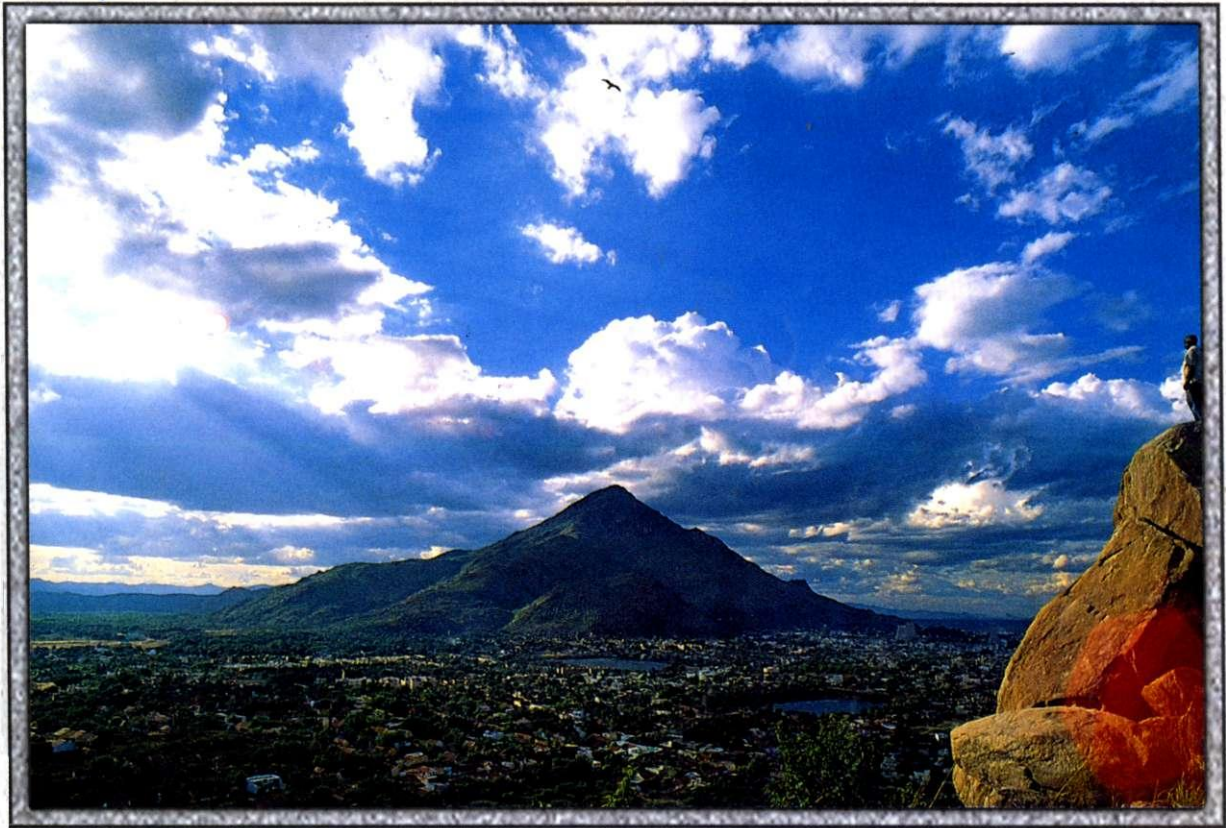


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The

# MOUNTAIN PATH

*Aradhana Issue 2000*

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# THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1*

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— Editor.

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## The Mountain Path

The aim of this journal is to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

- Contributions for publication should be addressed to The Editor, *The Mountain Path*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu. They should be in English and typed with double spacing. Contributions not published will be returned on request.
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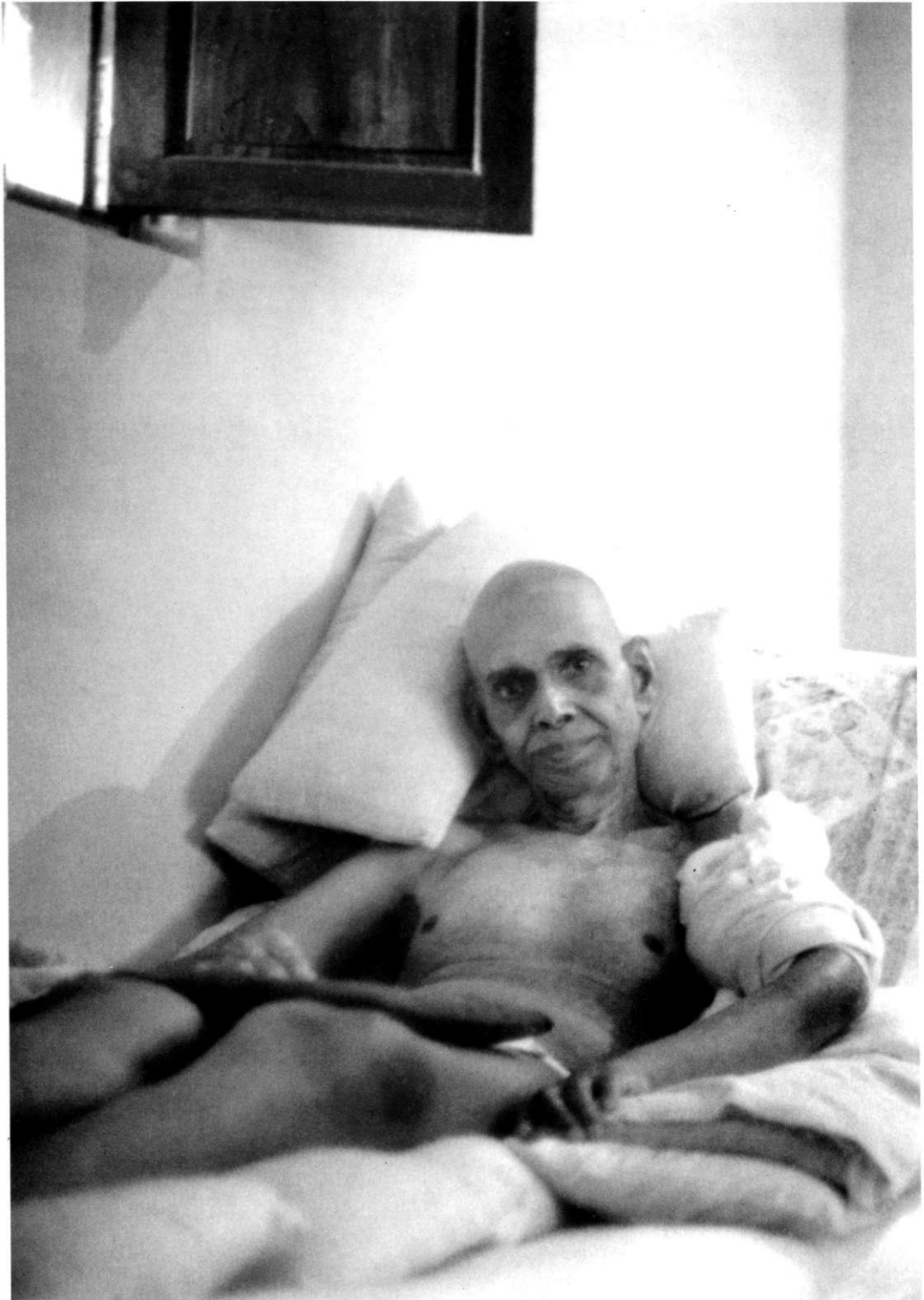
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**The Mountain Path**  
is dedicated to  
**Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

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EDITORIAL

## In Search of the Eternal Truth

**M**AN is at the crossroads in a higher, ideological sense, as far as rituals are concerned.

Most rituals are performed with a certain desire in mind. And they are done in endless, mechanical fashion. One can expect to reap their results, or enjoyments, including life in a higher world. These have the effect of perpetuating the transmigratory existence of the individual.

Alternatively, it is upto the individual to seek the means of freedom from the laws of *karma*, that is freedom from the cycle of birth and death.

For the real seeker, it is only a Hobson's choice. There is no alternative to seeking the means for ending relativistic existence.

One should rise above the *maya* of *samsara* and the world by embarking on a search for the Eternal Truth. This lies beyond limitations and illusion.

The *Upanishads* have the sole aim of leading man to the Eternal Truth within him.

One can understand the true meaning of the search for the Eternal Truth through the well known episode concerning Nachiketas, son of Vajasravas. We have a detailed account of this in the *Katha Upanishad*.

Vajasravas, a poor *brahmin*, performs a sacrifice. The presents he offers the priests are just old, feeble and barren cows.

Nachiketas, struck by the unworthy nature of the gifts felt his father's action had

only a limited, ritualistic content. He felt hurt thereby.

As a dutiful son, Nachiketas thought that he can himself be given as a gift! The son is the property of the father, so why not he be offered as such? When he questioned his father, 'To whom are you giving me as a gift', Vajasravas replied, 'To Death shall I give thee.'

Accordingly Nachiketas arrived at the abode of Yama, the Lord of Death. Yama (Death) was not at his abode just then. He returned after three days. Seeing Nachiketas he felt there was a transgression of *dharma* in that Nachiketas had not been attended to or fed, all the time.

So Death offered three gifts (boons) to Nachiketas by way of recompense. Nachiketas prayed that his father may be relieved of his anger and be kind to him (Nachiketas). This of course meant his arrival back on earth. This boon was granted.

As a second boon, Nachiketas asked for knowledge of the fire (sacrifice) which leads to heaven — where one rejoices leaving sorrow behind — without fear of old age, hunger and thirst. Life in heaven is long. However it is terminable. It is not immortality in the real sense. This boon was also granted by Death.

Then Nachiketas prayed to Death as follows:

There is this doubt in regard to a man who has departed, some (holding) that he is and some that he is not. I would be instructed by thee in this knowledge. Of the boons, this is the third boon.<sup>1</sup>

Yama replied:

Even the gods of old had doubt on this point. It is not indeed, easy to understand, (so) subtle is this truth. Choose another boon, O Nachiketas! Do not press me. Release me from this.<sup>2</sup>

Nachiketas would not give up. He felt that Yama, the Lord of Death was the most qualified one, to teach him on this subject. He wanted no other boon.

Death thereupon offered Nachiketas various material objects or sources of enjoyment by way of land, elephants, horses, gold, noble and lovely maidens, long life and the like.

Nachiketas said all these are transient. Man whose life is brief does not profit by these. He would have nothing less than the instruction regarding *samparaya* (the great passing on), the mystery behind death.

Yama then instructed Nachiketas on the immortal nature of the Self. (Some select verses are given here).

He said:

Both the good and pleasant approach a man. The wise man, pondering over them discriminates. The wise chooses the good in preference to the pleasant. The simple-minded, for the sake of worldly well-being, prefers the pleasant.<sup>3</sup>

(Having seen) the fulfilment of (all) desire, the support of the world, the

(Footnotes 1 to 6 refer to the *Katha Upanishad*).

<sup>1</sup> I.1.20.

<sup>2</sup> I.1.21.

<sup>3</sup> I.2.2.

endless fruit of rites, the other shore where there is no fear, the greatness of fame, the far-stretching, the foundation, O wise Nachiketas, thou hast steadfastly let (them) go.<sup>4</sup>

Realising through self-contemplation that primal God, difficult to be seen, deeply hidden, set in the cave (of the heart), dwelling in the deep, the wise man leaves behind both joy and sorrow.<sup>5</sup>

The knowing Self is never born; nor does he die at any time. He sprang from nothing and nothing sprang from him. He is unborn, eternal, abiding and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.

If the slayer thinks that he slays or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of them do not understand. He neither slays nor is slain.

Smaller than the small, greater than the great, the Self is set in the heart of every creature. The unstriving man beholds Him, freed from sorrow. Through tranquillity of the mind and the senses (he sees) the greatness of the Self.<sup>6</sup>

The essence of Yama's instruction to Nachiketas contained in the six verses quoted above may be summarised as follows on the basis of the commentary of Shankaracharya (on these verses):

A man of intelligence separates the *preferable* (the ultimate human goal of salvation) from the *pleasurable* (prosperity here and hereafter — a limited objective), just as a swan separates milk from water. The man of poor intelligence does not do so — he is preoccupied only with the protection of the body. Nachiketas (according to Yama

himself) has examined the highest state possible of attainment by man — (upto) the state of Hiranyagarbha — and renounced it (The state of Hiranyagarbha is the limit of worldly enjoyment). Instead he was desirous only of the Supreme One. The Self is hard to see because of its subtle nature. Concentration of the mind on the Self — withdrawing it from the senses — is *adhyatma yoga*. The Self is eternal. If one looks upon the mere body as the Self and thinks 'I shall kill It', one is wrong. If the one who is killed thinks 'I am killed' he too is wrong. Both of them do not know — their own Self. The Self is subtler than the subtle — for example, the *syamaka* grain. It is greater than the great — the earth, for example. And It is located in the heart of all beings — beginning from Brahma upto (ending with) a blade of grass.

The unstriving man — the man who is free from desire for external objects, earthly or heavenly — sees. That is, he directly realises the Self as 'I am the Self'. Thereby he is freed from sorrow.

The means for the realisation of the Self are: hearing, thinking and meditation (on the Self).

(Many other topics like, for example, the causes for the non-perception of the Self are also discussed in this *Upanishad*. However, they are not referred to here).

Shankaracharya concludes his commentary on this *Upanishad*, saying:

<sup>4</sup> I.2.11.

<sup>5</sup> I.2.12.

<sup>6</sup> I.2.18-20.

He [Nachiketas] attained Brahman, that is, became free (*Brahma-praptah abhut*). How? By having already become *virajah*, free from virtue and vice (and) *vimrtyuh*, free from desire and ignorance, through the acquisition of knowledge.

There seems to be something inconsistent, something odd in the God of Death, or the Lord of Death, being himself the Teacher of the path to Eternal Life!

However there is nothing odd in this. Shankaracharya at the beginning of his commentary on the *Upanishad* salutes Yama. He says, "Salutations to Bhagavan Yama (Death), son of the Sun and the Teacher of the Science of Brahman. Salutation to Nachiketa!"

The fear of death, or rather the death experience was the fore-runner of Self-realization in the case of Bhagavan Sri Ramana. This is of great significance.

He had made no preparatory effort. He had not even heard of terms like 'Brahman', 'Self' and the like. How he faced the death experience without getting scared and how he realized the Truth in a flash can be properly described only in the words of the Maharshi.

Maharshi says:

I just felt 'I am going to die' and began thinking what to do about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor, or my elders or friends; I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then.

The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come; what does it mean?

What is it that is dying? The body dies.' And I at once dramatized the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched and stiff as though *rigor mortis* had set in and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered. 'Well then,' I said to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process.

'I' was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centred on that 'I'. From that moment onwards the 'I' or Self focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the Maharshi realized the Self, completing the *sadhana* of a lifetime or several lifetimes in one brief moment.

<sup>7</sup> *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words*, Sri Ramanasramam, pp. 2-3 (1960 Edn.).



Paul Brunton in his long dialogue with Maharshi expressed grave fears over the implications of the loss of individual personality (which spiritual enlightenment implies). Sri Maharshi, allaying such fears, explained how only through such 'loss' man 'finds' himself!

Maharshi says:

The sense of 'I' pertains to the person, the body and the brain.

When a man knows his true Self for the first time, something else arises from the depths of his being and takes possession of him. That something is behind the mind; it is infinite, divine, eternal. Some people call it the Kingdom of Heaven, others call it the soul, still others name it *Nirvana*, and we Hindus call it

Liberation; you may give it what name you wish. When this happens, *a man has not really lost himself; rather, he has found himself.*

Paul Brunton says:

As the last word falls from the interpreter's lips there flashes across my mind those memorable words which were uttered by the wandering Teacher in Galilee [Jesus Christ], words which have puzzled so many good persons: *Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *A Search in Secret India*, B.I. Publications Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, p.159 (1994 Edn.).

## **Niranjanananda Swami's Devotion to Sri Bhagavan**

**By Kanakamma**

**It is well known that Niranjanananda Swami was aware of the stature of Sri Bhagavan. To him Sri Bhagavan was the Supreme Being and nothing less. This is illustrated by the episode relating to one Kasi Ammal.**

**Kasi Ammal of Andhra Pradesh was brought to the fold of Sri Bhagavan by a Tamil devotee. Kasi Ammal used to visit Sri Bhagavan as often as possible.**

**However it was her habit to visit the devotee who introduced her to Sri Bhagavan first (who was living in the far south) before she came to the Ashram!**

**Chinnaswamigal was aware of this and one day he remarked, "Kasi Ammal! If, supposing you wanted to go to a temple and take the help of another person to find your way, do you on that account worship him (the helper) by offering coconuts and lighting camphor etc.?"**

**The obvious hint was that Kasi Ammal should come first to Sri Bhagavan as a matter of course!**



# A Dialogue with the Maharshi

By B.V.Narasimha Swami

**Devotee:** Swami, pray give me some *mantra upadesa*.

**Maharshi:** I am not in the habit of giving such *upadesa*.

**D.** Swami, I came here in hopes of obtaining such a blessing.

**M.** What do you want it for?

**D.** Is it not good to have *upadesa*?

**M.** Yes, it may be good. But do you want *upadesa* merely to repeat it or do you expect any benefit from it?

**D.** Well, certainly it will benefit me to have *upadesa, japa* and so on.

**M.** What benefit?

**D.** I shall attain many good things such as supernatural powers (*siddhis*), heaven (*swargam*), God's Grace and so on.

**M.** What do you seek from all these things?

**D.** Will I not be well off with all these? I will get a good state (*gati*) in this way.

**M.** You expect perfect happiness from these things, do you not?

**D.** Certainly, Swami.

**M.** Then you desire happiness from all such efforts of yours?

**D.** Yes, I want happiness.

**M.** Then have you not got it now?

**D.** I have bits of it now and then, but I get sorrows and worries as often.

**M.** Then you want it unmixed with sorrow?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Just now, you have no sorrow, have you?

**D.** No.

**M.** Then what more do you seek?

**D.** Sorrows will come very soon, which I wish to prevent.

**M.** Then you seek enduring and permanent bliss, do you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** You will be content, then, if your present state is made permanent?

**D.** (musing awhile) I fear, Swami, that it will not suffice. I am not enjoying any happiness at this moment.

**M.** Do you find pleasure or pain in going on putting questions to me?

**D.** It is rather pleasant to put questions and to learn.

---

This dialogue recorded by the author was serialised earlier in *The Mountain Path* between July 1982 and April 1983.

The devotee in question is not named, but we have reasons for presuming that it was B. V. Narasimha Swamy himself.

**M.** What is it that gives you pleasure in this?

**D.** Your kindness in giving me knowledge and guidance gives me pleasure.

**M.** But that pleasure is only when you get the answer. What is it that gives you pleasure when you are putting questions?

**D.** If I put a question, your kindness is certain to give me replies.

**M.** You mean that the assured prospect of replies which will give you pleasure when they are given is itself a pleasure, in other words, that the coming pleasure casts its shadow or reflection in advance.

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Is that the only reason or cause for the pleasure?

**D.** Probably the presence or proximity of holy people may itself be pleasant.

**M.** When you put questions to ordinary people, for example, when you wish to know the road to a village to which you are going, does that not give you pleasure?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Why?

**D.** Because knowledge of facts is in prospect there also.

**M.** Suppose some passer-by is talking to another about many facts and the talk falls on your ears. Is that not also knowledge of facts? Yet you pass by and do not care to listen to him. Does not that knowledge give you pleasure?

**D.** No, Swami, I do not care for it.

**M.** Then knowledge or a prospect of knowledge gives you pleasure only if you care for it, that is, only if you are interested in it.

**D.** Yes, that is it.

**M.** What you feel interested in gives you pleasure, is it not so?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** What do you mean by interest? Why are you interested in any knowledge? For example, why are you interested in putting questions to me?

**D.** By interest I mean that for some reason (habit or chance contact) my mind feels drawn to some knowledge or act. Knowledge interests me, as in my present questions, since it will benefit me.

**M.** How will this knowledge benefit you?

**D.** It will lead me to a good state (*gati*) and thus secure happiness for me.

**M.** Then your questions give you happiness because they are associated in your mind with the happiness you expect to gain therefrom in the form of that good state, in other words, because they produce a reflection or image of the forthcoming happiness.

**D.** Probably that is the explanation.

**M.** If you were not interested in that state, would you put questions about it or would such questions put by others give you pleasure?

**D.** No, they would not give me pleasure.

**M.** Is it not clear then that if you are resolved to find pleasure in some object,



the attainment of that object is what will give you pleasure?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Then you can choose to take pleasure or no pleasure in any particular object?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Can you then say that pleasure or happiness is a quality of outside objects? Is it not rather a quality of you who can at will take pleasure or no pleasure in them?

**D.** Clearly pleasure or happiness is in me and not in outside objects, as you have said. But still I have a doubt. Why then does sugar taste pleasant to all people at all times, and why do I never refuse objects of pleasure like sugar, if pleasure is not the property of sugar itself?

**M.** It is better to be accurate in your facts before you seek the reason for those facts. Is it a fact that sugar is pleasant to all people at all times?

**D.** Yes, Swami, everyone likes sugar and views a piece of candy or a cake containing it with obvious signs of pleasure.

**M.** If you take the sugar-candy or sugar-cake to a diabetic patient who is just undergoing an operation for a carbuncle, will it give him pleasure?

**D.** No, it will cause fear then. I mean all healthy people love sugar.

**M.** Do they? Do they derive pleasure from it at all times?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Take a glutton who has crammed his belly with laddus (sweet cakes) and who is

trying to relieve the pain of his stomach by vomiting. Will your cakes then give him pleasure or pain?

**D.** They will not give him pleasure, for he is then trying to get rid of them. But sugar will give pleasure to one in normal health and in his normal state, free from such an unnatural condition as over-eating.

**M.** Having scrutinised your facts, now examine the question you raised on them, namely, "Why are all people pleased with sugar, if sugar does not have in itself the pleasure-giving quality?" You believe that these facts show that the pleasure is not in the subject but in the sweet object, do you not?

**D.** It appears so.

**M.** Then why did this same sugar not produce the same pleasure for the diabetic patient or the vomiting glutton?

**D.** Because it would harm their health.

**M.** How would it affect the health of others?

**D.** Sugar is a good and nutritious food, and in the case of ordinary people it would promote their health.

**M.** Well then, is it not clear that men generally take pleasure in having good health and hence in objects which produce good health; and that they reject the same objects if their health would suffer by taking them?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Then the reason why sugar gives pleasure lies not in the sugar itself but in the subjective preference for health.

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Which is natural to man, health or disease?

**D.** Health.

**M.** Then the pleasure in attaining health is the pleasure in attaining or rather re-attaining one's natural condition, is it not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** When a man eats sugar, is he not seeking to secure happiness by giving his body that which it lacks and which it needs for the perfection (*purvatvam*) of its health or natural condition?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Is it not the nature of man to be happy? That is, when nothing extraneous interferes with him, is he not happy?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Should we not say, then, that man's nature is happiness?

**D.** Probably that is so. But still I feel some hesitation or doubt to say so.

**M.** Why should you entertain such a doubt when your experience can remove it?

**D.** What experience do I have, Swami?

**M.** Do you not experience your self?

**D.** In some vague way. But when I think of myself, it is always in connection with so many other extraneous things and rambling thoughts. I can hardly get a clear idea of myself.

**M.** Do you not at any time free yourself from these extraneous things and rambling thoughts?

**D.** I have tried to.

**M.** Why should you try? Do you not every day find yourself free from them?

**D.** I have never found myself free from them.

**M.** You are talking of your waking condition, are you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** But what about your condition in sleep?

**D.** I have sleep. But what can I remember of it except a few which happen to produce a strong impression on me?

**M.** I do not refer to your dreaming sleep, which is but a weak echo or replica of your waking state. I refer to dreamless sleep. Have you not had dreamless sleep?

**D.** I have it every night.

**M.** Then in that condition, are you not free from these extraneous things and the rambling thoughts about them?

**D.** I do not know. I remember nothing about that state when I wake up.

**M.** Do you wake up with a sense of having passed the time of dreamless sleep in misery or with rambling thoughts?

**D.** No, of course not.

**M.** Do you not wake up with a sense of blissful, undisturbed repose?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Who enjoyed that blissful, undisturbed repose during the time of dreamless sleep?

**D.** I myself enjoyed it.

**M.** Were extraneous things and rambling thoughts with you at that time?

**D.** No.

**M.** Here then is your daily experience of yourself when free from extraneous things and rambling thoughts, and you find it blissful and pleasant, do you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Is this not a further reason for inferring that the essential nature of yourself is happiness?

**D.** Yes, it seems to be.

**M.** Why do you doubt again?

**D.** Because dreamless sleep looks so vague a state to me and is not clear and convincing like the truths that I perceive now in the waking state.

**M.** As you said, you have had dreams also, have you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** When you had dream experiences, did they not appear to you to be true and real?

**D.** Yes, as a rule they did, though with occasional exceptions.

**M.** Leaving aside exceptions for the present, you found reality in the dream state. Then why do you say that dreams are unreal?

**D.** Dreams are often such a jumble of impossible, improbable and absurd circumstances, as for example, being on land, suddenly rising into the air, then

suddenly finding oneself old or young, and so on.

**M.** These dream experiences are impossible or absurd if you judge them by waking standards. But judging them by dream standards, you did not deem them impossible or absurd while undergoing the dream.

**D.** That is true.

**M.** What is your next reason for maintaining that dreams are unreal?

**D.** Because they are not confirmed in my waking state. For example, I dream of swimming and sinking, but I wake up and find no water on me or on my bed.

**M.** Your waking experiences were not confirmed in your dream state either, were they?

**D.** No, as a rule each state has its own independent existence.

**M.** Then why do you prefer to say that waking experiences alone are real, and not dream experiences?

**D.** I spend much more of my time in waking, it is a longer experience. I can now consciously discuss reality. The light of consciousness now appears stronger and clearer. I can go on endlessly corroborating these experiences with innumerable people. All agree that waking is the real state and dreams are unreal.

**M.** All, or almost all, agree in saying that the sun rises every morning and sets every evening. Do you for this reason agree that it is the sun that moves around the earth?

**D.** No.

**M.** Why not?

**D.** Because geographical, astronomical and scientific enquiry disproves the primary impression on the mind.

**M.** Then why do you not pursue a similar scientific enquiry about the dream state and about dreamless sleep?

**D.** Yes, I agree that I should.

**M.** Let us go into the facts then. You said that there were exceptions to the feeling of reality experienced in dreams. What are they?

**D.** Sometimes in dreams we dream that we dream, and that suggests the unreality of dreams.

**M.** Is it not just the other way round? If in the primary dream a dream interlude or secondary dream intervenes, the feeling about the primary dream when it prevails is that it is true and real, while the secondary dream is felt to be unreal. Is it not so?

**D.** It seems so.

**M.** Any other exception?

**D.** In dreams there is occasionally a vague and confused feeling of uncertainty.

**M.** Do people in the waking state never experience a sense of the unreality of things, especially after great sorrow or after a deep reverie?

**D.** Yes, sometimes they do.

**M.** Do these exceptions in the waking state convince you that waking state is unreal?

**D.** No, they are exceptional experiences, and my conclusions must be based on regular and reliable data.

**M.** All right, but the dream state is not just now so relevant or important for consideration of the question in hand as dreamless sleep. Why not investigate that?

**D.** How can I?

**M.** Well, when you are in deep sleep, are you conscious of your body, your breath and your mind or intellect?

**D.** No.

**M.** Are you yourself absent then?

**D.** It seems so.

**M.** Did you not admit that you had enjoyed the bliss of dreamless sleep every night?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** If you enjoyed it, you must have existed then to undergo the experience of bliss — the bliss of being free from all extraneous things and rambling thoughts, even the thoughts about your body, breath or mind.

**D.** Yes, it seems so.

**M.** Why do you say 'seems'? Who enjoyed that bliss? Was it you or someone else?

**D.** It was I, not anyone else.

**M.** Could you have had that experience if you yourself were not present?

**D.** No.

**M.** You also said that you had no idea then of your body, breath or mind. Who had no idea?

**D.** I.



**M.** To be able to say that none of these things were present in dreamless sleep, you must have been present there, must you not?

**D.** It appears so. But everything is so vague about that state. I cannot definitely examine it as I can now examine this waking state.

**M.** You have not been to Siberia, have you?

**D.** No.

**M.** Yet do you not believe in its existence?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Why?

**D.** Because I accept the statements of credible witnesses who say that there is such a land and that it has the peculiarities which they say they noted in it when they went there.

**M.** If there are those who have seen this Siberia of dreamless sleep with better equipment than yourself, and if you regard them as credible witnesses, can you not accept their statements?

**D.** Yes. But where are such witnesses?

**M.** What do you take the sages who gave the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* to be? Do you doubt their capacity or veracity?

**D.** I doubt neither.

**M.** Well then, hear what they say in the *Upanishads*. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (2.1.17), for example, they say that in deep sleep the individual remains absorbed in the *Atmakasa* (the space of self). Again, in the *Chandogya Upanishad* (6.8.1)

they say that when a man is said to be sleeping, he has in fact become united with the reality and he has attained his own nature.

**D.** This is getting deeper and deeper into philosophy and metaphysics, which is very perplexing and troublesome. Why should I trouble myself with the solution of these problems?

**M.** Why should you, you ask. Because you wished to obtain *upadesa*, *siddhis* and so on as a means to happiness, and therefore you needed to understand all these matters. However, never mind about metaphysics or philosophy. Do you want happiness or not?

**D.** Certainly I want it.

**M.** Do you understand what gives happiness?

**D.** Yes, so many things give it. But what I wanted to discover is how to get it unmixed with sorrow and how to get it permanently.

**M.** Are there degrees or kinds of happiness?

**D.** Some things are more pleasant than others. Some give more enduring pleasure. Some give pleasure, but mixed with or followed by sorrow.

**M.** Then which kind or degree do you want?

**D.** I want the highest and most permanent kind, that kind which has no trace of sorrow mixed with it.

**M.** Have you ever seen light without some darkness or shadow contrasted with it?

**D.** No.

**M.** If a man had experience of only one taste and not of various tastes, could he say whether it is sweet, sour or bitter? If all colours but one had never come before a man's eye, would he have the notion of colour? Is it not by contrast that you know and have experience of touch, taste, colour, smell and so on?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Similarly, is it not because of the prior experience of pain that pleasure is recognised as pleasure?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** If a man continued to have the taste of sugar on his tongue every second or minute for a week or month, would he recognise its sweetness?

**D.** No, he would become cloyed with it much sooner.

**M.** That is, what was pleasure would be viewed as pain, and any variety would be welcomed as pleasure, would it not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** But you said you want pleasure always, unmixed with pain, did you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Then the pleasure you desire cannot be relative pleasure, can it?

**D.** No, it cannot.

**M.** So you want absolute pleasure or happiness. If a thing is viewed as happiness by one and misery by another, then it is not absolute happiness, is it?

**D.** No, it is not.

**M.** All right, but in any case it is best for you to begin with an analysis of happiness from your own standpoint. so you can begin with the question, "What will give me happiness?"

**D.** All right.

**M.** But the answer to the question. "What will give me happiness?" depends upon the answer to the further question, "What am I?", does it not?

**D.** Why? Whatever I am, happiness must be happiness.

**M.** Take the case of a tiger seizing a lamb which was tied by a huntsman, who is watching on an adjoining tree waiting to shoot the tiger. Is the seizure of the lamb happiness to the lamb, to the huntsman or to the tiger?

**D.** It is happiness to the tiger only momentarily, to the huntsman ultimately, and not at all to the lamb.

**M.** Therefore, before deciding whether something will be happiness to a person, you must first ascertain who that person is. So before finding out what will give you happiness, you must first enquire and find out 'Who am I?'

**D.** Who am I?

**M.** What is your first impression on that matter?

**D.** I am the person now sitting here talking and listening.

**M.** It is the body that sits here with a voice organ and a sense of hearing. Are you the body then?

**D.** Am I not?

**M.** What does your body consist of but hands, legs, eyes, nose and so on. Are you your hands? Can you not exist without hands?

**D.** I can exist without my hands, so I am not my hands.

**M.** For the same reason, you are not the legs, nose, eyes and so on.

**D.** Just so.

**M.** If you are not the parts, you are not even the whole body.

**D.** How does that follow?

**M.** What belongs to you and is your property is not yourself. Is that not so?

**D.** It appears so.

**M.** "My body" you spoke of. Then the body is your property, is it not?

**D.** It seems so, though I cannot see who the 'I' is who owns the body.

**M.** Then the owner, yourself, must be invisible. Are there no invisible entities in existence?

**D.** Yes, there are, such as ghosts, spirits and so on.

**M.** Then you may be a spirit, may you not?

**D.** How can a living man be a spirit?

**M.** When can he be a spirit?

**D.** After his death.

**M.** Where was that spirit during life?

**D.** It must have been connected with or residing in the living body.

**M.** What is the distinction in nature between the spirit and the body, living or dead?

**D.** I suppose the fact that the spirit is subtle while the body is gross and material, and that the spirit acts upon the body.

**M.** Then neither the body, nor the senses, nor the *pranas* (the breath and other vital functions), constitute the spirit, which is yourself, your 'I'.

**D.** No, they are not 'I'.

**M.** When you think or talk of 'I', what else do you feel is a part of you or your spirit?

**D.** People say that we have both a body and a mind. If I am not the body, it follows that I am the mind.

**M.** What is that mind? What constitutes the mind?

**D.** I cannot say.

**M.** When you refer to your mind, what idea do you have at the back of your mind? The mind is not a trunk with limbs, head and voice, is it?

**D.** No.

**M.** You have something more subtle than this gross body which you express with your voice. Why do you talk now?

**D.** To express the thoughts and ideas which are in my mind.

**M.** The thoughts and ideas are the contents of the mind, and together constitute the mind.

**D.** Yes.

**M.** Are thoughts and ideas all of the same sort, or are they the basis of each other?

**D.** I do not understand.

**M.** When you see a person, what thoughts have you?

**D.** I think I see a figure with some qualities such as brightness, shortness and so on.

**M.** How do you know that it is brightness or shortness?

**D.** I have known them previously.

**M.** So you have the primary sensations, and then you compare these with a previous stock of such impressions. Is not this power of memory, comparison and judgement of similarity or dissimilarity, a power higher than mere receptivity to impressions?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** It is this secondary function that is called the intellect or *buddhi*. Which of these two, (1) sensations or thoughts, and (2) intellect, is superior?

**D.** It is the intellect that guides, arranges and controls the thoughts. So the intellect (*buddhi*) is superior to the thoughts (*manas*).

**M.** So the intellect (*buddhi*) may be regarded as an inner sheath, a sort of core, for this mind (*manas*). Can you discover any further inner core to which this *buddhi* is an outer sheath?

**D.** My mind cannot penetrate into any such mysterious region.

**M.** Why, even now you have penetrated, since you said "my mind"! You include your thoughts and your intellect in the term "my mind", do you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** When you say "my intellect", what is the relationship between you and the intellect? Is it not that of an owner and his property?

**D.** It may be so, but the matter is not clear to my intellect.

**M.** Is the intellect the same thing to you at all times, or to you and to all others?

**D.** No, my own intellect varies at times, and it differs from that of others, especially when I do not agree with them.

**M.** Do all men have the same degree or quality of intellect, whatever their age, education, health and so on?

**D.** No. Babies have little of it. Older and educated people have more of it. Sick people have little of it. Geniuses have much of it. Fools, drunkards and insane people have little or none of it.

**M.** In insane people, where is the intellect?

**D.** It is clouded or destroyed.

**M.** Do they never recover it?

**D.** Some do.

**M.** Just as you recover stolen property. So the intellect is your property, capable of improvement, subject to variation, liable to destruction, and capable of being again restored to you, the possessor. Is it not so?



**D.** Yes.

**M.** Then the intellect or *buddhi* is only your property; it is not you.

**D.** Just so.

**M.** Then what are you?

**D.** I cannot find out what I am.

**M.** You mean that your intellect does not show you who you are.

**D.** Yes, that is what I mean.

**M.** Do you have no powers besides the intellect? Why do you not see if you have?

**D.** Where or what am I to see?

**M.** See within yourself, see yourself.

**D.** How can I see what is not visible?

**M.** You cannot see with these physical eyes.

**D.** What other eyes do I have?

**M.** You have your 'I'. See with it and enquire 'Who am I?'

**D.** How can I see my 'I'?

**M.** When you talk of 'I', are you not conscious of something?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** That consciousness is not a consciousness of objects, so it must be a consciousness of something else, must it not?

**D.** How does that follow?

**M.** When you think of an object, you are absorbed and transformed into that object. At that time you are not thinking of 'I' but of the object, are you not?

**D.** Just so.

**M.** Now if you drop the object, what remains?

**D.** Nothing remains.

**M.** But when you perceived the object, there was both the object perceived (the *drisya*) and yourself, the perceiver (the *drik*).

**D.** Yes.

**M.** If of these two you remove the first mentioned, namely the *drisya* or object, what should remain?

**D.** Logically or mathematically speaking, the *drik* or subject 'I' should remain. But in point of fact I do not find it remaining. When I stop thinking of objects, all thought ceases. The 'I' does not remain alone.

**M.** You are partly right. The intellectual and relative concept of 'I' as subject, does not exist apart from the other similar concept, the object. The subject and object appear together and disappear together. The first person, second person and third person all jump into and jump out of consciousness together. But is there no consciousness apart from these intellectual concepts?

**D.** I see none.

**M.** Did you have your intellect in deep sleep? That is, were you then perceiving, comparing and contrasting, remembering and judging things or objects?

**D.** No, there were no objects to think of and, no intellectual play at that time.

**M.** Yet as you already admitted, you felt happy, did you not?

**D.** Yes.

**M.** What is this general feeling, this happiness unrelated to any object or thought, this feeling or consciousness in which the intellect has no part? You have already found that the nature of 'I', the Self, is to be happy, and here you find happiness when you transcend the intellect. Can you therefore conclude that 'I', 'Self' and 'happiness' are one and the same thing, felt as one, though not intellectually perceived as one.

**D.** I am now convinced that it must be so, but I do not yet feel it clearly. I do not feel this unrelated or absolute happiness transcending the intellect.

**M.** That is because of the fact that it has long been your habit to think of and identify yourself with other objects and that you have never faced your 'I' in the above manner. You have always been exercising your intellect and never your intuition. If you now reverse your course and take to inward vision, shutting out all external images and falling back on intuitive feeling, in that dark chamber of your mind you will catch the true picture of yourself. This is the real, the realisation, the realizer or the Self — the One which words cannot describe and the mind cannot reach, and which is merely suggested by the term often used for describing it, namely *sat-chit-ananda*, that is, existence or reality, consciousness or illumination, and bliss.

**D.** Swami, now that you have disclosed this to me, is *jnana* attained by me?

**M.** No. You are just being enabled to prepare the intellectual foundation and to give the necessary turn to your will. What has

to be done is to *realize*. You have been supplied with a bottle of elixir or nectar (*amruta*), but you can get happiness only by the actual taste of it. It is only by realisation that it becomes firm or habitual, that is, that the old tendencies (*vasanas*) which draw you away into identifying yourself with what is unreal, what is not the Self, are extinguished, leaving you really free and unencumbered by the non-Self. This enduring freedom or perpetual realization (in which time itself sinks back as unreal) is called *moksha*, salvation or release.

**D.** Is this salvation or enlightenment (*jnana*) instantaneous or gradual?

**M.** Time is taken to prepare the intellectual basis on the strength of which intuition is formed. Such time may be of varying lengths in various cases. But the intuition which is realisation, is something to which time does not apply. Realisation of the Self and consciousness of time are like wax and water. There is no sense of time in *samadhi*. What is regarded as either quick or delayed realisation (*jnana*) is really the quickness or delay in the preparation leading to realisation — not in the realisation itself.

**D.** Is it not necessary to study the Vedas or at least the *Prasthanatraya* (the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Dasopanishad* and *Brahma Sutras*, all with commentaries) to ensure firm realisation?

**M.** No. Do you need all that to see yourself? All that is intellectual wealth, useful in explaining doubts and difficulties if others raise them or if you yourself encounter them in the course of thinking. But to

attain realisation, all that is not necessary. You want fresh water to drink, but you do not require all the water of the river Ganges to quench your thirst.

**D.** What is the exact attitude of the *mukta*, the one who has attained realisation? Is he aware that he has realised and is a perfect *jnani*, that he has been released from the bondage of ignorance or *samsara*, that he is God or the Self or all the *triputi* (the triad of seer, seen and seeing), that he is the one thing that is real and that all these phenomena are unreal.

**M.** These are all intellectual concepts. No concept is realisation. You must leave the intellect behind and be firm in intuition of the Self. None of these concepts are required even as aids for ensuring firmness, once perfect realisation is attained. A man does not go on saying to himself, "I am a man, I am free, I am conscious", and so on. Realisation is simple consciousness and is not complicated by thoughts like these.

**D.** Is non-duality (*advaita*) alone the Truth then? Are dualism (*dvaita*) and modified monism (*visishtadvaita*) wrong at the time of realisation? From that point of view, does not the *jnani* realise the unity of being?

**M.** He does and does not realise unity. *Advaita*, *dvaita* and *visishtadvaita* represent the attitude of the individual before he realises. These are also intellectual concepts. In realisation there is no such thing as number experienced, that is there is no contrast of unity and plurality. These quarrels of one and many are outside realisation.

**D.** Is not the reality only one?

**M.** The scriptures say of it, *Yatho vacho*

*nivartante aprapya manasa saha* (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2-9-1), that is, that the mind and speech retire from it baffled. Why then should you impose mental concepts upon it?

**D.** But do not the scriptures contradict themselves by adding, *Manasa eva boddhavyam* (by the mind alone it is to be known)<sup>1</sup> and do they not describe that state as *prajnana ghanam* (awareness absolute)?

**M.** The term 'mind' (*manas*) there means the mind which is transformed by realisation into That (*tadakara*). The terms 'tat' (that), 'wisdom', 'consciousness' and so on, are used since they are the nearest approach to That.

**D.** In the scriptures a table is given showing the ratio or proportion which each kind of happiness or pleasure bears to other kinds, and this realisation is the twelfth in that series. Does not this show that this realisation (*Swarupananda* or *Brahmananda* as it is called there) is relative? It is only a billion billion times a student's happiness. Can this be termed absolute?

**M.** Commentators say that the word too is *upalakshana* (an approximation). What is meant is that the state of realisation is infinitely happy when compared to the unit which is a student's happiness. There is no comparison between one and infinity. The infinite is the Absolute, alike in point of happiness, knowledge, power and so on.

**D.** Should not the *jnani* do good deeds (*karmas*) even after *jnana* or realisation?

<sup>1</sup> Compare with *Katha Upanishad*, 2-1-11.

**M.** This question shows that what was said above about realisation (*jnana*) has not been comprehended. To the *jnani* there is nothing but *jnana*. Action (*karma*), which implies change, plurality, doership and so on, exists only in the intellectual and physical fields.

**D.** But when a person, who is a combination of spirit and a particular body, proceeds by enquiry (*vichara*) and attains realisation (*jnana*), will not the body of that person go on doing work even after realisation as a result of previous *karma*?

**M.** From the point of view of the *jnani*, there was never any bondage (*bandha*) or release (*moksha*), never any body nor any action (*karma*). From the standpoint of the spectator, a body is seen going on doing work in accordance with the tendencies (*vasanas*) operating on it. What is destiny (*prarabdha*)? The arrow which is loosed from the bow, is proceeding straight to hit its mark. But since the *jnani* feels that there was never a bow or an arrow, where is the mark yet to be hit?

**D.** But we see the arrow moving.

**M.** Then to your sight there is *prarabdha*. What meaning does *prarabdha* have, however, except to one who knows it or its effect? That body which you see is not the *jnani*; it is his former or cast off slough. The serpent's slough (*ahinirvayani*) may be blown about by the wind, but the serpent itself is free, happy and unaffected.

**D.** But cannot all this *karma* and these *vasanas* be destroyed by realisation?

**M.** To the *jnani* they never existed, and hence there is no meaning in suggesting to him that they should be destroyed.

**D.** But for one's practice, is it not legitimate for one to pray to God to remove one's *karma* or to counteract it, and to hasten one's attainment of *moksha*?

**M.** It is legitimate. As long as you feel that you are different from the higher powers, pray to them; as long as you feel that there are burdens on you, pray in respect of them. But better still, attain *prapatti* (the state of self-surrender) and entrust your entire burden to the Lord, who will then take the burden off your back and give you the feeling that you are in Him and are one with Him.

**D.** Swami, some say that change or activity of the body, senses and mind are obstacles to *samadhi*, while others say that it need not be so. Which of them is right?

**M.** Both are right. In *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* the mind is temporarily lulled into inaction, but it is not yet dead. It is in *laya* and not in *nasa*. Therefore when objects are in contact with the body and senses or when the mind is otherwise exercised, his thin thread of *samadhi* snaps off. But in the case of the perfect *samadhi* known as *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*, the *samadhi* state has become permanent and part of one's nature. Objects may be in contact with his body and senses, and his mind may also be working, yet his *samadhi* remains undisturbed. How is this possible? An analogy will illustrate it. A boy goes to sleep without taking food. Being a heavy sleeper, after much trouble he is roused just

sufficiently to swallow some food. He is hardly conscious of eating then, and has no recollection of it after he wakes up in the morning. Again, take the case of our usual bullockcart drivers. They sleep while seated or lying in the cart, but the bulls take the cart right on to the

destination. In both these cases, sleep rendered the boy or man oblivious of the motion of the body. In the case of *sahaja samadhi*, what renders the possessor of the body oblivious of its motion or change is the intoxication of Consciousness-Bliss.

### ONLY HE IS: NONE ELSE IS.

By Swami Vivekananda

Every ounce of fame can only be bought at the cost of a pound of peace and holiness. I never thought of that before. I have become entirely disgusted with this blazoning. I am disgusted with myself. Lord will show me the way to peace and purity. Why, Mother, I confess to you: no man can live in an atmosphere of public life, even in religion, without the devil of competition now and then thrusting his head into the serenity of his heart. Those who are trained to preach a *doctrine* never feel it, for they never knew *religion*. But those that are after God, and not after the world, feel at once that every bit of name and fame is at the cost of their purity. It is so much gone from that ideal of perfect *unselfishness*, perfect disregard of gain or name or fame. Lord help me.

Pray for me, Mother. I am very much disgusted with myself. Oh, why the world be so that one cannot do anything without putting himself to the front; why cannot one act hidden and unseen and unnoticed? The world has not gone one step beyond idolatry yet. They cannot act from ideas, they cannot be led by ideas. But they want the person, the man. And any man that wants to do something must pay the penalty — no hope. This nonsense of the world. Shiva, Shiva, Shiva.

Mother, there is God. There all the saints, prophets and incarnations meet. Beyond the Babel of Bibles and Vedas, creeds and crafts, dupes and doctrines — where is all light, all love, where the miasma of this earth can never reach. Ah! Who will take me thither? Do you sympathise with me, Mother? My soul is groaning now under the hundred sorts of bondage I am placing on it. Whose India? Who cares? Everything is His. What are we? Is He dead? Is He sleeping? He, without whose command a leaf does not fall, a heart does not beat, who is nearer to me than my own self. It is bosh and nonsense — to do good or do bad or do fuzz. We do nothing. We are not. The world is not. He is, He is. None else is. He is.

Om, the One without a second. He in me, I in Him. I am like a bit of glass in an ocean of light. I am not, I am not. He is, He is, He is.

Om, the One without a second.

— From his letter to Mrs. G.W. Hale written in 1894.

# Vivekachudamani of Shankaracharya

## INTRODUCTION

By Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

*Sri Bhagavan translated the Vivekachudamani of Shankaracharya into Tamil prose while he was still living at the Virupaksha Cave. He also wrote an introduction to it.*

*A translation of the introduction is presented here.*

EVERY being in the world yearns to be always happy and free from the taint of sorrow, and desires to get rid of bodily ailments, which are not of its true nature. Further, everyone cherishes the greatest love for himself, and this love is not possible in the absence of happiness. In deep sleep, though devoid of everything, one has the experience of being happy. Yet, due to the ignorance of the real nature of one's own being, which is happiness itself, people flounder in the vast ocean of material existence, forsaking the right path that leads to happiness, and act under the mistaken belief that the way to be happy consists in obtaining the pleasures of this and the other world.

Unfortunately, however, there is no such happiness which has not the taint of sorrow. It is precisely for the purpose of pointing out the straight path to true happiness that Lord Siva, taking on the guise of Sri Shankaracharya, wrote the commentaries on the Triple Canon (*Prasthanam Traya*) of the *Vedanta*, which extols the excellence of this bliss; and that he demonstrated it

by his own example in life. These commentaries, however, are of little use to those ardent seekers who are intent upon realizing the bliss of Liberation but have not the scholarship necessary for studying them.

It is for such as these that Sri Shankara revealed the essence of the commentaries in this short treatise, *The Crown-gem of Discrimination*, explaining in detail the points that have to be grasped by those who seek Liberation, and thereby directing them to the true and direct path.

Sri Shankara begins by observing that it is hard indeed to attain human birth, and that, having attained it, one should strive to achieve the bliss of Liberation, which is really only the nature of one's being. By *jnana* or spiritual knowledge alone is this

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Bliss to be realized, and *jnana* is achieved only through *vichara* or steady enquiry. In order to learn this method of enquiry, says Sri Shankara, one should seek the grace of a Guru; and he then proceeds to describe the qualities of the Guru and his disciple and how the latter should approach and serve his master. He further emphasizes that in order to realize the bliss of Liberation one's own individual effort is an essential factor. Mere book-learning never yields this bliss; it can be realized only through Self-enquiry or *vichara*, which consists of *sravana* or devoted attention to the precepts of the Guru, *manana* or deep contemplation and *nidhidhyasana* or the cultivation of equanimity in the Self.

The three bodies, physical, subtle, and causal, are non-self and are unreal. The Self, that is the *Aham* or 'I' is quite different from them. It is due to ignorance that the sense of Self or the 'I' notion is foisted on that

which is not Self, and this indeed is bondage. Since from ignorance arises bondage, from Knowledge ensues liberation. To know this from the Guru is *sravana*.

The process of *manana*, which is subtle enquiry or deep contemplation, consists in rejecting the three bodies consisting of the five sheaths (physical, vital, mental, intellectual, and blissful), as not 'I' and discovering through subtle enquiry of 'Who am I?' that which is different from all three and exists single and universal in the heart as *Aham* or 'I', just as a stalk of grass is delicately drawn out from its sheath. This 'I' is denoted by the word *tvam* (in the scriptural dictum '*Tat-tvam-asi*', That thou art).

The world of name and form is but an adjunct of *Tat* or Brahman and, having no separate reality, is rejected as reality and affirmed as nothing else but Brahman. The

instruction of the disciple by the Guru in the *Mahavakya* 'Tat tvam asi', which declares the identity of the Self and the Supreme, is this *upadesa* (spiritual guidance). The disciple is then enjoined to remain in the beatific state of *Aham-Brahman*, (I—the Absolute). Nevertheless, the old tendencies of the mind sprout up thick and strong and constitute an obstruction. These tendencies are threefold and ego is their root. The ego flourishes in the externalized and differentiating consciousness caused by the forces of projection due to *rajas* and veiling due to *tamas*.

To fix the mind firmly in the heart until these forces are destroyed and to awaken with unswerving, ceaseless vigilance the true and cognate tendency which is characteristic of the *Atman* and is expressed by sayings: '*Aham Brahmasmi*' (I am Brahman), and '*Brahmaivaham*' (Brahman alone am I) is termed *nidhidhyasana* or *Atmanusandhana*, that is constancy in the Self. This is otherwise called *bhakti*, *yoga* and *dhyana*.

*Atmanusandhana* has been compared to churning curds in order to make butter, the mind being compared to the churn, the heart to the curds, and the practice of concentration on the Self to the process of churning. Just as butter is made by churning the curds and fire by friction, so the natural and changeless state of *nirvikalpa samadhi* is produced by unswerving vigilant concentration on the Self, ceaseless like the unbroken flow of oil. This readily and spontaneously yields that direct, immediate, unobstructed, and universal perception of Brahman,

which is at once knowledge and experience and which transcends time and space.

This perception is Self-realization. Achieving it cuts the knot of the heart. The false delusions of ignorance, the vicious and age-long tendencies of the mind which constitute this knot are destroyed. All doubts are dispelled and the bondage of *karma* is severed.

Thus in this crown-gem of discrimination has Sri Shankara described *samadhi* or spiritual trance which is the limitless Bliss of Liberation, beyond doubt and duality, and at the same time has indicated the means for its attainment. To attain this state of freedom from duality is the real purpose of life, and only he who has done so is a *jivanmukta*, liberated while yet alive, not one who has a mere theoretical understanding of what constitutes *purushartha* or the desired end and aim of human endeavour.

Thus defining a *jivanmukta*, Sri Shankara declares him to be free from the bonds of threefold karma (*sanchita*, *agami* and *prarabdha*). The disciple attains this state and then relates his personal experience. He who is liberated is indeed free to act as he pleases, and when he leaves the body, he abides in Liberation and never returns to this birth, which is death.

Sri Shankara thus describes Realization, that is Liberation, as twofold, *Jivanmukti* and *Videhamukti*, as explained above. Moreover, in this short treatise, written in the form of a dialogue between a Guru and his disciple, he has considered many other relevant topics.



# A Story from *Srimad Bhagavatam*

(Book X, Chapter IV)

## LORD KRISHNA MANIFESTS HIS DIVINITY TO BRAHMA

**W**HEN in time Krishna had become a well-grown youth, he used to go out with other shepherd boys of his own age to play and also to tend the cattle in the neighbouring pasture ground of Sri Vrindavana. While the cattle grazed in the pasture, the boys would play together.

Once after their usual play they sat down to partake of the lunch which they had brought with them. To their surprise they suddenly saw that the whole herd of cattle was missing. All the boys except Krishna were much troubled, but Krishna told them they were not to worry but to finish their lunch, and that in the meantime he would find the cattle.

Now Brahma, the Creator, who had stolen the herd of cattle to test the divine power of Sri Krishna, took this opportunity to steal the shepherd boys also, as soon as Krishna had left them to go in search of the cattle. Brahma imprisoned the boys, together with the cattle, in a mountain cave, where by his divine power he kept them sleeping and unconscious.

Krishna searched everywhere for the cattle but could not find them. Then, disappointed, he came back, only to discover that the boys also were missing. Realizing that all this must be someone's mischievous trick, and being curious to know the truth of the matter, he soon found through meditation and divine insight, that it was all a gay prank of Brahma to test his divinity. At this, Krishna smiled to himself, and thought it a good occasion to teach Brahma a lesson. He therefore left the boys and cattle in the care of Brahma, and

out of himself created as many more boys and cattle, with the forms and characteristics of their originals. Then he returned home with his mind-born boys and cattle. The parents saw no change. The mothers as usual kissed their boys. The cattle were housed in their respective places.

Now, as before, Krishna went out every day to the pasture with the mind-born boys and cattle and played in the fields. No change was noticed by anyone, except that the mothers felt a greater love for their sons. Before, they had loved Krishna more than their own boys; but now they loved them all equally, and the very sight of their children gave them that highest bliss which comes only to him who realizes the presence of the blissful Self, or the God of Love. Truly has it been said, "None loves the children for the sake of children, but for the divine Self that is in the children." The mothers were not conscious that Krishna had become their sons, but in their heart of hearts they felt his divinity within each child. Indeed Krishna is the Soul of all souls, the Self of all selves, with whom all souls are eternally united. In reality it is Krishna who has become all beings. He has become, indeed, the whole universe.

This play of Krishna in many forms continued for about a year. Then one day Brahma came to visit Krishna. He was surprised to see all the shepherd boys and also the cattle, for he was sure that by his own divine *maya* they had been kept asleep and unconscious in the cave of the mountain. Brahma pondered within himself; then suddenly a new vision opened up before him. Looking at all the boys and the cattle, he saw that they were all Krishna. He looked about him and saw Krishna in each form in the universe, Krishna in all beings and things. He saw Krishna as the light of all lights, the revealer of the whole universe, and knew that everything was He. He then lost his outer consciousness, and, absorbed in the deepest contemplation, he found himself one with Krishna. Brahma now realized that Krishna, the Lord of the universe who is One without a second, who is the divine Self in all beings, was playing his divine play in human form as Krishna the man. He realized Krishna as God, the Lord of the universe.

Brahma then offered this prayer to Sri Krishna:

Lord, thou art formless, infinite, blissful existence;  
 Yet thou hast assumed this form  
 To gladden the hearts of thy devotees  
 And so shower thy mercy upon them.  
 Thy form is indeed pure *sattva*.

Blessed indeed are those  
 Who art not concerned about philosophy, or doctrines,  
 But who live and follow thy life-giving words;

For such pure ones alone find thee,  
Who art beyond thought.

O thou infinite,  
Thou art both personal and impersonal.  
Incomprehensible is thy true being —  
Yet, again, comprehended and realized art thou  
By those who control their outgoing senses  
And become absorbed in deepest contemplation of thee.

Thou art blissful, unfading, eternal.  
Thou art the light of all lights,  
Pure, absolute.  
Those whose divine sight is clear  
Find thee within themselves:  
Loosed are they from the wheel of birth and death.

As in darkness we fancy a rope to be a snake,  
So in ignorance do we mistake the all-pervading Brahman for the  
world we see;

But as light dispels the darkness  
And the rope is seen as a rope,  
So with the rising of the sun of knowledge  
The phantasmal world vanishes,  
And thou art revealed — the true Brahman.

Thou art the Atman, the divine Self;  
Not without do the wise seek thee, but within,  
For thou art present in the hearts of all.

Knowledge brings freedom,  
But the mere intellect gives no knowledge of thee.  
Those who devote themselves to thy service  
Come to know thee through thy grace.  
May I be even the least of thy devotees,  
And may I devote my life to thy service alone!

Blessed indeed are the shepherd boys and girls,  
 For they love thee as their very own,  
 Thee, the eternal, infinite Brahman.  
 They that serve thee with whole-souled devotion  
 Enjoy thy bliss with their whole being  
 The *Vedas* only tell of thee;  
 Thy devotees behold thee.

O Krishna, thou art the friend of the destitute.  
 Thou art unborn, eternal;  
 Yet thou hast assumed this human form  
 For the good of all,  
 That all may taste of thy heavenly bliss.

Attachment and delusion bind a man only so long  
 As he fails to take shelter at thy Lotus Feet.

Thus singing the praises of Krishna, Brahma brought back the shepherd boys and the cattle. Then Brahma returned to his heaven, and Krishna played with his friends.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA ON SRI KRISHNA

**Sri Krishna was bent on account of His ecstatic love. His body was bent in three places owing to His love for Radha. That is how some people explain Sri Krishna's form. Do you know why He has a deep-blue complexion? And why He is of such small stature — only three and a half cubits measured by His own hand? God looks so long as He is seen from a distance. So the water of the ocean looks blue from afar. But if you go near the ocean and take the water in your hand, you will no longer find it blue; it will be very clear, transparent. So the sun appears small because it is very far away; if you go near it, you will no longer find it small. When one knows the true nature of God, He appears neither blue nor small. But that is a far-off vision: one does not see it except in *samadhi*. As long as 'I' and 'you' exist, name and form will also exist. Everything is God's *lila*, His sportive pleasure. As long as a man is conscious of 'I' and 'you', he will experience the manifestations of God through diverse forms.**

— *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.*

## A Hindu Saint: A Sign to Indian Christians

Laurence Freeman

*Christianity in India is beginning to meet Hinduism at a deeper level. The story of Ramana Maharshi shows what is at stake in the encounter. It is unfolded here by a Benedictine monk of Cockfosters monastery in London who directs the international centre of the World Community for Christian Meditation.*

THE greatest sage of twentieth-century India is Ramana Maharshi. His story shows how Indian religious experience is a unity across a spectrum ranging from the devotional to the mystical.

Born Venkataraman, in a small town in Tamil Nadu on 29 December 1879, Ramana Maharshi went to the American Mission High School, where he absorbed a basic knowledge of Christianity though he preferred football, wrestling and swimming to study. The only exceptional qualities people noticed in him were his extraordinarily retentive memory and capacity for deep sleep. Venkataraman's family was middle class, happy and relatively well-to-do. His father died when he was 12 and the children went to live with their uncle.

One day when he was 17 a sudden violent fear of death overcame him. So sure was he that he was going to die that his mind

was driven silently inward. He dramatized death by lying on the floor with his limbs stretched stiff and by holding his breath. "I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit." All this, he said years later, was not dull thought but flashed through him as living truth which he perceived directly, "almost without thought-process."

From that moment his fear of death evaporated and his absorption in the true Self continued unbroken until his death in 1950. He had passed beyond duality, the sense of separateness and opposition which is inherent in daily mental consciousness.

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(The introductory remarks are by the Editor of *The Tablet*.)

Six weeks later, realizing that his new life could not be lived where he was, he wrote a note to inform his family that "I have set out in quest of my Father in accordance with his command." Then he borrowed a few rupees and took the train to Tiruvannamalai, south of Madras, one of the holy towns of southern India and the home of Siva and his consort Parvati, at the foot of the holy mountain of Arunachala.

It was Arunachala which drew the young Ramana there by the same power which awakened an attraction to it when he first heard its name. He settled first in the great temple to Siva at the foot of Arunachala, renounced his remaining possessions — he never touched money again — and removed his sacred *brahmin* thread, thus renouncing his caste status. He spent six months in a tiny underground shrine in the temple grounds, his needs cared for by temple devotees, until he later removed himself to a cave on the mountain.

In the West by this time the young swami would have already been institutionalised and heavily medicated. But on Arunachala the experience he had embodied was recognised as authentic, and pilgrims and devotees flocked to him for his *darshan*: the grace of his presence. He was discovered by his family, and his mother and brother moved there to administer the ashram that soon grew up around him. He performed no miracles, wrote nothing except a few devotional hymns, gave no lectures. The most powerful effect he had on people was through silence. He taught no patented methods of self-realisation except the way of self-enquiry. When he spoke it was simply to

remind the questioner to find out who was asking the question. The French Benedictine monk Abhishiktananda, co-founder of Shantivanam ashram, visited and left a moving record of the experience.

Ramana Maharshi accepted no disciples because, from his vision of non-duality, there was no distinction between himself and others. He was a gurus' guru, making no capital of his own experience or personality but remaining totally true to his Self. His responses to questions were scrupulously recorded and show a faultless harmony of humour, intelligence, compassion and humanity.

The great and the ordinary visited him — and sometimes deliberately avoided him. Carl Jung wrote of him: "He is genuine and, in addition to that, something quite phenomenal. In India he is the whitest spot in a white space." But Jung admitted that he chose not to visit him while he was in India because he feared the experience would derail his evolving theory of the psyche.

How does the story of Ramana Maharshi help us to understand India and the challenges facing Indian Christianity today? First, it points to an archetypal experience which Sri Ramana embodied but which can be seen also in the lives of Christian saints. There is an intriguing parallel here with St Benedict, who also abandoned the world as a child to become a hermit and, later, the heart of a community. Or with St Catherine of Siena, who withdrew dramatically from her family life as a young girl to concentrate on her overwhelming experience of the Divine. Above all, Ramana teaches us the priority of inner experience in Indian spirituality.

The Ramana Ashram is now administered hospitably and reverently and visited by pilgrims from every part of the world. It is eminently sane, balanced and well-managed. The attraction of the ashram remains what it was when Ramana was visible: a pure, direct and inwardly overwhelming experience of real presence, of exceptional bliss and plenitude.

Most Indian Christians, however, have never even heard of Sri Ramana Maharshi, though there are streets named after him in most Indian cities, and would be deeply shocked to hear him compared with Christian saints. It was not so long ago that they were told that Hindus were devil-worshippers and even taught to spit when passing a temple. Among many ordinary Christians in India there remains a deep fear and ignorance of their country's spiritual culture.

This Western, isolationist and exclusivist conditioning makes Indian Christians strangers in their own land. Modern changes of approach in Christian formation and catechetics remain largely superficial, even nominal. Seminaries are full but even their rectors and spiritual directors express concern at the students' lack of interest in the spiritual, experiential dimension of their studies. Indian priests and sisters, like Western missionaries, exchange stories about former Hindu students who respect them for their charitable labours but have never thought of them or other Christians as spiritual teachers.

A limited and controlled earthing of the Gospel in the local culture has become respectable and inter-faith dialogue is

encouraged by Rome. At least you would think so, by speaking to theologians and other Christian intellectuals, but it is not borne out in conversation with most clergy or laity or by a visit to any church. There is still, in the Catholic Church of India (in addition to its deep faith and selfless service of the poor and marginalised) a spiritual insecurity and excessive institutional fear. In relation to secular politics there is a similar caution. The Conference of Catholic Bishops has never yet commented on the violent Hindu-Muslim divide in the country which is the most serious threat to national unity.

However isolated it may be from India, Indian Christianity gives the appearance of being well-established. That is perhaps why it is so reluctant to risk real change. But the very idea of Indian Christianity may not be as secure and culturally insulated as Christian leaders like to think. If Christian faith and institutions could disintegrate so rapidly in the West under the forces of materialism, will they be more resistant to these same forces now being unleashed in India? Is the Christian experience deep enough, interior enough, in India to survive?

Experience and enthusiasm there is in abundance in many Indian churches but it is concentrated at one end of the spiritual spectrum. Thus, one of the largest Catholic churches in Bombay attracts enormous crowds of Hindus because of its devotions to Mary. Around the church stall-holders sell plastic models of legs, hearts, and arms for offering when praying for a physical cure. At Pota, in Kerala, a huge charismatic healing centre attracts Christian retreats and

pilgrimages from all parts of the country in tens of thousands. Here the search for the wondrous and miraculous is as intense as among popular Hinduism.

Kerala is India's most Christian state (nearly a quarter of the population). With Goa, it provides the religious and clergy who serve most of India's Catholics and now even the mission fields of the West. But the Catholic Church in Kerala has for years been beset by internal feuds over the precedence of its different rites and over property disputes. The rise of the charismatic movement is interpreted by many as a kind of religious desertion in reaction to the turbulence of ecclesiastical politics.

Yet, however colourful and intense their devotions to Mary, the Sacred Heart, the Infant of Prague or St Anthony, Christian churches in India cannot rival the sheer exuberance and carnival atmosphere of the Hindu temples such as the Siva temple at Tiruvannamalai where the young Ramana took refuge. There you find a religion of total sensory bombardment: traders in beads, incense and offerings; elephants; glistening oil-soaked statues and *linga*; loud music; crowds flowing from one shrine to the next for its *pujas* (rituals).

India simultaneously sustains a vast breadth of experience in many dimensions, from the sensory to the imperceptible. Arunachala — to take it as a symbol of Indian religion — is the icon of silence, the profoundest, most universal interiority. Yet at the same time and without contradiction it is the temple of devotional worship in which no god would ever be refused a shrine.

The depth of Indian spiritual experience is radically linked to this breadth of religious tolerance. Hindu fundamentalism is, therefore, more than any other form of religious intolerance, a self-contradiction.

A Christianity that could justly be called Indian would have to show a continuous way of spiritual progress from the temple to the mountain, from devotionism to meditation. Christianity in India, however, is Western and conceptual, not experiential; and the Catholic Church is overwhelmingly Roman with a centralising authority and emphasis on dogma foreign to the Indian spirit. Where the Anglican tradition stemming from the British Empire retains a tiny band of social and religious respectability, the Catholics broaden the band to embrace charismatic forms of religious experience. But the central Indian experience of spiritual transcendence, of *advaita* or non-duality, the stillness of inner awakening that calls the universe to attention, and which is the underlying unity of humanity, is rarely felt, and even more rarely encouraged among Indian Christians.

The revival of the Christian contemplative tradition which is silently transforming Western Christianity, particularly among the laity, is just beginning to stir in India. Small Christian meditation groups are forming and a recent seminar of meditation teachers in Bangalore concluded with great promise and enthusiasm. And there are centers, ashrams like Shantivanam, where this deeper spiritual life of Christian faith is being lived and taught. But these ashrams were pioneered not by Indian but by immigrant Christians, the luminous new missionaries of unity such as Henri le Saux



and Bede Griffiths. Now their generation has passed and the Christian ashram movement in India is confused and doubtful about its identity and purpose.

In any case Christianity in India is centred in churches not ashrams and any thought for the future spiritual deepening of Christianity must take that into account. There could be a national educational campaign among Indian Christians to familiarize them with the scriptures and beliefs of their own culture; a liberation of religious life from canonical restraints in order truly to earth it in Indian culture, releasing it to be both apostolic and contemplative; a revision of seminary and novitiate training to recognize the priority of spirituality in Indian religious consciousness; and the encouragement of small Christian meditation groups, led by laity, religious and clergy in parishes and institutions, to act as a leaven of interiority.

India — and Sri Ramana Maharshi — teaches the world that depth of experience requires breadth of tolerance. This depth and breadth of spiritual life is exemplified by Jesus, who fulfilled his own religious tradition and rose into a life-giving Spirit for all humanity. It is a great challenge to Christianity anywhere today to make the necessary distinction between the uniqueness it claims and the intolerance it must shun — and nowhere is the potential reward greater than in India.

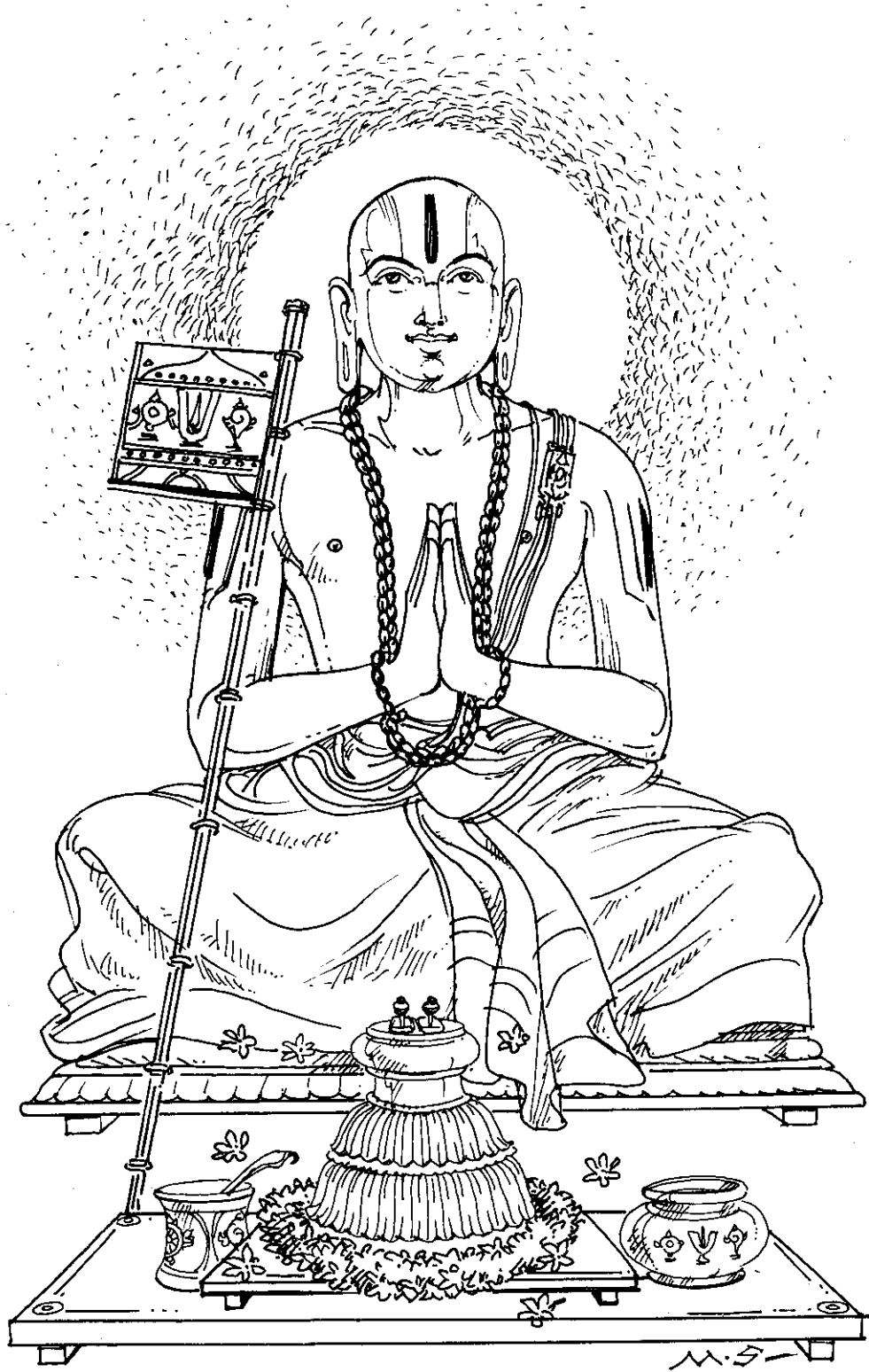
Two seeds of hope suggest it is a development worth waiting and hoping for. First, Christianity in India is small, giving it the potential both for flexibility and unity. Secondly, the Indianisation of Christianity does not require a naïve

**He who has his mind in check  
Needs no aid of incantations;  
He who knows the body from the Self  
Needs no penance to perform;  
He who realises Thee as all  
Need not pass through the stages of life;  
He who shuns all evil passions  
His past or future need not mind.**

— *Tyagaraja.*

rejection of all Western influence: the association of Christianity with Western thought and political process has its usefulness, for these are central movements in the rapid modernisation of India. No one could doubt the value of democracy, for example, having seen the dignity bestowed on the poorest and most underprivileged human being in the most desolate village by the right to vote. With that right he or she ceases to be a statistic and begins to be transformed into a person. In a land where life is cheap — in rural Bihar more than 1 in 10 infants die, and across the country thousands have been killed in religious riots — democratic politics and a free press at least affirm, if they do not yet protect, the value of each person.

Christianity in India has long and bravely witnessed through its social work to the absolute value of each human life. The story of Ramana Maharshi shows in what that value consists spiritually, in terms of ultimate human significance. On the day Indian Christians can revere and understand the experience of Ramana Maharshi, India and the Church will both be changed.



# Ramanuja: His Life and Philosophy

By Raman

**R**AMANUJA, the eminent philosopher and saint who lived in South India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was an able organiser of temple rituals as well. The elaborate and rigorous system of rituals which he established is still followed in temples dedicated to Vishnu. The cult of *bhakti* which he advocated had a decisive influence on the North also. This made him an all-India figure.

Thanks to his energetic and selfless work Sri *Vaishnavites* (those devoted to Vishnu) could have an identity of their own and stay united in a common bond of devotion to Vishnu. Doctrinally they owe their allegiance to Ramanuja. This is still so, in spite of the schism that developed in the post-Ramanuja years and led to the formation of two groups (of *Vaishnavites*) known as the *Thenkalais* and *Vadakalais*.

Ramanuja retains, to this day, his wide popularity. He has a status of his own as an influential thinker in the religious scene of India.

Ramanuja's chief contribution to *Vedantic* thought is his systematic exposition of the doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism). His system upholds belief in the supremacy of the personal God Vishnu or Narayana. Narayana is identified with Brahman of the *Upanishads*.

Taking into account the historical circumstances *Vishishtadvaita* may be said to reflect partially the mood of the times, or rather the reaction and protest by some against the uncompromisingly absolutist philosophy of Shankara, equating the *jiva* and Brahman.

There is a tendency on the part of some people to identify *Vedanta* exclusively with *Advaita*. This is not fair, mainly for the reason that *Vishishtadvaita* has its own claims as a *Vedantic* school of philosophy. Just like *Advaita*, it is based on the primacy of the *prastanatraya* (*Upanishads*, *Vedanta Sutras*, and *Gita*).

The same argument holds good for *dvaita* and other systems which have the *prastanatraya* as their foundation.

In this connection the views of Swami Vivekananda should guide us.

He says:

We find that a Shankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhvacharya, or a Vallabhacharya, or a Chaitanya — anyone who wanted to propound a new sect — had to take up these three systems (the *Upanishads*, the *Vyasa Sutras*, and the *Gita*) and write only a new commentary on them. Therefore it would be wrong to confine the word *Vedanta* only to one system which has arisen out of

the *Upanishads*.... The infinite oneness of the soul is the eternal sanction of all morality, that you and I are not only brothers — every literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom has preached that for you — but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian Philosophy.

### Life of Ramanuja

Ramanuja, or Ramanujacharya, also known as Yatiraja, Bhashyakara and Ilayaperumal, was born the son of Asuri Kesava Dikshita and Kantimati. The generally accepted tradition is that Ramanuja lived between 1017-1137. This means that he had a life-span of one hundred and twenty years. There is also another view that his life-span was only 80. The date assigned on this basis is 1077-1157. Kesava Dikshita was an expert in the performance of *Vedic* rituals and was conferred the title *Sarvkratu*.

Ramanuja was born at Sriperumbudur, a village situated about 30 miles to the southwest of Madras (Chennai).

Ramanuja was a precocious child. He was well up in all studies. He felt attracted to pious and holy persons. This was a special trait in him from early years. He felt specially attracted to Kanchipurna (Tirukachinambi), a great devotee of Lord Narayana. Kanchipurna used to go by walk to Kanchipuram daily from his native village of Poonamallee. Hence in order to have *darshan* of Lord Varadaraja he used to pass through Sriperumbudur. Kanchipurna belonged to a low caste. Nevertheless Ramanuja revered him greatly

and once fed him to a sumptuous lunch at his house.

Ramanuja married Rakshambal, an exceedingly good-looking girl, at the age of sixteen. Soon after this happy event Ramanuja's father passed away. The family then moved to Kanchipuram. This was to help Ramanuja pursue higher studies. Of course Ramanuja had studied Sanskrit and the Veda under his father. He had already attained high proficiency in these subjects.

Yadavaprakasa a reputed philosopher, was then living in Kanchipuram. He was considered an authority on *Advaita Vedanta*. Ramanuja joined him as a student. Soon Ramanuja became the favourite student of Yadavaprakasa. The teacher was impressed by the bright appearance of the student, his talents, attentiveness in studies and in general, amenability to all the discipline expected to be observed by a student.

(It appears that the school of philosophy propounded by Yadavaprakasa was akin to that of *Bheda-abheda*. It was not identical with the philosophy of Shankara.)

Ramanuja was deeply committed to the path of devotion — that is devotion to a personal God. This appeared to come into conflict with the concept of the formless God as postulated by his teacher. This led to difference of opinion between them. The traditional story is that Yadavaprakasa grew jealous of Ramanuja. He is stated to have apprehended the possibility of Ramanuja becoming the head of a rival school. He felt that such a development should be guarded against.

Activated by such motivation Yadavaprakasa is stated to have conspired

at the murder of Ramanuja. With this purpose in mind he planned a journey to Kashi, the holy city, along with other disciples. Ramanuja would be murdered at a convenient point on the way. A long journey would provide an excellent opportunity for accomplishing this.

At a point on the journey Ramanuja is stated to have received advance information about the plot against him. He escaped from the travelling party. He almost lost his way. He could not pursue his journey in full. It seems that a hunter and his wife happened to meet him at this critical juncture. They led him to a good well with a supply of fresh water. Ramanuja refreshed himself. But when Ramanuja looked for the hunter couple, they had vanished!

He did not know where exactly he was. Consulting a passer-by he learnt to his surprise that he was near his own town of Kanchipuram!

Ramanuja now joined his relatives at Kanchipuram. Soon after, Yadavaprakasa also returned from his tour of the North. Ramanuja duly resumed his studies under his teacher, Yadavaprakasa. However the teacher and student could not get on well due to sharp differences on points of doctrine and the manner of interpretation of scriptural passages.

Yamunacharya (Alavandar), the leader of the *Vaishnava* community at Srirangam, had heard about Ramanuja for a long time and desired that he should take up the mantle of leadership from him. On hearing that Ramanuja had dissociated himself from Yadavaprakasa, he sent Mahapurna (Perianambi), his senior disciple to fetch

him urgently from Kanchipuram. The contingent reason behind this urgent summons was that he felt his own end was quite near.

Responding to the call of Yamunacharya Ramanuja proceeded to Srirangam in the company of Mahapurna. When they reached Srirangam they saw the funeral procession of Yamunacharya himself. This was too much of a shock for Ramanuja and he fell into a swoon. Recovering from the swoon Ramanuja went to have *darshan* of the body of the Acharya. He was amazed to find that three fingers of the right hand of the Acharya were folded. He felt that the phenomenon (of closed fingers) signified that the Acharya had left him some tasks for completion. Intuitively he felt that these tasks were:

- 1) Popularising the *Divyaprabandha*,
- 2) Writing a commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* of Badarayana, and
- 3) Perpetuating the memory of Parasara, the author of *Vishnupurana*.

He resolved to perform these tasks. As soon as he took a pledge to that effect, the Acharya's fingers resumed their normal position.

Soon after completion of the last rites of Yamunacharya, Ramanuja returned to Kanchipuram. He spent all his time in the service of Lord Varadaraja. He was constantly in the holy company of Kanchipurna. Ramanuja wanted Kanchipurna to be his spiritual teacher, but the latter declined to play that role. However Lord Varadaraja Himself gave the message to Kanchipurna that Mahapurna was to be the teacher of Ramanuja.

Receiving this gracious message of the Lord and keen to receive initiation from Mahapurna, Ramanuja proceeded to Srirangam.

Simultaneously, at the persuasion of the devotees and followers of Yamunacharya, Mahapurna himself started for Kanchipuram. It was the general feeling that in order to fill the void created by the passing away of Yamunacharya, Ramanuja should come to Srirangam for good and live there.

Without any kind of pre-planning Mahapurna and Ramanuja met at the Vishnu temple at Madurantakam. Mahapurna initiated Ramanuja into the *Vaishnava* order through the formal process known as imparting of *pancha samskara*.

Mahapurna and Ramanuja then proceeded to Kanchipuram. Here Ramanuja learnt from his master the four thousand and odd verses of *Vaishnava* scripture known as *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*.<sup>1</sup>

Now, Rakshambal, Ramanuja's wife was keen on observing caste restrictions. One day she chided Mahapurna's wife (of lower caste) for having spilt some water into her pot. On hearing this Mahapurna left for Srirangam without even informing Ramanuja. Ramanuja in turn got deeply offended and resolved to renounce the life of a householder. He could not put up with the insult administered to the wife of his guru.

With a view to avoid any interference from his wife to his plan to take *sannyasa*, Ramanuja adopted a ruse. He informed her that her sister's marriage was fixed and that

her assistance was required by her father. Rakshambal went away. Using this opportunity, Ramanuja took *sannyasa* as per his plan. Lord Varadaraja Himself was his guru. He assumed the *sannyasin* name of Yatiraja.

After becoming a *sannyasin* Ramanuja lived for sometime at Kanchipuram. Kuresa who had considerable scriptural learning became his disciple. His former teacher, Yadavaprakasa also became his disciple.

The circle of devotees at Srirangam was happy at the news of Ramanuja's assuming *sannyasa*. Once again they sent Mahapurna in order to persuade Ramanuja to come to Srirangam.

Reaching Srirangam, Ramanuja mastered a number of *Vaishnavite* texts under his master Mahapurna. The master, in order to complete the process of Ramanuja's absorption into *Vaishnavism*, advised him to go to Goshtipurna (Tirukoshtiyur Nambi) who was living at Tirukoshtiyur.

<sup>1</sup> The number of verses composed by the individual Azhwars are indicated (against each name):

Nammazhwar	... 1296
Poigai Azhwar	... 100
Bhutathazhwar	... 100
Peyazhwar	... 100
Tirumangai Azhwar	... 1136
Thondaradipodi Azhwar	... 65
Periazwhar	... 485
Andal	... 173
Kulasekara Azhwar	... 105
Tiruppanazhwar	... 105
Madhura Kavi Azhwar	... 216
Ramanuja <i>Nootrandadi</i>	... 108
<i>Upadesa Ratna Mala</i> of Manavala Mamuni	... 74
<i>Tiruvaimozhi Nootrandadi</i>	... 100

Ramanuja completed the study of many *Vaishnava* texts under Mahapurna. Mahapurna now desired that as the finale to all the process of his training in *Vaishnavism*, he should get his initiation into the *Vaishnava mantra*, the *ashtakshari*, by Tirukoshtiyur Nambi (who was living at Tirukoshtiyur). Accordingly he went there. The master however asked him to come sometime later. The next visit was ineffective and he did not get the cherished *mantra*. He was asked to come again. This went on no less than eighteen times.

At long last, Goshtipurna initiated Ramanuja into the *mantra*. His specific instruction to Ramanuja was that he should not divulge it to anyone.

However, Ramanuja, immediately went up the tower of the temple at Tirukoshtiyur. From the top of the tower he gave a clarion call to all devotees to assemble. He told them he would be giving all of them a priceless gem. Ramanuja then pronounced the *mantra* (which was expected to be cherished as a secret) in public, requesting all those assembled to repeat it thrice along with him.

Goshtipurna, the master, was furious with Ramanuja for having defied his specific instructions. In all humility Ramanuja submitted that the *mantra* being very powerful, would prove a blessing to all. It would be a great thing indeed if such a vast number of people were saved — even if it meant his going to hell, for his acting against the wishes of the guru.

Goshtipurna was impressed by this large-heartedness of Ramanuja. He prostrated before Ramanuja, recognising his stature.

Subsequently also he received further training on a comprehensive scale on all aspects of the *Vaishnava* tradition from the leading five of the disciples of Yamunacharya — Kanchipurna, Mahapurna, Goshtipurna, Maladhara and Vararanga.

Following this, with the gracious blessings of the Lord, he took charge of the great temple of Sri Ranganatha at Srirangam. He reorganised the working of the temple effectively.

Ramanuja now addressed himself to the task of writing a commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* of Badarayana. The text of Bodhayana's *Vritti* was needed for this purpose and a copy of it could not be obtained anywhere in the south. Learning that it was available at Sarada Pitha in Kashmir, Ramanuja proceeded there in the company of his disciple, Kuresa.

Although the *pandits* of Sarada Pitha received him cordially they did not part with the *Bodhayana Vritti*. The excuse offered was that it was eaten away by white ants! Sarada Devi herself now came to the rescue of Ramanuja. She handed over the copy of the text to Ramanuja, herself. Devi also instructed Ramanuja to leave the place immediately.

The *pandits* now got scent of the fact that the manuscript of *Bodhayana Vritti* had been taken away by Ramanuja and his disciple. They followed him, overtook him at a certain point and wrested the manuscript from him. Ramanuja was astonished to hear from Kuresa that the entire manuscript had been committed to memory by him and could be reproduced at will !

With the help of Kuresa who knew the exact contents of the *Vritti* Ramanuja now took up and completed the task of producing a commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras*, known as *Sri Bhashya*. This was faithful to the ideas contained in the *Bodhayana Vritti*.

After completing the *Sri Bhashya* Ramanuja undertook an all-India tour. This pilgrimage gave him the opportunity to meet scholars of other traditions and engage in debates with them. Many were the traditions which were won over to his school of thought. He first visited all the holy centres in Tamil Nadu. He then went to Kerala. Thereafter he proceeded to the North. He visited Dwaraka, Mathura, Brindavan, Salagrama, Saketa, Badarikasrama, Naimisa, Pushkara, Kashi and Sarada Pitha in Kashmir. His visit to Ahobila situated on the Garuda mountain resulted in the establishment of a monastery. Before he returned to Srirangam Ramanuja went to Tirupati and also Kanchipuram where he was once a resident. His visit to Tirupati resulted in settling a point of dispute — whether the shrine was a *Saiva* shrine or *Vaishnava* shrine. The verdict was in favour of the *Vaishnavas*.

By this time Ramanuja had fulfilled two of his promises, namely the popularisation of the *Vaishnavite* texts and the writing of a commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras*.

Ramanuja's third pledge — that of perpetuating the memory of Parasara — still remained unfulfilled. This was also fulfilled by divine grace. Andal, the wife of Kuresa after partaking of the *prasada* from Lord Ranganatha conceived and gave birth to twins. They were named Parasara and

Vyasa. Parasara in later years became a great scholar. He also succeeded Ramanuja as the spiritual teacher of the *Vaishnavites*.

Ramanuja now faced the problem of religious persecution at the hands of the Chola King Kulothunga. The king was not well disposed towards *Vaishnavas*. Ramanuja had to leave Srirangam.

Crossing the hilly terrain of the Western Ghats he reached Yadavagiri, the present Melkote, near Mysore. He established a big temple at Melkote. Since this temple had no *utsava vighraha* (image taken out in procession), one had to be found. The Lord himself gave instructions to Ramanuja in the matter. The image of Sampatkumara was the *utsava murti* and it was then with Bibi Lachmar, the Muslim princess of Delhi. It was very lovingly worshipped by her. Ramanuja was commanded by the Lord to go to Delhi and bring the idol to Melkote.

Ramanuja accordingly went to Delhi and succeeded in gaining possession of the precious image by appealing to the Emperor of Delhi. Bibi Lachmar could not bear the separation from her chosen idol. She followed the idol. Ultimately she is said to have been absorbed in the image of her beloved Sampatkumara.

Ramanuja then returned to Srirangam, since by then a liberal-minded emperor had ascended the throne of the Cholas.

Ramanuja is stated to have lived thereafter peacefully for a long period of sixty years at Srirangam. By then two images of Ramanuja had been made and installed at Yadavagiri and Sriperumbudur. A third one was also made (at Srirangam) into which



Ramanuja is stated to have transmitted his powers — by breathing into the crown of its head. This was for the benefit of his followers. It was his last act.

He was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Lord Narayana at noon on a Saturday, the tenth day of the bright half of *Magha*, 1059 *Saka* era, corresponding to the year 1137 AD.

### The Philosophy of Ramanuja

The doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita* may be said to represent the fusion of *Vedic* thought as well as non-*Vedic* thought extant in the times of Ramanuja. The *Vedic* thought is that contained in the *Veda* (inclusive of the *Upanishads*) and the *Puranas* (which follow the *Veda*). Elements or rather, the essentials of the doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita* were available even before the times of Ramanuja in the teachings of Nathamuni (which were not reduced to writing) and in the written works of Yamunacharya (Alavandar). These constitute the non-*Vedic* thought. The relevant manuals of Yamunacharya are: *Agama Pramanya*, *Mahapurusha Nirnaya*, *Gitartha Sangraha* and *Siddhi Traya*.

Using these sources well and applying his own metaphysical skills, Ramanuja gave a final shape to the doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita*. Therefore Ramanuja cannot exactly be called the founder of the doctrine. His exposition is mainly through his major commentaries. They are: *Vedartha Samgraha* (summary of the meaning of the *Veda*), the *Sri Bhashya* (commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* of Badarayana) and the *Bhagavad Gita Bhashya* (commentary on the *Gita*). Since *Vishishtadvaita* draws its

authority from *Vedic* as well as non-*Vedic* sources, it is called *Ubhaya Vedanta*.

According to Ramanuja there are three distinct orders of Reality. They are: *Ishwara* (God, identified with Vishnu), *jiva* (soul) and *prakriti* (matter or world). They are all different and eternal. At the same time, they are inseparable. Inseparability is not identity. God is the central reality of soul and matter. They (the latter two) cannot exist without Him. The Supreme Being known as Brahman, Ishwara, Narayana, or Bhagavan, exists for Himself. The other two — soul and matter — subserve His purpose.

The relation between the world (of sentient and insentient beings) and Brahman is akin to that between *sarira* (body) and *sariri* (soul). This analogy is central to the philosophy of *Vishishtadvaita*. It is also like the relation between *sesha* (subordinate) and *seshin* (principal); or, *prakara* (mode) and *prakari* (substance).

Ramanuja uses the term *apritak siddhi* to denote the inseparable union of *jiva* and *jagat* with Ishwara or Brahman. The non-duality of God or Brahman is modified (*vishishta*) by the orders of matter and soul. Hence the doctrine is known as *Vishishtadvaita*.

In other words whatever exists is contained in Brahman or God. There is no second independent entity.

Once in response to the request of Swami Vivekananda for being enlightened on the doctrine of *Vishishtadvaita*, Sri Ramakrishna gave the following explanation:

Master (to Narendra): This doctrine holds that the Absolute (Brahman) must

not be considered apart from the world (*jagat*) and the soul (*jiva*). The three between them form one — three in one and one in three!

Let us take a *bilva* fruit. Let the shell, the seeds, and the kernel be kept separate. Now suppose somebody wanted to know the weight of the fruit. Surely it would not do to weigh only the kernel of the fruit. The shell, the seeds, and the kernel are all weighed with a view to knowing the real weight of the fruit. No doubt we reason at the outset that the all-important thing is the *kernel*, and not either the shell or the seeds. In the next place we go on reasoning, saying that the shell and the seeds belong to the same substance to which the kernel belongs. At the first stage of the reasoning we say, 'Not this,' 'Not this.' Thus the Absolute is not-soul (not the finite individual soul). Again, It is not the world either. The Absolute is the only Reality, all else is unreal. At the next stage we go a little further. We see that the kernel belongs to the same substance as that to which the shell and the seeds belong. Hence the substance from which we derive our negative conception of the 'Absolute' is the identical substance from which we derive our conception of the finite soul and the phenomenal world. Your 'Relative' (*Lila*) must be traced to that very Being to which your 'Absolute' (*Nitya*) must be traced.

Hence, as Ramanuja says, the Absolute is qualified by the finite soul and the phenomenal world. This is the doctrine of *Visishtadvaita* (qualified non-dualism).<sup>2</sup>

According to Ramanuja individual souls are always separate from Brahman. They retain their separate individuality, even after liberation. Ramanuja also accords reality to the world.

According to Shankara the *jiva* is only Brahman. It is never a separate entity. The world is an illusion. *Mithya*, the illusory existence of the world, is not accepted by Ramanuja.

Thus the standpoints of *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita* are contradictory.

### Sri Bhagavan's Observations

The general concept of *maya* has been explained by Sri Bhagavan in detail:

Sri Bhagavan says:

... Only they (*Advaitins*) say the world as world is not real, but that the world as Brahman is real. All is Brahman, nothing exists but Brahman, and the world as Brahman is real. . .

So when Shankara is called *mayavadi* it may be retorted, 'Shankara says *maya* does not exist. He who denies the existence of *maya* and calls it *mithya* or non-existent cannot be called a *mayavadi*. It is those who grant its existence and call its product, the world a reality, should be rightly called *mayavadis*. One who denies *Ishwara* is not called *Ishwaravadi*, but only one who affirms the existence of *Ishwara*.'

<sup>2</sup> *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 47-48, Almora Edn. (1934).

(Bhagavan went on to add)

All these are of course vain disputations. There can be no end to such disputations. The proper thing to do is to find out the 'I', about whose existence nobody has any doubt, and which alone persists when everything else vanishes, as during sleep, and then see if there is any room for such doubts or disputes.<sup>3</sup>

Maharshi once remarked, "Buddha was concerned with guiding the seeker to realize Bliss here and now, rather than with academic discussions about God and so forth." This was true of Sri Maharshi himself. He discouraged preoccupation with theory since it is detrimental to *sadhana*.

However he also expounded philosophy in response to requests. He had a way of pointing out the features common to differing systems of religious thought.

In particular, *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita* seem to represent irreconcilable viewpoints. But more than once Sri Ramana resolved the incompatibility in a surprisingly simple manner.

A conversation between Dr. Hafiz Syed and the master, is an instance in point:

The Muslim Professor asked how *Vaishnavism* can be reconciled to *Advaitism*.

**Maharshi:** The *Vaishnavites* call themselves *Visishtadvaitins*. This is also *Advaita*. Just as the individual body comprises the soul, the ego and the gross body, so also God comprises *Paramatma*, the world and the individuals.

**Devotee:** Does not *bhakti* imply duality?

**Maharshi:** *Swa swarupanusandhanam bhaktirityabhidhiyate* (Reflection on one's own Self is called *bhakti*). *Bhakti* and Self-enquiry are one and the same. The Self of the *Advaitins* is the God of the *bhaktas*.<sup>4</sup>

There is another episode during which Sri Maharshi gave a similar clarification. This does not appear to have been recorded. However it is supported by the oral testimony of Krishna Bhikshu (Voruganti Venkatakrishnaiah), a staunch, scholarly devotee of Sri Bhagavan.

During the visit of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar (a *Vaishnavite*) of the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Sri Bhagavan remarked, "Poddar, what you call Narayana, I call *Aham* ('I'). This is all the difference (between *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita*)."

### Kuresa's Tribute to Ramanuja

Kuresa's memorable, last verse in praise of his master, sums up the whole personality of Ramanuja.

Kuresa says:

I take refuge at the feet of my illustrious preceptor Ramanuja, the sole ocean of compassion, who because of eternal, passionate attachment to the gold of Achyuta's (Vishnu's) Lotus Feet, considers all else as straw!

<sup>3</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, entry for 7-4-46.

<sup>4</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No. 274, pp.229-30 (1994 Edn.).

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# Sri Ramana and the Holy Mountain

By Eugene Lawrence

I first heard of Ramana Maharshi in 1955-56 in Rangoon, Burma from my father. I was then about six years old. The name seemed to have had great appeal and suggested a profoundness that only very highly evolved spiritual beings possessed and emanated.

It was also a time when, born as a Christian, I was developing my emotional and psychological, and, perhaps a nebulous and boyish spiritual reverence for and awe of Jesus Christ. I wasn't concerned with the question whether Jesus was a god or God himself but what concerned me was that he represented a holy state that made possible a demonstration of God's powers; the New Testament account of the miracles, his power to heal and his incisive division of what was right and what was wrong. That was why, I think, I made the connection between Sri Ramana and Jesus; that they were men of God.

I also became aware of Buddha in a natural sense because Burma was Buddhist and my father and mother had, as a family friend, a Buddhist monk who was always pleasant and soft spoken and who I thought was very kind, especially to me. I suppose, as a boy I couldn't resist that little ego that probably created a sense of exclusivity

when there probably was none. But I was certain of one thing; Jesus, Buddha and Sri Ramana were all exclusive and I wanted to be exclusive as well.

While I learnt more of Jesus and Buddha at the local church and school respectively and, of course, at home, I began learning more of Sri Ramana from my father, who held discourses with his group of friends numbering some fifteen or so every weekend. My favourite place was my father's lap. Then I heard of Dr. Paul Brunton, of his two books — *Search in Secret India* and *Search in Secret Egypt*. I do recall the excitement I had felt then — a deep secret had been unravelled, a secret that only I knew which the other boys didn't. I could no longer look at the sky or the moon or the scenery around me without seeing the secret of God revealed silently, majestically and on a stupendous scale. That was the treasure that I had discovered. Soon I felt old enough and found myself sitting next to my father, asking questions and one of them was how did he come to know of Sri Ramana?

"It was in Singapore," replied my father, "In 1937/8, I got involved with a group of people, Indians and whites, who were interested in mysticism and as you

know, that was just what was calling me then as it does now.

“And that was when I became aware of Ramana Maharshi again. I had heard of the Maharshi in India before I had left the country but I felt the spiritual impact of the Maharshi’s Being only in Singapore when I saw people of different creeds and colour devoted to him. I was surprised because I had thought of Ramana as a local personality. When I started reading on Ramana, I couldn’t help becoming a devotee and participate with them in discourses and yoga practices. And soon I got very involved.”

“Did you attain any power or special abilities after that?” I asked.

“I haven’t experienced what the Maharshi experienced,” my father had replied. But he continued, saying, “I could, however, see the face of the person who would visit me on a given day and I would instruct the housekeeper to prepare that much extra food to be served.”

“And did that person come?”

“Always,” he answered.

That was a unique ability I had thought and asked on another day, “Was there ever a time when you did feel the presence or power of the Maharshi helping you in a direct or personal way?”

“Several times, . . .”

“Something like a miracle?” I remember interrupting.

“Yes. In a very distinct way. That was the time when I had moved onto Malaya,

(Malaysia now) and the Japanese were sweeping across the country. They were confiscating and commandeering all the cars that they could lay their hands on for their onward push. Every garage, premises and compound was searched. Every hidden car was found and taken. Even those that were hidden in the ground and camouflaged with leaves and rubble were unearthed. . .”

I remember having gasped. “What happened to your car?” I then had asked eagerly.

“I had just parked it in my tin shed of a garage and had secured the doors with an old padlock. Then this Japanese soldier came along and broke the lock with his bayonet, and rifle in hand, he advanced towards my car. . .”

“What happened then?” Unable to bear the suspense, I had interrupted him again.

“I prayed. . . ‘Maharshi, save my car!’” answered my father.

“And?” I prompted.

My father said, “. . . and the Japanese soldier just walked away.”

I needed no other story then to equate Ramana Maharshi with the powers of the Miracle. The war had continued into Burma and with it my father advanced along with the Indian National Army. The war ended for him in Burma and with the peace that followed, he married my mother who is a member of an ethnic community called the Karens. His spiritual search continued and rested when he died in 1978. But mine continued from where he had left.

Seeking outwards for the truth of that, which I am, outside conventionalism and orthodoxy, and having found no substance in institutionalised religion except ritualism that precedes in importance over the actual nature of original faiths, and unsatisfied with materialistic or physical interpretations of existence which have a tendency to quantify the Infinite, I had started looking inwards again some years ago when I was in the Middle East which prompted me to return to India. And with that, through a series of circumstances, walked into my life, the stimulus that would lead me to Ramana Maharshi's Ashram — Dr. Lata Ramaswamy, a devotee.

We visited the ashram. Our minds were soothed by the peace and stilled by a tranquillity that exuded from the divinity of the ashram. Strangely and to my great relief, I had not a question nor a personal argument in my mind — only a humbled consciousness and a sense of satisfaction beyond the dynamics of *cause* and *effect*. I felt I had completed the cycle that my father had started: He had started as Ramana Maharshi's devotee in Singapore in the thirties and I was now in 1999 at the ashram, in the land of the Maharshi's birth, looking at the Magic Mountain from where Sri Ramana had made a personal sacrifice of his silent bliss with the eternal reality and descended to the mass of humanity below.

That was the overpowering thought in my mind when I sat silently in Skandasramam and looked down at the present day Tiruvannamalai the next day when I walked up Arunachala. Only love, perhaps not unlike Jesus's could have swayed Ramana to countenance the noise of humanity's quarrelsome minds to share with them his peace and Oneness with God. And when I came down from the mountain, another overwhelming awareness overtook me: The authorities of the Ashram actually continued their devotion to the Maharshi as if in the very presence of the Maharshi — no staged pretences and no self aggrandisement — they were pilgrims as much as we were.

It is said that transformation is instantaneous but in a world of human thoughts, filled with strife and frailty, and the conflict between *maya* and *dharma*, it seems to me that the possibility of that instant happening to anyone, while possible, it also remains largely evanescent. But I know that it happens to only a chosen few; those great ones that chart infinity for the finite ones like me that we may in an instant perceive and transform to become one with the eternal reality. To Arunachala we will come again, and again, and again in our finite lives that such an instant may befall us when we can be one with the Infinite.

**His disciples said to Him, 'When will the Kingdom come?' Jesus said, "It will not come by expectation; they will not say, 'See here', or 'See there'. But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it."**

**— The Gospel according to Thomas.**

# Swami Pranavananda

By T.R. Kanakammal

**S**ARVEPALLI NARASIMHAM, better known as Swami Pranavananda to the devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, was a true devotee who had surrendered without reservation at the feet of his Lord. It was in 1910 that Sarvepalli Narasimham had his first *darshan* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi to further his spiritual pursuit; it changed his life for ever.

Swami Pranavananda was born in the little village of Venkatapuram near the temple town of Tiruttani, one of the six famous abodes of Lord Subramanya. The family carries the name "Sarvepalli" and their family deity is Yoga Narasimham of Sholingapuram. The Sarvepalli family valued education highly and were proficient in the Vedas.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, well known philosopher and former President of India, comes from this family and was closely related to Narasimham. It was due to the encouragement given by Narasimham that Radhakrishnan received higher education. It appears that the former President in his childhood showed no signs of progress in studies. Narasimham brought him to Vellore. He initiated the young Radhakrishnan into the *Rama Taraka Mantra*. The results were remarkable. Radhakrishnan showed vast improvement and soon excelled in studies, at school as well as college. Through the efforts of Narasimham, Radhakrishnan could

study upto Intermediate class at Voorhees College, Vellore.

Coming back to the story of Narasimham, his family was indifferent to accumulating wealth. They were not poor either. But what they did have was this extraordinary enthusiasm for learning in the true sense of the word. Some of the Sarvepalli clan moved to Madras, where they made their living by giving religious discourses. Some stayed in Tiruttani, which all considered as their spiritual, real home.

Narasimham studied till the Matriculation class but did not take the examination. This did not prevent him from becoming extremely proficient in English, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Sanskrit. And he was recognised as an excellent tutor in these languages.

Narasimham got a job as teacher in the Arcot Christian Mission school in Vellore. His abilities were recognised by the missionaries who persuaded him to teach languages to novitiate missionaries at their seminary.

Munshi, as Narasimham was known, was modest and affectionate. Yet, he was a disciplinarian. These traits endeared him to his students. He also taught meditation techniques to the novitiates; this brought him to the attention of Paul Adisheshiah, the then Principal of Voorhees college, Dr. Guelter of the Christian Medical



College at Vellore and others, who also began to attend his meditation classes. Some of them went so far as to announce that they would embrace Hinduism as they were so taken up by Narasimham's way of life.

Narasimham would often tell his pupils that truth lay beyond the boundaries of religion. There was no need for religious conversion for realising the truth. The Supreme Being does not belong to any particular religion. Narasimham even taught meditation to the local jail inmates and initiated many of them into the mysteries of the *Rama Taraka Mantra*. By practising what he preached, Narasimham influenced many people.

In due course, he quit the teaching profession to join the Vellore Police training school as a Munshi in Telugu, Sanskrit and Tamil. British police officers were expected to be fairly proficient in local languages and Munshi's talents were appreciated, as were his spiritual *satsanghs*.

While working as a Munshi in Vellore, Narasimham met Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni who was also a teacher at a nearby school. It was more than a meeting of kindred souls and soon Narasimham became Ganapati Muni's disciple.

The year 1910 was to be a turning point in Narasimham's life. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was still at Virupaksha cave when Ganapati Muni and Narasimham came for his *darshan*. By receiving the glance of grace of Bhagavan, Narasimham felt relieved of all the spiritual doubts which had haunted him. He returned to Vellore in a different state of mind. The seed of the

changes that were to take place later had already been planted in his mind.

In 1911, another extraordinary event took place. It was an innocuous meeting with one Frank Humphreys, a young, newly posted Assistant Superintendent of Police. Munshi Narasimham was to teach him languages. Humphreys on disembarking at Bombay caught a fever and had spent many delirious days in hospital. He was still convalescing when Munshi led him into the intricacies of the Telugu alphabet.

Before they could commence, Humphreys asked, "Do you know astrology?". On hearing Munshi's firm, 'No', Humphreys wanted to know if he could procure some books on astrology. The local Union Services Club provided Munshi with a book on astrology. When he handed the book to Humphreys the next day, a stranger question awaited Munshi. "Do you know any Mahatmas?", asked Humphreys. Not quite certain of dealing with this question, Munshi hedged with another 'No'. The next day, Humphreys startled Munshi by saying, "Munshi, you said you did not know any Mahatmas, but I know your *guru*. This morning he sat by my bedside and muttered something which I couldn't follow. But he is the very same man who I saw when I directed my vision to Vellore from my hospital bed in Bombay."

When Munshi replied that he had not gone beyond Guntakal let alone Bombay, Humphreys said with certainty that he felt there had been an astral travel experience that had culminated in recognising

that person who was to give him spiritual initiation.

Munshi, still not quite clear of Humphreys' intentions, placed a photograph of Bhagavan and Ganapati Muni along with many other photographs on Humphreys' table and went away. On his return, Humphreys with joy writ large on his face, showed him the photograph of Ganapati Muni and asked, "Is he not your Guru? Tell me the truth. This is that very Swami who had appeared in my vision in Bombay."

Munshi's affirmation seemed to overwhelm Humphreys. Munshi was already Ganapati Muni's disciple. He was already following Bhagavan's teachings of *Atma Vichara* (Self-enquiry). Meanwhile Humphreys again fell ill and was taken to Ooty for recuperation. Then followed a steady stream of correspondence between Munshi and Humphreys. In one of the letters he asks Munshi about a visitor who looked poor but was well built, had bright eyes, matted hair and beard. Munshi replied that he could have been a *siddha*. In another letter he enquired of Munshi whether he could learn *hatha yoga* and *pranayama*. Munshi dissuaded him writing that *hatha yoga* was not possible for one in a weak physical condition. He also wrote that he should follow Sri Bhagavan's method of focussing the mind in the heart, so that it results in natural *kumbakha*, i.e., breath retention.

In yet another letter Humphreys asked whether he ought to become a vegetarian in order to gain spiritual progress. Munshi wrote back saying that becoming a

vegetarian was necessary since *ahimsa* as a way of life was *paramodharma*.

Thus there was a regular exchange of letters including one in which Humphreys wanted to know if he could join the mystic society as he believed he had been associated with its activities in his previous life. Being a mystic himself Munshi had replied that events should run their course and we should not bother about these matters.

Soon after, Humphreys returned to Vellore and recommenced his classes with Munshi. One day, asking for a paper and pencil, Humphreys sketched for some moments and showed it to Munshi. It was the sketch of a hill, a cave could be seen, a rivulet and a *swami* standing beside it. Humphreys said that he had visualised his dream and sketched it. Munshi had no difficulty in recognising the man in the sketch as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Meanwhile Ganapati Muni who was to lecture at Tiruvannamalai arrived at Vellore where he met Munshi and Humphreys. They decided to accompany Ganapati Muni to Tiruvannamalai for Bhagavan's *darshan*. Again this meeting with Bhagavan had momentous effect not only on Frank Humphreys but also on Narasimham.

A subtle change was taking place in Narasimham. At Vellore he continued his language classes at the Police Academy and to those interested, he gave lectures on *Valmiki Ramayana* and other scriptures. It was not just his knowledge, but his ability to teach and his innate modesty that drew praise and respect from his students and admirers. Devoted to Bhagavan Sri Ramana and an ardent disciple of Ganapati Muni,

Narasimham lived a life of simplicity. His meagre earning kept penury from the door and yet, he looked after the odd student who stayed with him.

Narasimham had two daughters and though his wife longed for a son, that was not to be. A life of constant devotion finally resulted in Narasimham taking to *sannyasa*. He was given the name 'Pranavananda'. The inner transformation had taken place long ago and the ochre robe was only an external manifestation of total renunciation and complete adherence to Self-enquiry. To him, Bhagavan was the embodiment of *Vedanta*, who had assumed a human body in order to uplift the world spiritually.

Swami Pranavananda used to translate the teachings of Bhagavan into Telugu and have them printed at a disciple's press. These monographs would then be donated to Sri Ramanasramam.

Once, on a hot day, Swami Pranavananda carrying his load of books from the station, paused at the Ashram gate, quite tired. Sri Bhagavan who happened to see him resting under the tamarind tree, went over to him, poured water from his *kamandalam* over his feet and made him comfortable. Sri Bhagavan also remarked, "Why do you undertake such a hard task in the hot sun? Did I ever ask you to do all this?"

Pranavananda was the first translator of several works of Sri Bhagavan into Telugu. He translated '*Who am I?*', *Vichara Sangraham*, *Viveka Chudamani* and *Devikalottaram*. His Telugu style was simple and pleasing.

He also wrote several books on his own in Telugu. He is the author of *Ramana Maharshi Charitramu*, *Omkara Tattvamasi Dhyanamu*, *Sri Guru Anugraha Avataramu*, *Dipamu Chudandi*, etc.

One day when Sri Bhagavan was seated on the verandah, a wounded crow fell down at his feet. Sri Bhagavan took it up in his hands and stroked it with great kindness. However the bird died on his lap. In his infinite compassion Sri Bhagavan interred the crow. Sri Bhagavan also remarked, "We do not know who this *siddha purusha* is. He has given up his body here today." Just then Pranavananda and other devotees were coming for *darshan*. With great warmth, Sri Bhagavan told them, "The body of the crow has been interred." Pranavananda however seemed to take it casually. "What is so special about your making a *Samadhi* for a crow?" he asked. The others around didn't quite understand Pranavananda's statement which appeared to be a retort! Immediately thereafter, Pranavananda with tears streaming down his face exclaimed, "In an earlier *yuga* appearing as Rama you liberated Jatayu. In this *yuga* appearing as Ramana you have granted liberation to this crow. Granting the boon of liberation is a natural action with you. Where is the need to single out this incident of the crow?" His voice was faltering; he broke into tears. The devotees around were delightfully surprised at these remarks. Of course the depth of his devotion to Bhagavan was brought out during this episode!

Once on the occasion of Sri Bhagavan's Jayanti, Pranavananda sent his grandson Hari Prasad with a letter (to Sri Bhagavan).

Hari Prasad had his *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan and was about to start on *giri pradakshina*. Bhagavan reminded him of his grandfather's letter. (about which Hari Prasad had not mentioned at all). The purpose of the letter was to intimate Sri Bhagavan that the Maharajah of Mysore was coming on a visit to the Ashram.

It is of interest here to know about Kulumani Narayana Sastri who was on intimate terms with Pranavananda. Sri B.V. Narasimha Swami gives the following account of Sri Sastri:

A few devotees appear to have a special aptitude to rouse psychic power in Maharshi, power perhaps unconsciously exercised in all cases. To illustrate this the instance of Kulumani Narayana Sastri, a devout *bhakta*, and a disciple of both Maharshi and Seshadriswami, may be cited.

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

the power described as *chitta samvit* in Patanjali's *Yoga sutra* (I, 35)—power which includes clairvoyance and telepathy.

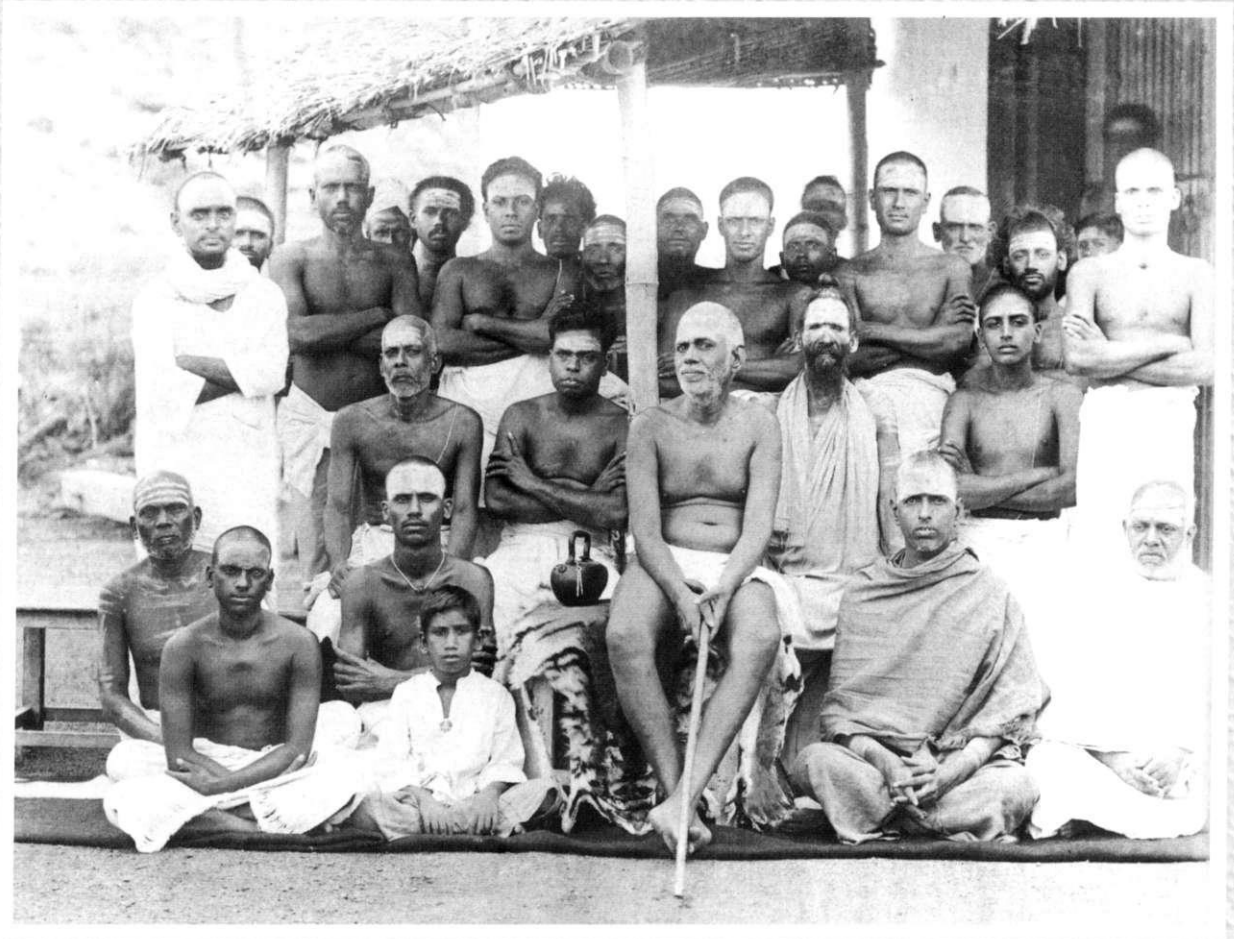
He carried with him his recent and as yet unknown composition in Sanskrit, a prose abridgement of *Valmiki Ramayana*, and, without letting anyone know of it, he composed a mental address in Sanskrit to Maharshi: "To you with your power of *chitta samvit*, a statement of the purpose of my visit would be a needless repetition." At once Maharshi, adverting to his purpose, said, "Why not take out the *Ramayana* and read it?" Sastri's object was to secure the *arangetram* (first formal reading of his work in public) before Maharshi. Now he rejoiced at the fulfilment of his desire and the manifestation of the powers of Maharshi.<sup>1</sup>

On a certain day in 1969 Pranavananda requested Hari Prasad to visit Kulumani Narayana Sastri and bring him to Vellore. Sastri came as requested. At the instance of Pranavananda both of them chanted *Sri Rudram*. At the end of the recitation Pranavananda closed his eyes uttering the words *Hari Om*. That was his last moment. He had merged at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan. His Samadhi was built on the banks of the Palar river.

Thus ends the story of an outstanding devotee, who lived a simple but purposeful life.

<sup>1</sup> *Self-Realization*, Sri Ramanasramam, pp.189-190 (1985 Edn.).

**From the Ashram Archives**



**Group Photo taken near the Old Hall : Year not known**

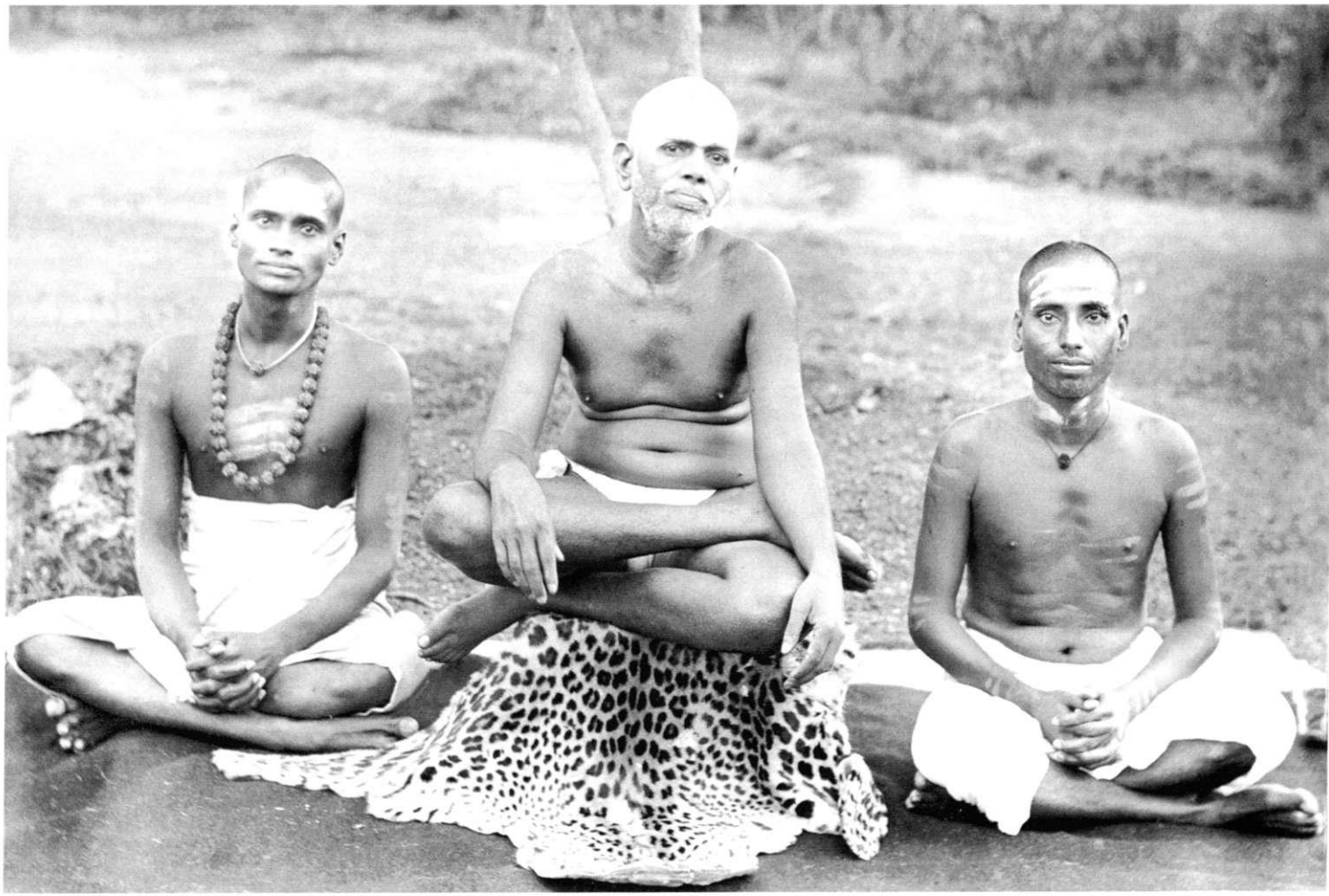
*(First row, sitting) Left to Right : 1. Rangaswamy, attendant to Sri Bhagavan, 2. Not identified, 3. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, 4. Niranjanananda Swami, 5. Not identified.*

*(Second row, sitting, behind Rangaswamy and young boy) Left to Right : 1. Not identified, 2. Annamalai Swamy.*

*(Third row, sitting) Left to Right : 1. Shama Thatha, 2. T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, 3 and 4. Not identified.*

*(Fourth row, standing) Left to Right : 1. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, 2. Not identified, 3. Ramaswamy Pillai, 4 to 9. Not identified, 10. Subramania Swamy, 11 to 12. Not identified, 13. Ramakrishna Swamy, 14 to 15. Not identified, 16. Madhava Swamy.*

From the Ashram Archives



*Date of photograph not known*

Sri Bhagavan (*centre*) with Kariyanur Sri Natesa Swamigal of Esanya Mutt, Tiruvannamalai, to his right.  
(The sadhu sitting at left could not to be identified).

# Bhagavan Ramana: The Sun of Knowledge

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

TO me, as Secretary of Ramana Kendra, Delhi, has been accorded the proud privilege of speaking on this occasion on behalf of thousands of devotees all over the world who regard Ramana as 'Bhagavan'. This is a name reserved for Shiva, Surya and any person endowed with the six *bhaga* (attributes) of *aishvarya*, *virya*, *yashas*, *shri*, *jnana* and *vairagya*, a list which may be translated as "godhood, manly strength, fame unsought, spontaneous happiness, knowledge and detachment."

Sri Ramana, resplendent like the sun of this *Baisakhi* New Year day, belongs to all mankind and none of us can claim a preferential share in the plenitude of his grace. The release of this commemorative stamp will turn a million eyes towards the *jnana-bhanu* (sun of knowledge) of the modern age.

Truth and non-violence, Gandhiji used to say, are as old as the hills. The truth that Ramana radiates is as old as the sun and as eternally fresh, though so completely forgotten by us even in this *punyabhumi* of Bharat. We seem to grope in darkness at high noon.

The essence of the Indian revelation, the open secret taught in whispers by our sages, is that *moksha* is not something to be attained at some distant time and place, but a sort of sunlight and starlight, a present awareness of oneness, wholeness and egoless freedom, which is our *sahaja* (nature) and is only waiting to be luminously enjoyed in the darkness of deep sleep. The bright sun shining there without is only a symbol and reflection of the indwelling Krishna or Christ that knows no rising and no setting.

Sri Krishna says, "I am the Self, seated in the hearts of all creatures." This, the 20th verse of the 10th Chapter of the *Gita*, was Ramana's seminal *mantra* for perennial world renewal, as the first verse of the

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Speech delivered by the Professor on 14 April 1971 at Delhi on the occasion of the release of the commemorative postal stamp in honour of Sri Bhagavan by the President of India, Sri V.V. Giri.

A colourful function was held at the Ashram also on the same day during which Sri B.D. Jatti, the Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, released the special stamp.



*Isopanishad* was Gandhiji's golden key to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The poet Muruganar who revels in recounting the *lilas* of Ramana declares:

Here is no limb, no part, no *anga*;

No path, no goal, no journey.

Behold. The whole sole Truth

Is straight revealed.

Again and again he repeats:

Destroy the false idea of *two* worlds,

This of earth and that of heaven.

Experience here and now

The whole sole Truth of oneness,

Shiva's own auspicious bliss.

In the exploration of awareness, the ancient Indian method is still the most direct, most practical, most scientific and modern. It is the method of each one purifying his own mind, cleansing the doors of perception and discovering for himself the human Spirit divine. Reform, like charity, begins at home.

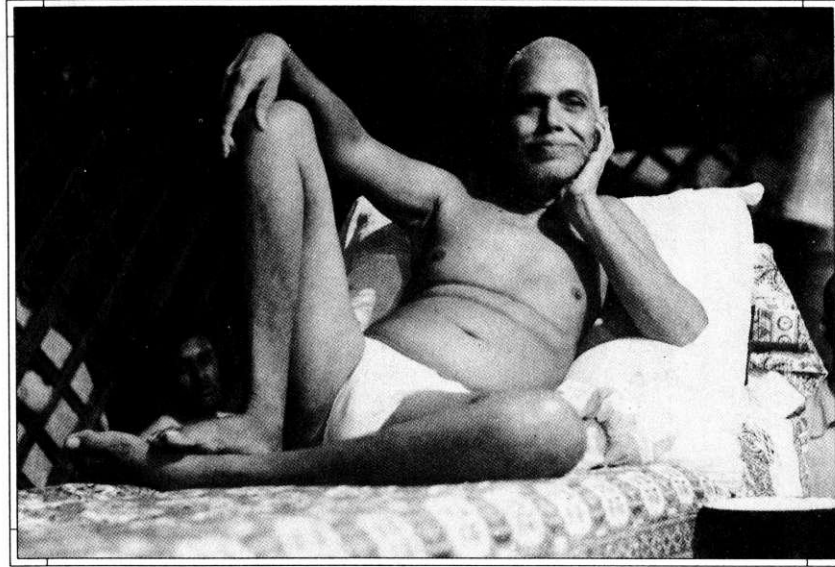
The very mode and manner of the Maharshi's illumination (which took place in 1896 in the thrice holy city of Madurai, the Varanasi of the South) was as thoroughly practical and verifiable as any scientist could wish for. And yet it was a re-enactment of the encounter between Nachiketas and Yama reported in sonorous Sanskrit in the *Kathopanishad*. It was a re-enactment too of the drama of Calvary where the Presence of the Immortal in the mortal was revealed through the torture on the cross. By calmly accepting and fully digesting the body's death, Nachiketas, Jesus and Ramana reveal man's supreme identity, superseding all smaller identities of class, creed and culture and firmly

establishing not only the equality but the unity of all men in blissful awareness of the one sun shining within us all, the ground of all our being — if only we would open our hearts to the love that moves the sun and the other stars.

In the Maharshi, then, we have an actual, historical, recent sage, whose writings and recorded sayings provide, in the words of Wei Wu Wei, the most precious "cross-reference and confirmation" of the utterances of the old *Vedantic* and Buddhist Masters. The Maharshi's dynamic peace — a *shanti* which is a *shakti* — and his unbroken and unalloyed *ananda* cast a spell on children and simple folk, on animals and birds, as well as on *sadhakas* and scholars. The peace is tangibly present even now in his Ashram at Arunachala. Those bright, calm, piercing eyes, tender like a mother's even in a photograph, comfort, sustain and purify the hearts of all beholders. His answers to questions clear the doubts of honest seekers, whether they are Hindus, Muslims or Christians, or humanist philosophers carrying no label and subscribing to no creed. His bearing, words and silence, all true to tradition, have at the same time a close and vital relevance to the latest findings of psychology, ethics and metaphysics.

His *Brahmastra* "Who am I?" admits of no verbal answer, but sets in motion a sustained and fruitful process of disinterested action and ever deeper meditation. This technique of self-enquiry, destroying in one stroke all contentiousness, cowardice and hypocrisy, clarifies and confirms the magnificent spiritual discoveries of his great contemporaries, Aurobindo, Gandhi,





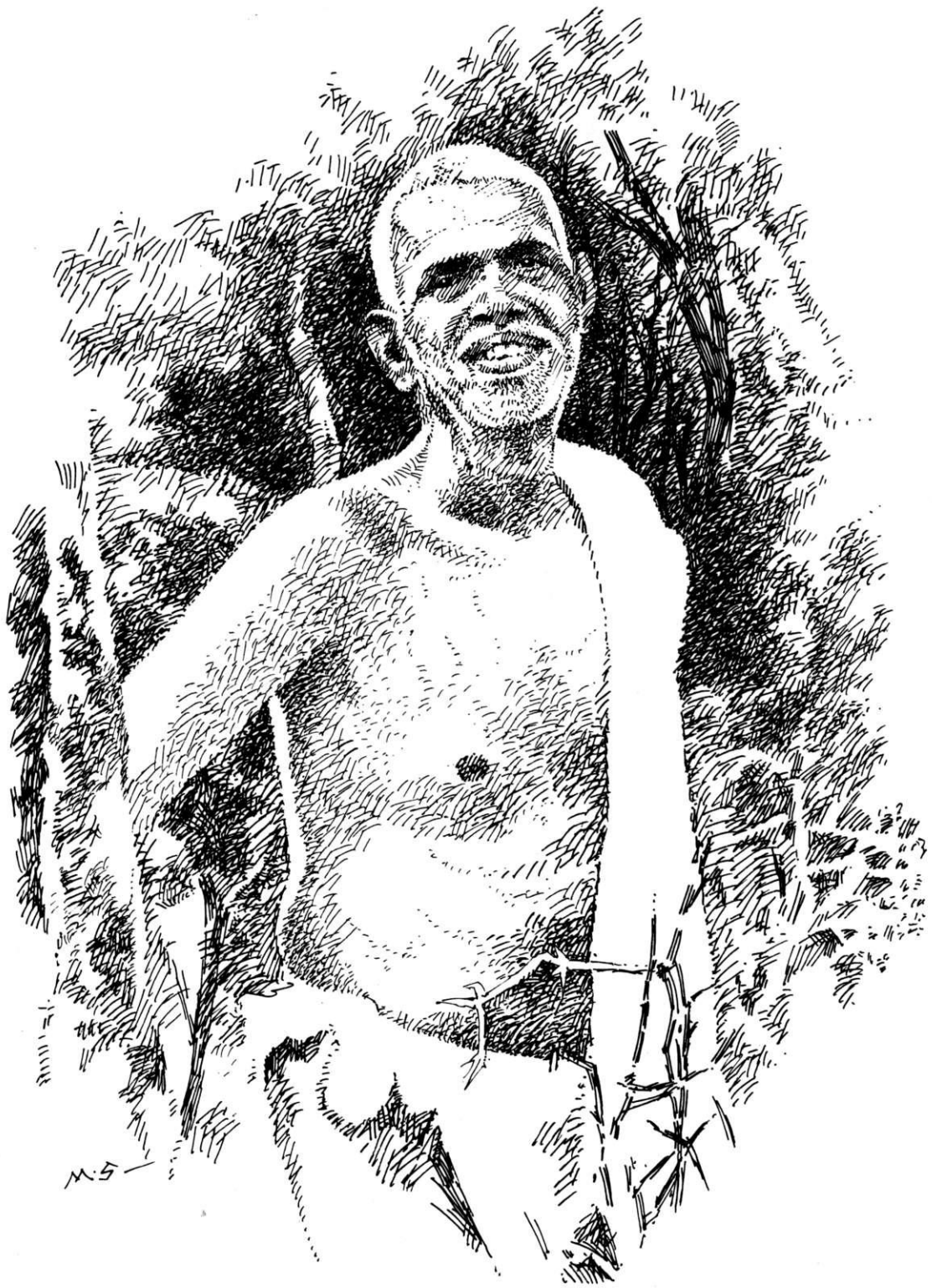
Vinoba and the Acharya of Kanchi. The *sadhana* has been known to help both the orthodox who cherish a long and honourable tradition, enriched by mythology and music, and the iconoclasts who seek instantaneous, total deliverance from the burden of the past.

Studying the books of and on the Maharshi and the journal, *The Mountain Path* published by Sri Ramanasramam, practising the *sadhana* of service and self-enquiry, anyone can join the Ramana circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, though of course Arunachala is still the still centre of this oldest and ever new wisdom.

Ramana Kendra, Delhi, hopes soon to have a humble home of its own next to the Rama Mandir, on Lodi Road where a group of friends will invoke the divine in *satsang* and service for human brotherhood. But there can be no special establishments for

selling the Sun's light. Every tree is a Surya Kendra, each green leaf spreads the gospel of *swadharna*, of growth through tension, reconciling loyalty to home and loyalty to heaven. While firmly clinging to its branch, the leaf feels free to traffic with the sun; it acts as if it knew *salokya* and *sayujya*, the essential unity of all creation. Are men and societies less wise than leaves and trees?

In the current Indian renaissance, the Mahatma exemplifies the *dharma* of rootedness and the Maharshi embodies its openness to light. They both knew, but we have yet to learn in waking life, that the earth that holds the tree that holds the branch that holds the leaf is in its turn held by the sun. The hands that work are guided by the Eye of the Eternal Goodness. Ramana's ageless wisdom illumines and makes easy for us the mountain path of *dharma* which Gandhiji trod with brisk, firm steps and wanted all his countrymen to tread.





## Holy Tiruchuli: Birthplace of Maharshi

Siva, the Lord supreme, whom all  
 adore,  
 Us'd once His trident in a mighty act of  
 Grace ;  
 That trident thrust He made in times of  
 yore  
 Proclaims for e'er Tiruchuli sacred  
 place.

That ancient sanctity about Tiruchuli  
 declared by the *puranas* is now confirmed  
 in living memory by the incarnation of  
 Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in Sri  
 Sundara Mandiram which stands adjoining  
 the temple of Sri Bhuminatha.

Tiruchuli is a small town that has some  
 local commercial importance and has grown  
 around the ancient temple. In South India,  
 the land of *pagodas*, Sri Bhuminatha's tem-  
 ple is not of inconsiderable importance. Of  
 the twelve principal Saivite Temples of

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Reproduced from *Free India* (weekly) dated 22 October  
 1944.

This weekly has since ceased publication.

The article gives details regarding the installation of the  
 portraits of Sri Bhagavan and his parents at *Sundara  
 Mandiram*, Tiruchuli.

India, that of Tiruchuli is reckoned as one. While Siva is worshipped as Bhuminatha, Parvathi, His consort, is known here by her name Sahayamba. Historical records show that saints like Sundaramurty Nayanar and Manikyavachakar had visited this sacred place and extolled the spiritual merit of a pilgrimage to Tiruchuli. *Periyapuranam*, the well-known scripture in Tamil, contains a description of this *Sivakshetra*. Of particular sanctity are the waters of the tank, known as Soolathirtham in front of the temple. That was the place of Siva's trident thrust; and during the month of *Magha*, just prior to the grand annual festival in the temple, the waters are reputed to rise step by step, day after day, till the celebrations are over, and thereafter they sink down in like manner. The remarkable part of this phenomenon is that it takes place each year whether the monsoon appears or has failed!

### Sri Sundaram Ayyar

Towards the north east of Sri Bhuminatha's Temple is Sri Sundaram Mandiram: it is a spacious but modest-looking house built by Sri Sundaram Ayyar, after whom it is named. The building remains to this day substantially as he had left it, though more than sixty years have lapsed since it first sheltered the revered parents of the Maharshi.

Sri Sundaram Ayyar was a self-made man of innate wisdom and strong character. He started his independent career in his twelfth year, as a village accountant clerk. Such was his keen observation of men and matters that he soon acquainted himself

with the legal profession and obtained permission to practise as a pleader. By 1880 he built up a large practice, and his house was busy from morning to night with numerous clients, guests and visitors. Indeed, the house he built was so designed as to have two sets of compartments with equal accommodation; one half was occupied by the family and the other was at the disposal of the visitors or of some officer who might have come to Tiruchuli on tour or official visit. Whoever be the visitor, even if he be a stranger, he had his board with the "Vakil Ejaman", as Sri Sundaram Ayyar was familiarly known to the people. Throughout his busy life he was very ably assisted by his devout wife, Alagammal, who not only looked after her four children but also to the needs of every guest to her house with equal, maternal love. Helpful and obliging by nature to one and all, Sri Sundaram Ayyar became a man of considerable influence.

### Even Robbers Respect

A small incident in his life is worthy of mention here. On professional work Sri Sundaram Ayyar had often to go to the surrounding places in the country, and in those days travelling had to be done by the bullock cart. The countryside was infested by robbers and no traveller could claim immunity from their molestation. But such was the awe and respect the 'Vakil Ejaman' commanded that even the robbers prowling at night would let go his cart un-molested. On one occasion a Government officer of local importance was actually surrounded by a band of robbers and would have been a victim to their highhandedness

had not Sri Sundaram Ayyar's cart arrived on the spot, quite providentially, in the nick of time. The robbers thereupon took to their heels.

### Early Demise

But alas! Even before Sri Sundaram Ayyar had reached the meridian of his life, he left his mortal coil. His death spread a gloom over the life of the disconsolate widow, Alagammal and her four children. Happily, however, they found good protection and help from Sri Subbier and Sri Nelliappier, the two younger brothers of Sundaram Ayyar. At that time Sri Subbier was employed in the Sub Registrar's Office at Dindigul, and, not long after, he was transferred to Madura. Sri Nelliappier was then practising as a pleader at Manamadura. In due course, in order to meet the expenses of the family, the house at Tiruchuli had to be sold. From that time upto 1934, the house changed hands several times; and finally, in that year, it was purchased by the Nadar community at Tiruchuli as trust property for their school.

### Installation

Now in 1944, it is this house which first sheltered the great sage as a baby and a boy, which by virtue of his birth therein has become a temple of worship, and which actually stands adjoining the Temple of Sri Bhuminatha in Tiruchuli, — it is this house that has been acquired by Sri Ramanasramam in the month of September. Protracted negotiations had to be conducted by Sri Niranjanananda Swamy, the Sarvadhikari of Sri Ramanasramam. But for his perseverance and indefatigable zeal, the

generous help and selfless services of numerous devotees, this great acquisition of Sri Sundara Mandiram might not have been possible. Sri Niranjanananda Swamy, who stayed all the while at Madura, made necessary arrangements for the installation of a large portrait of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi with those of the parents, Sri Sundaram Ayyar and Alagammal. A large gathering of devotees had already gathered from different parts of Madura and Ramnad Districts, and some had come even from Bombay. All the devotees were at Tiruchuli by the morning of the 13th of September. Prominent people of Tiruchuli arranged for the reception of the Sarvadhikari and the devotees, and the day began with *archana* in Sri Bhuminatha's Temple. In the evening the portraits were taken in a big procession through the main streets of Tiruchuli. As the procession passed by each house, devotees came out and offered *harati* and worship to the portraits. Before the procession reached Sri Sundara Mandiram, it stopped for a short while in the *mantapam*, just as the temple procession with the idol of God stays in the *mantapam* before returning to the temple. When the procession recommenced with the portraits, it looked as if it were a procession with the idol of Bhuminatha himself that proceeded and entered Sri Sundara Mandiram.

Thus took place the grand installation of the portraits of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and the parents. *Sahasranamarchana* was duly performed and *prasadam* was also distributed. From that day (13-9-44) onwards *archana* is being performed daily.

## The Silence on the Mountain

By Noona Osborne

The silence on the mountain,  
And the light within the light  
There is love, Bhagavan!

The silence on the mountain,  
And eternity within,  
There is love, Bhagavan!

In the noise on the mountain,  
There is silence, in the silence  
There is love, there is beauty  
In the rocks, rugged chunks  
Of granite brown and ochre  
In the mid-day sun, grey  
And black at night, there is love,  
And love is gentle, love is  
Eternity, that is your love —  
Siva Ramana Maha!

And the light makes shadows,  
flitting.  
Flitting through my soul, and there  
I sit on the mountain side,  
And I observe the love that's life!  
See a shadow dancing, now

Shadow flitting through my mind,  
And softly comes a feather mist.  
Softly round the peak, that is  
That mountain light, Siva's crown,  
And this the still infinity!

Do you see the sun shine  
Playing on. . . Playing on  
Pebbles in a mountain stream.  
And something else, something else  
Is God, and on the mountain, there  
You held me in your arms!

The grass on the mountain is  
Pretty, and insects,  
Coloured butterflies,  
Grasshoppers, ants, and  
Pretty looking things,  
See the praying man 'tis,  
Blue green deep on the  
Peak, there is infinity,  
That is eternity, and  
The silence on the mountain,  
And the light within the light,  
There is love, Bhagavan.

## Manuscripts of Sri Bhagavan

We reproduce here the following manuscripts which are in the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan:

- 1) *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham (Supplement to Reality in Forty Verses)* — between pages 62 and 69. This is the earliest version of the *Supplement*. This contains 20 verses apart from the invocatory verse.
- 2) Sri Bhagavan's prayer to Sri Arunachala for the recovery of his mother — on page 70.

The *Supplement* contains certain verses selected by Sri Bhagavan from Sanskrit and Malayalam texts and translated by him into Tamil, as well as certain original verses written by him in Tamil.

Apart from this, two verses (7 and 9) are Sri Bhagavan's own compositions in Sanskrit, which he has translated into Tamil, himself.

In the Ms. Sri Bhagavan has generally written the original Sanskrit (or Malayalam) verse in the Nagari script on the left page and his Tamil rendering of it on the facing page.

However, in the case of the invocatory verse as well as verse (1), the Tamil translation appears immediately below the Sanskrit text.

Verses 13, 16, 17 and 19 are Sri Bhagavan's own compositions in Tamil. Hence there is no text on the left page.

The English translation of the Ms. appears between pages 87 and 88.

The latest (enlarged) version of the *Supplement* consists of 40 verses, in addition to the invocatory verse.

### For the Mother's Recovery

The four verses appearing on page 70 contain Sri Bhagavan's prayer to Sri Arunachala for the recovery of his mother, when she was stricken with high fever. This was composed in 1914.

The English translation of these verses is furnished on page 88.

நூல்.

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ॥

निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलत्वं निश्चलत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

1. சத்திண்க் கத்தினூற சார்பகலுஞ் சார்பகலச்  
சித்தத்தின் சார்பு சித்தையுமே - சித்தச்சார்பு  
பற்றா ரலைவிலதி லற்றார்சீ வன்முத்தி  
பெற்றா ரவரிணக்கம் பேண்.

सज्जन सङ्गे संप्राप्ते  
समस्त नियमै रतम् ॥ १ ॥  
तालवृन्तेन किं कार्यं  
कथं मलय मारुते ॥ २ ॥  
गंगा पापं शशी तापं  
दैन्यं कल्प तरु स्तथा ॥  
पापं तापंच दैन्यंच  
हन्ति सज्जन दर्शनम् ॥ ३ ॥  
नह्यम्मयानि तीर्थानि  
न देवा मृच्छिला मयाः ।  
ते पुनन्त्युरु कालेन  
दर्शनादेव साधवः ॥ ४ ॥  
को देवो यो मनो वेत्ति  
मनो मे दृश्यते मया ।  
तस्मान्त्वमेव देवोसि  
ऽको देव इति श्रुतेः ॥ ५ ॥



அனுபந்தம்.

மங்கலம்.  
यस्मिन्सर्वं यस्य सर्वं यतस्सर्वं यस्माद्दम् ॥

येन सर्वं यद्वि सर्वं तत्सत्यं स मुपास्महे ॥

எதன்கண்ணே நிலையாகி யிருந்திடுமிவ் வுலகமெலா மெதன் தெல்லா  
மெதனின்றிவ் வனைத்துலகு மெழுமோமற் நிவையாவு மெதன்பொ ருட்பா  
மெதனாவிவ் வையமெலா மெழுந்திடுமிவ் வெல்லாமு மெதுவே யாகு  
மதுதானே யுளபொருளாஞ் சந்தியமாடிச்சொருப மகத்தில் வைப்பாம்.

2. சாதுக்க ளாவார் சகவாச நண்ணினு  
வேதுக்கா மிந்நியம மெல்லாமு -மேதக்க  
தண்டென்றன் மாருதந் தான்வீச வேவிசிறி  
கொண்டென்ன காரியநீ கூறு.
3. தூபந்தண் சந்திரனாற் றைனியநற் கற்பகத்தாற்  
பாபந்தான் கங்கையாற் பாறுமே -தாபமுத  
லிம்முன்று மேரு மிணையில்கா சாதுக்க  
டம்மா தரிசனத்தாற் றுன்.
4. கம்மயமாந் தீர்த்தங்கள் கண்மண்ணாந் தெய்வங்க  
ளம்மதத்துக் கட்கிணையே யாகவா -மம்மவவை  
யெண்ணினு ளாற்றாய்மை யேய்விப்ப சாதுக்கள்  
கண்ணினாற் கண்டிடவே காண்.
5. தேவனா ரார்மணந் தேருவ னென்மன  
மாவியா மென்னு லறிபடுமே -தேவனீ  
யாகுமே யாகையா லார்க்குஞ் சருதியா  
லேகனாந் தேவனே யென்று.

महापञ्चमं.

किं ज्योतिस्तव भानुमानहनिमे रात्रौ प्रदीपादिकं  
स्यादेवंरविदीपदर्शनविधौ किंज्योतिराख्याहिमे ।  
चक्षुस्तस्यनिमीलनादिसमये किंपीर्यियो दर्शने  
किंतत्राहमतो भवान्परमकं ज्योतिस्तदस्मिप्रभो ॥ ६

हृदयकुहरमध्ये केवलं ब्रह्ममात्र  
महमहमिति साक्षादात्मरूपेण भाति ।  
हृदि विशमनसास्वं चिन्वतामज्जतावा  
पवनचलनरोप्यादात्मनिष्ठो भवत्वम् ॥ ७

हृत्सरोजेह्यहंरूपा  
याचितिनिर्मलाचला ।  
अहंकारपरित्यागा  
त्साचितिमोक्षदायिनी ॥

देहं मृण्मयवज्जडात्मकमहंबुद्धिर्नतस्यास्त्यतो  
नाहंतत्तदपेतसुप्तिसमये सिद्धात्मसद्भावतः ।  
कोहं भावयुतः कुतोवरपियादृष्ट्वात्मनिष्ठात्मनां  
सोहं स्फूर्तितयाऽरुणाचलशिवः पूर्णो विभातिस्वयम् ॥

शरीरपोषणार्थीसन्यआत्मानंदिदृशते ।  
ग्राहं दारुपियाधृत्वा नदीं नर्तुं सहच्छति ॥

அனுபந்தம்.  
(விருத்தம்)

6. ஒளியுனக் கெதுபக வினனெனக் கிருள்விளக்  
கொளியுண் ரொளியெது கண்துண் ரொளியெது  
வொளிமதி மதியுண் ரொளியெது வதுவக  
மொளிதனி லொளியுநீ யெனகுரு **வீமதே**.
7. இதயமாங் குகையி <sup>(வென்பா)</sup> னுப்ப னேகமாம் பிரம்ம மாத்ர  
மதுவக மகமா நேரே யவிர்ந்திடு மாண்மா வாக  
விதயமே சார்வாய் தன்னை யெண்ணியா ழலது வாயு  
வதனுட னுழ்ம னத்தா லாண்மாவி னிட்ட னுவாய்.
8. அக்கம லத்தே யமல வசல  
வகமுருவ மாகு மறிவே - தகத்தை  
யகற்றிடுவ தாலவ் வகமா மறிவே  
யகவீ டனிப்ப தறி.
9. தேகங் கடநிகர் <sup>(விருத்தம்)</sup> சடமிதற் ககமெனுந் திகழ்விலதா  
னுகஞ் சடலமி னுயிலினி றினமுறு நமதியலாற்  
கோகங் கரனெவ னுளனுணர்ந் துளருளக் குகையுள்ளே  
சோகம் புரணவ ருணதிரி சிவவிபு சயமொளிர்வான்.
10. இழிவுடல்யா <sup>(வென்பா)</sup> னென்ன லிகந்திடுக வென்று  
மொழிவிலின் பாந்தன்னை யோர்க - வழியு  
முடலோம்ப லோடுதனை யோரவுனல் யாறு  
கடக்கக் கராப்புணைகொண் டற்று.

അനുപന്തം.

മുലനടുവിനു നേരേ മാർച്ചിനങ്ങൊട്ടുതാഴേ  
 ഉദരമതിനു മേലേ യാവുപോൽ സാധനങ്ങൾ,  
 പലനികമതിലൊന്നങ്ങാവൽമൊട്ടെന്നപോലേ  
 യിരവിരകുപുലഭാഗേ മാനസം കണ്ടുകൊൾക॥  
 അതിനു മുഖവിരോധമുള്ളിലുണ്ടല്ല അന്യം  
 തിമിരമവിടെവാസം രാഗരോഗാദിപുണ്ണം।  
 അഖിലവുമതിനോടങ്ങൊരൂയിച്ചിട്ടു നാഡീ  
 പവനകരണവാസസ്ഥാനമോജഃപ്രവാസം॥

सर्वोपाधि विनिर्मुक्तं  
 चिद्रूपं यन्निरन्तरम्।  
 तच्छिद्रोहमिति ध्यात्वा  
 सर्वासक्तिं विवर्जयेत्॥ १४  
 पुत्रदारादि संसारा  
 स्त, द्रवन्त्यल्प मेधसाम्।  
 विदुषां शास्त्र संसारो  
 योगाभ्यासस्य विघ्नकृत्॥ १५

அனுபந்தம்.

11. திருமுலை நடுமார் படிவயி நிதன்மே  
 (விருத்தம்)  
 லிருமுப் பொருளுள நிறம்பல விவற்று  
 னொருபொரு ளாம்பல ரும்பென வுள்ளே  
 யிருவிரல் வலத்தே யிருப்பது மிதயம்.
12. அதன்முக மிகலுள தகமுள சிறுதுள  
 (வேறு)  
 யதனிலா சாதியொ டமர்ந்துள திருந்தம  
 மதனையா சிரித்துள வகிலமா நாடிக  
 ளதுவளி மனதொளி யவற்றின திருப்பிடம்.
13. இதயமலர்க் குகையகமா யிலகிறையே ருகேசனென வேத்தப்  
 (வேறு) T.பட்டோ  
 னிதமனைய ருகேசனயா னெனுஞ்சோகம் பாவனதா னின்னு டம்பிற்  
 நிதமுறுநா னெனுந்திடம்போ லப்பியாச பலத்தாலத் தேவாய் நிற்கிற்  
 சிதையுடனா னெனுமவித்தை செங்கதிரோ னெதிரிருள்போற் சிதையு  
 (வேள்பா) மன்றே.
14. அகில வுபாதி யகன்ற வறிவே  
 தகமச் சிவமென் றனிச - மகத்தே  
 யகலாத் தியான மதனா லகத்தி  
 னகிலவா சத்தி யகற்று.
15. மக்கண் மனைவிமுதன் மற்றவர்க ளற்பமதி  
 மக்கட் கொருகுடிம்ப மானவே - மிக்ககல்வி  
 யுள்ளவர்தம் முள்ளத்தே யொன்றலபன் னூற்குடிம்ப  
 முள்ளதுயோ கத்தடையா யோர்.

அனுபந்தம்.

தூண்துலிதாஸிலஜகதா  
 கரதலகலிதாஸிலரஹஸ்யானாம।  
 ஶ்லாபா வாரவஶ்ரூதி  
 ஶடதாஸதவ்ஸுதுநிரஸம॥ 15

ஸர்வவேதாந்தஸித்தாந்த  
 ஶாரவஶ்மியதார்ததஃ।  
 ஶ்வயம்நுஷ்டாஸ்வயம்நூதவா  
 ஶ்வயமேவாஸிஷ்யதே॥ 20

அனுபந்தம்.

16. எழுத்தறிந்த தாம்பிறந்த தெங்கேயென் றெண்ணி  
யெழுத்தைத் தொலைக்க வெணாதோ-ரெழுத்தறிந்தென்  
சத்தங்கொ ளெந்திரத்தின் சால்புற்றார் சோணகிரி  
வித்தகனே வேறார் விளம்பு.
17. கற்று மடங்காரிற் கல்லாதா ரேயுயந்தார்  
பற்று மதப்பேயின் பாலுயந்தார்-சுற்றுபல  
சிந்தைவாய் நோயுயந்தார் சீந்தேடி யோடலுயந்தா  
ருயந்ததொன் றன்றென் னுணர்.
18. எல்லா வுலகுந் துரும்பா யினுமறைக  
எல்லாமே கைக்கு ளிருந்தாலும் -பொல்லாப்  
புகழ்ச்சியாம் வேசிவசம் பக்கா ரடிமை  
யகலவிட லம்மா வரிது.
19. தானன்றி யாருண்டு தன்னையா ரென்சொலினெண்  
றன்றென்னை வாழ்த்துகினுந் தாழ்த்துகினுந்-தானென்ன  
தான்பிறரென் றோராமற் றன்னிலையிற் பேராமற்  
றென்னென்று நின்றிடவே தான்.
20. சிகிலவே தாந்தசித் தாந்தசா ரத்தை  
யகமுண்மை யாக வறைய-னகஞ்செத்  
தகமது வாகி லறிவுரு வாமவ்  
வகமதே மிச்ச மறி.

முற்றிற்று.

22

17-ம் பக்கம்  
குறிக்கப்பெற்ற  
வெண்பாக்கள் :

1. அலையா வருபிறவி யத்தனையு மாற்ற  
மலையா யெழுந்த மருந்தே - தலைவாநின்  
ருள்கதியா வாழுமென் ருய்தாப மாற்றியே  
யான்வதுவு முன்கடனே யாம்.
2. காலகா லாவுன் கமல பதஞ்சார்த்த  
பால் னெனையின்ருள் பாலந்தக் - காலன்ருள்  
வாரா வகையுன்கால் வாரிசும் காட்டுவா  
யாராயிற் காலனுமே யார்.
3. ஞானுங்கி யாயோங்கு நல்லருண வோங்கல்  
ஞானுங்கி யாலனை நல்லிடலை - ஞானுங்க  
மாகச்செய் தன்பதத்தி லைக்கியமாக் கிக்கொள்வாய்  
சாகத்தீ மூட்டுவதேன் சாற்று.
4. மாயா மயக்கமதை மாற்றருண மாமலையென்  
ருயார் மயக்ககற்றத் தாமதமேன் - ருயாகித்  
தன்னையடைந் தார்வினையின் குக்கறுத்தாள் வானுகி  
லுன்னையலா லுண்டோ வுரை.





*In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Brahma Nirvana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi which falls on May 1, 2000, we are publishing (in the coloured pages that follow) some chosen photographs along with articles by two eminent devotees, specially relevant to the great event (of Maha Nirvana).*





Bhagavan,  
at the doorsteps  
of Skandasramam

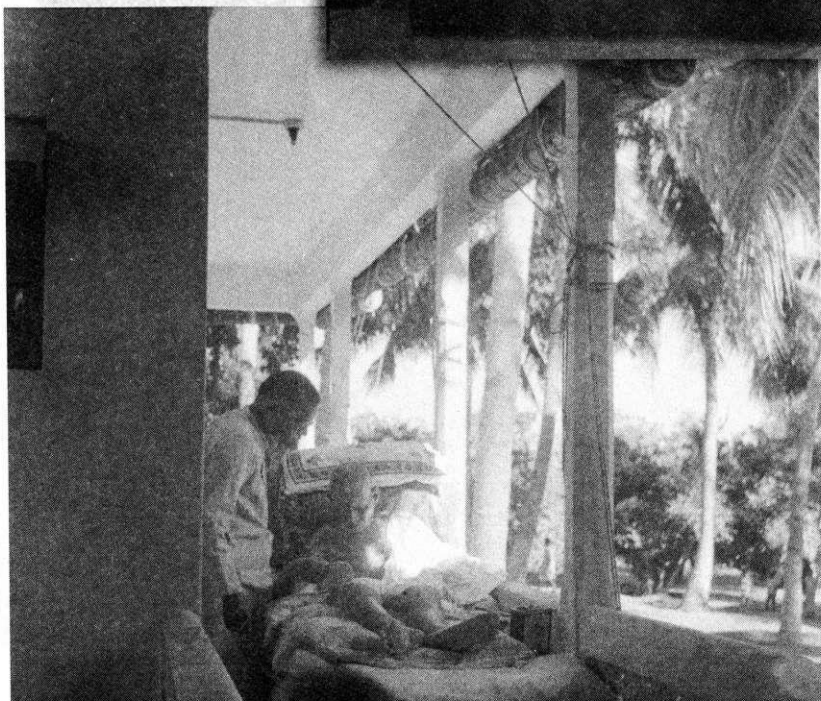
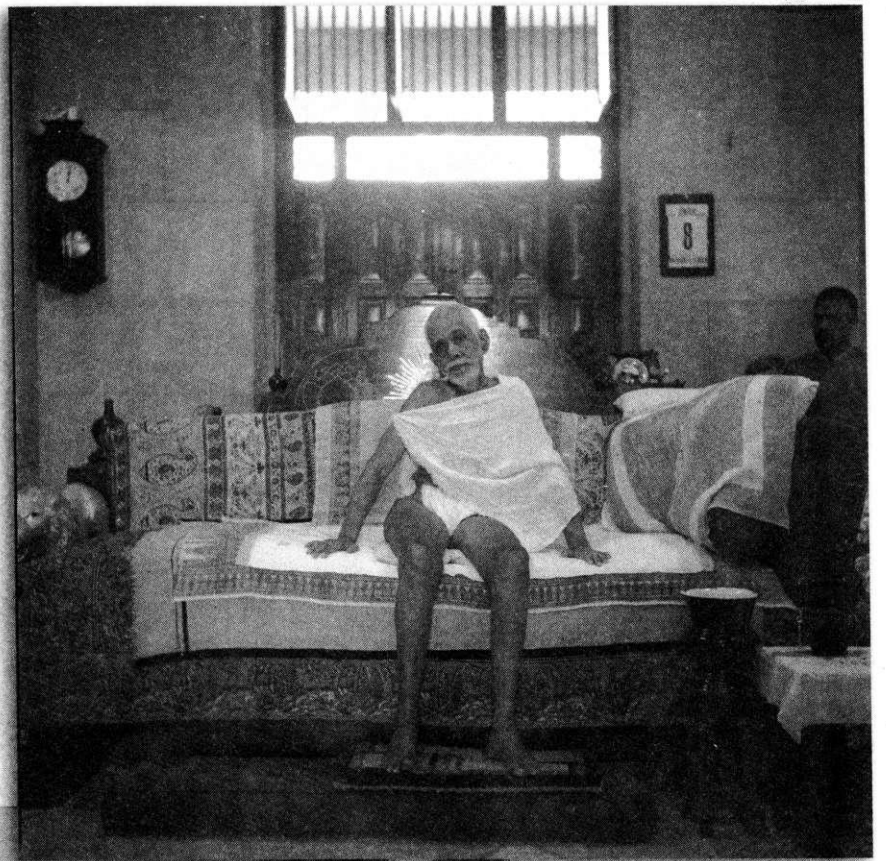


In the Old Hall



Blessing Kumbhabhishekam  
(1949)

Bhagavan in  
the New Hall





About 10 days  
before  
*Maha Nirvana*



Day after *Maha Nirvana* (15-4-1950): Chinnaswamigal overseeing rituals



T.N. Venkataraman (now Swami Ramanananda) performing *Archana* to Bhagavan

Devotees watching interment rituals:  
French photographer Cartier-Bresson is seen taking a photograph





Nirvana Room: interior view

## The Last Days and *Maha Nirvana* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana

### I

By Viswanathan

**T**HE unique manifestation of Divine Grace on earth known and loved by us as Bhagavan Sri Ramana receded into its Reality as night set in on Friday, April 14th, 1950. The very moment that Bhagavan entered into *Maha Nirvana*, at 8-47 that night, the skies announced the great event with a long, slow trail of light.

Bhagavan Ramana moved with us, as one of us, though he had, even as a lad of 17, found his unity with the Reality underlying all appearance and had remained ever since as that resplendent Pure Consciousness, the Self. Though he never left Arunachala after his first arrival there, the power of his light spread silently through the world during the half century and more of his stay there. Many earnest seekers approached him and some found spiritual illumination in his presence. His mode of life was natural, his ways were gracious, his smile brought peace to the heart. His look was an initiation into divine mystery; his teaching was simple, direct and profound, based on man's natural experience of I-ness. He directed all to seek and find for themselves the source of the ego, the Reality behind their individuality, from which all thoughts and actions proceed. His luminous abidance in the Self was itself teaching conveyed from heart to heart in silence. As all his actions were waves from the Light within, the grace of them attracted and uplifted all who came in contact with him.

What follows here is the closing chapter, an intimate account of the last year of life and the *Maha Nirvana* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

At the end of 1948 a small growth, the size of a peanut, was noticed on Bhagavan's left elbow. It gradually grew in size and became painful when touched. By February 1949 it had grown into a tumour, the size of a small lemon. The doctor in charge of the Ashram dispensary removed it surgically, and the wound healed up in about ten days. At the time of the opening ceremony (*Maha Kumbhabhishekam*) of

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Reproduced from the book with the same title published on 3-5-1951, the first anniversary of the *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan.

the temple erected over the Samadhi of his mother in March, Bhagavan looked all right except for a little sagging of the skin at the elbow.

Soon after this, however, the tumour returned over the operated part. Eminent surgeons from Madras came and examined it and, suspecting it to be malignant, they again removed it surgically on March 27th. Soon after this they treated the spot with radium. An examination of the affected tissue showed that the growth was sarcomatic.

Sarcoma is excruciatingly painful, especially in its later stages, and fatal. A fresh growth was already observed while the wound was healing; so the doctors suggested amputating the arm above the affected part in the hope of saving Bhagavan's precious life. Bhagavan smiled and replied, "There is no need for alarm. The body is itself a disease. Let it have its natural end. Why mutilate it? Simple dressing of the affected part is enough."

At this time, a village physician of some repute was allowed to try herbal treatment, but it had no success. There was further aggravation and sepsis set in. A medical board discussed the matter and decided upon a third operation in the hope of saving Bhagavan's life. Bhagavan was persuaded to agree to this. This third operation, on August 7th was a major operation carefully organised and carried out by a team of doctors and surgeons. A week later it was followed by radium treatment to destroy the affected tissues.

The wound was gradually healing up and Bhagavan's general health showed a slight improvement for about three months, so that hope revived in all hearts. And then again, to the dismay of all, the tumour reappeared, higher up on the arm, at the end of November. This necessitated a fourth operation on December 19th. After this the doctors were definite that if the tumour again appeared there was nothing more they could do except administer palliatives.

At this stage homeopathy was tried for a few weeks but it could not arrest the disease. Another tumour appeared adjoining the left armpit and grew rapidly. Two Ayurvedic physicians of repute now tried their treatment but without success. The whole of the left upper arm had become one terrific swelling.

Owing to constant oozing of blood through the open wound and the tumour, Bhagavan's system had turned anaemic. The poison of the disease had now spread, affecting the whole body. It was the last phase of sarcoma and the end was near.

Throughout this long time of pain and sickness Bhagavan was quite unconcerned. He had no personal inclination for any kind of treatment. Whenever a course of treatment was decided upon by the Ashram he abided by it, rather to please the



devotees than to get cured. He has often said, "It is for us to witness all that happens," and his behaviour was a perfect illustration of this. In December 1949, when the devotees were at a loss what treatment to try next, one of them approached Bhagavan and asked him and he replied with a smile, "Have I ever asked for any treatment? It is you who want this and that for me, so it is you who must decide. If I were asked I should always say, as I have said from the beginning, that no treatment is necessary. Let things take their course."

All the doctors who attended upon Bhagavan were struck by his superhuman indifference to pain and his absolute unconcern even during and after operations. He took everything lightly and retained his sense of humour throughout. His casual remarks have often made the doctors and attendants laugh despite their anxiety.

A few hours after the serious operation of August, Bhagavan decided to give *darsan* to the many devotees who were waiting anxiously outside the Ashram dispensary, although he had been advised not to move out for some days. He was as serene as ever and even smiled from time to time. At noon next day, as soon as the doctors had left, he returned to the hall where he always sat, saying that he should not occupy the dispensary to the inconvenience of patients who needed to go there for treatment.

Doctors and others who saw Bhagavan even after the fourth operation were amazed at his tranquil expression and gracious smile. There was no sign of suffering in his face.

The seventyfirst birthday of Bhagavan Sri Ramana was celebrated in his presence on January 5th, 1950. Bhagavan sat up for hours, morning and evening, amid his devotees, that festive day. He read through many hymns newly composed by devotees and heard them sung. The elephant of the temple of Arunachala came and stood there for a while after bowing down to Bhagavan and then took leave of him by touching his feet with its trunk. A Rani who had come from North India to pay her respects took a motion picture of the scene. The atmosphere was full of joy, and the festivities ended with the prostration of the devotees to their Master after the Vedic chants.

Prayers and chanting of hymns for Bhagavan's recovery went on for months at the Ashram and outside. Once, when Bhagavan was asked about their efficacy he replied with a smile, "It is certainly desirable to be engaged in good activities; let them continue."

When the devotees prayed to Bhagavan himself to set his health right by his own potent will, he replied, "Everything will come right in due course." And he asked

them, "Who is there to will this?" He could not will or desire anything, having lost the sense of separate individuality in the Universal Consciousness.

Bhagavan kept to his normal daily routine until it became physically impossible for him. He took his morning bath an hour before sunrise, sat up for *darsan* at fixed hours, morning and evening, went through the Ashram correspondence and supervised the printing of the Ashram publications, often making suggestions. Everything received his attention despite his ill-health.

More than a year before his *Maha Nirvana*, Bhagavan quoted and rendered into Tamil verse a sloka from *Srimad Bhagavatam* (*Skandha XI*, ch. 13, sl. 36): "Let the body, the result of fructifying *karma*, rest or move about, live or die, the Sage who has realized the Self is not aware of it, just as one in drunken stupor is not aware of his clothing."

Late in 1949 Bhagavan picked up and expounded a verse from *Yoga Vasishtam*: "The *jnani* who has found himself as formless pure Awareness is unaffected though his body be cleft with a sword. Sugar-candy does not lose its sweetness though broken or crushed."

On one occasion during the last months, Bhagavan said to an anxious attendant, "When we have finished a meal do we keep the leaf-plate on which we have eaten it?" On another occasion he told him that the *jnani* rejoices to be relieved of the body by death as a servant rejoices to lay down his burden at the place of delivery.

With a look of compassion he consoled a devotee, saying, "They take this body for Bhagavan and attribute suffering to him. What a pity! They are despondent that Bhagavan is going to leave them and go away; where can he go, and how?"

When one of his attendants entered his room, Bhagavan greeted him with a smile and asked, "Do you know what *moksha* (Liberation) is?" The attendant looked at the Master in receptive silence and Bhagavan continued, "Getting rid of non-existent misery and attaining Bliss which is the only existence, that is the definition of *moksha*!"

Even during the last days, when Bhagavan was unable to leave his room, he continued to give *darsan* to the hundreds of devotees, morning and evening, reclining on his bed within, majestic like Bhishma on his bed of arrows. Bhagavan would not consent to have the *darsan* cancelled even on days when his condition was critical, so it went on right up to the last evening.

The news of the rapid decline in Bhagavan's physical condition spread and hundreds of devotees came to Tiruvannamalai to have a last *darsan*. In the queue that filed past his room there were men and women, rich and poor, learned and simple,

from all parts of India and from abroad, all united in their devotion to this Divine Personification.

On Wednesday evening, two days before the *Maha Nirvana*, Bhagavan gave a peculiar look of Grace to devotees who passed before him in the queue. It struck some of them that this might be his parting look, and it turned out to be so, for during the next two days Bhagavan had not the physical strength to turn about and look at the devotees. Whether his eyes were open or closed, his mind was always clear and he spoke to the attendants when necessary.

On Thursday morning, when a doctor brought Bhagavan some medicine to relieve congestion in the lungs, Bhagavan told him that it was not necessary and that everything would come right within two days. That night Bhagavan told his attendants to retire for sleep or meditation and leave him alone.

On Friday morning, Bhagavan said “thanks” to an attendant who had just finished massaging his body. The attendant, who did not know English, blinked with surprise, so Bhagavan, smiling, explained to him the meaning of the English term. It is probable that, when about to leave the physical plane, Bhagavan intended thus to express his thanks to all who had served him.

That evening there was a vast gathering of devotees and all had *darsan* of Bhagavan. Many stayed at the Ashram after *darsan*, as Bhagavan’s condition was critical. At about sunset Bhagavan asked his attendants to raise him to a sitting position. They raised him up as comfortably as they could, one of them gently supporting his head. One of the doctors began to give him oxygen but Bhagavan motioned them to stop it with a wave of his right hand.

There were ten or twelve persons, doctors and attendants, in the small room. Two of them were fanning Bhagavan. Hundreds of devotees were anxiously waiting just outside. A group of devotees seated on the temple ramp opposite the little room began chanting with devotional fervour the Hymn to Arunachala composed long ago by Bhagavan, with the chorus ‘Arunachala Siva’. Bhagavan’s eyes opened a little and flashed for a moment. From their outer edges tears of ecstasy rolled down.

The last breaths followed one another softly, smoothly, and then, with no premonition, no shock, breathing stopped.

Bhagavan had receded into his Reality, the Heart of the Universe. The extraordinary peace of that hour overwhelmed every one in his Presence, felt more now than ever before. It was the transcendental glory of Bhagavan, the Luminous Self, that prevailed.

Bhagavan Ramana proclaimed in silence:

“Unveiled, here I am, Effulgent in my Eternal Reality.”

“Who art Thou, Arunachala Ramana? What God or Siddha?” — a devotee once asked Bhagavan in verse, when he was living in Virupaksha Cave on Arunachala. And Bhagavan replied in verse. “The Supreme Self, the Blissful Pure Consciousness sporting within the Heart of all Gods and creatures, is Arunachala Ramana.”

To those blessed devotees who have contacted Bhagavan at heart, he is the Eternal Presence, the unchanging Reality, the substratum of all appearance. But even we, the many who have not understood and utilised properly this rare opportunity of Bhagavan’s advent in our midst, the potency of his Grace is such that it will, in course of time effect the spiritual transformation in us, annihilate our ego, the source of all evil, and absorb us back into the Life Eternal. Let us open and surrender ourselves to his Grace.

Blessed is the dust that has come in contact with his lotus-feet. His words are our beacon-light. The Samadhi at the foot of the south slope of Arunachala, the Hill of Fire, enshrining the holy frame of our Master and Lord is our sanctuary where we still feel his living Presence as vividly as at the place of his *Maha Nirvana*. May it bless us all for ever! May Ramana’s Light, Love and Peace spread ever wider! May his Grace reign supreme!

## II

By Arthur Osborne

ONE of the great epics is finished, one of the supreme manifestations of Divine Grace, when God wore a human body and moved and talked with men as Bhagavan Sri Ramana, called Maharshi, the Great Rishi. Bhagavan was a man abiding in constant, unwavering consciousness of identity with the Self, which is God, or, to express the same from the other side, he was God wearing a human body and submitting deliberately to human limitations. For fiftyfour years his wearing the body was one long sacrifice for our redemption, and at the end the sacrifice became a martyrdom.

When he consented to wear the human form after transcending the human and all other states, Bhagavan accepted all its limitations — to feel heat and cold, to suffer pain and sickness, to be bound by ignorance of events. Had he worn a human body but set himself free from its conditions of pain and sickness and ignorance of events, people would have said, “It is easy for him to tell us to abide in the heart,

unperturbed by events, because he has no pain or uncertainty and we have." So he accepted pain and uncertainty as features of the human form and showed that they cannot touch the equanimity of the *jnani*, who remains fixed immovably in the Real.

Just as Bhagavan accepted the limitations of human knowledge, so did he accept the limitations of human powers. There have been spiritual masters who have worked miracles to exhibit the supremacy of spiritual over physical laws and to show men what a resplendent birthright was theirs for the taking, but the purpose of Bhagavan was different; it was to remain fixed in the Self amid all the limitations of human life. Therefore he used no powers that others do not use.

There was once a discussion in the Ashram hall as to how long Bhagavan would live. Some quoted the astrologers as saying that he would live to be eighty; others either denied the accuracy of astrology or doubted its applicability to Bhagavan, who had no more *karma* to work out, being one with the Self. Bhagavan listened to the discussion, smiling but taking no part in it. A newcomer, puzzled by this, asked, "What does Bhagavan think about it?" Bhagavan did not reply but smiled approvingly as one of the devotees replied for him, "Bhagavan does not think about it."

The whole last year of his bodily life was an illustration of this. We grieved over the suffering and dreaded the threatened death; he did not.

Bhagavan had long suffered from rheumatism, and early in 1949 a small nodule appeared under the elbow of his left arm. In February the Ashram doctor cut it out, though it was not looked upon as anything serious. Within a month it returned, larger and more painful, and this time it was recognised as a malignant tumour and there was general alarm. Doctors came from Madras to operate, but the wound did not heal and the tumour very soon began to grow again, larger and higher up.

Henceforth there was an air of tragedy and inevitability about the march of events. The orthodox medical men let it be known that they could not cure the tumour but could only operate, that it might return after operation, despite radium treatment, and that if it did, it would eventually prove fatal. Those of other schools believed that they could cure it and that operating would only bring it back in a worse form, as in fact happened. During the following months there were two more operations, each with the same result.

And there was the deeper feeling of inevitability far beyond the medical: that Bhagavan knew what was appropriate and pitied us for having to witness his suffering and sought to give us strength to endure his body's death. Indeed, this long, painful sickness came to appear more and more as a means of preparing us for the inevitable parting which many felt they would be unable to endure; more profoundly it came to appear as payment of the *karma* he had lifted from us as expiation of the sins of

the world he had taken upon himself. A devotee begged him to give the sickness to her instead, and he replied: "And who gave it to me?" We did, as surely as though we had crucified him. A school girl was told in a letter about the impending danger and wrote back that, "Bhagavan knows what is best for us," and the face of Bhagavan was radiant with pleasure as he read her letter and commended her wisdom because she had not said "what is best for him" but "what is best for us."

Already frail and weakened by rheumatism, Bhagavan's body now grew steadily weaker. Already by September the end would have surprised nobody, least of all the doctors. By December it had come to be a matter of waiting and counting the weeks and days. By the beginning of 1950 the tumour had reached the shoulder and gone inwards. The doctors said that the pain must be terrible, but Bhagavan gave no sign of it. He was smiling and gracious as usual. In fact more than usual, for towards the end his face became even softer and more gentle. Right up to the end his eyes shone with their old radiance and he insisted on giving *darshan* to all who came. During the last days, when he was too weak to move, arrangements were made, morning and evening, for the silent throng of worshippers to file past the open doorway where he lay. Only once the Ashram authorities, fearing that it was too strenuous for him, cancelled the *darshan*, but he immediately protested and had it renewed, and to the last day it was continued.

Some have comforted themselves with the thought that the *jnani* does not feel pain, but those who were in attendance on Bhagavan were convinced of the reality of the suffering. Indeed, he would sometimes admit, "There is pain," though he would never say, "I have pain." While wearing a body, he accepted the body's sensations although in constant awareness of the Self. He felt heat and cold, distinguished sweet and salt, yellow and red: and with pain as with all other sensations. Only he never for a moment confused the suffering body with the Self.

Throughout, Bhagavan cooperated loyally with the doctors, and yet with an air of dutiful submission to authority rather than with any interest in the outcome. Occasionally he protested at the amount of attention bestowed on his body. Several times, when there seemed to be an improvement, he declared that he wanted no more treatment. Only on one occasion did he refuse to submit, and that was when it was proposed to amputate the arm.

Many devotees offered remedies or wished to try some other treatment, and the attitude of Bhagavan was typical of his utter selflessness. Loyalty to the doctor who was in charge forbade him to accept such offers, but he would show interest and consideration, not for his own health, but for their devotion and the pains they had taken. Once, when the condition was already desperate, he was asked by the Ashram

authorities to say himself what kind of treatment he would prefer, and he replied simply that he would take whatever treatment they could agree upon.

Many a time devotees implored him to desire to be well, if only for our sake. On one occasion a devotee begged him to give but a single thought to getting well, as that would be enough, and he replied, "Who could have such a thought!" It was evident that, having submitted to the conditions of human life, he would use no powers for his cure that ordinary men and women could not use.

He simply sat as a spectator, watching the disease destroy the body. He had immense compassion for those who grieved over the suffering, and he sought constantly to appease their grief, not the easy way, by removing the suffering and postponing death for a few years, but the fundamental way by making them realize that the body was not Bhagavan.

The last few days, enormous crowds had gathered, because it was plain that the end was coming. And the long suffering had at last inclined people to accept death as a relief. He said more than once during these days, "They say I am dying, but I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here."

On April 14th, the doctors and attendants knew that it was the last day. In the morning he bade them go and meditate. About noon, when his liquid food was brought, he asked the time, punctual as ever, but then added, "But henceforth time doesn't matter." In his delicate way of expressing recognition of service, he said, "The English have a word *thanks*, but we only say *santosham*."

The devotees also, passing in long line that morning, silent with grief, before the doorway where he lay, saw an almost lifeless body, the face pinched, the stomach sunken, the ribs protruding. And after the evening *darshan* they felt that it was the end. Instead of dispersing to their homes as they usually did, they hung about in small groups or stood silently waiting or sat in grief along the temple ramp facing the little room where Bhagavan lay. There was an air of foreboding. Many eyes were fixed on the window of the room and the two fans gently waving inside — the sign that there was still a living body to fan.

A group of *sadhus* and devotees sat together on the temple ramp just opposite the little room and began singing *Arunachala Siva*, the supreme song of Divine Love that Bhagavan has given us. More joined in. The singing swelled louder to drown murmurs and cries of grief. Inside the room, Bhagavan bade them sit him up. The pain must have been intense, but he found it appropriate to die sitting, as our Guru. At the sound of *Arunachala Siva*, he opened his luminous untroubled eyes, with a brief smile of indescribable tenderness, and a tear of bliss trickled down from the outer corner of his eyes. And then, at 8-47, breathing stopped.

There was no struggle or spasm, no other sign of death; only that the next breath did not come.

For a few moments people stood bewildered. The singing continued. A French press photographer who had been pacing the road outside came quickly into the throng and asked a devotee at what precise moment it had happened. The devotee, taking it to be journalistic callousness, answered brusquely that he did not know, and then, recalling Bhagavan's unfailing courtesy, gave as precise an answer as he could; and the photographer thereupon declared that at that very moment an enormous star had passed slowly across the sky. Many had seen it, even as far away as Madras. Many who were not present felt what it portended.

After the first numbness there was a wild burst of grief. The body was carried out on to the balcony of the room, and men and women crowded near and wept aloud.

The body was placed garlanded upon a couch in the temple hall and the devotees thronged there and sat around it. One had expected the face to be rocklike in *samadhi*, but it was so pitiable, so marked by pain. Only gradually during the night the air of mysterious composure returned to it.

All that night devotees sat in the large hall and townsfolk passed through in awed silence. Some of the devotees sang songs of praise and grief, others sat silent. And yet, what was most noticeable was not the grief but the calm. For they were men and women deprived of him whose love had been the very meaning of their life. Already that first night, and much more during the days that followed, it became clear how vital had been his words — "I am here." It was not the mere intellectual truism that the Self cannot go away; it was a promise full of love and warmth. One after another, devotees would say, each as though it were a discovery of his own, "Bhagavan has not gone away; I feel his presence more than ever."

The body was interred next day with divine honours in the ground between the old hall where Bhagavan had sat so many years and the north wall of the temple. It is hoped eventually to erect there a Hall of Silence where devotees from far and near can come and sit in meditation as they did before the living Ramana. Even now, those who sit there before the *samadhi* find the Grace of Bhagavan as powerful and as sweet and subtle as during his body's lifetime. Some who lived there have remained. Some who went away returned. Many more will come. For, according to his promise, he has not left us. He is here in our hearts. He is here at Arunachala.



## Reality in Forty Verses: Supplement

(Reference: Note on page 61)

### Invocation

That which is the support, the soul, the source, the purpose and the power of all this world, the Reality behind all this appearance, That indeed exists. Let That, the Truth, abide in our heart.

### The Text

1. In the company of sages, attachment vanishes; and with attachment, illusion. Freed from illusion, one attains stability, and thence Liberation while yet alive. Seek therefore the company of sages. (1)

2. When one has learned to love the company of sages, wherefore all these rules of discipline? When a pleasant, cool southern breeze is blowing, what need is there for a fan? (3)

3. Fever is overcome by the cool light of the moon; want by the good wish-yielding tree; and sin by the Holy Ganges. Those three — fever and want and sin — all flee at the august sight of the peerless sage. (4)

4. Holy rivers, which are only water, and idols, which are made of stone and clay, are not as mighty as the sages are. For while they make one pure in course of countless days, the sage's eyes by a mere glance purify at once. (5)

5. Disciple: 'Who is God?'

Master: 'He who knows the mind.'

D: 'My Self, the Spirit, knows my mind.'

M: 'Therefore you are God; and also because the *Sruti* declares that there is only one God, the Knower. (6)

6. M: 'By what light do you see?'

D: 'The sun by day, the lamp by night.'

M: 'By what light do you see these lights?'

D: 'The eye.'

M: 'By what light do you see the eye?'

D: 'The mind.'

M: 'By what light do you know the mind?'

D: 'My Self.'

M: 'You then are the Light of Lights.'

D: 'Yes, That I am.' (7)

7. In the centre of the Heart-Cave there shines alone the one *Brahman* as the "I-I", the *Atman*. Reach the Heart by diving deep in quest of the Self, or by controlling the mind with the breath, and stay established in the *Atman*.<sup>1</sup> (8)

8. In the lotus of the Heart is pure and changeless Consciousness in the form of the Self. When the ego is removed, this Consciousness of Self bestows Liberation of soul. (9)

9. The body is like an earthen pot inert. Because it has no consciousness of 'I', and because daily in bodiless sleep we touch our real nature, the body is not 'I'. Then who is this 'I'? Where is this 'I'? In the Heart-Cave of those that question thus, there shineth forth as 'I' Himself, the Lord Siva of Arunachala. (10)

The invocatory verse is not numbered.

The number of each verse according to the manuscript (earliest version) is furnished at the beginning.

The corresponding number of the verse as it appears in the final (present) version of forty verses is furnished within brackets at the end.

The translation is by Prof. K. Swaminathan.

<sup>1</sup> In 1915 when Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha Cave, a young devotee, Jagadiswara Sastri, wrote on a piece of paper in Sanskrit the words *hridaya kuhara madhye* (in the interior of the heart-cavern). He then went out on some business. When he returned he found to his surprise a complete Sanskrit verse beginning with those words and learned that Bhagavan had written it. This verse was later translated into Tamil by Bhagavan and incorporated in the *Forty Verses Supplement*. Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni also included this verse in his *Sri Ramana Gita*.

10. Cast off the notion, "This vile flesh am I," and seek the ceaseless bliss of Self. To seek the Self while cherishing this perishing flesh is like trying to cross a stream by clinging to a crocodile. (12)

11. Between the two paps, below the chest, above the stomach, there are six organs of various colours. Of these, one, looking like a lily bud, is the Heart, at two digits' distance to the right of the centre. (18)

12. Its mouth is closed. Within its cavity is seated a heavy darkness, filled with all desires; all the great nerves are centred there; the home it is of breath, mind, light of Knowledge. (19)

13. The Lord whose home is the Interior of the Heart Lotus is extolled as Lord of the Cave. If by force of practice the feeling "I am He, I am the Lord of the Cave" becomes firmly established, as firmly as your present notion that you are the ego is established in the body, and thus you stand forth as that Lord of the Cave, the illusion that you are the perishable body will vanish like darkness before the rising sun. (20)

14. By constantly meditating in the heart, "That pure unconditioned Awareness that is Siva, That am I", remove all attachment of the ego. (25)

15. For unlearned folk there is only one family consisting of wife, children and dependents. But in the mind of those with much learning there are many

families of books, theories and opinions as obstacles to *yoga*. (34)

16. What is the use of letters to those lettered folk who do not seek to wipe out the letters of Fate by inquiring, "Whence are we born?" What else are they but gramophones, O Lord of Arunachala? They learn and repeat words without realizing their meaning. (35)

17. The unlettered are easier saved than those who are learned but unsubdued. The unlettered are free from the clutches of the demon pride, they are free from the malady of many whirling thoughts and words; they are free from the mad pursuit of wealth; they are free from many, many ills. (36)

18. Though a man looks on the world as a wisp of straw and holds all sacred lore in his hand, it is hard for him to escape from thralldom if he has yielded to vile flattery, the harlot. (37)

19. Without thinking of oneself as apart from others, without swerving from one's true state, if one abides always in one's Self, who is there alien to one? What matters it what people say of one? What matters it if one praises or blames oneself? (38)

20. I shall declare truly the essence of the final doctrine of the Vedanta:- when the ego dies and becomes That, the Self of pure Awareness, That alone abides. (40)

## For the Mother's Recovery

(Reference: Note on page 61)

1. Hill of my refuge that cures the ills of recurring births! O Lord! It is for Thee to cure my mother's fever.

2. O God that smitest Death itself! My sole refuge! Vouchsafe Thy grace unto my mother and shield her from Death. What is Death if scrutinised?

3. Arunachala! Thou blazing fire of *Jnana*! Deign

to wrap my mother in Thy light and make her one with Thee. What need then for cremation?

4. Arunachala, that chasest away illusion (*Maya*)! Why delayest Thou to dispel my mother's delirium! Besides Thee, is there anyone who with maternal solicitude can protect the suppliant soul and ward off the strokes of destiny?

# A Millennial Meditation

By I.S. Madugula

I am born in this body  
 through a dark and dreary passage  
 groping into a world already in the dark,  
 I see the scene on the screen.  
 I cry I feed I sleep,  
 I forget the screen.  
 Now my mother then my father  
 fill the screen.  
 I talk I walk I crawl the vast expanse of my crib,  
 and chatter till I am fed, again,  
 secure under the blanket.  
 Darkness is so comforting.

I learn the language, the idiom of the world,  
 feeling my way through the jungle of notions  
 and sentiments  
 I study the *Vedas*, the *sastras*, the *puranas*,  
 and the classics, grammar, logic,  
 and philosophy. Relentless words  
 labyrinthine  
 that shroud the Reality.

I see my body. I like it. I love it.  
 I take care of it, as it crumbles  
 right under my nose.  
 I wash it, aromatize it, decorate it,  
 as the winds wither it.

I look around and like what I see,  
 I smell the flowers  
 and watch the rainbow melt  
 into the liquid sky  
 The sun smiles, the rains drench, the stars shine  
 and the seas moan in utter ecstasy.

**Not Happy**

The mind churns, the heart races.  
 I like some things, hate others.  
 Feelings, fears, emotions, desires,  
 strange modifications of the mind  
 that haven't been there before.  
 I seek pleasure, shun pain.  
 I make friends, feel the pangs of flesh.  
 I indulge. It is all so real.  
 Passion guides and instinct rules.  
 I see the scene, the screen is blurred.

I work, work to live, live to eat,  
 and eat to indulge.  
 The body takes charge and controls the mind.  
 I work, I rest, I win, I lose.  
 I get me a partner, a helpmate,  
 to double my rapture,  
 to have all I want and more.  
 I pursue more happiness working harder  
 making more and spending more,  
 aiming to suck up all the pleasures of the world  
 in one giant gulp.

I sing I dance I write,  
 I scale the heights of art into  
 an emptiness most empty.  
 I build forts and mansions,  
 I dare the mysteries of the skies  
 and dive into oceans to steal their secrets.  
 I probe the laws of nature,  
 I distil the alchemy of the elements  
 and unravel the implicit formulae of existence.  
 I peer countless miles into space  
 seeking the alleged Creator.

Having found none,  
 I feel that I am greater than He or She  
 as the case may be.

**Still Not Happy**

Miracles do not a seer make,  
when he fails to see his own mistake.

I have many a brother and sister,  
aunts and uncles,  
and children and children's children,  
manservants and maids to please.  
But I am alone at night, though consorted,  
for reasons beyond explanation.

What is company that is least companionable?  
Who is company for one who remains most alone?  
And the children get sick and the old-timers drop,  
and sometimes the young ones, too.  
The heart aches and the mind follows suit.  
The mind agitated agitates the spirit.

The arts evanesce and the sciences cease  
and the literatures languish  
though I still *am*,  
breathing through a thousand noses  
eating through a thousand mouths  
and merging in a thousand minds.

I give up, I care no more.  
I do and not do the things I do,  
I give up the fruits of my labour  
so others may gain, I give up  
my stake in the action  
and gain relief beyond satisfaction.  
The end-all is the new be-all.

The fog clears and heart stops  
and I can see where I've been  
and where I need to be,  
where it's really Real.

I think I am dead  
The limbs do not move, the senses do not sense,  
the organs do not act.

Darkness ensues presently.  
 I look within me and take note of it all.  
 Nothing matters now.  
 I finally gain control over it all,  
 more alive than when I was alive,  
 now that I am dead to the outer world.

I dive into the core of my being  
 where I disappear to be for all eternity  
 and beyond. I feel  
 nothing see nothing hear nothing.

### **I just am**

conscious, blissful, higher than the transient worlds  
 and the ephemeral gods.

Fire doesn't burn me nor winds dry  
 seas don't drown me nor weapons hurt,  
 I am when I don't think that I am,  
 when I don't know that I am.

My questions cease my quest's done,  
 my doubts vanish, leaving answers  
 clear as crystal.

No darkness lingers in Superior Light,  
 no questions rise in Superior Knowledge,  
 the knowledge that I am I and no other,  
 that I alone exist and no other,  
 I am all, all is me.

I create all in the nooks  
 of my mind which therefore  
 cease when the mind ceases, and I remain forever.

Time is but a shadow of the mind  
 as is space which  
 ceases when the periphery  
 is consumed by the center.

The world is only a wink away,  
 but wholly separated by that wink  
 for one whose winks destroy it

and establish the Self instead,  
Such a one is the master of the world,  
its mighty creator and destroyer-at-will.

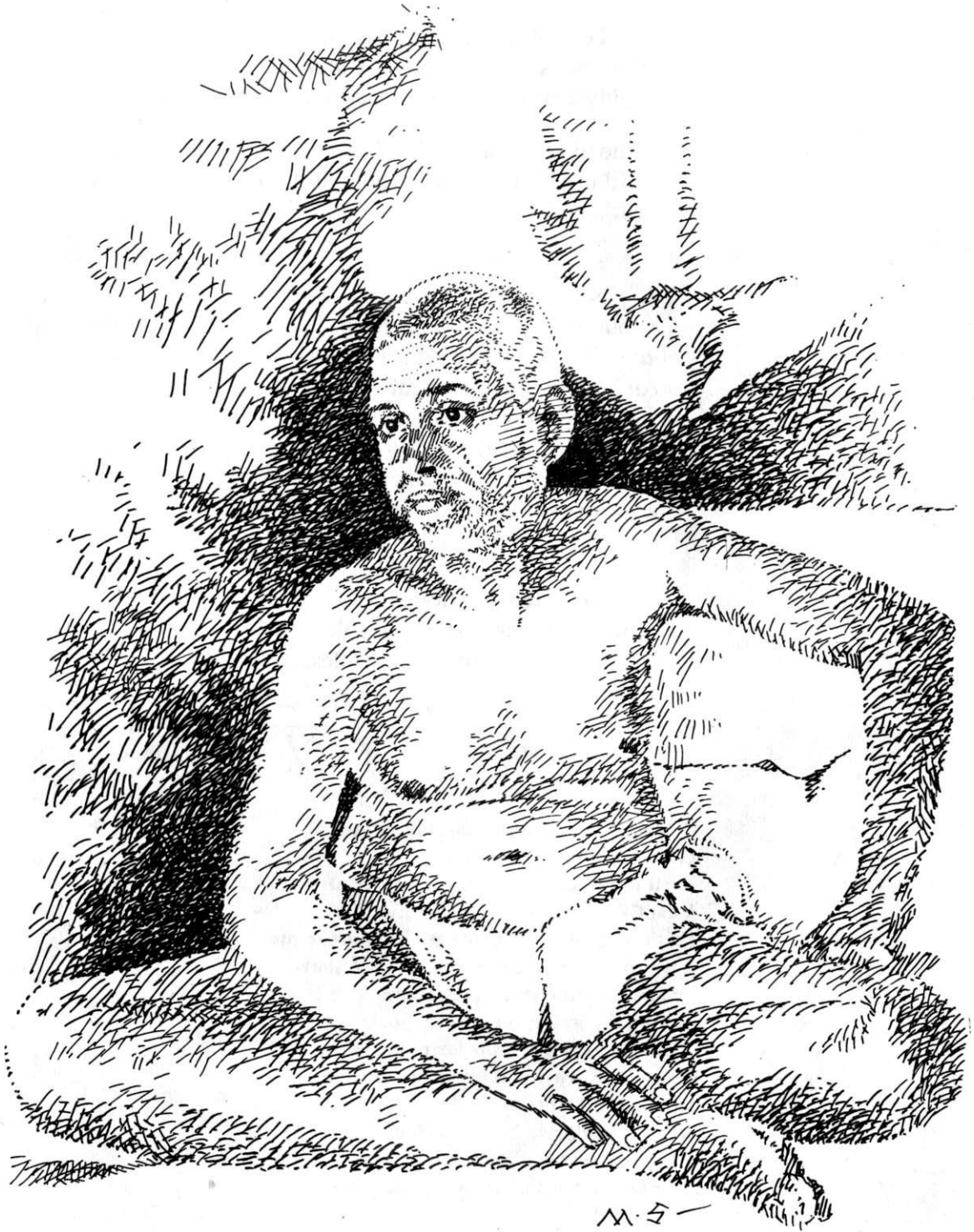
The world is an idea? Whose?  
The world is a thought? Who thought it up?  
It's *leela*? Sport for whom?

First, I am.  
Not the I that was born,  
but the I that's always been.  
I *am*, therefore I think I act I speak  
And, after I have thought enough  
and spoken enough and acted enough,  
I still *am*,  
happy without seeking to be,  
and blissful without trying to be.  
There is no choice but to be  
in the Perennial Present,  
the Pure Consciousness  
unchanging and unchangeable,  
ageless timeless nameless formless.

### TO SLEEP

By William Wordsworth

O gentle Sleep! Do they belong to thee,  
These twinklings of oblivion?  
To sit in meekness, like the brooding Dove,  
A captive never wishing to be free.  
This tiresome night, O Sleep! Thou art to me  
A fly, that up and down himself doth shove  
Upon a fretful rivulet, now above,  
Now on the water vex'd with mockery.  
I have no pain that calls for patience, no;  
Hence I am cross and peevish as a child:  
Am pleas'd by fits to have thee for my foe,  
Yet ever willing to be reconciled:  
O gentle Creature! Do not use me so,  
But once and deeply let me be beguiled.





## Together and Apart

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

**M**ANY of Muruganar's poems are charming or piquant variations on a theme or mode immortalized by Manikkavachakar. They run, but somehow escape, the risk of being merely imitative or monotonously repetitive, because the Shiva whom Muruganar celebrates is not an image in some dear, familiar shrine, but a concrete person, historical and contemporary, and the modern poet's approach is dramatic and metaphysical rather than devotional or lyrical.

Muruganar, whose early work was wholly inspired by Gandhian nationalism, is well aware of the march of time and the call of the future. While making free and splendid use of the old mythological stories and situations, he never ceases to be an authentic modern poet uttering with authority and in strikingly appropriate language his own direct experiences, his own original thinking and his own genuine insights. Of course he has been lucky in finding a hero who combines in himself the frail, ephemeral perfection of a fresh, human flower and the steady radiance of the sun, a Master who taught not only the sublimest truth in the simplest language but a technique of enquiry safe to handle and infallible in effect. To sing his praises, explain his teachings and practise his presence in words which, whether richly sensuous or austere intellectual, are invariably poetic, this consummate scholar manipulates with unerring tact and taste the inexhaustible resources of an ancient and still living language unsurpassed in the range, depth and continuity of its religious poetry.

In order to discover and enjoy the similarities and differences between Manikkavachakar and Muruganar, one may make a comparative study of Chuttaruttal ("Destruction of the Demonstrative") in the Sacred Century of the two poets. In both the theme is the mystery of God and man being at once together and apart, *That* becoming *This*, *This* becoming *You*, and *You* becoming *I*.

Manikkavachakar's lyric is a perfect gem in its own kind, a truthful and most moving utterance of the experience of dialogue and dedication. As in Shelly's *Ode to the West Wind*, the mood changes from helpless humility to triumphant power and joy.

"You whose matted tresses hold  
 the Ganga-flood! Bull-rider!  
 Master of the gods celestial!"  
 Hearing such words your devotees  
 Trembling, struggling, yearn for you,  
 Eager like those who pant for breath,  
 Submerged beneath down-rushing water,  
 They yearn, they wait. But me  
 You call and choose and make your own.  
 Yet my heart swells not from toe to top, it melts not,  
 My body is not all eye in tears dissolving.  
 What can this body of mine,  
 This body compact of evil deeds,  
 What can it hold, my Father,  
 But stone heart and wooden eyes?

As I lay pent in action you broke in  
 And stood before me saying, as it were,  
 "Come, let us go. I am the Deed-destroyer"  
 Thus you announced yourself as so-and-so,  
 Made me your servant and became my Master.  
 And here I stand still like some iron statue,  
 Sing not, dance not, wait not, wither not, faint not.  
 What has become of me? How may this end,  
 O Lord, who are the beginning and the end?

Of all four Vedas you, I know, are the Lord.  
 And I am the lowliest cur, I see this too.  
 Yet, I have by some strange chance become  
 A devotee of yours, hence you have chosen me.  
 Are there not others more deserving? Why,  
 Why then this wretch? And is not this Your greatness  
 Whereof in what words shall I speak, my Lord?

Many there were who, if they spoke, spoke only  
 Of you as Master, Father and Forefather;

Who covered their bodies with holy ashes and cried,  
 "Praise Him, the Mighty!" who had, through their Love  
 Unalterable, transcended birth and death.  
 Such you used to choose and make your own.  
 But me, O flawless Hill of gems, my Father,  
 Me, me, this dastard driven by desire,  
 Why and in what manner have you chosen me?

How and in what manner do you reveal yourself?  
 "He is not red. He is not white.  
 He is many. He is one.  
 Atom-small. No, smaller still."  
 Bewildered thus the gods in heaven  
 Know not for certain what you are.  
 But to me who had lost my way on earth  
 You revealed your colour, your form  
 And the twin blossoms of your Feet.  
 You crossed my path and made me yours  
 And saved me for ever from rebirth  
 Mighty Lord, what shall I say, what think?

My thinking you turned toward yourself,  
 My eyes toward your flowery feet,  
 My adoration too to these,  
 And all my speech to jewelled words  
 Concerning you.  
 Fulfilling all my senses thus,  
 You came and promptly made me yours.  
 Miracle of miracles,  
 Nectar-ocean mountain-high,  
 Yourself you gave to me,  
 To me a helpless thing forlorn  
 Lacking both works and wisdom.  
 O Flame unique whose body is  
 A forest of red lotuses.....  
 God of gods whom Indra knows not,

Creator and preserver and destroyer  
 Of fields and their fertility.  
 The primal one who stands supreme  
 Among the Trinity, Image of Being,  
 Forefather, Father with one half  
 Ruled by the Mother.  
 The Sovereign Master of the Universe  
 Has come and made me, even me, His own.  
 Subject to none are we, afraid of nothing.  
 The company of His servants' servants  
 We have joined. Deeper, deeper let us dive  
 And delve in bliss and sport for ever.

In this song of sustained ecstasy with its exquisite modulations, the distinction between weak, erring man and almighty God, as that between one devotee and another, does persist, in however subdued a key.

Muruganar, the modern poet, on the other hand, passes easily from praise and gratitude to a precise exposition of a shared experience of heightened awareness. And as we read and re-read the poem, one notices how sometimes master and pupil, God and man, science and poetry, the yearning and the fulfilment, lose their separate and contrasted identities and merge into a mysterious mutuality of action and unity of awareness. To well-trained Tamil readers, Muruganar's words through their sounds and ideas convey a meaning as clear and strong and moving as the *vina* music which is produced but cannot be explained by taut strings and plucking fingers. The rendering which follows is a brave but far from successful attempt to reproduce the complex thought and imagery of a few selected stanzas.

Both male and female, far yet near,  
 Mountain-huge and atom-small  
 Pure Spirit. He, whose sidelong glance  
 Has made me see  
 The Truth invisible  
 And hear  
 The dancing music of His feet.  
 For He has caught within His heart  
 And carries in His cosmic dance  
 This midget. What extravagance  
 Of grace, to hold me in this bliss,  
 Both mine and His,  
 Together and apart!

And He has left me wordless, deedless, prone,  
 Helpless on death's brink.  
 Only the vast beatitude endures.

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## Can Ajata Really Be?

By J. Jayaraman

The *vada* of Ajata of  
 Acharya Gaudapâda  
 Says, "Self is all, no seeker-sought  
 no praise no calumny  
 Nobody bound, no teacher-taught;  
 nobody later free  
 Why search amidst effects for cause?—  
 Ajnana never was!"

### THE DOUBT .....

Waking from a dream  
 one found it falsified.  
 But the *fact* of waking up — it seems  
 just couldn't be denied.  
 Likewise, now awake to Self,  
 this world may cease to be;  
 But not the fact of 'waking up', you see?  
 This means the rope was always rope  
 and though the 'snake' stands falsified;  
 The false, was surely *briefly* eyed  
 It's fact! And that, you surely can't ignore!  
 Because of this and reasons which follow  
 has Ajata met with mighty blow? —

For,  
 What of *Jivanmukti* gained?  
 And what of 'waking up' and Vedas  
 old?  
 And don't forget the Acharya  
 campaigned!  
 The Karikas, he wrote for whom?  
 Explain!  
 These five, if true can then Ajata hold?

### THE ANSWER .....

Yes it does!  
 And here the key you see  
 is that the 'waking up' can only be  
 completed with the ending of  
 the primal Dream—the curtain call —  
*That one there was, who'd woken up,  
 and said there was a 'waking up' at all!*  
 So  
 Blind there are who crave to lead the  
 blind  
 The one who says "I'm realized"  
 Is yet to wake up; yet to transcend mind.

# Gaudapada and Non-origination

By Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan

*The author, a well known philosopher and devotee of Sri Bhagavan, gives here a summary of the main points that emerge from Gaudapada's Mandukya Karika (expository treatise on the Mandukya Upanishad). The Karika is the first systematic exposition of Advaita Vedanta that has come down to us.*

*Gaudapada is the parama guru (grand preceptor) of Shankaracharya.*

ONE of the stray verses translated into Tamil by Ramana Maharshi is from the *Mandukya Karika* of Acharya Gaudapada. In one of his conversations, Sri Ramana refers to the same verse, gives the source and explains its meaning thus:

"There is no dissolution or creation, no one in bondage, nor anyone pursuing spiritual practices. There is no one desiring liberation, nor anyone liberated. This is the Absolute Truth."

He then went on to say:

"This *sloka* appears in the second chapter, (the chapter on *Vaitathya* or illusoriness) of Gaudapada's *Karika*, a commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*. It means that there is no dissolution and no creation. There is no bondage, no one doing spiritual practice, no one seeking spiritual liberation, and no one who is liberated. One who is established in the Self sees this by his knowledge of the Self." (October 1980, *The Mountain Path*)

This view (this is called a view only in our language) is known as *ajati vada* and is

also sometimes called *ajata vada*. It means that the ultimate truth is that nothing whatever is born. Non-birth implies that the concept of causality is an illusion. But for whom is it an illusion? It is for the sage who has realised the truth of non-duality. From our standpoint — the standpoint of relative existence — the world and its changes, the soul and its states cannot be dismissed outright. But if one undertakes proper enquiry, one would at least realize theoretically that the world, though it appears, cannot be real.

In his *Talks* Ramana says that there are three methods of approach in *advaita*: (1) *srishti drishti vada* i.e. what is perceived existed and was created prior to the person who perceives it. (2) *drishti srishti vada* i.e. simultaneous creation. The seer and the seen arising together. (3) *ajati vada*

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This was published earlier in *The Mountain Path* in two instalments. The issues for January 1982 and April 1982 refer.

Relevant verses from the *Karika* of Gaudapada are reproduced in the footnotes that follow.

according to which there is no loss, no creation, no one bound, no *sadhaka*, no one desiring liberation and no one liberated; this is the Supreme Truth.

In order to appreciate this teaching of Sri Ramana, it will be worthwhile to understand the quintessence of Gaudapada's exposition of *advaita*. We will find there, how, step by step, the great teacher guides us to the Supreme Truth.

The central theme of Gaudapada's philosophy is that nothing is ever born (*ajati*). This however does not mean that 'nothing' is the ultimate truth as in *Sunyavada*. When he speaks of nothing in this context, he means that there is nothing more than the Supreme Self. That Self is the only Reality. "No *jiva* is born; there is no cause for such birth; this is the supreme truth, nothing whatever is born."<sup>1</sup> From the standpoint of *advaita*, there is nothing finite or non-eternal. The Absolute alone is; everything else is illusory appearance and non-real. Those who take the pluralistic universe to be real are deluded. It is because of *maya* that there seem to be distinctions such as knower and object known, mind and matter. One cannot explain how they arise. However, an enquiry will reveal that they are void of reality. Seeing them is like seeing the footprints of birds in the sky.<sup>2</sup> The Self is unborn; there is nothing else to be born. So duality is mere illusion; non-duality is the ultimate truth.

In several ways, and through many an argument Gaudapada expounds his philosophy of non-origination or non-birth. He first establishes the reality of the non-dual Self through an investigation into the purport of the *Mandukya Upanisad*. The *Upanishad*

is extremely brief, yet it contains the essential teachings of *Vedanta*. The *Muktikopanishad* says that for those who seek liberation the *Mandukya* alone is enough. The *Mandukya Upanishad* begins with this equation: "Om = all. Brahman = Self;" and then it describes the three states of the Self, waking, dream and sleep, as well as the fourth (*turiya*), which is not a state like the others, but is the transcendent nature of the Self — the non-dual peace, the Self *per se*. Gaudapada makes this statement of the *Upanishad* the basis of his metaphysical quest and seeks to show, through reasoning, that non-origination is the final truth. The Self in the three states of waking, dream and sleep, is *visva*, *taijasa* and *prajna*. *Visva* is conscious of the world outside, enjoys that which is gross, and is satisfied therewith. *Taijasa* is conscious of what is within, enjoys what is subtle and finds satisfaction there. *Prajna* is a consciousness-mass without the distinctions of seer and seen; bliss in its enjoyment and satisfaction.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that *Visva*, *Taijasa* and *Prajna* are not distinct selves. It is one and the same Self that appears as three. Gaudapada assigns localities to them in order to show that all three aspects are present in waking. The right eye is the seat

<sup>1</sup> (4.71) No *jiva* is ever born; for that there does not exist a cause. This is the supreme truth, where nothing whatever is born.

<sup>2</sup> (4.28) Therefore the mind is not originated nor is originated what is seen by the mind. Those who see the origination thereof verily see the footprint (of birds) in the sky.

<sup>3</sup> (1.3) *Visva* indeed is ever the experiencer of the gross; *taijasa* is the experiencer of the subtle; and *prajna* is the experiencer of the blissful. Know that the experience is three-fold.

of *Visva*; *Taijasa* has its location in the mind and *Prajna* is located in the ether of the heart. Also, the three should be thought of as the three cosmic forms of the Self; *Virat*, *hiranyagarbha* and *avyakṛta* or *Isvara*. So as to indicate this identity the *Mandukya Upanishad* describes the *prajna-self* as the lord of all, the knower of all, the controller of all, the source of all, the origin and end of all beings. The recognition of *visva*, *taijasa* and *prajna* in the waking state, and the identification of the three individual forms of the Self with the three cosmic forms, are for the purpose of realising non-duality.

*Turiya* is the non-dual reality.<sup>4</sup> It has no name really by which it is to be distinguished, and for this reason it is called the 'fourth' (*turiya*). It is the Self, changeless, self-luminous, and one without a second. The various states which come and pass with their worlds and enjoyments are not real, they are really products of *maya*. *Maya* functions in two ways: it veils the one and projects the many. This results in non-apprehension of the Real (*tattva pratibodha*). In the state of sleep there is no misapprehension, there is non-apprehension alone. The Self in its real state is unknown, but even the non-self is unknown. In the *Turiya*, there is not even a trace of ignorance. It is omniscient sight, unflinching light. Sleep, in which the true is hidden, and dream, in which the untrue is projected, have metaphysical implication for us when we consider the aforementioned issue. Real awakening comes with the realisation of the *Turiya* in which there is no veiling or projecting. In the so-called 'fourth state' it is shown that the two are unreal. When the *jiva* wakes from the beginningless sleep of illusion it knows its true nature as that in

which there is neither sleep nor dream nor duality; it understands itself as unborn and beyond death.

This enquiry into the three states of experience leads to the knowledge that the pluralistic world is illusory and that the Self alone is real. Gaudapada seeks to establish that the world, which we take to be real is illusory in the chapter on illusoriness by using the analogy of the dream world. When we judge by the standards of waking, we see that the world of dreams is unreal. We may dream of chariots and elephants for instance, but on waking, we realise that all of them have been illusory because they appeared within the small space of our body.<sup>5</sup> No one else experienced them. The dream contents do not form part of the external world which we take to be real in waking. So they are illusory. Also they do

<sup>4</sup> (1.5) He who knows these two — what is experienced in the three states and that one who is proclaimed to be the experiencer — he, however, is not affected, although experiencing.

(1.11) *Visva* and *taijasa* — these two are taken to be bound by the effect (apprehension otherwise i.e. *viksepa*) and the cause (non-apprehension of the truth i.e. *avarana*); *prajna*, however, is bound by the cause. Those two (i.e. the effect and the cause) are not there in the Fourth (i.e. *Turiya*).

(1.10) When all miseries (consisting of *prajna*, *taijasa* and *visva*) are removed, the Lord is known to be the supreme changeless non-dual luminous reality of all entities, the Fourth (*turiya*) which is all-pervading.

<sup>5</sup> (2.1) The wise declare that in dream all objects are illusory, for the reason that they have their place within (the body) and because of their confined space (in the *nadis* inside the body.)

(2.2) And because of the shortness of time (the dreamer) does not go to the place (to which he imagines he goes) and see (the dream-objects). And when he wakes up all (that which he saw in dream) is not present in that place (where he is while awake).



not conform to the laws of space and time which govern the waking world. In a moment of waking time, one may have travelled far and wide in a dream. In dream there is no real going to a place, even if we are convinced thereof at that time, for on waking, we find that we are not at that place.<sup>6</sup> The same holds good for the objects experienced in dream. They too are not real, for when the dream spell is broken, one does not see them. This is because the chariot and the elephant seen in the dream are non-existent, they are illusory.

In many respects the world of waking resembles the world of dream.<sup>7</sup> Just as the dream objects are perceived, so also are the ones of the waking state, but they too are evanescent. How can what is non-existent in the beginning and at the end be existent in the present? That only is real which is not conditioned by time. That which is conditioned by time cannot be real. The dream objects experienced in dream are experienced therein only, neither before nor after, so also the objects of waking are experienced in the state of waking alone. We cannot say that there should be made a difference between the two states on the ground that the objects experienced in waking are practically efficient, whereas those seen in dream are not. For even these are so only to the waking state and not in the dream state. Just as it is true that dream water cannot quench actual thirst, so also the so-called actual water cannot quench dream thirst either. One may argue that the things experienced in dreams are abnormal unlike those in the waking state. But in the dream world we find nothing unusual in watching the dismemberment of our own head. We are told that the denizens of

heaven have their own peculiarities which to us are all abnormal, but in themselves they may be quite normal. Similarly, from the side of waking, the dream contents may be abnormal, yet here too, in themselves, there is nothing strange. A closer scrutiny of the two states will show that there is an essential similarity between them. When we wake up from a dream we realise the unreality of the things which we experienced *as if* outside. The same in waking; we have our fancies which we know to be unreal, and we experience facts which we take to be real. But when the delusion of plurality is dispelled, the so-called facts of the external world will turn out to be mere illusory appearance.<sup>8</sup> This is why the wise characterize waking as a dream. In the same way as the dream content arises and perishes, the contents of the waking world also come into being and pass away. Both the dream contents and the external world are

<sup>6</sup> (4.34) It is not possible for a dreamer to go out in order to experience the (dream) objects on account of the discrepancy of the time involved in such a journey. Again, on being awake, the dreamer does not find himself in the place (where he dreamed himself to be.)

<sup>7</sup> (2.5) The discriminating ones say that the different objects in the states of dream and waking are one, because of similarity (of objects) perceived, and for the reason already well known.

(2.6) That which is non-existent at the beginning and at the end is so even at present. The objects are similar to the illusion (we see). They are referred to as if non-illusory (by the ignorant ones).

<sup>8</sup> (2.9) In dream what exists as within is unreal being imagined by the mind, and what is understood by the mind as being outside — both these are seen to be illusory.

(2.10) In the state of waking also what is imagined by the mind within is but unreal. And what is understood by the mind as being outside appears to be real — it is reasonable to regard both these as illusory.

posited by the Self. The things created in the mind within, and those in the world without — both these are the illusory imaginations of the *Atman*.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, a difference between the waking experience and that of dream. While the dream contents are experienced in the mind of the dreamer, the objects of the external world are perceived by other subjects as well. Not only that: they are cognised through the sense organs. But even so, illusoriness is common to both dream and waking.<sup>10</sup> In both, it is the mind, impelled by *maya* that creates the appearance of plurality. As identical with the Self, the mind is non-dual; but owing to nescience, duality is figured and there is the consequent cycle of birth and death.

Even in the state of waking there are illustrations for illusoriness. In the dark a rope which is not clearly seen is imagined to be a streak of water or a snake. So also the Self is imagined to be the world owing to nescience.<sup>11</sup> When the snake is known as such, the posited snake vanishes; so also, when the Self is known as what it really is, i.e. the non-dual reality, the pluralistic world disappears. It is just like the palace city of Fairy Morgana (*gandharvanagara*); our universe may be seen but it is not real. Because they are perceived, the things of the world are thought to exist, also because they answer to certain practical needs. But these two reasons cannot render them real on that account. Even objects like elephants conjured up by the magician are observed and practically efficient, but they are certainly not real.<sup>12</sup> Gaudapada gives another illustration in the fourth chapter. It is the one of the firebrand. When the firebrand is moved, it appears straight or crooked depending on

how it is waved, yet when the movement is stopped, the appearances vanish.<sup>13</sup> They do not really emerge from the moving firebrand, nor do they merge into it when it comes to rest. These patterns seen when the firebrand is moving are illusory and without any substance whatsoever. In the same way we can understand that consciousness appears in many forms because of *maya*. But these too do not come out of it, in reality, nor do they return to it. So there is no dissolution, no origination; no one in bondage, no one who desires release, no one who is released. This is the Supreme Truth expounded in Gaudapada's chapter on the firebrand.

When Gaudapada establishes the non-reality of the world, it does not mean that this great teacher of *advaita* subscribes to the view of ontological unreality or *sunyavada*.<sup>14</sup> We have already noted how in the *agama prakarana* he expounds the

<sup>9</sup> (2.12) The shining *atman* through its own *maya* imagines by itself and in itself (all the objects seen within as well as without). It alone cognises the different objects (so imagined), this is the conclusion of *Vedanta*.

<sup>10</sup> (2.15) Those objects which are within are unmanifest and those which are outside are manifest — all of them are but imagined. The difference, however, is in regard to the sense-organs (by which the latter are seen).

<sup>11</sup> (2.17) As the rope whose nature has not been determined is imagined in darkness as a snake, a streak of water etc., so the Self is imagined in a variety of ways.

(2.18) Even as when the nature of the rope is determinately known as the rope alone the imagination is removed, so also is there the determinate knowledge of the Self.

<sup>12</sup> Referred to Chapter 4 verse 44.

<sup>13</sup> (4.48) The firebrand, when not moved, is without appearance and origination, even so cognition, when not moved, is without appearance and origination.

<sup>14</sup> The Scripture chapter, the first section of the *Karika*.

meaning of the *Mandukya Upanishad* and shows through an investigation into the nature of the three states of experience that the Self is the sole reality. To show that it is so, the great philosopher argues through reasoning in the *advaita prakarana*.<sup>15</sup> In support, he cites the evidence of passages from other scriptural texts as well.

The Self is undivided and the same throughout, like ether. The *jivas* are merely apparent distinctions therein, as pots etc., produce distinctions in ether, as it were; so in this case also these distinctions are not real. Just as we may speak of pot-ether, pitcher-ether and so on, we speak of a plurality of souls and a multiplicity of material objects, but in reality there are no such things. The one Self appears as many *jivas* in the same way as the ether seems divided and enclosed in the different containers and things. When these are destroyed, the distinctions also in ether vanish, so too when the *jivas* are realised to be illusory manifestations due to *maya*, what remains unaffected and changeless is the Self alone. There is no contingency of the defects of one *jiva* being occasioned in the other *jivas* or the defects of the *jivas* defiling the purity of the Self.<sup>16</sup>

By the defilements of the *jivas*, the Self is not affected just as dust, smoke etc., to be seen in pots or pitchers do not make the ether foul. Forms, names and functions may differ from object, but there is no difference in ether as such. So also, the *jivas* may vary in their physical structure and moral endowment, in station and status, but the Self is unvarying, formless, functionless, and nameless. In the same way that children attribute dirt to the sky when dust is in

the air, the ignorant superpose on the unsullied Self defects such as birth and death, pleasure and pain.<sup>17</sup> These are changes that are not real and do not touch the Self. The appearing and disappearing of *jivas* and their births and deaths do not alter the *Atman*. They are not produced by the Self, nor do they form any part thereof. The non-dual Reality neither causes anything nor is caused by anything. It is partless.

In many places in the scriptures, the non-duality of the Self is proclaimed, and duality is denounced. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* exhibits the Self as the non-dual bliss by an enquiry into the five sheaths (*kosas*) which cover the soul. By this method of inquiry it shows us that the Self is not to be confused with these mutable coverings. In the 'Honey Section' of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* the principle behind the cosmic elements is identified with the Self which is the substratum of the body and its functions. What is without is within as well. The same 'honey' pervades all beings. *Brahman*, the all, is the immortal Self. Just as the spokes are fixed in the nave of a wheel, so are all

<sup>15</sup> The non-duality chapter, the third section of the *Karika*.

<sup>16</sup> (3.5) Even as when one pot-ether is associated with dust, smoke etc., all pot-ethers are not affected, even so (all) the *jivas* are not affected by happiness etc. (when one is so affected).

(3.6) Form, function and name differ here and there but there is no difference in ether. The same is the determination in regard to the *jivas*.

<sup>17</sup> (3.8) Even as with children the sky appears to be rendered impure by impurities, in the same way for the ignorant ones the Self too appears to be made impure by impurities.

beings centred in the Self. Scripture denounces plurality and declares the non-difference of the *jiva* from the Self. Difference is illusory, the one appears as if many through *maya*. Here are some declarations from scripture: "Indra through *maya* assumes diverse forms." "Though unborn, he appears variously born."<sup>18</sup> The *Isavasya* even denies the birth of the Self, and the *Brihadaranyaka* asks "Who indeed could produce him?" Gaudapada proclaims: "Of what is real, birth is incomprehensible; and what is unreal cannot ever be born."

We need not hesitate to admit that in some contexts scripture does speak of creation. By using the illustrations of clay, metal, sparks and so on, creation of the many from the one is described. However, this is only to make it easier for those who are dull-witted to understand the fundamental unity of Reality.<sup>19</sup> In some parts of scripture we come across declarations of creation and in others non-creation. Obviously, the two sets of passages cannot have equal validity. We should take that teaching as the purport of scripture which is ascertained through inquiry and is reasonable.<sup>20</sup> If birth is predicated of the real, it can only be in the sense of an illusion, and not in the primary sense. In reality, the Self is unborn. It is sleepless, dreamless, nameless and formless, self-luminous and all-knowing.

Gaudapada seeks to demonstrate that the Self is unborn and that there is nothing else which is born, through a dialectical criticism of the causal category in the fourth chapter. Like all other relations, causation falls within the realm of nescience. This is because on analysis we find it to be

unintelligible. There are two rival views on causation which are totally opposed to each other. The one is the *Sankhya*<sup>21</sup> which is that the effect is pre-existent in the cause, and that it is not produced afresh. The other is the *Nyaya-Vaisesika*<sup>22</sup> a view which holds that the effect is non-existent prior to its production. On either of these hypotheses there will not result causation. If the effect is already existent, there is no need for any causal operation. If the effect is non-existent, it can never be produced; what is non-existent, like, say, a barren woman's son is at no time seen to be born.<sup>23</sup> The rival schools of *satkarya vada* and *asatkarya vada*<sup>24</sup> are seen to support the view of non-origination or non-creation even without their knowing it.<sup>25</sup>

The disputants argue and predicate birth of what is unborn. How can that which is unborn and therefore immortal become

<sup>18</sup> These quotations are used by Gaudapada himself in chapter 3 — verses 11, 12 and 24.

<sup>19</sup> (3.15) The creation which is taught through the examples of clay, metal, sparks etc., or otherwise, that is only a means to introduce (non-duality); there is no difference howsoever.

<sup>20</sup> Whether what is being created is real or unreal — in this matter scripture is equal (neutral). (Of these) what is stated conclusively and is in keeping with reason, that is the truth, not the other.

<sup>21</sup> One of the six systems of Hindu philosophy.

<sup>22</sup> Another of the six systems of Hindu philosophy.

<sup>23</sup> (3.28) The birth of what is unreal is not possible whether in reality or through *maya*. The son of a barren woman is not born whether really or through *maya*.

<sup>24</sup> The two viewpoints outlined above.

<sup>25</sup> (4.4) Nothing that exists is born. What does not exist verily is not born. In this manner the dualists (the *sunyavadins* and the *sankhyas* respectively) quarrelling among themselves, indeed make known non-origination.

subject to temporality and death? It is impossible for a thing to change its nature. What is by nature immortal cannot become mortal for then it would cease to be changeless and it would become artificial and illusory.<sup>26</sup> The *Sankhya* thinks that the unborn and beginningless *Prakriti* evolves itself into the manifestations that make up the universe. No canon of logic will justify this. If *Prakriti* becomes the world how can it be unborn (*aja*) and eternal? Another problem the *Sankhya* offers is that the effect, according to this school of thought, is non-different from the cause. But is the effect born or unborn? If it is unborn, then it cannot be called effect, because the effect is a thing which is produced. Further if the effect is produced, and is non-different from the cause, the cause cannot be permanent and unchanging. There is no illustration that could be given to prove the production of the effect from the unborn cause. To avoid the difficulty, if it is said that the cause too is born, then there has to be cause for that cause, a still further cause for that other cause, and so on — *ad infinitum*.<sup>27</sup>

The school of *Mimamsa* maintains that the cause and the effect are mutually dependant. They say that merit and demerit are responsible for producing the body; and the body in turn gives rise to merit and demerit. There is no beginning for the chain of cause and effect and each alternates with the other, like the seed and the sprout. Insuperable difficulties show up here. If what is before a cause is its effect and the antecedent of an effect is its cause then both cause and effect are begun. Thus they cannot be considered beginningless. This very thesis seems paradoxical.

To maintain that the effect precedes the cause is like saying that the son begets his father.<sup>28</sup> A definite sequence must be recognised as between cause and effect. There is no use in believing that the two are reciprocally dependant. There would be no distinction between them if the cause and the effect were to be indifferently antecedent or consequent. Moreover, to call one a cause and one an effect would be quite arbitrary and void of any meaning. The ways of stating the sequence can be done in three ways: we can say that first there is the cause and subsequently the effect takes place (*purva krama*) or it may be said that the effect is followed by the cause (*apara krama*); or it may be thought that the cause and the effect are simultaneous (*saha krama*). None of these alternatives is intelligible. We have seen already that the cause cannot produce the effect. If the cause is not born, it cannot change, and thus no production from it is possible; if it is born, then there results infinite regress. The opposite too is impossible, because, as we said, it is like the son preceding the father. By definition, the effect is that which is produced by the cause, and if the cause is not there prior to the effect, how

<sup>26</sup> (4.6) Even of that entity which is unborn, the disputants say that there is birth. The entity which is unborn and immortal, how indeed can that attain mortality?

(4.7) The immortal does not become mortal, and likewise the mortal immortal. What is one's nature can by no means become otherwise.

<sup>27</sup> This line of logic is pursued in Chapter 4 verses 10, 11, 12, 13.

<sup>28</sup> (4.15) Those for whom the fruit (effect) is the source of the cause and the cause is the source of the fruit — for them origination becomes like that of the father from the son.

can the effect be produced at all? Further, is a cause possible as rising from an unproduced effect? The third alternative is also without basis. Is it necessary for events which are simultaneous to be causally related? Judging by this, there should then also be a relation between two horns of an animal. Experience shows that the two horns are not related in this way.<sup>29</sup> Now we have reached the crux of the problem. If we cannot settle the sequence, the distinction of cause and effect would become unintelligible. It is impossible to settle the sequence. In despair one might appeal to the illustration of the seed and the sprout. But a little reflection reveals that seed and sprout cannot be used as an illustration. Only when the causal sequence has been established can the relation between seed and sprout become intelligible. Since this is a particular case, falling under the wider relation of cause and effect, it cannot serve as an illustration. It still remains to be proved.<sup>30</sup>

A thing is not produced from itself nor from another. A pot is not produced from that very pot, nor from another one. One may argue that a pot is produced from clay, but is there a relation between clay and pot? Is it non-different or different, or both different and both non-different from it? If the pot is non-different from the clay, it cannot be produced, since clay already exists. If it is different then why should it not be produced from another pot or a piece of cloth even, both being different. It cannot be both different and non-different because of contradiction. So also, neither the existent nor the non-existent, nor what is existent and non-existent can be produced. It is meaningless to

maintain that what exists is produced. The question does not even arise for the non-existent to be produced because of its very non-existence. The third alternative involves us in contradiction.

Empirical distinctions, it is true, are observed between the knower and the known, pain and its source etc. From the standpoint of reasoning based on relative experience (*yukti darsanat*) there is difference as also causal relation governing the differents. But from the standpoint of the Absolute (*bhuta darsanat*), difference is not there and the concept of cause is unintelligible.

In the empirical sphere Gaudapada admits creation. But according to him, creation is neither *de novo*<sup>31</sup> nor transformation of an original stuff. It is illusory, *maya*, it is manifestation or transfiguration. The world is not related to the Self any more than a piece of cloth to threads or curds to milk. In fact no relation could be conceived of. Somehow the one Reality appears as the pluralistic universe by its own *maya* (*atma maya*). The intricate structures that constitute the world are projections, just as in dream. These are effected by the illusions of the *Atman*. From the empirical standpoint we can say that things are born. They have, however, no permanence.

<sup>29</sup> (4.16) If the origination of cause and effect is desired you must state the sequence. If the origination is simultaneous there would be no relation between them (as cause and effect) even as for the (two) horns (of an animal).

<sup>30</sup> Chapter 4 — verses 17, 18, 19, 20.

<sup>31</sup> In this context, creation of something from nothing.

Creation theories are many. There are some philosophers who favour materialistic origins of the world. There are thinkers who attribute the origination of the universe to time. But theists regard God as the first cause of things. Some of them ascribe to Him efficient causality only, while others say that He is the efficient and material cause. The former say that creation is by the mere will of God, and the latter believe that it is his expansion. Some hold that God creates for the sake of His enjoyment. Others there are who maintain that creation is His sport.<sup>32</sup> But how can there be desire for God who is desired but desireless and who has no ends to achieve? In our limitation owing to ignorance we must rest content with the idea that creation is His nature or *maya*. It is illusory, like dream or magic. The non-dual is imagined to be the manifest universe. It is neither different from the Self nor identical with it. The only thing one could say about it is that it is indeterminate.

The thinkers of the different traditions characterise the real in different ways and give their own theories with categories and schemes. Each stresses one particular point about reality and clings to his theory as if it were the whole truth. The Self has been conceived of in so many ways, as life, elements, constituents of primal nature, things, worlds, *Vedas*, sacrifice, what is subtle, gross, with form, formless etc. The *Sankhyas* say there are twentyfour *tattvas* or principles. The followers of the *Yoga* system add to these one more: God.<sup>33</sup> The *Pasupatas* tell us that there are twenty one categories. There are other schools which make the categories endless in number. However, all these theories are but the

imaginings of their respective advocates. There is only one Self which appears as many through self-delusion, as it were. First the *jivas* are imagined and then the numerous things, external and internal. All this is a superimposition on the Self. It is just like the snake form being superimposed on the rope substance, owing to insufficient light.

There is no final purport to the teaching of creation. Let us remember what has already been shown, viz, that what is real cannot really be born. If it is maintained that it is born, it can only be in the sense of an illusory appearance. Usually it is said that the cycle of birth and death, which has no beginning, comes to an end when release is obtained. But this can only be maintained in a figurative sense. If *samsara* is beginningless, then it must be endless too. Also, if release is gained, it is liable to be lost at some other time. If the universe really were to exist, then it would be destroyed. But we have seen that duality is mere illusion. Removal of *samsara* and attainment of release are figurative. These are taught in language which must necessarily relate to duality. When the real is known, there is no duality whatsoever.

It will be clear by now how the teachings of the two great Masters, Gaudapada and Ramana are identical. They do not stop with proclaiming the highest truth, but they provide the seeker guidelines, by adopting which, he will at least come to the point where he can appreciate the truth of non-origination.

<sup>32</sup> All these possibilities are discussed in chapter 1 verses 7, 8, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Gaudapada lists all these categories in chapter 2.

# Sridhara (Ayyaval) of Tiruvisanallur

By N.R.S. Manian

THE distinct contribution of the Thanjavur region to the cultural heritage of India is well known. Thanks to the enlightened rulers of Thanjavur and the liberal patronage extended by them to scholars, painters and sculptors, a good number of literary works of outstanding value — many of them on religion — as well as paintings and sculptures were produced.

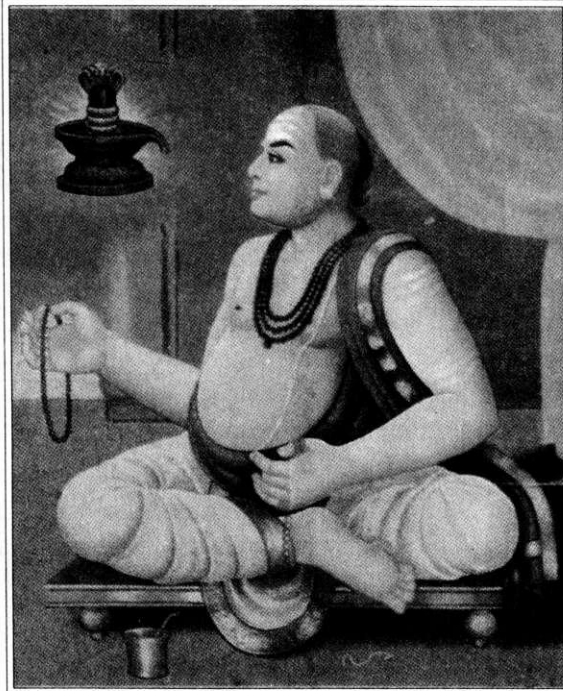
In particular the literary activity seems to have reached its peak during the reign of the Maratha ruler Shahaji (1684-1711). A large number of books were written in Tamil, Telugu and Marathi.

One remarkable feature of the times was that scholars and religious personalities from other regions of India were freely invited to come and live in the Thanjavur region. They were extended all facilities.

Sridhara Venkatesa, popularly known as 'Ayyaval' was a remarkable religious personality of his times. His particular

contribution was towards the propagation of the *Nama Siddhanta* (Doctrine of the Divine Name) and the organisation of *bhajana paddhati* (religious group singing). His qualities of piety, simplicity, sound scholarship, poetic ability and ability to give discourses enabled him to do

his work with ease. He exerted tremendous influence on the religious activity of the Thanjavur region. He cannot be considered an all-India personality in the strict sense of the term. However the fact remains that he is still well remembered in the South, particularly Tamil Nadu. A special verse in praise of Sridhara Ven-



katesa is still sung as an integral part of programmes in the *bhajana matas* of Tamil Nadu.

Sridhara, or *Ayyaval* (meaning 'revered elder' in Tamil) hailed from Mysore. His father Linga Arya originally from Andhra Desa, was the Dewan (Minister) to the Maharajah of Mysore. He was quite



wealthy. Thus Sridhara (the only son) had a comfortable life in all respects. He was also happily married. He was highly learned. A remarkable trait in him even from early years was his intense devotion to Shiva and the tendency to chant His name.

After the death of his father Sridhara was overcome by a sense of detachment. Declining the king's offer of ministership and even renouncing the property already in his possession Sridhara resolved to pursue a religious life. Compelled by an intuitive urge that he had a mission to fulfil, Sridhara moved towards the general direction of Tamil Nadu.

He left Mysore along with his wife and mother and, after visiting various *kshetras*, arrived at Tiruchirappalli. He worshipped Lord Tayumanavaswamy there. People who held important positions at the royal court were able to spot Sridhara and gauge his merits. It was clear that he was a pious man as well as an outstanding scholar. A number of admirers desired that he should live there. But Sridhara did not choose to do so. He shifted to Thanjavur.

Raja Shahaji who was very much devoted to Shiva, with the intention of energising religious activity, gifted the whole village of Tiruvisanallur to a group of (fortyfive) *Vedic* scholars. The village was also named Shahajirajapuram in his honour. The land was declared *sarvamanya*. That is, all taxes were waived for the occupants of this village. Sridhara's destiny was linked with this village.

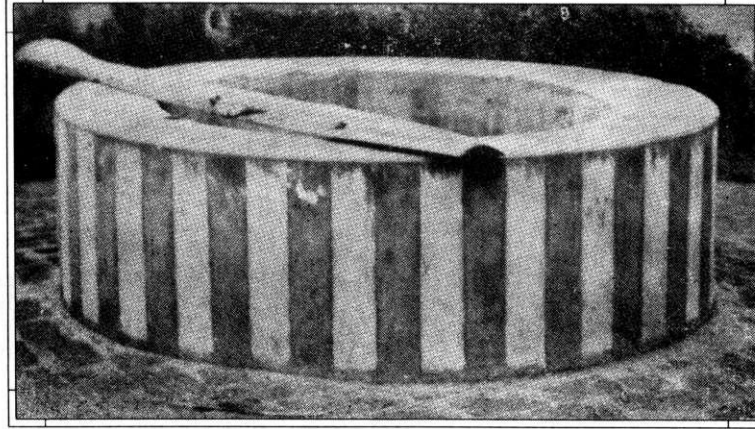
In course of time at the request of the king and others, Sridhara took up residence at Tiruvisanallur. Raja Shahaji was very

much devoted to Sridhara. Sridhara was the pre-eminent religious personality at Tiruvisanallur after his arrival there. Raja Shahaji consulted Sridhara on important affairs of state and he found his judgement was sound on all matters (referred to him). He requested Sridhara to be the Dewan (minister) and the latter complied.

In spite of his spiritual accomplishments Sridhara for outward appearance was just an ordinary man. He spent his time in *nama japa*, reading scriptures and giving instructions and discourses. Sridhara spent all his time in devotional exercises. He chanted the name of the Lord aloud and was often in ecstasy.

He was not happy to deal with affairs of state. Once when he was doing *nama japa*, an emissary of the ruler came to his house and desired to see 'the Dewan'. Sridhara immediately replied on a slip that the Dewan was dead! The king took this literally and came all the way to Tiruvisanallur. He was relieved to see Sridhara alive. Sridhara explained that his position as a devotee was greater than that of a Dewan. This was the reason for writing as he did (to the effect that the Dewan was dead).

The doctrine of the Divine Name was expounded by Bodhendra elaborately. There were frequent meetings between Bodhendra and Sridhara. Bodhendra lived at Govindapuram just a few miles away. The *nama siddhanta* was put on a sound basis as a result of interaction or coordination between these great men. Sridhara made his own contribution to this school. *Vedic* scholars at Tiruvisanallur who believed in the primacy of *Vedic* rituals



The well at Tiruvisanallur

such as *yajnas* and *yagas* did not take *nama japa* seriously and felt that the *Veda* did not provide for such methods or practices. The votaries of *nama siddhanta* school pointed out that the *Veda* did provide for such practices. They also argued that even for those who adopted the ritualistic approach as enjoined in the *Veda*, *nama japa* was an essential prerequisite. A further argument was that the prior conditions enjoined in the *Veda* itself for the proper performance of such rituals were not satisfied in modern times. These conditions involve the cleanliness of the venue as well as the materials used in rituals. Therefore *nama japa* was the more efficacious method. An important argument of the *Vedic* scholars was that the *Veda* would have stopped with presenting *nama japa* and not mentioned rituals at all, if the former alone was effective. Also the good results achieved as a result of performing *Vedic* rituals could never be denied.

Thus, roughly speaking, there was a conflict between *pandits* on the one hand and *bhaktas* on the other. We have no

definite information on the point whether the *Vedic* scholars at Tiruvisanallur who were opposed to the *nama siddhanta* school merely stopped at the level of *mimamsakas* for whom rituals were the end of religious life, or accepted the ultimacy of the *Vedantic* doctrine and the need for *sadhana* on that basis towards God-realisation. All that we know is that a controversy was raging between the two schools then and that it also took the shape of personal animosity.

The response to the *nama siddhanta* was enormous and the *bhajan* procedure advocated by them was followed by the people at large. *Bhajan* halls were founded all over the region. The tradition continues to this day.

Sridhara wrote extensively on various themes. His works include: *Akhyashasti*, *Dayasataka*, *Matrubhutasataka*, *Stuti-paddhati*, *Sivabhaktikalpalatika*, *Sivabhaktalakshana*, *Taravali Stotra*, *Artihara Stuti*, *Kulirashtaka*, *Jambunathashtaka*, *Doshapariharastava*, *Krishnavadasa Manjari*, *Achhyutashtaka* and *Dola Navaratna Malika*.

The following is the most important and well known among the numerous episodes in the life of Sridhara. Once on the occasion of *sraddha* ceremony (the death anniversary) of his father Sridhara went out for his bath in the river. On the way he witnessed a scene which melted his heart. A man of low caste (untouchable) was suffering from the pangs of hunger — he was on the point of death. Moved by pity, Sridhara ordered that the specially prepared food intended to be ceremoniously offered during the ceremony should be given to the *chandala* (untouchable).

This was duly done. The *brahmins* who officiated as priests were shocked and left the place boycotting the ceremony. By the Grace of Mahalinga Swamy two (other) *brahmins* came unexpectedly and helped in duly completing the ceremony as per *sastraic* injunctions.

However the *brahmins* of the village did not tolerate this behaviour of Sridhara. They felt he had committed a serious breach of the *sastras* and insisted he should undergo some expiation. Some purificatory ceremony (*prayaschitta*) was badly needed. A bath in the Ganges was the ideal means for achieving this. If Sridhara did not consent to this, he would be expelled from the community! Sridhara was in a fix. A journey to the North for the sake of a bath in the Ganga was most difficult to make in those days when transport facilities were next to nil. He prayed to Ganga Devi (goddess manifest as the river Ganga). Thereupon Ganga Devi appeared in his dream and assured that she would manifest herself in the well in his house on a particular day. It was the New Moon day of the *Kartika* month (Novem-

ber-December). The waters of the Ganga came into the well as assured. It was not merely a symbolic flow. The water came in torrents, and reaching beyond the bounds of the well, flowed into the streets.<sup>1</sup>

Sridhara as well as the other *brahmins* of the area bathed in the holy waters. His fame as a true *bhakta* was well established, as a result. However the script of *Ganga Ashtakam*, the hymn composed by Sridhara on Ganga Devi, has unfortunately, been lost.

Ayyaval's *Sri Bhagavan Nama Bhushanam* has been quoted with appreciation by Sri Bodhendra in his *Namamruta Rasayanam*. This manuscript has unfortunately been lost. We know of its existence only from the quotations made by Bodhendra.

An error to which many people are prone is that of *murtibheda* (discriminating between different manifestations of the Lord). The distinction sought to be made out between Siva and Vishnu is an instance in point. Sridhara was totally free from this erroneous attitude although his chosen deity was Shiva. More important, he was responsible for guiding the people at large properly on this vital question.

The swelling of the waters in the well at Ayyaval's house is a regular, annual feature. And this event is commemorated (annually) by elaborate programmes comprising *bhajan*, classical music, discourses etc. at Tiruvisanallur, for a period of ten days.

<sup>1</sup> According to some accounts this phenomenon occurred on the day of the *sraddha* itself.

Sridhara's life at Tiruvisanallur was purposeful and eventful. Many are the miracles that have been recorded about his life which bring out the depth of his devotion to Lord Mahalingam (as Lord Shiva is known at Madhyarjuna Khsetra or Tiruvidaimarudur). The temple of Lord Mahalingam was across the river Cauvery and Sridhara used to have the *darshan* as part of his daily routine. One day, due to unprecedented rains the river was overflowing. There was no way of crossing the river (even the boats had stopped plying).

Sridhara was in deep agony at this obstruction to his daily routine. Moved to the depths of his being and full of tears, he composed a hymn to Siva (Lord Mahalingam) entitled *Artihara Stotra*.

A temple priest, an acquaintance of Sridhara, now came to him and gave *vibhuti* (sacred ash) as *prasad*. The priest duly explained why he was there. It was to give relief to Sridhara who must be greatly disappointed at the obstruction to his daily *darsan*.

The next day Sridhara could have his *darsan* as per routine. An enquiry with the

priest concerned brought out the fact that he had never left the temple the previous day. He further confirmed no one could possibly have crossed the river the previous day. It was now clear to Sridhara that Lord Mahalingam had come to his house the previous day in the guise of a priest!

One day Sridhara went for his *darsan* during *ardha jama puja* (night worship). He was looking brighter than usual. He spent much time with the devotees and gave them many instructions.

He was in tears and uttered the following prayer to Lord Shiva:

O Lord! I have grown tired after playing many roles in this huge arena of the world. I have done all this before you, the All-knowing and All-compassionate. It is fitting that you now halt this (*samsaric* existence of mine)!

Few could comprehend what he meant. Moved by emotion Sridhara ran into the *sanctum sanctorum* with a view to embracing the Lord. The priest tried to stop him. But, by then, Sridhara had disappeared within the precincts of the inner shrine!

#### THE SUPREME BRAHMAN

The Supreme Brahman is to be known through the Vedas. Brahman is to be known specially through Knowledge. The Self is Brahman. I am Brahman. The beginning and the end are Brahman. I am He.

Reality is Brahman, ever Brahman. There is nothing else; it is always the Supreme. I am Brahman. I do not exist; there is nothing as egoity.

I am Brahman. "This" does not exist. This Self is ever the greatest. Brahman-Self is to be comprehended through the Vedas. All else is like the horn of a hare.

— Ribhu Gita, XVI11. 5-7.

# The Confluence Of All Paths

P. Sridharan

THE Vedas, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and other religious texts expound philosophy and also lay down various paths to be followed by man in pursuit of the ultimate truth. The *karma marga*, *bhakti marga* and *jnana marga* are the chief among the many paths that have been commended and dealt with in great detail. Great many have been the *rishis* and saints that have lived as shining exemplars of these *margas*. The sacred texts give numerous examples of devotees who have received the grace of God through various means. In this age of *kali* man suffers from lack of peace. There is an inner vacuum that he finds hard to fill. Wherefrom can he derive solace and comfort? If such examples as given in the ancient texts were actually to exist, will not man be benefitted? If all the various paths known to mankind were to merge into one single grand path, would it not be the consummation of all that is best in spiritual history?

There always exists a doubt in the minds of serious spiritual aspirants as to which of the various paths commended in spiritual literature is superior. Spiritual teachers over the centuries have advocated various methods of *sadhana* which they themselves have practised. Many devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi have questioned him on this point. The important question is whether Sri Bhagavan ever insisted on devotees following any particular path.

The following conversation throws light on this question:

D: Is a *jnani* different from a *yogi*? What is the difference?

M: *Bhagavad Gita* says that a *jnani* is the true *yogi* and also a true *bhakta*. *Yoga* is only a *sadhana* and *jnana* is the *siddhi*.

D: Is *yoga* necessary?

M: It is a *sadhana*. It will not be necessary after *jnana* is attained. All the *sadhana*s are called *yogas*, e.g., *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *jnana yoga*, *ashtanga yoga*. What is *yoga*? *Yoga* means 'union'. *Yoga* is possible only when there is '*viyoga*' (separation). The person is now under the delusion of *viyoga*. This delusion must be removed. The method of removing it is called *yoga*.

D: Which method is the best?

B: It depends upon the temperament of the individual. Every person is born with the *samskaras* of past lives. One of the methods will be found easy for one person and another method for another. There is no definiteness about it.<sup>1</sup>

In the following passage, Bhagavan indicates the real purpose of all these methods:

<sup>1</sup> Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No.580.

There are many methods. You may practise Self-enquiry, asking yourself 'Who am I?'; or if that does not appeal to you, you may meditate on 'I am Brahman', or some other theme; or you may concentrate on an incantation or do invocation. The object in every case is to make the mind one-pointed, to concentrate it on one thought and thereby exclude the many other thoughts. If we do this, the one thought also eventually goes and the mind is extinguished at its source.<sup>2</sup>

Although Sri Bhagavan's cardinal teaching was *Who am I?*, a practical guide to *jnana marga* reinforced through his silence, he did not discourage the pursuit of other paths *viz.*, *bhakti* and *karma*. Of course more than once he has stated that finally one has to resort to Self-enquiry in order to realise the truth.

Sri Bhagavan was a living example of how one who takes to *karma*, *bhakti* or *jnana margas* should live in the world. The very purpose of his taking a body was to live the life of a perfect human being — to show man how he ought to conduct himself and achieve happiness and peace.

It is a known fact that Sri Bhagavan participated in the various works and activities of the Ashram. He rose early, at 2-30 to 3 in the morning and went to the kitchen to cut vegetables, grind pulses and lentils and help in the preparation of the morning breakfast. All this was done with a perfection that was the despair of experienced and seasoned cooks. Not a grain was wasted. Everything would be done in a clean and methodical manner. Sri Bhagavan had a way of preparing delicious dishes out of cheap and simple ingredients.

Sampurnamma, who lived in the Ashram and served in its kitchen says:

He was very strict with us in the kitchen. His orders were to be obeyed to the last detail. No choice was left to us to guess or try on our own. We had to do blindly as he taught us and by doing so, we were convinced that he was always right and that we would never fail if we put our trust in him. When I think of it now, I can see clearly that he used the work in the kitchen as a background for spiritual training. He taught us that work is love for others, that we never can work for ourselves. By his very presence he taught us that we are always in the presence of God and that all work is His. He used cooking to teach us religion and philosophy.

In the kitchen he was the master cook aiming at perfection in taste and appearance. One would think that he liked good food and enjoyed a hearty meal. Not at all! At dinner time he would mix up the little food he would allow to be served on his leaf — the sweet, the sour, and the savoury — everything together, and gulp it down carelessly as if he had no taste in his mouth. When we told him that it was not right to mix such nicely made up dishes, he would say, "Enough of multiplicity. Let us have some unity".

It was obvious that all the extraordinary care he gave to cooking was for our sake. He wanted us to keep good health and

<sup>2</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, by Devaraja Mudaliar, entry for 19-10-1945.

to those who worked in the kitchen, cooking became a deep spiritual experience. "You must cover your vegetables when you cook them," he used to say, "Then only will they keep their flavour and be fit for food. It is the same with the mind. You must put a lid over it and let it simmer quietly. Then only does a man become food fit for God to eat".<sup>3</sup>

Sri Bhagavan read proofs of Ashram publications with the diligence and care that rose above the level of professional proof readers. Proofs were read and re-read until all mistakes were corrected. He would however often refrain from correcting the matter or the story itself, even if certain facts mentioned in it were incorrect. This attitude of his proves that for the *jnani* doing the work on hand perfectly was all that mattered. Sri Bhagavan also used to bind books, stitch leaf-plates used for eating food and feed the monkeys, peacocks and squirrels that came to him eagerly, seeking his personal attention. Sri Bhagavan has personally copied out in his own hand his poetic and literary works as well as other *Vedantic* works for the sake of devotees. The number of such fortunate devotees is legion. His handwritten manuscripts prove that he was perfection personified. His handwriting in the four languages in which he wrote (Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam) is finer than print and is itself worthy of worship.

What better commentary can be offered on *nishkama karma* than the incident given below?

Mr. Rangachari, a Telugu Pandit in Voorhees' College at Vellore, asked

about *nishkama karma*. There was no reply. After a time Sri Bhagavan went up the hill and a few followed him, including the *pandit*. There was a thorny stick lying on the way which Sri Bhagavan picked up; he sat down and began leisurely to work at it. The thorns were cut off, the knots were made smooth, the whole stick was polished with a rough leaf. The whole operation took about six hours. Everyone was wondering at the fine appearance of the stick made of a spiky material. A shepherd boy put in his appearance on the way as the group moved off. He had lost his stick and was at a loss. Sri Bhagavan immediately gave the new one in his hand to the boy and passed on.

The *pandit* said that this was the matter-of-fact answer to his question.<sup>4</sup>

Sri Bhagavan used to say that *bhakti* was *jnana mata*. There is ample evidence to show that only a *jnani* can be a true *bhakta*. Adi Shankara, the foremost apostle of *advaita*, was an example of the *jnani*, being the supreme *bhakta*. His soulful devotional poetry in praise of the gods and his codifying and establishing of temple worship at various centres throughout the land, besides consolidating the *shanmathas*<sup>5</sup> and founding of *mutts*, bear ample testimony

<sup>3</sup> From *Ramana Smriti*, Second Edition 1999, page 170.

<sup>4</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No. 118.

<sup>5</sup> The six basic branches that comprise the Hindu religion: *Saivism* (worship of Shiva), *Vaishnavism* (worship of Vishnu), *Saktam* (worship of Shakti), *Ganapatyam* (worship of Ganapati), *Kaumaram* (worship of Lord Subramanya) and *Sauram* (worship of the Sun).

to the fact that he was not the harbinger of an abstruse teaching. He was an authentic master who belonged to a glorious tradition which combined work, faith, devotion and knowledge into a wholesome blend. Sri Bhagavan, the perfect *atyashrami* in the line of Suka, Vamadeva and Jada Bharatha was also, like Shankara, a true *bhakta*.

Sri Bhagavan used to be visibly moved while narrating stories of great devotees. He could not control his tears and more often than not, it would be impossible for him to continue the story beyond a certain point.

Once, the great poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya asked Sri Bhagavan:

“How is it, Bhagavan, we sometimes feel choked with tears in Bhagavan’s Presence?” Bhagavan smiled and kept quiet. I (Devaraja Mudaliar) said, “It is a good thing if one’s tears gush forth like that and even of Bhagavan it is recorded that when he used to go and stand before the image in the temple at Madura (before he came here), tears used to flow involuntarily out of his eyes, not as the result of any joy or pain, but purely out of *bhakti*.” Bhagavan was thereupon kind enough to add, “Even after coming here such a thing has happened. Even on reading or hearing touching passages from books such a thing has happened.”<sup>6</sup>

Devaraja Mudaliar in his *Day by Day with Bhagavan* has recorded several episodes in which there was such open expression of *bhakti* by Sri Bhagavan:

As I was entering the hall about 2-50 p.m., Bhagavan was reading out

from the Tamil *Arunachala Puranam* the verses in which it is said that Gauri, after crossing the several streets of Arunachalam, reached Gautama’s Asramam. When Bhagavan came to the verses dealing with Gautama’s joy at Gauri’s coming to his Asramam, Bhagavan could not go on, for tears filled his eyes and emotion choked his voice. So he laid aside the book and Desai continued his reading of the manuscript. I may here record that I have noticed on more than one occasion in the past how Bhagavan could not proceed with the reading of any deeply devotional portions of Tamil works such as *Tevaram* and devotional hymns of Thayumanavar. This afternoon when I took from Bhagavan the above *Arunachala Puranam* and referred to the portion which moved him so deeply and told him, in effect, that I had discovered his plight which he tried to hide from us all, he remarked, “I don’t know how those people who perform *kalakshepam* and explain such passages to audiences manage to do it without breaking down. I suppose they must first make their hearts hard like stone before starting their work”.<sup>7</sup>

A conversation the famous musician Dilip Kumar Roy had with Sri Bhagavan once and for all puts at rest all speculation on which path is greater:

<sup>6</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, by Devaraja Mudaliar, entry for 5-6-1945.

<sup>7</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, by Devaraja Mudaliar, entry for 12-12 1945.



Dilip Kumar Roy: What is the best way of killing the ego?

Bhagavan: To each person that way is the best which appears easiest or appeals most. All the ways are equally good, as they lead to the same goal, which is the merging of the ego in the Self. What the *bhakta* calls surrender, the man who does *vichara* calls *jnana*. Both are trying only to take the ego back to the source from which it sprang and make it merge there.

...

When Roy was taking leave, he asked Bhagavan whether *bhakti marga* could be followed with advantage and whether it would lead to *jnana*.

Bhagavan: Yes. Yes. *Bhakti* is *jnana mata* i.e., the mother of *jnana*.<sup>8</sup>

On another occasion Dilip Kumar Roy asked Bhagavan:

According to the *Maha Yoga*, you say that the sages have not said anything to contradict each other. Yet, we find one advocating *bhakti*, another *jnana*, etc., leading thus to all sorts of quarrels.

Bhagavan: There is really nothing contradictory in such teachings. When for instance a follower of *bhakti marga* declares that *bhakti* is the best, he really means by the word *bhakti* what the *jnana marga* man calls *jnana*. There is no difference in the state or its description by attributes or transcendence of attributes. Only different thinkers have used different words. All these different *margas*, or paths or *sadhanas* lead to the same goal. What is once a means

becomes itself the goal. When that happens, *dhyana*, *bhakti* or *jnana*, which was at one time a conscious and painful effort, becomes the normal and natural state, spontaneously and without effort.<sup>9</sup>

Another incident recorded by Suri Nagamma reveals Sri Bhagavan's *bhakti* towards Arunachala:

The day before yesterday being full moon, the usual *Deepotsava* (festival of lights) was celebrated on a grand scale. This morning Sri Arunachaleswarar started for *giri pradakshina* (going round the hill) with the usual retinue and devotees and accompaniment of music. By the time the procession reached the Asramam Gate, Sri Niranjanananda Swami (the *Sarvadhikari*) came out with Asramam devotees, offered coconuts and camphor to Sri Arunachaleswarar, and paid homage when the procession was stopped and the priests performed *arati* (waving of the lights) to the God. Just then Sri Bhagavan happened to be going towards the *goshala* (cowshed) and seeing the grandeur of it all he sat down on the pial near the tap by the side of the book depot. The *arati* plate offered to Arunachaleswarar was brought to Bhagavan by Asramam devotees and Sri Bhagavan took a little *vibhuti* (holy ashes) and applied it to his forehead, saying in an undertone "*Appakku Pillai*

<sup>8</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, by Devaraja Mudaliar, entry for 2-11-1945.

<sup>9</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, by Devaraja Mudaliar, entry for 29-10-1945.

*Adakkam*" ("The son is beholden to the father"). His voice seemed choked with emotion as he spoke. The expression on his face proved the ancient saying "*bhakti poornathaya jnanam*" (the culmination of Devotion is Knowledge). Sri Bhagavan is Lord Siva's son. Sri Ganapati Muni's saying, that he is Skanda incarnate, was confirmed. It struck us that Bhagavan was teaching us that since all creatures are the children of *Ishwara*, even a *jnani* should be beholden to *Ishwara*.<sup>10</sup>

Seekers have the tendency to presume that the various paths are all different and exclusive of each other. Balarama Reddy in his reminiscences cites an instance in which Sri Bhagavan clarified that this was not so:

Balarama Reddy says:

Scholars often dispute why Krishna omitted *bhakti* in Verse 3, Chapter III of the *Gita* which says, "Arjuna! In the world two courses of *sadhana* have been laid down by Me in the past. In the case of the *Sankhya yoga* the *sadhana* proceeds along the path of knowledge. In the case of the

*karma yogi* it proceeds along the path of action."

Some scholars say that *bhakti* is in between *jnana* and *karma*.

When I asked Bhagavan about this, he said that *bhakti* was not a separate path but was included in *jnana* and *karma yogas*. "Without *bhakti* there can be no *jnana* and *karma*."<sup>11</sup>

The most important point to be remembered is that Sri Bhagavan has given us in Self-enquiry an all-embracing path which can be practised in the conditions of the world of today.

Sri Bhagavan says:

To be absorbed again into one's Source  
Is *Karma, Bhakti, Yoga, Jnanam*, all  
These things in truth. Or put in other  
words  
Good works, Devotion, Union, Gnosis,  
too.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, by Suri Nagamma, entry for 21 November 1945.

<sup>11</sup> *Moments Remembered*, p.36.

<sup>12</sup> *Upadesa Saram*, verse 10, *Poems of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Translated by Major Chadwick.

### THE LOVE OF GOD

God, despite Himself, is ever hanging over some bait to lure us into Him. I never give God thanks for loving me, because He cannot help it; whether He would or not, it is His nature to. What I do thank Him for is for not being able, of His goodness, to leave off loving.

— Meister Eckhart.

## What Remains?

By Arthur Osborne

You can't give; you can only refrain from stealing,  
Like a servant who says: "All right, I'll let you keep  
Your change from marketing, your soap and cheese."  
Nothing is yours to give, what 'thing', what 'you'?  
You imagine a person, then you think he owns  
A cluster of electrons that you call a wife,  
A house, a car, children, suits of clothes.  
First find out if he exists at all.  
In a world where things break down into a cloud  
Of whirling atoms with no taste or smell,  
No shape of colour, just a grey — what?  
Energy? Mass? Not thingness anyway,  
And thoughts about it — whirling, never still,  
What is it you call 'you'?  
This minute's body-shaped bag of atoms?  
This minute's thoughts? A you that has the thoughts?  
What underlies them? What constant is there,  
If anything? You'll not find out by thinking  
Because that's thoughts. Nor by arguing.  
There's only one way: that's to try and see —  
Stop thoughts and see if anything remains.

# The Mystic Poetry of William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

By Alan Jacobs

SAMUEL COLERIDGE lived in Nether Stowey in the 1790's and his dear friend William Wordsworth moved to be near him at Alfoxden. Together these two lofty souls merged their understanding to reflect on God, Nature and how to awaken the common man to a sense of their reality. They were full of admiration for each other at this time and composed a joint collection of poems together, the *Lyrical Ballads*. This collection was planned to change the face of English Romantic poetry using the everyday language of common folk, no longer using the high flown vocabulary of the stylised court circles which had dominated seventeenth and eighteenth century English verse.

Wordsworth has been universally regarded as an original Nature-mystic. That is to say, he was inspired by natural beauty to reach the heights of ecstatic feelings normally reserved for the religious mystics of all traditions. These revelations arose spontaneously and his poetry was an earnest attempt to communicate his experience with mankind. As with most great poets he wished to lift the vision of the reader to a higher perspective and open the heart.

He was born in the picturesque Lake District of England, a verdant and pleasant pastoral landscape surrounded by great trees, soft hills, large lakes, running rivers, mists, rain, sunshine and rainbows. His father, a successful lawyer, ensured that his talented son had a good education at the nearby grammar school. He was very close to his favourite sister Dorothy, who later was to record an intimate diary of their shared moments. These journals have found a place in literature and throw light on the everyday customs of the bard. He shared a prodigious gift for poetry and his first published work was dedicated to Dorothy in 1787.

After school he went to Cambridge but was unsettled by the atmosphere of worldliness and sophistication. He preferred the solitude of his beloved Nature.

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The author was inspired to write this article sitting by the beautiful green serene landscape of the Quantock Hills in Somerset where he is staying.

As with Shelley and the other young Romantics, he broadly supported the French Revolution but later became more conservative in his outlook.

In 1793 he visited Tintern Abbey where he reached visionary heights, as may be seen from the following lines:

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind.  
With tranquil restoration:— feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:— that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on, —  
Until, the breach of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

It is as if the poet had reached the *samadhi* state. He then decided with Coleridge to use his powers for the benefit of mankind in a poetic diction they would understand and enjoy. Their first venture was published as the *Lyrical Ballads*.

He now commenced a major work, *The Excursion*, which, in narrative form portrayed the inner contemplation of a countryman recluse, a natural hermit-sage. His only early visions of Reality were expressed in *Intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood*, a long meditative ode.

The following lines give expression to his vision:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy  
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

He also like Shakespeare and Milton loved the epigrammatic force and power of the sonnet form which he developed in many lyrical sequences. Eventually he decided to express his debt to the Christian faith in his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* which tell the entire history of Christianity in Britain.

He was appointed to the august post of National Poet Laureate after the death of Robert Southey in 1843.

All his life he had been composing and reviving his poetic autobiography *The Prelude*, which he intended to be followed by a very long poem containing his whole philosophic vision. *The Excursion* was the first and only part completed. *The Prelude's* first version was completed in 1805. But never satisfied, he continued revising the epic Fourteen Books for the rest of his life. A revised version was published posthumously in 1850. A work of consummate genius, it is perhaps one of the greatest poems in English literature.

Here are some excerpts from his two major works, *The Excursion* and *The Prelude*, which he believed were of his best. They illustrate his genius and heights of expression.

His vision of unconditional universal love is best illustrated in a passage from Book I. *The Wanderer* (a hermit-sage) is obviously autobiographical:

Such was the Boy — but for the growing Youth  
 What soul was his, when, from the naked top  
 Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun  
 Rise up and bathe the world in light! He looked —  
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
 And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
 Beneath him:— Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
 And in their silent faces could he read  
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
 Nor any voice of joy: his spirit drank  
 The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,  
 All melted into him, they swallowed up  
 His animal being; in them did he live,  
 And by them did he live; they were his life.  
 In such access of mind, in such high hour  
 Of visitation from the living God,  
 Thought was not: in enjoyment it expired.  
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request:  
 Rapt into still communion that transcends  
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.  
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
 That made him; it was blessedness and love!

In the same poem his hero gives his vision of peace:

And, looking up to those enormous elms,  
 He said, "Tis now the hour of deepest noon,  
 At this still season of repose and peace,  
 This hour when all things which are not at rest  
 Are cheerful; while this multitude of flies  
 With tuneful hum is filling all the air;

Why should a tear be on an old Man's cheek?  
 Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
 And in the weakness of humanity,  
 From natural wisdom turn our hearts away;  
 To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears;  
 And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
 The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?"

At the close of Book 1 of this monumental poem he seems spontaneously to have struck the *Vedantic* idea that life was a dream:

I well remember that those very plumes  
 Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,  
 By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,  
 As once I passed, into my heart conveyed  
 So still an image of tranquillity,  
 So calm and still, and looked so beautiful  
 Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,  
 That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
 From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
 That passing shows of Being leave behind  
 Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain,  
 Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit  
 Whose meditative sympathies repose  
 Upon the breast of Faith. I turned away,  
 And walked along my road in happiness.

In Book III he seems to visit the heights of Self-realisation:

— Hail, Contemplation! From the stately towers,  
 Reared by the industrious hand of human art  
 To lift thee high above the misty air  
 And turbulence of murmuring cities vast;  
 From academic groves, that have for thee  
 Been planted, hither come and find a lodge  
 To which thou may'st resort for holier peace —  
 From whose calm centre thou, through height or depth,  
 May'st penetrate, wherever truth shall lead.  
 Measuring through all degrees, until the scale



Of time and conscious nature disappear,  
Lost in unsearchable eternity!

And in Book IV, he gives as the antidote to despair, an absolute faith in God, come what may:

The Wanderer said:— 'One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life:  
Exists — one only; an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents, converting them to good.  
— The darts of anguish *fix* not where the seat  
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified  
By acquiescence in the Will supreme  
For time and for eternity; by faith,  
Faith absolute in God, including hope,  
And the defence that lies in boundless love  
Of his perfections; with habitual dread  
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured  
Impatiently ill-done, or left undone,  
To the dishonour of his holy name.  
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!  
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;  
Restore their languid spirits, and recall  
Their lost affections unto thee and thine!'

But it is in the *Prelude* that we find him soaring to a pinnacle of understanding.

In Book I he outlines his youthful vow to be a pilgrim dedicated to truth:

I gazed with growing love, a higher power  
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work  
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,  
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused,  
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,  
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,  
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup

Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once  
 To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.  
 From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun  
 Had almost touched the horizon; casting then  
 A backward glance upon the curling cloud  
 Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;  
 Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,  
 But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,  
 Even with the chance equipment of that hour,  
 The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.

Three hundred and forty lines later in this poem composed in the Heroic flexible blank verse of Shakespeare he gives a vision of man's situation.

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
 Like harmony in music: there is a dark  
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
 In one society. How strange that all  
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,  
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused  
 Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,  
 And that a needful part, in making up  
 The calm existence that is mine when  
 Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!  
 Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ.  
 Whether her fearless visitings, or those  
 That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light  
 Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use  
 Severer interventions, ministry  
 More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

This is clearly followed fifty lines later when he recognises the *sphurana* of the Heart:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,  
 That givest to forms and images a breath  
 And everlasting motion, not in vain

By day or starlight thus from my first dawn  
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
 The passions that build up our human soul;  
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
 But with high objects, with enduring things —  
 With life and Nature, purifying thus  
 The elements of feeling and of thought,  
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Finally, this is a summing up of his vision in a passage from Book VIII of the *Prelude*:

Enough of humble argument; recall  
 My Song! those high emotions which thy voice  
 Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth  
 Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,  
 When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,  
 And all the several frames of things, like stars,  
 Through every magnitude distinguishable,  
 Shone mutually indebted, or half lost  
 Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy  
 Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,  
 Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,  
 As of all visible natures, crown, though born  
 Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being  
 Both in perception and discernment, first  
 In every capability of rapture,  
 Through the divine effect of power and love;  
 As, more than anything we know, instinct  
 With godhead, and by reason and by will,  
 Acknowledging dependency sublime.

It would be possible to continue this survey by endless expansion of his mystical insights throughout his work. However poems too familiar with the reading public have been avoided.

By quoting from *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* the writer hopes to interest the reader in these two great poems where the richest views of the poet's mystical experience may be discovered.

## BOOK REVIEWS

DEVI: Goddesses of India: Ed. by John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff. 1998 Pub: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi 110007. Pp.352; Rs.195 (pb).

This book is a collection of thirteen essays written on the goddesses of India by American academics. The editorial essay is followed by two parts titled "Goddess as Supreme and Goddess as Consort" and "Goddesses who possess and mother". The first section contains essays on Dêvî, Vindhyavâsinî, Kâlî, Srî and Râdhâ. The second section deals with Gangâ, Saranyu/Samjñâ, Sêrânvâlî, Bhagavati, Satî, Bhârat Mâta and an epilogue on the Western Kâlî. The book is a sociological study of religion and most the writers are interested in the power equations that determine the growth of goddesses. Issues of class, caste, race, gender and politics with some psychoanalysis in varying degrees are the main preoccupations. The main thesis (if one must be identified) is that Goddess worship thrives in India as nowhere else, and that the Western movement towards the Goddess springs from the need to empower women, while in India such worship is ambivalent in its advantages for women.

There is much painstaking research and scholarship here. The chapters on *Dêvî* by Coburn, *Srî* by Narayanan, *Kâlî* by Kinsley, *Râdhâ* by Wulff are insightful and contribute to an understanding of these goddesses and the meanings behind their worship. The ultimate reality as feminine and its difference from and relationship to the concepts of *purusha*, *prakrti*, *mâyâ* and *sakti* are brought out in Coburn's study of the *Dêvî Mâhâtmya*. The uniqueness of Srî in her distinct identity and her inseparable oneness with Vishnu, in spite of what the texts say, is brought out by Vasudhâ Nârâyanan. Kinsley analyses the "terrible" Kâlî as a goddess who ultimately either turns us towards *dharmâ* or beyond it to *môksha*. Wulff sees the supremacy of Râdhâ over Krishna in her unconditional love, in both the 'classical' tradition of Rûpâ Gôsvâmi's Sanskrit plays and the popular *padâvali kîrtana* tradition. The arguments are substantiated from the texts. Eck's *Gangâ* is analysed as liquid *sakti*, an all-encompassing mother who accepts her devotees unconditionally. The analysis is adequate even if one has to plough through some obscure writing. The chapter on *Sêrânvâlî* by Erndl is also written with some sympathy and the phenomenon of possession in its human and divine dimensions is explicated. So

also, the essay on the Western *Kâlî* by McDermott analyses the ways in which Kâlî is worshipped and proffers a cautionary note on interpreting a goddess that originated in a culture entirely different from the one in which it is worshipped presently. Most of these essays point to the feminine principle as the Supreme which is not necessarily linked with a male deity.

However, several aspects of the book perplex the reader. First, what is the reason for the choice of these particular goddesses for study? Why not for instance, Sarasvati, Gowri (a benign aspect of Pârvasî), Ândâl (the mortal, turned goddess), Gâyatri, etc.? Overall, the disproportionate emphasis on Kâlî/Durgâ points to a Western bias. If "lived religion" is supposed to be represented, then what is *Saranyu* who is not worshipped, and not even known to millions of Hindus, doing in this book? Again, *Bhârat Mâta*, will not be considered a "goddess" in quite the same way as the other goddesses in Hindu psyche. Satî(s) too occupy a dubious status.

The problem of this book also lies in some of the interpretations which are highly questionable. In a country like India where even 'basic assumptions' such as the Âryan invasion are now being debated, interpretations of complex religious and ritual practices must be made with utmost caution. Many of the conclusions are therefore at best suppositions, negating the very purpose of an objective study.

The chapter on *Vindhyavâsinî* comes across as singularly un insightful. The "pilgrimage" of the author to the place of worship becomes an occasion to highlight the corruption rampant in places of worship with overemphasis on the crowds that mill around them. The superior tone of this portion of the essay is uncalled for. There is criticism in this essay that the local *Vindhya Mâhâtmya* is sidelined in favour of the better known *Dêvî Mâhâtmya* in the process of "Sanskritisation" and for economic gain by the local priests. According to the author, one of the reasons is that there are detailed instructions for *tântric* practitioners which the priests do not care to reveal to the public, because these are regional. However, the author also points out that the text itself repeatedly exhorts that this secret wisdom is not to be divulged to the uninitiated. The contradiction in the argument is obvious.

Harlan on *Satî Gôdâvari* suggests that one of the several reasons for the resistance to the

practice of Satī from the people is "powerful psychological ambivalence about according power to females". Why is it not seen as a 'conscience-stricken' response of the community to murder and abetment in suicide? At the same time, it is surprising that the legend of the original Satī (Pārvati), who is not worshipped, goes unmentioned in this essay.

McKean's purpose is to establish the relationship between the Hindu nationalist movement, the VHP (and indirectly the BJP) with the relatively recent Bhārat Māta temple in Hardwar. Much depends on how the idea of 'goddess' is defined. There are many believing Hindus for whom Bhārat Māta would not be a goddess as there would be others who would see her as one—with or without the temple. The mere construction of a temple does not make a god/goddess. If that were indeed the case, then the film stars for whom temples exist in the South would have to be considered as elevated to the status of gods/goddesses. And, believing in Bhārat Māta as a goddess does not necessarily mean that one is toeing the 'Hindu' nationalist line.

This need to see all of religion in its social context pervades almost all the essays. The book does not provide much insight into the inner life. Written by Westerners and Westernised Indians, it is a book for their own kind with a particular agenda. It is not a book for believers and spiritual practitioners.

— P.Sailaja

**SERVANT OF GOD: Swami Ramdas:** by Susunaga Weeraperuma - 1998. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, N.Delhi 110007. pp257, Rs.50

**DIVINE MESSENGERS OF OUR TIME:** by Susunaga Weeraperuma. 1998, Sri Satguru Publications, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, N.Delhi 110007. pp166, Rs.250

Books, as Swāmi Vivēkānanda pointed out, can never substitute for spiritual practice. Still it is true that a chance reading of a book or even a sentence in it has had a tremendous impact on many a sādḥaka, setting him firmly on the quest for the Ultimate Reality. The two books under review by Susunaga Weeraperuma offer interesting insights into the inner world of man.

The author of the two books under review has had personal contact with many of the saints he writes about and has first-hand knowledge of their teachings.

*Servant Of God* serves as an excellent introduction to the teachings of Swāmi Rāmdās. The anthology extracted from many books of Rāmdās

covering all aspects of spiritual life—Faith, Prayer, Contemplation, Death, Meaning of Good and Evil, Japa, Godhead, Relation between God and Man, etc., contains the essence of Papa's teachings.

The second book *Divine Messengers Of Our Time* brings together the great saints and Mahātmās of the Twentieth Century. They are Mahātmā Gāndhi, Yōgaswāmi of Srī Lankā, Srī Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swāmi Rāmdās, Swāmi Sivānanda, Paramahansa Yōgānanda, Srīla Prabhupāda, Peace Pilgrim and Bishrul Hafi. These messengers of God have demonstrated in our time the validity of the teachings of all saints of all time. The author has met some of these saints and so there is a sense of immediacy when he writes about them. As the author points out in the chapter of Yōgaswāmi, the strange saint of Srī Lankā, "The experience of conversing with a living master in a remarkable interview was far more instructive than reading many books expounding the ageless spiritual and philosophical wisdom". The inclusion of two great saints of our time who may not be so well-known as the others, namely Peace Pilgrim and Bishrul Hafi, has immensely enriched the book. All the chapters lead to one conclusion, that is, paths may seem different but the destination is the same.

— Prof. Leela Subramoni

**THE BRHADĀRANYAKA UPANISHAD (vols. 2&3)** with transliteration, translation and detailed commentary by Sri Nitya Chaitanya Yati. 1996. Pub: D.K.Printworld, F-52 Bali Nagar, N. Delhi 110015. Pp466/657; Rs.300/ Rs.300.

Srī Chaitanya Yati, the editor of this massive 3-volume work under review, is a disciple of Srī Natarāja Guru who was the *priya sishya* of the great Srī Narāyana Guru, in himself the Renaissance in Kerala, nearly destroying age-old prejudices by leading a movement with a vision and intrepidity rare enough in general, but particularly notable in a person born into a rigid but disgraceful *apartheid* of our own making involving measureless personal and group humiliation. Srī Natarāja Guru's commentary on the *Gītā* was altogether a remarkable achievement. Nitya Chaitanya inherits the uniquely perceptive wisdom of these two scholars and shows himself to be a worthy successor.

The Brhadāranyaka Upanishad is truly *brhat* being one of the two longest Upanishads of the Dasōpanishads constituting the *sruti prasthāna* of the Prasthānatrayī. It belongs to the Sukla Yajur Vēda, is the concluding section of the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* and its companion in this Vēda is the

amazingly short *Īsôpanishad*. The editor-translator of this edition is mistaken in thinking that Yâjnavalkya cleared the Yajur Vêda of excrescences which still survive in the Krishna Yajur Vêda. The Taittirîya, Katha and other Upanishads which are in Krishna Yajur Vêda are not in any sense of the term "excrescences". These Upanishads form essential pillars of the structure of Advaita Vêdânta.

The first volume *Madhu Kânda* [already reviewed] has the famous Maitrêyi-Yâjnavalkya *samvâda*. We may here point out that Sankara in his interpretation of the word *âtma* has been misunderstood as emphasising the limitations of human attachments..

The second *kânda* is really Yâjnavalkya's *kânda* and it is aptly called *Muni Kânda*. The debate in the royal philosophic *sadas* of king Janaka is magnificently enlivened by the questions of Asva, Arthabhâga, Gârghi and others, all sharpshot at Yâjnavalkya whose replies to the vast issues raised are the Upanishad in essence. The third, *Khilâ Kânda* has Prajâpati thundering 'da!' (*damyatâ*: self-control); 'da!' (*datta*: generosity); and 'da!' (*dayadhvam*: compassion) to the gods, humans and demons respectively.

We tender respectful congratulations to the editor and his publisher for a great task truly greatly done.

— Prof.S.Râmaswâmy

SAIVISM: Some Glimpses: by G. V. Tagare. 1996. Pub: D.K. Printworld, F-52, Bali Nagar, New Delhi, 110015. Pp 161, Rs.180.

The ancient Saiva thinkers tried to comprehend the Reality (Siva) and His relation with man (*jîvâtman*) and the world. The author states in his preface "It is neither possible nor necessary for a layman to enter into intricate subtleties of the various doctrines promulgated by them. I propose to elucidate the main features of the following prominent schools of Saivism: (1) Pâsupatism; (2) Kashmir Saivism; (3) Siddhânta Saivism; (4) Sivâdvaita; and (5) Vîra-Saivism. These schools advise worship, japa, and yoga for the realization of Siva and do not advise black-magic, or reprehensible types of worship like *pancha makara pûjâ* (involving intake of wine, meat, sexual intercourse and the like). Those are Vâmachâra (left handed) types of Saiva sects."

The introduction giving a good definition of Saivism, is followed by the first chapter throwing some light on various historical interpretations of Linga worship. Chapters two through six are expositions and commentaries, both historical and

personal, on primarily the sectarian differences of five major schools of Saivism. Chapter seven is an epilogue in which he places the five major schools into four categories of 'thought-current': "1. Monism (*advaita*): Kashmir Saivism; 2. Dualism-cum-monism (*dvaitâdvaita*): Pâsupatism, Vîra-Saivism; 3. Pluralistic realism (*dvaita*): Siddhânta Saivism; and 4. Qualified monism (*visishtâdvaita*): Srîkantha's Sivâdvaita." The author explicitly excludes other "minor" sects from his categories. He concludes his book with a simplified glossary, bibliography and index.

Dr Tagare believes that "Saivism has relevance in the world of cut-throat competition and tremendous nerve-racking tension. If one spares some time for *upâsana* ... one can gain some peace of mind and poise and successfully cope with one's job... Saivism is a panacea to all [the] side effects of modernism."

Dr. Tagare's scriptural translations of Hindu classics are becoming legendary. He is known as a respected scholar, researcher and author. However, in this reviewer's opinion, after being an English-speaking student of Saivism and Vêdânta for many years, I would hesitate to recommend this book as an introduction or overview of Saivism. Though filled with interesting information and some fresh views regarding the differences between five major Saivite sects, I personally found difficulty in feeling a smooth and consistent flow of information. Sometimes the presentation of information seemed confusing instead of clarifying and elucidating while comparing and contrasting the five major sects. An emphasis on similarities of Saivite sects instead of differences might help the reader to gain a clearer understanding of Saivism as a whole. Perhaps personal and moralistic views might be stated as such and presented with some opposing views.

May I respectfully suggest that a re-presentation in these lines might bring the next edition up to Dr. Tagare's impeccable standards and fully capture the Divine Spirit of all the Saivite traditions.

— Chandrasekhar (A. Roy Horn)

VEDIC ARYANS AND THE ORIGINS OF CIVILIZATION: by N.S. Rajaram and David Frawley. (2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn.)1997 .Pub: Voice of India, Ansari Rd., New Delhi 110002. Pp.328; Rs.450

There has been a steady stream of books published in the last few years refuting the long held academic claim that the origins of the Vêdic civilisation of India is due to the invasion of India by a so-called tribe originating in Central Asia, who descended on the Gangetic plain around



1,500 BC or thereabouts. It was a notion conceived of by 19th Century academia in Europe based on linguistic tools that had been at that time recently developed to understand the apparent similarities between Indo-European languages and Sanskrit. These philologists used the rather crude knowledge acquired by their superficial researches to foist the mistaken idea that since the languages had affinities they were *ipso facto*, one and the same in their origins from a single race. This false conception has not prevented the theory to continue a charmed life when a new wave of academics with a Marxist bent persist in elaborating a doctrine bearing no relation to the accumulated facts to the contrary. The whole story of how this Āryan invasion theory took hold is as fascinating as the true picture seen today with all the research provided outside main-stream intellectual establishment.

J. Jayarāman in the Jayanti '95 issue of *The Mountain Path* initially broached the subject for the readers in his long review of *The Āryan Invasion Theory* by Shrikānt Tālagiri.

The present book under review gives the reader a fairly broad but incisive resumé of the hoax that was perpetrated due to the politics of 19th century particularly concerning Germany, and the role Max Mueller played, and as well the missionary zeal displayed by those who wanted to discredit the indigenous culture and learning of India, through contrasting this with an invasion by an Indo-European race, that perhaps justified, in recent times the colonial rule of the British. All of which had nothing to do with the facts but with propaganda.

The authors have gone into some depth exploring the historical background of the theory from the point of view of its political history and have refuted it by an investigation of the Vēdas, in particular the indigenous *Rg-Vēda* which makes no mention of an invasion. Through a study of linguistics the convenient chronology laid out by Mueller into four periods to justify the invasion theory is found to be not just wanting but grossly misleading as the dating, for example of the *Rg-Vēda*, places it at ca.1200 BC which is wholly at odds with the discoveries at Harappan and others sites, which indicated that a sophisticated civilisation existed at least ca.3000 BC. This was long before the nomadic hordes from Central Asia suddenly descended ca. 1900 BC and plundered the long established Sarasvati River Culture and instantly produced the Vēdas as proof that they could do more than just riding horses into battle for loot! Evidence has been finally

established by satellite imagery that the fabled Sarasvati river did actually exist, but ca.1900BC it finally dried up due to the movement of tectonic plates that diverted the Yamuna and crucially the Sutlej from their course as tributaries of the Sarasvati. The Sanātana Dharma in all its riches now had its origin in that basin extending from the Punjab to the Rann of Kutch. The irony is not lost that most of the territory is now in Pakistan.

The authors have made investigations into the mathematical and astronomical knowledge available during the Vēdic age and found the dating to be much further back than supposed. 3800BC is mentioned as a high point. They make a cogent argument that it was the knowledge from India which influenced the Old-Babylonian and Egyptian civilisations. A dating for the Mahābhārata war is considered. Srī Rājārām, a trained mathematician has marshalled a compelling case. The suppositions are elaborate and are backed by a close reading of the facts available but it is beyond the caveat or competence of this reviewer to take a position. All the same the arguments are stimulating.

The book provides fascinating and intelligent reading.

— Peter Picqlemann

GANAPATI: Song of The Self: by John A. Grimes. 1996. Pub: Sri Satguru Publications, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, N.Delhi 110007. Pp196+xxxv, Rs345

Ganapati is the writer of one's destiny. With his elephant's head, he is easily the most recognisable of all the deities in the Hindu pantheon. He is popularly known as Ganēsa. *Rg Vēda* uses the term 'Ganapati'. He shapes many factors, his sphere of influence touching personal experiences, religious texts, ritual procedures, myths, stories, parables, dramas, festivals, attitudes and beliefs. Ganēsa is many things to many people.

The Vedic tradition gives us three levels of scriptural interpretation—physical, cosmic and spiritual. In a given myth, four levels of meaning are possible. They are the narrative, the metaphoric, the metaphysical and the psychological/social. These levels of meaning operate simultaneously. The myths on Ganapati are interpreted at these four levels.

The history of Ganēsa is almost impossible to trace with any precision. Historical evidence about his origin is scant. This work is an attempt to present Ganapati from within a tradition. Each chapter begins with an anecdote, story or elucidation of one of the eight Vināyakas. There is a

subtle connection between each Vinâyaka. All eight chapters are employed as eight divine doors to the *sanctum sanctorum* of Ganapati.

The *Rg Vêda* says that *brhaspati/ brahmanaspati* is Ganapati. There are Vedic passages which refer to Indra and Rudra as Ganapati. The words *vakratunda* and *dantin* are found in *Taittiriya Âranyaka*. The *Krshna Yajur Vêda* mentions two Gâyâtris: *tat karâtâya vidmahê...*, and, *tat purushâya vidmahê...* The tusk (*danta*) of Lord Ganapati refers to *rtam/satyam*, says the Vêda. In the *Atharva Vêda*, the *Ganapati Atharvasirsa* occurs. It is one of the earliest recorded hymns to Ganapati and identifies him as the embodiment of the ultimate principle, Brahman. The text is explained in detail. A figurative representation of Ganêsa's body, made up of the five elements, is also given.

Srî Mayurêsvara of Mōrgâon is very important to the worshippers of Ganapati. Mōrgâon (Mayûrapuri) is the *âdya pîtha* of the Gânapatya tradition. *Mudgala Purâna* devotes twenty chapters to its greatness.

The *Smrtis*, the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Purânas* also speak about Ganêsa. The *Bhârgava Purâna* and the *Mudgala Purâna* deal entirely with the stories of Ganêsa. *Ganêsa Sahasranâma* and the *Ganêsa Gîta* are found in the *Bhârgava Purâna*. The *Mudgala Purâna* provides an account of the eight incarnations of Ganêsa. The *Skanda Purâna* lists 56 Vinâyakas located within the precincts of Vârânasi.

Thirty-two pictures of Ganapati and the 108 holy names of Ganêsa are given in the third chapter. Information about Siddhi Vinâyaka of Siddhatek, Gajamukha, Vakratunda, Lambôdara, Ganêsa's weapons, his mount Mûshaka, Môdaka and Swastika, are available in the next chapter. The eight Vinâyaka avatâras, as well as *ashta* Vinâyaka temples, are sketched in detail in the following chapters.

The Gânapatya interpretation of the Vêdânta *mahâ vâkyas* are discussed in the sixth chapter. The seventh is exclusively devoted to Ganapati *pûja*. In the eighth chapter the lives of Ganêsa's devotees are enumerated. Finally, the author takes up the question of 'Who is Ganapati?'

The book starts with theological tone and ends in metaphysical musing. A very useful book for learning.

— Dr. T.N. Pranathârthi Haran

SAMADHI: Self Development in Zen, Swordsmanship, and Psychotherapy: by Mike Sayam Pub: Sri Sadguru Publications, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110007. pp. Vii + 160, Rs. 180.

The 'six dusts' (the five senses and objects of mind) prevent the seeker from perceiving reality as it is. The concept of *avidya* illustrates this. To achieve *mushin*, interpreted in the philosophy of Zen as 'no mind', is to be aware of everything without being distracted by anything. Sayama's *Samâdhi* is concerned with this truth.

The first part of the book is a collection of teachings from Bodhidharma, Lin-Chi, Hakuin, and Omori Sogen, with the author's notes on the refined precepts embodied in their lives. Drawing on the texts of his own teacher Tanoyue Tenshin extensively, the author explains *mushin*: "The conscious mind is the deluded mind. It is also called the dichotomous mind ... *mushin* is not rigid or one-sided. At the time when there is no discrimination, thought or anything in the mind, the mind will pervade the whole body and being." He provides a fine *koan* to cultivate it:

Backed by his personal experience and years of training under Tanoyue Tenshin Roshi, Sayama has the following to say about the relation of Zen to the current models of Psychotherapy:

"Circulating energy is the practice of dissolving the aberrations in the body which impair the flow of energy....When one develops the ability to generate and direct the heat current (a genuine idea along with the movement of breathing) one can focus energy to dissolve blocks in the body from the inside out as Hakuin did in his practice of *naikan*. Combined with simple techniques from Zen body-therapy, this forms an extremely effective method of realising the natural, enlightened form of the body." Much of the second part of the book is concerned with Mind-Body Training. The comparison of Transmission of Zen to a sword fight and the four main practices (*zazen*, *hara* development, circulation of the vital energy and communication) are described adequately with diagrams of stabilizing postures and Zen paintings.

— R. Râmâsâmi

SIR C.P.REMEMBERED: by Shakuntala Jagannathan. Pub:Vakils, Feffer & Simons Ltd., Mumbai 400001. pp x+214, Rs.180

Sir C.P. Râmaswâmi Iyer, one of the most interesting personalities of the last century, was not just a politician or an eminent Advocate. He was an orator par excellence with ready wit and eloquence. He was an able administrator with farsightedness and remarkable efficiency. Though born in a tradition-bound orthodox South Indian family he was a forerunner in bringing social



reforms like temple-entry to Harijans, widow re-marriage etc., even before Mahâtmâ Gândhi could think of implementing them, and withstood not only criticisms but even organised revolts and manhandling. Despite such extravert activities. Sir C.P. was pleasantly human, an ardent lover of music and the fine arts, and an ideal householder. In sum, he was an *ârya*, a noble man, who had become a legend, even during his lifetime. Reading such a personality through these pages is to read the political and social history of almost a century.

Though based on collected records, letters, and meetings with persons close to Sir C.P. including relatives, the book is free from the drudgery of being just a bunch of facts, figures and incidents. This has been possible since the author, herself a popular writer and an active Government administrator, was the beloved grand-daughter of Sir C.P. Hence the touch of intimacy, adoration and understandable sentiment in describing personal details. Her 'Thâthâ' was aged just 16 when he married Seethamma, an only daughter among five brothers, a much loved and pampered child who loved fun and who was 'a bit of a tomboy!' The author rightly quotes much moving tribute to this lady from her husband: "She was a rare type—wonderfully courageous in her way and frank and yet almost too apt to efface herself in the face of opposition or calumny, and possessed of a self-denying generosity that knew no boundaries. If ever a woman could be styled blessed, it was she" (p.180).

And about Sir C.P.'s vision and creativity there are many rare anecdotes, particularly when he held the post of Dewan in Travancore State in pre-independence and post-independence days. There is a long list of firsts to his credit in making a model State. He was ahead of his time and this brought him many opponents—there was an attempt at assassination too. Coming out of a music concert, Sir C.P. was attacked by a well-built man, swinging a knife that slashed C.P.'s skull, and cheek and lower palate too. The whole cheek fell off with profuse bleeding. With remarkable cool and presence of mind he got into the car, saying that there should be no alarm, that the concert should continue undisturbed, and ordered the driver to proceed to the General Hospital, where he told the doctors attending on him, "please go ahead, I can stand any amount of pain", much to their amazement! (p.115).

And how about the rather caustic humour of this great man? A most successful Advocate, as he was, Sir C.P. was offered the Judgeship of Madras High Court. He refused the offer with a classic reply: "I prefer, Mr. Chief Justice, to talk nonsense for a few hours each day than to hear nonsense everyday and all day long!" (p.40).

This book abounding in many such touching and interesting accounts deserves to be preserved and read again and again. A powerful personality is quite successfully recreated in this book. The grand-daughter has done the grand man proud.

— Dr.A.S.V.Rao.

GOD LIVED WITH THEM: by Sw. Chetananda.  
1998. Pub: Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 700014.  
Pp.655; Rs.100

*God Lived With Them* is the life story of all the 16 monastic disciples of Sri Râmakrishna Paramahansa. The disciples having been drawn to the monastic path in their teens and twenties, continued in it unmindful of the trials and tribulations that came their way. The 16 chapters in the book thus outline the early life of each, the first meeting with the master and later contacts, their austerity and *sâdhana* before and after the Master's passing away, their work, their interpersonal relationships and finally their last days.

Why at all 'austerity' after being with the Master; why a 'mission' and whether it didn't clash with Sri Râmakrishna's attitude which was "Mother does her own work, who am I to work for the world and teach humanity!"; the astuteness of Vivêkânanda as a leader and guide to all of them, and his special bonding with each of them are all, though elaborated upon, but a tip of the iceberg.

Maybe that is why Sw. Chêtânânda has chosen two of the unique disciples, Vivêkânanda and Adbhutânanda who were poles apart in their upbringing and conduct, to write whole books on. The latter was the only illiterate monastic disciple of the Master, and the former needs no introduction.

These 16 youngsters were unique receptacles of the Master's 'touch'. One of them said about the guru's initiation: "By that potent touch, the devotee's mind would become indrawn and his accumulated impressions would be activated and produce spiritual realisation in him." That "it is the receptacle that decides upon the receiving of

grace which is ever manifest" is clearly demonstrated in their lives.

After M's *Gospel*, written during the Master's lifetime, Sw. Sâradâna's 5-volume *The Great Master* which took him 10 years to complete, had left the author feeling he still hadn't done full justice to the disciples and devotees.

For one who is unfamiliar with the Master, *God Lived With Them* whets one's curiosity to read on, and for one who is already intoxicated by Him, it still throws fresh light on His awe-inspiring presence.

That is why after 100 years of Ramakrishna's passing away, this book is still very relevant to the generations of the second millennium too.

Like a brick burnt with a trademark, impressed and informed by the Guru's message, those 16 youngsters lived untouched by Mammon all through their lives.

— Nalini Subramanyam

**THE TEACHINGS OF H.H. SHREEMAT BHAKTARAJ MAHARAJ**, by Dr. Jayant Balaji Athavale and Dr. (Mrs.) Kunda Jayant Athavale. 1994. Pub: Sanaatan Bhaarateeya Sanskruti Sansthaa, Sion Cosmopolitan Co-op. Hsg. Soc. Plot No. 272/273, Sion (W), Bombay 400022. Pp163, Rs—

This is the first English version of a book originally written in Marâthi language and published in 1992. It consists of eleven chapters with two Appendices, a glossary and an index. Chapter 1 is a Preface explaining how the authors were prompted by their Guru to write the book and citing the various sources for his holy songs quoted in the book. Chapter 2 gives a brief biography of the Guru and also an account of his daily life. The seven Tables inserted here make a general but interesting assessment of Gurus, classifying them as Guru, Sadguru and Paraatpara Guru, presented in an academic mould with qualifications prescribed and grades allotted. A Paraatpara Guru is considered to be God Himself in human form. Chapter 3 reproduces the homage paid to the Maharaj by some other saints. The next two chapters interpret the implied meanings of his holy songs and quotations. The value of chanting divine names is elaborated very well in the sixth chapter. Chapter 7 to 10 deals with the methods of teaching adopted by different spiritual masters: direct verbal guidance, behavioral techniques and surprise tests of various kinds. The one-page concluding chapter closes with a prayer of surrender to

Maharaj and his Guru.

Appendix I gives information about a Seva Trust founded by the Maharaj and Appendix II outlines the objectives and activities of the organisation that has published the book.

This is an inspiring book, particularly for those who follow the path of Bhakti for Self-realization.

There are a few grammatical and printing errors scattered throughout. The list of Contents at the beginning of each chapter renders it unnecessary to pick out selected points for special focus.

— Dr. T. Sankaran

**MAN AND HIS MIND**: by Swami Nihreysananda. Pub: RK Math, Madras 600004. Pp343, Rs20

This is a collection of the editorials written by Swâmi in *The Prabuddha Bhârata* of Sri Ramakrishna Math.

The articles clearly show how an undisciplined and uncontrolled mind is the cause of numerous problems not only for the individual but for society also. The author quotes from Sri Râma-krishna, Sâradâ Dêvi, Vivêkânanda and from the scriptures (*Taittirîya Upanisad*, *Vivêka Chûdâmani*) for suitable ways and means to discipline the mind.

Swâmi, a monk of the Râmakrishna order, and a disciple of Mahâpurush Maharâj, makes us peep into our own minds and realise how undisciplined we are.

This is a book to be read and reread if one wants to develop a very healthy mind and make it useful for oneself and society.

— N.S. KRISHNAN

**THE INDIAN TEACHING TRADITION (A Psychological and Spiritual Study)**: by Jacques Vigne. 1998. Pub: B.R. Publishing Corp., N. Delhi 110052. <brpcltd@del2.vsnl.net.in> Pp220, Rs300

This book tackles a vast but little explored subject with both courage and an impressive independence of spirit.

Using Western psychology as a loose framework on which to hang his investigation, Dr. Vigne undertakes a wide-ranging study of the guru-disciple relationship in India. First he delineates the guru tradition within the context of Hinduism, covering such topics as initiation; the Vêdic *gurukula* system; the guru-disciple relationship as evidenced in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*; the influence of Vêdânta and Sankarâchârya; qualities of the sadguru, guru and disciple; devotion to the guru; and the

pivotal role played by the guru in Sikhism. Next, the author discusses the guru in Indian society—in the arts, politics and Indian family culture—and concludes this section with a look at Western psychotherapeutic practices in India. The second part presents and contrasts the lives of a number of well-known gurus and their disciples (eg. Ānandamayī Mā, Bhagavān Ramana Maharshi, Swāmi Rāmdās, Rāmakrishna Paramahansa and Shirdi Sai Bābā). The third, and much shorter, section specifically compares the techniques of the guru with that of the therapist. Finally, the author includes an "anthology" of relevant short texts and quotes, such as the poems of Kabir and the Maharashtrian poet-saints, the testimony of Vivēkānanda and extracts from various scriptures.

Throughout the book, the author draws extensively from a number of sources - modern and ancient texts, Western spiritual literature and, most compelling for the reader, his own observations and experience. The inclusion of anecdotes and commentary lends the book vitality and helps rescue it from incipient dryness.

It has to be admitted, however, that the price of such a broad range of material is, inevitably, a certain superficiality, though this is partly mitigated by the author's down-to-earth observations. That he is eminently qualified for such a study is clear: he trained in medicine, psychiatry, and in psychotherapy; he is a regular meditator; he has met and interviewed many saints and spiritual teachers, and has been living in India for a dozen years or so. Perhaps, most importantly, he has himself experienced the powerful and transforming relationship with a guru. Thus, despite his erudition and academic qualifications, he is not limited by them or their methods, and can casually observe that "Western psychology remains at the level of an odd and amateurish job, when compared to the traditional ways of exploring the mind," and, "authentic gurus refuse to be pigeon-holed ... they reaffirm the supremacy of experience, of life, over concepts." This respect and love for his subject matter pervades the whole book and gives it a stamp of authenticity and thus authority.

That the book is idiosyncratic is, however, both its strength and its weakness. The quality of the text appears to have suffered in translation from the original French, with some awkward phrases and occasionally incomplete sentences. Misprints render some lines incomprehensible

and the layout is both dull and inconvenient. Some of the author's suppositions (such as that the disciple finds a guru in order to become a guru himself) lack rigour, as does the presentation of the lives of certain gurus given in the Appendix (eg. Sai Baba never "apologized for performing miracles", nor did Ramana Maharshi have a "practice"). By far the greater proportion of the material is about the guru, and what little there is on psychology is confined largely to psychoanalysis, actually only one among many branches of therapy. However, despite these shortcomings, the book is an important contribution to what is, after all, an essentially unfathomable subject. It will be welcomed by any with an interest in the Indian Tradition and its mysterious power to transform the individual.

— Alison Williams

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#### OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

REFLECTIONS ON UPADĒSA SĀRAM: M.Bhīmasēna Rao, 2<sup>nd</sup> Military Line, Berhampur 760001. Pp169, Rs—

ARUNĀCHALA PURĀNAM (Saiva Ellappa Nāvalar's Tamil Poem, with meaning): Pub: Ashram. Pp299, Rs50.

SRI RAMANA MANAM (vol.1&2; Tamil): Ra. Ganapati. Pub: Ashram. Pp295, Rs50 each.

SRI RAMANA VAIBHAVAM (collection of 26 *kritis*): M.R.Srinivasan, 777, Hsg.Board phase 2, opp.RTO, Vellore 632009.

RAMANA UPANISHAD (Dutch): Main Works. Philip Renard. Pub: Uitgeverij Servire, Utrecht. Pp208

BE STILL IT IS THE WIND THAT SINGS: A.Osborne. [*Anthology of articles and poems appearing in The MP; supplements the anthology of his editorials in For Those With Little Dust*]

TIMELESS IN TIME: A.R.Natarajan. Pub: RMCL, Bangalore 560003. Pp402, Rs200

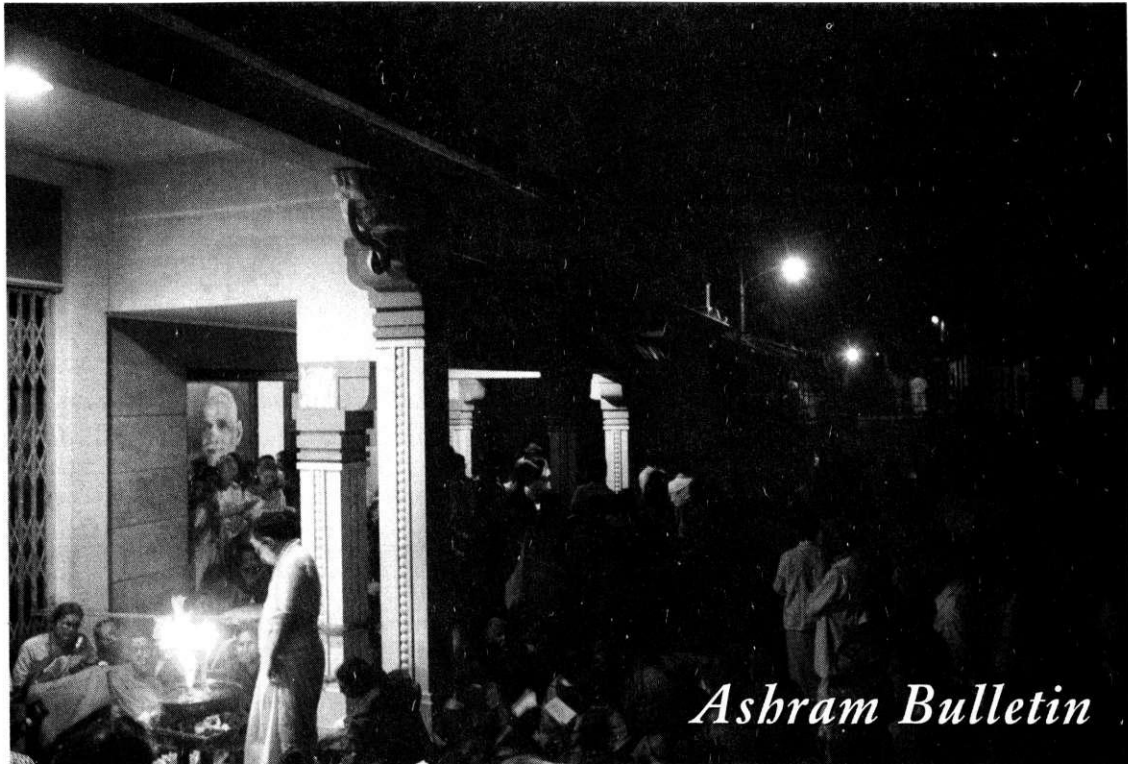
HINDUISM: Sw. Harshānanda. Pub: RK Math, Bangalore 560019. Pp39, Rs10.

ANNIE BESANT'S 150<sup>th</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY: Commemoration Issue '97. Wake Up India, The Theosophical Soc., Madras 600020. Pp200, Rs25

STORIES FOR A GRANDCHILD: Neela Suri. Pub: Gilbert Bose, 24 Maya Apts., 36 Ashoka Rd., Thomas Town, Bangalore 560084. Pp38, Rs60.

UNKNOWN JOURNEY: P.S.Chandrasekhar, 101 Shanta Sadan, P.S.Rd., Mumbai 400057. Pp23, Rs—

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**Celebration of 120th *Jayanti* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi  
At Ashram  
(24-12-99)**

The 120th *Jayanti* of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated at the Ashram in the usual elaborate manner, on 24 December 1999. The Ramana Auditorium was specially decorated with flowers.

The after-dinner programme of Ramana music by the **Ramananjali Group**, Bangalore (led by **Smt. Sulochana Natarajan**) on 23 December was received very well by devotees.

Being the *Dhanur Masa* (Tamil month of *Marghazhi*), hymns of Andal, Manickavachakar and Muruganar were sung during the (first) special *puja* to Sri Bhagavan in the early hours. Group recital of *Vishnu Sahasranamam* followed.

Thereafter there was group singing of hymns on Sri Bhagavan appropriate to the *Jayanti* day. As per normal daily routine there was the brief

*puja* to Sri Bhagavan at seven (during which milk is offered as *naivedya*). Devotees were treated to breakfast.

*Mahanarayana Upanishad* was chanted in full at the Shrine. Special *puja* to Ramaneshwara Mahalingam was performed. This was preceded by special *abhishekam* again, known as *Mahanyasa Purvaka Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam. Harati*, the finale came off at eleven.

Devotees and visitors were then treated to special lunch. The poor were fed on a large scale in accordance with convention.

In the afternoon there was a memorable concert of Ramana Music by the **Amritavarshini Group**, Bangalore, led by **Smt. Sakkubhai Srinivasan**.

The following books were released on *Jayanti Day*:

*Timeless in Time*, a biography of Sri Bhagavan by Sri A.R. Natarajan, published by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

*Be Still: It is the Wind that Sings*, by Arthur Osborne.

*Ramana Manam* (Tamil) by Ra. Ganapati.

*Atmasakshatkaramu* (*Self-Realisation* of B.V. Narasimha Swami, rendered into Telugu by P.S. Sundaram).

### **Aradhana of Chinnaśwamigal (20-1-2000)**

The *Aradhana* of Sri Chinnaśwamigal was celebrated at the Ashram on 20 January with special *abhishekam* and *puja* at his *samadhi*. The assembled devotees were treated to special lunch.

### **Flute Recital at Ashram**

**Master S. Shashank** gave a memorable concert of Carnatic music on the flute, on the evening of February 5 at the Ashram. He was accompanied by **Sri Raghavendra** on the violin, **Sri Ramakrishna** on the *mridangam* and **Sri Uma Shankar** on the *ghatam*.

### **Sri Vidya Havan**



A large gathering of devotees was present to witness *Sri Vidya Havan*, the annual function conducted on the first Friday of the Tamil month of *Panguni*. This year the *havan* came off on March 17.

As usual, it was a day-long function which concluded with *Purnahuti* at four in the evening. This was followed by *abhishekam* to *Sri Chakra*. The *Sri Chakra Puja* done as per routine on Fridays was deferred and done the next morning. (This is the usual practice on this occasion).

### **Celebration of Sivaratri at Ashram**

Sivaratri is celebrated in a solemn manner at the Ashram. Four *pujas* are performed in the night — in addition to the *pujas* as per daily routine. (All the *pujas* are preceded by *abhisheka*). *Ekadasa Rudra Parayana* is also done around midnight.

This year Sivaratri came off on March 4. The afternoon *Thevaram* concert by Odhuvars was quite impressive.

Devotees kept vigil in the usual manner. Many of them did *giri pradakshina* as well.

### **Recital of Arunachala Puranam**

*Arunachala Puranam* is a long poem consisting of nearly 700 verses composed by Saiva Ellappa Navalara (in Tamil). The poem is based on accounts of Arunachala as given in *Skandam*, *Siva Puranam* and *Linga Puranam* (which are in Sanskrit).

Devotees of Sri Bhagavan are well aware that he was profoundly moved and choked with emotion while reading and explaining the text of *Arunachala Puranam*, to devotees. He could not proceed (with the reading) beyond a certain point.

This work has now been brought out as an Ashram publication.

Commencing from March 4, Sivaratri day, **Sri J. Jayaraman**, the Ashram Librarian is reciting the *Arunachala Puranam* daily at the New Hall of the Ashram (in the evening). He reads out the meaning of the text in Tamil and translates it into English as well, simultaneously.

### **Seminar at Bangalore**

**Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore**, conducted a national seminar and cultural festival on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan between March 11 and 12.

The speakers in the Kannada session on March 11 were: **Sri Sri Sri Rangapriya Swami**, **Sri Shadakshari**, **Dr. M.E. Rangachar** and **Veda Brahma Sri Subraya Sharma**. The speakers in the English session on March 12 were: **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, **Swami Virajananda** of Dattasrama, **Dr. Sarada**, **Dr. Venugopal Rao** and **Sri A.R. Natarajan**. There were cultural programmes on both days.

### Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad



*Swami Ramananda opening the new building of Ramana Kendra, Hyderabad, on 9 January, 2000*

### OBITUARY

#### Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavat (1912-2000)

With deep regret we report the passing away of **Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavat**. He was absorbed at the Lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan on the morning of April 10 (U.S. time).

Sri Bhagavat was an exceptionally staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan. His monumental contribution is the founding of the **Arunachala Ashrama** in the heart of New York City (342, East Sixth Street), in 1965. The Ashrama is at present located at 66-12, Clyde Street, Rego Park, Forest Hills, Queens, NY. 11374.

Sri Bhagavat was always full of ambitious projects about the propagation of the teachings of Sri Bhagavan and dissemination in general of information about the greatness of the master to the world at large.

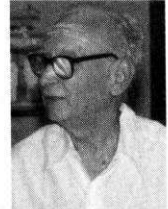
It is significant that Shri Bhagavat passed away on *Rama Navami* Day (April 10) and that he was cremated on April 14, the 50th Anniversary of the *Maha Nirvana* of Shri Bhagavan (according to the Western calendar).

His gentle and soft manners and spirit of love and dedicated service to devotees will be remembered for long.



#### Justice K.S. Venkataraman (1913-2000)

We regret to report the death of Justice **K.S. Venkataraman**, father-in-law of Sri A.R. Natarajan, President, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore and father of Srimati Sulochana Natarajan, leader of the Ramananjali Group, Bangalore. He passed away on January 8, at Madras.



Sri Venkataraman was fortunate to have the *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan on many occasions. Members of his family are devoted to Sri Bhagavan. He was President of the Ramana Kendra, Madras for many years. During his tenure he was an active participant in the proceedings of the Kendra.

After a brilliant record in the I.C.S. (Indian Civil Service) Sri Venkataraman opted for the judicial wing. He was District and Sessions Judge at Tirunelveli, Nellore and other places. He was elevated as Judge of the Madras High Court in 1961. He retired from this position in 1975.

He was a man of pleasant manners and a great lover of Carnatic music. He took a leading part in the religious and cultural activities of various associations in Madras.

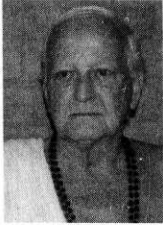
He was also a regular participant in the annual proceedings of the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore.

Justice Venkataraman will be remembered by his friends and admirers as a humane person with a religious bent of mind. His record as a brilliant judge will also be remembered for long.

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

#### Hamsananda (J.J. De Reede)

We regret to report the death of **Swami Hamsananda** (J.J. De Reede) on January 28. He was a prominent local resident and a devotee of Sri Bhagavan. He became a devotee of Sri Bhagavan under the influence of Dr. G.H. Mees.



Hamsananda did useful work as Founder President of Kanvasrama Trust. He brought out publications on Sri Bhagavan and Arunachala. He was also instrumental in providing accommodation and other facilities to spiritual seekers.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

### C.P. Arunachala Ramanan

### C.P. Amrithalingam

Sri C.P. Nathan who passed away some years ago was a well known devotee of Sri Bhagavan.

His wife Srimati C.P. Nathan who lives in Ramana Nagar is known for her steady habit of doing *giri pradakshina*, daily.

We regret to report the death of both her sons.

**Sri C.P. Arunachala Ramanan** passed away on 26 October 1999. He was 52. He was looking after the *samadhi* of Sri Sadhu Om.

**Sri C.P. Amrithalingam** passed away on 26 January 2000. He was quite a popular figure who took an active part in organising festivals at the temple of Arunachaleswara.



## FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

<b>GURU POORNIMA (VYASA PUJA)</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>16.7.2000</b>
KRISHNA JAYANTHI (GOKULASHTAMI)	Tuesday	22.8.2000
104th ANNIVERSARY OF SRI BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA	Friday	1.9.2000
VINAYAKA CHATHURTHI	Friday	1.9.2000
<b>NAVARATRI FESTIVAL (commences on)</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>28.9.2000</b>
SARASWATHI PUJA	Friday	6.10.2000
DEEPAVALI	Thursday	26.10.2000
<b>KARTHIGAI DEEPAM</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>9.12.2000</b>
<b>SRI BHAGAVAN'S 121st JAYANTHI</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>10.1.2001</b>
PONGAL	Sunday	14.1.2001
CHINNA SWAMIGAL ARADHANA	Wednesday	7.2.2001
<b>MAHASIVARATHRI</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>21.2.2001</b>
<b>SRI VIDYA HAVAN</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>16.3.2001</b>
TELUGU NEW YEAR'S DAY	Monday	26.3.2001
TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY	Saturday	14.4.2001

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I, V.S. Ramanan hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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(SD) V.S. Ramanan

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Awareness wherein brightly shine  
 Those many forms of persons, places, time  
 All separate-seeming though in substance One:  
 Into that same Awareness He transmuted  
 This 'I' of mine. Now, nothing to be known,  
 My past undone, my being His,  
 I stand, unruffled bliss, a Rock  
 Untouched by any shock.  
 Lord Siva-Venkatesa, King of Kings,  
 Came conquering  
 And made me His alone.

What is this 'I' that rises from within?  
 Only a thought that, like a bubble, floats  
 Up to the troubled surface of Awareness.  
 In sleep the sea is still, no bubble rises:  
 Then too you are, and are aware you are.  
 You're not the 'I' that rises and then sets,  
 You are the sole Awareness in the All,  
 The eternal, uncreated Light of Being.....

Your Grace it was I stumbled to your feet,  
 Your love that raised me up and made me yours,  
 Chosen to serve, though not for service meet,  
 Untouched save by the Grace that from you pours.  
 I too have seen all creatures live and move  
 Not of themselves but Self, all living prove  
 That I am nothing and can nothing do;  
 So all my duties I have cast on you.

No form or feature has He of His own,  
 Yet form and feature to all beings gives;  
 Knowledge and ignorance, both to Him unknown,  
 Each human mind from Him alone derives.  
 He brought me into being but to think  
 Of Him as 'you', of me and mine as 'yours';