

The

MOUNTAIN PATH

Jayanti Issue 1997

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1

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— Editor.

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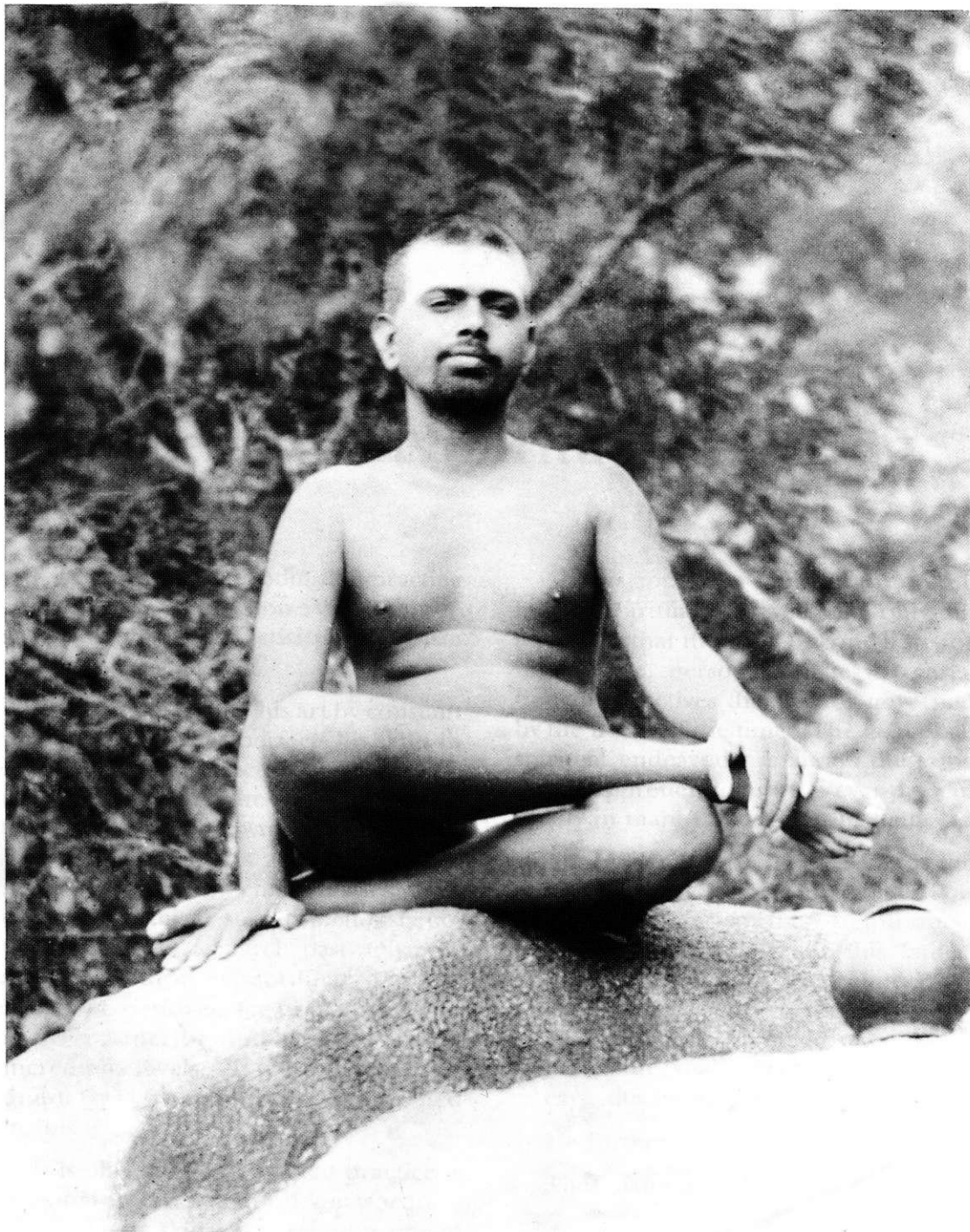
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



EDITORIAL

Intensity in Spiritual Practice

IT is a well known maxim that practice makes for perfection. Whatever be the field of human activity this truism would apply.

The painter refines his art by constant practice. The writer perfects his skills in like manner. The effects of rigorous practice in enhancing the performance of musicians is well known. Through incessant training soldiers achieve the flawless rhythm which characterises their exercises — this is so conspicuously noticeable during a march past. Olympic athletes perform extraordinary physical feats. The performance of circus artistes is even superior and reaches nearly incredible levels. Numerous instances drawn from common life could be cited in this manner.

It is obvious that repeated practice is essential in order that one may acquire and maintain skills in any chosen area of worldly activity.

All this applies in full measure to the field of spirituality as well. The only difference is that there is no scope here for innovations, personal fancies or variation in objectives dictated or governed by the needs of the times. The goal of all spiritual endeavours is always the same — the apprehension of the ever-present reality in man, the core of his being.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad*¹ records the episode of Lord Varuna and Bhrigu. This is of the highest spiritual significance. Bhrigu approaches Varuna, his father, and seeks instructions on Brahman.

Varuna instructs his son as follows:

Food, the vital forces, the eyes, the ears, the mind and speech.

He further adds:

That from which these things are

¹ *Bhrigu Valli*, Sections I to VI.

born, that by which these that are born live, that into which they completely go back on departing (from this world), try to know That. That is Brahman.

Bhrigu practised austerities (*tapas*). After doing *tapas* he came to the conclusion that food was Brahman. He did not stop with this. He again approached Varuna saying, "Revered Sir, teach me about Brahman". The father said, "Try to know Brahman through *tapas*; *tapas* is Brahman".

Bhrigu proceeded further with his *tapas* and realized that *prana* (the vital force) was indeed Brahman. Having come to this conclusion he again approached his father and asked for instructions on Brahman. Varuna again asked him to do *tapas*.

This rigorous spiritual exercise was continued in this manner thrice more — that is, till Bhrigu crossed the stages of *prana* (vital air), *manas* (mind), as well as *vijnana* (intellect) and, eventually, came to the stage of *ananda* (bliss).

Thus, proceeding on the basis of the definition by Varuna of the qualification of Brahman — its causality of the origination, sustentation and destruction of the universe — Bhrigu concluded that gross matter, vital air, mind and intellect cannot be the cause of the world. He discovered that *ananda* (Bliss) is Brahman.

The passage concludes with the following statement:

This is the esoteric knowledge (*vidya*)

of Bhrigu, son of Varuna. It is established in the highest *vyoman* (ether or space; Brahman). He who knows this is firmly established . . .

When it is said that the ultimate reality is Bliss it should be taken to mean the unexcellable Pure Bliss of the Self experienced by the knower of Brahman without interruption and without any effort whatever on his part.

The happiness derived by the ordinary man through perception of desirable objects or obtaining them is only a fraction or reflection of the Bliss of Brahman. Even the pure happiness experienced by the *jiva* during *sushupti* (dreamless sleep) persists only as a memory after waking up. It is not permanent. Therefore Brahman is even beyond the *anandamaya kosha* (sheath of bliss). All the five sheaths (*annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha* and *anandamaya kosha*) have to be discarded before the Self is experienced as Pure 'I'.

The great lesson to be derived from this episode is that through austerities — unwavering concentration of mind — one can eventually know the Truth. Persistent effort, however, is necessary.

The Self is the truth and the whole truth about man. For the man with the highest receptivity hearing this even once is enough to reach the highest goal. But for the average man repetition of the truth or contemplation on it is necessary. Relentless effort is therefore the key to success.

Sri Krishna says as follows on the need for practice:

Fix your thought on Me alone, centre your mind and reason on Me. Then, without doubt you will abide in Me.

If you cannot fix your mind steadily on Me, Oh Dhananjaya, then seek to reach Me by the *yoga* of constant practice (*abhyasayoga*)².

The *Sruti* says:

Even as a mirror stained by dust shines brightly when it has been cleared, so the embodied one when he has seen the (real) nature of the Self becomes integrated, of fulfilled purpose and freed from sorrow.³

Shankara says:

Long, constant practice of 'I am Brahman only' destroys all *vasanas* born of ignorance as an efficacious remedy (*rasayana*) eradicates a disease.⁴

There is not the least possibility of failure for the aspirant really intent on realisation. Divine aid is bound to step in and guide him even though he may commit mistakes.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

There was a great devotee who started to see Lord Jagannath, but not knowing the path to Puri, instead of going towards, went away from it. With an anxious heart, however, he asked everyone he met, about the road. Now, on his asking this, they all told him, "This is not the way, take that!" And so the pilgrim reached Puri at last, and had his wishes fulfilled. Thus, if one has the will, even if one be ignorant of the path, one is sure to find someone to point it out. One may err

at first, but in the end one is set on the right road.⁵

Intense yearning is a pre-requisite for God-realisation. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this by means of the following story:

A devotee asked his Guru, "Sir, how can we attain God?" The Guru took him to the sea and immersed him under water. After a short time he released him and asked him, "How did you feel?" The devotee replied, "I felt as though my last moment were come — the condition was desperate." Upon this the Guru said, "You shall see God when your yearning for Him will be as intense as your yearning for a breath of air just now."⁶

Bhagavan Sri Ramana's instructions point to the need for *vairagya* (dispassion) to be combined with *abhyasa* (practice). He says:

Abhyasa and *vairagya* are necessary. *Vairagya* is the absence of diffused thoughts; *abhyasa* is concentration on one thought only. The one is the positive and the other the negative aspect of meditation.⁷

Proper *vairagya* should end in realisation. Sri Maharshi illustrates this by the story of Chudala and Sikhidvaja.

² *Bhagavad Gita*. XII, 8-9.

³ *Svetasvatara Upanishad*. II, 14.

⁴ *Atma Bodha*, Verse 37.

⁵ *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.182, Mayavati Edn. (1981).

⁶ *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.185, Mayavati Edn. (1981).

⁷ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.247 (1994 Edn.).

(King Sikhidvaja and his queen Chudala received instructions from a sage simultaneously. Whereas the queen attained Self-realisation by following the instructions the king did not). The reasons are explained:

Sikhidvaja had *vairagya* even while ruling his kingdom and could have realised the Self if only he had pushed his *vairagya* to the point of killing the ego. He did not do it, but came to the forest, had a timetable of *tapas*, and yet did not improve even after eighteen years of *tapas*. He had made himself a victim of his own creation. Chudala advised him to give up the ego and realise the Self which he did and was liberated.

It is clear from Chudala's story that *vairagya* accompanied by ego is of no value, whereas all possessions in the absence of the ego do not matter.⁸

The need for intensity in spiritual effort is clear whatever be the method that one adopts. However, those who take to the method of Self-enquiry are placed in a specially advantageous position. This is because there is no scope here for

discursive arguments or discussion of metaphysical niceties. The attention being focussed solely on the Self, that is, the core of one's personality, the normal or natural concentration of the *sadhaka* is further augmented and rendered highly effective.

A legitimate question on *sadhana* is about the duration for which it should be continued. Maharshi answers this question in the following dialogue:

Devotee: How long should one practise?

Maharshi: Until the mind attains effortlessly its natural state of freedom from concepts, that is, till the sense of 'I' and 'mine' exists no longer.⁹

Sivaprakasam Pillai says:

Blessed be the Feet of the One [Sri Bhagavan] who says: "Do not slacken in Self-enquiry but continue it till you achieve Abidance in the Self."¹⁰

⁸ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.380, (1994 Edn.).

⁹ *Spiritual Instruction*.

¹⁰ *Sri Ramana Pada Malai*, Verse 16.

The milk of the cow in reality pervades the whole body of the animal through its blood, but you cannot milk it by squeezing the ears or the horns. You can get the milk only from the teats. Similarly, God pervades the universe, but you cannot see Him everywhere. He manifests Himself more readily in those sacred places which are charged with the spirituality of great souls who have done *tapas* and *sadhana* there for long years. In such spiritual centres, one's awareness is spontaneously and effortlessly awakened to greater intensity and becomes conditioned to concentrated *sadhana*.

— **Sri Ramakrishna.**

Na karmana na

(A passage from the *Veda*)

Translation by A.W. Chadwick

We present below the translation of a passage from the Maha Narayana Upanishad in praise of the Self-realised sage, commencing with the words Na karmana na. This used to be chanted before Sri Bhagavan at the end of Veda Parayana. These moments had a special solemnity; all those assembled, including the priests who did the chanting, used to stand up. At the end, all did a full prostration to Sri Bhagavan.

The practice still continues at the Samadhi Shrine of Sri Bhagavan.

At the request of Alan Chadwick Sri Bhagavan perused his translation of the passage and made corrections as well.

'Tis not by means of action immortality is gained,
 Nor even yet by offspring, nor possession of much gold,
 But by renunciation by some it is attained,
 The sages who their senses have all thoroughly controlled
 Attain that Sat of which high heaven's supremacy is less,
 Which ever doth within the heart its radiance unfold.
 The adepts by renunciation and one-pointedness
 Who have become both pure in heart and who have also known
 The certainty of that one Truth Vedanta doth profess,
 Attain Self-realization; when ignorance has flown
 From body and its cause *maya* they'll gain full liberty.
 That only as minute *akasa* what has eternal shone
 That is within the Lotus Heart, of every sorrow free,
 Of the Immaculate Supreme, the seat molecular,
 Within the body's inner core, should meditated be.
 He verily is Lord Supreme. He is exalted far
 Above the Primal Word, which is of Veda first and last;
 In which blends the Creative Cause, so merged in one they are.

How I Came to Bhagavan

By Major Chadwick

I HAVE been amused since my arrival in India to find that the general opinion here seems to be that all of us in the West live in a state of spiritual darkness; that knowledge of such things as yoga is only just beginning to penetrate Europe, and that a new book, however inferior, from the East (by which, I find, they mean only India) is acclaimed immediately as a new revelation. Of course this is not really the case. We have had our mystics who have written extensively on such subjects ever since the time of Christ though the special colour given to religion by Indian thought, it is true, has been a more recent phenomenon in Europe; but that has grown increasingly familiar during the last hundred years. I preface my remarks in this way so that the reader will be better able to understand how I, an ignorant Westerner, could have found my spiritual way to Tiruvannamalai and to the great saint whose earthly appearance is found there.

For many years I had been interested in mysticism, and in 1919 a friend of mine gave me a copy of *Bhagavad Gita*, which has been my constant companion ever since. For a long time too, I had prayed for a master, as I felt I had reached such a point in my meditation that only

the personal contact of Guru could carry me further on my road. This I was unable to find in the West; my prayers were in vain. There is a saying that when a pupil is ready the master will appear. I suppose that I was not ready.

One day while I was at a reception at Budapest, the strong conviction suddenly came to me that I must go to India. At the same time, I was unable to understand why this obvious decision had not come to me long ago. This happened in April 1934 and I planned that I would put my house in order and leave in the October of the following year. Though I had not the least idea where I should go except that I vaguely thought that the Theosophists were the right people to contact, and that perhaps I ought to start in Madras. They, however, refused to help me. They knew of no teacher and could not see their way to facilitate my search by allowing me to make Adyar my headquarters while I pursued my quest, even though I had become a member of their Society for the purpose of asking their help.

First published in the 1930's in *The Sunday Times*, Madras, and subsequently reproduced in January 1981 issue of *The Mountain Path*.

Ten months after I had made this momentous decision to go to India I was still just as ignorant as to my destination as originally. In fact, I had not sufficient money to make an extensive tour of India, staying at her most expensive hotels, and even should I do so, I saw no possible way to achieve my end.

So I reluctantly came to the conclusion that my voyage must be postponed. It was too much groping in the dark. Perhaps my faith had been tried enough, for shortly after I reached this decision, I came across the information I required in the strangest manner.

One day I was attending a lunch party in Spain given by a friend of mine, an English lady. While alive, her husband had been a famous politician who had been noted for his evangelical outlook and strict orthodoxy, the very last person to have approved of *A Search in Secret India* with its esoteric carvings. He would have considered such a book almost sacrilegious. However, when lunch was finished, my hostess picked up Paul Brunton's book and

handed it to me, telling me to take it away and read it, as she was sure that it would interest me.

We had never before discussed such subjects and it still remains a mystery to me why she should have chosen me from among her many guests as a fit person to read this particular book, a work I formerly believed would be an anathema to her.



Once I had read the book I knew that my prayers had been answered. I had no doubt that the Maharshi was the teacher for whom I had been searching for so long. My postponed plan to go to India was revived, and I sailed as originally intended, at the beginning of October, my destination being Tiruvannamalai near Madras.

I have since been specially asked to state what I have gained by my residence in Tiruvannamalai and all I can rather surprisingly reply is nothing. Maybe I have changed from one state of ignorance to another, but any state which believes in the intrinsic reality of the

objective world is a state of ignorance. The fact that intellectually one subscribes to the belief that all objective existence is *maya* means nothing unless one has experienced it for oneself actually and spiritually. I am unfortunately not in such a position. I have still to learn it for myself, which can only be done by Self-realisation. So until I realise that state I must continue to hold to my statement that I have obtained nothing.

I have learnt that Self-realisation is a question of discarding beliefs entirely, as a snake throws off its old skin. And I am in the constant hope that being in the presence of the Holy One will help me to do that more quickly than any other method. That at least is what I understand Him to teach. That love and peace permeate his very presence is true,

though perhaps for some that peace is more provocative of a divine discontent than the generally accepted tranquillity.

And so with constant hope in my breast I remain here, far from my home and friends. No doubt as I pursue my search my hope will increase and so I shall be forced to remain an exile. For although I know that His grace would follow me wherever I went, I should find it impossible to run away from the Wonder of the World. Anyway, if I did so, I should only be forced to come back.

Of himself, I hardly dare speak. He is so far greater than I could hope to express or explain, and the only way that he can be understood is through the spirit. Here the intellect will fail us entirely.

Reminiscences

By K.K. Nambiar

Bhagavan Ramana gave no initiation as such and had no disciples. In fact this was the main problem for many of the foreign visitors who came in search of a Sadguru. Having read Vedantic literature and eager to learn more about Eastern mysticism they came to Tiruvannamalai, to Bhagavan's Presence, hoping to get direct initiation and form a Guru-Sishya relationship, only to find that there was no such thing as formal initiation here. One of these visitors asked Bhagavan: "May I believe that there is nothing more to be known now, so far as the technique of *sadhana* is concerned, than that which has been written in your books from time to time? This question arises from the fact that in all other systems of *sadhana*, the Sadguru unfolds some secret technique of meditation to his disciple at the time of initiation or *diksha* as it is called."

Bhagavan: "There is nothing more to be known than what you find in the books. No secret technique. It is all an open secret in this system."

The Nature and Function of the Guru

By Arthur Osborne

MAN'S mind is poised between the Spirit and the outer world which reflects the Spirit. Turned inwards it receives intuitions of the Spirit; turned outwards it receives sense data of the manifested world.

That is how it should be, but in fact it is apt to become engrossed in the outer world according to a fictitious reality and forgetting that it is a manifestation of the Spirit. That leads to its forgetting the Truth of the Spirit and becoming obtuse on the inward side through which spiritual influence should flow. Therefore the Spirit, unable to penetrate directly through the inward side, manifests outwardly in order thus to attract the attention of the mind and turn it inwards. This outward manifestation is the Guru. The Tamil poet-saint Tayumanavar refers to the Guru as a decoy:

Eating and sleeping, suffering and enjoying, bearing a name and having a place of birth, it appeared as the Silent Guru, like a deer used to decoy other deer.

Understood thus, whatever serves to proclaim the reality of the Spirit to man and to turn his mind inwards can be called a Guru; and in this sense the Sage Dattatreya could say that he had many gurus.

Those rare persons who are already near to spiritual awakening can be illumined by the Inner Light acting directly with no outer agency, and for them, as the Maharshi said, no outer Guru is necessary. For those who come near to this, reminders coming from natural forces, creatures and episodes may spark the illumination, as Dattatreya indicated. For most people, however, the Guru takes the form of an outer individual — a deer used to decoy other deer.

This indicates the need for a Guru and shows what his function is. For anyone to whom the Golden Gates do not open spontaneously and for whom some spiritual discipline is necessary in order

to make him poor enough to pass through the eye of a needle, a Guru is necessary. And the function of the Guru is not primarily to teach him doctrine or theory. There is no doctrine or theory that cannot be learned from books; and yet a book does not normally act as a Guru. There was a time when doctrinal truths were normally kept secret or revealed only gradually, stage by stage. D.T. Suzuki quotes a Ch'an Master as saying: "Ask of your self, pursue your self, investigate within your self, and never let others tell you what it is, nor let it be explained in words"¹. Not only did he not give the disciple an explanation in words but he even forbade him to accept one if offered. This can be compared to an arithmetic master not telling his pupils the answers to their sums until they have worked them out. There are some modern arithmetic books in which the answers are given at the end, but still the pupils have to work the sums out; the answers serve only to check whether they have done the work rightly or not. There is no merit in knowing the answers if you have not done the work. So it is with the expositions of doctrinal theory so easily obtainable nowadays. The *Chandogya Upanishad* goes even farther than the Ch'an Master whom Suzuki quotes, for there the Guru gives the pupils a wrong explanation to see which of them will be taken in by it and which will see through it and come back for a correction.

It follows, then, that the function of the Guru is not to expound doctrine. He may do this incidentally, but the expositions can be obtained just as well from books. This is what the Maharshi meant by saying that he taught in silence: not

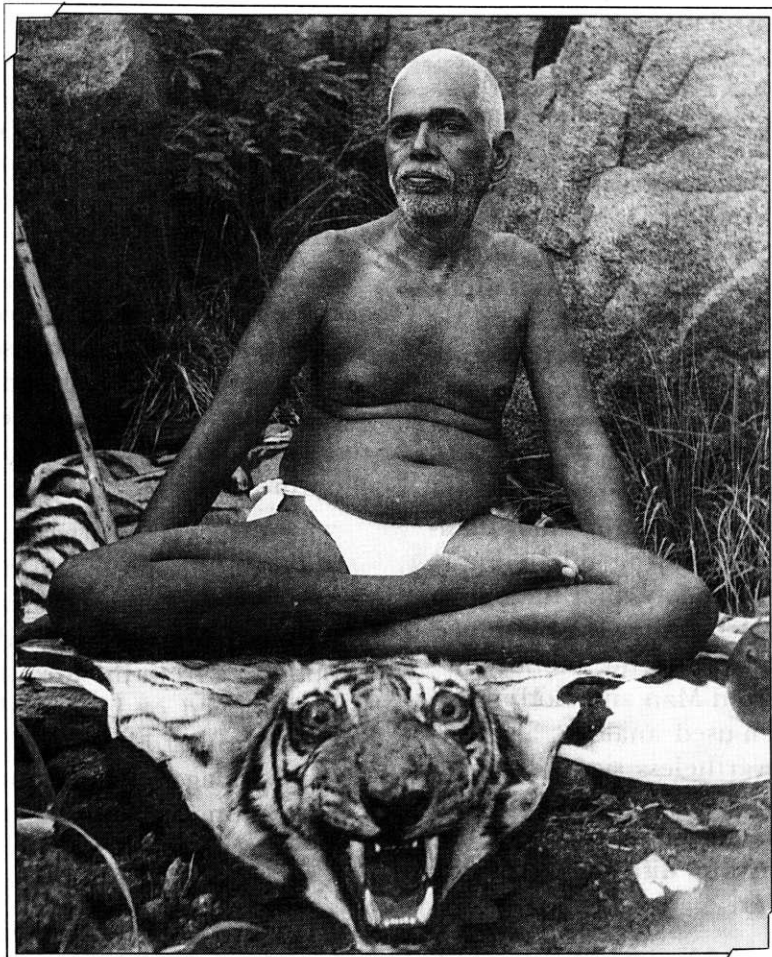
that he did not give expositions but that they were not his essential teaching. Some of his disciples never asked him any questions of doctrine at all — they knew all that before coming. In the compilations of questions and answers which his Ashram has published² it will be seen that most of the questions are asked by visitors or newcomers. The real function of the Guru is to awaken a spiritual current in you and turn you inwards, impelling you on towards liberation from the illusion of the ego-self into realization of universal Being.

This implies that the need for a Guru is not a specifically Hindu dogma and does not need to be illustrated by quotations from Hindu scriptures. It is a fact of nature as universal as physical parenthood. What is, perhaps, specifically Hindu is the unequivocal equating of the Guru with God. As the Maharshi said, "God, Guru, and Self are the same". This also, however, although concealed for contingent reasons in most religions, is a universal truth and is therefore capable of exposition outside the technical terminology of any religion.

Being *is*. Once the illusion of a separate individual 'me' is dissolved, this universal Being is felt as the sole reality of me and I call it 'Self'. So long, however, as the psychosomatic instrument appears to subsist as a real and separate entity I call it 'me' and regard pure Being as 'other', that is as 'God'. It is the same Being. It is only belief or disbelief

¹ *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, p. 320, Rider.

² *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, and *Day by Day with Bhagavan*.



in the reality of the illusory ego which makes pure Being appear to be God or Self. God or Self manifested outwardly in human form as a decoy to lead one back to the Formless Self is the Guru. Thus God, Guru and Self are One.

It is said in the Upanishads that he who knows Brahman is Brahman. For that matter everyone is, every cat and dog is, in the sense that there is no other than the One Self manifested in all beings. This is not pantheism. It does not

mean that the sum total of all beings added together makes up God but that God manifests as all beings without ever ceasing to be the universal Unmanifested Self. The nearest analogy (though all analogies are incomplete) is a dream, since all the dream creatures are manifestations of your mind, having no existence outside you, while you continue as you were, complete and unchanged, before, during and after the dream. Actually there never has been a doctrine of pantheism. The best definition of the

term would probably be: "A Western misinterpretation of Eastern doctrines".

The difference between the Guru or Realized Man and others is that the Guru is consciously identical with the Spirit, implying by the word 'consciously' not merely theoretical understanding but the living awareness or experience with which one knows that one is a man. Even so, saying that the Guru is no different from God does not mean that he has the power of God. There is an important distinction made by the Sufis according to which a Realized Man cannot say "I am God" but can say "I am not other-than-God". The former saying might imply the supreme blasphemy, that the ego is the Self; the latter denies the existence of the ego. Illustrating the identity between the Realized Man and God, there is another often-used analogy, also imperfect but nevertheless significant: he is identical as the water in a tumbler is with that of the Niagara Falls — of the same substance but differing vastly in scope and power.

It is not only in his state of being but functionally also that the Guru is held to be not other than God. Supreme Being, as God, is the Source, Father or Creator of the individual. But in becoming individualized the creature loses his awareness of identity. Then God materializes as Guru to lead him back to the Source or Father. This is the basis of the Christian doctrine of the Divinity of Christ and his identity with the Father. It is no mere historical accident that Christ was Divine and One with the Father but the expression of a profound truth. Christ, as he himself said, is the Way; and it is

God who is the way back to God. So it is with the Guru. Not only his state but his function is divine. As the Maharshi often said: "the Guru is One". In however many different forms he may appear, it is the one divine spirit of guidance wearing different masks.

This, of course, is giving its loftiest meaning to the term 'Guru', implying one poised in constant conscious identity with Universal Being and consciously performing a divine function. It was in this sense that the Maharshi always used the word. He says:

The Guru is one who at all times abides in the profound depths of the Self. He never sees any difference between himself and others and is quite free from the idea that he is the Enlightened or Liberated One while those around him are in darkness or the bondage of ignorance. His self-possession can never be shaken under any circumstances, and he is never perturbed".³

A Guru in this full and perfect sense is a very rare phenomenon. It follows therefore that many who function as gurus must have a lesser qualification. A guru may be simply one who has been initiated into that function as a priest has been ordained into the priesthood. A certain power and grace will flow through him, although he is not a realized man. Even though he is, the term 'realized' may mean something very different from the constant state of conscious identity which the Maharshi and his followers imply by the term; it may imply spasmodic realiza-

³ From *Spiritual Instruction*.

tion or merely the realization of some higher state of phenomenal being.

By the law of symbolism every person one comes in contact with reflects some possibility within oneself; one's relations with him reflect one's inner economy, so to speak, that is the ordering or disposition of one's potentialities. Just as the outer Guru in the full and perfect sense of the word reflects the inner Guru or Self in the Heart, so the incomplete or imperfect guru reflects various potentialities in the disciple. He will transmit the spirit of guidance, but it may come through tainted by his individual qualities, like water flowing through an unclean pipe. The individual strain may not greatly weaken or corrupt the spirit of guidance but it may pervert it completely. In the *Quran* Allah is spoken of as He who guides aright and He who guides astray. To one with an anthropomorphic conception of God as a benevolent old man this would sound blasphemous, but once one conceives of God as pure impersonal Being it becomes obvious that both the out-going and the incoming tendencies express Him. From the universal view-point of a man's totality of lives from the going-out into manifestation to the re-absorption into pure Being, like the simultaneous view of the whole course of a river seen from the air, the course of each lifetime fits into place; but from the point of view of the aspirant the wise choice of a Guru in this lifetime is of vital urgency.

This raises practical questions:—How to avoid the false guru who misguides? How to find a true guru? How to distinguish the true from the false? How to recognize whether and to what extent

a guru is potent for good? Or, whether or to what extent he is realized?

Unfortunately there is no guaranteed method. Things are not so easy. Knowledge of doctrinal theory is certainly no safeguard. It may afford protection against some errors but not against a false guru; there are cases of people with impeccable theoretical grounding being led astray. The best safeguard is inner purity and sincerity, since inner qualities are reflected outwardly in the persons with whom one is brought in contact. Impure forces cannot gain a footing unless there is some ally in the citadel to give them entrance. But inner purity and sincerity are not easy of attainment; one in whom they were perfect would no longer need a guru.

If one does not have the rare blessing of meeting a perfect Sage such as the Maharshi, it is better to let caution outweigh enthusiasm in accepting a guru, for the benefit that may accrue is less than the harm. On the side of benefit it is to be remembered that no one can lead others farther than he has gone himself, so that if the guide has not attained the Goal his disciples are not likely to either. On the other hand faults of character are no less infectious than physical diseases. That is why Hindu Sages warn aspirants so insistently to seek the company of saints and to avoid the impure. And to the influence of his guru, for good or bad, a man is susceptible as to none other, since the relationship is one which invites such influence.

Of course, a guru who has not attained the Supreme Goal may be wise and benevolent and a great aid to his disciples

within his limitations; only not all are: there is the danger. So flattering is it to be regarded as a guru that even an ego which has been severely disciplined may rise up again and develop faults such as arrogance and hypocrisy, craving flattery, shouting down opposition or criticism or accepting praise which does not belong to him, allowing himself to be treated as what he is not. That is the beginning of a decline which can be expected to grow worse and to infect his followers. It is no use taking a guru unless one has implicit faith in him, and one should be very wary in bestowing implicit faith.

People are caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, a trustworthy guru is no longer easy to find, and on the other hand they believe that they have no hope of spiritual development without a guru. I will repeat what I have said elsewhere about the position of such people:

What of the predicament of those who in our times seek an authorised and realized guru and do not find one? As they look around they perceive, not in one religion but all, an aridity in the channels where Grace once flowed. They hear strident voices proclaiming themselves gurus but would do well to remember Christ's prediction that there would be false Christs and false prophets to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect. Christ's saying that he who seeks will find is a universal law; but a law must have some technique, some means of action; what is this in an age when the former life-lines to those struggling in the turbulent waters of *samsara* have been withdrawn or have rotted and

become unfit to bear the weight of a man? Willing to follow an authorised and realized guru in any religion, they look around and do not see one.⁴

They must have implicit faith in God. The Guru, after all, is only the intermediary between the individual and God, between man's outward-turning mind and inner essence. If the submission and aspiration are strong enough the Grace will flow, even without a visible channel. I have said elsewhere:

There certainly are laws regulating the flow of Divine Grace, but the Grace is more than the law. Or it might be more accurate to say that a commonly applicable law is overridden by an emergency law. That guidance comes only through regular channels may be the commonly applicable law; but Divine Providence will not therefore leave men without succour in their time of need. To deny this possibility of overriding the regular law would be to attempt to tie the hands of God.⁵

One hears of more and more cases nowadays of the Spirit blowing where it listeth, of Grace and intuitional understanding descending directly on some aspirant without the mediation of an outer guru or the formalities previously held necessary. And while legalists may still try to bind men with the letter of the law, the Masters themselves bring about a relaxation. I quote from an earlier article:

⁴ *Guidance and Orthodoxy*, from *The Mountain Path*, October 1965.

⁵ *Ibid.*

If ours is a time of emergency when a relaxation has come about in the formerly rigid laws of orthodoxy, the first persons to see this and react to it would naturally be the guides themselves; and it is noticeable that all the prominent gurus of India from the time of Sri Ramakrishna onwards have diverged from the orthodox pattern⁶

One response to the peculiar needs of the time is the possibility of following a Guru who is no longer physically embodied. One case is Ramana Maharshi; another is Sai Baba;⁷ there may be others too. When the Maharshi was a youthful Sage on the sacred mountain of Arunachala he always refused to accept initiation.⁸ Being identical with its Source, he could not subordinate himself to the channels through which it flowed. When disciples gathered round he refused to designate himself a Guru, since for the Enlightened there can be no others and therefore no relationship; but he explained that from the point of view of the disciple the Guru-disciple relationship is a reality. He declared that there is no difference between Realization with a body and without. For him who is established in conscious Identity with Pure Being the body is only an appearance and nothing is either gained or lost by its dissolution. From this it follows that one who is a Guru when embodied can be a Guru equally when disembodied. When some disciples asked before his body's death what they could do if he left them without guidance he replied cryptically: "You attach too much importance to the body," indicating that

its disappearance would make no difference to the guidance.

The initiation that comes thus to his followers is independent of ritual, but it was in his lifetime also: a sustained, penetrating look, a dream or vision or just the inner certitude of having been taken up. Those who have been taken up by him since he left the body are in no less certainty as to his guidance than those who followed him already in his lifetime.

Formless initiation is one of the relaxations of orthodoxy that has come about in recent times. It had been used also by Sai Baba and Swami Nityananda;⁹ perhaps by others too. Sai Baba died as far back as 1918 and yet he too appears to his followers in dream and vision and guides and supports them.

The Guru is the Spirit of Guidance. Ultimately this is to be found within oneself. Whatever awakens it is acting as Guru. "The purpose of the outer Guru," the Maharshi said, "is to turn you inwards to the inner Guru." And yet in this regard also there is no easy formula, no guarantee against error, for just as the aspirant may be misled by false outer gurus reflecting undesirable qualities in himself, so he may dignify various inner urges with the name of "Guru". Constant vigilance and intelligent purity are necessary.

⁶ From *The Mountain Path*, October 1965.

⁷ For whom see *The Incredible Sai Baba*, by Arthur Osborne, Rider, London, and Orient Longmans, Calcutta.

⁸ See *Initiation Rejected*, by Nagamma, *The Mountain Path*, April 1965.

⁹ For an article on whom see, *The Mountain Path*, April 1965.

Moral Freedom : Its Meaning And Scope

By Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

I AM one of those who believe that it is not very wise for the philosopher or the metaphysician to welcome any new discovery in the field of science and exploit it for the purpose of what he might imagine as proving his conclusion. Moral freedom cannot be proved to be significant because some of the physicists today are inclined to believe that there is no strict determinism in the sub-atomic world. If moral freedom was significant before this discovery of the theory, it cannot become more significant today. The significance of moral freedom must be considered without too much reliance — I would underline the word “too much” — on what may happen in the exact sciences. For the logical difficulty would be this:

Was the concept of moral freedom non-significant before and has it become significant now? If tomorrow — or even at present — some physicists believe that the principle of indeterminacy does not mean the absence of determination, are we prepared to say that moral freedom is not a worthwhile concept? But I would welcome the help that we may derive

from such a theory, in order to expound the doctrine that we believe to be intrinsically true. I am reminded of Cassirer's words in this context. He, I believe, says: “Ethics should not be forced to build its nests in the gaps of physical causation”. But at the same time if a certain theory in physics removes the obstacle in the way, we would certainly welcome that step. So, it is more a negative view of some of the scientific discoveries that we must welcome rather than any positive help.

I am interested in understanding the meaning of freedom, moral freedom. Freedom certainly means absence of constraint. This is the irreducible minimum of the significance of the term ‘freedom’. While referring to the *mukta*, the liberated person, or the one who has realized perfection, a text of the Upanisad says:

Even so that serene one when he rises up from this body and reaches the highest light appears in his own form.

From *The Call Divine*, January 1971.

Such a person is the Supreme Person. There such a one moves about, laughing, playing, rejoicing with women, chariots or relations, not remembering the appendage of this body. As an animal is attached to a cart, so is life attached to this body.¹

Now, this is a crucial passage because here the Upanisad says that the liberated man may act in any way he likes, even in ways which are considered to be not only non-moral but immoral. He may court with women, enjoy riding in vehicles, and so on. He can laugh, he may sport, he may use chariots, he may keep the company of the people who are not respectable. Now fishing out this passage, critics of *Vedanta* say that *Vedanta* does not lay stress on morality. If the perfect man does not obey moral rules, it means that morality has not any significance for *Vedanta*. That is the criticism that has been made especially by some of the Orientalists of the West. Even Hume, the well known translator of the Upanishads, makes this criticism in his introduction.

Our reply is that these words should be taken in a figurative sense. They should not be interpreted literally. The meaning is that the realized one is above law, above moral rules. It does not mean that he can act in any immoral way. It means that he does not act under the pressure of any sense of 'ought'. Virtue becomes natural to him, that is what Sankara and others say. Virtue is not in his case some quality acquired through effort and preserved through conscious effort, but virtue is natural to him, even as fragrance is natural to a flower and is

not put into it artificially. Virtues like truth and non-violence are natural to the *jnani*, to the *mukta*. That is the meaning.

But I am trying to draw another implication from this text on this occasion. The question is: *What is freedom?*, *Who is free?* One who is not under the sense of any constraint, one who has no limitation, even the distinction that we make between good and evil, one who has gone beyond even good and evil, is perfectly free. Now from our empirical standpoint, so far as our worldly experience goes, whom do we call a free man? One who does not obey any rule, one who is erratic, and one whose conduct cannot be predicted and one who behaves as he feels, one who is not under any compulsion, one who is non-conformist — him we call free. This is the sub-moral level. In the sub-moral level we know of free people. We call them perfectly free in this empirical sense. They do not conform to any rule. They are not afraid of public opinion. They do not expect your approbation. They do not mind your condemnation. They are free, they are sub-moral. Similarly, those who have gone beyond the moral realm are also free. So, at the sub-moral level, there is freedom with which we are acquainted only too well, and the Upanisad makes use of this idea in order to indicate to us what perfect freedom is, what the nature is of the man who has gone beyond the realm of claims and counterclaims.

We are acquainted with pseudo-freedom; but the real freedom is there when

¹ *Chandogya Upanishad*. XII.3.

there is no other self at all; when there is no possibility of constraint, there you have perfect freedom. But in between the two extremes is the moral world. In the moral world you have freedom and also constraint, determination and freedom, because the moral world, I believe, is necessarily a world which is at conflict with itself, and which endeavours by stages to overcome the contradiction. The moral world is a world of claims and counter-claims, and therefore so long as we are bound to this world we have to say that there is this contradiction, and that it may be reconciled in the concept of self-determination. What does self-determination mean? Self-determination implies the identity of the determining self and the determined self. How can these be identical, unless you are specifying selfhood, one part of it determining the other part. and how without this division can you speak of self-determination? How can one and the same self be both the subject of determination and the object which is determined? So there is a contradiction, and that is why we believe that perfect freedom is possible only when one goes beyond the moral

realm. So long as there is a sense of 'ought' there cannot be freedom in the plenary sense of the term. At the lower level there is an 'is-ness' but there is no 'ought'-ness, and we say there is freedom. At the higher level one has gone beyond the sense of 'ought'. In between, in this middle region of morality, we have necessarily to face a contradiction. We might say, we have to say, that there is determinism as well as freedom. In the moral world there is necessarily 'ought'-ness. But when the 'ought'ness becomes 'is'-ness, we have perfect freedom. You do not pass moral judgement on infants, the insane and the disembodied spirits, because there is no real action there, there is no governance by a rule or even an attempt to be governed. That is why we say that the insane and the infants are exempted from the application of laws and rules. The *muktas* behave like children, the insane and the disembodied spirits. For them there is perfect freedom. But as long as we have not reached that goal we have to struggle. The moral realm is a world of struggle, and in this struggle we have necessarily to make compromises.

The happiness obtained on the cessation of desire is ever the same. Whatever may have been the varieties of desire that preceded it, the bliss had on the cessation of desire is the same. If a man is affected by some disease, you may ask him: 'What is the disease you are suffering from?' When he has recovered from the disease and regained his normal health, nobody can ask him: 'What is the health you are now having?' The reason is, though diseases may be many and various, health is ever one and the same.

— *Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swamigal.*

Sri Ramana, The Embodiment Of Humility

By Sri. C.V. Yogi

SOME years ago an ascetic had come to Tiruvannamalai. He used to give a pinch of ashes to those who went for his *darshan*. The story soon spread that the little pinch of ashes given by him was a panacea for all ills.

Humanity with all its achievements, is not yet free from the herd instinct. So large crowds soon flocked to the abode of the ascetic, whom people called Vibhootiswami, the saint of the holy ashes.

This Vibhootiswami had encamped at a distance of about two furlongs from Sri Ramanasramam, that is, still further away from the town, in a *mantapam* (a big hall supported by pillars and open on all the four sides), on Chengam Road. The people who went to Vibhootiswami, had necessarily to pass by Sri Ramanasramam. Many persons would therefore visit the *ashram*, while returning from Vibhootiswami's camp, and pay their obeisance to Sri Ramana. Consequently the number of visitors to the *ashram* suddenly increased. Sri Bhagavan was duly informed of the cause of these unusual crowds.

Sri Bhagavan used to leave the hall daily at 9-45 A.M., after reading the incoming post and again in the evening at 4-45 P.M., after going through the replies given to these letters. In those days, his knee joints used to get very stiff, so he had to massage them with oil. Without this lubrication, the joints refused to work and he could not even get down from the sofa. One day he forgot to massage his knees. So when he tried to get down, he could not succeed. Seeing that my eyes were fixed on the stiff knee joint, he said, "This body requires oiling just like a machine. This joint did not work because it was not oiled". With these words spoken with his usual charming smile, he began to massage the joint with oil. Just then a group of visitors on their return from Vibhootiswami, entered the hall to pay their respects to Sri Bhagavan. On seeing them Sri Ramana said to one of us: "What are they thinking of this Swami (meaning himself)? Perhaps they say to themselves: 'How can this Swami heal others when he cannot heal himself?'"

From *The Call Divine*, January 1958.

Sri Bhagavan made this remark with reference to Vibhootiswami only casually, but the sharp-witted among the hearers could grasp its hidden purport and they felt elated at their master's grand humility.

In 1908, Sri Ramana used to stay in Pachaianman Temple. There were many tamarind trees surrounding the temple. The Municipality gave to the highest bidder the monopoly to collect tamarind from these trees every year. That year a Muslim had got the monopoly.

As these trees gave an unusually rich yield, the contractor himself was guarding the trees from the monkeys, whom he drove away by throwing stones with a sling. As he wanted only to scare them away, he took care to see that they were not injured. But by some ill chance, a stone from his sling hit a monkey on its head so hard that it died on the spot. Immediately a large number of monkeys surrounded the dead monkey and began to wail and lament the death of their dear one. Then by way of a complaint, they took the dead monkey to Sri Bhagavan in the Pachaianman Temple.

These monkeys considered Sri Bhagavan as their friend and well-wisher because he often satisfactorily settled their internal disputes and made happy compromises between the rival groups and thus re-established peace and harmony among them. So, in this hour of grief, they resorted to him for consolation and redress, with the corpse as an irrefutable testimony.

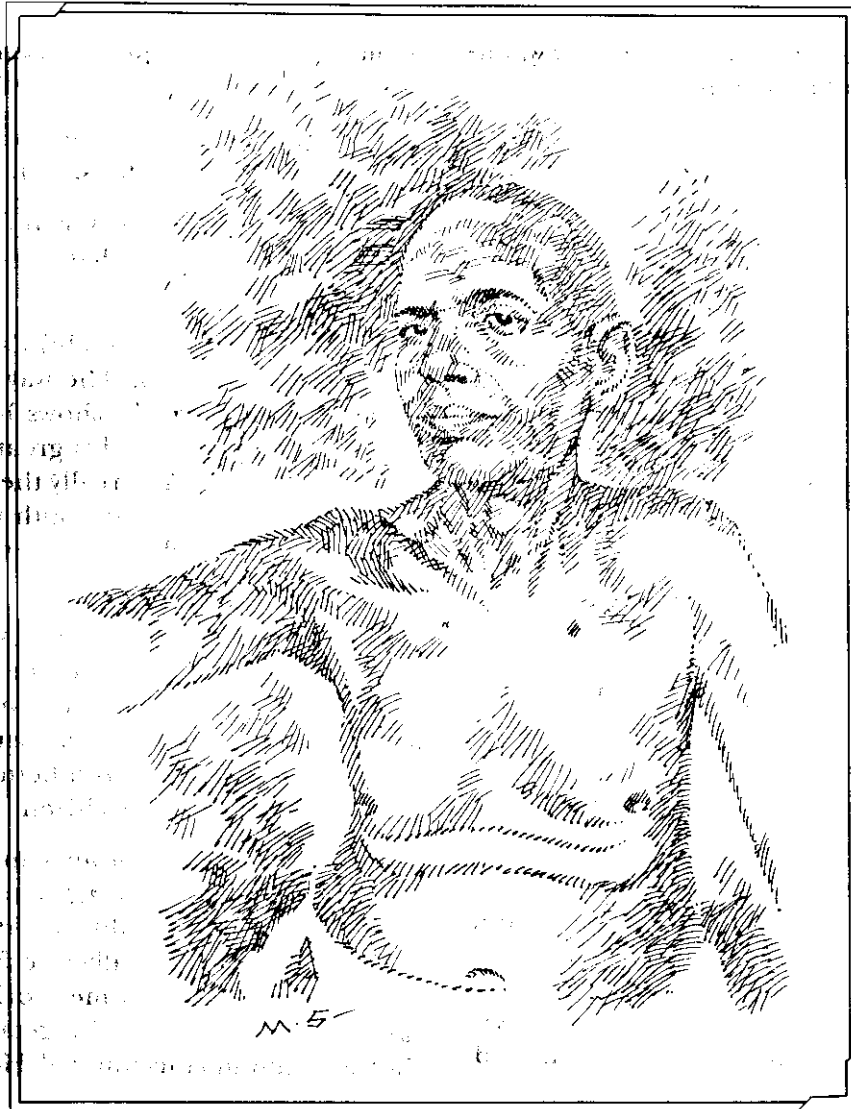
As soon as they came near Sri Ramana, they burst into bitter cries and tears. Sri

Bhagavan whose heart melted with pity for all creatures, could not bear their painful wail. Tears trickled down his cheeks. Gradually this hearty sympathy affected the monkeys who were also soothed. Then consoling the monkeys Sri Bhagavan said: "For everyone that is born death is inevitable. He at whose hands this monkey died will certainly meet with death one day. So, you need not grieve".

The monkeys were fully pacified at these words and they went away carrying the corpse with them.

Now it so happened that in two or three days, the Muslim contractor was bed-ridden with some serious malady. The story of the consolation given by Sri Bhagavan to the aggrieved monkeys spread from mouth to mouth, till it reached the home of the Muslim contractor. The members of his family were convinced that his sudden illness was due to the saint's curse. They therefore went to Pachaianman Temple and began to plead for Sri Ramana's pardon for the ailing contractor. They prayed to Sri Bhagavan as follows, "It is certain that your curse has hit him. We beseech you to be gracious enough to save him from death. Please deign to give us some *vibhooti*, so that we will apply it to his body and he will surely recover."

With a benign smile Sri Ramana replied: "You are mistaken. I never curse or bless anyone. I sent away the monkeys that came here, by telling them the simple truth that death inevitably occurs to all those who are born. Moreover I never give *vibhooti* to anyone. So please go home



and nurse the patient whom you have left all alone.”

But the Muslims were determined and they declared their resolve not to move without getting the *vibhooti*. So, just to free himself from them, Sri Ramana gave them a pinch of *vibhooti* from the burning fire. On receiving it their faces

beamed with joy. They then returned home, after expressing their hearty gratitude to the sage.

And it so came to pass that after the *vibhooti* was applied to the sick contractor, he began to recover and in a few days he rose from his bed.

What a world of difference between

the *vibhooti* given by the Vibhootiswami and that given by Sri Ramana Swami? And what sublime humility went with Sri Ramana's *vibhooti*?

A frenzied visionary youth once saw a dream, in which he was asked to follow the dictates of the following teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

Leaving aside all *dharmas*, surrender to Me, as your sole refuge.

In accordance with his own interpretation of this dream, he gave up a lucrative job and cherished the fond delusion that within six months Lord Krishna would shower His Grace on him and perform some miracle.

He fancied that he had totally surrendered himself to the Lord just because he had given up a comfortable income and invited unemployment with all its attendant ills.

The six months of eager expectation soon passed away, but no miracle took place! The shock of this disappointment had a very unhappy effect on his mind, which was consequently deranged. Some well-wishing friend directed him to Sri Ramanasramam. So he went to the *ashram* and no sooner he entered the hall and saw Sri Bhagavan, he bawled out, "Where is that Krishna, who has betrayed me? Show me, I want to behead him".

Sri Bhagavan's reaction to this outburst was his usual genial smile and concentrated gaze full of love and compassion for the youth, who was then sitting at some distance from him.

Some time passed in this superb silence. By then the morning breakfast

was over; an *ashramite* approached the young man and requested him to go to the dining hall to have his tiffin.

"I won't", he replied assertively, "unless Bhagavan himself asks me".

When Sri Bhagavan was informed of this talk, he asked: "Is that so? Will he go if I tell him"?

How simple like a child's was Sri Bhagavan's question? The way in which he spoke these words, shows how humble he was, in spite of his greatness and world-wide fame. And really the moment Sri Bhagavan asked the youth to go, he obeyed him meekly and went to the dining hall.

In the holy vicinity of Sri Bhagavan, the young man regained his mental equipoise in a short time. He returned home fully cured, resumed his old service and began to lead his life as a better householder and a worthier citizen.

Sri Bhagavan was never conscious of his greatness. He was widely known in all the four corners of the world for the reason that he was totally free from egoism. When he did some work of the *ashram* such as cutting of vegetables etc., he was totally unconventional. He regaled and enlightened the devotees working with him by talking as a friend to his chums. Whenever any devotee happened to meet Sri Bhagavan coming from the opposite direction, he would stop and stand aside by way of showing reverence to him and allow him to pass. At this, Sri Bhagavan would remark: "Why stop and stand aside? You could as well go".

In this manner, in all big and small

matters, Sri Bhagavan revealed through his own conduct, his superb humility, childlike simplicity and innocence.

From 1945 to 1947, I was running the Aruna Press at Bangalore, in which all the publications of Sri Ramanasramam in various languages were being printed. During this period, some differences arose between myself and the *ashram* brother in charge of publications. The tension went on increasing. Ultimately both of us decided to go to Sri Bhagavan to get our differences resolved.

The rest interval between 12-00 noon and 2-30 P.M. was chosen for going to Sri Bhagavan, so that we could be alone with him. We went to the hall and waited for his return. As he was coming up, he saw both of us waiting for him. So, without getting into the hall, he took his seat on the big stone couch lying outside the hall. Immediately my friend launched upon his case in a spirited manner. But soon the idea struck him that Sri Bhagavan was sitting on the uncomfortable stone couch. So he stopped in the middle of his plea, and with hands folded in a prayerful mood, he requested Sri Bhagavan to go into the hall, be seated on the sofa and then listen to his case. Sri Bhagavan dismissed his appeal with a smile saying, "What is wrong with this seat? Were there any soft bed and sofa, when I was up there (pointing to the Hill)? There was then only the bare stone as my seat as well as bed".

And he stuck on to the stone couch.

It was clear that our unseemly haste and over-anxiety to plead our cases, was responsible for causing this discomfort

to him. I felt very much uneasy on account of my friend's request being turned down. In a voice that betrayed my anguish, I spoke out: "No, Bhagavan no. That won't do. It is our earnest prayer that you shall not sit here in the hot sun. We will resume our talk only after you go into the hall and recline on the sofa there".

He only knew why he complied with the request this time and got up. But we felt that by rejecting our first request, he brought home to us the impropriety of our insistence on the soft sofa, because the hard stone couch and soft sofa were really the same to him. And by acceding to our second request, he gave us an elevating instance of his heart-felt love for his devotees and his inherent humility.

Thus he got up, went to the hall and reclined on the sofa. Both of us then placed before him our cases. He quietly listened to us and gave his verdict in his language of silence. He maintained complete silence throughout, which was combined with his charming smile. It was the just and happiest verdict that he gave, because as we emerged out of the hall, both of us had a spontaneous impulse to embrace each other warmly. Our hearts had changed, so we separated with the resolve to bury the past and treat each other with love and friendship. The silken ties with which Sri Bhagavan bound us then, have never snapped till this day.

In this manner, in trifling matters that happened for countless number of times at the *ashram*, one could see Sri Bhagavan's childlike simplicity and supreme humility.

Ramana Maharshi and Seshadriswami

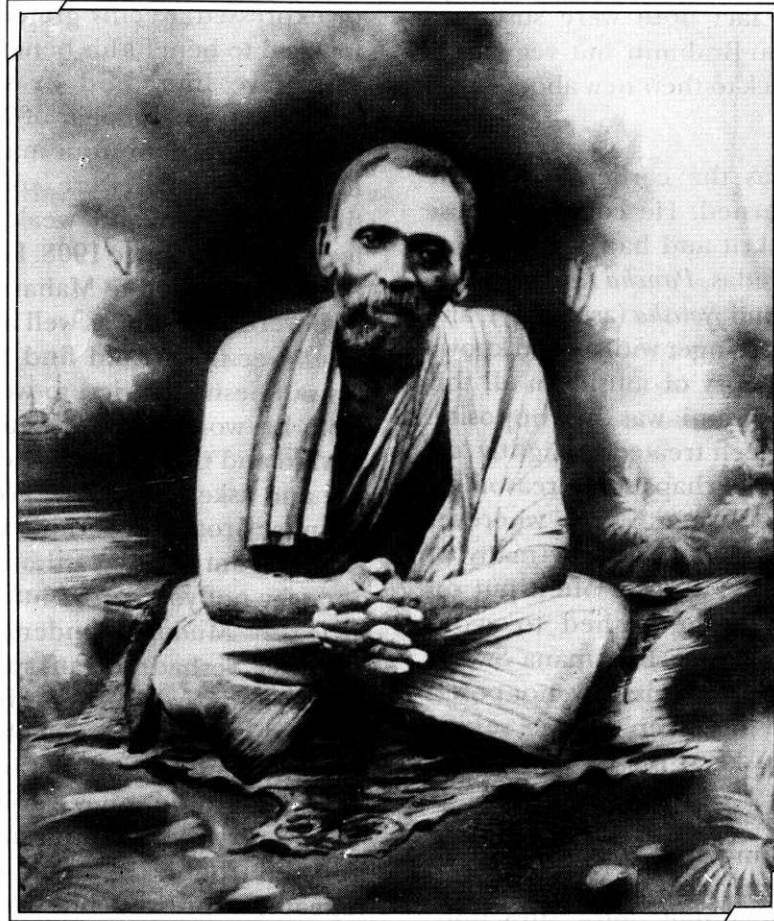
By B.V. Narasimha Swami

TIRUVANNAMALAI, it was often said, had two eyes by which the town was sanctified — Seshadriswami and Ramana Maharshi. The former left his body on 14th January 1929; and the extent of his popularity or influence was seen by the spontaneous concourse of crowds that came in their thousands to honour his remains. The living Maharshi is similarly honoured especially on the occasion of festivals like the Kartikai. It will be appropriate to note the points of contact between the two and the few striking features of similarity or difference between them in attitude and behaviour.

Seshadriswami was an Ashtasahasram Brahmin born in 1870 at Vazhur in the Wandawasi Taluk of the North Arcot District of Madras and brought up by his mother's uncle, the devout and learned scholar and *pouranika*, Kamakoti Sastriar, from whom (mainly through his mother Marakatammal) he derived his proficiency in, and attachment to, vocal music and puranic lore, especially the national epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. He had a very plastic and retentive memory. Even at the early age of fourteen he had sufficient mastery over important works in Sanskrit literature, and could express his thoughts in Sanskrit with ease. He was always earnest, and had intense devotion to the Goddess Kamakshi of

Kancheepuram. He lived there with his father in the ancestral home. Reciting the five hundred stanzas in Her praise known as *Mukapanchasati*, he used to go round Her shrine day and night. When he was about seventeen he was initiated into Sakti (or Bala) *mantra*, and carried on spiritual *sadhana* at dead of night alone in a cremation-ground adjoining a river and in the shrine of his family deity Periandavar. He appears to have had a vision of the Goddess Sakti and to have been deeply influenced thereby. He quickly lost all touch with domestic concerns and study, and took to wandering and performing *japa* of various *mantras* with deep concentration. He often spent whole nights in meditation. He was however treated roughly by all about him; so he left home and tried place after place. His choice fell on Tiruvannamalai ultimately to which he went in about 1890. His relations went there to recall him home, but in vain. He stuck on to Tiruvannamalai with hardly any break for about thirty-nine years. At the outset he roamed about apparently without aim, but aiming all the while at completing his *vairagya* (detachment) and

From *Self Realisation*, Pub: Sri Ramanasramam (1976).



mantrajapa. His *tapas* matured in about ten years and developed in him psychic powers such as telepathy, clairvoyance and prophecy.

The virtuous alone are capable of lasting friendship, says Epictetus. Those attached to the world are drawn away from their friends and hate sometimes replaces love. Two unattached souls like Ramana Maharshi and Seshadri Swami might well be expected to be good friends for ever. The expectation is fully borne out by facts of their lives.

They had many points in common. Both were Brahmin bachelors who with perfect *vairagya* left home at the age of seventeen or nineteen (just the critical period of maturity). Each had lost his father in boyhood itself. Both were keenly intelligent and had retentive memory. Both were natives of places away from Tiruvannamalai, but from an early age deeply devoted to Arunachala. Both were conservative till they left home; but soon after their arrival at Tiruvannamalai both gave up caste distinction in matters of

food, etc. In fact both were sustained mainly on non-Brahmin but vegetarian food. Both stuck to their new abode spontaneously.

Seshadri was the earlier arrival. He was highly learned. He could compose verses in Sanskrit and had a good command of the Vedas, *Pancha Kavyas*, grammar, prosody and *jyotisha* (astrology), and was an excellent singer with a good knowledge of the theory of music. In all this the younger Swami was his opposite. Seshadri had been treated as slightly 'off his mind', with perhaps some reason. In fact from his eighteenth year, wherever he went, he was regarded by many as somewhat insane; and he often put on that cloak when he wished to avoid crowds and be alone. Brahmana Swami never showed signs of insanity, nor posed as insane, but his deep silence served equally well to keep off indiscriminate crowds.

Seshadri found that the new arrival, Brahmana Swami, was a soul of rare worth who had transcended sense attraction, withdrawn his senses from external objects, and was deeply absorbed in *samadhi*; so Seshadri tried to extend what help he could to the junior to save him from the stone-throwing and pot-hurling imps. He met the junior again at Pavazhakunru and occasionally shared with him the food offered by the *mutt* at the foot of the hill and by visitors. When the junior moved to the hill Seshadri went up to see him and occasionally ate with him. He endeavoured to be unobtrusive in most of his activities; and his purpose, if any, was mostly undiscoverable. On some occasions, however, his aims were patent

or expressed. Keenly grateful by nature, he tried to benefit his benefactors, those who gave him food or shelter. One Subrahmanya Mudaliar of Tiruvarur, his mother, Alankarattammal, and wife, Kamakshiammal, were spending their time, attention and wealth mostly on feeding *sadhus* since 1908. For thirty years they offered food to Maharshi and those who were with him as well as to Seshadri whenever they could find him. True to his salt Seshadri tried to wean Mudaliar from his worldly activities and turn him inward and God-ward. So he went up the hill and asked Mudaliar, "You see, (my) younger brother is earning ten thousand rupees, I am earning a thousand rupees; and why not you earn a hundred rupees at least?" Mudaliar understood that by 'earning' Seshadri meant spiritual attainment, and by 'younger brother' the Maharshi; but he was deeply involved in his agrarian litigation, hoping to acquire more land and money. So he answered, "I have no time, Swami; I have my litigation and troubles to attend to." Seshadri repeatedly pressed him and "rebuked each dull delay", pointing out that the science of the Self was very easy to comprehend and that by neglecting it Mudaliar was incurring *Brahma hatya*, the mortal sin of slaying a Brahmana. Mudaliar got frightened and went to Maharshi in whom he had more faith, and reported this remark. "Well said," replied Maharshi, "You are indeed murdering Brahman by not understanding that you are Brahman."

Seshadri generally prevented people from approaching him. If, however, they were devotees of 'Ramanaswami', as he called the Maharshi, he discovered it at

once and gave them the needed help, encouragement or instruction.

Echammal, who daily fed Maharshi and his visitors fed Seshadri also whenever he went to her house. Whenever the latter met her returning home in the evening he would inquire whether she had offered food to Ramanaswami and escort her to her house. He was, as a rule, indisposed to give advice on matters spiritual; but, as in the case of the above Mudaliar he made an exception in her case also. When she asked "What are the *Mahavakyas* (cardinal Vedantic texts) and what is their import?" he lectured at length without reference to any book on that subject and made the audience wonder at the depth of his learning and spiritual insight. Again, when she was at her worship, he dropped in one day and asked her what she was adoring. "Only your portrait and Ramanaswami's" was her reply. "Why do you not practise *dhyana* (meditation)?" he asked. Though Echammal had already been taught meditation by a Guru and could spend a day or two in ecstatic trance with total loss of consciousness, she wished to get further instruction from this eminent saint and asked him how to practise *dhyana*. He sat down at once bolt upright in the middle of her small apartment with legs folded over each other and, keeping a level gaze, sank into *samadhi* immediately; and as he rose up from it asked her, "Do you see, Echammal?" He taught her many a truth, consoled her and fortified her mind when she lost her foster child, Sellammal.

Seshadri always advised people to stick to the particular path they had chosen for spiritual development. He was an

adept in *mantra sastra*, and by constant repetition of *mantras*, with due observance of the required conditions had obtained a vision (*darsan*) of his Goddess Kamakshi, Sakti, or Bala. He had practised numerous other *mantras* also and from his quiver he could pull out the particular *mantra* suitable to the particular person who approached him for initiation. When he found that those who approached him had already faith in Ramanaswami he would direct them to stick to him to the last, and not infrequently on such occasions he would either identify himself with Ramanaswami or point out that there was really no difference in serving either of the two.

Lakshmiammal (of Tiruchuzhi) had first visited Tiruvannamalai fifteen years previously, stayed with Echammal, and spent an entire week in serving Ramana Maharshi. At the end of the week she remarked to Echammal, "I have stayed a week and not yet seen Seshadriswami." The next day as she was going through the temple on her way to Skandasramam on the hill she found Seshadri (with whom it was child's play to read the thoughts of people, near or remote, and to avoid, or appear before them, just as he thought fit) at the temple, bowed before him, and thought within herself that she was not blessed enough to serve him. In reply to her unuttered thought he remarked: "What does it matter whether here (you serve me) or there (you serve Ramanaswami)?" Though he never asked anybody for anything, he would drop in off and on at the north-east *mantapam* in the Arunachala temple where several disciples of the Maharshi lived and begged their food and, after

remarking: "I suppose there are no others here (i.e. other than disciples of Maharshi)", he would sit and take his food. At other places he would scatter food; and if his host remarked, "Swami, this is *bhikshanna* (begged food); so no food should be thrown away," he would reply: "You see, I am not scattering any; I am only offering some of it to beings around me."

About 1914 he regularly visited the Virupaksha cave for some weeks and shared the food with Maharshi. One day, however, Kandaswami, the latter's attendant, found fault with him for scattering food and remarked, "If you do this I will not give you any more food." Seshadri who was very sensitive in such matters never again went up the hill for food. About this Palaniswami once remarked, "You see! Seshadri is not a wise man, not a *jnani*. He scattered and wasted food and when we expostulated with him about it, he stopped coming up here again." Seshadri never cared for good or bad remarks. But when Palaniswami's remark was mentioned to him, as it concerned his conduct towards Ramanasram, he defended his action by observing that one should not eat all the food placed before one, being surrounded as one is by other (presumably hungry) creatures, and quoted from *mantras* to show that *elementals, spirits, Yakshas, Rakshasas*, etc., abounded everywhere, usually unseen.

Somasundaraswami, a disciple of Maharshi, left him once, and was wavering in his mind as to where to go. In such a plight he waited for Seshadri at the temple. As soon as he came he looked at Somasundaram, read his thoughts, and

asked him to "go back to Ramana"; and when Somasundaram still hesitated and waited, Seshadri said emphatically, "Go, go, go at once to Ramana. Do not delay." So Somasundaram started off immediately and went back to Ramanaswami though it was midnight then.

A Sastri of Chidambaram, who was often visiting Maharshi and serving at the Asram, was one night at the temple. To assist his spiritual soaring he often resorted to the use of the stimulating drug *ganja (cannabis indica)*. Unfortunately, on this occasion, the drug used had evidently not been purified. Poor Sastri was therefore distressed to find that, instead of making him spiritual, the drug had made him carnal, for carnal thoughts now flooded his brain. Not knowing what to do, he went and prostrated before Seshadri who at once saw how matters stood, and remarked: "I told you to give up this drug habit, yet you have taken it." Seshadri had never given him that advice, but Maharshi had. So Sastri discovered that Seshadri was identifying himself with Maharshi.

When a Public Works contractor (A.V. Iyer) stood before Seshadri thinking of visiting Maharshi, Seshadri encouraged him by saying "*Darsan* of Maharshi thoroughly cleanses the mind of all impurity".

A very interesting scene between these two spiritual giants (Maharshi and Seshadri) was witnessed in 1908 by Vasudeva Sastri, a disciple of Maharshi. Seshadri went up to the Mango-Tree-Cave where Maharshi was and sat up gazing at him. A minute generally sufficed to enable him to read the thoughts and

nature of any individual. But, after long gazing at Maharshi, he pointed to Maharshi and remarked, "It is not clear what this person is thinking."

Maharshi however kept silent. Then Seshadri, expressing his own view, said: "If one worships Arunachala, He will grant salvation."

Maharshi: "Who is the person who worships and who the worshipped?"

Seshadri breaking into a loud laugh said, "That is just what is not clear."

Then Maharshi expounded at length the Advaitic realisation of Unity — of everything including God, the world and the individual souls. Seshadri patiently and quietly listened and at the end got up and said: "I cannot say anything; all this is dark to me. I at any rate worship." So saying he faced the crest of the hill Arunachala, then prostrated himself ten or fifteen times and went down. He was then evidently keen on maintaining a personality distinct from God as the very foundation of his worship.

But it would not be correct to suppose that Seshadriswami never cared for Advaitic realisation. He had on the other hand expressed that state pithily several times (after 1908) to Ramana's devotees. Once Echammal was getting *Bhagavad Gita* interpreted to her by a learned pandit at her house. Seshadri dropped in then once. The pandit, puffed up with the pride of learning, pointed to him and remarked concerning the difference between book knowledge and realisation of the Self, *jnana*: "See this man : not even after seven more births can he attain *jnana*." Seshadri put

up with the impertinence, stayed awhile, and departed remarking: "If, when you taste food you see who it is that tastes, then you have known Him (Brahman)."

Once a person named Narayanaswami found Seshadriswami near a house adjoining the Temple looking at a buffalo. The Iyer asked the Swami, "What is Swami looking at?" Seshadri answered: "I am looking at this." Iyer then asked, "Is it the buffalo Swami is looking at?" Then Seshadri turned to Narayanaswami and asked him (pointing to the buffalo): "Say what this is." The latter replied, "It is a buffalo."

"Is it a buffalo, a buffalo? You Buffalo! call it Brahman" was Seshadri's remark as he left the place.

His advice to Natanananda, when he tried to approach Maharshi, is given in a later chapter.

The high regard Seshadriswami had for, and his occasional identification of himself with, Ramana Maharshi, explain a curious observation which he once made to a clerk, T. V. Iyer, who was deeply attached to him and in whom he took much interest. Iyer regarded Maharshi also as a Guru. Once when Iyer was alone with Seshadri the latter, evidently to develop further Iyer's faith in his Guru (*gurubhakti*) which is absolutely essential for spiritual progress asked him: "Do you know there are three *lingas* (embodiments or visible representations) of God here (i.e., at Tiruvannamalai)?"

Iyer: I do not know three. One Linga is the Hill, I know only that.

Seshadri: No, no; you know all the three.

Iyer: No, Swami, pray tell me what the other two are.

Seshadri: But you know them.

Iyer: No, Swami.

Seshadri: One linga they call Ramanaswami.

Iyer: Yes, Swami; now I know the second. Pray which is the third?

Seshadri: You know it too.

Iyer: No, Swami; I do not.

Seshadri: The third linga they call Seshadri.

Iyer: That is you, Swami: is it not?

Seshadri: You know it.

Iyer: I did not.

Seshadri: Yes, it is I.

Before closing this narrative, the af-

fectionate relations between the two Swamis may be illustrated by reference to a dream. Students of psycho-analysis know that one's inmost thoughts are often brought to the surface in dreams. Maharshi related in March 1930 to his disciples that he had, a few days previously, met Seshadriswami in a dream. Seshadri (of the dream) was having a shave. Maharshi, went up and patted him on the back, saying "Hello". Seshadri looked up and, finding that it was Maharshi, got up and held him fast in embrace for many minutes.

When Seshadri attained Mahasamadhi and his body was about to be buried, Maharshi stood nearby for an hour witnessing the formalities of traditional interment, amidst a crowd of thousands of people and added to the impressiveness and sanctity of the proceedings by his hallowed presence.

GOD IS HERE

As long as a man feels that God is 'there', he is ignorant. But he attains knowledge when he feels that God is 'here'.

A man wanted a smoke. He went to a neighbour's house to light his charcoal. It was the dead of night and the household was asleep. After he had knocked a great deal, someone came down to open the door. At the sight of the man he asked, 'Hello! what is the matter'? The man replied: Can't you guess? You know how fond I am of smoking. I have come to light my charcoal'. The neighbour said: 'Ha! Ha! You are a fine man indeed! You took the trouble to come and do all this knocking at the door! Why, you have a lighted lantern in your hand'!

What a man seeks is very near him. Still he wanders about from place to place.

— *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Only he who knows it not knows it,
 He who knows it knows it not.
 Unknown by the wise,
 Known by the ignorant.

In whom it wakes to life,
 He knows it and finds immortality;
 Because he is it, manhood is his,
 Because he knows it, immortality. ⁴

The one Lord and inner Self of all living beings,
 He his one form expands in many ways.
 He who, the wise, sees himself dwelling in himself
 He alone, and no other, is eternally blessed.

Not by speech, not by thought,
 Not by sight do we apprehend him;
 "He is!" By this word is he apprehended,
 And not in any other way.

"He is!" thus may he be apprehended,
 So far as he is the reality of both;
 "He is!" who has thus apprehended him,
 To him his essential nature becomes manifest.

When all the suffering vanishes,
 Which finds a home in the human heart,
 Then he who is mortal becomes immortal,
 Here already he attains to Brahman.

When all fetters burst asunder
 That are woven around the human heart,
 Then he who is mortal becomes immortal,
 Thus far the doctrine extends. ⁵

Yet he who here recognises again
 All living beings in himself,
 And himself in everything that lives,
 He no longer is vexed by any.

⁴ *Kena Upanishad.* 11-12.

⁵ *Katha Upanishad.* 5. 12, 6. 12-15.

Here where the knowing Self
 Becomes all living beings:-
 How could error be, how pain,
 For him who thus beholds the unity? ⁶

The darkness vanishes, there is no longer day nor night;
 Neither being nor not-being,—blessed alone is he;
 He is the syllable Om, Savitar's beloved light,
 From him knowledge flowed forth in the beginning. ⁷

He who, his spirit purified by contemplation,
 Plunges into the *atman*, — what measureless blessedness he feels!
 That for the expression of which words are of no avail
 Must be experienced within in the inmost heart. ⁸

He who still craves for his desires and clings to them,
 Will through his desires be born here and there;
 He whose desires are laid to rest, whose Self is prepared,
 From him all desires vanish here below.

He who beholds that Loftiest and Deepest,
 For him the fetters of the heart break asunder,
 For him all doubts are solved,
 And his works become nothingness.

Like streams flow and disappear in the ocean,
 Abandoning name and form,
 So the wise, freed from name and form,
 Enter into that supreme divine spirit. ⁹

In the world's false show that has known no beginning,
 The soul slumbers; when it awakes,
 Then there wakes in it the Eternal,
 Beyond time and sleep and dreams. ¹⁰

⁶ *Isa Upanishad.* 6-7.

⁷ *Svetasvatara Upanishad.* 4. 18.

⁸ *Maitreyi Upanishad.* 6. 34.

⁹ *Mundaka Upanishad.* 3. 2 2, 2. 2. 8, 3. 2, 8.

¹⁰ *Mandukya Karika* 1. 16.

(The emancipated soul speaks)

That which as enjoyment, enjoyment's object,
And enjoyer knows the three states,
Distinct therefrom, O spectator,
Pure spirit I am ever blessed.

In me the universe had its origin.
In me alone does the All subsist,
In me it vanishes, this Brahman,
The timeless, it is I myself.

The smallest of the small I am, and none the less am I great,
I am the motley rich universe,
I am the Ancient, the spirit, the lord,
Altogether of gold I am, the blessed Manifestation.

Without hands or feet am I, yet infinitely powerful,
I see without eyes, hear without ears;
I am the wise, and beside me
None other is wise in endless years.

In all the Vedas I am to be known,
I am the fulfiller of the Vedas, learned in the Vedas,
Free from good and evil, imperishable,
Unbegotten am I, without body or sensation;
For me there is neither earth nor water,
Nor fire, nor yet wind or ether. ¹¹

The Characteristics of the Wise Man

On the basis of these and other passages we propose finally to attempt here to give a brief characterisation of those who have gained release.

The knowledge of that *atman* does not effect emancipation, but it is emancipation; for he who possesses it has found the existence of the universe as well as his own bodily and individual existence to be an illusion (*maya*). Everything else follows from this:

(1) The wise man is *akamayamana*. Every wish, craving, desire, all hope and fear have for him been destroyed; for all this presupposes an object to

¹¹ *Kaivalya Upanishad*. 18-23.

which it is related. Such an object however no longer exists for the wise man. "In truth, after that they have become conscious of this soul, Brahmans abstain from desire for children and possessions and the world, and wander about as beggars. For desire for children is desire for possessions, and desire for possessions is desire for the world; for all together are vain desire."¹² "This is the men of old time knew, when they ceased to long for descendants and said, 'What need have we of descendants, we whose soul this universe is.'"¹³ Gaudapada sums this up briefly and strikingly in the words: — "What can he desire who has all?"¹⁴ The wise man therefore no longer experiences fear. "He who knows this bliss of Brahman is not afraid either now or at any time";¹⁵ he is no longer vexed by anything";¹⁶ "for wherefore should he fear? since fear assuredly is of a second."¹⁷

(2) The knowledge of the *atman* transcends individuality, and therefore the possibility of pain. "He who knows the *atman* overcomes sorrow."¹⁸ "He who is in the body is possessed by desire and pain, for because he is in the body no safeguard is possible against desire and pain. He however who is free from the body is not affected by desire and pain."¹⁹ "He therefore who has crossed this bridge is like a blind man who gains his sight, like a wounded man who is healed, like a sick man who becomes whole."²⁰

(3) "And his works become nothingness."²¹ All works, the good as well as the evil, become of no effect for him who has attained knowledge, as is often affirmed. For the individuality which gave rise to them is for the wise only a part of that great universal illusion which he has succeeded in penetrating.

(4) For the same reason future works no longer cling to him, as the water does not cling to the leaf of the lotus flower.²² For him to do evil is entirely excluded by his freedom from all desire. "Therefore he who knows this is tranquil, subdued, resigned, patient and self-controlled. He sees the Self only in himself, he regards everything as the Self. Evil does not overcome

¹² *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. 3. 5.

¹³ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. 4. 4. 22.

¹⁴ *Mandukya Karika* 1. 9.

¹⁵ *Taittiriya Upanishad*. 2. 4.

¹⁶ *Katha Upanishad*. 4. 5, 12.

¹⁷ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. 1. 4. 2.

¹⁸ *Chandogya Upanishad*. 7. 1. 3.

¹⁹ *Chandogya Upanishad*. 8. 12. 1.

²⁰ *Chandogya Upanishad*. 8. 4. 2.

²¹ *Mundaka Upanishad*. 2. 2. 8.

²² *Chandogya Upanishad*. 4. 14. 3.

him, he overcomes all evil . . . free from evil, free from suffering, and free from doubt, he becomes a Brahman, he whose universe Brahman is."²³ "Whereby does this Brahman live? By living as chance may determine."²⁴ His future condition, as far as the bodily state is concerned, which he has cast off like the skin of a snake, is entirely without importance:

No matter whether a man wish for himself
A hundred years, pursuing his work;
Remain then, as thus thou art, not otherwise,
The stain of work clings not to thee. ²⁵

(5) "He who has reached this state in truth feels no doubt",²⁶ "for him all doubts are solved",²⁷ "free from doubt he becomes a Brahman."²⁸ Because the knowledge of the *atman* does not depend on reflection (*tarka*),²⁹ but on immediate intuition (*anubhava*), therefore he can no longer be shaken by any doubt. The illusion, when once it has been penetrated, can no longer delude. The question of the possibility of a relapse is not and cannot be raised.

²³ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. 4. 4. 23.

²⁴ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. 3. 5.

²⁵ Isa Upanishad. 2.

²⁶ Chandogya Upanishad. 3. 14. 4.

²⁷ Mundaka Upanishad. 2. 2. 6.

²⁸ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. 4. 4. 23.

²⁹ Katha Upanishad. 2. 9.

SRI BHAGAVAN ON RENUNCIATION

Sannyasa or renunciation is not the discarding of external things but of the ego. To such renouncers (*sannyasins*) there exists no difference between solitude and active life. The Rishi Vasishtha says: 'Just as a man, whose mind is preoccupied, is not aware of what is in front of him, so also the Sage, though engaged in work, is not the doer thereof, because his mind is immersed in the Self without the uprising of the ego. Just as a man lying on his bed dreams that he is falling headlong over a precipice, so also the ignorant person whose ego is still present, though engaged in deep meditation in solitude, does not cease to be the doer of all action.'

— *Self Enquiry.*

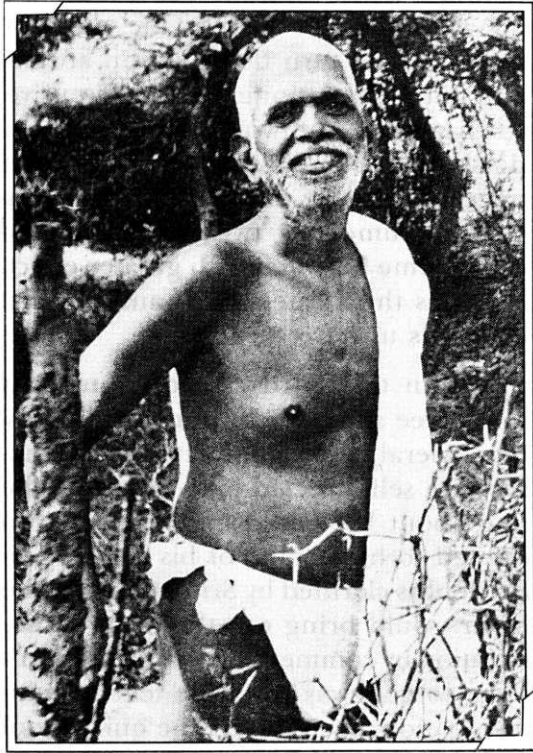
Saintly Humour

I.S. Madugula

NOT all saints are known for their sense of humour. Some tend to be aloof or inaccessible. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi never claimed any exclusiveness. He lived among ordinary folks the most part of his life as an ordinary human being, effecting extraordinary changes in the lives of those that came in contact with him. And he did it all in the most charming manner imaginable. He democratized spirituality, so to speak, and demystified life, using his unexceptionable argument of the Self.

One of the tools that Sri Bhagavan used to convey his message was humour, perhaps because that would put his audience at ease and bond him to them — as if his unbounded affection for them wasn't enough.

Furthermore, a sense of humour seems to have been a natural part of his being, no matter how serious the matter on hand. Thus, he could remark about the great merit the ox must have earned when a devotee announced her just-concluded *giri pradakshina* in a cart. Or, when a grieving mother in her folly asserted that he could revive her dead son, he would lighten the heavy atmosphere by declaring his inability to do so and adding that, if he were indeed capable of the miracle, there would be no end of corpses on the *ashram* grounds.



Perhaps even a better instance of his inherently playful nature (that is, playful for a sage) can be seen in the incident when he *pretended* to stumble as if under the influence of *hashish* when the effects of that drug were being discussed by some people around him. He even admitted the possibility of drug-induced *ananda*, foreseeing and providing justification as it were, for the antics of hippies who were to come two decades later! At

the same time, while appearing to play-act, he managed to electrify a devotee with his touch, whom he leaned against for apparent support.¹

Sri Bhagavan's strategy in responding to the seekers' questions appears to have been three-fold, depending on the context and the attitude of the questioner. He would either answer the question pointedly; or turn the question around and put the questioner on the defensive, so that he or she would more fully understand the implications of his or her question; or give the question an unexpected humorous twist, which would drive home his point with greater effect. It is this third category of answers that concerns us here.

Within this third category, one may find three sub-types of humour: linguistic, general, and self-directed. An example of a self-directed joke would be the one about his Old Tamil teacher who wanted to have some of his philosophical doubts clarified by Sri Bhagavan. The latter would bring out the irony of the situation by commenting that he couldn't seem to get away from the teacher's interrogation, even though he quit school and fled to the hills out of town.

This episode may be recounted:

When Bhagavan was living on the hillside, his old Tamil teacher came all the way from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai to see for himself the change in his former pupil and pay his respects to the now famous Maharshi.

He sat unobtrusively among the visitors, but soon Bhagavan recognized

him and had a copy of *Aksharamanamalai* (The Marital Garland of Letters) put into his hands. Glancing through it, the Pandit was pleased with its deep devotion and sound philosophy, but felt the need for help in understanding the full import of some passages. Mustering courage, he stood up, read out a verse and asked Bhagavan to explain it.

"Look at this", Bhagavan protested. "I ran away from school and home to escape such questions. And here he is after me, asking the same old question, 'what does this passage mean?'"

Everyone enjoyed the affection behind this mock complaint. Like the elders who learnt from Lord Swaminatha and Dakshinamurti, the school master whose questions were once intended to test the pupil's knowledge had now turned a disciple whose questions were aimed at removing his own ignorance.²

Another example might be about his lifelong 'sentence' of having to wear only a *kaupina*, as a penalty for having refused to wear one as a shy youngster when asked to do so by an elderly neighbour lady to help with the cooking on an auspicious occasion, as was the custom.

If I refused to wear *kaupina* once, I am now made to pay the penalty by wearing it always.³

¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.179 (1994 Edn.).

² *The Mountain Path*, June 1996.

³ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.387(1994 Edn.).

For a self-taught Sanskritist, Sri Bhagavan exhibited remarkable scholarship in that language, in that he could come up with original antitheses among philosophical and technical terms. While discussing the concept of *yoga*, he observes:

Therefore the Path of Knowledge tries to find out how *viyoga* (separation) came about.⁴

Yoga (union) is for one in *viyoga*.⁵

Again, his interpretation of *brahmacharya* is a radical departure from the traditional one, and is based on the literal meaning of the word:

Brahmacharya is 'living in Brahman.' It has nothing to do with celibacy as commonly understood. A real *Brahmachari*, that is one who lives in Brahman, finds bliss in the Brahman which is the same as the Self. Why then should you look for other sources for happiness?⁶

A real funny one is his contrast of guru with *laghu*, again based on the denotational meaning of the terms rather than any philosophical import:

Guru is necessary so long as there is the *laghu*. (Pun on *Guru* = heavy; *laghu* = light).⁷

Then he goes on to give the philosophical implications of the contrast.

In an equally funny vein, he stresses the need for Self-enquiry by pointing out what happens if it ceases:

If *atma vichara* (self-investigation) ceases, *loka vichara* takes its place.⁸

Yet another language-based explanation that he proffers in answer to a question is:

Visitor: There are several *asanas* mentioned. Which of them is the best?

Bhagavan: *Nididhyasana* (one-pointedness of the mind) is the best.⁹

Shankara missed the opportunity for rhyme when he said that any posture that does not conduce to the realization of Brahman was just self-torture (*netarat sukhanasanam*). Sri Bhagavan seems to go one better and provide us with a rhyming correlative, with the same import.

A large number of *impromptu* comments by Sri Bhagavan seem to fall in the category of general humour, of course not directed at anyone, but highly appropriate to the context. He would often wonder in a bemused manner how anyone could miss the Self that is so near him and so constantly residing in him:

What could be more concrete than the Self?¹⁰

There is no greater mystery than this — viz. Ourselves being the reality, we seek to gain reality.¹¹

In fact, this wonderment on his part could best Yudhisthira's answer to the

⁴ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.11 (1994 Edn.).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.140.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.140.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.519.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.130.

yaksha, which implies that people are stupid not to beware the end and live their lives accordingly. Sri Bhagavan deals with people missing out on the Self that lights every inch of their way every minute of their lives.

When the question of how to deal with persistent desires and emotions was brought up by a visitor who felt that "one must become satiate with the fulfillment of desires before they are renounced," Sri Bhagavan pointed out the folly of the suggestion:

Fire might as well be put out by pouring spirit over the flames.¹²

It is quite possible that the pun on spirit was intended, because it is only by seeking refuge in the inner spirit that desire can be subdued, not by indulging it.

One is not quite sure how effective aversion therapy is when we are dealing with age-old *samskaras*. Sri Bhagavan instructed Mr. Shamanna as follows:

Either surrender because you admit your inability and also require a Higher Power to help you, or investigate into the cause of misery, go into the cause of misery, go into the source and merge into the Self.

He queried: "What is the drift of the mind after surrender?" eliciting Sri Bhagavan's jocular counter question:

Is the surrendered mind raising this question?¹³

This was how Sri Bhagavan benignly corrected a number of visitors who want-

ed to know about what might happen at a certain future stage before achieving that stage, or how to reform the world before reforming themselves first. The questions included *post-mortem* and post-enlightenment states, among others, to which Sri Bhagavan would respond by asking the questioner to find out what the present state was before beginning to speculate on the future.

Sometimes even his sympathy would turn into a light-hearted remark, as when he told an American visitor (who was a little hard of hearing) that he didn't need to worry about his hearing problem:

There is no cause for worry. Subjugation of senses is a necessary preliminary for Self-Realisation. One sense is subdued for you by God Himself. So much the better!¹⁴

And at other times, he just couldn't resist the urge for repartee. When several people including the American Dr. Henry Hand extensively discussed various philosophical topics, Dr. Hand wanted to offer an apology of sorts for their being such pests:

Hand: Maharshi! Do not think we are bad boys.

Bhagavan: Do not tell me so. But you need not think you are bad boys.¹⁵

Similar quick wit can be found in the following exchange between Ramana-

¹² *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.476 (1994 Edn.).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.334.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.132.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.142.

padananda and Sri Bhagavan when they meet on the way to the hill:

Padananda: All right, I have had *darsan*. . . I shall return.

Bhagavan: Whose *darsan*? Why don't you say that you gave *darsan* to me?¹⁶

Sri Bhagavan was never stuffy as a sage. He could be downright this-worldly, as evidenced by the following discussion with Mr. Anantachari. The latter claimed that it was easy for people in general to naturally understand the statement "I am a man," rather than the spiritual assertion "I am That," and added that, if the audience at hand was polled, he would get the majority vote. Sri Bhagavan promptly joined in:

I cast my vote also on your side. . . I say also "I am a man," but I am not limited to the body. It is in ME. That is the difference.¹⁷

This *hasya vichara* of Sri Bhagavan may be concluded with one last observation that he did not spare even the gods when a humourous context presented itself. As he was reading the story of how the saint Tirujnanasambandar was waylaid

by Siva's motley entourage disguised as fake bandits, he called everyone's attention to what happened to Siva Himself:

Siva Himself was waylaid in *Tiruvudal Utsava* and He practiced the same trick on his devotees. Can it be so?¹⁸

The above illustrations of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's very fine sense of humour are just from one book. There would be many more in the rest of the Ramana literature recorded by those who had the good fortune of visiting and spending time with him when he was bodily present in the *ashram*.

Humour is a tricky area of the human psyche and even the best professional comics have a hard time playing it safe without offending their audiences. In the case of Sri Bhagavan, it must be noted that he never ever hurt anyone's feelings by his wit, even as he enlightened them with his wisdom.

¹⁶ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p.326 (1994 Edn.).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.556.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.153.

When a nail pierces through the shell of a green coconut, it enters the kernel of the nut too. But in the dry nut, the kernel is separated from the shell, and so when the shell is pierced, the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry nut, his inner soul was separate from his exterior shell, and consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect him.

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

A Scene from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*

(Act III, Scene I)

Claudio, a young citizen is in prison for having committed an act of youthful indiscretion.

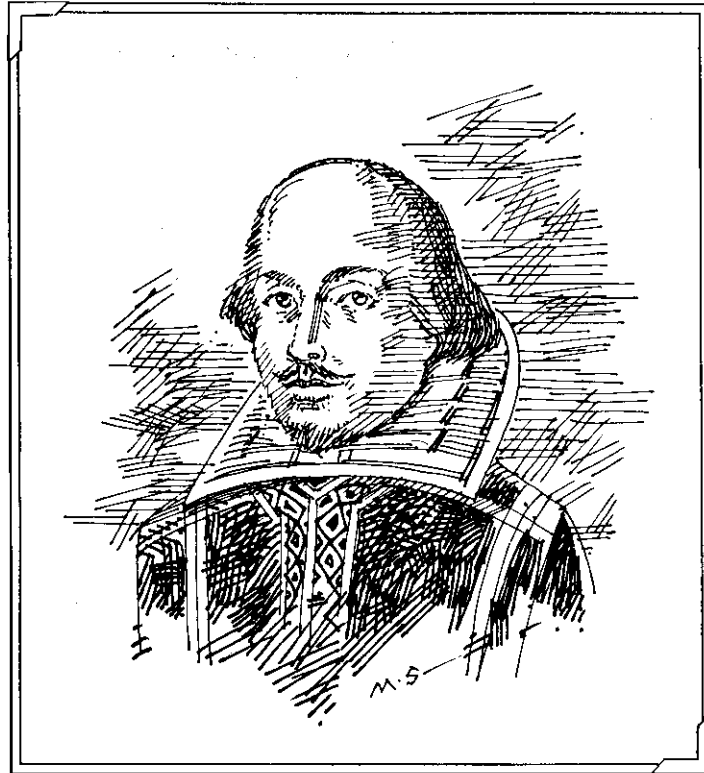
Lord Angelo, officiating Duke of Vienna, who has passed the death sentence on Claudio appears before him in the guise of a friar and counsels him to face death with courage. The gist of his speech is that death is not something to be scared about — it should be as welcome as life.

(Enter the Duke, disguised as a friar, Claudio and the Provost)

DUKE : So then you hope of pardon from Lord Angelo?

CLAUDIO : The miserable have no other medicine
But only hope.
I've hope to live, and am prepared to die.

DUKE : Be absolute for death. Either death or life
Shall thereby be the sweeter. Reason thus with life.
If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing
That none but fools would keep. A breath thou art,
Servile to all the skye influences
That dost this habitation where thou keep'st
Hourly afflict. Merely thou art death's fool,
For him thou labour'st by thy flight to shun,
And yet runn'st toward him still. Thou art not noble,



For all th' accommodation that thou bear'st
Are nursed by baseness. Thou'rt by no means radiant,
For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
Of a poor worm. Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provok'st, yet grossly fear'st
Thy death which is no more. Thou art not thyself,
For thou exist'st on many a thousand grains
That issue out of dust. Happy thou art not,
For what thou hast not, still thou striv'st to get,
And what thou hast, forget'st. Thou art not certain,
For thy complexion shifts to strange effects
After the moon. If thou art rich, thou'rt poor,
For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey,
And death unloads thee. Friend hast thou none,
For thine own bowels, which do call thee sire,
The mere effusion of thy proper loins,

Do curse the gout, ¹ serpigo, ² and the rheum, ³
 For ending thee no sooner. Thou hast nor youth nor age,
 But as it were an after dinner's sleep
 Dreaming on both; for all thy blessed youth
 Becomes as aged, and doth beg the alms
 Of palsied eld; ⁴ and when thou art old and rich,
 Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty,
 To make thy riches pleasant. What's in this
 That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
 Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we fear
 That makes these odds all even.

CLAUDIO: I humbly thank you.
 To sue to live, I find I seek to die,
 And seeking death, find life. Let it come on.

¹ drop.

² a skin disease.

³ mucus from nose or throat.

⁴ old age.

Tomorrow

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

'Tis late at night, and in the realm of sleep
 My little lambs are folded like the flocks;
 From room to room I hear the wakeful clocks
 Challenge the passing hour, like guards that keep
 Their solitary watch on tower and steep;
 Far off I hear the crowing of the cocks,
 And through the opening door that time unlocks
 Feel the fresh breathing of Tomorrow creep,
 Tomorrow ! the mysterious, unknown guest,
 Who cries to me : "Remember Barmecide,
 And tremble to be happy with the rest."
 And I make the answer : "I am satisfied;
 I dare not ask; I know not what is best;
 God hath already said what shall betide."

The Spiritual Message of Robert Browning's *Abt Vogler*

By N.R.S. Manian

ROBERT BROWNING, like many other poets, gives expression to his religious beliefs through his poetry. Poems like *Prospice*, for instance, bring out his belief in 'personal' immortality. *Abt Vogler* embodies his convictions which are based on Christian doctrine and Platonic idealism.

Abt Vogler, the subject of the poem, is not a fictitious character. Georg Joseph Vogler, also known as Abbe or Abt Vogler, was a contemporary of Browning. He was a reputed musician who specialised in improvising music. He was a teacher of music and the author of a book on music as well. We are not sure whether the thoughts are Vogler's. There are reasons, however, for presuming that they are Browning's own.

After extemporizing a piece of music on an instrument of his invention (a kind of small organ known as the orchestrion) in an empty church, Abt Vogler is in a state of emotional elevation.

This state of exhilaration is so precious that the musician wishes "Would it might tarry".

In the following lines he compares the music of his creation to the palace brought into being by Solomon. (The reference is to the story in the *Talmud* according to which King Solomon possessed a seal inscribed with the 'ineffable name' of God. With the aid of this seal he was enabled to command supernatural creatures to perform at his bidding):

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build
 Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to the work,
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon
 willed
 Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
 Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
 Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-de removed,—
 Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
 And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!

The structure of his music is so lofty in conception. It is comparable to the streams of light which rise high and illuminate the high dome of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. (The reference is to the decorative lighting of St. Peter's Cathedral on festival nights. Browning had actually seen such lighting):

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul
was in sight.

In order to bring out the superiority of music over other arts like painting and poetry he lays stress on the limitations of the latter. Poetry and painting are subject to laws. You can see the why and wherefore of it all. You can watch them grow — the touches of the artist or the shaping of the poem line by line are so visible.

Music is independent of such earthly limitations. It is pure inspiration and created by a flash of God's Will. The creative art of a musician who combines three notes into a new harmonic unit is as profound and miraculous as the creation of a star:

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a
star.

The musician was so lost in his music that he could not recollect the tones that called up or built it. Unlike the palace of Solomon which endured, his own palace of music built up by his inspiration vanished into thin air! He has only a memory of the thing — but not its details (which would help recreate it).

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music-I reared;
Gone! And the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again!

But then, Abt Vogler is certain that nothing good can be lost. God preserves all the good that man builds up. Pure music is divine and eternal. Therefore, if not on earth, it will be preserved in heaven!

... I cling with my mind
To the same, same-self, same love, same God: aye, what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

The last stanza presents a basic philosophy of life. It is an observation on the vicissitudes that one faces (in life), employing the symbolism of music.

He discovers that the C Major scale (middle octave) which contains nothing but natural tones (that is, without variations of sharpened¹ or flattened² tones) is comparable to the common level and activities of life. One may rise to the heights of celestial joy (High C) from the abyss of misery, but not before passing through the common duties of ordinary life (common chord):

Give me the keys. I feel the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life; so, now I will try to sleep.

The poem is a unique exposition of the divinity of music and its effect on the human soul. It is also a powerful reminder about the saving power of God and His love for man.

¹ When the pitch of a note is raised by the interval of a semi-tone or half-step, it is known as 'sharp'. This is symbolic of ascent to a joyful mood.

² When the pitch of a note is lowered by the interval of a semi-tone or half-step, it is known as 'flat'. This may be said to correspond to depression.



Mahatma Gandhi : A Man of God

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

THE teachings of Mahatma Gandhi have profoundly influenced the outlook on life of a very large number of people across the world. The great majority of such people of course never saw the great man in the flesh. Some had the good fortune, however, of listening to his talks on All India Radio and enjoyed reading his stimulating writings on many subjects. Lucky are those who have come across a copy of his *Key to Health*.¹ Admirers of Gandhi could never forget a broadcast made by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru soon after Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic in 1948. Choking back his sobs, Nehru requested that on the day of his cremation the nation should pay homage to the great soul by making it a day of fasting and prayer. "The light has gone out of our lives", he said, "and there is darkness everywhere."² Thousands attended his funeral on the banks of the sacred Jumna river.

Ardent followers of Gandhi (most of whom had not only been closely associated with Gandhi but had even stayed in his ashram) were easily noticeable as they wore only white clothes made from khaddar, the hand-spun and hand-woven Indian cloth. Their slightly comical white caps were somewhat similar to those worn by hotel chefs. These Gandhians were vegetarians and animal lovers; their simplicity of life was such

that they had only a bare minimum of possessions; they loved to make widely known the view that the world has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed; in the manner of Gandhi, they looked askance at machines and preferred to wash their clothes with their own God-given hands; they frowned on sexual misconduct and maintained that the solution to the problem of over-population was sexual abstinence; they fasted from time to time with the intention of atoning for the wrongdoings of the world; they helped the poor and the underprivileged; as they believed in the brotherhood of all human beings they were naturally opposed to all forms of discrimination; they were pacifists who regarded with disapproval the armaments industries; they were uncompromisingly loyal to the principle of non-violence; they viewed all religions as different expressions of the Divine Wisdom; above all, they regularly prayed to the Divine who is the invisible creator, sustainer and ruler of the universe.

¹ *Key to Health*. Pub: Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, (1948).

After reading this book the writer of this article decided to become a vegetarian and to follow naturopathic principles in times of illness.

² *Independence and After*, p.17. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi (1949).

Born in 1869 when India was part of the mighty and extensive British Empire, Gandhi spent his childhood at Porbandar. At school he was a less than average student. "It was with some difficulty," he wrote, "that I got through the multiplication tables. The fact that I recollect nothing more of those days than having learnt, in company with other boys, to call our teacher all kinds of names, would strongly suggest that my intellect must have been sluggish, and my memory raw."³ He used to be haunted by the fear of thieves, ghosts and serpents. Consequently he could not bear to sleep without a light in his room. Yet anyone who reads his *Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* will discover that right throughout his adult life two of his principal traits were a certain fearlessness and an undeviating loyalty to Truth. At the tender age of thirteen he married an attractive girl called Kasturbai. He was passionately fond of her and he used to think of her even at school. After spending three years in London Gandhi passed his law examinations and became a barrister. He was a failure as a lawyer in Rajkot, and in Bombay the poor man was laughingly called 'the briefless barrister'.⁴ But in South Africa Gandhi managed to settle a dispute out of court. "My joy was boundless. I had learnt," he stated, "the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bring-

ing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby — not even money, certainly not my soul."⁵ Soon Gandhi became a successful lawyer with a substantial income but he was not interested in the accumulation of riches. He identified himself with the Indians in South Africa who had long been subjected to political and social repression. He became their principal political agitator.

Gandhi developed his doctrine of passive resistance which stood him in good stead when confronting the Raj. "Passive Resistance," he declared, "is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self. . . A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him. . . We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realize that it is

³ *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, p.3. Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad (1976).

⁴ Eknath Easwaran. *Gandhi The Man*, p.20. Nilgiri Press, Petaluma (2nd Edn. 1978).

⁵ *An Autobiography* . . . p.100.

of humanity, may itself be regarded as an offering to God. Significantly, when he was shot at point-blank range and fatally injured, Gandhi's dying words were "Rama, Rama". He breathed his last with the sacred name of God on his lips because it was the subject of God that preoccupied his heart and mind.

Interestingly enough, a little more than a year before his death a statement by Gandhi was published in *Harijan* of October 6th 1946: "If we have a living faith in God, we will realize that it is the mortal body that perishes, never the immortal spirit within. Man is born to die. Death is the natural corollary to birth. So, whether God sends us natural death or whether we are killed by the assassin's knife, we must go smiling to our end. Let us, therefore, pray to God to vouchsafe to us the living faith that enables one to put oneself entirely under His protection without reliance on any outside help and to remember that He never fails His devotees."⁸

Once he was asked: "Do you definitely feel the presence of the living Christ within you?" Gandhi answered: "If it is the historical Jesus surnamed Christ that you refer to, I must say I do not. If it is an adjective signifying one of the names of God, then I must say I do feel the presence of God — call Him Christ, call Him Krishna, call Him Rama."⁹ Those who constantly feel the presence of the Divine are generally regarded as mystics. Given his inherent modesty and his awareness of his own imperfections, Gandhi would probably have disliked being categorised as a mystic.

Gandhi grew up in a land where four

of the world's great religions originated and flourished — Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Foreign faiths such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Islam were introduced into India, which considerably enriched the general ethos of the people. Gandhi taught that religious tolerance was a *sine qua non* for peace and harmony in a country with such diverse beliefs. His religious eclecticism resulted in his selecting what is best in all religious systems. "I believe," maintained Gandhi, "that all the great religions of the world are true, more or less. I say 'more or less' because I believe that everything that the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is indescribable, untranslatable. I do believe that it is possible for every human being to become perfect, even as God is perfect. It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes indescribable, indefinable. And I, therefore, admit, in all humility, that even the Vedas, the Quran and the Bible are imperfect words of God and, imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fullness."¹⁰

One of his favourite books was the *Bhagavad Gita*; he was also fond of the

⁸ *Why Fear or Mourn Death?* p.62. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (1971).

⁹ *The Message of Jesus Christ*, p.19. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (1971).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.93.

New Testament, especially the noble teachings of Jesus which were eloquently expressed in his Sermon on the Mount. However his view of Jesus may displease some Christians: "Jesus . . . to me is a great world teacher among others. He was to the devotees of his generation no doubt 'the only begotten son of God'. Their belief need not be mine. He affects my life no less because I regard him as one among the many begotten sons of God. The adjective 'begotten' has, for me, a deeper and possibly a grander meaning than its literal meaning. For me, it implies spiritual birth. In his own times, he was the nearest to God."¹¹

He set the greatest store on praying. "Prayer," said Gandhi at one of his prayer meetings in 1945, "is even more essential for the well-being of the soul than is food for the maintenance of the body. It becomes necessary to give up food on occasions in order to benefit the body. But prayer may never be abandoned. If we provide food for the body which is perishable, then, surely it is our primary duty to provide food for the soul which is imperishable, and such sustenance is found in prayer. The real meaning of prayer is devoted worship."¹²

There are a number of interesting insights into the purpose of praying in his writings and speeches. "Prayer," he explains, "is either petitional or, in its wider sense, is inward communion. In either case, the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleansing and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelop it. He, therefore, who hungers for the awakening of the Divine

in him, must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. . . . It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart¹³ . . . The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world; the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable¹⁴ . . . Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. Take care of the vital thing and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of square, and the other angles will be automatically right. Begin, therefore, your day with prayer, and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be any form, it should be such as can put us into communion with the Divine. Only, whatever be the form, let not the spirit wander while the words of prayer run on out of your mouth . . . There is no peace without the grace of God, and there is no grace of God without prayer. That is why I ask you all to observe the habit of prayer. Prayer should proceed from the heart¹⁵ . . . Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is

¹¹ *The Message of Jesus Christ*, p.86. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (1971).

¹² *Food for the Soul*, pp.62-63. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (1970).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

the most potent instrument of action. Undoubtedly, prayer requires a living faith in God. God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life — in other words, the Law and the lawgiver rolled into one . . . heartfelt prayer steadies one's nerves, humbles one and clearly shows one the next step¹⁶ . . . Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness¹⁷ . . . Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude. But the word is used also to denote any devotional act¹⁸ . . . It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing. It is the attitude that matters, not words uttered or muttered¹⁹ . . . A man of prayer must know no disappointment, because he knows that the times are in His hands who is the Arch Planner and does everything in His good time. A man of prayer, therefore, waits in faith and patience always²⁰ . . . Emptying of the mind of all conscious process of thought and filling it with the spirit of God unmanifest, brings one ineffable peace and attunes the soul with the Infinite. I agree that if a man could practice the presence of God all the twenty-four hours, there would be no need for a separate time for prayer. When the mind is completely filled with His spirit, one cannot harbour ill-will or hatred towards anyone, and, reciprocally, the enemy will shed his enmity and become a friend."²¹

Any kind of retaliation against those who harmed or insulted him was always anathema to his forgiving and loving nature. Because of his refusal to bear any resentment against his enemies and his renunciation of possessions, Gandhi

was venerated by millions as a godlike person.

As God was central to his philosophy of life, the following statements of his about the Divine are worthy of consideration: "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends reason. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is. And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good. . . To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist . . . He tran-

¹⁶ *Food for the Soul*, p.6. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay (1970).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

scends speech and reason . . . He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied in those who need His touch. He is the purest Essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us . . . He is long-suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible . . . With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good . . . God will not be God if He allowed Himself to be an object of proof by His creatures. But He does give His willing slave the power to pass through the fiercest of ordeals. I have been a willing slave to this most exacting Master for more than half a century. His voice has been increasingly audible, as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour. He has saved me often against myself and left me not a vestige

of independence. The greater the surrender to Him, the greater has been my joy²² . . . God is the hardest task-master I have known on earth, and he tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms. God is great and compassionate. He would not try His servants beyond endurance. As we go forward in our journey of life, we have always problems coming up for decision, and they are the hardest when the voice of Satan nearly approaches the voice of God. Only fullest trust (in God) and perfect purity and extreme humility can lead us to the right choice."²³

²² *The Message of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.12. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Delhi (1968).

²³ *Ibid.*, p.5.

Happy the man who is busy attending to what God is saying in him. He is directly subject to the divine light-ray. The soul that stands with all her powers under the light of God is fired and inflamed with divine love. The divine light shines straight in from above, and a perpendicular sun on one's head is a thing that few can survive. Yet the highest power of the soul, her head, is held erect beneath this shaft of godly light so that there can shine in this light divine which I have oft described as being so bright, so overwhelming, so transcendent, that all lights are but darkness in comparison with this light.

— Meister Eckhart.

The Significance of Meditation in Buddhism

By Lama Anagarika Govinda

THE pre-condition of every religious practice or meditation is the recognition of divine or eternal qualities in man, qualities whose awakening or realization constitute the aim of religious life. If we do not believe in a supreme, all-transcending value, inherent in man and attainable by him, then the very reason and starting point for any kind of spiritual aspiration is missing. That is why the Buddha proclaimed faith as the first prerequisite of the spiritual way:

Wide open are the gates of
immortality,
Ye that have ears to hear, release
your faith!

However, the faith (*saddha*) which the Buddha demanded, was not the blind faith in dogmas, revelations, gods or human authorities (including his own), but the faith in ourselves, in our higher nature, and the possibility to realize it, to attain liberation.

'Liberation' can only have a mean-

ing, if there is something that can be liberated, and this 'something' can be nothing other than the living power, the manifestation of universal forces that create and maintain the individual streams of consciousness. The very fact that Buddhism believes in the continuity of *karmically* conditioned, self-perpetuating conscious forces, moving through endless cycles of reincarnations, proves that it recognizes an indestructible power or quality, which is maintained through countless lives and deaths.

The question which arises from this, is not how to destroy that power, but how to lift it from the narrow tracks of a never ending, ever repetitive cycle into the freedom and all-pervasiveness of an enlightened consciousness. Due to habit, which is a form of inertia, caused by 'ego-sclerosis', i.e. by calcification or

hardening of our egohood at a certain stage of our individual development, man is in danger of cutting himself off from his universal heritage and to content himself with the lesser, though the greatest of all values is available to him. It is the greatest good that the Buddha is concerned with. That he did not only believe in it, but actually attained it and realized it himself, is proved by the fact of his Enlightenment.

On this the whole edifice of Buddhism is based. For the individual it is the highest aim; for the teaching, however, it is the starting point. The teaching, therefore, is rightly called 'Buddhism', the doctrine of Enlightenment. It is the idea of Enlightenment and not that of suffering (as so many Western critics of Buddhism believe) which gives Buddhism its character; just as medicine is first and foremost the science of healing (and the Buddha, indeed, has been called 'the great Healer' or *Bhaishajyaguru*, 'the Supreme Physician') but not the science of disease — though the knowledge of disease is necessary for the knowledge of healing — for the same reason the Buddha had to understand first the nature of suffering, in order to be able to show the way towards its overcoming, the way to happiness. However, the idea of suffering and its annihilation on the path of morality, renunciation and knowledge, is common to all religious systems of India.

What was new in the Buddha's doctrine was that he recognized individuality as a flowing, ever-changing, self-transforming living force, evolving or developing to an inner law, in contradis-

inction to an unchangeable, self-contained and separate soul-substance, as assumed by primitive animism and popular belief. In this way he raised his doctrine to the level of a dynamic world-view, in which individuality was liberated from the *rigor mortalis* of separateness.

Thus we can only arrive at the conclusion that individuality is a necessary, important and meaningful expression of the universe or its inherent divine consciousness or ultimate reality. Consequently individuality and universality are not mutually exclusive values, but two sides of the same reality, compensating each other and becoming one in the experience of Enlightenment.

In this experience it is not the mind that dissolves into an amorphous All, but it is the realization that the individual itself contains the totality of the universe focalized in its very core. Thus, it is the world that hitherto was experienced as an external reality, that merges or is integrated into the enlightened mind in the moment in which the universality of consciousness is realized. This is the ultimate moment of the liberation from the impediments and fetters of ignorance and illusion.

We are still captured by crude similes of quantitative magnitudes in place of qualitative values, when we compare the ultimate experience of liberation with the 'drop that slips into the shining sea'. It would be more appropriate — though paradoxical from the viewpoint of three-dimensional logic — to say that the "sea slips into the shining drop". Because, the drop is qualitatively not different from the sea. All the oceans that cover

the earth, as seen from the distance of the sun, are not more than a drop in the immensity of space; and a drop, as seen from the standpoint of a micro-organism contained in it, is as vast as an ocean.

The demonstration of the universality of man and of his capacity of attaining self-realization in the supreme experience of Enlightenment — without the intervention of gods, priests, dogmas and sacrificial rituals — on the direct way of meditation; this is what the Buddha gave to the world, and which has become the very core of Buddhism, irrespective of differences, created by sects, philosophical schools or scholastic traditions or by racial or linguistic influences.

Meditation, however, does not concern only the mind, but the whole human being, including his bodily functions and activities. Therefore the first step towards meditation consists in taking stock of the situation in which we find ourselves. Meditation means many things: it means turning inwards, it means quiet observation, reflection and awareness of ourselves, it means to be conscious of consciousness, to become a detached observer of the stream of changing thoughts, feelings, drives and visions, until we recognize their nature and their origin.

But these are only the first steps of meditation, while in the more advanced stages we change from the role of a more or less intellectual observer to that of an experiencer of a deeper reality, namely of the timeless and universal source of all the phenomena we observed in the contemplation of our stream of con-

sciousness and even in the simplest bodily functions, as for instance in the process of breathing, which in itself can be a subject of meditation, because it reveals the very nature of life in its alternate inward and outward movement, in its continual process of receiving and releasing, of taking and of giving back, of the deep relationship between the inner and the outer world, the individual and the universe.

However, between and beyond the two alternative movements, so to say, at the turning point between them, there is a moment of stillness, in which the inner and the outer world coincide and become one, since there is neither anything that can be called 'inside' or 'outside'. This moment, in which time stands still, because it is empty of all designation of time, space and movement, but which nevertheless is a moment of infinite potentialities, represents the state of pure 'being' or 'is-ness', expressed by the word *sunyata*, the all-containing void or metaphysical emptiness, beyond definition, beyond any kind of 'thingness' or conceptual limitation which, therefore, may be called 'no-thingness' or the primordial ground from which everything originates. It is the timeless moment before creation or, seen from the standpoint of the individual: the moment of pure receptivity that precedes all creative activity.

It is the first *movement* in the great symphonic *mandala* or magic circle, in which our inner world appears as sound and light, colour and form, thought and vision, rhythm and harmonious co-ordination, visible symbol and meditative

experience. This first *movement* which expression may be taken in the musical as well as in spiritual and emotional sense — corresponds to the first profound meditative attitude of experience, called “The Wisdom of the Great Mirror” or the “Mirror-like Wisdom” (*adarsa jnana*).

In the light of the Mirror-like Wisdom things are freed from their ‘thingness’, their isolation, without being deprived of their form; they are divested of the materiality (like the reflections in a mirror, which can neither be said to be inside or outside of the mirror) without being dissolved, because the creative principle of the mind, which is at the bottom of all form and materiality, is recognized as the active side of the Universal Consciousness (*alaya-vijnana*) on the surface of which forms arise and pass away, like the waves on the surface of the ocean, which latter, when stilled, reflects the pure emptiness of space and the pure light of heaven (the two aspects of *sunyata*).

Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch’an School once said:

When you hear me speak about the void, do not fall into the idea that I mean vacuity.... The illimitable void of the universe is capable of holding myriads of things of various shapes and forms, such as the sun and the moon, and the stars, worlds heavenly planes and hells, great oceans and all the mountains Space takes in all these, and so does the voidness of our nature. We say that Essence of Mind is great, because it embraces all things, since all things are within our nature.

If *sunyata* hints at the non-substantiality of the world and the interrelationship of all beings and things, then there can be no better word to describe its meaning than *transparency*. This word avoids the pitfalls of a pure negation and replaces the concepts of substance, resistance, impenetrability, limitation, materiality, by something that can be positively experienced and is closely related to the concepts of space and light. The transparency of the mind-created body, the *vajra kaya* or ‘Diamond Body’, visualized in *tantric* meditation, symbolizes *sunyata* in visible form, thus bearing out the above-mentioned interpretation. Here ‘form’ is no more in opposition to space, but form and space penetrate each other in a luminous and dynamic play of light and colour. The conception of *jiji-mu-ge* (Japanese; lit. “each thing no hindrance”) has its origin in this interaction of form and emptiness, or form and space, which are experienced in the realization of the ultimate transparency of the world: the world as a phenomenon of consciousness. Without consciousness there is neither form nor its concomitant notion of emptiness. Consciousness determines the world in which we live or the particular aspect under which the universe appears to us; in itself it is neither this nor that, it is *sunyata*.

Thus the Mirror-like Wisdom reflects with the impartiality of a mirror the nature of all things and of ourselves, while remaining unaffected and untouched by the images it reflects. It is the attitude of the impartial observer, the pure, spontaneous awareness, which in Zen Buddhism is called *satori* or *kensho*: “seeing into one’s own nature”.

By recognizing our own nature as *sunyata*, we realize that it is not different from the essential nature of all living beings; and herefrom arises the 'second movement' of meditation, in which we realize the oneness of all life, the solidarity of all sentient beings. This is the 'Equalizing Wisdom' or the 'Wisdom of Equality' (*samata jnana*), in which we turn from the cool and detached attitude of an observer to the warm human feeling of all-embracing love and compassion for all that lives. Already in the *Dhammapada* (Pali) this essential equality with others has been made the keystone of Buddhist ethics, when it was said that 'having made oneself equal to others' or 'recognizing oneself in others' one should abstain from hurting others, which shows that compassion in Buddhism is not based on moral or on mental superiority, but on the feeling of oneness.

If, however, this feeling remains confined to the merely emotional plane, it may lead to a purely sentimental and one-sided attitude, in which the feeling of oneness deprives the individual of responsibility, action and discrimination in a world that is not merely a featureless unity but an organic whole in which differentiation is as much an expression of reality as oneness, and form is as important as emptiness, since both depend on each other, condition each other like light and shade.

Thus we come to the 'third movement' of meditative experience, in which we are neither concerned with concrete beings nor with material things, but where both differentiation and unity,

form and emptiness, the purity of light and the infinite modulations of colour are revealed in their infinite interrelatedness without losing their distinctive qualities and individuality of expression. This is the 'Distinguishing Wisdom' (*pratyavekshana jnana*), in which our mundane mind, our discriminating, judging intellect turns into the intuitive consciousness of inner vision, in which the 'special and general characteristics of all things become clearly visible without hindrances (*asanga*; i.e., spontaneously)' and in which the unfolding of various spiritual faculties takes place.

Through this wisdom the functions of the group of discriminating processes, which we sum up under the general term of perception (*samjna skandha*) are turned inwards and become transformed and intensified into creative transcendental vision (*dhyana*) — in which the individual characteristics of phenomena and their general and universal relation become apparent. This Wisdom is represented by Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who is shown in the gesture of meditation (*dhyana mudra*).

The 'fourth movement' of meditative experience belongs to the realm of action and will-power and represents the 'All-Accomplishing Wisdom' or 'the Wisdom that Accomplishes All Works'. Here volition (*samskara skanda*) is transformed into selfless, 'karma-free' action of life dedicated to the realization of Enlightenment, motivated by compassion and based on the understanding of both the individual and the universal aspect of life and phenomena, as experienced in

the previous three movements. In the *Vijnaptimatra Siddhi Shastra* it has been said that "this kind of consciousness manifests itself for the benefit of all living beings.... in the three kinds of transformed actions....", namely those of the body, speech and mind, 'according to the vow', namely that of the Bodhisattva, whose 'body' is the universe (*dharma kaya*), whose 'speech' is the *mantric* word, the word of truth and power, and whose 'mind' is the universal consciousness.

Each of these four movements is represented by a gesture (*mudra*) of the respective four transcendental Buddhas who symbolize these states of meditative consciousness and experience, and occupy the successive places in the *mandala*, beginning with the east and moving via south and west to the north. The position in the *mandala*, therefore, does not indicate only a spatial position in the visible diagram, but a sequence in time, i.e. in the unfoldment or process of meditation.

Thus the Buddha of the eastern quarter of the *mandala*, Akshobhya, the Immutable One, who embodies the pure inward-directed awareness of the basic mirror-like consciousness, points with his right hand towards the earth (representing the totality of the past) which the Buddha called up as a witness before his Enlightenment with the palm *inwards*, while the passive left hand — as in the case of all the four *Dhyani Buddhas* representing the Four Wisdoms — rests in the lap with the palm upwards.

The Buddha of the southern quarter of the *mandala*, Ratnasambhava the Jewel-

Born, who embodies the Wisdom of Equality, expresses the feeling of solidarity and love towards all living beings by the gesture of giving, similar to the previous one, but with the palm turned *outwards*.

The Buddha of the western quarter of the *mandala*, Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who embodies the Wisdom of Distinguishing Inner Vision, is represented in the gesture of meditation; both hands with palms *upwards*, resting upon each other in the lap.

The Buddha of the northern quarter of the *mandala*, Amoghasiddhi, the Realizer of the Aim, who embodies the Wisdom that Accomplishes All Works, i.e., of selfless action, is represented in the gesture of fearlessness, expressing at the same time reassurance and blessing. His right hand is raised to the height of the shoulder and the palm is turned *outwards* in the gesture of blessing the world.

It may be noticed that in each of these cases the palm of the active right hand follows the direction of the consciousness. And in this connection it might be mentioned that the upturned palms in the gesture of meditation (*dhyana mudra*) signify a receptivity towards the eternal qualities and forces of the universe. The palms are like open bowls, ready to receive the gifts of heaven.

The passive left hand of all these Buddhas is always shown in this attitude, because our essential, though unconscious, relationship to the universe is common to all stages of meditation. Besides the direction of the palms we have to consider the three planes or levels

stroy both: the Man and the object. At the fourth instance I destroy none of them: neither the Man nor the object.

This statement, which on the surface sounds like a paradoxical Zen *koan*, is in reality a sober assessment of the subject-object relationship in the experience of the Four Wisdoms:

In the Mirror-like Wisdom the pure objective awareness prevails, while the notion of the subject ('Man') is absent.

In the Wisdom of the Essential Equality of all beings, the subject ('Man') becomes the only conscious reality, without an object.

In the Wisdom of Distinguishing Vision both subject and object lose their independent reality and are seen in their mutually dependent relationship on the universal stage in their eternal interplay of emptiness and form, in which materiality, thingness and the illusion of separate entities gives way to the transparency of creative vision. It was this experience, according to the Buddha's own words, that characterized his Enlightenment.

In the all-accomplishing Wisdom of selfless action, subject and object are restored to their functional status of polarity on the plane of the three-dimensional world of existential — i.e. relative — reality. Thus, "neither the Man nor the object" are destroyed, and we have returned into our familiar world, where "mountains are again mountains and waters are again waters" (to use the well-known Zen phrase), but where we see them with new eyes that are no more

veiled by the illusion of egoity and separateness, freed from craving and possessiveness as well as from enmity and aversion. *Samsara* has turned into *Nirvana*, the mundane world has turned into a gigantic *mandala*, in which every form has become an expression of total reality and every living being a unique manifestation of a greater life and a universal consciousness.

Thus the meditative experience of the Four Wisdoms has revealed itself as a tremendous symphony of four movements, in which the pendulum of experience results in the transformation of *all* faculties of man, until he has become *complete*.

This completeness cannot be achieved through negations — for which reason the Buddha rejected asceticism — nor through the one-sided affirmation of the one or the other of our basic faculties. Feeling has to be balanced by knowledge, intuition has to be balanced by clear thought, contemplation has to be balanced by action. Those who believe that by mere passive sitting they can attain enlightenment are as far from the mark as those who believe that they can achieve liberation by mere learnedness or pious recitation of sacred texts. This was pointed out already by the ancient Ch'an Master Tai-hui when he wrote to his disciple Chen-ju Tao-jen:

There are two forms of error now prevailing among followers of Zen, laymen as well as monks. The one thinks that there are wonderful things hidden in words and phrases, and those who hold this view try to learn many words and phrases. The second goes

to the other extreme forgetting that words are the pointing finger, showing one where to locate the moon. Blindly following the instruction given in the *sutras*, where words are said to hinder the right understanding of the truth of Zen and Buddhism, they reject all verbal teachings and simply sit with eyes closed, letting down the eyebrows as if they were completely

dead. Only when these two erroneous views are done away with, is there a chance for real advancement of Zen.²

This sound advice is as true nowadays as it was then and applies not only to Zen but to all methods of meditation.

² Translated from the German version, quoted by Ohasama-Faust in *Zen, der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan*.

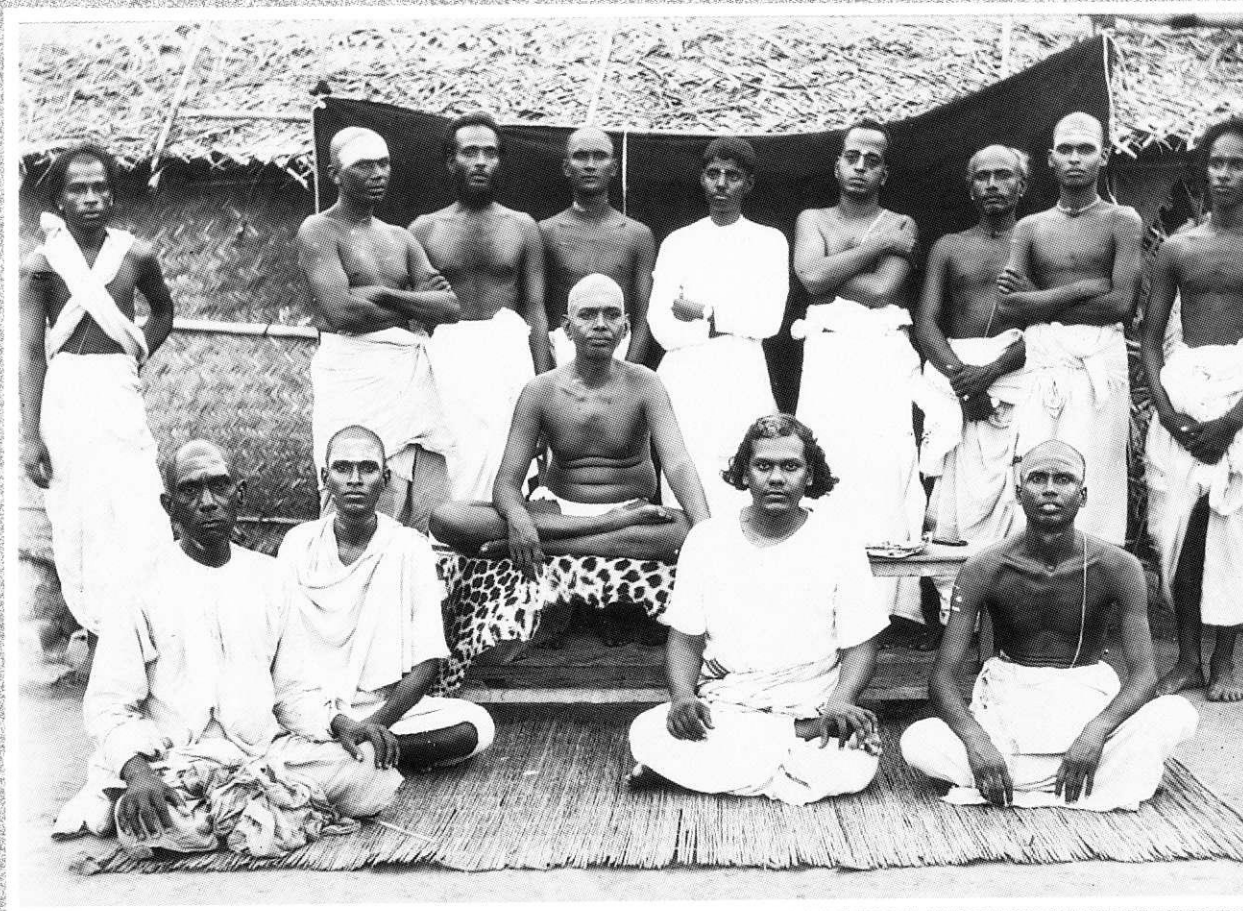
Striking the Ego

One morning in September, one Maurice Frydman, a consulting and electrical engineer announced himself before Sri Bhagavan. He entered the Hall, hat in hand but with shoes on. The Maharshi ordered a stool for him on which he seated cross-legged for a short time and then he withdrew. After a wash and light refreshments he came back without shoes and squatted on the floor. He stayed three days and was quite social and genial and friendly to everyone who responded similarly towards him. He tried to learn our ways and adapt himself to them. His clumsiness often evoked the good-humoured laughter of the Maharshi who always put him right as a father would a child. He tried to learn from Maharshi something about Realisation, raised doubts and had them cleared. Once he asked why there should be illusion if the individual soul is identical with the supreme. Bhagavan gave him the usual answer (the answer is not on record) and then began to chew betel leaves. In the meantime, Mr. Frydman was ruminating and with dramatic gestures wanted to know why the ego should not be cut down at one stroke and destroyed so as to gain Supreme Bliss. The Maharshi stopped chewing his betel leaves long enough to smile, and then broke out into laughter and asked the questioner to hold out his ego so that the Maharshi could strike it down. Everyone in the Hall laughed including Mr. Frydman, and at the conclusion of the laughter Mr. Frydman addressed the Maharshi and said, "Yes, now I understand."

(This took place in 1935. Maurice Frydman eventually became a resident of Sri Ramanasramam for a period of nearly three years and compiled *Maharshi's Gospel*).

— From *The Mountain Path*, April 1981.

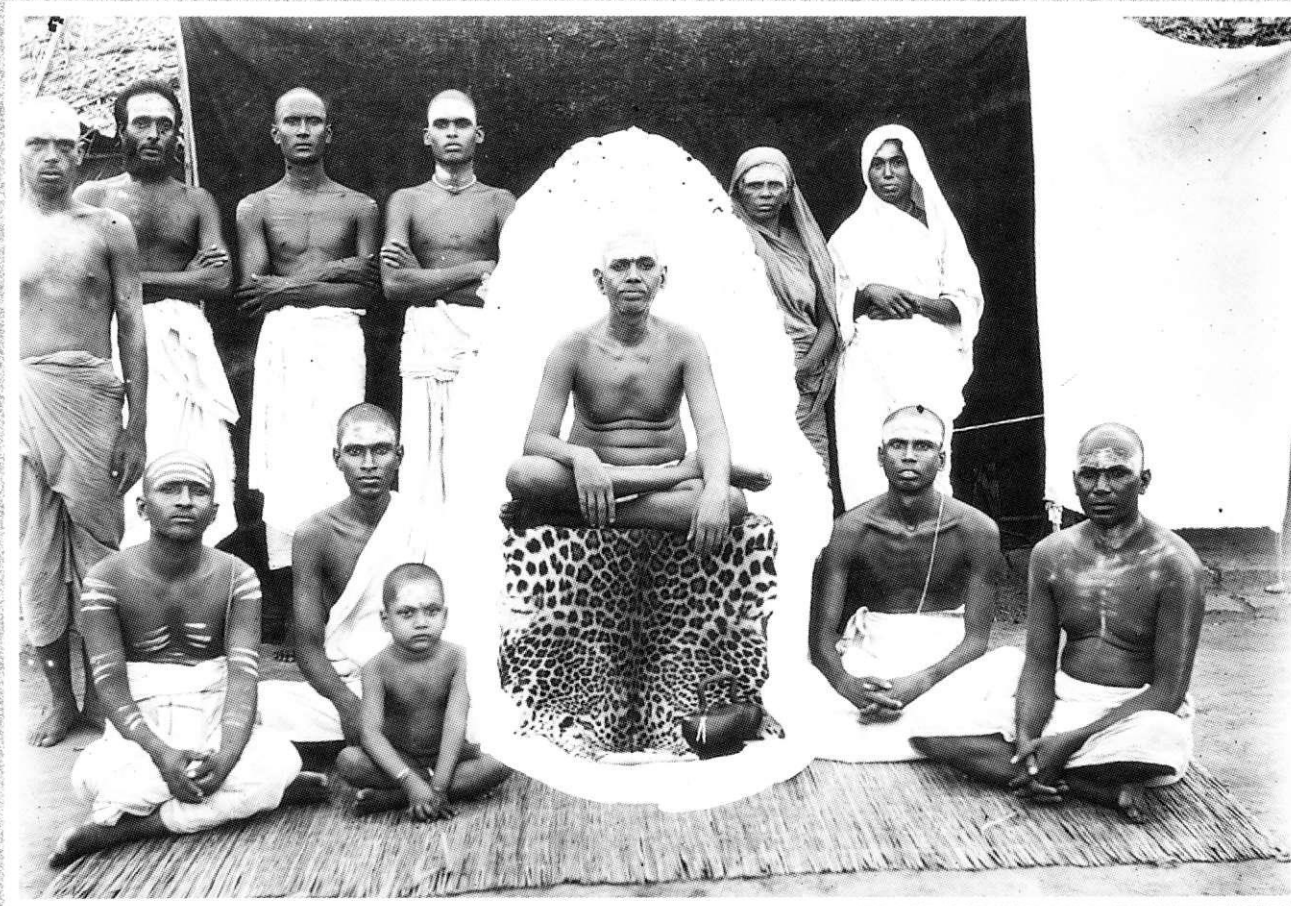
From Our Photographic Archives



Circa 1930, in front of the Mother's Temple thatched shed.

Sitting (left to right): 1. (Probably) Malaysia/Rangoon Chettiar, 2. Vishwanatha Swami, 3. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, 4. (Probably) Malaysia/Rangoon Chettiar, 5. Muruganar.

From Our Photographic Archives

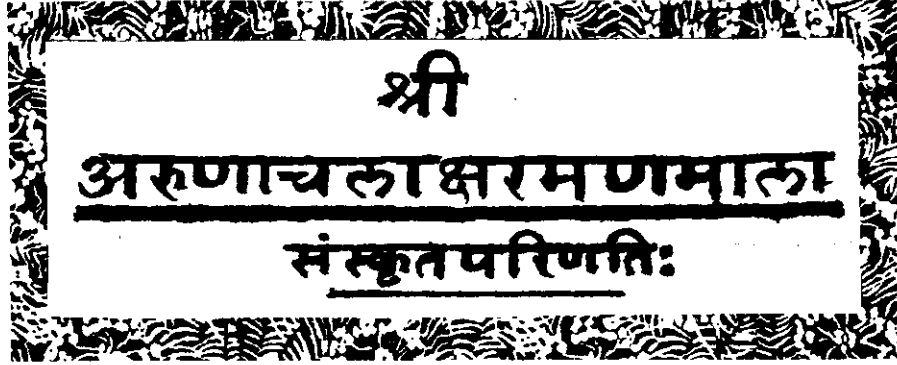


Circa 1932, in front of the Mother's Temple thatched shed.

Sitting (left to right): 1. Vasudeva Sastri, Secretary of Sri Ramanasramam, 2. Vishwanatha Swami, 3. (Front) K. Venkataraman (K.V. Mama), 4. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, 5. Muruganar, 6. Perumal Swami.

Standing (left to right): 1. Unidentified, 2. Kumara Guruparar, 3. Ramakrishna Swami, 4. Madhava Swami, 5. Echammal, 6. Tiruchuzi Lakshmiammal.

Enlarged print from original glass negative on Agfa Recorded Rapid paper. White mask around Bhagavan is photographer's opaque on emulsion side of negative.



Sri Arunachalaksharamanamala Sanskrit Translation

It came as a great surprise to rediscover this authentic Sanskrit translation of Sri Ramana Maharshi's *Aksharamanamalai* in Sri Ramanasramam Archives, while in the midst of scanning the precious manuscripts onto computer media. It is by Jagadeeshwara Shastri and dated 13th June 1940.

The original manuscript has become extremely brittle and discoloured. It is reproduced here in its entirety and in the same size, after converting the initial colour scan made at 440 dots per inch black-and-white line art, utilising photo-editing software.

It is clear that more than one hand has penned these pages. *Most probably* the latter portion (from page 4 and onwards) is in Bhagavan's handwriting.

Preserving the entire manuscript archive on compact disks is a mammoth and expensive project. Already 29 works in Tamil, 22 in Malayalam, 16 in Sanskrit, and two in Telugu have been scanned, adding up to a total of some 4,500 individual scans. Most of this material includes what is (a) definitely, and (b) probably Bhagavan's handwriting.

In addition there is a vast correspondence in the Archives, the entire *Mountain Path*, and other works to be covered. By a rough estimate, nearly half the work has been completed.

We welcome contributions from devotees who may be in possession of valuable manuscripts relating to Sri Ramana Maharshi. Due care will be taken in handling the original papers which will be returned to the owners after the scanning process.

We hope to regularly feature Bhagavan's work in his own handwriting in subsequent issues of *The Mountain Path*. They are of great beauty, each letter perfectly formed, and marked with the quality of penetrating directly into the Heart.

-1-

करुणा सार सर्वस्वं समस्थमसमै क्षणम् ।
कविं बुधं गुडं शुक्रं सूर्यं रमणमाश्रये ॥

" भगवते श्रीरमणाय नमः "

" अरुणाचलाक्षरमणमाला "

" उपात्मविद्याभूषणम् "

जगदीश्वरशास्त्रिभिरसंकलिता ॥

" संस्कृतपरिणतिः "

" मंगलम् "

अरुणाद्रिसपर्याहीमाक्षरीमणमालिकाम् ।
दातुं तस्मै करं देहि कृपाकर ! गणेश्वर ! ॥

" ग्रंथारम्भः "

अरुणाचल ! शिव ! अरुणाचल ! शिव ! अरुणा-
चल ! शिव ! अरुणाचल !

अरुणाचल ! शिव ! अरुणाचल ! शिव ! अरुणा-
चल ! शिव ! अरुणाचल !

{ अरुणाचलसंपूर्णकरुणामृतसागर ।
स्मरणाद्भवसन्तापहरणेशारुणाचल ॥ }

- 1) अरुणाद्रेरहंभावं ये २ नुसंदधते नराः ।
अहंभावं निकृन्तिसि ^{त्वमहंकार} समूलमरुणाचल ! ॥
- 2) सौन्दर्यसुन्दरभिरव्यभिदाश्रयेथामते ।
त्वमहंचतथा २भिन्नौवर्तेमह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 3) मदहंभावमाविश्यत्वदहंभावरूपिणम् ।
कारुण्यहंप्रापितोस्मि किमेवमरुणाचल ॥

- 2 -

- 4) कस्यान्यस्य कृते त्वं मा मवितोऽसि यद्व्य
लोकहासास्पदोस्यातामुभावप्युणाचल ॥
- 5) अक्रमोप्ययमास्तां वा त्वच्चिन्तां तन्ननोषिकिं
सन्ततंचिन्त्यमानं त्वां कस्यजेदुणाचल ॥
- 6) जनन्या जनयिष्याभ्य भूयो नुग्रहदायक ।
असाव नुग्रहः किं ते स्थिति स्यादुणाचल ॥
- 7) त्वद्व्यतिमिदं चैतो न यथा बहिरुच्यति ।
हृदीकृत्यतथाऽऽतिष्ठ हृदंतत्रा उणाचल ॥
- 8) उद्धा बहिर्मुखे चैतो हृद्धानिर्वाणमृच्छति
तथाते परमांशोभां दर्शयाध्वुणाचल ॥
- 9) निहृत्य त्वमिदानीं यदि नो पादितोसि
पतन्नुपौडुषं किं ते न युक्तम उणाचल ॥
- 10) कुत एष तव स्वापोऽवकृत्यनिकृते परैः ।
मय्युदस्था समस्याते युज्यतेना उणाचल ॥
- 11) पंचेन्द्रियमहाचौरविशन्तेऽन्तर्यदा
हृदये नासि मे किं त्वं सदा भास्य उणाचल ॥
- 12) एकं त्वामन्तरान्यः कः आगमिष्यति
वञ्जितुम् ।
अतस्त्वद्व्यनैवेति चिन्तयाम्य

- 3 -

- 13) ओंकाराक्षरतात्पर्यसमानाधिकवर्जित ।
भवनं कः परिच्छेत्तुं शक्यं दण्डा-
राकारं त्वेयं चल ॥
- 14) च क्षुब्धश्च क्षुब्धश्चक्षु रक्षुब्धश्च मान्तरं ।
चाक्षुषीकुडुतांको वा त्वत्त्वमरुणा
चल ॥
- 15) औ वै समानमेव त्वत्कण्डुणरसदो नतः ।
विधातुं रक्षणं मे त्वमधमर्णोऽरुणाचल ॥
- 16) अथ स्कान्तशिलाकुल्यं बलादाकुप्य
मां दृढम् ।
स्वभेदसंस्थितिं प्राप्य वसत्वमरुणाचल ॥
- 17) अरुणाचलरूपेण कडुणा वडुणा लय ।
कडुणा पांगसंज्ञेन पाहिंमामरुणाचल ॥
- 18) अभितः पुरतः पश्चादुपरिष्ठा द
तेजोमय महादेन्यं इक्ष्वास्त्वमरुणा
धो ज्वलन् ।
- 19) ~~क्रक~~ क्रक चो ~~क्रक~~ तडुणी दुहू
यत्तुः ।
अबद्धमनु गृह्ये त्वं भाहि मय्यरुणा-
चल ॥
- 20) इत्वा मे सर्वमप्यागः सगुणीकृत्यमां भजेः ।
आचार्यदिव्यमूर्त्यापि विजयस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 21) सदेन्यमर्थितोपित्वं कपटित्वं नमुञ्चसि ।
मा भैषीरिति संबोध्य दयां कुर्वस्व रुणाचल ॥

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- 22) अप्रार्थित^तदयस्य तव यन्निर्मलं यशः ।
मलीमसमकृत्वैतन्मह्यं देह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 23) करस्थफलसङ्काशं त्वद्रसं पारमार्थिकम् ।
साग्रहीकुरु तं भोक्तुं मजस्रमरुणाचल ॥
- 24) ध्वजिनामपि भक्तानां घ्रातुकं त्वामहं कथम् ।
अवलम्ब्य परीरथ्य जीवेयमरुणाचल ॥
- 25) कोपशून्यगुणोपेत ! लक्ष्मीकृत्यचरक्षितुम् ।
कंवाऽपराधमातेने न कंचिदरुणाचल ॥
- 26) अक्षपादकृतस्तोत्रकृपाकरमहागिरे ।
कटाक्षक्षेपणेन त्वं त्राहि मामरुणाचल ॥
- 27) सकलग्रासशीलाभिः किरणोत्करकान्तिभिः ।
मदीयमानसोल्लासमातनुष्वारुणाचल ॥
- 28) भोजनं त्वामुपश्रित्य शिष्यते भोजनेकृते ।
प्रशान्तस्सञ्चरिष्युत्वस्वभावो मेऽरुणाचल ॥
- 29) कृत्वामन्मानसोल्लासं किरणावलिभिस्तव ।
वाचं सुधामुचं सम्यग्विघटस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 30) प्रथितप्रभुतां हत्वा निर्वाणीकृत्य मे सदा ।
त्वत्कृपाप्रभुतादत्वाऽनुगृह्णाणारुणाचल ॥
- 31) सुखाम्भोषिं समुल्लास्य मनोवाग्वृत्तिसंक्षयम् ।
विधाय संस्थितिं देहि मौनितामरुणाचल ॥
- 32) वज्रनावृत्तिमाश्रित्य ममाकृत्वा परीक्षणम् ।
दिष्यतेजोमयीं मूर्तिं माषिष्युर्वरुणाचल ॥
- 33) इन्द्रजालप्रतीकाशशास्त्रजालभ्रमं मम ।
निहत्य तारकं बोधं दर्शयस्वारुणाचल ॥

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- 34) सह योगो मयामाशू दितिचेत्तीरवद्भुतः ।
आक्रुशक्यु परीबाहैः नक्षत्रेय मरुणाचल ॥
- 35) धिगिति त्यज्यतेऽहं चेत्कृतं कर्म दहेत्ततः ।
उज्जीवक उपायः कः? उच्यता मरुणाचल ॥
- 36) अवाचा उवाचि तिष्ठेति वच उच्यता भवानपि ।
अवाचूष्णीक एवास्ते हन्त! हन्तारुणाचल ॥
- 37) तूष्णी मालस्यतस्तिष्ठ न्युख भुक्सुप्यते यदि ।
कावा गति रथान्यास्ते? वदत्व मरुणाचल ॥
- 38) आविष्कृत्यातिशूरत्वं विनष्टं संकटं ततः ।
इति मत्वाऽचली भूय वयति भासेऽरुणाचल ॥
- 39) शुनकादति नीचोहं सुदृढं त्वा मुपाश्रितः ।
त्वन्निष्ठ स्तवन्मयो भूयो भूयास मरुणाचल ॥
- 40) ज्ञानोत्पत्तिहीनत्वा न्वयि विश्वासवन्तया ।
आयासमपहत्य त्व ज्ञानं देह्य रुणाचल ॥
- 41) सप्त सप्ति गभस्ति सिद्ध सद्दृशं नचकाशसे ।
अत एवपुरस्सा क्षाद्दृशो भास्यरुणाचल ॥
- 42) त्वत्संवि त्समाभूतं दत्तं स्वीचकृषे सुतम् ।
किमेतत्स्वीकृतेस्त त्व मुच्यता मरुणाचल ॥
- 43) अहमेवाह मेवाह महमः पारमार्थिकम् ।
सतत्व मनुगृहीष्व स्वयमेवारुणाचल ॥
- 44) परावृष्टिं परित्यज्य प्रतीच्यान्न त्यहं दृशा ।
ज्ञातव्यं तत्त्वमि पश्य स्व बुध्यसे त्युक्तं जातं कि मरुणाचल ॥
- 45) अधीर मानसेऽजस्र मन्विष्यान्विष्यविह्वलः ।
पुन रा कस्मिक्तया लेभे त्वामरुणाचल ॥
- 46) त्वत्प्राप्तिप्रतिपद्दीन जननं किं प्रयोजनम् ।
अस्तिचेत्तदुदाहर्तुं मरमेह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 47) अतिशुद्ध मनोवाग्भि स्सन्ततं हृदि चिन्तिते ।
ममापि त्व महं भावे चिन्तां तन्वरुणाचल ॥

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- 48) प्रतिभूनीयकश्चेति त्वदुपाश्रयणे कृते ।
प्रत्याख्यातं त्वया तच्च नयुक्तमरुणाचल ॥
- 49) स्कन्नान्वेषणसंविन्नं सत्कृपा सन्निधिं मम ।
प्रापय्य मानसोत्कण्ठं कुण्ठयस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 50) सधैर्यं सदहंभावे तावकेऽन्तर्गन्धेभिते ।
अन्तराय समुच्छेद प्राप्तवानरुणाचल ॥
- 51) त्वत्कृपारससम्मिश्रहस्तमस्तक्त्रयोजतः ।
तत्त्वगुप्तं न कुर्यात्प्रेक्षीये स्वत्वरुणाचल ॥
- 52) अहंभावे मुपासिष्य निवेद्य ^{दृष्ट्वा} ~~निवेद्य~~ ^{त्वत्कृपापिणम् ।} ~~निवेद्य~~ ^{मया सदा} ~~निवेद्य~~ ^{प्राप्तुं} दृणीयस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 53) माभूत्प्राकृतहास्यत्वं त्वदेकशरणीकृतम् ।
दयारसहसंदत्त्वा पश्य मामरुणाचल ॥
- 54) अन्वेषितेऽहमस्थाने तेन संकलितो भृशम् ।
स्वयं प्रकाशसे स्थाणुः किंचित् मरुणाचल ॥
- 55) त्वद्भक्ति ^{हिति} ~~निका~~ मालाभिर्भस्मसाद्भवनात्पुरा ।
त्वत्कृपावर्षाभिरभिषिञ्च्यारुणाचल ॥ (अनुकोशास्यर्थः)
- 56) त्वंचाऽहंचभिदाशून्यं स्थित्वाऽहमिदमावरात् ।
आनन्दमयनिष्ठायां स्थापयिस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 57) अत्यन्तसूक्ष्मरूपं त्वां न भोरूपमुपासितुम् ।
संजातं मम संकल्पं स्थिरीकुर्वरुणाचल ॥
- 58) शास्त्रज्ञानविहीनस्य जडमूकोपमस्य मे ।
कच्चरासारविज्ञानं तूनीकुर्वरुणाचल ॥
- 59) लीनं लीनं प्रवीशूय ^{मयि त्वां शरणं गते ।} ~~प्रतिष्ठां शरणं गते ।~~
तदात्मीं नग्नरूपस्त्वं वर्तसे न्वरुणाचल ॥
- 60) त्वत्प्रेमरसशून्यस्य त्वत्प्रेमरसकौतुकम् ।
संसूच्य कुरु माशाठ्यमशाठ्यस्यरुणाचल ॥
- 61) पाकोद्रेकलयावस्थफलतुल्योऽधिराकृतौ ।
पदेते स्थापयित्वा मामन्तःकुर्वरुणाचल ॥
- 62) अक्लेशेन भवद्रूपं न प्रदर्श्यानुकंपसे ।
अन्तकस्त्वं नितान्तं मे व्यथां पत्सेऽरुणाचल ॥

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- 63) प्रमाय सं प्रधार्य त्वत्त्वं संस्तभ्यन्वा सकृत् ।
प्रकी कृत्य प्रविश्यान्तः पाहिमा मरुणाचल ॥
- 64) संसक्तमानस श्रान्ति गरुळं व्याप्य मेशिरः ।
मारणात्प्राक्कृपाप्राप्त्यै कृपां कुरु रूपाचल ॥
तत्रैव करुणा नास्ति यदि ममोह नाशने ।
- 65) अनुग्रह मरुणाचलं तूष्णं मादुःखं शान्तं
तत्राशने हृदये ममैव प्रसीदति कः ब्रूयादरुणाचल ॥
- 66) हित्वा लोकोन्मनस्कत्वं त्वय्युन्माद मणाहितः ।
अमनाशौषधं दत्वा त्वंदयस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 67) भीत्यात्वा मभिसंवीतो नास्ति भीर्मा मुपाश्रय ।
तत्रैव वा कुतो भीति रवितस्यारुणाचल ॥
- 68) काऽसम्यग्दृगिति ब्रूहि कानुसम्यग्दृमित्यपि ।
वेत्तुं विविच्य वक्तव्यं करुणौस्यरुणाचल ॥
- 69) प्रसूनामोदसंपूर्णं मनोमेपूर्णवासनम् ।
भवितुं पूर्णसौरभ्यं भूयो देह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 70) त्वन्नाम स्मृति मात्रेण प्रसह्याऽऽकर्षितोस्मियत् ।
ज्ञातुं क्षमेत कोवाते प्रभाव मरुणाचल ॥
- 71) पिशाचत्व जिहासुं मां सुदुस्त्यज पिशाचताम् ।
प्राप्य भूयः पिशाचत्वं हठादत्से रूणाचल ॥
- 72) बालवल्ली समानोहं निरुपपन्नं क्रमं विना ।
उपज्ञानो कही भूय रक्षामा मरुणाचल ॥
- 73) पूणेन वञ्चियित्वा मद्दोषमाकृष्य निष्क्रमात् ।
उपलंभ समाकंभं लंभितोऽस्म्यरुणाचल ॥
- 74) गत्या गति प्रतीघाते नभोनिभ रणांगणे ।
त्वत्कृपापांग समरं दर्शय स्वारुणाचल ॥
- 75) अहन्ता ममतावर्जं शरीरं पाञ्च भौतिके ।
त्वत्तेजस्सुषमां द्रष्टु मीहां देह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 76) उद्वेगोत्पत्तये किं मे महीभर महौषधम् ।
कृपाचलज भौषप्यं दत्वा भाह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 77) मदमानाभिभूतानां मानमुन्मथ्य मूकतः ।
अभिमान विहीनस्त्वं त्रिकाशस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 78) किञ्चित्समुच्छ्रितेऽत्यन्त दैन्यकृत्युरुपा मरुः ।
कुहना कुसृतिं हित्वा गोप्यता मरुणाचल ॥

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- 79) अतिक्रम परीसार वि सर्पण विहीनतः।
विभ्रमास्पदतोपित्वं रक्षामारुणाचल ॥
- 80) आशिरस्पद दुर्दर्श शिरस्त्वं व्यसृजस्त्वयम्।
साक्षान्मे शिरसस्त्यागे किमृणं नारुणाचल ॥
- 81) विख्यात्रदर्शितादर्श बन्नामुत्थाप्य पाणिना।
दृढमाश्लिष्य भूयोपित्वं दयस्वारुणाचल ॥
- 82) तत्त्वाहं भवसंस्थाने विकसितमनस्सुमम्।
उपगूह्यचसंमिश्र्य स्थितिं देह्यरुणाचल ॥
- 83) उदग्रे पासितस्थान प्राप्तावप्यतिनीचकैः।
दुर्बलैस्त्वं समावोगा दत्युच्चो स्यरुणाचल ॥
- 84) मायिकाञ्जनज भ्रान्तिं विनाशयत्वकृपा मयैः।
अञ्जनैस्त्वदधीनत्वं प्रापितोऽस्म्यरुणाचल ॥
- 85) बहिर्विष्णुपदस्थाने परिवाप्यविसृज्य माम्।
सानन्दत्वं नरीनर्त्सि किमेव मरुणाचल ॥
- 86) मयि मोहं निहत्य त्वं त्वयि मोहं च भावितम्।
तथापि मोहहानं मे किं नाजन्यरुणाचल ॥
- 87) अज्ञत्वेनाविकसिते शिष्यत्वं मौनिनिश्चिते।
निपाठे तव मौनित्वमिदमाहोरुणाचल ॥
- 88) शर्कराभिस्तु सूक्ष्माभिर्वैक्त्रमापूर्य मामकम्।
जीवनं त्वं विनाक्त्रोवा भ्रंशिष्यत्यरुणाचल ॥
- 89) अनन्यविदितं बुद्धिं मोहयित्वा रहो मम।
कोवासाहसिकश्रौर्ध्वमकरोदरुणाचल ॥
- 90) रमणस्त्वमिति प्राध्वमकोचं तेनरोषणः।
माभूरसह नोपित्वं रमयेरुणाचल ॥
- 91) दिवानक्तसमुत्सृष्टे बहिश्शून्यगृहोत्तमे।
लीलायै रमणायैव त्वमागच्छारुणाचल ॥
- 92) लक्ष्यं कृत्वा कृपास्तं मां प्रयुज्ये मजडंजनम्।
दशभिः प्राणवर्गैस्त्वं भक्षितोऽस्यरुणाचल ॥
- 93) लाभस्त्वमिह चामुत्र लाभलेशविवर्जितम्।
मां लब्ध्वा वदके लाभं लब्धवानरुणाचल ॥
- 94) त्वमागच्छेति नञ्छां योगक्षेमं वहाशुमे।
नियत्यादुःखितत्वं तु संजातमरुणाचल ॥

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- १५) आगत्यान्तः प्रविष्टस्य देहिमेतन्न जीवनम् ।
इतिमे जीवनं हीनं कुतो ब्रूह्य रूपाचल ॥
- १६) यदिहास्यसि कष्टं स्यादपरित्यागपूर्वकम् ।
मम प्राणास्त्रिमोक्तुं त्वं कृपां कुर्वरूपाचल ॥
- १७) त्यक्त्वा ब्राह्मणं गृहं चैतो गुहा गृहमुपाश्रितः ।
सुन्दरं मन्दिरं तेहं दर्शितोऽस्म्य रूपाचल ॥
- १८) ब्राह्मणदेशे मया त्यक्तं ससच तेशासनादभूत् ।
दयामयप्रदेशं ते देहि पाह्य रूपाचल ॥
- १९) वेदान्तान्तर्विराजन्तं त्रिमोहितिमिरं महः ।
सर्ववेदसमावेद्यं तत्त्वं भास्वरूपाचल ॥
- १००) आशिष्वेनातिब्रूदित्वं मारुच्य कृपामये ।
कुटुंबे स्थापयित्वाह मत्याज्योऽस्म्य रूपाचल ॥
- १०१) ब्राह्मणन्मेषपुष्पे मां निसर्गप्रेमरूपिणि ।
त्वयि स्नेहरसं दत्त्वा द्रवी कुर्वरूपाचल ॥
- १०२) अरुणे त्यन्तसाध्यात् त्वत्कृपापांगवीक्षणे ।
पतितोऽस्मि कृपाजालाद् द्विप्युतिर्निरूपाचल ॥
- १०३) त्वत्कृपापांगसंगाच्चिन्तितं तन्नुवाचवत् ।
ब्रह्माबन्धनगेहेमा मखादीररूपाचल ॥
- १०४) त्वन्नमश्रवणासक्तं भक्तभक्तातिभक्तिमान् ।
यथातथं यथाहं स्यां तथा कुर्वरूपाचल ॥
- १०५) मद्भिषान्दुर्विधांश्च त्वं सुरवी कृत्यानुपालयन् ।
सदासमुपजोषन् चिरं जीवारूपाचल ॥
- १०६) सास्थि विद्रुतभक्तानां सृष्टोक्तेर्गृहीतरि ।
श्रोत्रे मम दुरुक्ते स्त्वं गृहीष्यु ररूपाचल ॥
- १०७) शान्तिभूषण! दुर्वाक्यं संगती कृत्य मामकम् ।
क्षमेथाः कृपया पश्याद्यथेष्टमरूपाचल ॥
- १०८) माता कलापसंभूषणु मेदुरोऽनुग्रहप्रदः ।
मन्मालयाप्यलं कृत्य पाहि मामरूपाचल ॥

(अरूपाचलशिव! अरूपाचलशिव! अरूपाचलशिव!
अरूपाचल!)

चिरं जीवतु शोणाद्रिः चिरं जीवतु सेवकाः ।
आक्षरी मणमालापि चिरं जीवतु भूतले ॥

॥ इति श्रीमदक्षरमणमाला संस्कृतपरिणति स्म माता ॥

[विक्रम-शारन-कुक्काष्ट्यां (13-6-40)
समाप्ति मगमम्]

William Shakespeare and the 'Twins': A Review of *The Comedy of Errors*

By Rosalind Christian

ONE cannot help feeling that Shakespeare has never been put into his proper category in the West. In the East he would be regarded as a *mahatma* or seer of high status. However, he lived in times when religious persecution was the norm and narrow dogmatic views prevailed. To openly express an inner vision would have been to court disaster. Yet as both poet and mystic he needed to express himself. As somebody said of Maharshi's Muruganar his poetry was his *sadhana*. How could Shakespeare express the inner world he had entered? Of course the Gospels were to hand where Jesus's experience of the 'kingdom' found expression. Gospel references are far from rare in Shakespeare but they are presented in a very veiled way. They had to be. However, there was in folktales a symbol language of deep inner meaning which was there for his use and with which no one could quarrel. The way Shakespeare used folktale themes proves his ability to probe their inner meaning. Nowhere is this more evident than in one of his early plays, *The Comedy of Errors*.

The Comedy of Errors is about the reunion of two brothers, identical twins, long separated. There is no doubt about the literary origins of Shakespeare's play. *The Menechmi* of Roman playwright Plautus was the main source. Here a pair of twins are separated. One grows up and becomes a citizen of Epidamnum while his twin, deciding to go in search of his brother, comes, at last, to that city. Here he is welcomed to board and bed by a courtesan. An ill-wisher at once reports this to the citizen's wife, and the citizen himself returning home is soundly rated. Deciding to go and consult his friends the citizen leaves the way open for his twin to wander in. The drift of his conversation makes all his hearers believe that he has gone mad. A doctor is called but the 'patient' escapes leaving the citizen to be taken and bound! And so it goes on till the brothers are brought face to face.

There is no reason to assume that there is any link whatever between this drama and the very ancient folk tale of *The Two*

*Brothers*¹. In that story the younger twin sets out to find his elder who he knows has suffered a grave mishap. He comes to his brother's kingdom and is accepted by all as that brother. Understanding the situation and learning where his elder has gone, he sets out to rescue him from the Witch-who-turns-men-to-stone. Together they destroy 'her'. Nor have we any reason to believe that Shakespeare knew that story either. However, in his play he makes it plain that he clearly understands that the function of the 'Twins' is the defeat of death.

The key to his understanding may well have been another play by Plautus, *Amphitruo*. Here twin sons are born to Amphitruon a Theban General, but everybody would know that he is not the father of both — for Zeus, disguised as Amphitruon, has slept with his wife before her husband's return. One of these twins is Hercules (Greek Heracles). It would not take Shakespeare long to realise that Hercules carried the divine spark implanted by Zeus, The Bright One. After much struggle and suffering Hercules, the super-hero of Greek myth, knows himself to be immortal. And, of course, there are a number of other Greek myths about twins which Shakespeare may have known, particularly that of Castor and Polydeuces, called the Dioscuri or Sons of Zeus. To the Greeks the 'Twins' were demi-Gods. They had taken the first step towards immortality.

The Menechmi is doubtless good comedy but Shakespeare manages to double the farcical element by giving each twin a twin servant, born on the day of their

own nativity, and likewise long separated. So opportunities for confusion are compounded. The play is hilarious but it has a melancholy opening and almost a tragic end — something for which Shakespeare has often been criticised. These passages show us Egeon, father of the Twins, who has arrived alone and penniless in Ephesus — the city Shakespeare chooses to set his scene. By an inexorable Ephesian law Egeon, citizen of an enemy state, is doomed to die, unless, within a day, he can win a ransom. He sums up his condition as one "whom the fates have marked to bear the extremity of dire mishap".

Yet if we take a good look at Egeon we see that his condition is that of each and every man — whose lifespan is but a 'day' in the face of eternity. Death approaches as inexorably as the Sun goes down at sunset. Then it seems wife and family are altogether lost, and life, looked at clearly, is but an expectation of loss. The duke of Ephesus is personally moved by Egeon's sufferings, but the law cannot be altered. So *The Comedy of Errors* is sandwiched between two slices of potential tragedy. Why did Shakespeare do this? I suggest it was because he wanted to make a bold and dramatic statement as to what the play was essentially about — the defeat of death.

In his very stage management of the play Shakespeare, as it were, throws down the gauntlet, and tells us, if we will listen, that this story is about reincarnation — as is the very ancient tale of *The Two Brothers or Twins*. At the back of the stage

¹ *The Mountain Path*, December 1996.

there were to be three houses; to the left a courtesan's house, to the right a religious house, and in the centre the house of the twin called The Phoenix. In choosing this symbol, it seems to me, that Shakespeare brings us straight to the concept of rebirth. For the Phoenix is a fabulous Egyptian bird which returns to the place of its birth, Heliopolis (the City of the Sun) and there builds a nest and immolates itself on the altar of the Sun God. From its ashes rise the new Phoenix. The myth is obscure and variable but this is the popular version that, I assume, Shakespeare would know.

The twins themselves differ greatly in character. The citizen is a sturdy character, a man of wealth and well-reputed in the town, but prone to sudden bouts of anger, even rage. Finding his house locked against him while within his wife dines all innocently (with the wrong twin!) the citizen decides to send for a crow-bar to smash down the door. A friend persuades him to desist for the sake of his own and his wife's good names. He counsels him to wait till evening comes and the streets are empty. Had this sage advice been followed, of course, Egeon would have died at sundown. However, other causes of rage and violence lie in wait for the citizen.

The second twin is very different, thoughtful, sensitive, almost diffident. He arrives from the sea and lays up his wealth and belongings at an inn. As he becomes more deeply entangled with the affairs of Ephesus, the more he longs to take ship and sail away. The 'Sea' in ancient religion is a very ambivalent symbol, sometimes hugely dangerous

(think of Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus) but not necessarily so. Two basic ideas seem to shape the symbol.

1) Ebb and flow; what the sea takes it will, at last, give back.

2) The sea is a deadly and divisive element to the land-dweller, but to the sea-dweller it gives abundant life. These two simple facts lie I believe, behind folklore view of the sea and behind ancient mythology too. As 'life' is to 'death', so 'land' is to 'sea'. Put simply they are different modes of consciousness. Folk heroes are sometimes asked to build a ship that sails on land and sea — that is to win through to the truth that 'life' and 'death' are an ongoing cycle.

The sea plays a big part in Shakespeare — supremely so in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* — where it always has strong tones of death and loss, yes, but also of return to land and re-union.

In *Errors* the twin from the sea constantly longs to return there. He quickly concludes that Ephesus is a place of danger and sorcery. Is anything there real? Is he asleep or awake? A lady, who knows his name, and claims to be his wife, takes his arm and leads him in to dinner! His doubt is:

Was I married to her in a dream?
Or sleep now and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears
amiss?

He falls instantly in love with this new 'wife's sister'. She enchants him — ah! But what sort of enchantment? Does she beguile him on to the rocks and shoals of rebirth as the deadly sirens sought to

beguile Odysseus? To escape all this make-belief and dissimulation (*maya?*) becomes an obsession. But he cannot. He is trapped. We, who know the conditions of the twins' birth, two identical parts of a single ovum (egg) realise that willy nilly they must meet at last².

We might call this voyager-twin a reluctant returner to the world of bodily limitations. The core of the situation is made plain in the words of his own servant, Dromio. He comes from the sea with his master and lays up their goods at an inn. He is continually being charged to make things ready for instant departure. But he rather likes Ephesus. They are offered a meal, gratis! A goldsmith accosts his master in the street and gives him a sumptuous gold chain — and refuses payment! But then something happens to alter Dromio's views. At the Phoenix, where they so strangely dine with the citizen's wife, he finds that he also has a wife. She knows his name and claims him for her own — and she is terrible! "She's the kitchen wench and all grease." Put a light to her and she would burn till Doomsday — and beyond, quips Dromio.

To his master's enquiry as to her looks, Dromio answers:

"She's spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her."

"Where's Scotland?"

"I found it in the barrenness, hard in the palm of the hand."

Scotland³ was a poor and wild country and the Scots became a by-word for tight fistedness. And so master and servant rag together and the countries are de-

scribed by Dromio with a youthful gutter humour that would have gone down well on the playground of Stratford-upon-Avon grammar school. But who or what is this terrible spherical thing into whose power poor Dromio feels he has fallen? Is 'she' not the world, spherical and covered with different countries? 'She' means trouble, *samsara*; of this poor Dromio has no doubt. Amazingly, *samsara* can mean the wife in Tamil!. The people of Tamil Nadu evidently have the same dire sense of humour as the London cockneys. In their rhyming slang the wife becomes trouble and strife — *samsara*!

Events in Ephesus move towards a climax of pandemonium as the citizen twin (having been taken and bound as mad) turns the tables on his captor, binds him and douses him with filthy water. Drawing his sword he dashes out into the street. Meanwhile his twin, constantly mistaken for his brother also draws sword and, at last, takes sanctuary in the religious house, observed by the citizen's wife and others.

The sun now begins to set and the Duke in solemn procession enters to witness the beheading of the prisoner, Egeon, when the citizen's wife throws herself at his feet begging justice against the Abbess who refuses her all sight of her husband. All are utterly disconcerted when the citizen suddenly appears (is he 'borne about invisible'?) and demands justice in his turn against his wife for locking the doors against him. Need

² One of the symbols of the Dioscuri was the halved egg which the twins wear on their heads, helmet style!

³ The writer lives in Scotland.

we say more? The Abbess is ordered to bring forth her charge and the twins are revealed before the astonished eyes of the people of Ephesus.

With this revelation the law is cast aside, death is cancelled. Egeon's bonds are cut. Even the proffered ransom is rejected.

"It shall not need, thy father hath his life"

'Thy father hath his life' — the statement is as plain as that. Essentially on-going life is something man cannot be deprived of. Linked incarnations, 'brothers', or closer still, 'twins', mean on-going life. In place of death we find total rejoicing. The family is re-united. (Guess who turns out to be the mother!) Through all the turmoil and error the Twins have triumphed.

Have I read too much into the symbolism of *The Comedy of Errors*? Certainly if accepted as a statement about

the reincarnation the play holds together. Egeon's part is thus absolutely essential, not an aberration or misfit as has so often been suggested. To me the key dialogue is the description of Dromio's 'wife' — totally spherical with countries all over 'her', like a map. Shakespeare was among the first authors to consistently describe the world as round (Doubtless the inspiration for this character came as a spark of wit from Plautus who gives his courtesan a cook with the delightful name of Cilindrus).

Shakespeare learnt from *Errors* and other early plays that he could say what he liked behind laughter. His audience would totter home, their sides aching and tumble into bed (for laughter is tiring) and just think no more about it.

But in the light of a Maharshi truth will be out! Behind the sound-barrier of words Shakespeare makes many statements that marry well with the teachings of Sri Ramana.

To rise above joys and sorrows is happiness. It is the hankering after enjoyments that is misery. He is the man of wisdom who knows the true nature of bondage and freedom. The fool is he who identifies himself with the body and possessions. That is the true path, which leads to Me; to allow the mind to be distracted is to take the wrong path. The predominance of *sattva* in one's nature is heaven, of ignorance, hell. The Guru is the true friend and he is none but Me. What is wrong is the disposition to see good and evil; what is right is the habit of mind that sees neither.

— *Srimad Bhagavatam, Book-XI, Ch.19.*



Mother Teresa : A Rare Karma Yogi

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

A RICH young man approached Jesus and asked him what good things must be done in order to find eternal life. Jesus replied : "If you want to be perfect, sell your possessions and give them to the poor and then you will have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19 : 21) . It was to the poorest of the poor that Mother Teresa (1910-1997) dedicated her life; as regards her possessions, they were minimal — two cotton saris, a bucket to wash them, a pair of sandals and a Bible of course.

This tiny frail woman was a rare karma yogi. Her *sadhana* was practising self-abnegation through intense involvement in altruistic activities of various kinds. Denying herself the pleasures and comforts of this world, Mother Teresa devoted herself to the welfare of the sick, the poverty-stricken and the downtrodden. She was very Gandhian in the sense that what was always uppermost in her heart was the happiness of the down-and-out. With loving care she provided shelter for

the dying homeless so that they could pass away in a dignified manner; she helped orphans and people afflicted with AIDS or leprosy. Such was her compassion that she even saved the lives of the innocent unborn for she was dead against abortion. "If you don't want a child," she would say, "give it to me."

Born in Skopje (a predominantly Muslim area in Albania) in 1910, she was christened Agnes Gonxha ("Rosebud") Bejaxhiu. Even as a child she was rather frail and susceptible to malaria and whooping cough. Her father, a successful shopkeeper, passed away when she was eight. Her mother, a staunch Catholic, made her conscious of the sufferings of the poor. She taught her daughter that good deeds should not be done immodestly, they must be performed without drawing attention to them, as though one were casting a pebble into the ocean. Evidently her mother's advice was taken seriously because in her life Mother Teresa did not seek publicity.

The girl was very bright in school and she excelled in music. Even before her early teens, when she was only twelve years old, Agnes had made up her mind to become a nun. Her closely-knit family was a happy one, consequently it was with some reluctance that she decided to leave her home at the age of eighteen when she felt that the Divine was calling her.

In 1928 she sailed to Dublin and stayed in the Loreto Convent. The Loreto nuns were already busy working in Calcutta and Agnes knew that the Lord was planning to send her to this city. She travelled to Darjeeling where she took her first vows and chose the name Teresa. Mother Teresa was named after St Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897), a Carmelite nun who after much suffering died of tuberculosis at the early age of twenty-four. St Therese was an advocate of the "little way" that entails trust in and love of God. It is reasonable to assume that the teachings of this saint shaped Mother Teresa's own spiritual outlook on life. St Therese, a religious contemplative, was deeply committed to the *bhakti marga*. She influenced Mother Teresa who believed that one becomes able to care for other people only after the love within the heart gets released.

At first Mother Teresa taught geography and history in St Mary's High School in Calcutta from 1929-48 and served as its Principal for some years. From her convent window she could see the distressing squalor and suffering in the streets. Greatly moved by the plight of the slum dwellers, she sought permission to visit them. Thereafter she per-

sonally took good care of them. Then in 1937 Mother Teresa took her final vows.

It was while travelling in a train to Darjeeling some nine years later that she had a profound spiritual experience. Mother Teresa had what she termed "a call within a call" — the Lord was instructing her to continue doing His work in a more direct manner. It was a turning point in her life.

In 1946 she sought permission to live outside her convent walls. Pope Pius XII approved her decision to leave her convent for the purpose of working among deprived men, women and children. As she had a feeling of personal inadequacy Mother Teresa trained as a nurse, despite her tendency to faint at the sight of blood. In 1949 she took Indian citizenship. She integrated well into India where she was widely revered as a living saint.

Once she began a school for slum dwellers. Having neither furniture nor a blackboard, she used a stick to write the Bengali alphabet on the ground. That was so typical of her work. Her charitable projects had humble origins. With the close collaboration of her kind volunteers and numerous donors, houses and centres have been established even in Europe and the United States. Homes for the poor were built in many cities, ranging from the slums of Calcutta to the ghettos of New York.

The Society of the Missionaries of Charity which Mother Teresa started in 1950 is an order that ministers only to the extremely poor. The religious Sisters are trained nurses with mobile dispensa-

ries. In 1966 there began the Missionaries of Charity Brothers. These Brothers are especially interested in helping diseased and dying men. Their religious calling requires a lot of self-denial. They take the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and free service to those lacking in the bare necessities of life. For example, they search for destitutes and lepers in the gutters of Calcutta and make sure that they are treated with loving care.

So strict are the rules of the order that Sisters are not allowed to leave their houses without permission; they must not entertain guests, receive private letters, watch films or read novels. It is also forbidden to call each other by nicknames. The vow of poverty is very strictly observed. Mother Teresa maintained that to be able to love the poor and to know the poor they must first of all be poor themselves. The Sisters and Brothers cannot work for the rich nor accept any payment for what they do.

It is the policy of her Missionaries of Charity not to preach to those whom they help. They do not try to convert non-believers to Catholicism. Impressed by the shining example of Mother Teresa's piety, some persons of their own accord decided to change their religion and follow hers instead. We live in a world that is characterised by strife between different faiths. For this reason it is a tribute to her broadmindedness that Mother Teresa has upheld the principle of religious tolerance. After admitting that she does in fact convert, Mother Teresa added : "I convert you to be a better Hindu, a better Catholic, Muslim, Jain or Buddhist" .

The poor lady laboured for years, sleeping only four hours a day, surviving on a spartan diet of rice and lentils, finding time for both menial tasks and administrative responsibilities, and above all, devoting hours to prayer and contemplation. She worked enthusiastically even in the evening of her life, despite her curved back and gnarled hands. She sincerely believed that the Almighty would unfailingly provide her with funds for her various charitable projects. Her workload was enormous. In fact it was God's work that she was doing, Mother Teresa being a mere passive instrument in the hands of the Lord; she was, so to speak, a pen that God was using to write His divine message of compassion. Through her deeds she made manifest God's love for the world. In her work she saw the face of the Lord. She profoundly believed and trusted in the unseen Power.

Her soul was sometimes in turmoil. There were inner struggles that remained unknown to the outside world. Once in her diary Mother Teresa referred to her 'tortures of loneliness'. The rather stressed expression on her deeply lined face was an indication of her suffering. Yet great tenderness radiated from her tired eyes.

Although she was the venerated founder of a famous religious order, Mother Teresa regarded herself as a person of no importance. As Mother Teresa's will was totally superseded by the will of the Divine, she realised that she was nothing more than a faithful servant of the Lord. It was the prior existence of this sublime state of utter humility and

nothingness that enabled God to invest Mother Teresa with His power of love.

During her lifetime people were lavish in their praise of her but Mother Teresa remained unaffected by it. She won world-wide fame but she never lost her essential humility. She was happiest when she moved among the homeless. Sometimes she befriended the rich but only for the purpose of getting aid for the penniless. Critics have said that she had thoughtlessly accepted money from the affluent without first investigating how they had obtained their wealth. Be that as it may, because we know that through her numerous good works Mother Teresa somehow managed to subjugate her ego and smash it to pieces. Her deeds were not motivated by personal gain: her actions were inspired solely by the desire to glorify God.

"I am unworthy," said Mother Teresa self-effacingly, when she was informed of the Nobel Committee's decision to honour her. Her audience was spellbound when Mother Teresa made a speech without preparation after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. Speaking from her heart on that occasion, she said that she would use the money to feed the poor and build houses for the homeless and lepers. She accepted this prestigious prize in the name of the destitute. "The poor," she declared, "must know that we love them".

Patience and humility are among the greatest of Christian virtues. It cannot be doubted that Mother Teresa exemplified these noble qualities. The mentally handicapped and the dying are often very trying. But Mother Teresa under-

stood their needs and was able to nurse them with joy as she had this gift of infinite patience. Such was her humility that she did not mind toiling in the dirty and smelly quarters of Calcutta. It was Sri Ramakrishna who remarked that "the tree laden with fruits always bends low. If you wish to be great, be lowly and meek".

Mother Teresa lived at a time when the greed of human beings was so insatiable that societies everywhere were becoming increasingly competitive and materialistic. A pillar of spirituality in our secular century, Mother Teresa demonstrated the truth that it is possible to be very happy while leading a simple and austere life. We all need some money to survive but it is important to realise that money does not necessarily bring happiness. She taught that God has provided enough in the world for all. The problem, though, is that man's acquisitiveness makes him unwilling to share.

A very practical nun who refused to get unnecessarily embroiled in theological disputes, Mother Teresa was often dismissive of criticisms that were levelled against her. When she was informed that she had been attacked by the feminist author Germaine Greer, Mother Teresa simply said : "I shall pray for her" . On another occasion when several journalists had visited her, Mother Teresa asked them to put away their notebooks and "do something useful" . Actions were her forte, not words. She would probably have agreed with the saying that just one good deed speaks more eloquently than a thousand useless words.

The message of Mother Teresa can be summed up thus :

The fruit of silence is prayer
 The fruit of prayer is faith
 The fruit of faith is love
 The fruit of love is service
 The fruit of service is peace

Mother Teresa had these lines nicely printed on yellow cards. With a touch of humour she said that these were her "business cards"! She offered them to people.

Although she was an indefatigable social worker who seemed to have an inexhaustible source of energy and an amazing drive, Mother Teresa's health was slowly deteriorating. She suffered a slight stroke in 1974 which was a precursor to her heart attack in 1983 while visiting the Holy Father. It was world news whenever she was taken ill. Then in 1989 a pacemaker was implanted in her by doctors in Calcutta. It might have given her a new lease of life. Yet she suffered physically; but did she really? She might not have suffered, after all, because once Mother Teresa had declared that suffering is not from God, but suffering acquires a positive value when it is experienced with God. This means that it is incumbent on every Christian to identify his or her own personal suffering with the Crucifixion, remembering always how Jesus, the Son of God, suffered and experienced indescribable agony and thereby redeemed mankind. In April 1990 Mother Teresa announced her retirement as Superior of the Missionaries of Charity.

Despite her poor health she travelled to her native Albania in 1991 and established a mission in Tirana. Her presence in Albania helped greatly to bring about a religious revival in that troubled land.

In the presence of some of her religious sisters who had lovingly gathered around her bed, Mother Teresa died of a heart attack at the age of 87 on September 5th 1997. It happened in Calcutta. It was in the worst slums of this city that she had selflessly helped others for some 50 years. "I can't breathe anymore" were her last words. Then she fell back on her bed and passed away. Cardinal Basil Hume, who is the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain, observed that "it is rather lovely to think that Mother Teresa, who was very friendly with Princess Diana, should have gone so soon to join her". Where indeed has she gone? Once while discussing the hereafter, Mother Teresa said that Heaven for her will be the joy of being with Jesus and Mary and all the other saints and angels.

Ironically, Mother Teresa who had renounced all worldly riches was given a state funeral with military pomp and ceremony. Ignoring the monsoon rains, thousands lined the streets to catch a last fleeting glimpse of her body that was lying in an open coffin. It was borne on a gun carriage that had previously been used to carry the corpses of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru at their funerals. People from different walks of life were paying their last respects to a great soul. Finally the funeral cortege entered the Mother House for interment. There she was buried in privacy.

Perhaps it is only a matter of time before the Catholic Church decides to canonize her. At present the Church does not regard Mother Teresa as a saint but millions of non-Christians already treat her as one.

The Fear Of Death

By N.N. Rajan

OF ALL the fears for a man the fear of death is the most dreaded, and men who reign over empires, the scholastic genii and even the mighty warriors, who exhibit their own valour in the battlefield, are no exception to the experience of this fear. The bravest warrior flinches when he becomes aware of his last fateful moments. Only a man seeking Self-knowledge can be perfectly free from this fear. He can maintain equanimity even in the wake of worst disasters.

There is no surer way of escaping this enemy than by annihilating the ego or 'I am the body' - thought (*dehatma-buddhi*). A realised person rather courts death as his body becomes a burden to him and is of no use to him any longer. It is only the ego self (non-Self) that is faced with this fear. But one who has realised the supreme consciousness by exalting his own consciousness becomes merged in the Self and finally comes out free from the cycle of birth and death.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi actually encountered the death experience, and thereby got direct enlightenment spontaneously without any outside

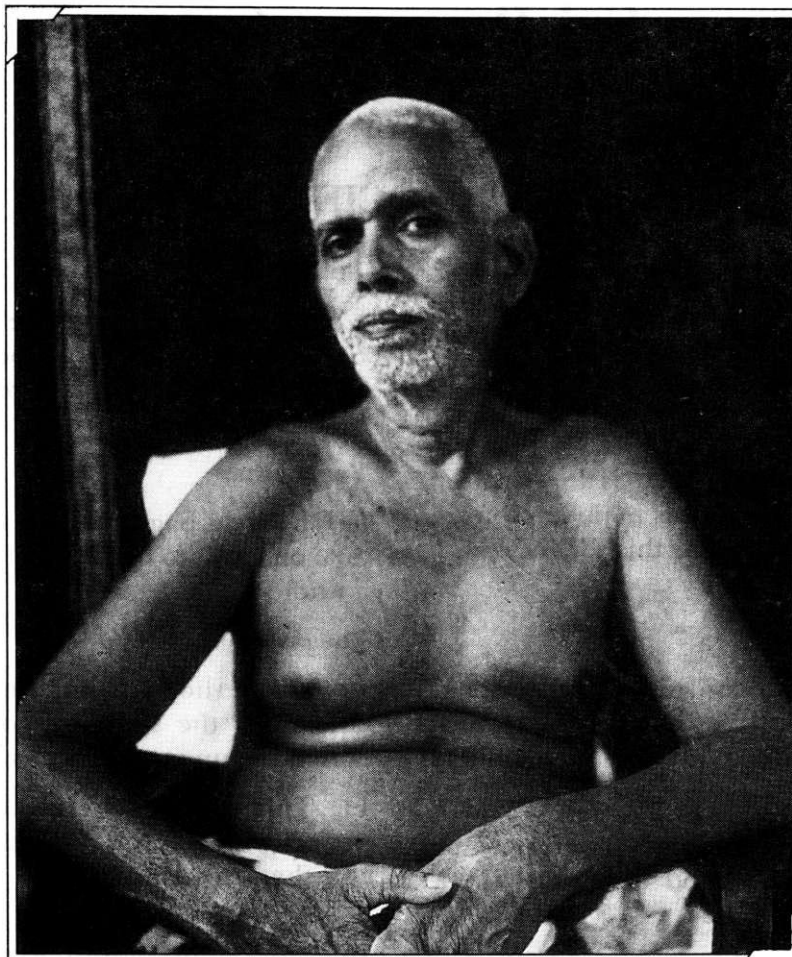
guidance. At the age of sixteen he realised distinctly and unmistakably that it is the body that dies, and not the Self. The shell is only broken but the contents, the all-pervading Self ever shines in perfect splendour.

Self-realisation through *vichara* or enquiry as directed by Sri Ramana is the only panacea for all the ills of the world, including death. The impressions of a man's deeds (*karma*) are clinging to the subtle body which forms the very basis for his future births and for merits and demerits. But a Self-realised person escapes this process, and he never returns to the mortal sphere.

In *Ashtavakra Gita* it is said, "In one who is the infinite ocean of consciousness, the souls like waves naturally rise, beat, play and return: wonderful!"

After Hiranyakashipu was killed by Lord Vishnu, Prahlada (his son) was afraid that he would also meet with the same fate one day. Overcome by this fear he surrendered to the Lord. He began to adore Him with *puja*, *japa* and meditation. The Lord was pleased with

From *The Call Divine*, January 1971.



his devotion and appeared before the boy in His divine form. He also warned him that, to be perfectly free from the haunting fear of death, he should not rest content with having His *darsan*, but he should strive to realise the *Atman* within, which is none other than Lord Vishnu. He also initiated him in the practice of this sacred pursuit. As a true devotee Prahlada developed his *sadhana* and realised the Self (Lord) within. Thus he was freed from this fear and attained immortality. This episode from *Yoga*

Vasishtha was narrated by Bhagavan Ramana, and this, it would be seen, is different from the narrative in the *Bhagavatham*. The unity of the oneness of the Self, which is the only Reality ever-present is the ultimate stage of Supreme Knowledge. One should shake off the mundane links to know the glory of the Self within and remain immersed in the bliss. The pseudo-Self or the ego dies, and the aspirant settles in conscious union with the immortal Self located in the Heart.

Sri Ramana Gita

Chapter Ten

ON SOCIETY

1. We record in this, the tenth chapter, the conversation between Yati Yoganatha and Maharshi Ramana, which will rejoice society.

Yoganatha:

2. Oh Great Sage, what is the relation between society and its members? Lord, be pleased to explain this for the *sreyas*¹ of society.

Bhagavan:

3. In a society consisting of followers of diverse ways of life, Oh best of sadhus, society is like the body and the members like its limbs.

4. Oh ascetic, a member prospers by working for the good of society like a limb serving the body.

5. Through mind, speech and body one should always conduct oneself so as to serve the interests of society and should also awaken his circle to do likewise.

6. One should build up one's own circle so as to serve the interests of society and then make it prosper so that the society itself may prosper.

Yoganatha:

7. Among the wise some extol *santi*², others *sakti*³. Which of these, Oh Lord, is the better means for promoting the well-being of society?

Bhagavan:

8. *Santi* is for purifying one's own mind, *Sakti* for the progress of society. Society should be raised through *sakti* and then *santi* established.

Yoganatha:

9. Oh Great Sage, what is the supreme goal on earth to be attained by society as a whole?

Bhagavan:

10. Brotherhood based on a sense of equality is the supreme goal to be attained by human society as a whole.

11. Through brotherhood, supreme peace will prevail among mankind and then this entire planet will flourish like a single household.

12. This conversation between Yoganatha, the ascetic, and the gracious Maharshi took place on the 15th of August 1917.⁴

This is the Tenth Chapter entitled 'On Society' in *Sri Ramana Gita*, the Science of Brahman and the Scripture of Yoga, composed by Ramana's disciple, Vasishta Ganapati.

¹ Progressive improvement.

² Peace.

³ Power.

⁴ It is significant that India attained independence exactly thirty years after this episode.

Alan Chadwick : A Western Seeker Who Found His True Home

By N.R. S. Manian

Sri Bhagavan had this to say of Chadwick: "Chadwick was with us before, he was one of us. He had some desire to be born in the West, and that has now been fulfilled".

Coming from Sri Bhagavan (who was not known to make such remarks as to personal matters) it is an exceptional statement. This explains why Chadwick was truly at home with Sri Bhagavan and Arunachala.

NOT all Westerners who came to Sri Bhagavan became as staunch devotees as Major A.W. Chadwick, later on known as Sadhu Arunachala. And he was the first to stay on permanently in the Ashram. From 1935 and until his end in 1962 he had never once left India. As a Major in the British Army he had seen service in theatres of war and was employed for some time in Chile. When he built his own room it became the first private room inside the Ashram proper.

Reading through Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* he decided that Sri Bhagavan was his Guru and stuck to him steadfastly and loyally ever since. When he first arrived at the Ashram he felt remarkably at home and this is how he describes his feelings on seeing Sri Bhagavan: "I felt the tremendous peace of his presence, his graciousness. It was not as though I were meeting him for the first time. It seemed that I had always known him, though I had not

been conscious of it at the time. Now I know."

Genial and popular among devotees he is remembered as an outstanding devotee, a perfect *sadhaka* and a source of strength for the Ashram administration. A tall and imposing figure with a beaming smile and pleasant greeting for everyone whom he chanced to pass by in the morning hours in the Ashram, he was also known to maintain a strict schedule of reading, work, meditation and other activities with the punctuality characteristic of the West. He would not be disturbed from his routine on any account and once refused to come out and meet a Governor who wished to see him!

The Ashram remembers his name for many things of lasting value. One is the starting of a regular *Sri Chakra Puja* at the Shrine of the Mother. The other is

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, January 1972.

the revival of the *Veda Patasala* which had stopped functioning soon after the *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan. Another achievement of his was his translating the works of Sri Bhagavan into English verse. At his request, Sri Bhagavan went through the translations and made corrections.

Even before coming to the Ashram Chadwick had practised meditation sporadically for quite some years. To quote his own words: "I had argued that since God had created the world, it was only out of Himself that He could have done so, for if there was some other apart from Himself then He could not be God, undisputed and omnipotent. So I decided that the seeker himself was God, or as Sri Bhagavan puts it, the Self. My method of meditation then, was to make the mind cease from thinking as an individual and just rest in its Godhead." Here was no beginner but an advanced seeker who had arrived at the Advaitic conviction on his own and was ripe to practise the unique method of Self-enquiry as taught by Sri Bhagavan.

Chadwick overcame many difficulties which a born Westerner faces in India. One of which is sitting on the floor! He devised a meditation belt which consisted of a piece of cotton cloth brought round from the back across raised knees. With this support he could sit comfortably on the floor for long periods. Ashram life he adopted immediately and with perfect ease, pursuing a rigorous *sadhana* which included wearing *vibhuti* and *kumkum*. His interest in the *Veda*, particularly its chanting, and *puja* (which he wanted to be performed with meticu-

lous attention to detail) and other Hindu rituals was not casual but abiding. He proved more zealous about these than many a Hindu devotee.

Chadwick also took to doing *namaskaram* (falling prostrate in salutation) before Sri Bhagavan as other devotees but not before passing through a period of hesitation. His point was that he was a Westerner not accustomed to such a form of salutation and further what Bhagavan wanted after all was an attitude of surrender in the mind. Vain repetition of a mere formality was not necessary. He therefore simply stood before Sri Bhagavan with folded hands. Other devotees were not satisfied and wanted to bring him in line. Choosing a convenient time they got an explanation from Sri Bhagavan himself who remarked that every *namaskaram* at the feet of the *jnani* was so many nails driven into the coffin of the ego which is the trouble with all. This convinced Chadwick. He did the *namaskaram* all right but at a place of his own choice in the Hall and not right in front of Sri Bhagavan, in the full view of others. One day however he had to do it just like others since the Hall was very crowded. Sri Bhagavan noticing this laughed aloud and pointed it out to others making a joke about the space occupied by Chadwick's tall frame while he did the *namaskaram*. Chadwick was rid of all hesitation or shyness and actually advocated the practice thereafter. He says: "Prostration done in sincerity and with real surrender was undoubtedly accepted in the same spirit. Bhagavan would say 'They don't know it, but every time they prostrate to me I

stay by him and on account 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 Sri Bhagavan's passing away in persuading the Ashram authorities to start the *Sri Chakra Puja*. When someone remarked how magnificent it had been and what a good thing it would be if such *pujas* could be performed regularly, Sri 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 Sri Bhagavan."

It looked as if the Vedic chanting done during Sri Bhagavan's lifetime might come to an end simply because there was no one to carry it on. Since the *parayana* was a welcome time for meditation its ending was regrettable and Chadwick averted the danger by organising a *Patasala*, a traditional boarding school, where the boys learn to recite the Vedas as well as English with some general education. It was a great expense but Chadwick collected donations for it so that it should not be a burden on the Ashram. It is being run to this day successfully.

A great contribution of Chadwick's is the help he rendered to the Ashram administration in seeing to it that the Will of Sri Bhagavan was respected and its provisions carried out against a storm of controversy and challenges legal and otherwise. He recognised the Will as nothing less than the Will of the Master whose actions could not be taken lightly. He observed: "There were strong reasons for making the Will to safeguard

the future of the Ashram. It was executed in consequence of the ardent prayer of a number of disciples and devotees, who having witnessed one protracted litigation were naturally apprehensive of similar litigations in the future, and time fully justified this apprehension." Though he was fundamentally a *sadhaka* from first to last he had no hesitation in his efforts to put the administration in a position of stability. It was not material activity really since Sri Bhagavan had declared that those who were looking after the activities of the Ashram were only doing his will.

Chadwick once asked Sri Bhagavan about a novel method of suicide which he thought would ensure Liberation. "I had been cycling round Arunachala and on meeting a bus the thought occurred to me: 'Why shouldn't I concentrate on the Self and, while so doing, throw myself in front of the bus so as to attain *moksha*?' I told Sri Bhagavan when I got back, but he said it would not work. Even though I tried to concentrate on the Self, thoughts would spring up involuntarily as I fell; the mind would become very active and owing to the thoughts life would continue and I should take another body."

Chadwick's identification with the Ashram was total. He regarded it his duty to defend when necessary the position of the Ashram. He was quick and sharp in his retorts when there was any misrepresentation of the Master's teaching. Typical of this is his reaction to an article by Somerset Maugham which contained the following passage: "When one considers how full the world is of sorrow

and suffering, one can hardly refrain from thinking that Brahman might have done better to leave well alone. . . . To Maharshi the world was a place of suffering and sorrow." Chadwick says: "Really Mr.M, is this your idea of *Advaita*? . . . What absolute rubbish! Bhagavan always insisted that there was nothing wrong with the world. All the trouble lay with us. On reading S.M. one comes to the conclusion that he has again succeeded as a first class writer of fiction!"

His *samadhi* is right inside the Ashram grounds which is something special again. Besides his room is a small structure, the *samadhi* of his ego which he built symbolising the crucifixion of the ego which Sri Bhagavan explained was the significance of Christ's crucifixion and the essence of Christianity.

His last moments at the Christian Mission Hospital, Vellore, were as thrilling as revealing. In a condition of delirium he could still recognise people around. When speech had failed him even the previous day he could clearly reply 'Yes' when asked by a German devotee (Hugo Maier) present whether he

felt Sri Bhagavan's presence. It was again a clear 'No' when he was asked whether Sri Bhagavan was helping him. He enquired about the Ashram President and his family. And just before the end Chadwick said in a clear voice, "It is Easter!"¹ When reminded it was not yet Easter he said again in a clear voice with a beaming expression on his face, "I know it will be still five days; but it *is* Easter." His eyes closed never to open again! His body was brought to the Ashram to be interred with rituals similar to those observed in the case of a Hindu *sadhu*.

¹ Easter is the day of resurrection of Christ after the crucifixion. Christ was crucified on a Friday and the resurrection came on Sunday. Resurrection symbolises the rise of the Real and crucifixion the death of the unreal. The pure 'I' of Being is resurrection. The lesser 'I' or ego is to be crucified in order that the real 'I' may be revealed.

See *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 86 : "The Master gave the true significance of the Christian faith thus: Christ is the ego.

The CROSS is the body.

When the ego is crucified, and it perishes, what survives is the Absolute Being (God), (cf. "I and my Father are one") and this glorious survival is called RESURRECTION.

At a distance from the market, we hear only a loud buzzing noise, but entering the market, we hear this no longer, and become aware of the bargains that are being carried on. Similarly, so long as man is far away from God, he is in the midst of the confusion of sophistry, vain argument and discussion; but once he approaches the Almighty, all arguments and discussions cease, and he clearly understands the mysteries of God.

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

The Quaker Faith

ENGLAND 350 years ago was in a state of religious ferment. The grip of the Roman church had been broken in the West, the Bible had been rendered into English for all to read who had learned their mother tongue. Freedom was in the air: sects and schisms abounded. There were also, here and there, little groups of quiet folk who met together in private for periods of prayer and mutual support. Although they called themselves by different names, or by none, they came to be known corporately as 'Seekers'. It was to these groups that the preaching of George Fox made its greatest appeal.

George Fox was a solitary seeker. Impelled by deep-seated distress at the state of the orthodox church and the shallow, unspiritual attitude of some of its incumbents, he wandered about the country as a young man, searching for a faith that would satisfy him. Discussions with religious persons served only to deepen his despair: he could find nobody to understand his need to get to the root of the matter. When, at last, the solutions to his troubles came, it was as

a sudden revelation. Later, he wrote of it in his *Journal*:

As I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition'; and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.

The truth, Fox discovered, was not to be learnt from books nor taught by the priests; it was to be realised inwardly, by the workings of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Early Christianity did not depend upon church or upon holy writ: when the faith spread across the Roman world in the first decades after the crucifixion the church had not been organized nor the gospels even written. True religion was a matter of personal experience —

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of direct experience of Christ. "This I knew experimentally", wrote Fox. From this he developed his conception of 'the Light within' or 'Inward Light of Christ'. People must be brought back to know the reality of the spirit and the possibility of direct experience of it; "for people had the Scriptures, but were not in that same light and power and spirit which they were in that gave forth the Scriptures; and so they neither knew God nor Christ nor the Scriptures aright; nor had they unity one with another, being out of power and spirit of God...."

The date usually given for the founding of the Religious Society of Friends is 1652. Fox made preaching journeys all over England and addressed the large gatherings that came to hear him. Some of his teaching was startling. Once he interrupted a dry and academic sermon in Ulverstone Church with an impassioned appeal for a renewal of faith; his final words have become a motto for Friends ever since:

You will say, Christ saith this and the apostles say this, but what canst THOU say?

Another much-loved saying comes from one of his outdoor meetings of that time:

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

'Let your life preach' is one of the

principles of the Quaker way; 'walking cheerfully over the world' is what Friends still try to do. 'That of God', or the 'Inward Light' or 'the working of the Holy Spirit within you' — all these phrases are attempts by Fox to define the indefinable direct and personal link that the individual can have with the Divine. This is the quintessence of Quakerism.

It offended both the established church, with its hierarchy of bishops and priests, and the Puritans, whose faith was an interpretation of the infallible Bible, the 'Word of God'. Friends were persecuted, their meetings banned. They were thrown into jail, their possessions were confiscated. Those who were at liberty got together to help those in distress and formed a committee which they called 'Meeting for Sufferings'. That is still, to this day, the name given to the central executive committee of the Society.

The troubles of early Friends were not lightened by the eccentric behaviour into which their convictions led them. Once the distinction between 'truth' and 'notional beliefs' was made, further insights followed hard, one after another. For, if it were true that we lived in the divine Light at all times, why should Sunday be singled out as being especially 'holy'? All days should equally be devoted to seeking God's will and doing it. If we were in touch with the Holy Spirit wherever we were, why should special buildings be 'consecrated' to God's work? The Friends recognized no difference between sacred and secular activity. Nor did they see any need for special acts known as 'sacraments' when the whole

of life should be lived sacramentally, in the service of God and for Him alone.

George Fox and his followers became the butt of public merriment and abuse for their peculiar ideas; their appearances before magistrates were times of public entertainment. They refused to take an oath, on the ground that it suggested the existence of two standards of truth, a lower one for ordinary use and a higher one for special occasions. They refused to use titles or to remove their hats before officials, saying that the only proper subject of honour was God and no man could or should perform empty honours to another, since all were equal in the divine sight.

This point of view was not appreciated by the justices before whom they were brought. It was one of those justices who coined the name that has stuck ever since. George Fox, under questioning by a certain Judge Bennett, bade the magistrates 'tremble at the word of the Lord'. "So", said the judge, "we are to be quakers, too, then?" The epithet quickly caught on and became widely used in scorn by a delighted public.

When the 'Friends of Truth', one of the many names by which they called themselves, came together for their Meeting for Worship they sat in silence, 'waiting upon the Lord'. Only when the Spirit came upon one of them would he (or she) rise and speak. There was no liturgy, no 'order of service', no set prayers and no formal sermon. William Penn, the most famous of the 'second generation' of Quakers, has captured the philosophy of the meeting in a notable paragraph, written in 1693:

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion; and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here makes them strangers. This world is a form; our bodies are forms; and no visible acts of devotion can be without forms. But yet the less form in religion the better, since God is a Spirit; for the more mental our worship, the more adequate to the nature of God; the more silent, the more suitable to the language of a Spirit.

Today, the only 'service' conducted in the Society is still that same 'Meeting for Worship', held normally on a Sunday morning ('because it is a convenient time', Friends hasten to point out) in a room which is bare, uncluttered, with simple chairs or benches set in a square or a circle, a small table in the centre holding a bowl of flowers and a book or two for reference if required. The meeting starts when the first person enters, sits down and composes himself for meditation. Others follow, as quietly as possible. Soon the room is full: without a word the silence deepens. The meeting 'centres down', as the phrase has it, as Friends wait in silent prayer and 'mental worship': a living silence, without scuffling or shifting about. A corporate silence, which is broken only when a Friend is drawn to rise and offer vocal ministry: which may be a short homily or exhortation, a brief reading from the Bible or some other religious book or from the Society's own 'Advices and Queries', or a spoken prayer. Anyone

present, member or non-member, man or woman, may speak. To the offering there is no response, no applause, no word of thanks. The words tail off into the silence which engulfs them. The speaker resumes his seat, the silent meeting continues. The meeting is closed by two Elders shaking hands, a token of friendship which is taken up by others in the circle as the group 'comes to life' moving, shuffling, coughing.

Edgar Castle, in his book *Approach to Quakerism* describes the 'feel' of a Quaker meeting thus:

One of the features of the Quaker way of worship that very soon appealed to me was the fact of its strongly social character. By 'social' I mean 'related to other persons'. It had been my experience in a variety of other churches, Catholic, Anglican and Free Church, that my attention travelled along a thread leading from me to the priest at the altar, or to the preacher in the pulpit, or may be to the organ and the choir, each in turn. But I have no memory of this binding thread passing from me *around* and *through* all those who were worshipping with me. There was far too much going on, far too much outwardly attracting my interest and even demanding my attention to permit of a thought for my immediate neighbours. But in a Quaker meeting I found that I was firmly bound to my fellow worshippers; they were the only visible distraction from my inward thoughts.... My fellow worshippers, known and unknown, were part of me and I of them; what

**The Lord sustains the Universe.
The pseudo-self which thinks it
bears
Is like the grinning figure which
seems
To carry the weight of the temple
tower.
If a traveller in a cart does not
Put down his baggage in the cart
But carries it painfully on his
head,
Whose is the fault?**

— Sri Bhagavan,
Supplement to the Forty Verses.

I was trying to do they were trying to do. It was just God and they and I...

As the accent in Quakerism is on the personal response and individual understanding of spiritual matters, there is no creed, no required statement of belief of even the widest kind. This has meant that although in the early days the Society was entirely Christ-centred coming close to fundamentalism, it has more recently been able to admit to its meetings people with less orthodox Christian ideas. However, the general discipline of silence and self-education which is characteristic of Friends is not to everyone's taste and is sufficient to restrict the numbers of adherents. Total membership in Great Britain is now (1980) somewhat less than 20,000, although there are as many again who are associated with its meetings but who do not wish to commit themselves to formal membership. There are nearly ten times that number in the U.S.A., while other large congregations exist in Kenya and

Madagascar, the result of nineteenth-century missionary work, and smaller groups in most western European countries and in most English-speaking communities across the world.

In modern times the Society has embraced among its members a diversity of belief. In a Quaker Meeting for Worship a thoroughgoing, Christ-centred trinitarian may sit next to one whose thought is influenced more by Buddhist philosophy, while a convinced unitarian next to him is flanked by one who is seeking 'the Ground of our Existence'. There is something that holds these diverse characters together in a Society that means a great deal to every member, although nobody has been able to identify what it is. We do not attempt to convert each other to our personal views, but we look upon the very different contributions in our vocal ministry as one of the most valuable assets we have — we think it a great improvement on the orthodox custom of having a prepared sermon from the same parson every week! Among ministry that I recall over many years has been readings from *The Prophet*, from the *Bhagavad Gita* and from the stories of the *Hasidim*, as well as from Christian mystics and devotional books.

Quakers have traditionally been noted for their social conscience and for their forward-looking ideas. They have been in the forefront of many social movements and responsible for a number of successful ideas for social reform that were ahead of their time. One thinks immediately of Elizabeth Fry who gave up a brilliant social life to devote herself to those in prison; of William Tuke who,

towards the end of the 18th century, opened the first mental hospital with a modern view of caring for the welfare of the insane. An American friend, John Woolman, spent much of his life seeking amity with the Indians and made long missionary journeys trying to persuade his countrymen to abandon slavery. Education was an early concern. Friends were among the first to open schools where girls were given just as good an education as were the boys. Today the Quaker schools in Great Britain are looked upon as places where character is developed and where the accent is more on producing well-informed and well-intentioned citizens than on cramming unwilling heads with information for passing examinations.

Until comparatively recent times Quakers were barred from entering the universities — Oxford and Cambridge abandoned religious tests for membership only in the 1870s — and they were therefore excluded from the professions for which a university education was essential. Their energies were thus directed into industry and trade. Soon small businesses grew into large ones and many companies that are now world-famous names have had obscure Quaker beginnings. The 'chocolate trio' come at once to mind — Rowntree, Cadbury and Fry were all Quaker families. Others include Reckitt & Colman, Allen & Hanbury, Bryant & May, Ransomes, Barclays Bank, Lloyds Bank... the list could go on. Now-a-days fewer Friends make their name in commerce: more are teachers and university professors, doctors and dentists, psychiatrists and social workers. They are active in many charitable organizations

(Oxfam was founded by a group of Friends and others in Oxford) while the voluntary housing movement in Britain owes much of its impetus and success to the involvement of Friends.

I suppose the best known concern of Friends generally is that for Peace. Quakers have always been completely opposed to war and many have suffered severe penalties for their persistence in declaring themselves 'conscientious objectors'. Here, as in so many other ways, their testimony, maintained through much personal suffering, has influenced national opinion so that machinery now exists in British law to provide in war-time for those for whom the killing of another human being is just unthinkable. This peace testimony goes right back to the beginnings of the Society, for it was as early as 1661 that George Fox found it necessary to establish its position, in a Declaration to King Charles II which is now part of Quaker lore:

Our principle is and our practices have always been to seek peace and ensue it and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare and doing

that which tends to the peace of all.... All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever.... This is our testimony to the whole world. The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we certainly know and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war with any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world.

In the complicated world of the 20th century the options are not so clear cut as they were; in World War II many Quakers pocketed their philosophy and went to fight the Hitler evil. But more found they could not. They worked as members of the Friends Ambulance Unit and in other welfare operations. The Peace Testimony stands as a central pillar of the Quaker ideal. It is one of the basic convictions that unite the many different people within the Society of Friends.

The faith-healers of India order their patients to repeat with full conviction the words, 'There is no illness here at all'. The patients repeat them, and this mental suggestion helps to drive off the disease. So if you think yourself to be morally weak, you will actually become so in a short time. Know and believe that you are of immense power and the power will come to you at last.

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Reminiscences of Meenakshi Muruganar

I WAS born the sixth daughter of Sri Periyakulam Krishna Iyer and Kanakammal on the fourth day of Panguni month in Saleevahana Sakabdha 1823 (17.3.1902). When I was eleven, I was engaged to Subramanian of Ramanathapuram, son of Krishnamurthy Iyer and Subbalakshmi Ammal. Our marriage took place in Melmangalam village near Periyakulam. It was a five-day celebration conducted on a grand scale.

Muruganar, my husband, was a tutor to the third Rani's mother in Ramanathapuram Palace. After the marriage, he served as Tamil *vidvan* in Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal, Madurai. Then we left that place, came to Rayapuram and settled in Kollava Agraharam. My husband was appointed Tamil *pandit* in Northwick School, Rayapuram.

Meantime, my father took *sannyasa* and became one of the leading disciples of Sri Ramana Bhagavan. His *sannyasin* name was Dandapani Swami. Later, my father went to Palani with Bhagavan's permission, constructed an *ashram* in South Giri Street, and lived there for

some time. While he was there he came to our house in Rayapuram. During his visit, he gave a copy of *Aksharamanamalai* (The Marital Garland of Letters) composed by Sri Bhagavan, to my husband. My husband went through this work and after four days informed me that he was going to Thirukkazhikunram. However, instead, he went to Tiruvannamalai.

When he saw Bhagavan, he felt that his whole body was burning. He wept and cried out, complaining of a burning sensation without knowing what it was. The attendants around Bhagavan thought that he was mad. One attendant, Sri Ramakrishna Swamy rubbed lemon juice on his head and poured pots of water over him. He stayed there for several days doing meditation and having Bhagavan's *darshan*. Then he returned to Madras and his job, but he had little interest in his work.

Subsequently he began to go to Tiruvannamalai on all weekends. After the first annual ceremony of my mother-

Excerpt from *The Mountain Path*, April 1981.

in-law, he resigned his job and went to Ramanathapuram. I had no information whatever about this. My neighbours telegraphed to my brother about my problem and he came to see me. Both of us went to the school and met the headmistress who was an English lady. She said that he had resigned his job and left. I began to weep and she consoled me by saying that God would help me.

Then I went to Ramanathapuram with my brother. Muruganar came to visit us the night we arrived. I held his feet and wept. I requested him to point out my faults if any that made him leave me alone. He gave me no reply. Then I went to Raghava Iyengar, a great Tamil scholar in the town and told him about my troubles. Raghava Iyengar talked to my husband but this had no effect.

Then Sri Muruganar left for Tiruvannamalai. After ten days, I also went there. Santhammal also came to the Ashram. I told all my sufferings to Bhagavan and wept. Bhagavan consoled me. I stayed in the Ashram for six months. At that time the Ashram was very small. Bhagavan, Chinnaswamy, and Dandapani Swamy used to cook. I helped them in the kitchen and it was a very happy time for me.

Everyday Bhagavan used to give me ten verses from Muruganar's works and instructed me to recite them to him the following day. I did so regularly. Sometimes I helped Bhagavan in grinding iddlies etc. Once a week Bhagavan used to go around the Hill with Kunjuswamy, Dandapani Swamy, Ramakrishna Swami, Santhammal and others. I also used to accompany them. We used to recite

Aksharamanamalai during our *pradakshina*.

Bhagavan never allowed anyone to be idle. All devotees used to sit in meditation with closed eyes in the hall. I did not know how to meditate; when I mentioned this to Bhagavan, he gave me instructions. One day I came to the hall wearing nice clothes decked with flowers. I did *namaskaram* to Sri Bhagavan. Santhammal saw this and remarked, "Your husband has become a *sannyasi*, why do you dress up like this?" (It is traditional for widows and wives of *sannyasis* not to dress themselves up in any way). After hearing this, I removed the flowers and went up to Bhagavan weeping. I bowed down before him. He noticed me and asked, "Why did you remove all your decorations?" I said that it was on the advice of Santhammal. Immediately, Bhagavan called Santhammal and asked, "Why, has she no husband? Why should she not decorate herself if she wants to? When anyone comes to the Ashram and takes a ladle in the hand, he immediately thinks that he is wonderful. (Santhammal was the Ashram cook). While I am considering how best to pacify her, you hurt her deeply. Hereafter, nobody should make any remarks about Meenakshi".

On one occasion, while others were doing meditation, I was more interested in some coffee which was about to be served. Bhagavan noticed this, laughed and said; "Everyone is doing meditation on the Self, but Meenakshi is doing coffee meditation". Saranagathi Ramaswami Iyer who came in a bullock cart entered the hall with coffee and *iddlies* and Bhagavan asked him to serve me first!

On another occasion, someone brought a big plate of *prasadam* and Bhagavan asked Muruganar to distribute them. He distributed *prasadam* to everyone except me. Bhagavan noticed this and asked me whether I had received *prasadam* and I replied that I had not. Then he asked Muruganar why he had not given me *prasadam* and he replied; "Since she did not hold out her hand I could not give her any." When he asked, "Why did you not stretch out your hand," I complied immediately.

Muruganar stayed near the temple in town with Eswaraswamigal and Gopal Rao. They used to go begging for their food at noon. Muruganar used to sit alone in Subramanya Temple in the evening. One evening, acting on Santhammal's advice, I caught hold of his feet and asked, "What mistake have I done? Why did you leave home? What will be my future?" There was no response from Muruganar. He did not speak to me. He did not even look at me.

Soon after this incident, someone brought a piece of verse to the hall and submitted it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan wanted Muruganar to read it and said: "Muruganar has been absent for the last two days. What is the reason?" In response to this I went to Bhagavan and told him what I did at the temple on Santhammal's advice. Bhagavan got angry with me and said, "Why did you act like that on Santhammal's advice? You see, while he was here, you could see your husband. But now he has disappeared, what will you do? Hereafter, don't take others' advice and don't give trouble to Muruganar".

Then he asked Viswanatha Swami and Ramakrishna Swami to look for Muruganar and bring him back. They found him in Skandashram and brought him back to the Ashram telling him that Meenakshi had gone to her village. He came and sat by the side of Bhagavan and I went before Bhagavan and did *namaskaram*. Then Bhagavan asked Muruganar why he had run away instead of advising her to do some meditation. Muruganar remained silent.

One day, all the devotees were sitting in the hall. I was in tears again. Bhagavan asked me, "Why are you crying again? Did somebody tease you?" I said "No one talked against me, but I thought of my miserable life and the tears just came." Bhagavan said, "Why don't you take my advice? What is there in the family life? See, your father has ten children, but they are not helping him. What is the use? I am always here with you. Nothing will happen, don't worry." Thus Bhagavan consoled me. He said, "Go only to the house where they treat you well and call you 'Meenakshi!' with affection. The Ashram will take care of you."

Another day he called me and gave ten verses by Muruganar to memorise. In these verses he describes Bhagavan as his bridegroom, Muruganar being the bride. He complains that Ramana has left the bride in the streets after marriage without proper care. The verses are in *Nayaki Nayakabava*. The verse says, "You were once with me my wedded lord, but now for a long time you have abandoned me. And if I complain, you call our old friendship a dream that I had dreamt." In the version given to me,

Bhagavan changed the last line, "*Ramana mayavane*" into "*Murugamayavane*" (implying thereby that Muruganar had abandoned me, his wedded wife). He then asked me to recite these verses in the hall in the evening while Muruganar was there.

I sang these ten verses in the hall while Muruganar was sitting by the side of Bhagavan. Bhagavan then told Muru-

ganar that he has not left him in the streets, but Muruganar has left Meenakshi in the streets. Muruganar got up laughing, but Bhagavan asked him to give a reply before getting up. However, he went away without saying anything.

Bhagavan said, "I tried in so many ways. It is of no use. God alone can look after you".

Bhagavan was so gracious to me.

JAI SRI KRISHNA

By Dilip Kumar Roy

Oh, give me refuge at thy feet,
And take me across the shoreless deep.
Who but thyself, my Lord, can ever transform
Life's thorny woods into sweet flower-gardens?

Thy mystic flute-call has, once and for all,
Weaned my soul from the bondage of the world.
Why then must thou in this fateful hour of night
Still turn thy face away,

I know thou art compassionate :
For time and again have I not thrilled
To the message of thy flute
But thou, alas, hast stayed invisible :

I know thou art not cruel, Lord :
For has not thy cascade of blessing flown
In ever-new lints of deep delight for me?
In my loneliness I hark to thee and appeal :
Oh, teach me to hail thy bliss.
And let me havened be
At thy dawn-rose feet.
Kindle, oh kindle in my soul
Thy everlasting Light of lights.
How else shall I ever learn to love thee
Unknowing thy unutterable Self
Of supernal beauty and bliss?

How I Came to the Maharshi

By Francis Allen

THIS is the story of how Bhagavan, whom I never met, came, I believe into my life. During World War II, I was posted from England to Ceylon, where I became so interested in Theravada Buddhism that I determined to enter the *Sangha*. I was informed by monks there that they could not give me ordination without first obtaining my parents' consent.

After being demobilized in England I joined a small London group studying Theravada, another member of which was a lady who, it transpired, had been to Tiruvannamalai. I discovered this one day when I heard her telling a mutual friend how she had gone to Sri Ramana-sramam with a personal problem. For the first time in my life I then heard the name Sri Ramana Maharshi. "Bhagavan" she explained, had merely smiled and indicated that she settle herself upon a mat in His hall. Whereupon, without words passing between them, the solution to her trouble had soon presented itself to her mind. This she informed her London friend, was nothing unusual where Bhagavan was concerned.

I made up my mind there and then to break my journey to Ceylon at Tiruvannamalai. Unfortunately, although my father had agreed to my ordination as a Buddhist monk, my mother withheld her permission, fearing it was only a passing impulse on my part. I had returned to a good job in London, and she was reluc-

tant to see me disappear, perhaps for ever, into a far away monastic life.

Months passed, until one evening I returned home from a particularly trying day at the office feeling tired and looking, I dare say, dejected. My mother greeted me with the words: 'I can see you are as keen as ever to go back to Ceylon. You have my permission, if you think it will make you happy'.

That day was April 14th, 1950. The very day that, miles and miles away from London, Bhagavan left the body. It was not until I arrived in Bombay that I discovered this: and imagining that Bhagavan was no more, I went to Colombo.....

It was another few years before I met Ethel Merston who suggested I should read Arthur Osborne's book *Ramana Maharshi*. After that, with the assistance of Ronald Ross, I arrived at Sri Ramana-sramam.

What, I wonder, would Bhagavan have advised me if I had visited Him *enroute* to the Buddhist monastery? Had he warned me of what was going to come of it, I should have found it impossible to believe. At that time I had set my heart on embracing the monastic life, and any dissuasion would not have deterred me, yet would have filled me with foreboding uneasiness. No; I imagine that, simply smiling, Bhagavan would have left me to go ahead and work out in my own way what was a particularly complicated part of my destiny.

KARMA AND REINCARNATION: by Muni Narayana Prasad. 1994. Pub: D.K.Print World, F-52 Bali Nagar, New Delhi 110015. Pp.106, Rs.80

THE POWER OF THE SACRED NAME: V.Rāghavan's Studies in Namasiddhanta and Indian Culture: Ed.by William J. Jackson. 1994. Pub: Sri Satguru Publications, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, New Delhi 110007. Pp.362, Rs.300.

Two scholarly books dealing in Indian themes, and that too in a most systematic manner. V Rāghavan is of course quite well known for his intensely scholarly studies on musicology and Indian aesthetics, and Muni's commentaries on several Upanishads are well rated. In short two notable works.

Karma and Reincarnation, dedicated to Guru Nitya, forms part of *Contemporary Researches in Hindu Philosophy & Religion* — a series committed to independent studies in that area. The author spent more than two years in Fiji, in the South Pacific, as he says, reading, writing and occasionally lecturing to a group of devotees on the *Bhagavad Gita*. The eighth chapter was a sort of stumbling block where the Muni found the reference to two paths of the departed souls, and being steadfast like the Yogis mentioned by Krishna himself, the Muni felt deeply disconcerted at the idea of teaching certain verses that he had himself not fully comprehended. He meditated on the same for a whole week and came upon the eye-opening third and fourth verses that clearly discriminated between the imperishable real and the perishable unreal. This distinction formed the basis for the *Gita*'s reference to the two paths as he came to understand. For a self-realised soul, there is neither birth nor death — the Karmic cycle is only a delusion for the *ajñāni*. Karma and rebirth are there for the eyes only of those who *intend* to see it!

This concise booklet is an exploration into the concept of *karma* and rebirth as it is visualized variously in the Vēdas, the Brāhmanas, the Upanishads, the *Gita* and in the Brahma Sūtras. Throughout the book, Muni Nārāyana Prasād keeps to his theme in a sort of frontal view, never straying a bit from it, and conclusively arguing with the clarity of a Sankara and the virtuosity of a Rāmānuja. The clarity and skill in interpretation, perhaps, he owes to his Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati.

On the other hand, in William Jackson's work, the virtuosity and intensity issue from V.Rāghavan's highly rigorous analytical skill — the source material on to which Jackson has worked out his editorial skills. Many are the chosen ways to *mukti* and *nāma sankīrtanam* (the repetition of the sacred name) one among them. The Bhakti movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced a wealth of devout literature that revolved round the sacred names of the Lord: devotional versions of the Upanishads and the Purānas gained popular currency, and *nāma-siddhanta* — the way of salvation by means of the name — evolved as a simple and direct path to the Ultimate. V. Rāghavan has written extensively on the thoughts and visions of these singer-saint integrative traditions of South

India with the ease and insights of the profound scholar that he is. The book is divided into eight sections including detailed bibliography. Of special interest to the serious reader would be those sections dealing with the proponents of the *nāmasiddhanta* like Bōdhēndra Sridhara Venkatēsa Ayyāvāl, Nārāyana Tīrtha, and Sadāsiva Brahmēndra — the Silent Avadhūta as he is described in the South and creator of *Mānasa Sancharare*, *Pibare Rāmarasam*, *Brōhi Mukundēti* etc. Other rewarding features of the book are the entire translated version of the *Vishnu Sahasra Nama* by Rāghavan and the erudite reflections on the Indian concept of the *mantra* by Jackson. Above all, it is the seriousness and dedication spelt out in every word of the book that would merit the attention of any casual reader. To borrow the words of Milton Singer, who has written a personal reminiscence of the author, Rāghavan carries his academic scholarship lightly and does not overwhelm any of his readers with it. The book remains eminently readable.

— Dr. S. Murali

TRAVELS THROUGH SACRED INDIA: by Roger Housden. 1996. Pub: Harper Collins Publ., 7/16 Ansari Road, New Delhi - 110002. Pp.195, Rs.316.

Travel documents about India are legion, and many a traveller apparently, is compelled to share his/her experiences of travelling through this 'exotic' land! However, in more ways than one the book under review is different. It avoids the usual pitfalls and over-exaggerations found in most documentations of its kind, and strives for precision and brevity. It is personal and informative at the same time, honest as well as casual. The format is handy and affordable too. It includes a detailed gazetteer of sacred places and a glossary of typical Indian terms. Of course, it is intended mainly for the foreigner who takes the Hindu religion and practice seriously. The book, as the author says "unfolds with the support of personal encounter and experience. It is the subjective view of a foreign eye".

After Richard Lannoy's *The Speaking Tree*, a most sensitive and 'commonsensical' book on India it is quite difficult to find many books on a similar topic, but Housden has been able to bring across with involvement and commitment another document of *personal experience* that is perhaps, of serious and abiding relevance. We read: "Nothing more profound than tourism — seeing for seeing's sake - will take place unless the imagination of the pilgrim is sensitized to the deeper realities abiding there." If Lannoy's has been an objective account, Housden's is subjective and immediate and at the same time 'sympathetic' in the primary sense of the word. He attempts to see India as an Indian does, and to perceive the underlying spirituality that is *qualitatively* different from its Western counterpart.

That Housden is a self-reflective 'tourist' one need not take the pains to highlight: it is self-evident. He writes: "Tourism encourages a culture of observers, instamatic snappers, consumers of culture, sights, information, places of 'interest'. None of us, least of all me, an author of a book

such as this, are untainted by it ... our motivation may well be that of a genuine pilgrim... Yet however we like to think of ourselves, we must know that our visit can only add to the pressures on the place and steer it that little bit further towards being a secular monument instead of a source of awe and veneration." (p.219) Tourism is fine, but the sacredness of the place is finer.

The entire account running into more than 200 pages can be read at one sitting - the production is excellent and spelling errors few (barring the most notable error in spelling *Gandhi*, which has been printed as *Ghandi* (p.5)). The cover photograph by Judith Bromley deserves special mention for its exceptional clarity in capturing the echoes of light and shadow, which in fact could be seen as a fit illustrative comment on Housden's enterprise.

— Dr. S. Murali

MRTYU: Concept of Death in Indian Tradition: by Gian Giuseppe Filippi. Tr. By Antonio Rigopoulos. 1996. Pp.xii+258, Rs.325.

YAMA: The Glorious Lord of the Other World: by Kusum P. Merh. 1996. Pp.xvi+302, Rs.340.

Both from D.K.Printworld, SriKunjF-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi 110015.

The wise man is not afraid to die, because that is where the journey from confusion to clarity begins, as evident from the life of a Jesus Christ in the past or a Ramana Maharshi of our day. Light follows darkness, joy follows sorrow, so turns the wheel of birth and death acknowledged as a major part of the suffering that has to be borne by all beings, tossed from side to side going up and down the cycle. In this mysterious territory how much is taught, preached and traversed in the name of spiritual journey, pilgrimage or holy trip!

Death is not quite an end. It is only a disguise for the beginning of a rebirth process. The repeated metaphor for this phenomenon is that of a snake which frees itself from its old skin. The entry into a Hindu temple, passing through the entrance door under the signs of death and rebirth (*kāla-kīrtimukha*), a vestibule (*mandapa*) and interior halls upto the sanctum sanctorum (*garbha-grha*) symbolises the dying to the external world and being reborn to a more sacred condition. These are the consolations of Hindu philosophy that *Mrtyu* offers us from the start.

This study on the phenomenon of death focuses on each aspect of the *jiva*; its *pinda* stage, as Human Life from Conception to Birth, the Structure of Human Being, the End of Bodily Life, Transformation of the Deceased into Ancestor and lastly its Journey to the Kingdom of Yama, interspersed with chapters of Agony and its Rites, The Last Sacrifice, and Funerals without Cremation — tour de force of Hindu *samskāras*. The infinitesimal egg (*pinda*) having lost its individual existence somewhere in the cosmos, when further contact is made with the seed of life provided by its would-be parents, begins to recall its origin. It is like the tiniest particle of black joining the larger blackness. *Yatha pinda tatha*

brahmānda. Its journey runs on several levels viz. as *prēta* (spirit properly disconnected from the dead body) and enroute to the *pitr*-world where, as *pitr* the ancestor, it awaits a suitable physical vehicle; or as *dēva* on the Northern Path of *krama mukti*. Hymns are addressed to *Mrtyu* to make its voyage one of solace and peace to protect the ill-fated one from getting transformed into a ghost (*pisācha*) unable to disconnect from the corpse, tormented by delusions of physical thirst and hunger. A fate, hellish. 'Renting' by some sorcerers may make it extra hellish. Thirst (*trshnā*) being the daughter of *Kāma* passion, and *Rati* pleasure, is delusive to the core. A permanent lesson to pull the mind away from its blood instincts and to seek the self instead.

There are interesting discussions in the second book *Yama* as to how the deities get their names. A scholarly analysis by its author shows *yama* and *yami* as day and night, the two children of dawn ie *Vivasvat*, embracing the sky. She traces the root meanings of *Nirrti*, *Swapna* and *Kāla* (*kālyamāna*, being killed). The name *Nirrti*, for example, combines *nir* and *rti*, negation of order, conceived as a malevolent goddess who brings disease and destruction. A passage from *Satapatha Brāhmana* which identifies hunger with death is as follows: "Verily there was nothing here in the beginning. By death this Universe was covered, by hunger because death is hunger."

We get an explanation for the obvious need of sacrifices. "If one does not offer oblations Death would get hold of him in every world and if he offers oblations to Death, he wards off Death in every world, even hunger."

Similar observations are made by Prof. Filippi in his *Mrtyu* with elaborate accounts of the living rituals and beliefs in today's India, including mock sacrifices and comparisons between birth and death rites, between *garbhādhāna* and *pinda dāna*. The use of sesame, its black seeds in preparing sweet *pindas*, the crows representing *pitr* and the black ram sacrificed while practising witchcraft, all agree in ditto with the dark world of the dead. In heaven the dead assume a shining body free from imperfections. These are not Hindu superstitions, lifted from any unsound belief or ritual practice. The whole of the first book, in fact, revolves around this single theme of the supernatural to protect us from unbelief and to honour the Āryan system of worship and prayer 'going back to time immemorial'. An added merit is that its original Italian text has been translated into English by Antonio Rigopoulos, the well-known biographer author of the *Life of Sai Baba of Shirdi*.

The author of the second book seems to be stitching a garland of thousand names of Yama apart from further elucidations on Yama, the Preacher and Yama, the Law-Giver. We learn that *Mrtyu* is mentioned both as a god and a goddess in the *Mahābhārata*. "The goddess *Mrtyu* was created by Brahma out of his wrath and was ordered by him to kill the creatures. Unwilling to do such a cruel task, she protested. On being rebuked by Brahma for her disobedience, she wept. As her tears got collected in her cupped palms,

Brahma transformed those tears into dreadful diseases which would kill people."

Dr. Merh's research stretches across ancient commentaries of Śāyana and Yāska's classification, beautifully tailored to the text as an introductory chapter. The author assembles passages from Yama mythology and presents to the readers Heaven/Hell, Dharma associated with Yama and his parallels with Agni, Varuna, Sōma and Kāla. Her list of comparisons multiplies and the naming of the deities grows thick like a forest. One cannot afford to ignore the plenty of printing mistakes from a D.K. Printworld intent on a 'Reconstructing Indian History and Culture' series. Nevertheless I read these two books with mounting satisfaction.

A treasure hunt for the occult readers and lovers of Vedic tradition.

— R. Ramasāmi

THE MYTH OF SAINT THOMAS, AND THE MYLAPORE SHIVA TEMPLE: by Ishwar Sharan. 1996. Pub: Voice of India, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002. Pp.290, Rs.100.

In India, instances are many where symbol creates the actual which in turn becomes the symbol. In the form of a story, picture or a song, myth touches on man's basic relation to his world and fellow-beings, on his original roots, his future possibilities and destiny.

But, to fabricate a myth and foist it with sinister design on another's ancient culture is condemnable and needs to be exposed. It is in this strain that the author has taken cudgels against the myth of St. Thomas who is supposed to have preached Christianity in Malabār and Mylapore and attained martyrdom at the hands of 'fanatic' Hindus in the first century A.D. The author also marshals facts from authentic sources to prove that the Kapāliswara Temple in Mylapore (a suburb of Chennai) was originally situated not in its present site but at the place where the San Thome Church now stands.

The ulterior motive, according to the author, for fabricating and sustaining the myth of St. Thomas by certain sections of the missionaries are three-fold: (i) the 16th century Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries needed a pious story of persecution to cover-up their own persecution of the Hindus, (ii) to present Christianity as an indigenous Indian religion, and not a Western import, that can rightly claim religious hegemony in India and (iii) to help the community-conscious Syrian Christians to cling to their claim to be Jews or Brahmins, the latter descendants of Namboodiri Brahmins converted by St. Thomas in the first century. Owing to the myth, San Thome Church, St. Thomas Mount and the Our Lady of Health Church on Little Mount (all in Chennai) stand sanctified for their holy association with Apostle St. Thomas.

The St. Thomas myth owes its origin to the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas* originally composed in Syriac around 210 A.D. and later translated into Greek. The author quotes summarized passages therefrom to show how by its own

internal details, the romantic work destroys the history that it is said to recount. Moreover, distinguished scholars had denied credibility to the *Acts of Thomas*. The historicity of the tradition that St. Thomas came to India has been rejected by scholars like Jacques Basnage (historiographer of 17th century), Bishop Stephen Neill (in his *History of Christianity in India*, Cambridge University Press, 1984), Dr. A.D. Burnell, Rev. James Hough and others.

Perhaps, the best known event in St. Thomas' life is the one from which the phrase 'doubting Thomas' developed. In *John 20. 19.29*, he was not among those disciples to whom the risen Christ first appeared. When they told the incredulous Thomas, he requested physical proof of the Resurrection. It was fulfilled when Christ re-appeared and specifically asked Thomas to touch His wounds. His sudden realization of Truth ("My Lord and my God") made Thomas the first person to explicitly acknowledge Jesus' divinity.

According to the 4th century *Ecclesiastical History* of Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, Thomas evangelized Parthia (modern Khorasan in north-eastern Iran). Thomas' subsequent history is uncertain. But it suited the Portuguese Catholic missionaries of the early 16th century to resurrect St. Thomas and his Indian assignment from the *Acts of Thomas*.

Tracing the origin of the South Indian version of the St. Thomas fable, the author, on the authority of T.K. Joseph's book, *Six St. Thomases of S. India* pinpoints that the story did not take its final shape until 1892 in which year one Vargese Pālayūr composed the *Rabban Pāttu* which was supposed to be a summary of a non-existent *St. Thomas Song* of 1601. The Vatican has since declared the apostolate of St. Thomas in South India as unverified, but the author points out that "the Roman Catholic Church in India then and now is still the only entity that reaps any benefit from the propagation of the myth among Indians". The author is sore that the entry in the prestigious *Encyclopaedia Britannica* written by a Catholic scholar is built on the alleged South Indian adventure of St. Thomas. [The author has now received a reply from the Editorial Office of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago, assuring him that the information contained in his book has been referred to the editor concerned "so that the article can be revised in future printings of Britannica"].

In parts II to IV of this book is reproduced inter alia a 20-year-old episode of Acharya Paul (alias Ganēsh Iyer) who was allegedly induced by an Archbishop of Madras diocese to concoct a thesis with forged palm-leaf scrolls to claim that St. Thomas had converted Tiruvalluvar to Christianity and that *Tirukkural* was based on Biblical thought; and another article titled *The Legend of a Slain Saint to Stain Hinduism* by Swami Tapasyānanda who was provoked by write-ups in the Madras edition of the *Indian Express* that gave credence to the St. Thomas myth.

The author admits that this 'Apostle of India' tradition is not an 'article of faith' for Christians and that Protestants

reject it outright as a Catholic superstition (p. 109). At this point in time, one would rather agree with the more reasonable view presented by Papal Chevalier D'Cruz who writes in *St. Thomas the Apostle in India* that "Catholics who venerate the tomb are not compelled to believe in its genuineness; and they know well that it is a question of evidence and that they may be mistaken as to the fact. They regard it, in any case, in the light of a memorial whereby the saint is remembered and honoured". Even so, one cannot brush aside Ishwar Sharan's challenging question in this book as to why this manufactured history should find safe berth in speeches of India's secular leaders and continue to be pampered in pamphlets and by the Press for cheap tourist publicity inspite of apprising the Press of the facts.

— La.Su. Rengarajan

ARISE ARJUNA: by David Frawley. 1996. Pub: Voice of India, Ansari Rd., New Delhi 110002. Pp. 228, Rs. 100.

This book subtitled *Hindusim and the Modern World*, is divided into four broad sections—social, religious, historical and cultural issues, each consisting of short articles. Hinduism is in a crisis and is often being grossly misinterpreted, both in and outside India, as an exclusive and intolerant religion marred by so-called fundamentalism. The author contradicts this distorted view and holds that other religions are, in fact, dogmatic, exclusive and fanatical, lacking the ideological diversity, multifarious approaches to Divinity, cultural richness and global, nay even cosmological, outlook promoted in Hinduism. He lauds the efforts of modern teachers like Aurobindo and Vivekânanda to revitalize Hinduism and to save it from the frequent onslaught of rank materialism and corrupting alien influences. He cites evidence from the *Mahābhārata* that India is perhaps the oldest civilised and culturally advanced nation in the world. Among the people of India there has always been a steady undercurrent of understanding and acceptance while in the West religious divisions and discords have generally led to widespread, brutal suppression and persecution. The author also upbraids the hypocrisy of his own country, the U.S.A. using (rather misusing) the issue of human rights only against some of the countries, particularly in Asia, which follow their own independent domestic and foreign policies. The Unity of Thought as taught in all religions and the virtue of tolerance are discussed in the light of practical Vēdānta, followed by an account of Swāmi Rāma Tirtha's views on Christianity and Islam. Two further articles give a wealth of information on Prophet Mohammed, Sufism and the Islamic attitude to spiritual realisation. The author challenges the myth of the so-called 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' races invented by British and other invaders to split Indian society and to exploit group rivalries to further their own cultural, economic and political interests. He tries to trace the ancestry of Rāvana of the Rāmāyana and to inter-relate the two hostile camps known as Dēvas and Asuras in Purānic lore in a historical context. Here David Frawley treads on slippery ground because the Avatār of Rāma is held by very learned

scholars and other reliable authorities to belong to a much earlier, pre-historic epoch. In his book on this epic the late Sri C. Rājagōpālāchārīār has stated that the Rāmāyana is not history or biography but part of Hindu mythology and that mythology is an integral part of religion. David Frawley has unmasked the fallacy of regarding the devotees of Siva and Vishnu as incompatible sects dominating popular religious faith in north and south India, respectively.

Frawley's book comes as an eye-opener to misguided Westerners and anti-Hindu zealots of the brand of the infamous American author Katherine Mayo. There is much force in his exposure of the moral perversity of many Occidental writers and religious groups in maligning Hinduism as well as India and trying to prejudice the minds of gullible Indians themselves with the evil motive of conversion to their faith.

— Dr. T. Sankaran

PATHWAY TO GOD IN THE VEDAS: by K.D. Sangoram, edited by B.R. Kulkarni. 1995. Pub: Prof. B.R. Kulkarni, A-4-2, Postal Colony, Hotgi Road, Solapur 413 003. Pp. 349, Rs. 80.

The Vēdas are an authoritative, ancient and yet a perennial source for philosophical concepts and religious beliefs in India. Most of our cultural traditions and spiritual practices are derived from them. Several famous sages, saints and scholars, such as Sankara and Sāyana, have provided commentaries and interpretations for Vēdic hymns or *suktas*. There is an esoteric significance in all the acts of daily worship. The intuitive conclusions of *Jñānis* and the experiential as well as experiential findings of scientists are present in a cryptic seed-form in the Vēdas. Sri Ramana's example of the peacock-egg containing in a potential form all the beauty and grandeur of the adult male's plumage presents a similar idea.

Sri K.D. Sangoram, an erudite Sanskrit scholar who was also well-versed in English and several Indian languages, had originally selected much of the material, covered in this posthumous book, and serialised it in *Bhavan's Journal*. Although the selections are mostly from the Rgvēda many of the hymns appear in other Vēdas with some variations. He had also consulted classical metaphysical literature like the *Bhagavat Gīta*, *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata* as well as the Bible, besides a number of Vēdic scholars. The thoughts enshrined in the Vēdas were studied by him in comparison with those of Western philosophers, such as Descartes, James and Socrates. The editor has chosen for this book a wide range of Vēdic hymns containing references to God.

The texts of all Chapters are mainly English translations, interpretations and brief comments based on the hymns. Incentives to and preparation for spiritual life are explained in the first two of the ten Chapters in the book. In the second chapter *Manōlaya* and *Unmana* are quoted from Vēdic prayers (the latter term connoting what Bhagavān called *Manōnāsa*). The third chapter is rather dubiously titled 'The

Problem of God' because if it is earnestly sought as to whom God is a 'problem' it will be realised that the seeker and the sought have no independent existence and that there is therefore no problem for either! The relationship of God, Guru and Disciple is discussed in the next two chapters, the fifth elaborating on the greatness and glory of *Agni* as a supreme teacher. The significance of God's name(s) is brought out in the sixth chapter. Methods of meditation are summarised in the seventh. Obstacles to spiritual progress and the ways of overcoming them are dealt with in the eighth while the subsequent one outlines the various modes of spiritual experience. The last chapter recounts the effects of God-realisation. The Editor well concludes that the Self is essentially of the nature of God, both being *chaitanya*, and that the goal of Védic philosophy is the experience of the Bliss of Brahman which he terms supernal peace (*parā śānti*).

Each chapter closes with selected Védic hymns germane to the text. There is an Index of Védic Mantras and a General Index is also provided.

This is a very useful publication for laymen as well as scholars.

— Dr. T. Sankaran

VALUES: The Key to a Meaningful Life. (A Vedanta Kesari Presentation). 1996. Pub: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004. Pp.220, Rs.30.

A valuable volume indeed, a collector's item! Neatly produced in a handy format the book definitely worth more than its quoted price is a collection of twenty six essays preceded by an introduction by Swāmi Tyāgānanda and an analytic and interesting introductory essay by Swāmi Bhajanānanda, both of the Rāmākrishna Math.

The introduction bears an epigraph from the Austrian born British philosopher Wittgenstein: "A terrible business. You can best stammer when you talk about them!" And apparently the producers of this collection considered it better at least to stammer about values if the alternative happens to be silence! The topics discussed range widely from family to public administration, from cinema to medicine, from society to sports.

In the introductory essay on Values, Yoga and Reality the definition offered by Radhakamal Mukherjee is cited: "The psychological and social sciences dealing with values define them as mere preferences, as desirable goals, emotions and interests. The humanistic disciplines, on the other hand, define them as functioning imperatives or 'oughts'". Society cannot exist without a sense of values, and further, it is not always what the individual considers as valuable, but what the entire society desires, that becomes a pursuable 'value'. In a way, values are the higher normative needs of humanity. While for the Dalai Lama, compassion is the compelling value, for Alan Arkin the actor, value is the commitment to the theatrical enterprise, a reaching out to the people to

communicate 'something', through means themselves in harmony with it.

A short stimulating essay by Dr. William Pullen, Reflections on Suffering, draws attention to our common material destiny and underlines the human species' determination to persist against all odds, while R. Mōhan's case for sports argues for its value as an ennobling concept.

The overall concern that unites all the extracts is the abiding sense of the spiritual, that which is for instance reflected in such statements like: *Music is but one of the paths that can point us towards the Great Silence that is God (p.129); or again: We must find a way to lead our business life in harmony with our inner life (p.202)*. It is, in other words, the recognition of the interconnectedness of all and everything that leads us to the ultimate sense of value, and that is *spiritual*. It is this truth that is upheld by the entire book in toto. In a world gone astray under the powerful sweep of a technocratic-minded generation single minded in sole pursuit of creature comforts a book like *Values* would certainly provide the key to a meaningful life!

— Dr. Usha V. T.

LIVING WISDOM—Vedanta in a World Community: Ed. By Pravrajika Vrajaparna. 1995. Pub: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600004. pp. 300, Rs. 85.

The relevance of Védānta as a philosophy and a way of life in the modern context is very well brought out by this book which has articles on different aspects of Védāntic philosophy, written by 34 authors, mostly from U.S.A. associated with Rāmākrishna Order. The compendium has been edited by Pravrajika Vrajaparna, an American nun of the Védānta Society of Southern California in Santa Barbara.

The articles are neatly grouped in 4 parts. Part-1 deals with different aspects of Védānta as a philosophy founded on ancient Indian scriptures. Part-2 provides an appreciation of Védānta with reference to the philosophy propounded by other religions notably Judaism and Christianity. Part-3 deals with the practice of Védāntic concepts in real life situations. Part-4 presents some salient features of the lives of Rāmākrishna Paramhansa, Sāradā Dēvi and Swāmi Vivēkānanda, besides referring to the concept of Avatār and Mother Goddess in Indian scriptures.

The articles abound in many inspiring and pithy statements which are admirable not only for their literary beauty but also for the depth of their meaning. Some are recounted here.

Vivēkānanda is projected as the prophet of self-reliance, of courage, of individual enquiry and effort. He had two messages to deliver: One to the East, the other to the West. In the United States and in England, he preached the universality of religious truth, attacked materialism and advocated spiritual experiment, as against dogma and tradition. In India he preferred to stress the ideal of social service. To each, he tried to give what was most lacking.

Physicists seek a theory which would unify our understanding of all the various physical forces, by showing their interrelatedness. What humanity at large needs is a new understanding of self, God, world, purpose, which can serve as the basis for creative action and discovery. It cannot be a dogmatic creed which claims to answer all questions and thereby deaden all creative thought and action. It needs to be open-ended, dynamic, releasing human potential and yet harmonising, unifying while respecting diversity. Religion for the Vēdāntin lies in being and becoming, not in believing and proclaiming.

The articles stress that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Reason can lead us only to a certain point after which faith must take over and carry us to the final realisation of God. Goethe says: "Man's highest happiness as a thinker is to have fathomed what can be fathomed, and to bow down in reverence before the unfathomable".

Religion specialises in the invisibles that science cannot touch. The stage seems to be set for the twenty-first century to accept religion (and its ally, art) as equal partners to science in discerning the full range of reality.

The best among the options provided by the pluralistic approach to creation and life is the one that is available through Vēdānta reinterpreted and exemplified by Śrī Rāmakrishna and Swāmi Vivēkānanda. Their approach toward plurality of religions may be called the harmonious approach. This approach has the unique advantage of fulfilling the aspirations of all concerned without destroying anyone's innate faith.

Every religion has a special bent, a characteristic feature, a unique trait. In Islam it is the spirit of equality and brotherhood; Christianity — emphasis on love and sacrifice exemplified by Christ; Buddhism — stress on renunciation, compassion and rationality; Hinduism — its principle of the basic unity of the universe in consciousness, the insistence on the need for direct mystical experience, the spirit of acceptance and its extraordinary power of assimilation.

Pico Iyer's article 'Silence' points out that we have to earn silence, then, to work for it; to make it not an absence but a presence; not emptiness but repletion. Silence is something more than just a pause; it is the enchanted space in which things open up and surfaces fall away and we find ourselves in the midst of absolutes. If noise is the signature tune of the world, silence is the music of the other world. We babble with strangers; only with intimates can we be silent. A thought when repeated becomes a tendency, a tendency when repeated becomes a habit, and a habit when repeated becomes character.

All the articles make excellent reading and provide plenty of material for further analysis and contemplation.

This is an excellent source book for understanding Vēdānta in its different aspects. It is also a good handbook to help us practice Vēdāntic precepts in life situation.

— C. V. Narasimhan.

NINE HEADED DRAGON RIVER: by Peter Matthiessen. 1987. Pub: Shambhala, Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Av., Boston, Mass 02115, U.S.A. Pp.288, \$16.25.

Though the book under review was published in 1987, I thought it was worth bringing it to the notice of readers. Matthiessen is a professional writer who has a long distinguished literary career behind him. One of his more notable books was *The Snow Leopard*, an account of his journey to remote northern Nepal which became a meditation on the ephemeral nature of existence centered round the then almost mythical snow leopard.

The title of the book refers to the river by which Dogen built the monastery that became the mother-house for Soto Zen in Japan. In this sense it refers to the eternal spring, the uncompromising reality of true knowledge which is the bedrock of our existence.

What is fascinating about the author's inner and outer journeys of discovery is his ability to verbalise the process of walking it using his powers as a writer. Usually such accounts are written by amateurs in this art, so we are fortunate in this respect. I wonder what transformation occurred in the last 10 years since the author published it?

It is interesting to follow the sense of wonder as each unconscious thought or attachment is revealed and dropped in the secure environment of Zen Buddhism as it grew in America under the safe eyes of Japanese masters. The author recounts the gradual transition of an alien tradition into American Zen. It is a painful process, stumbling and quick, doubtful and incisive as the Japanese mind welds and collides with an American mind that in many regards is its opposite. For this reason alone the book is worth reading, for there is a fundamental question: How can Oriental Spirituality in all its garbs be it Hindu, Buddhist or whatever, convey and retain the essence of their teachings shorn of the accretions. The process by which Buddhism transited to China from India and became original in its own right is an historical example. How now America? The author does not and cannot be expected to give a solution, rather he presents the dilemma in such precise, personal observations, with one left the wiser not with an answer, but with insight.

His story is our story on the way.

— 'Peter Picqlmann'

COMING HOME: The Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions: by Lex Hixon. Pub: Larson Publ., 4936, NYS Route 414, Burdett, NY14818, U.S.A. 1995. Pp.215, \$14.

In Maurice Maeterlinck's immortal story two children of a forest woodman go out in search of that most wondrous bird — the bluebird of happiness — and after many adventures return home to find that it is right there in their own humble home. Likewise, throughout the ages, man has gone on a spiritual journey seeking, in all the great mystical traditions of the world, the ultimate goal of all spiritual experience called

Enlightenment only to discover that it has always been his, right here in the cave of his own heart. All his search had been essentially a 'going away' whereas what was necessary was to see the futility of this and to 'come home' — back to the still centre of one's primal divine nature. Sri Ramana says it simply: *to abide in the Self is enlightenment.*

In *Coming Home* which was his first book (1978), Lex Hixon explores the question of what is enlightenment and how it operates in the life and behaviour and sayings of great mystics and saints — Plotinus, St. Paul, Sri Rāmakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Jewish soul masters of the Hasidic way, Sufi Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, Heidegger and J. Krishnamūri. Showing that however different the various traditions appear they nevertheless have a universal core of profound insights into the nature of God and the Godhead, these ten essays primarily attempt to kindle an intellectual and spiritual awakening in aspirants leading ultimately to the direct revelation that God is consciousness as oneself — the Self that lights up all sentient beings.

Illustrating this dramatically are the ecstatic letters of Yaeko, a twenty five year old Japanese girl, whose experience of enlightenment in various stages is woven into the so-called Ox-herding pictures of 12th Century China depicting the spiritual quest — the search for an elusive Ox that roams wild in the rainforest and which is essentially one's intrinsic True Nature; the taming of the Ox and bringing it home, the ecstasy of enlightenment with the sudden realisation that there was no Ox at all and the final resolution where one comes back to a natural way of living albeit in an entirely new dimension.

The chapter on Sri Ramana's Way of Natural Enlightenment shows commendable understanding of the subtle teaching, but abounds in concocted biographical details and careless language ("Ramana was walking with some friends").

The last chapter suggests a meditation cloned from the practical aspects from diverse traditions.

All in all, Lex Hixon's presentation may not be very profound but it certainly makes compelling reading.

— *Prema Rao*

THE VISION AND THE WAY OF VASISHTA (Vāsishṭa Darsanam): Comp. by B.L. Atreya; Tr. by 'Samvid'. 1994. Pub. Indian Heritage Trust, 573 Mount Road, Chennai 600006. Pp. 583, Rs. 175.

Yōga Vāsishṭa a remarkable book portraying the inner mystical vision of the Absolute with clear expressions and in telling idioms is a dialogue between the Sage Vāsishṭa, and the disciple — Lord Rāma himself. The original compilation which can be termed as the mother of the present book had been published by Dr. B.L. Ātrēya as a part of his doctoral thesis as far back as 1928, drawing largely from the Sanskrit commentary by Ānanda Bōdhēndra Saraswatī. The present translation is by 'Samvid' who has done tremendous justice to the task on hand.

The Svētāsvatara Upanishad described God or Guru as *amrtasya paramasētu* or the perfect bridge between mortality and immortality. The learned introduction by Dr. Ātrēya is an exhaustive treatise on the philosophy of the Yōga Vāsishṭa. It requires a very great erudition and semantic skill to present the powerful dialogue of Vāsishṭa in clear terms intelligible even to a lay reader. Saints of Advaita philosophy like Gaudapāda, Gauda Abhinanda, Vidyāranya, Nārāyana Bhatta etc. have repeatedly referred to it in their works. Legends attribute the authorship to Sage Vālmiki. There are references in the text to typical Mādhyamika-usages like *vijnānavāda*, *sūnyavāda*, *mādhyamika* etc. However its essential Advaita character is clearly delineated in its clear exposition of the concept of non-duality, of Brahman, nescience etc.

Yōga Vāsishṭa starts from man's eternal quest: "What are we born for? Why are we born?" The same question that entered the mind of young Venkatarāman at a very tender age at Madurai seems to have entered the mind of Lord Rāma aeons ago. Lord Rāma, the representative man at the crossroads declares, "I therefore want to know if there is any state of existence attainable, which is above the sufferings and sorrows of life". Vāsishṭa replies to Rāma that true joy comes where there is no desire for any object in one's mind: it is the abiding bliss belonging to the very nature of our Self for which we have to go nowhere outside. Fate is nothing but the inevitable consequence of our own already accomplished efforts. Hence fate can be easily overcome by our present efforts. Self can be known by preparing oneself through the quality of contentment, peace of mind, association with the wise and rational investigation. Like Sri Ramana, Vāsishṭa also declares "there is no other means of knowing the Self than our own self-enquiry". Behind the panorama of objects perceived in the world, there is an all enveloping and subterranean Unity called Brahman. All perceived objects are the modification of this all enveloping Superconsciousness. The objective world is a manifestation of mind which is essentially a bundle of successive thoughts. Every mind creates its own world like a spider weaving a web from matter from its own belly. Mind creates its world through its own thought process. Interestingly Yōga Vāsishṭa says "Every mind being the manifestation of the same cosmic Mind, represents all other individual minds also as ideas within itself. The common ideas of us all give us the appearance of a common world. That is, there are worlds within worlds ad-infinitum." A maze of mirrors!

The evolution of an objective world within a mind is like objectification of an idea in a dream. Every world-evolution is followed by an involution. Echoing the thoughts of the Tathāgata, Vāsishṭa declares that the dynamic force behind the manifestation of all the objects in the world is desire. Imagination coupled with desire creates the objective world and the sense organs to enjoy the objects. Schopenhauer would be very comfortable with Vāsishṭa when the Sage declares "Even if death can bring about the total dissolution of a person, it would be a desirable consummation. Death is only a change of experience and it is only those persons who

have realised identity with the Absolute and become liberated in their life that, having given up their physical body, do not undergo any further experience in the world as there are no desires to fructify. After death they attain the stage of Nirvana and merge with Brahman or Absolute Reality.

Vasishta gives a very interesting prognosis that all physical disorders have their place in mental disorders: which well anticipates modern medical theory.

Yoga Vasishta is a very radical work in the sense that it regards bondage and freedom only as stages, of mind and determined by it. The two are there because we think we are finite beings. Sri Bhagavan says "Actions form no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion 'I am the doer'. Leave out such thoughts and let the body and senses play their roles, unimpeded by your interference". (Talks 46).

Like Ramana Maharshi (*Upadēsa Saram*, Verse No.9) Vasishta says that Yoga consists of *brahma bhāvana* i.e. intuiting oneself to be identified with the Absolute using (means) upāyas, like *manonāsa*, *prāna nirodha* etc. Vasishta describes 7 stages on the progressive path of Self-realisation. From the fourth 'stage' onwards one is established as Jivanmukta. According to *Yoga Vasishta*, there is no distinction; man or woman, anybody can be a candidate for self-realisation.

The beauty of *Yoga Vasishta* consists in the fact that all these are convincingly explained with appropriate similes, metaphors and stories. There are 55 stories in all. Some of them familiar like that of Janaka, Bali, Prahlāda and some of them which can be found only here.

The present work is a comprehensive abridgement of the voluminous *Yoga Vasishta* which contains 32,000 stanzas. It has been beautifully classified so as to present a systematic flow. The philosophy has been thoroughly enunciated. The stories have been excluded in this compilation (except a summary of them in chapter 4 of the introduction). The translation is very lucid. The translator has mercifully avoided the temptation to use long sentences to be in conformity with the prosody of the original text. Another remarkable feature is the very clear print, error-free presentation and price. The book would definitely be a boon to any serious reader of philosophy.

— S. Ram Mohan

THE DALAI LAMA IN AUROVILLE: 1994. Pub: Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, Auroville, 605101. Pp46.

This small commemorative volume marks the occasion of the laying of a foundation stone by the Dalai Lama for the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, which is to be built in Auroville. It includes talks by the Dalai Lama, an interview with him, a discussion on alternative education and background information. It shows that the work at Auroville is creative, continuing and expanding. It does not detail how this new pavilion will be paid for or what it will cost.

The talk by the Dalai Lama is concerned with global

problems and universal values. These values are centered on love, compassion and calmness of mind. He makes the point that these are important for all, theists or atheists. At every stage of life we depend on the compassion of others. A calm mind contributes to health and can be developed. Says the Dalai Lama, "Each individual human being has in himself the potential or seed of these good qualities. The question is whether we want to make the effort or not.... We can change our minds through mental training, just as we train our physical bodies". (p.20)

The Dalai Lama comes regularly to South India to visit the Tibetan refugee communities in Karnataka. He is less often in Tamilnadu. Hopefully this new pavilion in Auroville will be a focus for mutual enrichment through practical and cultural exchange.

—Sanyata

BOOKS RECEIVED

RAMANA SAHASRANAMAM: by Jagadishwara Sastry. Tr. by A.R. Natarajan. [English transliteration without Sanskrit script]. Pub: Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore 560 003. pp340, Rs. 145.

THE SONG OF THE SOUL. Comp. & tr. Sw. Gabhirananda pp.77, Rs16; Pub: Sri R.K. Math, P.O. Purnattukara, Kerala 680 551. [*Gems from the scriptures selected from the Upanishads, Gita, Bhāgavata, Rāmākrishna-Vivēkānanda literature (with Sanskrit slokas), Bible & Koran. Offers lofty themes for meditation & prayers. The assiduous aspirant after Truth can see the light of Self-Realization break through every syllable of these expressive stanzas so well translated. Whoever repeats the Song of the Soul in faith is bound to benefit in every way.*]

GRACEFUL EXITS: Death stories of Tibetan, Hindu & Zen Masters: Comp. & ed. by Sushila Blackman. Pub: Weatherhill Inc., 568 Broadway Suite 705, NY 10012. pp160, \$12.95.

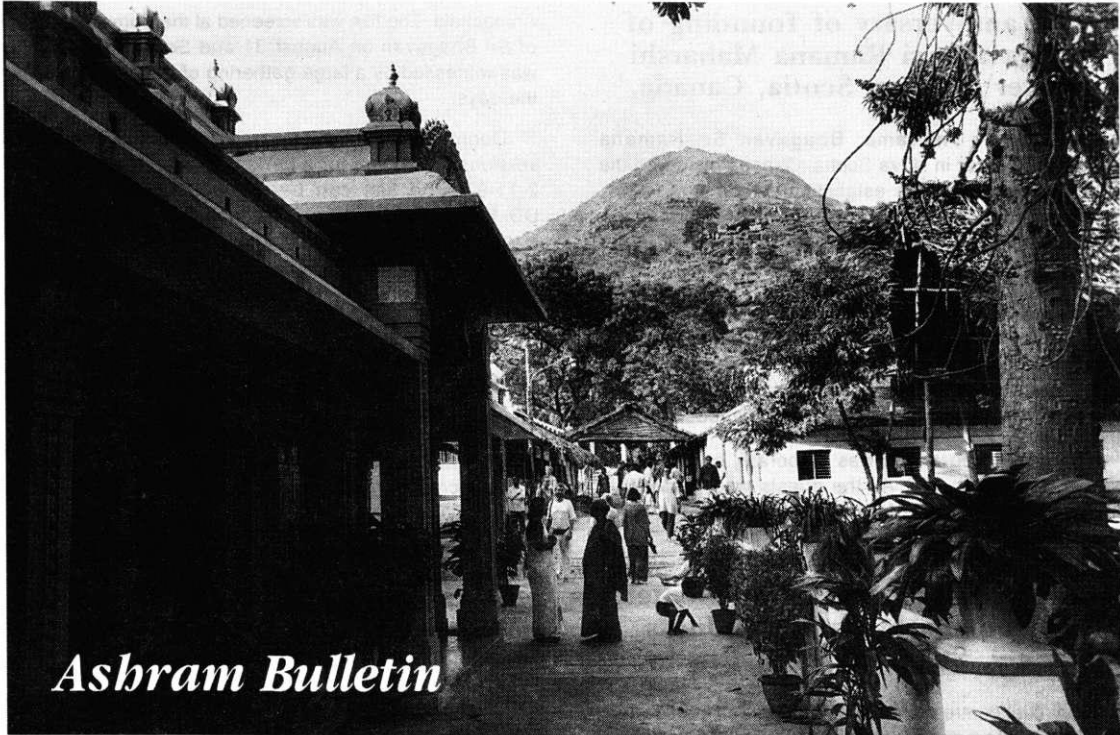
[NEEM: A Users Manual (English) pp96, Rs75 (& Tamil pp188, Rs.25). PLANTS IN PEST CONTROL: (3 Books) Persian Lilac, pp30, Rs25; Garlic & Onion, pp38, Rs30; Pongon, Tulasi & Aloe (English/Tamil) pp33, Rs25.

TREATMENT FOR POISONS IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: pp66, Rs60. OPHTHALMOLOGY IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE: pp58, Rs50.

RITUCHARYA: LIVING ACCORDING TO SEASONS: (Hindi) pp87, Rs50

PRAKRUTHI: AN AYURVEDIC GUIDE FOR HEALTH pp65, Rs75.

All by Dr.K. Vijayalakshmi/K.M. Shyam Sundar/ A.V. Balasubramanian/R. Nana. Pub: Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems, 2, 25th East St., Madras 600 041].

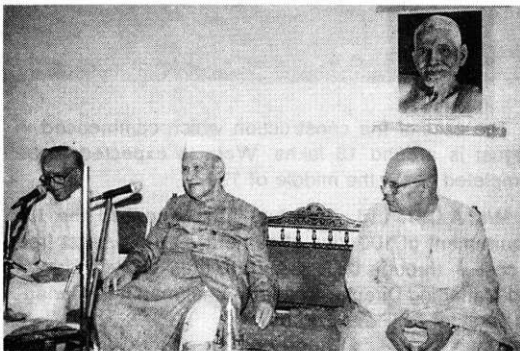


Celebration of 101st anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala

At Delhi

A public function was organised by the **Ramana Kendra, Delhi** to commemorate the 101st anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's advent at Arunachala on September 1.

Swami Gokulananda delivered the keynote address.



Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, former President of India, presided over the function.

He released the special Souvenir entitled *Ramana Gyan* brought out by the Kendra, as well as a book of Tamil poems by **Srimati Mahalakshmi Suryanandan**, entitled *Ramana Potri*. Speaking on the occasion he observed that Sri Maharshi was a phenomenon and a shining symbol of *jnana marga*.

Celebration at Arunachala Ashrama, New York

The 101st anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala as well as the founding of Sri Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia, Canada was celebrated at **Sri Arunachala Ashrama** on Clyde Street, Rego Park, New York City, on August 31.

The programme consisted of talks, chanting of *Aksharamanamalai* of Sri Bhagavan and *puja*. A speech by **Dennis Hartel** detailing the history of the Nova Scotia Ashrama over the past twenty-five years was read out on the occasion. All the guests were treated to lunch.

25th anniversary of founding of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in Nova Scotia, Canada observed the 25th anniversary of its establishment on August 31. Devotees from the U.S. and other parts of Canada travelled all the way to Nova Scotia for participating in the function.

Srimati Sushila Ramanan, wife of the President, Sri Ramanasramam, specially flew in from Detroit in order to be present. Her rendering of devotional songs on Sri Bhagavan by Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer was heard with rapt attention by the assembled devotees.

The day's programme was elaborate, consisting of *bhajan*, talks and *puja*. All the guests were treated to lunch. A special photo of Sri Bhagavan printed to mark the occasion was distributed to those present.

Arunachala Self-realisation Center, Sri Ramana Maharshi Stillness Society, St. Petersburg, Russia.

A spiritual centre named Arunachala Self-realisation Center, Sri Ramana Maharshi Stillness Society has been formed by the devotees of Sri Bhagavan living in St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia.



Satsang under the auspices of the Society was conducted on September 1, commemorating the 101st anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala.

Telefilm on Sri Bhagavan

A telefilm entitled *Maharshi Ramana Oli* in Tamil consisting of 13 episodes from the life of Sri Bhagavan has been prepared by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore. This is by way of celebrating the 101st anniversary of the Advent of Sri Bhagavan at

Arunachala. The film was screened at the Samadhi shrine of Sri Bhagavan on August 31 and September 1. This was witnessed by a large gathering of devotees on both the days.

Doordarshan is also telecasting the Tamil and Hindi versions of this film for a period of thirteen weeks from 2-11-97. The film can be viewed on Sundays over DD-1 Channel between 7-30 and 8 p.m. The last instalment is on 25-1-98. Chennai DD-1 will telecast the Tamil version whereas other stations will telecast the Hindi version entitled *Ramana Dhara*.

Extension of Ashram Kitchen and Dining Hall

Expansion of the present kitchen and dining hall (built in 1938) has become necessary on account of considerable increase in the number of visitors.

An additional structure abutting the existing one and roughly modelled on it is therefore being put up on the northern side. The plinth area of the new wing is a little more than that of the present dining hall. With this additional facility it will be possible to serve lunch to devotees in one sitting for most part of the year.



The cost of the construction which commenced in August is around 15 lakhs. Work is expected to be completed about the middle of 1998.

M/s A.C.C. Ltd., Bombay have supplied the full requirement of 100 tons of cement for the project free of cost — through Dr.S. Ganguli, their Vice-Chairman and Managing Director (formerly Chairman and Managing Director of IPCL, Baroda).

Work of Annamalai Reforestation Society

The **Annamalai Reforestation Society** is doing valuable work in regard to restoration of the ecological balance in the area of Arunachala Hill and its immediate environs. The effects of afforestation are already visible. The Hill is greener now than in the recent past and while walking on it one hears the joyous singing of the birds.

Rain water is properly utilised since it is absorbed by the trees planted on the Hill. Earlier the water just ran down the slopes — with practically no arrangement for its collection or utilisation.

The Society has the capacity to plant 20,000 saplings annually. But, owing to practical difficulties the full target is not reached. As part of this year's programme, nearly 5,000 saplings have been planted.

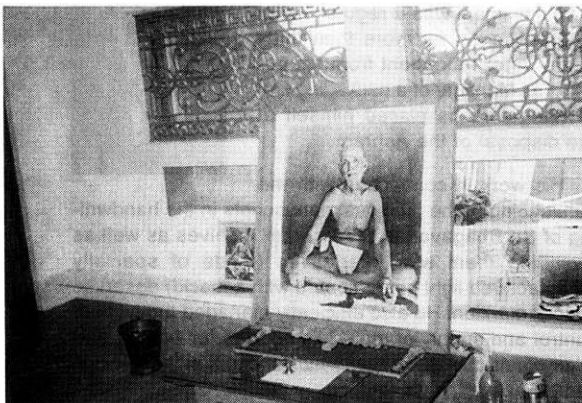
Sri Ramana Vidya Trust and Ramana Kendra, Chennai

Sri Ramana Vidya Trust and Ramana Kendra, Chennai have, along with similar organisations been catering to the needs of the devotees of Sri Bhagavan at Chennai by organising various activities. Sri Ramana Vidya Trust has since merged with Ramana Kendra. Hereafter there will be one organisation named Ramana Kendra Trust, Chennai with **Srimati Meenakshi Anantaswami** as Chairperson.

Ramana Griham, Ghazipur

Ghazipur (UP) is an ancient spiritual centre some 75 KM east of Varanasi (Banaras), where the Ganga takes a turn towards the north.

Sri R.N. Khare, members of his family and friends have built at Ghazipur (on the banks of the Ganga) a centre known as **Ramana Griham**. This centre, intended



Aradhana

The 48th anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan will be celebrated at the Ashram on Friday, the 24th April, 1998.

Mahapuja

The Mahapuja of Sri Matrubhuteswara will be celebrated at the Ashram on Wed-nesday, the 20th May, 1998.

for the convenience of *sadhakas*, consists of a small dormitory, library and kitchen.

Devotees who are interested in staying at 'Ramana Griham' for limited periods for purposes of *sadhana*, may get in touch with: **R.N. Khare, Sri Ramana Griham, Annapurna Bhavan, 44, Subhas Nagar (Koilaghat), Ghazipur, UP.233 001.**

Kartigai Deepam

Deepam is one of the important festivals of India which draws massive crowds. This year this ten-day festival was held from December 3 to December 12.

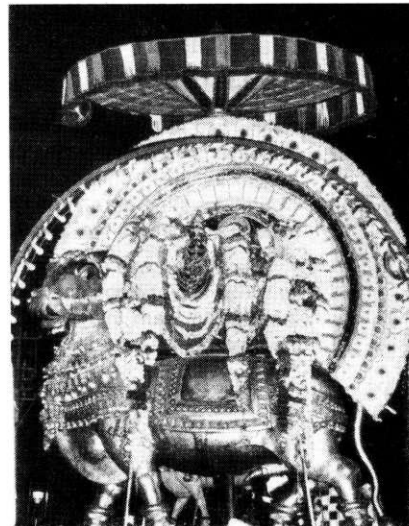
The celebration is organised by the authorities of the **Arunachaleswara Temple, Tiruvannamalai.**

The lighting of the *Deepam* (beacon) at sunset on the tenth day on the summit of Arunachala represents not merely the last item in the celebration but the most important one as well.

The deities are taken in procession each day with different decorations and mounts. The bull mount made of silver is colourful and picturesque. It is unique for the reason that it is the biggest of its kind in India.

By convention followed since the days of Sri Bhagavan a function is also held in the quadrangle of the Ashram. Here a small *deepam* is lit immediately after the lighting of the *Deepam* on the summit and *Aksharamanamalai* is chanted.

Sri Arunachaleswara on the bull mount



OBITUARY

H.W.L. Poonja

Sri. H.W.L. Poonja, popularly known as Papaji was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on September 6. In another five weeks (that is on October 13, precisely) he would have been 88.

On account of his simple and unostentatious ways Papaji might have remained obscure. But, thanks to the efforts of Swami Abhishiktananda in the 1970's towards bringing him to limelight, his spiritual stature was made known to the outside world.



Hundreds of seekers, Indian as well as Western, saw in him a competent, kindly and considerate spiritual master who could transform their lives. His *satsangs* held at Satsang Bhavan, Indira Nagar, Lucknow were lively and purposeful.

Papaji was precocious in the spiritual sense. He used to put one constant question to the saints he met. This was: "Have you seen God? And, can you show me God?"

He came to Sri Bhagavan in 1944 and questioned him also in similar manner. Maharshi remained silent at first. However when Papaji pleaded for a 'straight answer' Bhagavan condescended to give the reply, "I can enable you rather to be God than to see God". He repeated his visits to Sri Bhagavan and became an ardent devotee in due course.

His basic instruction to his followers was 'Keep quiet'. Speaking about the attraction of Lord Krishna, he says: 'What was the beauty of this boy . . . ? Only he was empty inside, and this emptiness was blown through the hollow bamboo stick and shot into the inner core of the hearts of the *gopis*, driving them mad".

Under his guidance the followers of Papaji have been enabled to develop such ecstatic devotion to the Divine.

Ella Maillart (1903-1997)



Ella Maillart was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on 27 March. She passed away at her chosen retreat, Chandolin-sur-Sierre, one of the highest villages on the Swiss Alps.

Ella Maillart was a tireless traveller, writer and photographer who had the urge to learn things and study the features of local life in various

parts of the world. Her journeys took her to such remote areas as Chinese Turkestan, the Caucasus, the Tien Shan Mountains etc.

For most of World War II she was in India. During this period she had the good fortune of having darshan of Sri Bhagavan and living near his ashram.

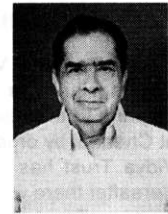
She was fortunate enough to hear from Sri Maharshi himself an exposition on the characteristics of the sage. We published an article by her in our last issue.

B. Ananthaswamy (1921-97)

Sri B. Ananthaswamy, Chairman, Ramana Kendra Trust, Chennai passed away after a brief illness on October 31.

Sri Ananthaswamy was a patron of institutions founded for promotion of charitable and cultural activities; his donations (to such causes) were very liberal.

His outstanding achievement is the founding of the Ramana Shrine and Meditation Centre at Alamelu-mangapuram, Chennai. This has been built out of funds provided solely by Sri Ananthaswamy and family members. (Please see December 1996 issue of 'The Mountain Path' for a full report).

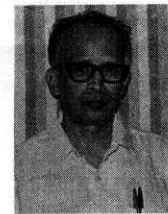


May his soul rest in peace at the Feet of the Lord.

H.V. RAMANI (1932 - 1997)

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Sri. H.V. Ramani at Bangalore. He reached the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on June 28.

Sri Ramani was a regular visitor to the Ashram for more than thirty years. After retirement from his position as Manager of a packaging firm at Bangalore he placed himself at the disposal of the Ashram.



His work in connection with the cataloguing of the precious manuscripts in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan at the Ashram archives as well as providing them with interleaves (made of specially manufactured light paper coated with antiacid) deserves special mention. He also efficiently managed the work of control and supply of materials needed for *homams* and other rituals during the *Kumbhabhishekam* at the Ashram in 1995.