

*Origin of Spiritual Instruction*



*Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Society of Abidance in Truth

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# *Introduction to This Edition*

*Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*

In 1939, under the auspices of Niranjanananda Swami, Sri Ramanasramam published a book in the English language entitled, *A Catechism of Instruction*, bearing the subtitle of “Being a Translation of the Original Instructions of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.” The book was brought out in a second edition the following year, in 1940. The name of the author, that is to say the recorder, of the text did not appear in these editions, though a passage said to be “from the author’s preface to the Tamil original” appeared at the beginning of the text positioned opposite a black and white photograph of the Maharshi depicting Him in His middle age. The book is the first English translation of *Upadesa Manjari*, which may be translated as “A Bouquet of Spiritual Instruction.” The book is in the form of dialogues, though when and with whom these dialogues occurred are not stated in the book.

At a later time, the text was recast in the form of a work that is still published by the Asramam as *Spiritual Instruction*, and the author’s name was revealed as Sri Natanananda. In this later edition, many of the passages have been re-translated, edited, abbreviated, or otherwise altered, doubtlessly for the sake of clarity for the spiritual seekers who read this sacred work filled with Sri Bhagavan’s liberating spiritual instructions. There are, though, passages in the original edition that may be of great benefit in their original form also, and so this present edition is being published for the purpose of the preservation of these expressions of the Maharshi’s sublime teachings.

This present edition has been entitled *Origin of Spiritual Instruction* for several reasons. The first is that the text is the teaching about the Self, and the Self is the Absolute Source of all spiritual instruction that reveals itself as the Absolute Self. The second is that the teachings contained herein are the profound revelations of the Truth of the Self and how to realize it from Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, who, abiding as the Self, is, Himself, the Origin of the instruction revealing the Self, which is

Himself. The third is that the contents of this book represent the original manner in which the teachings of *Spiritual Instruction* were published.

In this present volume, the 1940 edition has been reproduced completely. Passages marked as “Note” are as they appear in the original, presumably representing Sri Natanananda’s understanding or additional instructions heard by him at a time other than that during which the dialogues that constitute this book occurred. In the original, these insertions were labeled as “notes” and inserted into the text itself, as well as, in other passages, placed at the bottom of the page as footnotes. In this present edition, the sections marked “Note” and the forty-one footnotes do not indicate any editorial insertions by the present editor, but are these original notes and footnotes, set in a different font to render them easily recognizable. In addition, the footnotes have been placed in vertical columns next to the passages to which they pertain. The only changes that have been made to the original text are for minor corrections of grammar and punctuation and the usage of American English spelling. In addition, in order to aid the reader, at several points, the corresponding passages of the later editions of *Spiritual Instruction* have been included in the form of footnotes marked with asterisks located at the bottom of the page when such later versions contain more instruction than the original, when the later versions exhibit a greater clarity of expression of the essential teachings, or when they provide additional information.

The Society of Abidance in Truth wishes to express its deep gratitude to Sri Ramanasramam and to Sri V. S. Ramanan, the President of Sri Ramanasramam, for so kindly granting permission to SAT to publish this present work and for all Sri Ramanasramam’s devoted dedication to the preservation and dissemination of the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

SAT also wishes to express its thankfulness to Nome for editing the present work, to Sasvati for design, layout, and seeing to the printing of this book, and to Sangeeta Raman for her careful proofreading.

May Sri Bhagavan’s Grace bless those who imbibe these teachings of Self-Knowledge so that they ever abide in the unwavering, silent Bliss of the Realization of the Self.

*Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu  
Om may this be an offering to Sri Ramana*

# *A Catechism of Instruction*

*Being a Translation of the Original Instructions of  
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*

## **From the Authors Preface to the Tamil Original:**

Worshipping in thought, word, and deed the sacred lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the very embodiment of the universal, eternal Sat-Chit-Ānanda, I have gathered together this bunch of flowers for the benefit of the foremost among those who seek Liberation and are adored even by the learned that they may enjoy the Bliss of their fragrance and attain Salvation.

## **Later Editions:**

### *Invocation*

I seek refuge at the sacred feet of the blessed Ramana, who performs the entire work of creation, preservation, and destruction, while remaining wholly unattached and who makes us aware of what is real and thus protects us, that I may set down his words fittingly.

### *Importance of the Work*

Worshipping with the instruments (of thought, word, and body) the sacred lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the very embodiment of the beginningless, infinite, supreme Brahman, the Sat-Chit-Ānanda (Existence, Consciousness, Bliss), I have gathered together this bouquet of the flowers of his instructions (upadeśamañjarī) for the benefit of those who are the foremost among the seekers of Liberation and who are adored even by learned persons in order that they might adorn themselves with it and attain Salvation.

This book is an epitome of the immortal words of the great soul, Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose teachings entirely dispelled the doubts and wrong notions of this humble person, even as the sun dispels darkness.

The subject of this book is that eternal Brahman, which shines as the pinnacle and heart of all the Vedas and Āgamas.

That incomparable Self-Realization (Ātmasiddhi), which is praised by all the Upanishads and which is the supreme good to be sought by all noble aspirants (brahmavid-s), is the theme of this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

# *Upadesa or Spiritual Instruction*

Disciple: What are the distinctive marks of a Guru,\* or Master, that enable one to know and recognize him as such?

Master: The Guru is one who at all times abides in the profound depths of the Self.\*\* He never sees any difference between himself and others, and he is not in the least obsessed by false notions of distinction, that he himself is the enlightened one (jñāni, i.e., has realized Truth) or is the liberated one (mukta), while others around him are languishing in bondage or immersed in cimmerian darkness of ignorance. His firmness or self-possession can never be shaken under any circumstances, and he is never perturbed.

D.: What are the requisite qualifications of a disciple?\*\*\*

M.: He should have an intense and incessant longing to get free from the miseries of life<sup>1</sup> and to attain supreme spiritual Bliss. He should not have the least desire for anything else.

D.: What is the essential feature of upadeśa, or spiritual instruction, to the disciple by the Master?

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\* of a real teacher (Sadguru)

\*\* Steady abidance in the Self, looking at all with an equal eye, unshakable courage at all times, in all places and circumstances.

\*\*\* of an earnest disciple (sadsishya)?

<sup>1</sup>This does not consist in running away from life, but in transcending mind and thought by realizing the eternal Spirit that is beyond birth and death. Such a Sage remains for all time a source of spiritual strength and power.

M.: The term “upadeśa” literally means restoring an object nearest to its true and proper place.

The mind of the disciple having become differentiated from its true and primal state of pure Being, or the Self, which the scriptures describe as Sat-Chit-Ānanda, Being-Consciousness-Bliss, slips away from it and, assuming the form of thought, ever runs after the objects of sense gratification. Thus, the mind gets buffeted and battered by the vicissitudes of life and becomes weak and dispirited. Now, upadeśa, or spiritual instruction, consists in the Master\* restoring the mind of the disciple to its primal state and effectively preventing it from slipping away from that state of pure Being, of absolute identity with the Self, or, in other words, the spiritual Being of the Master.\*\*

The term “upadeśa” may also be understood as presenting an apparently distant object to one's near view; i.e., it consists in the Master showing to the disciple, as immediate and identical with the disciple, that which he has been considering (viz., the Self, or Absolute\*\*\*) as distant and different from himself.

D.: If, as the above statement implies, the spiritual Being of the Master is really identical with that of the disciple,\*\*\*\* why then have the scriptures categorically declared that however great the attainments<sup>2</sup> of a seeker may be, he cannot have spiritual awakening\*\*\*\*\* except with the Master's Grace?

<sup>2</sup>These include aṅimadi siddhi-s, or thaumaturgic powers to work miracles, etc., which do not connote spiritual awakening or enlightenment. The desire for these powers is a positive hindrance to one's spiritual progress.

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\* The Guru who is the embodiment of that which is indicated by the terms sat, cit, and ānanda (existence, consciousness, and bliss).

\*\* and establishes him in his own real nature without differentiation.

\*\*\* Brahman

\*\*\*\* the Guru is one's own Self

\*\*\*\*\* attain Self-Realization