



THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Vol. 17, No. II

April 1980



Sri Bhagavan's Birth Centenary



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

With madness for Thee
hast Thou freed me of
madness (for the world) ;
grant me now the cure of all
madness, Oh Arunachala !

—*The Marital Garland*
of *Letters*, verse 66

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(A QUARTERLY)

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meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala !"

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

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CONTENTS

	Page
EDITORIAL :	
Silence	67
A Centenary Tribute to Bhagavan Ramana — <i>Sri Prabhudas Patwari</i>	70
Physical Supports of Grace — <i>Arthur Osborne</i>	72
Ramana Maharshi and How to Take Responsibility — <i>Douglas E. Harding</i>	74
With the Sage of the Holy Hill — II — <i>Dilip Kumar Roy</i>	78
Reintegration — <i>Wei Wu Wei</i>	81
Coming In . . . from Out in the Cold — <i>Martin Leo</i>	82
What is True Religion — <i>Prof. G. V. Kulkarni</i>	83
Scenes from Ramana's Life — II — <i>B. V. Narasimha Swamy</i>	86
Sri Ramana and Arunachala — <i>Prof. G. V. Subbaramayya</i>	89
God Realization No Realization At All — <i>Martin Leo</i>	94
How I Came to Bhagavan — <i>Santha Rungachary</i>	95
Incredible Satsang — <i>Smt. Mani Sahukar</i>	99
Garland of Guru's Sayings — <i>Sri Muruganar</i> Tr. by <i>Prof. K. Swaminathan</i>	101

The Arunachala Hill picture in the cover page was
drawn by Sri Bhagavan Himself.

CONTENTS — (Contd.)

	Page
Song of At-One-Ment — (III) — K. Forrer . . .	103
Introducing . . . Sri K. Venkataraman . . .	107
Book Reviews . . .	109
Ashram Bulletin . . .	117

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— Editor.

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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.

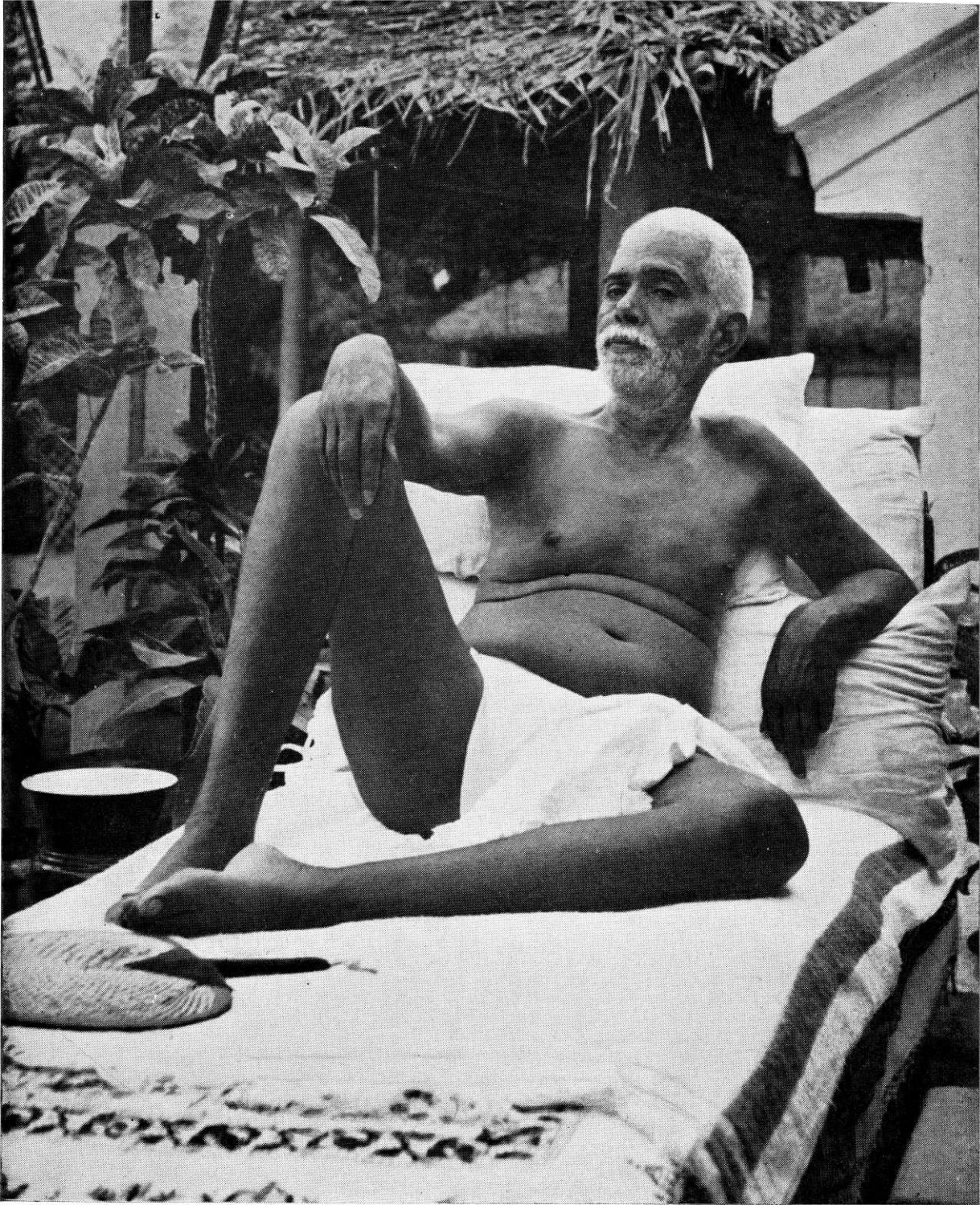
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH
is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



The Mountain Path

Vol. 17, No. II, April 1980

EDITORIAL

SILENCE

.....

SILENCE is not mere absence of speech, it is the cessation of the activity of the mind. It does not reject the world, but sustains it. Physical silence is a prelude to mental silence. It tunes out mental turbulence.

Silence as a technique for the attainment of spiritual experience is of ancient origin and is recommended by all religions. The patriarchs of Israel considered the voice of Silence to be a "clearer revelation" than natural phenomena like earthquakes, fire or storm. Bhagavan often quoted from the Old Testament:

"Be still and know that I am God"

The Egyptian mystics, St. Augustine, Thomas A. Kempis, the Quietists of the eighteenth century and the Trappists — all acknowledged the supremacy of silence as a *sadhana*.

"That which we most require for spiritual growth is the silence of the desire and the tongue before God. The language He most listens to is that of Silent love." (*St. John of the Cross*.)

The Vedas and the Upanishads proclaim the importance of silence in several places. Silence is advocated for leading the soul forward to contemplation. Verbal prayer is recommended in the initial stages but only as a means to silent meditation. The Brahad-aranyaka Upanishad says: "Therefore having become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected, one sees the self in the self." Among the Tamil Saints, Tayumanavar has sung the most glorious songs in praise of silence.

His own guru's name was Mauna Guru. A *muni* is one who has taken the vow of *mauna* or ascetic silence. The Buddha was called the *maha muni* (the great silent one). Also Pythagoras required of his students a one to three year period of silence during which they listened, absorbed and assimilated but said nothing. "He enjoined upon his followers continence of speech and perfect silence. They were asked to take their early morning walks alone. They were not to break their silence until they had rendered their own souls sedate and had co-harmonised the reasoning power."

The Quakers too conduct all their prayer meetings in silence. They feel that only from inner silence can proceed perfectly egoless action.

Language is useful to pass on information, to persuade or order people, and so on. But it cannot communicate Truth. The infinite cannot be caught in the web of words. Aldous Huxley describes how language constricts our awareness. "Each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But insofar as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet. ...That which, in the language of religion, is called 'this world' is the universe of reduced awareness expressed, and, as it

were, petrified by language. The various 'other worlds' with which human beings erratically make contact are so many elements in the totality of awareness belonging to Mind at Large. Most people most of the time know only what comes through the reducing valve and is consecrated as genuinely real by their local language. Certain persons, however, seem to be born with a kind of bypass that circumvents the reducing valve Through these bypasses there flows, not indeed the perception of everything that is happening everywhere in the universe (for the bypass does not abolish the reducing valve which still excludes the total content of Mind at Large), but something more than, and above all something different from, the carefully selected, utilitarian material which our narrow individual minds regard as a complete, or at least sufficient, picture of reality." (*The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*).

Ordinary awareness is a personal construction. Reality cannot be experienced through words, which are a distorting mirror or medium. One must go beyond language. Language is of the mind, Silence is of the heart.

Silence is not reflection. Reflection is *on* something and is utilitarian. A reflective man may be outwardly silent but inwardly very active. Reflection results in clarity of something, but it is not silence of the mind.

Real silence is not inaction. It is the cessation of the chatter of the mind. In reflection, the mind operates diligently. In silence, the mind dissolves into its source; the reflector, the reflection and the object of reflection become one. Silence is pure awareness beyond the comprehension of the mind.

Speech is necessary where there is a feeling of otherness. The feeling of otherness is the result of one's identification with his body. Where there is no body-consciousness, there is no individuality, no ego; there is only pure consciousness.

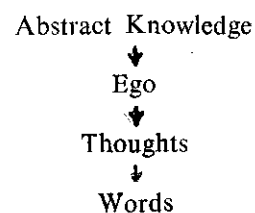
Bhagavan Ramana was ever in the state of pure consciousness. He communicated most effectively through Silence. He was the embodi-

ment of Dakshinamurthi. Bhagavan never identified himself with his body. Hence, it is only natural and to be expected that the consciousness that influenced people during his lifetime continues to do so even now. He taught through Silence and continues to teach through Silence even those who have not seen him. The Self is there always with or without the body.

Bhagavan speaks often of the importance and efficacy of Silence:

"Dakshinamurti observed silence when the disciples approached him. That is the highest form of initiation. It includes the other forms. There must be subject-object relationship in other *dikshas*. First the subject must emanate and then the object. Unless these two are there, how is the one to look at the other and touch him? *Mowna diksha* is the most perfect; it comprises looking, touching and teaching. It will purify the individual in every way and establish him in the Reality."

Once when he was asked why he did not go about preaching the Truth, Bhagavan said, "How do you know that I don't? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Preaching is simple communication of knowledge and can be done in silence too. What do you think of a man listening to a harangue for an hour and, going away without being impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits in a holy presence and leaves after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better: to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending forth intuitive force to act on others? Again how does speech arise? First, there is abstract knowledge (unmanifest). From this there arises the ego which gives rise to thoughts and words successively.



Words therefore are the great-grandsons of the original source. If words can produce an effect, consider how much more powerful preaching through Silence must be."

But Bhagavan discouraged people from taking a formal vow of Silence. Real silence to him was silence of the mind. "The inner Silence is Self-surrender. And that means living without the sense of ego."

While stressing the efficacy of elected silence as spiritual sadhana, one should not forget its value in secular life and in the learning process at all levels. Learning comes through patient listening and listening presupposes silence. Even in ordinary conversation one gains more by listening than by talking. In acquiring its mother-tongue, the child well begins and half does the difficult job of learning through long months of humble listening, ears intent and tongue still. In fact, all growth is growth in silence; for growth is access of being, which defies expression and is shattered by speech. The greatest of poets at the peak of tragic experience ends by saying: "The rest is silence." As Swinburne says in a similar context: "Words divide and read. But silence is most noble till the end."

What separates one person from another is the sense of a separate individuality. Where there is a sense of separateness, there is need for speech. Speech is the result of desire. Where

THE UNION

.....

Those who know do not talk.
 Those who talk do not know.
 Keep your mouth closed.
 Guard your senses.
 Temper your sharpness.
 Simplify your problems.
 Mask your brightness.
 Be at one with the dust of the earth.
 This is primal union.
 He who has achieved this state
 Is unconcerned with friends and enemies,
 With good and harm, with honor and disgrace.
 This therefore is the highest state of man.

—LAO TSU

there is desire, there follows the effort to achieve the object of desire.

Speech is movement towards something. It is Becoming. Where there is no desire, there is no need for speech. The bee buzzes a lot before it sits on the honey. When it tastes the honey, it is quiet. There is Silence when there is experience of Reality.

What links one with others is consciousness ; where there is pure consciousness there is no need for speech. The Self can communicate without speech. Speech is Becoming; Silence Being.

SILENCE

.....

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;
 It is the center hole that makes it useful.
 Shape clay into a vessel ;
 It is the space within that makes it useful.
 Cut doors and windows for a room ;
 It is the holes which make it useful.
 Therefore profit comes from what is there ;
 Usefulness from what is not there.

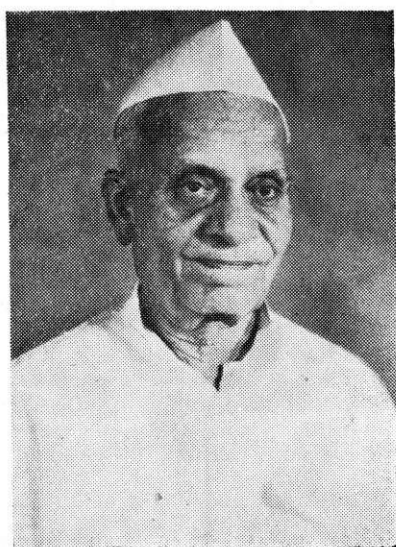
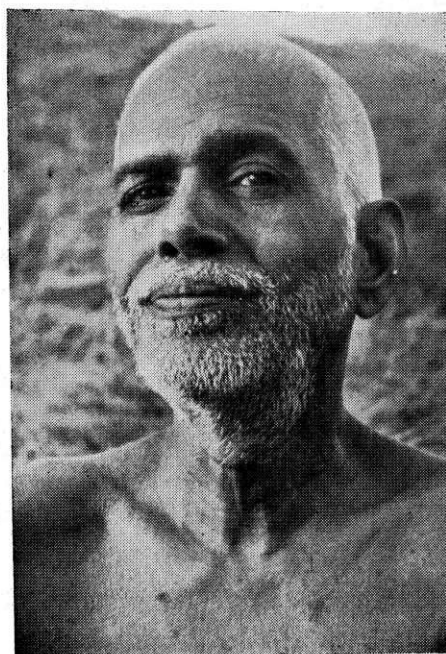
—LAO TSU

A Centenary Tribute to Bhagavan Ramana

By
Sri Prabhudas Patwari
 Governor of Tamil Nadu

IN this land of saints and philosophers Bhagavan Ramana lived for over fifty years in one place — ARUNACHALA, 'the Hill of the Holy Beacon' — spreading through *Silence*, like Lord Dakshinamurti of yore, the light of Knowledge over all the world. Many flocked to him from far and near, from India and abroad and found their unspoken doubts resolved by merely being in his presence, as he sat plunged in the depths of his being. Is not the 'centre' the same for all? He was not at first learned in the scriptures, but he had gained illumination in a flash and he found the scriptures describing his experience.

He was born as 'Venkataraman' under the star *Punarvasu* (hallowed by Sri Rama) in the early hours of the 30th December 1879 — following the festival day of *Ardra Darsan* — dedicated to Nataraja, the Lord of Cosmic



Sri Prabhudas Patwari

Dance, signifying creation, protection and dissolution. How significant! No wonder that his scholarly disciples held him to be a perfect manifestation of Lord Siva and Subrahmanya too! In fact, it was Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni who gave him the name we now know him by — BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI.

When he was only sixteen years old, he attained Self Realisation and he stayed in that state throughout his life, without further *sadhana*! The goal was reached at the starting point itself. Instead of the arduous way of Yoga, his simple prescription for aspirants was to *BE* — find yourself and abide there. No question of 'becoming'! *Awareness* is bliss! Dive deep within and let the ego, which consumes everything, consume itself! This

'awareness' can function as the immost *sruti*, even amidst all our worldly occupations. Sri Bhagavan would not, however, ask persons finding solace in devotion to give up that path. He had himself composed hymns in praise of Lord Arunachala. His advocacy of *Vichara* (Enquiry) alone marks him off from all other sages — past and present.

This path — the '*Mountain Path*' of Self-enquiry — is open to all men and women in all climes! There may be many ways to reach the top of the mount, but this is implicit and helpful in all of them. Each one has to make the enquiry himself, without waiting to be 'led' by another, however great.

Sri Ramana was incomparably telling and simple in clarifying doubts. When asked why we do not have knowledge of our previous births, he said that it was because God was kind. If we knew we were virtuous, we would be swollen, headed; and if bad, we would be miserable. That was why He hid from man the past but not the Self which is *Atma Jnana*.

Speaking about *siddhis*, Sri Ramana says: "The disappearance from sight by Yogis like Vasishtha and Viswamitra concerns only physical matter. Is that our chief interest? Are you not the Self — the Reality? Why trouble yourself about extraneous matters? Those who imagine physical invisibility counts in the quest for *mukti* are mistaken. You are not the body. The loss of ego is the main object and not the loss of the body."

He is more forthright in a later conversation. He says: "People look to the body and want *siddhis*. They are not content with the idea of *jnana* and so want *siddhis* to be associated with it. For this they go through the by-lanes instead of the royal path and so are likely to lose their way. In order to guide them aright and keep them on the royal road alone, *siddhis* are said to accompany *jnana*. Seekers must try to get *jnana* and then seek *siddhis* if they so desire."

The Maharshi made those who saw visions understand their origin. Once a Swiss lady sitting before him reported that she saw his face becoming cherub-like and draped in glorious

flowers. Ramana suggested that she had been thinking of a child and it appeared in her vision, and the lady confessed she had.

Once a question was put as to how a *grihasta* would fare in the scheme of *moksha*. Sri Ramana had a ready answer: "Why do you think of yourself as a *grihasta*? If you go out as a *sannyasi*, the thought that you are a *sannyasi* will haunt you. Thus you will be substituting only one thought for another. The fault does not lie in the environment but in you, in your mind. Change of environment does not help."

In *Srimad Bhagavata*, Prahlada tells Narasimha that he does not want to abandon those around him and solicit *moksha* only for himself. This prayer has later been misinterpreted, as if solitude and salvation were a negation of service to humanity. Ramana says that realisation of the Self is the greatest service that can be rendered to humanity. The saints serve mankind even though they dwell in forests. But solitude is not to be found in forests only; it can be found in the thick of worldly occupations. The saint helps humanity unknown. In fact, desire is the crowd, desirelessness is solitude.

As for *saguna upasana*, Sri Ramana says that the form and appearance of God-manifestation are determined by the mind of the devotee. After God is seen, the enquiry starts about the duality of the seer and the seen. The enquiry will lead to the realisation of the Self. For many people, *bhakti* is easier. This is how Sri Ramana established the supremacy of *advaita jnana* without running down other forms of mental experience.

The Bhagavan's physical presence disappeared on 14th April, 1950. It was noticed that the event was marked by a moving star of exceptional luminosity — it travelled slowly from the south towards the north and disappeared behind the peak of the Hill. But his grace still abides here and will go so for all time.

May we all prove worthy to receive his Grace now and always!

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya !

Physical Supports of Grace

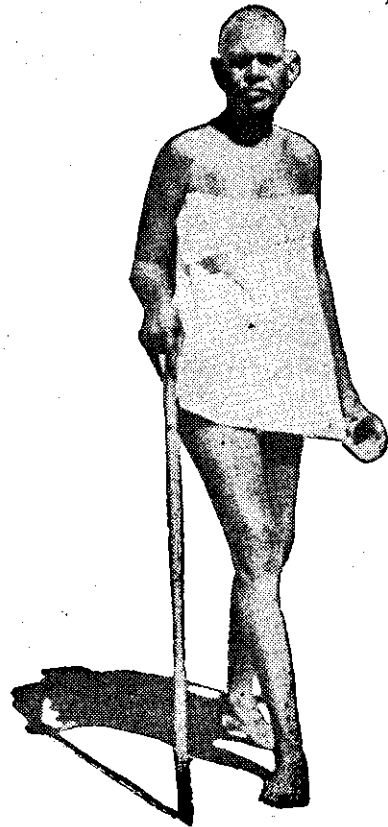
By
Arthur Osborne

IN every religion physical objects serve as a support of divine grace. A tooth of the Buddha, a hair of the Prophet, a fragment of the true cross, has been enough to draw pilgrims through the centuries. At the time of the Reformation in Europe the attack was immediately turned upon such physical supports—relics, shrines, rosaries and so forth. The Reformers did not know that they were undermining religion, they were earnest and devout, but what resulted from the inconclasm of the 17th century was the rationalism, agnosticism and atheism of the 18th and 19th. They made reason the arbiter of faith, rejecting whatever had no rational explanation, and even today there are critics and historians who praise this attitude, not seeming to realize that to subordinate the spiritual to the mental is an inversion of the natural order of things and leads inevitably to the rationalism that denies the Spirit altogether.

Bhagavan taught that the Heart is the Source of the ego, the Spirit is the Source of the mind. The mind can sink back into the Spirit but cannot understand it, at least not except by becoming merged in it.

Actually, it may be possible to give a rational explanation of the physical support of grace. It may be that they serve as radiating centres equivalent in a sense to the transmitters of physical radiations; however, those who attacked them knew nothing of such possibilities, nor do those who admit such possibilities today understand that spiritual forces stand in no need of their rational explanations but work whether explained or not.

Whether explained in terms of radiation or not, grace does emanate from a physical support. Is it imagination? If Bhagavan had been



asked he might have agreed that it is, but only in the sense that the whole world, including one's own body, is imagination. It is as real as the mind that questions its reality.

Some, however, have wondered whether it is legitimate to use physical supports of grace on such a direct and purely spiritual path as that enjoined by Bhagavan. It was with some such doubt that an English devotee who has never yet been able to come to Tiruvannamalai wrote to me asking for some subject, such as a small stone, from near the tomb but felt that his request might be inappropriate. It was

quite appropriate. Although he taught the purely direct and spiritual path of *vichara* Bhagavan never discouraged any from observing the rites of their religion or from using any physical supports so long as they were helpful. The path he taught was universal; it included devotion and disinterested activity as well as knowledge. Indeed, his devotional hymns to Arunachala are a constant support to the devotees. His very coming there was recognition of the physical manifestation of grace, since Arunachala has been through the ages the supreme centre of silent initiation, of Siva manifested as Dakshinamurthy, teaching in silence. No one could be more insistent on its actual sanctity. He said: "Mount Kailas is the abode of Siva but Arunachala is Siva Himself." He saw the sacred hill as the form assumed by pure Spirit for the support and guidance of men. Now that the physical body of Bhagavan — that most precious of all physical supports of grace — has been withdrawn from us, the hill emits power and grace for his devotees even more than before.

When I was asked for some token from the hill I was able, fortunately, to quote the approval of Bhagavan in a similar case. Once when he was walking on the hill he said to Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami who was with him: "Some devotee from a far-off land has asked for a stone to be taken from the most holy part of the hill and sent to him. He thinks that some part of the hill alone is holy; he does not know that the whole hill is Arunachala Himself." And, picking up a small stone, he added, "I sent him a stone like this."

Bhagavan would sometimes give a devotee some object as a vehicle of grace, but very seldom, as he had normally nothing to give. Perhaps also because he scrupulously avoided giving grounds for jealousy. In his youthful years he would sometimes cut a stick from the hill, fashion it into a staff for walking and give it to someone. Sometimes also he would touch an object that was shown to him and

give it back. His old school friend, Ranga Iyer, once brought him a walking stick and he gave it back, bidding Ranga Iyer use it himself, but first he held it in his hand for a while. When I left for Madras and showed him the lifesize portrait of him that I was taking with me he held it in his hands before giving it back and saying: "He is taking Swami with him."

It may not be inappropriate to end this article with the strange story of how he who had nothing to give once gave me an object he had touched. We were sitting outside the old Hall. Bhagavan was reclining on his usual couch and behind him was the stone couch presented formerly by Mr. McIver. There was a sudden clatter and we saw that a metal shoe-horn had fallen to the ground behind the head of the stone couch. How it came to fall there no one could say — there was no breath of breeze and no monkeys or squirrels were playing around. Perhaps it had been stolen from some house by a monkey previously and left in the palm-leaf roof above and had gradually been slipping so that at this moment it lost equilibrium. Anyway there it was. Bhagavan sent the attendant for it and, after turning it over and examining it began demonstrating to him its use as a spoon. I was sitting in the front row and explained: "No, Bhagavan, it is a shoe-horn," and demonstrated how it would be used to put on European shoes. Bhagavan laughed and with his usual vivacity began explaining and demonstrating to the attendant. Then, as was his way, he quite suddenly lost interest and handed it back. The attendant took it and put it back on the head of the stone couch. Bhagavan turned and looked and one could see the disapproval; he hated anything to be wasted, but what was to be done with it? Suddenly a solution occurred to him and he smiled and, turning to me, asked whether I would like it. And so I received a gift from him who had nothing to give, from the Divine Giver, from him who has all to give.

Ramana Maharshi and How to Take Responsibility

By
Douglas E. Harding

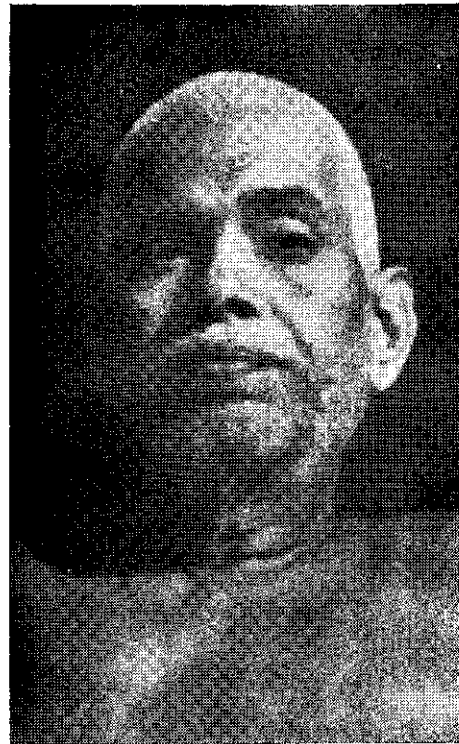
QUESTION: Should we not think of and work for the welfare of the country?

MAHARSHI: First take care of yourself and the rest will follow.

Life has a distressing way of presenting us with dilemmas — seemingly insoluble problems about what to do and what not to do. Not so much problems with *no* answer as predicaments with *two* quite contradictory answers. We don't know where we stand. Issues aren't clear-cut. Right and wrong have a habit of changing places. You might say that life is a cleft stick, a game impossible to win, a continuing choice of evils.

One of the most troublesome of these dilemmas is whether to watch life from the sidelines or to get involved, whether to decline or welcome responsibility, whether (in current slang) to cop out or to cop in.

The world's great teachers don't make it any easier for us to decide. They seem only to add to the confusion. Take Jesus for example. On the one hand in his Sermon on the Mount, he tells us to relax, to let tomorrow take care of itself, and leave everything to the hidden Power that makes the lilies grow. On the other hand, in the Parable of the Talents, he heaps praise on the busy, duty-bound, responsible citizen, and cheerfully consigns the unprofitable layabout to hell. Or take Nisargadatta Maharaj: "As long as you have the idea of influencing events, liberation is not for you. The very notion of doership, of being a cause, is bondage." And yet, again and again, he insists that conscious effort is essential,



and indeed that earnestness is the decisive factor. Finally, take Ramana Maharshi himself. "No-one succeeds without effort," he declares. "The successful few owe their success to their perseverance. And then immediately he adds: "A passenger in a train would be silly to keep his load on his head. Let him put it down; he will find that the load reaches the destination all the same. Similarly, let us not pose as the doers, but resign ourselves to the guiding power."

Well, which shall we do — carry our own load, or dump it? Help others carry their

heavy loads, or accept no responsibility for them either?

The dilemma is far from being a merely intellectual or theological puzzle. It is real and it hurts — so much so that some of us are in danger of being torn apart by it. There is no 'right' choice. Whether we take the way of just letting things happen, or the way of strenuous intervention, we are in for trouble. The life of the drop-out who exerts no effort and makes no decisions and accepts no responsibility for himself (let alone for his fellow man) — what sort of life is that? As for his opposite, the 'square' — the hard-working, conscientious, load-carrying, public-spirited man — we all know the compromises and frustrations and anxieties that are coming to *him*, to say nothing of the decay and death that will shortly terminate himself and all his well-laid enterprises.

So much for the dilemma. This article, with the help of Ramana Maharshi, is about its radical solution, a truly practical one which we can immediately start to apply in our everyday living. But first let us take stock of the human situation of what it is to be someone in the world, a living thing.

It is the very nature of every creature to assume responsibility for its own welfare, its separate thinghood. Thus it takes up a portion of the world's space, filling out this volume to the exclusion of other things. And it needs a constant supply of other things to survive: it persists only by competing for and incorporating them (we call the process *feeding*, of course). In general, its behaviour is aimed at the survival of this thing at the expense of other things. Now this unrelenting self-seeking isn't merely a necessity of life: it is the life-thrust itself. You don't say of a vegetable in your garden that it generously takes less than its fair share of water and sunlight, or praise a piglet for not being greedy at the trough. On the contrary, you dismiss them as unhealthy, weaklings, insufficiently alive.

The Unknowing

By

Ka Kavanaugh

i am....
in the thought
beyond the thought
to be.....
beckoning the Silence
as a silent blue lily
before the misty warm sky
of a summer dawn.....

we are the thought
that springs from the seed,
to grow in the field
of becoming.
or rest on the threshold
of the Unknown....

It isn't different with people. Let's face it: a vital, truly alive man is one who knows what he wants, and goes after it, and gets it. He is self-reliant, energetic, audacious, determined, fully co-operative where it suits his purpose and at other times quite ruthless. Above all, he doesn't moan about his bad luck, his crippling circumstances, or what God and his parents did to him. Instead, he takes himself for better or worse as his own property, for which he alone is responsible. And insofar as he avoids this responsibility, and lacks purpose and drive and a strong sense of doership, he falls short of manhood. You could charitably call him a retiring, humble, self-effacing man; or, more honestly, a tired man, a failed man, a sick man, and no more deserving of our admiration than the wilting plant or the under-sized piglet is. To be manly is to take responsibility for one's particular portion of the world and all the life in it, and to live out that life zestfully, without apologies or holding back. Vitality and responsibility come to much the same thing.

A Hat Salesman and a Capable Ruler

.....

A man of Sung did business
In silk ceremonial hats.
He travelled with a load of hats
To the wild men of the South.
The wild men had shaved heads,
Tattooed bodies.
What did they want
With silk
Ceremonial hats ?

Yao had wisely governed
All China.
He had brought the entire world
To a state of rest.
After that, he went to visit
The four Perfect Ones
In the distant mountains
Of Ku Shih.
When he came back
Across the border
Into his own city
His lost gaze
Saw no throne.

— from *The of Chuang Tzu*

What price, then, the Sermon on the Mount, with its insistence on passivity? And what shall we say of the Seer who is happy to witness life going by, and careful not to get involved in it? Are the Liberated wilting, diluted, failed, irresponsible humans? Obviously they are not! Quite the contrary, they are specially alive, and in their own (sometimes concealed) way marvellously determined and energetic and (ultimately) successful, and in fact the very opposite of those sad humans who (for some reason or no reason) lack vital force. There is a world of difference between the drop-out and the Seer, no matter how alike their appearance and behaviour may happen to be.

And the difference is simply this: the drop-out thinks he's some kind of person (for example, a care-free person), whereas the Seer sees he's not a person at all. The one imagines he's a thing in the world, while the

other perceives himself as the no-thing that contains the world. And not only is the Seer the Space in which *things* happen, but also the Space in which *all the contradictions and dilemmas that afflict things* happen, without affecting the Space in the slightest. In his capacity (*verb. sap*) as Container of things, the Space which is also their Source and Reality, he *is* the reconciliation of whatever divides them. Thus the Seer resolves the dilemma of passivity *versus* activity, of detachment *versus* involvement, of witnessing *versus* responsibility, in the only way they can be resolved — by being the Source of *both*. As their Source and Spring, he is upstream of all tributaries. He is the Stem of the cleft stick. He is the undivided Divider.

And you, dear Reader, are that Source. You are not, and never have been, a man or woman or child. Intrinsicly, therefore, you are free of all the contradictions and tearing-apart that such creatures are subject to.

What is a human being? It is, as we've already observed, a something — opaque, solid, small. It isn't empty of itself but full of itself of its own material. It occupies and packs out with flesh and blood a few thousand cubic inches, thus excluding other creatures from that volume. It exists by closing itself to others, by being distant from them, distinct from them, unlike them. It proclaims itself alone, announcing to an alien world "Here am I! Keep off! No entry!"

Are you like this, in your own experience, at this moment?

If so, how do you manage to easily to *take in* this page, right now? How else but by giving it room, by disappearing in its favour? Have you anything where you are, now, to keep it out with? Aren't you built open? Aren't you an empty vessel for filling with anything and everything, all the way from the stars to this printing? And when you look up from this page to the face of your friend over there, don't you take in and take on that face? Or, if you *aren't* accommodation for things, but

just one of them, how do you account for their brilliance at this moment, compared with the obscurity of their observer, not to mention his absence? All you need to settle these questions is to stop thinking long enough just to take a look. And then, if you really do experience yourself as that small and opaque object you see in your mirror, if you really are what you look like *to others*, why then you are a human being, and that's that! But if you really are what you look like *to yourself* — Room for all things to come and go in — why then you are God, and should stop all this pretence of being human.

As God, as the Space, for all and the Source of all, you are responsible for all. There is no second Power. You did it all, you are doing it all. But notice now whether this Space that you are is *efforting* its contents. Do you, as filled with this scene, have any sense of intending it, of contriving it and putting it together, of causing and sustaining it? It is for you, who alone are responsible for it, to say. Isn't it rather that everything flows spontaneously, without motive or taking thought, from your Being, a sort of spin-off from Who you are? Isn't Maharshi right when he says: "No motive can be attributed to that power..... God is untouched by activities, which take place in His presence."?

Here is the perfect reconciliation between the detachment that witnesses all and the involvement that originates all. It was the false notion that you are a human being which gave rise to the dilemma, the contradiction between the Sermon on the Mount and the Parable of the Talents. Your True Nature is the Paradox to end all paradoxes.: there is nothing that is *not* you and nothing that *is* you;

this Space *is* and *isn't* its contents; you care and you don't care; you control everything, and it just happens.

And, after all, these conclusions make good sense. The responsibility that a *man* feels, his sense of being a doer controlling this and that, is illusory. Every event in his life is conditioned by the other events constituting the universe: it takes the Whole to make every part what it is. Behind every happening and every thing lies only one Cause, namely the First Cause which is God. Attributing particular causes to particular events, and feeling personally responsible for any of them, is quite unscientific. The universe is strictly indivisible, and the only way to take responsibility for some of it is to take responsibility for the lot. Which is to be God.

You as God are responsible for everything, and manage it all perfectly well — and this without any sense of responsibility or good management. How can you know this for sure? Only by being yourself now and consulting your own first-hand experience. Only by ceasing to masquerade as a man, a woman, a child.

The answer to the problem of personal responsibility is not to give up feeling responsible, but to take it to the limit — where it vanishes. You *are* the answer. See who you are, and the problem at once dissolves, and you can say with Maharshi:

"Action forms no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion: 'I am the doer'..... Be fixed in the Self and act according to nature without the sense of doership..... Attending to the Self includes attending to the work.....The work will not bind you. It will go on automatically."

All speech and reasoning, all eloquence and science, all methods and all psychologies, all slogans and suggestions, are not worth a minute's silence, in which the soul, completely open, yields itself to the embrace of the Spirit.

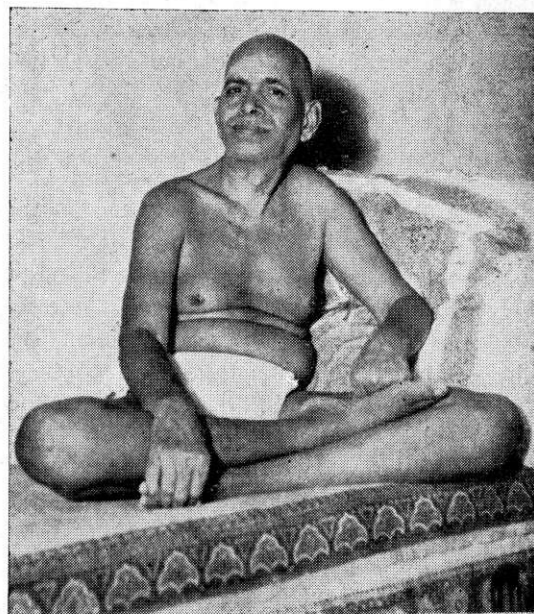
—Maurice Zundel

With the Sage of the Holy Hill—II¹

By
Dilip Kumar Roy

RAMANA was suddenly drawn to Arunachala Hill in 1896, when he had just turned sixteen. With just three rupees in his pocket, he left his home and parents and everything a man holds dear. He did not even know the way but somehow arrived there with literally just what he wore, trusting entirely to the mercy of his heart's Lord, Arunachala Siva. He arrived at the temple and went straight to the sanctum of the Lord and, with tears coursing down his cheeks, said: "I have come at your call, Lord. Accept me and do with me as you will."

Thereafter he lived ever immersed in the bliss of samadhi. My dear friend Duraiswami, who knew him for years as one of his intimates, told me this: Once he was expressing his admiration for the sage's power of concentrating day and night on his sadhana, when the other cut in smiling. "Sadhana? Who did sadhana? What did I know of sadhana? I simply came and sat down in the temple or elsewhere in Arunachala and then lost all count of time." To me he said the same thing in a slightly different way with his characteristic irony. "People call Him by different names, but He came to me with no name or introduction so I know not how to define Him. What happened was that my desires and ego left me — how and why I cannot tell — and that I lived thenceforward in the vastness of timeless peace. Sometimes," he added with a smile. "I stayed with closed eyes and then, when I opened them, people said that I had come out of my blessed meditation. But I never knew the difference between no-meditation and meditation, blessed or otherwise. I simply lived a tranquil witness to whatever happened around me, but was never called upon to interfere. I could never feel any urge to *do* anything except to *be*, just *be*. I see



that all is done by Him and Him alone, though we, poor puppets of maya, feel ourselves important as the doers, authors and reformers of everything! It is the ineradicable ego, the I-ness in each of us, which is responsible for the perpetuation of this maya with all its attendant sufferings and disenchantments."

"What then is the remedy?" I asked.

"Just *be*," he answered. "Delve down into That which only *is*, for when you achieve this you find: 'That am I'; there is and can be nothing else than That. When you see this, all the trappings of maya and make-believe fall off, even as the worn-out slough of the snake. So all that you have to do is to get to this I, the real I behind your seeming I, for then you

¹ Reprinted from *Kumbha*, pp. 170-182, with the kind permission of *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan*, and continued from the January, 1980, issue.

are rid for ever of the illusive I-ness and all is attained, since you stay thenceforward at one with That which is you; that's all."

"We have to do nothing then?"

"Why? You have done the greatest thing, the only thing that is worth doing, and when you have done this, you may rest assured, all that has to be done will be done through you. The thing is," he added, "not to worry about doing; just be, and you will have done all that is expected of you."

"That is all very well," I demurred. "But who is to show us how to do this — or rather *be* as you put it? Is not a guide, Guru, necessary? Or are you against *Guruvad* (the Guru principle)?"

"Why should I be against *Guruvad*?" he smiled. "Some people evidently need a Guru; let them follow him. I am against nothing except the ego, the I-ness which is the root of all evil. Rend this and you land pat in the lap of the one Reality That, the one solvent of all questionings"

"But why then don't you come out to preach this great message?" I asked, "For most people, you will agree, do not even know there is this I-ness to be got rid of."

He gave me again that quizzical smile tinged with his characteristic irony. Then he turned grave and asked:

"Have you heard of the saying of Vivekananda that if one but thinks a noble, selfless thought, even in a cave, it sets up vibrations throughout the world and does what has to be done, what can be done?"

I nodded. "But forgive me if I presume to ask whether it is being done in a tangible way."

He gave me a quizzical smile.

"Listen. A spiritual seeker used to attend religiously the lectures of a great pulpit orator and feel thrilled by all that he heard from day to day. But after some time he discovered, to his chagrin, that after all that he had heard

he was just where he had been at the start — not an impulse had changed. Then he happened upon a silent man, a Yogi who said practically nothing; nevertheless he felt attracted by something in him he could not define and so went on being near him. After a time he discovered, to his great joy and surprise, that things which had worried him before affected him less and less, till he came to feel a deep peace and a sense of liberation he could not account for. And this grew with the passage of time until at last he became a different man altogether. Now tell me, which of the two would you name as the doer of something 'tangible'?"

And this was true. After just being near him for a little while my gloom of months melted away like mist before sunrise. Nor could I myself "account for" why and how it happened. I only knew — and vividly — that it had happened. I shall never forget that night when, after having meditated at his feet, I felt a sudden release from what had been stifling me for weeks. It was such a delectable experience that I did not feel like going to bed. I pulled out a deck-chair and merely reclined in it under the stars, utterly relaxed. Everything around me seemed to drip peace and harmony; the breeze, the murmuring leaves, the hooting of an owl, a dog barking, the insects screeching... everything deepened my vivid sense of care-free plenitude. And I wrote a poem in the fulness of my heart of which I will give here a few lines:

You came in a pauper's garb and stayed
to teach

That world what only a beggar could impart
And offered a kingdom we could never reach
By all our science, philosophy and art.

Some day a light shall dawn and then
we'll know

What you came to give — a King, incognito!

He left his mortal body in April, 1950, (after having suffered excruciating physical pain for *two* long years.) One of his arms

had become cancerous. The medical men did their best but nothing availed. He died, but with the self-same radiant smile on his lips. Once the painful wound had to be prodded thoroughly. Declining an anaesthetic he stretched out his arm. His face remained serene — not one groan issued from his lips. The doctor was amazed.

Such was he. No wonder they called him *Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi*.

The modern man often enough denounces the mystic as a selfish seeker of personal salvation. There may, indeed, be some sadhus who belong to this category. But the major mystics have never been indifferent to the suffering of others. Sri Ramana Maharshi proved this once again by the great life he lived after his attainment. He was always available, always ready to help with his words — more with his silent spiritual presence. He was the soul of divine compassion, always giving, never asking anything for himself. No man who is selfish can attract such a band of devoted seekers around him. This is not the place to talk about his remarkable devotees but I will end this tribute with a letter from one of his disciples, an Englishman, Major A. W. Chadwick. I was fascinated by his personality and wrote him a letter which I need not quote as it will be readily inferred from his reply, which is dated October 11, 1946.

Dear Dilip

It was kind of you to write ... I feel diffident in answering your question as I fear I have made or may make myself appear of some spiritual attainment a thing to which I have no pretension. I am just a humble seeker, with the same failings and the same difficulties as everybody else. That all paths are extremely difficult there can be no doubt, but how can it be otherwise? The ego which has taken such tremendous pains to establish itself as a seemingly independent and self-

sufficient entity will fight to the last ditch before it will admit defeat and relinquish its claims. But my motto has been persistence and I think that by that victory is assured. The Guru of a friend, of mine, who passed away some years ago and was undoubtedly a jnani, used to tell him that if he desired Self-realization sufficiently he could not even die till he had attained his goal. And in that is our hope.

You ask me how long I had to persevere in solitude before I attained peace ... Surely peace is a thing which grows and is not for the majority attained in a flash once and for all. (I do not speak of Self-realization) The moment I came into the presence of my Guru, eleven years ago, I found peace. My staying here was never premeditated; it was just something which had to be in spite of myself. It was my true home. However the pendulum swings, in time the beats grow shorter and shorter until it comes to rest in the Self. To expect anything else is to expect the impossible.

It seems to me that the great thing is to follow one Guru and one path unwaveringly and the goal is assured. For after all, the goal and the path are the same; the Chinese call both the Way — Tao. But we become disheartened and impatient. These seem to be the two greatest obstacles to attainment. If we can only face up to these and go on in spite of everything and everybody then there is absolutely no doubt as to the result. But how few of us can! May the Supreme Guru give us the necessary strength!

I seem to have been very prolix and to have preached. I ask your forgiveness.

Very cordially yours,
A. W. Chadwick

Glory to the Guru who can inspire such love and devotion in men of this calibre!

REINTEGRATION

By
Wei Wu Wei

PART I

ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION

*I can be Aware of Split-consciousness
Whereby split-consciousness is healed
and becomes Aware.*

In phenomenal living, which is termed 'Relativity', all sentient-beings, so being are conscious, which is being conscious of sentience.

RELATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS: being conscious of Consciousness.

Within historical times, and perhaps for uncounted ages before, a minority of sentient-beings, principally human, has become *conscious* of consciousness (of being conscious), and thereby has been able to conceptualise objectively. This, though still relative, is evidently a superior degree of consciousness, comprising a suppositional 'subject' cognising suppositional phenomenal objects.

Beyond this 2nd degree of consciousness there would not seem to be reason to suppose that anything can be *attained* by purely relative means, since these phenomenally-identified, individuals have not transcended identification.

But a few sentient-beings throughout recorded history have, by negating their own relativity, re-discovered Absolute — which term is a verbal symbol for what Relativity, when no longer relative, is and always has been even when subjected to relative space-time. This is so because 'Absolute' connotes what is not subjected to 'space' and 'time', which are concepts defining the relative extension of objects by which they are relative to Absolute,

and whereby phenomenally they appear to exist.

What then happens, or seems to happen, when this hitherto rare occurrence occurs?

2

ABSOLUTE CONSCIOUSNESS: being conscious of Awareness.

It may be suggested here that sentient phenomena who have already become conscious of consciousness have recognised, or have been recognised by (which is not-different), a further, non-relative degree of consciousness to which as a verbal symbol the term 'awareness' may be applied. This ulterior and potential degree of consciousness is common to all sentient-beings, is said to be present in deep (dreamless) sleep, in fact is and must necessarily always be present, though apparently absent, since in relative terms it is 'timeless' and 'infinite'.

Therefore the 2nd degree of consciousness is not the end, the ultimate, for Absolute, if the term is to have its full meaning, requires a further degree of transcendence. It is then necessary for the sentient-being to become conscious of being *Aware* as he had previously become conscious of being conscious, thereby becoming able to know, and therefore to be, what he is as I — for 'knowing' in this sense is 'being'. (1) Such 'being' is then Absolute, or Absolute Awareness, which is ultimate, unicity, wholeness, relative no-thingness, and all there could be — which is absolute absence of relative 'being' and absolute Presence as such.

¹ That it 'knowing' is 'being' was confirmed by the enlightened sage of our times, Ramana Maharshi.

But this, as a sentient-being, he cannot factually *do* for as such he cannot escape from his relative limitations: relatively he cannot 'become' Aware, but what he already is as what we have called 'being-Aware' can supervene on what-he-appears-to-be-in relativity. Then, from being a phenomenal aspect of Noumenality, while still 'living' in relativity he can appear as a Noumenal aspect of phenomenality, which is what we sometimes call 'a sage'.

Finally, since 'This' aforesaid is, and must necessarily be, all that any phenomenon has

ever been or ever can be beyond its phenomenality or relative appearance, 'This' must be present timelessly and unextended in space, though phenomenally and relatively absent. 'This' cannot be far, since there is no 'space', 'This' cannot be sooner-or-later, since there is no 'duration'; therefore 'This' must be here and now and I 'forever'.

Those who have apperceived 'This' have told us that 'This' is the birthright and total-being of all and every sentient phenomenon which could ever appear in relative space-time.

(to be continued)

Coming In...from Out in the Cold

By
Martin Leo

The state of Being, Being God is not subject to temporal conditions nor can it be subject to or dependent on any apparent outside condition.

Being unconditional, God Being knows not other than its own primal ignorance; in other words it knows no other condition than its own primal Self — Being.

Being absolutely ignorant of any apparent relative condition, this primal Being state is absolutely independent of any condition.

The unconditional will always remain such, and no matter how apparent sensation to the contrary is, there can be no comparative state existing.

If such a comparative state could exist it would deny the Absoluteness of Primal Being for it would declare itself as being relative to the Absolute, thereby denying the very state of Being Absolute.

The condition of apparent opposites will continue to appear as a result of the denial of One's Primal Absolute Being.

Who or what is there to deny that Being?

There is nought!

Conceptually of course thought arises which may deny this state of Being, but in actuality the very state of Being denies thought itself.

Being Itself Is!

The world of perception, conception and relativity in other words all apparent conditional states, will continue to exist, but it is Being itself which is Being those states (notwithstanding its own Being).

In the absence of Being itself (an impossibility) these apparent other states could not exist, and only continue to exist by Being itself. This apparent contradiction nullifies itself by the realization that there is no other being or state which is not Being Itself.

Again thought may arise which denies this statement; however no one can actually deny that everything IS.

Being Itself.

What is True Religion?

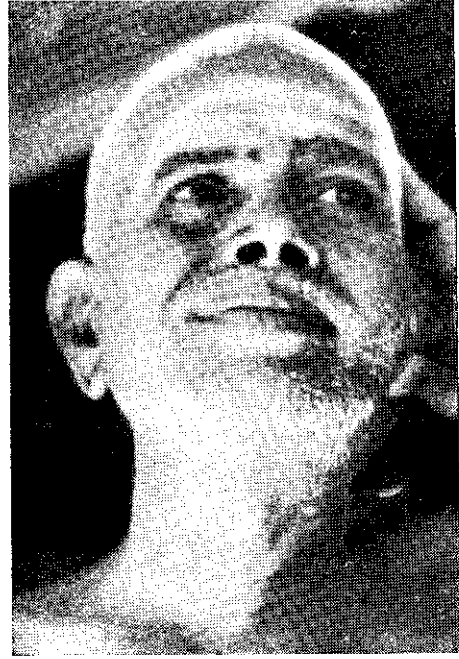
By
Prof. G. V. Kulkarni

MY father was a religious man. He used to worship the images of God. He especially loved Siva and worshipped Him throughout his life. He used to read 'Guru-Cherita' of Saraswati Gangadhar daily and used to recite many hymns addressed to God. He used to visit temples and go round them. He visited several places including Benares and Gokarna and stayed there for some time. He undertook fasts. He visited saints and served them. During the last ten years, when he had become totally blind, he took recourse to Nama-Japa and found satisfaction in it. He used to listen to religious talks. Finally he fell seriously ill and in a coma left his body. His death was beautiful, in the midst of the chanting of the Bhagavadgita.

I respect my father, I owe a great deal to him: I learnt from him that true religion must transform man totally. It consists in overcoming the fear of life and death, attachment to the body and the outer world. Thus in a way he was my guru.

Later when I came in contact with my Sad-guru Bhagavan Ramana — though he had left the body then — I found the deeper secret of true religion. It happened thus:

In the year 1951, when I was working as a lecturer in the N. Wadia College, Poona, I fell seriously ill. I was a victim of T.B. and was in a sanatorium. It was a period of great stress and strain, a crisis in my life. I had heard the name of Bhagavan Ramana and knew something of his life through Prof. R. Sadasiva Aiyer, a great devotee of Bhagavan and a senior colleague of mine. When Prof. Aiyer knew about my serious illness, he wrote me long letters now and then and the Grace of Bhagavan began to work through him. Those



letters contained wonderful anecdotes about Bhagavan and his teachings. He sent me some books also, viz. *Ramane Arunachala* by Arthur Osborne, *Five Hymns*, *Ramane-Hridayam*, a Sanskrit translation of *Ulladu Narpadu* etc. All this made a very deep impression on my mind and sustained me throughout the most trying period of my life. Out of the sheer grace of Bhagavan, who had become my Guru, I was not only cured of the disease but was also relieved of the mental malady. I was reborn with a fresh and optimistic outlook on life. I resumed my normal life and career. I got an opportunity to visit Sri Ramanasramam for the first time after I completed my doctoral thesis on the 'Concept of Viveka' which contained the antecedents of Ramana's philosophy in ancient Sanskrit literature. Ever since we

The Reflection

By
Ka Kavana

i am a poet.....
with a knowing of words
and a knowing of meanings.
i am a poet.....
between the word.
and the meaning.

....with open eyes
i see the sky.....
with tears of Joy
i sigh.....
to Realize
that This and That
are One.
and my mind
a mirror
or IT.....

have been frequent visitors to the Ashram which has become a sweet Home to me, my friends and relatives and brother devotees. We have started *Ramana Satsang Mandal* at Kolhapur and it has become a centre for *sadhana*. Bhagavan, who is the soul of the universe, is our *Sadguru*, our beacon-light in life. Service to him is our mission.

What is Religion? The Sanskrit term is *Dharma*. 'That which sustains the Universe, all the creatures in the Universe, is Dharma', says the *Mahabharata*. In Vedic literature this is called '*Rita*.' The best definition given by Shankaracharya is: 'That is Dharma by which man attains material prosperity and spiritual welfare.' (*Abhyudaya* and *Nishreyasa*). That which binds man to God is Religion. Religion is nothing if not God-Realisation or Self-Realisation. True religion aims at this. It is 'being the Self', says Bhagavan. Everything else is subsidiary. All *sadhanas* lead to the one goal of realisation. One has to discriminate between so-called religion and true religion. In modern times, Bhagavan

Ramana has made a unique contribution by revealing the truth in all religions. He has not founded a new religion like the Buddha, Jesus, or Mohammed, but he has demonstrated by his life and teachings the true essence of all religions. Let us see what it is.

The tragedy of man's life is that he does not know who he is. He identifies himself with the body, the mind, the intellect and the world around him. He mistakes the outer shell for the inner essence. He does not enquire: "Who am I?". "What is my real nature?" He takes things for granted and never goes deep. With this superficial and wrong outlook he suffers, loses peace of mind and the real joy of life. Attachment and fear follow him throughout his life. In spite of many religious practices, he remains a neurotic, miserable, egoistic person. He lives and dies in ignorance. He can discover the truth behind religion only by search for the Self, a relentless enquiry of 'Who am I?'

Bhagavan pinpoints this and tells us that as we proceed in this enquiry, as we concentrate on this 'I' thought, all other thoughts disappear and finally the I thought also disappears. When we trace the source of the ego, the I-thought, there is the plenary experience of Reality, the bliss of the Self. When there are no thoughts, there is no world, no 'I', no 'you', no 'he' or 'she'. This is our real nature. Time itself is a product of thought. When we bypass thought, we bypass time and its divisions. There is, in reality, neither past nor future. There is only the Ever-Present, which is timeless. If we learn to live in this eternal, timeless Present, we are in Truth—, nay, we are Truth. This is God, this is Self, this is 'What Is'. There is neither bondage nor liberation. There is neither birth nor death. There is no problem. There is no sorrow.

For those who cannot comprehend and pursue this method, Bhagavan gives a simple way of life; the way of self-surrender. This is perhaps the easiest way to destroy the ego which is the impediment on our spiritual

journey. Do not take any burden on your shoulders. Surrender everything that you call yours to the Higher Power and you are free. One has to directly experience all this. If we consider deeply, we discover that self-surrender and self-enquiry are two sides of one and the same coin. In both, we lose our identity with external things and become one with the Real.

Since in the realisation of our true nature there are no others, there is nothing but love in our relationships. "This whole universe is my Home," says saint Jnaneshwara. Consequently there is no envy, hate, or misunderstanding in our dealings with people. Heaven is not a far-off place. It is Here and Now.

There is a story of an emperor and a saint. The emperor was ambitious, active and aggressive. The saint was sitting quietly under the shade of a tree. The emperor asked the saint: "Why are you sitting thus?" The

Silence is needed that man may be whole. If a man has within himself the substance of silence, he need not always be watching the movements of his heart or ordering them by his will.

—Max Picard

saint asked him: "What will you do after you conquer the whole world?" The emperor replied: "After that, I shall sit quietly under a tree." "That is what I am doing now", said the saint.

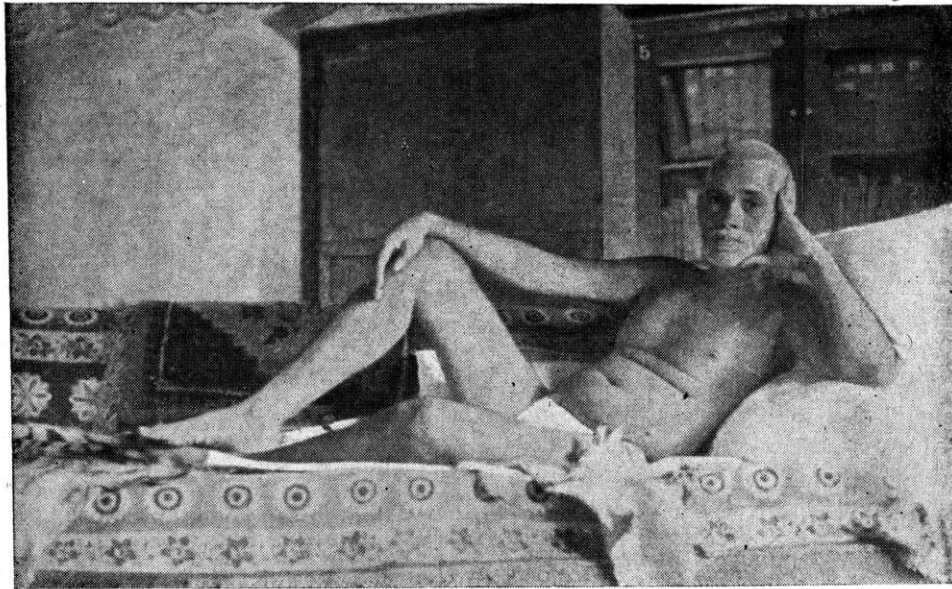
Wisdom lies in being quiet, being still, being 'at home', free from all thoughts, under all conditions of life. Let the body move about as it is destined to. True religion lies in one simple teaching of Bhagavan Ramana: 'Be the Self' or simply 'Be'.

**Gentle winds sing timidly
Strong ones blast on without restraint.
Then the wind dies down. The openings
Empty out their last sound.
Have you not observed how all then trembles and subsides?**

**You replied: I understand:
The music of the world sings through a thousand holes.
The music of man is made on flutes and instruments.
What make the music of heaven?**

**Master Ki said:
Something is blowing on a thousand different holes.
Some power stands behind all this and make the sounds die down.
What is this power?**

—from *The Way of Chuang Tzu*



Scenes From Ramana's Life—II¹

By
B. V. Narasimha Swamy

A day 1929 (date not given)

Sri N. Natesier, advocate, of Madura, arrived this morning at 7-30 a.m. with his family and paid his respects to the Maharshi. He quoted a verse from the Bhagavad Gita and then asked: "How are doubts removed?"

Maharshi: By *Granthichhedan* (cutting the knot).

N. Natesier: "All Karmas get destroyed on seeing it." How are we to have that experience? How does this illusion arise and to whom? How is it removed?

M.: Instead of pursuing these inquiries as to how illusion arises and how it is removed, it is sufficient if we solve first the question 'To whom?' it arises and then all questions are solved.

N. N.: The doubts arise in my mind and to me. The books say that I must know myself and learn my own nature. But how is this to be done?

M.: Seek your source. Find out whence the thought 'I' springs.

¹Taken from the Ashram Archives.

N. N.: How is that to be done? I don't find that easy.

M.: Do we not see things and know them clearly? But what object can we be surer of and know more certainly than our Self? This is direct experience and cannot be further described.

N. N.: If we cannot see the Self, what is to be done?

M.: Strenuous endeavour to know the Self. Develop the *Antarmukam* or introspective attitude. Constantly put before your mind the query "What am I?" and in time you will be able to see your Self. How can you see yourself? You can see that which you have not seen before. But as to what you are always experiencing, there is no *drishti* (vision), strictly speaking. By *drishti*, the removal of the hindrance, viz. the idea that you are not seeing the Self, is meant.

N. N.: It is said there are *Trimurthis* (three aspects of God) and that Vishnu is in *Vaikuntalokam* (a heavenly region). Is that a real world, real like this world, or is it only a fiction?

M.: If you and others and this world are real, why are *Mahavishnu* and *Vaikunta* unreal? So long as you consider this reality, that also is reality.

N. N.: I am not referring to the Advaita state or truth that Brahman alone is real and all else is fiction (*mithya*). But I am trying to find out if, in *Vyavahara* (empirical) stage, accepting the standards for truth that we have here, *Vaikunta* is true. *Trikalabadhyam Satyam* (true in all three states) is not the standard I take. In *Vyavahara*, this body exists *now* and though it may not be found at other times it is *satyam* or true in one sense. In that sense, is *Vaikunta* true? Does it exist?

M.: Why not?

N. N.: Are Mahavishnu, Siva, etc., then included among *jivakoties*?

M.: There are jivas and Iswara. Jivas are not the only beings known.

N. N.: Is there *pralaya* (dissolution) for Mahavishnu, etc., and do these *Trimurthis* also meet with their end? Or are they eternal? Do they exist with a body, like this *panchabowthika* (made of the five elements) body of ours? Have they a *Vyavaharika satyatwam* (empirical reality)?

M.: Instead of pursuing the inquiry in that direction, why do you not turn attention to yourself? To whom does the notion of *Vaikunta* and Vishnu arise?

N. N.: Is Mahavishnu or *Vaikunta* a mere notion or idea?

M.: Everything to you is a notion. Nothing appears to you except through the mind and as its notions.

N. N.: Then Vishnu and *Vaikunta* are creatures of my imagination and pure fiction? They have no more reality than the snake fancied in the rope or *sasa-vishanam*, the hare's horn?

M.: No. When you consider your body and life and other things as real, how can you treat Mahavishnu or Iswara as unreal? If you are real, he is real, too.

N. N.: It is not about reality in that sense that I am asking. *Sasa-vishanam*, for example, never exists. None has seen it. It is a case of *atyantika abhavam* (absolute non-existence), whereas this body is felt and exists at least as an object of sense experienced for the present. There is a difference between the two sorts of *abhavam*. Can it be said that *Vaikunta* is as unreal as *sasa-vishanam*, the hare's horn?

M.: No. Just as you experience this world and this body and say it is true, there are others who have experienced *Vaikunta*, the *Vishnulokam*, and say that is true. Why call that alone unreal, while you talk of your sense experience as real?

N. N.: Then *Vaikunta* must exist somewhere. Where is it?

M.: It is in you.

N. N.: Then it is only my idea, what I can create and control?

M.: Everything is like that — your idea.

N. N.: That is coming back to the Advaitic idea. But what I wish to know is, is there a separate person like ourselves who is *phaladata*, the rewarder of virtue and the punisher of sins?

M.: Yes.

N. N.: Has he an end? Does he get dissolved in *pralaya*?

M.: *Pralaya* is for the soul held by *maya*. If you can, with all your defects and limitations, rise by *jnana* into realisation of the Self, and above all *pralaya*, and *samsara*, is it not reasonable to expect that Iswara, who is infinitely more intelligent than you, is above and beyond *pralaya*?

N. N.: I have my doubts yet.

M.: He who has doubts will go on doubting up to the end of the world.

N. N.: No. I am anxious to get rid of that doubt and request you to remove my doubts begotten of ignorance. Pray, enlighten me.

M.: Enlighten yourself by realising your Self.

N. N.: That I am unable to do. In spite of my desire to shake off all doubts, they cling to me. That is why I seek help. My present doubts about the reality of the existence of other worlds have been long with me. Are *Devas* and *Pisachas* true?

M.: Yes.

(to be continued)

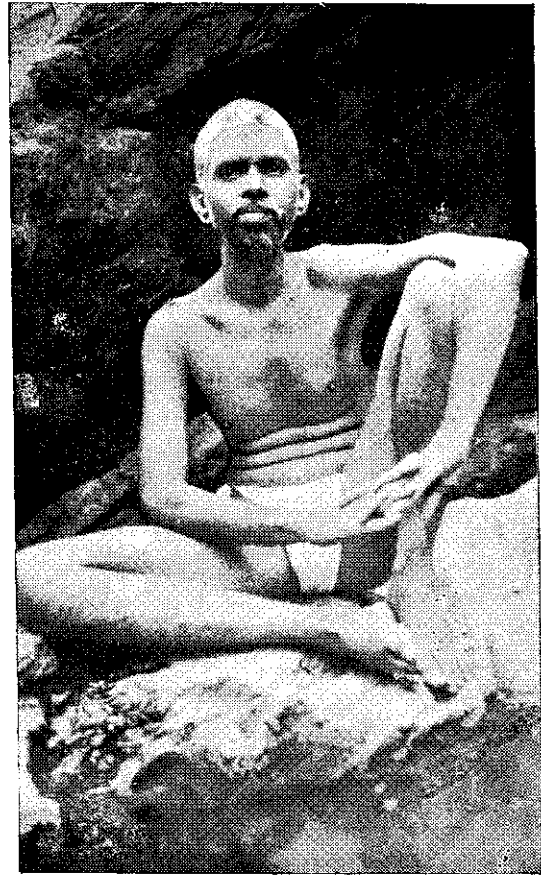
Sri Ramana and Arunachala

By
Prof. G. V. Subbaramayya

THE relationship between Sri Ramana and Arunachala is a grand mystery. To view it from our level ascribing an individuality to both, it was surely antenatal and supramundane. In terms of human relationship, it was that of son and father. That is why Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni has described Sri Ramana as the human incarnation of God Skanda, the Son of the Supreme Lord Siva.

It is commonly supposed that Sri Ramana heard the *first* mention of *Arunachala* from a relative who had just returned from Tiruvannamalai to Madura, and that the hearing of the name sent a thrill through Sri Ramana's veins. Sri Ramana himself told this writer that this version was somewhat erroneous. Even from childhood, he had been hearing the Sanskrit verse that "the mere remembrance of Arunachala confers *Mukti* (salvation)." But he had no definite notion of what Arunachala meant. He had a vague idea that Arunachala might be the holiest form of God Almighty. When his relative casually said that he had returned from Arunachala, the very thought that a mortal could come from that Supreme Being was to him a thrilling revelation. When the visitor further explained that 'Arunachala' was only Tiruvannamalai which the boy had already known as the name of a place, it had the effect of an anticlimax. It was like a fall from the sublime to the ludicrous, and the thrill at once subsided.

With the deathlike trance which instantly snapped the thread of the ego and gave him Self-Realisation, there arose in the person of Sri Ramana an unaccountable pang which grew in time till it became an unbearable agony. It created an aversion in him to his school-lessons and other routine activities. It inclined



him to study the lives of saints, to visit the temple of Meenakshi nearby and pray for Divine Grace and to sit still in *samadhi* every now and then. Thus it transformed the nature of the boy Ramana completely and it finally disappeared only when he entered the sanctum-sanctorum of the great shrine at Tiruvannamalai and beheld the *Lingam* of Arunachala.

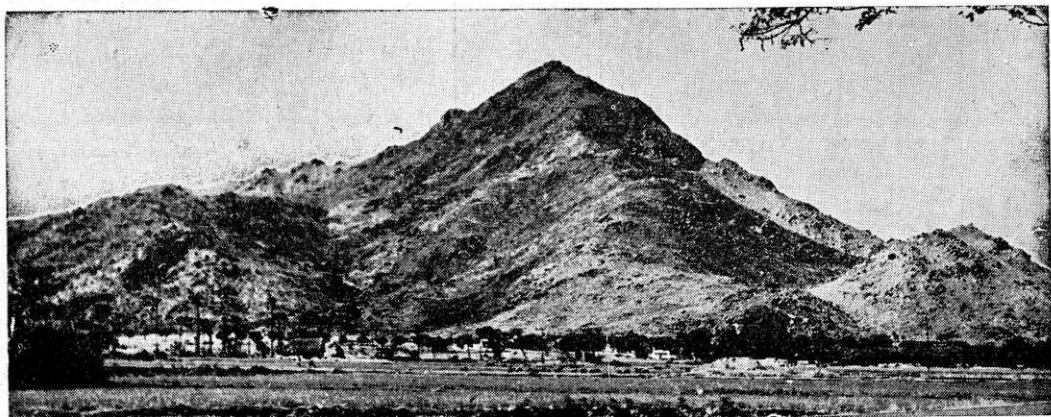
When his elder brother noticed him sitting in *samadhi* before his books and rebuked him

saying "Why should one who behaves thus retain all this?", the thought of Arunachala at once flashed upon his mind and gripped his entire being. "Yes, I must no longer be here, 'cabined, cribled, confined', Arunachala is calling. He shall be my haven, my home". This resolve that now shaped itself within the boy's mind, became all-absorbing. It determined and carried out his secret flight from Madura without any initiative of his own. It dictated his parting letter: "I have in search of my Father and in obedience to His command, started from here." That was why the letter was left unsigned. Every circumstance favoured his 'enterprise' the extra-class, the train's delay, the strange Moulvi's direction to change at Villupuram, free food on the way, Muthukrishna Bhagavatar's loan — these and other incidents prove beyond doubt the hand of Arunachala holding and drawing the little one to Himself. When he arrived at the holy shrine, the gates of the three compound walls and all the inner doors were open at an unusual hour in the early morning and there was no one inside. It was clear that Arunachala Himself had thus prepared to welcome His beloved boy. Entering the Holy Presence, Sri Ramana reported himself, saying: "Father, I have obeyed Your call and come leaving off everything."

The most notable event of Sri Ramana's journey was his vision of dazzling light (*Tejo Darshan*) at Arayaninallur. It was the very spot where Saint Jnanasambhandhar had

experienced a similar vision on his pilgrimage to Arunachala. Both Sri Jnanasambhandhar and Sri Ramana had thus first glimpse of Arunachala, the far-famed *Tejo-Lingam* (the symbol of Light) at the identical place.

All the rest of Sri Ramana's life for four and fifty years was spent in Arunachala alone. Within the temple-compound, in the outskirts of the town, up the Hill and down the Hill, he dwelt throughout his life. Never once — not even during the time when the place was declared dangerous on account of epidemics — did he stay from the environs of Arunachala. The very thought of leaving Arunachala never seems to have occurred to him. From his mother down to a casual visitor, so many people attempted to induce him to go elsewhere. His written reply to his mother's entreaties was typical and significant: "Whatever is destined not to happen will never happen, try how hard you may. Whatever is destined to happen must happen, do what you may to prevent it." In other words, he declared that Arunachala and he were destined to be inseparable. One evening Sri Ramana related to this writer and others seated around him, how in his vision Arunachala appeared a citadel of Heaven full of shrines and gods. One morning, when Sri Ramana delayed to return from his constitutional and this writer with another devotee went up and met him, he said smiling: "As the weather is fine I have been strolling here. This hill is like my own home. Whenever I am in Arunachala



I forget myself." While relating the glories of Arunachala he would indeed forget himself, the story of Arunachala was his favourite theme. He often used to say that while all other sacred hills and shrines were but the abode of various Gods, Arunachala is the Supreme God Himself and that going round Arunachala is the direct worship of God Almighty.

The Five Hymns to Arunachala are the *magnum opus* of Sri Ramana in devotional lyric poetry. Of them the first is *Akshara-Mana-Malai* (the Marital Garland of Letters.) It was composed in Tamil by young Ramana in response to the request of a devotee for a song to be sung while wandering in the town for alms. It is an acrostic of one hundred and eight couplets with the initial letters in alphabetical order, and with a popular refrain "Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva". It unfolds an allegorical love story and depicts the *madhura bhava* (love-aspect) of devotion. Arunachala the lover and singer is the beloved. The lover made secret love to the beloved while she was in her parental home. At the mere thought of his name, he stole her heart. He eloped with her stealthily and brought her here. While she is now harassed by so many enemies, he remains unmoved as a mountain. She remonstrates and complains of her lover's neglect and indifference. "Having entered my home and lured me to yours, why do you keep me prisoner in your cavern?... Having seduced and ravished me, if you deny me union and abandon me now, would it be chivalry? Nay, such desertion will be a memorial of shame for you... Having, called me and lured me here, it is writ large on your forehead to look after my wellbeing... If you will not unite with me, I shall be melting away in tears of anguish... Pray rain your mercy on me ere your fire consumes me to ashes." So runs her love-plaint. Then for her harsh words of remonstrance, she apologises to her lover and prays for the bliss of complete Union and merging. "Pray close me in, limb to limb, body to body, or I am lost... Let us embrace one in the Real Self on the soft flower-bed

of the Mind... Come and sport with me in the open space of the Heart where there is neither night nor day... May I be absorbed into you as food is assimilated into the feeder." At last the prayer is fulfilled. The love is consummated in marriage, and with the bride's invocation to the bridegroom: "O Lord Arunachala, throw around me your garland and let me place on your breast this garland strung by me," the song concludes. In this poem Arunachala is described and addressed in the most fascinating terms. Arunachala is 'the real meaning of OM unexcelled, unparalleled,' 'the magnet that attracts the iron filing of devotees and holds them fast', 'the Ocean of Grace in the mould of a mountain', 'the gem of fire sparkling all round', 'the treasure of Divine Grace got without seeking', 'the elixir of all life's ills', 'the spider whose spreading webs entices into its meshes and devours all egos', 'the wizard who exercises the ghost of the ego and then himself possesses the being', 'the mountain-drug for all madness'. The word *Arul* (Grace) occurs in nearly every stanza, so that the whole song may be called a rhapsody of Grace. This love-lyric is indeed an allegory of Sri Ramana's own life-story and so is full of autobiographical interest. While sounding the depths of philosophical wisdom, this song stirs the tenderest chords of the human heart and makes the most daring flights of love-romance in the spiritual firmament. It was and is sung on all auspicious occasions in the Ashram. Though Sri Ramana always declined to be drawn into a discussion of its diverse interpretations, he would sit up in a trance of ecstasy whenever it was sung. Just before Sri Ramana's *Mahanirvana* this hymn was being sung in chorus by the devotees who assembled outside the room. Sri Ramana opened his eyes, looked at the direction from where the voices came, and then as he closed his eyes, tears of ecstasy gushed from their outer edges and he breathed his last. So this song into which Sri Ramana had breathed the essence of his Divine Spirit became appropriately the background music to his life's finale, like

the glow of mellow light around the setting sun.

Next in chronological order comes *Nava-manimalai* "The Garland of Nine Gems". This is a collection of nine casual verses in various metres. Its underlying sentiment is also love and devotion to Arunachala. It explains at the outset the idea of *Achala tandavam* (motionless dance) of the Lord. He is static and dynamic at the same time. The glorious source that absorbs and transcends both the aspects is this Arunachala. The verbal root-meaning of *A-Ru-Na* is also set forth. It means respectively either *Sat-Chit-Ananda* or the Supreme Self, the individual Self, and their identity or That-Thou-Art. *Achala* means the Great One. That is why the mere recollection of the name 'Arunachala' confers *Mukti* instantly. The rest of the poem is a call to complete Self-surrender and a moving prayer for forgiveness of faults and for deliverance. It is impossible to ford the sea of Samsara and get up the shore unless Arunachala out of his more than maternal love stretches forth His hand of Grace. This song is also autobiographical. It relates how Sri Ramana was born of virtuous Sundaram and Alagu in sacred Tiruchuzhi and was rescued from the coils of ignorance even in early youth and raised by Arunachala to his own seat. The poem is in short a paean of praise and thanksgiving.

The next hymn is *Arunachala Padikam* ("Ten Verses on Arunachala"). It really consists of one invocatory verse and ten stanzas, all in the same metre. It observes the rule of *Mukta-Pada-Grastam* that is to say, the last word of each verse is repeated as the first word of the next verse, so that the whole poem reads like a chain of 'linked sweetness long drawn out'. It is also a devotional love-lyric and is full of autobiographical interest. Arunachala, the lover has stolen the guileless singer in early youth for thinking of Him but once, and having drawn the beloved to His Feet and keeping her long like a frog amidst the lotus-stalks, is slowly consuming her (ego). The singer surrenders

to the will of her Lord and prays for completing the process of devouring and for changing the frog into a bee that tastes the honey of the lotus-blossom. The song concludes with a warning and an appeal. It warns the worldly-wise saying: "Lo, I have newly discovered a magnet mountain that attracts all beings who think of it even once, makes them still like itself and preys upon their sweet lives (egos). That magnet-mountain is Arunachala. So beware and keep off." At the same time, the singer makes a clarion-call to all kindred spirits who have renounced the worldly life in quest of the means of deliverance. The singer shouts: "Here is the panacea, the sovereign remedy, the wonder-drug for all the distractions and ills of life. If you merely think of it but once, it cures you. It kills without killing. It kills the ego without killing the Self. Many have been thus saved like me. It is none other than Arunachala. You, all afflicted beings, know this and be saved."

The next and grandest hymn is *Arunachala Ashtakam* ("The Eight Verses on Arunachala") Sri Ramana himself related how it was composed in the course of a walk round the sacred Hill. All of a sudden, the first word of the hymn flashed into his mind and with an irresistible urge composed itself into the first stanza. Then the last word of the stanza lingered in the mind and clamoured for further expansion into the second stanza. The same process was repeated in the other stanzas, and at the end of the eighth stanza the urge for expression, automatically ceased. So the stanzas are of uniform metre and observe the rule of *Mukta-pada-grastam* like the previous hymn. This hymn is a masterpiece of philosophical poetry in which both thought and style reach their high-water-mark. For its superb symphony it is a universal favourite among music-lovers. It is also autobiographical and reveals the mysterious association of Arunachala with Sri Ramana from childhood and the part played by Arunachala in his process of Self-Realisation. Arunachala is the Real Self that manifests 'Itself when the ego-mind traced back through

Self-enquiry merges in its Source. This song is distinguished for the daring originality of its thought and imagery. "To search for the essential inner truth of Thyself (Arunachala) is like going round the earth to see the sky. It is like the sugar-doll diving to measure the depth of the ocean." "To quest for God elsewhere turning away from Thyself (Arunachala) is like searching for darkness with a light." "Those who fail to visualize the one, matchless, resplendent diamond of Arunachala are like the blind, that cannot see the sun before them." "The mind, that has contacted Thee (Arunachala) and is sparkling itself like a cut or polished gem will not need another light to kindle it, just as a sensitive plate exposed to the sun will not take on impressions afterwards. "A mysterious *Shakti* (Power) in Thee (Arunachala) which however is not apart from Thyself, illumines with the reflection of Thy pure Light the latent, subtle dark mists which then manifest *within* as thoughts whirling in the rolls of *prarabdha* (past *karma*) and are projected *without*, across the lens of the mind and the outgoing senses as the passing world-picture upon the unchanging screen of Thyself (Arunachala)." "Just as the waters rising from the sea as vapour and coming down as rain must flow back into the sea inspite of all obstacles, just as a bird soaring into the sky and fatigued must needs return to the earth for rest, so every being must finally retrace its way to the Source and merge in Thee, Thou Ocean of Bliss, O Arunachala." It will be seen that in the above passages the poet makes use of irony and of metaphors called from Nature and from arts and science such as photography and cinema. This is all the more remarkable as Sri Ramana had never handled a camera nor had he ever been to a cinema show.

The last and most famous hymn is the one entitled *Arunachala Pancharatnam* (Five Gems to Arunachala). While the other four hymns were Tamil composition, this one was composed by Sri Ramana in Sanskrit at the request of Kavyakantha

The Act

By
Ka Kavana

if it is
to be free
as the wind
over the sea,
i am,
as it were,
the eye of a needle
through which
the thread of time
shall pass.

Ganapathi Muni to serve as introduction to *Sri Ramana Gita*. It was later rendered into Tamil by the author himself. It has become the daily prayer of all devotees. These 'Five Gems' have been praised by Kavyakantha saying that they contain the quintessence of the whole Vedanta, and though terse and brief are all-comprehensive like *Sastras* (Scripture). As Sri Ramana never studied Sanskrit how he could compose this Sanskrit classic is a wonder which can only be explained on the ground that he had realised 'THAT by knowing which everything else is known.' As to the Maharshis of yore so to Sri Ramana Maharshi the usual order of thought and speech was reversed. Words flashed first, and their sense followed next. In their depiction of Arunachala as *Sarvatman* (the Universal Self) these 'Five Gems' resemble the famous *Dakshinamoorti Ashtakam*. The opening stanza invokes Arunachala as 'Ocean of Nectar full of Grace by whose splendour the entire Universe is engulfed' and it prays to Him the Supreme Soul 'to be the sun for the full blossoming of the lotus-mind'. The second stanza expounds Arunachala as *Swarupa* (the Source) in whom 'all this panorama arises, exists and dissolves'. It further explains how Arunachala manifests in the Heart as 'I' the Self and so is Himself named the Heart. The

third stanza describes the path of *Jnana* (Self enquiry) and how on knowing one's Self one merges in Arunachala as the river in the ocean. The fourth stanza unfolds the path of *Yoga* (Meditation). "The Yogi with controlled breath and concentrated mind meditating on Thee within beholds in Thee, O Arunachala, Thy Light Transcendent." The final stanza depicts both the paths of *Bhakti* (Devotion) and *Karma* (Action). The devotee who with dedicated mind beholds Arunachala alone or the man of action whoever reverentially serves all as the form of Arunachala shines immersed in the Bliss of Arunachala. So this hymn within a brief compass is all-comprehensive and stands out as the most glorious monument of Sri Ramana's relationship to Arunachala.

This mysterious relationship was most impressively demonstrated by the celestial phenomenon at the time of Sri Ramana's *Mahanirvana*. At that very moment a brilliant light in the shape of a huge star emanated in the south-east corner of the horizon and trailing majestically across the sky, seemed to merge in the highest peak of Arunachala. This was witnessed by so many people outside. It was to all mortals an ocular, heavenly revelation of the Life-Light of Sri Ramana ascending and merging in the Universal Light of the Supreme Self that is Arunachala. Indeed Sri Ramana was Arunachala's Self in human shape incarnate; and Arunachala is Sri Ramana himself in mountain-mould. In essence, both Sri Ramana and Arunachala are one and the same, that is the Supreme Self.

God Realization No Realization At All

By
Martin Leo

TO not realize God it is only necessary to try; as long as one keeps trying, just so long will there be no realization.

To realize God it is only necessary to not realize that you already realize! When this realization occurs no one knows about it! Not knowing that there is no one to know is the illusion. As long as the illusion persists there is no one to know about it. Since no one knows about it, it disappears.

To make any illusion appear it is only necessary to know about it. Since God IS, it is

not apparent. If God were not, it would be obvious!

To misunderstand God it is only necessary to know what you are talking about! Once you have realized that you know nothing, God is no longer able to inform you.

The ultimate in misunderstanding God is to try and understand in the first place. How on earth can God be understood? If God could be understood it could only be God Knowing; it certainly could not be otherwise.

How I Came to Bhagavan

By
Santha Rungachary

ONE of the great regrets of my life is the loss of a letter which I received in the year 1934. It was in reply to a rather hysterical missive I had despatched addressed 'Personal and Private' to Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai. This communication dealt with a serious, self-admitted weakness of mine which was my mother's despair — a combustible temper which could explode at the slightest provocation.

It was a bad time for me. I had just lost a father I had worshipped. I was twelve-going-on-thirteen — and at once all is said.

I desperately needed a confidante, an adviser, somebody preferably outside the family, and out of the blue the name of Ramana Maharshi came to me. His was the only name I had ever heard my father, a stubborn, intolerent sceptic, mention without any codicils. I decided, therefore, to write to the sage of Tiruvannamalai secretly.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts, I finally sent off a letter asking the Maharshi directly to please-I-beg-of-you-help-me with my temper problem. Within a week I received a reply signed by the Sarvadhikari, informing me that my letter had been received and placed before the Maharshi and that his message to me was that if I myself made a constant and earnest effort to overcome my temper I would rid myself of it, and that he sent me his blessings.

My first reaction to that letter was one of astonishment at being treated like a grown-up, since I had always been told what to do, guided, instructed, warned, but never challenged except on Sports Day. And here was this great guru as good as telling me: "It is *your* temper, isn't it? So, *you yourself* deal with it." He had



Santha Rungachary

simply batted the ball back to my court in the nicest possible way by treating me as an individual in my own right. I rather *liked* that.

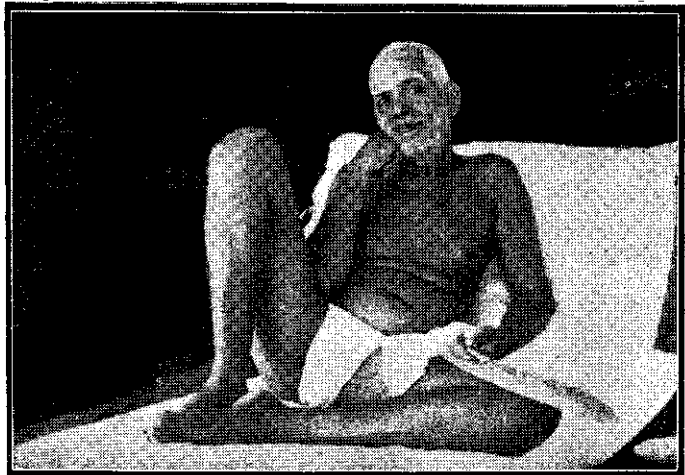
Ramana Maharshi entered my life again a year or so later when my sister took our whole family on a pilgrimage. The whole thing was going to take less than a week and we were to stay at Tiruvannamalai only for two days. But as it turned out we stayed at Ramanasramam for the whole week and I wept like a lost child when we had to leave. The visit to Ramanasramam was a shattering experience for me. I do believe I literally fell in love with Ramana Maharshi. I was in a daze, a trance, my tongue was gone, my mind was gone, I was in a state of dumb founded ecstasy. This love which had been awakened was the kind which totally bypasses the physical and creates an awareness of a different kind of consciousness which can only be described as a mindless rapture, pure joy. It is an unlocated, pervasive

state of being sparked off by some kind of *recognition* and it stays with you and you are never the same again.

We arrived at Tiruvannamalai just before dawn. After reaching the Ashram, we bathed and had our breakfast, and then made our way to the Hall. My mother, brother and sister went ahead and quickly disappeared into the Hall. I hung back for, unaccountably apprehensive. Then, as I at last composed myself and got to the door and looked in, I saw, reclining on a sofa, a golden-brown figure with the most radiant countenance I had ever seen before or since and, as I stood there reveted to the spot, the Maharshi turned and looked at me. When I remember it even now, more than forty years later, tears come to my eyes as they did then. I stood there, God knows how long, just looking at that face. Then, as in a trance, I moved forward deliberately towards him and touched his feet. Fighting my way through the disapproving glances that followed, I then made my way to a place near the window. Once I was seated I let my tears flow. I remember I spent a good part of that morning wiping my eyes. They were not tears of grief nor were they tears of joy. May be they were for something which I saw in the Maharshi fleetingly and which I also want and shall forever seek. Yes, I cried for myself then and I still do it now.

Never before had I seen in a human countenance a more intense, inward life and yet one which remained so transparent and child-like. There was about him an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power which simply overwhelmed me. I was conscious of people sitting all around me but was totally incurious about them. After an hour or so of silence I suddenly felt like singing. Without hesitation or embarrassment I lifted my 12 year-old

voice in a rendition of Tyagaraja's *Vinanashakoni Yunnanura*, keeping time softly with my fingers on my knee. The audience sat still and unresponsive. The total lack of reaction to my performance, should in reason have embarrassed me, but I was away in a state of mind which recognised nobody except that reclining figure on the sofa. After a few minutes I threw myself with another gush of abandon into *Thelisi Rama Chintana*. As I



began the *anupallavi* which exhorts the mind to stay still for a moment and realise the true essence of the name Rama, I saw the Maharshi turn his eyes upon me with that impersonal and yet arresting look of his, and my heart soared and I thought: I want to be here for ever and ever.

For three hours every morning and two every evening my vigil in the Hall continued for seven days. After the first day my whole family had, without any discussion, silently and unanimously changed our planned programme and requested and got extension of residence. I sat in my seat near the window, still and thought-free, just gazing at the Maharshi. Occasionally somebody would ask a question and the Maharshi would turn and look at him, and you got the feeling that the question had been answered. Or somebody would ask for the meaning of a particular

phrase in a Sanskrit or Tamil stanza, and the Maharshi would answer softly, briefly.

He was not a man of many words. His long years of practised detachment from people had made him laconic in speech. His knowledge of classical Tamil religious literature was considerable; he could himself compose verses and he did. His enlightenment had not been directed by a guru but had come from his own self-consciousness. It was all there lighting him up from inside and his most effective form of communication was intra-personal through the sense of sight and the medium of silence. He was a very human being, who laughed and joked occasionally, but he could suddenly plunge deep into himself while sitting in a hall full of people and rest in that stillness of spirit which, as he himself said, was being in God.

One afternoon somebody showed Maharshi some verses written on paper. Maharshi read them, made a brief comment, and then clarified it by narrating a story from *Yogavasistam*. I listened and felt that I could understand the words that were being spoken though I really could not have grasped their meaning. I wondered in retrospect years later when I myself read that book, at the delightful ease and simplicity with which the Maharshi had narrated that story, going straight to the spirit of it like an aimed arrow, and then lapsing into what I can only describe as a speaking silence. In those eloquent silences that punctuated his brief remarks, one seemed to feel unspoken thought flowing around the room touching and drawing everybody into its illuminating course. That was a strange experience to me, that in the presence of Maharshi speech seemed redundant. I was totally and blissfully satisfied just *being* in his presence.

That whole week we spent in the Ashram. I practically did nothing else but sit in that Hall. We attended the Vedic recitals at dawn of the students of the Ashram *Pathasala*. My brother and I watched every morning the Maharshi's gangly walk up and down the hill and I remem-

ber, on one memorable occasion, the gentle sage himself smilingly stood still for a couple of minutes as he saw my brother adjusting his camera. I had never before spent so many days talking so little, just sitting around so much, or so lost in a single-minded pursuit of the Maharshi. The evening we finally left my brother and I kept coming back to look at the Maharshi "Just one more time" as he sat in the enclosed verandah beside the hall having a light oil massage. I finally said: "We will go only after he turns his head and looks at us once more." After a minute or two the Maharshi turned full face towards us and looked at us and without a word we turned and walked away.

I shall not claim that my whole life was transformed after this meeting. No. I went back to school and then to college, fell in love, got married, set up house, had children, started a journalistic career of mine own. My *grihas-thasramam* became my main preoccupation. But my visit to Ramanasramam had done something to me. It had left a mark on my mind and heart. The picture of the Ashram and of the Maharshi was always in my mind like the background curtain of a stage. Whenever I was tired or dispirited or perplexed, the wish "to go to Ramanasramam" would possess me like a hunger. Even when I was so busy that I did not know whether I was coming or going a sudden look at a picture of the Maharshi hanging on the wall would momentarily root me to the spot and my mind would suddenly go blank.

I did go to Ramanasramam a fortnight before death claimed the Maharshi's frail human body. Because of the vast crowds which had come to visit him, the Ashram authorities had made special arrangements for everybody to get darshan of the white-haired smiling figure who sat on an easy chair on the verandah of the room in which he later breathed his last. For a brief moment, I stood below and looked up at that benign countenance, the eyes so

bright and serene, and knew it was the last time I was looking at the living Maharshi.

I went to the Ashram again some years later. As usual, as soon as I passed through the Ashram gates, its peace closed around me and emptied my mind. I sat on a verandah where I had only to turn my head to the left to see the mountain and bring my eyes back to the samadhi to see in my mind the Maharshi sitting on his sofa. I sat there the whole of that day doing nothing, not reading, not writing, not eating, not thinking, not remembering, not wondering why it was so quiet or where everybody was, and the voice of a young lad who came running through the gate screaming: "Nehru has passed away" was just an incidental sound. During all those hours I never

for a moment wanted to be anywhere else or doing anything else.

Whenever I feel I want to go away somewhere, away from home, family, friends, books, mistakes, fears, sorrows, my mind automatically turns to Ramanasramam. And my body follows. I make the journey to Tiruvannamalai, walk into the Ashram, enter the old Hall, and I am "home", and totally at peace.

Every human being has really only one guru, like one mother. Some are fortunate enough to meet their gurus, some pass them by like ships in the light. I stumbled upon mine when I was twelve. I now stand alone in myself. In a sense I am twelve-going-on-thirteen all over again, standing on another threshold, remembering, waiting.

The Breath of Nature

*When great Nature sighs, we hear the winds
Which, noiseless in themselves,
Awaken voices from other beings,
Blowing on them.*

*From every opening
Loud voices sound. Have you not heard
This rush of tones?*

*There stands the overhanging wood
On the steep mountain:
Old trees with holes and cracks
Like snouts, maws and ears
Like beam-sockets, like goblets
Grooves in the wood, hollows full of water:
You hear mooing and roaring, whistling
Shouts of command, grumblings,
Deep drones, sad flutes.
One call awakens another in dialogue.*

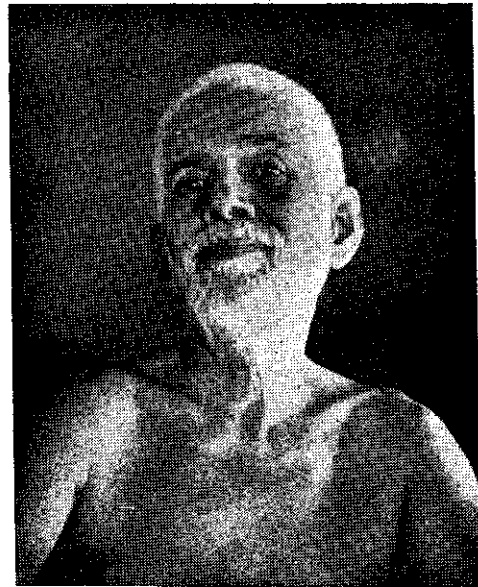
— From *The Way of Chuang Tzu*.

INCREDIBLE SATSANG¹

By
Smt. Mani Sahukar

SRI Ramana Maharshi's birth on the 29th of December, 1879 coincided with a great festival held to honour Lord Shiva. This coincidence together with many other incidents and characteristics of this *Mahapurush*, established him as the Incarnation of the mighty Shiva himself. Sri Ramana's extraordinary stature as a spiritual leader has been universally recognized and he is hailed as the messiah of this century. A great *jnan* and an Apostle of Love, Bhagavan was indeed *jnan ke sindhu* and *karuna ke sagar*. The Birth Centenary of such a Master is indeed a unique event. The president and the inmates of Ramana Ashram as well as scholars, yogis and simple bhaktas from all over the world took up the challenge of organizing an unforgettable function to honour this great Son of *Bharat*.

Those of us who participated in this great festival from the 2nd to 4th of January 1980 at Arunachala which for 54 years had been the



sacred abode of this Master, were thrilled with the incredible *Satsang* that was enacted before our eyes as if the whole programme had been geared with Love's Essence to move smoothly and majestically revealing a luminous manifestation of Divine Grace. How else could hundreds of visitors not only be accommodated and fed but also inspired to achieve a rare camaraderie of the spirit. It is faith born of intuition that makes for such miracles!

Tiruvannamalai lying on the slope of the sacred mountain wore a festive look during the celebrations. Those of us who assembled there, coming from all over the world to honour



Smt. Mani Sahukar

¹Many devotees have given their impressions about the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Sri Bhagavan at the Ashram. We are choosing this for inclusion.

—Editor

a *Mahatma*, were indeed blessed. Bhagavan Ramana's presence was with us, alive and vibrant compassionate and powerful as he subtly led us to higher levels of consciousness on his holy occasion.

A massive programme of speeches and music, feasting and puja was on the agenda. A huge pandal erected in the ashram compound was filled with powerful loud speakers so that all items were projected to every nook and corner of the Ashram from 4 a.m. till midnight, sometimes disturbing the innate Silence of an otherwise peaceful abode! But often volubility becomes an essential attribute of life. One must learn too to dwell in the inner depths of a Silence which nothing can disturb. After all, is this not one of the main currents of Maharshi's teachings? However, we cannot but pay unstinted tribute to a few outstanding orators to whom the audience listened with rapt attention as wisdom flowed out of their hearts and lips, uplifting men and women to new vistas of thought and aspiration.

The musical interludes in Carnatic style were deeply appreciated for their beauty and resonance. *Bharat* is indeed a blessed country. What a wealth of spiritual and artistic culture is embedded in her rich tradition! It just needs to be ignited frequently, as it was during the recent celebration.

In a lyrical outburst of sheer poetic imagery the great Yogi Ramana wrote — "Arunachala! Thou Form of Grace Itself, haven of my refuge, let Thy pleasure be mine, for that way lies my bliss — Oh Lord of my life!" Thus it appeared as if this holy mountain had kindled Bhagavan's dormant divinity — or was this just a fantastic *Leela* of the Divine, for, as one speaker succinctly pointed out, the Being and its manifestation are ever identical, never separated. So Sri Ramana and Arunachala are inseparably united in the Divine.

It is interesting to record that during his lifetime, the Maharshi made it a practice to walk barefooted round the eight-mile long girth of Arunachala, with disciples following in a reverent procession.

No wonder that on the 3rd of January 1980 scores of devotees and visitors should have made this holy pilgrimage. Starting at 11 p.m. a procession of Bhagavan's lovers went round the beaten path made sacred by the Master's feet. As the *bhaktas* went round, they chanted His holy name. It was a sight for the Gods!

Ruefully I looked on, not daring to join this holy crusade, for though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. 'Oh Ramana,' I cried in anguish, 'I too want to be a pilgrim', and lo, a miracle was manifested. I felt as if my body was lifted up and I was suddenly sitting on the peak of Arunachala. My heart sang out — in *rag yaman* — 'In Arunachala I find Giridhara Ramana' — I related this miracle in my speech. One sadhu asked me sceptically — "Did you really sit on the peak, or was it a figment of your fancy?" I replied meekly, 'What is real what is fancy? Are not both experiences of the same mind?' The revered gentleman looked at me disapprovingly — and I left it at that.

Nostalgically, I recalled how 30 years ago I had first had Maharshi's *darshan*. Sitting on that holy verandah of Bhagavan's choice. My mind seething with doubts. I beheld him on the dais. It was the twilight hour of unspeakable serenity. Suddenly, the sage of Arunachala directed at me a look of infinite Grace and power — and I was transformed. The rays of the setting sun illumined Bhagavan's body. He looked like an image of God carved in gold. Thrilled, I gazed at his beautiful eyes shining not only with love, but with a longing to appease humanity's hunger for being loved.

Garland of Guru's Sayings

By SRI MURUGANAR
Translated from Tamil by
Professor K. Swaminathan

813

Through wicked conduct based alas
On a sense of otherness foolish people
Tend to become cowardly and cruel.
And so like angry cobras they
Strike ruthlessly to kill, because
They are at heart afraid.

[Note: From ignorance springs the sense of otherness, from this springs fear, from fear springs cruelty, from cruelty springs further fear, and so on. The only way to break this vicious circle is to gain knowledge and shed fear.]

814

Great ones strong of mind endure
Unflinching all the blows that may
Fall on themselves. But they in tears
Of pity melt when others stricken
By sorrow or suffering come to them
In search of solace.

815

Putting your foot in what you thought
Was a green herb bush, you had it stung
By hornets till it swelled up big.
Why should you regret and pay for
This accidental fault as if
it were intentional?

Bhagavan :

If hornets sting and cause to swell
A foot that crushed their hidden nest,
Should not the man regret the event
Accidental though it was?

816

Those who profess to be good people
Should take care to avoid the fault
Of claiming for themselves a few
Special rights beyond what is
Available to all alike.

817

All the rights that we concede
To others we too may enjoy.
But to enjoy what we deny
To others is a sin indeed.

818

God is justice. They defy Him
Who are in their conduct partial.
And if they worship God, this worship
Is wholly by their life annulled.

819

Sometimes good people may forsake
The seeker following his own conscience.
They he should heed, not hush, his pure
Inner voice and wend his lonely way.

820

One has only oneself to blame
If one should try to teach the Truth
Supreme to those who are immature.
The highest truth they might reject
As false because it contradicted
Some things which they had been told before
And had believed as "truth".

821

Since one True Being in every being
 Stands as its centre, source and substance,
 Let no one — even to save dear life, —
 Commit the irredeemable sin
 Of breaking one's given word.

822

The boat moves in the water, but
 Water should not enter it.
 Though we live in the world, the world
 Should not occupy our mind.

823

In the flood, the hollow pitcher
 Sinks, but not the solid log.
 The world's ways bewilder minds
 Attached to them, not those detached.

824

If one is free at heart from any
 Attachment, one may well engage
 In various actions, and yet run
 No risk of bondage; for the mind
 With Shiva filled shines bright and clear.

825

The tamarind fruit grows unattached
 To its dry shell. Even so, the wise
 Renounce at heart and quite forget
 The wondrous charms of this false world
 Which only ruins those who trust it.

826

A superstructure raised without
 A strong foundation soon collapses
 In disgrace. Earnest seekers therefore
 First ensure by every means
 Their own stern self-discipline
 Through devotion and detachment.

827

If firm and clear one holds at heart
 The true Self-Being, one shines pure
 Free from attachment, like the sky
 Without its former azure veil.

828

Slippery, strait is the renunciant's path.
 The slightest mental lapse brings ruin.
 Whoso would tread this perilous path
 Should keep strict watch no traitor thought
 Breaks burglar-like into his mind.

829

Even the strongest-willed aspirant
 Knows not how long his life will last.
 Hence when you feel the body and world
 Turn sour, renounce them both at once.

830

As from the tree the ripe fruit falls,
 The seeker when his mind matures
 Renounces family life as insipid
 Saltless gruel, unless indeed
 Cruel Fate comes in between.

SONG OF AT-ONE-MENT—(III)

By
K. Forrer

7. "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father."

(*St. John VI, 46*)

AS sons of man we know the world alone, because our awareness is then centred in the brain.

There, pure God-Consciousness is refracted into human-consciousness like clear daylight in a crystal is refracted to rainbow light.

Just as the fascination of the spectrum makes us forget the all-pervading, all-present daylight, so the fascination of worldly things created in the brain draws our attention away from the Glory of the Father, which is pure Consciousness.

Outside the limits of the brain, God is known as unbounded Bliss, Divine Knowledge, and Eternal Being.

Outside the limits of the brain, we are free from the individual, illusory self that appears as separate from the Universal Self. Just as the rainbow seems to be an independent existence from light.

There we re-discover ourselves as that which we truly are and always; pure and unrefracted God-Consciousness.

As that we are the Father, the Self of selves how else to know Him?

8. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

(*St. Matt. XI, 27*)

IN his sleep a dreamer will see many persons, while upon waking he will find himself alone.

So every man who has awakened from the dream of bodily life will find himself all-One.

All being One, where are Father, Son and man?

At-one-ment then is not the becoming one of many, but the realization that the many were never more than ONE!

The realization that the many do not exist apart from the One, that nothing is apart from Him, the One, that verily is Un-veiling!

9. "He that is of God heareth God's words, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting."

(*St. John VIII, 47*)

(*St. John XII, 50*)

JUST as we may have a dream of someone calling us to wake up from our sleep, so, God can call us from the waking state to the Eternal State.

That State is our Natural One, and though we are ever in it, we are not aware of it while we identify ourselves with the body, much the same as we are forgetful of the waking-world when we are immersed in dream, and forgetful of both waking and dream worlds when we are plunged in deep sleep.

Yet whatever state may superimpose itself over our Natural Being, It is not affected, just as the cinema screen is not affected by the projected pictures. Remaining ever the same unbroken Consciousness, we are truly That, which IS.

When we have become mature, we hear God's call; we are ready to wake up. Because we believe we have a body, God appears to be with a body, speaking to us in a human voice though truly God has neither body nor voice.

Yet this illusory voice coming from an illusory form has its use: it awakens us from an illusory state to the Real One, which is Life Everlasting.

That being our very Nature, who but God is commanding God?

10. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect, that where I am there ye may be also."
(*St. Matt. V, 48*)
(*St. John XIV, 3*)

WHAT can be said of perfection that will not make it imperfect?

No-thing!

Silence, Divine Silence!¹

While in the grip of body-identification, the closest we come to that Perfection is in the experience of deep sleep.

There, free of thought, silence reigns.

Because of it we wake refreshed, having rested from the incessant chatter of our thoughts.

'I had a wonderful sleep', we say — and after another harrassed day of thinking we look eagerly forward to that silence once again.

Because of the relief and happiness we tasted during sleep, we court it night after night.

But sleep is only a negative experience of Perfection.² Only when that state is known even when we are awake, is it true Perfection.

That is the State of states, beyond all states. To awake to it alone is "to be perfect as the Father", and "to be where I AM also".

11. "I am the way, the truth and the life."
(*St. John XIV, 6*)

JESUS, the son of man, is the pilgrims' model, showing the way of realization, the technique towards enlightenment.

In his way of life and in his death on the cross he foreshadows the fate of every man; our son-of-man-idea is to be lost in crucifixion if the Son of God is to be found.

A devotee contemplating the moment of crucifixion may see at first another person being nailed fast. But as his concentration deepens, that very crucifixion becomes the transfixing³ of his own mind: its activity is suddenly arrested and forth bursts Christ Consciousness as 'I AM' without beginning or end, and this is the true meaning of resurrection, for only when it happens to us has it any reality at all — all else is but a dream.

And this Resurrection of the Christ *within*, not that of a body in the world of appearances, is the veritable Resurrection; the true Realization of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

And that Way is never lost, for all roads reach their end in It, and that Truth is never told, for there is never a tongue to move, that Life is never lived, there is but death-less BEING.

Every path of whatever name leads to that solitary Peak beyond all names.

Because our temperaments are varied the approach to the One is manifold. God caters to all kinds of seekers by a variety of ways which fall into three basic classes;

1. The way of labours
2. The way of love
3. The way of enquiry.

These categories are named according to the accent placed upon the method of approach to God but it does not mean that one excludes the other, indeed they inevitably overlap, and in some cases it would be hard to decide which is the more predominant.

However, the 'way of labours' would be followed by those who best worship God by performing good works, by charitable deeds.

The 'way of love' stresses the aspect of loving devotion, adoration, the longing for God much the same as a lover longs for his beloved.

In both these ways surrender to a personal God is marked, the aspect of love is to the fore.

The 'way of enquiry' is the philosophical approach to Eternity. Yet it does not engage in futile analysis of the body and soul, but goes straight to the root of things by tracing the very source of one's existence.

The enquiry "Who am I?" is its sole means.⁴

If incessantly pondered on, the question will resolve not in an answer, but in Pure Being.

That alone ends all and every doubt for ever and ever.

12. "I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go."

(St. John VIII, 14)

EVERYONE says 'I'. The 'I' steadily hums through all experience like the unbroken and unvaried drone of the bagpipes.⁵

The 'I-thought' is the first to appear upon waking; you, he and all else follows, dancing up and down like the melody above its base and holding fast to that one thought, to that one sustained experience; 'I am'.

"I AM before Abraham was," says Christ, pointing out the Essence of existence; BEING.

BEING is unchanging and endless while the phenomenal world is ever changing and a prey of time, of becoming.

Abraham stands for the world, for history, for time, hence he is dismissed with the word 'was', while Christ extracts the Essence of all as being 'I AM' — I AM before Abraham and after Abraham, I AM always.

God taught Moses this same truth when He said: "I Am that I Am".⁶

**The world would be happier if
men had the same capacity to be silent
that they have to speak.**

—Spinoza

And 'I am' is the experience of all living beings, 'I-am-ness' is the very life all creatures, it is synonymous with consciousness.

Though endowed with God's 'I-AM-ness' every individual being thinks his 'I am' to be separate from others and separate from God, for God's 'I AM' entering the brain of unenlightened man becomes the human 'I-am-so-and-so', and 'I-am-such-and-such'.

God's 'I AM' associated with the body creates the ghost 'I am', the human ego.

But this ego is nonetheless rooted in the universal EGO, in the EGO SUM, in the 'I AM he who IS.'

Because of this, because BEING and being are linked like man and his shadow, to trace the I thought in one's body as a dog would trace his master's scent, must lead to the universal Origin of the human 'I' and to merge with THAT is to know veritably "whence I come and whither I go", or "whence the 'I' rises and whither it sets."⁷

¹ Divine Silence is really Eternal Speech. Like pure Consciousness, purity of screen or invisibility of projection, it does not denote 'void-ness'; on the contrary, it signifies the ALL.

² Similarly as in deep sleep, a state of thought-free consciousness is also experienced in a sudden shock and in swoon.

On these occasions our mind is introverted and experiences within the blissful state of pure Consciousness. All happiness is derived from this internal state of permanent bliss, and whenever we enjoy it, it is because we have for that moment abandoned extroversion.

In the case of worldly gain, too, happiness appears to come from the exterior object or position gained,

but in reality we taste bliss because at the moment of gain we relax our hitherto strenuously sustained extroversion and hence experience our innate state of unbroken bliss, which is our Natural State.

³ This same Moment of moments has been pictured by mythology throughout the world in a marvellous variety of ways. This mystic union is the ever recurring theme of all 'Fairy Stories', the marriage of prince and princess, of soul and God. It may be interesting to note a striking parallel between the ancient Chinese version and that of New Testament fame. The Chinese Legend tells of a great fish (!) surfacing at which moment a descending bird (!) sinks its claws into it, the two becoming ONE. They rise as a new creature, the dragon, which symbolises in Oriental metaphysics the Heavenly Power, the Supernal Spirit. When looking at Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan we may witness exactly the same happening; Jesus, the Fish, (born in the cosmic constellation of Pisces), is visited by the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, a bird, the embodiment of the heavenly, and He thenceforth represents the Divine Power 'which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost'. (*St. John I, 32, 33*). He is now recognized as the Son of God. (*ibid. 34*). At this point the symbolism becomes inverse; while the Chinese Dragon is the equivalent of the Son of God, that same creature in the West becomes the menacing ego-ghost that threatens to destroy the divine spark in man. But St. George, another Hero of Resurrection, comes to the rescue, and kills that vile worm, and as we well know from other dragon battles, the death of the monster uncovers the Great Treasure of gold and jewels which it had hidden from our sight. This Treasure is nothing less than our innermost Being, which had temporarily and mysteriously been withdrawn from our attention.

⁴ This quest 'Who am I?' had been followed in India in early times, was forgotten and then re-established by Sri Ramana Maharshi.

In Chinese Buddhism it is known too, where it is combined with saying the invocation 'Namo Amito Fo'. This invocation serves as a devotional introduction, and when the mind has been steadied, the question is asked, "Who is it that says the name of the Lord?"

"Be still and know that I am God" is not an arbitrary command; it is a psychological necessity.

—A. Maude Royden

St. Francis, too, in the later stage of his meditation, at Mt. La Verna, just before he received the holy stigmata, was overheard by Brother Leo to have said; "Who art Thou, sweetest Lord God? And what am I, Thy worthless servant?" And he continued to repeat these words, saying nothing else. (*The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, p. 161, Penguin Classics).

⁵ This was the case in all truly traditional music of people all over the world. The breakaway from this isotope is comparable to our restless mind that has abandoned the Grand Substratum of creation; Pure Being.

⁶ *Exodus III, 14*. And God's name in Hebrew, JEHOVAH, simply means 'I AM', which is the most apt name for God there is.

As a note in the Scofield Reference Bible (p. 6) has it; "Jehovah: The primary meaning of the name Lord (Jehovah) is 'the Self-existent One', literally I AM". . . and, "The name is in itself an advance upon the name 'God' (E1, Elah, Elohim) which suggests certain attributes of Deity, as strength, etc, rather than His essential BEING."

⁷ The description that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has given of his 'death experience' when he was 16 is the example par excellence of the process of successfully tracing this 'I-thought' to its Origin.

How can you expect God to speak in that gentle and inward voice which melts the soul, when you are making so much noise with your rapid reflections? Be silent and God will speak again.

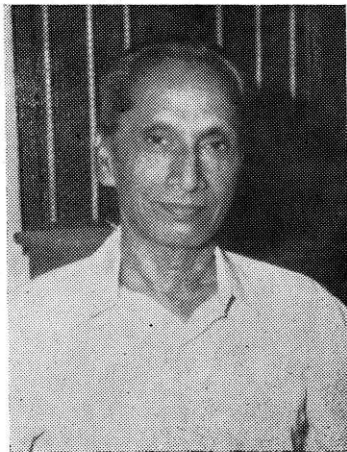
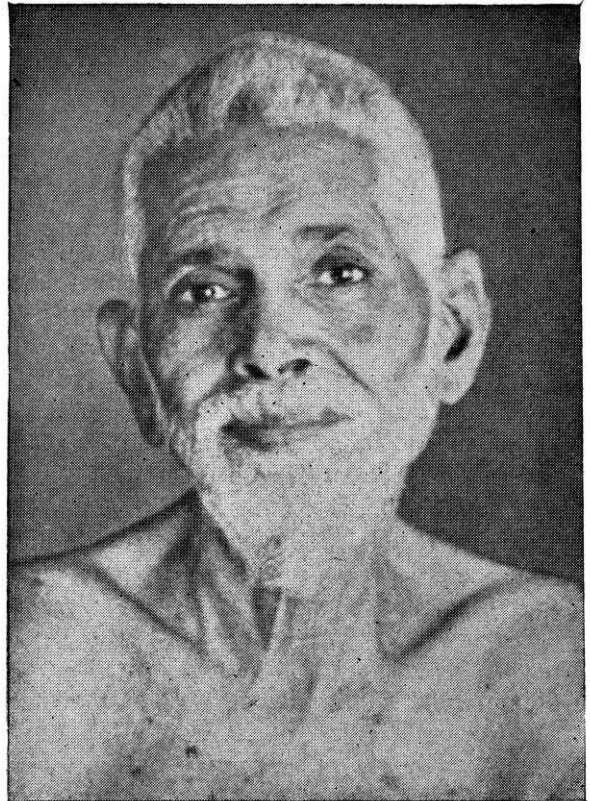
—Francois Fenelon

INTRODUCING....

..... Sri K. Venkataraman

SRI Venkataraman comes from a family totally devoted to Sri Bhagavan for several generations. His grandmother was Echamma, the Grand Old Lady of the Ashram, who for over 38 years, till her death in 1945, would not partake of her food until she had first sent food to Sri Bhagavan and his devotees. His mother, Chellama, was an ardent devotee from her childhood till her death in 1922. When news of her death was conveyed to Sri Bhagavan, he was so moved that tears came to his eyes. From his earliest days "Ramanan" has experienced the protection and guidance of Sri Bhagavan, who has been his only refuge. He feels himself especially blessed to have come from such a family marked by unique dedication.

His first memory of Sri Bhagavan's Grace goes back to about 1925, when he was four years old. It was then a routine that twice a year Ashram inmates were treated for clean stomachs by doses of castor oil and herbal



Sri K. Venkataraman

kashayam. After a dose of oil at night, followed by one of *kashayam* very early the next morning, an early and frugal lunch consisting of a small quantity of rice mixed liberally with a special light *rasam* and mango kernels was served. On one such morning, Venkataraman was being served much more *rasam* than he wanted, and he blurted out 'BUS' (Hindi for 'no more') to stop the server, uncle Ranaga Rao, from giving him more. Sri Bhagavan heard this remark and, punning on the word, regaled the diners with laughter by saying, "Yes, BUS runs outside on the Chengam road to your father's place."

On Kartika day in 1931, when he was about 11 years old, he was staying with his grandmother Echchamma. Finding her busy with the *sraddha* ceremonies for her late husband, he took her permission to go to the temple for *puja*. Before going into the Sanctum Sanctorum, he decided to have his bath inside the temple compound. He went down the steps and entered the water carefully, as he did not know how to swim, but despite his care, he slipped and went down deep into the water. With great effort he was able to come to the surface several times and shout for help, yet no one took any notice of him. After his third unsuccessful attempt, he sank deep into the water, without any hope of survival. Suddenly he saw a very bright light inside his head in the midst of which Sri Bhagavan's face shone — a phenomenon which came in a flash and disappeared immediately. A little later he felt something catch his ankles and he experienced a similar flash in exactly the same manner and intensity as before. By then he became unconscious. When he awoke as if from a deep sleep he found himself on the steps of Siva Ganga. After looking around carefully and reassuring himself that he was really alive, he asked people around him how he had gotten there. He was told that an old man who was doing *pradakshina* of Kambathu Nayanar had run down the steps, jumped into the tank, brought him out of the water and laid him down, and then had gone away as swiftly as he had come. Venkataraman then quickly had his *puja* performed and went straight home, without mentioning a word about it to his grandmother. The next morning they went together to the Ashram as usual and prostrated before Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan looked at

them and asked how deep Siva Ganga was. The lad could not understand the import of the question, and ran out of the hall silently. It was only later in life that he realised that his saviour had been none other than Sri Bhagavan himself. It is true that Sri Bhagavan shunned occult powers as an obstacle to pure sadhana, but it is also true Sri Bhagavan is all grace and compassion and never fails his devotees.

Another incident he recalls happened about a year later when he had come from his father's to stay with Echchamma for his school vacation. One morning at the Ashram he noticed that almost everyone had copies of a new book, which he found was Suddhananda Bharati's biography of Sri Bhagavan, *Sri Ramana Vijayam*, fresh from the press and presented to all inmates. Disappointed at not getting a copy, he went to Chinnaswamy to ask for one. After Chinnaswamy refused to give him one, he went where Sri Bhagavan was and stood weeping. Bhagavan asked why he was crying and Venkataraman told him what had happened. Bhagavan then sent an attendant to the book-stall for a copy of the book. After writing "Ramanan" on the fly-leaf, he handed it to the boy, who was filled with joy and thanked him for it. Sri Bhagavan then observed: "Oho! You are all joy now and your weeping has vanished so soon." Venkataraman then went out of the Hall to tell Chinnaswamy that he had gotten what he wanted from the hands of Sri Bhagavan himself.

Sri Venkataraman was a founder member and the first Treasurer of Ramana Kendra, Delhi and he is now serving (after retirement) as the Treasurer of the Centenary Celebrations Committee.

Silence is the fence around wisdom.

—Proverb

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MAN OF LIGHT IN IRANIAN SUFISM:

By Henry Corbin. Pub.: Shambhala Publications, Boulder, Colorado, USA, Pp. 173. Price : \$ 6.95.

Dr. Henry Corbin is a noted French Islamic scholar whose works on Sufism and pre-Islamic religions have firmly established him as the foremost commentator on Iranian spiritual traditions. His latest work, "*The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*" centres on the symbolism of light as a metaphor for spiritual growth in the works of mediaeval Sufism. After an introductory chapter on the symbolism of the "North Pole" as the "origin of origins" in Iranian mysticism, he illustrates how the metaphor of light has been a recurrent theme in all the major spiritual movements of Iranian history. The "figure of light" or "man of light" appears with minor variations in Zoroastrian, Manichean, Hermetic and Sufi traditions as a spiritual guide projected from the spiritual seeker. Dr. Corbin shows how the light is not only the guide but also the seeker, and illustrates with examples from all the traditions, how the eventual goal is the union of the external and internal light in a dualistic but symbiotic relationship.

The imagery of light pervades other aspects of Sufi belief and practice. There is, for example, the Sufi belief in a non-earthly city of light, a parallel paradise world which is the goal of the pilgrim. There is also the widespread practice of interpreting coloured lights as instructions from the spiritual guide. The colours are seen with an inner non-physical perception and each colour symbolises a different instruction or concept.

Dr. Corbin's range of sources is enormous and his vast knowledge and scholarly methods are clearly evident in every section. The works of Shoravardi, a 12th century Sufi mystic, and later teachers such as Najmaddin Kobra, Najm Razi and Alaoddawleh Semnani are dealt with in great detail, and the book concludes with an interesting comparison between the Sufi ideas of colour and the similar ideas of Goethe, the German poet and mystic. The only minor criticism I have of the content is that the author fails to emphasise that the coloured phenomena he describes are not independent realities in themselves, but are merely projections of the seeker. Najmuddin Kobra himself states: "Know that the soul, the devil, the angel are not realities outside of you; you are they... When you have accomplished the mystical journey and have become pure, you will become conscious of that." This aspect is largely ignored since the author seems to be more intent on giving a descriptive and

conceptual analysis of the light phenomena than in analysing their cause or origin.

Despite this, it is a profound and well-argued book whose complex ideas are presented with great imagination and intelligence. The scholarly style and the occasionally obscure vocabulary make it a formidable, and at times, intimidating book to read, but those with an interest in Sufism may be assured that their efforts to read and comprehend this major work will be more than repaid by the knowledge and insight they receive from it.

GURU AMAR DAS: LIFE AND TEACHINGS:

By Fauja Singh. Pub.: Sterling Publishers, Pvt. (Ltd.), New Delhi, Pp. 196. Price: Rs. 50.00.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Guru Amar Das, third of the ten Sikh Gurus, and Fauja Singh, a Sikh historian, has celebrated the occasion by producing this memorial volume on the Guru's life and teachings.

There is very little undisputed information about the life of Amar Das, but the author has done an excellent job in separating the facts from the fiction, and where facts are not available, clearly isolating the more plausible conjectures.

Amar Das was born into an orthodox Hindu family and only came to the Sikh faith at the age of 60. Twelve years later, he was appointed Sadguru of the Sikhs by the second Guru, Angad Dev, a position which he held for over 22 years, the longest tenure of any of the gurus. Amar Das fully endorsed the teachings of the previous two Gurus, and never missed an opportunity to point out that traditional Hindu practices were of no use to aspirants on the spiritual path. On the positive side, his teachings were simple and direct. Disciples were instructed to "Adore God who is in thy heart" and were told that "In this heart are all the places of pilgrimage." To increase awareness of this truth in his devotees, he always emphasised the importance of "sangat", which meant "congregation of the good", and "kirtan", which was the singing of holy hymns.

In his term of office, many organisational changes were introduced. He was the first Guru to appoint Manji, approved teachers who acted as missionaries, he inaugurated the Bisowa Divas, the annual meeting of all Sikhs, he built the Baoli, the first Sikh pilgrimage centre, and he collected the authentic sacred hymns of

the first three Gurus in a document which was the forerunner of the *Adi-Granth*, the basic scripture of the Sikhs.

It is clear from the book that he radiated a great spiritual power and that his devotees worshipped him as one who is in permanent union with God. There are many reports of miracles which may or may not be authentic, but it is an undisputed fact that on a preaching tour of North India, the Muslim tax-collectors were so impressed by his holiness that they waived the customary pilgrim-tax and allowed him to travel wherever he wished without any charge being levied.

The author is guilty in many places of unnecessarily abusing popular Hindu beliefs and customs, but he has successfully performed his main task by analysing and presenting all the available information on Amar Das in a coherent and readable form. The result is the most complete account of the Guru's life and teachings ever to appear in English, and unless new historical evidence comes to light, it is unlikely to be dislodged as the standard work on the subject.

BORN IN TIBET: By Chogyam Trungpa. Pub.: Unwin, London. Pp. 255. Price: £2.25.

This reprint is the latest addition to the increasingly large series of popular spiritual books published by Unwin of London under their *Mandala* label. There are now about 25 books in the series, around half of which are newly-commissioned works, the remainder like "Born in Tibet" being reprints of modern spiritual best-sellers. With such well-known authors as Christmas Humphreys, John Blofeld, Joel Goldsmith and Lama Govinda contributing to the series the *Mandala* label is acquiring a well-deserved reputation for quality.

"Born in Tibet", the latest addition to the series, maintains the high quality of the previous publications. It is a unique account of the early life and training of the 11th Trungpa Tulka, a Tibetan lama, better known in the West as Chogyam Trungpa.

His early life alternated between intensive periods of religious and academic training and frequent trips to neighbouring monasteries sometimes on social visits but more often to visit famous teachers and be taught by them. Had the Chinese not invaded, he would have become the supreme religious and temporal ruler of a large area in eastern Tibet but it was clear from his early teens onwards that the traditional Tibetan way of life was coming to an end and that his destiny lay elsewhere. He was eventually forced by circumstances to attempt to escape to India and the story of how a 20 year old boy led hundreds of starving refugees across the uninhabited wilderness of Tibet in the middle of winter is one of the great escape stories

of modern times. The hardships of travelling in Tibet while trying to evade capture have been well-documented by both Heinrich Harrer and Alexandra David-Neel and Trungpa's account is similar in many ways to those earlier stories. There is an astonishing physical and mental resilience in the main characters of all three books, a resilience which enables them to overcome immense physical hardships and to attain seemingly impossible goals.

In Trungpa's case the resilience sprang from his intensive training in leadership and Tibetan Buddhism. His life and death struggle on the road to India was raised to the plane of a pilgrimage by his refusal to abandon his high standards of ethics and behaviour. His followers were instructed that they must never take any aggressive action against the invading army nor take food from the local people unless they could pay for it even though they were without food for much of the journey. More impressive still he never considered that his perilous position or the imperative need for speed were sufficient reasons to abandon his meditation. On several occasions he stopped to undergo brief meditation retreats and while he was travelling he tried to inculcate his own attitude into the members of his group by regularly lecturing them on the importance of adhering to the Buddhist canons of right behaviour and attitude.

Overall, it is a profoundly moving account, a rare glimpse into an ancient but dying culture but more importantly, a shining personal account of how the twin pillars of Mahayana Buddhism, wisdom and compassion can triumph over the evils and hardships of the modern world by transcending them and rising above them.

A TESTAMENT OF DEVOTION: By Thomas R. Kelly. Pub.: Quaker Home Service, London, Pp. 114. Price: £ 1.40.

Thomas R. Kelly is one of the great modern Quakers of this century and on the evidence of this brief book his only written record he stands equal to the great Quaker figures of the past such as George Fox and John Woolman. Most of His adult life was spent as a teacher of philosophy in America and although he was a committed Quaker activist, his initial search for Truth was limited by the strict academic standards of logic which prevailed in his profession. However, in the three years which preceded his early death in 1941, a great spiritual unfolding took place and he began to have the direct experience of the immanent presence of God. This book flows from these three years of God-Intoxication, and in the brief period of time since the death of its author it has become one of the classics of Christian devotional literature.

The whole book overflows with the joy of a man who has discovered his beingness in God. His unwavering enthusiasm is infectious and his words are a powerful call to his readers to increase their spiritual endeavours and to have a more continuous awareness of the divinity that is within them.

He recommends that one should proceed along the spiritual path "by quiet persistent practice turning all our being day and night... toward Him who calls in the deeps of our souls". The aim of this practice is to make the presence of God the "continuous current and background of all moments of life." For him this continuous current is the divine Center in man and it is from this Center that one must live one's life. His description of such a life is simple and poetic. "Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time but it occupies all our times."

His words and his modes of expression are fresh and original and clearly come from personal experience. The only man he extensively quotes is Meister Eckhart, the German mystic whose words are probably the closest western parallel to the sayings of the realised sages of the east. He quotes Eckhart with great approval when he says: "There are plenty to follow our Lord half-way but not the other half. They will give up possessions, friends, honours but it touches them too closely to disown themselves." Thomas R. Kelly was undoubtedly a man who went beyond the half-way stage for he gave up his whole self to God. His written work has the same inspirational quality that has made the books of Brother Lawrence and Thomas a Kempis the standard works in this field and I would recommend it without hesitation to anyone whose sadhana is the path of devotion and surrender.

SEARCH: JOURNEY ON THE INNER PATH:

Edited by Jean Sulzberger. Pub.: Harper & Row, San Francisco, U.S.A., Pp. 145. Price: \$ 5.95.

The spiritual quest is a common theme in all major spiritual traditions and the world's religious literature is well-stocked with epics, fables and parables whose main subject is a prolonged search for an object of great value. Superficially, they might appear to be accounts of external physical searches, but they invariably symbolize the inner spiritual journey. In editing this collection, Jean Sulzberger has gathered together some of the more famous allegories of search; there is the Epic of Gilgamesh, the conference of the birds, the Zen ox-herding pictures and the hymn of the pearl, a lesser known Gnostic poem. Each story is presented by a different writer, usually with a brief introduction or preface, although no attempt is made to give a detailed commentary on the text.

The rest of the book is more original, consisting of individual contributions, all on the basic theme of spiritual search. Many are by well-known writers, but while the quality of the writing is understandably high, the content of the articles is at times trivial and superficial, particularly in some of the early contributions, which are little more than personal reminiscences. Fortunately, the majority have more substance to them; one is a good historical account of the physical and spiritual search for Shambhala, another an informative analysis of differing concepts of "crossing the stream to Reality", while in "Search For A Wise Man" there is a well-researched wide-ranging exploration of the Guru-disciple relationship.

Perhaps the most direct and penetrating article of all is a reprint of a conversation between Zen master Sohaku Kobori and one of his students. His unequivocal directness leaves the other contributions far behind. At one point he tells his student: "You are continually deceived by the magic of terminology" and that regrettably is a fair criticism of the majority of the articles in this book.

Most of the authors seem to be more interested in generating good prose than in producing spiritual insight in their readers. Although the book is well-produced, beautifully written and illustrated, somehow its contents rarely rise above the ordinary. It seems to be aimed at that vast body of 'armchair pilgrims' in the West who love to have their minds overflowing with images and concepts, but who somehow never have the energy or the inclination to transcend them.

D.G.

SAD GURU GNANANANDA: By his devotees.

Pub.: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. Pp. 365. Price: Rs. 30.

Thanks to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, thanks to the erudite compilers, we have here a genuine de luxe edition of the life of the grand old bold Saint Gnanananda Giri. I have met him many times and recorded his voice. The details of his lonely itineraries are very interesting. They give a century of India's spiritual history. From Ramalinga to Ramana Maharshi he has seen all the sages of modern days. He inspired Achchudadasar who sang melodious Vedantic Kirtans. He travelled widely doing hard penance. The places he stayed flourished into centers of material, and spiritual progress. Thus, Kallakurichi became Dalmiyapuram, Tirukkoilur became a Tapovanam and Yerkadu too. From Acharya Upasana to Ahm Brahmasmi he leads seekers step by step to God-conscious life.

The gamut of Sadhanas in his Tapovanam includes *Padapuja, Guru Seva, Siva Puja, Shakti Puja, Vishnu*

Puja, Mantra, Japam, Bhajan, Asanam, Pranayam, meditation, introspection, *Atma Vichara* and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Swami Ratna Giri of Jyotir Mutt initiated him in *advaita Sampradaya*. "But," says M. P. Pandit in his introduction, "his life was a meeting ground for various traditions: Sankya, Yoga, Tantra and Vedanta." Prof. T.M.P. Mahadevan says in his preface that "he preserves the culture of the Spirit unfolding even like the great Kanchi Sage, the blessedness of non-duality." The ascending order of Jnana Sadhana begins with Guru Seva and ends with the realisation of the I-Self in the psychic peace of the heart. Once he came to the Yoga Samaj, Vadalur, and explained to me Tirumula's *Kesari* and *Paryanka Yogam*. Like the Maharshi, he insists upon the enquiry of "Who am I?" For "Who am I?" is the beginning and *I am That Self-I* is the end of all philosophic enquiries. Even like Ramana, Gnanananda immensely liked *Kaivalya Navanitam* and *Ribhu Gita* that din into us the truth of the *mahavakyas*, *Tat Tvam Asi* and *Ayam Atma Brahman*. Gnanananda says that the post must be planted firmly before a flag is hoisted; psychic fixity must precede any inner sadhana. Even self reflection needs mental fixity, for which the mind must be trained in *Japam, Puja, Guru Seva*, etc. Bhagavan Ramana spent his whole lifetime sitting in a single place calling people to *Atma Vichara*. But how many have succeeded in the path? Gnanananda used to show *Chinmudra* and say *Tat Tvam Asi* to aspiring *Jnana sadhakas*. He taught Vasi Yoga to aspirants. . . *Vasi Vasi Siva Siva*. . . It is done by rhythmic breathing with the mantra *Sivoham* or *Hamsa Soham*. A study of this book shall initiate the reader in the spiritual path beginning with *Guru Seva*, developing by *Guru Kripa* and culminating with the realisation of That which is the One Self in all. The book has been dedicated aptly to the Benedictine French monk Swami Abishiktananda who got initiation and wrote the notable booklet, "Guru and Disciple", extolling Sadguru Gnanananda.

YOGI SHUDDHANANDA BHARATI

THE ULTIMATE TRANSFORMATION: By Dr. R.P. Kaushik. Pub.: The Journey Publications, Woodstock N.Y., U.S.A. Pp. 156. Price: \$ 3.95.

"What is Truth?" asked jesting Pilate of the Lord, but he would not wait for an answer. We are in a more leisurely and persistent mood not only to enquire into this momentous issue but to question the very credentials of the tools at our command to answer it. Can the mind understand the whole process of its own existence and thus go beyond reason and logic? Just as the sage of Arunachala has ever been insisting, the logical mind, may be fervent and even fanatic in defending a dogma, creed or political formula but can never be

free to find out what is true. It is the dauntless courage to go beyond the frontiers of the limited mind, points out the author that awakens the kundalini energy destroying the old patterns. Even this circular movement of the Serpent of the Tantric lore, according to him is conditioned and when this is seen, consciousness really explodes by questioning what is beyond.

"When you question it, when you cannot go beyond it, then the entire mind finally becomes silent; only in this totally silent mind does an explosion take place which takes it beyond the conscious as well as the unconscious, into a new dimension which we may call the spirit — or the unknown — but which is no longer the human mind as we know it. That is the ultimate transformation."

Disillusioned with popular ideologies and spiritual movements, the author held a retreat in Goa in 1973 with his friends and students and this book is a result of their talks on self-enquiry, or investigation into the nature of the human body, mind and psyche.

SATSANG NOTES OF SWAMI AMAR JYOTI:

By Kessler Frey. Pub.: Ananda Niketan Trust, Pune. Distributed by India Book House. Pp. 104. Price: Rs. 10.00.

This book is an outcome of the annual spiritual retreat held by the Swamiji at Sacred Mountain Ashram, Boulder, Colorado, in 1976. Selflessness, sincerity and devotion are the *sine qua non* of spiritual growth, urges the author, when the ego dies and words, symbols, thoughts, sensations and the relative world are all lost. This is an inexpensive paperback edition of the original publication brought out by Truth Consciousness, Inc. (USA), which operates ashrams in California, Arizona, Michigan and Colorado.

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA: By Anthony Elenjmittam. Pub.: Aquinas Publication, Bandra, Bombay-50. Pp. 152. Price: Not indicated.

The Aquinas Publications of the Institute for Inter-religious Understanding has already brought out several books on Hindu and Buddhist scriptures and this is a free, liberal translation of the *Gita* with paraphrasing and commentary whenever necessary. Parallel references to some texts from the Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Stoic and neo-Platonic literature give additional value to this handy compilation.

MODES OF VALUE: By A. H. Johnson. Philosophical Library, Inc., New York. Pp. 244. Price: \$ 15.00.

Whether value is an entity in its own right is the question taken up for detailed philosophical treatment

in this difficult book by a senior University Professor who was made an F.R.S. for his research on the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead. The value situation is a complicated issue, inasmuch as there are several different modes of presence of value, six of them being taken up for careful examination. Before investigating into the complex moral problems of honesty, love, ideals, rights and other social and related matters, Dr. Johnson focusses attention by apt illustrations on simple entities which are intrinsically valuable or otherwise, such as beauty, pleasure, truth, appropriateness, efficiency, consistency, harmony and moral worth. Then comes the detailed analysis of five ways in which entities are characterised by extrinsic value, such as by means, characteristics, consequences, causality and operational resultants, all of which constitute an excellent study in human relationships as well as social institutions.

This book is of a specialist nature, as it follows the traditions of Plato, the Stoics, Dewey and Whitehead, whose approach to value involved both rational analysis and practical concern for the solution of specific human problems.

DICTIONARY OF ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES: By St. Elmo Nauman, Jr., Pub.: Philosophical Library Inc., New York, Pp. 372. Price: \$ 20.00.

Scant attention was given to the Asian philosophies until recent times by Western scholars, to whom the East remained dark and blank. Dr. Nauman, educated in the "little Osaka" district of San Francisco has studied Japanese language and literature and is well qualified to present Eastern culture to the West. He has shown unusual acumen in selecting the contents of the Dictionary, which for its compactness, clarity and objectivity is unique.

The hidden mysteries of Tibet, China, Japan and Persia are brought out with painstaking effort in the presentation of the key teachings of Tsongkha-pa, Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Mo Ti and Mao Tse-Tung, as also of the lesser known thinkers Chou Tun-i, Wang Yang-Ming, Ho Yen, Kung-Sun Hung, and Wang Pi. The book is a welcome addition to philosophical literature, as it makes the Eastern works in general accessible to the layman.

CONSCIOUSNESS IN ADVAITA: By Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao. Pub.: I.B.H. Prakashana Gandhinagar, Bangalore. Pp. 101. Price: Rs. 35.00.

THE ASCENT OF THE SPIRIT: By Swami Krishnananda. Pub.: The Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar, Tehri-Garwal, U.P. Pp. 255. Price: Rs. 8.00.

Prof. Ramachandra Rao's treatise is the first instalment of the four volumes planned by Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Swamigal Scientific Research Academy with regard to a research project on the study of consciousness in Advaita relating traditional wisdom to modern scientific knowledge. Investigation into the nature of consciousness has of late become fairly popular, being carried on by several scientific disciplines including psychology, neurology, neurophysiology, psychopharmacology and biology. The author is fully conversant with all of these fields having done advanced research work in the Indian Institute of Science and having been head of the Department of Psychology in the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences.

In this dissertation the author makes a detailed historical survey of source-materials in Advaita and evaluates the points of view prevailing on the subject over the ages, from the pre-Sankara era to the present day. Particularly mention must be made of the masterly treatment of the methodological considerations and the examination of the relative merits of observation, reasoning, experience and intuition emphasised in the Advaita system. Most of the sources of Sankara's thought, according to the author, can be traced to Gaudapada's *Karika* on "Mandukya Upanishad". The author rightly deplores the fact that much of Advaita literature has not yet appeared in print, as valuable commentaries, glosses and manuals in the hundreds are buried in manuscript collections in various parts of the country. He makes a fervent plea that "their publication is an urgent need in order to reconstruct the development of the core-concepts in Advaita."

Such a core-concept of the Advaitic consciousness is evident in each chapter of Swami Krishnananda's book, which emphasises that every kind of object-perception is an abstraction from the infinite resources of the Absolute of only those characteristics of the object, "due to the obscuration of aspects of consciousness brought about by the peculiar structural finitude of an individual", caused by his past Karma. This revolutionary method to explain the ultimate reality is the hallmark of Shankara's theory of Maya or *Mithya jnana* which is the cause of Samsara. "The Ascent of the Spirit", clarifying the Advaitic concept of Truth is therefore, of great benefit to all those engaged in the deeper pursuits of spiritual life and the practice of Yoga in its analytic and philosophical aspects. The range of subjects covered in the two dozen essays, collected from the editorials of "The Divine Life" publication of the Sivananda Ashram is varied and extensive, touching almost all the phases of a study of the internal structure of Man and the Universe in relation to the ultimate nature of Reality.

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL ASPIRANTS: By Swami Purushottamananda. Copies from Vasishtha Guha Ashram, Goolar-Dago B.O. Shivanandanagar, Tehri-Garwal, U.P. Pp. 35. Price: Rs. 2.00.

REALITY AT DAWN: By Ram Chandra. Pub.: Shri Ram Chandra Mission, Shahajanpur, U.P. Pp. 119. Price: Rs. 6.00.

YOGA OF EFFORTLESS ACTION: By Dr. R. K. Shringy. Pub.: Jyoti Publications, Banares Hindu University, Varanasi. Pp. 78. Price: Rs. 5.00.

The first book is an English translation by Swami Nirvedananda of the teachings recorded in Malayalam by Swami Purushottamananda of Vasishtha Guha. There are 120 short Mantra-like instructions containing the essence of Advaitic truth, which has a universality and an abiding vitality, being neither old nor new. The cryptic and aphoristic guidelines to thought enshrined in this small volume will serve as spiritual awakeners not only to his own disciples but to all interested laymen.

That spirituality begins where religion ends and that religion is only a preliminary stage for preparing one on the path of freedom is the thesis put forward by the author of "Reality at Dawn". The topics dealt with here relate to the ways leading to Self-realisation which, it is stressed, can be followed even by those leading the Grihastha life. As the preface points out, "the author, Mahatma Ram Chandrajī, the president of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission, leads an ordinary Grahasta life surrounded by all kinds of worldly cares and responsibilities." The methodology suggested here is called the Sahaj Marg, a new type of concentration, where the aspirant is busy in his conscious mind with the external work on hand, while his subconscious mind is engaged in divine thoughts. He is all the while stated to be in a Samadhi condition, although apparently busy with worldly work.

In striking contrast to all these manuals is Dr. Shringy's book on effortless Yoga where any type of discipline or ideal is a bar to comprehension of Truth and a new technique of achieving the silence of mind and freedom from mental unrest is suggested. Such phrase as choiceless awareness, conditioned mind, movement of thought, etc. smack of the teachings of Krishnamurti who, as the author himself confesses, "has inspired and strengthened faith in my understanding of life as reflected in this work." The price indicated for this book deserves better printing, paper and production.

ARGUS

REALIZATION OF THE ABSOLUTE: Translated by A. J. Alston, Pub.: Shanti Sadan, 29, Chepstow Vilas, London, W. 11. Pp. 269. Price: not stated.

"Realisation of the Absolute" is an English version with commentary of Sureswara's *Naiskarmya Siddhi*. The Sanskrit word *Naiskarmya* literally means 'actionlessness'. Sureswara means by this word the Self in its pure nature, "void of the world-process consisting in the whole system of acts, their component factors and results". And by *Siddhi* he means the practical realisation of one's identity with this metaphysical principle. The work, which must be presumed to have been written in or about the first half of the eighth century A.D., deals with the method of Advaitic Self-realisation. Of its four books, the first refutes the views of those who maintain that Self-realisation or release is to be obtained by works alone or by works combined with knowledge; the second illustrates the mode of reflecting on the implications of experience which takes the aspirant to a theoretical understanding of the inner meaning of the mystic texts of Upanishadic revelation; the third explains the meaning of the cardinal text "That thou art"; and the fourth recapitulates and shows by means of quotations that the doctrines now being taught agree with those of earlier Acaryas such as Gaudapada and Sankara. Each of the books consists of about one hundred stanzas interconnected by a prose commentary.

DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF REALITY: Translation & Commentary by Hari Prasad Shastri. Pub.: Shanti Sadan, London. Pp. 88. Price: 40 Pence Sterling.

In his boundless compassion for the upliftment of humanity, Adi Sankara wrote several easy texts for the common aspirant who may not be capable of studying the recondite philosophies enshrined in his commentaries on the Upanishads or the Brahmasutras. These easier works are called *prakaranas*.

The verses contained in this *prakarana*, originally titled *Aparokshanubhuti*, are a summary of the Advaitic doctrine of Self-realisation. The procedures inculcated are well known to every student of Advaita, namely, earnest desire for salvation, capacity to distinguish between the permanent and the transient and internal and external discipline. These procedures constitute the bed-rock of Advaita; in the *prakaranas*, including the present one, the need for the grace of God is added. This is considered to be the important link for all the other procedures.

Verse 49 says: "All beings are born of Brahman who is the supreme spirit; they are therefore Brahman. Be convinced of this. Realisation therefore is this apprehension of the unchanging universalness of being.

All changes are appearances; as the waves are only water and copper pots only copper, so the multitude of universes are the Self and the Self alone." This is the realisation briefly explained in the text.

S. Y. KRISHNASWAMY.

IN HIS OWN IMAGE MAN CREATED GOD:

Author and Publisher: M. P. John. New Times Press, Pondicherry. Pp. 97. Price: Rs. 10.00.

The very title of this work indicates its main theme — that it is highly critical of the popular conceptions of Christianity. What God really is and what religion also is has been a perennial theme with students of religion. M. P. John, in the words of the preface by Swami Gitananda, was, when Swamiji first met him "a dedicated Marxist, and a confused lay-preacher who was trying to reconcile the best of Marx and the communal teachings of Jesus with the church and its modern lack of concern for the teachings of Christ and his obvious message." The author holds that Jesus is a World-teacher who tried to reveal the true meaning of life on earth. It is meaningless to regard Him as the Only Begotten Son of God.

In 13 very brief chapters, John points out how the facts in Christianity have been twisted and the symbolism and imagery wrongly interpreted. Carefully avoiding mystic language and poetical expressions, he argues that man creates his own God in his (man's) own image due to basic fear — fear of the future, fear of death and fear of a life beyond. Really God neither judges nor punishes. The author ridicules the creeds of one birth, one baptism, the one exclusive heaven and the Last Judgement Day. What is the basis of our belief in the efficacy of prayer, e.g., or in the omniscience and omnipotence of God? According to M. P. John, all this is founded in our strong faith. Chapter V is headed: "Believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." The popular mind thus wrongly attributes to God what it has itself effected. We project our own thoughts, conditioned by our upbringing, race and several other factors, to what God is. This is dangerously akin to another doctrine that religion is the opiate of people. John is of the view that the powers we attribute to God can also be acquired without rituals and mantras and other superstitions. Intellect can produce all these. Matter is acted upon by thought and hence where is the need to clothe Him with mysterious and miraculous powers? On p. 84, the author makes a significant statement that we are drawn to religion to "put in order the kingdom within (the mind) so that we may be able to deal with the several pulls in the external world satisfactorily. Prosperity in the worldly sense too can be a result of persistent thinking."

SRI RAMANASRAMAM LIBRARY

APPEAL

We are trying to assemble in the Ashram library a complete collection of all works by or on Bhagavan. There are many works which the Ashram does not possess, particularly in languages other than Tamil and English, and we would like the co-operation of devotees in filling the gaps that exist in our collection. If any devotees have early editions of Ashram publications or books on Bhagavan in any language which are no longer in print we would like to hear from them. Ideally we would like devotees to donate such books to the library but if any devotees have copies of old or rare books which they wish to keep, we can arrange to have copies made for the library. To avoid unnecessary duplication we have compiled lists of works on Bhagavan which are currently available at the Ashram. We will be happy to send copies of this list in any language to devotees who would like to assist us in this matter.

The other side of the picture, the positive one, is rather vague. He equates God (or religion) with the Evolving Reality which is to higher and higher forms. This is the Divine Principle of Life, and the secret is Evolution by experience based on learning. Such statements, vague in themselves, do not seem to clarify our thoughts on God or religion.

THE GOSPEL OF ZARATHUSHTRA: By Duncan Greenlees. Pub.: The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras. Pp. 280. The World Gospel Series. Price: not stated.

Mr. Duncan Greenlees is well known to all students of comparative religion as an assiduous worker in this sphere of the World Gospel Series. The book under review is the fifth and is preceded by the Gospels of Islam, of China, of Hermes and of Jesus. The full series will include 25 titles.

Zarathustra was the prophet of Iran who flourished about the seventh century B.C. In a rather elaborate preface, the author discusses topics, such as the Avesta, Pehlvi and Persian, the life and dates of the prophet, and his message through the ages. The main book contains ten chapters divided into two parts. The first deals with Mazdayasnam and the second with the Gathas. In the latter are embedded the sacred

words and the creed taught by the prophet. Mr. Greenlees has made a careful selection of the Gathas and has given the core of their teaching. The notes accompanying the verses enable the reader to have a correct perspective of their meaning. Not only is the book handy and eminently readable, it offers in an easily understandable form the essence of this ancient Parsi religion. We sincerely congratulate the author on this very valuable work.

S. RAJAGOPALA SASTRI.

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN THE BRAHMA-PURANA: By Surabhi Sheth. Pub.: Sterling Publishers, New Delhi-6. Pp. xii+341. Price: Rs. 100.00.

In the midst of all the teeming multiplicities in the vast Indian subcontinent—social, religious, ethnic, economic, etc.—down the centuries, if any single bond has served as a unitive force, it lies undisputedly in the values popularised by the Puranas.

They contain accounts of geographical regions and holy places of pilgrimage; they give the myths that make rivers, mountains and shrines sacred. They dwell in detail on the norms of ethical behaviour expected from men and women belonging to different strata.

They give graphic accounts of the pantheon of gods ever in conflict with demons. In a word, almost all shared beliefs by the Indian community regarding every important aspect of life—like marriage, ritual practices, feasts, obsequies, on the one hand and all ingrained faiths in ideas like re-birth and karma, merit and sin, heaven and hell, God and His abode — are directly traceable to the Puranas.

The present study of religion and society in the, Brahma-Purana is much more comprehensive and readable than the run of Ph. D. theses all too common today. It covers chronological and textual problems within moderate limits (Part I). In Part II it arranges the carefully selected and sifted source-material from the Purana under clear heads and sub-heads, such as social stratification, marriage, family, position of women, economic and cultural life, and ethnic composition. Under Part III we have chapters on beliefs, practices and moral sanctions.

Throughout, the writer's comparative, critical and historical perspectives are evident. The study throws fresh light on the specific ways in which our present day Indian culture has come to be what it is. It should prove of interest not only to students of Sanskrit literature but also to sociologists and historians of Indian religion and culture.

DR. K. KRISHNAMOORTHY.

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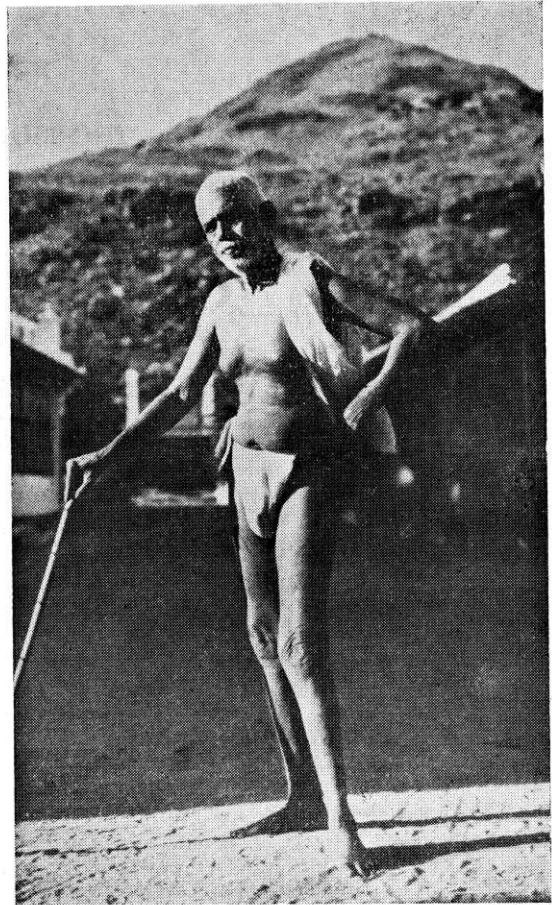
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Signature of the Publisher : (Sd.) T. N. VENKATARAMAN.

Date : 31-3-1980

ASHRAM BULLETIN

**RICH
BIRTH CENTENARY
TRIBUTES
PAID TO
Bhagavan Ramana**



A Three-Day International Seminar held at Bangalore

“Sri Maharshi’s teachings are bound to attract the earnest all the world over, since they are simple, direct and rational.”

A Three-day Seminar to discuss the teachings and philosophy of Ramana Maharshi was held at Bangalore in the middle of March (14th to 16th).

The great number of participants reflected the fact that the number of people, both Indian and Foreign, who have heard of the Maharshi and have acquainted themselves with his personal discovery of Truth is very great. From the talks, it was evident that the sage of Tiruvannamalai has been fully accepted as spiritual leader of great eminence not only in India but also abroad. Yet it can be clearly seen that all such discussions are only verbal elucidations of the Maharshi’s brief and often cryptic utterances, while the rock-like core of his *apparently* simple method of Self-enquiry has yet to be fully penetrated.

The subjects discussed at the seminar were the Maharshi’s technique of Self-enquiry, the nature of Realisation, the concept of guru, the place of the Maharshi

in the religious tradition of India, and his relevance to modern times. Often contradictory and complementary points of view on these topics were raised by the speakers, giving the participants much food for thought. Here we can only point to some of the highlights.

On the afternoon of March 14, the Governor of Karnataka, *Sri Govind Narain* and his wife, *Smt. Chandra Narain*, graced *Ravindra Kalakshetra*, Bangalore, the venue of this Seminar. *Smt. Chandra Narain*, who visited the Maharshi, with her father, *Sri Pana Lal, I.C.S.*, inaugurated the Seminar by lighting the *kuthuvilakku*, traditional lamp.

In this inaugural speech, the Governor, *Sri Govind Narain*, extolled the spiritual supremacy of Sri

Maharshi. He also congratulated *Sri Bhagavan's Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee* and the *Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning* for having organised such an enlightened congregation.

Professor S. K. Ramachandra Rao (Director, Study of Consciousness Project, SAVSSRA, Bangalore), in his inaugural address, talked of the tremendous impact the meeting between Ramana and Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni had on both of them. *Dr. R. Balasubramanian* (Director, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Studies in Philosophy, Madras University), speaking on Self-enquiry, defined the subject as an enquiry into our own composition. *Mr. K. S. Rangappa* (retired editor of Government of India publications) felt that the confusion between the infinite 'I' and the limited personal 'I' can be removed only through logic as has been prescribed by the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* as well as the writings of Sankara and Gaudapada. *Prof. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao*, (Prof. of Philosophy, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore), speaking of Ramana's silence, characterised it by the words 'Self', 'Knowledge', and 'Freedom', all of which are concurrent and overlapping. *Krishna Chaitanya* (Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow and well-known writer), pointing a very different direction from most other speakers said: "One may surrender one's ego only by putting oneself at a higher level of being, so how about enlarging the boundaries of the ego?"

In a joint presentation, *Mr. V. Ganesan* (Managing Editor, *The Mountain Path*) and *Mr. Matthew Greenblatt* (*Arunachala Ashrama*, New York), speaking of the relationship between Arunachala, Siva and Ramana, said that it was not a Father-Son relationship, but a single immanence which divided itself for a pur-

pose, and when that purpose was served fused into one again. *Prof. Krishnamurthy* (of the Karnataka University, Dharwar) said that both Ramana and Sankara belong to the same stream of Vedanta, the difference between the two being only in the nature of emphasis. *Dr. P. R. Sundaram* (Prof. of Philosophy, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Studies in Philosophy, Madras University) made an exhaustive and itemised comparative study of the two great leaders. Talking on the present phenomenal advance in science and technology, *Dr. Santosh Das Gupta* (Director, Centre for Advance Studies in Philosophy, Viswabharati University, Santiniketan) pointed to the need for greater Self-Knowledge to get beyond current imbalances. *Dr. T. N. Ganapathy* (Professor of Philosophy, Vivekananda College, Madras) declared Ramana Maharshi an outstanding example of the way of rationality and enlightenment. Sri Ramana Maharshi was a *Jivanmukta* — the Living Free, *Here and Now* — said *Sri Swami Ekatmananda* (President of the Ramakrishna Mutt, Ootacamund). *Mr. David Godman* (a Britain now living in Sri Ramanasramam) spoke of the relationship between the teachings of Ramana and of two other teachers with similar methods. It was left to three women, *Mrs. Jean Dunn* from Honolulu, *Miss Williamson* from Australia, and *Mrs. Ratna Navaratna* from Sri Lanka, to tell the audience about Ramana the man, the individual. All of them spoke with great warmth about their subject, Mrs. Navaratna becoming quite rhapsodical in the pertrait she drew of the Maharshi.

In his Valedictory address, *Dada J. P. Vaswani* of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Poona said that, while our silence is full of the clamour of passions and desires, the Guru's silence is vaster and more emphatic than all the *sastras* and Scriptures put together.

There were attractive cultural programmes on all the three evenings. On the 14th, *Sri Maharajapuram Santhanam* with accompaniments, gave a vocal performance, singing songs only on and by Sri Ramana. The next evening, the 'Ramana Art Centre' presented a dance ballet on 'Vedantha Kuravanji' which was followed by 'Ramana Geethamala', a multilingual musical extravaganza by 'Ramananjali' group, led by *Smt. Sulochana Natarajan*. On the last night, there was an absorbing 'Dance and Music' programme by Prabhat Kalavidaru of Bangalore.

All the programmes were well attended by a large appreciative crowd.



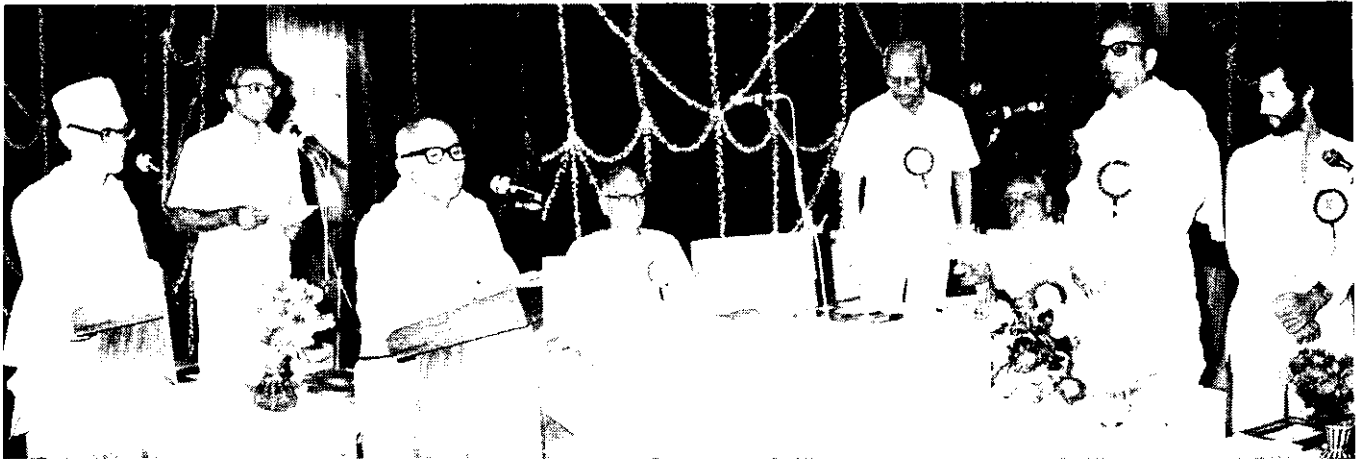
Delegates from Madras Kendra at Bangalore.



H.E. the Governor of Karnataka, *Sri Govind Narain*, who delivered the inaugural address at the Seminar, is being garlanded by *Sri A. R. Natarajan*.



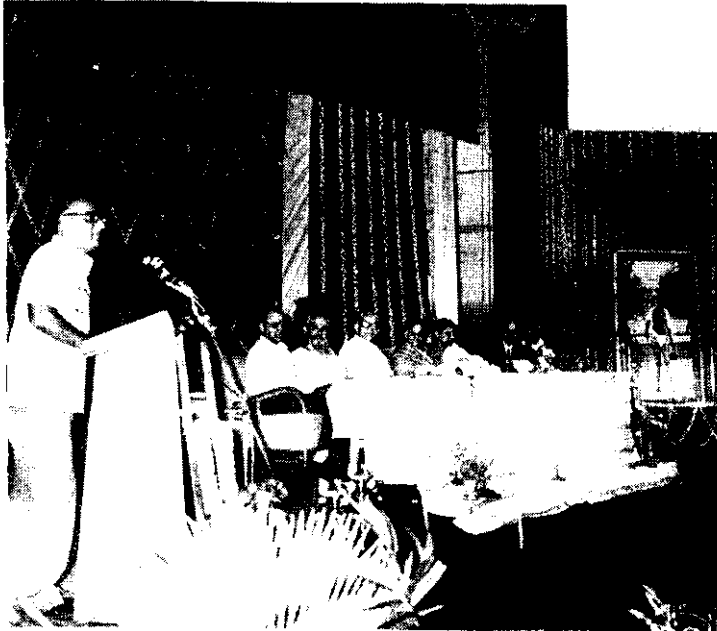
Smt. Chandra Narain inaugurated the Seminar by lighting the *kuthu vilakku*. (l to r): *Kumari Ambhika*, *Mrs. Joan Greenblatt*, *Kumari Surada* and *Kumari Lalitha*



A few of the elegant speakers (l to r): *Swami Harshananda*, *Dr. Veezhinathun*, *Swami Ekatmananda*, *Prof. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao*, *K. K. Nambiar*, *Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao* and *David Godman*.

The *Ravindra Kalakshetra* auditorium where the Seminar was held was packed with delegates.





(For details of pictures see opposite page)



Sri A. R. Natarajan (Secretary, Sri Bhagavan's Birth Centenary Committee), President of *Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning*, Bangalore, deserves all credit for organising this Seminar so well and conducting the proceedings with taste and tact.

DETAILS OF PICTURES ON OPPOSITE PAGE

(Top left):

Sri Dada Vaswani released the Hindi L.P. "*Ramana Bhajan*" and handed over the first copy to *Smt. Sulochana Natarajan*, the leader of the '*Ramananjali*' group of singers, who have sung in the L.P.

(Top right):

Sri Dada Vaswani was presented with a *Gitopadesa* tableau by *Sri A. R. Natarajan*. *Sri Dadaji* presented it back to *Sri Ramanasramam* !

(Middle left):

Sri S. Krishnaswamy, Secretary, *Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning*, Bangalore, thanks the Governor, *Sri Govind Narain* and *Smt. Chandra Narain*, for having graced the occasion and inaugurated the Seminar. The tastefully and beautifully decorated stage attracted everyone's attention. (seated l to r): *Dr. Sankaranarayanan*, *Sri T. N. Venkataraman*, *Sri Govind Narain*, *Smt. Chandra Narain*, *Smt. Sulochana Natarajan* and *Sri A. R. Natarajan*.

(Middle right):

Smt. Suri Nagamma, who graced the Seminar, was presented with the Telugu L.P. Record: "*Ramana Geethalu*" by *Justice A. R. Somanath Iyer* who released the L.P. (the famous Music Director *Sri S. Rajeswara Rao*, is seen behind him).

(Bottom):

The dedicated singers: "*Ramananjali*", presented a multi-lingual musical extravaganza—all songs by and on *Sri Ramana Maharshi*—this *Ramana Geethamala*, was well received by the audience.

RAMANA KENDRA, DELHI

The Delhi Kendra is having a series of special functions during the centenary year.

On January 3, 1980, the hundredth Jayanti, which happened to be a Government holiday, the day began with puja and Veda parayana. In the evening, a public meeting was held at which *Parivrajika Atma Prana* of *Sri Sarada Mission*, gave a moving talk describing her visit to *Tiruvannamalai* and her darshan of *Bhagavan*,

Mr. Justice N. Krishnaswamy Reddy of Madras spoke at length on 20th January about *Bhagavan's* teachings and how they could be easily understood by one and all. He was greatly impressed with the *Vedaparayan* conducted at the Kendra.

On January 4, night and January 5 morning, A.I.R., Delhi broadcast the musical feature on the *Maharshi* by *Smt. M. S. Subbalakshmi* with introduction and comments by *Professor Swaminathan*.

The devotees at Delhi who could not go to *Tiruvannamalai* for the Centenary Celebration on January 3, were amply compensated when *Shri K. K. Nambiar*, Chairman of *Ramana Kendra*, Madras, gave an eye-witness account of the celebrations at the Ashram and in Madras.

PRIZE DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY

At an impressive function held on February 10, *Smt. Madhuram Bhoothalingam* distributed prizes



Smt. Madhuram Bhoothalingam giving away prizes.



Prizes displayed in front of Bhagavan's portrait.

to the winners in school-level and inter-school competitions in Music and Recitation held in Delhi earlier under the auspices of the Centenary Committee. The Kendra auditorium was packed with beaming children. In all 113 school children received prizes and 14 schools received shields.

NAMING OF ROAD MAHARSHI RAMANA MARG

Devotees of Sri Bhagavan will be glad to learn that an important road in the capital of the country has been named after the Maharshi. The road running along Bharati Nagar, from Khan Market to Lodi Road and leading directly to the Institutional area where the Ramana Kendra is situated, has been named "MAHARSHI RAMANA MARG". The New Delhi Municipal Committee has thus paid its tribute to the sage during the Centenary Year.

On February 3, an informal function was arranged at the Kendra premises at which Shri Kedar Nath Sahni, Chief Executive Councillor, Delhi Metropolitan Council, was the Chief Guest. After a brief introduction by Shri S. Ramakrishnan, Shri Kedar Nath Sahni, who spoke in Hindi, narrated some incidents from Bhagavan's life to illustrate his compassion for the weak and down-trodden. He said that the naming of the road in the capital after Bhagavan was like offering *comphor arti* to the Sun God. He felt that much more needed to be done to make the Maharshi better known to the people in the North. Prof. K. Swaminathan thanked Shri Sahni and others whose good offices helped the naming of the road after the Maharshi.



Road sign of "MAHARSHI RAMANA MARG" at the Sujan Singh Park end.

RELEASE OF HINDI RAMANA BHAJAN AT DELHI

The songs and bhajans by and on Sri Ramana Maharshi recorded on cassette tapes, through the dedicated efforts of Smt. & Shri A. R. Natarajan and others, have now been rendered into Hindi by Ramanath Shastri and recorded by the group of artists in Bangalore.

At a function held on February 17, the Hindi Bhajans cassette tape was released by Dr. (Mrs.) Kapila Vatsyayan, Joint Education Adviser to the Govern-



Shri Ramanath Shastri receiving the tape from Dr. (Mrs.) Kapila Vatsyayan.

ment of India, in the Department of Culture. In a brief speech, she explained the eternal relevance of Bhagavan's teachings. Shri Ramanath Shastri explained in Hindi the meaning and beauty of some of Muruganar's poems.

* * *

The Annual General Body meeting of the Kendra was held on January 27 when the Annual Report for the year 1979 and the audited statement of accounts and the balance sheet for 1978 were passed.

A grand Tiruppugazh Bhajan was conducted in the Kendra Auditorium on Thai Pooam day, 31st January. Smt. Rukmini Subramanyam and Smt. Tara Krishnan led the groups of singers.

* * *

Sivaratri was observed on 14th February with the recitation of Sivapuramam and chanting of Rudram and Chamakam.

On February 14, Sivaratri, A.I.R., Delhi broadcast a 50 minute Hindi feature on the Maharshi based on a script by the late Ramdhari Sinha "Dinkar".

SRI RAMANA KENDRA, CALCUTTA

The Calcutta celebrations began with Mahaganapati Homam, Rudrabhishekam, and Pratahkala Puja on the morning of 3rd January.

The evening function commenced with prayers and chanting of Bhagavan's Upadesa Saram, Veda chanting by students of Sankara Hall Veda classes was follo-

wed by recitation of Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam by Sarada Mandali ladies.

Then Sri P. Subrahmaniam, President, Sri Ramana Kendra welcomed the guests and the devotees, who had assembled in large numbers.

Sri Sankar Prasad Mitra, formerly Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, in his inaugural address recollected his visit to Sri Ramanasramam and drew an analogy between the two great sages of this century, Maharshi Ramana and Aurobindo.

The Vice-President of the Kendra, Sri H. N. Mazumder, spoke in Bengali about the life and teachings of Maharshi, and of his benign presence even now felt in Ramanasramam.

Smt. Anasuya Subrahmaniam, in a Tamil talk, recalled Bhagavan's divine affection for human beings and animals alike, and his equal respect for all religions of the world.

The celebrations ended with a vote of thanks by the General Secretary, Sri P. M. Das Choudhry, and bhajans by Smt. Lakshmi Lakshminarayan.

* * *

Meetings at different centres in Calcutta were being arranged during the whole year till 21st December, 1980, the next Jayanthi day. Three such functions have been held at New Alipore (20-1-80), Lake Town (3-2-80) and Salt Lake (17-2-80)



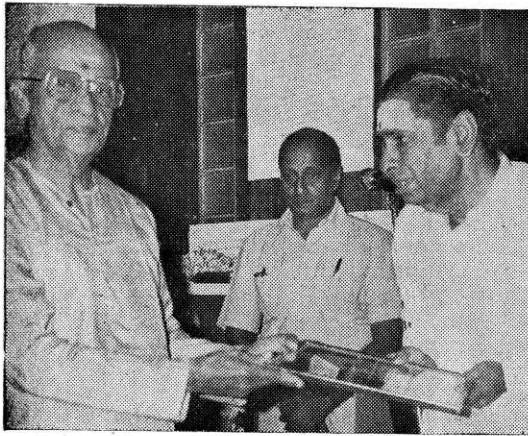
Photo taken on 3-1-80 at Sankara Hall (left to right) Sri P. Subrahmaniam, President (welcoming the devotees), Sri H. N. Mazumdar, Justice Sankar Prasad Mitra.

RAMANA KENDRA, MADRAS

The Jayanti was celebrated on Sunday, 20th January in a grand scale, with a programme that commenced at 5-00 a.m. and lasted until 8-30 p.m.

The day started at 5-00 a.m. with chanting of Sri Ramana Suprabhatham, Sri Ramana Sannadhi Parayanam, etc., as is the practice at Ramanasramam. This was followed by Suryanamaskaram, Rudrabhishekaradhana and Sri Ramana Sahasranamarchana.

Poor feeding was organised on a big scale thanks to the initiative and generosity of Sri B. Ananthaswamy. About 1000 poor were fed on that day.



Madras Kendra Chairman Sri K. K. Nambiar (left) presented a beautiful picture of Bhagavan to Sri Ananthaswamy (right), Sri R. Venkatakrishnan, Treasurer is seen in-between them.

In the afternoon there was Ribhu Gita parayanam followed by Vedaparayanam. The public meeting at 5-00 p.m. was attended by a big audience. After the welcome address by the Chairman Sri K. K. Nambiar, Sri K. V. Jagannathan in his lecture described Bhagavan as an Avatar in a familiar form, spreading quietude by his mere presence. As one lamp lights another and glows not less, great sages like Bhagavan illumine others and guide them towards the centre of all being.

There was a grand Bhajan programme by Sri Srinivasa Rao and party when compositions on Bhagavan and by Bhagavan were also sung.

Thanking Sri B. Ananthaswamy for his outstanding services to the Kendra, Sri K. K. Nambiar presented him with a framed photograph of Sri Bhagavan.

VIJNANA RAMANEeya ASHRAM, PALGHAT, KERALA

The Birth Centenary of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was celebrated in a most fitting manner at

Vijnana Ramaneeya Ashram, Palghat, Kerala, for four days, from 3rd to 6th of January, 1980.

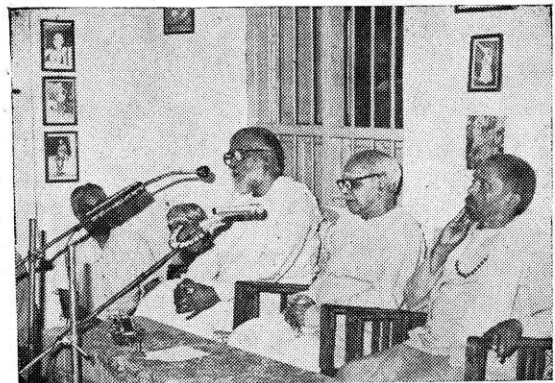
On the 3rd, Ganapati Homam was followed by Guru Puja with Ashtothara Archana. There was Akhanda Japa and poor feeding on all four days. In the evening on all days there were parayanams of Ramana Gita, Sat Darshanam, Upadesa Saram and Sivananda Lahari.



Sri N. Viswanatha Iyer, the District Judge, gives the inaugural address on the occasion of the Centenary Celebrations.

There was public meetings on all the four days. On the first day the inaugural speech was delivered by Sri N. Viswanatha Iyer, the District Judge. Sri Swami Maitrananda of Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Trichur, narrated the experiences he had in the holy presence of Bhagavan.

On the second day Dr. P. Achuthani of Govt. Victoria College, Palghat, presided and there were speeches by Prof. N. K. Sesham of St. Thomas College, Trichur on "Maharshi as a Sthithaprajna", and by Sri T. L. Easwaran of State Bank of India, Palghat, on "Sat Darsanam",



Sri Nitya Chaitanya Yati speaks on "Mumicharya Panchakam". Next to him are the President Sri Vaisravanath Raman Namboodiri and Swatmananda Saraswati of Kollur.

On the third day, Rtd. Principal Sri Anantha Narayana Iyer was in the chair. Prof. Vaidyalinga Sarma of St. Thomas College, Trichur, spoke on "The Place of Maharshi in Advaitic Thought" and Sri Janardanam Thampan in a moving speech showed how only a jnani could be a true bhakta.

The fourth day's function was presided over by Brahmasri Vaisravanath Raman Namboodiri, a veteran Sanskrit scholar and a devoted Bhagavathopasaka. Sri Nitya Chaitanya Yati of Sri Narayana Gurukulam, Varkala, spoke on "Municharya Panchakam", a work written by Sri Narayana Guru about the Maharshi. This was followed by an interesting speech by Swami Swatmananda Saraswathi of Kollur.

The function ended with Arati and distribution of Prasadam.

AT FLEURIER, SWITZERLAND

On January 2, 1980, the devotees of the Maharshi in Switzerland, France and Italy met in Fleurier to celebrate the Centenary.

After an Indian dinner, they moved to the Library where a beautiful picture of Sri Bhagavan brought to those present his penetrating glance and abundant grace.

A few minutes' silences was followed by the testimonies of four speakers who had all met the Maharshi in person in Tiruvannamalai. Swami Nityabhodananda explained Sri Bhagavan's method of self-enquiry leading to Self-realization.

Miss Ella Maillart described her search for "Indian Wisdom" and discovery of "light" in the Maharshi's message. The sole reality is this light and it is best taught in the universal language of silence. She had planned a brief stay at Tiruvannamalai but spent years there.

Eleonore de Lavandeyra went to Tiruvannamalai during the Maharshi's last, long illness and yet she found in his look a "light, love and strength" which filled her then and has never left her. She plays on the tanpura whose fundamental sound is a great support to meditation. This was experienced by all present during the spell of meditation at the end of the meeting.

Hendri Hartung, the last speaker, recalled four persons who had helped him in the quest: Olivier de Carfort, Rene Guenon, K. F. Durkheim and Sylvia Hartung.

Music and meditation followed and fulfilled a memorable day charged with the Maharshi's presence.

RAMANA KENDRAM, HYDERABAD

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's birth centenary was celebrated by Hyderabad Ramana Kendram on January 3, 1980, in the main lobby of the Hindi Arts College building in a simple yet elegant manner. There were plenty of lights, but they were subdued. There were plenty of people, but all were quiet, even the children. There was plenty of music, but it only fostered silence. The whole atmosphere was serene;



Centenary Celebrations in Fleurier, Switzerland. (l to r): Miss Eleonore de Lavandeyra, Swami Nityabhodananda, Miss Ella Maillart and Mr. Hendri Hartung.

minds were still, and hearts full. The presence of the Maharshi could be readily felt. The large portrait facing the main entrance seemed to beckon everyone into his realm of bliss.

Recitation of the Taittiriya Upanishad was followed by talks in which some of the Maharshi's old associates shared their experiences with the audience. Professor Shiv Mohan Lal, formerly of the Osmania University Department of Philosophy, participated in the proceedings, against doctors' orders. A chapter from his Urdu translation of the Maharshi's biography was read by his son.

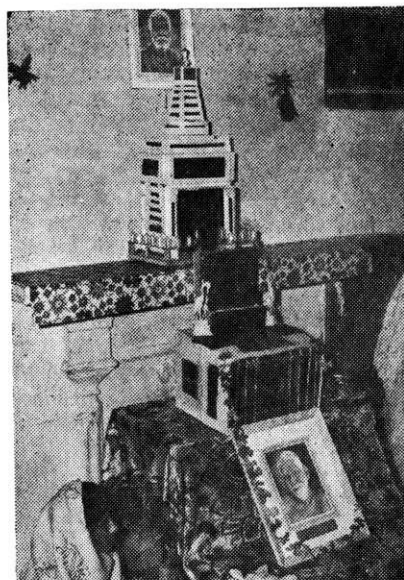
Other old devotees present on the occasion included Mr. Hariprasad, grandson of Mr. Narasimhaiah, who was Telugu instructor to Mr. Humphreys, and Mr. T. S. Rajagopalan, whose son Ramanan, was saved by the Maharshi after a snake bite. Mr Ramanan was also present. Mr. G. Krishna, of *The Indian Express*, spoke on the Maharshi's relevance in the modern world. (Mr. Krishna has translated into English Mr. Lakshmikantam's biography of Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni.)

Earlier in the day, food packets were distributed to about one thousand slum dwellers around the Rama Temple in Nallakanta. Poor feeding is now being done on the last Sunday of every month.

Other highlights of the programme were the recitation of Upadesa Saram by children and singing of the Maharshi's poems and songs. The ceremony concluded with puja and arati and distribution of prasadam.

AT NAHAN (H. P.)

The 100th birthday (Jayanthi) of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in Nahana on December 30, 1979. The function was brief but was enriched by the presence of a small 'Ramana Mandiram' made especially for this occasion.



Some discourses in praise of Sri Ramana were given and prasadam was distributed.

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OBITUARY

SURI NAGAMMA

We regret to report that Suri Nagamma passed away in Bangalore on the full-moon night of March 31. After an operation a few years ago for terminal cancer, she was miraculously cured and restored to normalcy by Sri Bhagavan's grace.

She spent about six weeks very happily at Sri Ramanasramam during the Birth Centenary Celebrations. She attended the Seminar in Bangalore. She fell ill in the third week of March, when she was moved into a Nursing home in Bangalore, where she breathed her last with Bhagavan's name on her lips.

The name of Suri Nagamma has found a special place in the hearts of *Ramana-bhaktas*. Her 'Letters' (to her brother) vividly describe the day-to-day happenings that took place in the presence of Sri Bhagavan, and have already acquired a great reputation in spiritual literature. Her reports cover the period between 1945 and 1950, thus continuing and completing the record which started in 1938 by Sri Munagala Venkataramaiah ("Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi") and was followed by Sri A. Devaraja Mudaliar ("Day by Day with Bhagavan"). While the 'talks' present the teachings of Sri Maharshi and 'Day By Day' brings out the *bhakti*-aspect of the Sage, Nagamma's 'LETTERS' capture the total personality of Bhagavan, not only as a Master of masters but also as a most lovable father, mother and friend of prince and pauper alike.

Her devotion to Sri Bhagavan can be seen from her two books ("My Life at Sri Ramanasramam" and "Letters and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam").

After the *Maha Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan, she often visited the Ashram, staying for many weeks, and (as



can be seen from *The Mountain Path*) regaling eager fellow-devotees with reminiscences of Sri Bhagavan. Her soul-stirring poems in Telugu on Sri Bhagavan have been brought out by the Ashram in book form.

Suri Nagamma — the child of Bhagavan — now rests in eternal peace at the Lotus Feet of her Father.

* * *

Smt. VISALAKSHI BALASUNDARAM

A great musician and an expert on the *vina*, Smt. Visalakshi Balasundaram, made her own unique contribution to the music world. She dedicated herself to arts and music and trained many in the field of fine arts.

She had been from her young age a devotee of Sri Bhagavan. The darshan of Sri Bhagavan, she used to say, changed her life thoroughly. Her devotion to him was total and supreme.

She took an active part in the International Seminar on Sri Bhagavan that was held at Bangalore recently by presenting the ballet 'Vedanta Kuravanji', singing the songs herself. When questioned on the dias about why she had undergone such strain when not physically fit, her sweet reply was: 'For my Bhagavan, I want to sing myself.'



Along with her husband, Dr. Balasundaram, she had spent many useful years at Rishi Valley.

Though she was ailing for the past few years, the end was sudden.

We pray to Sri Bhagavan that He absorb her at His lotus feet!

* * *

We are deeply grieved to announce the passing away of two very staunch devotees of Sri Bhagavan in March this year.

SRI MADAN MOHAN VARMA

Sri Madan Mohan Varma came into contact with Sri Bhagavan in early forties and was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. He was Chairman of Public Service Commission, Rajasthan. The end came at his ripe old age at Lucknow and was most peaceful.