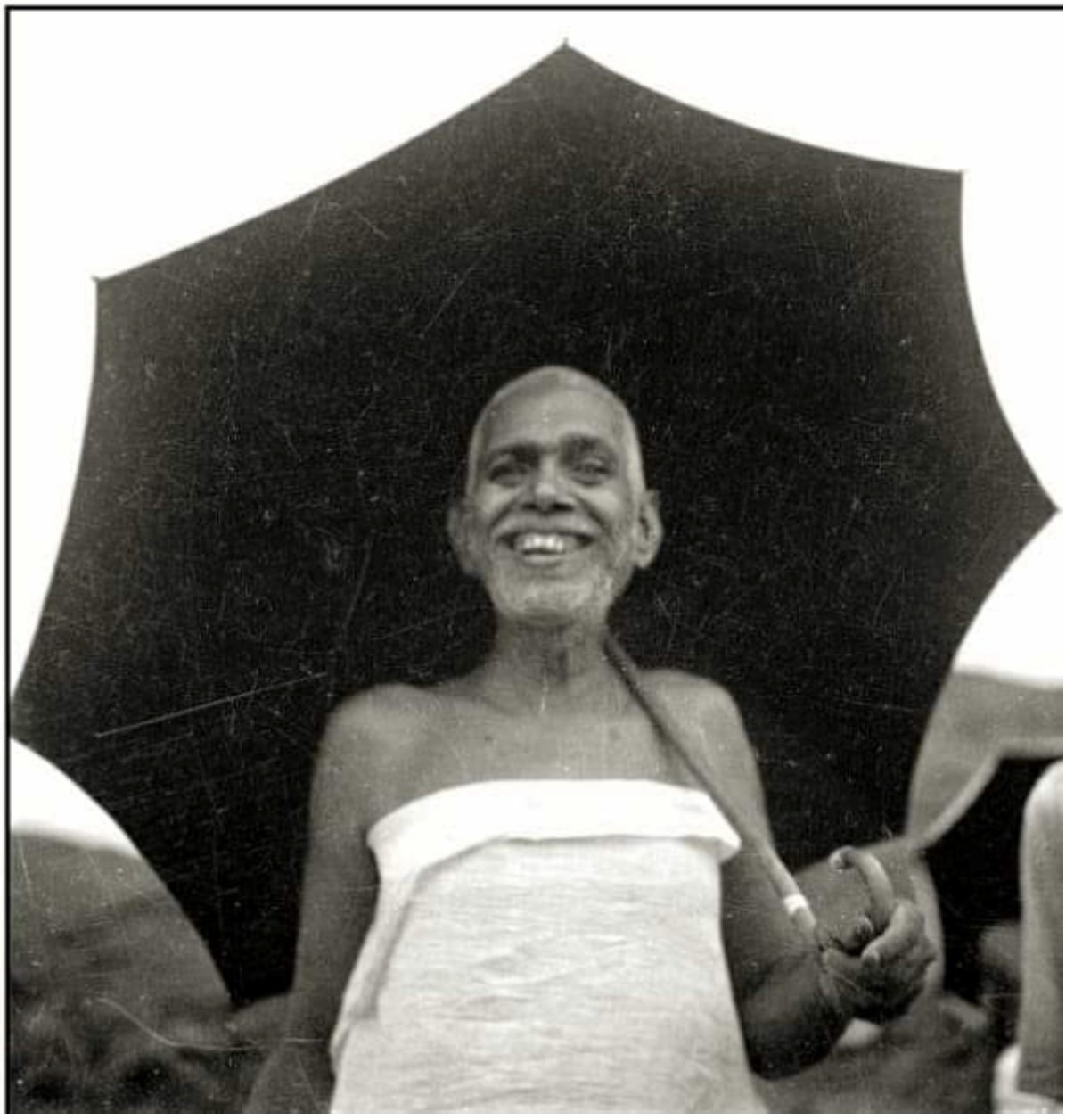
You yourself impose limitations
on your true nature of Infinite Being
and then weep that you are but a finite creature.
You only need to give up the false idea 'I am the body'.



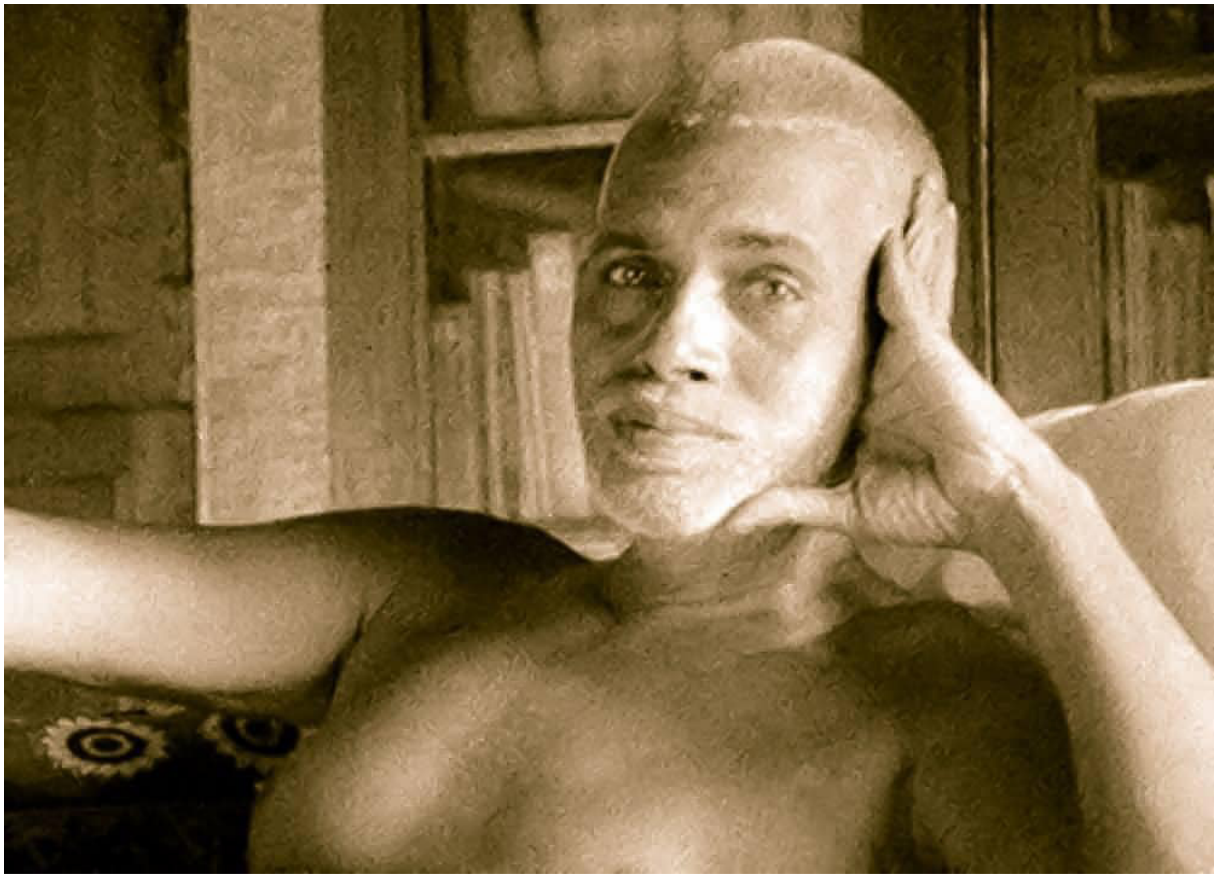
You are the Supreme Being,
and yet thinking yourself
to be separate from it,
you strive to become united with it.
What is stranger than this?



There is no greater mystery than this, that we keep seeking reality though in fact we are reality. We think that there is something hiding reality and that this must be destroyed before reality is gained. How ridiculous! A day will dawn when you will laugh at all your past efforts. What you realize on the day you laugh is also here and now.



Reality is simply the 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. You and I are the same. What I have done is surely possible for all. You are the Self now and can never be anything else. Throw your worries to the wind, turn within and find Peace. We loosely talk of Self-realization, for lack of a better term. But how can one realize or make real that which alone is real? All we need to do is to give up our habit of regarding as real that which is unreal. All religious practices are meant solely to help us do this. When we stop regarding the unreal as real, then reality alone will remain, and we will be that.



Q: Is it possible for everyone to know directly,
without doubt, what exactly is one's true nature?

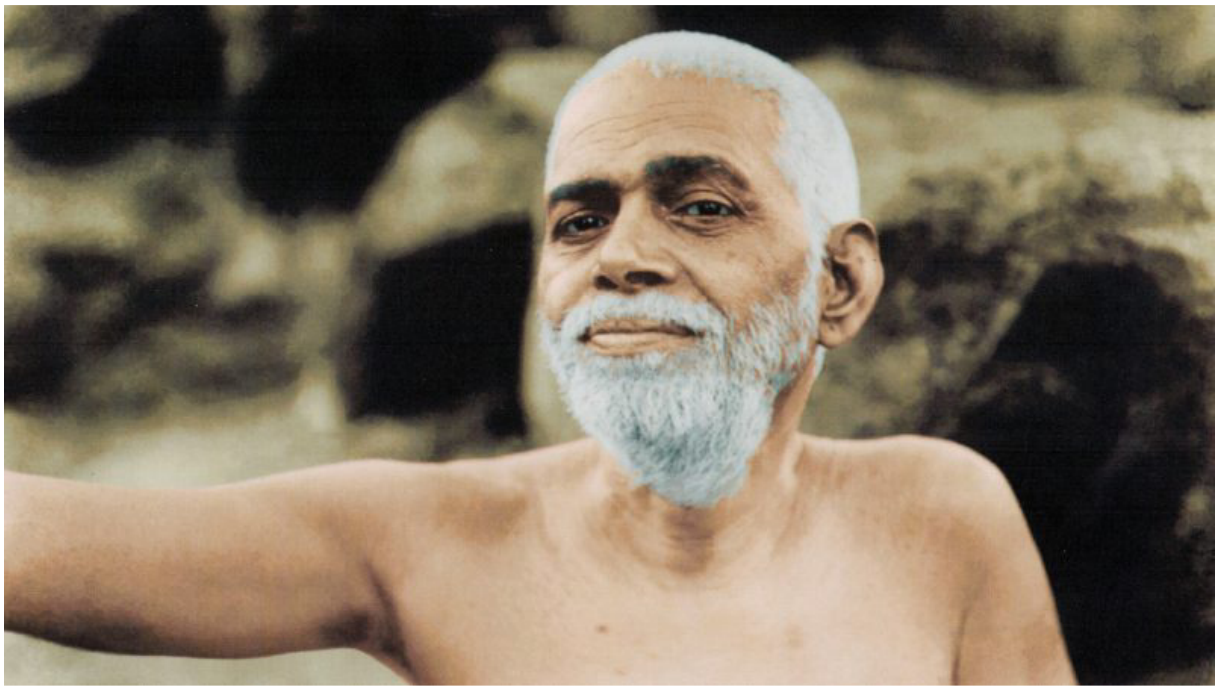
RM: Undoubtedly it is possible.

Q: How?

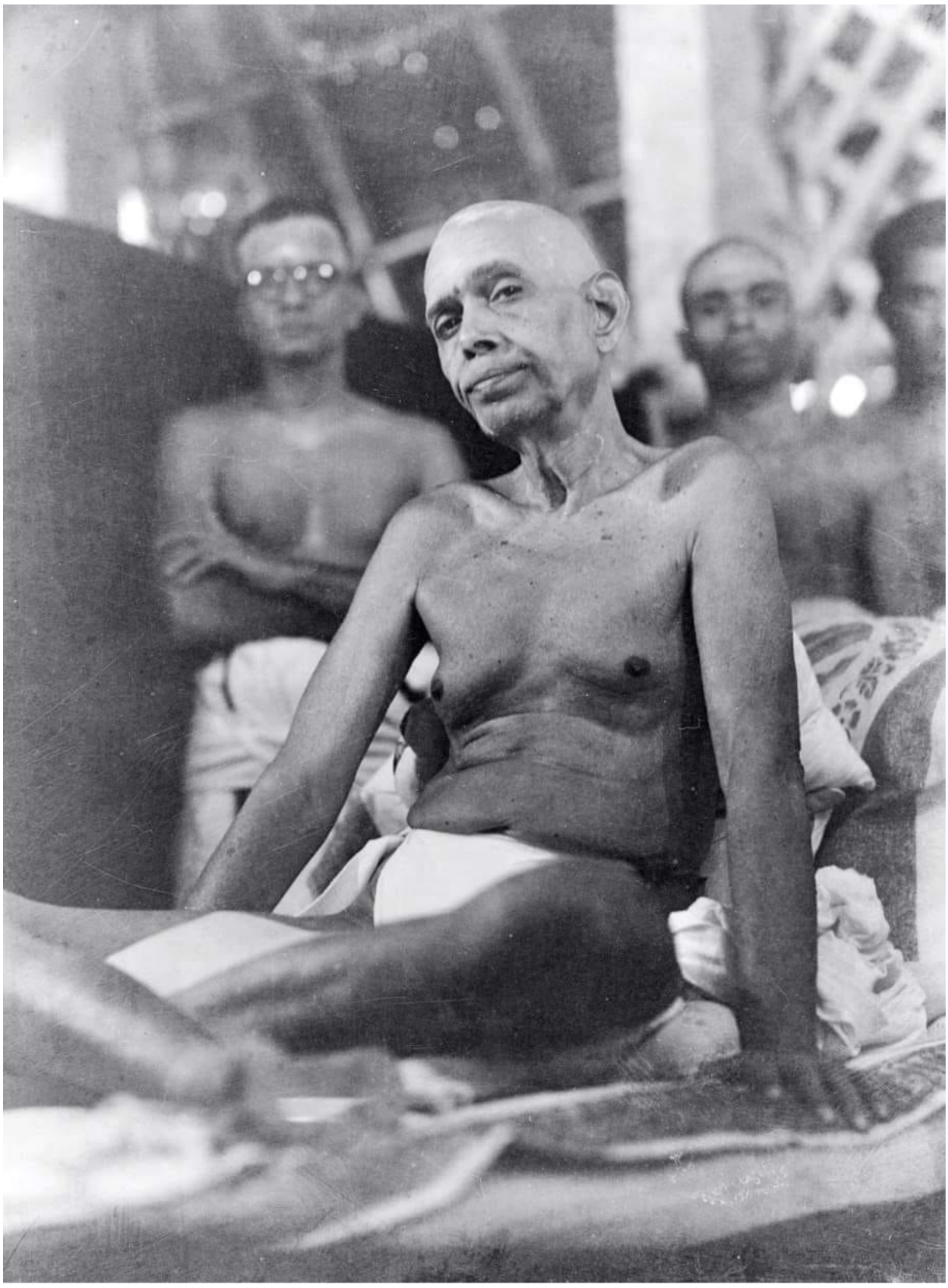
RM:

It is the experience of everyone that even in the states of deep sleep, fainting, etc., when the entire universe, moving and stationary, beginning with earth and ending with the unmanifested, disappear, he does not disappear.

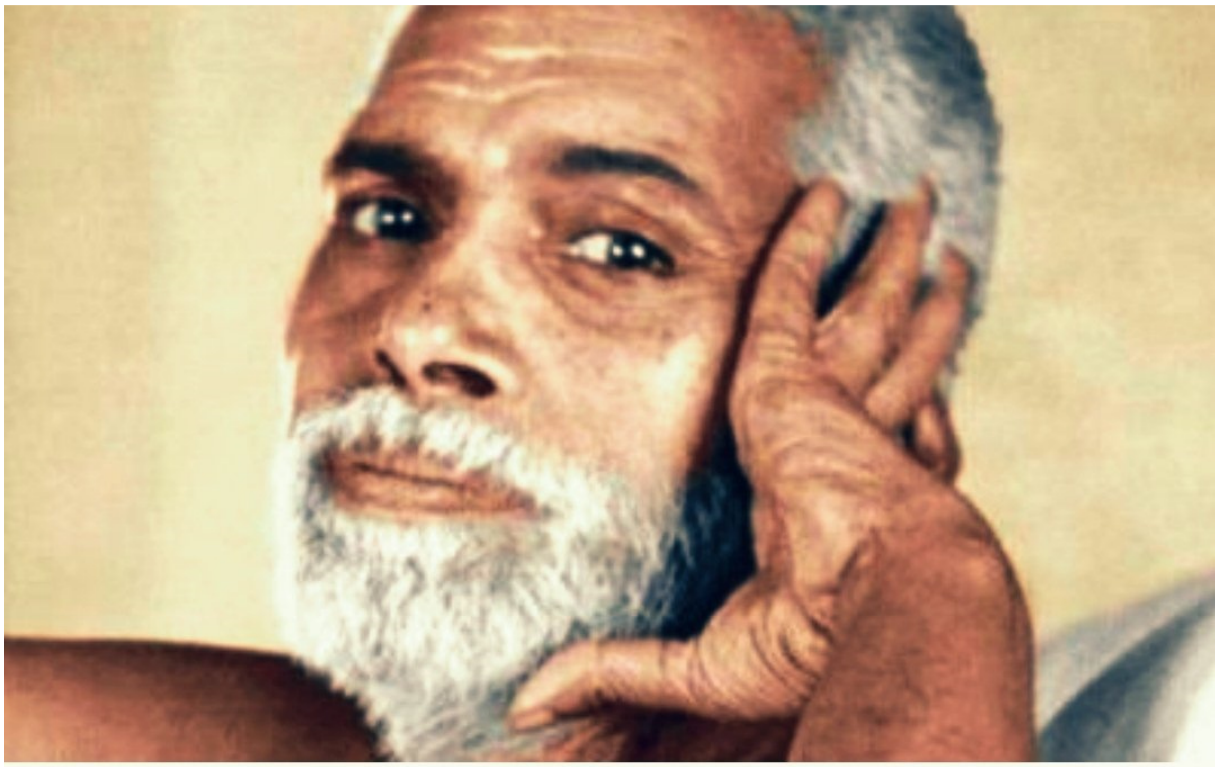
Therefore, the state of pure being, which is common to all and which is always experienced directly by everybody, is one's true nature. The conclusion is that all experiences in the enlightened as well as the ignorant state, which may be described by newer and newer words, are opposed to one's real nature.



I see only what you see,
but I notice what I see.



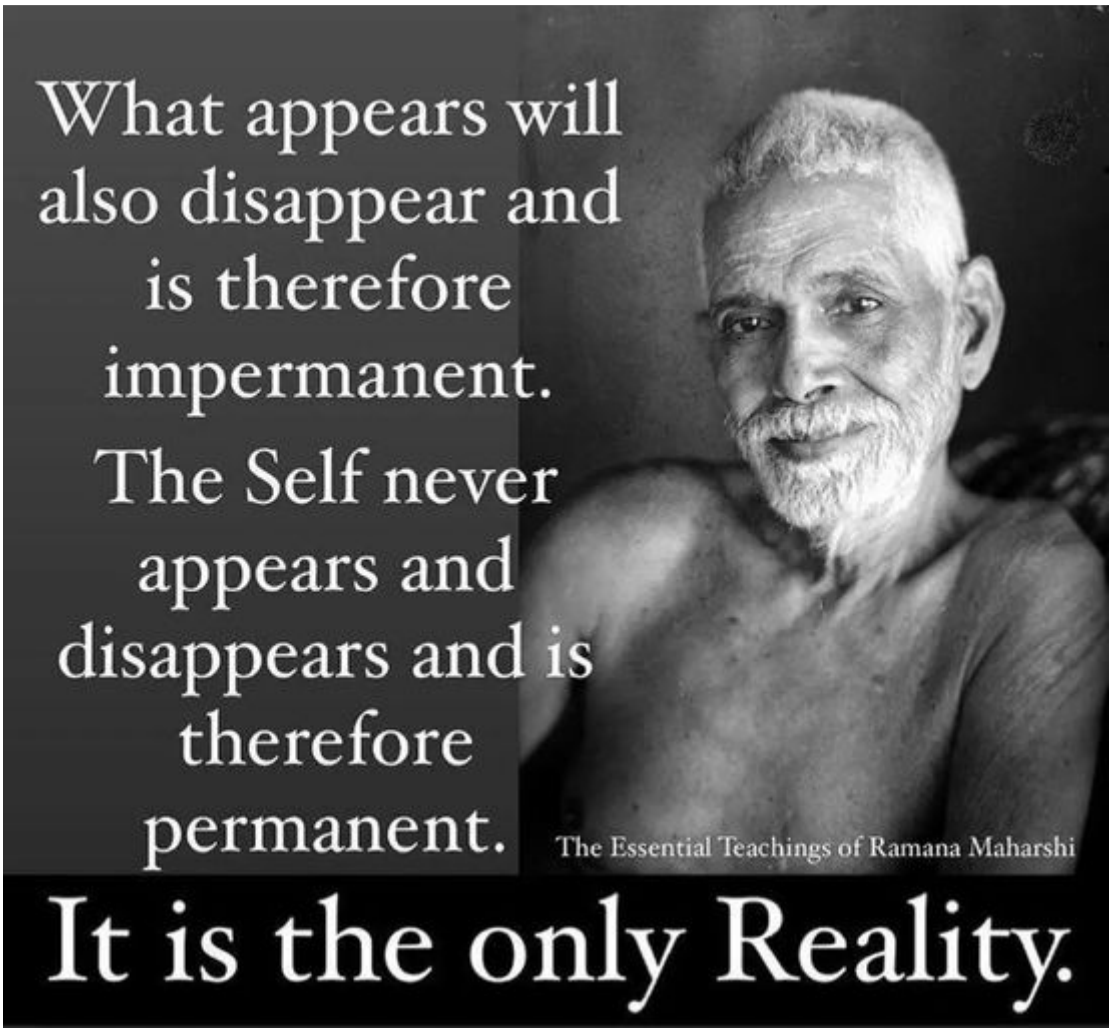
If the seer [the ego] and the seen [the world]
were different in their reality,
the act of seeing would never be possible.
But since seeing is possible,
know that they [the seer and the seen]
have one and the same reality.



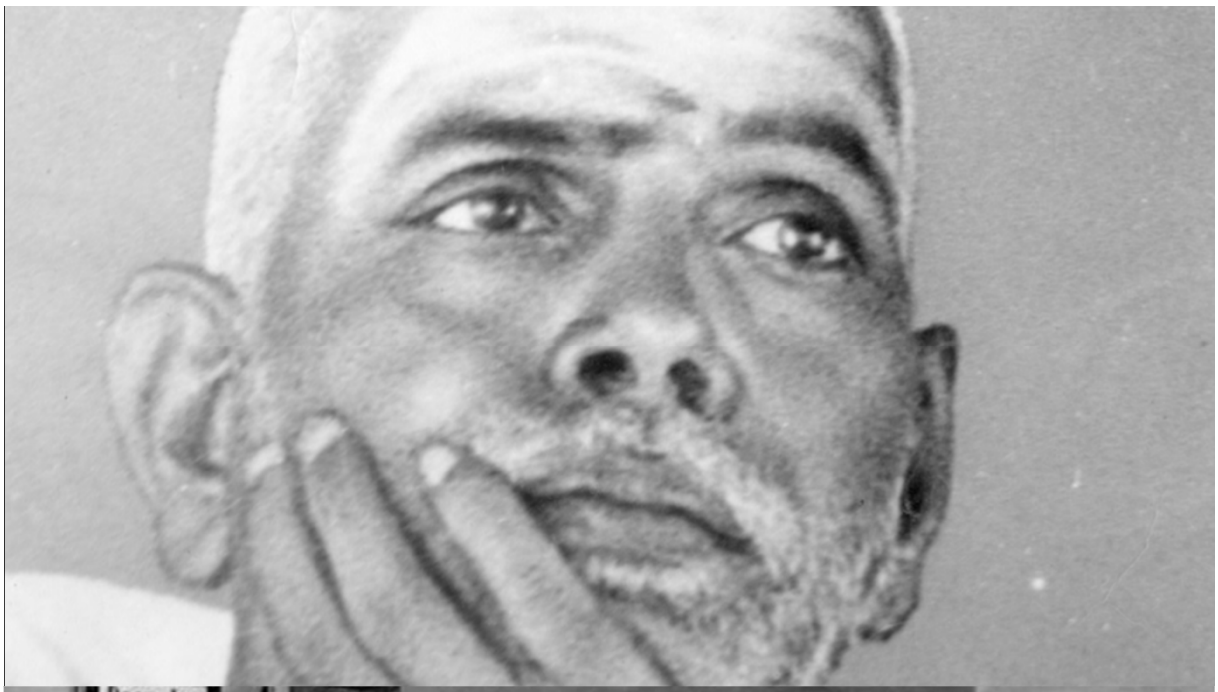
See with the physical eye, and
you see the world. See with the
eye of realisation, everything
appears as the Self.

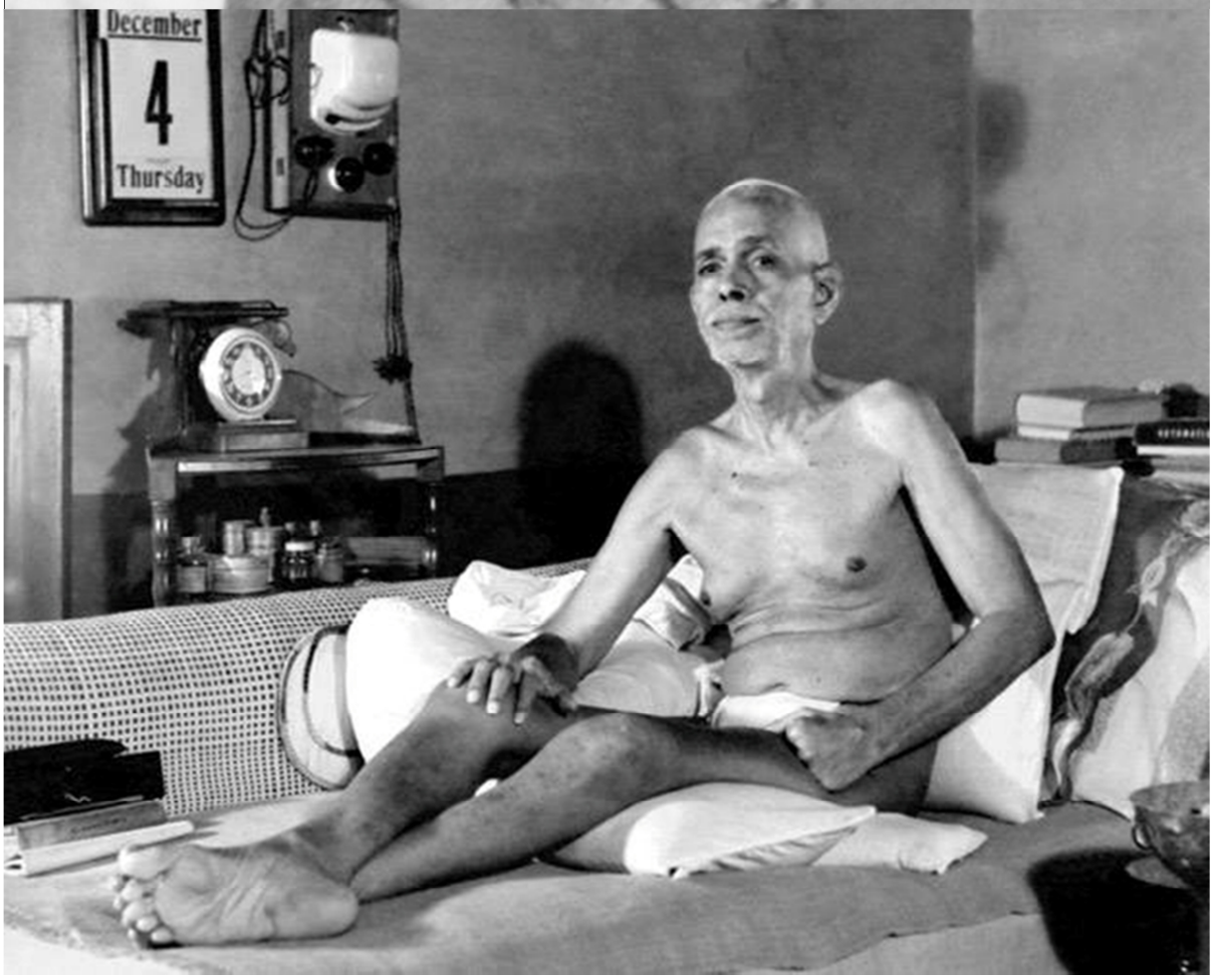
Sri Ramana Maharshi

There is no reaching the Self.
If it were to be reached,
it would mean that the Self is not here and now,
but would have to be gained.
What is got afresh, will also be lost.
So it will be impermanent.
What is not permanent is not worth striving for.
So I say the Self is not reached.
You are the Self. You are already That.

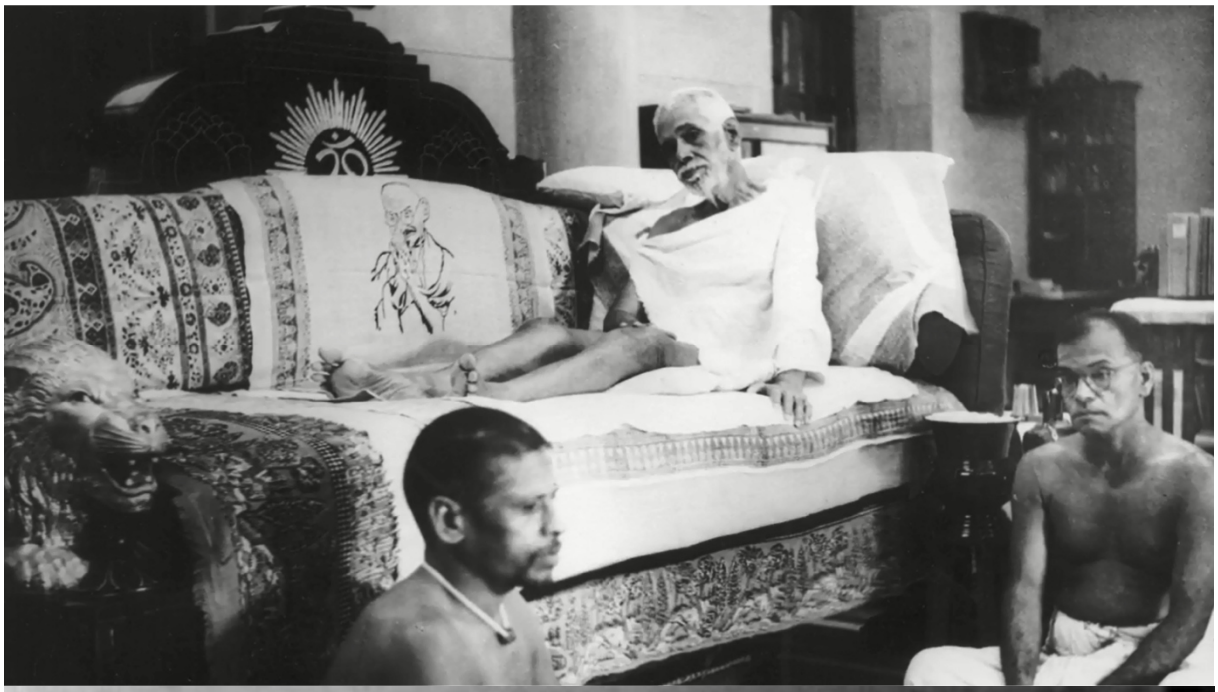


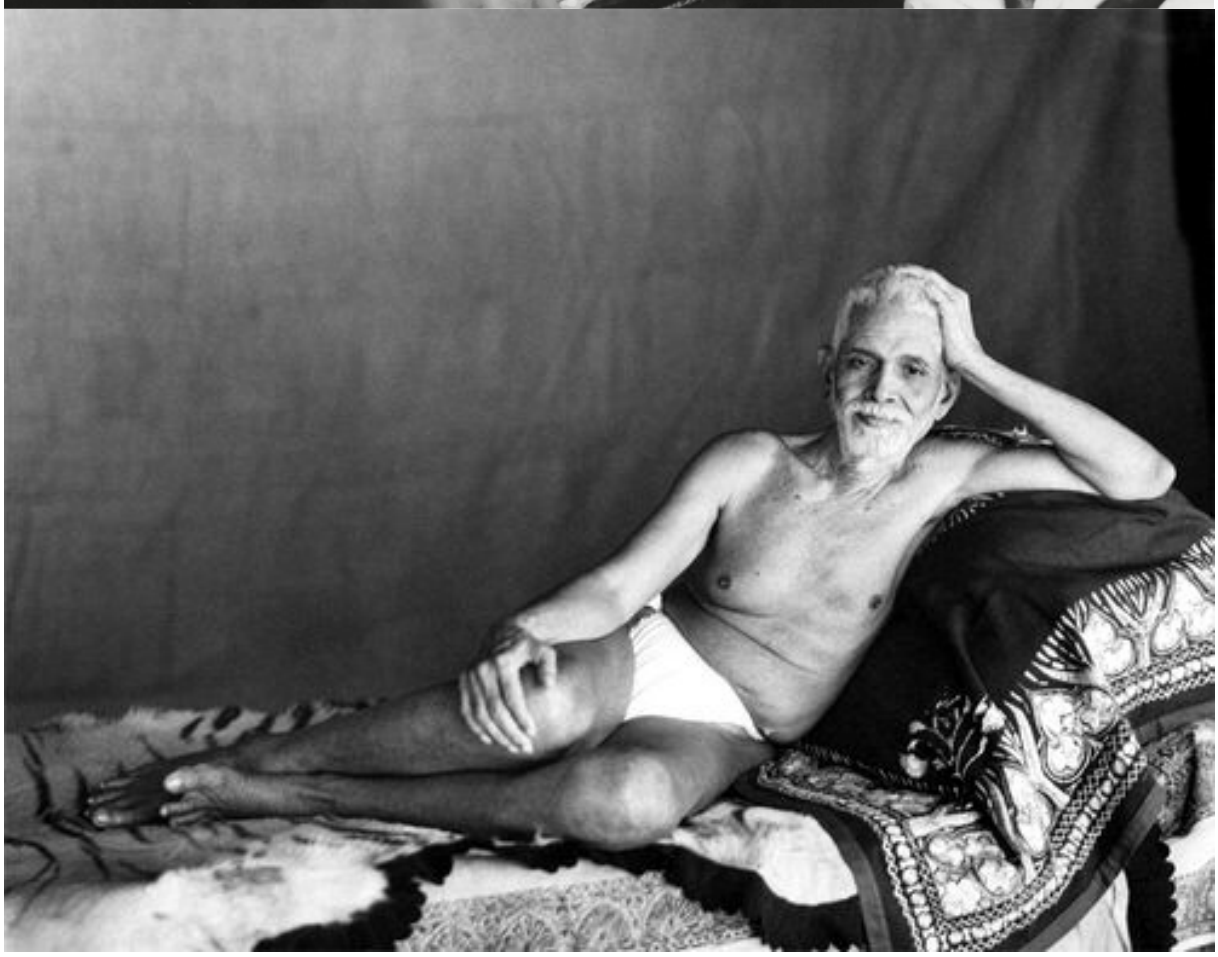
The question 'Who am I?' is not really meant to get an answer.
The question 'Who am I?' is meant to dissolve the questioner.



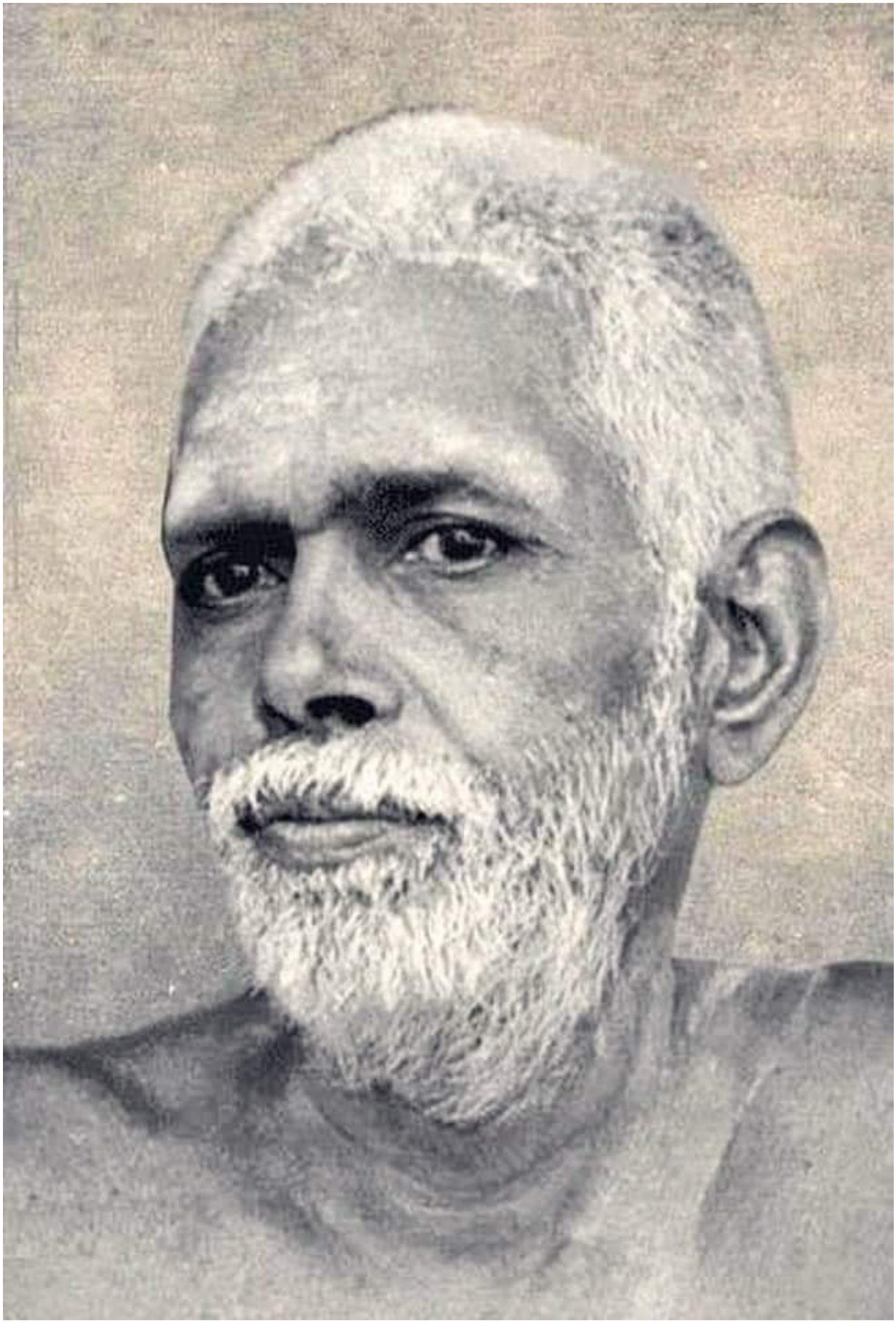


You have to ask yourself the question 'Who am I?'
This investigation will lead in the end to the discovery
of something within you which is behind the mind.
Solve that great problem and you will solve all other problems.

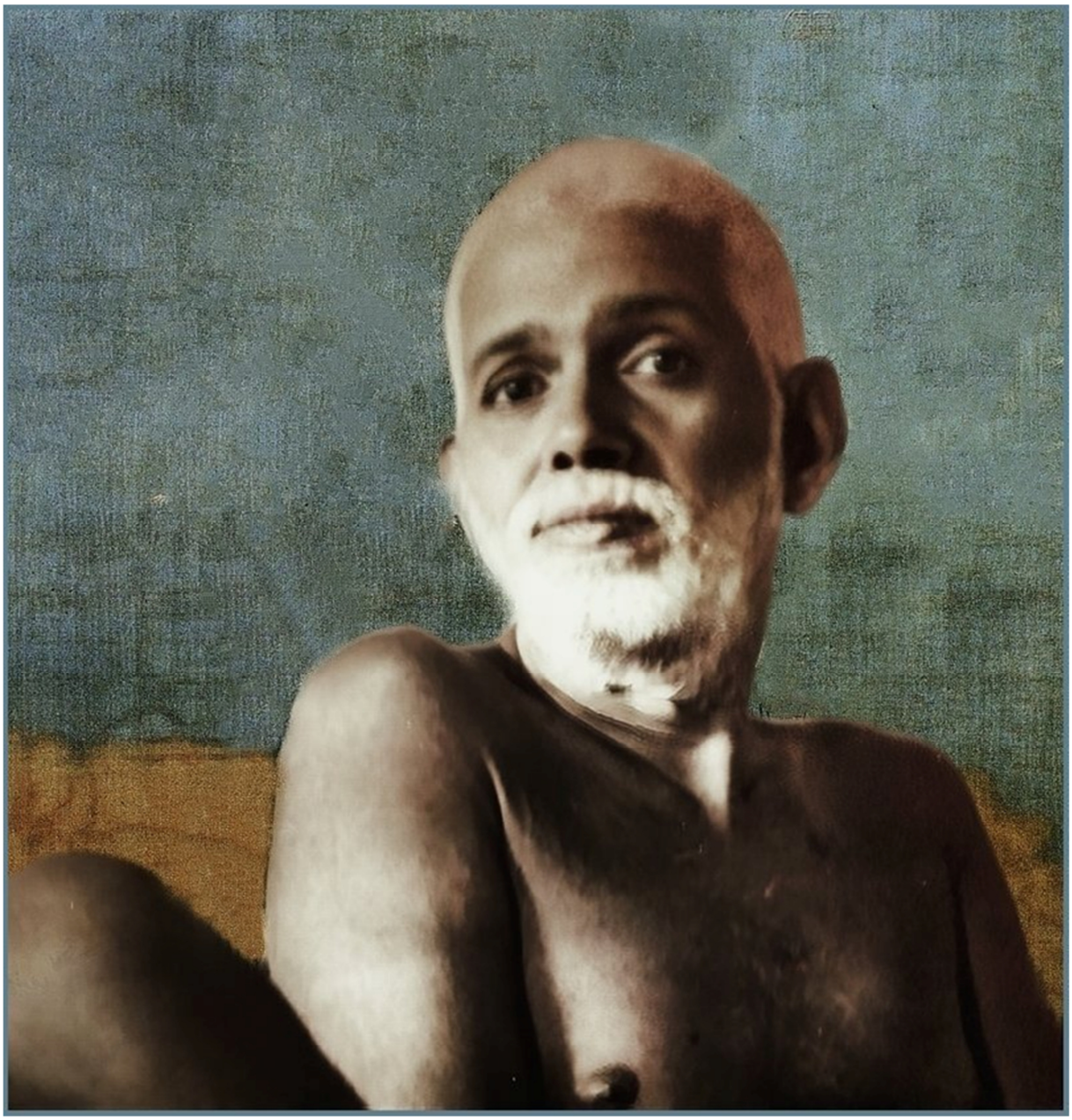




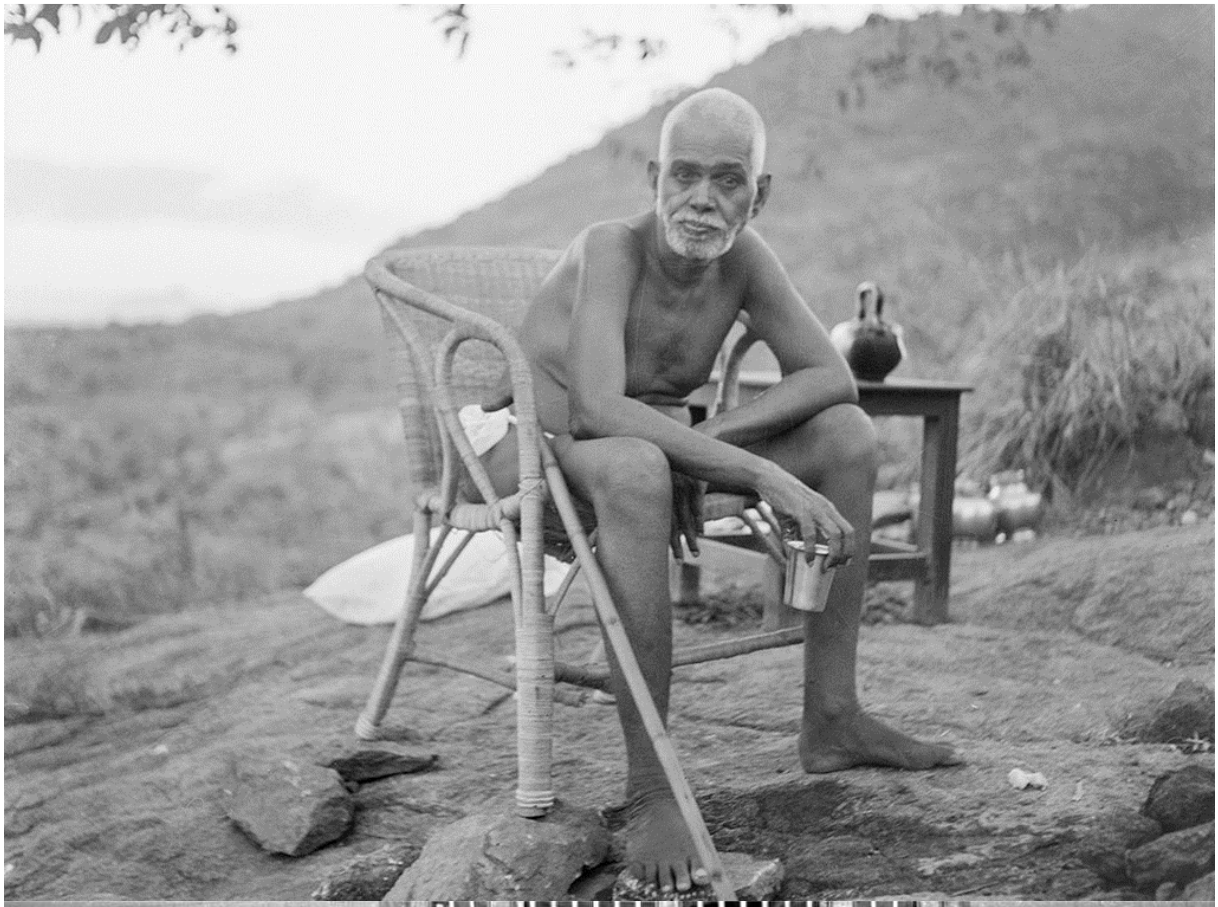
The solution to your problem is to see who has it.

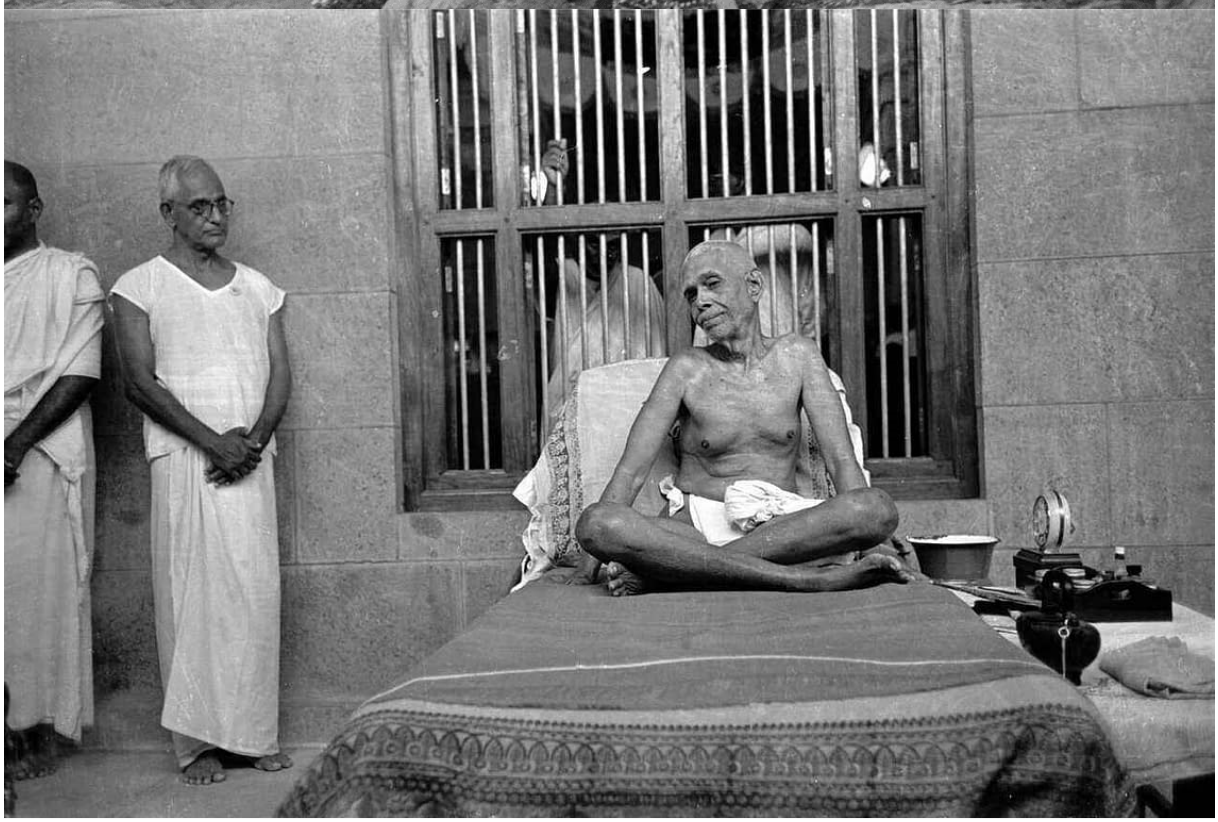


If you are calm, you will solve every problem. This is something you must remember. When you are perfectly calm, time stops. Everything becomes void. For when you are calm, you are one with the entire energy of the universe and everything will go well with you. To be calm means everything is alright. There is nothing to worry about. This is also the meaning of the biblical saying, "Be still and know that I am God." To be calm is to be still.



Calmness is the criterion of spiritual progress.
Plunge the purified mind into the Heart.
Then the work is over.

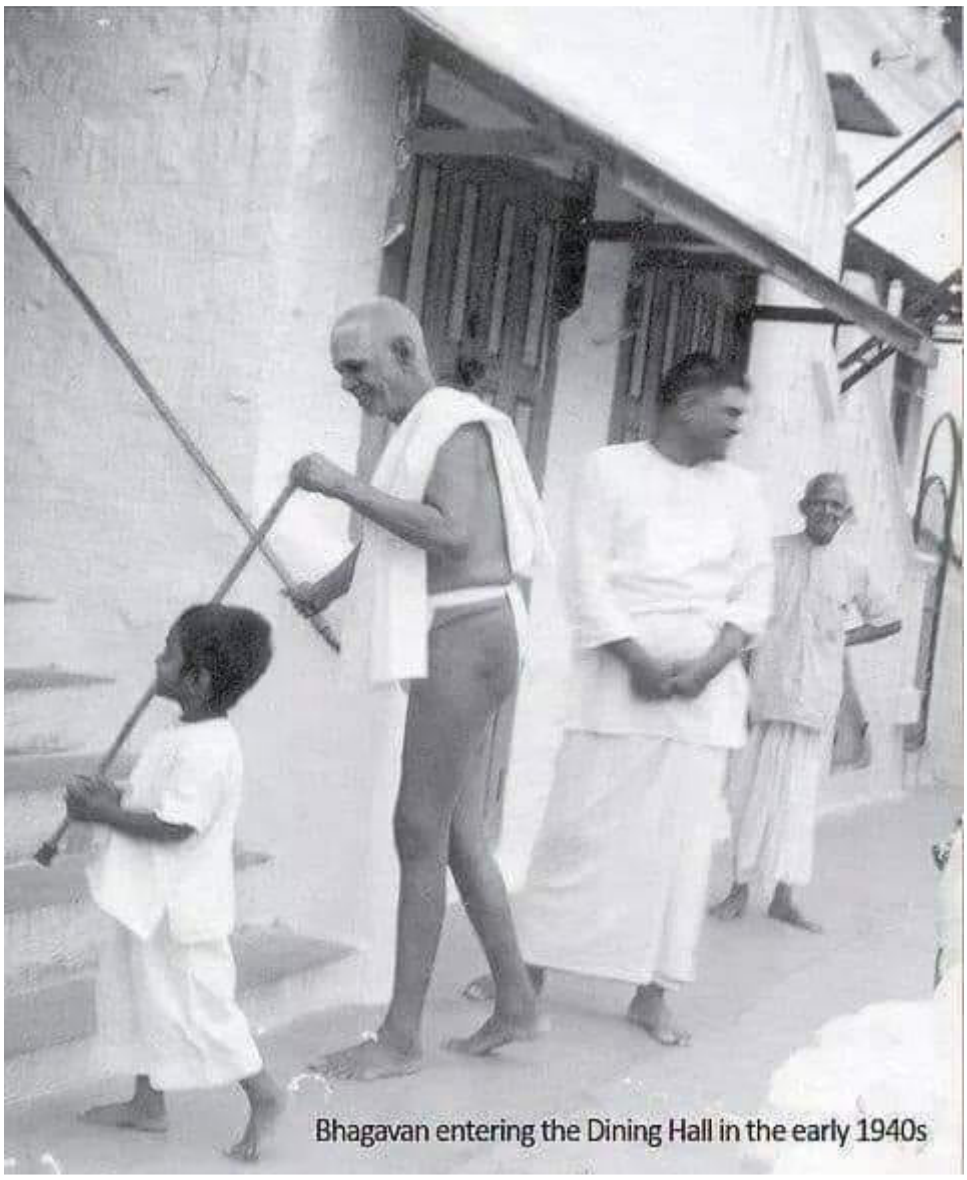




Without seeing the origin of light, the true Self,
the ordinary man sees by the mind different things and is deluded.

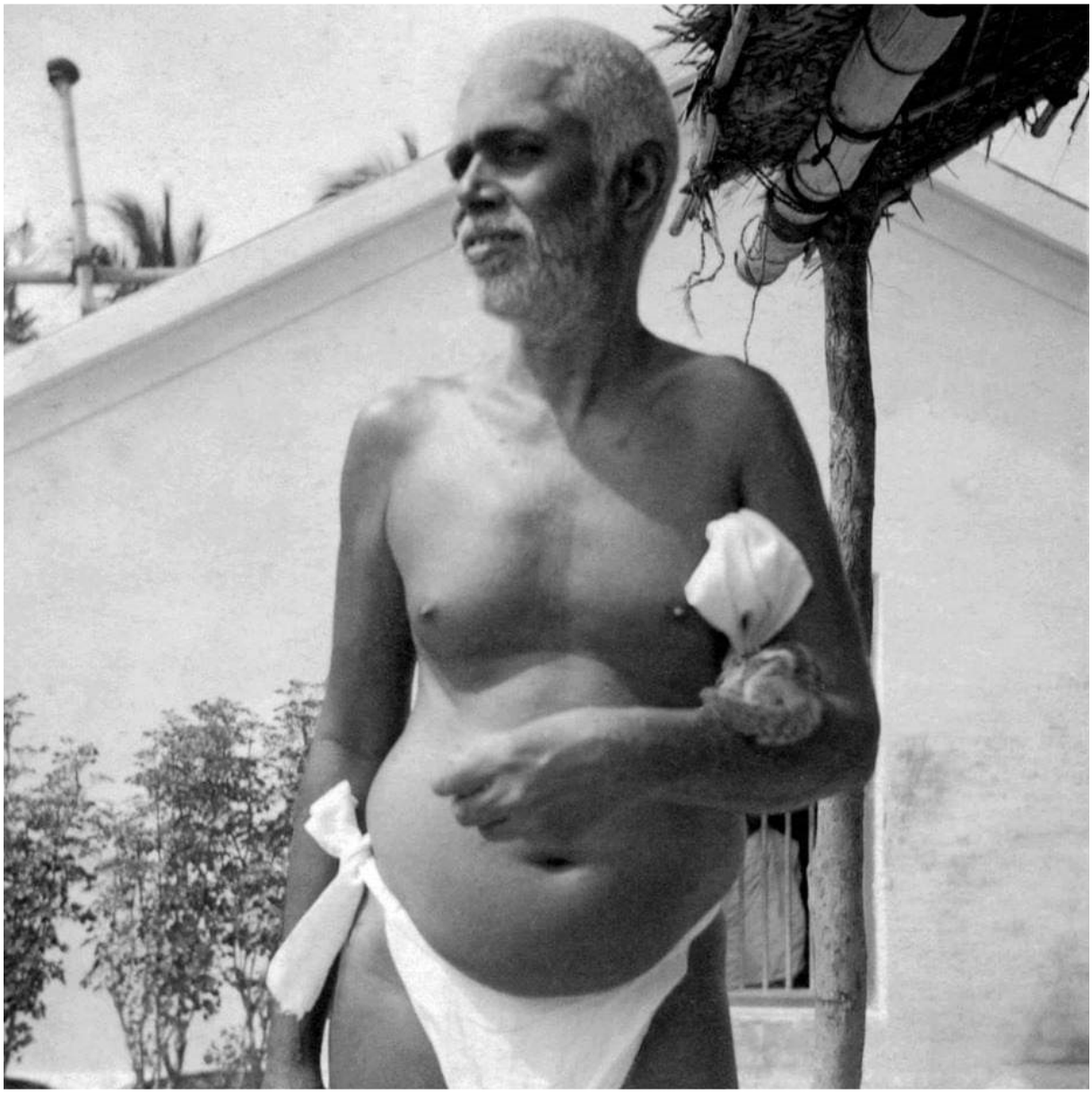
If you take the appearance to be real,
you will never know the Real itself,
although it is the Real alone that exists.

There is diversity in the world.
A unity runs through the diversity.
The Self is the same in all.
There is no difference in spirit.
All the differences are external and superficial.
The pain of diversity is overcome
by the joy of the perception of unity.



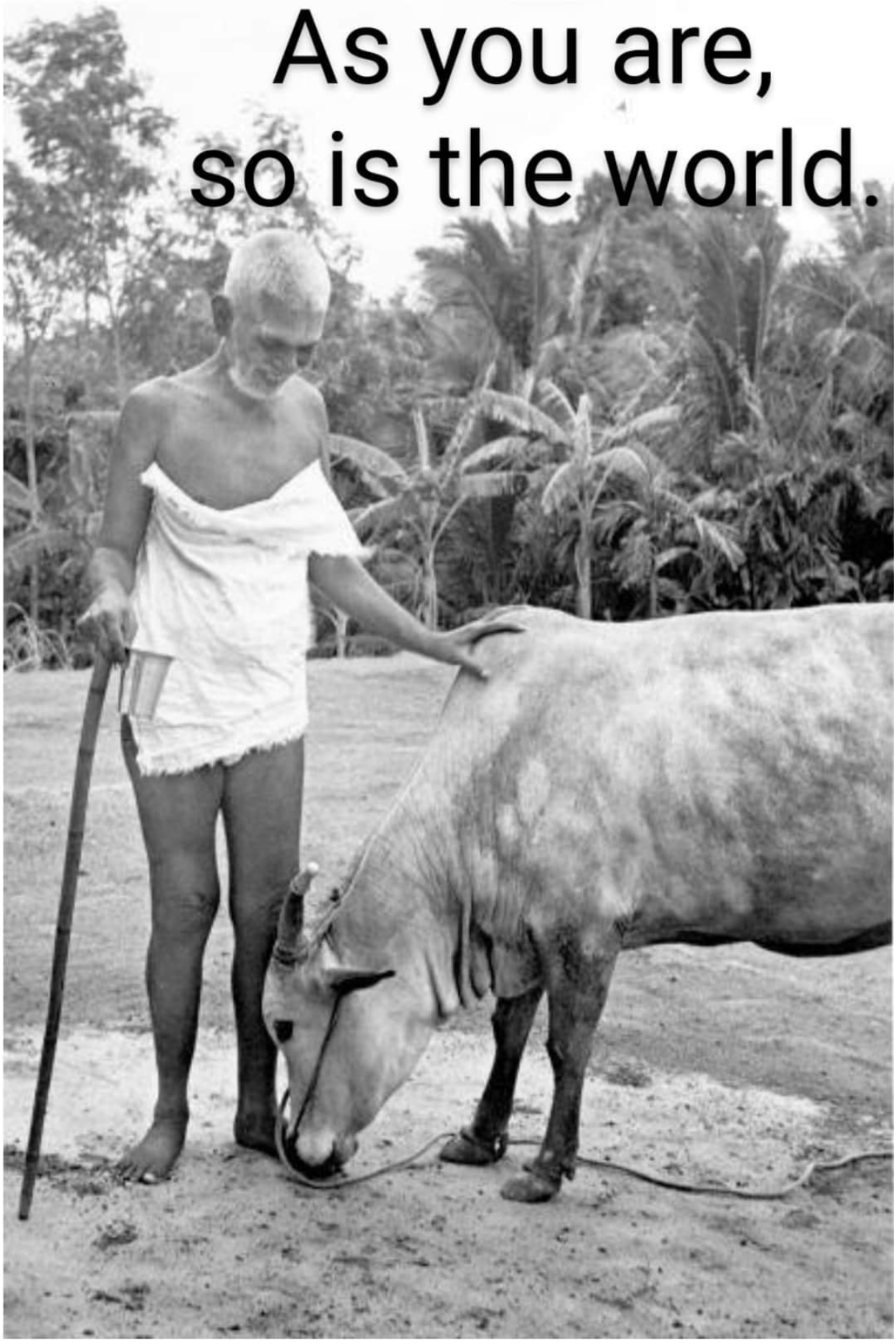
Bhagavan entering the Dining Hall in the early 1940s

Wanting to reform the world
without discovering one's true Self
is like trying to cover the world with leather
to avoid the pain of walking on stones and thorns.
It is much simpler to wear shoes.



Your own Self-Realization
is the greatest service
you can render the world.

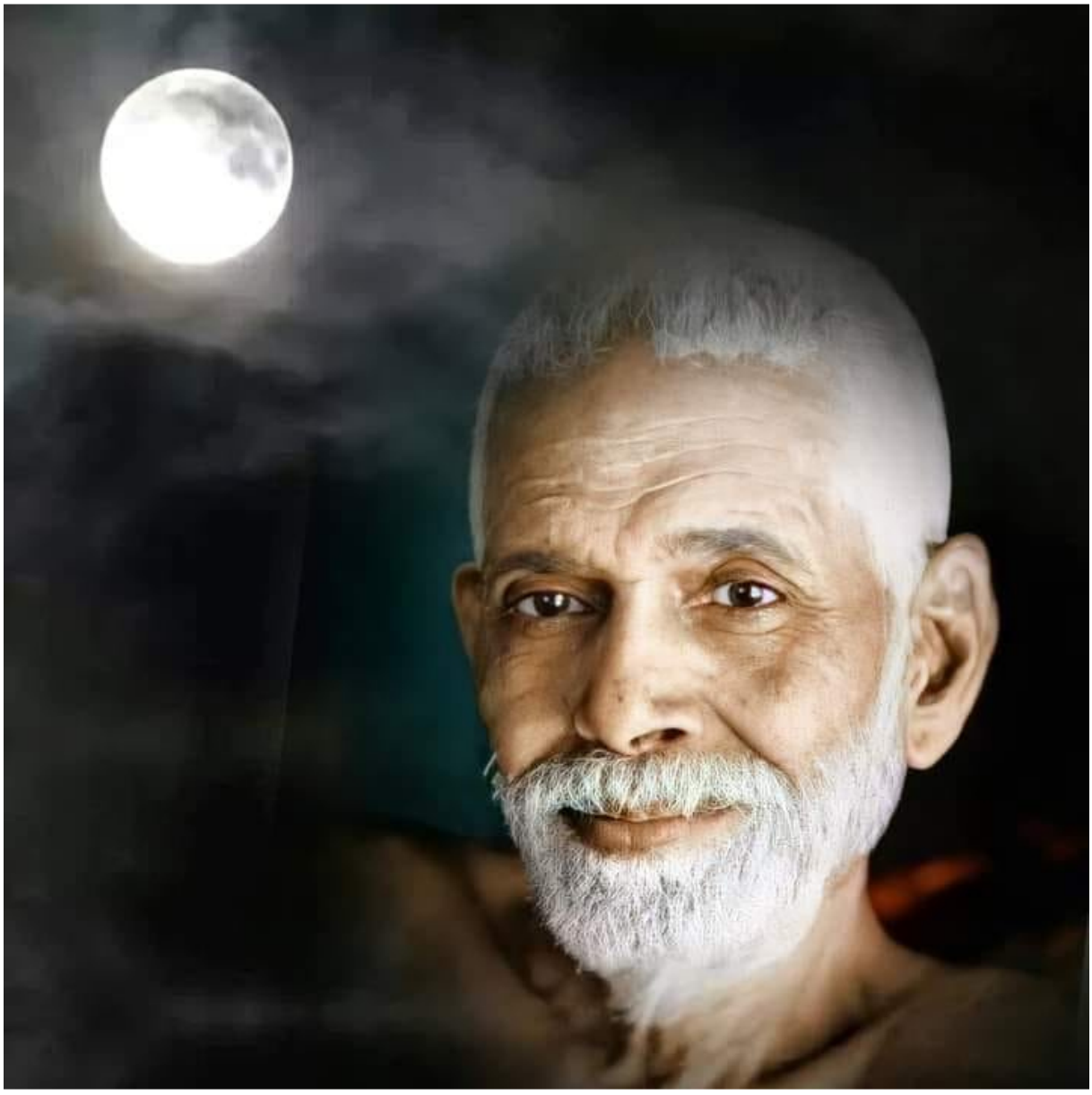
If one's mind has peace, the whole world will appear peaceful.



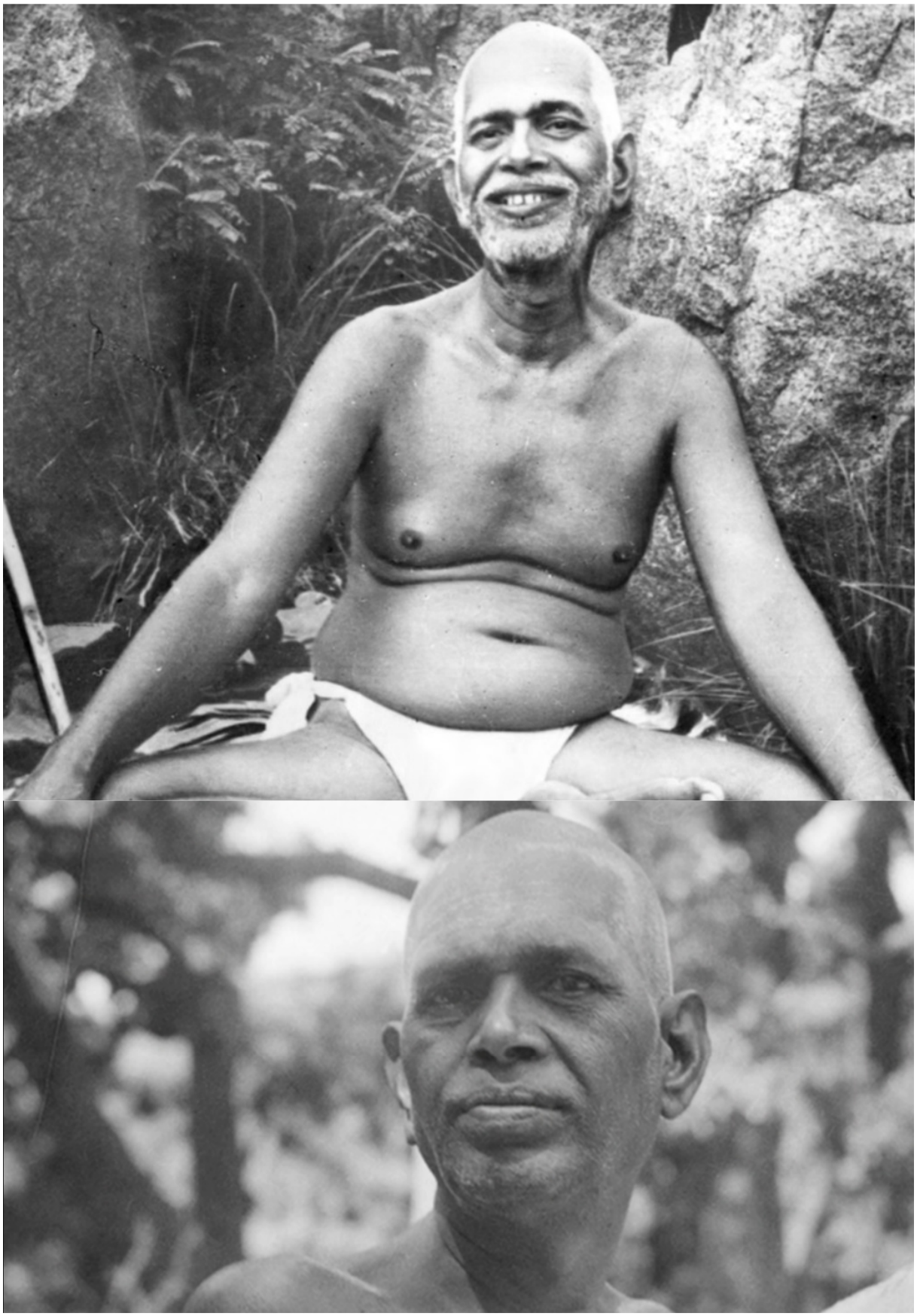
The world is not external. Because you identify yourself wrongly with the body, you see the world outside, and its pain becomes apparent to you. But they are not real. Seek the reality and get rid of this unreal feeling.

The world is not outside you.
Everything is within.
There is nothing without.

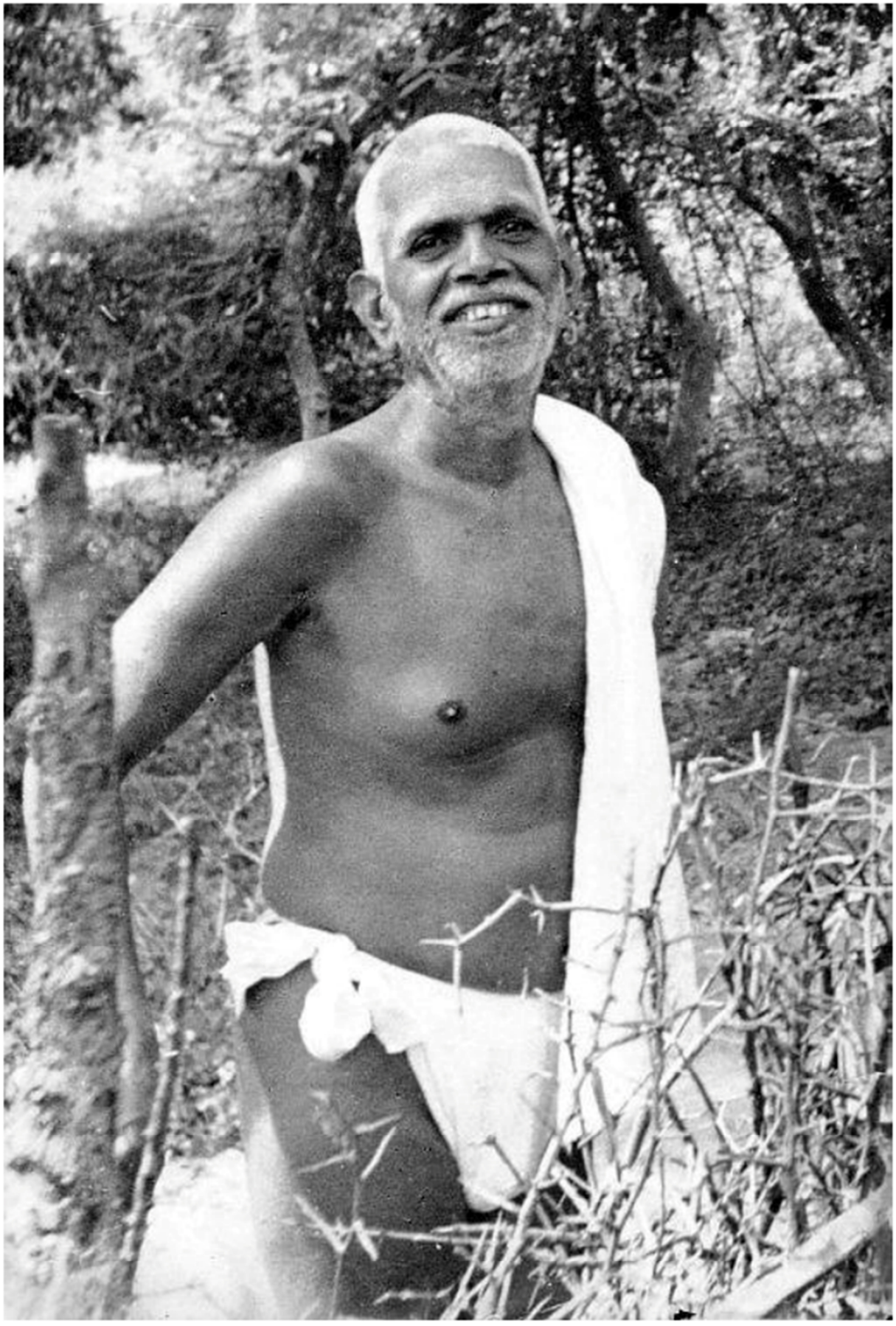
The whole cosmos is contained in one pinhole in the Heart.



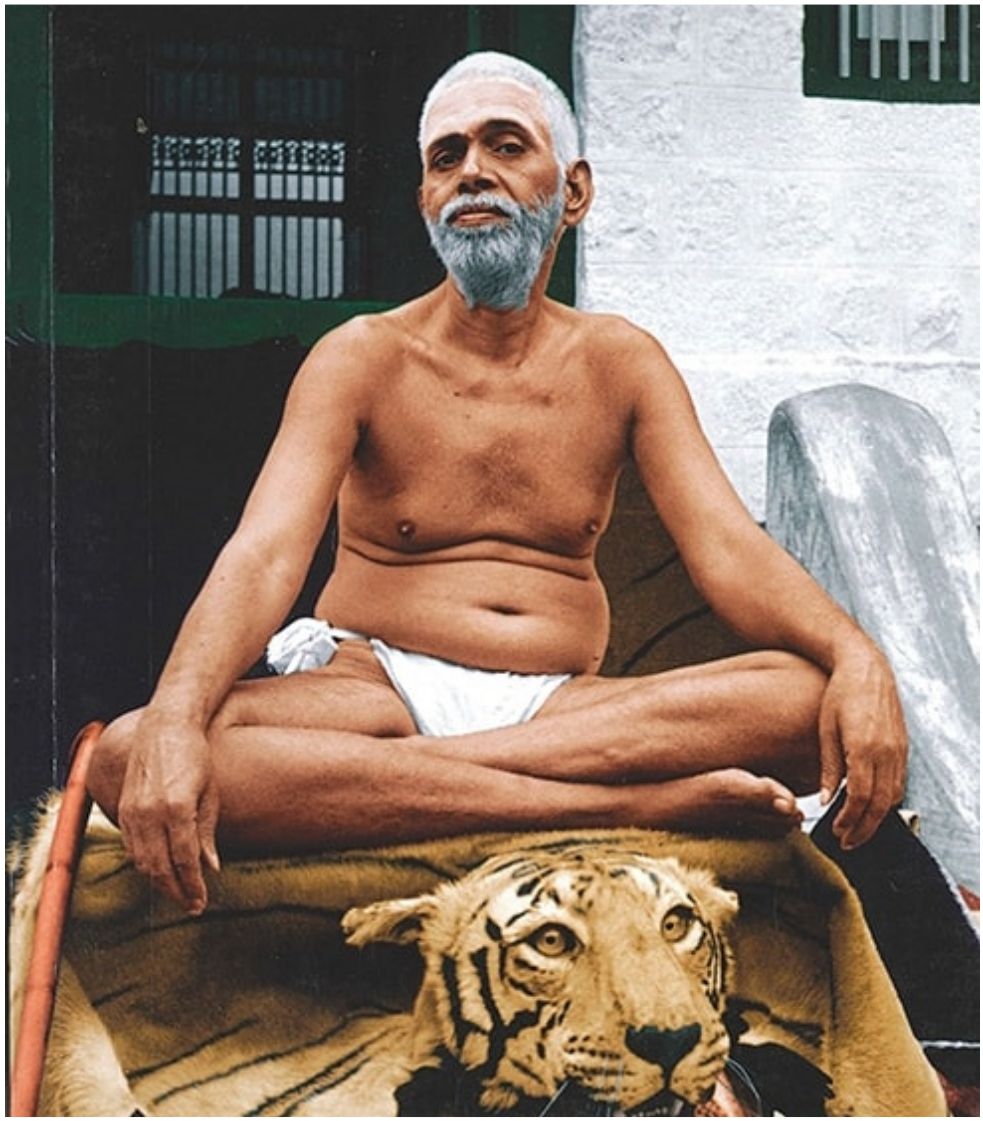
You carry heaven and hell within you.



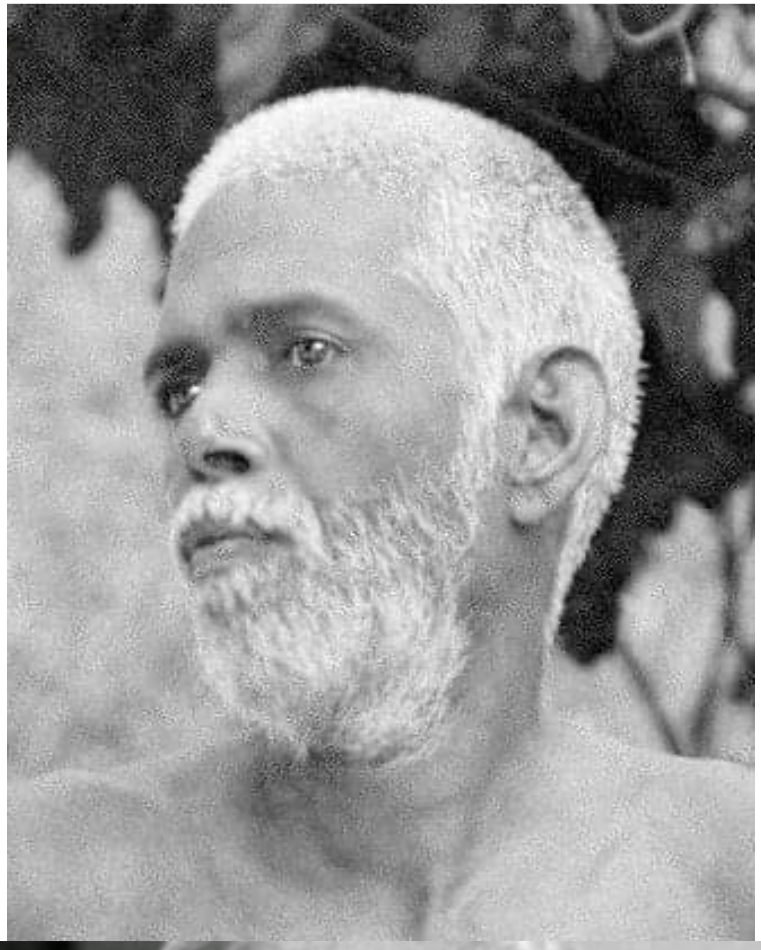
Control the mind and even Hell will be Heaven to you.

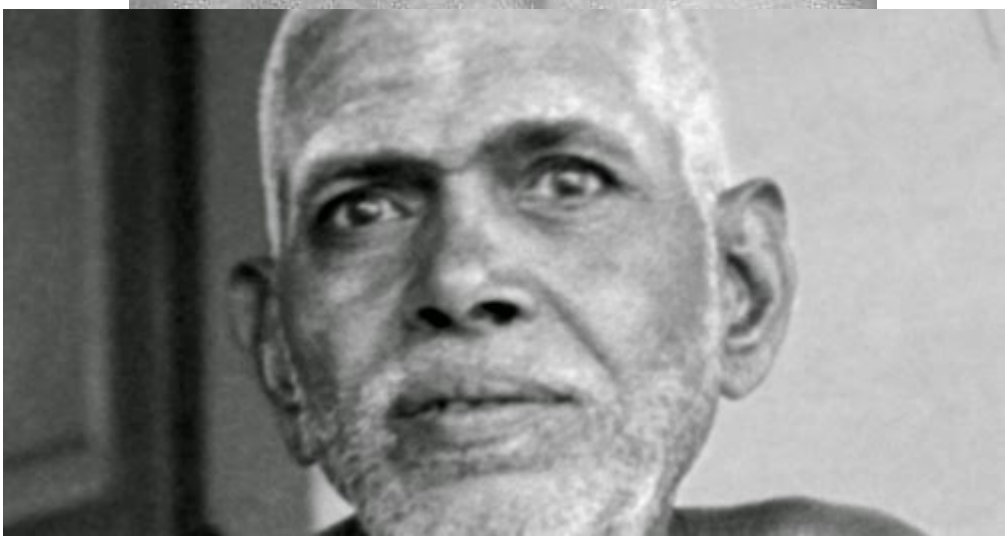


Peace is your natural state. It is your mind that destroys it.

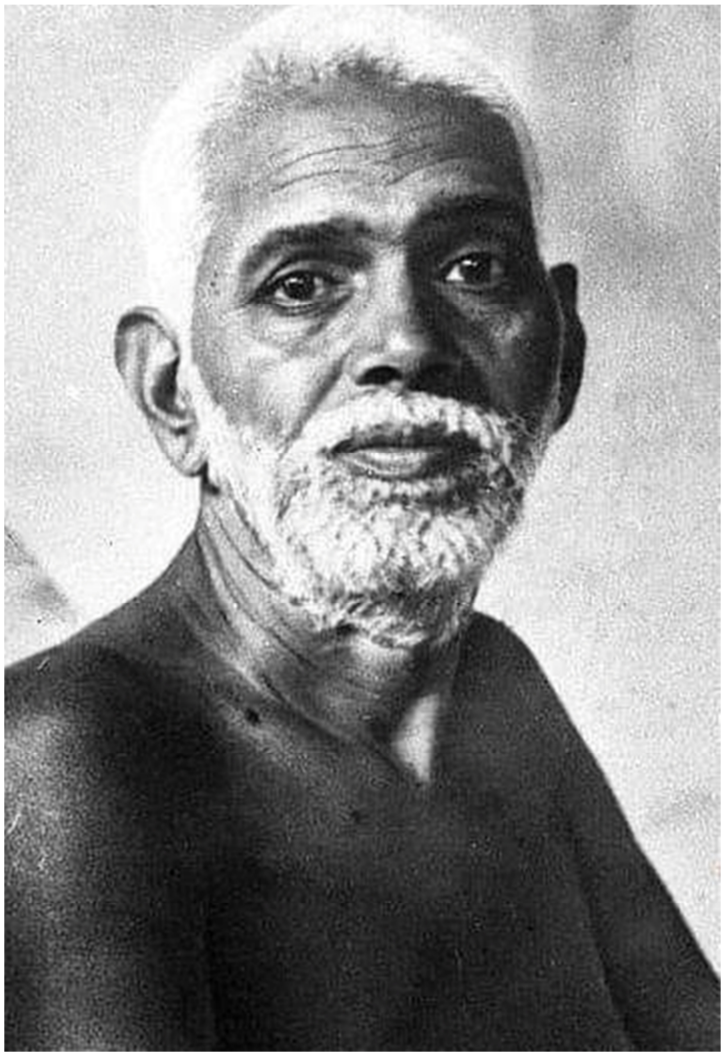


Your true nature is that of
infinite spirit, limitless consciousness.
The feeling of limitation is the work of the mind.
When mind unceasingly investigates its true nature,
it transpires that there is no such thing as mind.
This is the direct path for all.



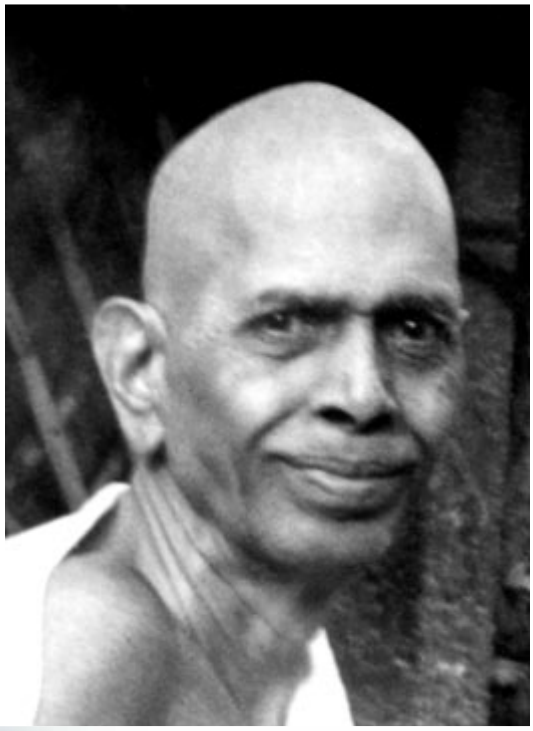


God dwells in you, as you,
and you don't have to 'do' anything
to be God-realized or Self-realized,
it is already your true and natural state.
Just drop all seeking,
turn your attention inward,
and sacrifice your mind to the One Self
radiating in the Heart of your very Being.
For this to be your own presently lived experience,
Self-Inquiry is the one direct and immediate way.



Bliss is not added to your nature,
it is merely revealed as your
true and natural state,
eternal and imperishable.

Happiness is your nature.
It is not wrong to desire it.
What is wrong is
seeking it outside
when it is inside.



Just a look,

just a turning-in,

and you are

no more a beggar..

Ramana Mahrishi

The Perfect Master, Vol. 2 by Osho

If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution.

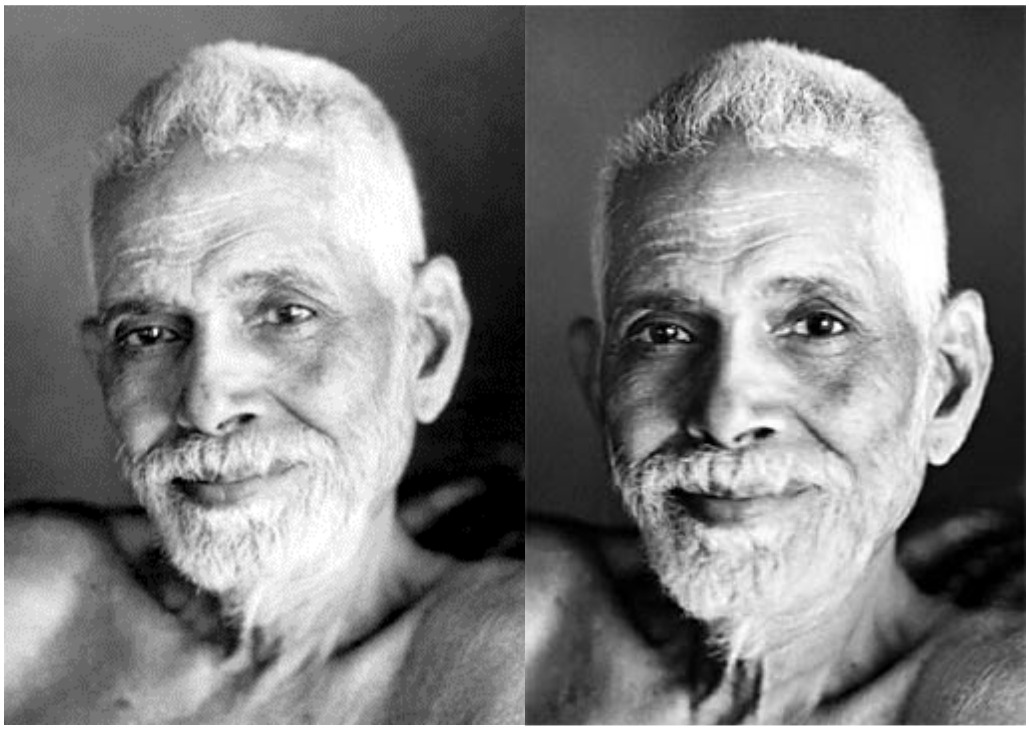
Therefore if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view?

In deep sleep, the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy, he is quite happy.

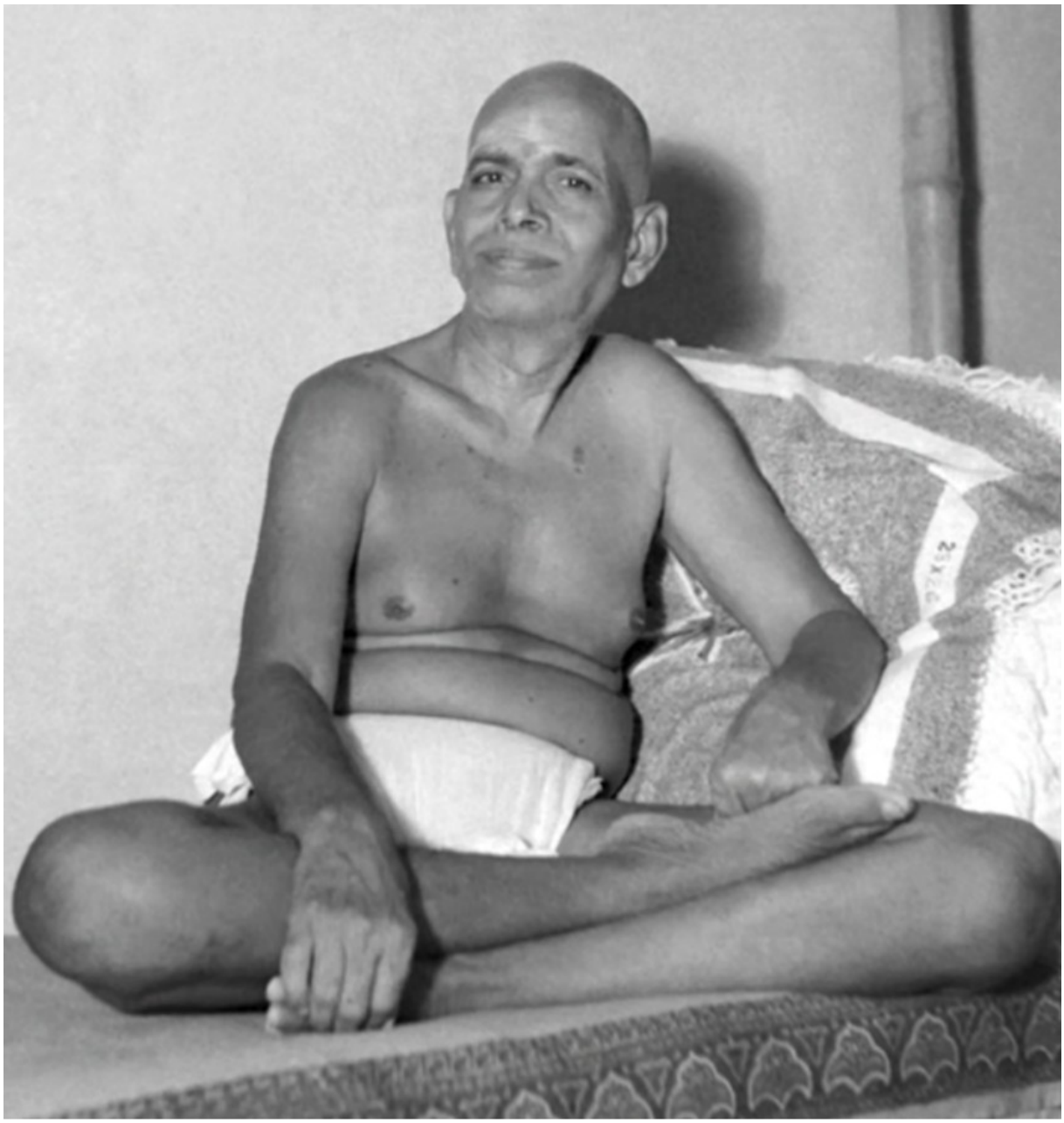
Everyone desires to sleep soundly.

The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes.

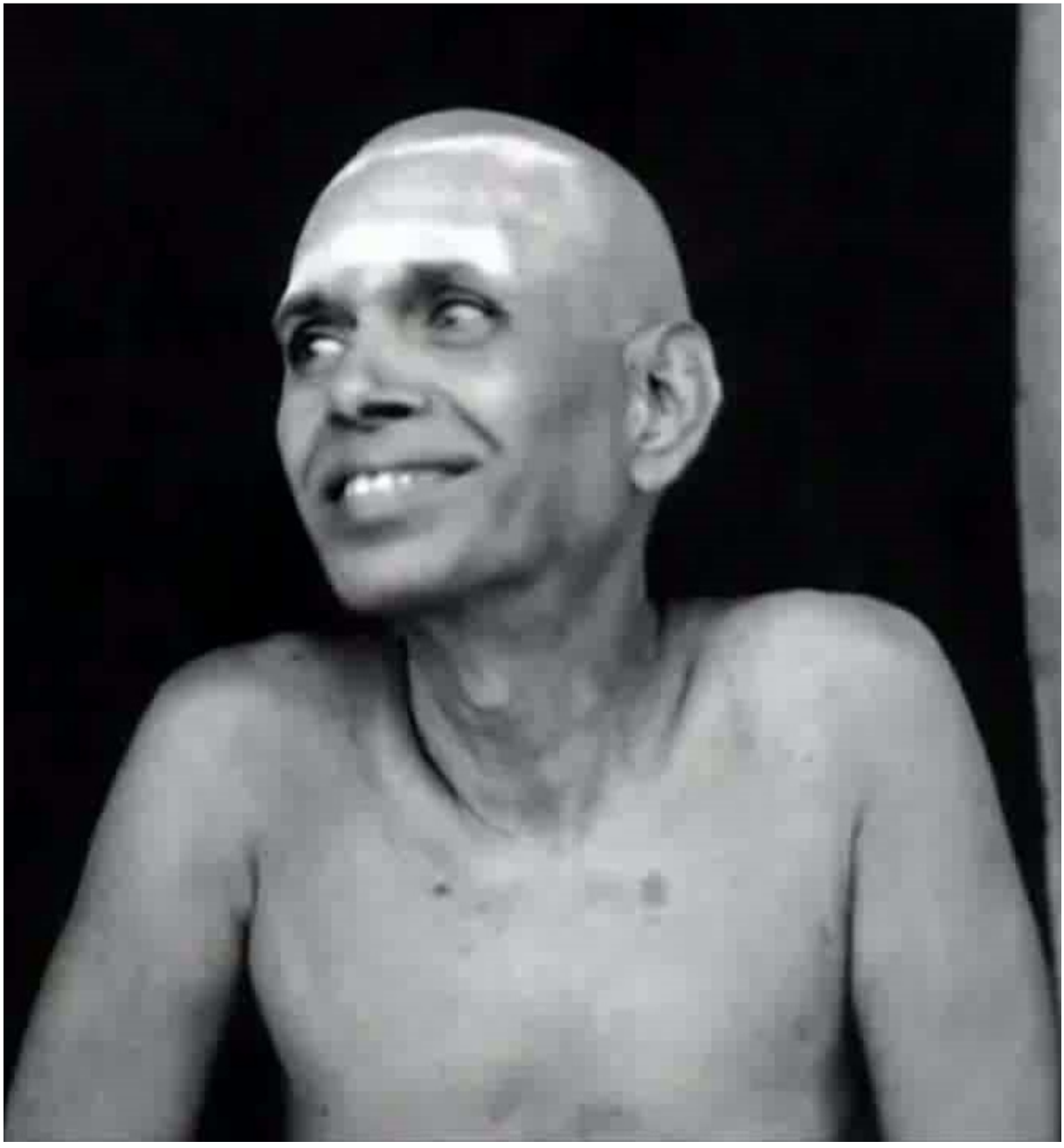
One must realise the Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.



That which is Bliss is also the Self. Bliss and the Self are not distinct and separate but are one and the same. And That alone is real. In no single one of the countless objects of the mundane world is there anything that can be called happiness. It is through sheer ignorance and unwisdom that we fancy that happiness is obtained from them. On the contrary, when the mind is externalized, it suffers pain and anguish. The truth is that every time our desires get fulfilled, the mind, turning to its source, experiences only that happiness which is natural to the Self.



See from whence all happiness, including the happiness you regard as coming from sense objects, really comes. You will understand all happiness comes only from the Self, and then you will always abide in the Self.



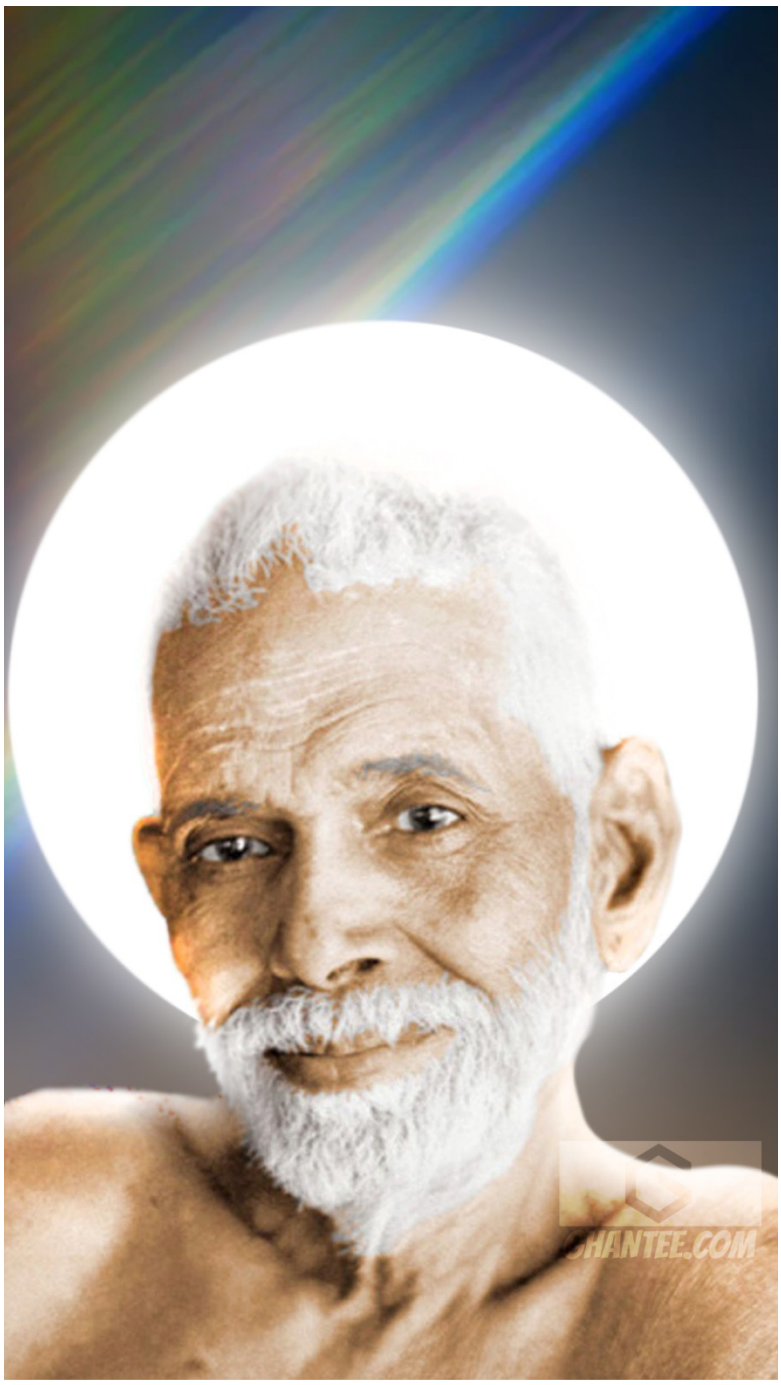
You must become very small.
In fact, you must become nothing.
Only a person who is nobody can abide in the Self.

Give yourself up to deep meditation.
Throw away all other considerations of life.
The calculative life will not be crowned with spiritual success.

(Once, a devotee remarked to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi that a certain devotee must be well advanced on the spiritual path because he meditated for eight to ten hours every day.)

"Oh," replied Ramana...

"He meditates, he eats, he sleeps. But who is meditating, eating, sleeping? What advantage is there in meditating for ten hours a day if in the end that only has the result of establishing you a little more deeply in the conviction that it is you who are meditating?"



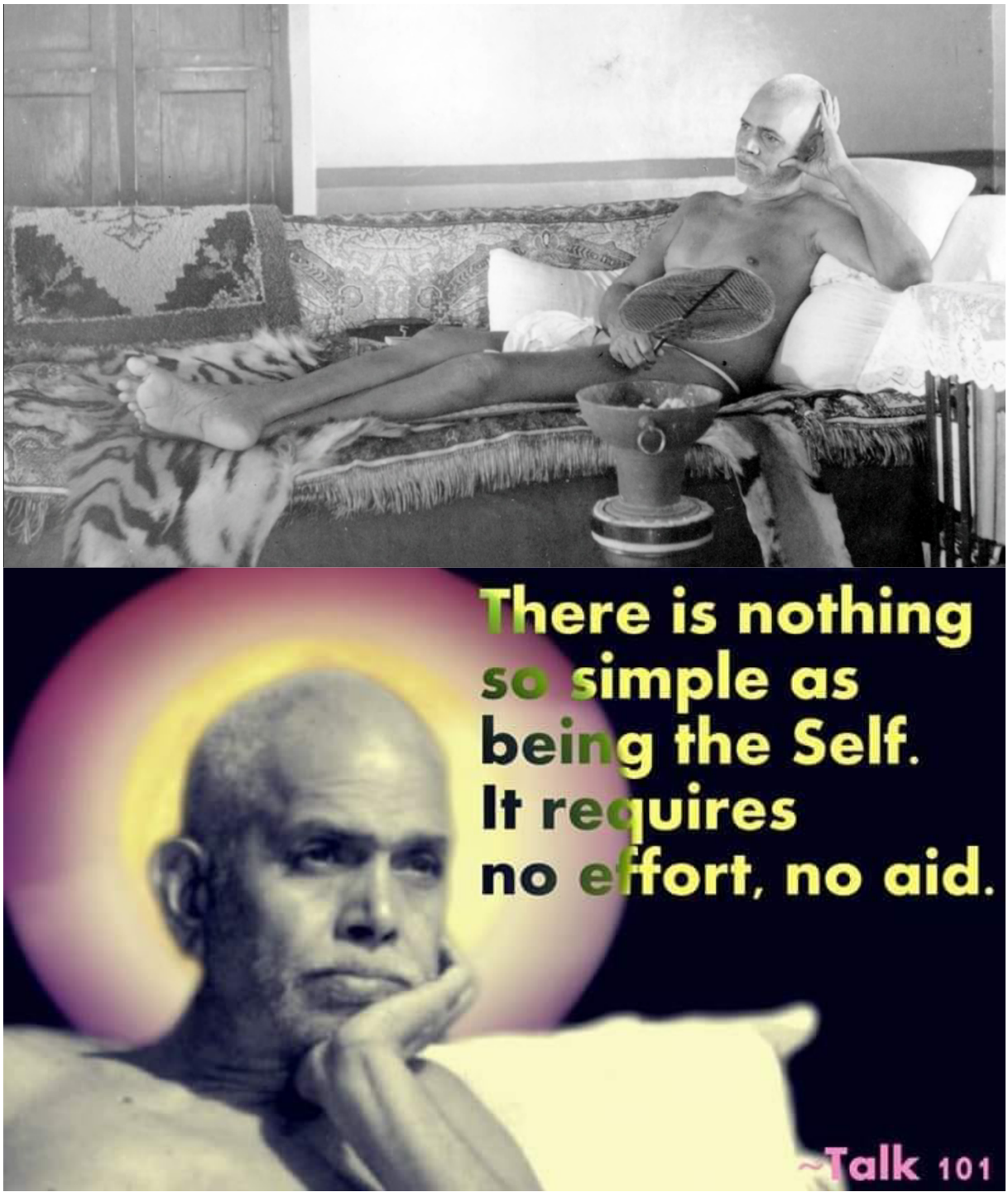
The spiritual force of Self-realization is far more powerful than the use of all the occult powers. Inasmuch as there is no ego in the Sage, there are no others for Him.

What is the highest benefit that can be conferred on you? It is happiness, and happiness is born of peace. Peace can reign only where there is no disturbance, and disturbance is due to thoughts that arise in the mind. When the mind itself is absent, there will be perfect peace.

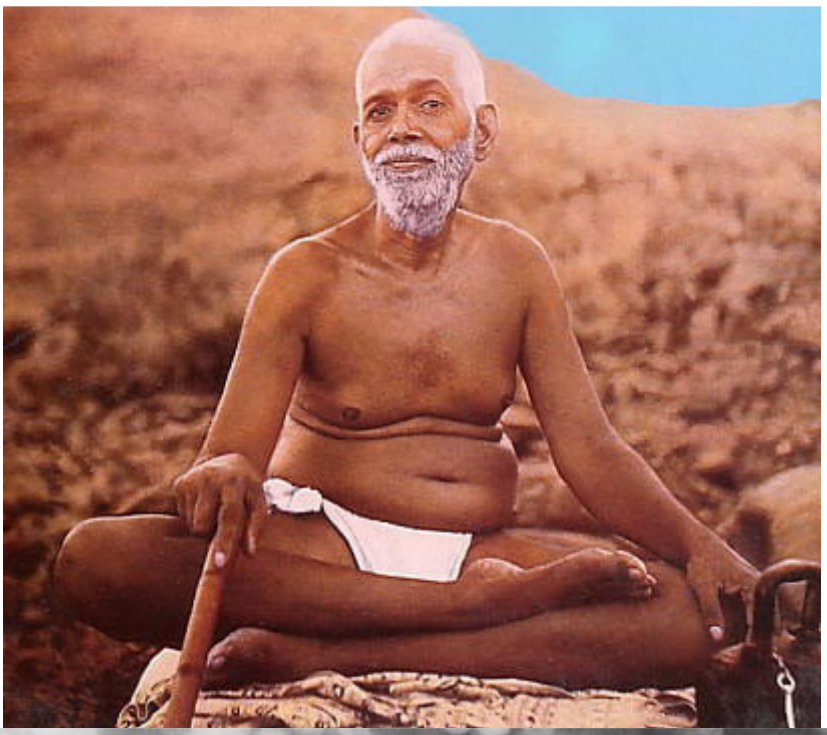
Unless a person has annihilated the mind, he cannot gain peace and be happy. And unless he himself is happy, he cannot bestow happiness on 'others'. Since however there are no others for the Sage who has no mind, the mere fact of His Self-realization is itself enough to make the 'others' happy.

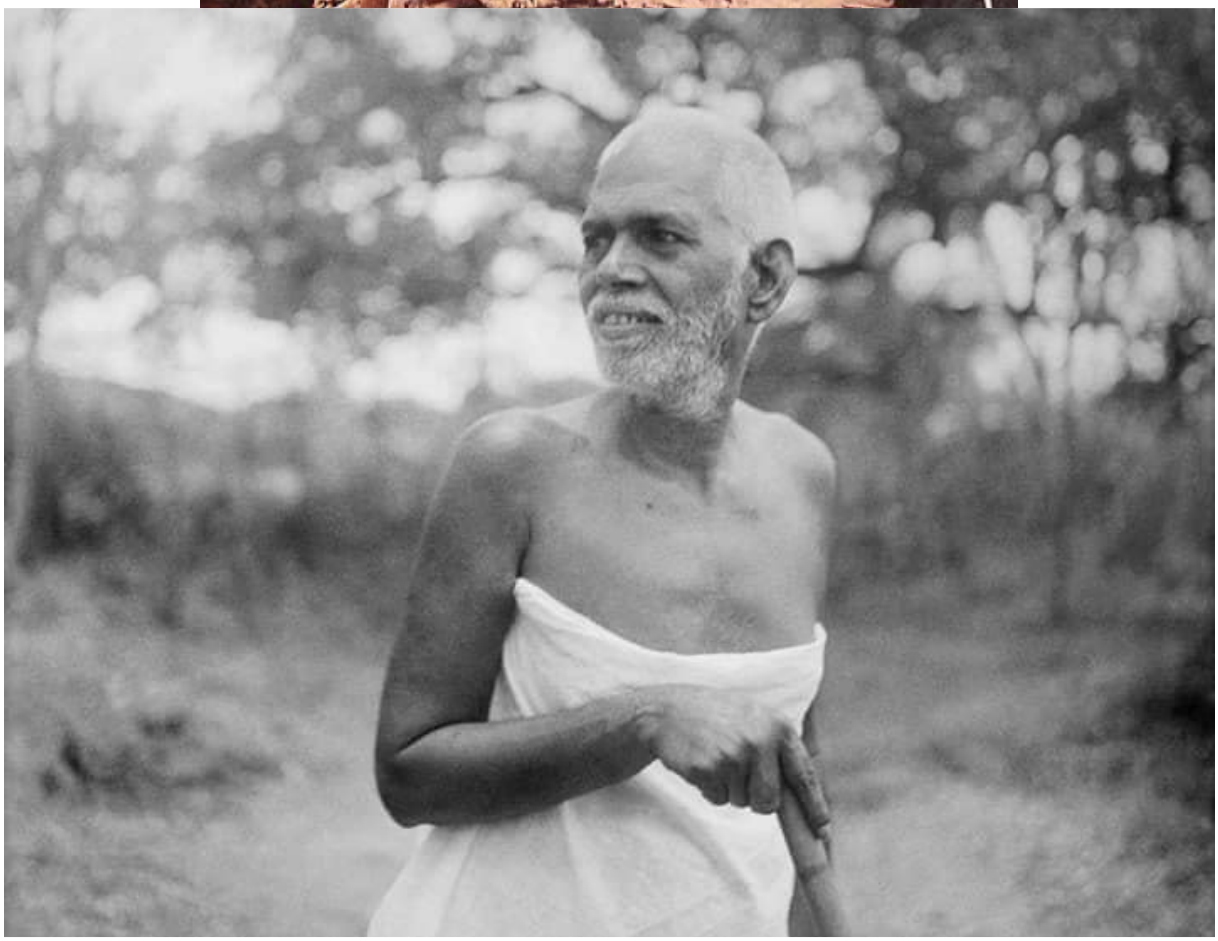
Your duty is to be,
and not to be this or that.
"I Am that I Am" sums up the whole truth.

The state we call realization is simply being oneself,
not knowing anything or becoming anything.



The greatest obstacle to enlightenment
is getting past your delusion
that you are not already enlightened.

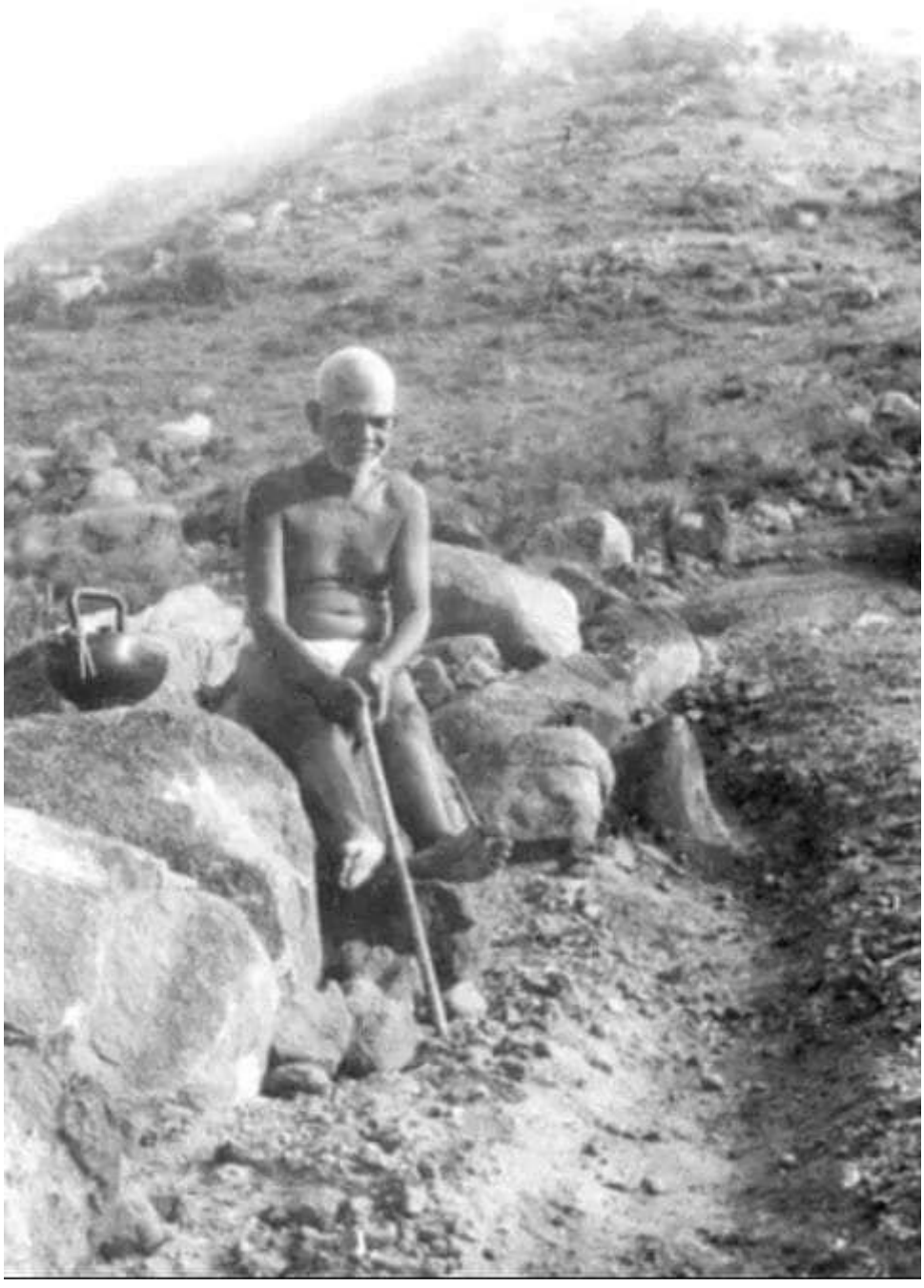




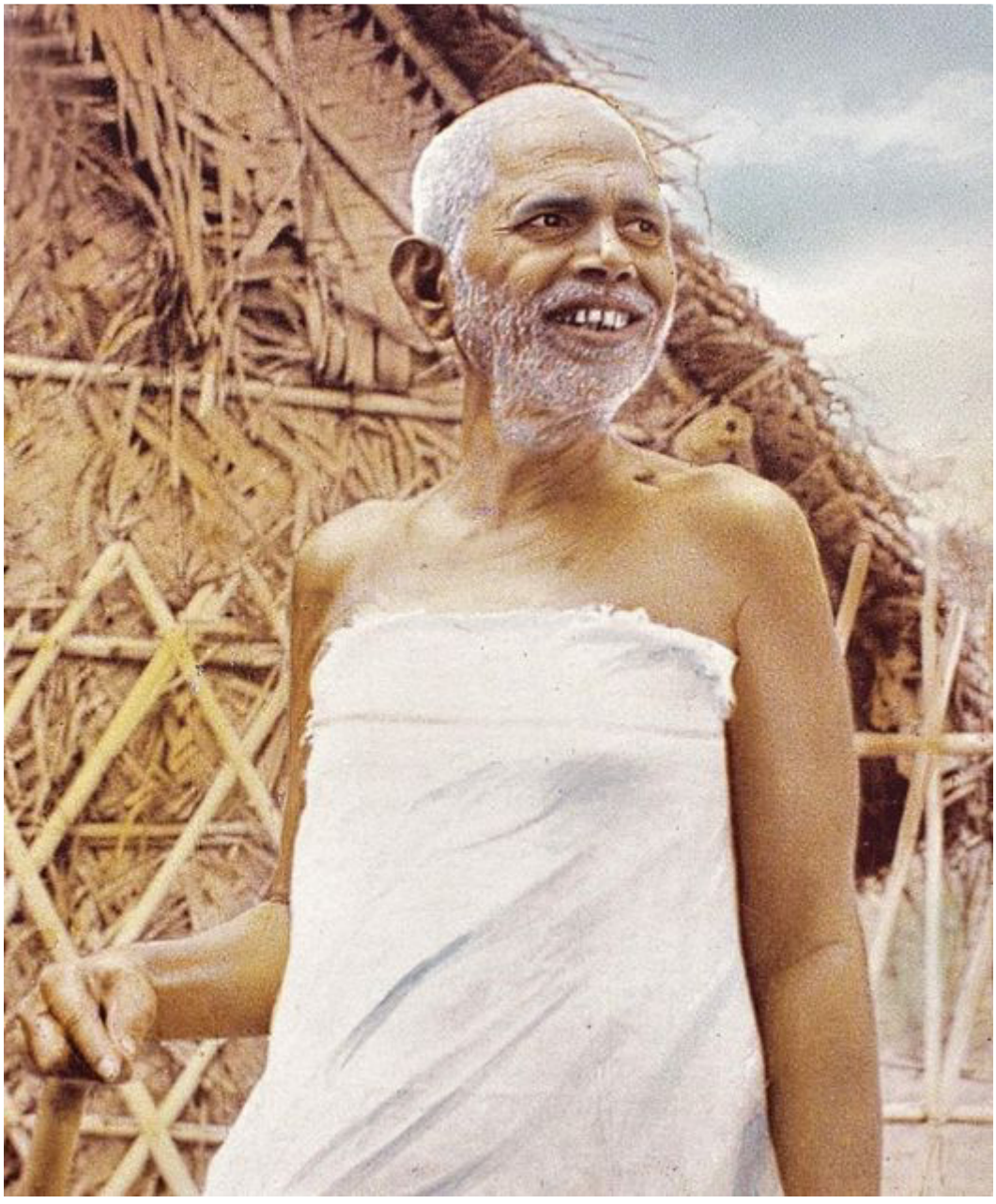
The very fact that we wish for liberation shows
that freedom from all bondage is our real nature.
It is not to be freshly acquired.
All that is necessary
is to get rid of the false notion that we are bound.

Liberation is only to remain aware of the Self.

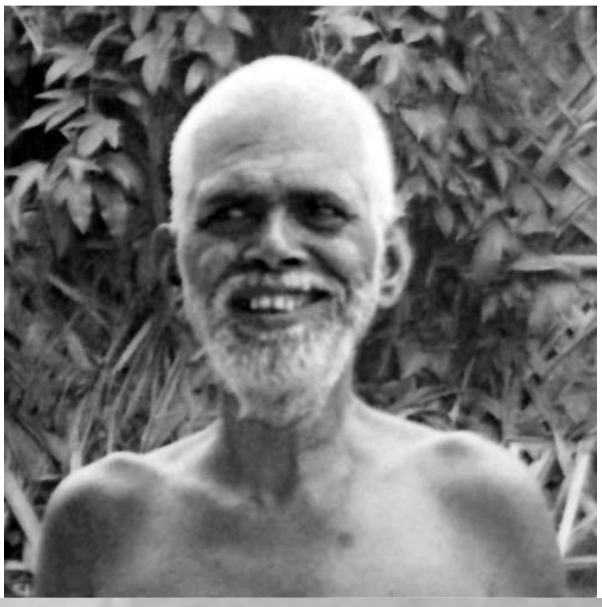
Realization consists
of getting rid
of the false idea
that one is not realized.

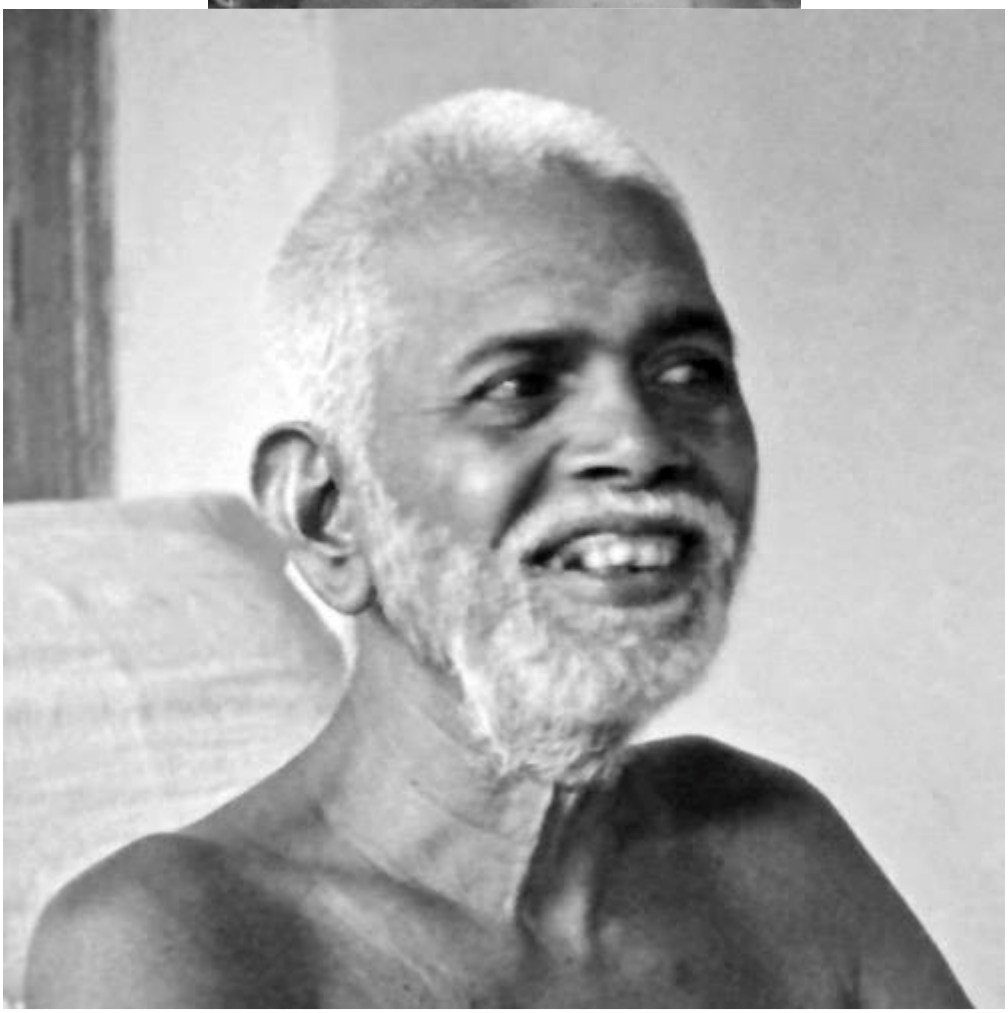


Seeing is being. The state of Self-realization, as we call it, is not about attaining something new, or reaching some goal which is far away, but simply being that which you always are and which you always have been. All that is required is that you give up your realization of the not-true as being true. All of us are regarding as real that which is not real. We have only to give up this practice on our part. Then we shall realize the Self as the Self; in other words, 'Be the Self'. At one stage, you will laugh at yourself for trying to discover the Self.

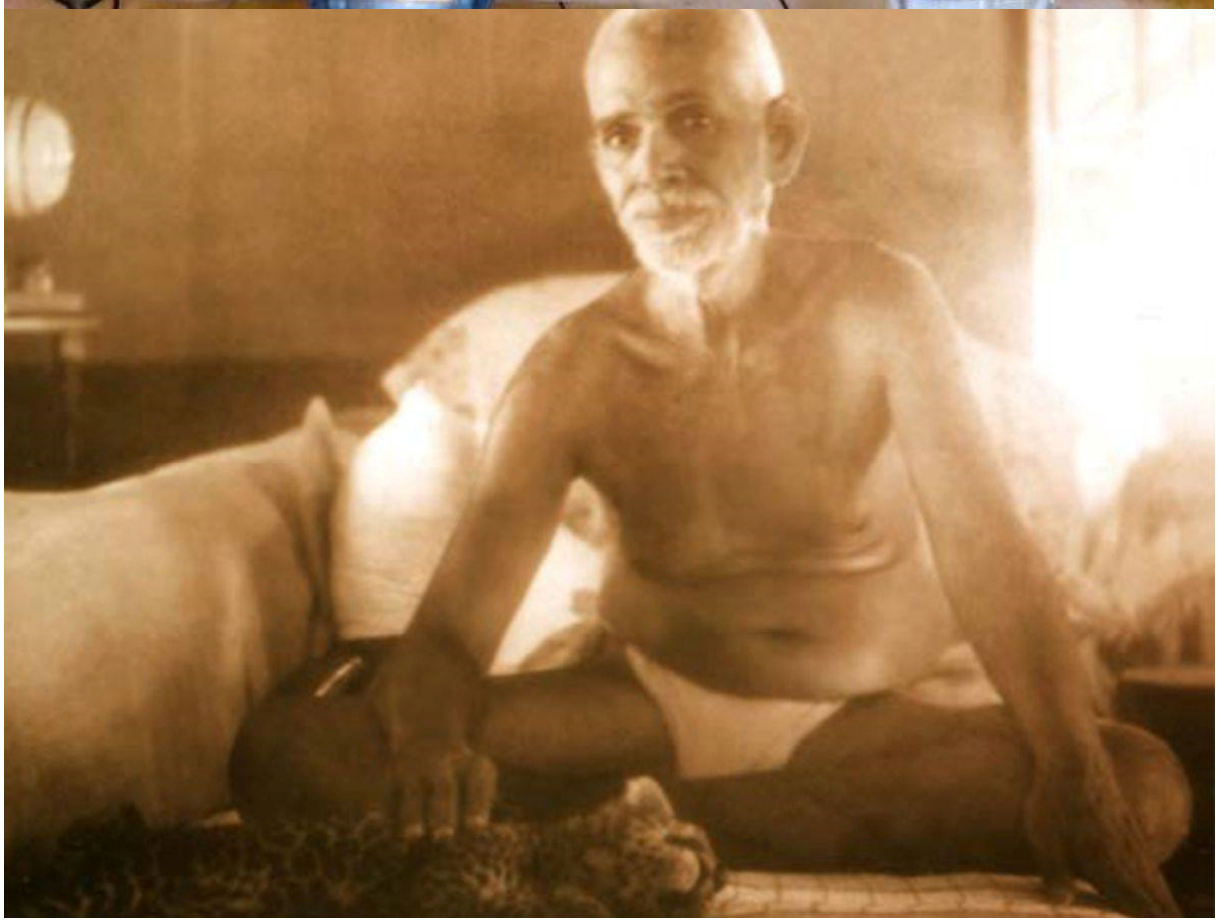


Realisation is not
acquisition of anything new
nor is it a new faculty.
It is only removal of all camouflage.



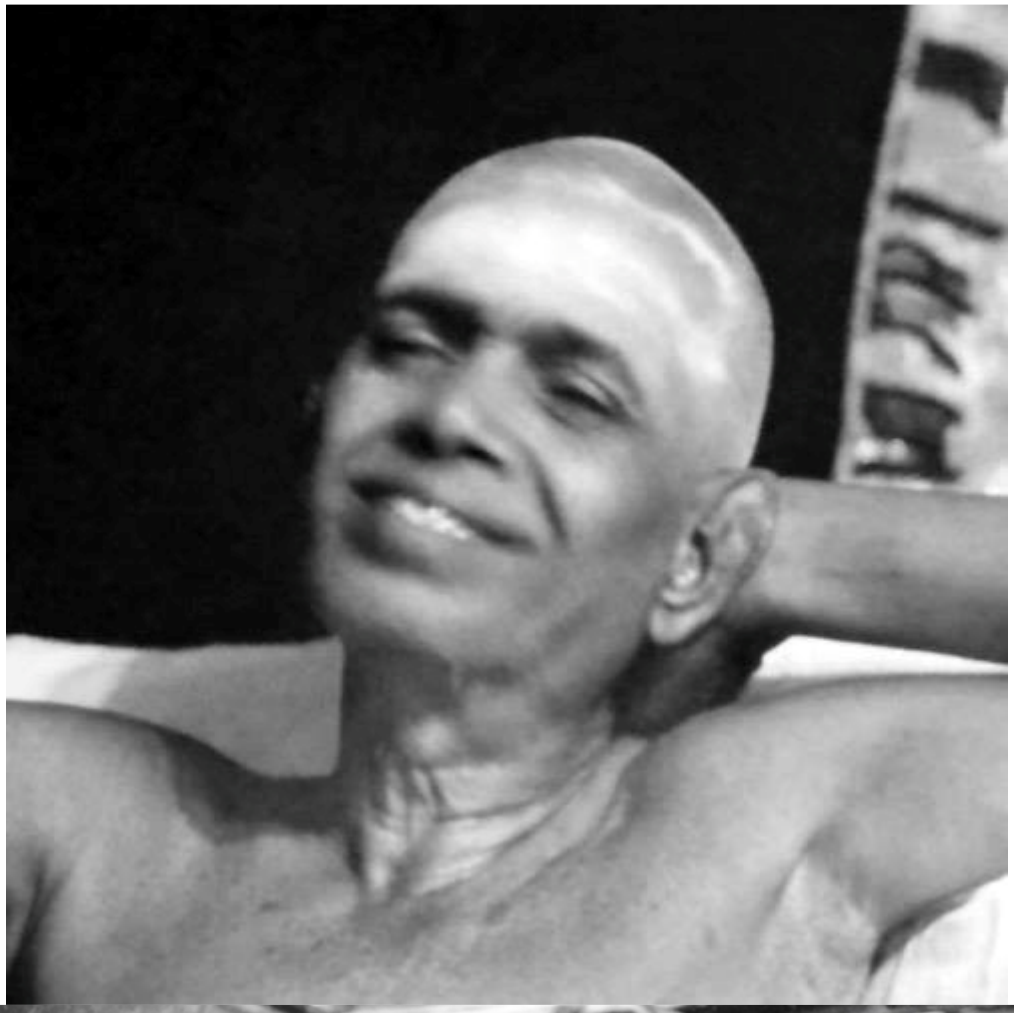


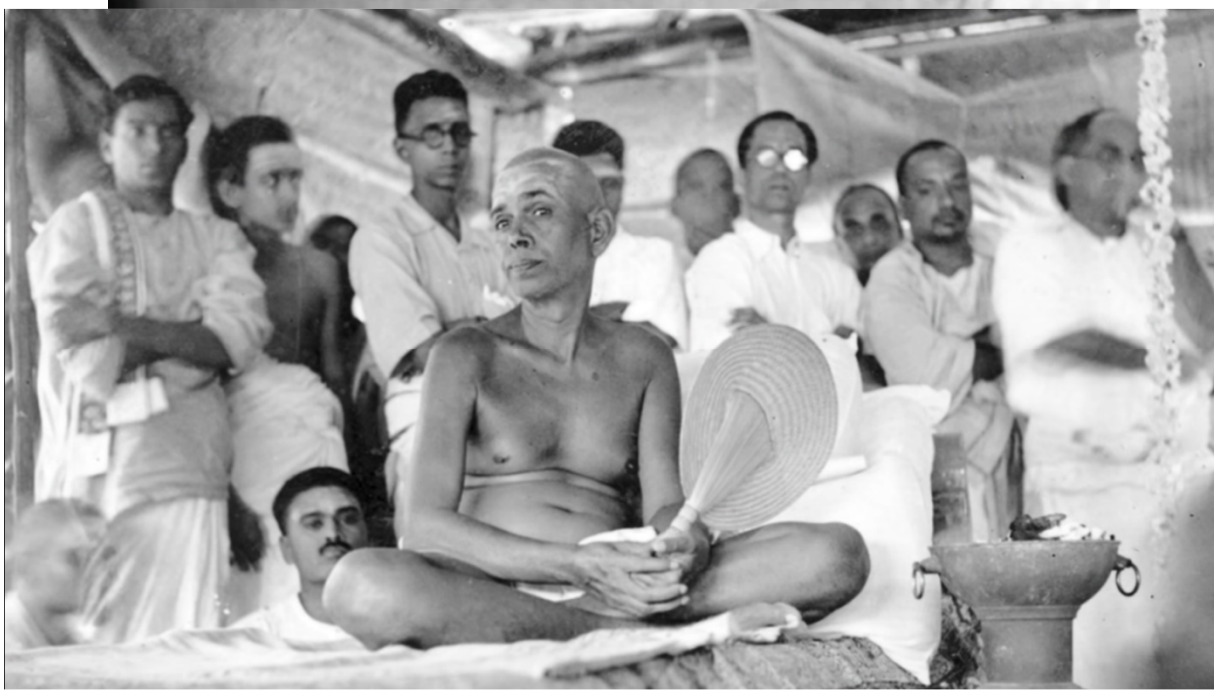
Realisation is nothing new to be acquired. It is already there, but obstructed by a screen of thoughts. There is nothing new to gain. On the other hand, a man must lose his ignorance. That is all.



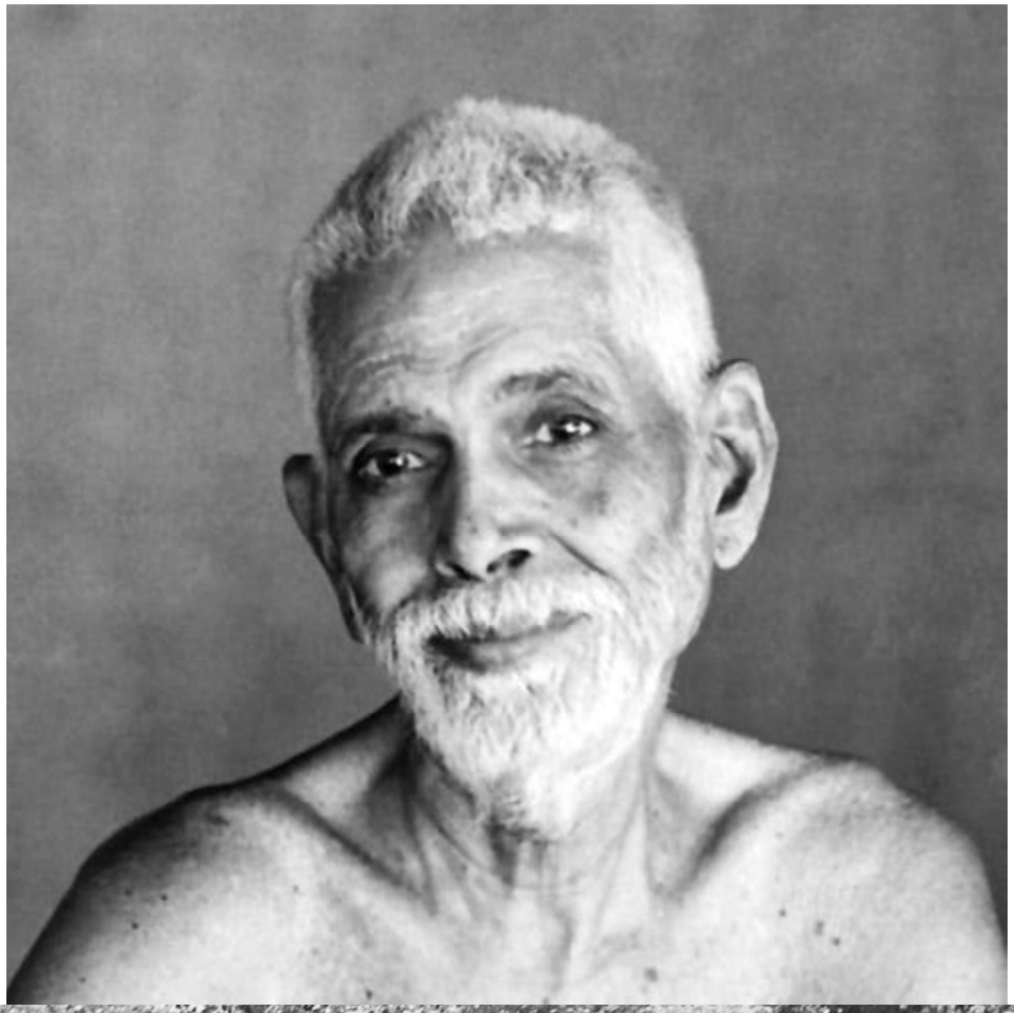
Forgetfulness of your real nature is the real death; remembrance of it is the true rebirth. It puts an end to successive births. Eternal Life is then yours. How does the desire for Eternal Life arise? Because the present state is unbearable. Why? Because it is not your true nature. Had it been your real nature, there would be no desire to agitate you. How does the present state differ from your real nature? Truly, you are Spirit. Human beings consider themselves limited and that is the root of the trouble. The idea is wrong.

Misery does not exist in reality
but only in mere imagination.

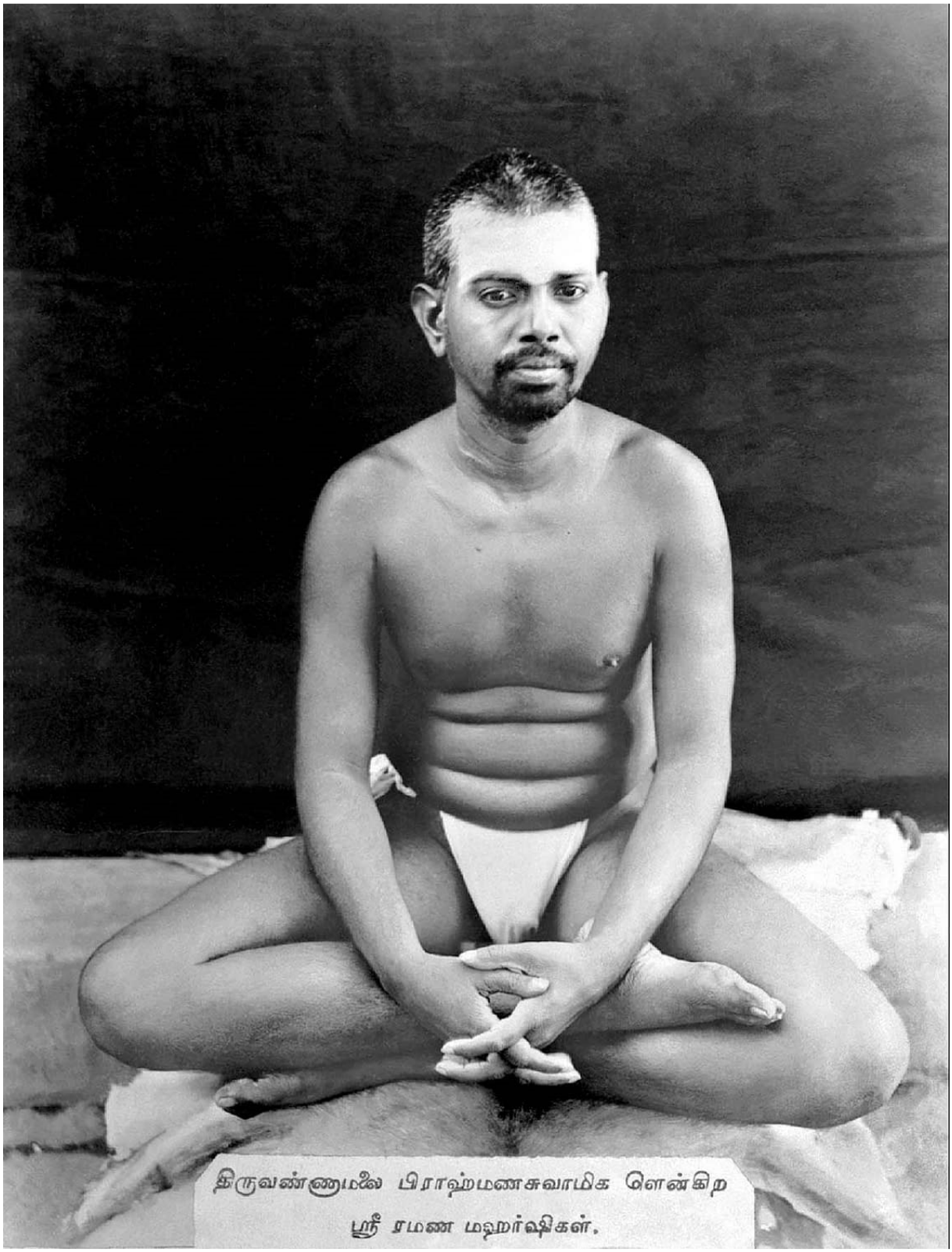




Misery is nothing but an illusion. If one scrutinises one's own Self, which is bliss, there will be no misery at all in one's life. One suffers because of the idea that the body, which is never oneself, is 'I'; suffering is all due to this delusion.

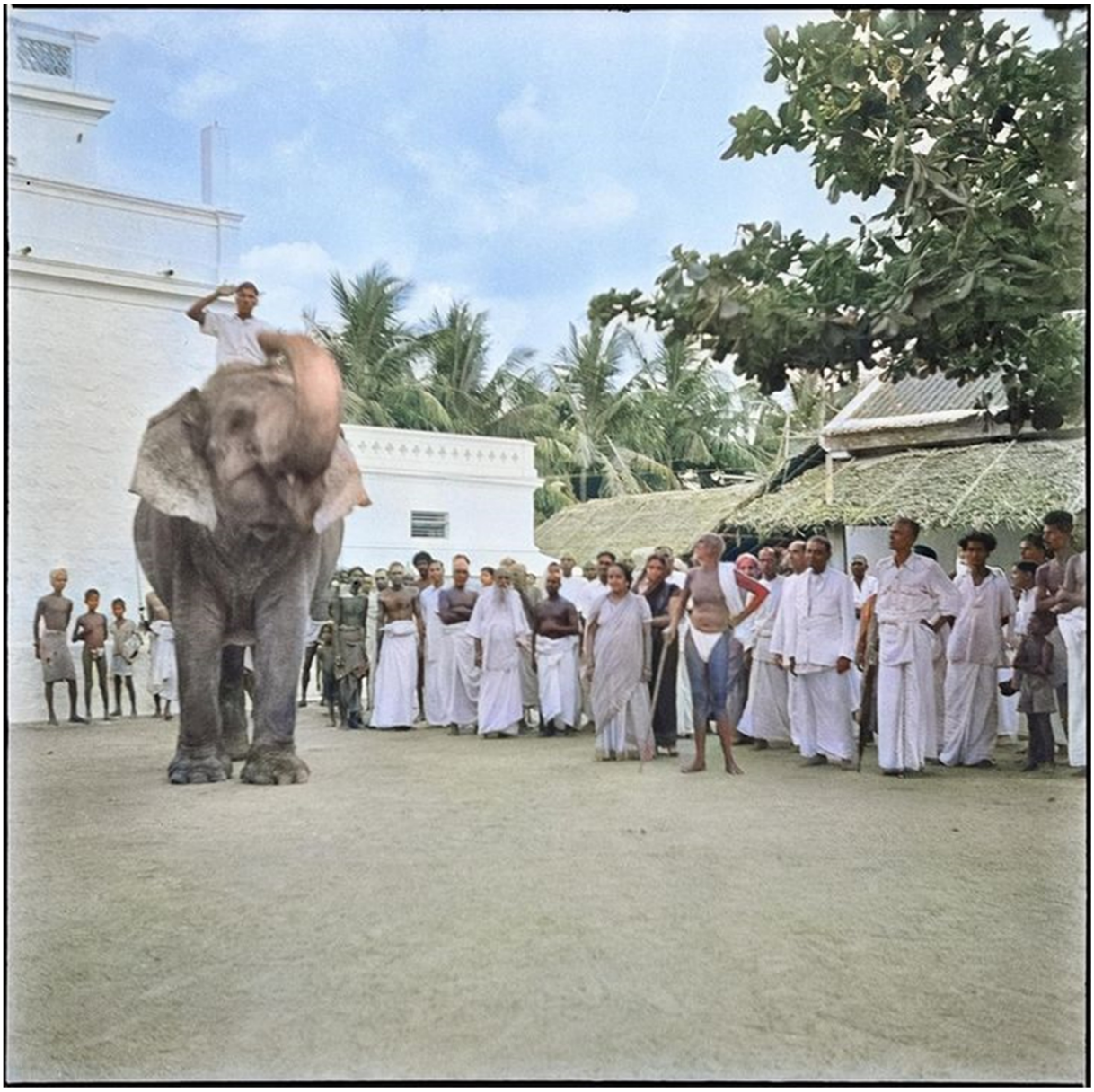


The death of the I-thought is the person's death.
After the I-thought has arisen, the wrong identity with the body arises.
Get rid of the I-thought.
So long as 'I' is alive, there is grief.
When 'I' ceases to exist, there is no grief.

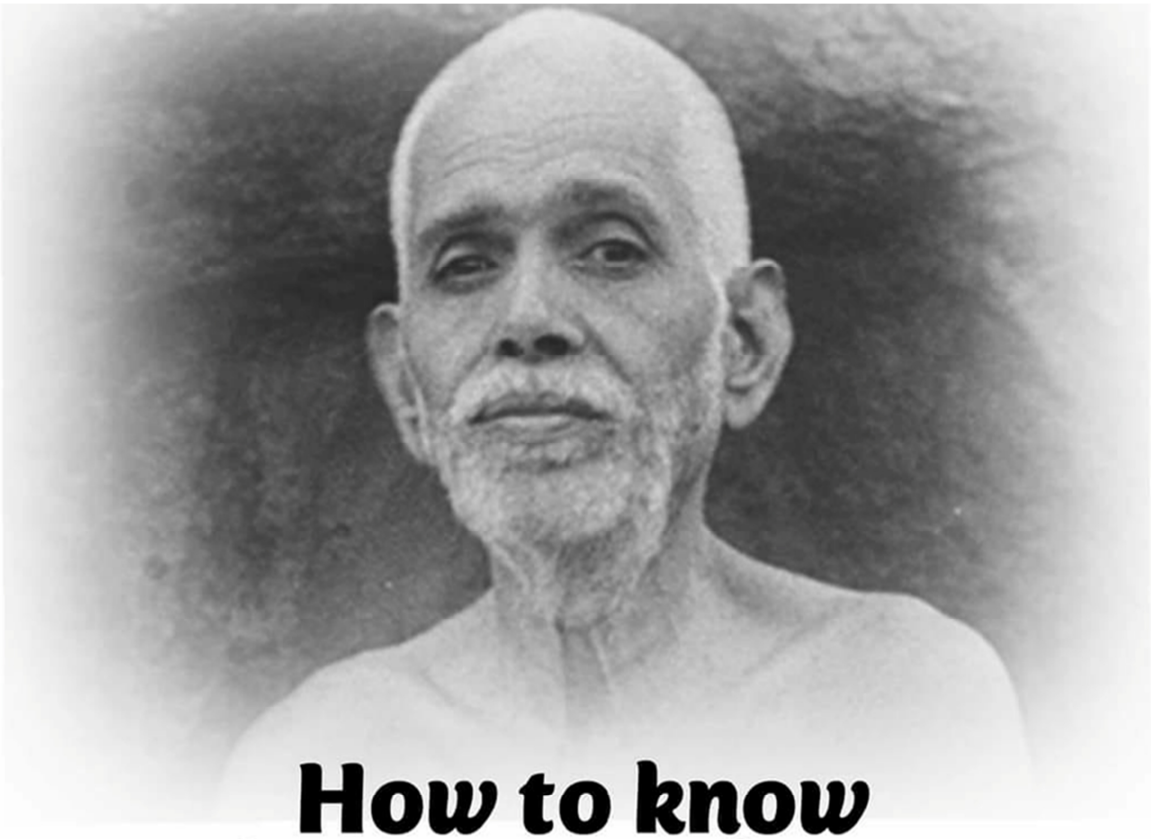


So long as there is identification
of the Self with the body,
there will be fear.

The Self is always there.
It is you.
There is nothing but you.



The Self is here and now,
it is the only Reality.
There is nothing else.



How to know the Power of God?

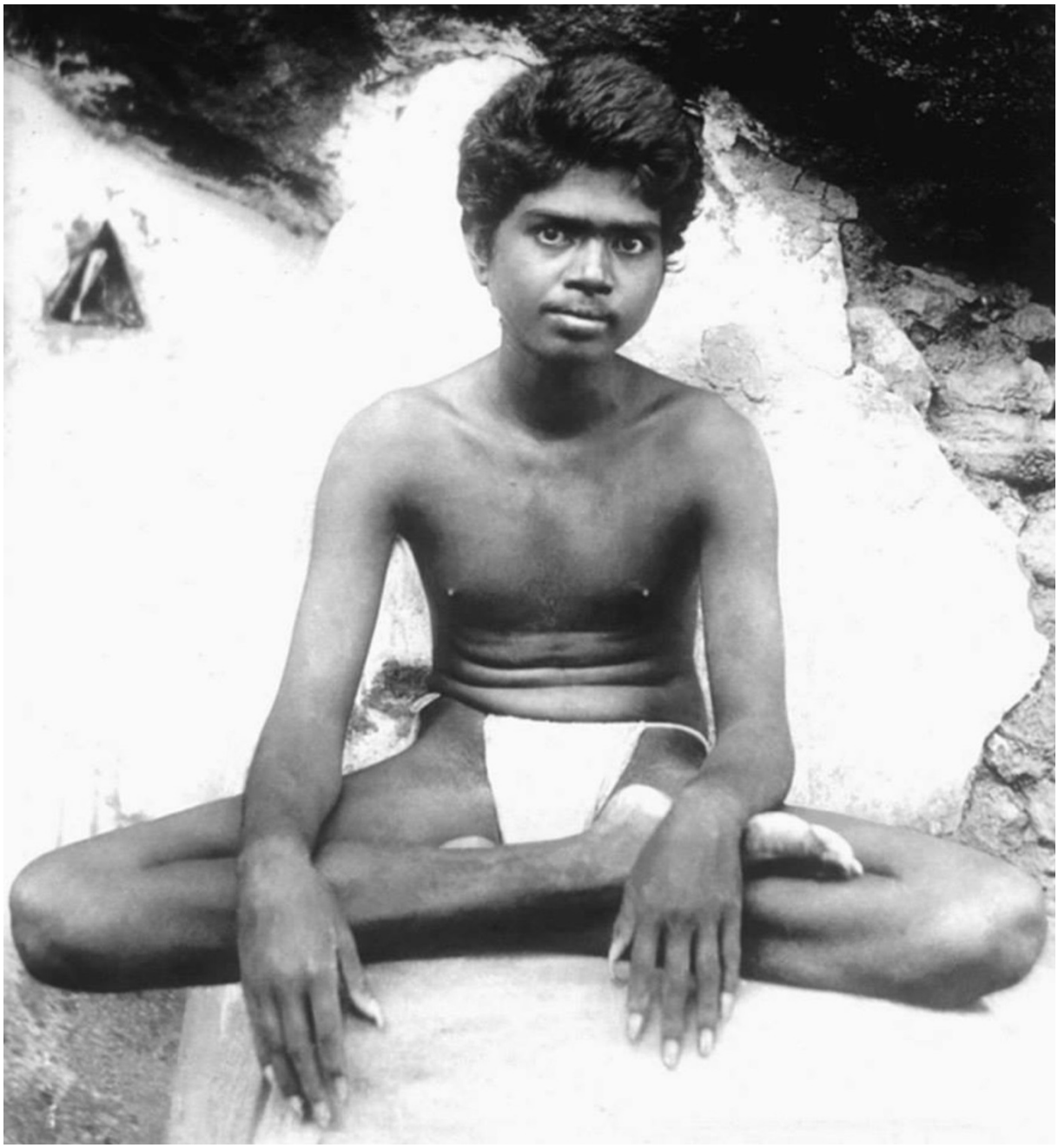
You say 'I AM'.
That is it.
What else can say I AM?
One's own being is His Power.

Ramana Maharshi

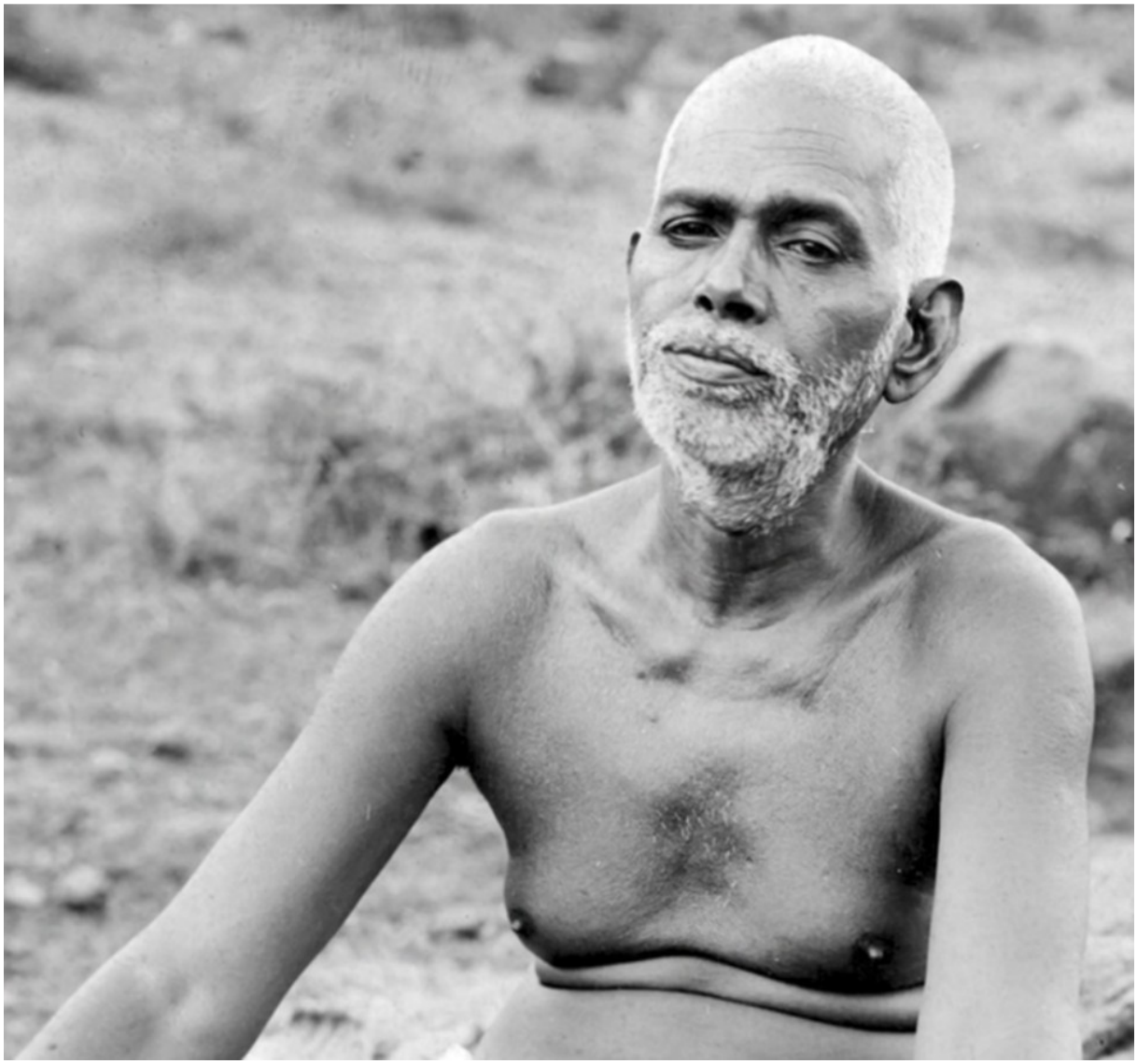
There is never a moment
when the Self is not;
It is ever-present,
here and now.

You exist
even in the absence
of time and space.

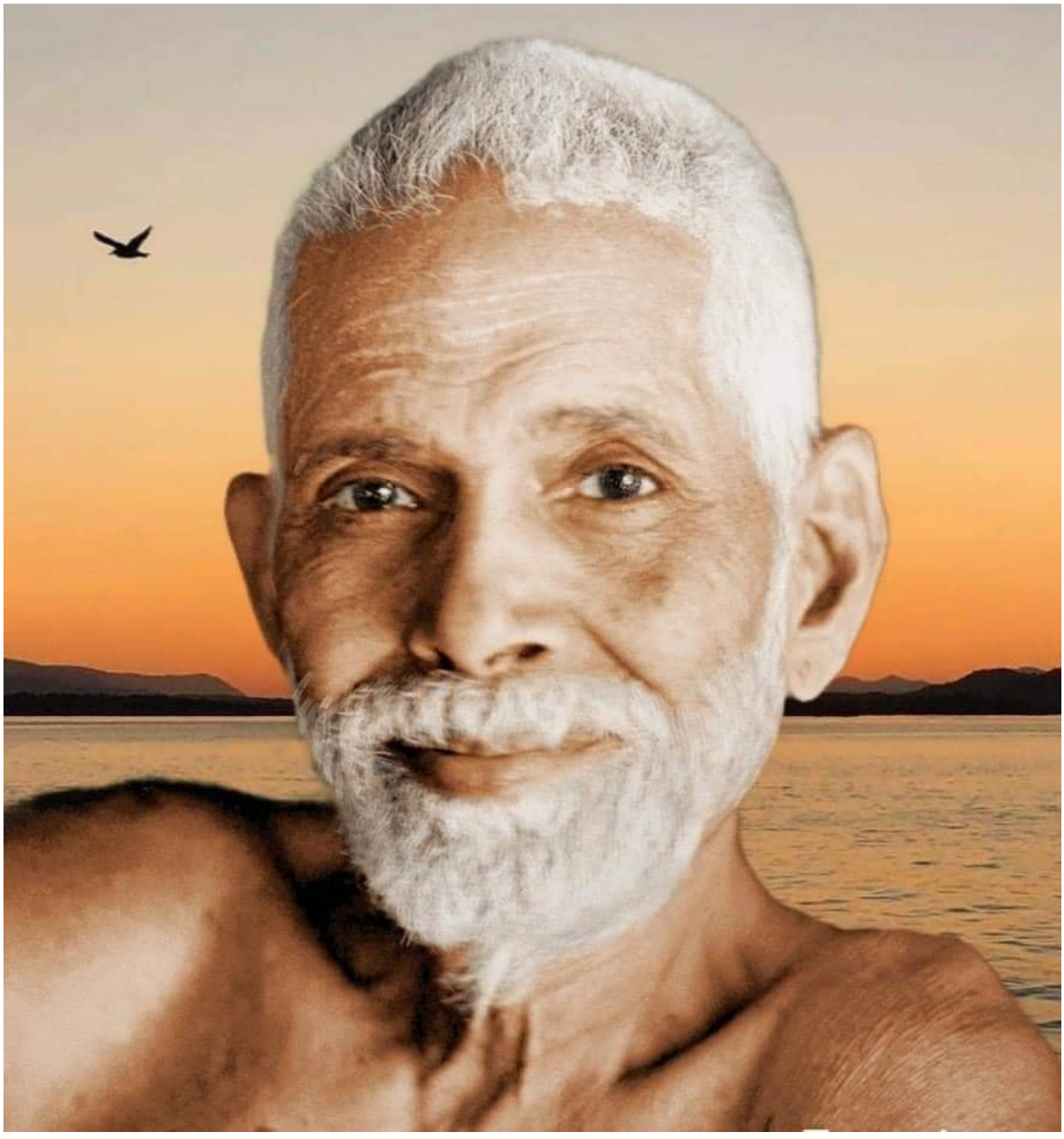
Time is only an idea.



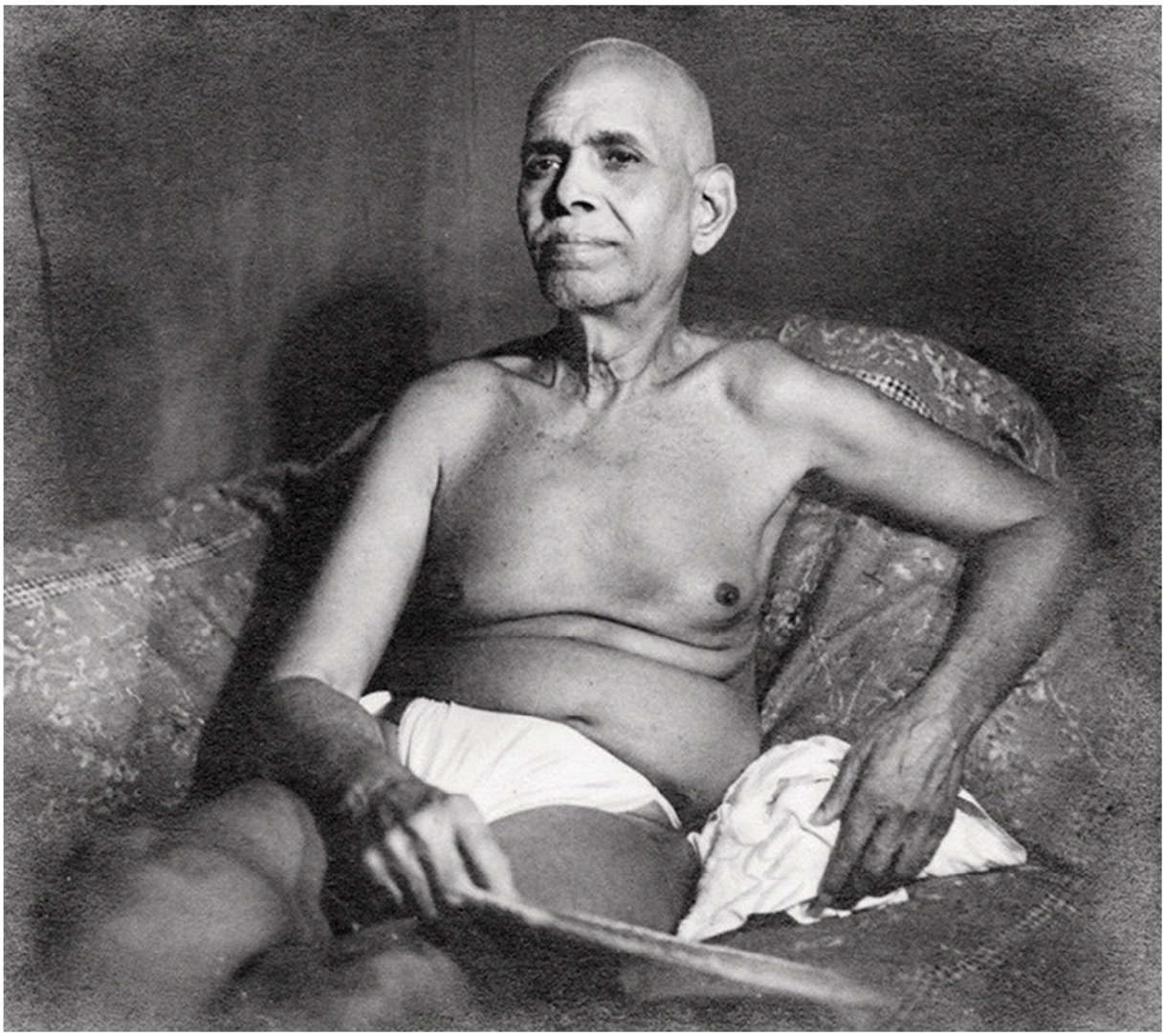
I said to the Maharshi that a certain appointment I had was a waste of time. He smiled, "There is no time. How can you waste it?"
Q: "If we want to reach the goal quickly, what can we do?"
RM: "Time is a concept in your mind. The goal always exists. It is not something new to be discovered. The Absolute is our nature. The trouble comes when you limit yourself."
Q: "I am going to stay in the East for three or four years this time."
RM: "Jesus said, 'Don't think of the tomorrow.'"
The Maharshi was presented with some new calendars...
"You bring a new calendar to help me remember the days, when I often have serious doubts as to what year it is. Time is all one to me."



The three states come and go, but you are always there. It is like a cinema. The screen is always there but several types of pictures appear on the screen and then disappear. Nothing sticks to the screen, it remains a screen. Similarly, you remain your own Self in all the three states. If you know that, the three states will not trouble you, just as the pictures which appear on the screen do not stick to it. On the screen, you sometimes see a huge ocean with endless waves; that disappears. Another time, you see fire spreading all around; that too disappears. The screen is there on both occasions. Did the screen get wet with the water or did it get burned by the fire? Nothing affected the screen. In the same way, the things that happen during the wakeful, dream and sleep states do not affect you at all; you remain your own Self.



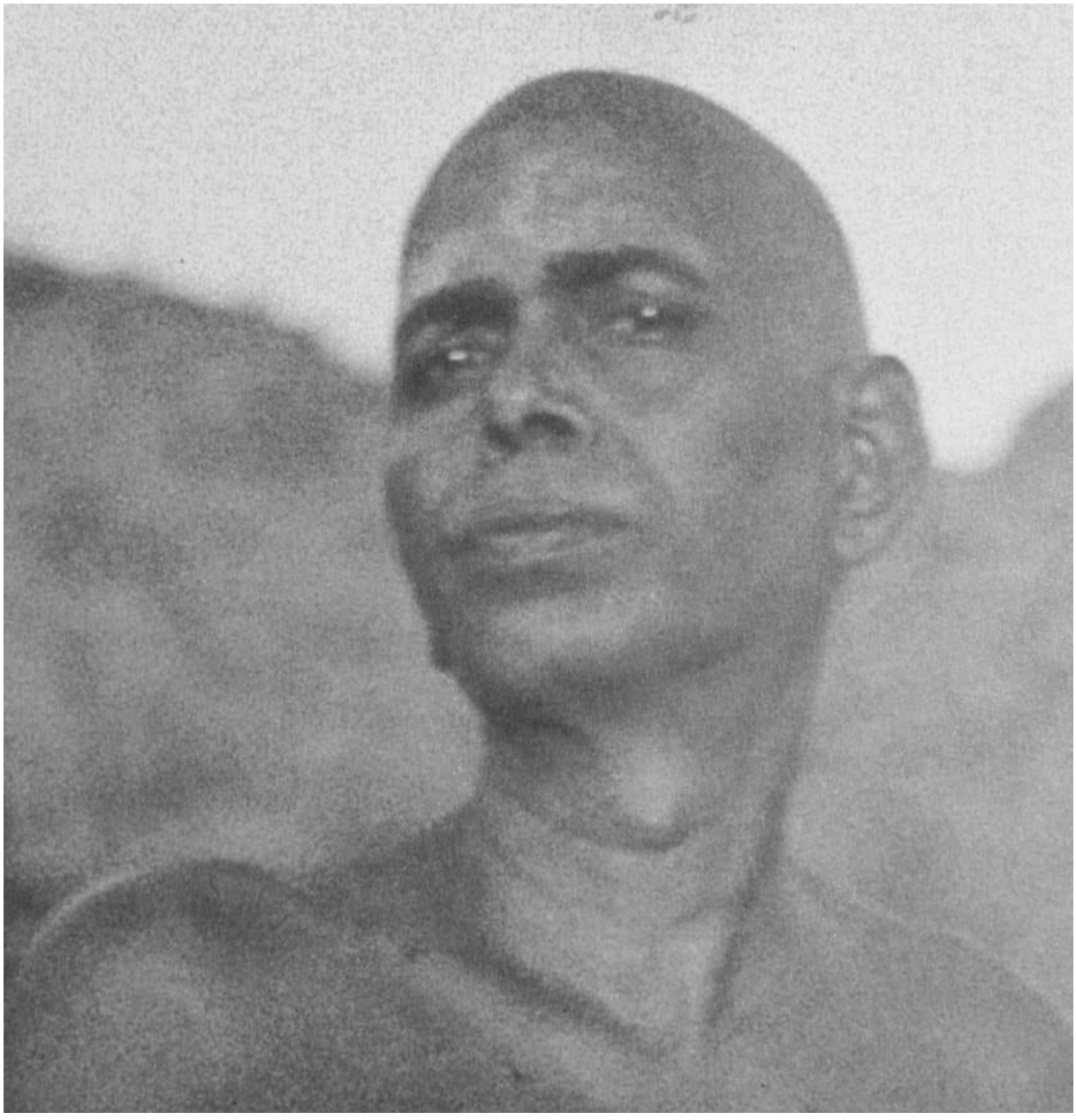
The state of a jnani is neither sleep nor waking but intermediate between the two. There is the awareness of the waking state and the stillness of sleep. It is the state of perfect awareness and of perfect stillness combined. It lies between sleep and waking; it is also the interval between two successive thoughts. It is not dullness but it is bliss. It is not transitory but it is eternal.



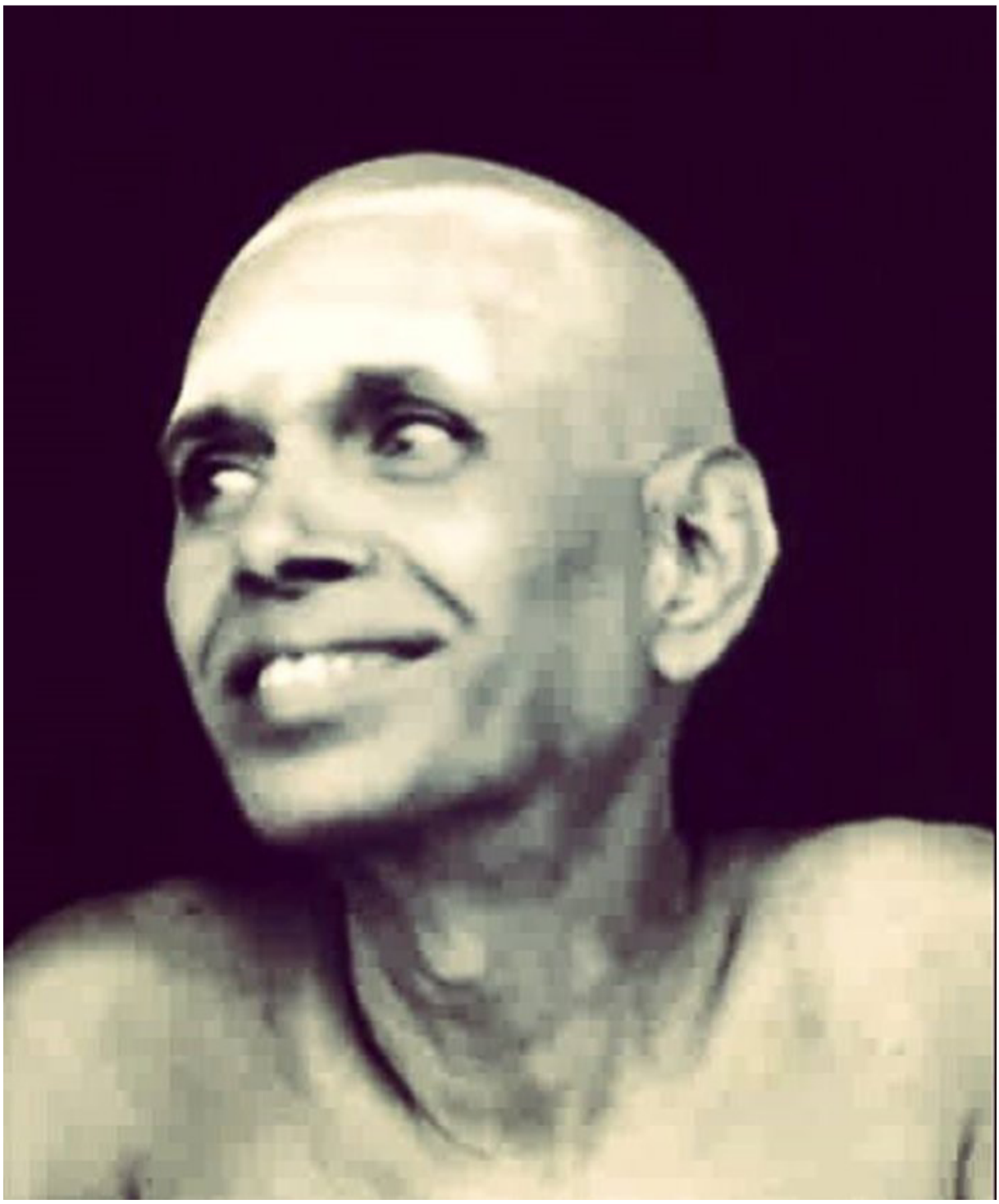
There was no mind in sleep.
But YOU were there.
So, mind comes and goes,
but there is no change
in That which is actually YOU.
YOU, the Self, remain always.

(What is the proof that I am not this body?)

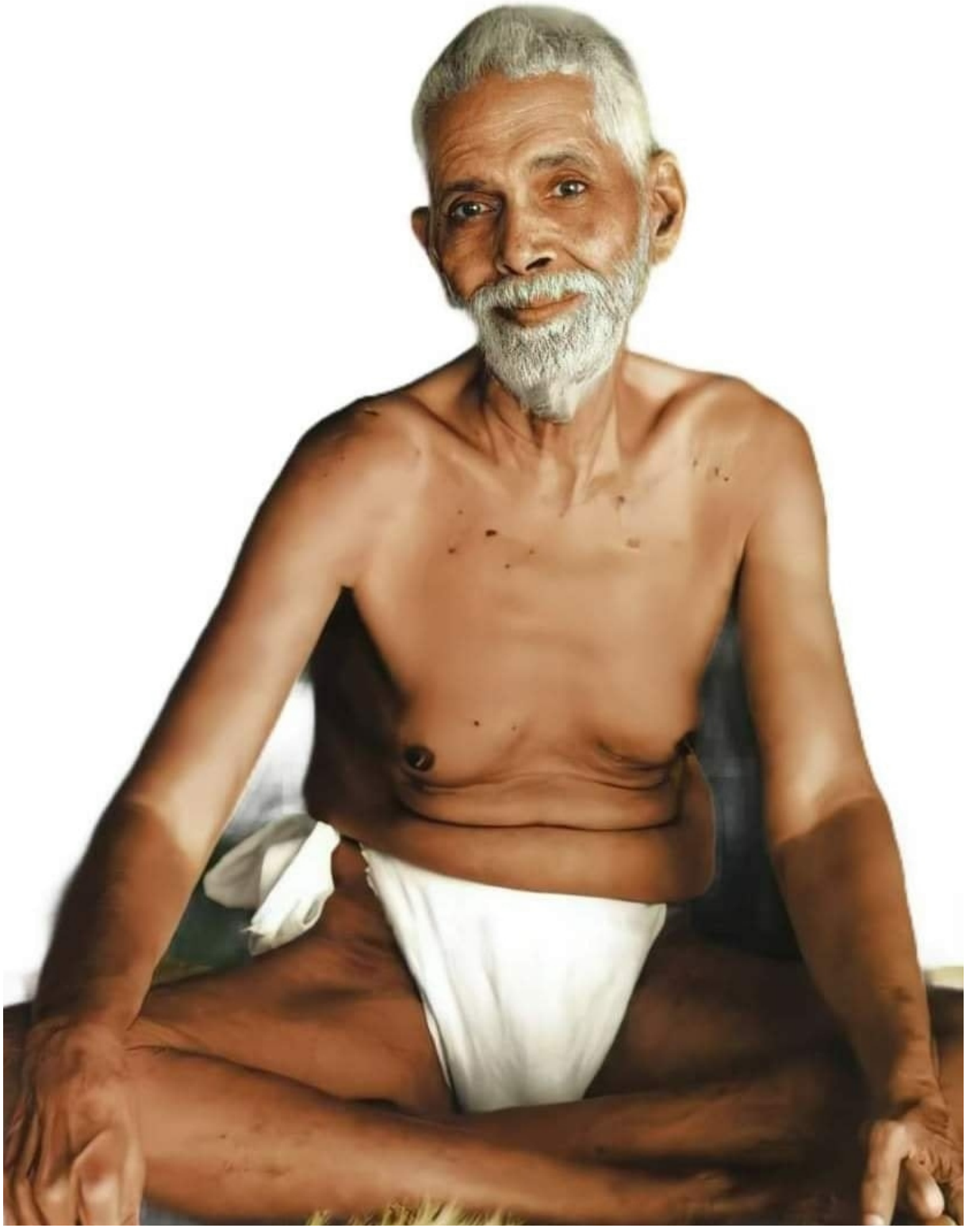
The fact that the body, which you now erroneously believe to be identical with yourself, is lost in the states of dream and deep sleep is the proof. Yet on waking you find yourself in the same body. This is continuity of memory and nothing more. What proof do you have that you are this physical body made of flesh and bone?



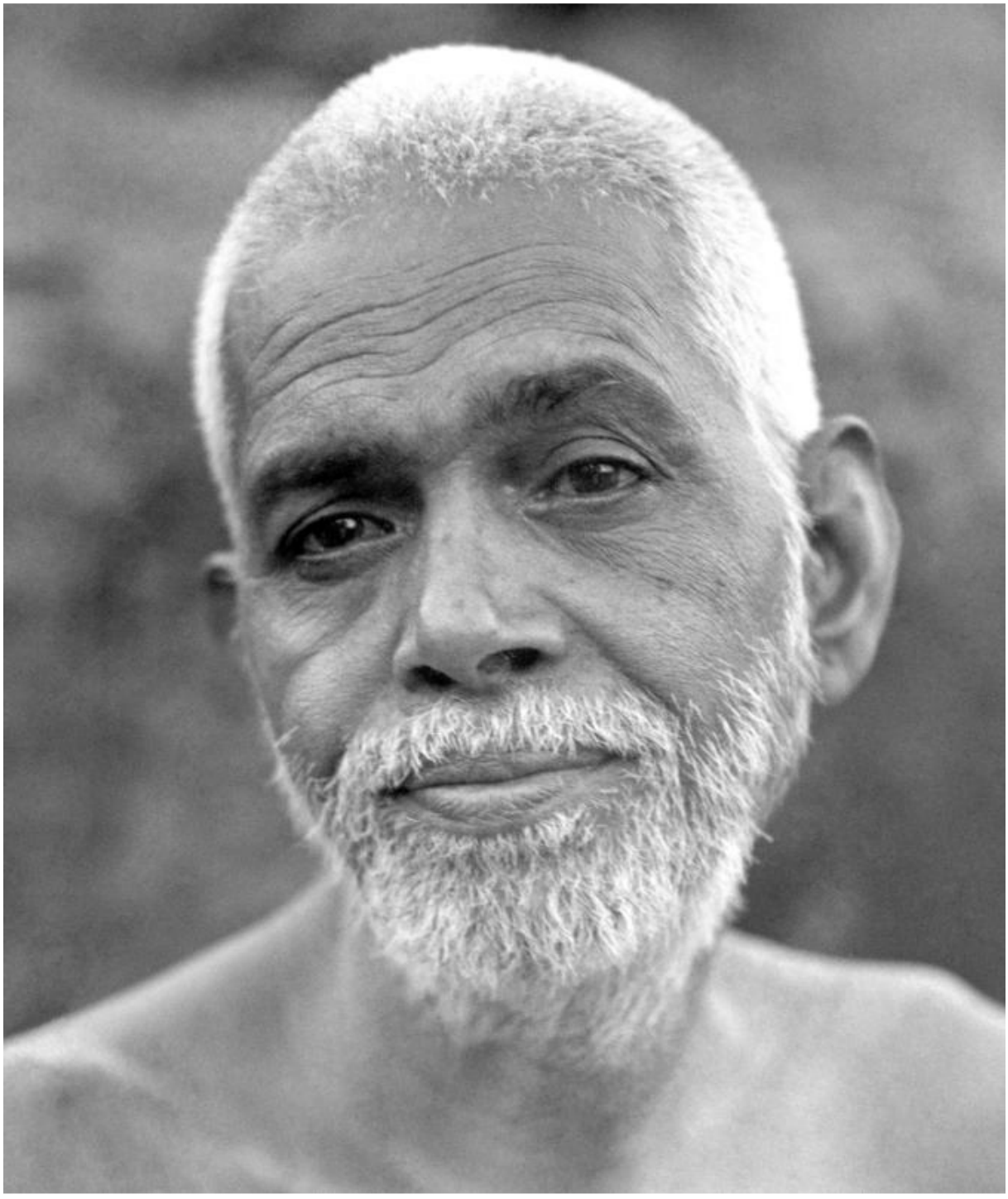
The end of all wisdom is Love, Love, Love.



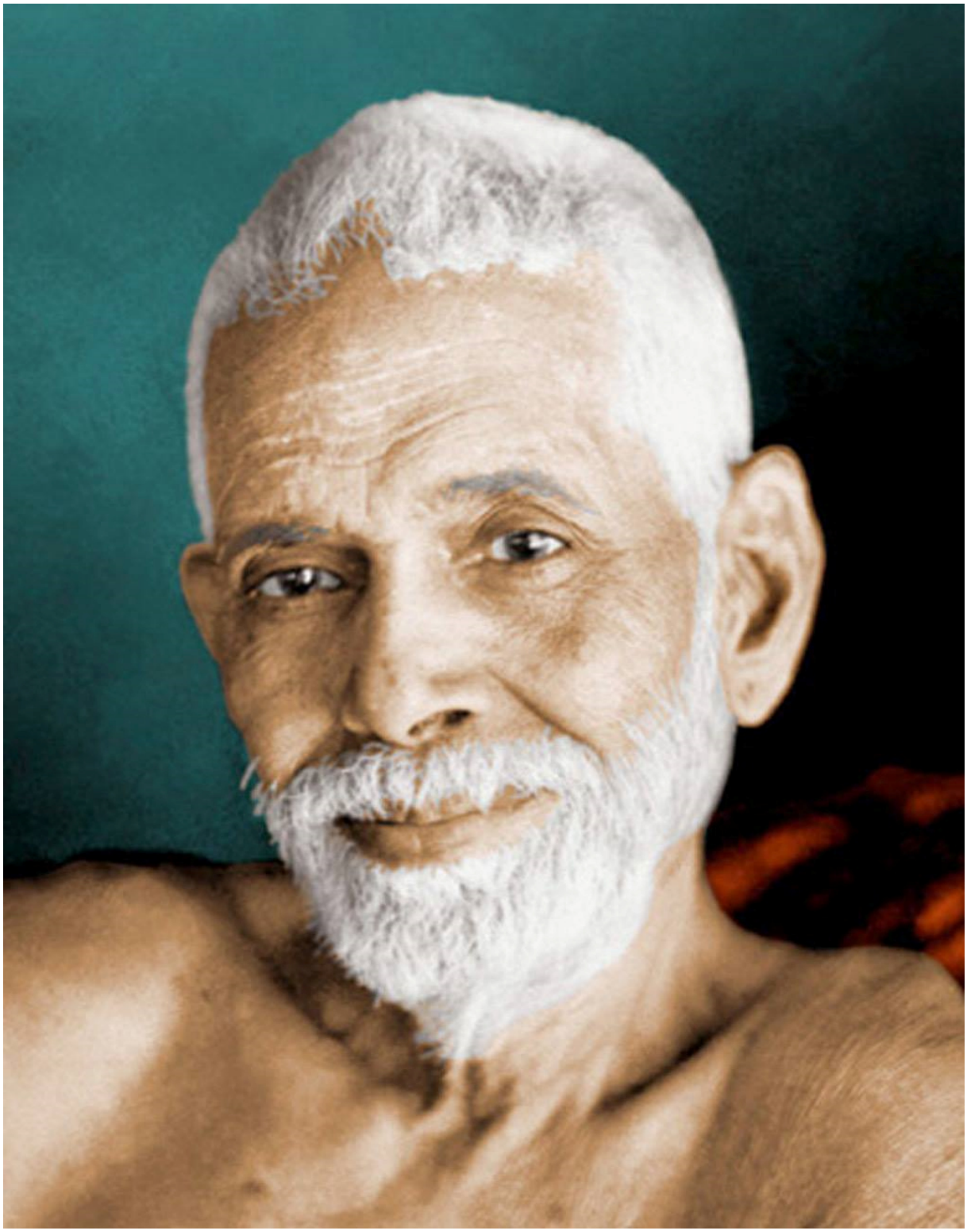
Love is verily the heart of all religions.



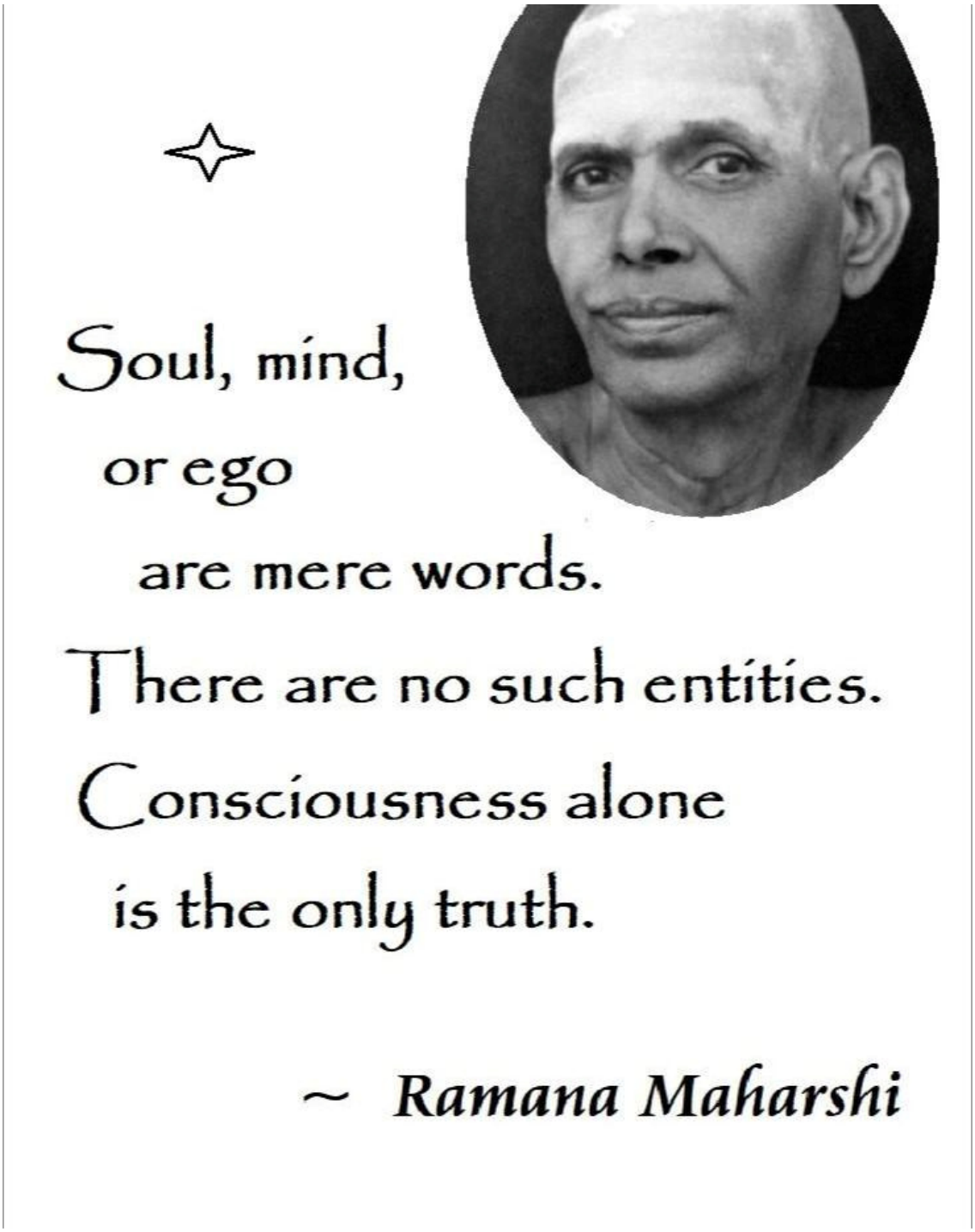
The enemy hates the ego,
which the seeker wants to kill;
thus, like the anvil to the goldsmith,
he is actually a friend.



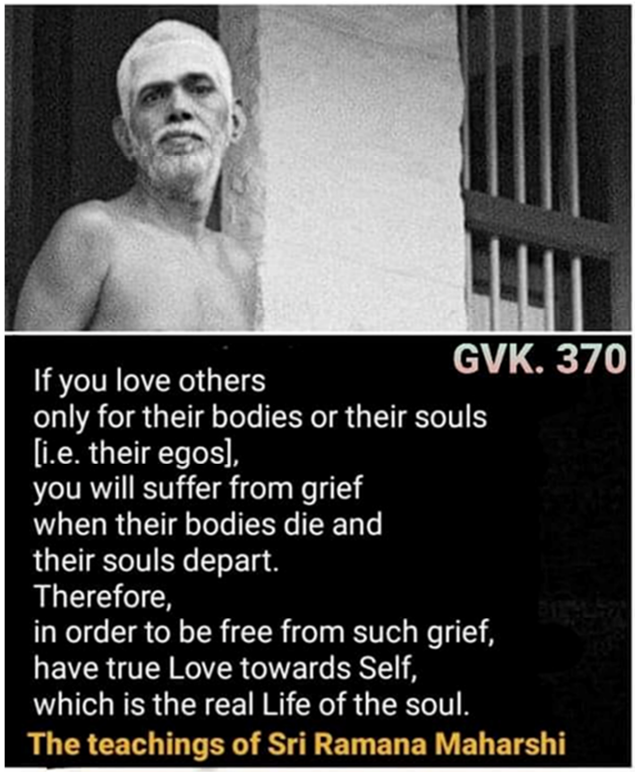
That is the ego which rises and sinks periodically.
But you exist always.
That which lies beyond the ego is
Consciousness – the Self.



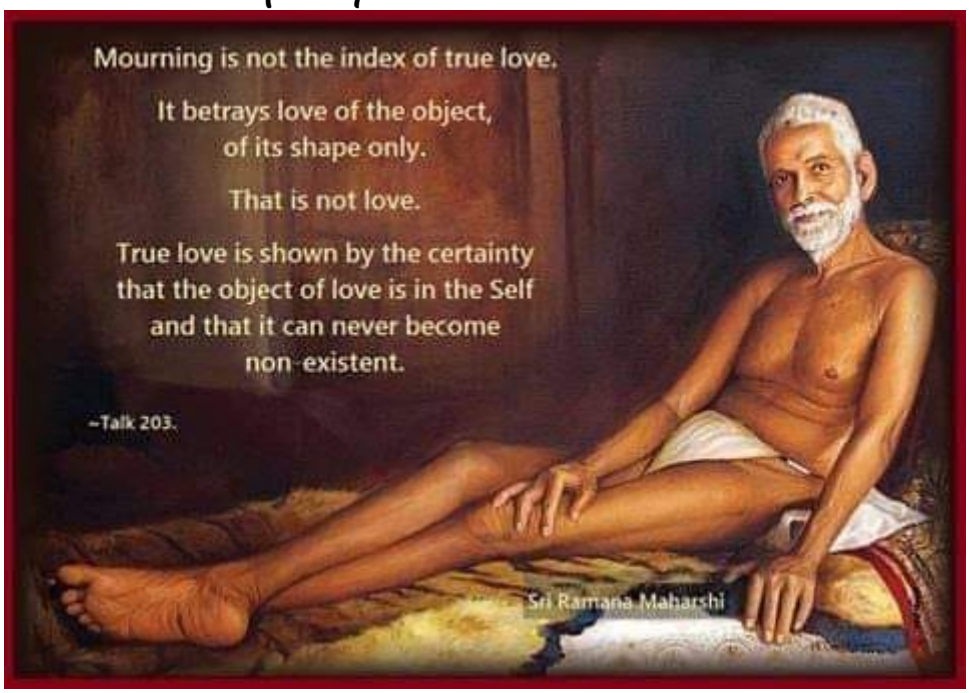
Soul, mind and ego are mere words. These are not real entities. Consciousness is the only truth. Its nature is Bliss. Bliss alone is - enjoyer and enjoyment both merge in it. Pleasure consists in turning and keeping the mind within; pain in sending it outward. There is only pleasure. Absence of pleasure is called pain. One's nature is pleasure - bliss.



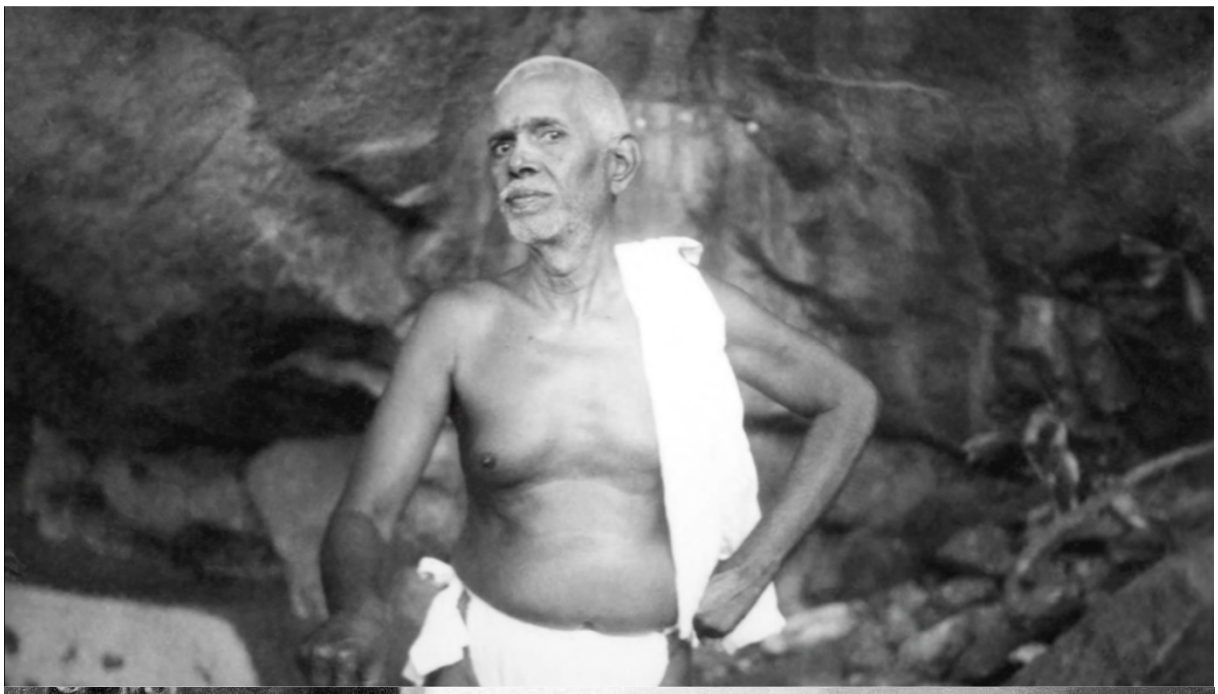
The mind and the ego are one and the same. The other mental faculties such as the intellect and the memory are only this. Mind, intellect, the storehouse of mental tendencies, and ego; all these are only the one mind itself. This is like different names being given to a man according to his different functions. The individual soul is nothing but this ego.

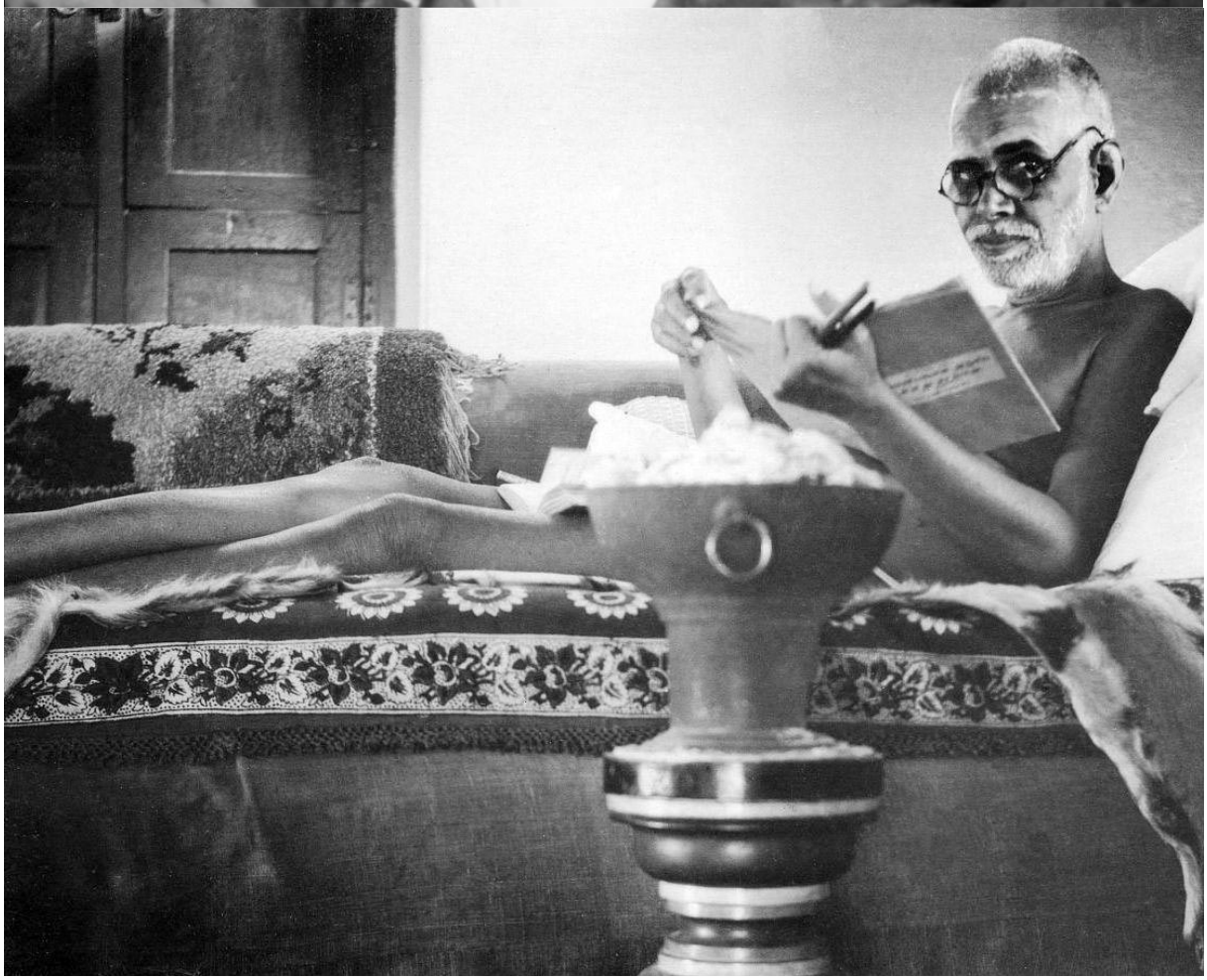


Let him who weeps over the death of his wife and children, weep first for the death of his ego – 'I am the body' – and attend to his own Self, then all his miseries will die completely.

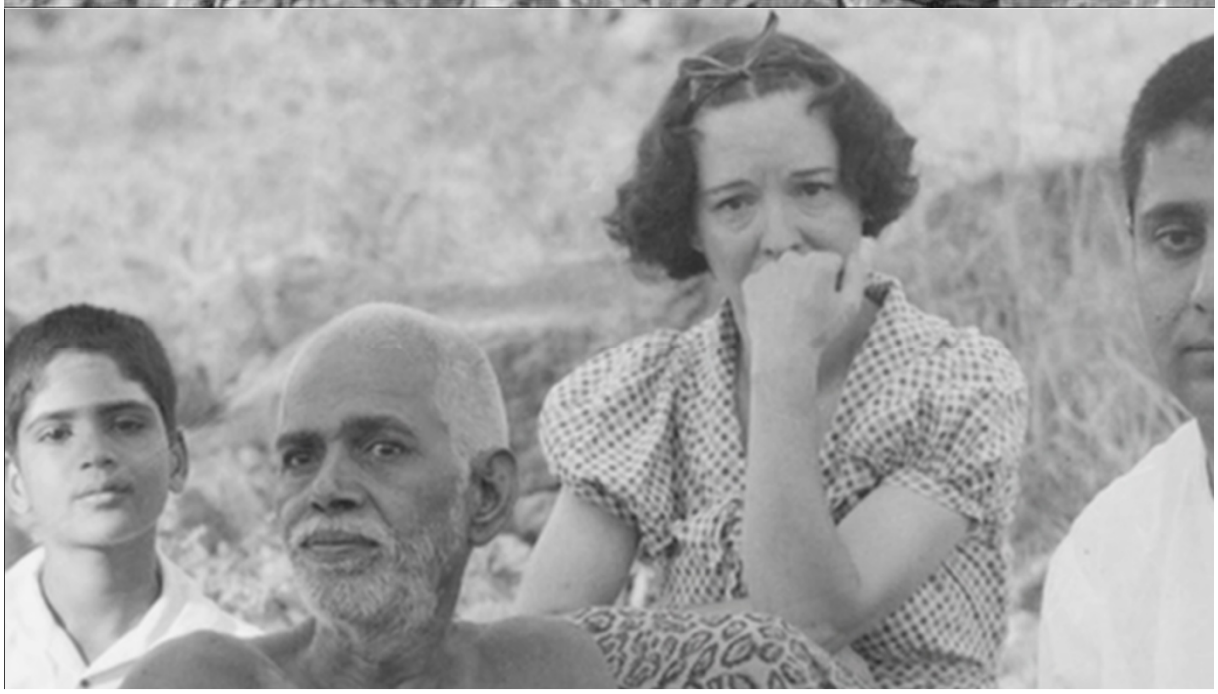


Mind is consciousness which has put on limitations.
You are originally unlimited and perfect.
Later you take on limitations and seem to become the mind.



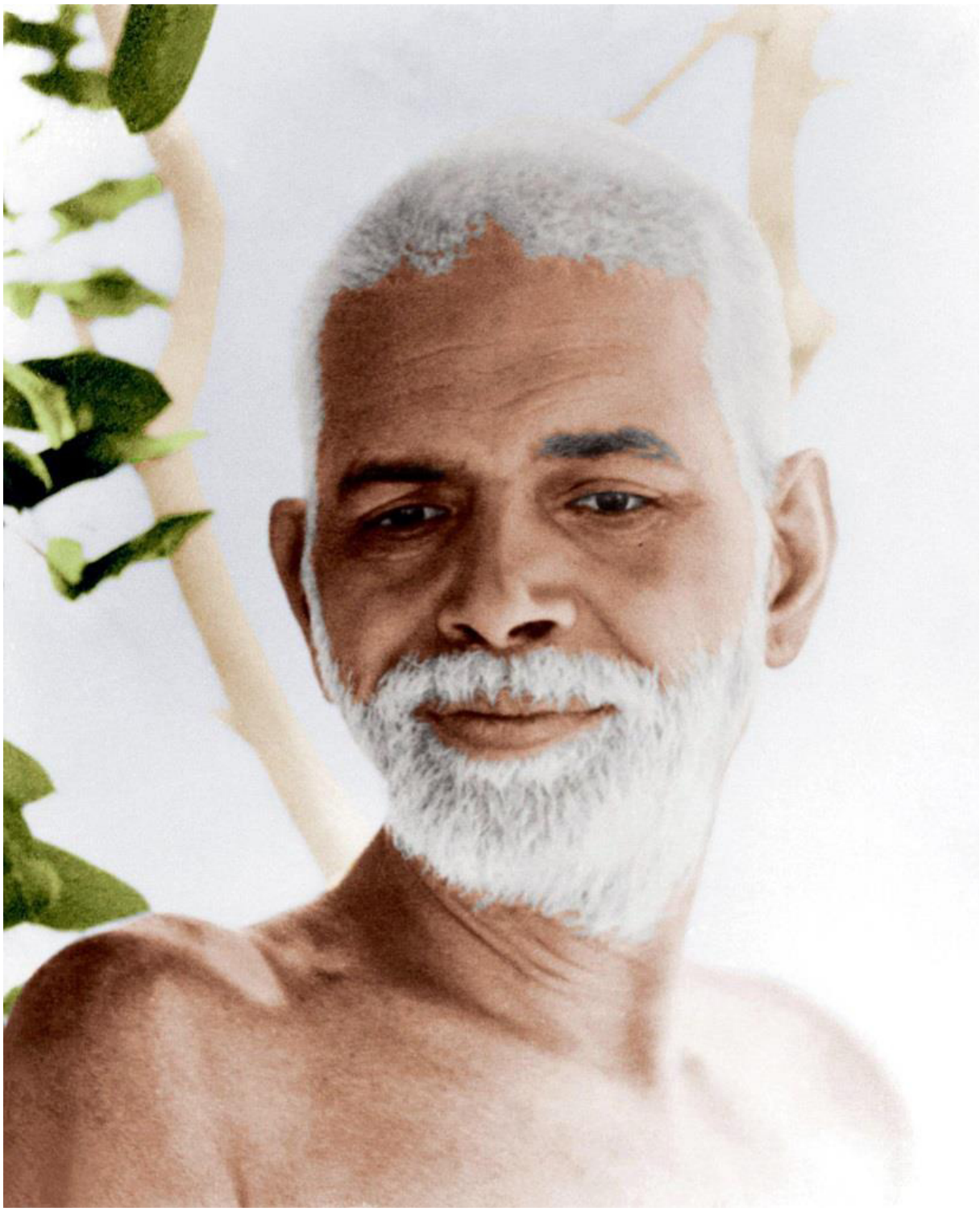


When infinite consciousness puts on limitations,
it appears as individuals.

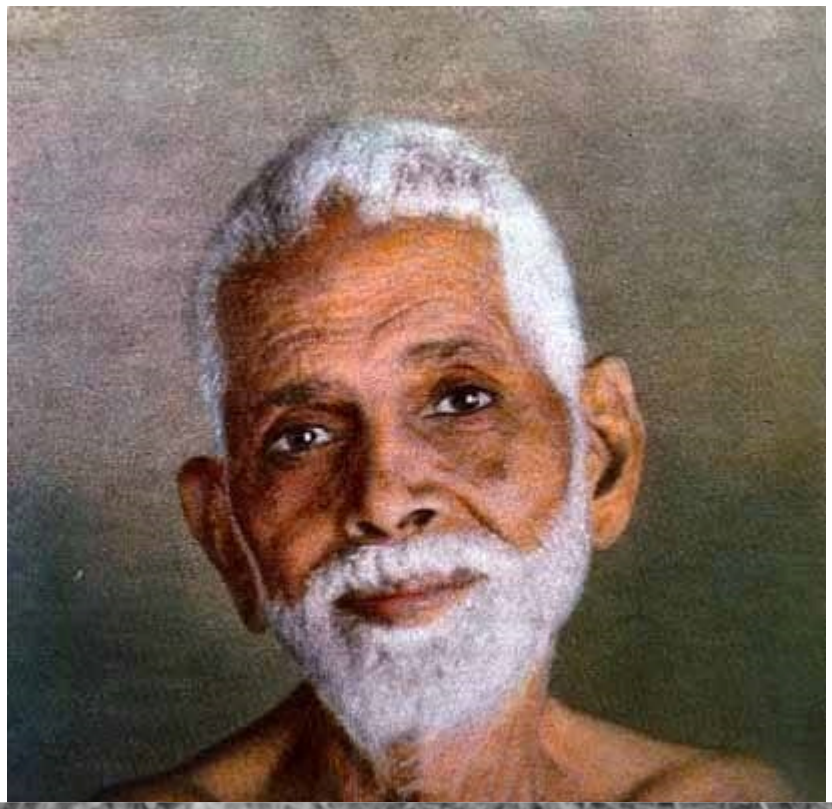


(What is the nirvana of Buddha?)

Loss of individuality.



The truth is
that the individuality is not lost but expanded to infinity.
The elimination of thoughts is for the purpose of concentrating
on the deeper awareness that is beyond thought.
When the quest is achieved, the faculties of the mind are not lost.

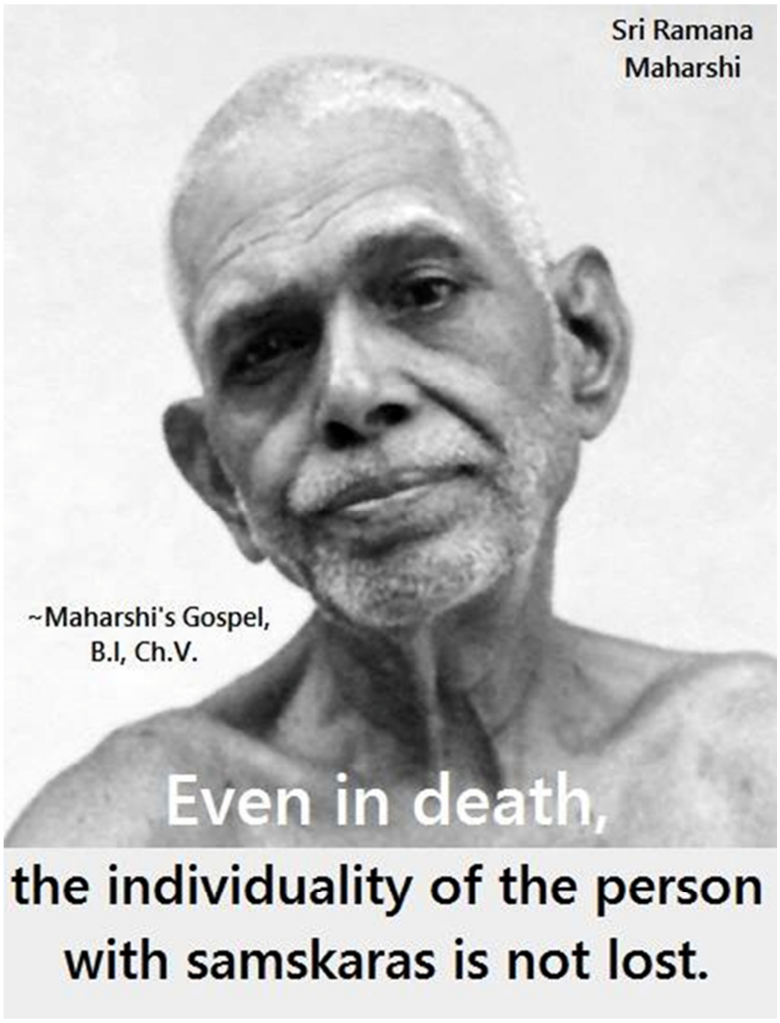


(Does not death dissolve the individuality of a person, so that there can be no rebirth, just as the rivers discharged into the ocean lose their individualities?)

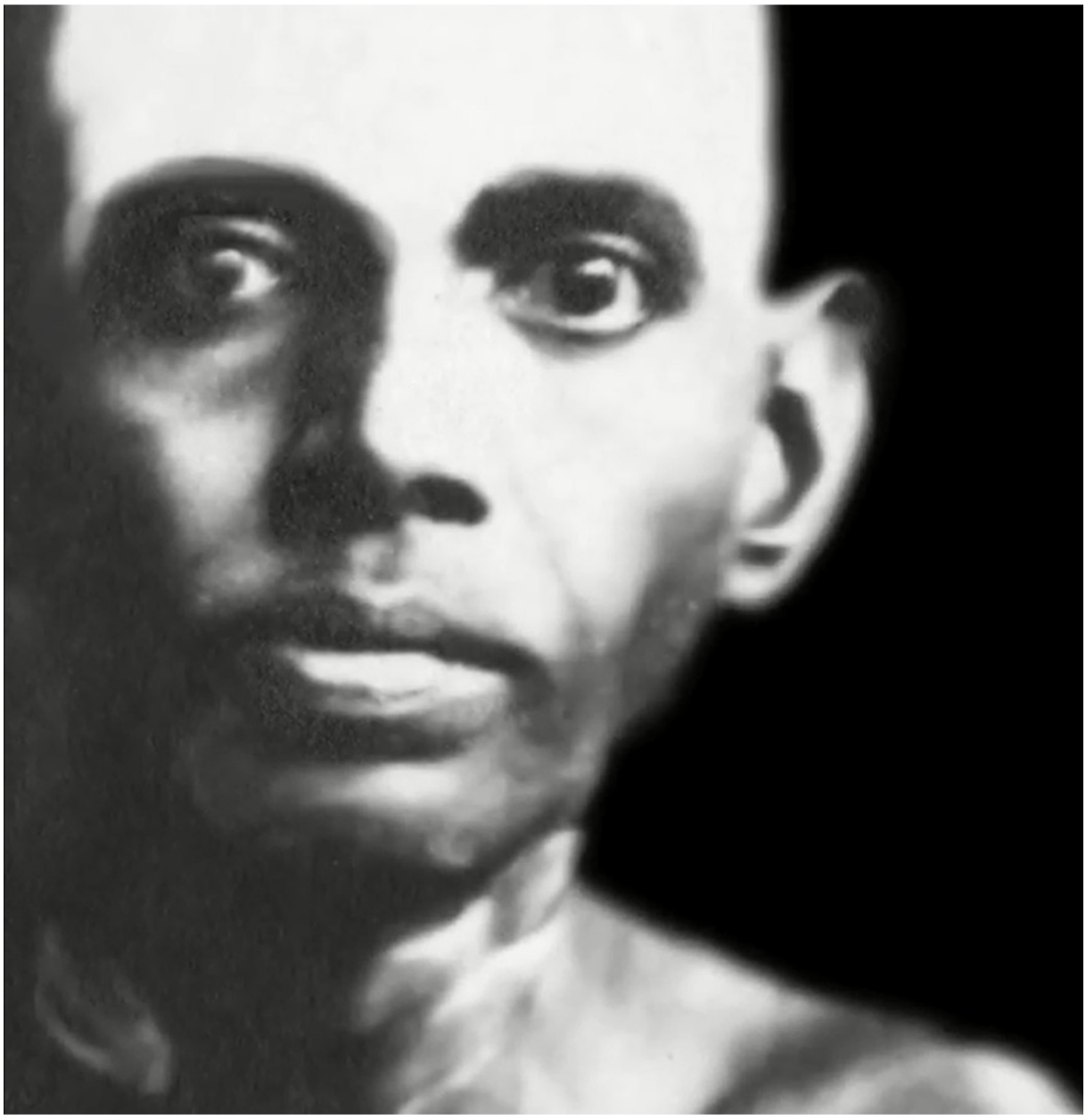
But when the waters evaporate and return as rain on the hills, they once more flow in the form of rivers and fall into the ocean; so also the individualities during sleep lose their separateness and yet return as individuals according to their samskaras or past tendencies. Even so it is in death; and the individuality of the person with samskaras is not lost.

(How can that be?)

See how a tree whose branches have been cut, grows again. So long as the roots of the tree remain unimpaired, the tree will continue to grow. Similarly, the samskaras which have merely sunk into the heart on death, but have not perished for that reason, occasion rebirth at the right time.

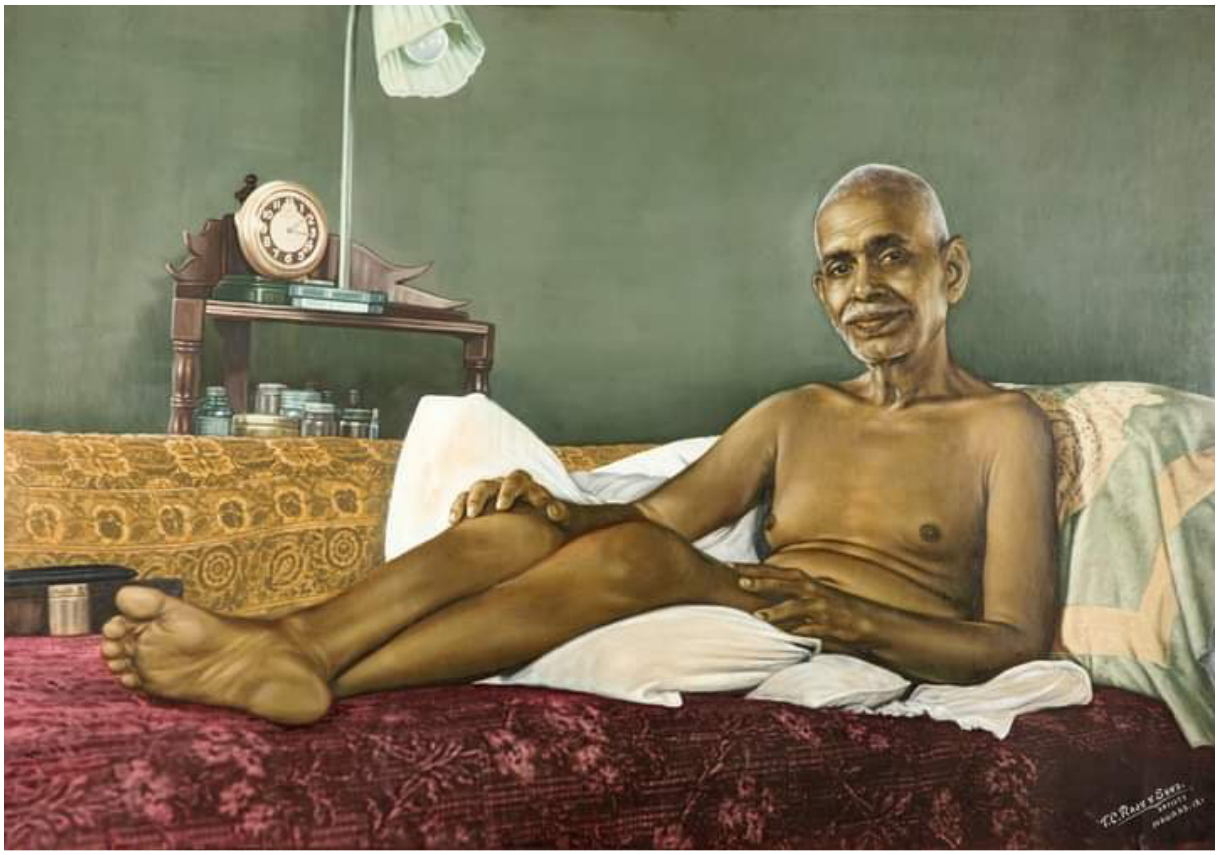


Even the structure of the atom has been found by the mind.
Therefore, the mind is subtler than the atom.
That which is behind the mind,
namely the individual soul,
is subtler than the mind.

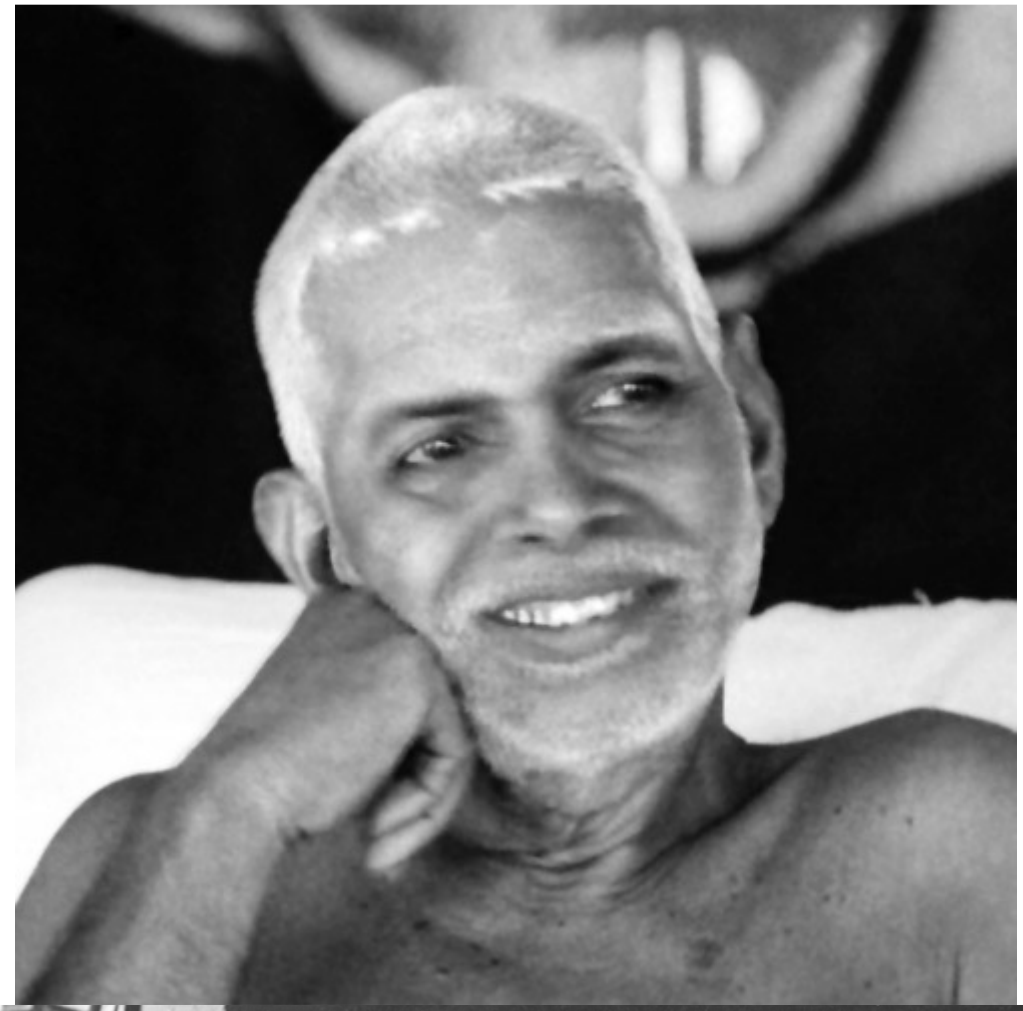


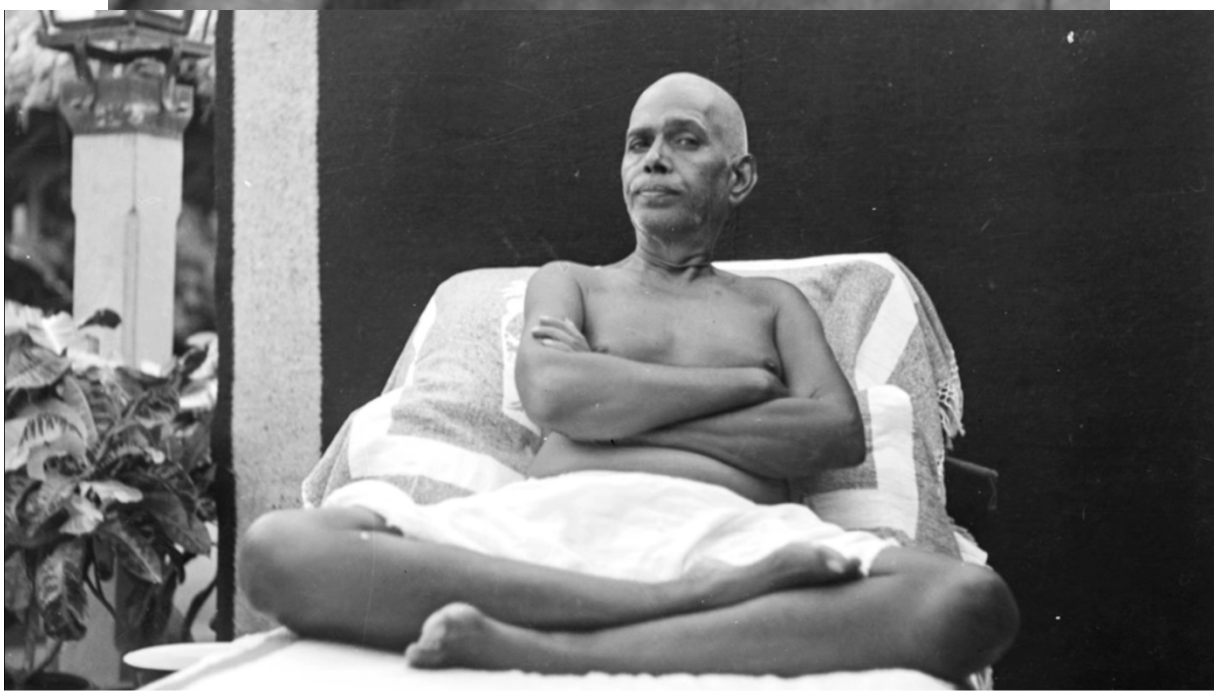
They write a lot about the paths beyond the sun and other planets, and the blissful worlds above them. All those worlds also are like this world. There is nothing specially great about them. Here, a song is being transmitted over the radio. Last time, it was from Madras. Now it is from Tiruchirapalli. If you tune again, it will be from Mysore. All these places are in Tiruvannamalai, within this short time. It is the same way with the other worlds. You have only to turn your minds to them. You can see them all in one moment. But what is the use?

You merely go about from place to place to get tired and disgusted. Where is shanti (peace)? If you want it, you must know the eternal truth. If you cannot know that, the mind will not get absorbed in shanti.

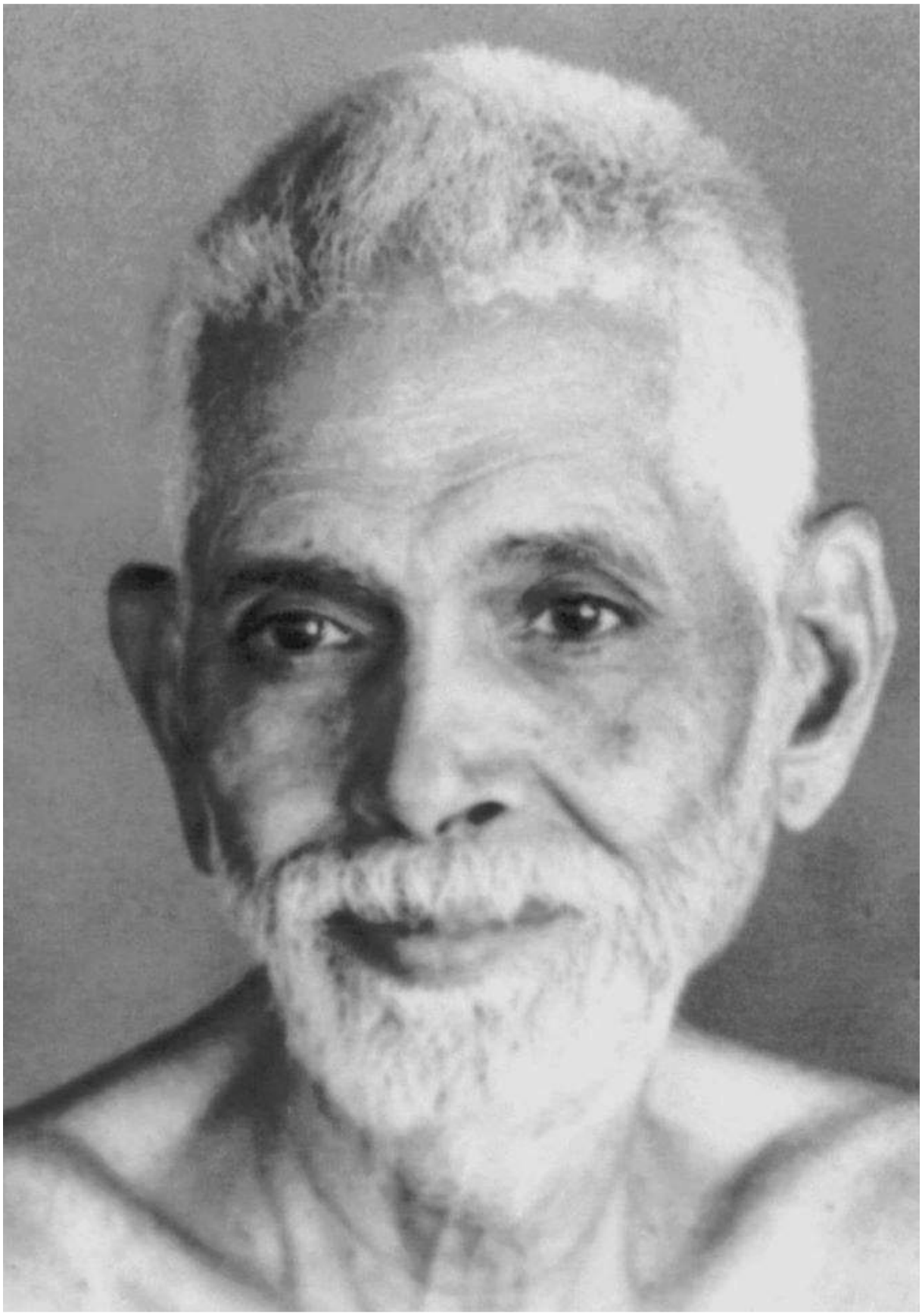


People do all sorts of funny things
according to their preconceived notions.
We have merely to keep quiet, witnessing them.





The only language able to express the whole truth is silence.



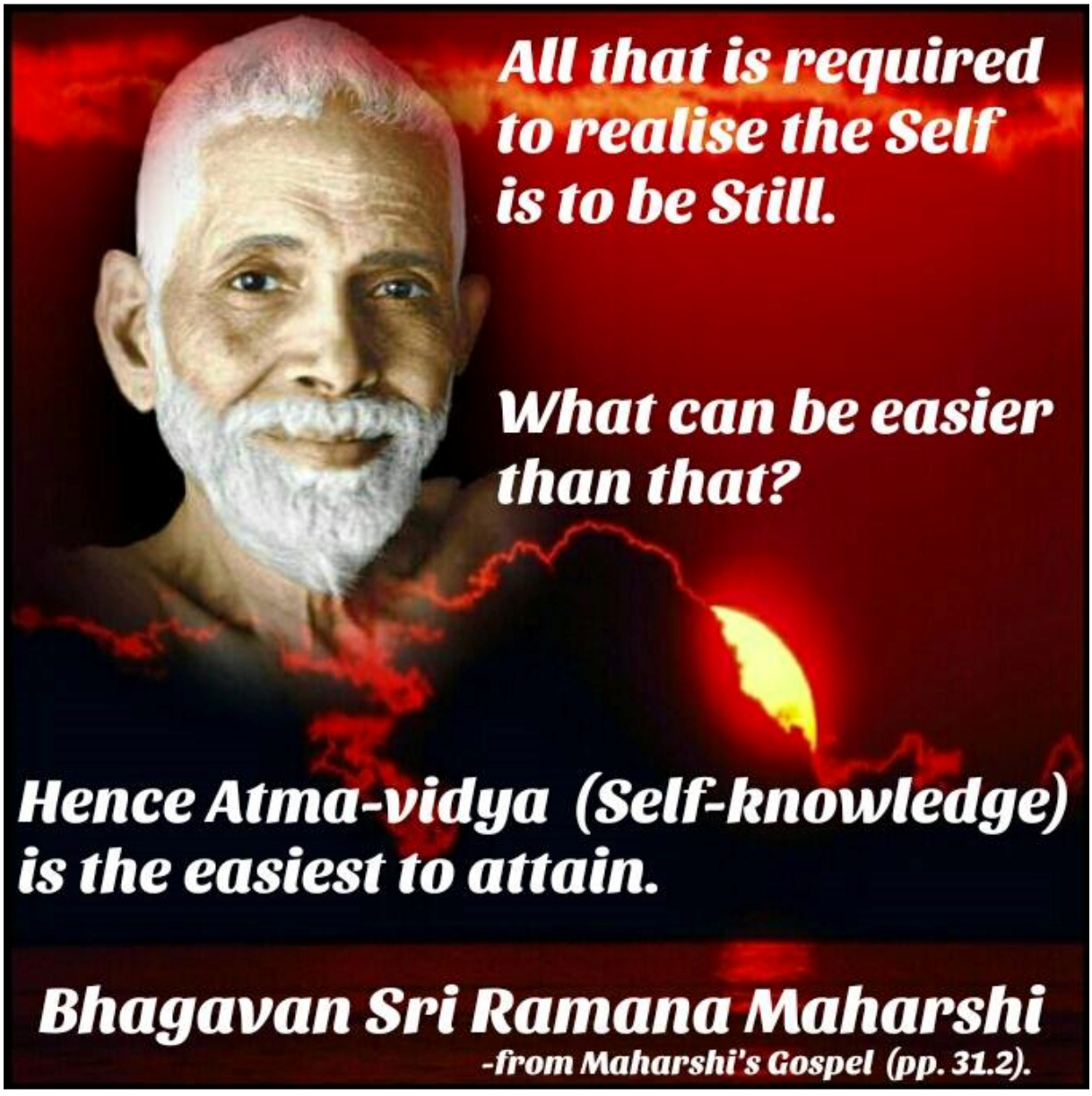
Silence is most powerful.
Speech is always less powerful than silence.

Silence is truth.

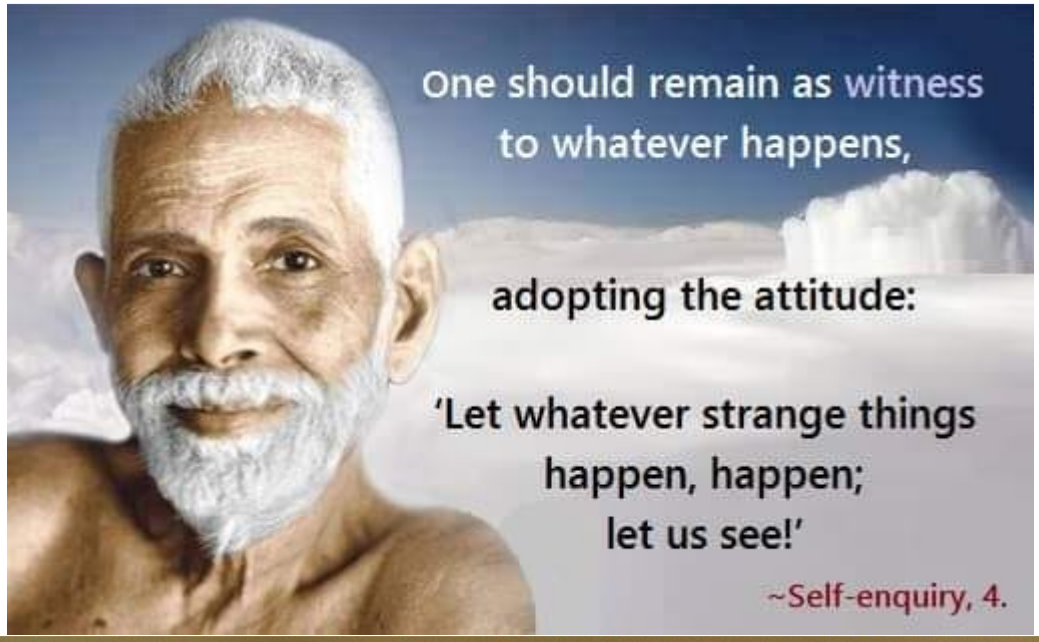
Silence is bliss.

Silence is peace.

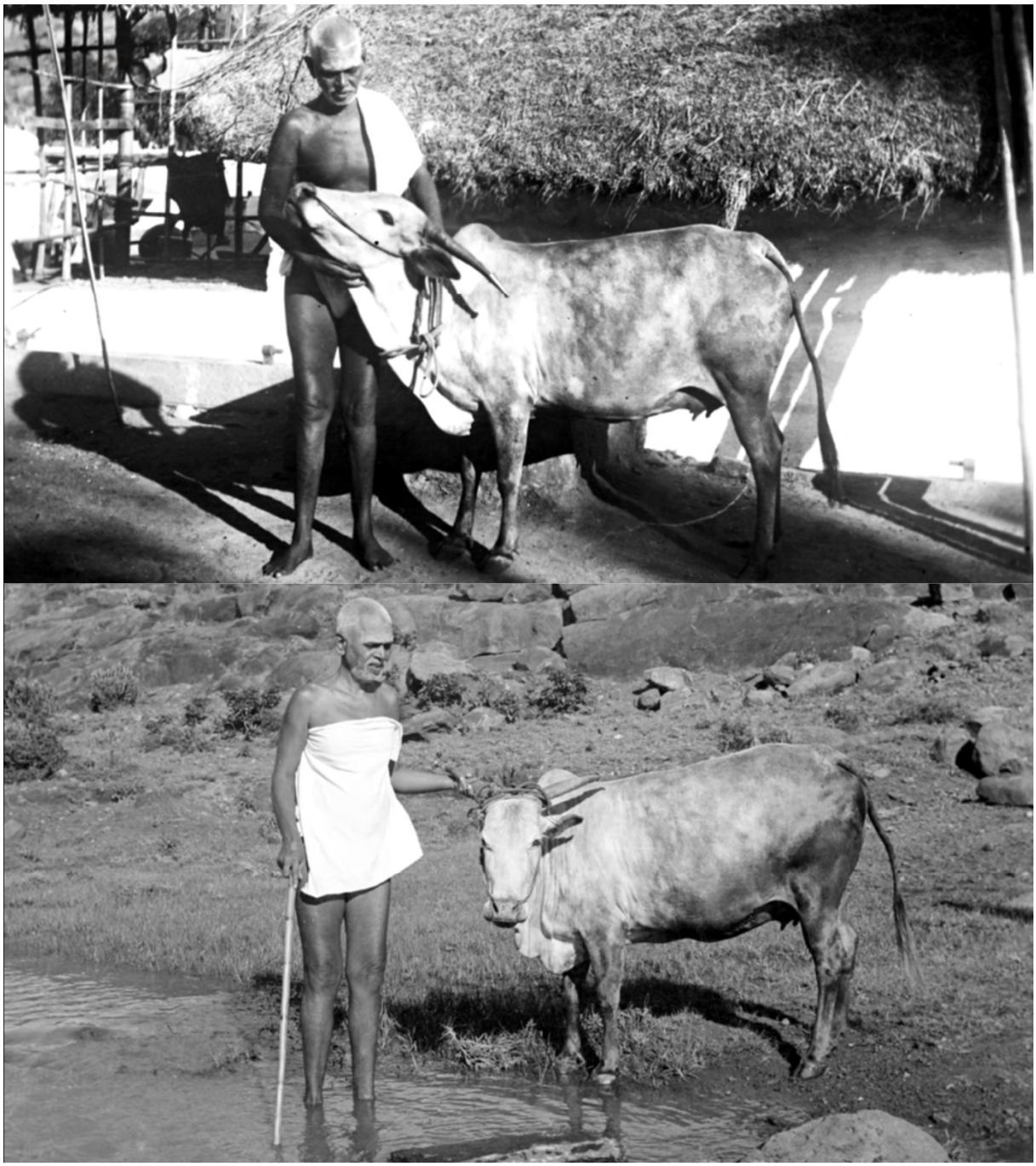
And hence Silence is the Self.



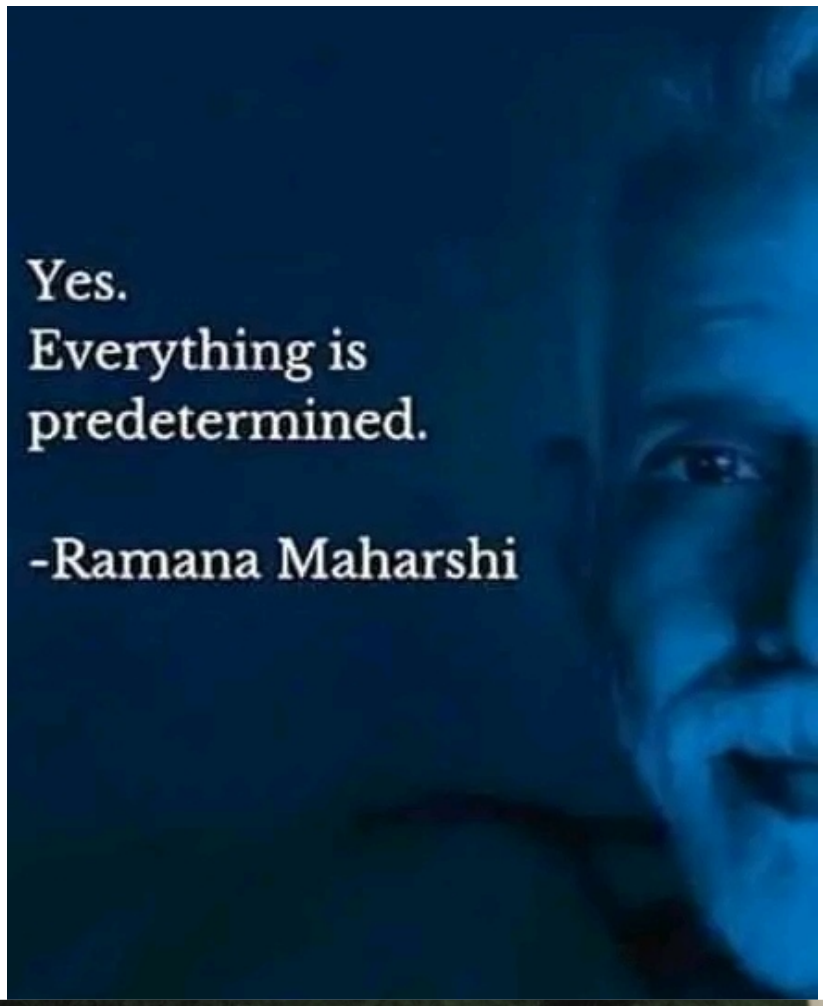
Take refuge in silence. You can be here or there or anywhere. Fixed in silence, established in the inner 'I', you can be as you are. The world will never perturb you if you are well founded upon the tranquility within. Gather your thoughts within. Find out the thought centre and discover your Self-equipoise. In storm and turmoil, be calm and silent. Watch the events around as a witness. The world is a drama. Be a witness, inturned and introspective.



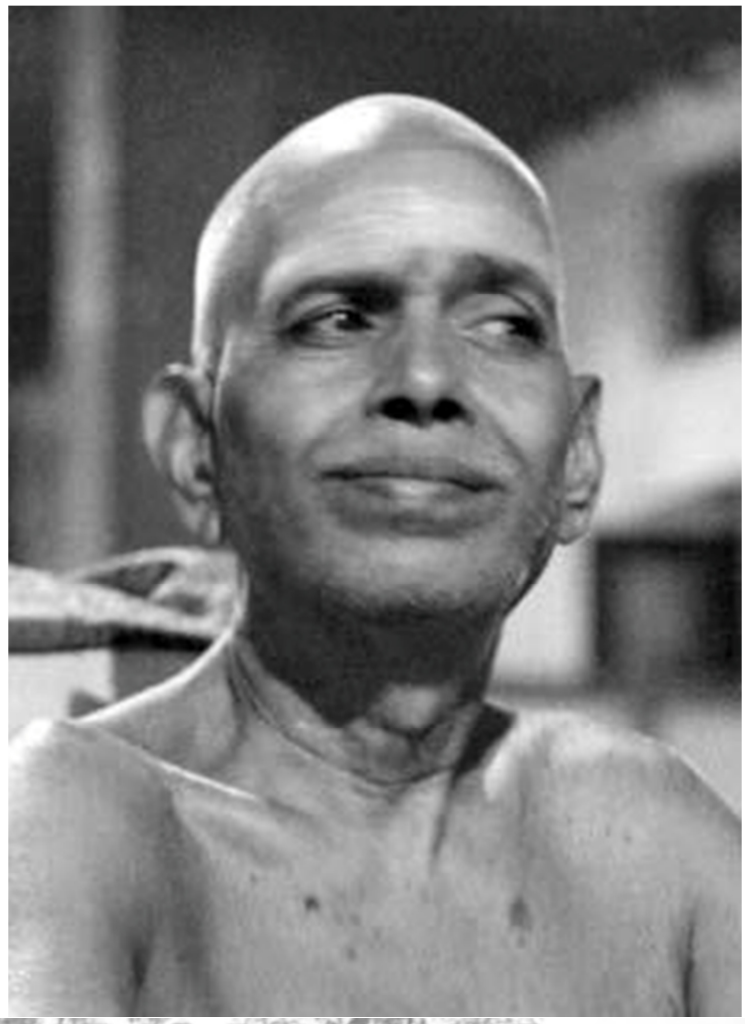
There is no you,
there is only the state of freedom.
Be That.
Be free like the sky.
Be still like the hill.
Accept change like the seasons.
Be silent like complete emptiness.
You are That!

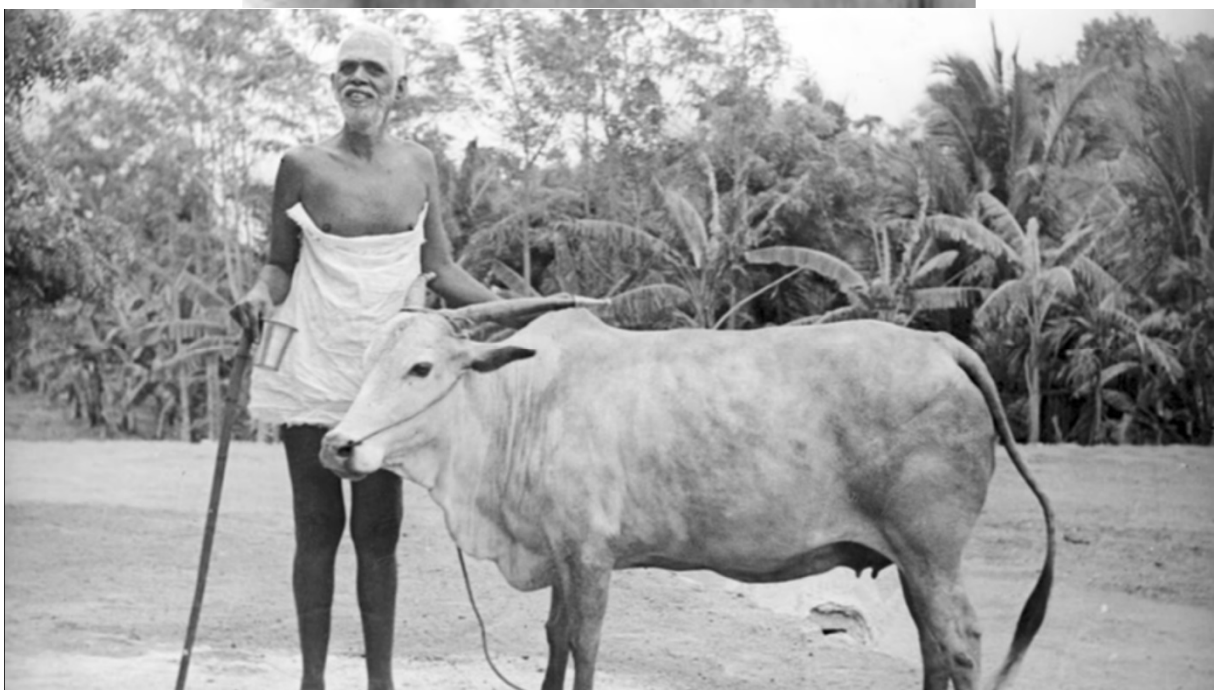


Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may.
Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it.
This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent.

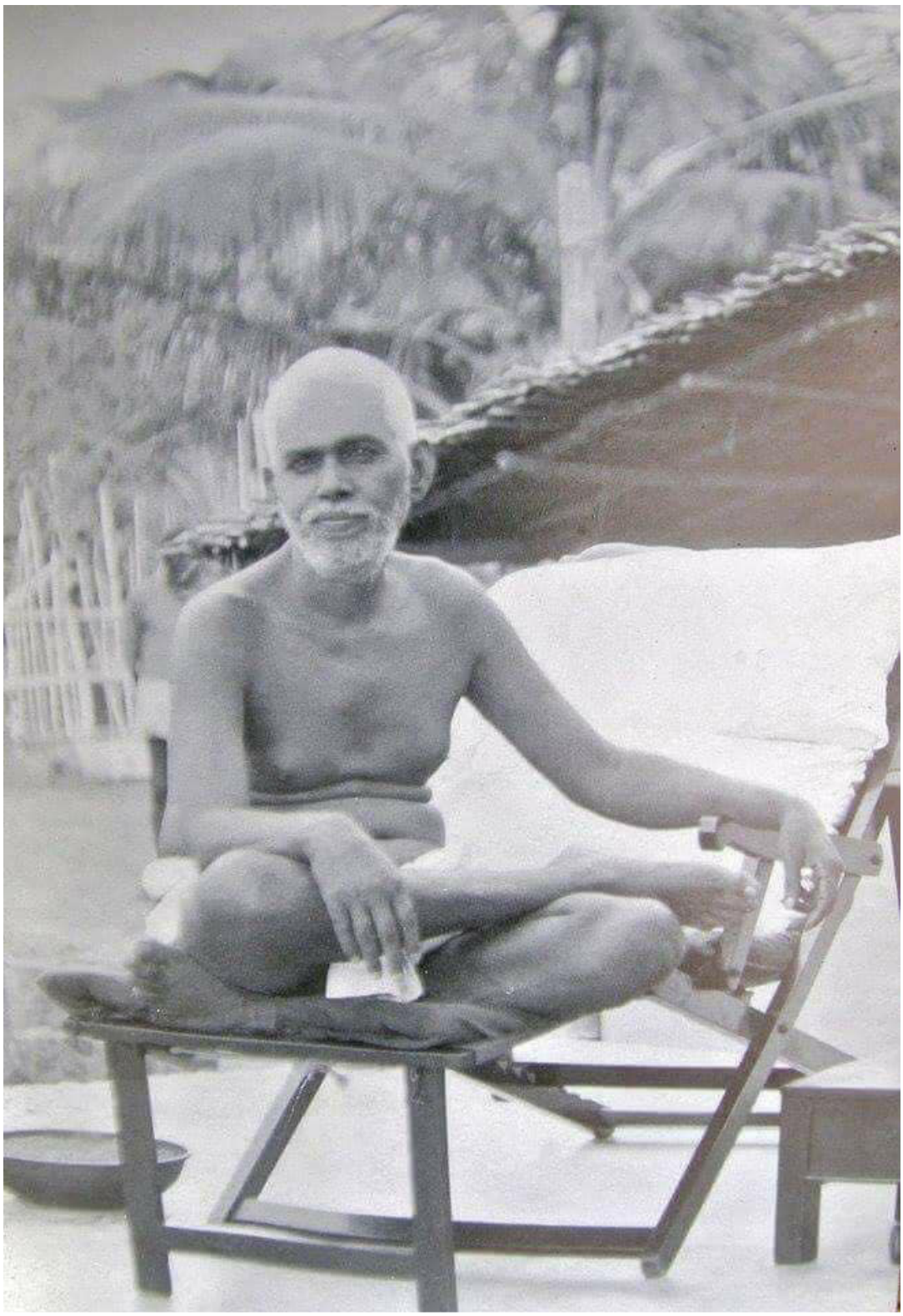


The wise people will not care to make plans previous to their actions. Why so? For God who has sent us into the world has His own plan and that will certainly work itself out.



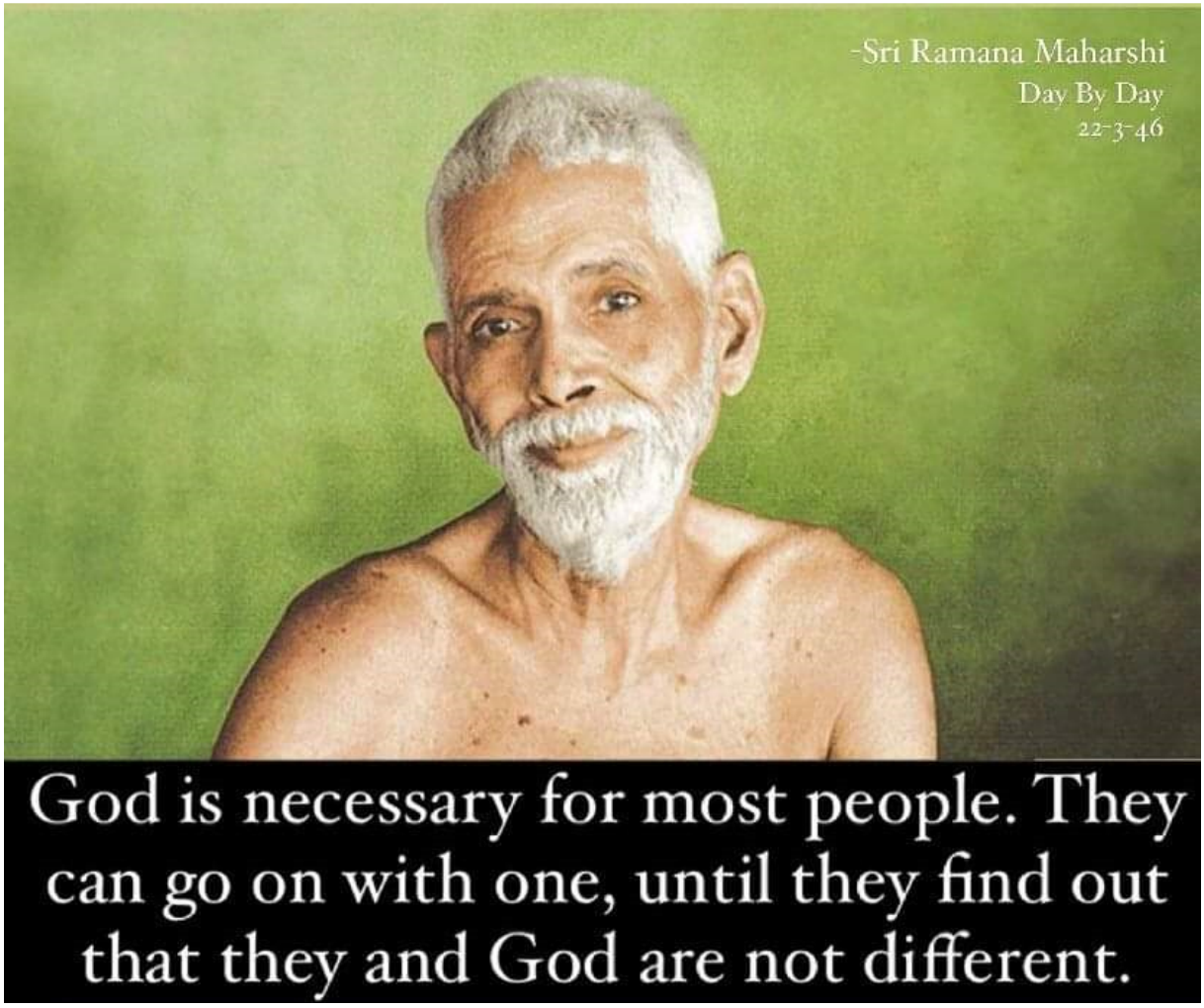


They pray to God and finish with "Thy Will be done". If His Will be done, why do they pray at all? It is true that the Divine Will prevails at all times and under all circumstances. The individuals cannot act of their own accord. Recognise the force of the Divine Will and keep quiet. Each one is looked after by God. He has created all. You are one among 2000 million. When he looks after so many,will he omit you? Even common sense dictates that one should abide by His Will.



Nothing happens by accident
in the divine scheme of things.

All things are being carried on
by the omnipotent power
of a Supreme God.



Ishvara, the personal God, the supreme creator of the universe, really does exist.
But this is true only from the relative standpoint of those who have not yet realized the truth, those people who still believe in the reality of individual souls. From the absolute standpoint, the sage cannot accept any other existence than the impersonal Self, one and formless.

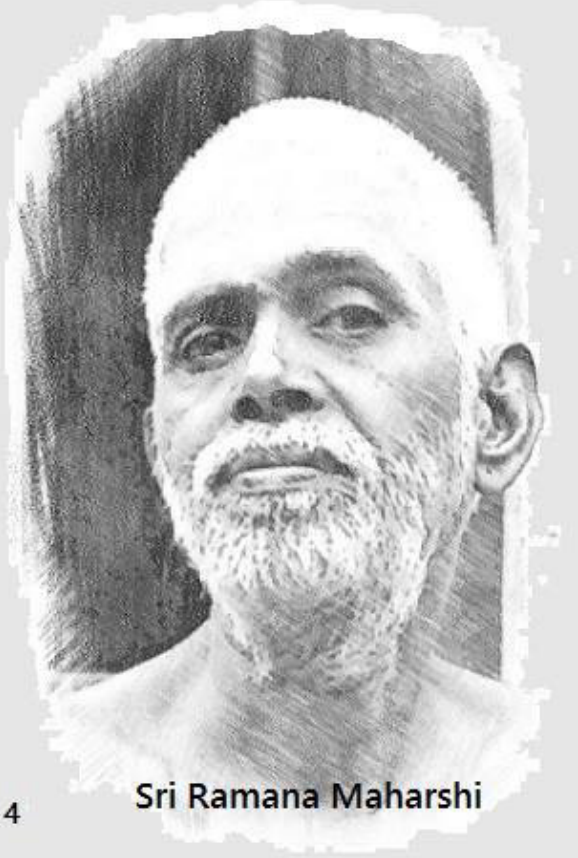
The difference between man and God is the ego. The One without ego is God. The One with some thoughts and imaginations is the human being.
Experiencing God by removing all names and forms is the true experience. Since we think ourselves as a body, we also think of God with images and names. Once we get rid of thoughts that we are the body, then we can experience God in every scene, every object, every person, and every feeling, too.
(Note: The question always remains how to get rid of these thoughts? If we put any effort to remove any thought, then effort becomes another thought. So whatever we try to do, goes against removing thought. Then what do we need to do? NOTHING!)

If one has form oneself,
the world and God will also
appear to have form;
but if one is formless,
who is to see these forms,
and how?

Without the eye can any
object be seen?

The seeing Self is the Eye,
and that Eye is the Eye of
Infinity.

~Reality in Forty Verses (Ulladu Narpadu): 4



Sri Ramana Maharshi

"HIS ESSENCE IS THE SAME AS OURS."

Question: "Is there Ishvara [personal God]?"

Ramana Maharshi: "Yes."

Q: "What is he like?"

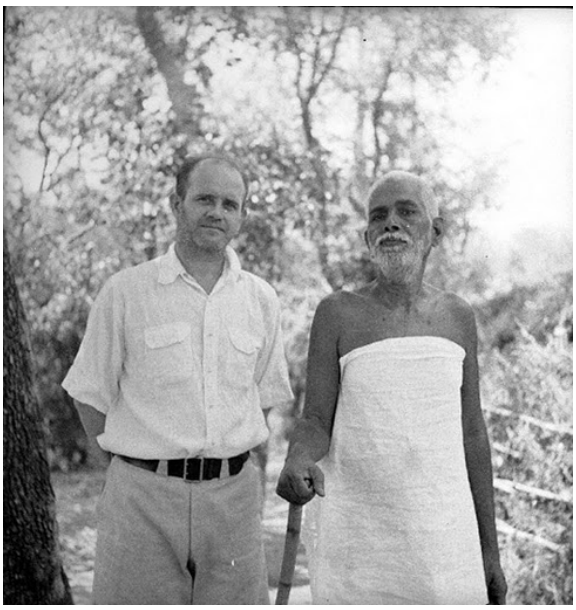
Ramana Maharshi:

"Ishvara has individuality in mind and body, which are perishable, but at the same time, he has also the transcendental consciousness and liberation inwardly.

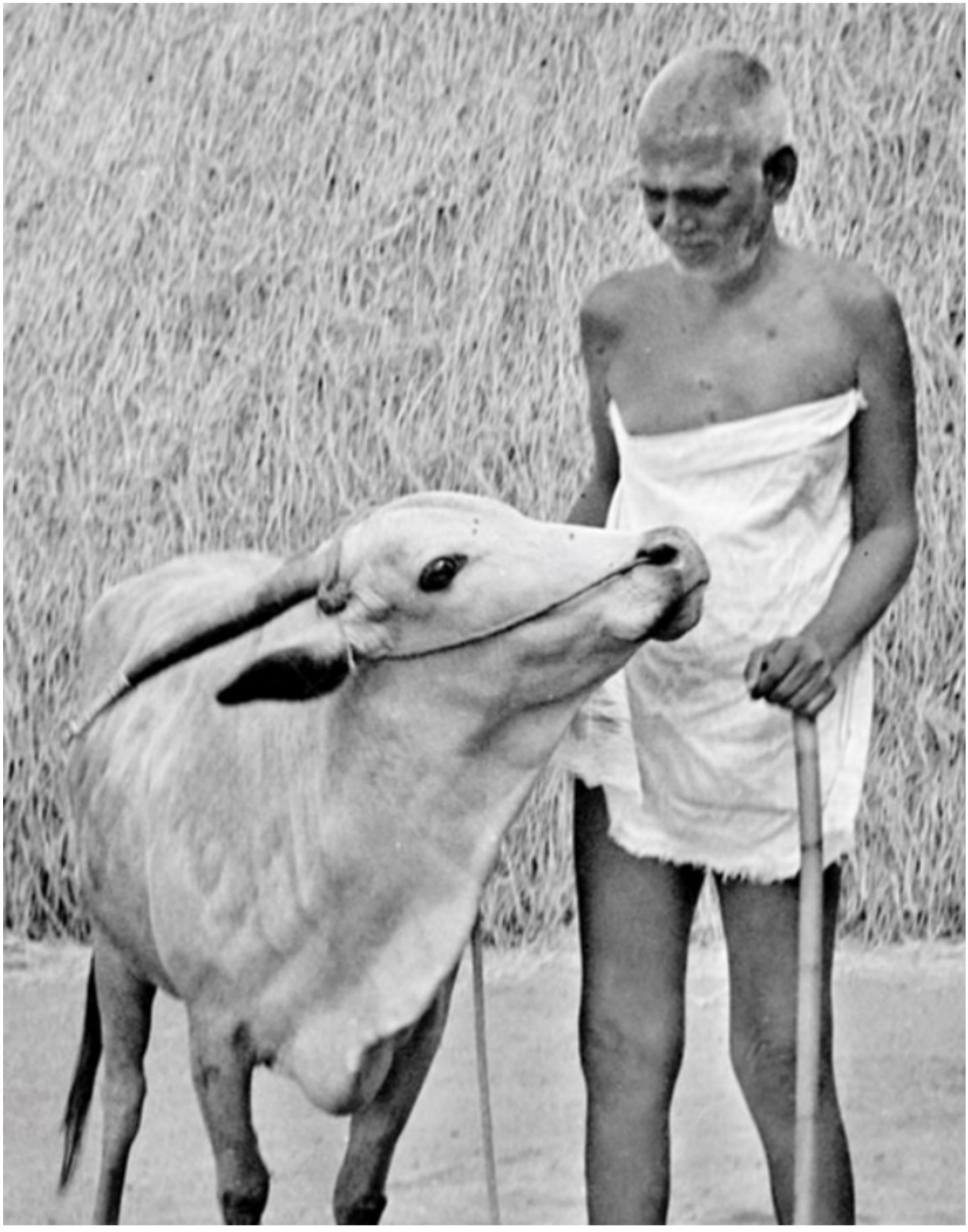
Ishvara, the personal God, the supreme creator of the universe, really does exist. But this is true only from the relative standpoint of those who have not yet realized the truth, those people who still believe in the reality of individual souls. From the absolute standpoint, the sage cannot accept any other existence than the impersonal Self, one and formless.

Ishvara has a physical body, a form and a name, but it is not so gross as this material body. It can be seen in visions in the form created by the devotee. The forms and names of God are many and various and differ with each religion. His essence is the same as ours, the real Self being only one and without form. Hence forms he assumes are only creations or appearances.

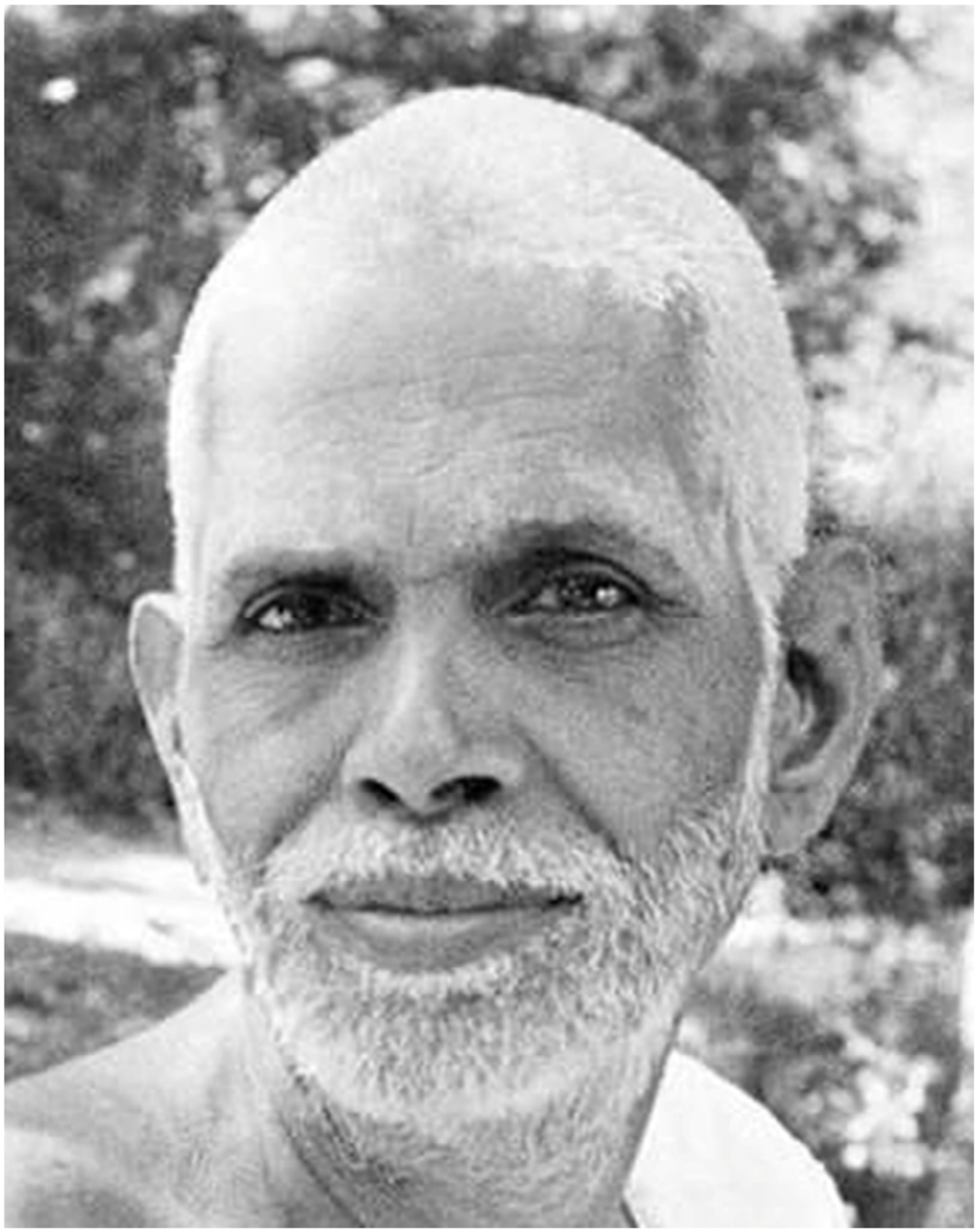
Ishvara is immanent in every person and every object throughout the universe. The totality of all things and beings constitutes God. There is a power out of which a small fraction has become all this universe, and the remainder is in reserve. Both this reserve power plus the manifested power as material world together constitute Ishvara."



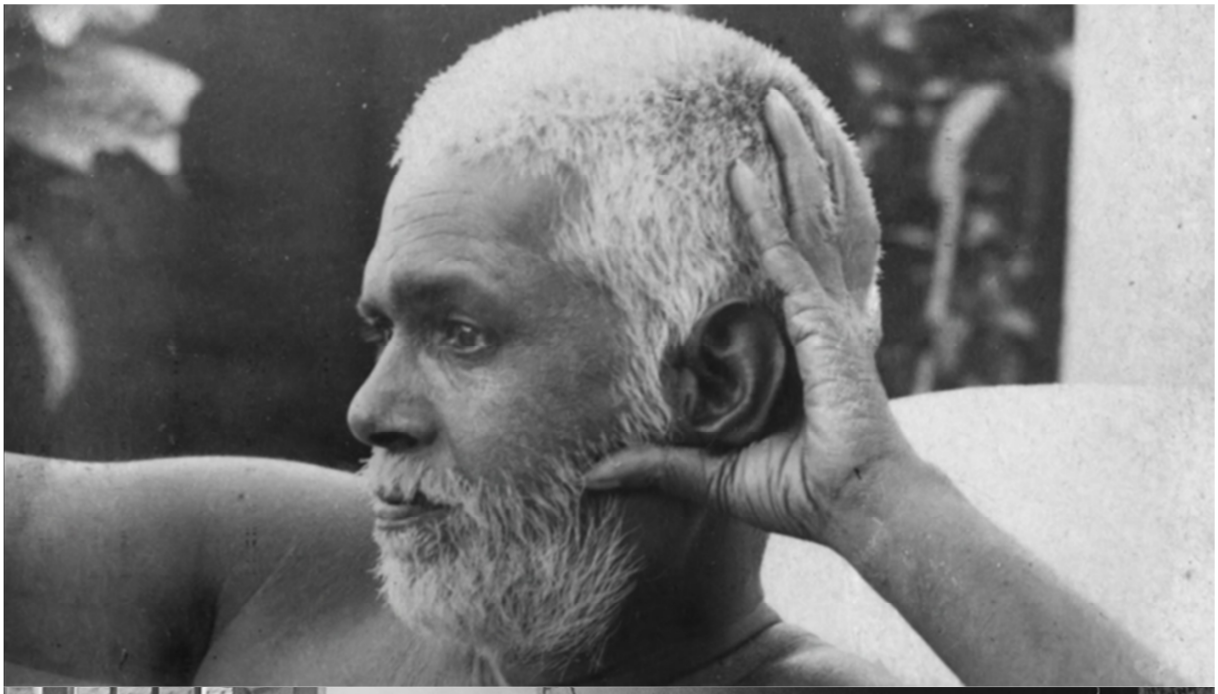
Surrender yourself
fully and wholeheartedly
to the One Universal Force
and you will become one with that Force.

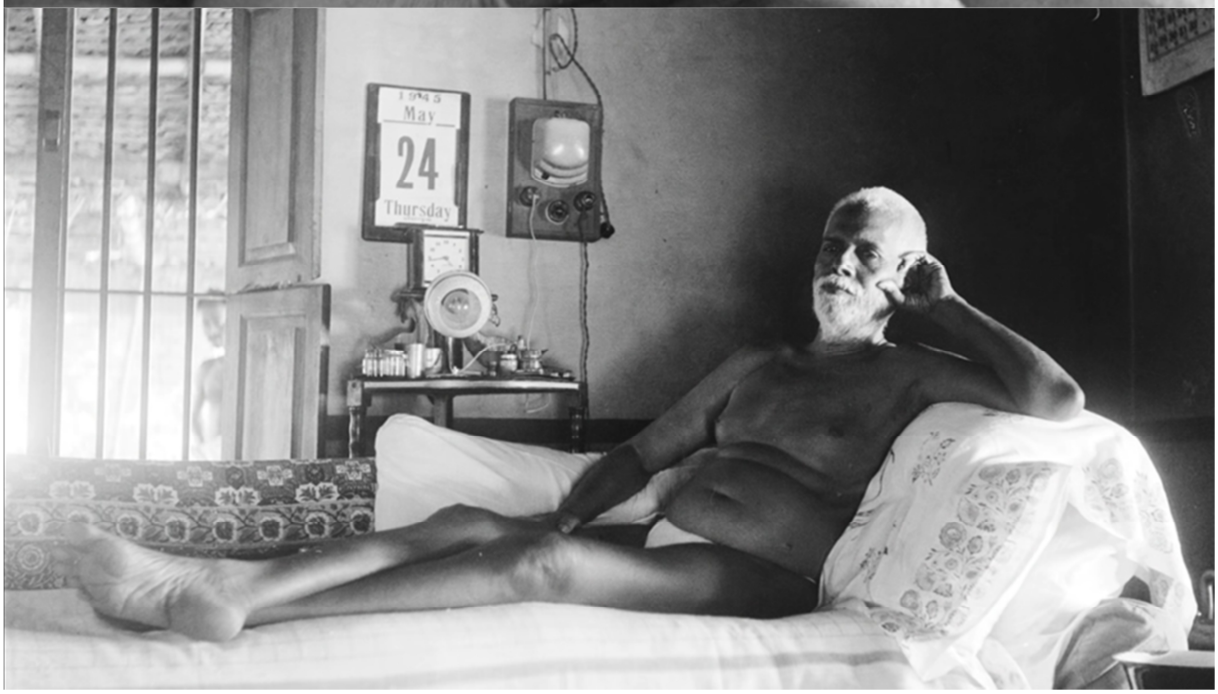


Grace is ever present.
All that is necessary
is that you surrender to it.

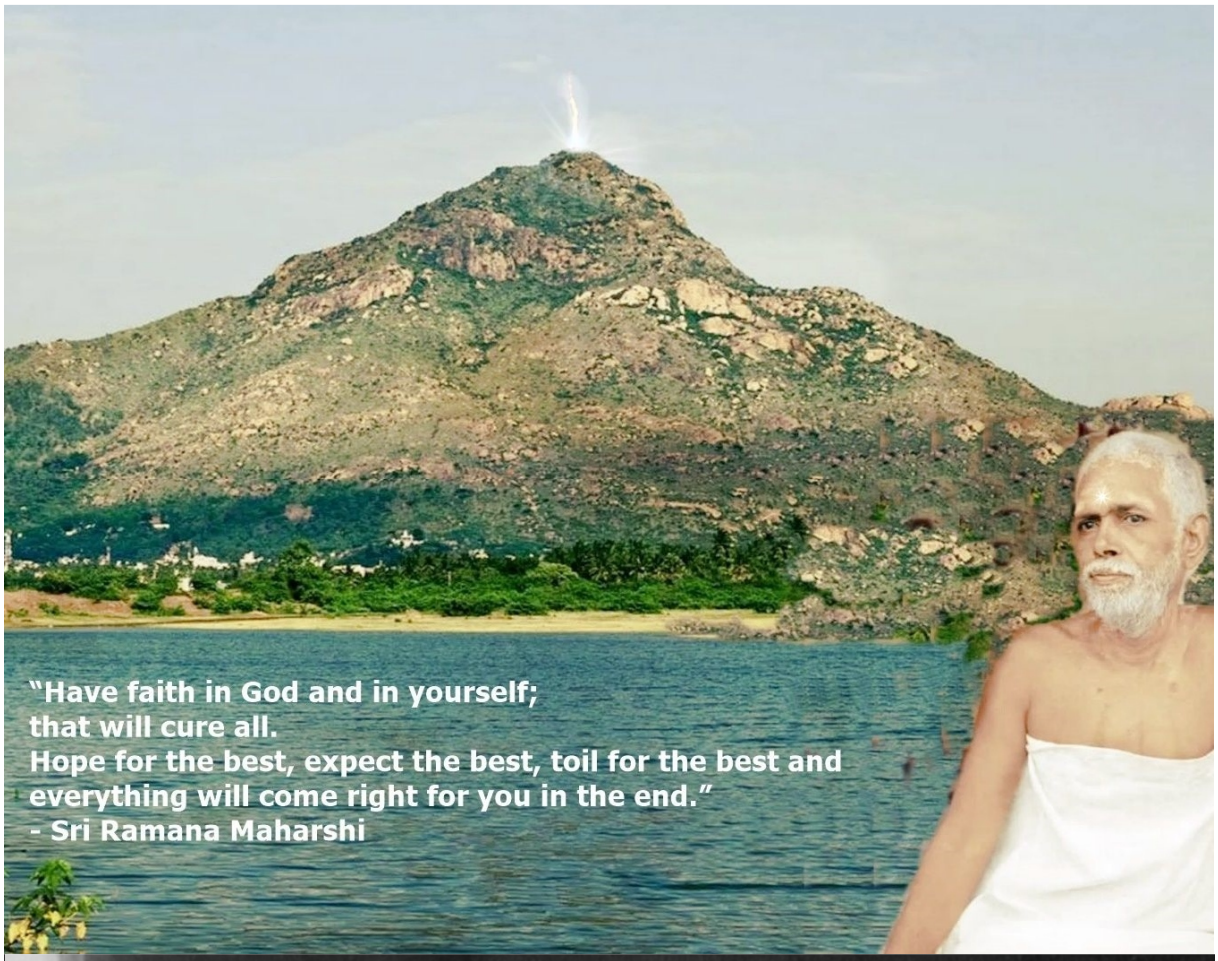


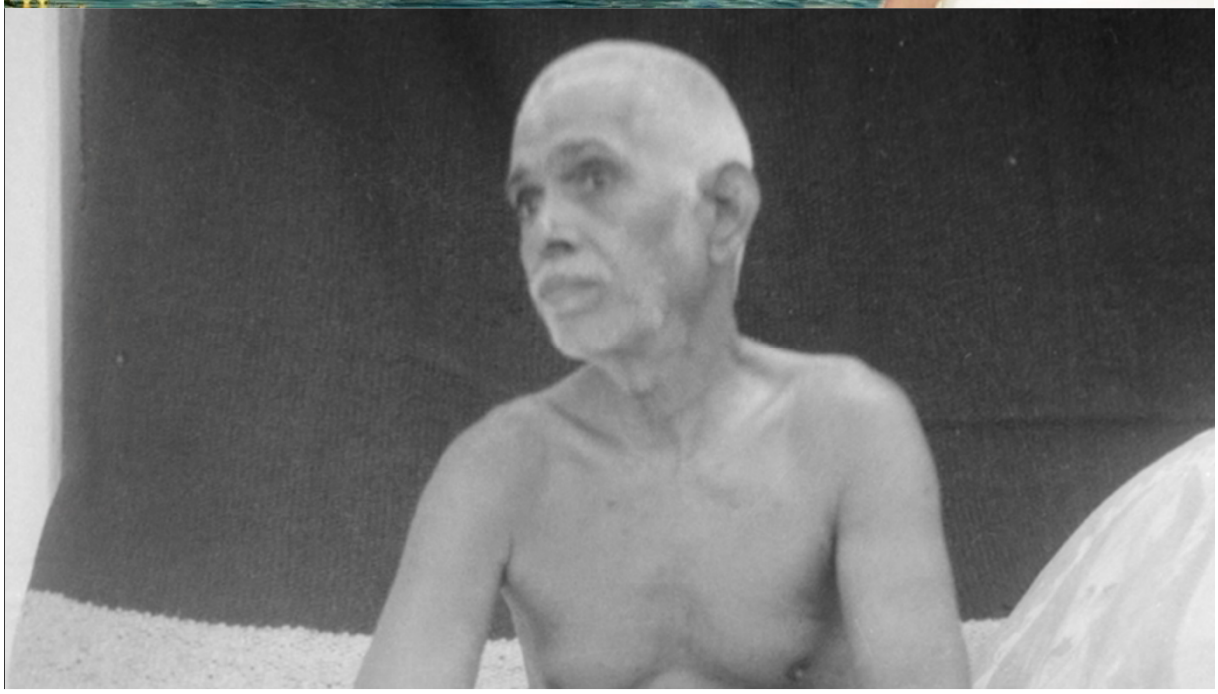
We confound appearance with Reality.
Appearance carries its end in itself.
What is it that appears anew?
If you cannot find it, surrender unreservedly
to the substratum of appearances;
then Reality will be what remains.



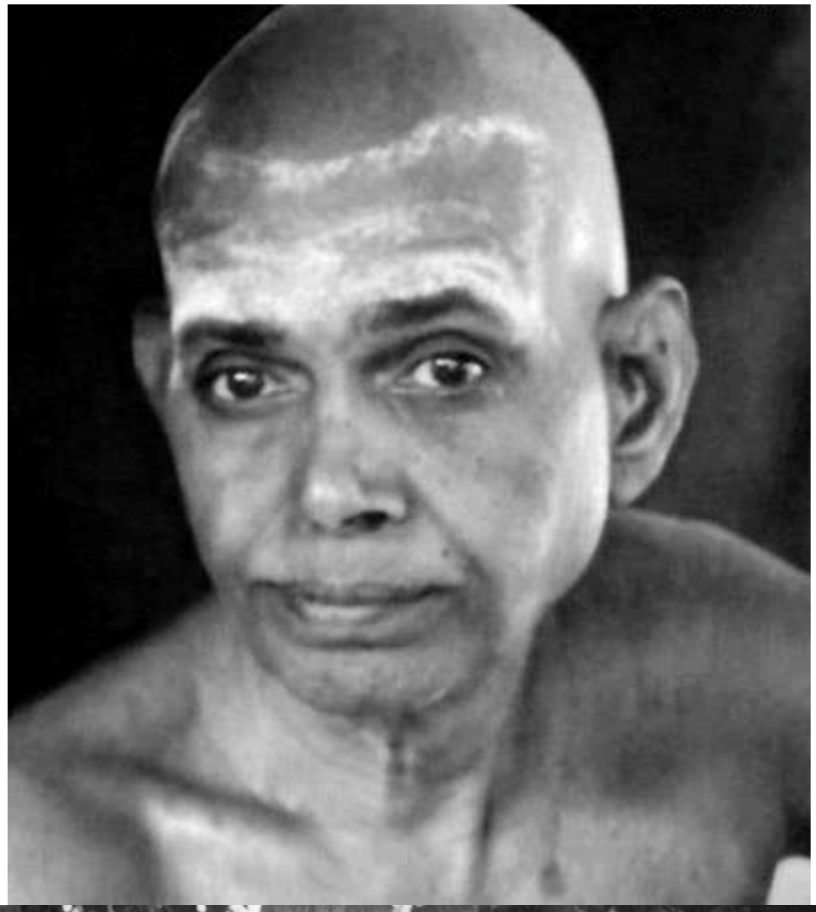


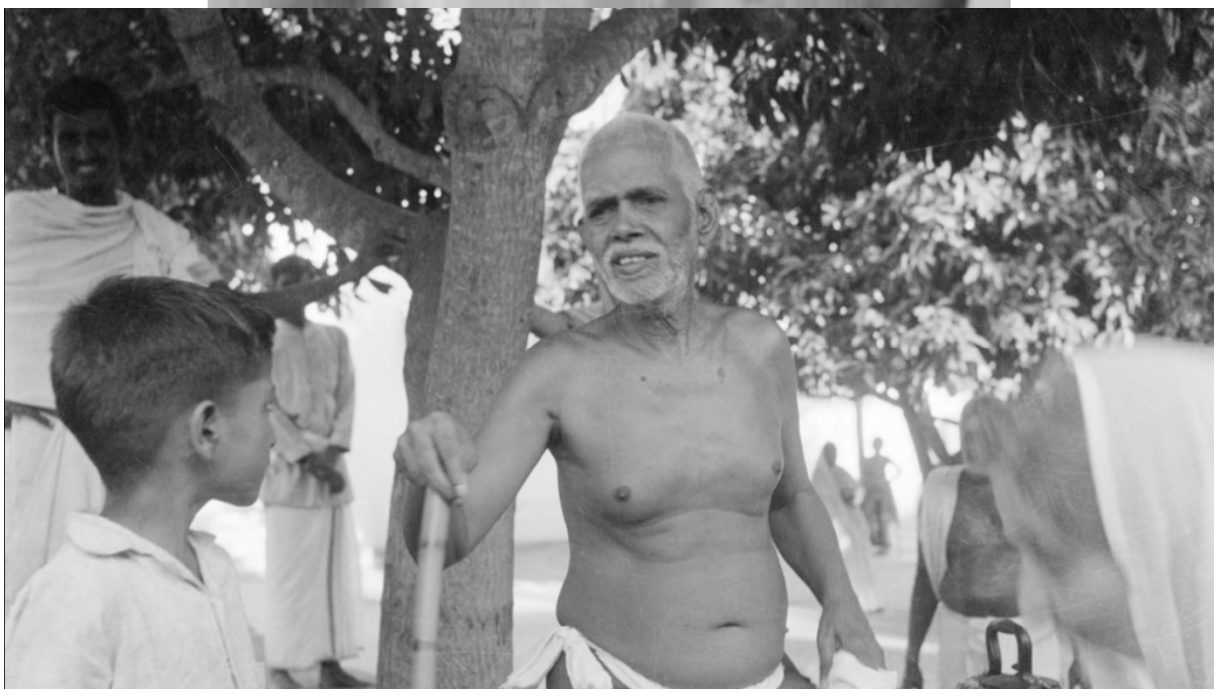
It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every downfall and breakdown. Gradually, the obstacles are all overcome and your current becomes stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is what is required.



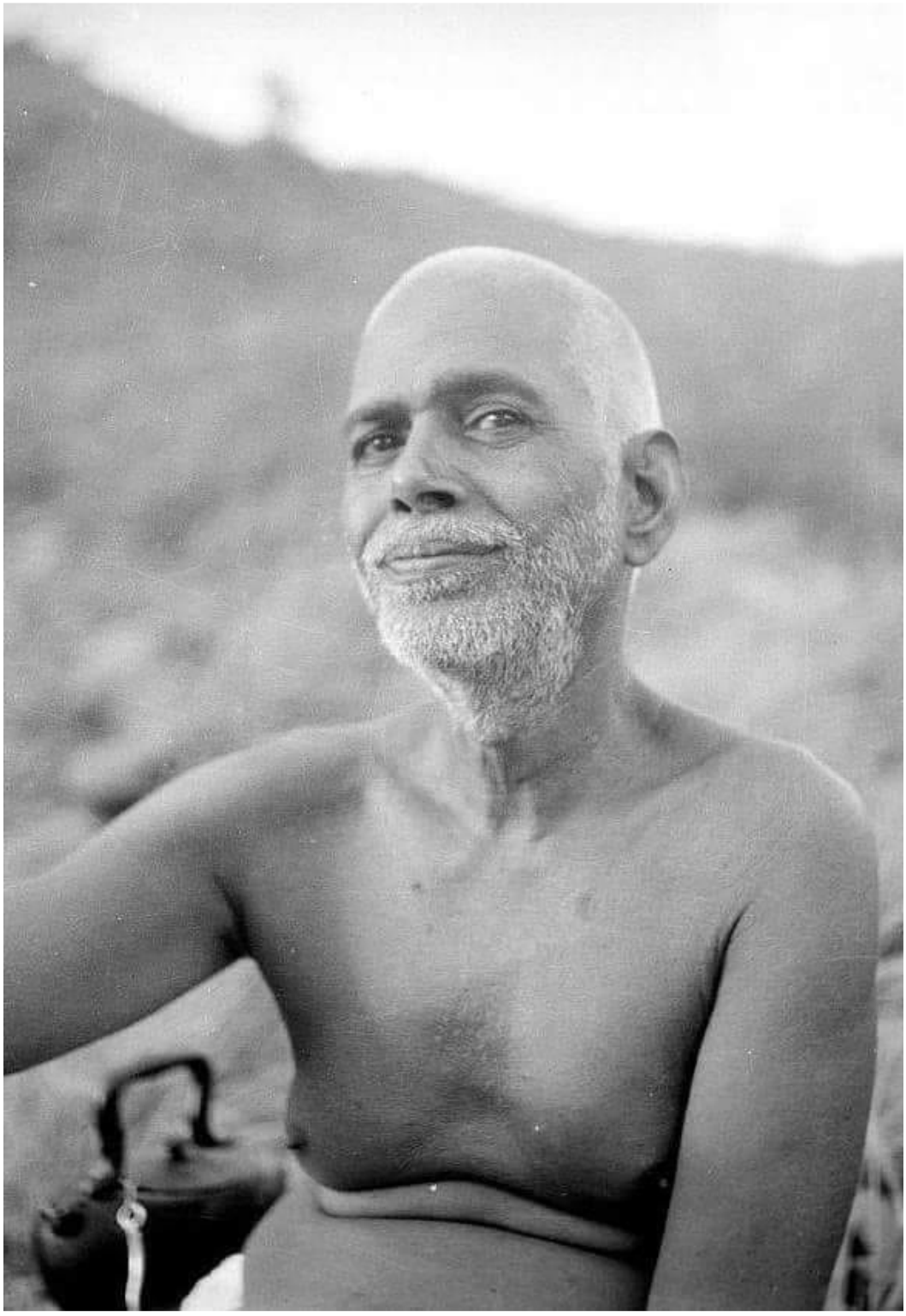


You wake up in the morning and look into the mirror, and the mirror shows you that you have a growth and that you have to get rid of it. You may go on looking into any number of mirrors; every mirror will tell you the same, but no mirror can ever shave you. You have to shave yourself. Instead of wasting time looking into mirror after mirror, it is best to start shaving after having looked into the first mirror and known the truth. So also all the books will tell you the same truth, perhaps in slightly different ways. Instead of wasting time reading book after book, why not realize for yourself what was obvious from the very first book?

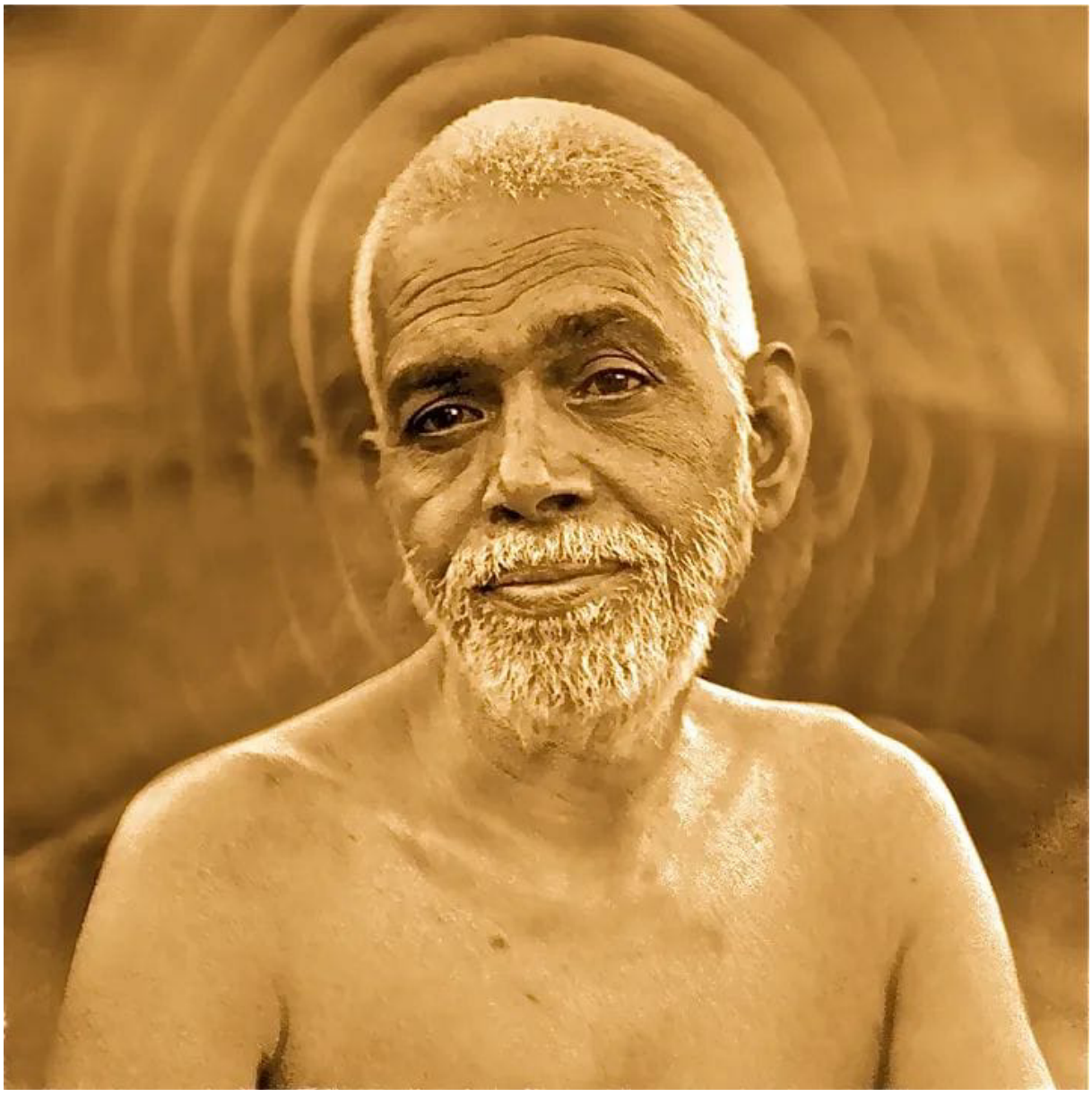




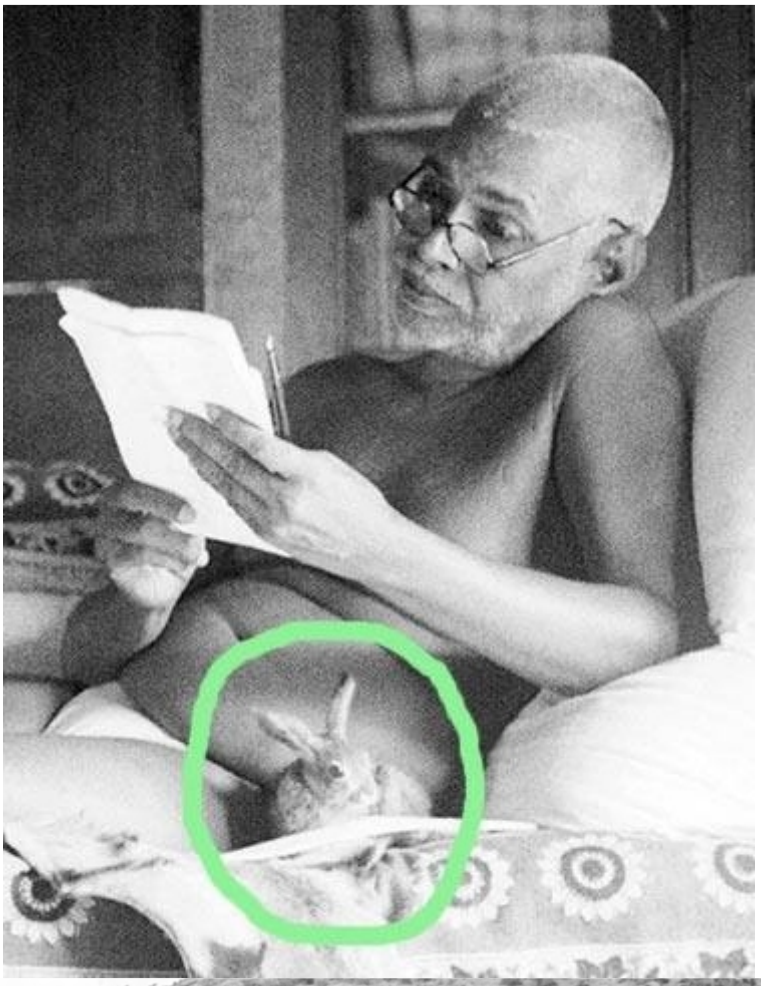
The seer and the object seen are like the rope and the snake. Just as the knowledge of the rope, which is the substrate, will not arise unless the false knowledge of the illusory serpent goes, so the realization of the Self, which is the substrate, will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed.



Where can you go, fleeing from the world or objects?
They are like the shadow of a man, which the man cannot flee from.
There is a funny story of a man who wanted to bury his shadow. He dug a deep pit and, seeing his shadow at the bottom, was glad he could bury it so deep. He went on filling the pit and when he had completely filled it up, he was surprised and disappointed to find the shadow on top.
Even so, the objects or thoughts of them will be with you always, till you realise the Self.

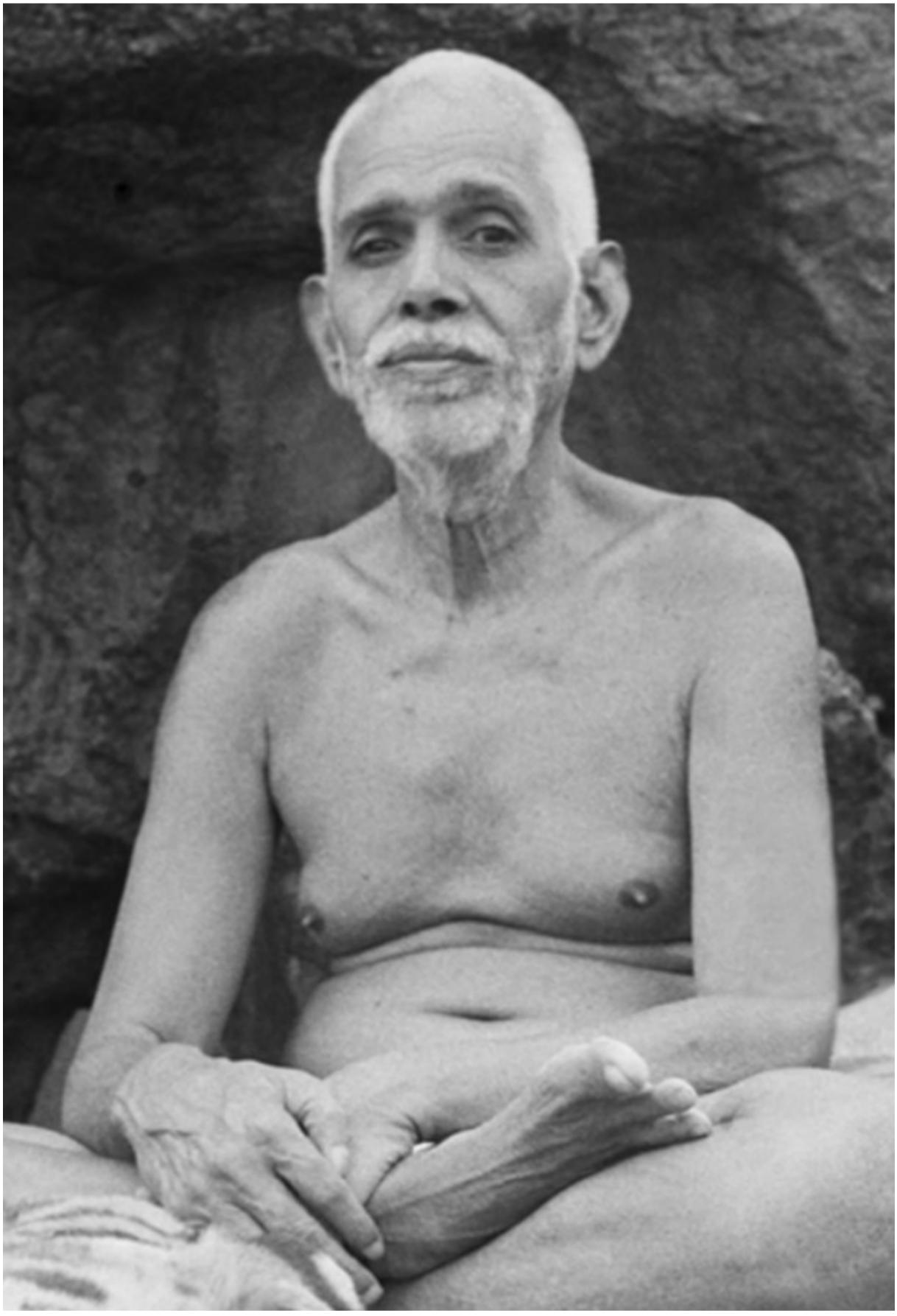


People call me Maharshi and treat me like this.
But I do not see myself as a Maharshi.
On the other hand, everyone is a Maharshi for me.

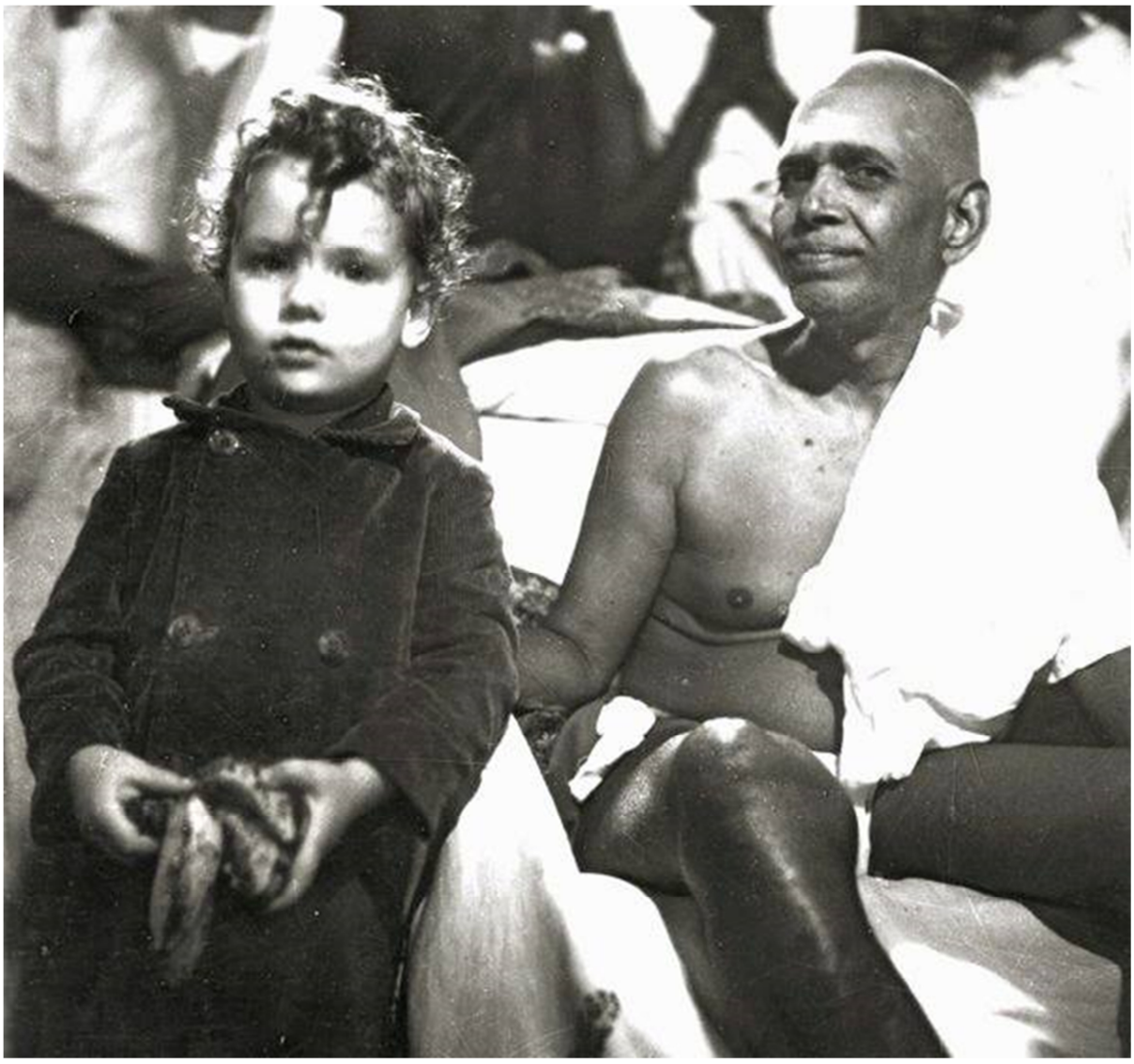


The Guru comes only to tell you
that God is within yourself.
Dive within and realize.
God, Guru and the Self
are the same.

God, Guru and the Self are identical.

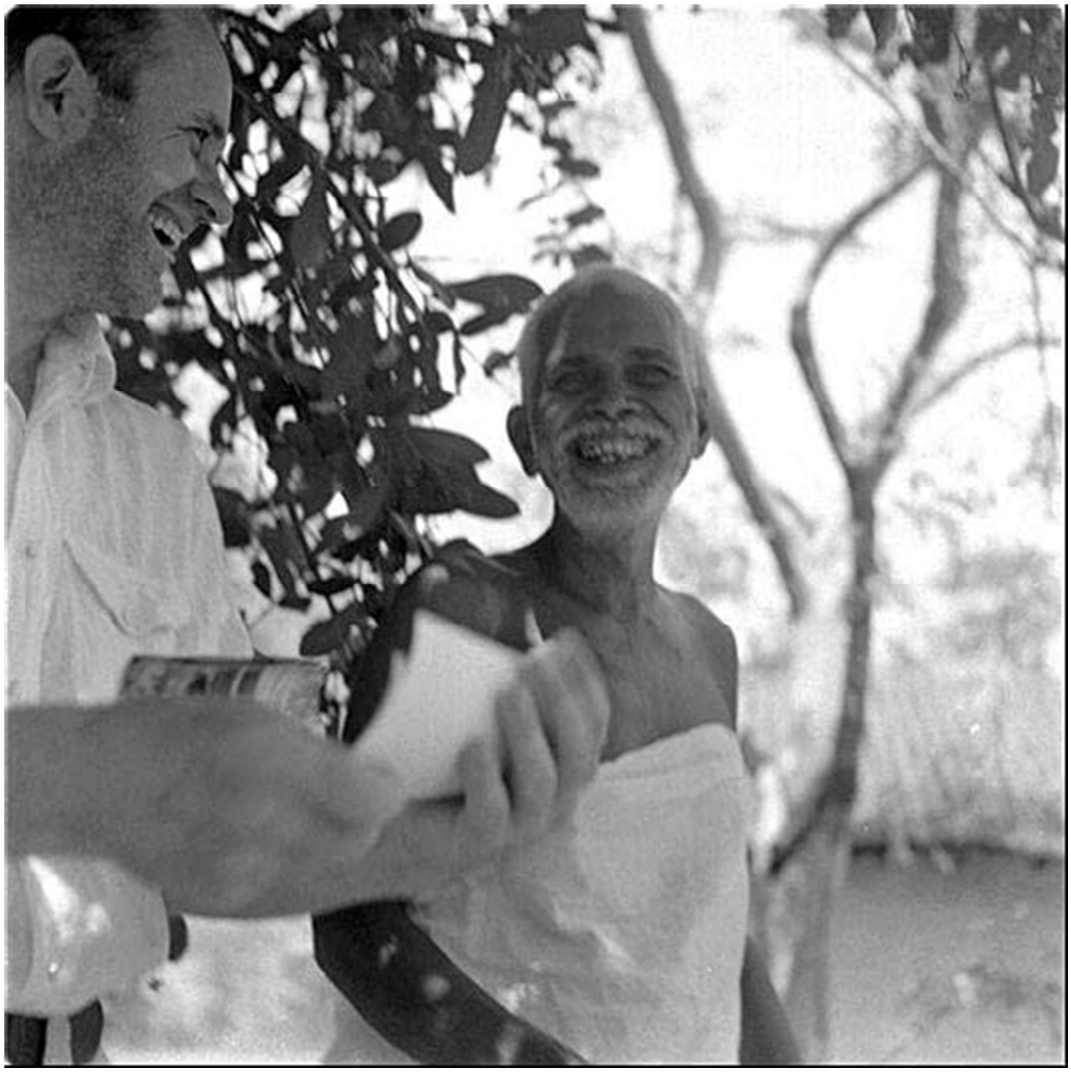


Do not cling to the form of the guru, for this will perish. The true guru resides in your heart as your own Self. This is who I truly am.



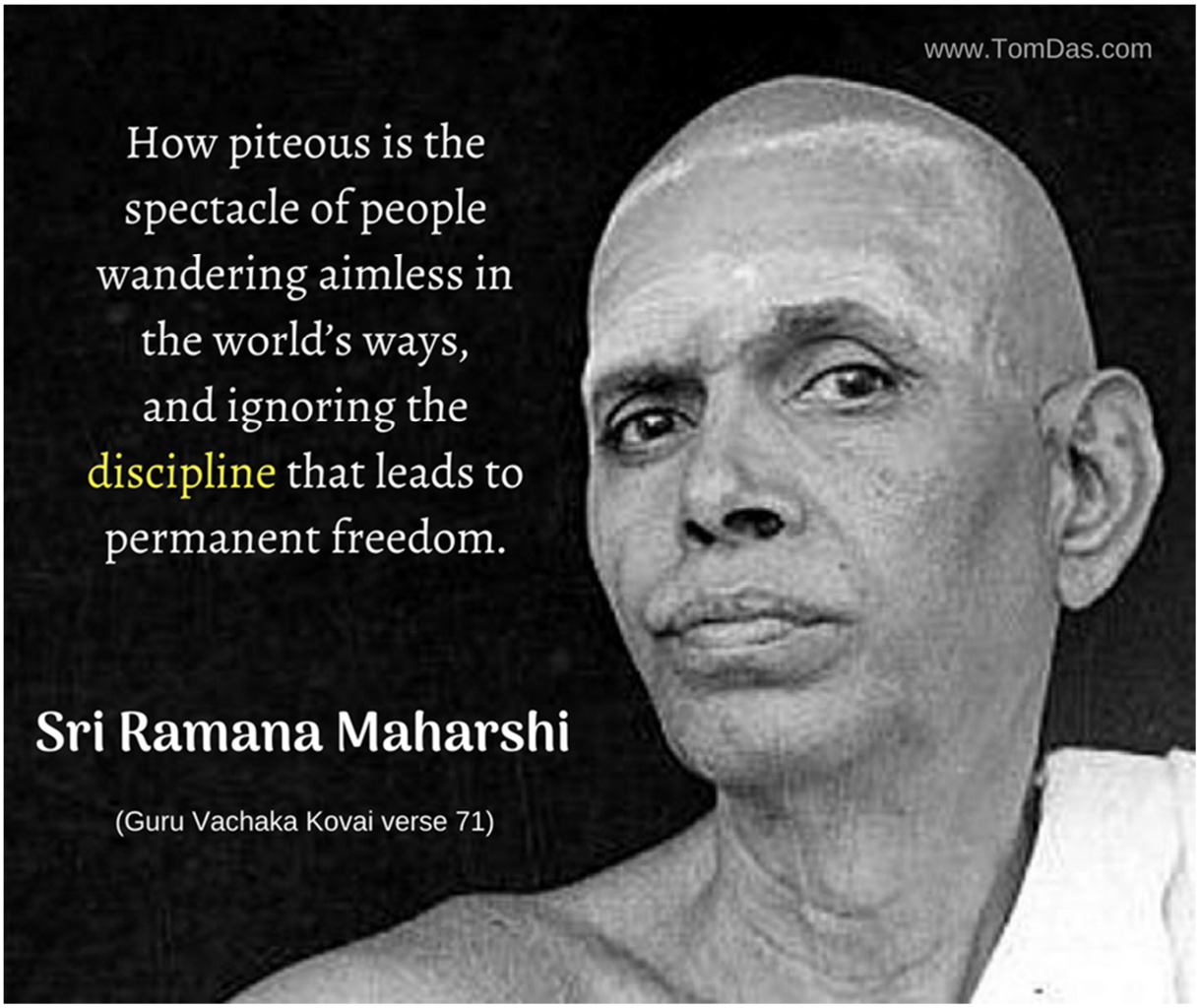
The only useful purpose of the present birth
is to turn within and realise the Self.
There is nothing else to do.

All that is inside will try to come out.
There is no other way
except to pull up the mind
each time it wants to go astray
and fix it on the Self.



(What is the easiest and most effective way
to do atma-vichara, self-inquiry?)

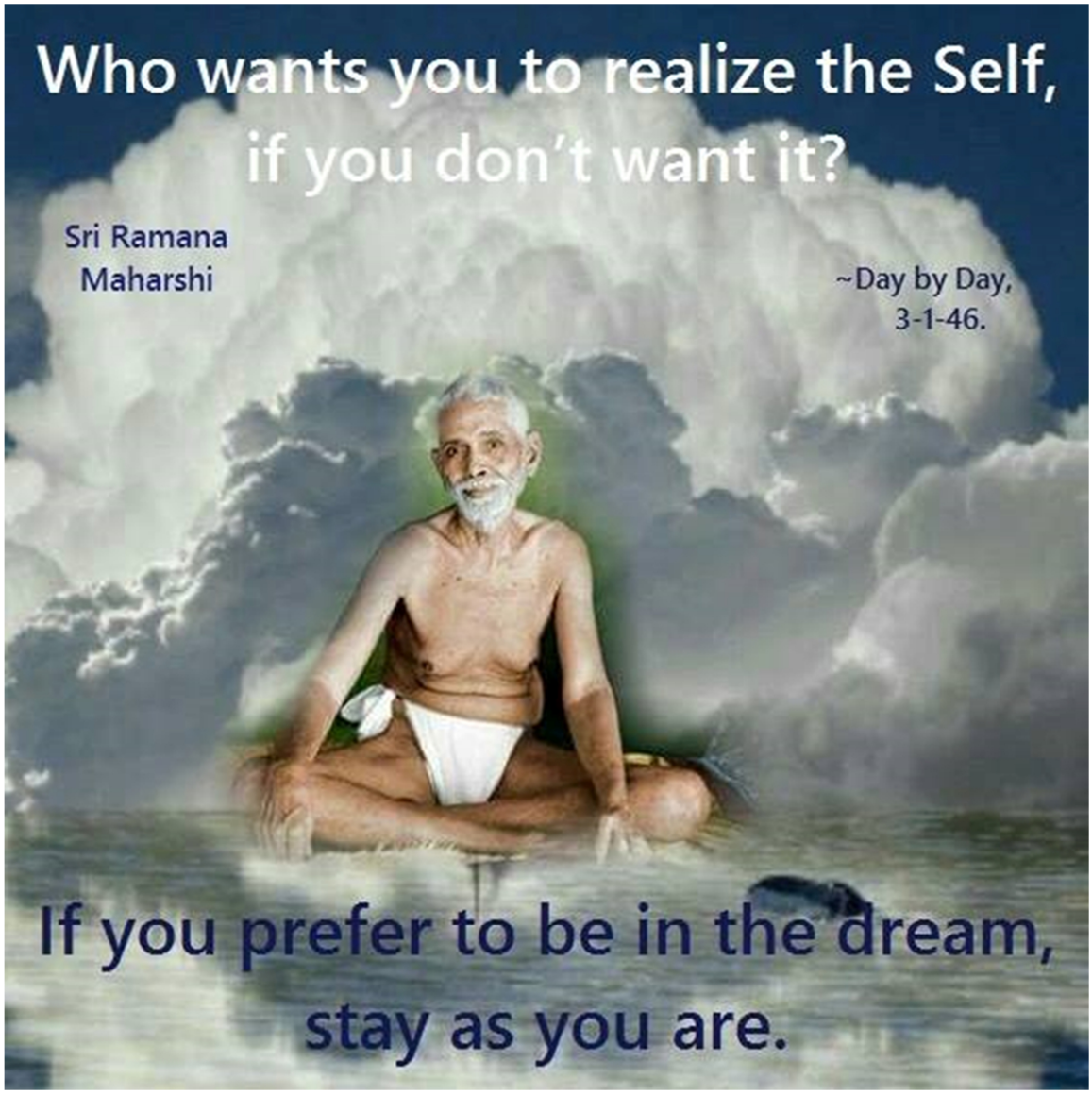
To always be aware consciously
in all situations of the I-am.
No matter what you're doing, where you are,
be aware of the I-am in your heart.
This is the most effective practice.



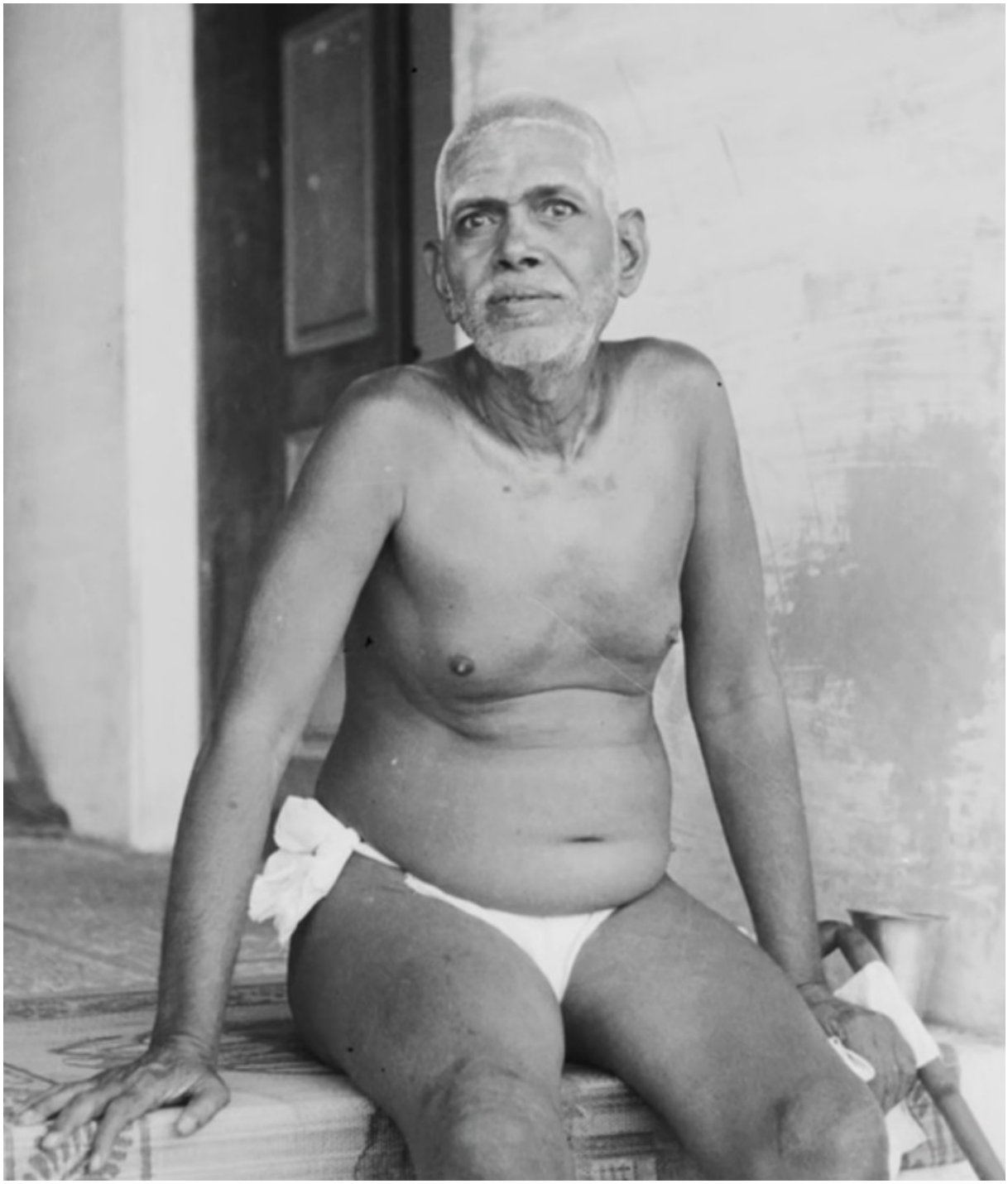
Self-enquiry is the one, infallible means, the only direct one to realize the unconditioned, absolute Being that you really are.

Self-inquiry is the process and the goal also.
'I AM' is the goal and the final Reality.
To hold onto it is self-inquiry.
When spontaneous and natural, it is Realization.

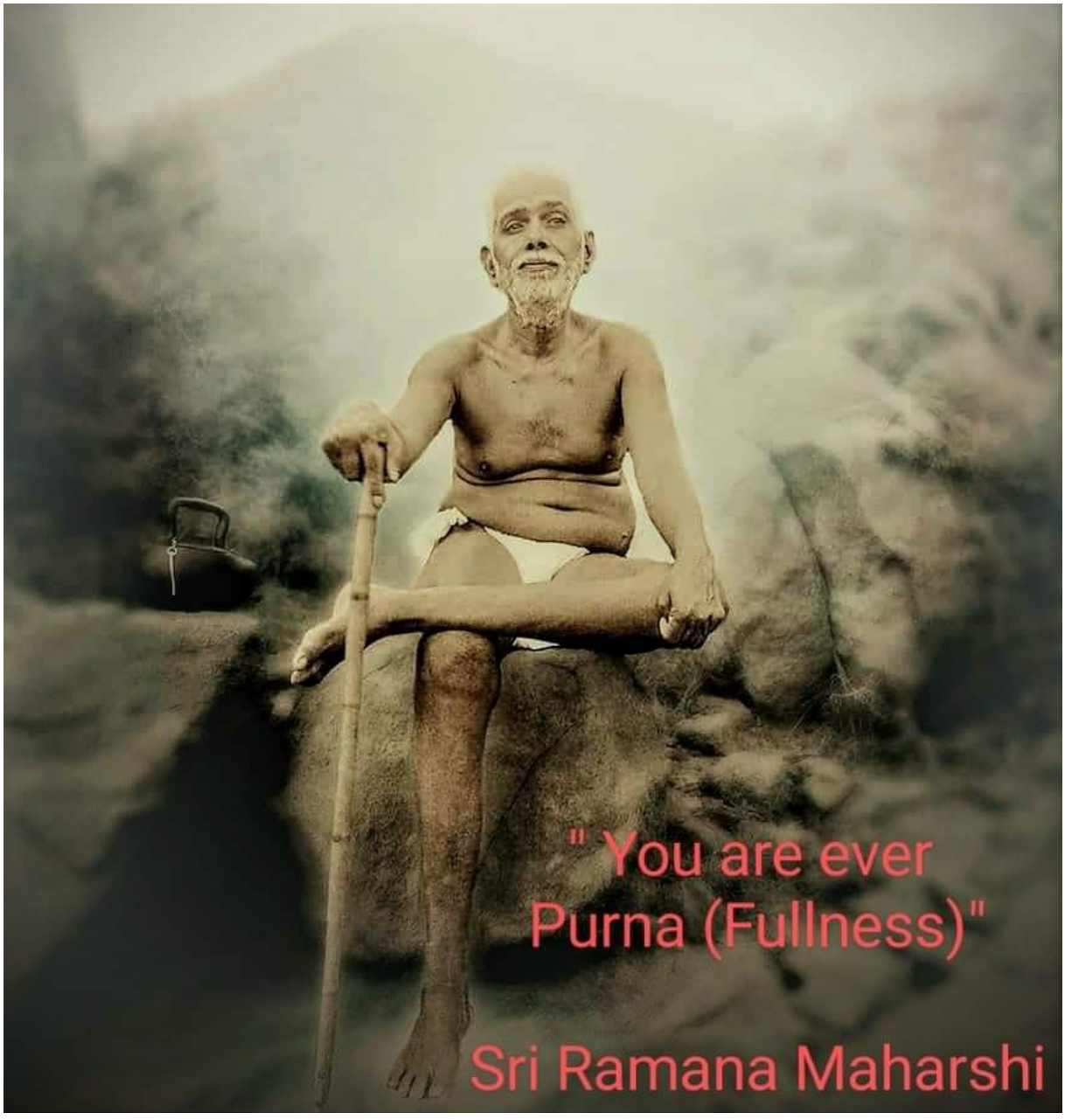
Persist in the enquiry throughout your waking hours. That would be quite enough. If you keep on making the enquiry till you fall asleep, the enquiry will go on during sleep also. Take up the enquiry again, as soon as you wake-up.



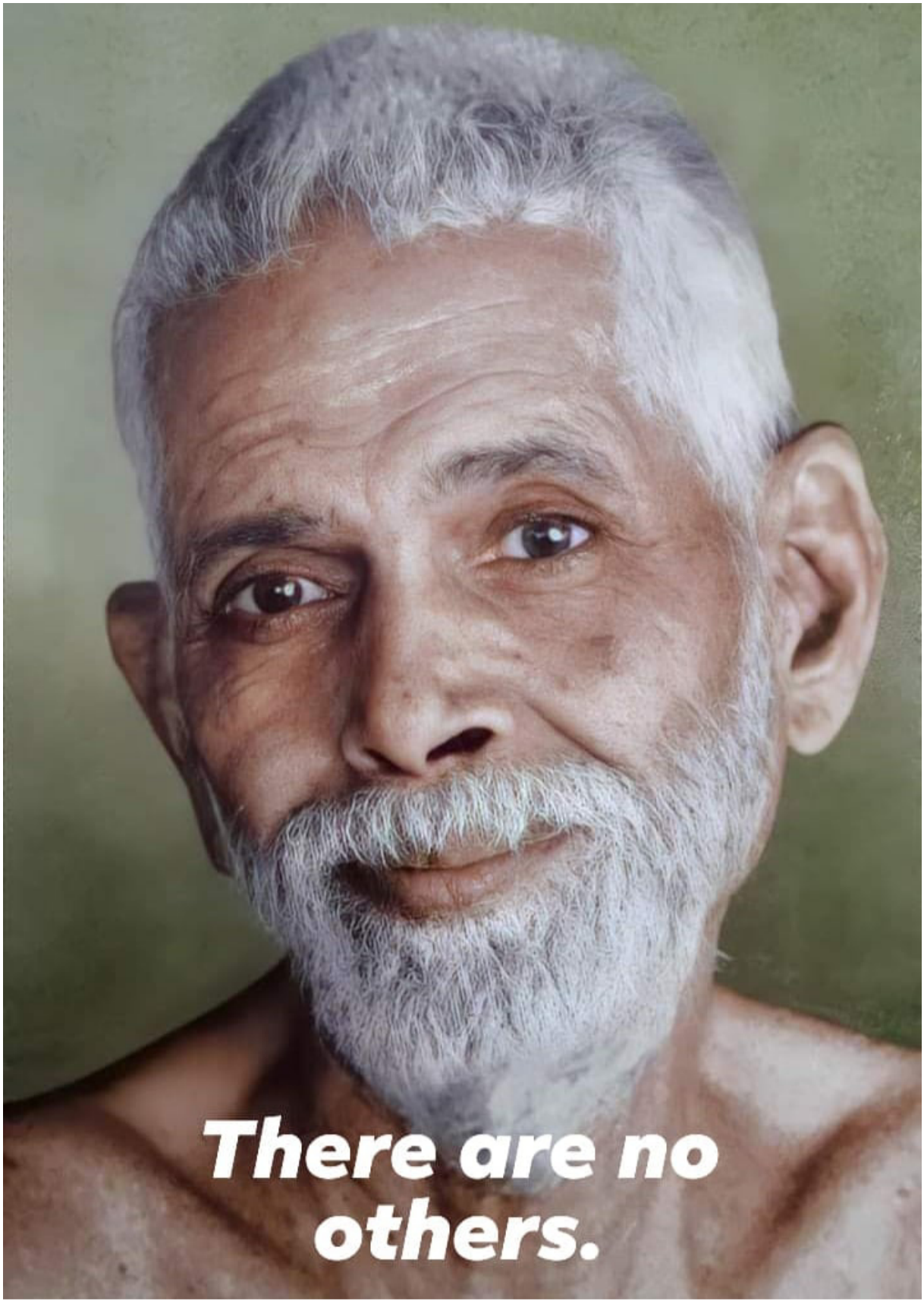
To all deep-thinking minds,
the enquiry about the "I" and its nature
has an irresistible fascination.



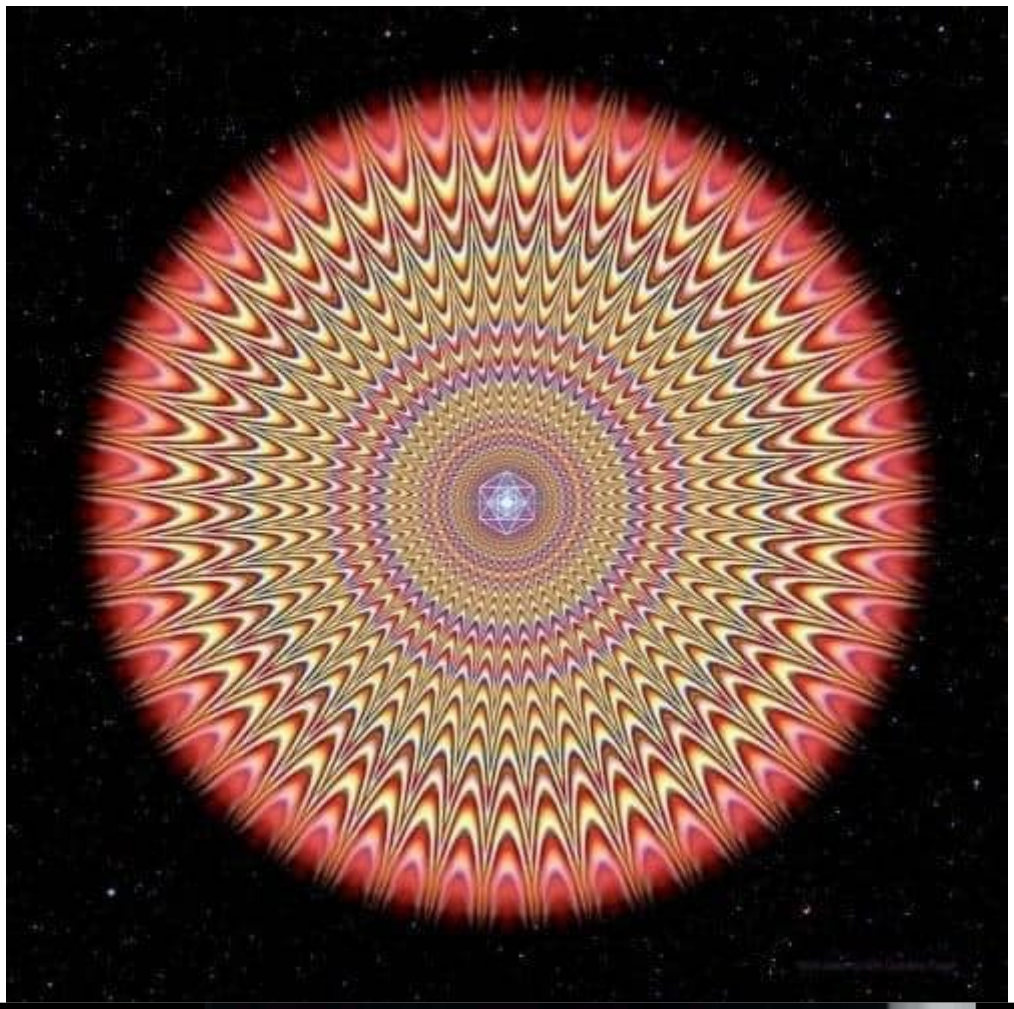
That which exists, exists forever.

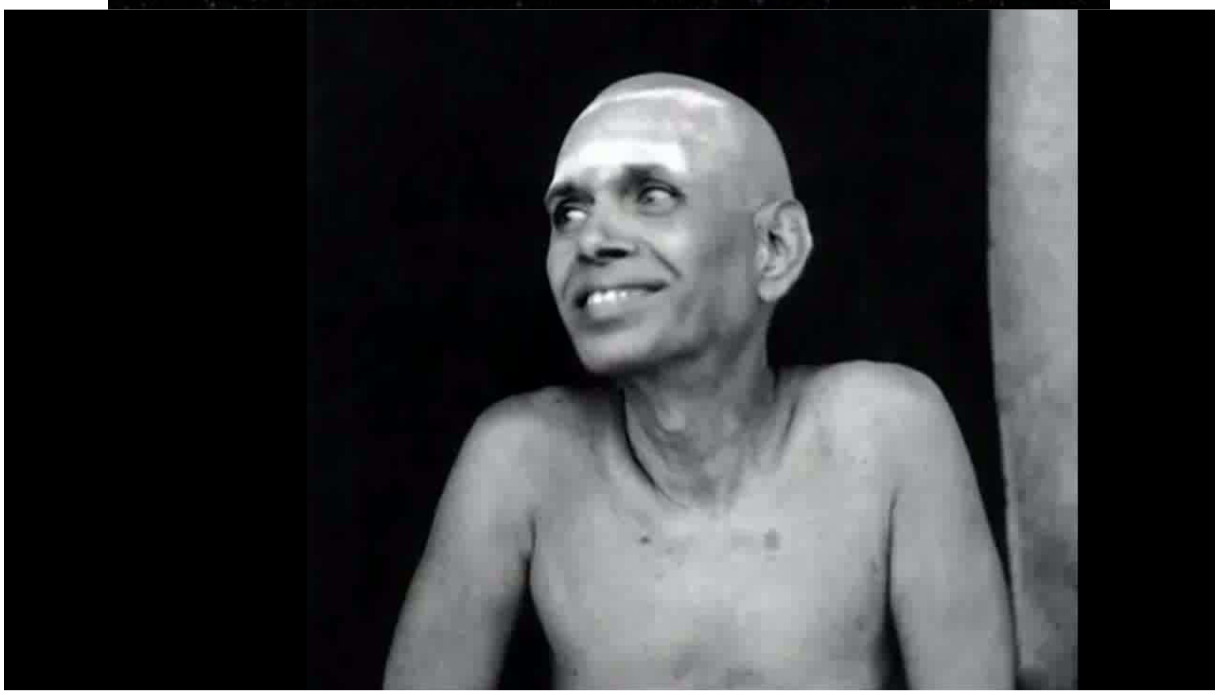


That which Is, is only one. Some call it Shakti, some Shiva, some Vishnu, some Jesus, and some Allah. People give it whatever names they like. What does it matter if the names they give are different? That which Is, is only One.



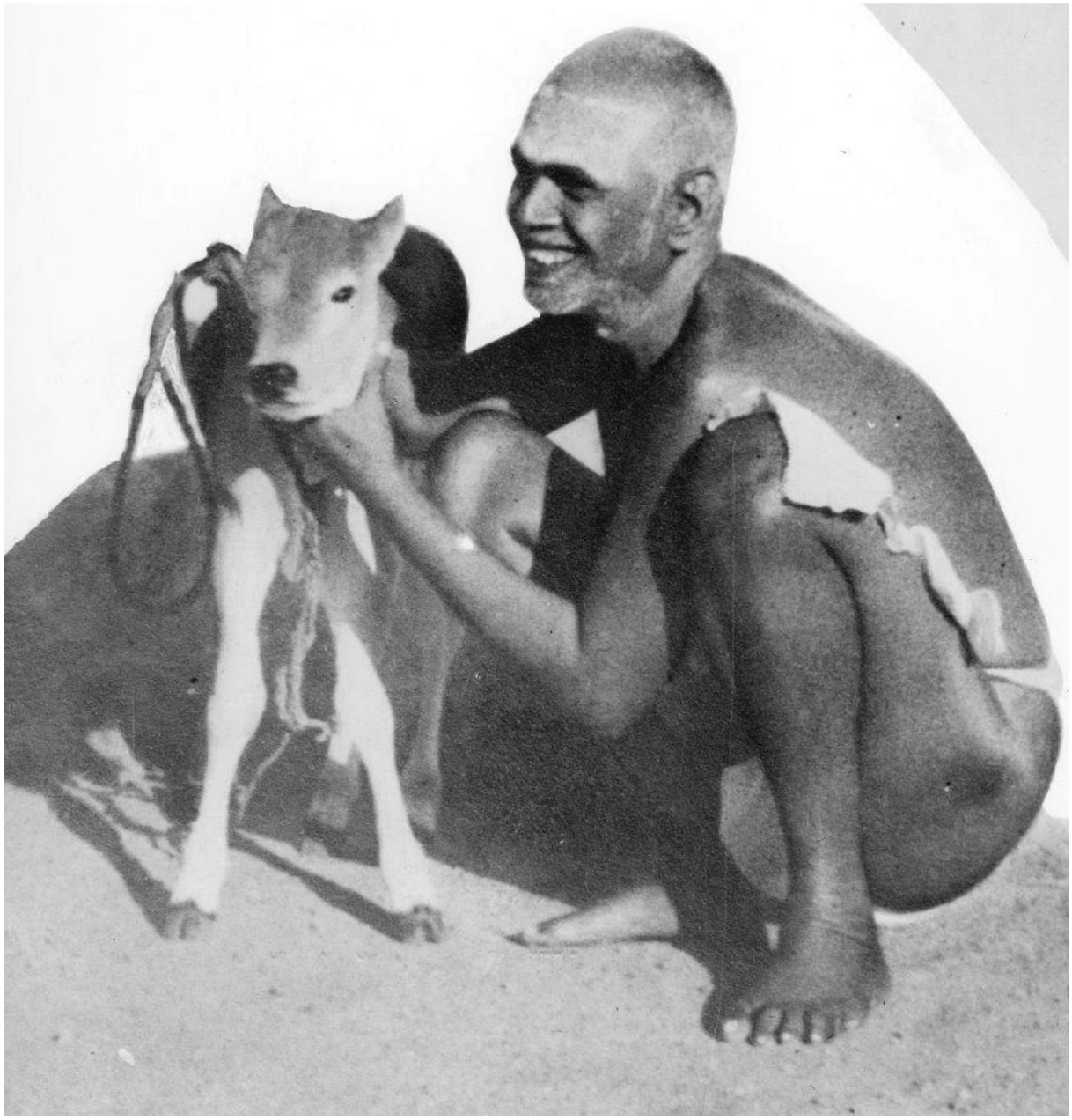
Call it by any name, God, Self, the Heart, or Consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this: that means the very core of one's being, the center, without which there is nothing whatever.



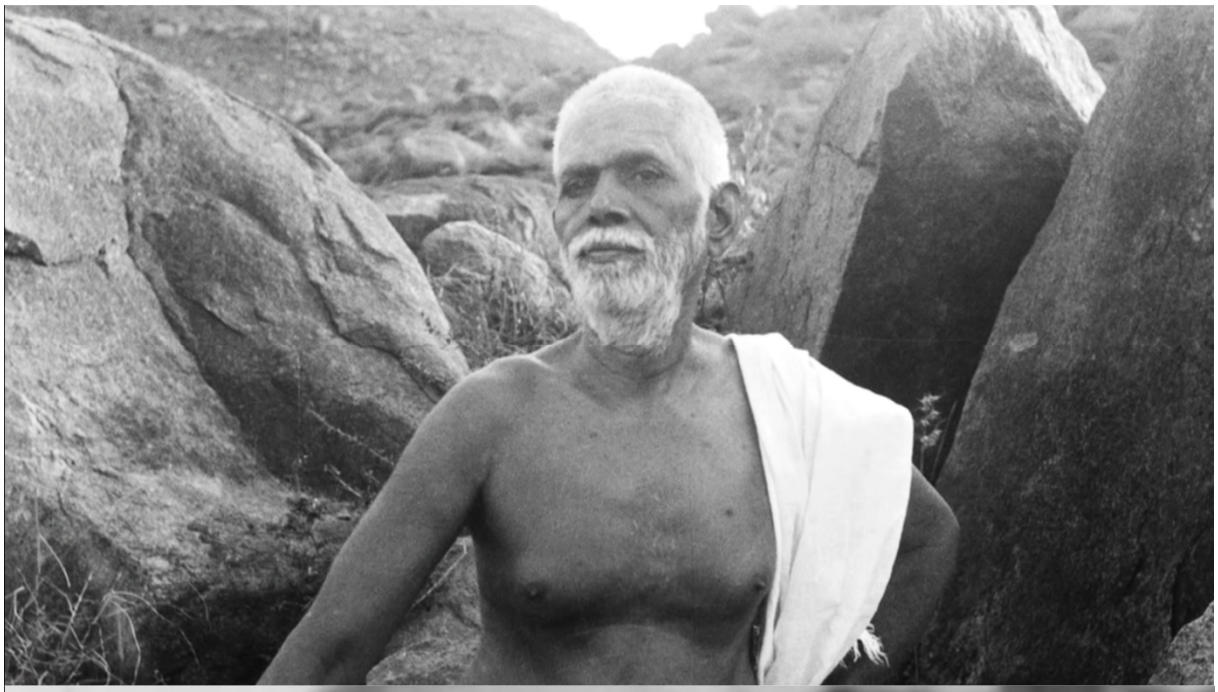


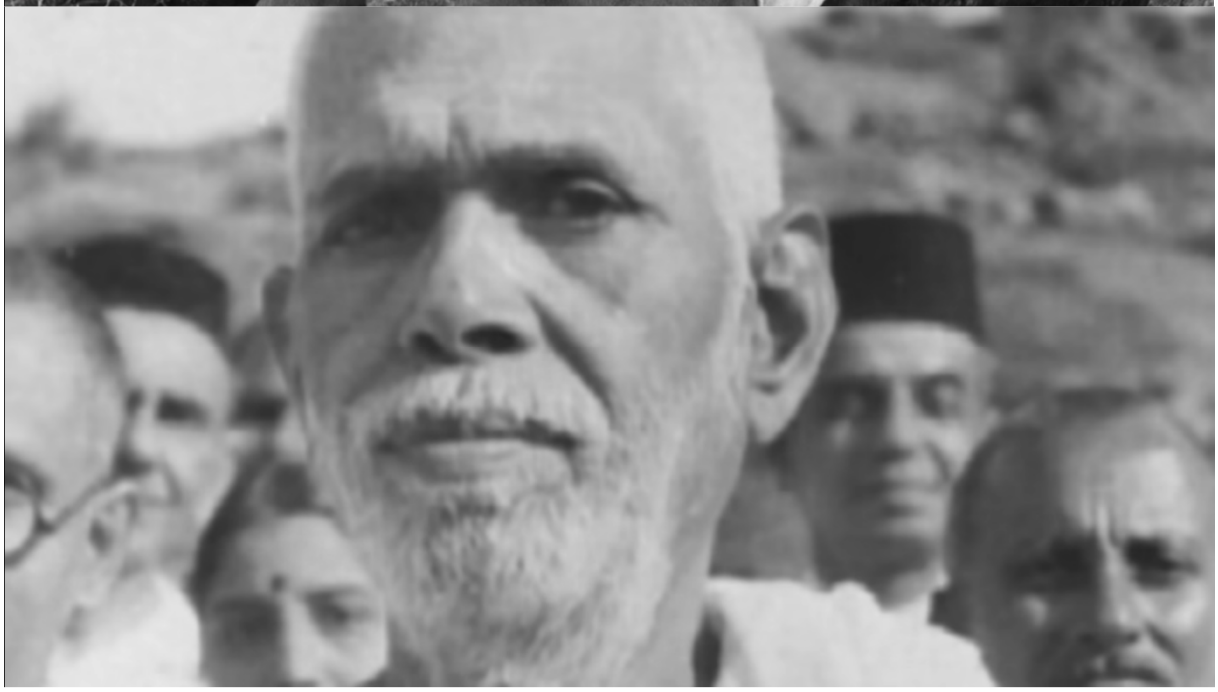
Truly speaking, pure Consciousness is indivisible; it is without parts. It has no form and shape, no within and without. There is no right or left for it.

Pure Consciousness,
which is the Heart, includes all,
and nothing is outside or apart from it.
That is the ultimate Truth.



There is
neither creation nor destruction,
neither destiny nor free will,
neither path nor achievement.
This is the final truth.

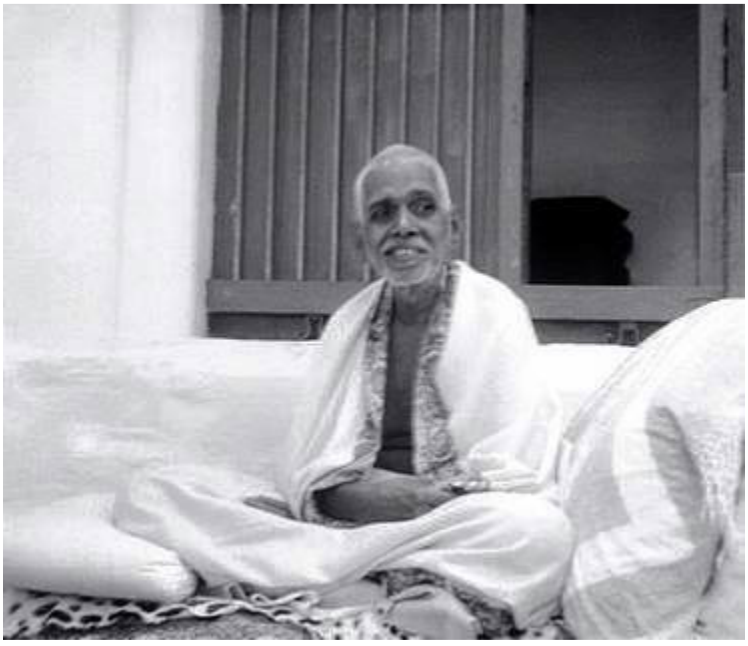




We are happy in deep sleep. We remain then as the pure Self. The same we are just now too. In such sleep, there was neither the wife nor others nor even 'I'. Now they become apparent and give rise to pleasure or pain. Why should not the Self, which was blissful in deep sleep, continue its blissful nature even now? The sole obstruction to such continuity is the wrong identification of the Self with the body. There is neither birth nor death. Waking is birth and sleep is death. The difference lies in the different thoughts. That is the cause of pain. All this is the mischief of the mind. The mind creates pain for himself even when there is pleasure. But pleasure and pain are mental creations. Again, why mourn the dead? They are free from bondage. Mourning is the chain forged by the mind to bind itself to the dead. The Bhagavad Gita says: "What if anyone is dead? What if anyone is ruined? Be dead yourself – be ruined yourself." In that sense, there is no pain after one's death. What is meant by this sort of death? Annihilation of the ego, though the body is alive. If the ego persists, the man is afraid of death. The man mourns another's death. He needs not do so if he predeceases them (by waking up from the ego-dream, which amounts to killing the egosense). The experience of deep sleep clearly teaches that happiness consists in being without the body. The wise also confirm it, speaking of liberation after the body is given up. Thus the sage is awaiting the casting off of the body. Just as a labourer carrying a load on his head for the sake of wages bears the burden with no pleasure, carries it to the destination, and finally unburdens himself with relief and joy; so also the sage bears this body, awaiting the right and destined time to discard it.

A Realized Soul has really no love for his body. For one who is the embodiment of bliss, the body itself is a disease. He will await the time to be rid of the body. When he has the body, he has to clean its teeth, has to walk, bathe, and give food to the body; and has to do many other things besides. If a boil grows, it has to be washed and dressed; otherwise it becomes septic and emits a bad smell. In the same way, if the body is not kept clean, it will get diseased. A Realized Soul looks upon his body in the same way that a coolie does regarding his load. He will look forward to putting down the load at the destination. That being so, will he try to keep on his body and prolong its existence by breath control and rejuvenation (kayakalpa) processes? Those are the methods adopted by men in pursuit of powers, siddhas.

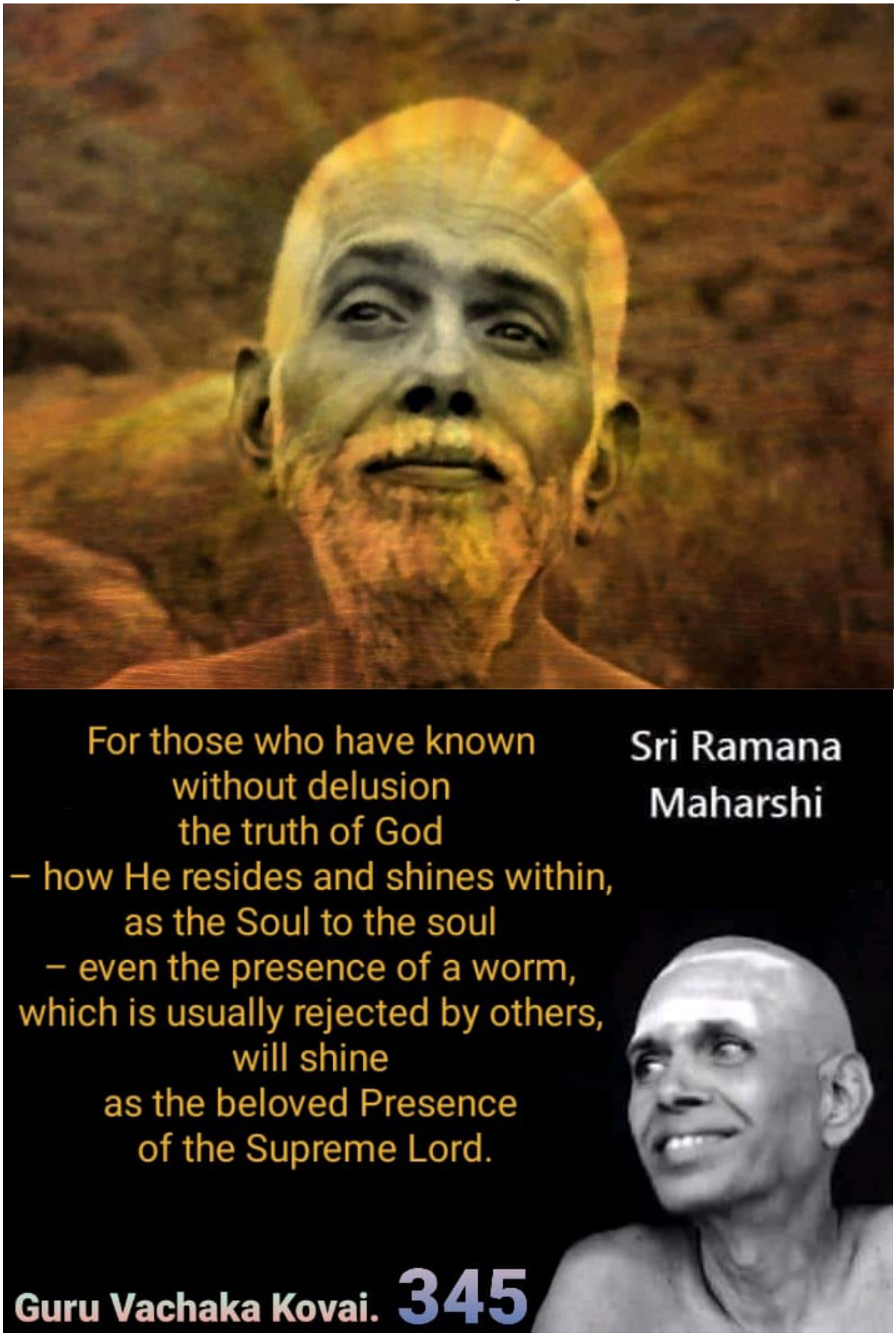
If true realization is attained, who wants this body?
For a Realized Soul who enjoys limitless bliss
through realization of the Self,
why this burden of the body?



"They say that
I am dying.
But I am not
going away.
Where could I go?
I am here."

Ramana
Maharshi

Da jeder das eigene Selbst ist, ist, was auch immer wer auch immer wem auch immer tut, allein sich selbst angetan.



Du wirst zu gegebener Zeit erkennen,
dass deine Herrlichkeit dort beginnt,
wo dein persönliches Sein endet.

Verehre das Göttliche, bis du begreifst, dass du selbst es bist.

Suzanne Segal – Kollision mit der Unendlichkeit
Ein Leben jenseits des persönlichen Selbst

Kurz bevor es geschah, begann sich eine Veränderung in meiner Wahrnehmung zu manifestieren. Die Welt schien zweidimensional zu sein, wie eine Filmkulisse aus Pappe mit nichts dahinter. Die Szenerie erschien völlig flach, leer, wie eine Skizze, ohne Festigkeit. Des Weiteren verflüssigten sich jene klaren Umrisse, die bislang die Trennung zwischen den Dingen markiert hatten und gingen in einer Wellenbewegung ineinander über. Objekte, die bislang stabil zu sein schienen, pulsierten sanft in einem Lebensrhythmus einer Sphäre, die für den erstaunten Verstand unerreichbar war.
Es war Frühling, als es geschah. Die Sonne strahlte warm in mein Gesicht, als ich an der Bushaltestelle stand. Als der Bus näher kam, stellten wir uns am Straßenrand auf. Als ich mich in die Reihe stellte, fühlte ich mich plötzlich völlig vom Geschehen um mich herum isoliert wie in einer Blase. Ich hob mein rechtes Bein, um in den Bus zu steigen und prallte mit voller Wucht auf eine unsichtbare Kraft, die wie eine Stange Dynamit lautlos in meinem Gewahrsein explodierte, die Türen meiner normalen Wahrnehmung aus den Angeln sprengend und mich in zwei Teile zerspaltend. Was ich bislang als "Ich" bezeichnet hatte, wurde aus seinem üblichen Platz gerissen und an einen neuen verlagert, ungefähr dreißig Zentimeter hinter meinem Kopf. Ich befand mich nun hinter meinem Körper und betrachtete die Welt, ohne die Augen im Körper zu benutzen. Mein Verstand war völlig zum Stillstand gekommen durch den Schock. Auch wenn meine Stimme weiterhin zusammenhängend sprechen konnte, fühlte ich mich von ihr völlig getrennt. Schließlich hielt der Bus an meiner Haltestelle und der Körper stieg aus. Losgelöst von jeglichen Sinneseindrücken, abgetrennt vom Körper und ihn lediglich aus der Ferne beobachtend, bewegte ich mich auf der Straße wie eine Wolke von Gewahrsein, die einem Körper folgte, welcher mir vertraut und zugleich fremd vorkam. Der Beobachter war ganz deutlich vom Verstand

getrennt. Ich kehrte zur Wohnung zurück und legte mich ins Bett. Der Körper schlief zwar ein, doch der Beobachter blieb und beobachtete den Schlaf aus seiner Position hinter dem Körper. Es war eine äußerst seltsame Erfahrung. Ohne Zweifel schlief der Verstand, doch etwas war gleichzeitig wach. Der Beobachter schien sich dort zu befinden, wo "ich" mich befand, und das hinterließ den Körper, den Verstand und die Emotionen ohne eine Person. Im Wachzustand war der Verstand überwältigt von seiner Unfähigkeit, den momentanen Seinszustand zu begreifen. Nach Monaten dieses mysteriösen Beobachter-Gewahrseins veränderte sich wieder etwas: Der Beobachter verschwand. Dieser Zustand war noch wesentlich verblüffender. Die Auflösung des Beobachters bedeutete zugleich auch die Auflösung der letzten Spuren einer persönlichen Identität. Der Beobachter hatte zumindest einen Standort für das Ich geboten. Die Erfahrung einer persönlichen Identität wurde abgeschaltet und kehrte niemals mehr zurück.

Das persönliche Selbst bzw. die Illusion eines persönlichen Selbst war verschwunden. Die Erfahrung, niemand Bestimmtes zu sein, ist äußerst schwierig zu beschreiben, aber sie ist absolut unmissverständlich. Wenn sich das Gefühl eines persönlichen Selbst auflöst, dann gibt es im Inneren niemanden mehr, den man für sich selbst halten könnte. Der zuvor scheinbar existierende Jemand bestand ohnehin nur aus Gedanken. Verstand, Körper und Emotionen bezogen sich nicht mehr auf jemanden – es gab niemanden, der dachte, niemanden, der fühlte, niemanden, der wahrnahm. Trotzdem funktionierte all das weiterhin unvermindert. Es benötigte offenbar kein persönliches Ich. Es ergaben sich besonders seltsame Momente, wenn mein Name ins Spiel kam, wenn ich zum Beispiel einen Brief unterschrieb. Der Name bezog sich auf niemanden. Es gab keine Suzanne Segal mehr, tatsächlich hatte es nie eine gegeben. Die Bewegung des Verstandes nach innen führte dazu, dass er dort immer wieder nur auf Leere stieß, wo er früher ein Selbstkonzept vorgefunden hatte. Der Körper, der Verstand, die Sprache, die Gedanken und Emotionen waren alle leer, es gab keine Person dahinter.

All meine bisherigen Vorstellungen von der Realität waren vollständig zerstört worden. Die Person, die ich zuvor zu sein geglaubt hatte, war abwesend. Es ging aber alles so weiter wie bisher – meistens sogar leichter.
Währenddessen versuchte der Verstand ununterbrochen, jemanden zu lokalisieren, dem das alles widerfuhr. Es misslang ihm immer wieder. Und doch verlief alles ohne Probleme.
Die Beziehung zwischen meiner Tochter Arielle und ihrer Mutter, die niemand ist, entwickelte sich so wunderbar, dass die Versuche des Verstandes, den Zustand zu pathologisieren oder als Wahnsinn abzustempeln, unvermeidlicherweise fehlschlugen. Es ist gar nicht nötig, jemand zu sein, damit die Funktionen einer Mutter ausgeführt werden. Der Verstand hatte große Schwierigkeiten, sich daran zu gewöhnen. Meine Tochter jedoch konnte nichts verunsichern. Sie war ein glückliches Kind, das jeden mit ihrer Frühreife beeindruckte. Mindestens einmal hat sie zu mir gesagt: „Weißt du, wie das ist, Mama, wenn Menschen dich anschauen und glauben, du bist jemand, doch du weißt, dass du nicht diese Person bist?“ „Ja, mein Liebling.“ antwortete ich. „Dieses Gefühl kenne ich sehr genau.“
Ich muss wiederholen, dass alle Gefühle in angemessener Weise weiterbestanden. Was sich aufgelöst hatte, war der Bezugspunkt eines persönlichen Selbst. Gedanken, Gefühle oder Handlungen entstanden nicht mehr für irgendeinen persönlichen Zweck. Hinter den Handlungen und dem Sprechen stand nicht mehr irgendeine persönliche Absicht, sie geschahen nun entsprechend den Bedürfnissen und Anforderungen der augenblicklichen Situation, nicht mehr abgetrennt vom Ganzen.
Als ich vom Tod meines Vaters erfuhr, weinte ich. Es gab zwar niemanden, der sich traurig fühlte, und dennoch erfolgte die emotionale Reaktion genau wie zuvor. Das Weinen fand statt – nicht mehr und nicht weniger. Für andere schien es jemanden zu geben, der traurig war, doch da war niemand. Der Verstand hingegen kommentierte, wie es ein Verstand nun einmal tut, jeden Moment entweder als positiv oder negativ.

Nicht für einen einzigen Augenblick ist das Gefühl, eine individuelle Person mit einer persönlichen Identität zu sein, zurückgekehrt.
Die Funktionsfähigkeit der Welt war unbeeinträchtigt, sogar verbessert.
Nachdem ich innerhalb eines Jahrzehnts 12 verschiedene Psychotherapeuten aufgesucht hatte, wurde deutlich, dass der Bereich der Psychologie nicht die geringste Ahnung davon hatte, was hier vor sich ging.
Zu wissen, dass man niemand ist, passt nicht in unser kulturelles Bild.
Leere ist in dieser Welt kein akzeptierbares Ziel.
Ich hatte diejenigen aufgesucht, die als die Weisen in unserer Kultur gelten, diese gebildeten Seelen, deren Intellekt durch strenge akademische Ausbildung geschult worden war. Alle Therapeuten, mit denen ich gesprochen hatte, waren, auch wenn sie die besten Absichten hatten, von den Mauern ihrer Vorstellungen über die Interpretationen des Lebens umgeben und unfähig, bis zur Realität durchzudringen.
Schließlich entdeckte ich den Buddhismus und las alles, was ich finden konnte. Ganz besonders war ich von der folgenden Passage vom Dalai Lama beeindruckt: „Selbstlosigkeit hat nichts damit zu tun, dass etwas, was in der Vergangenheit existierte, aufhört zu existieren. Vielmehr wird erkannt, dass ein solches Selbst niemals existiert hat."
Schließlich traf ich auf Jean Klein. Jean lehrte wie Ramana Maharshi und andere große Meister, dass das individuelle Selbst lediglich eine Konstruktion des Verstandes, das wahre Selbst jedoch ein unpersönliches, alles-einschließendes Gewahrsein ist. Ich erzählte ihm, was ich seit 10 Jahren erlebte. Er antwortete:
„Das ist phantastisch. Ausgezeichnet."
Ich fragte ihn, warum so viel Angst damit einhergeht. Er sagte, sobald der konditionierte Verstand, der darauf trainiert ist, die Illusion aufrechtzuerhalten, zum Stillstand kommt, endet auch die Angst. Seine Worte waren treffend. Ich kontaktierte weitere Lehrer. Einer von ihnen erläuterte mir, wie wichtig es sei, die Substanzlosigkeit des Ich zu erkennen. Er sagte: „Die Abwesenheit der Erfahrung, wie du sie erlebst, überlässt der "Ich, Ich, Ich"-Kultur die absolute Autorität.

Der Wahnsinn dieser Überzeugung – und es ist nicht mehr als eine Überzeugung – hat globale Konsequenzen."
Die spirituelle Lehrerin Gangaji schrieb mir:
„Ich bin absolut begeistert und sehr, sehr glücklich darüber, dass du unmittelbar erfahren hast, dass du kein individuelles Ich bist. Die Verwirklichung der innewohnenden Leere – das reine Bewusstsein – ist die wirkliche Erfüllung."

Die klarste Bestätigung erhielt ich von einem Lehrer, der nicht mehr am Leben ist. Als ich Ramana Maharshi in Buchform begegnete, wusste ich, dass ich meinen spirituellen Lehrer gefunden hatte. Er beschrieb es auf so direkte und einfache Weise, dass absolut kein Raum mehr für irgendwelche Zweifel blieb.
In seinen Worten: „Gleichheit ist das wahre Merkmal eines Erwachten. Der Begriff Gleichheit impliziert das Vorhandensein von Unterschieden. In all den Unterschieden nimmt der Erwachte eine Einheit wahr. Gleichheit bedeutet nicht, die Unterschiede nicht zu erkennen. Sie erkennen die Unterschiede als etwas sehr Oberflächliches, sie haben keine Substanz, sie sind nicht von Dauer. Doch das Essenzielle, das all diesen Erscheinungen innewohnt, ist die eine Wahrheit, das Reale. Das bezeichne ich als die Einheit, das eine Selbst."

Das Gewahrsein sollte sich in den nächsten Monaten noch vertiefen. Mein Bewusstseinszustand sollte ganz plötzlich in die Erfahrung überwechseln, dass es nicht nur kein persönliches Selbst gibt, sondern auch keine anderen. Mit anderen Worten: Ich war im Begriff, in das Gewahrsein der Einheit überzuwechseln, wo die Leere meines Bewusstseins als die eigentliche Substanz aller Schöpfung erkannt wurde. Nachdem es sich auf diese Weise offenbart hatte, begann ich die Leere als die unendliche Weite zu beschreiben.

Inmitten einer ereignisreichen Woche befand ich mich auf einer Fahrt nach Norden, um Freunde zu besuchen, als mir plötzlich bewusst wurde, dass ich durch mich selbst fuhr. Viele Jahre lang hatte es überhaupt keine Erfahrung des Selbst gegeben, doch plötzlich, hier auf dieser Straße, war alles ich selbst, und ich fuhr durch mich, um dorthin zu gelangen, wo ich bereits war. Genau genommen fuhr ich nirgendwohin, denn ich war bereits überall. Die unendliche Leere, als die ich mich erkannt hatte, offenbarte sich nun als die unendliche Substanz und Fülle all dessen, was ich sah. Auf meiner Fahrt dorthin erschien mir alles viel fließender. Die Berge, Bäume, Felsen, Vögel und der Himmel hatten ihre Unterschiede verloren. Wenn ich mich umschaute, dann sah ich zuerst, wie sie alle eins waren und dann, wie in einer zweiten Welle der Wahrnehmung, sah ich die Unterschiede. Doch die Wahrnehmung der Substanz, aus der sie alle geschaffen waren, erfolgte nicht durch den physischen Körper. Die unendliche Weite nahm sich selbst wahr. Alles war von einer wunderschönen Stille durchdrungen. Die Form ist wie ein Gemälde auf der Leinwand der Einheit, in welcher alle – das Gemälde, die Leinwand und die Hand, die es malt – eins sind.

Hatte man dies einmal erkannt, schien alles so lächerlich einfach.

Nachdem der Verstand damit aufgehört hatte, sich hartnäckig an die alten falschen Vorstellungen zu klammern, endete die Angst und es kam Freude auf.

Ich erkannte, was schon immer direkt vor meinen Augen existiert hatte, jedoch durch die Angst des Verstandes verschleiert worden war: Es gibt kein individuelles Selbst und keine anderen, alles ist die unendliche Weite. Wie konnte ich das nur so lange übersehen? Dass alles in Wirklichkeit eins war, schien auf einmal das Normalste auf der Welt zu sein, doch ich hatte sehr lange gebraucht, um darauf zu stoßen. Es war auf sich selbst gestoßen.

Die Tatsache, dass „ich persönlich“ nicht mehr existierte, dass es keine Person mehr gab, ebnete schließlich vollständig den Weg für die Erkenntnis, dass es nichts gibt, was ich nicht selbst bin.

Was übrig bleibt, wenn es kein persönliches Selbst mehr gibt, ist alles, was es gibt. Aus der Perspektive des Unendlichen ist es völlig offensichtlich, dass das individuelle Selbst überhaupt nicht existiert. Das individuelle Selbst ist nichts weiter als eine gedankliche Vorstellung davon, wer wir sind. Vorstellungen sind Vorstellungen – und sonst nichts. Dieses Leben wird nun in dem permanenten, immer präsenten Gewahrsein der unendlichen Weite, die ich bin, gelebt. In diesem Zustand gibt es absolut keinen Bezugspunkt und kein Zentrum. Der Ozean, in dem alles erscheint und vergeht, ist sich immer seiner selbst gewahr, egal ob der Körper schläft, träumt oder wach ist. Niemals kommt ein lokalisierbares Ich ins Spiel. Die unendliche Weite ist sich ununterbrochen ihrer selbst gewahr. Was für eine außerordentliche Art zu leben! Gefühle wie Verlegenheit, Schande, Neid, Selbstmitleid oder Selbstbezogenheit tauchen einfach nicht mehr auf. Sie haben keine Basis mehr, auf der sie entstehen könnten.

Die unendliche Weite nimmt mit absoluter Klarheit wahr, dass Gedanken nichts weiter als Gedanken sind. Es gibt kein Urteil von gut oder schlecht, von richtig oder falsch – alles ist lediglich, was es ist. In diesem Zustand wird auch niemals etwas als ein Problem erachtet. Nehmen wir zum Beispiel die Beziehung zu einem starken Gefühl wie Ärger. Die Beziehung der unendlichen Weite zum Ärger ist ähnlich wie die Beziehung des Ozeans zum Seegras, das in ihm umherschwimmt. Der Ozean würde sich niemals über das Seegras beschweren und darauf bestehen, dass es entfernt wird, damit der Ozean der Ozean sein kann. Genauso würde sich die unendliche Weite niemals über die Anwesenheit von irgendetwas beschweren, das in ihr auftaucht. Die unendliche Weite verändert sich niemals, egal wie zahlreich oder intensiv die Dinge erscheinen. Nichts, was erscheint, ist ein Problem.

Die unendliche Weite begegnet sich selbst in jeder einzelnen Person, mit der sie in Kontakt kommt. Der Verstand hat seine Grenzen anerkannt und aufgehört, Dinge außerhalb seines Fassungsvermögens abzulehnen, und so hat sich der unbeschreiblich freudvolle Geschmack der

unendlichen Weite, die sich selbst erlebt, machtvoll und für immer in den Vordergrund geschoben.
Die Vorstellung von persönlichem Wachstum oder Entwicklung steht in jeder Hinsicht im Widerspruch zum Wesen der unendlichen Weite. Wenn mir Leute erzählen, dass sie das Persönliche nicht aufgeben wollen, weil sie glauben, damit auch die Liebe, die Freude oder die tieferen Gefühle aufzugeben, dann verstehen sie nicht, dass Liebe und Freude niemals etwas Persönliches waren und dass es das persönliche Selbst niemals gegeben hat. Nichts wird aufgegeben, nur die Illusion.
Liebe, die einen persönlichen Zug aufweist, basiert auf dem vom Verstand konstruierten Gefühl des Getrenntseins. Aus der Perspektive der unendlichen Weite aber existiert die Trennung gar nicht.
Das ist allerhöchste Vertrautheit. Das ist Liebe, die keine Grenzen kennt und alles weit in den Schatten stellt, was sich der Verstand unter der idealen Liebe, die er sucht, vorstellen könnte.
Die meisten spirituellen Praktiken gehen davon aus, dass das Erwachen erreicht oder erlangt werden muss. Dabei sind wir doch immer die unendliche Weite – ständig, ohne jede Unterbrechung!
Es ist der natürliche Zustand.
Wenn der konditionierte Verstand durchschaut, dass Erfahrungen keinen Jemand enthalten, mit dem er sie erfüllt glaubte, dann rastet er aus und führt überzeugende Argumente an, warum die Leere absolut nicht erstrebenswert ist. Meine Arbeit als Psychologin hat mir einen Sitz in der ersten Reihe im Theater des menschlichen Leidens verschafft. Es ist offensichtlich, dass die konventionelle Psychotherapie ihren Erfolg daran misst, wie gut wir den festgefügten Vorstellungen entsprechen. Betrachtet man es aus der absoluten Perspektive, dann sind all das nur Vorstellungen, die nicht mit der Wahrheit verwechselt werden sollten. Meine psychotherapeutische Arbeit mit Klienten hat sich radikal verändert. Mein Ziel für alle ist die Freiheit – die absolute Freiheit. Ich möchte nicht, dass Klienten ihre Gefühle verändern, sich durch Kindheitstraumata arbeiten oder Symptome loswerden. Ich möchte, dass sie

frei werden, indem sie erkennen, wer sie wirklich sind. Zuerst frage ich jeden Einzelnen, wer er zu sein glaubt. Das zieht normalerweise eine umfassende Untersuchung all der Vorstellungen nach sich, die er von anderen Menschen übernommen hat und für die wahrhaftige Definition dessen hält, wer er ist. Schon in jungen Jahren vermittelt uns unsere Kultur ein klares Bild von der Person, die wir werden sollen und die meisten von uns versuchen ihr ganzes Leben lang mit aller Kraft, diese Person zu werden. Alle Menschen, mit denen ich gearbeitet habe, sind sich bewusst geworden, dass sie ihre Identität aus Informationen konstruiert haben, die andere Leute ihnen erzählt haben und daraus haben sie gefolgert, wer sie sind.
Die moderne Welt untermauert diese Täuschung.

Es gibt nur eine Realität, eine Wahrheit, ein Bewusstsein, das in diesem Moment durch deine wie durch meine Augen schaut. Es ist die Basis des Seins, in der alle Manifestationen erscheinen und vergehen.

Auf die Frage, wer ich bin, gibt es nur eine Antwort: Ich bin das Unendliche, die unendliche Weite, welche die Substanz aller Dinge ist. Ich bin niemand und zugleich jedermann, nichts und alles – genau wie du.

Suzanne Segal – Danksagung/Anerkennung

Ich möchte all jenen danken, die in dem mysteriösen Ablauf des Unendlichen, so wie er sich in diesem Leben manifestiert hat, ihre Rolle gespielt haben. Viele von ihnen haben einen entscheidenden Beitrag geleistet, um diese Beschreibung, die Sie gerade gelesen haben, ins Leben zu rufen. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi für seine Beschreibung des transzendentalen Bereiches. Den öffentlichen Pariser Verkehrsmitteln, die eine Bushaltestelle zur Verfügung stellten, weil gerade kein Bodhi-Baum in der Nähe war. All den Psychotherapeuten, die erfolglos versucht haben, die unendliche Weite zu heilen. All jenen, die die Anwesenheit der unendlichen Weite während der Winterzeit bestätigten: Jean Klein, Jack Kornfield, Christopher Titmuss, Andrew Cohen, Gangaji, Hameed Ali, Reb Anderson, Poonjaji (Papaji), Ram Dass, John Tarrand.
Ramana Maharshi, zu allen Jahreszeiten anwesend.

Ramana Maharshi – SEI, WAS DU BIST!

Die wichtigsten Lehren des großen indischen Weisen

Herausgegeben von David Godman

Aus dem Englischen von Kurt Friedrichs

(Ausschnitte aus Einführung und Kapitel 1: Das Selbst)

...

Einführung von David Godman

1896 verließ ein sechzehnjähriger indischer Schuljunge seine Familie und machte sich, von einem inneren Drang getrieben, auf den Weg zum Arunachala, einem heiligen Berg und Pilgerzentrum in Südindien. Bei seiner Ankunft warf er sein Geld und jeglichen Besitz fort und ergab sich dem neu entdeckten Gewahrsein, dass sein wahres Wesen formloses, absolutes Bewusstsein ist. Sein Aufgehen in diesem Gewahrsein war so intensiv, dass er seinen Körper und die Welt völlig vergaß. Insekten fraßen sich in das Fleisch seiner Beine und sein Körper magerte ab, weil er das Essen vergaß.

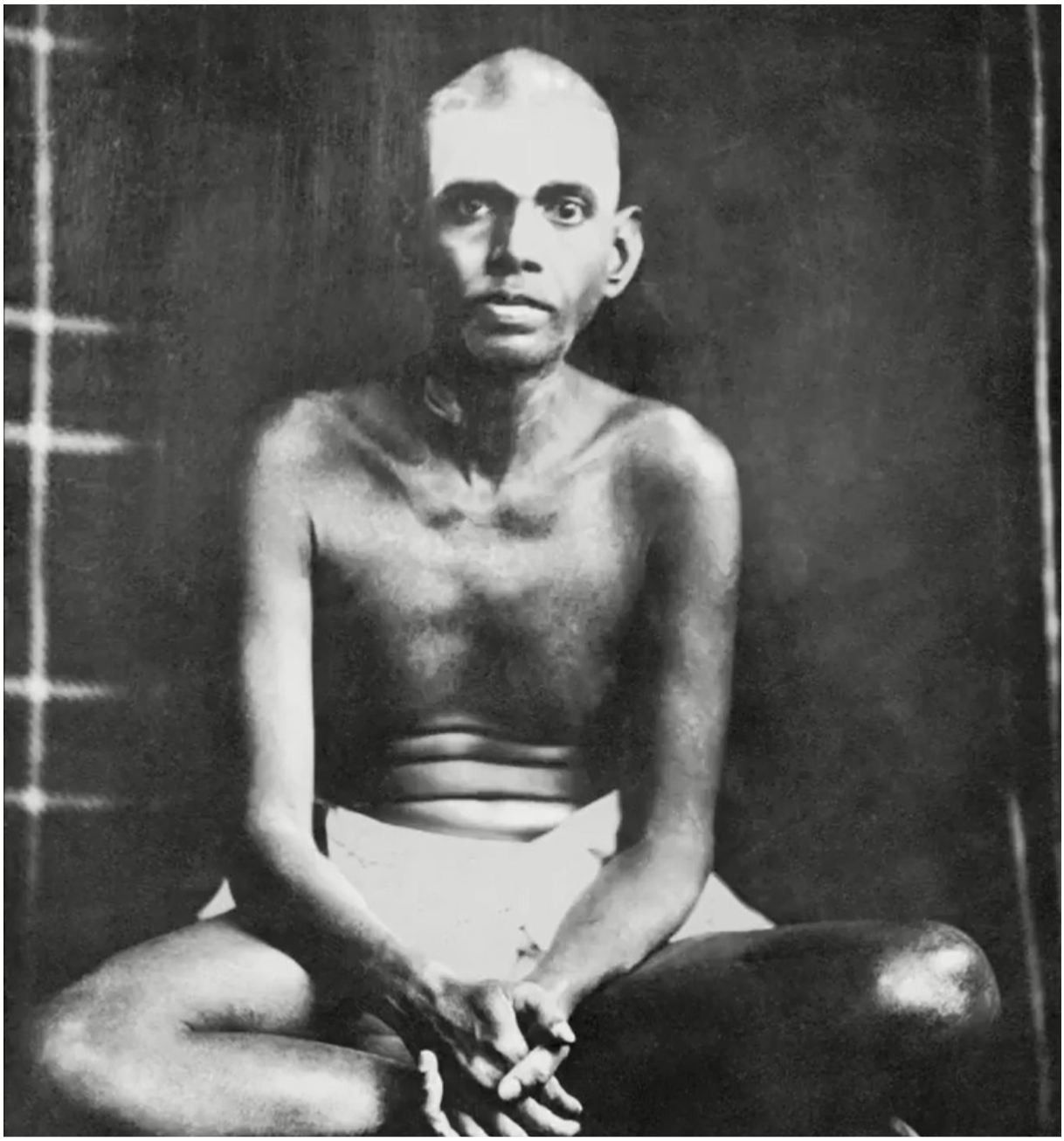
Dass er sich selbst als reines Bewusstsein erfuhr, blieb von den körperlichen Veränderungen unberührt, und dieses Gewahrsein blieb ungetrübt für den Rest seines Lebens erhalten.

Nach Auffassung der Hindus hatte er „sein Selbst verwirklicht", also die direkte Erfahrung gemacht, dass nichts existiert außer unteilbarem, absolutem Bewusstsein, das in unmanifestierter 'Form' als Sein oder Gewahrsein erfahren wird und als manifestierte Form die Gestalt des Universums annimmt.

Venkataraman, der sechzehnjährige Schuljunge, erlebte eine Todeserfahrung, in der ihm zum ersten Mal bewusst wurde, dass sein wahres Wesen unvergänglich ist und mit dem Körper, dem Denken und der Persönlichkeit nichts zu tun hat. Viele Menschen haben über ähnliche, unerwartete Erfahrungen berichtet, die aber fast immer vorübergehend waren. Venkataramans Erfahrung aber war dauernd und unwiderruflich. Von dem Augenblick an verschwand die Vorstellung, eine individuelle Persönlichkeit zu sein, für immer.

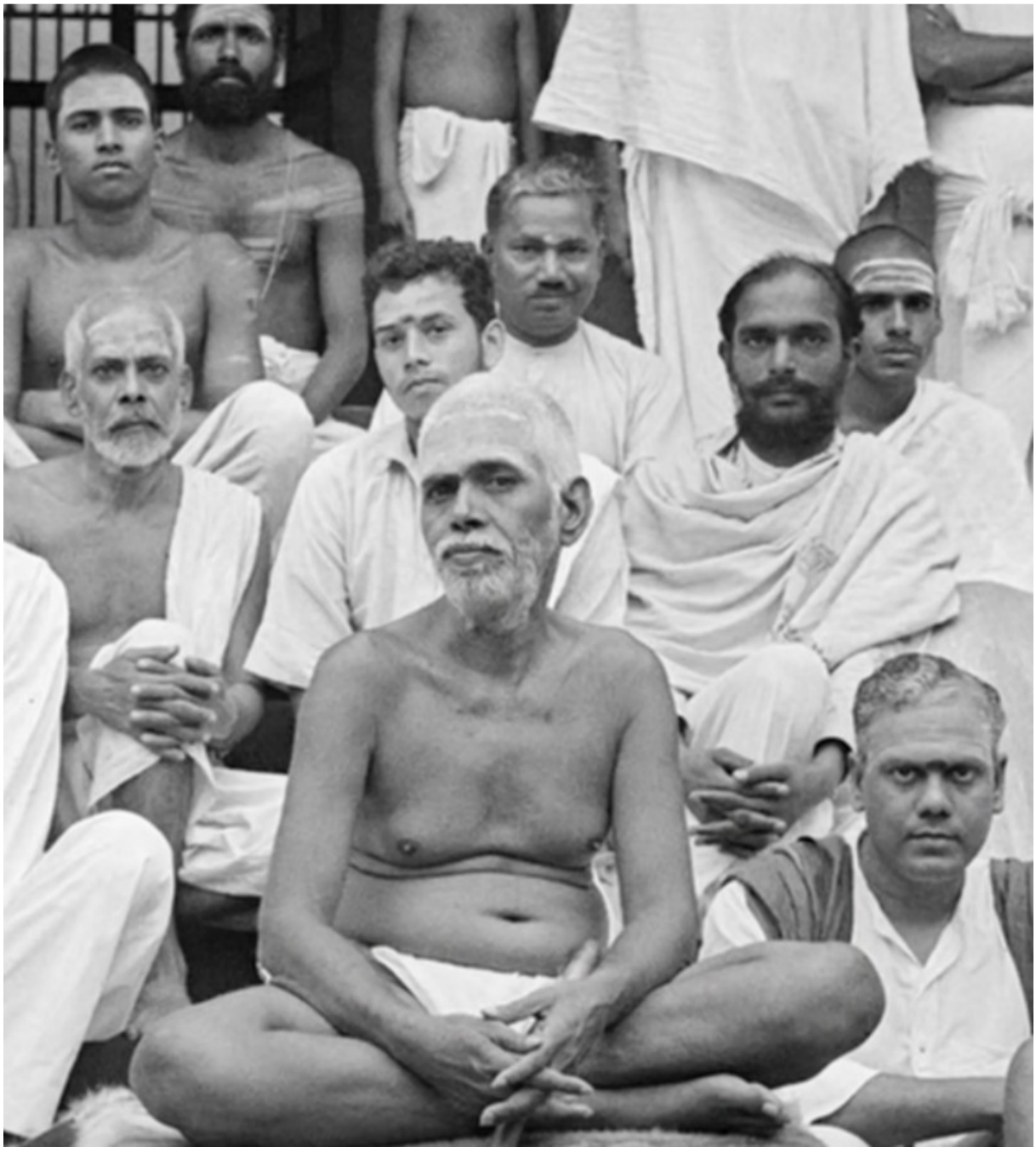
Seine Liebe zu dem Berg Arunachala war so groß, dass er sich vom Tage seiner Ankunft im Jahre 1896 bis zu seinem Tod im Jahre 1950 nie mehr als zwei Meilen von ihm entfernt hat.

Nachdem Venkataraman einige Jahre auf dem Berg verbracht hatte, begann sich seine Erleuchtung als äußere, spirituelle Ausstrahlung zu manifestieren. Diese Ausstrahlung zog einen kleinen Kreis von Anhängern an, und obgleich er meistens in Schweigen verharrte, begann er allmählich zu lehren. Einer seiner frühesten Anhänger, beeindruckt von der offensichtlichen Heiligkeit und Weisheit des jungen Mannes, entschloss sich, ihn Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi zu nennen. Bhagavan heißt „der Göttliche"; Sri, Ehrwürdiger, ist ein indischer Ehrentitel; Ramana ist von Venkataraman abgeleitet; Maharshi bedeutet im Sankrit „großer Seher". Der Name fand auch bei den anderen Anklang und wurde bald zu dem Namen, unter dem er in der Welt bekannt wurde.

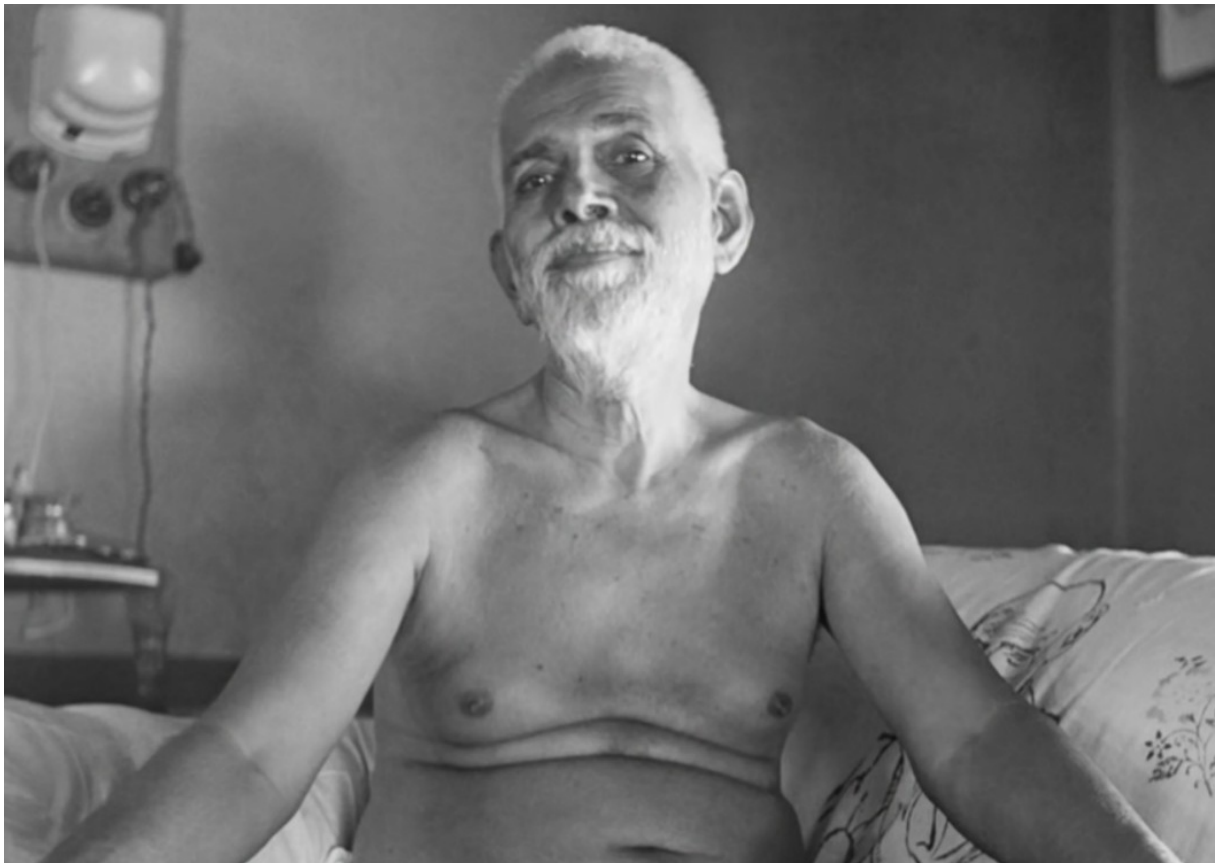


In diesem Lebensabschnitt sprach Ramana nur sehr wenig und lehrte auf ungewöhnliche Weise. Statt verbale Anweisungen zu geben, strahlte er schweigend eine Kraft aus, die den Geist derer zur Ruhe brachte, die darauf eingestellt waren, und sie gelegentlich den Zustand erfahren ließ, in dem er sich ständig befand. Später war er eher bereit, mündliche Anweisungen zu geben, aber auch dann gab es weiterhin die schweigende Unterweisung für diejenigen, die fähig waren, sie zu nutzen. Sein ganzes Leben lang hat Ramana darauf hingewiesen, dass diese schweigende Kraft die direkteste und konzentrierteste Form seiner Unterweisung sei. Für wie wichtig er dies hielt, geht daraus hervor, dass er häufiger sagte, seine mündlichen Belehrungen seien nur für diejenigen bestimmt, die sein Schweigen nicht begreifen könnten.

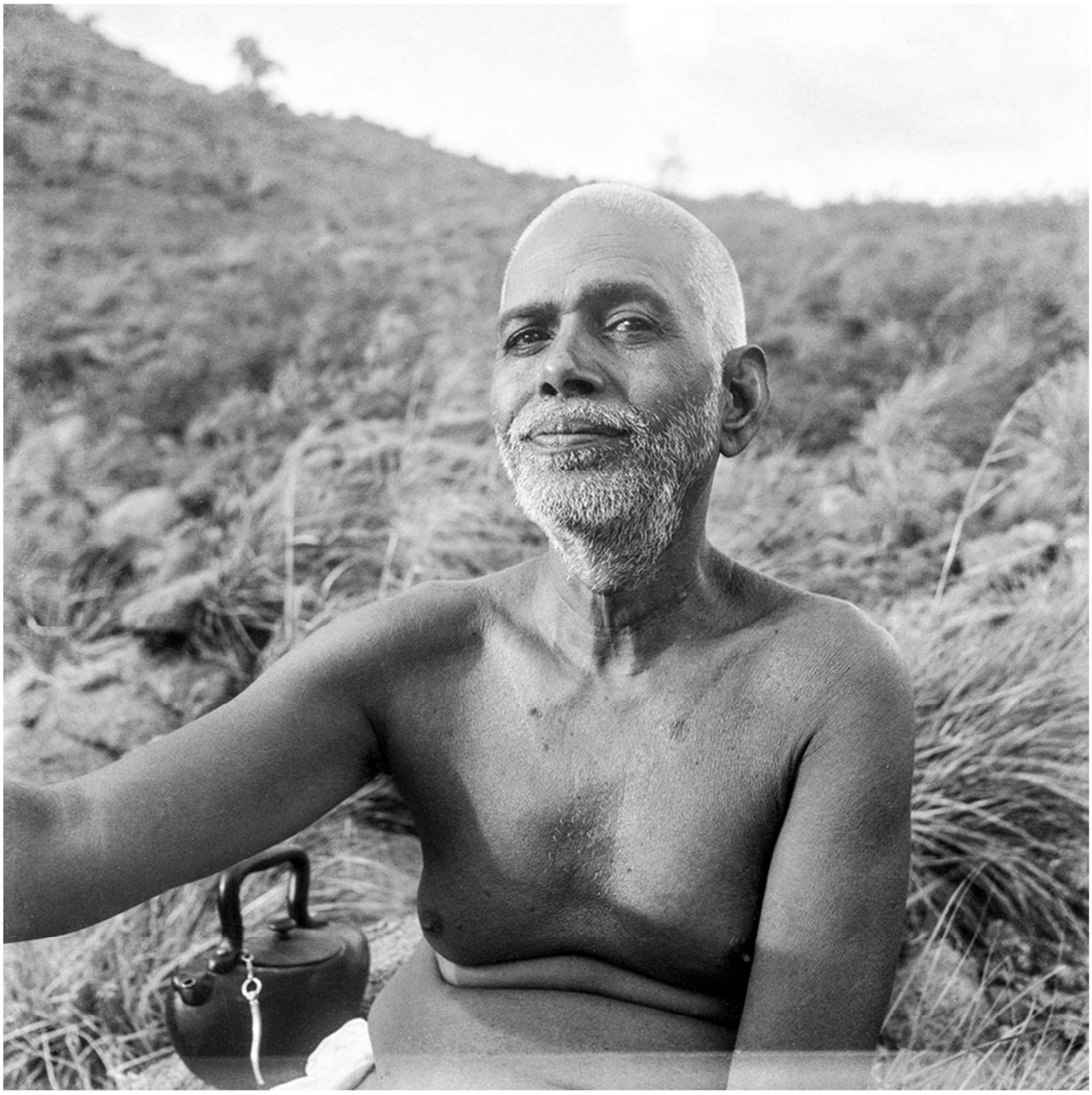
Im Lauf der Jahre wurde er immer berühmter. Eine Gemeinschaft sammelte sich um ihn, und Tausende von Besuchern kamen. In den letzten zwanzig Jahren seines Lebens wurde er der bekannteste und am meisten verehrte Heilige in Indien. Viele wurden von dem Frieden angezogen, den sie in seiner Gegenwart erfuhren, andere von der direkten Art, wie er spirituell Suchende unterwies, und wieder andere, um ihm ihre Sorgen und Nöte darzulegen. Aus welchem Grund sie auch zu ihm kamen, fast jeder, der ihm begegnete, war beeindruckt von seiner Einfachheit und Bescheidenheit.



Er war für die Besucher vierundzwanzig Stunden des Tages erreichbar, da er in der allen zugänglichen Gemeinschaftshalle lebte und schlief. Sein einziger privater Besitz war ein Lendentuch, ein Wasserkrug und ein Spazierstock. Obwohl Tausende ihn als lebenden Gott verehrten, wollte er nicht als eine besondere Person behandelt werden, und er nahm nichts an, was nicht allen im Ashram zugute kam. Er beteiligte sich an der gemeinsamen Arbeit, und viele Jahre lang stand er morgens um drei Uhr auf, um das Essen für die Ashram-Bewohner zu bereiten. Sein Sinn für Gleichheit war legendär. Wenn Besucher kamen – er machte keinen Unterscheid zwischen hochstehenden Persönlichkeiten, Bauern oder Tieren –, wurden sie alle mit gleichem Respekt und mit gleicher Hochachtung behandelt. Seine Achtung erstreckte sich selbst auf die Bäume, und er bat seine Anhänger, weder Blätter noch Blüten abzureißen, und wenn Früchte von einem Baum genommen wurden, so sollte es auf eine Weise geschehen, die dem Baum möglichst wenig Schmerz zufügte.
Von 1925 bis 1950 spielte sich das Ashram-Leben in der kleinen Halle ab, in der Ramana lebte, schlief und Besucher empfing. Die meiste Zeit des Tages saß er in einer Ecke, seine schweigende Kraft ausstrahlend und Fragen entgegennehmend vom ständigen Strom der Besucher,die aus allen Ländern der Erde zu ihm kamen.



Die verbalen Unterweisungen kamen aus seiner direkten Erfahrung, dass Bewusstsein die einzig existierende Wirklichkeit ist. Folglich zielten alle seine Erklärungen und Anweisungen darauf ab, seine Anhänger zu überzeugen, dass dies ihr wahrer und natürlicher Zustand sei. Nur wenige seiner Anhänger waren in der Lage, diese Wahrheit in ihrer höchsten und reinsten Form zu begreifen, und so hat er seine Lehren oft dem begrenzten Verständnis der Menschen angepasst, die ratsuchend zu ihm kamen. Das ist der Grund, weshalb man verschiedene Ebenen seiner Unterweisungen feststellen kann. Auf der höchsten Ebene, die durch Worte ausgedrückt werden kann, sagte er, dass nur Bewusstsein allein existiert.

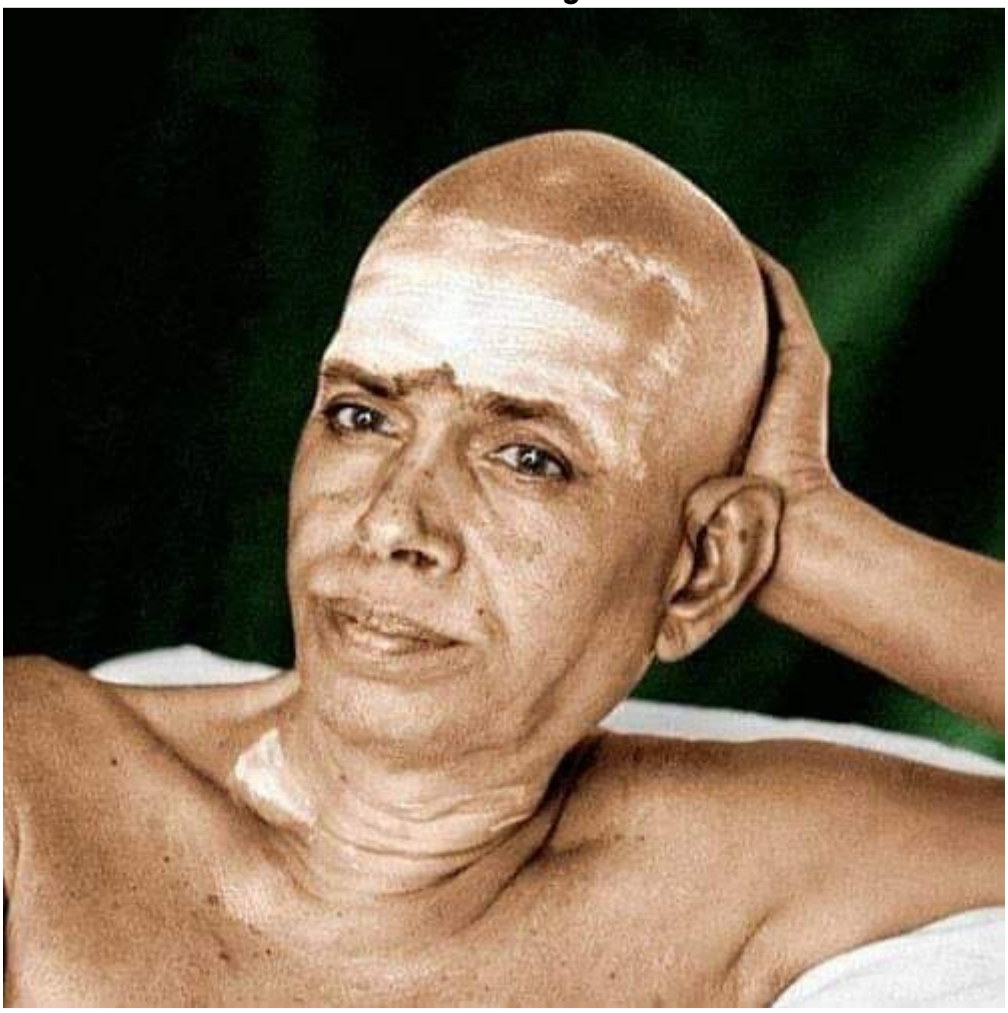


Wenn man die Gedanken, mit denen wir uns selbst einschränken, aufgäbe, dann würde sich die Wirklichkeit des Bewusstseins offenbaren. Die meisten seiner Anhänger waren so sehr in die selbstbeschränkenden Vorstellungen, die aufzuge-

ben Ramana sie aufforderte, verstrickt, dass sie meinten, die Wahrheit über das Bewusstsein könne sich ihnen nur nach einer langen Zeit spiritueller Übung enthüllen. Um diesen Menschen Genüge zu tun, lehrte er sie eine Methode der Selbstbetrachtung, die er Selbstergründung (Selbstbefragung) nannte.
Er hat diese Methode oft und eindringlich empfohlen.

Die Art, seine Unterweisungen auf die verschiedenen Bedürfnisse der Menschen einzustellen, hat zu vielen (scheinbaren) Widersprüchen geführt. Er konnte zum Beispiel dem einen sagen, dass ein individuelles Selbst nicht existiere, und gleich darauf einem anderen ausführlich schildern, wie das individuelle Selbst funktioniert, Karma schafft und wiedergeboren wird. Ein Betrachter mag sagen, dass solch gegensätzliche Ausführungen beide richtig sein können, wenn man sie von

verschiedenen Standpunkten aus betrachtet, aber die erstere ist zweifellos von größerer Gültigkeit, wenn sie vom absoluten Standpunkt der eigenen Erfahrung Ramanas aus betrachtet wird.
(Beispiel: „Ishvara, der persönliche Gott, der Schöpfer des Universums, existiert wirklich. Aber das stimmt nur vom relativen Standpunkt derer aus, die die Wahrheit noch nicht erfasst haben und an die Wirklichkeit individueller Seelen glauben. Der Weise kann vom absoluten Standpunkt aus keine andere Existenz als die des einen, formlosen Selbst akzeptieren.“, so Ramana Maharshi.)
Dieser Standpunkt, zusammengefasst in seiner Feststellung, dass Bewusstsein allein existiert, ist letztlich der einzige Maßstab für die Einschätzung der relativen Wahrheit seiner unterschiedlichen Aussagen.



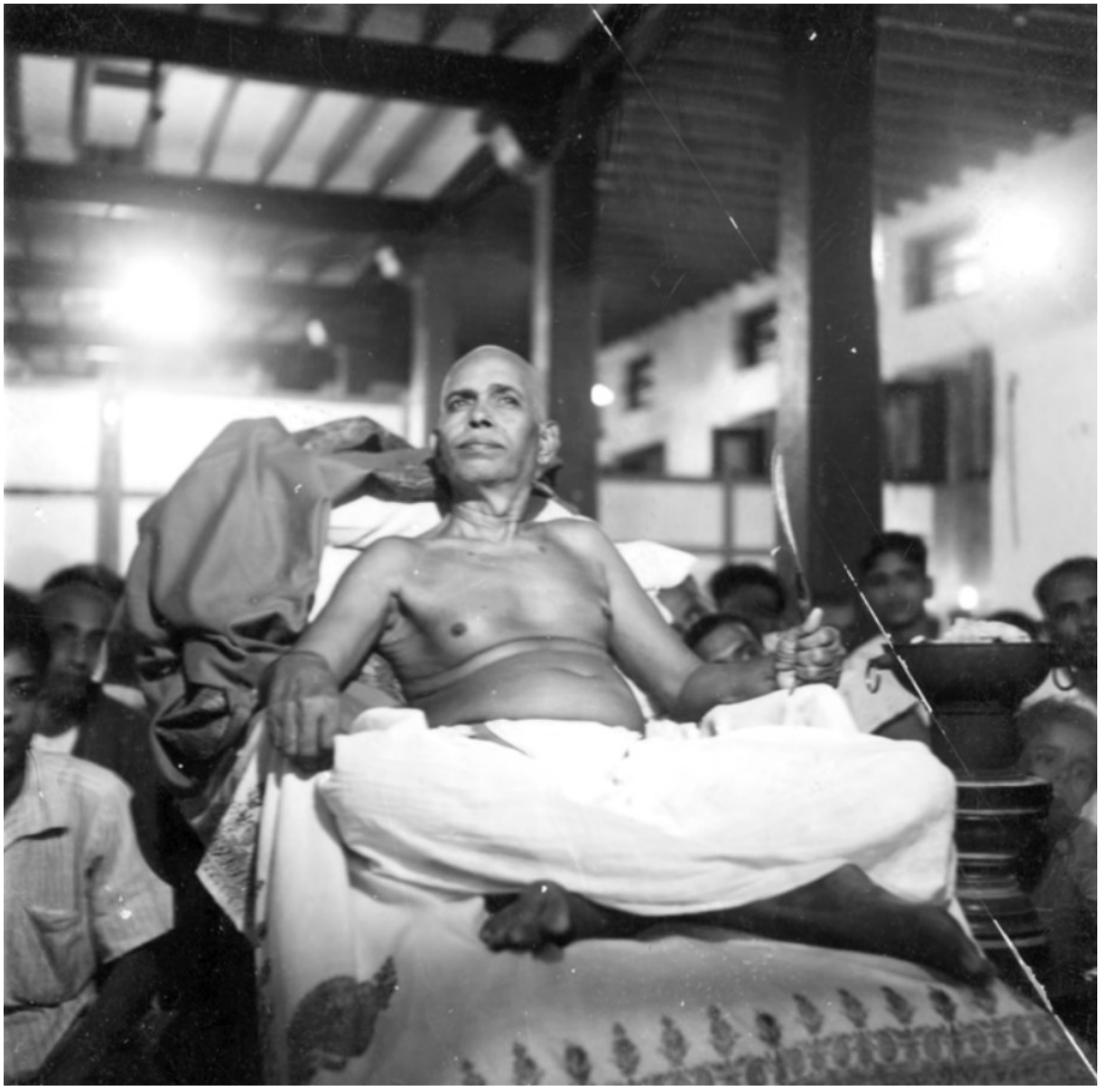
Dies im Auge behaltend, habe ich (David Godman) versucht, das Material dieses Buches so zu ordnen, dass Ramanas höchste Lehren zuerst kommen und die weniger bedeutenden oder abweichenden zuletzt. Wenn Besucher kamen, versuchte er stets, sie von der Wahrheit seiner höchsten Lehren zu überzeugen, und nur, wenn sie offenbar nicht bereit waren, diese zu akzeptieren, sprach er von einer mehr relativen Ebene aus und gab leichtere Antworten.

Die Lehren werden hier in einer Reihe von Fragen und Antworten dargelegt. Die Fragen und Antworten stammen aus vielen Quellen und sind so zusammengestellt, als wären sie ein fortlaufendes Gespräch.
Die Fragen sind im Buch mit „F:“ bezeichnet und Ramanas Antworten mit „A:“.

DAS SELBST

Der Kern von Ramanas Lehren kommt in seinen wiederholten Feststellungen zum Ausdruck, dass es eine einzige, immanente Wirklichkeit gibt, die von jedermann direkt erfahren wird und die gleichzeitig die Quelle, die Substanz und das wahre Wesen von allem ist, das existiert. Er gab ihr verschiedene Namen.
Das Selbst – Dies ist der Begriff, den Ramana am meisten benutzt hat. Er definierte ihn, indem er sagte, dass das wahre Selbst oder das wirkliche ICH, im Gegensatz zu unserer gewöhnlichen Wahrnehmung, keine Erfahrung der Individualität, sondern ein unpersönliches, allumfassendes Gewahrsein ist. Es darf nicht mit dem individuellen Selbst, dem Ich oder Ego, verwechselt werden, das, wie er sagt, im Grunde nicht existiert. Es ist vielmehr eine Projektion des Geistes, die die unmittelbare Erfahrung des wahren Selbst verhüllt. Er stellte fest, dass das wahre Selbst immer gegenwärtig ist und immer erfahren wird, betonte aber, dass man sich dessen nur bewusst wird, wenn die selbsteinschränkenden Neigungen des Geistes verschwunden sind. Dauerndes und bleibendes Selbst-Gewahrsein wird Selbstverwirklichung (Selbsterkenntnis / Erwachen / Erleuchtung) genannt. Ramana lehrte, dass das Selbst reines Sein ist, ein subjektives Gewahrsein des „Ich bin“, welches völlig frei ist von dem Gefühl „Ich bin dies oder das“. Es gibt keine Subjekte oder Objekte im Selbst, nur ein Gewahrsein des Seins. Da dieses Gewahrsein bewusst ist, wird es auch Bewusstsein genannt. Die direkte Erfahrung dieses Bewusstseins ist ein Zustand ununterbrochenen Glücks.

Ramana wollte darauf hinweisen, dass das Selbst die Quelle ist, aus der alle Erscheinungen hervorgehen.
Die Erfahrung des Selbst wird manchmal Jnana genannt. Es ist direktes und wissendes Gewahrsein der einen Wirklichkeit, in der Subjekt und Objekt nicht mehr existieren. Wer in diesem Zustand fest gegründet ist, wird ein Jnani genannt.

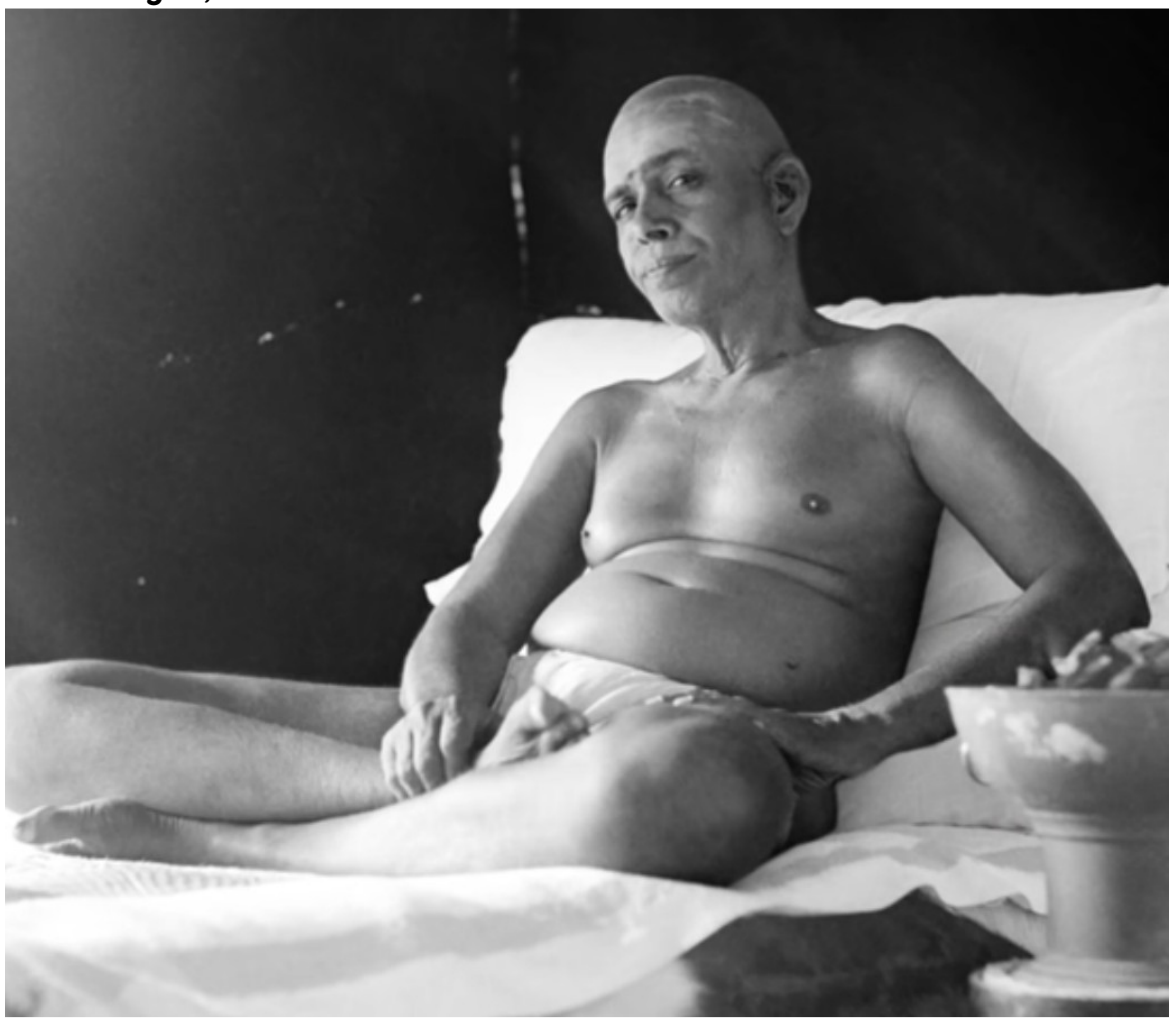


Ramana hat oft betont, dass das Selbst unser wahrer und natürlicher Zustand des Seins ist.
Er benutzte gleichfalls das Wort „Schweigen“, um anzudeuten, dass das Selbst ein schweigender, gedankenfreier Zustand des Friedens und totaler Stille ist.

Frage: Was ist Wirklichkeit?

Antwort: Wirklichkeit muss immer wirklich sein. Sie ist nicht in Formen und Namen. Was diesen zugrunde liegt, ist die Wirklichkeit. Sie liegt den Begrenzungen zugrunde, ist aber selbst grenzenlos. Sie ist nicht gebunden. Sie liegt den Unwirklichkeiten zugrunde, ist aber selbst wirklich. Wirklichkeit ist das, was ist (und nicht das, was nur vorübergehend erscheint). Sie ist, was sie ist. Sie ist jenseits der Sprache. Wirklichkeit ist reines Bewusstsein, das verbleibt, wenn Nichterkenntnis zusammen mit der Erkenntnis von Objekten verschwindet. Sie allein ist das Selbst. Im völligen Selbst-Gewahrsein gibt es nicht die geringste Nichterkenntnis. Die Wirklichkeit leuchtet ohne Leid und Körper – nicht nur, wenn die Welt erkannt ist, sondern auch, wenn sie nicht erkannt ist.

Das Leuchten von Bewusstsein-Seligkeit in Form des einen Gewahrseins, das gleichermaßen innen wie außen leuchtet, ist die höchste, beseligende Wirklichkeit. Ihre Form ist Schweigen, und die Jnanis bezeichnen sie als den letzten und unverstellten Zustand wahrer Erkenntnis. Jnana ist Nichtverhaftung. Jnana ist Reinheit. Jnana ist die Verwirklichung Gottes. Jnana, in dem es kein Vergessen des Selbst gibt, ist Unsterblichkeit. Jnana ist alles.



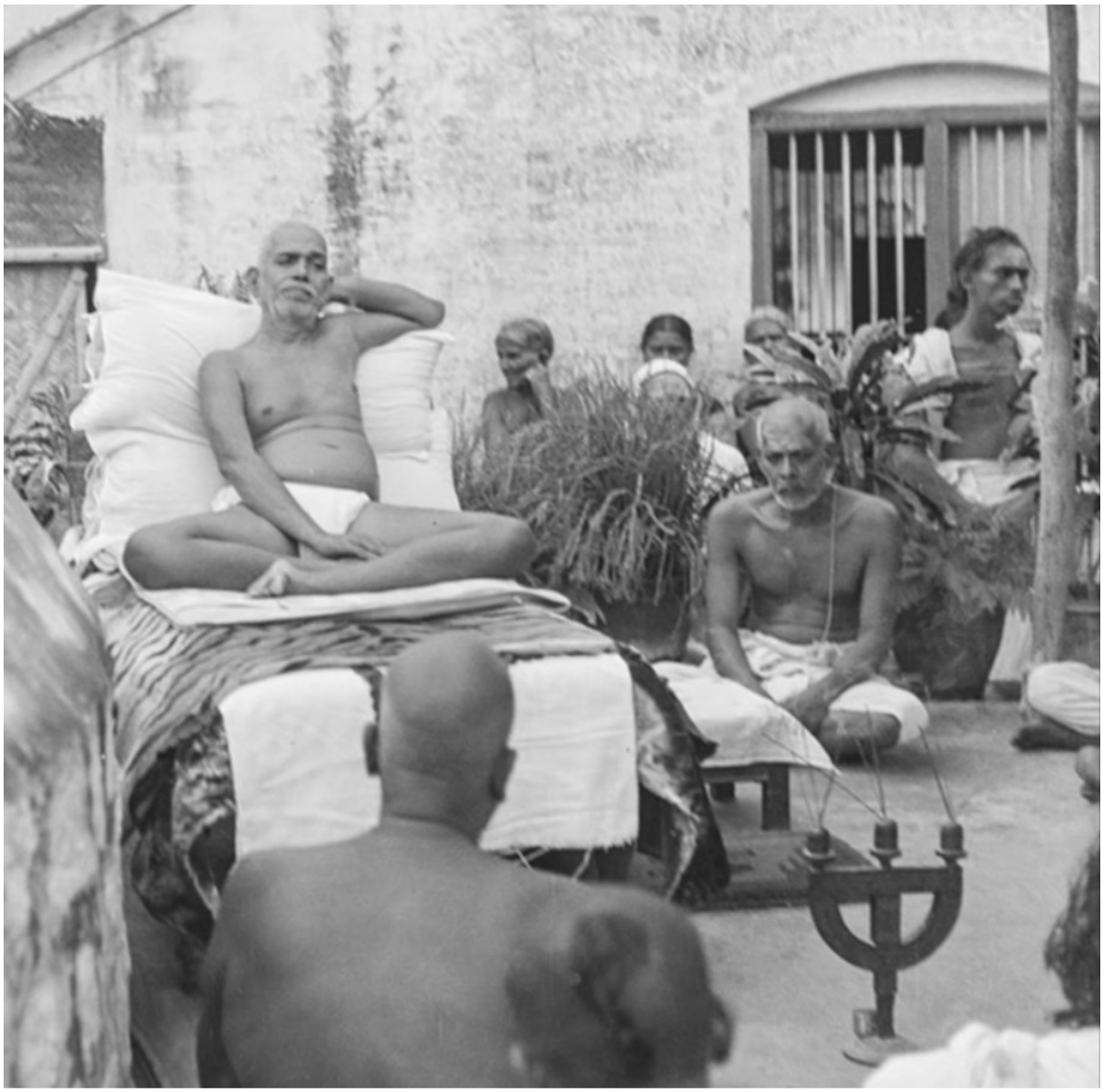
F: Was ist dieses Gewahrsein, und wie kann man es erlangen oder entwickeln?
A: Sie selbst sind Gewahrsein, es ist nur ein anderer Name für Sie. Da Sie selbst es sind, besteht keine Notwendigkeit, es zu erlangen oder zu entwickeln. Alles, was Sie tun müssen, ist aufzuhören, andere Dinge wahrzunehmen, also das Nicht-Selbst. Wenn man aufhört, dieses wahrzunehmen, bleibt nur reines Gewahrsein, und das ist das Selbst.

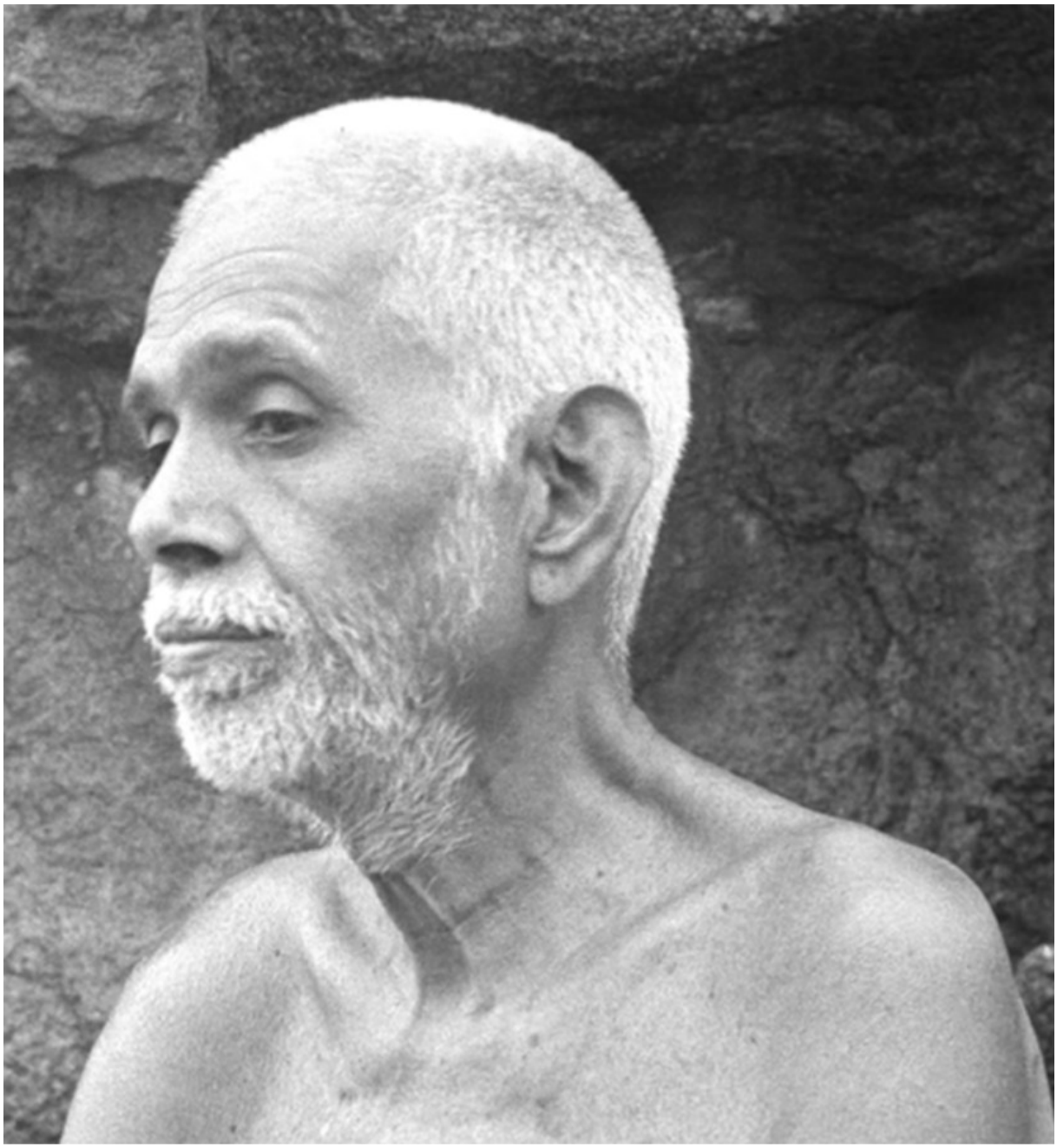
Das Gewahrsein des Selbst ist absolut und bedarf keines Objektes.
Das Selbst ist immer gegenwärtig.
Die Shrutis (heiligen Schriften) beschreiben das Selbst als unermesslich, feiner als das Feinste usw. Es ist nur Sein.
Wie kann man es überhaupt definieren? Es ist einfach Sein.

F: Wenn ein Mensch das Selbst verwirklicht, was sieht er dann?
A: Was wir Selbstverwirklichung nennen, ist nicht das Erlangen von etwas Neuem oder das Erreichen eines fernen Ziels; es heißt einfach, das zu sein, was man immer ist und schon immer war. Alles, was nötig ist, ist, dass Sie aufhören, das

Nicht-Wahre als wahr zu sehen. Wir alle halten etwas für wirklich, was nicht wirklich ist. Wir brauchen nur diese Gewohnheit aufzugeben. Dann erkennen wir das Selbst als das Selbst. Sie werden irgendwann einmal darüber lachen, dass Sie versucht haben, das Selbst zu entdecken, das ja so offensichtlich ist.
Dieser Zustand ist jenseits von Sehendem und Gesehenem. Es gibt keinen Sehenden, der etwas sehen könnte. Der Sehende, der jetzt dies alles sieht, verschwindet, und nur das Selbst bleibt zurück.

Wenn man verwirklicht, ist man das, was allein ist und was allein immer war. Man kann diesen Zustand nicht beschreiben; man kann nur Das sein. Natürlich sprechen wir leichthin von Selbstverwirklichung, weil es keinen besseren Begriff gibt. Wie etwas ver-wirklichen oder wirklich machen, was allein wirklich ist?

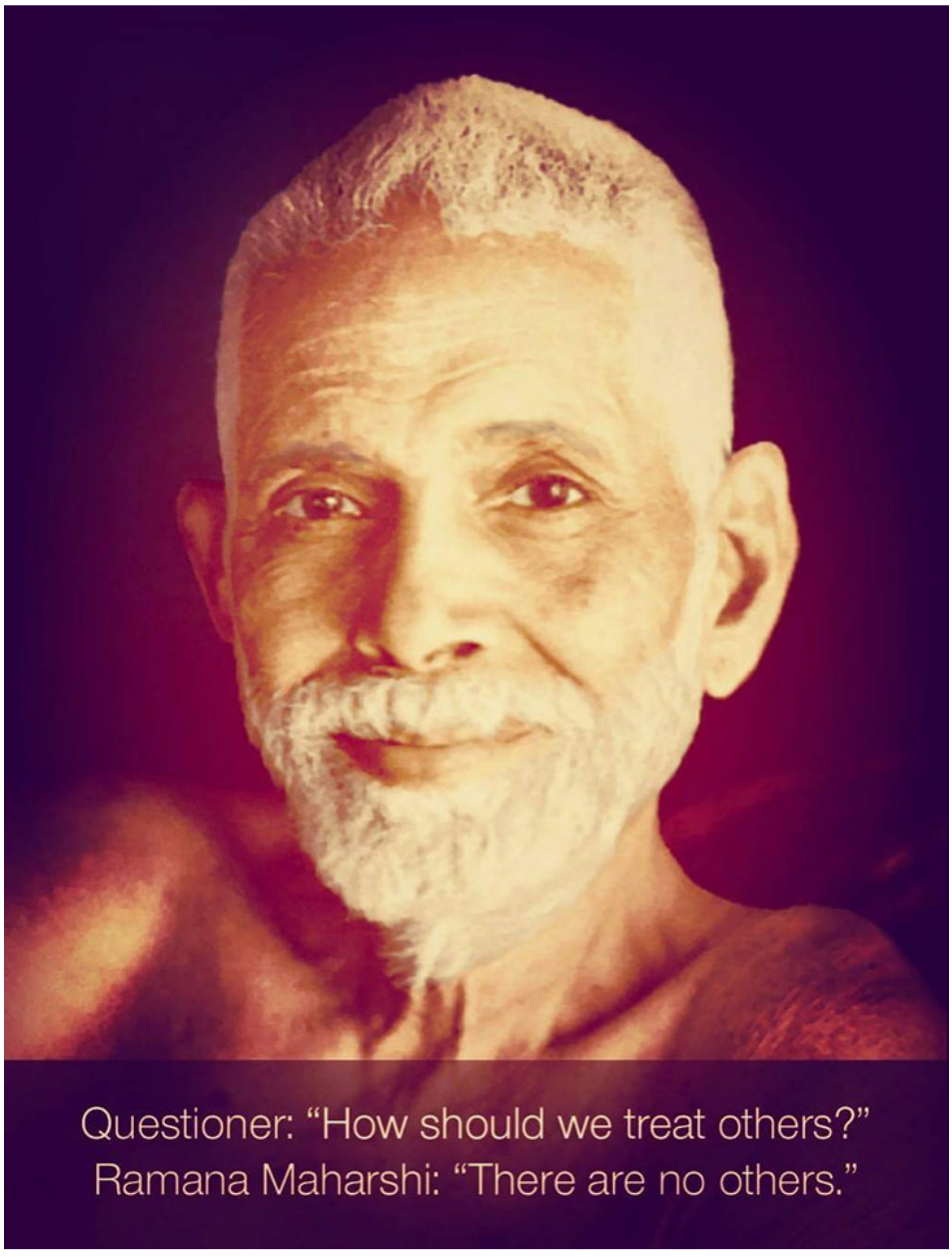




F: Sie sagen manchmal, dass das Selbst Schweigen ist.
Wie ist das zu verstehen?
A: Wer im Selbst lebt, in der Schönheit bar allen Denkens, der hat nichts, woran er denken müsste. Woran man sich halten sollte, ist allein die Erfahrung des Schweigens, denn in diesem höchsten Zustand gibt es nichts, was man erreichen könnte, außer sich selbst.

Das Selbst ist der Zustand, in dem der Ich-Gedanke (das Ego) sich nicht im Geringsten regt. Dieses schweigende Selbst allein ist Gott.
Jede andere Erkenntnis ist trivial und unbedeutend.
Die Erfahrung der Stille allein ist die wirkliche und vollkommene Erkenntnis.

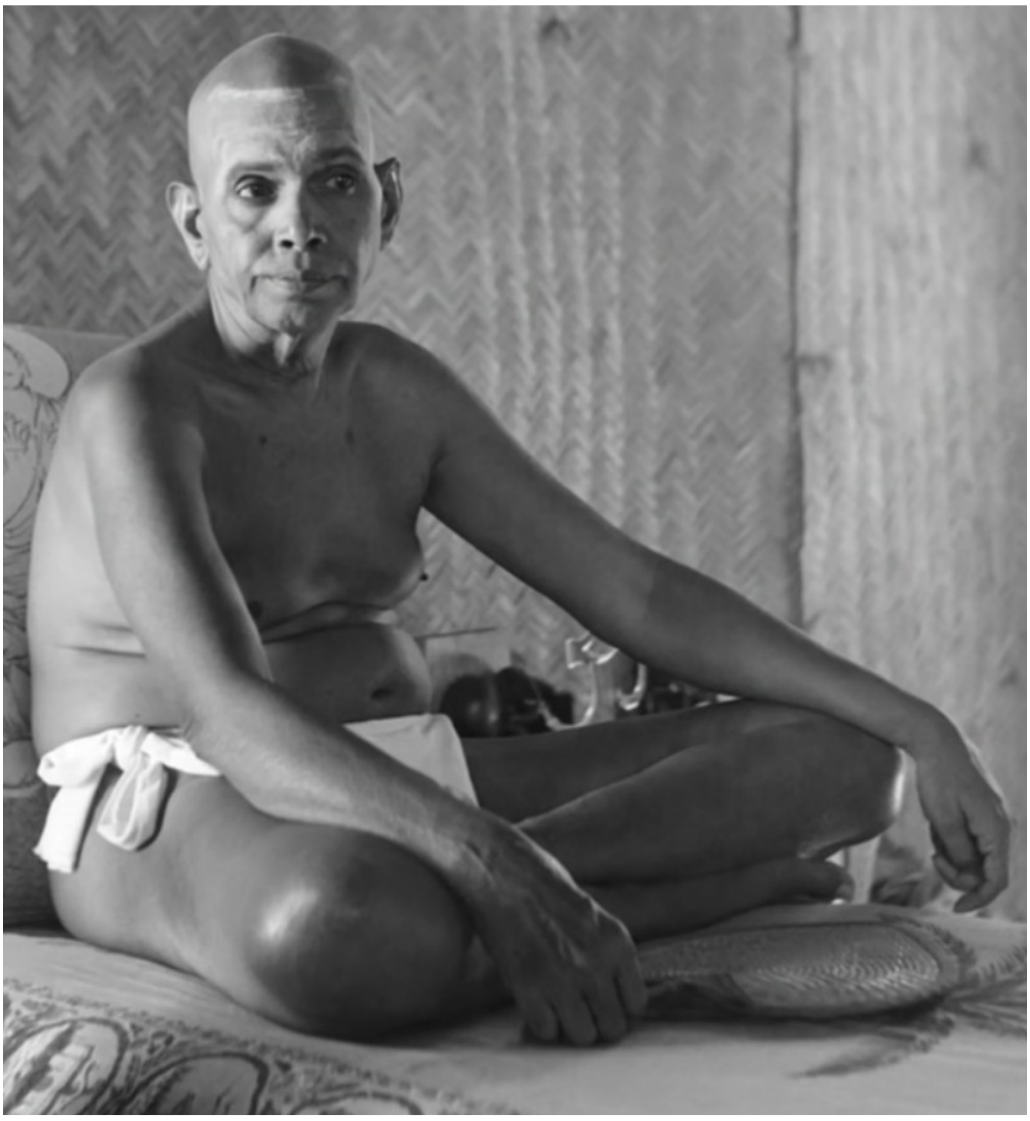
F: Da man die Körper und die sie belebenden Selbste überall als unzählig wahrnimmt, wie kann man da sagen, dass das Selbst nur eins ist?
A: Wenn man die Vorstellung „Ich bin der Körper“ akzeptiert, sind die Selbste zahlreich. Der Zustand, in dem diese Vorstellung verschwindet, ist das Selbst, denn in diesem Zustand gibt es keine anderen Objekte. Aus diesem Grund wird das Selbst als nur Eins betrachtet.
Für den Weisen, der das Selbst in sich gefunden hat, gibt es nichts anderes als das Selbst. Warum? Weil das Ego, das die Form eines Körpers für das „ICH“ hält, ausgelöscht ist und er formloses Sein-Bewusstsein ist. Der Jnani weiß, dass er das Selbst ist und dass nichts als das Selbst existiert – weder der Körper noch sonst etwas. Welchen Unterschied macht für so jemanden die Anwesenheit oder Abwesenheit eines Köpers?



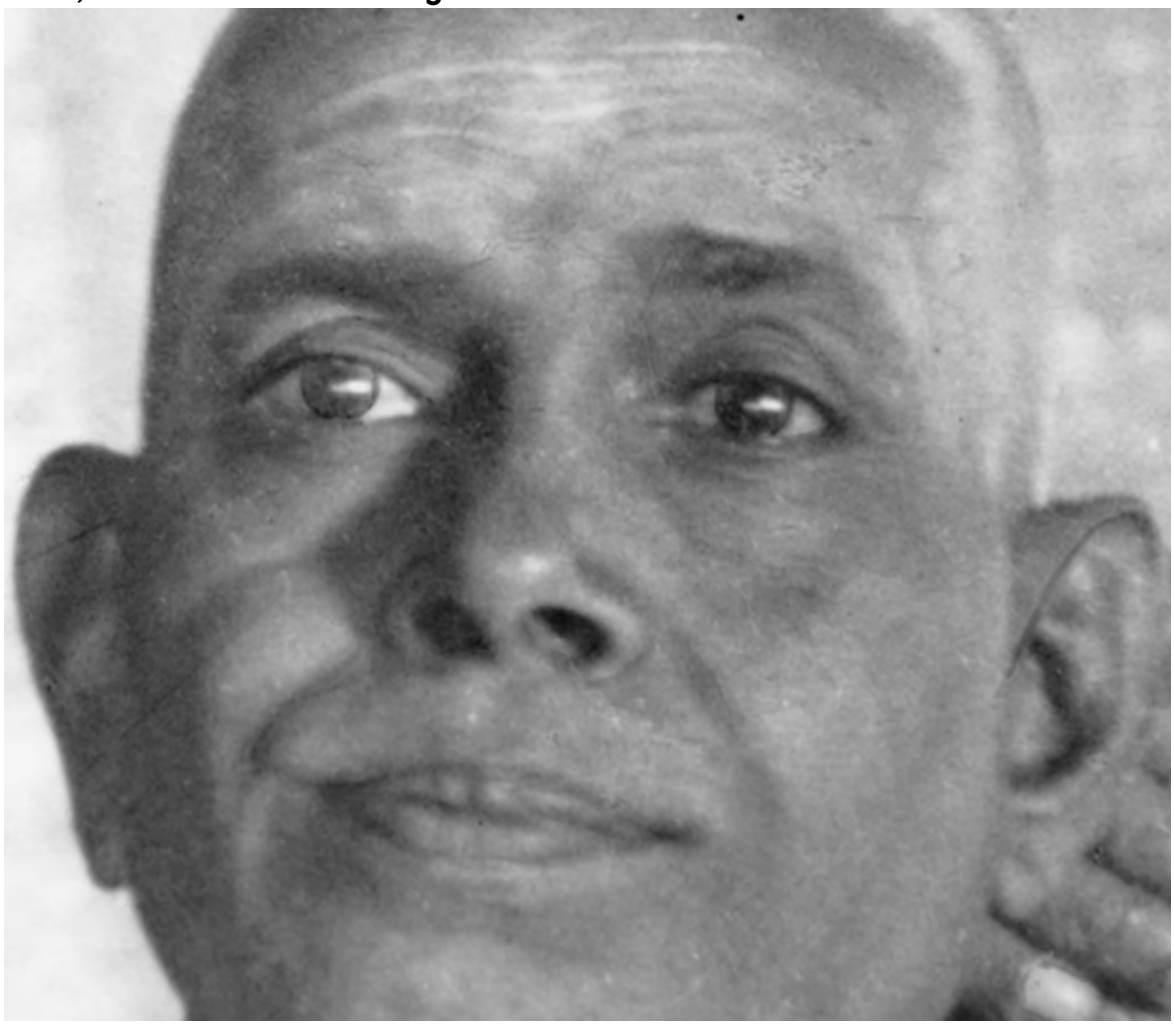
Es ist falsch, von Verwirklichung zu sprechen. Was gäbe es zu verwirklichen? Das Wirkliche ist, wie es immer ist. Wir schaffen nichts Neues, noch erlangen wir etwas, was wir vorher nicht hatten. Wir graben einen Brunnen und machen eine tiefe Grube. Der leere Raum in dieser Grube wird nicht von uns geschaffen. Wir haben nur die Erde entfernt, die den Raum ausgefüllt hatte. Der Raum war vorher dort und ist es auch jetzt. Genauso brauchen wir nur die über viele Leben angesammelten Samskaras (Gewohnheiten/Neigungen), die in uns sind, hinauszuwerfen. Wenn alle aufgegeben sind, wird das Selbst allein leuchten.

F: Aber wie das schaffen und Befreiung erlangen?

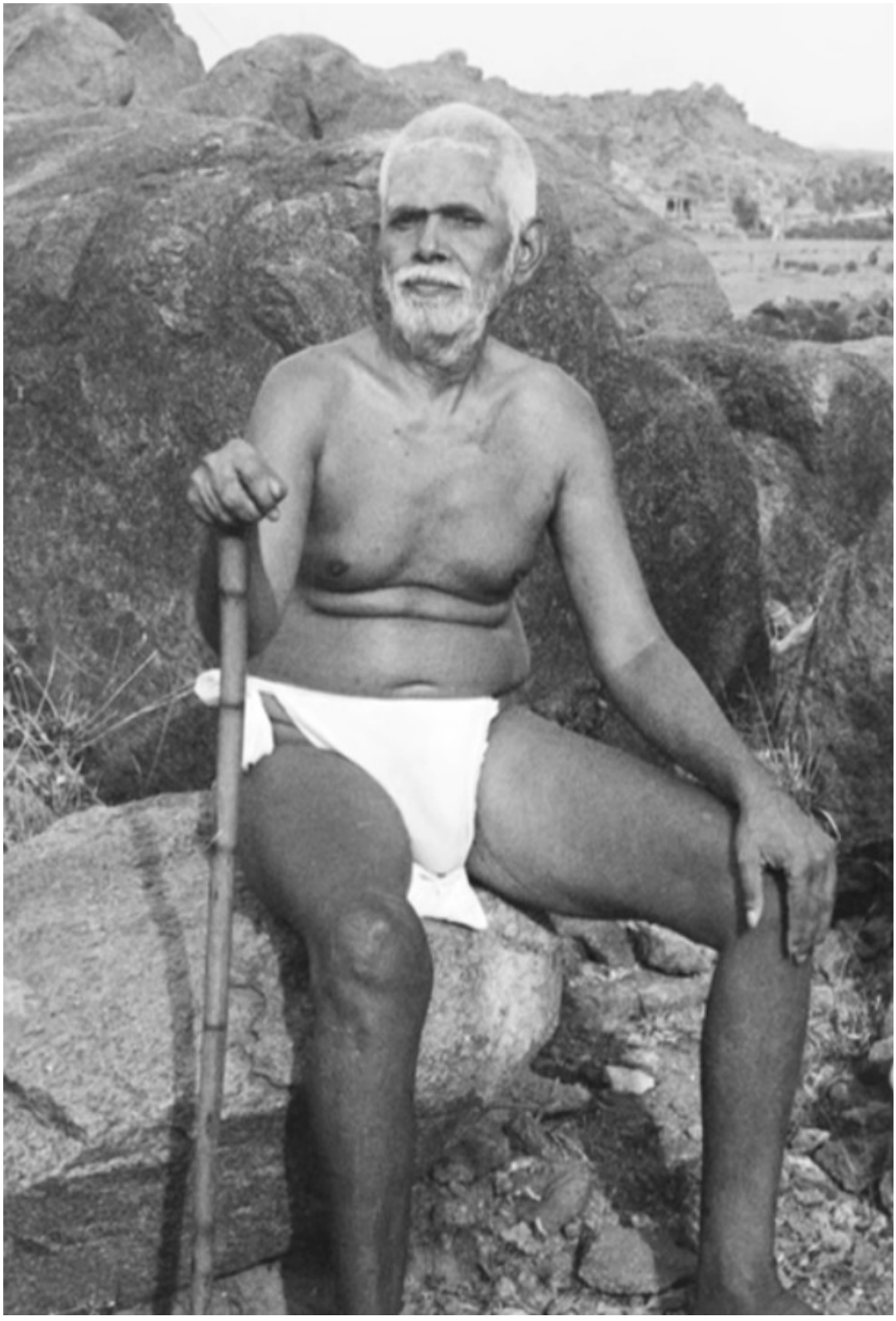
A: Befreiung ist unsere eigentliche Natur. Wir sind das. Schon die Tatsache, dass wir nach Befreiung verlangen, zeigt, dass Freisein von Fesseln unsere wahre Natur ist. Es braucht nicht neu errungen zu werden. Notwendig ist nur, die falsche Vorstellung loszuwerden, dass wir gebunden sind. Wenn wir das schaffen, gibt es keine Wünsche oder Gedanken mehr. Solange man noch nach Befreiung verlangt, so lange, das ist gewiss, ist man gebunden.



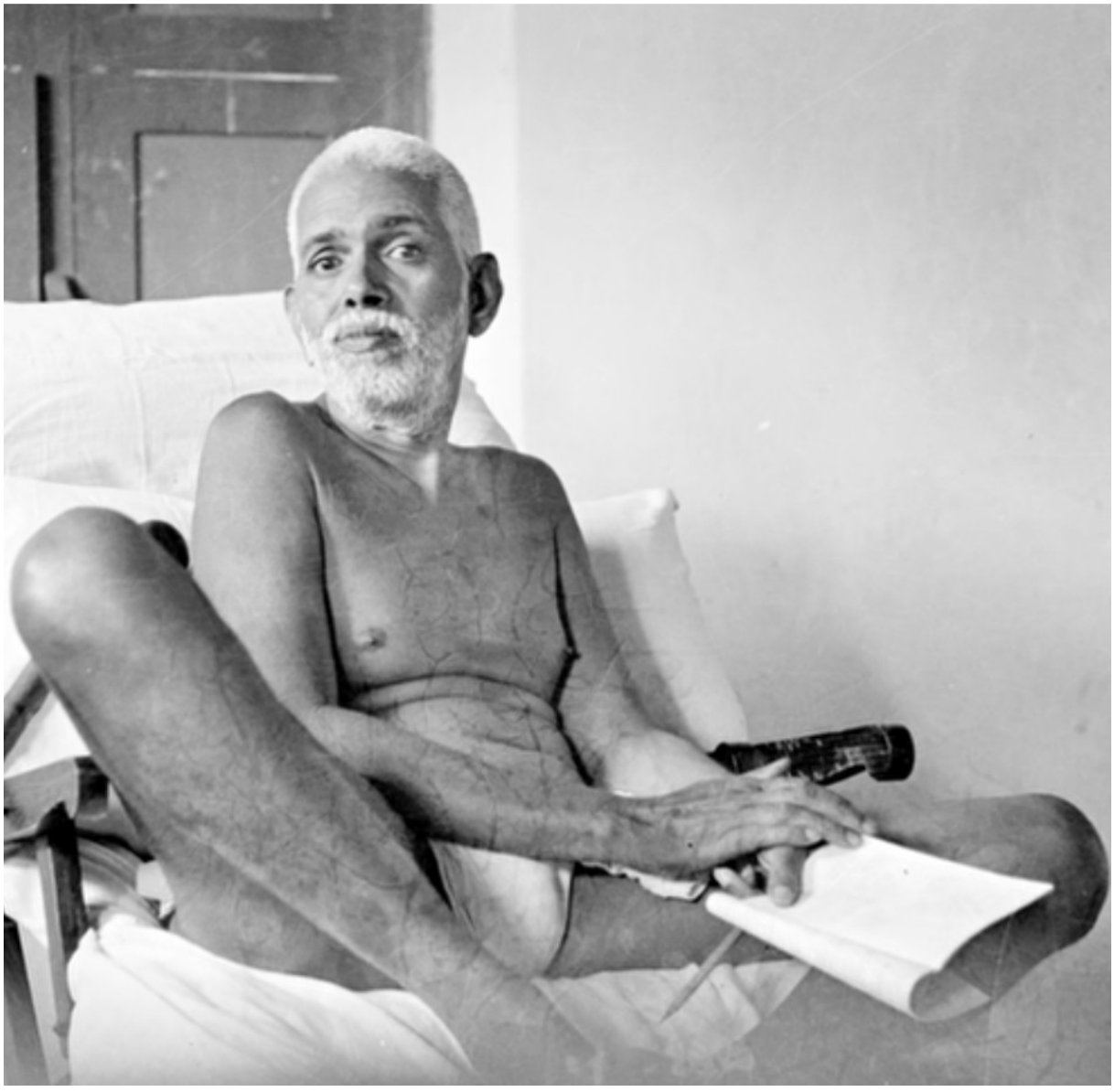
F: Man sagt, dass, wer das Selbst verwirklicht hat, die drei Zustände von Wachen, Träumen und Tiefschlaf losgeworden ist. Entspricht das den Tatsachen?
A: Was lässt Sie sagen, dass Sie diese drei Zustände nicht mehr haben? Wenn Sie sagen: „Ich wache; ich träumte; ich war im Tiefschlaf", dann müssen Sie zugeben, dass Sie in allen drei Zuständen vorhanden waren. Sie waren vorher da, Sie sind jetzt da, und Sie sind immer da. Die drei Zustände kommen und gehen, aber Sie sind immer da. Es ist wie im Kino. Die Leinwand ist immer da, aber verschiedene Bilder erscheinen auf ihr und verschwinden. Nichts bleibt an der Leinwand hängen, sie bleibt eine Leinwand. Genauso bleiben Sie Ihr eigenes Selbst in allen drei Zuständen. Wenn Sie das wissen, beunruhigen die drei Zustände Sie nicht mehr, genau wie die auf der Leinwand entstehenden Bilder nicht daran hängen bleiben. Auf der Leinwand sehen Sie manchmal einen großen Ozean mit endlosen Wogen; dann verschwindet er wieder. Oder Sie sehen ein sich ausbreitendes Feuer, das auch wieder verschwindet. Ist die Leinwand vom Wasser nass geworden oder vom Feuer verbrannt? Nichts hat die Leinwand berührt. Genauso berühren die Dinge, die im Wachen, Träumen und Tiefschlaf geschehen, Sie nicht, denn Sie bleiben Ihr eigenes Selbst.



F: Soll das bedeuten, dass die Menschen, obgleich sie wach sind, träumen und Tiefschlaf erleben, davon nicht berührt werden?
A: Ja, so ist es. Diese Zustände kommen und gehen. Das Selbst wird nicht davon berührt, es hat nur einen Zustand.
F: Heißt das, dass ein solcher Mensch nur als Zuschauer in dieser Welt ist?
A: So ist es.



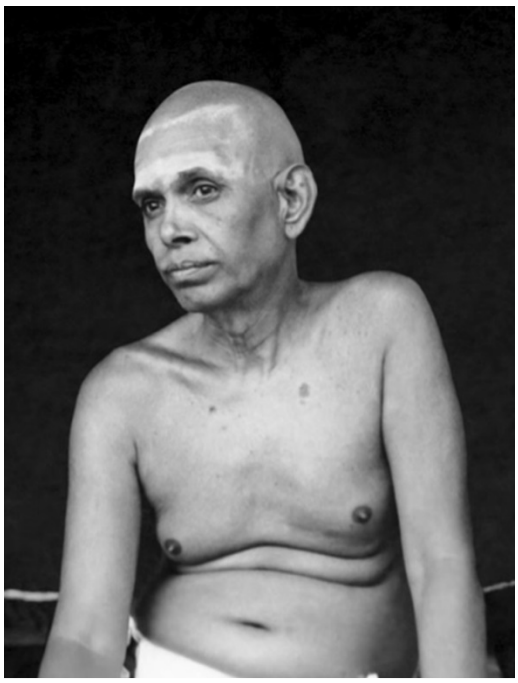
Ein Beispiel ist das Licht, das die Bühne des Theaters beleuchtet. Wird ein Drama aufgeführt, bescheint das Licht ohne Unterschied alle Darsteller – ob König, Diener oder Tänzer – und auch die Zuschauer. Das Licht ist da, bevor das Drama beginnt, während der Vorstellung und auch, nachdem die Aufführung vorüber ist. Genauso gibt das innere Licht, das Selbst, dem Ego, dem Intellekt, der Erinnerung und dem Denken Licht, ohne dem Prozess von Werden und Vergehen unterworfen zu sein. Obgleich im Tiefschlaf und in anderen Zuständen keine Empfindung eines Ego vorhanden ist, bleibt das Selbst ohne Eigenschaften und leuchtet aus sich selbst.
Die Vorstellung vom Selbst als Zuschauer existiert nur im Denken, es ist nicht die absolute Wahrheit des Selbst. Zum Zuschauen muss es Objekte geben, die gesehen werden. Sowohl der Zuschauer als auch seine Objekte sind Schöpfungen des Geistes.



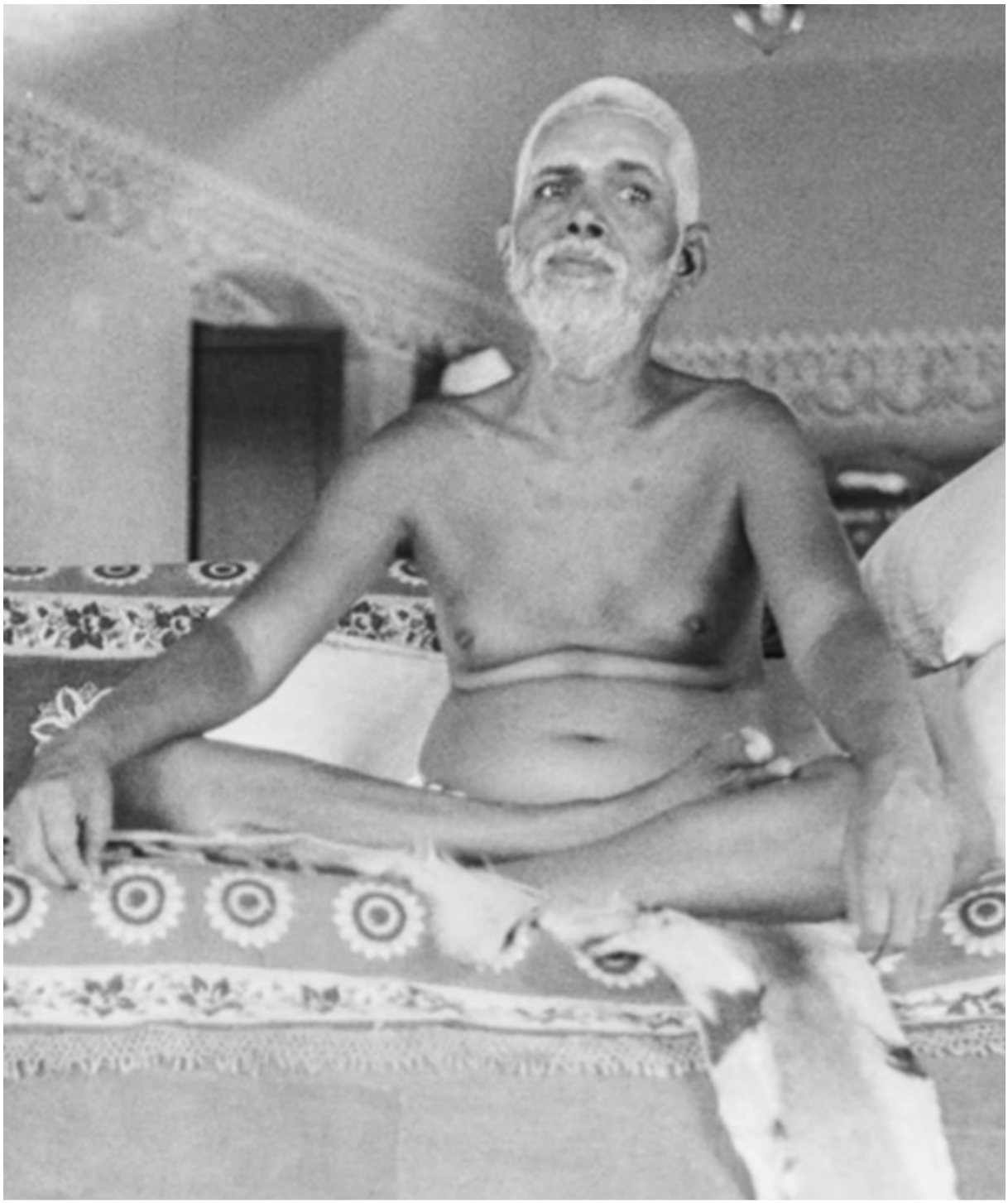
F: Inwieweit sind die drei Bewusstseinszustände von geringerer Wirklichkeit als der vierte? Was ist die Beziehung zwischen diesen drei Zuständen und dem vierten?

A: Es gibt nur einen Zustand – den des Bewusstseins, Gewahrseins oder Seins. Die drei Zustände können nicht wirklich sein. Sie kommen und gehen. Das Wirkliche muss immer existieren. Das „ICH" oder Sein, das allein durchgängig in allen drei Zuständen vorhanden ist, ist wirklich. Die drei Zustände sind nicht wirklich und so ist es nicht möglich, bei ihnen von einem Grad der Wirklichkeit zu sprechen. Grob gesagt kann man das folgendermaßen formulieren: Sein oder Bewusstsein ist die einzige Wirklichkeit. Bewusstsein ist die Leinwand, auf der alle Bilder kommen und gehen. Die Leinwand ist wirklich, die Bilder sind nur Schatten darauf. Aufgrund langer Gewohnheit betrachten wir die drei Zustände als wirklich, und deshalb nennen wir den Zustand reinen Gewahrseins oder Bewusstseins den vierten. Es gibt aber keinen vierten Zustand, sondern nur einen.

Es gibt keinen Unterschied zwischen Träumen und Wachen, außer dass der Traum kurz ist und das Wachen lang. Beide sind Produkte des Geistes. Weil das Wachen länger dauert, halten wir es für unseren wirklichen Zustand. Unser wirklicher Zustand ist aber das, was immer ist, was es ist, und von den drei Zuständen nichts weiß.



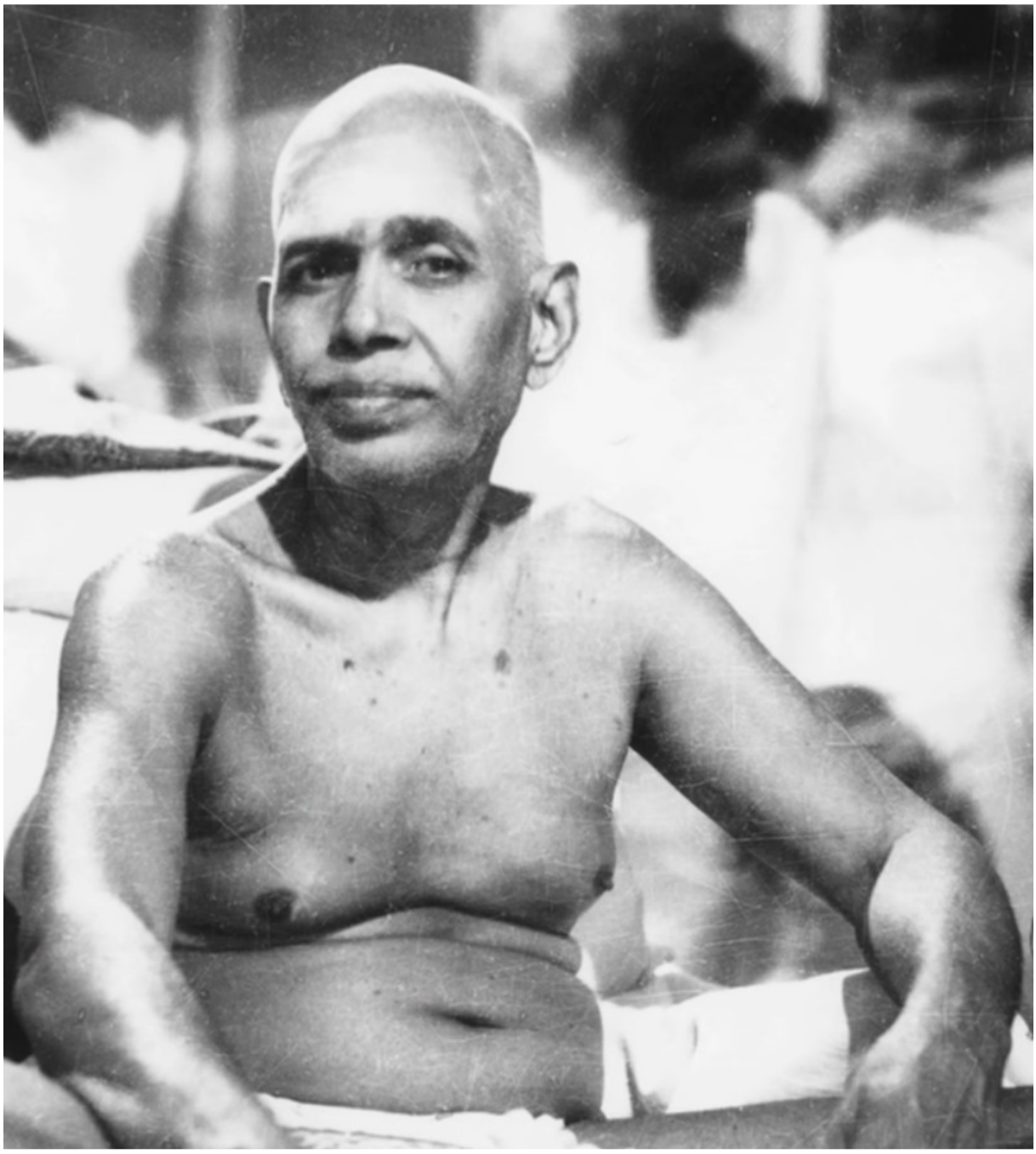
Prüfen Sie, ob es so etwas wie den Verstand gibt. Dann verschwindet der Verstand im Selbst, und es gibt weder Sehenden noch Gesehenes. Das Selbst allein bleibt, was es immer ist. Die drei Zustände können nur aufgrund von Nichtergründung bestehen; Selbsterforschung macht ihnen ein Ende.



So viel man auch erklären mag, die Tatsache wird erst klar, wenn man Selbstverwirklichung erlangt hat und sich wundert, wie man so lange blind für das Offensichtliche und allein Existierende sein konnte.

F: Worin besteht der Unterschied zwischen dem Geist und dem Selbst?
A: Es gibt keinen Unterschied.

Der Geist, nach innen gewandt, ist das Selbst, nach außen gewandt ist er das Ego und die ganze Welt. Baumwolle, zu Kleidung verarbeitet, hat verschiedene Namen. Gold, zu Schmuck verarbeitet, trägt verschiedene Namen. Aber alle die Kleidungsstücke sind Baumwolle, all der Schmuck ist Gold. Das Eine ist wirklich, das Viele ist bloß Namen und Formen.

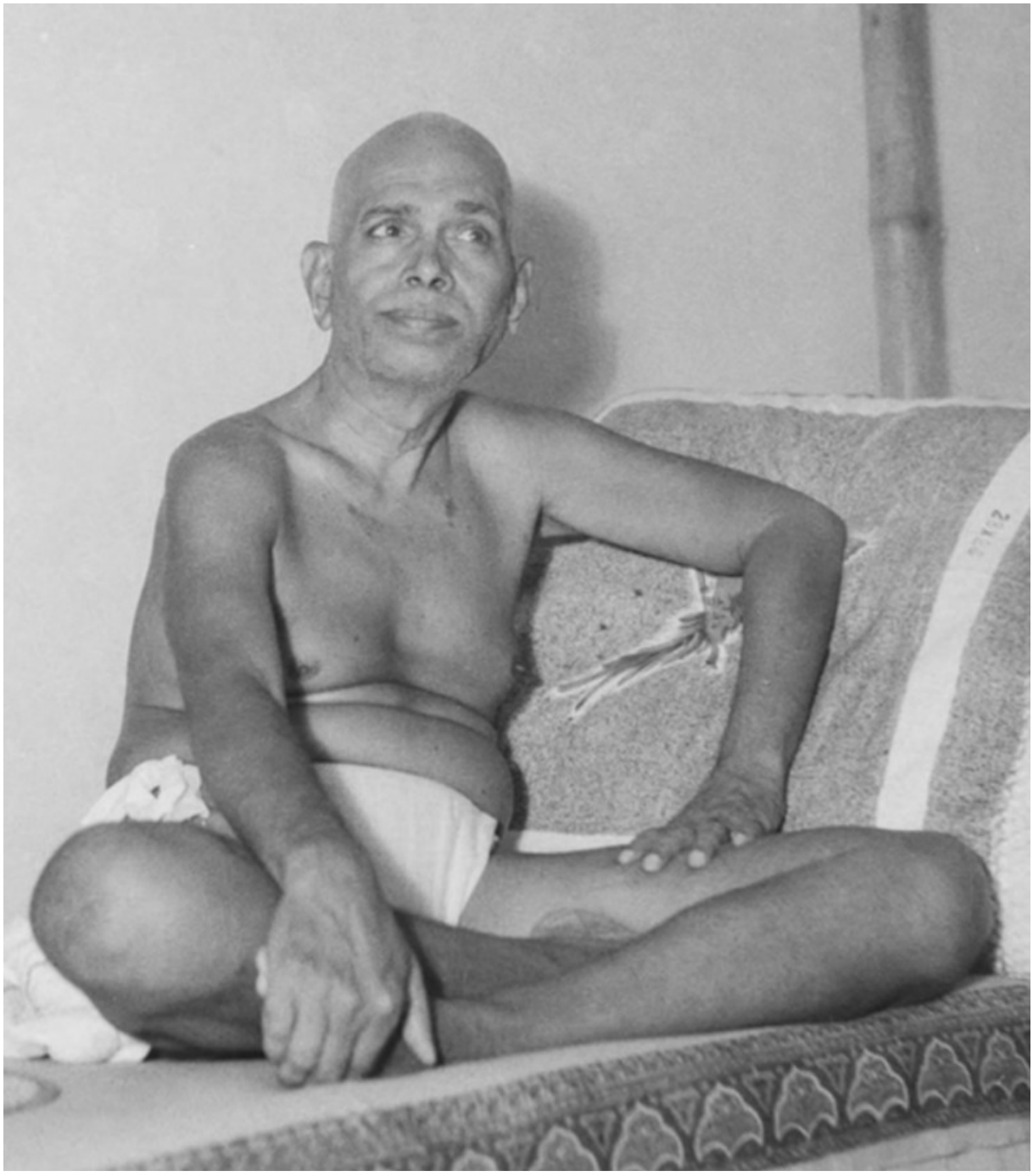


Der Geist existiert aber nicht getrennt vom Selbst, er hat keine unabhängige Existenz. Das Selbst existiert ohne den Geist, aber der Geist nicht ohne das Selbst. (Geist hier = Verstand; im englischen Originaltext = mind)

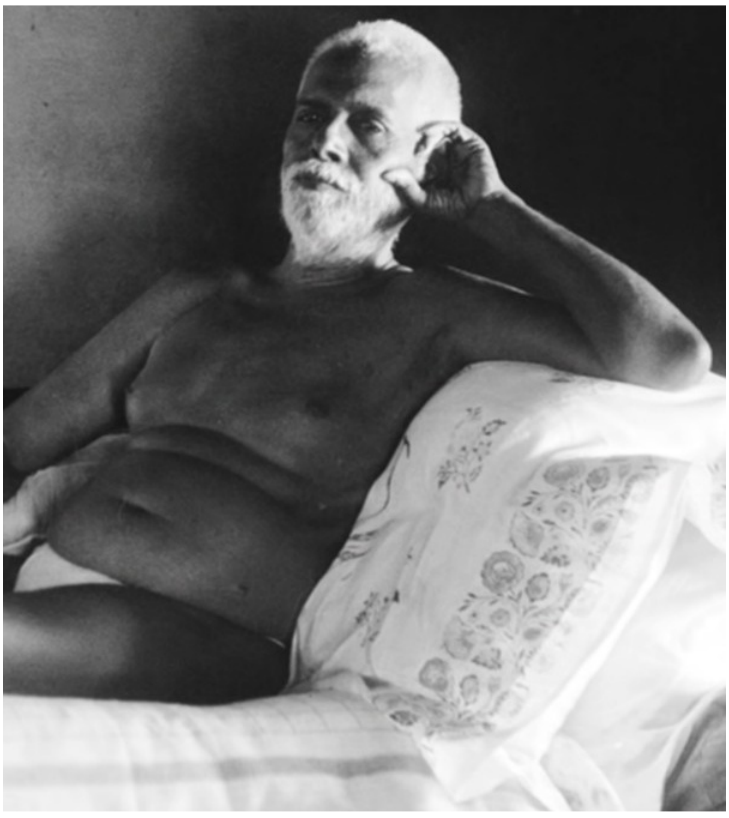
Für das Bewusstsein gibt es nichts, das es erkennen oder dem es sich zu erkennen geben könnte.

F: Inwieweit ist Seligkeit unser wahres Wesen?
A: Vollkommene Seligkeit ist Brahman. Vollkommener Friede gehört dem Selbst. Nur das allein existiert und ist Bewusstsein. Was wir Glück nennen, ist nur das Wesen des Selbst. Selbst ist nichts anderes als vollkommenes Glück. Nur das allein existiert. Genießen Sie ewige Seligkeit, indem Sie dies erkennen und im Selbst verweilen!

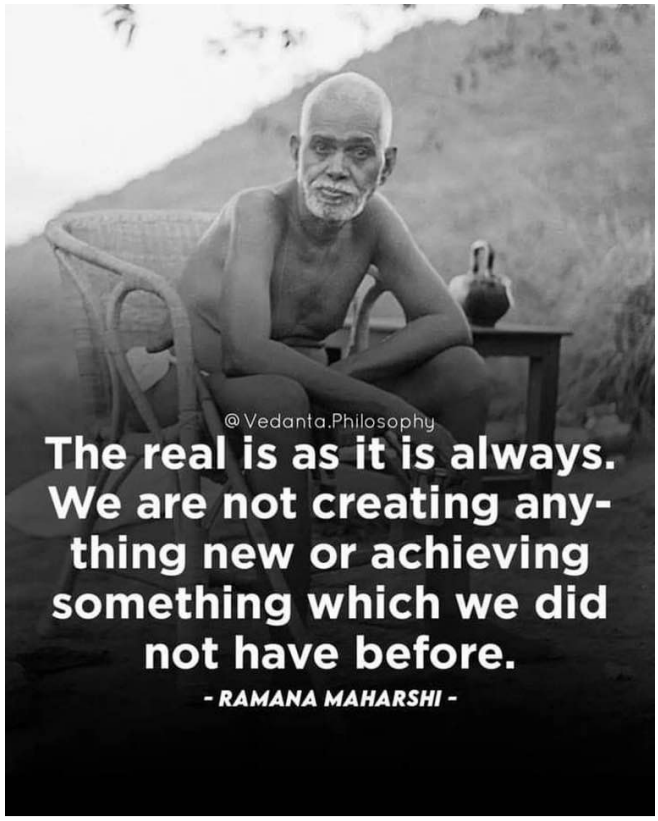
Wenn ein Mensch glaubt, dass sein Glück von äußeren Ursachen und Besitz abhängt, dann wäre es vernünftig, daraus zu schließen, dass sein Glück zunehmen muss, wenn sein Besitz zunimmt, und abnehmen muss, wenn sein Besitz abnimmt. Wäre er besitzlos, dann dürfte er auch kein Glück erfahren. Was ist aber die Erfahrung der Menschen? Stimmt sie damit überein?
Im Tiefschlaf hat der Mensch keinen Besitz, nicht einmal den Körper. Aber statt unglücklich zu sein, ist er recht glücklich. Jeder sehnt sich nach Tiefschlaf. Daraus muss man schließen, dass Glück dem Menschen inhärent ist und nicht von äußeren Umständen abhängt. Man muss das Selbst erkennen, um die Schatzkammer des unbeeinträchtigten Glücks öffnen zu können.



F: Shri Bhagavan spricht vom Herzen als dem Sitz des Bewusstseins und als identisch mit dem Selbst. Was bedeutet hier das Herz?
A: Benennen Sie es mit jedem beliebigen Namen, Gott, Selbst, Herz oder Bewusstsein, es ist alles das gleiche. Was man erfahren muss, ist, dass das Herz der Kern unseres Seins ist, das Zentrum, ohne das es nichts gibt.
Das Herz ist nicht körperlich, sondern spirituell. Es ist das, aus dem die Gedanken entstehen, in dem sie verbleiben und in dem sie sich auflösen. Die Gedanken sind der Inhalt des Geistes, und sie schaffen das Universum. Das Herz ist das Zentrum von allem. Die Upanishaden nennen das, woraus die Wesen hervorgehen, Brahman. Brahman ist das Herz.
F: Wie verwirklicht man das Herz?
A: Es gibt niemanden, der auch nur für einen Augenblick das Selbst nicht erfährt. Niemand kann zugeben, dass er je von seinem Selbst getrennt ist. Er ist das Selbst. Das Selbst ist das Herz. Das Herz ist das Zentrum, aus dem alles entsteht. Weil Sie die Welt, den Körper usw. sehen, sagt man, dass es ein Zentrum dafür gibt, das man das Herz nennt. Sind Sie im Herzen, dann wissen Sie, dass das Herz weder der Mittelpunkt noch der Umfang ist. Es gibt nichts getrennt von ihm. Das Bewusstsein, das die wahre Existenz ist, das ist das Herz. Da die Wahrheit über das Selbst nur diesem Bewusstsein bekannt ist, das frei ist von Aktivität, ist dieses Bewusstsein, das stets nur des Selbst gewahr ist, das Leuchten klarer Erkenntnis.

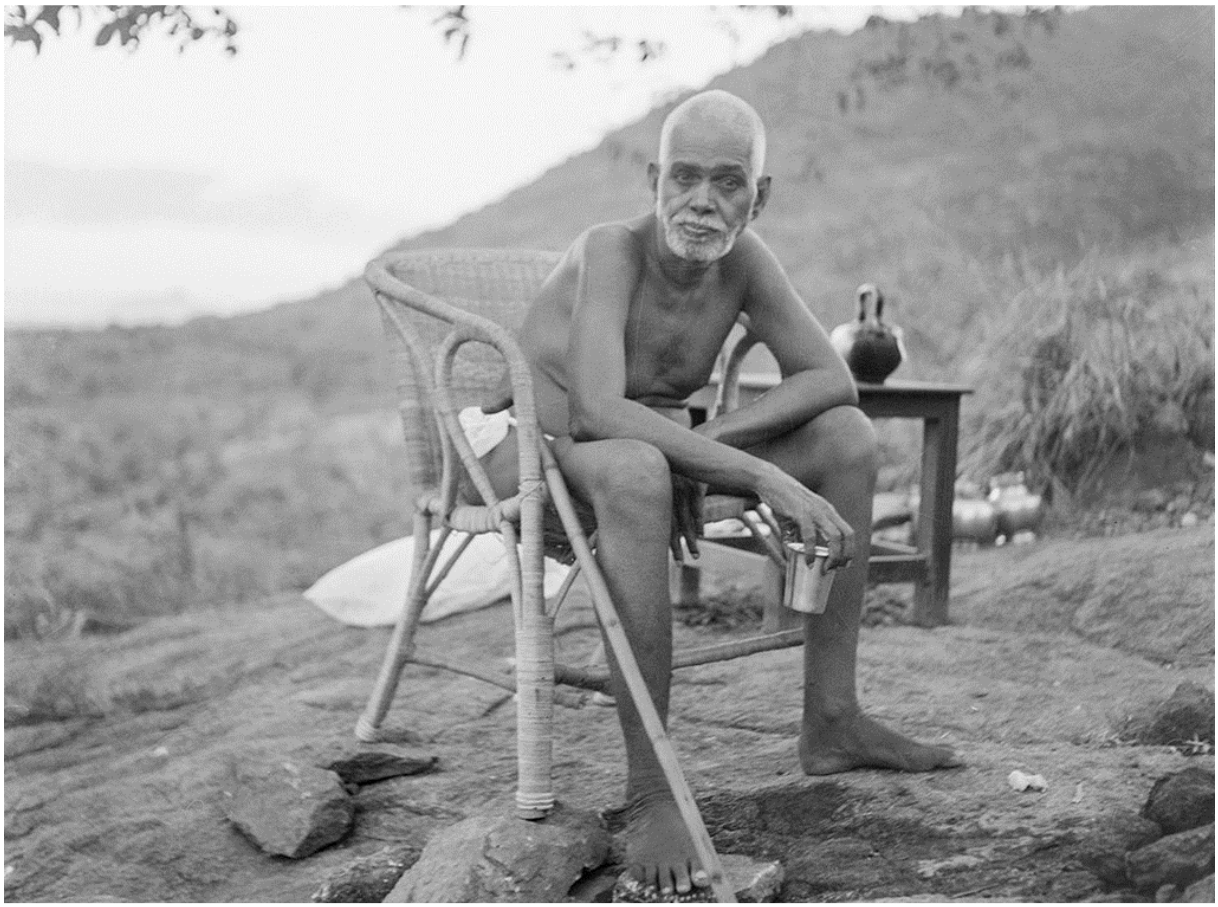


Ramana lehrte, dass nur das Selbst existiert und direkt erfahren werden kann, wenn man nur aufhört, sich den falschen Vorstellungen hinzugeben, die man von sich selbst hat. Diese falschen Vorstellungen nannte er zusammenfassend das „Nichtselbst", denn sie sind eine der Imagination entspringende Hinzufügung von falschen Annahmen und Missverständnissen, die das wirkliche Selbst verhüllen. Der Hauptfehler liegt in der Vorstellung, dass das Selbst auf Körper & Verstand beschränkt ist. Sobald man aufhört zu glauben, dass man ein individueller Mensch mit einem besonderen Körper ist, bricht der ganze Überbau der falschen Vorstellungen zusammen und wird ersetzt durch ein dauerndes Gewahrsein des wahren Selbst.
Auf dieser Ebene der Unterweisung geht es nicht mehr um Anstrengung oder Übung. Alles, was not tut, ist zu begreifen, dass das Selbst kein Ziel ist, das erlangt werden muss, sondern ein Gewahrsein, welches verbleibt, wenn alle begrenzenden Vorstellungen über das Nichtselbst aufgegeben sind.



F: Wie kann ich Selbstverwirklichung erlangen?
A: Verwirklichung braucht nicht neu erlangt zu werden, sie ist bereits da. Es ist nur notwendig, den Gedanken „Ich habe das Selbst noch nicht verwirklicht" loszuwerden.

Stille oder Frieden ist Verwirklichung. Es gibt keinen Augenblick, in dem das Selbst nicht ist. Wenn das Nichtselbst verschwindet (der Glaube daran), bleibt das Selbst allein zurück. Um Platz zu schaffen, genügt es, Gegenstände zu entfernen. Der Platz braucht nicht von anderswo herbeigeholt zu werden.
F: Da Verwirklichung ohne Zerstörung der Denkneigungen nicht möglich ist, wie soll ich den Zustand erkennen, in dem diese Neigungen ausgelöscht sind?
A: Sie sind eben jetzt in diesem Zustand.



F: Wie kann ich das Selbst erreichen?
A: Es gibt kein Erreichen. Wäre das Selbst zu erreichen, hieße das, dass es nicht hier und jetzt ist und noch erlangt werden muss. Was erlangt wird, kann auch verlorengehen; es ist also unbeständig. Es lohnt nicht, nach dem zu streben, was unbeständig ist. Ich sage deshalb, dass es kein Erreichen des Selbst gibt. Sie sind das Selbst. Sie sind bereits Das.
Tatsache ist, dass Sie Ihren beseligten Zustand nicht kennen. Nichterkenntnis tritt dazwischen und zieht einen Schleier über das reine Selbst, das Seligkeit ist. Alle Bemühungen gelten allein der Beseitigung des Schleiers, der nur aus falscher 'Erkenntnis' besteht. Diese falsche 'Erkenntnis' ist die Identifizierung des

Selbst mit Körper und Geist. Wenn diese verschwindet, bleibt das Selbst allein zurück. Deshalb ist Verwirklichung für jeden da, sie macht keinen Unterschied zwischen den Strebenden. Der Zweifel, ob man verwirklichen kann, und die Vorstellung „Ich habe nicht verwirklicht" sind selbst die Hindernisse. Befreien Sie sich von ihnen.

F: Wie lange dauert es, bis man Mukti (Befreiung) erreicht?

A: Mukti wird nicht in der Zukunft erreicht. Befreiung ist immer da, hier und jetzt.

F: Ich stimme Ihnen zu, aber ich erfahre sie nicht.

A: Die Erfahrung ist hier und jetzt da, denn niemand kann sein eigenes Selbst verleugnen.

F: Das bedeutet zwar Dasein, aber nicht Glück.

A: Dasein ist dasselbe wie Glück und Glück ist dasselbe wie Dasein.

Warum sollte man Befreiung suchen? Man glaubt, gebunden zu sein, und sucht deshalb Befreiung. Tatsache ist aber, dass es keine Bindung gibt, sondern nur Befreiung.

F: Das stimmt, aber wir sind erkenntnislos.

A: Beseitigen Sie die Erkenntnislosigkeit, das ist alles, was getan werden muss. Alle Fragen nach Mukti sind unstatthaft. Mukti bedeutet Befreiung von Bindungen, was das Vorhandensein von Bindungen voraussetzt. Es gibt keine Bindung und folglich auch keine Befreiung.

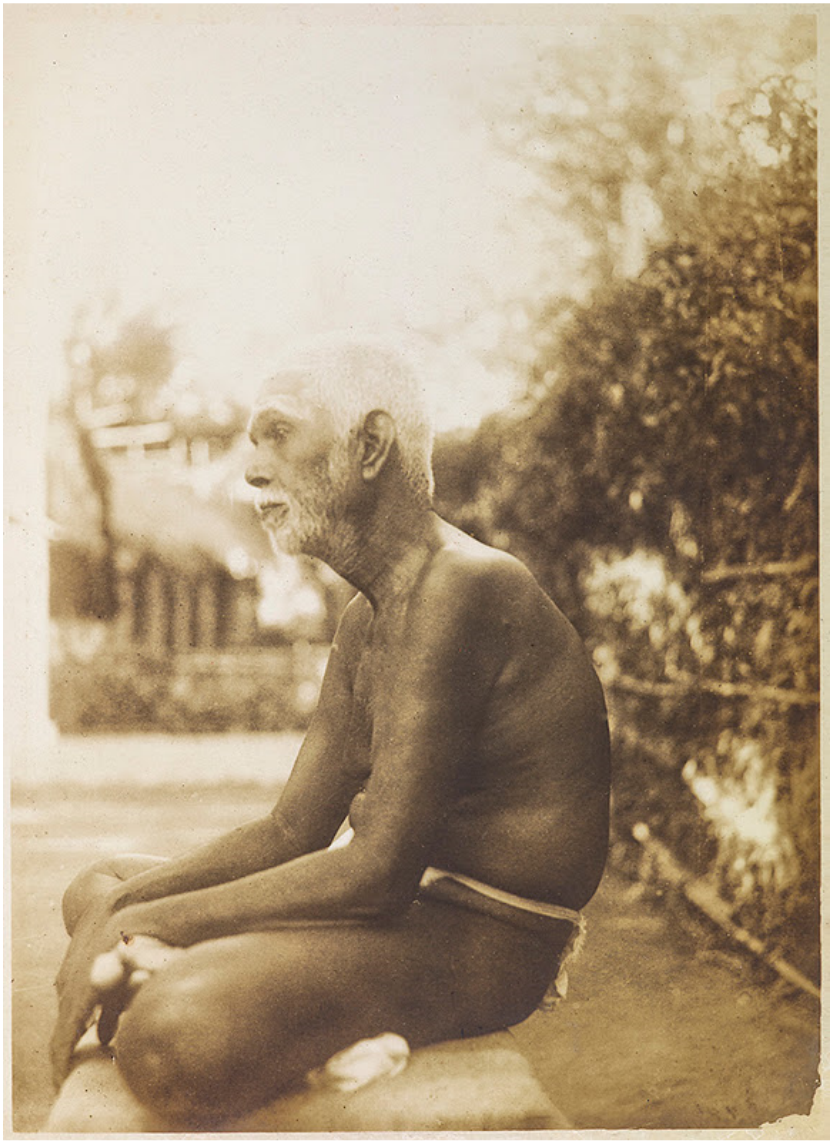
F: Welcher Art ist die Verwirklichung westlicher Menschen, die berichten, dass sie das Aufblitzen des kosmischen Bewusstseins erlebt haben?

A: Es kam wie ein Aufblitzen und verschwand ebenso.

Was einen Anfang hat, muss auch ein Ende haben. Nur wenn das allgegenwärtige Bewusstsein erkannt wird (sich selbst erkennt), ist es von Dauer. Bewusstsein ist immer mit uns. Jedermann weiß „Ich bin". Niemand kann sein eigenes Sein leugnen. Der Mensch im Tiefschlaf ist seiner nicht gewahr; im Wachzustand scheint er es zu sein, aber es ist derselbe Mensch. Er verändert sich nicht, ob er schläft oder wach ist. Im Tiefschlaf wusste er nichts von seinem Körper und es gab kein Körperbewusstsein. Im Wachzustand kennt er seinen Körper und hat Körperbewusstsein. Der Unterschied liegt im Entstehen des Körperbewusstseins und nicht im Wandel des wirklichen Bewusstseins.

Körper und Körperbewusstsein entstehen zusammen und verschwinden zusammen. Im Tiefschlaf gibt es keine Begrenzungen, wohl aber im Wachzustand. Diese Begrenzungen sind die Bindung. Die Empfindung „Ich bin der Körper" ist der Irr-

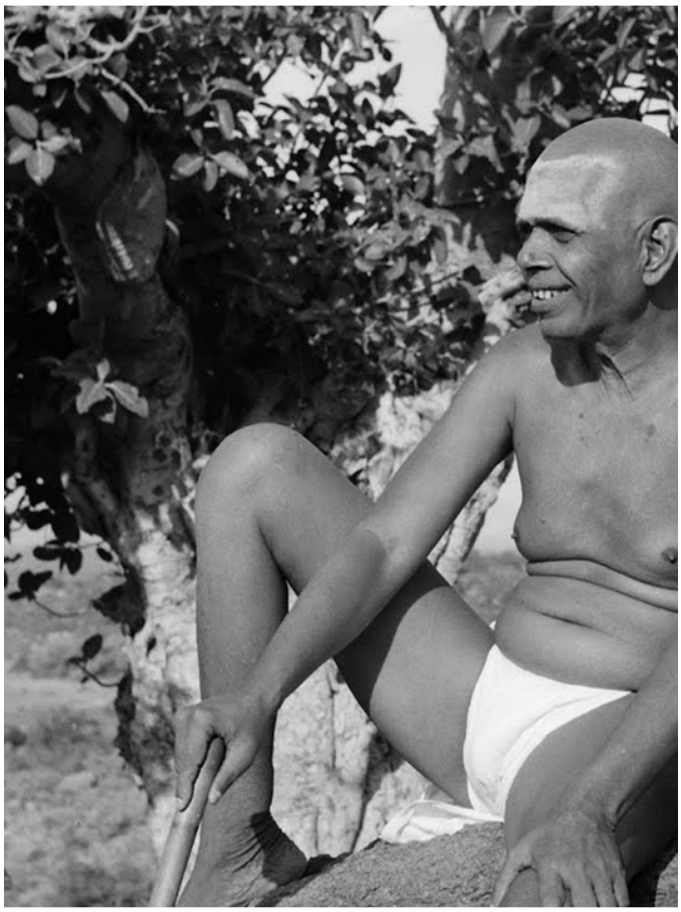
tum. Diese falsche Empfindung des „Ich“ muss verschwinden. Das wahre „ICH“ ist immer da. Es ist hier und jetzt. Es taucht nicht neu auf und verschwindet wieder. Das, was ist, muss auch für immer dauern. Was neu auftaucht, geht auch wieder verloren.
Das Bewusstsein war schon vor dem Körper und überlebt ihn auch.



Jeder sagt: „Ich bin.“ Die falsche Vorstellung „Ich bin der Körper“ ist die Ursache von allem Unglück. Diese falsche Vorstellung muss verschwinden. Das ist Verwirklichung. Verwirklichung ist kein Erwerb von etwas Neuem und keine neue Fähigkeit. Sie ist lediglich die Entfernung aller Tarnungen.
Die letzte Wahrheit ist so einfach. Es ist nicht mehr, als im ursprünglichen Zustand zu sein. Das ist alles, was gesagt werden muss.
F: Ist man im Tiefschlaf dem reinen Bewusstsein näher als im Wachzustand?

A: Wachen, Träumen und Tiefschlaf sind nur Erscheinungen auf dem Selbst, das selbst unbewegt ist. Es ist ein Zustand einfachen Gewahrseins. Kann irgendjemand auch nur für einen Augenblick vom Selbst getrennt sein?
F: Sagt man nicht häufig, dass man im Tiefschlaf dem reinen Bewusstsein näher ist als im Wachzustand?
A: Diese Frage könnte auch lauten: „Bin ich mir selbst im Tiefschlaf näher als im Wachzustand?"
Das Selbst ist reines Bewusstsein. Niemand kann sich vom Selbst entfernen. Die Frage ist nur in der Dualität möglich. Aber im reinen Bewusstsein gibt es keine Dualität.
Der Wachzustand ist voll von schönen und interessanten Dingen. Da diese Erfahrung im Tiefschlaf fehlt, sagen wir, der Tiefschlaf sei Stumpfheit. Bevor wir weitergehen, muss dies ganz klar werden. Müssen Sie nicht zugeben, dass Sie auch im Schlaf existieren?
F: Ja, das tue ich.
A: Sie sind dieselbe Person, die jetzt wach ist, stimmt das?
F: Ja.
A: Es gibt also etwas Durchgehendes im Schlaf und Wachzustand. Was ist dieses Durchgehende? Es ist das reine Sein. Es gibt einen Unterschied zwischen den beiden Zuständen, nämlich, dass im Wachzustand Körper, Welt und Objekte auftauchen und im Tiefschlaf verschwinden.
F: Aber im Tiefschlaf nehme ich nichts wahr.
A: Richtig, es gibt keine Wahrnehmung von Körper und Welt, aber Sie müssen im Schlaf existieren, um jetzt sagen zu können: „Ich habe im Schlaf nichts wahrgenommen." Das Individuum, das sich jetzt mit dem Körper identifiziert, sagt, dass im Schlaf ein solches Gewahrsein nicht existierte. Weil Sie sich mit dem Körper identifizieren, sehen Sie diese Welt und sagen, dass der Wachzustand angefüllt ist mit schönen und interessanten Dingen. Der Schlaf erscheint Ihnen stumpf, weil Sie als Individuum nicht da waren und deshalb auch keine Dinge. Was ist aber die Tatsache? Da ist eine Kontinuität des Seins in allen drei Zuständen, aber keine Kontinuität des Individuums und der Objekte. / F: Ja.
A: Das, was durchgängig ist, ist auch bleibend, fortdauernd. Was nicht durchgängig da ist, ist vergänglich. / F: Ja.
A: Deshalb ist das Sein dauernd, Körper und Welt aber nicht.
Sie sind flüchtige Erscheinungen auf der Leinwand des Sein-Bewusstseins, das beständig und ewig ist.

Man sollte aber nicht verlangen, immer im Schlaf zu sein. Erstens ist das nicht möglich, weil er sich notwendig mit den anderen Zuständen abwechselt. Zweitens kann dieser Zustand nicht der Seligkeitszustand des Jnani sein, denn dieser ist dauernd und nicht wechselnd. Der Schlaf wird außerdem von den Menschen nicht als ein Zustand des Gewahrseins erkannt, während der Heilige immer im Zustand des Gewahrseins ist (wissentlich). Dadurch unterscheidet sich der Tiefschlaf vom Zustand, in dem der Heilige gegründet ist. Ferner ist der Schlaf frei vom Denken und seinen Eindrücken auf das Individuum. Er kann nicht willentlich verändert werden, weil Anstrengungen in dem Zustand nicht möglich sind.



F: Ist die Verwirklichung des Absoluten nicht etwas Unerreichbares für einen Laien wie mich?

A: Das ist eine irrtümliche Ansicht, die man aufgeben sollte. Das Selbst, das Sie zu erkennen suchen, sind Sie selbst. Ihre eingebildete Nichterkenntnis beschert Ihnen unnötigen Kummer, wie bei den zehn Männern, die den Verlust des zehnten beklagten, der nie verlorengegangen war. Die zehn Männer durchquerten einen Fluss und am anderen Ufer wollten sie feststellen, ob alle sicher angekommen waren. Einer der zehn begann zu zählen, ließ sich selbst aber dabei aus.

„Ich sehe nur neun, einer muss verlorengegangen sein." „Hast du richtig gezählt?" fragte ein anderer und begann selbst zu zählen, aber er kam auch nur auf neun. Einer nach dem anderen zählte nur neun, sich selbst auslassend. „Wir sind nur neun", waren sie sich einig, „aber wer ist der Fehlende?" Alle Versuche, den Fehlenden zu finden, waren umsonst. „Wer es auch ist", sagte der Sentimentalste von ihnen, „wir haben ihn verloren", und er brach in Tränen aus, was die anderen ihm nachtaten. Ein Wanderer, der die Narren am Ufer weinen sah, erkundigte sich nach der Ursache ihres Kummers. Sie berichteten, was geschehen war, aber da er alle zehn vor sich sah, erkannte er ihr Problem, und um ihnen klarzumachen, dass alle zehn überlebt hatten, sagte er zu ihnen: „Stellt euch in einer Reihe auf und zählt der Reihe nach eins, zwei, drei usw., und ich gebe jeweils dem, der zählt, einen Schlag, damit jeder weiß, dass er mitgezählt wurde, aber auch nur einmal. Dann werden wir den vermissten Zehnten finden." Jeder, der zählte, bekam einen Schlag, und als der letzte ihn bekam, sagte er „zehn". Erstaunt guckten sie sich an, sagten „Wir sind zehn!" und bedankten sich bei dem Wanderer, dass er sie von ihrem Kummer befreit hatte. Dies ist die Parabel. Woher kam denn der zehnte Mann? War er je verlorengegangen? Hatten sie, indem sie einsahen, dass immer alle dagewesen waren, etwas Neues gelernt? Die Ursache ihres Kummers war nicht der wirkliche Verlust von jemandem, sondern ihre eigene Erkenntnislosigkeit, ihre Vorstellung, jemanden verloren zu haben. Das ist auch bei Ihnen der Fall. Es gibt keinen Grund für Sie, elend und unglücklich zu sein. Sie selbst überdecken Ihr wahres Wesen mit Begrenzungen und weinen darüber, dass Sie ein begrenztes Geschöpf sind. Dann nehmen Sie diese oder jene spirituelle Übung auf, um die nicht existierenden Begrenzungen zu überwinden. Wenn aber Ihre spirituellen Übungen selbst davon ausgehen, dass diese Begrenzungen existieren, wie können sie Ihnen dann helfen, diese Begrenzungen zu überwinden? Deshalb sage ich: Erkennen Sie, dass Sie wirklich das unendliche reine Sein sind, das Selbst. Sie sind immer das Selbst und nichts als das Selbst. Ihre Nichterkenntnis ist nur eine Einbildung, wie sich die zehn Narren den Verlust des zehnten Mannes einbildeten; diese Erkenntnislosigkeit verursachte ihren Kummer. Erkennen Sie also, dass wahre Erkenntnis kein neues Sein für Sie schafft, sie beseitigt nur Ihre Nichterkenntnis. Seligkeit wird nicht Ihrer Natur hinzugefügt, sie wird nur als Ihr wahrer natürlicher Zustand enthüllt, ewig und unvergänglich. Die einzige Möglichkeit, Ihren Kummer loszuwerden, besteht darin, Ihr Selbst zu erkennen und zu sein.

Wie kann dies unerreichbar sein?

F: Sooft Bhagavan uns auch belehrt, wir sind doch nicht fähig, es zu begreifen.
A: Die Menschen sagen, dass sie nicht fähig sind, das Selbst zu erkennen, das alldurchdringend ist. Was kann ich dagegen tun? Selbst das kleinste Kind sagt: „Ich bin da, ich tue dies, dies gehört mir." Jeder versteht also, dass dieses „Ich" immer vorhanden ist.
Brauchen wir eine Kerze, um nach diesem Selbst zu suchen?

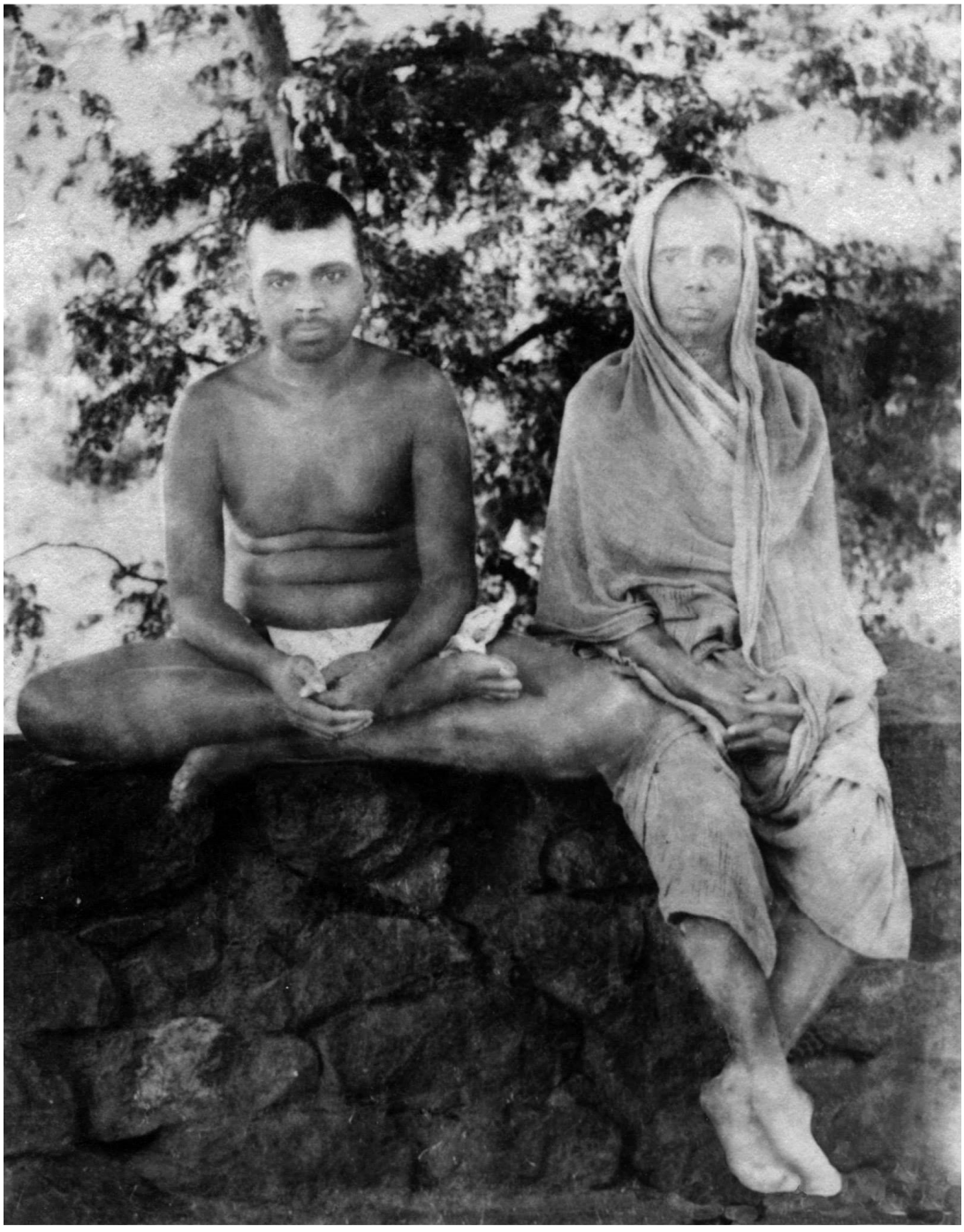
F: Aber wie diesen Zustand erreichen?
A: Es gibt kein Ziel zu erreichen, nichts, was erlangt werden muss. Sie sind das Selbst. Sie existieren immer. Über das Selbst kann nicht mehr ausgesagt werden

als: es existiert. Gott oder das Selbst zu sehen ist nur, Sie selbst zu sein. Sehen ist Sein. Sie, der Sie das Selbst sind, wollen wissen, wie man das Selbst erlangt. Es ist, als fragte jemand hier im Ramana-Ashram, wie viele Wege zum Ashram führen und welcher der beste Weg für ihn sei. Alles, was not tut, ist, den Gedanken, dieser Körper zu sein, aufzugeben, und ebenso alle Gedanken an die äußeren Dinge oder das Nichtselbst.
Obgleich Sie tatsächlich das wahre Selbst sind, identifizieren Sie sich mit dem Ego.
F: Wie entsteht dieser Irrtum?
A: Sehen Sie, ob er entstanden ist.
F: Man muss das Ego im wahren Selbst aufgehen lassen.
A: Das Ego existiert überhaupt nicht.
F: Warum bereitet es uns dann Schwierigkeiten?
A: Wer hat Schwierigkeiten? Auch diese sind eingebildet.
F: Warum ist die Welt in Nichterkenntnis gehüllt?
A: Kümmern Sie sich um sich selbst und lassen Sie die Welt sich um sich selbst kümmern. Sehen Sie Ihr Selbst. Wenn Sie der Körper sind (dieser zu sein glauben), gibt es die materielle Welt. Wenn Sie (wissentlich) Bewusstsein sind, ist alles Bewusstsein.
F: Das mag für das Individuum stimmen, aber was ist mit dem Rest?
A: Tun Sie das erst, und sehen Sie, ob sich die Frage dann noch stellt.
F: Gibt es Nichterkenntnis?
A: Für wen?
F: Für das Ego.
A: Ja, für das Ego. Entfernen Sie das Ego (den Glauben daran) und Nichterkenntnis ist verschwunden. Wenn Sie das Ego suchen, verschwindet es (offenbart es sich als nicht existent), und nur das wirkliche Selbst bleibt. Das Ego, das Nichterkenntnis vorgibt, ist nicht aufzufinden. Es gibt in Wirklichkeit keine Nichterkenntnis.
F: Wie ist das Ego entstanden?
A: Es ist nicht vorhanden. Sonst müssten Sie zwei Selbste zulassen.
Nichterkenntnis gehört zum Ego. Warum denken Sie an das Ego und leiden?
Nichterkenntnis ist nur unsere Erkenntnislosigkeit oder unser Vergessen des Selbst. Gibt es Finsternis angesichts der Sonne? Kann es angesichts der Evidenz des selbstleuchtenden Selbst Nichterkenntnis geben? Wenn Sie das Selbst erkennen, gibt es keine Dunkelheit, keine Nichterkenntnis und kein Leid mehr.

Schwierigkeiten und Leid gibt es nur im Verstand. Die Dunkelheit kommt weder, noch geht sie. Erblicken Sie die Sonne und es gibt keine Dunkelheit. Schauen Sie das Selbst und Sie finden, dass Nichterkenntnis/Unwissenheit nicht existiert.

F: Wie ist das Unwirkliche entstanden?
Kann denn Unwirkliches aus dem Wirklichen entstehen?

A: Sehen Sie, ob es entstanden ist! Von einem anderen Standpunkt aus gibt es so etwas wie das Unwirkliche gar nicht. Das Selbst allein existiert. Wenn Sie das Ego aufspüren wollen, das die Basis der Wahrnehmung der Welt ist, so entdecken Sie, dass es weder ein Ego gibt noch die Schöpfung, die Sie wahrnehmen.

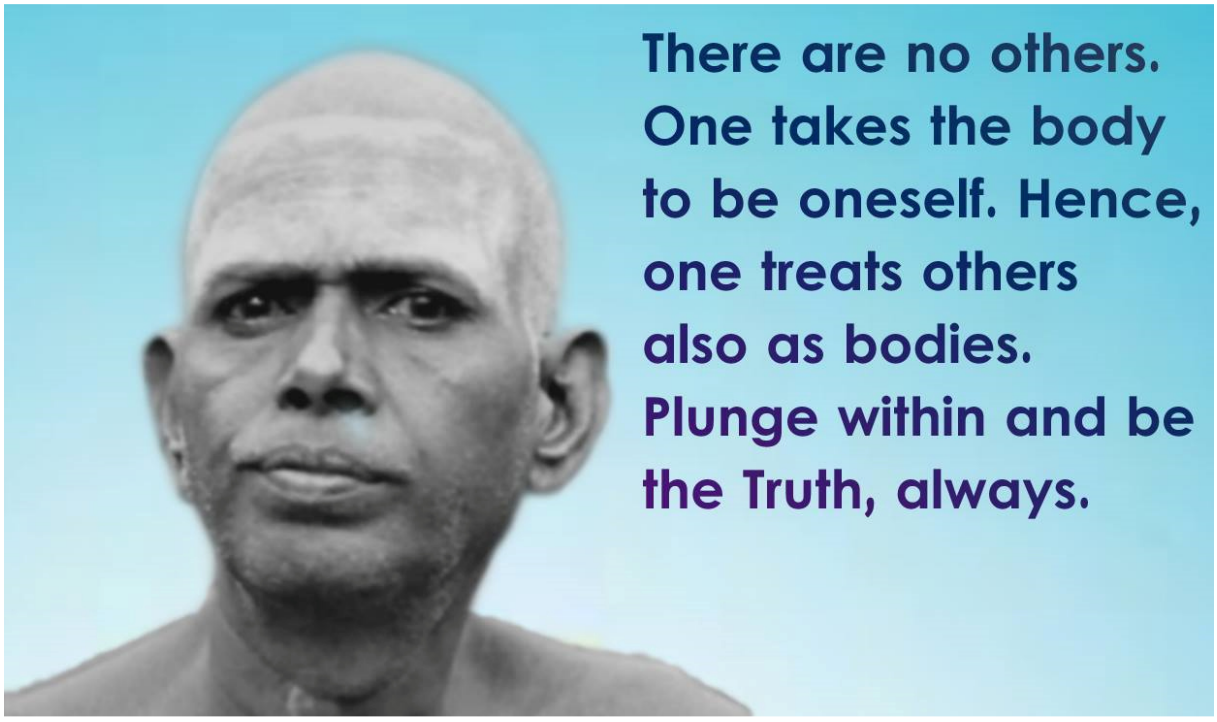


F: Gottes Lila (Spiel) ist grausam, wenn es die Erkenntnis des Selbst so schwer macht.

A: Das Selbst erkennen heißt das Selbst sein, und Sein ist Existenz, die eigene Existenz. Niemand leugnet die eigene Existenz, so wenig wie man seine Augen leugnen kann, obgleich man sie nicht sieht. Die Schwierigkeit entsteht durch ihren Wunsch, das Selbst zum Objekt zu machen, so wie Sie Ihre Augen zum Objekt machen, wenn Sie in den Spiegel sehen. Sie sind so sehr an die Betrachtung von Objekten gewöhnt, dass Sie die Erkenntnis Ihres Selbst verloren haben, weil das Selbst nicht zum Objekt gemacht werden kann. Wer kann das Selbst erkennen? Kann der leblose Körper das? Sie reden ständig von Ihrem „Ich", aber wenn Sie gefragt werden, leugnen Sie, es zu kennen. Sie sind das Selbst, und dann fragen Sie noch, wie es erkannt werden kann. Wo ist also Gottes Lila und wo die Grausamkeit? Nur weil die Menschen das Selbst leugnen, sprechen die Schriften von Maya, Lila usw.

F: Hilft meine Verwirklichung auch anderen?

A: Ja, gewiss. Es ist die beste mögliche Hilfe. Aber es gibt keine anderen, denen man helfen muss. Der Verwirklichte sieht nur das Selbst, so wie ein Goldschmied in all seinem Schmuck nur das Gold sieht. Nur wenn Sie sich mit Ihrem Körper identifizieren, gibt es Formen und Gestalten. Wenn Sie den Körper transzendieren, verschwinden die anderen zusammen mit Ihrem Körperbewusstsein.



F: Geschieht das auch mit Pflanzen, Bäumen usw.?
A: Existieren diese getrennt vom Selbst? Finden Sie das heraus. Sie denken, dass Sie sie sehen. Der Gedanke wird aus dem Selbst projiziert. Finden Sie heraus, wo er entsteht. Dann werden keine Gedanken mehr austeigen und nur das Selbst bleibt zurück.
F: Theoretisch verstehe ich das, aber die Gedanken sind dennoch da.
A: Ja, das ist wie im Kino. Lichter und Bilder erscheinen auf der Leinwand und beeindrucken die Zuschauer. Wenn im selben Film auch Zuschauer als Teil des Films auf der Leinwand gezeigt werden, erscheinen Seher und Gesehenes beide auf dem Schirm. Wenden Sie das auf sich selbst an. Sie sind die Leinwand, das Selbst hat das Ego geschaffen, das Ego schafft die Gedanken, die Gedanken schaffen die Erscheinungswelt, die Pflanzen und Bäume, nach denen Sie fragten. In Wirklichkeit sind alle nichts als das Selbst. Wenn Sie das Selbst erkennen, ist dieses überall. Nichts außer dem Selbst existiert.

F: Ja, ich verstehe es immer noch nur theoretisch, aber die Antworten sind einfach, schön und überzeugend.
A: Schon der Gedanke „Ich erkenne nicht“ ist ein Hindernis. Tatsächlich ist allein das Selbst.
Unser wahres Wesen ist Befreiung. Wir glauben aber, gebunden zu sein, und machen verschiedene verzweifelte Anstrengungen, frei zu werden, während wir es ständig sind. Dies begreift man nur, wenn man diese ‘Stufe‘ erreicht hat. Wir werden überrascht sein, dass wir wie wild versucht haben, etwas zu erlangen, das wir schon immer waren und sind. Ein Beispiel wird dies klarmachen...

Ein Mensch schläft in dieser Halle ein. Er träumt, auf einer Weltreise zu sein, er wandert über Berge und durch Täler, durch Wälder und Wüsten, und überquert verschiedene Kontinente. Nach vielen Jahren ermüdenden und anstrengenden Reisens kehrt er in dieses Land zurück, erreicht Tiruvannamalai, betritt den Ashram und geht in die Halle. In dem Moment wacht er auf und stellt fest, dass er sich nicht von der Stelle bewegt hat. Er ist nicht nach großen Anstrengungen in diese Halle zurückgekehrt, sondern ist und war immer in der Halle. Wenn man also fragt: „Warum glauben wir, gebunden zu sein, wenn wir frei sind?", so antworte ich darauf: „Warum konnten Sie, in dieser Halle liegend, eine Weltreise machen? Es geschah alles nur in Ihrem Geist und ist Maya (Täuschung)."

F: Wie kann die Unwissenheit über diese eine und einzige Wirklichkeit im Ajnani (Erkenntnislosen) entstehen?

A: Der Ajnani kennt nur den Geist (/Verstand), der ein bloßer Abglanz des Lichts des reinen Bewusstseins ist, das sich im Herzen erhebt. Vom Herzen selbst weiß er nichts. Warum nicht? Weil sein Denken nach außen gerichtet ist und niemals seine eigene Quelle gesucht hat.

F: Was hindert das unendliche, unterschiedslose Licht des Bewusstseins, das sich im Herzen erhebt, daran, sich dem Ajnani zu offenbaren?

A: Genau wie Wasser in einem Topf die gewaltige Sonne im kleinen Umfang des Topfes widerspiegelt, so bilden die Vasanas oder latenten Neigungen des individuellen Geistes ein reflektierendes Medium für das alles durchdringende Licht des Bewusstseins, das aus dem Herzen aufsteigt. Die Form dieser Reflexion ist eine Erscheinung, „der Geist" („the mind") genannt. Da der Ajnani nur diese Reflexion sieht, wird er zu dem Glauben verführt, ein begrenztes Wesen zu sein, der Jiva, das individuelle Selbst (die Seele).

F: Welche Hindernisse gibt es für die Erkenntnis des Selbst?

A: Es sind die Denkgewohnheiten (Vasanas).

F: Warum ist diese geistige Bindung so beharrlich?

A: Das Wesen dieser Bindung ist nur der aufsteigende, verderbliche Gedanke: „Ich bin von der Wirklichkeit verschieden." Da man aber mit Sicherheit nicht von der Wirklichkeit getrennt sein kann, sollte man diesen Gedanken aufgeben, wann immer er sich erhebt.

F: Warum erinnere ich mich nie daran, dass ich das Selbst bin?

A: Die Menschen sprechen vom Erinnern und vom Vergessen des Selbst. Beides sind nur Gedankenformen. Sie wechseln sich ab, solange es Gedanken gibt, aber die Wirklichkeit liegt jenseits von ihnen.

Erinnern und Vergessen sind abhängig vom individuellen „Ich". Sucht man danach, dann ist es nicht aufzufinden, weil es nicht wirklich ist. Deshalb ist dieses „Ich" identisch mit Illusion oder Erkenntnislosigkeit. Zu begreifen, dass es Erkenntnislosigkeit nie gegeben hat, ist das Ziel aller spirituellen Übungen. Erkenntnislosigkeit muss jemandem angehören, der gewahr ist. Gewahr sein ist Jnana. Jnana ist ewig und natürlich. Ajnana ist unnatürlich und unwirklich.

F: Warum ist man nicht zufrieden, wenn man diese Wahrheit gehört hat?

A: Weil die Samskaras (Denkneigungen) nicht vernichtet sind. Solange diese nicht verschwinden, wird es stets Zweifel und Verwirrung geben. Alle Anstrengungen sind darauf gerichtet, Zweifel und Verwirrung auszuschalten. Um das zu erreichen, müssen ihre Wurzeln gekappt werden.

Das Hören der Wahrheit ist die erste Stufe; ist das Begreifen nicht tief, muss man darüber reflektieren und unentwegt kontemplieren. Diese beiden letzteren Prozesse versengen die Samen der Samskaras, sodass sie unwirksam werden. Ungewöhnliche Menschen erlangen unerschütterliches Jnana, nachdem sie die Wahrheit nur einmal vernommen haben.

F: Wie ist Nichterkenntnis überhaupt entstanden?

A: Sie ist nie entstanden. Sie hat kein wirkliches Sein. Was da ist, ist nur Erkenntnis.

F: Warum erfahre ich sie nicht?

A: Wegen der Samskaras. Finden Sie heraus, wer nicht erfährt, und was er nicht erfährt. Dann stellt sich heraus, dass es keine Unwissenheit gibt.

F: Es ist also falsch, mit einem Ziel zu beginnen, nicht wahr?

A: Wenn es ein Ziel gibt, das erreicht werden muss, kann es nicht etwas immer Vorhandenes sein. Das Ziel muss bereits da sein. Wir suchen mit dem Ego ein Ziel, aber das Ziel existiert vor dem Ego. Was das Ziel ist, war schon vor unserer Geburt, vor der Geburt des Ego.

Der Schatten auf dem Wasser scheint zu zittern. Kann man das Zittern anhalten? Hört es auf, sieht man nicht mehr das Wasser, sondern nur das Licht. Beachten Sie also nicht das Ego und seine Aktivitäten, sondern nur das Licht dahinter. Das Ego ist der „Ich"-Gedanke. Das wahre „ICH" ist das Selbst.

F: Wenn es nur um ein Aufgeben der Vorstellungen geht, dann ist es doch nur ein Schritt zur Verwirklichung.

A: Verwirklichung ist bereits da. Der Zustand, der frei von Gedanken ist, ist der einzig wirkliche Zustand. Es gibt keine solche Tätigkeit wie Verwirklichung. Gibt es irgendjemanden, der nicht sein Selbst erfährt? Verleugnet jemand seine eige-

ne Existenz? Von Verwirklichung sprechen heißt, an zwei Selbste zu glauben – das eine, das verwirklicht, und das andere, das verwirklicht wird. Wenn wir unsere Existenz zugeben, wieso kennen wir dann nicht unser Selbst?
F: Wegen unserer Gedanken.
A: Genau so. Es ist der Verstand, der unser Glück verhüllt.
F: Wie können wir den Verstand loswerden?
A: Ist es der Verstand, der sich selbst umbringen will? Der Verstand kann sich nicht selbst auslöschen. Ihre Aufgabe ist es, das wahre Wesen des Verstandes herauszufinden. Dann erkennen Sie, dass es keinen Verstand gibt. Wird das Selbst gesucht, ist kein Verstand aufzufinden. Wer im Selbst ruht, kümmert sich nicht um den Verstand.

F: Ist Befreiung dasselbe wie Verwirklichung?
A: Befreiung ist unser Wesen. Es ist ein anderer Name für uns. Unser Verlangen nach Befreiung ist eine komische Sache. Es ist wie ein Mensch, der sich freiwillig aus dem Schatten in die Sonne begibt, die Last der Hitze spürt, große Anstrengungen macht, in den Schatten zurückzukommen, und jubelt: „Wie gut ist der Schatten, endlich habe ich ihn erreicht!“ Wir tun ständig dasselbe. Wir sind nicht von der Wirklichkeit verschieden, doch wir bilden uns ein, es zu sein. Wir erzeugen die Empfindung des Anders-Seins und machen dann spirituelle Übungen, um die Empfindung des Anders-Seins loszuwerden und die Einheit zu erkennen. Warum erst ein Gefühl des Anders-Seins schaffen, um es dann wieder loszuwerden?
F: Dies kann nur durch die Gnade des Meisters verwirklicht werden. Ich habe gelesen, dass Seligkeit nur durch die Gnade des Meisters erlangt werden kann. Ich bete um die Gnade.
A: Seligkeit ist nichts als Ihr eigenes Wesen. Sie sind nicht getrennt vom Sein, das identisch ist mit Seligkeit. Sie glauben jetzt, Körper und Denken zu sein, die sich wandeln und vergänglich sind. Sie sind aber unwandelbar und ewig. Das sollten Sie erkennen.
F: Es ist alles Dunkelheit, und ich bin erkenntnislos.
A: Wer sagt „Ich bin erkenntnislos“? Es muss der Zuschauer der Nichterkenntnis sein. Das ist es, was Sie sind. Sokrates hat gesagt: „Ich weiß, dass ich nichts weiß.“ Kann das Erkenntnislosigkeit sein? Es ist Weisheit.
F: Warum fühle ich mich unglücklich, wenn ich zu Hause bin, und empfinde Frieden in Ihrer Gegenwart?

A: Sie können Seligkeit nicht an einem Ort oder in Zeitabschnitten finden. Sie muss dauernd sein, um Nutzen zu bringen. Sie ist Ihr eigenes Wesen, das dauernd ist. Seien Sie (wissentlich) das Selbst – das ist Seligkeit. Sie sind immer Das.
Das Selbst ist immer verwirklicht. Es ist nicht notwendig, etwas verwirklichen zu wollen, das schon verwirklicht ist und immer verwirklicht war, denn Sie können Ihre eigene Existenz nicht leugnen. Diese Existenz ist Bewusstsein, ist das Selbst.
Wenn Sie nicht existieren, können Sie auch keine Fragen stellen. Sie müssen Ihre Existenz zugeben. Diese Existenz ist das Selbst. Es ist bereits verwirklicht. Der Versuch, es zu verwirklichen, führt nur zur Erkenntnis Ihres Irrtums – nämlich das Selbst noch nicht verwirklicht zu haben. Es gibt keine neue Verwirklichung. Das Selbst wird nur offenbar.
F: Das wird einige Jahre dauern.
A: Warum Jahre? Die Vorstellung von Zeit ist nur in Ihrem Denken, nicht im Selbst. Es gibt für das Selbst keine Zeit. Zeit entsteht als Idee, nachdem das Ego entstanden ist. Aber Sie sind das Selbst jenseits von Zeit und Raum. Sie existieren selbst in Abwesenheit von Zeit und Raum.
Verwirklichung ist der wahre, ewig Zustand, der sich nicht wandeln kann.
F: Ja, ich werde es im Laufe der Zeit verstehen.
A: Sie sind bereits Das. Zeit und Raum können das Selbst nicht berühren. Sie sind in Ihnen, genauso wie alles, was Sie um sich herum sehen. Eine Geschichte soll diesen Punkt illustrieren. Eine Dame besaß eine wunderschöne Kette, die sie um den Hals trug. Einmal vergaß sie das in ihrer Aufregung und dachte, sie hätte ihre Kette verloren. Sie bekam es mit der Angst und suchte im ganzen Haus, konnte sie aber nicht finden. Sie fragte ihre Freunde und Nachbarn, aber ohne Erfolg. Schließlich bat eine gute Freundin sie, an ihren Hals zu fassen. Sie entdeckte, dass sie die Kette die ganze Zeit um den Hals gehabt hatte, und war glücklich. Als sie später gefragt wurde, ob sie die verlorene Kette wiedergefunden habe, sagte sie: „Ja, ich habe sie gefunden." Sie hatte immer noch das Gefühl, ein kostbares Juwel wiedergewonnen zu haben. Hatte sie die Kette denn wirklich verloren? Sie hing doch immer um ihren Hals. Doch betrachten Sie ihre Gefühle! Sie war so glücklich, als hätte sie ein verlorenes Schmuckstück wiedergefunden. So geht es auch uns: Wir stellen uns vor, irgendwann das Selbst zu verwirklichen/erkennen, während wir nie etwas anderes sind als das Selbst.
F: Gibt es etwas, was ich tun kann, um diesen Zustand zu erreichen?

A: Die Vorstellung, dass es ein Ziel gibt und einen Weg dahin, ist falsch. Wir sind stets das Ziel oder der Friede. Wir brauchen nur die Idee loszulassen, dass wir nicht Friede sind.
F: Alle Bücher sagen, dass die Anleitung durch einen Guru notwendig ist.
A: Der Guru wird nur sagen, was ich jetzt sage. Er kann Ihnen nichts geben, was Sie nicht schon besitzen. Das Loswerden der falschen Vorstellung ist alles, was notwendig ist. Wir sind stets das Selbst, wir realisieren es nur nicht. Wir irren auf der Suche nach dem Selbst umher, bis wir zur erkennenden Schau gelangen und sagen: „Dies bin ich." Wir sollten zu dieser Schau kommen. Hat man sie erreicht, gibt es keine Verhaftung mehr, selbst wenn man sich mit der Welt abgibt und sich in ihr bewegt. Wenn man erst einmal Schuhe angezogen hat, spürt man die Steine und Dornen des Weges nicht mehr. Wir wandern ohne Furcht und Sorgen, selbst wenn es Berge auf dem Wege gibt. So wird alles einfach und natürlich sein für jene, die Selbsterkenntnis erlangt haben. Was gibt es außer unserem Selbst?
F: Der natürliche Zustand kann nur erkannt werden, wenn die weltliche Sichtweise gänzlich aufhört. Aber wie geschieht das?
A: Wenn der Verstand aufhört, hört auch die Welt auf (als etwas Getrenntes). Der Verstand ist die Ursache von all diesem. Hört er auf, zeigt sich der natürliche Zustand. Das Selbst verkündet sich ständig als „Ich, Ich". Es ist selbstleuchtend. Alles, was ist, ist das Selbst.
Warum danach suchen, wenn wir doch das sind? Die Alten haben gesagt: „Wer sein Sehen in Jnana aufgehen lässt, sieht die Welt als Brahman."

(Kommentar von David Godman:)
Die verborgene Grundannahme (hinter den folgenden Fragen) ist der Glaube, dass es eine Person (den Jnani) gibt, welche einen Zustand erfährt, den sie das Selbst nennt. Diese Annahme ist falsch. Die Wahrheit über das Selbst ist, dass es weder Jnanis (wissende Personen) noch Ajnanis (unwissende Personen) gibt, sondern nur Jnana (unpersönliches Wissen / Bewusstsein).
(Wenn das Bewusstsein sich in einer menschlichen Form seiner selbst bewusst ist, dann entsteht die Illusion eines weisen Menschen. Wenn das Bewusstsein sich in einer anderen menschlichen Form vergisst, entsteht die Illusion eines unwissenden Menschen. Es gibt weder wissende noch unwissende Personen / Individuen, sondern nur Gewahrsein, das sich entweder seiner selbst gewahr ist oder nicht.)

Ramana hat diesen Punkt bei vielen Gelegenheiten direkt oder indirekt aufgezeigt, aber nur wenige der Fragenden waren in der Lage, die Bedeutung der Feststellungen zu verstehen. Deshalb hat er gewöhnlich seine Einsichten so verkleidet, dass sie den Vorurteilen seiner Zuhörer entsprachen. In den meisten Gesprächen akzeptiert er, dass die Fragenden zwischen dem Jnani und dem Ajnani einen Unterschied machen. Ohne diese Annahme in Frage zu stellen, nimmt er die Rolle des Jnani ein und versucht, diesen Zustand zu erklären.

F: Was ist der Unterschied zwischen dem gebundenen Menschen und dem Befreiten?
A: Der gewöhnliche Mensch lebt im Gehirn, ohne seiner selbst im Herzen gewahr zu sein. Der Jnani lebt im Herzen. Wenn er sich mit Menschen und Dingen beschäftigt, weiß er, dass das, was er sieht, nicht verschieden ist von der höchsten Wirklichkeit, Brahman, die er im Herzen als sein eigenes Selbst erkannt hat.
F: Was ist mit dem gewöhnlichen Menschen?
A: Ich habe gerade gesagt, dass er die Dinge außerhalb von sich sieht. Er ist von der Welt und seiner eigenen, tiefen Wahrheit getrennt, von der Wahrheit, die ihn und das, was er sieht, trägt. Ein Mensch, der die höchste Wahrheit seiner eigenen Existenz erkannt hat, weiß, dass sie die höchste Wirklichkeit ist, die hinter ihm selbst, hinter der ganzen Welt steht. Er ist in der Tat des Einen als des Wirklichen gewahr, des SELBST in allen Selbsten, in allen Dingen, des Ewigen und Unveränderlichen in allem, was vergänglich und veränderlich ist.
F: Welche Beziehung besteht zwischen dem reinen Bewusstsein, das der Jnani verwirklicht, und der Ichhaftigkeit, die als erste Tatsache der Erfahrung betrachtet wird?
A: Das undifferenzierte Bewusstsein des reinen Seins ist das Herz; es ist das, was Sie wahrhaft sind. Aus dem Herzen steigt die Ichhaftigkeit auf als die erste Tatsache der Erfahrung. Sie ist an sich von vollkommen reiner Art. In dieser Reinheit, unberührt, scheint das „Ich“ im Jnani fortzubestehen.
F: Im Jnani existiert das Ego in reiner Form und erscheint deshalb als etwas Wirkliches. Habe ich Recht?
A: Die Existenz des Ego in jeglicher Form ist als solche eine Illusion. Für den Ajnani, der irrtümlicherweise glaubt, dass der Wachzustand und die Welt wirklich sind, scheint auch das Ego wirklich zu sein. Da er sieht, dass der Jnani wie andere handelt, überträgt er deren Individualität auch auf den Jnani.
F: Wie funktioniert der Ichgedanke, das Gefühl der Individualität, im Jnani?

A: Überhaupt nicht.
Das wahre Wesen des Jnani ist das Herz selbst, denn er ist eins und identisch mit dem undifferenzierten, reinen Bewusstsein. Es ist dasselbe wie Brahman, das Absolute.
F: Besitzt ein Jnani Wünsche?
A: Die Haupteigenschaften des gewöhnlichen Geistes sind Trägheit und Ruhelosigkeit; deshalb ist er voll von egoistischen Wünschen und Schwächen. Der Geist des Jnani ist reine Harmonie; er ist formlos und betätigt sich in der feinen Erkenntnishülle, durch die er Kontakt mit der Welt hält. Seine Wünsche sind deshalb ebenfalls rein.
F: Ich versuche, die Weltsicht des Jnani zu verstehen. Wird die Welt nach der Selbstverwirklichung noch wahrgenommen?
A: Warum sich über die Welt und was nach der Selbstverwirklichung geschieht bekümmern? Verwirklichen Sie zuerst das Selbst. Was macht es, ob die Welt wahrgenommen wird oder nicht? Es ist ganz unwichtig für den Jnani wie den Ajnani, ob er die Welt wahrnimmt oder nicht. Beide sehen sie, aber ihre Sichtweise ist verschieden.
F: Wenn der Jnani und der Ajnani die Welt gleicherweise wahrnehmen, wo ist da der Unterschied zwischen ihnen?
A: Wenn der Jnani die Welt sieht, dann sieht er das Selbst, das allem Geschehen zugrunde liegt. Der Ajnani kennt sein wahres Wesen, das Selbst, nicht, ob er die Welt nun sieht oder nicht.
Nehmen Sie als Beispiel die Bilder, die sich auf der Leinwand des Kinos bewegen. Was befindet sich vor Ihnen, bevor das Spiel beginnt? Nur die Leinwand. Auf dieser Leinwand sehen Sie dann den ganzen Film, und allem Anschein nach sind die Bilder wirklich. Aber gehen Sie hin und versuchen Sie, die Bilder anzufassen. Was fassen Sie an? Nur die Leinwand, auf der die Bilder erscheinen. Und was bleibt nach dem Spiel, wenn die Bilder verschwinden? Nur die Leinwand.
So ist es mit dem Selbst. Es allein existiert, die Bilder kommen und gehen. Wenn Sie sich an das Selbst halten (seiner bewusst bleiben), werden Sie von der Erscheinung der Bilder nicht mehr getäuscht. Auch spielt es keine Rolle, ob die Bilder erscheinen oder verschwinden. Der Ajnani vergisst das Selbst und hält die Welt für wirklich, so wie man die Leinwand vergisst, wenn man nur die Bilder sieht und meint, sie existierten getrennt von ihr. Wenn man weiß, dass es ohne den Sehenden nichts zu sehen gibt und ohne die Leinwand keine Bilder, dann wird man nicht getäuscht. Der Jnani weiß, dass Leinwand und Bilder nur das

Selbst sind. Mit den Bildern zeigt sich das Selbst in seiner manifestierten Form, ohne Bilder bleibt es in der unmanifestierten „Form". Für den Jnani ist es ganz unerheblich, ob das Selbst die eine oder die andere Form hat. Es ist stets das Selbst. Aber der Ajnani, der den Jnani aktiv sieht, ist verwirrt.
F: Sieht Bhagavan die Welt als Teil von sich?
A: Das Selbst allein ist, und nichts anderes. Durch Nichterkenntnis wird es jedoch differenziert. Die Welt ist kein weiteres Selbst, das dem Selbst ähnlich ist. Sie ist auch kein Teil des Selbst. Sie ist nicht vom Selbst verschieden.
F: Ist nicht die Welt im Selbst widersgespiegelt?
A: Bei einer Spiegelung muss es ein Objekt und sein Bild geben. Doch das Selbst lässt solche Unterscheidung nicht zu.
F: Hat ein Jnani Träume?
A: Ja, aber er weiß, dass es Träume sind, wie er auch weiß, dass der Wachzustand nur ein Traum ist. Sie können es Traum 1 und Traum 2 nennen. Der Jnani, der in der höchsten Wirklichkeit ruht, beobachtet losgelöst Wachzustand, Träume und Tiefschlaf als Bilder, die der Wirklichkeit überlagert sind.
F: Für den Jnani gibt es also keinen Unterschied zwischen den drei Zuständen?
A: Wie könnte es das, wenn das Denken aufgelöst und im Licht des Bewusstseins verlorengegangen ist? Für den Jnani sind alle drei Zustände gleichermaßen unwirklich. Der Ajnani kann das nicht begreifen, denn für ihn ist der Wachzustand der Maßstab für die Wirklichkeit, während für den Jnani die Wirklichkeit selbst der Maßstab für die Wirklichkeit ist. Diese Wirklichkeit des reinen Bewusstseins ist ewig und deshalb immer gleichbleibend in dem, was Sie Wachzustand, Traum und Tiefschlaf nennen. Wer eins ist mit dieser Wirklichkeit, für den gibt es weder den Verstand noch seine drei Zustände, und deshalb weder Einkehr noch Ausgehen. Er ist ewig wach, denn er ist zum ewigen Selbst erwacht. Er ist stets im Traumzustand, weil die Welt für ihn nichts anderes als ein wiederholt vorgespiegeltes Traumphänomen ist, und er ist immer im Schlafzustand, weil er stets ohne das „Ich bin der Körper"-Bewusstsein ist.
F: Gibt es keine Ich-bin-der-Körper-Vorstellung für den Jnani? Wenn zum Beispiel Bhagavan von einem Insekt gestochen wird, gibt es da keine Empfindung?
A: Doch, und auch eine Körpervorstellung. Die hat der Jnani und auch der Ajnani, mit dem Unterschied, dass der Ajnani sich für den Körper hält, während der Jnani weiß, dass alles das Selbst, alles Brahman ist. Gibt es Schmerz, dann lass es geschehen; er ist auch ein Teil des Selbst. Das Selbst ist vollkommen.
Nach Überwindung der Identifikation mit dem Körper wird man ein Jnani.

Ist jene Vorstellung verschwunden, gibt es keine Handlung und keinen Handelnden mehr. Deshalb schafft ein Jnani kein Karma mehr. Das ist seine Erfahrung, sonst ist er kein Jnani. Der Ajnani identifiziert den Jnani mit dessen Körper, was der Jnani nicht tut.
F: Ich sehe Sie Dinge tun. Wie können Sie sagen, dass Sie nie Handlungen vollziehen?
A: Das Radio singt und spricht, aber wenn Sie es öffnen, ist niemand darin. So ist es mit meiner Existenz: Obgleich der Körper spricht wie ein Radio, ist niemand als Handelnder darin.
F: Ich finde es schwer, das zu verstehen. Können Sie mir das bitte erklären?
A: Das Rad des Töpfers dreht sich noch weiter, selbst wenn der Töpfer es nicht mehr antreibt, weil der Topf fertig ist. Genauso dreht sich der elektrische Ventilator noch eine Weile weiter, wenn man ihn abgeschaltet hat. Das Karma, das sich noch auswirken muss, und das den Körper geschaffen hat, lässt ihn weiterhandeln in Dingen, für die er bestimmt war. Der Jnani versieht all diese Handlungen, ohne zu glauben, dass er der Ausführende sei. Es ist schwer zu verstehen, dass dies möglich ist.
Erklärungen sind nicht für den Jnani bestimmt. Er weiß und hat keine Zweifel. Er weiß, dass er nicht der Körper ist und nicht handelt, obgleich der Körper in Aktivitäten verstrickt sein mag. Diese Erklärungen sind für Betrachter, die den Jnani für den Körper halten und nicht verhindern können, ihn mit dem Körper zu identifizieren.
F: Man sagt, dass der Schock der Verwirklichung so stark ist, dass der Körper ihn nicht überlebt.
A: Einige glauben, dass, wer stirbt, kein Jnani sein kann, denn sie meinen, dessen Körper müsste sich in Luft auflösen. Sie haben verschiedene merkwürdige Vorstellungen. Wenn man glaubt, dass ein Mensch sofort seinen Körper aufgeben muss, wenn er das Selbst verwirklicht hat und dass ein Mensch nicht als Jnani betrachtet werden kann, solange er in der Welt tätig ist, dann müssen nicht nur die großen Heiligen, die nach der Erlangung von Jnana noch viel Arbeit leisteten, als Ajnanis betrachtet werden, sondern auch die Götter. Das trifft auch auf Ishvara (den persönlichen Gott) zu, weil er sich dauernd um die Welt kümmert. Tatsächlich aber kann ein Jnani jede Art von Arbeit verrichten und gut verrichten, ohne sich mit ihr zu identifizieren oder zu glauben, der Handelnde zu sein. Irgendwelche Kräfte handeln durch seinen Körper und benutzen ihn, um die Arbeit zu erledigen.

F: Ist ein Jnani in der Lage, Sünden zu begehen?
A: Ein Ajnani sieht einen Jnani und identifiziert ihn mit dem Körper. Da er das Selbst nicht kennt und sich für den Körper hält, überträgt er diesen Irrtum auf den Jnani und betrachtet ihn als Körper. Obgleich der Ajnani nicht der Handelnde ist, hält er sich für den Handelnden und die Tätigkeiten des Körpers für seine eigenen. Er glaubt, dass auch der Jnani so tätig ist, wenn der Körper tätig ist. Doch der Jnani kennt die Wahrheit und ist nicht verwirrt. Der Zustand des Jnani kann vom Ajnani nicht erfasst werden, und deshalb beschäftigt diese Frage nur den Ajnani. Das Selbst kann nicht der Handelnde sein. (Denn das Bewusstsein ist das, was sich der Handlungen bewusst ist.) Finden Sie heraus, wer der Handelnde ist, und das Selbst ist enthüllt.
F: Das läuft auf dies hinaus: Einen Jnani sehen heißt noch nicht ihn begreifen. Man sieht seinen Körper, aber nicht sein Jnana. Man muss also ein Jnani sein, um einen Jnani erkennen zu können.
A: Der Jnani sieht niemanden als Ajnani an. Aus seiner Sicht sind alle Jnanis. Im Jnana sieht der Jnani nichts als vom Selbst getrennt. Das Selbst ist leuchtend und reines Jnana. Dafür ein Beispiel: Zwei Freunde legten sich gemeinsam schlafen. Der eine träumte, dass sie beide auf eine lange Reise gingen und seltsame Erfahrungen machten. Nach dem Aufwachen erzählte er von diesen Erfahrungen und fragte seinen Freund, ob es so gewesen sei. Der lachte ihn aus und sagte, dass es doch nicht sein Traum gewesen sei und er die Erfahrungen nicht gemacht hätte. Ebenso geht es dem Ajnani, der seine falschen Vorstellungen auf andere überträgt.
F: Sie sagen, dass der Jnani aktiv sein kann und es auch ist und sich mit Menschen und Dingen beschäftigt. Ich bezweifle das nicht. Aber gleichzeitig sagen Sie, dass er keine Unterschiede sieht, dass für ihn alles eins ist. Wenn das stimmt, wie geht er mit den Unterschieden um, die sicher in Menschen und Dingen vorhanden sind?
A: Er sieht diese Unterschiede als bloße Erscheinungen, er sieht sie nicht getrennt von dem Wahren, Wirklichen, mit dem er eins ist.
F: Alle Formen, Klänge usw. sind für den Jnani dasselbe wie für die anderen. Wenn das stimmt, wie kann man da sagen, dass es nur Erscheinungen sind? Sind sie nicht ein Teil seiner Lebenserfahrung?
A: Ich habe gesagt, dass Gleichheit das echte Merkmal des Jnana ist. Das Vorhandensein des Begriffs Gleichheit impliziert ja schon das Vorhandensein von Unterschieden. Es ist die Einheit, die der Jnani in allen Unterschieden sieht, was

ich Gleichheit nenne. Gleichheit bedeutet nicht, dass man nichts von Unterschieden weiß. Wer verwirklicht ist, sieht, dass diese Unterschiede sehr oberflächlich sind, dass sie nicht substantiell oder dauernd sind, und dass das, was das Wesen all dieser Erscheinungen ist, die eine Wahrheit, die Wirklichkeit ist. Das nenne ich die Einheit. Sie bezogen sich in Ihrer Frage auf Form, Klang usw. Der Jnani erlebt die Unterschiede, aber er sieht darin nur die eine Wirklichkeit. Deshalb hat er keine Vorlieben. Ob er herumgeht, spricht oder handelt, es ist immer die eine Wirklichkeit, in der er das tut. Er hat nichts, was von dieser höchsten Wahrheit getrennt ist.

F: Man sagt, dass der Jnani sich allen gegenüber gleich verhält.

A: Ja. In Patanjalis Yoga-Sutra heißt es: Freundschaft, Freundlichkeit, Glück, Zuneigung, Güte, Freude daran, Gutes zu tun, Vergebung und andere derartige Dinge – all dies sind natürliche Eigenschaften des Jnani.

Jnanis sind in jeder Situation die gleichen, da sie die Wirklichkeit, die Wahrheit kennen. In ihrer täglichen Routine wie essen, sich bewegen usw. handeln die Jnanis nur für die anderen. Nicht eine Handlung geschieht für sie selbst. Ich habe Ihnen bereits mehrfach erzählt, dass, genauso wie es Menschen gibt, die von Berufs wegen gegen Bezahlung Klagelieder singen, der Jnani unverhaftet für andere Menschen Dinge tut, ohne selbst davon berührt zu werden.

Der Jnani weint mit den Weinenden, lacht mit den Lachenden, spielt mit den Verspielten, singt mit den Sängern. Was verliert er dabei? Seine Gegenwart ist wie ein reiner, klarer Spiegel. Er spiegelt die Bilder genau so wider, wie sie sind. Der Jnani ist nur ein Spiegel, unberührt von den Handlungen. Wie können ein Spiegel oder der Ständer, auf dem er steht, von den Reflexionen berührt werden? Nichts berührt sie, da sie nur Träger sind. Auf der anderen Seite müssen die Handelnden in der Welt, die Ajnanis, für sich selbst entscheiden, welcher Gesang und welche Handlung zum Wohle der Welt geschieht, was mit den Schriften übereinstimmt und was ausführbar ist.

F: Man sagt, dass es schon im Körper Befreite und beim Tode Befreite gibt.

A: Es gibt keine Befreiung, und wo sind die Muktas (Befreiten)?

F: Sprechen nicht die Hindu-Schriften von Befreiung?

A: Befreiung ist ein Synonym für das Selbst. Befreiung gibt es nur für die Erkenntnislosen. Der Jnani weiß weder von Befreiung noch von Bindung. Von Bindung, Befreiung und den verschiedenen Arten von Befreiung spricht er aus Rücksicht auf den Ajnani, damit dieser die Nichterkenntnis abschütteln kann. Es gibt nur Befreiung und sonst nichts.

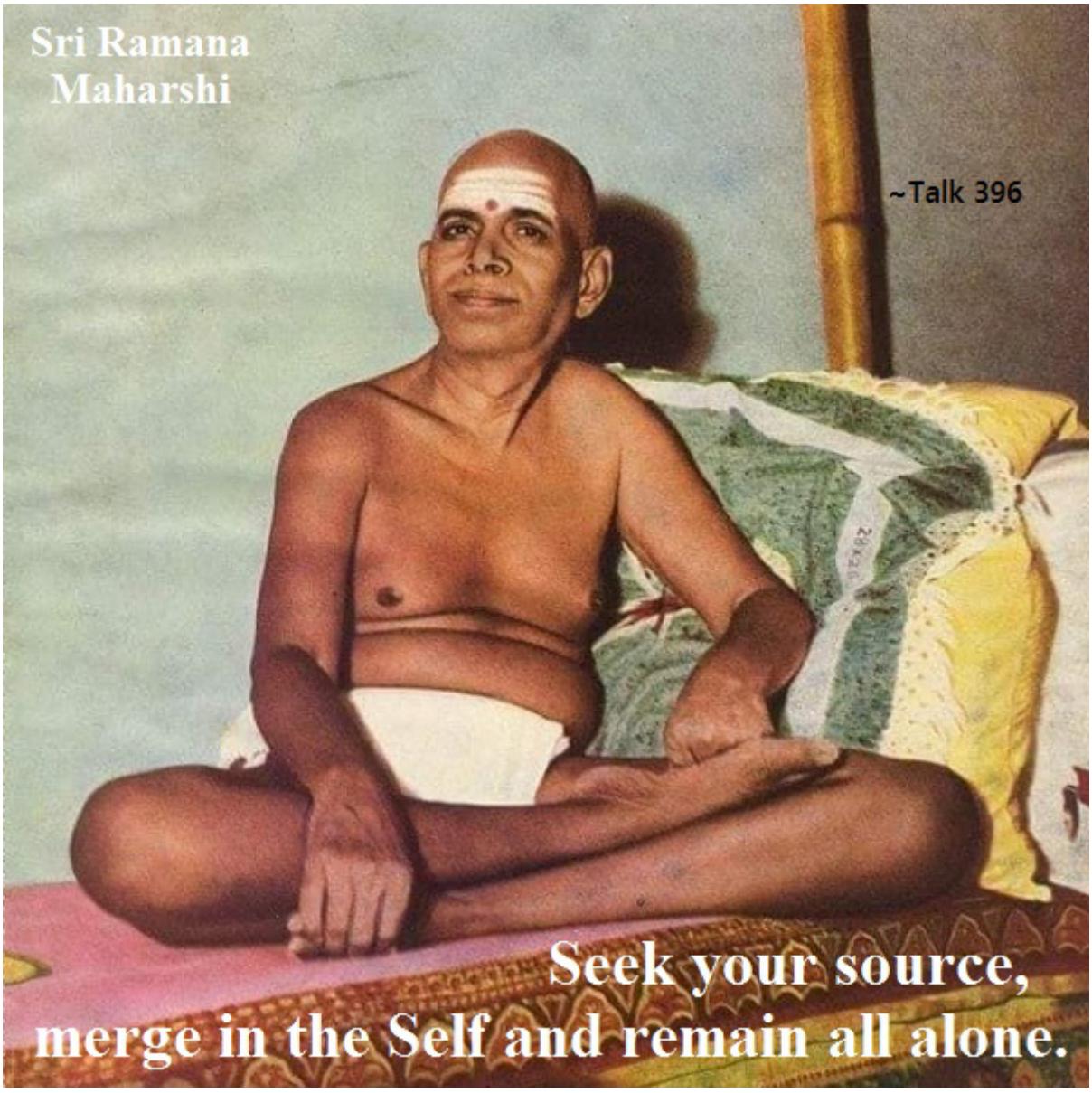
F: Das mag von Bhagavans Standpunkt aus stimmen, aber was ist mit uns?
A: Die Hindernisse entstehen, weil zwischen „Er“ und „Ich“ ein Unterschied gemacht wird.
F: Sie haben einmal gesagt, dass der Befreite, wenn er die sterbliche Hülle verlässt, nicht wieder einen Körper annimmt, der im Grunde der Tod ist. Das erzeugt den Eindruck, als ob der Jnani, auch wenn er auf dieser Ebene nicht wiedergeboren wird, auf feineren Ebenen weiterwirken kann. Ist in ihm ein Wunsch verblieben, das zu tun?
A: Nein, das habe ich nicht damit gemeint.
F: Ein indischer Philosoph sagt, dass der Befreite nach seinem Tod einen Körper des Lichts annimmt, in dem er verbleibt, bis die ganze Menschheit befreit ist.
A: Es ist ein Zustand, in dem es weder Bindung noch Befreiung gibt. Einen weiteren Körper – wie subtil er auch sein mag – anzunehmen bedeutet, einen Schleier über die Wirklichkeit zu ziehen, und das ist Bindung. Befreiung ist absolut und unwiderruflich.
F: Wieso kann der Jnani nicht auf zwei Ebenen sein? Der Jnani bewegt sich mit uns in der Welt und sieht die verschiedenen Objekte wie wir. Wenn er zum Beispiel geht, sieht er den Weg vor sich. Angenommen, es liegt ein Stuhl oder Tisch auf dem Weg. Er sieht ihn und weicht ihm aus. Wir müssen also annehmen, dass er die Welt und die Objekte sieht, und natürlich auch das Selbst.
A: Sie sagen, dass der Jnani den Weg sieht, ihn geht, auf Hindernisse stößt, ihnen ausweicht usw. Wer sieht das so, der Jnani oder Sie? Er sieht <u>nur das Selbst und alles im Selbst.</u>
F: Gibt es Beispiele in unseren Büchern, die uns diesen natürlichen Zustand deutlich erklären?
A: Ja. Wenn Sie zum Beispiel ein Spiegelbild im Spiegel und den Spiegel sehen, dann wissen Sie, dass der Spiegel wirklich ist und nicht die Reflexion. Ist es denn nötig, die Spiegelbilder nicht mehr zu sehen, um den Spiegel sehen zu können?
F: Welche Kriterien gibt es, um herauszufinden, ob ein Mensch von großer Spiritualität ist, da doch einige dieser Menschen sich wie Verrückte benehmen sollen?
A: Den Stand des Jnani erkennt nur ein Jnani. Man muss ein Jnani sein, um einen anderen Jnani verstehen zu können. Der Friede, der von einem Heiligen ausstrahlt, ist das einzige Zeichen, durch das der Suchende die Größe eines Heiligen erkennt. Seine Worte, Handlungen und Erscheinung sind kein Hinweis auf seine Größe, denn diese ist gewöhnlich jenseits des Fassungsvermögens gewöhnlicher Menschen.

F: Warum sagen die Schriften, dass der Heilige einem Kind gleicht?
A: Ein Kind und ein Jnani sind sich ähnlich. Vorkommnisse interessieren ein Kind nur, solange sie dauern. Es denkt nicht mehr daran, wenn sie vergangen sind. Sie lassen keine Eindrücke im Kind zurück, und es ist geistig nicht davon berührt. So ist es auch beim Jnani.
F: Sie sind Bhagavan. Sie sollten wissen, wann ich Jnana/Erleuchtung erlange. Sagen Sie mir, wann werde ich ein Jnani?
A: Wenn ich Bhagavan bin, dann gibt es niemandem außer dem Selbst, weder einen Jnani noch einen Ajnani. Andernfalls bin ich so gut wie Sie und weiß soviel wie Sie. In beiden Fällen kann ich Ihre Frage nicht beantworten.
Einige Menschen, die herkommen, fragen nicht nach sich selbst. Sie fragen: „Sieht ein Befreiter die Welt? Wird er vom Karma betroffen? Was ist Befreiung, nachdem man den Körper verlassen hat? Ist man nur nach dem Tode befreit oder schon, während man noch im Körper lebt? Löst sich der Körper des Heiligen in Licht auf, oder verschwindet er auf irgendeine andere Art? Kann er befreit sein, obgleich der Körper als Leiche zurückbleibt?“ Ihre Fragen sind endlos. Warum sich so viele Sorgen machen? Besteht Befreiung darin, diese Dinge zu kennen? Ich sage deshalb zu ihnen: „Hören Sie auf, an Befreiung zu denken. Gibt es Bindung? Erkennen Sie das. Betrachten Sie zuallererst sich selbst.“

„Selbstverwirklichung kann allein schon dadurch herbeigeführt werden,
dass man die Vorstellung von einem individuellen Selbst,
das durch Körper und Geist tätig ist, aufgibt.“

David Godman

“Ich existiere“ ist die einzige dauernde, an sich evidente Erfahrung eines jeden. Nichts anderes ist so evident wie „Ich bin“. Was die Menschen gewöhnlich Evidenz nennen, nämlich die Erfahrungen, die sie durch die Sinne gewinnen, ist alles andere als evident. Nur auf das Selbst trifft das zu. Alles, was es zu tun gilt, ist Selbstergründung und das ‚Ich bin‘ zu sein. „Ich bin“ ist Wirklichkeit. „Ich bin dies oder das“ ist unwirklich. „Ich bin“ ist Wahrheit, ein anderer Name für das Selbst.



FACE TO FACE WITH
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

(Enchanting and Uplifting Reminiscences of those who enjoyed his presence)

Ode to Ramana Maharshi by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya:
"Eternity has worn a human face, contracted to a little human span,
the Immortal has become a man, a self-imprisoned thing in time and space."

The pages that follow, which I consider appropriate to conclude this book, contain first-hand experiences of individuals who had an opportunity of living or interacting with Ramana Maharshi, or just being in his presence. They tell us about his teachings and his love for all living beings, including animals and plants. They reveal how sincere aspirants felt the impact of the irresistible light of the Maharshi's eyes which penetrated their inner being, and also how the peace and bliss got transmitted through celestial vibrations released by his presence.

From the Foreword: Ramana Maharshi is one of the unique shining stars on the spiritual firmament of India. The Maharshi's luminous 'personality' radiated serenity and provided solace to those who approached him. The doubts and skepticism of many would just vanish by the glow of his eyes. Always resting in the depth of his own inner Self, his very glance will many times answer and resolve the questions that the visitors and devotees would have liked to ask. The Maharshi was neither a philosopher nor a preacher but a realized soul. People of great distinction and knowledge have testified to it. His teachings are both simple and profound.

Interesting fact from the Life Sketch in the beginning of the book:
In his boyhood years, he was prone to abnormally deep sleep.
Speaking about it in later years, he said:

"The boys didn't dare to touch me when I was awake, but if they had any grudge against me, they would come when I was asleep, carry me wherever they liked, beat me, paint my face with charcoal and then put me back, and I would know nothing how it happened until they told me next morning."

REMINISCENCES:

Dr. Paul Brunton (British journalist):

"The Maharshi turns and looks down into my face. I become aware of a mysterious change taking place with great rapidity in my heart and mind. An untellable peace falls upon me and I know that <u>there is nothing further that I shall ask from life.</u>

<u>This man has freed himself from all problems, and no woe can touch him.</u>

The Sage seems to speak not as a philosopher, not as a pandit trying to explain his own doctrine, but rather out of the depth of his own heart.

I become aware that he is definitely linking my own mind with his, that he is provoking my heart into that state of starry calm, which he seems perpetually to enjoy. In this extraordinary peace, I find a sense of exaltation and lightness. Time seems to stand still. My heart is released from its burden of care. Never again, I feel, shall the bitterness of anger and the melancholy of unsatisfied desire afflict me.

I have sometimes asked myself why these disciples have been staying around the Sage for years with few conversations, fewer comforts and no external activities to attract them. Now I begin to understand – not by thought but by lightning like illuminations – that through all those years, they have been receiving a deep and silent reward.

I enjoy an ineffable tranquility merely by sitting for a while in the neighbourhood of the Maharshi. A force greater than my rationalistic mind awes me until it ends by overwhelming me.

Day after day brings fresh indications of the greatness of this man.

His silence and reserve are habitual. One can easily count up the number of words he uses in a single day.

It is clear that his mere presence provides many with spiritual assurance.
There are moments when I feel this power of his so greatly that I know that he has only to issue the most disturbing command and I will readily obey it. But the Maharshi is the last person in the world to place his followers in the chain of servile obedience, and allows everyone the utmost freedom of action. In this respect, he is quite refreshingly different from most of the teachers and yogis I have met in India.
I dawns upon me with increasing force that, in this quiet and obscure corner of South India, I have been led to one of the last of India's spiritual supermen.
I like him greatly because he is so simple and modest, when an atmosphere of authentic greatness lies so palpably around him; because he makes no claim to occult powers and hierophantic knowledge to impress the mystery-loving nature of his countrymen, and also because he is so totally without any traces of pretension and he strongly resists every effort to canonize him during his lifetime.
Often he is eloquent enough without opening his lips.
Each phrase that fell from his lips seemed to contain some precious fragment of essential truth. In the presence of the Maharshi, one felt security and inward peace. The spiritual radiations that emanated from him were all-penetrating.
He possessed a deific personality which defies description.
He was the most understanding man I have ever known. You could be sure always of some word from him that would smooth your way a little, and that word always verified what your deepest feeling told you already.
Upon all the evidence, one fact is incontrovertibly clear, that he was a pure channel for a Higher Power."

Sadhu Ekarasa / Dr. G.H. Mees (Dutch scholar):

"The Maharshi is above the spirit of time. His immportality stands out from his every word and look. It lives in the inner heart of all who have had the great privilege to come and sit in his presence."

Prof. Banning Richardson:

"I had come into touch with spiritualism of the finest type.
What Jesus the Christ taught 2000 years ago that "I am in my Father and my Father is in me. My Father and I are one" is the same as He who teaches today at Tiruvannamalai."

Justice K. Sundaram Chettiar:

"Whatever seems to happen in the world is incapable of affecting his peace, which passeth understanding. He has gone beyond the pair of opposites and looks at events in the light of the Absolute.
His very presence generates an atmosphere of peace."

Manu Subedar:

"There is grace in the way he looks
at the devotees as a mother looks at her children."

Grant Duff / Douglas Ainslie (scholar and senior government official):

"The moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light.
Never perhaps in world history was the Supreme Truth – Reality – placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude.
The Maharshi has particularly appealed to me because of his extreme politeness and gentleness. He is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness. My visit to the Sage of Arunachala has been the greatest event in my life."

Dilip Kumar Roy:

"Greatness sat easily on him as beauty on a sunset cloud, but with a devastating effect. All our ideas as to how the great should act seem to be dismissed by him with a smile of simple disavowal. I saw with my own eyes day after day during my five-day-stay at the Ashram of this unique sage, the like of whom I am sure is not to be met within this vast world.
I have never in my life of varied experience and wide travelling met a man so utterly indescribable and yet so profoundly moving. I cannot say why he moved me to my depths with eyes where no soft light of emotion presided, and yet it bathed me when I met his gaze with a peace that I find as unac-

countable as it was delectable. The Maharshi has not the slightest use for pretentiousness and self-importance.
I realized for the first time what is really meant by the word 'sacred'."

B. Sanjiva Rao:

"Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a strange figure – one of the strangest and yet one of the most fascinating and striking human beings of all times. As a matter of fact, he belongs not to any age, but to all ages, not to time but to eternity. The Maharshi has renounced as valueless all that the modern world values most. He has no use for money; he is no respecter of rank and position. His detachment is as complete as it is perfect. Nothing seems to possess the power to disturb his superpoise, his marvelous tranquility and peace. Tragedy does not move him in a personal way.
There is little doubt that an ageless Wisdom shines through those wonderful eyes which look with such perfect tranquility and yet such deep compassion upon the suffering world.
The Maharshi is a living proof of the ancient advaitic thought.
He demonstrates the reality of Self-transcendence.
The Maharshi represents a very perfect instance of the ego-less state. He speaks little and only when he finds it necessary to do so. Silence is to him the most powerful expression of Being, which speech only hinders. He uses the power of this Silence in a most effective fashion."

K. S. Venkataramani:

"Sri Bhagavan is an ocean of tranquility. He seldom spoke. There was always a look of serene joy in his face; sometimes it glowed up into a lustre of bliss; at times I noticed that he rose into a state of Samadhi or trance. But that look of blissful peace was always there. I cannot say he was unaware of his surroundings; indeed, he was always in the fullness of unbroken awareness, but the surroundings made no fluctuations in him. When people prostrated themselves before him or when they offered presents, there was the same look on his face. The mode of salutation and the mode of approach made no difference to him. To him, it was one, continuous state of serene peace and joy – Ananda."

Madan Mohan Varma:
"Indeed, such a life is a blessing to humanity."

Ella Maillart (Swiss travel writer and photographer):
"He is a living symbol of that knowledge without which the humanity of today is but a pitiful joke. He implants a lasting peace in the centre of every man's heart. What do we see in the West today? Every moment adding to the despair of men lost in fruitless researches."

T.M. Krishnaswami:
"His ashram is an oasis in the desert of the modern world."

K.S. Ramaswami Sastri:
"The world-intoxicated mind became subdued, calm and purified in the holy atmosphere of the Sage. When we sat before him, each felt a sense of inner release and was happy as a bird sailing through the vast expanse of the blue sky."

Giridhari Lal:
"What Maharshi knew at seventeen, we don't know at seventy.
Why? We lack the fire; our hearts are cold and our heads are hard."

Prof. Syed M. Hafiz:
"Unlike all the saints, sages and prophets, the Maharshi is the only sage who has realised the Truth Eternal that keeps the flame of spiritual wisdom alive. His silence is more eloquent, more effective, more far-reaching than the sermons of any number of teachers put together. His sense of humanity was as great as his sense of spirituality. The mere sight or tale of human suffering touched his heart. His words went straight into our heart because he lived what he taught. Most of the time, he sits silently, transforming the hearts and minds of those who are privileged to be near him. The Sage of Arunachala is really a spiritual scientist, who has adopted the scientific method of approach to Truth by investigating the realm of the unknown with the aid of his intuitive genius. He is the greatest of modern Sages of India."

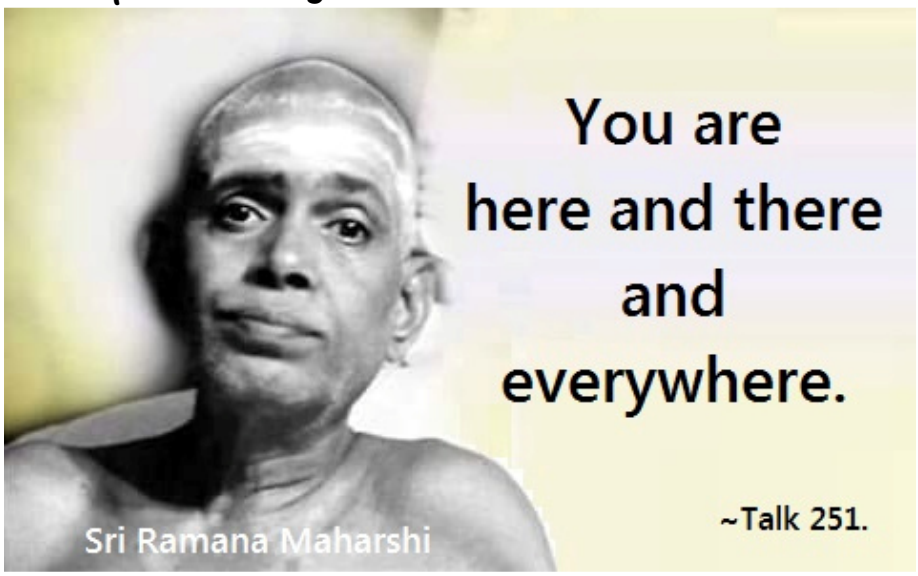
Duncan Greenlees (scholar and theosophist):

"I saw the Maharshi. It did not take long for me to be sure that I was in front of one who had, in that very body, solved life's problem for himself. The radiant peace around him proved it beyond all cavil. The calm, like that of the midnight sky, was something too real to question for a moment. The part of my search thus was over, even at the first glimpse. I knew he was what the books call a 'Master'. Please don't ask me how I knew because I cannot answer that. It was just as one knows that water is wet and the sky is blue. It could not be denied – self-evident is the word.

My mind was caught and held in that peace in a blissfulness it had never known before.

I have seen how totally impervious he was to all considerations of power, place, prestige, and how his grace shined equally on prince and peasant. Then, can I doubt that here indeed we have, if not God Himself – for He is omnipresent – at least Greatness incarnate, the majesty of the ancient hills blending with the sweetness of the evening star?

I know no other man whose mere presence has thus enabled me to make the personality drop down in the abyss of nothingness, where it belongs. I have found no other human being who so emanates his grace that it can catch away the ordinary man from his stillness and plunge him deep in the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being.



His grace, which of course is the grace of God whose representative and messenger he is, has been enough to give brief glimpses even to me of that infinity, wherein he always seemed to live.

He will brush away all this nonsense of my talk with a wave of hand and a smile, while saying as he once did, "It is the same in this as in another place. That bliss you feel is in the Self, and you superimpose it upon the place or environment in which you are bodily set."
His very presence among us is a benediction. His attaining a clear and unflickering vision of the Self has raised the whole world a little nearer to the Truth. His words have been an unfathomed ocean of comfort and inspiration to thousands. His silent peacefulness has revealed the Eternal in human form, as mountains, seas and skies above can usually reveal It."

H. Ghosh:
"A silent look or an encouraging word from Him
will do much more good than all the sermonic literature of the world."

C.S. Bagi:
"Sins of whole lives are forgiven by one act of His Grace."

Dr. K. Subrahmanian (Professor at the Central Institute):
"Bhagavan treated animals and birds with great affection and concern. Sometimes, a couple of monkeys would walk into the meditation hall. Some devotees used to get agitated. Bhagavan would gently call the monkeys and give them cashewnuts or groundnuts. They would go away screeching with delight. Sometimes a squirrel would scramble up the couch. Bhagavan would fondle it and give it whatever was available and it would leave without disturbing anybody. Similarly, a peacock would come and get some puffed rice from his hand. Once an ashram deer was attacked by some animals and the wounds turned from bad to worse. Bhagavan sat near the deer, held its face in his hand, looking at its tearful eyes. Someone asked my uncle, who was standing close, to look after the deer and relieve Bhagavan. Bhagavan heard this but did not make any response, and sat there till the deer breathed its last."

N. Balarama Reddy:
"In Bhagavan we found a being that was so surcharged with Reality that coming into his presence would effect a dynamic change in us. The Divine

Power of his presence was something remarkable, entirely outstanding. When we walked into the hall and sat down, we immediately felt that we had entered a different plane of existence. It was as if the world we knew did not exist – Bhagavan's presence, his otherworldliness, would envelop the atmosphere. When we walked out of the hall, we were again confronted with the old world we knew all too well.
Usually, we could not tell if Bhagavan was asleep or awake, though in reality he was always awake – awake to the Self.
How he managed to remain in that unbroken state of universal awareness and still functioned in a limited, physical form remains a mystery.
Just to think of him or sit in his presence used to raise us to higher levels of blessedness."

Maurice Frydman (Polish Jew, working as a research engineer in France):
"Just as the egg grows and hatches only with the aid of the warmth of the mother, I was getting into shape slowly and steadily in his presence. My mind became quieter than before. Previously it was unhappy and dissatisfied, now a kind of security and peace began to be felt spontaneously. I felt that the Maharshi was coming nearer and nearer as time passed. Afterwards I used to think of him whenever I felt unhappy. His affection was always there and as fire melts ice, so his affection made my worries melt and my struggle for life got transformed into a blissful life.
It was the immense privilege of the writer to meet a few gigantic spiritual men, but nobody ever produced on him a deeper impression than Ramana Maharshi. In him, the sublime majesty of the divine life stood and moved in all simplicity. The ultimate had revealed itself as the immediate, and the undreamt had become the actual.
The burning regret, which many probably share with me, is that full advantage was not taken of those happy and precious days when he was with us physically also – eating, talking, laughing, welcoming all, open to all. The reality was there – in abundance for taking, but we enclosed ourselves in timidity, in false humility, in self-deception and false excuses. We took a cupful when the ocean was at our feet."

Suleman Samuel Cohen:

"After food, someone announced that the Maharshi was coming to the hall. I rushed there. Behind me calmly walked in the tall, impressive figure of the Maharshi with leisurely though firm steps. I was alone in the hall with him. Joy and peace suffused my being, never before had I such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man. After a while, I saw him looking at me with large penetrating eyes, rendered divinely soothing by their child-like innocence. I became absorbed in the entrancing personality of this magnificent human magnet – Sri Ramana Bhagavan. It is needless to say that from that day, Sri Ramanasramam became my permanent home. To the serious-minded, Bhagavan was a beacon light in an otherwise impenetrable darkness, and a haven of peace. Bhagavan was the most liberal of gurus. At no time did he consider the need to frame rules and regulations to control the lives of his disciples; nor did he believe in a common, enforced discipline, for he himself had attained the highest without them. He left his disciples completely free to mould their lives as best as they could.

Renunciation and surrender is the cornerstone of sadhana (spiritual practice), and with the Maharshi it was the completest.

Psychologists deal only with the working of the mind, but Bhagavan goes to the source, the Self itself.

It was a wonder that all visitors were agreeably impressed by him, sometimes even without comprehending the drift of his insights."

Arthur Osborne:

(Oxford-educated lecturer in English at a university in Bangkok,
edited and authored books about RM,
whose writings and photographs had 'made a tremendous impact' on him)

"My wife entered the hall and sat down. Immediately, Bhagavan turned his luminous eyes on her in a gaze so concentrated that there was a vibration she could actually hear. She returned the gaze, losing all sense of time, the mind stilled, feeling like a bird caught by a snake, yet glad to be caught. She wrote to me that all her doubts had vanished; her objections no longer mattered. She had complete faith. The most beautiful face, she told me, looked

commonplace beside him, even though his features were not good. His eyes had the innocence of a small child, together with unfathomable wisdom and immense love. She felt Bhagavan's power and guidance constantly.
There was also a letter from my eldest daughter Catherine (7 years), one of the most moving I have ever received. "Daddy, you will love Bhagavan. When he smiles, everybody must be so happy."
Then (when I met him), for the first time in my life, I began to understand what the grace and blessings of a guru could mean.
There was an air of modesty, of utter simplicity, a childlike defencelessness in Bhagavan. The mere sight of him walking across the Ashram ground was enough to grip the heart. He was Divine Grace in human form. While fully human, he was fully in Samadhi, fully divine, alike when talking and when sitting silent. He was indeed the universal Divine Guru.
The graciousness of Bhagavan's reception melted the heart and awoke a feeling of guilt as to how great was the reward for so little effort made. I was there on that fateful April night of the body's death. Since that day, his presence in the heart has been more vital, the outpouring of the grace more abundant, his support more powerful."

Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya (taught English at a College):
"As our eyes met, there was a miraculous effect on my mind.
I felt as if I had plunged into a pool of peace,
and with eyes shut, sat in a state of ecstasy for nearly an hour."

Major A.W. Chadwick (was in the British army serving in South America):
"Whenever people came to Bhagavan with their family stories, he would laugh with the happy, and at times shed tears with the bereaved. He never raised his voice. He would never touch money because he never had need of it and was not interested in it. He preferred every sort of simplicity and liked to sit on the floor, but a couch had been forced upon him and this became his home for most of the twenty four hours of the day. He would never, if he could help it, allow any preference to be shown to him.
Bhagavan was a very beautiful person; he shone with a visible light or aura. He had the most delicate hands I have ever seen. The wonder of his eyes

was famous. His forehead was high and the dome of his head the highest I have ever seen. He was always scrupulously clean and his body gave off a faint perfume, though he never used any scented soap.
Bhagavan always radiated tremendous peace, but on those occasions when crowds were attracted to the Ashram, this increased to an extraordinary degree. The numbers seem to call up some reserve of a hidden force, and it was a great experience to sit with him at such times. Bhagavan had a great sense of humour, and when talking, a smile was never far from his face. He had many jokes in his repertoire and was a magnificent actor; he would always dramatize the protagonist of any story he related.
I see him sitting in the Hall completely detached, entirely unmoved by the happenings which seem so momentous to me, his face wreathed in the most lovely of smiles, and an expression of serenity and beauty on it which is impossible to describe, or even believe unless you have seen it yourself. This is absolutely genuine and I am unable to doubt any longer even if I want to. I doubt if we realize how lucky we are. One is inclined to get used to things and take them for granted. But there is no taking Bhagavan for granted, he is always surprisingly different, and that is one of the greatest wonders of his presence."

Prof. K. Swaminathan (taught English at the Presidency College in Madras):
"I was told about Bhagavan in 1927, but then I was not interested in someone sitting still and doing nothing when so much was needed to be done to change this mad, bad world.
As one deeply interested in poetry, I have read the poems of Muruganar (Tamil poet-saint who wrote thousands of verses about Ramana Maharshi) and said to myself, good heavens, the man who could inspire this kind of poetry is divine. It moved me completely. I decided to visit the Ashram...
My first meeting with the Maharshi on September 29, 1940, was the most memorable event of my life. The pure happiness I enjoyed was that of a child when it sits securely in its mother's lap.
Bhagavan was a perfect Impersonality, like the sun in the sky or like unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber. This impersonal being would suddenly become a person full of power, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could

communicate with sharp precision his own Awareness Bliss to other persons according to their needs and moods. The sun now came down and played with us as the light of the moon to illuminate the mind, and as the fire in the home to cook our food.

Bhagavan listened like a child to passages from Shakespeare's plays and quickly and convincingly revealed the universal truth in each flower unique in its own beauty.

In his technique of self-enquiry, the exploration of consciousness, which gives energy and meaning to the whole human life and breaks down the barriers between sacred and secular, he resembles the scientist.

The experience of the peace conferred by the Maharshi's presence, testified to by so many devotees, accords with his reply to a visitor who asked which of the many spiritual teachers he should follow:

"Choose that guru from whom you get shanti (peace)."

Rangan (Velacheri Ranga Iyer) – (classmate of Sri Ramana):

"In June 1907, I saw Bhagavan for the first time since we were at school together. I asked, "Do you recognize me?" Bhagavan uttered "Rangan" with difficulty. In those days, he spoke little and found it difficult to use his voice. Many years later, talking to me about my mother's visit, Bhagavan said, "When your mother came to see me, she was frightened by my ascetic appearance and attire. My hair was all matted and my body was completely covered with dust." He added that at that time he was never aware of the passage of time. Sometimes, when he tried to stand up, his head would reel and he would lose his balance. When this happened, he concluded that he must have spent many days in a state in which he had not been conscious of the world. When asked whether he had any food in those days, he replied, "When there is no consciousness of the body, the bodily functions are also suspended." At the time of my departure after the first visit, I told Bhagavan, "You have reached great heights." His reply was, "The far off mountains look even and smooth." I felt that he was telling me that one could become a jnani even while living an ordinary householder's life. He seemed to be telling me that there was nothing special or great in physical renunciation. ... I got on very well with Bhagavan's mother because we had known

each other when she lived in Madurai. On one occasion she told me, "One day, when I was looking steadily at Bhagavan, his body gradually disappeared and in its place, I saw the lingam (object that symbolizes the god Shiva and is revered as an emblem of generative power). The lingam was very bright. I could not believe my eyes. I rubbed my eyes but I still saw the same, bright lingam. I was frightened because I thought my son was leaving us forever. Fortunately, the lingam gradually transformed itself into Bhagavan's body." After hearing her account, I looked at Bhagavan for confirmation or comment, but he just smiled and said nothing.

Once, I went out of the Ashram for a short period of time, leaving Bhagavan sleeping inside. When I returned, I saw him sitting outside on a bed. I thought nothing of it until I went inside the ashram and saw Bhagavan was sleeping inside, in the position I had seen him when I left the ashram. When I told Bhagavan about this later, he smiled and said, "Why did you not tell me then itself? I could have caught the thief!"

This was typical of Bhagavan's response to the supernatural. If such events were reported to him, he would either ignore them or pass them off as a joke. This was because he didn't want any of his devotees to be sidetracked from their main goal of realizing the Self into an unproductive interest in miraculous phenomena.

Although Bhagavan preferred to keep his exalted state a secret from the public, he would occasionally show us glimpses of his power and knowledge. Once, for example, a devotee, who was sitting at a distance from Bhagavan, copying some Sanskrit verses, had a doubt about what he should write. Bhagavan, without even being asked, called over to him and cleared his doubt; but he rarely showed his omniscience so openly.

I witnessed another manifestation of Bhagavan's power on one of my visits to the ashram. Two men came from a village and asked Bhagavan to give them vibhuti (sacred ash made of burnt dried wood or burnt cow dung) with his own hand. They refused to collect the vibhuti from the place where it was kept, even when told by Bhagavan to do so, and eventually left disappointed. I followed them and asked, "Why did you want the vibhuti from Bhagavan's own hands? Why were you so insistent?" One of them told me, "I used to have leprosy. I once came to see Bhagavan and he gave me some

vibhuti with his own hand. I applied it to my body and soon there were no signs of the disease. This is my friend. He also has leprosy. That is why I ask for vibhuti from Bhagavan's hands." Bhagavan must have known that he had inadvertently cured the leper of his disease. He probably refused to repeat it because he didn't want to acquire reputation as a 'miracle man'.
Although Bhagavan managed to maintain a facade of ordinariness, he was able to see the spiritual worth of everyone who came to see him, and would not let himself be understood by the undeserving.
Bhagavan could recognize spiritual maturity in the people around him. He could also discern it in the animals that came to him. One day, Bhagavan's mother asked, "Why does that dog always like to stay in your lap?" Bhagavan turned to me and said, "This dog is always in unwavering samadhi. A great soul has come in the form of a dog. Mother does not know this."
That Bhagavan had ceased to identify with his body was clear to me when he and I were walking on the forest path around the mountain. Having stepped on a thorn, I was lagging behind. Bhagavan stopped, came back to me, and removed the thorn. Later, Bhagavan stepped on a big thorn. Lifting his foot, I was astonished to find many thorns sticking out of it; some were old and some were new. I lifted the other foot and found the same. "Which thorns will you remove?" asked Bhagavan with a laugh. Then he crushed the protruding thorn with the foot in which it was embedded and happily continued to walk."

M. Sivaprakasam Pillai (graduate in philosophy, officer):
"All the dangers and difficulties I encountered disappeared by his grace like mist disappearing before the sun. The Supreme Lord has assumed a human body as an act of grace and resides at Arunachala under the name Ramana. If people in the world say that he too is a human being like us, that is the same as describing dense, rain-filled clouds as mere smoke clouds."

Akhilandamma (born in 1887, was married at the age of five, her husband died two years later; she decided to devote her life to serving sages and saints. In 1903, she visited Sri Ramana on the hill and felt his power. She served food to him for four decades.):

"A person told me, "There is one Brahmana Swami who sits motionless." These words kindled in me a desire to see him. I bought a little sugar candy as a token offering and went to see him. What a sight he was! For the first time, I saw the magnetic Lord who draws towards him the minds of those who see him. Even though he was unwashed and covered with dust, his body glowed like gold. On seeing Bhagavan, my mind flowed towards him with uninterrupted, boundless love, but along with this emotion, there was a sort of inexpressible regard and fear. It is only natural for people to feel a sense of awe and reverence while they are near Bhagavan. It is also natural for the individual self to subside in his presence. There was a gracious power that prevailed in that holy place. It numbed the mind, the power of speech and the body so effectively that the visitors were automatically silenced.

No one can hide anything from him. He can understand the state of mind of anyone who approaches him, merely by looking at him. He looked at me graciously and said, 'Be without leaving yourself.' I could not comprehend the meaning of this high-level teaching, but as soon as the words came from Bhagavan's mouth, I felt an immense satisfaction and wonderful effulgence in my mind. The feeling these gracious words produced gave me an indescribable happiness. Even today, the sound of that instruction rings in my ears and bestows immense peace on me."

Gudipati Venkatachalam (author):

"Although Bhagavan was half-naked and lived in a very unostentatious way, most people were afraid to approach him, to speak with him. Important men such as senior army officials, or highly placed persons, who held important positions in various fields, trembled and were afraid to go up to that decrepit old form that had neither temporal power nor even a significant following.

When he sat in his majestic unmoving posture, which he often did, there was unspeakable beauty and grace in his figure.

Wearing only a loincloth, he would bring to our minds an emperor wearing magnificent robes, sitting on a diamond-studded throne, with all the paraphernalia of his estate.

But then, when somebody called 'Bhagavan', he would come down from some unknown region to this earth to attend to the call.

Gurus like Bhagavan are manifestations of God in human form. To relieve and redeem the suffering of mankind, the Lord occasionally comes down to earth and manifests in a physical form."

Souris (daughter of Gudipati Venkatachalam):

"When I saw Bhagavan's photo for the first time in 'The Sunday Times', I wondered who that ugly person could be. I thought, "Not only does he get himself photographed half-naked, he also gets the picture printed in newspapers." I loathed him and what he stood for. I discovered that his name was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, which sounded harsh and artificial to my ears. I felt that he had added these titles merely for the sake of self-advertisement, to show himself off. My aesthetic feelings were so hurt that if I ever saw the Maharshi's photo in a newspaper, I used to turn the page as quickly as possible. At that time, when I was fourteen years old, I couldn't stand the sight of him. But now, today, I know no other beauty is comparable to the beauty of the Maharshi. It is not merely a feeling; it is a conviction, a sure knowledge. His enchanting smile, his melodious voice, the nod of his head, his wonderful look that splits through the maya of the world, these are found nowhere else in the world.

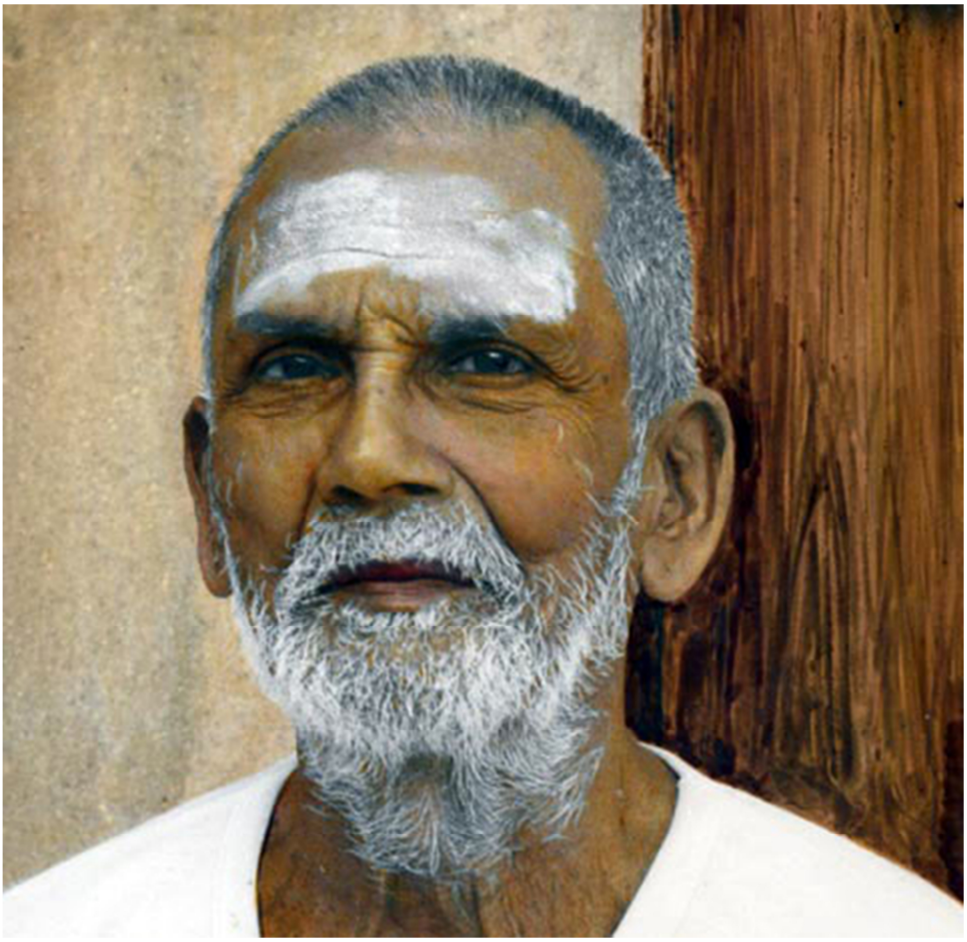
For me, being in Bhagavan's presence was like being in heaven. If I am to write how Bhagavan has impressed me, all the vocabulary I can command in the three languages I know would not suffice. When a word issued forth from his lips – generally he did not speak much at all – it was just as astonishing as it would be if words had come forth from an inanimate idol. Above all else, I noticed his sparkling eyes; even in the dark, one could see them sparkle. And when he looked at us, his sight, like an arrow, pierced right into the deepest recesses of the heart.

In January 1950, when Bhagavan was in the last stages of his life, I, along with my father, packed up all our belongings and moved to Arunachala, our only refuge, to take up permanent residence there. Within a few weeks of our arrival, Bhagavan gave up the body. We had come to die in his presence, but instead, he passed away before our very eyes. We stayed on near his samadhi. For us, there was nowhere else to go."

Swami Madhavatirtha (prolific writer on a wide variety of spiritual topics):
"On the very first day of my visit, I found in the look of the sage the dazzling brilliance of the sun. On a subsequent day, while in the presence of the Maharshi in the hall, I recognised the same brilliance in the look of the sage. It seemed to pierce me to the core of my being. My breath seemed to stop for a while and my mind was elevated into some spiritual realm of unutterable peace and happiness.
While sitting in the hall, I observed the Maharshi resting on his couch wholly unconcerned with what was taking place in his presence. From the constant flow of visitors who prostrated before him and moved one after the other, I could easily discern in him the attitude of oneness with all. I can confidently say that it was through his abhinnabhava (feeling of parity for all) that he touched the inner being of visitors, who were then able to feel within themselves the presence of the universal spirit, transcending thought.
Having realised that the Maharshi was radiating the power of the Self in this way, I decided to ask how I could best prepare myself to receive the transmission of grace while sitting in his presence. He said, "You will get spiritual help sitting in this hall if you keep yourself still. The aim is to give up all practices. When the mind becomes still, the power of Self will be experienced. The waves of Self will be experienced. The waves of the Self are pervading everywhere. If the mind is at peace, one begins to experience them." When I enquired whether I should gaze at his eyes or his face, or should close my eyes and concentrate on a particular object, he replied, "Gaze at your own real nature. Everywhere there is one, so it is all the same whether you keep your eyes open or closed. If you wish to meditate, do so on the 'I' that is within you. It is atman." When asked about the required sitting posture, the sage's view was that stability in Self was the real posture. Embodying the Advaitic truth, the one universal spirit transcending the bounds of time and space, the Maharshi truly represents in himself the University of Spiritual Education."

Kunju Swami:
"As we sat silently, Bhagavan's gracious look was fixed on me. At that very moment, all my confusions ceased and I was filled with a peace and bliss

I had never experienced before. While we were together, Bhagavan would often look at me; and as he did so, I became aware that his eyes had a strange brilliance and fascination in them."



Muruganar

Muruganar (outstanding devotee of Sri Ramana and a great poet, composed thousands of poems praising Sri Ramana, expressing gratitude to him for having established him in the Self):

"I was a learned fool. My flawed mind knew nothing till I came to dwell with him whose glance filled my heart with the light of awareness. I entered into union with the deathless state of knowledge of the Reality. As the deadly delusion of a body-bound ego faded, a flower of pure light unfolded at his holy feet. That radiance grew ever brighter with my love until I realized the flawless knowledge of the Self, manifesting as the unbroken awareness 'I-I' within my heart.

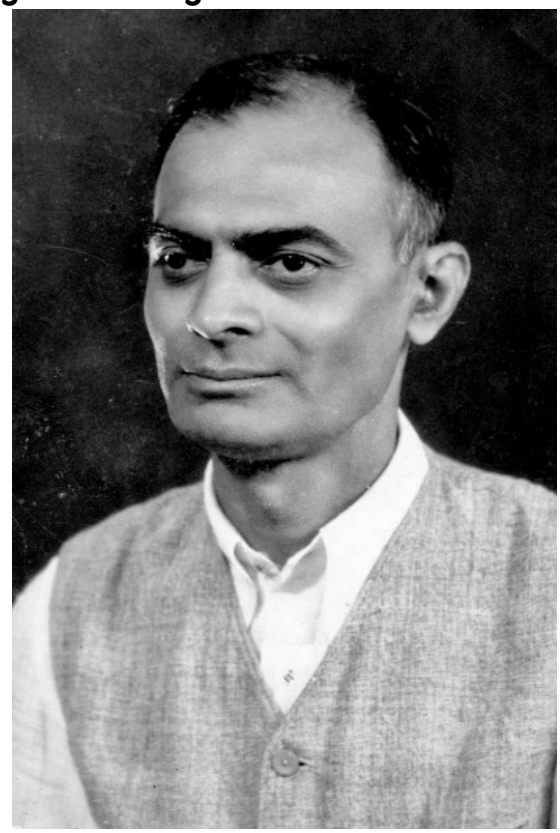
Beneath my Guru's gaze, my heart was emptied of guile so that the false understanding that has usurped my heart disappeared completely, and there,

in the silence of his holy feet, the pure ocean of the Self, swept me into the deep bliss of the absolute Godhead.
Surrounded by desires that led me astray, my heart was hardened and my understanding was tricked by the illusion of a personal self. Hail to the Lord who through his love refreshed my heart, banishing my deluded attachment to land ownership, wealth and women."

Ramachandra Iyer:

"He (Maharshi) was so great, yet so simple. I rose up. Bhagavan smiled and bade me to be seated. All the emotions, thoughts and surging doubts were nowhere! I felt I had found my refuge, and the greatest fortune of my life. I felt and experienced my nature, dived deep into my consciousness and swam in the ocean of bliss."

Chhaganlal V. Yogi (businessman of Bombay):



"On my first visit to the Ashram, I found Sri Ramana seated on a couch, as quiet and unmoving as a statue.
I could feel Bhagavan keenly observing me. It seemed that the light of his eyes was suffusing my consciousness. Even without my being aware of it,

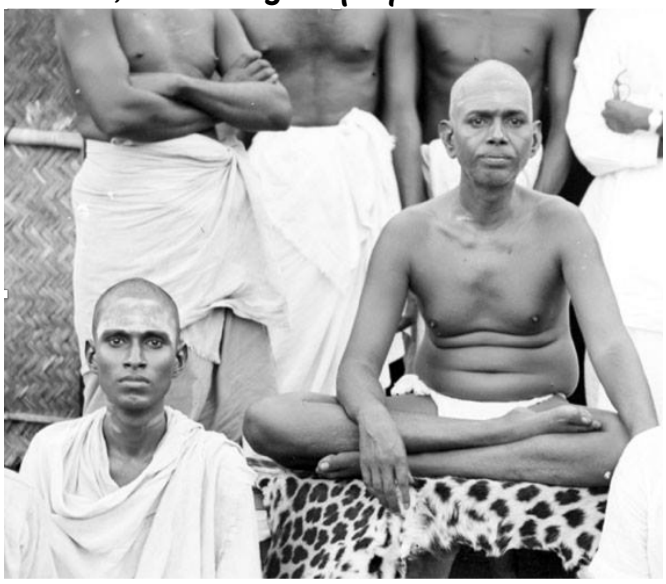
his silent gaze brought about a subtle but definite transformation in me. My erstwhile sadness completely disappeared, leaving in my heart an inexplicable emotion of joy. That evening, I sat close to Bhagavan in the dining room. In my exalted state, the food I ate seemed to have an unusual and unearthly taste. I quite literally felt that I was participating in some heavenly meal in the direct presence of God.

During the three days of my stay in the proximity of the Divine Master, I found my whole outlook entirely changed. After that short period, I could find little evidence of my old self, a self that had been tied down with all kinds of preconceptions and prejudices. I felt that I had lost the chains that bind the eyes of true vision. I became aware that the whole texture of my mind had undergone a change. The divine magician opened up for me a strange new world of illumination, hope, and joy. I felt that his presence on earth alone constituted sufficient proof that humanity, suffering and wounded because of its obstinate ignorance, could be uplifted and saved.

Visitors who sat before Bhagavan in silent meditation got the peace they were looking for and departed satisfied. Bhagavan used to say, "The state is beyond speech and thought. Silence is eternal speech. It is the perpetual flow of language; it is the supreme language."

Bhagavan was undoubtedly one of those rare mahatmas who had the power to banish the suffering through his presence."

Viswanatha Swami: (left in the photo; a distant relative of Sri Ramana, was brought up by the Maharshi's mother)



"In my first visit of Bhagavan at the ashram, the very sight of him thrilled me. Something very subtle, seemingly with its center in that body, shone forth, without limitation, engulfing everything else. I felt swallowed by it. I stayed for a week with Bhagavan in that atmosphere of utter purity and serenity. I saw in Bhagavan something quite arresting, which clearly distinguished him from all others I had seen. He seemed to live apart from the physical frame, quite detached from it. His look and smile had a remarkable spiritual charm. When he spoke, the words seemed to come out of an abyss. One could see immaculate purity and non-attachment in him and in his movements. I sensed something very lofty and sacred about him. In his vicinity, mind's distractions were overpowered by an austere and potent calmness. In his presence, the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced. This I would call Ramana Lahari – 'the blissful atmosphere of Ramana'. In this ecstasy of grace, one loses one's sense of separate individuality and there remains something grand and all-pervading, all-devouring."

Mastan (a Muslim):

"When I came to Bhagavan, he was seated like a rock. His unwavering gaze was filled with grace, compassion and steady wisdom. I stood by his side. After giving me a look, he opened the gate of my Heart and I was established in his state. I stood like that for eight hours without fatigue, filled with total absorption and peace. Bhagavan in those days used to open our Heart with a simple gracious look, which transformed us. There was no need for any questions since he made us, by his look, like himself."

Echammal / Lakshmi Ammal:

(She was a native of a village near Tiruvannamalai. In a flood of misfortunes, her husband, her son and two daughters died in quick succession. She had an inner confidence that a guru could put an end to her sorrow.)

"On the advice of my relatives and friends, I went to see Sri Ramana and stayed there for an hour. The Maharshi said nothing to me, but in his presence, all my sorrows melted away. From that day on, Bhagavan attracted me like a magnet. Once I was going up the hill with my food basket. I met a party of pilgrims returning with a sad look, as they could not find the Maharshi.

Promising to show them Bhagavan, I took them with me. They were utterly amazed on seeing Bhagavan whom they had seen earlier working alone at raising a mud wall. Mistaking Sri Ramana for a laborer, they had asked him, "Where is the Swami?" Bhagavan, it seems, had replied, "I do not know." When I, after their departure, remonstrated with Bhagavan for having misled the poor pilgrims, Bhagavan replied, "What can I do? Do you want me to tie a placard round my head announcing that I am Ramana Maharshi?"

Natesa Iyer (cook at the Ashram) He loved to narrate his experience of the operation performed on Bhagavan, when he was his attendant. In his words:
"Bhagavan's behaviour throughout the operation showed very clearly that the body was just something that he was wearing. The flesh was being cut, blood was flowing, and I could see the radium needles that had been inserted into the flesh around the cancerous growth. Bhagavan was fully conscious but utterly indifferent to the procedures that were being carried out on his arm. We were all consumed by the power of Bhagavan's silence. Even the doctors were sucked into it. When the operation had been completed, the doctors spontaneously prostrated to Bhagavan.
One of them said, I have operated on many people, but I have never had an experience like this. There was peace in the room that I have never felt anywhere else. I cannot describe what it was like except to say that it was unlike anything I have ever experienced before.
Bhagavan is not something or someone we can fathom with our minds. We have to admit our ignorance and our inability to say anything about him that is true. I cannot tell anything about Bhagavan because the real Bhagavan cannot be explained in words. It is a sweet taste that you can only know by tasting it yourself."

("Bhagavan, I am coming."
These were the last words that came from Natesa's lips.)

Subbalakshmi Ammal (cook at the Ashram):
"Bhagavan loved retelling incidents from old devotional classics. His face would light up as he recounted the amazing stories of saints of long ago. He would be visibly moved when he recited their inspired poetry.

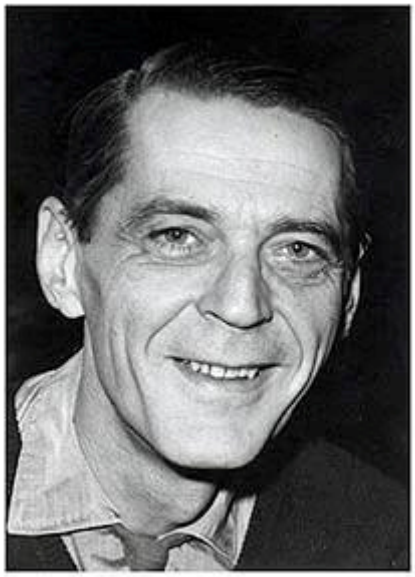
With children, Bhagavan was their playmate; to family people, he was a wise counsellor; to pandits, he was a storehouse of knowledge; and to yogis, he was God of victory. Everyone who came to him with a sense of devotion was charmed by his love and kindness, his beauty and wisdom, and by the overwhelming sense of unity he radiated. Crowds would gather around him and each one would see him differently. One afternoon, a lady visitor sat near Bhagavan and exclaimed, "How glad I am that I have met you, Swami! I have been desperate to see you for such a long time, Swami. Please be kind enough to give me salvation. That is all I want. I want nothing else." After she left, Bhagavan had a hearty laugh and said, "Look at her! Is salvation something to be handed over on request? Do I keep bundles of salvation concealed about me that I can give away when people ask for it? She said, 'I do not want anything else.' If what she says is true, that itself is salvation."

Bhagavan would make the small tasks of daily life into avenues that led to light and bliss. We experienced ecstasy in grinding, rapture in cooking, and joy in serving iddlies to the devotees. Why? Because while we were doing these things, we were experiencing the state in which the mind is in the Heart. <u>One who has not experienced this cannot really know how much bliss a human heart can contain.</u>

Lord Krishna in his mercy became a cowherd to teach simple milkmaids the way to salvation. Similarly, Bhagavan, the same Supreme Being in another form, took to cooking in order to save a few ignorant women."

Subbulakshmi

Wolter A. Keers:



(He was a Dutch teacher and writer who lectured extensively on Yoga and Advaita in Europe in the 1970s and 80s. Shortly before his death in the 1980s, he invited his friends to a party at his house in his hometown. At the end of the party, he informed his friends that he was going to give up his body. He prostrated to a large photo of Sri Ramana that he had placed on the floor. Then he placed a cushion in front of the photo, laid down his head on the cushion at Sri Ramana's feet and passed away.)

"Roda MacIver, a Bombay devotee who had been living near Bhagavan for several years, took me to the Ashram and pointed out Bhagavan to me. The mere sight of him made me tremble all over because I had come face to face with the divine. This recognition affected me so much that my body shook involuntarily. As I gazed at Bhagavan, I felt I saw God himself sitting there. In that early morning meeting, I saw a blazing light that had taken a human form. It was more radiant than anything I had ever seen before. When I was very young, I had believed that God was some magnificent being, having a human form that radiated light and goodness. I had long since abandoned this childhood belief, believing it to be a fairy story that was told only to credulous children. Yet now this childhood belief turned out to be true, because here before me was a human form that seemed to be made of light itself. God became manifest before my eyes, announcing his presence to me by radiating a blazing, penetrating light, a light that went right through me like x-rays.

When I had time to reflect on this first meeting, it seemed amazing that such an air of normality could prevail around someone who was radiating so much light and energy. Perhaps other people were not seeing and feeling what I was experiencing. I asked Roda about this later that day. She laughed and said, "Many people do have special experiences when they see Bhagavan. For most of the time we all see him as a normal, elderly person sitting on a sofa, but once in a while, he graces us with an experience, such as you had today, that convinces us of his greatness and his divinity."

There was a radiant power and energy in Bhagavan's presence that effortlessly swept through the mind and matter. His grace silenced my mind, it filled my heart, and it took me to realms that were way beyond the phenomenal. The light radiating from Bhagavan filled my being, sweeping away all my darkness in one stroke. Effort seemed redundant when his presence alone was enough to evaporate the usual mental flow of thoughts, ideas and problems. For me, Bhagavan's immediate presence was overwhelmingly potent and nothing could distract or disturb me there. However, I began to notice that the exalted state of experience in his presence gradually wore off when I went back to my little house opposite the Ashram. Sitting in Bhagavan's presence I felt a quiet lucidity. All thoughts and problems would be swept away, burnt in the raging fire of his potent presence. But after a few hours of being alone in my room, I would realise that these states were only temporary because my old thoughts and problems would eventually rise up again. I felt I had to confront Bhagavan with this problem. I had not come to him for blissful experiences; I had come to him to seek a permanent end to my mind and all its problems. That day when I passed in front of him, a quick smile passed over his face. I somehow felt that he knew what I had come for. Was he smiling at the audacity of my demand? I sat down among the crowd close to Bhagavan, and began to bombard him with thoughts. With all the mental energy I could summon up, I shot out my complaint at him: 'Bhagavan, of what use is all your radiance to me if I cannot solve my mental problems the moment I leave you?' This, with minor variations, I repeated again and again. Bhagavan took no notice. He continued to go through his everyday routine. Frustrated, I concentrated on him even more. I tried to shake his indifference with my thoughts. I felt I was shaking him the way I would shake a tree

to get a fruit to fall off. The whole force of my will was focused on one thought, 'I must have an answer; I must have an answer.' Finally, my mental persistence paid off. He turned in my direction and looked at me with a smile of utter amazement on his face. Then his expression changed and its new configuration exclaimed,

'You are looking for your glasses and they are on your nose!'

No words passed his lips, but the message came to me with unbelievable clarity. There was no doubt or conjecture or imagination. Bhagavan continued to gaze at me. Perhaps he was waiting for some kind of response. Suddenly his eyes emitted light and spat fire at me. I can think of no other way of describing that sudden explosion in his gaze. His powerful look went straight into me, boring away at everything that made me think I was different and separate from him. I felt the right-hand-side heart getting warmer as he continued to gaze at me, until I felt it to be a hot, fiery ball glowing inside me. I felt as if he was charging it with some immensely powerful spiritual electricity because, as he continued to look at me, I had the unmistakable feeling that my heart-center was some kind of spiritual dynamo that was emitting sparks of light and energy. I felt as if some enormously potent electrical apparatus had been suddenly transplanted into my chest.

I sat rigid and straight, my eyes glued to his. Fire flowed from his glowing eyes and drilled into the core of my being. How long this transmission lasted, I cannot say. Time and space had no meaning in that never-ending moment when our eyes were locked together. At some point, I realized that my body could no longer stand the strain. The fire in my chest had expanded to the point where I felt that I was about to explode. Mentally, I asked Bhagavan to let me go.

I had received what I had come for. There was a complete transformation, inside and out, and it all happened without a word being spoken. That communication through silence was clearer and more direct than any explanation that could be given in words. Having received the blessings and initiation, I gave my place in the crowd to those who might still have been seeking their own final benediction.

Back in Bombay, where I stayed in a friend's flat, I was amazed to discover to what extent changes had occurred. Something had clearly and demonstrably transformed my mind and my understanding.

My two months' stay with Bhagavan had turned me inside out and upside down. My mind and heart had been illuminated by his grace, but I also knew that the time I spent with him had been too short to remove all obstacles. Being with Bhagavan had given me the unshakable conviction that he was looking after me. I knew that he was supervising my spiritual welfare. I also knew that his guidance would not cease simply because he had shed his body. Three months after his physical departure, I had a vision of Bhagavan that amply justified my faith that he would continue to guide me.

I used to imagine myself in the hall, speaking with him. During one of these imaginary exercises, I suddenly found myself transported back to Sri Ramanasramam, and once more I was sitting opposite to him. He smiled at me. How can that smile ever be described? It contained the whole world. On this occasion, I felt I was being bathed in a radiant glow of love and light. I asked him what I should do about all the various mental problems. He told me to spend time with another venerable teacher whose name was mentally mentioned to me (probably Atmananda Krishna Menon). I spent several years with this man until I felt that all my problems had been overcome.

I still find myself being with Bhagavan. Sometimes it is with form and sometimes it is without form. It is a kind of deep visitation that touches and overwhelms me when it suddenly descends. When Bhagavan's presence makes itself known to me, I feel tears beginning to flow. Deep emotions arise. I glow with happiness and my heart leaps into the sky.

The first time I saw Bhagavan, I immediately recognised that this was the being I had been looking for all my life. My immediate experiences in his presence cemented that conviction. The problem I always encounter when I start to speak or write about Bhagavan is that the real Ramana the Maharshi is unimaginable and therefore indescribable. Who, for example, can really describe happiness? My experience of Bhagavan was pure happiness. The pure radiance of his real, egoless state is unimaginable, beyond any verbal description. I was inclined to compare him with Jesus or the Buddha. But they were images in my head, formed on the beliefs in which I had been

brought up and on the stories heard and read later on. Sri Ramana Maharshi, from the second I saw him, was anything but an image in my head. He was a bomb that exploded the myth of my life. His look blasted away years of accumulated wrong ideas. In his presence, reality manifested itself.
His presence revealed to me how stupid I had been all my life. I came to Bhagavan for help to climb a mountain, but after smiling at my idea of help, he showed me that the mountain did not exist.
I regarded myself as a poor man in need of help.
He revealed to me that I was more than a millionaire.
He showed me that I was the source of all things.
He enabled me to realize the timeless, unimaginable, unthinkable 'I am'.
Simply by abiding in his luminous natural state, he made me experience myself as a light. I will not say that in his presence my sense of 'I' vanished completely; it simply diminished in significance. It took me three or four years for the full impact of Bhagavan's silence to settle in me and become, if I may use such a phrase, 'my own'.
Bhagavan encouraged us to examine through self-enquiry, questions such as,' Who wants to realize? Who feels exalted or miserable? Who feels angry, desired or shunned?' The purpose here is not to track down the person who had these feelings or emotions, it is to discover that such a person does not and never did exist.
By sitting in Bhagavan's presence, there was a confrontation between illusion and truth, and in that confrontation, illusion could not sustain itself. Whatever transformation took place in his presence happened of its own accord, not because he desired it or willed it. Darkness was exposed to light and ceased to be dark. Light did not orchestrate it in any way. It simply expressed its inherent nature.
If you ask me how all this worked, my answer is, 'I don't know.'"

Annamalai Swami (considered one of the "enlightened devotees of Bhagavan"; David Godman's book 'Living by the Words of Bhagavan' is a detailed report on Annamalai Swami's life and the years of his service at the ashram.):
"In 1928, a wandering sadhu gave me a book that contained a photo of the Maharshi. As soon as I saw the photo, I had the feeling that this was my

Guru. Simultaneously, an intense desire arose within me to go and see him. That night I had a dream in which I saw the Maharshi walking from the lower slopes of the hill towards the Ashram. Next morning, I decided to go.

Having arrived, when I approached the hall, a part of the dream I had repeated itself in real life. I saw Bhagavan walk down the hill as I had seen in the dream. When I sat down and Bhagavan gazed at me in silence for about 10-15 minutes, I had a great feeling of physical relief and relaxation. It was like immersing myself in a cool pool after being in the hot sun. I asked for permission to stay, which was granted.

About ten days after my arrival, I asked Bhagavan how I could attain Self-realisation. He replied, "If you give up identifying with the body and meditate on the Self, you can attain Self-realisation."

As I was pondering over these remarks, Bhagavan surprised me by saying, "I was waiting for you. I was wondering when you would come." I was delighted to hear him speak like this because it seemed to indicate that it was my destiny to stay with him.

A few days later I asked, "Scientists have invented and produced the aircraft which can travel at great speeds in the sky. Why do you not give us a spiritual aircraft in which we can quickly and easily cross over the sea of illusions?" Bhagavan replied, "The path of self-inquiry is the aircraft you need. It is direct, fast, and easy to use. You are already traveling very quickly towards realization. It is only because of your mind that it seems that there is no movement." In the years that followed, I had many spiritual talks with Bhagavan but his basic message never changed. It was always: "Do self-inquiry, stop identifying with the body and try to be aware of the Self, which is your real nature."

When I first came to the Ashram, there were still some leopards in the area. They rarely came into the Ashram. Once when a leopard appeared, Bhagavan was not in the least afraid. He just looked at the leopard and said, 'Poda!' [Go away!] and the leopard walked away.

When I had been an attendant for about two weeks, the Collector of Vellore brought a large plate of sweets, which I was to distribute to everyone in the Ashram. While I was distributing the sweets outside the hall, I went to a place where no one could see me and secretly helped myself to about double

the quantity that I was serving to others. When I went back to the hall and kept the empty plate under Bhagavan's sofa, he looked at me and said, "Did you take twice as much as everyone else?" I was shocked because I was sure that no one had seen me do it. This incident made me realize that it was impossible to hide anything from Bhagavan.

I had hired both men and women for the construction of the dining hall. Some of the women were quite attractive and I was occasionally troubled by sexual desires. I told Bhagavan, "I don't want moksha, I just want that the desire for women should not enter my mind." Bhagavan laughed and said, "All the mahatmas are striving only for this." To avoid sexual thoughts, I decided to do away with women workers. Bhagavan did not approve of this. He saw no reason why the women should lose their jobs merely because I was unable to control my mind.

In the 1930s, Bhagavan alone decided when and where the buildings should be built, on what scale and what material be used. He drew up the plans for Ashram buildings and told me what to do. When he gave me plans, he would always say that it was only a suggestion. He never presumed to give me orders. Bhagavan would frequently come out to see what we were doing. He would occasionally join in the work himself. But he would say, "I am not connected with any of the activities here. I just witness all that happens." Bhagavan would start projects when no money was available to pay, happily ignoring all predictions of imminent financial doom. He never asked anyone for money and he forbade begging for donations, yet somehow enough donations came to complete every building. Once when Bhagavan was very sick, Maurice Frydman gave money for buying fruits for Bhagavan. Knowing that Bhagavan would not eat fruits unless everyone else was given an equal share, he avoided the use of money for the purpose.

Bhagavan taught us a lesson by doing the work himself. A room near the kitchen was dirty and dusty and was rarely cleaned. Many people walked through the room but never thought of making it tidy, until Bhagavan himself took a broom and completely cleaned it. Several devotees tried to stop him saying, "Please, Bhagavan let me do this job. I will clean the room." Refusing to handover the broom, he said, "Now your eyes are on it. Did you not see the mess before?" From that day on, the room was cleaned regularly."

Krishna Bhikshu / Voruganti Krishnayya (had a degree in law but he rarely practised, and preferred to devote his life to spiritual pursuits. He was also attracted to Sri Aurobindo, but in 1931 he finally decided that Sri Ramana was the guru he had been seeking.):

"Once I wrote a poem in praise of Bhagavan in which I said, "May you be with us in all your future births." Bhagavan heard this and said, "Is this birth not enough, that he wishes me many more?" People scolded me for writing so disrespectfully. Some said Bhagavan was beyond rebirth. Others maintained he was the son of great Siva Himself, who was never in need of a human body. I exclaimed, "Bhagavan will be reborn many times, not because he needs it but because we need him." Bhagavan listened carefully. 'Right', he said, and became very quiet. The hall was filled with power and silence, and immense love was pouring from Bhagavan like a mighty sea."

Mouni Sadhu / M. Sudouski (Australian author):

"It was in 1949 that the vital transformation took place in the presence of Sri Ramana. I was struck by the softness and serenity of the gesture with his hand as if inviting me to come a little nearer, so simple and dignified that I immediately felt I was facing a great man. All theories, all acquired knowledge fall into dust when standing face to face with the Maharshi. One gets peace that passeth all human understanding. Moments of inner experience with the Maharshi are so fraught with consequences that they may influence not only one but many incarnations. His face is full of inspiration, unearthly serenity and power, of infinite kindness and understanding. He reigns in silence. The atmosphere of utter purity and peace constantly radiated by the Sage compels us to examine and verify, as it were, all our beliefs and opinions; yet it comes by itself spontaneously, without any effort on our part; it is not imposed, it is simply the result of a sudden enlargement of consciousness. The inner process is accompanied by a sense of great happiness.

The glow, the reflection of the Real which I see through the Master illumines the mind. A wave of endless bliss surges through and overwhelms me. It carries me beyond thought, beyond suffering and grief, neither death nor change exist there, only infinite being. Time disappears – there is no need

of it any more. The Maharshi's spiritual alchemy could transmute the hard materialism into something pure and noble. Sometimes when I sat near him absorbing the invisible radiation of His light, I thought: "To whom and when can I repay this bliss? Who is it that is taking away the burdens and debts of my life?" The former young dreamer was now sitting at the feet of and face to face with a being who has solved all human problems.

The tragic comedy of earthly love now appears in all its unattractive nakedness before the tribunal of his consciousness. A new vision was entering the temple of my soul, just vacated by the impostors – a luminous ideal, incorruptible, pure, devoid of any stains of selfishness, resplendent with spiritual beauty and independent of all short-lived physical forms. Here was no more possibility of disappointment, of friction, and of misunderstanding.

The Maharshi has a strange power to awaken love for himself in the hearts of all. The devotion uplifts his pupils, incalculably raising the level of their lives, enabling them to touch the purest form of the power-energy which is perhaps the creator of the universe.

I have never seen, and undoubtedly shall never see in any other face, such an inexpressibly wonderful smile as the Maharshi's, a transcendent beauty reflected in physical form. In the presence of the Saint, the mind gets tuned to silence, and does not dare to indulge in endless questioning as it used to do. The invisible, but in its influence the most efficacious, light emanated by the Maharshi brings about a total change in our opinions and in our appreciation of all the values of worldly life. He is like the highest tribunal of our conscience, the Father Confessor whose 'very presence purifies us from all sins'. In the presence of the Master, our mind ceased to be a hindrance to seeing Reality. I noticed for myself that questions and problems, which sometime ago were unintelligible or postponed for later solutions, got solved themselves.

Light and life are constantly flowing through the eyes of the Maharshi with a majesty and intensity unimaginable to those who have not seen them.

A stream of peace, powerful yet sweet, flows from his eyes. They glow with a perfect understanding of all the weaknesses, defects and inner difficulties of those who look into them. Whenever the Maharshi spoke to us, his eyes had much sympathy, wisdom and understanding. An incredible loving kind-

ness radiated from them. Like a lofty beacon whose beams point the way to a safe harbour for all on the high seas who are searching for a haven, so this great Rishi of India sheds light on those who have 'eyes to see and ears to hear.' I felt that this light permeates our being through and through to give us an insight into all the mistakes and imperfections of our 'ego', our little insignificant personality.

Being near the Maharshi, one feels the presence of God as a matter of course – no arguments or proofs are necessary. The greatest miracle is the Maharshi himself. I know that not all are able to feel or even guess it. Such miracles can be known only by plunging into silence and into our own depths. The proximity of the Maharshi makes the effort of stilling the mind infinitely easier than it would be elsewhere. In the presence of the Maharshi, we are able to find intuitively by ourselves the proper attitude.

I approach him to bid farewell. He looks into my eyes. He has seen each word in my mind even before I put them together. I bow my head and feel the touch of his hand on my brow, the delicate touch of his fingers along my head. A subtle current of power and purity passes through my whole frame. Like in a lightning flash, I realise that the power of this moment will sustain me in all the years to come, and its light will forever shine on my life.

At his feet, I learned to stop the thought-currents in my mind, a thing that formerly devoured long years of effort and had never been completely successful despite the many exercises. In some wonderful way, the Maharshi seemed to supervise the inner processes in us, just as an operator watches the working of a complicated machine, which he knows thoroughly. He mysteriously helped in the inner experiences, but how still remains closed to me. A man emerged from these experiences greatly changed and often with a totally different conception about everything in this world. For myself, I call it the 'spiritual alchemy of the Master.'

There would appear a peculiar expression of other than human beatitude and delight on Sri Bhagavan's face. The light from those luminous eyes was forever engraved on my memory when leaving the Ashram. It would be ridiculous to say that the light of eternity has been extinguished. I know this light is not a material one, though it is conveyed through a material body. So his death did not deprive me of his reality.

It is a well-known fact that in the Maharshi's presence everyone felt himself to be different and better than before in his everyday life. The spiritual magnetism of the one who himself had found the final peace and wisdom could not fail to radiate on all of us, just as the sun sheds its rays on everything and everyone, good and bad alike. That is beyond doubt.
When I realised the greatness of the Maharshi's achievements, I involuntarily turned to myself and said, "Here sits the sage without boasting of any titles or degrees, like the sun in comparison to my poor little candle." And then, the first battle was won. I realised the emptiness of all human titles and degrees."

Kumar (Bangalore-based journalist):
"Sri Maharshi sits on the bank of time and watches it flow, unmoved and unaffected. He is ageless and therefore the birthday has no significance to him. He is full and complete and perfect.
Sri Maharshi is the magnet of attraction, and people try to use him in the way they want, for purposes they want. He is the sun whose rays of grace fall and dance on the minds and hearts that are open.
Maharshi is today the repository and reflector of the spiritual traditions of India. Those who read the Upanishads and the Gita and wrangle over the immediate and the ultimate can see in him a silent achievement of the highest. Those who dig their spurs into the sides of their race-horse-mind and keep it hurrying towards worry and discontent, will see in Sri Maharshi a God-man who has annihilated his mind and is therefore a perfect stillness and bliss."

Swami Ranganathananda (well-known sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Order):
"The Maharshi had condensed in himself the immortal, the eternal. Hence the tremendous stature of his life. He lived amongst us like a simple human being. Those who had seen the human form of Bhagavan are blessed indeed. His touch was the touch of the immortal, a touch which elevates and makes you feel that you are also someone worthwhile. In this age of physical verification, we find in Bhagavan, the human form of that eternal truth.
Bhagavan was constantly in the divine awareness – whether he was sitting alone and radiating his silent presence, whether he was correcting proofs,

whether he was reading the newspaper, whether he was cutting vegetables in the kitchen, he was brimming with joy. He was the very personification of the infinite, of the divine. Every word he spoke was charged with wisdom.
How human – talking man-to-man, and yet how gigantic.
What is said of Sri Krishna applies equally to Bhagavan."

Swami Desikananda (a sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Order, was head of the Vedanta College, Mysore, for many years):
"Bhagavan's routine was to sit on the couch mostly in silence till noon and again after food, and a little rest. He used to look through the mail twice a day and go for a short walk on the Hill. He said on one occasion that since there was no mind at all, there was also no concept of anything. All was one full expanse in peace and happiness. He quickly added that we cannot even say one expanse, as there was no second. He was always immersed in sat-chit-ananda (existence-consciousness-bliss).
By Bhagavan's grace not only was I drawn into the fold of a sage who had the highest realisation, but was helped in every way to experience periods of supreme peace and bliss. This indeed forms the sheet anchor of my life that was, that is, and that will be. The silent aid and relief provided by Bhagavan will indeed remain an eternal spring of spiritual joy and peace."

Pascaline Mallet (French writer and seeker):
"In the Ashram, we saw at one end of the hall a silent, motionless figure reclining on a low couch, lost in deep meditation, oblivious, it would seem, of everybody and everything. We slipped in quietly and seated ourselves on the ground amongst the crowd. I took in slowly the strange, unforgettable scene, my whole attention fixed on that central figure whose calm majesty, serene strength and perfect poise seemed to fill the whole place with unutterable peace. To look into his eyes, shining like stars, was perhaps for the first time to know the meaning of Eternity and to be caught up into bliss that passeth understanding. Who was this Great one? On what rung of the ladder of human or superhuman evolution did he stand? Such questions have but little value. When the sun shines, does one need to know why and how it shines? I opened my heart to the Spiritual Life which radiated so intensely

in the Silence. I had the impression of being as it were, surrounded by a sea of fiery Power, welding all present into a great Flame rising Heavenwards. Not once did the silent figure turn or move or show any sign of interest in the proceedings, that is, the recitation of the Vedas conducted as evening prayers in the Ashram. It was as if he had been living in a sphere beyond the limitations of time and space.

Later he was busy writing and reading. But somehow I had the feeling that all the while he lived in a state where time and space did not exist; in the region of the absolute, at the very heart of the universe. This can hardly be described, much less proved and only dimly sensed, but even so constituted a never-to-be-forgotten experience. His utter impersonality and supreme detachment did not in the least exclude all-embracing compassion, sympathy, and understanding of the many problems and difficulties which were continually being submitted to him by the weary, sorrow-striken people who come to him in the hope of finding comfort and help.

Undoubtedly, merely to live in his presence is the greatest help that one could possibly receive. It is a fact that no one who comes to the Ashram goes away empty-handed. Each receives to his utmost capacity, be that capacity great or small, and many people got inner experiences which have changed their lives."

Ethel Merston (French devotee):

"We were curious to see the great man. Bhagavan drew me to Tiruvannamalai in 1939. It took me a few moments after entering his hall to know that I was in the presence of the greatest teacher I have ever met. From the first moment in his presence, he made me feel at home, and the peace in that little hall drew me as nothing had before.

Once I had been mulling over a problem for three days without finding the solution. The fourth day, while sitting opposite to Bhagavan, and still harassed by the problem, Bhagavan suddenly turned his eyes upon me. After a moment, he asked one of his attendants to find him a certain book of stories; he turned over the pages until, finding the passage he wanted, he handed over the book to one of the men who knew English and told him to read the story aloud. That story gave me the answer to my problem.

He taught each seeker as suited his need. He was clairvoyant and could read our thoughts. Of psychic powers, I saw him use none, beyond conveying thoughts silently and so powerfully that the vibrations would sometimes roll in waves down the hall almost hurting one by the force with which they impinged on the body, not only of the recipient, for whom the thought was meant, but on many of us sitting there.

Bhagavan's gaze was spellbinding. Once an elderly man entered the hall. Bhagavan, who was reading, dropped his book immediately and looked straight up at the man who took two strides forward and stood near Bhagavan's feet, returning his gaze. There was such love and joy in Bhagavan's gaze that one could almost hear him say, "So you have come at last, my beloved brother." The two went on gazing at each other, without a word spoken aloud, but I could literally feel them speaking to each other, the flow of the current going back and forth between them. They talked thus voicelessly for some ten or fifteen minutes, then suddenly the man dropped to the floor and passed into samadhi for the next two hours. Bhagavan quietly took up his book again and went on, remaining as though nothing had happened, as doubtless indeed for him it had not.

But for us it was an unforgettable experience.

Quite apart from solving our problems, or helping us to do so, just to sit in Bhagavan's presence was to realize or get a feeling of what true relaxation and a quiet mind might mean. It did not mean shutting oneself away, isolating oneself, on the contrary, it meant being with all, yet remaining within, being in the world and yet not of it.

During the last years of Bhagavan's life, we learned many lessons from him. But one, which he never ceased to hammer into us, was that he was not the body, the body might go, but he would not go. He always was and always would be there with us, as now. I saw only three people cry as we spent the night keeping vigil of the corpse. We just knew that Bhagavan had not gone, so why cry for him, or rather, cry for a non-existent loss? We who knew him in the body are not the only ones to feel his presence. Even after he left the body, people in England who never knew him in the flesh, have told me that after reading about him, they have had the experience of his actual presence near them, even of his touch, ready with his grace to help."

A European Sadhak, who withheld his name:

"Sri Bhagavan is unique, peerless. One gracious and understanding look from him and a few sympathetic words from him had always meant oceans to the earnest seeker, to the aspiring pilgrim. And which sincere voyager has gone to him and returned empty-handed?"

M.A. Piggot (the first English lady who visited Sri Ramana):

"He was seated on a divan in front of which sandalsticks were burning. About a dozen people were present in the hall. I sat cross-legged on the floor, though a chair had been thoughtfully provided for me. Suddenly I became conscious that the Maharshi's eyes were fixed on me. They seemed literally like burning coals of fire piercing through me. Never before had I experienced anything so devastating – in that it was almost frightening. What I went through in that terrible half hour, by way of self-condemnation and scorn for the pettiness of my own life, would be difficult to describe. In the light of perfection, all imperfections were revealed.

When we returned for the evening meditation, the hall was compellingly still. The eyes of the Holy One blazed no more. They were serene and inverted. All my troubles seemed smoothened out and difficulties melted away. Nothing that we of the world call important mattered. Time was forgotten. One day a man rushed in and flung himself face down before the Maharshi. He was crying bitterly. Great sobs tore his body. The Maharshi said nothing. His head was turned aside, and he seemed indifferent. After some little time, the violence of the man's grief subsided and gradually he became quiet. Then at last, reverently the man arose and made a deep salutation. The Maharshi turned his head and smiled upon him. I felt suddenly as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance into our midst.

Another time, a poor person who had been bitten by a snake was brought in and laid before him. We all watched, fear gripping our heart. Not so he, who sat looking into the far distance, while the victim writhed in pain. Calm and compassion was in that look, and infinite peace. After what seemed like hours, the twitching ceased and the man appeared to be in sleep. Then the one who had brought in the sufferer gently touched him. The man rose, prostrated himself before the Maharshi and went out cured.

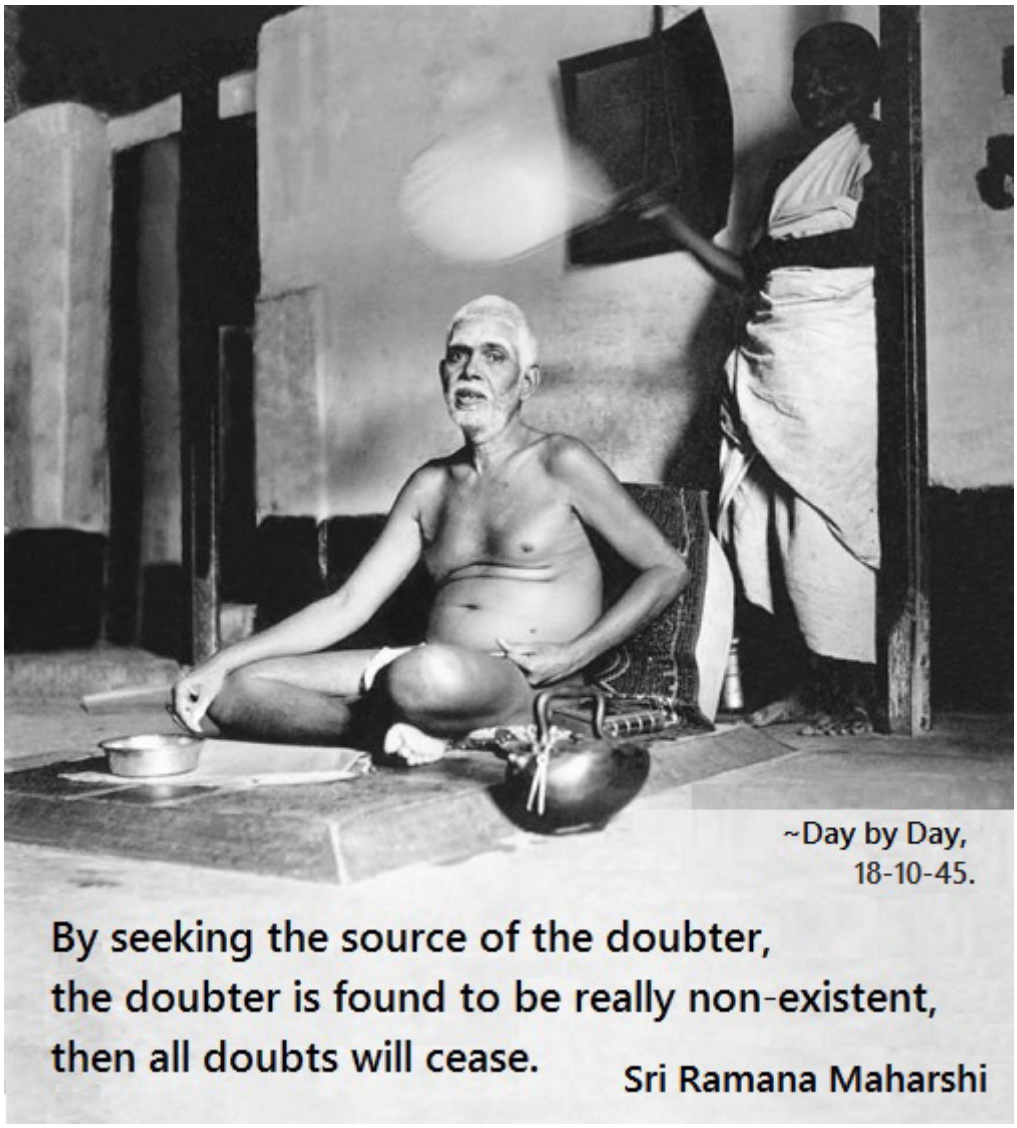
But this was unusual. The Maharshi did not heal in the accepted form of the word. Talking about it one day, I asked him if one could use spiritual power for healing. He remarked, "Yes, if you think it worthwhile," but added, "it required a great deal of force, which might be used more profitably in other directions."

That afternoon I had my farewell talk with the Maharshi. He was so gentle and human. I again asked about the relation of the body to the 'I'. He gave his smile, and said, "You came up from the bungalow this morning in a cart, yet you do not say, "The cart came." You say, "I came up." You did not make the mistake of identifying yourself with the cart. In the same way, look upon your body as you do the cart. Treat it well, and it will be a good servant and instrument. But do not be deceived into thinking it is 'I'. At the end of our talk, he quoted that wonderful saying from the Upanishad, "When, to the man who understands, the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be, to him who has once beheld this unity?"

I had been in despair of ever getting the Maharshi alone. It is hard to unburden the soul before a crowd. One morning, I went into the hall early and found him there unattended, emanating a wonderful stillness and peace. I asked quietly if I might talk with him. He nodded and smilingly sent for someone to translate.

My first question was, "What are the hindrances to the realisation of the true Self?" He said, "Memory, chiefly habits of thoughts, accumulated tendencies." When I enquired, "How does one get rid of these hindrances?", his answer was:

"Seek for the Self through meditation by tracing every thought back to its origin, which is only the mind. Never allow thought to run on. If you do, it will be unending. Take it back to the starting place – the mind – again and again, and the thought and the mind will both die of inaction. The mind only exists by reason of thought. Stop that and there is no mind. As each doubt and depression arises, ask yourself, "Who is it that doubts? What is it that is depressed?" Go back constantly to the question, "Who is the 'I'? Where is it? Tear everything away until there is nothing but the source of all remains. Live always in the present; there is no past or future, except in the mind."



Regarding meditation, he said, "Meditate on what you are in Reality. Try to realise that you are not the body, emotions or intellect." As the days passed, I saw more and more clearly that this was no theoretical philosophy. He himself lived it continuously and joyously.

He was one of the few I have met who were not only happy but untroubled. Not that the sorrows of the world left him untouched, but he knew where they belonged and was not identified with them. To any sufferer, his compassion was unlimited. As I went to say goodbye in the evening, the Ashram people clustered around for my departure, I felt I had made and was leaving true friends. They were so simple and so genuine."

J.P. Vaswani (Head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission):

"It was my great good fortune to have had darshan of Sri Bhagavan – to have sat in his purifying presence – to have gazed into the liquid depths of

his mystic, luminous, compassion-filled eyes – to have listened to his words of wisdom, which centred around the question, which indeed is a question of all questions – the one eternal question, which if you once answer, you will have no more questions to answer, namely, 'Who am I?'

This happened in 1939. He sat in the Ashram hall on a couch. As I went and sat in the midst of the devotees, I recalled to my mind the picture of Dakshinamurthi – the eternal youth, seated on a raised platform, and at the feet of this young teacher, sat a number of old rishis with white flowing beards and underneath the picture were written the words: "The teacher sits in silence. His teaching is silence and the disciples' doubts are cleared." Sri Bhagavan sat in silence. His teaching was silence. Many came to him – many from the East and some from the West. They came bringing a hundred questions and a hundred doubts in their hearts, but no sooner did they enter into his purifying presence than their minds were stilled. They were filled with a strange feeling of peace. They forgot their questions and their doubts. His silence was so profound. His silence was so sublime. His silence was so unique. His silence was utter and complete. The master's silence was deep. It was the silence which is the depths of the realised soul.

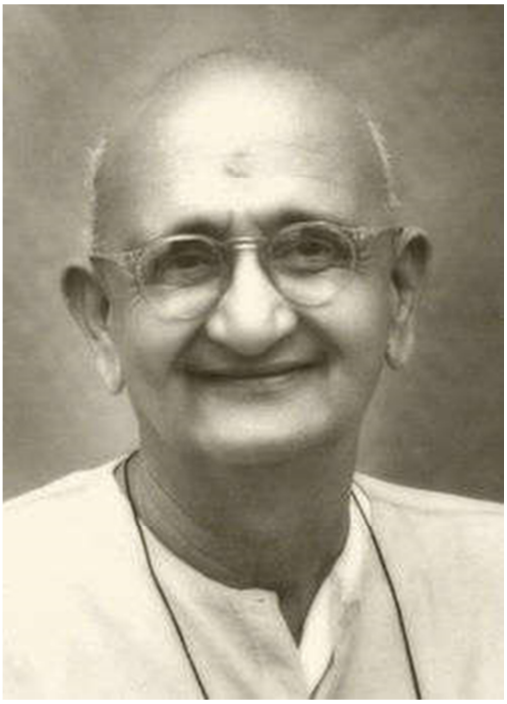
Sri Bhagavan had realised God. But he did not forsake humanity. He came and lived in the midst of men to share with them the treasures of the spirit. He lived as the simplest, clad in but one loincloth, barely enough to hide his utter nakedness. From morn till eve and sometimes late in the night the people thronged around him. Everyone was welcome. He was a friend of all who came to him.

Sri Bhagavan was a jnani of the highest order that the world has ever known. Every word that he uttered came out of the depths of his own realisation. You may read all the books that are in the world. But what you gain by studying them will be nothing as compared to the gain you get through hearing a few words sitting at the feet of the self-realised guru like Sri Ramana Maharshi.

What wondrous love Sri Bhagavan had for the poor, forsaken and forlorn! When he was staying on the Hill, he once found that some low caste women returning from their work everyday in the heat of the mid-day sun, with throats parched with thirst, wanted to drink water.

But as they belonged to a low caste, they were not allowed to draw water from the well. Sri Bhagavan himself would come out and wait for them. With his holy hands, he drew water and when they said, "Samy, Samy, we are thirsty, give us a little water", he gave them the water. I sometimes feel that I am like those low caste women and again and again turning to the gracious face of the Maharshi, I say to him "Samy, Samy, give me the water of life!" and he will give it to every aspiring heart."

Swami Ramdas:



(Spiritual teacher, considered one of the greatest saints of the 20th century)
"The Maharshi turned his beautiful eyes towards me and looked intently for a few minutes into my eyes, as though he was pouring into me his blessings through those orbs. Then he shook his head as if to say I have been blessed. A thrill of inexpressible joy coursed through my frame, my whole body quivering like a leaf in the breeze. I had gone to the Maharshi in a state of complete obliviousness of the world. I felt thrills of ecstasy in his presence. The Maharshi made the awakening permanent in me. Some people asked me, "You went to the Maharshi and you got illumination. Give us illumination like that." I responded,
"You must come to Ramdas with the same spirit as he went to the Maharshi. Where was his heart? How intense was his longing? What was the world to him at that time? If you come in that state, then you also get it."

Swami Muktananda:

(Founder of the well-known ashram at Ganeshpuri near Mumbai)

"Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was a great saint who always occupied a high place of reverence in the minds of people; his divine personality endeared him to all beings. The word 'Ramana' means 'One who plays'. You may call him 'atman' or 'Guru'; both are synonyms indicating the same divine power of which this universe is a game.

Ramana Maharshi was a divine soul, completely detached, beyond all differences, highly self-restrained and playfully living in the ocean of transcendental consciousness. I had the good fortune to be in his company just for three days. Even during that short stay, I found that anyone entering his presence even for a moment would experience the state of a fully realized soul in a transcendental state, beyond all thoughts. Some believed him to be a siddha or great saint, and some believed him to be an incarnation of God. Anyone going even once to the Maharshi felt as if the Maharshi belonged to him. This was because he really belonged to everyone and everyone to him. Wearing only a loincloth, he used to sit relaxed on a sofa, but still he looked more attractive than even the most richly attired princes because, as my revered gurudev Nityananda used to say, the Maharshi was beyond body-consciousness, beyond all attributes and beyond dualities. This indicates that he was on a plane far above the body pain and pleasure, a plane inaccessible to most of us mortals. Realization of the Self was all-important in his teaching: to everyone who asked, he unhesitatingly gave the advice to meditate on the Self, worship the Self and know the Self. This is because, according to Vedanta, there is nothing worth knowing, hearing or seeing except one's true Self.

Those who loved the Maharshi got from him the true supreme bliss attained by means of jnana, yoga and bhakti. He is the ever-adorable Great Soul. My adorations to him."

Eliot C. Clark (renowned American painter):

"The Maharshi sits half reclining upon a raised divan. He wears only a loincloth. I have no preconceived thought but pass before his presence respectfully. He seems quite oblivious, and if he has noted the stranger, there

seems no reaction. Although I am the only foreigner present, no one seems to have any visual or curious interest. I sit among others on the floor. No word is spoken.

My attention is at first a purely objective one. I study the head of the Maharshi. He is a man past sixty, with hair close cut and white, a short moustache and a beard, his complexion rather light. His features are not typically Hindu. The back of his head is unusually full and round; high forehead, the brows almost in the center of the head, the eyes high set, the ears long and pronounced, the body in a state of composure. A tall, dark-skinned pilgrim enters. He is nude to the waist. Then a woman enters. She kneels, bows her head three times. The Maharshi shows no sign of recognition.

The collective quietude creates a natural tranquility. Objective thought and self-consciousness gradually subside and one merges in the prevailing unity.

At the moment, I have deliberately ceased my curious interest and am about to close my eyes in reverie, the Maharshi's head is slightly turned, his eyes meet mine and there is an inexpressible radiance, the slightest indication of a smile. Then visual awareness ceases.

The teaching of the Maharshi is very simple. Quite impersonal in content, it can only be realized by personal practice and experience. The real teaching is in the revelation of silence: when the perturbation and the fluctuations of the mind are stilled, the inner presence radiates itself. He says: If the mind turns inward in quest of its origin, the 'I'-awareness vanishes in its Source. The 'I' becomes identified, not with its egotistical consciousness and the world of change but with its Source, which is constant. 'I'-consciousness is relative and finite; but the Source is infinite and eternal.

<u>In the womb of silence, the light is ever shining.</u>

The Maharshi does not lecture. He will answer questions; but in the magic of his presence, the questions begin to vanish with the quietening of the mind."

Swami Abhishiktananda:

(Earlier in his life, he was a Christian monk called Father Henri Le Saux)

"All that I saw or heard aroused overwhelmingly powerful echoes. Even before my mind was able to recognise the fact and still less to express it, the invisible halo of the Sage had been perceived by something in me deeper

than any words. Unknown harmonies awoke in my heart... In the Sage of Arunachala, I had discerned the unique Sage of the eternal India, the unbroken succession of her sages; it was as if the very soul of India penetrated to the very depths of my own soul and held mysterious communion with it. It was a call which pierced through everything, and opened a mighty abyss."

Ramanadasa Sadananda / Seshagiri Iyer
(Teacher in P.S. High School, Madras):

"I stood before Sri Ramana, the blazing sun of wisdom. Never having seen such a being of bliss before, I could not think, speak or do anything except to feel dumb-founded. I prostrated before him, drank with avidity the nectar of his gaze on me, felt myself freed from the pairs of opposites, and lifted above the never-ending din and misery of worldly existence. Contagious was his bliss! He not only sends forth beams of the light of jnana by his mere proximity but also fills even the unhappy among us with joy and peace by his very presence. I myself went with a heavy heart at first, tossed and troubled by misfortunes, haunted and hooted by cares and anxieties, worried and flurried by soul-killing thoughts. Such oppressing and depressing ideas and feelings could disappear all of a sudden, as dew or darkness dies before the sun. Where else, if not at Tiruvannamalai, could one find a place which can easily rid one of all earthly woes and transport one to a Realm Divine, the joy of which none who has not tasted it could tell!

At another time, when I prostrated with my eyes impressed on the sacred lotus feet of Bhagavan and begged of him to save me from the crushing blows of cruel maya, the divine lips parted to say, "Whom do all these (worldly woes) seem to trouble? Put that question to yourself as often as you feel troubled. Thou art not the body, which will perish one day. Know that thou art the atma of unmixed bliss. How then could any worldly bugbear affect you?" His gracious words wrought a miracle. I was suddenly raised above the cloud of misery that had enveloped and distressed me till then. That very moment my dejection disappeared. I cannot say which way it went. I felt as if I never knew sorrow or misery in any shape. My mind was sunk in a sea of joy. That divine magician's word had its desirable balmy effect forthwith."

Dr. M. Anantanarayana Rao:

"I went to see Sri Ramana. He was sitting in the open space near the Ashram well. I asked him a couple of questions about my problems when I meditated. His answers were short, clear and to the point. I at once felt his greatness. My first visit to the Ashram ended in a couple of days, but Sri Ramana's smile and sparkling eyes had an irresistible influence on me.

His grace flowed into us and made us happy.

Many people have experienced happiness when they sat in Sri Bhagavan's presence even without a word being spoken!

When he had a shooting pain in the thigh up to the hip, I took his permission to rub the part with some wintergreen oil. This gave him relief. I then asked him to lie down on the bed and not to recline on the pillows as he usually did. He smiled and told me that he could get in a few moments as much or more rest than what we could by sleeping on a nice bed for hours. This puzzled me for some time and then it struck me that Sri Ramana could establish himself into samadhi of which we had no experience.

Bhagavan was always awake though in a state of samadhi. Once I went to him with a small pot containing an ointment. As I heard him snore lightly, I thought he was asleep. I stood thinking whether to keep the pot on the shelf quietly or wait till he was awake. Within a moment, he opened his eyes, smiled and asked me why I was waiting without handing over the ointment to him. I replied that he was asleep and I did not wish to disturb him. Sri Bhagavan at once asked me how I concluded that he was asleep. I mumbled some reply, handed over the pot to him and sat in the hall along with some others. Bhagavan again closed his eyes and was snoring lightly. At that time, a newcomer to the Ashram came near the couch and prostrated, he at once opened his eyes and smiled at him. Again, Bhagavan reverted to the sleepy condition.

In December 1948, while I was massaging Bhagavan's hand, I felt a small nodule above his elbow. In July 1949, the damaged tissue flared up. I begged him to make a resolve to heal himself. He smiled and sat silent till I repeated my request. He then answered, "There is no mind here, so the question of a resolve does not arise." To Bhagavan, the body with its ills did not exit. While dressing a large wound, pain is inevitable, but he did not

show any pain and even assisted with his right hand in adjusting the bandage, as if it were an arm belonging to another.

During dressing of the tumour, I had to wipe it with rectified spirits. One day, the spirits from the swab flowed on his arm and body. He at once said that he had a 'spirit bath' and that all should have such baths. I did not understand the significance of this and asked him to kindly explain the same. He smilingly said, "Fish are always in water and cannot survive on coming out of it. Similarly, we are in Spirit or Pure Consciousness and should always be in it as fish in water. One should always consciously remain in Pure Consciousness or Self." That made me believe that he was always in sahaja samadhi.

In the course of a conversation in 1949, he described to us that tears flow from the outer canthus of the eye of a man when he is very happy and from the inner canthus when he is sad. It is a correct observation. On the evening of his nirvana day (April 14, 1950), I was in that room among others. At his request he was assisted to sit up, with legs stretched in front. He had kept his eyes closed, and his breathing was gradually becoming shallow. The devotees outside began singing 'Arunachala Siva'. He opened his eyes, looked at the direction from where the voices came and then closed the eyes. Tears came gushing from the outer canthus of the eyes. I felt that it was the visible sign of the Supreme Bliss of rejoining the ONE without a second. The body was discarded very peacefully."

Papaji / Hariwansh Lal Poonja:

(Great spiritual teacher; former Indian Army officer;

Since his boyhood, his deep devotion to Krishna gave him vivid visions of the Lord.)

After relinquishing his commissioned post in Indian army in favour of spiritual attainments, Papaji went from place to place and met numerous spiritual gurus including Swami Ramdas, Swami Sivananda, Swami Tapovanam and Anand Moyi Ma. But no one could answer his oft-repeated query: "Have you seen God? Can you show me God?" After all his journeys, when he returned home 'disillusioned and disappointed', a man resembling Sri Ramana appeared at his door asking for food, which was given to him. Then the man was asked: "Can you show me God? If not, do you know of anyone who can?"

Papaji says:
"Much to my surprise, the sadhu said, "Yes, I know a person who can show you God. His name is Ramana Maharshi and he lives at Tiruvannamalai." He gave me detailed instructions on how to reach there. I noted these down carefully. But I had spent all the money I had saved from my brief spell in the army on my unsuccessful pilgrimages. Through an amazing coincidence, I came across an advertisement offering job to an ex-army officer in Madras. After I got the job, my employer gave me money to get to Madras and told me that I need not report for duty for one month, thus giving me an opportunity to be in the Maharshi's presence before I reported for work.
It was 1944, and I was thirty-four years of age.
As per sadhu's instructions, I reached Sri Ramanasramam. Before entering the hall, I peeped through the window and saw, sitting on a sofa inside, the same man who had visited my house in the Punjab. I was disgusted. I said to myself: "This man is a fraud. He appears in my house in the Punjab, tells me to go to Tiruvannamalai, and then hops on the train so that he could get here before me." I felt so annoyed that I decided to leave the Ashram.
As I was preparing to do so, one of the residents asked, "Haven't you just arrived?" I told him the story as to how I got cheated. The person said, "You are mistaken. He has not moved out of the town during the last 48 years. It is either a case of mistaken identity or somehow, through his power, he managed to manifest himself in the Punjab while his physical body was still here. Some girls from America came here once and told a similar story. These things do happen occasionally."
This aroused my curiosity and I decided to stay.
I had lunch in the Ashram. At the conclusion of the meal, the Maharshi went to the hall followed by his attendant. As he needed rest after lunch, devotees were not allowed to see him during 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. Not knowing this, I followed him. While his attendant was persuading me to come later, the Maharshi overheard the exchange, and I was allowed to get in.
I approached the Maharshi in a belligerent way, "Are you the man who came to see me at my house in the Punjab?" The Maharshi remained silent. I tried again, "Did you not come to my house and tell me to come here?" Again the Maharshi made no comment. Since he was unwilling to answer,

I moved on to the main purpose of my visit. I asked, "Have you seen God? And if you have, can you enable me to see Him? I am willing to pay any price, even my life, but your part of the bargain is that you must show me God." He answered, "No, I cannot show you God or enable you to see God because God is not an object that can be seen. God is the subject. He is the seer." He also added, "You alone are God." His words did not impress me. I would have dismissed him and his words without a second thought, had it not been for an experience I had. As he looked at me and gazed into my eyes, my whole body began to tremble and shake. A thrill of nervous energy shot through my body. My nerve ends felt as if they were dancing and my hair stood on end. Within me, I became aware of the spiritual Heart. This is not the physical heart; it is, instead, the source and support of all that exists. Within the Heart, I saw or felt something like a closed bud. It was very shining and bluish. With the Maharshi looking at me, and myself in a state of inner silence, I felt this bud open and bloom. I use the word bud, but this is not an exact description. It would be more correct to say that something that felt bud-like opened and bloomed in my Heart. It was an extraordinary experience. It totally surprised me when it happened. Though I had an immensely powerful experience, the Maharshi's statement that 'You alone are God' and his advice to find out who the seer is did not have a strong appeal for me. I thought to myself, 'It is no good to be a chocolate, I want to taste chocolate'. I wanted to remain separate from God so that I could enjoy the bliss of union with Him. My views on various religious practices were limited. I thought to myself, 'No one here in the hall seems to be chanting the name of God. How can they consider themselves to be good devotees? All these people may have been meditating but so far as I am concerned, they were wasting their time.' I still had some time before I had to report for duty in Madras. But I did not want to spend it with all these 'spiritually lazy' people in the Ashram. I found a quiet spot in the jungle on the other side of the Hill, and settled down there to do my Krishna japa, alone and undisturbed. I stayed there for about a week, immersed in my devotional practices. Krishna would often appear before me, and we spent a lot of time playing together.

Before going to Madras to join my duty, I paid another visit to the Ashram, partly to say goodbye and partly to tell the Maharshi that I didn't need his

assistance for seeing God because I had been seeing Him everyday through my own efforts. When the Maharshi asked where I had gone, I told him with a great amount of smugness that I was playing with my Krishna.

The Maharshi commented, "Very good, very nice. Do you see Him now?" I replied, "I see Him only when I have visions." The Maharshi said, "What is the use of a God who appears and disappears? If he is a real God, He must be with you all the time."

The Maharshi's lack of interest in my visionary experiences deflated me a little, but not to the extent to make me listen to his advice. A lifetime of devotion to Krishna had left me incapable of conceiving the spiritual quest in any other terms than that of a quest for a personal god. Having therefore got, in my jaundiced opinion, nothing from the Maharshi except a good experience and some bad advice, I returned to Madras to take up my new job. I found a nice house to live, and began my work. All my spare time and energy were devoted to communing with Krishna. I synchronized the japa with my breathing. Calculating that I breathed about 24,000 times a day, I decided that I should repeat the name of God at least once for every breath I took. One day, I found that when I tried to resume my chanting, I could not repeat the name of Krishna any more. Somehow, my mind refused to cooperate. Not finding any solution to my problem, even after consulting well-known swamis in Madras, my thought turned to the Maharshi. I said to myself, 'This man came all the way to the Punjab in some form and directed me to see him at Tiruvannamalai. I went there and got a very good experience. I may as well go to him and see what he has to say.'

Taking a train to Tiruvannamalai, I reached the Ashram. In order to talk to the Maharshi alone, I went to the hall after lunch. As on my previous trip, the attendant wanted me to come later. But again the Maharshi intervened and I got an opportunity to tell him that for twenty five years, I have been doing sadhana, mostly repeating the name of Krishna. Now my mind refuses to engage itself in thoughts of God. What has happened to me and what should I do? The Maharshi looked at me and asked, "How did you come here from Madras?" I did not see the point of his question but told him politely, "By train." Then he inquired, "What happened when you reached Tiruvannamalai?" "Well, I took a bullock cart which brought me here."

The Maharshi then explained what he was driving at: "The train brought you to your destination. You got off it because you did not need it anymore. Likewise, with the bullock cart. Now you are here, they are of no use to you. That is what has happened to your sadhana. Your japa and your meditation have brought you to your spiritual destination. You yourself did not give up your practices; they left you of their own accord because they had served their purpose. You have arrived."

Then he looked at me intently. I could feel that my whole body and mind were being washed away with waves of purity. His silent gaze was purifying them. Under that spellbinding gaze, I felt every atom of my body being purified. It was as if a new body was being created for me. A process of transformation was going on – the old body was dying atom by atom, and a new body was being created in its place. Then, suddenly, I understood, there was a sudden impact of recognition as I became aware of the Self. The silent gaze of the Maharshi established me in that primal state that was permanent. The 'I' which had for so long been looking outside perished in the direct knowledge and experience of the Self, which the Maharshi had revealed to me. I cannot describe what the experience was, but I knew that my spiritual quest had definitely ended; and the source of that knowledge will always remain indescribable. In a lifetime of spiritual seeking, I have met hundreds of sadhus, swamis and gurus, but none of them could reveal the truth the way the Maharshi had done.

I must make one more comment about the greatness of the Maharshi: He could see that I had reached a state in which my sadhana could never be resumed again. He knew I was ready for realization and through his divine look, he established me in his own state. After my final experience in the Maharshi's presence, my outer life went on much as before. I went back to Madras, carried on with my job, and supported my family. At weekends, or when I had accumulated enough leave, I would go to Tiruvannamalai, sit at the feet of my Master and bask in his radiant presence. The cynical, skeptical seeker, who aggressively confronted the Maharshi on the first visit, had gone for good.

In the first few months after my realization, I did not have a single thought. I could go to the office and perform my duties without ever having a thought

in my mind. It did not take me long to realize that a mind and thoughts are not necessary to function in the world.

When one abides as the Self, some divine power takes charge of one's life. All actions then take place spontaneously and are performed very efficiently, without much mental effort or activity.

On one of my visits to Tiruvannamalai, I took my seven-year old daughter with me. She sat before the Maharshi and went into a deep meditative trance. She spent several hours in that condition before returning to her normal waking state. Major Chadwick, who was watching all this, approached the Maharshi and said, "I have been here for more than ten years, but I have never had an experience like this. This seven-year old girl seems to have had this experience without making any efforts. How can this be?"

The Maharshi merely smiled and said,

"How do you know that she is not older than you?"

My daughter did not want to go back to Madras. The Maharshi advised her to first finish her education and then come back if she wanted to do so. If anyone asked her, "What happened that day when you were in trance before the Maharshi?", she could not answer and just cried.

I would sometimes accompany the Maharshi on his walks around the Ashram. I watched him remonstrate with the workers who wanted to prostrate to him rather than carry on their work. Everything he did contained a lesson for us. Every step he took was a teaching in itself. The Maharshi preferred to work in a low-key and in an unspectacular way. There was no demonstration of his power, just a subtle emanation of grace, which seeped into the hearts of those who came into contact with him.

One incident that I witnessed illustrates very well the subtle and indirect way the Maharshi worked. A woman brought her dead son to the Ashram. The boy had apparently died of snakebite. The woman cried and begged the Maharshi to bring him back to life, but he did not respond to her repeated requests. After a few hours, the Ashram manager made her take the corpse away. As she was leaving the Ashram, she met some kind of a snake charmer who claimed that he could cure her son. The man did something to the boy's hand where he had been bitten, and the boy immediately revived. The devotees attributed the miraculous cure to the Maharshi, saying, when a

problem is brought to the attention of a jnani, some 'automatic divine activity' brings about a solution. According to this theory, the Maharshi has done nothing consciously to help the boy, but at a deeper, unconscious level, his awareness of the problem has caused the right man to appear at the right place. The Maharshi, of course, disclaimed all responsibility for the miraculous cure. 'Is that so?' was his only response when told about the boy's dramatic recovery. This was typical of him.

The Maharshi never performed any miracles. The only 'miracles' he indulged in were those of inner transformation. By a word, a look, a gesture, or merely by remaining in silence, he could quieten the minds of people around him, enabling them to become aware of who they really are.

In July 1947, a month before Independence, Devaraja Mudaliar told me about the problems which I could face if I did not bring my family to India from the Punjab, which was soon to become a part of Pakistan. I told him, "I am not going. I cannot leave the company of the Maharshi." I had reached a stage in my relationship with the Maharshi where I loved him so much, I couldn't take my eyes off him or contemplate the thought of going to the other end of the country for an indefinite period. When Mudaliar told the Maharshi that Poonja's family seems to be stranded in West Punjab and he did not want to go there, the Maharshi told me, "There will be a lot of trouble in the area you come from. Why don't you go and bring your family out?" Though this amounted to an order; I was still hesitant. I then explained the main reason for my reluctance to go: "I am far too attached to your physical form. I cannot leave you. I love you so much that I cannot take my eyes off you." ... "I am with you wherever you are," was his answer. From the way he spoke to me, I could see that he was determined that I should go. I accepted the decision. I prostrated before him and for the first time in my life I touched his feet as an act of veneration, love, and respect. He will not normally let anyone touch his feet, but this was a special occasion and he did not object. Before I rose, I collected some of the dust beneath his feet and put it in my pocket as a sacred memento. I also asked for his blessings because I had an intuition that this was our final parting. I left the Ashram and made my way to Lahore. The atmosphere there was every bit as bad as I had been led to expect. I went to the station and bought a ticket for my

hometown – Lyalpur. In those violent days, Hindus and Muslims were travelling in separate carriages so that they could protect each other in case there was any trouble. The nearly empty carriages were those occupied by the Hindus. And then an inner voice, the voice of my Master, said to me, "Go and sit with the Muslims in their compartment. Nothing will happen to you there." Superficially, it seemed like a good idea, but I had a doubt about my ability to fool my Muslim fellow-passengers into believing that I was one of them. I dressed differently and had a highly visible 'Om' tattooed on the back of one of my hands. I listened to the voice and took my seat with the Muslims. No one questioned my right to be there. Somewhere in the countryside, Muslims stopped the train and all the passengers in the Hindu carriages were gunned down. Nobody paid any attention to me, even though I was clearly a Hindu sitting in a Muslim compartment. After disembarking from the train, I went to my family home and found 34 members of my family, most of them women, stranded there. I succeeded in bringing them back safely to India. The Maharshi had sent me to the Punjab to do my duty. That was typical of him because he never permitted his devotees to abandon their family responsibilities. Telling me, 'I am with you wherever you are', he sent me off to fulfill my obligations. When I first heard this remark, I appreciated only its philosophical significance. It did not occur to me that physically I would also be under his care and protection. Yet this was manifestly the case. He had told me where to sit on the train. For more than twenty hours after the massacre, I had sat unrecognized in a Muslim carriage, despite having pierced ears and an 'Om' on my hand, both of them classic Hindu identification marks. Further, in an environment of utter anarchy, I had secured seats for a vast contingent of my family and got them out of danger on the last train that left Lahore for India.

(On an enquiry about any other case where Sri Ramana provided physical protection to a devotee as happened in case of Papaji, David Godman, who has done extensive research about Sri Ramana and his devotees, replied that he knew no other example of this nature.)

I took my family to Lucknow because I had a friend there from my time in the army. There was no question of returning to the Maharshi because I was the only potential earner in my group. Arriving in India with little more than

the clothes we were wearing, it became my responsibility to feed and support this vast group. I had to work night and day to keep the family going. At 8.47, on the evening of April 14, 1950, I was walking down a street in Lucknow. I suddenly felt an enormous spasm in my chest, which nearly knocked me down to the ground. I thought it must be some sort of heart attack. A few seconds later, I saw a few people pointing to a large meteor, which was trailing across the sky. This was the meteor that thousands of people all over India saw in the first few seconds after the Maharshi's death.

Many years later, sitting on the banks of the Ganges, I had an extraordinary vision of my various incarnations through time. I watched the Self moving from body to body, from form to form. It went through plants, through animals, through birds, through human bodies, each in a different place at a different time. The sequence was extraordinarily long. My own body finally appeared as the last one of the sequence, followed by the radiant form of the Maharshi. The vision then ended.

The appearance of the Maharshi had ended that seemingly endless sequence of births and rebirths. After his intervention in my life, the Self that finally took the form of Poonja could incarnate no more.

The Maharshi had destroyed it by a single look.

Sometime ago, at one of the satsangs which I used to conduct in Lucknow, a note handed over to me concluded: "My humble respects and gratitude to you, especially to one who was a disciple of Ramana Maharshi." I couldn't let this pass. I exclaimed, "Please correct your grammar. I am his disciple! He is my master. How can I throw him away into the past? I never think it is I, Poonja, who is speaking. If I ever thought that this person called Poonja was speaking to you, I have no right to sit here because whatever would come out of my mouth would be false. It is my own master who speaks. I am sitting here introducing you to my teacher and his teachings. He is the teacher; not I. Poonja has gone for good, but the Master remains and will always remain. He is seated in my heart as my own imperishable Self."

[David Godman, from whose book 'Nothing Ever Happened' the above has been extracted, says: "Having just finished interviewing Papaji in 1992,

about the events when he was at Sri Ramanasramam in the 1940s, I wanted to know as a conclusion, if he could say a few words of gratitude or appreciation, summarizing what the Maharshi did for him. Papaji opened his mouth to speak but no words came out. After two or three seconds, tears started flowing down his cheeks. Turning his head to hide his tears, he said, "I can't answer that question. I can't speak about it. No words can ever express it." Godman, however, refers to a poem, which Papaji wrote to one of his devotees in 1982:

'My Master spoke in silence.
My Master spoke through his eyes.
My Master spoke through words.
All the three languages I have heard.']

Ganapati Muni (renowned Sanskrit poet and scholar,
known by his title Kavyakantha; After meeting Sri Ramana in 1907 and having got convinced of his spiritual attainment, he, for the first time, called him 'Bhagavan' and 'Maharshi.' These got popular in due course.):

"One day some years ago, when I was lying down, I suddenly felt my body carried up higher and higher till all objects disappeared and all around me was one vast mass of white light. Then suddenly my body descended. I said to myself, "Evidently this is how siddhas appear and disappear."

Once the kundalini rose in my body, I suffered an unbearable burning sensation. I felt that the pain would subside if Bhagavan touched me. My wife, son and some others took Bhagavan to the Mango Tree Cave, where I lived. Bhagavan went there and sat beside me, I took Bhagavan's hand and put it on my head and asked him to bless me. Bhagavan kept quiet for a while. "It will be all right soon," he said, and left. I felt immediate relief. A devotee asked Bhagavan whether he also had a similar experience. 'Hm, Hm', said Bhagavan smilingly."

T. K. Sundaresa Iyer records in his book 'At the Feet of Bhagavan':

"After Ganapati Muni had composed 700 out of the 1000 verses in praise of the Divine mother, he announced that the complete work will be dedicated on a particular day in the Arunachaleswara temple. On the evening of the dedication day, he found that 300 verses were still to be composed. When the

Maharshi asked the Muni whether he was getting the event postponed, the Muni assured him that the task would be completed here and now. The scene that followed was unbelievable. The Maharshi sat silent and in deep meditation. The eager disciples of the Muni watched in tense admiration the sweet flow of Sanskrit verses as they came from the lips of Kavyakantha and wrote them down. The job over, Bhagavan opened his eyes and asked the Muni whether all that he said had been taken down. The Muni's grateful response was, "All that Bhagavan inspired in me has been taken down." It is noteworthy that whereas the Muni revised the first 700 verses of this monumental work some six times, he did not revise any of the last 300."

F. H. Humphreys:

"We sat at his feet and said nothing. I felt lifted out of myself. For half an hour, I looked into the Maharshi's eyes, which never changed their expression of deep contemplation. I began to realize that his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; I could only feel that the Maharshi's body was not the man; it was the instrument of God, merely a sitting, motionless corpse from which God was radiating terrifically. My own feelings were indescribable.

The most touching sight was the number of tiny children up to about seven years of age, who climb the hill, all on their own, to come and sit near the Maharshi, even though he may not speak a word or even look at them for days together. They do not play, but just sit there quietly, in perfect contentment.

The Maharshi is a man beyond description in his expression of dignity, gentleness, self-control and calm strength of conviction.

(His second visit:) I went by motorcycle and climbed up to the cave. The sage smiled when he saw me, but was not in the least surprised. He asked me a private question, only known to him and me. Evidently, he recognised me the moment he saw me. Everyone who comes to him is an open book, and a single glance suffices to reveal to him its contents.

"You have not had your food" he said, "and are hungry." I admitted that it was so. He immediately called a disciple to bring food – rice, ghee, fruit etc. He gave me a coconut spoon to eat with, smiling and talking during the time I ate. You can imagine nothing more beautiful than his smile.

When I finished, I was still hungry, and he knew it and ordered more. He knows everything, and when others pressed me to eat fruit when I had had enough, he stopped them at once. Later on, I was thirsty, for it had been a hot ride, but I would not show it, come what may. Yet he knew and told a disciple to bring some lemonade. I sat for about three hours listening to his teachings. It is strange what a change it makes in one to have been in his presence." [Humphreys retired from service some years later and became a monk.]

Rama Varma Appan Tampuran (Maharaja of Cochin, Kerala; came to Sri Ramana in the 1930s, when he was not the Maharaja. The visit had a profound effect on him.): "Self-realization dawned all at once for the Maharshi. The light of the Self shone forth suddenly like the flash of lightning. The Supreme Lord of the universe lifted him with His sacred hand and established him at the very centre and source of Being, Awareness and Bliss. It is perhaps on account of this we find in much of the teachings of the Maharshi, ultimate knowledge revealed rather than the path leading to it, giving preeminence to the end rather than to means.
The sorrows of the distressed, the doubts of earnest seekers, the disbelief of the sceptics who come to test him, and the pride of the high and mighty, verily perish in the mere presence of the Maharshi. His sacred abode confers peace and even induces spiritual trance which yields the Bliss of Self-realisation. The praise of the Maharshi like that of Sri Krishna is delightful and beneficient alike to the worldly-minded sunk in the whirlpool of egoistic attachment and wallowing in the ditch of blind infatuation, as well as to those who seek liberation. It is indeed our good fortune to live during the lifetime of such a distinguished and great Sage. Blessed are the devotees who spend their time in his presence. The life of the Maharshi is not the biography of an individual but radiance of the universal Self; not the expression of body's acts but manifestation of the Spirit within."

Swami Rajeswarananda (Sannyasi of the Ramakrishna Order):
"Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was the personification of emancipation, the source of supreme peace, and the boundless ocean of freedom. His solemn presence lifted us beyond our body and mind to our true Self. The truth

of Self-realization, in his holy presence, was as if coursing through our veins, pulsating in our bosom, tingling with every drop of blood and becoming consonant with our very heartbeats. His words make us even today rest on the Glory of our Self, the infinite, the eternal and the deathless. His silent and sacred look imparted Self-knowledge that became a part and parcel of our constitution and the very vitality of our life. Sri Ramana was the wonder of the world with the perfume of spiritual peace. His life is a study in divine illumination based on the dynamic silence. All worries and wounds of the world simply melted in his presence like ice before fire.

No school of philosophy, cult, creed, yoga and the like could claim Sri Ramana, as he did not fit easily into any ready-made classification. He lived free and remained free and let every one remain free likewise. A sage, a philosopher, a recluse, an incarnation of God – all these terms do not adequately describe him. All these fall flat since he transcends them. He was unique in remaining true to himself and being himself. He was in himself the quest and the find. He set before us, as the glory and goal of life, the realization of the full divine consciousness of our Self. He proclaimed the Absolute as the Self, 'I Am' in each individual life. He was himself a testimony for such a revelation that always stands at the very doorstep of one and all.

His was the cure-all that could restore the human race to its lost heritage and happiness. Sri Ramana kindles in every one of us an awareness of the spiritual glory within. Bhagavan's gospel is a practical expression of Self, the Reality, Intelligence and Bliss.

Sri Ramana stands for the unity of existence, the non-duality of the Godhead and the harmony of religions. His teachings are refreshingly plain and powerful. They throw open the floodgates of the soul and make the living waters of the highest consciousness rush forth. His gospel, free from any dogma or doctrine, is not hampered by the fossilised traditions. It is as broad as the sky, as deep as the sea, and as universal as the rays of the sun. He awakens in every one of us the dormant Divinity. His very life was a practical demonstration of the reality of Brahman, the Supreme Self. His gospel reveals clearly the divinity of the soul, the oneness of humanity and the indivisibility of the Godhead, not as articles of belief or opinion, cult or creed, dogmas or doctrines but as the truths of his own experience.

Even a single word from Bhagavan's holy lips was enough to enable us to carry it all through our life, to stir the soul, and awaken it to its intrinsic immortality and infinity."

Dr. Lt. Col. P. V. Karamchandani (District Medical Officer):

"That wondrous gaze of Sri Ramana seemed to envelop me with an aura of bliss. I felt the spiritual pull from him so irresistible that after a few days I myself arranged a visit to Tiruvannamalai. I took my wife with me.

We visited Sri Ramana with a sense of curiosity and an indefinable sense of expectation. We made our obeisance and sat by his feet. We did not speak a word; nor did he. No speech seemed necessary. So surcharged with spirituality was he that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of blissful, ecstatic meditation.

The tumour that Sri Ramana was bearing must have given him the most excruciating, nerve-wrecking pain. Such writhing pain would make the toughest man wince and moan. But his godly face did not bear the slightest sign of his agony. It reflected only joy and peace. He seemed to have switched off his mind from the body to the divine.

The next occasion when I was summoned, Sri Ramana had developed anuria. [Failure of the kidney to produce urine.] I went to his Ashram not with the all-important feeling of a District Medical Officer. I went in the spirit of a humble devotee to serve a saint of colossal spiritual magnitude. My job as a doctor was to be coupled with the devotion of a disciple. I was told that for the previous 24 hours, he had not taken any food, not even a drop of water and all earnest requests and persuations had failed. I was requested to persuade him to eat something. On examination I found that it was imperative that Bhagavan should take some fluid. Ordering him in my capacity as a doctor was out of question. I felt like asking him as a boon to accept my prayer. I prayed inwardly and held a glass of buttermilk before him. He gazed at me for a second, took the buttermilk in shaking hands and drank it. My joy knew no bounds. There was relief and jubilation all around. I was thanked profusely. But I felt infinitely grateful for Bhagavan's overwhelming grace. He had heard my silent prayer and granted my boon. Wonderful was the

spiritual exhilaration which I experienced in his holy presence. I was called again at midnight. As I entered his room, four disciples were there. Bhagavan wanted them to leave the room. After they left, I was alone with Bhagavan. As usual, he did not speak with me. I was also silent. But the vibrations that emanated from him were celestial. His body must have been in terrific, mortal pain. But his heavenly spirituality was unaffected by it. A rapturous thrill electrified my entire being.

I had an intense desire to worship this illumined soul. I had learnt that Bhagavan did not allow devotees to touch his feet. But I felt a deep urge not only to touch his blessed feet but also to press them lovingly. I took courage in both my hands and pressed them. The wonder of wonders! He let me do so! His grace was abounding. I considered myself in the seventh heaven. I glorify those few minutes of my life.

On my next visit, I went before him with my mind resolutely set on requesting him. But a marvel happened. As soon as I saw him, my mind melted, the resolution evaporated, and I felt filled with strange contentment. My prayer seemed to be instantly granted. Effulgent joy flooded the very depths of my being. I reverently bowed before him and he gazed at me benevolently.

My last visit was on the day Bhagavan attained nirvana. On visiting him, I found that his body would not last beyond that day. I silently prayed that he might retain his body till I brought my wife from Vellore who wanted to witness how a great saint discards his body.

Now the finale – how my wife brought orange juice for the Maharshi, how he would not accept any drink at all to avoid going to the bathroom; how I devoutedly prayed that he may drink the juice to save my wife from deep disappointment; how he accepted my unspoken prayer and asked for the juice to the transcendental delight of my wife and myself; and how, shortly afterwards, in utter tranquility, he passed on.

During my two months' contact with Bhagavan, I did not speak a single word with him. But, what wonderful grace he poured into me through his benign, benevolent gaze! A peerless spiritual experience indeed."

Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami (a prolific photographer of Sri Ramana; Dozens of his shots are reproduced in 'Radiance of the Self', Sri Ramana's picture al-

bum, published by the Bangalore Centre): "So long as I was meeting the Maharshi, I felt drawn and attracted to him. It gave me immense pleasure to take pictures of him. He was more important to me than his teachings – every little movement, every one of his acts and gestures, was highly gratifying. I was attracted to him like a baby to its mother. We have to learn to feel his presence. We would never be forsaken for he had himself assured us that he was not going away."

R. Narayana Iyer:

"Someone nearby said that it had been arranged that the Maharshi himself would explain to us the 'Reality in Forty Verses' that night...

At night, the Maharshi sat on a dais inside a shed. About half a dozen of us were seated on the ground before him. A solemn stillness pervaded the air. There was absolute silence. Maharshi read the first stanza. The mere reading of the stanza made the meaning as simple as simplicity itself! Stanza by stanza, he read and explained in a voice that was so sweet and melodious and coming as though from 'somewhere'. The climax came. Explaining one verse he said, "God cannot be seen with our eyes or known by our sense perceptions. This is what is meant by the saying: To see God is to become God." A stalwart person with a severe expression named Dandapani Swami, interposed: "Is Bhagavan saying this out of personal experience?"

The question asked bluntly with such naivete was answered with equal candour: "Else would I dare to say so?" What takes so much time to think flashed upon me in a moment. God cannot be known by our sense faculties. The only way was to become God. If God were to appear before one in flesh and blood, here He is. My body experienced a thrill from somewhere deep down in me. Again and again, thrill after thrill quivered and shook my frame. I went out to compose myself.

I once told Bhagavan, "I have been here for many years. People meditate and get into samadhi. I close my eyes for a minute and the mind travels round the world ten times and so many long forgotten things come up."

Upon this, he said, "Why do you concern yourself about others? They may meditate or sleep and snore. Look to yourself. Whenever the mind goes astray, bring it back to the quest."

Once a few very learned Sanskrit scholars were seated in the hall discussing portions of the Upanishads and other scriptural texts with Bhagavan. I felt in my heart, how great these people are and how fortunate they are to be so learned and to have such deep understanding and ability to discuss with our Bhagavan. I felt miserable. After the pandits had taken leave, Bhagavan turned to me and said, "What?", looking into my eyes and studying my thoughts, "This is only the husk! All this book learning and capacity to repeat the scriptures by memory is absolutely of no use. To know the Truth, you need not undergo all this torture of learning. Not by reading do you get the Truth. Be Quiet, that is Truth. Be Still, that is God."

Then very graciously he turned to me again, and there was an immediate change in his tone and attitude. He asked, "Do you shave yourself?" Bewildered by this sudden change, I answered trembling that I did. "Ah", he said, "For shaving you use a mirror, don't you? You look into the mirror and then shave your face; you don't shave the image in the mirror. Similarly, all the scriptures are meant only to show you the way of Realization. They are meant for practice and attainment. Mere book learning and discussions are comparable to a man shaving the image in the mirror." From that day onwards, my long-standing sense of inferiority vanished once for all.

One day, I felt puzzled by the teaching that everything in the world is maya or illusion. I asked Bhagavan how with the physical existence before our eyes we can all be unreal and non-existent? Bhagavan laughed and asked me whether I had any dream the previous night. I replied that I saw several people lying asleep. He said, "Suppose now I ask you to go and wake up all those people in the dream and tell them they are not real, how absurd would it be! That is how it is to me. There is nothing but the dreamer, so where does the question of dream people, real or unreal, arise; still more of waking them up and telling them that they are not real. We are all unreal, why do you doubt it? That alone is real." After this explanation, I never had any doubt about the unreality of the objective world.

Bhagavan's compassion has graced my life many times – On the day my wife died, it rained in torrents. I was afraid that the cremation would be delayed. Bhagavan sent some Ashram workers to help me. When Bhagavan was told that the rain was too heavy for the funeral, he said, "Go on with it, never

mind the rain." When the body was taken to the cremation ground, the rain stopped, and after the body was burnt to white ashes, it started raining again. In 1942, I wanted to get my daughter married. I had a suitable boy in mind but he raised some objections. Anxiously, I showed his letter to Bhagavan, who said, "Don't worry, it will come off." Soon afterwards, the boy himself came and the marriage was celebrated.

It is our greatest fortune that the Supreme Consciousness appearing in the garb of a human body graciously undertook to come down to our level of understanding and bore the tremendous task of imparting to us the atma vidya. The contact and impact that I have had with Bhagavan have been such as to make me feel that knowingly or unknowingly I must have done something in the course of my lives to deserve this unique blessing."

V. Kameswara Rao (a government employee):

"Once I had a dream in which a saintly old man with a radiant smile beckoned me to him. I told my wife about my dream, but could not identify the saint I had seen. Could it be Ramana Maharshi? I asked a friend of mine, who often went to Sri Ramanasramam, whether he would take me with him, and he agreed. We set off that very day, arriving at the Ashram next morning. We went to the hall and there on a couch sat the Maharshi, the saint of my dream. I felt that I was in the presence of God."

P.V. Sastri (lawyer, came to Sri Ramana in 1945 in the aftermath of death of his 23-year-old son):

"The event was so terrible and caused such grief that I thought I would not survive it. I neglected practically all my worldly duties for some time. Later, I got somehow attracted to Sri Ramanasramam and went there with my whole family. Having read about Sri Krishna's bringing His guru Sandipani's son back to life, we were so mad as to think to get our son restored to life by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana. We reached Tiruvannamalai and entered the hall where Bhagavan used to sit. Our one idea was to beseech him to bring our son back to life; but despite our intense desire, we found that we could not open our mouths to speak. We simply sat silent till Bhagavan rose for dinner and everyone went out. Then we too went back to the place

where we stayed. We went to the hall again in the afternoon with the same purpose but with the same result. In this way, we went to the hall each morning and afternoon continuously for seven days to implore Bhagavan to bring our son back to life but we could not utter a word in his presence. On the eighth day, we talked it over together after coming out of the hall and decided that it was no use staying any longer since our purpose had not been fulfilled, and we decided to leave next morning.

At this time, a gentleman named Subbarao met us. He was formerly a pleader at Nellore and had come to Tiruvannamalai and settled down as one of the resident devotees. We became friends. He asked me what we were talking about, and I told him the whole story. I admitted that we felt peace in Bhagavan's presence, but the moment we left the hall, our grief bursts out again like a volcanic eruption; and yet, we were unable to speak out and put our desire before Bhagavan. Subbarao promised to take us to Bhagavan next day and introduce us to him. We agreed. The next day, on being introduced, we told Bhagavan about our grief and in a general way asked for his help. Bhagavan nodded his head and said, Seri, Seri (All right, all right), but we still found ourselves unable to talk any more, still less to tell him what it was that we really wanted. Again, we felt constrained to sit there speechless. That evening we decided to leave, since even the intervention of Subbarao had not helped us. But Sri Ramana would not let us go. A thought occurred to me that I should buy some books published by the Ashram. When I went to the bookstall, the gentleman in charge was in meditation but opened his eyes immediately and asked us to come in. On being questioned by him, I repeated the whole story. He said that the Maharshi was capable of bringing the boy back to life, but since the boy was a highly religious and a devout young man, he would have gone to better regions and would not like to come back to us. I assured him that he loved us so much and we loved him so much that he would really come back, if it were possible. The gentlemen then put me another question. "Suppose Bhagavan brings him back to you and then both of you die, what will the position be then?" This question dispelled the thick cloud of illusion that had enveloped us and at last, we saw that our attempt to get our son back was sheer madness. I felt at the time and feel even now that it was not the bookseller talking to me, but really Sri

Bhagavan was speaking through him. We abandoned the hope of getting our son back to life and also our plan of leaving immediately. We stayed for about twelve more days.
The rest of our stay at the Ashram was only for the purpose of obtaining peace. Sri Ramana's 'all right' had been meant to help us in the only way in which a realized guru will help. His grace was bestowed on us and he began to work silently in our hearts to remove the thick clouds of sorrow and end the volcanic outbursts of grief. He began to instil peace and develop real knowledge in us. Silently and slowly, the grace is still working in that direction. We were blessed with his grace and felt uplifted in the right way."

M. M. Menon

(A man who wrote articles on Advaita and great Indian sages):

"In May 1948, I was seated in the hall a few yards away from the couch of Bhagavan, immersed in the serenity and the peaceful silence emanating from him. I was overwhelmed with happiness.
The bliss I felt could not be described.
I could not contain myself and felt like sobbing. The happiness I felt then I am able to recall even now in all its intensity and I consider myself especially blessed by Bhagavan. I cannot recall the incident in my mind without realising how infinitely merciful Bhagavan was."

Mercedes de Acosta:

(A Spanish American woman who was a Hollywood socialite and scriptwriter for films. Long after meeting Sri Ramana, she wrote the book 'Here Lies the Heart', which was dedicated to:
"Thou Spiritual Guide - Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, <u>the only completely egoless, world detached and pure being I have ever known.</u>")
"When I first entered the hall, I perceived Bhagavan at once, sitting in the Buddha posture on his couch in the corner. At the same moment, I felt overcome by some strong power in the hall, as if an invisible wind was pushing violently against me. For a moment, I felt dizzy. Then I recovered myself. To my great surprise, I suddenly heard an American voice calling out to me, 'Hello, come in.' It was the voice of an American named Guy Hague, who had

already been with the Maharshi for a year. He came towards me, took my hand, leading me to a place beside him. I was able to look around the hall, but my gaze was drawn to Bhagavan, who was sitting absolutely straight looking directly in front of him. His eyes did not blink or move. Because they seemed so full of light, I had the impression they were grey. I learned later that they were brown, although there have been various opinions as to the colour of his eyes. His body was naked except for a loincloth. As he sat there, he seemed like a statue, and yet something extraordinary emanated from him. I had a feeling that on some invisible level I was receiving spiritual shocks from him, although his gaze was not directed towards me. He did not seem to be looking at anything, and yet I felt he could see and was conscious of the whole world. Hague whispered, "Bhagavan is in samadhi." After I had been sitting for sometime, Hague suggested that I go and sit near the Maharshi. He said, "You can never tell when Bhagavan will come out of samadhi. When he does, I am sure he will be pleased to see you." I moved near Bhagavan, sitting at his feet and facing him. Not long after this Bhagavan opened his eyes. He moved his head and looked directly down at me, his eyes looking into mine. It would be impossible to describe that moment and I am not going to attempt it. I can only say that at that time, I felt my inner being raised to a new level – as if, suddenly, my state of consciousness was lifted to a much higher degree. Perhaps in that split second I was no longer my human self but the Self. Then Bhagavan smiled at me. It seemed to me that I had never before known what a smile was.

I said, "I have come a long way to see you."

There was silence. I had stupidly brought a piece of paper on which I had written a number of questions I wanted to ask. I fumbled for it in my pocket, but the questions were already answered by merely being in his presence. There was no need for questions or answers. Nevertheless, I asked, "Tell me, whom shall I follow – what shall I follow? I have been trying to find this out for years." Again there was silence. After a few minutes, which seemed to me a long time, he spoke, "You are not telling the truth. You are just using words – just talking. You know perfectly well whom to follow. Why do you need me to confirm it?" "You mean I should follow my inner self?", I asked. His response was, "I don't know anything about your inner self.

You should follow the Self. There is nothing or no one else to follow." I asked again, "What about religions, teachers, gurus?" He said, "Yes, if they can help in the quest for the Self. Can a religion, which teaches you to look outside yourself, which promises a heaven and a reward outside yourself, be of help to you? It is only by diving deep into the spiritual Heart that one can find the Self." I said, "Bhagavan, you say that I am to take up the search for the Self by atma vichara, asking myself the question 'Who Am I?' May I ask who are you?"

Bhagavan answered,

"When you know the Self, the 'I', 'You', 'He', and 'She' disappear.
They merge together in pure Consciousness."

To write about my experience with Bhagavan, to recapture and record all that he said, or all that his silences implied is trying to put the infinite into an egg cup. On me he had, and still has, a profound influence. I feel it presumptuous to say he changed my life. My life was perhaps not so important as all that. But I definitely saw life differently after I had been in his presence, a presence that just by merely 'being' was sufficient spiritual nourishment for a lifetime. I sat in the hall with Bhagavan three days and three nights. Sometimes he spoke to me, other times he was silent and I did not interrupt his silence. Often he was in samadhi. I wanted to stay on there with him but finally he told me that I should go back to America. He said, "There will be what will be called a war, but which, in reality, will be a great world revolution. Every country and every person will be touched by it. You must return to America. Your destiny is not in India at this time."

Before I bid a sorrowful farewell to Bhagavan, he gave me some verses he had selected from the Yoga Vasistha. These contained the essence for the path of a pure life: "Steady in the state of fullness, which shines when all desires are given up, and peaceful in the state of freedom in life, act playfully in the world, O Raghava! Inwardly free from all desires, dispassionate and detached, but outwardly active in all directions, act playfully in the world, O Raghava! Free from egotism, with mind detached as in sleep, pure like the sky, ever untainted, act playfully in the world, O Raghava!"

When I returned from India, undiscerning people saw very little change in me. But there was a transformation of my entire consciousness. And how

could it have been otherwise? I had been in the atmosphere of an egoless, world-detached and completely pure being."

T. K. Sundaresa Iyer:

(A school teacher at Tiruvannamalai, acted as an interpreter for English-speaking visitors at the Ashram)

"In those days, Bhagavan's figure was like a statue of burnished gold. He simply sat and sat, and rarely spoke. He was an enchanting personality, who shed a captivating lustre on all, and a life-giving current flowed from him, charging all those nearby, while his sparkling eyes irrigated all those around him with the nectar of his Being.

Bhagavan was a pastmaster at story telling. His solo acting was ever the admiration of his devotees. His modulation of voice of different characters, suiting gestures and postures of each incident, were wonderfully effective. His devotees never missed a chance of being in the hall on such occasions. When Bhagavan came to the story of how the forest devotee was plucking out his second eye to heal the second eye of the Lord, and of how the Sivalinga extended a hand to stop him, saying, 'Stop Kannappan', Bhagavan's voice got choked, his body perspired profusely, his hair stood on end, tears gushed out of his eyes, he could hardly utter a word, and there was pin-drop silence in the hall. All were dumbfounded that this great jnani could be so overpowered by emotion and ecstasy at the hunter's devotion. After a while, Bhagavan quietly closed the book, dried the tears with the end of his towel and laid aside the book, saying, "No, I can't go on any further."

About 1920, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni came to reside at Tiruvannamalai. He used to discuss sastras with Bhagavan and get his doubts cleared. He was a mighty scholar, while Bhagavan was just literate, yet the Muni would say, "Without Bhagavan's grace, the intricacies of the scriptures are beyond one's power of understanding. One word from him makes everything clear."

When Ganapati Muni would see someone sitting in front of Bhagavan, meditating with his eyes closed, he would scold the devotee, saying, "When the Sun is shining in front of you, why do you need to close your eyes?"

At the Skandasram, a peacock would follow Bhagavan everywhere. One day a huge black cobra appeared in the Ashram and the peacock attacked it

fiercely. The cobra spread its hood and the two natural enemies were poised for a fight to death. Bhagavan went near the cobra and said, "Why did you come here? The peacock will kill you. Better go away at once." The cobra lowered its hood and slithered away.

In 1933, on my 36th birthday, I sat in Bhagavan's presence in a pensive mood. I addressed a prayer in Tamil to him complaining: "O, Bhagavan, I have completed three and half decades, and yet have not had the experience of the real you. Pray, let me have this day the touch of Your Grace." Handing over the slip of paper, I prostrated before him. He made me sit down and gazed steadily at me; I was still in a pensive and meditative mood. All of a sudden I lost body-consciousness, and was absorbed in the Maharshi. I got turned inward, and the voice of Bhagavan made me see whatever I desired. The ecstasy of the vision defied description. I simply sat on, with the Maharshi gazing at me. Two hours may thus have passed in pin-drop silence, lost in the vision, until it vanished. I prostrated at the feet of the Maharshi, with tears of ecstasy in my eyes and my hair standing on end.

Bhagavan gave us a tangible demonstration of God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Though outwardly we seemed to remain very much the same persons, inwardly he was working to destroy the deep roots of separateness and self-concern in us.

A couple from Peru, who had heard of the Maharshi's greatness, came to the Ashram. Being poor, they had to save enough money for a few years to become deck passengers. To the couple, the Maharshi's presence on the earth seemed the second coming of the Christ himself and they longed to see him. One evening, when they sat before Bhagavan, the talk turned to Peru. The couple was describing the seacoast and beach of their town. Just then Bhagavan remarked, "Is not the beach paved with marble slabs, with coconut palms planted in between? Are there not marble benches in rows facing the sea, and did you not often sit on the fifth of those with your wife?" This remark came as a great astonishment to the couple and as they were wondering and were at a loss to understand as to how the Maharshi could know such minute details, Bhagavan smiled and remarked, "It does not matter how I can tell. Enough if you know that the Self is not limited by space and time."

Knowles, an Italian, well read in both Eastern and Western philosophies, once came to the Ashram and had many interesting talks with Bhagavan. One morning, Bhagavan was describing the state of a jivanmukta: "He is the ever-aware Self, the witness-consciousness transcending space and time and causation, the fullness of Being. How he is the non-actor, non-enjoyer, and yet at the same time the greatest of actors, the greatest of enjoyers and so forth." This was too much for Knowles to digest. In the heat of the discussion, he put a straight question to Bhagavan, "Are you or are you not speaking to us?" Bhagavan gave Knowles a meaningful look and said in a most emphatic tone: "No, 'I' am not talking to you." In an ecstatic mood, Knowles echoed: "No, Bhagavan is not talking to us. He only exists. That is all."

'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi' records:

"T.K.S.Iyer, a disciple, was agitated because someone in the town had spoken disparagingly of the Master and he had failed to retort. So he asked the Master what penalty should be paid for his failure to defend him. The Maharshi replied, "Patience, more patience; tolerance, more tolerance."

T. R. Kanakammal:

(Her uncle Ramakrishna Iyer was one of the earliest devotees of Sri Ramana. Married against her wishes, she never led a family life.)

"Every morning, my heart sang at the very thought of spending the day in Bhagavan's presence. Entering the Ashram, I could feel a transformation within myself. All my petty worries disappeared as if by magic. I also found each one of my faculties slowly calming down. It is difficult to describe this feeling. At times, it was as though I was totally detached from my body. I was in a state of ecstasy. Sometimes, I found Bhagavan directing his eyes at me. The intensity of his gaze was, at times, almost impossible to bear. My mind would get completely absorbed in the Self without any kind of effort on my part. The peace and joy of the experience used to linger on for a long time after leaving the hall. One day, after I prostrated and settled down in the hall, Bhagavan's eyes stayed on me. Bhagavan's gaze makes it impossible for you to keep your eyes open. The intensity of his direct look is too much for an ordinary human being to take. It is as though some invisible

power has entered you and made its way to the very core of your being and there is nothing but the blissful awareness of the Self.

When this happened for a short while, I would gaze at Bhagavan with my eyes open. But within a few seconds, my eyes would close of their own accord and I got totally immersed in a peace, which is beyond description. I do not know how long I would stay in that state of bliss. When I managed to open my eyes, I saw that Bhagavan's gaze was still upon me. Then I saw Bhagavan getting up and going out of the hall. I also stood up. Kameswaramma (a lady devotee) embraced me and with tears in her eyes, said, "Kanakamma, you are indeed fortunate. Bhagavan's eyes were on you all the time. Not for a moment did he shift his gaze. I was watching you and Bhagavan all the time. Bhagavan has been extremely gracious to you today. What more can you want!" I was unable to respond to these words because I was in a state beyond speech. The state of my mind was indescribable. I felt a deep peace within me, which stayed for many days afterwards. Everytime I think about that day's experience, I feel the same thrill of ecstasy.

One day, a young, well-educated man came to Bhagavan, prostrated and sat down. Addressing Bhagavan, he said, "Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was able to elevate Vivekananda to the state of nirvikalpa samadhi with just a touch. Can Bhagavan do the same for me?" Bhagavan did not say anything. The young man waited with obvious impatience for Bhagavan's reply. After a few minutes of silence, Bhagavan looked at the youth and, in a soft voice asked, "You are another Vivekananda, I presume?"

The young man was taken aback. He was at a loss for words. Greatly embarrassed, he left the hall quietly. Bhagavan then told us, "It is difficult to appreciate the need for self-analysis and self-criticism. The tendency is to think of oneself as perfect. Though this person was eager to see whether I had the power of Sri Ramakrishna, he was not bothered whether he himself merited comparison with Vivekananda. That is because he assumed that he was perfect. Sri Ramakrishna bestowed that rare state upon Vivekananda alone because he was a person of rare spiritual merit."

Once Subbalakshmi Ammal, a long-standing devotee and a cook at the Ashram, was indiscriminately plucking flowers from a bush. Bhagavan asked, "What are you doing, Lakshmi?" She replied, "I am plucking flowers for

puja." Pointing to the towel, which she had spread on the ground to collect flowers, Bhagavan said, "You already have so many flowers. Why pluck more?" The lady artlessly replied, "There are so many flowers on this bush. I thought it would be better to gather them, rather than let them go waste." Bhagavan retorted, "You have already seen and enjoyed the sight of the bush laden with beautiful flowers. Now you do not care whether anybody else gets a chance to enjoy the same heart-warming sight. Or maybe you have some exclusive right over this bush. Did you plant it and nurture it yourself, thus making it your personal property?"
Subbalakshmi Ammal told us that after the incident, she was reminded of Bhagavan's words everytime she saw a flowering bush!"

Srikrishnaprem (formerly Prof. Ronald Nixon from England, taught literature at Benaras and Lucknow universities; The story of his visit to Tiruvannamalai in 1948 is as told by his friend Dilip Kumar Roy:)
"He entered the room where the Maharshi was reclining and sat down among the devotees to meditate. As soon as he did so, he heard a voice saying over and over again, Who are you? Who are you? Who are you? He tried to ignore it but eventually he replied mentally, "I am Krishna's servant." The voice still went on to ask, "Who was Krishna?" He answered, "Nanda's son. He is an avatar, the one-in-all, the resident in every heart."
Next morning, when he sat down in the hall with other devotees, the Maharshi gave him a lightning glance and smiled at him. He closed his eyes. Then on a sudden impulse, he found himself silently asking the Maharshi, "Who are you?" When something made him open his eyes, he found that the Maharshi's couch was empty. He closed his eyes again; but in a moment, he opened them. The Maharshi, who was reclining in his usual place, gave him a fleeting smile and a meaningful glance."

Prof. Pryns Hopkins (an American social psychologist):
"I was requested to take my seat in the front row and an interpreter sat next to me. The Maharshi was saying that we only know the object through sensation derived from it remotely. Physicists have shown that in place of what we thought to be a solid object, there are only dancing electrons and

protons. I asked, "If the outer phenomena which I perceive have no reality apart from my ego, how is it that someone else also perceived them? For example, not only do I lift my foot higher to avoid tripping over that stool yonder, but you also raise your foot higher to avoid tripping over it. Is it a mere coincidence that each of us independently has come to the conclusion that a stool is there?" The Maharshi replied that the stool and our two egos were created by one another mutually. While one is asleep, one may dream of a stool and of persons who avoided tripping over it just as persons in waking life did, yet did that prove that the dream stool is any more real? And so we had it back and forth for an hour, the gathering feeling amused. The Maharshi went on to say that the essential thing is to divorce our sense of Self from what our ego and body are feeling or doing. We should think, "Feelings are going on, this body is acting in such and such a manner," but never, "I feel, I act."

I objected, "You have told us that all the animal propensities are attributes of the ego. If when a man attains jivanmukti, he ceases to feel responsibility for the behaviour of his ego and body, won't they run amok completely?" The Maharshi replied, "When you have attained jivanmukti, you will know the answer to this question. Your task now is not to worry about it, but to know the Self."

I said, "Here before us is the Maharshi who has attained jivanmukti, and so has withdrawn from all responsibility for the conduct of his ego and the body. But though he declares them to be the seat of all evil propensities, his ego and body continue to behave quite decorously instead of running wild." He retorted, "Let the Maharshi deal with that problem if it arises and let Mr. Hopkins deal with who is Mr. Hopkins."

Major-General V. N. Parameswaran Pillai:
(Later known as Swami Paresananda)

"My friend Narayana and I reached the Ashram. He was a frequent visitor, accommodation was no problem. We proceeded to the hall. The hall was almost full with visitors. As we entered, the scene brought to my memory Dakshinamurthi. I felt as if Dakshinamurthi Himself was reclining on the couch. Bhagavan noticed us, and after a while, he sat up and beckoned me.

We did not know whom he was summoning. I was a stranger, Narayana thought he was being called and he got up. Bhagavan signalled 'No'. When I was pointed out and the Maharshi nodded assent, everybody was surprised and became curious about me. I was also surprised. After I postrated, he beckoned me to come nearer and gazed at me for a while and smiled. Then he told his attendant, "Bring that book". It was brought and the Maharshi presented it to me. It was a Malayalam translation of the Maharshi's Tamil book, the Gitasaram. I was overwhelmed with joy and devotion. Then it was time for the midday meal. In the dining hall, the Maharshi asked me to sit in the opposite row, just facing him. While eating, he enquired tenderly, how was the food? and so on. He also said, take enough rice, curry, eat slowly, etc. Throughout, he was talking to me only. This made others wonder who this favoured one might be. I felt that it was all due to some merit accumulated in past lives. "Omniscient as he is, the Maharshi understands the heart of every one." This belief of mine was confirmed. Narayana was a regular visitor to the Ashram, but the Maharshi had never spoken to him. When I received such favours from him, it was natural for Narayana to feel that there was something lacking in him. The Maharshi could easily understand this. The same day, he presented a book to Narayana also and made him feel gratified."

N. O. Mehta (devotee from Gujarat):

"I felt that I was face to face with a Reality which has transcended all that I had dreamt of him. Here was a great sage whose company was undoubtedly a privilege. I instinctively felt that here was India at its highest, for here was the deepest realization of the Reality transcending all mundane factors and bringing peace which surpasses all understanding. We were in a world totally different from the one we had left behind.

Bhagavan's presence would never be forgotten. A friend said that we could not possibly leave without taking Bhagavan's permission. We reached Bhagavan as he was coming out of the dining hall. Our reward was immense. Bhagavan gave us a penetrating glance of immeasurable grace, which even now, is one of the most abiding memories of our sacred pilgrimage. It is astonishing how Bhagavan's presence and his usual, apparently routine activities cast such a magic spell over all those who are blessed to come near him."

Madhavi Ammal (a sincere lady devotee):

"I knew fully well that Bhagavan gave no formal initiation, but I kept on asking for it whenever an opportunity presented itself. Invariably Bhagavan used to reply, "Who is the Guru and who is the Disciple? They are not two. There is but One Reality. It is in you and it can neither be given nor taken."

Bhagavan resumed his state of absorption. He continued to sit motionless. Finally, I begged of him, "Am I not a competent person to receive the teaching? Bhagavan should himself tell me about this."

Immediately on speaking thus, I found a bright light emanating from Bhagavan's face, and the effulgence filled the whole hall. I could not see Bhagavan's body but only the brilliance. I shed tears in profusion. The whole incident lasted for a few seconds. I prostrated to Bhagavan. There was a smile on his face but no movement otherwise. After a while, he turned to me as if to ask, "Have you got rid of your mania?" He then took a piece of paper, wrote a sloka on it and gave it to me, saying, "You can make use of it in meditation." The sloka was: "I adore Guha the Dweller in the Cave of the Heart, the Son of the Protector of the Universe, the pure light of Awareness beyond thought, the wielder of the weapon of jnana sakti and the Remover of ignorance of blemishless devotees."

Dr. Shankar Rao:

(Retired District Medical Officer)

"To have served Bhagavan as a doctor is no ordinary privilege and no ordinary experience. It was an education of the highest type, a training of a unique character. It provided me with vivid glimpses into the human as well as the superhuman and god-like personality of Sri Maharshi.

When I first came to the Ashram in December 1948, Bhagavan had a small nodule under the skin above the elbow. It was removed in February 1949. A microscopic examination revealed it to be a malignant tumour of the flesh. The wound did not heal and after a few days a new growth appeared. The tumour subsided a little as a result of radium treatment, but it again began to grow. In August, the tumour was removed with the help of surgeons from Madras. In December 1949, a small nodule again appeared in the middle of the arm which was operated. By the middle of February 1950, the tumour

again started growing. All treatment, including homeopathic and ayurvedic failed. The general health of Bhagavan continued to deteriorate and the end came on April 14, 1950. Bhagavan's attitude towards his body was one of complete detachment. Disease and pain left no impression on his mind. If he allowed himself to he treated for the ailment, it was more because his devotees wanted it than because he desired relief. His attitude was always of supreme indifference to bodily ailments. To everyone by his side, the way he bore the pain, which was at times extremely excruciating, without showing signs of suffering on his face, was a wonder.

One of my friends took photographs of Sri Bhagavan one afternoon. During the night, when we both were together and I was dressing the wound, he referred to the photos and gave a profound spiritual discourse, using the science of photography as an illustration. He said, "For taking a picture, the silver salts are coated over a film in the dark and when the film is exposed in the camera, you get an impression caused by light outside. If the film is exposed to light before you put it in the camera, there can be no impression on it. So is it with our jiva. When it is still in darkness, impression can be made on it by the little light that leaks in. But when the light of knowledge has already flooded it, no impressions of external objects can be obtained." In a similar fashion, he used to entertain his medical attendants with jokes interspersed with profound spiritual education.

To watch Bhagavan and listen even to his day-to-day talk was an education to those who were near him. There was no need to read books on religion or philosophy. His whole philosophy and the philosophy of ages were in Bhagavan's life. His life was an exposition of the highest philosophy."

Emmanuel Sorensen / Sunya Baba:

(Danish devotee, was once referred to by Ramana as 'a natural born mystic')

"The first seeing of the Maharshi remains an unforgettable experience, especially Sri Ramana's casual, as it were, statement, "We are always aware," and this made a most powerful impact on me. It resounded in my consciousness like a chime and continued to linger in my memory like a mantra or echo. I also remember some passages mentioned by him from the Bible: "I am That I am", "Be still and know that I am God", "Know ye not that you

are God." I found Ramana Maharshi's was a pure Advaita experience, and his chief language was radiant silence, to which only mature souls familiar with solitude could easily respond. When Sri Ramana was questioned by officious officials and was later asked if it had tired him, he said, "No; I did not use my mind!" He was mind-free and ego-free."

Lokamma (a kitchen worker at the Ashram):

"By a mere look, Bhagavan transmitted his power. I could feel it coursing through my veins. With eyes brimming with tears of happiness, I kept looking at Bhagavan. Gradually, I became a regular visitor. I used to assist in the kitchen. One day, I was to cook some dhal and curry. I came early in the morning so as to have some more time. But Bhagavan was quicker than me. He told me that the dhal was ready and I have to prepare only the curry. Bhagavan asked Thenamma what she was doing, and finding that she was preparing special food for a lady having her menses, he got annoyed and said, "Why should she eat food cooked separately? Make no differences, serve her the food you have prepared for all." After the evening meal, Bhagavan asked me whether the lady was given the common food. As I was assuring him about it, the Ashram manager came near and told me in whispers that in case someone else asked me what food was served to ladies during their period, I should say that separate food is prepared for them. Bhagavan overheard the manager and scolded him, "Why do you ask her to tell lies? The Ashram gives food to all and makes no difference. There are no untouchables here. Those who do not like it, may eat elsewhere."

He went on to add, "There used to be the same trouble with Mother at the Skandasram. Here we have menses and there we had pariahs. She would not give food to the man who brought us firewood because she was afraid of pollution! She insisted that I must eat first, then she would eat and then the woodcutter could have the remnants left on the ground outside the Ashram. I refused to eat until the man had been decently fed. At first, she would not yield and would suffer, weep and and even go without food. But I was adamant; and she had to reconcile to my standpoint. What is the difference between man and man? Is it not correct to see God in all?" We were all astounded. The rebuke, addressed to the manager, went deep into our hearts."

Raja (V. Rajasubrahmania) Iyer (the first postmaster at Sri Ramanasramam):
"Bhagavan sometimes would give useful tips to make it easy. Often Bhagavan would work with us side by side, cutting vegetables, etc. He was very particular about avoiding waste. He showed me how to use a ladle to avoid spilling while pouring, and how to start a fire with just a few drops of kerosene. In 1937, Sri Ramanasramam post office was opened and I was appointed the first postmaster. Prior to that, I used to bring post from the town. Bhagavan humorously remarked, "Yesterday's postman is today's postmaster." Bhagavan used to wake up at four in the morning. Till nine at night, there would be a continuous stream of visitors and his solicitude for each of them was touching. To provide some relief, the management decided to close the the doors of the hall for two hours after lunch. When Bhagavan learnt about it, he sat outside the hall after lunch saying that people come to see him from long distances."

Roda MacIver:
"The time I arrived at the Ashram, the Maharshi had gone up the hill. I was told to wait on the footpath for his return. I was expecting to see a man walking down the hill, but when the Maharshi finally appeared, I couldn't believe that I was watching a glorious sunrise unfold: a distant glimmering of light that, as it approached, became more and more radiant until the blazing sun itself was standing next to me. I was overawed and humbled by this display of utter magnificence. Standing in the glow of that radiant presence, something shifted inside me, some new awareness manifested that I had never had before. I was caught by him and his love, and in that moment my soul became his.
During the next two years, I was visiting the Ashram regularly. One day in 1944, when I went into the hall, Bhagavan was reading some papers. I sat down and looked at him. Suddenly he put away the papers and turned his luminous eyes on me. I could not stand the gaze, so I closed my eyes, tears streaming down my face. When I opened my eyes, he was still looking at me. My heart got flooded with joy and inner calmness! Next morning, when I was in the hall, somebody asked Bhagavan what was the use of sitting before him, if he does not give initiation? Bhagavan replied that initiation can be

given in three ways: 'by silence', 'by look', and 'by touch.' When saying, 'by look', he looked at me. Then I had no doubt that I had received initiation from Bhagavan, my most revered Master!

After a month's stay, when I returned to Bombay, there was a complete change in my life. Worldly pleasures ceased to attract me and I wanted to be alone as much as possible.

From the beginning, I had a strong desire to touch Bhagavan's feet, but I knew this was not allowed by his attendants. I confided this desire to Mrs. Taleyarkhan, thinking she would keep it a secret. But in the hall, in front of everyone, she told Bhagavan, "Roda has a strong desire to touch your feet." I was so embarrassed. Bhagavan said nothing at the time; but after lunch that day, he stopped near me, said something in Tamil to a nearby devotee and asked him to translate it for me. The devotee said, "Bhagavan says, why should she want to touch my feet? My feet are always on her head." I was overwhelmed with joy. Everyone around congratulated me on my good fortune on getting a blessing like this. People who had been with Bhagavan for years and years said they had never heard him make a remark like this to anyone else. From that time onwards, I gave up worrying over any problem."

Meenakshi (the wife of Muruganar):

"In those days, the Ashram comprised just two cottages set in the most picturesque surroundings. There was the backdrop of the Arunachala hill in all its majesty. Bhagavan would do the cooking and I would assist him.

Sri Ramana would teach me some new Tamil devotional song each day.

One day while all were meditating, my thoughts strayed. I started wishing for a cup of coffee. Bhagavan knew everyone's thoughts. He said, "While everyone is meditating on the Self, Meenakshi is meditating on coffee." Just then, Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer arrived with iddlies and coffee for all of us. Bhagavan jokingly said, "Meenakshi's tapas has borne fruit, please serve her first."

After being abandoned by Muruganar, who would not take me as wife even after Bhagavan's intervention, I wept bitterly before Bhagavan. He asked, "Did anyone chide you?" "No Bhagavan, I was only cursing my fate." With a heart brimming with love, he said, "Meenakshi, why don't you have faith in

my words? What is there in the family life of which you are so enamoured? My protection is always there for you."

Nagaiah V. Chittoor (legendary Telugu cine artist):

"When my wife died, the whole world looked bleak to me. Everything seemed like an arid desert with no oasis in sight. I would be reading the Gita over and over again. The slightest thought of my wife would sink me into deep sorrow. To overcome it, I would let my friends force me into giving music concerts. One day I left my house, and wandering here and there, reached Sri Ramanasramam. To me it was like entering the heaven on earth. The atmosphere of profound peace which surrounded the Maharshi and which enveloped the place sank into me. At long last, my mind knew some rest. The majestic silence of Bhagavan ended my suffering and my self-concern about the bereavement.

Paul Brunton and I became friends, and time passed happily.

I had not spoken a single word to Bhagavan all this while nor had he to me. But there was some imperceptible yet strong bond of love between us. To leave the majestic master who filled my heart with peace was unthinkable. Still the seeds of desire had been sown. I was looking for an opportunity to get the Maharshi's permission. When the permission was sought, he said, "Yes, you can go. There is still a lot of work for you to do."

I could not comprehend the implications of the statement at that time. The recording assignment took me to the film world where name and fame came to me in a big way. I would have withered away unhonoured and unsung but for the grace of Bhagavan Ramana. He poured new life into me. The Maharshi had an uncanny perception of each person's need and would lead one along the path best suited to that person."

Subbalakshmi:

"My husband, Dr. Krishnamurthi, the first Ashram doctor, met Bhagavan in 1924. During one of the Deepam festivals, he introduced me to him. In the early days of my married life, while living in Tiruvannamalai, my husband (who worked in a hospital) would often run away to Bhagavan, leaving me all alone. He never thought about the children or me. One day, I was terribly

afraid that my husband might become a sadhu. The next night Bhagavan appeared in a dream and assured me, "Have no fear; your husband knows where his duties lie. Give up all worries." When my husband narrated the dream to Bhagavan, he gave a gracious smile! One day all of a sudden, I became extremely unwell. Neighbours and friends felt that I was nearing my end. At that time, my husband was at the Ashram. When the message was sent to the Ashram about my condition, Bhagavan, who was reading the newspaper at that time, went into a trance for some time. Simultaneously, I became normal. This was nothing short of a miracle. Later, when I met Bhagavan, he mischievously told me, "It seems it is a new life for you." Once Bhagavan was narrating the life of the saint Siruthondar Naayanaar. His voice was choked with emotion and tears kept trickling from his eyes. No doubt he was a jnani par excellence but what a heart he had!

On his mahanirvana day, I could not get Bhagavan's darshan because of the long queue. Bhagavan, however, graciously appeared in a dream and said, "Amma, how long should I bear the body? Death is natural to it. It is like a leaf on which the food has been eaten. It has to be thrown away."

Vajreswari (daughter of the outstanding devotee Ganapati Muni):

"My mother would regard him as her father and he in turn would treat her like a child. Once a devotee brought her dead son in a box and prayed intensely to Bhagavan to bring him back to life. Bhagavan could readily see the faith and hope behind her prayer. Tenderly he told her, "Amma, don't you see that if I restore your son's life, Sri Ramanasramam would be flooded with corpses?" Then he spoke to her at length about life, death and the need to be conscious of the state transcending both. He explained that all experiences were centred round the individual and that the search for the source of the 'I' alone would end all sufferings. These soothing words and advice went home and the lady returned, consoled at heart. This was only natural since Bhagavan's words were loaded with power and grace. After the lady left, a devotee asked, "Is it possible to revive the dead?" Bhagavan replied, "Jnanis, siddhas and yogis can restore life, but is it for this purpose that they have come?"

Santha Rangachary (journalist):

"I desperately needed a confidante, an adviser, somebody preferably outside the family, and out of the blue, the name of Ramana Maharshi came to me. His was the only name I had ever heard my father – a stubborn, intolerant sceptic – mention without any adverse suffixes.

Ramana Maharshi entered my life when my sister took our family on a pilgrimage. We were to stay at Sri Ramanasramam only for two days. But as it turned out, we stayed for the whole week and I wept like a lost child when we had to leave. The visit was a shattering experience for me. I do believe I literally fell in love with Ramana Maharshi. I was in a daze, a trance, my tongue was gone, my mind was gone, I was in a state of dumbfounded ecstasy. This love, which had been awakened, was the kind which totally bypasses the physical plane and creates an awareness of a different kind of consciousness which can only be described as a mindless rapture, pure joy. It is an unlocated, pervasive state of being sparked off by some kind of recognition and it stays with you, and you are never the same again. When we went to Sri Ramana's hall, my mother, brother and sister went ahead and quickly disappeared into the hall. I hung back, unaccountably apprehensive. Then, as I at last composed myself and got to the door and looked in, I saw reclining on a sofa, a golden-brown figure with the most radiant countenance I had ever seen before or since and, as I stood there riveted to the spot, the Maharshi looked at me. When I remember it even now, more than forty years later, tears come to my eyes as they did then. I stood there, God knows how long, just looking at that face. Then, as in a trance, I moved forward deliberately towards him and touched his feet. Fighting my way through the disapproving glance that followed, as devotees were not allowed to touch Bhagavan, I made my way to a place near the window. Once seated, I let my tears flow. I remember I spent a good part of that morning wiping my eyes. They were not tears of grief nor were they tears of joy. Maybe they were for something which I saw in the Maharshi fleetingly and which I also want and shall forever seek. Yes, I cried for myself then and I still do it now. Never before had I seen in a human countenance a more intense inward life and yet one which remained so transparent and childlike. There was about him an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power, which simply overwhelmed

me. I was conscious of people sitting all around me but was totally incurious about them. After an hour or so of silence, I suddenly felt like singing. Without hesitation or embarrassment, I lifted my 12 year-old voice. I saw the Maharashi turn his eyes upon me with that impersonal yet arresting look of his, my heart soared and I thought: 'I want to be here for ever and ever'. For three hours every morning and every evening, my vigil in the hall continued for seven days. I sat in my seat near the window, still and thought-free, just gazing at the Maharshi. Occasionally, somebody would ask a question and the Maharshi would turn and look at him, and you got the feeling that the question had been answered. Or, somebody would ask for the meaning of a particular phrase in a Sanskrit or Tamil stanza and the Maharshi would answer softly, briefly. The Maharshi was not a man of many words. His long years of practised detachment from people made him absolutely brief in speech. His knowledge of classical Tamil religious literature was considerable; he could himself compose verses and he did. His enlightenment had not been directed by a Guru but had come from his Self-consciousness. His most effective form of communication was intra-personal through the sense of sight and the medium of silence. He was very much a human being, who laughed and joked occasionally, but he could suddenly plunge deep into himself while sitting in a hall full of people and rest in that stillness of spirit, which, as he himself said, was being in God. One afternoon, somebody showed the Maharshi some verses. The Maharshi read them and made a brief comment. In those eloquent silences that punctuated his brief remarks, one seemed to feel unspoken thought flowing around the room touching and drawing everybody into its illuminating course. That was a strange experience to me. In the presence of the Maharshi, speech seemed redundant. I was totally and blissfully satisfied just being in his presence. That whole week, I practically did nothing else but sit in the hall. I had never before spent so many days talking so little, just sitting around so much, or so lost in a single-minded pursuit of the Maharshi. I shall not claim that my whole life was transformed after this meeting. No. I went back to school and then to college, got married, set up a house, had children, started a journalistic career of my own. All this became my main preoccupation. But my visit to Sri Ramanasramam had done something to me. It left a mark on my mind and

heart. The picture of the Ashram and of the Maharshi was always in my mind like the background curtain of a stage. Whenever I was tired or dispirited or perplexed, the wish to go to Sri Ramanasramam would possess me like hunger. Even when I was so busy that I did not know whether I was coming or going, a sudden look at a picture of the Maharshi hanging on the wall would momentarily root me to the spot and my mind would suddenly go blank. Whenever I feel I want to go away somewhere, away from home, family, friends, books, mistakes, fears, sorrows, my mind automatically turns to Sri Ramanasramam. And my body follows. I make the journey to Tiruvannmalai, walk into the Ashram, enter the hall, and I am 'home' and totally at peace. Every human being has really only one guru like one mother. Some are fortunate enough to meet their gurus; some pass them by, like ships in the night. I stumbled upon mine when I was twelve; I now stand alone in myself. In a sense, I am twelve-going-on thirteen all over again, standing on another threshold, remembering, waiting."

T.R.A. Narayana (Manager in a large British firm in Madras):

"While returning from our brief tour of the Ashram, we heard a childlike voice say "Chee, asatthe!" (Fie, you creature!). We observed movement among the leaves of the brinjal, lady's finger and other plants in the kitchen garden. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey and a squirrel and Bhagavan who was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. Bhagavan was holding a small paper packet in his left hand and was picking groundnuts from it with his right-hand fingers to feed the goat, the monkey and the squirrel and himself, by turns. His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey, which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel's lips. As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the eating. All the four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. We saw all the four only as good friends despite the differences in their forms. No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight. The nuts over, Bhagavan threw the paper away and said: "Pongoda!" (Go away, you fellows!), just as any old man speaking to his grandchildren. The goat, the monkey and the squirrel left

and Bhagavan got up. We hurried away, feeling guilty of trespassing into the Divine, but not sorry. Soon after, Bhagavan came to his couch. His eyes were fixed on something far above and beyond anything on earth. They were like screens which shut the material world off from the light which was burning behind them. Sparks of light shot out through the fibres of the screen at times, sparks which cooled the eyes on which they fell, pierced the gross coverages and lighted the wick inside them. Bhagavan reclined on the pillow on the couch, supporting his head on his left palm. We all sat down to look at his face. We sat and sat, and looked and looked. No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very alive experience in which the innermost being of each one of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness which was Bhagavan.

My mind kept recalling that scene: how the goat had snuggled to Bhagavan's breast in perfect confidence in his love for it; how the monkey had grinned in joy and how Bhagavan had returned the grin as both bit the nut; how the squirrel had peered with its pinhead eyes into Bhagavan's dream-laden ones and scratched his nose tenderly with its tiny paw. The vision of the Supreme Spirit underlying and overlaying the sense perception was spiced with the lovely sight of the groundnut party in the kitchen garden.

Bhagavan got up from the couch. We also got up. We left. I felt a hitherto unknown peace and joy inside me; the faces of the others also showed a similar condition. One day, while in the dining hall, a man of about thirty came in. I looked at the man. He was thin but strong. His face glowed with health and happiness. I shook his hand heartily. He spoke, "Sri Bhagavan fulfilled his promise wonderfully well."

My mind went back to the kitchen garden and the four friends at the groundnut party."

K.R.K. Murthi (Chief Electrical Engineer):

"Once in 1937, I read in a newspaper that an eminent personage was going to Tiruvannamalai to have darshan of Sri Ramana Maharshi. I had great respect for that gentleman and was anxious to meet him. So I made up my mind to proceed to Tiruvannamalai. I went straight to the hall and placed the packet of sugar candy, which was purchased as an offering to the Maharshi

on a stool near him and sat down along with a number of people of both sexes. All people were sitting like silent statues and the only offender in the gathering was the clock on the wall. Physical activity in the hall was nil but for the scented sticks, which were briskly throwing up curls of smoke. I waited patiently for sometime but still the same silence continued. It looked very strange and odd as I had never seen such a silent gathering before. I wanted to know something about the Maharshi, but whom to ask? Several people were coming, prostrating before the Maharshi and sitting quiet in the hall. This was also an unfamiliar sight which left a deep impression on my mind. After a while, the Maharshi rose up and then everyone in the hall got up and prostrated. When the Maharshi left for a walk towards Arunachala hill, people began to appear in their true colours and I witnessed the usual work-a-day world. A visitor to the Ashram once told me that Sri Ramana simply sits quiet without talking and without doing anything useful to anybody. My personal experiences, which are very real, have convinced me that Bhagavan was always lending his helping hand actively and silently in his own characteristic way. He used to help the devotees so secretly that no one knew anything about it, except the recipient.

Once, as I was entering the hall, I saw the Maharshi holding his left hand forefinger with his right hand. There were several people in the hall at that time. Some might not have noticed this and some might have dismissed this as insignificant. But to me it is unforgettable because the pain I was for long experiencing in my left forefinger was permanently cured.

I was also cured of the pain in my elbow, which was persisting in spite of all medical attention. One day, I dreamt Bhagavan taking meals at our house. After the meals, I handed over a mug of water to him to wash hands. He took the mug and poured some water on my elbow before washing his hands. Next day onwards, there was no pain in the elbow. If it had been a mere dream, could it have such an effect on the physical body?

Once arrangements were made for feeding the poor in the Ashram. People were rushing into the place set apart for dining. Then someone in authority told loudly that sadhus should keep out. When food was to be served, it was found that Bhagavan was not present. People rushed in all directions and found Bhagavan sitting under a tree. When requested to join the devotees,

Bhagavan said, "You never wanted sadhus to remain there. Being a sadhu, I left the place." Bhagavan identified himself with the lowest. He used to rectify the wrong not by showing anger but by self-denial or self-punishment.
The Ashram was developing a garden. Some inmates had put forth their best efforts to secure plants and nurse them. One day, some Ashram cows entered the garden and grazed off the inviting plants. The inmates were very unhappy. The event created much stir and reached Bhagavan's ears, who smiled and said, "Why should cows be blamed? Did they know they were not to graze in certain places? If the garden is properly fenced, the cows will not get in." Bhagavan saw the other side of things, which the normal people failed to see. With a view to recording Bhagavan's voice, some devotees referred to the sound recording machines. Seeing that Bhagavan was favourably disposed towards them, they wanted to pursue the matter further and fix a date for recording the voice. At that moment Bhagavan said, "My real voice is silence. How can you record the same?"
Once Bhagavan was asked whether it was true that by the grace of the guru, the highest state is reached in a moment. Bhagavan replied, "Yes. If the disciple is in a ripe state, the ajnana (ignorance) will be removed only by the avalokana (look) of the guru." He added, "The kripa (grace) flows towards one in proportion to one's merit. If the vessel is small, the kripa received will be small; if the vessel is big, the kripa will be proportionately more."
Once an attendant of Bhagavan was reading some scriptures to him at night. The attendant heard a snoring sound and stopped reading. Immediately Bhagavan questioned him as to why he stopped. Again the attendant continued and similar snoring sounds from Bhagavan made him stop again.
But Bhagavan was quite alert and asked him to continue.
One day a prince entered the hall with a few friends for Bhagavan's darshan. As there was no distinction between the prince and the peasant before Bhagavan, the prince took a seat beside us. One of his friends wanted to ask a question but was feeling shaky and hesitant. To his great surprise and amazement, almost the same question was put to Bhagavan by someone else. Bhagavan's reply gave great joy to the visitor. The prince sat quietly for a time, and who knows what happened, he began to pour forth streams of tears till he left the hall.

Once, going through an English daily as usual, Bhagavan read somewhat aloud a sensational report of a new invention and smiled. After a pause, he gently remarked, "One may acquire any number of powers, but without realising the yathartha (truth), one cannot acquire mano shanti (peace of mind). When someone asked, "What is yathartha?" Bhagavan replied, "That which exists always," and added after a pause, "Peace is our swabhava (nature). Just as a person who keeps a number of things in a room and complains that there is no space in the room, we say there is no peace. Is not the space obtained automatically when the things are removed?"

In the early days, the Ashram was a lonely cottage in a jungle. One day thieves broke into the Ashram at the dead of night. They freely used their sticks on everyone including Bhagavan, who restrained the devotees who tried to pay them back in the same coin. He said, "Do we knock down the teeth if they bite the tongue?" Bhagavan told us: "If one wants to commit suicide, even a small implement or knife is sufficient. For murdering others, bigger things are required. Similarly, for oneself, one or two words are sufficient, but to convince others, books after books have to be written."

When a Westerner invited Bhagavan's attention to the poverty of the average Indian and his poorly furnished quarters, Bhagavan replied that although the Indians did not possess many material comforts, they are not less happy on that account; as they do not feel the want of the same, they are able to enjoy life with what they have.

Bhagavan's handwriting was just like print. I had a keen desire to preserve something written by Bhagavan. But I was feeling very hesitant to ask in front of so many persons. Then, someone in the hall remarked loudly that I had written in Telugu script the songs of Tamil saint Tayumanavar, as selected by Bhagavan. Now Bhagavan wanted to see them. Asking me to hand-over the notebook, he patiently corrected some mistakes. In this way, he satisfied my burning desire, even before I expressed it, and without appearing to have done a special favour to me."

Srimat Puragra Parampanthi (renowned swami of his time, has authored many books on Advaita and Modern Physics, and The Meaning and Mystery of Reincarnation):

"I saw Sri Ramana for the first time on December 10, 1949. I saw a tall, lean man in loincloth; the limbs were well proportioned and well knit and long; the skin was smooth and glowing and the quivering head was inclined towards the right side. There was a white bandage on the left arm, which had been operated upon to remove a tumour. His eyes shone with kindness and love, his face was lit up with a beatific smile of benediction. I saw before me a yogi of the highest order – a mystic of the supreme realisation, who radiated the living presence of divinity within and without.

The next morning I saw him again. His ever-smiling face was completely free from the ravages of illness, which was slowly and steadily ruining his body. His spiritual presence was dynamic and clearly perceptible. It touched and inspired us and simultaneously took us to the high and rare sphere of spirituality. I felt suddenly the presence of a spiritual power, which was ambient and edifying, and which raised the expectancy of all to a high pitch. The atmosphere of the hall was distinctly attuned to a higher will and power which influenced the entire gathering. All eyes were fixed on the Maharshi. I wanted to know how and by what irresistible force it had been possible for persons – young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple, belonging to different races and religions – to gather at the feet of this great yogi. I wanted to know how and why the stubborn diversity has transformed into unity here – the persistent dissimilarity into perfect harmony – the 'many-ness' into one-ness! I realised that it had been possible solely due to the unifying presence of the Maharshi. He was not only the preacher of truths of unity and one-ness, of identity of man and God, of spiritual brotherhood of mankind – irrespective of caste or creed, race or position – he was the living symbol of these truths. That was why his all-embracing personality had become the centre of universal truth and the unifying force cementing diverse races and religions into a harmonious concord. Our narrow understanding cannot fully comprehend him; his greatness is too vast – too immense to be captured within our mental orbit. Just a part of his spiritual self, a tiny fraction of it is visible to us and we rejoice in the partial vision of him because we are in the dark and bound by the sad limitations of our senses.

He has passed away, yet he lives perpetually in the evergreen memory of his thousands of devotees the world over, in his own undying gospels and

messages which will continue to uplift, inspire and guide all along the right path towards the right and highest goal – God-realisation."

K. Arunachalam (Gandhian social worker):

"During the daytime, there was a stream of visitors who prostrated before the Maharshi. Sometimes he opened his eyes and blessed them with a smile. Occasionally, he spoke a few words. When the daily newspaper arrived, he glanced through its pages. Most of the time, his eyes remained half closed. There was a calm peace in the whole environment that surpassed all understanding. I sat silently watching and enjoying the holy presence of the Maharshi and spent a full three-day period like this. Before leaving, I requested the Maharshi to clear a doubt of mine. He showed his willingness by a broad smile. Taking courage, I posed the following problem: "The Maharshi by his example directs his followers to keep quiet, but Mahatma Gandhi, by his own example, goads everyone to be continuously active." The Maharshi's face broadened with an unparalleled smile. He asked, "Who told you that I am sitting quiet?" I replied in all humility that I had seen it with my own eyes. He said, "Why do you think that what you are seeing with your physical eyes is the truth?" I had no answer for this question.

In 1951-52, during my tour of the southern United States, I came in touch with a group of Whites who were deeply involved in the desegregation movement. They did not differentiate between one and another, whether black or white. I found in the study room of the leader of this group a photo of Ramana Maharshi, whom he had never seen. He revealed that it was the Maharshi's teaching that was a driving force in all his activities undertaken for bringing about equality between the two races – the Whites and the Coloured. He evinced a deep interest in the Maharshi's mode of self-enquiry for self-realisation. Now I understood the true import of the Gita's teaching: "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is a yogi who has accomplished all action."

Panthulu Lakshmi Narayana Sastri (scholar, adept in composing extempore poetry):

"As we entered the hall, Bhagavan was seated majestically on the sofa. His first sight evoked great faith and ineffable bliss in my heart.

I felt as if some divine force had taken possession of me.
I was told that when Devaraja Mudaliar had said to Bhagavan, "It seems that Sastri is a great poet", Bhagavan replied, "Yes, I agree." But he was quick to add, "All this is only an activity of the mind. The more you exercise the mind and the more success you have in composing verses, the less peace you have. What use is it to acquire such accomplishments if you don't acquire peace? But if you tell this to people, it does not appeal to them. As Ganapati Muni used to say, in going forward, one can run with speed, but when it is going backwards, that is, running inwards, even one step is hard to take." When I came to learn about Bhagavan's opinion on the composition of extempore poetry, I greatly curtailed my poetic ambitions."

B. N. Datar (famous philosopher):

"During my 16 or 17 annual visits to the Ashram, I was generally a silent, though an observing member of the group of devotees that used to assemble to seek blessings from Bhagavan. I was, in particular, very keen on observing the attitude of various disciples towards Bhagavan and his response to them in his inimitable way.
Once a spiritual seeker from the West, highly perturbed over the then darkening clouds of the international situation (sometime before World War II) came to the hall in a challenging and quarrelsome mood. He almost took Bhagavan to task "for wasting his time and energies in a secluded corner of the earth, and not taking active steps to turn the world's attention from the ways of the devil to those of the divine." His rebellious mood struck us dumb in the hall. He demanded an immediate answer from Bhagavan, who quietly told him that he would have it, and remained quiet without saying anything further. We were all sitting anxiously in the tense atmosphere when, after half an hour, quite suddenly, the questioner broke the silence by exclaiming that he had got the answer. Bhagavan asked him to write it. He did so, and when it was read out, it breathed a sense of complete submission to Bhagavan. He confessed in the writing that Bhagavan was serving the best interests of mankind in his own unobtrusive and silent ways, and that what was required from a seeker was not a mood of challenge but one of submission to the higher forces, which were working in their own inscrutable ways

through great sages like the Saint of Arunachala. The questioner, from that time onwards, became one of the gentlest of Bhagavan's devotees.
A few days before Bhagavan left this world, All India Radio at Dharwar had requested me to broadcast a short talk on the great personages that had influenced my life. I chose to speak on Bhagavan; my speech to be broadcast on a date to be fixed later. As destiny would have it, it was fixed for April 14, 1950, between 7.30 and 7.45 p.m. I went to Dharwar and gave the talk, and thus had the good fortune of broadcasting to the world my tributes just one hour before Bhagavan departed from this world. I treat this as the highest blessing from Bhagavan, and the greatest treasure of my life. Even though Bhagavan is not with us in human form, I have never felt his absence because he is living in my house and before my eyes wherever I go. I experience that he is guiding every action of mine at every moment of my life."

Y. N. (alias Bhaurao) Athavale (devotee who used to sing before Sri Ramana in the hall):
"In February 1942, when I was in a state of utter depression, I had a wonderfully vivid vision-like dream at dawn. I saw in a mountain cave, a great mahatma and throngs of people going up the mountain to listen to him. I was one of them. I waited and asked the people around me, "How is it that the lecture has not started yet? Where is the Saint?" Near me sat an old man who raised his hand and said, "Silence is the Master's speech and his disciples have no doubts left." I asked, "Where is the Master?" He replied, "He is sitting near you." Searching near me, I found a slender young man wearing a white codpiece, with a smile on his face. I bowed to him and asked his name. Pointing a finger to his heart, he said in Marathi, "This is known as Ramana Maharshi." Having said this, he smiled in a charming manner and instantly, I woke up in delight. I took it to be the answer to my repeated prayers and felt happy. I had not heard much about Ramana Maharshi's greatness, as his name was not then (in 1942) well-known in Maharashtra. For about ten or twelve days, I was longing to get some information about him. All of a sudden, one day a gentleman of my acquaintance told me that during his pilgrimage to Rameswaram, he went to Tiruvannamalai and had a blissful darshan of Ramana Maharshi. He advised me to go.

I reached Sri Ramanasramam at 6 a.m. I saw Bhagavan coming towards us. My joy knew no bounds. As I prostrated before him, he asked, "Have you come from Poona? You seem to be quite exhausted." I was wonderstruck to hear this. In the afternoon, when I sat before him in the hall, he enquired about my health. I replied that I had been suffering terribly from sciatica for three years, had no sleep, no desire for food and was growing from bad to worse in spite of the treatment by the best of doctors. He graciously said, "You can stay here in peace. Your disease is not incurable." He quoted a verse from the Gita: "O son of Kunti, the contacts between the senses and their objects, which give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., are transitory and fleeting. O Arjuna, endure them," and pacified me. I felt extremely relieved. In three or four months, I was completely cured of the disease. Thereafter, I used to see him three or four times a year up to 1950 and came in close contact with him. He rejuvenated me physically and spiritually and brought me eternally into the fold of his benign Grace, to describe which I have no words. On receiving a telegram, I went to the Ashram on the day of his mahasamadhi. My emotions and feelings were checked somehow during the day he left the body. But next day, at night, I began to weep bitterly feeling very uneasy that I shall never henceforth see Bhagavan in an embodied form and enjoy the bliss of his presence. All of a sudden in the dead of night, some footsteps were heard! There came Bhagavan with a lantern in his hand! He straightaway approached me, and said in a soft, gentle, loving voice, "Why do you weep? Did I not tell you that I am here?" I controlled myself and bowed down to him. By the time I raised my head, he had disappeared, leaving me in utter surprise and desolation. My thousand pranams to Ramana Bhagavan."

Dr. Haribhai M. Adalja:

"In 1946, I went to Sri Ramanasramam for Bhagavan's darshan. Devotees were seated in the hall in front of Bhagavan. I wrote a chit and placed it before Bhagavan, stating, "I feel I have the experience of the Self, but my mind does not agree with that." After reading it, Bhagavan ordered a copy of Ulladu Narpadu, turned to verse 33 therein, and asked someone to show it to me. It read, "To speak I have not known myself or I have come to know

myself is ridiculous. What? Are there two selves, one to objectify the other? The experience for all is that the Self is only One."

A year later, when I was coming down the Arunachala Hill and Bhagavan was going up the narrow path, I stepped aside to give him room to go and stood with closed eyes and folded hands. When Bhagavan came near me, to my utter surprise, he asked, "Do you still find two?"

Once I asked Bhagavan, "If waking and dream states are not different, can a man realise his Self in the dream state?" He replied, "First realise the Self in the waking state and then raise the question." Bhagavan was quoting an example of the relation of gold with the ornaments, that only gold is real, while the name and form of gold appearing as ornaments are unreal. I raised a query, "Though the ornament is false, we see gold and also the ornament which is false, which is not the case with the world, i.e., when we see the world in numerous forms, we do not see the Reality, the substratum." Bhagavan explained, "In dream, there is no world, and yet you see it just as in the waking state. Both name and form are illusions; you see them only when you see yourself in form and identify yourself with the ego sense."

N. Ponniah:

"In 1948, the opportunity came for me to visit the Ashram. I was accommodated in the guesthouse. Devoid of all signs of so-called civilised standards, this thatched cottage entertained me with inexpressible homeliness in the company of resident sadhus and devoted visitors. Away from the din and bustle of city life, the Ashram is ideally situated in the midst of natural surroundings. There was no regimentation based on caste, creed or colour or of any other type. As a background to this model of ancient hermitages stood, in all its grandeur, the holy hill of Arunachala. With a heightened reverential emotion, I entered the hall. Bhagavan was reclining on the sofa, absorbed in the Self, silent and serene. I took my place amongst the gathering. Pin-drop silence prevailed. Nothing seemed more enjoyable in this blessed world than to sit in silence in that place in the holy presence of the Maharshi. Darshan was not the monopoly of human beings alone. At certain hours, the squirrels from a large tree by the side came down to claim their fair share. The beautiful peacocks followed. Bhagavan looked at them most graciously. "Oh, you

are hungry!" he would say, and some grain was given to them. They would then move away happily like a child after the mother's feeding! One day, a barrister from Bombay broke the silence by raising some puzzling questions, not capable of satisfactory answers. A discussion followed at a high intellectual level. When an impasse was reached, the Maharshi told the barrister about the futility of the theoretical enquiry. He suggested that he could sit in silence and introspect and he will find the answer. Darshan of the Sage Ramana is a singular experience, which words can hardly describe. I can only say that I felt an unusual vibrating sensation, a sort of electric charge, which had transported me for a moment. What is even more unforgettable are Bhagavan's melodious and inspiring expressions in Tamil, which often attuned to his Holy Hermitage, reverberate in my ears."

Swami Satyananda:

"Once I went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram in the company of some sadhus. Narayanaswami spoke to me of the greatness of Bhagavan and gave me the address of the Ashram on a piece of paper. I went to Tiruvannamalai. When we arrived, Bhagavan was sitting in the hall alone. He looked at us and smiled. I can never forget that smile. I spent seven years at the Ashram, begging my food in the town. I then obtained, by Bhagavan's grace, the good fortune of serving him as his personal attendant.

On the evening of April 14, 1950, we were massaging Bhagavan's body. At about 5 p.m., he asked us to help him sit up. Precisely at that moment, devotees started singing 'Arunachala Siva.' When Bhagavan heard the singing, his face lit up with radiant joy. Tears began to flow from his eyes and continued to flow for a long time. I was wiping them from time to time. Bhagavan's breathing became gradually slower and slower and at 8.47 p.m. subsided quietly. There was no struggle, no spasm, none of the signs of death. At that very moment, devotees who were outside saw a bright meteor in the sky, which reached the summit of the holy hill Arunachala and disappeared high in the sky."

Henri Hartung (Swiss, ran a Ramana Centre in Switzerland for many years):

"I came to Bhagavan in 1947. The long path to the Ashram became for me

the royal road to the discovery of oneself. I had learnt that Ramana Maharshi was an authentic representative of the traditional wisdom. During the two days and two nights of train travel, I admired the Indian landscape and especially the noisy and colourful scenes, which occured during the stops. Finally, I framed some ten questions that remained essential for me – the meaning of my presence on earth, what happens after death? Why? How? etc. On the day of my departure, precise answers to every one of the questions I had prepared were given to me, without my asking them. All this is a really subtle transmission of an exceptional spiritual reality. Till his last day, the Maharshi will make it possible for his visitors from the next town or from a remote place, on foot and penniless or in luxurious cars, to see him, even to talk to him. They came to bow in front of the living incarnation of the divine reality in human form. He was there, amongst us, without ever showing any sort of ambition, or a particle of pride. A smile of love and peace and the look which I feel while writing these lines can never be described in words.

Thirty years after the first meeting, I am once again at Tiruvannamalai, with my wife. A pilgrimage, which goes to the depths of my soul, as it did thirty years ago. The Maharshi's life serves as a concrete reference. He was the last link of a chain of wise and holy men whose origin is beyond time and whose influence gives a meaning to our life, a harmony to our behaviour and peace to our hearts."

Swami Chidbhavananda:

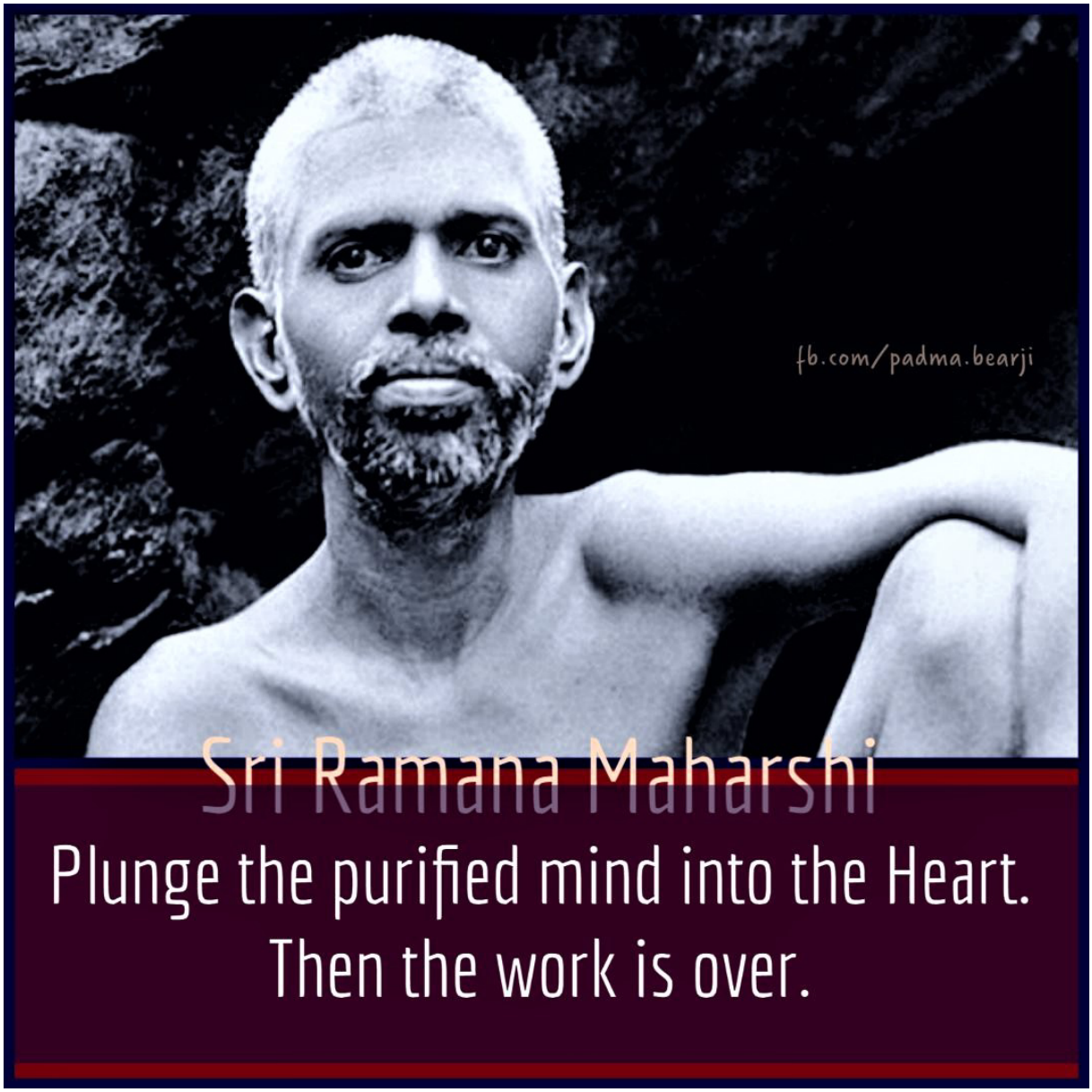
"In 1923, a few of us religiously inclined college students undertook a pilgrimage from Madras to Tiruvannamalai for a darshan of Ramana Maharshi. The Ashram was then in its initial stage. An august person was seated on a raised platform. Around him on the floor were seated a number of devotees, all intently looking at him. Silence reigned supreme. This was a novel experience for us. We sat quietly. The Maharshi turned his penetrating gaze at us off and on. We felt ourselves highly blessed by his friendly and kindly look. Occasionally, he spoke a word or two, which were always pertinent and to the point. But his silence was more eloquent. As head of Sri Ramakrishna Ashram at Ootacamund, I took as many opportunities as possible to see the

Maharshi. I was not inclined to talk much with him; being seated in his presence was more than sufficient. Occasionally he spoke, but his silence was what I sought and prized every time I went to him. A purified enquirer makes a rich harvest of the blissful calmness that prevails in his presence. The Maharshi occupied a couch in a corner of a hall in the Ashram. One day a man following the path of devotion came in and occupied a place near the sage. Then he unburdened all that lay buried in his heart. His speech was choked with feeling. He poured forth, "I have gone on pilgrimage all over the land. I have been regular in my spiritual practices. Many a sleepless night I have passed in prayer. Still to this day, I have had no mercy from the Lord. I am forlorn." He cried bitterly, but the Maharshi sat unconcerned. When all his suppressed feelings were worked out, in a measured voice, the sage said, "What is there to sob about? Instead of being poised in the blissful Self, you go on wailing." This simple observation had a telling effect. The visitor saw that his problem was self-created; and a new chapter started in his life. On another occasion, a talkative man made his appearance. He chose to sit near the sage and unceremoniously asked, "Bhagavan, what is your view on birth control?" There being no answer, that man explained at length the importance of the topic. Again getting no reply, he continued until he could say no more and then fell silent. Silence reigned supreme in the hall. In the midst of this silence, the Maharshi asked, "Do you know death control?" There was no response. One day, it was suggested to the Maharshi that no spiritual progress could ever be made without sadhana or discipline. After a pause, he made these observations:

"Desire is of two kinds – the noble and the base. The base desires are lust and greed. Noble desires direct us towards enlightenment and emancipation. Base desires contaminate and cloud the understanding. Sadhana is easy for the aspirant who is endowed with noble desires. Calmness is the basis of spiritual progress. Plunge the purified mind into the Heart. Then the work is over. This is the essence of all spiritual discipline!"

During one of my visits, I was seated at some distance from the Maharshi. I remembered his injunction, 'Plunge the purified mind into the Heart', and decided to practise it then. I gazed at him and he gazed back at me. What followed was indescribable. His body seemed a glass case from which a

blissful brilliance streamed out. More than half an hour passed this way. It was an experience unique and unforgettable. It confirmed Sri Ramakrishna's statement that spiritual experience can be transmitted from one person to another in the manner in which material things are handed over."



C. R. Pattabhi Raman (a minister at the Centre):

"My first meeting with Ramana Maharshi was in the early 1930s when I returned from England after my studies. The Maharshi was the same serene blissful self with a friendly and kindly look on his face. The next important occasion when I went to Tiruvannamalai was a few days before the Maharshi's bodily demise. I accompanied my father, Dr. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar,

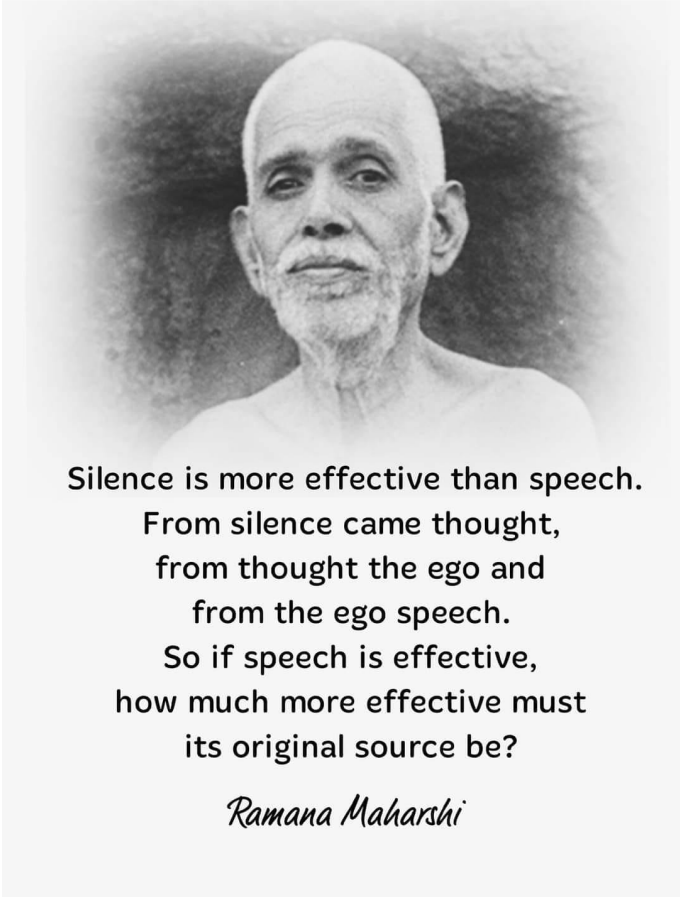
along with a friend. We were taken to the sage, who had been operated upon for a carcinomatous growth on his left arm. Apart from a few beads of perspiration on his forehead, there was nothing on his face to show that he was ill or suffering from pain. He proved beyond doubt that pain or sorrow did not affect a realized soul. A leading civil surgeon from Vellore expressed great surprise that the sage did not even want anesthesia for the operation and yet was able to stand the pain and the shock. Ramana Maharshi spoke a few words to my father and we took leave. As we were getting ready for dinner, my father said to me that he did not want food and would have some milk. At that very moment, an attendant ran to us with a message from the Maharshi, "The elderly person will say he will only have milk. Let him eat some fruits also." It was miraculous because the Maharshi was nearly half a furlong away and could not have heard what my father was saying.

The Maharshi was unique in many respects. Like Dattatreya, he did not have a guru as such. One could see on his face expressions of joy when recitations from the Vedas and Upanishads were taking place in the Ashram. His path of knowledge was not rigid or exclusive. Sri Ramana did not seek to establish any new cult but showed the direct way to Self-realisation. He taught as a jivanmukta (liberated soul), exemplifying Tat tvam asi ('Thou art That'). He was characterised by samatva (sameness in joy and sorrow and freedom from duality). He frequently referred to verses from the Yoga Vashista wherein the Sage Vashista advised the young Sri Rama to fulfil his mission, all the while abiding in the Self. The ideal of Self-realisation is not visionary, but is the very goal of life. Unswerving abidance in the Self, the one eternal Truth, whatever one may be doing, is well described in the Yoga Vashista: "Firmly established in the vision that shines forth, on the renunciation of all desires, and rooted in your own Being, act playfully in the world." To have seen the Maharshi in flesh and blood and have heard his word is our great fortune and most treasured memory."

Maha Krishna Swami (established 'Bhagavan Sri Ramanasramam' in Brazil):
"In 1938, I was taken to Bhagavan. His face radiated endless love and serenity. I prostrated before him. He said to me, "It seems you have been called." After thus greeting me, he became deeply absorbed. Without looking

at anyone or anything, he was penetrating into my innermost Self. Suddenly, he turned to me and, with a look that acquired an indescribable intensity, aroused in me quietness, deep peace and a great compassion for all living beings of the universe. From that day on, I knew that Bhagavan was not an ordinary master but a Universal Sadguru.

He was vitalizing and transforming me in every way. I knew that what I could absorb of the light of initiation would be according to my own efforts. I was to develop more and more control of my thoughts for receiving the subtle vibrations radiated by Bhagavan.



One day Bhagavan told me, "Silence is the most powerful form of teaching transmitted from the master to the adept. The soundless voice is pure intuition. It is the voice of the spiritual mind speaking in our innermost being. Self-enquiry is the only path we have in order to eliminate spiritual unconsciousness, which is widespread. Self-enquiry brings the consciousness of the divine, the universal truth and the light that governs the universe. All this must be known, felt, lived and realized. In order to realize this truth, we need to eliminate the thinking mind, to dissolve it in the Universal Self."

To forget the ego and discover the Universal Being, is the direct path taught by Bhagavan. After practising Self-enquiry for a period of time, one awakens a current of consciousness, the supreme consciousness. Bhagavan recommends: "Effort is necessary to move oneself deeper and deeper in the practice of Self-enquiry. Firm determination is essential to achieve the experience." Thoughts disappear and the state of consciousness, 'I am that, I am that', arises. Bhagavan spoke very little and showed the world how much could be transmitted by silence. With his attitude of serene benevolence, he set all at ease. I felt with absolute certainty that all the knowledge to be gained would be simply assimilated from his holy presence, for I had caught the truth that he is the link to the formless Being."

Dr. M.R. Krishnamurthi Iyer (the first doctor of the Ashram dispensary): "In the later 1930s, continuous hiccups gripped Sri Bhagavan. I was treating him. Days passed and I had tried all the medicines known to the profession; all in vain. I got thoroughly upset. I spoke no words to Him, but standing in His presence, I prayed mentally that He should show me a way to cure Him. I returned home grief-stricken and cried and cried like a child till I fell asleep. In the early hours of the morning, Sri Bhagavan appeared in my dream and asked, "Why are you crying?" I replied sobbing, "Bhagavan, you know why. I don't know how to save you from hiccups. What am I to do?" Sri Bhagavan consoled me saying, "Don't cry. In the courtyard of your house there is a plant of Seenhikodi. Pluck some leaves from it, fry them in ghee and then pound them along with dried ginger and jaggery, make balls of it and bring them to me. Don't worry!" I woke up delighted. My wife and I went out with a hurricane lamp and searched for the herb in the courtyard. In the small strip, many bushes had grown. There among them, we did find the herb; prepared the medicine and almost ran to the Ashram. As we entered the hall very early in the morning, we found Sri Bhagavan on His couch. With a smiling face, He greeted us and extended His hand with these words: "Give me what you have brought!" He swallowed a part of the medicine. When I spoke to Him about the dream, He looked innocent as if He knew nothing about it! Needless to say, the hiccups stopped as expected and He was restored to normal health."

Prof. Shiva Mohan Lal (Head, Dept. of Philosophy, Osmania University, Hyderabad, an Urdu scholar, has translated 'Who am I?' and other books on Sri Ramana into Urdu. Most of his family members are devotees of Ramana):
"I would often visit the Ashram, particularly during vacations. I was very dedicated and attached to Bhagavan. Once I sent a telegram to the Ashram, stating that my wife had given birth and that the delivery was smooth. Bhagavan simply acknowledged it with his usual 'Um Um!' Muruganar who was there asked: "Bhagavan, was it not because you were informed and your blessings were sought that there was an easy delivery for Mrs. Shiva Mohan Lal?" Bhagavan gave an understanding smile but did not reply. He resumed his usual serene gaze, and stern silence.
My sister was greatly worried about her son being issueless. At my behest she sought Bhagavan's intervention in this regard. We went to the Ashram along with her daughter-in-law, who presented a handful of almonds to Bhagavan. He chose to pick up only two out of the lot presented to him, without uttering a word. In course of time, she was blessed with two children."

Prabhakar (sceptic who got convinced of Sri Ramana's greatness):
"When I came to Bhagavan in 1949, I was a pure rationalist, averse to anything spiritual. Though I had heard about Bhagavan and had seen his photos, I ignored him. However, a total change in my life took place suddenly. One night, Bhagavan appeared in my dream. In that dream, my boss pointed to Bhagavan and asked me whether I knew Him. On replying in the negative, I was told that He was none other than Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and that I should go to Arunachala. I replied that I felt no such need, and in any case had no money to travel. My boss offered to give me the required money, that is, Rs. 60. At this point, I woke up from the dream. I hesitated to narrate the dream to my boss, though I did to one of my close friends, who persuaded me to approach the boss with the story. One day, I picked up courage and narrated my dream to the boss, avoiding the portion dealing with money. The boss was unmoved. He said, "Give more attention to your job and save some money to pay for the trip to your Bhagavan." But before I could move away from the place, there was a sudden change in the boss's attitude and he asked, "Do you really have a deep desire to visit Bhagavan?"

On my replying in the affirmative, he asked me how much money I would require. And even before I could open my mouth he wrote a cheque for Rs.60! Receiving the exact amount indicated in the dream, I felt that it was all Bhagavan's Grace, and immediately left for Tiruvannamalai. More thrilling than this was the fact that while entering the hall, I felt as if Bhagavan was looking intently at the entrance to the hall and waiting for someone to arrive. As soon as I entered, He gave a beaming smile and a welcoming nod! For the first time in my life, I bowed down to anyone. At the very first glimpse of Sri Bhagavan, I became a full-fledged bhakta! Once Bhagavan told me, "You say 'I am Prabhakar'. Who is this Prabhakar? Why do you accept that you are Prabhakar? Your parents called you so; you, being a rationalist, why should you accept it? Who is this Prabhakar? Use your reasoning faculty and search for who you really are. Then, the Prabhakar of this particular form and name will drop off and the real being alone will shine."
In spite of odds and obstacles, I led a peace-filled life because of my faith in and devotion to Bhagavan. I got all this not due to the excellence of my reasoning power or spiritual maturity but because of the lustre shed by Bhagavan on me."

Lakshmi Ranganadham (was affectionately referred to as 'our Lakshmi' by Sri Ramana):
"I stayed in Tiruvannamalai with my mother, and used to visit the Ashram. One day, while I was grinding rice for the next day's iddlies, suddenly Bhagavan came there and asked, "Why are you doing it all alone?" Then He also sat with me and completed the grinding. Even now, my hairs stand on end when I think of it! Bhagavan could be stern when we made mistakes. Once I made some puris which were to be served in the afternoon. I fried them in oil, but also made a few in ghee. I placed the specially made ones on top, so that I could quietly serve them to Bhagavan. Everything was distributed. When all was over, Bhagavan called me and said, "Lakshmi, don't do this again. If you try to differentiate, I will never touch any of your preparations." How did He know what I had done? I never repeated the mistake. Bhagavan's words were so powerful that one's entire being got changed with a single word of His."

Ramaswami Pillai (a long-time associate of Sri Ramana):

"I first saw Bhagavan when I was studying in school. He looked indescribably majestic. Since then, He has been God to me in human form. I did not ask for anything. He turned on me that look of heart-melting grace that He so often bestows on newcomers. I felt filled to the brim just by seeing Him.

Miracles did take place in the presence of Bhagavan. Strangely people like me, very close to Bhagavan, never cared to notice anything happening, as we were all so thoroughly absorbed in Him, in His Presence! I am able to recollect a 'miracle' that took place. A person from a town near Tiruvannamalai lost his eye sight owing to small pox or severe fever. He was advised that if he went to Sri Ramanasramam, Ramana Maharshi would give him back his eyesight. He arrived at the Ashram and, enquiring his way, reached Sri Bhagavan's hall. A few days earlier, two young doctors had arrived for darshan of Bhagavan. They were totally captivated by Him. They came to the hall, prostrated and went up to their car, when they had an urge to have one more glimpse of Bhagavan. Meanwhile, the blind man had entered the hall and was praying to Bhagavan that his eyesight be somehow restored by His Grace. Bhagavan was listening to everything, but kept absolutely silent. The doctors who witnessed this, voluntarily took the blind man in their car to Madras and treated him. After some months, I saw a man prostrating to Bhagavan with deep and sincere gratitude for having restored his eyesight. Bhagavan listened to him unmoved, as if He had nothing to do with it. This was the natural way He performed miracles. The other 'miracle' occurred when Bhagavan was staying at the Skandasram. In those days, He was taking only one meal a day. In the evening a disciple got rice and coconut. Bhagavan told us to make gruel by grinding the rice and coconut, and add sugar to it. But there was no sugar in the Ashram. Even salt, which Bhagavan suggested as an alternative, was not to be found. At about nine p.m., there was a knock at the Ashram's door, which was opened by me. To our great surprise, we saw two young men, who had braved through the drizzling rain and darkness, with a packet of sugar candy. Bhagavan jokingly said, "Aye! Sugar candy has come with bananas to supplement." The sugar candy was powdered and duly mixed with the gruel. Bhagavan asked the visitors how it was that they had to come at that time. One of them replied, "Bhagavan, it was

my good fortune to have read three articles by Mr. Humphreys published in the International Psychic Gazette. Ever since, it has been my greatest ambition to see Bhagavan and have His darshan. Somehow, it is only today that we had the opportunity. As college students at Coimbatore, we came for an excursion here and are going back tomorrow morning. Not willing to lose this God-sent opportunity, we came here not minding rain or darkness. We shall never forget this most memorable meeting."

V. Ganesan in his 'Moments Remembered' records:

"One day, when Ramaswami Pillai entered the hall, discussion was going on as to who was the greater of the two: Siva or Sakti. Bhagavan, as usual, sat in silence, with a look of amusement. The trend of the talk was that without Sakti, Siva could not do anything and this argument looked infallible. Ramaswami Pillai also joined the fray and said, "Yes, yes! 'He' is contained in 'She'!" The Sakti party became jubilant. "But", interrupted Ramaswami Pillai: "He can be independent and be without 'She'; but 'She' cannot be without 'He'!" The Siva-party looked triumphant. Bhagavan laughed till tears came to his eyes; he enjoyed the spelling-game thoroughly!"

David Godman records:

"Bhagavan could turn the most mundane event into an opportunity for spiritual instruction. Once, for example, Ramaswami Pillai was searching for a key that he had lost. After some time, he came into the hall and told Bhagavan about the missing key, who said to him, "The key is where it always was. It is not lost. Only your memory is lost. Atman (the Self) is always there, but due to ajnana (ignorance), we spend our time searching for it."

Morarji Desai:
(Prime Minister of India (March 1977 to July 1979)
& President of Ramana Kendra, Delhi, 1968-70)

"I had the privilege of seeing Ramana Maharshi in August 1935 in the hall in which he usually sat. He was sitting on a sofa and wore only a loincloth. I could see an aura on his face, which was glowing with peace and joy. I sat opposite to him but did not ask him anything. He too did not say anything to me. I sat just over an hour and just looked at his face. <u>Till today, I have not seen that aura, that joy or peace on anybody else's face.</u>

That hour of perfect stillness in that silent presence has been a precious memory ever since. While I sat there, no questions arose in my mind, nor did I feel any desire to ask anything. I was at complete peace with myself. It was this experience which convinced me that Ramana Maharshi had realized God or Truth. Some of his disciples who were present asked him some questions, which he answered. He, however, said nothing of his own accord.

The visit left an abiding impression on me and convinced me that Ramana Maharshi was a realised soul and that the ideal of 'action in inaction' as propounded in the Gita is really attainable.

The Maharshi seemed to know everything. He knew the language of the animals. He listened to their complaints. He treated every being in the same way, whether it was a cow or a dog, a crow or a monkey. All were equal in his eyes, the beggar and the millionaire.

He never went out of Tiruvannamalai. He refused to go out and preach. He said, "If I am a jnani, I consider everybody else a jnani too. What is there to give?" He regarded everybody as himself. He made no attempt to convert anybody. One got transformed by his very presence.

Many civilizations have flourished and then disappeared. But in this country you find our old culture and the ancient religion still alive. And it is this that keeps the country alive. It is persons like the Maharshi who keep it alive... All learning should come from within. That is the way the Maharshi showed. He did not criticize others way of life."

M.V. Ramanachalam (a boyhood friend of Sri Ramana):

"My father Venkataraman and Bhagavan lived in the same house. He would join Sri Ramana and his friends in their nocturnal escapades [daring adventures done at night]. After sneaking out in the dead of the night, the boys would go to the river bank and practise 'chilambam' (a martial art using long bamboo poles). Once, when my father returned late at night, my grandfather caught him, tied him to a tree in front of the house and caned him. Sri Ramana was watching this. Later, when my father heard about Ramana dwelling at Arunachala, he paid a visit to him out of curiosity. But the moment he stepped into Bhagavan's presence, he began to shed copious tears. To his amazement, he found nothing there of the former Venkataraman, his play-

mate. When he was about to leave, Ramana asked him in a subdued tone, "Is that tree still there in front of your house?" From then on, my father used to rush to Tiruvannamalai whenever he felt like visiting Bhagavan. At times, he would be accompanied by my mother.

My father considered Bhagavan the Supreme Eternal. Whenever the topic of Bhagavan was raised or Bhagavan's name was even mentioned, he would simply shed tears. As he was unable to refrain from weeping in Bhagavan's presence, Bhagavan gave him the name azhugani siddhar – the one who attains siddhi, that is, liberation, by weeping for God.

I remember visiting the Ashram when I was just five. I had high fever and was sleeping near the door of Bhagavan's hall. I felt delirious. Bhagavan would now and then lift his head from the sofa and tell me to go to sleep.

Once, as a boy, while leaving the Ashram, a deep sorrow suddenly overtook me and I began to cry. I refused to go with my mother, telling her that I wanted to stay with Bhagavan. Bhagavan, who was going that way, stopped and told me gently, "Go with your mother now and come back later."

My father died in 1939 when I was just 17. After a few months, my mother took us for Bhagavan's darshan. When she prostrated, she began to shed tears. As it was the custom in those days, my mother was not wearing any jewellery. She had her head shaved and covered it with her sari. She was wondering whether Bhagavan would recognize her and asked, "Bhagavan do you recognize me?" He smiled and said, "Why not? Only the makeup has changed." When I visited Bhagavan with my wife, he talked to her in Malayalam. How he knew that she was from Kerala is still a wonder to me."

Swami Ramanananda Saraswati:
(formerly T.N. Venkataraman;
President of Sri Ramanasramam for over forty years till 1994;
He had moved to Tiruvannamalai in 1938
to help his father Swami Niranjanananda in managing the Ashram affairs.)

"I met Mahatma Gandhi at Madras in January 1946, and presented him a photo of Bhagavan and some Ashram publications. Gandhiji kept looking at the photo and said in Hindi,

"What a great Sage!"

Robert Adams (Great spiritual teacher; had a vision of a small Indian figure, appearing at his bedside. He consulted Paramahansa Yogananda, who showed him the picture of Sri Ramana, which he recognized as the figure in the dream. He visited Ramanasramam and was with Sri Ramana for three years – 1947-50):

"When 19, I arrived at Bombay on my way to Tiruvannamalai. It was about 8.30 a.m. when I entered the hall. Sri Ramana was on his couch, reading the mail. I sat down in front of him. He looked at me and smiled, and I smiled back. There were about 30 persons in the hall. The Maharshi asked me if I had my breakfast. I said, 'No'. He spoke to the attendant, who came back with two giant leaves; one with fruits and one with some porridge and pepper. After I consumed the food, I just lay down on the floor. I was very tired. The Maharshi had arthritis in the legs and could hardly walk at that time [1947]. His attendants helped him to get up and he walked out of the room. When he came outside, he said something to his attendant who motioned me to come. The Maharshi guided me to a little shack that I might use while I was staying there. He came inside with me. I bet you think we spoke about profound subjects. On the contrary, he was a natural man. He was the Self of the universe. He asked how my trip was, where I was from, and what made me come here. Then he said I should rest. I lay myself down on the cot and he left. I was awakened at about five in the evening by Ramana himself, who had brought food for me. Can you imagine that? We spoke briefly. I ate and slept. The next morning, I went to the hall. Everybody sat around, just watching Ramana. He would go through the mail and at times may read it aloud, talk to some devotees, but his composure never changed. Never did I see elsewhere such compassion and love. Then people started asking questions. His replies were very succinct. They weren't like you read in a book. Apparently, what you read in a book is his reply to three or four people. They condense it all into one question and answer. People usually asked a question or made a statement. If he agreed, he would nod or say yes. That is it. If he didn't, he would offer an explanation in, may be, one or two sentences. There were Muslims, Catholic priests and people from many races and nationalities at the Ashram. When I was there for a week or so, two of his disciples were jokingly arguing about something at a meal. I asked

the interpreter what they were talking about. He said, "Ramana's couch is covered with lice, and he refuses to let us kill them. They climb over this body and legs, and he doesn't care. We want to have the couch fumigated, but he won't let us." Next day, when he went for his morning walk, they sprayed the couch with DDT. On coming back, he smelled the couch, smiled and jokingly said, "Someone has tricked me." He never got angry or mad; I don't think he knew what the words meant. A few days later, there was a German lady who had come to the Ashram, and had made a donation. She was not happy for some reason and was complaining to Ramana, who just kept silent. I asked the interpreter, "What does she want?" He told me, "She wants her donation back and go back to Germany." When she started arguing with the manager of the Ashram, Ramana said in English, "Give back her donation and add 50 rupees to it", which was done, and she left. This was his nature. He never saw anything wrong; he never took anyone out of his love, no matter what they did. He loved everyone just the same.

Ramana used to quote from the scriptures; Jesus and Ramana said basically the same things. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Ramana said, "The Self is within you. Search for and find it, and awaken." Jesus said, "Son, I am with you always, and all that I have is yours."

Ramana said, "I can never leave you, I am always with you."

His compassion never left him.

In April 1950, I was in Bangalore to see Papa Ram Dass. When informed that Ramana has left his body, I went to Tiruvannamalai. The crowds had already started to come, thousands and thousands of people. So I climbed the hill and went into one of the caves, and stayed there for five days. When I came down, the crowd had dispersed. He had already been interred. I enquired of his devotee who saw him last, "What were the last words he spoke?"

He said, "While he was leaving the body, a peacock flew on top of a wall and started screeching. Ramana asked his attendant, 'Has anyone fed the peacock yet?' Those were his last words."

I have been to many teachers, many saints and many sages. I was with Nisargadatta, Anand Mayi Ma, Papa Ram Dass, Neem Karoli Baba and many others, but never did I meet anyone who exuded such compassion, such love, such bliss as Ramana Maharshi."

Ramakrishna Madhavpeddi:

"I first visited Ramanasramam when 24. At that time, I was very much depressed owing to the sudden death at the age of twenty of my very close relative [his wife]. My father was urging me to visit the Maharshi. He had already visited him twice, with a list of doubts all of which were cleared, without a single word being spoken by him. He had also experienced complete peace in the Maharshi's presence.

Someone took me where Sri Ramana was reclining on a sofa and asked me to sit with eyes closed. Although there was absolute silence in the hall, I could not sit with eyes closed. I was restless and felt as if the time was dragging. Slowly, my mind began to reflect on all my miseries, one after another. My thoughts would take off at high speed and my misery increased. So, on the third day, I said that I had come to the Maharshi for peace but I was only experiencing an increase of pain and misery. I was asked to stay on for one more day. On the morning of the fourth day, I was sitting in the hall with eyes closed. At one point, I happened to open my eyes and saw the Maharshi looking at me intently. Suddenly, all thoughts vanished from my mind and I experienced a delightful blank or void. Then, a resplendent light enveloped me fully. I was empty of thoughts but full of immense happiness. I was one with some indefinable peace and splendid glory. After sometime, I again became aware of my body. This experience made me believe in God for the first time. In spite of all my theories of Marxism, dialectical materialism and atheism, I could not deny the truth of this wonderful experience.

This condition continued for three days. I witnessed my body go through its daily activities but I remained fixed in that immense peace. The Maharshi's look pierced into me when I sat before him and even when I was not before him. The eyes of the Maharshi are the kindest and most powerful energy of the universe. I left the Ashram after six days. Remembering those days with the Maharshi brings ecstasy to me even today."

M. G. Shanmukam's (wrote the biography 'Ramana Maharshi - Life and Teachings' which was published in 1937):

"I came to the conviction that the highest human attainment was the state of jivanmukti (full enlightenment whilst still in the body)...

During 1921-25, as a college student, I fervently prayed that I should meet a jivanmukta and receive his blessings. My prayers were soon answered!

When I arrived at the Ashram, Bhagavan gave me a warm welcome with a benign smile. As He was seeing me for the first time, His two spontaneous utterances surprised me. Like an affectionate mother, He asked me, "When did you come?" and "How is your right hand?" My right hand was badly fractured when I was 14 years old, and though it had healed up, it remained bent and short. I used to cover it up with full sleeves and even my friends did not know of this serious deformity. How did Bhagavan know about it? And what affectionate concern He showed! After Bhagavan inquired about it, my sense of inferiority, because of the defect, totally disappeared. More than all this, He asked me to be seated in front of Him. Gazing at Him, I sat down and I do not know what happened to me then. When I got up, two hours had elapsed. This was an experience I had never had before and I have always cherished it as the first and foremost blessing received from my sadguru. That day, I understood the purport of the statement, 'The sadguru ever gives unasked!' That moment, I knew I had been accepted into His Fold. He allowed me to enjoy this strong bond until His mahasamadhi, and even after. Daily I would go to Him by two in the afternoon and return home only at 8 p.m. Bhagavan would quote from Ribhu Gita, Kaivalya Navaneetha, Yoga Vasishtam and other advaitic texts, and explain to me their greatness. All the while, I felt that I was in the blissful presence of one who has realised the Self, so highly extolled in our scriptures.

Once sitting before Him, the following thoughts rose in my mind with great force and were running repeatedly for a long time:

'Do not argue on controversial points of philosophy or read too much of philosophical books. Silently practise either enquiry or meditation. Do not do anything which you know to be wrong.'

Some of Bhagavan's personal instructions to me were:

'The more you humble yourself, the better it is for you. You should look upon the world only as a dream. Except attending to the duty-work in life, the rest of the time should be spent in atma nishta (absorption in the Self). Do not cause the slightest hindrance or disturbance to others. Do all your work yourself. Both likes and dislikes should be discarded and eschewed.

With attention focused on the first person and on the heart within, one should relentlessly practice 'Who am I?'
Sri Ramana was a sarvajnani (all-knower). I got many proofs of it.
I noticed the strange ways in which the doubts in one's mind got answered. The doubt you had would mysteriously be got expressed by someone else in the hall to Bhagavan and He would not only give the answer but look at you with a smile as if to say, 'Has your doubt been cleared?' Bhagavan would be seated like a rock with eyes open for hours together and silence would pervade the hall; and everyone's heart would be filled with peace and stillness. This silence was His real teaching!"

Firoza Taleyarkhan:

"I had wonderful experiences, but my heart was longing to meet a person who could show me God. One day, someone told me about Ramana Maharshi. The moment I opened the book given to me, I was struck by the beauty of his face. I first visited Tiruvannamalai in 1937.
A Polish lady came to the Ashram and told Bhagavan that she was working hard to collect money to help people in distress and asked him whether it was a good thing to do. Bhagavan took out a copy of Kalyan Kalpataru [a monthly journal of the Gita Press, Gorakhpur] and showed her a passage to read. As I was sitting beside her, I could read it too, and it made me smile. Bhagavan looked at me and said, "It is for you, too." The passage stated, "A frail woman who knows how to find God's peace through prayers can do more to help a country or mankind than all the intellectuals put together." That very moment, something within told me that the Maharshi was right. He knew that I was not ripe for the responsible work of helping others. I needed to cure myself before I cured others. For the first time, I got up and prostrated before him and from that moment, my life, mind and heart changed and I felt his unbounded Grace flowing over me.
Bhagavan's Grace is sufficient to accomplish anything, big or small, if one's life and soul are laid at his feet. He has brought about many seemingly impossible things for me. For over a week after the mahanirvana, I was quite desolate at missing the physical presence of Bhagavan. I did not know what to do. Between tears, thoughts of ending the life often came to my mind.

One afternoon as I lay asleep, I saw Bhagavan coming down Arunachala with his stick and enter my house. He asked me, "Why are you weeping?" and bade me wipe my tears, assuring me he was always with me here. Then he went out by the opposite door. This dream is yet vivid in my memory and were I an artist, I would have drawn a picture of the scene. Some Muslim servants of mine, who protested to the presence of the photo of Bhagavan, have been granted the vision of Bhagavan. Now they not only do not protest but have themselves become his devotees."

Shankarlal Banker (a close associate of Gandhi):

"In 1934, I met a high-ranking serving officer of the German Air Force. In the course of our conversation, the officer wondered whether I had heard of Ramana Maharshi, who, he said, was a rare personality, and suggested that I could visit him. In the hall, all anxieties seemed to vanish and I had the feeling that I was that 'pure Brahman' and the words 'Sivoham, Sivoham' [I am the Supreme Being] raced through my mind. I was astonished at this phenomenon. I wondered whence came those thoughts, considering that I was not a very spiritually-inclined person. To my surprise, I experienced a feeling of extraordinary self-confidence and felt convinced that the experience was real. As I took leave of the Maharshi, I experienced a great deal of peace and encouragement. Later that month, I narrated my experience to Gandhiji, who not only expressed his joy but also suggested to me that on the next occasion, I should stay longer at the Ashram.

In the summer of 1936, I once again found myself in the presence of the Maharshi. This time, I made bold to ask the Maharshi: "What books should I read for spiritual progress?" The reply startled me. "Books? Why books?" the Maharshi queried and repeated the words, "Why books?" Then the Maharshi added, "Make your heart pure and you are bound to see the light!" That was to make a lasting impression on my mind and I kept thinking over it during my entire day's stay at the Ashram. On the train that was to take me to Madras, I suddenly woke up and saw the picture of the Maharshi floating before my eyes! I opened my eyes fully, rubbed them, and wonder of wonders, I felt as if he was standing before me... I had a continuous feeling of exultation and joy as if there was no need to think or have any anxiety about

anything in the world! I again reported this experience to Gandhiji who recommended that I visit Tiruvannamalai more often. Gandhiji also told me, "After listening to you, I have suggested to Rajendra Babu and Jamana Lal Ji also to go there."

I was back in Tiruvannamalai in 1937. I was seated in the hall along with others as Sri Ramana was talking of Self-realization and the bliss of the soul. This distressed me who had seen starving people in Tirupur. How could, I wondered aloud to my friend Dr. Syed, who was sitting next to me, one reconcile misery with the bliss of the soul? And I showed him a photographs of starving people, I had brought with me. Dr. Syed did the unexpected. He went over to the Maharshi and placing the pictures in his lap said, "This gentleman here says, when there is so much misery in the world, how can we think of the bliss of the soul?" Instead of being fazed by the question, the Maharshi replied gently that while all effort should be made to help those in distress, one should not take individual credit for the act. The Lord alone was the saviour of the people. The Maharshi added that he has seen people who had not eaten for two or three days and they seemed to glow with some inner joy. Where did that joy come from? Only the Almighty could give it to them! When I retrieved the snapshots and looked at them again, I was to observe what I had not noticed before! Those poor starving people engaged in breaking stones seemed to have smiles on their faces! For me, it was a revelation.

I met the Maharshi the next day quite unexpectedly. This time I wondered how marvellous it would be if the Maharshi and Gandhi met. To which the Maharshi replied with a soft smile, "Distance does not exist!"

When I next visited Wardha, I repeated this conversation to Gandhiji who said, "Haven't you understood? Distance does not exist the way we think. I have written on the subject only three days ago!"

In 1939, again I got direction from the Maharshi when I watched him engaged in cleaning and chopping vegetables in the kitchen. I noticed that the Maharshi was going about his work with remarkable expertise. I even heard the Maharshi telling a devotee how to slice a pumpkin skillfully! It was a lesson for me, too. Do a job, do it well, and do it with complete detachment!

The Maharshi came out with a ladle full of cooked lentils and looking quizzi-

cally at me, invited me to taste it. "It is a bit hot. But I cooked it myself," said the Maharshi by way of explanation. I tasted it and exclaimed, "Why, it is very tasty!" At that the Maharshi broke into laughter and went back to the kitchen. I got the answer to the problem that was bothering me, about engaging myself in some activity even while involved in spiritual pursuits. Wasn't the Maharshi telling me by example that to be working actively was as important as searching for spiritual bliss?"

Swami Lakshman Joo Raina (is recognized as the last living pre-eminent exponent of Kashmir Saivism):
"When I was in the twenties, some one told me of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Then and there, I left Kashmir and proceeded to Tiruvannamalai. As I entered the Hall, I saw Bhagavan seated on a sofa with his legs stretched. I was thrilled with joy. Bhagavan asked me to sit in front of himself. I sat and gazed at his Feet and entered the blissful state of samadhi. Those golden days were indeed divine. One day, I was overjoyed by the nearness of Bhagavan and composed a few slokas as my offering to him. These in effect stated: "There are four types of body: the gross (sthula), the subtle (sukshma), the causal (karana) and the void (sunya). Transcending these (four types) is the great Hill Arunachala, which is praised as the form of the all-knowing Supreme. We worship Sri Ramana, who blissfully abides in His own true nature (swarupa), which is named Arunachala, the foremost among the foremost of Hills. I take refuge at the feet of the great personage Ramana who had realized his identity with the Lord. I utter the name of the accomplished yogi Ramana, ceaselessly. I always contemplate on Maharshi Ramana, the realized soul. I offer my salutations to the celestial being Maharshi Ramana, whole-heartedly." When these slokas were placed before Bhagavan, he was so pleased that he explained them to the devotees who were seated in the Hall. I used to go on Arunachala Hill with Bhagavan, where he used to sit on a rock and I would be seated at his Feet. Once a devotee took out a camera to take a picture of Bhagavan. At that time Bhagavan addressed me, "Lakshmanjoo! Lakshmanjoo! Sit here by my side. This man is going to take a picture of us." I cannot express how Divine were those days of my stay near Bhagavan and how kind he was to me. Eleanor

Pauline Noye shed tears of joy when Bhagavan asked me to sit near him. Those were golden days for me when I was near Bhagavan, my Divine Lord!"

Swami Rama (well-known spiritual figure, founded the Himalayan Institute to create a bridge between the ancient teachings of the East and the modern scientific approach of the West. He authored the great book 'Living with Himalayan Masters'):
"Dr. T.N. Dutta, a prominent physician from Gajipur in U.P., came to see me at Nasik, where I was staying. He told me that he was very anxious to take me with him to Arunachala to have darshan of Maharshi Ramana. It was winter of 1949. My stay at the Ashram was brief, but very pleasant. During those days, Maharshi Ramana was observing silence. There were several foreigners staying in the Ashram. In the Maharshi's presence, I found something that is very rare and which I seldom found elsewhere. For those whose hearts were open to that voice of silence, which was perennially radiating in the Ashram, just sitting near the Maharshi was enough to find answers to questions arising from within. It is true that to be in the presence of a great man is the same as experiencing samadhi. "He is the greatest and holiest man born on the soil of India within a hundred years' period," said Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. A glance of such a great man purifies the way of the soul. According to the Maharshi, contemplating on the single query, "Who am I?" can lead the aspirant to the state of self-realization. Though this method of contemplation is the foundation stone of the philosophies of both the East and the West, it was revived again by the Maharshi. The entire Vedanta philosophy has been brought into practice by him. He has put the Iliad in a nutshell: By knowing oneself, one knows the self of all. After five days' stay in the spiritually vibrant atmosphere of the Ashram, we came back to Nasik. My visit to Arunachala and the darshan of the Maharshi added fuel to the fire which was burning within me. 'Renounce, and you will attain': this echoed in my heart so powerfully that my stay at Nasik became more and more impossible. It was not easy for me to run away, abruptly leaving all the responsibilities – but one day the courage came to me, and I left Nasik for my Himalayan home. I have firm conviction that no one can be enlightened by anyone else – but sages inspire and give inner strength, without which self-

enlightenment is impossible. In today's world, human beings do not have any example to follow. There is no one to inspire them, and that is why enlightenment seems to be so difficult. Great sages are the source of inspiration and enlightenment."

Swami Paramahansa Yogananda

(Well-known spiritual guru, visited Sri Ramana in November 1935):

"Before leaving South India, I made a pilgrimage to the holy hill of Arunachala to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi. The sage welcomed us affectionately and pointed to a nearby stack of East-West magazines.

During the hours that we spent with him and his disciples, he was mostly silent, his gentle face radiating divine love and wisdom.

To help suffering humanity regain its forgotten state of Perfection, Sri Ramana teaches that one should constantly ask himself: "Who am I?" – the Great Inquiry indeed. By stern rejection of all other thoughts, the devotee soon finds himself going deeper and deeper into the true Self, and the sidetracking bewilderments of other thoughts cease to arise.

The illumined rishi of South India has written:

"Dualities and trinities on something do hang,
Supportless they never appear;
That support searched for, they loosen and fall.
There is the Truth. Who sees that never wavers."

Swami Yogananda asked the following questions:

SY: How is the spiritual uplift of the people to be effected?
What are the instructions to be given to them?

RM: They differ according to the temperaments of the individuals and according to the spiritual ripeness of their minds. There cannot be any instruction en masse.

SY: Why does God permit suffering in the world? Should He not with His omnipotence do away with it at one stroke and ordain the universal realization of God?

RM: Suffering is the way for Realization of God.

SY: Should He not ordain differently?

RM: It is the way.

SY: Are yoga, religion etc. antidotes to suffering?

RM: They help you to overcome suffering.
SY: Why should there be suffering?
RM: Who suffers? What is suffering?
No answer.
Two of the many questions asked by the swami's secretary C. R. Wright, were:
Q: How shall I realise God?
A: God is an unknown entity. Moreover, He is external. Whereas the Self is always with you and it is you. Why do you leave out what is intimate and go in for what is external?
Q: What is this Self again?
A: The Self is known to everyone but not clearly. The Being is the Self. Of all the definitions of God, none is so well put as the Biblical statement "I am that I am". "I am" is the name of God. Knowing the Self, God is known. In fact, God is none other than the Self.

Swami Tapasyananda
(Scholar; head of Ramakrishna Mission, Madras, for two decades)

"The Maharshi impressed me as a rare type of man.
He simply seems to exist, without waiting for anything, without being anxious about anything. This reminded me of the Gita where the Lord says about Himself, "Nor do these actions bind me. Like one unconcerned, I remain unattached to these actions."
The only activity of the Ashram in which he seems to take interest is cooking. He cuts vegetables and prepares some of the dishes for the day. Another point that struck me is his silence. When I asked him to tell me something of spirituality, the first thing he said was that silence is the highest teaching! 'The Advaitin has no position to state, no siddhantas [theories] to propound.' He regrets that these days, even advaita has become a siddhanta, whereas it is really not meant to be so. When I asked him about a book that I purchased in the depot there, how far the ideas stated therein are his teachings, he said, it was very difficult to state that, as he had no definite teaching. He told me that he has absolutely no inclination to write a book; but due to entreaties of some people, he has written some verses, and

also added that he is often troubled by men who take a fancy to translate them into this language or that, and ask him about the faithfulness of the translation. Mostly, the Maharshi remains silent. People come, make prostrations, sit before him for some minutes or hours and then go away, perhaps without exchanging even a single word! I have got my own doubt whether people benefit by this teaching through silence. Yet people come from long distances to hear this dumb eloquence and go back satisfied.
Though he speaks but little, it is very instructive to watch his face and eyes. There is nothing very prepossessing about his personality, but there is a beam of intelligence and unruffled calmness in his eyes, which are unique. His body is almost motionless except when he occasionally changes his position or wipes his sweat in that hot place. I was carefully observing his face; I found him seldom winking and never yawning. I say this to show that I am sufficiently satisfied that the absence of activity in him is not due to inertness. I stayed at the Ashram for three days. The Maharshi talked with me very kindly and quite freely on several questions I asked him. His thoughts are always clear, concise and free from all ideas of narrowness. I am convinced that he is a sweet and lovable person who is indifferent to all things about him, who has no end of his own to gain, who is always alert even when he seems to be most deeply absorbed, and who may be said to be perfectly free from greed and vanity. In seeing him, I do believe I have seen a unique personage – a jnani, a perfect sage."

J.C. Molony (a district collector in Madras Presidency):

"I was strolling with my dogs on the hill, when I stumbled upon an ashram, a hermitage set in a cleft of rocks and overhung by trees. Water bubbled from a spring and gathered in a stone basin. I spied the hermit within, my dogs spied him too; and in a second, three of them were all over him, while the fourth plunged with a splash into the coolness of the stone basin. I looked for a tempest of anger; hurriedly, I prepared the best apology that I could think of on the spur of the moment. There emerged a tall, lean ascetic, smiling at me and my yelping companions. "You like dogs?" he said. "I love them myself, but I have sent them away from the summer heat. Why should not a dog like clean, cool water? No harm is caused by the dog jumping in the ba-

sin. Ten minutes after she is gone, the basin will have emptied itself and filled itself afresh." So we sat together on the parapet of the ashram and looked down on the hot, dusty, town far below. When I reached my camp, one of my dogs was missing. In the evening arrived the holy man leading the truant on a string. "He came back to me, and I should have liked to keep him," he said, "but why should I steal him from you?" As I write these lines, the fields before my eyes are white with frost; but my thoughts travel back to the kindly recluse on the sun-baked hill. You have learned that man adds naught to his own sanctity by affected disdain of God's dumb creatures."

T.S. Anantha Murthy (a judge from Bangalore):

"My wife and I entered the hall and felt awe as we stood and looked at the great sage. His mind was, as we could easily realize, absorbed within. I was astonished to see the sage keeping his eyes wide open without blinking for such a long period of time. I also felt that Sri Ramana who sat in front of me in such an engrossed manner, was Brahman in human form and spiritual illumination was enshrined in him. He was not only august to look at but also an inspiring figure.

That evening after the meal was over, the Maharshi picked up his stick and slowly walked into the hall. As I was eager to talk to him, I went behind. He sat down on the sofa. A petromax lamp was illuminating the hall. There was no other devotee. This was the opportunity I was longing for, which by his grace became available without any effort on my part. There was no need to draw his attention. The merciful sage lifted up his face and smiled slightly. He did not utter even one word, nor made any gesture. However, his gentle smile gave me sufficient courage to address him. With folded hands, I said, "Sir, I do not know Tamil. Please permit me to talk in English. I have not been in good health for some months. Dyspeptic troubles are the cause of my suffering. Doctors have failed to cure me. My eyes are always burning and I feel giddy now and then. I have come here to obtain your blessings." Sri Ramana heard these words patiently, lifted up his serene face and said, "All your troubles will disappear of their own accord."

These were the nine English words uttered by him in his mellow voice. I was filled with delight and gratitude on hearing the blessing so readily bestowed

upon me by the great sage. I felt transformed. I prostrated to him and left the hall with my heart filled with joy and relief, and returned to the guest room. It was a memorable occasion indeed. My long cherished desire to obtain darshan of Sri Ramana had been fulfilled. In addition, within a few hours after I had set foot in Ramanasramam, all my bodily troubles ceased to torment me as a result of the great blessing so readily bestowed upon me by the merciful saint. During my ten days' stay, one day when practising meditation in the hall, I could not concentrate the mind in spite of my best efforts. Desirous to know the way to surmount the difficulty, I approached the sage and said in English, "Bhagavan, my mind is not steady today. What is to be done?" The great sage raised his head and recited verses 5 & 26 from chapter VI of the Gita. After quoting the verses, the sage, in his infinite mercy, said in English, "These two verses contain the needed instructions. All efforts must be made to become effortless." He then closed his eyes."

Suzanne Alexandra:

(Born in Paris in 1896, was in the quest for Truth from an early age; When 18, she joined the Theosophical Society. A talented dancer and a doctor, she came to India in 1925, where she met a Buddhist monk and became a Buddhist nun. She ran a free clinic for the poor in Tiruvannamalai for several years.)

"I found the hall decorated and furnished in a simple way. A frieze of blue flowers ran along the walls. I saw Maharshi take some nuts out of a container for the squirrel that had run to him. Next to the couch was a revolving bookcase and further down two cupboards holding more books. No attempt had been made to create a mystical or spiritual background for the Maharshi, yet the setting could not detract from the grandeur of the sage. He was exceptional in just being himself. In every action he did, whether he was correcting a manuscript or reading a letter, there was complete naturalness and absence of pose. This is very rarely seen elsewhere. The Maharshi ate very frugally. He asked me whether the food was not too pungent for me. These words of solicitude were the first words he spoke to me...

The Maharshi did not give any discourses. He replied to questions put to him, usually very succinctly, as if to let the one word or the few words he said make their way directly into the understanding of the questioner.

On the other hand, when a young man struggled to grasp what the Self was, the Maharshi with great patience guided him through his reasoning until at last he got some glimmering of what the Maharshi meant. Apart from these exceptions to silence, there were long quiet moments when the Maharshi said and did nothing, but which were more effective in conveying the transcendent Truth than any lecture or sermon would have been.

The evening session in the hall began with the recitation from the Vedas. As the powerful Sanskrit syllables vibrated in the hall, the Maharshi's appearance underwent a remarkable change. His expression became austere, his gaze inward. His face appeared translucent as if lit by an inner illumination, whilst the constant slight trembling of the body had now stopped completely. Yet even in this state it was evident that he was not oblivious of his surroundings, and he had an awareness of both the inner and outer reality... The Maharshi is an Adept of the highest order, a king of Yogis. The splendour of his Realization radiates like a sun. He lifts you far above the world.

When ladies had to leave the Ashram at sunset, I refused to do so, considering it an act of discrimination, and to register my protest, I declared that since I could not stay at the Ashram, I would go and spend the night at the Hill. I climbed the Hill somewhat afraid of the wild animals and found a small cave for my stay. My anger drove all other thoughts from my mind. It was then that I had a vision of Arunachala as a Hill of Fire, and I saw many worlds existing within the Hill. To protect me from the wild animals, the Maharshi asked Cohen, who knew me, to persuade me to come down. Without further protests, I agreed to spend the rest of the night in a hotel room in town. I was for long associated with the idea of a Master-Disciple relationship through formal initiation, which was never done by the Maharshi. In 1945, I decided to go to Swami Ramdas, to be his disciple in a formal way. I sorrowfully mentioned about my departure to the Maharshi, who kept quiet. But then, something strange and wonderful happened, for I saw the Maharshi as Dakshinamurthi, the great silent guru. When I was talking to him, his appearance changed and I thought that Dakshinamurthi was sitting before me. In the silence, I heard, 'There is no separation, all gurus are one. They are the indwelling Self of everyone. I shall ever remain as the Jewel shining in the lotus of your heart.'"

Anonymous chronicler:

"I bowed down and sat in the hall before the Maharshi. There were many people present but the hall was quiet. I was unable to continue sitting in a quiet manner, but did not know what to speak to the Maharshi. There were a few books on a stand near the Maharshi. I picked up one of them and began to read. The book had sayings such as "Being is one", "The world is unreal." I could not understand them as my knowledge was confined to science. I could not help feeling confused on the following line of thoughts: "Why should God create me? Where was I? Where will I be? Is all that I see false? I do know the presence of objects before me. Don't I see the Maharshi sitting before me?" I could not read the book any more and fell into a contemplative mood. Just at that time, the Maharshi addressed me thus: "What is the doubt?" I raised my head and said, "There is a human figure on the sofa. There is one on the floor. With my eyes, I perceive these two very clearly. But you say that in reality there is only One. How can that be true?" The Maharshi smiled and kept quiet. After a few minutes, he said, "You must be used to performing experiments in your laboratory. If you are examining an object, the amount of details would depend upon the quality of the instrument you use to examine the object. Now, even if your instrument is fine, but your eyesight is poor, you will know little about the object. If the eyesight is good but the brain is not normal, the object's true nature will not be known to you. Again, if the brain is fine but if the mind does not pay attention to what you are observing, the less you will know about the object. In brief, the amount you know about an object is dependent on an entity called mind. What is mind? It is thoughts. All the thoughts spring up from a single thought. This thought is 'I am-the-body' thought. It has two components. One is the body and the other is I. The body, being of transient nature, is subject to change, and it depends on external factors for its existence, such as food. But the nature of 'I' is different from that of the body. What exists in truth should be existing always. The body does not exist all the time, so it is not the truth. The 'I' exists in all states including waking, dream sleep, and deep sleep. Hence 'I' is the truth; body is untrue. Both of these combined can not exist as one entity. How can night and day, light and darkness co-exist? Similarly, there is no entity that has as its basis the co-

existence of 'I' and the body. So 'I am-the-body' thought has no basis in truth. If we examine the world with this untrue thought as the basis, how can we learn the Truth?"

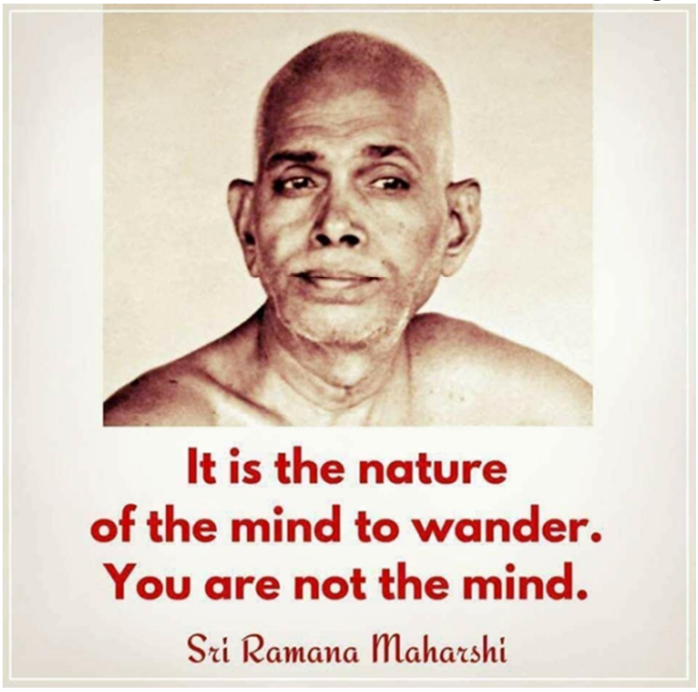
At that moment, I felt the foundation of my knowledge being shaken up, and my conviction in scientific pursuit as providing the ultimate fulfillment suddenly disappeared. Further, the Maharshi said that one can realize the truth about the world, after knowing the Truth about oneself. The teaching I received changed my mental attitude and, subsequently, my daily activities. I pursued life in the same environment I had before, but looked for life's fulfillment in the spiritual path, blessed by the Maharshi. I felt that the grace of the Maharshi allowed me to lead a harmonious life."

P. L. N. Sharma:

"In the subdued light of the hall, Bhagavan's body shone like burnished gold and his eyes were luminous, full of flashes of some very intense inner life. The more I looked at him, the more his face seemed to be radiating a mysterious light, the source of which was somewhere deep within. I could not make out whether he was aware of the world or not, whether he saw me or not, whether he was in some yogic trance or contemplation of something quite beyond my vision and knowledge. The hall was full of silence, serenity and peace. About twenty people sat on the ground, apparently in deep meditation. When the bell rang for midday meal, the Maharshi invited us all with a nod of his head and we followed him to the dining hall. Next morning, I sat facing the Maharshi. A government officer accompanied by his retinue entered the hall and at once started telling Bhagavan how corrupt the government servants were, how they abused and misused their positions, how he had been entrusted with the task of cleaning up the government machinery and in his anxiety to make a success of himself, he had lost his peace of mind and had come to Bhagavan to make him calm and contented. It was clear that he thought of himself to be a very important person whose request must be promptly met. After he had finished his long oration, he looked expectantly at Bhagavan as if saying, 'Now it is your turn to show what you can do.' Bhagavan did not even look at him. The clock was striking hours, but Bhagavan was completely silent. The officer lost patience, got up

and said, "You are silent, Bhagavan. Does it mean that you want me to be silent too?" "Yes, yes", said Bhagavan, and that was all.

One day, all the delegates to the conference for which I had come to Tiruvannamalai, went in a body to the Ashram. The president of the conference said, "Bhagavan, we are all social workers and disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. We have sworn to devote ourselves to work for the removal of untouchability. Be gracious to tell your view on the subject." Again, there was no reply. One could not even make out whether he had heard the question. Time was passing. The delegates were getting tired of sitting quietly. When the situation grew embarrassing, Yagnanarayana Iyer, principal of Pachayappa College, Madras, got up and said, "Bhagavan, our question concerns worldly life. Perhaps it was improper to put it to you. Kindly forgive us." "There is nothing to forgive", said Bhagavan quite readily and with a bright smile. "When the ocean is surging and carrying away everything before it, who cares what are your views or mine?" The delegates could not find much sense in the answer. Only the great events years later gave meaning to it. I was told that in Bhagavan's presence, doubts got cleared without the need of questions or answers. Nothing of the kind happened to me. On the three previous days, I tried to catch his eye, but could not. On the fourth day, I managed to address him, while he seemed to be looking into the infinity of space, "Bhagavan, my mind does not obey me. It wanders as it likes and lands me into trouble. Be merciful and tell me how to bring it under control."



Bhagavan looked at me affectionately and spoke most kindly, and his words sparkled with meaning, "All religious and spiritual practices have no other purpose than getting the mind under control. The three paths – Knowledge, Devotion, and Duty, aim at this and this alone... The path of Devotion is the easiest of all. Meditate on God or on some mental or material image of Him. This will slow down your mind and it will get controlled of its own accord." I felt satisfied, and there was deep peace in me when I looked at him for the last time."

B.C. Sengupta:

"My visit to Ramanasramam coincided with the Maharshi's birthday. He was seated in a big enclosure outside the hall. A continuous stream of people passed before him for a couple of hours. I waited and waited and went closer, but could not attract his attention. My whole being was irresistibly getting drawn towards him. I was eager to put my case before him, but was not getting an opportunity to do so. On the third day of my visit, I entreated an inmate of the Ashram to help me put my case before the Maharshi. As advised by him, I wrote down what I intended to say on a piece of paper. He kindly took the paper and went to the hall, followed by me, and placed it before the Maharshi, speaking something to him in Tamil. The Maharshi read it and smiled. I was sitting there. As he looked at me, I was overwhelmed and a violent emotion convulsed my body, which set the Maharshi laughing. He laughed merrily for sometime and then silently folded the paper and left it on the book-shelf, which stood nearby. He did not speak to me nor did he seem to pay any further attention to me. This made me very depressed. There was nothing more to be done. I must return home. After the night meal, I sat in the hall and felt a pleasant coolness inundating me. Is this the spiritual fragrance spoken of as emanating from the Maharshi?

The next day, while sitting before the Maharshi, I experienced a sudden pull in the region of the heart. I was astonished and as I sought to observe it, it passed away. On the fifth day of my stay, I thought that I have obtained what I deserved and that nothing more would be gained by a further stay at the Ashram. I wrote my intention to go home and placed it before the Maharshi. He read it and kept it aside. I felt it was yet another rebuff.

Next morning, I attended the usual prayers. Some discussion was going on in the hall. As they were talking mostly in Tamil, my attention was not attracted till I found some persons turning their heads and laughing at me. On enquiry, I learnt that they were discussing the subject matter of my note to the Maharshi. Though I was the laughing-stock, I was still glad to find that the Maharshi had taken notice of me. As I was in the back row, they asked me to come nearer to the Maharshi. The discussions over, I heard the Maharshi say, "He is concentrating on the reflection and complains that he cannot see the original." It struck me forcefully. What did he mean by the reflection and what was the original? I shut my eyes and tried to find the meaning. Immediately, I felt a pull in the region of my heart. My mind was completely arrested – stilled, but I was wide awake. Suddenly, without any break in my consciousness, the 'I' flashed forth! It was self-awareness, pure and simple, steady, unbroken and intensely bright, but as much brighter than ordinary consciousness as is sunlight brighter than the dim light of a lamp. The world was not, neither the body nor the mind – no thought, no motion; time also ceased to exist. I alone existed and that I was consciousness itself, self-luminous and alone, without a second. Suddenly, without any break in my consciousness, I was brought back to my normal, ordinary consciousness. A great miracle had been performed in broad daylight in the presence of so many people, without their knowing it.

No argument of the greatest philosophers and scientists of the world will now make me doubt the possibility of experiencing the 'I' in its pure state or pure consciousness, without any subject-object relationship.

I, an insignificant creature, wallowing in the mud of mundane existence, and without any sadhana, being granted this supreme experience! – an experience which is rarely obtained even by great yogis after austerest spiritual practices strenuously performed for ages together. Such is the wonder of His Grace – immeasurable and unfathomable Grace! Truly it has been said – "Unasked Thou give, this is Thy imperishable fame."

As soon as I was brought to my normal consciousness, I opened my eyes and looked at the Maharshi, but he appeared to be quite unconcerned, as if nothing had happened. He was not even looking at me. How could he have performed this miracle? Who can comprehend?

The experience so much amazed me that I even forgot to express my heart-felt gratitude to the Maharshi. I could not at that time even properly evaluate the supreme experience, which caused a very cheerful mood in me. I felt completely carefree. I stayed at the Ashram for a few more days. The thoughts of home did not trouble me any further."

C.R. Rajamani:

"I was in my early twenties when I first had darshan of the Maharshi. I saw him seated on a couch. A cast-iron charcoal brazier was radiating a comfortable warmth, and a pleasing aroma of the incense thrown into it at regular intervals was pervading the entire hall. About thirty people were seated on the floor facing the Maharshi. None spoke or even whispered. What struck me was that no one seemed to show even an inclination to talk. Some were meditating with closed eyes. Sri Ramana's body was luminous like burnished gold. He was clad in his usual loincloth, with a small towel across his chest. He appeared to be occasionally dozing off and had to steady his head often.
He frequently stretched his palms over the fire and massaged his long fingers. In spite of his apparent dozing, his eyes did not look drowsy. On the contrary, they were extraordinarily bright and alert. He was not looking at anybody in particular. I felt I was in the presence of an extremely affable person with a lot of natural grace, at perfect ease and without any pretension whatsoever.
I saw a white-skinned boy of about ten years sitting a couple of feet to my left. Next to him was a white man, presumably his father. Further to my left, was a white woman, whom I thought was the boy's mother. I then saw Bhagavan's eyes alight on the boy for a brief minute. I thought it was just a casual look. The boy was all the time looking at Bhagavan with a sort of fixation, as if on the verge of asking a question. But, no! He broke into tears. A cascade of tears came gushing out of his eyes. They were not tears of pain, for his face was radiant with joy. I could see that Sri Bhagavan's glance, though only resting on him for a brief moment, had opened in the boy's heart a veritable reservoir of pure joy. I learned that the boy had come along with his parents, who had come to attend the Theosophical Society's convention at Adyar, Madras. The boy's parents arranged a trip to Tiruvannamalai, but

he stoutly refused. However, he changed his mind at the last moment and did make the trip. Within an hour of his face-to-face meeting with Sri Bhagavan, his mental barriers were reduced to nothingness. He shed tears for quite sometime and later said to his mother, "I am so happy. I don't want to leave his presence. I want to be always with him!" His mother was most upset. She pleaded with Bhagavan, "Swami, please release my son! He is our only child. We will be miserable without him." Bhagavan smiled at her and said, "Release him? I am not keeping him tied up. He is a mature soul. A mere spark has ignited his spiritual fire." Turning to the boy, the Maharshi said, "Go with your parents. I will always be with you." He spoke in Tamil throughout, but the boy understood him fully. He bowed to Bhagavan and reluctantly left with his parents. Whenever I recall this incident, it creates a feeling of being very near to something truly Divine. Of course, I have had my own share of Sri Bhagavan's grace in my later years. I have also had some ever-fresh visions which I dare not devalue as creations of a fevered imagination, for they have strengthened my faith in Bhagavan. Some of them occurred decades after Sri Bhagavan's mahanirvana. They have been firm confirmations of his continued Presence and reassurances of his immortal words: "They say I am going! Where can I go? I am always here!"

Rajalakshmi:
(Granddaughter of Venu Ammal,
who was the younger sister of the outstanding devotee Echammal)

"On the death of my mother, my grandmother was completely devastated, unable to bear the loss of her only daughter. She walked all the way from Tiruvannamalai town to then distant Ramanasramam at 11 p.m. on a dark, lonely night. She cried uncontrollably and fell at Bhagavan's feet. Bhagavan's younger brother, objected to her falling at the feet of Bhagavan for a worldly reason. To this, Bhagavan countered by asking, if he would have objected to his sister Alamelu doing the same thing in a similar circumstance. Bhagavan shared her grief in his inimitable way and consoled her.

I first saw Bhagavan in 1923 when I was three years old. My grandmother, who was serving at the Ashram, took me along with her every morning, returning home in the evening.

Once, I was playing 'cooking' game by offering small pieces of stones as cooked rice to Bhagavan, and I asked him to eat them. Bhagavan readily put those stones into his mouth and pretended to eat. When my grandmother objected to it, Bhagavan replied that the child was happily offering him the stones as food and he did not want to disappoint her. Once, when seated next to Bhagavan in the dining hall, I asked my grandmother to serve me more of a particular preparation. She declined. When she was about to serve more of the same preparation again to Bhagavan, he refused on the ground that what was applicable to the child was applicable to him.

The book Ramana Vijayam by Suddhananda Bharati tells the story of Bhagavan's stay at Patala Linga. Being curious, I visited that place, but I could not go inside due to bats flying around and the stinking smell from inside. I told Bhagavan about my experience and asked how he could stay at a place like that for such a long time. His reply was that he was not aware of his stay there and that he came to know of it from others. This shows he was completely oblivious of time and space while inside Patala Linga.

In my school, children used to play kolattam (a game using two wooden sticks). I did not have the sticks to play. My grandmother was not willing to spend two paise (1/32 of a rupee) for the sticks. When I told Bhagavan of my problem, he asked his attendant Madhava Swami, to get a branch from a tree, out of which he made two beautiful kolattam sticks and presented them to me.

Somebody told me not to address Bhagavan as 'Thatha' (grandfather). Bhagavan replied that as I was at the Ashram since childhood, there was nothing wrong in calling him 'Thatha'.

In early 1950, when Bhagavan was very ill, I was at Lucknow. My grandmother, who was working at the Ashram, asked Bhagavan's permission to visit me and then go to Kasi. Bhagavan told her that when she took a dip in the Ganges at Kasi, she could perform the ceremony on his behalf too. After staying for a few days with me, she went to Kasi and while taking a dip in the evening, thinking of Ramana, somebody told her to look up. She saw a large bright star trailing its light across the sky. And this happened at the exact time of Bhagavan's mahanirvana."

M. Abdul Wahab: (closely associated with Sri Ramana as his classmate in 4th, 5th and 6th forms at the school in Madurai; Sri Ramana was very fond of this Muslim boy and addressed him as Sab Jan.)

"Venkataraman (Ramana Maharshi) was very learned in Tamil and stood first in the class. He was particularly well-versed in aphorisms of Tamil grammar. Our Tamil Pandit John Balakrishna was very fond of him. He was not very good in English. In other subjects, he was above average. In general, he was not much interested in his school books. He was very fond of playing games, particularly football. Even as a student he was very religious, and would go round the Subramania Swamy temple with fervent religious ecstasy. He used to take me with him several times and make me go round the temple saying, "God's creation is alike. God is the same; the apparent differences in gods are created by men." Because of such universal outlook implanted in me by him in those days, I could become an ardent devotee of Sri Varadaraja Perumal of Kancheepuram.

When Venkataraman disappeared, it was a shock to me that he did not tell me about running away from his home. I was enlisted in the police department. In 1903, in one of the shops at Uttaramerur, I was surprised to see a portrait of Venkataraman, but completely different in appearance.

I was anxious to know how the shop-man happened to possess the photo. I was told that this was 'Brahmana Swami' living in Tiruvannamalai. I was eager to meet my old friend and went to his abode. He was pleased to receive me although he did not speak. He simply nodded his head with a radiant face. I was thrilled to meet my classmate, who was all the more beautiful and resplendent with a mark of saintliness. Again I went there when I was Inspector of Police at Tirupathur. At that time, I was very sad, as my father had passed away. Sri Ramana showed me his mother's tomb, which consoled me. I understood from his action that death was inevitable as far as the body was concerned. After that, I went to see him many times and on all occasions he gave special attention to me. I was transformed into being a devotee of Bhagavan from being his friend. This inward change brought about by him is the greatest boon he has showered on me. He manifested his greatness once through a dream in which he showed signs of my wife passing away and in a mysterious way consoled me and prepared me for the shock-

ing incident. It did take place very soon, and my wife passed away as predicted. But by the grace of Sri Maharshi, it did not affect me very much."

Dhiruben Patel (popular novelist of Gujarat):

"My mother was badly shaken at a tragic misfortune in 1944, when my brother met with a drowning accident witnessed by her from the shore. Chhaganlal Yogi suggested her to visit the Ashram. When she saw Bhagavan she was so much impressed that she came back to take the whole family to the Ashram. At that time, I was 18. I had no interest in Bhagavan. As I could not defy my mother, I bowed to him with folded hands and closed eyes. But as I raised my head, Bhagavan looked at me and in that very second, I was annihilated totally by his gaze. I didn't exist any longer and there was a great sense of release and peace. I felt a soft moon light around me, with no boundaries and barriers. It was as if I was lost in a sky of light and peace. I don't know how many minutes or seconds I was in that state; it seemed a life-time. When I came back to my material existence, I could not accept what had happened. We stayed five more days and I had Bhagavan's darshan many times, but that experience never got repeated. The event, however, made me think very deeply and continuously: What was it? And how could I be in that state constantly? One day during our stay, we along with other devotees were watching Bhagavan going for his walk on the hill after lunch. Suddenly, my two-year-old nephew left us and caught hold of Bhagavan's walking stick. Everybody was aghast. The child was called back again and again and asked not to bother Bhagavan. He just wouldn't listen and went on staring at Bhagavan. But as soon as Bhagavan put his hand on his head, he let go of the stick and started weeping, not loudly, but tears were streaming down his eyes, while he just stood looking at Bhagavan.

I saw Bhagavan again in 1950. There was a heavy bandage on his arm and people filed by, single file, quietly. When I came near him, I couldn't help saying, "Bhagavan, call me again". With infinite compassion and immense love, he looked at me and said, "Sari, sari." [O.K.]. Now I have come back after 57 years, and I am sure that he has called me. It is a very strange thing that I do not feel the absence of Bhagavan. Perhaps it is because during all these years, I have always felt that he was near me.

I have at some level communicated with him, and have received his grace. When you are facing a big problem and you do not know where to turn or what to do, then Bhagavan really gives the answer in your heart of hearts. I may be anywhere, Bhagavan is always with me, and it is all due to the first wonderful moment when he had looked at me.

My mother used to rent a cottage near the Ashram, stay for two or three months at a time, and meditate very regularly. What she experienced, she spoke little. In her last illness, she made me promise that Bhagavan should be with her when she goes and I was to be responsible for this request. And by God's grace and Bhagavan's blessings, it so happened that during her last moments, we could hold a big framed photograph of Bhagavan before her eyes. She quietly gazed at it, slightly turned her face and passed away."

K. Vithoba Kamath:

"I had read about the Maharshi from an article by M. S. Kamath, and later when I read his book about the Maharshi, a magnetic attraction arose in me to see him. Visiting the Ashram in 1946, I beheld the Maharshi in the hall. I felt that he was not in any way attached to or connected with anything around him. He radiated spiritual splendour through sublime silence.

I used to sit in the hall in the last row. One day, an idea flashed that I should see Lord Krishna. I intently looked at Bhagavan and saw a dark cloud engulfing him and within that emerged the Lord. I was at my wit's end. I thought it was a hallucination and a projection of my own mind. I wanted to try again. This time, I thought of Gandhiji. Ramana was nowhere, but in his place there was Gandhiji. Being bewildered, I looked at Bhagavan. There! He was looking straight at me with a benign smile on his face. I felt highly blessed.

Prior to my departure, I took courage to sit near Sri Ramana. Being the morning hour, there were few visitors. I verily felt vibrations emanating from him which thrilled me. I asked Bhagavan with much hesitation as to how to control the tossing of the mind. He simply looked at me but didn't give a reply. I thought it was not proper on my part, a raw graduate, to have asked him. Meanwhile Devaraja Mudaliar came and sat by my side. Bhagavan, though he knows English, rarely replied in that language. He asked me through Mudaliar, as to who was asking this question:

"Is it you or your mind?"
I replied, "It is my mind."
Bhagavan's response was, "Mind is a bundle of thoughts. See who you are, then these oscillations of the mind cease to exist."
I remember well, as if it just happened today, the figure of Bhagavan Ramana returning from his walk on the hill, radiating spiritual aura, with eyes glittering like live stars, emanating bliss. Decades later, the scene of that uplifting influence is still so fresh and inspiring."

T.V. Kapali Sastri (scholar):

"What a meeting it was! The very first day wrought a remarkable change in my being. No amount of practice would have given an indubitable knowledge of spiritual consciousness and a correct appreciation of the truth of spiritual life which the Maharshi gave me. The personal attraction of the Maharshi was irresistible. But I found his teaching too direct, immediate, seemingly simple, having no step in between, i.e., the starting point and the goal; at any rate not practicable to people circumstanced like myself. When the Maharshi was on the hill, he used to take a few of us with him. This used to last from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. Once, while I was going with him, he pointed his face towards the sky and said, "Look, there perhaps are the siddhas. They (people) say they are stars and pass them by." As we walked on, he observed that the very stars were beneath his feet. During one such round in May 1922, we got news that supervisor Ramaswami Iyer was taken ill suddenly and was dying. The Maharshi went to the place on the Hill where Ramaswami was lying and was having violent palpitations of the heart. The Maharshi sat near him, placing his hand on his head. Within five minutes, Ramaswami got up and was quite normal.
In 1930, I went to the Ashram with my friend Sunder. Later, Sunder told me what a magnificent and inspiring sight it was to see the Maharshi sitting with his blazing eyes transfixed on me all the while.
The Maharshi was very particular about the food requirement of the visitors to the Ashram. He did not take his meal till the last man had had his food. When I asked him about this, he said in effect, that when as a boy he set out from the house to Tiruvannamalai, he had to starve for days together.

And so he has been very particular that nobody should suffer the pangs of hunger as he did.

Once a hunter was about to kill a peacock on the hill. When the Maharshi forbade him to do so, he brushed aside his words saying, "Go Swami, who is asking you?" The next day, it would appear, the man had an accident and his very arm had to be cut off. "I felt sorry for him," said the Maharshi speaking of it, "but what is to be done? People have to go through these things before they would learn."

Atmakuri Govindacharyulu (a known freedom fighter):

"One day as I was dwelling on the name of Rama, I heard 'Ramana, Ramana.' The sound was pleasant. I don't know why it gave me great joy. The yearning to see him grew day by day. Finally one morning I reached the Ashram and went to the hall. I joined my hands, prostrated and stood up and began to reflect, 'How is it that this head which had bowed to none but Mahatma Gandhi has prostrated?' The mind which had worshipped only Rama, becomes subdued here! It is inexplicable! I sat down on the floor near the Sage's feet and began to gaze at his countenance. Five minutes passed. Suddenly, he turned his gaze upon me and I could not stand it. My hair stood on end and an unknown force began to rise throughout my frame. I prayed, 'Thou alone art my refuge!' Later, when introduced to the Sage, from the depth of that placid human statue, a smile emerged that seemed to say, 'Don't I know him?' That smile, mingled with that look of grace, stirred me deeply, and made me tremble like one who has passed through blazing fire.

I could not bear to look at that face radiant like the sun.

The Maharshi is an ocean of peace. Whoever sets eyes upon this sea or sits near it even for an instant, cannot fail to taste supreme peace, their mental movement held, be it only for a while. Such is the grace of this transcendent yogi, such is his motiveless activity. Whoever gathers at his feet, he will not fail to shed on them at least a drop from his unfathomable ocean of tranquility. He will not fail to shower on them the transcendent seed that ends the ego and yields peace. He waters the fields of their hearts with the elixir of devotion that passes unperceived from his heart. His handwriting is like a string of pearls. The style and the exposition of the Truth are outstanding in

his poems. What is impossible for the perfect adept who has grasped the essence of all sciences? He knows everything.
I stayed for three days and only once or twice a day, I heard him speaking. He rules all through silence. On the third day of my arrival, I drew near the sea of love and prostrating said, "I take leave, bless me." He looked at me and nodded his head in assent. I stood transfixed, arrested by the power of that look. I came out of the Sage's hall with peace in my heart. I said to myself, 'I am blessed.'"

Padma:

"With my husband Venkataraman, I went to see Bhagavan in 1947. After prostrating, we stood near him. I said, "Bhagavan, I want Self realisation." Bhagavan looked at me and smilingly asked, "Is it so?" The way Bhagavan asked me took my breath away. It was so charming. Then my husband said, "She wants to stay here permanently." Bhagavan did not say anything but looked at me steadily pouring forth his grace. I used to sit in the hall spellbound for many hours; such was his power. While engaged in meditation, old memories would well up in my mind and disturb the flow of meditation. I wanted to find a way out to quench all the vasanas. One day, I got an opportunity to put my problem before Bhagavan. His reply was, "You be the subject instead of the object, then the vasanas would not trouble you any more." This suggestion and his grace worked for me.
Even now, when I think of Bhagavan's grace, I simply shed tears."

D.S. Sastri: (an official of the then Imperial Bank of India; his sister Suri Nagamma wrote 273 letters to him during 1945-50, about happenings at the Ashram.)
"I had my first darshan in 1941. As I was mentally worried, I thought of going to Tiruvannamalai and obtain some solace from the sage. Some years earlier, a friend of mine had asked me to accompany him to the Ashram, but I had refused as my experience of so-called holy men had been unfortunate. Having nothing particular to do, I strayed into the bookstall. Bhagavan, while returning from the bathroom, stopped near there to talk to someone. The attendant pointed him out to me; a thrill went through my whole body. What a difference from the swamis and holy men I had seen before!

That lustrous body, those shinning eyes, that beauteous smile, that gentle speech and halting gait – all took me by surprise. Later, on entering the hall, the ego in me did not permit my prostrating before him. Instead, I just folded my hands by way of namaskar and sat down, watching critically all that was happening. The prevailing serene atmosphere was infectious. I sat motionless. I was lost in wonder and admiration at the peace and silence. The thought uppermost in my mind was: if people could be happy thus with a minimum of food and clothing, why not I? Why grieve about official worries and domestic calamities? In the afternoon, when I sat before Bhagavan in the open space adjacent to the hall, and the chanting of the Vedic hymns began in those idyllic surroundings, I felt that I was in another world altogether. It was only when the chanting was over and devotees began leaving that I realised I was in this mundane world. After supper, when Bhagavan came back from a short walk, he sat on an easy chair in the open space between the hall and the well. One of the few devotees present, asked him about an incident in the Yoga Vasishta. Instead of just explaining it, he began narrating the whole story at length. The pleasant way he spoke, the simple language he used and the dignified manner in which he related the story captured our hearts and kept us all spellbound. At the end of it, the devotees told me that I was particularly lucky because Bhagavan rarely spoke much or for such a long time. I felt extremely happy and gratified. That night my wife and I fully agreed that we had reached our haven and found our real guru. Thus began our attachment to Bhagavan and the Ashram."

Sankarananda (an officer in the postal department):

"As a result of a long practice of mantra japa, I attained stillness of mind. I lost interest in all worldly things and could not attend to my duties either in the office or at home. I used to come and see Bhagavan often. Once I came to Bhagavan on a six-month leave. I sat in the hall and soon lost outer consciousness. One day, even after the lunch bell was rung, I sat unmoved. Bhagavan brought me back to (normal) consciousness by giving a mild push with his foot and took me to the dining hall. Since transient experiences would not lead one to the ultimate Truth, Bhagavan asked some senior resident devotees to take me to the temple in the morning and to Samudram

lake in the evening, and engage me in one way or another throughout the day and talk to me about the path of self-enquiry, thus preventing me from relapsing."

Seshadri Sastrigal (served in the dining hall of the Ashram):

"Once when I was serving buttermilk to Bhagavan, I found I had no more left with me. Bhagavan asked me, "Could you get some more buttermilk for me?" This was very unusual as Bhagavan had never asked for a second helping. I went into the kitchen, got some more and served him. After tasting it, he said, "There seems to be some difference between the buttermilk you served me earlier and this." As I did not know the answer, I went to the kitchen and asked the cooks. They told me that the buttermilk served later was intended for the servants. Bhagavan asked, "Why not the same for everybody?" From next day onwards, everyone was served the same buttermilk. During the rationing days, boiled wheat used to be served to the devotees, instead of rice. One night, instead of wheat, rice was served on Bhagavan's leaf. When the cook, who happened to be present, was asked by Bhagavan as to why he got rice and others wheat, he said, "Wheat is not good for Bhagavan's health." Bhagavan retorted, "Oho! Are you a doctor? Serve me the same as is served to others. Make no discrimination."

M.S. Nagarajan (a devotee who, even as a young boy, used to accompany his parents to the Ashram):

"My friend, who was a nephew of the great devotee Echammal, spoke to me about the greatness of Bhagavan. In 1930, when 15 years old, I came to the Ashram and was allotted the work of puja, help in the kitchen and bookstall, etc. But what I valued most was the privilege of cutting vegetables and grinding pulses in the kitchen along with Bhagavan.

At the end of six months, I went home but soon returned and stayed for four years. In 1932, I was in charge and a devotee called P.W.D. Ramaswami Iyer arranged a special food offering of sarkarai pongal (a kind of rice pudding) and vadai (a small round cake of black gram fried in oil). I had many things to do and there was no one to help. So I got up very early, took my bath, removed old flowers from the shrine, swept and cleaned the floor and lit two

fires. I then sat down to grind the black gram which I had soaked the previous night. I had not prepared vadai previously any time. I took some dough and tried to spread it out on a leaf to form a round vadai, but it would not come out properly. I tried again and again without success. I got annoyed and disgusted. The next moment, I noticed Bhagavan standing behind me and watching my effort to make vadai. He said quietly, "It doesn't matter. You have added too much water while grinding the gram. Now make round balls of the dough and fry them. They will be bondas." When the bondas were served, Ramaswami Iyer said to me angrily, "Look here. Did I not ask you to prepare vadai?" I was afraid to say anything and so merely looked at Bhagavan. He immediately turned to Iyer and said, "What does it matter? If the cakes are flat, they are vadais, if spherical, bondas. The stuff is the same and the taste is the same. Only name and forms are different. Eat prasadam and do not make a fuss." Everyone was astonished at Bhagavan's apt reply. Later in the day, when Ramaswami saw me, he remarked how lucky I was to get support from Bhagavan himself.

One day, a letter came from my mother informing me that a job had been found for me. This letter came to the hands of Bhagavan. After reading it, Bhagavan said, "Look here, a job has been found for you. Go and accept it immediately."

C. Rajagopalachari:

(Former Governor-General of India, well-known Congress leader of India)

"I first visited the Ashram in January 1936. Besides Indian devotees of Bhagavan, I found some foreign devotees also seated in the Hall. I was struck by the high spiritual atmosphere of the place surcharged with deep silence; Bhagavan radiating love and simplicity. I am a person belonging to the qualified Advaita school of thought. Being impressed by Bhagavan, I asked him how to reconcile it with the Advaita school. After a pause, Bhagavan said, "You have to workout your karma anyhow and you are saved." Ever since, I have been pondering over that teaching and felt benefited."

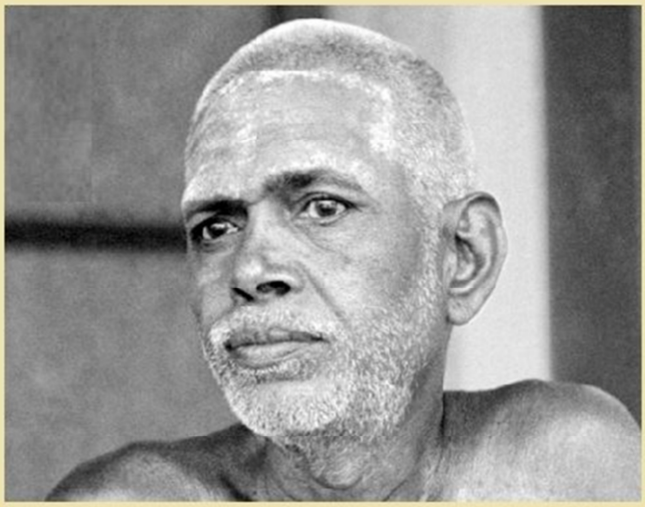
T.S. Narayanaswami (went to see Ramana just 2 months before the mahanirvana):

"Ramana Maharshi was a seer such as those born on this earth once in a millennium. My cousin and I went to see him compelled by sheer curiosity;

we had no desire for spiritual advancement. We had heard that the Maharshi was afflicted by sarcoma on his arm and he was bearing the pain without any sign of suffering. In the opinion of the doctors who attended on him, any other person would have been crying aloud with pain, characteristic of this malady. We entered the hall with a feeling of wonder and curiosity, as we wanted to have a look at this remarkable man of God. We took our seat along with other men. At seven in the morning appeared the tall, frail frame of the Sage. Clad only in a loin cloth, with an indescribable radiance on his face, he seated himself on a raised platform. Cries of Annamalaikku Haroha-ra (Hallowed be the Lord of Arunachala, Siva) went up in the air as he took the seat. He then cast his glance over every member of the audience. Seated by my side was the chief minister of Mysore, K.C. Reddy, who was a great devotee of the Maharshi. The entire gathering sat still for about fif-teen minutes in pin-drop silence. Then suddenly something within impelled me to rise from my seat, proceed to where the Maharshi was seated, and prostrate myself for a second and a third time before I resumed my seat in the rear row of the audience. I still remember the Maharshi nodding his head twice and casting his loving and gracious look at my face, which was suffused with awe and reverence. To me, it was like Dakshinamurthi Himself sitting before me, speaking to me through His benevolent eyes in solemn silence, a silence that was truly eloquent. I could feel a thrill, an ecstasy, and the calm of the great peace that filled the heart!
We took leave of the Ashram and with a wrench of the heart made our jour-ney to Madras where the humdrum life of cares and anxieties awaited us. Looking back with nostalgia, our visit to the Ashram and the darshan of the Maharshi turned out to be the most fortunate happening and the most mo-mentous event of our lives."

Uma Devi (Polish lady (Wanda Dynowska), converted to Hinduism, has au-thored 'The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi', which attracted seekers from Poland to Sri Ramana. She translated the Gita into Polish and started a publishing house that printed many Indian texts in Polish. She was a fre-quent visitor to the Ashram.): "I told the Maharshi about my vision of Siva and asked him as to how it could be everlasting. Sri Ramana told me that a

vision depends on the subject. It would appear and disappear. The value of the vision is the same as of the 'seer'. A vision can never be eternal. Therefore, enquire 'Who am I?' Sink deep within and abide in the Self. When I asked as to how to effect it as quickly as possible, the reply was:



One cannot see God and yet retain individuality.
The seer and the seen unite into one Being.
There is no cogniser, nor cognition nor the cognised. ~Face to Face: 194.
All merge into One Supreme Siva only.

"There is no question of time. Surrender to Him and abide by His will, whether he appears or vanishes, await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but a command. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden, no longer you have to have any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is bhakti. Or enquire to whom these questions arise. Dive deep in the Heart and remain as the Self. One of these two ways is open to the aspirant. Think of the man who sees only the cloth and not the cotton of which it is made, or the man who sees the pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show and not the screen itself as the background; or again the man who sees the letters which he reads but not the paper on which they are written. The objects are the consciousness and forms. The ordinary person sees the objects in the universe but not the consciousness in these forms. One cannot see God and yet retain individuality. The seer and the seen unite into one Being. There is no cogniser, nor cognition nor the cognised. All merge into One Supreme Siva only."

Prof. D. Gurumurthi (came to see Sri Ramana during his last days):
"On the day of our visit, we found Sri Ramana walking a few steps to the verandah with great effort. His body looked extremely weak, pale and limp. He could scarcely stand the weight as he moved forward. But the moment he ascended the seat and settled down for one-hour public darshan, a marvellous change came over him. It was as though he was summoning the spirit to dwell visibly in his body. His face shone radiant with peace. It was a marvel of conquest over the body. As devotees advanced to the presence of the Maharshi and bowed down in utter faith and fervent dedication, vibrations of power could be felt. At every bow a wave of devotion would flow towards the sage, and there would come a powerful flood of benediction from him to the devotees on the ground. A veritable miracle was being performed. An aged body bent down by terrific penances, exhausted and enfeebled by a mortal illness, and yet the immortal spirit of the emancipated sage triumphed over the weakness of the body, which was resplendent and shedding benign grace on the assembled devotees. Few among mankind have had the great privilege of participating in such a spiritual feast. When I sat in the evening session of darshan, a question formed in my mind. What will happen to the hundreds who will be deprived of this spiritual nourishment? As I was mentally addressing this question to Sri Ramana, radiance was felt by me. His physical form before me gradually became shrunken, smaller and smaller and vanished into radiance. As the radiance grew deeper and more powerful, I felt I had the answer to my query. Even though the body may disappear, concentration of spiritual power which was focused round it will continue to shed its influence. And as long as one can put oneself into attunement with that form and with that radiance, one would draw spiritual sustenance."

Gouriammal (visited Sri Ramana as a child with her father, an earnest devotee; She lived in her house opposite the Ashram):
"When I asked Bhagavan what I should do to be on the spiritual path, he said, "Do what you want to do but keep doing it; don't remain doing nothing. Repeat the name, or think deeply or seek the source of your 'I' consciousness, do atma vichara, but keep working on yourself.This is very important."
Once a well-meaning but ignorant devotee insisted that Bhagavan should

take the glass of orange juice that he had brought. Bhagavan said. "If you give anything to me without giving it to all, it will be like poison to me." When the devotee said that next time, all would be given orange juice, Bhagavan said, "What is the use because I tell you? You should know by this time that they are all myself and what you give to them, you are giving me."

Once my sister's five-year old son was bitten by a snake and in desperation she brought the child to Bhagavan. The doctors had given up hope. The boy was perspiring profusely and was in great pain. The child was already stiff with glazed eyes and was breathing heavily. The mother was weeping inconsolably. When Bhagavan saw her, he said, "Do not weep. It is nothing." He passed his hand over the child and within a few minutes, the boy recovered his senses and sat up. As the mother was leaving, she saw a Muslim devotee in front of the hall. By profession, he was a snake charmer and a snakebite healer. He said, "Now the child is safe, but the poison is still in his body and I had better chant some charms to get it out." He did so and asked her to go. Bhagavan had saved the child but wanted the snake charmer to take the credit."

Krishnaswami:

(came to Sri Ramana in 1936

and was his attendant till the mahanirvana)

"There was a lame puppy which would wag its tail whenever Bhagavan went up the hill. He was fed. One day, after having food, the pup went and urinated in front of the office. He got wild and ordered that no more food be given to the pup. When Bhagavan asked me why the pup was not fed, I disclosed the reason. He got angry and told me, "Earlier, many have come, ruled and gone, one day you too have to go." And thus feeding of the pup got resumed. The same mongrel would come in front of Bhagavan with the mouth full of filth. Bhagavan used to wipe her mouth clean with his own towel and say, "Some great soul has come in this garb." He never gave me the towel for washing.

Bhagavan used to say with a laugh, "A person performs namaskaram to the Swami and expects all his prayers fulfilled and boons granted. Who wants this namaskaram? Even before they prostrate physically, I prostrate to them mentally."

One day he told me, "One could cause God through alchemy. But even if that God tells you something, don't believe it. If I come in front of you, don't believe it. The Seer is most important. You are. That is most important. Concentrate on the Seer, not on the seen. All that you see is false and the Seer alone is true. All knowledge you gather is useless, until you hold on to your Self. You are the Truth, not what is being told to you, not what you see."

Apa B. Pant: (High Commissioner for India in U.K.
He visited Sri Ramana in 1937 along with Maurice Frydman)

"I well remember the day Maurice and I reached Sri Ramanasramam. There was some festival and the Maharshi's hall was overflowing. We found a seat in a corner and fell silent. In a minute or two, I felt that there was radiance alight that was filling the whole hall. It was so quiet, so still. The impression was so indelible. I had just returned from England after doing my course on philosophy, and thought I knew answers to the eternal questions. I wanted to put those before Bhagavan. But, somehow, in his presence, I did not feel like opening my mouth. At night, as it was hot, we slept in the open. There was so much of turmoil and noise all around. The whole night, it was impossible to sleep. In the morning, I spoke to Maurice about it. He asked, "What noise? There was no noise whatsoever; everything was peaceful." I was stunned! I was sure I had not slept a wink and here was Maurice saying that there was no noise at all. Then it dawned on me that Bhagavan had given me a message. He had spoken without speaking that the mind creates the noise and is chattering and arguing illusions and unless one goes beyond this turmoil, there can be no living in Truth, or Liberation. He had given me in a flash the message that 'Awareness is all'. The same evening, Maurice said to Bhagavan that I do surya namaskars [a type of physical exercise]. Bhagavan looked at me very straight and said, "Let me see how you do it." So, in front of all, I did 12 surya namaskars with breathing and mantras as my father had taught me. Bhagavan smilingly said, "Yes, it is a good exercise to be done after you have been sitting for hours in meditation and your knees and other joints feel a little stiff." I never used to do any meditation at that time. But I know now [30 years later] that it were these words which kept me on the surya namaskars and led me to daily meditation."

Vaikuntavasar (worked up his way to be Sri Ramana's attendant in 1940):
"Before becoming an attendant, I had talked to Him only once, soon after my arrival. After that, there was no need for me to think of anything else. Bhagavan was God for me. Everything I did for Him was done with care and dedication. I used to devote considerable time to wash the only two pieces of cloth Bhagavan had (loin cloth and a small towel), as I wanted them to be spotlessly clean. Massaging His feet was another duty I welcomed. Bhagavan's rheumatism gave me an opportunity to massage His feet and legs. On great occasions, Bhagavan would ask me, "Have you attended to the 'boys' (monkeys)?" I used to take plenty of food and spread it on the rocks. After they finished eating, the monkeys would keep quiet, lying down content, and Bhagavan would remark, "Look, how good they all have become and do not do any mischief now." Once there was a snake below my pillow. When I reported it to Bhagavan, He laughingly remarked, "Oh, it is quite all right. What else can make a better bed for you?" Such was His sense of humour. Once, about nine at night, Bhagavan walked towards the Hill. I went along with Him. Bhagavan had gone a bit further to ease Himself. Then I heard the sound of wooden sandals moving nearer and nearer and passing on. There was no one to be seen. I was awe struck. I had heard from Bhagavan about the siddhas living on Arunachala. I began to sweat. When Bhagavan came near me, He looked at me and said, "So, you too have heard it."

Saroja Krishnan (Her family had a close relationship with the Ashram. Her uncle, Rajagopala Iyer, was one of the attendants of Sri Ramana.):
"When I was young, I used to sit in the hall, watching with interest the happenings around me. One day, Bhagavan's eyes turned to me and rested there; my eyes were locked in his, unable to turn away. How does one describe the indescribable? Dark and wide, cool and bright, melting with mercy and kindness, those heavenly orbs seemed to expand and fill the room and all space, engulfing me. Looking back, I understand that this was his nayana diksha [Initiation by look]. When fifteen or sixteen, I was undergoing mental suffering. My husband was not in town. In despair, I tried to put an end to my life, but did not succeed. My uncle Rajagopala Iyer chanced to take the family to the Ashram. Even here, my agony continued. The time came for us

to return home. One by one, all members of the family prostrated and took Bhagavan's leave. When I raised my head after prostration, my eyes fell on Bhagavan's feet, placed on a low stool in front of his sofa. My hands shot forward as if propelled by some powerful force and I grasped those feet only for a very short time. A fount of happiness seemed to burst forth from somewhere deep within me. Wave after wave of bliss washed over me and I seemed to be floating in it. I was oblivious of everything else. Thoughts of Bhagavan and the surging happiness absorbed every nook and corner of my being.

Back at home, even though the old situation continued, nothing touched me. In my lifetime, I have never experienced anything remotely resembling it.

Once, Bhagavan was coming down the hill after his morning stroll. Suddenly, a dove fell down at his feet. Bhagavan bent down and picking it up, cradled it in his arms and gently soothed it by passing his hand lightly over its back. Then he turned round to see how the bird happened to fall. A young hunter was hesitantly standing a little distance away with a catapult in hand. Bhagavan remarked in quiet voice, "This is the poor boy's food, but two annas [one eighth of a rupee] would do to buy something to satisfy his hunger." The amount was paid immediately to the boy by my uncle. The dove lay still and dazed in Bhagavan's arms. It did not move ever after Bhagavan came back to the hall. "A few drops of green grapes juice applied on its head would cure him." As Bhagavan was saying this, an out-station devotee entered the hall with a few bunches of green grapes, as an offering to Bhagavan. "Hey, look, we are just talking about green grapes and here they are!" exclaimed Bhagavan. Immediately, a few grapes were squeezed on the dove's head. In a short while, the bird stirred, raised its head and looked around. After a few tentative steps, it fluttered it wings and flew away. Who is the vet who taught Bhagavan this treatment? I wondered."

Shanti (pseudonym; visited Sri Ramana in 1943):

"Bhagavan welcomed me with a soft and affectionate look. I prostrated and when I got up, he made a sign to take my seat nearby, and I did so. From the moment Bhagavan's eyes fell on me, my heart went out to him in spontaneous love and reverence.

The way he ate his food, the way he sat, the way he walked, the way he talked, were remarkably calm, and so very different from the manner of ordinary men.

At about 9 a.m., Bhagavan came to the meditation hall and we too entered the hall and sat facing him. For the first time in my life, I realized how dynamic shanti could be. Peace seemed to emerge from Bhagavan and fill the hearts of one and all. In his presence, the mind became calm and tranquil of its own accord and, consequently, doubts and questions became few, and finally vanished. I was very happy. My heart softly whispered within me the words, 'dhanyoham, dhanyoham' (I am blessed, I am blessed).

I had a desire to dedicate a Sanskrit stanza to Bhagavan, but my knowledge of the language was not so much as to compose a verse with any degree of confidence. In my heart, I prayed for his grace to fulfil my wish. That noon, when I got up from my usual siesta, a stanza occurred to me. Apparently, without any conscious mental process, a poem was formed in my mind ready to be transcribed. My prayer had been granted. With great joy, I wrote it down on a piece of paper, took it to Bhagavan and placed it at his feet. He read the stanza twice and asked me to put the words 'Sona Sailam' for the words 'Ramana Maharshi'. I changed the fourth line which read, "I meditate on Sona Sailam (Arunachala)". Thus Bhagavan revealed to me that he was none other than Arunachala or Dakshinamurthi, who by his sublime silence expounded to his devotees the mysteries of Self-knowledge. At that time, it struck me so and my eyes were filled with tears of delight and gratitude.

According to Viveka Chudamani, the flight of steps leading to jivanmukti begins with satsanga, the company of sages and saints. Our Bhagavan is such a soul. I think we are too near Bhagavan's time to see him in correct perspective of history. As years roll on, his spiritual grandeur will assume Himalayan proportions."

THE COW LAKSHMI

The cow donated to the Ashram in 1926 was named Lakshmi by Sri Ramana himself. She died in 1948. She had nine deliveries in all. At the time of one such delivery, Sri Ramana's attendant Kunju Swami remarked, "It is auspicious that the cow has delivered the calf on Sri Ramana's birthday." Sri Ramana interrupted him to say, "Correct yourself Kunju, my birthday celebrations are taking place on the day Lakshmi has calved."

Sri Ramana would visit the cow shed regularly. Lakshmi also became greatly attached to the Maharshi and would, of her own accord, walk from her shed into the hall, even when the hall was full of devotees.

One day, the cow came to the hall, put her head on the Maharshi's shoulder and wept. He gently stroked her head and said, "Who has hurt you? Stop crying. I am here to befriend you." Lakshmi stopped crying, gave the Maharshi a few licks and went away comforted.

Lakshmi would walk into the hall from her shed a few minutes after the birth of her new calf and stand mutely before the Maharshi, who would then address her: "Lakshmi, you have come to tell me that you have a new baby. I will come to the shed and see your child."

Lakshmi continued through the years as one of the favoured devotees of Sri Ramana. Whenever she visited Sri Ramana, he would pay attention to her, stroke her and feed her with plantains, rice cakes, etc. The possessive way in which she approached Sri Ramana and the attention bestowed on her made many devotees believe that there was some special bond between them in an earlier birth. It seemed hard to explain in any other way the great solicitude and tenderness that Sri Ramana always showed in his dealings with her. Many old timers at the Ashram believed that Lakshmi was reincarnation of an old lady by the name Keeraipatti, who had known Sri Ramana from his earliest days in Tiruvannamalai and had occasionally prepared food for him almost up to her death in 1921. (Sri Ramana has also referred to the fact of reincarnation without committing himself.) It is believed that Lakshmi brought a lot of luck and prosperity to the Ashram, a fact that was mentioned by Sri Ramana himself. On the day of Lakshmi's death, the Maharshi sat beside her, took her head into his arms and gently stroked her neck. He fixed his gracious gaze on her. She passed away peacefully.

DAKSHINAMURTHI

(The Great Silent Guru, an incarnation of Lord Siva)

It is said that Lord Siva manifested as Dakshinamurthi in order to instruct and enlighten four ascetics. In the traditional version of this story, He appeared in the form of a young boy sitting under a banyan tree. The four ascetics attained enlightenment as a result of receiving Dakshinamurthi's silent transmissions. A verse from Adi Sankara's Sri Dakshinamurthi Stotra goes on to say – "Look at the wonder under the banyan tree! While the disciples are old and grey-haired, the teacher is blooming youth. And though the Master's speech is simple silence, the doubts of the disciples are all resolved." Dakshinamurthi means 'southward facing god', and one finds Lord Siva in this form on the outside of the southern walls of South Indian Siva temples. Sri Ramana devotees generally believe that the Maharshi was a manifestation of Dakshinamurthi. He took up residence on the southern side of Arunachala hills, identified himself with Arunachala Siva, and he always preferred to teach through silence. The Maharshi has told the following story about Dakshinamurthi to Muruganar:

When four aged Sanakadi rishis [Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata] first saw the youthful Dakshinamurthi sitting under a banyan tree, they at once got attracted to him, and understood that he was the real sadguru. They approached him, prostrated before him, sat at his feet and began to ask very shrewd and pertinent questions about the nature of Reality and the means of attaining it. Because of the great compassion and fatherly love which he felt for his aged disciples, the young Dakshinamurthi was overjoyed to see their earnestness, wisdom and maturity, and gave apt replies to each of their questions. As he answered each consecutive question, further doubts arose in their minds and they asked further questions. Thus they continued to question Dakshinamurthi for one whole year, and he continued to clear their doubts through his compassionate answers. Finally, Dakshinamurthi felt that if he continued to answer the questions, more doubts would arise in their minds, and there would never be an end to their ignorance.

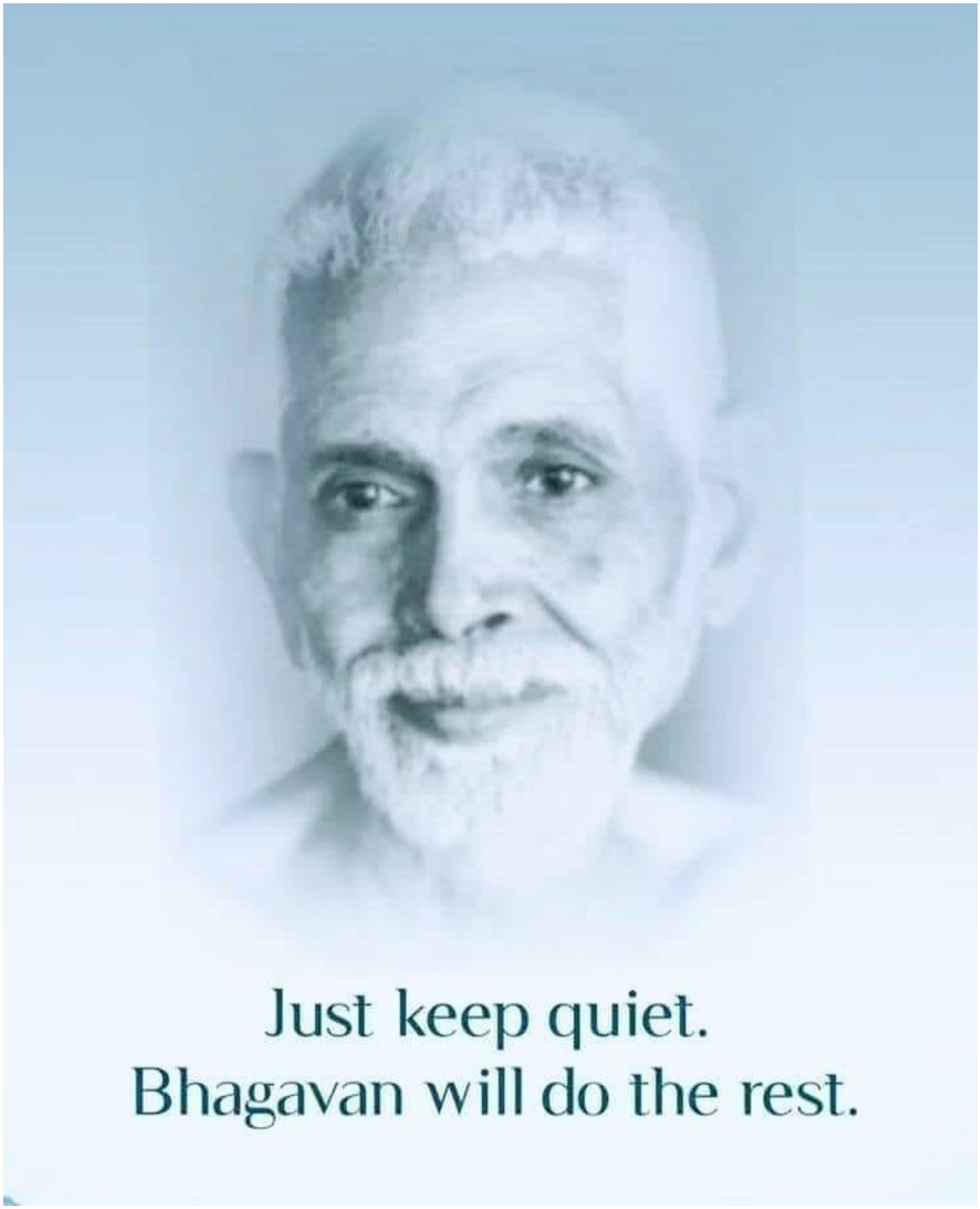
Therefore, suppressing the feeling of compassion and fatherly love, which was welling up within him, he merged himself into Supreme Silence. Because of their great maturity (which had got ripened greatly due to their year-long association with the sadguru), as soon as Dakshinamurthi assumed silence, they, too, got merged into Supreme Silence, the true state of Self.

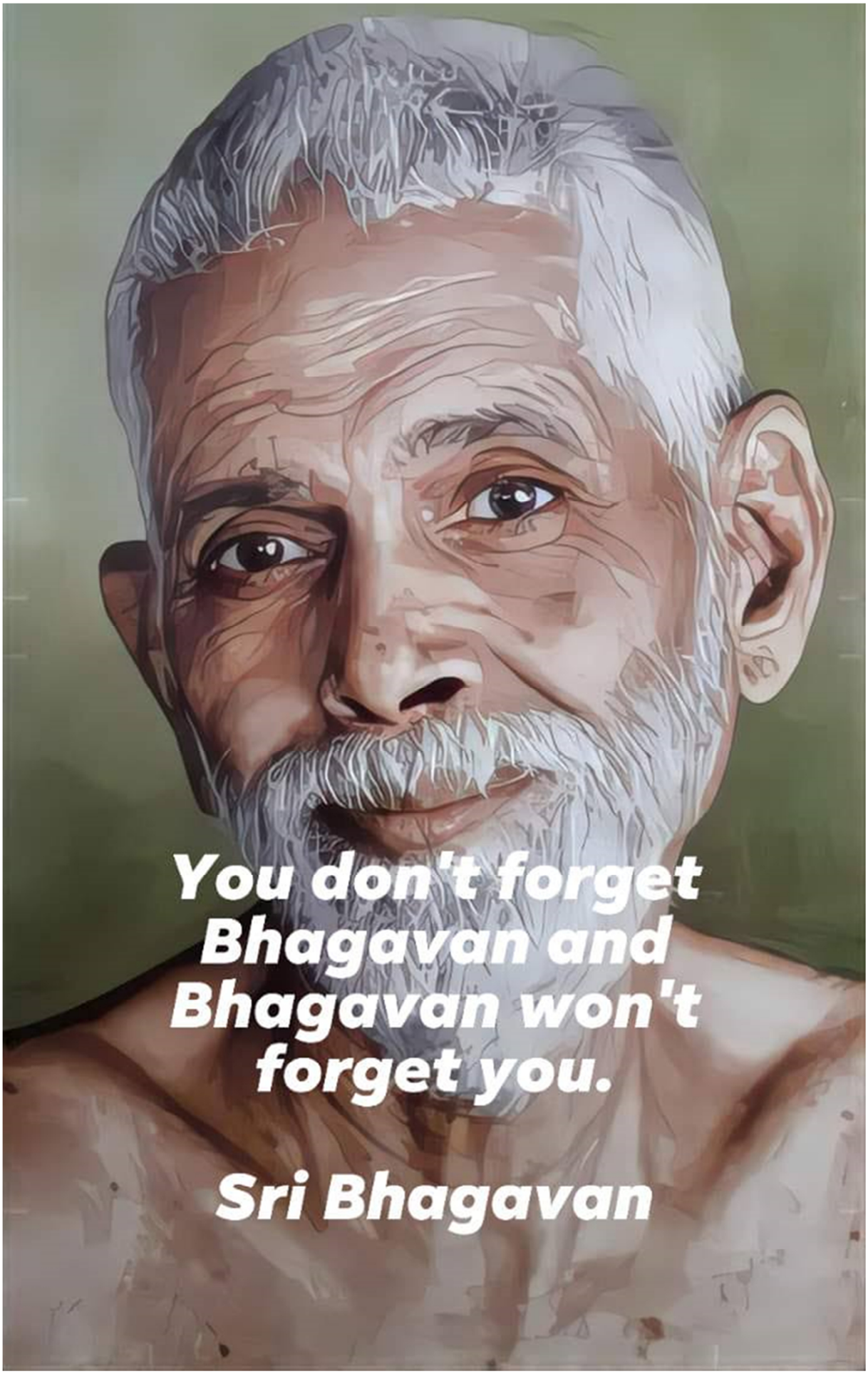
When Muruganar, who was hearing the story, remarked that no book has mentioned about Dakshinamurthi ever speaking anything, Sri Ramana replied curtly, "But this is what actually happened."

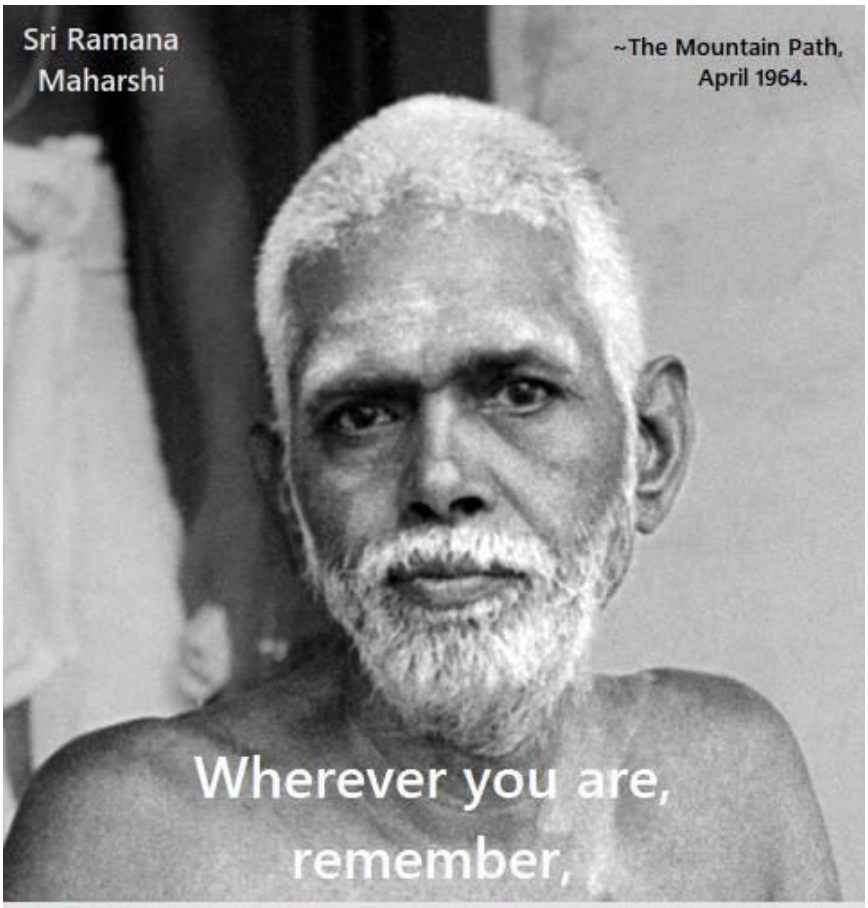
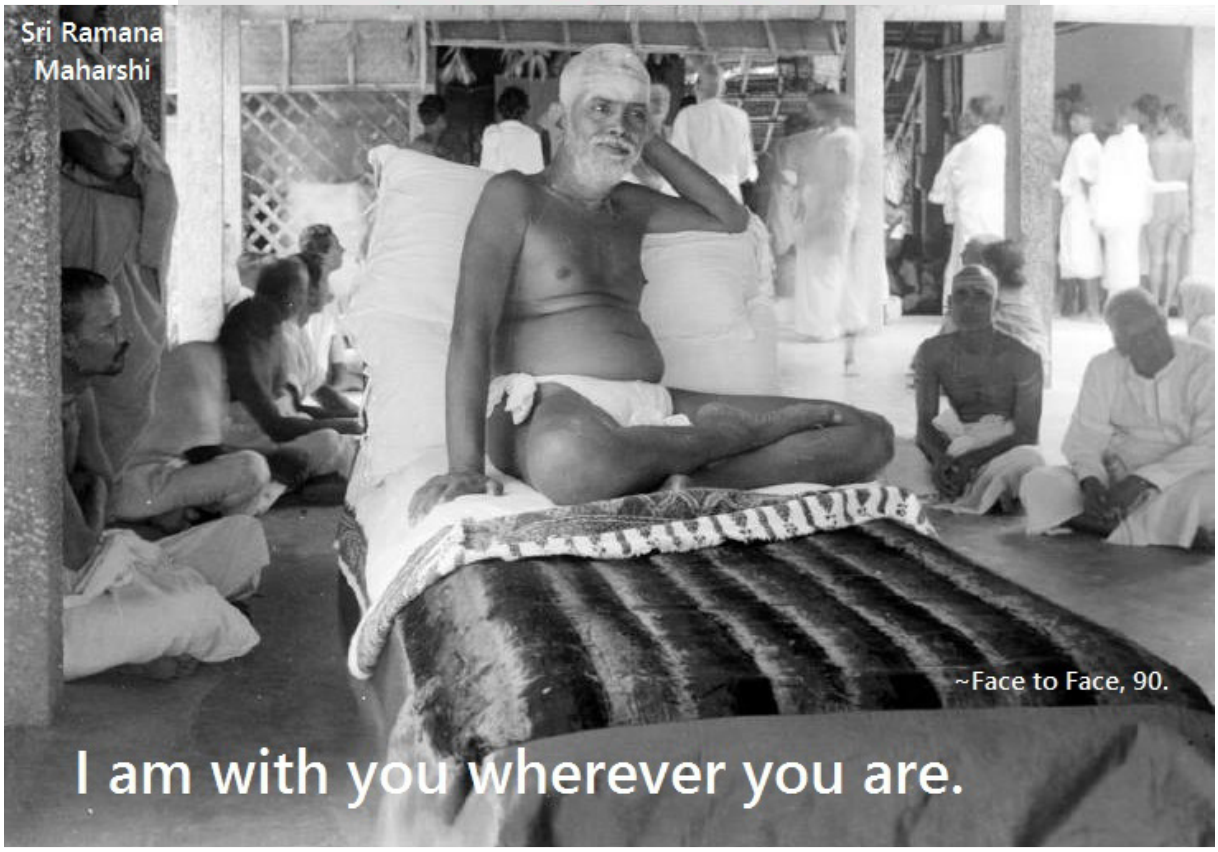
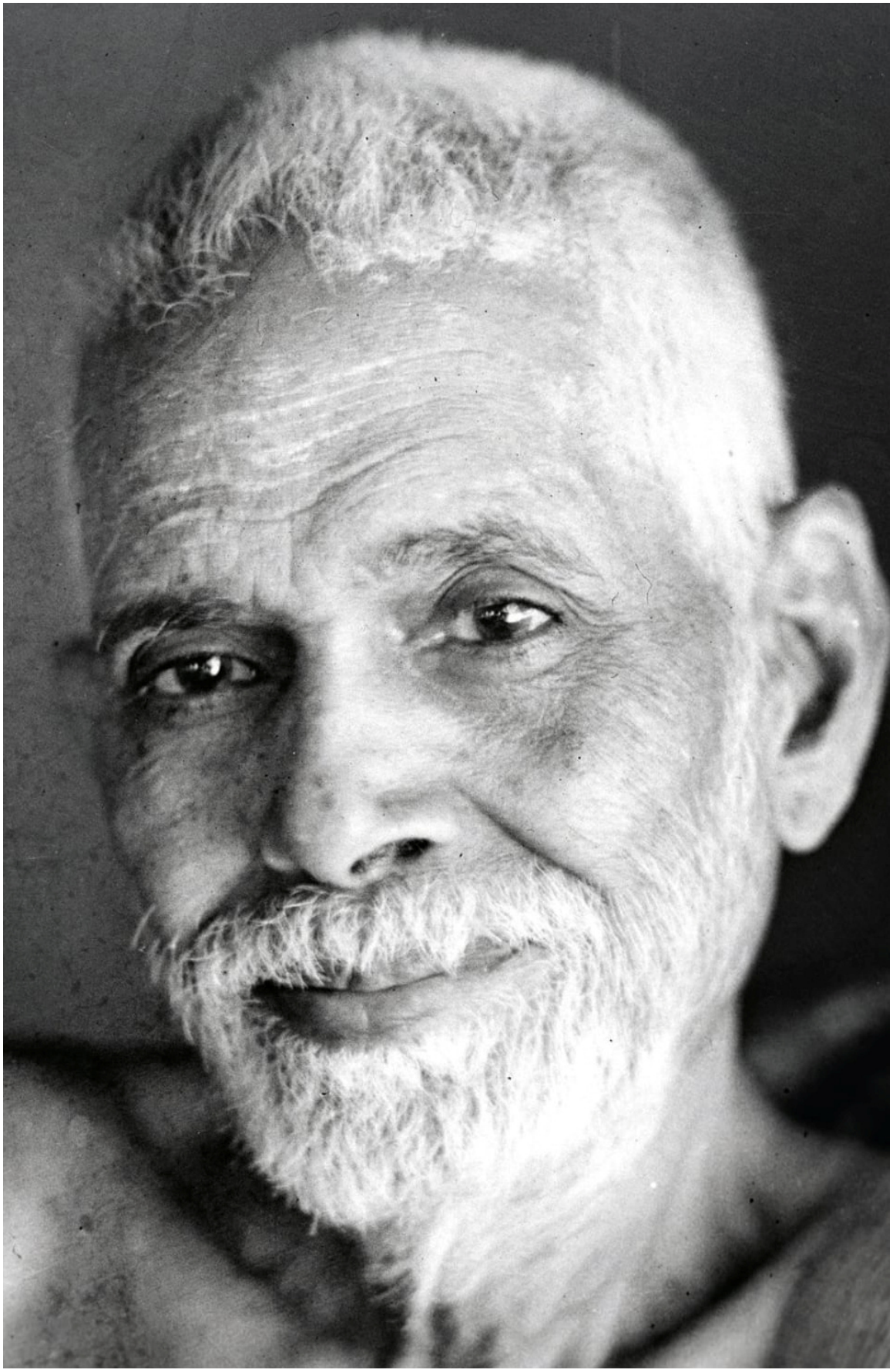
From the authoritative way in which Sri Ramana reacted, Muruganar realised that Sri Ramana was none other than Dakshinamurthi himself.

Silence is said to be the 'highest' teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. For those who are not able to reap the full benefit of this silence, he prescribed 'Summa Iru', which is supposed to be his 'highest verbal teaching'.
This has been variously translated as:

"Keep Quiet"! "Be Still"!
"Just Be"! "Simply Be"!




You don't forget Bhagavan and Bhagavan won't forget you.
Sri Bhagavan



Bhagavan is there in your heart watching over you.