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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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EDITORIAL

THE JOURNEY

A JOURNEY is a movement in space; an experience a leap in time. In a mystical experience, time and space are both transcended, though it seems to happen within their frame-work. Instances galore can be cited from the history of all religions. Most of these 'peak' experiences leave indelible imprints on the persons who experienced them. They come in a flash, but go also the way they came. Such gifted persons leave accounts of their experiences in words for the benefit of posterity. These journeys of the 'becoming' into the 'Being' make up mystical literature. Many saints and fakirs, are thus remembered today with grateful veneration.

Running parallel to this, but proceeding in the opposite direction, is the Final Experience of Sri Ramana Maharshi — a school-boy of sixteen instantaneously stood transformed into a Sage of steadfast Wisdom. This was not a case of becoming merging into Being, but of Being consuming the becoming. The Death Experience of Sri Ramana is the single, final act of Being swallowing up the becoming.

A spark of Arunachala *Jyoti* had reached the reputed Siva *kshetra* — Tiruchuzhi — and descended on a most righteous and generous lady, only to take a human garb. Blessed indeed was Alagammal for the Lord of Fire had chosen her! Alagammal could hardly bear the 'heat', the 'brilliance' hidden in her womb as her second son. When the child was born, a big *Jyoti* flashed across the delivery room and



the born-blind midwife 'saw' the Light and announced to Alagammal: "This is a divine child, indeed! I saw a brilliant light, Alagu!" The Child, Venkataraman, started hearing, within, the sound 'Arunachala, Arunachala' for, the Self, the Lord, Arunachala, had 'chosen' this child as the vehicle for Its latest earthly journey.

For sixteen years 'Arunachala' lay latent, a vague vibration within the lad. Suddenly, one day this *nama* materialises as an external sound from the mouth of an elderly relative. 'Arunachala', 'Arunachala' reverberates everywhere! No more weary waiting within the confines of a physical body. Arunachala envelopes the boy into Its Eternal Embrace, in a thanatopsis, a Death Experience, the blessing of the full descent of Arunachala on Venkataraman. No more could the lad be content with His burnt-rope-like physical frame 'living' apart from His Parent, the Fire Supreme.

What a journey it was! *Purusha* subjecting Itself to the sway of *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* in turn seeking shelter in *Purusha*.

Not knowing the exact railway fare from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai was Rupees three, the boy-god takes just that amount out of Rupees five offered! Look at the array of guidance and help He received *en route* — A muslim *fakir* guides him aright at Villupuram, the hotel-owner gives a free meal, effortless walk from Mambalapattu to Kilur, a drummer gives *anna* (food), a devout couple showers love and affection, a barber offers to give a shave, the Father's Arms receive the Son with a shower-bath!

One journey ends in home-coming. But the child is yet to feel at home with Mother *Prakriti* and Her other children.

Then follow thirty glorious months!

This is the period between September 1, 1896, the day of His arrival at Arunachala till the boy-saint—then known to all as *Brah-*

mana Swami — "started responding to the questions of *sadhakas*, with written replies to start with" and then with a flood of words of pure Wisdom, in poetry and prose. This austere period saw the ascetic's gradual movement from Self-absorption and silence into an outward normality, communicating His inner experience, through words simple and precise. He was often absorbed in Himself but there was no more *sadhana*. When He was not going after food people said He was fasting; He had no occasion to speak, they said 'Swami was observing *mounam*'! He was established in Himself always, reposing totally in the oneness of Self, like the *adhara sruti* (fundamental note in music). But new notes from the environment started blending with that *adhara sruti*. Now, He was in a state where "any amount of action can be performed, and performed quite well, without identifying himself with it in any way or ever imagining that he was the doer." He started living in our midst as Awareness, as the Person in all persons; He lived in all and as all life! And this He did for four and fifty years!

Reign of Supreme Wisdom in the very presence of Father Arunachala! The Truth Eternal is now made manifest and available to all, not only to human seekers but even to animals and plants! The journey which began at Tiruchuzhi continued in Arunachala and ended as a *Jyoti-rupa*, the source, the course and the End of all!

Arunachala took up this journey in motion in the form of Ramana only to draw, every one, even the least of us, into the fold of Ramana and start a similar journey, for returning to our source in pure Being-Awareness-Bliss.

" The embodied soul from you proceeding may through various ways self-chosen wander aimless for a while, but cannot rest till it rejoins You, the source Even so the soul must turn to you, O Aruna Hill, and merge again in you alone, Ocean of Bliss." — *Arunachala Ashtakam*, v. 8

LEAVES FROM DEVOTEES'
DIARIES

TOWARDS ARUNACHALA

The pilgrim had left home, determined never to set foot there again. The cuckoo leaves the crow's nest where she was hatched when she discovers her true nature, and never returns. (Self-Realisation)

V ENKATARAMAN thought that the journey to Tiruvannamalai would cost three rupees and took only that sum, and left the remaining two rupees with a letter in Tamil to the following effect: "I have set out in quest of my Father and at his bidding. Let none grieve over this act and let no money be spent in search of this. Your college fees have not been paid. Two Rupees are enclosed herewith" The reference to the writer as 'this' and the absence of a signature reveal the state of mind he was in.

He left home a little before noon and reached the railway station just in time to catch the train. He bought a ticket for Tindivanam, which he thought was the station nearest to Tiruvannamalai. This cost him two rupees and thirteen annas. The fact was, though he did not know it, that there was a new link line by which he could have travelled to Tiruvannamalai itself by changing at Villupuram, and this would have cost him exactly three rupees. After he got into the train a Muslim fellow-passenger, a *moulvi*, entered into conversation with him, discovered his mistake and advised him to detrain at Villupuram.

— from *Ramana Maharshi*, p. 11
By K. Swaminathan

* * * * *

He remained at the Villupuram station till daybreak and then wandered out into the town to look for the road to Tiruvannamalai, deciding to walk the rest of the way. However, the name was not to be found on any signpost and he did not like to ask. Feeling tired and hungry after walking about, he entered a hotel and asked for food. The hotel-keeper told him the meal would be ready only at noon so he sat down to wait and immediately lapsed into

meditation. The meal came and, after eating it, he proffered two annas in payment, but the hotel-keeper must have been struck by this fine-looking Brahmin youth with long hair and gold ear-rings sitting there like a sadhu. He asked how much money Venkataraman had and, on hearing that he had only two and a half annas all told, refused to accept payment. He also explained that Mambalapattu, a name that Venkataraman had seen on a signpost, was on the way to Tiruvannamalai. Venkataraman thereupon returned to the station and bought a ticket to Mambalapattu, which was as far as his remaining annas would take him.

He reached Mambalapattu in the afternoon and from there set out to walk. By nightfall he had gone ten miles. Before him was the temple of Arayaninallur built on a large rock. The long walk, most of it in the heat of the day, had tired him and he sat down by the temple to rest. Shortly after someone came along and opened it for the temple priest and others to make *puja*. Venkataraman entered and sat down in the pillared hall, the only part that was not yet quite dark. He immediately beheld a brilliant light pervading the whole temple. Thinking it must be an emanation from the image of the God in the inner sanctuary, he went to look but found that it was not. Nor was it any physical light. It disappeared and he sat down again in meditation.

He was soon disturbed by the cook calling out that it was time to lock up the temple as the *puja* was finished. Thereupon he approached the priest and asked if they had anything for him to eat but was told there was nothing. He then asked to be allowed to stay there till morning but that was also refused. The *Pujaris* said they were going to Kilur,

about three-quarters of a mile away, to make *puja* at the temple there as well and that after that he might get something to eat, so he accompanied them. As soon as they entered the temple he was again plunged in the blissful absorption called *samadhi*. It was nine o'clock by the time the *puja* was finished and they sat down to supper. Again Venkataraman asked. It seemed at first that there would be nothing for him, but the temple drummer had been impressed by his appearance and devout manner and gave him his share. He wanted water to drink with it and, holding his leaf-plate with rice, was shown the way to the house of a Brahmin nearby who would give him water. While standing in front of the house, waiting for it, he stumbled on a few paces and then collapsed in sleep or faint. A few minutes later he came round to find a small crowd looking on curiously. He drank the water, gathered up and ate some of the rice he had spilled, and then lay down on the ground and slept.

Next morning, Monday, August 31st was *Gokulashtami*, the birth anniversary of Sri Krishna and one of the most auspicious days in the Hindu calendar. Tiruvannamalai was still twenty miles distant. Venkataraman walked about for some time looking for the road to it and again began to feel tired and hungry. Like most Brahmins at a time when ancient customs still held more than they do today, he wore gold ear-rings, and in his case they were set with rubies. He took them off in order to raise money on them and finish the journey by train, but the question was, where and with whom? He stopped at random at a house which turned out to belong to one Muthukrishna Bhagavatar and asked for food. The housewife must have been deeply impressed by the appearance at her door of a Brahmin youth of beautiful countenance and shining eyes on the day of Krishna's birth; she gave him a large cold meal and although, as in the train two days ago, his appetite disappeared after the first mouthful, she stood over him in true motherly fashion and made him finish it.

There remained the question of the ear-rings. They must be worth some twenty rupees but he only wanted a loan of four on them to cover any more expenses he might have on his way. To avoid arousing suspicion he gave the pretext that he was on a pilgrimage and his luggage had got lost, leaving him destitute. Muthukrishna examined the ear-rings and, judging them to be genuine, advanced the four rupees. However, he insisted on taking the youth's address and giving his own so that they could be redeemed at any time. The good couple kept him with them till noon and then gave him lunch and packed up for him a parcel of sweets that had been prepared for *puja* to Sri Krishna but not yet offered.

— from *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge* Pp. 28-30
by Arthur Osborne

* * * * *

Alighting at Tiruvannamalai station on the morning of 1st September, 1896, Venkataraman beheld his "promised land" in the "starry-pointing" towers of Arunachaleswara's Temple from afar. As with the Saint Nanda, the very sight of the towers filled his soul with joy, arising not merely from the sense of achievement but also from the close proximity to Bliss itself. With quick steps and a bounding heart he proceeded straight to the great Temple. The gates of the three high compound walls and all the inner doors were open. There was not a soul beside him there; and it looked as though the Father was thus preparing to welcome his 'beloved son', who marched straight to the inmost shrine, the Holy of Holies without any hindrance and addressed Arunachaleswara (in the shape of *lingam*) thus:

O God, obedient to Thy call,
Here have I come, deserting all.

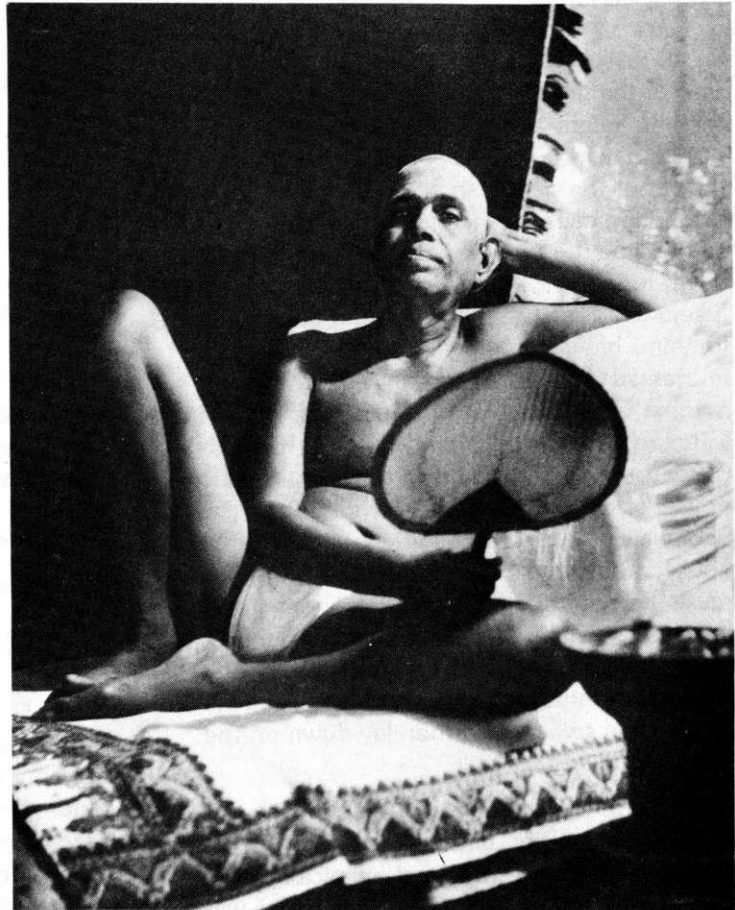
That moment all physical and mental excitement disappeared; he felt a soothing sensation and his cup of bliss was full to the brim.

— from *Self-Realisation*, p. 40
— by B.V. Narasimha Swami

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QUEST AND EGOISM

By
Arthur
Osborne



It is tremendously exhilarating to learn for the first time the truth of the One Self and the possibility of Self-Realization. At last life has a meaning and a purpose! All previous desires and ambitions fade into insignificance; they were mere re-arrangements in the pattern of the mirage, whereas this is penetrating beyond the mirage to Reality. So one vows oneself to the great quest and, most often, is drawn into some group following some path or discipline. One looks with awed reverence upon the senior members, those already advanced on the way. But it is not long before one discovers that by no means all of them merit this respect. A few seem earnest in their efforts and helpful towards others; and these it is who are on a good way, but with a shock of disillusionment the new recruit discovers many to be very imperfect people. Not only have they failed to eradicate their faults, but he may find less simple goodness among them than among his associates or former associates in the world of ignorance. He will hear them speak maliciously of one another and find a jealousy no less bitter than among worldlings. Not only that, but some are grasping and possessive, some assertive and boastful; some lack self-control. If understanding has really sunk into the heart of the newcomer and truth been recognised as what he always knew but did not know that he knew, nothing of all this can make him doubt — nothing again can ever make him doubt — nevertheless it is a great disappointment and many have felt that it needs an explanation.

One explanation is that the process of *sadhana* squeezes out the lower tendencies in a person and brings them to the surface in the process of casting them out just as psycho-analysis is supposed to. This is a healing process but it can cause a lot of inconvenience to the person concerned and to those who have to live or work with him. Some one once complained to Bhagavan that low thoughts crowded into his mind when he was trying to meditate and Bhagavan said: "That's all right. Everything that's in the mind has to be brought out. How can they be cast out if they are not brought to the surface?" On another occasion a complaint was made to him of the arrogant behaviour of one of the senior devotees and he said: "That is only his *vasanas* (inherent tendencies) coming out".

Sometimes it happens that a person's first perception of Truth has a transforming effect, bring out all that is beautiful in him, so that his friends wonder, finding him a new and delightful person. But that is only temporary. It may be followed by a surfacing of his worst tendencies, so that those who wondered at his improvement begin to find him worse than before and question whether it would not have been better if he had never put his hand to the plough. Only then, when both armies have been mustered, is the battle joined; and it may be a lifelong one.

This however, still leaves unexplained the many cases of aspirants who were outstanding egoists before they took to the path and seem to remain so afterwards, and of good, kind-hearted people who do not take any path. When Christ was asked why he associated with riff-raff he answered that it is those who are sick and need the doctor, not those who are in good health. There may have been some sarcasm in this, since one can hardly imagine those who thus challenged Christ to have been in a good state of spiritual health; nevertheless it does point to the fact that it is those who recognize themselves to be sick that seek treatment. That explains why it is so often misfits and outsiders who become aspirants.

An American woman once asked Bhagavan why we should seek Realization and he answered: "Who asks you to if you are satisfied with life as it is?" But, he went on to explain, people often become dissatisfied with life and then they turn to God and seek guidance. That explains why the good, comfortable, kind-hearted people so seldom become seekers. They lack the spur of initial discontent to start them off. Christ said that he who seeks shall find, but before one even knows that there is anything to seek the first stage of seeking may have to take the form of rejecting the sham satisfaction provided by worldly life. This may be provoked by tragic events, but it is a state of mind and assails the prosperous no less than the indigent, the successful as well as the failures. It can be the result of boredom as well as of tragedy.

There is also another, more psychological explanation why many egoists take the path (and it is only a matter of degree, because we are all egoists, more or less, until the ego is burnt out at the end of the path). It is because the ego has much to expect from it, more indeed than from any worldly attainment, even though vowed to immolation. There have been mystery-religions in which some one has been treated like a king or a god for a year, only to be sacrificed at the year's end. That is a symbol of the ego; except that on the path the term is not fixed and can be postponed indefinitely. And after all, even if the ego were not to make this hazardous choice, the life of the world also faces it with the ultimate extinction of death.

The path or quest goes in alternate waves of expansion and contraction symbolised by Jupiter and Saturn. This can be explained quite simply. All that one has to do is to keep one's mind still, take cognizance of outer happenings, concentrate on the mere fact of being, and remain poised and alert for promptings from within. It is as simple as that. But, although simple few people find it easy. There is the temptation, while shaving or while stirring the porridge, to let the mind ramble on

incessantly over what I said to aunt Emma yesterday, what to write to Joseph today, what I will say to George in the Office, and so on. These ramblings have two features in common one is that they centre round a character called 'I' by whose interests the good and evil, advantage and disadvantage of all events are measured and whom the Sages declare to be fictitious; and the other is that they add nothing to the success of that presumptive character but merely mull over what has already been decided or will have to be decided in due course. They have the disastrous effect of deafening the mind to the still small voice of the Self and preventing the spiritual intuition or awareness of Self from flowing in, so that the presumptive 'I', like an evil ghost, seems to usurp the place of the Self.

This helps to explain the paradox of saying that the mind of the realized man is dead. It is quite alive for receiving impressions — inwardly: awareness and intuitions of the Self; outwardly: from things and events of which it takes cognizance; it is only dead to its usurped role of creator, creating an imaginary world for an illusory being. And it is much more efficient for being set free from this.

THE EVIL GHOST

In the heart — pure being:

"Isness alone is."

Outwardly — flow of events:

"A dance, a rhythm."

Between — an evil ghost:

"The imposter me,"

Who seems the very hub and
first of things,

But, scrutinized, dissolves and is not there.

Pure being in the heart —
be this, be still;

Flow of events without — cognize, accept;

The evil ghost — be vigilant, expel;

This is the path and all the wisdom of it.

Most people find it rather difficult just to hold to pure awareness of being and stop the mind rambling, so the paths laid down in the

various religions offer them crutches to help them do it — asking yourself "*Who am I?*" or being mindful of your actions, or watching your breathing, or repeating a *mantra*, or concentrating on a scriptural text, or puzzling over an insoluble problem — all just ways of stilling and controlling the mind, if you can't do it without them.

As the mind begins to be stilled to a greater or lesser degree and for longer or shorter periods, the barrier against spiritual knowledge is breached and it begins to flood in, sometimes pure and formless, sometimes garbed in bliss or ecstasy or healing grace or innate vigour or prevision or supernatural powers, according to the individual nature, just as wine takes the form of the receptacle it flows into. In some people, the temporary stilling of the mind occurs with no striving or effort and the barrier to experiences and powers is thus removed without their understanding what is happening or why. They come to be known as natural mystics.

From this explanation of the process that takes place we can come back to the question of egoism and the alternate phases of expansion and contraction experienced during the quest. Each time the barrier is breached the Water of Life flows through, even though it be only a slight trickle or a fitful jet; a feeling of expansion, Grace, well-being results, whether or not accompanied by any of the powers or experiences referred to above. But the lurking ego is not slow to pounce upon the new supply and use it for its own ends, for enjoyment or boasting or glorification or whatever it may be, thereby closing the barrier again and preparing a new period of contraction and aridity, of which it will soon complain. And so the wheel goes round. It is necessary to be ever on the alert and when Grace comes, to avoid stealing it or impeding its flow. When King Janaka attained Realization he said: "At last I have caught the thief who has been robbing me all these years."

Thus the ego has plenty of rewards to look forward to on the quest, and of a rarer and

more exotic kind than it would find in the crude life of the world. There are ancient myths where the hero had to pass by trees laden with jewels or rare fruits, but woe betide him if he stopped to gather them. Or where lotus-eaters can dissolve his initiative or a Circe turn him into a swine. The warnings of dangers on the path are not fanciful; they are sober realities. Indeed, when the flow of Grace is bounteous but the resistance of the ego tenacious it may well happen that the resultant stress will over balance the mind. I have seen not a few such cases.

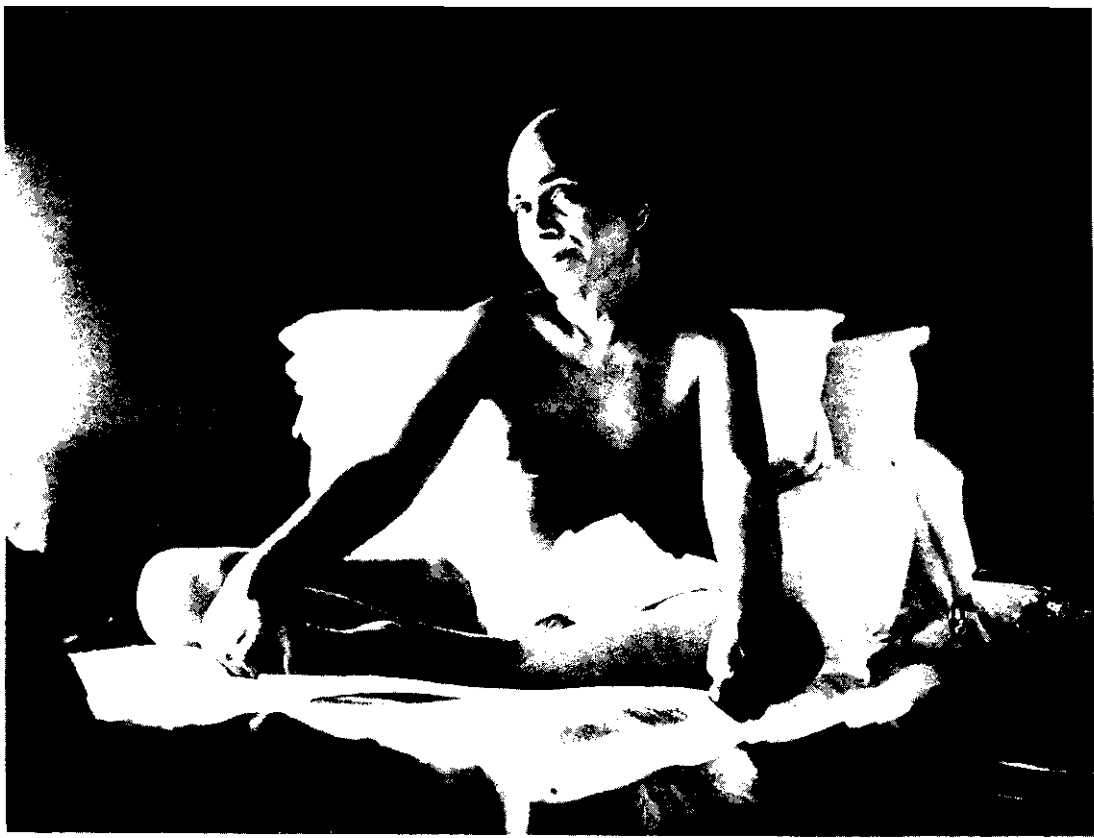
The most pernicious egoism is that of the person who has already advanced far enough on the path to obtain certain experiences. The Realized Man is set free from ordinary rules of conduct. He no longer needs them. As is said in the Old Testament, he is a "law unto himself". Having direct apprehension of the Divine Harmony and no egoistic impulses to put him in opposition to it, he needs no outer directives. This has been recognized in the various religions. For instance, the 4th Century Christian Desert Fathers, than whom none could be more extreme in austerity, declared that one who had attained the goal could return to the cities of the world and live there unrecognized.

But this truth gives rise to a pernicious heresy. It may happen that some corrupted individual claims on the basis of real or alleged experiences to be above good and evil and free to indulge in various kinds of licentiousness. Such a man is likely to corrupt himself and others, especially as he is only too apt to set himself up as a guru. That is a form of indulgence the ego loves. No such claim is valid. A conclusive answer to all such claims is that only he in whom the ego has dissolved really is above the law; and he in whom the ego has dissolved will have no incentive to indulge in licentious behaviour. Therefore the very fact that a man does so is proof that the ego in him still exists and that he is not authorised to but is deluding others and possibly himself also.

One conclusion is definite; that whatever method or path an aspirant may follow, in whatever religion it is a method or path towards the liquidation of the ego; and therefore whoever retains a strong egoism, whether it manifests as arrogance, jealousy, licentiousness, avarice or whatever else, is very far from the goal, no matter what experiences he may enjoy. Whatever technique of inner purification may be followed, the gross outer work or moral purification must be done. There may be possibilities on some paths of obtaining occult powers while still weighed down by moral impurities, that is by egoism, but never of attaining spiritual realization. There are paths where specific exercises are given for cultivating the several virtues and eradicating their opposite vices. In Yoga, as traditionally taught, the first two steps, before *asanas* or postures are even attempted are *yama* and *niyama*, the acquisition of moral control, without which a practiser may master endless stunts but will never attain the goal. On some other paths the moral discipline is less formal, comes more from within. These are questions of technique; what is definite is that liquidation of the ego is the goal and it can never be attained on any path while harbouring egoism.

But why so many words? Living on the supposition of an individual self alienates one from the Universal Self or God and brings frustration. Believing in the co-existence of a Universal Self and an individual helps a little but not much (and how could it be Universal if an individual existed outside it?) Intellectual argument that there is no individual self helps still less. To believe in the existence of a Supreme Self or God and consistently subordinate the interests of the presumptive individual self to the Supreme helps very much; but the only way to complete fulfilment is to live on the constant assumption that, as said in Chapter II, verse 16 of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

"There is no existence of the unreal and no non-existence of the Real".



FIRST DARSHAN

By Professor K. Swaminathan

ON MICHAELMAS Day (September 29) 1940 happened the most memorable event of my life, my first *darshan* of the Maharshi. The last *darshan* (which the Master and the servant knew was indeed the last) occurred a fortnight before April 14th, 1950. In between, during many weekends and college vacations, repeated visits to the Ashram kept me (as spells of sound sleep keep one) in health, happiness and taut efficiency. Comparison with egoless sleep is not a literary flourish, but an attempt to explain the pure contentless happiness which one recalls as "how one felt, but what one felt remembers not". Such happiness a child enjoys as it sits securely in its mother's lap. Sri A. Devaraja Mudaliar (master of the ceremonies in the Old Hall) encouraged this mother-child bond, while

D.S. Sama, G.V. Subbaramayya and K. Subrahmanyam (of Loyola and Vivekananda Colleges) preferred the teacher-student roles. Bhagavan was an ideal mother, but to please us he could also pose as an eager, bright-eyed student quick to grasp (and able to expound) the deepest mysteries of English poems and Biblical passages. One who is at home in the stillness of pure Being keeps no diary, makes no notes, writes no letters. Like dreams remembered after waking up, the golden hours spent in the divine presence in that blessed decade demand for utterance a gift like Muruganar's. That is why one reads him and rejoices in the voice that speaks for M. Anantanarayanan, Sadhu Om and many dumb creatures like me.

Some moments recalled at random may be recorded later.

.....

Sixty years ago, M.G. Shanmukhan, (son of Police Inspector Gopala Pillai), then my student of Sri Minakshi College, Chidambaram, spoke to me enthusiastically about Bhagavan. I was not interested then in some one sitting still and doing nothing when so much needed to be done to change this mad, bad world and Mahatma Gandhi strode the land doing so many things "socially relevant".

Many things happened between 1927 and 1940 which drew me to the Mightier magnet of the moveless Mountain. Long talks in Madras with Douglas Ainslie and Swami Siddheswarananda and a casual perusal of Muruganar's *Sannidhi Murai* (1939 edition) convinced the obstinate camel that the oasis he badly needed was near and easy to reach.

In 1910 my good father had appointed and I had meekly accepted Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer as my infallible guide and mentor. In the summer of 1940 I had many baffling problems and mental conflicts and, as advised by Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer, took a series of lessons on the *Brahma Sutras*, sitting at the feet of a learned Pandit in Bangalore. An English

scholar, a Swami from Paris and this Narayana Sastriar agreed that an actual person in the *Brahmic* state was present there in Tiruvanna-malai, offering rest and shade to tired travellers in the desert of *samsara*.

Cautious Sir P.S.S. who was my sole *pater familias* after my father's death in 1935, permitted my visit to the Ashram but added this advice: "You are a young man with many responsibilities. When I look down at the abyss from the edge of Dodabetta, I have four strong men holding me safe with a rope round my hip. By all means, go to the Ashram. But don't go alone. Take some friends with you."

And so I took with me my wife, my former student, K. Subrahmanyam and my then student M.M. Ismail. The Maharshi deprived me of none of the persons or pleasures that were dear to me. He left them all with me enriched and sanctified. Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth and the *Bible* meant much more for me when illumined by the light He shed on all He saw. His grace it was that gave me length of life, strength of body and ample room to render humble service to Rajaji, Vinoba and Gandhi, all reflections in our own time of the Eternal Goodness of which He was the full embodiment.

IS

By Frederick Beck

is god independent?
how could it be
for if it were independent
there would have to be something
to be independent of
there is nothing
just absolute consciousness
not dependent
not independent
just itself
nothing

OUTSIDE THE SCRIPTURES

By Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami

*A special transmission outside the scriptures;
No dependence upon words or letters;
Direct pointing at the heart of man;
Seeing into one's own nature, and the attainment of Liberation.*

— Traditional summary of Zen

THESE are the reflections of a traveller on the Mountain Path laid down by the Maharshi. The Maharshi's wordless doctrine is unlike the usual traditional teachings. There are no creeds to be elaborated, so there is no need for preaching. There is nothing for the mind to theorize or philosophize about. What is needed is immediate, intuitive understanding of the heart. "The intricate maze of philosophy of the various schools is said to clarify matters and to reveal the Truth, but in fact it creates confusion where none need exist. To understand anything there must be the Self. The Self is obvious. So why not remain as the Self? What need to explain the non-self?"¹

What the seeker has to do is rather to unlearn and let go all his preconceived ideas about the Self. Indeed, the Maharshi has been known to say that in the end even the scriptures must be given up and unlearned. "All scriptures without exception proclaim that for attaining salvation the mind should be subdued. And once one knows that control of the mind is the final aim, it is futile to make an interminable study of them. What is required for such control is actual enquiry into oneself by self-interrogation: 'Who am I?' How can this enquiry in quest of the Self be made by means of a study of the scriptures?"²

This reminds one of Chuang Tsu's saying that if one gets rid of small wisdom great wisdom comes in.

There are no precepts for special austerities, while at the same time indulgence is not condoned. The question always is: Who is it that seeks all this? To refer a second time to a Taoist Sage, it is like Lee Tsu's story of the animal trainer who subdued his tigers (*vasanas*) by treating them quite impersonally, neither gratifying their desires nor provoking their anger.

All thinking is out of place as a means of *sadhana*. It is not one's true nature. It creates all errors and, what is worst of all, creates, as the father of them, a false entity, the ego or individual being. "Concentration is not thinking of one thing. On the contrary it is excluding all thoughts, since all thoughts obstruct the sense of one's true being. All efforts to be directed simply to removing the veil of ignorance."³

The Maharshi says that the Self is not in books; if it were, anybody might become a

¹ *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in his own words.*
p. 10

² *Ibid.* p. 75

³ *Ibid.* p. 160

Sage by study. Also it is not in any hermitage, and going to live in solitude will not help. "Why do you think you are a householder? The similar thought that you are a *sannyasin* will haunt you even if you go forth as one. Whether you continue in the household or renounce it and go to live in the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thought. It creates the body and the world and makes you think of being a householder. If you renounce, it will only substitute the thought of renunciation for that of family and the environment of the forest for that of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there for you. They even increase greatly in the new surroundings. Change of environment is no help. The one obstacle is the mind and this must be overcome whether in the home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? So why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now, whatever be the environment."⁴ Nor is the Self something to be attained at some future date. "No one is ever away from his Self, and therefore everyone is in fact Self-realized; only—and this is the great mystery—people do not know this and want to realize the Self. Realization consists only in getting rid of the false idea that one is not realized. It is not anything new to be acquired. It must already exist or it would not be eternal, and only what is eternal is worth striving for."⁵

All doctrines are made by the ego and for the ego. The ego flourishes on them. But on the Maharshi's path the very existence of the ego is denied right from the start, both that of the teacher and that of the taught. "There is no ego. If there were you would have to admit of two selves in you. Therefore there is no ignorance. If you enquire into the Self, ignorance, which is already non-existent, will be found not to exist and you will say that it has fled."⁶

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 94

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 23

The Blind Seer

By Muruganar¹

As the sun which, never resting,
Seeks and seeks but finds no trace
Of darkness, so our master cannot see
Our foe, delusion: Cannot see,
So blind is he.

There is no deed beyond the reach
Of Soul-force. Soul-force is love's own
power.

Strength of arms is but the sordid, passing
Play of mere illusion.

See love. Hear love.
Go and touch love.
Eat love, sweet love.
Smell love, for this
Love is the Self's
Awareness of Itself.

'Tis wisdom not to beat against the
wind
Like sails outspread upon a boat afloat,
But, like the anchor in the ocean
depths,

Humbly to sink and rest.

As in the ocean salt
Dissolves and disappears,
So in the body lost I lay.
But now I long to be absorbed
In the brightness of your grace.
Eat me as food, O Lord,
Digest both Me and Mine.
Convert my being wholly
Into your true body, Light.

On the body's cross the ego Jesus
Stretched, tortured dies.
The passion ended,
The immortal spirit shines as risen
God.

This is the resurrection of our life.

¹ Translated from Tamil by
Professor K. Swaminathan.

Is there anything in the human body that can be called 'I'? There are mental and vital processes but investigation reveals no person there to be designated as 'I'?⁷

The negative process consists of intellectually eliminating the not-I so that one can see that he who eliminates everything else cannot eliminate himself. Such intellectual investigation may prepare the way for Self-enquiry but is not the enquiry itself.

"Visitor: I begin with asking myself 'Who am I?' and eliminate the body as not-I, the breath as not-I, the mind as not-I, but then I am unable to proceed further.

"Bhagavan: Well, that is all right so far as the mind goes. Your process is only mental.... The Truth cannot be directly indicated; that is why this mental process is used. You see, he who eliminates all the not-I cannot eliminate the 'I'. In order to be able to say 'I am not this' or 'I am That' there must be the 'I' to say it. This 'I' is only the ego or the 'I'-thought. After the rising up of this 'I'-thought, all other thoughts arise. The 'I'-thought is therefore the root thought. If the root is pulled out the rest is at the same time uprooted. Therefore seek the root 'I'; question yourself; 'Who am I?'; find out the source of the 'I'. Then all these problems will vanish and the pure Self alone will remain."⁸

Why was the Maharshi so against thought? Why was he not satisfied with mental investigation? Because it cannot see beyond itself. It is created by the ego and therefore cannot pierce to the Self underlying the ego. But will its renunciation not result in a mere blank? It can; that is what happens in deep sleep. But it can also result in awakening into pure *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, Being-Consciousness-Bliss. This is what is called Realization. "Absence of thought does not mean a blank. There must be some one to the aware of that blank. Knowledge and ignorance pertain only to the mind and are in duality, but the Self is beyond them both. It is pure Light. There is no need for one

Self to see another. There are no two selves. What is not Self is mere non-Self and cannot see the Self. The Self has no sight or hearing; it lies beyond them, all alone, as pure Consciousness."⁹

Then does one who has realized the Self remain absorbed in pure, formless Consciousness, oblivious of any outer world? He can; that is the state of trance known as *nirvikalpa samadhi*. But he need not. Full and complete Realization involves return to formal consciousness also, with full perception of the outer world, not as a self-subsistent reality but as a manifestation of the Self. The mind and senses can still cognize; when one says that the mind is dead, that means only that it no longer presumes to imagine, create or originate, as it formerly did. This is the state the Maharshi was in. It is known as *sahaja samadhi*.

"To those who have not realized the Self, as well as to those who have, the word 'I' refers to the body, but with this difference, that, for those who have not realized, the 'I' is confined to the body, whereas, for those who have realized the Self within the body, the 'I' shines as the limitless Self.

"To those who have not realized as well as to those who have, the world is real. But to those who have not realized Truth is adapted to the measure of the world, whereas to those who have, Truth shines as the Formless Perfection and as the Substratum of the world. This is all the difference between them."¹⁰

Why is the Maharshi so insistent against the ego? Because the ego is the usurper that claims to be the Self, the mask that conceals the Reality. Its elimination is the only way to realization of the true Self that underlies it. The seeker has no alternative. There can be no chick unless the egg-shell is broken. The true Self cannot be realized until the false is

⁷ It will be observed that this is the same as the Buddhist doctrine of 'anatta'.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 146-7

⁹ *Ibid.* p.23

¹⁰ *Forty Verses on Reality*, vv. 17-18 from *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*.



renounced. Therefore, the Maharshi says, since this is ultimately necessary, why not start with it straight away; since you must finally remain as the Self, why not do so from the start; since other paths will lead you round-about and finally face you with the alternative of Self or pseudo-self, why not to go direct and face it here and now? "This is the direct method. All other methods are practised while retaining the ego and therefore many doubts arise and the ultimate question still remains to be tackled in the end. But in this method the final question is the only one and is raised from the very beginning..... because every kind of path except Self-enquiry presupposes

the retention of the mind as the instrument for following it, and cannot be followed without the mind. The ego may take different and more subtle forms at different stages of one's practice but it is never destroyed. The attempt to destroy the ego or the mind by methods other than Self-enquiry is like a thief turning policeman to catch the thief that is himself. Self-enquiry alone can reveal the truth that neither the ego nor the mind really exists and enable one to realize the pure, undifferentiated Being of the Self or the Absolute."¹¹

¹¹ *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in his own words*, p. 112

Many hesitate and find this method too harsh, because of all renunciations this seems to them the most severe, renouncing not merely enjoyment but him who desires and enjoys it. But this is a wrong idea. If it were true, a Self-realized man such as the Maharshi would be the most miserable of men, whereas in fact he is the most happy, in pure, unbroken, unalloyed happiness, regardless of whether outer circumstances seem favourable or unfavourable. This is because in renouncing the ego one really renounces nothing except a wrong conception of 'I', an error whose removal reveals the eternal Truth and unalloyed happiness that is one's real nature. "The individual being which identifies its existence with that of the life in the physical body as 'I' is called the ego. The Self, which is pure Consciousness, has no ego-sense about it. Neither can the physical body which is inert in itself, have this ego-sense. Between the two, that is between the Self or pure Consciousness and the inert physical body, there arises mysteriously the ego-sense or 'I'-notion, the hybrid which is neither of them, and this flourishes as an individual being. The ego or individual being is at the root of all that is futile and undesirable in life. Therefore it is to be destroyed by any possible means; then That which ever is alone remains resplendent. This is Liberation or Enlightenment or Self-Realization."¹²

It is to remove this error that the Maharshi prescribes the enquiry '*Who am I?*' from the very start. He had no graded methods. Nor did he grade his disciples according to seniority. Progress was an inner state which only he perceived. The aspirant is expected to understand that he does not know his self, to investigate into it in order to find out what it really is. He must see: "I am possessed of a wrong view of 'I'. I am a slave of a pseudo-I. I should not take him for the real 'I' or lend him that name. This tragedy of wrong thinking has brought on me the sickness of a wrong 'I'. The Maharshi has prescribed the right medicine to cure me. I am under the spell of the ego which has hypnotised and enslaved me. I myself gave it the power to do so by thoughtlessly bestowing my

'I'-sense on it. By doing so I am helping it to rob me of my very Self." Indeed, the Maharshi often referred to the story of King Janaka who, on attaining Realization, exclaimed: "Now I have caught the thief who has been robbing me all these years!"

Why do I thus misplace my 'I'-sense? Because I take sense-perceptions for true. I have to learn to realize the true 'I' which underlies mind and senses and the whole objective world.

Man's mind and senses, are used to cognize objective things, but this talent is of no use for knowing the Self, in which there is no trace of objectivity. One cannot have a vision of the Self or know the Self as one knows another, because that would imply two selves in you, one to know the other. "You speak of a vision of Siva, but a vision always presumes an object. That implies the existence of a subject. The value of the vision is the same as that of the seer. That is to say the nature of the vision is on the same plane as that of the seer."¹³ "A vision of God is only a vision of the Self objectified as the God of your particular faith. What you have to do is to know the Self."¹⁴ And to know the Self is only to know to be aware, to be.

Devotee: When I seek the 'I' I see nothing.

Bhagavan: You say that because you are accustomed to identify yourself with the body and sight with the eyes, but what is there to be seen? And by whom? and How? There is only one Consciousness and this, when it identifies itself with the body projects itself through the eyes and sees the surrounding objects. The individual is limited to the waking state; he expects to see something different and accepts the authority of his senses. He will not admit that he who sees, the objects seen and the act of seeing are all manifestations of the same Consciousness—the 'I-I'. Self-enquiry helps to overcome the illusion that the Self is some-

¹² *Ibid.* p.18

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 213

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 215

thing to see. How do you recognize yourself now? Do you have to hold a mirror up in front of yourself to recognize yourself? The awareness is itself the 'I'. Realize it and that is the Truth."¹⁵

However the ego is engrossed with seeing, hearing, feeling and objective knowing. It values these functions and considers them as belonging to the Self. Blinded by this view, one does not experience the brilliance of the true 'I'. One's attention is to be drawn away from such objective perceptions to That with respect to which there is unknowingness.¹⁶ If that were known and experienced as It is, It would be recognized as one's very Self, and then the false 'I' would fade out.

The outer man is unreal and should be made, passive, a mere recipient of impressions. Self-enquiry helps to do this. The journey is inwards through territory unknown to the senses.

So long as life remains one should strive to reach one's source. This is the only worthy aim in life, the only goal worth seeking, the only use of life that can put an end to suffering and frustration and reveal the pure Bliss, the radiant Consciousness, the unruffled Being that one really is. The weapon for doing this, on the Maharshi's path, is concentration on the 'I'-sense. This is not like other thoughts that come and go and can be dismissed at will. One's attention must be constantly drawn to feeling of pure awareness, pure consciousness of I-am-ness. At first this can be done only during concentrated sessions of Self-enquiry known loosely as 'meditation' but later the awareness of I-am-ness becomes an undercurrent underlying all one's activities. This 'I'-sense is the scent by tracing which to its source one reaches the Self, as a dog tracks out its master.

"Am I worse than a dog? Steadfastly will I track Thee out and regain Thee, Oh Arunachala!"

(*Marital Garland of Letters, verse 39*)¹⁷

One Leaf Of Grace

By Fred Broumand

**From the source of Siva's light
from the boulders, dawn and dusk,
rays of peace and solitude
turning the mind inward
radiate and are absorbed
by pilgrims few, who bask
upon Arunachala's lap**

**And even those who have not
travelled there
and have not sat reposeful
in the hall or pillared shrine**

**Can take the precious
journey in the heart,
into the peace of Self-abidance,
with one leap, one leap of grace**

**Like a hollow reed if we
but catch the wind,
the pristine melody of guidance
and grace can freely flow**

**Ramana's song, the song of freedom
of acceptance, of letting go
and diving in, may fill
our being with its bliss**

**From the bouldered slopes
of Arunachala to our heart
one leap of grace
laughs at time and space
we are one with Light
wherever we may be.**

The Maharshi says that if one earnestly seeks the 'I', the false 'I' vanishes, leaving only the true to shine in all its pristine glory. His teaching is based on his own experience not on learning or reasoning, and nothing he says is for the sake of argument. What can be more heartening to the traveller on the Mountain Path?

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 22

¹⁶ This expression recalls the title of the 14th Century English Mystic's guide to aspirants, *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

¹⁷ *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*.

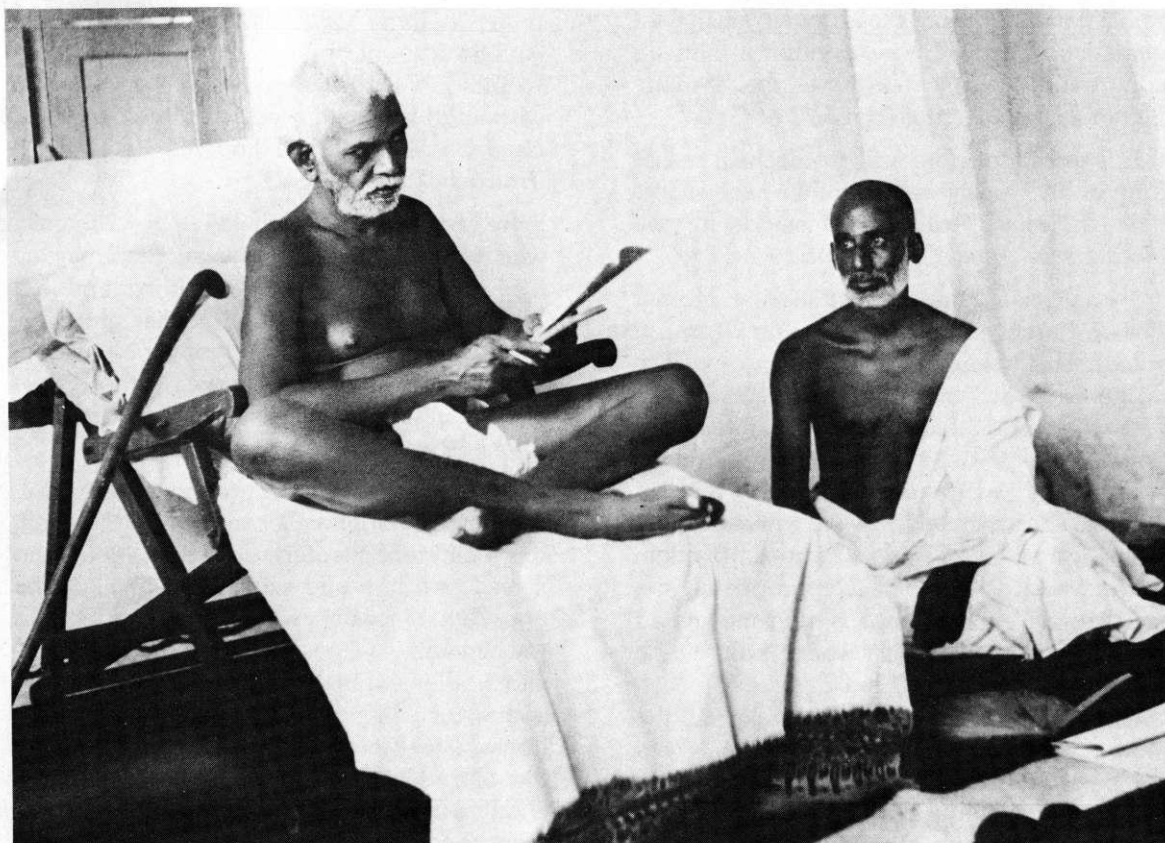
MAHARSHI, THE POET – IV

By Ra. Ganapati

WE heard the utterances divine of Ramana on himself as an *avatar* (as the Brother of Lord Ganesa, i.e. Subramanya) as well as his at-one-ment with the Self. Now the *Marital Garland of Letters*.

Atma or the Self belongs to the state of Truth called *Nitya Vibhuti*, which is ever changeless and transcends all attributes and definitions. But the *avatar* is contained in the *leela-vibhuti* belonging to the world of illusion which is ever changing and governed by the triple *gunas* (qualities). *Sakti* (power) also called *Maya*, *Prakriti*, *Pradhanam* is the chain-link between *Nitya* and *Leela* (the illusive Sport of Creation). *Nitya* (the Eternal) is Siva. The purport of *leela* is the *jiva*, the embodied being, *Sakti* it is that engages the *Nitya* in *leela*. Consorting with *Sakti*, Siva creates, manipulates and destroys the world in grace-play. Thus the world is born by the marriage of Siva and *Sakti*. It is this doorway of the communion of Siva and *Sakti* that leads from the Source of liberation to the world of duality. Even so, the selfsame doorway alone can lead from the dualistic world to non-dual liberation. The liberated ones stand at the doorway, one eye

focussed inwards on the *Nitya Vibhuti*, the *sanctum sanctorum* of liberated existence, and the other outwards on the *leela-vibhuti*, the play on the world-stage. Their hearts are abrim with the wonderful experience of the indivisible union of the *Nitya* and the *leela*: that is, the marriage of Siva and *Sakti*, eternally fresh and green in their hearts, will waft forth its exhilarating fragrance even in their seeming existence in the dual world. Therein, by the will of *Parasakti*, surge waves of compassion for the emancipation of the world. Are there not, in this world, many struggling *sadhaks* who are in torment owing to ignorance of the *Atmic bliss*? Not in them alone but in all the embodied beings that may not pass for *sadhaks*, there hides in subtle depths, the thirst to merge with turth, perhaps unknown to themselves. It is this thirst that gets refracted into the multifarious thirsts mooted by desire. There arise occasions when the essence of all these thirsts of all the people are rolled into one and reflected in the liberated ones who, out of compassion, place themselves in vicarious identity with the suffering humanity. At such times, there happens a miracle. The liberated ones, established, ensconced in the



Nitya Vibhuti, not only enjoy the *leela vibhuti* as well — they not only relish with delight the ever-fresh, ever-recurring marriage of Siva-Sakti for themselves, but in addition, plead plaintively on behalf of the myriads of people who are ignorant of this bliss, but struggle for it either knowingly as *sadhaks*, or unknowingly as all the rest of the commonalty, with their varied yearnings. In other words, the Para-sakti, the Power Supreme, who seems to attribute to even the liberated a pure mind wherein She portrays Her eternal and evergreen communion with Siva, also occasionally causes to spurt within that pure mind the love-lorn ache of the virgin who has not enjoyed the bliss of union with the Self-Siva. In such stances the liberated *Jnanis* appear to be in an inexplicable and enigmatic state: They do not appear to be conscious of their Siva (Self-Identity; they do not appear to enjoy even an *avatar*-identity; nor do they appear totally deluded

like us. In a very strange way they realise themselves as the *Sakti* that causes the originating of the entire world of beings, incarnations, gods; yet at once not absolutely Sakti in eternal communion with Siva; but sort of Sakti (*willingly*) relinquishing Her own flow of power, lost in intense compassion towards the embodied beings, and in at-one-ment with them languishing as helpless virgins love-lorn with the ache for union with Siva.

There have been devotee-*Jnanis par excellence* who have superbly versified this *nayika-bhava* (emotional attitude of a bride to God) like Manikkavachaka and Nammazhvar.

Our Ramana too, through his *Marital Garland of Letters* goes to swell the blessed ranks of those lyric poets extolling *madhura bhava* (sweet mode of bridal devotion to God). Wonderful indeed is his becoming a bride to the Lord Arunachala and adorning the Eternal

with a garland of word blossoms strung in their alphabetical order, more wonderful than his compositions portraying him as the Absolute Self or as the *avatar* of the Child of God.

It is worthy of note that Arunachala is that form of Siva in which the Mother Sakti shares half His body. 'Aruna' itself stands for the Mother and 'Achala' for Lord Siva.

(Aruna is a name of the Divine Mother Power, Kameswari, because of her deep red colour. This colour typifies creativity and love in the Sanskrit literary tradition. It is of note that when attributeless white incandescence resolves itself into the seven primary colours it is red (infra-red) that comes out as the first evolute. The attributeless Siva is white incandescence and His Sakti (*Maya*) who is the origin of the world of attributes is appropriately the red Aruna. 'Achala' means non-moving. It symbolises the static Siva whose Sakti is the ever dynamic Dance of Dualities).

On one occasion the Lord rejected the Mother who, for fun, had closed His eyes with Her palm. Fired by penitence, She did penance and regained Him as her Lord in Kanchi, and reaching Arunachala, She became His inseparable Consort by sharing half of His very person.

"Lord! Was it not because I happened to be outside of yourself that you could reject me? Therefore, make me half of yourself" – prayed the Divine Mother to the Lord and thus came to share His body. This story used to sink and soak Sri Ramana in surging emotion. On such occasions, failing to control himself, he would shed ecstatic tears of devotion. In love-light would glow his tender visage a moon. What a strange similarity in that the great devotee-*Jnani* Manikkavachaka too should speak of being engrossed in the *ardha-narisvara* form and thereby growing lustrous and dissolving in tears! (stanza 6 of his *Tiruttellenam*.)

Manikkavachaka, who sings the praises of a number of – Siva's *leelas* and forms in many places of his *Tiruvachakam*, accords the highest importance to His *ardha-narisvara* form and makes mention of it in no *ardha-nareesvara* less than forty-five places. Next only to that, he

refers in thirty eight places to the story of Arunachala – of Brahma and Vishnu – seeking to find Siva's crown and feet. For the spell and wonderful fascination *ardha-nareesvara* exercised on Ramana, we find the authority in *Tiruvachakam*.

Readers would be familiar with Echammal who served food to Bhagavan Ramana and his devotee-sadhus and servitors, and her 'rival' in this service, the Mudaliar grandma. Yet, their service of food-offering took place in the forenoons only. Therefore, in those days of his residence in Virupaksha Cave food for the night was collected by begging.

Sri Ramana never went out for alms (There was a period of his collecting alms – but, then, it is a different chapter). Only the sadhus who stayed with him and served him and got the appellation 'Swami', went out to beg food. In the beginning, when there were only three servitors, Planiswami, Ayyaswami and Kandaswami, they did not go out to collect alms from house after house. They would come down the hill and make a beeline to a particular choultry in the town. The manager would give them food. They would return with it. Later, one Perumal Swami joined the three servitors. Unfortunately though, thanks to the power of *Maya*, he was not endowed with much good nature. (In later days he went to the extent of claiming the entire Ramanasramam as his own; then he started a rival Ramanasramam; went to court over the issue – only to fail and waste away. 'All that is a pathetic chapter in "*Sri Ramanayanam*".) Perumal Swami could not stay long in the good books of the manager of the choultry. When the latter expressed his dissatisfaction, Perumal Swami said to his fellow-sadhush that none needed to go to the choultry any more and that they might beg their *bhiksha* in the town itself on house-to-house rounds.

We owe our grateful respects to him for this arrangement – for, this alone sowed the seed for the word-blossoms of the *Marital Garland of Letters* to sprout in the soul soil of the poet in Sri Ramana.

As per this arrangement, after sunset, these four would visit home after home to collect *bhiksha*. There is a hymn on the destitute beggar, Parameswara, with alliterative lines set in alphabetical order: “*Adbhuta vigraha Amaraadeeswara Aganita guna gana roopa Siva*” — said to be authored by Adi Sankara. These sadhus wended their way with this song on their lips. It was a sort of trade-mark for them to announce the fact of their belonging to the ‘*Brahmana Swami*’.

Many a destitute, mendicant, recluse used to beg for alms in the town. But would the people have the heart to feed them all? But ‘*Brahmana Swami*’ stood to them in a class apart, shedding new lustre on the whole town. They believed it would add to their merit if as much as a granule of their rice found its way into his stomach. They were, therefore, happy to identify his entourage by the trade-mark of the ‘*Adbhuta Vighraha*’ song, and offer alms.

But then, the sadhus of Ramana could not lay any exclusive copy-right claim over the “*Adbhuta Vighraha*” song of Adi Sankara. Any sadhu or destitute had the right to sing it! Hence some so-called sadhus resorted to a mean trick. They thought: “Let us precede the Ramana throng, singing the self-same song! People would take us for the servitors of ‘*Brahmana Swami*’ and give us alms!” They did accordingly. “*Adbhuta Vighraha*” song changed mouths, and as expected, the people too were deceived into taking them for servitors of Ramana and offered them alms. Later came the ‘original’ group only to be duly disappointed. The people also felt deceived — for they could not feed the ‘real’ Ramana group of their special choice.

This group of sadhus now found they could circumvent the daring deceit only if they had some original *bhiksha*-songs for their ‘trade mark’ beyond copying by others.

So, Palani Swami, Perumal Swami and others requested Sri Ramana to compose some new songs.

Rivalry among recluses! Oh that one group should impersonate another and steal what is meant for it and in turn the second should proceed to counter them and stake its claim! Can the Ramana, the Self Beyond, relish this? Moreover when the object of rivalry was food...! Can he ever think that only his group should get fed and not another? And for that purpose can he compose songs?

However, he had to concede that the same matter, when viewed from another angle, had its justification. This was not from the angle of the homeless fakirs — the recipients of the *bhiksha* — but from that of the householders who proffered the *bhiksha*. They certainly were no recluses, but householders. So no hard and fast rules meant for the ascetics can be enforced on them. Nor was their means unlimited. It would be impractical to tell them to feed all who called at their doors for alms. It won’t do to discourse to them not to discriminate and feed the impersonators as well. The all-too-sympathetic Ramana could not brush aside peoples’ desire that they should identify beyond a shade of doubt the throng coming from the immaculate recluse ‘*Brahmana Swami*’ and feed them only.

He to whom, in one state, the world existed not, to whom in another, the whole world was his, felt yet the justification, at this stage, of having to own one group alone as his.

Even so, is it possible for him to compose a new song just with a view to making people identify a group as his entourage? Is the birth of a real poem at all possible for purposes other than Self-fulfilment and/or His pleasure? That too in the case of Ramana? A poem is born of the spontaneous splendour of thought, wealth of imagination adding to its grace. From one who was ensconced thought-free in the indivisible, how could a poem arise, and that for a definite purpose?

Yet — it did happen.

(To be continued)

THE FOUR FATAL LIES

(1) "I'M FAULTY"

By Douglas E. Harding

THIS is the first of a set of four articles to be published this year in *The Mountain Path*. Each examines one of the basic lies which people in general—and spiritual aspirants in particular—tell themselves: falsehoods that virtually all of us found our lives on, live by and die by, hang onto at all costs. Falsehoods which obstruct our ordinary life, as well as blocking the way to the aspirant's goal, to the freedom that he or she professes to long for and to strive for.

It's as if, told often and loudly enough, the wildest tale becomes true. The fact that these barriers are insubstantial, mere self-deception and make-believe, does nothing to reduce their obstructiveness, their sinister effect. One has to *see through* them to dissolve them. That is our aim in these four articles. We aren't going to attempt to *think* (or understand or intuit) our way past these obstacles, or to *feel* our way over or under them, but rather to *see* that they aren't there at all, that they are no more real than a mirage that vanishes on closer inspection. Thinking and feeling don't settle anything here. Nothing less than child-like looking-to-see carries conviction.

The first one of the four is: "I'm faulty. There's something radically wrong with me."

That is what society is telling us in a hundred subtle and not-so-subtle ways, and how eager

we are to believe the message! We positively lap up the bad news. In fact many of us will pay large sums of money to anyone who explains convincingly what a mess we are in, and will follow him all over the world for years just to hear more and more about the mess.

Far be it from me to unsettle those who enjoy bad news about their spiritual condition. My remarks here are addressed to people who don't enjoy it so much, who have had just about enough of that sort of thing. To you I say: brace yourselves for good news. Not for *hearing* incredibly good news about yourselves, but actually *seeing* it unfold. Or rather, suddenly blaze out.

But this is to anticipate. For a start let's take the prevalent bad news about ourselves seriously and sensibly, in order to discover what truth there is in it, and what action is called for. Let's treat this tale of spiritual-personal woe as intelligently and calmly as we treat secular and less personal tales of woe—in business life for example. Supposing you are boss of a big firm, and suddenly everyone's saying that disaster looms, that the enterprise is almost certainly heading for bankruptcy and its proprietor for poverty and disgrace. How do you react?

There are two things you can do, and they contrast sharply.

(i) You can panic. You can hand out orders right and left. You can sack the works manager and the sales manager, close down a subsidiary plant or two and lay off the work force, scrap old production models and start new ones. Deeds are what you prescribe for this condition. "Don't just sit there," you cry. "Get cracking! Any change is better than no change."

The result is almost certainly that things get worse. Impulsive remedies, blindly administered to a patient the doctor can't find time to examine, may well kill him. The chances they will cure him are one in a thousand.

(ii) Instead of this frantic over-reaction, you will — if you are a normally competent business man or woman — *do nothing: nothing remedial at all, till you have ascertained the facts.* So you call an extraordinary board meeting, at which the sales manager displays his graphs showing present trends and future market prospects, and the works manager reports on the likelihood of rising productivity and falling costs, and the accountant forecasts profit and loss for the financial year, the increasing size of the overdraft, and so on.

Then — and only then — do you make up your mind. This body of information, duly absorbed and digested, gives rise to sensible decisions. It may indicate what drastic short-term and long-term measures are needed to put the firm into shape. It may indicate that no precipitate action at all should be taken till the actual shape of things gets a lot clearer. Or it may indicate that those initial impulses to panic were quite unjustified, that all those rumours of impending doom were ill-founded if not malicious, and that *on careful examination the business turns out to be very prosperous. That, in fact, the news couldn't be better!*

That is the way, if we have any practical good sense at all, we run our ordinary secular affairs.

Would that we ran our spiritual affairs half as intelligently, a quarter as sanely, on the same business-like principle of *facts first, action second!* How very, very few of us, alas, are anything like so sensible when we turn from the conduct of our life's periphery to the very heart of it! When dealing with mere things, with markets and merchandise and money, we are fairly sane, but when dealing with the Dealer, with their Proprietor, we go quietly mad. On little or no evidence, on the basis of mere hearsay and fearful thinking (or is it, hiddenly, wishful thinking?) we decide that our lives have gone wrong, that we are profoundly defective, unfortunate, even cursed. So we thrash around seeking cures for a condition we have no idea of and don't want to know a thing about — except that it is very bad indeed and no cure is in sight.

If anything could be counted on to push us deeper and deeper into trouble it is this hysterical blindness to our present state, this compulsive yet calculated overlooking of the most self-evident facts about ourselves, this deliberate choosing to live from a miserable pack of lies about our nature instead of that nature as it obviously is. No surprise, then, that our worst fears seem to be justified, and we are in the market for the countless quack remedies on offer. Suckers all, incredibly gullible — that's us!

But now you and I are going to be business-like about ourselves — about our true condition and nature — for a change. We are going to ignore the rumours and look at the facts. We are going to come to our senses and attend — if not for the first time, at least *as if* for the first time — to what's clearly on show, to what we are in our own direct experience at this moment. Attend not (please note) to what we're *said to be* by others, or what we *appear to be* to them, but to what we *are* to ourselves, intrinsically — when we put aside all pre-suppositions, beliefs, imaginings. This means daring to turn our attention round 180° and looking

at the Spot we occupy: just looking with an open mind prepared for any discovery however strange, and with the humility and honesty to go by what we find there. In other words we are about to look, not just at what we're looking at (currently at this page of writing or printing) but also at what we're looking out of . . .



What is this pointing finger pointing at right now, *on present evidence*, without any thinking about it? Look! Don't lay ideas on what you clearly see: simply notice. What's it like to see IN?

Is Ramana Maharshi perfectly right when he says: "It is really like gazing into vacancy"?

Is this finger, in your own immediate experience at this moment, pointing at a something? In particular, at a pair of eyes, a face, a head? At an opaque, small, solid, coloured, complicated, clearly outlined *thing* of any sort? Or at just *Space*? At *Vacancy*, *Capacity*, clean of all characteristics and limitations: just *Aware Space* for this page of words, and the hands holding it, to come to pass in: just *Room* or *Emptiness* for filling with whatever's on offer: just this *No-thing* that miraculously takes in all things?

Isn't this *What you are*, *What I am*, right now? And *What we are* always—immense, simple, speckless, colourless *Transparency*, vividly alive to *Itself* as precisely this? Again, *miraculously* so, and with unsurpassable brilliance?

What can go wrong with *This*? What loss or injury can *This* suffer, what change for the worse? What change of any kind? What is there *Here* to decay and die? What is bad news for *This*? What does *This* have to do to

Mastery

By Johan Wiss

I at last have reached my goal.
 And solved the mystery of my soul;
 I am that to which I prayed.
 That to which I looked for aid.
 I am That which I did seek.
 I am my own Mountain Peak.
 I upon creation look
 As a leaf in my own book;
 For I the One, the many make,
 Of substance which from me I take
 For all in me — there is no two.
 Creation in myself, all through;
 What is given to my self
 I take down from my own shelf,
 And give to me — The only One
 I am the Father and the Son.
 When I want, I do but see
 My thought form coming back to me.
 For I'm the Knower and the known,
 Ruler, subject and the Throne.
 The "Three in One" is what I am.
 Hell itself is but my dam
 Which I did put in my own stream
 When in a nightmare I did dream
 That I was not the only One.
 Thus by me was pain begun.
 Which ran its course till I awoke
 And found that I, with me did joke!
 So now that I do stand awake
 I, my throne, do wisely take
 And rule my Kingdom, which is Me,
 A master through Eternity.

put itself right? What medicine do you prescribe for This Patient?

But at once I can hear you raising a strong objection: "All right, I see that *physically* there's nothing here where I AM to give me trouble, but *mentally* there's a great deal. My feelings — of anger, resentment, frustration, sadness, boredom, despair, and so on — bug me just the same. What's the use of being so Spacious if I must put up (and put up with) an endless succession of mostly negative emotions, if I'm forced to play host to such guests? Why, I'd rather be bunged up solid with stuff than have it swept clean away to make room for the seven devils of the mind to rampage in!"

I reply: At this point you have to make a momentous decision. You must settle whether these feelings — both negative and positive — are really yours or not. Whether they are feelings about you who are No-thing but Room for things, or feelings about *those things* — characterizing *them*, the way they happen to come across to you, to be served up. If you attend carefully I think you will never find any resentment or anger (for instance) of your very, very own — I mean just subjective anger apart from, and having no reference to, any object. Always it's a resented world, or a resented situation or event or something or other. Whatever the feeling, if it's real and not imaginary, I suggest you will find it's about what or who you are hosting, not about their host. Thus your genuine frustration finds things and people frustrating, not the Accommodation you're providing them with. Thus your genuine love exclaims: "How lovable, how adorable he or she is!" Not "How I'm enjoying being so in love!" (That's not love at all.) Thus your genuine joy finds the universe quite delightful for a change, not yourself quite delightful for a change. *You do not change*. That bald assertion is for you to verify for yourself, not take from me. Everything hangs on your conclusion.

Look and see. It belongs to the nature of your world to be suffused and drenched with

every sort of feeling (whether positive or negative) — as well as structured with every sort of thinking (attributing values, meanings, relationships), and ornamented with every sort of perceptual and sensory decoration. And just as there are no loose textures or colours floating around apart from textured and coloured things, and no loose thoughts and meanings and values floating around apart from thought-about and meaningful and valued things, so there are no loose misery-feelings or surprise-feelings or puzzle-feelings floating around apart from puzzling and surprising and miserable things. No: none of that stuff detaches itself, like fleas or germs, from your guests, and attaches itself to you their Host. In other words, of all the infinitely complex and ever-changing contents which come together to constitute your world, you are the absolutely simple and never-changing Container. As such, as this stainless, parasite-free, infection-free, speckless, trackless Spaciousness-for-worlds-to-come-and-go-in, you are the Eternal Perfection itself. This is not for believing or understanding or feeling one day, or even for seeing one day, but for simple seeing today, as you turn the arrow of your attention round 180° once more. Now.

"All right," you rejoin. "But what's the use of my being absolutely perfect if my universe (which includes the thing I'm looking down at, and the thing I'm looking out at in my mirror) is so dreadfully imperfect? Let's say — at very best — a universe that's a quarter good, half neutral, and a quarter bad?"

Apparently in the beginning (I reply) it had to be this curate's egg of a world, or else no world-egg at all. Not even You in your primeval fecundity were able to give birth to a uniformly good universe, a non-dualistic world free from clashing opposites and built-in contradictions — a world in which there flourished a joy that, to be itself, required no background of indifference and sadness; in which there flourished a love that, to be itself, had no need to grow and diminish and grow again; in

which there flourished a peace that, to be itself, was inactive and automatic and not some kind of pacification. You were no more able to produce these values, without simultaneously producing their opposites, than you were able to produce light without darkness, or silence without sound, or height without depth. All the same you must have decided that, though the cost of such a universe was awesomely high, it was worth it: that this kind of universe was and is preferable to no universe at all.

But—wait a minute!—all this assumes that, when at last you see and go on seeing your own perfection as the Uncontaminated Source of the world, the world will still seem contaminated, tragically imperfect. It is an assumption which you can now do without. Be prepared to find that the universe of things, when consciously viewed from the No-thing it arises from, is a universe transfigured, mysteriously taking on the All-rightness of its Origin. Be prepared to find that, when you no longer do incalculable injury to your world by cleaving it into an observing thing you call *me* and an observed thing you call *not-me*, you heal it of the near-mortal wound you inflicted on it. Be prepared to find that, when you no longer hang onto anything—onto the shred of a particle or the ghost of a thought—you restore to your world all the goods you stole from it over the years, bringing it to a richness you haven't glimpsed since early childhood.

Yes: but do *not* be prepared simply to detach yourself from this transformed world, to shrug it off or wash your hands of it now you have put it to rights. Quite the contrary. The paradox is that, seeing you are now at last free of it, unmarked and spotless, you *are* it—spots and all—and your identity with it makes it worthy of you. (Look in now at the Space you are, that you're according these black marks on a white ground, and see how inseparable it is from them.) Put the matter like this: when you see *Who* you are you see that, as their Source, you are empty of all your products, and as their Seer you are empty for all your

products, and as their Saviour you are empty as all your products: and as *You* they are very good indeed. This is the love of God which not only creates the world and makes the world go round, but saves the world.

However fine this may sound, don't take a word of it from me. Try it out for yourself. Turn your attention round 180°, see *What you see*, stay with the seeing, and see what happens to your world.

* * * * *

We have been practical. We have discovered what has to be done to remedy our plight. The answer—the business-like and sensible answer—is: nothing at all. Nothing but wake up. *Seeing Who we are, we are all right as we are.* And that's putting it conservatively, the understatement of the century!

No: you are *not* faulty. Ramana Maharshi said:

"A man can realize the Self because it is here and now. If it were not so, but attainable by effort at some future time and if it were new and something to be acquired, it would not be worthy of pursuit."

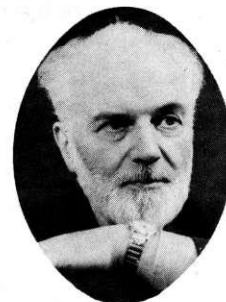
"All are *jnanis, jivanmuktas.*"

"All are seeing God always, but they don't know it."

"Be as you are."

These assertions aren't for reciting but for putting to the proof. You have to see yourSelf. for yourSelf. It is the easiest, most natural, most striking sight imaginable.

And the most resisted. We humans will go to any lengths to blind ourselves to our blessedness.



Douglas E. Harding

MINISTRY OF BHAGAVAN

By M.P. Pandit

IN the economy of Nature there are no repetitions, and none at all in the working of *Para Prakriti*, Higher Nature. Each teacher, each realised being, has his own contribution to make to the sum total of human experience. One teacher does not repeat what another has done already. To say that Bhagavan has come to reiterate what Acharya Shankara did many centuries ago, or to compare him to some modern teacher, is to see him in a wrong pers-

pective. Shankara as want of awareness of one's own true state. It can be interpreted at different levels. In ordinary life when we are absent-minded, we are as if dead. We are not present where we are. But in the spiritual context it is unawareness of true state. Now this is the theme of Bhagavan's teaching as I have understood it, that we human beings are totally unaware of what we are. We live on the surface forgetting our true state, our true nature,



pective. Bhagavan, like every other world-teacher, has come to reveal a new approach to the eternal Truth. The Truth always stands eternal, but the approaches vary depending upon the changing conditions through which humanity is passing.

In this connection I would like to recall the episode of Vidura and Sanatsujata in the *Mahabharata*. When the battle is going against him, King Dhritarashtra in a depressed mood sends for Vidura, his wise adviser and asks him profound questions. To answer them, Vidura, by his *tapas*-power, invokes the presence of Sanatsujata, and among other questions the blind King asks, 'Sir, is there death?' The Lord answers, 'There is and there is not'. 'Then what is death?' 'Death is *pramada*, heedlessness, unawareness'. This famous phrase about heedlessness has been interpreted by Acharya

and so miss our mission in life. And Bhagavan's mission has been to remind us of this awareness, the need to be aware of our true state.

Proceeding further, Sanatsujata lists four conditions as indispensable for this enquiry into the truth of our Being. First, it is *Shastra*, the teaching, the knowledge of the principles, the methods of procedure. The second condition is *Utsaha*, effort, personal effort. Effort is indispensable in any sphere and much more so in spiritual discipline. Third comes the teacher, *Guru*. And the fourth is *Kaala*, time. In this context, where does Bhagavan stand? Where does his ministry stand? His teaching is not an elaborate, mentally worked out philosophy. It is perhaps the briefest teaching in spiritual history: to know myself, *Who am I?*

This cuts through all the speculative inferences, logical systems, in which the human mind had

been imprisoned all along. He sets a goal: *Who am I?* And he starts a quest that shakes the foundations of our normal, routine existence. He makes our life a journey uphill all the way. He is not content with setting a goal.

The philosophers of ancient Greece said, 'know thyself'; modern psychologists ask, who is thy self? They write volumes. And even in our Upanishads the question is asked, 'Who is the real Self?' In the *Taittiriya* we are reminded that this physical frame, *Annamaya sarira*, is not my self. I say, 'I am not this body, I call it my body'. So the identification with the body loosens and falls away by itself. Behind this physical body, behind the *Pranamaya sarira*, there stands, my *Manomaya sarira*, formation of mind. The mind is the enemy that stands in the way of sincere pursuit of the truth. So one learns to quieten the mind, to withdraw the mind from external gyrations, and make it calm, quiet, in which state alone there is a reflection, a gentle play of the ray of peace from deep within. When we have cleared the mental cobwebs, the mind no more interferes, it falls silent. With normal vital activity there can be a mental silence which comes when one learns to detach oneself, when one learns to observe oneself, one's activities, the movements of one's mind. In this vantage position of observer or witness, the mind realises that all that goes on is not myself. It is nature, maybe my personal, individual nature or universal nature acting within me, but it is not me.

Once the mind is silent, and ready to receive what comes from above or within, one becomes aware of the state of illumined knowledge, not mentally laboured, not logically inferred, but self-revealed. That is *Vijnana*, the *Vijananamaya sarira*. The last sheath is the *Anandamaya*, the blissful. But, this blissful state is also a trap. Many are tempted to stay there tasting the bliss of God. This is what Patanjali calls the *rasaasvaada*, tasting that ambrosial nectar of the bliss from within or above. But that is not our goal. We have to go still deeper because there is something of

which all these different *koshas* are sheaths. That entity, that being is the Self as it has been expressly called — because it is the Self of all movements, all forms, all sheaths. And the way to it, as prescribed in this teaching, is the method of *Self-enquiry*.

Self-enquiry? When I ask myself who I am, outer thoughts may come and interfere; I have to withdraw myself from this thought-activity and take up the pursuit afresh. We should develop a technique of letting these thoughts play on the surface, but the main bulk of the mind should be introverted, harnessed to the enquiry. When we do not pay attention to them, the thoughts become less and less aggressive. And they slink away, as the poet describes, the last wave sinking into the ocean. When I have an all-consuming hunger to know, and when that zeal, that flame of seeking devours me, no thoughts can swamp, no philosophies can distract me, because I am launched on the voyage of the soul, the quest of the Self.

My way of reaching, of realising the *Sat*, is different from my neighbour's. The goal is the same, but the paths are different. And this is the catholicity of Bhagavan's teaching that he nowhere lays down an iron system of discipline that everybody has to follow point by point. He launches each person on his voyage. It is left to each individual to meander or sail straight to the post. This is the briefest teaching of greatest moment for one who is serious about this quest, that is when one is ripe for it. It is a law of spiritual life that nobody thinks of God unless God first thinks of him. He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.

The journey is not on our own initiative. Something prods, something pushes us and there is a guiding Hand. This is the *Shastra*, this is the teaching, the first condition. The second is *Utsaaha*, effort. In a momentous quest like this, the effort has to be whole-time; it has to permeate all one's life-activity. The spiritual quest, the spiritual outlook must form the background of life from morning to evening, from dusk to dawn. What I am doing, what I

am thinking, what I am speaking, is it consistent with the demands of this enquiry. What would Bhagavan expect of me? To know what is spiritual and unspiritual, the simple test is to ask oneself, would he approve of my doing this? Thus the entire life-activity has to be to help this inner journey. That leaves no time for any other activity except as a duty, except as a circumstance of life. But all the while attention is fixed here. This is demanded of us, those who are sincere, who want to make the best use of the Grace that is vouchsafed. This is the only course: to permeate the entire life texture with the spirit of this Self-enquiry.

The third condition is the teacher, the *Guru*. Bhagavan disclaimed being anybody's teacher or *Guru*. He did not initiate anyone in a formal way or accept anyone as a disciple. But in practice we have found, all have found, that those who accepted Bhagavan as their Guide, as the Lord of their Being, became receptacles of his Grace, of his help. And this initiation was through his eyes. All his concentrated *tapasya*, all his spiritual energy was focussed through his eyes. And I was a witness on a number of occasions as to how everybody in the hall thought, felt and believed that Bhagavan was looking at him. As a matter of fact he was looking at nobody in particular. He was gazing at the Infinite through that window. But all felt a spell of Peace, an indrawing pull at that moment which could never be forgotten. For Him there is no death. He continues to regard everyone who looks to him, everyone who wants to realise the truth for which he came. And fortunately for us there is a body of literature that has grown around a few seminal instructions left by him. They are *mantric* in character, dynamic in their effect. They are like *mantras* of the Vedas uttered thousands of years ago. With Bhagavan it is a living tradition, it is a present-day utterance. He is still accessible through the writings, through his pictures.

The word is very potent. It is a dynamo concentrating the spiritual experience that has given birth to that Word. So, "Who am I?" and verses that he has written, his answers to ques-

tions in *Sri Ramana Gita* are guides for life. There is no topic that has not been touched directly or indirectly.

More even than the word is the presence, the example of the teacher. In his total detachment, total aloofness from material interests, Bhagavan was a spiritual exemplar. His humility, his transparent sincerity in attending to the needs of everyone, great or small, old or young, was an impersonal outflow from his being. Impersonality was a very special feature of the personality of Bhagavan.

The influence of Bhagavan is wider than the membership of the various Kendras, the readership of his books; the influence is not confined to literate people. Everyone who is sincere, who is open and who loves Bhagavan, participates. Self-giving is the secret of love. And the closest link that one can have with Bhagavan is to love him. To love him requires a considerable discipline of self-purification and a totality of commitment. This demand of Bhagavan, we love to satisfy, love to meet.

And last is *Kaala*, the instrumentality of time. Nothing is achieved in a day. We must not be disappointed, frustrated, impatient, if things do not fall into our hands within a week or a year. Once you have set your foot on the path, the goal is sure. Persist in the quest with intensity. Respect Time. God determines when the goal is reached and the journey ends.

These are the conditions laid down by the Divine Teacher for the disciple to go beyond death, in the sense of unawareness, to live a life in the total awareness which is one's true Being. Looked at in this context, Bhagavan's ministry conforms to the classical frame and is a standing inspiration not only to us in India but to all the world over, who are awake. I have met people in countries like Holland whose faces glowed at a mere mention of Bhagavan. There are indeed some who have never come here, who have not read a book, but in whom a simple portrait of Bhagavan has brought about an inner revolution and they have shed tears of gratitude that such a person was there on earth!

DYNAMIC INACTION

By Dr. K. Subrahmanian

WHO is a dynamic person? A dynamic person is one who is 'active, potent and energetic'. We all admire those who are dynamic. They are movers and doers. Some of them are always on the move doing what they want to do. They are outgoing, extrovert people. They tend to forget themselves in their work and feel miserable when there is no work. They must be occupied all the time. They are bored when they are by themselves with nothing to do. In other words, they are willing to face the world but not themselves. They are willing to listen to others but scared of listening to themselves. The noise of their talk drowns the Voice within, the Voice of God or the Self.

Kierkegaard says:

The present state of the world and the whole of life is diseased. If I were a doctor and were asked for my advice, I should reply: Create silence! Bring men to silence. The Word of God cannot be heard in the noisy world of today. And even if it were blazoned forth with all the panoply of noise so that it could be heard in the midst of all the other noise, then it would no longer be the Word of God. Therefore create silence.

Real silence is silence of the mind. It isn't inertia, inactivity. To be still is to be in the Self. This stillness, according to Sri Bhagavan, comes into being when the mind merges in the Self. This stillness, this silence is far more dynamic than anything else. Sri Bhagavan illustrates this with the old story about the power of the guru's silence.

Tattvaraya composed a *bharani*, a kind of poetic composition in Tamil, in honour of his Guru Swarupananda, and convened an assembly of learned pandits to hear the work and assess its value. The pandits raised the objection that a *bharani* was only composed in honour of great heroes capable of killing a thousand elephants in battle and that it was

not in order to compose such a work in honour of an ascetic. Thereupon the author said, 'Let us all go to my Guru and we shall have this matter settled there.' They went to the Guru and, after they had all taken their seats, the author told his Guru the purpose of their visit. The Guru sat silent and all the others also remained in *mouna*. The whole day passed, the night came, and some more days and nights, and yet all sat there silently, no thought at all occurring to any of them and nobody thinking or asking why they had come there. After three or four days like this, the Guru moved his mind a bit, and the people assembled immediately regained their thought-activity. They then declared, 'Conquering a thousand elephants is nothing beside this Guru's power to conquer the rutting elephants of all our egos put together. So certainly he deserves the *bharani* in his honour!'

This is what J. Krishnamurti also says:

Meditation is a movement in stillness. Silence of the mind is the way of action. Action born of thought is inaction, which breeds disorder. This silence is not the product of thought, nor is it the ending of the chattering of the mind. A still mind is possible only when the brain itself is quiet. The brain cells — which have been conditioned for so long to react, to project, to defend, to assert — become quiet only through the seeing of what actually is. From this silence, action which does not bring about disorder is possible only when the observer, the centre, the experiencer, has come to an end — for then the seeing is the doing. Seeing is possible only out of a silence in which all evaluation and moral values have come to an end.

Real dynamism consists not in movement but in stillness, not in speech but in silence, not in seeking and holding on to a variety of things but holding on to the Self, not in Becoming but in Being. It is only when the tree is rooted in the earth that it grows towards the Sun.

SILENT INITIATION

By Louis Hartz

I MET Arthur Osborne in an internment camp in Bangkok during the second world war. At first I had little contact with him because he was very reserved. After some time, however, I approached him. I had a craving to understand and asked him point blank what is Truth. What sticks in my memory is how, sitting besides his bed in the common dormitory, he said: "I will tell you one truth - Infinity minus X is contradiction in terms because by the exclusion of X the first term ceases to be Infinite. You grant that?" Yes, I granted that.

"Well, then," he said, "think of God as Infinity and yourself as X and try to work it out." When I asked for more explanation he just said: "Think this over and come tomorrow at this time and tell me what you make of it."

I returned to my place in the dormitory, which was only some eight or ten steps distant, and suddenly it flashed upon me that he was right, that you cannot take anything away from the Infinite, and that I was not apart from it, only I had not known.

The thought made me so happy that I could hardly wait to speak to him next day, but I did not like to disturb him earlier.

From that time onward he started to instruct me and after a few weeks he showed me a photograph of the Maharshi. There was an urgency in his voice as he spoke of him and he

handled the photograph with reverence. I began to understand that there was only one 'I' and that it was in me and was everywhere.

The Maharshi grew so much in my heart that I felt him nearer to me than my parents or my wife. He lived more vividly in me than any person I had known. After some time we received permission to write a Red Cross letter to our families and I used mine to write to the Maharshi and ask him for guidance.

Then the war ended and I left camp. The desire to enjoy life sprang

up in me again. I was strongly drawn to the spiritual path but even more strongly for the time being to a worldly life. I wanted to make money, to have power and fine clothes, to be important. In camp I had eliminated day-dreaming as far as possible. When I went to



bed at night I slept straight away. But now my nights were often filled with planning and scheming.

A few years later, when I was in Europe and due to return to Siam on business, I wrote to Osborne, who was living at Tiruvannamalai, to suggest that I should break my journey in India and stay there for a few days. He at once wrote back arranging to meet me and conduct me there and inviting me to stay at his house.

In Madras we hired a car and drove to Tiruvannamalai. It was an old car and I felt that I was being slowly roasted in the midday heat. When I let my eyes rest on the sun-baked scenery or the country folk sheltering under the wayside trees I saw only the face of the Maharshi looming up before me. Nothing else registered.

I was terribly scared that the Maharshi would look in my eyes and see into me. I cursed myself for a fool for coming to this desolate place, with its heat and discomfort. I don't know what prevented me turning back; perhaps I was afraid to show Osborne what a coward I was. The nearer we approached the Ashram the more I shrank from meeting the Maharshi.

It was nearly dusk when we arrived and he had already retired, but Osborne went in to see him and asked whether he would see me for a few moments. I entered the hall and saw an elderly man reclining on a couch, who gave the impression of great reserve and a certain shyness. It was not the severe Master or the Guru with the burning eyes that I had expected. Osborne explained who I was, and his replies were monosyllabic and sometimes in Tamil. With a slow movement of the head he turned to me and held my eyes for a moment. His eyes were like empty, bottomless pools and at the same time they worked like magic mirrors, because suddenly I felt at peace as though I had come home after a long journey.

I can't recall where I slept that night, but I do remember that before going to bed I sat and talked with a number of people, Indians and foreigners, at Osborne's place. One of them

was a diplomat from some European country, stationed in China. He talked about seeing spirits and even conversing with them, and it struck me as funny that any one should be interested in such things at a place like this.

Sitting in the hall next day I saw that the Maharshi's smile was tender and gracious. I not only lost my fears but felt at ease. I had no questions to ask. Before coming I had prepared a number of questions that had been worrying me to ask the Maharshi, but now I couldn't remember them. My doubts had simply evaporated. Questions seemed unimportant.

I felt that there was nothing strange about the Maharshi. He was just a man who was himself, whereas all of us were growing away from ourselves. He was natural; it was we who were not. We call him a saint or sage, but I felt that to be like him is the inheritance of everybody; only we throw it away.

There were a lot of people in the hall — Indians and foreigners, learned professors and simple country people. I reminded the Maharshi about the Red Cross letter I had sent him and he replied that he wanted me to come and I had come. There was something childlike about him; he was free and natural and could laugh with the spontaneity that only a child shows.

A discussion started in the hall and they appealed to the Maharshi to say who was right. Some one spoke about unity and I objected that the word implied two to be united and that a better word was Oneness; and the Maharshi confirmed this. He said that there is only one, and that One is indivisible: I felt that he meant that the divisions are all unreal, just as we say rain, ice, water, coffee-water, washing water, but it is all water.

A group of devotees started singing and I asked the Maharshi what he felt about it. He laughed and replied that it pleased them to sing and made them feel peaceful.

Next morning again I sat in the hall. There was a yogi with matted hair. The diplomat was there, sitting in concentrated thought. I wondered whether I should imitate him, but I did

not feel like meditating. Suddenly the Maharshi looked at me with great intensity. His eyes took possession of me. I don't know how long it lasted, but I felt at ease and happy.

Afterwards a disciple who had been with him for twenty years told me that this was the silent initiation. I felt that it probably was, but I wanted to make sure, so in the hall that afternoon I said: "Bhagavan, I want your initiation."

And he replied. "You have it already."¹

Knowing myself and feeling anxious about what would happen when I left his presence, I asked for some sort of reassurance from him,

¹This is the only occasion on which we ever have known the Maharshi give an expressed verbal confirmation of having given initiation to any one. It will be noted that the request was phrased in such a way that the confirmation could be given without any statement implying duality.

and he replied very firmly and decisively: "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

There was some whispering and exchange of glances when people heard that. The diplomat whispered to a Muslim professor who was sitting beside him and then the latter asked the Maharshi whether this guarantee applied only to me or to him also. The Maharshi did not look very pleased but replied briefly: "To all."

Nevertheless, I felt that there was something intensely personal in it, that it had been a confirmation of the initiation and a direct, personal guarantee of protection.

Certain it is that, whatever else may have happened, there has been no day since then when his face or his words have not influenced me.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

By Lucia Osborne

THOSE whose spiritual effort is in the right direction get progressively closer to their perfect Self, become more peaceful, happier and are increasingly liked and helped by those with whom they come into contact.

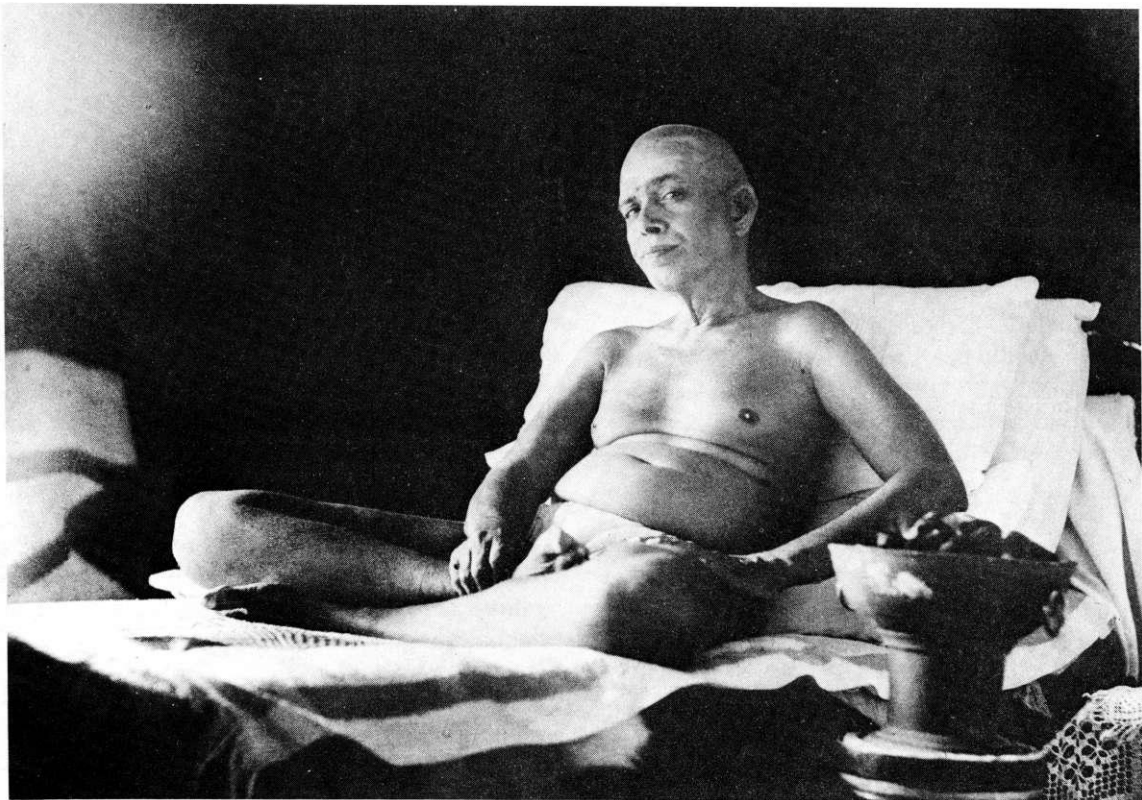
Some of the negative category will attend rigorously only to externals like clothing and pure food which will not help them much if it combines with egocentric selfish behaviour and possessiveness. They will do anything to be able to possess a few more things of scarcely any importance.

They do not realise the harm they do to themselves getting deeper into *samsara* with all its problems and suffering, away from realising the glorious peaceful joy in their heart.

This pertains also to those in positions of power who treat the people with whom they deal, without goodwill, sincerity or even truthfulness. They will usually be disliked, have a few friends if any. Those who associate with them, will either have some affinity or feel sorry for them combined usually with reluctance to forego some convenience or other; not a particularly spiritual motive.

One might say that a misguided 'seeker' forfeits the great opportunity of gaining the greatest fortune possible for a human being.

The purpose of life is to return to the source. The source is mysterious, glorious, peaceful joy which is God in everybody's heart. This is realisation. We do not gain it. It is always there in the heart. Only, the obstructions, the *vasanas*, have to be removed to reveal it.



Mind The Business for Which You Have Come

By A.R. Natarajan

ALL events in life are shaped according to the divine plan. What is bound to happen will happen. What is not to happen cannot be brought about by any human effort. On this point, Ramana was quite categoric. When Devaraja Mudaliar questioned Him as to whether only important things in one's life such as major occupation or profession alone are pre-determined or even trifling acts, Ramana replied, 'Everything is pre-determined. One of the purposes of birth is to go through certain experiences which have been marked out in the karmic unfoldment of this life. The whole programme is chalked out'. This would apparently be a dampener to all effort, for one would be puzzled as to what the responsibility of man is. Is he an automation of karmic

forces? Where do his free will and effort come in? Ramana points out that there is another, deeper purpose to life, that is to search and find out the truth for oneself. He would say that 'the only useful purpose of life is to turn within and realise.' There is nothing else to do.

Ramana would therefore constantly din into everyone the fact that the ultimate truth is 'Sakshat', immediately available here and now. When Natanananda asked Ramana 'Is it possible for everyone to know directly without doubt what exactly is one's true nature?' prompt came the reply, 'Undoubtedly it is possible'. The ultimate truth is so simple, Ramana would say. It is nothing more than abiding in one's own state. This is the essential

message of all religions and creeds. Leaving aside the automatic course of our lives, regulated by the Creator according to His law, one's duty is to channel effort to be Self-aware. Steadfastness of purpose is in treading the inner path through vigilant self-enquiry. On such enquiry as to the source of the individual the enquirer merges in the conscious source. The inner odyssey is seldom smooth sailing. Full many a delusion would wean one away. For instance, people would go to Sri Ramanasramam to breathe its rarified atmosphere. While there, instead of surrendering to His flowing grace, they would get involved in the happenings of the Ashram management. Ramana used to jocularly remark of some visitors: 'On their first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, they seem to be all right. On their second visit, they discover that the Ashram is not properly run; on the third visit, they start giving advice; on the fourth, they know best how to run the place; on the fifth, they discover that the management is not responsive; on the sixth, they suggest that the present staff should walk out leaving the Ashram to them'. They would thus get bogged down in things which are irrelevant for the search. When such people complained, Ramana would say, 'mind the business for which you have come'. This would apply of-course not only to their visit to Sri Ramanasramam, but also to the purpose of human life itself. One has to constantly keep before the mind's eye, the liberating purpose — the only worthwhile one of freeing oneself from the karmic chain by discovering the hidden truth.

Ramana would even seemingly chide if one failed to pursue one's own sadhana, but wasted time thinking and talking of 'others'. A devotee once told Ramana 'I have been here for many years. People got into *samadhi*. I close my eyes for a minute and my mind travels round the world.' Ramana replied, 'Why do you think about others? Let them meditate, sleep or snore; look to yourself, whenever your mind goes astray, bring it back to the quest.' Once Bhagavan told a devotee, 'You wake up, look

at the mirror, it shows the growth to be got rid of. Instead of wasting time, start shaving.' Similarly heaven knows when the allotted time would end. Hence not to seek the truth, by vigilant self-enquiry is truly suicidal.

Many would like to blame their circumstances for their indolence and laziness and failure to pursue self-enquiry. Ramana would ask, 'Why depend on that which is not in your hands. Go ahead with the business which is in your hands, under your control, leaving aside what you cannot do anything about'. Proper utilisation of God-given freedom of turning the mind is what is needed all the time. As for adverse circumstances in life of which everyone has a bellyful, while sympathising, Ramana would at the same time say, 'You are always free not to be affected by the pleasure and pain consequent on action'. The teeth have to be taken out of the event by an attitudinal change which neutralises it.

Sometimes Ramana would advise leaving things to the sure hands of the *Sad-Guru* and to stick single-mindedly to the effort which would make one Self-aware. Ramana would say 'Why don't you do what the First Class Railway passenger does — he tells the guard his destination, locks the door and goes to sleep. The rest is done by the guard. If you can trust your guru, as much as you trust the railway guard, it will be good enough to make you reach the destination.' Again when some one pestered Him for the *darsan* of Sri Krishna, He said 'Why don't you leave the *Sakshatkara* of Krishna to Krishna?' We also have the pointed advice given by Him to Ganapati Muni, 'Remain all the time steadfast in the Heart. God will determine the future for you and accomplish the work. What is to be done will be done at the proper time. Don't worry. Abide in the Heart.'

Life becomes meaningful if we joyously tread the inward path remembering that ours is to do the *Vichara* and it is for the Inner force to do the rest. Then bliss is not the end product to be found on reaching the goal, but is felt all along the homeward, Heart-ward journey.

TO WITHDRAW AS PURE BEING

OZHIVIL ODUKKAM

By Kannudaiya Vallalaar¹

Ozhivil Odukkam is a Tamil Advaitic classic that was often referred to by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. The title also accommodates the following meanings: "Inherence in deathless Being", "Inherence upon removal of finitude". The author Kannudaiya Vallalaar, an early seventeenth century saint, is said to have attained enlightenment merely by contemplating his Guru Thirujnaana Sambandha Swami, the child Saivite saint who was initiated into Jnana when barely three by the Divine Couple. In just 253 superb Venba verses the saint advocates the direct path to Liberation which is Self-Knowledge. He is very critical of pedantry and postures yogic or otherwise, and pokes much fun at all practices which begin as aids and then become the very obstacles to Jnana. It is the mind which sees bondage, nay, IS bondage, and it is the mind which seeks to transcend this. The point is subtle, so the path is razor sharp, fraught with pit-falls. Sri Vallalaar accords the highest value to Guru's Grace.

In his stance of nearly rip-roaring ridicule of half-baked teachers and half-blind sishyas we are reminded of the jibes of J.K. The brevity and clarity in pointing the way and describing the grandeur of the Jnani and the inscrutability of Jnana, anticipate Ramana Maharshi. In the abundance of its telling similes drawn from daily life and Nature, this work has perhaps no parallel.

The whole work was translated many years ago by Sri Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi, but was never published. We believe this is the first time the translation appears in print. Given below are 88 verses selected from its ten chapters. These would appear serially in the four issues for 1988.

— Editor.

1.13. "To withdraw as Pure Being" is the work which truly reveals the knowledge conforming to all the three, namely the Scripture, the master's Word and one's own experience. This contains the seed of all elaborate works.

1.14. Other methods like *tantra*, *mantra*, create new attachments. For those who, by previous merit, are already unattached, this teaches how to get rid of limitations.

1.15. This is useful to that disciple who, in service to the master, like life to the body or the lids to the eyes and (in following his way) as a thread follows a needle, will readily defy even the tiger, fire or serpent. This cannot serve the purpose of others, as fire cannot burn a plantain tree nor the philosophers' stone turn an earthen pot into gold.

1.19 Even the Vedas and Agamas cannot describe the state free from ego. Can it be grasped by the mind so that one may walk upto it and see it with one's eyes? To a child (wishing to catch the ocean), a mirror reflecting the ocean (if placed in its hand) satisfies it. So

¹Tr. from Tamil by Swami Ramanananda Saraswati, compiler of TALKS

also I shall say a few words about it (the ego-free state). With a pure mind understand its significance as a lover understands a mere glance from his sweet-heart.

1.2 By what other means can one lose oneself in Bliss than by the timely glance of the gracious Master that brings one to stillness, as an elephant in rut running wild is killed by the sight of a huge lion though only in dream?

1.4 Incoherent ravings as of delirium by way of seeming good advice from gurus, themselves steeped in impurities, will land the ignorant in disaster, as in the story of the shepherd who jumped into a spate bearing away a brood of bears, mother and young ones, and perished with them. (The shepherd mistook the bear for a sheep, the bear mistook him for a raft).

1.7 He only is a Jnana Guru, who, finding the seeker fit, can by a look bring him to stillness; so he melts away in the waves of Bliss rising from the sole Reality left over as the Self, after ignorance has been gradually lost.

1.8 A bee collects honey from flowers and, when full, discharges it into the comb, so also, in due course the supreme Mauna of the

master will surely manifest Itself as a look of Grace, a thought of love or a word of instruction. The devotee should patiently wait for it, in service to the master as the seasons of the year silently bide their time to manifest themselves in due course.

1.20 Can speech or mind reach the Blissful Silence which remains unbroken and non-dual like the elephants' trunk (nose and hand in one)? One identifies a spot when told, "The house on which the crow is perched". Also one sees the crescent moon by looking beyond the pointing finger. So too, you shall by insight realise Siva.

1.27 Only in you are you made aware of yourself, your bondage, and the Lord. As fire, made manifest by rubbing wood, cannot be known apart from its heat, so also you are That.

1.36 That knowledge which does not identify with Self, is like the (wasted) quest of the man intent on peeling away the sheaths of the virgin banana tree (in order to find what lies in it, but finding nothing left over). Though called 'Self' and asked to know yourself—(there are no two here)—the word is a mere pointer like the tongue that utters "Tongue". The Self is never two to become an object.

1.37 On being told that all that is "knowable" is non-Self, does it not flash that the Self is stillness? When the head is cut off, the mouth that opens in shock can do no more than close lifeless thereafter. So also realize that no more can be said of the beyond.

1.39 For the individual self to know the Supreme Self lying unseen beyond life itself and always at one with you, is like raising the earth with a lever. In that case, a finger can touch its own tip or the mouth eat the face and laugh at its performance!

1.43 Just as for a mountain-climber the plain and the mountain too are now below, so also my Master lifted me beyond learning and intellect, showed them to be different from me, made the world disappear as such and freed

D.: Is it harmless to continue smoking?

B.: No, for tobacco is a poison. It is better to do without it. It is good that you have given up smoking. Men are ensnared by tobacco and cannot give it up. But tobacco only gives a temporary stimulation to which there must be a reaction with craving for more. It is also not good for meditation practice.

me from *vasanas* so that the world should not reappear. If I attempt to speak of His greatness Silence overpowers me!

1.47. Freed from movement, Consciousness is All-Perfection; with a mere movement, it appears falsified. It is like the eye remaining open or closed. When still, air is felt as *Akasa* and when it moves we call it 'breeze'. Observe this (within) and Realize.

1.54 The ignorant are like reflections of the moon in water. The activities of the sages are like washing ether with rain-water or scorching air by fire in order to purify it!

1.55 To call it a sin for the Lord of Death to kill living beings, for the wind to blow and for the Sun to shine over dirty places, or (to call it a sin) for the Sivayogin to neglect *puja* and conduct — this is the work of ignorance, ever whirling one in illusion.

1.56 What does it matter either to ride proudly on a dog or fall off it? What does the sage care for the esteem or contempt of the world which is false? Honour, dishonour, past or future is not for him. Unmindful of conventions, he does what is to be done.

1.58 Not the ego, nor the ego's, but master of the illusion of Ignorance, the sage's body is itself the fountain-head of ever-rising bliss. Like the dual-functioning elephant-trunk, the bodily sport of the sage really forms the worship of Siva and so the way to Liberation for others.

(to be continued)

INTELLIGENCE AND SANITY

By G. Narayan

WHAT is intelligence? The synonym in Sanskrit is *Buddhi*. The meaning of the root word intelligence is the ability to read between the lines. There are many situations in life and literature when what is not said is more important than what is stated. An alert mind appreciates the subtleties and responds with intelligence.

Life is relationship with people and with nature, with ideas and things. In this relationship one is exposed to many challenges in day to day living. Due to lack of education and complexity of the present day society, many people are not able to respond to these challenges adequately. There is a residue of fear, anger, frustration and hope. Mental illness is on the increase and there is considerable suffering. These are man-made problems.

To meet the challenges of life adequately, without conflict, is a state of intelligence. The response is adequate to the challenge and there is no residue of self-pity. The mind renews itself in observation and in learning to meet the different challenges whether they are imposed from without or come from within. In this dynamic state of learning, there is a gathering of energy and there is sanity.

A sane mind is whole and has a sense of wellbeing and affection. It is not tossed about by the vicissitudes of mundane existence and sensate values. Such a mind can use reason and logic with a proper perspective, and is not caught in illusion generated by dogma and superstition. To be free of illusion, romantic and grandiose ideas of becoming, is intelligence.

Knowledge and skills are essential for the maintenance of any society. But the accumu-

lation of knowledge does not necessarily lead to intelligence. The two great evils of any society are social injustice and war. Nations and people have accepted war as a way of life with all the brutalities, violence and killing. We know it is wrong to kill another. This knowledge becomes irrelevant to the fact of killing. Knowledge does not prevent us from killing animals, from denuding the earth of its goodness, from engaging in war. Knowledge does not function through intelligence but intelligence can utilise and function with knowledge. "To know is not to know and the understanding of this fact that knowledge can never solve our human problems is intelligence" J.K.

To live with 'what is' requires alertness. 'What is' is swift and dynamic. It is pleasure and pain, fear and hope, joy and despair, indeed all the movements of thought and consciousness. In staying with 'what is' it unfolds itself and tells its own story, without the interpretation of thought. It is only then that there is a transformation of 'what is'. There is a denuding the mind of thought, and intelligence is awakened. This is the beginning of clarity which will utilise knowledge for the good of the many.

The Present is eternal. It contains the past and the future, so it is the totality of time. The past informs and conditions the present, and the future is shaped by the way we live in the present. To live in the present is to be wakeful, without being caught in the past or projecting an utopian future. Such a mind has access to great intelligence which is without measure. Tradition whether it be political, religious or academic, denies this intelligence. The meaning of the word tradition is, to hand down, and what is handed down is of the past

and within the realm of knowledge. It is easy and comfortable to follow tradition and to live in the past. If one tradition breaks down it is followed by the imposition of another tradition, and one tradition claims precedence over another. So man lives in grooves of habit, with its ache of routine and boredom.

Perception is in the present and has the quality of freedom. 'The ending of sorrow is the beginning of wisdom'. When one listens to such a statement one grasps the spirit of it. There is a feeling of wholeness and it is of the nature of an insight. Where there is a perception it can lead to a meaningful dialogue. Analysis is very different from perception. Each analysis leads to a further analysis, and this is an intellectual process. Words and rhetoric become important, and there is an absence of perception. It is like dissecting the beauty of a flower.

Fear cripples intelligence. It exhausts one's energy and can lead to neurosis. Fear is always in relation to something whether it is darkness, pain or death. There is no abstract fear, or fear of the unknown. It is clinging to the known and fear of losing the known that projects itself as fear of the unknown. It is not possible to be afraid of something which is unknown. The only way to understand the nature and structure of fear is to face it, and learn about it— not run away from it or suppress it. In this learning there is a curiosity which has its own vitality "You can if you will allow fear to tell its ancient story. Listen to it attentively without interference, for it is telling you the history of your own fear. When you so listen you will discover that this fear is not separate from you. You are that very fear with a word attached to it. The word is not important. The word is knowledge, the tradition; but the actual, the now that is happening, is something totally new. It is the discovery of the newness of your own fear. Facing the fact of fear, without any movement of thought, is the ending of fear. Not any particular fear but the very root of fear is disintegrated in this observation. There is no observer, only observation" (J.K.). To live without fear is heaven on this earth.

Footprints

One night I had a dream –
 I dreamed that I was walking with the Lord.
 Across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
 For each scene I noticed two sets of foot-
 prints in the sand,
 One belonged to me and the other to the
 Lord.
 When the last scene of my life flashed before
 me,
 I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
 I noticed that many times along the path
 There was only one set of footprints.
 I noticed that it happened at the very lowest
 and saddest times in my life.
 This really bothered me and I questioned
 the Lord.
 "Lord, you said that once I decided to
 follow You,
 You would walk with me all the way,
 But I find that during the most
 troublesome times in my life,
 There is only one set of footprints.
 I don't understand why when I needed you
 most, you should leave me."

The Lord replied:

"You saw only one set of footprints,
 For I carried you when most you needed
 me."

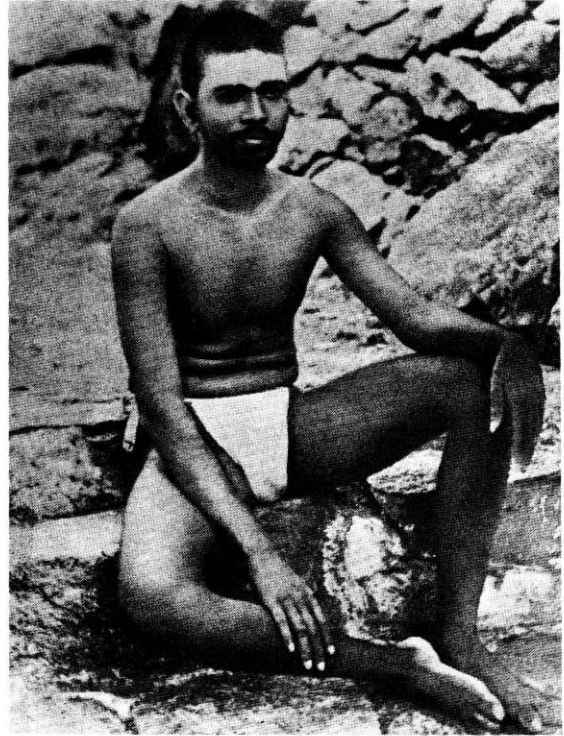
(Author Unknown)

The response to any given challenge follows it. There is a time lag. If the response is belated, a lot of damage can happen during the interim period. This is true of societies and individuals. Is there a way of living where the response precedes the challenge? Men of long vision have this foresight and this is an aspect of creative living and meditation. The world with all its mounting problems of violence, corruption and human misery is in desperate need of such men and women. And it is the most important function of education that this challenge is adequately met by creative individuals in any given society.

EARLY DEVOTEES: I-a

SIVAPRAKASAM PILLAI

By Michael James



AMONG the five prose works contained in *Sri Ramana Nutrirattu* (The Tamil Collected Works of Sri Ramana), the work *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?) holds a place of unique eminence, both because of its contents and because of its genesis. That is, not only does it contain an extremely clear and undiluted account of the very core of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, but it is also the only original prose work written by Sri Bhagavan Himself. Whereas *Vivekachudamani* and *Drik-Drisyā-Viveka* are works translated by Sri Bhagavan from Sanskrit, and whereas *Vichara Sangraham* and *Upadesa Manjari* are works recorded and edited by devotees, *Nan Yar?* not only contains the original teachings of Sri Bhagavan but also holds the unique distinction of having been edited and rewritten by Sri Bhagavan Himself in the form of a twenty-paragraph essay. However, more than any other factor, what has really earned this small work a place of such great esteem in the hearts of all devotees of Sri Bhagavan is the fact that in such simple and direct language it reveals truths of such great depth and practical value.

Of His own accord Sri Bhagavan never sought to give any teachings to anyone. All

that He taught during the fifty-four years He lived in Tiruvannamalai was taught only in response to the questions and prayers of those who came to Him seeking His guidance, and hence His teachings were always given in such a manner as to suit the needs of the individuals who sought them. For this reason His most pure and undiluted teachings were given only in response to those who came to Him with the most pure and undiluted yearning to know the truth as it is. Among the devotees who were endowed with such yearning and whom Sri Bhagavan has chosen for the role of eliciting from Him His teachings, the foremost are undoubtedly Sri Muruganar and Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai. Just as the world of spiritual aspirants is eternally indebted to Sri Muruganar for eliciting from Sri Bhagavan *Ulladu Narpadu*, *Upadesa Undiyar*, *Atma-Vidya Kirtanam* and other verses and poems containing His teachings in their purest form, so we are also indebted to Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai for eliciting from Him the priceless teachings contained in *Nan Yar?*.

Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai was born on Saturday the 7th August 1875 in the village of Idaiyanpaalchori, west of Chidambaram, as the

son of one Muthusami Pillai and his wife Swarnammal. His parents were pious and orthodox Saivites belonging to a farming community known as Kaarkaatha Vellalar. Hoping that their son would not only prosper in the material life but would also continue to uphold the family tradition of piety, the foundation of which was rooted in the rich soil of Tamil Saivite literature, they arranged for him to study both English and Tamil at school. As he grew up, they found that both their hopes showed signs of being fulfilled, for he was not only an intelligent student but was also naturally endowed with all good qualities such as devotion, humility, patience, honesty and kindness towards all living beings. He had an enquiring mind and an eagerness to understand the truth underlying the appearance of our life in this world, so at college he chose to study philosophy as his major subject. While at college, the question 'Who is this I who whirls about in the world attached to this body?' arose spontaneously in his mind, but in spite of his studying many books he could find no satisfactory answer to his deeply-felt doubt, and hence he began to feel a strong yearning to meet a great soul who could give him the answer he was seeking.

After graduating from college he was married to a girl named Parvati, and in the year 1900 he was given employment in the Revenue Department of the South Arcot District Collectorate. In 1902 he happened to visit Tiruvannamalai for the first time on some official duty, and there he heard of the saintly and ascetic life lived by a young boy on the Hill, whom all people referred to with great respect as *Brahmana Swami*. Sri Pillai at once climbed up the Hill to Guhainamasivayar temple, where the *Brahmana Swami* was then staying, and on seeing the divine lustre which shone in the face of the silent young ascetic, he felt strongly attracted to Him as a piece of iron to a magnet. Immediately he asked Him the question 'Who am I?' which had been haunting his mind for so many years. Little could he have known at that time, however, that the young

Sage he saw seated quietly before him was born in this world with a divine mission to reveal the direct path of Self-enquiry, through which alone the true answer to the question 'Who am I?' could be experienced within the heart. Such is the working of divine Grace that the fit and worthy disciple had thus been automatically drawn to the proper Guru.

Since in those early days Sri Bhagavan rarely spoke except perhaps to his faithful attendant Sri Pazhani Swami, He answered Pillaiyavargal's¹ question by writing on the sandy ground. For a number of days Pillaiyavargal continued to ask Him a series of questions, all of which He answered by writing either on the sand or on a slate, and most of His answers were later noted down by Pillaiyavargal from memory. Some of the answers Pillaiyavargal received at that time he later incorporated in lines 37 to 73 of one of his Tamil poems, *Anugraha Ahaval*, in which he describes some of the experiences he had of Sri Bhagavan's Grace. Later, in the year 1923, when some friends of his decided to print this poem and another poem entitled *Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval*, in which he narrates the story of Sri Bhagavan's life, he edited in the form of thirteen questions and answers a brief summary of the teachings he received from Sri Bhagavan in 1902, and this was printed under title *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?) as an appendix to the small book containing those two poems. The following is a literal translation of that appendix².

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¹In later years, Sri Bhagavan enquired about Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, saying "Is Pillaiyavargal keeping well?", the word *avargal* being an honorific appended to a name. This fact is mentioned by Sri Manikkam Pillai, disciple of Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, in a footnote on p. 3 of his book *Sri Sivaprakasa Charitamum Malaiyum*, from which most of the facts in this article are drawn.

²This appendix was included in the 1st ed. (1923), 3rd ed. (1931) and 4th ed. (1946) of *Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval*, but was not included in the 2nd ed. (1929), 5th ed. (c. 1956) or reprint of the 5th ed. (1971).

WHO AM I?

The enquiry 'Who am I?' alone will give liberation (moksha).

1. *Who am I?*

The gross body, which is composed of the seven dhatus (chyle, blood, flesh, fat, marrow, bone and semen), is not 'I'. The five sense-organs (jnanendriyas), namely the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose, which individually and respectively know the five sense-knowledges (vishayas), namely sound, touch, sight, taste and smell, are not 'I'. The five organs of action (karmendriyas), namely the mouth, legs, hands, anus and genitals, which perform the five functions of speaking, walking, giving, excreting and enjoying are not 'I'. The five vital airs such as prana, which perform the five (vital) functions such as respiration, are not 'I'. Even the mind, which thinks, is not 'I'. Even the ignorance (of deep sleep), in which only the latent tendencies towards sense-knowledges (vishaya-vasanas) remain and which is devoid of all sense-knowledges and all actions, is not 'I'.

2. *If all these are not 'I', then who am I?*

After negating as 'not I, not I' all that is mentioned above, the knowledge which remains alone, itself is 'I'.

3. *What is the nature of (this) knowledge?*

The nature of (this) knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss (sat-chit-ananda). This is called Silence (mauna). This Self alone exists. The world, soul and God are imaginary superimpositions (kalpanas) in it like silver in the mother-of-pearl. Therefore Self itself is God; Self itself is 'I', Self itself is the souls; Self itself is the world. All is verily the Supreme Self (siva-swarupam).

4. *When will Self-realization (swarupa-darshanam) be attained?*

When what-is-seen (drisya) is removed, the realization of Self, the seer (drik), will take place³.

5. *Will not Self-realization take place even while what-is-seen exists?*

No, it will not. The seer and what-is-seen are like the rope and the snake. When the knowledge of the snake, the imaginary superimposition, has not gone, can the knowledge of the rope, the base, appear?

6. *When will the world, which is what-is-seen, be removed?*

If the mind, which is the cause of all (objective) knowledge and all action, subsides, the world will disappear.

7. *What is the nature of the mind?*

Thought alone is the nature (or form) of the mind. It is a power. It expands as all objects. When it subsides within itself, that is, in Self, Self will appear; when it comes out, the world will appear. Therefore, when the world appears, Self does not appear.

8. *How will the mind subside?*

The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?'. The thought 'Who am I?', having destroyed all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre. Then Self-realization will take place. When the thought 'I' subsides, the breath also subsides. From where the ego originates, from there alone the breath originates. Whatever one does,

³Though Sri Bhagavan here refers to Self as the 'seer' (drik), it should not be thought that Self is really a seer of objects, for in truth all objects are seen only by the mind or ego. Self is described in scriptures as the seer (drik) because it is only by the light of Self that all things are seen. But as Sri Bhagavan explains in chapter 3 of *Vichara Sangraham*, since the word 'seer' (drik) is applicable only in relation to the objects seen (drisya), and since the objects seen are not other than Self, Self is in truth not a seer. Therefore the use of the word 'seer' in the present context should be understood to be figurative and not literal. It may also be noted here that when Sri Bhagavan rewrote *Nan Yar?* in the form of an essay, He omitted the words *drik* and *drisya* from this portion so as to avoid giving rise to a possible misunderstanding.

one should do without 'I', the ego. If one does thus, even one's wife will appear as Jagadiswari (the Mother of the Universe). Whoever sacrifices himself to Self, who is God, alone is the (true) devotee.

9. Are there no other means by which the mind will subside?

Other than enquiry (vichara), there is no adequate means. If made to subside by other means, the mind will remain as if subsided, but will rise again.

10. Tendencies towards sense-objects (vishaya-vasanas) rise in countless numbers like waves in the ocean. When will they all be removed?

As Self-attention (swarupa-dhyana) becomes more and more intense, all the tendencies will subside.

11. Is it possible to remove all the tendencies towards sense-objects, which have been continuing from the ancient past, and to remain as Self alone?

Without giving room even to the doubting thought 'Is it possible or not?' one should steadfastly cling to Self-attention. If one thus goes on scrutinizing the nature of the mind, the mind will finally remain as Self.

12. For how long is this enquiry necessary?

As long as there are tendencies towards sense-objects in the mind, so long is the enquiry 'Who am I?' necessary. As long as there are enemies in the fort, they will continue to come out. If one continues to cut them down as and when they come, the fort will fall into one's hands. Likewise, as and when thoughts rise, then and there one should annihilate them through knowledge born of enquiry (vichara-jnana). Destroying in their very source all thoughts that rise, without leaving even a single one, is desirelessness (vairagya). Until one attains, Self, one should not give up enquiry.

13. Are not all these the will of God (iswara-sankalpa)?

Just as by the mere presence of the sun, which rises without desire (iccha), intention (sankalpa) or effort (yatnam), the sun-stone (the magnifying lens) emits fire, the lotus blossoms, water evaporates and people begin, perform and stop their respective activities, and just as in front of a magnet the needle moves, so the souls (jivas) – who are governed by the three divine functions (muttozhil) or five divine functions (panchakrityas)⁴, which take place due to the mere influence of the presence of God, who is without intention (sankalpa) – perform and stop their activities in accordance with their respective karmas⁵. Nevertheless, He (God) is not one who has intention (sankalpa); not even a single action (karma) will affect (literally, approach or adhere to) Him. That is like the actions in the world not affecting the sun, and like the good and bad qualities of the other four elements (namely earth, water, air and fire) not affecting the all-pervading space (the fifth element)⁶.

* * * * *

Since in 1923 very few works containing the original teachings of Sri Bhagavan had come into existence, this brief appendix and the above-mentioned lines 37 to 73 of *Anugraha Ahaval* created such a stir of interest among the Tamil devotees of Sri Bhagavan that

⁴According to the different classifications given in scriptures, the divine functions are said to be three, namely creation (*srishti*), sustenance (*sthiti*) and destruction (*samhara*), or five, namely these three plus veiling (*tiro-dhana*) and Grace (*anugraha*).

⁵That is, in accordance not only with their destiny (*prarabdha karma*) but also with their former tendencies towards action (*purva karma vasanas*).

⁶This last answer was written by Sri Bhagavan on a slate and was immediately copied verbatim by Pillaiyavargal in his notebook, whereas most of the other answers were recorded by him later from memory.

Pillaiyavargal was soon prevailed upon to edit a more detailed record of the teachings he received from Sri Bhagavan in 1902, and thus an enlarged version of *Nan Yar?* came to be published as a separate booklet containing thirty questions and answers. Soon afterwards, sometime around the year 1927, Sri Bhagavan Himself rewrote these thirty questions and answers in the form of an essay, which is now included in *Sri Ramana Nutri-rattu*.

After receiving these teachings in 1902, Pillaiyavargal was convinced that Sri Bhagavan was God in human form, and firmly believing that to have the *darshan* of such a great *Jnani* was the best of all spiritual practices, he began to visit Him once a month. For some years he continued thus, but as time went by he began to find his job to be an obstacle to ceaseless Self-enquiry, and so he submitted his resignation. Knowing his good qualities and character, however, his superior officer, who was an Englishman, did not accept his resignation. Taking this to be the divine will, for some more time Pillaiyavargal continued his job, but in a detached and disinterested manner. In the meanwhile his wife and only son passed away. This strengthened his *vairagya*, and knowing the body to be impermanent, he decided that he should not waste the precious days of his life but should dedicate all his time to following the path of Self-enquiry taught by his divine Guru. Therefore in 1910 he again submitted his resignation after giving the requisite prior notice to his employer.

One of the reasons which prompted him to take this decisive step was as follows: In Sri Bhagavan's Presence he would sometimes effortlessly and spontaneously experience a state in which all movements of the body and mind were stilled, and he also sometimes used to experience the same state even when sincerely attending to his official work. At such times he would automatically forget the surroundings and his mind would turn Selfwards. Referring to this state, which he understood to be the result of Sri Bhagavan's power of Grace,

D.: How does one get rid of fear?

B.: What is fear? It is only a thought. If there is anything besides the Self there is reason to fear. Who sees things separate from the Self? First the ego arises and sees objects and external. If the ego does not rise, the Self alone exists and there is nothing external. For anything external to oneself implies the existence of the seer within. Seeking it there will eliminate doubts and fear. Not only fear, all other thoughts centred round the ego will disappear along with it.

in lines 75 to 79 of *Anugraha Ahaval* he sings, "Subduing all my *karanas* (mind, intellect, senses, etc.) by Your power, absorbing me within this body as the form of mere consciousness, You graciously taught me the path of enquiry".

After resigning his job, Pillaiyavargal came to Tiruvannamalai and informed Sri Bhagavan, whereupon Sri Bhagavan quoted verse 341 of *Tirukkural*, "From whatever one has withdrawn oneself, from that one will experience no suffering". Taking this to be Sri Bhagavan's approval of his resignation, Pillaiyavargal returned to his village to practise Self-enquiry earnestly and unceasingly.

(To be continued)



Sivaprakasam Pillai

VEDANTA CHOODAAMANI

Four Sevas, Five Adhikaaris and Eight Gurus

By J. Jayaraman

Vivekachintamani is an encyclopaedic work in Kannada by Nijaguna Yogi. It is in prose and encompasses the entire gamut of Vedanta, Agama, Dharma Sastra and descriptions of various worlds in creation. The first portion, Vedanta-Parichheda, was rendered into Tamil verse by the famous Sivaprakasa Swamigal of Thuraimangalam. This Tamil work goes by the name of Vedanta Choodaamani. In just 183 verses that have a mantric ring about them, the entire body of Vedantic terminology has been condensed, classified and defined in a way only a Jnani could do.

Bhagavan Ramana had great regard for the works of this saint, particularly his Prabhulinga Leelai, Sonasaila Maalai (like Bhagavan's Aksharamana Maalai written in alphabetical order while going round the Hill), and Vedanta Choodaamani. "It's a law book!" That is how the Maharshi referred to the latter. On other occasions when referring to some verse or the other in it, in order to clarify a questioner's doubt, he said, "That's the Supreme-Court judgement!"

What follows is an amplified rendering of verses 10 to 13 of the epigrammatic original. Sutra-like, the four verses use only 128 words!

FOUR SEVAS: The seeker must first acquire the four *sadhanas* (*Viveka*, *Vairaagya*, *Mumukshutvam* and the six-fold asset of Equanimity, Self-control, Forbearance, Renunciation, Fixation-in-Self and Faith). He is then an *Adhikaari*, who, depending on maturity qualifies, to serve the Guru in various ways. These are *Aapta*, *Anga*, *Sthaana*, and *Sadbhaava Seva*.

1. **AAPTA SEVA:** This means he does service by conducting himself in such a way that he endears himself to the Guru. This includes a readiness to do menial jobs, being cheerful at all times and, when in conversation with visitors, to be factual and at the same time observe discipline of the tongue. The last point is important, for at times the speaker could get carried away and utter by way of causing a harmless thrill, something about his Guru, which though factual, nevertheless lowers the stature of his Guru in the eyes of the listener. e.g. A Guru who is beyond temporal attractions might still accept the service of say, tobacco or betel-leaf from a devotee for a period of time. But mentioned in casual conversation, this piece of information could occa-

sion in the hearer anything from a lowering of the Guru's worth from his point of view, to seeing in the act of the Guru a license to imitate the same. *Aapta Seva* therefore enjoins on the *sishya* exercise of circumspection.

2. **ANGA SEVA:** This is the service of close attendance on the Guru. This includes attending to his body-needs like the arranging of his seat, bed, bath-water, washing of his clothes and other occasional functions like nursing him when unwell and massaging of limbs. This calls for unconditional love for the Guru and a perspicacity that anticipates the Guru's needs even by his mere glance or sign.

3. **STHAANA SEVA:** This involves guarding and upkeep of the land and property, moveable and immovable, of the Ashram where his Guru resides, even though the Guru might lay no claim to any ownership. This includes planning and maintaining adequate resources of water, fuel, food and accommodation for the benefit of all who visit the Ashram as well as all the colleagues associated in the service of the Guru. This calls for attention to the smallest detail, persistent follow-up, incur-

able optimism and even a capacity for perfectly feigned anger. It calls for humility in the midst of wielding power, openness to criticism and non-acceptance of any luxury, privilege or perquisite accorded to him by others even if it were offered without his asking for it. If thrust upon him it should be accepted and distributed right away equally among all. If such sharing were not possible, he could accept it only if he were satisfied that such special treatment came his way unasked, not because of his position, but because of deep devotion that was independent of it. How is he to discern this? By noting whether the same courtesy is accorded to anyone else, even though less highly placed.

Sthaana Seva calls for utter neglect of doership, motivation of all colleagues by unostentatious personal example, kindness towards the infirm, unyielding demeanour towards aggressive bluff, and a strictness that is feared by the lax. His fearlessness should, tempered by tact, ensure perfect congruence of his deed and word with his thought. This last quality calls for unshakeable faith in his Guru's presence, full confidence in His invincibility and total surrender to His subtle guidance.

4. **SAD BHAAVA SEVA:** To regard the Guru as the Lord Himself is to be engaged in *Sadbhaava Seva*. When ripe, the *sisya* sees without break, the Guru truly present always as his inmost Self.

In the evolution of the *jiva* towards *Brahman*, the above could be seen as the four states of *SAALOKYA*, *SAAMEEPYA*, *SAAROOPYA*, and *SAAYUJYA* where the relationship with the Guru progresses from one of Acquaintance, to one of Friendship, Heirdom and finally Identity.

* * * * *

FIVE ADHIKAARIS: The five claimants to Liberation.

Conventionally the servitors are classified as belonging to *Karma Kaanda*, *Bhakti Kaanda* and *Jnana Kaanda*. The first considers himself to be the body itself and its consequent rela-

tionships with family etc., as his. The second, acknowledging a Providence, performs actions firmly and, without eye on reward, offers the fruits to the divine. The last whether called on to perform action or not, remains as the detached witness in the midst of it.

There is another classification which is five-fold. These five are enumerated below in the order of ascension, and a scale of ratios.

1. **KARMI:** Attached to limitations of clan and family due to ignorant identification with his body, the *karmi* is said to be engaged in the faultless observance of duties and rituals. Such a servitor though lacking in insight, by virtue of his dogged attention, gains by and by, purity of *chitta*, and attains *Mukti* in one hundred births.

2. **MUMUKSHU:** By experience, observation or insight acquired through scripture or the Enlightened, the *mumukshu* gains conviction that worldly life is impermanent. Continuing to perform worldly duties and yet with an eye on the higher life, the praiseworthy *mumukshu* gains *Mukti* in three births.

3. **ABHYAASI:** Perceiving without a shadow of doubt that worldly life is no more than a dream projection, the *abhyaasi* takes to the worthwhile effort of *sraavana*, *manana* and *nididhyaasana*. Established on the road to Self, he attains *Mukti* in two births.

4. **ANUBHAVI:** Fully charged with the search for Self, the *anubhavi* renounces all thought of home, world and allied business and attains *Mukti* that very birth.

5. **AAROODHA:** Freed from the deception of a separate world, he who is established in *Mukti* by self-aware, self-evident Self, is the *Aaroodha*. He is truly Liberated while yet alive and cannot even be said to have had a birth.

It would be more true to perceive the above five as different rungs on the same ladder rather than as five different routes. Thus given the ratio of 100 to 3 to 2 to 1 to Zero, and assuming the *karmi* to take 100 births, he would be called the *mumukshu* in the 98th birth, the *abhyaasi* in the 99th, *anubhavi* in the 100th and *aaroodha* "thereafter".

There is yet another three-fold classification of *Adhikaaris* based on the force propelling their evolution. The three are:

1. **VIRAKTI GATI:** A sufficient dip in the *samsara* of suffering leads one to seek the Guru and through him attain Salvation.

2. **VIVEKA GATI:** Seeking a first principle behind the experience of creation, one gains the Self through the Guru's help.

3. **DAIVA GATI:** Hearing providentially, *upadesa* being imparted to another by a Sage, one may intuit the Self oneself.

Here again the three are to be seen as various phases.

* * * * *

EIGHT GURUS: There being so many levels of *sadhakas*, some differences in the capacity and functions of gurus are also natural. They fall into eight categories. Such classification has significance in an age when *sishtyas* wish to become gurus and as soon as possible, and gurus wish to delay such transformation as much as possible! The classification given in *VEDANTA CHOODAAMANI* does not include the counterfeit. The ant finds its fill in the dew-drop, the crow in the puddle, the cow in the pond and the elephant in the vast lake.

1. **BODHAKA GURU:** He is actually a teacher who is capable of delivering long lectures to big audiences. He expatiates effortlessly on the Vedas, *Sastras* or Philosophy or Science. Brevity is perhaps not his *forte*. He could be compared to an efficient parrot or a civilized tape-recorder. In the scale of gurus he performs an important function, by broadcasting all kinds of human knowledge. He is also a sort of tranquilizer to those torn in the midst of want and boredom-filled life and, like a VCR, helps keep the vast audience in a sort of hypnotic catalepsy, and therefore out of mischief for that duration.

2. **VEDAKA GURU:** This one too is a teacher, but has a fair understanding of the subject at

hand. He has had personal experience of some of the points that he makes. He is capable of clarifying doubts and advising *sadhakas* on an individual level.

3. **NISHIDDHA GURU:** This one is an adept in charms, spells and abracadabra. His affairs are often secretive. He is involved with the world of spirits and goblins. His strength lies in his ability to command their obedience, to relieve his devotees of some misery or favour them by inflicting misery on their enemies. Such a guru and naturally his *sishtyas* are constantly in fear of coming under the influence of others with greater malevolence at their command. Though the followers gain their ends for the present, their means being improper, they are sure to come to grief sooner or later in future, along with the guru.

4. **KAAMIYA GURU:** This one advises on the ways as laid down in the scriptures for gaining one's desires. He prescribes the specific *karma* to be done in order to gain a particular fruit within the confines of *Dharma*. This may be for a happy event in this life or for ensuring better conditions in what lies beyond. It is obvious that such a guru is much sought after and acquires much renown.

The following four Gurus show the way out of Bondage. The first two of these communicate *Paroksha* (theoretical) *Jnana*, and the last, *Aparoksha Anubhooti*.

5. **SOOCHAKA GURU:** He is the pointer to the higher life. He impresses on the *sadhaka* the need to acquire *Shama* (equanimity), *Dama* (self-control) etc. This is possible only in a *sishtya* whose discrimination is awakened. The guru's personal example of calm and discipline awakens the same in the *sishtya*.

6. **VAACHAKA GURU:** In a *sishtya* who displays calm, self-control, forbearance, a capacity to renounce, and faith in the words of the wise, the *Vaachaka Guru* implants the thirst for Self-knowledge by pointed reference to the falsity inherent in sense-knowledge. The guru's personal conduct in the world reinforces this.

7. KAARAKA GURU: He imparts the Upadesa of the oneness of Jiva and Brahman. The *sadhaka* is made to see that *Self-Knowledge* or *Mukti* is more of a removal than of an addition to oneself. The initiation could be by word, touch or look. *Kaaraka Guru* is instrumental in leading the *Sadhaka* out of *Paroksha Jnana*.

8. VIHITA GURU: The destiny of every individual is to transcend individuality. The *Vihita Guru* brings to a close this destiny. Destroying all remnant *vasana* and doubt, he grants the ripe *adhikaari* the ever present, blemishless Liberation. This the *Guru* does by *Mauna*; by revealing that which IS at it IS, by continuing all along AS IT EVER IS.

THE NEXT STEP

By Sqn. Ldr. N. VASUDEVAN

Who am I that wants to take the next step?
What is the next step?
Far far away, where I was You told me
I AM THE WAY and I thought the next step was
To get on to this Royal Road;
I forgot to ask where this Road led to,
For where-ever-it-led-to, it was the only Way.

II

'I' to me meant Mr. Five-foot-six and needed
no definition;
'AM' meant to keep me in maximum opulence and
happiness,
Which simply meant wealth and sense-gratification;
'Way' meant taking steps to gather much money and
enjoy sorrow-laden sense-gratification.
I wandered into the wilderness where my beasts of prey
Seeking more possessions and sense-gratification
Nearly swallowed me up.

III

I cried for help to you whose Presence I at once felt.
You who were always present though I did not notice it;
You beamed your charming smile; "Here I am your
Refuge. Find out 'Who am I' who is chasing."
To me it meant maximum knowledge, for the fullness
of 'I' meant all available knowledge...
... I read philosophy from Vedic period to Russell B.,
... I studied mathematics from pre-Pythogoras
without finality,
... Scholarly expositions of the Gita, the Bible,
modern science and so forth ...
All led me to a jungle of ideas where beasts of
scholastics nearly swallowed me up.

IV

Again I turned to you, the unfailing Presence,
You as ever smiled, You as ever cheered:
"Investigate the Source from which I-awareness arises,
Fix your mind on its Source".
I spent all my time self-enquiring,
Reduced my needs to the basic minimum.
My friends said, 'he is crazy', my family 'he is selfish.'
My self-enquiry I steadfastly continued ...
It narrowed the states between my Source, mind and
body;
My Self-harmony increased more and more to
I-AM-THAT-I-AM.
That was it: Peace, quietude – was that all?

V

Again I turned to the presence, the unmistakable
guidance;
Again You responded, smiling with effulgent grace;
"I AM TOTAL HARMONY – the PRESENCE as-it-is...
That harmonizes those in less than TOTAL HARMONY;
You have become one with me –
Remain unswerving as Me for ever

VI

This is my story: my next step....
Shows that all brother-humans: scientists,
politicians, workers.....
In HARMONY can function happily and
leave footprints for what follows.
When distressed, discarded, deprived...
never mind what.....
Self-enquire, WHO AM I in that state, gain
Self-harmony and take the next step.

RECOLLECTIONS

By Akhilandamma

Akhilandamma was born in 1871 in a small village called Desur, about 30 miles north-east of Tiruvannamalai. She was married at the age of five but her husband died when she was only seven years old. She spent the remainder of her youth living with her mother. When she grew up she devoted all her life to serving sadhus, particularly Ramana Maharshi, Seshadri Swami and Vithoba, a saint who lived in Polur, about thirty kilometres north of Tiruvannamalai.

When she stayed in her native village with her mother, many of Bhagavan's devotees used to come and stay at her house. With the object of serving such devotees, Akhilandamma and Masthan Swami (whom she introduced to Bhagavan) established a Math there in 1914. Called Sri Ramanananda Mathalayam, it was the first 'Ramana Centre' to be established outside Tiruvannamalai. Many of Bhagavan's early devotees such as Kunju Swami, Ramaswami Pillai, Madhava Swami and Ramanatha Brahmachari, were taken there to recuperate from occasional illnesses they had contracted while in Tiruvannamalai.

Sometime in the 1950s Kunju Swami suggested to Sadhu Om that he record some of her reminiscences. Sadhu Om thus compiled a small Tamil book of Akhilandamma's recollections of Bhagavan and other saints. It was written by him in the form of a first person narrative. It was published in 1961 under the title of Sri Ramana Anubhavam.

The following extracts have been taken from her book, translated by M.V. Ramanachalam and edited and paraphrased by **DAVID GODMAN**. These will be serialised in three parts.

In 1903 I visited Tiruvannamalai. While I was wandering near the mountain with the object of gathering *thumbai* flowers I saw many people walking in a crowd towards Banyan Tree Cave (then known as Sad Guru Swami Cave). I enquired of them, "Where are you going? What is so special there?" One of the crowd told me, "There is one *Brahmana Swami* there. He is only a small child but he sits motionless, without taking food or water." These words surprised me, but they also kindled in me a desire to see him. Perhaps it was through these brief words that the grace of Bhagavan ensnared me.

My first thought was "Can I take him something to eat? They say that he is a *Brahmana*

Swami. If I take any kind of food he may not eat it." After thinking the matter over I bought a little sugar candy as a token offering and then went to see him.

What a sight he was! For the first time I saw the magnetic Lord who draws towards him the minds of all who see him. Even though he was unwashed and covered with dust, his holy body glowed like gold. On seeing this ascetic *sannyasi*, with a frame so lean that it exposed his bones, my mind melted and tears welled up within me. The young Lord then opened his eyes and graciously directed them towards me. I approached, placed the sugar candy near him, and prostrated. After Bhagavan had

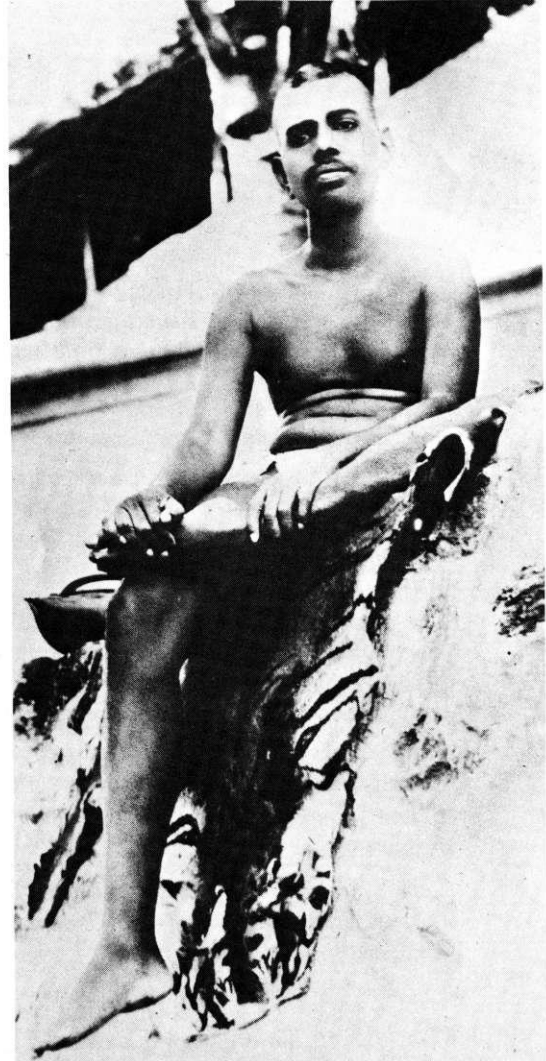
taken a piece and eaten it, a *sadhu* who was nearby returned some of it to me as *prasadam*.

On seeing the condition of Bhagavan's body I was both struck with awe and overcome with grief. These emotional reactions were so strong that I was unable to speak. While I was standing there, affected in this way, a Brahmin, aged about 50 years, came in with some sweets in his hand. Bhagavan smiled when he noticed him but the Brahmin burst into tears. Unable to control his weeping, he eventually went outside to wipe his face. I followed him and asked, "Sir, why did Swami smile at you, and why are you crying." He replied, "Madam, I am a relative of the Swami¹. This Swami belongs to our place. He is the son of a great lawyer but he has come to this. My mind is unable to bear this fact and so I weep. He smiled at me because he knows who I am."

I then asked some people who were standing there: "Will Swami take some food if I bring it?" I received a positive reply. From that time on I became a regular visitor; each time I came I would bring fruits, place them before him and do *namaskarams*.

After this visit I returned to Desur. Bhagavan, at that time, was not living permanently in one place. He would mostly stay in Virupaksha Cave, but in the summer months he would move to one of the adjoining caves². When I came for *darshan* again, Bhagavan was sitting inside Virupaksha Cave, facing south. In those days Palaniswami was the fortunate *sadhu* who attended to Bhagavan's needs. He stayed with him night and day and served him his food. On this particular day he was also sitting in the cave, facing east.

I slowly made my way inside the cave, placed some milk near Bhagavan as an offering and then came outside and stood in a shady place. On seeing Bhagavan again my mind had flowed towards him with uninterrupted boundless love, but along with this emotion there was a sort of inexpressible regard and fear. It is only natural for people to get sense of awe and reverence while they are



near Bhagavan. It is also natural for the individual self to subside in his presence. There was a gracious power that prevailed in that only place. It numbed the mind, the power of speech and the body so effectively that visitors were automatically silenced. There were no rules about silence, but in that holy presence casual

¹ A footnote in the book states that the Brahmin is likely to have been Bhagavan's paternal uncle, Nellappier. It also states that the *sadhu* who gave Akhilandamma the *prasad* was probably Uddhandi Nayinar, an attendant who had looked after Bhagavan under the Iluppai Tree, inside the big temple.

² Such as the Mango Tree Cave or the Sad Guru Swami Cave.

visitors who had come for *darshan* would automatically remain calm and quiet.

After I had waited outside for some time Palaniswami came out. There was some milk left in the vessel; this was given to me as Bhagavan's *prasad*. I took it and returned home greatly delighted. From that day on this poor lady had the good fortune of getting Bhagavan's *prasad* for many years.

While Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha Cave, Kandaswami, a leading devotee who had great love for Bhagavan, selected a site higher up the hill for a new ashram³. He took Bhagavan there and Bhagavan indicated his appreciation of the site. Kandaswami then began work on the new ashram. Single-handed he cleared away the thorny shrubs, levelled the ground and planted coconut trees there. Since that ashram was constructed in a spirit of service to Sri Ramana, in a quiet manner and without any self-advertisement, it came to be called Skandashram in memory of his name.

Bhagavan often used to go from Virupaksha Cave to Skandashram during the period when the latter was being constructed. Because Palaniswami was very ill at that time, he was left behind in Virupaksha Cave. It was on one of these occasions that I went there to serve food to Bhagavan. I placed the rice, *sambar* and *rasam* I had brought outside the cave. I then peeped inside, but Bhagavan was not to be seen. Palaniswami, who was lying by himself in the cave, called me inside. I went to him and told him that I had brought *bhiksha* (food offering) for Bhagavan. He replied: "Bhagavan has gone up to Skandashram, but he will return soon because I am not in good health. Bhagavan thinks that there is no one to attend on me, so he will soon come back and see me."

On hearing this I thought about Bhagavan, and in particular I thought about how he had made me do service to devotees. I realised that it was my duty to stay with Palaniswami. I quickly began to prepare hot water for him so that he could take a bath. Bhagavan returned

from Skandashram just as I was finishing this job. I bowed to him and then stood aside. Bhagavan went straight to Palaniswami and enquired about his health. Palaniswami merely replied "I will take my bath now". I then explained to Bhagavan that I had been preparing the hot water in his absence, and that it was now ready. Bhagavan indicated his pleasure by saying "Very good!" Turning to the others he said. "Everyone is waiting hungrily. Let us take food soon." Palaniswami then said, "I also wish to take some solid food", but Bhagavan told him "You must take only gruel". Palaniswami replied "The *rasam* prepared by Desuramma⁴ will be nice. I will mix the rice with it and eat it." Then Palaniswami called me aside and said, "Prepare *rasam* with pepper, chutney with horsegram and serve them to Bhagavan." I followed his instructions and served the food to all the people there except Palaniswami. Everyone, including Bhagavan, ate it.

For Palaniswami I merely gave cooked rice mixed with *rasam*. He ate it and seemed satisfied with it. However, he never ate again and about a week later he died. Perhaps it is Bhagavan's grace that he took his last food from my hands.

When Bhagavan first moved to Skandashram, no cooking was done there. Bhagavan, and the devotees who were living there, used to live on the food offerings that were brought every day. Whatever food came was equally divided and served to all. On one occasion during this period Kamakshi Ammal and myself went there with some food. On that day five or six heads of Maths had unexpectedly come to Skandashram to have Bhagavan's *darshan*. Since we had not known about this in advance we were not able to prepare food for them.

When it was time to eat a devotee approached Bhagavan and said, "They are all

³ Kandaswami began work in 1906 and it took him 7 or 8 years to complete the job.

⁴ Akhilandamma was affectionately known among Bhagavan's devotees as Desuramma, which means 'the lady from Desur.'

waiting; may we take food?" Bhagavan, who knew that there was not enough food for everyone, replied, "Let us wait a while". Sometime later a group of people unexpectedly came, bringing with them big vessels full of food. After saluting Bhagavan they offered the food to him. Bhagavan asked them to first serve the food to everyone who was present. Only then did he stand up to indicate that he was ready to eat.

In *Sri Ramana Gita* a devotee asks, "How can one detect the existence of *jnana* in a person?" Bhagavan's reply was, "The existence of *jnana* is perceived by equality of vision, which expresses itself in the form of total love towards all living beings."⁵ Bhagavan himself is an example of this answer since his entire life is an illustration of this equality.

Bhagavan never accepted anything which was served to him alone and not to others. Even when medicine was given to him, he would take some and then have the remainder distributed to the devotees who were with him. Not only did he insist that all offerings should be shared, he also insisted that he should not be given more than anyone else, nor be given anything that was of a better quality than that which was given to devotees. Because of this, he would only accept a small quantity of food when devotees insisted on serving him first.

Whenever I cooked food I would put most of it in a large vessel and put the remainder in a small pot for Bhagavan. When I served Bhagavan from this small pot Bhagavan would sometimes say, "You are serving too much to me! How will the remainder in this small pot be sufficient for everyone else." I would then have to reassure him by saying, "I have brought a large quantity in another vessel. There is quite enough to distribute a good amount to all." When Bhagavan had satisfied himself that this was correct he would relent and accept the offering.

Because everyone was aware of this principle, Bhagavan trusted us to distribute the food

⁵ *Sri Ramana Gita* Ch. 1 v. 16

SAMADHI

D.: Is it possible to enjoy *samadhi* (awareness of reality) while busy in worldly work?

B.: The feeling 'I work' is the hindrance. Ask yourself 'Who works?' Remember who you are. Then the work will not bind you, it will go on automatically. Make no effort either to work or to renounce; it is your effort which is the bondage. What is destined to happen will happen. If you are destined not to work, work cannot be had even if you hunt for it. If you are destined to work, you will not be able to avoid it and you will be forced to engage yourself in it. So, leave it to the higher power; you cannot renounce or retain as you choose.

equally to all, after first giving him a small quantity. However, in later years, when Bhagavan became aware that this principle was not being rigidly adhered to, he refused to let anyone serve him first. Instead, he insisted that he be served last with whatever remained when all others present had been served.

He would also refuse to start eating until all those who were eating with him had been served their food. All these practices were continued when Bhagavan moved to the new Ashram at the foot of the hill.

(To be continued)



Akhilandamma

The Discovery of Immortality

By
Robert Powell



Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

ALTHOUGH certain Oriental scriptures talk about "The Experience of Immortality," we wish to find out through our own actual experience whether there really is such a thing as "immortality". Perhaps "experience" is not exactly the right word, for, paradoxically, if immortality is our natural condition, we may not be able to experience it. Immortality would have to be a "steady state," since an intermittent state of immortality is obviously a contradiction in terms. Yet, by logical necessity, immortality could only be experienced against a background of mortality. This is because for perception and recognition — comprising "experience" — to occur, first a condition of duality, as an interface or contradistinction, must be present. Secondly, the perceiver or experiencer has to be greater in scope, more complex or more sophisticated than that which he wishes to perceive and understand. For example, if a drop of water in the ocean were sentient, it would not be able to experience the nature of water, leave alone the ocean. Or, to take another example, the mythical "flatlander" of elementary physics books, living in a world of two space dimensions, can never experience

our three-dimensional world. But somehow he has the possibility of arriving at the discovery or insight that his flat world is not the whole truth, is a flawed concept because it leads to contradiction and paradox. And with intelligence and sufficient contemplation, he may even come to realize the whole truth — or perhaps we should say, a greater truth — although due to his inherent limitations, it could never be an "experience" in the way that he experiences his "flatland."

Now, in the same vein, Immortality stands for Infinity, and Infinity is fundamentally different from, that is, it is infinitely greater than, any finite quantity or form. By the same token, Immortality is infinitely greater and more fundamental than mortality. Therefore, mortality, the known, can never *experience* Immortality, the Unknown, in the way that it experiences the "world." (But Immortality can understand mortality.)

Thus, not only is the "experience of Immortality" now seen to be a misnomer and it would be more appropriate to substitute the term "insight" or "discovery," but also our very

inquiry itself is fraught with paradox and strictly circumscribed. Only immortal man can discover his true nature; mortal man's inquiry will for ever flounder because of his own inherent limitations. Within this frame of reference, let us now proceed.

To answer the question whether man is mortal or immortal, it will first be necessary to explore very deeply the nature of what we actually are — not merely that which we *appear* to be — which will become clear only when all that we are *not* has been completely understood and discarded.

At first glance, man appears to be mortal. This seems an evident and highly visible truth. He is born and dies. This apparently indisputable fact is, however, never directly experienced. Birth and death are always observed with respect to others. The "I" never experiences its own beginning and ending — that is, respectively, the moment of conception and expiration. What happens is that consciousness comes upon us in some inexplicable and apparently acausal manner, and expires in a similar way.

A similar thing happens to us when falling asleep and waking up, or at times of fainting ("losing consciousness"). Since during such episodes, we undeniably exist, to simply assert our birth and death on the basis of possession of consciousness, is not valid. Thus, existence is not necessarily synonymous with consciousness.

Now, as to the question of self-existence, where does identity enter into the picture? When different individuals are challenged to describe their identities, they will reply "I am male," "I am female," "I am black," etc. In other words, they will enumerate various attributes, all derived from body-mind, and with which they have identified themselves. What all their statements have in common is "I am," and so what all these individuals inherently are, beneath the various labels or superimpositions, is the awareness "I am" or Beingness — undifferentiated, unidentified, and unidentifiable. That is, on this fundamental level, there is

no separation between individuals, no extension in space.

Looked at it from a different angle: The seer has identified himself with the seen — or, rather, with a fragment of it — the one body that he calls his own. Had he identified himself, on the other hand, with the totality of the seen, this fragmentation leading to grotesque distortion in his understanding of life would never have occurred. Instead, he would immediately have come to the holistic insight: "I am the world."

To identify with "his" body goes hand in hand with another mental process. Onto the "I am" consciousness appears the "I"-thought, which is the seed of all further thought. This means all thought essentially contains and reflects the "I"-thought in holographic manner; that is, it centers around a self-concept. And, in the absence of the latter, which is the main-spring of the psyche, the mind would be quite still. Incidentally, it is this very polarization of thought, leading to various crystallized thought patterns, that we call the "mind." Otherwise, there is no mind at all,¹ only a creative state of Emptiness (not to be confused, however, with Nihilism), which in Zen is actually called the "No-Mind" state.

Since man has identified himself with the body, a space-time frame of reference has been created. The birth and death of that body logically implies linear thought or sequential vision; that is, things go from here to there, both in time and in space.

Having arrived at the quite extraordinary understanding of the voidness of space and time, one is necessarily led to a further extraordinary insight. This is to see the accepted order — of being born, living in this world, and finally disappearing from it — as quite erroneous. Such a vision would apply to the body,

¹ "When the mind unceasingly investigates its own nature, it transpires that there is no such thing as mind. This is the direct path for all. The mind is merely thoughts. Of all thoughts, the thought "I" is the root. Therefore, the mind is only the thought "I" — *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, Upadesa Saram, vv. 19, 17, 18, p. 85.

but my real Self has nothing to do with that. This body, along with all others, and in fact, the entire world of objects, exists within me, owes it origin to me.² Thus, looking upon myself in the traditional way—being in the world, in my present body, for a limited time, to finally disappear, and possibly repeating the whole cycle in another body, under different circumstances—is actually tethering myself to a false mortality. The truth is: I ever experience myself and the world as “I am,” in my present body, or, more accurately, “containing my present body.” Seen from the old viewpoint, it may be my *n*th body of identification but will necessarily be experienced only as “my present body.” After all, when considering that *n*th body, do I carry with me the feeling of any previous bodies?

It appears then what the distorted view has

done is to spread out, unfold, the dimensionless reality of my Being into linear dimensions, displaying a Universe populated by a multitude of creatures. This unfolding is what in Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj’s teaching has been called the “objectivization” of Reality and represents the quality of *Maya*—the manner in which the Unmanifest, or that which is timeless, manifests itself in time. To be able to recognize and identify with that reality which lies beyond space-time and the “seen,” is to find oneself at last. This is the real Homecoming, which may truly be called the Discovery of Immortality.

² Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj stated in this connection: “I do not believe that anybody did exist prior to me. When my beingness appeared, then everything appeared.” (In a discourse on July 9, 1980, as reported in *Prior to Consciousness*, Acorn Press, 1985, Edited by Jean Dunn, p. 27)

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj Talks

(Edited by Jean Dunn)

Maharaj: Consciousness is not private property, it is universal. So long as you do not abide in the “I Am” consciousness you are restricted to the body. Do not try to understand with the intellect, just be. If you abide in the consciousness you understand that everything is happening spontaneously. If you are still at body-mind level you will think that you are doing something.

Question: After understanding all of this, activities still go on?

M: Consciousness can never remain inactive, it will always be busy, that is its nature.

Q: Even if I have an intuitive understanding of this, why is there this reluctance to give up all this that I am not?

M: You are not firmly stabilized in that understanding. Your conviction should be such that no question at all should arise in future about that. For instance, a person is dead and the body cremated, are there any questions about that? It is all over—like that, it will be all over.

Q: Is there effort to be made toward that?

M: Effortlessly, just be. When the consciousness fully understands the consciousness, will it embrace the body as itself? In totality it is, it is not going to pick out a fragment and say “I am this.” The consciousness expresses itself like a light. The five elemental play is the manifestation of my consciousness, the effulgence of my consciousness only. The playing of the five lights of elements will finally merge into the consciousness, because it is the outcome of consciousness.

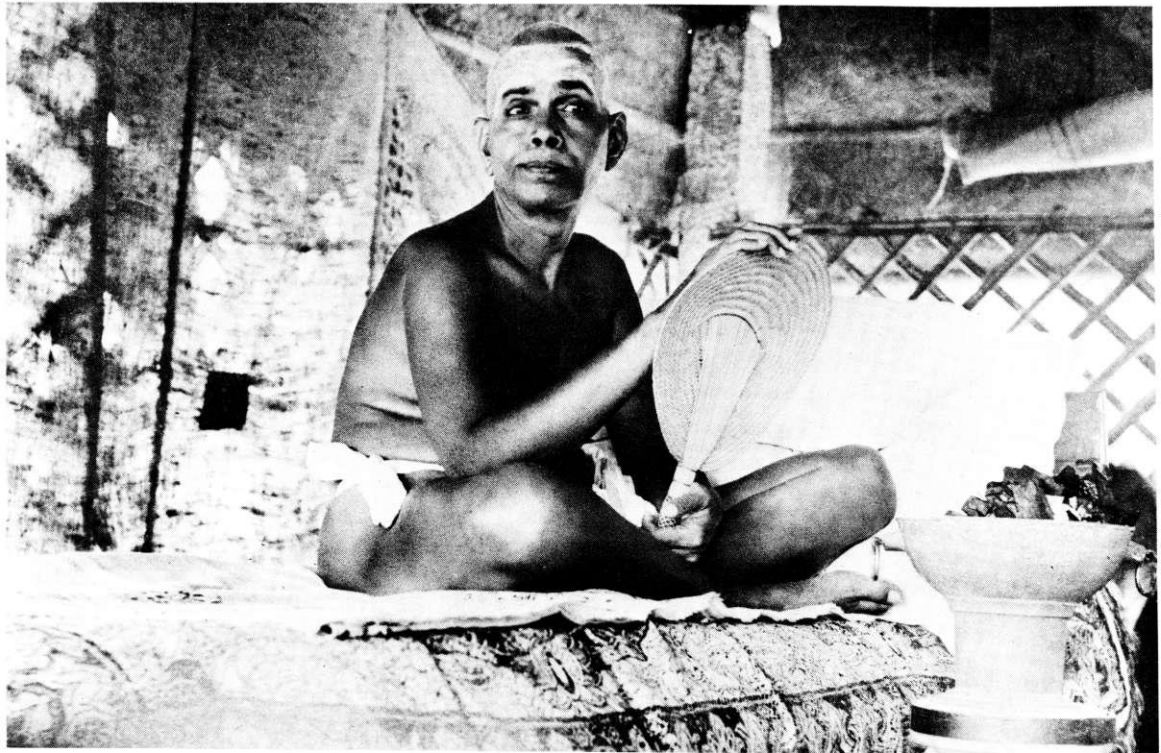
Q: Did this come to Maharaj gradually or in an instant?

M: Gradually and instantly. You are trying to measure with the yardstick of your body and you will not be able to understand.

Consciousness is the primary force, become one with that. “I Am” means the world is. When you stabilize in the message “I Am”, when you are thoroughly one with that, then you start transcending that also.

Birth and death relate to the message “I Am”. The true eternal state is the no-message state. The process of going upward spiritually is an unwinding process, escaping the mind, escaping the body identity.

The Ultimate state is one where there is no scope for the message state or the no-message state, these are merely concepts.



IN THE HALL OF SRI BHAGAVAN

Usually, we publish a column, **Letters to the Editor**, in each issue. In its place, we now publish day-to-day, practical questions raised by aspirants and answers given by our Master, culled from recorded talks with Sri Maharshi.

Devotee: Can one progress spiritually by fasting?

Bhagavan: Fasting should be chiefly mental (abstention from thoughts). Mere abstinence from food will do no good, it will even upset the mind. Spiritual unfoldment will come rather by regulating eating. But if, during a fast of one month, the spiritual outlook has been maintained, then in about ten days after the breaking of the fast (if it be rightly broken and followed by judicious eating) the mind will become pure and steady, and remain so.

In the early days after my coming here, I had my eyes closed and I was so deeply absorbed

in meditation that I hardly knew whether it was day or night. I had no food and no sleep. When there is movement in body, you need food. If you have food, you need sleep. If there is no movement, you do not need sleep. Very little food is enough to sustain life. That used to be my experience. Somebody or other used to offer me a tumblerful of some liquid diet whenever I opened my eyes. That was all I ever ate. But remember one thing: except when one is absorbed in a state where the mind is motionless, it is not possible to give up sleep or food altogether. When the body and mind are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life, the body reels if you give up food and sleep.

There are differing theories concerning how much a *sadhaka* should eat and how much he should sleep. Some say that it is healthy to go to bed at 10 p.m. and wake up to 2 a.m. That means that four hours sleep is enough. Some say that four hours sleep is not enough, but that it should be six hours. It amounts to this, that sleep and food should not be taken in excess. If you want to cut off either of them completely, your mind will always be directed towards them. Therefore, the *sadhaka* should do everything in moderation.

There is no harm in eating three to four times a day. But only do not say 'I want this kind of food and not that kind' and so on. Moreover, you take these meals in twelve hours of waking whereas you are not eating in twelve hours of sleep.

Food affects the mind. For the practice of any kind of yoga, Vegetarianism is absolutely necessary since it makes the mind more *sattvic* (pure and harmonious)

* * * * *

D.: When I try to be without all thoughts, I pass into sleep. What should I do about it?

B.: Once you go to sleep you can do nothing in that state. But while you are awake, try to keep away all thoughts. Why think about sleep? Even that is a thought, is it not? If you are able to be without any thought while you are awake, that is enough. When you pass into sleep the state which you were in before falling asleep will continue when you make up. You will continue from where you left off when you fell into slumber. So long as there are thoughts of activity there will also be sleep. Thought and sleep are counterparts of one and the same thing.

We should not sleep too much or go without it altogether, but sleep only moderately. To prevent too much sleep, we must try and have no thoughts or *chalana* (movement of the mind), we must eat only *sattvic* food and that only in moderate measure, and not indulge in too much physical activity. The more we con-

trol thought, activity and food the more we shall be able to control sleep. But moderation ought to be the rule, as explained in the *Gita*, for the seeker on the path. Sleep is the first obstacle, as explained in the books, for all *sadhaks*. The second obstacle is said to be *vikshepa* or the sense objects of the world which divert one's attention. The third is said to be *kashaya* or thoughts in the mind about previous experiences with sense objects. The fourth, *ananda* (bliss), is also called an obstacle, because in that state a feeling of separation from the source of *ananda*, enabling the enjoyer to say 'I am enjoying *ananda*', is present. Even this has to be surmounted. The final stage of *samadhi* has to be reached in which one becomes *ananda* or one with reality. In this state the duality of enjoyer and enjoyment ceases in the ocean of *sat-chit-ananda* or the Self.

* * * * *

D.: What is the difference between deep sleep, *laya* (a trance-like state in which the mind is temporarily in abeyance) and *samadhi*?

B.: In deep sleep the mind is merged and not destroyed. That which merges reappears. It may happen in meditation also. But the mind which is destroyed cannot reappear. The yogi's aim must be to destroy it and not to sink into *laya*. In the peace of meditation, *laya* sometimes ensues but it is not enough. It must be supplemented by other practices for destroying the mind. Some people have gone into yogic *samadhi* with a trifling thought and after a long time awakened in the trail of the same thought. In the meantime generations have passed in the world. Such a yogi has not destroyed his mind. The true destruction of the mind is the non-recognition of it as being apart from the Self. Even now the mind is not. Recognise it. How can you do it if not in everyday activities which go on automatically? Know that the mind promoting them is not real but is only a phantom proceeding from the Self. That is how the mind is destroyed.

Book Reviews

IN SEARCH OF SELF-Selected writings of Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, Pub: Arunachala Ashram, 342 East Sixth Street, New York City-10003, USA. Copies on sale at Sri Ramanasramam, Pp. 175; Price Rs. 25/-

THE MIGHTY MAHATMA STRIDES THE LAND.
Pp. 75 Price Rs. 15/-.

The second title is the first part of the first book issued separately and tells the story of the author's early life when he was a follower of Gandhi and took part in the freedom movement. The second part, longer and more important, deals with the author's later life spent mostly in the New World, as a dedicated "servitor" of Ramana Maharshi, devotion to whom fills him with perpetual peace and bliss and lifts him far above the many troubles and tribulations of earthly existence. With the help of a few enthusiastic fellow-devotees, this determined devotee from Bihar has succeeded in founding the Ramana Center in New York City and a spacious Ashrama in Nova Scotia, Canada; the latter being taken care of by Dennis J. Hartel, the editor-compiler of the books under review.

Like Muruganar Sri Bhagawat was first drawn to Gandhi and his movements and later to Bhagavan Ramana and his blissful Being in the Heart which is indeed the centre of the universe. And like Muruganar in his classical Tamil poetry, Sri Bhagawat in his cascading English prose, pours out his prayers to and praises of Bhagavan in such profusion that the reader is left breathless and laid half asleep in mind, carried by this current.

A fair estimate of this dithyrambic diary would be Muruganar's own apologia for his nine-volume *Ramana Jnana Bodham*:

Again, again repeatedly,
To please itself and no one else
The parrot utters what it uttered
In joy when first it found its voice.
And like a parrot I rejoice
In singing songs of prayer and praise,
The self-same prayer, the self-same praise,
To my sole Master, Ramana.

Indeed as Hartel informs us in the Introduction, the unpublished works of Bhakta Bhagawat could fill several volumes. It has been a labour of love and dedication for the compiler too. The big book, sumptuously produced

and a delight to handle, will be welcomed by devotees as a vast ocean of bliss to swim in, to their heart's content.

The chronology at the end gives revealing facts little known and well worth knowing.

— K.S.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD BY
BROTHER LAWRENCE: Pub.: Samata Books, 10
Kamaraj Bhavan, 573, Mount Road, Madras-6. 1987
Pp. 102. Price: Rs. 35/-

Nicholas Herman, born in Lorraine, France, of lowly parents, in 1611, became a professional soldier and later a footman in a noble family. At the age of 18 he is reported to have experienced a spiritual conversion. However, he waited till he was 55 to make an act of renunciation and enter a monastery in Paris of *Discalced* (i.e. bare-footed) Carmelites. Admitted as a lay-brother (that is, not meant for priestly ordination and ministry) and given the new name of Br. Lawrence, he served in the kitchen for 15 years. During the last decade of his life till he died in 1691 at the age of eighty he did odd jobs practising always the Presence of God. By all standards, his life was uneventful, ordinary and even obscure. What has made him, however, widely known, is a collection of his Thoughts and Maxims along with Conversations with a dear friend who reduced them to writing, and also some of his Letters to religious persons, salvaged two years after his death. The present volume brings together, apparently for the first time, all the available sayings and writings in four parts under the headings mentioned above and translated from the French originals. There are two Prefaces under the initials H.C., another Preface from the original edition, a Foreword and a fairly long Character-Sketch which is largely a repetition of what follows. This book is of pocket size handsomely printed and bound, and can be easily carried about on one's person.

This reviewer would recommend a first reading of it at one sitting since that is the best way to let it have its impact on the mind. It is an ageless book that articulates the common language of all religious traditions. It demonstrates with deep conviction the simple art of keeping oneself in God's Presence. The starting point of course is Faith in the One in 'Whom we live and move and have our being.' Unwavering faith in His fatherly care and concern for all, is the basis of this Practice. This is not just a form or method of prayer. It is prayer at its deepest:

I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers save those to which my state obliges me. And I make it my only business to persevere in His Holy Presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention and an absorbing passionate regard to God....

(Letter 6. page 84)

And in Letter 9, page 90, he says:

I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer. Hold yourself in prayer before God, like a poor dumb, paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be

your business to keep your mind in the Presence of God: If it sometimes wanders, and withdraws itself from Him, do not much disquiet yourself for that...

This practice helps us to have the right scale of values and the proper motivation in daily life:

We ought not to weary of doing little things for love of God, for He regards not the greatness of the work but the love with which it is performed.

(*Fourth Conversation. page 64*)

It helps acceptance of one's work, however distasteful, and also the place where it is to be done. In the record of the Second Conversation we read:

In his business in the kitchen (to which he naturally had a great aversion) having accustomed himself to do everything for the love of God, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for His Grace to do His work well, he had found everything easy (p. 56)

The anguishing, and to many the insoluble, problem of pain in God's world is taken in its stride by the one who always stands consciously in God's Presence:

Nothing can give us so great relief in the trials and sorrows of life as a living intercourse with God; when such is faithfully practised, the evils that afflict the body will prove light to us. God often ordains that we should suffer in body to purify the soul and to constrain us to abide with Him.

(*Gathered Thoughts. page 48*)

About mortification and penance, often prescribed by spiritual teachers, Br. Lawrence gives us this perspective:

all bodily mortifications and other exercises are useless but as they serve to arrive at the union with God by love

(*Second Conversation. page 57*)

This Practice rids us of all self-seeking and human consolation even in prayer:

Lord, it is not Thy gifts I seek, but Thee Thyself, and my heart will know no rest, till it has found Thee.

(*Gathered Thoughts, page 46*)

It is this intense and continuous Practice of the Presence of God that opens our eyes to the One true Reality:

The whole world seems to me no longer real; all that my outward eyes behold pass like fantasies and dreams. That which I see with the eyes of my soul is what alone I long for...

(*Gathered Thoughts. page 43*)

Is mystic experience, the moment when 'the senses are laid asleep and we become a living soul' an extraordinary gift or something to which a man of prayer is naturally led? This is a question long debated in the schools of theology. On the benefits of the Presence of God Br. Lawrence writes:

By faith it would seem, the soul draws very near to the state of the Blessed, the higher it advances, the more

living does the faith grow, until at last so piercing does the eye become, that the soul can almost say— Faith is swallowed up in sight, I see and I experience.

(*Spiritual Maxims. page 37*)

Brother Lawrence represents the unlearned of the world to whom God reveals Himself rather than to the wise and the prudent (Matt XI, 25). Unlearned, but not ignorant. As one goes through these pages, one cannot but recognise the voices of great Saints: Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola, Augustine and others. As a Carmelite monk he was evidently nourished on the Bible, especially the Psalms. He listened every day to readings from the Fathers and spiritual writers. What he heard, he absorbed in such a way as to make it the expression of his own inner life of union with God.

The book under review, is not one to be read and put down. It is one's friend and fellow-traveller on life's daily pilgrimage.

— *Father Lawrence Sundaram S.J.*

SAYINGS OF J. KRISHNAMURTI, Compiled by Susunaga Weeraperuma. Pub.: M/s. Chetana Pvt. Ltd., 34 Ram-part Road, Bombay-400 031. Pp. 225. Price: Rs. 150/-

When I was asked for a review on this compilation of the *Sayings of J. Krishnamurti*, newly come out, my first reaction was to refuse.

There is a category of writers whose place is not within the literature of their own nation or their own age. Who will be able to review them?

J. Krishnamurti belongs to this category, which needs neither propaganda nor defense. There will be no educated person unfamiliar with his keen if not daring criticism of the social diseases of our time and people. And through these 'people' Krishnamurti is addressing everybody individually, asking him or her to look into the mirror, he is offering.....

There are a lot of books in which J. Krishnamurti has developed his ideas of Man and his World. In these 'Sayings' their compiler *Susunaga Weeraperuma* has picked out the most interesting and most important ideas of his. These are arranged as natural 'Aphorisms' for those friends of the teachings of the Master, who need only a catchword, to remember. The collection gives him 514 of such catchwords up to the year 1968. On 17th February 1986, when J. Krishnamurti passed away, there left another great Soul of this country of great souls.

"His physical presence is no more but his immortal teachings will be cherished for all time."

(The compiler in the dedication of the book.)

— *Lucy Cornelissen.*

THE I CHING ON BUSINESS AND DECISION MAKING: By Guy Damian-Knight. Pub.: M/s. Rider & Co., 62-65, Chandas Place, Covent Garden, London, WC2, England. Pp. 286. Price: £9.95.

The *I Ching*, the 3,000 year old Chinese oracle and book of wisdom, was originally compiled to assist rulers and governors who wanted to administer their territories in an ethical and spiritual way. Over the centuries its applications have expanded and it is now widely consulted by people in all walks of life. Nowadays its primary use is divination; if it is reverently and properly used it can give profound insights into one's problems and indicate what action should be taken to solve them.

The *I Ching* is primarily a religious treatise. Whenever it is consulted it invariably advises its readers to blend the spiritual and temporal aspects of their life into a harmonious whole; even when it is consulted on mundane question, the reply invariably has a spiritual dimension.

This new edition of the *I Ching* largely ignores the metaphysical dimensions of the text and instead concentrates on its predictive aspects. It is a businessman's manual — the emphasis is on how to be successful at business and make more money. The original structure of the text has been largely retained but the ancient advice has been transposed into the jargon of the modern-day businessman. In Wilhelm's classic edition the initial subdivisions of each hexagram are 'The Judgement' and 'The Image'. These have been largely replaced in this new edition by financially-orientated units entitled 'Specific modality', 'Ambience', 'Concept model' and 'Decision-based assumptions'. This last-named division is further subdivided into sections which give advice on marketing, finance, management etc.,

Transposing the text into business jargon may seem comical or irreverent, according to one's point of view, but the power of the oracle has not been lost in the process. To test its efficacy I formulated two personal business questions and checked to see what this and other translations of the *I Ching* had to say about them. All the answers I received were equally useful and appropriate.

There is a well-established occult law that one cannot use supernatural forces for personal gain over a long period of time without reaping dire *karmic* consequences. I do not doubt that this book can help businessmen to make larger short-term profits, but it may be disastrous for them in the long-term unless they adhere to the spiritual and moral principles which are vividly incorporated in the older and more orthodox versions of the text. One feels that these essential principles ought to have been given more prominence in the book under review. When asked if businessmen would be benefited by acting on the advice given in this book the reply was hexagram 14, *Possession in great measure*. It went on to say "great material good fortune.... there is an attendant responsibility on those who possess (or control) material wealth to see that wealth is used to serve only the very best aims . . . rewards will be substantial, providing that what you are doing is intended to increase benefit to others."

A serious flaw is the omission of even a simple index linking the 64 hexagrams to the page numbers. After constructing the hexagram it is quite a job to find out its number and then to search out the page.

— David Godman

ZEN DAWN — EARLY ZEN TEXTS FROM TUN HUANG

By J.C. Cleary; Pub.: Shambala Pub. Inc., 314, Dartmouth Street, Boston, Mass 02116; Price \$ 8.95 Pp. 135.

The first treatise in this collection give the words of the earliest Chan patriarchs. It doesn't tell much about their lives but gives the subtlest philosophical teachings: "Thus we know that however broad the Cosmos, it can fit into an atom of dust without being cramped. However, long past, present and future are, they can be contained in a brief moment." (Pp. 45-46).

The other two texts, on 'Contemplating Mind' and 'Sudden Enlightenment', give more of the same esoteric view. Mahayana Buddhism commonly lays great stress on the practice of the six perfections such as generosity and patience, and the undertaking of such meritorious activities as building monasteries and casting statues of the Buddha. However, the great patriarch Bodhidharma — who incidentally hailed from Kanchipuram — explains how these activities are only metaphors for inner transformation.

"As for 'casting images', this refers to all the various provisional forms of enlightening practices cultivated by the sentient beings who seek the Path of enlightenment. It certainly does not mean that the wondrous true visage of the Tathagata is something made out of cast metal. Therefore, those who seek liberation use their personal existence as the furnace, the Dharma as the fire, wisdom as the smith, and the three pure disciplines and the six perfections as the gold." (page 91). Usually the perfections and disciplines are explained in their mundane, literal aspect, not metaphorically, so as to gradually guide ordinary beings with dualistic views.

It is stated, "The Dharma of the Great Path cannot be shown lightly" (page 130); to know the place of these teachings requires familiarity with a large spectrum of Buddhist thought particularly the Heart Sutra (*Prajna paramita hrdaya sutra*). Usually ultimate truth is only approached after a thorough grounding is established in other aspects of the Sutrayana. Therefore the texts would be best understood when explained in a guru-disciple relationship with a qualified Zen Master, so as to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation.

The manuscripts had been lost for many centuries; therefore it is our good fortune that they have been made available. The translation is excellent and the presentation attractive, although I would have appreciated the Chinese titles to be given phonetically in English. The discourses give the view from the mountain top of enlightenment, and which of us can comment on that?

— Sunyata

INSIGHTS INTO BUDDHISM — Ed. Sunil K. Gupta
Pub.: Sri Satguru Publ.: 40/5, Shakti Nagar, Delhi-110 007. Pp. 205; Price Rs. 80/-

This is an odd bunch of essays, published in different journals by remarkably diverse authors on a wide range of subjects related to Buddhism. The diversity is so broad that it allows for little binding factor — independent points of view are put forward in relation to the history, philosophy and even archaeology of the Buddhadharmā.

One strange element is that most of these essays are very old. Dates of original publication are not given but their references are mostly to works written before 1940. Mrs. Rhys David is referred to as a 'new' interpreter though her Pali translations are really fifty years old. These are pioneer works; in fact, the entire Pali canon is in need of new translation.

Perhaps the most controversial subject in Buddhadharmā is the doctrine of *anatta* or soullessness. Three authors give vent to various views on this subject, and they disagree with each other. Various odd terms are used to describe aspects of the individual such as self with a small 's', and Self with a big 'S', and ego, and so on. I think a great many problems would be resolved by using Sanskrit. Buddhism accepts the non-inherently existent, relatively existent person who eats, sleeps and meditates and this is called in Sanskrit 'aham'. A concretely self-existent, unchanging person is denied — Buddhists do not accept 'atman'.

Three articles are devoted to strained and emotional discussions on the degree of existence of self-Self. Buddhadharmā does not have room for a great many independent and imaginative points of view on the subject of soul. Actually, there are four major schools, and it would be well if the authors identified themselves with one of them instead of interpreting *anatta* in their own limited if creative way. The four schools are Vaibhashika, Sautantrika, Chittamatrin and Madhyamika.

Perhaps this one problem typifies the purely intellectual approach of the authors. They read as scholars with formidable theories rather than as practitioners immersed in a tradition.

The Mahayana Buddhadharmā is hardly mentioned — perhaps because the modern Mahayana movements that are sweeping through the West are too recent. For more than fifteen years Japanese Zen and Tibetan Vajrayana have been explaining and interpreting the Dharma in the light of modern thought and modern life, creating new communities of Buddhists in Western countries. Somehow this momentous event has escaped attention.

— Sunyata

STUDIES IN POST SHANKARA DIALECTICS: By Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Pub.: Sri Satguru Publications 40/5, Shaktinagar, Delhi-7. Pp. 322, Price Rs. 150/-

Based on the author's doctoral thesis, this volume offers a reliable survey and assessment of the important developments that have taken place in the field of Advaita Vedānta metaphysics after the age of Acharya Shankara. As pointed out in the preface, there is a spiritual aspect of the Advaita Vedānta which leads the seeker Self-ward or Brahman-ward. There is a conceptual side which is the delight of the philosopher providing him with enough subtleties to sharpen his mental faculties. The present work devotes itself to the latter aspect.

The systematic treatment in these pages covers the following themes: nature of Knowledge, self-luminosity of knowledge, validity of knowledge — with special reference to the position of the Navya-Nyaya school; Sriharsha's refutation of the Nyaya-Vaisheshika school; Madhusudan's refutation of the argument of Vyasa-raja; epistemology of Maya; Avidya in the light of the position of Ramanuja and Madhva.

In his conclusion, the writer observes: "Avidya is a positive entity which is inexplicable in its nature. This Avidya is beginningless and being the principle of cosmic illusion introduces multiplicity, subject-object relations, individuality etc., where there is but one undifferentiated Being. Pain, sorrow, grief and all other evils of life arise from a consciousness of multiplicity. ... The study of the Vedānta removes Avidya and reveals true knowledge completely disentangled from the accidental impurities. It is in absolute monism, where all multiplicity vanishes and where knower, knowledge and known are all merged in one undifferentiated Being, that we find ineffable Bliss. It is to this end, to the removal of misery and to the attainment of Bliss, that the study of the Vedānta tends."

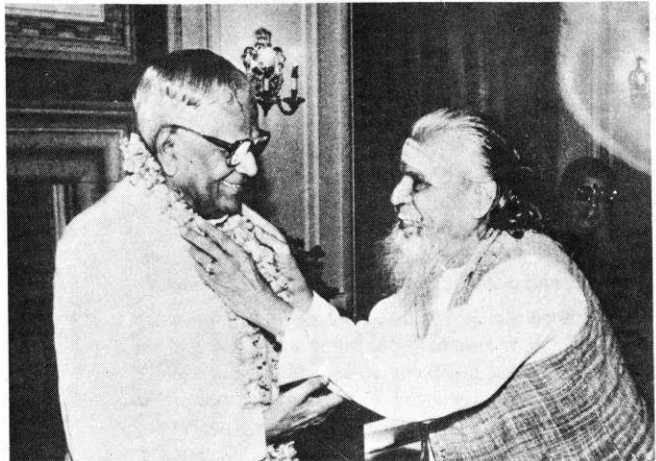
— M.P. Pandit

RATIONALE OF HINDU FESTIVALS: By Skanda Narayan. Pub.: Sister Nivedita Academy, 118, Big Street, Triplicane, Madras-5. Pp. 67. Price: (de luxe) Rs. 12/- Paper back Rs. 9/-

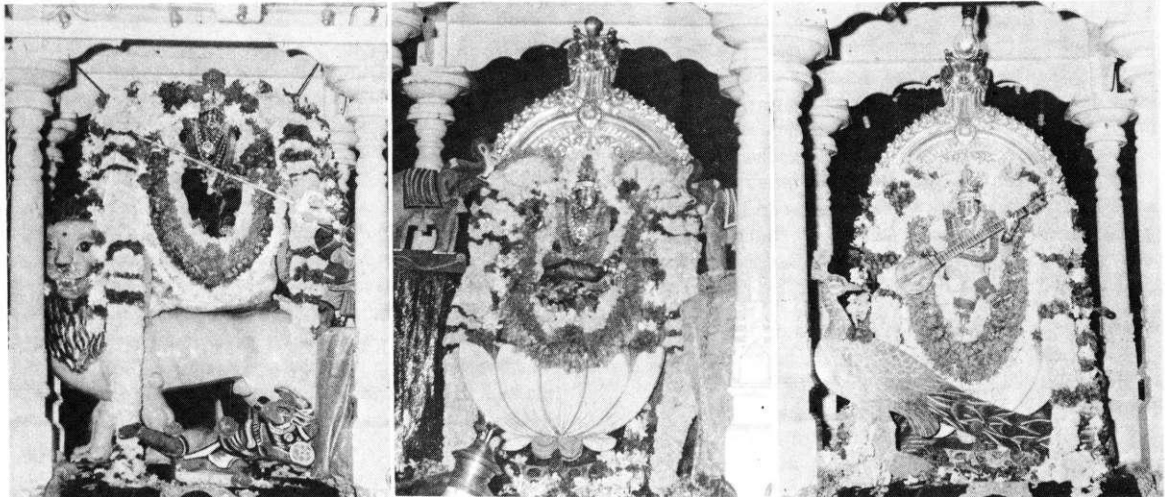
The author has done a commendable piece of work in bringing together, in a handy publication of just 70 pages, much valuable information from ancient Hindu literature regarding the scientific precision of the astronomical and astrological calculations of our sages of the past. The rationale of the Hindu Almanac would have been a better title than Festivals, as there is only one chapter on the Seasons which deals with the subject of Hindu festivals. However, the author has an erudite mind, a synthetic method of approach to the subjects and a simple and lucid style of presentation. That he is an ardent student of Sri Aurobindo philosophy is evident in almost every page, particularly when he deals with the five *angas* of Divine Light and proves how the Thithi, Vara and Nakshatra guide the mental, physical and spiritual progress of mankind.

— Argus

Ashram Bulletin



President of India, **Sri R. Venkataraman**, being garlanded by **Sri T.N. Venkataraman**, President, Sri Ramanasramam, at the Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi, where the latter was given a rousing reception.



Navaratri Celebrations at the Ashram are a big attraction to the devotees. The idol of Mother Yogambal is decorated beautifully on this occasion. Here She blesses the devotees in the Forms of **DURGA**, **LAKSHMI**, **SARASWATHI** (in that order from l to r).

Ramana Kendra, Delhi: **Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma**, Vice-President of India (*first from left*) paying homage to Sri Ramana Maharshi's shrine at the Delhi Ramana Kendra. **Sri C.G. Balasubramanyan**, who looks after the Kendra is seen in the middle.



Sri Bhagavan's Arrival at Arunachala Day — September 1 — was celebrated at *Arunachala Ashrama*, New York City. **Smt. Geeta Bhatt** is seen instructing her nieces as to how to perform *arti* to Sri Bhagavan's picture





Book Release Function: "The Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His own handwriting" being received by **Sri Hamsa de Reede** from the Samadhi Shrine of Sri Bhagavan. **Sri K. Navaratnam** receives the copy from **Sri Kunju Swami**. "The Vision of Siva in Periyapuram" written by **Smt. Ratna Navaratnam**. Her brother, **Sri C. Thuraij Singham** and our Ashram Librarian, **Sri J. Jayaraman**, receive the copies.



Sri Ramana Kendra, Jinnur, celebrated *Navarathri* with *mantra japa, puja* and devotional singing.

OFFERINGS:

To bring out the four SILVER JUBILEE issues of our journal for 1988, *without advertisements*, earnest devotees (who want to remain anonymous) have sent donations, thereby meeting the printing and production expenses of these issues. We are grateful to them!

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Two bore wells have been dug and submersible pumps installed in them at Ashram, through the kind services of **Sri Ramachandra Khoday** of Bangalore. **Sri V. Dwarkanath Reddy** is making arrangements to help construct a big overhead tank. These steps should help surmount the never-ending water problem of the Ashram, especially during summer.

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The joyous *Deepavali* celebration was observed in the Ashram with delight and devotion on October 21, '87. Through the generous gesture of two devout Ramana-bhaktas in Dubai, clothes were distributed to the inmates and assistants at the Ashram. The *Vedapathasa* boys were jubilant to receive a lot of crackers as gift from **Sri S.P. Janardhanan** of Bangalore.

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Two cows were donated to the Ashram by **Sri Kanakammal** (in her sister's memory) and **Sri N.S. Krishna Iyer** (in his wife's memory)

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APPEAL TO ALL RAMANA KENDRAS:

The *Ashram Bulletin* which has maintained a vital link among Ramana-bhaktas all over the world on important Ramana-happenings, will henceforth be short. The Kendras are requested to submit photos, messages of happenings by Nov. 1, Feb. 1, May 1 and August 1, for inclusion in the four respective quarters of issue.



Karthigai Deepam was celebrated for ten days from November 25 to December 4, 1987. On the final day the top of Arunachala was ablaze with Light, symbolising Illumination of the Self, in us all. At the Ashram this holy occasion was observed with intense devotion and Chanted Sri Bhagavan's *Hymns to Sri Arunachala*.

"Getting rid of the 'I am the body' idea and merging the mind into the heart to realize the Self as non-dual Being and the Light of all is the real significance of darshan of the beacon of light on Arunachala, the centre of the universe."

— Sri Bhagavan

Sri Henri and Sylvie Hartung were at the Ashram for a fresh pilgrimage. Sri Henri Hartung had darshan of Sri Bhagavan in 1947. We are very happy to know from them that the Centre — *Centre de rencontres Spirituell et de Meditation 2114, FLEURIER, Switzerland*, is actually a Ramana Centre for the French-speaking. There are true links between Sri Ramanasramam and Fleurier's Centre!

Sri L.R. Murthy, an old devotee of Sri Bhagavan from Kuala Lumpur, recounts with intense gratitude, his Master's miracle:

"On the 30th June I felt the heart pain and phlegm was coming out from my mouth. Immediately I was carried to the Hospital where I was under the emergency care under the hands of the doctors who gave injections, E.C.G. and put me under the oxygen tent. Then I was carried to the intensive care unit. While being carried I was able to see only Sri Bhagavan's Radiant Face and continued to see the same for sometime at the intensive care unit. All of a sudden I felt that Sri Bhagavan was seated close to me putting His hand over my head. Immediately I felt the heart pain completely relieved the phelgm had stopped too. The doctors told me the next day that it was nothing but a miracle!"

PILGRIMS

Devotees from Ramana Kendra, Madras, headed by **Sri B. Ananthaswami**, its Chairman, spent two days at the Ashram in the middle of October.

Nearly 30 devotees from Jinnur, headed by **Sri B.V.L.N. Raju** stayed with us for a week in the first week of November.

Sri Brahman of Tadpatri Ramana Kendra, came to the Ashram along with 100 devotees on November 15. They spent two days, in prayers and silent contemplation.

Sri Lakshmana Swami and **Sri Sarada** from Lakshmana Ashram, Andhra Pradesh, along with devotees, stayed a fortnight in the Ashram from November 24, dedicating themselves to contemplation, *sadhana* and *sat sangh*.

OBITUARY:

Dr. A.P. Venkatesan of Tindivanam, a long-standing devotee of Sri Bhagavan, passed away on November 10. He was very helpful to all devotees of Sri Bhagavan, in an all-round way. In him we have lost one of the gem of devotees.

