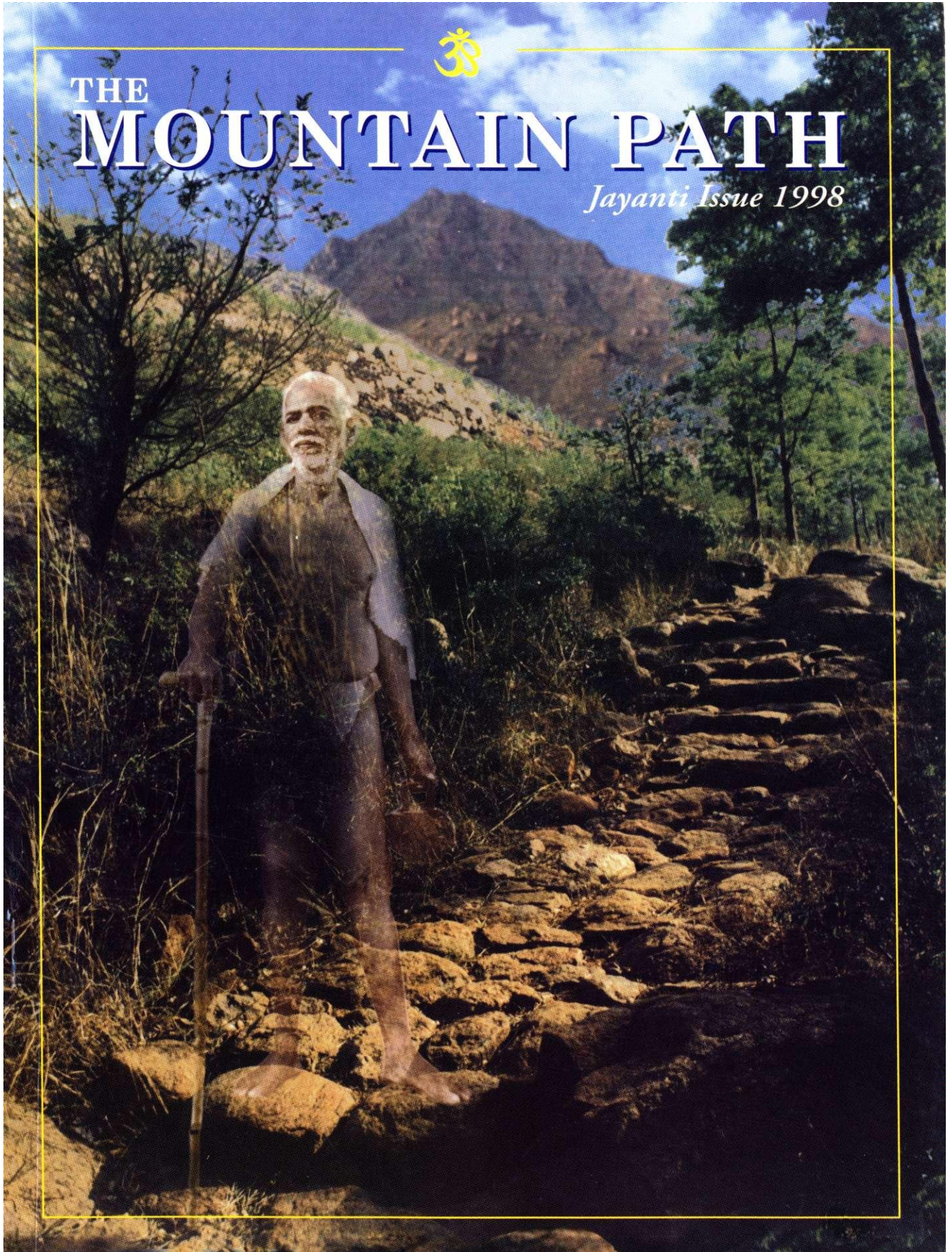




THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Jayanti Issue 1998



THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1

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— Editor.

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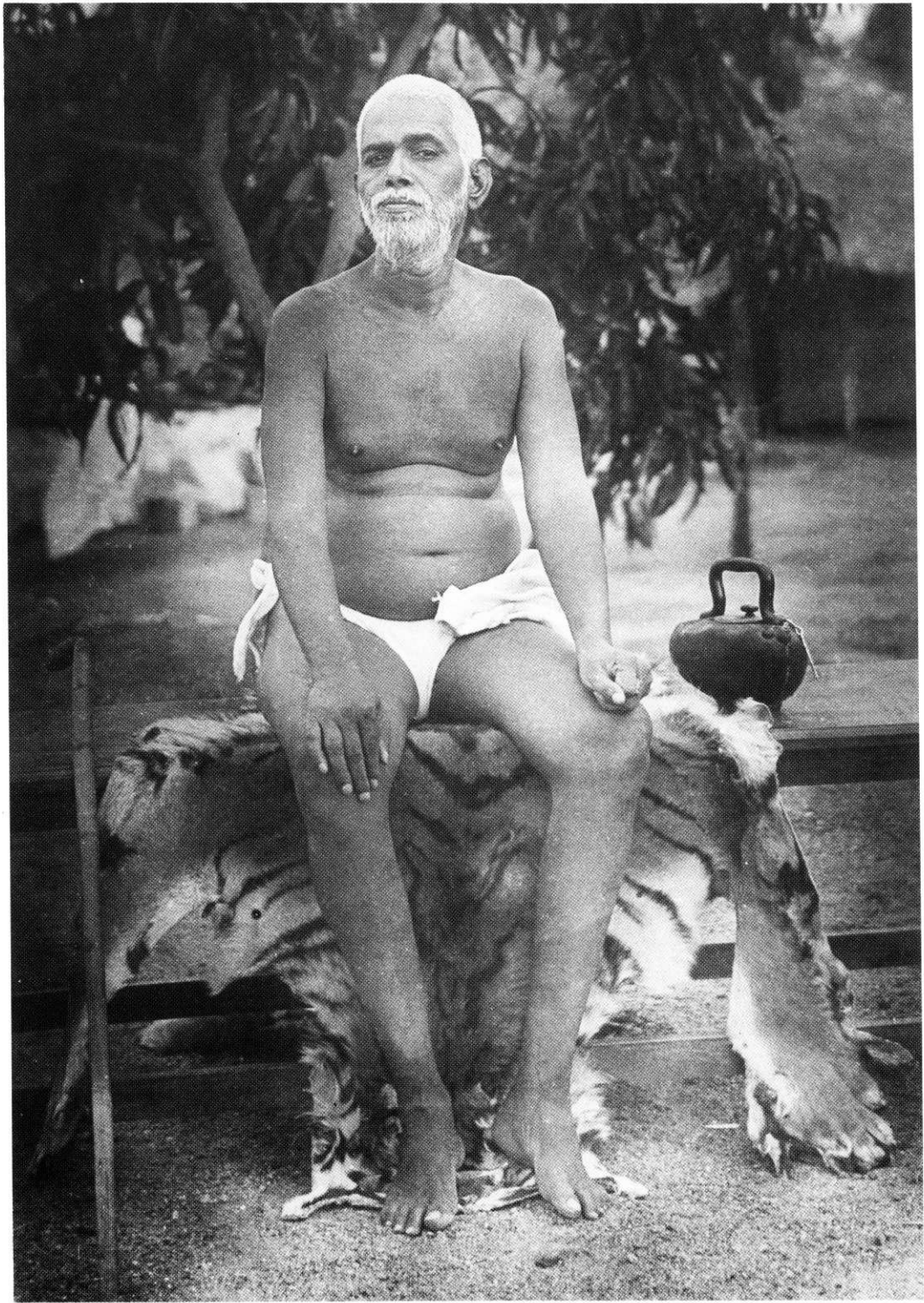
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



EDITORIAL

The Way of Surrender

'SURRENDER' or rather, an act of Surrender in the ordinary sense of the term, signifies a situation in which one yields oneself upto another. This happens mostly under force of circumstances.

The meaning of the term is perhaps more clear while we refer to situations of war. A whole nation may capitulate to another under force of arms. Oftentimes a shrewd national leader chooses rather to surrender in time than face the might of a superior army, fight to the last man and cause further destruction to the homeland.

On the whole, surrender in a material context is governed by expediency— not principles. And the chances are that one may after all be at the mercy of the merciless.

Coming to the spiritual field, it is wholly for principles that things are done; this can never be under the constraint of opportunism. And most important, one is at the mercy of the All Merciful.

Surrender in the true spiritual sense is a natural, heart-felt and voluntary gesture or act, by which one subordinates the individual will to the divine will. One may at first shudder at the very thought of losing the individual will. It may appear suicidal to do so. But, only by such subordination can one advance spiritually. It is not merely that we do things better when we invoke the aid of the Divine. It is also that we do the right things.

It is not unusual for a sensitive seeker to be haunted by the constant fear of spiritual stagnation. But such hindrance should be got over by remembering that the play of the ego (with all the dead-weight of past *karma*) has somehow to cease, before one can be free from fear. Surrender to the Divine is the way and it effects a transformation. Destroying the ego looks a formidable task at first, but it can be done, with proper effort aided by grace. To use the analogy of Tayumana-var, it is like burning down a mountain of camphor with a flamelet.

There is a certain simplicity about the concept of surrender. But this can be misleading. One is apt to think that it is all vague or rather far too simple a method to be effective. One may also wonder whether it is merely a question of saying verbally 'I have surrendered to the Lord' or repeating it mentally. Whatever be the nature of presumptions it is a gross error to think that the way of surrender represents an oversimplification of the spiritual process !

How to surrender? Or rather, what exactly constitutes surrender? These can be prime questions for the seeker.

The precise definition of *bhakti* given by Shankara in one of his verses, is in effect, a definition of surrender as well.

Shankara says:

Just as in this world the *ankola* seeds approach their tree, the needle approaches the magnet, the chaste wife her lord, the creeper the tree, and the river the sea, even so when the current of thought approaches the two Lotus Feet of the Lord and abides there always, that is termed *bhakti*.¹

Shankara also clarifies that purely formal or ritualistic worship, which is devoid of the spirit of surrender, is a sign of ignorance:

The ignorant one enters the deep moat, and roams about the desolate and dreadful forest or the wide mountain range for the sake of flowers. Alas! Why does not the world know to be in the state of Bliss in this life, having surrendered the one lotus-heart to Thee, O Lord of Uma?²

Shankara affirms that no one in any station of life is barred from the path. The only requirement is that one should surrender heart and soul to the Lord.

He says:

Be one a *brahmachari*, a *grihastha*, a *sannyasi*, or the recluse with the matted hair or be anybody else, what does it matter? Thou becomest his whose heart-lotus is surrendered to thee, O Sambhu! The Lord of life; and, Thou bearest also the burden of his temporal life.³

Puranas point out the need for surrender. One learns from a meaningful episode in the *Mahabharatha* that a true devotee will never be forsaken by the Lord.

Once the Kauravas sought to dishonour Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas, by disrobing her in public. When such humiliation was only a moment away, she saved herself by praying to Lord Krishna. A miracle happened. As the miscreant pulled at the upper portion of her dress it would not come off; it grew in size. He pulled and pulled, but the cloth grew and came out in a stream as it were, in interminable fashion! The cruel act was then abandoned. Draupadi's honour was saved by the grace of Lord Krishna.

Sri Maharshi explains the significance of this episode in the following dialogue:

¹ Verse 61, *Sivanandalahari*.

² Verse 9, *Ibid*.

³ Verse 11, *Ibid*.

This verse as well as the other two quoted here (from *Sivanandalahari*) are from a group of ten selected and re-arranged by Sri Maharshi for the guidance of seekers.

Devotee: (A gentleman from Ambala) What is the rationalistic explanation of Draupadi's *sari* becoming endless?

Maharshi: Spiritual matters cannot be fitted into rationalism. Spirituality is transcendental. The miracle was after Draupadi had surrendered herself. The secret lies in *surrender*.⁴

That surrender to the Divine is essential even for workers who engage themselves in public or national causes is evident from the replies given by Sri Maharshi to a group of workers from the Indian National Congress. (This was in the year 1938 when the burning question before every Indian was that of national independence.)

Excerpts are given below:

Questions:

How long is India destined to suffer bondage?

Have not the sons of India made enough sacrifice for her liberation?

Will India get freedom during Mahatma Gandhi's lifetime?

Maharshi: Gandhiji has surrendered himself to the Divine and works accordingly with no self-interest. He does not concern himself with the results but accepts them as they turn up. That must be the attitude of national workers.

Question: Will the work be crowned with success?

Maharshi: This question arises because the questioner has not surrendered himself.

....

Question: Should we not know if our actions will be worthwhile?

Maharshi: Follow the example of Gandhiji in the work for the national cause. 'Surrender' is the word.⁵

....

The ordinary human tendency is to rejoice over favourable developments in life and recoil even from thinking of the unfavourable ones. This is a sign of spiritual inadequacy. On the other hand, a devotee who cultivates the thought that the Lord's will alone prevails and that all happenings are a part of the divine dispensation, will be at peace — whatever be the turn of events. This the spirit of surrender.

When requested for instructions as to how one should pray, Jesus taught his disciples as follows:

... When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. *Thy will be done*, as in heaven, so in earth.⁶

Sri Ramakrishna advocates the method of giving the 'power of attorney' to the Lord.

He says:

For a devotee there is no path safer and smoother than that of the 'power

⁴ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No.101, p.98 (1994 Edn.).

⁵ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No.521, p.504 (1994 Edn.).

⁶ St. Luke. 11.2.

of attorney'. This means resigning the self to the will of the Almighty, to have no consciousness that anything is 'mine'.⁷

Girish Chandra Ghosh was an unusual devotee of Sri Ramakrishna who lived upto this ideal. He had no spiritual tendencies at first. At least such was the outward appearance. But after he came under the loving care of the master, he improved tremendously.

Once Sri Ramakrishna instructed him to think of God at least twice a day. When Girish could not promise he would do even that much, the master told him, '.... very well, then give me the power of attorney.'

After this Girish developed intense devotion to Sri Ramakrishna and felt comforted by the thought that the master had taken upon himself all his responsibility. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna he also faced a number of calamities. But he took them calmly. It was all for his good, he felt.

Girish observed:

Much remains to be understood even now. Did I know then that so much lay in the simple 'giving of the power of attorney'? I now find that at some time there is an end to the spiritual practices like *japa*, austerities and devotional exercises, but there is no end to the work of a person who has given the power of attorney; for he has to watch every step and every breath to know whether he does so depending upon Him, and His power, or on this wretched 'I'.⁸

Sri Krishna's instruction to the seeker is that he should surrender wholeheartedly to the Supreme Lord in order to gain the final emancipation.

Sri Krishna says:

To HIM do thou for shelter fly
with *thy whole being* Bharata!

His Grace shall bear thee safe across
to His eternal, changeless STATE.⁹

In the course of his conversations with devotees as well as his written works Sri Maharshi has quite often pointed out the need for surrender.

The following dialogue carries Sri Maharshi's instruction:

Question: Of the devotees, who is the greatest?

Maharshi: He who gives himself up to the Self that is God is the most excellent devotee. Giving one's self up to God means remaining constantly in the Self without giving room for the rise of any thoughts other than the thought of the Self.

Whatever burdens are thrown on God, He bears them. Since the supreme power of God makes all things move, why should we, without submitting ourselves to it, constantly worry ourselves with thoughts as to what

⁷ *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p.272, Almora Edn. (1934).
By giving the 'power of attorney' one transfers the power of managing one's worldly affairs to another person. The latter is authorised to sign all documents (on behalf of the principal).

⁸ *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, Part III, Chap.I.

⁹ *Bhagavad Gita*. XVIII. 62.

should be done and how, and what should not be done and how not? We know that the train carries all loads, so after getting on it why should we carry our small luggage on our head to our discomfort, instead of putting it down in the train and feeling at ease? ¹⁰

In the dialogue that follows Sri Maharshi has explained in specific terms the significance of the way of surrender:

Devotee: . . . I am too weak to realise my Self.

Maharshi: In that case surrender yourself unreservedly and the Higher Power will reveal Itself.

Devotee: What is unconditional surrender?

Maharshi: If one surrenders oneself there will be no one to ask questions or to be thought of. Either the thoughts are eliminated by holding on to the root thought 'I' or one surrenders oneself unconditionally to the Higher Power. These are the only two ways for Realisation. ¹¹

¹⁰ *Who am I?*, Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, p.43 (1979 Edn.).

¹¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No. 321, pp. 284-85 (1994 Edn.).

SHIVA

(From the Kashmiri of Paramanand)
Translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan

To behold Shiva, die and be born
again
Shut fast the body's window. Turn
the mind
Inward to starve and be confined.
Be merged in stillness beyond joy
or pain,
Aware without remembrance or
forgetting.
Lost in the Void, the Ground
Of being and non-being. Be
The self-effulgent Sun that knows
No rising and no setting.
From this calm seeing flows

A rill of love that fills
Each fibre of your being,
Sweet, fragrant oil that feeds
The flame that burns all creeds
And deeds, all thought, all self-
hood,
Leaving nought but brightness,
Brightness !
Open wide the windows now.
Let the new mind, the soul made
whole,
Go where it will. It cannot go
Where Shiva is not.

The Literary Testimony Of Bhagavan Sri Ramana

By Arthur Osborne

IT is natural to an age like ours, where the mind seems more than the Spirit, to judge the influence of a Teacher by the written records he leaves; but this yardstick does not always measure true. Christ wrote nothing. When Lao-Tsu declared his life-work finished and rode away to the west, he also had written nothing. The warden of the Pass of Han Kow, through which he had to ride, begged him to set down his teaching, so he stayed at the gateway to the town and wrote the *Tao Te Ching*, which became the Scripture of Taoism. It is an amusing reflection that had he not done so modern scholars would not have failed to dispute his existence and represent him as a fictitious person.

In the case of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi there are published works and something should be known about them, while remembering that they are not the real legacy. He taught in silence and continues to do so from his *samadhi* at Tiruvannamalai and in the hearts of those who turn to him. When asked once why he did not go about preaching the Truth to people at large, he replied:

How do you know I am not doing so?
Does preaching consist in mounting a
platform and haranguing the people

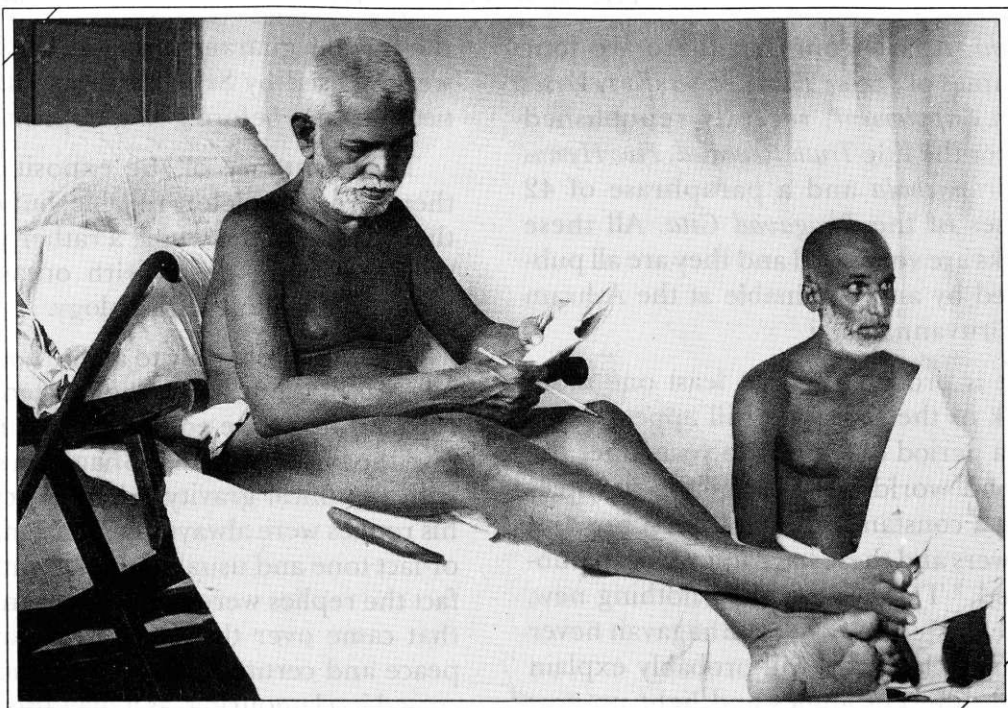
around? Preaching is simple communication of Knowledge, and it can really be done in silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another who sits in a holy Presence and goes away after some time with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better; to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently, sending out inner Force? Again, how does speech arise? There is pure Knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the original Source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself how much more powerful must be preaching through silence.¹

All that is said here about preaching obviously applies equally to writing.

Silent teaching is indeed natural to the *jnana marga* where theory is at a minimum, being reduced to the one all-absorbing statement of Advaita — that

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

¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*



there is only the Self. That is why it was the method of the original Taoism before Chang Tao Ling developed a Taoist system of cosmology and priesthood in the first century of the Christian era.

And it was a method which had already made Taoism the hidden controlling influence of the Empire.

Teaching by silence did not mean that Sri Bhagavan was unwilling to explain to those who asked. He always answered doctrinal questions fully and a certain number of his answers have been noted down and published by the Ashram. Only it must be remembered that these verbal explanations were not the real teaching; they were the preliminary explanations which are easy to understand but whose understanding does not in itself enlighten the heart. The real work is the awakening

of Self-awareness in the heart, and this was and is made possible by the powerful yet subtle action of the silent Grace of Bhagavan.

Since his real teaching was by silence, Sri Bhagavan very seldom made any doctrinal statement except in answer to a question. For the same reason he very seldom wrote anything. Most of the books published as his are mere records of question and answer noted down at the time and subsequently published, but always with his approval. In this category are: *Sat Darshana Bhashya*, *Sri Ramana Gita*, *A Catechism of Instruction*, and the two volumes entitled *Maharshi's Gospel*. The only prose volumes actually written by Sri Bhagavan are *Who Am I?* and *Self Enquiry* written for the instruction of devotees who asked for explanation in the very early years when Sri Bhagavan was still

mouni. Apart from that there are four volumes of verse: *Thirty Verses*, *Forty Verses* with *Supplement*, recently republished under the title *Truth Revealed*, *Five Hymns to Arunachala* and a paraphrase of 42 verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*. All these books are very small and they are all published by and obtainable at the Ashram at Tiruvannamalai.

It is probable that at least one more book of the first type will appear, since for a period of about two years after the second world war one of the devotees kept a constant record of questions and answers and these have not yet been published.² They will explain nothing new, since the teaching of Sri Bhagavan never changed but they will probably explain from different angles and light up new facets of the same teaching. And in this connection, it must be stressed that there is absolutely no change or 'development' in the exposition of Sri Bhagavan over the fifty odd years of his teaching. He was not a philosopher and had no system of thought to expound. He was a *jivanmukta* indicating the way to Self-realization and guiding men thereto in silence.

These books, in their English form, do not record the exact words of Sri Bhagavan, but they do record exactly his teaching. Those that were written by him were written in Tamil, and the compilations also recorded answers mostly given in Tamil, even though the questions were put in English. Although Sri Bhagavan understood English, he gave all but very short replies through an interpreter, listening carefully the while and pulling him up at the slightest mistranslation. So far as concerns accuracy of meaning there is

the further guarantee that all the books were revised by Sri Bhagavan with meticulous care before going to print.

The substance of the expositions is therefore, completely reliable, but not so their style. On the whole a rather sedate style has been used, with occasional touches of biblical phraseology.

This does not apply to all the books or all parts of them, and it is expected to be rectified in future editions, but it might give the impression that Bhagavan spoke with pontifical gravity, whereas actually his replies were always given in a matter-of-fact tone and usually with laughter. In fact the replies were not the real answer: that came over the heart in a wave of peace and certitude after the mind had ceased its clamouring, as it may also come to the reader of the printed page.

Also, it must be borne in mind that the replies were very much *ad hominem*. Without losing their general truth in any way, they vary much according to the mental equipment of the questioner. They are shrewd also. When a theosophist asked whether Bhagavan approved of the search for invisible masters, the reply came with laughter and lightning wit, "If they are invisible how can you see them?"

This drove the questioner to the statement: "In consciousness." To which the real reply came: "In consciousness there are no others." For by "Consciousness" Bhagavan meant, not thought, but awareness of the Self.

² This has since been published under the title *Day by Day with Bhagavan*. The devotee referred to is A. Devaraja Mudaliar.

The best use of the books is to take them up and read on until one comes to a sentence which removes a doubt or touches a chord in the heart and use it as a key to meditation. As meditation becomes more natural and spontaneous, the book will become less necessary. And, in this connection, it is well to remember that it was usually newcomers who asked questions. For the most part, those who strove by way of the *vichara* never asked for verbal instruction at all. To read the books for mental satisfaction or in search of a system of philosophy is useless, because Sri Bhagavan had no intention of satisfying curiosity or encouraging speculation. He wrote and spoke only to help and guide men in their *sadhana*, and there is no point in reading the books except as a guide to *sadhana*. In general, the prose books should be regarded less as the teaching of Bhagavan than as a commentary on his teaching. They outline the theory and doctrine of *jnana marga*, which is not taught in words but in silence; and they give instructions for the large element of *karma marga* in the path he prescribed, which must be lived, not merely learnt.

However, the verse books have a more direct potency. The *Thirty Verses* were sung in the evening with the Vedas and were thereby recognized as having a scriptural character, as also have the *Forty Verses* and the *Supplement* that Bhagavan later added to them. They are as concise as they are profound, and on each verse a treatise could be written. One of these (*Forty Verses*) runs as follows:

That only is Knowledge in which there is no knowing or not knowing. To

know is not true Knowledge. The Self is Knowledge, for It shines with nothing else to know or to make known. It is not a negation.

The *Thirty Verses* and the *Forty Verses* are indeed the scripture of Advaita and of the *jnana marga* of Self-enquiry. The *Five Hymns* may also be considered scriptural in character, but in them the element of *bhakti* is more prominent. Since Bhagavan spoke always of Knowledge and Self-enquiry when asked about the Goal or the way, few except those who approached him personally realized what a powerful support devotion was in his teaching. As the verse quoted above shows, knowledge in the ordinary sense of a link between knower and known is not Knowledge as he meant it. That Knowledge is being the self-effulgent Self. And the approach to it is through love as well as Self-enquiry. Self-enquiry is the mind's attempt to turn inwards, and it is love that draws the mind inwards. Knowledge of one by another and love of one by another are alike incomplete, but in their perfection Love and Knowledge are the same. Love for Bhagavan and Self-enquiry are the two ropes pulling the mind of his devotee back towards the Self. Therefore it may be said that the greatest and most potent record of Bhagavan's teaching and guidance to meditation is not any written word but the photographs he allowed to be disseminated, in which the beauty of countenance, the love and compassion, grip the heart, and the wisdom in the eyes stirs the mind out of itself and urges it to plunge deep into Reality. A picture of Bhagavan, even more than a verse from his songs, may be the key and starting

point to meditation as he enjoined it and under his guidance.

The doctrine of Love and its identity with Knowledge is most fully contained in *Arunachala Siva*, the first of the *Five Hymns*. While he was still living in a cave on the hill, some *sadhus* came and asked Bhagavan for a devotional hymn, and he walked round the sacred hill with them and composed *Arunachala Siva* as he walked, tears streaming down his face while he sang it. It is the great emotional support of the devotees, the most ecstatic and profound song of Divine Union of Lover and Beloved, the supreme hymn where Love and Knowledge, *bhakti* and *jnana*, are fused in one: *In my unloving self Thou didst create a passion for Thee, therefore forsake me not, Oh Arunachala!*

Wherever the devotees are gathered together it is sung. It was sung while life was leaving the body, and just before the end, Bhagavan opened his radiant eyes in recognition and two tears of bliss trickled down his cheeks.

This study would not be complete without some mention of the books about Sri Bhagavan. Undoubtedly the book that has done most to make him known, both in India and the West, is Paul Brunton's *Search in Secret India*. The best biography in English is *Sri Maharshi* by M.S. Kamath. It is a simple and striking narrative, though unfortunately ending shortly after the time when Bhagavan came down from his abode on the hill to the present *ashram*. Delightful vignettes of the later years are contained in *Letters from Sri Ramanashram*, written in Telugu by a lady devotee and translated into English.

The most widely appreciated expositions of the teaching of Bhagavan are *Maha Yoga* by 'Who' and the exposition by the great *pundit* and poet Ganapati Muni in *Sat Darshana Bhashya*.

There is an extensive literature about Bhagavan in the various Indian languages. One series of poems especially should be mentioned.

Many years ago, while he was still living in the Virupaksha cave on the hill, before the present ashram premises were built, a visitor came and stayed five days and on each day composed a Tamil hymn in praise of Bhagavan. It was obvious from the light in Bhagavan's eyes as he regarded him that he had won his Grace. Before leaving he gave his name and said that he came from Satyamangalam, but later, when enquiries were made there, nobody had heard of him, and it was remarked that, apart from being the name of a township, the word means 'Abode of Blessedness' or 'Place of Truth.' He never returned. Countless hymns to Bhagavan have been composed, but these five continued to be sung, and one of them, *Ramana Sad Guru*, has become a devotional support second only to *Arunachala Siva*. It has been suggested that he was an emissary from a hidden spiritual centre come to pay homage to Bhagavan and to hail him as the Sad Guru of the age. Once, when *Ramana Sad Guru* was being sung, Bhagavan himself joined in; the devotee who sang it laughed and said that he had never before heard any one singing his own praise, to which Bhagavan replied: "Why should Ramana be limited to these six feet? Ramana is universal."

The Bhagavad Gita

Chapter XVIII

DEVOTION AS REGARDS RENUNCIATION AND FINAL LIBERATION

English rendition by William Quan Judge

W.Q. Judge was a great Theosophist whose favourite book was the Gita. Earlier, we presented his rendition of Chapter II in the Jayanti 1996 issue of THE MOUNTAIN PATH.

ARJUNA: I wish to learn, O great-armed one, the nature of abstaining from action and of the giving up of the results of action, and also the difference between these two, O slayer of Keshin.¹

KRISHNA: The bards conceive that the forsaking of actions which have a desired object is renunciation or *sannyasa*; the wise call the disregard of the fruit of every action true disinterestedness in action. By some wise men it is said, 'Every action is as much to be avoided as a crime,' while by others it is declared, 'Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity should not be forsaken.'

Among these divided opinions hear my certain decision, O best of the *Bharatas*, upon this matter of disinterested forsaking, which is declared to be of three kinds, O chief of men. Deeds of sacrifice, of mortification, and of charity are not to be abandoned, for they are proper to be performed, and are the purifiers of the wise. But even those works are to be performed after having renounced all selfish interest in them and in their fruits;

this, O son of Pritha, is my ultimate and supreme decision. The abstention from works which are necessary and obligatory is improper; the not doing of such actions is due to delusion springing from the quality of *tamas*. The refraining from works because they are painful and from the dread of annoyance ariseth from the quality of *rajas* which belongs to passion, and he who thus leaves undone what he ought to do shall not obtain the fruit which comes from right forsaking. The work which is performed, O Arjuna, because it is necessary, obligatory, and proper, with all self-interest therein put aside and attachment to the action absent, is declared to be of the quality of truth and goodness which is known as *sattva*.

The true renouncer, full of the quality of goodness, wise and exempt from all doubt, is averse neither to those works

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¹ Keshin was a *daitya*, a demon, fabled to have been sent by Kamsa for the purpose of destroying Krishna.

which fail nor those which succeed. It is impossible for mortals to utterly abandon actions; but he who gives up the results of action is the true renouncer. The three-fold results of action — unwished for, wished for, and mixed — accrue after death to those who do not practise this renunciation, but no results follow those who perfectly renounce.²

Learn, O great-armed one, that for the accomplishment of every work five agents are necessary, as is declared. These are the substratum, the agent, the various sorts of organs, the various and distinct movements and with these, as fifth, the presiding deities. These five agents are included in the performance of every act which a man undertaketh, whether with his body, his speech, or his mind. This being thus, whoever because of the imperfection of his mind beholdeth the real self as the agent thinketh wrongly and seeth not aright. He whose nature is free from egotism and whose power of discrimination is not blinded does not slay though he killeth all these people, and is not bound by the bonds of action. The three causes which incite to action are knowledge, the thing to be known, and the knower, and threefold also is the totality of the action in the act, the instrument, and the agent. Knowledge, the act and the agent are also distinguished in three ways according to the three qualities; listen to their enumeration after that classification.

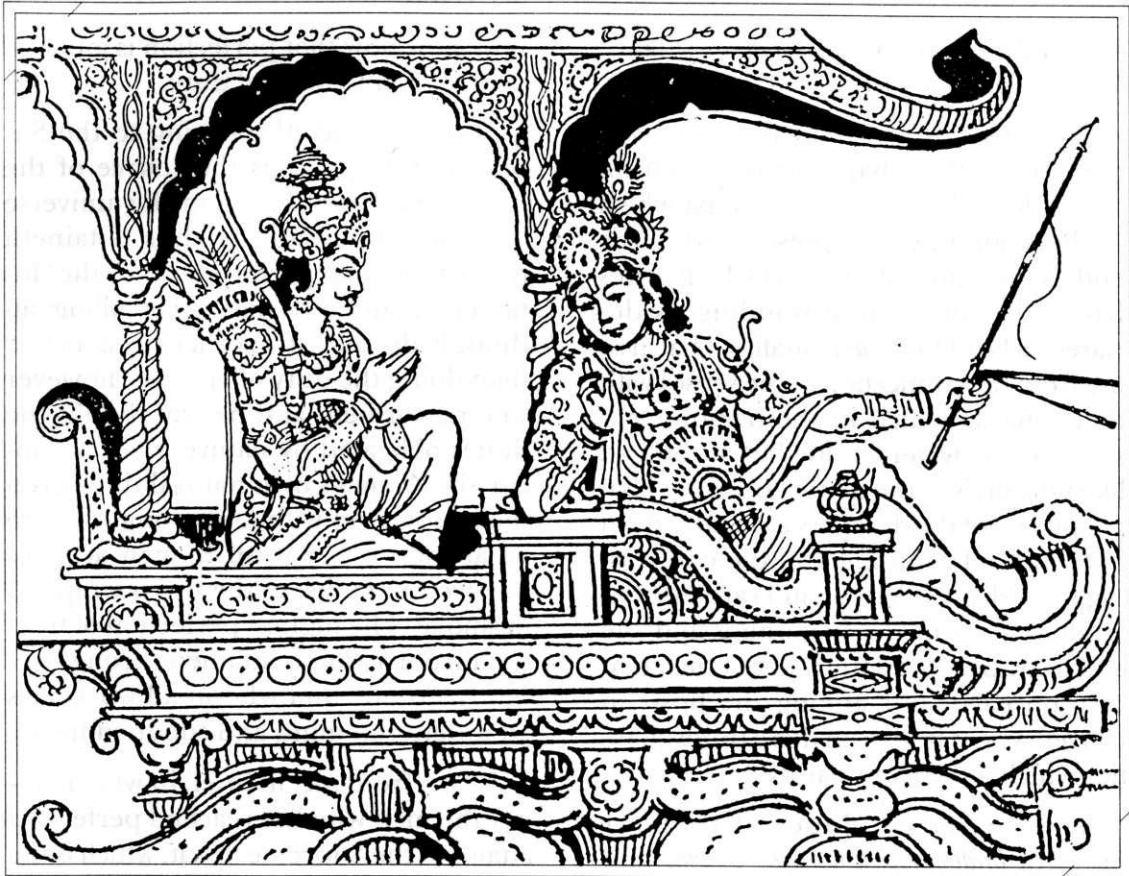
Know that the wisdom which perceives in all nature one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen, is of the *sattva* quality. The knowledge which perceives

different and manifold principles as present in the world of created beings pertains to *rajas*, the quality of passion. But that knowledge, wholly without value, which is mean, attached to one object alone as if it were the whole, which does not see the true cause of existence, is of the nature of *tamas*, indifferent and dark.

The action which is right to be done, performed without attachment to results, free from pride and selfishness, is of the *sattva* quality. That one is of the *rajas* quality which is done with a view to its consequences, or with great exertion, or with egotism. And that which in consequence of delusion is undertaken without regard to its consequences, or the power to carry it out, or the harm it may cause, is of the quality of darkness — *tamas*.

The doer who performs necessary actions unattached to their consequences and without love or hatred is of the nature of the quality of truth — *sattva*. The doer whose actions are performed with attachment to the result, with great exertion, for the gratification of his lusts and with pride, covetousness, uncleanness, and attended with rejoicing and grieving, is of the quality of *rajas* — passion and desire. The doer who is ignorant, foolish, undertaking actions without ability, without discrimination, with sloth, deceit, obstinacy, mischievousness, and dilatoriness, is of the quality of *tamas*.

² This verse refers not only to effects after death in the *post mortem* states, but also to subsequent lives in the body upon reincarnating.



Hear now, O Dhananjaya, conqueror of wealth, the differences which I shall now explain in the discerning power³ and the steadfast power within, according to the three classes flowing from the divisions of the three qualities. The discerning power that knows how to begin and to renounce, what should and what should not be done, what is to be feared and what not, what holds fast and what sets the soul free, is of the *sattva* quality. That discernment, O son of Pritha, which does not fully know what ought to be done and what not, what should be feared and what not, is of the passion-born *rajas* quality. That discriminating power which is enveloped in obscurity, mistaking

wrong for right and all things contrary to their true intent and meaning, is of the dark quality of *tamas*.

That power of steadfastness holding the man together, which by devotion controls every motion of the mind, the breath, the senses and the organs, partaketh of the *sattva* quality. And that which cherisheth duty, pleasure, and wealth, in him who looketh to the fruits of action is of the quality of *rajas*. But that through which the man of low capacity stays fast in drowsiness, fear, grief, vanity

³ This is *buddhi*, the highest intellection, the power of judgement.

and rashness is from the *tamas* quality, O son of Pritha.

Now hear what are the three kinds of pleasure wherein happiness comes from habitude and pain is ended. That which in the beginning is as poison and in the end as the water of life, and which arises from a purified understanding, is declared to be of the *sattva* quality. That arising from the connection of the senses with their objects which in the beginning is sweet as the waters of life but at the end like poison, is of the quality of *rajas*. That pleasure is of the dark *tamas* quality which both in the beginning and the end arising from sleep, idleness, and carelessness, tendeth both in the beginning and the end to stupefy the soul. There is no creature on earth nor among the hosts in heaven who is free from these three qualities which arise from nature.

The respective duties of the four castes, of *brahmanas*, *kshatriyas*, *vaisyas*, and *sudras*, are also determined by the qualities which predominate in the disposition of each, O harasser of thy foes. The natural duty of a *brahmana* compriseth tranquillity, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. Those of the *kshatriya* sprung from his nature, are valour, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character. The natural duties of the *vaisya* are to till the land, tend cattle and to buy and sell; and that of the *sudra* is to serve, as is his natural disposition.

Men being contented and devoted to their own proper duties attain perfection;

hear now how that perfection is attained by devotion to natural duty.

If a man maketh offering to the Supreme Being who is the source of the works of all and by whom this universe was spread abroad, he thus obtaineth perfection. The performance of the duties of a man's own particular calling, although devoid of excellence, is better than doing the duty of another, however well performed; and he who fulfills the duties obligated by nature, does not incur sin. A man's own natural duty, even though stained with faults, ought not to be abandoned. For all human acts are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke. The highest perfection of freedom from action is attained through renunciation by him who in all works has an unfettered mind and subdued heart.

Learn from me, in brief, in what manner the man who has reached perfection attains to the Supreme Spirit, which is the end, the aim, and highest condition of spiritual knowledge.

Endowed with pure discrimination, restraining himself with resolution, having rejected the charms of sound and other objects of the senses, and casting off attachment and dislike; dwelling in secluded places, eating little, with speech, body, and mind controlled, engaging in constant meditation and unwaveringly fixed in dispassion; abandoning egotism, arrogance, violence, vanity, desire, anger, pride, and possession, with calmness ever present, a man is fitted to be the Supreme Being. And having thus attained to the Supreme, he is serene, sorrowing no more, and no more desiring, but alike

towards all creatures he attains to supreme devotion to me. By this devotion to me he knoweth fundamentally who and what I am and having thus discovered me he enters into me without any intermediate condition. And even the man who is always engaged in action shall attain by my favour to the eternal and incorruptible, imperishable abode, if he puts his trust in me alone.

With thy heart place all thy works on me, prefer me to all else, exercise mental devotion continually, and think constantly of me. By so doing thou shalt by my divine favour surmount every difficulty which surroundeth thee; but if from pride thou wilt not listen to my words, thou shalt undoubtedly be lost. And if, indulging self-confidence, thou sayest 'I will not fight,' such a determination will prove itself vain, for the principles of thy nature will impel thee to engage. Being bound by all past *karma* to thy natural duties, thou, O son of Kunti, wilt involuntarily do from necessity that which in thy folly thou wouldst not do. There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master — *Ishwara* — who by his magic power causeth all things and creatures to revolve, mounted upon the universal wheel of time. Take sanctuary with him alone, O son of Bharata, with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place.

Thus have I made known unto thee this knowledge which is a mystery more secret than secrecy itself; ponder it fully in thy mind; act as seemeth best unto thee.

But further listen to my supreme and most mysterious words which I will now

for thy good reveal unto thee because thou art dearly beloved of me. Place thy heart upon me as I have declared myself to be, serve me, offer unto me alone, and bow down before me alone, and thou shalt come to me; I swear it, for thou art dear to me. Forsake every other religion and take refuge alone with me; grieve not, for I shall deliver thee from all transgressions. Thou must never reveal this to one who doth not practise mortification, who is without devotion, who careth not to hear it, nor unto him who despiseth me. He who expoundeth this supreme mystery to my worshippers shall come to me if he performs the highest worship of me; and there shall not be among men anyone who will better serve me than he, and he shall be dearest unto me of all on earth. If anyone shall study these sacred dialogues held between us two, I shall consider that I am worshipped by him with the sacrifice of knowledge; this is my resolve. And even the man who shall listen to it with faith and not reviling shall, being freed from evil, attain to the regions of happiness provided for those whose deeds are righteous.

Hast thou heard all this, O son of Pritha, with mind one-pointed? Has the delusion of thought which arose from ignorance been removed, O Dhananjaya?

ARJUNA: By thy divine power, O thou who fallest not, my delusion is destroyed, I am collected once more; I am free from doubt, firm, and will act according to thy bidding.

SANJAYA: Thus have I been an ear-witness of the miraculous astonishing dialogue, never heard before, between

Vasudeva and the magnanimous son of Pritha. By the favour of Vyasa I heard this supreme mystery of *Yoga* — devotion — even as revealed from the mouth of Krishna himself who is the supreme Master of devotion. And as I again and again remember, O mighty king, this wonderful sacred dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna, I am delighted again and again. Also, as I recall to my memory the wonderful form of Hari,⁴ the Lord, my astonishment is great, O king, and I rejoice again and again. Wherever Krishna, the supreme Master of devotion, and wherever the son of Pritha, the mighty

archer, may be, there, with certainty are fortune, victory, wealth, and wise action; this is my belief.

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

DEVOTION AS REGARDS RENUNCIATION AND FINAL LIBERATION.

⁴ One of the names of Vishnu, and also applied to Krishna

SUSTAINING PEACE

By Cornelia Bagarotti

SUSTAINING Peace is achieved by centering one's thoughts on God. Then peace, instead of being a fleeting experience, will become a steady certitude. A flame on a windy night must be shielded if it is not to go out. The flame of love and contact with God must be shielded by conscious maintenance of thought that is centred upon His Eternal Presence. In all you do or say carry this with you.

As love grows, as God's ever-present companionship within our heart is steadily meditated upon and affirmed gradually, all sense of duality departs. Concentration upon God within becomes at-one-ment with God within. Egoism disappears.

Outside God, all is a hurricane of desires, fears, anxiety, sorrow, obstacles and problems. The mind and emotions are constantly being swept up in them and torn apart. Only a self-discipline which centres upon that one point of Peace in which there is only eternal Love can reveal where peace abides.

"Love God and do what you will," said St. Augustine.

"My Peace I give unto you," said the Christ.

There in the heart is the seat of Love, is the Presence of the Christ, is at-one-ment with God. Turn your thoughts there and all else will disappear. "For where a man's heart is, there his treasure lies."

The Quest

By A.W. Chadwick

Give me the strength to follow on the Quest,
To renounce All, till nothing more is left.
The way that Thou hast shown is surely best
If only I had courage. Though bereft
Of friends, of home and all that held me bound,
There still remains of all the greatest tie,
The ego-self persistently is found
Obtruding thoughts that it is really I.

As one by one I throw aside the chains
Which make illusion seem as if't were true,
This ego-thought in spite of all remains
With cruel persistence trying to renew
My faith in old beliefs. It will not give
Without fierce battle one small inch of ground;
Saying: "Without me you could never live,
Are not your dearest treasures in me found?"

But Thou art always there could I but see.
I look for Thee, my prying eyes are blind.
The search itself must go if I would free
The Real Self from shackles of the mind.
But yet perhaps I seek what is not lost;
Maybe 'tis only it eludes my glance.
While I, poor fool, am by each fancy tossed,
Treating a certainty as if 'twere chance.

The more I seek the more the Quest recedes,
Slipping away as shadows from the hand.
I have renounced all ancient Gods and Creeds,
But it is not enough. Until I stand
Stripped bare of all, I cannot gain my end
Where Thou art found; but found, Thou too must go.
For in True Knowledge we together blend,
There all is One. There's no more one can know.



In Memoriam
The Holy Cow, Lakshmi

(Passed into the Light on 18th June, 1948 — at 11.30 A.M.)

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Before the Golden Sage who reigneth still
 At the wide foot of the celestial Hill
 Arunachala — lord of the Beacon Light,
 I bow in reverence, then rise to write
 This song about the Cow who, ere she died,
 Was by His touch of mercy deified
 And set among the immortals who continue
 To breathe as Light within me and within you.

Lord of sheer Grace! thy holy Name resounds
 From end to end; thy Mercy knows no bounds,
 Thy Power no limitation! Through thy Peace
 The struggles of thy seekers slowly cease
 Leaving a large contentment in the heart:
 Before thy luminous Presence glooms depart,
 Clouds vanish . . . In the stillness of thine eyes
 The all-unseeing fool grows sudden wise,
 The ignorant grow learned. With a smile
 Thou canst redeem us in a fleeting while,
 Rendering our lives significant. O thou
 Who wearest realisation on thy brow
 Even as a jewel! with what master-ease
 Thou dost immortalise thy devotees!

And thou art worshipped everywhere by all
 Who, touched by thy deep Grace, have heard thee call
 And gathered at thy Feet: numerous shapes
 Of peacocks, squirrels, deer, and dogs and apes,

Of cows and men. And from them thou dost draw
Thy chosen few according to a Law
Known but to thee, whom, drenching in thy love,
Thou dost, to each, allot a height above
Earth's little level, that they may arise
From hells of flesh to the soul's paradise.

It is of her I sing who is no more,
Lakshmi, the Master's sacred Cow, who bore
The beauty of a goddess — she who was
Experience carven out of luminous pause
And moulded into creature line and curve;
Lakshmi, the Mother Cow, was born to serve
Sage Ramana.

Yet, it was nothing strange,
Some say her creature form was but a change
From human, since — such is the story told —
She was a woman once, wizened and old,
Her wrinkled body all in tatters clad,
But held behind that ugliness she had
A lamplike soul that bade her self engage
In long and selfless service of the sage.

She came to Him through many noons and eves
Bringing Him simple fare of herbs and leaves
Plucked with devotion, cooked with love and care,
And, it is said, He ate the humble fare
As though it were a banquet!

Serving thus
She died and passed into the luminous
Lakshmi that she might serve Him once again
And so, through service, finally attain
Self-knowledge and release. . . .

Great Master! thou
Art all-compassionate. Upon the brow
Of self-surrender thou dost seal thy grace
And dost, in a miraculous while, efface
Bondage and grief. In thy compassion's ken
Dumb créatures share an equal place with men.
Thy law is universal, working out
Even through layers and layers of lampless doubt
Ultimate faith which sees thee as thou art:
Master Illumination of the heart!

Even so did Lakshmi know thee, Master! when
She breathed and moved amidst a world of men
Who scarcely know thee. Even as a cloud
Moves in the wide horizon, glow-endowed
And solitarily she moved with grace
Within thy Love's horizontal embrace.

Within thy Mercy's garden, hour by hour,
She grew from bud to flower, and then from flower
Into the ripened fruit of wisdom hues
With subtle hues of inward solitude.
And while she was a bud she lit the air
With delicate sweetness making us aware
Of some high mission to be done through her;
Then, in the flowering state, she seemed to stir
The hermitage with more-than-human power,
And everywhere she went she was a flower
Scattering fragrance drawn from inwardness;
The Master met her soul, beyond our guess,
In high communion and absolute
Love that transformed the flower into the fruit
Of ultimate ripe attainment.

She has passed
Into His shining vast
Of Essence, beyond form and name;

She has become a Flame
 Upon His quiet altar which shall burn
 Forevermore, lending at every turn
 Light to our hearts and splendour to our minds;

Dark Death, the wind of winds,
 Can not disturb It on that altar burning:
 She will no more in any form occur,
 The law of evolution no more binds
 Her great untrammelled spirit. Lo, for her
 There is no more returning!

Yet, let us see what was the heritage
 Which brought Her to the all-compassionate Sage?
 What strange unearthly scope
 Embodied in her horoscope
 And in herself? this creature made of earth,
 What gave the high significance to her birth?
 What penance and what prayer
 In other births than this, her last,
 Did she perform, scaling stair upon stair
 Of pure illumination in the past
 Closing in ultimate ripeness?

Let us unveil

Before the world her fascinating tale:
 In nineteen twenty six, . . . four mortal years
 After the passing of the Sage's Mother
 Into the State of Light and Liberation,
 Granted to Her by the great Seer of Seers,
 A *bhakta* came to offer salutation
 To Him, and brought with him a gift along,
 A cow and a she-calf, lovely and strong
 The rose-red season-ache in blood and limb,
 With tenderness the creatures gazed on Him
 And knew He was their Lord. . .

He only smiled
 And gently said: "The mother and her child
 Need tending with devotion, love and care.
 So, take them back, and know that I am there
 Wherever they may be. . ."

Arunachala Pillai

"Lord, they are thine,
 Have mercy and accept them. Every line
 Contour and curve of them are thine alone.
 It is a gift I make thee, humbly bowed
 In reverence. I pray, do not disown
 The humble gift. . ."

Out of the crowd
 Emerged a little man, who hardly spoke
 At other times, a puny fragile man
 Whose words collected to a master-stroke
 And seemed thrice pregnant with some future plan
 Of which he was unconscious.

Ramanatha Dikshitar

It is my prayer
 The offering be accepted. In this place
 They shall remain receiving love and care
 Fed not on fodder merely, but Thy Grace!

Thenceforth, the mother-cow remained beside
 Her lovely calf which like a crescent waxed
 In beauty day by day, and seemed untied
 Knot after knot of creaturehood; relaxed
 Slowly but surely from her animal state
 The calf appeared to sense the Lord and wait
 Tip-toe on some great happening, all sublime:

Then, they were led after a little time,
 To dwell within a dairy in the town
 Among a hundred others of their ilk,
 Conducted by a person of renown
 Who earned his daily bread by selling milk.
 His name was Pasupati Aiyer. . . he
 Was Ramana's thrice humble devotee
 Who visited the Sage from day to day
 And with him brought these twain to bend and pay
 Homage along with him.

The calf began
 Within herself to calculate and plan
 Her future carefully, — yet, no one guessed
 The gathering inspirations in her breast!
 Without or show or fuss, she had decided
 To learn by rote the roadways that divided
 The dairy from the hermitage. And soon,
 Growing from the young crescent to the moon,
 She grew in wisdom and self-confidence
 And with her growth, within her grew the sense
 Of adoration for the Lord who was
 Already bending her to other laws
 Than those of earth and time. Each nerve in her
 Began to wake and ache and thrill and stir
 With sweetness, until every nerve became
 A roadway kindled with unearthly flame
 Leading her footsteps to the hermitage
 Where on her own she came at last to dwell!
 One of the few, the chosen of the Sage
 Held evermore under His magic spell.

Lakshmi they called her; and, indeed, she proved
 Goddess of Wealth. The way she breathed and moved,
 The manner of her gait, the light that beamed
 In her large jewel-glorious eyeballs seemed
 To bear an air of boons.

After her coming

The little hermitage began a-humming
With affluence and progress. Thus, at length,
It grew from joy to joy, from strength to strength,
Lands multiplied, grew plenty, laughed with grain
And structures loomed like links within the chain
Of Ramana's growing Kingdom.

Her tangled mesh

Of mortal life is over. She is not
Among us now, a form of blood and flesh,
But lives as lyric light that never dies;
The memory of her movements brimmed with grace
Haunts us forever, and her jewel-eyes
Glitter in every corner of this place
Shedding strange glory. Everywhere we turn
We feel her presence like to moonrise burn
Cleaving our darkness.

While they build and raise

A monument to her in humble praise
Of her existence and her saintliness,
She stands amidst the toiling men to bless
Their labour. Her divine arithmetic
Sums up the meaning of each stone and brick
Which go to build her pure mausoleum:
Her presence is not heralded by drum
Or cymbal nor announced by sounding pipe,
But by Itself which sheds around a ripe
Self-blaze of realisation. She remains
As one ecstatic tingle in our veins
Linking us with the Master, golden-hearted,
Who but a little hour ere she departed,
Touched her into release, — calm stroke by stroke,
Thrice tenderly, compassionately, awoke
In her a wondrous seerhood!

She has gone
 Beyond our common ken, beyond the dawn
 And noon and evenfall — nay, she has earned
 Creation's rich totality and turned
 Part of creation's sweetness gripped above
 Desire and hunger, thirst and ache and love
 Which hold the world in bondage.

Seer of Seers!
 Perfect us difficultly through the years
 Into the state to which she has attained;
 Make us, like her, surrender, every inch
 Until we, too, have reached thy Feet and gained
 Self-cancellation. May we never flinch
 Even by a hair's-breadth from the Truth thou art:
 Teach us, as thou didst her, in limb and heart
 The full surrender until naught remains
 Of blindness and corruption, rusted chains
 Of thee-betrayal.

May we evermore
 Learn from sweet Lakshmi to salute thy Light,
 To bend in self-surrender and adore
 Thy Presence reigning on the starry height
 Piercing the darks of sightless human sight.
 Give us the Grace, like her, to see
 Beyond thy human form, thy Majesty
 Enveloping the universe. Like her
 Make each of us a true interpreter
 Of spirit-radiance until we, who seek,
 Grow one and indivisible with thy Peak.

COW LAKSHMI: EPITAPH BY SRI BHAGAVAN

**On Friday, the 5th of Ani, in the bright fortnight, in Sukla Paksham on Dvadasi
 in Visaka nakshatra in Sarvadhari year, that is on 18-6-48, the cow Lakshmi
 attained mukti.**

Srimad Bhagavata

(Skandha VII, Chapter 13)

The Ascetic's Way of Life

Mode of Sannyasin's Life (1-10)

Narada said:

1. (If he has become physically disabled by old age and disease and is incapable of following the *sannyasin's* way of life, the *vanaprastha* may starve himself to death, meditating as mentioned above). But if he is physically and mentally fit for a *sannyasin's* life, he should, after resolving everything in the Atman, wander forth over the world without any special destination. He should carry the body alone with him, stop in no village for more than a day, and depend on no one for anything.

2. If he is particular about wearing anything, he can have a *kaupina* (codpiece covering the private parts) and nothing more. Except in times of danger, he shall not resume anything that he has abandoned on becoming a *sannyasin*. He can have only the *sannyasin's* emblems of a staff and water pot made of shell.

3. He should move about alone, absorbed in the Atman, depending on nothing external, friendly to all living beings and completely resigned to the Lord Narayana, the support of all beings.

4. He should view this world as subsisting in the Supreme Spirit, who is none

the less uninvolved in the cause and effect relation, and unaffected by any change or transformation. In everything that is bound by cause and effect relation, one should see the Self, inseparable from the Supreme Brahman, as the indwelling principle.

5. Between waking and sleep, there is a junction in which there is neither the unconscious dullness of sleep, nor the form-taking tendency of the mind. A close observer of this Pure Self-awareness will realise the true Self as also the apparency of both bondage and freedom.

6. He should not think of the death of this body, which is certain to come whether one thinks of it or not.

Nor should he think of the continuance of this life, which is by nature impermanent. Let him be indifferent to both. Let him think of Time, which is the Supreme Being Himself in the process of bringing out and swallowing everything.

7. A *sannyasin* should not interest himself with the study of subjects that are not concerned with spiritual realisation; nor should he take up any occupation merely

for his livelihood. He should avoid sophistry and those who indulge in vain argumentation, which serves no other purpose than logic-chopping. He should not take sides in controversies.

8. He should not strive to attract disciples and followers. Study of many books is not for him. He should not go about giving discourses merely for gaining popularity; nor should he initiate new ventures (like starting monasteries etc.).

9. In the case of a great ascetic who has attained tranquillity and equability through spiritual realisation, adherence to the rules and insignia of an *ashrama* (state of life) ceases to be a means for attaining any great end. He may stick to them or abandon them.

10. He may appear to others as one without any distinguishing insignia but with his spiritual aura manifest; he will have wisdom but look like a child or one intoxicated; he will be full of inspiration but appear dumb.

Prahlada with an Avadhuta (11-18)

11. In clarification of the *paramahansa* ideal there is the following old story in the form of a conversation between Prahlada and an ascetic (Dattatreya) who followed the mode of life of a python.

12-13. Prahlada, the beloved of the Lord, was once moving about in the land with some of his advisers in the valleys of the Western Ghats in order to have a first-hand knowledge of the affairs of the country, when he came across an ascetic on the banks of the Cauvery, lying on the ground with his body covered with dust that hid his natural aura.

14-15. None could recognise who he was from his actions, appearance, or words. Nor did he bear the insignia of any *varna* or *ashrama*. The great devotee Prahlada prostrated himself before him, touched his feet with his head, offered him worship and entered into conversation with him, inspired by his eagerness to know the truth.

16. He said: 'You, Sir, have a fat body like a man given to work and enjoyments, though you are neither of these. Only those who work will have money; only men with money in hand can have enjoyments; and only those who enjoy the blessings of life have a fat body.'

17. 'You, who simply lie in a place without doing anything, cannot have any money which alone can bring enjoyments for man. How is it then that your body, without any objects of enjoyments, has become so fat? If it is not improper, we want to know the truth about it.'

18. 'You are learned, capable, clever and endowed with astonishing power of speech. You see all the world working hard, and yet you keep quiet, lying down in spite of your many capacities.'

Avadhuta's Mode of Life (19-24)

Narada said:

19. Thus questioned by the king of the *asuras*, the great sage, who was very much pleased by his nectarine words, replied with a smile.

The Avadhuta said:

20. O great *asura*! You know all about this by your spiritual insight. You are one who has the recognition of all good men.

You know what are the respective consequences of following the path of desire and the path of renunciation.

21. For, in your heart Narayana, the Lord of All-inclusive Self-consciousness, dwells for ever, drawn by unswerving devotion and dispelling the darkness of ignorance like the sun.

22. O honoured one! Still, I shall answer your questions from what I have learnt from my teacher. For, you are respected by all who care for their spiritual evolution.

23. Desire, which remains unsatiated in spite of repeated experiences of highly exciting pleasures, entangled me in transmigratory cycles and took me to innumerable embodiments.

24. After being driven to several embodiments in diverse species of beings by my *karma*, I have at last got this human body, which can once again be the gateway to heavenly regions or to liberation, to the status of a brute or to a human embodiment, according as it is made use of.

Withdrawal as a Way of Life (25-29)

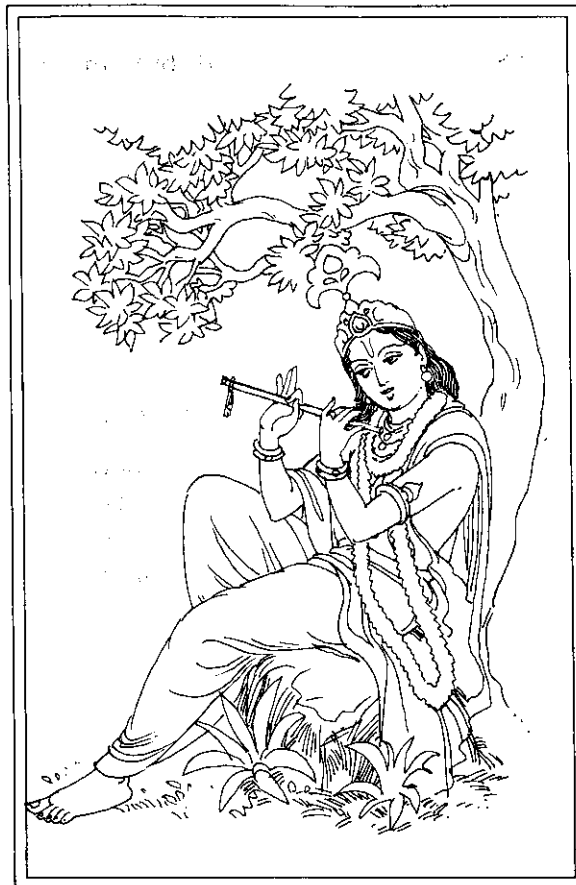
25. Observing how householders in this world perform work for attainment of happiness and avoidance of unhappiness but happen to get only contrary results, I have withdrawn from all work.

26. Joy is the nature of the Atman. Abstinence from every work is what makes that nature manifest. As enjoyments are largely projections of the mind and quite temporary, I rest quietly, undergoing the effects of my *prarabdha* but making no new efforts of any kind.

27. Though the bliss of the Atman is present in man, he is forgetful of it and wanders in search of it through the various travails of transmigratory existence.

28. It is like a man running foolishly after the illusory water seen at a distance in the mirage, not recognising the real water in the lake by his side under the cover of the grass growing from it.

29. People without any faith in God or in the spiritual destiny of man, who



are ignorant of the fact that their present body and mind are the result of their past *karma*, engage themselves in actions calculated to bring about happiness and ward off unhappiness. But their repeated efforts in this respect will be of little avail (succeeding or failing according to what past *karma* would allow).

Ways of the Bee and the Python (30-36)

30. Of what avail will be the wealth and the objects of enjoyment gained by great effort for man who is naturally subject to the three types of sufferings caused by his own body and mind (*adhyatmika*), by external natural forces (*adhibhautika*), and by extra-human agencies (*adhidaivika*)?

31. I find how wealthy men, who are miserly and slaves of their senses, are ever subject to sufferings. Out of fear they get no sleep, and suspicion of others becomes second nature with them.

32. Men who want to preserve their life and their wealth are both subject to fear from a variety of sources — from the ruling power, robbers, enemies, one's own relatives, birds and animals, suppliants, time, and even from oneself (through exhaustion of wealth and one's energies by enjoyment).

33. A wise man should therefore abandon love of sense enjoyments and the desire for wealth, both of which are productive of grief, infatuation, fear, anger, attachment, helplessness and exhaustion.

34. In this world, I have two teachers — the honey-bee and the python. It is from them that I learnt the lesson of renunciation and contentment.

35. The honey-bee taught me renunciation. Just as the honey gathered by the bee through hard labour, is taken away by others who do not hesitate even to kill it, so the hard-earned wealth of a rich man is robbed by others, killing him if need be.

36. Like the python I make no effort for food, but am satisfied with what chance brings. If nothing comes for many days, I lie all the time like the python without food, but with my strength undiminished.

Taking Life as it comes (37-42)

37. I eat whatever I get, sometimes a small quantity and sometimes large, sometimes well-cooked and sometimes ill-cooked, sometimes with condiments and sometimes without them.

38. Sometimes I eat food that is given with reverence, and sometimes food given without it. Sometimes I take food only at night, sometimes only during day, and sometimes at night too, as chance would bring it.

39. I, who am exhausting my *prarabdha*, wear with satisfaction whatever I get — be it silk, skin, torn cloth, or bark.

40. If the kindness of others makes it available, I may lie on a soft bed on the top floor of a house, or otherwise I may sleep in any place like an ash heap, stones, leaves, grass, or bare ground.

41. O great one! Sometimes I may move about accompanied by chariots, elephants and horses, bathed, well-dressed in silk and well-decorated with unguents and garlands; sometimes I may be going about naked like a ghost.

42. I never praise or criticise people who vary so widely in their nature. Irrespective of their nature, I only pray that they may all gain devotion to Him, and the knowledge of their unity with Him.

Establishment in the Self (43-46)

43-44. Diversity of perception should be dissolved in the mental mode that grasps it. These modes must be dissolved in *manas* (inner perceptive mechanism or *antahkarana*), which causes the distortion of perceptions through its modes. The mind should be dissolved in its cause, the *sattva* aspect of *ahankara* (I-sense); and that I-sense, in *mahattattva* (inchoate all-inclusive self-awareness). The *mahattattva* should be dissolved in *maya*, the power

of the Lord. The Truth-seeking sage should dissolve *maya* in the Universal Self, the Supreme Being. Then without any desire or expression of will, he should retreat into the Atman which is Pure Consciousness.

45. Different from all codes of conduct recognised in worldly behaviour, a secret unknown, is this, the way of my life. I have communicated this to you only because you are whole-heartedly devoted to the Lord.

Narada said:

46. Having thus heard the *dharma* of the *paramahansa* from this sage, Prahlada offered him worship with a joyful heart, took his leave, and went home.

ABOVE AND BELOW

When Bhagavan was living on the hill-side, some *sadhus* used to visit him. While most of them felt they were superior to the householder devotees, one *sadhu* whom we shall call X regarded himself as superior to the rest and almost equal to Bhagavan.

His constant efforts to occupy a seat not much lower than Bhagavan's used to evoke caustic comments. One day as Bhagavan was seated on a boulder near Virupakshi cave, he approached the company and, finding no elevated seat and unwilling to sit on the ground, walked away in a hurry. As a titter ran round the group of *sadhus*, Bhagavan remarked, "You have honoured me with the highest available seat and duly driven X away. But what about this fellow here?"

So saying, he pointed his finger upward at a monkey proudly perched on a branch above his head!

— *Ramana Jyothi.*



Meditation at the Ashram

By B.V. Narasimha Swamy

The Pranava (OM) is the bow; the arrow is the self; the target Brahman. Aim steadily, deliberately, and hit the mark. Like the arrow, get imbedded, lost therein and become That.

In That the earth and the sky, intervening space, mind and all vital forces are interwoven. The one Self is that. Cognize that. From other talk, refrain. This is the bridge that leads to immortality.

Meditate on the Self as OM. May you thus safely cross beyond darkness.

— Mundakopanishad, II. 2.

MAHARSHI is regarded by many as a sphinx. He speaks little and only as to what is asked. He is mostly silent. His works are cryptic and are capable of diverse interpretations. *Saktas* go to him and think he is a *Sakta*, *Saivas* take him for a *Saiva*, *Vaishnavas* find nothing in him inconsistent with their *Visishtadvaitic* ideal. Moslems and Christians have found in him elements of their 'true faith'. Who can say what his faith is? Few are those who have analysed and understood his attitude and realisation on matters of supreme, ultimate interest. More than twenty years back ¹ Seshadriswami, a great *tapasvi* of remarkable *vairagya* and high spiritual culture tried in vain to see through this Swami. If the giant Seshadri Swami with his extraordinary training, acuteness and powers of thought-reading could not make out his 'mentality' or state, how can puny souls

make it out? Yet having started on a biography, one has to face the task. They say, "It is the next best mark of wisdom to complete what is begun".

The theory of meditation and Self-realisation has been frequently set forth in books on *Yoga* and *Vedanta*, and clearly explained by Maharshi at least from 1901-02 onward, as may be seen from G. Seshier's note-book and subsequent books. The instrument employed is the *antahkarana* consisting of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahankara* (mind, intellect, desire and personality), which is often termed the mind. This instrument has to be improved and developed and given the most favourable conditions for

From *Self-realisation*, Pub: Sri Ramanasramam (1985).

¹ This was written in 1931.

the task before it. The mind unaccustomed to concentrate must be bent to that task constantly, so that concentration may become easy and natural. Frequently steadying one's mind on a particular point, when diverse other attractions or distractions operate on the senses and mind, will enable one to concentrate even in a fish market. Favourable conditions are, however, necessary in the case of beginners, and must be first attended to diligently. These can be dispensed with later. First the place selected must be clean, peaceful, and free from all distracting noise. That is why a forest, hill, river bank, cave or corner of a temple is generally chosen. Even a quiet room in one's house will do. Next, a firm seat is made, not too high, (for fear of a fall) nor too low (for fear of damp, insects, etc.) As explained in *Bhagavad Gita* (VI, 10-15), a grass mat is spread or a grass bundle is laid flat; over it a deer-skin and over that again a cloth is spread. On this the aspirant sits in any posture convenient to him. But as far as possible the body must be kept erect in a seated posture. The mind must remain calm, unagitated by fear, sex, or other attractions, or thoughts, or by fatigue, drowsiness, restlessness etc.; especially one finds it necessary to regulate sleep and food, avoiding all excess, and to live a pure, good and simple life, on plain *satvic* fare. The thoughts must be brought under control.

The best way to keep off all distracting thoughts is to occupy the mind positively with some object of devotion like Sri Krishna's or Rama's figure, and intently concentrate on that alone. One must throw into this meditation one's entire

heart without any reservation. The personality of the meditator must be merged in the thought (or form) chosen for meditation and disappear into it like an arrow-head into the target.² The breath becomes regulated and tranquil thereby; and one need not worry about it; enough that one is bent on meditation. But where a man lacks earnestness and force of personality, and is much distracted by conflicting currents of thought, — especially thoughts of worldly temptations, e.g., woman, wealth, fame, pleasure, he may call to his aid breath regulation for a period; attention to breath regulation, especially to the retention of breath for a fixed period, will smooth his ruffled mind. But as *pranayama* (breath-control) is a mere step in aid of a great purpose, Maharshi frequently reminds people not to waste much time and energy on that to the detriment of the main objective (*lakshya*), viz., Self-realisation.

The question what exactly is to be meditated on is frequently put to Maharshi by his disciples and others. He often allows them to select whatever they have previously taken up as their *lakshya* or object of meditation. Anything will do. If a man has already started meditation on God Ganapati, Subrahmanya, Kali, Siva, Rama, Jesus, Buddha, *Pranava*, *Sakti bijam*, *Panchakshari*, *Ashtakshari*, a lamp's flame, his mother or his guru, Maharshi tells him to go on with that with full faith, as that will ultimately lead him to the goal. But to him who comes with what is practically a mental *tabula rasa* without any

² As described in *Mundaka Upanishad* quoted earlier.

practice or predilections, he advises the adoption of his own method. He is asked to follow intently the quest "Who am I?" In an earlier chapter are given some steps in the quest (which admit of description) leading to Self-realisation. "Inquire first how you think of 'I' or yourself". Most people adopt the cut and dried analysis of one's self as body and soul; the body includes the organs and senses, the breath and other vital activities; the term soul or mind includes sensation, perception, memory, judgement and all mental operations.

No apology is offered for repeating here the pith and core of Maharshi's teaching. To understand and appreciate him, one has to get a good grip of his theory and actually practise it; it is a matter which has to be dinned into one times without number, before one can hope to make any progress.

The question then is "Am I this body, this fleshy cage, these senses?" Obviously he is not these, as he parts with these piecemeal or wholesale and yet retains his feeling of self. At any rate " 'I' cannot remain after death!" someone may remark. Well, "Death of what? What is it that dies?" Most people agree that they pass on from one body to another after death. Some people have experience even in this life of leaving their bodies in sleep, visiting distant scenes, noting what occurs there and, after waking up, verifying the truth of the dream. Others are made to do this through hypnotic trance. These and similar facts enable a man to infer that the body, breath, life and vital activities are not his Self, though he is apt to identify himself with his physical or animal life (as

in fact he often identifies himself erroneously with the body).

If the body and life are not the Self, a person may perhaps conclude that he must be his mind or mental modes. At any rate this is coming nearer the mark. But taking mind to mean the sum total of his thoughts, he feels almost instinctively that he is not his thoughts. A person feels, "I entertain the thoughts, push them out, again give them room to re-enter. I send out and select various thoughts," and may well conclude that these thoughts do not mean his Self but are mere objects with which the Self, the subject, is sporting. But even the subject seems to be a thought or inextricably inter-mixed with thoughts. So he should first try and eliminate purely objective thoughts in his quest. All thoughts other than 'I' may thus be regarded as objective and as much outside the Self as the external world is. The question then is: What is the residuary subject, this stem, or root-thought 'I', which is termed personality? Having already belittled the intellect by including it among the objects he is faced with the question whether the intellect can throw light on the nature of this 'I'. To some extent it can. When object after object is eliminated with the remark "This is but an object, a possession of the Self, a thing which rises and falls, which changes, passes away and returns, and which is consequently not 'I' and not the Real" (i.e., with the remark *neti neti*, not this, not this), the intellect is playing its part and rendering service. This service is exhausted with this negative course, this cleansing of the room (i.e., its purification) to fit it for the 'occupation'

or the 'coming' of the pure Self. The final service of the intellect is to eliminate itself, saying "I too am only the instrument of the subject and am not the subject itself."

The pure Self is not sensed by the intellect. The eye sees not the Self, though the Self sees all else with the eye. The intellect too is similar to the physical eye which sees only outside things. In some very extraordinary cases, the eye, so to speak, is turned round on itself. That is the introverted eye spoken of in *Katha Upanishad* (II, 4. 1). Strictly speaking, it is not the eye or the intellect that sees the Self, but the Self sees, rather knows, Itself. We shall not try to describe what is indescribable. Seers have long ago declared, "Speech and mind return baffled in the attempt to describe the Self".³ So we content ourselves with a description of the preliminaries of meditation and leave the reader to realise the rest by himself. The mother, when questioned by her little girl, what the joys and pains of maternity and child-birth are like, smiles and says: "Wait and see for yourself by actual experience." The 'birth' of this *Atman* (Self), i.e., its realisation in one's Self and all, as pure 'bliss-consciousness-existence', can be understood only by actual experience.

But the external circumstances of meditation can be set down here in greater detail. What the visitor who stays a while with a view to catch a glimpse of the inner life of the Ashram observes, what makes it worth his while visiting the Ashram, may be described here at some length.

Most visitors have noticed that Maharshi seldom talks. When visitors come

he just notes who come and keeps on his 'contemplative' attitude. His eyes are fixed, his breath is even, and his mind is evidently in *samadhi*. If the visitor comes for getting help to settle his own thoughts and dive into himself, Maharshi stops talking and gives him the needed tip or help. Maharshi has often said that the proximity of great ones is one of the means to attain breath regulation (*kumbhaka*). The great ones in their peaceful meditation maintain rhythmic breathing. Those who intently watch them with a view to attaining *samadhi*, imitate them consciously or unconsciously; and their breath and mind fall in line. This very soon leads to shaking off all cares, worries, and disturbing influences and preparing for the inward plunge. Numerous devotees (or followers) of Maharshi have described this process from their experience. Several people say that, while they find contemplation hard in their own homes, temples, river-sides, tanks, etc., if they sit before him in the hall, cares are dispelled and distracting currents cease — such is his grace towards them. Some of them say that they sat before him, and in a few moments attained *antarmukha drishti* (the inward vision) which later on became habitual.

Several devotees do not go there to talk or ask questions; they are happiest when visitors do not talk and Maharshi sits still in *samadhi* giving them the lead for their own *samadhi*. They are those who have been working on the lines recommended by him, i.e., *Atma Vichara* (pursuing the quest "Who am I?"). Once Kapali Sastri

³ *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2-4.

asked him if a disciple can go to more than one *guru* without detriment to his progress. Maharshi answered that he could, provided the current of thought of the *gurus* is substantially the same. This explains why those pursuing Maharshi's line of preparation for *samadhi* find his presence so helpful — the very atmosphere of his hall being full of the quest "Who am I?"

Several of these have been advised what to shun in the course of their concentration. They have had 'photisms' i.e., visible light in various shapes and forms — like the sun, the moon, lightning, golden discs, etc., with their eyes closed or open and have been warned that no time ought to be wasted on such. Not having reached the intuitive awareness of the Self at that stage, their duty is to push on deliberately brushing aside these lights (*kalas*, *chit-kalas*, *jyoti* etc. they are termed) or sounds (*nada*) heard within till they reach the Self by intuition. Sometimes, instead of these lights, divine forms like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Siva, Subrahmanya, Mother Sakti etc., appear. Maharshi's advice is that even when these appear one should not stop one's efforts for realisation or crave for boons. These forms are subjective like other phenomena — only more glorious. All the same, if they raise desires in the aspirant or divert him from the pursuit of the Self, they become hindrances, which the wise would be well advised to ignore and push on towards Self-realisation, in *nirvikalpa samadhi* where no forms and no activity of the senses in any shape persist.

This advice should not be interpreted as lacking reverence for these divine

forms. Maharshi includes his own form also. The last stanza in *Swetasvatara Upanishad* warns the pupil that the teachings of the *Upanishads* will bear little fruit unless the pupil has great reverence for God and equal reverence for the *guru* (who is identified with God). So the object mostly selected by his devotees for contemplation is Maharshi himself. They either gaze at him or at his photograph for that purpose, or merely think of his image with the consequence that his form appears transfigured often in brilliant light, which the pupil invariably reports to Maharshi, who then counsels him to put aside all form and to remember that what is seen is perishable, that what has an origin must also have an end, and that what has to be realised is the intuitive perception of the I, the Self, and not anything apprehended by the senses or the intellect. Maharshi does not ignore the value of concentration on a physical form. That is the invaluable intermediate step. That must be stressed upon the beginner along with the other factors — place, time, food and sleep-regulation. But when one has progressed, it is necessary to look ahead and to throw away the ladder by which one rose so high. The highest is not yet reached. The one thing needed is not yet gained. Self has yet to be realised.

So far mention has been made of how Maharshi helps the ordinary run of devotees who visit him. A few who are more finely strung, perhaps more delicately attuned, mention their experiences to him, which cannot be adequately described to one who has not had a similar experience. Some say that at a glance of

Maharshi or because of his mere presence (vide e.g., the entries in the diary of Ramaswamy Iyer, Ch. XVI) a current from him entered their heart and greatly assisted them in mind and body. Some say that Maharshi, in order to instruct them about the working of 'the Heart' which is said to be the seat of intuition, or Self, has asked them to place their palm on his right breast⁴ where they felt the rhythm of this peculiar heartbeat. Some of them felt something like an electric shock coursing through their entire body at the very touch of his body. Whether these phenomena are subjective or objective, the results have been the same in their spiritual course. Some disciples say that they derived similar benefit by their bodies being touched by Maharshi when he appeared before them in dreams or waking visions.

When Maharshi renders such aid to occasional visitors, one may easily gather that he gives no mean help to the resident disciples whose chief delight and occupation is to serve at the Ashram. Their very service is a great help to their progress. All the time they are cooking or watering the garden, cutting vegetables or running errands; whatever their body may be engaged in, they intently think of Maharshi as their God, their sole refuge, and refer to, or address him as Bhagavan (God) with intense faith. When they get occasional spells of leisure, for some moments or hours, they sit by his side and try to fall into *samadhi*, or ask him for any guidance they require. Sometimes they spend their leisure hours in intellectual preparation and development of faith, by learning the import of his

compositions (*Upadesa Sara*, *Ulladu Narpadu*, *Arunachala Stotra*, *Devikalottara*, *Dakshinamurthi Ashtaka*, etc.) and by reciting them before him in sonorous Tamil along with songs of praise skilfully interwoven with his teachings.⁵ Maharshi listens right through and corrects any errors in the recitation. Early morning when he wakes up and sits in his seat, meditation is often resumed by the disciples. Some may begin with songs on awakening the Lord, imitating the praises of God sung at such hours in temples and at *bhajan*s, and then proceed as at night to sing his poems describing the spiritual course — specially the *samadhi* state. These invaluable hours of meditation or communion, night and morning, are highly prized by the resident disciples who often continue to meditate by Maharshi's seat even when he is asleep or away.

Sometimes Maharshi and his disciples sit up, especially after the night meal, reading books like *Ribhugita*, and *Kaivalya Navaneetha*, each by turn reading a verse or a set of verses. The books read are mostly very easy to follow; and in places Maharshi puts in a word or two to make the meaning or its application clear. The reading continues for about two hours at a stretch and occasionally a whole night. He says, "These readings from *Ribhugita* are as good as *samadhi*." Evidently such a continuous reading (following the

⁴ See *Ullathu Narpadu* Supplement.

⁵ As in *Ramana Sannidhimurai* by Muruganar, *Ramana Stuti Panchakam* by Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer etc.

meaning intently) induces *samadhi*. In fact, page after page, nay, line after line, of *Ribhugita* merely goes on rubbing into one the nature of the Self. With a constant study of such works the mind easily gets into the mood of *samadhi*. The words keep ringing in the ears or in the heart for a long while after study. It is exactly for that reason that he encourages constant recitation of his works. His words, phrases and ideas thus soak into their minds; and they can easily catch any further hints and instructions he may give; and all these permeate their subconscious mind, ripen there and produce highly desirable results in the long run.

The description of meditation given thus far may give the impression that *nirguna dhyana* (meditation upon the formless) is practically the only thing that obtains at the Ashram. This would however be inaccurate. No doubt identification with *nirguna* Brahman is the ultimate end and aim of all efforts. But the veteran with forty years of experience knows full well that, for most people, formless contemplation is an almost impossible feat; and these are advised to meditate on forms (*saguna dhyana*) with or without the aid of images of pictures etc., according to the previous training, ideas or circumstances of each *sadhaka*.

A party of vakils, wakil *gumasthas* (clerks) and others from Salem accompanied Vallimalai Murugar known as Tiruppugazh Swami to see Maharshi about December 1925. Vallimalai Murugar himself spends all his time singing *Tiruppugazh* (praises of God Subrahmanya) composed by the poet Arunagirinathar

almost entirely devoted to meditation on form. Maharshi found him years ago repeating it very impressively with great musical talent but without understanding its meaning. Maharshi patiently sat and taught Murugar the meaning of *Tiruppugazh*; and now the latter (who has no other education but this) is able to expound *Tiruppugazh* even to Tamil graduates and clear their doubts. It is *saguna dhyana* that he practised and Maharshi by his exposition enabled him to pursue it more effectively. At the same time Maharshi was requested by the Salem group to explain how they were to derive any benefit from the *Gayatri mantra* which every Brahmin daily repeats a number of times, and whether it was to be construed literally. "Yes," Maharshi said, "there is no harm, but real good results in starting *Gayatri dhyana* by taking the *Savita* as the orb of the Sun at first." He also approved of the use of the closing *mantra* of the daily *japa* (prayer) to guide one in meditation. The orb of the Sun is viewed as the one eye of the universe, the source, the sustainer and the end of all existence, the embodied form of the *Vedic* (i.e., spiritual) wisdom, the fountain of all *gunas* (attributes), the soul of the Triad (Brahma the Creator, Narayana the Upholder, and Sankara, or Siva, the Withdrawer of the universe). The meditation is on that threefold yet unitary Being who resides in the centre of the solar orb, seated on a lotus decked with ornaments of burnished gold, bearing the resplendent crown of imperial power (his entire body also shining like molten gold), holding in his palms the mighty conch (a spiral symbolising space,

wherein the worlds are ever rotating), the terrible, flaming discus (*chakra*, or wheel significant of Time wherein all creation is held, shaped and transformed) and the *gadha* weapon (typifying omnipotence). Thus God is to be intently thought of as omnipotent, omnipresent, all-pervasive, infinite, eternal; and by perpetual contemplation one finally sinks one's individuality in God. If the votary is earnest he need not have anxieties about the correctness or the form of his meditation. He has entrusted it to an omniscient power. Does not that power know what is good for the votary and will He not bestow it? Intensity of devotion converts the finite form on which the devotee begins to meditate into an infinitely vast formlessness. *Saguna* thus easily glides into *nirguna*.

"Everyone according to his liking" is the motto of Ramanasramam, a 'Liberty hall'; and various disciples place before Maharshi their special inclinations towards meditation. A *Sakta* wants advice about his line and gets it. One very keen on *mantras* with intent to achieve worldly, albeit altruistic, and highly ambitious aims, asks advice on the way in which he is to carry on his *japa*, or how the power presiding over the *mantra* attracts, or is attracted by, the *japakarta*,⁶ and how the current generated in the exercise works, etc. Maharshi enters into that line of thought and gives the answers suitable from that devotee's viewpoint; and when the latter sits up for meditation according to that point of view, Maharshi sits in *samadhi* and lends him a helping hand.

When people require assistance not merely in the choice of *dhyana murti* (i.e.,

a form to meditate upon) but also in the selection of particular passages of sacred works wherein such meditation is set out, Maharshi, whose knowledge of such matters is extensive, picks out particular passages from sacred scripts to suit all. Passages abound in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* describing the heart as the seat of God and God as residing therein as light of the size of the thumb (see *Purusha Sukta*; see also *Katha Upanishad*, II. 4.12 & 13). God is again described as floating on the waters, i.e., the ocean (of milk or water), or as appearing in the form of a hill, or of a river flowing down from the hill. He is described as the entire universe. Maharshi, as already stated, gives the disciple a free choice of forms, *mantras* and passages like these for contemplation.

Several people have asked Maharshi from time to time for help, especially in directing their meditation to overcome various cravings and thus to prepare themselves ultimately for Self-realisation. In W. James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, the instance of Col. Gardiner is given to show how a person who was a veritable slave to sexual craving suddenly became master of himself and freed forever from it, together with instances of others who similarly overcame love of drink, anger, etc. Disciples have requested Maharshi's advice for similar conquests. There are some detailed instructions in Sri Sankara's *Bhaja Govindam* (*Mohamudgaram*) e.g., "Deem this body a nasty bundle of flesh, serum, etc., and do not be enamoured of it"; "When you are

⁶ The one who does *japa*.

impatient and wroth with me or another, remember you are wroth with God who is in you, in me and in all." There are some passages in the poems of Pattinathupillai and others which similarly make one feel disgust for sexual craving and wealth. Maharshi does not generally give advice on these lines. He always goes to the root of the matter. "Aim high, aim at the highest; and all lower aims are thereby achieved," is his principle. If a person tries and learns the nature of the Self, where is lust or anger there to disturb him? But some disciples are only too conscious of their own weaknesses and feel that an immediate remedy for their troubles is required before aiming so high. Maharshi asks them not to look downwards at the stormy seas but to pass to the Self (Himself). "It is looking below on the stormy seas of differences that makes you sink in them. Look up beyond these, and see the one

glorious Real, and you are saved", is his advice. "Have faith in God and in yourself: that will cure all," is his panacea for all ills. "Hope for the best, expect the best, toil for the best," he says, "and everything will come right in the end." Some do rise to the occasion and, by acting on this advice, meditate straightaway on the Self and overcome their "defects of doubt and taints of blood". Many lines of Maharshi's *Aksharamanamalai* are found suitable by many *bhaktas*, while others may constantly repeat other passages full of excellent suggestions, e.g., the following:

O Goddess Parvati, consort of Sankara, bounteous feeder, ever free of want, give me alms, Wisdom and non-attachment.

Grant me, O Lord! equality towards all, universal love and association with the spiritual master.

The Long Way Home

By Wei Wu Wei

Which is the best way?

From where to where ?

From where I am to where I belong.

To where is that ?

Let us call it 'home'.

Blind ? or blindfold ?

What do you mean?

Looking for where you are by going elsewhere is a long way 'home'.

But how can I be at-home when what I AM is absent ?

Absence is only relative to 'presence':

Absolutely I Am neither absent nor present.

So what-I-AM is never absent ?

Nor present. To what could I be either ?

But how can that be ?

How can that not be? Can you be either absent from, or present to, what you are ?

You mean. . . .

I do.

The Meditations of William of St. Thierry

By Gladys O'Rorke

"I have composed some Meditations; they are not altogether useless for training beginners in prayer." Thus wrote William of St. Thierry, a Flemish noble born at Liege in the year 1085. While still a youth, William set forth in search of a master who could further his education. The schools of northern France attracted him — and, in particular, that of Laon, where the famous Master Anselm taught. Peter Abelard, the genius who was to gain popularity later, studied there, and William wrote of their friendship: "I too loved Peter Abelard — and I should like to love him still."

Little is known of William's student days, but in the year 1113 he entered the Benedictine Abbey of St. Nicasius of Rheims. This Cluniac house enforced strict discipline upon its monks, expounding the Scriptures and the Fathers, with especial zeal. William reached the turning-point of his career when he journeyed to Clairvaux, five years later. The daughter-house of Cîteaux, Clairvaux was the birthplace and centre of the Benedictine reform undertaken by Robert de Molesmes some twenty years previously. The Head was Bernard, who was then twenty-eight years old and its first Abbot. William met him whilst Bernard convalesced in a hut on the abbey land,

after having been very ill. Although still weak, the Abbot received his visitor with courtesy, and afforded him leisure to converse with him on spiritual matters. William found the younger man charming, and an ideal Religious. They became close friends.

One year later, William was called upon to become Abbot of St. Thierry of Mount Hor, north-west of Rheims. Within a short time, the new Abbot's charm, wisdom, and dynamism won over the monks, so that they all co-operated fully with his religious reforms. It was for their benefit that William wrote his first works — *On the nature and dignity of Love* and *On contemplating God*. He then wrote his *Meditations*, leaving the last Meditation for a future date. Although he was kept very busy, William found time to visit Bernard at Clairvaux. When administrative cares began to press more heavily upon him, William yearned to retire into seclusion so as to devote himself solely to inner prayer.

As the years passed by, his respect and admiration for Bernard of Clairvaux grew steadily, so too, did the conflict within his soul. The Benedictine Reform, the Order of Cîteaux, was attracting more and more ardent souls, appealing strongly also to the finer spirits in other

monastic Orders. Many faced a dilemma. They hardly knew what should be done. Should one leave the Monastery for that of the other, or remain in one's own Order and work for a reform from within? William knew his mind. In 1124, he wrote to Bernard, asking to be admitted to Clairvaux. The reply came forthwith. It was a refusal pointblank. It said, "Stay where you are and try to serve the souls under your care. Do not run away from honours, for it is in your power to use them for the common good. It would be disastrous indeed, if you were in authority and yet of no use; but it will be more so if, in your reluctance to command, you fail to serve." Although his heart sank when he read these words, William remained where he was for a further period of eleven years, working with Bernard to promote reforms in his own Order.

When he reached the age of fifty, William decided his weary and frail body required the change he so ardently yearned for. Knowing that Clairvaux was closed to him, in 1135 he relinquished his office of Abbot and journeyed to the Ardennes where he received the white Cistercian habit at Signy, a little daughter-house perched amidst the fresh forests of pines, in the mountains. It proved to be a hard and challenging decision, for the ex-abbot found Cistercian life difficult. The manual labour assigned to him proved too arduous, and he was relieved of his duties. Feeling ever frail and useless, William was assailed by doubt. Had he made the right choice? Ought he to go on? Steeling himself to resist these crippling thoughts, William persevered.

He concentrated on his writing, compiling, editing, and putting together previous works. He also finished his *Meditations*, adding the thirteenth. He passed away in 1148.

Etienne Gilson wrote of him: "William of St. Thierry had everything — power of thought, the orator's eloquence, the poet's lyricism, and all the attractiveness of the most ardent and tender piety. Ardent is the right word, for William had a passion for God, with him it was his own phrase *non amor sed ardor*."

THE MEDITATIONS ¹

(Condensed)

Meditation One

"O the depth of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor ... Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy; Thou art our Potter, and we are the clay... We were created by Thee for Thyself, and toward Thee our face is set. We acknowledge Thee our Maker and Creator; we adore Thy wisdom; and beg that it may order all our life; we adore Thy goodness and mercy, and beg them ever to sustain and keep us. Thou Who hast made us, bring us to perfection; perfect in us the Image and the Likeness of Thyself for which Thou madest us ...

¹ From: *The Meditations of William of St. Thierry*, A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., London (1954).

There is no past with Thee, nor future either; but Thou art ever what Thou art, and all that exists in any mode whatever, be it past or present or future, is Life in Thy Word ... Pride therefore, is at once the thing that merits reprobation and the sign of it, just as humility is that which both deserves election and denotes it."

Meditation Two

The soul presents herself to God, desiring to receive His light and, with a mind detached from things of sense, to meditate upon the Holy Trinity.

"... I could not exist in any way at all, either in soul or in body, save by Thy Constant Grace, and I could never find Thee, did not Thy mercy and Thy goodness run to meet me on the way. In all these things I am with Thee, and I am conscious of Thy grace at work in me; ... But if, when Thou art present in thus doing good to me, I am myself absent from Thee in mind and heart, the operations of Thy grace, it seems to me, are like burial rites duly and carefully fulfilled upon a corpse.

"Sometimes indeed I hear Thy Spirit's voice and, though it is no more than as the whistling of a gentle air that passes me, I understand the message, 'Come unto Him and be enlightened.' I hear, and I am shaken. Arising as from sleep and shaking off my lethargy, a certain wonder fills me ... I stretch my spiritual muscles and rouse them from their sloth ... If, by Thy gift, I find a fount of tears, that which is wont to spring up speedily in lowly ground and in the valleys of a contrite soul, I wash the hands wherewith

I work and the face I lift in prayer ... And, when I raise the eyes of my mind and my reason's perception to Thee, O Sun of Righteousness, it happens to me as is wont to persons drunk with sleep ... seeing one thing ... until in the process of seeing it dawns upon them that the defect is in their sight, and not in the thing seen ... my soul's foolish way of picturing things sees and regards the Trinity in such a fashion, that she fondly thinks that there is a number in the simple Being of the Godhead Which, Itself beyond all numbers, made all that is by number and by measure and by weight; the soul ... seeks Thy face, O Lord".

Meditation Three

The soul gives utterance to her longing to see God, and dwells upon the joy of that same sight.

"Where art Thou, Lord, where art Thou? And where, O Lord, art Thou not? ... But if Thou art with me, why am I not with Thee? What hinders it? What is the obstacle? ... I pray Thee, by Thy most tender patience towards us, yield something to my quest, and tell my soul what she desires when she seeks Thy Face ... when the soul reaches out in love to anything, a certain change takes place in it by which it is transmuted into the object loved ... the understanding which is from above carries the fragrance of its place of origin, there is nothing human in its operation, it is all divine ... this sort of understanding makes neither division nor conjunction in the Trinity ... For the Spirit of the Lord of a sudden so clothes

the tranquil, humble soul on whom He rests, and so changes him into another man, that no antithesis is felt in the believer's mind: the Trinity in no way contradicts the Unity nor puts a stumbling block before the piety of him who seeks the One God".

Meditation Four

The soul asks for the gift of prayer, and describes its former state and recent desolation ... "merciful art Thou, O Lord, patient and exceedingly kind, Thou art gracious to all and Thy compassion rests on all Thy works ... And Thou hast bidden us ask boldly in Thy Name, and to believe we shall receive whatever we have asked, and that those things for which we pray will come to pass ... We pray, therefore, because Thou biddest us; we ask with confidence, because Thou promisest; and forthwith Thou runneth to meet us and answerest our prayer, finding in us a ground for Thy forgiveness, because Thou hast Thyself made us forgiveable ... When Thou drawest near, the soul's dead senses catch the fragrance of Thy healing presence and perceive its touch, and straightaway come to life; faith leaps up and confidence is cheered; the heart is kindled, and the tears run down to fan the newlit fire, not to quench it.

"When Thy Spirit helps our weakness thus, Thy sweetness moves us to weep copious floods of sweet and fruitful tears ... when Thy loving comfort wipes the tears away, they flow the more profusely and become ... a strong and pleasant food ... Lead me where the bush burns where

HE WHO IS, WHO cannot be seen as HE IS, is heard to say "I AM WHO I AM" ... Teach me then, Holy Spirit, to pray without ceasing."

Meditation Five

The soul enumerates the different kinds of prayer; she calls to mind Christ's Passion and her sins.

"though I find a solitary place with ease, I shall not find a solitary heart ... forgive me all my sins ... I have spurned Thee, I have denied Thee ... Thou knowest that my mind has always wanted to believe in Thee ... I have always loved Thee, even when I sinned against Thee ... let the fire of Thy perfect love inflame my heart, let its great heat sweat and cook out of me all the poison of sin ... unmake me from the pattern of the world on which I have modelled myself, make me and conform me to the pattern of Thy grace".

Meditation Six

The soul contemplates the joy of the blessed, and heaven, that is God, and the Ark of the Covenant, that is Christ's Humanity.

"... O Thou Who didst Thyself declare, 'I am the Door', by Thy own Self, I pray Thee, open Thyself to us ... Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and be the Sons of God ... Thou art the Heaven of Heavens, O Truth Supreme, Who art that which Thou art Who

hast Thy Being from and of Thyself, belonging and sufficient to Thyself ... what does the Ark of the Covenant that was seen in heaven mean, if not the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning hath been hid in God Who created all things? Thou art Thyself that Ark."

Meditation Seven

The soul expresses longing to see God.

"... my heart desires nothing so much as it desires to love Thee."

Meditation Eight

Of the manifold face of man, and the kiss and embrace of the Bridegroom and the Bride:

"... Thou didst die, lastly, so that I might live, and Thou wast buried, so that I might rise.

"This is the Kiss Thy tenderness bestows upon Thy Bride, this is Thy love's embrace for Thy beloved.

"... the thief's confession on the cross earned him this Kiss!

"Peter received it when the Lord looked on him at the time of his denial and, going out, wept bitterly and many of those who crucified Thee were turned to Thee after Thy Passion, and so united to Thee in this Kiss ... Whither, Lord, dost Thou draw those whom Thou thus embracest and enfoldest, save to Thy Heart?"

Meditation Nine

The soul takes stock of her thoughts and affections.

"... All other things excluded, I can shut myself away with Thee, O Truth, alone. Making Thy Secret Face my hiding-place, I speak to Thee more intimately and in more homely wise, throwing open to Thee all the dark corners of my conscience ... I show myself to Thee as naked as when Thou madest me."

Meditation Ten

A consideration of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ ... "O Blessed is the temple of the Holy Spirit, wherein the memory of Christ uplifted on the Cross is ever green ... for through this picturing of Thy Passion, O Christ, our pondering on the good that Thou has wrought for us leads us forthwith to love the highest good".

Meditation Eleven

He lays bare his blindness, desiring God to give him light and lay aside his pastoral charge. "... Let us, who must shortly enter into judgement with the Truth, avoid all the windings of error by taking the short way of faithfulness; and because perhaps we want not to be able to perform the action, let us not manifest ourselves as liars before the bar of our self-will, so that we may not be found liars before the bar of Truth, that done, and seeking pardon for both affection and action, we shall appear as tellers of the truth before the bar of Truth. For we must not act with guile in the sight of the Truth, lest our iniquity turn out to our undoing".

Meditation Twelve

He makes confession of sin, and of his longing to love God.

"... it is Thy Love that urges me to Thee ... Come, therefore, come, O holy Love, come, O Thou sacred Fire, burn up the pleasures of our reins and the thoughts of our hearts on every side, to furnish more and more abundant fuel for humility for Thy revealing flame."

Meditation Thirteen

He complains that the Lord has not fulfilled His promises; and the Lord answers him.

"... Have I not done all I could?"

The Lord: "My son, do not despise your Father's chastising; do not grow weary when you are reproved by Him; for 'whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth'"

Answer: "Lord, I should have reached perfection long ago ... give me that entire and perfect charity."

The Lord: "My son ... you ask for charity; you have set out along the road that leads you to the Way. If you do not forsake this road, you will reach your goal. I myself go before you; and you must follow as you see Me go before ... God is Charity. When you reach that, you will labour no more".

Answer: "Lord, I dare not ask to be relieved of labour, nor do I want to do so, but in the meantime, while I have not got charity, who is going to bear the toil along with me?"

The Lord: "I have made, and I will bear ... Charity is proper Wisdom ... God

A HUMOROUS EPISODE

A few days ago when Bhagavan, after supper, was resting on his cot in the verandah, east of his hall, something funny took place. He was facing south. Chadwick was sitting behind Bhagavan's back. Soon after Bhagavan took his seat and leaned on the cushions, Chadwick from behind stealthily and unnoticed, fanned Bhagavan. When Bhagavan turned and looked, Chadwick withdrew the fan and remained still. When Bhagavan turned his face south, Chadwick resumed fanning again. Bhagavan turned round and Chadwick stopped. Bhagavan was left wondering how he got the breeze! Chadwick then laughed and Bhagavan joined in the laughter. This shows how even with such an eminent master a devotee can play and both can enjoy the joke like children!

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan.*

has already led you up to this present point, already it has put you in this place where if the end should find you there, you will go forth in safety. It has led you thus far, it has put you here, it is keeping you here — have you then made so little progress? Is it so little that you have hitherto received?"

Answer. "Truly, O Lord, Thou art become our refuge ... teach me Thy will and make me do it ... Have pity on my weakness, O my strength, and may it be to Thy great glory that my feebleness continues to serve Thee".

The Golden Master

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

*This was composed and sung by the author at the
Matrubhuteswara shrine at the Ashram soon af-
ter the maha nirvana of Sri Bhagavan.*

Grief hath grown silent with its own excess
And will not weep lest it betray his trust.
Even in this dark hour of dire distress
He lights the flame of knowledge through our dust.

Illuminating its blindness wide and far
He glitters from his heaven of deathless grace.
In every speck and stone, in every star
We see the lonely wonder of his Face.

Ignorance rumours that our King departs;
Where can he go, O where? — the being moans,
He who has made rich kingdoms of our hearts
And of our thoughts his countless jewelled thrones?

May he forgive our wavering faith, forgive
The folly of our doubts whose eyes are dim;
How dare we move or breathe except through him?
How could we live if he should cease to live?

Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan

The manuscripts reproduced here are all in Sri Bhagavan's handwriting. Details are mentioned below.

1. ***Upadesa Saram* of Sri Bhagavan**
Sanskrit original in Grantha script ... pp. 198 - 200
2. ***Ekatma Panchakam* of Sri Bhagavan**
Telugu and Tamil versions ... pp. 201 - 202
3. **Sri Bhagavan's Epitaph on Cow Lakshmi**
 - (a) Tamil original of Sri Bhagavan ... p. 203
 - (b) Telugu translation by Sri Bhagavan ... p. 203
 - (c) —do— in Tamil script ... p. 204
 - (d) —do— in Malayalam script ... p. 204
 - (e) Malayalam translation by Sri Bhagavan ... p. 205
 - (f) —do— in Telugu script ... p. 205
 - (g) —do— in Tamil script ... p. 206
4. **Viswanatha Swamy's Sanskrit translation of the Epitaph**
 - (a) In Telugu script ... p. 206
 - (b) In Malayalam script ... p. 207
5. **Epitaph on Cow Lakshmi by G.V.S. Bharadwaja in Telugu** p. 207
6. ***Atma Vidya* of Sri Bhagavan**
Sanskrit rendering by K.L. Sharma in Telugu script. p. 208

ஸ்ரீ
உபதேச
ஸாராஃ॥
பாராஃ॥
— ... —

1. கதம் ராஜ்யா
பாபு தெவமம்
கம் கிவரம்
கம் தஜ்ஜம்॥

2. கிருதிஜ ஹோஜியள
வதந காரணம்
மயஜி மாலதம்
மதிநி ரொயகம்॥

3. ஸ்ரீ ராபிதம்
நெஜி யாகுதம்
விசுத ஸொயகம்
சுசுதி ஸொயகம்॥

4. காய வாஜநஃ
காயம் சுகுதம்
வகுஜ நஞ்ஜவ
மிஞ நஞ்ஜாகம்॥

5. ஜமத ஸ்ரீ
யுக்த ஸ்வநம்
சுஷி ஜிதிஜ்ஜ
ஜேவ வகுஜநம்॥

6. உக்த பிஷ்வா
ஜிஜிஜிந்ஜ
விசுத ஜஞ்ஜவ
புரந சுகுதம்॥

7. க்ருஜ யாரயா
ஸ்ரீராத ஸாஸகம்
ஸாரஜேவிஞநம்
விநஜதஃவரம்॥

8. ஹேஜ ஹாவநாக்
ஸொஹ ஜிகுஸன
ஹாவ நாஜிஜா
பாவ நீஜதா॥

9. ஹாவ மிநுஸ
காவ ஸ்ரீஜிதிஃ
ஹாவ நாஜமொ
ஜிசுதி ஸுகுதம்॥

10. ஹ்ருக்ஷு வெஃநஃ
ஸுஸுதாசுரியா।
ஸக்தி யொழவொ
யாஸ நிநிதம்॥
11. வாயுரொயநா
ஸீய தெஃநஃ॥
ஜாஅ உக்ஷிவ
ஜோயஸாயநம்॥
12. அிக்த வாயவ
ஸிக்ரீ யாயதாஃ।
ஸாஸ்யொயூய்
ஸக்திஃஹைகா॥
13. டுயவி நாஸநெ
உலாய ரொயநெ।
டுயத தம்ஸந
ஸ்வதிநொஜிதம்॥
14. ஸ்ராண வநநா
ஸீந ஜாநஸம்।
வனக அினநா
நாஸஜெகூதஃ॥
15. நஃஜ ஜாநஸொ
சக்ரஃயொநிநஃ।
கூகூ ஜஸ்திகிம்
ஸஸ்திம்யதஃ॥
16. ஜேஷு வாரிதம்
அிக்த ஜாக்நஃ।
அிக்ஷ ஜஸ்தநம்
தக்ஷ ஜஸ்தநம்॥
17. ஜாந ஸஸ்துக்ரி
ஜாஸ்துக்ரிதெ।
நெநவ ஜாநஸம்
ஜாஸ்துக்ரிவர்க்॥
18. வுக்ர யஸ்துஹம்
வுக்ரி ஜாஸ்திதாஃ।
வுக்ர யொஜநொ
விஜ்ஜுஹம்ஜநஃ॥
19. க்ரஹ ஜயக்ரதொ
ஸ்வதி அிநதஃ।
க்யிபதகூஹம்
நிஜவி அாரணம்॥
20. க்ரஹ ஜி நாஸநெ
க்ரஹ ஜி ஹையா।
ஸார திஹுக்ஷயம்
வாஜவஞ்ணஸக்॥
21. ஜஜ்ஜ ஹம்வஜா
லிப்த ஜிநஹம்।
க்ரஹ ஜிஸ்தகூ
வ்யுயஸக்யா॥

22. விழு ஹெந்ரிய
பூராண யீதபி:
நாஹ ரெகஸ
சுதஜ்ஜி லுஹஸ்க்||

23. ஸகவ லாஸிகா
அிகவ வெதரா
ஸகத யாவ்ரிசி
அிகத யாவ்ரிஹ்||

24. எரெஜீவ யொ
வெஹ் யீலிடி:
ஸகவ லாவதொ
வஸ்து கெவயொ||

25. வெஷ ஹாநத:
ஸாக்ஷ டிஸ்க்ந:
எரெஜீவ யொ
ஸாக்ஷ ரெகஸ:
||

26. சுதஜ்ஜி ஸரஸ்தி:
ஸாக்ஷ டிஸ்க்ந:
சுதஜ்ஜி நிபியா
டிாக்ஷ நிபிதா||

27. ஜோந வஜிதா:
ஜோந ஹ்நிபிக்:
ஜோந ரெகஸ்க்:
ஜோந ரெகஸ்க்:
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28. கிஹ் ரெகஸ்க்:
சுதஜ்ஜி டிஸ்க்ந:
சுதஜ்ஜி யாவ்ரிசி
வெதரா டிஸ்க்ந:
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29. வஸ்து கெவயொ
தெஹ் ரெகஸ்க்:
விநிதா டிஸ்க்ந:
வஸ்து கெவயொ:
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30. சுதஜ்ஜி வெதரா
நிபியா லாநக:
ஜோந ரெகஸ்க்:
ரெகஸ்க் வாயி:
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—...—

உதி,ஸ்
உவெடிஸ
ஸா ர:
||

ஸகவ லாஸிகா:
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—

వక్రతూ పంచకము.

(వెన్నా)

ఐకాత్మ పంచకము.

(వెన్నా)

1. తన్ను మఱచి తన్నువూ నైవేది
యన్నయో జన్నయూ లెత్తితుది — తన్ను
తలసితా నొటపలు దేశసం చార
కలన్నే ల్కనుట కను.

1. తన్నే మఱచి తన్నువూ నైవేది
యన్నయో జన్నయూ లెత్తితుది — తన్నే
యన్నయో జన్నయూ లెత్తితుది — తన్నే
యన్నయో జన్నయూ లెత్తితుది — తన్నే

2. తానుండు తానుగ తన్నుతా నేనెవఁ
డేనుండు స్థాన మెరియను — వానికి
నేనెవఁ డెక్కడ నేనున్నా నన్నమధు
పానుని యిడు పలుకు.

2. తానిరుక్తున్ తానాకత్ తన్నేత్తా అనివెన్
యానిరుక్తున్ తాన మెతులెనక్కడ — బాని-
యానివ ఎనవిడియ బానియె నెన్నమధు
బానియె యిడు పలుకు.

3. తనలో తనువుండ తాను జీడవకా
తనువందు న్నట్టు తలచు — మనుజుడు
చిత్రములో నున్నది చిత్రమున కాథార
వస్త్ర మనియెంచు వాడు .

3. తన్నుట డలువిరుక్కత్తానాశ్ శుద్ధుడనా
తన్ను నిరుప్పతాత్ తానున్ను — మన్నవన్
శిత్తిరత్తి నుள்ளతాత్ శిత్తిరత్తుక్ కాథార
వత్తిర మెన్మెన్ను వాన్ .

4. పొన్నకు వేలుగ భూషణ ముండునే
తన్ను విడిచి తనువేది — తన్ను
తనువనువా దజ్జుడు తానను వాడు
తనుకనిన జ్ఞానే ధరించు .

4. పొన్నకు వేలుగ భూషణ ముండునే
తన్ను విడిచి తనువేది — తన్ను
తనువనువా దజ్జుడు తానను వాడు
తనుకనిన జ్ఞానే ధరించు .

4. పొన్నకు వేలుగ భూషణ ముండునే
తన్ను విడిచి తనువేది — తన్ను
తనువనువా దజ్జుడు తానను వాడు
తనుకనిన జ్ఞానే ధరించు .

5. ఎప్పుడు నున్నది యేకత్వ వస్తువే
యప్పుడ వస్తువు నాదిగారు — చెప్పక
చెప్ప తెలియగఁ జేసినా రేయెవరు
చెప్ప తెలుపుదురు చెప్పు .

5. ఎప్పుడు నున్నది యేకత్వ వస్తువే
యప్పుడ వస్తువు నాదిగారు — చెప్పక
చెప్ప తెలియగఁ జేసినా రేయెవరు
చెప్ప తెలుపుదురు చెప్పు .

ஸ்ரீகோ லட்சுமிகதிசுடுநாட்பா.

வெண்பா.

சுருவதா ஈப்பேர்கொள் சம்வச் சுரத்து
வருமானி யைந்துசனா வாரம் — மருவுமுற்
பக்கத் துவாதசிவி சாகம் பசுவாமி-
லக்குமிவி முக்தநா ளாம். (18-6-48).

● உசனா - சுக்கிரன்.

(பெண்பா)

சுரீசரூ டாஸம் வத்சர ஜ்யேஷ்டா
மாஸஸித ட்யாடசிம் பார்பவ — வாஸரம
தாரகவி சாஸிஹ தமூவு லக்ஷ்மி
சேரு வினமனி செப்பு. (18-6-48)

வெண்பா:

[தெலுங்கு]

ஸ்ரீஸர்வ தாரிஸம் வத்ஸர ஜ்யேஷ்டாக்ய
மாஸஸித த்வாதசிம் பார்க்கவ - வாஸரமு
தாரகவி ஸாகஸஸி தம்மாவு வக்ஷ்மிகதி
சேரு தினமநி செப்பு.

(18-6-48)

(வெண்பா)

[தெலுங்கு]

ஸ்ரீஸவ் யாரிஸம் வஸர ஜ்யேஷ்டாவு
மாஸஸித த்வாதசிம் பார்க்கவ - வாஸரமு
தாரகவி ஸாகஸஸி தம்மாவு வக்ஷ்மிகதி
சேரு தினமநி செப்பு.

(18-6-48)

అనుబంధం

దేవతాపా.

అనీసం యానిసం వసారం జేరికిడిక
 మాసం బాంశుక్ర వాసారం — అనీత
 పక్షం ద్వాదశివి శాఖం పశువాయ
 లక్ష్మీ విమక్తనా శం.

(18-6-48)

అనుబంధం

వేదా.

(మహాభారతం)

శ్రీ సర్వ ధానిసం వత్సరం చేర్చిధున
 మాసం బాంశుక్ర వాసారం — అనీత
 పక్షం ద్వాదశివి శాఖం పశువాయ
 లక్ష్మీ విమక్తనా శం.

(18-6-48)

వెంబనపా.

(మేయనామ్)

శ్రీస్వా తానిసమ్ వత్సరమ్ శోమితున
మాసమ్రో శామ్శుక్ర వాసరమ్ — శ్రీనిత
పశుత్తు త్వతలివి శాకమ్ పశువాద
లక్ష్మి విమక్తనా నామ్ .

(18-6-48)

(సంస్కృతమ్)

శ్రీ:

సర్వధారి వత్సరే త్వతీయ మాసి పంచమే
వాసరే సితే విశాఖ తారకాన్వితే శుభే !
ద్వాదశాహినీహ పూర్వపక్షగే యరుణాచలే
లక్ష్మ్యభిఖ్యకాహినోర్వముక్తిమాప్సభా

{ విశ్వనాథః }
{ 25-6-48 }

శ్రీ:

(సంస్కృతం)

సంధ్యాది వసంతే తుల్య దాని పంచద
 వాసంతే సింహ విశాఖ తారకానితే శ్రీ
 బ్రహ్మ హరిని పుష్ప పంచకేతనాచల
 లక్ష్మీ ద్వివికాని గ్రహిణి దాప ~~సంస్కృతం~~ ||

{ విశాఖామాసం }
 { 25-6-48 }

పెళ్ళా.

శ్రీ సర్వ ధర్మో జ్యేష్ఠ సిత ద్వాదశిని
 వాసిష్ఠ గు వాసరవి శాఖననా — యాసముగ
 జెందె విదేహయై చిత్తుఖమా గోలక్ష్మి
 యెందెవ్వు రీతుగన మే.

జి.వి.యస్.భారద్వాజ

24-6-48.

How To Surrender

By D.E Harding

Being united to the will of God you enjoy and possess Him.

It is in His purposes, hidden in the cloud of all that happens to you in the present moment, that you must rely. You will find it always surpasses your own wishes.

People who have abandoned themselves to God always lead mysterious lives and receive from Him exceptional and miraculous gifts by means of the most ordinary, natural and chance experiences in which there appears to be nothing unusual.

— Jean-Pierre de Caussade.

INSPIRING words, coming from one of the great experts in self-surrender and abandonment to the will of God. But of course they are for testing, day in and day out, and not just for believing and taking on trust. And it's when we start trying them out in practice that we run up against what look like insuperable difficulties, some of which we address in this chapter. It is about practice and not theory. Here we are not concerned with the theology or philosophy of surrender to the Divine Providence, but with precisely how to give up and let be and let go, precisely how it is possible for you and me to arrive at and maintain this wonderful state.

It's not so easy to describe what surrender is, but we all know what it feels like — the sudden cessation of struggle, the end (for the time being) of all our resistance, the special sort of calm that follows the storm of what has become futile effort, the relaxation we enjoy when 'something gives' at last after a long period of mounting tension and anxiety and all the fight goes out of us.

A beautiful presentation of this abrupt shift of mood — or rather reversal of mood — is to be found in Berlioz'

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overture *Les Francs Juges*. This celebrated piece of programme music dramatises the tale of a prisoner who is appearing on a capital charge before a secret mediaeval court. As he tries, with mounting desperation and terror, to defend himself, the music gets wilder and louder, more and more frenetic. Then quite suddenly, realising that his fate is sealed, he abandons all hope and submits with perfect calm to the death sentence; and the music of struggle gives place to one of the great serene tunes of the world, smoothly flowing and even blissful. (Berlioz took the tune from a Russian folk song. In fact, it's common property, a perennial theme that crops up in unexpected places, for instance in the once-popular song *Now the Carnival is Over*, which is itself about a lover's resignation, if hardly his self-abandonment.)

We may take as typical our example of the prisoner on trial — typical of the dependence of surrender upon its opposite, without which it cannot exist. *Giving in* is as inseparable from *fighting* as *up* is from *down* and *left* is from *right*. You can't let go of something you weren't holding on to.

It follows that the mood of surrender can't be permanent: to be itself it must alternate with its opposite, with the mood of resistance. It's not in its nature to be steady. This is certainly common experience. We go on struggling against God's will as bodied forth in our circumstances, then somehow we find the grace to submit to it — for a while — and then the wretched process starts all over again. Surrender may come, but alas,

what comes goes. In common with all thoughts and feelings (no matter how profound or enlightened or even divine they may be) it is impermanent. Since it's a specific something with limited characteristics, it not only implies and needs its opposite, but is always tending to merge into it.

These obvious but neglected facts set limits to all *cultivation* of surrender — whether by reading and thinking about it, by trying somehow to work up the feeling, by various kinds of religious disciplines and practices, by any means whatever. The trouble with this highly desirable experience is that it fluctuates all the time, that it eludes our grasp, and is apt to be least available when most needed. Who, indeed, can feel *anything* to order? And in this instance there's something particularly self-defeating, and certainly ridiculous, about deliberately cultivating what must come naturally if it comes at all: about chasing stillness, about trying not to try, about holding on to letting go, about straining after relaxation. The sooner we surrender these absurd attempts to surrender the better.

Is there then nothing we can do about the problem? Must we continue to let these alternating moods of struggle against the nature of things, and whole-hearted (or half-hearted) acceptance of even the worst of them, continue to structure our lives? Or, more likely tear them apart?

No. The *direct* method of trying to gain control over our feelings proves self-defeating, but there is an *indirect*

method which is more promising. The problem can be solved — though emphatically not at its own level or on its own terms — and solved absolutely.

The solution is ATTENTION, attention instead of intention. Attention to What is, in place of striving for what should be. Attention to how things already are, without any attempt to improve them. The fact is that total attention is surrender, and total surrender is attention.

Attention to precisely what? To what's given right where you are at this moment, regardless of other places and times. Just to read about this attention is no good at all. To get the point, dear Reader, look right now at what's taking in this line of print, at its Seer, its Reader — if any. Isn't it a fact that there's no-thing where you are, nothing but space for the scene (for a pair of hands holding an open book, surrounded by vague coloured shapes) to happen in? Nothing where you are now but this speckless Awareness or Capacity, itself lacking all smell, taste, sound, colour, opacity, movement, and therefore perfectly fitted to take in all these, and more? How marvellously accommodating you are!

This inseeing, this attention to What one always is, this discovery of What is beyond all improvement or deterioration (because there's nothing here to change or be changed) — *this alone is total surrender*. It is the giving up of every attribute and function that one had claimed, the end of all one's pretensions to be anything whatsoever. Not an atom of

substance, not a twinge of feeling, not the shadow of a thought can survive in the rarefied atmosphere of the Centre. Here remains only Attention, simple Awareness, pure Consciousness-of-consciousness without content or qualification, and This can never come or go. Here is Abandonment itself, including the abandonment of all time and change. One doesn't achieve this abandonment. One *is* it eternally.

All the same, this essential inseeing doesn't put an end to the parade of feelings and thoughts with their endless shifts and alternations, their built-in contradictions. Nor can it be counted on to 'rectify' them. Maybe they will in some degree sort themselves out, and maybe the feeling of surrender will grow apace, now that all feelings are consciously experienced from their problem-free Source and Container right here. Nevertheless they remain in their own sphere essentially 'problematical': it's their nature to be incomplete, in part false, at odds with one another. The real difference which this seeing-What-one-is makes, isn't the *improvement* of that scene (of one's thinking and feeling and behaving) but in its *placing*. It all belongs out there, in and to the world. What I used to call *my* thoughts and feelings are found to be thoughts and feeling about things there, not about Me here. The universe is as replete with sadness and joy, ugliness and beauty, fighting and giving up, with all the other opposites, as it is with colour and shape and movement. All of it is brought to light by the Light here, the Light that is itself clean of every thing it shines on. You are that Light.

But you may object that this Seeing-Who-and-What-you-really-are doesn't last, that it comes and goes just as the feeling of surrender comes and goes, and perhaps is just as difficult to arrive at and maintain.

Well, try it, and you will find that, quite unlike the feeling, the seeing is always available. You can see perfectly well What and Who you really are, whatever your occupation or circumstances or mood. Nothing is easier or more natural.

Nor, strictly speaking, is it intermittent. It occurs out of time, inasmuch as it is seeing into the Place where nothing whatever — not even place and time — survives. This isn't theory for thinking about, but fact for testing. Look again and see the Emptiness that you are, and you will find that it doesn't read as beginning at such and such a time by the clock, and end so many seconds or minutes or hours later. I think you will find that it cannot be separated by any interval from other 'occasions of seeing', so called. As one of the Zen masters observes, "Seeing into nothingness — this is the true seeing, the *eternal seeing*".

Where there is no time there is no will or intention or choice: all three are time's offspring. Paradoxically, real surrender to the Divine Will isn't just giving up one's own personal will but all will, and resting in the perfection of what is. The only way to come to the place of no desire is to attend to it, and see that one has never been anywhere else. Right here at zero inches from oneself, at the very midpoint of one's universe, is the

God who is the still point at the heart of the storm.

We used to pray: 'Thy will
my Lord and God, be done.'

And lo! He has no will
He is stillness alone.

So wrote Angelus Silesius, the Cherubic Wanderer.

But in that case what are we to make of Dante's cry from the heart: "His will is our peace"?

The answer is to examine yet again the Spot one occupies and see how empty it is of all content of its own, and in particular of all will or intention. And see, too, how full it is of the scene, of the world as it is now given, complete with all the feelings and thoughts that are now colouring and enlivening it. Isn't it a fact, in your own experience at this moment as the will-less Source, that your will is perfectly embodied in what is now flowing from that Source, so that all of it is perfectly acceptable just as it is? Is it possible to see Who you are without endorsing things as they are? Is there any other way to true self-abandonment but falling into the arms of the One who is infinitely more you than you are yourself? The One who in Himself has no will, but is responsible for everything in the world? To see that you are not in the world, but that on the contrary the world is in you, is to be more than reconciled to its every manifestation.

First see What and Who you really, really, really are, establish your true identity, and then see whether you have anything whatever to complain of.

My Visits to Sri Ramana Maharshi

(A Talk over All India Radio)

By Swami Chidbhavananda

Swami Chidbhavananda (1898-1985) was a well known scholar and sannyasin who received his initiation from Swami Sivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

His translation of the Bhagavad Gita into Tamil (with commentary) has achieved great popularity. His work at Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tiruparaiturai, South India, is also well known.

SOMETIME in the 1920's a few of us, religiously inclined college students, undertook a pilgrimage from Madras to Tiruvannamalai. Contacting Sri Ramana Maharshi was the main object of that pilgrimage. Sri Ramana Ashrama was then in its initial stage. An august person was seated on a raised platform. It was evident he was the sage whom we wanted to see. Round about him were seated on the floor a number of devotees all intently looking at him. We, the newly arrived students, also found our places among them. Silence reigned supreme. The presiding deity of the Ashrama was the author of that silence. Hence its perfection. This was a novel experience to us students who were used to a vociferous atmosphere. We took to this congenial environment quite happily. Our expectation was amply rewarded.

There was no such thing as formal introduction of the newly coming devotees. In accordance with the usage we quietly sat. Sri Maharshi turned his penetrating

gaze at us on and off. We felt ourselves highly blessed because of his benign look at us. Occasionally a word or two came out of his mouth. Those words were always pertinent and to the point. Actually what came out of that personality was silent eloquence. In other words, silence was his message to mankind and he was ever eloquent in it. An occasional smile from him was very significant. It revealed Bliss encased in a human body.

The visiting devotees would often bring a packet of sugarcandy or any such edible and offer it to him piously. He would just help himself to a tiny piece from the packet and pass it on to the assembled group. Then and there it would be shared by the entire lot. This was the usage in that Ashram all through his earthly life.

I made my personal contact with the Maharshi in the year 1928. I had

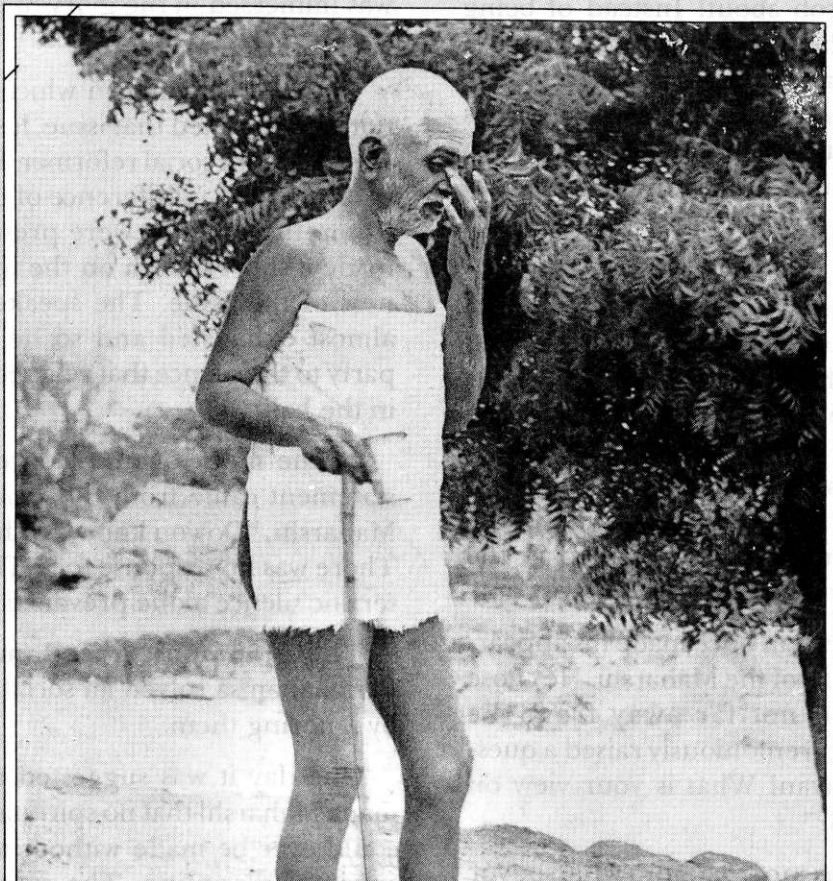
Courtesy: All India Radio. This was broadcast over the AIR sometime in 1980.

renounced the world in the year 1923 and joined the Ramakrishna Math. In the year 1926 I was ordained to the order of *sannyasa*. From the year 1926 to 1940 I was in charge of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Ootacamund. During that period, in the course of my movements from Ootacamund to Madras, I snatched as many opportunities as possible to deviate my journey to Tiruvannamalai in order to contact the Maharshi. I was not inclined to talk much with him. Being seated in his presence was more than sufficient to a spiritual aspirant. One gets all the required spiritual succour in the august presence of this dynamo of divinity. Occasionally he entered into brief talks. But invariably he was at his best in silence. His silence was what I sought after every time I went to him. Verbal expression was the gross manifestation of mentation. When the mind itself gets absorbed in pure consciousness, utterance becomes burdensome. Blissful calmness alone prevails. A purified enquirer makes a rich harvest of this original state in the presence of this exalted person. This bait drew me on to him as often as possible. On one occasion I made reference to the sage's *Forty Verses on Reality*. I had perused this literature of his with deep interest. But his personal exposition of it made it simpler. Awareness or Pure Consciousness is the one thing that remains unaffected and unassailed by time, space and causation. Being personally enlightened by a perfected being is far superior to poring over the books written by the same person. Enlightenment is caught, it is not taught. This maxim was made evident by Sri Ramana Maharshi. People from all over the

world were drawn to this spiritual magnet for this reason.

Religious experiences are innumerable and variegated in their pattern. Some of them sound strange and fantastic. Some others are actually cases of mental defect. All the pious ones who get something like a psychic experience rush to a holy man to clarify their visions and clairsaudiences. Yet others go to him for consolation for their failures in the spiritual pursuits. He would often be confronted with such cases. Sri Ramana Maharshi occupied a couch in a corner of a middle-sized hall in the Ashrama. Barring this corner the entire hall was at the disposal of the visiting public. There was no such thing as seeking the audience of the Maharshi. Anybody could go into the hall at any time, day and night. It was open to both men and women. The visiting devotees would quietly steal in, sit for a while receiving inspiration and then quit the place in the same obscure manner.

One day a man given to the path of devotion calmly walked in and occupied a place very near the sage. Then he unburdened all that was burdened in his heart. He was deeply affected with emotion. The body was quivering. His speech was choked with feeling. He poured forth, "I have gone on pilgrimage all over the land. I have been regular in my spiritual practices. Day and night I have been praying to the Lord. Many a sleepless night have I passed. Still to this day I have had no mercy from the Lord. I am forlorn". The man bitterly cried, sobbed and entreated Bhagavan. But the stoic sage sat unconcerned with all his entreaties.



The visiting *bhakta* became exhausted. All the suppressed feelings were worked out. Then in measured voice the sage analysed the position, "Funny man; he cries! What is there to sob about! Instead of being poised in the blissful Self, he goes on wailing. What is there to moan about? Be blissfully calm". This observation had its telling effect. A veil was removed from the man's mind. He felt his problem was self-created. He opened a new chapter in his life.

The subsequently evolved *bhakti marga* or the path of devotion is as sacred and effective as the path of knowledge. Saints in large number have attained perfection through the path of devotion. Sri Ramakrishna says that pure knowledge and pure love are one and the same. But the sage of Arunachala is ingrained in the time honoured ancient path of wisdom.

A talkative man once made his appearance in the hall of the Maharshi. He chose to be seated not far away from the sage and unceremoniously raised a question, "Bhagavan! What is your view on birth control?"

There was no reaction whatsoever from the august personality before whom this question was put.

After a while the man elaborated on the question thinking that the Maharshi could not understand a topical question like that prevalent in society. This elaborate elucidation of the question made no change in the stoic figure seated on a couch.

The man again fluently wagged his tongue. He made the topic plain to the

sage as well as the silent devotees scattered in the spacious hall. Still there was no reaction whatsoever from the presiding deity of the hall. It seemed as if he was immersed in the glory of the Self in a mountain cave.

From the manner in which the questioner elaborated that issue, it seemed he was an ardent social reformer. He was not baffled by the indifference of the sage to whom these points were presented. He made a short speech on the imperative-ness of this issue. The speaker became almost exhausted and so he became a party to the silence that reigned supreme in the hall.

In the midst of this silence a serene statement came from the mouth of the Maharshi, "Do you know death control?" There was no response to it. The characteristic silence alone prevailed as usual.

The Maharshi, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa solved all social problems by ignoring them.

One day it was suggested to Sri Ramana Maharshi that no spiritual progress could ever be made without *sadhana* or spiritual discipline. The sage who received the suggestion was calm and serene for a while; then he made the following observations on the point raised:

Mind it is that binds man and the same mind it is that liberates him. Mind is constituted of *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* (desire and disposition). Desire shapes and governs disposition. Desire is of two kinds — the noble and the base. Mankind suffers mainly from base desires. They are lust and greed.

But the noble desire is directed towards enlightenment and emancipation. The base desire contaminates and clouds the understanding. The noble desire cleanses and clarifies the understanding. *Sadhana* is easy for the aspirant who is endowed with the noble desires. Calmness is the criterion of spiritual progress. Plunge the purified mind into the *prajnanam* (enlightenment). The work is over.

This is the goal of all spiritual discipline. But how many are competent to come up to this level? The Maharshi himself is the embodiment of this statement — so reflected I pondering on his statement.

On one occasion when I was with the Maharshi, there entered an eminent person, occupied a seat in a convenient place in the hall and started speaking:

“Bhagavan! I am so and so”. (He gave his name). “I am a judge of the Madras High court”.

There was no response whatsoever from the sage of Arunachalam.

The man continued, “For a long time I am an ardent student of yours. I have closely read two or three books of yours”.

Still there was no reaction of any kind in the revered sage.

The judge continued, “I am a busy man; my profession is such; still, now and then I snatch some time to study your books”.

The Maharshi continued to be immersed in his own world.

The visitor stated, “Somehow I made it possible to come to you on this day. I cannot stay long here. Through this flying visit I pay my homage to you”.

The Maharshi continued to be silent.

The judge then said, “I want to discuss one or two knotty problems in philosophy”.

The sage seemed to be all alone in seclusion.

The visitor further said, “I must soon exchange views with you, Bhagavan, and get away as quickly as possible. I cannot afford to stay long here”.

The Maharshi did not respond at all. It seemed as if he had not been addressed by anybody!

The visitor finally said, “I take leave of you Bhagavan”.

Still there was no response from the sage.

The judge bowed his head and left the hall. That was the kind of response that Sri Ramana Maharshi made to the self-conscious and self-important people in society.

The sage made no difference between the high and the low, between the rich and the poor, between the learned and the ignorant, in short, between man and man. Whoever approached him with the right attitude and pertinent questions had his needs fulfilled. The vainglorious ones were left severely to themselves.

During one of my visits I was seated sufficiently removed from the sage. There were a number of devotees scattered in the hall. The usual silence prevailed. My experience with the sage was that he was at his best when he maintained silence. Whenever he spoke, my view was that he came down a little from his exalted spiritual state. I enjoyed the silence of the

place. In the midst of it I recollected his injunction, "Plunge the pure mind in *prajnanam*". I decided to practise it in his presence. I gazed at the holy person. In response he gazed at me. Spiritual exuberance was the result. It was indescribable. The Maharshi's mortal coil then seemed a glass case. Within it was enshrined brilliant bliss. More than half-an-hour paused this way. It was an experience unique in itself.

Sri Ramakrishna stated that spiritual experience can be transmitted from one person to another in the manner in which material things are handed over from one person to another.

Paul Brunton was present in the Ashrama at Tiruvannamalai when I went there once. Somebody introduced me to him as a member of the Ramakrishna Order paying frequent visits to the sage at Tiruvannamalai. I introduced myself to the foreigner saying that I was the person who reviewed his book *A Search in Secret India* in the magazine *Prabuddha Bharatha* in the year 1934. This was an agreeable surprise to the author of that popular book.

The last time I was privileged to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi was in December, 1940 on the occasion of his birthday. Sri Ramana Ashrama was bustling with activity of the devotees who had gathered there for the occasion. I happened to contact the Maharshi at the courtyard as he was returning from the bath room. We both stood there and talked for over fifteen minutes. It was a novel sight to the visitors. The topic was the Tamil translation of the two foremost chapters in Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*. These two chapters dealt with the author's spiritual contact with the Maharshi. *Europe Comes on Pilgrimage to India* was the caption.

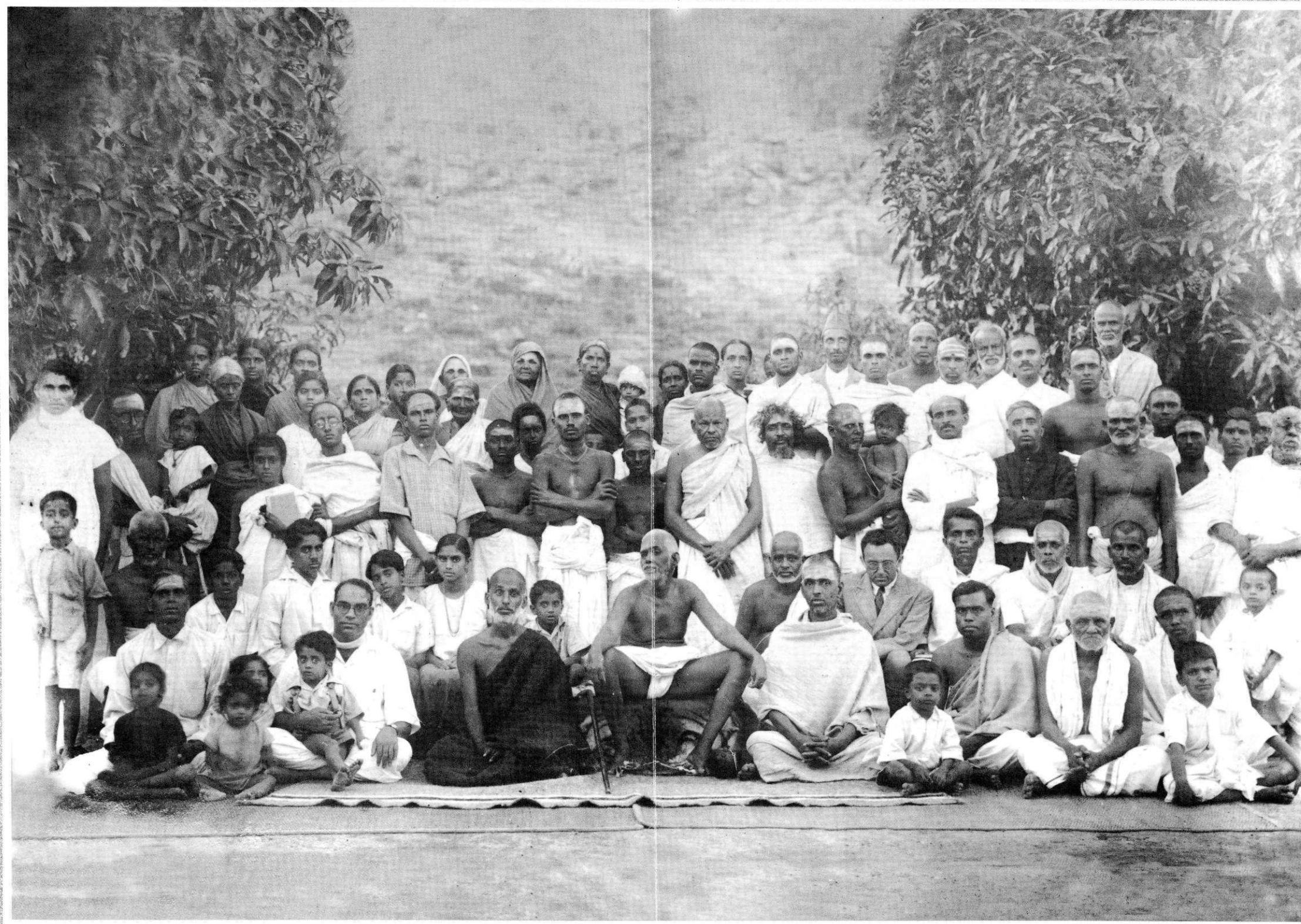
The talk was out and out impersonal. The sage took an objective view of the literary work. The familiarity and the free talk between the two was what attracted the people.

Bharata Varsha is ever the bestower of spirituality to mankind. Sri Ramana Maharshi is a true spiritual son of this holy land. Spontaneously and impersonally he showered benediction on mankind.

Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (*chitta*) from taking various forms (*vrittis*) Control is by practice and non-attachment. . . . That effect which comes to those who have given up their thirst after objects either seen or heard, and which wills to control the objects, is non-attachment. That is extreme non-attachment which gives up even the qualities, and comes from the knowledge of *Purusha*.

— Patanjali.

From the Ashram Archives



Sri Ramana Maharshi with devotees, 1935:

Group picture commissioned by K.K. Nambiar, photographed in the courtyard north of the Old Hall, with two mango trees and Arunachala visible in the background.

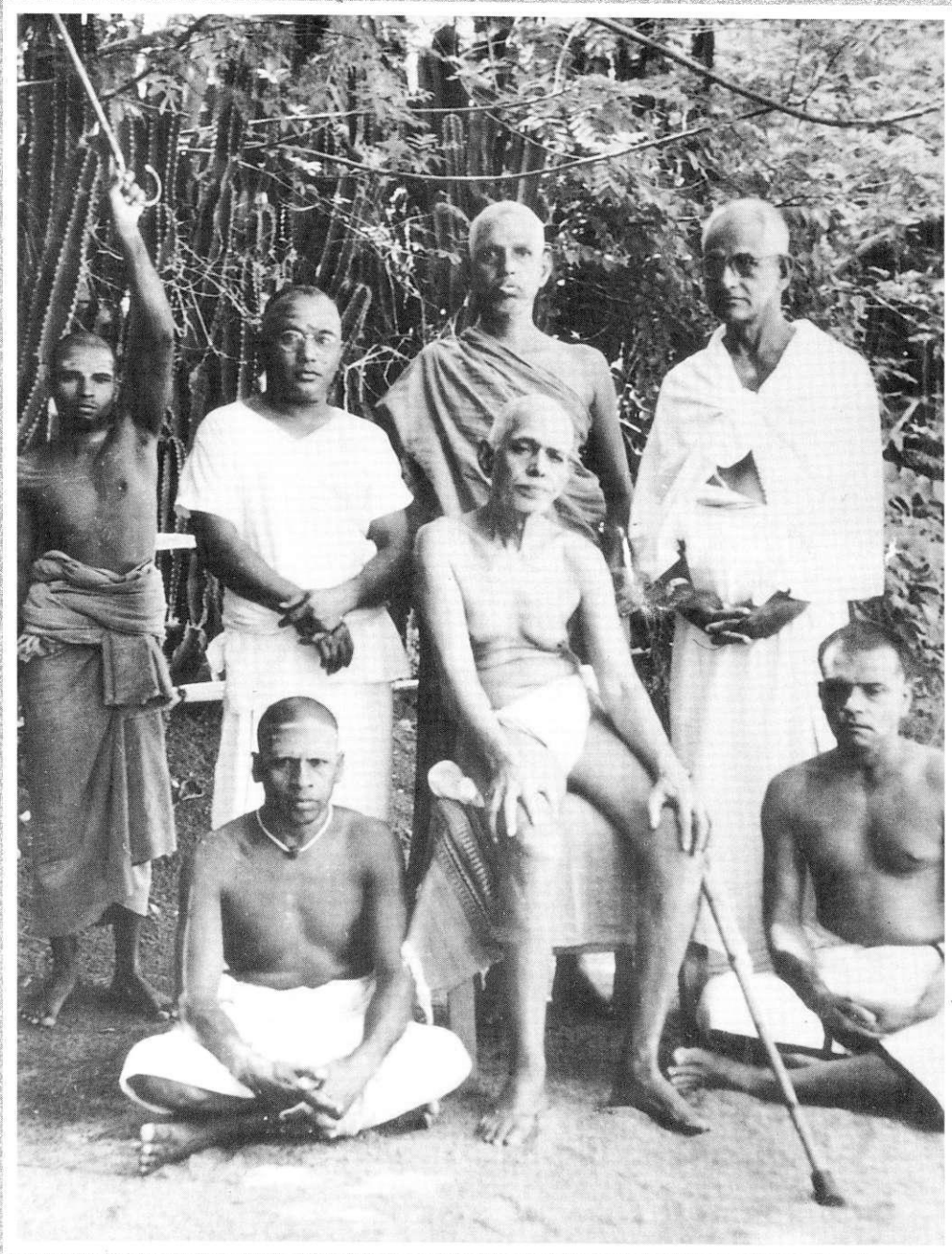
Sitting (front): 1, 2 & 3. Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer's children, 4. Dr. P.C. Nambiar's child, 5. Dr. P.C. Nambiar, 6. Yogi Ramiah, 7. **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**, 8. Swami Niranjanananda (Chinnaswami), Sarvadhikari, Sri Ramanasramam, 9. Seshu Iyer's grandchild, 10. T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, 11. G.R. Subbaramiah, "Aksharajna", author of "Sage of Arunagiri", 12. Krishnamurti, office boy, 13. Seshu Iyer's son.

Sitting (middle): 1. Garden worker, 2. Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer, 3. Unidentified, 4, 5, & 6. children of Madhavi Amma and Dr. P.C. Nambiar, 7. Unidentified, 8. Munagala Venkataramiah, compiler of "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi", 9. Maurice Frydman, 10. Malayalee acquaintance of Dr. P.C. Nambiar, 11. Sama Tatha, 12. Balarama Reddiar, disciple of Yogi Ramiah, 13. Unidentified.

Standing (middle): 1 & 2. N.R. Krishnamoorthy Iyer with his eldest daughter, 3. Relative of Omandur Ramasami Reddiar, 4. N.R. Ramaswami Iyer, younger brother of N.R. Krishnamoorthy Iyer, 5. T.N. Venkataraman (Swami Ramanananda), son of Swami Niranjanananda, 6 & 7. Unidentified, 8. Annamalai Swami, 9. Rangaswami, Bhagavan's attendant, 10. Ramanadasa Seshu Iyer, 11. Nondi Srinivasa Iyer, 12. Madurai Venkataramiyer, Bhagavan's boyhood friend, 13. Unidentified, 14. Dr. Ramachandra Rao, Ayurvedic doctor from Bangalore, 15. Karnataka devotee, 16. Maddu Rao, 17. Ramakrishna Swami, 18. Kitchen assistant from Kumbakonam, 19. Unidentified.

Standing (back): 1. Unidentified, 2. Ammalu Ammal, Vishwanatha Swami's mother, 3, 4, & 5. Unidentified, 6. Madhavi Ammal, wife of Dr. P.C. Nambiar, sister of K.K. Nambiar, 7. Nagalakshmi, wife of T.N. Venkataraman, 8. Shantamma Patti (back), 9. Mudaliar Patti (front), 10. Tenamma Patti, 11. Atthai, Bhagavan's sister, 12. V.S. Ramanan, son of T.N. Venkataraman, President, Sri Ramanasramam, 13. Unidentified, 14. Wife of Madurai Venkataramiyer, 15. Kunju Swami, 16. Mrs. N.R. Krishnamoorthy Iyer, 17. Vishwanatha swami, 18. Karnataka devotee, 19. Madhava Swami, 20, 21 & 22. Unidentified, 23. Karnataka devotee, 24. Subramania Swami, 25. K. Lakshmana Sharma, "Who", author of "Maha Yoga".

From the Ashram Archives



Late 1940's:

Sitting (left to right): 1) T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, 2. **Shri Bhagavan**, 3. Sivananda Swami.

Standing (left to right): 1. S. Doraiswamy Iyer, 2. Sri Niranjanananda Swamy, 3. Dr. S. Mani, 4. Satyananda Swami.

The Miraculous Waters of Lourdes

By Dr. Susunaga Weeraperuma

We presented a biographical sketch of St. Bernadette in our last issue. We now publish an account of the curative powers of the sacred waters of Lourdes by the same author, as a complementary feature.

EVERY year millions of people flock to drink the fresh spring waters of Lourdes, wash themselves, pray and meditate. Thereby they cleanse themselves of their psychological impurities. No wonder therefore, that, for nearly a century and a half, it has been regarded as a shrine of spiritual regeneration. The endless streams of visitors to Lourdes from every continent know that in this town they can find peace, goodwill and religious tolerance. Here racial and nationalistic barriers are transcended. One can meet persons who were raised in different religious faiths. They all stand silently together before the sacred Grotto (cave) and experience for a while the invisible presence of the Divine. Lourdes is the great leveller of the world — in this sanctuary there is a levelling of differences based on wealth, rank and birth. Proud princes kneel down to pray and next to them are factory workers. The arrogant are humbled and their egos are smashed to smithereens. Nothing is more beneficial than to be reduced to a state of nothingness.

I feel privileged to be living in the South of France because it is not only easy

and convenient but also intensely joyful to visit the beautiful town of Lourdes that is situated on the heights of the green and picturesque mountains of the French Pyrenees. The enchanting view of the snowcapped hills in winter is so symbolic of the purity and holiness of this celestial place of pilgrimage. It is good to go there from time to time to recharge one's spiritual batteries.

Once I was considerably distressed when I heard that a friend of mine was critically ill. He was in intensive care in a Bombay hospital. His worried relatives believed that his death was imminent. My wife and I rushed to Lourdes and prayed at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There in front of the sacred Grotto, where Bernadette Soubirous had had visions of the Holy Mother, we interceded for him with Our Lady. I desperately begged for a new lease of life for my friend whom I regarded as my own brother. Thanks to the Virgin, his health was miraculously restored. I received a letter from him in which he referred to his serious illness and sudden recovery. "I suffered from brain fever", he wrote,

"and there was no hope of my survival. But I did survive." The literature on Lourdes is replete with numerous instances of extraordinary cures of this kind. Sometimes patients are partially cured or they return to good health over a long period. We are given divine grace in the form of Lourdes water which often helps to heal the deep wounds within the mind that have been caused by, say, a thousand resentments or countless cravings. The healing of the mind is a necessary preliminary to the curing of psychosomatic illnesses.

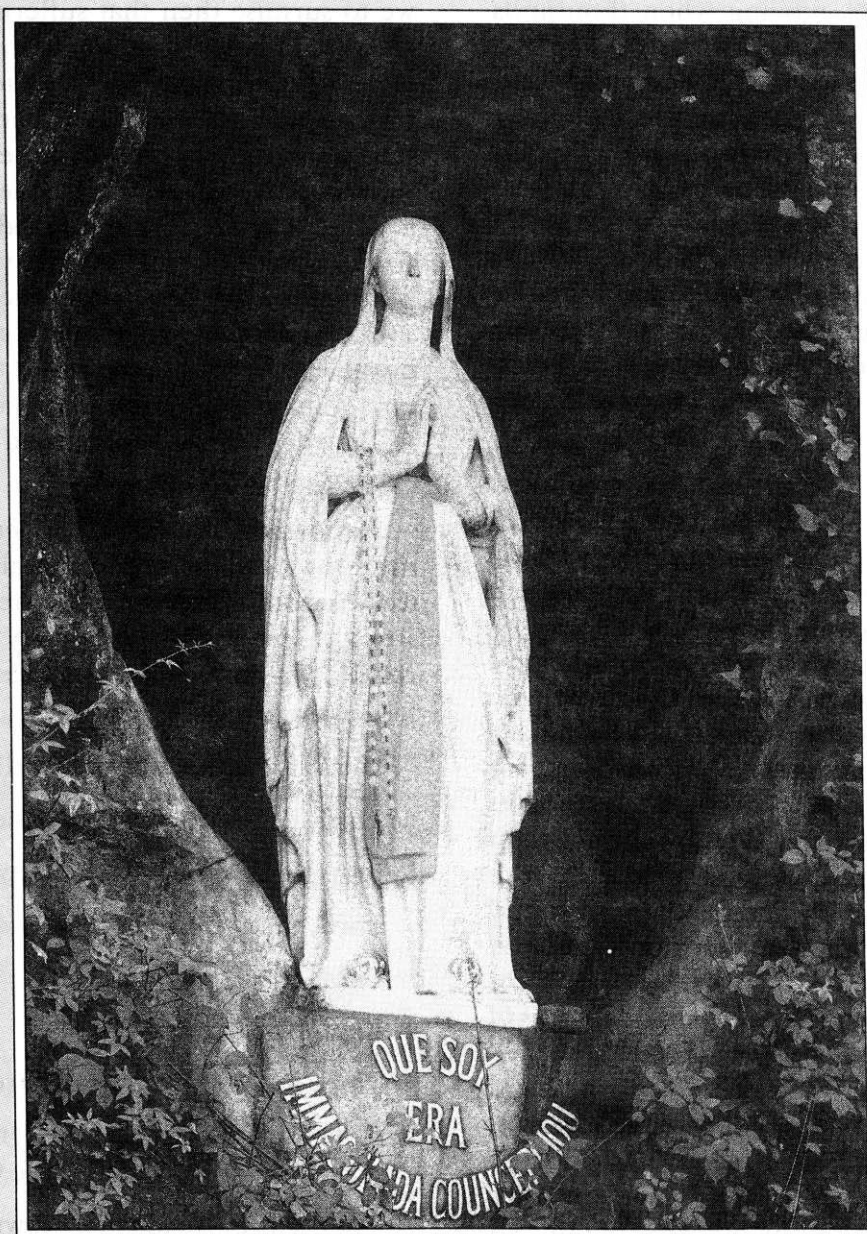
It is necessary to stress that miracles at Lourdes are not confined to sudden and incomprehensible bodily healings. There are also those numerous unrecorded healings of disorders of the Psyche when, for instance, violent and aggressive persons instantaneously become friendly and compassionate. Those feeling very depressed find their spirits raised at Lourdes. Rank materialists have been transformed into deeply religious people. Incidentally, a good many pilgrims to Lourdes who come from Eastern Europe were raised in Communist societies where atheistic ideas and attitudes still prevail. Despite this disadvantage, they are all magnetically drawn to Lourdes.

I have read long and fascinating accounts of miraculous healings at Lourdes. Is the element of *bhakti* or faith in the Lady a contributory factor in miraculous healings? To judge by the large number of Catholics who have been permanently healed, the healing process is no doubt assisted when a patient holds the Virgin in great reverence. Could an atheist who

regards the Madonna as a mere figment of the imagination ever get healed if, for instance, he were suffering from a terrible illness? However, would such a person ever care to visit Lourdes? It seems to me that it was because he was already blessed that a pilgrim makes the big decision to go to Our Lady's shrine.

I had an unusual experience when, for the first time, I went to see the enormous paved space that is right in front of the Grotto (it was here that Bernadette had her visions of the Virgin Mary). I saw crowds of people who were either kneeling or standing there in supplication. Their eyes were closed in prayer. It was so quiet in spite of the clicking of their rosary beads. A certain intensely charged other-worldly silence pervaded the place. Suddenly all my fears, anxieties and inhibitions melted away and the mind became unburdened. I did not actually pray in the sense of being a supplicant begging a favour, but I simply closed my eyes for a long time and emptied my mind of all thoughts. Following in the footsteps of Ramana Maharshi, I tried to reach the very source of my mind. Then I experienced a certain short-lived blissful peace. It was a state of ecstatic happiness which was characterised by an ineffable joy.

The early afternoon and late evening devotional processions that pass through some of the pathways of this sanctuary have become regular features of life in Lourdes. Some like to line the processional route and watch the proceedings as passive spectators, but the majority of pilgrims actively participate in these



A statue of Virgin Mary at the exact spot where she appeared

ceremonies, either carrying banners, lighted candles or colourful icons of the Virgin. How moving when thousands, raising their arms in adoration, sing "Ave Maria" in unison! Through the loud-speakers one can hear the melodious chanting of the litany and various hymns. These sacred sounds reverberate throughout the sanctuary, much to the great happiness of the faithful. Possibly, there are invisible angels and other celestial beings who, perched on the enormous trees of the holy grounds and quite unbeknown to us, enjoy listening to these songs of praise.

During these processions, volunteers slowly and carefully push the wheelchairs in which the disabled sit; some walk on crutches; nurses attend the mentally and physically handicapped; it is the responsibility of stretcher-bearers to take care of the chronically ill and the dying who lie on wheeled stretchers. The terminally ill, who sometimes lie unconscious, are rushed to Lourdes in last-ditch attempts to save their lives. Who would not want to make a desperate attempt to find a cure and live longer when death is just round the corner? The deaf, the dumb, the blind and those with hideously contorted faces are also there. Then, from the depths of one's heart there springs forth some basic theological and philosophical questions. Why did God, the Creator, permit this kind of agony? Is God the cause of their misery? Are not our pains and misfortunes the outcome of our bad *karma* either in this life or in previous ones? Christians believe that it is possible to atone for their sins by bearing their sufferings bravely; they maintain that the

crucifixion was the means whereby Jesus atoned for the sins of fallen mankind. Are we to surmise then that suffering, after all, should be seen as something desirable? Is suffering the high price to be paid for spiritual salvation? It is paradoxical that, although the capacity for enduring suffering has been elevated to the status of a virtue, obeying the commandment of Jesus "Love your neighbour as yourself" would entail the obligation to alleviate the suffering of one's neighbour. For, it is not possible to love someone and at the same time remain indifferent to his suffering. At Lourdes pilgrims are helped to overcome their suffering.

Sometimes miracles do happen during these processions and especially when the diseased are blessed. As the processions move majestically the faithful recite such famous lines as these in different languages:

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Lord, he whom you love is sick!

Jesus, Son of David, have pity on us!

Lord, that I may see!

Lord, that I may hear!

Lord, that I may walk!

Lord, if you will, you can cure me!

Holy Eucharist, create the Unity of
the Church!

You are the Bread come down from
heaven!

You are Resurrection and Life!

O Mary, health of the sick, pray for us!

There is a prayer, which is both a cry of delight and a cry for help, that one frequently hears:

Hail Mary,
Full of grace,
The Lord is with Thee.
Blessed art Thou amongst women.
And blessed is the fruit of Thy womb,
Jesus.
Hail Mary,
Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour of our death.

This is the most popular prayer. Men, women and children beg Mary to intercede with the Lord.

Strict criteria are used when determining if a miracle is genuine. Any doctor who happens to be in Lourdes, regardless of his religion, race or nationality, can become part of the Medical Bureau. When it is claimed that an inexplicable cure has taken place, any doctor is free to examine the evidence and vote. What are the criteria? It must be proved that the disease was serious and organic, not just functional (a functional disease can be defined as one in which there is a morbid change in the functioning of an organ but there is no structural alteration in the tissues involved, whereas in an organic disease there is a structural alteration). Furthermore it is necessary to establish that the disease was not responding to treatment or not receiving treatment of any importance. The cure should be incapable of being explained; it must

also be unexpected, sudden and absolute. The total *absence* of convalescence (a period of time for recovery from an illness) is an essential feature of any miraculous cure. Such an immediate cure must also last without any relapse for six years.

Once the Medical Bureau decides that a cure is a phenomenon that is contrary to the observations and experience of medical knowledge, the case is referred to the International Medical Committee of Lourdes. If this body is satisfied that the cure is "scientifically inexplicable", the matter is next considered by the bishop of the diocese to which the patient belongs. Finally, an ecclesiastical commission also examines the question. Once this commission is convinced that the cure is a sign of the Lord's love, it is the bishop who makes a declaration that the cure is miraculous. Although there have been countless cures that are truly extraordinary, it is significant that only sixty-five of them have been officially recognised as miracles.

The mysterious spring is at the base of the Grotto and water has been flowing from it since 1858. During the ninth apparition of the Virgin on February 25th 1858, Our Lady showed Bernadette where exactly it is. The Virgin instructed Bernadette to go to the fountain for the purpose of drinking and washing. When the girl mistakenly went to the river, the Virgin used her finger and pointed to a place underneath the rock. Then with her hands Bernadette started digging the damp ground. Thrice she tried to drink the dirty brackish water that emerged but she had to throw it away. At her fourth

attempt, however, Bernadette drank the water and washed herself.

That the water from this newly formed spring has curative properties was discovered at once. A quarrymen's labourer by the name of Louis Bouriette had been unlucky enough to injure his right eye irreversibly as a result of a mining accident nineteen years before. During the accident a flying object damaged the eye, resulting in a total loss of vision for two years. When Louis heard that this water was curing so many sick people, he went to the Grotto in March 1858 and prayed to Our Lady and bathed his right eye again and again with the water from the fountain. After these ablutions he declared that his sight was excellent. He was fully cured.

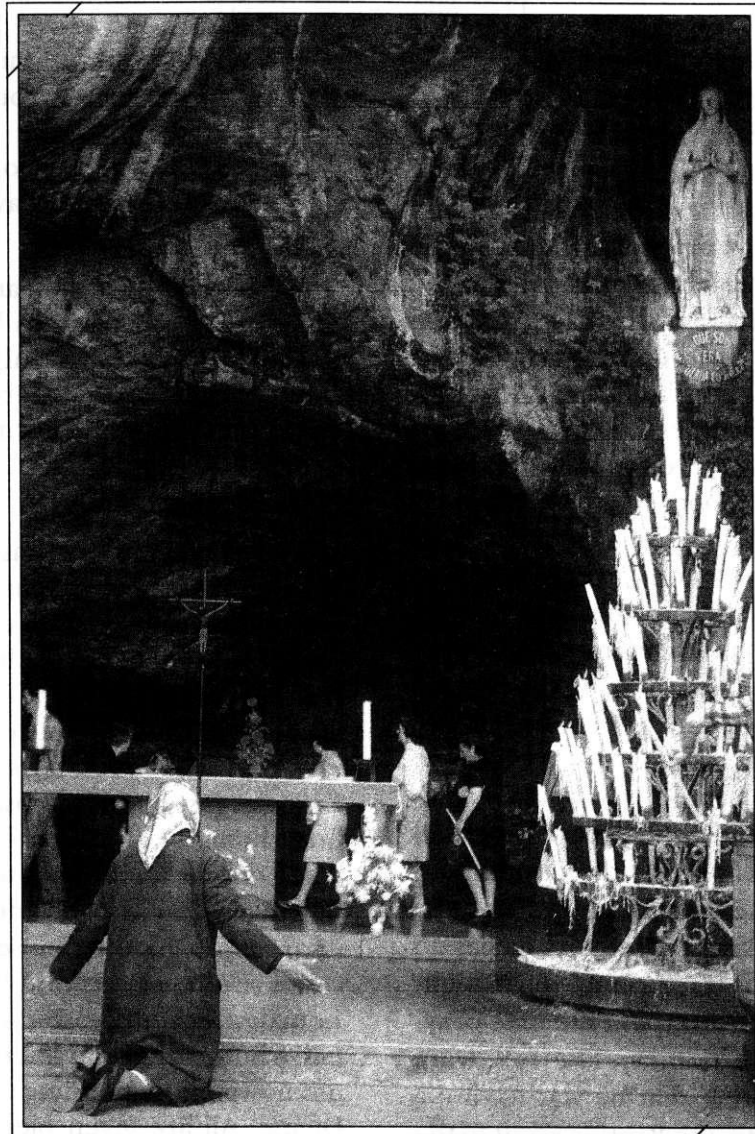
Various tests have established that this spring water is not chemically different from the water found elsewhere in Lourdes. Is there anything special about this water? It is a question that has left scientists baffled for over a century. All that one can say is that the supernatural is beyond the ken of man. With our finite mind we vainly try to fathom the Infinite!

A few discarded old crutches of a bygone period hang loosely at one end of the Grotto. It is believed that some unknown lame persons, who were once heavily dependent on them, left these unwanted crutches there as a token of their undying gratitude to the Virgin.

The first officially recognised cure "presenting a supernatural character" was the case of Madame Catherine

Latapie who had injured her right hand after falling from a tree in 1856. Consequently she had an ulnar type of paralysis caused by the traumatic stretching of the brachial plexus. She was no longer able to use the last two fingers of her hand. Driven by a strong desire, she rose at three o'clock one morning in 1858 and went to Lourdes which is a few kilometres from her home in Loubajac. After arriving at the Grotto where she met Bernadette, Catherine knelt and prayed. When she bathed her hand in the spring water her fingers suddenly became normal, regaining their former flexibility and freedom of movement. It was an extraordinary occurrence.

Let us consider a case history of modern times relating to Brother Leo Schwager, a Benedictine of Swiss origin who was born in 1924. Unfortunately, his childhood and adolescence was full of traumatic experiences. Later he had a serious bicycle accident and then another accident when a horse bucked and he was unconscious. He worked as a novice at the Benedictine Missionaries of Fribourg. He wished to become a missionary. Brother Leo had trouble in speaking and double vision. Because he was totally paralysed on the left side, it was impossible for him to work. His Superior, Father Mannhart gave him much emotional support and advised Brother Leo to trust God, for the Lord would certainly help him without fail. In 1951 Brother Leo's condition was diagnosed as Multiple Sclerosis at an advanced stage. All his organs were suffering. Totally infirm, the sick man was losing weight



A picture of the grotto in Lourdes

and had to be nursed like a little child. He was also unable to speak. His Superior maintained that, given the critical stage of his illness, only the Good Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, can save the Brother's life. He was at death's door. Next, the patient was taken to Lourdes, arriving there on April

29th 1952. Brother Leo was indescribably happy to be in the very place where Bernadette had seen and conversed with Our Lady. Here by the Massabielle Grotto, the Virgin had appeared to Bernadette on eighteen different occasions.

The following day, after Mass, Brother Leo was taken to the baths but he felt no

relief from pain. A little before 4 p.m. he was immersed in the water for the second time but he felt great uneasiness and pain. Thereafter the man who was pushing Brother Leo's wheelchair took him to the Esplanade of the Rosary where the patients were already waiting for the Blessing of the Sick. He was placed on the front row. Brother Leo was in a miserable state. Then when the Bishop gave the Blessing, Brother Leo felt as though he was getting an electric shock from head to foot. "Good, now you can die," he thought.¹ There was a temporary loss of consciousness and everything was blurred. Suddenly Brother Leo noticed that he was on his knees, right in front of the Bishop who was carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Like a new-born, he felt well and all the pains had gone for good. Some of the sick and one of the doctors testified that Brother Leo, had been projected forcefully out of his seat, directly onto his knees. This means that he did not rise first and then kneel. Brother Leo has no memory of this happening. That night he did not sleep but spent the time praying and giving thanks. The following morning, noticing that he was having a healthy appetite, the Brother went to the Swiss refectory and ate voraciously! In 1959 Brother Leo's healing was recognised as "real and totally inexplicable" by the International Medical Committee of Lourdes.

Brother Leo is still alive. Every year since 1952 he has taken part in the pilgrimage to Lourdes and served the sick as a stretcher-bearer.

When, following his miraculous cure, Brother Leo returned from Lourdes, his parish priest remarked: "Although it's great that you're in good health, this doesn't mean that you have a free ticket to heaven".²

It is always wise to bear in mind that life is short and that this body to which we are so attached is only a perishable thing. Bodily healings are not without value but the real pilgrim is one who dedicates his entire life to the discovery of the Imperishable.

Masses of pious pilgrims have been visiting Lourdes for 140 years. These devotees find that the Grotto exercises an irresistible influence over their minds and hearts. It brings them the benefits of spiritual regeneration. But there is a minority of rank materialists who go to Lourdes just out of curiosity. Often they find themselves in a state of confusion. They do not know what to make of this sanctuary. Can we conclude that their visits are to no good purpose? On the contrary, none is impelled to travel to Lourdes without reason. Even the sceptics who go there as mere tourists are unknowingly responding to the call of the Divine. All are given blessings. No one leaves the shrine of Our Lady empty-handed, although one might not be conscious of the great gift that one has received. A good many unbelievers become believers. Doubting Thomases sometimes develop deep religious faith.

¹ *Lourdes Magazine*, No. 42 (54) August 1996, p.19.

² *Ibid.* p.19.

Learned scientists are always baffled whenever they examine and analyse the healing water from the spring by the sacred Grotto. They have so far failed to discover anything that is particularly strange or unusual in it. From the standpoint of science, this water is not different from that found elsewhere. With all their sophisticated instruments and laboratory tests these researchers have not succeeded in finding out that elusive extraordinary element that characterises this water. Their frustrations would not have been in vain if they had at least come to terms with the fact that the mystery of God is truly unfathomable. Therefore the great significance of Lourdes is that it presents a challenge to all intellectuals, rationalists and scientists. Those who have hitherto worshipped at the shrine of reason must understand that there are spiritual realms that their finite minds can never reach. They must admit that the mind is not without frontiers. The mind is only a thinking machine for our mundane existence. It is just a tool with many uses. The mind has its place in human affairs but let us not make the mistake of elevating it into a thing of spiritual stature. Those who pride themselves on their intellect should realise that the gates of paradise will always remain closed to them unless they first of all have the virtue of humility. The beautiful flower of humility blooms only when the ego is cast aside.

Miracles are a constant reminder of the Divine Presence in our midst despite the fact that ours is an age of gross

materialism. Among the miraculously healed, one can even find people who insist that there is no God. Puffed-up persons become atheists and turn against the Almighty, but the Divine never deserts them! Those making the journey to Lourdes have the chance to reconcile themselves with their Maker and thereby rediscover the faith which they had once abandoned.

Visitors cannot help seeing numerous patients in wheelchairs who are dangerously close to death. They thereby develop the capacity to identify themselves with the problems and sufferings of the sick. Their whole attitude to suffering quickly changes. Whereas they had accustomed themselves to pursue pleasure and avoid suffering like the plague, at Lourdes they learn to accept suffering penitentially. By regarding their sufferings as sacrifices that they gladly offer to the Divine, they atone not only for their own sins but also for the wrongdoings of others. Their willingness to suffer and their patient acceptance of both physical and mental pain, as well as their practising of austerities, such as fasting or painstakingly caring for the sick by being voluntary helpers, are all different forms of *sadhana*.

We can say that medically inexplicable healings take place when patients with terminal cancer are suddenly cured, or when men who are paralysed from the waist down can unexpectedly walk. Any such miracle is of course a cause for rejoicing and bowing down respectfully to the Virgin with a thankful heart. Yet let

us not forget or overlook the fact that physical healings are of secondary value. Only an inner spiritual transformation, if it happens, is of lasting value. "I tell you the truth," declared Jesus, "none can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." What might Jesus have meant by the term "born

again"? Are we ready to discard all our prejudices, resentments, pride and every trace of self-centredness, and thus be born again? The marvellousness of Lourdes consists mainly in its being a sanctuary where human beings from everywhere are given the opportunity to be born of the Spirit.

THE ETERNAL LIFE

He was setting out on a journey when a man ran up, knelt before him and put this question to him, "Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: You must not kill; You must not commit adultery; You must not steal; You must not bring false witness; You must not defraud; Honour your father and mother."

And he said to him, "Master I have kept all these from earliest days."

Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him, and he said, "There is one thing you lack. Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

But his face fell at these words and he went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth.

Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were astonished than ever.

"In that case," they said to one another, "who can be saved?"

Jesus gazed at them.

"For men," he said, "it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God."

— Mark 10. 17-27.

Prosperity And Adversity

By I.S. Madugula

LIFE is full of vicissitudes. An important question is whether we stand upto these mutations well and preserve unvarying reverence to the Lord. What happens in practice? We praise God when things go our way and blame Him when they don't. And, the greater our misfortune, the louder the blame tends to be.

It is natural that we offer thanks to God when we prosper; we recognise Him as the source of good fortune. What we often fail to do, though, is to recognise with equal readiness that He is the source of all adversity as well.

God, the source of adversity? The benevolent Creator, the source of suffering? How can that be? At any rate, even if He is not directly responsible for human misery and suffering, He shouldn't let misfortune befall His creatures. It is His job to protect us, not persecute. Such is the common line of thinking.

One answer to this age-old puzzle is that the source of suffering is one's own *karma*; we cannot blame God for it. It is something one does to oneself over many lives. This is equally true of the good *karma* which makes things go our way. All that God does is to see that *dharma*, the moral order, takes its course. In this sense, He merely functions as an administrator, not an executive.

When we pray to God during prosperity, we are expressing our gratitude to Him. Simultaneously we also want to ensure that we enjoy the fruits of our good deeds! In similar manner, we need to appeal to Him during times of adversity to give us the fortitude to bear it, even though we are solely responsible for our predicament. In so appealing, we are acknowledging the fact that His grace can even change our situation for the better, because He is All Merciful. In other words, it is wise to think of Him both in prosperity and in adversity. Hence the prayer which says that He shields us from calamity and confers good fortune upon us (*apadam apahartaram, dataram sarva sampadam*).

Also, let us not overlook the symbolism of prosperity and calamity. The greatest calamity of all is *samsara*, and the greatest wealth is spiritual evolution through *jnana* or *bhakti*, through Self-realization or total surrender. This is the two-fold path that Bhagavan so often emphasized.

The point so far is that there is a strong case in favour of being grateful to God not only during good times but also in bad times. It is easy to be thankful when we are happy. But we need to remember that it is in times of misfortune that we have the greater opportunity to get close

to God. It is the perceived bad luck that opens the doors to the inner *sanctum* of His temple. In fact, He is even said to be *partial* to the down-and-out folks, as embodied in the notion of *daridra narayan*. This is best illustrated by Sri Krishna's tremendous compassion for the dirt-poor Kuchela. So, how can we ever *blame* God for adversity, seeing that it is a short cut to His abode?

Poets and philosophers of other cultures also corroborate this view of adversity. The following is a typical passage from Shakespeare:

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and
venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in
his head.¹

The French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau feels that "Remorse sleeps during a prosperous period, but wakes up in adversity".² That is, the better qualities in us surface when we are not forgetting ourselves in the enjoyment of prosperity.

To the poet Byron, "Adversity is the first path to truth".³ The man of religion, Thomas a Kempis, is of the opinion that "For a man to rejoice in adversity is not grievous to him who loves; for so to joy is to joy in the Cross of Christ".⁴

Francis Bacon says:⁵

Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Prosperity is not without many fears

and distastes; adversity not without many comforts and hopes.

All of the above discussion on adversity applies basically to the ordinary man, the *ajnani*. But what about the *jnani*? Does adversity make any difference to him? What would be his advice to someone going through hard times?

For the *jnani*, life is simple and straightforward. The *jnani* is a *Vedantin* for whom, by definition, the "pairs of opposites" such as good and bad fortunes do not exist. He is neither elated nor depressed, regardless of what life dishes out to him. He has achieved total *samatva*, perfect equanimity, in the best sense of the term. What is his technique? Bhagavan answers this question over and over again. The *jnani* either surrenders himself totally, or is totally immersed in Self-enquiry questioning who it is that is enjoying or suffering.

When you surrender yourself to God's will, you have no will of your own. You take whatever comes your way, good and bad. What you are really doing is that you are kicking the mind and ego out of the way which keep you attached to your emotional morass. The *jnani's* mind however is like the burnt rope, which is incapable of interfering with his direct perception of reality which transcends happiness and suffering. Because the

¹ *As You Like It*, II, i, 12-14.

² *Les Confessions*.

³ *Don Juan*, XII. 50.

⁴ *The Imitation of Christ*.

⁵ *Of Adversity*.

material mind is absent in the paradigm (*amanskat*), dualistic states like sorrow or joy do not register on the *advaitic* consciousness.

Let's note Bhagavan's explanation of this phenomenon in his own words:

Devotee: Why should there be suffering now?

Bhagavan: If there were no suffering, how could the desire to be happy arise? If that desire did not arise, how could the quest for the Self arise? ⁶ . . .

Devotee: Should I help the suffering world?

Bhagavan: The power that created you created the world as well. If God created the world, it is His business to look after it, not yours.

Devotee: But we see pain in the world. A man is hungry. It is a physical reality. It is very real to him. Are we to call it a dream and remain unmoved by his suffering?

Bhagavan: From the point of view of *jnana* or Reality, the suffering you speak of is certainly a dream, as is the world of which that suffering is an infinitesimal part... The hunger in the dream has to be appeased by dream food. You can never mix the two states, the dream and the waking states. Similarly, till you attain realization and thus wake out of this illusory, phenomenal world, you must do social service by relieving suffering whenever you see it. ⁷

Though always and everywhere present, the Self does not shine forth in all places. Just as light is reflected only in a transparent medium, so also the Self is clearly seen in the intellect only.

— *Atma Bodha*.

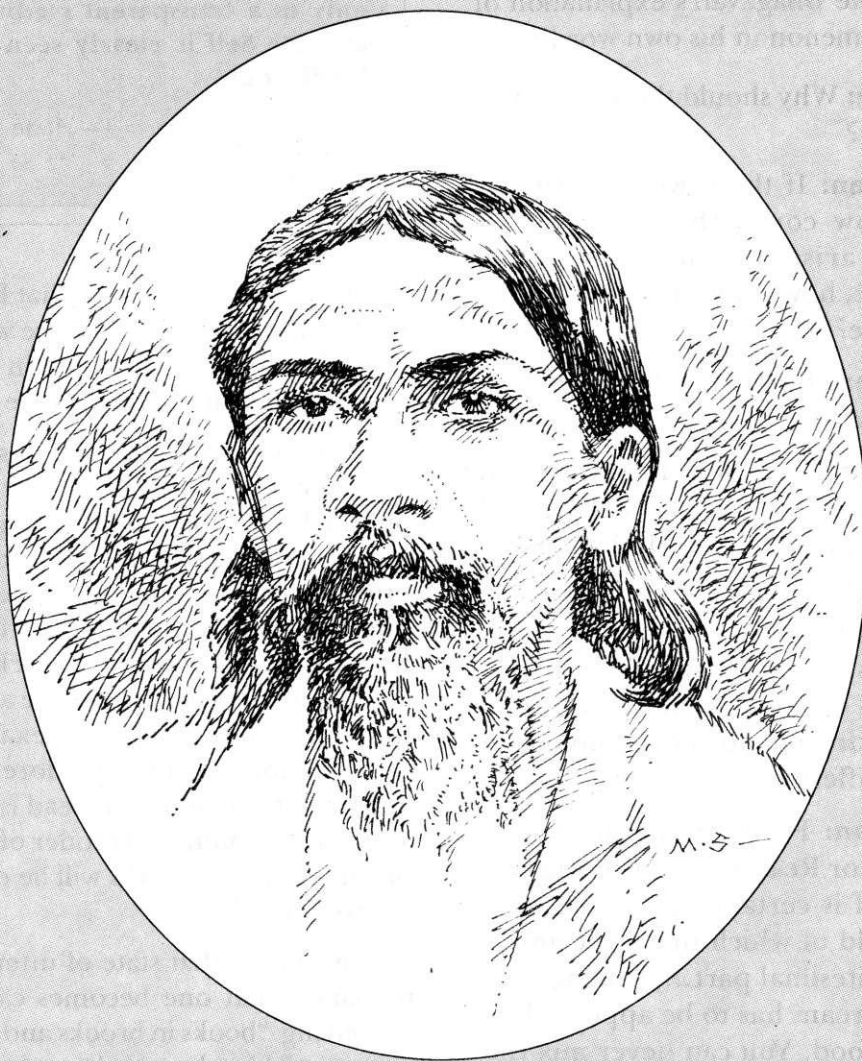
The point to be noted is that Bhagavan hastens to add that any service we render should be totally selfless and in the spirit of serving God in the form of the destitute.

So there you have it, the positive side of adversity, the adversity that brought out the best among the Pandavas following their long exile into the forest, the utter poverty of Kuchela that endeared him to Krishna, the adversity that even Rama needed to prove himself to be a divine incarnation. Note once again that in these and other shining examples of our epic lore — any epic lore for that matter — the common thread is the total and unquestioning surrender of the people involved. Let God's will be done. He knows best.

It is only in that state of utter self-annihilation that one becomes capable of perceiving "books in brooks and sermons in stones," blending *bhakti* and *jnana* in a quantum leap of the Spirit.

⁶ *Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own words.*

⁷ *Ibid.*



The Mystic Poetry of Sri Aurobindo

By Alan Jacobs

IT is indeed strange that Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), one of India's greatest mystic-seer-sage-poet-philosophers who, together with Sri Ramana Maharshi and Ramakrishna is credited, by world opinion, as being instrumental for the Indian spiritual renaissance of the twentieth century, should also be regarded as a poet from the English literary tradition. It is remarkable that this Bengali sage, one-time freedom fighter and later founder of a city, Auroville, should have composed what is one of the finest epic poems ever written in the English Language — *Savitri*.

Of course, he is barely acknowledged by the British academic literary establishment. In contemporary companions to literature and encyclopedias he is noted as a prolific religious thinker who also composed considerable poetry, without comment. It is perhaps because of the great length of *Savitri* (28,813 lines in twelve books) that it has been overlooked as one of the most significant mystical poems of the English language. Most likely the difficulty for academics and literary critics lies in the fact that in the main they have next to no understanding of what constitutes a dynamic spiritual *sadhana*, which is what the poem is largely about.

Aurobindo¹ was almost wholly educated in England. His father, a medical doctor, trained in England, was an obsessive anglophile and wanted his talented son to benefit from the best, most exclusive English education, with the minimum of Indian influence.

He attended the famous St. Paul's School, one of the country's best Public Schools where he excelled in all subjects, particularly in the classics and showed an early love for English literature and Greek philosophy. He won a scholarship to Cambridge University where he majored in classics and also began a study of the rhythms and forms of English prosody and the major English poets until he was able to compose his own poetry, often on classical mythological themes and exhibiting strong, latent religious feelings.

An example of this is his early poem *Euphrosyne*. *Euphrosyne* was one of the three graces who accompanied Aphrodite the Goddess of Beauty along with Eros, God of sensual love. The poet apologises for failing to hymn *Euphrosyne* of "she who rejoices the heart" instead of Aglaia 'the brilliant' or Eros "Carnal desire".

¹ For an article on whom, see *The Mountain Path*, Jayanti 1995.

EUPHROSYNE ²

Child of the infant years, Euphrosyne,
 Bird of my boyhood, youth's blithe deity!
 If I have hymned thee not with lyric phrase,
 Preferring Eros, or Aglaia's praise,
 Frown not, thou lovely spirit, leave me not.
 Man worships the ungrasped. His vagrant thought
 Still busy with the illimitable void
 Lives all the time by little things upbuoyed
 Which he contemns; the wife unsung remains
 Sharing his pleasures, taking half his pains,
 While to dream faces mounts the poet's song.
 Yet she makes not their lyric light her wrong,
 Knowing her homely eyes his sorrow's star
 Smiles at the eclipsing brow untouched by care.
 Content with human love lightly she yields
 The immortal fancy its Elysian fields.

This poem illustrates well his precocious poetic talent which was later to flower into unforeseen heights.

After University he was compelled to earn a livelihood. He obtained the post of Professor of English ³ at the Baroda State College where he eventually became the Vice Chancellor. His father's suppression of his Indian heritage had burst forth into a great love for Indian culture, religion and civilization once he knew his roots. Fired with the desire for Indian independence from the oppressive British 'Raj' he entered politics and became an ardent pamphleteer and fighter for India's freedom. Feared by the British for his dangerous eloquence he was imprisoned. Here he had the time to study the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and underwent a number of mystic experiences which shaped his religious life. He became one of the spiritual giants of the twentieth century.

Let us briefly examine his poetic achievement. Aurobindo's poetic vision is best summarised in a letter he wrote on 29-3-36 about *Savitri*: ⁴

In fact *Savitri* has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own *yogic* consciousness and how that could be made creative.

² *Collected Poems*, page 31.

³ His lectures on the English poets became the basis of Part I of his book, *The Future Poetry*.

⁴ *Sri Aurobindo On Himself: The Poet and the Critic*, p.229.