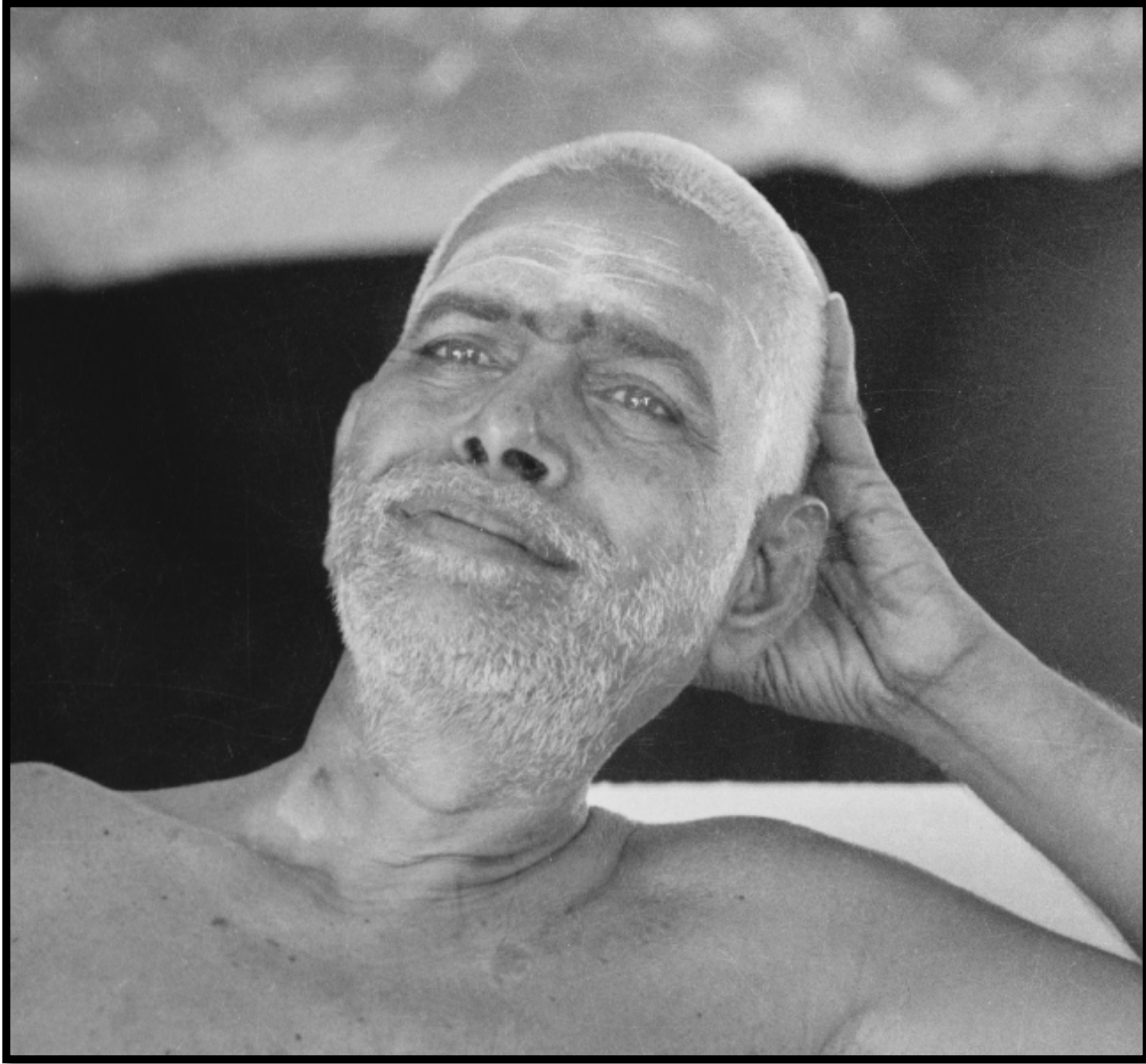


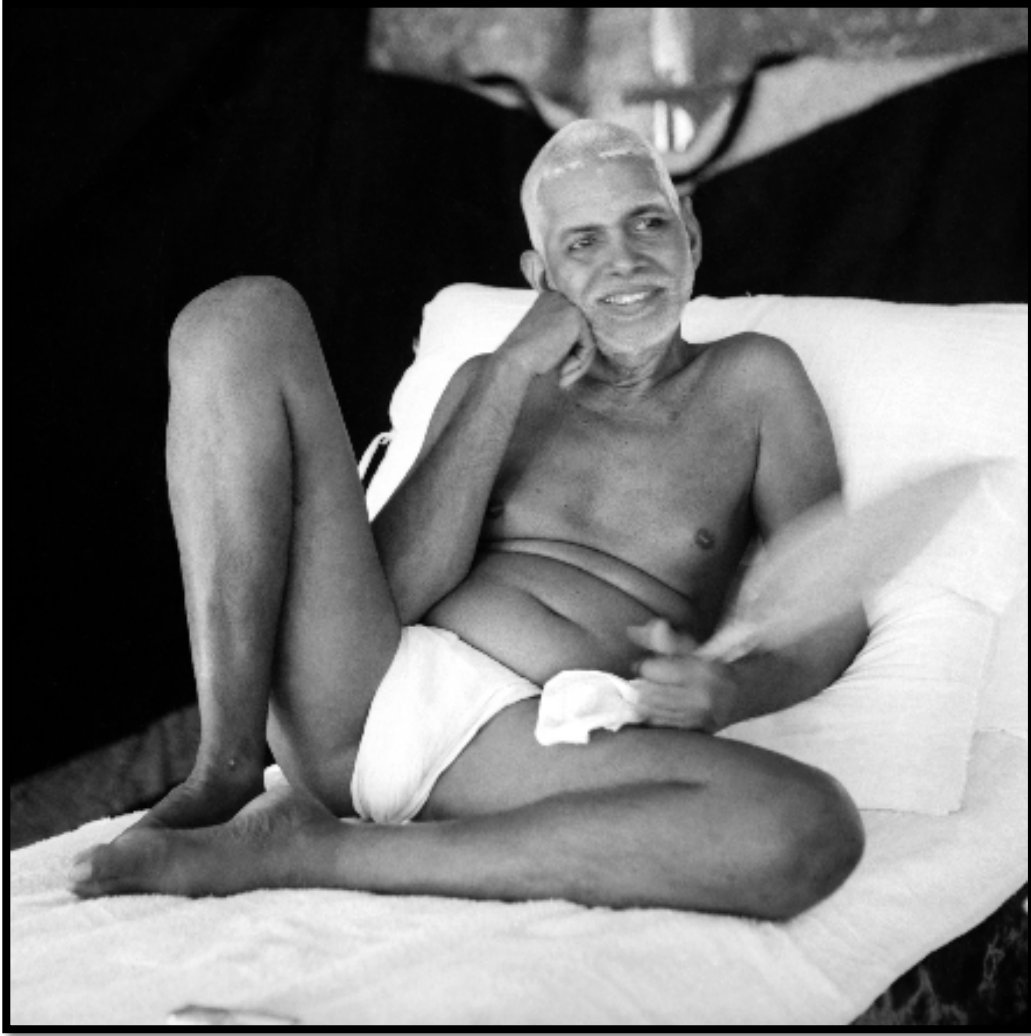
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# **THE SECRET OF THE SMILE**



**THE HIGHEST OPERATION OF GRACE**

Swami Sadasivananda Giri



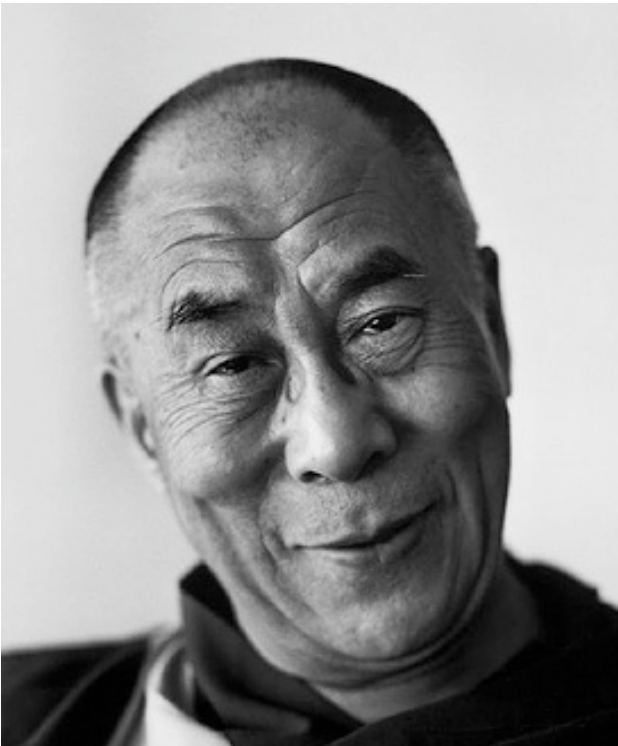
Sri Muruganar, a close disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, read from the scriptures before Bhagavan:

“There is a secret language of silence and smiles understood by mutual lovers, but not noticed by onlookers; in the same way the operation of grace is secret and not spectacular.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Five Hymns*, Marital Garland of Letters, #97 sub clause (2), page 91.

There is so much that can be said about a smile; indeed the exaltation it brings is indispensable even for saints. Saint Francis de Sales once said: “A saint who is sad, is a sad saint!” Indeed, smiling opens the heart and lets your light shine. Scientists claim that it encourages good health; it reduces stress, increases the endorphin flow (the inner happy chemicals in the blood) and it is contagious. When people smile others are attracted, for unconsciously they think: “Gosh, that person is happy maybe I can become happy too by association.” We learn from those who have unlocked the secret, and have found therein ‘stillness, peace, happiness and purifying energy’, and we know that this is God shining through them; because it is all derived from a “heart in union with the Divine.”



A friend once told me that in a lecture given at Alexandra Palace in London about 15 years ago the Dalai Lama was the key speaker. After the talk he was walking along the park with all his bodyguards to get into his car and she just happened to be there by the car and he turned and gave her this huge smile — at once she received an amazing flow of grace and of uplifting loving kindness from him. She still remembers that his smile was absolutely full of grace,

genuine and a huge gift. It was as though he was carrying all the power and joy of his lineage.



Mother Teresa said: “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.” (Mother Teresa’s smile towards mankind was conveyed through the compassionate labor of her life!)

Everyone understands in a totally intuitive way what a smile means. It transcends language and cultural barriers. It is the clearest, simplest manifestation of the joy that lies within us. It is the quickest and most direct way to connect with another human being. A smile is shorthand for ‘I recognize and acknowledge the God within you’.

These truths are undeniable. With a clear understanding of the ability of every human to communicate with a smile ‘stillness, peace, happiness, positive energy and uplifting compassion’, let us attempt to consider what actually happens to humans when God smiles.



There is a beautiful saying from the scriptures of India:

*Devi priya prahasant.*  
*Devi prahasant priya.*

The love of the Devi manifests as a  
smile,  
Therefore She loves to smile!



It is said in the Holy Bible: “God is glorious in His saints.” God is even more glorious in His smile!

The most learned scholars who have sought to plumb the depths of the *Bhagavad Gita* universally agree that the actual teaching of Lord Krishna begins in the eleventh verse of Chapter Two:



The Blessed Lord spoke:

“You have mourned those that should not be mourned;

The wise do not mourn for the dead or for the living.”

Many of the very wisest of these scholars, those who strive to comprehend the Gita in its highest mystical sense, profoundly declare that the Lord’s teaching to mankind actually begins with the tenth verse of Chapter Two. They boldly go further and declare that the Gita’s entire message is actually conveyed by the very first action Sri Krishna makes before Arjuna — and us!

As if assuming the manifestation of Dakshinamurti, Sri Krishna being named as the ‘Lord of the Senses’ (*Hrishikesh*), responds to the despondency of Arjuna in silence. From the uncompromising position between the two opposing armies drawn up for battle, the Lord smiles!

The advanced devotee — who has found them self in an uncompromising position between the sense soldiers of the ego and the discriminating warriors of the soul, the latter lamenting the necessity of renouncing habits of the senses and who has therefore become indecisively inactive, surrendering himself passively to the infinite —

beholds the Spirit, come to dispel the gloom of doubt with the gentle light of His smile and His voice of wisdom heard through intuition.

“Those devotees who, during the invasion of doubt, completely give themselves up to the Spirit in inner silence and submission are able to perceive the indescribable, all-purifying Light of God playing across the firmament of their inner perception.

“**T**his indescribable ‘Smile of the Spirit’ is fully perceived only by those devotees whose spiritual lives are directed by ‘right action’. For as the Buddha demonstrated, through ‘right action’ alone does one cultivate ‘right perception’. There is little mystery, and even less theory (for the Buddha was not a theorist) behind this proclamation. It is simply a definitive declaration that one must lead a clean spiritual life; eat properly, practice correct moral behavior and deep meditation!”



Arjuna was the epitome of a devotee on the verge of the highest spiritual attainment, for he had chosen the Lord Himself to direct the horses of his chariot, to be his Guiding Power.

The name 'Arjuna' mystically symbolizes self-control. The means of achievement of this is demonstrated by Arjuna's 'right action' of choosing Sri Krishna to hold the reins that guide the five horses (five senses) of his chariot (his mind).

Thus Arjuna's mind was under control and still. His surrender was active in that he was now fully empowered to arouse and encounter the sense soldiers of the ego. Furthermore, he was ready to fight under the banner of the monkey ensign signifying devotion. In response to his submission and devotion he was transformed through the illuminating smile of the Lord, which caused him to have "an ear to hear" the still, small inner Divine voice of his Soul!



In our modern era, during the sojourn of Sri Ramakrishna, another soul was transfixed and transformed by a slight smile from the Face of a Living God.

Girish Chandra Ghosh was considered to be one of the closest and dearest disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and unmistakably he was the most flamboyant and rowdy. In addition to having become irrevocably attached to Sri Ramakrishna, he was addicted to alcohol and frequent visits to houses of ill repute. On one occasion he was fully inebriated and reeling on his way to visit one of his 'ladies of the night' when instead he changed his mind and turned around to make a visit to his Lord and Master. Upon

arrival at Sri Ramakrishna's room he attempted to bow at the Master's feet, only to collapse in a heap of reeking 'pickled' flesh. Sri Ramakrishna began to try to persuade him to correct his behavior. The truth is well known that 'the Lord works in mysterious ways', and what happened next ascended such heights of 'mystery' that all present fell to their knees and wept. Girish, too drunk to stand, half-raised himself and tried to focus on the face of Sri Ramakrishna. His mind, his reasoning and his entire personality were numbed into oblivion. But upon beholding the living face of Sri Ramakrishna, his heart burst forth with an all-consuming silent prayer for mercy. As the Master's sweet words rained upon him like nectar, Girish raised his hand up and said: "Stop! Don't give me any advice, it will do no good. Please do something to transform my life!"

In response to this soulful plea, the Master smiled!

All in the room said they saw only a very slight smile play across the lips of the Master. But the power and sweetness of that slight smile was so indescribable that in a wondrous flash, Girish Chandra Ghosh was completely transformed and purified.

Only at a later date could Girish attempt to speak of the wondrous event. And in doing so he proved that though now a completely changed being, he still retained a vivid sense of humor. All he could say was: "If I had known that there existed in the Master such a huge pit that I could cast all of my sins into it, I would have committed a lot more!"<sup>2</sup>

In our own times divine embodiments of Grace have come forth to grant the heartfelt prayers of many who yearn to live a higher life.

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<sup>2</sup> Paraphrased from the original *Memories of Sri Ramakrishna*, by Girish Chandra Ghosh, published in South Africa 2003, by permission of The Vedanta Society of Portland Oregon, USA





Sri Anandamayi Ma was given the name ‘Joy–permeated Mother’ mainly due to her lustrous smile that transformed onlookers at a mere glance. As a young baby, the women in her village would line up early every morning to take turns holding her. They longed for a smile from the baby Goddess, which always came. From that smile, the women could endure the day’s bitterest hunger and direst labor, for their hearts were satiated with bliss and the love of God.



It was said of Sri Ramana Maharshi that he had ‘A look that pierced’.<sup>3</sup> So much so that people had to avert or close their eyes when his look fell upon them. Nevertheless, when his look displayed his divine smile, all were transfixed. Many have tried to communicate the wondrous experience of beholding the smile of Bhagavan. They all finally admitted that their words fell far short of the wonder. Here are a few instances from those who attempted to convey the effect of the smile that seemed to ‘burst open the very gates of heaven’.

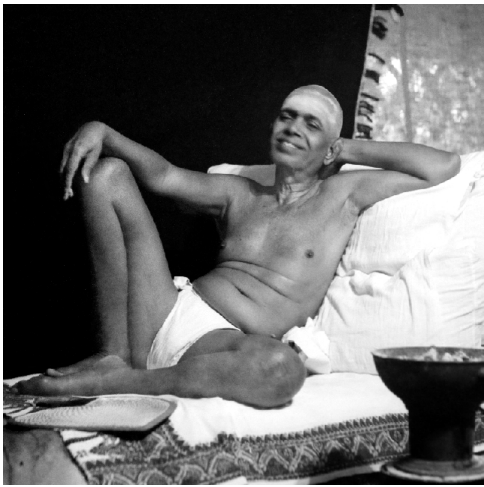
“You can imagine nothing more beautiful than his smile. There is no way of describing the radiance of his smile...A simple woman said: I

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<sup>3</sup> *Be Still, It Is The Wind That Sings*, Arthur Osborne, Sri Ramanashramam 2000. p. 27.

don't understand the philosophy but when he smiles at me I feel safe, just like a child in its mother's arms... I had never yet seen him when I received a letter from my five-year-old daughter: 'You will love Bhagavan. When he smiles everyone must be so happy'." <sup>4</sup>

"And he would explain that it is the Guru not the disciple who sees the progress made; it is for the disciple to carry on persevering with his work even though the structure being raised may be out of sight of the mind. It may sound a hard path, but the disciples' love for Bhagavan and the graciousness of his smile gave it beauty." <sup>5</sup>



devotee or a yogin, who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom." <sup>6</sup>

"The Maharshi with an ineffable smile which lit up His Holy Face and which was all-pervasive, shining upon the coterie around him, replied in tones of certainty and with the ring of truth; 'Divine Grace is essential for Realisation. It leads one to God-realisation. But such Grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true

"Standing with his body bent slightly to the left, and with his left hand on Lakshmi, and with the walking stick in his right hand, looking as if it was a flute, with a sparkling smile on his face like the foam on the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of self-Knowledge*, Sri Ramanashramam 2002, p. 142

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p.187

<sup>6</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Sri Ramanashramam 2006, Talk #29, p.33

waves of the ocean of ananda... It is no surprise if in Sri Ramana, the embodiment of grace, one were reminded of Lord Krishna Himself.”<sup>7</sup>

“His gentle smile shone like the cool rays of the moon. His words simply rained amrit. We sat there like statues without consciousness of the body.”<sup>8</sup>

“I saw him looking at me with large penetrating eyes, wreathed in smiles rendered divinely soothing by their child-like innocence.”<sup>9</sup>

“All I can say is, that smile and that silence were radiant with knowledge and wisdom. How can I describe it?”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Letters from Sri Ramanashramam*, # 23, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1946

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* # 6, 26th November, 1945

<sup>9</sup> *Guru Ramana*, Sri Ramanashramam 2003, p.5

<sup>10</sup> *Letters from Sri Ramanashramam*, # 55, 8th August, 1946



“At the time of Bhagavan’s *Mahanirvana* (leaving the physical body): Unexpectedly, a group of devotees sitting on the veranda outside the hall began singing ‘Arunachala-Siva’ (*Aksharanamanamalai*). On hearing it, Sri Bhagavan’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. One more deep breath, and no more. There was no struggle, no spasm, no other sign of death: only that the next breath did not come.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of self-Knowledge*, Sri Ramanashramam 2002, p. 211





**“SMILE WITH GRACE AND NOT WITH SCORN ON ME, WHO  
COME TO THEE (FOR REFUGE), OH ARUNACHALA!”**

*Aksharanamanamalai, v. 53*

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