

The Mountain Path

Vol. III

OCTOBER 1966

No. 4

SRI RAMANASRAMAM, TIRUVANNAMALAI

"One art Thou without a second; who then could dare elude Thee and come in? This is only Thy jugglery, Oh Arunachala!"

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 12.

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Editor :

Arthur Osborne,
Sri Ramanasramam,
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*

Managing Editor :

V. Ganesan,
Sri Ramanasramam,
Tiruvannamalai.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(A QUARTERLY)

"Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!"

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1.

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The Mountain Path

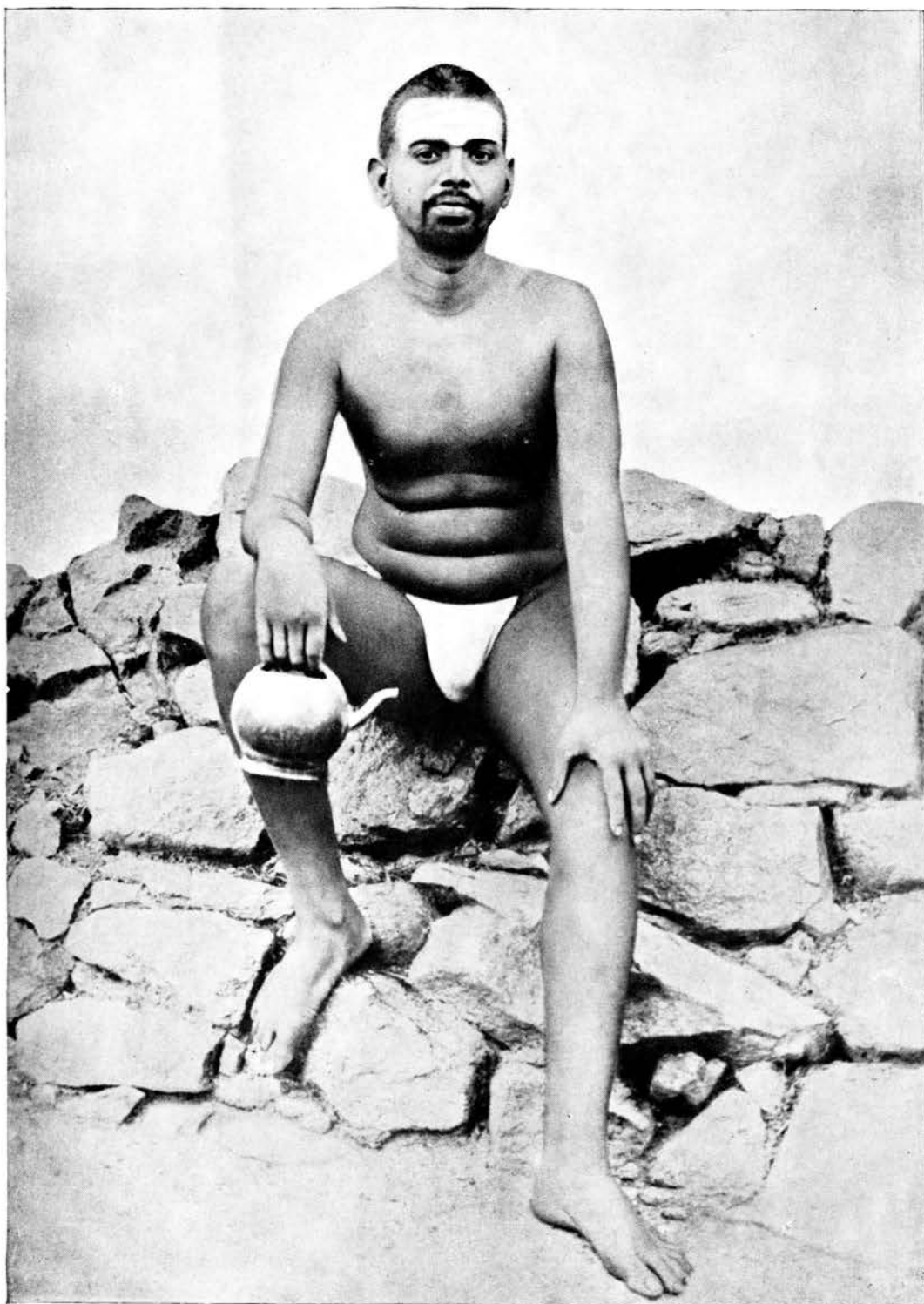
(A QUARTERLY)

The aim of this journal is to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

Contributions for publication should be addressed to 'The Editor, *The Mountain Path*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Madras State'. They should be in English and typed with double spacing. Contributions not published will be returned on request.

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SRI MAHARSHI — AT THE AGE OF 38.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(QUARTERLY)

Editor: ARTHUR OSBORNE

VOL. III

OCTOBER, 1966

No. 4

TALES OF MEANING

(EDITORIAL)

The whole world is a book of symbols insofar as physical things naturally reflect those of a higher plane. We do not have to make symbols, only to recognize them; and they are there whether we recognize them or not.

Apart from natural symbols, religions do, however, create myths or symbolical stories in which the truths of the Quest are dramatised. These are extremely varied. Many are tales of love, the quest of God for man or of the soul for God; and in these the soul may appear either male or female. There are many other themes also. The story in the Old Testament of how Abraham is ordered by God to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac is equivalent to Christ's saying that only he who gives up his life shall find it. The son is the individuality and only when it is offered up in full submission is it restored. Incidentally, to say that a story is symbolical does not mean that it is not historical. It may be, since history itself is symbolical. Whether it is or not is of secondary importance. There is urgent truth in the saying of Angelus Silesius: "Christ may be

born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but if he be not born anew in your own heart you remain eternally forlorn."

It often happens that the meaning of symbolical stories is lost. They remain like empty shells: their form still appeals but the contents are lost — or lost except to those few who can read the forgotten script. That is the case with Mediaeval European parables of the Quest that have degenerated into tales for children. For instance, the Sleeping Beauty obviously represents man's primordial beatific state. The knight who undertakes the quest to awaken her is the initiate. Or again, Snow White, described as "white as snow, red as blood and black as coal", is the human soul with the qualities (Hindu gunas) perfectly balanced in her. The evil step-mother, the mind or ego, tries to poison her. The dwarfs are the human faculties, stunted and capable of being corrupted but basically useful. The poisoned apple of which she takes a bite and which nearly kills her is mundane life. God is the Prince whose kiss restores her. And incidentally the conclusion to 'fairy tales'

which modern realists have made such game of, "and they lived happily ever after" is perfectly true, for the wedding symbolises the Mystic Union of the soul with God, which is the attainment of Beatitude.

Mallory's 'Morte D'Arthur' is a vast compendium of symbolism, Christian and pre-Christian. Its central theme is the quest of the Sangraal, the chalice which had held the blood of Christ. What else is this but the quest of Divine Grace? However, many other themes interweave. Even the same story can be told with different meanings. For instance, Lancelot's love for Guinevere can represent man's quest for the Divine Beauty in stories where he has to cross a razor-sharp bridge over a chasm to reach the castle where she is imprisoned and, out of his great love for her, does so with never a tremor. On the other hand, Guinevere represents the lure of the world when, in Mallory, Lancelot withdraws from the quest of the Sangraal out of longing for her.

There is much symbolism of the quest also in the Arabian Nights. Think of Sinbad's 'Old Man of the Sea', the vicious creature who clings to his back and drives him to get one useless thing after another, allowing him no rest. What better symbol of the ego? Another symbol of the ego that occurs in them is the adversary who, when defeated in open combat, constantly changes form and tries to slip away. It becomes a serpent and the champion an eagle to seize it, fire and he a raincloud to quench it, a fish and he a larger fish to devour it. The struggle sometimes ends with the adversary becoming a pomegranate and the champion a cock which eats it grain by grain, but one grain rolls under cover and is overlooked with the result that, although the champion has subdued the adversary, he has not completely destroyed it. This is the partial victory of the aspirant who attains a state of sanctity, with ego subdued, but not the final state of Realized Identity in which the ego is entirely destroyed. Another case will come up later where a single pomegranate seed has the implication of an irrevocable pledge, though in the opposite direction.

The truth of this story is clear to any aspirant who has experienced the cunning of the ego in assuming new forms. Strike it down in one form and it will slip away and quietly rise up in another. Renounce luxury and it will take pride in austerity. Strike down pride and it will creep in as pride in one's humility. Give up emulation and it will emulate others in lack of emulation. In Western stories the ego is often represented as a giant or a dragon whom the aspirant has to slay. It may sound fantastic to one who has never taken him on in single combat — not to one who has.

Many of the Arabian Nights stories are detailed, technical symbolism of the indirect type of path that was prevalent in the Middle Ages. Much Western symbolism is too. For that readers are referred to an article that appeared in one of our issues analysing the astrological symbolism of one of Shakespeare's plays.¹

Some Graeco-Roman mythology is transparent in meaning, some of it more abstruse. The later Roman writers seem to have been ignorant of it themselves, as we are of our fairy tales. One of the clearest myths is the marriage of Psyche, the human soul, with Cupid, the God of Love, which means the Love of God. He loves her but comes only by night and warns her against trying to see him. But her two elder sisters — unhappily married, jealous of her happiness — egg her on to kindle a light and see him. She does and as a result he abandons her and she has a long quest and many tribulations before she is raised to immortality and re-united with him. Divine Love does indeed first impregnate the aspiring soul in darkness and hidden bliss; she does not yet understand it or know the glory and splendour of it. The two wicked elder sisters are a common theme in mythology — Lear, Cinderella. They symbolise the mind, twofold to show its preoccupation with diversity, married to mundane interests. Under the mind's prompting the soul loses its simple, implicit faith and begins to probe.

¹ *Hermetic Symbolism* by Sagittarius in our issue of April 1965.

Then follows the loss of the Beloved, the long quest, the endless tribulations, before the early bliss can be recaptured, stabilized now and immortal.

But the quest is not always successful. A man may banish the simple truth of intuition, preferring instead the diversity and flattery of the mind — the two sisters. Then the mind itself turns against him, but he finds that intuition has perished and cannot be revived. Then grief and madness drive him to his death. That is the tragedy of Lear.

The scholar-mystic-ascetic Simone Weil gives a brilliant interpretation of the myth of Persephone. The story is that Persephone, daughter of Demeter, the Earth-Mother, is stooping down to pick a narcissus flower in the fields when the earth opens and Pluto or Hades, Lord of the Underworld, emerges in his chariot and carries her off. Demeter complains to Zeus and because Persephone has refused to eat in the Underworld, refused, that is, to give her consent to residing there, Pluto has to release her. But before she leaves he manages to get her to eat a single pomegranate seed and this binds her to return for a part of every year. This has been interpreted superficially to symbolise the seasons of the year, but why should they need a symbol? Simone Weil probes deeper. This is the meaning she gives.

“Hades or Aidoneus, a name which means Invisible or Eternal, or the two at once, is presented sometimes as the brother of Zeus, sometimes as Zeus himself; for there is a subterranean Zeus. The name of Demeter very probably means Earth-Mother, and Demeter is identical with all those goddess mothers whose cult has so many analogies with the role played by the Virgin in the Catholic conception. The narcissus flower represents Narcissus, a being so beautiful that he could only be in love with himself. The only beauty which can be an object of love for itself, which can be its own object, is the divine beauty. The soul in quest of pleasure encounters the divine beauty which appears here below in the form of the beauty of the world, as a snare for the soul. By the power of this snare God seizes the soul in

spite of itself. This is the very same conception that we find in Plato's 'Phaedrus'. God must allow the soul to return to nature, but before that, by surprise and by strategy, He furtively gives it a pomegranate seed to eat. If the soul eats this it is captured for ever. The pomegranate seed is that consent which the soul gives to God almost without knowing it, and without admitting it to itself. This is an infinitely small thing among all the carnal inclinations of the soul, and nevertheless this decides its destiny for ever. This is the grain of mustard seed to which Christ compares the Kingdom of Heaven, the smallest of the seeds, but which later will become that tree wherein the birds of heaven alight.”²

In commentary on this she makes the statement which may come as a surprise to many. “Notice that in the Gospels there is never, unless I am mistaken, question of a search for God by man. In all the parables it is the Christ who seeks men, or else the Father has them fetched by His messengers. Or again, a man finds the Kingdom of God as if by chance, and then, but only then, he sells all.”³

A good deal of the symbolism of those parts of Hindu mythology which concern Arunachala is interpreted in the articles by our late contributor T. K. Sundaresa Iyer in his contributions of April and July 1964.⁴

I quote the following analysis of another fragment of Hindu mythology from a book of my own. “It is said that the devas and asuras, that is the gods and devils or good and evil spirits, wished to acquire amrita the nectar of immortality or elixir of life which was sunk in the ocean of milk. The only way to do so was to churn the ocean. They did this by rotating in it Mt. Meru, the holy and central mountain, one party pulling it one way and one the other. The first result was to bring up poison so terrible that the whole world might have perished

² *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks* by Simone Weil, p. 3. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴ *The Secrets of Arunachala and The Mythology of Arunachala.*

of it had not Siva swallowed it. It penetrated only as far as his throat, which turned blue from it, whence he is represented in iconography as blue-throated. After that the amrita was obtained. The devas wanted it all for themselves but the asuras naturally refused. Thereupon Vishnu assumed the form of a beautiful woman and the asuras were so infatuated that they forgot all about the amrita. There are more details and the story continues further, but this is enough for analysis. . . .

“When a man undertakes the quest his higher and lower tendencies, devas and asuras, tug either way at his ego, rotating it back and forth and churning up his subconscious. The first result is to bring to the surface his lower possibilities, of which perhaps his conscious mind had hitherto been unaware. These threaten to destroy him but the Guru (or Self) takes them on himself; . . . When finally the amrita is obtained it has to immortalize only the good, not the evil tendencies. This is the attainment of a beatific state by the aspirant. . . . But in order to be destroyed they (the evil tendencies) must first be deluded; they must not want the amrita. Therefore Vishnu, the God of Preservation, God who holds the universe afloat despite its persistent downward tug to materialism, who bears the aspirant through all the dangers and hard-

ships of the quest, takes a form of illusion, the illusion of worldly values, and they are so infatuated that they forget about spiritual life, leaving it to the devas.”⁵

It would be quite wrong to regard such stories in any religion, among any people, as folk tales. They undoubtedly have a wide vogue, perhaps owing to the dim, intuitive feeling of truth and appropriateness they inspire even in those who do not understand them in detail, but they are precise symbolical teaching which only one who knows it could compile.

If asked how much understanding of them there still is in India today and whether their meaning is tending to be lost, as happened with Graeco-Roman and Mediaeval Christian symbolical stories, I should have to say that my own limited experience, for what it is worth, has been that there is little interest in them, even among people of real spiritual purpose. There seems to be a general feeling that simpler paths are what we need today. Characteristically perhaps, the best exposition of them, or some parts of them, that I have come across is by a Westerner, that is in ‘Hindu Polytheism’ by Alain Danielou.⁶

⁵ *Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism* by Arthur Osborne, p. 67-69. Rider & Co.

⁶ Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul.

JAYANTHI INVITATION

The 87th Birthday of BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI will be celebrated at His Shrine of Grace in the Ashram, on Thursday, the 29th December, 1966.

The readers of ‘The Mountain Path’ are invited to attend the celebration and partake of His munificent Grace.

PRESIDENT, SRI RAMANASRAMAM.

MEERA BAI AND BRIDAL MYSTICISM

By T. KRISHNAJI

T. Krishnaji specialises in the lives of Hindu saints and contributes articles on them to a number of journals. We published one on the Hindi poet-saint Tulsidas in January 1965, and one on Ramanuja, the founder of Visishtadvaita, in October the same year. We have one on the great Tamil poet-saint Thayumanavar in pickle for as far ahead as January 1968.

Bhakti marga, the devotional way to God-realisation, is the common heritage of people of all religions. Two sages, Narada and Sandilya, great devotees and exponents of the devotional school, define Bhakti as the form of Supreme Love. "Parama prema Rupa"; exemplified in the life of the gopis of Brindavan. Devotion is giving oneself to God in total surrender and absolute dedication. This pure love for the Divine implies detachment from the worldly life. The Sufi saint Nuri pleads :

"Lord ; I have severed every thought
from me
And died to selfhood, that I might be
Thine.
How long, my heart's Beloved, I am
spent.
I can be no more endure this banishment."

Rabia of Basra (717 A.D.) declares "I exist in God and am altogether His". Meera Bai was one such devotee who dedicated herself to God, that is to Krishna under the name of Giridhar Gopal, as His spouse and exemplified the way of devotion known as "bridal mysticism".

The devotee is depicted in the Bhagavata Mahatmya as feminine, and indeed devotion and intuitive awareness of God do come easily to women owing to their spirit of service and sacrifice. Tara, wife of Vali, and Mandodari, wife of Ravana, had the awareness that Sri Rama was Divine. Kunti and Draupadi had firm faith that their kinsman Sri Krishna was none but the Universal Lord. The Rishi Patnis and the Gopis of Vraja realised the Vedantic Truth in the

personality of Sri Krishna. The gopis of Vraja sang their intense love and devotion out of the awareness that Sri Krishna was not a mere child of Devaki but one who abides in all as Atma. They sang their agony of separation from Him in the language of bridal mysticism. Catherine of Siena (1347 A.D.) dedicated herself as the bride of Jesus. At the age of twelve she removed her beautiful hair on hearing that her parents had arranged for her betrothal. She "sang her joy when she met Him, and expressed her sorrow at separation from Him, seeking Him more intensely." Mechtild of Magdeburg (1207 — 1282 A.D.) sought God as her bridegroom. St. Theresa of Avila (1515-1582) a contemporary of Meera Bai, speaks of espousals and marriage, of bride in search of bridegroom. St. John of the Cross expresses spiritual life in the language of bridal mysticism. Ruysbroeck (1293—1381 A.D.) says that union with God is possible, indeed the goal of all religious life. The soul feels itself one with God though it knows by the same ineffable knowledge that difference between itself and Him continues and this may be called "spiritual nuptials". Nammalvar and Andal, Tamil Vaishnava Alwars and Manicka Vachagar, a Tamil Saivite saint, sang their rapturous devotion and spiritual longing in the language of bridal mysticism. Meera Bai was one such mystic who dedicated herself as the bride of God under the name of Giridhar Gopal, and sang her burning love and longing for Him.

Meera Bai belonged to the illustrious Rathod Rajput family of Jodhpur whose chivalry was a theme for ballads. Duda Rao of this family was a ruling chief of

Mewar. He had an only son, Ratan Singh, who was blessed with a daughter named Meera in about 1500 A.D. Some scholars are of the opinion that she lived between 1547 and 1614. Early in life Meera lost her father, but she was the darling of the royal household and particularly of her grandfather Duda Rao, who lavished all his love on her, telling her stories from the scriptures and singing devotional songs to her. Thus Meera was brought up to a devotional life.

While holding Meera in her arms one day, her mother saw a marriage procession pass by on the road. Meera saw the bridegroom dressed gaily and pestered her mother with the question, "Ma, where is my bridegroom?" In jest her mother told her that her bridegroom was God or Krishna in the form of Giridhar Gopal. Meera took these words for literal truth, and in her childish games began to serve Giridhar Gopal as her spouse.

Madhava Das, revered saint and guru of Brindavan, visited Duda Rao, and, observing the devout nature of the child, he blessed her. Meera observed the saint worship an idol of Giridhar Gopal and desired to possess it. The saint refused to part with it, but Meera persisted until at last he yielded. Another version has it that Duda Rao gave her a gold image of Giridhar Gopal. Her devotion to Giridhar Gopal was intense and as she grew older she sang her ardent devotion in the language of love, panting and longing for a vision of her Divine Spouse.

On reaching the age of sixteen Meera was married to Bhoj Raj of the Sisodaya Rajput clan of Chitor, eldest son of the Maharana Sangha. On the eve of her marriage, Meera confided to her mother that she dreamt that she was married to Sri Jagadish, Lord of the world. Bhagavan Krishna came as a bridegroom with a party. She sang :

"Mother I chose Gopal for my bridegroom.
I wore a veil of red and yellow colour.
Meera's Lord, Giridhar Gopal married
her :
My hands are painted red with *medi*.
I chose the Lord Gopal. My bangles will
be worn for ever."

Meera's faith was in her Divine Spouse, Giridhar Gopal, Lord Hari, the Eternal. Soon after her marriage, Meera was taken to Chitor, and her mother-in-law arranged for the customary worship at the shrine of the family goddess Durga. But Meera declared that she would worship no god or goddess but her Giridhar Gopal. The royal household was taken aback at her refusal to worship Durga. Though Bhoj Raj was also shocked at Meera's refusal to worship the family god, he appreciated her mood and arranged a separate shrine for Giridhar Gopal and allowed her freedom to worship and lead a religious life as she pleased. Many saints and sadhus visited her and participated in her bhajans. The famous cobbler saint Raidas visited her, and Meera refers to him as her Guru.

About 1527 her husband Bhoj Raj died and his younger brother Vikramjit became the Rana. . . . He violently disliked the sort of life Meera was leading, singing in the company of sadhus and bairagis in the palace. He thought that the prestige of the royal family suffered thereby and devised foul means to coerce her into giving up her religious life. Meera's fame as a saint spread. There is a rumour that the Emperor Akbar attended her Bhajana disguised as a sadhu. The Rana heard of this and was furious. He sent Meera a basket of deadly snakes, but they would do her no harm. Next he sent her a cup of poison and she dedicated it to God and then drank it with no ill effects. When his dastardly schemes failed, the Rana sent his sister Udu Bai and her maid Champa to wean Meera away from her religious life by persuasion. But they who came to deride and dissuade remained as her adherents, devotedly assisting in her religious activities. Frustrated in his schemes, the Rana told Meera that it would be better for her to drown herself than bring disgrace upon the family. In deference to his wish, Meera stole out at dead of night to a pond to throw herself in. When she was about to leap into the water, the Divine hand pulled her back and she heard a voice telling her to leave for Brindavan.



In the meantime, Meera had addressed a letter to Tulsidas¹ seeking his advice and he had written the famous lyric counselling her that kinsmen who have no devotion to God should be shunned as foes. Meera, a princess, dared to adopt the life of a beggar in pursuit of her beloved of Brindavan. Meera sings: "I have cast away my fear of the world. Meera's love for her Lord is fixed. I have planted the vine of love and irrigate it again and again with my tears." Nabhaji, the great hagiographer writes how Meera broke the ties of family and social life to worship Giridhar. Meera entrusted the image of Giridhar to her maid Champa and left Chitor to meet her cousin Jayamal, and thence to Mathura and Brindavan. Once a princess, she was now a beggar in quest of the flute player of Brindavan. She wandered in the woods of Brindavan singing

ecstatically her love for the Divine Beloved. She met many saints and sadhus. The disciples of Jiva Goswami explained to her that their master would not see her because he had taken a vow never to see a woman. She sent back a message that this was the first time she had heard that there was more than one male² in Brindavan. Hearing this Goswami himself came to her. After some time Meera followed the footsteps of Ranchodrai and reached Dwaraka.

¹The famous poet saint about whom there is an article in our issue of January 1965, and a life of whom is reviewed in our issue of October 1965. (Editor).

²This is a play on words to which it is impossible to do justice in English. "Purusha" means male person, but also "Spirit"; therefore the implication is that Krishna is the only Divine Spirit or Male and all other beings are female towards Him. (Editor).

Meera remained in the shrine of her Beloved, Giridhar Gopal called Ranchodrai at Dwaraka. She sang her rapturous devotion in many lyrics, expressing her joy at his presence, pangs of separation at his absence, and her dreams and visions of her Beloved. The natural outpourings of her soul, inspired by deep devotion and expressed in her lyrics, assumed beauty of form and melody of expression. Meera had the natural grace of a princess and a culture derived from study of scriptures. In one of her lyrics she expresses her philosophy and longing :

“I dance and sing the glories of God Hari,
I study the Bhagavad Gita in my oratory
I am unconcerned with dhyana and
Jnana,
I commune with holy men and shall
taste
The sweet love of Giridhar Nagar, my
Lord.”

She declares that holy company and God's name will guide a pilgrim safely on the path to God. She says that undifferentiated love for God merges the devotee and his devotion in Godhood. The ultimate message of the Gita finds its fulfilment in the lives of the gopis of Vraja and Meera Bai. Bridal mysticism is intense dedication to God transcending sensory life and as such it takes one to the acme of spiritual experience. Dr. Radhakamal Mukherjee observes : “Mysticism posits eternal values such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness, all infinities transcending any system of human relations, but it finds them actualized in concrete

human situations and experiences. To realise these ultimate values it often borrows its symbols and imageries from the intricacies of human love and aspiration and the Divine communion is sought to be translated in human love.”

While Meera led an exalted life of ecstatic devotion to the Lord of Dwaraka, the political conditions of Chitor State deteriorated. Feeling remorse for his cruel conduct towards Meera, the Rana went to Dwaraka where he fell at her feet and implored her forgiveness. He begged her to return to Chitor but she told him that she bore no ill-will towards anyone, but would not leave Dwaraka without God's permission. One day in 1573 the evening service to God Ranchod Rai was celebrated and Meera sang rapturously. While Arati or waving of burning camphor was going on the two hands of the image of God as Ranchod Rai stretched out to Meera “as when the bridegroom receives his bride” and she was absorbed into the idol to the amazement of all. Soon an image of Meera was enshrined by the side of that of the God, and due worship is offered to her along with her Divine Spouse. Andal, the woman devotee and spouse of God in the form of Ranganatha had a similar spiritual experience and is therefore worshipped along with him in most of the shrines of Vishnu in South India. The holy name of Meera Bai is a household word throughout India, her devotional lyrics are sung throughout the country. Her memory is hallowed and is a blessing. May she inspire all to love God and to spiritualise their life. Her life is a glorious chapter in the religious history of India.

Your eye has not the strength to gaze at the blazing sun, but you can see its brilliance by looking at its reflection in water. Similarly the reflection of Absolute Being can be seen in this mirror of non-being. Non-being is the opposite of Being and reflects it. Know that this entire world is a mirror.

— MAHMUD SHABISTARI

THE RESURRECTION

By CORNELIA BAGAROTTI

Mary went to the tomb and finding the stone rolled back entered and found that the body of Christ was gone and only his burial cloths remained. At this moment Mary represented all humanity : all humanity that seeks in external form the eternal Spirit. When she met her Master outside the tomb she mistook him for a gardener and it was not until he had spoken to her that the full realisation of the resurrection entered her consciousness. Today most of mankind is like Mary for unless the Christ himself appear to them, or unless some personal experience prove to them the illusion of death, or unless inner illumination awaken them to their eternal life they cling to the body and are blind to the Spirit.

How difficult it is for them to achieve that inner certainty and knowledge of the Divine indwelling, to waken to the eternal and to leave behind all identification with or striving for the transitory. With each breath we breathe in the Spirit, with each movement we are sustained by it. It is nearer to us than our hand yet as invisible as thought, stronger than stone, more enduring than marble, more evanescent than dew. . . . it pervades all things. Like Mary we live in its midst yet know it not.

Her Master, The Christ, had lived with his disciples and followers for three years and with his townsmen and family for thirty years yet who gazed beneath the body and knew the Spirit that was the Christ? Who of us today knows himself to be Spirit and not body? Who renders unto Caesar that which belongs to Caesar and that which belongs to God to God? Who can say to him-

self at each moment : I am Spirit and all life is from God. Who can step out of his tomb and his burial cloths and be resurrected WHILE in the flesh? Who is beyond identification, limitation, fear and dependence upon the physical having a constant connection with his Divine Indwelling? This is the end of all spiritual striving in which God alone becomes the eternal reality. In the words of St. Paul "We die daily and live in Christ". For unless a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. And unless he die to the world he cannot be born to the Spirit.

The life of one who lives in the eternal is transformed. Heretofore dedication, service, reverence, all encompassing love, faith, serenity, patience, detachment, humility, acceptance, courage, compassion, forgiveness, generosity were ideals not normal states of consciousness. But to one who, like St. Paul or the Disciples, actually experienced inwardly the reality of the resurrection all life is recreated anew.

Man is here on earth to evolve beyond isolated moments of perception or illumination and to fuse these moments into a continuum in God. Only then shall the heart know constant resurrection. What a weight of the world was rolled aside with that stone from the tomb, what glory of freedom and joy entered the aura of the earth when only the burial cloths remained but the Christ himself revealed the Divine Indwelling that is beyond death. Somehow each human heart no matter how filled with darkness and fear will in time achieve the reality of the resurrection.

As God has descended into man, so must man ascend to God, and in the Perfect Man, who is the true saint, Absolute Being which had descended from its absoluteness returns again into itself.

— ABDUL KARIM AL JILI

THE VISION OF WHOLENESS

By SIR GEORGE TREVELYAN

Sir George Trevelyan, whose second article on Shakespearean symbolism we are now publishing (the first was in July) is Warden of the Shropshire Adult College. He is widely known in England for his defence of natural agriculture and attacks on factory farming and the use of insecticides and fertilisers which, from a long term view, are threatening to ruin agriculture and destroy wild life in England. He is also known, as readers of these articles will see, for his profound understanding of symbolism and of Shakespeare's mastery of it.

Our first need in the world of today is to wake up to the oneness of life in its incredibly complex pattern. I find my mind constantly turning back to Shakespeare, because the whole truth is hidden allegorically in his plays. He hides in them the great truths which we need to know and which could transform our lives. They should be taken as myths which, behind the outer story, tell of the soul of man in its passage through the difficulties of the earth plane. 'The Merchant of Venice' is particularly appropriate to our times, dealing as it does with the problem of avarice. We are exploiting the earth rapaciously and inviting disaster by our greed. In 'The Merchant' we see the rich city of Venice representing the mundane level and the 'beautiful mountain' of Belmont representing the higher plane of awareness where the princess Portia lives. The personality, Bassanio, has to journey there to win and unite with the higher being in himself symbolised by Portia. In the lottery of the caskets he gambles rightly on true love and wins his lady. However, as in so many allegories of the quest, so soon as the aspirant has discovered his higher self they have to be separated and he has to go through trials and ordeals before he is fitted for the spiritual awakening symbolised by their permanent union. These trials often involve facing up to death in one form or another. In this case it is the threat of death hanging over the rich friend who has loaned Bassanio the money to come to Belmont

and win his lady. He has to return to the lower level of the rich city and take part in the trial of his friend who has forfeited a pound of flesh to the Jew. Taken symbolically, this is exactly what is happening to mankind today. The 'Jew', the grasping avarice in us, has us in its grip. "There is no power in Venice that can alter a decree established." That is to say that no earthly power can suspend the law of karma, the repercussions of our actions. We are caught in the toils of our own rapacity and retribution is upon us.

The Jews cries, "a sentence, come, prepare!" and is about to cut his pound of flesh "nearest the merchant's heart". Nothing, not even the Doge of Venice himself, can stop this happening. But the judge is the Higher Self who has come down from the level of the higher consciousness, from the eternal world to which the inner core of man belongs. She plays the whole company up to that point of death, pleads for mercy, and then draws them on, realizing that they have no way out within their thinking. They are in despair, calamity is upon them, but as the knife comes up to the breast of the merchant she halts it with the words, "Tarry a moment, there is something else." What is it that we have all forgotten? She goes on: "this bond doth give thee here no drop of blood," and the whole play turns on images of blood, the heart, gold, sun, kingship, light. Blood is the vehicle of the heart, gold is the organ of the sun, gold used homoeopathically is the curer of heart

disease. This triangle of gold and blood and sun runs through the whole play as a hidden allegorical theme. On the lower level of the rich city Shylock has treated the metal gold as something which can breed, as if it were alive; but Portia knows that gold is also a symbol for the light of the spiritual sun, the Christ power, the force of the Spirit. Therefore she is infinitely rich. Once you see 'The Merchant' in this way you see that it describes exactly the point our civilization has reached. Our motto should be, "Tarry a moment, there is something else." Portia in disguise departs with the words: "I pray you, know me when we meet again." Thus speaks the higher Self to each one of us.

Throughout all Shakespeare's plays we find the constantly recurring theme of Unity, Wholeness, broken up into disharmony by human greed and passions and harmony has to be consciously re-established on the path to Unity.

First is the primal unity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, By Him were all things made and without Him was not anything made that was made." From this Primal Unity, the Divine Imagination divides itself into a series of opposites or polarities, down and down into more and more divisions, each of them in balanced harmonious opposition. There are the great polarities of male and female, gravity and levity, and then lesser ones. All these work in dynamic balance to each other, down to the incredible proliferation which represents ecology as it was in the paradisaical world and should be in ours. Here we come right down to the smallest elemental forces working in the smallest plants or among the birds and insects. Each little thing is just being itself, doing its particular little task as part of the great whole. Behind each physical thing is the formative force or elemental being which is the force of God, the One Great Self. Everything has its wave-length or frequency and the whole world is made up of the complex balance of wave-lengths. What we call Omniscient and

Omnipresent God is that ultimate Being who is present in every being and able to act at the same time on every wave-length. In all this complex pattern stands, as a central figure, the human organism. God made man after his own image, a creature of thought, emotion and will. Often people forget that there are two creations mentioned in the Bible. First God makes man divided into the polarity of male and female but above physical division, and only later He makes physical man and extracts from him the physical body of Eve. Man was there before physical creation because man is God's first archetypal idea. Man is the great experiment and spiritually was there from the beginning.

The Divine Imagination descends from this archetypal world into the world of material things. The world of birds and animals is part of the great ideal image of life, and man is in a true sense a symphony of the whole creative world. The whole is a unity in which the Divine Imagination has created one point in which Nature can consciously begin to think. Man is that part of Nature in which the living earth can look out into the cosmos and be conscious.

Not until a creature has been created who has gone through separation from the Divine and experienced death can there be the freedom of conscious return. It looks as though the purpose of creation is that the crown of it all should become a free being who can, through his own initiative, come back to the Divine. It is quite wrong for man to think that he is an accident on this planet and therefore free to exploit it or do what he likes with it. He is integrally part of the whole of nature and responsible for that which has been handed over to him. And what are we doing about it? We have totally forgotten that there is a plan at all. We think this world is ours to turn to our personal profit. The metanoia or change of thinking to which we are called now is that we turn around and re-establish the unity with the help of the divine forces. That is the point. We have not got to do it all ourselves, but we must rediscover that the

entire power-house is there and waiting for the invitation from us to pour in with healing force. We don't need to invent or bring about the unity. It is there ; it is a fact. God is everywhere and is working on every wave-length, including our own bodies, but the Divine Forces are standing back and will not go into action in any way until invoked. The unity could come with a rush as soon as it is rightly called on.

The first thing needed is recognition of this unity and realization that behind it is realm upon realm of light and creative energy waiting to pour through us. Many are beginning to wake up to this. Raynor Johnson in his fine books 'Watcher on the Hill' and 'The Imprisoned Splendour' gives quotations from quite ordinary folk who get the flash of what life is about. The mere fact that ordinary people are now getting such experiences is highly significant. Bucke in 'Cosmic Consciousness' describes the essence of these experiences of illumination. "Like a flash there is presented to his consciousness a clear conception, a vision in outline of the meaning and drift of the universe. He does not come to believe merely, but he sees and knows that the cosmos, which to the self-conscious mind seems made up of dead matter, is in fact far otherwise, is in very truth a living presence. He sees that the life which is in man is eternal, as all life is eternal, that the soul of man is as immortal as God is, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any per-adventure all things work together for the good of each and all and that the foundation principle of the world is what we call 'Love' and that the happiness of every individual is, in the long run, absolutely certain. Especially does he obtain such a conception of the whole, or at least of an immense whole, as dwarfs conception, imagination or speculation, springing from or belonging to ordinary self-consciousness. Such a conception as makes the old attempts mentally to grasp the universe and its meaning petty and ridiculous." This is the wholeness of which we are part and for

which we are responsible. We have the power to re-establish the true harmony in the individual personality, in society and in nature.

We are called on to do nothing about it except to BE, simply to go on in our own lives, serving as we understand it the forces of light in our own circumstances. What matters is that we each of us from moment to moment dedicate the will to the forces of light so that, whatever devastating thing happens, we shall be ready for it and react imaginatively and positively towards it in the change. This is a picture of immeasurable hope. May I quote from a poem by Flecker :

Awake, awake the world is young
For all its weary years of thought,
The starkest fights must still be fought,
The most surprising songs be sung.

I think we have got to be prepared for the most surprising songs. And finally I will quote that wonderful passage from Fry's 'Sleep of Prisoners'. This is allegory itself, for these English prisoners are imprisoned in a dead church in the war ; they are locked in the empty church and they have a visionary experience in which one of them says :

The human heart can go to the lengths
of God.
Dark and cold we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to
move ;
The thunder is the thunder of the foes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.
Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul men ever took.
Affairs are now soul-size.
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for ? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake, for pity's sake ?

THE BASIC CHRISTIAN SYMBOL

By SAGITTARIUS (A.O.)

Christianity is based on a symbol.

When people argue whether Christ is the Son of God, whether he is the only son of God, whether all who say 'Our Father' are the sons of God, whether they are in the same sense in which Christ is or in some different sense, they are apt to forget that they are using a symbol. Every one knows what a son means literally: a separate person begotten by his father upon his mother and growing into manhood as his father's manhood declines, so as to be able to act as a replacement for his father. Also every Christian knows that that is not what he means when he speaks of Christ as the Son of God or when he himself addresses God as 'Father'. In other words he is using a symbol. He is saying: "Christ is to God as a son is to his father" or, more correctly, since it is the lower that symbolises the higher and not the higher the lower: "A son is to his father as Christ is to God." But no symbol is perfect or corresponds in all particulars, since physical realities can never wholly reflect spiritual, and therefore this symbol is incomplete, as the above definition of 'son' in the human sense of the word shows. To forget that one is using a symbol leads to woolly thinking and to argument about undefined terms.

When, for instance, a Muslim speaks of Christ as the 'Spirit of God' but denies that he was the 'Son of God' or that God ever can have a son, the correct Christian reply would be: "All right, you explain what you mean by 'Son of God' and I will explain what I mean by it." If this were done it might be found that the difference was more apparent than real.

On the other hand, to say that an expression is symbolical does not imply that it is meaningless. That would be quite a wrong deduction. Although the ultimate Truth is

One, the approaches to it vary. Islam concentrates more on the conception of the One:

Say He is God, the One,
God the Undifferentiated;
He never begot nor was He begotten;
He has no companions, He, the One

(*Quran, sura CXII*)

Christianity on the other hand concentrates on the Intermediary, the Word or Logos, the Power or Expression of God, the Son of God "without whom was not anything made that was made." In Hindu terminology, Islam concentrates on Siva and Christianity on Shakti. The active, dynamic aspect of God, that which creates and redeems, is symbolised in Hinduism by the Spouse of Siva and Mother of the universe, in Christianity by the Son of God. This does not imply pluralism: the Son is One with the Father, Shakti is One with Siva.

There have been Christian mystics who have been immersed in the symbolism of the Son, of the indwelling and redeeming Christ. To refer again to Hindu terminology, they correspond to the bhakta, the devotional saint. However the purest and most complete mystic, equivalent to the Hindu jnani, is apt to hold to Christ's saying 'I and my Father are One' and to claim that it is universal, that it is true of any who can realize its truth. I have tended to stress this attitude in some of my *Mountain Path* articles because it has been too much forgotten in Christendom; nevertheless it cannot be the general Christian attitude and the Church is therefore justified in ignoring (though not in condemning) it.

The general Christian attitude focuses attention rather on the path than the goal—and indeed Christ said "I am the Way". "I and my Father are One" may be ulti-

mate truth, but arguing whether it is or not does not help the ordinary practising Christian. What he needs is a way to the ultimate truth, whatever this may turn out to be ; and Christ is that way. Certainly Christ is the model of the perfect man that I could be if the Great Work had been completed, but also and more dynamically He is the infused Spirit of God that can enable me to complete the Work.

Ultimately, it may be said, God is One ; the Word or Christ is the same as God.

“Granted,” the Christian admits ; “That is why I say ‘Three Persons in One God’. But along the path I follow, for the purpose of bringing me to realization of this Oneness, it is the Intermediary, the Second Person, the Son of God to whom I must cling. Thus it is that the Christian comes through the Son to the Father and that “no man cometh to the Father save through the Son.” It is not a vulgar historical claim that one teacher is authentic and all others, past and to come, are bound to be spurious.

THOUGHTS AND CLOUDS

By LIBRA

The clear expanse of sky is a symbol of pure Consciousness ; the clouds that pass across it are symbols of thought. That is why when you look steadily at a cloud it dissolves, just as a thought does.

Rolf Alexander has demonstrated this before vast audiences in Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico, and accounts with photographs have appeared in the mass circulation dailies. He would indicate a small or medium cloud and gaze steadily at it and within about a minute, or two minutes at the most, it would dissolve — not merely change shape but completely fade out.

He claims to have learned the art in Tibet. I myself simply tried it and found that it worked. There is no particular technique. What is important is that you do *not* will the cloud to dissolve. Doing so would imply the interference of the self will and would impede the process, just as Joel Goldsmith used to warn that it would with spiritual healing. You simply look steadily and insistently. Many people can do it. Perhaps you can. I know at least one other person in Tiruvannamalai (from where I write) who can. It is the natural working of symbolism.

The power should not be over-used or it may deplete one's psychic strength. It may even leave one. I also don't agree with commercialising it or using it to boost oneself. However I have sometimes used it to convince a materialist or a sceptic. He will assert that mind cannot influence matter, so you point to a cloud and ask him whether that is matter.

“Of course,” he replies.

“Then it couldn't be dissolved by mind, say by just looking at it ?”

“Of course not.”

“Then watch it.”

You gaze steadily and in a minute or two it has vanished.

“A coincidence,” he says.

You may have to dissolve half a dozen or so clouds before he reluctantly admits that those you look at dissolve and those you don't don't. But it is worth doing to see the stupefaction on his face. Evidence is a thing the materialist hates ; and the scientist is quite unscientific in refusing to face it unless you force it on him.

SPIRITUAL ALCHEMY

By BRIAN COOPER

Brian Cooper is lecturer in liberal studies at the Lanchester College of Technology at Coventry. He has made a particular study of the mediaeval sciences of hermetism and alchemy which came to the surface at the time of the Renaissance. We are glad to welcome a contributor showing such a rare combination of solid erudition and intuitive understanding.

In all the major civilisations of the world, men in their desire to understand and formulate coherent truth about the universe as they have seen and experienced it, have sought that truth amid the secret workings of nature itself. The advent of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras in the East and the consequent development of the Indian alchemical tradition, had its parallel in the Western world with the alchemical searchings of mediaeval and Renaissance Europe. In Europe this alchemical tradition, itself interwoven with astrology, manifested itself in various ways: the search for the 'philosopher's stone' the quest for the 'elixir of life'; the striving (for motives high and base) to transmute common metals into gold. The search was at one and the same time a 'scientific' one in which men enquired after the basic stuff of life, and a mystical one in which the same men sought the unifying spiritual principles underlying the outer fabric of the universe. This yearning to comprehend the 'labyrinth of the world' sprang from a fundamental concern (not destroyed in the West until comparatively recent times, indeed still showing signs of vitality) for the Oneness of Truth. Its advocates accepted that such truth was to be discovered as much amid the physical-chemical workings of the natural order created by the Deity, as amid the credal formulae and official theological orthodoxies presented by established ecclesiastical authority, itself divinely ordained.

The Western alchemical tradition sprang from the inheritance of the classical world and contact with Islamic civilisation. Every age has believed alchemy to be of ancient,

mysterious, even divine origin. In mediaeval Europe it was generally held that God himself had given the first Man, Adam, knowledge of alchemy. This secret knowledge, revealed via Raziel, the Angel of Mysteries, to Enoch (who came to be identified with Hermes, an Egyptian god, frequently referred to in alchemical literature as Hermes Trismegistus), went in turn via Abraham, Moses and Job to its subsequent practitioners. Other biblically-derived legends derive the origin of alchemy from the fallen angels or from the dreadful workshops of Tubalcain. Biblical sources for alchemy had an obvious appeal within the alchemical sub-culture of mediaeval Western Christendom, postulating as it did another biblical orthodoxy and a freedom from established beliefs, for certainly the 'nonconformism' of alchemy was a major source of its appeal to a civilisation dominated by the spiritual totalitarianism of the mediaeval Papacy. However, other sources were equally regarded and probably more so.

'Hermes Trismegistus', whose "works" enjoyed a vast circulation with Europe's development of printing, derived from a pseudo-legendary master of arts and sciences of ancient Egypt, and was variously regarded as a divine saviour-figure, or a great mortal to whom had been entrusted the knowledge of the secret ways of nature. By its very nature alchemy was hybrid, syncretic and eclectic, and nowhere more so than in the West, where mediaeval civilisation strove for its own distinctiveness so often by borrowing from other civilisations. Thus the mediaeval European alchemist drew upon Biblical, ancient Egyptian and classical

Graeco-Roman sources, as well as questing for himself. It has been written: "the philosopher's stone was said to have affinities with the mysteries of Genesis or those of the Apocalypse . . . was seen in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Odyssey*, . . . was symbolised by Pandora's box, Jason's golden fleece, the rock of Sisyphus, Pythagoras' golden thigh, and other Hellenic myths."¹ Mediaeval Europe also inherited a respect for the metallurgist, with whose processes sacred rites were often associated. From the pre-Hellenic peoples of ancient Samothrace had come those Cabiric rites which were such a focus of mystery in the ancient Mediterranean world: from an early civilisation which had contributed much of knowledge in agriculture, metals and techniques of building and navigation, came also a mystical relationship between the working of metals and religion. The Cabiri were "theurgic priests of fire"; metallurgists were the "sons of fire"; metal-founders, glass-makers and others were often bound by the rules of a priestly caste; in the Arab and Western worlds alike, the working and research into chemical knowledge often took place in secret. The secrecy associated with classical and mediaeval attempts to manipulate the physical world intensified its religious connotations.

Alexandria, in late Roman and early Islamic times, was a focus of many springs of western alchemy. From Chaldea had come the planetary symbolism of metals; from Greek syncretism the yearning for purity and salvation so characteristic of later Christian alchemists; from Alexandria itself the search for salvation through illumination and knowledge, the Gnostic pathway; and, directly, the metallic art as being preoccupied with transmuting base metals into gold, with curative elixirs, and the attainment of perfection. With the coming of Islam, Alexandrian alchemy was diffused westwards, and in its scope and magnitude enormously enhanced by the scientific achievements of a civilisation stretching from the Middle East across North Africa to Granada in Spain. Alchemists of the stature of Avicenna (980—1036) fore-

shadowed western alchemists of the stature of Paracelsus. Certainly Avicenna engaged himself with the quest for the philosopher's stone; the legend that he had acquired immortality by his own elixir flowered after his death; his many works, such as *Summa Perfectionis*, *Ars Chimica* and *Porta Elementorum*, found their way steadily to France, England and Central Europe. From the 12th century Moslem scholar Averroes came a revival of Aristotle's concepts, while other Arab alchemists stressed the importance of spiritual discipline and ascetic pursuits for the understanding of the secret ways of nature. "The alchemy of felicity" (*kimyâ es saâdah*) sprang from non-conformism within Islam, especially the Sufi tradition. The Arab world gave to the West a panoply of chemical knowledge from which modern chemistry developed; it gave to mediaeval and Renaissance Europe many alchemical concepts and techniques. The 'culturing' of metals, mixing them with gold and putting them through processes in an attempt to achieve transmutation of the mixture; the careful chronicling of the various colour stages through which the mixture would have to pass; the desire for a catalyst to speed up the processes of nature, and the consequent need for the 'philosopher's stone'; the attempt to separate the 'spirit' of a substance from its material form; the accretion of elaborate religious rituals to accompany every stage in alchemical experiment; the notion that the transmutation of lower metals into gold was an allegory of the ascent of the personality of man from brute matter to pure spirit-soul; and finally the vision of the whole universe as a single cosmic system of inter-related elements, in which planets, metals, numbers and the souls of men were bound to the nexus of eternal truth;—such was the debt of western Europe to Islamic alchemy.

Spreading gradually throughout the Christian world, alchemy by the fifteenth century was being practised throughout Europe, with translations of Arabic works

¹M. Caron and S. Hutin, *The Alchemists*, New York, 1961, p. 103.

and original western alchemical treatises in ever wider circulation. Early on, and certainly until the thirteenth century, alchemy was a "science of nature" and as such its practice could be reconciled with Catholic orthodoxy, but by the fifteenth century hermetic philosophy had become associated with heterodox beliefs claiming their own interpretation of traditional Christian mysteries. It is important to understand why alchemy had such a wide following in mediaeval and Reformation Europe. While it is true that alchemy was the chrysalis out of which the scientific study of chemistry developed in the West (in the same way as astronomy grew out of astrology), the alchemists only sought to understand the chemical-physical processes of nature as a means towards essentially religious knowledge about their world and destiny. Europe was attracted to alchemy because the Christian teaching of the divine Creation of the natural order stimulated curiosity about the details of the Creator's handiwork, and also because it offered another orthodoxy. The syncretic nature of Europe's alchemical inheritance meant that it comprised elements — 'pagan' classical and 'heathen' Muslim — unacceptable to official Christianity. Alchemy ranks along with the popular mystery cults, apocalyptic movements and heretical groups which formed a religious sub-culture within pre-Reformation Europe; in the Reformation and post-Reformation periods to the end of the seventeenth century, alchemy formed part of the radical Protestant spectrum, in its association with Cabalism, theosophy, freemasonry and even witchcraft. The seventeenth century was the high peak of alchemical questing in the West.

What was alchemy seeking to achieve? It sought to achieve, through the processes of the Magnum Opus, the attainment of the philosopher's stone, which physically and chemically would serve as the key to the understanding of matter, and in so doing would be able to be used to transmute base metals into gold, thus achieving the age-old dream of mankind; spiritually and mystically the whole process would also open up

to the initiate secret knowledge making possible union with the divine. Beyond this, it is very difficult in detail to understand what the alchemists were getting at or what they achieved. The reason is simple and obvious: they were so concerned to hide their secrets from the curious or the persecuting that they enveloped their methods and beliefs in highly coloured symbolic language. In the words of Huginus à Barmâ, "barring the profane, the Sages shall admit only the Elect to their sacred mysteries; from the moment they come into possession of this rare gift of divine Wisdom, they shall give thanks for it to the supreme Being, and shall place themselves beneath the banner of Harpocrates (god of silence)."² He who revealed the alchemist's secrets was counted accursed; the descriptions of the Magnum Opus are never expressed clearly and exactly in alchemical literature. The secrets of alchemy were carefully guarded by cabalistic use of numbers, secret keys, passwords, highly obscure symbolism of all kinds, the use of Greek or Arabic words, geometrical constructions and a wide range of illustrations including men, animals, cities, mythological divinities, and female figures.

Although the intentionally allegorical nature of many of the terms and signs used to denote metals, elements and chemical operations is understood, the complete meaning lies beyond our grasp. For example, the lion or bull stood for earth, the eagle for air, a fish for water, a salamander or dragon lying amid flames for fire — the four elements of mediaeval European science. Two beasts, serpents, birds, or figures of opposite sex symbolised the "fixed" and the "volatile", sulphur and mercury, for use in the Magnum Opus. The male always symbolised the fixed, sulphur; the female always the volatile, mercury. Among many other symbols, a circle stood for universal harmony, the unity of all matter; the sun represented gold; both the Magnum Opus and the philosopher's stone were designated by a lion, by a tree with

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

suns as fruit, and by a child-prince. Yet, in spite of modern man's ability, through the research of the historian, to decipher much of the actual operations involved in the chemical work of the alchemists, the actual meaning of it all still largely escapes us, because the operations of the *Magnum Opus* referred simultaneously to material phenomena and spiritual transformations.

It is therefore the spirituality and mystical concern of the western alchemist and hermeticist which is of prime importance, though of course the incidental contribution to the development of modern science was enormous. Here our purpose is to glimpse the meaning of "the spiritual alchemy". In the words of Becher in *Physica Subterranea*, true philosophers desire only knowledge. "False alchemists seek only to make gold; The former produce mere tinctures, sophistries, ineptitudes; the latter enquire after the principles of things." In short, 'alchemy at best was a search for spiritual salvation. In *Introduction to the Philosopher's Stone* the Rosicrucian alchemist Sperber wrote,

"It purifies and illuminates the soul and the body so that he who possesses it sees, as it in a mirror, all the celestial movements of the constellations and the influences of the stars; remaining in his chamber with the windows closed, he need not even contemplate the firmament."

Thus alchemy was another route to that ultimate wisdom which the astrologer sought. We can best gain insight into the spiritual alchemy by considering a few of its most significant exponents.

The mysterious Benedictine monk Basil Valentine, of the fifteenth century, according to tradition born in Erfurt, supposedly discovered various chemical processes including the distillation of alcohol, also antimony. His alchemical texts were widely published in Latin and French, and included *Azoth* (1613), *The Chemical Apocalypse* (1624), and the *Chemico-Philosophical Treatise*, which latter set forth the natural and supernatural principles of metals and minerals.

In his *Allegory of the Holy Trinity and the Philosopher's Stone*, Valentine wrote:

"Dear Christian lover of the blessed art: oh how brilliantly, how marvellously, the Holy Trinity has created the philosopher's stone! For God the Father is a spirit, yet he appears in the form of a man, as is written in Genesis; in like manner we must look upon the mercury of the philosophers as a body which is spirit. From God the Father was born Christ Jesus, his son, who is at once both man and God, and sinless. He need not have died, yet died of his own will and was resurrected in order that his brothers and sisters might be free of sin and live eternally in Him. Thus too, gold is without sin, ever the same and glorious, able to survive all trials, yet dies for its ailing and imperfect brothers and sisters; soon gloriously born anew, it delivers them, tinctures them for life eternal; it bestows upon them the perfection of the state of pure gold."³

Valentine was thus concerned to show the analogy linking the realm of things material to the realms of things human and divine. Matter in the first realm was composed of sulphur, mercury and salt; in the second realm was composed of body, spirit and soul; in the third realm God is composed of the three persons of the Trinity. Such a form of spiritual alchemy could be held within the framework of traditional Christian orthodoxy. Though we cannot know the full meaning it held for the initiated, we can glimpse that concern for harmony and totality of spiritual awareness characteristic of the true alchemist.

Philippus-Aureolus-Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, otherwise known as Paracelsus (1493-1541), was among the alchemists of the Reformation period who flouted traditional Church authority and made for himself a wide reputation as healer, alchemist, astrologer, traveller, and medical innovator. Hated by his opponents, Paracelsus developed 'hermetic medicine', which derived from alchemical-astrological theories about the 'correspondence' between soul, body and the exterior world, and behind a facade of much hoaxing and boasting, was both a scientist of great significance

³ *Ibid*, p. 154.

and religious thinker of nonconformist outlook. Notions of 'resurrection' and life within nature led him to the view that when an object or physical entity is destroyed, its "astral" form remains. In such attempts to relate Christian orthodoxy about the eternal nature of the soul to classical notions of 'spirit in matter', we see a Renaissance and Reformation religious outlook at work.

Jean-Baptiste van Helmont (1577-1644) was both an alchemist whose scientific researches were of enormous value to the development of the scientific tradition in the West and a religious mystic of profound spirituality. In 153 *Chymical Aphorisms* he wrote of alchemy: "this Science is the gift of God, which he giveth to whomsoever he pleaseth": it was both a system of chemistry to attain the philosopher's stone and the door into mystical understanding.

"This art requires the whole man, possesses him when found, and delivers him, when possessed, from all the tedious cares of this life, as esteeming little of all other things, and judging them of no value, and foreign to him."⁴

In *Ternary of Paradoxes* Helmont described the mystical visions which drove him to grapple with understanding the nature and inter-relationship of God, the soul and eternity.

"The body is like wax, whereupon the impression of the image of the Soul is imprinted, but the Soul hath her image and essential perfection from Him (God), whose stamp or similitude she wears."⁵

As a religious radical of his day, Van Helmont rejected prevailing Christian orthodoxy's division of the Soul into Intellect, Will and Memory, and instead saw these faculties, along with Love, related to the Mind, with all subject to the supreme and immortal Soul. For Helmont alchemy and astrology were alike valid means of perceiving the divine at work in the material world, and he wrote at length of the influence of the stars and planets upon mankind, their "radiations" being a form of the transmission of the divine will to mortal men.

All over seventeenth century Europe were many figures, often shadowy ones, whose range of religio-scientific interests embraced mysticism and alchemy, and often astrology too. They shared a belief in the Oneness of Truth, and alchemy was a focus of unity between knowledge about the natural world and knowledge about, or rather perceptive experience of, the nature of the soul. John Everard (c. 1575-c. 1645-50?), fashionable London preacher and Cambridge Doctor of Divinity, strove for a synthesis of alchemy and traditional Christian spirituality, came to an identification of "hidden knowledge" and "hidden mystery" with the mystery of Christ, and preached a mysticism which reflected the influence of Jacob Boehme. As translator of Hermes Trismegistus' *Divine Pyramander*, he helped to further alchemy in England.

"There is contained in this book, that true philosophy, without which, it is impossible ever to attain to the height, and exactness of piety, and Religion . . . Acknowledge thanks to, and admire, the Omnipotent Creator, Preserver, and Director of all these things."⁶

The concerns of the alchemist reached out into many aspects of European society in that age when the art most flowered. Spurred on by his understanding of the working of the divine amid the material, the alchemist — though pursuing his alchemy in secret so often — was mindful of the needs of society. Medicine, missionary endeavour, scriptural interpretation, religious controversy, freemasonry as an aid to the development of free institutions in authoritarian Catholic states, the coming of "the scientific revolution" — all owed much, directly and indirectly to the alchemist and his spiritual preoccupation. Although we are only at the very beginning of our understanding of "the spiritual

⁴B. Van Helmont, 153 *Chymical Aphorisms*, London, 1639, p. 13. See my article in *Aryan Path*, Jan.-Feb. 1964, "Three Seventeenth-Century Mystics".

⁵*Ternary of Paradoxes*, London, 1650, p. 131.

⁶*Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, His Divine Pyramander*, . . . (and) . . . *Asclepius*, trans. J. Everard, London, 1657, "To the Reader", p. A9.

alchemy" and its contribution to western thought and civilisation, its essentially religious significance is clear.

Of course, there were many charlatans. Many were engaged in alchemy because they wanted to enlist demonic spirits, indulge in magical fantasies, dupe the credulous seekers after wealth with their formulae for the philosopher's stone, or ensnare gullible searchers for the elixir of life. Henry I of Bouillon, Cardinal de Rohan, Alphonse X of Castille and Henry IV of England were among princes duped by alchemical charlatans. The existence of so many tricksters heightened the need for secrecy and obscurity among true initiates of alchemy's scientific and spiritual knowledge.

Underlying all the work and thought of the true alchemist, mystic and astrologer was a vision of the inter-relatedness of all things, material and spiritual, human and divine, in one unified cosmos of truth under the divine guidance.

"We know that in the Elements, Water agrees with Earth in Coldness, Water with Air in Moistness, Air with Fire in Heat ... so Metals agree with Plants in their Unsensibleness, Plants with Animals in Growing, Animals with Man in Sense, Man with Angels in Understanding, Angels with God in Immortality. So also Stones and Metals agree with Plants, Plants with Animals, Animals with the Heavens, the

Heavens with the Intelligences, and those with the Divine Properties and Attributes, and with God himself, So the Divinity answers to the Mind, the Mind to the Understanding, the Understanding to the Intentions, the Intentions to the Representation, the Representation to the Receiving it, the Receiving to the Senses, and at last the Senses to the thing itself. For such is the binding together and continuity of Nature, that every Superior virtue doth disperse its beams through every Inferior thing, by a long and continued rank, flows even to the utmost. And the Inferiors are annexed to the Superiors by each other, that the Influence from the Head, the First Cause, as it were a certain Chain stretched out, proceedeth even to the very Lowest."⁷

This quotation from a mid-seventeenth century English alchemical and astrological work reveals that inter-sympathy throughout Creation which was the conviction of the alchemist, the unifying principle he sought to unravel, and the divine goal of his religious contemplation. In aiming simultaneously at the transfiguration of matter and the illumination of his own soul, the alchemist was seeking spiritual self-realisation, knowledge of the Ultimate, and union with the Deity. The concern of "spiritual alchemy" with the Oneness of Truth, now so sadly lost in the western world, speaks to our own time.

⁷ Hardwick Waren, *Magic and Astrology Vindicated*, London, 1651, pp. 10-11.

Question: Who is a pandit?

Mataji: He who has got rid of the idea that he is learned, he is a pandit — where what *can* be destroyed *has* been destroyed. He who has left off being a teacher and guide to others and, becoming a teacher unto himself, has taught himself so that nothing more remains to be learnt, he is a real and true pandit.

— MA SRI SRI ANADAMAYEE MA, *Ananda Varta*, May 1966, p. 7.

THE SYMBOLISM OF NUMBERS

By H. SEBASTIAN GUBBINS

Although much nonsense has been talked in the name of numerology, that does not alter the fact that numbers have a natural and inherent symbolism. The series of numbers does not begin with one, but with zero, which represents the Void, the Unmanifest, the primal Non-Being out of which both being and non-being emerge. By a natural symbolism, the zero is figured by a circle. This represents the metaphysical circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere.

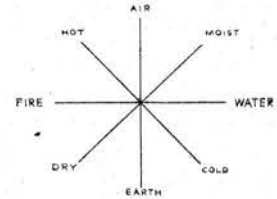
The first crystalization of zero is into One. The very name means God — the One Being. He who alone is. All creatures are from God ; all numbers are from the One. Every number is made up of ones. One is the substance of them as gold is of the jewellery made of it. It is a natural symbolism that we use a single straight line as the figure for one. The straight line is in itself an affirmation of oneness. The Sanskrit symbol for one १ is also interesting, however. It is a circle uncoiling and therefore represents the metaphysical zero of Non-Being opening out into the affirmation of Being.

But one is not in itself creative. First it polarises into the Divine Couple ; the complementarism of two — the yang and yin in China, Purusha and Prakriti in India, the polarity of active and passive, male and female, positive and negative, day and night, creation and dissolution, being and non-being, manifested and unmanifested. But this is a lower unmanifested existing together with its counterpart, the manifested, within the primal, total Unmanifested of the Zero, as Sri Krishna explains in the Gita.

Nevertheless, it is not two which is the dynamic and creative number, but three. Three is two and their uniter or union. It is therefore the number of the Word or the Son, without whom, as St. John says, was

not anything made of all that was made. Three is the number of the Hindu gunas, the stresses or tendencies which govern all creation.

Three is the number of creating, four of the created, of the world, of stabilisation. It is 'foursquare', the number of the square, which is the very picture of stability. In every way it has been taken to represent the stability of creation — the four seasons of the

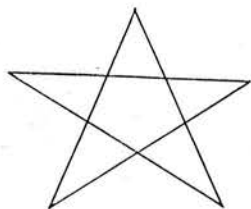


year, the four yugas of a human cycle ; gold, silver, copper and iron, the four alchemical elements (fire, water, air, earth) and the qualities (hot, cold, moist, dry) which interlock with these as shown in the diagram each of the elements partaking of the qualities on either side of it, the four ages of man, (childhood, youth, maturity, age), the traditional four races of mankind (white, red, yellow, black), in India the four vedas, the four yugas, the four ashramas, the four castes (priestly, military, economic, labouring).

However, if one characteristic of physical manifestation is stability, another and opposite one is incompleteness and constant reaching out. In the former regard, four is the number of the square, in the latter of the cross, its arms forever reaching out. Historically the cross is associated with Christianity, but symbolically its significance is more universal and more ancient. As creation reaching out, it symbolises both aspiration and suffering. It has been used, with a number of variations, of which the Swastika is one, in many ancient civilisations.

Although four is the number of creation, it is not the number of man, for man is more

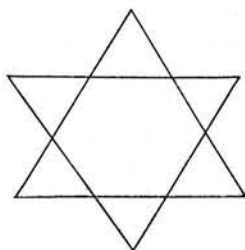
than the four elements ; he is the four elements, with the quintessence (or essential fifth) in the centre. Therefore, five is his



number, the number of substance with the spirit in the heart of it. The fifth point in the centre of the cross converts it from an image of blind reaching out to an image of balanced manifestation from the heart. The five-pointed star is a traditional symbol for man. In some hermetic drawings it is actually humanised, a man being depicted with his head at the apex, his arms extended to the two upper points, and his legs to the two lower.

Six is again a number of stabilisation, but more profound than four, since it contains the quintessential five. Whereas four depicts merely expansion into manifestation in the four directions of space, six brings in the further two directions of up and down, implying the possibility of rising to higher and sinking to lower worlds. Therefore six is represented by the cross of three dimensions.

Another form of it is the six-pointed star, depicting the union of heaven and earth, spirit and body, yang and yin, Purusha and Prakriti, man and woman. Woman is traditionally represented by a triangle with the apex downwards. This marks the points of her body physically, higher and lower than the male upright triangle, thus reflecting woman's twofold relationship to man. Above the male triangle it represents the descent of Divine Grace on man ; below it represents woman bound to the body more than man is by her physical functions, and therefore inferior to man. The six-pointed star



symbolises the union of the two where the lower triangle of aspiration moves upwards into the descending one of Grace. Thus it is used to depict the perfect man.

Just as five completes four by addition of the quintessence, so seven completes six, but six is the four directions of space plus the additional two of up and down, so seven is a more universal perfection than five. Five represents the completion of the human state, seven the total perfection of cosmic being. From one viewpoint, therefore, seven is the perfect number. Paintings of Christ and the apostles sometimes show the apostles in pairs, making six groups with Christ in the centre as the seventh.

Eight is a number of stabilised manifestation, like four. When the intermediary points are considered, it is the number of the directions of space. It is the combined number of elements and qualities. Nine is taken as the number of the circumference of the circle and is therefore, in its own way, a perfection. It is also the last single digit, which gives it finality. It has the peculiar integrity that the digits in every multiple of it add up to itself (18, 27, 36 etc.). The digits of any number to which it is added add up to the same as before (e.g. $24 = 2 + 4 = 6$; $24 + 9 = 33 = 3 + 3 = 6$), so that the nine remains invisible.

Ten being the first double number, has a sort of primordality like one, and indeed its digits, 1 and 0, add up to one. It is complete as being the summation of the first four numbers, $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$, which are the basis of creation. It is for this reason that it is taken as the opening of a new series, nine being the last single digit.

This has been so among all peoples, but there have been some ancient peoples who have taken twelve instead of ten as their cyclic number. Twelve has indeed a peculiar complexity and completeness. Astrologically, each of the four elements (fire, water, air, earth) must be manifested according to each of the three modes (cardinal, fixed and mutable) ; and therefore there must be

twelve signs of the zodiac, three for each element. In many other cases twelve has been the number of a complete cycle of manifestation or a complete symbolical group — the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve tables of the Law, the twelve apostles of Christ, the twelve knights of the Round Table, peers of Charlemagne, even months of the year.

It is partly for historical reasons that thirteen is considered an unlucky number:

because there were thirteen at the Last Supper when Christ was betrayed. But in itself also it is inauspicious since it breaks the cyclic perfection of twelve.

Thus it will be seen that numbers have an inherent meaning and importance. It is because their symbolism is natural to them that it is found among many disconnected ancient peoples. It did not need to be invented but only recognised. Today it is largely forgotten.

CONSCIOUSNESS

By T. P. RAMACHANDRA IYER *

My special subject in college was philosophy and so I had some knowledge of both Eastern and Western systems of thought and to some extent I was conscious of this. My first appearance in the Old Hall set me free from any such ridiculous feeling. When I entered the Hall there was a discussion going on about the nature of self and of consciousness and unconsciousness. Book learning being fresh in my mind, I began to express what I had read about the various grades of consciousness in Western systems, and particularly mentioned and explained the super-conscious and sub-conscious. Sri Bhagavan listened and reacted sharply and remarked: "What is is only Consciousness. It is only with reference to something that is that you can postulate a super or sub state to it. Only to that which exists can you postulate higher or lower grades; you never talk of adding to or subtracting from a non-existent. Consciousness is Existence and every living being agrees that it exists; so that which IS is consciousness. Consciousness is Truth; other postulations of it are the creation of

ignorance, clouding the mind but appealing to the intellect. Peel off the postulations, ignore the supras and subs and be as you are. You ARE: that is the truth known even to a child. Truth is simple and direct. Being always IS, it knows no variation. That which IS — Consciousness — has neither appearance nor disappearance. Therefore, what exists is Consciousness, call it by any name, Self, God, Atman, Brahman. . . ." I did not only hear the words of Bhagavan but experienced something else also.

I felt and experienced my nature, dived deep into my consciousness and swam in the ocean of Bliss. I fell prostrate before Bhagavan and cried aloud within myself: "O Bhagavan! my Master! dispeller of my darkness! obeisance to you! Accept me as your servant!" How can I speak of the joy and bliss I experienced that day, which still surges in me by the Grace of the Master, Sri Ramana Sat-Guru!

* For an introduction to whom see our issue for July '66, pp. 299-300.

“ WE WILL SHOW THEM OUR SIGNS ”

By ABDULLAH QUTBUDDIN (A.O.)

The Qur'an, like the Tao-Te-King, often speaks of a people or community when, read with more understanding, it refers to the individual. For instance, the Tao-Te-King asserts that when the Emperor refrains from ruling there is peace and prosperity in the Empire; and the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins not to make mischief in the land. The meaning in both cases is the same: that a man's faculties (the 'people') should be allowed to function simply, spontaneously, naturally, and that his mind or ego (the 'ruler') introduces disharmony among them when it starts to interfere and 'make mischief', harnessing them to some ambition or twisting them to imitation of some pattern that is not natural to them.

Living 'naturally' does not imply licentiousness or animal self-indulgence. On the contrary, that is itself a perversion created by the mind. It implies a life of noble simplicity.

Again, it says in the Qur'an that Allah does not change the state of a people until they first change what is in themselves. The Qur'an is an intensely symbolical book. Again and again one is brought up against sayings like this that need to be pondered over. In this case also the 'people' represent the 'community' of faculties, impressions, urges that go to make up what we call an individual. So the implication is that God does not change a man's circumstances until he first changes 'what is in himself', that is his nature or his attitude towards his circumstances. This carries the profound message that a man's environment reflects his nature.

This is a very hard thing to say. He who says it lays himself open to the accusation of smugness. "It is all right for you to say that because you are in comfortable circumstances, but what about all those who are destitute or bereaved or suffering, those who

have no work or financial security or have been thrown into concentration camps?' It certainly is a hard thing to say, and it does not mean crudely and simply that good people succeed in life and bad people suffer. One's own character and destiny are so complicated that it is much if one can understand them; how then can one hope to understand at all fully those of others, about whom one has only comparatively external information? One complication that rules out a crude application of the theory is that what appears to be success is by no means the same as contentment—as many successful people commit suicide as unsuccessful, as many wealthy as indigent. Another is that human happiness itself is not the purpose of life. Another that happiness may even grow out of suffering if the suffering has awakened a man's nobler qualities. Collections have been published of letters written by inmates of Nazi concentration camps and it is remarkable how many of them speak of finding not only a meaning in life but a happiness and serenity which they had never experienced in the free but superficial life they knew formerly. Indeed, from a profounder viewpoint, it may have been the camp guards who were more to be pitied than the prisoners.

Also, of course, it is to be remembered that people in the same family or working in the same office may have very different environments. One of two brothers may be bullied by his elder brother, miserable at school, but consoled by the protective love of his mother, while the other may be happy and successful among his school friends but embittered at home by his mother's favouritism towards his younger brother. The environment of a person is not something that can be measured by statistics but is mental and emotional as well as physical.

Taking all this into consideration, it does remain true that a man's environment reflects his nature as a mirror does his face. From this it results naturally that Allah does not change it until he changes first what is in himself. This has a bearing on what I wrote in an earlier article on petitionary prayer.¹ It is no use scowling into a mirror and praying that it will reflect a smile; as long as you scowl it will continue to reflect a scowl. Still less helpful is it to be aggrieved that the mirror shows bitterness. The aggrieved look will make the reflection still less amiable. But as soon as you change what is in yourself — malice to sympathy, jealousy to friendliness, suspicion to appreciation — the change will be reflected back at you from the mirror. And in your life also. A man who is full of malice will be subject to the malice of circumstances; one who is open and trusting will meet with unexpected help; one who is at war with the world will find the world at war with him.

Again it must be repeated that this cannot be taken crudely and simply. It does not mean that a just man can never be cheated or an honest man exploited. Nevertheless it does remain true in a general way; and in specific cases it is often self-evident.

This carries the implication that a man's environment is not merely something passive, like a reflection in a mirror, but also

an active influence which, by changing as he changes, can provide a means for his spiritual progress. The whole universe manifests the Attributes of God, while His Essence remains unchanged. So it is also with a man and his environment. "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth."² This is the same promise or threat as that referred to earlier: God will not change your state until you change first what is in yourself; He will continue to manifest His signs outwardly and in yourself until you recognize their truth. Your whole life is a book of signs if you could read them aright. A mean and timid man will find himself insecure in a threatening environment; and inwardly too the sicknesses he suffers from will be those of deficiency; but let him muster up courage to fulfil his obligations generously and both health and circumstances will change accordingly. The correspondence may not always be as obvious as that, but it often is; and in more subtle ways the signs are always there on the horizons and in ourselves. But too often our self-will prevents us from seeing them. And then we pray for the mirror of life to change its expression and rail against blind fate when it does not. It is we who are blind.

¹ See *The Mountain Path* for April 1966.

² *Qur'an*, XLI, 53.

VERSES FROM THE "GARLAND OF GURU'S SAYINGS"

Translated by PROF. K. SWAMINATHAN *from the Tamil of* SRI MURUGANAR

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| <p>336 Seeing in all oneself,
 Humbler than the humblest,
 Supremely meek,
 Through meekness the Supreme
 Achieves supremacy.</p> | <p>338 Unheroic chaff
 Floats atop the flood.
 Pearls sink down
 And at the bottom rest.
 Men are made high or low
 By what they are, not where.</p> |
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RENÉ GUÉNON, RESTORER OF TRADITIONAL SYMBOLISM IN THE WEST

By ARTHUR OSBORNE

Traditional wisdom is taught more in symbols than in verbal formulations. This is in the natural order of things, because words can only hint at that which lies beyond them and are almost inevitably twisted to point in the wrong direction, whereas symbols are natural reflections on a physical plane of truths from a higher plane. They do not have to be created but only recognised, and they exist whether we recognise them or not. For instance, a seed containing all the possibilities of branches, leaves, flowers and fruit really does symbolize the original, mute intuition of truth in the heart, out of which all later experiences evolve. It symbolises also the germ that passes on from this life to the next, where it will sprout into a new life in the soil of its new environment.

At the time of the Renaissance, Europe turned away from traditional wisdom in pursuit of "the things of this world". The understanding of symbolism was lost and was replaced by academic philosophy and experimental science. So far as concerns theoretical materialism and rationalism, this trend reached its apogee in the nineteenth century. There are many signs that a contrary trend — both above and below rationalism — has now set in; and perhaps the most spectacular of them is the discovery by materialist science itself that there is no matter. Physically and symbolically we no longer stand on the solid ground of materialism: physically we stand on a whirling mass of electrons, dashing around in empty space, symbolically on the quicksands of new occultisms, the sub-conscious mind, dangerous drugs, unbridled individualism, nuclear destruction. But today those who seek to rise above the ground-floor level of rationalism and materialism, have redis-

covered the ancient paths "from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality."¹ Mysticism is no longer merely a freak phenomenon but also a path that can be followed.

The one person who was instrumental more than any other in the restoration of traditional wisdom to the West was René Guénon. Far from founding any school of his own, he kept himself in the background while proclaiming the eternal, universal Truth underlying all religions. He poured forth a stream of books and articles in the twenties and thirties of this century in which, with brilliant lucidity, vast erudition and scathing contempt for all who differed with him, he attacked modern civilisation and revealed traditional wisdom. Above all, he explained what is meant by Self-Realization and how it differs from spasmodic mystical trances and psychic experiences. He taught that the Divine or Realized State is the natural fulfilment of man and that there are paths to it and guides to show the paths. And in book after book, article after article, he restored the ancient language of symbolism. The writer of this article was one of many who took him as the prophet of our times — unpopular to the multitudes, as all prophets have been, but divinely inspired for this purpose. Certainly he educated us into the truths of tradition and symbolism of which the academic education of our time had lost the key. The result of his work may have been less spectacular than that of many self-styled teachers, but it had a far firmer foundation, it bred up a new type of intellectual seeker in the West, prepared to set forth on the quest wherever a path and a

¹ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1, 3, 28.

guide could be found. There can be no automatic safeguard against the dangers that beset every path, the symbolical enemies, the wild beasts of the senses, the pitfalls of delusion, but at least the followers of Guénon went forth with a sound route-map, that is a knowledge of doctrinal theory such as Western seekers had not had for centuries back. It was no guarantee against being led into danger by false guides, as some of its possessors, in their youthful enthusiasm, had believed it would be, but even so it was much.

A peculiar feature about Guénon's expositions was that, although he himself was a Muslim following a Sufi path, he expounded doctrine almost entirely in terms of Hinduism. His first book, which contained in germ all the others, was "*A General Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*", and perhaps his most influential was "*Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*". He considered the Hindu concepts the most complete intellectually, and he thoroughly familiarised his readers with them.

In his recognition of all religions he was no syncretist. While prepared to show how the same fundamental Truth underlay all religions, and how parallel concepts appeared in them, he insisted no less on their difference in the contingent domain of theology, ethics, ritual and social application. He taught that each religion is a living, organic whole and that attempts to combine features of one with features of another would create a monstrosity, like trying to combine parts of a horse, a cow and a dog in the same body. Therefore, while demanding an intellectual recognition of all religions he was scathing in his denunciation of any attempt to fuse them. He even wrote a book against one such attempt which was enjoying popularity in his day.

His books are less necessary today, because they have done their work so well that the essence of their teaching pervades the atmosphere of the quest even among those

Western intellectuals who do not approach it through them; also because translations of scriptures and other works of genuine guidance from one religion or another are now available. Nevertheless, they still have a wide appeal both in the original French and in English translations. And the periodical which served as his mouthpiece, *Etudes Traditionnelles*, is still published by his followers. Indeed, series of his articles on various aspects of symbolism have been put together in book form and are also republished.

And what of his mistakes? Men who, in their youthful impetuosity, would have staked their lives on his infallibility now find his mistakes to be colossal. He declared that Buddhism was a heresy and a false religion and that Hindus do not believe in reincarnation. He asserted that Ramana Maharshi was not a guru, without troubling to go and see him in order to form an opinion, and ignoring a letter sent with the Maharshi's explicit approval by one of the Maharshi's disciples, stating that he was. Unaware that all Hindu gurus since Ramakrishna have been waiving the demands of orthodoxy, he taught that rigid orthodoxy was still necessary whatever path one might follow in whatever religion. The best way is to openly admit his mistakes. To try to gloss them over would only lead to further criticism. It is best to say quite simply: "Yes, he strayed into quite colossal errors, but his mistakes were factual, whereas his truth was principal. (to use a word he coined). He knew that there is a Goal and there are paths to the Goal, he taught the eternity and unanimity and universality of Truth, he understood the language of symbols pointing to Truth like fingers to the moon. All this he expounded with force and clarity. But for him, many who now follow a path would either be bogged down in modern materialism or have fallen victim to some freak esoterism. Let us recognize his errors and reject them, but let us recognize the tremendous service he performed and honour him for it".

UNIVERSAL SYMBOLISM

By J. J. DE REEDE

Dr. Mees of Holland, known also as 'Sadhu Ekarasa', was often here in Bhagavan's lifetime. He made a special study of symbolism, on which he published a weighty volume. He is no longer living, but the author of the following article, who was then a young pupil of his, is now an authority on symbolism in his own right.

So much has been said and written on symbols that it might prove useful to reflect for a moment on the meaning of the word itself. We then find that the word comes from the Greek, *sum-baloo*, denoting: I throw together, the throwing together. What is being thrown together in the symbol is, on the one hand, its form, its literal value, and on the other hand, the life which it leads in us, understood or misunderstood, in the conscious or in the unconscious. As such it is different from a sign, although there are instances when signs can become symbols. When the sign becomes inseparably fused with inner life, it stops being merely significant, it gets additional value, it becomes symbolic.

The opposite of the symbolic is the diabolic. This word finds its origin in *dia-baloo*, meaning: I throw apart, or: to throw apart. If the sign and its life get thrown apart, separated, nothing remains but the empty form, the dead skin. And if an estrangement arises between the sign and what it originally signified, (as is unavoidable in the process of cultivation: slowly the bullock loses its significance in association with agriculture), then the sign ceases even to be merely significant.

But it is the first part of the process — or rather degeneration—which concerns us here. The opposite of degeneration is generation, and the root of that word we also find in that old scripture, Genesis, containing some illustrative material on the subject. For there the opposing symbolic and diabolic are laid down in the commandment concerning the forbidden fruit, "for in the day that

thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die", as against: "And the serpent said unto the woman 'Ye shall not surely die. . .'"

The fruit is eaten and the culprits do not die literally. Since it seems unlikely that the story wants to draw attention to some mistake on the part of Almighty, we must seek for another explanation. The following becomes evident: the commandment is meant to be understood symbolically and its breach is punished on the same level with a symbolic death. The serpent here represents the voice of literalism and materialism. It is always or nearly always in close contact with the material element, Earth; its uplift plays a great part in all culture.

In Genesis it is not uplifted. On the contrary, its voice is listened to and its advice taken. Then symbolic death results. The meaning is separated from the commandment and the misdoers die a death in that they are driven out from paradise, from the peace and Bliss which would have been theirs if they had stuck to the path of Genesis, the path of becoming (constituting the six "Days" of Genesis I, resulting in the seventh "Day" of Genesis II).

It will not be superfluous to go through the relations between the five lower elements and their corresponding aspect in man. The Element Earth (in the Panchabhutas, Prithvi) represents the physical body of man and his material interest in life. The Element Water — the element-in-motion *par excellence* is used to denote the fleeting, flowing element in man: his emotional life (in the Panchabhutas, Ap). The third Element is that of Fire (Tejas) and is symboli-

cally connected with the mental life in man whence his urges and passions are supposed to spring — and even today we speak about the solar plexus near the digestive organs and the thinking faculty of man. The fourth Element is that of Air (Vayu) and as in Latin (*spiritus* = air, but also spirit) the close relationship between the airy and the spiritual can be clearly perceived. (Atman = to breathe, but also soul, spirit.) The spiritual would include the inspiration (literally: the intake of air and intuition — inner intuition). Presiding over the four elements, we are told, is the quintessential faculty of insight (inner sight). It is interesting to note that the “quintessence” of a matter, that is its centre and core, really means the “fifth element”.

Groups of five, sometimes with the two additional spheres added, we find in all traditions. For Christians the pre-Christian symbol of the Man on the Cross became all-important. The four points of the cross symbolize the four Elements, while the quintessence is the Man crucified on it. The initials INRI written above the head have been explained by some to represent the four Elements once more: Iam (Water), Nur (Fire), Ruach (Air) and Iabeshah (Earth). Christ is often designated as a “Ruler of the Elements”. The Egyptians had (to take only one example) the pyramids in which the same principle was laid down, with the four corners as the four Elements and the top of the structure, pointing upwards, as the Quintessence. In Hinduism we have the Panchabhutas which underlie the Kosas (body-sheaths), Yamas and Niyamas, the Panchavati etc. The “Body-sheaths” or Kosas have reference to the five “Elements” in man as follows: 1. the Annamayakosa represents the material and physical in man; 2. the Pranamayakosa stands for the fleeting, emotional function; 3. the Manomayakosa is connected with the mental faculty; 4. the Vijnanamayakosa is the spiritual aspect of man’s “aspirations” and 5. the Anandamayakosa represents the sheath of Bliss, the result of *insight*.

We find the same connection also in the five Yamas: 1. Ahimsa, non-harming, non-hurting refers purely to the physical sphere; 2. Brahmacharya, chastity, finds its true source in the emotional life, and is thus connected with the Element Water; 3. Asteya, or non-stealing refers to the mental faculty — for is it not the *mind* which, in guiding the hand, is the thief rather than that hand? 4. Satya, truthfulness, is at heart a spiritual quality and 5. Aparigraha, non-coveting, is the result of insight into the whole.

People are said to benefit from meditation near the Panchavati, the five trees harmoniously grown into one. Once the symbolic implications of the values of each of the trees are understood, the idea makes sense. The connection of the five trees with the several aspects of man’s being is said to be as follows: 1. the Amalaka or nelli: the Element Earth. 2. the Udumbar or fig: the emotional (including the erotic also evident in Roman Tradition). 3. the Margosa, the fiery neem, for the fiery mind. 4. the Vata (or banyan) is, with its *air* roots, symbolic of the spiritual Element Air. 5. the Asvattha or bodhi tree: the faculty of insight. It is interesting to note that the root “bodhi” is related to “Budhi” as found in Buddha, the “Enlightened”.

The additional two spheres referred to above are the Moon-Sphere and the Sun-Sphere, symbolic of the creative power of Consciousness as a reflection of Being or Reality. These symbols have been taken from nature, where the moon is a mirror of the sun reflecting the light of that source of life.

Examples of methodical attempts at integration in which groups of seven are found, are perhaps even more numerous and are also found all over the world.

Hindu ritual has probably been the least corrupted and the aim of integration is easily discernible, once the importance given to the Elements is understood.

The ritual of puja is an example. 1. Naidya, the offering of food which after-

wards comes back in the form of Prasad spirit. 5. Dipa, as *light* is that which gives sustains the body, the Element Earth. the onlooker a clearer view of the image of the Godhead, symbolically representing 2. Pushpa, the flowers, having grown from some sort of inner sight. To complete the water, symbolize that Element and, as the group of seven we may add the kumkum placed on the forehead, on the spot between the brows where the Yoga teachings have the *procreative* part of a plant they are especially connected with man's procreative and emotional life. 3. Gandha, the sandal paste, gives off a nice smell. Smell is (in the group of the five senses) symbolic of the mental faculty. It is, in fact, the "animal mind" or the mind of the animal, for beasts rely largely on their smell. The sandal paste giving off a nice smell, is believed to cool and soothe the (fiery) animal mind, and serves a symbolic purpose. 4. Dhupa, the incense, rises up in the spiritual Element, Air, when burning. With the act of offering the incense, expression is given to a desire, namely, that the mental faculty may be raised up into the realm of the

DAY AND NIGHT

By A. RAO

World and dissolution, day and night,
 Both are eternally, although to sight
 They seem to alternate. Life and death
 Are the twin phases of a single breath
 Of That-which-is, That which underlies
 The self that lives and then reluctant dies,
 Not knowing whence or whither. To out-turned gaze
 World with its intricate in-weaving maze
 Of ever-varied forms forever is.
 Turn inward and its woven harmonies
 Are gone with him that saw them. Nought remains
 That eye can see or thought (though it contains
 All things) can comprehend, only the vast
 Unknowable whereon the worlds float past
 Like foam-flakes on the Ocean. How shall mind
 Pierce to what was before it, or how find
 The Womb that gave it birth? No aggregate
 Of thoughts and feelings, no conglomerate
 Of forms endures; and yet, though figments pass,
 "Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,"
 And all things are and are not endlessly.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE MUDRAS IN INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCING

By GITA SHARMA

The author of this article is herself an accomplished exponent of Bharata Natya. She is a student of the renowned instructor Ellappa Mudaliar of Kancheepuram. In the photograph her right hand forms the mudra 'Sikhara' or 'peak' denoting Purusha, both as 'Spirit' and as 'male'; her left hand forms the mudra 'mrigasirsa' or 'deer's head', denoting woman, among other things. The whole pose represents Siva-Shakti where the right half of the body is Siva and the left half Parvati.

Among the classical styles of the Indian dance comprising Kathak (North India), Kathakali (Kerala), Manipuri (Assam and Bengal), Oddissi (Orissa), Bharatanatyam, nowadays performed in the South, represents the purest form of the tradition.

The Bharatanatyam dance has its roots in the most ancient dance traditions found in Vedic hymns for which the earliest recorded evidence is in the "Natya Sastra" of Bharata. The "Natya Sastra" treats of Drama, Dancing, the Stage, Music, Aesthetics, Elocution, Rhetoric and Grammar; particular techniques, movements and gestures of the dance, attributes of dancers and in fact everything appertaining to the theatrical profession. The origin of the dance is as follows :

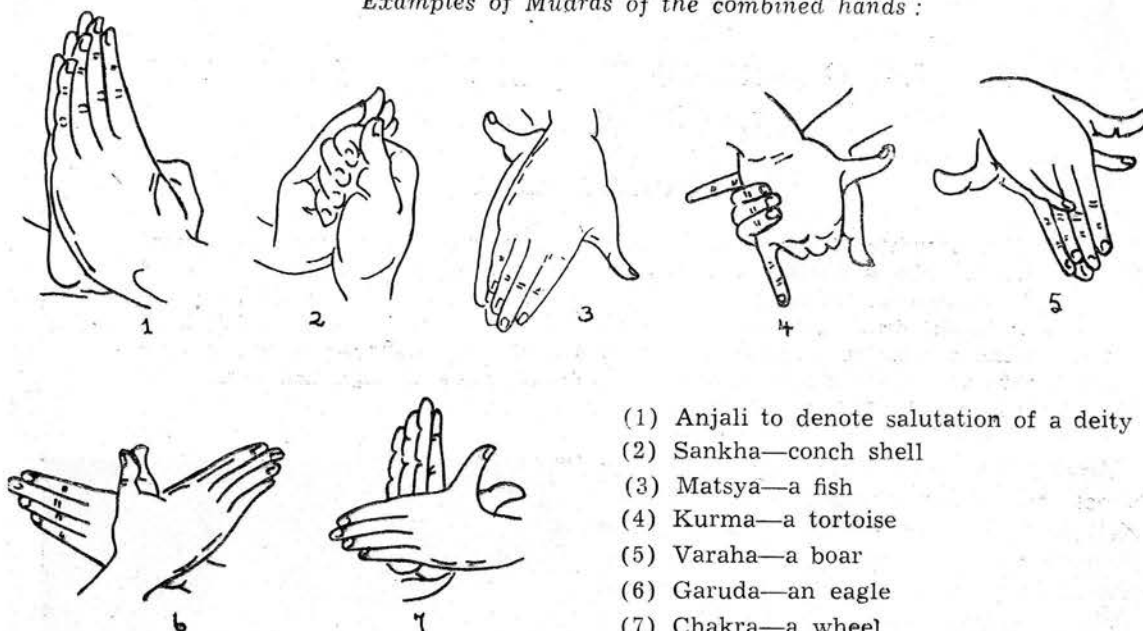
"In the beginning Brahman gave the Natya-veda to Bharata. Bharata together with groups of Gandharvas (heavenly dancers in the air) and Apsarasas performed natya, nr̥tta and nr̥tya before Siva. Then Siva, having remembered his own majestic performance (dance), caused Bharata to be instructed in that art by his attendants (ganas). And before this, on account of his love for Bharata, he gave to the latter, instructions in lasya (a graceful feminine type of dance) through Parvati. Knowing about tandava from Tandu, sages spoke of it to mortals. Parvati on the other hand instructed Usa, the daughter of Bana in lasya. The latter taught the art to milk-



maids of Dwaraka, and they taught it to women of Saurashtra who in their turn taught it to women of other places. In this manner this art was traditionally handed down, and has come to stay in the world."¹

¹From the *Abhinayadarpanam* by Nandikesvara.

Examples of Mudras of the combined hands :



- (1) Anjali to denote salutation of a deity
- (2) Sankha—conch shell
- (3) Matsya—a fish
- (4) Kurma—a tortoise
- (5) Varaha—a boar
- (6) Garuda—an eagle
- (7) Chakra—a wheel

(Taken from the *Abhinayadarpanam*)

In the classical dances not only the body, head, neck, glances, rhythm of the feet and facial expressions (Abhinaya) play an important role, but also the movements of the hands and especially the positions of the fingers. These hand gestures are known as Mudras (meaning seal or signature). In the technique of dance, the Mudras are used for a definite purpose. They are a language of the hands used in accompaniment to the words of the song conveying the story or incident, object or shades of emotion. Several of the Mudras are also used during pure dance movements but then do not convey any specific meaning and are only ornamental. According to the "*Abhinayadarpanam*" by Nandikeswara based on the "*Natya Sastra*" (a manual of gesture and posture used in Hindu Dance and Drama translated from Sanskrit into English by Manomohan Ghosh) there are 28 artistic and symbolic positions of the fingers of a single hand (Asamyuta Hastas) and 23 of the combined hands (Samyuta Hastas) known to the ancient Masters and used to interpret the story and the mood.

Mudras describe :—

- (1) Nature : (e.g. clouds, forests, night, rivers, blowing of winds, moonlight, severe heat, waves, trees, flames of fire, lightning, creepers, different phases of the moon, storms, rains, sun, flowers, fruits, stars, planets, mountains, etc.)
- (2) Animals and birds : (e.g. there are different finger positions to indicate the fish, tortoise, boar, lion, snake, eagle, cock, parrot, bee, elephant, giraffe, etc.)
- (3) Objects : (e.g. a lamp, bow and arrow, vessel, shoes, pearls, etc.)
- (4) Activities : (e.g. ringing a bell, threading a garland of flowers, applying tilak on the forehead, applying sandalwood paste on the body, chanting mantras, meditating, fighting, shooting, tearing, carrying something, decorating, looking, listening, calling, forgetting, speaking, questioning, decorating the hair, dressing, tying anklets)

to the feet, being thin or fat, beautiful, ugly, weary, pleading, eating, writing, forbidding an act, expressing condemnation, giving leave to go, bathing, worship, rowing, riding, reprimanding, playing musical instruments, beating drums, etc.)

- (5) Moods (e.g. estrangement, separation, illusion, trickery, feeling love, dizziness, mockery, teasing, pity, valour, laughter, disgust, anger, fear, feeling of peace, wonder, heroism, good humour, pining, valour, majesty, courage, fury.)

Moods are mainly conveyed by facial expressions (Abhinaya) combined with the appropriate Mudras to intensify the thought.

Coronations and festivals are also described, as also deities, avatars and relationship (e.g. son, father-in-law, younger brother etc.).

According to the above mentioned ancient sanskrit text *Abhinayadarpanam* the dancer should perform her dance in the following manner :

“She should sing with her mouth, express the meaning of the song by gestures of her hands, show States (bhava — feeling, thought) by her eyes, and

beat time with her feet. Where the hand goes, the eyes also should go. Where the eyes go the mind also should go. Where the mind goes there the State (bhava) should follow, and where there is the State, there the Sentiment (rasa) arises.”

Each Mudra has several meanings. The songs bring home how each Mudra will have to be used to express a special bhava (feeling and thought) or idea.

e.g. *Mukula* (blossom) (one of the 28 single hand gestures) means a water lily, eating, the God of love, etc.

Chandrakala (digit of the moon) denotes the moon, the crown of Siva, the Ganges,

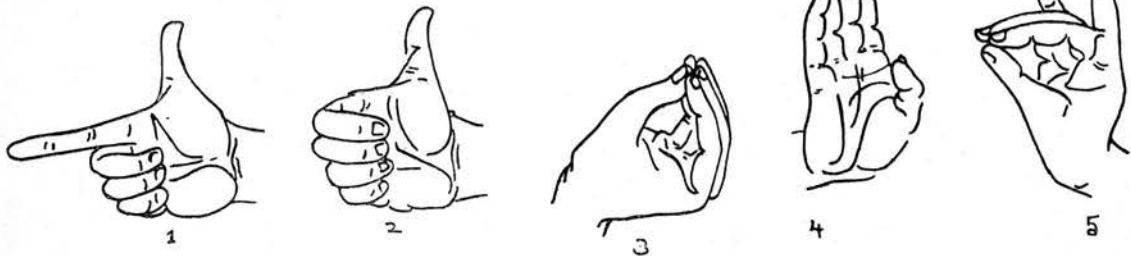
Pathaka (flag) denotes river, region of Gods, entering a street, clouds, benediction, waves, etc.

Sankha (conch) (taken from the 23 combined hand gestures) denotes a conch shell.

Matsya (fish) denotes a fish.

K. S. Ramaswami Sastri in his book “*Indian Dance as a Spiritual Art*” tells us “the dancer must enter into the spirit of the Mudras and not merely exhibit the Mudras in a mechanical way. She must weave them into the dance as a supreme poet weaves into a perfect lyric.”

Examples of Mudras of single hand :



(1) Chandrakala (digit of the moon) used to denote the moon, the face, the crown of Siva, the Ganges etc.

(2) Sikhara (peak), God of love, a bow, a pillar, questioning, the act of embrace, sounding a bell

(3) Mukula (blossom), a water lily, eating, the god of love (with his five arrows)

(4) Pathaka (flag) to denote the beginning of dance, clouds, a forest, forbidding things, bosom, might, a river, region of Gods, the horse, cutting, wind etc.

(5) Simhamukha (lion face) to denote a hare, an elephant, a lotus garland, a lion's face etc.

(Taken from the *Abhinayadarpanam*)

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THE SYMBOLISM OF EASTER

By IRMGARD GEORGA SCHULTZ

Good Friday and Easter have a profound symbolism. Joel Goldsmith reminds us in *"The Contemplative Life"* that the crucifixion of Christ must be taken to symbolise the death of the ego-self. The Maharshi also has given the same meaning to it. Joel compares the ego-belief to a tomb in which we are buried ; so the crucifixion is naturally followed by the resurrection. " We must die to the belief that of our own limited selves we are something, that we have lives of our own, a mind, a soul, a way and a will of our own. We are to die to the belief that we have any virtue, any life, any being, any harmony or any success of our own."¹ Everything is summed up in the statement " Not my will be done but Thine." This holy affirmation is an acknowledgment of our own nothingness and God's Allness. It leads the way to the sublime revelation : " I and my Father are One."



This picture of Christ is said to be taken from an inscription on the signet ring of a Roman Emperor and to be authentic.

Thus the crucifixion symbolises breaking attachment to this world, killing the ego-self who can be attached. Following that, our higher Self rises from the tomb of ignorance or sin or self-will, triumphing over death.

Another historical symbol of this is the emergence of Saul of Tarsus out of his blindness as "Saul" into the light as "Paul". Then St. Paul could say : "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."² What Jesus called "the Father", Paul called "the Christ": that is the Christ-consciousness, the Christ within. Joel Goldsmith says : "A Something walks before us, making the crooked ways straight."¹ If we have this conviction,

not only in our mind but in our heart, no material form of protection is necessary. He further says : " Hold steadfastly to the realization of God as the temple in which we live, as the hiding place, the fortress and the rock."¹ And he continues: " I live with God ; I walk with God ; I hold my mind steadfast in God ; I acknowledge Him in all my ways. In quietness and in confidence, in the assurance of God's presence ; God in me and I in God."¹ With this attitude of mind we are no more of this world, though still in this world.

¹ *The Contemplative Life*, Fowler, London.

² *Galatians*, 11, 20.

Our desires and aversions are two apes living in the tree of our heart. So long as they continue to shake and agitate it with their joggling and jolting there can be no rest for it.

— YOGA VASISHTA

SYMBOLISM—COMMUNICATION OR COMMUNION ?

By Fr. THOMAS MERTON

The topic announced in this title could easily lend itself to a detailed, long-winded academic treatment. In order to avoid the disadvantages of such an approach, the author will permit himself to set down, in a more spontaneous and less organized form, a few bare intuitions. These may suggest further lines of thought in the mind of the reader.

In dealing with symbolism one enters an area where reflection, synthesis and contemplation are more important than investigation, analysis and science. One cannot apprehend a symbol unless one is able to awaken, in one's own being, the spiritual resonances which respond to the symbol not only as *sign* but as "sacrament" and "presence". Needless to say, when we speak of symbol here we are interested only in the full and true sense of the word. Mere conventional symbols, more or less arbitrarily taken to represent something else, concrete images which stand for abstract qualities, are not symbols in the highest sense. The true symbol does not merely point to some hidden object. It contains in itself a structure which in some way makes us aware of the inner meaning of life and of reality itself. A true symbol takes us to the centre of the circle, not to another point on the circumference. A true symbol points to the very heart of all being, not to an incident in the flow of becoming.

* * * *

One might begin by asking whether one can even attempt such reflections, in the Western world of the twentieth century, without a certain note of urgency, accompanied by a sense of conflict and confusion. In other words, the reader must be prepared to find these remarks somewhat lacking in serenity. The tension in the West, especially in America, between a naive surface optimism (belief in scientific progress as an end in itself) and the deep, savage destructive tendencies of a technology and an economy in which man becomes the instrument of blind inhuman forces, makes us realize that the *degradation of the sense of symbolism* in the modern world is one of its many alarming symptoms of spiritual decay.

The most unique and disturbing feature of this spiritual degeneration is that it finds itself armed

with a colossal will-to-power and with almost unlimited facilities for implementing its brutal aspirations. Thus twentieth century man, who mistakenly imagines himself to be standing on a peak of civilized development (since he confuses technology with civilization), does not realize that he has in reality reached a critical point of moral and spiritual disorganization. He is a savage armed not with a club or a spear, but with the most sophisticated arsenal of diabolical engines, to which new inventions are added every week.

* * * *

Nietzsche's declaration that "God is dead" is one that is now taken up, not without seriousness, by the prophets of the most "progressive" tendencies in western religion, which seems, in some quarters, eager to prove its sincerity, in the eyes of a godless society, by an act of spiritual self destruction.

Meanwhile, artists, poets and others who might be expected to have some concern with the inner life of man, are declaring that the reason why God has ceased to be present to man (therefore "dead") is that man has ceased to be present to himself, and that consequently the true significance of the statement "God is dead" is really that "MAN is dead". The obvious fact of man's material agitation and external frenzy only serves to emphasize his lack of spiritual life.

Since it is by symbolism that man is spiritually and consciously in contact with his own deepest self, with other men, and with God, then both the "death of God" and the "death of man" are to be accounted for by the fact that symbolism is dead. The death of symbolism is itself the most eloquent and significant symbol in our modern cultural life. Since man cannot live without signs of the invisible, and since his capacity to apprehend the visible and the invisible as a meaningful unity depends on the creative vitality of his symbols, then, even though he may claim to have no further interest in the "bringing together" (which is the etymological sense of "symbol") man will nevertheless persist in spite of himself in making symbols. If they are not living signs of creative integration and inner life, then they will become morbid, decaying and pathogenic

signs of his own inner disruption. The solemn vulgarity, indeed the spiritually hideous and sometimes unconsciously obscene nature of some of the "symbols" that are still held worthy of respect by the establishment and by the masses (whether in the capitalist West or in socialist countries), has naturally aroused the total protest of the modern artist who now creates only anti-art and non-symbol, or else contemplates without tremor and without comment the ultimate spiritual affront of those forms and presences which marketing and affluence have made "normal" and "ordinary" everywhere.

* * * *

The loss of the sense of symbol in scientific and technological society is due in part to an incapacity to distinguish between the *symbol* and the *indicative sign*. The function of the sign is communication, and first of all the communication of factual or practical knowledge. The function of the symbol is not the statement of facts nor the conveyance of information, even of spiritual information about absolute or religiously revealed truths. A symbol does not merely teach and inform. Nor does it *explain*.

It is quite true that the content of a religious symbol is usually rich with spiritual or revealed truth. Nevertheless, revelation and spiritual vision are contained in symbols not in order that one may extract them from the symbol and study them or appropriate them intellectually apart from the symbol itself. Revealed truth is made present concretely and existentially in symbols and is grasped in and with the symbol by a living response of the subject. This response defies exact analysis and cannot be accurately described to one who does not experience it authentically in himself. The capacity for such experience is developed by living spiritual traditions and by contact with a spiritual master (*guru*) or at least with a vital and creative liturgy, and a traditional doctrine. So, to demand that a symbol should fulfil the function of informing and explaining, or clarifying and scientifically verifying all the most intimate facts of the cosmos, of man, of man's place in the cosmos, of man's relation to God, of man's relation to himself, and so on, is to demand that the symbol should do what indicative or quantitative signs do. As soon as one makes such a demand, he immediately becomes convinced that the symbol is of far less practical value than the sign. In a world where practical use and quantitative scientific information are highly prized, the symbol quickly becomes meaningless.

When the symbol is called upon to *communicate*, it necessarily restricts itself to conveying the most trivial kind of idea or information. The symbol is then reduced to the *trademark* or the *political badge*, a mere sign of identification. Identification is not identity. "Rubber stamp" identification is actually a diminution or loss of identity, a submersion of identity in the generalized class. The pseudo-symbols of the mass movement become signs of the pseudo-mystique in which the mass man loses his individual self in the false, indeed the demonic void, the general pseudo-self of the Mass Society. The symbols of the Mass Society are crude and barbaric rallying points for emotion, fanaticism, and exalted forms of hatred masking as moral indignation. The symbols of Mass Society are ciphers on the face of a moral and spiritual void.

On the other hand, religious existentialism which seeks to restore man's freedom and deliver him from an 'inauthentic' existence in the world recognizes that without symbol and myth man cannot grasp the truth of his existential situation.

Werner Heisenberg, the physicist, has discussed the revolutionary change in man's attitude toward nature in an age of science and technology.¹ In the pre-scientific era man sought even in his "scientific" investigations to arrive at the most living and most qualitatively significant apprehension of nature as a whole. Such an apprehension, even when it contained elements of experiment and objective observation, remained essentially poetic, philosophical and even religious.

Modern science does not seek to create a "living representation" but to acquire and co-ordinate quantitative data from which to construct explanations or simply working hypotheses with a practical orientation. Where religion, philosophy and poetry use the power of the creative symbol to attain a synthetic apprehension of life in its ultimate metaphysical roots, science uses technical instruments to gather quantitative data about the physical universe and those data are reduced to mathematical formulas, which can then serve the practical needs of technology.

What is not generally realized yet is that modern science itself has undermined the world view of naive materialism which believed that "ultimate reality" could be found in the elementary particles of matter. Science has above all destroyed the materialistic idea of a purely objective knowledge in which we can, with absolute

¹ All quotations from Werner Heisenberg in this section are from his essay "The Representation of Nature in Contemporary Physics" (1954).

certitude, make statements about "reality" based on our observations of matter, as if we ourselves were observing everything from a platform of "science" in a pure realm of truth. Actually, as Heisenberg says, we cannot observe the particles of matter as pure objects since the fact of our observation itself enters into the interaction and behaviour of the entities we observe. Hence it is that the formulas of the atomic physicist represent "no longer the behaviour of the elementary particles but rather our knowledge of this behaviour". At the same time technology as it develops and apparently "penetrates" the "mysteries of nature" in so doing "transforms our environment and impresses our image upon it." This use of technology and science to transform nature and bring it under man's power appears to Heisenberg an extension of biological processes so that man's technology becomes part of him as the spider's web is inseparable from the biology of the spider. The result of this is that man no longer stands in opposition to nature; he confronts no adversary in the world in which he is alone with himself and which he will soon completely transform in his own image. But the problem arises: there does remain one adversary, *man himself*, and as Heisenberg says, in this situation man's technology, instead of broadening and expanding man's capacities for life, suddenly threatens to contract them and even destroy them altogether. "In such a confrontation, the extension of technology need no longer be an indication of progress."

Now symbolism exercises its vital and creative function in a cosmos where man had to come to terms with a nature in which he was struggling to maintain a place of his own—albeit a place of spiritual pre-eminence. Symbolism strives to "bring together" man, nature and God in a living and sacred synthesis. But technological man finds himself in another artificial synthesis in which he has no longer any knowledge of anything except himself, his machines and his knowledge that he knows what he knows. This knowledge is not a knowledge of reality, but a knowledge of knowledge. This is to say—man no longer is "in contact with nature" but is only well-situated in the context of his own experiments. He can say with certainty how an experiment will turn out, but he cannot find any ultimate meaning for this. Man is therefore cut off from any reality except that of his own processes—that is to say, in fact, of his own inner chaos—and that of the extraordinary new world of his machines. As the knowledge of his own disruption is unpalatable, he turns more and more to his machines. But through the power of his

machines he acts out the uncomprehended tragedy of his inner disruption. As Heisenberg says, in the arresting comparison, "man finds himself in the position of a captain whose ship has been so securely built of iron and steel that his compass no longer points to the north but only towards the ship's mass of iron."

Heisenberg quotes the Chinese Sage, Chuang Tzu, who, twenty-five hundred years ago, discovered that dependence even on a simple kind of machine caused man to become "uncertain in his inner impulses". Naturally, the advance of science and technology is irreversible, and man now has to come to terms with himself in his new situation. He cannot do so if he builds an irrational and unscientific faith on the absolute and final objectivity of scientific knowledge of nature. The limits of science must be recognized and blind faith in an uncontrolled proliferation in technology must be abjured.

To return to the ship's captain, Heisenberg says that his danger will be less if he recognizes what has gone wrong and tries to navigate by some other means—for instance by the stars. To "navigate by the stars" he needs to go beyond the limitation of a scientific world view and recover his sense of the symbol.

* * * *

Alfred North Whitehead, who, as a scientist, took a cool and detached view of symbolism, declared that society needed to defend itself against the proliferation of symbols which "have a tendency to run wild like the vegetation of a tropical forest". It is certainly true that a mass of obscure symbols that have ceased to illuminate and invigorate may end by stifling social and personal life. Therefore "an occasional revolution in symbolism is required" says Whitehead, in a rather off-hand way, as if symbols could be created anew by act of Parliament. Nevertheless Whitehead is quite definite in saying "Symbolism is no mere idle fancy or corrupt degeneration: it is inherent in the very texture of human life." He sees clearly that symbolism does not seek merely to convey information but to enhance the importance and value of what it symbolizes (see his *Symbolism, its Meaning and Efficacy*, p. 63). He points out how in social life symbolism replaces "the force of instinct which suppresses individuality" and creates instead a dynamism of thought and action in which the individual person can integrate his own free activity into the work of the commonweal, without simply submitting, in passive and automatic fashion, to external directives of authority.

By means of the social symbol, the person can make the common good really his own. By means of the religious symbol, the person can enter into communion not only with his fellow man and with all creation, but with God. Symbolism is powerful, says Whitehead, because of its "enveloping suggestiveness and emotional efficacy" (id. p. 67). However, the symbol is not merely emotional, and "it affords a foothold for reason by its delineation of the particular instinct which it expresses" (id. p. 70).

Whitehead however, thinking in terms of the mass-movement and of blind political prejudice, points to the danger of those (political) symbols which evoke a *direct (reflex) response* without reference to any meaning whatever. The effect of such symbols becomes hypnotic—certain responses, usually violent, are elicited without thought and without moral judgement.

Thus in certain unhealthy situations the political or military symbol can produce the automatic obedience of storm-troopers and political policemen who are ready for any savagery and any abomination. The symbol, in this case, has the effect of suppressing conscience and reasoned judgement and bringing about a demonic communion in evil.

But is this the fault of symbolism as such? Certainly not. It is due to the degradation of symbols. A man who is trained to respond to higher, more creative and more spiritual symbols will *instantly react in revulsion* against the crude barbarity of the totalist symbol. His reaction, too, is instinctive and as it were automatic. What matters then is not that the symbol tends to concentrate around itself man's instinctive forces for action and self-dedication, but that living and creative symbols elevate and direct that action in a good sense, while pathogenic and depraved symbols divert man's energies to evil and destruction.

The point is to educate men so that they can discern one from the other.

But if in our education we assume that all symbolism is mere fantasy and illusion, we no longer teach people to make this distinction. Hence while imagining they have risen above the "childishness" of symbolism, they will easily and uncritically submit, in fact, to the fascination of the perverse and destructive symbols which are actually obsessing the whole society in which they live.

In our modern world the fascination of violence has become, through TV, magazines, movies, radio, etc. almost irresistible. There is now so much

free-floating terror and hatred in the moral climate of the world that the slightest and most ridiculous of actions can be interpreted symbolically and instantly unleash mass-hysteria on a global scale. The only remedy for this is in a return to the level of spiritual wisdom on which the higher symbols operate. This is easy enough to say: but is it actually possible today? Have we in fact simply fallen away from our capacity for 'symbolically conditioned action' in the higher sense (guidance by the *meaning* and *wisdom* of the higher symbol) and relapsed into purely reflex and instinctive action without reference to meaning, and above all *without any rational sense of causality and responsibility*?

At the end of his suggestive essay, without perhaps fully intending to do so, Whitehead speaks of the community life of ants governed (probably) by pure instinct rather than by meaningful symbol.

It is no new idea to say that if man does survive in his cybernetic society without blowing himself up, it may well be that, renouncing the creative symbol and living mechanically, he learns to make his world into a vast ant-hill. If mere survival is all we desire, this may seem a satisfactory prospect. But if our vocation is to share creatively in the spiritualization of our existence, then the ant-hill concept is somewhat less than desirable.

Obviously the direction that symbolism must take, is that of expressing union, understanding and love among men—that Tillich has called a "communal eros". But the crude symbolism of violence has gained its power precisely from the fact that the symbolism of love has been so terribly debased, cheapened and dehumanized. There is something very frightening about the awful caricature of love and beauty which has manifested itself for several centuries, growing progressively worse, in Western literature and art, including religious literature and art, until today the sensitive mind recoils entirely from the attempt to see and portray "the beautiful" and concentrates on the hideous, the meaningless, the formless, in a sincere attempt to clear the desecrated sanctuary of the rubbish which fills it.

* * * *

In a technological society, in which the means of communication and signification have become fabulously versatile, and are at the point of an even more prolific development, thanks to the computer with its inexhaustible memory and its capacity for immediate absorption and organization of facts, the very nature and use of communication itself becomes unconsciously symbolic.

Though he now has the capacity to communicate anything, anywhere, instantly, man finds himself with *nothing to say*. Not that there are not many things he could communicate, or should attempt to communicate. He should for instance, be able to meet with his fellow man and discuss ways of building a peaceful world. He is incapable of this kind of confrontation. Instead of this, he has intercontinental ballistic missiles which can deliver nuclear death to tens of millions of people in a few moments. This is the most sophisticated message modern man has, apparently, to convey to his fellow men. It is of course a message about himself, his alienation from himself, and his inability to come to terms with life.

The vital role of the symbol is precisely this: to express and to encourage man's acceptance of his own centre, his own ontological roots in a mystery of being that transcends his individual ego. But when man is reduced to his empirical self and confined within its limits, he is so to speak excluded from himself, cut off from his own roots, condemned to spiritual death by thirst and starvation in a wilderness of externals. In this wilderness there can be no living symbols, only the dead symbols of dryness and destruction which bear witness to man's own inner ruin. But he cannot "see" these symbols, since he is incapable of interior response.

In a recent essay, of a rather esoteric, yet popular nature, an American theoretician of nuclear war devised an elaborate "ladder of escalation" in which his avowed purpose was to construct a *rudimentary language*. It is a language of destruction, in which each rung on the "ladder" (including massive exchanges of nuclear weapons, destruction of cities, missile sites etc.) was a way of "saying something" and of "conveying information" to the enemy. One feels that millenia ago, in the early stone age, communication among men must have been more basic, more articulate, and more humane. The "ladder" (itself an ancient symbol, as in Genesis 28: 12, as in Babylonian religion, as in the cosmic tree, the *axis mundi* of Asian myths, etc.) has now become a symbol of the total and negative futility of a huge technological machine organized primarily for destruction. At the top of the ladder is not God, but "Spasm". But "spasm" is on every rung. All rungs of escalation are "insensate war".

Of course, the more constant and more public claims made by the salesmen of communication is that our modern media are still interested, first of all, in rapidly conveying messages of love. This

of course is another way of affirming what is in fact so universally doubted: that men still have messages of genuine love to convey. Let us, for a moment, not dispute this. Here is one instance of such "communication".

A busy physician in an American city has a telephone in his car, so that even when he is not in his office, at the hospital or at home, he can receive urgent calls. While he is driving through the city, his phone rings, and he picks it up. It is a call from Africa, via short wave radio. He listens. It is a friend who has recently gone to Africa. What does he have to say? Nothing. "I had a chance to make this call for nothing so I thought I would say 'Hello'". They exchange greetings, they assure each other that they are well, their families are well, and so on. They indulge in the same completely inconsequential kind of talk as in any other casual phone call. One can reflect on this and recognize that even some of the seemingly "important" matters that occupy the communication media are perhaps almost as trivial as this.

Someone will argue: what does it matter if they had no really serious information to communicate? This was something more than communication. It was an expression of friendship, therefore of love. Is not love more important than factual information? Were these friends not seeking *communion* even more than communication?

To this one can only answer that love and communion are indeed most important, and far outweigh mere "communication". But the fact remains that where communion is no longer understood, and where in fact communication is regarded as primary, because "practical", then people are reduced to making a *symbolically useless* use of expensive means of communication, in an effort to achieve communion. But the symbolic uselessness remains self-frustrating, since, in the code of a technological culture, to carry out such useless acts is to become guilty of a sin against the basic virtue: practicality.

Yet even here there are curious ambiguities, for while the extraordinary efficacy of technological instruments increases every day, one is obliged to admit that the uses to which they are put are increasingly useless and even destructive. What is the uselessness of a friendly phone call from Africa to America, compared to the titanic uselessness of space travel and moon flights? One suddenly realizes that in point of fact technology at present is built entirely on uselessness rather than on use, and this uselessness is in fact symbolic. (It is a symptom. And in a sickness, a symptom is a symbol. Right understanding of the symptom

can lead to restoration of health. Wrong response aggravates the illness.) The one great usefulness technology might have for us is precisely what no one sees: its symbolic uselessness, which no amount of sermons on progress can manage to justify.

* * * *

Traditionally, the value of the symbol is precisely in its apparent uselessness as a means of simple communication. *Because it is not an efficient mode of communicating information, the symbol can achieve a higher purpose, the purpose of going beyond practicality and purpose, beyond cause and effect.* Instead of establishing a new contact by a meeting of minds in the sharing of news, the symbol tells nothing new: it revives our awareness of what we already know, but deepens that awareness. What is "new" in the symbol is the ever new discovery of a new depth and a new actuality in what IS and always has been. The function of the symbol is not merely to *bring about* a union of minds and wills, as a cause produces an effect. The function of the symbol is to manifest a union that *already exists but is not fully realized.* The symbol awakens awareness or restores it. Therefore it does not aim at communication, but at communion. Communion is the awareness of participation in an ontological or religious reality: in the mystery of being, of human love, of redemptive mystery, of contemplative truth.

The purpose of the symbol, if it can be said to have a "purpose", is not to increase the quantity of our knowledge and information, but to deepen and enrich the *quality* of life itself by bringing man into communion with the mysterious sources of vitality and meaning, of creativity, love and truth, to which he cannot have direct access by means of science and technique. The realm of symbols is the realm of wisdom in which man finds truth not only in and through objects, but in himself and in his life, lived in accordance with the deepest principles of divine wisdom. Naturally, such wisdom does not exclude knowledge of objects. It gives a new dimension to science. What would our world of science be, if only we had wisdom?

* * *

Appreciation of the symbol necessarily implies a certain view of reality itself, a certain cosmology and a religious metaphysic of being, above all a spiritual view of man. Symbols begin to have a living and creative significance only when man is understood to be a sacred being. The "desecra-

tion" of man begins when symbols are emptied of meaning, and are allowed to survive precisely in so far as they are patronizingly admitted to be misleading, but still "necessary for the ignorant."

The symbol is then regarded only as a politically or religiously "useful lie", insofar as it seems to communicate information on a childish level, information which is inadequate, but acceptable to those to whom "objective truth" is not yet clear. The "sacredness" of man consists however precisely in the fact that the truth for which and by which he lives is primarily within himself, and therefore prime importance belongs to the symbol which directs him to this truth, not as an external object, but as a spiritual and personal fulfilment. Without this interior fulfilment, the mind of man is not equipped to cope with objective truth, and the spirit that has no interior roots will find that its "scientific" knowledge of objects turns out to be "a lie" even when it is materially correct. It completely misleads him as to the meaning of his own existence.

Thus in order that man be profoundly secularized and "desecrated", symbols themselves must be discredited and excluded from art, culture and religion. For Marx, the symbol (above all, the religious symbol) is nothing but an instrument of alienation. Yet how many pseudo-religious symbols have sprung up in Marxist society, equalling in vulgarity and in triviality those of the capitalist and fascist societies? The emptiness of these symbols bears witness to the alienation of man in these societies.

The desecration of symbols has been systematically proceeding for two centuries and more, especially in semi-scientific theories of anthropology, archeology, comparative religion and so on. For example, consider the totally unrealistic theory that the art of primitive man took its origin in a utilitarian concept, the supposed magic efficacy of an artistic image. To paint a picture of a bison on the wall of a cave was supposedly primitive man's way of saying that he was desperately hungry and had not tasted bison meat for a long time. He painted a bison on the theory that the image gave him power over a real bison. The painting constituted a "virtual capture" of the desired prey. Once again, the symbol is seen only as an efficacious sign, an attempt to exercise causality to produce a practical and useful effect in the world of objects. This means that primitive art is understood only in modern commercial and technological terms.

A symbol is thought, like other signs, to have only a practical reference. It is supposed to claim a certain kind of efficacy, to pretend to a definite

causal influence: it provides a mode of control over objects. It is part of a technique. It is to be seen in a context of magic and archaic pre-technology which is now discarded as totally inefficacious. Art is then seen only as an imitation of objects, as a substitute for the possession of a desired object. What is important is not the art, but the object to which it points. This is the basic axiom of advertising, which *suggests* a need, awakens a need and keeps it awake, in the prospective consumer, by means of "art". This is also the principle governing political propaganda art.

This crude theory of the origin of primitive art lacks, first of all, any appreciation for the *extraordinary creative power* of these amazing symbols made by pre-historic man. The most elementary familiarity with modern psychology ought to be enough to show that such creative power could not normally proceed from a naked physical desire. It could only come from a sublimated transformation of desire.

Acquaintance with primitive religion shows us that primitive man had a deep sense of kinship with the animals among which he lived, including those on which he depended for his existence. His "love" for the bison or the reindeer was something far deeper and more complex than a modern city dweller's craving for this or that kind of meat, derived from an animal never seen in its natural state. This primitive "love" of the animals was embodied in a very complex religious relationship, hedged in with severe ritual limitations which prohibited useless and irresponsible killing and all kinds of misuse. Primitive art was far from being merely a weak, inefficacious, half despairing attempt of an inept hunter to bring down good luck on his spear. It was also an acknowledgement of a deep communion with all living beings, with the animals among which man lived on terms of familiarity that are no longer imaginable to us.

Hence the symbols of primitive art are vitally significant on more than one level. There is of course the representation of the every day level, the hunt for food. But there is also another level, that of kinship, of religious fellowship with the animal regarded from one point of view as superior to man, as "divine".

The Biblical polemic against the deification of natural beings and forces comes relatively late in man's cultural development, and doubtless by that time primitive religion had in fact become deeply degenerate. But a study of the philosophical ideas of the Bantu in Africa still shows that primitive man's reverence for life and for the sacred, creative dynamism of life, expressed in

his art and in his symbolism, could be extremely deep and pure. Modern man's misinterpretation of his primitive ancestor's thought and culture reflects discredit on our own blind complacency and sense of superiority.

Primitive art undoubtedly draws a great deal of its power from the *ambivalence of love and guilt*, due to the fact that man must slay a loved, admired and mysterious object, in order to keep alive himself. This became so strong that eventually, in certain highly developed religious cultures, such as those of India, the killing of animals and the eating of meat was eventually prohibited. Here one encounters an even deeper level of communion: the level of *being itself*. Man and the animal are finally seen as sharing in the ontological mystery of being, they are somehow one "in God the Creator". Or as Hinduism would say, *Atman* is one in them both.

Primitive art cannot be comprehended unless the implications of these different levels of symbolic meaning are somehow apprehended. Merely to declare that primitive art had a magic or utilitarian purpose, and aimed at a limited, practical result, is to ignore this symbolic quality and attach oneself exclusively to a supposed causal signification which is then shown to be so naive and preposterous that it cannot be taken seriously. Thus, substituting the practical sign for the religious symbol, the theorist manages to call into question all forms of culture, religious, philosophical, artistic, mystical, which make use of the symbol. All instantly become incomprehensible.

* * *

An American Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, has rightly seen that "A real symbol points to an object that can never become an object." This is a profound and intriguing declaration. The symbol cannot possibly convey *information about an object*, if it is true to its nature as symbol. Only when it is debased, does a symbol point exclusively to an object other than itself. *The symbol is an object pointing to the subject*. The symbol is not an object in which one rests for its own sake. It is a reminder that we are summoned to a deeper spiritual awareness, far beyond the level of subject and object.

It would however be a great mistake to think that the symbol merely reminds the subject to become aware of himself as object, after the Western manner of introspection and self-examination. We must repeat, the symbol is an object which leads beyond the realm of division where subject and object stand over against one another. That is why the symbol goes beyond communi-

cation to communion. Communication takes place between subject and object, but communion is beyond the division: it is a sharing in basic unity. This does not necessarily imply a "pantheist metaphysic". Whether or not they may be strictly monistic, the higher religions all point to this deeper unity, because they all strive after the experience of this unity. They differ, sometimes widely, in ways of explaining what this unity is and how one may attain to it.

Christianity sees this unity as a special gift of God, a work of grace, which brings us to unity with God and one another in the Holy Spirit. The religions of Asia tend to see this unity in an ontological and natural principle in which all beings are metaphysically one. The experience of unity for the Christian is unity "in the Holy Spirit". For Asian religions it is unity in Absolute Being (*Atman*) or in the Void (*Sunyata*). The difference between the two approaches is the difference between an ontologist mysticism and a theological revelation: between a return to an Absolute Nature and surrender to a Divine Person.

The symbols of the higher religions may at first sight seem to have little in common. But when one comes to a better understanding of those religions, and when one sees that the experiences which are the fulfilment of religious belief and practice are most clearly expressed in symbols, one may come to recognize that often the symbols of different religions may sometimes have more in common than the abstractly formulated official doctrines.

The Chinese ideogram *Chung* (⊕) bears more than a superficial resemblance to the Cross. It is also a picture of the five cosmic points, the four cardinal points centered on the "pivot" of *Tao*. This is analogous to the traditional Christian cosmic interpretation of the Cross symbol, the "picture" of the new creation and of the recapitulation of all in Christ (Ephesians 1: 12). One might pursue these analogies in studying the traditional Buddhist *Stupas*, and so on. It is sufficient to suggest these lines of thought which the reader can investigate for himself.

* * * *

A symbol is then not simply an indicative sign conveying information about a religious object, a revelation, a theological truth, a mystery of faith. It is an *embodiment* of that truth, a "sacrament", by which one participates in the religious presence of the saving and illuminating One. It does not merely point the way to the One as object. As long as the One is regarded

as object it is not the One, it is dual or multiple, since there is a division between It and the one (or ones) seeking to attain it. Hence the question of a Zen Master: "If all things return to the one, where does the one return to?" To such a question there can be no answer since the question itself is contradictory. Reason might seek a way to get around the contradiction and resolve it. Symbol tends rather to accept the contradiction in order to point beyond it. It seems to take the One as if it were an object, but in fact it reveals the One as present within our own subjective and interior entity. It reveals that the subjectivity of the subject is in fact, now, deeply rooted in the infinite God, the Father, now, Word, the Spirit, or in Hindu terms *Atman*, *sat-chit-ananda*. The symbol does not merely bridge the distance, and cause the believer to become united with God. It proclaims that, in one way or another, according to the diversity of religions, the believer can and does even now return to Him from Whom he first came. It does not simply promise a new and effective communication by which the believer can make himself heard by the Deity and can even exercise a certain persuasive force upon Him. It does much more: it opens the believer's inner eye, the eye of the heart, to the realization that he must come to be centered in God because that in fact is where his centre is. He must become what he is, a "son of God", "seeking only His Father's will", abandoned to the invisible Presence and Nearness of Him Who Is, for there is no reality anywhere else but in Him.

But the symbol also speaks to many believers in one: it awakens them to their communion with one another in God. It does not merely bring their minds into communication with one another, in a common worship, for instance. Worship itself is symbolic, and as such it is communion rather than communication. (Hence the great pity of a certain type of Christianity which has become in great measure mere communication of information, a meeting where the audience is entertained by an inspiring lecture.) Worship is symbolic communion in mystery, the mystery of the actual presence of Him Who is Being, Light and Blessedness of Love. It is recognition of the fact that in reality we cannot be without Him, that we are centered in Him, that He dwells in us, and that because He is in us, and we in Him, we are one with one another in Him.

"... that all may be one, even as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that

thou hast sent me. And the glory that thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me; that they may be perfected in unity, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou has given me may be with me; in order that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world."

—JOHN, 17: 21-24.

The desecration of symbols cannot be blamed exclusively on the forces of secularism and atheism. On the contrary, it unfortunately began in religious circles themselves. When a tradition loses its contemplative vitality and wisdom, its symbolism gradually loses its meaning, and ceases to be a point of contact with "the centre". Symbolism degenerates into allegorism. The symbol has no life of its own, it merely designates an abstraction. In the system of allegories, everything points to everything else and nothing conclusively ends in real meaning. There is nothing but a circle of references without end. "A" points to "B" which points to "C" which points to "A". The centre is forgotten.

All that matters is to have a key to the hidden meanings and to know that "A" really stands for "B", so that when you say "A" you really mean "B". But then a scientific critic comes along and says that "A" does not mean "B"; that there is no way of knowing that "A" means anything at all, and all we can say is, that in 500 B.C. "A" was thought to mean "B", while today science shows this interpretation to be impossible.

When the symbol degenerates into a mere means of communication and ceases to be a sign of communion, it becomes an idol, in so far as it seems to point to an object with which it brings the subject into effective, quasi-magical, psychological, or parapsychological communication. It would be pointless here to go into the ancient Biblical polemic against "idols of wood and stone". There are much more dangerous and much more potent idols in the world today: signs of cosmic and technological power, political and scientific idols, idols of the nation, the party, the race. These are evident enough, but the fact that they are evident in themselves does not mean that people do not submit more and more blindly, more and more despairingly to their

complete power. The idol of national military strength was never more powerful than today, even though men claim to desire peace. In fact, though they pay lip service to the love of life and of humanity, they obscurely recognize that in submitting to the demon of total war they are in fact releasing themselves from the anxieties and perplexities of a "peace" that is fraught with too many ambiguities for comfort. Can man resist the temptation to sacrifice himself utterly and irrevocably to this idol?

Another idol that is not so obvious is that of supposed "spiritual experience" sought as an object and as an end in itself. Here too the temptation that offers itself is one of escape from anxiety and limitation, and an *affirmation of the individual self as object*, but as a special kind of object, *to be experienced as free from all limitations*.

The temptation of modern pseudo-mysticism is perhaps one of the gravest and most subtle, precisely because of the confusion it causes in the minds and hearts of those who might conceivably be drawn to authentic communion with God and with their fellow man by the austere traditional ways of obedience, humility, sacrifice, love, knowledge, worship, meditation and contemplation. All these ancient ways demand the control and the surrender, the ultimate "loss" of the empirical self in order that we may be "found" again in God. But pseudo-mysticism centers upon the individualistic enjoyment of experience, that is upon *the individual self experienced as without limitation*. This is a sublime subtlety by which one can eat one's cake and have it. It is the discovery of a spiritual trick (which is sought as a supremely valuable "object") in which, while seeming to renounce and deny oneself, one in fact definitively affirms the ego as a centre of indefinite and angelic enjoyments. One rests in the joy of the spiritualized self, very much aware of one's individual identity and of one's clever achievement in breaking through to a paradise of delights without having had to present one's ticket at the entrance. The ticket that must be surrendered is one's individual, empirical ego. Pseudo-mysticism on the contrary seeks the permanent delight of the ego in its own spirituality, its own purity, as if it were itself absolute and infinite.

And this explains the success and the danger of the current western fad for producing "spiritual experience" by means of drugs.

Shall we conclude on a note of pessimism? Not necessarily. The present crisis of man is something for which we have no adequate historical standard of comparison. Our risks are extreme. The hopes which we have based on our technological skill are very probably illusory. But there remain other dimensions. The fact that we are not able to grasp these dimensions is not necessarily cause for despair. If our destiny is not entirely in our own hands, we can still believe, as did our fathers, that our lives are mysteriously guided by a wisdom and a love which can draw the greatest good out of the greatest evil. The fact remains that man needs to recognize something of this mysterious guidance, and enter into active co-operation with it. But such recognition and co-operation cannot really exist without the sense of symbolism. This sense is now to a great extent corrupted and degenerate. Man cannot help making symbols of one sort or another, he is a being of symbols. But at present his symbols are not the product of spiritual creativity and vitality, they are the symptoms of a violent illness, a technological cancer, from which he may not recover.

Meanwhile, the final answer does not remain entirely and exclusively in the hands of those who are still equipped to interpret ancient religious traditions. Nor is it in the hands of the scientist and technician. The artist and the poet seem to be the ones most aware of the disastrous

situation, but they are for that very reason the closest to despair. If man is to recover his sanity and spiritual balance, there must be a renewal of communion between the traditional, contemplative disciplines and those of science, between the poet and the physicist, the priest and the depth-psychologist, the monk and the politician.

Certainly the mere rejection of modern technology as an absolute and irremediable evil will not solve any problems. The harm done by technology is attributable more to its excessive and inordinately hasty development than to technology itself. It is possible that in the future a technological society *might* conceivably be a tranquil and contemplative one. In any case it will do no good for us to remain specialists, enclosed in our respective fields, viewing with suspicion and disdain the efforts of others to make sense out of our world. We must try, together, to bring about a renewal of wisdom that must be more than a return to the past, however glorious. We need a wisdom appropriate to our own predicament: and such wisdom cannot help but begin in sorrow.

But one thing is certain, if the contemplative, the monk, the priest and the poet merely forsake their vestiges of wisdom and join in the triumphant empty-headed crowding of advertising men and engineers of opinion, then there is nothing left in store for us but total madness.

THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA

By ARTHUR OSBORNE

Sinbad's old man of the sea—
 Hooked upon his back
 Unshakably—
 Have you ever had one?
 I had for years.
 Gave me no peace,
 Driving, driving me on—
 "Come on! Get this for me!
 Attract that girl! Get in the limelight there!
 Grasp this chance! Jump the queue now!"
 Gave me no peace.
 Once he gets a hold
 No use appealing;
 No restraint in him.

It's him or me.
 Shake him off,
 Bash his head against a stone!
 If not he'll kill me,
 Wear me out,
 Driven, driven like a whipt slave.
 It's me or him.
 Not dead yet—
 Keep an eye on him!
 He'll be back in a trice,
 Keep alert!

* * *

What bliss to be free from him—
 Simply yourself again!

WHY BHAGAVAN IGNORED SYMBOLISM

(EDITORIAL EPILOGUE)

All that has been said about the truth and profundity of symbolism in the foregoing articles may make the reader wonder why Bhagavan said so little about it, in fact practically ignored it. The answer is that symbolism is a great aid on indirect paths but is not necessary on the direct path of Self-enquiry or in the Advaitic doctrine on which this is based.

There are three levels of perception : physical, cosmological and metaphysical.

Seen from the physical level everything is a meaningless conglomeration of accidents and man is a stranger pushed around in an alien world by laws he did not make.

On the cosmological level the world is a vast book of symbols manifesting the attributes of God and reflecting His Being. Realities of the physical plane reflect or symbolise those of a higher plane, as is declared in the cryptic Hermetic saying : "As above, so below." Man is made in the likeness of God. The symbols can provide a path by which to trace one's way back to the Symbolised. The universe is a mirror reflecting Being. So are you, since man, the microcosm, corresponds to the macrocosm.

Still higher, on the metaphysical plane, attention is drawn back from the symbols to the Self. The world is not studied as a book of symbols but dismissed as a distraction, a dream, an illusion. As Bhagavan says in 'Who am I?': "Just as it is futile to examine the rubbish that has to be swept up only to be thrown away, so it is futile for him who seeks to know the Self to set to work enumerating the tattvas that envelop the Self and examining them instead of throwing them away. He should consider the phenomenal world in reference to himself as merely a dream."

Let us consider the question 'Why?' from these three levels. There can be few aspirants who have not at one time or another asked themselves this question. Why was I created? Why was I given an attraction

to the world and then told to fight it? Above all, why is there a world at all?

On the level of physical science there is no answer to these questions. It is unlikely that there ever will be, because they lie outside its purview; but even if there were it would neither confirm nor contradict those on the other two planes, being of a different nature.

From the cosmological level the answer, as given, for instance, in the Taittiriya Upanishad, is that the Supreme desired to create, to be multiple. "Having created all this He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became both the manifest and the unmanifest, both the defined and the undefined, both the supported and the unsupported, both the intelligent and non-intelligent, both the real and unreal. The Satya (Real or True) became all this, whatever is." (11, VI, 1). This does not mean pantheism. Indeed there has probably never been pantheism. The most satisfactory definition of the term would probably be : "a Western misrepresentation of Eastern doctrines." The Supreme remains utterly unaffected and undiminished by his manifestation in the universe, just as a man does by his reflection in a mirror. The same answer to the question is given in Islam also in the well known hadith in which Allah says : "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known."

Man or the universe is a book in which God's previously virtual potentialities are writ large. But 'previously' does not imply that this takes place in time. Time exists in God, not God in time. If we say that God was originally unmanifested, 'originally' refers not to a point in time but to the original state, which is timeless and eternal and therefore exists now and has never not existed nor will ever not exist, unchanged and unaffected by the simultaneous manifestation of Divine Being in the universe and in each individual being.

The metaphysical explanation is again on a higher plane, more simple and more direct. If the Maharshi was asked why there is a world he would reply: "Who says there is a world?" Or: "For whom is there a world?" Thus the questioner was driven straight back to Self-enquiry. This individual *me* sees a world outside it, but what is this individual *me*? Surely the first question to solve is what I am before coming to what I perceive. Who says there is a world? The individual *me* does, but is that the reality of me? First let me discover that and then see whether it perceives a

world outside itself or not. Thus the question why there is a world is dismissed as being based on an unproven premise, that is that there is an individual being who sees a world outside him. The validity of this premise must first be established or refuted before any deduction based on it can be fruitfully examined.

Thus it can be seen that, just as the physical mode of perception is below the level of symbolism, so the metaphysical is above it. While symbolism is of immense value on less direct spiritual paths, it is not needed on the path of Self-enquiry.

I, NOUMENON, SPEAKING

By WEI WU WEI

I only am as all beings,
 I only exist as all appearances.
 I am only experienced as all sentience,
 I am only cognised as all knowing.
 Only visible as all seeing,
 Every concept is a concept of what I am.
 All that seems to be is my being,
 For what I am is not any thing.

Being whatever is phenomenal,
 Whatever can be conceived as appearing,
 I who am conceiving cannot be conceived,
 Since only I conceive,
 How could I conceive what is conceiving?
 What I am is what I conceive;
 Is not that enough for me to be?

When could I have been born,
 I who am the conceiver of time itself?
 Where could I live,
 I who conceive the space wherein all things extend?
 How could I die,
 I who conceive the birth, life, and death of all things,
 I who, conceiving, cannot be conceived?

I am being, unaware of being,
 But my being is all being,
 I neither think nor feel nor do,
 But your thinking, feeling, doing, is mine only.
 I am life, but it is my objects that live,
 For your living is my living.
 Transcending all appearance,
 I am immanent therein,
 For all that is — I am.

HOW I CAME TO THE MAHARSHI

By ARTHUR OSBORNE

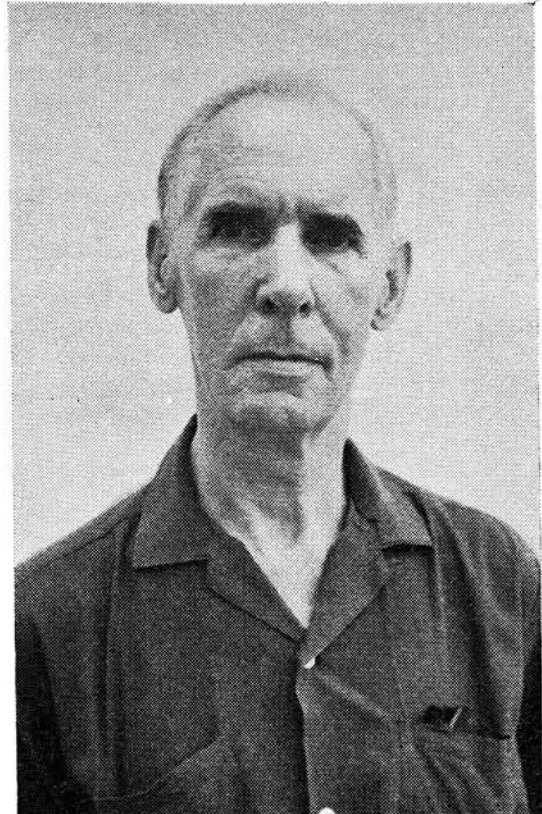
In September 1941, when my leave ended, the war was already drawing near to Siam (where I was employed as a university lecturer), so I left my wife and three children in India and went back alone. A friend had kindly opened to them his house at Tiruvannamalai. I went back without seeing Bhagavan.

In December the Japanese invaded Siam and I was arrested and interned. Just before that I had received a letter saying that my eldest daughter, aged five, and my son, three years younger, had asked Bhagavan to keep me safe through the war and he had smiled and assented.

There followed three and a half long years of internment until the Japanese surrender in 1945. There was ample time for sadhana. More and more Bhagavan became the support of my strivings, though I did not yet turn to him as the Guru.

As soon as the evacuation could be arranged I went to Tiruvannamalai, arriving there at the beginning of October; and yet it was as much to rejoin my family as to see Bhagavan that I went. Perhaps it would be more true to say that I simply felt I had to go there.

I entered the Ashram hall on the morning of my arrival, before Bhagavan had returned from his daily walk on the hill. I was a little awed to find how small it was and how close to him I should be sitting; I had expected something grander and less intimate. And then he entered and, to my surprise, there was no great impression. Certainly far less than his photographs had made. Just a white-haired, very gracious man, walking a little stiffly from rheumatism and with a slight stoop. As soon as he had eased himself on to the couch he smiled to me and then turned to those around and to



my young son and said: "So Adam's prayer has been answered; his Daddy has come back safely." I felt his kindness but no more. I appreciated that it was for my sake that he had spoken English, since Adam knew Tamil.

During the weeks that followed he was constantly gracious to me and the strain of nerves and mind gradually relaxed, but there was still no dynamic contact. I was disappointed, as it seemed to show a lack of receptivity in me; and yet, at the same time, it confirmed the opinion I had accepted that he was not a Guru and did not give guidance on any path. And Bhagavan did nothing to change my view.

Until the evening of Karthikai when, each year, a beacon is lit on the summit of Arunachala. Or it may have been Deepavali; I am not quite sure. There were huge crowds for the festival and we were sitting in the courtyard outside the hall. Bhagavan was reclining on his couch and I was sitting in the front row before it. He sat up, facing me, and his narrowed eyes pierced into me, penetrating, intimate, with an intensity I cannot describe. It was as though they said: "You have been told; why have you not realized?" And then quietness, a depth of peace, an indescribable lightness and happiness.

Thereafter love for Bhagavan began to grow in my heart and I felt his power and beauty. Next morning, for the first time, sitting before him in the hall, I tried to follow his teaching by using the vichara: 'Who am I?' I thought it was I who had decided. I did not at first realize that it was the initiation by look that had vitalized me and changed my attitude of mind. Indeed, I had heard only vaguely of this initiation and paid little heed to what I had heard. Only later did I learn that other devotees also had had such an experience and that with them also it had marked the beginning of active sadhana under Bhagavan's guidance.

My love and devotion to Bhagavan deepened. I went about with a lilt of happiness in my heart, feeling the blessing and mystery of the Guru, repeating like a song of love that he was the Guru, the link between heaven and earth, between God and me, between the Formless Being and my heart. I became aware of the enormous grace of his presence. Even outwardly he was gracious to me, smiling when I entered the hall, signing to me to sit where he could watch me in meditation.

And then one day a sudden vivid reminder awoke in me: "The link with Formless Being? But he is the Formless Being!" And I began to apprehend the meaning of his Jnana and to understand why devotees addressed him simply as 'Bhagavan', which is a word meaning 'God'. So he began to

prove to me what he declared in his teaching: that the outer Guru serves to awaken the Guru in the heart. The vichara, the constant 'Who am I?', began to awaken an awareness of the Self as Bhagavan outwardly and also simultaneously of the Self within.

The specious theory that Bhagavan was not a Guru had simply evaporated in the radiance of his Grace. Moreover, I now perceived that, so far from his teaching not being practical guidance, it was exclusively that. I observed that he shunned theoretical explanations and kept turning the questioner to practical considerations of sadhana, of the path to be followed. It was that, and that only, that he was here to teach. I wrote and explained this to the people who had misinformed me and, before sending the letter, showed it to him for his approval. He approved and handed it back, bidding me send it.

Daily I sat in the hall before him. I asked no questions, for the theory had long been understood. I spoke to him only very occasionally, about some personal matter. But the silent guidance was continuous, strong and subtle. It may seem strange to modern minds, but the Guru taught in silence. This did not mean that he was unwilling to explain when asked; indeed he would answer sincere questions fully; what it meant was that the real teaching was not the explanation but the silent influence, the alchemy worked in the heart.

I strove constantly by way of the vichara, according to his instructions. Having a strong sense of duty or obligation, I still continued, side by side with it, to use other forms of sadhana which I had undertaken before coming to Bhagavan, even though I now found them burdensome and unhelpful. Finally I told Bhagavan of my predicament and asked whether I could abandon them. He assented, explaining that all other methods only lead up to the vichara.

From the moment of my arrival at Tiruvannamalai there had been no question of my leaving again. This was home — even

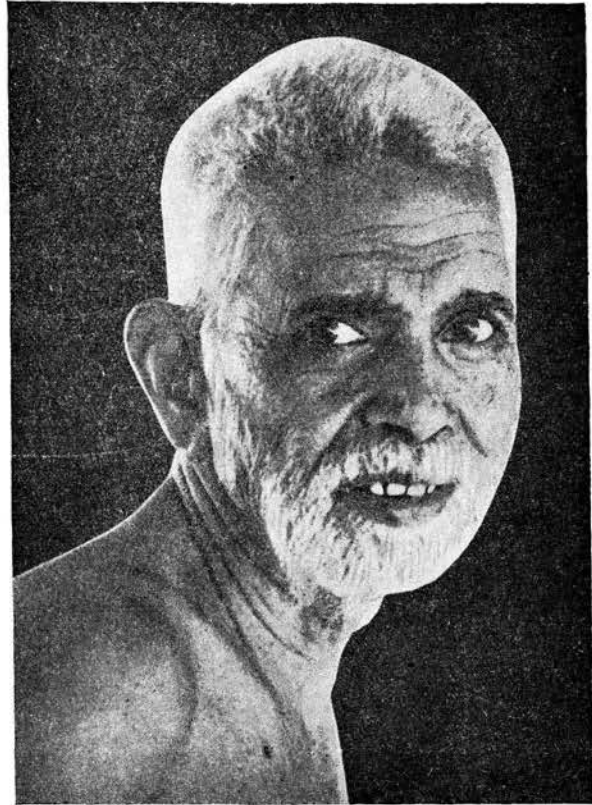
at the very beginning, when I was so mistaken about Bhagavan, even when material prospects seemed bleak. Perhaps that was why Bhagavan in his graciousness bestowed the initiation on one who sought but had not the wit to ask.

This period of constant physical proximity lasted up to the beginning of 1948. I had never been in a financial position to make me suppose I should be able to spend nearly three years at an ashram, but circumstances adapt themselves to the will of Bhagavan. Not only did his Grace keep me there, but it enabled me to go through the long period of unemployment and other trials and bereavement without undue anxiety. Although he never spoke of my difficulties or misfortunes, he flooded my heart with peace.

Early in 1948 constant physical proximity had ceased to be necessary and professional work had become urgently necessary. Work was found in Madras.

I took with me a life-size photograph of Bhagavan painted over in oils — a gift from Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, a devotee and photographer. I showed it to Bhagavan before leaving and he took it in his hands and returned it, saying: "He is taking Swami with him." Since then it has looked at me with the love and compulsion of a Guru and spoken more profoundly than all the other portraits.

Thereafter I went to Tiruvannamalai only for weekends and holidays, and each visit was revitalising. I was there at the time of one of the operations that Bhagavan suffered and had darshan immediately after it, and the graciousness of his reception melted the heart and awoke remorse to think how great was the reward for so little effort made. I was there that fateful April night of the body's death and felt a calm beneath the grief and a wonder at the fortitude Bhagavan had implanted in his devotees to bear their loss. Gradually one after another began to discover in his heart the truth that Bhagavan



had not gone away but, as he promised, is still here.

Since that day his presence in the heart has been more vital, the outpouring of his Grace more abundant, his support more powerful. I have been to Tiruvannamalai since then also, and the Grace that emanates from his tomb is the Grace of the living Ramana.

During these years I had felt no urge to write about Bhagavan. After his body's death and his reassurance: "I am not going away; I am here; where could I go?" there was a dream in which he called me up to him and, as I knelt before his couch, placed his hands on my head in blessing. At this time an impulse came to write about Bhagavan and especially to explain the accessibility of the path of Self-enquiry which he taught.¹

¹ Taken from the Foreword to *Ramana Arunachala*, published by Sri Ramanasramam.

THE MAHARSHI IN GERMANY

By DR. P. J. SAHER

Dr. P. J. Saher, a Parsi doctor living at Muenster in West Germany, is President of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Religionsphilosophie und Geistesgeschichte. He is also a close friend of the Altbuddhistische Gemeinde of Utting am Ammersee, which has become *The Mountain Path* agent for Germany and Austria.

One day as I was gazing affectionately at the picture of our beloved Maharshi, it came upon me to ask for a boon. "May I be brought into contact with the Maharshi's German devotees" was what I wished because I felt a bit isolated on my quest for the Higher Self. Thereupon I lost consciousness — not that I was at all in the habit of doing so. I awoke to the sound of my door-bell ringing. I got up and staggered to the door. It was the postman. I was too weak to shut the door properly and I felt as if I was about to fall. My last thoughts were directed to the Maharshi and I prayed to him for rescue. Then I must have fainted for I next saw the postman bending over me.

"Are you all right" he asked. "Shall I call a doctor?"

"Yes, do." I replied.

"Why, if you had fallen an inch more to the right or to the left, you would have banged your head seriously," he said.

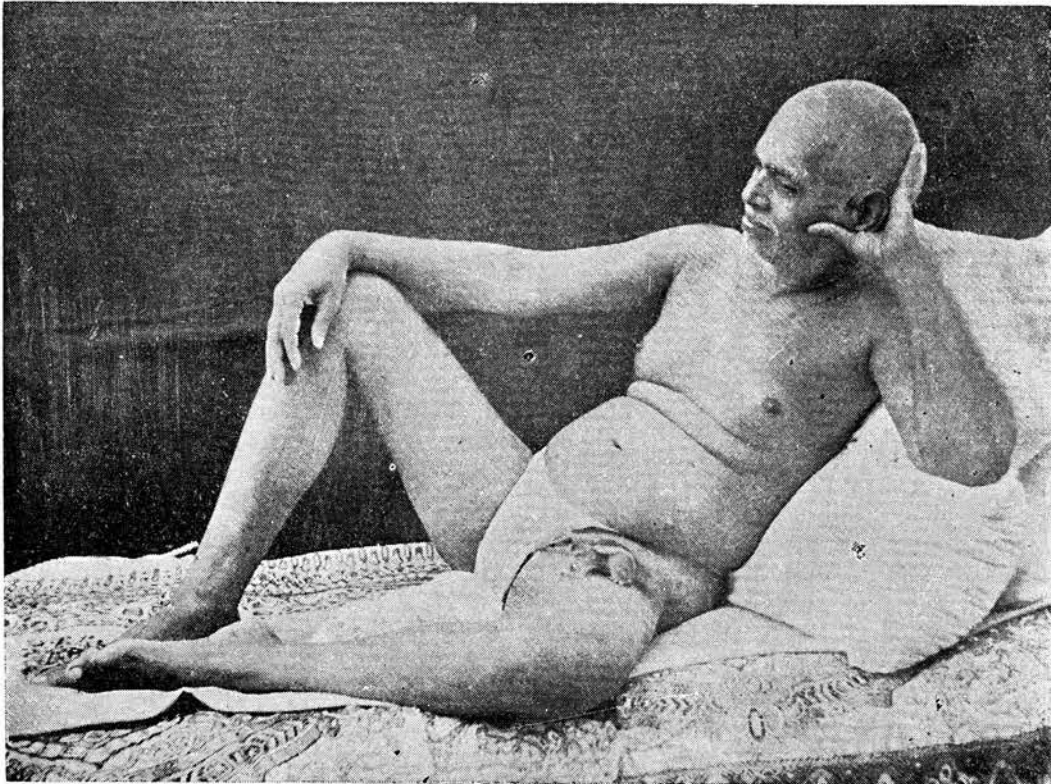
As I rested on the sofa I opened what the postman had brought me. It was a letter of invitation from the ABG (the Altbuddhistische Gemeinde or Buddhist Society) of Utting accompanied by a monetary transfer to meet the expenses of the journey. At that time I did not know that there was a single devotee of Maharshi in Utting but I did know that it was one of the few precious centres of Buddhist learning in Europe. I was reluctant to undertake the journey in my weak physical condition but as I gazed at Maharshi's picture, he appeared to be smiling assent, so I decided to go. And it was good that I did. Somehow the long and arduous journey did not tire me. The night train tore across the entire length of

Germany. Utting is a charming hamlet on the shores of an inland sea called Ammersee surrounded by solitary hills which are covered by the haunting forests of Bavaria. The Ammersee reminds one somehow of the Manasarovar lake in Tibet and the house of my hosts, die Altbuddhistische Gemeinde, was situated in an ideal spot. I could see the calm lake from my room and I found that I could meditate here better than usual.

This house in Utting (which is now open to all devotees of the Maharshi) deserves to be described in detail. It is indeed a kind of "ashram" where people come to stay from time to time in order to study Buddhist Philosophy (or for that matter any philosophy dealing with the Higher Self in man) and to meditate. This community house or ashram was founded by the late Georg Grimm, one of the most outstanding German scholars of Buddhist Philosophy.

Georg Grimm, a Mahathera as he is called today, was a judge of the High Court of Bavaria and was famous for pronouncing decisions which were not only just but also equitable from an ethical and human point of view. He, however, soon felt the urge to seek spiritual truth and something told him to look for it in the ancient wisdom of India. He thereupon gave up his lucrative post and took up the study of Sanskrit and Pali. He became an intimate friend of Paul Deussen, the famous translator of the Upanishads.

Georg Grimm studied Buddha and his teachings with extreme thoroughness and he was aghast at the superficial views of Buddhist thought in Europe at that time. People regarded it as a kind of "oriental pessimism caused by malnutrition"! Nirvana



was represented as an atheistic invention to abolish a self that never was!

Grimm's researches convinced him that the Buddha actually formulated a philosophy and a technique of logical thinking combined with meditation which helps us to understand ourself and the world around us as it really is. In his masterpiece *The Doctrine of the Buddha—the religion of Reason and Meditation* (Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1958), he took great pains to prove that the Buddha's teachings are not at variance with the main tenets of Indian Philosophy. The Buddha (according to Grimm) belongs to the mainstream of Indian thought because he also was trying to draw our attention to the cardinal problem of Self in contradistinction to ego. (I hope to show later in this article how the Buddha in effect comes to the same conclusions as Maharshi Ramana).

On my arrival in Utting I was met by Brother Dhammapalo who, having renounced all, leads an exemplary life of fasting, meditation and study. He introduced me to Holy

Sister Maya (Georg Grimm's daughter and spiritual heir who now conducts the administration of the community-house) and to Sister Karuna.

Sister Karuna worked selflessly and unceasingly from early morning till late at night attending and serving all who crossed her path. Under her loving care I regained health and strength.

In the evening I was requested to give a talk to the inmates of the house. This took place in an adjoining temple, one of the very few authentic Buddhist temples in Europe. In its meditation hall I found the atmosphere so rich with spiritual vibrations that I felt anyone here would be able to meditate effortlessly and without the usual obstructions. The temple has also a treasure-house of Buddhist art with originals collected from all over the world.

In my lecture I made it plain that I was not a Buddhist but a Parsi and further that I saw no contradiction in being (and remain-

ing) a Parsi and having Maharshi Ramana as my guru at the same time. At my mentioning the name of Maharshi Ramana the faces of the audience lit up and they exchanged meaningful glances with each other. I wondered why. I propounded my thesis that if one accepts Buddha one ought also to accept Maharshi Ramana because the latter illuminates the same truths from a different angle and for a later generation. I give below a summary of my lecture.

Pure Being is equivalent in practice to No-Thing. The SELF is Pure Being. As such it is a No-Thing and consequently cannot be described in words. A positive affirmation of SELF (as Ātman) is logically difficult if not impossible. An ordinary person might even fall prey to confusion with it. (We notice this on almost every page of "Talks with Maharshi"). The Buddha therefore bypassed this obstacle by using the method of *reductio ad absurdum*. Indeed the *neti neti* (not this—not that) of the Upanishads is a similar treatment. Georg Grimm saw deeper than most Buddhist scholars of his time. His *The Doctrine of the Buddha* shows with enormous source material how Buddha came to the same conclusions as Maharshi Ramana, using the *reductio ad absurdum*, a permissible method when positive proof of an affirmation is not possible but the number of alternatives is limited. e.g.: Suppose that I am not in a position to prove affirmatively that what I hold in my hand is a pen. Suppose further that apart from it being a pen only three other alternatives are possible: that (a) it is a bottle, (b) it is a nail, (c) it is a hat.

If now I can conclusively prove that what I hold in my hand is not a bottle nor a nail nor a hat, I have thereby proved that it is a pen. It is such a method that both the Buddha and the Maharshi adopt to drive home the truths about our essential self.

The Buddha lets every disputant say what he regards as his "self". He then shows him that that cannot possibly be his (real) self.¹ After the disputant has thought out all possibilities he is at his wits end and despairs of knowing what he is.

That I am cannot be denied. But what if the Buddha succeeds each time in proving that I am neither this nor that? The only alternative then left is that I am nothing. (Many people wrongly take this to mean 'I am not' or indeed 'I never was' or even 'a self does not and cannot exist'). But the Buddha was an incarnation of wisdom itself. His aim was to provoke the adversary further into asking what this "nothing" is. In order to understand what nothing is the adversary is invited to contemplate the opposite of nothing. The opposite of nothing is all. And what is "all" composed of? "All" means for us all we can cognize with our senses plus all we can picture through our imagination.² What I can neither perceive, cognize nor imagine is not included in my "all". It is, therefore, as if it were nothing. The 'I' indeed cannot be cognized for it is the cognizer; it cannot be imagined because it is the imaginer! The 'I', being always the subject of cognition, can never be an object of cognition. The 'I', being always the imagining subject, cannot be the object of imagination. The 'I', being always the thinker, it cannot be anything think-able, i.e.: expressible in thoughts. The I is the "Nothing" which makes "all" possible. As Goethe put it: "In this your Nothing, I find my all" (Faust's reply to the devil.)

The 'I' is transcendental: that means outside the realm of logical thought. The Real-Self akin to Nirvana is *atakkāvacara* (a = outside; *takka* = logical thought; *avacara* = the realm).

The Ātma or our essential Self is always in a condition of Nirvāna. The teaching of Maharshi Ramana enables us to understand Buddhist philosophy in its pristine purity. Georg Grimm freed Buddhist thought from the mountains of prejudice under which it was (in Europe) submerged. Thanks to him we see how Maharshi and Buddha complement one another thus giving us one of the most perfect systems of metaphysical thought known to man.

¹ *Majjhima Nikaya*, 22nd, Discourse.

² Cf. *Samyutta Nikaya*, XXXV, 24.

The Maharshi's cardinal question was "who am I?"; the Buddha's "what am I not?" By using the "what am I not method" one eliminates all one had superimposed on the Real-Self till there remains only the "Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade, Unformed."³ "If there were not, monks, this unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unformed, there would be no way out for the born, the originated, the made and the formed."⁴

At this point I told my audience about a miracle I had experienced through Maharshi Ramana's divine grace. Till then I had kept this experience secret for fear of being misunderstood.

It was near the end of August 1958. I had fallen on hard times. Insecurity and danger were lurking on all sides and my sole comfort was in thinking of Maharshi. My landlady showed me Zimmer's *Der Weg Zum Selbst* which she had bought for herself. I knew that the book was about Maharshi Ramana but could not read it, as at that time I was innocent of German! When I was alone in the room I actually wept because of my inability to read it. I was sure that Maharshi's wisdom could give me the guidance to overcome all worries for my future. This wisdom lay buried in a book I held in my hand but could not read! What would I not have given at that time to be able to read German. I wept with frustration. Then I distinctly heard a voice say with authority: "Read that book!".

I opened the book at the first page and each sentence my eyes fell on, the precise meaning was conveyed to me as if by telepathy.

When my landlady returned I requested her to sell me that book on the spot. She agreed but said with amazement: "Why do you buy a book you cannot read?" (My landlady and I used to speak English to one another. She had not however the intellectual calibre to act as translator or interpreter).

So miraculous was this grace that I read the whole book from cover to cover in seven days without even once consulting a dictio-

nary or asking anyone for aid. I understood the book so perfectly that I even underlined in black those passages I found important, in blue those more important, and in red those most important. Several years later, after I had learnt German properly, I noticed from the underlined passages that I had indeed understood the book correctly at that time.

The reading of this book was a great spiritual experience for me. Firstly, I felt so near to Maharshi Ramana being able to 'read' what I could not read. Then also the contents of the book were very important for my efforts at gaining enlightenment. It was indeed a source of inspiration for my *Indische weisheit und das abendland*⁵ (published by Verlag Anton Hain in 1965) which is dedicated to Maharshi Ramana and contains a chapter on him.

Feeling relieved that Maharshi Ramana's grace had come to my aid so spontaneously in a crisis, I gave up worrying about the future as something unworthy of a devotee. And indeed all turned out well. I remembered Maharshi's example of the man in a railway carriage who puts his luggage on the rack and lets the train carry it for him.

When I told this story everybody smiled appreciatively. I discovered later that, without my knowing it, they were all devotees of Maharshi! They had all read Zimmer's *Der Weg Zum Selbst* and all possessed a picture of our beloved Maharshi which they revered. I had been brought unwittingly into the midst of the Maharshi's German devotees!

The next day Sister Maya invited me to enter the inner sanctuary, so to speak, of the house. There in a position of great importance was a picture of Maharshi Ramana. I knelt before it in adoration. Then Sister Maya said to me: "When I am ill, I hang the picture over my bed." She then explained why everybody smiled the

³ The Maharshi also used this approach: "If you eliminate all that is not-self, what remains is the Self." (Editor).

⁴ *Itivuttaka*, 43.

⁵ 'Indian Wisdom and the West'.

evening before over my enthusiasm for the Maharshi. They themselves were equally enthusiastic. I then told them of the existence of *The Mountain Path* and soon several of them wanted to become life-subscribers. I suggested that since such a large assembly of the Maharshi's devotees were assembled in Utting, the ABG-Utting should also serve as the Ashram's and *The Mountain Path's* representative for Germany and Austria. We at once wrote to the Ashram. Sister Maya said that any devotee of Maharshi was welcome to come and stay at the ABG — Utting which itself is a kind of ashram. Efforts will also be made to hold an annual meeting of Maharshi Ramana's European devotees there.

Brother Dhammapalo (Mr. Max Hoppe), editor of the ABG-Magazine *Yana*, also gave a lecture in which he stressed the importance of studying Maharshi's teaching and described the coming of Maharshi Ramana as the most outstanding spiritual event of our time.

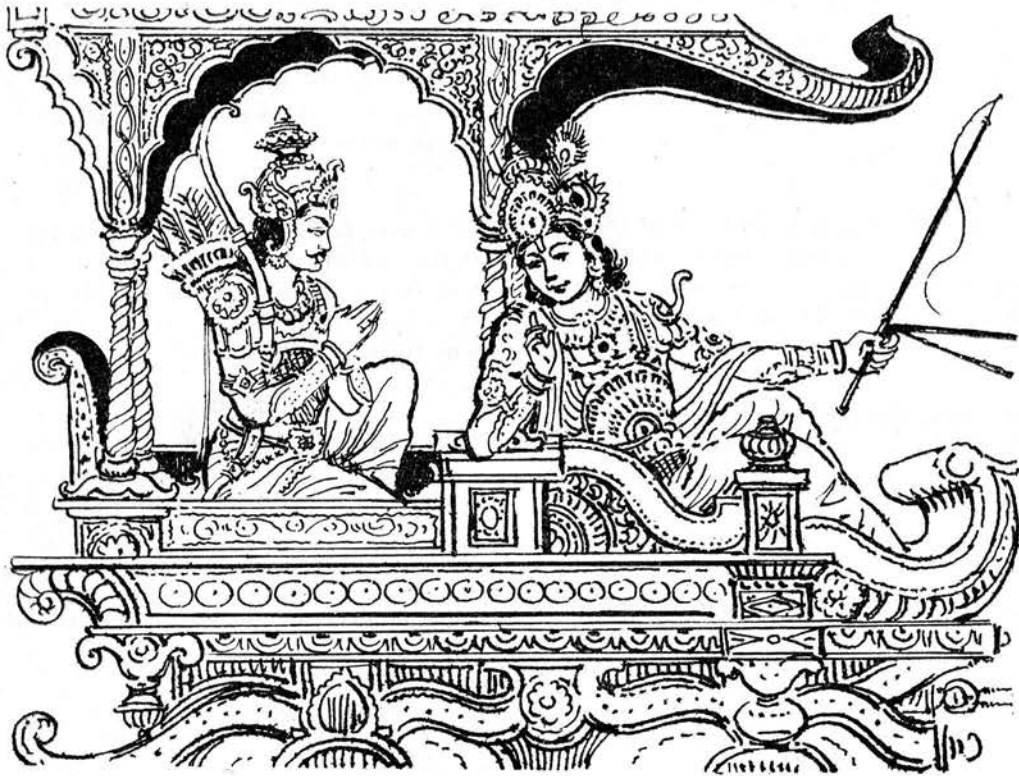
Next day a benevolent patron of the ABG, Mrs. Hopfner, took me to her mansion. It was a most beautiful place with a view of the lake and enclosed by solitary woods and hills. In her room also I found Zimmer's *Der Weg Zum Selbst*. Frau Hopfner's burning wish was to create a better understanding between the different religions of the world. She placed her entire villa and park, along with a separate lecture room and meditation hall, at my disposal to be used as a summer school for Comparative Religion this year. I agreed to conduct such a school and plans are already in progress.

It was late at night when I returned to Utting. As I lay in bed I had an urge to visit the temple below and give thanks for all the love and kindness I had received in Utting. I tiptoed silently into the temple and sat before the altar in meditation. I do not know how long I remained there. The place had a haunting beauty of its own. I

felt myself the recipient of waves of grace. I prayed inwardly "Sri Arunachala-Shiva! Shivoham!" Then again I did obeisance to Mahathera's picture. All of a sudden I had an uncanny feeling that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past had entered the room carrying with them an enormous wheel. (I marvelled that so huge a wheel could be encompassed within the confines of the room). Some of them had a friendly aspect while others were awe-inspiring. Then the Mahathera (Georg Grimm) seemed to appear at my side; or perhaps it was all only my heightened fancy. In any case I realised that the huge wheel was really the *paticcasamuppāda* (the formula of origination through interdependence). The Mahathera appeared to explain it to me, revolving both anti-clockwise and clockwise. Now I grasped what profound wisdom lay concealed in it. It is indeed a key to immortality. I wonder if it is possible without grace or exceptional insight to understand the secret yet unerring workings of this wheel. One who has got behind the mystery of this wheel could never again be life's victim. Indeed it was now that I realised what life was all about. It was Easter Sunday — and all the Easter Sundays of my life passed before me in review. I felt I could remember everything and it seemed that even my past lives on this earth were about to appear before my astonished gaze. A great sadness overwhelmed me and I realised how unworthy I was of even a fraction of this grace.

The prayer I mentioned at the beginning of this article had been answered. I wished to contact the Maharshi's German devotees and this had come to pass in a most pleasant and surprising manner.

Spiritually and physically refreshed, I returned home to Münster. On my return found an invitation from the Ashram for Maharshi's Brahmanirvāna celebrations on 18 April 1966. I at once phoned Sister Maya and told her of it. We both turned our thoughts to this important event.



The Bhagavad Gita

Translated by Prof. G. V. KULKARNI and ARTHUR OSBORNE

CHAPTER FIVE

After taking Chapter VIII out of sequence in our previous issue, for reasons there explained, we return now to the regular sequence with Chapter V.

1

Arjuna said :

You praise renunciation of action, O Krishna, but also the yoga (of action). Tell me clearly which is the better.

Here Arjuna returns to the question he asked at the beginning of Chapter III. The word 'sankhya', used there, meant 'knowledge' and the word 'sannyasa', used here, 'renunciation', but both are contrasted with 'yoga', here meaning 'the path of action', so the meaning is the same.

2

Sri Bhagavan said :

Right renunciation of action and right performance of action both lead to the goal, but of the two right performance is the better.

3

He is to be considered a perpetual sannyasi who neither hates nor desires, O Mighty-Armed. Being free from the pairs of opposites, he is easily released from bondage.

Thus Krishna applies the term 'sannyasi' to the man of inner detachment, not to the wearer of the ochre robe who has renounced the world outwardly.

4

It is child's talk, not the view of the wise, that the paths of knowledge (sankhya) and action (yoga) differ. He who is firmly established in one obtains the fruits of both.

5

The same state which men of knowledge attain is attained also by those who perform right action. He who sees the two paths as one, he it is who sees aright.

6

But it is difficult to attain to renunciation, O Mighty-Armed, without the yoga of action. A wise man who practises the yoga of action soon attains to Brahman.

7

He whose mind is purified by that yoga, who controls himself and is master of his senses, and who knows his self to be one with the Self of all, is unaffected even though engaged in action.

8, 9

He who knows the truth does not consider that it is he that is doing anything while seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping, breathing, speaking, excreting, receiving, or opening and closing his eyes; he considers only that the senses are contacting the objects of the senses.

10

He who, relinquishing attachment, resigns his actions to Brahman, remains untouched by sin, like a lotus leaf by water.

The waxy surface of the lotus leaf keeps it dry, although growing in water.

11

Renouncing attachment, yogis engage in activity with the body, the mind (manas)

the intellect (buddhi), or simply the sense organs, for the sake of purification.

The word 'yogi' here means a follower of the path of action.

12

He who is integrated in Union (yuktah) attains abiding Peace relinquishing attachment to the fruits of action, while the non-integrated (ayuktah) is bound by attachment to the fruits through desire.

13

The self-controlled one who has mentally renounced all activity dwells peacefully in the city of the nine gates (the body), neither acting nor causing to act.

14

The Supreme Self (Prabhu) creates neither agency nor action for people, nor unites action with its fruit; it is one's own nature (svabhava) which does so.

15

The Universal Self (Vibuh) takes over neither the evil nor the good of any man. Wisdom (jnana) is veiled by unwisdom (ajnana); thereby are men deluded.

16

But in those whose unwisdom is destroyed by wisdom, that wisdom, like the sun, reveals the Supreme (Param).

17

Mind fixed on That, self merged in That, directed and devoted to That, their sins dissolved by wisdom, they go whence there is no return.

18

The wise (panditah) see with an equal eye a learned and modest Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcast.

19

Even in this life those whose mind is equipoised have overcome phenomenal existence (sarga). Flawless and uniform is Brahman; hence in Brahman are they established.

20

The knower of Brahman, established in Brahman, steadfast and clear of mind, neither exults over a pleasant event nor grieves over an unpleasant.

21

Unattached to outer contacts, he finds happiness in Self; united with Brahman, he enjoys eternal bliss.

22

The pleasures of the senses are sources of misery, O Son of Kunti, being ephemeral. A wise man (budhah) does not delight in them.

23

He who, even before being set free from the body, can resist the force of desire and anger is in a state of integration (yuktah); such a one is happy.

24

That yogi whose happiness is inward, whose joy and whose light are inward, attains Brahma-Nirvana and becomes Brahman.

25

Those Sages (Rishis) attain Brahma-Nirvana whose imperfections are destroyed, their sense of duality turn aside, their minds

controlled, and who seek the well being of all creatures.

26

Brahama-Nirvana lies around those who have freed themselves from anger and desire, who have subdued their minds and have known the Self.

27-28

The Sage (Muni) who, intent on Liberation (Moksha), has overcome desire, fear and anger, who turns away from outer things and sits with gaze fixed between the eyebrows and with out-going and in-coming breath made equal in the nostrils, is for ever free.

29

Knowing Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, the Great Lord of all the worlds, the Friend of all beings, he attains Peace.

The previous 5 verses describe the attainment of Liberation through self-control and imperturbability; verse 29 adds also the element of devotion. Knowing God as the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities means performing them not as a mere formal discipline but as a mode of surrender of the individual to the Universal. That is what makes them effective.

Here ends the Fifth Chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita entitled the Yoga of the Renunciation of Action.

H A I K U

By MICHAEL RIGGS

In the temple court,
Waking,
I raise my head:
The moon is round.

A NOTE ON VEDIC SYMBOLISM

By M. P. PANDIT

In a sense, all forms are symbols. Each symbol is a representation, on one plane, of a reality on another plane of existence. This perception of physical forms being living symbols of psychological and spiritual realities was very common among all societies in their Mystic Age. For every human society has its stages which for purposes of study we may loosely group into Ages, the Mystic Age governed by symbols, the Typal Age, the Age of Reason and so on.

The Age of the Veda was pre-eminently an age of symbols. Everything in life, in the physical environment of those times, reminded the seers of the deeper verities of existence which were brooding behind. Features, happenings, physical forms, recalled to the mind of the *rishis* developments in their own inner life in which they were ceaselessly engaged. Thus the *hill* with its rising plateaux reminded them of the Reality of Existence with its ascending planes of consciousness to be scaled by the human soul. The *waters* come as a natural figure for the currents of energies from which life is born and on which it is sustained. Agni, the living *flame*, is a transparent symbol for the dynamic aspiration and will that burns in the being of man for self-exceeding. The physical *sun*, the source of light in the universe, is the symbol of the Sun of Truth that irradiates the whole of Creation with his

luminous energy. The *rishi* speaks of several Suns, one on each plane of being — the physical sun is only one of the solar concentrations of the Truth-Light.

There are other kinds of symbol in the Vedic hymnal which are more or less conventional, e.g. the *Cow* which stands for *Light* or the *Horse* which symbolises *Power*. The live state of language of those times helped them to transmit these truths in a natural manner. Thus the word *go* in Sanskrit means both the quadruped of that name, cow, and also a ray of light. And light — in all spiritual experience — is the physical form of knowledge. So to the *rishi* the cow stands for spiritual knowledge. Milk is the yield of the cow ; so is ghee, *ghrita* ; and hence both are figures for formations of illumined thought.

Sacrifice, *yajna*, an important feature of the Vedic society, is itself a spectacular symbol of the inner effort of the seer at self-transcendence in which he consecrates himself, all that he is and has, to the Gods. This sacrifice is aptly spoken of as a journey — going from the finite to the infinite ; as a battle — a fight against obscurity from within and without ; at times, as an ascent — from the plains of ordinary life to the mounting peaks of divine existence.

The Veda is a world of symbols.

He is and there is with Him no before or after, nor above nor below, nor near nor far, nor union nor division, now how nor where nor place. He is now as He was ; He is the One without oneness and the Single without singleness. He is the very existence of the First and the very existence of the Last and the very existence of the Outward and the very existence of the Inward.

— IBN ARABI

NOTES ON SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI'S HOROSCOPE

(WESTERN STYLE)

By the late RAO SAHIB M. D. SAGANE

(Through his brother H. D. SAGANE)

Maharshi's horoscope shows two celestial bodies, Moon and Jupiter, strong through being in their respective signs, Cancer and Pisces. On the other hand four planets Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn, are weak since they are in signs of their fall or detriment. One might, therefore, be surprised, how a person with so many weak or debilitated planets could be great. But the truth is that weak planets do not negative a birth in or rise to glory and greatness. So far as men of purely mundane activities are concerned, my experience is that with such weak planets they meet with ultimate downfall, disappointment and degradation. The horoscopes of the Kaiser, Hitler and others such constitute a good illustration of this. But in mystic or spiritual life such weak planets (as may be seen from the horoscopes of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and other masters), are indicative of greatness. Seers, saints and sages naturally possess such planets. The reason is that there is no mundane life for them in the ordinary sense. They give it up and lead a life of renunciation. The difference between them and worldly men with weak planets is that the former voluntarily give up or are not attached to riches, pleasures and all that constitutes temporal life, while the latter are deprived of them or compelled to give them up to their great sorrow and disappointment.

The Maharshi's weak planets put him in the brotherhood of sages. For even as early as at the age of 17, he gave up all that he had or could have had. He left his mother and brothers. He abandoned his home and left for Arunachala in the quest of his 'FATHER'. He threw away the few coins that he had and even the packet of sweets given to him by a pious couple on his way to Tiruvannamalai. He renounced everything. And all this was not casual. It was not a matter of momentary impulse. The life of renunciation that he began continued with vigour, in self poise and complete non-attachment all his years. Other indications of this will be examined below, but there can be no doubt that four debilitated planets provide a part explanation of this important phenomenon. Queer indeed is the arith-

metic of the planets; for at times, it means that mundane fall or loss is tantamount to spiritual rise or gain.

Other features in the horoscope are the conjunction of Mars and Neptune in the 7th house in opposition to Venus of the 2nd and Saturn's affliction by square to the Sun in Capricorn. Both are of similar nature, calculated to bring about poverty and privations creating obstacles and difficulties of severe type. As regards the first, the 7th is the house of marriage, Venus has influence over marriage and female relatives. Being in the 2nd house (Dhanasthan), she has dominion over wealth and comforts also. The affliction of Venus by Mars is, therefore, significant and indicates conditions against marriage; and that is why Maharshi led an unmarried life of strict celibacy. He was also destined to separate from his mother and renounce what the world could offer. He went, so to say, in exile in the quest of his 'FATHER' and never returned home in spite of the pitiful appeals of his mother. As regards the second feature, the sign Capricorn corresponding as it does to the 10th house, symbolises the apex or zenith of mundane life and activities. The Sun-Saturn affliction, therefore, indicates disruption and disintegration of mundane life or activities. Great indeed were the hardships and privations that Maharshi underwent since he left home. Disruption of family and social life, the long spell of seclusion and solitude that followed, the persecution by town urchins and later by bogus sadhus, accentuated Maharshi's trials.

But the aforesaid combinations, though evil in a worldly sense, were pregnant with possibilities of a high order. The Sun-Saturn influence in particular is very important. It makes one fearless and enables one to pursue one's course unshaken, disregarding all protests, obstacles, persecutions and misfortunes that necessarily obstruct the way. It gives all the qualities requisite for a leader, namely stern will, indomitable courage and unswerving determination. It makes a man put up a manly fight, as it were, to fit him for

the mission he has to fulfil. No man who has done something solid for the world and benefited humanity, no reformer or pioneer who has forged a new path, initiated a new school of thought or done some special work, has lacked some such discordant aspect as an afflicted Sun. Take any great man, say Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Mahatma Gandhi or any other who had a valuable mission, and you will surely find such an affliction in his horoscope. For such men must and do meet with difficulties and disappointments of a severe type, since the world, as it is constituted, always creates obstructions in their way. But they surmount them all. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that the Maharshi had an afflicted Sun and Venus. He had to tread through worldly wants to attain spiritual wealth.

Till now we have discussed the negative and discordant aspects only. We shall now turn to

the positive side. In any horoscope three centres are very important. They are the Ascendant (Lagna), the Sun and the Moon. These will now be dealt with, and also other influences.

The 23rd degree of the airy sign Libra is on Maharshi's ascendant (Eastern horizon). Airy signs represent intellectual self-consciousness. Libra in particular is connected with Mind. A Libran possesses good memory, pure reason and clear perception. Symbolising unity and balance, as Libra does, he seeks unity, taking a balanced view of the subjective and objective aspects of existence or consciousness.

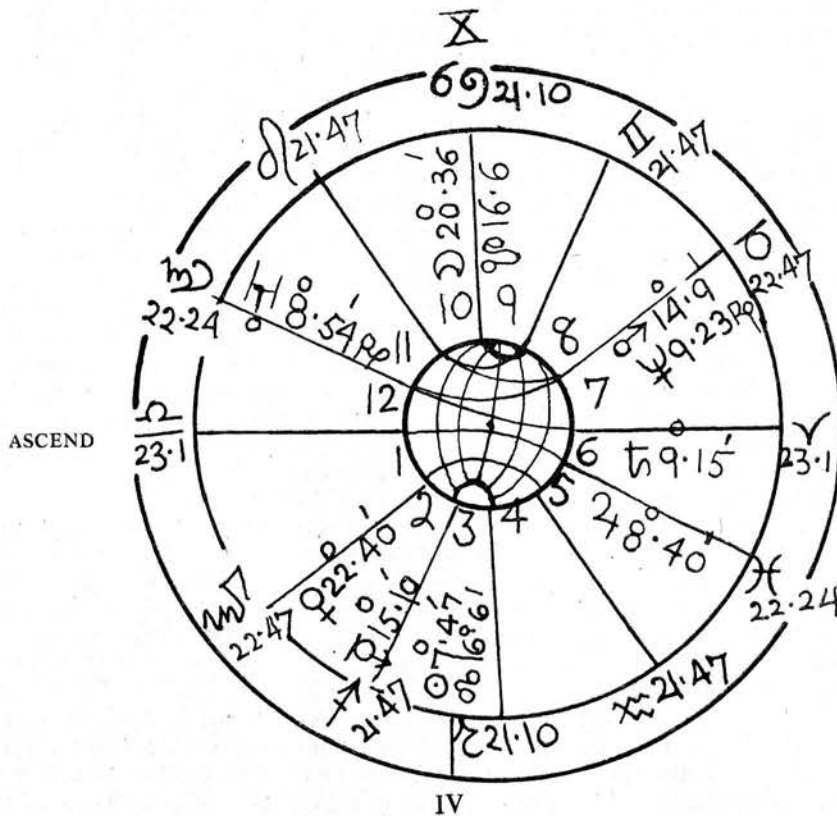
The Maharshi was profoundly mystic, in fact a mystic Sage. One could see this from his Sphinx-like serene look with a slight captivating ripple of a smile on it. Astrological causes for this are various. The Sun's trines with occult

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Born on 29/30-12-1879 at 1-00 A.M./L.M.T. (1-17 A.M./I.S.T.)

at 78°-15' E — 9°-50' N

(TIRUCHUZZHI near Madurai, S. India)



Uranus and mystic Neptune,¹ the residence of Venus in the psychic and occult sign Scorpio, her trines with Moon and Jupiter in the psychic or watery signs Cancer and Pisces, as also the trine between Mercury and Saturn are responsible for this. We shall analyse them, first in their abstract or theoretical aspect and then in their concrete and practical form.

Occupation of watery of psychic signs by Moon, Venus and Jupiter means that the mind is receptive, refined and highly developed. The benefic nature of the planets concerned assured smooth and rapid progress to higher planes of consciousness. Thus the foundation of the huge spiritual structure of the future was well and firmly laid by these forces and the ascendant.

Now for Uranus and Neptune, Uranus is well known as a planet of sudden, surprising or revolutionary events and changes of an iconoclastic nature. On a higher level however, he represents scientific intellect that dissects things like a surgeon or an impartial judge. He possesses power to discover the hidden side of things. Further, he illuminates the brain and can bestow universal knowledge. In short, Uranus works on the mental plane, and is an occult awakener. Neptune is still subtler. His plane or vision is beyond that of Uranus. It is mystic, intuitional and spiritual. Uranus may give mere knowledge, but Neptune gives universal love and a sense of unity with all forms of life. To those who are acquainted with the Maharshi's life, it will be apparent that there is a beautiful blend of their influences in him.

The Maharshi was a hard, ruthless thinker. Without any Guru and without any aid or guide, he thought coolly and intensively even when in the grip of the fear of death at the early age of 17, solving the riddle of life and death at that very moment. It was Uranus who did this and who, in accordance with his sudden surprising and revolutionary nature, made him quit his home for Arunachala suddenly a few months later and revolutionised his whole life. The change that came over Maharshi was certainly of iconoclastic nature as it broke all bonds of home and all affinities towards the world of senses. Uranus was certainly responsible for it. But the picture would not be complete unless we take into account the Mercury-trine-Saturn influence.

The occult combination of Sun-Uranus was helped by the combination of Mercury and Saturn. Mercury-trine-Saturn conferred the gift

of deep thought and profound philosophy, and also of meditation and concentration. This is particularly true as Mercury is almost in the 3rd house which is mental. The result was that Maharshi gave up his studies in the middle of 1896 and took to meditation. He realised himself through meditation on Self and in his teachings therefore, he asks all to do the same. If Self is gained, all is gained.

Maharshi's teachings sometimes appeared dry and terse. It looked as if he did not want to communicate. That was true in a sense. He was a silent sage. He observed silence for years. His motto was that silence is the best means of communication. That is the Saturnine influence which is prominent through his aspects to the Sun and Mercury and by Sun's residence in Saturn's sign Capricorn. It is no wonder therefore that taciturnity or reserve was apparent in the Maharshi where communication by words was concerned.

Maharshi's terseness or taciturnity did not, however, mean that he was wanting in sympathy or was devoid of love. On the contrary he possessed universal love. To him, all were alike. What else can explain his loving behaviour towards others? He would not partake of any food unless all in the Ashram could share it with him. He treated cows, dogs, all animals, like men and took care that their self-respect was not offended. And all these beings loved him. Herein then is the manifestation of mysticism of Neptune, and also of Jupiter in Pisces, the sign which is a 'universal solvent'. The Maharshi had no separate entity. It was dissolved in the infinite ocean of universal consciousness. He was in all; and all was in him; a halo of universal brotherhood surrounded him; and it rayed out love and peace in all directions.

The first occult or mystic experience Maharshi had was of the thrill that coursed through him on hearing the name 'Arunachala' from an aged relative. It created a devotional feeling of love and respect for saints in him. And when the thrill repeated itself, the feeling induced was

¹ The Western style chart of the Maharshi's horoscope which we published on page 60 of our issue of Jan, 1966 did not include the two new planets, Uranus and Neptune, which were not yet considered when he was born. The present author has plotted them in, Uranus in the 8th degree of Virgo and Neptune in the 9th degree of Taurus. This puts them in a grand trine with the Sun in the 7th degree of Capricorn, the third earthy sign. — (Editor)

more intense and persistent. The thrill was a mystic call from 'Father' 'Arunachaleshwar' or the Self. It was the result of a highly developed psychic nature. The presence of Venus, Moon and the Divine Jupiter in the watery or psychic signs is responsible for his receptivity to the call and for the devotional sentiments roused by it. The second experience occurred when the fear of death gripped him in June 1896. In this Venus, the ruler of Maharshi's ascendent, is a vital factor. As ruler, she represents the 'personal self'. Being in Scorpio, the 8th zodiacal sign, she is Lady of the 8th house also. The eighth sign and eighth house are associated, among other things, with sex, death, occultism mysticism and therefore with generation, regeneration and transmutation. An esoteric synthesis of these factors can have only one meaning, that the Maharshi was to attain sublimation as a result of interaction between mind, personal self, sex and death. Had it been otherwise, the fear of death would have simply paralysed him as would have been the case with an ordinary man. But it did not. On the contrary it made him go through the experience of death and led him on to the 'SELF' securing for him abiding Self-Realisation. The fear that frightened him made him fearless and placed him beyond the bonds of life and death. Such was the transformation or transmutation!

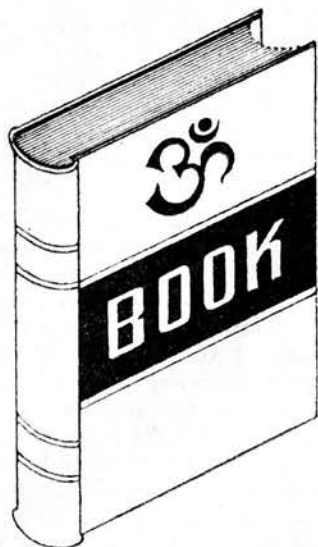
The question of sex is generally avoided, but it must be given its proper importance. Sex-energy is undoubtedly one of the greatest forces. In fact it is a primary force of vital importance. Creation, procreation, generation and regeneration proceed from it in this world of manifestation. If properly harnessed or polarised, the force is available for expression on other planes. Its sublimation transports a man to high spiritual levels. And it was so with the Maharshi. Nega-

tion of sex life fulfilled this function in his case. Similarity of planetary positions in the horoscopes of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Mahatma Gandhi are striking enough in this respect. Absence, control or polarisation of sex life may not necessarily lift personal self to the higher planes of consciousness. But in the Maharshi's case this was assured since Moon, Venus and Jupiter on the one hand and Sun, Uranus and Neptune on the other formed benefic combinations.

Lastly, as regards the Maharshi's fame and influence. Some saints and sages may have come and gone unheard and unnoticed, without influencing the world to any appreciable extent. But the Maharshi's fame is world-wide and his influence profound. Though to all appearance inactive and enveloped in the serenity of silence, he has been and is exerting dynamic influence, more potent than that of those whom we call 'men of action'. That is the effect of planets in cardinal signs and angular houses. A person with such planets is a man of energy in action, though his activities may not in all cases be visible on lower planes. This is particularly true if even one of the planets is in the 10th house. Now the Maharshi had Moon and Neptune in angular houses (10th and 7th) and Sun, Moon and Saturn in Cardinal signs (Capricorn, Cancer and Aries); and of these the Moon is in the 10th house. Furthermore his ascendant is also the Cardinal sign Libra. It is no wonder herefore, that with such enormous force behind him he is renowned the world over and is exerting tremendous spiritual influence, though silently. The needs of the world to-day are many, but the essential need is for 'spiritual food', though it is not felt distinctly and consciously. The subtle vibrations emanating from Maharshi will, however, make the world aware of it and make it listen to his message of 'Self-Realisation'.

I have built my house in the stainless. I am merged in the formless. I am one with the illusionless. I have attained to unbreakable unity. Tuka says: "Now there is no room for ego. I am identified with the eternally pure."

—TUKARAM.



REVIEWS

THE FOUR YOGAS, THE PATHS TO SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT: By Swami Atmananda. (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay-7, pp. 236, Rs. 10.)

Swami Atmananda (S. Neelakanta Iyer in his purvashrama, to distinguish him from other Swamis of that name) gives an authoritative account of each of the four classical margas, basing each closely on quotations from the appropriate scripture — karma yoga on the Bhagavad Gita, bhakti yoga on the Narada Bhakti Sutras, raja yoga on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and jnana yoga on the Brahma Sutras and Sri Shankaracharya's commentary on them. His expositions are not only authoritative but appreciative, seeing each marga from its own viewpoint and expounding it with full sympathy. This does not prevent him, however, from regarding karma marga rather as a preparatory stage for any of the other three than as a complete path in itself, or from regarding jnana marga as the most complete and far-reaching of the four.

It is a pity that he accepts as true the always dubious and now rather discredited Western hypothesis of evolution and progress in religion. He must know that Sri Krishna postulated an opposite process in the Gita.

One remarkable factual mistake in a writer who speaks of Swami Ramdas as his Guru is the statement (on page 19) that both he and Ramana Maharshi prescribed nama-japa as an initial stage in sadhana. Neither did. The Maharshi

prescribed Self-enquiry from the start and throughout, as Swami Ramdas did Nama-japa.

Nevertheless this remains a sound book to be warmly recommended.

FROM MIND TO SUPERMIND, A COMMENTARY ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA: By Rohit Mehta. (Manaktalas, Bombay, pp. 200, Rs. 20.)

Among the spate of books on the Gita, this one really does treat it as a guide to sadhana, which is what, of course, it is. Reviewing it chapter by chapter, the author comments on the various modes of approach with considerable penetration. Many readers will find his interpretation both of general themes and individual verses helpful. He rightly points out that the 'Me' of the Gita does not necessarily refer to the individual Krishna and does not therefore indicate exclusively bhakti marga. For instance, he shows how it refers to the Unmanifest and Unborn in the last verse of Chapter V, dealing with the passage of death: "Having known Me as the enjoyer of sacrifices and of austerity, mighty Ruler of all worlds and Lover of all beings, he goeth to Peace."

It is unfortunate that, perhaps as a hang-over from 19th Century influences, he speaks of 'occultism' in connection with the Gita. Such passages have to be discounted.

The English is good on the whole but not impeccable. Particularly irritating is his use of the word 'verily' as though it still existed in current English. It has long been defunct.

ARTHUR OSEORNE.

GURU DĒVI JANAKY MATHA: By S. Narayanaswami. (Sri Janaky Nilayam, Ganapathy Nagar, Thanjavur-1, pp. 186, price Rs. 5.)

SHASTIABDAPOORTHY SOUVENIR, 1966. (The same publisher, pp. 86, price not stated.)

Need a spiritual aspirant flee from home and seek the solitude of the forest or wander about as a sannyasin in order to attain his Goal? Is the life of a householder an obstacle to Realization? Certainly not, Sri Janaky Matha answers, in agreement with the teaching of her Sat-Guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi. This emerges clearly from the detailed biography of her (parts of which were published in our issue of January this year) written by her ardent disciple, who is also a sincere aspirant. He gives detailed descriptions of her visions of various deities, including Sri Krishna, Sri Subramania and the Lord of Tirupathi. He describes also the visits of several saints, Annaswamiar and Chatti Swamiar among them, who came to bless her; also how the Lord of Palani came on more than one occasion. He tells of her meeting with Sri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and of the visits paid by Sri Matha, alone or with her husband, sometimes accompanied by disciples, to Sri Bhagavan. Not only did Sri Bhagavan speak encouragingly to her on such occasions, but when she called on him in distress from a distance he always came to her rescue. It is interesting also to read of the impression left on her by the Mahasamadhi of Sri Bhagavan.

Apart from this, we read also of her family life with a husband who, at the time of their marriage, was more than twice her age, of her children and numerous devotees and the details of daily life at her home at Ganapathy Nagar, Thanjavur. Her husband was a doctor in government service, and this led to her travelling a good deal in India and also accompanying him to Austria.

It is interesting to note that the Sarvadhikari of our Ashram, Sri Niranjanananda Swami, compared her to a canal through which the water of life from the mighty river that is Bhagavan flows to irrigate the fields and produce a rich harvest. Her advice to women given at Sri Bhagavan's Jayanthi celebration in Bombay in 1953 is striking and testifies to her high attainment.

A companion work to this biography is the Souvenir brought out on the occasion of Sri Matha's 60th birthday (Shastiabdapoorthy) celebrated on 4th August this year. It contains well

deserved tributes by the followers of this great soul.

SRI SANKARA VIJAYAM: (Published by Ganesh & Co. (Madras) P. Ltd., Madras-17. Pp. 37 + xx; price Rs. 1.50; author's name not mentioned.)

Controversy hangs round the details of the life of Sri Adi Shankara. There is a controversy over the recognition of Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta as also established by Sri Adi Shankara in addition to the four Peetas, viz., Sringeri, Dwaraka, Puri and Jothir. And the aim of the small booklet under review not only seems to be to establish it as such but also to proclaim that Sri Shankara left his mortal body at Kanchi and not elsewhere, rather than give the reader a short and unvarnished account of the monumental life of Sri Shankara in brief compass. Else it is not possible to account for the three appendices occupying nearly a third of the book giving evidence in support of the said thesis, as also the rather sketchy account of the life and work that is furnished in the other pages.

Students of Sri Bhagavan will also note the difference in the version regarding the genesis of the *Guru Sthuthi* as given in the *Ramana Noolthirattu (The Collected Works)* and in Chapter X of this book. Whereas in *Noolthirattu* it is stated by Sri Bhagavan that it was only as part of his answer to the challenge of the wife of Mandanamisra to expound the spiritual symbolism of sex that Sri Shankara entered into the body of a king, in this book a different version is given whereby Goddess Saraswathi Herself challenges Sri Shankara when ascending the Sarvagna Peeta before mastering the science of erotics set out in Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra*.

The list of errata given at the end of this book is a bit too long for such a short book on a great subject. The get-up of the book also does not do justice to the good name earned by the publishers. 'SEIN'.

THE THREE PILLARS OF ZEN: By Philip Kapleau. (John Weatherhill, Tokyo, pp. 362, price £ 3-3-0.)

This practical book on what Zen means and how to practise it is an important milestone in Western literature on Zen. It is written by an American who has himself undergone the traditional training in Japan for at least ten years and has attained in some depth what is called satori (or Zen enlightenment).

Part One is a full course of private instructions by Yasutani Roshi on Zen practice. They cover what you do and why. The 'why' has been add-

ed by a Roshi for the first time, because he was dealing with Western students. It deals with the control of body, breath and mind which is essential for any form of meditation. It describes for the first time in English the Soto Zen practice of sitting in full awareness (Shikentaza), and gives full details of the other practices common to both Rinzai and Soto Zen.

Part Two is a lecture (teisho) on the koan 'Mu' and gives the reader some insight into the early stages of work on a koan.

Part Three contains verbatim accounts of private interviews (dokusan or sanzen) between the Roshi and some of his American students in training. This enables one to see for the first time how Zen speaks to the American mind with its Western angle of approach.

Part Four represents the theory and shows the result to which the Zen discipline leads. It consists of a sermon on the One Mind by Bassui (14th Century) and ten letters to his disciples which stress his simple method of training and all point to the One Mind.

Parts Five and Six contain the personal accounts of how five Western and five Japanese Zen students achieved various depths of satori through the discipline detailed in Parts One, Two and Three. They are first hand, extremely moving and all of interest.

There are two short appendices, one showing the ten Oxherding Pictures with a fresh translation of the text and commentary, the other being line drawings of the various sitting postures. The author's general introduction and a special one to each of the parts are written by some one who has done it all himself, so that the book comes to life and is tied together into a whole.

This is the best book yet to be published in English on the theory and practice of Zen.

It should be mentioned, however, that the school of which Yasutani Roshi is the head represents a unique mixture of Soto and Rinzai Zen, so that it is more or less disowned by both schools. It leans heavily on the Chinese maxim of 'beating into enlightenment'. This is a dangerous technique which knocks some unripe fruit off the tree. The other schools insist that the fruit should be allowed to ripen naturally before it falls.

G. J. YORKE.

A PSYCHIATRIST DISCOVERS INDIA: By Medard Boss. (Oswald Wolff, London, 1965, pages 192, price 31s 6d. Indian Agent, Rupa, Bombay, Rs. 21.)

Recent books on India — like those by N. C. Choudhury, Ronald Segal and Naipaul — have

been lopsided and gloomy, because they either ignored altogether or failed to understand the other India, the India of the sages where the ancient wisdom still survives. The present book is a pleasant surprise, all the greater because the author is a well-known psychotherapist and a leader of the continental movement in existential psychology which insists on the *Will-to-meaning*.

Dr. Boss felt the call of India because he was seized with questions to which he had no answer and was convinced that he would find them in India. In a sense, therefore, Dr. Boss provides an adequate and authoritative answer to Koestler's summary disposal of Asia in the *Lotus and the Robot*.

What were the questions which troubled the writer's mind? As a practising psychotherapist, he had come to perceive that though his science worked well up to a point and produced results, it suffered from some very obvious inadequacies. It threw little light on the essential nature of man, which indeed should have been its central aim. It had erected a host of conceptual notions such as the *id*, the *libido*, the unconscious and the super-ego which, though they could be exploited for practical purposes, provided no real insight into the inner processes of the mind. They were like mathematical symbols which have practical utility but hardly any meaning. Why was it so, he asked, and concluded that the methods of the physical sciences which the psychologists in the West had come increasingly to adopt were to blame. These methods, based as they are on the subject-object relationship, could hardly be expected to light up the essential man. *Vijnataram are kena vijaniyat?* How is the knower to be known? This then was the reason for the inherent failure of the science of psychology.

And so he came to India searching for the wise in whose living contact he could learn the secret 'knowing which all else is known'. And fortunately the endeavours of this earnest seeker were richly rewarded. The book is an account of his impressions and experiences gathered in the course of his two visits to India, which for the sake of presenting a compact narrative have been merged into one. Though the central interest must naturally lie in his encounters with the teachers, especially the venerable scholar-philosopher of Benares whom he sought and met, the author has also produced an absorbing travelogue. His vignettes of persons and places are vivid and finely rendered. His observations as a psychotherapist about the social and family

institutions of the Hindus and the strains and tensions produced by the economic changes taking place in India today are highly suggestive, though disputable here and there.

The talks with the teachers cover a wide field, affording sidelights on a number of related questions and converging in the end on the central teaching — that there can be no conceptualizing the essential truth about man; it has to be directly apprehended, a point which Bhagavan, as the readers of *The Mountain Path* know, never tired of emphasizing. While western psychotherapy "may enable the patient to become aware of his aggressive animal drives" and to some extent "control them", it is Dr. Boss's discovery in India that "eastern psychotherapy could successfully work the miracle of freeing him from evil."

A. L. TIWARI.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MEDITATION: By Jack Huber. (Gollancz, price 18s.)

In this short but significant book the author, who is an experienced American psychiatrist, describes in detail five days of intensive Zen training under a Japanese Roshi of the Soto sect. Though Dr. Huber had for some years been interested in Eastern methods of self-discipline and meditation, this was his first practical experience of it. The training was fairly severe, the pupil's application thorough, and the result was, on the last day of the course, an experience of *Kensho*. The Roshi confirmed that the pupil had succeeded in Zen and seen into his own Nature. Dr. Huber describes briefly the beneficent effects upon his own personality and considers what light his experience throws upon Western psychiatric practice.

Enlightenment in five days? And, seemingly, without any bitter struggle or lengthy preparation. It all stands far too easy. In fact it is a sincere story told with becoming clarity and modesty; perfectly serious, it deserves to be taken seriously. This is especially so when it is read along with other recent American accounts of Enlightenment experiences in Japan contained in Kapleau's important 'Three Pillars of Zen'. A spiritual movement of great promise is getting under way.

The crucial thing is that these Japanese and American seekers, suitably encouraged by the Roshi, go into training (whatever the period: it may be even less than five days) expecting success. If the pupil does not see into his own Nature before the end of the course he has failed to do what he intended. But next time he will

surely do so! And successes are apparently not at all rare, even among beginners like Dr. Huber.

How sharply this contrasts with the conviction, too common in Western spiritual circles, that Enlightenment is virtually impossible in this life, even if one were to devote the rest of one's days to the most arduous practice. Perhaps in one's next life, or after a hundred lives, but anyway not now! The truth, however, is that anyone who is serious about Enlightenment wants it right away. No one who is really interested in seeing into his own Nature is prepared to put off looking even for one day. These Soto students are serious. They want something; they believe that it is instantly available; they get it.

And because they are serious they are prepared to pay the price in boredom and fatigue and physical pain. They are willing to stop reading and arguing and thinking about spiritual matters, and instead humbly to accept a severe psycho-physical discipline. The chatterbox mind, the discursive intellect, and above all opinions of any sort, have to be stilled; moreover positive energy has to be built up in *zazen* to make the breakthrough. Precise instructions are given. The whole approach is practical and with a minimum of theory. This might be expected to appeal to the American's pragmatic sense and evoke his energy: interested in results, he gets them.

Well, what are these results? Of course they vary immensely in depth and scope, from the comparatively common brief glimpse of Who one is to the full Enlightenment itself. Much depends upon the motive: if one takes up Zen (or any other) meditation as a sideline or for a limited period, nothing much of permanence can be expected from it. But if, because one is in desperate trouble, one comes to devote one's whole energy to seeking the peace and joy of Enlightenment, lasting results are more likely. Best of all, if one is impatient for the Truth, if one is really interested in seeing Who one is and determined to do so without further delay, then speedy success is more likely.

Dr. Huber is wisely brief and necessarily vague about his own *kensho*. Very likely he would agree that it was comparatively shallow, since it did not proceed from any ardent and sustained desire to see into his own Nature. In any case, he is careful to point out that *kensho*, though it is true Enlightenment, (and in a sense ultimate) needs to be extended and matured throughout the rest of one's life by patient self-discipline. In the practice of the Soto sect this means keeping up one's *zazen* (or sitting meditation) every day and gradually bringing the whole

of one's life up to its level. In the end nothing occurs to break one's 'meditation'.

It would be interesting to know how many of those who obtain *kensho* under the guidance of contemporary soto masters go on to mature their Enlightenment to the limit and how many let it lapse till it is little more than a memory. It is a pity when this happens: but it is better to have seen and then gone blind than never to have seen at all. Suffering may be counted upon to open our Eye again.

THE MEANING OF PERSONAL EXISTENCE:

By Arthur W. Osborn. (Sidgwick & Jackson, price 35s.)

Western civilization is based upon a very shaky foundation — the conviction that each of us is a separate and inviolable self, quite distinct now and for ever from all other selves. This proposition will not stand up to examination. Nevertheless, seeing that few of us are philosophers and nearly all of us have deeply engrained this feeling of our separate selfhood, we go on living as if it were true. We ignore every indication to the contrary, including the massive experience of the religious East, and also the anxiety and pain and indeed madness which undermine the self that barricades itself against invasion by every other self. Philosophically and psychologically and practically, the separate-self doctrine does not work. And, if further evidence against it is needed, there occur all sorts of well tested paranormal phenomena which can only be accounted for on the theory that, below the surface, our island selves merge into great continental selves and, at the level of the ocean floor itself, they are all One.

Mr. Arthur W. Osborn (not to be confused with the editor of *The Mountain Path*, whose name is spelt differently, having an 'e' at the end) examines in detail the evidence for telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, veridical dreams, precognition, hauntings, phantasms of the living and dead, psychometry, 'PK', materialisations, astral projection, automatic writing, cross-correspondences, and memories of past lives. A great deal of this material has been investigated by competent researchers and pronounced genuine, but even if only a fraction of it were admitted, that would be enough to make nonsense of the commonsense doctrine of immiscible selves. It all points to the unity of Mind. Anyone who doubts this is recommended to read Mr. Osborn's book. Besides giving a conspectus of para-normal phenomena, he explores their metaphysical implications at length, with parti-

cular reference to the nature of personal existence and the doctrine of reincarnation. These matters are commonly the concern of people who are inclined to start upon the path to the One, but for some reason have not got going. Mr. Osborn could help them to move.

As for those who are already on that path, these researches and speculations are so many red herrings. The trouble is that there is no end to them: the arguments will go on *ad infinitum*. If we are genuinely desirous of Self-knowledge we shall waste no time puzzling over the problems of selfhood, survival, reincarnation, and the rest. In fact, they are pseudo-problems: the only way to clear them up is to ignore them and turn to the question to whom they occur. Our true Self finds no problems.

DOUGLAS HARDING.

THE LIFE OF SARIPUTTA: By Nyanaponika Thera. (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Ceylon, pp. 112, no price.)

Sariputta and Moggallana (to give the Pali forms of their names) were famous as Buddha's two leading disciples. If they play no part in the fashioning of the Sangha, it is because they both passed away before him. The present account of Sariputta is based closely on the original texts. It illustrates the nobility of character and consideration for (non-existent) others of this great saint. Incidentally it also, by the way, as it were, gives a revealing picture of the spiritual and intellectual climate in the environment of the Buddha.

BUDDHISM, THE RELIGION OF ANALYSIS:

By Nolan Pliny Jacobson. (Allen & Unwin, pp. 202, price 25s.)

Man everywhere is warped by conditioning into the particular culture-pattern in which he lives. The deepest and most harmful part of this conditioning is his belief in himself as a separate individual being. On the one hand this leads to ego assertion, while on the other it makes a man passive to pressures and vulnerable to suffering. The present work regards Buddhism as the earliest and most far-reaching system of psychotherapy freeing those who follow it wisely and ruthlessly from these compulsions. Other systems of psycho-therapy deal with social conditioning, but Buddhism alone shows the way to dissolve the really basic illusion of an individual being. The author therefore proposes it as a much needed therapy for the modern West and especially as a technique for study and practice by psychiatrists. Alluding to philosophy, he

speaks of Buddha as the real founder of Existentialism, but he holds mainly to the view that Buddhism is not a doctrine but a system of therapy.

But if individual being does not exist, what does? Blank nothingness? In the most interesting chapter of his book, entitled 'The Consummatory Experience', the author marshals the evidence of leading interpreters of Buddhism to show that this is misunderstanding. Nibbana, meaning extinction of egoism, is beyond conceptual thought and therefore cannot be described or defined; but it is to be experienced, and Buddhism shows the way to this.

^{BODHICHTTA.}
(Arthur Osborne)
SPIRITUALITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES, ASCETICS AND MYSTICS OF THE WESTERN CHURCH: Edited and Introduced by James Walsh S.J. (Burns & Oates, pp. 342, price 25s.)

This symposium on Catholic saints and mystics concentrates primarily on their writing and influence, treating their personal lives as secondary, though important. It therefore contains much solid fare and never becomes cloying. Some may find the constant emphasis on the superiority of the celibate and monastic life overdone; however the obvious answer is that these are the people who have shaped the teaching and development of the Catholic Church and that a similar list could not have been drawn up from among the laity, despite their far greater numbers.

In some cases there has been a tendency to bypass the more outstanding saints and take less known ones instead — for instance, instead of St. Francis of Assisi his female counterpart, St. Clare; instead of St. John of the Cross or St. Theresa of Avila their forerunner St. Bernardino de Lareda. Since mention is made of the greater figures, that only broadens the picture. Some of the great pivotal figures are dealt with, such as St. Benedict and St. Bernard. Since the subjects are taken in chronological order, the book adds up to a very fine and informative sidelight on the spiritual history of the Catholic Church.

However, a distressing feature about an otherwise exhilarating book is the nervous anxiety many of the writers show to prove that their subjects are not heretics, even though mystics. What is still more ominous is the care a number of the mystics themselves had to take; and even then Eckhart was adjudged outside the pale and St. John of the Cross spent a number of years

in prison and had his early manuscripts destroyed, and later ones meddled with before he was finally vindicated. One gets the impression that it has been a very risky thing for a Catholic to be a mystic.

^{SAGITTARIUS.}
(Arthur Osborne)
ARE THE GATHAS PRE-VEDIC? and THE AGE OF ZARATHUSHTRA. (pp. 115, price Rs. 7.50.)

IS THE SO-CALLED YOUNGER AVESTA REALLY YOUNGER? (pp. 96, price Rs. 6.50.)

THE ARYAN ECLIPTIC CYCLE. (pp. 384, price Rs. 25.)

(All three books by H. S. Spencer, published by H. P. Vaswani, Poona-2.)

It is really very difficult to review books of this nature where the author endeavours to prove preconceived ideas. All three subjects are highly technical and require specialised qualifications.

Vedic Sanskrit and Gathic Avesta are sister languages. The oldest portions of the Rig Veda and the oldest portions of the Gathas may be contemporaneous. Just as the oldest portions of the Vedas are separated from the later portions by centuries, so are the Gathas from the later Avesta. The first of the books listed above only repeats old theories and actually proves nothing. The claim that it settles once and for all the very difficult problems of the age of Zarathushtra and the Gathas is not tenable.

It would have been better if the author had given the second book the title 'References to Zarathushtra in the Later Avesta'. How can he presume to write on the subject when his guru stopped him from studying the Avesta, the language of the scriptures he writes about, trying to prove things based on imagination? The book contains quotations from other books and there is nothing very original in it.

The author has a right to put forward his own hypothetical theories on the subject of the third book, but the conclusions he arrives at are amazingly heterodox, confusing and contradictory.

FRAMROZE A. BODE.

OTHER BOOKS

STHITA-PRAJNA: By R. N. Agrawal. (Ganesh & Co., Madras-17, pp. 16, price 0.50 Paise.)

This little booklet is a translation of the famous passage comprised by verses 54 to 72 of the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

* * *

We have also received an abridged edition of a larger Gujarati original entitled 'On the Way to Harmony' or 'Nationalism in the Context of Civilization' by 'Prabhakar'.

* * *

Sri Champaklal (for a reference to whom see *Ashram Bulletin* of this issue) has kindly sent us a collection of books written by him in Gujarathi.

PERIODICAL

A new English quarterly under the title of 'Santi Dipam' is being published by the Rama Sakti Mission, Mangalore, from Ahmednagar and will be appearing every January, April, July and October. The first issue contains a fairly wide assortment of articles, including one by the Mother Sri Rama Devi on 'The Personal and the Impersonal'.

MISREPRESENTATION (1)

In *Viveka*, the journal of the 'Yoga Esoteric Ashram' of Manchester, we find regrettable misrepresentation of the teaching of Ramana Maharshi. In answer to the question: "What is meant by the term 'the direct way'?" it is stated: "It is a conception of the Rishi Maharshi Ramana. It involves very special exercises in concentration which lead in a stage by stage way to Samadhi or Bliss. The Maharshi did not insist on any posture except that the spine must be straight and the head balanced exactly on top of it. By learning to concentrate first on a small object for ten minutes, the pupil went through even more difficult exercises, till at last he was capable of extending pure consciousness into limitless space, thereby discovering his true nature....."

This is quite wrong. The Maharshi never taught any "very special exercises" or any "stage by stage way". He never told any one to "concentrate first on a small object". Such statements smack of occultism, than which nothing could be farther from his direct, purely spiritual teaching. No corroboration whatever will be found for them in his *Collected Works* or in any of the published collections of his talks with followers. A stage by stage way is by very definition indirect. The Maharshi's way is direct because it goes directly, with no stages or special exercises, to the heart of the matter — who am I? What is it that sits, thinks, seeks, meditates? What is the reality, the self, the I-ness, the being of this 'me'? He taught Self-enquiry as the one essential exercise from the beginning of

the quest to its end. "This is the direct method. All other methods are practised while retaining the ego and therefore many doubts arise and the ultimate question still remains to be tackled in the end. But in this method the final question is the only one and is raised from the very beginning."¹ He distinguished it carefully from meditation on anything, and he certainly never recommended concentration on a small object. "Meditation requires an object to meditate on, whereas in Self-enquiry there is only the subject and no object."¹ Even the statement that he insisted on sitting with a straight spine is misleading. It is doubtless helpful to do so in any system of meditation, but on the informal and purely inner path of the Maharshi such outer aids are less important than on other paths. Indeed, he sometimes told people that they should continue Self-enquiry all the time and not only while sitting in meditation. When asked once what was the best posture (asana) for meditation, he replied with characteristic indifference to physical aids: "One-pointedness of mind is the best posture."²

Also misleading is the use of the past tense. The direct path is not something of the past but is still living and widely followed.

We have the utmost sympathy for *Viveka* and for the Ashram it represents. We are cheered by the emergence of all such new strivings and beginnings where a few aspirants come together to seek a path to the Light amid the darkness of the materialistic world. We send them and also the 'Yoga Society' of Leeds, which is mentioned in *Viveka*, our earnest good wishes. But we do request any who come across divergent statements of the Maharshi's teaching, as they must have done, either to check them up carefully against his *Collected Works* and published volumes of talks to see whether there is any ground for them or to write to his Ashram at Tiruvannamalai or to *The Mountain Path*, which is its authorised mouthpiece, for confirmation of them.

MISREPRESENTATION—2

A book called '*Reminiscences and Anecdotes of Sri Aurobindo*' has been compiled by M. P. Pandit and published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. We are not reviewing it, and indeed it has not been sent to us for review; but two items about Sri Maharshi in it, both on p. 101,

¹ *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in his own words*, Ch. V.

² *Ibid.*, ch. VI.

have been brought to our notice and we feel obliged to correct them, since they are incorrect both in detail and (what is more serious) in spirit.

The first runs as follows :

Do you know the famous story about the Maharshi when, being disgusted with the Ashram and the disciples, he was going away into the mountains? He was passing through a narrow path flanked by the hill. He came upon an old woman sitting with her legs across the path. The Maharshi begged her to draw her legs (sic) but she would not. Then in anger he passed over her. She then became very angry and said, "Why are you so restless? Why can't you sit in one place at Arunachala instead of moving about? Go back to your place and worship Siva there."

Her remarks struck him and he retraced his steps. After going some distance he looked back and found that there was nobody. Suddenly it struck him that it was the Divine Mother herself who wanted him to remain at Arunachala.

Of course it was the Divine Mother who asked him to go back.

The true story, which Bhagavan told a number of times, is quite different. It is well remembered by a number of devotees and is told by A. Devaraja Mudaliar on pages 14-15 of '*Day by Day with Bhagavan*', vol. II. Bhagavan was not disgusted with the Ashram or disciples. In fact it happened when he was a young man living in a cave on Arunachala before there was an Ashram. He was not intending to leave Arunachala. The old woman was not sitting with her legs across the path. He did not get angry. He did not say that the old woman must be the Divine Mother. In fact, 'the Divine Mother' is an expression which was not in his vocabulary. What happened is that he was roaming about the hill when an old Harijan woman greeted him with the semi-jocular curse common among such people, meaning literally: 'May your body be put on the funeral pyre' and added: "Why can't you stay quiet in one place?" As reported by Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Maharshi said merely that it was good advice. As recollected by some others, he said afterwards: "How do we know who she

was? She may have been Sri Arunachala in human form."

The following is the second anecdote :

Mrs. Kelly went to see the Maharshi and was seen driving mosquitoes (sic) at the time of meditation. She complained to him about mosquito bites. The Maharshi told her that if she could not bear mosquito bites she could not do yoga. Mrs. Kelly could not understand the significance of the statement. She wanted spirituality without mosquitoes.

This is quite contrary to the spirit of Sri Maharshi's teaching. Moreover the expression 'do yoga' was not in his vocabulary. A case of his being asked about driving mosquitoes away is recorded, with his reply, by Devaraja Mudaliar in '*Day by Day with Bhagavan*', vol. I, p. 13. His reply was :

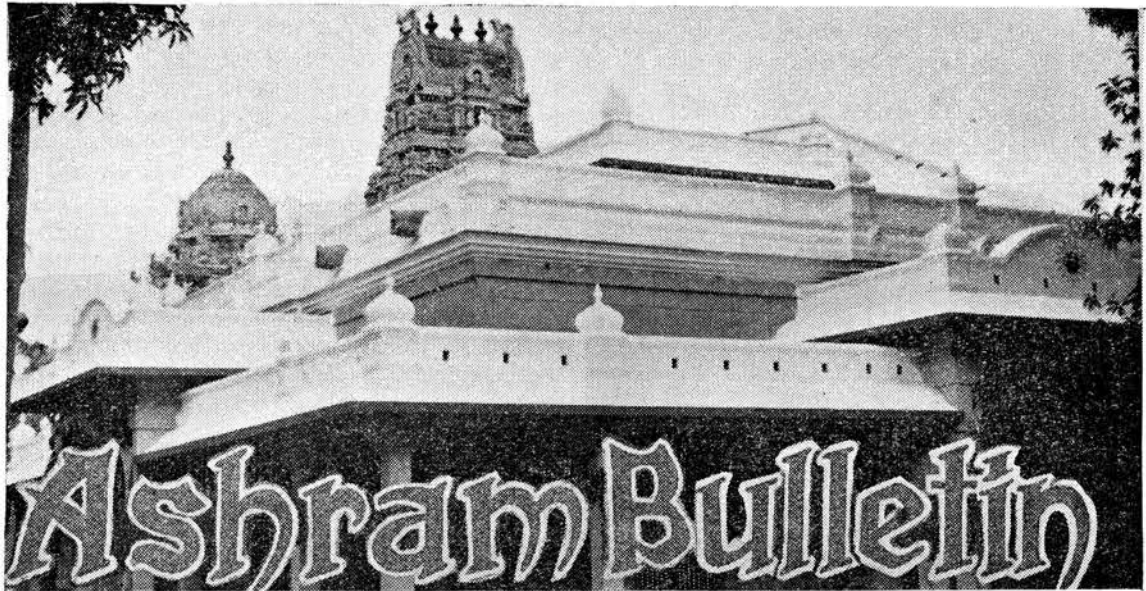
You must do as you find most convenient. You will not attain Mukti simply because you refrain from driving away the mosquitoes, nor be denied Mukti simply because you drive them away. The thing is to attain one-pointedness and then to attain manonasa. Whether you do this by putting up with the mosquito bites or driving the mosquitoes away is left to you. If you are completely absorbed in your meditation you will not know that the mosquitoes are biting you. Till you attain that stage why should you not drive them away?

This reply is completely in the spirit of Sri Maharshi's teaching. The editor of 'The Mountain Path' was in the hall when it was given and remembers it exactly as Devaraja Mudaliar records it.

It is of the utmost importance that stories circulated about Sri Maharshi should represent his teachings and personality accurately. Misrepresentations can do much harm, even though quite unintentional, as we are sure these must be. We therefore request any one who wishes to publish such to submit them first to his Ashram for verification.

Let each one search his whole way of life with all care, considering his interior soul and whether anything dwells therein that is not God. This preparation will consist of four dispositions: detachment, self-renunciation, the interior spirit and union with God.

— BLESSED JOHN TAULER



ADMINISTRATION

An interesting development is that resident devotees have been drawn into the running of the Ashram by the formation of a number of sub-committees to help the President with his work. There is one for maintenance of the premises (in which Bhagavan's tradition of cleanliness is still maintained), one for publications, library and literary work, one for the dispensary and medical work, one for guest rooms and guest houses and one for the care of visitors.

READING ROOM

The Ashram receives a large number of religious and philosophical journals. A reading room has now been arranged where residents and visitors can peruse them. They can also take them to their quarters for limited periods. Our premises are still too cramped to allow a separate room for the purpose, so the 'Mountain Path' office is at present being used. However, it is intended to construct a separate detached building for 'The Mountain Path' and when that is done the present office should remain available.

M. C. Subramaniam and V. Krishna Iyer have kindly volunteered to take charge of the reading room and the lending and cataloguing of periodicals.

"MOUNTAIN PATH" NEWS

Our next issue is to be on 'The Question of Suffering', that of April on 'Effort, Grace and Destiny'. The remaining two issues for 1967 are to be on 'Yoga' and 'The Ethical Basis of the

Quest'. The January issue is already full up, but contributions for the other three are invited.

* * *

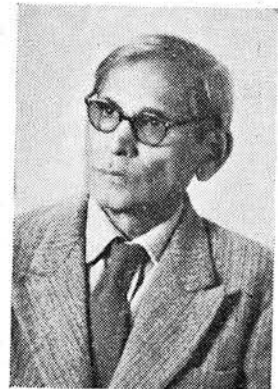
Readers will have observed that we often fill up the space at the end of an article with quotations from saints and mystics. I should be grateful to any reader who would send a supply of these that he has noted down in his reading.

* * *

We now have an agent for Canada also. The address is given elsewhere on this issue.

ROVING AMBASSADOR

Dr. V. N. Sharma of Madras is going abroad for a year to lecture on Hindu religious developments (and mainly on Bhagavan Sri Ramana) in Switzerland, Germany, Holland and Israel. As usual, he came to the Ashram to take leave of Bhagavan before going. He will go as representative of 'The Mountain Path' and contact many of our friends abroad. May Bhagavan guide and support him in his work. Dr. Sharma is the father of Gita Sharma, whose article on the mudras appear elsewhere in this issue.



Dr. Sharma

A CONCERT

On 18th July the famous sitarist Ustad Halim Jaffar Khan from Bombay paid a visit to the



Ustad Halim Jaffar Khan

Ashram at the instance of Sri A. R. Narayana Rao, a staunch devotee in Madras. He gave a

wonderful sitar recital lasting nearly three hours. The old hall was packed and everybody sat spellbound. His *alap*, *bistar*, *tala* and *gat* were perfect. He was brilliantly accompanied on the tabla by Pandit Sadashiv Pawar, making the whole concert very enjoyable.

We were delighted to hear from the Ustad that he was a devotee of Sri Bhagavan and had been thinking of coming here for the past ten years. He promised to visit the Ashram again whenever he gets an opportunity.

We wish him every success. May he have the blessings of Bhagavan.

BHAJAN

Sri Parmanandswarup Champaklal of Bombay visited the Ashram with a party of 17 from Secunderabad on August 7th and stayed for four days. On each day they gave a bhajan in the Old Hall. The hall was packed and the bhajan, which at times became ecstatic, was highly appreciated.



Sri Champaklal is seen in the centre, to the left of the Ashram President, Venkatoo.

Sri Champaklal visited the Ashram a few years back, although he never came in the lifetime of Bhagavan. His guru, Sri Narayana Swami, did and instructed him too to come here and invoke the blessings of Bhagavan, but he arrived too late; Bhagavan had already left the body. Although only 49, he has already a large following in Bombay, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Calcutta, where he conducts bhajan in his native Gujarati and Hindi. He has visited a number of highly reputed spiritual leaders and received their blessings, among them Swami Nityananda, Sri Hans Maharaj, Ananda Mayi Ma and Daya Mata of the Self-Realization Fellowship of California. He is still eager to meet saints and mystics. He himself has written books in Gujarati on the Gita and on bhakti marga. He is essentially a bhakta. While staying here he said to our Managing Editor:

"Prem, love, is the basic force, whichever marga you follow. Without it, what use is it to sit for hours in meditation or bhajan or yoga? As long as body-consciousness remains, Prem alone can give you peace and progress. The ego is routed when the spring of Prem gushes out. Such elimination of the ego results naturally in the supreme state of samadhi. Sadhana has no meaning if not based on Prem. Singing kirtan or bhajan is an additional aid; it is a powerful and simple means which any one can use. Your whole being is concentrated on the singing and listening, so that the other three senses become numb. If prolonged, even those two senses are numbed, resulting in samadhi, the sense-free state. Though by no means the final state, this gives an intimation of it. The Guru is Prem; his whole body emits Prem ceaselessly. That is why all sorts of people, irrespective of their walk of life, enjoy peace in the presence of a holy man. Prem not only makes it easier for you to reach God but facilitates His reaching you too. All saints and seers, whichever marga they may have taught, have had one unique feature in common, and that is Prem. Look at Ramana, Ramakrishna, Jnaneshwar, Mira, Tukaram or any other: they were all primarily the embodiment of Love. Neither philosophy nor asceticism but only Love can enable you really to understand the teaching of the Guru, for only in Love do you lose your ego-sense. Prem or Love is like the string in a necklace: without it there will be only scattered gems. Prem is the path and Prem the Goal."

Sri Champaklal and his party fitted so harmoniously into the Ashram life, that when they left many of us felt that it was some of our own

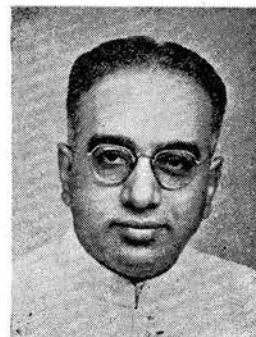
people who were leaving us. May they carry Bhagavan's blessings with them.

UPANAYANAM

Sri P. S. Easwaran, a devotee and a member of the Prem Sangh described in our issue of July 1964 (not the Prof. Easwaran who sometimes contributes articles to *The Mountain Path*) came here for a few days stay with his family and relatives and on 10th July celebrated the upanayanam of his son Ch. Bhavani Shanker in the Ashram. Devotees and sadhus blessed the boy and wished him prosperity, knowledge and wisdom. May Sri Bhagavan's blessings be on him and his parents and relatives and friends.

PROF. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

Prof. T. M. P. Mahadevan, head of the philosophy department of Madras University (for a note on whom see page 198 of our issue of Oct. 1964), was invited as a member of a select cultural group to Greece where he found very highly placed persons interested in Bhagavan and his teachings.



Prof. Mahadevan

He visited the Ashram on 14 August and gave us an account of his travels. 15 August is a holiday when many people come here (as explained on page 257 of our *Ashram Bulletin* of Oct. 1964). Since it fell on a Monday this year, it allowed two free days for visitors. Prof. Mahadevan not only came himself but was accompanied by some two dozen members of the Sankara Vihar, which he has organized in Madras. They followed a planned routine of bhajan, meditation and talks during their visit here.

Prof. Mahadevan wrote in the Visitors Book:—
 "These two days have been a home-coming for me. This particular visit had a special significance in that 26 members of the Sankara Vihar held a spiritual refresher meeting at the Ashram. The Ashram is filled with the serene Presence of Bhagavan The serenity and precision with which the daily work of the Ashram is carried on, the open-hearted sympathy and welcome which awaits every devotee, and above all the sense of constant dedication which is observable

in every detail of activity have helped to preserve the Ashram as a true abode of sanctified spiritual peace."

ARUNAGIRINATHAR FESTIVAL

There were many other visitors also for these two days (Aug. 14 & 15). There were several bhajan parties. Notable among them was that of Sri Krishna Iyer whose remarkable vision of Bhagavan at such a bhajan on a previous occasion is related on page 61 of our *Ashram Bulletin* of Jan. 1965.

GOPURAM

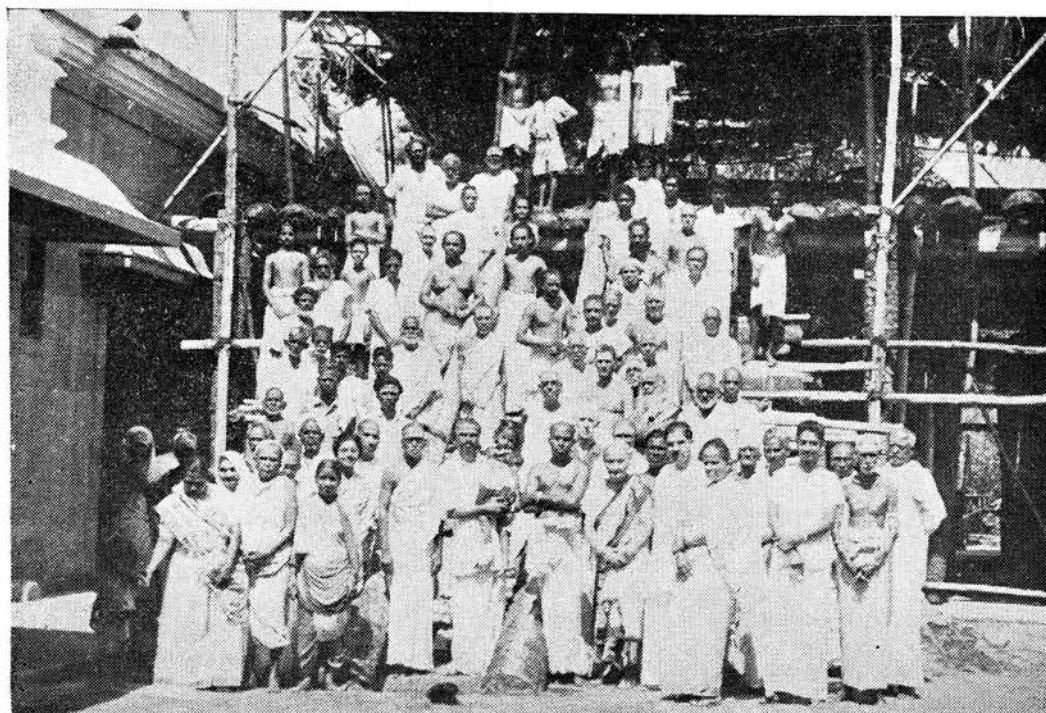
Monday, 22nd August, was an auspicious day when the work of constructing the gopuram or tower over the samadhi or shrine of Sri Bhagavan was inaugurated in the morning with Vedic rites. Work on the stone roofing of the samadhi mantap is nearing completion, and work on the gopuram is being taken up hand in hand with this in order to speed up the completion of the samadhi building and performance of the kumbhabhishekam or consecration. Our sthpathi architect, Sri S. K. Achary, tells us that the gopuram should be completed within four months.

The response to our appeal issued early this year for funds for the completion of this work has been fairly satisfactory so that we now have collected a sum of Rs. 13,000/- out of the total Rs. 25,000/- needed to complete the work. We earnestly appeal to devotees to make their contribution in favour of "Sri Ramana Mantapa Nidhi", so as to hasten the installation of the lingam and the commencement of regular pujas at the mantapam.

* * *

On the same auspicious day the inaugural ceremony was held for the construction of a proper samadhi in place of the present wood and bamboo structure over the grave of the Sarvadhikari, Sri Niranjanananda Swami, to whose dedicated work and administrative ability the Ashram owes so much. We hope, with the co-operation of the devotees, to finish this also in good time.

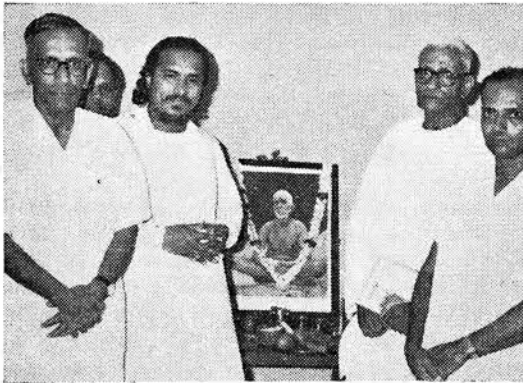
The functions were well attended by Ashram residents and devotees. Sri V. Seshadri from Calcutta was also there and quite a group of visiting devotees from Bombay, including: Dr. and Mrs. K. B. Pispati, and Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Capadia. Sthapathi S. K. Achary was, of course, present.



The group photo taken on the occasion: The Ashram President, Sri S. K. Achary, the *Sthapathi*, Mrs. Taleyarkhan and Mr. Arthur Osborne are among the gathering of devotees.

OUR DELHI KENDRA

Sri Kesavadasji of Dasasramam, Bangalore, has been giving a series of Harikathas (musical discourses) in Delhi drawing large, appreciative audiences. Included in his repertoire is 'Self Realisation', the theme of which is the life of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. According to Sri Kesavadasji, it would be more correct to say that Bhagavan is himself self-realisation than that a lad named Venkataraman attained self-realisation, for the Maharshi embodies the ultimate experience of all saints and seers.



Photograph taken at Sri Kesavadasji's discourse at Ramana Kendra, Delhi on July 3, 1966. *Left to Right*: (1) Sri C. Ramaswamy, Vice-President, (2) Sri Kesavadasji, (3) Prof. K. Swaminathan, Secretary, (4) Sri K. C. Subbiah, Joint Secretary of the Ramana Kendra.

PALAKOLE

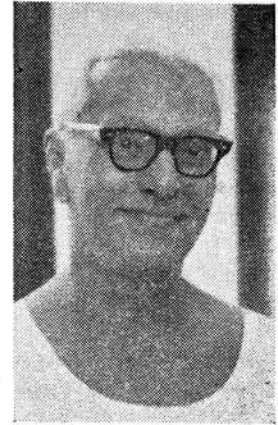
The Jnanotsavam of Bhagavan Sri Ramana was celebrated at Murali Krishna Ashram, Palakole, West Godavari District, on 18th July. In the morning Astotharanama Puja to Sri Bhagavan was performed by the devotees Sarraz Narasimharao and V. Narasimham. In the evening, with the latter, a prominent businessman of the place, presiding, the former explained Bhagavan's teaching on rebirth and how to transcend it in this very lifetime. He appealed to the assembled devotees to follow Bhagavan's teaching closely by banishing egoism. The meeting closed with distribution of Bhagavan's prasadam to all there.

KOLHAPUR

The sixteenth Mahanirvana Day of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated by the Dharma-Tattvajnana Mandal on 18th April. There was bhajan, prayer and meditation, and Sri Tukaram Patil spoke on 'Self-Surrender'.

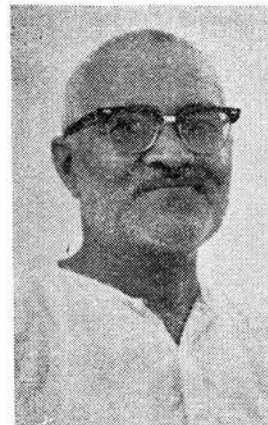
VISITORS

Surya Prakash is a Sindhi merchant who had to move to Bombay after Partition. He has been here a number of times before, both during Bhagavan's lifetime and since. Indeed, we have an article of his pending in our 'How I came to the Maharshi' series. (And the editor takes this opportunity to apologize to all those whose articles in this series are still pending. It is only in the present issue that he has found room for his own.) This time Sri Surya Prakash was accompanied by Sri Swami Arjandas Naraindas.



Surya Prakash

Swami Arjandas Naraindas comes from a distinguished family of Sindhi saints. Himself



Swami Arjandas Naraindas

humble and devoted by nature, the Swami presides over an institution at Kurla, a suburb of Bombay, comprising three temples in one: Lakshmi Narain Mandir, Shiv Mandir and Guru Nanak Darbar. He is not only well versed in Vedic lore but also a keen student of the Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Book. He has devotees in hundreds. Having heard about Sri Ramanashram in talking with a devotee, he changed

his original programme of going to Brindaban and instead came here. He found the atmosphere here most tranquil and peace-giving, and this made a deep impression on him. He was further impressed by the quiet and unobtrusive way the management went about its day-to-day work, leaving the devotees free in every way to carry on their sadhana.

He settled down while here to a serious study and practice of Bhagavan's method of Self-enquiry, which he found to give an effective edge to his usual spiritual practices. He left with a feeling that his three week stay here had been of considerable benefit to him.

* * *

Maurice Frydman, a very old devotee, paid us one of his rare but always welcome visits. He comes originally from Poland. He worked with Gandhi for many years, and it was Gandhi who gave him the name of *Bharatananda* under which we published some reminiscences by him in our special Jayanti issue of January this year. He was accompanied by Mrs. Petit, a notable Parsi lady of Bombay.

* * *

Artists. Among foreign visitors the accent was rather on art this time. The Italian artist Paolo Tommasi paid us a short visit while returning from an exhibition of his paintings in Japan. He left with the intention of returning for a longer stay.



Frانيا, with her painting of Arunachala, as seen from the rear of the Ashram.

Frانيا Osborne, the younger daughter of our editor, who is an art student of the Camberwell School of Art in London, arrived here for her summer vacation. She was brought up here and is known to some of the older devotees as 'Noona', the name by which Bhagavan knew her. Before leaving she held an exhibition in the Ashram of the paintings she has done here. It was highly appreciated.

* * *

Prof. M. L. Sondhi, Head of the Department of

International Politics and Organization at the 'Indian School of International Studies' in New Delhi, came with his wife and young son. We found him a dynamic person and he brought us some interesting new contacts.

Before leaving he wrote in the Visitors Book:

"My wife Shrimati Madhuri, our little son Shivaji and I regard our visit to Sri Ramanasramam as an occasion to renew our link with the source of dynamic values for all our activities. It is here that the message for blending tradition and modernity in the lives of all Indians in particular and mankind in general can be heard with powerful clarity. It is no exaggeration when I say that the dignity of Gothic Europe, the mystic beauty of Jerusalem, the rhythmic grandeur of the Himalayas, are all excelled here."

BOMBAY RECOLLECTIONS

We were expecting another visit from Sunil Damania, who was so helpful to Mr. and Mrs. Osborne during their stay in Bombay in February, but he has not been able to come, as his mother, who was to accompany him, had a mild heart attack. She is recovered but still has to be careful about travelling. His brother Jagdish has long been settled here as a sadhu.

Sunil writes that all is well at Gurudev Ashram, the Ashram of Swami Muktananda (for whom see our *Ashram Bulletin* of January this year) at Ganeshpuri outside Bombay, where Mr. and Mrs. Osborne paid a brief visit in February and were very hospitably received. It was a festival day and streams of visitors were arriving from Bombay. The Ashram is a flourishing institution with modern guest houses and well kept gardens, all under the personal supervision of the Swami, who seems a dynamo of energy.

Less than a mile away is the shrine of Swami Nityananda (for whom see articles in our issues of April 1965 and April 1966). The spiritual influence felt there is very powerful.

A NORTH INDIAN PILGRIMAGE

Our lifelong devotee Mallikarjunan, brother of our post-master Raja Iyer, and assistant to Sri Narasaiah in the bookstall, writes as follows of his pilgrimage.

"For some years past I had been intending to make a pilgrimage in the North, but it was only this year that, by the Grace of Bhagavan, I was able to do so. After doing archanas to Sri Aruna-

chala and Sri Ramana, I walked round the Hill with my family and thus imbibed the blessing of



Sri Mallikarjunan

mine. I daily visited the Uttar Swamimalai Temple at Ramakrishnapuram and prayed there. We also met a number of devotees in Delhi. Next - we went to Hardwar, where we stayed at the Perumal Chetty Choultry and were thrilled to see the sacred Ganges flowing past. Our next halt was at Rishikesh, where Sri Purushotham, the receptionist of Sivanda Ashram provided accommodation for us as soon as he saw the introductory

letter from our Ashram. We spent a few quiet days there, enjoying the bhajan and the peaceful atmosphere of the place. We visited Lakshman Jhula, Geetha Mandir, etc., across the river and returned by ferry. After looking over the Sivanandashram hospital, press, music school and temple, we left for Benares.

There, as previously arranged, we stayed at the Mysore State Guest House and were well looked after by the Manager, Sri K. M. Subba Rao, who is an ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan and who paid a visit here with his family after

Sri Arunachala-Ramana. On the following day we performed yatra-puja at our house. The Ashram President kindly gave us introductory letters to devotees in various parts of North India and we set forth on our pilgrimage.

In New Delhi we were well looked after by Sri M. Lakshmikanthan, a devotee of Bhagavan and a relative of



*Sri S. L. Narasiah **

my return. We stayed there for twelve days. One day I took him with me to see Dr. S. Nath, a great devotee and a patron of our Ashram, to whom I had a letter from the Ashram President. Although a very busy doctor, he immediately received us, on seeing the letter, and arranged for a conveyance to take us to Sarnath and other places. While at the Mysore State Guest House, Sri Subba Rao and I spoke to the other guests staying there of the greatness of Sri Bhagavan and explained his teachings. There was much interest. Especially the following expressed their desire to visit our Ashram: Smt. E. Seethalakshmi, Lecturer at the Maharani's Training College at Mysore, Sri M. S. Nanjundiah, Subedar Major, HO-101, Communication, Zone Area, c/o 99 APO, and Sri A. V. Subramaniam, Bridge Inspector, Madurai.

After making puja to Lord Viswanath, we took leave and went to Allahabad and Gaya. We were overpowered by the magnitude of the Triveni Sangam. Our next stop was Calcutta. There our very dear devotee Sri V. Seshadri very kindly extended his hospitality to us and saw to our needs. He took us to all the places of spiritual interest in that great city. On our return journey we halted at Godavari and paid our respects to the sacred Godavari River.

The success of the pilgrimage was entirely due to the Grace of Bhagavan and the kindness of the Ashram President and the many devotees who showed me kindness and hospitality on the way"

OBITUARY

Sujata Sen, a French lady doctor with a medical degree from the Sorbonne, married to a Bengali doctor, was one of the first foreigners to settle down here, certainly the first foreign woman. She arrived as a Buddhist from Ceylon in the mid thirties and remained here for a number of years as a devotee of Bhagavan. She was particularly susceptible to the power of Arunachala and had many strange visions and experiences. Lately she has not been in good health and has been staying with her married daughter, Monica Bose in Bombay. She died there of cancer on June 11th. May the Grace of Bhagavan protect her.

* For a note on whom see our issue for January, 1966, page 119.

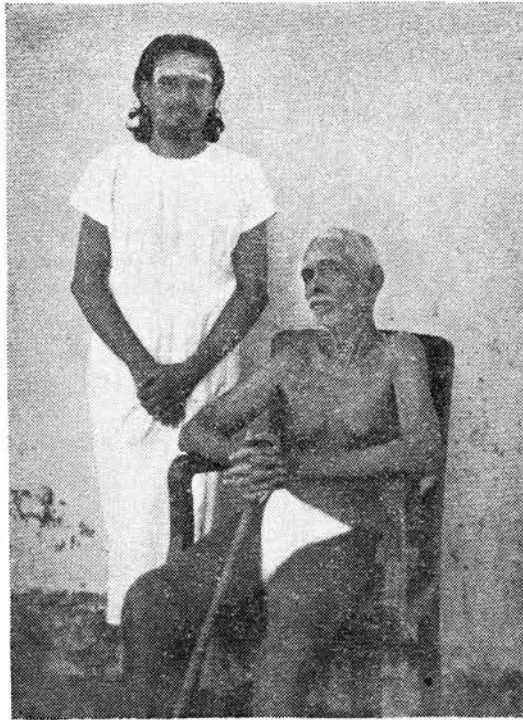
INTRODUCING...

VENKATOO, the Ashram President

It looked as though the family that gave birth to Sri Ramana Maharshi would become extinct. He had two brothers, one older and one younger, and one younger sister. The elder brother died suddenly a few years after Venkataraman left home and became Sri Ramana Maharshi. The sister married but had no children. The younger brother, Nagasundaram Iyer, married and had two sons, but both of them died within a few days of birth. In distress the mother repaired to her Swami son at Arunachala, taking Nagasundaram's wife, Mangalam, with her. Sri Ramana assured them that Mangalam would have a son and sent them back. She did in 1914 but she died in the process. Under this new shock, Nagasundaram Iyer, went to Arunachala where he took sannyas under the name of Sri Niranjanananda Swami and eventually became the Sarvadhikari or controller of his brother's Ashram (as described in our *Ashram Bulletin* of Jan. 1964). The mother also went to live with Sri Ramana as one of his devotees.

The young child was brought up with love and care by Bhagavan's sister, generally known as 'Athai', meaning 'Aunt', and her husband, Sri Pichu Iyer. He was given the name of Venkataraman, and this was shortened in childhood to Venkatoo, a name which stuck and is still used by the devotees. He was brought to Tiruvannamalai two or three times a year, to see Sri Ramana, who was then living in Skandashram,

Ladies were not allowed to stay in the Ashram overnight, but Sri Ramana assured Athai that she could safely leave the child and he himself looked after him, fed him with his own hands put him to sleep, washed him and cleaned his teeth in the morning.



When Venkatoo grew up he continued living with Athai and her husband, married and had two sons and took a job in a bank in Chettinad. The even tenor of his life was interrupted in 1938 when he received a letter from the Ashram summoning him to Tiruvannamalai with his family and Athai and her husband. This meant a complete change of course, and before embarking on it Venkatoo requested V. Narayanaswamy (commonly known as Chellam Iyer, for a note on whom see our *Ashram Bulletin* of Jan. 1964) to go and find out whether the summons had the authorisation of Sri Bhagavan. When ap-

proached by him along with Sri Yogi Ramiah (for a note on whom see our *Ashram Bulletin* of April, 1964), Sri Bhagavan confirmed it. When told that Venkatoo had a family, he said: "What of that? Let him bring them too!" Thus it was not on his own initiative that Venkatoo came to the Ashram.

Sri Bhagavan would never run the Ashram administration. The spiritual and temporal sides were kept separate, the latter being in the hands of the Sarvadhikari. He did not encourage devotees to interfere in the administration or in



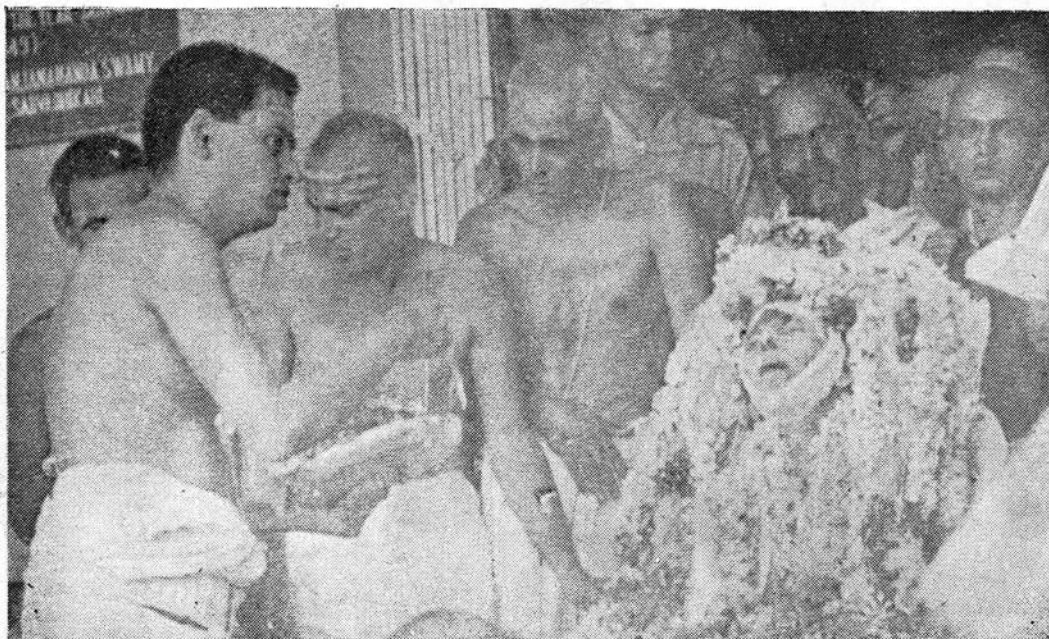
Venkatoo (extreme right, next to Sri Bhagavan), who representing the Ashram, inaugurated the Kumbhabhishekam ceremonies of Sri Mathrubhuteswara shrine on 17-3-1949, takes permission for the function from Sri Bhagavan.

Ashram politics. He would sometimes say to them (as reported, for instance, by Kunju Swami in his reminiscences in our issue of July, 1966): "Did you come here for Ashram politics or for Moksha? Attend to the matter for which you came." In any dispute he would support the administration on the ground that, when not actually unethical, established authority should be obeyed.

Venkatoo began to receive training as apprentice-Sarvadhikari. On several occasions when the Sarvadhikari had to go away on Ashram business he was put in charge. Bhagavan would sometimes refer people to him, saying: "Ask Venkatoo; he is the Kutti-Sarvadhikari (literally 'cub-Sarvadhikari')." He once actually stated: "He is the future Sarvadhikari; take his view also."

During Bhagavan's lifetime there was a lot of litigation due to false claims to ownership of the Ashram. Bhagavan even consented to make a deposition in the matter himself before a Commissioner appointed by the Court who was sent to the Ashram to record it. This is of philosophical as well as practical interest, as showing that Bhagavan, being, as he himself stated, '*athi-ashrami*' or 'above the stations of life', was not a sannyasi and was not therefore debarred from admitting to ownership of property.

A number of the senior devotees feared a recurrence of such trouble after Bhagavan left the body, and therefore, in 1938, a Will was drawn up. The main points of it were that the Ashram was to be maintained as a spiritual centre and that the management of it was to vest in the Sarvadhikari and, after him, Venkatoo and his



On 15-4-1950 Venkatoo leading the ceremonies of interment after Sri Bhagavan cast off his body (on 14-4-1950). He is seen performing *archana*.

descendants. Bhagavan listened carefully to the reading of it, made comments on it, and approved of it. Where a blank space had been left, he told them to write in the names of Sri Niranjanananda Swami and Sri T. N. Venkataraman (Venkatoo). He did not sign it, having no name to sign, but he drew a line at the foot of it and allowed Sri G. Sambasiva Rao (for a note on whom see our issue of Jan. 1964, *Ashram Bulletin*) to sign that he had done so in token of approval. The document was then registered and was attested by K. Sundaram Chetty (Dewan Bahadur and retired High Court Judge), M. M. Bhargava (Manager of the Reserve Bank of India in Madras), Yogi Ramiah, T. S. Rajagopala Iyer, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami (a member of the present Board of Trustees, for whom see our *Ashram Bulletin* of Jan. 1965) and the sub-registrar, R. Narayana Iyer, all present at the time when Bhagavan signified his approval. The legality of this Will has subsequently been upheld by the District Court and the High Court. In any case, for devotees the approval of Sri Bhagavan weighs far more than recognition by a court of law.

After Bhagavan left the body, a managing committee of devotees constituted itself to help and advise in the running of the Ashram, so

that Sri Niranjanananda Swami became rather a constitutional president than the Sarvadhikari he had previously been. After his death in Jan. 1953, Venkatoo duly succeeded him as Ashram President. At first the same committee continued, but the question of Ashram administration was taken before the Madras High Court and at the beginning of 1964 a scheme was devised by which, as recorded in our *Ashram Bulletin* of April of that year, a Board of five trustees was to be in charge. Two of them were to be appointed by the Government and two by the hereditary Ashram President, who was himself to be the fifth. The President was to be a trustee for life and the other four to be appointed for a three-year term. Since the first three-year period is now terminating, this seems a good occasion to introduce the President and administration of the Ashram to our readers.

The Sarvadhikari was an austere man and apt to be brusque in manner. Venkatoo has a conciliatory manner, suitable to the changed times. He is almost always genial and good-humoured and looks younger than his 53 years. He has the rare quality of knowing his own limitations and, while personally supervising the administration, he delegates doctrinal and literary matters to

others. Like the Sarvadhikari before him, he has implicit faith in Bhagavan and confidence that this is Bhagavan's ashram and that Bhagavan will protect it.

Venkatoo has not had by any means an easy time as President. During the first part of his tenure of office he had a lot of litigation to face. Financial conditions also were difficult. When he took over, the Ashram was burdened with a debt of over Rs. 10,000. (As against this, however, one must remember that the Sarvadhikari had carried through the building of the temple and new hall which are such a distinctive feature of the Ashram.) Not only has Venkatoo succeeded in paying off the debts, but he has accumulated a considerable reserve. Most of this is in fixed deposits which he has instituted, only the interest of which is available for current use.

This state of solvency has been achieved without parsimony. In particular, a number of guest-rooms have been built in the Ashram for single

men and of guest-houses outside for ladies and families. In Bhagavan's lifetime there was only a common dormitory for men and no accommodation for women, and unless visitors could make their own arrangements outside they were normally limited to a three-day stay. There is no such restriction now. Also, the food served at the Ashram is plentiful and of high quality.

A particular tribute must be paid to Venkatoo by 'The Mountain Path'. When it was still a project in the latter part of 1963 almost every one took it for granted that it would incur a deficit and need to be subsidised. In spite of this, Venkatoo told us that we could go ahead and he would finance it out of Ashram funds. Actually, it had not been appreciated how many of the business and industrial community were devoted to Bhagavan and would give their advertisements to a journal simply because it was issued by his Ashram. Such was their sympathy and the able and devoted work of the advertisement manager with the help of a few devotees



Venkatoo, with his wife, Nagalakshmi, and his children and grandchildren.
Our *Managing Editor* is standing first from the left.

and friends that 'The Mountain Path' covered its cost from the very first issue. Now the President has been repaid for his faith in it, because the fixed deposit built out of life subscriptions to it is one of those on which the Ashram's new prosperity is built.

The prosperity, however, is still quite precarious. It has not yet been sufficient to complete the building of Sri Bhagavan's samadhi. It is estimated that for the shrine alone a further sum of Rs. 25,000, will be needed, without even considering the meditation hall which it is hoped eventually to build alongside it.

While devoted to the Ashram and its affairs, Venkatoo is at the same time strongly attached to his own family. He has three sons, of whom the eldest and youngest are engineers, and four daughters, the first two of them already married. His second son, V. Ganesan, is helping him in running the Ashram. He is an M.A. in philosophy of Madras University and is the Managing Editor of 'The Mountain Path'. As such, he combines the functions of accounts and circulation manager, advertisement editor and page-maker, all of which he performs with remarkable enthusiasm and ability.

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

NAVARATHRI FESTIVAL (commences on)	Friday	14-10-1966
SARASWATHI POOJA	Saturday	22-10-1966
VIJAYADASAMI	Sunday	23-10-1966
DEEPAVALI	Thursday	10-11-1966
SKANDASASHTI	Friday	18-11-1966
KARTHIGAI FESTIVAL (commences on)	Friday	18-11-1966
KARTHIGAI DEEPAM	Sunday	27-11-1966
JAYANTHI OF SRI MAHARSHI (87th Birthday)	Thursday	29-12-1966
PONGAL	Saturday	14- 1-1967
CHINNASWAMI ARADHANA	Wednesday	25- 1-1967
SIVARATHRI	Thursday	9- 3-1967
SRI VIDYA HAVANA	Friday	17- 3-1967
TELUGU NEW YEARS DAY	Monday	10- 4-1967
TAMIL NEW YEARS DAY	Friday	14- 4-1967

NOTICE

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Copies for January 1967 will be sent only on renewal of the subscription.

Receipts will be sent along with the issue for January 1967 and *not* separately.

V. GANESAN,
Managing Editor.



Many the Paths that lead
To the mountain peak
One the moon that shines
Alike on all who seek.
Anonymous Japanese verse.

TO THE EDITOR

HINDU MYSTICS

Thank you very much for your kind and generous review of 'The Way of the White Clouds'.* But it saddens me to see that you think me capable of 'sniping' at Hinduism. You may not agree with my opinion or my terminology, but the word 'sniping' implies a surreptitious attack and an intention to hurt. Nothing was further from my mind. I have always shown respect and appreciation for Hinduism; in fact, in my writings, I have often gone out of my way to show how much Buddhism owes to ancient Vedic and Upanishadic tradition and how much Buddhism and Hinduism have in common. I have always insisted that even where the two systems differ, we have to acknowledge the validity of different ways and even of different aims. As I said in a previous letter to you: "I believe that every religion is a unique contribution to the spiritual life of humanity and that the more we respect this uniqueness by honestly accepting the necessary differences in form and outlook, the more we shall be able to discover the underlying harmony. Harmony, after all, is not based on sameness, but on co-operation of different forms of expression." I have used the term 'regression' in a strictly psychological sense—not as criticism but merely as an example of two different psychological methods or attitudes. The term was not invented by me but was used in the context of a quotation by the well-known psychologist Erich Fromm, and applies as much to certain Buddhist schools (as you rightly point out) as to certain Hindu schools of thought. My remark, therefore, is not caused by any prejudice against Hinduism (in fact I am far more critical about certain schools of Buddhism), but serves to clarify my own personal attitude or choice regarding two possible methods or ways of Liberation. I have not said that both these ways may not be found in Hinduism also—in fact I think that Sri Auro-

bindo comes very near to my own conception—but I merely refer to the conception of the 'average' Hindu mystic, and I might have said the average follower of Hinayana Buddhism, if I had not made my position in this respect already perfectly clear in other parts of the book.

I may add that my love and respect for Sri Ramana Maharshi (which I have often expressed in my various publications and lectures and which I have tried to instil into my Buddhist readers and audiences) is much too great to identify him with any particular school of thought or to measure him by the standards of 'average' Hindu mystics. His living presence was (and still is) a unique phenomenon and an inspiration to all religious-minded people in the world, however different their ways and methods of realization may be.

LAMA GOVINDA,
Almora.

I am glad to hear that the impression I formed of Lama Govinda's opinion of Hindu mystics was incorrect and happy to publish this rectification.

EDITOR.

PEACE OF MIND

I have a little problem. Of late I have been experiencing some (unfounded) fear of death and consequential worry as to what would happen to my large family if anything should happen to me. I fully realize that these fears and worries carry us nowhere and everything will happen as He ordains. But still the worry is there. I have been trying to overcome this by reading books on the Maharshi and by meditation. I have some relief but still I find it difficult to concentrate. I would like to have some practical suggestion as to how to meditate, how to control the mind

* On page 288 of our last issue.

from wavering and get manolaya. Kindly also explain how to "observe the breath".

The Maharshi says: "Enquire, Who am I?". How is one to conduct this enquiry? Should one go on repeating the question 'Who am I?' as a mantra? Kindly give me some practical suggestions how to meditate, as I am a novice.

I had the good fortune to see the Maharshi one day in 1940, but I was too immature to understand him or draw on his unbounded Grace. All the same, I obtained employment shortly after. I fervently hope to come and reside in Sri Ramanaashram after my retirement in about four years time. May He be pleased to draw me to him and give me peace of mind!

S. KRISHNASWAMY,
New Delhi.

Fear of death or a feeling of insecurity may be the reaction of the ego against meditation or any attempt to make sadhana. After all, sadhana does aim at the death of the ego. Therefore this sense of insecurity cannot be overcome by any kind of argument but only by attaining peace of mind. This can be done either by complete surrender and devotion to God or Guru or by meditation. The most direct and powerful form of meditation is Self-enquiry. This does not mean using 'Who am I?' as a mantra. Bhagavan often said that 'Who am I?' is not to be so used. It means concentrating one's mind on the sense of being, of I-am, or on pure consciousness while keeping thoughts out. Practice is needed.

Observing the breath is a simple aid to mind-control. It can be done by watching oneself breathing and counting the breaths from one to ten.

EDITOR.

* * *

DESTINY (1)

Kindly enlighten me on the following:

1. What is fate, its origin and its influence on human beings?
2. If it is the sole dictator of human life, why should one pray to God?
3. Can prayer to God eradicate fate in this life, and how, as we do not know our past and future births?
4. Why should one not surrender to fate and act as it dictates in one's life?

SARRAZ NARASIMHARAO,
Palakole.

These questions are too involved to answer briefly. Our issue of April 1967 will be mainly devoted to this subject.

EDITOR.

DESTINY (2)

In the July 1966 issue of *The Mountain Path*, Sri C. Sridhara Rao has written about effort and destiny.

Destiny and its pre-ordained nature is only for the ego, for the body. The Self is not bound by destiny. It is ever free. As long as we think we are encased in this body, we have to attempt to free ourselves from the body-consciousness and realize what we really are. We have got to disown the thought that we are the body. To achieve this, we may have to put in physical as well as mental effort.

Nature will compel each one of us to act, whether we desire to or not. Water from the great ocean evaporates only to get back to its original source through rain-drops, streams and rivers. This it does as naturally as the newborn child takes to its mother's milk. It is therefore latent in us all to start, to run in search of our own source—the SELF. We have no choice in this task. One may explain this running as a deliberate action, physical or mental.

Our effort consists in attempting to get in from without. As long as we remain in the sense-objects without, alas! it is impossible for us to be without effort. Once we surrender ourselves to the Grace, every effort thereafter is HIS. "Whatever you have to do you will be made an instrument for doing that at the right time. Do not think you cannot do it unless you have the desire to do it. Desire (or will) does not give you strength to act. The strength is the Lord's". (Bhagavan's *Sad-Darshana Bhashya*, p. xxvi) Our effort from without will help us reach only the threshold. Beyond that "it is impossible for us to make an effort". ".....the Real Self is waiting there to take you in and then whatever is done is done by something else, you have no hand in it. In this process all doubts and discussions are automatically given up....." (*Sad-Darshana Bhashya*, p. viii).

M. C. MENON,
Ramana Kendra, Delhi.

* * *

A BROAD PATH

It is with a pleasant surprise that I find that your *Mountain Path* is not a narrow one, as many ashram publications unfortunately are. It is delightful to see its columns wide open to many spiritual currents from other sides and from all faiths, as all are only the different colours in one solar spectrum.

E. VEDAVYAS,
Nellore.

APRIL

Accept my heartfelt gratitude for April. For sheer practical help to the seeker on the Path this is the best number yet. Your editorial on 'Higher Powers' is most illuminating. Apart from that, I particularly appreciate the profound common sense of Abdullah Qutbuddin and the vivid intuition of Indira Devi. I should like to know their addresses in case I feel inclined to write to them.

ALBERT STEIN,
Chicago.

Letters to Abdullah Qutbuddin can be addressed to Sri Ramanashram and will be passed on to him. The address of Indira Devi is 'Hari Krishna Mandir', Poona 16.

EDITOR.

GITA

We are enjoying the July *Mountain Path* very much, especially the editorial and the Gita translation. Please let us know whether it is intended to publish this translation in book form.

GITA SHARMA,
Madras.

Yes, the Ashram has the intention of publishing the Gita translation in book form when it is finished.

EDITOR.

PRAYER

Some time ago, while reading '*Day by Day with Bhagavan*', vol. II, I came across the prayer '*Saranagati*' on page 209. Since then my wife and I use it whenever we are confronted with difficulties and I assure you that we always obtain help. I think it would be to the benefit of other readers also if you would print it in *The Mountain Path*. If possible please give the musical notation also.

TIBOR and GEORGINA HALMAGYI,
Alegre, Brazil.

'Saranagati' is a very early hymn to Bhagavan composed by one of his earliest devotees, who is no longer living. Others also have found it effective as a prayer. A fairly literal translation of the words is given below, but it is not possible to give the musical notation, as Indian music does not conform to Western notation.

*I surrender to Thee.
I surrender to Thee.*

*Remembrance of Thee, Supreme Arunachala,
Ramana, Aruna, is Grace and gives strength.
This is the moment for Thy gracious look;
If delayed, Oh what then can I do
To avert grief and obtain joy?
Oh, I cannot bear Thy indifference, my Lord!*

— EDITOR.

JANUARY (1)

I cannot comprehend how anyone could have not liked your big issue on Maharshi. It was and is a living treasure and always will be. What a work! What pictures!

PAUL REPS,
Hawaii.

JANUARY (2)

I particularly liked your useful remarks on page 3 of this January's issue about turning the mind inwards to the sense of being, the feeling of 'I am'. You have helped at least one aspirant by this page, which I know almost by heart. Any more personal hints would be appreciated.

MARK WILDING,
Bournemouth.

POWERS

Regarding the article on 'Fire-Walking' in the April issue there was an article some years back in '*The Illustrated Weekly of India*' about Kuda Bux demonstrating it before a distinguished gathering of scientists in London. Scrapings from the soles of the feet were taken for laboratory tests before and after the fire-walking. Bux had to repeat some mantra to get into a sort of trance state. He explained that it was a case of mind overpowering matter. Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Mission explained during a symposium at Allahabad University that a subtle energy is emitted by the body, which is impervious to fire for some time.

V. B. IYER,
Bombay.

This is certainly interesting, but, as was said in the lead-in to our article, one of the interesting features of South Indian fire-walking is that it is performed by ordinary people who are not trying to prove anything to anybody but simply manifesting their devotion.

EDITOR.

REPRINTS (1)

Thank you very much for the April *Mountain Path* some of whose precious articles I would like, with your permission, to translate into German.

I. G. SCHULTZ,
Flensburg, Germany.

* * *

REPRINTS (2)

May I have the privilege of requesting you, as a devotee of Bhagavan and also for the benefit of humanity, to permit me to make a small booklet of the article by the Maharaja of Mysore, *Sri Ramana Maharshi and the Indian Philosophic Tradition*. I thought of translating it into Tamil and circulating both the English and Tamil copies at the time of Maharshi's Jayanthi celebration next December.

N. RAMAN,
Madras-17.

* * *

REPRINTS (3)

Can I have your permission to get *Spontaneous Awakening* by Douglas E. Harding in the October 1965 *Mountain Path* reprinted in *Chetana*? I am running there a series called *Witnesses*.

MAURICE FRYDMAN,
Bombay.

Certainly. Any article from 'THE MOUNTAIN PATH' may be reprinted, though of course with acknowledgement of its source.

EDITOR.

* * *

APPRECIATION (1)

The Mountain Path is a great source of inspiration to me. The peace and stillness of the Ashram at the foot of Arunachala means so much to me. It seems like, a flame that burns in a silent windless place in the centre of life.

GERTRUD LIETZ,
Stuttgart, Germany.

* * *

APPRECIATION (2)

It is always a delight to peruse each *Mountain Path* and to let its spiritual flow and teachings dissolve gradually but surely the many obstacles between our present knowledge of Self and the realization of the true Self. The Maharshi's

inspiration and guidance project forcefully through the articles and editorials, and the atmosphere of Sri Ramanashram envelops us as the bliss of an ever increasing consciousness pervades our being.

ILSE and GERD LEDERMANN,
N.S.W., Australia.

* * *

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

A brief write-up in two or three lines of the authors of the articles published will help readers to have a better appreciation. 'Who says' is more important than 'what is said', is it not?

T. A. KRISHNAMURTHY,
Palghat.

We used to give a brief introductory note on new contributors but have been getting a bit slack about it. I will see to it. But do not agree that 'who says' is more important than 'what is said'. Truth is truth and rubbish rubbish, whatever name may be beneath it.

EDITOR.

* * *

REINCARNATION (1)

I liked Mr. Gubbins' article very much and am writing to tell him so. Also Sir George Trevelyan's and the Incarnate Abbot's.

I wonder whether Mr. Gubbins has read the Zohar. Its teaching of devolution down into and through three hells and then evolution, starting from the lowest of them and up through the others, past the unconsciously good angels and the consciously good archangels, reversing the course of our devolutionary descent, obviously means reincarnation for the awakening of consciousness.

ETHEL MERSTON,
Ramananagar.

* * *

REINCARNATION (2)

One or two devotees here, including myself, were quite amazed to read in your excellent July editorial the sentence "A man who dies in England to-day may be reborn in Rome at the time of Caesar." Could you please write a little more about this in clarification? Ouspensky used to stress that if no progress is made now, one may have to relive this self-same life over and over again until awakening occurs. Awful! But not much worse than the prospect of emerging, for instance, in Imperial Rome. Of course, we all

hope that we are passing beyond the possibility of such gloomy future births—the very idea of them being sufficient to spur one on to ever greater efforts! But it would be interesting to read more about the theory of it.

SARAH, F.
London.

The purpose of my remark was to show that the physical time-scale applies only to this physical life. Just as you are free from your situation in time and place in a dream, so you are in the subtle state from which you return to rebirth. Re-entering the time scale in Imperial Rome is no more gloomy a prospect than re-entering it in London to-day; after all, there have been lofty souls and debased souls in both. What is certain is that, whether in ancient Rome or modern England, whether in China or America, we re-enter the earth-life in the circumstances which the karma we have made for ourselves demands. This means that it is impossible to repeat the same life over and over again. No one remains the same throughout his life. He leaves the stage with a different load of karma from that which he brought on with him, whether better or worse, and therefore a different set of circumstances is required. Thus you will see that the subject of rebirth merges into that of destiny, which we are taking up in our next issue.

EDITOR.

* * *

REINCARNATION (3)

I read the following in a book entitled: 'The Philosophy of Compassion' by Esme Wynne-Tyson and, as it is appropriate to the July issue, thought you might like to see it too.

An interesting sidelight on this subject (reincarnation) was provided some years ago

by the result of enquiries made by Geoffrey Gorer for a book he was writing on the state of the Englishman's religion. He gained his information by means of 5,000 questionnaires taken from a large cross-section of the public and found, to his amazement, that a wholly disproportionate percentage of the population believed in reincarnation, in spite of the fact that in no Western Church, orthodox or unorthodox, was this theory taught. He wrote: "The prevalence of this belief was the most surprising single piece of information that came out of my research." In his report, quoted in 'The Observer', he added: "A minority carry this belief to the logical point of stating that human souls can pass into animals." He found it quite impossible to account for the wide acceptance of what he referred to as this 'Eastern' belief among people of the West to whom it was never taught by their spiritual pastors. But in fact it was once as widespread in the West as it is in the East, and not only was it held by those most logical of all thinkers, the ancient Greeks, centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, but it actually survived in the Catholic Church until A.D. 553 when, at the Fifth Church Council at Constantinople, it was anathematised with other teachings of the great Alexandrian theologian Origen, at the instigation of the Emperor Justinian.

S. FARRAND,
London.

This is an interesting sidelight on the excellent article by our contributor H. S. Gubbins on 'Vestiges of Reincarnation in the West' in our issue of July 1966, and we are sure that it will interest many of our readers.

EDITOR.

CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK

Letters are invited from *The Mountain Path* readers to the following addresses:

Aitbuddhistische Gemeinde
Buddhistische Haus Georg Grimm
8919 Utting am Ammersee
West Germany.

Dr. P. J. Saher
Goerdelerstrasse 3 (x-106)
44 Muenster i.W.
West Germany.

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RIO G DE SUL, Brazil.

Prof. Rafael Lozada Carmona, Floristeria Potomac,
Av. Caracas, San Bernardina, CARACAS — Telef :
N. 55.83.50.

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Rev. McBride Panton, 216, 19th Avenue, S.E.,
ST. PETERSBURG, Florida 33705.

CIRCUS, Ring of Awareness.
P.O. Box 4277, CARMEL, California 93921

Mr. David Teplitz, 1040 F, Las Gamos Road,
SAN RAFAEL, California.

Canada

Mrs. Barbara Birch,
1218, Burnaby Street, VANCOUVER. B.C.

Australia

Mr. Kurt Forrer, Brookelands Cottage, 50, Sandells
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STOCKISTS ABROAD

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