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*The*

# MOUNTAIN PATH

*Jayanthi Issue 1995*

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# THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1

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— Editor.

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## The Mountain Path

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### THE MOUNTAIN PATH

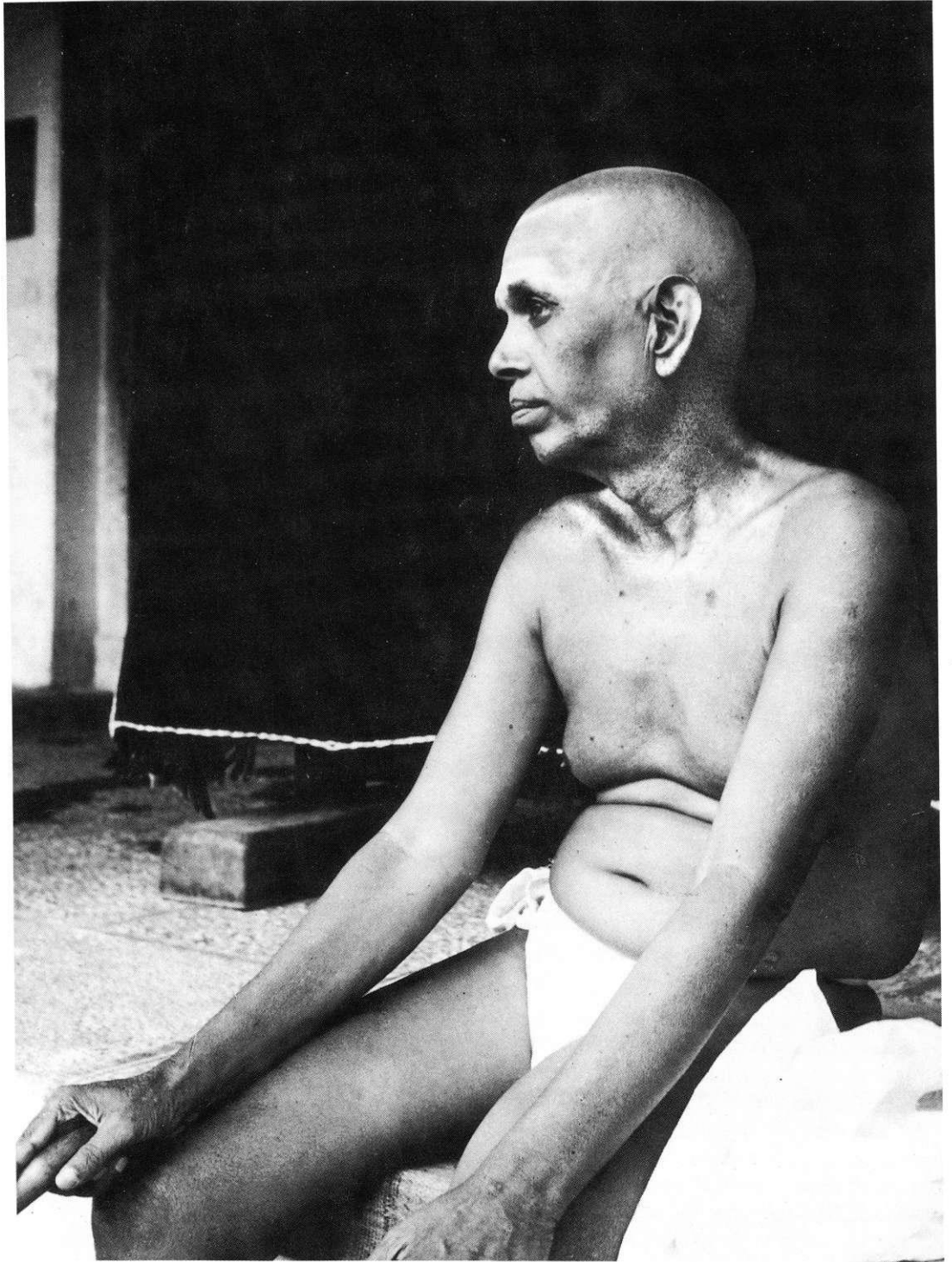
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EDITORIAL

## Progress on the Spiritual Path

**A** BROAD analysis of social trends shows that the majority are enmeshed in material pursuits. Even those who cannot be classified as over-ambitious have to engage themselves in the basic activity of bread-winning. Such activity, though fully legitimate, brings about mixed results. Success alternates with failure; pleasure alternates with pain. The only assessment that can possibly be made is that things are not exactly under our control. Being realistic enough to admit this takes us nowhere. It only reflects a pacifist attitude. A meek submission to the pressure of circumstances is not conducive to progress. But one should progress, otherwise one remains a fossil — that is, in an ideological sense.

It is difficult to give a definition of progress. One may achieve great distinction in the academic field. Or, one may rise to great heights in the fields of art, sports and the like. However, whatever be the field and whatever the achievements, a dead-end is reached at a certain stage. Beyond this no satisfaction is derived and one is left with the feeling that something is still wanting. Therefore the progress achieved is only notional. It is progress in a purely relative sense.

The wanting element is inner peace and happiness. Even a rough conception of religion is enough to convince one that such practices have an impact on the whole personality. They

bestow mental elevation, steadiness and peace. Armed with this strength one becomes capable of facing the vicissitudes of life. This is not the only gain. The greater one is that one achieves an inner evolution, which helps in the search for truth which lies beyond man's material existence. This is real progress.

One is on the right path when one is aware of spiritual values. But spiritual experiences do not come unsought. In that sense they are quite unlike worldly experiences which are forced upon us all the time. Those who take to the spiritual path should remember this. The seeker may take to any method or practice which is in line with his temperament. Whatever this line may be, continuous efforts are needed for achieving results. Slackness in any form should be avoided.

It is not unusual for a seeker to develop the feeling that he is not progressing well. But such appraisal may prove wrong. On the contrary, one may also feel that one is progressing well. And this estimation has an equal chance of being proved wrong. Because of the subtlety of spiritual experiences no evaluation of progress on precise lines as in the case of physical science is possible. However it would be useful to analyse the factors which have a positive or negative impact on the potentialities of a seeker in general.

The time-conscious seeker expects quick results. Because time lends itself to numerical

measure and we tend to attach absolute value to this (measure) we use it as a basis for assessing progress. However, in doing so, we are quite likely to come to wrong conclusions. This is clear from the explanation given by Sri Ramana Maharshi on the subject. In reply to a devotee who said, "To evolve through births, there must be practice, years of *abhyasa*," Sri Maharshi observed:

*Abhyasa* is only to prevent any disturbance to the inherent peace. There is no question of years. Prevent this thought at this moment. You are only in your natural state whether you make *abhyasa* or not.<sup>1</sup>

Some may doubt the correctness or efficacy of a certain path, after choosing it themselves. This can become a great obstacle. Sri Ramakrishna says:

God is our Inner Guide. It doesn't matter if you take a wrong path — only you must be restless for Him. He Himself will put you on the right path.

Besides, there are errors in all paths. Everyone thinks his watch is right; but as a matter of fact no watch is absolutely right. But that doesn't hamper one's work.<sup>2</sup>

Tireless effort is the essential requirement in *sadhana*. One of the names of Devi (Shakti) is *Abhyasatishayajnata* (known through constant devotion). Commenting on this Sri Bhaskararaya says:

As it is said, 'Till sleep as well as till death one should employ oneself in reflection on the Vedanta.' She is known by constant meditation upon the unity of Brahman and the self.<sup>3</sup>

Bhagavan Sri Ramana enjoins steadfastness in *sadhana* as may be seen from the following conversation:

*Devotee:* But the mind slips away from our control.

*Maharshi:* Be it so. Do not think of it. When you recollect yourself bring it back and turn it

inward. That is enough. No one succeeds without effort.

Mind control is not one's birthright. The successful few owe their success to perseverance.<sup>4</sup>

The spiritual journey is complete only when individuality is obliterated. It is the only means for cessation of suffering. Yet many a seeker is scared at the prospect of losing his personal identity. However one should be able to draw inspiration from records of mystical experience. One such is that of Lord Tennyson who describes his condition of trance as follows:

... .. a kind of waking trance, I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself, silently, till all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the *individuality* itself seemed to *dissolve* and fade away into boundless being; and this, not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only life ... .. I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? ... ..<sup>5</sup>

Extracts from a conversation between Paul Brunton and Sri Maharshi clearly bring out the sense of fear in the mind of a seeker about the effect of loss of individuality:

*Maharshi:* You ask me to describe this true self to you. What can be said? It is that out

<sup>1</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.218 (1994 Edn.).

<sup>2</sup> *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.645, Madras Edn. (1947).

<sup>3</sup> *Commentary on Lalita Sahasranama* (Name 990), Tr & Pub: Ananthakrishna Sastry (1925 Edn.).

<sup>4</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.369 (1994 Edn.).

<sup>5</sup> Letter to B.P. Blood.

of which the sense of the personal 'I' arises, and into which it shall have to disappear.

... .. If you could mentally follow the 'I' thread until it leads you back to its source, you would discover that, just as it is the first thought to appear, so is it the last to disappear. This is a matter which can be experienced ... ..

*Paul Brunton:* What is left? Will a man then become quite unconscious, or will he become an idiot?

*Maharshi:* Not so! On the contrary, he will attain that consciousness which is immortal, and he will become truly wise, when he has awakened to his true self, which is the real nature of man.<sup>6</sup>

One should not be overwhelmed by setbacks to *sadhana*. These can be only temporary. There is nothing like a permanent stumbling block on the path. Sri Ramakrishna says:

The waters of a swiftly flowing current move round and round at places in eddies and whirlpools, but passing these they resume their even course. So even the hearts of the pious fall at times into the whirlpools of despondency and unbelief, but those aberrations are only momentary. They do not last long.<sup>7</sup>

There is the distinct possibility of a seeker developing subtle supernormal or psychic powers.

This is not progress but only a development which has the effect of sidetracking the seeker. One should not hanker after such powers. The sole object of *sadhana* is realisation and nothing should be allowed to dilute one's firm resolve to achieve this.

The unseen hand of the divine is ever at work. One can count on its aid but only after putting in earnest efforts. Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai says:

Blessed be the Feet of the One (Sri Ramana Maharshi) who says, 'It is best to let one raise himself by himself. Grace helps where there is effort.'<sup>8</sup>

The result of *sadhana* is a foregone conclusion. The tiny ego struggling within the bounds of time and space is tamed, and at last devoured by the Self, which transcends time and space.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*, p.159, (1994 Edn.).

<sup>7</sup> *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.223, Almora Edn. (1934).

<sup>8</sup> Verse 36, *Ramana Padamalai*.

**Yet, religious realisation does all the good to the world. People are afraid that when they attain to it, when they realise that there is but One, the fountains of love will be dried up, that everything in life will go away, and that all they love will vanish for them as it were, in this life and the life to come. People never stop to think that those who bestowed the least thought on their own individualities have been the greatest workers in the world. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not any low, little, mortal thing. Then alone a man loves when he finds that the object of his love is not a clod of earth, but is the veritable God Himself.**

— Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga*, p.358, Almora Edn., 1955.

# Ramana Maharshi and Buddhist Non-dualism

by Lex Hixon

The aim of this article is to establish a parallelism between the tenets of Advaita Vedanta in general and the major (non-dualistic) schools of Mahayana Buddhism. Especially in focus is the teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi, who attained the ultimate realisation through spontaneous insight, unaided by scriptural study.

**T**HROUGH the *Gaudapada Karika*, which is the only extant pre-Shankara treatise on Advaita or non-dualistic Vedanta, we can document the influence of the major Mahayana Buddhist non-dualistic schools — *Madhyamika* and *Yogachara* — on the *Advaita Vedanta*. In considering the remarkable parallels between the spontaneous insight of Ramana Maharshi and Mahayana Buddhist insight, we should keep this connection in mind: the language of *Advaita Vedanta* which Ramana later adopted from the Indian cultural environment to express his own fresh insight was itself imbued with the flavour of Buddhist non-dualism. But at the same time, we must remember that Ramana's own insight was essentially not conditioned either by Hinduism or Buddhism; it sprang fresh from the source which we call pure awareness. Ramana himself said that at the time of his sudden total enlightenment at the age of seventeen,

I had never heard of Brahman, *samsara*, and so forth. Later, at Tiruvannamalai, as I listened to the *Ribhu Gita* and other sacred books, I found that these books were analysing and naming what I had felt intuitively without analysis or name.<sup>1</sup>

When once asked whether his teachings were the same as those of Shankara, Ramana replied,

"Maharshi's teaching is only the expression of his own experience and realisation. Others find that it tallies with Shankara's. A realised man uses his own language."<sup>2</sup> This sharply reminds us that as valuable as spiritual traditions are, realisation has no intrinsic or necessary connection with any tradition; conscious enlightenment is unique for each Buddha or awakened being to which it occurs. Spiritual traditions become influences, at once fruitful and limiting, on the mode of investigation pursued by non-enlightened practitioners. However, each enlightened being, fundamentally untouched by tradition even if 'traditional' in thought and behaviour, 'uses his own language'. But this 'new language' is always assimilated more or less into some appropriate traditional language by the followers, out of anxiety in the face of its newness, and by the awakened one himself or herself, out of the skilful compassion which recognises the usefulness of continuity (although

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Osborne, ed., *The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* (New York, Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1971), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> S.S.Cohen, *Reflections on Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1971), p.170.



most enlightened beings also stress, sharply or gently, their discontinuity with surrounding traditions).

By suggesting parallels between the 'new language' of Ramana and Buddhist non-dualism, we are not proposing a more appropriate 'translation' of Ramana's experience, although in his case Buddhist language is certainly no less appropriate than that of Hindu *Advaita*. We are simply suggesting that Ramana Maharshi be allowed to play freely within *Mahayana* tradition as a living Buddha. Perhaps this will help dissolve to some extent the conservative, separative, even paranoid attitude with which Hindus and Buddhists regard each other's traditions.

Most Westerners were fortunate enough not to have been conditioned from childhood as 'Hindu' or 'Buddhist'; therefore, as they begin their training, they can more easily be free from this artificial rivalry; unless of course, in their uncritical enthusiasm for one or the other, they submit themselves to some intense version of the cultural conditioning which created the rivalry in the first place. This is not to suggest a simple equivalence or interchangeability between the many spiritual languages of Hinduism and Buddhism. As it emerges fresh from the source called pure awareness, each authentic spiritual language is saying something unique. And yet each such language appears to be regarded by the enlightened consciousness as playful, provisional, awkward and ultimately, dispensable. Ramana says:

Silence is the true *upadesa* (instruction). It is the perfect *upadesa*. It is suited only for the most advanced seeker. The others are unable to draw full inspiration from it. Therefore they require words to explain the Truth. But Truth is beyond words. It does not admit of explanation.<sup>3</sup>

Nagarjuna, founder of the *Madhyamika* school of *Mahayana*, addresses himself thus to the Buddha: "Though, Lord, you have not uttered a single word, all the seekers have been satisfied by the teaching of the doctrine."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps we can compare briefly and impressionistically the approaches of the four major forms of Indian non-dualism — *Madhyamika*, *Yogachara*, *Advaita Vedanta*, and *Vajrayana* or *Tantra* — with the approach developed spontaneously by Ramana.

*Madhyamika* was founded by Nagarjuna in the second or third century of the Christian era as a systematic exposition of the spiritual insight found in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras*. These *sutras* are represented as having been uttered by the Buddha or by high *Bodhisattvas* in the presence of the Buddha. Buddhist piety has identified this 'Buddha' with Gautama Buddha, one of the beings on the planet who 'awakened' entirely and whose 'new language' became the spark for the multi-dimensional enlightenment-fire we call 'Buddhism'. But the fact is that these early *Mahayana Sutras* were not the language of Gautama, but another 'new language' spoken by enlightened men and women of a later era who also lived from pure awareness. Thus the source of these *sutras* could indeed be called 'Buddha', as long as we are clear that no particular person and no particular cultural-religious tradition is being designated by this term.

Nagarjuna's philosophical system (and the word 'system' is appropriate to describe the logical tightness to which it aspired) was a technique of avoidance, not a metaphysical picture of truth. The practitioner of *Madhyamika* avoids all assertions or, in the larger sense, avoids the structuring, anxiously grasping, single-perspective perceptions and thoughts which eventually produce assertions. 'Thinking', in the form of insight into the inherent inadequacy of any assertion is, however, not to be avoided, for it is the very life of the technique of avoidance or *prasanga*. One does not 'assert' the inadequacy of all assertions or the transcendent reality of insight, for obviously this would reintroduce what is to be avoided.

<sup>3</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 4th ed. (Sri Ramanasramam, 1968), p.528.

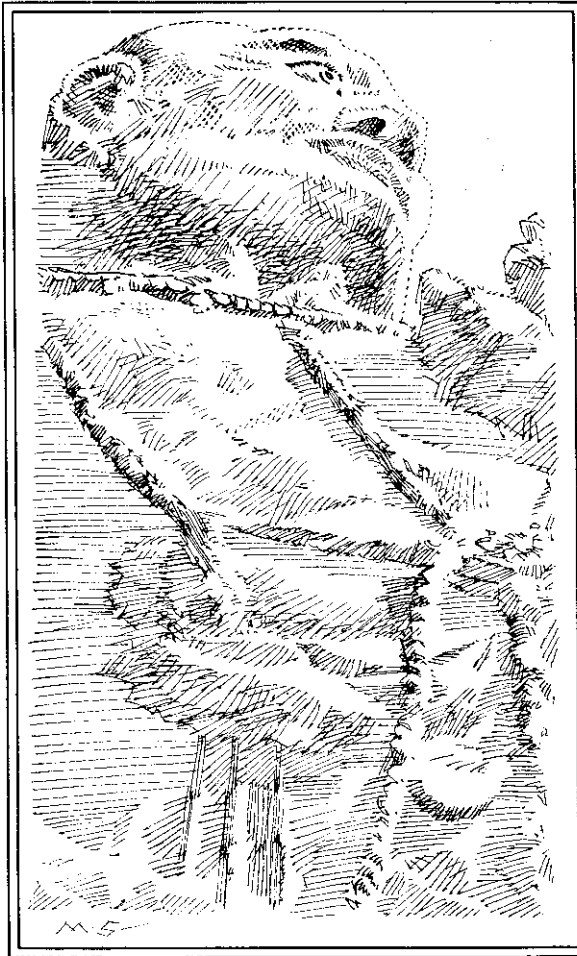
<sup>4</sup> T.R.V.Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p.282.

One simply *avoids* assertions, 'voids' them, sees them as void of essence. This dialectical process of voiding assertions or thought-forms is not itself an assertion or thought-form any more than a mirror which reflects various landscapes is itself a landscape that one can walk into and inhabit. The practitioner of *Madhyamika* submits to his dialectic the most cherished assertions of early Buddhism, such as the distinction between *nirvana* and *samsara*, which are the basic concepts of freedom and bondage.

The process of 'voiding' all thought-forms or concepts is extremely subtle as well as impossibly simple. A seeker asked Ramana, "Can one remain without thoughts rising for all twenty-four hours of the day?" And the Maharshi replied:

What is 'hours' again? It is a concept. Each question of your's is prompted by a thought. If peace is not found, that very non-finding is only a thought. Why should one attempt meditation? Being the Self, one remains always realised. Simply be free from thoughts.<sup>5</sup>

Being 'free from thoughts' does not mean 'stopping thoughts'. This is why *Madhyamika* allows for cogent assertions on the plane of relative truth as well as for the refutation of fallacious ones. The perfect transparency of relative truth to insight or *prajna* is itself absolute truth. *Samsara* consists of assertions or thought-forms and *nirvana* is simply the intrinsic trans-



Nagarjuna

parency of these very forms. This is why *Madhyamika* regards *samsara* and *nirvana* as non-different. Ramana says, "Everyday life is not divorced from the eternal state. So long as daily life is imagined to be different from spiritual life, difficulties arise."<sup>6</sup> A seeker once asked Ramana to clarify the difference between worldly activity and meditation. Ramana replied, "There is no difference. It is like naming one and the same thing by two different words in two different languages."<sup>7</sup>

Assertions, or thought-forms, live the same life of primal awareness as the insight which clearly sees their voidness. Nothing needs to be done to change thought-forms into clarity. This begins to sound like the *Vajrayana* or

*Tantric* non-dualism, which bases itself on *Madhyamika* but applies the dialectic even more thoroughly by voiding practices as well as doctrines. Says Saraha, an early Buddhist *Tantric* master from Bengal:

*Mantras* and *tantras*, meditation and concentration, they are all a cause of self-deception. Do not defile by contemplation thought that is pure in its own nature, but abide in the bliss of yourself and cease these torments.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.436.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.341.

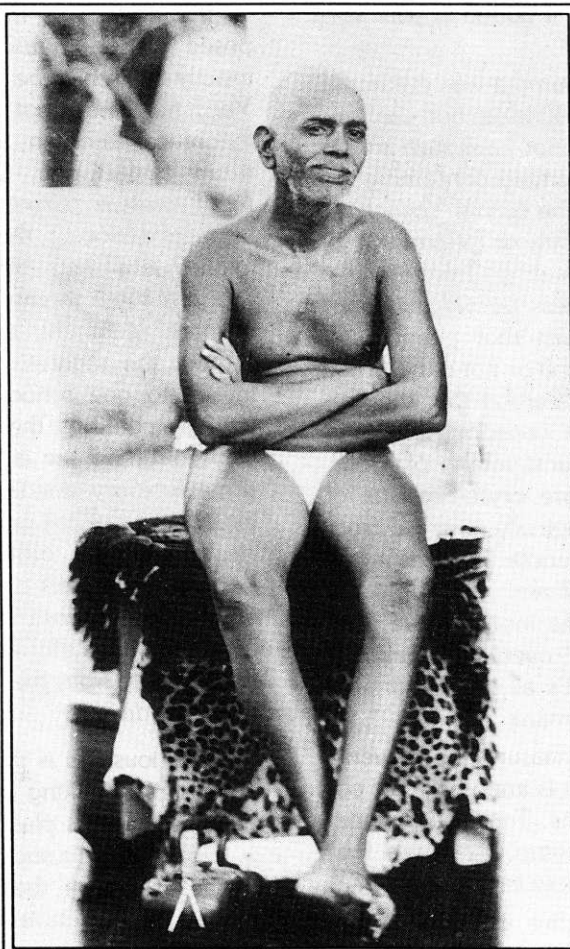
<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.513.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Conze et al., ed., *Buddhist Texts Throughout the Ages* (1940; reprint ed., New York & Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), p.227.

Saraha was part of the movement of Buddhist *Tantra* called *Sahajayana*, the way of primal, natural, innately clear awareness. Saraha says, "Look and listen, touch and eat, smell, wander, sit and stand, abandon thought and be not moved from singleness."<sup>9</sup> Ramana's central teaching of *Sahaja-samadhi* is closely akin to the spirit of *Sahajayana*. Says Ramana, "Your natural state is that of *samadhi*. Know that even now you are in *samadhi*, whatever happens. That is all."<sup>10</sup> He further explains:

Consciousness is the Self of which everyone is aware. No one is ever away from the Self and therefore everyone is in fact Self-realised; only — and this is the greatest mystery — people do not know this and want to realise the Self. Realisation consists only in getting rid of the false idea that one is not realised.<sup>11</sup>

*Vichara*, or investigation, was the method suggested by Ramana by which one can 'achieve' the paradoxical result of seeing through the false desire for some form of enlightenment over and above the light of awareness itself. Says Ramana, "The state we call realisation is simply being oneself, not knowing anything or becoming anything."<sup>12</sup> To practise *Vichara* is simply like keeping awake — an easy, refreshing practice unless, of course, one becomes extremely sleepy. The false desire for something — anything — over and above awareness is the sleepiness which



overwhelms us. To stay awake even for brief periods under the seductive pressure of this intense sleepiness involves courageous struggle. However, even that sense of struggle is ultimately inappropriate because when one feels genuinely awake — as walking through a New England autumn afternoon — there is not the remotest conception of any struggle to stay awake. The alertness, clarity, and buoyancy are perfect, unwavering, and yet natural, even 'ordinary'. Says Ramana, "One goes through all sorts of austerities to become what one already is."<sup>13</sup>

Ramana's *Vichara* is deeply akin to the *Madhyamika* method of *prasanga* as an emptying process which it-

self, as Ramana expresses it, 'finally gets destroyed or consumed, just as a stick used for stirring the burning funeral pyre gets consumed.'<sup>14</sup> *Vichara* and *prasanga* are not viewpoints with philosophical or emotional content, but activities empty of any such content. (*Prema*, or ecstatic love is another spiritual expression of this pure intensity, free from content.) Ramana describes *Vichara* as 'an intense activity

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.231.

<sup>10</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.279.

<sup>11</sup> Osborne, *Teachings of Ramana Maharshi*, p.23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.164.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.114.

of the entire mind to keep it poised in pure self-awareness."<sup>15</sup>

The *Prasangika Madhyamika* was eventually faced by a rival school of Buddhist non-dualism, the *Yogachara*, which did not have such strong paranoia about making assertions concerning the nature of ultimate reality. The central *Yogachara* doctrine was that of mind-only or *cittamatra*; all phenomena are streams or drops from the reservoir of pure consciousness or *alayavijnana*. *Madhyamika* thinkers insist that phenomena cannot be described as mind or not-mind. They consider the *Yogachara* assertion that the universe is nothing but pure consciousness as a defilement of the pristine unstability of Truth. Both schools, however, are crystallisations of 'new languages', which originally emerged from the fluidity of primal awareness. Ramana's language echoes *Yogachara* as well as *Madhyamika*. The *Yogacharins* deny the dualism of an objective world over and against a subjective consciousness; it's all one continuum of consciousness. Says Ramana:

One cannot hope to measure the universe and study phenomena. It is impossible for objects are mental creations. To measure them is similar to trying to stamp with one's foot on the head of the shadow cast by oneself.<sup>16</sup>

And again, "The objective world is in the subjective consciousness."<sup>17</sup> A seeker asked, "Are the gods and their heavens only my idea, which I can create and control?" Ramana replied, "Everything is like that"<sup>18</sup> Ramana states the Truth simply and comprehensively: "There is only Reality. Whatever you think it is, it looks like that."<sup>19</sup>

The best understanding of mind-only is available through consideration of dream-experience. One dreams about a ham sandwich. The mustard, the rye bread, the plate, and the table, are perfectly tangible and do not necessarily blend — dream-like — into one another. Yet no element of the dream-situation is more 'objective' than another; the dream-taste is no more 'subjective' than the dream-ham. Regardless of all the precise dream-differentiation — the clear demarcations between taste, bread, plate, hands

— the situation is through and through 'composed' of dream and nothing but dream. In exactly this sense the universe is mind-only. The *Yogacharins* are not proposing mind-only as a theoretical assertion; it is a report of enlightenment experience. Similarly, although the *Madhyamikas* purport to be engaged in philosophical reasoning, their logic is often rather far-fetched and their 'system' is fundamentally a report of enlightenment experience as well. Ramana Maharshi, expressing his experience without the slightest inhibition springing from loyalty to one school of thought or another, strongly confirms the dream-status of the universe: "All we see is a dream. On account of some arbitrary standards about the duration of experience, we call one experience dream-experience and the other waking-experience."<sup>20</sup> Ramana states this truth eloquently in the kind of *Advaita Vedanta* language which appears in the *Gaudapada Karika*, a text which itself borrows heavily from the *Yogachara* philosophy of *vijnanavada*:

Consciousness is the only reality. Consciousness plus waking we call the waking state. Consciousness plus dream we call the dream state. Consciousness plus sleep we call the deep sleep (or dreamless) state. Because by long habit we have been regarding these three states as real, we call the state of pure awareness the fourth or *Turiya*. There is, however, no fourth state but only one state.<sup>21</sup>

I am reminded at this point of my teacher, Swami Nikhilananda, a direct disciple of the wife of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sarada Devi. Sarada Devi was a woman of perfect realisation of the *sahaja* kind. I feel intense gratitude for the transmission which the Swami has made

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.123.

<sup>16</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.463.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.464.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.35.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> A. Devaraja Mudaliar, *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1968), p.172.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.114.

available through his translation of Ramakrishna's conversations, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and his biography of Sarada Devi *Holy Mother*. If I have begun to understand and feel the spirit of non-dualism it is due to seven years of the gracious friendship and firm guidance of Nikhilananda, who was truly a contemporary practitioner of the *Sahajayana* ideal which Ramana Maharshi so sublimely embodied. Writes Swami Nikhilananda in his commentary on the *Gaudapada Karika*:

Some regard *Atman* (pure awareness) as separate from the mind but related to it. For such aspirants the control of the mind is beneficial. But as soon as their efforts to control the mind are slightly relaxed, such *yogis* experience distractions. They do not possess the natural, spontaneous, and effortless peace and fearlessness that a person who sees nothing but *Atman* can enjoy. The sage illumined by the knowledge of non-duality sees that the mind and the senses are inseparable from *Atman* and hence has nothing to fear from their activity. He is not interested in control of the mind. Duality does not exist for him. Hence he is free from fear and misery, and his experience is natural and effortless.<sup>22</sup>

Ramana was clearly such a person who 'sees nothing but *Atman*', 'sees nothing but *vijñana* or *chitta*', or simply 'sees nothing'. But out of this nothing or *sunyata* emerges spontaneously and paradoxically, intense compassion for all living beings. This remarkable compassion born from the non-dual insight which sees no 'others' is most fully described by the language of Bud-

dhist *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*. Says Saraha, "The fair tree of the void abounds with flowers, acts of compassion of many kinds, and fruit for others appearing spontaneously, for this joy has no actual thought of another."<sup>23</sup>

A dog was chasing a squirrel. Ramana saw the situation, turned swiftly, and threw his staff between them. This distracted the dog enough that the squirrel escaped, but Ramana fell and broke his collar-bone. Non-dual insight as perfect self-abandon in spontaneous compassion is the *Bodhichitta* or Enlightenment-mind expressed so deeply by *Mahayana* Buddhist tradition. However, it is not the traditions which deserve our reverence and gratitude, but the men and women who live as the source. They simultaneously confirm and outmode the spiritual traditions. And they are with us now. They are us now. As Ramana remarked shortly before his *mahasamadhi*, or *nirvana*, "They say that I am dying, but I am not going away. I am here."<sup>24</sup>

Where is this 'here', this source or mother of all Buddhas or *bodhisattvas*? If you are experiencing body-consciousness at this moment, it is glowing two fingers to the right of your breast-bone. Right now say 'me' and, without thinking, point to yourself by touching your body. See! Ten thousand entire universes are bubbles in this reservoir of consciousness or *alayavijnana* which we foolishly refer to as the limited 'I'. It simply isn't limited. That's all.

<sup>22</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, *Gaudapada Karika*.

<sup>23</sup> Conze, *Buddhist Texts*, p.239.

<sup>24</sup> Osborne, *Teachings of Ramana Maharshi*, p.181.

**The shadow of dual experiences can never eclipse the supreme One, which is beyond the range of cause and effect. Egotism, identification with the body-mind-intellect complex, is the alpha and omega of *samsara*, and this egotism alone is responsible for the experience of happiness and misery. He who is awakened thus is never affected by happiness and sorrow, and lives unaffected by the pairs of opposites.**

— *Bhagavata*, 11.23.57.

## Conversations With Shri Bhagavan

Recorded by  
K.S. Narayanaswami Iyer  
(Ramanananda Swarnagiri)

**D**EVOTEE: I appear to get the same stillness of thought by tracing the root of the *mantra* which I repeat, as much as I would, if I were to do the 'Who am I?' enquiry. Is there any harm in my continuing the *japa* in this manner, or is it essential that I should pursue only the 'Who am I?' enquiry?

**Maharshi** : No. You can trace the root of any thought, *japa* or *mantra* and continue to do so till you have an answer for your query. This is in itself meditation in the right direction leading you to the same goal as the 'Who am I?' enquiry. Look! Muruganar has just rendered into Tamil verse my answer to your query:

Since you yourself are the *japa*-sound,  
If you ask who you are and find  
Your own true being, then, behold,  
The *japa* once with effort practised  
Now of its own accord proceeds  
Uninterrupted in the heart.<sup>1</sup>

**Devotee**: I have not yet been able to control my mind and I intend to have *ekantavasam* in North India and want Sri Bhagavan's grace.

**Maharshi**: You have come all the way from Melattur to Tiruvannamalai for *ekantavasam* and that in the immediate presence and vicinity of Ramana Bhagavan. Yet you do not appear to have obtained that mental quiet. You now want to go elsewhere, and from there you will desire to go to some other place. At this rate there could be no end to your travels. You do not realise that it is your mind that drives you in this manner. *Control that first and you will be happy wherever you are.* I do not know if you

have read Vivekananda's lectures. It is my impression that he has somewhere narrated the story of a man trying to bury his shadow. He found that for every sod of earth he had put into the grave dug for burying his shadow, it only appeared again over the new earth thrown in. In this manner the shadow could never be buried. Similar is the case of the person trying to bury his thoughts. *One must therefore attempt to get at the very bottom from which thought springs and root out thought, mind and desires.*

**Devotee**: If I spend an hour or two on the Hill yonder, I find sometimes even better peace than here, and it looks as if a solitary place is after all more conducive to mind-control.

**Maharshi**: True, but if you had stayed there for an hour longer, you would have found that place too not giving you that calmness of which you boast now. *Control the mind and even Hell would be Heaven to you.* All other talk of solitude, living in the forest etc. is mere prattle.

**Devotee**: People practising meditation etc. are said to get new diseases; at any rate, I feel some pain in the chest. This is stated to be a test of God. Will Bhagavan explain this, and say if this is true?

**Maharshi**: There is no Bhagavan outside you and no test is therefore instituted. What you believe is a test or a new disease, coming as a

Extracts from *Crumbs From His Table* (published by the author, 1936).

<sup>1</sup> Verse 707, *The Garland of Guru's Sayings* by Muruganar.

result of spiritual practices, is really the strain that is now brought to play upon your nerves. The mind which was hitherto operating through the *nadis* to sense external objects and had thus maintained a link between itself and organs of perception, is now required to withdraw from the link.

This action of withdrawal should naturally cause a strain, a sprain or a snap attendant with pain. This people call a disease, and perhaps a test of God. All these would go if you would but continue your meditation, bestowing your thought solely on understanding your Self, that is, intent on Self-realisation. There is no greater remedy than this continuous *yoga* or union with God, or *Atman*. There cannot but be pain as a result of your divesting your long acquired *vasanas*.

**Devotee:** *Hatha yogic* practices are said to cast away diseases effectively and are therefore advocated as necessary preliminaries to *jnana yoga*.

**Maharshi:** Let those who advocate it and those who follow it, do so. It has not been the experience here. All diseases would be effectively annihilated by continuous Self-enquiry.

**Devotee:** I have a good mind to resign my service and be ever before Bhagavan.

**Maharshi:** Bhagavan is always with you, in you; and you yourself are Bhagavan. To realise this, it is neither necessary to resign your job, nor run away from your home. Renunciation does not imply apparent divesting of costumes, family ties, home, etc. It means renunciation of desires, affection and attachment to objects. One who renounces these, actually merges in the world and expands his love to the whole universe. Expansion of love, affection and mind would be a far better mark of a true devotee of God than renunciation. One who renounces the immediate ties, actually extends the bonds of affection and love to a wider world beyond the borders of caste, creed, race, etc. A *sannyasi* who apparently casts his clothes away and runs

**This Self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellectual power, nor even through much hearing. He is to be attained only by the one whom the (Self) chooses. To such a one the Self reveals his own nature.**

— *Katha Upanishad* 1.2.23.

away from his home, does not do so out of aversion to his immediate relations but because of the expansion of his love to others around him. When this expansion comes, you do not feel you are running away from your house. You would drop out as the fruit from the tree; till then it would be folly to leave your home or your job.

**Devotee:** Can everybody see God?

**Maharshi:** Yes.

**Devotee:** Can I see God?

**Maharshi:** Yes.

**Devotee:** Who is my guide to see God? Do I not want a guide to see God?

**Maharshi:** Who was your guide to see the Ramanasramam? With whose guidance do you see the world daily? Just as you are able to see the world yourself, so also you will be able to see your Self if you earnestly strive to do so, your Self alone being your guide in that quest also.

**Devotee:** I have taken to a diet of milk and fruits to help me in meditation.

**Maharshi:** Yes. You can afford to do so, but you forget that it is a sin to drink milk, as by milking the cow you deprive the calf of such quantity as He has willed the calf to have. *Sadhaks* should sustain themselves by food other than milk and its preparations. Take what comes in your way by way of food and do not be worried about it.

## The Teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi: Affinity with Buddhism

By Arthur Osborne

IT IS reported that Bhagavan Sri Ramana was once asked why the Lord Buddha refused to answer questions about the afterlife and that he replied: "Perhaps he was more concerned with the real work of guiding man towards Self-realization than with satisfying useless curiosity." There is a very great similarity between the teaching of this *jivanmukta* born in modern times and that of the Blessed One. And there could be no better proof that it was the pure essence of Hindu spirituality that the Buddha taught, leaving aside only the incidentals.

I am not referring to Buddhist cosmology, which, indeed, figures much less in the teaching of the Buddha than in that of his later exponents, but to the great central theme of his teaching: that attachment to illusion binds man to the cycle of birth and death and to suffering, and that enlightenment brings release. Naturally, this basic truth can be found in one form or another in all spiritual teaching, but in that of the Buddha, as of Sri Bhagavan, it is the central theme. As a result, there was in both cases, the direct injunction to turn from illusion and seek enlightenment rather than the more indirect promise of reward for virtue and threat of

punishment for sin. I say "more indirect" not only because such teaching cloaks under a moral appeal what can be presented more simply as pure law of cause and effect, but also because it fastens the eyes and aspirations of its followers on states intermediary between this world and the absolute reality of the Self or *nirvana*, states which, though higher and more real than the present life, are also illusory in the ultimate truth of Advaita.

This refusal to prescribe any lesser goal or recognise any contingent reality made Sri Bhagavan, like the Buddha, unwilling to speak about the afterlife. When asked: "What shall I be when I die?" he answered: "Why do you want to know what you will be when you die before you know what you are now? First find out what you are now." That is to say: seek the ultimate truth of the Self which alone is behind the appearance of this or any other life. He even said explicitly: "But people do not like even to hear of this truth, whereas they are eager to know what lies beyond, about heaven and hell and reincarnation. Because people love mystery and not the

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From *Ramana Arunachala* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1951).





truth, religions cater to them so as to eventually bring them round to the Self. Whatever be the means adopted, you must at last return to the Self, so why not abide in the Self here and now?"

Preoccupation with higher and yet still contingent states implies teaching on the level of reality on which the Self is God, and the worshipper is separate from God; but in the ultimate truth there is no duality. Therefore, when asked about God, Bhagavan replied: "Why do you want to know what God is before you know what you are? First find out what you are." That is: why stop at even the highest manifestation of the Self? Seek the ultimate truth of the Self which you are. Or, as he put it more explicitly: "There is no God apart from the Self,

for if there were he would be a Self-less God, which would be absurd."

True, Bhagavan often spoke of God, but that was a concession, for so long as the conception of the individual self as a real and separate being continues, the conception of God as the Creator, Lover and Judge of that being must also continue. Bhagavan was willing to speak to each person in the idiom of that person's understanding, but to those who would open their hearts to his teaching he pronounced only the final truth: that there is no God and no you *apart from the Self*.

If some who call themselves Buddhists and others who attack Buddhism dub the Buddha's

refusal to speak of God atheism, and his refusal to describe the afterlife 'materialism,' that is mere ignorance: below the level of God-and-man is the illusion of the ego alone, as above it is the reality of the Self alone: below the appearance of higher worlds is that of this physical world, as above it is the formless Self; and they have mistaken the lowest for the highest.

Like the Buddha, Sri Bhagavan also refused to speak about the state (if it can be so called) of the *jnani*, that is of *nirvana*, for it would amount to defining the indefinable. When asked about the bodily consciousness of the *jnani*, he would reply: "You think the *jnani* has a body", or "Why worry about the *jnani* before you know what you are? First find out what you are." And when you have found out that, you know, because you are a *jnani*. Theoretical explanations do not help and may even impede the aspirant by gratifying the mind instead of turning it inwards in quest of the Self in which it merges. Mental speculation is not the least of the ego's defences against spiritual effort. And when the effort is directed to That which is beyond the mind, it would be a contradiction to try to elucidate it to the mind. It would be like trying to put the ocean in a bucket. Bhagavan said: "The Self is self-effulgent. One need give it no mental picture anyway. The thought that imagines is itself bondage. Because the Self is the effulgence transcending darkness and light, one should not think of it with the mind. Such imagination will end in bondage, whereas the Self is spontaneously shining as the Absolute."

Verbally, there is a contradiction between the teaching of Sri Bhagavan and that of the Buddha in that Sri Bhagavan declared that there is only *Atman*, while the Buddha declared that there is no *Atman*; but it is no more than verbal, for Sri Bhagavan used the word '*Atman*' to mean the universal Self, which is *nirvana*, whereas Lord Buddha used it to mean the individual soul. And Sri Bhagavan also taught that there is no individual being, not only in the sense that it will not endure after death but that it is not now. "Never

mind what you will be when you die; find out what you are now."

Teachers who have directed their followers on a more gradual path, shielding their eyes from the blinding simplicity of ultimate Truth, have affirmed the survival of the soul after this life. However, the contradiction, like all spiritual contradictions, is only apparent, and the clearest outer sign of that is that Buddhism itself combines the teaching of heaven and hell and reincarnation with that of the unreality of the individual soul. Any other life or world is as real as this one, but in truth this also is unreal, and therefore, instead of directing men to seek a higher level of comparative but not ultimate reality, Bhagavan, like Buddha, insisted on the total unreality of the ego whether in this life or any other. "First find out what you are now."

The Buddha was very little concerned with theory. His purpose was less to construct a cosmology than to show men the way from suffering to peace. Like Sri Bhagavan he brushed aside solutions that go only part of the way and left only pure affirmation of *nirvana* and of *maya*, of the Self and illusion. And yet theorists have descended upon his teaching and argued it out into patterns which help neither themselves nor others to escape from the wheel of suffering. It is possible that they will fasten on the teaching of Sri Bhagavan also, but it will not be his real teaching that they expound, for his real teaching was to avoid the unessential and follow the way to Self-realization. When asked questions within the framework of Hindu spiritual sciences he would sometimes answer them technically, but often he would brush them aside. He gave no ground for mental speculation and on the whole discouraged even spiritual sciences concerned with all the vast range of intermediate reality: "Just as it is futile to examine the rubbish that has to be swept up only to be thrown away, it is futile for him who seeks to know the Self, if, instead of casting away the *tattvas* that envelop the Self, he sets himself to enumerate them or to examine their qualities."

Not only was the Buddha not concerned to

elaborate a cosmology: he was also very little concerned to establish a social order. So far as he did so it was mainly through the negative act of refusing to recognise caste. Whoever proved himself capable of following the path was capable. Sri Bhagavan took up the same attitude. However, since his purpose was not to found a new religion or social order, he did and said nothing to attack caste. He simply bestowed his grace on all in the measure in which they were prepared to receive it. If the Brahmins chose to sit apart in the ashram dining-hall, they could — but he did not sit with them. If they found it appropriate to recite the *Vedas* in the hall, they could — but no devotee, whether woman, low caste or foreigner, was to be excluded from his presence during the recitation.

The difference in expression between the teaching of the Buddha and of Sri Bhagavan mainly stems from the fact that the Buddha was founding a new religion. Therefore, he spoke in such a way as to appeal to the masses as well as the seekers. Therefore, although he also stressed that it is knowledge that brings deliverance, he cast his teaching in a more emotional mould, speaking rather of suffering and relief from suffering. But the meaning is the same: that it is attachment that causes suffering, and that the attachment is to an illusion and is dispelled by knowledge. On the other hand, just because the teaching was adapted to the world at large, genuine seekers on the path who desired its essence had to renounce the world. Giving up home and property and entering a monastery was the outer symbol of giving up attachment and turning from illusion to enter the heart.

Since the teaching of Sri Bhagavan was directed to those who aspire to take the path, he spoke more coolly and clearly, rather of ignorance than of suffering, rather of knowledge than of relief from suffering. And since he was not formulating a new religion for the world, he did not withdraw his devotees from the life of the world. The conditions of life are such today that very many who crave for grace and guidance

#### PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument  
Of Thy peace;  
Where there is hatred,  
Let me sow love;  
Where there is injury,  
Pardon;  
Where there is doubt,  
Faith;  
Where there is despair,  
Hope;  
Where there is darkness,  
Light;  
And where there is sadness,  
Joy.  
O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not  
so much seek  
To be consoled,  
As to console;  
To be understood,  
As to understand;  
To be loved,  
As to love;  
For it is in giving  
That we receive,  
It is in pardoning  
That we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying  
That we are born  
To eternal life.

— St. Francis of Assisi

find it difficult or impossible to withdraw from the world or even to observe the full and detailed obligations of their religion, whichever it may be. And Bhagavan has absolved those who turn to him from the need to do so. That is his great mercy. Not only Hindus, but Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Parsis, all came to him and he never advised any to change from

one religion to another. He prescribed the *vichara* for all alike. So long as any other observances, of whatever religion, helped a devotee, Bhagavan never advised him to discontinue them; but when the *vichara* is effectively practised it supersedes other observances, and asked about that, Bhagavan approved and said: "All other methods only lead up to the *vichara*."

Since, the *vichara* as taught by Bhagavan contains a large element of *karma-marga* as well as *jnana-marga*, he never advised any to withdraw from the life of the world. He explained that the one object is to overcome the I-am-the-doer illusion, and therefore it is of no help to exchange the thought "I am a householder" for the thought "I am a monk". What is necessary is to discard both and remember only "I am".

Through the power of his grace, Bhagavan has re-opened to mankind the direct path of Self-enquiry prescribed in only slightly different form by Lao Tsu and by the Buddha. "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 Absolute. Having realized the Self,

nothing remains to be known, because it is perfect Bliss, it is the All."

The very simplicity of Bhagavan's teaching makes it easy to repeat or expound, but it was only his tremendous power that could open it as a living path to mankind. It was only the silent impregnation with grace that would enable any to follow him. This was given by a concentrated look of eyes shining with love and power to one who had the immense fortune of coming before him, and by silent transmission to all who turned to him in their heart from a distance.

Had this initiation to a new path and this potent guidance ended when Sri Bhagavan cast away his body, there would be little purpose in writing about it. But his compassion was more vast and his boon more enduring. He himself said: "I am not going away; I shall still be here." The doorway that he opened is still open. His grace is still poured out on all who turn to him. His compassion bears up all who aspire but stumble. His power is more unrestricted now than before. On all who turn to him his initiation will descend, and for all who aspire in all religions, the path he opened is still open.

**People are frightened when they are told that they are the Universal Being, everywhere present. Through everything you work, through every foot you move, through every lip talk, through every heart you feel.**

**People are frightened when they are told this. They will again and again ask you if they are not going to keep their individuality. What is individuality? I should like to see it. A baby has no moustache; when he grows to be a man, perhaps he has a moustache and beard. His individuality would be lost, if it were in the body...**

**.... Says an old Sanskrit philosopher : It is only the Spirit that is the individual, because it is infinite; no infinity can be divided; infinity cannot be broken into pieces. It is the same one, undivided unit for ever; and this is the individual man, the Real Man.**

**— Jnana Yoga, Swami Vivekananda,  
Almora Edn. (1955), pp. 35-37.**

## The Quintessence of Sri Ramana's Teachings

By Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

**T**O THE question "What is the quintessence of Sri Ramana's teachings?" I would say in reply, "It is *Vedanta*." *Vedanta* is the quintessence of the teachings of Sri Ramana. In fact, Sri Ramana came as the incarnation of the *Vedantic* truth. There was nothing in Ramana that was un-*Vedantic*. There is nothing in *Vedanta* that we cannot find in the words, and even more, in the silence of Sri Ramana. But what is *Vedanta*? *Vedanta* is the end of knowledge, the goal of wisdom, the limit of all that we can know. That is what we call *Vedanta*.

Sri Ramana came to teach us the truth of non-dual experience. He started on this journey in the context of a great problem in life, viz., the problem of death. The philosopher in India begins his career with facing the great problems of life; and there can be no greater life-problem than the problem of death. Some of the philosophers of Europe today, who call themselves existentialists, teach that death is the most stunning problem in the individual's life. Death is not something which is far off. Death is not something which is to come in the future. We are living every moment of our life with death confronting us. These philosophers tell us that death stares us in the face every moment, and we have constantly to confront death, and finally we have to succumb to death. Now that is the gospel of existentialism.

But Sri Ramana began his journey, his grand march to the spirit, in the context of his gravest problem in life, viz., the problem of death; and no sooner he posed this problem than he discovered the lasting solution to it. He discovered that

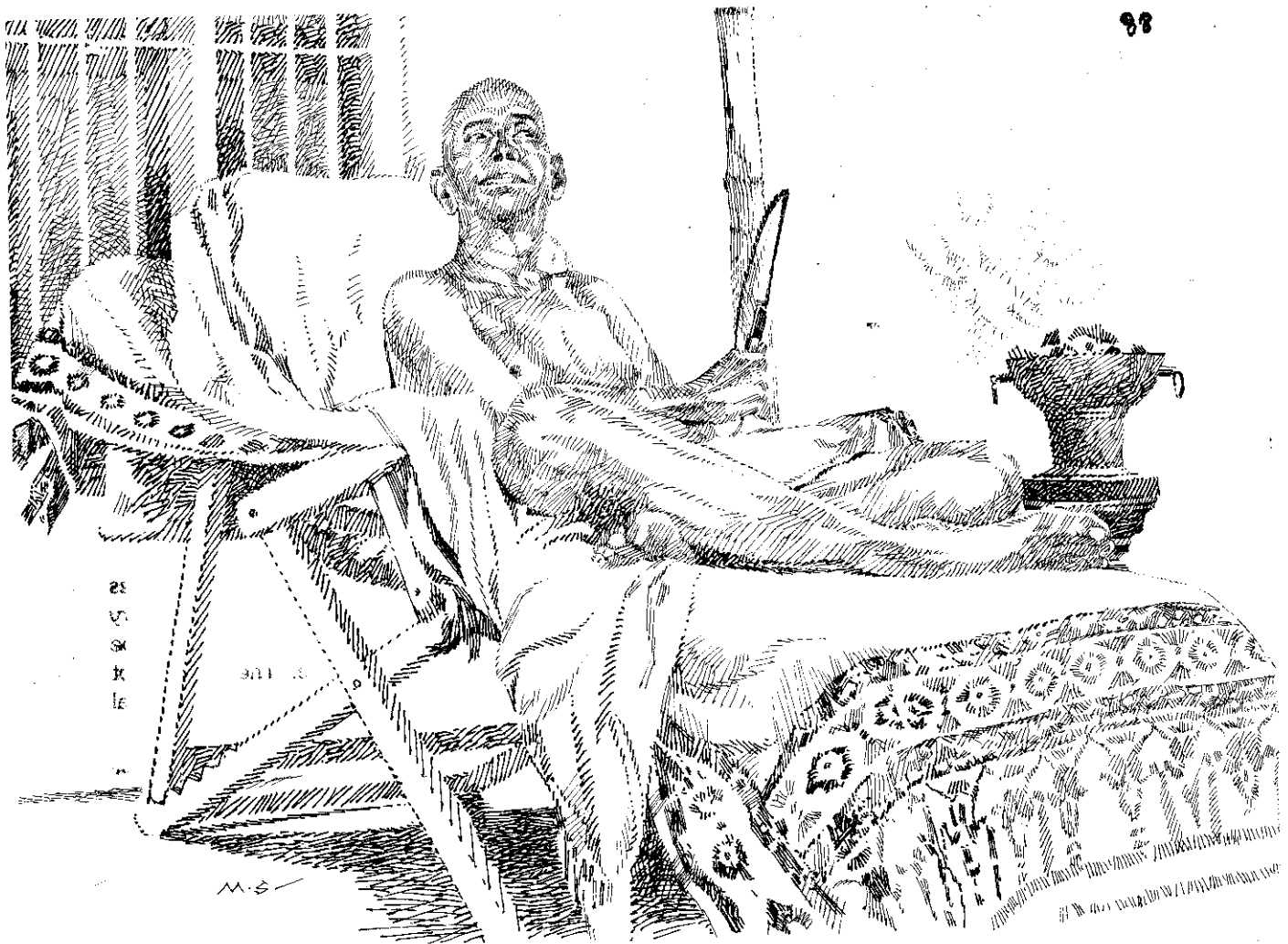
death is a phenomenon, that death is an appearance which pertains only to the body. The soul is not subject to death. It is not born and it does not die. The *Gitacharya* teaches at the very beginning of his gospel, "The Self cannot be killed. The Self does not die. The Self is not born. Unborn, unassailable, unchanging, eternal is the Self."

A great truth was revealed to Sri Ramana in his house in Madurai, where as a schoolboy he had his experience of death and he faced it. He faced it in a heroic way and overcame it. He discovered the solution for it, and thus began the grand march of the Sage of Arunachala to the plenary experience that is *Advaita*.

What did Sri Ramana teach us? What is the way that he blazoned forth for the benefit of us who have to plod on to the ultimate truth. The easiest way imaginable is the way of Self-enquiry. Anything else may be difficult for us. But nothing can be easier than Self-enquiry, provided we open our eyes. Sri Ramana used to wonder why we find *Vedanta* difficult. It is *vyavahara* that ought to be difficult and not *Vedanta*, because we are the Self and Self-enquiry ought to be the easiest process. But we are so much engrossed in the not-self, we have so much forgotten the Self, that the knowledge of the not-self seems easier to us and the knowledge of the Self seems difficult. If a person suffering from a serious malady does not know that he is ill, there is very little chance of his

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Part of a speech delivered by the author at Bombay in 1955. From *The Call Divine*, March 1956.



being saved. To have a disease, and yet not to know that one has it, is something dreadful. All of us have this malady called *samsara*. But we imagine that this is perfect health.

Sri Sankara says in *Sivananda Lahari*, "I am caught in this *samsara*. I revolve in it in a blind-folded fashion, thinking that it is the straight road to salvation. It is *asara*, without essence, and yet I have learnt to call it *samsara*, full of essence." The root-cause of all our trouble, therefore, is ignorance.

Sri Ramana used to wonder why *Vedanta* tastes like a bitter pill in the mouths of people, and why they should find the method of Self-enquiry difficult. Only if we change the twist that is in our personality, only if we free ourselves from the artificial knots in which we are tied up, we shall find that there is nothing easier, nothing smoother, nothing lovelier than Self-enquiry.

And so, we have to adopt this path of inquiring into the nature of the 'I'. No one is unaware of the 'I'. No one can even function in the world except on the basis of the 'I'. But only, each mistakes the pseudo 'I' for the real 'I'. When one says "I am tall or I am short", "I am stout or I am thin", he identifies the Self with a body. When one says, "I am bright or I am dull", "I have powers of imagination or I cannot remember", he identifies the Self with his mind. And so, it is wrong identification of the Self with a body and a mind that is responsible for *samsara*. It is the pseudo 'I' that must be unmasked. It parades in the garb of the 'I' which is not its nature. Only if we enquire, if we analyse, shall we discover that the body is not 'I', that the mind is not 'I'. 'I' speak of 'my body', 'my mind' etc. Even as 'my table' cannot be me, so my mind cannot be me. Even as 'my table' can only be possessed by me, so the body and mind can

be only my possessions. They cannot be identified with the 'I'. And so, Sri Ramana tells us that we must inquire into the implications of the 'I'.

Thoughts appear every moment of our life; whether in waking or in dream our life consists of a series of thoughts. It is these thoughts that are mistaken for the true Self by a school of Buddhists called *vijnanavadins*. How can a series of thoughts that are ceaselessly changing account for permanence and identity? If the mental flux were the 'I', how is recognition possible? "I am the same that I was yesterday, I am the same person that I was as a child". How is this recognition possible, if we are nothing more than a current of ideas, a ceaseless flux of thoughts? And therefore, Sri Ramana and *Vedanta* declare that we are not a series of psychological presentations. Even to know that there is a series, there must be an abiding Self that we are.

Sri Ramana tells us, "You inquire into the origin of thoughts. You inquire where the thoughts arise from. And if you inquire persistently, tenaciously, heroically, without getting down-hearted, you will succeed, you will come to an experience where there are no thoughts at all. If you can trace thoughts to their origin, thoughts will cease. This is because thoughts are not real."

It is the state of mindlessness — *amanibhava*, *amanasta* — that represents the true experience of the non-dual reality. It is not something to which all of us are strangers. No one is alien to it. For, one goes to it everyday in sleep, without one's knowing it. The *Upanishads* explain this truth by means of an illustration. Even as a man may walk over a buried treasure not knowing that there is treasure beneath his feet, we go to our true Self every day in sleep without knowing that we have gone there. And so *sushupti* or sleep experience is common to us all, but we do not recognize the truth implied therein, because in sleep there is the veil of ignorance. *Avidya* beclouds the truth in sleep. If through *Vedantic* inquiry the veil is lifted, the cloud is dispelled, then there will be no sorrow. This is the great truth taught by Sri Ramana.

Sri Ramana told us that all of us can adopt this path. Even a child can follow this road, and come to the final goal. No one can excuse himself from this path saying that it is something which is difficult for him. The self has to be lifted by the Self. In the words of the *Gita*, "Do not depress the Self by the self. Lift the self by the Self." All our lower passions are the functionings of the so called 'self'. They can be sublimated, provided we adopt the path of Self-enquiry. All problems can be solved if we inquire into the nature of the 'I'. Problems like 'What is God?' 'What is His nature?' 'Is He *saguna* or *nirguna*?' 'Is He the Creator or the Preserver, or the Destroyer?' 'Has He a heaven of His own?' 'Or, is He all-pervading?' — if they arise in your mind, Sri Ramana would say: "Ask who you are that put these questions. After all, it is you that are important. It is you that want to solve these problems. Have you known who you are before you try to solve these problems? If you ask that question, these problems would dissolve." And so, there is no point in posing a problem and remaining at the same level as the problem.

The ultimate solution to any problem that arises in *Vedanta* is to dissolve it in the highest reality. Is it the problem of evil? Do you ask the question: When did evil begin? Who created evil? What is its nature? Here again the solution to it lies in Self-enquiry. For whom is evil? Who am I that am tackling this problem of evil at all. So in this way Sri Ramana wants us to answer every question imaginable in philosophy. This is not something which is difficult; it is easy. But situated as we are, habituated as we are to paths which are wrong, to modes of life which are not our own, it now seems difficult.

And therefore, Sri Ramana also said that the path of devotion is useful; we may attain the goal of perfection through self-surrender also. To those who are not fit for Self-enquiry, to those whose make-up is more emotional, the path of devotion is recommended. There is no conflict between *bhakti* and *jnana*. There is no conflict between *paurusha Vedanta* and *prakrita Vedanta*. Because we are *prakritas* as we are, we think that we are of this body, that

we dwell in this body, that we possess this body. We have therefore to discipline ourselves in every way so that we may become fit for Self-enquiry or self-surrender. And so Ramana rejected nothing that is of value to *Vedanta*. He admitted the efficacy of every *sadhana* — of *pranayama* and *Raja Yoga*. These also are necessary.

Many complain that Sri Ramana did not stress *Karma Yoga*. But they are wrong. *Karma Yoga* is not a matter of theoretical teaching. *Karma Yoga* is a path which ought to be shown by example, so that others may follow. No amount of theorising about *Karma Yoga* will be helpful to any single soul. Those of us who saw Sri Ramana know perfectly what an ideal life he lived. He acted without attachment, without the ego. From the act of making leaf-plates upto the act of answering questions put to him, all actions he went through without attachment. So *Karma Yoga* is not something which can be learnt through books. The teacher has to teach the technique of *Karma Yoga* through concrete living. Now, that was exactly what Sri Ramana did in his life.

Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, "What the top men of society set as example by their conduct, that the others follow." For a particular great man a certain mode of action may not be necessary; but in order that he might not mislead those who are lower down, he has to adopt that mode of action. "Look at me," says Krishna, "Do I have anything to gain by work? There is nothing that I have to attain in all the three worlds, and yet I engage myself in action. What sort of action? I serve Arjuna as his charioteer, I wash his horses, groom them, and yoke them to the chariot. And when the day's work is done I untie them. What have I to gain by all these? And yet if I do not act, the rest of the world will follow me and come to ruin."

And so, Sri Ramana was acting; but in all that he did, there was no sense of egoity. One could find there *Karma Yoga* by example. And no better example of the ideal of *sthitaprajna* or

**Realising through self-contemplation that primal God, difficult to be seen, deeply hidden, set in the cave (of the heart), dwelling in the deep, the wise man leaves behind both joy and sorrow.**

— *Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.12.

*trigunatita* can we find than Sri Ramana. There he was unconcerned and yet concerned with everything. He could weep when someone wept, and yet his weeping left no sorrow behind. He could be happy on hearing some welcome news, and yet there was no attachment to what the news conveyed. He would read the newspapers, and know about all that happened, and yet there was around him an atmosphere which was far above where news occur and events happen. Thus he was a living example of the *sthitaprajna* — one to whom blame and praise were the same, heat and cold were identical.

To Sri Ramana there was no distinction of high and low. All were equal to him. All were the same to him. He was not elated, his heart did not jump at the approach of an important person. He was not depressed if he was beaten or ill-used. Now, that was *Vedanta* in life. That was *Vedanta* in concreteness. It was to save us that the absolute spirit took shape in the form of Sri Ramana. It was to show anew the ancient path of *Vedanta* that it appeared in the form of Sri Ramana and dwelt at Holy Arunachala for over half a century. To that Heart Centre many from all over the world came and derived benefit.

Unless every day, every hour and every minute that we live, we are conscious of that Spirit (of Sri Ramana) we cannot progress towards our ultimate goal. If we remember this and shape our life in accordance with it, then we can deem ourselves as the worthy children of the Sage Sri Ramana.



## God Comes First, Then (Comes) His Creation

(From the teachings of  
Sri Ramakrishna)

**MASTER (to Bankim):** Some people think that God cannot be realised without the study of books and scriptures. They think that first of all one should learn of this world and its creatures; that first of all, one should study 'science'. (*All laugh*). They think that one cannot realise God without first understanding His creation. Which comes first, 'science' or God? What do you say?

**Bankim:** I too think that we should first of all know about the different things of the world. How can we know of God without knowing something of this world? We should first learn from books.

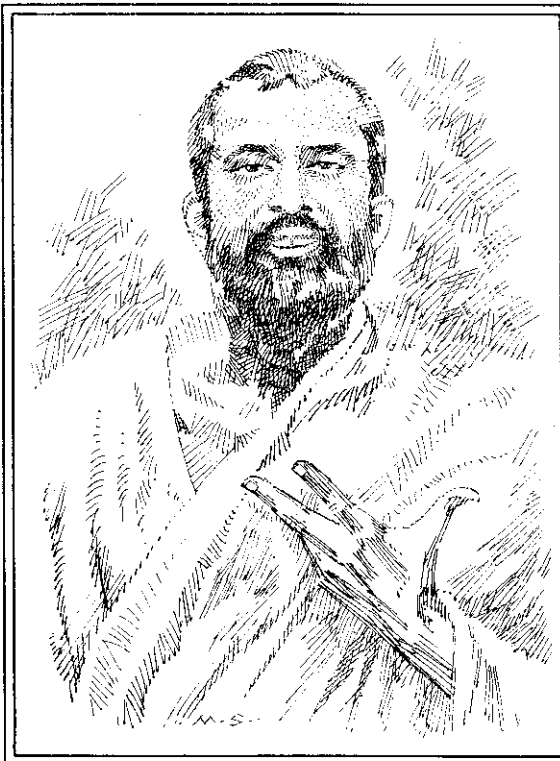
**Master:** That is the one cry from all of you. But God comes first and then the creation. After attaining God you can know everything else, if it is necessary.

If you can somehow get yourself introduced to Jadu Mallick, then you will be able to learn, if you want to, the number of his houses and gardens and the amount of his money invested in government securities. Jadu Mallick himself will tell you all about

them. But if you have not met him and if you are stopped by his door-keepers when you try to enter his house, then how will you get the correct information about his houses, gardens and government securities? When you know God you know all else; but

then you do not care to know small things. The same thing is stated in the *Vedas*. You talk about the virtues of a person as long as you have not seen him, but no sooner does he appear before you than all such talk stops. You are beside yourself with joy simply to be with him. You do not talk about his virtues any more.

First realise God, then think of the creation and other things. Valmiki was given the name of Rama to repeat as his *mantra*, but was told at first to repeat '*mara*'. 'Ma' means God and 'ra' the world. First God and then the world. If you know one, you know all. If you put



Reproduced with kind permission of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp.643-44, Madras Edn. (1947).

This is part of a conversation between Bankim Chandra Chatterji (reputed Bengali writer of the 19th century) and the Master on December 6, 1884.

## Presence

by Arthur Osborne

There was no emptiness, no cause for tears,  
When I went back to Arunachala  
And trod the ways for these many years  
Shone with God's Grace in form of Ramana.

A living quietude throbbed in the air,  
Peace in the earth and solace in the trees,  
And the great hill rose, tender and aware,  
Simple as Truth, as full of mysteries.

His Presence so pervaded, it had been  
No wonder or fulfilment, only Grace,  
At any sudden turning to have seen  
The majesty of the beloved face.

And then I sat in silence, as of old,  
Before Him. Like a sudden wave  
His mighty Peace surged through me to enfold  
In Knowledge-Being beyond birth and grave.

Peace is not langour but intensest life  
Whereon events float in a shallow stream  
Too slight for prayer and tinkling into strife,  
Unreal, as though one waking saw a dream.

Ineffable, beyond the range of thought,  
The timeless Peace that from His Presence flows;  
Even vaster now the wealth of Grace He brought  
Through human form and formless now bestows.

(This was written shortly after the *Maha Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan.)

fifty zeroes after a one, you have a large sum; but erase the one and nothing remains. It is the one that makes the many. First one, then many. First God, then His creatures and the world.

The one thing you need is to realise God. Why do you bother so much about the world, creation, 'science', and all that? Your business is to eat mangoes. What need have

you to know how many hundreds of trees there are in the orchard, how many thousands of branches, and how many millions of leaves? You have come to the garden to eat mangoes. Go and eat them. Man is born in this world to realise God; it is not good to forget that and divert the mind to other things. You have come to eat mangoes. Eat the mangoes and be happy.

## *How Sri Bhagavan Commended Study of the Dialogue Between Dnyaneswar and His Father*

*By Manu Subedar*

*We present here a first-person account of Manu Subedar's visit to the Ashram along with the text of the dialogue between Dnyaneswar and Vithoba, recommended by Sri Bhagavan for study by sadhakas. This is one of the instances in which Sri Maharshi came out with exhaustive instructions in response to queries from serious seekers.*

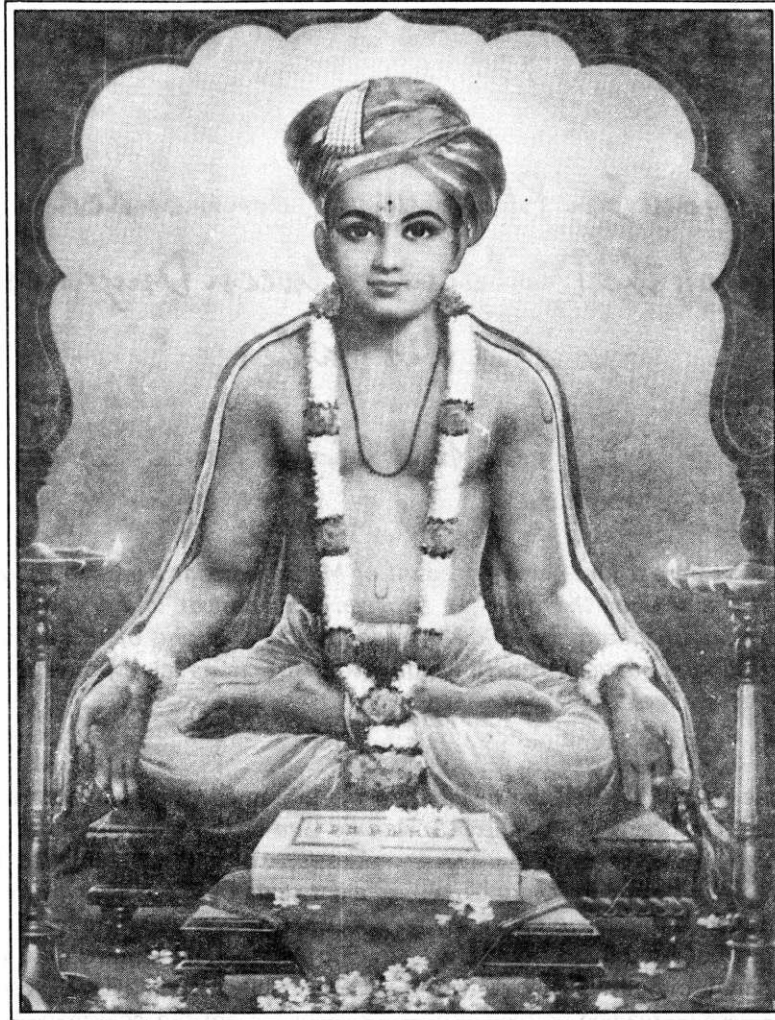
**F**OR OVER three years I resisted the invitation of my friend, Mr. Shankerlal Banker, to go to Ramanasramam. I pleaded with him that I was not ready; that "if I went into a very large shop, I would feel ashamed to come out with my hands empty." At last I decided that I would pay a visit and I prepared myself for about two months prior to that visit by reading nothing else except those two very outstanding books, viz. the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Avadoota Gita*. After finishing some work, which I had at Cochin, I set out for Tiruvannamalai. I decided that I should ask a few questions in order to solve some of my doubts and framed a few questions.

I was alone in a car from Katpadi and wanted to go over my questions and revise them if necessary. As I formulated each question, I found that I knew the answer! So when I went and had the *darshan* of the Maharshi, I had really no question to ask. I permitted myself to observe others and to absorb the elevating atmosphere of the Ashram.

I presented to the Maharshi a commentary on the *Gita* by the sage Dnyandeo, a great Marathi classic, which I had rendered in English after eight years of effort. He was much pleased with it. I had with me extra copies of the *Avadoota Gita* and the *Ashtavakra Gita* published by the Sastu Sahitya Mudranalaya Trust of Ahmedabad, of which I am the chairman. I presented these also to the Maharshi. I mentioned that I had been reading these books and I drew his attention to the very first verse in the *Avadoota Gita*, which is as follows:

"It is only through the grace of God that in men with knowledge is born a desire to experience cosmic unity (Advaita), a desire which protects them from the great dangers of *samsara*".

I further pointed out that most of the matter in these books was for the advanced *siddha*, i.e., the adept. For new seekers, who were attempting to learn, there was not much of direct guidance.



With infinite compassion in his eyes, the Maharshi looked at me and instructed one of his followers to bring a book. This was the *Maha Bhakta Vijayam* of Nabhaji. Bhagavan opened the book and began to read. (I noted with awe that the book opened exactly at the page where he intended to read.)

This is a discourse between Dnyaneshwar Maharaj and his father, in which the young son, who has achieved Realisation, is arguing with his father, who is still afraid, still seeking, and still groping. The father had gone to the forest to practise asceticism. The king desired to see

the father, with whose smart children he was terribly impressed. He therefore sent his own messengers to bring the father to the kingdom, but the latter refused to come. Then the children went to him and Dnyaneshwar Maharaj, getting on the lap of the father, engaged him in conversation, at the end of which he persuaded his father to come back with him to the capital.

The Maharshi seemed to relish reading the discourse. Those who were present thoroughly enjoyed the reading and I discovered that I was given exactly what I needed. I am for ever grateful to the Sage for what he taught me. The best

teacher is he, who takes you from where you are to the next stage. It is not the totality of the teacher's knowledge which the pupil must consider, but the appropriateness of that which is imparted at the proper moment.<sup>1</sup>

### Discourse between Dnyaneshwar and His Father (Vithoba)<sup>2</sup>

**Vithoba:** Does one taste again what has been vomitted once, even if it is some delicious dish? Should not the righteous ever stick to their word? Having retired from the world, can I go back there, mix with the undiscerning crowd and love them or adore the king? The forest shall ever be my abode and the world, yours. So go back and live happily in the world.

**Dnyaneshwar:** Why do you live in the forest?

**Vithoba:** My son, what profit or pleasure is there hereafter for me to obtain by going back to the world? Going back there, far from being an aid, will only be a hindrance to salvation. This forest free from the society of all people is alone fit for *mouna nishta* (silent faith) and hence I live on these slopes.

**Dnyaneshwar:** The *Brahmanishta* (devotion to Self) that you are doing, while still full of such distinctions as city and forest, is like one trying to shut out vision of the heavens by covering it with a canvas instead of closing one's eyes, like a small bird thinking to bear the impact of thunder with its tiny feet, like one trying to acquire virtue while engaging in acts of vice, like a hard-hearted man yearning for the sight of God, and like one achieving *jnana nishta* (firm faith with knowledge) without getting rid of the ego-sense. In that *nishta* which transcends all distinctions, can there be any idea of duality?

**Vithoba:** So long as the notion "mine" persists, the ego-sense and perception of duality as this and that will not disappear. It is *nirvikalpa nishta* (single devotion) that drives away all notions of duality. Such *nishta* can be obtained only by freedom from all *sankalpas* or desires and freedom from all society. So I am here

because the forest solitude is the proper place for *mauna nishta*.

**Dnyaneshwar:** Knowing one's Self and being that Self alone is *Brahma nishta*, and not living in forests.

**Vithoba:** Even though one may know the Self in the presence of one's Guru, is it not necessary to stay in solitude to remain fixed in that Self?

**Dnyaneshwar:** True *jnanis* realised that *ajnana* (error) will not be destroyed, nor the sense of "I" and "mine" be got rid of by living alone in a forest and doing penance, and therefore practised *nirvikalpa samadhi*, with firm mind, ignoring all such distinctions as city and forest, home life and asceticism. If that is so, why should you oppose home life and live in this forest?

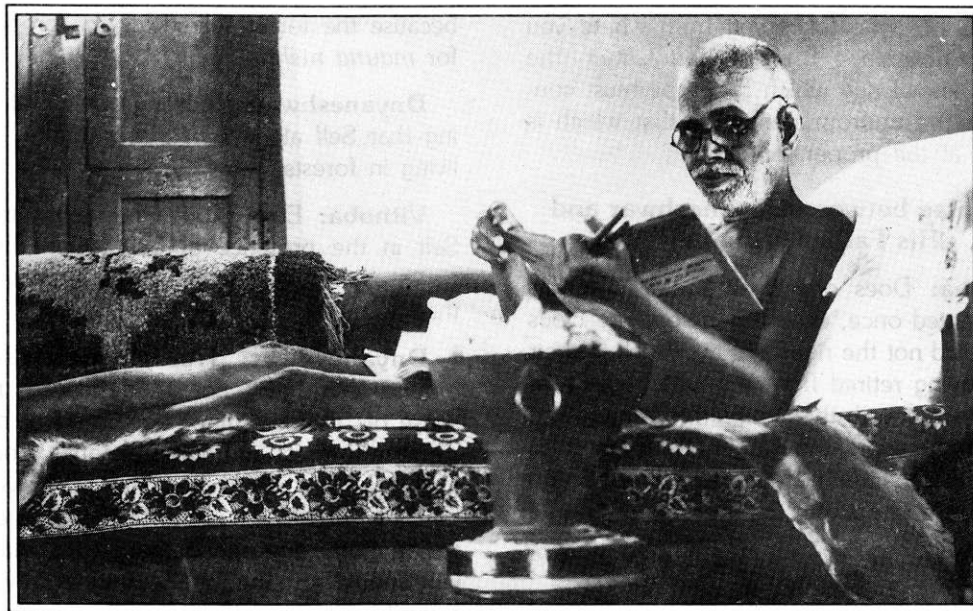
**Vithoba:** If those who have seen the *sakshi* (witness) and become one with the Self — who is mere witness of all — remain in family life, it will hamper their practice of *samadhi*, and they lose their experience of realisation of the Self. Therefore, those who have attained the bliss of the *sahaja* (spontaneous) state will not entertain, even in a dream, the desire to engage in family life.

**Dnyaneshwar:** *Sahaja nishta* (spontaneous faith) consists in being free both from desires and aversions. Can hating the town and loving the forest be such *nishta*?

**Vithoba:** How can one carry on with the affairs of the world who has no desires either to do or not to do? And what is the use if one who living in the world is not fit to engage in the affairs of the world? One should not at all remain

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the author's article in *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*. (Sri Ramanasramam, 1946), pp.90-92.

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced from the third edition of 'Gita explained by Dnyaneshwar Maharaj' (translated into English by Manu Subedar, Kodak House, Hornby Road, Bombay). The English translation of the discourse presented here appears as an appendix therein.



in a place where one would be a prey to many difficulties arising from the desire to cater to the comforts of this body, which catering can be compared to celebrating the marriage of a corpse.

**Dnyaneshwar:** If one, who has given up all desires to engage in any activity, engages in the practice of *samadhi*, is not that practice also an activity, and why should not he who has this occupation have also the activity of the family?

**Vithoba:** Even if *samadhi* (concentration) is an activity, it will remove all thoughts and anxieties. On the other hand, domestic business will create all kinds of thoughts and worries and cause grief always.

**Dnyaneshwar:** When one is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (three-fold Self) himself, why should one engage in *nishta sadhana* (practice of faith)?

**Vithoba:** Do not the wise say that *Brahma nishta* (devotion to Self) consists in realising while awake, the sleep state? If we don't so realise, can irresistible bliss flow from *samadhi*?

**Dnyaneshwar:** While the *Vedas* say that

proper bliss consists in watching like a spectator the diversions of the senses during the waking state, the activities of the mind during dream and the state of nothingness or blank during sleep, and that the state described as sleep during waking consists in being like a kite's shadow, (which while touching anything is not attached to it), can you imagine that to be in blank state as during sleep is real bliss, and that it is the state called sleep during waking?

**Vithoba:** Waking and dream conditions will plunge one into the affairs of the world and render one a prey to the wild beasts of sense organs. Hence, only that *samadhi* (concentration) where all affairs of the world cease and where there is total void as during sleep, is the proper *samadhi*.

**Dnyaneshwar:** The best *samadhi* (concentration) is not to be a mere blank but, like meeting blow with blow, to engage in the affairs of the world and check the sense objects, and be indifferent to them by opposing them with the sword of steady *jnana* (realization of unity), like Janaka.

**Vithoba:** Only Suka, who got rid of all attachments, was able to conquer the monkeyish mind, which had accumulated within it many *vasanas* (deep-set desires) during countless generations, and not Janaka, who, without being in the sleep-like state, had steady *jnana* that he was Brahman.

**Dnyaneshwar:** Only Janaka secured annihilation of mind and was able to do what he pleased with his mind, and not Suka who gave up all external attachments and betook himself entirely to life in forests.

**Vithoba:** It is only by inhering in the seer that one can get rid of the seen. How can one get rid of the seen by being in the seen? Will not death be the result, if, to cure a man of poison, poison is administered to him?

**Dnyaneshwar:** As we administer one poison as an antidote against another poison, he alone is wise, who instals imperturbable *jnana* against the dangers of the sense organs, both external and internal, and not he who is always in *nishta* filled with fear lest at any time the wild beasts of sense-objects should come and attack him. This latter will realise only his fear and never the supreme bliss of Brahman.

**Vithoba:** What would not the sense objects do to one in family life, when they are capable of subjecting to grief even those who have become ascetics and are always absorbed in *nishta samadhi* (practice of concentration)? Can a dried leaf that has fallen into a turbulent flood keep still in one place?

**Dnyaneshwar:** The sense organs will bring down one, who has not attained firm *jnana*, however long he may remain introverted, and cause him grief. Like a big rock that has fallen into a flood and remains there unmoved, one must remain unmoved, however numerous be the sense activities that come to one, and whatever be the unbearable griefs they cause. It is only such a one that can experience the bliss of Brahman. The ignorance of one that is not steadily fixed in *jnana* will never disappear.

**Vithoba:** However steady one may be fixed in *jnana*, he is sure to be engulfed in the darkness of *maya* (worldly illusion) unless he is always absorbed in meditation of Brahman, giving up all society.

**Dnyaneshwar:** It is only if there is such a thing as *maya* apart from Brahman, one would have to get rid of it by being always in *nishta*. Like saying 'one's shadow will fight with one', you have pointed a non-existent *avidya* and an ego and declared that we must always be in *nishta*. As the only result of fighting with an unreal shadow will be exhaustion, you will have only endless trouble if you don't stay quiet in *mauna* (silence), realising the unreality of *maya*, but go on eliminating, saying, "Not this, not this".

**Vithoba:** How is one to attain *sahaja jnana* (spontaneous knowledge) without eliminating the unreal, becoming one-pointed in mind, and remaining a mere *sakshi* (witness), unmoved by all that takes place.

**Dnyaneshwar:** The more we eliminate the unreal things as "not this, not this", the more sense-objects will go on appearing, like winged white ants that swarm out from an ant hill. The more we try to make the mind one-pointed, the more will the mind get disturbed like a repressed ball rebounding. The more you remain a *sakshi*, the more will the delusion "I am the body", etc. assert itself like the curly tail of the dog resuming its bent shape, however much we try to keep it straight. So the only majestic bliss of Brahman is to realise by the *jnana* (realisation) of enquiry, that one is himself Brahman, and that *avidya* alias ego, and *maya* alias unreality, are entirely illusory like the appearance of silver in the mother-of-pearl.

**Vithoba:** Is it possible to conquer the grief-causing sense-objects and to become one with the all-pervading blissful Self by not doing any other *sadhana* but merely realising as the result of *jnana vichara* (meditation on realisation) that one is himself Brahman?

**Dnyaneshwar:** If even a live cow cannot kill a tiger, can a dead cow do so? Similarly, what can the sense-objects do to the Self which is eternal, free from all defects, which extends everywhere and is of the nature of bliss? As even a fat cow will be afraid to face a tiger, sense objects will not dare to come before a *jnani*, who by steady *jnana* has attained perfection. But even if they do, they will be extinguished, as the cow by the tiger.

**Vithoba:** What if the *jnani* (he who knows), by mixing with *ajnanis* (the ignorant) should get entangled in sense-objects, yield to disturbances of the mind and become entirely sorrow-stricken, like a chaste woman becoming unchaste by mixing with prostitutes?

**Dnyaneshwar:** The steadfast chaste woman will maintain her chastity in spite of the company of any number of prostitutes. The unsteady one will find occasion for erring even without any evil company. Similarly, the firm *jnani* will never lose his perfect realisation though surrounded by any number of *ajnanis* (erring ones). The unsteady one will lose his *jnana*, even when in solitude.

**Vithoba:** How can one become a *sahaja jnani* (one who has spontaneously realised) if engaged in domestic affairs?

**Dnyaneshwar:** Though the *jnani* (sage) mixes with *ajnanis* and acts many parts with them, he will ever remain the experiencer of the supreme Bliss, just as a brahmin though acting the part of a scavenger on the stage, and behaving accordingly, ever remains only a brahmin without becoming a scavenger.

**Vithoba:** However firm the *jnana* or the spiritual insight of a man may be, unless he contemplates at least for some time every day that he is Brahman, it is very difficult for him to become a *Brahma jnani*.

**Dnyaneshwar:** Is it necessary for the brahmin, who is acting the part of a scavenger, to frequently think that he is a brahmin? Will he

become a scavenger if he does not think so? Are sacred strings necessary to distinguish one, whom all the world knows to be a brahmin? After the annihilation of the ego, "I", should one still retain the knot of the ego-consciousness and go on meditating "I am Brahman"? As the world-known brahmin is adored as a brahmin by everybody, even when he does not wear sacred strings, one who has renounced notions of "I" and "mine" will always be respected by all and will always be enjoying the supreme bliss of Self, even if he does not practise any meditation.

**Vithoba:** Even if one is equal to *Jagadish* (the Almighty), if one does not daily practise the meditation "I am Brahman", he will undoubtedly become an *ajnani*. The ego-sense which identifies one with body, etc will never vanish.

**Dnyaneshwar:** If one holds the light in his hands and asks darkness to remain, will it remain? Similarly, if, after vanquishing the ignorance that one is the body or its internal organs, one has attained the knowledge that one is the Supreme itself, will *ajnana* remain even if it is bidden to remain? If one holds the cat in one's hand and asks the parrot to talk, will it talk? After realising that self, *Isvara* and the world etc are all unreal, will *maya* come, even if it is invited? The eunuch will stand ashamed to declare himself a man before a woman who knows his impotence. Similarly, to one who has recognised beyond all doubt, in the presence of his Guru, that Brahman alone is real while *maya* is unreal, that Brahman is transcendent of all thoughts while *maya* consists of desires and aversions, and that one is Brahman and Brahman is one's Self, where is the desire or aversion, bondage or freedom, birth or death, country or forest, charity, penance, renunciation or family life? Can the power of *maya* avail even a bit against one, who is in the world like the eye of a dead sheep (which seems as if it can see while it does not)? Can it turn him again into *ajnana* (error)? Please consider deeply.

Thereupon Vithoba agreed and went back home.



## Abide With Me

By Henry Francis Lyte

*This is one of two or three hymns by the author which have achieved great popularity. Besides being a hymn-writer, Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) was also an ordained clergyman. Abide With Me is used in the Requiem mass. It is also used by many as an evening prayer.*

Abide with me! fast falls the eventide,  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see:  
O thou who changest not, abide with me!

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word;  
But, as thou dwell'st with thy disciples, Lord,  
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,  
Come, not to sojourn, but abide with me!

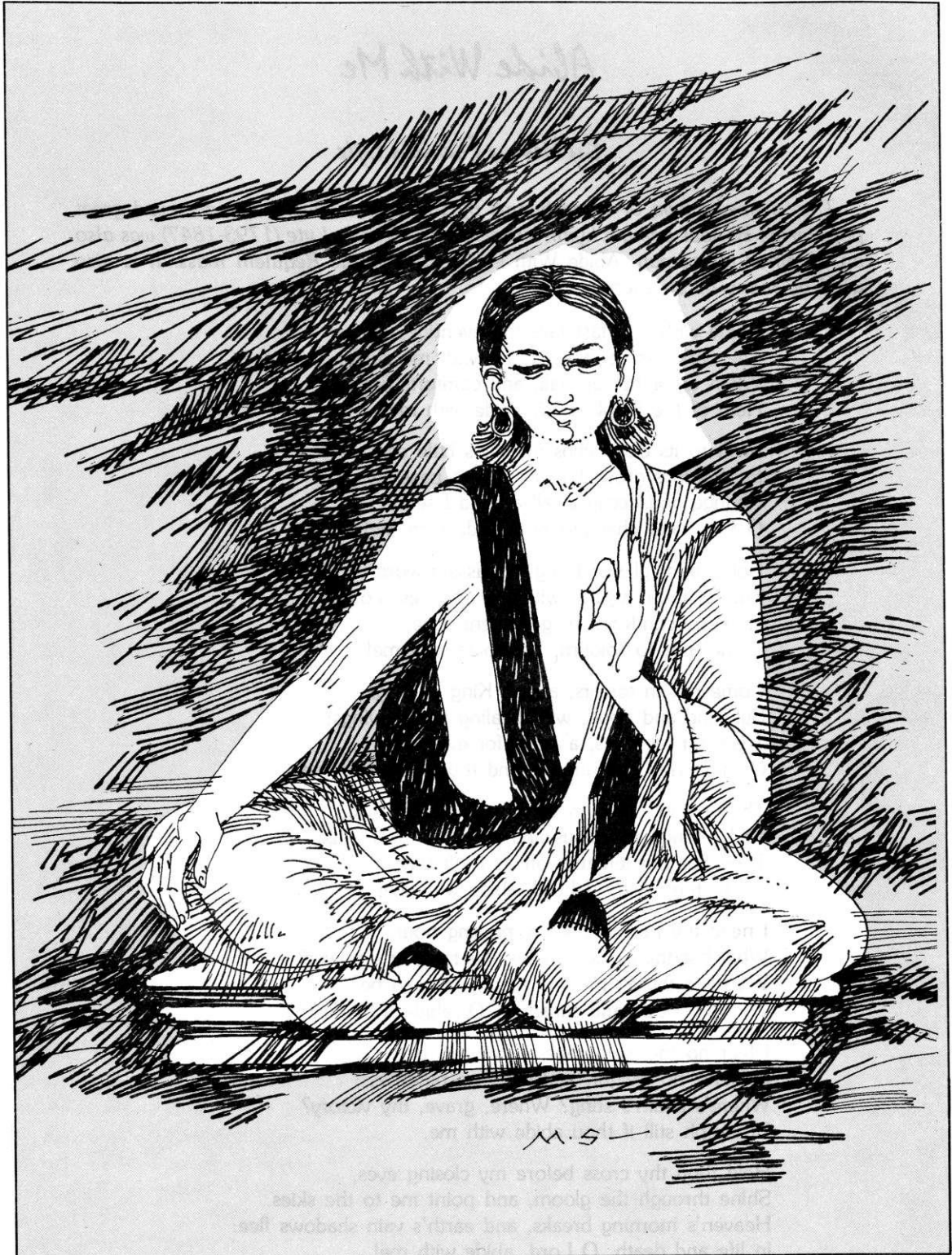
Come not in terrors, as the King of kings;  
But kind and good, with healing in thy wings;  
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea;  
Come, Friend of sinners, and thus 'bide with me!

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;  
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,  
Thou has not left me, oft as I left thee;  
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!

I need thy presence every passing hour:  
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who like thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, O, abide with me!

I fear no foe, with thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness:  
Where's death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee:  
In life and death, O Lord, abide with me!



M.S.

## Milarepa, The Great Tibetan Yogi

by Gian Chand Ahluwalia

**M**ILAREPA belonged to the Kargyutpa sect of Buddhism in Tibet. Tilopa, Naropa (the Indian yogis) and Marpa, the Translator (the Tibetan yogi) in that order are the teachers of the Kargyutpa sect. And Milarepa, the disciple of Marpa, surpassed them, acquired merit in one life span and attained perfect enlightenment. He was endowed with firm faith, a heart full of love and compassion for all mankind. He was endowed with the gift of inspiring not only the righteous but also the unrighteous, transforming them into good human beings. His quest was for discovery of the highest truth, in which indeed he succeeded. He lived for the good of all — practising universal brotherhood.

Milarepa was born in AD 1052, in Tibet, to rich parents and was named Thopaga. When Milarepa was only seven years old, his father Mila-Sherab-Gyaltsen fell seriously ill. Before his death, he called all his relatives and entrusted his property to them, chiefly to his children's uncle and aunt; they were to see that the children were looked after well. He also willed that the property should be restored to Milarepa, his son, on his attaining maturity. However, the entire property was divided between his uncle and aunt and he was deprived of all rights over the property of his father. Not only this, they were compelled to work in summer as field-labourers for the uncle and in winter as spinners of wool

for the aunt. The food given to them was coarse and the clothing was mere rags. In this way, young Milarepa, his younger sister and mother lived a miserable life for years.

On Milarepa's coming of age, his mother arranged a feast inviting all the village folk, including Milarepa's uncle and aunt. On this occasion, the mother pleaded that as per the will of her husband the property should be restored to her son. But the uncle and aunt said that all the property — houses, fields, cattle, ponies, gold and silver — was in fact borrowed by her husband Mila-Sherab-Gyaltsen from them and he had only restored the property to them at the time of his death. It was at this stage, when their suffering had become unbearable, that Milarepa's mother asked him to learn the black arts thoroughly so that he could cause death to his enemies, chiefly the uncle, aunt and their children. They were a source of such great grief and misery to them. Milarepa learnt the black art of killing. When the wedding of his uncle's elder son was going on in a huge building, Milarepa caused the collapse of the building, thereby killing thirty-five persons including his uncles' sons, but leaving out, on purpose, his uncle and aunt, so that they could witness the tragedy. On receiving a message from his mother, Milarepa also learnt the black art of launching hailstorms from another guru. As a result, huge black clouds

gathered in the sky and burst into a violent hail-storm, destroying all the standing crops in his uncle's village. In this way Milarepa committed black deeds by becoming a professional evil-doer.

After all these misdeeds, Milarepa deeply repented the destruction and mischief he had caused. He sincerely desired to have a Guru who would transform him and help him to lead a good life. This brought Milarepa at the feet of Guru Marpa, the Translator. Milarepa, after bowing down and touching Marpa's feet to his forehead, prayed :

I, O Precious Guru, am a great sinner from the West Highlands, and I have come here to offer body, speech and mind to thee. I pray thee to provide me with food, clothing and spiritual instruction, and enable me to obtain Liberation in this very lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

And Milarepa went on doing all acts under the command of Guru Marpa for years together, yet Marpa did not give the necessary teachings relating to the truth. No words can describe the suffering which Milarepa had to undergo as a result of trials and tribulations; he had even deserted his Guru several times, but had to return to him again and again. Marpa's wife, the loving lady, however went on helping Milarepa in one way or the other, providing him with food and other necessities. Guru Marpa commanded Milarepa to build single-handedly building after building and then had them pulled down when half built.

As Marpa had not given the initiation to Milarepa all these years, Milarepa had felt that unless he obtained emancipation in one lifetime, the evil deeds which he had committed earlier would cast him into hell. And so he went on with the building work, though Milarepa had sores on his back causing great pain and suffering. During this period Guru Marpa gave initiation to some of his disciples, but refused to do so in the case of Milarepa.

Now the mother, Marpa's wife, seeing Milarepa's suffering, helped him by giving a

forged letter (as if it was from Marpa) with some other gifts. Milarepa was to go to a pupil of Marpa named Ngogdun-Chudur, who would give Milarepa the initiation. Ngogdun gave the initiation as directed in the forged letter, but Milarepa made no progress. On knowing this, the new guru Ngogdun doubted whether the Head Guru Marpa had given his assent at all to this initiation. Ngogdun, however, asked Milarepa to proceed with his meditation.

At about this time, Marpa had the remaining portion of his son's residence completed and wrote to Lama Ngogdun to come in person for the consecration ceremony of the house and also the ceremony of the coming of age of Doday-Bum (Marpa's son). The letter also mentioned that Thopaga (Milarepa), the wicked person who was with Ngogpa, should also be brought with him.

At the great assembly where all the disciples of Marpa from distant places had gathered, Lama Ngogpa and Milarepa had also come. At this gathering, Marpa took Lama Ngogpa to task for giving initiation to Milarepa on the basis of a forged letter, as also his wife for giving the forged letter (in his name) with the gifts containing his Guru Naropa's garlands. Seeing this, Milarepa had to run away from the presence of Marpa. Marpa then commanded Lama Ngogpa to go and fetch Marpa's garlands and rosary, sent to him as gifts. Marpa had by now become quite mild and enquired about Lama Ngogpa and other pupils. Ngogpa had seen Milarepa outside and was engaged in consoling him. This was conveyed to Marpa who then commanded that they be called. The great Guru Marpa declared that the chief guest at that assembly would be the Great Sorcerer, Milarepa himself. And Marpa asked his wife Damema to invite Milarepa. The mother with all smiles said to Milarepa : "Great Sorcerer, at last, I think thy Guru is going to favour thee, for he said just

<sup>1</sup> *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* (Oxford University Press, London) p.91.

now that thou were to be the chief guest and that I was to go and call thee. Now rejoice and let us go in".<sup>2</sup> Milarepa then went in and took his seat among the great assembly. Guru Marpa then said :

When we come to think well over matters, no one seemed to deserve blame. Wishing that Great Sorcerer (Milarepa) is absolved from his sins, I caused him to build the edifices single-handed ..... As for Demema (his wife), she being a woman, and possessing more than the usual share of maternal sympathy and pity, could not bear to see me ill-treat poor Milarepa, who seemed so willing, obedient and patient. So who could blame her for furnishing him with the forged letter, and the accompanying tokens, although it was a rather serious thing to do? Ngogdun-Chudor! Thou art not to blame as thou hast thyself said. And Great Sorcerer! thou art quite right in trying to obtain religious truths by every possible means. Religious anger is a thing apart; and in whatever form it may appear, it hath the same object — to excite repentance and thereby to contribute to the spiritual development of the person..... Had I had the chance of plunging this spiritual son (Milarepa) of mine nine times into utter despair, he would have been cleaned thoroughly of all his sins..... However, he hath been subjected to eight deep tribulations, which have cleaned him of the heavier sins; and he hath suffered many minor chastenings, which will purify him from minor sins. Now I am going to care for him and give him those teachings and initiations which I hold as dear as mine own heart. I myself will provide him with food while he is in retreat, and with mine own hands will enclose him in the place of meditation.<sup>3</sup>

It would thus seem that Guru Marpa caused all the suffering to Milarepa to cleanse him of his sins and when the right time came he gave

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**"Bhagavan read many English books. W.Y. Evans-Wentz gave Bhagavan copies of his books, and Bhagavan liked best *Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa* [Oxford University Press, 1928]. He once requested me to read it." — N. Balarama Reddy in *My Reminiscences*, to be published by Sri Ramanasramam.**

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him the necessary initiations. Placing his hand upon the crown of Milarepa's head, he said:

My son, I knew thee to be a worthy *sisya* from the very first..... Thou art a *sisya* whom my Guru and my Guardian Goddess have given to me as a boon, who would imbibe the whole of the spiritual truths which I had to impart to thee.....<sup>4</sup>

Marpa further said :

And it was with a view to cleansing thee from thy sins that I had thee work so hard upon the four houses..... I purposely wanted to fill thy heart with bitter repentance and sorrow, verging on despair, by turning thee out ignominiously. And thou, for having borne all those trials with patience and meekness, without the least change in thy faith in me, shalt have, as the result, disciples full of faith, energy, intelligence and kind compassion.....<sup>5</sup>

This is how Guru Marpa encouraged, praised and gladdened his worthy *sisya* — Milarepa.

Thus began the period of meditation for Milarepa, who retired to meditate in a rock-cave called Lhobrak-Tak-nya with ample supply of

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* p.30.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* p.130-131.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* p.133.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* p.134-135.

provisions provided by his Guru Marpa. Milarepa was shut in this cave where he meditated for eleven months. Guru Marpa along with his wife Demema then came to this cave and asked Milarepa to demolish the wall and come out to relate his experiences. Milarepa sang a seven-stanza hymn of praise to his Guru Marpa and the last two lines are:

I dedicate all merit from this Hymn  
Unto the Cause of Universal Good.<sup>6</sup>

And then Milarepa laid before his Guru Marpa whatever knowledge he had imbibed during his meditation period. Of this narration, a few lines are given here to show the depth of knowledge gained by Milarepa :

This our life, is the boundary-mark  
whence one may take an upward or  
downward path. Our present time is a  
most precious time, wherein each of us  
must decide, in one way or the other, for  
lasting good or lasting ill. I have under-  
stood this to be the chief end of our  
present term of life.<sup>7</sup>

I have understood that one who aimeth at  
his individual peace and happiness  
adopteth the Lower Path (the *Hinayana*).  
But he, who from the very start, devoteth  
the merit of his love and compassion to  
the cause of others, I understand  
belongeth to the Higher Path (the  
*Mahayana*).<sup>8</sup>

And then Milarepa said that though he had no means to recompense his Guru and the Revered Mother, he would repay them by a life-long devotion to meditation. And as Milarepa was one with a sweet voice and one who could compose hymns, he sang a hymn; some stanzas from this hymn are given here to show how great were the thoughts of Milarepa :

To my Guru, the Great Dorje-Chang,  
To Demema, the Mother of all Buddhas,  
And to all Princes royal, the *avatars*,  
I make as offering, to their ears, this essence

of my learning gleaned.

Vouchsafe to bless me in mine efforts  
That good may come to every sentient being.  
Lastly, I ask forgiveness, too, for any  
lavishness of words.<sup>9</sup>

On hearing all the experiences of Milarepa, Marpa was delighted and said : "My son, I had expected much from thee; my expectations have been fulfilled." And then Mother Demema said: "I know that my son had the will and intellect to succeed."<sup>10</sup>

Milarepa went on meditating in close retreats during the time of his Guru Marpa and even after his passing away. It is a big story of the trials and tribulations of this great Tibetan Yogi, Milarepa, who meditated in desolate caves with scanty food supplies and at times with nothing to eat. During these retreats Milarepa suffered at the hands of hunters and others, but he had ill-will towards none. He continued to be in utter want of clothes and food after his Guru's passing away. It was after years of meditation and severe penances that Milarepa could exercise endless phenomenal powers — even flying through the air. Milarepa had thus obtained transcendent knowledge and *siddhi* (super-normal powers).

Milarepa left this place as he thought that worldly people would flock to him praying for protection from harm and the fulfilment of selfish desires. Thus Milarepa went from one cave to another but continued his religious practices. Milarepa did so because his Guru Marpa made him give up all worldly concerns, aims and objects; to bear the loss of food, clothing and names; to live in various solitary places (not fixing himself to one place permanently); and to carry on his devotion most energetically.

Some teachings of Milarepa are given below

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* p.138.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* p.139.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* p.140.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* p.143.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* p.143-44.

to show that these are in tune with the Vedanta teachings :

All worldly pursuits have but the one unavoidable and inevitable end, which is sorrow; acquisition ends in dispersion; buildings in destruction; meetings in separation; births in deaths. Knowing this, one should, from the very first, renounce acquisition and heaping-up and building and meeting; and, faithful to the commands of an eminent Guru, set about realising the Truth (which hath no birth or death).<sup>11</sup>

Life is short, and the time of death is uncertain, so apply yourselves to meditation. Avoid doing evil, and acquire merit to the best of your ability, even at the cost of life itself. In short, the whole purport may be stated thus: "Act so that you have no cause to be ashamed of yourselves and hold fast to this rule."<sup>12</sup>

To Milarepa, as ancient sages of India had taught, self-conquest is better than world-conquest and renunciation of the world better than accumulation of all the riches of the world. And Milarepa had shown during his lifetime that he had been successful in self-conquest. On passing away, he owned no monasteries, no temples. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he left behind only a few personal belongings.

Milarepa composed and sang hundreds of religious hymns. Addressing a huge congregation, Milarepa said :

..... Now that I am grown very aged, no certainty is there of our being able to meet again (in this lifetime). I exhort you to preserve the religious discourses which I have delivered to you and not to neglect them, but to carry their teachings into practice, in so far as ye can, in your daily life .....<sup>13</sup>

A few lines from his hymns will show his love

for good:

May none of living creatures, none e'en of insects,  
Be bound unto *samsaric* life; nay, not one of them;  
But may I be empowered to save them all.<sup>14</sup>  
Unless all partiality, all likes and dislikes, be abandoned,  
What gain is it to offer worship?  
Unless all selfishness be given up, from the very heart's depths,  
What gain is it to offer alms?  
Unless all evil hankerings be overcome,  
What gain is it to render service now and then?<sup>15</sup>

Towards the end of his life Milarepa exhorted all disciples to have but the one resolve, namely, to attain Buddhahood for the good of all living beings. This is based on ancient India's teaching, *lokah samastha sukhino bhavanthu* (May all the worlds be happy and prosperous). And Milarepa told them to be lowly and meek; be resigned to hardships and gain knowledge from experience. And his last song was:

Dwell alone and ye shall find a friend;  
Take the lowest place and ye shall reach the highest;  
Hasten slowly and ye shall soon arrive;  
Renounce all worldly goals and ye shall reach the highest goal.<sup>16</sup>

And the great Tibetan yogi then said that he may not live much longer; they should observe his teachings. Milarepa passed away in the state of *samadhi* at the age of eighty-four in 1135 A.D.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* p.259.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p.262.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* p.254.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* p.257.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* p.263-264.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* p.273.

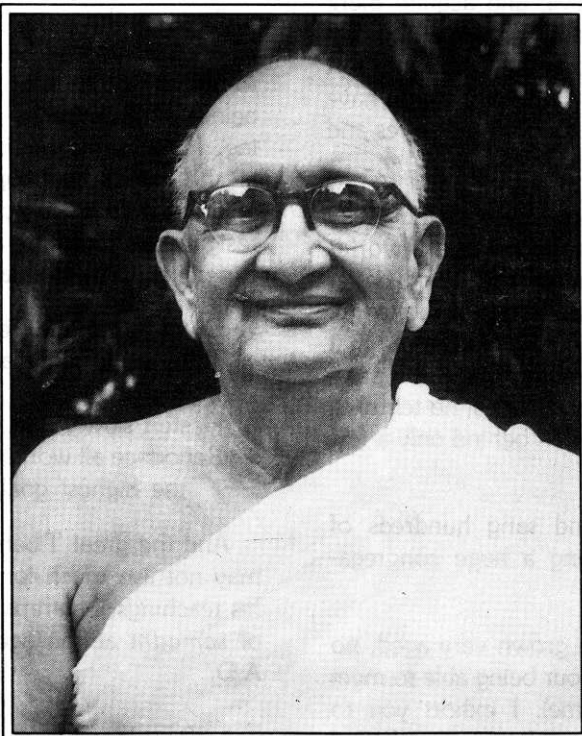
## Bhagavan's Grace and Name

By Swami Ramdas  
(Anandashram, Kanhangad)

**S**RI RAMANA Maharshi was in all respects a remarkable saint. After realising the Eternal, he lived in the Eternal. His advent was a veritable blessing on this earth. By his contact thousands were saved from the clutches of doubts and sorrow. He lived what he preached and preached what he lived. He exerted a wonderful influence and created in the hearts of ignorant men and women a consciousness of their inherent divinity. He awakened the sleeping soul to the awareness of its immortal and all-blissful nature. By his very presence he rid the hearts of people of their base and unbridled passions. The faithful derived the greatest benefit by communion with him.

Ramdas thinks it will not be inappropriate to recall here his own experience, thirty years ago at Tiruvannamalai and to describe how, by having *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi, he was prepared for the universal vision he had a few

days afterwards, on the sacred Arunachala Hill. It came about in this way.



Soon after Ramdas had the *sagun darshan* of God in the form of Sri Krishna, he left Mangalore, as prompted by the Lord and went about wandering from place to place. In the course of these wanderings, God in His own mysterious way, took Ramdas to Tiruvannamalai. Ramdas' condition in those days was like that of a child, waiting always for the mother's guidance. He had absolutely no *sankalpas* or plans of any sort. So when a Tamilian *sadhu* asked Ramdas to accompany him to Tiruvannamalai, Ramdas readily obeyed and simply followed the

*sadhu*. The latter took him to Sri Ramana Maharshi. The very sight of the Maharshi left an

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From *The Call Divine*, January 1954.

The Jayanthi, 1993, issue of *The Mountain Path* carries an article on Swami Ramdas by Swami Satchidananda.



indelible impression on Ramdas. Ramana Maharshi stands for Nirguna Brahman and universal vision. So he poured into Ramdas the necessary power and grace to obtain this vision.

After obtaining Maharshi's *darshan*, Ramdas went up the Arunachala Hill and remained there in a cave. During his stay in the cave, Ramdas was chanting *Ram Mantra* day and night. He had absolutely no sleep and for food he used to take only a small quantity of boiled rice, which he himself prepared out of the alms he got. After twenty days' stay in the cave, in the above manner, one morning Ramdas' eyes were filled with a strange dazzling light and he realised the presence of the Divine everywhere. This new vision of the Universal gave him such waves of ecstatic bliss that he started running about here and there on the hill, embracing the trees and rocks, shouting in joy, 'This is my Ram, this is my Ram'. He could not resist the rising ecstasy. This was his first experience of the universal vision.

Saints are beacons. They show the path to mankind. The influence of saints and sages like Sri Ramana Maharshi cannot be lost on the world. India is a chosen country, a land of

religion. She is already roused and alert. She is fast shaking off her lethargy. By the blessing and power of our innumerable saints and rishis, India shall rise as a spiritual luminary to dispel the dark forces of chaos and destruction and restore a reign of concord, unity and peace among the nations of the earth. In carrying out this mission India's weapon shall be universal love. Her ideals are based on the universal vision. Hence her motto should be universal service. Her watchword should be the Name of the universal God.

The Divine Name is pregnant with a power to transform the world. It can create light where there is darkness, love where there is hate, order where there is chaos, and happiness where there is misery. The Name can change the entire atmosphere of the world from one of bitterness. For, the Name is God Himself. To bring nearer the day of human liberation from the sway of hatred and misery, the way is the assertion of the supremacy of God over all things and keeping the mind in tune with the Universal by chanting of the Divine Name. May the nectar of the Divine Name flow in ceaseless streams through the hearts of all devotees and usher in an age of harmony, brotherhood and peace in the world!

**The well-being of the Self is the Self itself, nothing else being existent. There is no doubt of this. The delusion of the Self is the Self itself. The Self is nothing else.**

**The happiness of the Self is the Self itself. Nothing else exists. There is no doubt of this. The power of the Self is in the Self itself. The fondness of the Self is for the Self itself.**

**The Knowledge of the Self is the Supreme Brahman. The Knowledge of the Self is the happiest of happiness. There is nothing higher than the Knowledge of the Self. There is no scripture other than the Knowledge of the Self.**

— *Ribhu Gita, Ch.34.*

## Palate and Passion

By Mangla Prasad Srivastava

**A**FTER the abduction of Sita by Ravana from the Panchavati, Sri Ramachandra was grief-stricken and wandering here and there (in search of Sita). He was asking the birds and beasts, trees and creepers, about the whereabouts of Sita.

Once, in the course of this frantic search, it was dusk and Sri Ramachandra asked Lakshmana to build a hut as a shelter for the night. And then suddenly he asked him to stop it, saying that since they were in another king's domain, they should obtain permission from the king of that place for constructing the hut; or else they would be branded as thieves. Lakshmana looked here and there and reported to Sri Ramachandra that there was no human habitation and no king whose permission could be sought. Sri Ramachandra told him that every place, without exception, had a presiding deity and that there must be one for that place also.

Lakshmana went deep into the forest to find the presiding deity but none could be seen. He came back and reported that none was to be found anywhere. Sri Ramachandra asked him to penetrate still deeper into the forest to find one. Lakshmana entered the deeper regions of the forest and came back to Rama and reported his helplessness a second time. Sri Ramachandra repeated his orders. Lakshmana obeyed the command and entered into the impenetrable forest once again.

At last, he saw an old dilapidated temple of Shiva. He thought that the deity in the temple was probably the *vandevata* (deity of the forest) he was seeking for. While thus absorbed in thought, to his utter amazement he saw an aerial car descending from the heavens and a damsel of dazzling beauty emerging therefrom. The celestial beauty gave an enchanting dance with ravishing coquettishness and ascended back to heaven. She appeared in a flash and disappeared in a flash. Lakshmana could not make anything out of this spectacle and in utter bewilderment hurried back and reported the whole incident to Sri Ramachandra. On hearing this, Sri Ramachandra told Lakshmana that permission had been granted for him to build the hut. Lakshmana requested him to explain how the permission was now granted and what the damsel and her dance could mean. Sri Ramachandra explained:

All the creatures of the world are under the control of *jihva* (tongue) and *upastha* (generative organ) — that is, palate and passion. If one abandons these two, then there is nothing in the world to attract one. The home and the jungle are alike for one. Lakshmana, you were not shaken in the least by the scene of the dancing damsel and thus have conquered lust and passion. You have already controlled the palate by abstaining from the dainty dishes of the palace. Thus, hero as you are, you are fit to live anywhere without fear. You may build the hut.

## Heart Full of Love : His Holiness The Dalai Lama

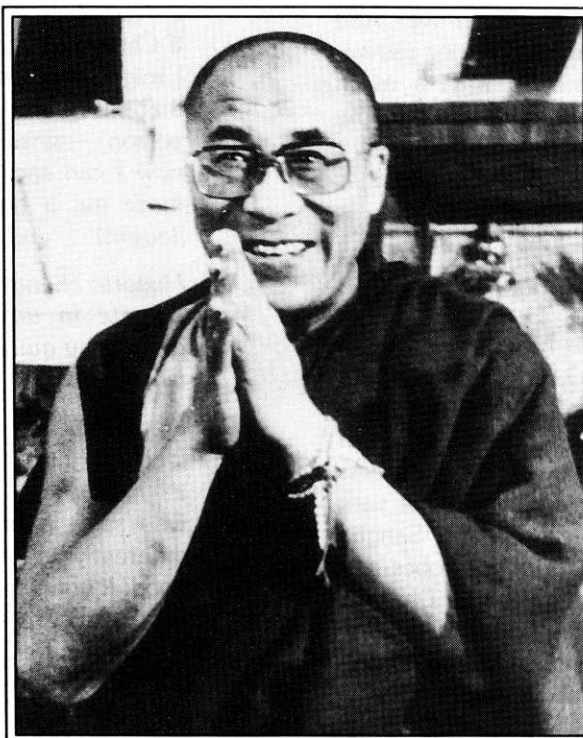
By Vijay Kranti

(Continued from the previous issue)

**Vijay Kranti:** *It is a common observation that if one is kind, honest and compassionate, others take undue advantage of this. Then one strongly feels like hitting back. In such a situation it may become difficult to practise what you are saying.*

**Dalai Lama:** I have been asked similar questions many times. My idea is that if the situation really demands a counteraction, then, without developing anger or hatred in your heart, you can take countermeasures. A counteraction motivated by reason becomes more effective than the one which is motivated by anger. A counteraction motivated by anger is shaky. So, if a situation demands strong action, it should be without hatred or bad blood.

Anger, inevitably, is enemy number-one of humanity. No doubt, when anger dominates a person, it looks like the best protection, but in practice it may destroy the person. Therefore, even if it may appear difficult to avoid anger, one should learn to keep it under check. Good results will follow.



**VK:** *Do you think meditation can be of help in this matter?*

**DL:** There are various types of meditation. But generally speaking, meditation helps you in understanding your mental attitude and offers an opportunity to analyse and change it. Meditation also promotes mental and physical health. One can also achieve much higher goals through it. It is, therefore, quite useful for individuals with varying levels of spiritual development and needs.

**VK:** *You have been going into retreat quite frequently. Would you explain why?*

**DL:** This is a normal practice for practitioners of Mahayana. A practitioner goes into retreat so that he can devote his time to meditation without disturbance. It ensures that he is free from mundane activities which means that he

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can meditate freely without feeling the pressure of time and work. But because of my responsibilities I cannot afford long retreats. I go in for shorter ones. It increases one's virtues and adds to spiritual experience.

And, of course, it gives me some rest also [laughs]... because I am free from friends like you.

**VK:** *Is it purely for a religious purpose, or do you also go into retreat to meditate over pressing political problems?*

**DL:** No, retreat is for spiritual meditation. But there are times when a problem vexes you so much that you can't ignore it. It doesn't vanish from your mind even if you want. You have to think it over. And since your mind is relaxed during retreat, you can concentrate on it in a much better way. Sometimes you do come across a new idea during retreat. Then it is a bonus [laughs]... but the retreat is mainly a spiritual exercise.

**VK:** *In a nutshell, how would you put the elementary qualities of a true Buddhist?*

**DL:** First and foremost is his taking refuge in the Three Jewels. These jewels are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Buddha is the teacher, and one's goal should be to reach the same level of consciousness attained by Buddha. Dharma is the path which has to be realised and Sangha comprises the holders of the robes and the advanced practitioners of Dharma. This refuge has to be based on a clear and deep understanding of the significance of these Three Jewels.

It is not enough to call oneself a Buddhist. One has to exert oneself at developing harmony with the karmic laws of cause and effect. One must make efforts to purify one's mind of negative traits and develop positive qualities like love, compassion, detachment and wisdom. It

is necessary to realise that we ourselves are responsible for our spiritual lives and that no one else will save us if we are unable to help ourselves.

**VK:** *You have been in exile for more than three decades. How has this experience affected your personality?*

**DL:** Generally speaking, these years have been a sad period. For the Tibetan nation as a whole this is the darkest period in our history. Personally, also, it has been a difficult time. But then difficulties and problems help you come closer to reality. They also increase your inner strength. In that sense it has definitely helped me.

If everything were the same as earlier — if China had not occupied Tibet — then I might have been living in comfort. In that case I may have been a superficial person — a superficial Dalai Lama. So now I can say that this experience has made me a better person, more wise [laughs] ... and more realistic.

**VK:** *Historic changes have made you participate in international politics and diplomacy quite actively. Do you enjoy what you do?*

**DL:** Frankly speaking, I don't like all this. But I do not have a choice. I have to get involved. Here you come across people who sport a smile but think altogether differently in their hearts. This is not good. If you are a friend, you're a friend; but if you are not a friend, why feign friendship? Personally, I feel put off by this type of hypocrisy — someone living a lie.

**VK:** *Each Dalai Lama is believed to be the reincarnation of an earlier one. Do you ever communicate with any of them?*

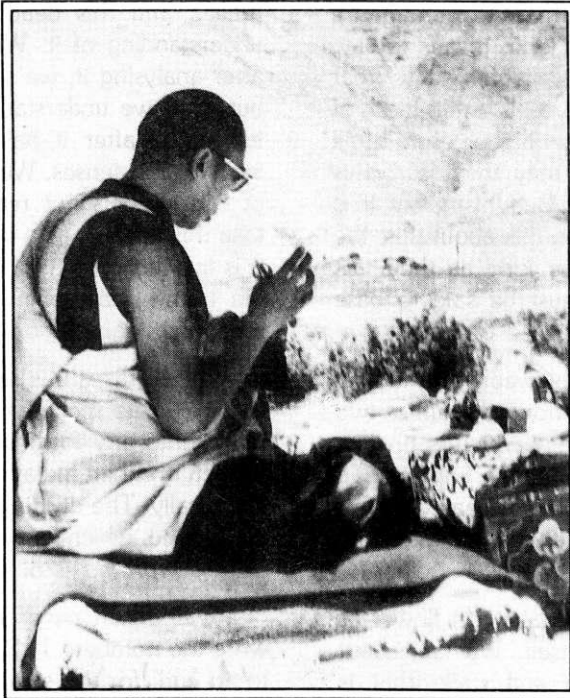
**DL:** Yes, occasionally. For instance, I had a meeting with the thirteenth Dalai Lama in a dream recently. We discussed Tibet.

Years ago, when I was still in Tibet, I had a similar encounter with the fifth Dalai Lama. Incidentally, certain dreams I have been having suggest that my own reincarnation may be from India, possibly an Indian *siddha* ... But this is a different subject. I don't want to talk about this right now.

**VK:** *A few years ago you stated that you may be the last Dalai Lama ...*

**DL:** Yes, I did say that. But what I really said was that if the institution of the Dalai Lama did not serve the interests of Tibet, then there was no need of maintaining it. I had said that whether this institution should continue would depend completely upon the wishes of the Tibetan people.

What will happen if the present Dalai Lama dies? I think the circumstances show that it is necessary that there should be another Dalai Lama after me. And here I want to make it very clear that the reincarnation, or rebirth, of the Dalai Lama will never fall into the Chinese hands. Because the Dalai Lama — I mean the present Dalai Lama — deliberately left his country because of pressing circumstances. This fact makes one thing very clear — that if the present Dalai Lama takes rebirth, his reincarnation will be for a very specific purpose.



Because his predecessor left his own country, Tibet, deliberately and for a specific purpose, to live in India, then his reincarnation will also definitely reappear in that area and not in Chinese hands. That is definite. Otherwise, there is no logic behind my coming into exile and working for Tibetan freedom.

**VK:** *In case the institution of the Dalai Lama ceases to exist, what would happen to you as an individual? Would it mean an end to your personal rebirth?*

**DL:** Some people have a misunderstanding on this issue. They think that the end of the Dalai Lama institution would also mean the end of my rebirth. This is absolutely wrong. Whether the institution remains or not, my own rebirth will continue. It is a different matter whether people designate him the next Dalai Lama. As far as I am concerned, in one of my daily prayers I always say that as long as space remains, and as long as the living beings' sufferings remain, I shall be there to serve them and to dispel their misery.

One of the Indian *pundits*, Shantideva said something beautiful and it gives me genuine determination, inspiration and hope. He said that one decade or two, or even a generation or two, is nothing. As long as sentient beings are there, I will remain and try to serve them as best as I can. That is the real spiritual value of an individual, the meaning of life.

(Concluded)

## The Meaning Of Satori

(A Talk By Dr. D.T. Suzuki)

**S**ATORI is a Japanese term (it is *Wu* in Chinese). The Sanskrit *bodhi* and *buddha* come from the same root, *bud*, "to be aware of", "to wake". Buddha is thus "the awakened one", "the enlightened one", while 'bodhi' is "enlightenment". "Buddhism" means the teaching of the enlightened one, that is to say, Buddhism is the doctrine of enlightenment. What Buddhism teaches, therefore, is realisation of *bodhi*, which is *satori*. *Satori* is the centre of all Buddhist teachings. Some may think *satori* is characteristic of *Mahayana* Buddhism, but it is not so. Earlier Buddhists also talk about this, the realisation of *bodhi*: and as long as they talk about *bodhi* at all, they must be said to base their doctrine on the experience of *satori*.

We have to distinguish between *prajna* and *vijnana*. We can divide knowledge into two categories: intuitive knowledge which is *prajna*, and discursive knowledge which is *vijnana*. To distinguish further: *prajna* grasps reality in its oneness, in its totality; *vijnana* analyses it into subject and object.

Here is a flower; we can take this flower as representing the universe itself. We talk about the petals, pollen, stamen and stalk; that is physical analysis. Or we can analyse it chemically into so much hydrogen, oxygen, etc. Chemists analyse a flower, enumerate all its elements and say that the aggregate of all those elements makes up the flower. But they have not exhausted the flower; they have simply analysed it. That is the *vijnana* way of understanding a flower. The *prajna* way is to understand it just as it is without analysis or chopping it into pieces. It is to grasp it in its oneness, in its totality, in its suchness (*sono mame* in Japanese).

We are generally attracted to analytical knowledge or discriminative understanding, and we divide reality into several pieces. We dissect it and by dissecting it we kill reality. When we have finished our analysis we have murdered reality, and this dead reality we think is our understanding of it. When we see reality dead, after analysing it, we say that we understand it, but what we understand is not reality itself but its corpse after it has been mutilated by our intellect and senses. We fail to see that this result of dissection is not reality itself, and when we take this analysis as a basis of our understanding it is inevitable that we go astray, far away from the truth. Because in this way we shall never reach the final solution of the problem of reality.

*Prajna* grasps this reality in its oneness, in its totality, in its suchness. *Prajna* does not divide reality into any form of dichotomy; it does not dissect it either metaphysically or physically or chemically. The dividing of reality is the function of *vijnana* which is very useful in a practical way, but *prajna* is different.

*Vijnana* can never reach infinity. When we write the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc., we never come to an end, for the series goes on to infinity. By adding together all those individual numbers we try to reach the total of the numbers, but as numbers are endless this totality can never be reached. *Prajna*, on the other hand, intuits the whole totality instead of moving through 1, 2, 3, to infinity; it grasps things as a whole. It does not appeal to discrimination; it grasps reality from inside as it were. Discursive *vijnana* tries to grasp reality objectively, that is, by addition objectively one after another.

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From *The Call Divine*, January 1955.

But this objective method can never reach its end because things are infinite, and we can never exhaust them objectively. Subjectively, however, we turn that position upside down and get to the inside. By looking at this flower objectively we can never reach its essence or life, but when we turn that position inside out, enter into the flower, and become the flower itself, we live through the process of growth: *I am the shoot, I am the stem, I am the bud, and finally, I am the flower and the flower is me.* That is the *prajna* way of comprehending the flower.

In Japan there is a seventeen-syllable poem called *haiku*, and one composed by a modern woman-poet reads in literal translation :

Oh, Morning Glory!  
Bucket taken captive,  
I beg for water.

The following was the incident that led her to compose it. One early morning the poet came outdoors to draw water from the well, and saw the morning glory winding round the bamboo pole attached to the bucket. The morning glory in full bloom looks its best in the early morning after a dewy night. It is bright, refreshing, vivifying; it reflects heavenly glory not yet tarnished by things earthly. She was so struck with its untainted beauty that she remained silent for a little while; she was so absorbed in the flower that she lost the power of speech. It took a few seconds at least before she could exclaim: "Oh, Morning Glory!" Physically the interval was a space of a second or two or perhaps more; but metaphysically, it was eternity as beauty itself is. Psychologically, the poet was the unconscious itself in which there was no dichotomisation of any kind.

The poet was the morning glory and the morning glory was the poet. There was self-identity of flower and poet. It was only when she became conscious of herself seeing the flower that she cried : "Oh, Morning Glory!" When she said that, consciousness revived in her.

But she did not like to disturb the flower; because, although it is not difficult to unwind the

**The Buddha Summarizes  
The Teaching Of  
The Awakened**

**To refrain from evil,  
To achieve the good,  
To purify one's own mind  
This is the teaching of all  
Awakened ones.**

flower from the bamboo pole, she feared that to touch the flower with human hands would be desecration of the beauty. So she went to a neighbour and asked for water.

When you analyse that poem you can picture to yourself how she stood before the flower, losing herself. There was then no flower, no human poet; just a "something" which was neither flower nor poet. But when she recovered her consciousness, there was the flower, there was herself. There was an object which was designated as morning glory and there was one who spoke — a bifurcation of subject-object. Before the bifurcation there was nothing to which she could give expression; she herself was non-existent. When she uttered, "Oh, Morning Glory!" the flower was created and along with it herself, but before that bifurcation, that dualisation of subject and object, there was nothing. And yet there was a "something" which could divide itself into subject-object, and this "something" which had not yet divided itself, not become subject to bifurcation, to discriminative understanding (i.e., before *vijnana* asserted itself) — this is *prajna*. For *prajna* is subject and at the same time object: it divides itself into subject-object and also stands by itself, but that standing by itself is not to be understood on the level of duality.

Standing by itself, being absolute in its complete totality or oneness — that is the moment which the poet realised, and that is *satori*. *Satori* consists in not staying in that oneness, not remaining with itself, but in awakening from it

and being just about to divide itself into subject and object. *Satori* is the staying in oneness and yet rising from it and dividing itself into subject-object. First there is "something" which has not divided itself into subject-object; this is oneness as it is. Then this "something" becoming conscious of itself, divides itself into flower and poet. The becoming conscious is the dividing. Poet now sees flower and flower sees poet; there is mutual seeing. When this seeing each other, not just from one side alone but from the other side as well, when this kind of seeing actually takes place, there is a state of *satori*.

When I talk like this it takes time. There is something which has not divided itself but which then becomes conscious of itself, and this leads to an utterance, and so on. But in actual *satori* there is no time interval, hence no consciousness of the bifurcation. The oneness dividing itself into subject-object and yet retaining its oneness at the very moment that there is the awakening of a consciousness — this is *satori*.

From the human point of view we talk of *prajna* and *vijnana* as the integral understanding and the discriminative understanding of reality respectively. We speak of these things in order to satisfy our human understanding. Animals and plants do not divide themselves; they just live and act, but humans have awakened this consciousness. By the awakening of consciousness we become conscious of this and that, and this universe of infinite diversity arises. Because of this awakening we discriminate, and because of discrimination we talk of *prajna* and *vijnana* and make these distinctions, which is characteristic of human beings. To satisfy this demand we talk about having *satori*, or the awakening of this self-identity consciousness.

When the poet saw the flower, that very moment before she spoke even a word there was an intuitive apprehension of something which eludes our ordinary intuition. This *sui generis* intuition is what I could call *prajna*-intuition. The moment grasped by *prajna*-intuition is *satori*. That is what made Buddha

the Enlightened One. Thus, to attain *satori*, *prajna*-intuition is to be awakened.

That is more or less a metaphysical explanation of *satori*, but psychologically *satori* may be said to take place this way. Our consciousness contains all things; but there must be at least two things whereby consciousness is possible. Consciousness takes place when two things stand opposing one another. In our ordinary life, consciousness is kept too busy with all things going on in it and has no time to reflect within itself. Consciousness has thus no opportunity to become conscious of itself. It is so deeply involved in action, it is in fact action itself. *Satori* never takes place as long as consciousness is kept turning outwardly as it were. *Satori* is born of self-consciousness. Consciousness must be made to look within itself before it is awakened to *satori*.

To get *satori*, all things which crowd into our daily life consciousness must be wiped off clean. This is the function of *samadhi*, which Indian philosophers emphasize so much. "Entering into *samadhi*" is to attain uniformity of consciousness, i.e., to wipe consciousness clean, though practically speaking, this wiping clean is something almost impossible. But we must try to do it in order to attain this state of uniformity, which, according to early Buddhist thinkers, is a perfect state of mental equilibrium; for here there are no passions, no intellectual functions, but only a perfectly balanced state of indifference. When this takes place it is known as *samadhi*, or entering into the fourth stage of *dhyana* or *jnana*, as described in most early Buddhist *sutras*. This is not, however, a state of *satori*. *Samadhi* is not enough, which is no more than the unification of consciousness. There must be an awakening from this state of unification or uniformity. The awakening is becoming aware of consciousness in its own activities. When consciousness starts to move, begins to divide itself into subject-object and says, *I am sorry*, or *glad* or *I hear*, and so on — this very moment as it moves on is caught up in *satori*. But as soon as you say "I have caught it" it is no more



there. Therefore, *satori* is not something you can take hold of and show to others, saying, "See, it is here!"

Consciousness is something which never ceases to be active though we may be quite unconscious of it, and what we call perfect uniformity is not a state of sheer quietness, that is, of death. As consciousness thus goes on unceasingly, no one can stop it for inspection. *Satori* must take place while consciousness is going through stages or instant points of becoming. *Satori* is realised along with the becoming, which knows no stoppage. *Satori* is no particular experience like other experiences of our daily life. Particular experiences are experiences of particular events while the *satori* experience is the one that runs through all experiences. It is for this reason that *satori* cannot be singled out of other experiences, pronounced, "See, here is my *satori*!" It is always elusive and alluring. It can never be separated from everyday life, it is for ever there, inevitably there. Becoming not only in its each particularisable moment but through its never-terminating totality is the body of *satori*.

The nature of human understanding and reasoning is to divide reality into the dichotomy of this and that, of "A" and "not-A" and then to take reality so divided as really reality. We do not seem to understand reality in any other way. This being so, as long as we are depending on "the understanding," there will be no grasping of reality, no intuitive taking hold of reality. There is no reality besides becoming; becoming is reality and reality is becoming. Therefore, the *satori* intuition of reality consists in identifying oneself with becoming, to take becoming as it goes on becoming. We are not to cut becoming into pieces, and, picking up each separate piece which drops from "becoming", to say to people, "Here is reality". While making this announcement we will find that becoming is no more there; reality is flown away into the realm of the irrevocable past.

This is illustrated by a Zen story. A woodman

went to the mountains and saw a strange animal on the other side of the tree which he was cutting. He thought "I might kill that animal." The animal then spoke to the woodman and said: "Are you going to kill me?". Having his mind read, the woodman got angry and wondered what to do. The animal said: "Now you are thinking what to do with me." Whatever thought the woodman had, the animal intuited, and told him so. Finally, the woodman said: "I will stop thinking about the animal and go on cutting wood." While he was so engaged, the top of the axe flew off and killed the animal.

This illustrates that when you are not thinking of it, there is *satori*. When you try to realise *satori*, the more you struggle the farther it is away. You cannot help pursuing *satori*, but so long as you make that special effort, *satori* will never be gained. But you cannot forget about it altogether. If you expect *satori* to come to you of its own accord, you will not get it.

To realise *satori* is very difficult, as the Buddha found. When he wished to be liberated from the bondage of birth and death he began to study philosophy, but this did not avail him, so he turned to asceticism. This made him so weak that he could not move, so he took milk and decided to go on with his search for liberation. Reasoning did not do any good and pursuing moral perfection did not help him either. Yet the urge to solve this problem was still there. He could go no farther, yet he could not retreat, so he had to stay where he was, but even that would not do. This state of spiritual crisis means that you cannot go on, nor retreat, nor stay where you are. When this dilemma is genuine, there prevails a state of consciousness ready for *satori*. When we really come to this stage (but we frequently think that what is not real is real), when we find ourselves at this critical moment, something is sure to rise from the depths of reality, from the depths of our own being. When this comes up, there is *satori*. Then you understand all things and are at peace with the world as well as with yourself.

# The Maharshi and the Giant

By Rosalind Christian

## Part I

**M**ANNIKIN open the gate', said the Giant. 'I won't', said the Cowherd.<sup>1</sup> So it was that the Strong Brother, who is body and the first quester on the road to Realisation, defies a hideous giant who has seized three of his cows. So, preferring to die rather than fail in his task, the herdsman faces his first enemy. But who might this giant be? The Celtic story gives us some clear hints. In a land where the pasture has become poor and bare, the giant fences off stretches of fine grass which he guards with the utmost ferocity. Yet he has no cows of his own to pasture there! We seem to have a picture of the amassing of wealth for its own sake.

Ancient story-tellers loved the giants, creations which lent themselves to endless embellishment. Their size and cruelty became more and more horrendous — details enjoyed by all. For example Heracles, very much a Greek evolver from the Strong Brother, had also to guard a famous herd from the ravages of a monstrous thief born with three heads, six hands and three bodies joined at the waist, whose three mouths breathed fire. When Heracles heard his missing kine lowing from behind a massive boulder, he tossed it away like a pebble and ground the thief's face to pulp!

So that's that! But in the Celtic story there is a titanic struggle which brings the Strong Brother to his knees and almost his last gasp. Indeed, without three friends, whom he had helped on the way, he would have been lost and the Giant would have defeated him as he had defeated all who came before.

The three friends were a wolf, a hawk and a fox. In their gratitude each had promised succour in this lad's hour of need. So, when his knees began to quake and his heart began to fail, the Strong Brother remembered his friend.

'He thought of a wolf and he was a wolf. And he gave the

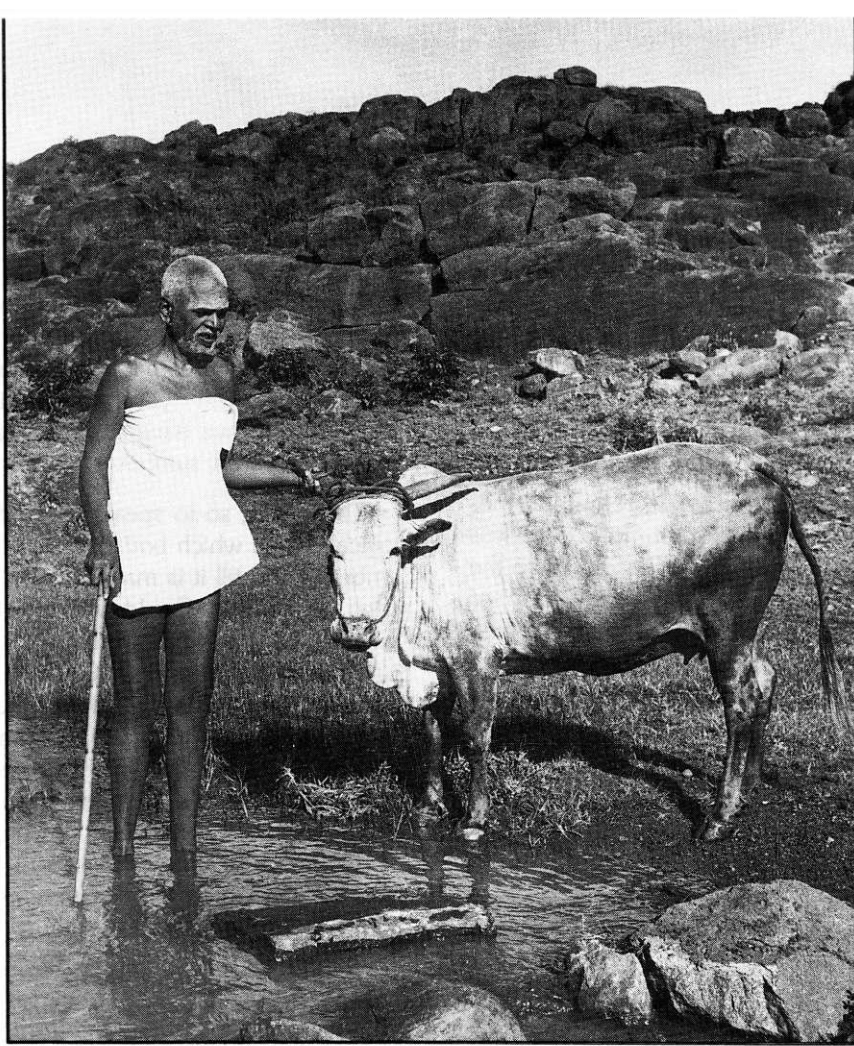
Giant a little easy lift, knocked him down and stood on him.'

So — in the end — it is easy! How is it done? First we have to decide who the 'Giant' can be. It is not hard, I think, to read this symbol; the hints given by the Celtic variant are so specific and direct. The 'Giant' is Greed — whom the Buddha also names as the first enemy. Always, wherever he is found, his main attribute is size, whether he is some strong child bullying a smaller and weaker, or some giant syndicate insuring itself against competition. The fight with Giant Greed is one of the worst ordeals the Strong Son has to face. Yet at last the victory seems so easy. There is a basic hint here about the nature of endeavour, which is that effort and attainment seem to come quite separately. First all struggle and no success, and then, quite suddenly, a sense of ease and power. Moreover, and this is the main point, the Strong Brother suddenly gets the measure of his adversary:

He thought of a wolf and he was a wolf.

He suddenly sees who his adversary really is. There is the realisation that he carries the

<sup>1</sup> *The Mountain Path*, December 1989.



rapacious 'wolf' *within himself*. Directly this lad sees 'who' this Giant really is, and 'where' he really is, then he can cut his adversary's huge proportions down to size: the struggle is contained and the outcome easy. Self-aggrandisement through many lifetimes has left its legacy — the power of the wolf, the cunning of the fox and the eyes of the hawk. So the weapons are ready for the strong brother to stamp on Giant Greed — who is indeed himself.

All this is summed up in what is certainly the world's earliest recorded joke. It is the tale of a Giant who is a deadly threat to the hero. One day the Giant asks to be told the hero's name. 'Myself', comes the reply. Later the hero falls upon the Giant, who yells for help. 'Who is hurting you?' call his friends. 'Myself, Myself'. 'O well', they grumble, 'what can we do?' So my-

self was slain by my Self. This immensely ancient jest may also turn out to be one of the world's most subtle little pieces of wisdom.

A previous existence must have seen the death of Giant Greed for Ramana Maharshi.

He called nothing his. He never asked for anything. He accepted the food and clothing that was necessary, that was all. The only outer gifts that one could make were fruit and flowers. And gifts were taken to the dining hall and shared among all equally.... An attendant was placing a quarter mango on each person's leaf and slipped a half mango on that of Bhagavan and he angrily put it back and took a small piece.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ramana Arunachala*, by A. Osborne, p.22.

The Strong Brother too believed in fair shares, and had won the friendship of the animals by dividing some food fairly between them. He too could be angry, as when he saw his poor starving cattle and the giant's rich pasture.

### Part II

In the ancient Celtic story three brothers set out to win their fortune. The first two succeed so wonderfully well that the third brother reaches the Golden Castle with seemingly effortless success.<sup>3</sup> But, alas, an act of disobedience to the Princess of the Castle destroys all this rich inner world. The Simple Brother wakes to find himself in the harsh, everyday world outside. Nor can he perceive the smallest opening in the mighty rampart of the castle.

But this lad too had animal friends, and from the humblest and the most industrious of these he gains help. In the guise of an ant he scales the castle walls and, at last, wins his way back to the rich apartment that had been his of yore. But there, in his very own bed, lies a hideous giant!

One wonders how to define this last enemy. The sum of all greeds of body, mind and spirit? Certainly greed for aggrandisement on the spiritual plane is the most deadly greed of all — as Jesus makes clear in his scathing attack on the Pharisees. Only after long pleading will the Entity of the Golden Castle tell the Simple Brother something about his enemy:

'You cannot slay him', she says, 'it is not in himself that his life is at all'.

Then she tells him where a very special egg is hidden, and adds:

*Nothing is that will kill this giant but to smite him with that egg.*

Brewer, in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, tells us that the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, Hindus, Japanese and many other ancient nations maintain that the world was hatched from an egg made by the Creator. Orpheus too, it says, speaks of this egg. Unfor-

tunately, I have not the training to evaluate this statement, but I have seen it made elsewhere, and always with the dismissive view that here we have something quaintly primitive that we need hardly bother our heads about now. But none of the nations mentioned by Brewer are merely primitive; ancient, yes, but sophisticated too. Here, I think, we have another example of our failure to read a symbol.

The egg is, so to speak, a wonderful technological device which both feeds and protects the embryo chick till it is mature. Then it breaks the shell and flies! Could we give a symbolic meaning to this 'egg'? Could we suggest encapsulated consciousness? Our world-view, as Maharshi tells us, is limited — it has a 'wall' or 'hard shell' round it. 'The fact is man considers himself limited'.<sup>4</sup> This encapsulated consciousness is both man's inheritance and something assiduously cultivated by him. Each ego-mind has its world-picture, and each sets up demarcation lines beyond which it is not prepared to go. On July 21, 1935, Maharshi said:

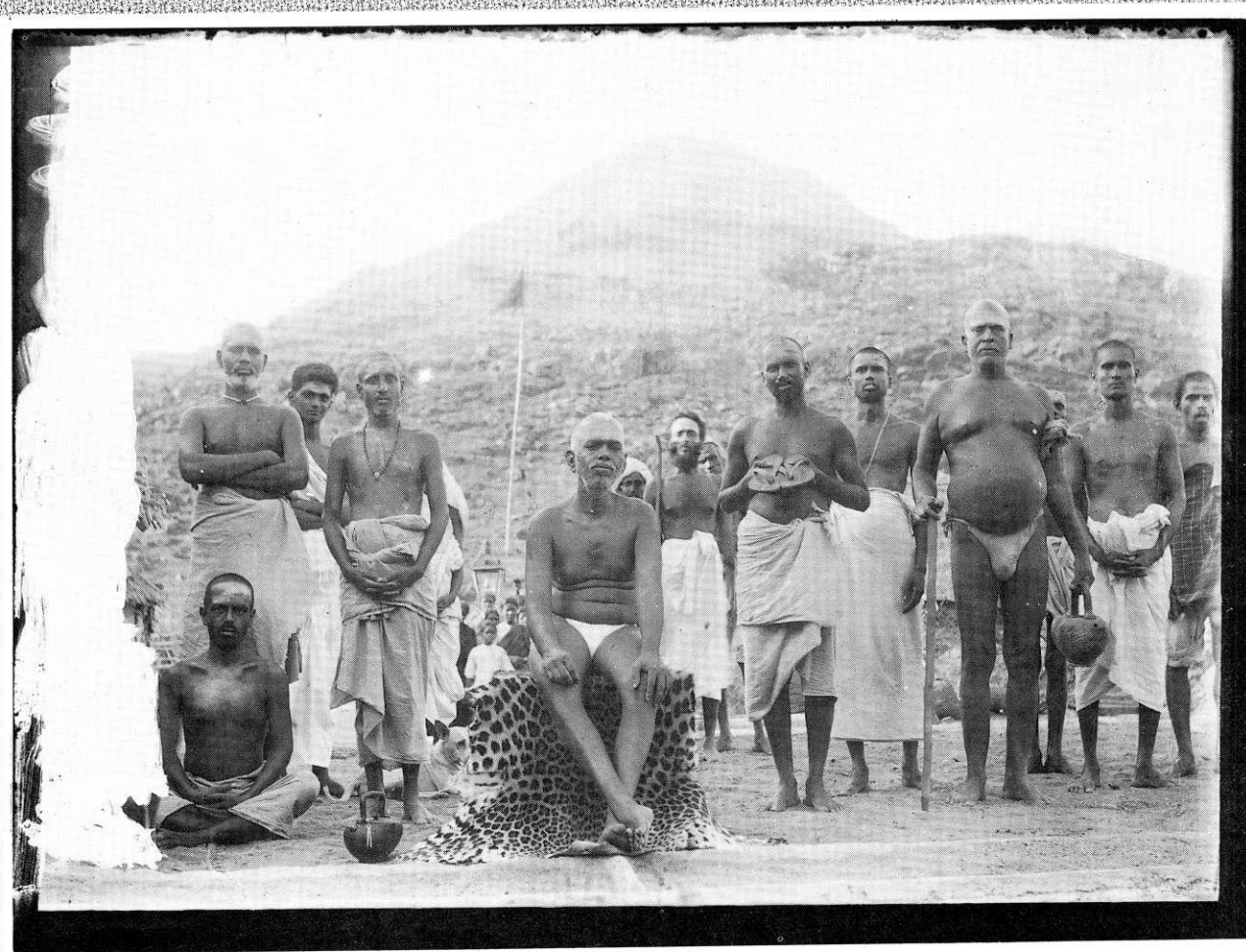
*Bhuma* (perfection) alone is. It is infinite. There arises from it finite consciousness taking on an *upadhi* (limiting adjunct). This is *abhasa* or reflection. Merge this individual consciousness into the Supreme One. That is what should be done.<sup>5</sup>

Isn't the Princess of the Golden Castle saying just the same thing? Is 'she' not saying, "Take the 'egg' of finite consciousness and hurl it at this horrible Giant which you have created and who so persecutes you — sleeping in your bed, disturbing your sleep and filling you with anxieties and desires. The 'egg' will shatter, the 'Giant' will die, and the soul will escape into Liberation." Or, as we should say, it is ego-mind that stands between the seeker and the Atman, or Self.

<sup>3</sup> *The Mountain Path*, December 1990.

<sup>4</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.70.

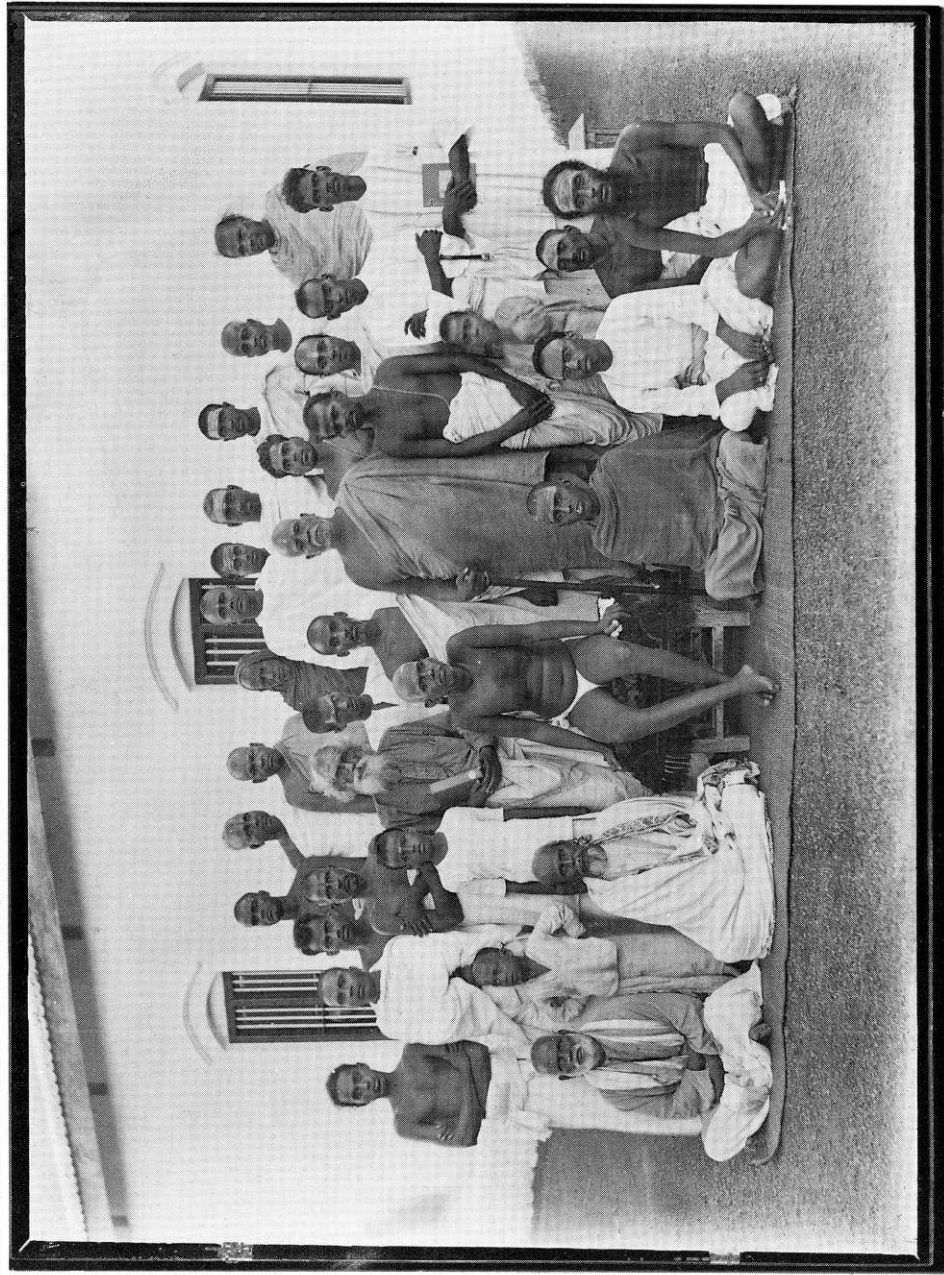
<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.24.



Circa 1920s. *Left to right:* 1. to 4. unidentified, 5. Sri Ramana Maharshi, 6. Kumara Guru, 7. Perumal Swami (with sandals), 8. Muruganar, 9. Dandapani Swami (with stick and waterpot), 10. Ramakrishna Swami, 11. unidentified.

Contact print from glass negative on printing-out paper toned in gold chloride.

From our Photographic Archives  
(Renovations by DEV GOGOI)



Bhagavati's Jayanti, 28 December 1928. Left to right, front row, seated: 1. Brother of Echammai Patil, 2. Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, 3. Sri Ramana Maharshi, 4. Niranjananda Swami (Chinnaswami), 5 & 6. unidentified, 7. Kumara Guru (Subramaniam Swami's father).  
Middle row, standing: 1. Subramaniam Swami, 2. Arunachala Swami, 3. unidentified (boy with arms akimbo), 4. Dr. Ramakrishna Iyer (behind), 5. Barataria Reddier (Yogi Ramiah's disciple), 6. Venkatoo (T.N. Venkataraman), 7. B.V. Narasimha Swami, 8. unidentified, 9. Yogi Ramiah, 10. Dandapani Swami (with stick, father-in-law of Muruganari), 11. Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer, 12. unidentified, 13. P.R. Nagasundaram Iyer, 14. (boy) K.V. Mama (K. Venkataraman), 15 & 16. unidentified.  
Back row, standing: 1. Kunju Swami, 2. Rangaswami Iyengar, 3. Seshu Iyer, 4. Kristnananda Swami, 5. S. Sundaram Iyer, 6. Chinaiyayar, 7. Picochu Iyer, 8. unidentified, 9. Munagala Venkataramiiah (Swami Ramananda Saraswati, compiler of Talks), 10. Harbour Narayana Iyer.

Contact print from glass negative on printing-out paper toned in gold chloride.

## *Sri Aurobindo : The Saintly Scholar who found God*

*By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma*

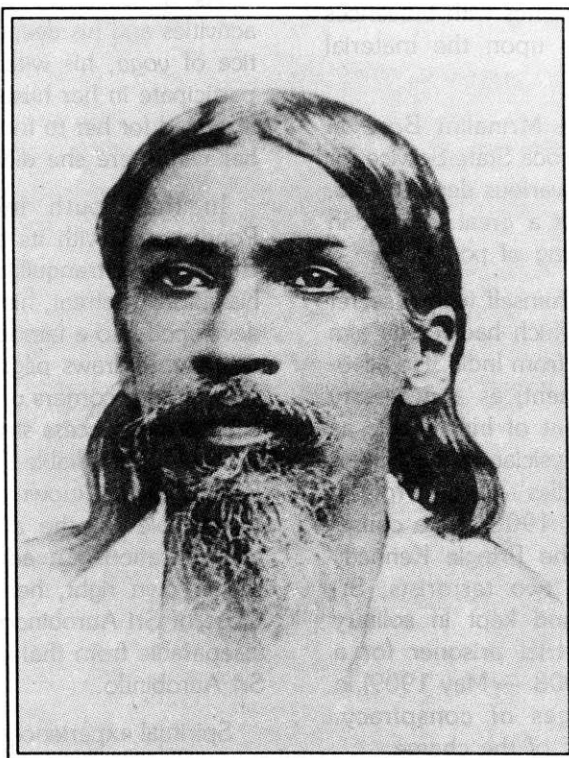
**A**N HOUR before sunrise on August 15th 1872 the world was blessed by the birth of a boy in Calcutta, who, in the fulness of time, became one of the greatest of spiritual masters. He was called Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo's father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, was an Anglicised Bengali and an eminent physician who had been educated in England. He wanted his children to be given a European upbringing. In 1879 Dr. Ghose took Sri Aurobindo and his two brothers to England, where they were lodged with an English clergyman and his wife.

Sri Aurobindo was sent to St. Paul's School in London, where he did quite well. Poetry and languages particularly interested him.

His last years in London were a period of hardship because his father could not send him

enough money. His financial situation improved after he had won a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he passed the first part of the classical Tripos examination in the first class. He also passed the Indian Civil Service examination. Languages were his forte: before leaving England he had mastered Greek, Latin, English and French and acquired familiarity with German and Italian. After returning to India he learned Bengali, his mother tongue, and became proficient in Sanskrit, Marathi and Gujarati. Although he lived in England for fourteen years it was France (a country he never visited) that had an intellectual and emotional appeal for him.



During the latter part of his sojourn in England, Sri Aurobindo was influenced by his father, who was now disillusioned with the heartlessness of the British Raj. He attended a private meeting of Indians in London at which a secret society called Lotus and Dagger was formed. Each member pledged to take some action towards ousting the British from India.

When he returned to India after a long absence, a great calm descended on him which in a sense heralded the beginning of a new spiritual dimension to his life: ".....since I set foot on Indian soil at Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane...."<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo married Mrinalini Bose in 1901. He served in the Baroda State Service for thirteen years, working in various departments. During this period he took a great interest in politics, yoga and the writing of poetry.

Sri Aurobindo engaged himself with a secret revolutionary movement, which had for its aim the expelling of the British from India. He advocated *Swaraj* (self-government) as a necessary step for the accomplishment of India's role as 'the Guru of nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies' (so he wrote in *Bande Mataram*, March 2, 1908). As a consequence of the killing of the Pringle Kennedy ladies in Muzzafarpur by two terrorists, Sri Aurobindo was arrested and kept in solitary confinement as an under-trial prisoner for a period of one year (May 1908 — May 1909) in the Alipur Jail on charges of conspiracy. Eventually he was acquitted of the charge.

After his release from prison there were rumours of Sri Aurobindo's arrest or deportation, because he continued to criticise the colonial

power in the *Karma Yogin*. For this reason he had to flee British India. He boarded a boat for Chandernagore in French India. He had to keep changing his place of residence to avoid detection. He returned to Calcutta and thereafter, using a different name, set sail for Pondicherry in French India, which seemed a safer place.

Sri Aurobindo put an end to speculation about his intentions by issuing a statement, which was published in *The Hindu* (November 1910): ".... I am and will remain in Pondicherry. I left British India over a month before proceedings were started against me and, as I had purposely retired here in order to pursue my *yogic sadhana* undisturbed by political action or pursuit, and had already severed connection with my political work, I did not feel called upon to surrender .... I have since lived here as a religious recluse..."

As a result of Sri Aurobindo's political activities and his deepening interest in the practice of yoga, his wife Mrinalini could not fully participate in her husband's life. In 1918 it was arranged for her to move to Pondicherry, but on her way there she died of influenza.

In the South Indian coastal town of Pondicherry, with its soothing sea breezes and characteristic tranquillity, Sri Aurobindo founded his spiritual retreat, his ashram, which has today developed into a famous and flourishing spiritual centre that draws pilgrims, visitors and students from the far corners of the world. Its history has been a real success story, thanks to the untiring work of a remarkable French lady, Madame Mira Richard, better known as 'The Mother', who was responsible for the ashram's organisation and administration. An advanced spiritual luminary in her own right, her publications supplement those of Sri Aurobindo. Her name has become inseparable from that of her spiritual mentor — Sri Aurobindo.

Spiritual experiences of various kinds resulted from the yoga that Sri Aurobindo started

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *On Himself* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 98.



practising in Baroda. After doing *pranayama* there was a certain inner awakening and he had visions; his health improved; he felt an electric power around his head; he also found that he could write prose and poetry with ease. With the assistance of a yogi called Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, he succeeded in realising the thought-free state of eternal silence — the spaceless and limitless Brahman. Henceforth the inspiration for all his work came from a source higher than the mind.

When Sri Aurobindo visited Bombay, this silent state of Brahman-consciousness became more intense and he witnessed the rows of tall houses and the numerous activities of this busy metropolis as mere appearances — unreal things against the background of the silent Infinite which seemed the only reality. There is a sonnet by Sri Aurobindo wherein he described this rare mystical experience:

#### NIRVANA

All is abolished but the mute Alone.

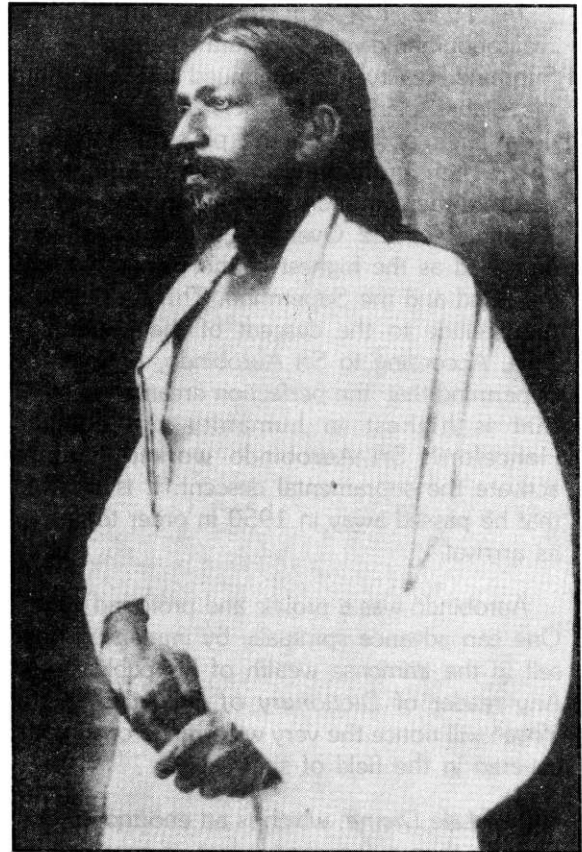
The mind from thought released, the heart  
from grief

Grow inexistent now beyond belief;  
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.  
The city, a shadow picture without tone,  
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief  
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef  
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.  
Only the illimitable Permanent

Is here. A peace stupendous, featureless,  
still,

Replaces all, - - what once was I, in It  
A Silent unnamed emptiness content  
Either to fade in the Unknowable  
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the  
Infinite.<sup>2</sup>

When he saw suffering in the Alipur Jail, Sri Aurobindo had a vision of Vasudeva (Vasudeva is one of the names of Sri Krishna, the supreme Godhead); it was Vasudeva who surrounded him, not the high prison walls; it was Vasudeva who held him in the shade, not the branches of the tree in front of his cell; it was the sentry Vasudeva who was guarding him. Not only did



Sri Aurobindo experience the omnipresence of the Absolute but he also saw the face of God in the lowest of the low, which bespeaks a compassionate heart.

On one occasion while he was engaged in *sadhana* Sri Aurobindo questioned the possibility of levitation. Suddenly he found his body raised in a manner that he could not have done by himself. He levitated and only one part of his body was slightly in contact with the ground while the rest was raised against the wall. He remained suspended without any effort on his part. Whist meditating alone in jail Sri Aurobindo constantly heard the voice of Vivekananda speaking to him for a period of two weeks.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems*, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971), p.161.

In 1912 he experienced 'an abiding realisation and dwelling in Para Brahman' — the Supreme Reality. He continued to ascend into the higher planes of consciousness and bring down their power into the physical consciousness. Then on November 24th, 1926, there occurred the descending into the physical of the 'Godhead of the Overmind', which has been described as the highest of the planes between the Mind and the Supermind. This descent was the prelude to the descent of the Supermind itself. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is via the Supermind that 'the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come'.<sup>3</sup> Henceforth Sri Aurobindo worked hard to activate the supramental descent. It is believed that he passed away in 1950 in order to hasten its arrival.

Aurobindo was a prolific and profound writer. One can advance spiritually by immersing oneself in the immense wealth of his publications. Any reader of *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga*<sup>4</sup> will notice the very wide range of subjects covered in the field of spirituality.

*The Life Divine*, which is an enormous book of more than a thousand pages, is regarded by some as Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus*. Even a sentence taken at random will help to convey a sense of its quality: "The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions".<sup>5</sup>

According to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, man has the potentiality to evolve from his limited mental consciousness to a far superior state, a new consciousness which has hitherto remained unknown to him, which he termed 'supramental'. The aim of yoga is self-development whereby one can realise this supramental consciousness. Man, alas, in his present state of

evolution has to depend on his mind which is a limited instrument that is capable of both good and evil. The supermind, in contrast, is only capable of good. The purpose of yoga has been very clearly explained by Sri Aurobindo in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: "Our purpose in yoga is to exile the limited outward-looking ego and to enthrone God in its place as the ruling inhabitant of nature. And this means, first, to disinherit desire and no longer accept the enjoyment of desire as the ruling human motive. The spiritual life will draw its sustenance not from desire but from a pure and selfless spiritual delight of essential existence. And not only the vital nature in us whose stamp is desire, but the mental being too must undergo a new birth and a transfiguring change. Our divided, egoistic, limited and ignorant thought and intelligence must disappear; in its place there must stream in the catholic and faultless play of a shadowless divine illumination which shall culminate in the end in a natural self-existent Truth-Consciousness free from groping half-truth and stumbling error. Our confused and embarrassed, ego-centred, small-motivated will and action must cease and make room for the total working of swiftly powerful, lucidly automatic, divinely moved and guided Force. There must be implanted and activated in all our doings a supreme, impersonal, unfaltering and unshaking will in spontaneous and untroubled unison with the Will of the Divine. The unsatisfying surface play of our feeble egoistic emotions must be ousted and there must be revealed instead a secret, deep and vast psychic heart within that waits behind them for its hour; all our feelings by this inner heart in which dwells the Divine will be transmuted into calm and intense movements of a twin passion of Divine Love and manifold *Ananda*. This is the

<sup>3</sup> *Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram* (6th edn. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1983), p.31.

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (5th edn., Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1982), p.6.

definition of a divine humanity or a supramental race."<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of Sri Aurobindo's yoga is *mukti* or Self-realisation. It is our self-centredness that prevents the realisation of the Self. But our *ahamkara* (egoism) can and should be dissolved by unconditional surrender to the Divine. We must learn to accept our lot in life without complaining, because what fate decrees is no other than the operation of the unseen hand of the Divine. We should also perceive the Divine in all things.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual ideal is a Superman, a 'gnostic' being, who is fully liberated and truly universal. Such a person's cosmic consciousness will be such that he will inevitably feel and experience the presence of the Divine in everything. The Superman with his supermind will even succeed in conquering old age and death. Sri Aurobindo maintained that living in the Divine and having the Divine Consciousness is itself immortality. But this supreme state of immortality cannot be reached if there is any attachment to the body. One has to live in the immortal part of oneself, which is not identified with the body, and bring down its consciousness and force into the cells.

By a remarkable coincidence, Sri Aurobindo's 75th birthday fell on the day of Indian Independence. It was as though Mother India was paying a delicate tribute to one of her greatest sons.

Towards the end of his life Sri Aurobindo made himself accessible to the public only on three days a year. A few select disciples enjoyed the privilege of his *darshan*, although on rare occasions he did not mind his other followers seeing him.

After a brief illness Sri Aurobindo passed away on December 5th, 1950. For four days thereafter his body glowed and there were no signs of its decomposition. His mortal remains were placed in a *samadhi* within the Ashram compound. The *samadhi* is now a place of pilgrimage and is frequented by tens of thousands of visitors from every continent. Sri Aurobindo's outstanding contribution towards the spiritual evolution of man still continues, long after his passing away, through the varied activities of the Ashram founded by him in Pondicherry.

<sup>6</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (6th Edn., Aurobindo Ashram, 1984), pp.83-84.

**Rare indeed is the Sage who does not crave for that which he has enjoyed, and has no desire for that which he has not possessed.**

**In the world those who crave for mundane joys and those who crave for liberation are found, but rare is that great-souled one who cares neither for enjoyment nor liberation.**

**It is only an enlightened man who has no attachment to righteousness, prosperity, sense-delights or even liberation, and is indifferent to life and death.**

**— Ashtavakra Gita, Ch. XVII.**

## The Various Texts of 'Who am I?' — 4

by Michael James

### Text B

As mentioned on page 37 of *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana Issue, 1994, in the pre-publication manuscript of *Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval* dated 6.1.1920, text A of *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?) was included as an appendix (*anubandham*), but in 1923 when *Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval* actually came to be published for the first time, text B was included as the appendix in place of text A. However, the introductory sentence ("The investigation 'Who am I?' alone will give liberation") and the first twelve questions and answers of text B are the same as those of text A, except for a few printing errors,<sup>1</sup> and the answer to question 13 of text A is reproduced with little change in text B as the answer to question 27. Thus the main difference between these two texts lies in the addition in text B of fourteen extra questions and answers, namely those numbered as 13 to 26.

Text B, which was the first text of *Nan Yar?* ever to be published, appears to have been drafted rather hastily for press, because some of the ideas found in answers 13, 14 and 15 are repetitions of ideas already expressed in answers 3, 8 and 12. This fact was noticed before the printing of the book was completed, because on page 50 at the end of the errata (*pizhai tiruttam*) a note is given saying, "In the appendix the natures of the devotee (*bhakta*), desirelessness (*vairagya*) and Self (*svarupa*) are [each] told twice". The reader may also notice the fact that the answers to questions 16, 17 and 19 to 25 of this text are taken largely from passages in text AS, often with little or no change.

On page 40 of the first edition of *Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval*, a footnote is given to the title of this text saying, "This has been made compiling in a way questions asked on some occasions to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharishi Avargal concerning *Atma-vichara* and the answers which He graciously gave".

The following is a literal translation of the last fifteen questions and answers of text B:

13. *What is the nature of Self (Svarupa)?*

That which truly exists (*yatharthamayulladu*) is only Self (*atma-svarupa*). The world, soul and God are imaginary creations (*kalpanas*) like silver in mother-of-pearl. These three appear simultaneously [literally, in one time] and disappear simultaneously. The place in which the thought 'I' does not exist even in the least is alone Self. That alone is called Silence (*mauna*). Self itself is God. Self itself is 'I'. Self itself is the world<sup>2</sup>.

14. *Among devotees, who is the superior devotee?*

Whoever sacrifices himself to Self, who is God, he alone is the best devotee<sup>3</sup>.

15. *What is desirelessness (vairagya)?*

Whatever thoughts arise, destroying all of them in the very place of rising (*utpattisthana*) without leaving even one, is alone desirelessness<sup>4</sup>. Just as pearl-divers, tying a stone to their waist, dive deep within the ocean and take the pearl lying at its bottom, so if each one dives deep within himself with desirelessness, he can attain the pearl of Self. Unceasing Self-remembrance (*nirantara svarupa-smarana*) should exist. That alone is sufficient.

16. *Is it not possible for God and for Guru to transform a jiva as Sivam?*

God and Guru, showing the path to attain liberation, can establish *jivas* in liberation<sup>5</sup>. Each one by his own efforts alone, acting in accordance with the path which God or Guru has shown, should attain liberation.

It is necessary to know oneself only by one's own eye of knowledge (*jnana-kan*); instead, how can one know by someone else?

For a person called Raman to know himself as Raman, is a mirror necessary?

17. *For a person who has desire for*

*liberation, is investigation of the principles (tattvas), which exist as other than himself, necessary?*

There is no benefit in one who should sweep up and discard a barber's rubbish, counting that there are so many hairs in it and scrutinizing their qualities beginning with length. Like that, there is no benefit in one who should know himself, instead of all together collectively discarding all of the *tattvas*, which are concealing himself, counting that the *tattvas* are so many and investigating their qualities and actions. It is necessary to consider the universe like a dream.

18. *Is there no difference between waking and dream?*

Waking is enduring (*sthira*), dream is fleeting (*asthira*); except this, there is no other difference; to the extent to which all the events which happen in waking appear to be real, similarly to that extent even the events which happen in dream appear at the time of dream to be real. In dream the mind assumes another body.

If one asks the reason for spermatorrhea (*indriya-skhalita*) arising in the waking-body of a person who has seen a dream as if he were embracing a woman, it happens thus

<sup>1</sup> The most significant printing error found in text B is that the fifth sentence of the first answer, "Even the mind, which thinks, is not 'I'", was omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Except for minor changes in wording and a different order of presentation of the ideas, this answer to question 13 is almost the same as that to question 3.

<sup>3</sup> Except for the addition of the word 'best' (*siranda*), this answer to question 14 is the same as the last sentence of answer 8.

<sup>4</sup> The wording of this sentence defining *vairagya* is almost the same as that of the second last sentence of answer 12.

<sup>5</sup> Though in other texts, such as text AS passage 6 and text E answer 19, it is said that God and Guru cannot of their own accord establish *jivas* in liberation, in this text it is said that they can do so. Refer to footnote 9 on p.49 of *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana Issue, 1995.

due to the speed with which the mind enters the waking-body from the dream-body<sup>6</sup>. In both waking and dream, thoughts and names-and-forms appear simultaneously.

19. *For aspirants for liberation (mumukshus) is there benefit by the study of scriptures?*

In every scripture it is said that for attaining liberation it is necessary to make the mind subside. Therefore, after knowing that mind-restraint (*mano-nigraha*) alone is the intention of the scriptures, there is no benefit in studying scriptures without limit. For making the mind subside, it is necessary to investigate who one is. It is necessary to investigate who one is only within oneself; instead, how to investigate oneself in scriptures? That which is called oneself (*tan*) is the reality which exists within the five sheaths (*pancha-kosas*). Whereas the scriptures are something which exists outside the five sheaths. Therefore, investigating in scriptures about the reality called 'I', which it is necessary to investigate setting aside even the five sheaths, is indeed futile. Being (*iruppadu*) keeping the mind always in Self is alone named Self-investigation (*Atma-vichara*). All the scriptures that have been studied will at one time end up as that which it is necessary to forget.

20. *What is happiness? Does it exist in Self, or does it exist in the objects of the world?*

What is called happiness is the very nature of Self. Happiness is not different, Self is not different. Self-happiness alone exists; that alone is what is real. Happiness is not obtainable in even a single object of the world. We think that happiness is obtained from them due to our wrong discrimination. In truth, whenever our intentions are fulfilled, the mind, returning to its proper place, experiences Self-happiness alone. Similarly, in sleep, swoon and *samadhi*, and when a desired object is obtained and when harm occurs to disliked objects, the mind,

becoming inward-facing, experiences Self-happiness alone. In this way the mind wanders without rest, going out, leaving Self, and returning within. When it comes outside, it experiences misery<sup>7</sup>. At the foot of the tree the shade is blissful. Outside, the sun's heat is scorching. A person who is wandering outside moves into the shade and feels cool. After a brief while he stirs outside, and unable to bear the scorching of the heat, again comes beneath the tree. In this manner he is engaged in going from the shade into the sunshine, and in moving from the sunshine into the shade. He who acts thus is a person devoid of discrimination. But a person who has discrimination, on the other hand, does not leave the shade. Similarly, the mind of the sage (*jnani*) does not leave Brahman; but the mind of the ignorant person (*ajnani*), on the other hand, is engaged in roaming in the world and suffering, and in returning to Brahman for a brief while and enjoying happiness.

What is called the world is only thought; when the world disappears, the mind experiences bliss (*ananda*); when the world appears, the mind experiences misery.

<sup>6</sup> This saying of Sri Bhagavan was omitted by Him when He wrote text F, but it has been preserved for us by Sri Muruganar in verse 558 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*: "If it be asked, '[When the dream-body and the waking-body are different, how is one to explain] the dripping of semen in the waking-body of one who sees [himself in dream] to be embracing a woman with the dream-body?' [the answer is that it is due to] the speed with which [impelled by the force of its attachment] the mind itself springs from the dream-body into the other waking-body".

<sup>7</sup> One sentence which is found here in text AS, "When it returns within, it experiences happiness", is omitted not only in this text B but also in texts C and E, and hence it is not found in text F, which was written by Sri Bhagavan on the basis of text E. In answer 18 of text D, however, this and the previous sentence are both incorporated in the sentence prior to that, thus: "In this way the mind wanders without rest, going out, leaving Self and experiencing misery, and returning within and experiencing happiness".

21. *If it is said 'knowledge-sight' (jnana-drishti), what is the meaning?*

Being still alone is named *jnana-drishti*. Being still is only making the mind to subside in Self. Other than this, knowing the thoughts of others, knowing the three times, knowing what is happening in distant places, and so on, are not *jnana-drishti*.

22. *What is the connection between desirelessness (nirasa) and knowledge (jnana)?*

Desirelessness itself is knowledge. Desirelessness and knowledge are not different. What is called knowledge is being without any object appearing. What is called desirelessness is being without the mind moving towards any object.

23. *What is the difference between investigation (vichara) and meditation (dhyana)?*

Meditation is imagining oneself as *Brahman* and as *sat-chit-ananda*. Investigation is being, having the mind kept only in itself.

24. *If it is said 'giving the soul to God', what is the meaning?*

Being without giving room to the rising of any thought other than the thought of Self is alone giving the soul to God.

25. *If it is said 'liberation', what is the meaning?*

Knowing one's true nature, having investigated who is the person who is in bondage, is alone liberation.

26. *What is the cause for the creation of the world (jagat-srishti)?*

The volition of God (*isvara-sankalpa*).

27. *What is the cause for the volition of God?*

[The answer to this question is the same as that to question 13 of text A, except for a few minor changes in spelling and for the fact that in this text the words 'the lotus blossoms' (*tamarai malartalum*) were inadvertently omitted<sup>8</sup>.]

(To be continued)

<sup>8</sup> Refer to footnote 19 on p.40 of *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana Issue, 1994.

**Do you not see how the colour of a red object placed near glass apparently colours the glass? In reality, no colour taints the glass.**

**Similarly, the *samsara* experienced by the senses and intellect is attributed by the ignorant to the *Atman*. The individual soul, by the force of this attachment to the mind and senses, inevitably gets caught in the net of the *gunas* of *maya*, and so undergoes the pain and pleasure of *samsara*. It imagines the *gunas* and creates the objects of the senses and the three kinds actions-good, bad, and mixed. This is an eternal law. The individual soul whirls in this self-created suffering or *samsara*, indefinitely till he gains the knowledge of the Self.**

**— *Adhyatma Ramayana*, 4.3.22, 23-25.**

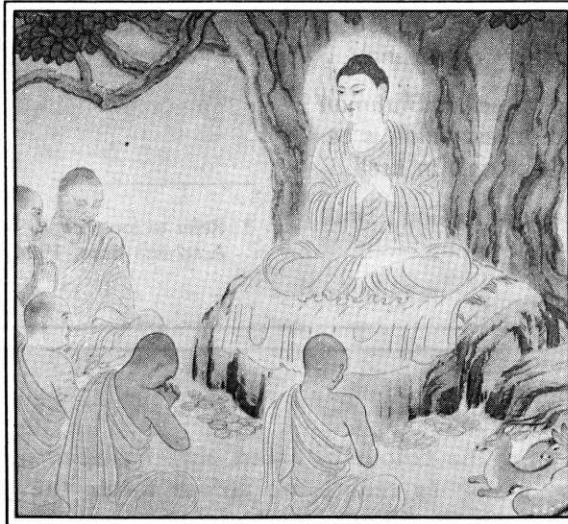
## Buddha the Saviour

By Swami Ramdas  
(Anandashram, Kanhangad)

**B** UDDHA is a veritable sun of spiritual effulgence. He came into the world more than 2500 years ago and his power and glory still holds sway on a large portion of humanity. He is a redeemer and saviour of souls, just as Krishna and Christ are. His burning renunciation, his absolute purity in thought, word and deed, his heart throbbing with love and compassion towards all living creatures in the world, his illuminating presence that brings solace and peace to sufferers caught in the grip of pain and misery, stand out in bold relief whenever we meditate upon him.

The message of non-violence and love which issued forth from his divine lips so long a time ago still reverberates and will reverberate throughout the passage of time. It is a message which brings solace to the aching heart of humanity. There is no period in the history of the world when this great message is more needed than at the present time. The world has been and is in the throes of discontent, discord and distress, and Buddha's exhortation of love and peace can alone relieve the earth from its heavily pressing burden of ill-will, hate and injustice and the consequent agony of disaster and

war. Buddha's teachings taken in their totality can be resolved into one illuminating short edict, namely: "Give love for hate". This brief sentence is pregnant with the greatest uplifting and divinising power, and when it is followed with faith and surrender, it can transmute the life of a human being into one of supreme tranquillity, light and beneficence.



Buddha never sought to define the ultimate Truth which all beings are in quest of, because Truth is inexpressible. It is realised only by purifying our mind, emotions and actions and for achieving this end he sets down certain rules of conduct which, if adopted, will lead the soul to a state of deliverance from the deep-seated ignorance

with which it is enveloped. This deliverance or emancipation, Buddha calls *nirvana*. *Nirvana* is the attainment of supreme inner freedom and peace in which the soul is freed from the thirst for sense-objects and enjoyment accrued from them. He teaches that by the negation or elimination of that which is transitory or unreal, the ineffable Reality can be realised. He emphasizes



that absolute purity is the only sure way to *nirvana*. Compassion towards all beings is both the means and result of such a realisation.

Let us therefore learn from this great world-teacher the lesson by following which we can make our lives in every way blessed, a great force for radiating love, light and peace towards all our fellow-beings on this earth. It is by love that we find union with them. It is by love that we conquer our lower nature, baser instincts and

desires. It is by love that we ignite within us the flame of true wisdom and knowledge. It is love that makes our hands and feet engage themselves in service, without expectation of any reward, for healing the sorrows of the world. Buddha is the very embodiment of this love. May his love awaken the hearts of all beings, inspiring them to live together in perfect harmony and goodwill and establish thereby a lasting spirit of unity and brotherhood on this earth.

**Devotee:** The Buddhists deny the world whereas Hindu philosophy admits its existence but calls it unreal, isn't that so?

**Bhagavan:** It is only a difference of point of view.

**D.:** They say that the world is created by Divine Energy (Shakti). Is the knowledge of unreality due to the veiling by illusion (*Maya*) ?

**B.:** All admit creation by the Divine Energy, but what is the nature of this energy? It must be in conformity with the nature of its creation.

**D.:** Are there degrees of illusion?

**B.:** Illusion itself is illusory. It must be seen by somebody outside it, but how can such a seer be subject to it? So, how can he speak of degrees of it?

You see various scenes passing on a cinema screen; fire seems to burn buildings to ashes; water seems to wreck ships; but the screen on which the pictures are projected remains unburnt and dry. Why? Because the pictures are unreal and the screen real.

Similarly, reflections pass through a mirror but it is not affected at all by their number or quality.

In the same way, the world is a phenomenon upon the substratum of the single Reality which is not affected by it in any way. Reality is only One.

Talk of illusion is due only to the point of view. Change your viewpoint to that of Knowledge and you will perceive the universe to be only Brahman. Being now immersed in the world, you see it as a real world; get beyond it and it will disappear and Reality alone will remain.

— From *Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words.*

## Where Buddhist Advaita Joins Hands With Adi Shankara

By Anthony Elenjittam

**O**UR EARTHLY planet should not be allowed to enter the third millennium before we, children of mother earth, have learnt the wisdom of Advaita and live by its light. *Advaita Vedanta*, the philosophy of non-duality, is the only philosophy of life that can give meaning to our earthly existence, generate self-realised dynamics within us and bestow that mental illumination which alone can save us from the deluge which threatens to engulf and overwhelm our planet earth.

Our great prophet Swami Vivekananda has already taught us to combine the brains of *Vedanta* with the heart of Buddha — that metaphysical non-duality with compassion which is the main characteristic of Buddhism, both in the *Theravada* and the *Mahayana* branches of the gospel of Buddha. As one studies with heart and love the *Vivekachudamani* of Shankara on the one side, and the *Surangama Sutra* of Buddha on the other, one discovers that the teaching of both Adi Shankara and Lord Buddha is substantially the same. In fact, scholars and students, both Western and Eastern, describe Shankara as a hidden Buddhist. In the same vein one can say that Buddha was a Shankarian Vedantist.

The singular mission of the philosopher-sage of Kalady, who came some thirteen centuries later, was to interpret the perennial philosophy of the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Brahmasutras* (*prastanatraya*) in terms intelli-

gible to those intellectuals and spiritual aspirants who were then breathing the Buddhist air. It is not that Shankara drove away Buddhism from India. The truth is that Shankara embraced the common denominator in the *Advaita Vedanta* of India and the Buddhist metaphysics, psychology and ethics as contained in the *Tripitakas*, in Buddha's discourses — notably in the *Surangama Sutra* — and in the Buddhist traditions from the time of Shakyamuni (from Ashoka to the *Theravada* of southern Buddhists and the *Mahayana* branches in northern Buddhism). The *Saiva Siddhanta* of Kashmir should also be mentioned in this connection.

To make a long story short, Shankara condensed the whole of *Advaita* in these terse words: *Brahma satyam, Jaganmitya, Jivo brahmaiva na apara*. ["Brahman is Truth, Reality; the universe is non-existent, an illusory mental creation. The individual life (in its ontological essence) is Brahman (Reality), identical with IT"]. This non-dualistic Vedantic axiom is explained with logic, experience and irrefutable arguments in the world-famous *Vivekachudamani*, the textbook written by Shankara for all spiritual aspirants of all countries, of all times.

Going through the Buddhist classics like the *Visudhi Marga*, *Majjima Nikaya*, the entire *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, *Maha-parinirvana Sutra*, *Udana*, *Dhammapada* and other Buddhist classics, one can condense the Advaita doctrine

in Buddhism in these words: "*Alaya Vijnana*, unconditioned consciousness, is the Absolute, the Real, the unborn and the Eternal. The ever-changing, evolving and involving universe is a mental fiction with all its fevers of egoism and all the consequent miseries and sufferings. Realise that Reality". In the *Udana*, Buddha teaches his bikshus, saying: *Atti bhikahue, ekam, ajaatam, abhutham, asangatham*. ["There is, O bhikus, the One (without a second), the Unborn, the Unconfectioned, the Unrelated"].

Buddha refers to that unitary consciousness of pure being beyond all becoming, where alone egoistic desires and lusts and sufferings can be extinguished in *nirvanic* bliss, described by the *Upanishads* as ineffable, indescribable (*anirvachaniya*). Buddha, as a child of the soul of Mother India, nay, as the greatest son of India, pointed towards the same Self-realisation which Adi Sankara thirteen centuries later taught with rigorous logic. The intellectual side predominates in Sankara's metaphysics and ontology, while in Buddha, the same non-duality or *Advaita* experience points towards strengthening of compassion. *Maitri, anukamba*, (fellow-feeling towards all sentient beings) is stressed by Buddha.

We, the ignorant, are all deceived by the phenomenal mind with its egoistic desires and interests, whereas, when enlightenment dawns in the non-dualistic unitary consciousness of the One without a second, the entire relative world disappears and the Self-realised sage says: "You are That" [*Tat tuam asi*].

As *avidya* or spiritual ignorance is the root-cause of all our ills and miseries, we are all called upon to uproot this poisonous weed from the minds and hearts of human beings. In order to achieve this goal of spiritual education and Self-realisation we need study, silence, meditation and the entire monastic discipline. It is for this reason that the Indo-Aryan tradition starts off human pilgrimage on this earth with *brahmacharya*, which is the period of the celibate student, boy or girl, to prepare oneself to shoulder the responsibilities of one's social life

### The Tree of Life

By Lama Anagarika Govinda

The life-tree's roots  
Grow from the night of death,  
Embracing the dark realms  
With golden nets.

The life-juice of the stars  
Is rising in its trunk,  
Transforming steadily  
The powers of the dark.

Innumerable suns  
Bloom in the life-tree's twigs,  
Surrounded by their planets  
As by swarming bees.

The heavens of the gods  
Are in the life-tree's crown,  
But in the course of time  
Even their pleasures cease.

And one by one they fall  
From their bright realm  
And drop like falling stars  
Into the earth's dark womb,

To be reborn as men  
And learn through pain  
and strife,  
That from the night of death  
Is born the greater life.

as a means towards Self-realisation. The code of Manu, the code of Hammurabi, Moses and the other prophets of ancient civilisations have insisted on purity of life — in thought, word and deed — in order to understand the basic ethics and moral values, without which the tower of human civilisation cannot stand on its feet.

The kernel of Buddhist teaching is pure non-duality of the Real which is unbounded, unrelated, unborn and unconditioned consciousness. It is on this essence that the entire historical growth of Buddhism is based, from the sublime Himalayan heights of ineffable consciousness to the popular religions manifested in rosaries and prayer wheels, and in the ceremonial religions in Buddhist countries. It is this scientific and psychological aspect of Buddhism that is today spreading to the West, after the teaching of the Buddha was for centuries restricted mostly to Asian countries. The Tibetan diaspora with the Dalai Lama and his entourage exiled in India has contributed to the revaluation and restoration of Buddhist Advaita.

Says Buddha: "Salutation and prostrations to Thee, O Wisdom-Consciousness, unconditioned and boundless. Purity Thou art, devoid of all defects, hence only the pure (in heart), the blameless, the perfect, will be enabled to realise Thee." Disidentifying himself from the phenomenal universe of names and forms, Shankara in his *Nirvana Shatkam* says: "Mind, intellect, egoism, thought, I am not; nor am I the one who hears, tastes, smells or sees (with ears, tongue, nose or eyes); nor am I the space or earth, nor fire, nor air. I am pure Being-Consciousness-Bliss; I am Shiva, I am Shiva, indeed."

Jesus echoed the same truth in his famous

aphorism: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In those great Buddhist universities like Virkamshila and Nalanda, and, as revealed at the Kanheri, Ajanta and Ellora caves, the innermost core around which the entire gamut of Buddhist philosophy, theosophy and religion revolved was pure Advaita, non-duality. This Reality of realities is conceived as pure Being beyond all becoming, consciousness unrestricted by names and forms, which for that very fact, is also the essence of bliss, beatitude and highest spiritual perfection. The core of the Buddhism that was taken to Tibet by Padmasambhava, to China by Bodidharma — the father of Zen Meditation — was *Advaita*, non-duality. While Nagarjuna, Dharmakirti, and Asvaghosa dwelt at the Himalayan altitudes of Advaita, people embraced this concept in their own way, often descending to degenerated forms of idol worship and priestly ceremonies. This happened to Hinduism too.

The wars between Jews and Arabs, the Sunnis and the Shias, Catholics and Protestants can end only with the Gospel of Advaita which proclaims: "The one without a second is Reality; the many of the phenomenal universe is appearance. Atman-Brahman-Consciousness is the substance. Everything else is mere shadow, cast by change-ful mind."

### The Kingdom

His followers said to him, "When will the kingdom come?"

Jesus said: "It will not come by watching for it, It will not be said, 'Look, here it is', or 'Look, there it is.' Rather, the father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

— The Gospel of Thomas.

## On Renouncing Mukti

By K. Lakshmana Sarma

**T**HE WAY taught by Buddha is now known as the *Hinayana*, or the inferior path. In contradistinction to it arose what is known as the *Mahayana*, the great path. The former prevails in Ceylon and Burma; the latter in Tibet. This cult consists in the teaching of the renunciation of *nirvana* or *mukti*, and the one that does this is styled a *bodhisattva*. He dedicates himself to the salvation of others, himself remaining in a state of imperfection or bondage.

The *Mahayanists* explain that they are followers of what Buddha taught by example. The story goes that after he attained illumination under the bodhi tree at Gaya, Mara, the tempter came to him (Buddha) and suggested that he should give up his physical body and enter *nirvana*. The term *nirvana* is usually rendered as annihilation, but really means only egolessness, exactly as taught by Bhagavan Ramana. Buddha refused and continued to live in order to teach the way he had followed. This is described as renunciation of *nirvana*, and the *Mahayanists* claim that they are following this example of Buddha.

Now the implication is that the followers of the so-called *Hinayana* are inferior, because the pursuit of *nirvana*, or deliverance, is selfishness. Is it so? And is this policy of *Mahayana* really superior? A question also arises, whether this new cult is strictly correct. On this question powerful light is thrown by the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan, our master.

Vedanta has always maintained that no one

can really be of any help to others, who is himself not free from the bonds of ignorance, and consequent imperfection. The query is: "How can one, who is himself unable to cross the ocean of worldliness, enable others to cross that ocean?"

This is conclusive on the question and Bhagavan himself has told us that in order to do real good to others, or uplift the world, one must qualify by attaining the egoless state. So long as the ego is retained, it disqualifies the person for the task of uplifting the world. And because of the retention of the ego, the effort to save others without himself being saved may amount to a sin of great seriousness, since the ego has been described as the potency of all possible sins and defects of character.

Love of deliverance is certainly not wrong, because deliverance alone makes us truly and completely unselfish. Egoism is described by Bhagavan as the original sin. This must be guarded against always, till the ego is once for all destroyed.

But how to understand the so-called 'renunciation of deliverances' by Buddha, which is interpreted as setting an example for the followers of *Mahayana* Buddhism? The clue to understanding this is Bhagavan's teaching of the true nature of *mukti* as the natural state — *sahaja samadhi*.

*Mukti* or *nirvana* occurs automatically when the awareness of the real Self as identical with the supreme reality is experienced. After this the sage is no longer embodied, and is hence not subject to bondage. He is thereafter a *jivanmukta*. His deliverance and participation of

the supreme bliss of the real Self is not at all discounted by the apparent survival of the body for some years. Nothing is gained by the sage when the body ceases to live. The notion that real *mukti* or *nirvana* is only won on the dissolution of the body is due to our ignorance. Between *jivanmukti* and *videhamukti*, there is no real difference.

The position of the *jivanmukta* is just the same as that of God, the Lord of the Universe. God's activities in creating, maintaining, destroying and recreating the world do not at all detract from His true nature as *Sat-chit-ananda*. The same is the state of the *jivanmukta*. He does not become free, or more free, after getting rid of the body. He is already free.

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## Sinfulness is no Bar

By H.S. Spencer

**W**HAT IS 'sinfulness'? It is merely the exhibition of certain 'vasanas' or tendencies of human character which are against the Divine Moral Order. They are all acquired traits and what is acquired can always be disowned and thrown aside, because it is not inherent and germane but foreign to one's nature. In the words of Sri Ramana it might be said: "Countless vasanas or tendencies caused by past karma reside in the mind. These have accumulated from time immemorial, through untold past lives". (Cf. *Who Am I?* page 9). Such accumulations being foreign to our true nature, have at one time or another to be cast aside in our progress towards freedom which is our true nature. This, I submit, is Bhagavan's special message to the world.

It is a message of brightness, and hope that has reverberated through the ages from Zarathushtra, Sri Krishna, Jesus and Mohammed. It is based upon the essential Divinity of the human soul, however much it may be besmirched by non-human tendencies. The smudges the personality bears are a mere veneer that appears on the surface. They cannot permanently affect the Real Self within.

The more vigorous and determined the search

for the Real Self within the more rapidly does this tarnish of sin fall away. The search cleanses the Soul's vehicle. It is the impure state of the vehicle that is responsible for the persistence of *vasanas*. Once the vehicle is cleansed these *vasanas* die a natural death.

Sri Ramana has given to the world the easiest and most practicable method of *Atma-Vichara* for Self Realisation. As he says, "All scriptures, with one voice, declare that control of the mind is absolutely necessary for the attainment of salvation. Hence control of the mind is the goal to be aimed at." (Cf. *Who Am I?* Page 13). What easier and more practicable way can any one think of, for the purpose, than going to the very source of the mind through the simplest of simple inquiries, 'WHO AM I?'

The Mind in the ultimate analysis is nothing but Consciousness. This consciousness can only reside in some permanent part of the constitution of man and there is no other permanent part except the Soul, the individualised Atma, which is itself a particle of the Paramatma or Absolute Spirit. Sri Ramana's method of *Atma Vichara* for reaching the Real Self within is the easiest, shortest and most practicable path for reaching the goal of Self-Realisation.

# The Aryan Invasion Theory<sup>1</sup>

An Assessment by J. Jayaraman

**T**HIS book is a testimony to the mockery, which a blind acceptance of one's past handed-down and built upon feet of clay, can make, of man's search for Truth. The Aryan Invasion story reminds me of *Who Stole Milady's Necklace?* a whodunit in photographs (cf. Readers Digest, June'85). Milady wishing to protect her jewels got a camera installed such that it took in a wide view of her room. The camera was set to take a photo of anyone while they crossed the threshold either way. When milady's necklace was stolen, the roll of film yielded a sequence of photos showing milady, or her butler, maid, nurse etc; one photo while entering and one while leaving the room in the course of each one's work. The reader given a mixed up sequence of photos is asked to spot the thief. Strangely, a logical sequence cannot be got at all! — until one realizes that the thief, by walking backwards, had made it seem as if he were entering, while actually *leaving* the room, and vice versa.

Dr. Ambedkar, after a first-hand study of the Rigveda and the Avesta had concluded (pp. 74-85 of his, *Who Were the Shudras?*) that '1. The Vedas do not know any such race as the Aryan race; 2. There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the Dasas and Dasyus supposed to be natives of India; 3. There is no evi-

dence to show that the distinction between Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus was a racial distinction; 4. The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryans were different in colour from the Dasas and Dasyus.'

'These are also the conclusions drawn by Talageri,' says Sita Ram Goel the publisher, in his Foreword. He concludes with, 'To the best of my knowledge — and I am no stranger to the subject — no one before him has noticed the role and presence of Puranic dynasties in Vedic literature the way he has done ... .. in his magnum opus ..... he has not only stormed into the ... *Cakravyuha* erected by the invasionists, but he has also come out of it with flying colours, although he is not much older than Abhimanyu...'

The Aryan invasion theory developed in Europe after Sir William Jones established in 1786 that Sanskrit and most European languages had a common origin. Study of Sanskrit grammar gave rise to linguistics as a science in Europe, and to the concept of language 'families'. The largest of these, the Indo-European family, has 9 branches, 8 of them confined to Europe, the 9th being the Indo-Iranian branch. A proto-Indo-Euro-

<sup>1</sup> By Shrikant G. Talageri : Published by : Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002. 1993; pp.408, Rs. 150.

pean language ('the original' parent) was reconstructed hypothetically by comparing the widely scattered Indo-European branches existing today. But where was its 'original' homeland? In the very beginning scholars felt that India was the most likely candidate. For various reasons this view was abandoned. The presence of 8 out of 9 branches in Europe, and the fact that the whole of South India remains non-Aryan in speech, made them look elsewhere. It is now widely regarded that South Russia is the centre from which the branching took place around 3,000 B.C. The (to be) Indo-Iranians separated from the (to be) European branches, in South Russia, and lived for a while in Central Asia. During the second millennium BC they again split from Central Asia and reached their respective Iranian and Indian destinations. The date of second millennium BC was arrived at as follows — (i) the earliest *recorded* and *dated* presence of any branch of the Indo-European family anywhere, is of the Hittite-Kassite-Mitannis who invaded Iran-Turkey during this time. This fixed the time of Aryan arrival in Iran. (ii) the discovery of Indus valley civilisation dated positively to have ended by 1500 BC, fixed the time of Aryan arrival in India.

These Vedic invaders, were presumed to be the cause of the mysterious fall of the Indus natives (the Vedic *dasyus*) presumed again to be a Dravidian race. Scholars looked for evidence within the Vedas and Puranas in *support* of this and (therefore!) found it. The evil *dasas* and *dasyus* of the Rig Veda were taken to be the Indus natives. The absence of any mention in the Rig, of South India, or rice, or tiger 'proved' the Aryans were not native to India. When scholars looked into the Puranas they found that these showed amazing correspondence in terms of nearly 100 dynastic generations (Manu downwards) spanning nearly 1700 years. These were available upto the Mahabharata War. The Puranas again agreed on nearly 1050 years lapsing from the War to the reign of Mahapadma Nanda. The Puranic dynastic listing stops after here. Greek cross-reference (Alexander reached India 326 BC) fixes Nanda at 380 BC. This placed the Bharata War at (1050+380) around 1500 BC. But the Vedic Aryans, we saw, reached India only around 1500 BC and so the War can have occurred only after this date, after the ages of the Vedas, Brahmanas, and Upanishads, but before Buddha (600 BC). Since the Invasion theory was never

questioned the Puranas were enmasse rejected as unreliable. (Incidentally, the under-water ruins at Krishna's Dwaraka have been fixed through TL-dating to be around 1500 BC, endorsing the Puranic date for the War). The Invasion theory was retained as the basis to interpret (twist, ignore) every contrary internal evidence. For example, (i) there is no shred of Vedic evidence that the term *dasas* referred to non-Aryans. The presence of substantial evidence that *dasas* referred to warring clans among Vedic Aryans was ignored. (ii) There is no memory of such conflicts with Vedic Aryans, within Tamil or other Dravidian literature. More importantly, there is no memory of a northern home in Tamil texts. (iii) There is no memory within Vedas of a home outside of the Punjab, let alone one of a non-Indian home. (iv) Iranian texts retain the memory of an original Aryan home (*aryana vaejo*). (v) There is no evidence of destruction by war, within the Indus ruins. (vi) The majority of archaeological sites are now seen to lie, not along the Indus, but along a massive river east of it and now dated to have dried up around 2000 BC. This is now identified as the Saraswati, of the Sapta Sindhavah (seven-river system) most hymned in the Rig Veda.

All these (and much more as Talageri shows) should have led to the conclusion that the Saraswati (Indus) culture is itself the Rig Vedic culture, and that there were break-away groups (the *dasas*) from here to Iran and Europe; not the other way round. P.L. Bhargava did pioneering work collating dynastic data of the Rig and the Puranas. He *did* reject the Invasion theory and postulate an expansion from a Vedic Punjab, to UP, Bihar, Maharashtra etc. But even he twists logic or interpretation when encountering Puranic data which imply a movement towards Punjab from other parts of India, *even though such data is corroborated in the Rig!* There was a bias in the minds of the scholars which made them assume that all Puranic dynasties of north India must have had origins only in the Vedic people of Punjab.

Puranic dynastic listing shows that four major dynasties of Vaivaswata Manu were 'spread out over the expanse of north India already around 3000 BC: Ikshvaku (Ayodhya), Pramsu (Bihar), Saryati (Gujarat) and Sudyumna (Prayag). Talageri in a total reversal of directions convincingly shows through cross referenced Puranic and Rig Vedic evidence, that the last named, Sudyumna, moved westwards and split



into four major dynasties: Anu (Kashmir), Druhyu (Afghanistan), Puru (Punjab) and Yadu (Maharashtra). *These alone formed the Rig Vedic (Saraswati) culture.* They composed the Rig Veda. Early Rig shows that the Purus were friendly with the Anus and Druhyus. Later Rig shows much enmity with them. Talageri proves that from time to time, Ikshvaku kings from Ayodhya (Mandhata, Purukutsu, Trasadasu etc.) helped the Purus fight their enemies. There are two major references for the defeated Anu and Druhyu enemies moving out westwards and northwards of their homes. There are ten clans among the Anus and Druhyus identified in the later of the above references (Rig VII. 18). Seven of these 'prove to be unmistakably identifiable with a range of ancient and modern Iranian peoples' (p.365): Parshus i.e. Parsavas (Parsis), Pakthas (Pashtus, Pathans), Prthus i.e. Parthavas (Parthians), Bhalanas (Baluchi, cf. the Bolan pass), Vishānis i.e. Pisāchas (Dards), Shivs (Khivs) and Bhrgus (Phryges i.e. the Thraco-Phrygians). The eighth of the ten clans are the Simyus (Sirmios, the ancient Albanians). The ninth were the Alinas (Hellenes), and the tenth Druhyus (Druids, the ancient Celts). The Celtic branch, though the western-most branch today, was widely spoken between Spain and Asia Minor before the Christian Era. These ten therefore, 'constitute a long belt of southern branches' (p.372). According to Talageri, the earlier of the two major references mentioned above (found in no less than five Puranas; p.366) led to an earlier Anu and Druhyu emigration northwards leading to the Balto-Slavonic and the Germanic languages respectively. These formed 'the northern branches of the Indo-European family.'

Coming to the triumphant Purus of Punjab, the Puranas and the Vedic texts indicate that the centre of Puru culture shifted eastwards to the region later known as the Kuru-Pānchāla, and further eastwards. The Brāhmanas and Upanishads might have evolved with this movement of the Purus. Talageri opines the exact identity of the Saraswati people who remained behind, to be 'a mixture of Puru and Anu with also an element of Yadu' (p.403).

K.D. Sethna has demonstrated through the 'cotton' and '*mleccha*' evidence that the culture of the Rig Veda 'gradually developed into the culture of the Indus Civilisation' (p.175). He dates the era

of the Dharma Sutras (which are post-Vedic) to 2500 BC, since the word *mleccha desa* ('region of indistinct speakers') occurs for the first time only in the Dharma Sutras, and since Mesopotamian Cuneiform texts (dated 2350 BC and after), mention regular trade with a far-away kingdom (pronounced *milukkha*), which obviously is the *mleccha desa*. The Sutra texts circumscribe *mleccha desa* geographically within the Saraswati region. This shows that the Vedic culture (not beyond the Upanishads) preceded the Indus culture, in the Saraswati region. This fact is corroborated by astronomical evidence within the Sutras (which places Sutra-period, after 2500 BC), and also by the total non-mention of 'cotton' in all Vedic texts upto the Sutras where it first occurs. Cotton incidentally, is dated in Indus sites around 2500 BC.

Talageri modifies Sethna's theory and shows that, after 2500 BC the Purus and with them the Vedic culture, moved eastwards to Kuru-Panchala and beyond. Those that stayed back in Saraswati were a motley group of Puru, Anu and Druhyu (*mlecchas*) who formed the Indus civilisation. This accounts for features found in Indus sites which do not entirely correspond with Vedic culture. Indeed, they *need not*, due to the above reason.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Indus script has been shown by S.R.Rao to have Vedic connection. But even he 'interprets the language and culture of the Indus people as "pre-Vedic", apparently unwilling or reluctant to tamper with the sacred cow of the accepted date of the Rig Veda (1000 BC)' (p.103). Dr. Rao has conclusively shown that the basic letters of the Indus script bear resemblance with the known values of South Arabic and Old Aramaic letters. Further, from several inscriptions (of 1000 BC and after) 'found all over the country in the last few years .... it is evident that the Brahmi script evolved directly from the Indus script' (p.101). This 'proves that the South Arabic, Old Aramaic alphabets of West Asia, and the Indian Brahmi, are all derived from the Indus script. Between themselves these three alphabets are the ancestors of every single alphabet and script in use in the world today with the sole exception of the Chinese script' (p.103)

Talageri casts a wide net. He does a searching, comparative analysis of the 7 Indo-European mythologies: Vedic, Iranian, West Asian, North European (Teutonic), Southern (Graeco-Roman),

Eastern (Balto-Slavonic) and Western European (Celtic). He concludes, 'the one startling fact that comes to our notice is that each of the mythologies bears a relationship to Vedic mythology, but not to any of the others. The common elements in any mythology are common with Vedic mythology; sometimes also with some other mythology in addition to the Vedic, but nowhere to the exclusion of the Vedic ..... (this) proves that the Vedic language and culture stood in a somewhat ancestral position in respect of the Iranian, West Asian and European languages and cultures.' (pp. 378, 399).

Talageri presents every bit of evidence advanced by the Invasionist scholars and those advocating Punjab as the region from which all expansion occurred. He therefore contends with a very wide field of disciplines of research. He counters them all, often exposing manipulation and builds up a theory brick by brick before our very eyes, while simultaneously pulling down warped theories. Talageri's theory in summary is best stated in his own words, 'the original Indo-European language .... was spoken in interior north India; but in very ancient times it had spread out and covered a large area extending to Afghanistan and had developed a number of dialects, which may be classified as follows: (1) *Outer Indo-European dialects*: spoken in Afghanistan and northern Kashmir and adjoining north Himalayan region. The first major migration took place with a major section of them moving out northwards and westwards towards Europe. This may have taken place in two waves. The outer dialects were thus the ancestral forms of the European languages. (2) *Central Indo-European dialects*: spoken in what we may call the "Punjab region" and in southern Kashmir. Those speakers of the Outer dialects who remained behind got absorbed into the speech of the Central dialects, and formed part of the Rig Vedic culture which had developed there. (3) *Inner Indo-European dialects*: spoken in the expanse of northern India from the Gangetic region to Maharashtra and from Punjab to Orissa and Bengal. As the Rig Vedic culture became rapidly accepted all over India a hybrid but refined language (Classical Sanskrit) was developed by the Indian grammarians, coordinating the Central dialect of the Rig Veda with the Inner dialects spoken by the masses over the major part of north India. Today, all the languages of India are descendants of the Inner dialects,

though highly influenced by Vedic and Classical Sanskrit.' (p.185). Frawley has shown (see MP '92, p.94) that prior to major geological changes, the ancient Saraswati river-system included Ganga and Yamuna, and that the eastern Sarayu formed a separate river-system of the Solar Ikshvakus. He also dates the early Rig Veda at 6000 BC, through much internal evidence on equinoxial precession. This indicates a vaster ancient Rig Vedic domain than that suggested by Talageri. Some adjustments may thus be needed in his otherwise sound theory.

Talageri is true to the Upanishadic spirit of enquiry — he modifies theory and not the evidence whenever the former conflicts with the latter. His thinking is daring enough to let go of past conditioning, aggressive enough to come down heavily on insincerity and brilliant enough to synthesise a staggering scenario of references. It is to his eternal credit that his theory which ties up many hitherto loose ends, also proves that the evidence of Purānas and Itihasas is very reliable and consistent with the Vedas. Santayana said, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' Talageri's theory if true, would triple the size of Indian History books. It would herald a renaissance world founded on Sanātana Dharma described amply in India's ancient history. Talageri's theory, if true, promises an archaeological gold mine in central Northern India, especially around Prayāg and Ayodhya which must yield strata going back to 3500 BC, the beginning of Vaivaswata Manu. The Purānas talk of a *pralaya*, deluge, prior to that, and they list other Manu-dynasties, and deluges separating dynasties and minor deluges separating these Manu-eras over staggering, cyclic time scales. The extant Purānas are all inevitable branches of an original Purāna (*the panchama veda*) codified by Bhagavan Vyasa along with the four Vedas. Talageri's work shows that Purānic material is as authentic as the Vedic.

Purāna deals not only with perceived evolution and man, not only with relationships within families, societies, kingdoms and gods, but ultimately with Cosmic-Atmic relationship and identity. This identity is the theme that runs throughout the Vedas as Rta, the Upanishads as Satya and the Itihasa-Purānas as Dharma. It is all cosmic opera, pointing to Self-discovery.

This book, like our self, awaits discovery.

## BOOK REVIEWS

In the Charge of J. JAYARAMAN

**THE ANUBHUTI PRAKASA OF VIDYARANYA:** The Philosophy of Upanishads, an interpretative exposition critically edited. By Godabarisha Mishra. Pub: University of Madras, Madras-600 005; 1992; pp. 729+49; Rs. 200.

The title under review is the thesis approved by the University of Madras for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1986 under the guidance of Prof. N. Veezhinathan. The Sanskrit text of Vidyaranya's Anubhuti Prakasa has been critically edited and is provided with introduction, English translation, notes and indices by Sri Godabarisha Mishra of the Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy. This is a definitive edition based on 25 manuscripts (from India and abroad), their variant readings and their suggested interrelationships. Sri Vidyaranya (14th century A.D) chose to expound the philosophy of 12 Upanishads in twenty chapters in this work which is a metrical composition. Students of Upanishads know that a study without an insight into the philosophy that an Upanishad expounds does not take them far. This book helps us to develop this insight.

All Upanishads talk of Atman-Brahman identity. But each Upanishad has its own method and technique to convey this Truth. A beginner generally finds it difficult to arrive at the central teaching of an Upanishad even after wading through its various analogies, metaphors and similes as Upanishads are abstruse. Sri Vidyaranya takes up the central thought of each Upanishad and in lucid language describes the setting and the way the key concepts such as Jiva, Iswara, Moksha, and the World are discussed in the particular Upanishad.

To take an example, the popular *Kathopanishad* is taken up and discussed under the following heads: Detachment, Definition of a preceptor and a disciple, the definition of Atman, the grace of God, the stages of Yoga, Discrimination, the identity of Jiva and Brahman and the destruction of the limiting adjunct. Between verses 54 and 64 (chapter 11) the entire subject matter of *Katha* has been compressed and our attention is directed to the central theme. We see the beauty of this method of exposition all the more where more difficult Upanishads such as the *Brihadaranyaka* are dealt with.

Sri Vidyaranya, in this, as in his *Panchadasi*, is refreshingly clear and enlivens the otherwise dry subject. Mishra has chosen this text of Sri Vidyaranya for a critical examination and English rendering. In his scholarly introduction he discusses the date and works of Vidyaranya, the nature of Reality, Iswara, Jiva and Sakshi, the doctrine of Maya, World and Liberation. The introduction is illuminating and the translator has discussed the cardinal tenets of Advaita lucidly.

We are sure that this painstaking research work will attract the attention of scholars and bring this valuable text to the notice of the English knowing public.

— Swami Amritananda.

**SRI RAMANA MAHARSI'S UPADESA SARAH:** Exposition by Swami Tadrupananda. Pub: Manan Abhyas Mandal near Sardar Bridge, Jhadeshwar - 392011. District Baruch, Gujarat. pp. ix+278. price not stated.

The operation of deluded mind is more manifest in people

playing hide-and-seek with the samsaric existence than in those who have 'renounced' it. Even children when they come to know that little sand-castles must collapse after a while, are no more deluded to believe in their immortality. The point here is that knowledge derived from sensory experience presents a reversed view of ourselves and the world, whereas Self-Knowledge, as indicated by the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, is immediate and innate. In a succinct and well-defined way his *Upadesa Sarah* begins with the primeval truth that definite *karma* enacted, or partially enacted as in memory, yields its definite results. Then it goes on to deal with the hierarchy of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana margas. To talk about the transcendent reality found in the contents of Bhagavan's essential teachings is like talking about rain in Cherrapunji.

The book under review is a translation from the original Gujarati exposition of Swami Tadrupanand into English by Brni. Sandhya, one of his disciples. It combines scriptural teachings from such sources as *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* and *Sandilya Bhakti Sutra* with the divine message of *Upadesa Sarah*. The narration outlined under the heading 'A Legend' gives an impressive account of the Tamil original of *Upadesa Saram*, connecting it with the egotism of Darukavana ascetics and their release through the Grace of Lord Siva.

Tadrupanand highlights with a touch of humour and candour the importance of the practice of meditation in its proper order: "An individual who neglects *pujan* and *japa* and straightaway begins to meditate is compared to an individual whose hunger is normally appeased after eating eighth capatis decides to leave the first seven capatis and eat the eighth one first! .... With the help of *virala cintana* alone [discontinuous meditation in which term the Swamiji includes also the practice of puja and japa] the summit of *sarala cintana* can be achieved."

In the course of his exposition the reader progressively gathers the details necessary to recognise the path leading to Self-Knowledge. A compelling book that arouses one's interest to delve deep into the profundity of *Upadesa Sarah*.

— R. Ramasami.

**RIPENESS IS ALL:** N. Raghunatha Aiyar Commemorative 1893-1993. Editor: V. Sivaramakrishnan. Pub: Vighneswara Publishing House, 19, XII Main, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560 055. pp. 126; Rs. 20.

This book brought out on the birth centenary of N. Raghunatha Aiyar (NR), is in two parts. The first part contains pen-portraits by eminent people who have known NR and his works. The second part contains a selection from NR's writings.

Even as this reviewer started reading the first few articles on NR, the quotations from NR reported in them were so arresting, that he jumped directly to the main course, the second part, to meet and attempt to know NR in person. An original thinker with a breath-taking mastery of the written word, NR was the de-facto editor of HINDU for over three decades, and later wrote the brilliant 'Sotto Voce' columns under the

pen-name '*Vighneswara*' for the *Swatantra* journal. In his retired life he translated Valmiki Ramayana and Srimad Bhagavatam, for which he was awarded the title 'Bhagavata Vidya Praveena' by Mahaswami of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

In NR's hands journalism is transformed into literature. Casting mirth at the House of Lords, crossing swords with Nehru and Rajaji, riding the Ragas with music and musicians, raising penetrating questions on ethics, politics, education, dueling tongue in cheek with Sir C.V. Raman on matters of the palate, penning a soulful article on Bhagavan Ramana's Mahanirvana, his 'ink-dyed' hands have surveyed it all, and there is 'moon magic' in his words.

Every book has its 'beauty-spots'. The slight mismatch in the 'contents' page would surely have brought a frown on NR's face. But the word 'wrong' printed as 'worg' would perhaps have brought a wry smile on his otherwise stiff editorial lip.

The book is very reasonably priced and is heartily recommended.

It's a pity they don't make them like NR anymore.

— 'g.j.k.'

**KINDNESS, CLARITY AND INSIGHT:** by Dalai Lama.  
Pub: Snow Lion Publications, P.O. Box 6483, Ithaca, NY 14851 U.S.A. pp. 232, \$10.95.

**COMPASSION AND THE INDIVIDUAL:** by Dalai Lama  
Pub: Wisdom Publications, 361, Newbury St., Boston, Mass. USA 02115. pp. 14; Free

In these twenty lectures given in U.S.A. and Canada during his tours in 1979, '81, the Dalai Lama presents the main features of Buddhist Philosophy and Practice in their relevance to the present day conditions of the world. He speaks of the distinct approaches of the several schools of Buddhism though his exposition is of Tibetan Buddhism. He is frank in his assessment of other religions in the context of the progress of humanity. In his view the developments in Western technology do not necessarily conflict with the essentials of religion; but they are not enough to ensure happiness to man. The Dalai Lama is very precise in his exposition of the techniques of Meditation. He says: "First look to your posture: arrange the legs in the most comfortable position; set the backbone as straight as an arrow. Place your hands in the position of meditative equipoise, four finger widths below the navel, with the left hand on the bottom, right hand on top, and your thumbs touching to form a triangle. This placement of the hands has connection with the place inside the body where inner heat is generated. Bending the neck down slightly, allow the mouth and teeth to be as usual, with the top of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth near the top teeth. Let the eyes gaze downwards loosely — it is not necessary that they be directed to the end of the nose; they can be pointed toward the floor in front of you if this seems more natural. Do not open the eyes too wide nor forcefully close them; leave them open a little. Sometimes they will close of their own accord; that is all right. Even if your eyes are open, when your mental consciousness becomes steady upon its object, these appearances to the eye consciousness will not disturb you." (p.66)

His explanation of the Mandala is interesting: 'Mandala, in

general, means that which extracts the essence. One type of Mandala is the offering of the entire world system with the major and minor continents mentally made to high beings. Although we might call these pictures and constructed depictions Mandalas, the main meaning is for oneself to enter into the Mandala and extract an essence in the sense of receiving blessing. It is a place of gaining magnificence. Because one is gaining a blessing and thereupon developing realisations, it is called an extraction or assumption of something essential.' (p.82)

More important is his exposition of the Mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum'.

'Om is composed of three letters, A,U, and M. These symbolise the practitioner's impure body, speech, and mind; they also symbolise the pure exalted body, speech, and mind of a Buddha.

'The development of pure body, speech, and mind comes from gradually leaving the impure states and their being transformed into the pure. How is this done? The path is indicated by the next four syllables. *Mani*, being jewel, symbolises the factors of method — the altruistic intention to become enlightened, compassion, and love.

'The two syllables. *padme*, meaning lotus, symbolise wisdom. Just as a lotus grows forth from mud but is not sullied by the faults of mud, so wisdom is capable of putting you in a situation of non-contradiction whereas there would be contradiction if you did not have wisdom.... wisdom realising emptiness.

'Purity must be achieved by an indivisible unity of method and wisdom, symbolised by the final syllable *hum*, which indicates indivisibility...*hum* is the seed syllable of Akshobhya — the immovable, the unfluctuating, that which cannot be disturbed by anything.' (p.116-17)

The present-day world may be conflict-ridden; but if you as an individual can cultivate and radiate compassion in your personal life, you will have added a brick to the intended edifice of PEACE on earth. Seeds of compassion lie deep in each one and they have only to be tapped with good-will. This is the passionate plea of the benevolent Fourteenth Dalai Lama in the attractive brochure brought out for free distribution.

— (Late) Sri M.P. Pandit.

**THE EMPTINESS OF EMPTINESS:** An introduction to early Indian Madhyamika - by C.W. Huntington Jr. with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, 41, U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi - 110 007. 1992; pp. xvi + 287; Rs. 175.

The above book under review contains a study and a translation of 'The Entry into the Middle Way' a philosophical and religious text composed in India sometime during the first half of seventh century A.D. by a Buddhist monk named Chandrakirti. It was a treatise of critical importance to the development of Buddhism in Tibet and in India as well. Chandrakirti's text is essentially an introductory manual for scholars wishing to study and practise the soteriological philosophy or philosophical propaganda of Madhyamika (middle

way) or Sunyavada (doctrine of emptiness). The Madhyamika or Middle Way originated in India in the second or third century and had a decisive influence in the subsequent development of Mahayana Buddhism.

'The Emptiness of Emptiness' reconsiders the central doctrine of Emptiness and affirms that the Madhyamika critique of all philosophical views is subtle and more radical than most Western interpretation indicates.

The first part of the book aims at discovering what is 'The Entry into the Middle way'. It has been designed to be read both as a commentary on Chandrakirti's treatise and as an introduction to early Indian Madhyamika. The interpretive comments of Part I are offered solely as a tool for approaching the Madhyamika as living philosophy.

Part 2 began years ago with Geshe Namgyal Wangchen's intention to produce an unblemished translation of Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara as an introductory text for Madhyamika studies.

In assessing the philosophical significance of the Madhyamika the author demonstrates that thrust toward a self-critical awareness of methodological pre-suppositions lies at the very heart of Indian Madhyamika. In this analysis, the self-deconstructing categories of Nagarjuna and his immediate followers emerge as an edifying philosophy that may have a great deal to offer to the discussion of the related problems of objectivity and relativism — issues crucial to current philosophical conversation in the West.

The book dares one to do away with all philosophical views as Buddhism is not and never has pretended to be a 'theory', an explanation of the universe; it is a way to salvation, a way of life.

— Prof. K.S. Ramakrishna Rao.

THE SKANDA-PURANA — Part-III: Translated and annotated by Dr. G.V. TAGARE. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N.Delhi 110 007. 1993; pp.186; Rs.200.

The Vedas eulogise Arunachala. So do the Skanda and Linga Puranas. Through the centuries Arunachala has acquired the reputation of being a magnet which draws to itself all serious seekers of truth. Why? Because though it is seemingly like an insentient hill it 'possesses the characteristics of a linga and is the embodiment of Siva himself.' In this century Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has highlighted a hidden aspect of Arunachala's glory in his 'Five Hymns on Arunachala'. It is the role of Arunachala as a *sat-guru*.

This book is Maheswara Khanda of Skanda Purana. As the name itself indicates, Arunachala Mahatmya is an account of the 'greatness, efficacy, power, majesty and spiritual merit of the mountain called Arunachala, all meaning the red mountain.'

The book comprises two parts. Essentially, both deal with same subject matter. The first half is the narration by Suta to the sages of Naimisa forest. They had wished to know from him about the glory of Arunachala. The second half is the conversation between the sage Markandeya, who himself is the symbol of Siva's grace, and Nandisvara on the same subject viz., the supremacy of Arunachala. The subjects covered are

the dispute between Brahma and Vishnu, each claiming superiority over the other, and the manifestation of the Tejasa linga, Arunachala before them. The manifestation was as an effulgence whose top and bottom could not be found out by the quarreling Gods. The penance of Parvati at the hermitage of Gautama, description of the holy places in Arunachala, the special benefit of circumambulating the hill, the destruction of Mahisasura by Durga are also covered. Finally, we have the reunion of Siva and Parvati, Siva sharing his body as well with her.

Dr. G.V. Tagare has done a fine job of the translation. One cannot but read these accounts over and over again for such is the thrill of the manifestation of Siva as Arunachala. The fortunate know that Bhagavan Ramana's advent on earth was to proclaim the glory of this hill by being its walking embodiment.

The book is certainly worth possessing notwithstanding its high price.

— A.R. Natarajan.

VRIKSHAYURVEDA: An introduction to Indian Plant Science. pp.101, Rs.60.

PLANT PROPAGATION TECHNIQUES IN VRIKSHAYURVEDA. pp.70, Rs.50.

PEST CONTROL & DISEASE MANAGEMENT IN VRIKSHAYURVEDA. pp. 86, Rs.60. All three by K. Vijayalakshmi and K.M. Shyam Sundar. 1994.

NOMENCLATURE & TAXONOMY IN VRIKSHAYURVEDA: by P. Ram Manohar. 1994. pp. 100, Rs.60.

All four published by: Lok Swasthya Parampara Samvardhan Samithi, C/o. Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, 2, 25th East Street, Tiruvanmiyur, Madras 600 041.

These booklets on the subject of Vrکشayurveda (Indian Plant Science) offer an extremely accessible introduction to the complexities of such a broadly based discipline.

Modern scientific identification has concentrated on the physical, generally external characteristics of plants, whereas traditional systems also included the properties, uses and propagation of wild species as identification tools. In consideration of the current perception of the need to recognize the physical world in terms of a whole rather than component parts, the ancient system of Vrکشayurveda seems both more appropriately focussed on an (w)holistic view of the plant world, and more accessible to the lay person than the narrower viewpoint of western botanical learning.

The booklets are divided into an Introduction, Plant Propagation Techniques, Nomenclature and Taxonomy, and Pest Control and Management in Vrکشayurveda. Although such brief volumes cannot possibly cover more than a brief overview on the subject matter, there is a wealth of valuable information which can be put to practice by any reader inclined to action as well as words.

While much information is covered regarding the philosophy behind Vrکشayurveda, and the methods of identification, propagation, and pest managements the book is peppered

with interesting snippets of history and cultural associations with techniques and practices described. Since there is quite an extensive reference section, anybody inspired to delve deeper into the subject has a ready access to do so.

— *John Button.*

**HEALING OUR WORLD:** by Dr. Mary J. Ruwart, with a foreword by Nobel Peace Prize Nominees. Pub: Sun Star Press, P.O.Box.342, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49005, USA, pp. 282 + 30; \$14.95.

Dr. Mary J. Ruwart has utilised a liberal upbringing and rich experience in her scientific, political and community activities to fulfil her crusade (against the current system prevailing in every branch of human endeavour) to build a new world order, in the name of social justice and common good. As a libertarian she echoes the call of Mahātmā Gandhi to adopt peaceful and non-violent alternatives as a means to fight poverty, ignorance, hunger and disease. Rightly, in common with Western and Eastern spirituality, she finds in America (which is not different from the world elsewhere) the current dichotomy between spiritual perspective and economic well-being, principles and practicality, ends and means.

The introductory chapter contains the very solutions to the problems raised and analysed in this brilliant-yet-simple volume. The book begins "If we wish to change the world, we must first change ourselves." This ageless truth has been expounded decades ago by Sri Ramana. When a visitor once asked of Sri Ramana "What are your opinions about social reform?", He replied: "Self-reform automatically brings about social reform. Confine yourself to self-reform. Social reform will take care of itself". In Sri Ramana Gita, chapter Ten, on "Society" Sri Ramana exhorts "Society should be raised through Sakti and then Santhi established" and "through brotherhood (based on a sense of equality), Supreme Peace will prevail among mankind and then this entire planet will flourish like a single household."

There is a wealth of documentation covering every contemporary social issue to highlight that "Our aggression boomerangs back to us costing us — our very lives". Dr. Ruwart concludes "only non-aggression can give mankind a peaceful and prosperous world". One may wonder whether a lone individual like Dr. Ruwart could make a difference in the present world of technological holocaust. She assures the doubting Thomases that even one thoughtful individual's smallest contribution can be pivotal. She illustrates it with her favourite story of the humble blacksmith on a horse, who failed to put the final nail in its horse-shoe, because of which the horse went lame and so he decided to continue his journey on foot, to carry a critical news to his embattled king and thus became pivotal to the safety of the kingdom.

The reading is interesting as a humane study in the political and social aspects of mankind. Students of political philosophy would do well to imbibe the great message of her win-win approach to mitigate the existing societal woes.

Every one of us is uniquely endowed with talent and therefore can and must, like the humble blacksmith, add to

human happiness the smallest contribution one is always capable of.

— *K. Venkataraman (the late 'K.V. Mama').*

**A HEALER'S JOURNEY:** by Sree Chakravarti. Pub: Rudra Press, 23, Thanikachalam Road, Madras 600 017. 1994; pp. 229; Rs.195.

A true healer is one who heals body and mind and points the way to the real destination — spirit or self. These are days of high-tech hysteria in medical diagnosis and treatment. In this book Sree Chakravarti tells in detail about her childhood and subsequent influences, her own illness finally leading to the discovery of her healing power, her healing method, her devotion to Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi, her inability to have a child of her own finally culminating in service to thousands of sufferers the world over. The former Canadian High Commissioner to India was one of Sree Chakravarti's early patients and in the foreword to the book he remarks 'the power is rigorous in its requirements. Without an egoless state, nothing will really flow.... Even the greatest healer knows that the power must be served, not commanded; that it is unquestionably higher. Those who forget this lose it'. Sree Chakravarti fully lives up to this condition.

Her method of treatment is to lay a patient on the bed and move her right hand over his body at a certain height. The moment the hand reaches the affected part it begins to vibrate.

She then treats him with the same vibration for a number of sittings. She charges no fee. "It seems my right hand possesses some kind of magnetic vibration and I believe this vibration, or radiation, helps to adjust the electrons and create a magnetic field that balances the body". Sree is candid about the limitations of her power and mentions that while she has treated more than thirty thousand patients she has normally been successful with the following ailments — slipped disc, spondylitis, ulcers, blood clots, some heart problems etc., along with some strange ailments which were found to be incurable by doctors. She is not very effective when the whole body has been attacked, viz, massive strokes, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease etc. She does not take on patients suffering from Asthma, skin and mental disorders.

One prays to the Almighty for health and longevity for Sree Chakravarti, so that divine Shakti could flow through her, a mother unto suffering humanity.

— *Ravishankar Aisolo.*

**HISTORY VERSUS CASUISTRY:** Evidence of the Rama Janmabhumi Mandir presented to the Government of India in 1990-91. Pub: Voice of India, Ansari Road, New Delhi-110 002; pp.144; Rs.65.

That there was a Rama temple at Ayodhya and that it was destroyed by the first Mughal Emperor Babar who built on its ruins, using some of the pillars and other materials of the temple itself — is attested by an article entitled *Ayodhya* in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The author is one J.P. Beach,

lecturer in Oriental studies at the Oriental Studies School of London, a well reputed centre of scholarship and research.

The Viswa Hindu Parishad has, in the brochure under review, gathered massive — not necessarily decisive — evidence in support of its demand for a temple at the very site where Babar built his mosque. The Parishad forgets two important facts. The first is — and this is the most important element altogether — that the true temple to Sri Rama is and ought to be in the inmost heart of Rama bhaktas. Once it is well set there, the need for one outside it, in brick and mortar or marble will not arise. The second fact is that it is utterly unrealistic to expect a brood of politicians, desperately clinging to power, office and the opportunities of massive self-enrichment that office affords, to listen to and act on mere historical or other evidence. Votes are what really matter to these creatures of our present circumstances. And vote banks can be manipulated more easily when they are small well-knit groups like minority groups in India. Has anyone outside India ever thought of the systematic dissolution of a whole community into warring castes and creeds and the deliberate suppression of talent as a possible or viable political policy? In India it is now an accomplished fact. Besides, the way religion is talked of and practised by large numbers of every religion in India will make God Himself exclaim "Save Me from my friends and especially from My devotees".

Anyhow, if people organize themselves with historical evidence as well as a well-assured sense of purpose they have a chance of achieving their end. And a Ram Mandir will come into being. As for the mosque, does not the Prophet Mahommed say, the World as a whole is a Mosque — echoing the first verse of Isopanishad?

Of course there are those who think it their duty to fight, if necessary, after trying other means, to make the entire world Muslim, interpreting the Prophet's words as a call to achieve this end. And since the scriptures, as interpreted by 'fundamentalists' (what a gross misuse of the word to mean fanatic, irrational 'believers') justify if not actually call for killing Kafirs (unbelievers) in many parts of the world even today, though not as openly as in Medieval India, the choice is offered Islam or death. Whether or not living in an Islamic country yields material happiness (you may not worship your own God in any Islamic country) dying, one hears is very dangerous. The restrictions on the disposal of the non-Muslim dead — with varieties in various countries — are an insult to the dead and an outrage on the living.

Let us not forget that the Lord Himself has said '*naham vasami vaikunthe*'. The hearts of the pure devotees are the real temples of the Lord. Most of the ways in which religious groups of every religion practice it make them SPCGs - Societies for the Practice of Cruelty to God. That this cruelty is 'unconscious' does not make it less painful. Let the Hindus have their temple in the very place from which a vicious symbol of religious fanaticism and political arrogance has been removed. It is not a case of 'you destroyed hundreds of our temples. Learn a lesson from the removal of one mosque which symbolizes for us your long period of oppressive rule'. It is that a people's faith has to be respected whatever the political costs may be.

— Prof. S. Ramaswamy.

THE EMISSARY: G.D.BIRLA, GANDHI AND INDEPENDENCE: by Alan Ross. Pub: Collins Harvill, 8, Grafton st., London W1. 1986; pp.240; £14.

This well-written book, by India-born British author Alan Ross who is the Editor of *London Magazine*, is part biography of Ghanshyamdas Birla (1894—1983), the pioneering Indian industrialist, and part narration of pre-independence political goings-on since Gandhiji's advent on the Indian scene. The narrative is inter-woven with Birla's unofficial role as an emissary between Gandhi and the Government of the day.

Birla was readily accessible to Gandhi to whose public causes he had been the main financial contributor. The massive Gandhi-Birla correspondence spreading over a span of 23 years from 1924 to 1947 (which has been published in four volumes in 1977 under the title "Bapu — A Unique Association") is a pointer to their close association that ended only with the assassination of the Mahatma in Birla House in Delhi on 30th January 1948.

The present work, first published in 1986, claims to draw upon much unpublished material since made available by G.D. Birla.

The Government of India Act conferring limited constitutional reforms was passed in August 1935. The chapters "Intermediary" and "The New Viceroy" (pp. 98-129) throw new light on Birla's ceaseless, high-level efforts in London and New Delhi to reconcile the opposite stands taken by the Government and the Indian National Congress that ultimately paved the way for Congress participation in the elections to the provincial and Central legislative councils early in 1937.

With the publication of the *In the shadow of the Mahatma* by G.D. Birla (1968) and Birla's correspondence in four volumes (1977), there have been criticisms that they give an exaggerated impression of Birla's role in political negotiations and that "G.D. Birla occasionally appointed himself the Mahatma's spokesman in his discussions with the British Officials" (c.f. *Gandhi and His Critics*, by B.R. Nanda). On the other hand though most of Gandhi's letters to Birla relate to health, welfare and monetary matters, the continuous exchange of letters show, besides warmth and affection, appreciation of each others view points on matters of importance as well. It is also true that Gandhi listened to everybody, made up his own mind and on fundamental issues he would not compromise even on the advice of his closest colleagues.

By the middle of 1940, Birla had become a 'suspect' in the eyes of the British Bureaucracy in India. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow refused to see him when he had requested a meeting with the Viceroy to convey to him the ideas he had discussed with Gandhi at Wardha. The Viceroy's Secretary told Birla the reason: 'G.D. Birla money was believed to be behind the congress movement and that in the then conditions of hostility between the government and congress, personal friendship should be put aside.' To the question by the Secretary "but surely you are a congress man?", Birla is reported to have replied: "No, I am not a Congressman. But I am a Gandhi-man" (p.142).

The author makes mention of Birla's last letter dated 30th October 1947 to Gandhi three months before Gandhi's assas-

sination, but not of his last and significant meeting with the Mahatma on 21st January 1948, just nine days before his martyrdom.

After the bomb explosion at Gandhi's prayer meeting on January 20, Vallabhbhai Patel had tightened the security measures at Birla House by posting army and police personnel. Birla who met Gandhi the next day expressed his fear that Gandhi might not allow so many policemen to be posted in the Birla House. Gandhi's reply was this: "..... I personally believe that I am in the keeping of Rama. If he wants to take me away, even a hundred thousand men cannot save me. But those in the Government do not share my faith in ahimsa and if they believe that I can be protected by these police guards, so be it. Today perhaps I am the only one left who has faith in ahimsa. I pray to God that he may grant me the strength to demonstrate this ahimsa even if it be in my own person. So it is all the same to me whether there are or there are not all these police and military personnel posted here for my protection. Because it is Rama who protects me and I become more and more convinced that everything else is futile." (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, volume 90, pages p.469-70)

— La. Su. Rengarajan

A MASTER GUIDE TO MEDITATION: by Roy Eugene Davis. Pub: CSA Press, Lakemont, Georgia 30552 USA. 1994; pp.128: \$ 6.25

Roy Eugene Davis, a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, is a widely published author and director of Centre for Spiritual Awareness, Georgia U.S.A. Authoritative and knowledgeable, he provides specific guidelines for beginners and advanced procedures for the more experienced.

Interiorisation of attention, as the author rightly points out, is the essence of meditation. If necessary, a mantra, a word or word-phrase given by a guru or one of your own choice or innovation, can be inducted into the field of awareness. Among others he quotes a Sanskrit Mantra: "Hong-Sau (pronounced hong-saw), Soham." But Hong-Sau? What in creation could that be? It sounds more like Chinese than Sanskrit. Well, Yoganandaji himself spells it this way in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Obviously it is *ham-sah* with a Bengali inflection, an unfortunate distortion, since the power of a mantra is derived from its sound frequency.

The plurals proliferating through the book are a bit bewildering: God realisations, episodes of cosmic consciousness, perceptions of transcendent realities, unfoldments of superconscious states and so on. Since our objective is to progress from multiplicity to unity, such intermediate experiences are to be bypassed, being projections of the mind.

Some of the complicated *pranayama* procedures the author prescribes are best learned from a competent teacher. It would be difficult and harmful to try to teach yourself such involved techniques from cold print. Authentic Gurus have affirmed that *pranayama*, though a valid technique, is not necessary for arriving at the plenary experience of reality. In Maharshi's Vichara, which is an ontological probe into the Heart of Consciousness, breathing gets automatically regulated, bringing an inner harmony into your system.

A welcome addition to Yoga literature, the book makes for enjoyable reading with its felicitous, almost lyrical prose, drawn from a rich and evocative vocabulary. But Mr. Davis would do well to do some pruning in the next edition, pulling out the weeds from his beautiful garden.

— V. Dhurandhar.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S THOUGHTS IN A VEDANTIC PERSPECTIVE: by Swami Tapasyananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004. pp.169, Rs.15.

Swami Tapasyananda (1904-1991) of the Ramakrishna order has left a considerable legacy to mankind in the form of over thirty books, consisting of biographies, studies and translations. The Swami demonstrated from his youth a keen interest in religious and philosophic thought and scholarship.

From 1931 to 1939 he served as the editor of the *Vedanta Kesari*. This book comprises a collection of essays originally published as editorials in the 1939 issues of the *Vedanta Kesari*. In five chapters — "Man" "World", "God", "Religious Pluralism" and "Sri Ramakrishna's Spiritual Experiences" the author takes us through all the philosophical understanding, ethical requirements and spiritual practices necessary to attain Divinity.

The intricacies of Samadhi, the subtleties of Jnana and Bhakti and the classifications of aspirants are only a few of the subjects clearly elaborated upon. Furthermore, I have found this book to be a complete guide in itself for those wishing to take up spiritual practice.

Sri Ramakrishna's experiences and teachings are the infallible helm that steers the author through all the complexities of spiritual life. Any one, whether a new enthusiast, or advanced practitioner, will benefit by reading these insights of Swami Tapasyananda.

— Dennis Hartel

AAZHWAARS, The Twelve God Persons of Vaishnavism: 1993; pp.36; Rs.10.

SRIMAD MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM; 1994; pp.iv + 168; Rs.25.

SRIMAD BHAAGAVATHAM; 1993; pp vi + 186; Rs.25. By Satchithaananda Bharathi Swamigal; Pub: author, T.S.No. 2854/1, Perumal Koil Street, Pudukkottai - 622 001.

Azhwars are great benefactors of humanity. They are twelve in number. They worshipped Lord Vishnu and propagated Sri Vaishnavism in Tamil Nadu. Their lives are briefly sketched in English by the author. In simple language, the Swami conveys big news. Names of 108 *divya desams* (with their present names) are given in the end.

*Srimad Mahā Bhakta Vijayam* is a hagiography. It deals with the lives of the devotees of Sri Panduranga and His divine sport. The stories are very interesting and the writing simple and lucid. The stories glorify God's grace and each conveys a moral.

The third is an abridged English version of the celestial poetry of Srimad Bhagavatam, which describes mainly the



avatars of Sri Narayana. The Leela of Lord Krishna is dealt with in detail. *Bhāgavatam* also deals with the history of the Universe and the dynasties of Kings. Thus in a way, it acts as an introduction to the *Bhāvishyath Purānam*. The translation is quite faithful to the original. The easy flow of the language tempts one to complete the reading at one stretch. The theme, no doubt is presented in an inspired manner.

— Dr. T.N. Pranatharthi Haran.

WAKE UP AND ROAR: Satsang with H.W.L. Poonja, Vols. 1 and 2. Pub: Pacific Centre Publishing, P.O. Box 818, Kula Mani, Hawai 96790 USA. 1993; pp.171, 175; \$ 12 each.

These two books recording satsang sessions with H.W.L. Poonja, better known to his devotees as "Papaji" (see MP book reviews, June 1994), held between January 1990-December 1992 in Lucknow give readers an opportunity to check out for themselves this very popular guru who along with some of his globe trotting satsang- holding disciples, present and former, (Gangaji and Andrew Cohen being the best known), have done much to make advaita a 'household word' in the West in the last few years.

Following the tradition of his guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Poonjaji eschews metaphysics and traditional teachings and exhorts his audience to just be quiet. In response to a questioner asking what kind of practice to do, Poonjaji tells the story which inspired the title of the two books and which best illustrates his main message. 'There once was an orphaned baby lion which was found and adopted by a dhobi who raised it with his donkeys. Thus the lion grew up thinking it also was a donkey, eating grass and carrying laundry on its back. One day another lion saw it acting in this totally unnatural way and confronted it with its mistaken identity. The tamed lion insisted it was a donkey. So the wild lion dragged him off to a river. "Look at your reflection" he said. "We are the same". The lion looked into the water and saw two lions looking back. "Now roar" said the lion. And the other lion roared! It's as simple as that. Dont practise being a lion, Roar!' (p83, Vol 1)

Poonjaji's style is informal, personal, warm and supportive, well suited to his predominantly Western devotees. Poonjaji's simple, straight-forward, warm assurances of their true identity backed by a master's conviction can often give to the seekers a glimpse of their true nature, thereby establishing in the seeker the confidence and devotion necessary to continue to deepen that experience effortlessly.

— Priscilla Gong.

THE FINAL TRUTH: by Ramesh S.Balsekar, Pub: Advaita Press, P.O.Box 3479, CA. 90277, USA. 1993; pp.238.

Deeply influenced by the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, the author provides in this book a guide to ultimate understanding.

The basis of this understanding is that all objects, all phenomena that are perceivable in the manifestation are merely appearance in consciousness. But the understanding is not a product of mind. It will happen only when the mind is empty of the "me" and the heart is full of love. The truth is that consciousness alone exists and is immanent in what appears as the universe. The Individual is a part and parcel of this great

system of Consciousness and all his problems arise on account of his feeling separate. The duality and multiplicity are his own making. Ultimately the final Truth is Unicity.

How to get at this Truth? The author commends the spiritual instruction given by the Sage Ashtavakra to his royal disciple King Janaka, but concedes that this most direct approach will be difficult for many aspirants. His lucid and brilliant exposition of the practice of the technique of Self-Enquiry bears quoting in full:

"The practice of Self-Enquiry or awareness or witnessing is a gentle negative technique — if at all it can be so called — to get rid of the positive conditioning that has accumulated over a long period and is totally different from the usually oppressive and repressive methods of controlling the mind. Curiously near to it is the method of surrender to God as a means of achieving Self-realisation or more accurately liberation from bondage. The path of surrender is generally associated with bhakti (devotional practice) which is essentially dualistic in nature. The point that is often missed or ignored in such devotional practices is that the "me" concept (illusory individual entity) gets stronger and stronger. The separation between the individual and his "God" gets wider and wider, if there is a motive or purpose or a desire to be satisfied, behind the devotional practices. *Even the desire for liberation or enlightenment will make the surrender incomplete* or partial because the supposed individual makes an effort to get or achieve something in return. It is then only a business transaction, there is desire behind the efforts.

The only true surrender is when there is no "one" to ask questions or to expect anything. This means surrendering the *total* responsibility for one's life, for all one's thoughts and actions to a higher power, God or Self. Obviously such self-surrender presupposes that one cannot have any will or desire of one's own — which means in effect the acceptance of the fact that there is no individual entity with ability to act independently of God. This actually amounts to a constant awareness that it is only the Self that prevails and that the supposed individual is truly an irrelevance in the totality or functioning. In otherwords, there is really no significant difference between Self-enquiry and Surrender because in both the "me" is finally to be isolated and annihilated".

Thus the author, so convincingly demolishes the popular conception of contradiction and opposition between Vichara Marga and Bhakti Marga. And we know that in the life of Bhagavan Sri Maharshi both Vichara Marga and Bhakti Marga found their fulfillment. One could not find any contradiction between his constant pointer towards Self-Enquiry and his intense and mystic love for God Arunachala.

Logical presentation and lucid exposition mark the writing of the author.

— S. Sankaranarayanan

BEYOND THE MIND: by David Frawley. Pub: Passage Press, P.O.Box.21713, Utah 84121 - 0713, USA. 1995; pp.171; \$ 12.95.

This is a revised series of cogent essays on a wider range of issues relating to spirituality and they include such topics as

The Culture of Illusions, Mind as Matter, The Origin of the Mind, The Alchemy of Perception, The Message of Anxiety .... Interestingly the second last of the 46 essays is entitled *Wonder and Awe*. I can think of no better way to indicate the response from reading these fresh essays.

For those who remember, when Mr. Frawley's book 'The Creative Vision of the Early Upanishads' came out in 1982 one was struck by his original perceptivity and striking insight into the depths of Vedantic scripture. Here was a person who could intelligently read the by-now abstruse scriptures and bring them alive for us today. The Vedas are the recordings of the *rishis* and the word itself, *rishi*, indicates the function of such a person, for it means literally, one who sees, i.e., a visionary. That being the case Frawley can rightly associate himself in spirit with this noble lineage, for is he not himself a seer? Frawley has a special gift to interpret the Vedic tradition which has found outlet in many forms: Astrology, Medicine and Cosmology.

The book's title is taken from the provoking opening paragraph: "According to the science of Yoga, what we call the mind or our thought process is something material. The mind is part of the material world and ruled by its mechanism. Therefore, whatever we may do by the intentionality of the mind is materialism, even if one uses the mind in the search for enlightenment. Thought is matter and what is truly spiritual is beyond matter and hence also beyond the mind" (p.1) "It is the spirit that fashions matter into form. Form is matter informed and infused to some degree by the spirit. The conflict is between matter and spirit, owing to matter's resistance to taking form under the will of the spirit..... It is like the pot that expresses the idea of the potter but which has the inherent resistance of the clay medium into which it must eventually dissolve. The idea of the pot comes from the potter and it is manifested by overcoming the resistance of the clay medium. The idea of the pot does not belong to the medium but cannot be manifested apart from it either". (p.65).

His concise, revelatory style is creative. Instead of reading his essays as static slabs of opinion interspersed with snippets of borrowed wisdom, I found myself enjoying (heaven forbid) his exposition for the lucidity of his observations. There is much a person from the path would find known already but this adds rather than detracts from the rich tapestry of his enquiry, for you become a fellow explorer sharing the salient landmarks which confirm one's own search. One can see the influence of Sri Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti in particular. However one should not presume Frawley is parroting a party line — he is very much his own person. What he writes resonates with his own inner experience. He has studied, absorbed and made his own the wisdom of the Vedic tradition.

— 'Peter Picqmann'

IN PRAISE OF RUMI: Pub: Hohm Press, PBox. 2501, Arizona 86302, USA. 1990; pp.67; US\$ 8.

This is actually one of the hardest reviews I've attempted because this book requires not an objective assessment but a living response from the reader who, by opening it, becomes a participant.

It is an unusual collection of poems said to be by the lesser known Sufi poets. This slim book is not academic, you will not find any footnotes or bibliography.

The provocative introduction by the purported translator challenges the reader to live the experience expressed in this small grouping of outpourings from souls scarred by love. It's a deceptively demanding book and if you are in the right spirit it will appeal profoundly to the quest aching in your heart. In this respect *In Praise of Rumi* has a singular flavour. The translator has become an author who has in turn become the cipher by which the poems are known. "They themselves are literally being written by that which possessed them". If you understand this you will meet the book in your own world.

"Why must words try to express the magic of love  
How can they  
Where words fail  
the eyes of a lover succeed  
they mirror the beautiful anguish  
of a heart aflame with love  
to see such eyes is to see love itself  
What more can I ask for"

Or, for that matter you.

— 'Peter Picqmann'

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CONSCIOUS IMMORTALITY (Hebrew): ODED, Tel Aviv, Israel. (Czech): by Jiri Vacek. Distr. by E. Vackova, Piskova, 15500 Praha 5, Luziny, Czech.

BHAGAVAN RAMANAR: Tamil tr. by La. Su. Rengarajan of T.M.P. Mahadevan's in English. Sri Ramanasramam. Rs.6.

RAMANA CHINTANAM (Telugu): by D. Venkayya. Pub: Sri Ramana Trust, Teacher's College, Mutyalampadu, Vijayawada 520 011, A.P. Rs.5.

ARSHA JYOTI (Telugu): by M. Narasimhan, C/o M. Krishna Mohan, SBI, Sai Nagar, Anantapur, A.P. Rs.40.

RAMANA MAHARSHI'S MIRACLES: by A.R. Natarajan, RMCL, Bangalore 560 003. Rs.50.

SRI RUDRA BHASHYAM OF SKANDA DEVA: English rendering. Valuable extracts from Bhatta Bhaskara and Sayana. Pub: Sw. Chitswarupananda Giri, Tapovanam, Tirukkoilur 605 756. Rs.35.

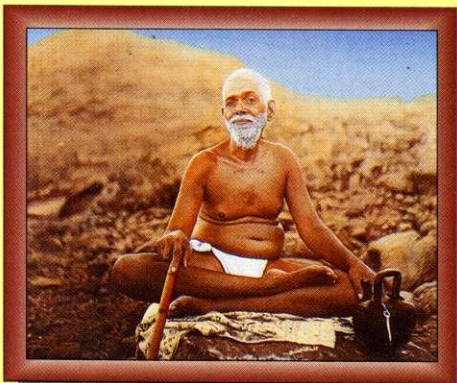
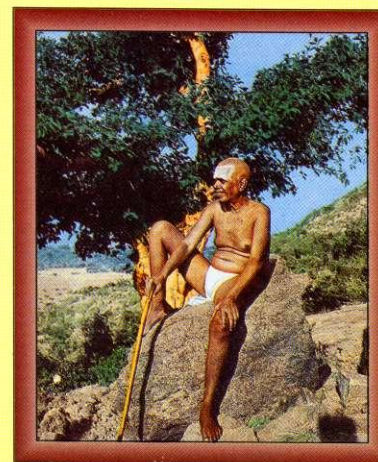
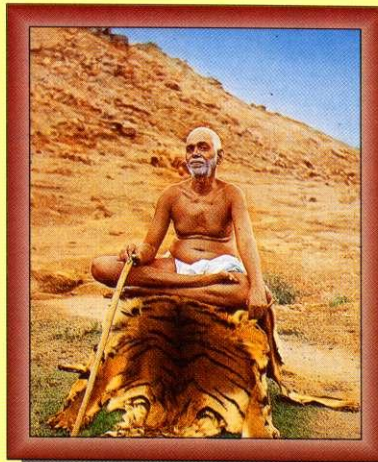
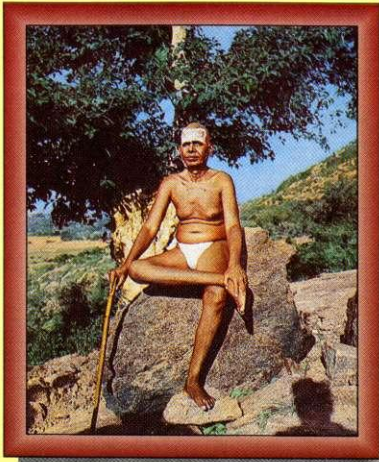
SANSKRIT WORKS OF NARAYANA GURU: Pub: Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapura PO, Varkala, 695 145, Kerala.

SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMA STOTRAM (with commentary): C.V. Bhimasankaram, PB 7228, Cembur, Bombay 400 071.

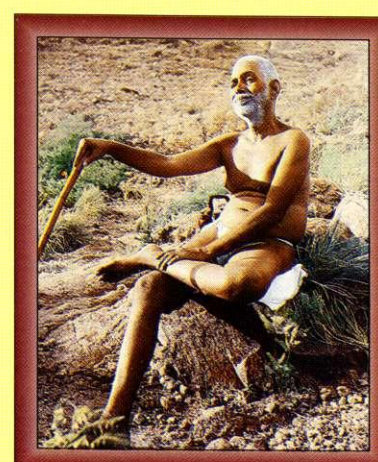
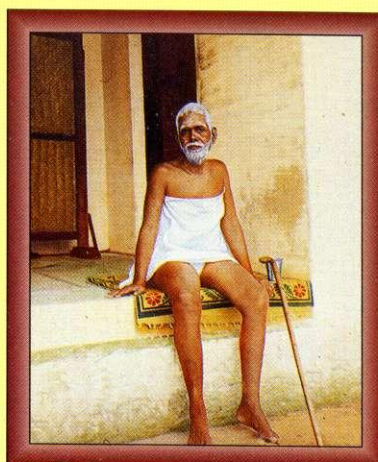
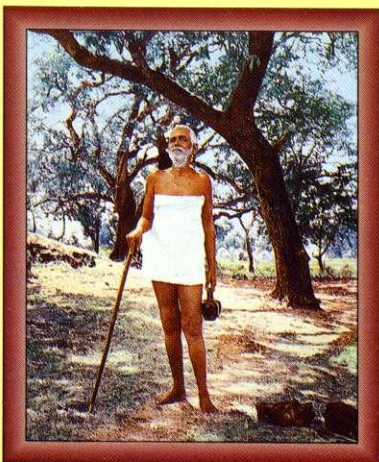
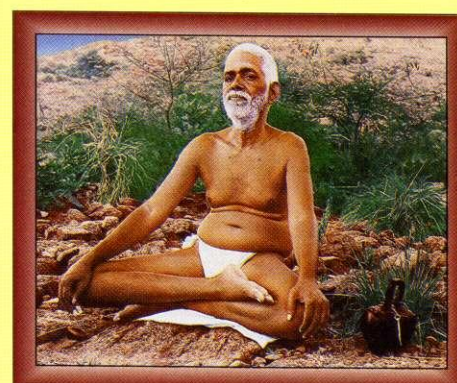
SELECTIONS FROM THE COMPLETE WORKS OF VIVEKANANDA: Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 700 014. pp. 570; Rs.17.

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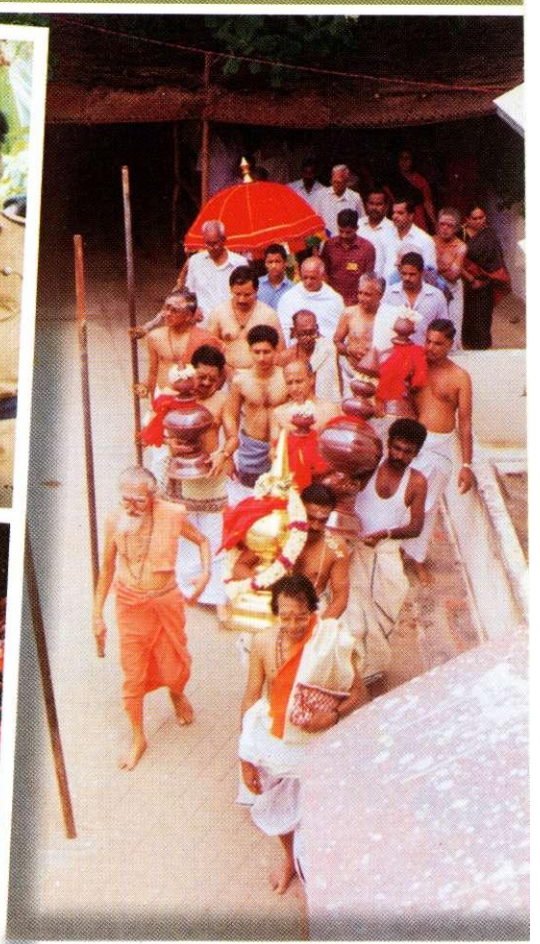
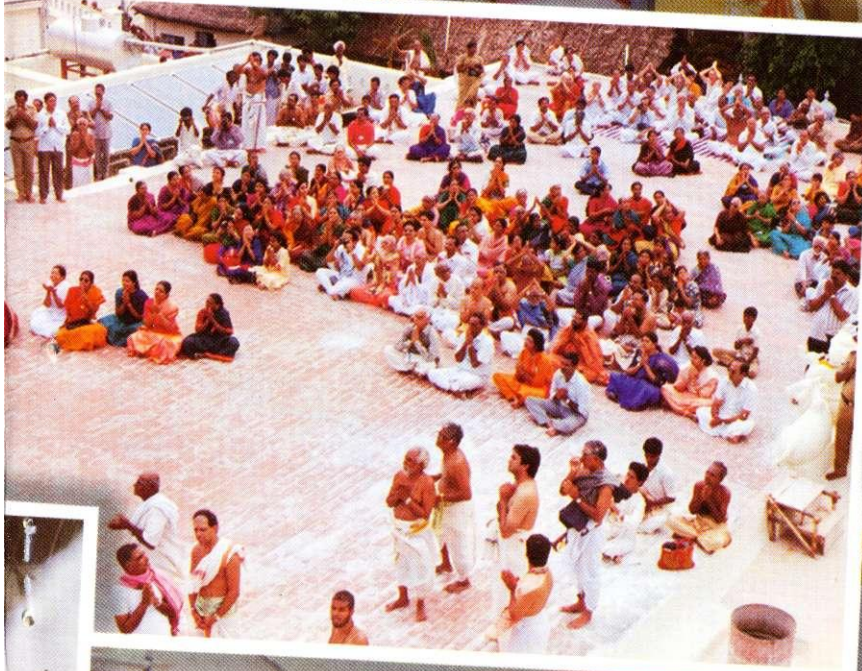
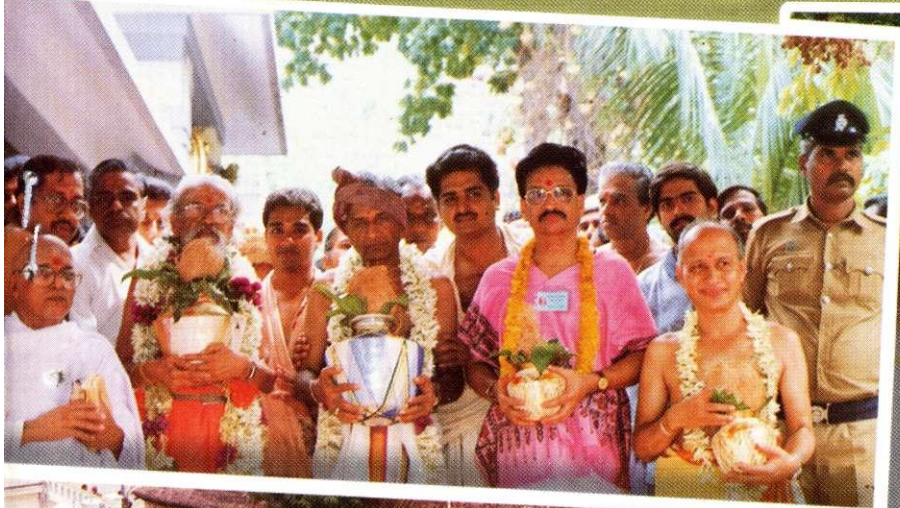
*Asbaram Bulletin*



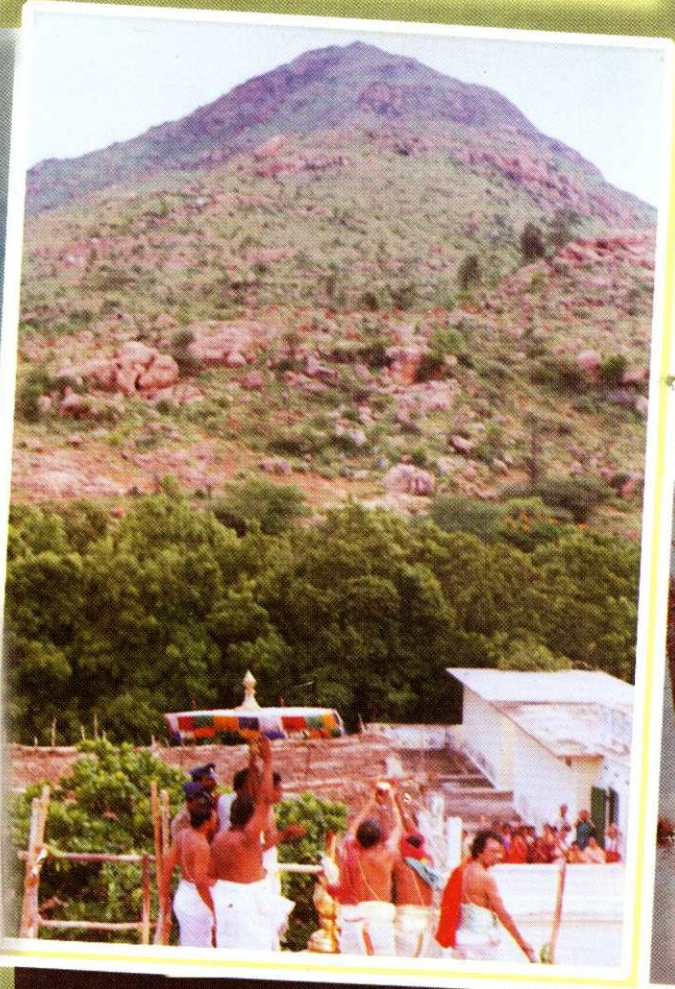
Many, many thanks to  
Kumar, Anand, Babu,  
Magesh and Selvam  
of Ramana  
Professional  
Photographic  
Laboratory  
for contributing  
eight magnificent  
Duratrans displayed  
at Bhagavan's  
samadhi  
shrine



# HEKAM 1995



# KUMBHABHIS



# A SPECTACULAR EMPOWERMENT

(3-7-95 to 7-7-95)



Go Puja

The power in a shrine is supposed to suffer a depletion in course of time and therefore a process of revitalisation involving rituals collectively known as *kumbhabhishekam* is prescribed. The possibility of an idol suffering disfiguration or damage is also taken into account. After the *kumbhabhishekam* everything is set right and the shrine is restored to its original power. The optimum time interval between successive *kumbhabhishekams* is twelve years. That is, the *kumbhabhishekam* to a shrine should be performed not later than twelve years since it was performed last. However on account of exigencies this time interval may go up to 15 years. But in no case should it exceed 18 years.



Shivacharya Sabharatnam

*yagasala*. In the evening after completion of *ankurarpanam*, *acharyavaranam* and *rakshabandhanam*, the important ritual known as *kalakarshanam* was performed.

*Kalakarshanam* is a process through which the power with which the *bimba* (idol) is invested is drawn into, or rather transferred to the water in a metal vessel (*kalasa*). This *kalasa* filled with sacred water is thereafter (that is, till the completion of *kumbhabhishekam*) the repository of the power of the deity.



Honouring Priests

After this, puja should be done to the deity only in its new location — that is, to the *kalasa* kept in the *yagasala*. This ceremony was performed separately for Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam, Sri Matrubhuteswara, Sri Chakra Maha Meru and other devatas. Puja to the original idols was discontinued.



Ramanalinga Abhishekam

The first *kumbhabhishekam* in the Ashram was to the Matrubhuteswara Shrine and this was performed in 1949 in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. The second was to the shrines of

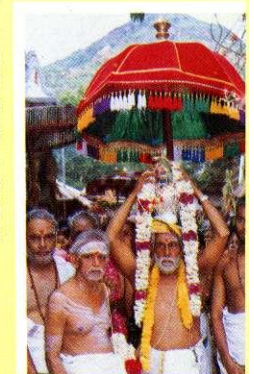
Worship of all the *kalasas* commenced on the evening of the 4th. This programme consisted of *yagasala puja*, *homa*, *purnahuti* and special *deeparadhana*. It was a thrilling experience to witness the special *deeparadhana* which consisted of several subsidiary programmes. Select passages from all the four Vedas were recited. In addition to *nagaswaram* music the *oduvras* sang songs in Tamil in *pann* style, as is done in Shiva temples. There was traditional music also. On the 5th and 6th July the programmes both in the morning and evening were a replica of the last phase of the programme on the 4th (consisting of *yagasala puja*, *homa*, *purnahuti* and special *deeparadhana*).



Yagashala Puja

Sri Chakra Kalasa

On the morning of the 7th, after *yagasala puja* and *maha purnahuti*, the *kalasa uthapanam* was done. This began the process of retransfer of the power of the deity to the *bimba* (idol). The *kalasas* of Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Sri Matrubhuteswara were taken in procession. They were carried to the top of the respective shrines. The sacred water was poured

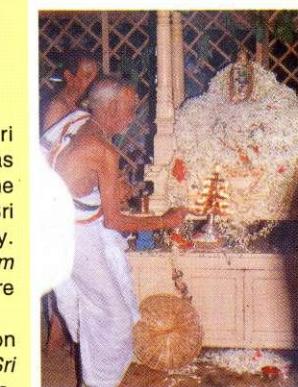


Ganapati Homam

Sri Bhagavan and Sri Matrubhuteswara and this was done in 1967. The third one done in 1979 coincided with Sri Bhagavan's birth centenary. The present *kumbhabhishekam* to both the shrines is therefore the fourth in the line.

The celebrations began on the 3rd July with *Anujna* and *Sri Vighneswara Puja*. After this, *Maha Ganapati Homam* was performed.

This was followed by *Go Puja*, *Vastu Shanti* and *Mrit Sangrahanam*.



Puja to Sri Chakra

The programmes on the morning of the 4th were: a *Navagraha Homa*, *Dhana Puja* and decoration *Painting Kolams* to the



Vaastu Shanti

was poured over the *vimanams*. This was the grand finale — the *Maha Kumbhabhishekam* — and it came off a few minutes after nine. The sacred water was also poured over the *bimbas* — Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Sri Matrubhuteswara. In the evening special *abhishekam* was performed.

In addition to the element water, two other elements — earth and fire — are also used in the consecration for the purpose of augmenting the power of the deity. The rituals known as *ankurarpana* and *homa* are designed towards this end.



*Giri pradakshina*

The function concluded with a procession in the night during which a picture of Sri Bhagavan mounted on a vehicle (and drawn by a tractor) was taken on *giri pradakshina* (circumambulation of the Hill).

During this period the Ashram was reverberating with Vedic chants (involving recitation of all the four Vedas), *nagaswaram* music and Tamil classical music in the *pann* style.

The rituals relating to Sri Chakra were performed by a team of *vaidiks* consisting of Sri Narayana Sastry (chief), Sri Krishnamurthy (Kittu), Sri Subramanian (Appichi) and others. The team of Sivacharyas headed by Siva Sri Doctor Sabaratna Sivacharya from Madras performed the rituals for Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Matrubhuteswara.

The timely completion of the renovation work in good style is due to the efficient services rendered by Sri Ganapati Stopathy. This deserves special mention. The work done by Sri Anjaneyalu is also to be mentioned.

All the prescribed rituals for *kumbhabhishekam* were gone through with meticulous attention to details. There was not even the slightest hitch at any time and the programmes were completed as per schedule.

All the visitors could not be accommodated within the Ashram premises. Hence the Ashram made special arrangements for accommodating a good number of them in the hotels in Tiruvannamalai town. There was feasting on a big scale on all the five days, to which the devotees residing around the Ashram were specially invited.

Among the distinguished visitors was Srimathi Janaki Venkataraman, wife of the former President of India, who attended the celebrations in spite of ill-health.

The Ashram is always surcharged with the power of Sri Bhagavan's Presence. This was doubly so during the

### Aradhana of Sri Bhagavan

The fortysixth anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan falls on 15.4.1996.

*kumbhabhishekam* days. The atmosphere was one of surging joy. On the whole the *kumbhabhishekam* was a memorable occasion.

### Mandalabhishekam

(22-8-95 to 24-8-95)

*Kumbhabhishekam* is to be followed up by *mandalabhishekam* after the lapse of a period of 45-48 days. During this period *Ekadasa Rudra Mahanyasa* is to be performed on daily basis. Rituals conforming to these requirements were duly performed at both the shrines.

The programmes commenced on August 22 and *mandalabhishekam* at the shrines of Sri Bhagavan and Mother was completed on August 23. A special feature was the *abhishekam* to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam with sacred waters from a thousand *shankas* (conch shells). Significantly it was a *Punarvasu* day (the presiding star of the day being *Punarvasu*, the birth star of Sri Bhagavan). The *abhishekam* for Sri Chakra Maha Meru was done on August 24, which marked the end of the proceedings.

### Kartigai Deepam

(26-11-95 to 5-12-95)

The Kartigai Deepam is one of the most important and largely attended festivals of India. People pour into Tiruvannamalai by the thousands during the ten-day festival by every available means of transport.

The idol of Lord Arunachaleswara along with those of other deities is taken out in procession morning and evening on all the days. The images are adorned with choice garlands of big size and special ornaments made of gold and precious stones. Some of the *vahanams* (mounts) are unique. The *vrishabha vahanam* (bull mount made of silver) is absolutely so — a mount of this size is not to be seen in any other temple.

The lighting of the *deepam* (cauldron) on top of the Hill at the time of sunset on the tenth day marks the finale of the festival. To see the *deepam* is a thrilling experience. Everyone's attention is riveted to the top of the Hill even before sunset in order to catch the first sight of it.

Following the tradition in vogue since the days of Bhagavan a small cauldron is lit at the Ashram at the moment of seeing the first glimmer of the *deepam* on the Hill. Devotees gather round a picture of Bhagavan installed on a chair, facing the Hill and chant *Aksharamanamalai*. After

### Centenary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent At Arunachala

The hundredth anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's advent at Arunachala falls on September 1, 1996. The Government of India have formed a committee in connection with the celebrations.

During the centenary year the Ashram proposes to bring out the following publications:

Special compact editions of the following works which will carry the Sankrit original, Sri Bhagavan's Tamil translation along with English translation:

- (1) *Atma Sakshatkaram*      (2) *Devikalottaram*  
 (3) *Atma Bodham* and      (4) a separate volume containing *Dakshinamurty Stotram, Hastamalaka Stotram* and *Guru Stuti*.

It is also proposed to bring out fresh editions of all Ashram publications which have been out of print for some years. The idea in particular is to ensure that all books published during Sri Bhagavan's days are available now.

this *prasad* is distributed to all present. Many devotees go round the Hill after dinner.

This year too the Ashram attracted huge crowds and the celebration was on the usual lines.

The spiritual significance of *deepam* has been explained by Sri Bhagavan as follows:

To make the intellect rid of the sense  
 'I am the body', and to introspect  
 By fixing it securely in the Heart,  
 And so perceive the true light of the SELF,  
 The one 'I', which is the ABSOLUTE.  
 This the significance of witnessing  
 The Beacon Light of Arunachala,  
 The centre of the earth.

### Literary award for Devotee

**Dr.A.S.Venugopala Rao**, retired Professor of Kannada and staunch devotee of Bhagavan, is a resident of Ramanagar. He is the author of several books in Kannada. Notable among these are his translations of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and *Maharshi and His Message* (Paul Brunton).

He has recently been awarded the prestigious literary prize entitled *Viswamanava Prashasti* for 1994. This is in recognition of his literary criticism (in Kannada) entitled

*Kuvempu Avara Darshanika Vicharagalu* (philosophic thoughts of Kuvempu). The award carries a cash prize of Rs.15,000/- besides the citation. Dr.Rao had received a cash prize earlier for his translation of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

### Request for Back Issues of Mountain Path

Devotees of Sri Bhagavan in Australia are putting together a complete collection of *The Mountain Path* at their meditation centre south of Sydney. In spite of efforts to procure the issues from all possible sources, the collection is still incomplete.

The required issues are:

Vol.1, 1964; Vol.2, 1965; Vol.3, 1966; Vol.7, No.4, 1970; Vol.8, Nos.1 & 3, 1971; Vol.15, Nos. 1 & 4, 1978; and Vol.18, Nos. 2 & 3, 1981.

Devotees who are in a position to spare the issues mentioned and thus help complete the collection may get in touch with the contact address given below, direct.

**Charles Read,**  
 RMB 506 ARALUEN ROAD,  
 MORUYA NSW 2537, Australia.  
 PH: (044) 742 683.



## RAMANA PHOTOGRAPHS

As part of an ongoing photographic archive project, several dozen images of Bhagavan have now been transferred onto computer. Working from fine prints made by V. Karthik (Madras) and high-resolution scans of original negatives, in cooperation with Dennis Hartel (Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia), Graham Boyd (Scarborough, UK) has devoted many hundred hours meticulously restoring and colouring these images. A complete record will eventually be available

on CD-ROM. Meanwhile, a selection of digitally restored and coloured reproductions are on offer for devotees in the west from:

### Arunachala Ashrama

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre  
R.R.1., Bridgetown  
Nova Scotia  
Canada BOS 1C0  
Phone: 902-655-2090  
Email: aashram@fox.nstn.ns.ca.

## Obituary

### Annamalai Swami (1906 - 1995)

*Sri Annamalai Swami*, one of the oldest devotees of Sri Bhagavan who has been associated with the Ashram since 1928, was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of the Master on November 9. He passed away in the early hours of the morning. He was 88.

Religiously inclined even from his early years, Swami once chanced to come across a copy of Bhagavan's *Upadesa Undiyar*. He was so impressed by the picture of Bhagavan which the book carried, that he developed an intense desire to have his *darsan*. Accordingly he left home and started on his journey to Sri Ramanasramam. He received unexpected support on the way in respect of transport etc. Learning that His Holiness Sri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, the late Paramacharya, was camping at Pudupalayam, he decided to have his *darsan* there, and take his blessings. He informed Shankaracharya that he was on his way to Bhagavan. The Acharya seemed pleased to hear this and also remarked, 'Very good'. Arriving in Tiruvannamalai, he first had *darsan* of Seshadri Swami and obtained his blessings.

Sri Bhagavan was alone in the Old Hall when Swami had his first *darsan* and it made a tremendous impression upon him. Convinced that Bhagavan was his Guru he sought permission from the Ashram management for staying on as well as doing some work. He was permitted to do service to Bhagavan as a personal attendant. Swami became a kind of stand-by for Madhava Swami (the only attendant at that time) whenever he needed rest.

Annamalai Swami was later on given the job of

supervising building construction work at the Ashram. Thus he had a major role in the construction of the Ashram kitchen, dining hall, *gosala*, store and dispensary. The revetment at the rear of the Ashram was also built under his supervision.

Annamalai Swami used to recollect several instances in which Bhagavan was especially kind and gracious to him. He also received several invaluable spiritual instructions from the Master.



In 1938 Annamalai Swami left the Ashram and moved to Palakottu, the sadhu settlement adjacent to the Ashram. After moving from the Ashram he led a life totally devoted to contemplation. He had the opportunity of having *darsan* of Bhagavan during his afternoon walks there. He also had several conversations with Bhagavan on spiritual matters. His diary records the conversations along with dialogues between the Master and a few other devotees. Some of these have been incorporated in the *Talks*. Some others have been published in the October 1979 issue of

#### *The Mountain Path*.

Until the end, Annamalai Swami continued to live in the small Ashram built by him at Palakottu, without any interruption whatever.

By virtue of his devotion to Bhagavan, personal spiritual accomplishments and ability to interpret the teachings of Bhagavan, he became a spiritual guide. For years he provided solace and support to a good number of seekers and followers.

The interment ceremony was well attended. The Ashram President and a number of residents took active part in it.

**Obituary****K. Krishnamurthy (Kittu)**

**Sri K. Krishnamurthy** the Chief Priest of the Ashram, popularly known as Kittu, was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on the 8th October.

Kittu had been having health problems for quite some time. In spite of this he was doing his allotted work without any let-up. On the morning of the fateful day, despite a feeling of extreme weakness he was on his way to perform puja as usual. He could not walk and proceed even up to the Ashram office. Therefore the office staff came out and helped him to stretch himself on the portico. It soon proved to be a massive heart attack to which he succumbed within minutes. The efforts of the doctor at resuscitation proved of no avail. Kittu was 68. It is significant that it was the holy day of Purnima.

Kittu joined the Ashram Veda Patasala in 1938 and completed his Vedic studies. In 1950 he became the Chief Archaka and served the Ashram in that capacity for a continuous period of 45 years. Thus his association with the Ashram extends over a long period of 57 years. It is noteworthy that during this period he never left the Ashram even once (on any other avocation).

In spite of a rather reserved nature Kittu was highly popular among residents and visitors alike. Besides being efficient in his allotted field of work at the shrine he proved to be an able assistant at the office also. In the earlier years his services were utilised in the maintenance of accounts.

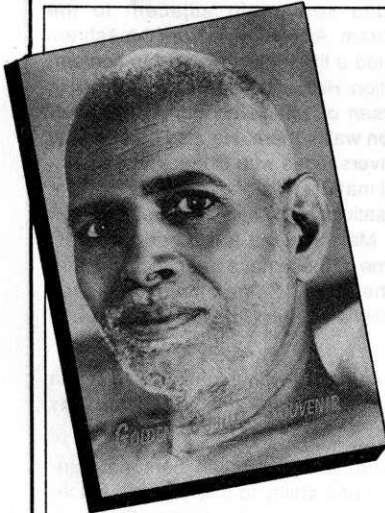


Kittu was a seasoned speaker who had a good sense of humour. It was a treat to hear him speak during gatherings at the Ashram on important occasions.

Kittu had a melodious voice and his manner of reciting the holy names was very impressive. In particular the first puja in the morning (milk offering) when done by him looked like a musical offering to Sri Bhagavan as well.

For a brief period preceding the *Maha Nirvana* Bhagavan could not go up to the dining hall. Kittu had the rare fortune of carrying food to him then. This deserves special mention.

Kittu will be remembered for long years as a sincere and dedicated worker of the Ashram.

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