

The

# MOUNTAIN PATH

Jayanti Issue 1996

# 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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*Cover:*  
Commemorating Sri Bhagavan's  
arrival at Arunachala by train a  
century ago.  
Maharshi has mentioned that at  
a particular point near the  
railway bridge one gets a fine  
view of Arunachala, with the  
peak in line with the Big Temple.  
The photograph has been taken  
from this point.

*Frontispiece:*  
Rare photograph of Sri  
Bhagavan, restored on computer  
by Bharati Mirchandani,  
New Delhi.

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— Editor.

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**The Mountain Path**

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**THE MOUNTAIN PATH**

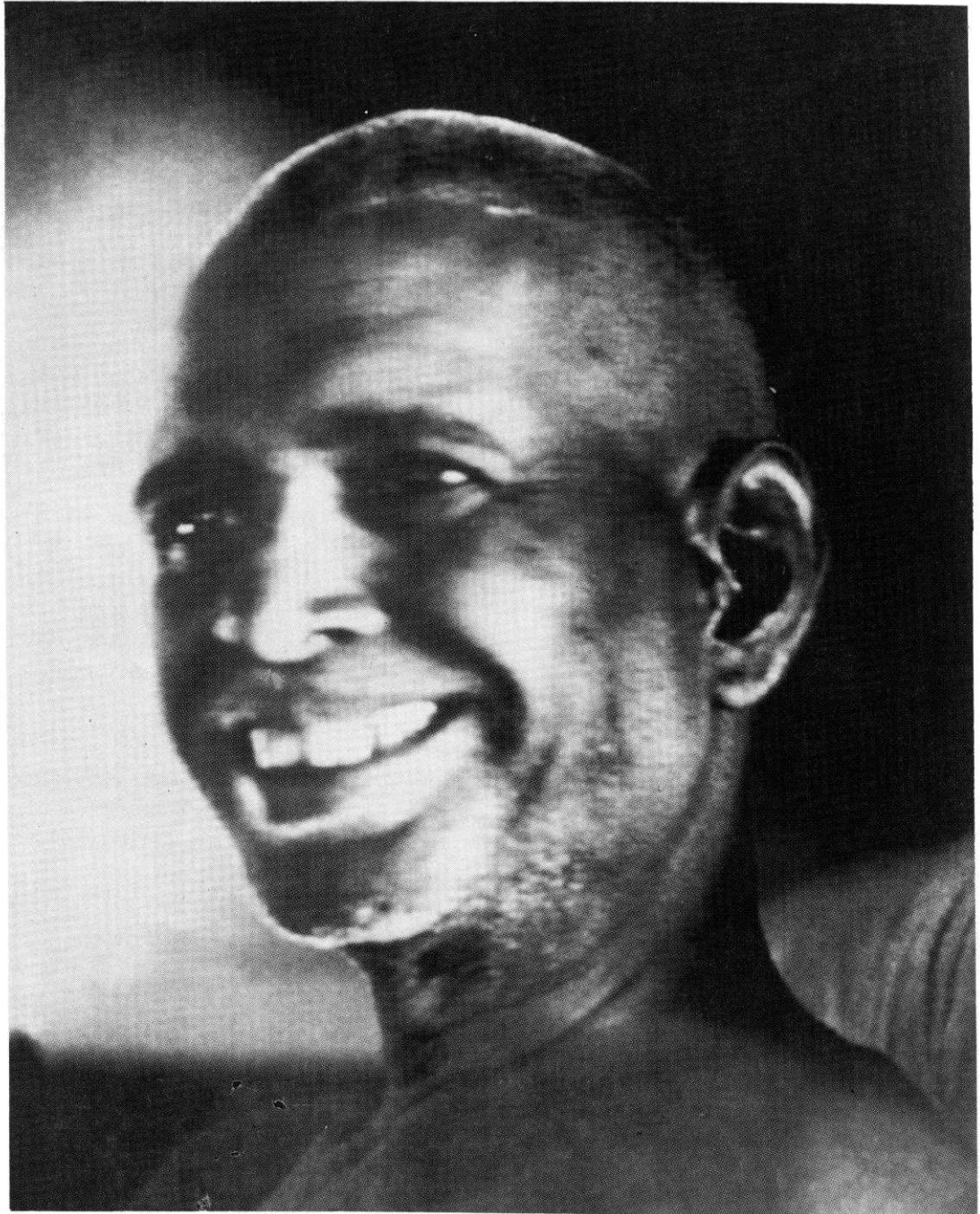
is dedicated to

**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

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**EDITORIAL****Who Does It All?**

**T**HE world resembles a huge work'room. And we are all members of the universal work force, either as consenting volunteers or conscripts under an unwritten law. Broadly speaking, everyone has some allotted work to do, irrespective of his state of life.

Even the work-shy are shaken out of their lethargy and forced to find the means of earning at least living wages, in the conditions of today's world. The economic constraints are so exacting now, that no one can possibly lead the life of a *lotos-eater* — a life of all rest and no work.

The highly placed or privileged ones who do not seem to be under the necessity of doing work in the normal sense, are really not exempted from it. Often, under the force of circumstances, they have to undertake work which can be more gruelling than that faced by the worker at the ordinary level.

Then there is the special class of workers who take to an active life of high purpose, guided purely by altruistic motives. They choose to do strenuous work, without any kind of external compulsion. In the Christian tradition, for example, the servant of God undertakes

to do the 'Seven Works of Corporal Mercy'<sup>1</sup> and the 'Seven Works of Spiritual Mercy'.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see activity all round. This is true not merely of human society. The physical universe itself presents a scene of intense, incessant activity. What is more, there is perfect order in the universe. A poem of Robert Browning brings this out clearly:

The year's at the spring,  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn;  
God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!

It is evident from events in the external world that a power higher than man keeps it in motion. The existence of such power is equally evident in the secular affairs of mankind. While routine events

<sup>1</sup> To feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, visit prisoners, visit the sick, harbour strangers and bury the dead.

<sup>2</sup> To convert sinners, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, console the afflicted, bear wrongs patiently, forgive injuries and pray for the living and the dead.

and occurrences are within the range of probability, major events are beyond this range. There is more of the unpredictable than the predictable in world events. No one can predict the course of world history. Omar Khayyam says:

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights  
and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces  
plays:  
Hither and thither moves, and  
mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the  
Closet lays.<sup>3</sup>

While those with deep powers of introspection see this reality clearly, most people miss this and rivet their attention to the routine of life and the connected activities.

In carrying out our duty or work, we are mostly obsessed with proximate objectives. We develop a sense of self-esteem or pride on the achievement of targets or expected results. Since we do not go deep into the matter, we tend to attribute the success to our own efforts or efficiency. Is this correct in the higher sense? More basically, what is the nature of the power which is behind all activity in the world? And, not less important, in what spirit should we approach our work?

Statements in the scriptures as well as the sayings of sages are the best means of enlightening ourselves on these questions.

Pride and vanity have always been condemned by the wise. The Bible says,

<sup>3</sup> *The Rubaiyat*, V.49.

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity".<sup>4</sup> Alexander Pope calls pride as "the never-failing vice of fools".<sup>5</sup> An old proverb also says, "Pride and grace never dwell in one place".<sup>6</sup> How human beings develop a sense of pride and gloat over their achievements is described thus by Lord Krishna:

.... ....  
This has been achieved by me today.  
Another ambition of mine will also be realized. This wealth is already mine. And I shall acquire more.

Today this enemy of mine has been killed by me. I shall make short work of others also. I am the lord, I am the enjoyer : I am perfect, powerful and happy.

Thus deluded by ignorance, bewildered by countless thoughts, enmeshed in delusion and addicted to sense enjoyments, men fall headlong into perdition.<sup>7</sup>

The sense of pride is not confined to the humans. Even the celestials are prone to it.

The *Kena Upanishad* records an episode in which the *devas* (Vedic gods, headed by Indra) were taught a great lesson by Brahman, the Supreme. They had once scored a victory over the *asuras* (demons) and they thought it was by their own prowess that they won. In order to relieve them of this conceit, Brahman

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes, i.2.

<sup>5</sup> *Essay on Criticism*.

<sup>6</sup> T.Fuller, *Adagies and Proverbs*.

<sup>7</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter xvi, 13 - 16.

appeared as a *yaksha* (spirit) before them. He placed a blade of grass before Agni (the fire-god) and asked him to burn it. Agni (who could burn down anything whatever on earth) could not burn even that blade of grass. This was because in the presence of the *yaksha* (and, as willed by him) Agni lost his powers (momentarily). Similarly Vayu (the wind-god) was immobilised and could not blow off even a blade of grass (placed before him by the *yaksha*). The *devas* were non-plussed at this strange happening and did not even know who the *yaksha* was.

At this juncture, Uma (Shakti), daughter of Himavat, appeared before them as a most beautiful lady, and said, "This is Brahman, to be sure, and in the victory of Brahman, indeed do you glory thus".

Thus the truth was convincingly demonstrated by Brahman in the form of the *yaksha* that all powers in the world, including that of the *devas* were derived solely from Him (Brahman). Brahman was higher than all the gods. It was the real source of victory for the *devas* and defeat for the *asuras*.

The *Sruti* makes it clear that Brahman is the ultimate source of all power and all action in the world :

For fear of It (Brahman) the wind blows, for fear of It the Sun rises, for fear of It Agni, Indra, and Death, the fifth, run ( to do their allotted work).<sup>8</sup>

Sri Krishna addresses Arjuna as follows, on the battlefield (before the start of the war):

Therefore, do you arise and win glory;

<sup>8</sup> *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Section II.

conquering foes, enjoy the affluent kingdom. These warriors stand *already slain by me* : be you only an instrument, Arjuna.

Do you kill Drona and Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other brave warriors, *who stand already killed by me*.<sup>9</sup>

Now, how could Bhishma and Drona be killed even *before* the start of the war? The question arises purely within the level of human conception. But divine activity lies beyond this. Therefore it is clear that the course of the war is already predetermined by the Lord. The Lord asks Arjuna to be only an *instrument* for achieving something which is already decided upon by Him.

Heinrich Zimmer quotes the following *Sruti* for the purpose of explaining how the Self transcends the gross body of the individual self and yet is its life-force:

The blind one found the jewel,  
The one without fingers picked it up;  
The one with no neck put it on;  
And the one with no voice gave it  
praise.<sup>10</sup>

(Zimmer's explanation: The owner of the body [Self] has no eyes, no hands, no neck, no voice, yet accomplishes everything through the instrument of the gross and subtle bodies).<sup>11</sup>

The nature of the higher power which sustains the world has been explained by Bhagavan Sri Ramana :

<sup>9</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter xi, 33-34.

<sup>10</sup> *Taittiriya Aranyaka*. 1. 11. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Philosophies of India*, p.409.

In the proximity of the magnet the needle moves. Similarly the soul or *jiva*, subjected to the threefold activity of creation, preservation and destruction which take place merely due to the unique Presence of the Supreme Lord, performs acts in accordance with its *karma*, and subsides to rest after such activity. But the Lord Himself has no resolve: no act or event touches even the fringe of His Being. This state of immaculate aloofness can be likened to that of the sun, which is untouched by the activities of life, or that of the all-pervasive ether, which is not affected by the interaction of the complex qualities of the other four elements.<sup>12</sup>

It is the lot of man to do his work. There should be no attempt to escape from this. William Penn says:

No pain, no palm; no thorns no throne  
no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown.<sup>13</sup>

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow says:

Let us then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labour and to wait.<sup>14</sup>

We should act with a clear sense of resignation to the dictates of the higher power. Jane Montgomery Campbell says:

We plough the fields, and scatter  
The good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered  
By God's almighty hand.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Who am I?*

<sup>13</sup> *No cross, no crown.*

<sup>14</sup> *A Psalm of Life.*

<sup>15</sup> *We plough the fields.*

An ancient proverb says:

Man doth what he can, and God what  
He will.<sup>16</sup>

To forget one's limitations and imagine that one can achieve anything and everything by sheer effort is indicative of spiritual immaturity. Such an attitude implies a negation of the divine will and the laws of its operation.

Therefore, at the height of a principled and regulated life in the course of which all action is consciously dedicated to the Lord, one should leave everything to Him. This is the ideal spiritual state. Sri Ramakrishna says:

For a devotee there is no path safer and smoother than that of the 'power of attorney'. This means resigning the self to the will of the Almighty, to have no consciousness that anything is 'mine'.<sup>17</sup>

To quote Ramakrishna again:

As dry leaves are blown hither and thither by the wind, without any choice of their own, so those who depend upon God move in harmony with His will, and leave themselves in His hands with perfect non-resistance.<sup>18</sup>

The answer to the question 'Who does it all?' is not far to seek. Vedanta makes things clear and gives no scope for any doubt. HE does it all. HE does it all the while.

<sup>16</sup> T. Draxe, *A Treasury of Ancient Adagies and Sententious Proverbs.*

<sup>17</sup> *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.272, Almora Edn. (1934).

<sup>18</sup> *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.273, Almora Edn. (1934).



## A Devotee's Reminiscences

By Lucia Osborne

(continued from the last issue)

### The Goal of Life

**E**VEN if all so-called good things in life are at one's disposal for enjoyment it does not satisfy the deepest longing of the human heart and more often than not, ends up in boredom. In the depth of the heart remains an unfulfilled longing which only the Unconditioned can fill. Modern man flies to the planets and seeks to conquer space due to the unconscious urge to transcend his earthly finitude. This he does in a physical manner which is the only one the majority believe to be possible. There is no joy or pleasure so great in this life that it can quench the thirst in our soul. The efforts to conquer mountains and to fly into space prove that man does not live by bread alone. There is the urge to escape from the tyranny of finitude; the urge for the Infinite, for the Sublime, to seek the Holy Grail.

To illustrate: At the height of her career the greatest Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova, said, "There is a desert in my heart."

Happiness derived from relationships, worldly success, acquisition, and special circumstances, usually has an element of restlessness combined with insecurity.

'Happiness', said Aristotle, 'is the object of the good, but peace is the object of happiness.' 'Where is happiness without peace?' asks the Gita.

### The Role of the Sadguru

The form of the Sad-Guru is a sort of decoy. Out of compassion he assumes a form and name. Sri Bhagavan says: "You imagine him to be like yourself with a body. His work lies within. The Guru is God or Self incarnate who is immanent, and who out of Grace takes pity on the devotee and manifests himself and guides him on the right path until he realises the Self within. The Guru is both within and without, so He creates conditions to drive you inwards and exerts a pull from within..."

In the verses selected by Sri Bhagavan Saint Tayumanavar says: "In order to enlighten me Grace took shape. In every respect like myself, eating and sleeping, suffering and enjoying, bearing a name and born somewhere, it appeared as the silent Guru, a deer used to decoy another of its species."

Enticement also comes in. Tayumanavar says that when overcome by Absolute Consciousness (White Expanse) everything will prosper, nothing will suffer,

all undertakings will succeed to perfection.... Naturally, the world is a shadow of our own mind. In a state of perfection above suffering and sorrow, whatever one projects will be perfect. It is like Christ's saying: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" — if one attains it all else will be added. 'Attaining' is a figure of speech. The Kingdom of Heaven is always present, there is only the Self. We do not exist apart from it. We only cease to be deluded that it is not so. It is like waking up from dream wanderings, Bhagavan says. The dream belongs to the dreamer or it is nothing.

The *Theologia Germanica* says, "...To the extent that the soul is progressively separated from all diversity there is revealed in it the divine realm. The soul is able to do this with the help of divine Grace. When it makes this discovery it has been helped thereby. And then it enjoys all things and has control of them like God....Finally it has discovered that it is itself the divine realm."

Ramana Maharshi says, "The mind turned inwards is the Self; turned outwards, it becomes the ego and all the world. But the mind does not exist apart from the Self, that is, it has no independent existence. The Self exists without the mind, but never the mind without the Self."

St. Simeon speaks of a realised man as if risen from the dead and one awakened from sleep, risen above the limits of the senses and the whole world, filled with unspeakable delight.

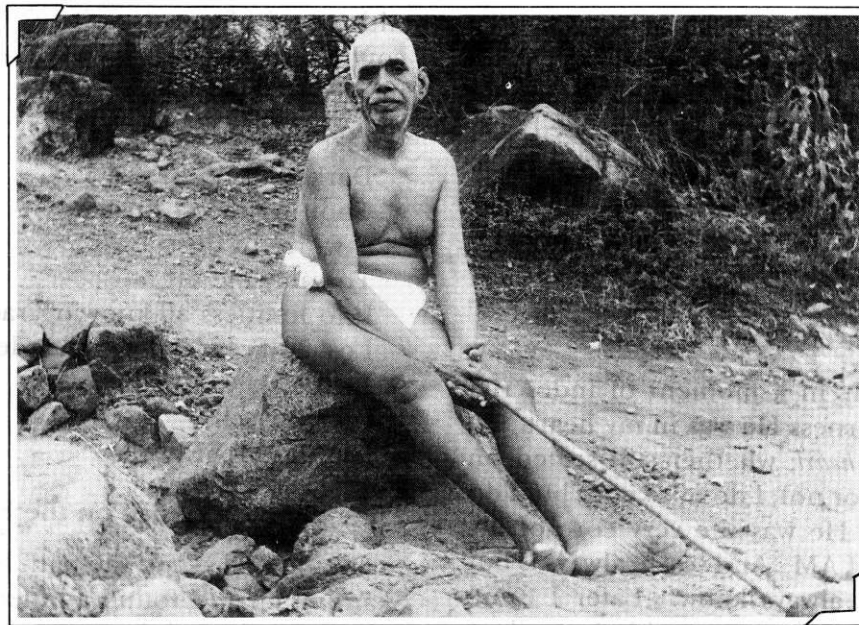
### Some Devotees

One Luis Hartz from Holland became

interested in Bhagavan's teaching through Arthur Osborne and later followed him to Tiruvannamalai. He told Bhagavan after a few days: "When I am here I am in heaven but when I leave I will be in hell." The reply was: "Even if you are in hell Bhagavan will go after you." He was a *bon-viveur*, one day a millionaire, next day losing or gambling away his fortune, then again making a fortune and so on. He had understanding but no will power. Bhagavan made a tremendous impression upon him. When Hartz wanted to be sure about his initiation Bhagavan told him: "You have it already". Now also devotees receive it in dreams by look or touch or in silence. A Persian professor present in the hall wanted to know whether "going to hell after you" applied only to Hartz and Bhagavan replied: "To all".

A diplomat from Czechoslovakia stationed in China was so attracted to Bhagavan after coming to Tiruvannamalai that he straightaway bought a house near the Ashram to settle there after retirement; a simple guileless man who became a seeker because he felt insecure. The atmosphere at Arunachala near Bhagavan he found helpful to stabilise his mind. On the Hill one day he took a picture of Bhagavan with me and the children. It came out well. Then I took a picture of Bhagavan with him. It was a blank. He never settled in Tiruvannamalai.

Sujata Sen was a French woman doctor married to a Bengali doctor. She settled in Tiruvannamalai to follow Ramana Maharshi while practising her profession. Her mother came from



France to visit her. A typical Parisian beautifully dressed and made up she was not interested in spiritual matters or religion. She used to come with her daughter to sit in the meditation hall observing people in preference to sitting alone at home. After some time she started practising her religion, going to mass and became an ardent Catholic. She said that it was due to Ramana Maharshi's silent influence.

Somerset Maugham came on a visit to Tiruvannamalai having heard of Ramana Maharshi. He first went to see Major Chadwick in his room and there he suddenly became unconscious. Bhagavan was passing that way on his daily walk, so Major Chadwick asked him to see the unconscious visitor. Bhagavan complied, sat down and looked at him. After a while he regained consciousness, saluted Bhagavan and both sat facing

each other in silence. Major Chadwick told Somerset Maugham that he could ask questions when the latter enquired rather nervously whether he should do so; but Bhagavan said that silence is best; he smiled and left the room.

#### The Power of His Presence

In the early years, long before the books on the Maharshi were written, we were sitting one evening, as usual, in the hall after the Vedic chantings were over. It used to be a truly wonderful hour of perfect eloquent Silence — 'our cares thrown among the lilies'. The Maharshi calls such Silence the eternal flow of language, obstructed by words, more potent and vast than all the *sastras* put together. So eager were the devotees not to miss this best hour of the day, that when the Ashram manager (*sarvadhikari*) gave an order sometime later for women devotees to leave the premises before

dark, one of them, a French woman, sat down among the men in man's garb with a shaven head. Well, usually one would sit down and meditate with closed eyes but that evening I could not turn them away from Bhagavan's face, so movingly beautiful, so pure and radiant, it gripped the heart with its innocence and unfathomable wisdom. Could anything, anyone be nearer, dearer?

Suddenly in a moment of indescribable tenderness He was in my heart. *He became my heart*; whether still seated on the couch or not, I do not know; but I do know that He was the very core of my being, the I AM. And so He always is but we do not always know. Later I came across such statements with a thrill of recognition that it was so, that it was true.

In other traditions this truth is couched in different terms but it means the same. In the *Siva Puranam* Saint Manickavachakar prays for an unbroken state of experience adoring the feet of Him 'who is really not apart from me in my heart, not even for a moment !'

#### **Bhagavan knows all**

One morning Bhagavan was perusing the mail brought from the Ashram office, scrutinising even the envelopes. I was sitting a few yards away meditating and suddenly was flooded with light in ecstasy, blissful well-being, in waves. It was not steady. Busy as Bhagavan was, he at once turned his luminous eyes on me as if trying to help, letters and the rest of the mail seemingly forgotten. How did he know busy as he was and surrounded

with people from the office? But, how could he not know? Is not Bhagavan the indweller in all hearts?

Like a hawk whose wings  
Darkened the sky  
Thou pouncest on me  
A worm in dust  
To carry me off  
Into limitless all-knowing radiance.  
Lost in Freedom, Resplendence-Bliss  
In ecstasy undreamt of  
I lost myself  
I found MYSELF.

#### **An Experience on the Hill**

On the Hill above the path leading to Skandasramam I found a hideout, a flat place of a few yards among the rocks surrounded by boulders and shrubs like a screen. I would lie down there, a clump of scented grass for a pillow, meditating and watching the sunrise heralded by a rosy then crimson foreglow. One memorable dawn the sun appeared on the horizon and in a breathless moment entered the earth through me. I became the earth, a blissfully slumbering earth. Trampled upon by all sorts of creatures, all sorts of vehicles moving on the surface, cars rushing at high speed, the earth — myself and everything on it completely unaffected — was at peace in a state of indescribably blissful awakened slumber which continued, though everything came to life quickened by the sun. This description is inadequate. The blissful slumber is its best remembered feature. 'The earth meditates as it were' I read somewhere. The earth is alive. Such experiences may happen also to people not on the spiritual path.



Time is not an empirical concept derived from any experience...only on the presupposition of time can we represent to ourselves a number of things as existing at one and the same time or at different times.... Time is a necessary representation that underlies all intuitions. We cannot in respect of appearances in general remove time itself, though we can quite well think of time as a void of appearances. Time is, therefore, given *a priori*.

Or in other words, we cannot think outside time, time is one of the modes of our minds as thinking machines. And Bhagavan also asks, "Do time and space exist apart from us?", implying thereby the contrary.<sup>2</sup>

In our objectification of the world, we create it in terms of time and space, thus only can we see it apart from ourselves. In the eternal Now it ceases entirely to exist. But we find it hard to realize this, as our minds are restless machines and refuse to give up their activities which necessitate time for their functioning. For we are always trying to become something else, rather than what we are, or rather think we are, at the moment, happy, virtuous. And we fail to see all becoming must change, so that this happiness gained will change back into its opposite eventually, that is into unhappiness. It is only in Being or the Now that we can ever find rest.

For, Plato also says that time and creation come into existence together, in

fact all appearance is only in time. And Schopenhauer opines that matter is actual, (using actual in its original meaning), that is, only in its functioning which is in time, does it exist at all.

My reading of the Hindu scriptures is defective though undoubtedly they must say exactly the same repeatedly; I find I am unable to quote from them as I should, to substantiate my thesis. But I know one quotation from the *Vishnu Purana*, which finds its place here: Parasurama says therein: "Time is only a form of Vishnu, for change is only possible for things which are imagined with reference to a substratum".

But the whole picture, all our waking experiences, is only in eternity. We see only a part; and through continuing time a strip. It all depends on the angle from which we look at it; if we look repeatedly from the same angle we see the same isolated picture or strip. The picture never changes; it is only our point of view which does. The prophet is able to see a larger expanse of the picture than the layman. To merge entirely in the picture is to know Eternity; and from that point there is no picture as we know, and no time.

Boethius, the old Roman statesman awaiting his death in prison, also said, "Eternity is the simultaneous and complete possession of Infinite Life". And it would be hard to find it summed up better than this. For Eternity is the Now, it does not flow in time, there is no before or after in it, no birth and no death.

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher famous for the aphorism "Everything

<sup>2</sup> *Forty Verses*, Verse 18.

flows", said that fire was the cause of all. By this he did not mean the physical fire, but rather the energy of the modern scientists, though an energy that was not just material but rather spiritual. For him this central fire is eternal and never dies; "the world was, is ever, and ever shall be, an ever-living fire". And though fire itself is everlastingly changing, though this change would, like phenomena, seem to be apparent, essentially fire remains the same fire. Change in appearance is its nature as the commentary on *Mandukyopanishad* has it: "others think that manifestation is for the purpose of God's fulfilment, while still others attribute it to mere diversion. But it is the very nature of the Effulgent Being, for what desire is possible for Him whose desire is always fulfilled?".

Substitute Fire for Effulgent Being, which is after all a legitimate substitution, for what is Fire but Effulgence? And do not both these essentially agree?

In Bergson I find the following: "Pure duration is the form which our conscious states assume when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states". Though this apparently goes beyond the tenets of *advaita*, as he seems to be referring to the reincarnating ego in his reference to former states. Nevertheless it is pregnant with meaning, for we are undoubtedly conscious when we rest in the Now, though we do not individualize, and surely it is only then that we do really live!

But for many of the philosophers time was a problem, with the exception of those who considered it to be something

real, and of these there were a number, though we are little interested at the moment in their conclusions. We are trying to picture the verity of the Eternal Now in contrast to the unreality of time, which slips through our fingers like a running stream when the hand is plunged into the water to stay its course.

Leaving the realms of metaphysics let us glance at the hypotheses of some of the scientists. They have certainly been intrigued by the problem and well understood that it was not to be ignored, especially so since Einstein sprang on the world his theory of relativity. He himself says that distance is between events and not things which is taking matter-of-fact measurements out of the realm of every day life, where we thought they were safely enthroned and could be relied on, into the province of time itself, where we had never thought that time had any reason to interfere. It reminds us of Schopenhauer's "matter is actual", though one doubts if he ever really intended to imply quite as much as this. Though he does say:

All being in time is also non-being; for time is only that by means of which opposite determinations can belong to the same thing; therefore every phenomenon which is in time again is not, for what separates its beginning from its end is only time, which is essentially a flitting, inconstant and relative thing.

In astronomy time takes on its most intriguing aspect. We think that when we look through our telescopes into the measureless distances of the sky, we are looking at something present now. Most

of what we see has either moved millions of miles away from where it appears or has even ceased to exist altogether. We are, in fact, looking at all sorts of things which are not there at all. And if this cannot be called *maya* then the term has no meaning. One of the furthest nebulae our present telescopes can reach is 150 million light years away, an unimaginable mathematical figure. Now, what actually does this mean? It means that the astronomer now is looking at a 150 million year past event, which is happening for him in the present. At best he is only looking at a cosmic memory. The picture does not actually exist at all.

In the whole pattern of the heavens the position of the stars is a hallucination, they have one and all moved away from the positions in which we see them now, but not proportionately so that the actual pattern is much the same. But some have shifted vast distances and others but small in comparison. We may photograph it, plot it on our tracing board, all to no purpose. It is all a myth. Our sight and even our machines are grossly deceived, as we can never know what the picture really is. And even the apparent stationary position of the stars is deceptive. They are one and all rushing about at incredible speeds. Time is playing a game with us.

Eddington pointed out that if the universe is spherical, whatever direction we may look, provided there is no obstruction, we would be able to see the back of our own heads. Well not exactly! Because time has taken over 6,000 million years to go round and our heads were not there then, but we ought to see

what stood in that particular place then. Now let us suppose there are no obstructions and we do see some object, which existed in that spot 6,000 million years ago. What actually does it signify? We do see and yet we don't see. We really see an object that is not there at all. Our head is turned by such riddles and with the poet Omar, who was himself a great astronomer, we may truly say:

Another and another cup to drown  
The memory of this Impertinence.

Perhaps this same problem was too much for him also. We can hardly be surprised.

So it would seem as if science were gradually being forced to recognize that reality can alone be found in the Eternal Now; that time deceives us at every step we take. Each of us makes his own individual picture in terms of time and space, which spring up together with the uprising ego, and with it sink back again. As Bhagavan says:

The ego rising all else will arise.  
On it subsiding all will disappear.<sup>3</sup>

It is also written in the Book of Revelation X.5.6.: "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever...that there should be time no longer".

As a method of meditation, trying to rest in the Now irrespective of time, is interesting, and seems to me a productive *sadhana*. When all is at rest and the flow of outward events is allowed to go

<sup>3</sup> *Forty Verses*, Verse 28.



on its way unheeded, or taken up together into the whole, a peace passing all understanding rests on one, and one draws very near to a full realization of the Reality. I am not speaking here of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, when all outward cognizance has disappeared, but rather of a preliminary condition. As for the ultimate state it matters little whether we call it — the SELF, ETERNAL NOW or PURE BEING. These are all names only given in objective consciousness, in pure introspection they are found to be one and the same.

But for the *advaitin* who sees and knows One alone, such discussion may seem unproductive, and for some not even interesting. But for those who are not so established, there still remain doubts, and especially on the question of mortality. They fear death. They look on it as extinction. And the dogmas, creeds of various faiths give them no

more than encouraging words, not assurance. But in the certainty of the Eternal Now all such doubts should be dispelled. Here there can be no fear of death, for how can we ever escape from the present that is Now. It eternally is. And it is summed up by I AM. Not *I was* or *I may be* at some future date, but eternally I AM.

Schopenhauer endorses this:

Any form of life or reality is really only the present, neither the future nor the past. These are only in the conception.... No man has ever lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the present alone is the form of all life, and is its sure possession which can never be taken from it. The present always exists.

Plato says, "We say that it *was*, and *is* and *shall be*, but in reality IS alone belongs to it".

### The Master is the Self

(Conversation between Mrs. Jinarajadasa, an old Theosophist and Sri Bhagavan)

Mrs. J.: In Mrs. Besant's time we used to spend such a lot of time meditating on the masters. Are masters really useful ?

Bhagavan: Masters do exist externally as long as the pupil feels himself to be the body. As such, they are useful to teach him the truth about himself. Once the pupil experiences the Truth and breaks the body illusion, he realises the masters to be the same as himself, namely, the Supreme Consciousness, or Self. If there are masters outside the Self, then they are not real, being external additions, for he who comes will also go; that is, he is impermanent. The fact is Self, Master and God are one and the same.

— *Guru Ramana*, p.68.

## Maharshi Ramana: A great *jnana yogin*

By D.S. Sarma

**T**HERE have been many teachers of *jnana yoga* in our country, but very few *jnana yogins*, many teachers of Advaita, but very few who had the realization of Advaita. Sri Ramana Maharshi, on the other hand, was not only a great teacher of *jnana yoga* all his life, but also a great *jnana yogin*. To use the figure employed by Sri Ramakrishna, he was a man who described Benares after seeing the Holy City with his own eyes and not after seeing only a map of it. The remarkable power which he exercised and still exercises over the minds of men was due to the fact that all his life he was describing an experience of his own and not merely expounding a doctrine.

It may be said that the Maharshi was a great *jnana yogin* by birth. For, even while he was a lad of sixteen, illumination came to him suddenly without any previous training or effort, and at once he became firmly established in the very centre of Reality for the rest of his life.

There have been other instances, in the lives of the mystics and saints of the world, of commonplace things like a tree in full blossom in spring, or a flight of white cranes across the clear blue, autumnal sky or a silvery cascade running

down a mountain-slope bringing about the realization of the universal Spirit. But they have been more or less temporary experiences. In the case of some, the experience never repeated itself. In the case of others, it needed extraordinary efforts to bring it back and make it steady. That is why in the literature of mysticism the so-called mystic way is described as consisting of three stages after the initial awakening, namely, purification, illumination, and union. In our own religious tradition we are familiar with long periods of *tapas* which the aspirants had to go through before they could have a vision of the Deity they wanted to see. And it is well known how Patanjali in his *Yogasutra* has mapped out the entire way leading to *samadhi* or union and described its eight stages beginning with *yama* and *niyama*. But in the case of the Maharshi, there were no periods of *sadhana*, no stages of the mystic way and no laborious practice of *yoga*. The realization that came to him with the thought of death came once for all and it became an abiding possession. The present writer, when he went

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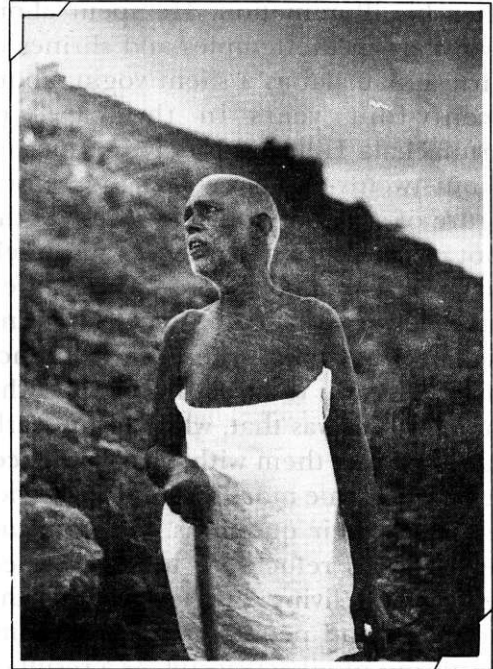
From *Maharshi Ramana, His Relevance Today*. Pub: Vivek. Publishing Company, Delhi (1980).

to pay his respects to the Maharshi in September, 1946, put to him the following question:

“In the lives of the Western mystics we find descriptions of what is called the mystic way with the three well-marked stages of purgation, illumination and union. The purgatory stage corresponds to what we call the *sadhana* period in the life of Bhagavan?”

And without the least hesitation came the following reply :

“I know no such period. I never performed any *pranayama* or *japa*. I know no *mantras*. I had no rules of meditation or contemplation. Even when I came to hear of such things later I was never attracted by them. Even now my mind refuses to pay any attention to them. *Sadhana* implies an object to be gained and the means of gaining it. What is there to be gained which we do not already possess? In meditation, concentration and contemplation what we have to do is only not to think of anything, but to be still. This natural state is given many names, *moksha*, *jnana*, *atma*, etc., and these give rise to many controversies. There was a time when I used to remain with my eyes closed. That does not mean that I was practising any *sadhana* then. Even now I sometimes remain with my eyes closed. If people choose to say that I am doing some *sadhana* at the moment, let them say so. It makes no difference to me. People seem to think that by practising some elaborate *sadhana* the Self would some day descend upon them as something very big called *sakshatkaram*. The Self is *sakshat* all right, but there is no *karam* or



*kritm* about it. The word *karam* implies one's doing something. But the Self is realized not by one's doing something, but by one's refraining from doing something, by remaining still and being simply what one really is.”

The audience assembled in the hall were astonished at the vehemence with which the Maharshi spoke these words. He spoke, of course, in Tamil. The present writer later on put the speech into English and sent it to the Maharshi for approval. He approved it and it was published in *Vedanta Kesari* with the caption, *Nastyta Kritah Kritena*. The latter is a quotation from *Mundaka Upanishad*. It means that what is uncreated cannot be gained by anything that one can do.

There are, no doubt, three distinct phases in the Maharshi's outward career

after his illumination. He spent about two years in the temples and shrines of Tiruvannamalai as a silent yogin, about twenty-four years in the caves of Arunachala Hill as a lonely hermit and about twenty-eight years as the central figure of a well-organized Ashram at the foot of the hill. But there was absolutely no inward change. There was no difference between his earliest teaching and his latest teaching. The only difference in his attitude towards the people who came to him was that, while in the early stages he met them with a stony silence, he later became more soft and gave brief replies to their questions. One can understand his reluctance to speak when he was still living in the caves of the mountain and people came to see him mostly out of idle curiosity. As a result of his tremendous experience he was on a far higher plane than the ordinary world. He was like an astronomer contemplating the magnitudes and the distance of the stars, while the world around him was like a villager thinking of his own hut and his little patch of cultivated land. No wonder, therefore, that his reply to their trivial and meaningless questions was mere silence. It required great compassion on his part to come down to the level of ordinary men and women and speak to them of his experience as a remedy to all their ills and illusions. This he did in his later life and gave rise to a spiritual movement which played its own part in the present Renaissance.

The Maharshi's illumination had a very important bearing on his mission in life. To begin with, it made him renounce the world while he was still on the threshold of man's estate and go away from

home leaving everything behind to a place he knew nothing about, as the Spirit led him. Thus he placed himself entirely at the disposal of God and surrendered his will to the Divine will. And when disciples came to him unsought and plied him with questions and begged for help he made his own experience the basis of his teaching. For, during his period of silence he had read some Hindu scriptures and found that they described nothing new, but only what he had experienced independently of them. Accordingly, the starting point of the discipline prescribed by him to others was Self-enquiry implied in the question, 'Who am I? — a question which he had put to himself immediately before his illumination. The process of enquiry suggested by him is as follows:

*Who am I? I am not this physical body, nor am I the five organs of sense perception; I am not the five organs of external activity, nor am I the five vital forces, nor am I even the thinking mind. Neither am I that unconscious state of nescience which retains merely the subtle vasanas (latencies of the mind).*

*Therefore, summarily rejecting all the above mentioned physical adjuncts and their functions, saying 'I am not this; no, nor am I this, nor this' — that which then remains separate and alone by itself, that pure Awareness verily am I. This Awareness is by its very nature Sat-Chit-Ananda.*

*If the mind which is the instrument of knowledge and is the basis of activity subsides, the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases. Unless the illusory perception of the serpent in the rope ceases, the rope on which the illusion is formed is not perceived as such. Even so, unless the illusory nature of*

*the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases, the vision of the true nature of the Self, on which the illusion is formed, is not obtained.*

From this quotation, and especially from the classical illustration of the rope and the serpent, it will be seen that the Maharshi's teaching is the same as Sankara's Advaita on its theoretical side. Like Sankara he insisted on the Absolute as the sole reality and the unreality of the individual and the world apart from the Absolute. In fact, he has translated two of Sankara's works, *Viveka Chudamani* and *Atmabodha* into Tamil and has appended an excellent summary of Sankara's teaching to the former. But on its practical side his teaching seems to be somewhat different from that of the traditional Vedanta. The traditional Vedantic *sadhana*, consisting of *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*, meant respectively the learning from a Guru of the Upanishadic truth of "Thou art That", then reflecting upon it, and then meditating on it till the Self was realized. The Maharshi, on the other hand, while insisting on the importance of a Guru, taught that meditation on one's own Self, rending its veils one after another till the divine spark at its centre was realized to be the universal Self, was a surer method. But in this progress of *vicharam*, as he calls it, the ego is made to merge in the Heart. For according to the Maharshi, the spiritual Heart, which is the centre of a man's being, is different from the physical organ that goes by that name and which is located on the left side of the body. And it is in the spiritual Heart that the transfiguration of the ego into the Self takes place. *Pranayama*, *dhyana*

and *japa* are only aids to control the mind and make it one-pointed. But it is *vichara* or Self-enquiry that makes the one-pointed mind liquidate itself in the heart. Thus, while the traditional Vedanta suggests that one should fix one's mind on the formula "I am That" till the Absolute is realized, the Maharshi suggests that one should fix one's mind on "I am not this" till 'I' is universalized and the realization of "I am That I am" takes place. Accordingly, he gives a different interpretation of the traditional formula of *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* in his method. In one of his talks he says:

"The enquiry 'Who am I?' is the *sravana*.

The ascertainment of the import of 'I' is the *manana*.

The practical application on each occasion is *nididhyasana*.

Being as I is *samadhi*".

Furthermore the Maharshi points out that *vicharamarga* may be followed even in one's worldly life. If a man puts himself the question 'Who am I?' at every step he takes in the world, it will cure him of all self-centred feeling which is the root of all sin. It will give rise to disinterested activity which is the essence of *karmayoga*. According to the Maharshi, *vichara* is also *bhaktiyoga*, because it is an unwearied quest of, and unfaltering devotion to, the true Self.

Thus Self-realization through Self-enquiry is the comprehensive central teaching of the Maharshi. It is essentially a *jnana marga*. For, to know the Self is to be the Self. All other things are only helps to start the mind on its enquiry

which ends with its own absorption in the Self. It may be asked whether the way indicated by the Maharshi is not an extremely difficult one, though it may appear to be very simple. Well, *jnana marga* is a steep and difficult path, being a short cut to the goal of man. That is why Hinduism prescribes so many alternative ways of approach, which are easy, but long and circuitous. The Maharshi thinks that his method is not difficult, provided the aspirant gets a competent guru and deserves his grace. In a remarkable statement he says that the guru need not be in human form. He may be a god, an Avatar or an idol. And initiation may be given by touch, look or silence. The Maharshi himself, the traditional Dakshinamurti form of Siva, taught mostly by silence those who surrendered themselves to him. But sometimes also by look — a steady gaze — he wrought a revolution in the mind of a devotee. The surprising thing about him was that some who came to him and put questions went away disappointed, while some came to him, were filled with his grace and became his lifelong devotees. He once said:

“Men prostrate before me, but I know who has really submitted.”

On another occasion he remarked:

“The grace of the guru is an ocean. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the ocean. The larger the vessel, the more will it carry away.”

As a teacher who stressed the supremacy of *jnana marga* the Maharshi was in the direct line of descent from Yajnavalkya, Gaudapada and Sankara. We may say that historically there has been

no such emphasis on *jnana* since Sankara. Several *bhakti* movements overwhelmed *jnana yoga* after Sankara established his Advaita. There were first of all the theistic systems of Ramanuja and Madhva and the system of *Saivasiddhanta*. After them the later *bhakti* movements in Northern India, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, had to take a firm stand by the side of Islamic theism and propaganda. The Samaj movements of the nineteenth century were also exclusively theistic in opposition to Christian theism. Even when Hinduism was revived later in all its aspects, *bhakti* was emphasized by Sri Ramakrishna as the easiest way for the modern world. Against this vast main current of *bhakti* flowing freely through eleven centuries stands the silent naked figure of Sri Ramana Maharshi like a rock. Not that he did not know the place of *bhakti* in the spiritual economy of man; on the contrary, like Sankara again, who composed several passionate hymns, he wrote five hymns in praise of Arunachala Siva. And in one of these, to our surprise, he uses the familiar imagery of the bride and the bridegroom of erotic *bhakti*. Also his insistence on the necessity of a guru for starting the process of Self-enquiry is a lingering phase of *bhakti* in his teaching. But when all is said and done, the *vicharamarga* which he incessantly advocated was a powerful plea for the revival of *jnana yoga*. Only, true to the spirit of the age in which he lived, he lifted it out of the particular religion which had encompassed it and made it accessible to men of all religions. Hence his disciples are found among men of all faiths and races.

## Universality of *Gita*

By Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati,  
Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitam

**T**HIS is the only philosophical work that enjoys the widest currency. It has been annotated as well as translated into several Indian and Western languages. Its message continues to be as fresh and inspiring as it was when the Lord delivered it to Arjuna. Though there are other equally elevating teachings, some of which have the suffix *Gita* also, why is it that the *Bhagavad Gita*, the celestial song, the message of true knowledge delivered to Arjuna by Krishna, alone come to occupy a supreme position and eternal value? The answer is to be found in the setting in which this divine message was given to the world.

Arjuna is the central figure in this interesting drama. He is seated in a chariot of which Lord Krishna is the charioteer. Arjuna, who, a little earlier, more or less directed Krishna to drive and position the chariot in between the opposing armies, has humbled himself into the position of a pupil at the feet of the teacher, Lord Krishna. Arjuna surrenders himself unreservedly to the mercy of Krishna and implores Him to guide him. And what a place to teach and to learn! The situation is such that Arjuna is not sure whether the next moment his head will be on his shoulders

or rolling in the dust. In actual life we see that a passing shower is enough to melt an audience listening to a religious discourse. People are more concerned about saving their clothes than hearing advice, however, ennobling it might be. But here is a case where a man in the jaws of death wants to learn and the Lord is willing to teach. It is this setting that has endowed the *Bhagavad Gita* with eternal value and supremacy over all other teachings.

There is also another aspect to the situation. Arjuna has proved himself fit to receive any *upadesa* the Lord may choose to give. Hostilities are about to commence and there is no knowing how many, and who, will lose their lives. Arjuna, while expressing his unwillingness to fight, is no coward and does not want to run away from the battle-field. On the other hand his objection is that war will entail his killing those whom he regards as his elders and relations. He does not mind being killed by the opponents even when disarmed. In fact he desires it to happen so that the slaughter

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Gist of a speech delivered by His Holiness during his visit to Madras in 1957-58.

Reproduced from *The Call Divine*, May 1958.

inherent in a war may not take place. That means Arjuna has overcome all desires and attachment to life. He has attained *vairagya*, the state of mind which is fit to receive true knowledge. There can be no better touchstone to test the *vairagya* (complete detachment) of a person than the battlefield. Arjuna is eager to learn. The only thing that matters to him is truth. Seeing that Arjuna has stood the test and made himself fit to receive knowledge, the Lord teaches him. That is how the message of the *Gita* has come to possess eternal value.

Arjuna has made out a good case for banning all wars. He says that any war is wrong and if one side is foolish enough to resort to arms it is better to ward off aggression by refusing to retaliate, thereby bringing about unilateral disarmament. In such a case, the casualties

will be low. War is different from the legal punishment imposed by a judge for a crime. A judge is a disinterested person and punishment is intended to act as a deterrent, which will check the

tendency to commit crimes or evil deeds. The disgrace attached to imprisonment and the hardship inside jails made people afraid to commit crimes. Though in modern times the disgrace attached to imprisonment has been converted into honour by political convictions and life within jails made better than the life many people led outside through reforms, still the consequence of punishment did act as a check to the growth of crimes.

But war stood on a different footing. It wiped out elders from society, leaving children and women without any guidance. Consequently there is disruption of family life, leading to deterioration of *dharma* and





the loss of chastity. When women lose their chastity *varna sankara* (upsetting of the caste system) is the consequence. *Varna sankara* results in both the persons responsible for it and the families affected suffering *naraka*, or unmitigated misery. Therefore argues Arjuna, a war instead of leading one to *moksha*, eternal bliss, will lead only to *naraka*, eternal misery. In the general interest of *dharma*, it is far better to submit bravely without resorting to extermination than to retaliate and cause greater human loss. After expressing this view, Arjuna remains heart-broken.

But how does Krishna meet the argument? His reply contains a touch of admonition. "Cast off your mental weakness and rise", says Krishna. He further says, "If you decide to refrain from fighting, it must not be from a sense of grief over the death that will ensue from it. Your weeping implies that you are affected by egoism and attachment, the sense of the 'I' and 'mine'. Fighting is the action that you should do as a *kshatriya*. In your present state of mind, you have not attained the qualification to abjure all action. Activity ceases only in the case of an unattached person. You are attached to your relatives, elders and teachers and bemoan their possible death in the battle. And so, inactivity is not yours now. You have not yet acquired the *siddhi* which will make for that inactivity. To attain that *siddhi* you should do the *karma* ordained by your *svadharma*". Therefore the Lord wants Arjuna to achieve personal perfection before he can qualify for this humanitarian attitude of abstinence from fighting.

We face the question which should have preference — individual salvation or *lokakshema*. The Lord's teaching on this point is that unless one is perfect oneself, one is not qualified to engage in acts of public good (*lokakshema*). A person who weeps or is angry, who is himself subject to *dukkha* or *krodha* cannot succeed in removing the like ills of others. The man who is subject to delusion (*bhramti*) is not qualified to rid the world of its delusions. And if there is a person who has overcome grief and other infirmities that subvert the soul, then his very existence will contribute to public weal (*lokakshema*). He need not strive for *lokakshema*; the world will learn by his example to reform itself and its consequent conduct will, of its own accord, lead to *lokakshema*.

The only way to overcome *dukkha* and other feelings is *jnana*. That is why the Lord proceeds to gradually instruct Arjuna in the truths of *Atma-jnana* which ultimately dispels his delusion.

The *Gita* began with the *vishada* (grief) of Arjuna. The Lord chided him for it in the beginning but towards the close tells him "do not grieve." The command to fight shows that even at the cost of the death of many warriors on both sides, one should perform one's *svadharma* as a *kshatriya*. For, the practice of *svadharma* without attachment and with resignation alone will make for *chittasuddha* (purity of mind) so necessary for *jnana prapti*. Such a *jnani* becomes a perfected soul, who by his very presence brings about *lokasangraha* in the truest sense of the term and in the most effective manner. Individual elevation alone would enable one to lift up others.

# Conversations with Sri Bhagavan

By Ramanadasasadananda

*Ramanadasasadananda was an outstanding devotee who visited Bhagavan during his early years on the Hill. His first visit was on the 19th October, 1915 and the next the following day, during which the conversation recorded below took place. He says that on the first occasion he was rendered speechless, overpowered by the joy of the darshan.*

*According to the author, Bhagavan was living in Skandasramam as well as Virupaksha cave during the period in question.*

**Ramanadasasadananda :** Mahatmas like Sankara, Tayumanavar, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda etc. have experienced and declared in unequivocal language the time-honoured truth of the actual oneness of souls, the falsity of fleeting *maya* and the permanent reality of the unity amidst all seeming diversity. While the *advaitin* maintains that we, the seemingly different *jivas* (souls), are no real separate entities but are merely the reflections of the Supreme Being even like the false representations of the sun's likeness in water-filled vessels, the arguments of teachers like Ramanuja and Madhva induce many to avoid the 'giddy heights' of *advaita* philosophy and follow *dvaita* pure and simple. The latter declares the souls to be eternally separate, subordinate to and dependent on the Supreme Being for — and even after — their attainment of salvation. May I know, which is true, the *advaitin's* conclusion, or the *dvaitin's* ?

**Bhagavan :** Each is true, in different stages.

**Devotee :** So the ultimate truth is that which is propounded by the *advaitin*?

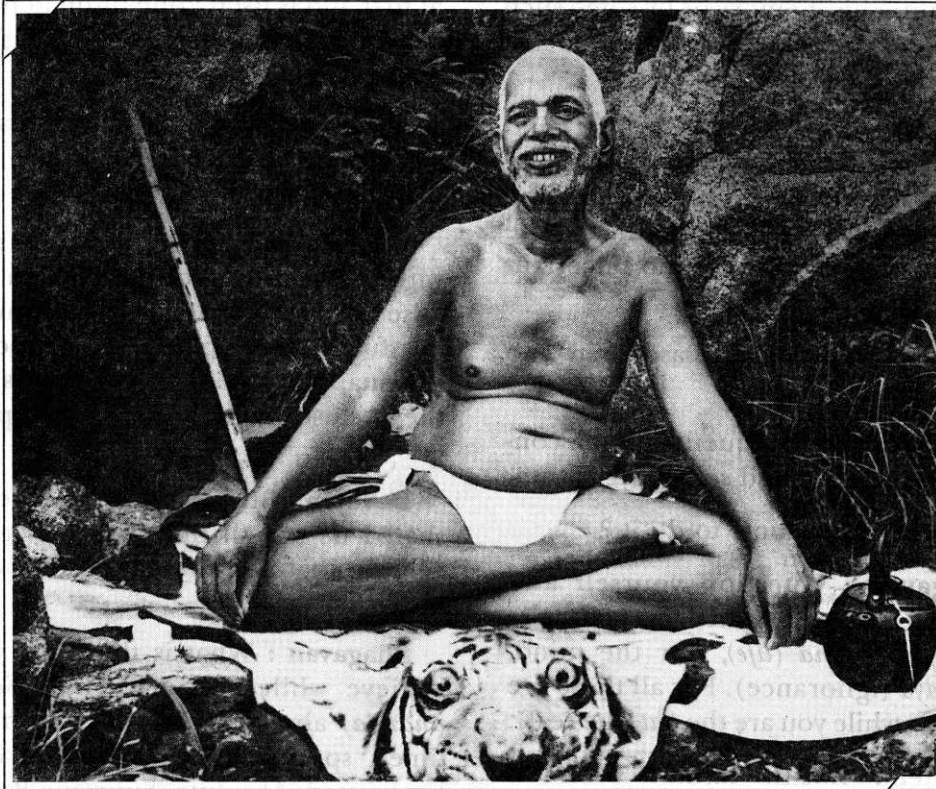
**Bhagavan :** Yes.

**Devotee :** I believe you concede that the soul in its real nature and origin is nothing less than God Himself.

**Bhagavan :** Yes. There is but One Being, devoid of all qualities and beyond the pale of death, birth, decay, progress etc. It is described as *Sat-chit-ananda*, (Existence - knowledge - bliss).

**Devotee :** If, as you declare, the real 'I' within this muddy vesture of body be one with Him, the Absolute, the sun of suns, the lord of lords, the author of whatever was, is or will be, how chances it that He, the All-knowing, and the

From *Ramana Stuti Dasakam* of the author (Pub: 1933).



Omnipotent is brought down to this despicable state of ignorance, forgetting his own divinity? How can he be enveloped by merciless *maya* which, while it is said to be but the shadow of *Isvara*, really eclipses the latter and deprives Him (in this body) — of the knowledge of His own nature even? Does not *Isvara* thus become a slave of *maya*, while *maya* herself plays the role of *Isvara*? If *Isvara* is really omniscient, how could He or a bit of Him — that dwells within and moves this body — be made, for however brief a time, ignorant of His own nature and what is worse, a victim of *maya*! How is this anomaly to be explained? Though it gives me no doubt immense

joy to learn from you that 'I' am really "One with the Supreme", I find it hard to get rid of the notion that I am a little self, limited to this petty mortal body and incapable of anything higher than what is achieved by men of the world.

**Bhagavan :** A mother wakes up her sleeping child and feeds him with milk late in the night. In the morning he does not remember having drunk his milk the previous night. He maintains that he did not drink milk while the mother says the contrary. Now, which of them speaks the truth?

**Devotee :** Of course, the mother. But the child also will believe it, if and when

by straining his memory or by some such process, he could recall to mind the fact of his having drunk milk.

**Bhagavan :** Even so, the *spiritual* child has *by some stress or strain* to ascertain and realise his oneness with the Supreme which the *Srutis (Vedas)* proclaim and the Guru (master) declares in no uncertain terms.

**Devotee :** How am I to ascertain who I am?

**Bhagavan :** By frequent, if not constant, questioning and searching within.

**Devotee :** How am I to do it ?

**Bhagavan :** Question yourself and learn that you are neither the body, the senses, the *prana (life)*, nor the mind, nor *avidya* (ignorance). For all these are insentient while you are the *Sat* (the real).

**Devotee :** But the mind is a demon which presents perpetual obstacles to *atma-jnana* (Self-Realisation). Which is the best way to overcome it?

**Bhagavan :** The mind is nothing but the thoughts. The root thought is the little 'I' which is known as *ahamkara*, or ego. When the question, 'Who am I?' preponderates, it kills all other thoughts

at first and is itself gone ultimately, since the little 'I' dwindles into nothing as you concentrate on its nature.

**Devotee :** What is it that displaces — or is found at the back of — the disappearing ego?

**Bhagavan :** Even as the rope is seen with the vanishing of the illusion of the false serpent in it, an all-knowing and blissful 'I', the Supreme 'I', devoid of all the qualities (and fear) of *maya* is felt to the exclusion of all duality and plurality.

**Devotee :** Bhagavan! How full of bliss shall I be for all time when I actually achieve that consummation devoutly to be wished!

**Bhagavan :** What is there for you to achieve while you are That (*Sat-chit-ananda*) already? You are beyond all time, space and causation. You are the Un-limited, Absolute, Supreme Being of Bliss. Like the silk worm which weaves its own web and crushes itself by being caught within its tightening folds, the ignorant man who yields to the mind and its ways seems to be immersed in a world of misery, though in reality, he never ceases to be the One Only without a Second.

### Bhagavan the Guru

Perhaps it was with V. Venkataraman that Sri Bhagavan came nearest to an explicit admission that he was the Guru. He told him once: "Two things are to be done, first to find the Guru outside yourself and then to find the Guru within. You have already done the first."

— *Ramana Maharshi and the path of Self Knowledge*, p.143.

# The Song of the Sannyasin

By Swami Vivekananda

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth  
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach;  
In mountain caves, and glades of forest deep,  
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame,  
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream  
Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.  
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,  
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore;  
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.  
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;  
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind;  
Then, off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Let darkness go; will-o'-the-wisp that leads  
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.  
This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags  
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.  
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this  
And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

'Who sows must reap,' they say, 'and cause must bring  
The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none  
Escape the law. But whoso wears a form  
Must wear the chain.' Too true; but far beyond  
Both name and form is Atman, ever free.  
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

They know not truth, who dream such vacant dreams  
 As father, mother, children, wife and friend.  
 The sexless Self! Whose father He? Whose child?  
 Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?  
 The Self is all in all, none else exists;  
 And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat Om!'

There is but One—The Free—The Knower— Self!  
 Without a name, without a form or stain.  
 In Him is Maya, dreaming all this dream.  
 The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.  
 Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat Om!'

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world  
 Nor that, can give. In books and temples vain  
 Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds  
 The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,  
 Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat Om!'

Say, 'Peace to all : From me no danger be  
 To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high,  
 In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!  
 All life both here and there, do I renounce,  
 All heavens, and earths and hells, all hopes and fears.'  
 Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,  
 Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;  
 Let one put garlands on, another kick  
 This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be  
 Where praiser, praised, and blamer, blamed are—one.  
 Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say—

'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed  
 Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman  
 As his wife can ever perfect be;



Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he  
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.  
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say—  
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?  
The sky thy roof; the grass thy bed; and food,  
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.  
No food or drink can taint that noble Self  
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free  
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say—  
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate  
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.  
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help  
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without  
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go  
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say—  
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent  
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,  
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'  
Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.  
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say—  
'Om Tat Sat, Om!'

**It sometimes happened that a devotee would grow despondent, seeing no improvement at all in himself and would complain that he was not progressing. In such cases Sri Bhagavan might offer consolation or he might retort, "How do you know there is no progress?" And he would explain that it is the Guru, not the disciple who sees the progress made; it is for the disciple to carry on perseveringly with his work even though the structure being raised may be out of sight of the mind.**

*— Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge, p.165.*



## Bhagavan Sri Ramana as I Knew Him

By Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

**H**E alone can be said to have known Sri Ramana, who has had the Ramana experience. And, he who has had that experience will not know him, remaining outside of him. To know Ramana is to be Ramana. To be Ramana is to have the plenary experience of non-duality. In the absence of that experience, we can only seek to know him by 'description'. This itself is not without its value. Through knowledge by 'description' we may succeed in gaining knowledge by identity. It is a *sadhana* of supreme potency, therefore, to be constantly aware of one's acquaintance with Sri Ramana.

To meet a sage and be acquainted with him is not an ordinary occurrence. It must be the result of a good stock of merit. I consider myself extremely fortunate, therefore, to have had the privilege of meeting the master, when I was barely eighteen. As I recall those three days I spent basking in the sunshine of Sri Ramana's glorious presence, I have no word to express the benefit I derived from that experience. To sit before him was itself a deep spiritual education. To look at him was to have one's mind stilled. To fall within the sphere of his beatific vision was to be inwardly elevated.

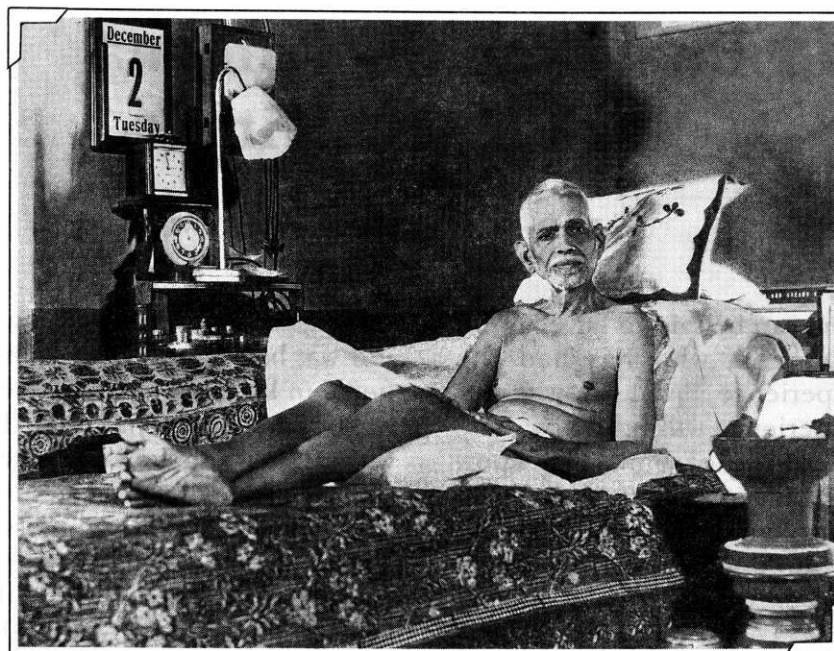
The most remarkable feature about

the master that struck even a casual visitor was his beaming face. There was no need, in his case, to frame the head in a halo. Such an enchantingly bright face with a soothing look and never-failing smile, one can never forget having seen it even once. The brightness remained undiminished till the very end — even when the master's body bore the cross of the last illness. A few days before the *mahasamadhi* when I went into the room where he lay and touched his feet with my head and quickly saw the condition in which his body was, I was on the point of shedding tears. But immediately I saw his face and he made kind enquiries in his usual inimitable way, all sorrow left without a trace, and there was Eternity looking on and speaking.

Even when I first saw the master, his head had begun to nod. The shaking head seemed to me to be saying *neti, neti* (not this, not this). And, all on a sudden the nodding would stop, the vision of the master would become fixed, and the spirit of silence would envelop everyone present. In the stillness of the Heart, one would realize that 'The Self is peaceful, quiet' (*santoyam atma*). Many of those who came with long lists of questions

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From *The Call Divine* (January 1955).



used to depart in silence after sitting for a while in the master's presence. When some did put questions to him, they received the replies they deserved. It was evident that many could not even frame their questions properly. In such cases Sri Ramana himself would help in the framing of questions. When he chose to answer questions or instruct through words, it was a sight for the gods to see. Each sentence was like a text from the Upanishad, so full of meaning that it required calm, silent pondering in order to be understood. Sri Ramana's answers never remained on the surface. He would go straight to the root of a question and exhibit to the wondering questioner the implications of his own question — which he could not even have dreamt of. Not unoften would the master make a questioner resolve his own doubts. But each time, the supreme

master would gently guide the seeker to the state of inner silence where all doubts get dissolved and all questionings cease.

There was no occasion when I experienced the manifestation of supernormal powers sometimes attributed to the master. He seemed to me to be perfectly normal. It is we that are abnormal by contrast. We have our tensions and mental tangles. As for the master there was no ruffle — not even the least agitation. The storms of the world never reached him. Sitting or reclining on the couch in the *ashram* hall, he appeared to be the still point of a turning world. There was not the least suggestion of his appearing to be other than normal. His mode of referring to his person as 'I' and not as 'this' was itself significant. He did not want to appear distinct from the rest of us with regard to empirical usage. Yet, there was no doubt about the fact

that there was not the least *adhyasa* present in him. His last illness quite clearly demonstrated this. What complete and utter detachment from the body he manifested in order to teach the world that the body is not the Self!

Having been a student of the *Gita* from childhood, I saw in Bhagavan a vivid and living commentary on that great scripture. When I was asked to address a meeting held in the local High School during one of my early visits to Tiruvannamalai, this is what I said: "If anyone wants to understand the inner meaning of the *Gita*, he must come to your town and meet the Maharshi". In 1948-49, when I was in the United States lecturing on *Vedanta*, many friends asked me if there was anyone living in India answering to the truth of the *Vedanta*. My reply invariably used to be 'Ramana'. On my return to India, when I went to the *ashram*, the master expressed a wish that I should give an account of my American visit to the devotees gathered during evening worship. I repeated to the gathering what exactly I had told American friends; and it was a pleasant experience to find a few Americans there.

The critics of *Advaita* usually say that the *Advaitin* is an austere intellectual in whom the wells of feeling have all dried up. Those who have seen the master will know how unfounded such a criticism is. Sri Ramana was ever brimming with the milk of divine kindness. Even members of the sub-human species had their share of the unbounded love of the Master. He was a consummate artist in life. Anything that he touched became orderly and pleasant. Sweet and firm was

## Light Shining Out Of Darkness

By William Cowper

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill  
He treasures up his bright designs,  
And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.

His purpose will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan his work in vain;  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.

his person even as the sacred Arunachala is. Why should I say 'was'? Even now he is and ever will be the light that never fades, the sweetness that never surfeits, to those who desire wisdom and eternity.



## Adi Shankara: His World View

Prof. K. Swaminathan

*The monumental contribution of Shankara towards the spiritual rejuvenation of India is part of recorded history. But his work had also a social dimension, apart from the purely spiritual one. This according to the author, is not of lesser significance.*

**D**URING the last eleven centuries many empires and systems have tumbled down, but Shankara's world view has not only retained its vitality and relevance but has been broadly accepted by intellectual and religious leaders in every free society. This world-view, the mutuality of *moksha* and *dharma*, the relatedness of the vertical and horizontal pulls in man and society, can be formulated roughly thus: awareness is the substance of being, growth in awareness is the evolutionary destiny of man the individual and of mankind as a species; and ample and deeper awareness in the individual is the surest means of social progress. The hope of peace and prosperity for mankind consists in the spontaneous and freely chosen pursuit of *sreyas* instead of *preyas* by intelligent individuals and enlightened groups.

The world had a right to look to independent India to provide the requisite educational, political, economic and administrative apparatus for shifting the foundations of human society from power to enlightenment. India seems to have failed the world, for the first great

opportunity which freedom brought us has been thrown away. But has it finally failed? Must it be allowed to fail? Have we not another opportunity today? These are questions we should ask ourselves as we meet to honour the memory of a man who achieved and distributed the highest freedom by accepting and discharging the highest responsibility.

I venture to think of the great Shankara as a harbinger of the future rather than as a relic of the past. The world's greatest mystic was also, as Dean Inge shrewdly observed, the world's greatest man of action. We are unfair to the Master and we impoverish ourselves when we regard him as a philosopher among philosophers, instead of Man among all living creatures. Birds, animals, children and illiterate people felt the total presence of Ramana Maharshi in a way which scholars could not understand or explain.

In man's evolutionary progress from

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From a talk by the author at the Ramana Kendra, Delhi (May 1972). His birth centenary was observed on December 3.

animality to godhood, three main forces operate: (1) intellectual curiosity, the search for certain truth, the mother of pure science; (2) compassion for fellow-beings, the mother of the politics of brotherhood; (3) aesthetic enjoyment, the mother of the arts of poetry, music, mythology and ritual. The three motives are typified (1) in Shankara and Ramana, (2) in Buddha, Muhamad and Gandhi, and (3) in Ramanuja and Tyagaraja.

These energies released by mother *prakriti* carry the risk of their misuse for selfish ends, for wealth, fame and power. But this risk is reduced when these forces operate harmoniously and in a balanced manner in an individual or a society. Modern civilization has destroyed the poetry of earth, by addiction to power and its systematic dehumanization and re-ification of all persons and personal dealings. It has ceased to throw up normal human beings, earthbound and bound for the sun. By growing too fast horizontally, by producing lush grass instead of giant trees, it threatens to destroy human culture by splitting the mind and starving the heart. Arnold Toynbee expressed the hope that "India the conquered would conquer its conquerors" and restore to knowledge and love their sovereignty over the human race. Is this fond hope mere folly? The Indian life-plan, a dynamic self-reliant *dharma*, was preserved by Shankara for future generations in the glass jar of an elite society. Gandhiji, with a confidence as sublime as Ramanuja's in the essential goodness of his fellow countrymen, broke the jar and scattered the seed. The question now is : having survived so many centuries of foreign rule, cannot

this *dharma* survive a few decades of *swaraj*?

Repeatedly and laboriously Gandhiji has explained the meaning of organic *swaraj* as internal self-rule in the fullest Vedic sense. Vinobha Bhave's understanding of Shankara's ontology and epistemology is great; his occasional criticism of Gandhiji derived from his firmer faith in Shankara. Nevertheless he has chosen to be a faithful and enthusiastic follower of Gandhiji because he saw that Gandhiji more than anyone else represented *the spirit of Shankara in action* in the conditions of contemporary life. Sri Aurobindo proved by his actual way of life during many decades that the world of consciousness was more real than the material and social world, just as Shankara proved by his amazingly strenuous activity that this poor planet and this dear, dear land of ours did matter enormously to him. Social concern, burning patriotism in the positive sense of loving and serving one's own people without any ill-will to others, this was as much a part of Shankara's make-up as it was of Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo. Such love and concern for one's people, whether as cause or consequence, is intimately connected with genuine religion, which is not an escape from life but an ever deeper engagement in it for one's own purification and peace and for the welfare of one's people. Does not our Kanchi Acharya<sup>1</sup> himself spread the purest kind of patriotism, as he spreads every other human virtue, by the fragrance of his words and actions?

<sup>1</sup> His Holiness the Paramacharya of Kanchi attained *Mahasamadhi* in 1994.

For Adi Shankara the past was not a prison, as some critics opine, but a launching pad. While freeing the mind from the shackles of time and space, he used all the available traditional means of communication with his people. He knew that in the conversation of mankind the voice of poetry should be heard often and listened to with respect. He preserved and enriched the poetry of the past, visited temples and reformed their rituals. Even as we thank him for the precious heritage he preserved, we should thank him for the negative tasks which he performed. Western writers like Landau, Robert Linssen and Richard Cregg quote profusely and approvingly from J. Krishnamurti and huge audiences listen to him with rapt attention, because cleansing of minds and temples is essential for their effective functioning. It is one item in the message of Shankara that knowingly or unknowingly Krishnamurti<sup>2</sup> is delivering through his discourses. When orthodoxy is blind, it brings corruption into every *sangha*, into every institution, into every *dharma*. It is only the *muktas*, the *mumukshus* and the common people with their unspoilt goodness that keep fresh and clear and strong the current of Indian *dharma*.

Zimmer says :

In the final analysis, the orthodoxy of India has never been grounded in a college of academy. Neither can it be defined by any numbering of views. For its life is in the *moksha* of the actual sages: such for example, as Rama-

krishna in the nineteenth century and Ramana in our own. These "wild geese" (*hamsa*), teaching numerously in every part of the land of the Bharatas, have renewed the ineffable message perennially, in variable terms, which philosophers classify and *adhikarins* transcend.

As the poet Muruganar sings,  
Like a tree which on a scorching day  
Offers cool shade to every corner  
By nature, not by choice,  
Even so stands Ramana  
Calm, immutable, impartial,  
Liking or disliking none,  
But saving all who reach His Feet.

The upside down tree whose roots are in transcendental awareness gives us, the fortunate children of India, many such human trees bearing fruits and flowers appropriate to every season. It once produced Shankara and Ramanuja and has in more recent times raised a veritable grove consisting of Ramakrishna, Gandhi, Aurobindo and Ramana. The Maharshi, notoriously silent and imperturbable like a stone, used to sit up and take notice of any whisper against such embodiments of the human spirit divine. More in sorrow than in anger he would atone for the critic's sin, saying, "it is our ego speaking". And in the Acharya of Kanchi we recognise a charming and balanced combination of *bhakta* and *jnani*, or *rasika* and man of action. Why do we talk then as if Adi Shankara was a mere man who lived among other men centuries ago? Is he not rather the *atman* in each *jiva*, the archetypal man, the whole human species in its evolutionary role fulfilling its divine destiny?

<sup>2</sup> J. Krishnamurti passed away in 1986.

## A Chakra At Sri Ramanasramam

By Krishna Bhikshu

**I**N the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Matrubhuteswara Temple at Sri Ramanasramam, established by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, in a small niche in the western wall, stands an object of worship two feet square and proportionately high, cut out of a single piece of granite and resting on a base of gold plate on which is etched a particular symbolical geometric figure. This object has been worshipped ever since its installation by Sri Bhagavan in 1949, the year before he laid down the body. In technical terminology it is a *Sri Chakra Meru* standing on a *Sri Chakra Bhuprasthara yantra*.

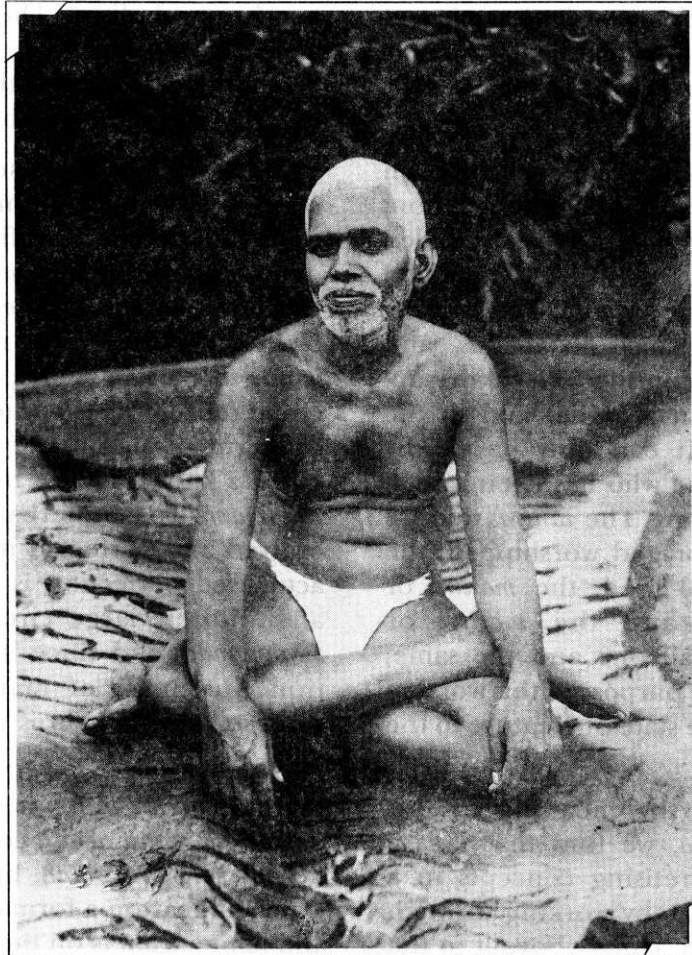
It may seem incongruous to some that Bhagavan who all his life taught the philosophy and path of *Advaita* or Identity should at the same time inaugurate this other mode of worship or *sadhana* which is to all appearance far removed from it. But since he did so it behoves us to try to understand why, and for that we must investigate the significance of the *Sri Chakra Meru* and *Sri Chakra yantra* and of the *sadhana* based on them. While doing so it is well to remember that they are a symbolism and a *sadhana* that go right back to Vedic times and are said to have been originally instituted by the Lord Himself.

The object of all *sadhana* taught and practised at Sri Ramanasramam is only to realize the ever-existing identity between the worshipper or individual self and the Worshipped or Supreme Self. *Advaita* itself is based on the Vedic text: *Sarvam khaluidam Brahma*, "All this is Brahman". To realize this is the purpose of any type of *Advaitic upasana* or teaching. The teaching is succinctly set forth in another verse: *Isavasyam idam sarvam, yatkincha jagatyam jagat*, "Whatever lives and moves in this phenomenal world is to be clad in the luminosity of the Lord." To put it more simply, we have to realize as a result of *sadhana* (and not merely know theoretically), that everything, visible and invisible, is a manifestation of the Supreme Brahman. This is technically termed *Brahma-atma-aihya-siddhi*: realization that the Brahman or Supreme Self is the same as the *atma* or individual self.

The Supreme Being is called the *Brahmanda* or 'egg of Brahma' and the composite personality of the individual, the *pindanda* or 'egg of flesh'. The embryonic form of the individual self or the basic form out of which it is evolved is called the *andanda* or 'egg of life'. From the *pindanda* the successful *sadhaka*

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, April 1965.





rises to the *Brahmanda* or limitless Beyond. Successful *sadhana* results in a blissful (*ananda*) conscious (*chinmaya*) existence (*sat*). In that state there are neither 'I' nor 'others', neither self nor phenomena, but only the all embracing *Satchitananda*, Being-Consciousness-Bliss. However, even this, the texts say, is only the mode of Brahman called *Saguna* or 'Conditioned'. Beyond it is *Nirguna Brahman* or 'Conditionless Brahman' to which no words or attributes can reach.

The *Sri Chakra Meru* type of *sadhana* instituted by Bhagavan at his Ashram aims at this same ultimate objective through concentration on a symbol called the *Meru*. The method is known as *tantra* or *tantrism*, being based on the ancient *tantric* texts. These are coeval with the Vedas. The *sadhana* based on them is worship of the power aspect of Brahman which is called *Tripurasundari*, the same as the *Saguna Brahman* we referred to above. Of course, it must not

be supposed that *Saguna Brahman* is anything different from the ultimate *Nirguna Brahman*; it is only another aspect of it.

*Tantric sadhana* proceeds by worship of a form, or perhaps concentration on a form might be a more apt description. This is usually a geometrical figure called a *yantra* although, as will be explained later, it may also be an icon. The *sadhana* involves the utterance of *mantras* and the use of the requisite *dravyas* or supports at the right moment and in the right manner. It can only be validly performed by one who has been initiated into it by a guru. The *tantras* declare that the *devata* or god worshipped, the *yantra* or symbol used, the *mantra* or words uttered and the *mantri* or worshipper are all one and the same; and therefore the purpose of this worship is to rise from the state of creature to the state of Creator.

Probing into the meaning of this mode of *sadhana*, we find that it is a method of concretising concepts in a material form and, by working through the material form, rising above it to the level of concept and then above even that to the finer and more subtle level of its Source. The material form through which one works may be a *prathika* or icon or a *prathima* or geometrical symbol. This last is known as a *yantra*. *Tantrikas* use both types. Both are described in detail in the *agamas* or *tantric* texts; and it is important that they should be exactly as laid down, because there is no fancy or imagination in the prescription but

precise symbolism. The object of this article is not to describe this symbolism at length but to explain the basic concept underlying *tantric* worship.

How do we represent the entire cosmos with its phenomenal manifestations in a geometrical figure? Its causal or embryonic state, the *andanda* referred to above, is represented by a minute circle called the *bindhu*, round which the *yantra* is built. This point or minute circle represents the unevolved essence or germ of being, the virtual *Satchit-ananda* known in the individual as the *antaryami*. To counterbalance it the fully evolved and perfected manifestation or actualised perfection is represented by an infinitely large circle. This is the *Brahmanda*, and since it has no limitation the limits of manifestation are represented by squares within it.

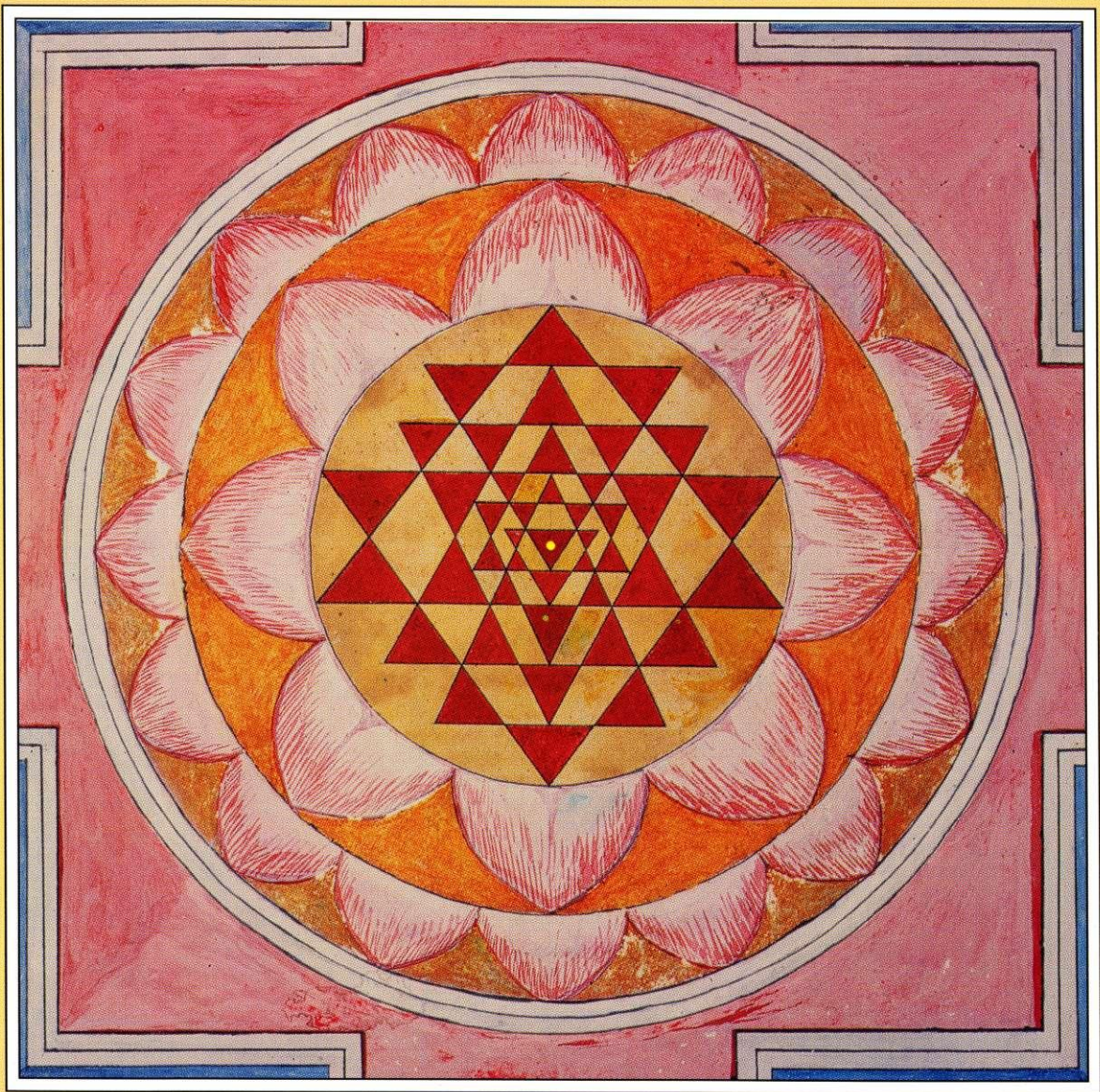
Out of the *bindhu* or causal state of the individual, which is the causal body or *karana sarira* of the cosmos, are manifested *kala* and *nada*, light and sound, which appear on a formal plane as form and name. That is on the level of formal manifestation, but prior to that, on the causal plane, first arise desire and action, *ichcha* and *kriya*. These are the first two expressions of the Prime Power or *Shakti*. Thus the whole process of manifestation is dependent on and governed by the *Shakti* who is (1) *Chit* or Consciousness, (2) *Ichcha*, wish or desire, (3) *Kriya* or action. *Kriya* is the combined result of the first two and is represented as the apex of the triangle of which they form

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*Picture of Sri Chakra appearing on opposite page was drawn by Sri Vaidyanatha Stapati sometime in the late 1940's. It has the special merit of having been seen by Sri Bhagavan.*

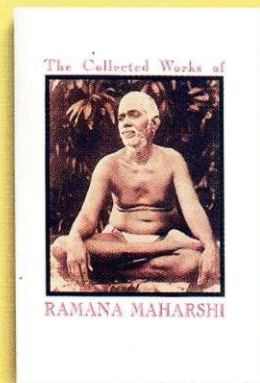
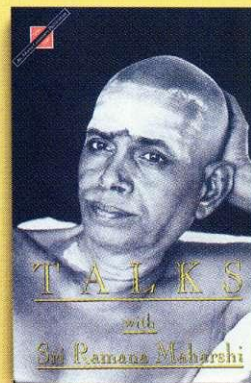
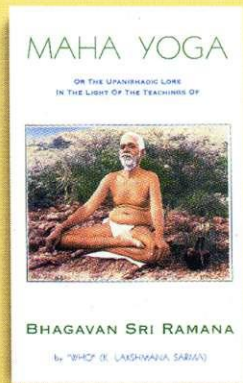
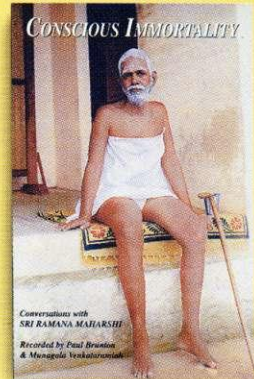
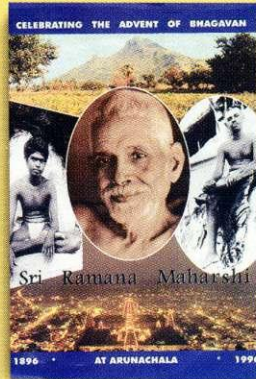
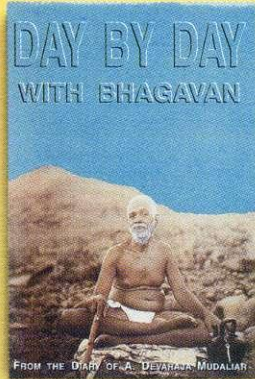
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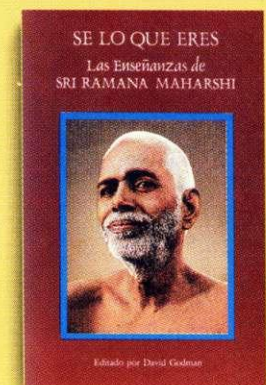
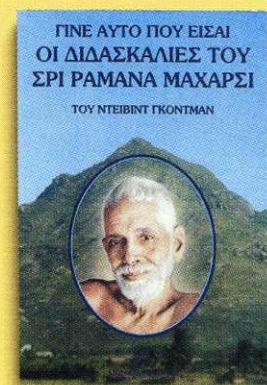
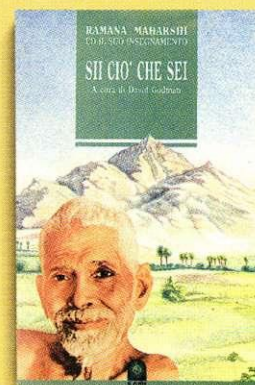
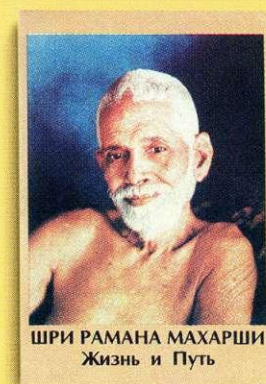
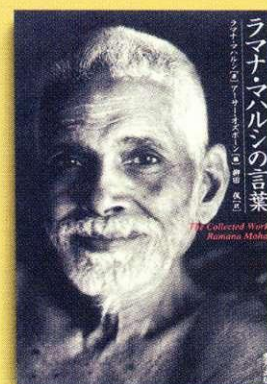
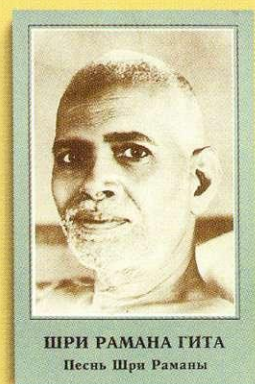


SRI CHAKRA

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the base. Although one says 'base' and 'apex' the triangle is actually inverted, with its apex pointing downwards, since it represents the descent of the Divine into the manifested world. The *sadhaka* is represented by another triangle with its apex pointing upwards. The two triangles interpenetrate and in the heart of them is the *bindhu*. The *ichcha* of the individual leads him to action and from the two of them combined arises consciousness, aspiring upwards. The descent of the Divine and the ascent of the aspirant are thus interlocked, and this is the simplest form of the *yantra* or symbol. Between the *bindhu* and the Beyond the power of the Maha Tripurasundari or Supreme Shakti has now built for herself a *pindanda* represented by the sixpointed star, and out of this emerge the microcosm or individual and the macrocosm or cosmos. This is also called the first *pura*, body or abode in which the *Mulashakti* or original *Shakti* abides.

All the geometrical figures used in the *chakra* are variants of circles and triangles. A *bindhu* surrounded by a triangle in a circle can represent the entire creation; but all the manifestations of power have to figure in the completed *yantra*.

According to *tantric* teaching the *Mulashakti* or Original *Shakti* manifests as three different *shaktis* at each node of the triangle. These are Sri Maha Saraswati, Sri Maha Shakti and Sri Maha Kali, the three primary forms of the Mother. They are the first deities to be worshipped by every manifestation of form and name in the universe. Each of them has various aspects which are

manifested in the larger triangles. The powers of the *Shakti* are legion. Cosmically, each larger triangle represents a wider and grosser manifestation. The *tantric* texts give the names of the presiding deities at each of the nodes of each of these triangles. This diagram of manifestation is surrounded by two concentric circles, of which the inner represents the centrifugal forces and the outer the centripetal. The various types of forces are represented by the petals of a lotus. Outside the circles there is still grosser manifestation represented by squares which surround the *pura* or abode of the Devi. Every type of matter, metal, tree and living creature, is given a place in these ramparts. The deities which preside over each rampart are mentioned and have to be worshipped by the aspirant. It is said that the *Sri Puri* or place in which the Mother manifests herself is surrounded by twenty five ramparts of different materials and that beyond these is the unmanifest power of the *Shakti*.

For the individual the order is reversed. What is in seed form in the first upright triangle has to be expanded by *sadhana* into the larger triangles which represent wider powers latent in him. Ultimately he has to overleap the ramparts and merge in the all-pervading Unmanifest. I have purposely not given the details of the *chakras* mentioned in the texts, since *tantrism* is a secret tradition not to be revealed in its operative details except to those who are initiated into it. It is enough to say that each figure represents some *tattwa* in the cosmic creation which is the second *pura* or abode of the Mother. And the Beyond,

i.e. the *Brahmanda* of the cosmos, is the third *pura*.

*Tantrism* teaches that in worshipping the deities at each point of the diagram one acquires their Grace and develops the power they represent. Thus, what begins as the mere worship of an outer form becomes a *samskara* on the mental plane, and these *samskaras* can actualise powers in the individual which were hitherto merely virtual or potential. Finally they lead the individual back to the amplitude of power, consciousness and bliss which is the essential nature of the Divine Mother.

*Tantriks* believe in the manifestation of the Mother in form and name, which means that for them creation is a fact and not just an illusion, as it is for the pure *Advaitin*. The *Advaitin* works for the elimination of ignorance or illusion, whereas the *tantrik* works for the development of cosmic power and consciousness. The ultimate goal of both is the same, that is identity with *Saguna Brahma* and further eventual transition into the *Nirguna* beyond.<sup>1</sup>

*Tantrism* teaches that there are a number of worlds on different planes controlled by different powers of the Divine Mother. The ultimate result of *sadhana* is identification with the formless

and nameless Power above them all that is Maha Tripurasundari, the Supreme *Shakti*.

Now to return to the specific case of Sri Ramanasramam. The *yantra* called *Sri Chakra Bhuprastara* is etched on a gold plate and forms the base of the *Meru* worshipped there. To the normal *Sri Chakra* form thus etched Bhagavan added some *bija aksharas* of the *mantra* of Kumara or Subramanya.

The *Meru prasthara* is the *Sri Chakra* in conical form, its apex representing the highest point of realization attainable to the aspirant as a result of his *sadhana*. The mind becomes one-pointed and merges into the indescribable Beyond that is the Mother. Through this *chakra* the deities or *devas* are to be worshipped. It is taught that the universe is in three stages, the causal, subtle and gross. For the *tantrik* all this has to be symbolised, whereas for the *Advaitin* it is not necessary. The ultimate result aimed at is the same for both.

That is why Sri Bhagavan, who prescribed Self-enquiry for those who could follow it, also instituted this type of temple worship for those who are helped by it. Thus the beneficent power which he brought on earth is induced into the *Sri Chakra* sanctified by his touch. Some of his devotees believe that when he felt that the time was approaching for him to give up the body he instituted this as a means of canalising and continuing the Grace he had brought to them. He inducted his Divine Power into the *Sri Chakra* and *Meru Chakra* so that those drawn to the more elaborate path might continue to receive his Grace even

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that these two view points are not mere theories, after the style of Western philosophy, of which one must be false if the other is true. Rather each is the theoretical basis for a practical discipline or *sadhana*. They are in ultimate agreement not on the theoretical plane but because the *sadhanas* based on them lead ultimately to the same goal.

after the disappearance of his body as well as those who practised Self-enquiry. He was present at the installation and took a great interest in the *pratishtapana*, personally adding some details to the forms of the *Chakra* and supervising the entire construction of the temple. He inspected every stone of the temple carefully during its construction and told the workmen to eliminate every defect, and at every stage he was the final authority both on form and on the ritual to be adopted and the deities to be

worshipped. It is through his Grace that the Matrubhuteswara Temple is now *Rishi-pratishtapita*, radiating his Light, which is the Light of the Mother. Its very name signifies that it is *Ishwara* (God) who has become the Mother, pointing to the identity between *Ishwara* and Mother or between *Siva* and *Shakti*. Thus the *advaitic* doctrine of identity is not negated by this act of Bhagavan's, but on the contrary reinforced, so as to be available for those who require a more ritualistic path.

*As a fitting conclusion to this article we add a note on the installation of the Sri Chakra left by Alan Chadwick (for whom see the 'Ashram Bulletin' of our issue of January 1964).*

Bhagavan took a personal interest in the cutting of the *Sri Chakra Meru* of granite which was installed in the temple and is regularly worshipped. At the time of the *Kumbabhishekam* or consecration, on the penultimate night before the holy water was poured over the images, he personally supervised the installation in the inner shrine. It was an extremely hot night, with the charcoal retorts melting the cement inside to further add to the heat and it must have been intolerable inside but he sat there for about an hour and a half telling them what to do.

On the last night before the final day he went in procession, opening the doors of the new hall and temple, and passed through into the inner shrine where he stood for some five or ten minutes with both hands placed on the *Sri Chakra* in blessing. I happened that night to be at his side the whole time. This was unusual as I usually avoided taking a prominent part in such things but liked to watch them from a distance. However something made me stay by him and on ac-

count of that I am able to testify to his deep interest in the temple and especially in the *Sri Chakra*. It was because of this knowledge that I was instrumental after Bhagavan's passing in persuading the Ashram authorities to start the *Sri Chakra Pujas* six times a month. The explanation of this unusual show of interest by Bhagavan is probably to be found in the necessity for the *Shakti* always to accompany *Siva*. It is not enough to have *Siva* alone. On the only occasion when such a *puja* was performed in Bhagavan's lifetime he refused to go to his evening meal at the usual time but insisted on staying to watch it to the very end. When some one<sup>2</sup> remarked how magnificent it had been and what a good thing it would be if such *pujas* could be performed regularly, Bhagavan replied: "Yes, but who will see to this?" As I have already said, it is now being done and undoubtedly has the blessings of Bhagavan.

<sup>2</sup> Actually it was Alan Chadwick himself who said this and who undertook to see to it.

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# The Bhagavad Gita

## Chapter II

### DEVOTION THROUGH APPLICATION TO THE SPECULATIVE DOCTRINES

English rendition by William Quan Judge

*W.Q. Judge was a great Theosophist, almost as well known as H.P. Blavatsky. His rendition of the Gita (which was a favourite book with him) was first published in 1890.*

**S**ANJAYA : Krishna, beholding him thus influenced by compunction, his eyes overflowing with a flood of tears, and his heart oppressed with deep affliction, addressed him in the following words:

**Krishna** : Whence, O Arjuna, cometh upon thee this dejection in matters of difficulty, so unworthy of the honourable, and leading neither to heaven nor to glory? It is disgraceful, contrary to duty, and the foundation of dishonour. Yield not thus to unmanliness, for it ill-becometh one like thee. Abandon, O tormentor of thy foes, this despicable weakness of thy heart, and stand up.

**Arjuna** : How, O slayer of Madhu, shall I with my shafts contend in battle against such as Bhishma and Drona, who of all men are most worthy of my respect? For it were better to beg my bread about the world than be the murderer of my preceptors, to whom such awful reverence is due. Were I to destroy such friends as these, I should partake of possessions, wealth and pleasures polluted with their blood. Nor can we tell whether it would be better that we should defeat them, or they us. For those drawn up, angrily con-

fronting us—and after whose death, should they perish by my hand, I would not wish to live—are the sons and people of Dhritarashtra. As I am of a disposition which is affected by compassion and the fear of doing wrong, I ask thee which is it better to do? Tell me that distinctly! I am thy disciple; wherefore instruct in my duty me who am under thy tuition; for my understanding is confounded by the dictates of my duty, and I see nothing that may assuage the grief which drieth up my faculties, although I were to obtain a kingdom without a rival upon earth, or dominion over the hosts of heaven.

**Sanjaya** : Arjuna having thus spoken to Krishna, became silent, saying: *I shall not fight, O Govinda.* Krishna, tenderly smiling, addressed these words to the prince thus standing downcast between the two armies:

**Krishna** : Thou grieveest for those that may not be lamented, whilst thy sentiments are those of the expounders of

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the letter of the law. Those who are wise in spiritual things grieve neither for the dead nor for the living. I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be. As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not disturbed by anything that may come to pass. The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are brief and changeable; these do thou endure O son of Bharatha! For the wise man, whom these disturb not and to whom pain and pleasure are the same is fitted for immortality. There is no existence for that which does not exist, nor is there any non-existence for what exists. By those who see the truth and look into the principles of things, the ultimate characteristic of these both is seen. Learn that He by whom all things were formed is incorruptible, and that no one is able to effect the destruction of IT which is inexhaustible. These finite bodies, which envelope the soul inhabiting them, are said to belong to Him, the eternal, the indestructible, unprovable Spirit who is in the body: wherefore, O Arjuna, resolve to fight. The man who believeth that it is this Spirit which killeth, and he who thinketh that it may be destroyed, are both alike deceived: for it neither killeth nor is it killed. It is not a thing of which a man may say, 'It hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter': for it is without birth and meeteth not death: it is ancient, constant, and eternal, and is not

slain when this, its mortal frame, is destroyed. How can the man who believeth that it is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible, and without birth, think that it can either kill or cause to be killed. As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new. The weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and it is not to be dried away: it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable: it is invisible, inconceivable, and unalterable; therefore, knowing it to be thus, thou shouldst not grieve. But whether thou believest it to be of eternal birth and duration, or that it dieth with the body, still thou hast no cause to lament it. Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals; wherefore it doth not behove thee to grieve about the inevitable. The antenatal state of beings is unknown; the middle state is evident; and their state after death is not to be discovered. What in this is there to lament? Some regard the indwelling spirit as a wonder, whilst some speak and others hear of it with astonishment; but no one realizes it, although he may have heard it described. This spirit can never be destroyed in the mortal frame which it inhabiteth, hence it is unworthy for thee to be troubled for all these mortals.

Cast but thine eyes toward the duties of thy particular tribe, and it will ill become thee to tremble. A soldier of the Kshatriya tribe hath no duty superior to lawful war, and just to thy wish the door

of heaven is found open before thee, through this glorious unsought fight which only fortune's favoured soldiers may obtain. But if thou wilt not perform the duty of thy calling and fight out the field, thou wilt abandon thy natural duty and thy honour, and be guilty of a crime. Mankind will speak of thy ill fame as infinite, and for one who hath been respected in the world ill fame is worse than death. The generals of the armies will think that thy retirement from the field arose from fear, and even amongst those by whom thou wert wont to be thought great of soul thou shalt become despicable. Thine enemies will speak of thee in words which are unworthy to be spoken, depreciating thy courage and abilities; what can be more dreadful than this! If thou art slain thou shalt attain heaven: if victorious, the world shall be thy reward; wherefore, son of Kunti, arise with determination fixed for the battle. Make pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, the same to thee, and then prepare for battle, for thus and thus alone shalt thou in action still be free from sin.

Thus before thee has been set the opinion in accordance with the *Sankhya* doctrine, speculatively; now hear what it is in the practical, devotional one, by means of which, if fully imbued therewith, thou shalt forever burst the bonds of *karma* and rise above them. In this system of *yoga* no effort is wasted, nor are there any evil consequences, and even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk. In this path there is only one single object, and this of a steady, constant nature; but widely-

branched is the faith and infinite are the objects of those who follow not this system.

The unwise, delighting in the controversies of the Vedas, tainted with worldly lusts, and preferring a transient enjoyment of heaven to eternal absorption, whilst they declare there is no other reward, pronounce, for the attainment of worldly riches and enjoyments, flowery sentences which promise rewards in future births for present action, ordaining also many special ceremonies the fruit of which is merit leading to power and objects of enjoyment. But those who thus desire riches and enjoyment have no certainty of soul and least hold on meditation. The subject of the Vedas is the assemblage of the three qualities. Be thou free from these qualities, O Arjuna! Be free from the 'pairs of opposites' and constant in the quality of *Sattva*, free from worldly anxiety and the desire to preserve present possessions self-centred and uncontrolled by objects of mind or sense. As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahman in all the Vedic rites.

Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to action by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting in *yoga*, perform thy duty, O Dhananjaya, and laying aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called *yoga*.

Yet the performance of works is by far inferior to mental devotion, O despiser of wealth [*sic*]. Seek an asylum, then, in this mental devotion, which is knowledge; for the miserable and unhappy are those whose impulse to action is found in its reward. But he who by means of *yoga* is mentally devoted dismisses alike successful and unsuccessful results, being beyond them: *yoga* is skill in the performance of actions: therefore do thou aspire to this devotion. For those who are thus united to knowledge and devoted, who have renounced all reward for their actions, meet no rebirth, and go to that eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease and untouched by troubles.

When thy heart shall have worked through the snares of delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion.

**Arjuna:** What, O Keshava, is the description of that wise and devoted man who is fixed in contemplation and confirmed in spiritual knowledge? What may such a sage declare? Where may he dwell? Does he move and act like other men?

**Krishna:** A man is said to be confirmed in spiritual knowledge when he forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and content in the Self through the Self. His mind is undisturbed in adversity: he is happy and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and

anger. Such a man is called a *muni*. When in every condition he receives each event, whether favourable or unfavourable with an equal mind which neither likes nor dislikes, his wisdom is established, and, having met good or evil, neither rejoiceth at the one nor is cast down by the other. He is confirmed in spiritual knowledge, when, like the tortoise, he can draw in all his senses and restrain them from their wonted purposes. The hungry man loseth sight of every other object but the gratification of his appetite, and when he is become acquainted with the Supreme, he loseth all taste for objects of whatever kind. The tumultuous senses and organs hurry away by force the heart even of the wise man who striveth after perfection. Let a man, restraining all these, remain in devotion at rest in me, his true self; for he who hath his senses and organs in control possesses spiritual knowledge.

He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all! But he who, free from attachment or repulsion for objects, experienceth them through the senses and organs, with his heart obedient to his will, attains to tranquillity of thought. And this tranquil state attained, therefrom shall soon result a separation from all troubles; and his mind being thus at ease, fixed upon one object, it embraceth wisdom from all sides. The man whose heart and mind are not at

rest is without wisdom or the power of contemplation; who doth not practice reflection, hath no calm: and how can a man without calm obtain happiness? The uncontrolled heart, following the dictates of the moving passions, snatcheth away his spiritual knowledge, as the storm the bark upon the raging ocean. Therefore, O great-armed one, he is possessed of spiritual knowledge whose senses are withheld from objects of sense. What is night to those who are unenlightened is as day to his gaze; What seems as day is known to him as night, the night of ignorance. Such is the self-governed Sage!

The man whose desires enter his heart, as waters run into the unswelling passive ocean, which though ever full, yet does not quit its bed, obtaineth happiness;

not he who lusteth in his lusts. The man who, having abandoned all desires, acts without covetousness, selfishness or pride, deeming himself neither actor nor possessor, attains to rest. This, O son of Pritha, is dependence upon the Supreme Spirit, and he who possesseth it goeth no more astray; having obtained it, if therein established at the hour of death, he passeth on to *nirvana* in the Supreme.

*Thus in the Upanishads, called the holy Bhagavad-Gita, in the science of the Supreme Spirit, in the book of devotion, in the colloquy between the Holy Krishna and Arjuna, stands the Second Chapter, by name —*

DEVOTION THROUGH  
APPLICATION TO THE  
SANKHYA DOCTRINE.

### What should One Meditate Upon

*(Conversation between Swami Akhandanand Sarasvati, the renowned Advaita Vedantin of Brindavan and Sri Bhagavan)*

**Swami** : What should one meditate upon?

**Bhagavan** : Who is raising this question?

**Swami** : The questioner is a *jijnasu*.

**Bhagavan** : *Jijnasu* is the one who has the yearning to know (the truth). Who is that 'I' who has the yearning to know? Meditate upon That.

— *Aparokshanubhuti Ke Pravachan*  
(Commentary in Hindi by the  
Swami on Sankara's *Aparokshanubhuti*).

# Advaita Bodha Deepika

## (The Lamp of Non-Dual Knowledge)

### Chapter VIII

#### MANONASA

#### (THE EXTINCTION OF THE MIND)

*Advaita Bodha Dipika is a work highly commended by Sri Bhagavan for study by seekers. The present translation has the merit of having been finalised after a thorough revision in his presence.*

*Sri Bhagavan has also written a brief summary in Tamil condensing the essence of the entire work in a single, long sentence.*

1. In the previous chapter, having taught the realisation of the non-dual Brahman, the master now treats of the extinction of the mind as the sole means of realising Brahman.

**Master:** Wise son, leave off the mind which is limiting adjunct giving rise to individuality, thus causing that great malady of repeated births and deaths, and realise Brahman.

**2. Disciple:** Master, how can the mind be extinguished? Is it not very hard to do so? Is not the mind very powerful, restive and ever vacillating? How can one relinquish the mind?

**3-4. M:** To give up the mind is very

easy, as easy as crushing a delicate flower, or removing a hair from butter or winking your eyes. Doubt it not. For a self-possessed resolute seeker not bewitched by the senses, but by strong dispassion grown indifferent to external objects, there cannot be the least difficulty in giving up the mind.

**D:** How is it so easy?

**M:** The question of difficulty arises only if there is a mind to leave off. Truly speaking, there is no mind. When told 'There is a ghost here' an ignorant child is deluded into believing the existence of the non-existent ghost, and is subject to fear, misery and troubles, similarly in

the untainted Brahman by fancying things that are not, as this and that, a false entity known as the mind arises, seemingly real, functioning as this and that, and proving uncontrollable and mighty to the unwary, whereas to the self-possessed, discerning seeker who knows its nature, it is easy to relinquish. Only a fool ignorant of its nature says it is most difficult.

**5-10. D:** What is the nature of the mind?

**M:** To think this and that. In the absence of thought there can be no mind. On the thoughts being extinguished the mind will remain only in name like the horn of a hare; it will vanish as a non-entity like a barren woman's son, or a hare's horn, or a flower in the sky. This is also mentioned in the *Yoga Vasishtha*.

**D:** How?

**M:** Vasishtha says: 'Listen, O Rama, there is nothing to speak of as mind. Just as the ether exists without form, so also the mind exists as the blank insentience. It remains only in name; it has no form. It is not outside, nor it is in the heart. Yet like the ether, the mind though formless fills all'.

**D:** How can this be?

**M:** Wherever thought arises as this and that, there is the mind.

**D:** If there be mind wherever there is thought, are thought and mind different?

**M:** Thought is the index of the mind. When a thought arises mind is inferred. In the absence of thought, there can be

no mind. Therefore mind is nothing but thought. Thought is itself mind.

**D:** What is 'thought'?

**M:** Thought is imagination. The thought-free state is Bliss Supreme (*Sivasvarupa*). Thoughts are of two kinds; the recalling of things experienced, and unexperienced.

**11. D:** To begin with, please tell me what is 'thought'.

**M:** Sages say that it is nothing but to think of any external object as this or that, is or is not, thiswise or thatwise, etc.

**12-13. D:** How is this to be classified under the heads of things experienced and unexperienced?

**M:** Of objects of senses, such as sound, already experienced as 'I saw — I heard — I touched etc'. to think of them as having been seen, heard, touched is the recollection of things already experienced. To call to mind unexperienced objects of senses is the thought of unexperienced things.

**14. D:** That thoughts pertain to things already experienced is understandable. But how to think of those not so experienced unless they are reminiscences of things already experienced? One can never think of things not experienced. How then can we say — to think of things not already experienced is 'thought'?

**15. M:** Yes, it is quite possible. To think of things not experienced is also thought. Objects unexperienced appear as such only after thinking.

**D:** How can the things not already experienced come within the orbit of thought?

**M:** By the process of positive and negative induction (*anvaya vyatireka*), all mental imagery must be said to be thought-forms, whether already experienced or not.

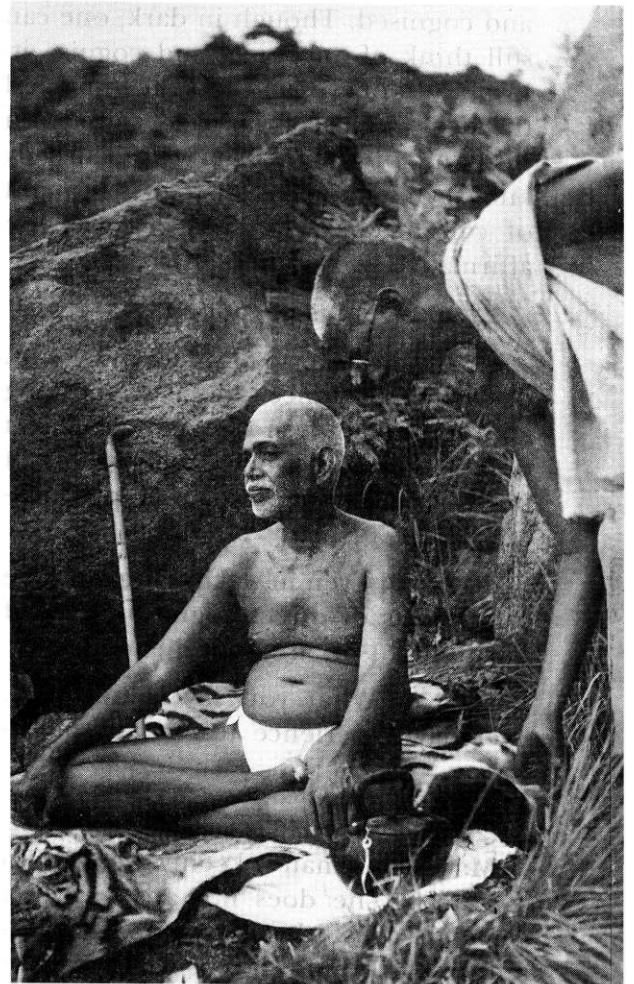
**16-17. D:** How do you apply the positive and negative induction here?

**M:** Whether existent or non-existent, already experienced or not so experienced, whatever and however something is thought of, it is apprehended. The mere thought of it amounts to apprehension. This is the positive induction. Real or unreal, experienced or not, however it may be, whatever is not thought of, is not apprehended. This is negative induction. From this process also it follows that thought is apprehension.

**18. D:** How can mere thought of anything be its apprehension also? Things are apprehended directly by the senses or by recall of past experiences to the mind. On the other hand, things unheard of or unseen cannot be apprehended by simple thinking of them. Therefore the logical conclusion that mere thought of anything is its apprehension, does not hold.

**M:** You are not right. How can you say that things not directly cognised by the senses are not apprehended? The pleasures of heaven though not already enjoyed, are vividly pictured in our minds. This is owing to our knowledge of the *sastras* which depict them. Though not experienced they appear to us as delights not experienced.

**19-21. D:** Things experienced can be thought of and cognised. But things



unexperienced cannot be cognised even if thought of.

**M:** Now listen. Experienced or unexperienced things can be cognised. As things already experienced at a distant place are thought of and cognised, so also things unexperienced can be thought of and cognised, on hearing from others, such as the Mount Meru of bright gold.

Though eyes and ears are closed, yet visions and sounds can be thought of

and cognised. Though in dark, one can still think of an object and cognise it. Even without eyes and ears the blind and the deaf cognise forms and sounds on thinking of them. Therefore, already known or unknown, all that is thought of can be apprehended. This is the affirmative proposition.

**22. D:** What is negation?

**M:** In the absence of mind, in swoons, deep sleep or trance there is no thinking and consequently nothing is seen. Not only in these states but also in waking, if one does not think, there is no phenomenon.

**23-24. D:** Even in waking it cannot be so. Objects of direct cognition even if not thought of, are apprehended.

**M:** No. What you say is not true. Everyday experience teaches us otherwise.

**25. D:** How?

**M:** When a man is keenly attentive to something, he does not answer when someone calls. Later he says 'I was intent on something else; I could not hear; I could not see; I was not aware' etc. It is therefore clear that without attention objects of direct cognition cannot be apprehended.

**26-28. D:** Cannot the objects of direct cognition be apprehended, without attention?

**M:** Though in direct contact with the senses, objects cannot be cognised without attention to them. Though the necklace is in contact with the body, because the wearer is not attentive, its presence is not known; being unaware

of it, she even misses the ornament and searches for it. Though in touch with the body of the wearer the necklace is missed for want of attention.

Again a patient writhing with pain can be made to forget it by drawing his attention to something else; similarly the grief of bereavement is forgotten by attention being directed to other matters of interest.

It is obvious that without attention, even the objects of direct cognition cannot be recognised.

**29-31.** From this it follows that the cognition of anything experienced or not, however it may be, can only be of the form of thought. Therefore the perception of things has been signified by various terms in *Vedanta*, such as, cognition as this and that, will, thought, mode of mind, intellect, latency, reflected consciousness, the heart-knot, the seen, illusion, the individual, the world, the all, God, etc.

**D:** Where has it been said that this knowledge is the all? On the other hand it is said that *maya* became the all.

**M:** Yes. *Maya* is the knowledge which is spoken of. Only this objective knowledge goes under the different names, *maya*, *avidya*, bondage, impurity, darkness, ignorance of the mind, the cycles of repeated births and deaths, etc.

**D:** Be it so, what has this got to do with the extinction of the mind?

**M:** Listen. You must understand that the knowledge signified by all these terms is only the mind.



**32-33. D:** Who else says so?

**M:** Vasishtha has said to Rama:

'Whatever objective knowledge manifests as this and that, or not this and not that, or in any other manner, it is only the mind. The mind is nothing but this manifest knowledge.'

**34. D:** Let it be so. How can the mind be extinguished?

**M:** To forget everything is the ultimate means. But for thought, the world does not arise. Do not think and it will not arise. When nothing arises in the mind, the mind itself is lost. Therefore do not think of anything, forget all. This is the best way to kill the mind.

**35-37. D:** Has any one else said so before?

**M:** Vasishtha said so to Rama thus: "Efface thoughts of all kinds, of things enjoyed, not enjoyed, or otherwise. Like wood or stone, remain free from thoughts.

**Rama:** Should I altogether forget everything?

**Vasishtha:** Exactly; altogether forget everything and remain like wood or stone.

**Rama:** The result will be dullness like that of stones or wood.

**Vasishtha:** Not so. All this is only illusion. Forgetting the illusion, you are freed from it. Though seeming dull, you will be the Bliss Itself. Your intellect will be altogether clear and sharp. Without getting entangled in worldly life, but

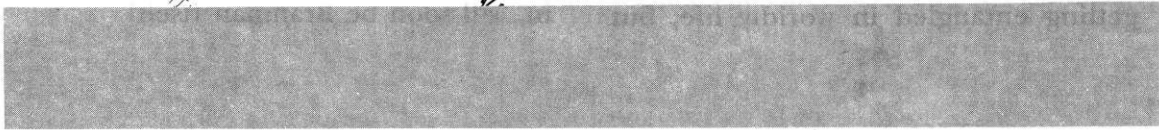
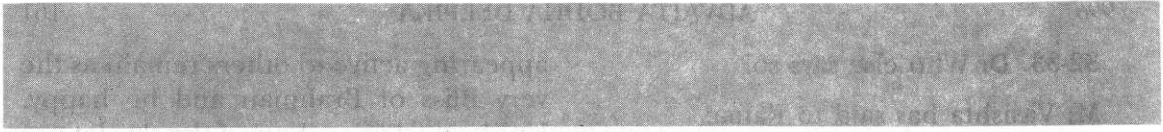
appearing active to others remain as the very Bliss of Brahman and be happy. Unlike the blue colour of the sky, let not the illusion of the world revive in the pure Ether of Consciousness-Self. To forget this illusion is the sole means to kill the mind and remain as Bliss. Though Siva, Vishnu, or Brahman Himself should instruct you, realisation is not possible without this one means. Without forgetting everything, fixity as the Self is impossible. Therefore altogether forget everything.

**38-39. D:** Is it not very difficult to do so?

**M:** Though for the ignorant it is difficult, for the discerning few it is very easy. Never think of anything but the unbroken unique Brahman. By a long practice of this, you will easily forget the non-self. It cannot be difficult to remain still without thinking anything. Let not thoughts arise in the mind; always think of Brahman. In this way all worldly thoughts will vanish and thought of Brahman alone will remain. When this becomes steady, forget even this, and without thinking 'I am Brahman', be the very Brahman. This cannot be difficult to practice.

**40.** Now my wise son, follow this advice; cease thinking of anything but Brahman. By this practice your mind will be extinct; you will forget all and remain as pure Brahman.

**41.** He who studies this chapter and follows the instructions contained therein, will soon be Brahman Itself!



## A Day at the Ashram

By B.V. Narasimha Swami

LET us peep into the *ashram* and watch its daily life. There are special days on which it attracts large numbers of visitors. *Kartikai* Festival, *jayanti* (Maharshi's birthday), and *mahapuja*, the anniversary of his mother's *mahasamadhi* are such special occasions. On the last two occasions over a thousand invited persons are fed (the number of the uninvited poor runs to several thousands); there is a special *puja* in the Matrubhuteswara temple, and generally there is the *nagaswaram* or other music. On his birthday Maharshi is visited by large numbers of resident and non-resident disciples, and is seated amidst numerous garlands and festoons on a decorated dais. His loving disciples swarm to his feet and spend some hours in his company. There is feasting with choice delicacies and plenty of dishes, which serve to remind all of the blessed day which ushered in this great enlightened soul to the world.

There are a few things to note about Maharshi's conduct on these special days.

When thousands are to be fed, he is apprehensive that nice things will be provided and the complete course served only for the first or second batch of persons and that the last batch may be given only a diluted sauce and tiny bits of the good things. More than four hundred or five hundred cannot be accommodated at a time, and the total number fed goes up to two thousand or more. So he refuses to sit for his meal till the last man is served. His unvarying principle when anything is prepared at the *ashram* or brought by any votaries is never to touch anything unless there is a sufficient quantity to go round, an equal share to all present. Someone brings occasionally a cup of very nice Turkish coffee or a little *halwa* and tells the Maharshi: "It is very good; Swami may take it." The Maharshi immediately answers: "Why should I? Am I not happy without it? If

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From *Self-Realization*, the earliest biography of Sri Bhagavan in English (Pub: Sri Ramanasramam).

I am to take anything, all must take it," and the proffered article is returned without being tasted, or is offered to the dogs or other animals present. He is never elated at a banquet nor depressed at Spartan fare. In fact one rule of his at meal makes the former rather trying. He observes from the days of his boyhood, the rule never to throw away anything served on his plate, but to consume patiently all things. He would certainly be better off if he reversed his rule, and ate only what was absolutely necessary and rejected the rest. But that is medical advice, which ignores the sentiments that underlie his rule. Another characteristic of his, when he sits for dinner, is that he inquires after and sees that impartial service is made to all present, even the poorest and meanest — if meanness among men can exist in his presence — before he begins to take his meal. If anyone refuses to take rice, he is offered fruit or the thing he can take.

One more fact about these special occasions may be noted. The Maharshi avoids all pompous celebrations connected with him. In fact, when the first celebration of his birthday was being arranged by his devotees in 1912, he objected, giving his reasons in a couple of stanzas which he composed in Tamil:

Ye who wish to celebrate the birthday,  
seek ye first whence was your birth.

That indeed is one's birthday when  
one enters that which transcends  
birth and death, the Eternal Being.

At least on one's birthday one should  
mourn one's entry into this world

(*samsara*). To glorify and celebrate it is like delighting in decorating a corpse. To seek one's self and merge in the Self — that is wisdom.

The devotees' insistence that they want it for their own good and that the Maharshi might remain unconcerned finally prevailed; and ever since, the *jayanti* has been celebrated every year. Similarly when Perumalswami and some others desired to have a life-size bronze statue of the Maharshi as an aid to devotion he did not raise any objection, though he did not care to have a statue. Consequently one was made at great cost by the artist Nagappa. Some swamis have a regular *abhishekam* and *puja*, i.e., water, milk, curds, oil, honey, sandal paste, etc., are poured over their heads or feet, as they are poured over sacred images; but Maharshi never permits such things. He does not even permit camphor to be lighted or coconut to be broken before him, as it is done before idols. But his views do not always prevail. Over-zealous admirers, who fail to see his reason for objecting, violate them not infrequently. They light up camphor, break coconuts and praise him with a hundred and eight epithets or names (as they praise God) in their homes, using his picture for worship. When they come to the *ashram* they fail to see why the original should not be worshipped in exactly the same way. However, some disciple in attendance dissuades them and often succeeds in saving the Maharshi from the ordeal.

As for *padaseva*, i.e., the actual touching of the Maharshi's feet and carrying the dust or washed water to the votary's

head and lips etc., these occasionally take place and the Maharshi submits. It is the sacrifice he has to make for the 'service of the world.' *Lokasangraha* (adjusting oneself to the needs and ideas of the world) has been mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The votary cannot rise high in his spiritual flights unless he idealises his Guru, and transfigures the physical Guru into Divinity. The closing sentence of *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, runs as follows:

These teachings will shine forth to the great soul who has faith in *Isvara*, the Lord, and the same faith in his teacher as in the Lord.

This distinctly encourages the identification of the teacher with God or Brahman by the aspirant in his struggle for realization (though to the realized man, the *jnani*, all distinction of himself, God and Guru ceases). Hence the Maharshi does not dampen the ardent votary's spirit in any matter essential for the latter's advancement. Gradually and gently, however, every votary is made to see his point of view also.

The Maharshi sets an example to all in his eating as in many other matters. He never exhibits any anxiety, depression, or elation at anything that happens. "Be not elated at attaining the desired or desirable objects; nor distressed at the contrary", says the *Gita*. The Maharshi who is the embodiment of this principle shows his equanimity best at these special gatherings when some 'notable' (say a judge or a *raja*) arrives; he does not feel fluttered or flurried over his arrival and departure. A Nattukottai Chetti's agent once told him

that, if he only agreed to accept the gift, his principal would provide two cows and a big endowment to maintain them and their keeper, out of the interest. The Maharshi simply remarked that the *ashram* was not in need of cows and that a cow would be an easy prey to cheetas which not infrequently visit the *ashram*. The local District Superintendent of Police came at the time of Maharshi's birthday, offered to supply whatever might be required, and asked him what he might send. He was told that nothing was needed; whatever was received was being distributed to all who came.

It is interesting to note how Maharshi conducts himself at music performances. All of a sudden some devotee thinks that some songstress, who is his protegee and has to make her debut in the world, should auspiciously begin her performance in Maharshi's presence. Maharshi has some appreciation of music but is not fond of it (as Seshadri Swami was). He sits through the performance statue-like, and neither shakes his head to express appreciation nor moves a finger to beat time, nor opens his lips in approval or disapproval, nor calls for any particular song or tune. When the music is over, he smiles at the person responsible for the music and the musician, and the smile is taken to mean 'Thank you.'

Maharshi explained the secret of his attitude towards music later, while explaining to some disciples how worldly objects are to be faced, and how a contemplation of unity is possible amidst the diverse pictures that present themselves to the senses and the mind at the time of devotion. He said: "When vari-

ous notes are played or sung by the musician, if you keep your attention fixed on the *sruti*, i.e., the fundamental note of the accompanying *tambur* or harmonium alone, it will not be distracted by the diverse notes or tunes; similarly in the world which is full of sights and sounds, keep attending to the *sruti*, the one Reality that the Vedas proclaim, and your concentration will remain undisturbed." The real point of this advice is that freedom from distraction depends on the strength of the interest in the subject selected for concentration and on will-power and that the best way to increase the will-power is to will its increase, i.e., by *abhyasa* and *vairagya* (constant practice and dispassion). But the advice incidentally shows how Maharshi keeps himself unconcerned by merely attending to the uniform, unchangeable *sruti*, the one sound, and escapes the bonds of the varieties that 'change and pass.'

Let us look into the *ashram* on ordinary days. When there is no special function and no crowd, Maharshi spends almost all his time seated on the sofa in the northern hall. He is available there all the hours of the day and night and to all visitors. No one has to be announced or get permission to go into his presence. None need fear to go, bow, and take a seat anywhere and put any question regarding the thing that worries him or her. People often go in and praise him, and then pour their woes into his ears; incidentally it may be added that all that is addressed to him in person can equally be found in various letters he receives. One comes and praises him in Sanskrit verse, another in plain Tamil

prose, a third in Telugu or Malayalam song. Several go to him heart-broken. "I have lost my only child : of what use is life to me? How am I now to get on?" says one. Another has met with loss in his business and is faced with bankruptcy. A third has been deprived of his property and wants the Maharshi's blessings to win his law suit. A fourth case which is common, is that of a childless lady who daily importunes him mentally to exorcise her "barren spirit," A fifth has a disease, often incurable, and prays for a cure. A sixth is a neurotic with unaccountable fears and wants a recipe or a blessing to drive them away. Some hysterical and obsession cases also turn up. They begin to weep and wave their heads at times. Most of them depart solaced and strengthened to some degree. Even among those who are of a religious turn, curious types come up in person or write letters. One writes from the distant north that he is assured of the Maharshi's power to save him and that the Maharshi must positively grant him *darsan* by mystic power at the writer's village on a date fixed in the letter. Another says that his sorrows are great, which the Maharshi must somehow remove. Among those who write or visit, few care to go in for self-analysis or study even the most elementary books on religion or philosophy dealing with the problems vexing them; few have any definite course of earnest devotion or practice of *vichara* (enquiry) or *Yoga*. Most of them turn up with a vague desire to see the Brahmana Swami (Maharshi) noted for his selflessness and equanimity. They put some superficial questions, which are easily met by a few simple answers, and go away

without serious thought. Occasionally a sincere soul turns up requiring a little encouragement or a few words to clear points or explain experiences as yet unintelligible. Maharshi's answers to these are very apposite and proceed on such high levels that some who hear do not understand the talk. The account of Natananandar furnishes a good illustration. Hardly any of these conversations have been preserved.

A few devotees appear to have a special aptitude to rouse psychic power in Maharshi, power perhaps unconsciously exercised in all cases. To illustrate this the instance of Kulumani Narayana Sastri, a devout *bhakta*, and a disciple of both Maharshi and Seshadriswami, who had received clear marks of favour and considerable attention in the development of his detachment (*vairagya*) and illumination (*jnana*) at the hands of the latter, may be cited. A person who was so highly honoured by Seshadriswami cannot be disbelieved.

About 1913, Narayana Sastri went to see Maharshi on the hill. He took with him a bunch of plantains which he had first carried to the temple and offered to Lord Arunachala. Earlier he had seen the huge image of Ganapati in front of the temple to which he had mentally offered one of the fruits without plucking it from the bunch. In the temple he offered the whole bunch to Arunachala and took it back and gave it to Maharshi saying nothing about his mental offer. When it was about to be taken inside the cave by a disciple, Maharshi stopped him and said, "Stop, let us take the fruit offered to Ganapati." Sastri was taken

aback at this remarkable thought reading. He concluded that Maharshi had the power described as *chitta samvit* in Patanjali's *Yogasutras* (I,35) — power which includes clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. He carried with him his recent, and as yet unknown composition in Sanskrit, a prose abridgement of *Valmiki Ramayana*, and, without letting any one know of it, he composed a mental address in Sanskrit to Maharshi: "To you with your power of *chitta samvit*, a statement of the purpose of my visit would be a needless repetition." At once Maharshi adverting to his purpose, said: "Why not take out the *Ramayana* and read it?" Sastri's object was to secure the first formal reading of his work in public before Maharshi. Now he rejoiced at the fulfilment of his desire and the manifestation of the powers of Maharshi.

Several devotees have constantly noticed that Maharshi addresses them on the very matter on which they intend to seek his help, without their expressing it themselves. He himself has mentioned that not infrequently objects which he thinks of obtaining are brought to him without his asking. These perhaps show that particular persons and circumstances call forth his various powers. It is assuredly as unreasonable to disbelieve the phenomena on the ground that some persons alone have experienced them, as it is to impute partiality to Maharshi on that account. Nor can mere 'chance' be an adequate explanation of so many instances.

A few light souls have occasionally dropped in to test Maharshi's learning or skill in dialectics. Though he has

many important religious works (like portions of the Upanishads, *Viveka Chudamani*, etc.) in Sanskrit, Tamil, Malayalam, etc., at his fingers' ends, he never cares to display his learning. When such people arrive, he remains quiet in *samadhi*; and not infrequently, the spirit of peace enters them, and they go away wiser. A few put useless questions like the following, "Herbert Spencer and Sri Aurobindo differ on the question whether in evolution some forms or links that are suggested by the principle of uniformity and continuity (*natura non facit saltum*, i.e., nature does not make jumps) can be dispensed with by Nature. Does Swamiji think that evolution can leap over such chasms?" The Maharshi is not a professor of biology or natural science to solve such conundrums. He maintains silence in such cases, thereby pointing out the inappropriateness of such questions — especially those which do not affect the religious progress or happiness of the questioner. But he entertains neither ill-will nor anger and shows no disgust. Mention has already been made of one who asked him if he had seen God and if it was a sin to kill a tiger. If, however, the question serves a useful purpose (even though the questioner's attitude is more critical than reverent), Maharshi is gracious enough to answer. Questions of fate and free-will, questions of the order of creation (whether the seed precedes the tree or the tree the seed), etc., are propounded; and he deals with them in his own way. When the former question was raised, he composed a stanza which says :

These controversies as to which is superior — fate or free-will — arise

only to those who look not into the root of both. If one however knows the Self, the root and cause of both, one transcends both and will never again entertain thoughts of either.<sup>1</sup>

In other words Maharshi cuts the ground from underneath the questioner by pointing out that the problem arises only in the phenomenal world and not for the Self.

The writer of these pages sitting in his presence, and translating into Tamil the life and sayings of Swami Vivekananda, wondered if anyone, e.g., Maharshi, could by a touch or glance give him (the writer) the peculiar feeling or perception that all things are really of one substance, which Vivekananda derived by a single touch of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and whether such *siddhi* (or miracle-working power) was worth having. Echammal at the same time put him the question point blank if *siddhi* could be attained. Maharshi then, by way of answer to both, composed another stanza for the same poem:

It is the realization of, and firm adherence to, that which is ever existent that deserves the name *siddhi* or attainment. Any other attainment or magical powers, is like attaining them in dreams. When he wakes up does he really possess these? Will those who have brushed aside the unreal and established themselves in the Real be tempted by these?"<sup>2</sup>

In this way he draws all people back to

<sup>1</sup> *Ulladu Narpadu*, Verse 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ulladu Narpadu*, Verse 35.



the central truth that one must realize the Self, which alone confers happiness, and the thing to be attained. Incidentally he is prepared to solve, and does solve, other problems, if connected with the main question even remotely. Mr. N.N., a Madurai wakil, wanted to know if the various gods, devils and spirits really existed, and Maharshi answered him: "Yes, but that is only *vyavaharika satya* (phenomenal existence) like your own."

N.N. : Then Siva and other gods are not mere fictions like a "hare's horn"?

M. : No.

N.N. : If they are like us, then they must be subject to dissolution (*pralaya*)?

M. : No. If you can become a *jnani*, a *mukta* (liberated person) and the immortal Brahman, is it not reasonable to suppose that Siva, etc., who are infinitely wiser than you, have such *jnana* and are the Immortal Brahman?

Amritanatha asked if *siddhas* (those who have attained supernatural powers) exist even now, if there is a *siddha* world, and if so what powers they wield. Maharshi replied that there are *siddhas* even now wielding equal powers with Mahesvara.

As it is not possible in a few pages to report all that Maharshi said to his numerous interlocutors, and, as some of his discourses are found elsewhere, these will suffice for the present.

Let us see what is being daily done at the *ashram* by him and his disciples.

Maharshi gets up between three and four in the morning, which means that

most of the others get up at the same time. After ablutions, he sits up on his sofa when some disciples begin the day by chanting his praise or reciting *Tiruppalli ezhuchi*, *Tiruvambavai* and other parts of a long poem, *Sri Ramana Sannidhimurai* by Muruganar containing over 1,500 stanzas, or chanting Maharshi's Tamil poems in praise of Arunachala. By five or six a regular stream of visitors pours in after an early bath in the neighbouring wells; they enter, prostrate before the Maharshi and go away. Then follows an adjournment to the dining hall for morning coffee with *idli* or *uppuma* — dishes peculiar to South India of rice and black gram, or semolina. Then he returns to his seat; and the visitors pour in again. Among the disciples there is a division of labour. Some cull flowers and make garlands; others fetch water and prepare *naivedya* (food offering) for the *puja*. Some go through the ceremony of *puja* at his mother's *samadhi*. Some are engaged in literary tasks — composing, correcting, translating, and editing the works of or about Maharshi, and in rare cases works by or about other saints. Fetching and preparing vegetables and other articles for cooking are attended to by a few disciples and is superintended by Maharshi's brother Chinnaswami (Swami Niranjanananda). The Maharshi occasionally assists at these tasks as also in cooking, thereby securing some exercise for his limbs, and setting an excellent example of diligence and humility. Dignity of labour is plain to all, when they see the Maharshi cutting vegetables long before dawn and attending to the due mixture of the various components for

the cooking. He does not stop with that. When there are no visitors, and when there is no literary or other work on hand, he polishes walking sticks, repairs *kamandalas* (water bowls used by ascetics), stitches leafplates, copies from books in a print-like hand, binds books, and does other useful work.

Then follows lunch between 11 A.M. and 12 noon. Then comes the usual work and rest; about 3 P.M., there is some tiffin. From that time (and sometimes even in the mornings) visitors come with sweetmeats, fruits, candy, etc.; and, after the Maharshi takes a little, these are at once distributed as *prasada* to all present. Many new visitors to the *ashram* are agreeably surprised to taste the sweet bits which are always distributed as they

come and the thorough equality and cordiality that characterise these gifts. The donor does not fancy himself superior to the recipient. It is *prasada* going round; and all concerned have *prasanna manas*, i.e., a happy and contented frame of mind. There is no trace of superiority or inferiority. Many newcomers wonder how it is possible for the Maharshi to be for ever giving them good things to eat, good example to copy, and good philosophy or philosophical explanations for them to take in and absorb, thereby promoting health, happiness and wisdom. The orthodox Hindu is directed to observe the scriptural direction to "bless the donor", e.g., on receipt of food, to say from the bottom of his heart, "Happiness befall thee, donor of food."

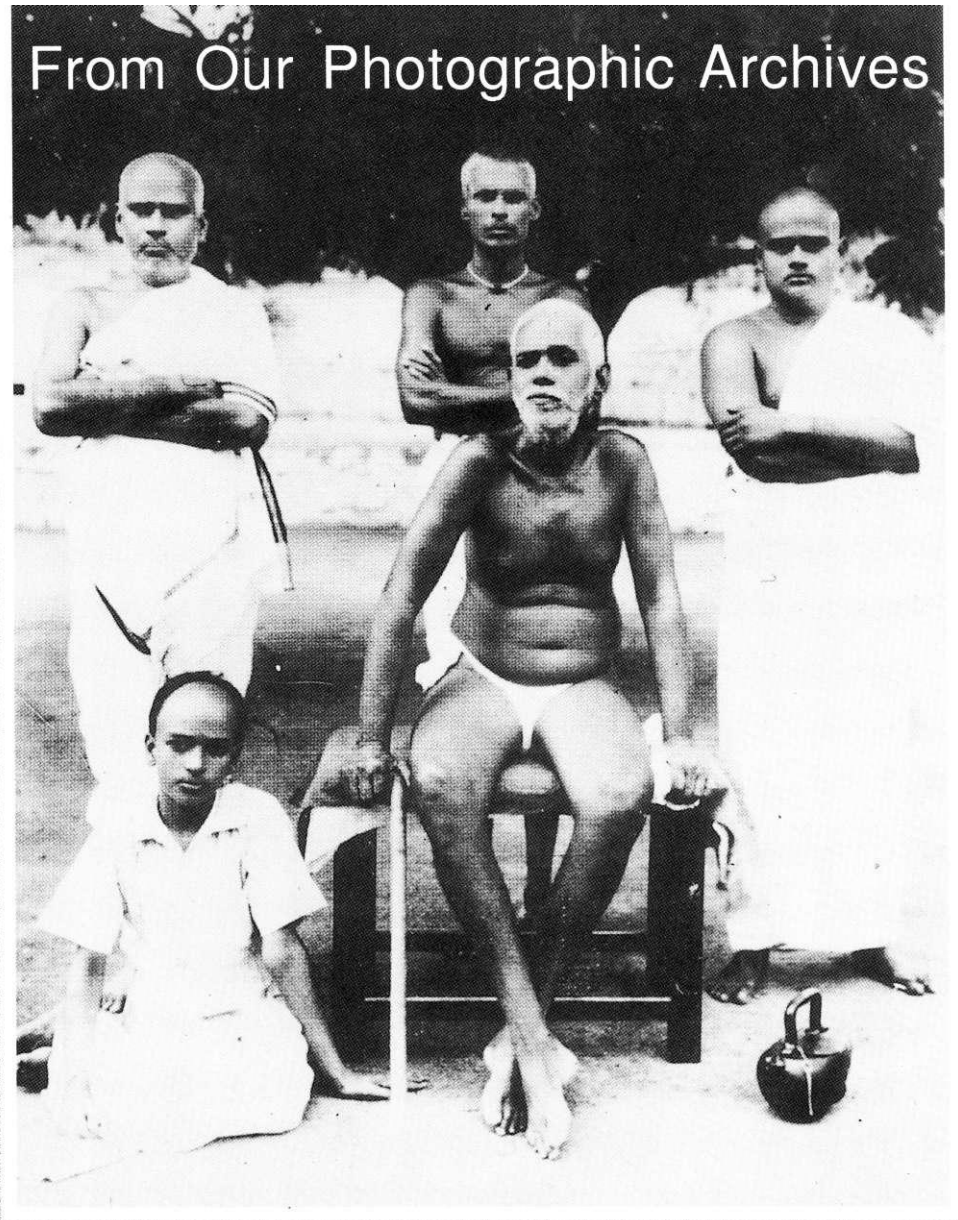
In his youth, V. Venkataraman was a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, but he felt the need for a living guru in flesh and blood, so he prayed to him with the fervour of intense longing, "Master, grant me a living guru no less perfect than yourself." Very soon afterwards he heard of Sri Ramana, then but a few years in the Ashram at the foot of the hill. He went there with an offering of flowers. It so happened (as would always happen when desirable) that there was no one else in the hall when he arrived. Sri Bhagavan was reclining on the couch, behind him on the wall the portrait of Sri Ramakrishna to which Venkataraman had prayed. Sri Bhagavan broke the garland in half; one half he bade the attendant place upon his portrait and the other on the temple *lingam*. Venkataraman had a feeling of lightness and ease. He was at home, his purpose achieved. He told the story of his coming. Sri Bhagavan asked him, "you know about Dakshinamurti?"

"I know that he gave silent *upadesa*," he replied.

And Sri Bhagavan said, "That is the *upadesa* you will get here."

— *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge*, p.146.

## From Our Photographic Archives



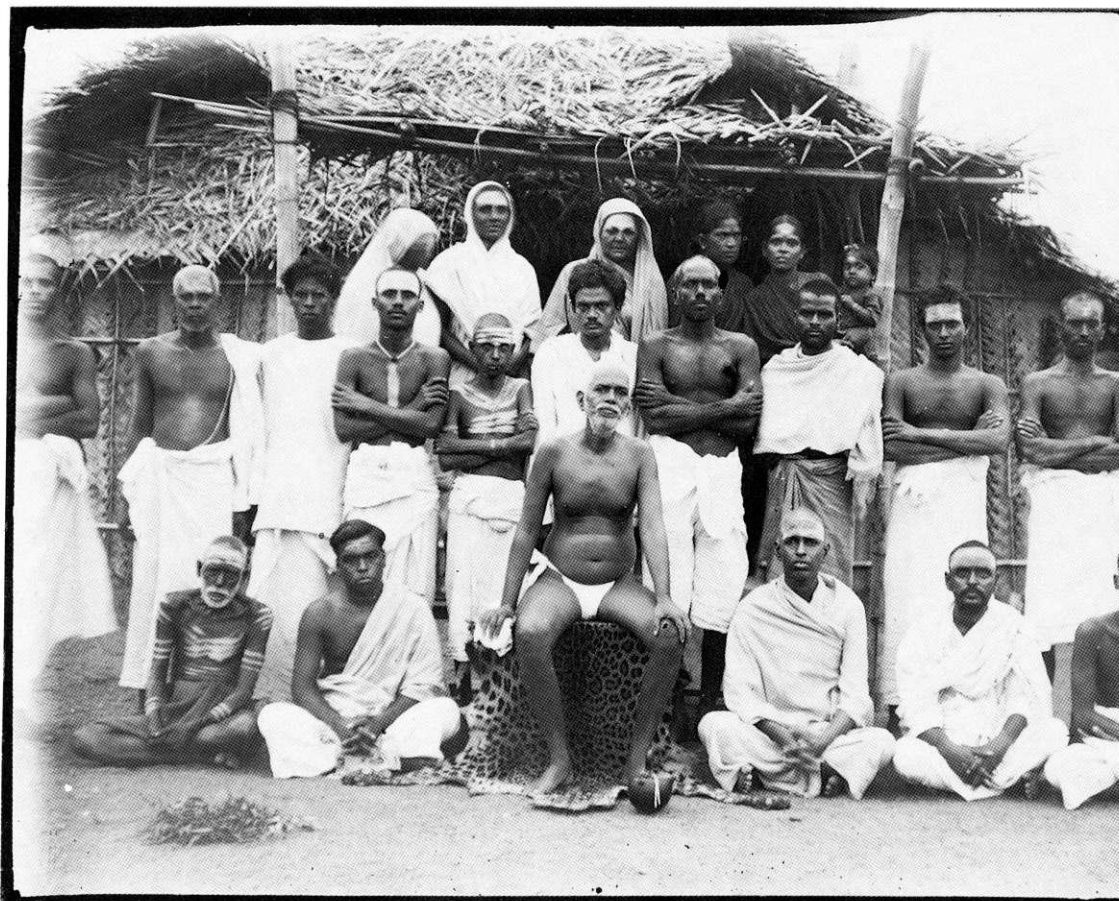
**Late 1930's (probably 1939): Sri Ramana Maharshi with Balasubramanian (sitting), and (standing, left to right) Tippirajapuram Krishnaswamy Iyer (Balasubramanian's father), Madhava Swami (Sri Bhagavan's attendant), and Konerirajapuram Ramiah (son-in-law of Krishnaswamy Iyer). This photograph was sent to us by Sri. S. Balasubramanian, who says of the circumstances in which the picture was taken:**

"It may have been the year 1939 or thereabouts. I was about ten years old then, and had a keen desire to be photographed with Sri Bhagavan. I approached Chinnaswami for the purpose. The Sarvadhikari said he would readily permit this and also arrange for a photographer to do the job. However, it was upto me to obtain permission from Sri Bhagavan.

Accordingly, I waited near the steps at the rear of the ashram so as to meet him on his return from his morning walk. When I made the request, Sri Bhagavan's response was warm in the extreme. He said, 'By all means, you can take the photograph. You may do it on my return from my evening walk on the Hill'. He also suggested the name of a particular photographer.

Tippirajapuram Krishnaswamy Iyer (Balasubramanian's father) was an old devotee who had been coming to Sri Bhagavan from the Virupaksha days. He had arranged at his own cost, for extensive renovations of Pali Tirtham, the tank beside the ashram. Later, he was also in-charge of the rituals during the *Kumbhabhishekam* ceremony for the Mother's Temple in 1949.

From Our Photographic Archives



Circa 1930. Left to right, front row (sitting): 1. Unidentified, 2. T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, 3. Sri Ramana Maharshi, 4. Swami (Chinnaswamikal), 5. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, 6. Madhava Swami.

Middle row (standing): 1. Unidentified, 2. Sree Narayana Guru, 3. Unidentified, 4. Unidentified, 5. Unidentified, 6. Unidentified, 7. Unidentified, 8. Unidentified, 9. Unidentified, 10. Unidentified, 11. Unidentified, 12. Unidentified, 13. Unidentified, 14. Unidentified, 15. Unidentified, 16. Unidentified, 17. Unidentified, 18. Unidentified, 19. Unidentified, 20. Unidentified, 21. Unidentified, 22. Unidentified, 23. Unidentified, 24. Unidentified, 25. Unidentified, 26. Unidentified, 27. Unidentified, 28. Unidentified, 29. Unidentified, 30. Unidentified, 31. Unidentified, 32. Unidentified, 33. Unidentified, 34. Unidentified, 35. Unidentified, 36. Unidentified, 37. Unidentified, 38. Unidentified, 39. Unidentified, 40. Unidentified, 41. Unidentified, 42. Unidentified, 43. Unidentified, 44. Unidentified, 45. Unidentified, 46. Unidentified, 47. Unidentified, 48. Unidentified, 49. Unidentified, 50. Unidentified, 51. Unidentified, 52. Unidentified, 53. Unidentified, 54. Unidentified, 55. Unidentified, 56. Unidentified, 57. Unidentified, 58. Unidentified, 59. Unidentified, 60. Unidentified, 61. Unidentified, 62. Unidentified, 63. Unidentified, 64. Unidentified, 65. Unidentified, 66. Unidentified, 67. Unidentified, 68. Unidentified, 69. Unidentified, 70. Unidentified, 71. Unidentified, 72. Unidentified, 73. Unidentified, 74. Unidentified, 75. Unidentified, 76. Unidentified, 77. Unidentified, 78. Unidentified, 79. Unidentified, 80. Unidentified, 81. Unidentified, 82. Unidentified, 83. Unidentified, 84. Unidentified, 85. Unidentified, 86. Unidentified, 87. Unidentified, 88. Unidentified, 89. Unidentified, 90. Unidentified, 91. Unidentified, 92. Unidentified, 93. Unidentified, 94. Unidentified, 95. Unidentified, 96. Unidentified, 97. Unidentified, 98. Unidentified, 99. Unidentified, 100. Unidentified.

## Non-Resistance: Sri Maharshi's Way

By Arthur Osborne

**N**ON-RESISTANCE may seem impracticable in an established religion, since every country must have its law courts and police and, at least in modern conditions, its army. However, a religion has two levels of obligation: the minimum obligation upon all who follow it and upon countries where it is established, and the full obligation upon those who devote their lives to following the path laid down, regarding all worldly advantages as nothing in the search for blessedness. It is only in this second and higher sense that Sri Bhagavan established a path, and therefore, for himself and his followers, he could say, "resist not evil". It was no social law for a whole community that he was proclaiming but a way of life for those who followed him. It is possible only for those who have submitted to God's Will and accept whatever comes as right and necessary even though it may be a misfortune from worldly standards. Sri Bhagavan once said to a devotee, "You thank God for the good things that come to you but you don't thank Him for the things that seem to you bad; that is where you go wrong." It may be objected that this simple faith is very different from the doctrine of oneness that Sri Bhagavan taught, but it is only on the mental plane that such

theories may conflict. He said, "Submission to God, Guru or Self is all that is needed." As will be shown in a later chapter, these three modes of submission are really not different. It is enough to say here that for one who can hold to the view that there is only the one Self all outer activity appears a dream or cinema show enacted on the substratum of the Self, so that he will remain an impassive witness. This was the attitude of Sri Bhagavan on the few occasions when evil or molestation threatened.

There were tamarind trees outside Gurumurtam and when he was living there he would sometimes sit under one of them. One day, when no one else was about, a party of thieves came to carry away the ripe tamarind pods. Seeing the young Swami sitting silent at the foot of a tree, one of them said, "Get some acid sap and put it in his eyes; let's see if that will make him speak." It is a sap that might blind a man, apart from the fierce pain it would cause, but he sat motionless, equally unconcerned about his eye and about the tamarind fruit. Another of the party answered: "Oh, don't bother

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From *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*.



about him! What harm can he do? Let's get along."

There was occasional interference or opposition during the early years on the Hill. In the strange world of *sadhus*, where some are frauds and some have striven on the way and developed psychic powers without burning out their lower passions, it was to be expected that the radiance of divinity recognized by devotees in one so young in years should awaken resentment in a few, though most bowed down and sought his grace.

Living in a cave on the hill was an elderly *sadhu* who had shown great reverence for Sri Bhagavan as long as he was at Gurumurtam. After coming to Virupaksha, Sri Bhagavan would sometimes visit him and sit in silence with him. He led a life of austerity and had followers; nevertheless so far was he from

having overcome human passions that he could not endure to see the number of the young Swami's followers increase and his own diminish. Deciding to kill Sri Bhagavan or frighten him away from the hill, he took to hiding on the hillside above Virupaksha after sundown and dislodging rocks and stones so that they would roll down there. Sri Bhagavan sat unperturbed although one stone came quite close to him. Always observant, he knew well what was happening and on one occasion he quickly and silently climbed the hill and caught the old man in the act. Even then the latter tried to laugh it off as a joke.

Having failed in this attempt, the *sadhu* enlisted the aid of Balananda, a plausible scoundrel, handsome and well read, who imposed on people under the guise of a *sadhu*. This person decided to make profit and prestige out of Sri Bhagavan. Rightly deeming that the young Swami would be too saintly to resist evil, he started posing as his Guru. He would say to visitors: "This young Swami is my disciple," or "Yes, give the child some sweets"; and to Sri Bhagavan, "Here, Venkataraman, my child, take the sweets" or he would keep up the farce by going into town to buy things for his so called disciple. Such was his effrontery that he would say blatantly to Sri Bhagavan when alone with him: "I will say I am your Guru and get money from the visitors. It is no loss to you, so don't contradict me."

This man's arrogance and offensiveness knew no bounds and one night he went to the length of relieving himself on the veranda of the cave. Next morn-

ing he went out early leaving his spare clothes — some of them silk with lace borders — in the cave. Sri Bhagavan said nothing. He went on a long walk to one of the sacred tanks that morning with Palaniswami and before they started, Palaniswami washed the veranda, threw out Balananda's clothes and locked up the cave.

Balananda was furious when he returned. He stormed at Palaniswami for daring to touch his clothes and ordered Sri Bhagavan to send him away immediately. Neither of them answered or paid any attention. In his fury Balananda spat on Sri Bhagavan. Even then Sri Bhagavan sat impassive. The disciples who were with him also sat quiet without reacting. However, a devotee from a cave lower down heard of it and rushed up shouting : "You! You dare spit on our Swami!" and could barely be restrained from setting upon the rascal. Balananda decided that he had gone farther than was safe and had better leave Tiruvannamalai. He pronounced the hill not a proper place and departed with his usual arrogance. Going to the railway station he entered a second-class compartment without a ticket. A young couple were in the same compartment. He began to lecture the young man and order him about and when the latter took no notice he became offensive and said: "What! you don't listen to me? It is because of your infatuation with this girl that you don't show me due respect." The incensed young man thereupon took off his sandal and used it to give him the thrashing he had so long needed.

After some months Balananda re-

turned and again made himself a nuisance. On one occasion he insisted on sitting looking fixedly into the eyes of Sri Bhagavan in order, as he averred, to give him *nirvikalpa samadhi* (spiritual trance), but what happened was that he himself fell asleep and Sri Bhagavan and his disciples got up and walked away. Soon after this the general attitude towards him became such that he once more deemed it safer to depart.

There was another '*sadhu*' also who tried to gain prestige by posing as the young Swami's Guru. Returning from Kalahasti, he said: "I have come all this way just to see how you are getting on. I will initiate you into the *Dattatreya mantra*."

Sri Bhagavan neither moved nor spoke, so he continued, "God appeared to me in a dream and ordered me to give you this *upadesa*."

"Well then," Sri Bhagavan retorted, "let God appear to me also in a dream and order me to take the *upadesa* and I will take it."

"No, it is very short — just a few letters; you can begin now."

"What use will your *upadesa* be to me unless I go on with the *japa* (invocation)? Find a suitable disciple for it. I am not one."

Some time later, when this *sadhu* was in meditation, a vision of Sri Bhagavan appeared before him and said, "Don't be deceived!" Frightened and thinking that Sri Bhagavan must possess powers which he was using against him, the *sadhu* hastened to Virupaksha to apologise and

begged to be set free from the apparition. Sri Bhagavan assured him that he used no powers and the *sadhu* saw there was no anger or resentment.

Another such attempt at interference was by a group of drunken *sadhus*. Appearing one day at Virupaksha Cave, they solemnly declared: "We are *sadhus* from Podikai Hill, the sacred hill on which the ancient Agastya Rishi is still doing *tapas* (practising austerities) as he has for thousands of years. He has ordered us to take you first to the Siddhas' Conference at Srirangam and from there to Podikai to give you regular *diksha* (initiation) after extracting from your body those salts that prevent your attaining higher powers.

Sri Bhagavan, as on all such occasions, made no response. However on this occasion, one of his devotees, Perumalswami outbluffed the bluffers. He said, "We have already received intimation of your coming and have been commissioned to put your bodies in crucibles and heat the crucibles over a fire." And turning to another devotee he bade him, "Go and dig a pit where we can make a fire for these people." The visitors left in a hurry.

In 1924, when Sri Bhagavan was already living in the present Ashram at the foot of the hill, some thieves broke into the shed that at that time housed his mother's tomb and carried away a few things. A few weeks later three thieves robbed the Ashram itself.

It was on June 26th, at about half past eleven. The night was dark. Sri Bhagavan had already retired to rest on the raised

platform in the hall in front of the Mother's tomb. Four devotees were sleeping on the floor near the windows. Two of them, Kunjuswami and Mastan, the former an attendant heard someone outside say, "There are six persons lying down inside."

Kunju shouted out, "Who's there?"

The thieves replied by breaking a window, apparently to frighten those inside. Kunjuswami and Mastan got up and went to the dais where Sri Bhagavan was. The thieves thereupon broke a window at that side, but Sri Bhagavan sat unperturbed. Kunjuswami then left the hall by the north door, as the thieves were on the south side, and brought Ramakrishnaswami, a devotee who was sleeping in another hut, to help them. When he opened the door the two Ashram dogs, Jack and Karuppan, ran out. The thieves beat them and Jack ran away while Karuppan ran back to the hall for refuge.

Sri Bhagavan told the thieves that there was very little for them to take but they were welcome to come in and take what there was. Either considering this a trap or being too stupid to depart from routine, they took no notice but continued their efforts to dislodge a window frame so as to get in that way. (According to the usual Indian practice, the windows had iron bars to prevent anyone getting in). Angered by their wanton destruction, Ramakrishnaswami sought Bhagavan's permission to challenge them, but Bhagavan forbade him, saying: "They have their *dharma* (role), we have ours. It is for us to bear and forbear. Let us not interfere with them."



Though Sri Bhagavan invited them to enter by the door, the thieves continued their violent methods. They let off crackers at the window to give the impression that they had firearms. Again they were told to enter and take what they wanted but they only replied with threats. Meanwhile Kunjuswami had left the hall and set out for town to get help. Ramakrishnaswami again spoke to the thieves and told them not to make unnecessary trouble but simply to take what they wanted. In reply they threatened to set fire to the thatched roof. Sri Bhagavan told them they should not do that but offered to go out and leave the hall to them. This was just what they wanted, perhaps still fearing that the others might set upon them while they were at their work. Sri Bhagavan first told Ramakrishnaswami to carry the dog, Karuppan, to a safe place in the other shed for fear the thieves would beat it if it were left there. Then he with the three others, Mastan, Thangavelu Pillai and Munisami, a boy who performed *puja* or worship at the Ashram, left by the north door. The thieves stood at the doorway with sticks and beat them as they went out, either hoping to disable them or to frighten them from any thought of resistance. Sri Bhagavan receiving a blow on the left thigh, said, "If you are not satisfied you can strike the other leg also." Ramakrishnaswami, however, got back in time to ward off further blows.

Sri Bhagavan and the devotees sat in the thatched shed (later demolished) that stood to the north of the hall. The thieves shouted to them to stay there. "If you move away we'll break your heads".

Sri Bhagavan told them, "You have the entire hall to yourselves; do what you like."

One of the thieves came and demanded a hurricane lamp and Ramakrishnaswami, on Sri Bhagavan's instructions, gave him a lighted lamp. Again one of them came and asked for the cupboard keys but Kunjuswami had taken them away with him and he was told so. They broke open the cupboards and found there a few thin strips of silver for adorning the images, a few mangoes and a little rice, altogether worth about Rs.10. A sum of Rs.6 belonging to Thangavelu Pillai was also taken.

Disappointed with their small takings, one of the thieves returned, brandishing his stick and asking: "Where is your money? Where do you keep that?"

Sri Bhagavan told him, "We are poor *sadhus* living on charity and never have cash," and the thief, despite his continued blustering, had to be satisfied with that.

Sri Bhagavan advised Ramakrishnaswami and the others to go and put ointment on their bruises.

"And what about Swami?" Ramakrishnaswami asked.

Sri Bhagavan laughed and replied, "I also have received some *puja* punning on the word that could mean either 'worship' or blows. Seeing the weal on his thigh, Ramakrishnaswami felt a sudden wave of anger. He picked up an iron bar that was lying there and asked for permission to go and see what the thieves were doing, but Sri Bhagavan dissuaded

him. "We are *sadhus*. We should not give up our *dharma*. If you go and strike them some may die and that will be a matter for which the world will rightly blame not them but us. They are only misguided men and are blinded by ignorance, but let us note what is right and stick to it. If your teeth suddenly bite your tongue do you knock them out in consequence?"

It was two o'clock in the morning when the thieves left. A little later Kunjuswami returned with a village officer and two police constables. Sri Bhagavan was still sitting in the northern shed, speaking to his devotees of spiritual matters. The constables asked him what had happened and he simply remarked that some fool-

ish persons had broken into the Ashram and gone away disappointed at finding nothing worth their trouble. The constables made an entry to this effect and went away together with the village officer. Munisami ran after them and told them that the Swami and others had been beaten by the thieves. In the morning the Circle Inspector, Sub-Inspector and a Head Constable came to investigate and later the Deputy Superintendent came. Sri Bhagavan spoke to none about his injury or about the theft except when asked. A few days later some of the stolen property was recovered and the thieves were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

## Shakespeare on Self-Love

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,  
 And all my soul, and all my every part;  
 And for this sin there is no remedy,  
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.  
 Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,  
 No shape so true, no truth of such account;  
 And for myself mine own worth do define,  
 As I all other in all worths surmount.  
 But when my glass shows me myself indeed,  
 Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,  
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;  
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.

'Tis thee (myself) that for myself I praise,  
 Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

# How To Be Happy

By Douglas Harding

*Samsara* (the world of objects) is sorrow.

Men want absolute and permanent happiness. This does not reside in objects but in the Absolute. It is Peace, free from pain and pleasure. It is a neutral state.

Self-realisation is Bliss.

Bliss is not something to be got. You are always Bliss.... get rid of your ignorance which makes you think you are other than Bliss.

Happiness is inherent and not due to external causes. One must realise Oneself in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.<sup>1</sup>

ONE of the inalienable rights of man, we are assured, is the pursuit of happiness. Yes indeed! But it is a right that is exercised more in talk than in action — effective action. Are we, in fact, serious about this pursuit? Of course we all say we want to be happy. Do we mean what we say? The truth is that our behaviour, the way we go all out for happiness, makes quite sure it will get away. So unpractical we are in this search — so unwilling to profit by the advice of experts like Ramana and by our own and others' oft-repeated failures — that it looks as if we were pursuing misery instead of happiness. Sure enough, we catch up with *that* quarry!

And yet it remains true that we want to be happy and not wretched. Otherwise those two words — our very lives — make no sense at all.

In short, we are thoroughly confused about the problem. It is our purpose here, with the help of Maharshi and other sages, to remove this confusion; to be very clear about how to be happy — so clear that we have no excuse for being miserable any more.

All the many recipes for happiness reduce to three. Let us call them (1) The Common-sensible Recipe, (2) The Uncommon-sensible Recipe, and (3) The Sensible Recipe, which seems nonsense till you put it to the test.

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<sup>1</sup> From Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi.

**The Common-sensible Recipe for  
Happiness is getting what you want**

For instance, at the 'lowest' or most popular level, happiness means getting possessions, money, skills, reputation, power, and so forth — and getting more and more of it all the time. In a phrase, on-going personal success.

At 'middle levels', happiness means striving successfully for the well-being of one's family, sect, political party, nation, race, species — culminating, one hopes, in a much happier state of affairs, if not in some kind of New Jerusalem or Utopia, here on earth.

At the 'highest level', happiness means working for the salvation of the whole world, the liberation of all beings — and getting some results.

Though so 'ignoble' at its lowest and most popular levels, and so 'noble' at its highest and least popular levels, this recipe comes to the same thing throughout — namely success, *getting what you want*.

As a recipe it seems sensible enough, but recipes happen to be inedible. The proof of the recipe is the pudding, and the proof of the pudding is the eating. Do we, in practice, get enough pudding this way to satisfy our hunger? Enough possessions, security, affection, influence, power, whether for our personal selves or for those larger selves called family, or nation, or sect, or species? Notoriously this getting is addictive, so that the more we accumulate the more we demand, and the thing that would make us 'really happy' recedes at least as fast

as our advance towards it. Nothing fails like success. The suicide rate goes up rather than down in affluent societies, and in the more 'successful' groups within those societies. But of course everyone knows that great possessions and power bring little satisfaction. And no wonder: their maintenance gets more and more difficult as they grow, the prospect of their loss more and more worrying, their actual loss more and more painful. What fleeting pleasure they give lies more in the getting than in the having.

The ordinary man aims less high. Whether from necessity, or fear, or lack of drive, or native shrewdness, he plays for lower stakes. At best, he avoids extremes of pain and pleasure; at worst, he becomes a vegetable. For it is the very nature of what we *have* — whether it be little or much — to be insufficient. And it is in the very nature of what we *do* — whether it be petty or heroic or enlightened — to leave us unfulfilled. Necessary though they are, neither having nor doing will cure our sadness.

Altruism doesn't help here. Clearly the anxieties and disappointments of the public-minded citizen — of the one who seeks the welfare of his city, his nation, mankind itself — aren't less severe than those of the averagely selfish citizen. Nor are they, strictly speaking, less 'selfish'. After all, the Nazis submerged their personal selves in a supra-personal one.

But what of the 'highest' level — working for the salvation or enlightenment of the world? Is this the way to be happy? Jesus wept, and we know how

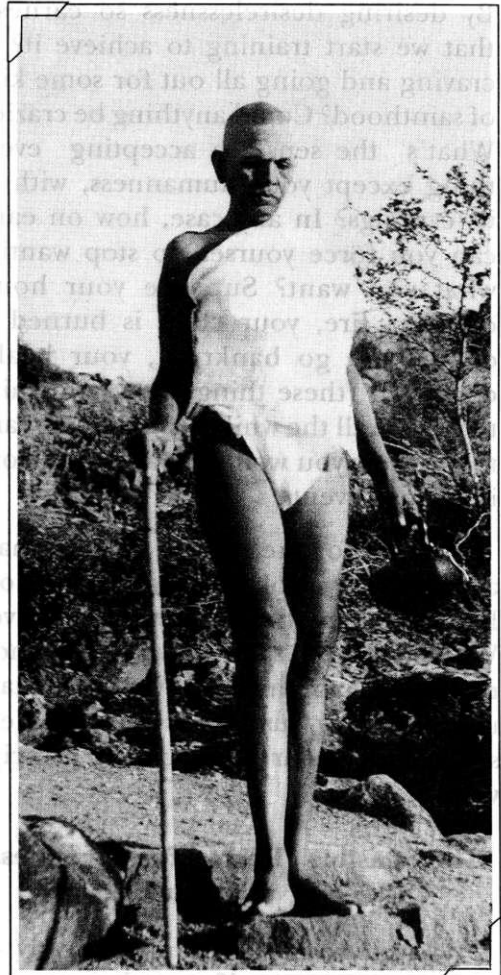
the Man of Sorrows died. Anyone who takes on such a job is asking for trouble, as history shows. The fundamental reason is that his happiness doesn't really consist in getting what he wants, even if he gets it.

In short, however we look at it, our first recipe for happiness looks good but turns out to be otherwise. So let's try our second.

#### **The Uncommon-sensible Recipe for Happiness is wanting what you get**

One of the finest advocates of this recipe (which, please note, is the precise opposite of our first recipe) is Jean-Pierre de Caussade. Who writes: "If people knew the merit in what each moment of the day brings them ... and that the true philosopher's stone is submission to the designs of God, transmuting into fine gold all their occupations, their worries and their sufferings, how happy they would be."

In one way or another, all the great spiritual traditions are agreed about the need for "self-abandonment to the divine Providence". The very word *Islam* means submission to the will of Allah. Which is not, for the proficient Sufi, resignation or mere obedience, but full identification with the divine will, so that he actively chooses what that will ordains. How could he be unhappy, in that case? Again, according to the Buddha, it is desire or craving which causes suffering, and the extinction of desire is the end of suffering. And according to Ramana Maharshi: "Desirelessness is God."



When you are personally desireless, when you choose what is instead of what *isn't*, when you want what you get no matter what it's like, when God's will expressed in your circumstances becomes precisely your will, why then you are Him! It's as simple as that.

Simple for me to write and for you to read and understand. But hard to put into practice, to live. Come on, let's be practical! *How* to give up our personal desires to the point of actually wanting those nasty things we are so apt to get?

By desiring desirelessness so earnestly that we start training to achieve it? By craving and going all out for some kind of sainthood? Could anything be crazier? What's the sense in accepting everything except your humanness, with all its cravings? In any case, how on earth can you force yourself to stop wanting what you want? Suppose your house catches fire, your child is burned to death, you go bankrupt, your health cracks up (these things are happening to people all the while), and tell me (and them) how you would go about welcoming those events.

And so, for the second time, we have a seemingly insoluble problem on our hands : in fact, the problem of our lives. We who are not saints have still to find a recipe for happiness that we can actually use right now, just as we are. Well, let's see whether our third and final recipe works.

#### **The Sensible Recipe for Happiness is seeing what you've got**

What if you were happy already — were happiness itself — and never noticed the fact? What if this frantic search for happiness elsewhere blinds you to the searcher's True Nature which is bliss itself?

Sri Nisargadatta is sure of the answer, and certainly doesn't mince matters. "Nothing can make you happier than you are. All search for happiness is misery and leads to more misery. The only happiness worth the name is the natural happiness of conscious being." This, and the quotations from Ramana Maharshi

that preface this chapter, together with the teaching of the long line of seers and sages who have indissolubly linked *ananda* (Bliss) with *sat* (Being) and *chit* (Awareness), and certainly the experience of this writer, all insist that the true recipe for happiness is seeing Who you really are, and enjoying your very Nature as unalloyed Bliss.

How, then, to see Who you really are? In fact, it's easier to see than anything else! Just look at What you are looking out of at this moment, at what's your side of these printed words, and see Nothing — no shape or form, no complexity, no colour, no texture, no opacity, no limits, no movement — nothing but Awareness.

But does this seeing into your Self-nature (and it's something you can't do wrong) mean that you want things to happen as they do happen? Well, who is responsible for them? Who you really, really are creates the world, and presumably isn't regretting any of it.

Those who have actually tried it find that this last recipe for happiness is the one that works. What's more, it makes the other two work. Consistently seeing Who you really are, you want what you get and get what you want. Again, this isn't for believing but for testing.

In his *Ethics* the great Greek philosopher Aristotle concluded that happiness is some form of *theoria*, which means a looking-at, a viewing, a beholding. That's to say, not a subjective state for achieving one day but an objective reality for enjoying right now. A reality we can't get rid of, no matter how we try.

# Sri Ramana, The Self Supreme

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

*O meek and gentle Child beloved,*  
*Ancient, immobile holy mount*  
*Crowned with the cool, red fire of Dawn;*  
*O Babe of Love, O Hill of Hope,*  
*Dwell in our hearts and make us whole.*

For fifty years, here, in men's sight,  
 You have lived the life of the seer, the free,  
 The knower who knows as he is known;  
 Spreading by silence stronger than speech  
 Unseen light and unheard melody,  
 Courage, clearness, calmness divine.

You are the Perfect One praised of old,  
 The Gita's *jnani*, the *jivanmukta*  
 Of the *Crest Jewel of Discrimination*;  
 Inactive doer of all deeds done,  
 Wishing no wish and taking no side;  
 Contemplative witness of things that pass,  
 Steadily established in *Satchidananda*;  
 Nothing topical, temporal, novel,—  
 No noise, no struggle and no change—  
 The pole-star, Truth, for ever the same.

Tossing on the space-time ocean  
 In the frail bark of body-mind,  
 Troubled by tides and heady currents,  
 We have jettisoned hope and charity:  
 Still we clutch at the phantom faith  
 That we shall reach firm land at last  
 And be planted again on the ground of Spirit,

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From *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1946).

The paradise lost but to be regained.  
 We mumble the names of God-Men who  
 Have walked on the waters in times past —  
 Over the treacherous waves of *samsara* —  
 And reaching safe the other shore  
 Have been canonized, deified, stellified.  
 And our faith grows fresh because we find  
 That in our own day four children of Bharata  
 Have trodden anew the four thrice-blessed  
 Paths of love, work, surrender and knowledge—  
 Bengal's Gadadhara, Gurjara Gandhi,  
 The integral yogi of all Eurasia,  
 And you, the Self Supreme Eternal  
 Incarnate in time in *Dravida Desa*  
 As the boy beatified, Bhagavan Ramana.

Steep uphill is the way you have taken  
 To the shining mountain-top of truth;  
 Steep, yet short and straight and clear,  
 Free from darkness, confusion and peril.

Others, in life's strenuous battle,  
 Wielding mighty weapons of morality,  
 Have slain with pain, one after one,  
 Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, envy,  
 The hydra-heads of the single ego;  
 Or, shedding copious torrents of tears,  
 And kindling blazing flames of devotion,  
 And heavily hammering fancies with facts,  
 Have tempered and moulded the indurate "I"  
 They have fought with Vali face to face  
 And shared their strength with the evil foe.

But you, a witness, a young spectator,  
 Looking calmly on death as on life  
 On the dark cloud and the silver mist,  
 By scientific self-analysis  
 Have pierced and passed the empty ego  
 And its shadow show of false phenomena  
 And have found and fed the Living Light,  
 The Self Supreme, the Self of All.





"Judge not others," Jesus said;  
 But made each mortal his own judge  
 To slay the goats and save the sheep  
 Among his *gunas* evil and good.  
 "Love thy brothers; judge thyself,"  
 Enjoined the Lord; but we go on  
 Judging our brothers and loving ourselves.

Neither judgment nor love you teach—  
 For there is NO OTHER to judge or love,  
 No boon to ask, no door to knock;  
 And all good things will come, unsought  
 Like leaves and flowers to a tree in spring  
 When *viveka* wide awake  
 Turns inward, enquiring "Who am I"  
 And undeluded by darkness and death  
 Sees only the bright immortal Self  
 The being whose nature is Knowledge and Bliss.

Those who practise your presence lose  
 Their ephemeral ego, and find  
 In you the goal and the way; and proceed —  
 Like trustful pilgrims on a train  
 Fortified by the heavenly viaticum  
 Of your *Forty Verses on Truth* —  
 Unresting, unhasting, in calm content  
 Along the *jiva's* joyous journey  
 From the many, tinted, peripheral points  
 To the one white seminal core  
 Of the single, complex sphere of existence;  
 From partial life to Immortal Perfection.  
 From *samsara* to *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

*O God Without, Guru of Grace  
 Who guide us well to God within,  
 Blessed the eye, the mind, the heart  
 Surrendered to your sovereign sway.*

*Rock of Faith, O Dawn of Hope,  
 Child of Charity, Holy Sage,  
 O Silent Presence on the Mount,  
 O Tiger bright with burning eyes!  
 You have sought us, and you have caught;  
 Forsake us not; consume us quite;  
 Sri Ramana of Aruna.*

# 'Peace Pilgrim': An Extraordinary Personality

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

**W**HEN preaching his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God". An extraordinary American lady of this century was such a person who brought a message of peace and goodwill to a war-weary world. A true messenger of the Divine, she preferred to call herself 'Peace Pilgrim' instead of Mildred Lisette Norman Rlyder (her real name).

## Her Early Life

Born on July 15th 1908, Mildred spent her first twenty-five years with her family on their poultry farm in Egg Harbor, New Jersey. Living conditions were somewhat primitive in this sparsely populated area where municipal water and sewage were not available. Yet there were fields and woods and opportunities to commune with nature. At high school Mildred threw herself heart and soul into debating and even at that early age she was an impressive speaker. Later she became an excellent office worker who was employed at a local glass plant and afterwards at a winery. Mildred wore fashionable clothes, danced well and was a good swimmer. Although outwardly she had a joyful and easy manner she was in fact a person with a serious disposition. The members of her family did not belong to any church but they valued righteousness and good conduct. After marrying Stanley Rlyder in 1933 Mildred lived with her husband in Egg Harbor City, then Cologne and finally in Philadelphia.

In the 1940s they bitterly differed over the question of war. Their marriage was on the rocks. It subsequently ended in a divorce.

## The turning point, and after

Over a period of nearly three decades 'Peace Pilgrim' walked extensively in the United States and Canada as well as parts of Mexico. Wishing to emphasise "the message and not the messenger",<sup>1</sup> she was naturally reticent about certain details of her life that she considered unimportant, such as her original name, age and birthplace. "I never want people to remember me except in connection with peace",<sup>2</sup> she once said self-effacingly. One night while walking through the woods she felt "a complete willingness, without any reservations, to give my life to God and to service".<sup>3</sup> On New Year's Day of 1953 her pilgrimage for peace began, when she vowed "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food".<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that she had neither a penny in her pockets nor did she have the ideological or financial support of any institution. Wearing a simple navy blue shirt and slacks and a short tunic with pockets containing her only

<sup>1</sup> *Peace Pilgrim: Her Life and Work in her own words*; compiled by some of her friends. Santa Fe: OceanTree Books, 1991, p.xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.xiii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. vii.

worldly possessions — a comb, a folding toothbrush, a ball-point pen, copies of her message in leaflet form and her current correspondence — this remarkable soul went on foot alone and met with thousands. She walked “as a prayer and as a chance to inspire others to pray and work with her for peace”.<sup>5</sup> Full of humour and the joy of living, this energetic pilgrim addressed numerous meetings ranging from university classes to church pulpits and was interviewed by various radio and TV networks. During the course of her travels she lived austere and did not mind sleeping beside roads, on benches or in bus stations when no bed was offered.

What was the secret of her abundant energy and good health? She purified her body so that it became a temple of the spirit and led a saintly life that was in harmony with nature: “In my eating and sleeping habits I have the closest contact with nature that is possible for me. Each day I get as much fresh air and sunshine ... as I can. I want to do much of my living out of doors and be a part of the landscape. Rest and exercise are important. I am not one who goes consistently without sleep. When possible, I go to bed at dusk and get eight hours of sleep. I take my exercise by walking and swinging my arms which makes it a complete form of exercise.”<sup>6</sup>

#### ‘Peace Pilgrim’s Vegetarianism

Her vegetarianism was inspired by a fine blend of ethical considerations and

a great compassion for helpless animals. “I have extended my pacifism”, stated ‘Peace Pilgrim’, “to include non-harming of creatures as well as non-harming of human beings.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore for many years I have not eaten flesh — no meat, fowl, or fish. I also don’t use furs or feathers, leather or bone. I realize that some people are vegetarians merely for health reasons, and are not necessarily opposed to war. Some people may miss the eating of flesh, but I do not. I don’t crave animal flesh any more than the average person craves human flesh. I think most pacifists — in fact, most modern human beings — would not eat flesh if they had to kill the creatures themselves. I think if you were to visit a slaughterhouse it might encourage you to extend your pacifism to include non-harming of creatures as well as non-harming of human beings”. In her message one can hear an echo of Mahatma Gandhi, the staunch vegetarian, who also advocated *ahimsa* (non-violence) as the right means of dealing with conflicts.

It is easy to profess pacifism in peacetime because one’s faith in it is not put to the test. But in wartime some so-called pacifists like to take sides. The idea of supporting a ‘just war’ or a ‘holy war’ as a method of settling international disputes is a contradiction in terms. ‘Peace Pilgrim’ was a genuine pacifist for she uncompromisingly maintained that violence and wars were always wrong. “Pacifists”, she explained, “use the non-violent way because they believe it to be the right way, and under no circumstances would they use or sanction the use of

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

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p 113.

any other way. The animal nature thinks in terms of using 'the jungle law of tooth and claw' to 'eliminate all opposition. But this law solves no problems for humans; it can only postpone solutions, and in the long run it worsens things...<sup>8</sup> I have extended my pacifism to include non-use of psychological violence as well as non-use of physical violence. Therefore I no longer become angry. I not only do not say angry words, I do not even think angry thoughts! If someone does an unkind thing to me, I feel only compassion instead of resentment. Even upon those who cause suffering I look with deep compassion, knowing the harvest of sorrow that lies in store for them. If there were those who hated me, I would love them in return, knowing that ha-



tred can only be overcome by love, and knowing that there is good in all human beings which can be reached by loving approach".<sup>9</sup> She recommended civil disobedience only as a last resort because much more can be accomplished by people out of jail than they can as imprisoned conscientious objectors. "I have never met anyone", she observed, "who built a bomb shelter and felt protected by it. I have never met a modern military man who did not realize that military victory is a concept which became obsolete with the coming of the nuclear age, and most civilians realize this also. Wisdom demands that we stop preparing to wage a war which would eliminate mankind — and start preparing to eliminate the seeds of war".<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.111.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.112.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.115.

Petty nationalism, psychological violence and hatred are the seeds that have to be weeded out from the mind. This was her message to mankind.

'Peace Pilgrim' composed interesting poems expressing her detestation of war:

### CONSCRIPTION

In days long past, when men were  
   mere barbarians :  
 They chose a man or maybe two, to  
   die  
 As sacrifices to the storm god,Thor.  
 But now that they are civilized and  
   Christians:  
 They choose a million men or two  
   to die  
 As sacrifices to the stern god,War .<sup>11</sup>

### WAR

On the scarred battlefield, where  
   they forced me to go  
 I met a man that they said was my  
   foe—  
 And I ran him through with my  
   blade !

When I pulled it out and his blood  
   gushed forth,  
 I was suddenly filled with racking  
   remorse —  
 "I have killed a man!" I said.

He was slim and youthful and fright-  
   ened like me,  
 And not a fiend as they said he  
   would be —

"They sent me to kill you," he  
   sighed.

"By God ! I wish you had done so!" I  
   swore.

"Why, I don't even know what I'm  
   fighting for!"

"Nor I," he breathed, and died .<sup>12</sup>

### The Significance of Suffering

It is often the case that people fail to understand the true significance of suffering. From childhood we have been conditioned to run away from pain; sometimes we like to put the blame for our misfortunes on others. But 'Peace Pilgrim' suggests an entirely different approach to it, which requires us to regard every form of suffering as a blessing in disguise: "Difficulties with material things often come to remind us that our concentration should be on spiritual things instead of material things. Sometimes difficulties of the body come to show that the body is just a transient garment, and that the reality is the indestructible essence which activates the body. But when we can say, 'Thank God for problems which are sent for our spiritual growth', they are problems no longer. They then become opportunities. Let me tell you a story of a woman who had a personal problem. She lived constantly with pain. It was something in her back. I can still see her, arranging the pillows behind her back so it wouldn't hurt quite so much. She was quite bitter about this. I talked to her about the wonderful purpose of problems in our lives, and I tried to inspire her to think about God in-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.165.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.165.

stead of her problems. I must have been successful to some degree, because one night after she had gone to bed she got to thinking about God, 'God regards me, this little grain of dust, as so important that he sends me just the right problems to grow on,' she began thinking. And she turned to God and said, 'Oh, dear God, thank you for this pain through which I may grow closer to Thee'. Then the pain was gone and it has never returned. Perhaps that's what it means when it says: *In all things be thankful*. Maybe more often we should pray the prayer of thankfulness for our problems...<sup>13</sup> I am constantly thankful. The world is so beautiful, I am thankful. I have endless energy, I am thankful. I am plugged into the source of Universal Supply, I am thankful. I am plugged into the source of Universal Truth, I am thankful. I have this constant feeling of thankfulness, which is a prayer".<sup>14</sup>

### Simple Living

'Peace Pilgrim's lifestyle demonstrated the truth, if proof were necessary, that it is indeed possible to enjoy living like a *sannyasin* with a bare minimum of belongings. She managed to do that in one of the wealthiest countries with a high cost of living. She believed that "because of our preoccupation with materialism we often miss the best things in life, which are free. *Unnecessary possessions are unnecessary burdens. If you have them, you have to take care of them...*"<sup>15</sup> Sev-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

### Death the Leveller

By James Shirley

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armour against fate;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings;  
Sceptre and Crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
And plant fresh laurels where they  
kill:  
But their strong nerves at last must yield;  
They tame but one another still:  
Early or late  
They stoop to fate,  
And must give up their murmuring breath  
When they pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow:  
Then boast no more your mighty  
deeds;  
Upon death's purple altar now  
See where the victor-victim bleeds:  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb;  
Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

eral of my well meaning, well-to-do friends have offered me large sums of money, which I of course refused...<sup>16</sup> To the world I may seem very poor, walking penniless and wearing or carrying in my pockets my only material possessions, but I am really very rich in blessings which no amount of money could buy — health and happiness and inner peace.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.





*relatives — and then gradually to the world. Keep on visualising God's golden light surrounding our earth. And if you have a problem, take the matter to God in prayer, and visualise it in God's hands. Then leave it, knowing it is in the best possible hands and turn your attention to other things".<sup>21</sup>*

Does prayer consist in saying the Lord's prayer or any other prayer? When praying is it really necessary to prostrate oneself submissively in the traditional Hindu manner? Are Muslims nearer and dearer to Allah because they faithfully pray five times a day? Interestingly enough, for 'Peace Pilgrim' prayer was a profound inner state of communion with the Divine. "In the beginning," she explained, "I undertook my walking not only to contact people, I undertook it as a prayer discipline to keep me concentrated on my prayer for peace. I hadn't learned yet to pray without ceasing. I also undertook a forty-five day period of prayer and fasting as a prayer discipline. After the first few years the prayer discipline was completely unnecessary, because I had learned to *pray without ceasing*. I made the contact so thoroughly that into my prayer consciousness I put any condition or person in the world I am concerned about and the rest takes place automatically.<sup>22</sup> Praying without ceasing is not ritualised, nor are there even words. It is a constant state of awareness of oneness with God; it is a sincere seeking for a good thing ; and it is a concentration on the thing sought, with faith that it is obtainable".<sup>23</sup> 'Peace

Pilgrim's emphasis on 'sincere seeking for a good thing' implies that morality and goodness are important ingredients of prayer. Therefore praying for the death of one's enemies is actually a travesty of prayer because one is motivated by hatred.

According to 'Peace Pilgrim' "the most important part of prayer is what we *feel*, not what we say. We spend a great deal of time telling God what we think should be done, and not enough time waiting in the stillness for God to tell us what to do... If you don't know what God's guidance for your life is, you might try seeking in receptive silence. I used to walk receptive and silent amidst the beauties of nature. Wonderful insights would come to me which I then put into practice in my life. You might prefer listening to beautiful, uplifting music, reading a few beautiful words and pondering on them. To me, the beauties of nature were always the most inspiring, and so actually that was my time alone with God".<sup>24</sup>

#### Hints on Spiritual Life

As a practical person she gave useful hints on the spiritual path: "When you feel the need of a spiritual lift, try getting to bed early and get up early to have a quiet time at dawn. Then carry the serene 'in tune' feeling that comes to you into your day, no matter what you may be doing. For those of you who are seeking the spiritual life, I recommend these four daily practices: Spend time alone each day in receptive silence. When

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 76-77.

angry, or afflicted with any negative emotion, take time to be alone with God. (Do not talk with people who are angry; it is better to leave and pray). Visualise God's light each day and send it to someone who needs help. Exercise the body, it is the temple of the soul".<sup>25</sup>

"It has been truthfully said", remarked 'Peace Pilgrim', "that the world is equally shocked by one who repudiates Christianity and by one who practises it".<sup>26</sup> 'Peace Pilgrim' was not a member of any denomination of Christians but she actually *lived* the teachings of Jesus. Her life fills one with wonder because her purity, piety and innocence were somehow unsullied by contact with the materialistic society in which she lived and taught.

#### Knowing God

Like a divinely inspired prophet of yore, she loved talking about God: "Do you know God? Do you know there is a power greater than ourselves which manifests itself within us as well as everywhere else in the universe? This I call God. Do you know what it is to know God, to have God's constant guidance, a constant awareness of God's presence? To know God is to reflect love toward all people and all creations. To know God is to feel peace within — a calmness, a serenity, an unshakeableness which enables you to face any situation. To know God is to be so filled with joy that it bubbles over and goes forth to bless the world. I have only one desire now: to do God's will for me. There is no conflict.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 86.

When God guides me to walk a pilgrimage I do it gladly. When God guides me to do other things I do them just as gladly. If what I do brings criticism upon me I take it with head unbowed. If what I do brings me praise I pass it immediately along to God, for I am only the instrument through which God does the work. When God guides me to do something I am given strength, I am given supply, I am shown the way. I am given the words to speak. Whether the path is easy or hard I walk in the light of God's love and peace and joy, and I turn to God with psalms of thanksgiving and praise. This it is to know God. And knowing God is not reserved for the great ones. It is for little folks like you and me. God is always seeking you — every one of you. You can find God if you will only seek — by obeying divine laws, by loving people, by relinquishing self-will, attachments, negative thoughts and feelings. And when you find God it will be in the stillness. You will find God within".<sup>27</sup>

#### The End

'Peace Pilgrim' died under tragic circumstances in 1981. As she was being driven to a speaking engagement, there was a head-on collision; she died instantly.

"I certainly am a happy person. How could one know God and not be joyous".<sup>28</sup> Thus spoke 'Peace Pilgrim', when a radio interviewer remarked that she seemed to be a most happy woman. This is a pointer to the core of her personality.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 87-88.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. xiv.

THE CHOICE OF BOONS

# The Choice of Boons

By Thomas Dekker

*Thomas Dekker was an English dramatist, a contemporary of Ben Jonson. What follows is a scene from his play Old Fortunatus. Fortune Herself places before Fortunatus (one of the characters in the play) six gifts. She leaves it to him to make a judicious choice and receive one of the boons offered. The dialogue between Fortune and Fortunatus is self-explanatory.*

**Fortune:** Thou shalt be one of Fortune's minions

.....  
Six gifts I spend upon mortality,  
Wisdom, strength, health, beauty, long life, and riches;  
Out of my bounty, one of these is thine;  
Choose, then, which likes thee best.

**Fortunatus:** Oh, most divine !  
Give me but leave to borrow wonder's eye,  
To look, amazed, at thy bright majesty.  
Wisdom, strength, health, beauty, long life, and riches ?

**Fortune:** Before thy soul (at this deep lottery)  
Draw forth her prize, ordained by destiny;  
Know that here's no recanting a first choice;  
Choose then discreetly (for the laws of Fate  
Being graven in steel, must stand inviolate).

**Fortunatus:** Daughters of Jove and the unblemish'd Night,  
Most righteous Parcae, guide my genius right !  
Wisdom, strength, health, beauty, long life, and riches ?

**Fortune:** Stay, Fortunatus, once more hear me speak;  
If thou kiss Wisdom's cheek and make her thine,  
She'll breathe into thy lips divinity,  
And thou, like Phoebus, shalt speak oracle;

Thy heaven-inspired soul, on wisdom's wings,  
 Shall fly up to the parliament of Jove,  
 And read the statutes of eternity,  
 And see what's past, and learn what is to come:  
 If thou lay claim to strength, armies shall quake  
 To see thee frown; as kings at mine do lie,  
 So shall thy feet trample on empery:  
 Make health thine object, thou shalt be strong proof,  
 'Gainst the deep-searching darts of surfeiting;  
 Be ever merry, ever revelling:  
 Wish but for beauty, and within thine eyes  
 Two naked Cupids amorously shall swim,  
 And on thy cheeks I'll mix such white and red,  
 That Jove shall turn away young Ganymede,  
 And with immortal hands shall circle thee:  
 Are thy desires long life? thy vital thread  
 Shall be stretched out; thou shalt behold the change  
 Of monarchies; and see those children die  
 Whose great-great grandsires now in cradles lie:  
 If through gold's sacred hunger thou dost pine;  
 Those glided wantons, which in swarms do run  
 To warm their slender bodies in the sun,  
 Shall stand for number of those golden piles,  
 Which in rich piles shall swell before thy feet;  
 As those are, so shall these be infinite.  
 Awaken then thy soul's best faculties,  
 And gladly kiss this bounteous hand of Fate,  
 Which strives to bless thy name of Fortunate.

**Kings:** Old man, take heed ! her smiles will murder thee.

**The others:** Old man, she'll crown thee with felicity.

**Fortunatus:** Oh, whither am I wrapt beyond myself ?  
 More violent conflicts fight in every thought,  
 Than his, whose fatal choice Troy's downfall wrought.  
 Shall I contract myself to wisdom's love ?  
 Then I lose riches; and a wise man, poor,  
 Is like a sacred book that's never read;  
 To himself he lives, and to all else seems dead.  
 This age thinks better of a gilded fool

Than of a threadbare saint in wisdom's school.  
 I will be strong; then I refuse long life;  
 And though mine arm shall conquer twenty worlds,  
 There's a lean fellow beats all conquerors:  
 The greatest strength expires with loss of breath,  
 The mightiest (in one minute) stoop to death.  
 Then take long life, or health; should I do so,  
 I might grow ugly; and that tedious scroll  
 Of months and years much misery may inroll;  
 Therefore I'll beg for beauty; yet I will not:  
 The fairest cheek hath oftentimes a soul  
 Leprous as sin itself, than hell more foul.  
 The wisdom of this world is idiotism;  
 Strength a weak reed; health sickness' enemy,  
 (And it at length will have the victory;)  
 Beauty is but a painting; and long life  
 Is a long journey in December gone,  
 Tedious, and full of tribulation.  
 Therefore, dread sacred empress, make me rich;

(Kneels down.)

My choice is store of gold; the rich are wise;  
 He that upon his back rich garments wears  
 Is wise, though on his head grow Midas' ears:  
 Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world;  
 The health, the soul, the beauty most divine;  
 A mask of gold hides all deformities:  
 Gold is heaven's physic, life's restorative;  
 Oh, therefore make me rich ! not as the wretch  
 That only serves lean banquets to his eye,  
 Has gold, yet starves; is famished in his store;  
 No, let me ever spend, be never poor.

**Fortune:** Thy latest words confine thy destiny;  
*Thou shalt spend ever, and be never poor;*  
 For proof receive this purse; with it this virtue:  
 Still when thou thrust'st thy hand into the same,  
 Thou shalt draw forth ten pieces of bright gold,  
 Current in any realm where then thou breathest;  
 If thou canst dribble out the sea by drops,  
 Then shalt thou want; but that can ne'er be done,  
 Nor this grow empty.

**Fortunatus:** Thanks, great deity !

**Fortune:** The virtue ends when thou and thy sons end.  
 This path leads thee to Cyprus, get thee hence:  
 Farewell, vain covetous fool, thou wilt repent  
 That for the love of dross thou hast despised  
 Wisdom's divine embrace; she would have borne thee  
 On the rich wings of immortality;  
 But now go dwell with cares, and quickly die.

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## The New Apostles

By Cornelia Bagarotti

**I**T is far too easy to become a spectator rather than a participator in spiritual life. Those whose chose as did Paul to discover the Christ and to reveal him are those who have become participators and not spectators in Spiritual life. Many do not realise that the Bible has been given to Man as a present source of inspiration and illumination and it is neither a legend, nor a parable, but an EVERLIVING reality which is meant to awaken to apostleship the sleeping hearts of men. To take in the Christ means to be reborn and utterly transformed. The road to Damascus is an inner experience of that revelation and illumination after which one's entire life is changed.

Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of Christ, became St. Paul, the great Apostle of Christ. It is said he was literally blinded by the light of Christ. When one has

lived in the darkness of the material world, bound to one's lower self or ego, the sudden blaze of TRUTH into every corner of one's inner being is not only a shock but tremendous adjustment. The Disciples had three years preparation for the Pentecost. Each seeker of the Spirit is slowly preparing himself to receive the Christ and must die and be reborn again as Christ told Nicodemus before that illumination can take place.

Not until each word becomes a living reality, and each parable speaks directly to the soul and enters into daily life as the inner ethic and yardstick of all activity, does Man become a participator in the Spirit. The slightest knowledge that is LIVED is greater than all the theoretical wisdom of the world. Christ seeks servers and Men who are transformed in His being.



Far away the second twin watches his brother's tree of life and sees it wither. Then he knows that evil has befallen him and sets out to the rescue. Step by step he follows his brother and comes to his very kingdom. He is even welcomed by the princess as her own lost husband — so alike are the two men! However, refusing to linger long, the second twin presses on with his search and reaches the witch's castle. Here he only pretends to tie his hound and together man and dog overcome the old crone and force her to restore her many victims to life — first and foremost being his own brother. Together the brothers slay the witch and come home with great rejoicing.

#### Comment

What a rigmarole you may say! What has this to do with Ramana Maharshi? But stop a minute! Who is this 'witch' that turns men into stone? Surely 'she' is death? And did not the Maharshi wrestle with and overcome all fear of death in his amazing boyhood experience at Madurai? Did he not, initially, simulate death by lying rigid and inert like a stone? So is he not close kin to both the brothers in the story — the one who experiences death and the one who overcomes it? Perhaps the best name for the crone who bewitches us all is Belief-in-the-reality-of-death. The first brother is but a hair's breadth away from defeating this 'witch', but that hair proves as strong as an iron chain. As a woman I find the hair episode fascinating. Very many women will pull out white hairs as they appear. Are they not harbingers of age, loss of beauty, and, at last, death? So it is that

the decay of youth and beauty bewitches us into regarding death as an unavoidable reality.

The young Venkataraman conquered death by Realization of the all-embracing Self — an awareness which, as he tells us, came to him in a flash. I submit that in our story the defeat of death also comes in a flash — but for the purposes of the unfolding of the story this flash of insight is circumscribed to one aspect of Enlightenment only. There comes a sudden realization to the second brother that death does not exist. Life does not end because he and his forerunner are one, and that he is completing the *sadhana* his 'brother' began. His 'brother' is not dead but lives, and always will live in himself and his successors till Liberation is attained. And, as we have seen, the purposeful reaching out for Liberation and final abidance in the Self is the story of *The Three Brothers* as we have it in the version translated from the Gaelic which I have used.

We could paraphrase and say that the birth of the twins is a dawning realization in the *sadhaka* of the presence within of a forerunner who makes his own victory over belief in the reality of death possible. Together (and this is very important) the 'twin brothers', i.e. linked incarnations, defeat death. There are many deft touches which tell us that this whole story 'happens' in the inner intuitive world — a world which grows richer and richer for the second 'twin' as he treads in the footsteps of his precursor. First there is tree-symbolism. The deciduous tree fades and *appears* to die in autumn only to be reborn, as it were,



in the spring. Second there is the importance of dog-symbolism. A dog has a strong telepathic link with its master whom it will not willingly forsake. If the master dies the dog will sometimes stay with the body, or by the grave, for weeks or even years. Such is the story of Bobby, a small dog who watched over his master's grave for 14 years in Greyfriars Churchyard in Edinburgh, the Scottish capital. Again there is a strong intuitive link between identical twins, who can, I believe, suffer acute unhappiness when separated from each other. Last, but not least, there is the princess who accepts the twins as *one and the same person*. As the story unfolds we think she is wrong, but, if my reading is correct, she is right! The princess in these very ancient stories is never wrong, because, ultimately, 'she' stands for the Atman or Self.

I submit that the acceptance of the truth of reincarnation is the *sine qua non* of all *sadhana*. How will the *sadhaka* proceed with calm and dispassion if told that his journey must be accomplished in one lifetime? Some may start late on the quest. Is their position futile? Some may become disheartened. Is their earlier effort so much waste? Sri Ramana stated frequently that *all* effort would bear fruit — though quite patently it did not always come to fruition in one lifetime. While clearly averse to discussing rebirth he always referred to it naturally and easily, as when he said, 'To seek to know the significance of life is itself the result of good *karma* in past births'.<sup>3</sup> He even applied this rule to himself, describing his good fortune at avoiding the tangled

maze of philosophical thought saying, 'My former tendencies directly took me to the enquiry "Who am I?"'.

Buddhism like Hinduism teaches rebirth, nor, I submit was the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth out of step. His parable, *The Labourers in the Vineyard*,<sup>4</sup> can, I believe, be most meaningfully interpreted as a veiled reference to reincarnation. The gist of the parable is that the lord of the vineyard sends in labourers to gather the harvest. Four times during the day he repeats this and at evening, when the harvest is complete, pays all the labourers exactly the same amount regardless of the fact that some have worked longer in harder conditions than others. Brushing aside all protest the lord essentially replies, 'I am good'. As so often with Jesus's parables we are faced with a tough conundrum. The lord appears to have acted most unjustly yet states that his decision, based on his own true nature, is just. We have to find a key to the story that will fit the claim. I suggest that the key is reincarnation. The 'lord of the vineyard', the Self, sends out 'labourers' till the long harvest of many lifetimes is gathered in. The 'wages' are the same for all since each individual is part of a single whole — an evolving soul who plays many parts on the world's stage. So the *sadhaka* entering the Kingdom of Heaven, to use Jesus's terminology, has a dawning realization of the meaningfulness of human endeavour and the road he has travelled. Essentially, I think, Jesus's parable voices the feeling I tried to express at the opening of the previous paragraph, that no one

<sup>3</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No.558.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 20.

would embark on the spiritual quest who did not at least have faith that life was meaningful and essentially just — in spite of appearances to the contrary!

Occasionally exactly the same story as that told about the two brothers is told about three, suggesting again that the *sadhana* of these three brothers on three planes, body, mind and spirit, will probably go on for three lifetimes at least. For the purposes of the story the paths of *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti yoga* are presented as three distinct journeys and by implication are the achievement of three incarnations. In real life, we know, that they more often run side by side.

Let us now turn to an event in the Maharshi's life which throws great light on the problem of reincarnation and our attitude to it. I have recently read the story of a bereaved couple who had lost their only son. Nothing that Bhagavan could say to lead their minds from the transient to the intransient could comfort them. The only consolatory idea that they would accept was Bhagavan's promise that they should see their beloved child in a future incarnation. At last Ramana told them :

You will certainly see him. You will see him in the next birth as vividly as you have seen him in this birth.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt in my mind that the Maharshi's promise was absolute truth. They would see their dear one 'as vividly' as they had seen him — but how vividly was that? How 'vividly' did they see themselves? I suggest that we all see

beloved ones again and again but since we don't know ourselves, the Self, we do not recognize them. It was for this reason that Bhagavan taught his devotees to eschew all side issues. Again and again the ancient folk tales of which I write introduce the themes of remembering and recognition — but they always centre round the Princess, Atman or Self. The prince forgets and 'She' has to win him back. The implication is, I think that all remembering, all recognition, is part of the total Enlightenment that the Atman sheds on the purified mind of the *sadhaka*. Thus, it seems to me, this ancient scripture is in complete accord with Maharshi's teaching :

Sleep is intermediate between two waking states, so also death is between two successive births.<sup>6</sup>

Seeing that Vedanta and Buddhism teach the truth of rebirth, as very possibly Jesus of Nazareth did also, is there anything to surprise us that the ancient Rishi who gave us the story of *The Three Brothers* and their *sadhana* also gave us a foundation story expressing the same truth? 'Brother' follows 'brother', he tells us: death is not real, therefore press forward with confidence in a purposeful *sadhana* in accordance with your temperament. Each successive incarnation will reap the dedication and effort of its precursors.

<sup>5</sup> This story is taken from the writings of T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, quoted in *The Ramana Way*, September 1989, p.8.

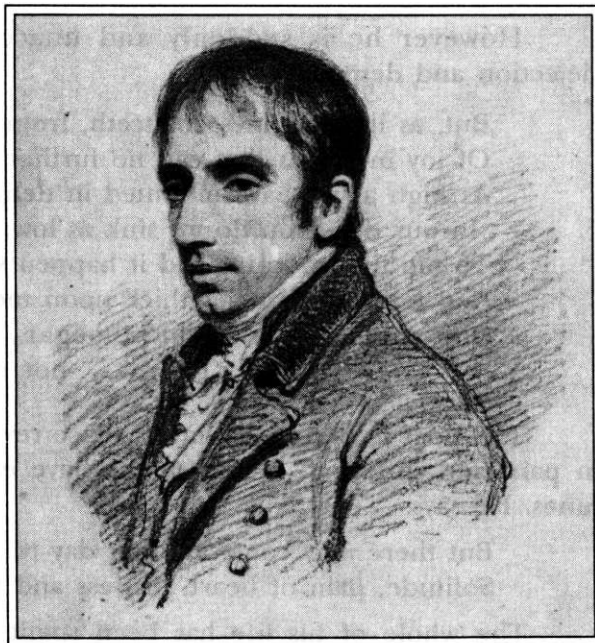
<sup>6</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No.206.

# Wordsworth's *Resolution And Independence*

By N.R.S. Manian

With the aid of his mystic insight and poetic powers Wordsworth could successfully portray Nature as inherently divine. Such poems of his — dealing with Nature — are all masterpieces. Many of his other poems — which do not deal with Nature exclusively — are also remarkable for the reason that he could draw spiritual lessons from events of an ordinary nature.

It was Wordsworth's conviction that he should depict 'incidents and situations from common life' and at the same time 'throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect'.



*Resolution and Independence* deals apparently with an ordinary human situation. It does not come under the class of mystical poems like the *Ode on Immortality*. But the poet draws a moral lesson of deep import from the episode described in the poem, all the same. He thus

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Picture of Wordsworth is published with kind permission of The Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage, Grasmere, UK.

The alternative title to the poem is *The Leech-Gatherer*.

performs his self-imposed task of picturing the uncommon on the basis of what is common.

The opening lines of the poem give a picture of the joyousness and beauty of nature, after a rainy night. The poet is thereby transported to the highest level of delight:

The birds are singing in the distant woods;  
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;  
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;

.....  
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;

However he is suddenly and unaccountably overtaken by dejection and despair:

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low;  
To me that morning did it happen so;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;  
Dim sadness — and blind thoughts, I knew not,  
nor could name:

The poet feels he may have to face reverses in future, resulting in pain and suffering. Many (poets) have experienced such misfortunes. He says:

But there may come another day to me —  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty.

The whole of his life has been spent in a spirit of optimism without envisaging the possibility of distress, and this introduces an element of self-pity:

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,  
As if life's business were a summer mood;  
As if all needful things would come unsought.

In the midst of such a mood of pessimism Wordsworth sees an old man beside a pool:

Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven  
I saw a Man before me unawares;  
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

The appearance of the old man on the scene is of great significance since the poet was thereby restored to his original state of normality, free from dejection. Speaking of this in a letter to some friends, he says:

I consider the manner in which I was rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence. A person reading the poem with feelings like mine will have been awed and controlled, expecting something spiritual or supernatural. What is brought forward? A lonely place, "a pond by which an old man *was*, far from all house or home"; not *stood*, nor *sat*, but *was* — the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible. This feeling of spirituality or supernaturalness is again referred to as being strong in my mind in this passage. How came he here? thought I, or what can he be doing? I then describe him ....<sup>1</sup>

Wordsworth describes the old man:

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,  
 Nor all asleep — in his extreme old age;  
 His body was bent double, feet and head  
 Coming together in life's pilgrimage;  
 . . . . .  
 Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,  
 That heareth not the loud winds when they call;  
 And moveth all together, if it move at all.

The old man then stirred the pond with his staff and his gaze was fixed on the water. He did this in the manner of reading a book. The poet then questions the old man on the nature of his occupation. The old man's response to Wordsworth's query is highly impressive:

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
 But each in solemn order followed each,  
 With something of a lofty utterance drest —  
 Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach  
 Of ordinary men ; a stately speech  
 Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,  
 Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, i. 172 - 173.

The old man describes his occupation. He is a leech-gatherer. Being poor he makes an honest living through this means.

The reply of the old man and the manner of its delivery keeps Wordsworth spellbound. He describes it thus:

And the whole body of the Man did seem  
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;  
Or like a man from some far region sent,  
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

Strangely Wordsworth again questions the old man on his occupation. The old man repeats his words. He travels over the weary moors continually, stirring the waters of the pools where the leeches take refuge. He pursues this hazardous occupation in spite of the dwindling number of leeches.

The poet draws a great lesson from this episode:

I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind  
'God' said I, 'be my help and stay secure :  
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'

Two qualities which ennoble man and enable him to face life with courage are: resolution and independence. This is the message of the poem.

Wordsworth says: . . . . I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old man like this, the survivor of a wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has laid upon him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, i. 172 - 173.

# Teachings of Sri Bhagavan: The Secular Import

By I.S. Madugula

**I**N today's terribly confused world, more and more people seem to be turning toward 'religion', the word and the experience meaning different things to different groups. In the West, we hear about individuals who suddenly 'discover' religion and are 'born again'. An article on 'Faith Healing' in a recent issue of the *Time* magazine refers to a study which concludes that prayer by doctors or others helps the patients heal faster. In a *Time* poll conducted recently, the majority of the respondents said they believed in the healing power of personal prayer. They also believed that praying for someone else would help cure his or her illness.

Interestingly, and increasingly, at the international level, the opposite trend seems to be more popular. Countries vie with each other to declare themselves 'secular', whatever that may mean. The dictionary defines 'secular' as (a) not overtly or specifically religious, (b) existing or continuing through ages or centuries, and (c) of or relating to a long term of indefinite duration. I suppose it is in the first sense that the term is generally used in a political context, so as to make it acceptable across much of the globe. If we assume that secularism

generally implies an absence of emphasis on particular religious dogmas and their attendant practices, then we might perhaps be able to say that something secular applies across religious boundaries, or that it transcends all organized religion. Now we know there are things that are religious, and there are things that are secular. There is also the third category — that of 'secular religion' — a notion that occurs in scholarly studies of religion, especially in the twentieth century. Some who are not satisfied with the established theories and rituals of religion feel it necessary to demand that there be a 'religionless religion,' so to speak. It is not the same as agnosticism, because it has definite religious implications. What is being called into question is the cultural, mythological, and psychological matrix usually attendant on religion. Bereft of these factors, religion is forced to go back to the basics, and question its own *raison d'être*. But even this may not quite meet all the requirements of pure secularism.

At the end of the article referred to above, there is an item by Marty Kaplan, in which he describes his transformation from a Harvard-educated sceptic to a believer in the power of meditation, to

which he was attracted by 'its apparent religious neutrality.' He experiences his personal god through meditation, a sort of highest common factor of all religions. Then he reinterprets his experience in more neutral — or secular — terms:

Now I know there is a consciousness that transcends science, a consciousness toward which our species is sputteringly evolving, a welcome development spurred ironically by our generational rendezvous with mortality.

Implied in the teaching of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is the secular essence of internalized religion. Well before secularism became a keyword of politics and began losing its cognateness with unmodified religious experience, he postulated the effective method of the questioner inquiring into his own identity, performing a sort of regression analysis until one reaches the 'source' of all questioning and analysis. This is an effective method because the minute one refers to oneself, one's consciousness comes into operation, the basis of which one then has to experience and establish for oneself. As long as one exists, one's personal identity if not one's universal identity, too, exists. As a matter of fact, in the ultimate sense, universal consciousness is all there is to experience. Nothing else exists, except in a superficial sense.

Aside from his winning ways and universal compassion that extended to nonhumans as well, the main reason why Bhagavan's teachings appealed to everyone who came in contact with him re-

gardless of their religious affiliations, is precisely this secular approach to the source of our existence. Religion may be subject to debate, but a *sui generis* analysis of who we are and how we work need not stir any passions or threaten any belief systems. We can all function within our own formal religious systems, yet learn to probe into the subpsychic foundation that sustains those systems.

The analytical steps to probing the inner 'I' are well laid out by Bhagavan and are all too familiar. Primarily, one just persists in one's inquiry until one loses oneself in one's self. There is no denying the existence of this self the while one continues to question its existence, much as it might sound like a redundancy. A self has to exist to question itself and other things. Bhagavan's formidable question is: 'Who is asking the question?' The active part of course is the intuitive merging of this self with the Self — the pure awareness, the neuter Brahman, the substructure which undergirds all gender, form, and function.

Difficult though it might be for intellectual comprehension, it is experienced by everyone some time or other for brief periods. All of us know this when we momentarily close our eyes, our mind, our ego long enough to relax and get away from it all.

If we can do this to perfection and consciously arrive at the source of our existence, peace will pervade our whole being.

This is the secularism taught by Bhagavan. It is more than the sum of all religion as we know it.



## BOOK REVIEWS

## In the Charge of J. JAYARAMAN

ADVAITĀMŌDA: by Vasudeva Sastri Abhyankar. Tr. from Sanskrit with comm. in English by Michael Comans. Pub: Sri Satguru Publications, 40/5, Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110007 pp lviii+623, Rs.300, 1994.

The text is an original exposition in Sanskrit on the two great Vēdānta traditions, Advaita and Visishtādvaita. As it had been written in the early part of the twentieth century, the modern reader not very much versed in ancient lore has been kept in view and the Sanskrit language used is straight, simple and elegant, at the same time not losing its usual majesty and profundity. It is sheer delight to read through the text and follow the subtle arguments and critique and its help is invaluable both for the learned and the laity to have a correct understanding of both the Advaita and the Visishtādvaita schools of philosophy.

The author, Mahamahōpādhyaya Vasudeva Sastri Abhyankar (1863-1942) was born into a family prominent in the field of Sanskrit scholarship. Brought up, from a very early age by his famous grandfather, Bhāskara Sastri who ran a Sanskrit *pāthasāla* at his home, Abhyankar mastered the intricacies of all the important Sanskrit texts at a very early age. He taught both at the traditional *pāthasālas* and in the Sanskrit Department at Fergusson College, Poona, almost till the end of his life. Thus he had the unique opportunity of knowing at first hand, the aspirations and needs of the traditional scholar and the modern votary. To cater to these he gave shape to his insights and thoughts in more than twenty publications on different subjects like philosophy, poetics etc. We are told that the present work under review, was written as a challenge when some of his friends accused him of too much specialisation in the Visishtādvaita philosophy.

*Advaitāmōda* is written in a unique fashion. It contains four chapters. The first two chapters give a brilliant and thorough exposition of the teachings of Advaita and Visishtādvaita respectively. Then follows a summary of the differences between Advaita and Visishtādvaita. Thirty three points of difference are enunciated and elaborated. The third and fourth chapters explain why Visishtādvaita is logically untenable and how Advaita is logically tenable. These chapters enter into a detailed critique of the arguments 'which Ramanuja advanced against Advaita in the Laghu and Maha Siddhanta portions' of his great commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, the *Sri Bhāshya*. Passages are first cited and then systematically discussed point by point. Thus a first hand knowledge of both the great Vēdānta systems are laid bare for the readers' benefit. And finally the author concludes that *advaitāmōda*, the fragrance of Advaita permeates all.

The translator and commentator Dr. Michael Comans has made a deep study of Advaita Vēdānta in the traditional manner under great Masters and has fully imbibed the hoary wisdom and insight of this ancient land. His translation of the Sanskrit text brings out the import both in letter and spirit and his commentary throws a flood of light on intricate and difficult portions of the text. The learned doctor does not restrict himself to the text *Advaitāmōda* alone, but draws from other works of Abhyankar to give the reader an insight into his inimitable style. We are tempted to quote the following:

The last chapter of *Sarvadarsanasangraha* of Śāyana Madhava deals with Advaita, on which Abhyankar has written a commentary in Sanskrit. The learned Doctor illustrates: "In dealing with the topic whether Brahman forms a legitimate object of enquiry, Mādhava gives a characteristically terse sentence — 'Because (the nature of being an object of enquiry) is due to the possibility or impossibility of a doubt and a result which both pervade the capacity for the desire to know'. Abhyankar explains this sentence: 'Where there is the capacity for the desire to know, the pair, in the form of a doubt and a result are certainly necessary. Because, a matter about which there is no doubt, but which has already been ascertained, even though a result exists for it, is not capable of being the object of the desire to know, because it is already known. So too where there is no result, even though that matter is in doubt, it is not capable of being the object of the desire to know. Because the knowledge is useless. And so even when the pair are not possible, there is all the more the absence of the capacity of the desire to know'.

Such a passage is quite typical of Abhyankar's commentarial style: he provides a clear understanding of the text he is commenting upon..." (Page xx).

The translation and commentary and explanatory notes of Dr. Comans bear everywhere the stamp of his great erudition, meticulous scholarship and deep insight.

The book contains an Introduction, Detailed Table of Contents, a Bibliography and an Index.

— S. Sankaranārāyanan.

THE HIDDEN POWER: by A.R. Natarajan. Pub: RMCL, Bangalore 560 003. pp 108, Rs.60, 1995.

This handy volume is written by A.R. Natarajan a devotee of Bhagavān Ramana. The first chapter, *Thinking Without the Mind* is not to be confused with mindless thinking which is like reading a book without reflection upon the contents of the book or like eating without an eye on digestion. Happiness is really an inner attitude, a subjective realization of the mind though many are under a misapprehension that it depends upon external conditions. Mind stubbornly refuses to turn inwards, that is, enquire *Who Am I?* A visitor to Sri Ramanāśramam at Tiruvannāmalai can observe many monkeys and can understand why mind is compared to a monkey.

Though the content of this book is familiar to Ramana devotees, the younger generation which is trapped in the speed and tumult of modern human society will find solace in reading such a useful book

— N. Panchāpagēsan.

ROLES AND RITUALS FOR HINDU WOMEN: ed. by Julia Leslie. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110007. pp 267, Rs.175 (hb), 1992.

This is quite a remarkably informative useful study of the role and rituals of Hindu women. The contributors are, with one exception, Western scholars a great many of them with degrees in special aspects of Anthropology and Sociology from the University of Oxford. The editor, Julia Leslie has

taught Indian religion at the University of London (with just an M.Phil. degree in classical Indian religions from Oxford) and Sanskrit at the University of Bristol. She has been Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University in the U.S., in the History of Religions (Women's Programme). She is now Lecturer in Hindu studies at the School of Oriental and African studies in the University of London. One of her notable publications is *The Perfect Wife* based on a study of *Strīdharmapaddhati* of Triyambaka Yogēswara. The solitary Indian contributor Sanjukta Gupta is a Ph.D. of Tagore's Viswabhārati University and a D.Litt. from Utrecht University and has to her credit books on the philosophy of Madhusūdhana Saraswati, *Lakshmitantra* and a study conjointly with another European scholar, of the *Navāvarana Kīrtanas* of Muthuswāmi Dikshitar of South India.

We mention these details about the contributors to stress the fact that the studies in this volume are exercises in cross-cultural scholarship and comprehension, and not ephemeral journalism designed to titillate the appetite for the exotic and sensational of the average foreigner. We don't intend to convey any impression that these studies are free from misunderstanding and error. Such errors are to be found — and there are quite a few — resulting from the inmitigable and almost estranging foreignness of the approach and the limitations arising from these as well as from what one may perhaps best describe, in the words of a great American jurist, Holmes, as the 'inarticulate major premiss' vulgarly called 'prejudice'. For example, we have Werner Menski speaking of "the difficulties of extracting information about the social reality of womens' lives from texts compiled by a male elite". He further speaks of "brahminical attempts to oust women from ritual involvement" though he thinks these insidious exercises in male chauvinism have failed.

The studies cover four important aspects of the theme taken up in the book. They are (1) *Wife*, by Frederick M. Smith, (2) *Power in the Home*, by Mary McGee, (3) *The Ritual of Dance*, by Saskia Karsenboom and (4) *The Pursuit of Salvation*. The studies are based throughout on relevant texts and historical information strenuously gathered for the purpose.

Smith, before dealing with the rites, in the first section, speaks of the mythic context — the story of Indra's brahminicide (*brahmahatya*) — as resulting in women's monthly illness through a transfer of one-third of Indra's guilt to women, marking her sin, danger and impurity. A pattern emerges for Smith — though not an uncontested one — of male dominance! While "the sexuality and reproductive function of the women are exalted... her vital role in the sacrifice is systematically reduced".

Menski studies Hindu marriage ritual but regards the role of the women as somewhat ambivalent. "A ritual drama", re-enacting the steps by which the bride leaves her parental home for her husband's. The woman gets married, according to the Rig Veda, *dharma prajā sampādyartham* (to beget worthy progeny), preferably male!

Mary McGee studies the significance of *vrata* undertaken by women, *mokshārtham* as well as for less important 'fruits'. Helen Stork studies the ritual relating to the birth and care of children, *pumsavanam* and *si mantam*. One wonders

why *asvatta pradakshina* (circumambulation of the peepal tree) does not come in for detailed study.

It is in the scholarly examination of the Dance — a purely religious ritual making the dedication of a young woman to temple ritual, a *nityasumangali* — that one notes how outrageously ritual can degenerate and corruption destroy the sanctity of such dedication. Also edifying is the study of the concept of *pātvratya* and *sati*. We venture to hope that enough indication has been given of the earnestness and scholarly objectivity of the contributors to this book. This book deserves close and careful study.

— Prof. S. Rāmaswāmy.

WOMEN OF GRACE AND POWER: Nine Astonishing, Inspiring Luminaries of Our Time: by Timothy Conway. Pub: The Wake Up Press, Santa Barbara. pp.351, \$22.95, 1994.

This book by Conway is truly a 'landmark' publication. Bhagavan Ramana once remarked that spirituality begins where philosophy/psychology ends but this author has achieved the feat of writing a book which is intellectual and analytical and at the same time intensely spiritual, indeed a rare achievement that perhaps owes its inspired presentation to those nine women of Grace and Power who have permeated his text defying accepted paradigms of spirituality.

Conway's choice of spiritual women has been eclectic cutting across many continents, cultures and religions. This catholicity is reflected in the range of religious symbols displayed on the frontispiece. Starting with the American missionary and social worker Mother Frances Cabrini, Conway moves through medieval Germany and Russia to the rugged African frontiers and the Indian sub-continent. The life of the nineteenth century saint Therese Neumann, better known as the 'little flower' is a familiar one to many of us and yet the author brings out new aspects of her saintly personality especially in relation to the medieval saint of Lisieux. Wherever possible these hagiographies are accompanied by a short resume of the saint's teachings as in the case of Jillelamudi Ammā, Ānūsūyā Dēvi, Mātā Amritānandamayī, Shyāmā Mātājī, Ānandamayī Mā and the Russian nun Maria Skobtsova.

In the case of Pelagia 'the Holy Fool' Conway raises the very important issue of afflictive spirit possession versus spiritual possession, manifesting itself in behaviour, psychiatrists would term as 'illness' and schizophrenic. The bizarre behaviour pattern of saints like Pelagia, Hazrat Babajan and others is rooted in their perception of this world as a meaningless dream which is best viewed upside down! Hence the divine idiocy, the playfulness of these 'God absorbed fools'.

The author inevitably looks at the phenomenon of the manifestation of thaumaturgic powers by these spiritual women. These manifestations range from simple miracles like clairvoyance and clairaudience to more complex ones like active intervention in natural furies like storms and floods, terminal illnesses of devotees and so on. This issue raised by the author finds an appropriate answer in Bhagavān Ramana's response. Acknowledging that these powers naturally followed spiritual practices He warned: "The magician

deludes the gullible, himself remaining undeluded. But lo, the Siddha himself first deluded, deludes others" (*Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, p.127). How then does one explain the compassionate healing of afflicted devotees by these saints including Ramana? Ramana calls the 'miracles' that take place in the presence of great saints as "automatic divine action". Conway's book abounds in the recounting of such miracles.

A brief review cannot do justice to the richness of this text — the madness of Pelagia, the patient suffering of Therese Neumann, the ecstatic beauty of Ānandamayi Mā and the mysticism of Babajan. This reviewer would strongly suggest that readers should go to this text again and again to savour its richness and benefit from the transforming power of these lives.

— Dr. (Ms.) Vijaya Rāmaswāmy.

AYURVEDA — LIFE, HEALTH AND LONGEVITY: by Dr. Robert E. Svoboda. Pub: Penguin Books, B4/246, Safdarjung Enclave, N. Delhi 110 029. pp332, Rs.85, 1993.

YOUR AYURVEDIC CONSTITUTION — PRAKRUTI: by Dr. Robert E. Svoboda. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 110 007. pp 206, Rs. 150, 1994.

Dr. E. Svoboda took a degree in Āyurvēda in 1980 from the University of Poona as the first Westerner ever to become a licensed Āyurvēdic physician. He has also imbibed the knowledge of esoteric aspects of Āyurvēda from his teacher Vimalānanda who was an adept in Tāntric Sadhana. The books under review are replete with profound insights and carry the unmistakable stamp of the author's erudition and experience. The presentation is scholarly, brilliant and incisive in its analysis. At the same time, the abstruse concepts are explained with remarkable clarity and precision in elegant and vigorous prose.

As compared to the mechanistic approach of Allopathy, Āyurvēdic paradigm shows how body, mind and spirit interactions can be predicted, balanced and improved to enable us to live gracefully, harmoniously. Āyurvēda is of hoary antiquity, being the Upavēda or accessory Vēda, to the Atharva Vēda.

Everything that enters our body or mind must be well 'digested'; whenever an experience remains 'undigested', the microcosm loses its coherence and develops a disease. Treatment is the re-establishment of this order. The principal word for health in Sanskrit, *svastha* means 'established in oneself'. Āyurvēda, a pragmatic science, teaches living beings how to establish themselves in themselves.

The three doshas viz. *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha* are central to Āyurvēdic theories on health and disease. They are derived from the five elements viz. ether, air, fire, water and earth. They are invisible forces that can be demonstrated in the body only by inference. They keep the body healthy only so long as they continuously flow out of it and maintain their balance with each other.

The six tastes viz. sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent exert a direct effect on the state of *dōshas* in the body. One should, therefore, select and combine foodstuffs

in such a manner as to have a beneficial influence on the level of harmony among the *dōshas*.

After explaining the basic principles the author proceeds to expound in a systematic manner the Āyurvēdic concepts relating to pathology, diagnosis, treatment, rejuvenation and vitalization. Two chapters are devoted to medicinal substances used in Āyurvēda and Āyurvēdic pharmacology. A few select diseases such as fever, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, etc. are taken as illustrative examples to show how they are diagnosed and treated according to Āyurvēdic principles.

The second book under review is about Prakruti — one's physical and mental constitution from Āyurvēdic perspective. The basic principles relating to the theory of *dōshas*, tastes and their inter-relations are first explained. The constitution is fixed at the moment of birth; to know whether your constitution is predominantly *vāta*, *pitta*, or *kapha* or a combination of them, you are asked to go through a list of twenty six characteristics of human constitution such as body frame, weight, appetite, vocal qualities, mind, emotion, etc. Against each characteristic, one rates oneself as *vāta*, *pitta*, or *kapha* and detailed analysis is given under each characteristic to facilitate response. This check-list is extremely interesting and helps even a lay reader to understand the nature of his innate constitution. The other chapters deal with the qualities of food items, suitability of foods for different constitutions, aspects of nutrition, the daily and seasonal routines to be followed, choice of life-style etc. These two books constitute an invaluable addition and they open our eyes, as it were, to the vast riches of Āyurvēdic lore.

— V.R.K.Raman.

SUFI TEACHINGS — LECTURES OF HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN: Pub: Motilal Banarasidass. Delhi 110 007. pp 343, Rs. 110/Rs. 60(pb), 1994.

This book the eighth in a series of thirteen volumes, is a collection of lectures by the Sufi mystic, Hazrat Inayat Khan. Having spent his early life in India he propagated to the Western World the Sufi message and these lectures are compiled in this book form. According to Hazrat Inayat Khan, the origin of Sufism is difficult to trace. Similarly it would not be possible to name the first exponent of Sufism. But Sufis lived at the time of Christ and Prophet Mohammed, who in fact helped this movement enter Arabia. Subsequently Sufism spread to Persia and reached India, where according to Hazrat Inayat Khan, the movement reached its perfection.

Freedom of expression has always been the hallmark of Sufi mystics, which naturally antagonised the religious dogmas prevalent at that time. Hazrat Inayat Khan says in one of the lectures that the Indian soil provided the fertile ground for the blossoming of the mystic expressions of the Seers. In the course of travel from Arabia, Persia to India, the Sufi philosophy became eclectic, whilst gathering the finer aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism. Even the influence of Plato and Socrates can be felt in the teachings. Because of the severe opposition felt in the early days of the movement, the mystics resorted to poetry, to veil deeper import of their statements. In fact, such poetry has been often misinterpreted as encouraging an Epicurean life. Rubaiyat is one such example where a discerning reader will not fail to detect the spiritual ecstasy of the poet.

The book covers a whole range of subjects, the Sufi's Aim, Self-discipline, Physical control, Renunciation, the Awakening of soul, etc. Hazrat Inayat Khan's lectures come from his heart and though expressed in a tongue foreign to him, reflect his depth of understanding backed by *sādhana*. He is quite familiar with the Christian holy Book, and introduces many Sanskrit phrases from the Hindu philosophy. The many parallels he draws between the Sufi and Hindu philosophy, throughout his lectures, bring home the unity of thought at the highest level of abstraction. Defining Sufism, Hazrat Inayat Khan, says "it is a religion for those who seek religion; it is a philosophy if one wants to know wisdom, it is mysticism if one wishes to be guided by it in the unfoldment of the soul". According to him, "the aim of a Sufi is not to seek the presence of God, which presupposes duality, but to reach the experience, in which there is no experience. Because God exists as the inactive perfect consciousness, whose perfection lies in his self-sufficiency. He only appears, active in manifestation".

The book contains stirring passages, and it can benefit any reader interested in philosophy. Hazrat Inayat Khan's statement that Sufi's doctrine is "know thy Self and thou wilt know God" will particularly appeal to Bhagavan's devotees.

— N. Panchāpakesan.

A TREASURY OF MAHAYANA SUTRAS: tr. by Garma C. C. Chang. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N. Delhi 110007. pp 496, Rs. 210, 1992.

The book under review is a very competent translation of the selections from the *Mahāratnakūta Sūtra* — a major compendium of Mahāyāna aphorisms. The well known Mahāyāna scholar, Dr. Chang, carefully selecting twenty two sūtras from the prodigious repertoire of forty nine sūtras enshrined in the *Mahāratnakūta Sūtras*, has translated them in a manner comprehensible to even a lay reader. Never for a moment sacrificing the beauty and the expansive imagery of the original, Dr. Chang takes the reader in a joyful guided-tour of Mahāyāna philosophy.

In a nut-shell, the Mahāyāna philosophy, as enshrined in the sūtras states that Nirvāna is not a negative cessation of misery but a positive state of bliss, comprehended through Paramita. Bodhi Satva here is the Transcendent Reality, the Absolute Self or Suchness, *tathatā* permeating the so-called individual selfs, the noumenon behind all phenomenon, all Dharmas. The negative and individualistic conception of Nirvāna of the Sravakas of Hinayāna, as beautifully brought out in the seventh chapter "The prophecy of Buddhahood", is replaced by a Universal conception of it. Reality, as the ultimate Existence, is called *bhūta-tathatā*; as pure spirit it is prajna or bodhi; as a harmonious whole as *dharma-dhātu* and as Bliss having infinite merits, it is called *tathāgatagarbha*. It is essentially indescribable because intellect cannot compass it. It is beyond the four categories of understanding. It is neither existence nor non-existence. It is neither unity nor plurality nor both nor neither. The Middle Path, realised by the Tathāgata Sākyamuni, eschewing the errors of existence and non-existence, affirmation and negation, eternalism and nihilism, at once transcending both the extremes is very

clearly explained in the various sūtras, which are a veritable mosaic of constructive dialectics. Dialogues marked by incisiveness of analysis, poetic description of the grandeur of the Tathāgata and the various Buddha-lands, are well translated with crystal-like clarity that they enthrall the mind of the reader. The topics discussed range from the monistic precepts (Vinaya) to intuitive wisdom (Prajna), from illusion and ingenuity (Upāya) to the nature of consciousness and pure-land practices, verily an encyclopaedic coverage.

When one completes reading the beautiful volume, one gets the impression that there is nothing in the teaching of Mahāyāna doctrines that seriously militate against the Upanishads. In the words of Rhys Davids, "The Sākyan Mission was out, not to destroy but to fulfil, to enlarge and continue the accepted faith-in-God not by asseverating or denying, but by making it more vital". The book amply illustrates this.

This is a very valuable work for any interested student of Mahāyāna. Endnotes and glossaries enhance the clarity of the text admirably.

— S. Rāmmōhan.

PATH OF PURIFICATION, (VISUDDHIMAGGA): by Bhaddāntacāriya Buddhaghōsa. Translated into English by Bhikku Nanamoli. Pub: Buddhist Publication Society, P.O. Box 61., 54, Sangharaja Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka. pp. li+907, \$40, 1994.

*The Path of Purification* now appearing in its fifth edition, is truly an encyclopaedia, but of the kind that details an inner world, a world of beauty and justice, of peace and fulfilment beyond rationality. Edward Conze, a Buddhist scholar has expressed his wish to keep himself immersed in the Dhamma thus: "Buddhaghosa has composed one of the great spiritual classics of mankind. If I had to choose just one book to take with me on a desert island, the *Visuddhimagga* would be my choice."

This long-treasured classic work of exegesis finds a parallel in the *Path of Freedom (Vimuttimāgga)* an English translation of the Chinese text *Gedatsu Dō Ron*. The *Visuddhimāgga* is more comprehensive than the *Vimuttimāgga* and abounds in allusions to the Pitakas. It is divided into three parts: *Sīla* (Virtue), *Samādhi* (Concentration) and *Panna* (Understanding) comprising twenty three chapters in all. Each figure of this holy trinity mirrors the other and leads the aspirant to Deliverance which is release from rebirth.

The opposite of virtue, as must be, is vice. Greed and success are inextricably intermingled. Success breeds jealousy which then gives way to hatred and violence. This is a situation very familiar to the untaught ordinary man (*puthujjana*). Animals warned by instinct avoid poisonous plants, but man shows no such discrimination, He deliberately seeks poisonous impressions at times compelled by perverse impulses to degrade his inner life. Life is just one long disease for him, as is well brought out by the author's similes for the twelve links. "The first is like a blind man who does not see what is in front of him; (2) he stumbles, (3) he falls, (4) he develops an abscess; (5) the abscess ripens and matter accumulates in it, which (6) presses on the

abscess, (7)hurts; (8)he longs for a cure, (9)has recourse to the wrong medicine, (10)uses the wrong ointment, (11)with the result that the abscess swells up and (12)bursts." These twelve links are not merely consecutive but simultaneously present in one and the same experience. This circle of birth and death is a subject of constant meditation. *Kusala cittēkaggatā*, that is to say, concentration on the illusory events in life rids the mind of the dross of its self-centred trivial preoccupations. The process of the loss of inner calm and its slow and painful rediscovery are beautifully described in the passages cited from the Buddha's Dispensation with the aid of picturesque similes and anecdotes.

Amongst other of the *niddēsas* the elder Buddhagōsa goes into details in this massive work are: Ascetic Practices, *Kasinas*, Recollections, Divine Abidings, Immaterial States, Supernormal Powers, Aggregates, Samādhi, Purification of View and Benefits of Understanding.

What is formulated, organised and completed here in a volume is what has never before been so fully explored, and points to a landmark in the history of Buddhist thought. It stands out, therefore, from among other important works in the Theravāda Pāli tradition as a product of high learning and insight.

The image of the perfect mind is well represented in the person of the *Arahant* (saint). *Nibbāna* is extinction of *samsāra* like 'the passing away of a lamp as a thing in or by itself.' The Pāli words *sati*, *pannati*, *paccaya*, *jhāna* and *anatta* are used with great precision for the sake of a new and comprehensive understanding of the *dharmas*. The Ven. Bhikku *Nānamoli's* translation and his notes, rendered in a style graceful enough to make a meditator zealous, are as refreshingly clear and brilliant as the text they interpret. To these we must add the Index, Pāli-English Glossary and the immense material arranged in tables at the end as a guide.

— R. Rāmasāmi.

BEING AS BECOMING: Studies in Early Buddhism: by Motilal Pandit. Pub: Intercultural Publications, 15A/30, WEA, New Delhi 110005. pp. xv+463, Rs. 300, 1993.

This text deals extensively about early Buddhism. Most of its doctrines according to the author, have their roots in the Upanishads; but the Buddha developed them in a new way. His interpretation, he called the Middle Path (rejecting the extreme doctrinal positions). The door of Nirvāna is open only to those who follow the middle way with diligence and equanimity. Nirvāna is the goal.

Nirvāna exists as the substratum of existence; it is a state about which no assertion is possible. Upon its attainment all questions and doubts vanish as there is nothing more to be known. Nirvāna, it is said, is a state which is "the harbour of refuge, the cool cave, the island amidst the floods, the place of bliss, the medicine for all evil, the ambrosia, the further shore and the holy city".

The Buddha speaks of liberation through spiritual praxis (*cēto-vimutti*) and liberation through knowledge or reason (*paññā-vimutti*). He blends knowledge and consciousness, theory and practice. The method which the disciple is asked to adopt is that of rational scepticism. It is through the process of doubt and analysis one arrives at truth. He

discourages belief in any supernatural being or agency. Man must reach the transcendent unconditional state beyond space and time.

According to the Buddha everything in the world is in a state of constant flux or change. All are subject to the law of becoming. There is no permanent self. The core of the Buddha's philosophy is contained in the following propositions:

"When this is, that comes to be.  
With the arising of this, that arises.  
When this is not, that does not come to be.  
With the cessation of this, that ceases".

[Bhagavan Ramana has echoed this very truth in the 27th of his *Forty Verses*].

The Buddha did not concern himself about man's ontological status. He was basically an empiricist. The aim of his doctrines is to show the practical way only. Self-effort and self-understanding are quite necessary for salvation, maintains the Buddha. When one is delivered from *samsāra*, all his problems end.

"Just as the great ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt, just so this doctrine and discipline has one flavour—the flavour of emancipation".

A comprehensive book to learn about Theravāda Buddhism.

— Dr. T. N. Pranathārthi Haran.

THE ULTIMATE MEDICINE: As Prescribed by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. Ed. by Robert Powell. Pub: The Blue Dove Press, San Diego, P. Bx 261611, CA 92196, USA. pp 215, \$11.95, 1994.

Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) was a Siddha Purusha, a self-realized master, of the Nāth-panth. He lived most of his life in a small, unimpressive flat, in one of the many faceless tenement buildings, in lower-middle class suburban Bombay. Except for the daily music of bhajans and kirtans coming from his house, no one would have imagined that there was anything spiritually exalted about the man who lived there. Indeed, to all appearances, Maharaj was a householder like any other. He was married, had four children, and earned his livelihood by running a small general merchandise shop.

Yet, to those who had the privilege of his darshan (or to those who come to know of his teachings through *I Am That*) Maharaj was undoubtedly a mystic, a jnāni of the highest order. His basic teaching was that Reality is beyond the five senses, beyond the *gunas* therefore beyond the mind and all that it considers as "knowledge". As he used to say, "All paths lead to unreality. Paths are creations within the scope of knowledge. Therefore, paths and movements cannot transport you to Reality...." If so, then what was the way? The way, if it can be called that at all, was to go to the source of one's being, of one's incarnation, by concentrating on the vital breath or *prāna*; once this source is found, one must abide therein and forever free oneself from biological process.

In that sense, though the terminology is somewhat different, Maharaj's teachings tally totally with Sri Ramana

Maharshi's. This is suggested in dialogues quoted in this book. Maharaj: "What has been said in Ramana Maharshi's books and what has been said in Maharaj's books — does it tally?" The visitor replies, "Absolutely." Maharaj appears to agree. He then asks, "You have a clear picture of your true nature, of what you are?" The visitor replies, "In words, yes." Maharaj: "Even if you accept it in words, that is already a lot. Who is it that accepts what has been said in the words?" And so on.

This book is made up of eleven such discussions. What makes it important is that these exchanges were recorded during the last year of Maharaj's life when he was grievously ill, in fact dying of cancer. About his illness itself, he used to say that he had nothing to do with it, that he had given it over to "that to which the name 'birth' has been attached. Therefore, that which is born is suffering from the disease, not I". Powell has performed a meticulous job in trying to keep the talks intelligible. He has also provided explanatory footnotes wherever necessary. The book has been produced and printed very well by the Blue Dove Press, which specialises in spiritual books.

Though all these factors go in its favour, I still had some difficulties with the book. The names, identities, and details of the visitors have been withheld. The result is that the talks become decontextualized and anonymous. One loses a sense of specificity of the inquirer and the reply. Instead of a one-on-one exchange between the Master and the pupil, the talks become three-way or even four-way exchanges, with the interpreter or some other visitor intervening. To make sense of this multiplicity is very difficult. Also, without knowing who the interpreter is and whether it is the same person from one dialogue to the next, this problem is compounded. Further, there are several confusing neologisms, partly owing to difficulties in translation. One example is "I-am-ness", which is considered to be very different from the ultimate reality. Finally, considering how abrupt and startling Maharaj's style was, it would be hard if not impossible, to transcribe the total effect of an encounter with him. The transcripts, consequently, suffer from lack of coherence or clarity from time to time.

Despite these drawbacks, this book is a welcome blessing for *sādhakas*.

— Makarand Parānjape.

VIVEKANANDA: Comprehensive Study: comp. and ed. by Sw. Jyotirmayananda. Pub: Sw. Jyotirmayananda, 137, Anna Salai, Madras 600002. pp.804, 1994.

"This interesting compilation not only gives a brief account of the Swami's life and a selected body of his lectures, it gives a variety of essays and utterances by eminent thinkers, a collection of which one can get nowhere except in this book", says Sw. Tapasyānanda in his Fore- word. The book also carries learned opinion by Sw. Ranganāthananda, Prof. K.R. Srinivāsa Iyengar and the late M.C. Subrahmanyam. The book is an expanded, international edition celebrating the centenary of Sw. Vivekānanda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions, 1893.

Romain Rolland, the celebrated mystic philosopher of

France and an admirer of Sri Rāmakrishna and Vivekānanda writes: "It was wonderful that Swami Vivekānanda kept in his feverish hands to the end the equal balance between the two poles: a burning love of the Absolute (the Advaita) and the irresistible appeal of suffering humanity". However he adds, "What makes him so appealing to us is that at those times when equilibrium was no longer possible, and he had to make a choice, it was the latter that won the day; he sacrificed everything else to pity, to poor suffering humanity". Sister Nivēdita and Josephine Macleod, two of his famous Western disciples, testify to the deep emotional fervour they used to witness in the face of their Master when he would utter the word 'India' (p.220). Sister Nivēdita also writes, "Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed". (p. 176). Sw. Siddhināthananda writes, "India was his object of worship. He asked his countrymen to worship the goddess Mother India through service of the poor and the downtrodden, setting aside all other gods for the next fifty years" (p.224).

Sw. Vivekānanda, probably the greatest Indian patriot of our times was also a spiritual giant and a practical genius. To me, the nagging question (paradox?) remains: can one be filled with missionary zeal, however socially relevant, and still remain Advaitin?

— C.B.Lal.

KRISHNAMURTI FOR BEGINNERS: An Anthology: Comp, by K. Krishnamurthy. Centenary edn. 1995. Pub: Krishnamurti Foundation of India, Madras 600028. pp 240.

FIRE IN THE MIND : Dialogues with J. Krishnamurti: by Pupul Jayakar. Pub : Penguin Books, 43, Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019. pp.351, Rs. 150, 1995.

The two books under review offer a key to unlock the teaching of J. Krishnamūrti. K belongs to the great tradition of philosopher-educationists beginning with Socrates and Plato who have brought enlightenment to the dark recesses of the human mind. These two books are relevant in the present age, for now more than ever, in a world ridden by violence, power-mania and greed, Krishnamūrti's dialogues and discourses call halt to mankind's heedless march to self-destruction. The essence of his teaching as revealed in these books is that true freedom and progress in the world can be realized only when the individual has freed himself from his mental distortions such as fear, anger, anxiety and thoughts. For this the seeker has to turn inward and observe the chattering that goes on inside.

*Krishnamūrti For Beginners* gives an excellent introduction ("Krishnamūrti : the Formative years" by Radhika Herzberger) that sets K in the cultural and intellectual context of late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. At the same time it touches upon the core of K's teachings, thus providing a direct path to the so-called abstract, and, to many, incomprehensible discourses of the great philosopher-teacher. This section gives an account of the history of the Theosophical movement which was closely linked with K's early years. The biographical account of his early years till the disbanding of the Order of the Star in 1925 is necessary for one coming to Krishnamūrti for the first time.

The book is divided into five sections each dealing with a key concept of Krishnamūrti's philosophy. The first section titled *Public Talks* deals with Krishnamūrti's statement on fear, freedom, death, self-knowing, meditation and the problem of sorrow. This section has been carefully compiled so that the reader is able to get a clear grasp of the subject. According to Krishnamūrti fear is thought and is deeply rooted in the human psyche. He says that the problem of fear can be resolved only when one goes beyond it, by giving complete attention to it. As he says, "There can be only attention when you have affection, when you have love, which means that you want to resolve this problem of fear. When you have resolved it, you become a human being, a free man who can create an oasis in a World that is decaying".

The anthology has a selection from different kinds of discourses — public talks, question-answers, writings, diaries, letters etc. The striking feature of the anthology is that despite the wide variety of sources for the extracts there are recurrent ideas and concepts that give clarity and precision to the selections. For instance Krishnamūrti's statements on thought, fear, the occupied mind, the need to look within ourselves, the need to do away with all labels, all false identifications in order to understand the true self are repetitive but always have the spontaneity and surprise of a new statement. The reading of this book is a rewarding experience.

The other book *Fire in the Mind: Dialogues with J. Krishnamūrti* lacks the sparkle and directness of the first. The discussions deal with very important topics and cover a span of twenty-five years. Apart from the everyday concerns of man such as fear, sorrow, death, ageing, culture, the book also deals with global concerns such as biological survival, the nature of consciousness, artificial intelligence, computers and the mechanical mind. The dialogues are interesting in that the questions asked are matched by counter-questions, thus making the reader think for himself, making him question his own questions. This method negates all spiritual hierarchy such as in a dialogue between guru and disciple. The positions arrived at are the reader's own with light thrown here and there by K's counter-questions.

— Prof. Leela Subramoni.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY: The Story of Divine Compassion:** by Sw. Purushottamanandaji (Vasishtha Guha). Pub: Sri Purushottamananda Trust, Vasishtha Guha, P.O. Gular Dogi, Tehri Garhwal, U.P. pp275, 1994.

This is the saga of a hauntingly beautiful life, lived in sublime simplicity, serenity and surrender at the lotus feet of the Divine. It wafts in mysteriously like the murmuring song of the boatman, absorbed in plying his rivercraft across the Ganga and singing of Life; fragile and at once eternal; a saga of those who sit in repose at the threshold between two worlds, whose language is silence.

It is the diary or jottings of an aspirant, Swāmy Purushottamanandaji Maharaj who understood the fabric of life by completely submitting to it in profound adoration. Worship was his mode of worship.

He was born in 1879 at Tiruvalla, (in the then Travancore State), an ancient temple town dedicated to Sri Vallabha or

Sri Vishnu. He was named Neelakantha and affectionately called 'Bhakta' by his master and mentor Swāmy Nirmalananda, head of Ramakrishna Mission, Bangalore.

Dreams of a lucrative career crashed and his young world crumbled, when merely in teens he was struck with painful crippling paralysis. "He creates misfortunes and calamities for those who avidly wish to worship Him. May calamities befall us eternally" was Kunti Devi's prayer (p. 19). He began to learn to depend upon the "dependable", deriving strength, courage and fearlessness from it. "Is not my strength that of the Lord"? (p. 126).

He took *mantra diksha* from Swāmy Brahmananda (Rakhal). In 1923 he was initiated into *sannyās* by Swāmy Shivananda the then President, R.K. Mission, Belur. All three masters were direct disciples of Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahansa.

He visited Badri, Kedār, Yamunōthri, Gangōthri, Amarnath and Pashupatināth. He recounts poignant scenes of Durga Pūja at Calcutta. Kāshi, he says is not only a place for liberation but also devotion.

In Swargāshram while contemplating in a forest he is seized with a sense of total identity, *sarvam vishnu mayam* and regards that as the beginning of his spiritual journey. In 1928 he reaches Vasishtha Guha on the banks of the Ganga surrounded on three sides by forests. He goes into the meditation of *guhāyām nihitam tatvam*: the supreme truth hidden in the heart cave.

Sri J. Padmanābha Iyer has rendered the English translation from the original Malayalam, keeping the mood and tempo intact and alive.

— Mālu Mangalorkar.

**SOME MOMENTS WITH THE MASTER: Spiritual Dialogues With the Sufi Saint, Sai Rochaldas Sahib:** Ed. by Dr. R.M. Hari. Pub: H.M. Damodar, ShantiNagar, Ulhasnagar 421003. Maharashtra. pp449, Rs. 190, 1995.

In 1948 shortly after partition, a host of refugees came and settled down at Kalyan near Bombay. Among these was the eminent Sufi Saint Sai Rochaldas Sahib and his family. He was a qualified physician, a disciple of Sai Hazrat Qutab Ali Shah and had gained considerable renown in Sind both as a physician as well as for his saintliness of a high order. He displayed divine love — "Ishq haqiqi" in all aspects of his multifaceted life.

Breaking his self-imposed silence of several years he responded to the spiritual needs of his uprooted people, living in the primitive conditions of refugee camps at Shanti Nagar, by spreading love and spiritual guidance. This he did by holding regular satsangs where, by using simple language and drawing on his own rich experience, he dealt with a wide range of topics covering diverse aspects of spiritual activity — self-surrender, satguru, yoga, holy word, devotion, how to attain renunciation and non-attachment, the nature of mind and self-realisation. According to him the easiest of all methods to root out the ego was to serve others. "The Lord may come and pour his nectar into the hands of the seeker but if the jiva (seeker) has not learnt to hold it in his hands it

slips through. To receive, and to hold nectar one must make the heart's receptacle pure".

This record of dialogues between the master and his sangat, for the last nine years of his life, edited ably by his eldest son and spiritual successor Dr.R.M.Hari is valuable and eminently interesting. What makes it noteworthy is that throughout the entire record there runs the golden thread of a great love that, to the Sufis, was an important component of all spiritual endeavour.

— Prēmā Rāo.

THE SOUL: AN OWNER'S MANUAL: by George Jaidar.  
Pub: Paragon House, 370, Lexington Av, NY 10017. pp  
142, \$18.75, 1995.

All of us who have ever experienced moments of an inexplicable feeling of hollowness which comes with the attainment of material success know what George Jaidar calls the 'awareness of the yearning' for something more. In the first part of *The Soul: An Owner's Manual* he traces in cultural and psychological terms, with revealing insight and breathtaking clarity, not to mention a refreshing lack of pseudo technical jargon, how the 'Yearning' is the central impetus that leads us to the pinnacle of material success and then beyond it to the wish for something more, both as a society and as individuals. The acknowledgement of this central 'Emptiness' at the zenith of success as defined by society, leads to a great 'Despair'.

'Embracing Despair' says Jaidar, speaking as one who has experienced the revelation, is the gateway for an adventurous journey toward the Life of Fullness. Completely contra intuitive, embracing the despair is to acknowledge that 'my life is not working', a very disturbing life position. However, this is the start of the journey towards a life that transcends Despair. This is the Second Journey, for which the Life of Survival, the First Journey, is only a preparation. The intellect or any other tool that has served well in the First Journey will serve nothing for the Second Journey, and in my own experience the realization that I am actually as helpless as a baby where it really matters was the most destructive illusion-shattering experience, yet cleansing when I stopped resisting the idea. Once shed of our illusions of control, in the journey to fullness (Arete or excellence, denoting the 'Highest'), there is constant guidance available. The Source, which is always calling to us, and being revealed to us through what Jaidar calls the Umbilicum Process, is a support system to one who in abandonment has become strong in his defencelessness. This is in the best traditions of the Sufi or Christian mystics who discover power in the darkest hour of hopelessness. After leading the open minded sceptic thus far without demanding more than that he listens without condemning, Jaidar advocates discovering, each individual for himself, the presence of the Source as a tangible and real force in Life. Sinking into the sureness of the Source is a realization that has to be experienced but it is very much within the grasp of every individual who has felt the 'Emptiness'.

The four steps in the Practice of the Life of Fullness as given by Jaidar, amply bear out the above declaration. All it requires is the awareness of the Yearning and a willingness

to be a 'courageous fool with spirit'. Make no mistake, it requires tremendous courage to undertake the Second Journey, leaving behind all that is familiar and entering No Man's Land where often you will not know (the Way) but will trust to knowing. This is "more like going on a safari. You will need a guide, not to take the journey or to lecture you about it but rather to help prepare and enable you to make the journey yourself". The four steps are guidelines, rules of the thumb to make you aware and more able to participate in the unfolding of the Second Journey; not a cut and dried method to penetrate the mystery of the Creative Unknown. They are detailed with the utmost clarity and provide a clear agenda for anyone who has the courage to follow their intuitive knowing into the most satisfying, rewarding and ultimately meaningful undertaking of one's life.

All Masters — be it Ramana or Ānanda Moyi Mā have spoken of the 'Inner Guide', who leads us step by step to the 'Ultimate Union' as Jaidar calls it, "if only we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear". Echoes of the experience, hoary and yet ever new are heard from George Jaidar in this book that demands no leap of faith or abandonment of the known, just the simple yet ever powerful sharing of a revelation that rings with the clarity of experience.

The First Journey culminates in the realization that 'something's missing', the Second will lead to the place where there is nothing to realize and nothing to let go of. *The Soul: An Owners Manual* is an excellent handbook for the rational, inquiring mind that seeks answers for Living and does not delight in merely finding the Way out of the Darkness.

— Rajeshwari.R.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI: by A.R.Natarajan & Dr.Sarada.  
pp.58, Rs.25, 1996.

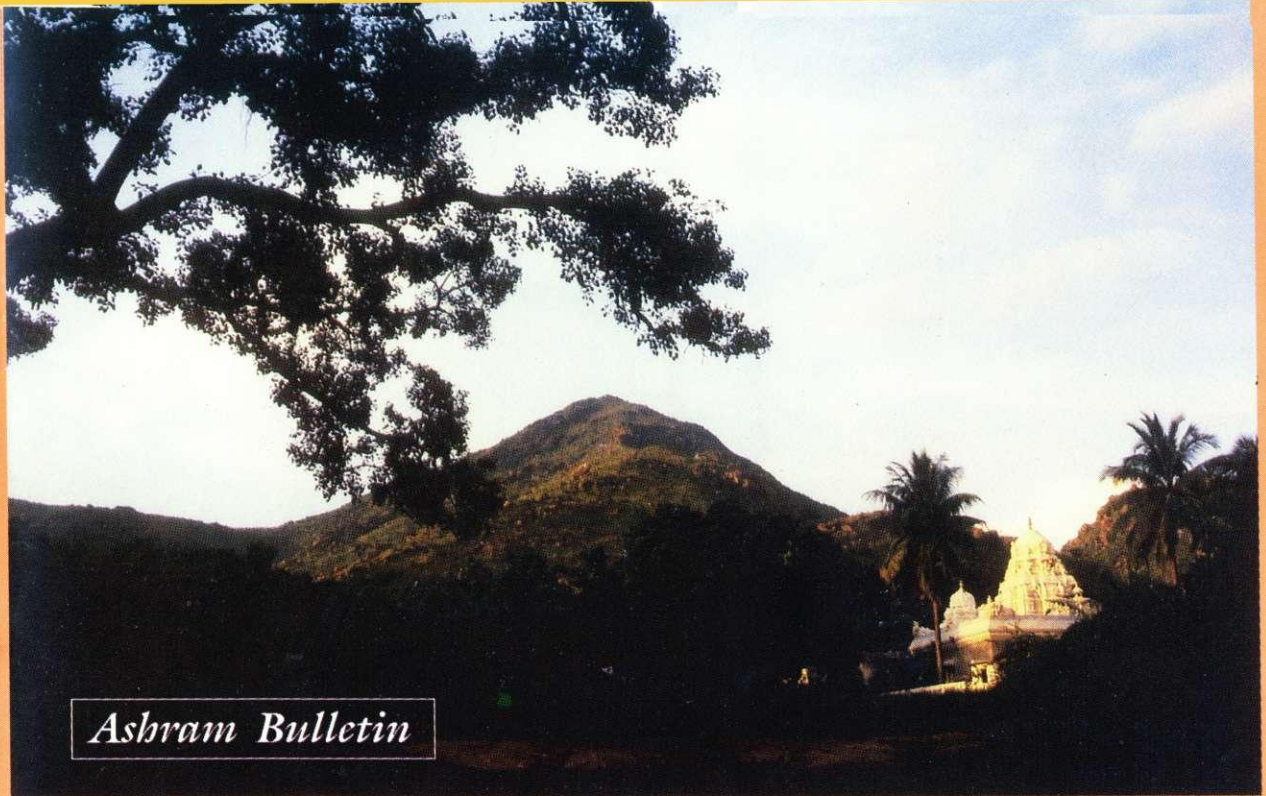
RAMANA MAHARSHI ANSWERS 100 QUESTIONS: A  
Centenary of Enlightenment Publication. pp.27, Rs.20.  
Both published by RMCL, Bangalore 560003.

ADVENT CENTENARY SOUVENIRS (English, Tamil &  
Telugu) : pp. 252, 166, 162 respectively. Pub: Sri  
Ramanasramam.

KNOW THYSELF (Rs.150), SATVIC FOOD AND  
HEALTH (Rs.35), TEN STEPS TO KESAVA (Rs.150),  
SATVIC STORIES (Rs.30), PRASHANTI GUIDE  
(Rs.50), SATHYA SAI CHALEESA (Rs.15), SAI MY  
DIVINE BELOVED (Rs.50), DIVINE LEELAS OF SRI  
SATHYA SAI BABA (Rs.90), SAI SANDESH (Rs.50),  
70 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON PRACTICAL  
SPIRITUALITY (Rs.90), SAI BABA GITA (Rs.180),  
GOD DESCENDS ON EARTH (Rs.60), GOD AND HIS  
GOSPEL (Rs.120), THE PROPHECY (Rs.120), NARA-  
NARAYANA GUFU-III (Rs.20), SELF-REALIZATION  
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515134, A.P.

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*Ashram Bulletin*

## **Advent Centenary Celebrations**



The celebrations in commemoration of the historic event of Sri Bhagavan's arrival at Arunachala on September 1, 1896, were organised on a big scale. The elaborate programmes chalked out for a two-day celebration — on the 31st August and 1st September 1996 — were meticulously carried out, to the last detail. The proceedings comprising rituals, devotional music, classical music and spiritual discourses were witnessed by a large gathering of devotees and visitors.

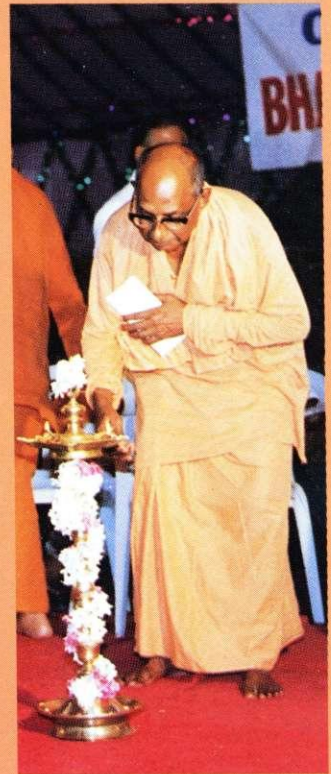
The celebrations commenced at one on the afternoon of 31st August. Some programmes were also gone through, prior to the formal opening ceremony.

*Chandi Homam* performed on the morning of August 18 was the prelude to the entire celebration. *Yajurveda Ghana Parayanam* was done by Sri Nagaraja Ghanapatigal, the Vedic Scholar, between August 26 and August 28. *Sri Ramana Sahasranama Homam* was performed on August 30. (This is the first occasion on which such a *homam* was performed at the Ashram).

The most memorable event in the programme was the devout pilgrimage to Arunachala undertaken by a group of seventy four devotees, under the leadership of Dennis Hartel (of Canada). They left Madurai on August 29, and travelling precisely on the route taken by Sri Bhagavan a

*continued on page 219*

**Swami Ramanananda** lighting the kuthuvilakku (*left*).  
**Swami Satchidananda** of Anandashram inaugurating the function (*right*).

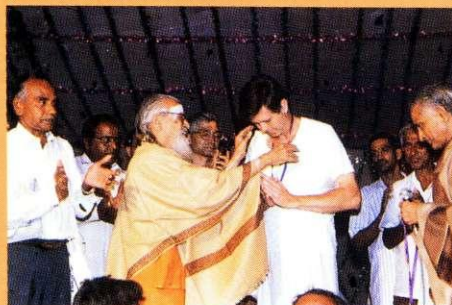


# Pujas, a Pilgrimage and other Performances



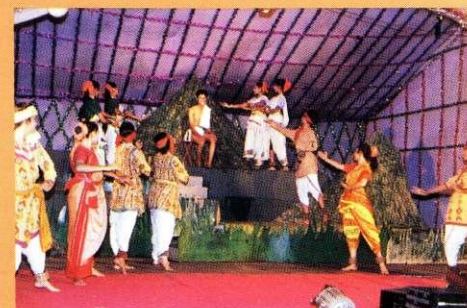
(Pictures at left): Pujas to Sri Bhagavan.

Swami Satchidananda of Anandashram and Yogi Ramsuratkumar, old guru-bhais, sharing a moment during the celebrations (right). Homam (far right).



The seventy-four yatri who followed in Bhagavan's footsteps, exactly re-enacting the Maharshi's journey from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai (far left). Swami Ramanananda felicitating Dennis Hartel, leader of the pilgrimage (left).

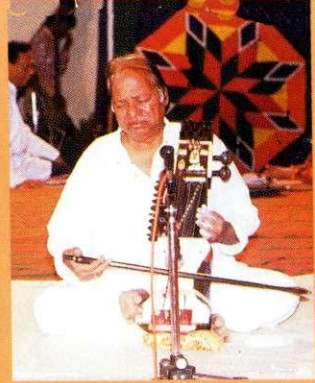
Right : Unveiling of plaque commemorating the arrival of Sri Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai railway station, courtesy Sri A.S. Krishnamoorthy, Chief Operations Manager, Southern Railway. Ramana ballet by RMCL, Bangalore (far right).



Advent Centenary Celebrations at Madras: concert by Smt. M.S. Subbalakshmi (far left). G.K. Moopanar, President, Tamil Manila Congress, being presented with a copy of Bhagavan's works by Swami Ramanananda (left).



# Inspired Music



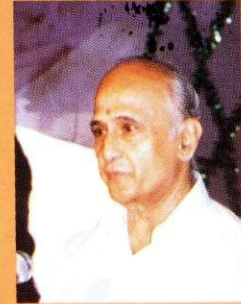
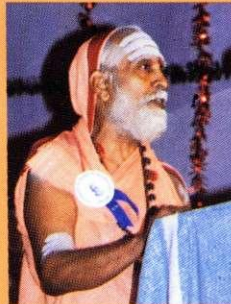
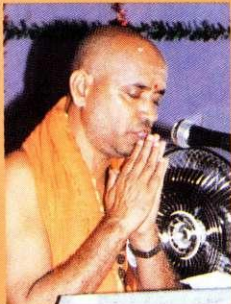
Clockwise (from left) : Dr. Ilaya Raja, Pandit Ram Narayan, Ramananjali (left to right : a member of the group, Dr. Sarada, Smt. Ambika, Smt. Sulochana Natarajan, H.K. Narayana), Madurai G.S. Mani, H.K. Narayana, Neyveli Santanagopalan.



# Captivating Talks

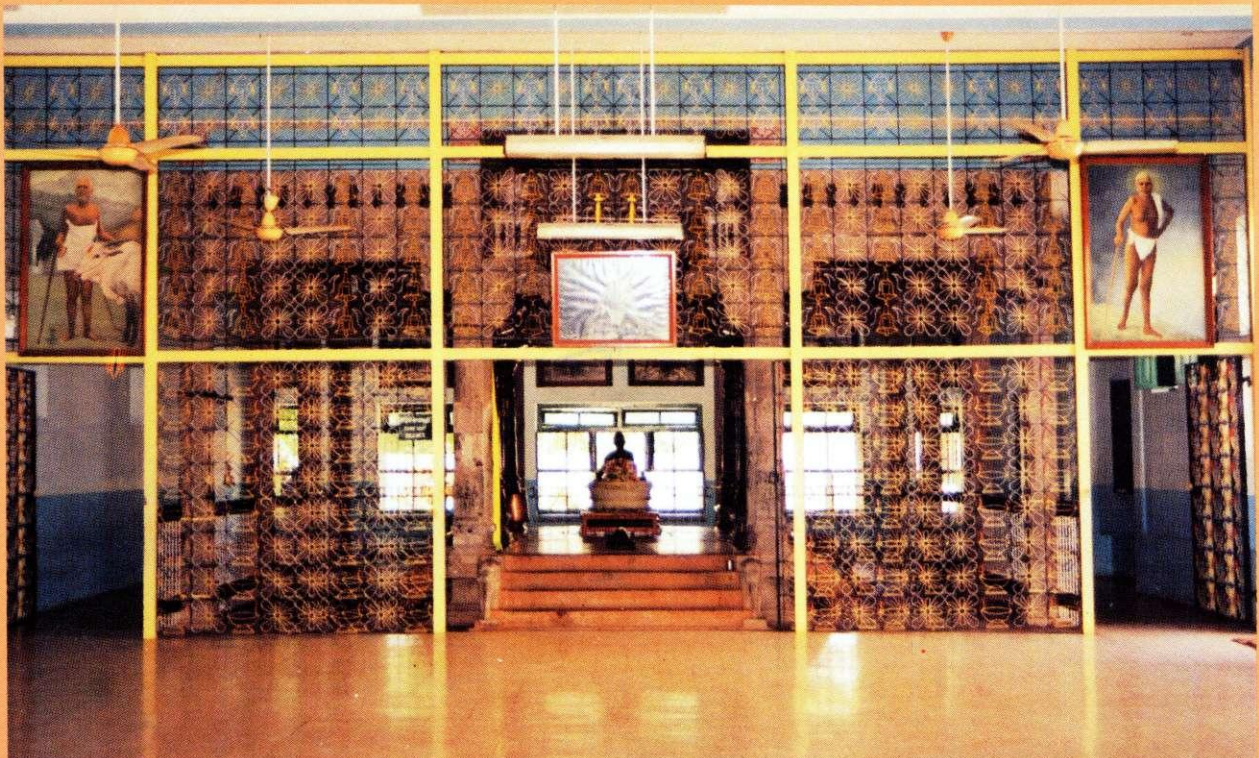


Left to right (top row) : V.S. Ramanan, A.R. Natarajan  
 (Middle row) : Swami Virajananda, Swami Shantananda, Nanagaru, V.S. Venkataraman, V. Dwaraknath Reddy,  
 (Bottom Row): Madhavan Unni, K. Sriram, Dr. Kala Rangaswami, Master Nome, Dr. Sarada.





***Bhagavan's samadhi shrine: Now graced with a neat granite railing and rounded off with a stone arch overhead (an original design feature, finally implemented); the decorative steel grill has been replaced by a low gate. Thanks to Sri V. Dwaraknath Reddy who contributed Rs.3.50 lakhs towards the expenses of this project.***



(continued from 218)

century ago (to the last detail), arrived at Arunachala on the morning of September 1. They thus re-enacted the sacred journey.

In the early hours of August 29 the inaugural recitation of *Sri Ramana Suprabhatam* (morning hymn to Sri Bhagavan composed for the occasion by Swami Shantananda of Vasishtha Guha) was gone through. In the afternoon Sri Ravi and Sri Sridhar rendered songs on Sri Bhagavan, accompanied by Srimati Hamsa Ramiah on the *veena*.

A programme of recitation of *Thevaram* songs in the Tamil *pann* style by Sri Mutiah Oduvar commenced on August 30 and continued for the rest of the days. The after-dinner programme of the day lasting for three hours was the presentation of six video films depicting episodes from the life of Sri Bhagavan. These have been prepared by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

On the 31st August, after the formal opening, the Ashram President, Sri V.S.Ramanan delivered his welcome speech. His speech was an expression of his deep devotion to Sri Bhagavan in a personal sense. In a higher sense it reflected the strong faith of all devotees in the continuous presence of Sri Bhagavan and the perennial flow of his grace. The President pointed out that it was only Sri Bhagavan's power and guidance which ensured the success of all activities at the Ashram. All did their work, but really they were mere puppets in the hands of the master.

He was followed by Swami Satchidananda of Anandashram. It was a refreshing reminder of the close connection always existing between the Ashram and Anandashram when Swamiji said that in coming to the Ashram he was only coming to his grandfather's house. For, Sri Bhagavan was always referred to by Mother Krishna Bai as Papa's Papa (Guru of their Guru, Swami Ramdas). He observed that Maharshi Ramana was a precious gift of God to humanity.

The other speakers of the day were: Swami Suddhanda, Dr. Sarada and Sri Ram Mohan. Sri H.K.Narayana, Madurai G.S.Mani and Neyveli Santana Gopalan gave recitals of Carnatic Music. The day's final event was a ballet entitled 'Arunachala Ramana'. The ballet produced by Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore was presented by Sri Ramana Nritya Kala Ranga.

The group of 74 devotees (under the leadership of Dennis Hartel) who made the trip from Madurai arrived at Tiruvannamalai Railway Station on the morning of September 1. They were accorded a warm reception by Swami Ramanananda, the Ashram President Sri V.S.Ramanan and Sri A.S.Krishnamoorthy, Chief Operations Manager, Southern Railway.

Prior to this, *Mahabhishekam* was performed at the Shrine of Lord Arunachaleswara in remembrance of Sri Bhagavan's first visit to the temple on 1-9-1896.

At the Ashram *Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudrabhisheka Japa* was done. This was followed by *mahabhishekam*, *puja* and *deeparadhana* to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam.

Further programmes of the day consisted of spiritual discourses and music concerts.

The speakers of the day were: Sri A.R.Natarajan, Sri N.S.Venkataraman, Master Nome, Swami Shantananda, Dennis Hartel, Sri V.Dwaraknath Reddy, Dr.(Smt) Kala Rangaswamy, Sri K.Sriram, Sri B.V.L.N.Raju (Nanagaru) and Swami Virajananda Saraswati.

Ashramites had the opportunity of meeting Padma Bhushan Pandit Ram Narain once again and listening to his recital of Hindustani Classical Music on the *sarangi*. This was followed by the Ramana Music programme given by the Ramananjali group, Bangalore.

The after-dinner programme, the finale to the entire proceedings, was the concert of devotional music by 'Isaignani' Dr. Ilayaraja and his party. This concert attracted a huge crowd of listeners.

## Celebration at Madras

Sri Ramana Vidya Trust, Ramana Kendra Trust and other devotees' groups in Madras organised a joint celebration on the 15th September. Sri G.K.Moopanar, President, Tamil Manila Congress was the chief guest and Dr. Radha Burnier, President, Theosophical Society delivered the keynote address. The highlight of the programme was a music concert by Dr. M.S. Subbalakshmi which lasted for about an hour. The concert hall at Narada Gana Sabha, Alwarpet, was packed to capacity.

On November 3, an elaborate function was organised as part of the celebrations, jointly by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Madras and Ramana devotees' groups of Madras. The programme was extensive with a good number of speeches. The proceedings were conducted at the premises of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Sri R.Venkataraman, former President of India presided over the evening session. He also spoke on the occasion. He released the 100th cassette brought out by the Ramananjali group (entitled Muruganar's *Ramana Puranam*). A concert by the Ramananjali group with orchestra, led by Srimathi Sulochana Natarajan, marked the end of the proceedings.

## Celebration at Mauritius

Mrs. Savitri Cuttaree organised a celebration of the centenary at her residence in Reduit, Mauritius.

This was an elaborate programme comprising *puja*, *nagaswaram* music and talks, as well as a drama depicting Sri Bhagavan's compassion for all, including animals.

Mauritius Radio and TV carried the news of the celebration in their programmes for September 1. Besides this there was also radio coverage of (part of) the celebrations.

### Commemorative Plaques at Railway Stations

Sri Bhagavan boarded the train at Madurai Railway Station on the 29th August, 1896 on his journey to Arunachala. However he arrived at Tiruvannamalai only after break of journey at Villupuram, Mambalapattu and Tirukoilur. Hence all these (five) railway stations have an association with the master.

Commemorative plaques referring to this connection have now been installed at all these railway stations. For this,

devotees feel highly thankful to the authorities of the Southern Railway, particularly to its Chief Operations Manager, Sri A.S. Krishnamoorthy.

### Release of Souvenirs

Three souvenirs prepared for the occasion have been released by the Ashram. The English souvenir was released on September 1. The Tamil and Telugu Souvenirs were released on October 21. (Vijayadasami day).

A Souvenir in Malayalam is also under preparation.

## Arunachala Yatra

By Dennis Hartel

At 7:30 p.m., on Thursday, August 29, 1996 seventy-four pilgrims boarded the Pandyan Express in Madurai for a three day journey which culminated at the inner *sanctum* of the Arunachala Temple in Tiruvannamalai.

All these pilgrims, earnest devotees of Sri Bhagavan, were observing the occasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the sage's advent at Arunachala. These devotees were inspired to travel the same route the youthful sage took one hundred years ago.

The pilgrims gathered in Madurai, travelling from all corners of India, the U. S. A. and Canada. The devotees of the Ramana Kendram in Madurai spent months meticulously working out every detail of the *yatra*. With the devoted assistance of officials especially Sri. A. S. Krishnamurthy of the Southern Railway, all the amenities, assistance and loving service we would have wanted to be extended to the lone Venkataraman one hundred years ago was lavishly showered on his children during this pilgrimage.

The description that follows will undoubtedly fail to recount this holy *yatra* as it was, in succeeding waves of devotion, experienced in the hearts and minds of each and every pilgrim. This can only outline some of the memorable events and scheduled programs.

After performing *puja* at the shrine in Ramana Mandiram, devotees began making their way to the railway station, which was less than a mile away.

The train left Madurai at 7:30 p.m. and was scheduled to reach Villupuram Junction at 3 a.m. Soon after boarding, the pilgrims were served meal boxes. Later, about the time when Venkataraman bought two wood apples to appease his hunger, slices of wood apples were distributed. In groups, the devotees spent most of the night singing and remembering the holy event they were now re-living.

By 3:30 a.m. the train reached Villupuram Junction, but unlike the boy, Venkataraman, we did not have to detrain. Our

car was detached and immediately attached to the Tirupati Express. Though we reached this railway station about the same time as the Maharshi did, we departed much earlier—at 4:30 a.m. Within half an hour we were getting down at the Mambalapattu Station. When the train pulled away we saw through the dark a huge 600-gallon water car that was left by an earlier train for our morning bath. Tea and biscuits were served and in the early morning light, led by a large, colourful banner, the pilgrims marched through the local village, the air reverberating with "Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva." Children woke and mothers and fathers left their dwellings to watch the joyous parade of devotees marching down the street, singing the *Marital Garland of Letters*, composed by the Maharshi for his devotees.

For the next eight kilometres we walked on a road that was often parallel and very near to the railway tracks. It is believed that the Maharshi walked alongside the tracks.

By 9 a.m. we reached the village of Mugaiyur. Here, breakfast and coffee were served. An overcast sky sheltered us from the warm morning sun and, like the welcomed breakfast, a pleasant breeze refreshed all the pilgrims.

Having briefly rested at the Mugaiyur Railway Station, we continued for another nine kilometres, walking on the service paths alongside the tracks. The pilgrims slowly spanned out over a kilometre, as some walked faster and others slower. A ridge of clouds covered us and extended for about one mile to our right. It was remarkable that, in spite of the brisk breeze blowing, the clouds remained fixed in place till about noon, when the devotees began arriving at the Tirukoilur Station.

Devotees met the pilgrims at the station with fresh, cool water and provided comfortable seats for them to rest. The van taxied the pilgrims to Kilur, about one mile distance, where a hall that had a number of adjoining rooms was rented for our accommodation. This place was just opposite Mutthukrishna Bhagavathar's house and adjacent to the Virateswara Temple.

After tea, the devotees were carried by van to the Araiyaninallur Temple. It was now evening. Earlier in the day elaborate flower garlands were brought from Sri Ramanasramam to adorn the sacred images of this ancient temple. *Puja* was performed in the shrines and the pilgrims gathered outside and sat facing the dim outline of the holy Arunachala Hill. Directly in front of them was a small monument dedicated to Tirugnanasambandhar. A stone-carved relief of the famous Sage's two feet topped off this monument. If you align your eyes at the level of these feet and look directly through the narrow space that separates them you will see the Arunachala Hill. It was designed in this manner to direct the sight to Arunachala. There is no marker on this monument indicating what it is, so the devotees proposed to have a stone engraving attached to it reading: "From this temple two 16-year-old Seers had *Arunachala Jyoti Darshan* — Tirugnanasambandhar over 1000 years ago and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi one hundred years ago, on 30-8-1896."

As the sun set, the pilgrims sang *Akshara Mana Malai* and then made their way across the mostly dry Pennar River bed about the same time of day the Maharshi did one hundred years ago. Arriving back at Kilur, the devotees had their meals and retired for the night.

On Saturday morning, August 31, all the devotees gathered in the house of Mutthukrishna Bhagavathar. There has been little change in its structure since Venkataraman visited and was lovingly served a meal by the mother of the house and pawned his earrings for cash. A week earlier, with the owner's permission, the front portion of the house was white-washed, a small pandal in front of the veranda was erected and other minor improvements were done at the expense of Sri Ramanasramam. Also, the Ashram installed a beautiful framed, glass-enclosed, coloured photo of Sri Bhagavan to remain as a permanent fixture in the central room of the house. *Arati* was performed in front of the photo while the devotees sang *Akshara Mana Malai*. All the pilgrims came out to the front of the house and a signboard was ceremoniously unveiled. The sign had a well-painted bust of Bhagavan and text describing the sage's connection with the residence.

The descendant of the drummer who gave his portion of food to the hungry Venkataraman was present and thrilled the pilgrims with his *nagaswaram* renditions at the Virateswara Temple, where the schedule of programs now continued.

The devotees squeezed into the inner *sanctum* and sat before Lord Virateswara. "Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva" resounded uninterruptedly for a long period while devotees meditated on Arunachala-Ramana in their hearts. Drums reverberated from the ancient stone walls of the temple, *nagaswaram* was played and all felt sanctified and elevated. Magnificent flower arrangements bedecked the image, *arati* was performed and *prasadam* distributed. The pilgrims then moved to the Mother's shrine. *Sri Lalita Sahasranama Stotram* was recited by the devotees and *puja* was performed. The whole temple united with the pilgrims' devotion

### Aradhana

The 47th anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan will be celebrated at the Ashram on Sunday the 4th May, 1997.

### Mahapuja

The Mahapuja of Sri Matrubhuteswara will be celebrated at the Ashram on Friday the 30th May, 1997.

and ascended in unison enveloping the atmosphere in a vibrant Divine Presence. That day's worship in the Virateswara Temple was a grand, spontaneous outpouring of devotion from the pilgrims and local participants alike.

After rest and tea, the pilgrims gathered in the stone *mantap* in front of the Virateswara Temple. A few distinguished devotees were scheduled to speak and modest loud speakers were set up. This meeting evolved into a warm, informal, family-like gathering where anyone who wished to share a few thoughts about Bhagavan and the pilgrimage, was given time. The sentiments expressed were replete with extreme cordiality, deep devotion and veneration to the Master. Devotees wept and laughed while listening to the heartfelt experiences of their fellow pilgrims, who by now had all been united as one inseparable "Arunachala Yatra Family."

The Maharshi spent the night prior to his arrival in Tiruvannamalai at the Tirukoilur Railway Station and, naturally, the pilgrims felt they should spend the night at the same place. Some of the devotees chose not to sleep at all that night and remained awake, remembering their Lord in so many ways. There was no tiredness or exhaustion as Bhagavan's grace was experienced to a high degree.

During the night we could overhear some of the conversations of devotees: "I don't think I ever contemplated Bhagavan and remembered Him day in and day out as we have done on this *yatra*." And another, with genuine sincerity, was heard to say, "Oh, I wish this *yatra* would never end."

This was the feeling of the pilgrims as the train pulled into the Tiruvannamalai Station at 6:30 a.m., on Sunday, September 1, 1996. "Arunachala Siva! Arunachala Siva!" resounded in a chorus from the pilgrims arriving by train and this was echoed back by a large group of devotees gathered to receive them. Sri V. S. Ramanan, Swami Ramanananda and others warmly embraced the pilgrims as devotion welled up and rained down from the eyes of the devotees. Ramana-Arunachala had reached his destination.

Amidst the chanting and emotion, Swami Ramanananda unveiled the engraved stone slab installed in the station, describing the sage's arrival one hundred years ago. The pilgrims, joined by many local devotees, gathered in a procession following the banner and marched to the

Arunachala Temple, chanting "Arunachala Siva!" Entering the temple we all offered ourselves to the Lord of Ramana, Sri Arunachaleswara and proceeded onwards to Sri Ramanasramam.

The pilgrims reached the Samadhi Hall at about 9 a.m., just after the completion of the *mahabhishekam* and *puja*. Wall to wall the hall was tightly packed with devotees, but the pilgrims, walking behind the banner, somehow entered and merged into the crowd, like a river merging into the ocean.

Later in the afternoon, following a short talk describing the *yatra* to the large gathering of assembled devotees, all the pilgrims were invited on to the stage and individually introduced themselves to the audience. Sri S. Guruswami presented a special commemorative gift to Sri. A.S. Krishnamurty of the Southern Railway. In addition to assisting the *yatra* organisers in every possible way, he was responsible for having commemorative stone engravings describing the Maharshi's journey installed at all the railway stations where the young sage alighted while in route to Arunachala. Sri V. S. Ramanan was formally honoured for his assistance and

The Ashram has complied with the request of some spiritual journals for a list of devotees. It is clarified that in doing so the Ashram has no other intention than that of helping the journals concerned in enlarging their circulation.

guidance in connection with the *yatra*. Sri V. S. Ramanan presented a commemorative coin and ribbon to Sri N. Somasundaram of the Madurai Ramana Kendra in recognition of his untiring service to devotees. Sri Somasundaram was requested to lead the pilgrims in the chanting of "Arunachala Siva," just as he had led them all throughout the pilgrimage.

What had transpired in a span of sixty hours will remain an unforgettable memory, kindling the flame of devotion and dedication in the hearts of all those blessed devotees who followed in spirit and word the sacred path to the holy hill of the beacon light.

### Publication of Rare Works in Tamil by the Ashram

We made an announcement in the last issue regarding the reprinting of some works by the Ashram. This is a major project which would take some time for completion. However progress has been made.

*Ribhu Gita* has since been published by the Ashram. *Tripura Rahasyam* as well as *Palliezuchikalum Tiruvembavaigalum* are scheduled for publication in June 1997.

Regarding the five works mentioned below, copies have been procured from the respective publishers. They are offered for sale by the Book Depot of the Ashram. The editions or renditions offered are not exactly those mentioned already (in our last issue). Due to practical problems we are in a position to offer such alternative editions only.

*Kaivalya Navaneetham*: Pocket size edition (text) is available. There is also an edition with paraphrase by Eesoora Satchidananda Swami.

*Jnana Vasistham*: Paraphrase (Part I) by Chinmayananda Jnana Desiga Swami

*Bhagavad Gita*: Translation of text by Sri Bhattanar (without paraphrase)

*Gitasara Talattu*: Paraphrase by Sri M. Ramaswamy of Rasipuram

*Vivekachudamani*: Translation by Ulakanatha Swamigal

### Opening of Ramana Shrine and Meditation Centre at Madras

For nearly two decades Ramana Kendra, Madras has been functioning at the residence of Sri B. Ananthaswamy. This has enabled the devotees to meet periodically and listen to spiritual discourses as well as other programmes.

A Shrine and Meditation Centre has since been built at 20, Alamelumangapuram, Mylapore. The project (costing Rs. 60 lakhs) has been financed solely by Sri Ananthaswamy and family members. The Centre was formally opened on December 13.

### Obituary

Readers of THE MOUNTAIN PATH who have gone through issues relating to earlier years would remember Sir George Trevelyan, as the author of some valuable contributions.

We regret to report that Sir George is no more. He died on February 9.

A profound scholar, Sir George taught many subjects ranging from literature to history, architecture, music, drama and crafts. He was the Warden of Attingham Park, the first Adult Education College in Britain.

His outstanding contribution was the setting up of the Wrekin Trust, an educational trust concerned with propagating spiritual ideals.

Sir George was a close acquaintance of Arthur Osborne, our Founder Editor.