



THE

Mountain Path

Aradhana Issue 2002



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*

Aradhana 2002

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**Deepam on summit
of Arunachala**

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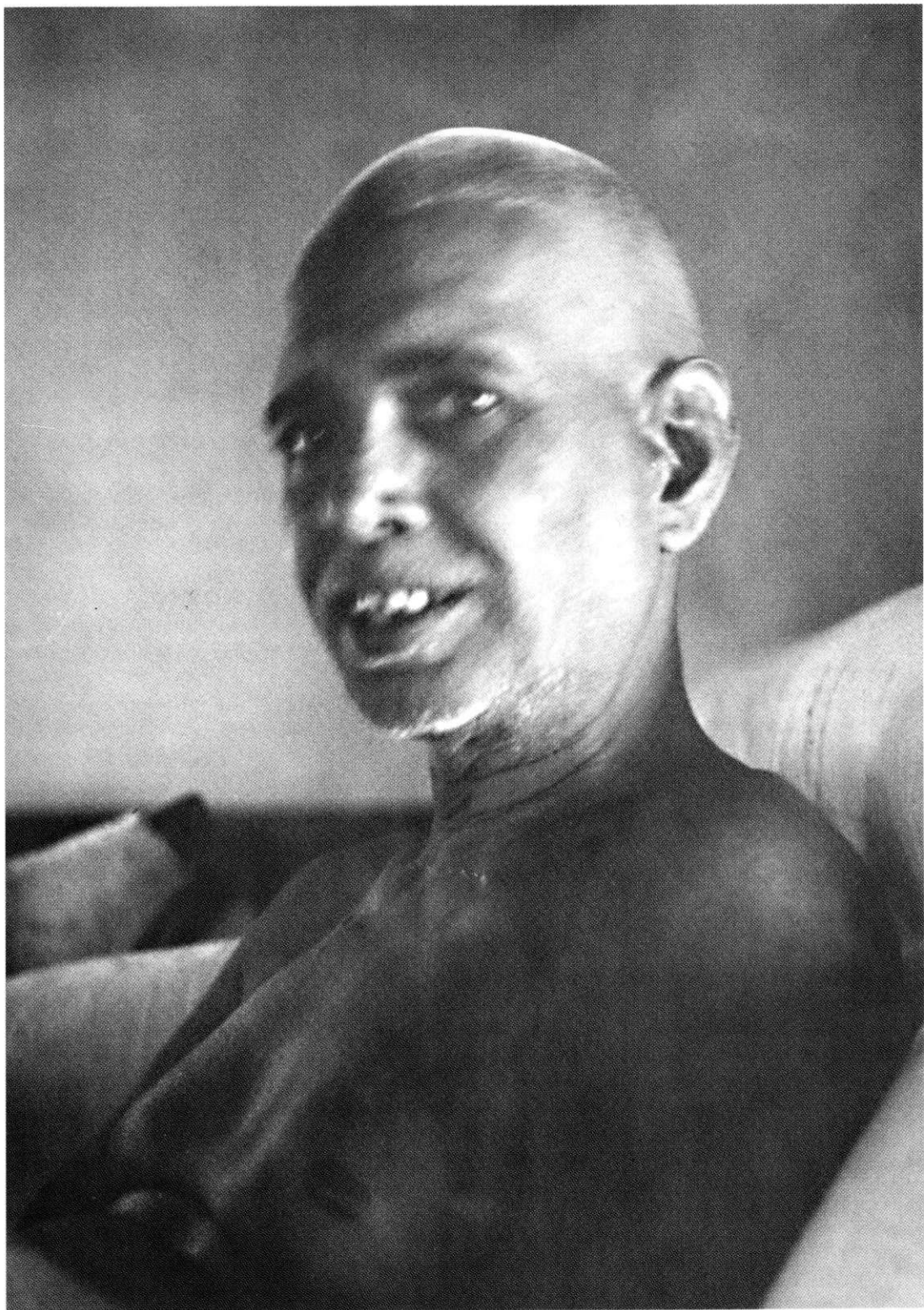
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The Mountain Path

- 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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***The Mountain Path* is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

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EDITORIAL

The Real Wealth

THE difficulties of life are common to all with the exception perhaps of the princely class, or those born with a silver spoon in the mouth. Even so, the privileged class have their own share of life's problems. They are free only from certain types of problems faced by the majority, who are under-privileged.

Human activity is not confined to self-preservation. It aims at self-improvement or self-advancement. Man's material ambitions therefore soar high. It is not merely a question of bread-winning!

This is particularly so in modern times. One has to make good in substantial measure. In an atmosphere clouded by competitiveness no one could possibly remain satisfied with mere existence! Many of the woes of present day society can be traced to the unbridled material ambitions of individuals or groups of individuals. This leads to clash of interests or even clash of personalities.

Nothing succeeds like success. Therefore the attempt by an individual to im-

prove his material position implies the use of all kinds of methods. They may be fair or unfair. The man who is conscious of ethical principles will adopt only fair methods for achieving results.

How is one to rise above common worldly tendencies or trends and cultivate a sane outlook or order of life? How to safeguard one's higher life? The way can be shown only by those who are free from even a trace of materialism or personal ambition.

The teachings of Shankaracharya are a pointer and show how man can regulate his life and also reach spiritual heights in spite of the constraints in which he is placed.

He says:

Oh fool! Renounce your endless thirst for riches. Learn to be contented just with the returns (wealth) you get for your *true* labour.¹

¹ *Dwadasa panjarika stotram*(1).

We find that the *Vedas* contain prayers or rituals towards acquiring name, fame and wealth.

The *Sruti* says:

May I become famous among people!
May I become praiseworthy among the wealthy. O Adorable One! May I enter into you, such as you are. . . . As water flows down a slope, as months roll into a year, similarly O Lord, may the students come to me from all quarters!²

Now, what is the significance of such prayers? Is there more to it than mere materialism, or not? The inner spiritual idealism contained in such prayers is explained by Shankaracharya in his commentary.

Shankara says:

. . . O Adorable One [Lord] let there be nothing but identity between us

The prayer for prosperity is dealt with in this context of knowledge for the sake of wealth; for wealth is needed for rites, and rites are calculated to diminish accumulated sins, on the exhaustion of which knowledge becomes revealed.

Shankara also quotes the *Smriti* in this connection:

Just as one sees oneself on the clean surface of a mirror, so knowledge arises for man on the exhaustion of sin."³

Traditionally, the possession of wealth by an individual has not been viewed in

isolation from his duty of doing charitable deeds. Those who are wealthy and those who are not so wealthy are alike expected to give in charity to the needy.

Avvayar, the great Tamil saint and poetess says, "Cultivate the desire to do charitable deeds."

The following is a verse of Shankaracharya:

Recite the *Bhagavad Gita*,
Recite the thousand names of Vishnu,
Meditate on the divine form of Vishnu.
Associate with the wise,
Give alms to the poor.⁴

A basic question that arises in this context is: what is real wealth? Is it merely, gold, silver, lands and the like — just movable and immovable property? Or, is there something else substantial and everlasting?

A number of *Sruti* texts point to the Self as the real wealth.

The *Sruti* says: *Dravinagum suvarchasam* (I am the effulgent wealth).⁵

In brief, the commentary of Shankaracharya on this passage is as follows:

. . . I am that effulgent (wealth) that is the reality of the Self. Or, the knowledge of Brahman is effulgent, inasmuch as it reveals the reality of the Self. And

² *Taittiriya Upanishad*, LIV.3.

³ *Mahabharata, Santi Parva*, 204.8.

⁴ *Charpata Panjarika Stotra*.

⁵ *Taittiriya Upanishad*, IX.1

it is called wealth, being comparable to wealth because of its producing the bliss of emancipation. . . .

The *Sruti* teaches that the Self is dearer than wealth.

The *Sruti* says:

This Self is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else, and is innermost.⁶

Commenting on this, Shankaracharya says:

A son is universally held dear in this world; but the Self is dearer than he, which shows that It is extremely dear. Similarly dearer than wealth such as gold or jewels, and everything else, whatever is admittedly held dear in the world. . . .

And is innermost. The body and the organs are inner and nearer to oneself than a son or wealth, for instance, which are external things. But this Self is nearer than even these. . . .

Hence the Self is the real wealth. Attaining the Self means obtaining the real wealth. However, in reality, nothing new — that is, something which was not there — is obtained.

This is explained by Shankaracharya as follows:

The non-attainment of the Self is but the ignorance of It. Hence the knowledge of the Self is Its attainment.

The attainment of the Self cannot be, as in the case of things other than It,

the obtaining of something not obtained before, for here there is no difference between the person attaining and the object attained.⁷

To all appearance it looks as though one obtains the Self afresh. However this is only because of self-forgetfulness. Self-realisation is just like waking up from a dream. This is the teaching of Sri Maharshi.

Sri Maharshi says:

When, forgetting the Self, one thinks,
That the body is oneself and goes
Through innumerable births
And in the end becomes
The Self, know this is only like
Waking up from a dream wherein
One has wandered all over the world.⁸

The same idea is expressed in the following verse of Shankaracharya which was often quoted by Sri Maharshi in his conversations with devotees.

Shankara says:

True — the Self is always here and now;
yet it is not apparent, owing to ignorance.
On ignorance being destroyed,
the Self seems as if it were gained, like
the necklace on one's own neck.⁹

⁶ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, I.IV.8.

⁷ Commentary on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, I.IV.7.

⁸ *Five Verses on the Self*, verse 1.

⁹ *Atma Bodha*, verse 44.

The allusion is to the story of a lady wearing a precious necklace, who suddenly forgot where it was, grew anxious, looked for it everywhere and even asked others to help, until a kind friend pointed out that it was round the seeker's own neck!

The Absolute of the Buddha

By Dr. P. J. Saher

THE Latin word *absolutus* is the past participle of *absolvere*, which means 'to loosen, to detach'. Therefore 'absolute' literally means 'detached', and so the Absolute is the 'loosened, the detached'. In Pali, the language of the Buddhist Canon, the word *vimutta*, as the past participle of *vimuncati* has exactly the same meaning, for the verb also means 'to release, to detach'. *Vimutta* is, therefore, identical with Absolute. Now this very word is regularly used by the Buddha when he speaks of a monk who has become holy, of a *Tathagata*, of a 'Perfect One'.

"A Perfect One, released (*vimutta*) from bodily form, from sensation, from perception, from activities of the mind, from concepts, is deep, immeasurable and unfathomable as the ocean."

Accordingly, the Buddha has proclaimed as the ultimate goal of the holy course of life (*brahmachariya*) taught by him, that we attain deliverance or release (*vimokha*) and thus become absolute (*vimutta*).

To this Absolute of the Buddha the concept of being no longer applies,¹ a

concept which Western philosophers attribute to their 'Absolute'. Concepts relating to the absolute are purely empirical and for this reason apply only to the realities that are accessible to our senses. The Buddha calls the substratum of the phenomenal world, and hence what is termed the absolute reality, the 'realm of *Nibbana*, free from all attributes' (*anupadisesanibbanadhatu*). Of this realm he states merely that, however many monks may have become absolute and extinct in it, one cannot detect either a reduction or an increase in it:

Just as, monks, all rivers in the world enter the great ocean and all the waters of the atmosphere are discharged into it, and one cannot detect thereby either a reduction or an increase in the great ocean, so also, however many monks may have become extinct in the realm of *Nibbana* that is free from all attributes, one cannot thereby detect either a reduction or an increase in this realm.

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, April 1973.

¹ See Grimm's *Doctrine of the Buddha*, p. 133.

² *Udana* V. 5.

The Search for Happiness

By Prof. K. Swaminathan

EVERYONE in the world wants to be happy — at all times, in all places and under all conditions. This quest for *ananda* is the universal human desire and the goal of all human endeavour. There are however some persons who are happy at all times, in all places and under all conditions and that too without any desire and without any effort on their part. This strange paradox about happiness — that one who seeks it strenuously often misses it, while one who is indifferent to it enjoys it — is explained by our failure to distinguish between pleasure or satisfaction on the one hand and happiness or *ananda* on the other. We mistake pleasure for happiness and, pursuing it as if it were happiness, end up in all kinds of misery.

In *Who Am I* and in the *Talks*, Sri Bhagavan brings out clearly this distinction between happiness, which is our inherent and permanent nature, and the pleasure which we from time to time derive from the satisfaction of our desires, physical or mental, healthy or unhealthy.

Happiness is the very nature of the Self; happiness and the Self are not different. There is no happiness in any object of the world. We imagine

through our Ignorance that we derive happiness from objects. When the mind goes out, it experiences misery. In truth, when its desires are fulfilled, it returns to its own place and enjoys the happiness that is the Self. Similarly, in the states of sleep, *samadhi*, and fainting and when the object desired is obtained or the object disliked is removed, the mind becomes inward-turned, and enjoys pure Self-happiness. Thus the mind moves without rest, alternately going out of the Self and returning to it. Under the tree the shade is pleasant; out in the open the heat is scorching. A person who has been going about in the sun feels cool when he reaches the shade. Someone who keeps on going from the shade into the sun and then back into the shade is a fool. A wise man stays permanently in the shade. Similarly, the mind of the one who knows the truth does not leave Brahman. The mind of the ignorant, on the contrary, revolves in the world, feeling miserable, and for a little time returns to Brahman to experience happiness. In

Speech delivered by the Professor at the Ramana Kendra, Delhi (sometime in the 1970's).

fact, what is called the world is only thought. When the world disappears, i.e. when there is no thought, the mind experiences happiness; and when the world appears, it goes through misery.¹

Absolute and permanent happiness does not reside in objects but in the *atman*. Such happiness is peace, free from pain and pleasure.

Sri Maharshi says:

If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions, and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view?

In deep sleep, the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realize his Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.²

For the *sadhaka* no doubt the ultimate goal is the complete extinction of the ego, when the *jiva* and the world cease to be and only the brightness and bliss of pure awareness remains. This goal, gained in a matter of a few minutes by Sri Bhagavan seems to most of us to be too

remote and indeed inaccessible in this, our present life. We are repeatedly told and we readily believe that spiritual progress has to be gradual and that *moksha* should wait until we have gone through the other *purusharthas*. Self-enquiry, the direct sovereign method taught by Bhagavan, gets continuously postponed while we are busy discovering and painfully practising our *dharma* or, worse still, we allow ourselves to be lulled into a spiritual sleep by sentimental *bhakti* and so escape from the responsibility of our station in life.

If *moksha* is bliss and if bliss is our real, permanent and inescapable nature, what is its relation to *dharma*? *Dharma* is not a normative or moralistic concept; it is well-being, health and growth, rootedness in responsibility and freedom to play with the light and warmth of Awareness. The tree does not distinguish between horizontal and vertical growth, between its loyalties to earth, water, air and to the sun. It follows its nature and grows unawares till seed becomes the tree and matures into fruit. This also is the human destiny. We are seed sown in the soil and eating matter and warmth, bound to become fruit. The eater ceases to eat and becomes food. The man of *dharma* ripens into the *mukta*. We however separate *dharma*, our empirical nature as *prakriti*, from *moksha*, our transcendental

¹ *Who am I?*

² *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No.3, Page 1 (1968 Edn.).

nature as *Purusha*. Instead of exposing ourselves to the sun wherever we are and drinking in its light and warmth, we make elaborate plans of travelling towards it at some future time.

The traditional view of *dharma* as that which binds man's social existence to a moral order, that which holds, preserves and protects mankind, can be illustrated by Kausalya's words to Rama before he left for the forest. She said, "May that *dharma* which you have nourished with determination and discipline protect you. This is the only blessing I can give." Here we have the popular idea of Rama as the fullest and clearest embodiment of *dharma*, the horizontal or inter-personal dimension of human growth. The mother rightly regards her son as a moral athlete who has with determination and discipline nourished *dharma* which in turn is expected to protect him as the mother protects the child.

But Sri Bhagavan prefers to dwell on the truer and maturer image of Sri Rama presented in the *Yogavasishta*. He cites with approval the preceptor's noble adjuration to the pupil who, absorbed in the bliss of awareness, is disinclined to act in the world of time and space. The preceptor says, "Holding firmly at heart to the truth of your being, play like a hero your part on the world-stage, inwardly calm and detached, but assuming zeal and joy, stirrings and aversions, initiative and effort, and performing outward actions appropriate to your particular role in various situations." In other words the

quest for Self-realization, serious *mumukshutva*, goes hand in hand with bold, heroic action. The call to such action, addressed to Sri Rama, is meant really for us. In outward action or the practice of *dharma*, there is no difference between the seeker and the realized person. The disinterested action which the seeker performs deliberately as a matter of discipline, which is for him a means of discovering his identity with fellow-beings, is for the *jnani* like Sri Rama or Janaka the spontaneous expression of such identity. The *sadhana* of the seeker becomes the *lakshana* of the realized person.

In recommending and indeed prescribing the quest of the Self to all thoughtful persons in the adolescent and adult stages of life, Bhagavan makes a radical and necessary departure from the letter of the tradition in order to restore its spirit. In Ch. 3 of the *Ramana Gita*, the paramount task of man is declared to be 'the discovery of our real human nature which is the basis of all actions and their fruit.' This quest for our real nature, the withdrawing of thoughts from sense objects and steady Self-enquiry, is not to be postponed. In Ch. 10, *Sangha Vidya*, one's duty to one's circle and to humanity is defined clearly as organic interdependence to be promoted both by *shanti*, which purifies one's own mind, and by *shakti*, which is required for the progress of society. The attenuation of the ego by steady Self-enquiry and the acceptance in practice of normal family and social responsibilities can alone lead to the

brotherhood and equality which is the supreme goal to be attained by mankind as a whole.

Bhagavan's comprehensive teaching, with its stress on the search for the Self, helps one to attain adult status and to assume full responsibility for oneself. Bhagavan is like a father who watches apparently unconcerned the child learning to walk, stumbling and falling and picking itself up again, but refuses to mollycoddle it and keep it dependent. There can be no responsibility without self-reliance and there can be no true self-reliance without Self-enquiry. We are responsible also, but only in part, to others. At any rate, the sooner we cease to be a burden on others, the better for ourselves and our neighbours. Loving the Lord God with all one's heart and loving one's neighbour as oneself are not two commandments but one. We cannot effectively love and serve our neighbour unless we have succeeded in some measure in loving and obeying the Father as Awareness. Autonomy is a product of increasing self-awareness, which includes sensitiveness to one's surroundings. Once we open and begin to operate a Both-or-Survivor account with the Universal Self, our spiritual resources expand according to real need. Instead of complaining against one's circumstances one derives inexhaustible strength from inner happiness (*uran* in Tamil) and says with Thoreau, "I love my fate to the very core and rind." One's present life is the fruit one has earned and must now eat to the last bite.

The creative person, spiritually attuned, mentally healthy and morally evolved, does not fear novelty, but recognises and practises the *dharma* appropriate to his unique situation in a fast-changing world. Having no personal desires of his own, he seeks the universal welfare, through the pursuit of truth, beauty, goodness, love. Not self-regarding and having no care for 'safety' as a value he contributes clarity and compassion to the ongoing movement of life. The unselfish are ever brave, accept loving responsibility for their neighbours and give them a share of their own courage and self-reliance.

As we climb the mountain path the view widens; new responsibilities come to us and are cheerfully undertaken. We are no more inclined to off-shoulder our burden on others. We find fulfilment in mastering rather than in evading *svadharma*. Such *svadharma*, disinterested action surrendered to the Lord (verse 3 of *Upadesa Sara*), purifies the mind and points the way to *moksha*. Through the practice of *dharma* we become progressively more eligible for the ultimate happiness of *moksha*. In meeting the challenge of time we respond to the call of eternity. We learn to live less in the surface and more and more in the deep centre of our being.

In any case, at all times and places and under all conditions, *dharma* has to be practised, whether as duty and discipline or as the happy and spontaneous expres-

ssion of Awareness. Self-actualization, in the language of Abraham Maslow, is the royal road to Self-realization. It is only in and through *dharma* that the happiness of *moksha* can be reached or manifested. Bhagavan could no more help spreading grace and bliss than the sun could help spreading light and warmth.

Moksha cannot be 'realized' by mere intellectual effort. It can only be experienced, and experienced as happiness. It is total freedom from nagging desires, it is pure Awareness.

In Bhagavan's own words:

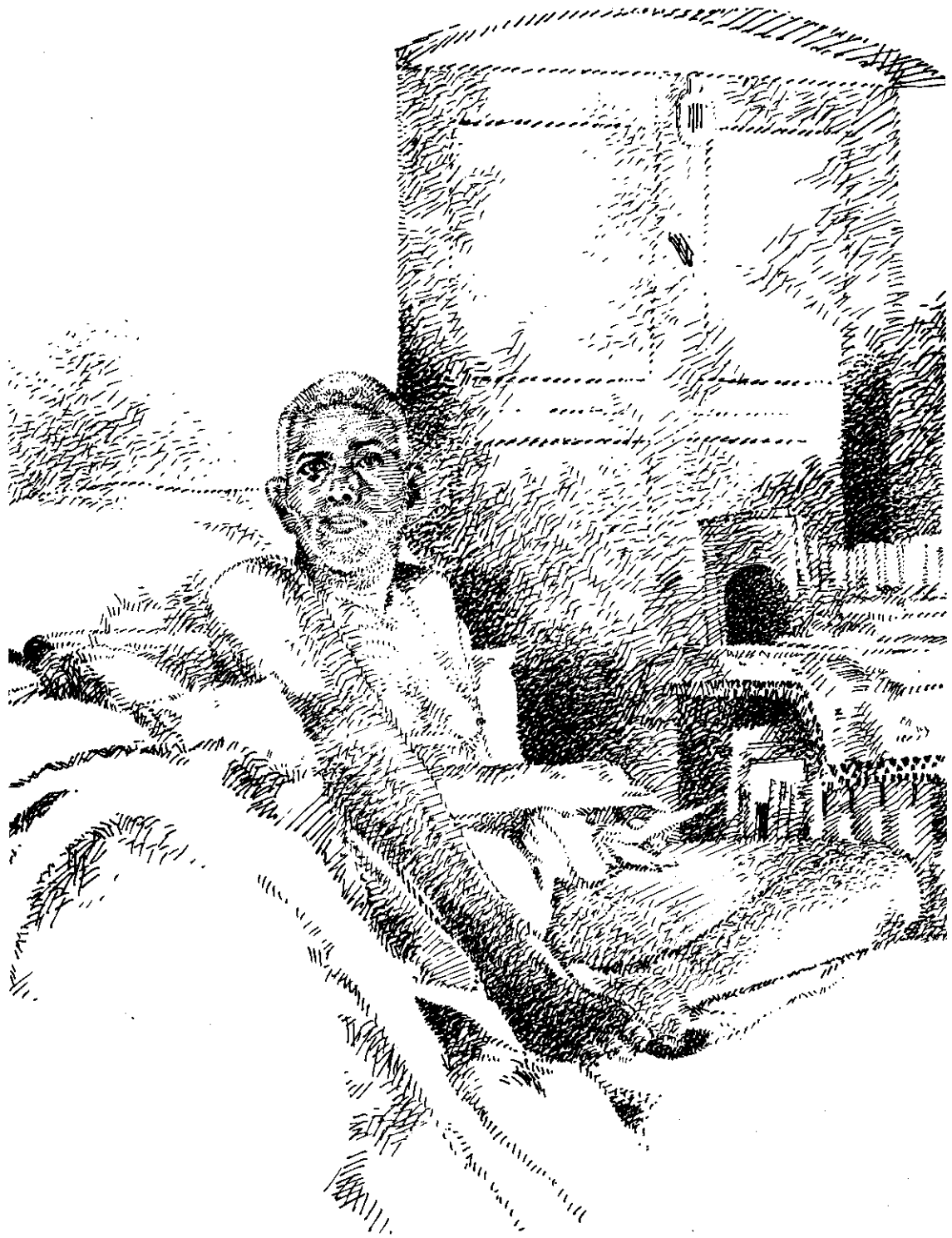
Unless and until a man embarks upon this quest of the true Self, doubt and uncertainty will follow his footsteps throughout life. The greatest kings and statesmen try to rule others, when in their heart of hearts they know that they cannot rule themselves. Yet the greatest power is at the command of the man who has penetrated to his inmost depth. There are men of giant intellect who spend their lives gathering knowledge about many things. Ask these men if they have solved the mystery of man, if they have conquered themselves, and they will hang their heads in shame. What is the use of knowing about everything else when you do not yet know who you are? Men avoid this enquiry into the true Self, but what else is there so worthy to be undertaken? . . . Admittedly the way to it may be harder for those who are engrossed in worldly life, but

even then one can and must conquer. The current induced during meditation can be kept up by habit, by practising to do so. Then one can perform one's work and activities in that very current itself; there will be no break. Thus, too, there will be no difference between meditation and external activities. If you meditate on this question, 'Who am I?'— if you begin to perceive that neither the body nor the brain nor the desires are really you, then the very attitude of enquiry will eventually draw the answer to you out of the depths of your own being; it will come to you of its own accord as a deep realization. . .

Know the real Self and then the truth will shine forth within your heart like sunshine. The mind will become untroubled and real happiness will flood it, for happiness and the true Self are identical. You will have no more doubts once you attain this self-awareness.³

As ends and means are inseparable, so are *moksha* and *dharma*. They reinforce each other in healthy individual and social life. They are in fact the empirical and transcendental modes of our being, whose basic nature is the bliss of awareness, stillness, *shanti*, broken occasionally by ripples of action, movement, *shakti*. It must be remembered that *dharma* is bound by time, while *moksha* is the boundless bliss of Awareness.

³ Paul Brunton, *The Maharshi and His Message*.



Foreword to *Self-realization*

By K. Sundaram Chetty

I consider it a rare privilege accorded to me that I should be asked to write a prefatory note to a book on the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, the great sage who is adorning the sacred hillside in Tiruvannamalai. In the dispensation of Providence, it was my good fortune to have had access to a sage, who shines in the spiritual firmament as a bright star, guiding the restless and depressed wayfarer along the path towards the haven of true and lasting happiness.

Dazzled as the majority of mankind are at the phantoms of this illusory world, frantic are their efforts to clutch at them, under a false sense of satisfaction; but they are ever tantalized in the fruition of their yearning; and late in their span of life, do they feel a pang of regret for having wasted their precious time in seeking after shadows, oblivious of the reality. The life and example of this great saint serve as a beacon light to warn us about the pitfalls in the path of worldliness and guide us on the safe path of spirituality.

His magnetic influence is a boon. One brief remark of his dispels sometimes a thick cloud of doubt, a heaving heart is soothed by a short sermon of his, and even the knotty conundrums of abstruse philosophy find satisfactory solution from his simple exposition, emerging forth from the fountain of his intuition.

It is a sorry spectacle, how slow is the response to the clarion call of this living monument of spiritual glory and how few are those who make a genuine attempt to realize what this sage has attained. His evolution is so far ahead of the average humanity of to-day, that he dwells in the transcendent sphere of spir-

Sri B.V. Narasimha Swamy's *Self-realization* (published in 1931) is the first biography of Sri Bhagavan in English. Sri K. Sundaram Chetty was a Judge of the High Court of Madras.

His Foreword is reproduced here for its historical value as well as its merit as a brief introduction to the teaching of Sri Bhagavan.

itual consciousness, his physical body and senses being no impediment to the realization of his true inner self. To him, the illusion of the physical world is no longer a veil to hide the substratum of all phenomena. It has been a transparent medium for him. The mind, the arch-juggler; is to him a docile and faithful servant. His favourite sermon is "Retreat ever within thine own self; seek the source whence the restless mind spins out an unceasing web of thoughts; brush aside the springing thoughts; concentrate at the root of thought; and take repose in that stillness and quietude. So much is thy effort, and what next is one for experience and inner realisation, and does not admit of exposition in words."

Few have reached the abode of bliss. Another gem of spiritual truth which this holy sage places for our gaze is: "Happiness is really an inner attitude, or a subjective realization of the mind, though many are under a misapprehension that it depends upon external conditions only." The outer quest for happiness, he would say, will only be the game of "Hide and Seek." He used to say, that by a wise adaptation of the attitude to changing events and environments, it is in our power to preserve a state of unruffled mentality. Much of the sorrow, misery, and depression can be averted by the practice of such an adaptation, which is, of course, based on wise discrimination. Real happiness is one that does not depend upon anything external to one's self. It is unconditioned bliss and therefore permanent.

"Know the 'I'". That is how he would ask us to tackle the problem of life. The words are simple, but their conception has baffled many a brilliant intellect. Here again, he would say the mere intellectual disquisitions are hardly enough, but success lies in unflinching practice, with a sincere yearning for the attainment of the true purpose of life. Many a sceptic who scoffs at such great spiritual personages as visionary and unpractical would begin to doubt his own scepticism, if only he tries to visit this sage, and remains within the ambit of his spiritual aura for an appreciable length of time.

I sincerely congratulate the author of this book, who has rendered a useful service to the present generation as also to posterity, by sparing no pains in gathering information about the incidents in the life of this holy sage and about his talks and sayings, which a limited number of disciples and admirers have had opportunities to hear, and by embodying it in the chapters of this book in the author's felicitous and lucid style, in a masterly way.

It may not be out of place, if I should observe in this preface, that the author of this book happens to be my classmate and colleague at the Bar in my younger days and that the link of old friendship has again brought us together in connection with his book, dealing with the life and teachings of a great sage, whom we both adore.

The Ideal of *Seva* (Service) with special reference to the Views of Swami Ramdas

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

SWAMI Ramdas (1884-1963) is well remembered as a remarkable spiritual teacher. He was a contemporary of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

In 1923 Ramdas travelled to Tiruvannamalai where he had personal contact with Bhagavan. That meeting was an unforgettable milestone in Ramdas' spiritual unfoldment which, writing in the third person, Ramdas has vividly described as follows:

When Sri Ramana intently gazed on Ramdas and the eyes of both met, Ramdas felt he was pouring into him spiritual power and grace in abundance, so much so that Ramdas was thrilled, as his divine light shone on his mind, heart and soul. Sri Ramana's eyes always radiated a splendour, which was simply unique and irresistible — a splendour mingled with infinite tenderness, compassion and mercy. The few minutes that Ramdas spent in his holy company meant a momentous impetus in his spiritual career.¹

Ramdas was a prolific author whose works abound in detailed accounts of his

extraordinary experiences and with illustrative anecdotes about the spiritual quest. What follows is an insightful passage from his writings:

SEVA

Life fulfills its supreme purpose when it is imbued with the spirit of service. Service is the very perfume of a true life of love and sacrifice. Labour is the natural form of life, because life itself is activity, but when labour is inspired by love, it assumes the name of service. Service for gain, service for reward are the terms commonly employed. Here the significance of service loses its true colour and glory. Real service is work done out of pure love and compassion. Service thus rendered liberates life and fills it with the joy of the Eternal. The expression "Do all your actions in the name of and for the sake of God" connotes that your life's activities be performed as pure offerings of love and for the fulfilment of love, because love is God and God is love.²

¹ *The Divine Life*, p. 193: Anandashram, Kanhangad (1991 Edn.).

² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Swami Ramdas has set forth the high ideal of *seva* wherein the elimination of all trace of ego sense is of paramount importance. Nearly everyone is willing to pay lip service to this ideal, but in practice is it really respected? Without having an abstract discussion of the problem, we can examine the following three fairly typical everyday situations.

First, a whole town is full of feverish activity as an election campaign is in full swing. All the candidates in the local elections are busy shouting insults at their opponents. "You have a duty to vote me into office," declares a prominent citizen, "because I was responsible for the construction of a new water supply system. It is only because I pressurized the government into spending more money that you have better roads and houses." Now, do his good works fall into the category of *seva*? Professional persons such as doctors, engineers or teachers render various services to society and they have a right to expect something in return as that is their means of livelihood. But those engaged in *seva* do so purely on a voluntary basis. They are neither paid nor should they expect any reward, monetary or otherwise, for all their labours.

Second, in the slummy outskirts of a densely populated city there are many shacks made of decaying wooden planks and plastic sheets. Here the poorest of the poor struggle to survive. These simple folk are illiterate and jobless. They look pale and undernourished. One day

several neatly dressed strangers visit them and say, "It is our pleasure to offer you decent clothes and regular meals. Your children will have the right to attend our schools free of charge. Rent-free flats will also be provided. Are you interested?"

"Of course we are," replies an elderly man with a smile. He can hardly believe his ears and eyes.

"You are so kind," remarks his wife. "And is there anything that we can do in return?" she adds.

Then the strangers beg, "Could you please do us only one favour? Could you start practising our great religion and discard yours?"

Is it ethical to take advantage of the underprivileged? Is it genuine *seva* to alleviate the sufferings of the needy for the purpose of increasing the number of converts from other faiths? Seldom, alas, is *seva* done for its own sake! Besides, why is religion regarded as the mere replacement of one set of beliefs by another, when it should be seen as the lifelong search for the Eternal and the consequential demise of the individual self?

Third, there is an extremely unhappy and lonely man who frequently feels depressed. He has short periods of happiness only when he gives generous gifts to those who are lacking in the bare necessities. Therefore he particularly enjoys helping refugees.

"Yesterday evening," he would proudly inform his office colleagues, "I distributed blankets and bread to hundreds of homeless men, women and children who live on the streets. I devote my leisure time to caring for the destitute. Do you also do that? You see, I have a self-sacrificing nature whereas you chaps lead such useless self-indulgent lives! When in the evenings you go down to your pubs to drink beer or wine and laugh away the time, remember that I'll be toiling for hours on the pavements. I'm very kind-hearted but you fellows feel no pity for these displaced persons. What marvellous men you are!" By making such statements he was trying hard to create a favourable impression of himself; he was implying that he was somehow better than his colleagues who, not surprisingly, resented his superior attitude. They dislike his offensive and arrogant manner of talking to them. His work mates also thought that it was in pretty bad taste for him to brag about his social work.

It is beyond doubt that *seva* is widely seen as one of the principal virtues. What is the nature of virtue? Virtue never proclaims its existence; it is too shy to show its face; it prefers to remain anonymous. The seed of virtue thrives in the soil of solitude and silence. Those imbued with the desire to serve the less fortunate members of society generally like to stay out of the limelight. Therefore never will they make a show of their care and affection for the sufferings of the penniless.

Jesus taught that "when giving alms, do not allow your left hand to know what your right hand is doing."³ Alms, he said, are best given in secret. By tradition, there was in the Jewish temple a "chamber of secrets" in which the devout secretly left their gifts so that the poor could help themselves to it in secret.

Jesus was fond of giving moral lessons by telling short and simple stories. Jesus captured the essence of *seva* in his famous Parable of the Good Samaritan:

Jesus said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wound, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him', he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neigh-

³ Matthew: 6:3.

⁴ Luke 10: 30-37.

bour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise".⁴

Perfect *karma yogis* who always act disinterestedly, which means, they do deeds without selfish motives, are as rare as they are great. In all my travels I have yet to meet a perfect *karma yogi*, but I have heard of a dear departed swami of Sri Lankan origin. No one knew his name for he refused to divulge it even to his very few friends.

His behavior might seem strange to some. Several hours before sunrise when the vast majority were still in bed, under cover of darkness and unseen by people, he would fetch buckets of water from wells and scrub all the public walls covered with unsightly graffiti; next he would clear the leaves out of blocked drains and clean up the public roads; finally, he would clean the public toilets thoroughly. Then before the crack of dawn he would hurriedly disappear

from the scene. Acting selflessly was part of his *sadhana*. He served society, but demanded nothing from it, not even the grateful thanks of pleasantly surprised residents. He did not draw up a list of favours done to people, preferring to forget the favours instead. He loved without counting the cost of loving. Some citizens mistakenly believed that certain celestial beings were busy cleaning up their little town regularly! In a sense they were not wrong because genuine *karma yogis* are comparable to gods.

In conclusion, we can speculate about the spiritual state of a full-fledged *karma yogi* who is involved in *seva*. Given the fact that all his actions originate in absolute altruism, none of the following self-centred thoughts would occur to him — "this good deed will result in name and fame", "these meritorious acts of mine will bring me rewards either in this life or the next" or, "I'm so holy that soon I'll be on the threshold of sainthood." Never will he think along such egotistical lines.

Nothing but pure actions emanate from the pure in heart.

THE SEARCH FOR BRAHMAN

A thief enters a dark room and feels the various articles within. He puts his hand upon a table perhaps and saying, "Not this", he passes on. He comes in contact with some other article, maybe a chair and again he says, "Not this."

He continues his search. He leaves one thing after another till he finally lays his hand on the box containing the treasure. He then exclaims, "It is here." His search ends. Such indeed is the search for Brahman.

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Is all love bliss?

By Stuart Rose

WHEN we talk about love it is normally in the context of “love for” someone or thing, as “I love you”. We rarely just use the word love without such relation. Love, therefore, might be considered as a form of activity in so much as it is a movement or correlation between the subject “I” and the object “you” or “it”. This manner of talking about love covers most uses of the term, although the question which this article attempts to explore is that there is perhaps one form of love which falls outside of this duality of subject and object, a form of love which can be experienced but not in the usual way that talking about love suggests — in fact, even use of the word “experience” here is incorrect as it implies duality. This love might be called spiritual love, although, to differentiate it more completely from other uses of the word love, we may not call it love at all but bliss. In this description, bliss is an experience that is not encountered for someone or thing. Bliss is purely a subjective experience, without activity or relation of any kind. So important is this experience that, termed *Ananda* in Sanskrit, it is given by ancient sages as one of the three attributes of the ultimately

unknowable Brahman or Absolute Reality, along with *Sat*, as existence or being, and *Chit*, as consciousness or awareness. Bliss, we can conclude, is the non-dual (*Advaitic*) experience of love.

By its very nature of being non-dual, the experience of bliss is found to be beyond any restrictions of time and space, which means that it exists always and everywhere. It can be described (inadequately) as an enduring ecstatic experience, one that cannot be shared and one which is necessarily the same — however differently it is experienced — for all who encounter it, because this is the nature of non-duality.

Through attachments, desires, and nescience, we usually only see separation; that is, we each see ourselves as separate to other beings — in fact, to all else — there seems to be little or no overriding connection between us. According to the *Advaitic* view, this is false, an illusion, which is created solely by the mind: the mind being comprised purely of thought, and it is through our thoughts that we decide — usually unwittingly — upon our separation. But we can ask, “Where do these thoughts come from?” And when

we do ask such questions, we find that the original thought becomes illusive: in the end — that is, after much inquiry (*Vichara*) — it simply vanishes because there was no “substance” or reality to it in the first place. In its stead, there remains an unchanging beingness and awareness, not of anything in particular because that would be based on a thought, simply what we might describe as Absolute Reality. In this state, there is total freedom because the individual is no longer “fettered” by thoughts which separate or particularize — in fact, there is no thought even of individuality. It is the nature of this state of beingness which is described as bliss.

In discussing this state, Sri Ramana Maharshi teaches that it is wholly unnecessary to lead any other type of life than the normal one a person might lead; no asceticism is necessarily involved for this state to occur. What he suggests is simply a way of being where the basis of existence is Reality, which is not like our normal multiple *un*-realities; simply one state of being which is described as pure existence or awareness. This Reality is not of the senses nor of the mind, it is ineffable, and encapsulates, is over and above everything that the mind and senses encounter. The Maharshi, in conversation, illuminates us:

Bhagavan: *Ananda* (Supreme Bliss) always exists. It is only the worldly things that have to be given up. If they are given up, what remains is only Bliss.

That which IS, is the Self. Where is the question of catching that which IS? That is one’s own nature (*Swabhava*).

Devotee: Is that nature also called *swarupa* (the Self)?

B: Yes. There is no difference between the two.

D: If it is said that *Ananda* is the Self itself, then who is it that experiences it?

B: That is the point. So long as there is one who experiences, it shall have to be stated that *Ananda* is the Self itself. When there is no one to experience, where is the question of a form for *Ananda*? It is only that which ‘IS’ remains. That IS is *Ananda*. That is the Self. So long as the feeling that the Self is different from oneself there will be one who enquires and experiences, but when one realises the Self there will be no one to experience. Who is there to ask? What is there to say? In common parlance, however, we shall have to say that Bliss is the Self or is our Real Nature (*Swarupa*).

D: That is all right, Swami. But, however much we try, the mind does not get under control and envelopes the *Swarupa* so that it is not perceptible to us. What is to be done?

(Bhagavan with a smile placed his little finger over his eye and said, “Look. This little finger covers the eye and prevents the whole world from being seen. In the same way this small mind covers the whole universe and prevents

Brahman from being seen. See how powerful it is!"¹

Through further study of our subject, there seems to be a remarkable consistency within many of the writings — religious, spiritual, or philosophical — on spiritual love or bliss, an underlying unity about what it is, although what is said is voiced through many different languages, styles, and sensibilities.

We can look briefly at three religious traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism, for example.

The Buddha gave a discourse to his followers on the practice of love (*Metta*²), the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (Hymn of Universal Love). In this discourse, the Buddha taught his followers as follows:

Cultivate an all-embracing mind of
love

For all throughout the universe,
In all its height, depth and breadth —
Love that is untroubled
and beyond hatred or enmity.³

In this passage, the Buddha suggests that there is nowhere where love is not and he implies that, with love, a person will not be affected by any and all of life's vicissitudes.

Christianity, according to the theologian James Moffat in his study on love, 'may justly be called the religion of love'⁴ and there are many passages in the New Testament which give evidence of this, not least from the First Letter of John and

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. John writes (in 4, 16), 'God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him' and Paul in his letter (13, 1-13) also describes this love by saying that without it life is empty (a resounding gong or clanging cymbal), and that love never fails whereas all else is impermanent, a reflection and not the real.

The basis of the middle six chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* is *Bhakti* (loving devotion). Here, Krishna teaches that, 'He who in the oneness of love, loves me in whatever he sees, wherever this man may live, in truth this man lives in me' (6.31).⁵ Later, in Chapter 12, Krishna outlines two paths of devotional worship; that of the form of God and that of the formless, and both paths are shown to have love as their means. Sri Shankaracharya in his commentary points out with regard to the latter that by following the path of the formless, one is already not separate from God; and

¹ Suri Nagamma, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*. Translated by D. S. Sastri, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai (1973:378f).

² *Metta* is often translated as loving-kindness, and the term is also frequently used in conjunction with *Karma* (compassion), being the first two of the four *Brahma Viharas* (divine states of mind).

³ Translated by the Indian Pali scholar, the Venerable Acharya Buddharakkhita.

⁴ James Moffat, *Love in the New Testament*. London: Hodder and Stoughton (1930:56).

⁵ Juan Mascaro's Penguin translation.

God, as Bhagavan has already stated, is Love itself.⁶

Across the broad spectrum of philosophy, too, there have been numerous important writings about love from such thinkers as Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Al-Ghazali, and Soren Kierkegaard, through to such people in the twentieth century as Erich Fromm, Karl Jaspers, Jiddu Krishnamurti, C. S. Lewis, Thomas Merton, Rudolf Steiner, and the current Dalai Lama. Even across this span of writers, a congruence of opinion can be found to exist. Two short although incomplete illustrations may suffice to demonstrate this homogeneity. Plato, for example, talks about realising through stages the love of absolute beauty which he describes as unchanging, as true goodness, and not a reflection of the truth but absolute truth, the pursuit of which is where he suggests life should be dedicated — in fact, he sees such activity as our prime duty.⁷ Likewise, in contemporary times, Sri Aurobindo talks of a coming together of the paths of action, wisdom, and love [in]

an adoration of an impersonal Delight and Beauty, of a pure and infinite perfection to which we can give no name or form, a moved attraction of the soul to some ideal and infinite Presence, Power, existence in the world or beyond it, which in some way becomes psychologically or spiritually sensible to us and then more and more intimate and real. That is the call, the

touch of bliss existence upon us. ... And to open ourselves to it is what we feel to be the one true happiness, to live in it the sole real perfection.⁸

The conclusion of such study seems to be that there is only spiritual love which can be regarded as the supreme importance in the lives of spiritual seekers, all else pales into insignificance: and this aim is summarised by the apostle Paul when he wrote: *Without love, I am nothing*.⁹ By this conclusion I mean that although this love may appear to be reflected in a multitude of different ways and situations — for example, romantic love, filial love, and motherly love — at its very basis, all love is the same love, is one love, and the variations that we encounter have much more to do with our own life paths, experiences, and attachments than with love itself.

It is obvious also to say that love exists whether 'I' as a person exist or not. Love existed before I was born and will exist after I am dead. This person, therefore, has nothing whatsoever to do with its generation. My part in this "play" (my seeming individuality) appears to be simply that of a channel through which love can be accessed. If this is the case and given

⁶ *The Bhagavad Gita with the commentary of Sri Shankaracharya* Translated by A. M. Sastry, Madras: Samata Books, 1998:304f.

⁷ Plato, *The Symposium*: Translated by W. Hamilton London: Penguin. (1967:92ff).

⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram 1996:567f.

⁹ 1 Corinthians: 13.

the importance of spiritual love, then accessing it to the fullest degree might be considered as life's highest purpose.

As has been said, this love (as bliss) can be described as pure subject. The variations which we appear to see stem from duality — that between the subject and its object. This is where I use the word bliss, so as to distinguish between love as pure subject, the bliss or *Ananda* which is spoken of by Sri Ramana and in the scriptures, and love as the outcome of the relationship between the subject and its object. In Reality, of course, there can be no such distinction. Perhaps the ultimate duality, as far as love is concerned, might be found in theistic beliefs between God and the devotee, which has been depicted in the Greek language as God's love pouring forth to us as *Agape*, together with the highest human love, as *Eros*, which we aspire to give to God. These two must, finally, be one and the same love because, as we have seen, all dualities have thought as their basis. When thought (and thereby individuality) is overcome, no such duality exists. Yet bliss remains, in that it is the characterization which has been applied to this state of pure subject. We might ask, who has applied it and by what authority? However, this question only serves to demonstrate the inappropriateness of language (in terms of rational engagement) with which to approach our subject — all thought, all ideas, from the *Advaitic* view, are nothing other than the result of the duality which only appears

to exist between the thinker and the object of the thought.

What is more, all duality is the cause of suffering, say most religions, and most if not all such spiritualities talk in united voice about the ending of suffering by absorption into the one, in whatever way it is described: resurrection, *Nirvana*, *Moksha*, release. The methods proposed are various, some involving the living of countless lives, others the living of just one, yet others proposing no methods or time scale at all. None of these seem to make any difference to the existence of bliss: using the much quoted analogy of the ocean, bliss can be described as the deep of the ocean and all the methods to approach it simply waves on its surface or rivers flowing to it. It can be said, therefore, that diving deep into bliss, without thought, might be the ultimate desire of all spiritual people. Such is the sublime importance of bliss.

The Maharshi, in dialogue with devotees, perhaps sums up best of all our subject:

This morning a Tamil youth approached Bhagavan and asked, "Swami, it is good to love God, is it not? Then why not follow the path of Love?"

Maharshi: Who said you couldn't follow it? You can do so. But when you talk of love, there is duality, is there not — the person who loves and the entity called God who is loved? The individual is not separate from God.

Hence love means one has love towards one's own Self. For this, i.e. loving one's own Self, examples have been given in the *Vasudevamananam*, stage by stage. Man loves money most; but he loves his son more than money; his own body more than the son; his *indriyas* (the organs of the body) more than the body; the eye most among the organs; life more than the eye; and the Self (*Atma*) more than life. This is exemplified thus: If the son does something untoward and the government decide to punish him for it, the parents offer money and even bribes to set him free. Hence the love towards the son is more than money. If, however, the government do not accept money but say that they will let off the son if the father agrees to undergo the punishment himself instead, then the father will say, 'Do whatever you like with the boy; I have nothing to do with him.' Hence the father loves his own body more than his son. If a man does something for which the powers that be say that his eyes must be plucked out, he tries to save his eyes by agreeing to bodily torture; so bodily torture is preferred to loss of an organ. If, however, they decide to take his life by beheading him, he would be prepared to lose his eyes or any other organ rather than lose his life; so life (*prana*) is loved more than the organs. In the same manner, a person who desires to have *Atma-Anandam* (bliss of the Self) would

be prepared to lose his life even, if necessary; so the Self is loved more than life. Hence the idea of a person in loving God, is only with a view to being happy himself. He is, however, the embodiment of happiness and that happiness is God. Who else is to be loved? Love itself is God.

Devotee: That is why I am asking you whether God could be worshipped through the path of love?

M: That is exactly what I have been saying. Love itself is the actual form of God. If by saying, 'I do not love this; I do not love that,' you reject all things, that which remains is *Swarupa*, i.e. innate Self. That is pure bliss. Call it pure bliss, God, *Atma* or what you will. That is devotion; that is realization and that is everything," said Bhagavan.

Another devotee remarked, "The meaning of what you say now is that we should reject all outside things which are bad, and also those which are good, and love God alone. Is it possible for anyone to reject everything, saying this is no good, that is no good, unless one experiences them?"

Sri Bhagavan remarked, "That is true. To reject the bad, you must love the good. In due course that good also will appear to be an obstacle and will be rejected. Hence, you must necessarily first love what is good. That means you must first love and then reject the

thing you love. If you thus reject everything, what remains is the Self alone. That is real love. One who knows the secret of that love finds the world itself full of universal love,"

(Sri Bhagavan resumed silence.)¹⁰

Love in all its varieties in concert — all too often overshadowed or veiled by activity — must be of supreme importance to the spiritual aspirant. Fully realizing this importance amounts to probably the

single most meaningful event on such a path as it is comprehensively life-changing. Then, as Sri Ramana describes, all the different loves, however appealing they might seem, need to be passed over — or at least become detached from — until just one love remains, which is found to be no different from what I ultimately am (what "I" is), which is Bliss.

¹⁰ *Suri Nagamma, op.cit.:309f.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S NARRATION OF HIS SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

God made me pass through the discipline of various paths. First according to the *Purana*, then according to the *Tantra*. I also followed the disciplines of the *Vedas*. At first I practised *sadhana* in the Panchavati. I made a grove of *tulsi* plants and used to sit inside it and meditate. Sometimes I cried with a longing heart, "Mother! Mother!" or again, "Rama! Rama!"

While repeating the name of Rama, I sometimes assumed the attitude of Hanuman and fixed a tail to the lower end of my backbone. I was in a God-intoxicated state. At that time I used to put on a silk robe and worship the Deity. What joy I experienced in that worship!

I practised the discipline of the *Tantra* under the *bel* tree. At that time I could see no distinction between the sacred *tulsi* and any other plant. In that state I sometimes ate the leavings from a jackal's meal, food that had been exposed the whole night, part of which might have been eaten by snakes or other creatures. Yes, I ate that stuff.¹

Sometimes I rode on a dog and fed him with *luchi*, also eating part of the bread myself. I realized that the whole world was filled with God alone. One cannot have spiritual realization without destroying ignorance; so I would assume the attitude of a tiger and devour ignorance.

While practising the disciplines of the *Vedas*, I became a *sannyasi*. I used to lie down in the *chandni* and say to Hriday, 'I am a *sannyasi*. I shall take my meals here.'²

— *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Entry for September 19, 1884).

¹ In a certain form of *Tantric* worship food is offered to the jackals, the companions of Goddess Kali.

² The *chandni* is an open portion in the temple garden with steps descending to the Ganga. According to orthodox Hindu tradition, a monk is forbidden to live in a house.

Bhagavan and I: A *Tete-A-Tete*

By I.S. Madugula

I never had the good fortune of seeing Bhagavan face to face. By the time I heard about him at the university where I was studying, it was already too late. I have since read about him, his life and his teachings. I have learnt that he was a person of great kindness and compassion for one and all, for those that came to him and those who could not. From what I have understood, he seems to provide the most suitable and the most practical answers to life's daily dilemmas. His total openness, accessibility, and warmth have appealed to my nature. He shunned all forms of show and hype. He never claimed to be a great master, nor did he ask to have any disciples to propagate his message. He treated everyone who came to him as an equal in that everyone shared the same spirit. He was genuine.

I have often wondered what I would have asked him if I had indeed seen him in person. If I have understood him right, maybe I can still talk with him because he assured us that he wasn't going anywhere even after he left the body. He lives on in the minds and hearts of all those who see him. He can indeed be a real, shiny presence any time that presence is invoked.

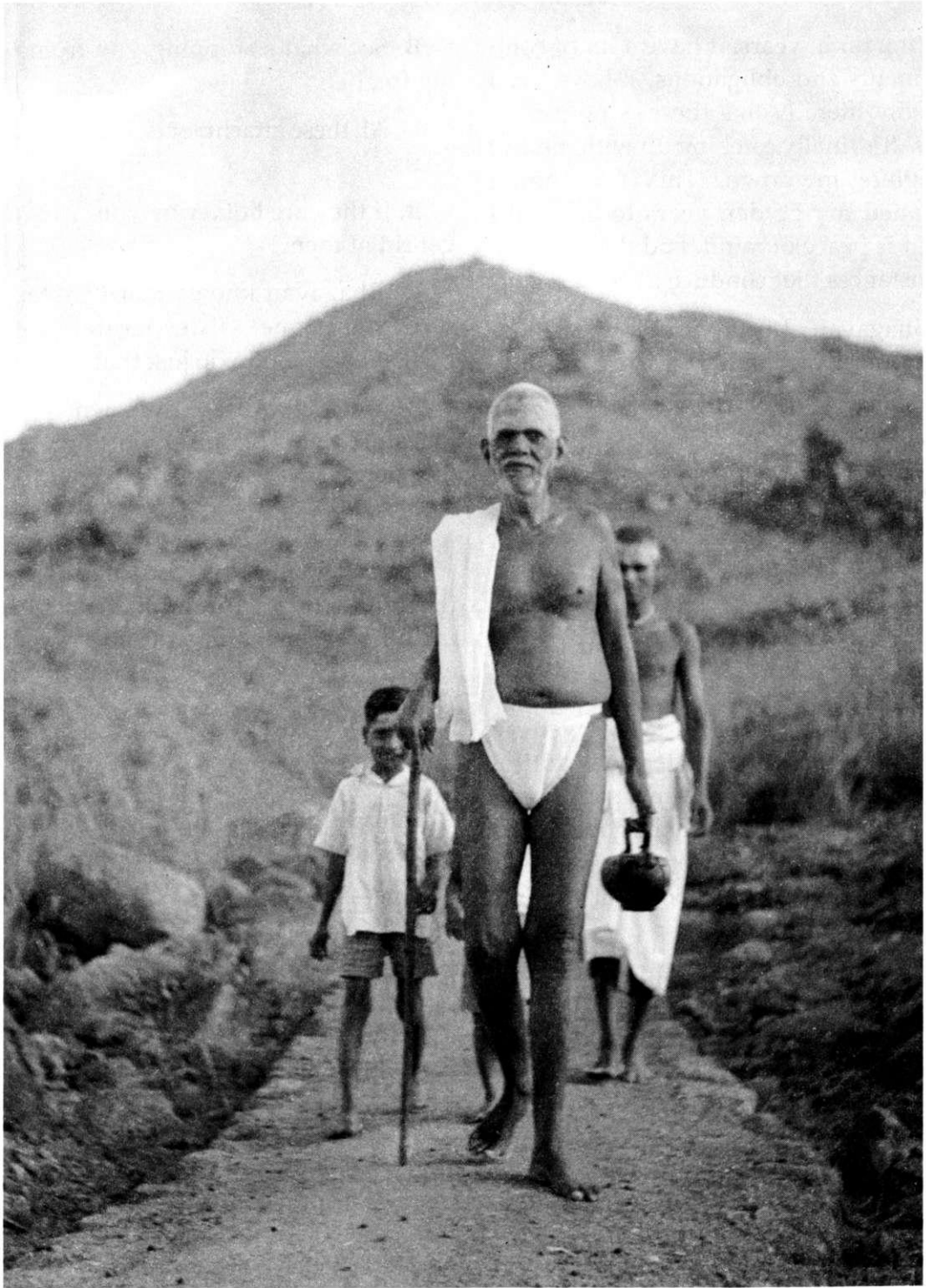
The following thus is an imaginary dialogue between me and Bhagavan.

(Bhagavan looks like one of his later pictures, with a benign countenance and a reassuring smile. His eyes exude grace and compassion. I am in a sort of twilight zone, not quite asleep nor quite awake. I sit quietly at a respectful distance waiting to catch his attention. I am in no particular hurry. I even think I am serene in a muddled sort of way. As yet I have no idea what I am going to say. I am hoping that somehow he would help me formulate that ice-breaking question.)

I eventually stutter, "Bhagavan, what's wrong with me?" and wait. I feel relieved that I am able to finally utter something.

After a period of silence, Bhagavan looks at me for a few seconds and turns his face away. I repeat my question, "Bhagavan, what's wrong with me, please?"

Still no answer. Although I know that he knows what I want, I explain my problems to him just to get them off my chest. "My mind wanders. I am restless. I am



getting on in years. I have a lot of commitments and obligations. I have lived my life literally like there is no tomorrow. It's finally catching up with me and weighing me down. This is not how I planned my golden years to be. All I want is peace of mind and the right circumstances that conduce to it. . ."

Bhagavan abruptly turns to me and, without any change in his expression, asks, "You say that your mind wanders?"

Devotee: Yes, Bhagavan, I did.

Bhagavan. Why? Where does it wander?

D. Bhagavan knows it all — a lot better than I can explain myself. Perhaps you want me to realize all that I have done wrong.

My senses have held sway over me far too long. I am attracted to beautiful things and persons. I cannot stand ugliness. I can deal only with the good things of life. I have lived beyond my means. I lack the resources to support that lifestyle.

I have not been able to fully discharge my obligations to the family. I want to help people, but I cannot. I want to do charitable work, but I lack the wherewithal. I work hard, but I can show nothing for it. I keep spinning my wheels, but I get nowhere.

The funny thing is that, in the same breath, I want to get away from it all, into my own world where I am free from all obligations, all distractions. . .

B. So, what's stopping you from being free?

D. All these attachments, these desires, goals.

B. If they are bothering you, why not get rid of them?

D. Bhagavan knows that it is easier said than done. I desperately need Bhagavan's help to do just that.

B. You say you are experiencing all these problems because you think, you feel, you want, or you act?

D. Yes, Bhagavan.

B. And you believe you are doing all the things you have done and experiencing all the things that you have experienced?

D. Yes, Bhagavan.

B. Who are you?

D. I am the agent and the patient, the actor and the experiencer of all my actions. . .

B. Therein lies your trouble.

D. I don't understand, I am confused.

B. All thought, both good and bad, emanates from your mind, and all actions, good as well as bad, are performed by your body. But you are neither, if you delve deep into your origins. There is a you, separate and distinct from the body and the mind and their functions. And that's the real you, your real self, untouched by any external phenomenon

or occurrence once you reach into it, as you do routinely in deep sleep.

D. I am sorry, Bhagavan, but I don't get it.

B. Try to journey to the bottom of your heart, the core of your personality. Inquire into its existence. Meditate on it, or get there by any other means that suits your temperament.

D. Bhagavan, that sounds like a long term process.

B. So, what are you waiting for? Start now.

D. Bhagavan can make all my problems disappear in an instant if he so wishes.

B. Look, you did not consult me when you made all those commitments, had all those experiences, and lived the kind of

life you wanted. Now you expect me to get you out of the woods?

D. Yes, Bhagavan. That's all I can do now. I have no other recourse. You are my last resort. I surrender. *Mahatmas* have been known to relieve their devotees' suffering by their mere wish.

B. Well, I don't do miracles. If I did, there will be endless lines of people to see me.

(I sit there stubbornly with my head hung in acknowledgment of the reproach. I make no attempt to leave his presence.)

After a while, in a voice softened with kindness, Bhagavan speaks slowly, "All right. Go home now, and practise Self-enquiry. All will be well."

Who will not wish to have this as a real experience?

TEACHING OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA: *GOD IS EVERYWHERE*

What is knowledge and what is ignorance? A man is ignorant so long as he feels that God is far away. He has knowledge when he knows that God is here and everywhere.

When a man has true knowledge he feels that everything is filled with consciousness. At Kamarpukur I used to talk to Shibu, who was then a lad four or five years old. When the clouds rumbled and lightning flashed Shibu would say to me, "There, uncle! They're striking matches again!" (*All laugh*) One day I noticed him chasing grasshoppers by himself. The leaves rustled in the nearby trees. 'Hush! Hush!' he said to the leaves, 'I want to catch the grasshoppers.' He was a child and saw everything throbbing with consciousness.

One cannot realize God without the faith that knows no guile, the simple faith of a child.

— *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Entry for September 26, 1884).

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Effort, Grace and Destiny

By Arthur Osborne

SCRIPTURES and gurus say that an aspirant must make effort on the path but that Grace also is necessary and that in the end Realization is bestowed by Grace, not achieved by effort. It is said in the *Upanishad* that the *Atman* chooses whom it will.

This is a hard saying. Those in whom the spiritual urge is powerful do not worry their heads over it but strive because they must, because they are drawn to it without any thought of reward. Those, however, in whom the mind is too active and the Spirit too weak, are apt to be puzzled and ask why they should make any effort if the final achievement is not to be won by effort but bestowed by Grace. They also ask why the *Atman* should choose one rather than another. For such people I will try to clarify the saying.

Who is the 'you' that has to make effort, and who is the 'God' or '*Atman*' that chooses and that bestows Grace on one rather than on another?

The essence of a man is pure Spirit or, which comes to the same, pure Being or pure universal Consciousness. This Spirit prowls in the lion, spreads in the tree,

endures in the stone; in man alone it not only lives but knows that it lives. The difference between man and other animals is not that man has greater ability (in many ways he has less), but that he knows that he is man; he is self-consciously man. This is through the human mind which, looking outward, knows and dominates the world, looking inward, knows and reflects Being as the essence and source of the world. However, the ability to do this implies also the ability not to do it, to regard oneself as a complete autonomous individual and forget the inner Reality.

The various religions express this simple truth through myth, allegory and doctrine and are apt to be puzzling. In the *Quran* it is said that Allah offered the trust to the heavens and earth and the mountains but all declined it; only man accepted and was untrue to it. Religions assert that God gave man free will, which implies the freedom to rebel. In Christianity it is said that man is fallen on account of original sin. The Book of Genesis gives the story of how man fell into the

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domain of opposites, the differentiation of good and evil. All these are allegories of the simple truth stated above.

The mind creates an ego, a seemingly complete, autonomous individual self, which, although illusory, seems to be the reality of one. This is the state known in Hinduism as *ajnana* or ignorance, in Christianity as 'original sin', in Islam, in its more violent form, as *kufr* or 'denial', in its milder form, recognising the Spirit as real but believing the ego also to be real, as *shirk* or 'association' (of other with God).

This is the obstruction to Self-realization. Therefore it has to be removed. That is why the masters say that Self-realization is not something new to be achieved but an eternally existent state to be discovered or revealed. Therefore they compare it to an overcast sky — the clear sky does not have to be created, only the clouds covering it to be blown away; or to a pond overgrown with water-lilies — the water is there all the time and only has to be revealed by clearing away the plants that have overgrown it.

To do this constitutes the effort of which the teachers and scriptures speak. The mind has created the obstruction; the mind has to remove it. But merely to recognise this, to recognise, that is to say, that the ego is (according to the *Advaitin*) an illusory self or (according to the dualist) a creation of the Spirit, to which it should be submitted and totally passive, is far from constituting the full effort required. Indeed, it increases the obliga-

tion for total effort and therefore, so to speak, the guilt in not making effort.

The effort involves the will and emotions as well as the understanding and therefore has to be persistent, determined and skilful. The ego has put out tentacles which cling to the world, and either these have to be lopped off or the ego itself killed. It craves the admiration or submission of other egos, and therefore humility is enjoined. It craves enjoyment of creation in its own right instead of being a mere channel through which the Spirit perceives and enjoys, and therefore celibacy and asceticism are sometimes prescribed and self-indulgence is always, in all religions, forbidden. The attempt to lop off the tentacles of the ego has been compared in mythology to a battle with a many-headed giant who grew two new heads for each one lopped off. The only way to disposing of him was to strike at the heart and kill the entire being, not deal with the heads individually. The campaign must be skilful and intelligently planned as well as ruthless. What wonder if different masters in different religions have prescribed different ways of conducting it? The goal in all cases is the same: the taming or destruction of the ego or the discovery that it never really existed!

Methods such as I have been alluding to, consist largely in curtailing the ego's outer manifestations so as to induce the mind to turn inwards to the Self or Spirit behind it. It is also possible to proceed in

the opposite direction by turning inward to the Spirit and thence deriving strength to renounce the outer manifestations. This is the path of love and devotion, worshipping God, submitting to Him, calling upon His Name, striving to serve and remember Him with one's whole life; either path can be followed, or both together. A third path is that of questioning the very existence of the ego by Self-enquiry.

All this is effort. Then what about Grace? Grace is the natural flow of the Spirit into and through the mind and faculties. There is nothing capricious or erratic about it. Bhagavan said: "Grace is always there; it is only you who have to make yourself receptive to it." It is likened traditionally to the sunlight falling on a flower garden: if one bud opens and not another it is not due to any partiality on the side of the sun but only to the maturity or immaturity of the buds. Or if the sunlight penetrates one room but not another it is simply because the doors and windows are open in one and shut in the other.

Why then is it said that the *Atman* chooses whom It will and that the final Realization comes by Grace, not by effort? In order to remove the insidious idea that the ego-self can continue to exist and attain something called 'Realization', whereas all it can do is to immolate itself and be replaced by the realized state of the Spirit, which is ever-present Grace. The mind makes efforts to remove

obstructions; it is hard for it to understand that it is itself the final obstruction.

The very desire for Realization has to be carefully watched and can become an impediment, for it implies someone to achieve something. At the end all that the mind is called on to do is to keep still and allow the Grace to flow unimpeded — but that is the hardest thing of all for it to do.

Till in the end

All battles fought, all earthly loves
 abjured,
 Dawn in the east, there is no other way
 But to be still. In stillness then to find
 The giants all were windmills, all the
 strife
 Self-made, unreal; even he that strove
 A fancied being, as when that good
 knight
 Woke from delirium and with a loud
 cry

Rendered his soul to God.

On the devotional path this danger of supposing that it is the ego who strives and attains, this warning against desires, even the desire to get Realization, is expressed in the attitude that true service of God must be for love alone with no thought of reward. He who asks for reward is a merchant, not a lover.

The impossibility of achieving when there is no one to achieve explains why a Guru will never answer the question 'When shall I attain Realization?' It implies the false presumption: "There is an individual me; when will it cease to exist?" whereas the Guru realizes the ulti-

mate truth — “There is no being of the unreal and, no not-being of the Real.” Not that the unreal ego will cease to be at such and such a point in time, but that it is not now, never has been and never could be. Therefore the attitude of mind that questions when one can attain Realization or whether it is one’s destiny to be realized in this lifetime is an obstruction sufficient to prevent Realization, being an assertion of the temporary existence of the unreal. Similarly, if you assert that you cannot attain Realization in this lifetime you are thereby preventing yourself from doing so by postulating the existence of a ‘you’ who cannot attain.

And yet paradoxically, it is also an impediment to assert that no effort need be made, on the pretext that, as “there is no being of the unreal and no not-being of the Real”, one is That now and has therefore no need to strive to become That. It sounds plausible, but it is an impediment because it is the pseudo-self, the illusory unreal, that is saying it. The Master can say that there is nothing to

achieve because one is That already; the disciple can’t. Bhagavan would sometimes say that asking the best way to Realization is like being at Tiruvannamalai and asking how to get there, but that could not be the attitude of the devotee. He expected the devotee to make effort, even while appreciating the paradox that there is no effort to make. In the same way he could say that for the realized man there is no Guru-disciple relationship but add that for the disciple the relationship is a reality and is of importance.

For the disciple effort is necessary, but it is also necessary to remember that effort can never attain the final goal, since he who makes the effort must dissolve, leaving only the Spirit. The Spirit, which is the true Self, replaces the illusory ego-self when the latter has removed the obstructions; and that is Grace. The Spirit flows into the vacuum which remains when the ego-self dissolves; doing so is the ‘choice’ which the Spirit makes. It is for the aspirant to create the vacuum by removing the obstructions.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM AND SRI BHAGAVAN

Somerset Maugham, the well known English author was on a visit to Sri Bhagavan. He also went to see Major A.W. Chadwick in his room. There he suddenly became unconscious. Major Chadwick requested Sri Bhagavan to see him. Sri Bhagavan went into the room took a seat and gazed on Mr. Maugham. He regained his senses and saluted Sri Bhagavan. They remained silent and sat facing each other for nearly an hour. The author attempted to ask questions, but did not speak. Major Chadwick encouraged him to ask.

Sri Bhagavan said, “All finished. Heart-talk is all talk. All talk must end in silence only.” They smiled and Sri Bhagavan left the room.

— *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk No. 550.



The Enlightenment of Buddha Sakyamuni

By Lama Anagarika Govinda

WHEN the Buddha after his enlightenment arrived at the Deer Park near Benares, he was but a lonely wanderer, a pilgrim like thousands of others who come daily to this sacred city. He was forsaken by his friends and companions, given up by his family — nobody knew of his great victory; no visible sign was there to convince the world of his supreme attainment. And even if it had been possible to impress the world by signs and miracles, the Buddha would have been the last to use such means. And yet, this lonely pilgrim carried in his heart that light which was to illumine the world and to leave its imprint upon the face of humanity.

When he left Uruvela (now known as Buddh Gaya) the place of his enlightenment, he was perfectly conscious of the immensity of the task before him, because he had been struggling deep within himself, whether he should return into the world and proclaim his newly found knowledge for the benefit of humanity, or whether he should continue to dwell in the blissful peace of his own liberation.

This inner struggle is represented in the sacred scriptures as a dialogue of the Enlightened One with Mara, the Tempter, on the one hand, and with Brahma *Sahampati*, one of the celestial gods of light, on the other. Mara is the advocate of the selfish, small ego, which is only interested in its own welfare, while Brahma is the advocate of that higher endeavour, which has the welfare of all beings at heart, without regard to one's own weal and woe. Though conscious of the difficulty of his mission (because 'it is difficult to find those capable of understanding'), the Buddha decided to yield to the promptings of these divine impulses. *Wide open are the gates of immortality, Ye that have ears to hear, release your faith!*

And after he had reviewed the world in his mind in order to determine where to proclaim first the happy tidings, he decided to go to Benares, India's holiest

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place, and he announced his decision with the following words:

Now to Benares Town I press
To set the Truth-wheel whirling round,¹
In this blind world I go to sound
The throbbing drum of deathlessness.²

If the Buddha called upon the people of the world to 'release their faith', he did not expect them blindly to accept his words, but merely to accept his message with an open mind and to let it sink into their hearts, so as to realize the truth for themselves. That the Buddha did not speculate upon the credulity of the people when he spoke of 'faith' (Pali: *saddha*, Skt.: *Sraddha*), may be seen from the fact that the first proclamation of his teachings was addressed to those of his former companions who had abandoned him, because he had given up the extreme austerities which they regarded indispensable to a holy life, but which he had found unprofitable and ignoble. When now they saw the Buddha approaching through the Deer Park, they decided neither to greet nor to welcome him, but to treat him with contemptuous indifference.

But, what happened?

When the Buddha drew nearer, they rose one after another from their seats and went to meet him. The Buddha's face bore the expression of his great spiritual victory, his eyes had the deep glance of one who had gone through the mysteries of life and death and conquered both. His whole personality was radiating happiness, as if the inner light had pene-

trated and saturated his bodily form. Never had a man's expression and behaviour revealed a greater power of conviction, sincerity and devotion to truth, combined with the ardent desire to communicate the experience of ultimate reality for the benefit of all living beings. It was this sincerity and radiance of his whole being that gave his words such an overpowering effect, an effect that has spanned millenniums and even now makes his message reverberate in the hearts of millions of men, as if those words were spoken this very moment. All the happiness which the Buddha had silently enjoyed during the weeks after his enlightenment in the solitude of the forest, is condensed in the solemn exclamation with which he addressed those five ascetics in the Deer Park: *Open your ears, O monks, the deliverance from death is found!*

Strange enough, these happy tidings have never been given the attention they deserve, and especially among modern students of Buddhism. Partly under the influence of Schopenhauer's philosophy, partly due to the materialistic outlook of science at the beginning of this century,

¹ The 'turning of the Wheel of the Dharma' (Skt.: *Dharmacakra-pravartana*. Tibetan: *chos-ki hkhoro hkor-ba*) is a metaphor known to every Buddhist, meaning 'setting in motion the forces of the universal and moral law' as embodied in truths of Buddhism. This metaphor is the origin of the Tibetan 'prayer wheel.'

² This versified translation is by Bhikkhu Silacara.

there arose the impression that Buddhism was either a pessimistic kind of philosophy or a life-negating form of rationalism. Both these views forget that Buddhism was not founded on an intellectual theory, but on an experience of overwhelming power. What was this experience that transformed the emaciated ascetic into the radiant figure of the Buddha?

The sacred texts give us a very clear description of this experience in the Buddha's own words, which — if we have ears to hear and hearts to understand — contain the key to the quintessence of Buddhism, to its most profound aspect, in which millenniums of religious development are foreshadowed and in which the essential message of all great religions is comprised, the discovery of the universality and immortality of the spirit that informs all life and that becomes conscious in man, if he bursts the barriers of egohood, that keep him a prisoner of his own illusions.

The Buddha described this process and the conditions that make it possible. No amount of will-power, no extreme of asceticism or self-torture can force open the gates of enlightenment. We can approach them only with due respect to the body in whom the human consciousness is enshrined and which therefore is to be looked upon as the temple of the mind. This was the first lesson the Buddha learnt, and it was for this reason that he abandoned the extremes of self-mortifi-

cation on account of which his companions lost faith in him.

And with a body restored to health and vigour, he directed his mind inward, and lo! it revealed to him a universe, greater than the universe that his mortal eyes could see or his mortal mind could conceive; a universe that did not only extend in space, but in which time and space were merged into a higher dimension, so that the past became an integral part of the present and the origination, disintegration and re-absorption of world-systems became as apparent as the infinite variety of life-forms, in which each single being has its function and is related to all other manifestations of life.

He discovered the universality of a consciousness of which our human intellect and reason are only small fragments, sufficient for the trivial tasks of daily life, but no more than a drop on the surface of the ocean. And as a drop, if separated from the ocean, evaporates and disappears from sight, so the limited human consciousness that separates itself under the illusion of its "egohood", will go through millions of transformations of births and deaths, until it remembers or rediscovers its origin and realizes its divine nature in the tremendous all-embracing experience of universality, in which the individual human mind serves as a mirror or a focal point of universal consciousness.

Thus the human mind is not annihilated but subordinated to a higher

dimension of awareness, it becomes a focalizing instrument which not only reflects but integrates a higher reality, so that the metaphor of 'the drop slipping into the shining sea' could be reversed into the paradox that 'the sea is slipping into the drop', which comes nearer to the truth that the infinite lives in the finite, the universal in the individual — which is the only *raison d'être* for the latter's existence.

This universal experience will at once explain the Buddhist concept of *anatman* (Pali: *anatta*), which has baffled many students of Buddhism and has given rise to the faulty notion of the 'soullessness' of Buddhism. This notion arose mainly from the naive presupposition that the word '*atta*' (Pali) or '*atman*' (Skt.), as used in Buddhist texts, could be equated with the concept of 'soul' and that 'soul' was identical with 'ego', and that the 'ego' is a limited, separate and constant entity. If however the Buddha spoke of '*anatta*' 'not-self', 'non-ego', 'egolessness' etc., he did not deny the eternal in man, but merely pointed out that, what we regard as our 'ego', is not the eternal but the ephemeral, not a reality but an illusion which prevents us from discovering the universality of our true nature. We are like a poor man, in whose house a treasure is hidden, but who refuses to break down the walls that hide the treasure.

On the other hand, we have to understand that the denial of separate egohood does not contradict the necessity and rela-

tive value of individuality. While in *Brahmanism nirvana* had a metaphysical connotation, implying the dissolution or merging of the individual soul in the undifferentiated *Brahman*, the Buddha used this term in a purely psychological sense: as the extinction of greed, hatred and ignorance. *Nirvana*, thus, is not the annihilation of individual life, as generally assumed, but something that can be experienced in this very life, as demonstrated by the Buddha himself, who — far from dissolving into the all, — led an active life as a teacher and leader of a great spiritual movement, wandering from place to place for full forty years.

The overcoming of greed, hatred and ignorance (which latter consists in the delusion of imagining one's own self as a separate and unchangeable ego-entity, but is not to be confused with lack of intellectual knowledge) is the precondition of enlightenment which, thus, includes *Nirvana* and at the same time goes beyond it. This is clearly shown in the distinction which is drawn between a perfect saint (*arahant*) and a Buddha. The saint has overcome the above-mentioned negative qualities and thus gained *Nirvana*, but he is not a Buddha because he has not attained the universal knowledge of a fully Enlightened One, he has not reached the universality of the highest consciousness. The highest ideal of Buddhism is, therefore, not *Nirvana* but Enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*).

The recognition of this fact gave rise to the 'Great Way' or 'Great Vehicle' (*Mahayana*) of Buddhism, whose followers were not content merely to escape the endless cycles of death and rebirth, by abstaining, from all actions which might perpetuate the state of worldly existence, but regarded the attainment of Perfect Enlightenment as the only aim worthy of human endeavour — and this all the more, as it presented the opportunity to help one's fellow beings in the greatest possible measure, though it meant taking upon oneself the burden of a longer way and sparing the sufferings of innumerable other beings.

Compared to this ideal, that of the Arahant, who tried to escape the rounds of birth and death on the shortest way, bent first of all on his own salvation, appeared narrow and to some degree selfish, and was therefore called the 'Lesser Vehicle' (*Hinayana*) by the followers of the *Mahayana* to which the Tibetan Buddhists belong. To them the profoundest teaching of the Buddha was his own example, his ceaseless striving after realization of the highest aim through innumerable existences and sufferings until he had attained Perfect Enlightenment. To them the Buddha's way (doctrine) is not a way of evasion or escape, but a way of facing and overcoming dangers and mastering difficulties. Only one who knows joy and sorrow to the full, who has tasted transitoriness as well as eternity, who has dwelt in the finite as well as in the contemplation of the infinite, who has experi-

enced the momentariness of that which appeared eternal and the eternity of the moment, who has reached universality in the highest state of individualisation — only such a one knows that the Buddha's Middle Path is neither a compromise nor a 'sneaking through' between the opposites, but the recognition of both sides of reality without clinging to the one or the other.

When the Buddha introduced the idea of the Middle Way in his first sermon at Sarnath before his five former companions, he was still aflame with the fire of his great experience, which reverberated in his triumphant exclamation: "The deliverance from death is found!" — compressing into these few simple words the quintessence of a message and an experience which took him the remaining forty years of his life to explain and to propagate — a message that even after two-and-a-half thousand years has not yet exhausted its profound significance. The Buddha himself underlined the importance of his words, by adding: "Tell me, ye monks, have I ever addressed you in such terms?"

The monks awakening from their perplexity could not but agree that they had never heard such words from him — vibrant with deep emotion; and knowing the unquestionable truthfulness of his character, they began to understand that the man who stood before them, was no more the simple ascetic Gotama, but one who had passed through an extraordi-

nary spiritual experience, one who had lifted his consciousness to a higher reality.

And now they listened to his words, and they heard the doctrine of the Middle Way, which is as far from a life of selfish enjoyment as from the self-mortification and gloominess of world-despising asceticisms, but which, free from these extremes "enlightens the eye, enlightens the mind, leads to peace, to knowledge, to Enlightenment!"

This avoidance of extremes applied to both the practical and the spiritual life, gave birth to a new kind of thinking, even to a new system of logic and later on to the greatest philosophies of Asia, in which the irreconcilable contrast between subject and object, between 'I' and 'world', between 'spirit' and 'matter', between 'substance' and 'appearance', between the 'eternal' and the 'ephemeral' was eliminated in favour of an infinite living interrelationship between everything that exists. The world that had been solidified by more or less abstract and static concepts, created by thinkers far removed from life, was again restored to fluidity by the Buddha's dynamic conception of a world in which there was as little place for dead matter or rigid mechanical laws, as for arbitrariness, lawlessness or merely 'accidental' happenings. Man and his universe, in fact, every living being and the world in which it exists, form an organic whole, and therefore any change in the essen-

tial nature of a being will result in a change of its world (i.e. the dimension in which it lives). The essential nature of an individual, however, consists in his consciousness, and thus, every living being not only lives in the world which it 'deserves', which corresponds to it but ultimately in the world which it creates. Recognizing this fact, which is only another way to express the law of *Karma*, the Buddha replaced the dogma of a static, immutable self (*atman*), to which the original experience of inner reality had been reduced by the idea of a living, organically evolving psyche and a growing human awareness of his inborn universality, inspired by a spontaneous impulse for freedom and illumination (*bodhi-citta*).

Looking back from the experience of highest reality, the Enlightened One saw the world from the opposite point of view of the ordinary human being, so to say in a reversed perspective, i.e. instead of seeing it from the point of view of an 'ego', he saw it under the perspective of egolessness, and lo! this, apparently so substantial, material world dissolved into a whirling mass of eternally rotating and at every moment originating and disintegrating elements. The momentariness of these elements of existence of which everything is composed, makes the application of concepts like 'being' and 'non-being' 'existence' and 'non-existence' impossible.

Buddha's instruction is as follows:

The world, O Kaccana, is accustomed to rely on duality, on the 'it is' and on the 'it is not'. However, O Kaccana, he who perceives in accordance with truth and wisdom how the things in this world arise, for him there is no 'it is not' in the world. And he, O Kaccana, who perceives in accordance with truth and wisdom how things of this world perish, for him there is no 'it is' in the world.³

From this point of view we can understand the Buddha's silence regarding the existence or non-existence of an Enlightened One after death or the existence or non-existence of God and similar metaphysical questions. The silence of the Buddha was not that of an agnostic, but was born of a deep understanding of the transcendental nature of ultimate reality. The non-theistic attitude of Buddhism (so different from that of atheism) springs from the deep respect for the mystery of transcendental reality, which is beyond words and concepts and can only be experienced. The Buddha, therefore, did not want to convince people through logical arguments, but by showing them the way that leads to the point where they can see the truth for themselves through their own experience. He did not ask people to believe in him, but to "come and see".

The Buddha once asked Ananda, whether he followed him because he believed his words and venerated him, or because he had understood and realized the truth (*dharma*) within himself, where-

upon Ananda answered that he followed the Buddha's teaching on account of his own insight into the truth. The Buddha then expressed his satisfaction and told Ananda that if he had accepted his words in blind faith he would not have been benefitted by them. He did not want his followers to believe in his words, but to understand them and to take them as a starting point for their own investigations and experience. The greatest knowledge cannot help us, if we have not made it our own by re-creating the process in which it was acquired.

All great truths were originally matters of experience, in which feeling and inner knowledge were combined; they were not discovered by the negative methods of deduction, abstraction or subtraction. They were found by the positive process of concentration and integration in contemplative activity in which the whole man was engaged and not only the brain or the counting, dividing, calculating, measuring and generalizing intellect. They were neither mathematical nor philosophical notions, and only if we can convert them again into something that can be felt and known directly and spontaneously, like heat or cold or like love and hatred — in other words, only if we can dissolve them again into the stream of life — only then do they become our philosophy. A real

³ *Samyutta Nikaya*. II. 17.

philosopher, in Lin Yutang's words, "is a man who holds his sensibilities at the highest point of focus and watches the flux of life ready to be forever surprised by newer and stranger paradoxes, inconsistencies and inexplicable exceptions to the rule."

Conceptual or intellectual knowledge only serves to rationalize our prejudices. The wise one has no prejudices. In other words: the wise one is not he who knows much, but he who is free from prejudice — even though he may know little. A mind free from prejudice is a mind free from the bondage of habitual thinking, a mind which refuses to move along the channels of habit and convention, i.e., an open and spontaneous mind: open to the outer world — in accepting it as it is (*yathabhutam*) — and open to the inner vision and the voice of intuition, by which our various experiences are welded together into an organic unity.

Ignorance (*avidya*) in the Buddhist sense — and this is important to note — is not the absence of factual knowledge (and can, therefore, never be rendered as 'stupidity'), but the wrong interpretation of facts or impressions (to which the highly intellectual are as prone as the unsophisticated peasant is). Complete absence of knowledge is not ignorance, but either a state of unconsciousness or lack of awareness. The most dangerous state of ignorance is half-knowledge, i.e., one-sided and therefore biased knowledge, which only creates or supports our

prejudices and prevents us from seeing things in their true relationship.

Lin Yutang says:

The human desire to see only one phase of truth which we happen to perceive, and to develop and elevate it into a perfect logical system, is one reason why our philosophy is bound to grow stranger to life. He who talks about truth injures it thereby; he who tries to prove it thereby maims and destroys it; he who gives it a label and a school of thought kills it; and he who declares himself a believer buries it.⁴

This is why the Buddha preferred silence to words, whenever there was a question concerning ultimate things, whenever there was a problem which went beyond the direct experience of life. This is why he warned his followers of the danger of clinging to any extremes in life or in views (i.e. to any partial aspect of reality or truth), and why the Middle Way, which he taught, is not based on the acceptance of an article of faith or the formulation of a philosophical theory or any other dogma, but on the impartial and unprejudiced recognition of the facts of life, as experienced by every human being. Each of the eight stages of this way of deliverance (generally known as the Eight-fold Path: Skt.:

⁴ *The importance of living*, p. 490.

astangikamarga; Tib.: *lam-brgyad*) is prefixed with the word *samyak* (Pali: *samma*; Tib.: *yang-dag*), which has generally been translated as 'right', so that the first step would be called 'right views' (Skt.: *samyag drsti*). But what is the criterion of 'right' or 'wrong'?

Most religions would say, 'right' is what agrees with the teachings or revelations of their scriptures; and consequently 'wrong' is what contradicts them. The Buddha is not concerned with revelations, however old and acceptable they may be, as long as they cannot be verified by the experience of each single individual. He asks the people to face the facts of life and to examine them carefully and impartially, i.e., to see them not only from one side or one point of view, or arbitrarily picking out partial aspects, but seeing them in their totality, in their completeness. This is exactly what the word *samyak* expresses. It has nothing to do with the opinions of 'right' and 'wrong', but signifies perfection, completeness, in contrast to something that is partial or one-sided. The epithet *Samyak Sambuddha* means a 'completely' 'fully' or 'perfectly Enlightened One', but not a 'rightly' Enlightened One.

Samyag drsti, therefore, means more than what is commonly called 'right views' or the agreement with a certain set of established ideas. It means a perfectly open mind, free from arbitrary opinions (an attitude that is not dependent on learning or factual knowledge and

conventional education), which enables us to see things as they are and not as we want them to be. Thus, instead of closing our eyes to what is unpleasant and painful, we should face the fact of suffering, which the Buddha calls the First Noble Truth. By facing it, we discover the causes of suffering and with it the second Noble Truth, namely, that the causes of suffering are within ourselves and that it is up to us to overcome them. This leads us to the third Noble Truth, the recognition of the supreme aim of liberation, and finally to the fourth Noble Truth, which consists in the way towards the realization of this aim: the Noble Eightfold Path (*arya astangika marga*).

I

The first step on the Eightfold Path, therefore, is the perfect understanding of and clear insight (*samyag drsti*) into these Four Noble Truths, which means that they should not only be accepted intellectually, but consciously experienced. Even if in the beginning the full significance of the Four Noble Truths cannot be realized in its entire depth and universality (because suffering means far more than our personal pains and disappointments, and liberation means more than our personal happiness), yet the fact of suffering and its immediate causes are so obviously demonstrated in every phase of life, that the mere observation and analysis of one's own experience is sufficient to convince any thinking man of the truth of the Buddha's statements.

Out of this conviction grows naturally the second step.

II

Perfect aspiration (*samyak samkalpa*), namely a mental attitude aiming at the elimination of the immediate causes of suffering, like greed and hatred, by cultivating their opposites, namely selflessness and loving kindness, liberality and compassion, with a view to attaining final liberation and (according to the ideal of Mahayana) perfect enlightenment.

This attitude gives rise to the next three steps.

III

Perfect speech (*samyak vak*), speech that is truthful and kind, that creates unity and not dissension, that is meaningful and to the point;

IV

Perfect action (*samyak karmanta*): in harmony with our mental attitude, i.e., based on love and compassion, on consideration of others.

V

Perfect livelihood (*samyag ajiva*), that benefits not only ourselves, but others as well (avoiding trades and professions which are harmful to others and to our own spiritual progress).

VI

The sixth step on the Path consists in the full employment of all our forces towards the attainment of our aim in the

form of a four-fold effort, namely, in overcoming all negative factors of our mind, in preventing such factors arising, in producing instead all such qualities that bring us nearer to our aim, and to cultivate all positive qualities of our mind, that have already arisen. This is called the perfect effort (*samyag vyayama*), in which the whole human personality is engaged and leads to the seventh step.

VII

Perfect mindfulness (*samyak smrti*) with regard to the body and its functions (in which especially the subtle functions of breathing — the meeting place of physical and spiritual processes, vital energies and psychic forces — are raised into conscious awareness), mindfulness with regard to feelings and emotions, as well as to thoughts and phenomena concerning both the inner as well as the outer world.

VIII

The eighth step consists in perfect concentration or absorption (*samyak samadhi*), i.e., complete inner unification, in which the tension between subject and object is eliminated in favour of a fully integrated consciousness. Here man becomes 'whole', 'holy' in the true sense of the word, and the cause of suffering, consisting in the illusion of egohood, on account of which the world is torn asunder into the two opposing principles of 'I-ness' and 'other-ness' is annihilated. Thus man regains the harmony and universality of consciousness, in which the break is

healed, the balance restored and supreme happiness is gained.

This experience may first be attained in momentary flashes or during brief spells of *samadhi*-experience, but even then the gain is immense, as this will now form the basis of a new and deeper realization of the first step and consequently of all the following stages of the holy path, which is now traversed on a higher level, and this is repeated in ever ascending spirals until permanent liberation and perfect illumination are attained.

The Noble Eightfold Path is based on three partly overlapping principles: the principle of knowledge, morality and concentration. Perfect views and perfect aspirations are based on the principle of knowledge, the faculty of understanding; perfect speech, action and livelihood represent the ethical principle. Perfect effort, attentiveness and *samadhi* (inner absorption or unification) are based on the principle of concentration. It is characteristic of Buddhism that it puts understanding, the principle of knowledge, before morality and thus makes it clear that the latter is more than conformity to rules and customs, but is based on our convictions. It is the agreement between our understanding and our conduct. Only when our convictions and our actions are in harmony, can we succeed in achieving full concentration and inner unification.

Thus we may summarize the meaning of the three principles: understanding is the harmony between our mind and

the laws of reality. Morality is the harmony between our convictions and our actions. Concentration (*samadhi*) is the harmony between the faculties of knowing, feeling and willing, the harmonious cooperation of all our creative faculties, leading to the experience of a higher reality.

There is nothing in this Path that could not be accepted by every single human being and by every religion. In the Buddha's teaching there is no 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not', but 'come and see', and if you have seen and convinced yourself of the facts of reality, act accordingly and take upon yourself the consequences of your actions.

According to the Law of Dependent Origination (the famous *pratityasamutpada*, through which the Buddha freed man from the fear of and the dependence upon the powers of gods and demons) man is the maker — as well as the unmaker — of his own fate. This is the law of action and reaction, known as *Karma*. As long as man has not sufficient insight into the nature of life, and especially into his own nature, he will act foolishly and suffer from the results of his actions. But this suffering is not a humiliating punishment, but the natural effect of his thoughts and actions, which will teach him more than the commandments imposed upon him by an external authority.

Thus suffering itself becomes the great teacher (as Guru Gampopa, the disciple of Milarepa, says in his *Golden Rosary*), because suffering forces us to look in-

wards and to discover the reason for our disharmony. It is the ignorance (*avidya*) of our own true nature, due to which we see world and life under a wrong perspective, namely from the egocentric point of view of selfish desires. It is like looking through the wrong end of a telescope, by which everything recedes further away from us and shrinks into insignificance.

The illusion of egohood creates active, but self-limiting tendencies (*samskara*) which perpetuate individual limitations and characteristics, like the germ of a seed that is not only the product or sum total of a complete cycle of individual life, but the force or vital energy which preserves and recreates the forms that have been consolidated through repeated actions or functions of preceding life-cycles. The tendencies of the survival of form are amply demonstrated in all organic life, but they become intensified in self-conscious individuals, in which the form-preserving tendencies of organic life are transformed into the directive forces of conscious will, acting under the influence of a widening field of perception and experience, in which suffering has the function of a regulating principle, like the balance in a watch, that checks the accumulated force from spending itself in an unrestricted rush of energy or in a wrong direction.

However, this conscious will is a double-edged sword: under the illusion of our little separate ego and its petty desires, it cuts us off from the roots of that

greater consciousness and from the stream of universal life, which alone can give meaning to our momentary existence, while under a growing insight and recognition of the universal foundations and relations of our being, it may free us from our self-created limitations by cutting down the fences (and defences) we have erected around us.

It is from this point of view that we have to understand the Buddha's formula of Dependent Origination which says that the tendencies of our character, the *karmic* form-energies, created by our volition (*samskara*) in dependence of ignorance (*avidya*) will produce ever and ever again a (rebirth) conscious (*vijnana*), [*sic*] which creates a psycho-physical organism (*nama-rupa*) that makes its sense-organs (*sadayatana*) through contact (*sparsa*) with their corresponding objects and the resulting feeling (*vedana*) into instruments of craving (*trnsna*, literally "thirst") after the things of this world. If this craving is satisfied, it results in clinging (*upadana*) to the objects of satisfaction. Desire sows and clinging develops the seeds which lead to a new process of becoming (*bhava*) and towards a future form of existence, corresponding to the present level of individual development. Thus the cycle of birth and death is repeated until suffering leads to a reversal of our will through the recognition of the causes of suffering and the discovery of an aim that is greater and worthier than the maintenance of our ephemeral form of existence, an aim that alone can justify the aeons of

our wanderings through birth and death: the final realization of universality in the experience of enlightenment.

The Buddha's enlightenment was the birth-hour of Buddhism. The aim of the Buddha's teaching, therefore, is not an abstract idea or an imagined paradise, nor a philosophical theory, but an experience, and it was this experience that gave Buddhism its name and determined the whole course of its history and its spiritual development. To understand Buddhism we have to view it under the aspect of this experience which represents both its starting point and its aim. It is from this aspect alone that we can assess correctly the meaning of Buddhist terminology. Even such a simple concept as that of suffering (*duhkha*) cannot be understood from a merely physical or psychological point of view, nor has it anything to do with philosophical pessimism — as early explorers of Buddhism were inclined to believe — but it has to be seen against the background of the Buddha's realization of the immense

potentialities of the human mind, compared to which the average human life and its paltry enjoyments were to be regarded as suffering, privation, as symptoms of a disease, of spiritual blindness, due to which human beings are not aware of the light that is ever present.

Enlightenment consists in the removal of hindrances that obstruct the light. And as this light exists everywhere, it cannot be created but only revealed. The Buddha therefore did not try to explain or to define the light, but to open the eyes of the people. "There are people whose eyes are only slightly covered with dust", he said, "they will understand the truth."

The light is universal, but everybody must see with his own eyes. Buddhism, therefore, is a way to enlightenment, which is both universal and individual, and thus able to satisfy the needs of man in the present as in the past and to extend its willing co-operation to all other religions which are striving for the creation of a better world and a happier humanity.

CONCENTRATION IS ESSENTIAL

An angler was fishing in a pond. An *Avadhuta* approaching him, asked, "Brother, which road leads to such and such a place?" The float at that time indicated that the fish was nibbling at the bait. So the angler gave no reply, but was all attention to the fishing rod. When the fish was caught, he turned round and said, "What was it you were saying, sir?" The *Avadhuta* saluted him and said, "Sir, you are my *guru*. When I sit in contemplation of the *Paramatman*, let me follow your example, in attending to nothing else before I finish my devotion."

— *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.*

Yoga Vasishtha Sara (The Essence Of *Yoga Vasishtha*)

Based on a translation made by Swami Suresananda

Chapter VI

Meditation On The Self

1. I, the pure, stainless and infinite consciousness beyond *maya*, look upon this body in action like the body of another.

2. The mind, the intellect, the senses, etc. are all the play of consciousness. They are unreal and seem to exist only due to lack of insight.

3. Unmoved by adversity, a friend of all the world in prosperity, without ideas of existence and non-existence, I live free from misery.

4. Inactive am I, desireless, clear as the sky, free from hankering, tranquil, formless, everlasting and unmoving.

5. I have now clearly understood that the five elements, the three worlds and I myself are pure Consciousness.

6. I am above everything; I am present everywhere; I am like space; I am that

which (really) exists; I am unable to say anything beyond this.

7. Let imaginary waves of universe rise or fall in me who am the ocean of infinite consciousness; there is no increase or decrease in me.

8. How wonderful that in me, the infinite ocean of consciousness, waves of *jivas* (individual souls) rise, sport for a while and disappear according to their nature.

9. The world which has come into existence on account of my ignorance has dissolved likewise in me. I now directly experience the world as supreme bliss of consciousness.

10. I prostrate to myself who am within all beings, the ever-free Self abiding as inner Consciousness.

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, April 1970.

சிவானந்தலகரி.

1. ஷ்டைவயங் கோல விசைகளுங் கந்தந்
 ஷ்டையீடும் பூதியும் பரிசையத்
 ஷ்டரிவையு மரத்தித் தொழுகளுங் கடகீத்
 ஷ்டள்ளிய நதிசுளுத் தேடு
 மொடுமுறையுப் படியே மனநினை வதுவ
 மொடுதிவன் மகையடி யினைய
 மடுவையந் நானு மன்னிநிற் பதுவே
 வரகிடு பத்தியன் வென்பர்.
2. சின்பது கம்பன் பரதபுட் காமே
 யகடந்நுகா எணக்கனி மையுளய
 யின்பயுப் பெய்யு ம்புள வரவே
 யவன்மன மடுநிறைந் துடுவோ
 மன்புவி யவன்றன் சிற்ப்பெணும் சபங்குடி
 மண்புது மெனைய சிறுவி
 துன்பகடந் தனவா மனவகொளும் பவதுந்
 துலங்கிடா தத்திவகடந் திடுமே.
3. சிற்ப்சிற்புப் புளடய தேவனரப் பேணிப்
 பெறுககல் சிறிதுமே யிசையாது
 சிற்ப்சிவ யிதனி சிவமே யிவ்வி
 தேர்ந்நெவந் சிற்ப்சிற்புப் சிவநி

6. புறகல வினையான் மனிதனே சாரனே
 பொருப்பதோ வடவியோ நாகர்கண்
 மீடுகமோ பஞ்னவ யோபசுடி னனே
 வெல்லிய கொசுகதோ புழுயோ
 ஆரியவெய் குறி யுந்தூள தேனூ
 முன்னடி மலர்களை யுண்ணி
 வடுகனி வெள்ளந் தீளேத்திடம் பெரினவ்
 வடிவட லார்குறையெய்ணே.

7. வனாசுதையி லில்லம் வெனியிடங் கான
 மலைகனி ஆச்சிநி ரங்கி
 யுரைசெயு மிந்த விடங்கனி லொருவ
 ஆறையலா ஆறுபயன் யாரோ
 கிரையிலா வன்ப கரணை வெவனூட்
 கரணமெய் போதுமுன் பாத
 மனையிலே மண்ணல் யோகமன் னவனே
 மாவெரும் யோகமொ சாதியே.

8. ஆழிய மடுவை மனிதசூ சார
 மறையெய் வனத்தாநிண் மலையச்
 சூழவந் மலர்க் குடுவியே யொன்றாய்த்
 ஆவந்முடி மீயடி மனைய
 யுதைய யொழிக்கு முனையவ னூடி
 யுனக்கனித் திரைகுவ வின்றி
 வாய்தித் தகமாய் வாய்திதி வாய்திய
 மந்திரே னோந்தில ரந்திரே.

9. மானியோ விவ்வம் வாழ்வனோ துருவ
 வாழ்ந்தவனோ தோசுடா துருவோ
 பேணிய துருவோர் நடுவையனோ யாழ்ப்ப
 துருவோக பெருவனோன் துருவோ
 வேணியம் பெருவனோன் துருவோ
 மென்மல நடுவனோக குருவோய்ப்ப
 துருவோ துருவோ வவன்மய துருவோ
 பெருவனோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ.

10. துருவோயன் மென்மல துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோ

துருவோ.

துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோயன்
 துருவோயன் துருவோயன் துருவோயன்

शिवानन्दरुहरी

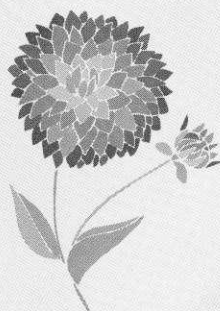
1. अङ्गोले निजबीजसन्ततिरयस्कान्तोपलं सूचिका
साधकी नैजविभ्रंलताक्षितिरुहं सिन्धुस्सरिद्वल्लभम् ।
प्राप्नोतीह यथातथापशुपतेः पादारविन्दद्वयं
येतोवृत्तिरुपेत्यतिष्ठति सदा सा भक्तिरित्युच्यते ॥ १ ॥
2. भक्तिर्महेशपदपुष्करमावसन्ती , कादम्बिनीवकुरुतेपरितोष
वर्ष । संपूरितो भवति यस्य मनस्तटाक , स्तज्जन्मसत्यमखिलं
सफलंच नान्यत् ॥ २ ॥
3. जननमृतिद्युतानां सेवया देवतानां , न भवति सुखलेशः संशयो
नास्ति तत्र । अजनिममृत रूपं सांब मीशं प्रजन्ते , अइहपससौख्यं
तेहि धन्या लभन्ते ॥ ३ ॥
4. यतोवा मृत्पिण्डोप्यणुरपिच धूमोग्निरचलः , पटोवा तन्तुवी
परिहरति किं योरशमनम् । वृथा कण्ठक्षोभं वहसि तरसा तर्क
वचसा , पदां भोजंशंभो भज परमसौख्यं व्रज सुधीः ॥ ४ ॥
5. वक्षस्ताडनशङ्कया विचलितो वैवस्वतो निर्जराः , कोटीरोज्वलरत्न
दीपकलिका नीराजनं कुर्वते । दृष्ट्वा मुक्तिवधूस्तनोति निभृताभ्रं
भवानीपते , यच्चेतस्त्वपादपद्मभजनं तस्येह किं दुर्लभम् ॥ ५ ॥
6. नखं देवत्वं नगवनमृगत्वं मशकता , पशुत्वं कीटत्वं भवतु विह
गत्वादिजननम् । सदा त्वत्पादाब्जस्मरणपरमानन्दरुहरी
विहारसक्तंचेच्छुदयमिह किं तेन वपुषा ॥ ६ ॥
7. गुहायां गेहेवा बहिरपि वनेवाद्रिशिवरे , जलौवा बह्वैना
वसतु वसतेः किं वदफलम् । सदा यस्यैवान्तःकरणमपिशंभो
तत्पदे , स्थितंचे व्योगोस्तौ सच परमसुखी ॥ ७ ॥
8. गभीरे कासारे विशतिविजने प्योरविपिने निशाले शैलेच
भ्रमति कुसुमार्थजडमतिः । समेषु किं चेतः सरसिजमुमुक्षु
भवते , सुरैरेनावस्थातुं जन इहनजानाति किमहो ॥ ८ ॥

16

१. वटुर्वा गेहीवा यतिरपि जटीवा तदितरो, नरोवाः कश्चि
 द्भवतु भव किं तेन भवति । यदीय हृत्पक्षं यदि भवदभिनं
 पश्यपते, तदीयस्त्वं शंभो भवसि भवभारं च वहसि ॥ ९॥

१०. आद्या विद्या हृद्गता निर्गतासी, द्विष्या हृद्या हृद्गता
 त्वत्प्रसादात् । सेवे नित्यं श्रीकरं त्वत्पदाब्जम्
 भावे मुक्ते भोजनं राजमौक्तिके ॥ १० ॥

अंभक् जन षटोवक्षः नरगुहा गभीवटुः ।
 आद्या दश शिवानन्द लहरी श्लोक सूचिका ॥ .



Garland of Guru's Sayings

By Muruganar

Quickly giving up attachment
To perverse talkers with their wicked ways,
Follow, my friend, and walk with
Steadfast knowers whose peace can still
The movements of the mind. (226)

Since every vice proceeds from false pleasures
Of swerving from the Self, the plenitude of virtue
Is the perfect peace of pure awareness following
The end of the ego by such false pleasures fed. (227)

The truly virtuous are those alone
Who abide in flawless awareness,
All others are but base.
Hence gain new life by living
In the company of those who free from falsehood
Live in the purity of true awareness. (228)

Ripened by the incomparable power
Of Self-knowledge, the *guru* has been transformed
Into transcendent Being.
He who through penance done becomes
The target of his glance of grace
Attains greatness beyond the reach of speech. (229)

The translation is by Prof. K. Swaminathan.

Ten Verses From Sri Sankara's *Sivanandalahari*

SELECTED BY SRI BHAGAVAN

(See note on flyleaf between pages 46 and 47)

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

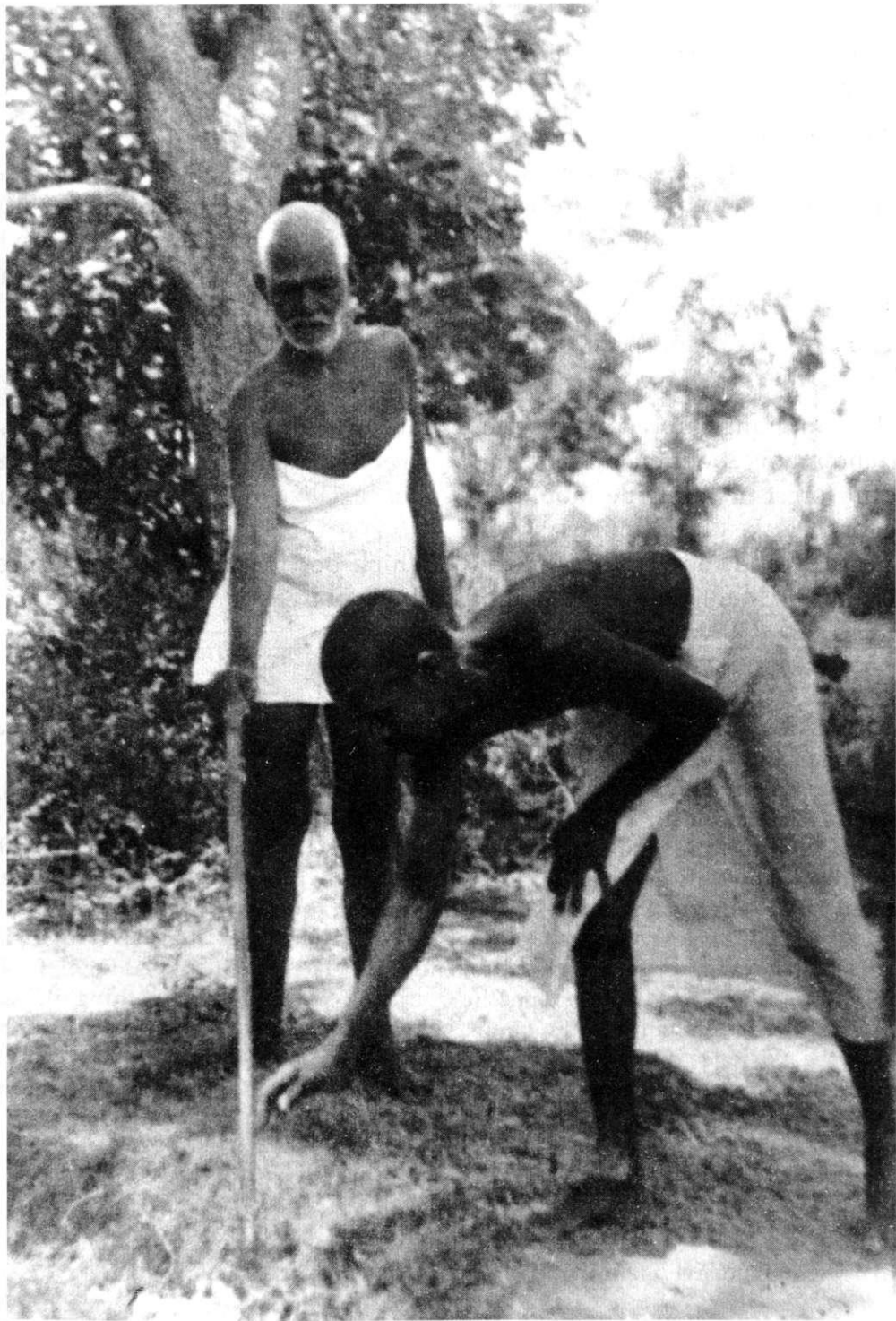
2. Devotion, that abides in the firmament of the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord, causes a shower of bliss like the clouds. The entire crop of life of him, whose reservoir of mind is filled to the brim with that shower of bliss and of none other, is blessed.

3. Not a little of bliss is obtained from devotion to *devas*, who are subject to birth and death. Of that there is no doubt. They alone, who dedicate their lives to the Lord of the unborn and immortal Form — inseparable from the Mother —, realize the Supreme Bliss in this life and are blessed indeed.

4. O wise one! can the pot, the lump of clay, the atom, smoke, fire, the hill, the cloth or thread — [terms used in dialectics] — ward off Death, the Terrible? In vain you suffer the pain in thy throat by loquacious discussion of dialectics. Meditate quickly on the Lotus Feet of Sambhu, and realize Supreme Bliss.

5. Fearing if he would not receive the kick on his chest, Yama flees from him whose mind is dedicated to Thy Lotus Feet, O Lord of Bhavani! *Devas* worship him by the lustre of the precious stones on their diadems. On seeing him Damsel Freedom holds him for ever in her embrace. What does not come within his reach in this life?

6. Let the state of birth be that of man or *deva*, of the beast of the hills and forests, of the mosquito, of the cattle, of the insect, of the bird or such others, — if the heart longs to revel incessantly in this life in the flood of Supreme Bliss, thinking of



Thy Lotus Feet, what matters whichever is the body?

7. Let one live in a cave, a house or even in the open, in the forest or on the mountain peak, in water or in fire: say of what avail is it to reside thus? He whose mind too abides for ever at Thy Feet, O Sambhu! — such abidance being *yoga* — he alone is the Supreme Yogi, and he is the Blissful One.

8. The ignorant one enters the deep moat, and roams about the desolate and dreadful forest or the wide mountain-range for the sake of flowers. Alas! why does not the world know to be in the state of bliss in this life, having surrendered

the one lotus heart to Thee, O Lord of Uma?

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

10. By Thy Grace the primeval ignorance rooted in the mind had fled, and sweet wisdom is realized in the heart. Hence, O wearer of the crescent moon! I worship for ever in mind Thy Lotus Feet, which bestow all wealth and are the abode of freedom.

WHO IS NOT PURNA?

Dr. Masalawala placed in Bhagavan's hands a letter he had received from his friend V. K. Ajgaonkar, a gentleman of about 35 (a follower of Jnaneswar Maharaj) who is said to have attained *jnana* in his 28th year. The letter said, "You call me *purna*. Who is not *purna* in this world?" Bhagavan agreed and continued in the vein in which he discoursed this morning, and said, "We limit ourselves first, then seek to become the unlimited that we always are. All effort is only for giving up the notion that we are limited." The letter further said, "The first verse in the *Isavasyopanishad* says the world is *purna*. It simply cannot be anything else, as its very existence is built on the *purna*." Bhagavan approved of this also, and said, "There is this typed letter, for instance. To see the world alone and not the *purna* or Self would be something like saying, 'I see the letters, but not the paper.' while it is the existence of the paper that makes the existence of the letters possible!" Dr. M. said, "In the letter we see the paper. But we are able to see only the world and we don't see God!" Bhagavan replied: "What happens in sleep? Where did the world go then? Then you alone or the Self alone existed."

The letter also said, "Jnaneswar Maharaj has said God will never forsake his *bhakta* who has undivided love for him." Bhagavan said, "Every saint, every book says so. I have been reading Ram Das's writings. Here, too, so many verses end, 'Ramachandra will never forsake his *bhakta*.'" So saying, Bhagavan read out a few of those verses.

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Entry for 15-3-46.

Methods of Meditation

By I.S. Madugula

THE chief approaches to meditation are compiled below. The aim of this article is to show at the end that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has given us the most sensible and practical approach of all to meditation.

1. Meditation is the act or process of reflecting, contemplating, emptying the mind, or praying as a spiritual exercise.

The word *meditation* is ultimately derived from the old Indo European root *med-*, "to take appropriate measures," and is etymologically related to *medicine*, *modest*, *modern*, *commodity*, and *empty*.¹ The immediate source is the Latin verb *meditari*, past participle *meditatus*. Synonyms of the verb *meditate* include *ponder*, *muse*, *ruminare*, *cogitate*, and *study*, as well as *contemplate*, *plan*, *devise*, and *contrive*.² As applied to Buddhism and Hinduism, *meditate* means "to train, calm, or empty the mind, often by achieving an altered state, as by focussing on a single object; to engage in devotional contemplation, especially prayer; to think, especially in a calm and deliberate manner."³ In a limited sense, all thought may be said to be meditation. Apte defines *dhyanam* as

"meditation, reflection, thought contemplation; especially abstract contemplation, religious meditation; divine intuition or discernment; mental representation of the personal attributes of a deity."⁴

The Internet search engine Yahoo turned up some 39,100 files in response to a query on the definition of meditation, and the number is perhaps growing, all of which testifies to the fact that the subject is one of universal interest. One file gives a "psychologically oriented definition": "Meditation is a set of attentional practices leading to an altered state or trait of consciousness characterized by expanded awareness, greater presence, and a more integrated sense of self." This "eventually leads to a tran-

¹ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

² *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996).

³ *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

⁴ V. S. Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1970, Reprint 2000).

scendence of the sense of separateness to an integration into a larger, transpersonal sense of identity." The author of the article goes on to say that meditation is "non-violent, non-manipulative, and non-mechanistic. It allows for the organic self-regulation, natural self-disclosure, and inherent growth potential of the human being."⁵

Another article "Tai-Chi Chu'an as Meditation," uses the following definition: "Meditation is the process of conscious, controlled focus of the mind which, may be, takes place when the thinking processes, both in pictures and in words, have been stopped." The author then refers to two kinds of meditation: "Yin meditation is the clearing of the mind of all thought, both pictures and words, and the holding of that mind in a focussed and alert state. Yang meditation is the concentrated focussing of the mind on something. The 'something' can have almost infinite variety. Common subjects of this type of meditation are: *mantras*, *chakras*, colours, shapes, prayers, and affirmations."⁶

Yet another website, devoted to *Yoga Journal*, paraphrases Patanjali and says: "...yoga (or union) happens when the mind becomes quiet. This mental stillness is created by bringing the body, mind, and the senses into balance which, in turn, relaxes the nervous system ... meditation begins when we discover that our never-ending quest to possess things and our continual craving for pleasure and security can never be

satisfied. When we finally realize this, our external quest turns inward, and we have shifted into the realm of meditation."⁷ We will be referring to Patanjali later on.

A fourth article on the neurophysiology of meditation explains the impact of meditation on the nervous system: "When meditation acts as a constant repetitive stimulus, certain qualitative and quantitative permanent changes develop in the nervous system. The neurotransmitters and neuro-modulators may stimulate growth of dormant or latent neurons to develop a centre (or centres) which on the evolutionary ladder is/are still higher than the present day cerebral cortex. The brain may develop new connections and plasticity resulting in the capacity to think, to rationalize, and to react in a different way than what is expected by present day physiologists. For want of a name, we may label it as 'God module.'"⁸

Shakespeare seems to use the word "meditation" in the sense of prayer to expiate sin:

Forbear to judge, for we are sinners
all.
Close up his eyes, and draw the
curtain close;
And let us all to meditation.⁹

⁵ <http://clem.msced.edu/~davisj/tp/medit2.html>

⁶ <http://www.patience-taichi.com/meditation.htm>

⁷ http://www.yogajournal.com/meditation/141_1.cfm

⁸ <http://geocities.com/neovedanta/a28.html>

⁹ *King Henry VI*, Pt. III, III, iii, 29.

So does the Bible:

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.¹⁰

St. Francis of Assisi uses the word somewhat in the *yoga* sense of stilling the heart:

Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor vexation...Where there is peace and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor doubt.¹¹

The Encyclopedia of Religion makes a distinction between meditation and contemplation:

Meditation is considered preparatory and contributory to the achievement of contemplation. Meditation involves concentration, the narrowing of the focus of consciousness to a single theme, symbol, catechism, or doctrine, yet it remains cognitive and intellectual. Meditation is usually rumination on a particular religious object, while contemplation is direct, intuitive seeing, using spiritual faculties beyond discursive thought and ratiocination.¹²

In this approach, meditation corresponds to Patanjali's *dhyana* and contemplation to *Samadhi*, his *dharana* being a prerequisite or preparation for *dhyana*.

2. There are three levels of meditation.

Reference is made here to the three stages of meditation enumerated by

Patanjali. After attaining competence in the first five "limbs" of *yoga*, the aspirant has to tackle the final obstacle of the mind and its wonted wanderings. The gradation is from the physical to the mental discipline, the fifth limb, *pratyahara* (the disabling of the connection between the senses and their objects), serving as the bridge.

Once the senses are muted, one can confine the mind to a single sphere of thought during Stage I. Stage II further limits the activity of the mind to a single object within that sphere, further enhancing the "interiority" of meditation. Stage III is the *summum bonum* of all yogic practice, where that object alone shines transcending the body consciousness of the yogi. Patanjali names these stages, respectively, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*.¹³ It is clear, however, that the difference between these stages is one of degree and not of kind, one of focus and increasing fullness of identification with the object of meditation, and of heightening consciousness. In *samadhi*,¹⁴

the goal of complete cessation of the modifications of the mind is achieved, and a transcendent awareness of one's ultimate reality as *purusha*, or uncon-

¹⁰ *Psalms*, 19:14.

¹¹ *The Counsels of Holy Father Saint Francis, Admonition* 27.

¹² *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

¹³ *Yoga Sutra*, III, 1-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

ditioned spirit, is attained. In this state of ecstasy, the normal ego sense and the experience of a dichotomy between subject and object is overcome.

The frequently used English terms for these stages — concentration, meditation, and contemplation — are at best confusing, and at worst hint at a qualitative difference.

3. Diverse are the practices of meditation.

Having attempted a working hypothesis of meditation, it is now appropriate to look at the different schools of thought that have prevailed over time in regard to its practice and goals. We have already noted that *yoga* aims to eradicate the distinction between the subject and the object in *samadhi* and take the practitioner to the realm of *purusha*, the primal substratum of all beings. It accomplishes this objective through the eight fold path involving a strict physical and mental regimen, culminating in *samadhi* and leading to "absolute" freedom and the establishment of the true nature of human consciousness.¹⁵

In the following paragraphs, we will examine other approaches.

4. The Lord is the goal of all meditation.

Blurring the lines between meditation and devotion, *dhyana* and *bhakti*, Krishna says that the object of all meditation is to know Him, the lord and friend of all.¹⁶ Practice here consists of self-mastery, total detachment, equanimity, and equal-

ity of outlook towards friend and foe. The practitioner chooses a clean place, a firm seat that is neither too high nor too low, holds his spine erect, looks one-pointedly at the tip of his nose, and subdues his mind and turns it towards the Lord. As aids to his practice, he should eat and sleep moderately, and be determined to restrain his mind through concentration. More importantly, he should learn to see the Lord everywhere, in everyone, and in everything. The mind that sees the Lord in everything becomes one with the Lord, as exemplified in the bee-wasp rule (*bhramara kita nyaya*). One important distinction between this approach and Patanjali's, on which this chapter¹⁷ of the *Bhagavadgita* is in part based, is that one should not give up action until one attains competency in meditation. Note also that the notion of a personal God is absent from *yoga*, though a generic *Isvara* is acknowledged. Note further that the chapter ends with Krishna declaring that *dhyana* as devotion is superior to action as well as knowledge. Shankara however clarifies that the knowledge referred to here is not Self-knowledge but book learning (*sastra panditya*).

5. Better yet, the Self should be made the object of meditation.

We seem to be shifting emphasis here, saying that meditation should be rather

¹⁵ *Yoga Sutra*, IV, 34.

¹⁶ *Bhagavadgita*, V, 29.

¹⁷ Chapter IV, *Dhyana Yoga*.

on the attributeless Brahman than a personal God. We will note later that this is a distinction without a difference, that the personal and the impersonal are merely aspects of the same Reality and that each practitioner should feel free to choose whichever approach he prefers, based on his background and temperament. Meditation on the attributeless Brahman is strictly enjoined by *Brihadaranyakopanishad*.¹⁸

Verily, the Self, Maitreyi, is to be seen, to be heard, to be reflected on, to be meditated upon; when, verily, the Self is seen, heard, reflected on and known, then all this is known.

In order to help us with this type of practice, the *Brahma Sutra* has provided some clear guidelines.¹⁹ *Upasana* (adoration) and *nididhyasana* (meditation) must be repeated until the goal is realized. All nature and creatures should be viewed as Brahman. One should meditate in a sitting posture for best concentration. One should be motionless. Any location where the mind can be still is appropriate for meditation. One should meditate until one's last breath, because whatever a man thinks of at the time of death, he achieves that without a doubt.²⁰ One who meditates on Brahman constantly realizes his identity with Brahman.

6. You are that Self.

Shankara, the uncompromising *advaitin*, takes this concept of the universe being suffused with the effulgence of Brahman to its logical conclusion. Even

in his elementary texts for practitioners, he asserts in a hundred ways that Brahman is the Ultimate Reality, the world is illusory, and that we are that highest Self. If we want to experience this great Truth, we should constantly train our minds to think that we are pure and free, indivisible and non-dual, *satyam, jnanam, anantam*.²¹ Once this idea is firmly established in our minds, nescience will be destroyed. This meditation should be carried on in a solitary place, all senses fully controlled, and the mind totally detached and concentrated. We will then transcend the limitations of name and form, and experience the absolute non-distinction between the knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge. Our eyes will be opened to true knowledge, and we will be *jivanmuktas*.

The meditator, that is, the seeker after knowledge in this case, should not waste even a minute without contemplating Brahman and Its all-pervasiveness. Even Brahma, Sanaka, Suka, and other divine personages are in constant meditation. This is the only way by which the mind can achieve a state of pure awareness and be ready to merge in Brahman. The practice toward this end includes fifteen steps: control of the senses, control of the mind, renunciation,

¹⁸ IV. 5. 6 Radhakrishnan's translation.

¹⁹ IV.i.1, *et seq.*

²⁰ *Bhagavadgita*, VIII, 5, 6, 10.

²¹ *Atma Bodha*, 36, *et seq.*

silence, appropriate place, proper time, comfortable position, *mula bandha*, balanced bodily posture, control of *prana*, withdrawal of the (lower) self, concentration, meditation on the (higher) Self, and *samadhi*. [sic]²² As can be seen, this list subsumes Patanjali's eight limbs of yoga, but Shankara explains them as applied to meditation on the Self.

For example, *asana* is that which facilitates Brahman-thought effortlessly and continuously; any other posture is merely self-torture. Erectness and alignment of the spine with the neck and head should lead to the thought of the homogeneity of the Self; mere straightness is no better than that of a dead tree trunk. The mental eye should be focussed on that point where the seer, sight, and the seen melt into one, and not just on the tip of the nose. *Pranayama* is not mere breath control, but a regarding of all states of mind as Brahman. Exhalation should be considered the negation of the phenomenal world, inhalation is the thought "I am Brahman," and retention is the resulting steadiness of mind. *Pranayama* performed in any other way just hurts the nose. *Dharana* helps the understanding that all places that the mind wanders into are abodes of Brahman; *dhyana* is the ceaseless and steady thought of our identity with Brahman, and in *samadhi* we experience the ultimate knowledge, having totally eliminated the lower mind. In this state, silence is the only language that exists, because there are no words to describe the Bliss of Brahman.

7. Meditation helps us transcend our ego.

According to Swami Vivekananda, meditation "is the power that enables us to resist all this" and it can be "attained in a dozen different ways" by people of different temperaments. "But this is the general principle: get hold of the mind."²³ One way to accomplish this is to first eliminate the unconscious baggage that we all carry, and then try to transcend the conscious or waking state. A room in the house may be set aside for meditation, if possible. This room should not be used for any other purpose.²⁴

Do not sleep in that room, it must be kept holy. You must not enter the room until you have bathed, and perfectly clean in body and mind. Place flowers in that room always; they are the best surroundings for a *Yogi*; also pictures that are pleasing. Burn incense morning and evening. Have no quarreling, nor anger, nor unholy thought in that room. Only allow those persons to enter it who are of the same thought as you. Then gradually there will be an atmosphere of holiness in the room, so that when you are miserable, sorrowful, doubtful, or your mind is disturbed, the very fact of

²² *Aparokshanubhuti*, 100, *et seq.*

²³ Swami Vivekananda, *Meditation and Its Methods*, ed. by Swami Chetananda (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1978), p. 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

entering that room will make you calm...Those that cannot afford a room to set apart can practise anywhere they like.

Yogic meditation must not be practised where there is fire, on wet ground, in a place full of dried leaves, where there are anthills, wild animals, too much traffic or noise, or bad people. One should not meditate when one is feeling lazy or sick or when feeling depressed. Meditation should be begun with obeisance to one's teachers, ancient *yogis*, and God. Morning and evening are good times for meditation, which should be done at least twice a day. Pray to God for "knowledge and light," not for material benefits.²⁵

Sit for some time and let the mind run on. You simply wait and watch. Knowledge is power. Until you know what the mind is doing, you cannot control it...Give up all argumentation and other distractions...Things of subtler planes have to be realized ... Imagine a lotus on top of the head...Think of a space in your heart, and in the midst of that space think that a flame is burning. Think of that flame as your own soul and inside the flame is another effulgent light, and that is the Soul of your soul, God. Meditate upon that in the heart.

Vivekananda suggested that *Vedantic* meditation, as distinct from the foregoing *yogic* meditation, seeks direct illumination by thinking of the "glory of that Being who created this universe..."²⁶

Then,

Sit and meditate on this ten or fifteen minutes. Tell your experience to no one but your Guru. Talk as little as possible. Keep your thoughts on virtue; what we think we tend to become. Holy meditation helps to burn out all impurities.

Vivekananda had the good fortune of having Sri Ramakrishna for his master, who initiated him into *advaita* by touch. The interesting thing in their relationship is that the master, though a great *bhakta* and a great *advaitin* realizing firsthand all their practical manifestations, encouraged the pupil to realize the *Vedantic* ideal, probably based on the latter's intellectual bent of mind.

8. *Vichara* is the ultimate meditation.

As the old cliché goes, we have saved the best for the last. We will now see how Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi views meditation and what new perspectives he brings to the whole process. Sri Bhagavan is well known for his simple and authoritative (because personally experienced) explanations of knotty philosophical questions, a great knack that he also brings to the present question. He never directly refutes any existing theories, but rather makes them simpler and clearer to one and all, be they

²⁵ Vivekananda, Op. Cit., pp. 40-41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

adepts or novices. He is as uncompromising in his non-duality as Shankara, but at the same time, he is prepared to make some concessions for the sake of slow learners. Also, his explanations go to the root of the question rather than just repeat traditional answers, e.g. his definition of *brahmacharya*. The traditionalist would say that *brahmacharya* is absolute continence and chastity, while Sri Bhagavan would point out that the more important consideration is to make Brahman the ground of all thought and action, as the etymology of the word suggests.

Let us start with his definition of meditation:²⁷

Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away all other thoughts; distraction of mind is a sign of its weakness. By constant meditation it gains strength, i.e. to say, its weakness of fugitive thought gives place to the enduring background free from thoughts. This expanse devoid of thought is the Self. Mind in purity is the Self.

He adds that the peace experienced in meditation, as it endures, is "true *bhakti*, true *yoga*, true *jnana*." Right away, then, we have the clue to his approach to meditation: *dhyana* is *bhakti*, is *yoga*, is *jnana*. Since meditation is a form of *vichara*, which is the simplest approach to Self-realization, it is also a means to liberation at its highest level. Herein lies Sri Bhagavan's famous synthesis of the three paths of Realization.

However, Sri Bhagavan does make a distinction between *dhyana* and *vichara* for practical purposes, saying the former invariably precedes the latter. Intense desire for meditation results in the mind melting in devotion. With the mind gone like camphor, what remains is the Self and Self-realization ensues.²⁸ He stresses this on a number of occasions. When a visitor suggested that meditation was more direct than inquiry, Sri Bhagavan agreed that "meditation on a form is more easy and agreeable," but added that "Practice of it leads to *atma vichara*, which consists in sifting the Reality from unreality." To another visitor he said that "Keeping God in your mind becomes *dhyana*. *Dhyana* is the stage before realization. Realization is in the Self only. *Dhyana* must precede it. Whether you make *dhyana* of God or the Self, it is immaterial. The goal is the same."²⁹ He also clarified that "meditation on forms or concrete objects is said to be *dhyana*, where as the enquiry into the Self is *vichara* (enquiry) or *nididhyasana*." This last discussion arose as a result of a devotee asking as to how to meditate on the Self because it is not a concrete form. Sri Bhagavan then goes to the crux of the matter and asks:³⁰

²⁷ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Three Vols. in One, 10th ed. (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1996), p. 256.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Why do you wish to meditate at all? Because you wish to do so, you are told *atma samstham manah krtva* (fixing the mind in the Self); why do you not remain as you are without meditating? What is that *manah* (mind)? When all thoughts are eliminated, it becomes *atma samstha* (fixed in the Self).

The whole point of meditation is to get established in the Self whether through forms or directly through inquiry. If one were to go from one step to the next, meditation on forms will empty the mind of all contents, *vasanas*, etc. and make it fit for realizing the Self. If one is capable of skipping the first step and plunging directly into the Self, then that meditation is *vichara*.

Along the same lines, on a different occasion, Sri Bhagavan affirms:³¹

Meditation is your true nature now. You call it meditation because other thoughts are distracting you. When those thoughts are dispelled, you remain alone, i.e. in the state of meditation free from thoughts; and that is your real nature which you are now attempting to gain by keeping away other thoughts. Such keeping away of other thoughts is now called meditation. When the practice becomes firm, the real nature shows itself as the true meditation.

In clear terms, Sri Bhagavan suggests how to actually practise meditation:³²

Concentrate on that one you like best. If a single thought prevails, all other thoughts are put off and finally eradicated. So long as diversity prevails, there are bad thoughts. When the object of love prevails only good thoughts hold the field. Therefore hold on to one thought only. *Dhyana* is the chief practice.

He continues:

Dhyana means fight. As soon as you begin meditation, other thoughts will crowd together and try to sink the single thought to which you try to hold. The good thought must gradually gain strength through repeated practice. After it has grown strong, the other thoughts will be put to flight. This is the battle royal...Peace of mind is brought about by *dhyana* alone.

Again, in *dhyana*.³³

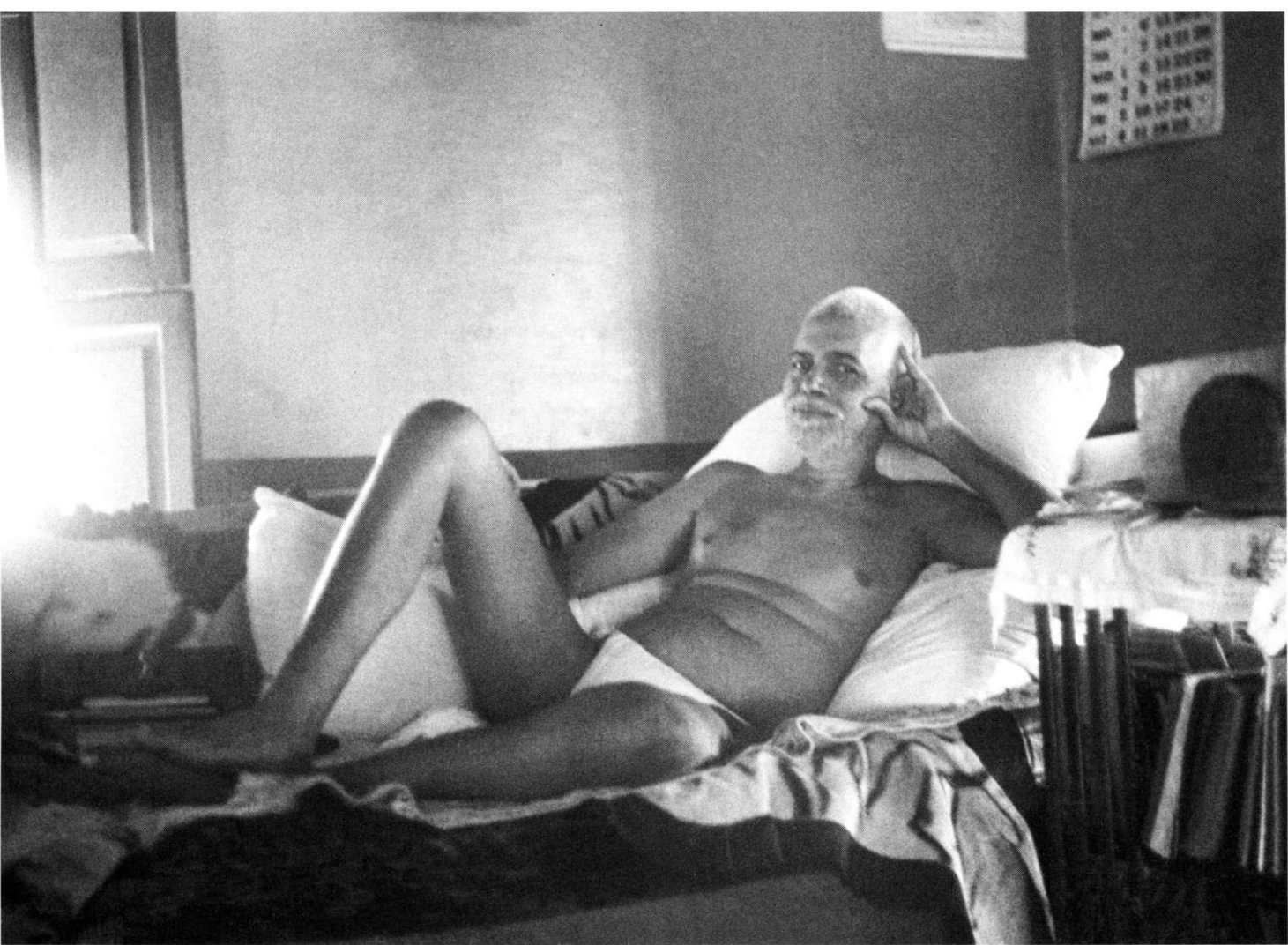
the mind must be introverted and kept active in its pursuit. Sometimes it happens that when the eyes are closed the latent thoughts rush forth with great vigour. It may also be difficult to introvert the mind with the eyes open. It requires strength of mind to do so. The mind is contaminated when it takes in objects. Otherwise it is pure.

³¹ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 269.

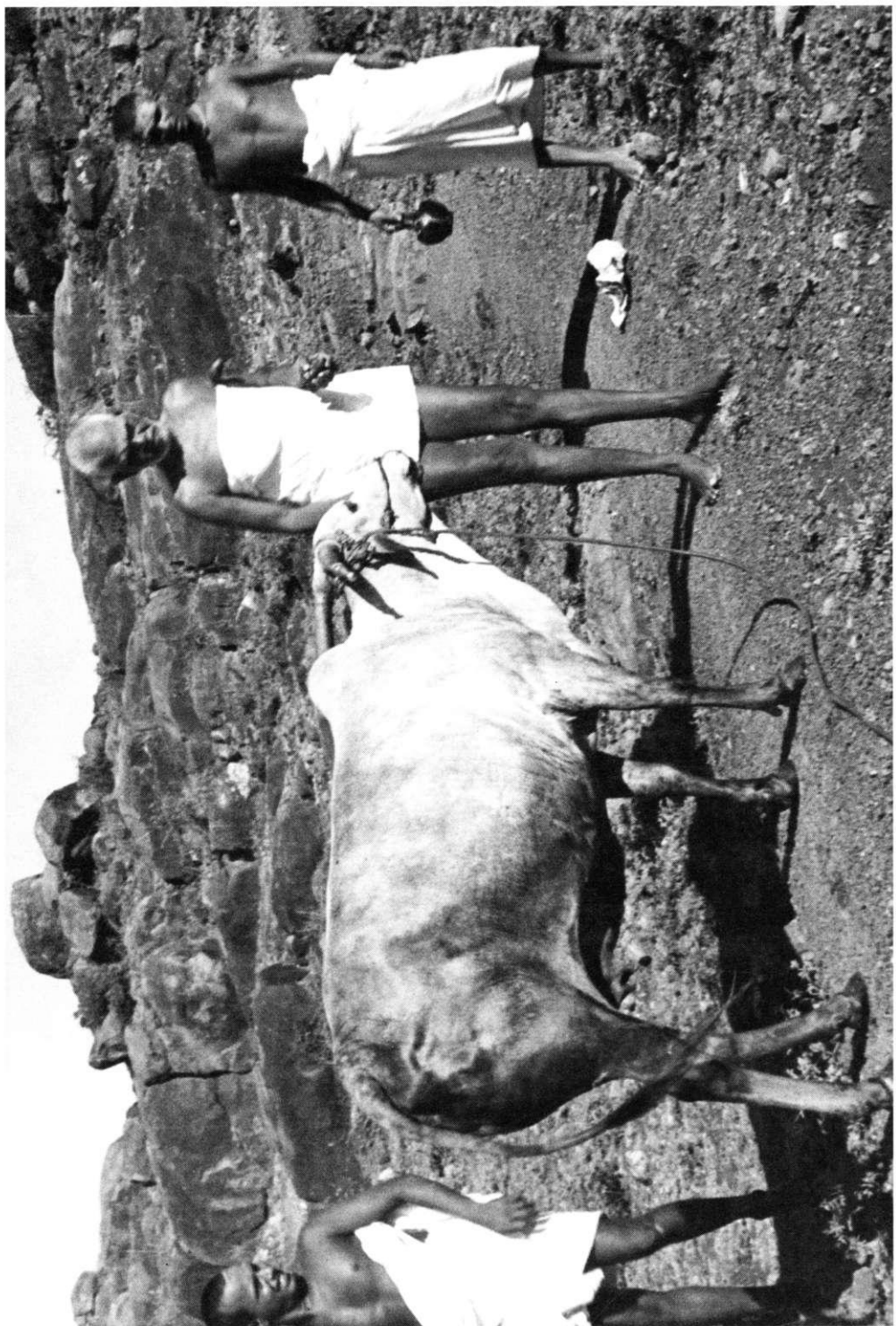
³² *Ibid.*, p. 337.

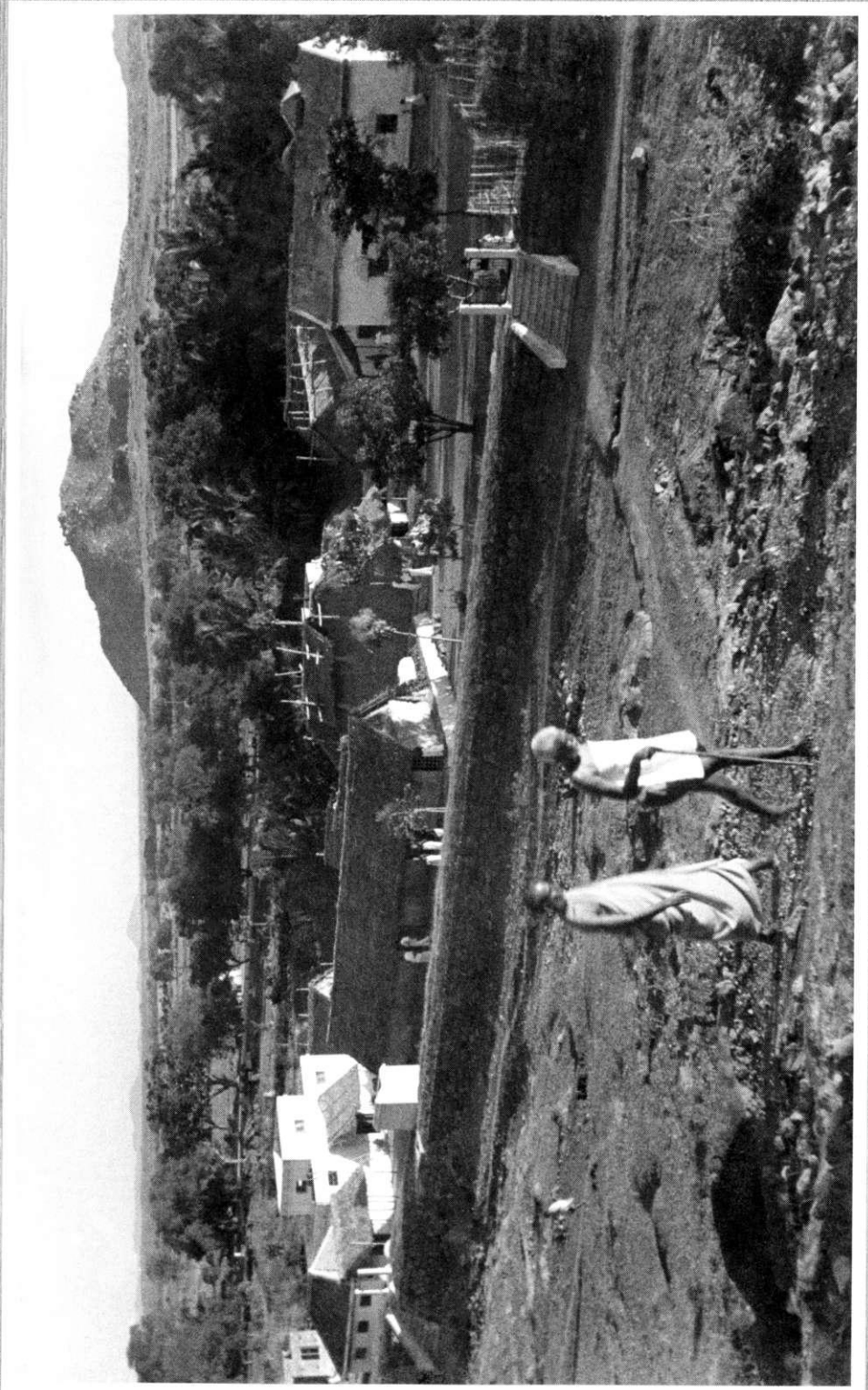
³³ *Ibid.*

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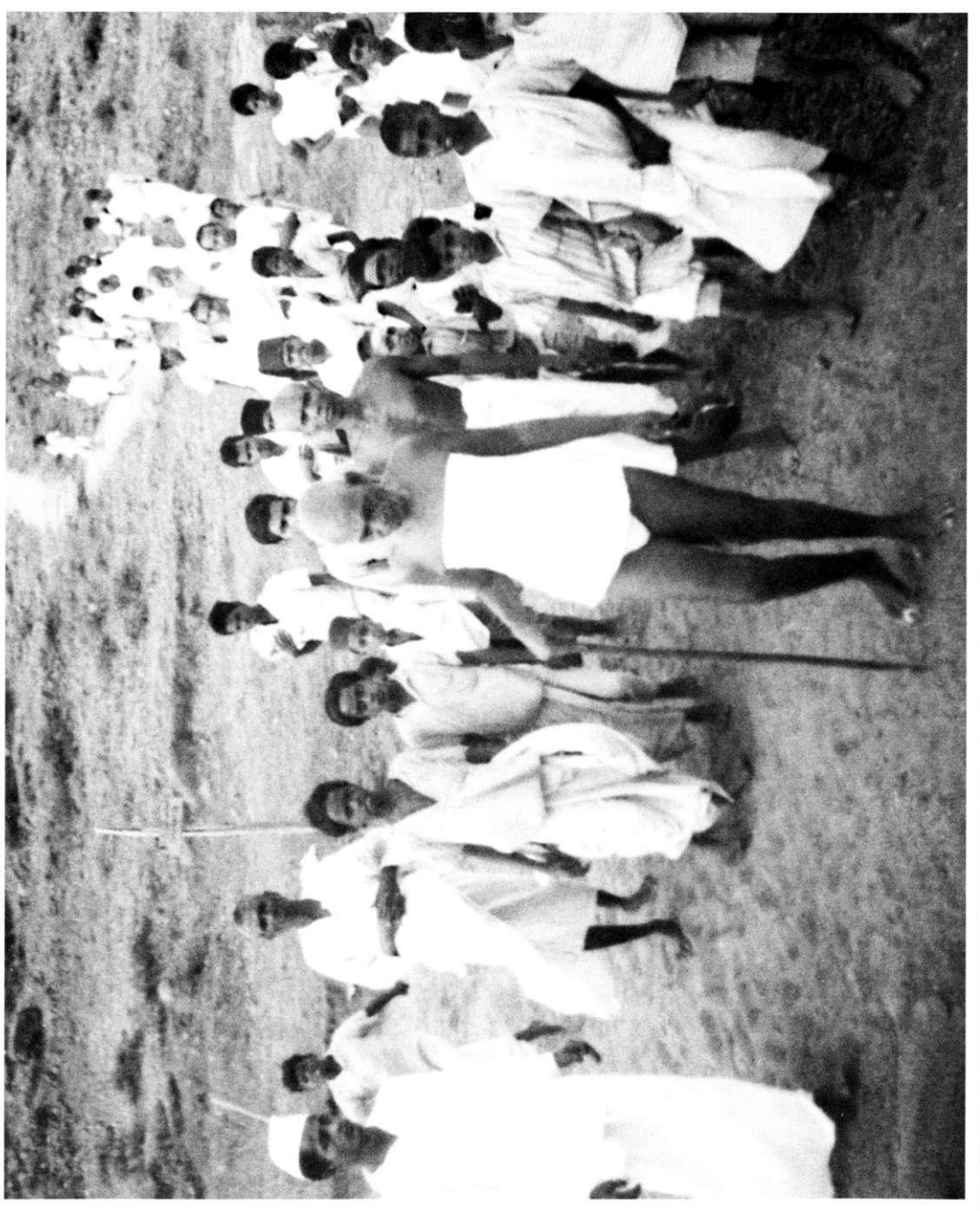


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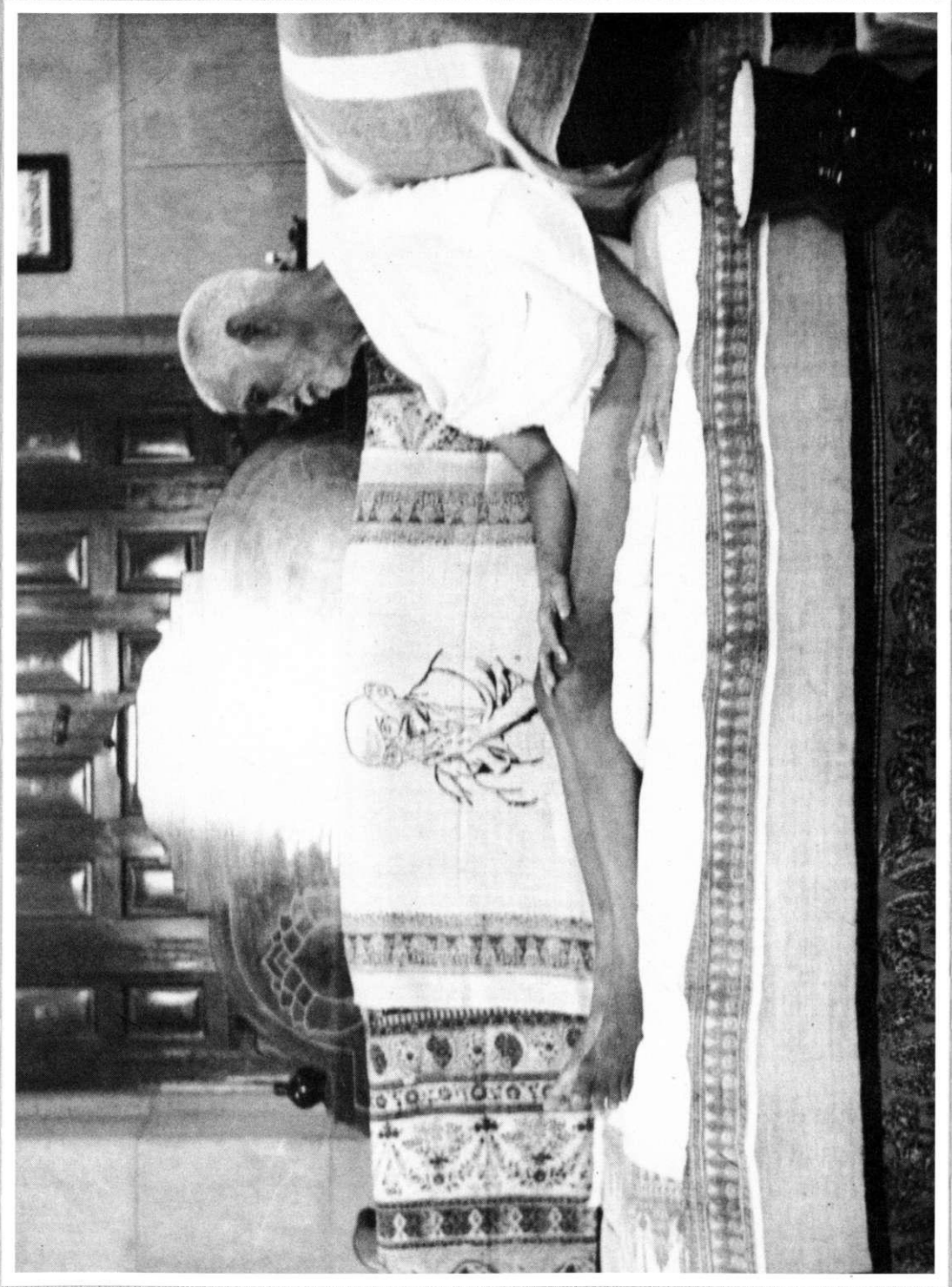
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9





In Praise of a Solitary Life

By Dr Susunaga Weeraperuma

MANY are the monks, nuns, hermits, ascetics, yogis and mystics who have chosen to lead solitary lives for religious reasons. Some persons shun solitariness as they fear loneliness. The latter are so fond of the society of friends and relations that the very idea of living alone is anathema to them.

It is necessary to be clear about the distinction between 'solitude' and 'solitary life'. The word 'solitude' is often suggestive of the uneasy state of feeling lonely, forsaken and deserted. 'Solitary life', though, has quite a different meaning. As a general rule only some people — only a small minority — are capable of leading solitary lives because of their detached attitude to worldly matters. Hence they prefer to spend their days in quiet places that are far removed from the exciting hurly-burly of city life. In this regard, we may pose several questions. Are those who pursue the passing pleasures of the world really happy, or do they simply imagine that they are leading happy lives? Do they bear the ups and downs of *samsara* with equanimity? Furthermore, are they any the closer to the cessation of the cycle of births and deaths?

A recluse who lives in a remote mountain cave might like to believe that his life is a solitary one merely because he has made himself inaccessible to the public, yet if his mind is preoccupied with earthly attachments, is he, strictly speaking, leading a solitary life? Once I met several forest-based saffron-robed 'renunciants' who were heavily involved in politics! One monk confessed that he liked making money on the stock market in order to finance the construction of a meditation centre! But persons who are genuinely interested in leading solitary lives fall into two categories: first, those who have purified themselves of their defilements; second, those who are in the process of purifying themselves in all seriousness.

One of my favourite Buddhist *suttas* is the *Khaggavisanasutta* of the *Suttanipata*. Therefore in my own words I have tried to restate as best I can, all the 41 verses. I have done this enthusiastically, since the profundity of this *sutta* is such that it deserves to be regarded as one of the great classics of religious literature.

In this *sutta* solitariness is likened to the horn of a rhinoceros. The enormously built Indian rhinoceros has a very prominent horn that is borne on the nose. The

horn is about a foot in length. Somehow the horn seems rather separated from the rest of the animal's body. This sense of isolation is conveyed in the final words of every stanza — 'one must be alone, like the horn of a rhinoceros'.

1. Cast aside the rod for punishment,
Hurt not any living being.
Crave neither for a son nor a friend.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
2. Intimate contacts with others
Result in affections, then pains ensue.
Affection leads to misery.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
3. He who has compassion for his friends
Fetters his own mind and ignores the goal.
Friendship is fraught with danger.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
4. Like a big bamboo with entangled branches
One cares for wife and children.
But be like a bamboo shoot that does not cling.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
5. In the forest an unbound deer is free
To go anywhere and feed itself.
The wise, likewise, have liberty.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
6. Polite demands are constantly made
When in company with people.
But if desirelessness and liberty are sought

One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

7. When friends gather there is fun and games
And much affection for children.
Although separation from friends is unpleasant
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

8. One should be relaxed anywhere,
Not unfriendly towards anyone,
Fearless and satisfied with anything.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

9. There is discontent among some ascetics
And some householders as well.
Be indifferent to others' children.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

10. The marks of a householder are thrown away,
Like the leaves of a *Kovilara* that fall away.
Family ties one should bravely slay.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

11. If one finds a friend wise and bright
Who is good and morally right,
Defeat all dangers on sight,
Then walk together, in mindfulness take delight.

12. If one finds not a friend wise and bright
Who is good and morally right,
As a defeated king gives up his might,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

13. Those with good friends are surely lucky.
Of friendships only the best are worthy.
If that is not a practical possibility
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
14. On an arm two golden bracelets fine,
Skilled work, they strike and shine.
See the jewels, then realise:
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
15. If with another I want to associate,
Useless talk will then take place.
On this risk one can meditate.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
16. Sensual pleasures of various kinds,
Sweet or charming, disturb our minds.
In sensual pleasures misery thrives.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
17. Sensual pleasures cause damage, destruction,
Bad luck and pains; illness, in addition.
See the danger in this sore situation.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
18. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst,
Wind and sun, gadflies and snakes,
These things one first subjugates.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
19. Like a forest elephant of size immense
That deserts its herd to commence

- Its freedom to go from place to place,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
20. Even temporary release he cannot find
Who loves the company of mankind.
Ponder over the Buddha's words and mind.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
21. Philosophical views I have transcended,
Self-restrained, the way to perfection I have attained,
Unled by others, the light has dawned.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
22. Devoid of fraud, greed, desire, detraction,
Cleansed of passion and foolish action,
Free from wanting any worldly possession,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
23. Run away from a friend wicked,
Who likes to misguide and is crooked.
Avoid also the sensual-pleasure-oriented.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
24. Associate with a friend learned,
Wise Dhamma adherer, high-minded,
Intelligent and clear-headed.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
25. Love not sports, amusements, worldly pleasures,
Adornments for oneself and dresses.
Speak the truth at all times.

- One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
26. Sever all ties with son, parents, wife,
Kin, wealth and corn, all so nice.
Also abandon all desires in life.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
27. 'This is an obstacle, without much happiness,
Hardly any delight, more of great distress,
A fish-hook,' one sees with mindfulness.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
28. After the obstacles are surmounted,
Like a net-encumbered fish been freed,
As fire never returning to what has burned,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
29. Eyes looking down, without prying to find,
With restrained senses, passion-free mind,
Lacking in lustful passions of any kind,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
30. The householder's marks he removes,
Like a coral tree stripped of leaves,
Homeless, the yellow-robed one moves.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
31. Free of greed for things sweet, and not unsteady,
No supporter of others, begs from all and sundry,
Without being partial to any family,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

32. Having overcome the Five Hindrances¹
Having cast aside all bad qualities,
Self-reliant, free from desires,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
33. With indifference to both pleasure and pain,
As well as joy and severe strain,
Then equanimity, tranquillity, purity are the gain,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
34. Strive strenuously for supreme Enlightenment
With a mind devoid of attachment.
Shun idleness, be firm and strong for highest Attainment.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
35. Neither giving up solitariness nor meditation,
Always living the Dhamma with devotion,
Seeing the suffering in our *samsaric* situation,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
36. Keen on seeing that craving has ended,
Be attentive, not silly, but learned,
Mindful, replete with energy and restrained.
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
37. Like a lion by noise remaining undisturbed,
Like the wind in a net remaining uncaptured,
Like a lotus by water remaining unstained,
One must be alone,
Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

¹ See page 75 for explanatory notes relating to the Five Hindrances.

38. Like a strong-toothed lion that all creatures
 Defeats, king of animals that victoriously goes
 To faraway and solitary living-places,
 One must be alone,
 Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
39. At the right time having compassion,
 Kindness, equanimity and liberation,
 With rejoicing and without others' obstruction,
 One must be alone,
 Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
40. Having overcome passion, aversion and delusion,
 The fetters broken: it means their destruction,
 Fearing not life's inevitable cessation,
 One must be alone,
 Like the horn of a rhinoceros.
41. Out of self-interest people serve and seek society,
 Friends free of ulterior motives one finds with difficulty,
 As men know self-profit and live impurely,
 One must be alone,
 Like the horn of a rhinoceros.

The refrain of this *sutta* 'One must be alone, like the horn of a rhinoceros' has sometimes been interestingly translated as 'let one wander alone like a rhinoceros'. The word '*wanderer*' conjures up various images. First, the greatest wanderer was the Buddha who wandered in central India over a long period of fortyfive years giving expression to those timeless truths that we treasure, which are collectively called the Dharma; second, it highlights the monk's austere life of homeless insecurity wherein, braving the elements, he has to beg for food for survival; third, it reminds one of the need to be attentive to the mind's tendency to wander aimlessly around its various cravings, for such attention is really a very important aspect of meditation; finally, regardless of whether one is a monk, in a sense every human being is a wanderer who has got caught up in the sorrowful cycle of countless births, deaths and rebirths. Therefore, not allowing our attention to wander outwards, we can observe the inner world of the psyche with all its pride, prejudices, preoccupations and predilections for this, that or the other. Watching how

the restless mind of the 'I'-centred wanderer is given to wandering is itself a form of meditation.

THE FIVE HINDRANCES

The following five hindrances or *Nivarnas* are sometimes described as defilements or obstacles, which indeed they are. These hindrances get in the way of undistorted mental perception. They have the effect of blinding the mind. They adversely affect our powers of concentration.

1. Sensuous Desire (*Kamacchanda*)

Overcoming this obstacle results in a pure heart that is free of sensuality.

2. Ill-will (*Vyapada*)

Overcoming this obstacle results in a pure heart that is free of ill-will wherein love and compassion for all beings will blossom.

3. Sloth and Torpor (*Thina-middha*)

Overcoming this obstacle (sloth = laziness; torpor = apathy or lack of zeal) results in a watchful mind wherein consciousness is characterised by clarity.

4. Restlessness and Worry (*Uddhacca-kukkucca*)

Overcoming this obstacle results in an undisturbed mind and a peaceful heart.

5. Sceptical Doubt (*Vicikiccha*)

Overcoming this obstacle results in the disappearance of doubts relating to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This hindrance also relates to uncertainty whether things are wholesome or otherwise, and the lack of eagerness to think things out and come to a conclusion.

The Buddha has eloquently expressed the profound truth that the exploration of the inner world within ourselves is an essential prerequisite for Enlightenment.

Buddha says:

It is in this fathom-long body with its perceptions and thoughts that there is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.

What follows is from *Anguttara Nikaya* (IV.45):

By walking one can never reach
The end and limit of the world,

Yet there is no release from suffering
 Without reaching the world's end.
 Hence the wise one who knows the world,
 The one who has lived the holy life,
 Will reach the end of the world,
 Knowing the world's end, at peace.
 He no more longs for this world
 Nor for any other.

Religious recluses understandably feel the need to keep themselves away from the escapist activities and numerous attractions of the outer world with its emphasis on money, power, position, politics and pleasure. Whoever turns his back on this outer world knows that he has suddenly found more time and energy to explore fully the hitherto hidden world of his own mind. Next he lives alone. Then from the elevated vantage point on the mountaintop of solitariness he starts observing with greater clarity all the once-concealed valleys of his subconscious. Totally unruffled by transitory excitements, worldly interests and people, in this special environment of silent seclusion, it becomes possible to delve deeply into oneself. At last the renunciant realises that he is devoting himself to higher pursuits.

CLAY MODEL FOR STATUE OF SRI BHAGAVAN

Throughout the day the Sarvadhikari has been inviting all *bhaktas* to have a look at a clay model of Bhagavan which the Madras sculptor engaged to make Bhagavan's statue, has prepared here. After *parayana*, Mr. Narayanaswami Iyer, retired drawing master, came to Bhagavan and expressed his opinion that the model was not satisfactory. He wanted Bhagavan's opinion. Bhagavan only said, "Don't ask me. How can one know one's own face? How can I judge this clay model?" Poor N. Iyer was disappointed. Bhagavan added after a while, "Each person has a different opinion. Rangaswami says the nose is too big, and the sculptor actually measures it and shows it is correct. But R. says, the nose *looks* too big. What are we to do? Supposing someone produces the most exact possible resemblance, I wonder whether even then if all those who look at the result will give the same unanimous verdict."

Mr. N. Iyer again came when we were all starting with Bhagavan for the night meal, and pleaded that he must give his opinion to please his *bhaktas*. He said he would produce two big mirrors and that Bhagavan could first study his own face standing between the two mirrors and then judge the clay model and give his frank opinion. Bhagavan stoutly refused to do any such thing.

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, pp. 227-28.

Lal Ded (Lalleshwari) of Kashmir

By J. L. Raina

KASHMIR is a beautiful place which has been a resort to many a saint and philosopher. Among those who have achieved fame in this valley as saints, Lal Ded is truly outstanding. She was a prophetess and was called Ishwari — a dignity earned by few. She was inspired and played an important part in reviving and fashioning the spiritual culture of the Kashmiri people.

The capital of Kashmir, Srinagar, is situated in the centre of the valley. The waters of Vitasta have flowed in grandeur down the seven bridges of this city; for the last six centuries or so; the Fifth Bridge has enjoyed the honour of being the saint's birthplace. No authentic record is available but there are orally transmitted stories. Much could also be gathered from her sayings now extant from which one can trace her spiritual evolution.

Sahaz Koul, a poor Kashmiri Pandit, was a devotee of Sharika Devi and used to pray daily in the morning at her shrine as the Brahmins of this place usually do. Many good men visited his poor home. He would entertain all with great hospitality in spite of his limited means. One day a saint of great *tapas* visited his house

and pleased with his devotion for Bhagavati prophesied, "Thine is the house where *Shakti* shall be born."

After a lapse of some time a girl was born in the house of Pandit Sahaz Koul. The girl was named Gunari. She was fostered in poverty of course but brought up all the same in the company of *sadhus* of great eminence. Her childhood was marked by purity, grace, innocence and serenity. It is, however, a pity that very little has come down to us about her childhood. There is no certainty even about her name.

In those times the Pandits of Kashmir used to get their girls married at an early age, to avoid the disgrace of their being molested by aliens. Married girls were safe as it was considered an offence by the aliens' religious standards to harm married couples. Every married girl had to use a particular garb and head dress called *degihura* to distinguish her from unmarried girls. Pandits also began to put their womenfolk under *pardah* in accordance with the times; a new system

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of *purdah* and early marriage came into vogue. These innocent girls began to be married at the age of six or seven (although the marriage was not consummated till the attainment of puberty).

In due time Gunari was also married at the age of seven into a Brahmin house at Padmapur now known as Pampur which lies at a distance of eight miles to the South-east of Srinagar. According to the usage then prevalent she was renamed Padmavati in the house of her father-in-law. Like other girls she was very submissive from her childhood. She would suffer hardships without demur. It is said that once her mother-in-law felt annoyed for not having been paid sufficient money called *teth* on the occasion of a marriage ceremony. In revenge the mother-in-law, who was in fact her step mother-in-law, gave Padmavati bad treatment. She would give her less food and at times none at all. The girl would be asked to sit at a distance from the other girls of the family during a meal and attend to the spinning wheel. Occasionally a *kajawat* (a small stone for pounding spices) was put beneath her small share of boiled rice on the plate so that it might appear that she was served with a large quantity of food. This practice was often repeated by the mother-in-law, but the daughter-in-law submitted to this outrage without a word of complaint, performing her daily chores. It was hard work for such a young girl, under the scorching sun and hard snow. Once while fetching water from the river she

was listening to the story of a girl friend about hardships at the hands of her mother-in-law. Padmavati forgot her own troubles and took pity on her. On parting, the girl friend remarked jokingly that Padmavati would get a good meal that evening as a feast was to be held in her (Padmavati's) house. But Padmavati promptly replied:

Whether a big sheep is killed or a
small one;
The daughter-in-law is always treated
slightingly.

The father-in-law of Padmavati overheard her reply and after making inquiries he found that she was maltreated in the house. He also found out about the pestle under the rice. This made him very angry with his wife who was reprimanded severely for her action. The mother-in-law was enraged all the more and more misery was heaped on the girl, although she was hardworking. It is said that she spun so fine that the thread was compared to that of a lotus stalk; but in spite of all this work, the mother-in-law would give her no credit. This gave the girl an opportunity for cultivating in herself the great virtue of patience.

So days, weeks, months and years passed. Padmavati grew up and when she was about eighteen, started living with her husband. In this way a period of a decade and a quarter had been spent in great suffering. This trained her for a path which even great saints tread with difficulty. She had powers latent in her which were developing gradually. She

believed that happiness cannot be derived from external circumstances; but, if the presence of God is felt pervading all aspects of life, then there is happiness even in suffering.

Padmavati was now nearer to her husband. This gave her a chance to cross over an ordeal different from the previous ones and enabled her to gain more experience in life.

She had now to serve two hard and exacting masters. But she loved the Master who is above all masters and in whom rests the whole world. She was up in the night busy with her penances and devotional practices. Her husband did not notice much change in her till later when she seemed transformed. She seems to have already developed the power of being present at home at her husband's side while actually at another place in communion with God. During the day also she would sit quiet in meditation and often the calls of her mother-in-law were left unheeded as in her absorption she did not hear them. While at work she was observed lost in contemplation, which was quite unusual for a woman of her environment. This sort of attitude angered the mother-in-law which made life even more difficult.

The reproaches did not affect her much, engrossed as she was in the contemplation of her real Master. She was becoming indifferent to censure or praise in the happiness of her inner life. How to control Padmavati became a problem in

the household. She was eluding their clutches. The mother complained to her son against her. Padmavati's conduct was now questioned but her serenity and poise remained unaffected.

The husband did not or could not reproach his wife. But constant reminders of his mother had their effect in making him suspicious. Mother and son were now bent upon mischief which the former displayed overtly while the other did so by secretly watching her movements. Both expected to find her enjoying clandestine love and made her life difficult in many ways. She bore all this patiently. She was not affected since she was finding consolation in her spiritual life. It is, of course, difficult at this distance of time not to omit some facts about her life. We have only to build on her sayings which give us a clue to the working of her mind.

The following saying of hers expresses a profound spiritual truth:

Look upon the mind alone as the ocean of existence. If thou restrain it not, the consequences of its rage will emerge in angry words of fire. Yet if thou weigh these in the scales of truth this weight is naught. If the fire of wrath burst forth from the ocean of the mind it would leave deadly scar, yet to the wise it does not matter.

The limitations of her environment could now ill contain her. Time was approaching when her spiritual training and evolution were nearing completion

Her greatness was becoming manifest to many except the husband and mother-in-law, (who were striving to control one beyond their reach).

Lal Ded was a follower of Shaivism. She was very liberal as its exponent with an ultra-monotheistic basis, as is evident from her inspired verses. Shaivism bases its theory on the one Self or *Sadasiva*, transcendent and immanent. Siva and Shakti are one in their essence but represent different aspects of the same Reality. They are eternally interrelated. Shakti is Siva in disguise. Her creative function acts as a force of obscuration in order to create many out of one.

"I was one and became many. I found Him everywhere, visible and invisible", says Lal Ded.

Unmindful of obstructions Lal Ded went on her way to realise her great longing, leading a life that had already become unconventional by then. At times she would leave the house at dead of night and return next morning when the sun was high in the heavens, to attend to her household duties. Often she was silent, absorbed in herself. Her husband, whose curiosity and suspicion were increasing day by day, did not dare to accuse her openly and scarcely had the courage to speak to her. The mother-in-law, who was furious by now, kept on goading and rebuking her son for his leniency. He therefore determined to follow her in the dark at night to catch her with the object of her love. When she went

out at night he followed in her footsteps silently. Behold! he was startled to see her walk across the river Vitasta without fear. On reaching the middle of the river she bathed and returned with an earthen jug full of water. This changed the attitude of the hiding husband who now felt he should respect her. But doubt overwhelmed him all the same. He was unable to believe the evidence of his own eyes. Perhaps some jugglery was at play. Going behind her, he aimed a stone at her jug which broke into pieces. But the water, as tradition says, did not spill out and remained motionless as if condensed. This dumbfounded the puzzled husband more than ever. On reaching home he related the story to his mother. Both of them were struck with awe. Lal Ded came home still with the condensed water on her shoulder and filled all empty pots with it; the rest was thrown out through the window into a ditch which was also filled to the brim. This ditch is to this day called 'Lalla trag' but little water is found in it now. The above amazing feature drew crowds of people to the place.

The neighbours knew already of the hardships Lal Ded was undergoing at the hands of her mother-in-law and husband. But she was bearing it all with great patience and even now a girl in Kashmir considered to be gentle is addressed as 'Lal Ded', one who has developed in her all great qualities. From now on people started coming to Lal Ded and falling at her feet in reverence. This she

found disturbing, so one dark night she disappeared into a dense forest without human habitation, to be with nature in all its purity and meditate in solitude. After a while her husband went into the jungle in search of her and succeeded in bringing her back; but it was impossible for her now to fit into a life which she had abandoned for good. She was roaming about, her mind fixed on her Beloved, unmindful of rain and snow and the hot sun, leaping from one cliff to another and caring little for what the world had to offer.

Seda Mol used to be the family priest in her parents' home and it is said that he became her Guru under whose instructions she had started her spiritual practices. She was advanced through her constancy and one-pointedness and was nearer Perfection than her guru. Lal Ded starts her teaching by relating her own experience:

I went to find Him with longing in my
eyes.

While searching I waited nights and
days.

But I beheld the sage, the wise
Dwelling in my own abode,
And that moment was auspicious.

It is obvious that the One she found dwelling in her own abode (herself) does not refer to an earthly guru.

Lal Ded believed in self-purification through selfless service (*nishkama karma*) and was intent to help others to a life leading to it. She undoubtedly attended

to her household duties and observed the daily routine meticulously.

Tradition says that on a solitary occasion when Seda Mol visited Lal Ded her husband requested him to admonish her so that she took more interest in her home. A discussion ensued and the points raised were to define the best light, the best friend, the best *tirtha* (sacred place) and the most comfort-giving state in the world. Her husband and Seda Mol gave commonplace replies pertaining to worldly comforts. After listening to them Lal Ded, improving upon it, said:

The best light rests in ecstasy,
God is the best Friend,
To trace him is the most sacred task
Leading to the most happy state.

Once at the bidding of her mother-in-law Lal Ded went to ask Seda Mol to attend a religious ceremony at their house. She did not enter the house of the guru but called for him aloud from a distance. The wife of Seda Mol resented this mode of calling and rebuking her for it, replied angrily that the guru was absorbed in meditation. Lal Ded was quick to retort: "How is he in meditation? He has been hit by the horse in the pasture of Nandan Marg". On hearing this remark Seda Mol came out and struck by her insight fell at her feet apologising for the harsh words of his wife. He admitted that while he was in meditation he was thinking of his untamed horse left roaming in the pasture land. It was a revelation to him that Lal Ded could read other people's minds.

Lal Ded's liberal outlook in Shaivism consisted in turning the Kashmiri people away from the rigid ritualism to which their religion had degenerated under repression. She was not against rituals as such but against sacrificing true religion for rituals and against animal sacrifices.

She says:

Wilt thou sacrifice a living being to a
lifeless idol?
Real worship rests in whatever action
you do

Every word spoken is the *Mantra*.

She appreciated the value of idol worship as a symbol and reminder, fulfilling the need of the less evolved section of the people. Purity of mind does not depend on externalities. But if she was not an upholder of rituals as the times demanded, she did not oppose their performance. What she advocated was a simple life, simple worship avoiding difficult paths. It is enough to remember and practise one *mantra*. Worship of God according to her teaching consists in carrying out smoothly the ordinary routine of life in a detached manner and in a spirit of selfless service. No need to abandon the world:

What use is leaving home and why to
woods;

Be firm in your faith

That alone will lead you to happiness.

What use is turning a recluse or
running away?

Be wise to know Siva is always with
you,

Do not run away, times must change.

Lal Ded's teaching was clear and simple, meant predominantly for simple people. Her poetry became popular and is quoted freely to this day by people of all faiths. Her saying influenced the common folk and gave them courage. She tried to draw out their narrowness of mind wavering between their traditional religion clouded with ritualism and the new ideas imposed upon them. She exhorts them to rely on God and not to fear men, bringing to their minds the value of surrender.

Yours is a restless mind.

Do not entertain any fear in your
heart.

He is Himself taking care of you.

It is only His will that prevails.

The highway robbers of desire, lust and pride should be slain; then the real and true Lord will be found. Ashes is all that is.

Lal Ded's teaching couched in such simple language expresses her own experience. It is so profound in its simplicity as to touch the heart of the learned people also. Among her followers was a Muslim saint Ali Sani better known as Shah Hamdan. He was greatly influenced by her. Another one was Sheikh Nur-ud-Din who prevailed upon the Government to adopt a more humanistic attitude towards the religion of the Kashmiri people. Lal Ded's sayings and verses *Lalla Vakyan* were collected and translated into Sanskrit nearly three hundred years ago by the learned Rajanak Baskara Acharya. Another collection

Lalishwari Viakhinni was made by Baskara Razdan. In recent times Sir R. C. Temple was so captivated by Lal Ded's inspired songs and sayings that it induced him to make a thorough study of Shaivism in the context of Indian philosophy and this work he dedicates to Lal Ded.

...

Thine is a song that enslaveth me,
Son of an alien kin and clime.

The living words of Lal Ded are inspiring and that, coming from the depth and simplicity of her heart, have a universal timeless appeal!

DIALOGUE BETWEEN ANANDA SWAMI (MOUNT ABU) AND SRI BHAGAVAN

ANANDA SWAMI: It is said in books that the *purusha* is *angushtha pramana*. What is it that is meant by it?

MAHARSHI: Evidently the books must be referring to the *upadhi* in which the *purusha* is manifesting. They cannot mean that the all-pervading *purusha* is *angushtha pramana*.

A.S.: Is that *purusha* in the heart?

M: If you mean the physical heart, it cannot be. But the books describe a heart which is an inverted lotus with a cavity inside and a flame in that cavity and all that. In such a psychic heart, the *purusha* may be said to abide and the flame may be of that *angushtha pramana*.

A.S.: Is seeing that light Self-realisation?

M: Abiding in it and being it, not seeing it, is Self-realisation.

A.S.: In *nirvikalpa samadhi* what happens to the *prana*?

M: It goes and merges where it came from.

A.S.: I wish to know if there will be breathing then.

M: It may not be then in the form of respiration, but in some *sukshma* form. They talk of *maha prana*.

A.S.: What is *sahaja samadhi*?

M: It is our *svabhava sthiti*. It is being in our natural state. *Nirvikalpa samadhi* also means merely giving up our *vikalpas*. *Samadhi* is our natural state, if we give up the *vikalpas*.

A.S.: What is the difference between *sushupti ananda* and *turiya ananda*?

M: There are not different *anandas*. There is only one *ananda* including the *ananda* enjoyed during the waking state, the *ananda* of all kinds of beings from the lowest animal to the highest Brahma, the *ananda* of the Self. The bliss which is enjoyed unconsciously in sleep is enjoyed consciously in *turiya*. That is the difference. The *ananda* enjoyed during *jagratis upadhi ananda*.

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, pp. 145-46.

What's Wrong With The World?

By Douglas E. Harding

FEW people would agree with Robert Browning's rapturous exclamation that all's right with the world. Most of us, most of the time, feel that something's terribly amiss. The aim of this article is to find out what's gone wrong, and what — if anything — you and I can do about it. An ambitious project? Yes, indeed! But let's see how far we can get.

We need hardly trouble to list the things about our world that aren't as they should be, or we don't like. They are too many and too obvious. So let's move straight on to consider the various ways we can and do respond to the troubles that surround us, and threaten to engulf us.

THREE REACTIONS TO THE HUMAN SITUATION

I

One very natural reaction is — *resentment*. We had no choice, no say at all in the kind of environment we find ourselves flung into. We weren't consulted, our preferences and needs were — it seems — unfeelingly ignored. We were pitchforked into this blood-soaked arena which, apparently, is all set up to hurt and mangle and eventually destroy us. What sort of Creator or Demiurge is it

(we want to know) who gives us one nature, and gives our world the contrary nature; who not only fails to match up the two, but actually fixes it so that, whereas we need love and security and success and joy and peace, the nature of things ensures that we get the opposite? What have innocent children done to deserve all the pain and disillusionment, ending in sickness and senility and death itself, that is steadily coming to them? Surely the only appropriate and manly reaction is anger. But the trouble with anger is that it is unproductive. It's a dead end, and gets us nowhere at all. It just adds to the misery.

II

The second alternative is rather less negative. It is *resignation*. Or, if you prefer, *realism*. Thus we say to ourselves, wryly but very sensibly, "Life is difficult!" Or, with the Buddha, "Life is painful, life is suffering." So let's stop pretending it could be otherwise than tragic, terribly unfair, made up of anxiety upon anxiety, agony piled upon agony. Let's nobly face this noble but dreadful truth: that our world is, and al-

ways will be, a very nasty place, even for the lucky ones. Lucky for how long?

There is a positive side to this kind of hard-headed realism. It makes a difference when at last we give up all our false optimism and wishful thinking, our pathetic pretence that tomorrow or next week or next year things will return to normal, and happy days will be here again. Suffering is the norm, relief from suffering the exception. Tomorrow's trials will be at least as severe as today's, and a certain kind of peace does descend upon us when we are honest enough to acknowledge the grim facts, steadily and without bitterness. Life does become more bearable, less of a let-down.

III

And so to our third alternative, which is that we should actually intend everything to be just as it is. This attitude is a long, long way from mere acceptance: it is *endorsement*; we go so far as to *choose* what's happening, to say a hearty YES! to all that life is handing out to us. It is so lining up our will with God's or the Universe's that Its will becomes our will. Then it must follow that everything goes as we wish, and in a sense we become omnipotent.

Of course this alignment of our will is pleasant and easy when all goes fairly well with us; very hard when things go badly; next to impossible (unless we are already saints) when disaster threatens and our very lives are at stake. Even

Jesus was agonizingly torn between his own will and his Father's in the end. And if *he* found this ultimate surrender of his personal will immensely difficult when it came to the crunch, what hope for ordinary mortals like you and me? What hope for *me*, I should say: you may be a saint, for all I know.

Yet all the evidence I'm aware of, and certainly the reported experience of the world's spiritual leaders, confirms that here lies the only real and conclusive answer to our troubles. If only we could be selfless, totally surrendered, in a word *saints*. There's the rub. How many of us are willing and able to transcend and do violence to our deep instinct for survival? To immolate ourselves, to play the role of both sacrificial priest and sacrificial victim? In a sense, to commit suicide as humans, in order to be what else we are? And to do so not merely because it's the best policy, but because we deeply feel it is right?

The answer is: very few of us. And even that heroic few who, by virtue of Grace or of extraordinary feats of discipline and self-abnegation, manage genuinely to will God's will — even they do not necessarily find that the Universe is, after all, a perfectly happy and beautiful scene. With some exceptions, they don't see it that way at all. No: Even the saints are apt to embrace the world in spite of what it is, rather than *because* of what it is. Some of them haven't a good word to say of it.

And so, on the face of it, there's no feasible solution, for us unsaintly ones, to the problem of what's wrong with the world. We have seen that *raging against* the Universe only makes matters worse; *resignation* may help us somewhat, but does little or nothing to improve the situation; and *full acceptance* is virtually impossible for us as we are now.

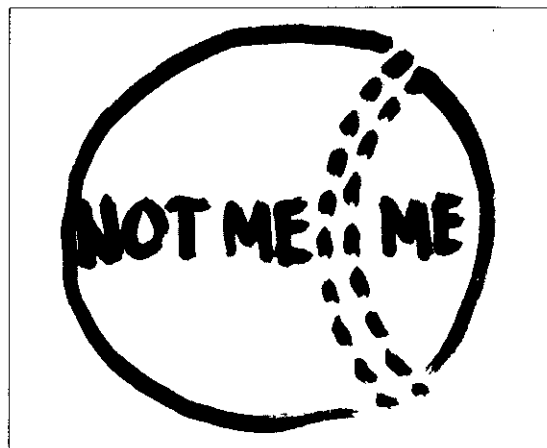
However, there is a fourth alternative, so let us take heart and go into it carefully, critically, and with open minds. After all, what have we — desperate characters that we are, in a desperate situation — to lose?

THE FOURTH ALTERNATIVE

Here is a very different approach from the three we have outlined. I trust you will find that it does hold out hope — even certainty — for us rather ordinary people — provided we are willing to drop our precious opinions, and specially our religious prejudices, and dare to take a fresh look at ourselves and the world we find ourselves in.

The proposition we are going to examine is this: *In itself, the world is all right. It isn't the world that has gone wrong or is unsatisfactory, but what you and I are all the time doing to it.*

Or let me put it like this: Apart from us, the Universe would be alive and in fine shape; it is we who are the trouble. We are inflicting a grievous wound upon it, and it's bleeding to death from that wound.



We have split it into two unequal fragments called OURSELF and THE REST, or ME and NOT ME. The result is that we have on our hands not a Universe but a Duoverse, a Duality and no Unity. And it's hardly surprising that the severed parts should be deficient, tragically and incurably sick, so long as that dreadful wound isn't closed and healed.

The *Katha Upanishad* identifies the disease: "He who divides the One, wanders from death to death," and indicates the remedy: "Tell the mind that there is but One." And the Third Patriarch of Zen speaks of the health which follows that remedy: "When the ten thousand things are viewed in their Oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been.... One in all, All in one — if only this is realized, no more worry about not being perfect!"

But again, merely understanding and concurring with these profound truths doesn't get us far along the difficult road to perfection. Sure enough, when times are

good and the sun's shining and the birds are singing, it's not too difficult to feel the Oneness of all things, with ourselves included in the Grand Design. Or, meditating in the tranquillity of a holy place.

We may occasionally sense that, however miserable the parts of the world may be *as parts*, the Whole is all that our hearts could wish for. Just as the most horrible slum, viewed from a weather satellite, becomes very pleasant to look at — and our sad, war-torn planet, viewed from the Moon, becomes a shining dream of peace and beauty — so, when we are in exalted mood, our Universe may briefly be viewed in its wholeness as wholly good. *When we're in the mood!* How are we to live in that exalted and rarefied atmosphere for more than a few moments at a time? Someone said that life down here on earth is one of quiet desperation. I guess he was right — except for the quiet! "Some day," says Master K'ung Ku Chin-lung, "you will realize that the Pure Land of Serene Light is none other than this earth itself." Meantime you may — if you're lucky — enjoy that realization in flashes. The rest of the time this earth is apt to seem more like Hell.

So what is our practical answer? I have already suggested that it is a very simple one — simple, if not exactly easy. *So long as I am anything whatever I have divided and therefore spoiled the One.* The only remedy is to restore its missing parts, to re-graft the organ I amputated, to hand back what I stole from the One — namely

myself — and so bring it again to life, health, wholeness, and perfection. In other words, *everything* will be all right when I am *nothing*. "Claim nothing; enjoy, do not covet His property," says the *Isa Upanishad*. In China, around the same time, the Taoist Sage Chuang-tzu taught: "Your body is not your own... It is the delegated image of God. Your life is not your own. It is the delegated harmony of God. Your individuality is not your own. It is the delegated adaptability of God." And, two millennia later, the French Jesuit De Caussade (1675 — 1751) wrote: "The body and its senses, the soul and its energies, the modicum of good you have performed — are God's portion. It so manifestly belongs to Him that you realize you cannot claim one whit of it as yours, nor feel one grain of complacency, *without being guilty of theft and larceny from God.*" Another Jesuit father, John Nicolas Grou (1731 — 1803), having pointed out "How God is all, and the creature is nothing," goes on to say: "I am nothing of myself, and I owe to God all that I am.... If I appropriate these gifts to myself.... *I steal from God what is His own*, I do not comprehend my own nothingness, I commit an injustice..." Karl Marx, too, seeking justice, decided "all property is theft," but didn't go half far enough. He excluded personal property like one's cooking utensils and clothes, and of course one's body and mind. He had the right idea, but stopped short of the heart of the matter. No wonder Marxism does not set our world to rights! It is insufficiently radical!

**THE FOURTH ALTERNATIVE
AS SEEING RATHER
THAN BELIEVING**

So I admit I'm a thief, a despoiler of the world. Thieves, however, are loath to part with their loot — specially when they've held it so long that they've come to think of it as theirs, and all the world has been agreeing. Who of us is prepared to return his or her body-mind to the Universe, and be reduced to *absolute poverty*?

The only convincing reason I can find for this restoration of stolen goods to their rightful Owner — the only consideration that would induce me to hand them over willingly and without further delay — would be the clear perception that I have no choice, seeing that they were never mine anyway, and my thieving was quite imaginary. In other words, if I were actually to see — not just *believe* — that I have never had and have never been a body-mind at all, that all along I have been exactly No-thing whatever and therefore problem-free — why then this clear seeing really would loosen my fictitious grip on myself. Sri Nisargadatta rightly asks: "Is it not important to you to know whether you are a mere body, or something else? Or maybe nothing at all? Don't you see that all your problems are your body's problems?" And indeed, when I give up my body-mind I not only give up its problems, but the world's too.

Asked why a perfect God should create such a disastrous world, Sri Ramana Maharshi replied, "His work is perfec-

tion. But you see it as imperfect because of your mis-identification with the body." That says it all.

Still I ask myself: is it *true* that I'm not the body and the mind I thought I was, and everyone told me I was? Is it a hard *fact* that I am, in reality, No-thing whatever, that I neither have nor am so much as a dustgrain? Above all, is it dispassionately *verifiable*? Or is this just holy talk, pious uplift, a good thing to believe because it makes me more comfortable? I must find out, because only complete honesty with myself will work here. A trace of self-deception or wishful thinking, and this promising remedy for trouble does me and my world no good at all.

Well, I can't speak for you, but I do indeed find that this Nothingness — this absence of body-mind right here — is the most obvious of all obvious truths. Whether I like it or not, I see — far more clearly than I see anything out there in the world — that right here is Emptiness, Space, Openness — Vacant Accommodation for the whole world. Whenever I look back here at what's looking, at this mysterious Spot I'm said to occupy, I find it unoccupied by me — and occupied instead by all the rest. Here, I am just Capacity, Room at this moment for these two arms and hands and this busy pen and half-filled sheet of paper, this littered desktop, and beyond them the room, and the view from the window of grass and bare trees, of racing clouds and cold sky. Plus all my thoughts and feelings about

those things: not about *me*, I emphasize, but about *them*. I no more *am* these hands, or am *in* these hands, than I *am* these clouds, or am *in* these clouds. I'm nowhere to be found, and everywhere. I have no body, and the whole world is my body. Never, never have I been *part* of the world; never, never have I parted or split up the world. I am Nothing — yes; and All things — yes; never Something, never any half-way house between these extremes. That great saint St John of the Cross tells me that to be all things I must be nothing. I don't have to take his word for it. I can always check this astounding fact, whatever my mood or activity of the moment, by just taking a look.

This clear perception, carrying with it utter conviction, is my best hope and indeed my only hope of setting myself and the Universe to rights. Let me steadily see What I am — thus restoring to the Whole everything I supposed I was, everything I stole from It — and see what happens. Insofar as I do just this, I do indeed find that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the world is. — yes, perfect! It is healed, and for the very good reason that its wounds were quite imaginary.

Continuing to speak for myself, then: whereas I'm wholly unable to make myself into any kind of saint (and settle the issue of perfection that very difficult way) I'm wholly able to see that I could *never* be a saint anyway, or any sort of person or thing or object! And (I repeat) this in-seeing isn't hard. It's entirely natural, refreshing, pleasant, secular, not special

at all. Not so easy to keep up all the while without a good deal of 'practice', no doubt, but renewable always and at will, whenever one's attention is turned round to the Absentee who's attending, right here.

So this, our fourth alternative, is certainly the one for me. What about you? Why not try it? Again, what have you (who in fact have lost all) to lose? You, too, may find that this alternative works because it convinces, because it's thoroughly verifiable and actual-factual, and not for taking on trust just because you read it somewhere or someone told you so. You, too, are likely to find that the Universe is radically transformed, once you clearly see for yourself that you could never disturb its perfection by stealing so much as a needle from it.

I say a needle, because it brings me to the conclusion of this article, which is a Muslim tradition about Jesus. The Sufi poet Attar tells the story. "When you are reduced to ashes, including your baggage, you will have not the least feeling of existence. But if there remains to you, as to Jesus, only a simple needle, a hundred thieves will lie in wait for you along the road. Although Jesus had thrown down his baggage, the needle was still able to scratch his face When existence disappears, neither riches nor empire, honours nor dignity, have any meaning."

And then it is (we may add) that all our wounds — and even mere scratches — are healed, and we are safe from thieves and all harm, and enter Paradise.

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The *Bhikku* Chitta

By Hellmuth Hecker

CHITTA was the son of an elephant trainer. When he was still a youth he met an elderly *bhikku* who was returning from his rounds for alms with a particularly tasty item of food in his bowl. The *bhikku* had no desire for it, so he gave it to the young lad. Chitta was greatly pleased, and under the impression that as a *bhikku* he would be fed like that every day without having to fatigue himself with work, he joined the *Sangha*. But with such a motivation no ascetic life is possible, and shortly afterwards he discarded the robe to return to his old life.

All the same, the spirit of the holy *Sangha* had left a deep and indelible impression on his mind. Soon he felt dissatisfaction with the life of a householder and asked for ordination once more. Having obtained it, after a time he deserted the *Sangha* again. A third, a fourth and a fifth time this happened.

The fifth time, when he was living a married life, he was unable to sleep one night, and while he was looking at his

wife, who was pregnant, the wretchedness of sensual pleasures was driven home to him so forcefully that he seized a yellow robe and hastened to the *vihara* at once. On his hurried way through the silent night all the good seeds planted during his previous monkhood burst into blossom and he attained to Stream-entry there and then.

At the *vihara*, however, his former fellow monks had just agreed among themselves to refuse a possible sixth request for ordination from Chitta. They felt that they had been forbearing to a praiseworthy degree, and considered Chitta totally unfit for the holy life and a disgrace to the *Sangha*.

Even while they were so deliberating, they saw Chitta himself approaching. His features were aglow with a new bliss, and his manner was so calm and mild that they found it impossible to refuse him another ordination.

Reproduced from *The Mountain Path*, January 1973.

This time he quickly succeeded in the four *jhanas* and signless unification of mind.

This filled him with joy, and he felt a great urge to talk about it. On one occasion some *Arahats* were sitting together in conversation and Chitta interrupted them again and again. The senior *bhikku* of the gathering, the Venerable Mahakotthita, advised him to wait until the senior monks had finished what they had to say. Thereupon, Chitta's friends said that he ought not to be reprimanded, because he was wise and capable of explaining *Dhamma* from his own experience.

Mahakotthita answered that he could see Chitta's heart. Then he went on to explain, by similes, that there are states of mind which may be excellent as long as they last, but are still unable to prevent a *bhikku* giving up monkhood again. In this connection he gave the following similes.

A cow securely tied up in the byre seems peaceful enough, but turned loose, it quickly tramples down the green crops. Likewise a *bhikku* may be humble and well behaved in the presence of the Master or saints, but left on his own, he tends to relapse and leave the *Sangha*. Again, a person may be in possession of the four *jhanas* and signless unification of mind, and as long as these abide he is safe; but as soon as the bliss wanes he goes among people, talkative and unrestrained and bursting with pride to announce his achievement. Then his heart becomes filled with greed and he gives up the

monk's training. He may feel secure in the *jhanas*, but it is precisely this which leads to his ruin.

While a king and army, with drums and chariots, are camping in the woods, nobody can hear the crickets chirping and everybody might think they had been silenced. But after the troops have moved on, the crickets can easily be heard again, although one might have been quite sure there were none.

Later on, Chitta actually did leave the *Sangha* for a sixth time to return to family life. His *bhikku* friends then asked the Venerable Mahakotthita whether he had himself foreseen that Chitta would act thus, or whether *Devas* had told him. He replied that it was both. In astonishment those friends went to the Buddha and related the matter to him. The Blessed One dispelled their apprehensions by telling them that Chitta would soon return.

One day Chitta went to see the Buddha, accompanied by Potthapada, a wandering ascetic of another sect. Potthapada posed some deep questions regarding the different modes of arising [*sic*] in the three worlds. Chitta followed up with further questions as to differentiation between these forms of becoming, since, having experienced the *jhanas* he was familiar with some of them. The Blessed One's answers satisfied him fully and he requested admission to the *Sangha* for the seventh time which turned out to be the last.

The Buddha gave his consent, and in a short time Chitta too became one of the *Arahats*.

In subsidiary books of the scriptures as well as in unrelated and later tradition we often find significant hints as to how the actions of past lives affect a man's present experiences. Thus we are told just why it was that the *Bhikku* Chitta, in his last life which was to bring forth *Arahatship*, had to defect from the *Sangha* so many times. It appears that a long, long time ago, when the Buddha Kassapa was teaching *Dhamma*, there were two

friends who joined the *Sangha*. One of them became dissatisfied with the hardships of a *bhikku's* life, and contemplated returning to his family. His friend encouraged him to make this decision, because in his heart he longed to be able to feel himself superior. This ugly motive had its results much, much later during the lifetime of the Buddha Gautama. It subjected this false friend, now become the *Bhikku* Chitta, not less than six times to the humiliation of leaving the *Sangha* and having to petition for acceptance again.

BHAGAVAN'S INSTRUCTION TO SRIMATI KHANNA

In the afternoon Khanna's wife appealed to Bhagavan in writing — 'I am not learned in the Scriptures and I find the method of Self-enquiry too hard for me. I am a woman with seven children and a lot of household cares, and it leaves me little time for meditation. I request Bhagavan to give me some simpler and easier method.'

Bhagavan: No learning or knowledge of scriptures is necessary to know the Self, as no man requires a mirror to see himself. All knowledge is required only to be given up eventually as not-Self. Nor is household work or cares with children necessarily an obstacle. If you can do nothing more, at least continue saying 'I-I' to yourself mentally all the time, as advised in *Who am I?*, whatever work you may be doing and whether you are sitting, standing or walking. 'I' is the name of God. It is the first and greatest of all *mantras*. Even OM is second to it.

Khanna: The *jiva* is said to be mind plus illumination. What is it that desires Self-realization and what is it that obstructs our path to Self-realization? It is said that the mind obstructs and the illumination helps.

Bhagavan: Although we describe the *jiva* as mind plus the reflected light of the Self, in actual practice, in life, you cannot separate the two, just as, in the illustrations we used yesterday, you can't separate cloth and its whiteness in a white cloth or fire and iron in a red-hot rod. The mind can do nothing by itself. It emerges only with the illumination and can do no action, good or bad, except with the illumination. But while the illumination is always there, enabling the mind to act well or ill, the pleasure or pain resulting from such action is not felt by the illumination, just as when you hammer a red-hot rod it is not the fire but the iron that gets the hammering.

— *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, entry for 28-6-1946.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF HINDUISM by V. Krishnamurthy. 1994. ISBN:81-224-0628-9 Pub: Wiley Eastern Limited, Ansari Rd, New Delhi 110002. pp.334, Rs—

The essential features of the inner core of Hinduism are grouped into 10 commandments and elaborated in this book. These are directive principles of the mainstream of Hinduism, which can be listed as follows:

- 1) The purpose of life is to realise the omnipresent divinity intuitively.
 - 2) Purification of mind is the purpose of all religious discipline.
 - 3) The divinity inherent in each one of us has a *dharma* of its own. We should strive to go back to God, our source. Every action of ours must be concordant with this natural order of things.
- These three are the fundamental axioms. The remaining seven are, in a sense, consequences of these three.
- 4) Act in the living present, in total detachment and dedication, by avoiding all egocentric desires, fears and anxieties. If such an action serves another fellow being, it becomes service to God.
 - 5) Freely search for a personal God and seek His grace for the purification of mind.
 - 6) The Avatârâs are to emphasise on one's duties to mother, father, Guru and on truth and love as the basic core of *dharma* and unity of all faiths.
 - 7) Remember God's names, chant them. Be aware continuously of His presence.
 - 8) Surrender to God in heart, soul and will. Then our future is His concern.
 - 9) Discover the Ultimate in yourself. Allow intuition and mystic experience to take you beyond reason and intellect.
 - 10) All faiths are valid. It is the attitude that matters - not the rituals.

An acceptance of these ten commandments alone help to understand Hinduism fully, says the author.

Many types of Hindus are differentiated - secular philosopher, orthodox theologian, rationalist, scientist-Vêdântin and the doubting devotee. A total of 1023 combinations among the people are characterised.

Each commandment is dissected into several facets and explained with the scriptural and other authorities that support it. The rationale behind the varied customs, practices, rituals and symbols associated with the religion are unfolded.

All the paths, *mârgâs* are enunciated on the basis of *dharma*. The author puts as many as 77 questions and proposes several answers. To quote a few:

- i) Why is the word *namah* important?
- ii) How can Bhakti co-exist with Advaita?
- iii) Who am I?
- iv) Is God always a 'He'?
- v) Can temple myths be true?
- vi) Are not science and religion contradictory?

Answers are found in the pages of the book. The author's careful approach is to be appreciated.

— T.N. Pranathârthi Haran

MAHÂBHÂRATA:pp.432, Rs195 RÂMÂYANA:pp.416, Rs195 both retold by William Buck. 2000. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007.

A profound sense of authority and poetic madness run through these modern versions of India's two great sacred epics, not merely edited or retranslated, but in the author's own words "retold." William Buck was only twenty-two years old when he chanced upon a copy of the *Bhagavadgîtâ* while on vacation from UC-Berkeley, and he spent the rest of his brief life (he died at age thirty-seven) plunging into the classic versions of both *Mahâbhârata* and *Râmâyana* with the aim of making the heart of both stories accessible to modern Western readers.

He succeeded so masterfully that it is not hard to imagine that Buck was the reincarnation of

Vâlmîki or Vyâsa or guided by both. His words and images leap off the page, simultaneously conveying not only the stories of Srî Râma and Srî Krishna, but also the spirit of true *bhakti*, devotion, without ever descending to sentimentality.

Like the sage Vyâsa himself might have done, Buck once replied to a critic, I've made many changes and combinations in both books, but I wish to have them considered as stories which they are, rather than as technically accurate scholarship, which I told you they weren't. ...One thing, however, is true. Read the stories and you get the real spirit of the original once you're done, and if they're entertaining that's all I ask.

They are much more than entertaining. The stories of God's advent as Srî Râm and as Krishna are two of the great guiding lights of human behaviour, of the struggles between right and wrong, good and evil, life and death. The reader is drawn fully into the passion of human drama, yet is frequently reminded as well that "all is mâyâ, all is illusion." All may be illusion, but that does not mean the illusion is unimportant or casual. Buck reminds the reader that even God "will have the adventure. He will take all the gain and all the loss."

Having read many versions of *Mahâbhârata* and *Râmâyana* and having studied both epics quite a bit, I find few that compare with Buck's exquisite style of storytelling. In describing a demon general's chariot and weapons in *Râmâyana*, for example, he writes, "Things were loaded all over Prahasta's chariot. He had slaughter-sledges, butcher knives and meat-hooks, chains and claws and clamps; he carried bombs and rockets and poisons and appalling jealousies; delusions and bad dreams, diseases and ambitions, many crises and confusions. Wrong-way road signs and false maps of mirages were tied on with broken promises. ...There were puzzles with essential parts missing and loaded dice and heartbreak and many first loves lost. It was quite a sight to see!"

This is divine storytelling at its finest. When he finished his manuscripts, William Buck wrote, "Based on the words of ancient songs, I have written books. I tried to make them interesting to read. I don't think you will find many other books like them." He was absolutely correct.

— Bo Lozoff

<www.HumanKindnessFoundation.org>

TOWARD A SUPERCONSCIOUSNESS:
Meditational Theory and Practice: by Hiroshi
Motoyama. Pub: Institute for Religious

Psychology, Inokashira, 4-11-7, Mitakashi, Tokyo 181, Japan. pp.150.

The present book under review is a translation from the Japanese. The book purports to serve the twin purposes of guiding the reader through the theory and practice of yôgic meditation with a view to help him reach the superconscious state and also help those who want to have a theoretical grasp of yôgic meditation especially from the Zen point of view. The author, Dr Motoyama, is a philosopher, scientist, religious leader, and a yôgi. The first chapter of the book generally delineates the effect of yôga on mind and body while describing various âsanâs and prânâyâmâs which would help awakening of superconsciousness. The author asserts superconsciousness can be awakened by the negation of the ordinary human consciousness through practice of yôga and by transcending ordinary human consciousness in the state of Satori where the subject and object are one, where superconsciousness is able to consciously control the deep layers of the unconscious and the autonomic bodily functions, both of which are ordinarily regulated by the unconscious. The author very clearly and effectively describes the eight systems of yôga meditations right from moral training, through bodily training and culminating in spiritual training. Most of these could be found in general books on Yoga and Meditation in India. What is striking is the clarity with which the author presents his analysis and a rich repertoire of spiritual experiences and experiments which he brings into focus to explain the various facets.

More interesting is the second chapter which talks about the "Approaching concentration, Meditation and Samadhi". Dr Motoyama elucidates the practice of yoga-meditation from the comprehensive stand-points of Hypnosis, Physiology, Neuro-physiology, Psychology, Philosophy, and Religion. Dr Motoyama states, echoing Srî Ramana Maharshi, that "to achieve the goal of superconsciousness a practitioner has to completely shatter his ego." He describes the various phenomena that the practitioner encounters, in the process of shattering his or her ego. He provides a set of specific techniques and instructions to deal with the phenomena. He clearly describes the various changes which can be effected in the body and mind through âsanâs, prânâyâmâs, meditation and Samâdhi, and the precautionary step one should take while launching on the journey over the razor's edge. While one is likely to look askance at his description of the

daemonic state, astral projection, and contact with the spirits, one has to agree on his emphasis on the leap into a higher dimension of consciousness which is conveyed by the eradication of the previous manner of being. The author has done extensive research using various scientific instruments (polygraphs and the electro-cardiograph) on the yôgic states of renowned yogis in India and abroad. Polygraphs of a practitioner who has achieved awakening of the *kundalinî*, the authenticity of the effect of meditation on respiration, GSR, heartbeats etc have been effectively presented. Of course, it is another question whether it is at all necessary to have such detailed scientific knowledge about something which we have to transcend anyway. Dr Motoyama asserts that the purpose in describing these phenomena that occur in the astral dimension is simply to give the practitioner the means of recognizing and interpreting these phenomena so that he can chart a profitable course and realize his full potential.

A unique contribution of the author is on the subject of the psychological and physiological understanding of the meditation state. He explains this using the electrocardiograph and plethysmograph conducted during the meditation state of his guru in Kâkinâda during 1969. Similar experiments had been conducted on him in Japan also. The author uses these two developments as authority on the functions of the Ki-meridians and the corresponding internal organs. The description of the psychic operation which he performed on a woman in the city of Kobe in Japan is rather fantastic. The author ultimately agrees with the Indian philosopher that *karma* must be fulfilled even after the Satori.

— S. Râm Môhan

LOOK FOR YOURSELF: The Science and Art of Self Realization: by Douglas E. Harding. 1998. Pub: Inner Directions - Encinitas, PO Box 231486, California CA 92023, USA. pp236, US\$16.95

In this interesting and illuminating collection of 29 essays by Douglas E. Harding of varied interest, the reader can listen to a common core of self-search. In its systematic well-arranged thoughts, the work becomes almost a science and in its fascinating style it touches the sensibilities of art. The titles of essays themselves are quite illuminating, such as 'The Shortest Path', 'The Last Upanishad?', 'Six Sketches for a Portrait', 'Sophia's

Three Suitor's' and so on. Harding's deep study of and due respect for Sri Ramana Maharshi, is evident in several articles and there is also an interesting comparative note in the essay *Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamûrti* (p.201). He commences on a disagreeing note about the common tendency of finding only similarities in thoughts of different spiritual masters, many times ignoring the uniqueness of a particular personality. Harding's lament "It can be the result of laziness or superficiality, of failure to listen carefully and go deeply into what is being said, of fudging boundaries when what is needed is clear and sharp discrimination" is quite understandable but not always true. Harding himself has attempted to bring out such similarities in his quotes, in other essays - quotes from Plotinus, Boehm, Hsu Yun, Rumi, Ramana Maharshi etc. It may not, perhaps, be due to laziness or lack of deep study! Anyway, he has brought out with clarity, the basic differences between J.K. and Maharshi. According to J.K. self-realization, seemingly simple, is extremely difficult. But to Maharshi the simplest and easiest of all is to be in the SELF - as SELF. "I see what needs to be seen. I see only just what all see, nothing more. The Self is always self-evident." This is one of the finest articles in the collection under review.

Harding has tried to make a mystical experience such as self-realization quite a practical possibility, in his elaboration in the essay 'Self Enquiry: Some Objections Answered' (p.27-35). He lists out 8 possible objections and effectively refutes each of them. To the common complaints that search for Self is a selfish diversion, almost a mental illness, time consuming and unpractical, depressing and boring, etc. he asserts that helping oneself is really helping others. It is never morbid. On the other hand, "We are all more or less ill till we find by self-enquiry our oneness with everyone else." He also asserts that self-search is a joyous adventure rather than a dull and monotonous occupation. "The Self-seeing man has the grace and charm of one who is free" (p.31).

In the last few pages, the author gives details of his workshop and its usefulness in realizing old truths, the periodical group meetings, to take part in an activity called 'Look-For-Yourself'. Turn the attention from externals to your own inner reality is the theme. It is claimed that over the past four decades such workshops are extended over 19 countries and have yielded good results. The "exercises" which he has developed over the years are all visual and are aimed at making the participant

see the difference between how one appears to others and how one appears to oneself. The author himself expresses concern about the inapplicability of his method for those without eye sight.

The haunting doubt of a sincere seeker is whether we are making use of a dependable and perfect means (*pramāna*) for self-search? We join the author in his searching question which in itself contains the answer - "Can you think of anything else that, if you do it at all you do perfectly? And can you think of any more perfect gift that you can hand to your friends — to the world that needs it so desperately — than the gift of gifts, which you are now fully able to bestow?" (p. 235-36)

— A.S.Vēnugōpāla Rao

ENTHUSIASM: by Swami Chidvilasananda. 1997. Pub: Chitshakti Publications, 5 Bishop Wallers Avenue (E), Mylapore, Chennai 600004. Pp. 213. Rs 95

Gurumāyi Chidvilāsānanda's talks on various moral, psychological and spiritual themes are published first in this Indian edition, with a foreword by Dr. Nitish Sengupta and an introduction by Thomas B. Coburn. The author was initiated in Siddha Yoga Meditation by Swāmi Muktānanda, a disciple of Bhagawān Nityānanda. There are thirteen chapters. In the first, the reader is asked to fill the mind with a constant sense of harmony, love and happiness. This is achieved by meditation through the grace of the Guru and by *satsang*. The second chapter explains the Upanishadic saying that the universe is a product of God's ecstasy and desire to become multifarious. The *tāntric* concept of *kundalinī* and *cakras* or yogic centers in the human body is outlined in the third chapter. The remaining nine chapters deal with various negative and positive mental traits including freedom of speech, hatred, constancy, patience, forgiveness, gentleness, envy, sacrifice, and gratitude. The book closes with some thirty pages covering an epilogue, notes and glossaries of poets, philosophers and sages, of texts and terms, a general index and a list of other books by the author and her associates.

The title of the book may be catchy but is somewhat inappropriate. Does freedom from envy or hatred by itself amount to or generate enthusiasm (for what)? Enthusiasm is no doubt a subjective feeling that may arise within oneself but it depends on actual or imaginary objects to stimulate and sustain it.

— T. Sankaran

HOW I BECAME A HINDU: My Discovery of Vedic Dharma: by David Frawley. 2000. Pub: Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Rd., New Dehli 110002. pp. 208, Rs 200.

[How I Became A Hindu was given to a Western and an Indian reviewer simultaneously, to offer perspective to the readers. The MP, Aradhana 2001 carried the review by Dorothy Tanous].

This is a fascinating story of the making of an intellectual Kshatriya Prince by the kiss of the Védās; a 'straight from the heart' narrative of the life's journey of David Frawley, a book for open minds and open hearts. David narrates his progress from an exclusive, intolerant world-view forced on him in his formative years to a universal, inclusive, world-view that he found in Hinduism. His early years were afflicted by Catholic guilt, fears of venal and mortal sins, purgatory and damnation in eternal fires. At the age of nine when he started reading biographies of great men, he says "my training that only Catholics had a monopoly on goodness was already getting a severe drubbing". His study of European history and its religious wars "like the bloody Thirty Years War of the seventeenth century that resulted in over one third of the population of Germany getting decimated", opened his eyes to the darker side of religious expression. His exposure to geography and ancient history made him realize that "clearly the American focus of our education left out most of humanity both in time and space".

By sixteen he started reading European intellectuals like Nietzsche and Camus, rationalists like Kant, Russell and the existentialists. He started writing philosophical poetry, experimenting in counter-culture, participating in anti-war movements. From these foundations, he moved on to yoga, Buddhism and then to the Upanishads and Vedas, an "extensive inner search of many years". His interest in Hinduism includes mysticism, Self Knowledge, devotion to Gods and interests of Kāvyaakanta Ganapati Muni. Indeed David has studied the Muni's works and acknowledges him as a "model for what I was attempting in all aspects of my work". His pen flows from the thoughts of sages like Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo to people in Sangh Parivār and VHP, and writers such as Rām Swarūp and Sitā Rām Goel. He wields the sword and shields on behalf of Hinduism and holds the Hindus themselves to be responsible for the open ground that they have given, allowing anti-Hindu sentiments to wax without fear of debate or repartee. On conversion he says "The word conversion is a misnomer and a term that I dislike.

One keeps to the original as much as possible, even if that means bad English, lots of repetitions and a frequent lack of clarity and focus in the message. The other school feels that the dialogues should be editorially polished. A diamond cutter cuts, polishes and then sets precious jewels to bring out their luster so that everyone can be aware of their beauty and value. In the same way, this school of editing tinkers with the text and polishes it in order to give the message maximum impact. I have edited several books of spiritual dialogues myself, so I am acutely aware of the competing pulls of clarity versus literalness. Ideally, the Guru's words should speak for themselves, since there is always some spiritual power in the original words, but in practice, they almost always need to be edited in some way. When the teacher tends, as Ranjit Mahârâj does, towards a discursive, stream-of-consciousness style of answering, the case for major editorial interventions becomes much more persuasive.

Robert Wolfe has, instead, elected for a 'hands off' approach and the unfortunate result is a series of rambling, incoherent monologues that rarely or only tangentially address the questions that have been asked. This may have been his style of teaching, but it makes for poor reading. There are gems in the answers, waiting for some expert cutting and polishing, but they are buried in pages and pages of dross that should have been excised long before the book made it to the press.

— David Godman

THE HILL (A Novel): by K.Venkataraman. 2000. Pub: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, KM Munshi Marg, Mumbai 400007. pp298, Rs220.

Seshâdri Swâmi and Sri Ramana Maharshi were two remarkable saints of Tiruvannâmalai in the late nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century. For spiritual aspirants, their lives and teachings are of perennial interest. Much has already been written about the two saints, particularly the latter. However, for those who adore, the need to read and write about them is insatiable. So, when almost all is already written, how is one to retell a known story? K.Venkatârâman, who obviously has the need to retell, chooses a 'novel' method to do so. The genre chosen is the novel and the protagonist is a simple, common man who makes a living by transporting people in carts.

As novels go, the book is not particularly appealing since there is nothing spectacular happening in the life of the protagonist, Sômu. Nor

is there any dramatic conflict in his mind. Whatever the travails and difficulties in his life, they do not get extensive treatment. The inner life of the protagonist is apparently an aspect that the reader is supposed to dwell on, though, even this is not a matter of debate or conflict for Sômu. The devotion he feels towards the two spiritual Masters and the final dependence on and surrender to Srî Ramana are unquestioning. While from the 'outsider-reader' point of view, this might seem uninteresting, especially in a novel, Srî Ramana's devotees would recognise this phenomenon as very real. It is an acknowledged fact among his devotees that Sri Ramana's magic works silently and effects a "painless transformation" as Dr. K.Subrahmaniam was wont to say.

Sri Ramana draws a parallel between the sleeping man in a moving cart who is not aware of the cart's movements and a jnani who is not conscious of the body and its activities. There are self-conscious allusions in the book to this imagery. While this seems to be a starting point for the novel, the symbolism does not go beyond this reference in the narrative. A fictitious character who drives a cart, however, becomes a useful device in describing the happenings in the town of Tiruvannamalai during a particular period of time. Since Sômu is moving around always, he is in the vantage position of seeing the various happenings and responding to them as an ordinary person would. In the process, the atmosphere of the period is well brought out, a period during which events of social significance happen. The two plague epidemics, the freedom struggle, the differences between the 'pacifist' Gandhians and the militant Indian National Army sympathisers, the visit of Mahâtma Gândhi to Tiruvannâmalai, the temple entry of untouchables all became events which touch Sômu's life directly or indirectly. As for the two spiritual Masters, who remain the main focus of the book in the midst of all this, the events chosen for representation are historically true and are ones that bring out the nature of the two Masters and their basic teachings.

The narrative mode is however, not all that new. There exists in the west and in India a considerably significant tradition of writing historical novels and there are also novels that deal with Indian spiritual Masters. Those so inclined, might embark on a serious academic discussion as to whether this particular book can be classified as a historical novel.

The greatest casualty in the book is the English language. While an attempt is made to cater to a western audience: using the word pancakes for *dôsās*, and a typical British expression: "Say, how old is Bhagavân?" (p.238), there are at the same time, typically Indian expressions: "Arasi was narrating what all she saw" (p.4); "He was busy for ten, twelve days" (p.35); "For him all these distinctions were not there." (p.53). Apart from errors that can be passed over as typographical ones, there are others that cannot be excused: "The mother was having fever" (p.124); "Some people started enquiring his father ..." (p.6); "Well, I will tell myself" (p.79); "to make our ends meet" (p.8); mentioned about , etc., to cite just a few examples. Other errors are the use of vocal chords (p.1) instead of vocal cords, and a factual error in referring to the Kîchaka episode as being from the Râmâyana rather than the Mahâbhârata (p.18).

Still, there are moments of inspired writing and flashes of poetry in the style: "The sea of humanity in the temple had turned into a flowing river in the streets" (p.5), "Sômu once tried to count the thousand pillars, but gave up, his interest flagging and his arithmetic faltering" (p.13); "The man is so modest that he would be lost in a crowd of one" (p.186). And, while for mere mortals, the end of life is dust to dust and ashes to ashes, for Srî Ramana, the end of bodily existence is "Light to Light".

This unevenness in language, style and emphasis characterizes the book. The overall impression one carries at the end of it all is that a devotee has made an effort to attempt something different, but greater care might have been shown in the process.

— Pingali Sailaja

THE QUANTUM LEAP INTO THE ABSOLUTE:
Essence of *Ashtavakra Gîta*: by Swami Shantananda Puri. 2001. Pub: Parvathamma C.P. Subbaraju Setty Charitable Trust, 13/8, Pampa Mahakavi Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore-560 004. pp.48.

In this little publication, his most recent, Swâmi Shântânanda Pûri offers an exuberant introduction into the *Ashtâvakra Gîtâ*. Without burdening his readers with unnecessary scholarly details (though careful to footnote his citations with the original Sanskrit), Swâmiji presents us with an impassioned exhortation to hear the message of the *Ashtâvakra Gîta* and embrace the ancient teaching of Advaita.

Rather than exegesis, he provides a protocol for the awakened life vis-a-vis King Janaka's encounter with the sage. The author underscores the sage's admonition that the sâdhaka not get overly burdened with technique but rather only remain "in the firm conviction that 'I am the Pure consciousness'...". Only thereby may one "become freed from all miseries and established in happiness."

Ashtâvakra maintains that enlightenment can be instantaneous. This is what the author calls the "quantum flight" from body identification to abidance in the eternal. Swâmiji's "instant recipe for *mukti*" à la Ashtâvakra, consists in what the author calls "three Moksha capsules": 1) separating oneself from the body and resting in Consciousness through witnessing, 2) the process of "de-hypnotizing lies" and remaining "in the conviction that you are liberated and free"; and 3) elimination of the 'I' through cessation of the sense of doership.

If theory and praxis are sometimes at a distance from each other, these three methods while straight forward enough on paper seem like 30,000 miles on one's hands and knees when it comes to putting them into practice. And yet, so says the author, this is just what the ego-sense would have us believe. The seeming bootstraps maneuver is contained simply in the "firm faith that we are that ultimate self-knowledge which is sought, the very Self and the Lord".

It sounds too simple. But it is precisely this, proclaims our author, for no sâdhana can bring us to who and what we already are. Rather the only 'sâdhana' here is remaining in that fundamental reality of the Self.

While the reader of this little volume may stumble upon some few typographical errors and minor copy-editing oversights, they will not distract him unduly as the spirit, vigour and vitality of Swâmi Shântânanda's narrative succeed not only in making the *Ashtâvakra Gîta* "an easily digestible capsule" but inspire its hearer to the one great work of earthly life: the discovery of and becoming established in one's true Self.

— Michael Highburger

AWAKENING NATURE'S HEALING INTELLIGENCE:
(Expending Ayurveda Through the Maharshi Vêdic Approach to Health: by Hari Sharma. 1999. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110007. pp278, Rs295

This book gives the readers a rare insight into the common focus of all natural health approaches.

It presents a comprehensive frame-work for understanding how nature's intelligence emerges and how it can be harnessed for greater health and well-being. The book shows how both modern science and the ancient Vêdic science of India point to wholeness as an essential quality of existence.

Maharishi Mahêsh Yôgi has cast the broad spectrum of Vêdic literature into a systematic and comprehensive understanding which brings the Vêdic wisdom into the reach of everyone. All parts of Vêdic knowledge contain valuable insights into enhancing all facets of human life. Mind, behaviour, life-style, environment, design of our homes, sun and moon all influence our physiology. The focus is on the underlying wholeness of existence.

Disease is viewed as the result of a breakdown in the delicate balance of the intelligence that rules the functioning of the body. The breakdown results from the disconnection of intelligence from its source in wholeness. The concept of wholeness is derived from the Vêdic tradition, paralleling modern physic's discovery of the unified force of reality beyond the sub-atomic level. Maharshi Mahêsh Yôgi's Vêdic approach to health treats the whole person.

All aspects of individual life - consciousness, physiology, behaviour and environment are taken into account. It aims to 'avert the danger that has not arisen' instead of crisis management. Truly it is a multi-dimensional system of health-care.

It approaches health from the interface of consciousness, mind and body. Also it contains a large number of techniques to good health, which are on the level of physiology, behaviour and environment.

The author deserves praise for delivering such a good book. Readers will be transformed into a new and fresh outlook, after going through the pages.

— T.N.Pranathârthi Haran.

corrigendum in *BOOK REVIEWS* (p.254) of
The Mountain Path, Jayanti 2001:

The last sentence of the third para of the *Jnânêsvar* review should read: "..... such excursions into the history of the Delhi Sultanate may seem irrelevant to the biography of Jnânêsvar. The book reads..."

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

RAMANA NAMANA (Kannada Poems on Ramana): ASV Rao. Pub: Ramana Kendra, Vasishtha Vidyalyaya, Kirti Nagara, Shimoga 577201. pp35, Rs10

THE SILENT POWER: Selections from *The Mountain Path* and *The Call Divine*. 2002 Pub: Sri Ramanasramam, 606603, India. pp229, Rs.70

CHERISHED MEMORIES: by T.R.Kanakammal. (Tr. into English by Lalitha Krithivâsan). 2002 Pub: Sri Ramanâsramam, 606603, India. pp217, Rs50

DEFINING AUSTERITY (Lectures on Sankara's *Kaupîna Panchakam*): by Sw. Suddhânanda. 1998 Pub: Samvit Sagar Trust, Utthandi, Chennai 400119. pp188, Rs?

SIXTEEN FACETS OF SELF REALIZATION: Sw.Srîkantânanda (pp85, Rs15) 2000 THE ESSENCE OF THE GITA: Sw. Sâradânanda, tr. Sw. Tyâgânanda. (pp125, Rs25) 2000; LEARN TO LIVE (vols I&II) Sw. Jagadâtmânanda, tr. NT Bhat. 2000 (pp256/415, Rs40/Rs60). All from: RK Math, Chennai 400004.

SRI VAISHNAVISM THROUGH THE AGES: (pp36, Rs2.50); DHARMA: (pp24, Rs2.50). 1991 both by Sw. Harshânanda, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore 560019.

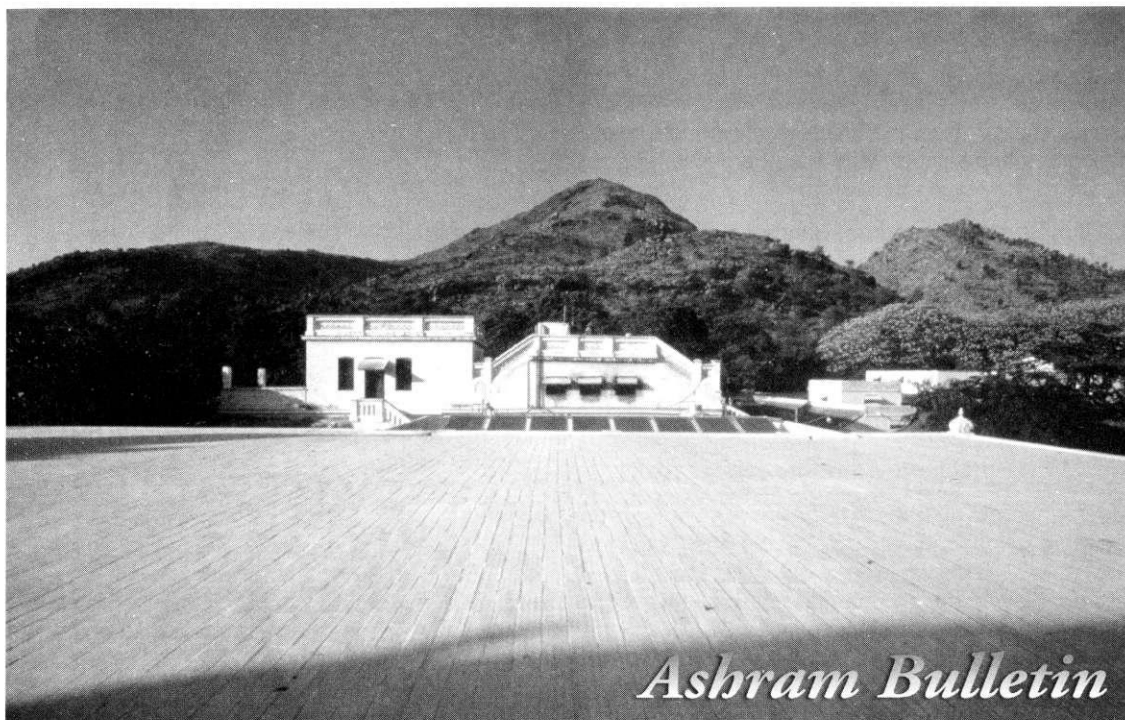
POEMS (of Sw. Ramdas): reprint of enlarged 1984 edn.). Pub: Anandashram, Kanhangad, 671531, Kerala. pp359, Rs50

KARMA & DISEASES (pp31, Rs8); RADHA'S PREM (pp71, Rs20); PHILOSOPHY OF DREAMS (pp95, Rs25). Pub: The Divine Life Society, U.P., 249192, India

HEALTH & HAPPINESS :by Sw. Sahajânanda, ed. by R.W.Zenner. 2000 Pub: Atheetha Ashram, Thally, T.Nadu, 635118, India. pp138, Rs100. BHAGAVAD GITAI (vols. 4&5): (Tamil tr. by Rajalakshmi of Rajneesh's Hindi *Geeta Darshan*). pp746/428; Rs300/Rs200

THE ÂCÂRYA SANKARA OF KÂLADÎ: by I.S.Madugula (revised edition 2001) Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 110007. pp184, Rs195 (pb) [*Carries a scholarly 22 page preface to this edition. Reviewed in The MP, Ârâdhanâ 1989*]

KAILASH MANSAROVAR: Diary of a Pilgrim. 2002. ISBN: 81-7822-060-1. Pub: New Age Books, A44, Naraina-I, New Delhi 110028. <nab@vsnl.in>, pp98, Rs195.



Celebration of 122nd *Jayanti* of Sri Bhagavan At Ashram (31-12-2001)

The 122nd *Jayanti* of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in the usual elaborate manner at the Ashram on Sunday, December 31, 2001. The Ramana Auditorium was specially decorated with garlands for the occasion.

Srimati Senthil and **Sri K.S. Senthil Murugan** of Tiruvannamalai gave a recital on the *nagaswaram* on the evening of December 30. After dinner, students of the **Boston Matriculation School** and **Visva Hindu Vidyalaya**, Chennai gave a rendering of *Ramana Bhajan*. This programme conducted by the young students was very impressive and earned the appreciation of an attentive audience at the New Hall of the Ashram.

On December 31, *Jayanti* day, the proceedings commenced with *dhanur masa puja* to Sri Bhagavan in the early hours. The *puja* was preceded by *Mangala Isai* (*nagaswaram* music) played by **Sri T.R. Pichumani** and party.

During this *puja* (done on all the days of the Tamil month of *Margazhi*), songs of Andral, Manickyavachakar and Muruganar are rendered at the time of *Arati*. This was followed by group recital of *Vishnu Sahasranama*.

Thereafter there was group singing of hymns on Sri Bhagavan appropriate to the *Jayanti* day.

As per daily routine, brief *puja* to Sri Bhagavan (during which milk is offered as *naivedya*) was performed at seven. Devotees were treated to breakfast.

Then came the chanting of *Mahanarayana Upanishad*. Special *puja* to Ramaneswara Mahalingam was performed (preceded by special *abhishekam*



known as *Mahanyasa Purvaka Ekadasa Rudra Abhishekam*). *Arati*, the finale, came off at eleven. Devotees and visitors were then treated to special lunch.

Amritavarshini group of Bangalore, led by **Smt. Sakkubhai Srinivasan** gave a moving rendering of devotional music in the afternoon.

After dinner, Ramananjali group of Bangalore, led by **Srimati Sulochana Natarajan** gave an impressive concert of Ramana music. This marked the conclusion of the proceedings.

At Arunachala Ashrama, New York

Arunachala Ashrama, New York celebrated the *Jayanti* on January 6, with chanting of *Aksharamanamalai*, *Saranagati* song on Sri Bhagavan, and *Bhaja Govindam* of Shankaracharya. A portion of the forthcoming video film entitled *Guru Ramana, his living presence* was also screened. **Dennis Hartel** gave a talk on the film. After *Vedic* chanting and *arati*, *prasad* specially prepared for the occasion was distributed to the assembled devotees.

At Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia, Canada

Arunachala Ashrama (Bridgetown, NS), Nova Scotia, Canada, celebrated the *Jayanti* on December 30, 2001 with recitation of *Lalita Sahasranama* and *puja*. Devotees from Halifax attended the function. **Dr.S. Swaminathan, Sri D. Srinivasan, Srimati Lalita** and other devotees were present. *Prasad* was distributed to the assembled gathering.

At Mumbai

Sri Ramana Jayanti Celebration Committee, Worli, Mumbai, organised a two-day celebration of *Jayanti* on 23 March and 24 March. **Dr. Sudha Seshayyan** spoke in Tamil on Sri Bhagavan on 23 March at the function held at Vashi Tamil Sangham Hall, New Bombay. Dr. Sudha addressed the English session held on 24 March at Shri Ramakrishna Cultural Centre, Worli. This function was presided over by Honourable Justice **Sarosh H. Kapadia**, Judge, High Court, Mumbai.

At Pachipenta, Andhra Pradesh

The residents of Pachipenta Mandal, Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh, celebrated the *Jayanti* on 31 December 2001. Sri M. Dattatreya Sastri of Andhra University and Sri P. Krishnaje Rao addressed the

gathering. Other prominent residents of the area also joined the celebrations.

Aradhana of Chinnaswamigal

(28-1-2002)



The *Aradhana* of Sri Chinnaswamigal was celebrated at the Ashram on 28 January, with special *abhishekam* and *puja* at his *samadhi*. Inmates and devotees who had assembled for the function were treated to special lunch.

Celebration of Sivaratri at Ashram

(12-3-2002)

Sivaratri is celebrated at the Ashram in a solemn manner. There are four special *pujas* at night — in addition to the *pujas* as per daily routine. *Ekadasa Rudra Parayana* is also done around midnight. A good number of devotees assemble for the occasion.

It is customary for devotees to keep vigil during the night. Most of the devotees also do *giri pradakshina*.

This year *Sivaratri* came off on March 12. The proceedings were on the usual lines.

Sri Vidya Havan at Ashram

(22-3-2002)

Sri Vidya Havan conducted annually at the Ashram in the Tamil month of *Panguni* is a day-long function.



The rituals are elaborate and take about ten hours to complete. Ten varieties of materials are offered as oblation to the sacrificial fire.

The main items of the programme are: *Navavarana puja, Lalita Sahasranama Homa, Lalita Trisati Homa, Kanya Puja and Suvasini Puja.*

This year the *havan* came off on March 22. The function was well attended.

Competition (2001-02) for School Students on the Teachings of Sri Bhagavan

At a function held at the Ashram on February 5 under the Presidentship of **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, Ashram President, prizes were distributed by **Swami Ramanananda** to the winners in the competition held for school students (of Tiruvannamalai) on the teachings of Sri Bhagavan.

Sri A.R. Natarajan, Dr. Sarada and **Sri R. Natarajan** spoke on the occasion.

Renovation of Atulyanatheswara Temple Arayaninallur, Tirukoilur

Tirukoilur has a special importance for the devotees of Sri Bhagavan since he had spent two nights there, on his way to Arunachala — on 30 August and 31 August 1896. Sri Bhagavan had *darshan* at the temples of Atulyanatheswara (Arayaninallur) and Viratteswara (Kilur).

While the renovation and consecration of Sri Viratteswara temple has already been completed (in September 2000), this is yet to be done for Atulyanatheswara temple. **Professor Yanagida**, President of Nippon Ramana Kendra, Japan and his assistant **Ms. Shunya**, have taken the initiative in this

regard and also contributed funds for the work. Some other Japanese devotees have also come forward with such assistance.

The work was inaugurated at Arayaninallur on 10 February in the presence of Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President and other local dignitaries and devotees. **Sri Adi Shankar**, Member of Parliament for Cuddalore and the temple authorities have assured all support for the completion of the work.

Function at Panchayat Union Sethupati Middle School, Tiruchuli

The Panchayat Union Sethupati Middle School, Tiruchuli, has a special importance for the devotees of Sri Bhagavan since he had studied there. At a function



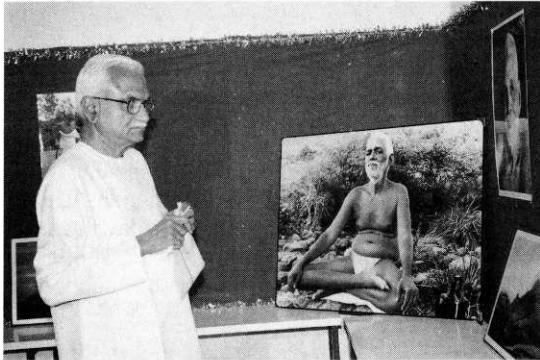
held on April 18 at the school, Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President presented fifty benches and desks as well as tumblers and lunch plates for use by the students. These articles have been donated by the Ullal Keeni family.

Local dignitaries and officials as well as devotees from Madurai were present on the occasion.

Inauguration of Sri Ramanalaya Trust Rajapalaiyam

A three day function was held at Ramajaya Mandiram, Rajapalaiyam, Tamil Nadu between 19 April and 21 April in order to commemorate the centenary of bringing out of Sri Bhagavan's *Who am I?* and also to inaugurate Sri Ramanalaya Trust.

The programme consisted of a photo session, video show on Sri Bhagavan's life and teachings, as well as lectures.



Sri P.R. Ramasubrahmaneya Raja, Chairman, Ramco Group, at the photo exhibition

The proceedings were inaugurated by **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, Ashram President.

The speakers were: **Sri P.R. Ramasubrahmaneya Raja, Sri S. Balarama Raja, Sri V.S. Ramanan, Sri T.R. Dinakaran, Sri Kondal Raj, Sri S. Ram Mohan, Sri T.R. Kannan, Sri T.R. Pranatarti Haran, Maharaja T.N.S. Muruga Tirtapathy, Sri N.K. Ramaswamy Raja, Sri Swami Omkarananda and Sri T.P. Ramaswamy Raja.**



Sri Ramanalayam Trust functioning under the Presidentship of **Sri P. Lokanatha Raja** has been formed with the object of helping spiritual aspirants in their *sadhana* — mainly having in mind the residents of Rajapalaiyam and its surroundings.

Plans are under way for constructing a prayer and meditation hall and lodgings.

Celebration of Fiftysecond *Aradhana* of Sri Bhagavan at Ashram (9-5-2002)

The fiftysecond anniversary of the *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated in an elaborate manner

at the Ashram on May 9, in the presence of a large gathering of devotees.

But for a difference in the choice of hymns for group singing in the early hours, the programmes on *Aradhana* day are identical with those on *Jayanti* day.

The proceedings actually commenced even on the previous day, May 8, with a saxophone concert by Kalaimamani **Sri Kadri Gopalnath**. He was accompanied by **Kumari A. Kanyakumari** on the violin, **Sri Danganikottai Mani** on the *tavil*, **Sri V. Suresh** on the *ghatam* and **Sri B. Rajasekhar** on the *morsing*.

The proceedings on *Aradhana* day commenced in the early hours with *mangala isai* — *nagaswaram* music — by **Sri T.R. Pichandi** and party of Tiruvannamalai. This was followed by group singing of *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Ulladu Narpadu* of Sri Bhagavan as well as *Ramana Sadguru* of Sri Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer. Then came the chanting of *Ramana Chatvarimsatas* as per daily routine. Devotees were treated to breakfast.

Special *abhishekam* to Ramaneswara Mahalingam known as *Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudrabhishekam* was performed. Simultaneously *Maha Narayana Upanishad* was chanted. The finale of the special *puja, arati*, came off around eleven. Devotees were treated to special lunch. The poor were fed on a large scale.

The evening concert of *nagaswaram* music (between seven and eight) by **Sri S.G.N. Pichayappa** and **Sri S.G.N. Ganesan**, brothers of Kattimedu was impressive. Following this **Smt. Ambika Kameshwar** and party gave an impressive concert of *Ramana* music in classical Carnatic style. This marked the end of the proceedings.

Observance of *Aradhana* day according to Western Calendar At Ashram (14-4-2002)

The main *Aradhana* function at the Ashram is usually held according to the Hindu Calendar, on *Chaitra Masa Krishna Paksha Trayodashi* day. Nowadays it is observed according to the Western (Gregorian) calendar also. The *Aradhana* falls on 14 April every year, on this basis.

Aksharamanamalai of Sri Bhagavan was recited by a group of devotees before the *Nirvana* room on 14 April between 8-15 p.m. and 9 p.m. A good number of devotees were present on the occasion.

Celebration by Ramana Kendram, Chennai

At a colourful function got up at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore, the Ramana Kendram, Chennai celebrated the fifty second *Aradhana* of Sri Bhagavan on May 5.

The proceedings began at nine with prayer.

Swami Ramanananda of Sri Ramanasramam was present on the occasion. *Kuthuvilakku* was lighted in his presence by **Smt. Kamala Parasuram** and **Smt. Chitra Rangabhashyam**. The portrait of Sri Bhagavan was garlanded by **Smt. Meenakshi Ananthaswami**.

The participants in the morning and afternoon (lecture) sessions were:

Swami Gauthamanandaji Maharaj, President, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Hon'ble Justice **K. S. Bhaktavatsalam**, **Sri V. S. Ramanan**, Ashram President, **Sri R. Venkatakrisnan**, **Sri S. Ram Mohan**, IRAS., **Sri S. Shankaranarayanan**, **Sri N. Panchapakesan**, **Pulavar Govindarajan**, **Ms. Ramya**, **Dr. Sudha Seshayyan** and Professor **Sharada Bhanu**.

The special session between 4-30 and 5-30 p.m. was addressed by **Sri S. Gurumurti**, C.A., writer and scholar.

The cultural session commencing from 5-30 p.m. consisted of Ramana Music by **Malgudi Subha** and party as well as a classical *Bharatanatyam* concert by **Smt. Preethi Atreya** and **Lakshmi Atreya**.

Seminar and Cultural Festival at Bangalore

A national seminar and cultural festival on the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan was held on 30 March and 31 March by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, at Ramana Maharshi Heritage Auditorium, Sanjay Nagar, Bangalore.

The speakers at the Kannada session (March 30) were: **Swami Brahmananda**, President, Chinmaya Mission, Bangalore, **Sri S. Shadakshari**, **Dr. A.S. Venugopal Rao**, and Veda Brahma **Sri Subraya Sharma**.

The speakers at the English session (March 31) were: **Sri V.S. Ramanan**, Ashram President, **Dr. Sarada**, **Swami Chidropananda Saraswati**, **Swami Virajananda** and **Sri A.R. Natarajan**.

Erratum

Jayanti Issue 2001

Contents Page

The sketch of Frank Humphreys printed on p.138 was drawn by an artist of earlier years and not Maniam Selven, as indicated.

The cultural festival was inaugurated by **Swami Ramanananda** of Sri Ramanasramam. The programme consisted of Ramananjali music and dance ballets entitled *Jagadeesa Ramana* and *Varthamana Ramana*.

Proposal for building of Meditation Hall at Lake Eiswoog, Germany

A rock situated on the shores of Lake Eiswoog with seven springs (near Frankfurt) has been considered a sacred spot by the local citizens for long. **Marion Von Gienanth**, a German devotee, proposes to build a Meditation Hall at this location. He has obtained official permission for doing so.

Renovation and Consecration of Arunachaleswara Temple

Arunachaleswara Temple, Tiruvannamalai spread over 25 acres is a huge structure. The last consecration was held in 1976. For the past few years elaborate renovation work has been made by the temple authorities with funds donated by willing donors for specific projects.

The ashram has renovated the *Patala Lingam* Shrine where Sri Bhagavan stayed for some time in 1896. The thousand-pillared *mantapam* (hall) spread over one acre has an association with Sri Bhagavan and the Ashram has been able to redo the roofing and floor of this structure with the aid of substantial funds received from **Arunachala Ashrama**, U.S.A., and the **Shantimalai Trust**. **Sri Anjaneyalu**, Ashram devotee and engineering contractor for the Ashram has borne the expenses for renovation of *Kili gopuram* (one of the towers).

All the nine *gopurams* (towers) and *vimanams* (hemispherical structure over the sanctum) have been renovated.

The *kumbhabhishekam* of the temple is to be performed on June 27.

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OBITUARY**S. Nilakanta Rao¹**
(1915-2001)

We regret to report the death of **Sri S. Nilakanta Rao**, an old devotee, at Hyderabad, on 28 November, 2001.

His marriage with Smt. Rukmini, daughter of Satyanarayana Rao (brother of Gridhalur Sambasiva Rao, the well known devotee and former Secretary of the Ashram) was the notable event of his life. Sri Bhagavan himself approved of the alliance.

Sri Nilakanta Rao became a devotee and regular visitor to the Ashram thereafter. He retired as Principal, Junior College, Tanguturu, Andhra Pradesh.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

R. Sivasubramanian
(1930 - 2002)

We regret to report the death of **Sri Rajanga Sivasubramanian** (popularly known as Mani or Mani Iyer) on the evening of April 1, at the Ashram. He had been a resident of the Ashram for the last fifteen years. He worked at the Ashram Store.

His father Dr.M.R. Krishnamurthy Iyer was an outstanding devotee. He was also the Ashram doctor for long years. He had the good fortune of serving Sri Bhagavan in the capacity of doctor. The reverential attitude he displayed while treating Bhagavan was quite remarkable.

Dr. Krishnamurthy Iyer was an efficient doctor but on certain occasions when he was overcome by a meditative mood he used to give Bhagavan's *Vibhuti* (sacred ash) to the patient instead of the relevant medicine. And the patients were invariably cured. Such was his faith in Sri Bhagavan!

Sri Mani was not a qualified doctor but had good knowledge of medicine all the same. This was useful to some inmates who went to him for advice.

A major portion of his life was spent in Tiruvannamalai itself. May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

Ramesh

We regret to report the death of **Sri Ramesh**, one of the Ashram cooks, in the early hours of December

7, 2001. He was fifty. Sri Ramesh had put in a service of 30 years at the Ashram. Genial by temperament and efficient in his work he was an asset to the Ashram.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

S. R. Joshi

We regret to report the death of **Sri S. R. Joshi** at Dharwad on 11 March. He was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan who has been regularly visiting the Ashram for sixty years and more. Sri Joshi used to conduct *satsang* regularly at his residence.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan.

Maddali Subba Rao
(1927 - 2002)

We regret to report that **Sri Maddali Subba Rao**, an ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan, passed away on 23 February at Hyderabad. He was the son-in-law of Satyanarayana Rao of Nellore, brother of Gridhalur Sambasiva Rao — well known devotee and former Secretary of the Ashram.

An ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan, Subba Rao was a frequent visitor to the Ashram over the years.

He is the translator of a number of Ashram publications into Telugu.

May his soul rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan!

Shantananda Swamigal

We regret to report that **Sri Shantananda Swamigal** of Sendamangalam Avadhuta Swami Adhishtanam, Pudukottai attained *samadhi* on 27 May at Skandasramam, Salem. He is the founder of Bhuvaneshwari temple as well as ashrams at Skandagiri and Tambaram.

Shantananda Swamigal had great reverence for Sri Bhagavan. He visited the Ashram and inaugurated the Ramana Auditorium on May 3, 1970.

¹ For an article by whom, see *The Mountain Path*, Jayanti 2001.

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

GURU PURNIMA (VYASA PUJA)	Wednesday	24.7.2002
KRISHNA JAYANTI (GOKULASHTAMI)	Friday	30.8.2002
106TH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA	Sunday	1.9.2002
VINAYAKA CHATURTHI	Tuesday	10.9.2002
NAVARATRI FESTIVAL COMMENCES ON	Monday	7.10.2002
SARASWATI PUJA	Monday	14.10.2002
DEEPAVALI	Monday	4.11.2002
KARTIGAI DEEPAM FESTIVAL COMMENCES ON	Monday	11.11.2002
KARTIGAI DEEPAM	Wednesday	20.11.2002
SRI BHAGAVAN'S 123RD JAYANTI	Saturday	21.12.2002
PONGAL	Wednesday	15.1.2003
CHINNA SWAMIGALARADHANA	Saturday	18.1.2003
MAHA SIVARATRI	Saturday	1.3.2003
SRI VIDYA HAVAN	Friday	21.3.2003
TELUGU NEW YEAR'S DAY	Wednesday	2.4.2003
TAMIL NEW YEAR'S DAY	Monday	14.4.2003

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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.

Date: 31.3.2002

Signature of the Publisher:
(SD) V.S. Ramanan

How can we be converted into anything? We can only be who we are. Understanding who we are is the Hindu and Vêdic path”.

His description of mystic experiences, particularly the ones that he had in Tiruvannâmalai are indeed fascinating. In this publication his thought is incisive, he speaks his mind and he hides no punches. For those seeking knowledge about spirituality this book is a must read. But if you are seeking the one who purports to know, well...read it anyway.

— G. Kâmêshwar

DIVINE POWER FROM CHUNCHUNAGIRI: by H.H. (Prof.) Anniah Gowda. 1995. Pub: Adi Chunchunagiri Mahasamsthana, 96, 7th Main, Jayalakshmi Puram, Mysore 570012 India. pp.126; Rs.200; US\$20.

This book is the spiritual biography of the Mathâdhipatih of Âdi Chunchunagiri, Srî Bâlagangâdharanâth Swâmiji, who took sannyâsa in 1967 and became the Mutt head in 1974. He took birth in an humble, pious family and by his own tapas outgrew the limitation and attained enlightenment. He is the 71st Pîthâdhipati and in tune with the modern times and having understood the need of the hour, has created awakening in the realms of education and health.

The various activities spiritual and material of the Mutt as directed by the Swâmiji are designed to promote the spiritual and educational aspects of the society and to mitigate the sufferings of humanity.

This book will quench the spiritual thirst of the devotees of the Mutt and help others to understand and appreciate the great contribution done by the Mutt under the spiritual leadership of H.H. Bâlagangâdharanâth Swâmiji. The book also reveals the ardent admiration and devotion of the author towards the Pîtham.

— N.S. Krishnan

ILLUSION vs REALITY (part I): compiled by Robert Wolff. 1999 Pub: Shri Sadguru Siddhameshwar Adhyatma Kendra, 45, Narayan Building, Dubash Lane, V.P. Road, Mumbai 400004 . p.220

This book is a master presentation of the dialogues of Srî Ranjit Mahârâj with his students between 1996 and 1999 held in various places. Srî Ranjit Mahârâj was a disciple of Srî Siddha Râmêshwar Mahârâj and the content of these dialogues are as taught by the Master who attained Nirvana in 1936.

The questions that are asked by the students are in reality the various doubts that a normal and sincere seeker has about the 'reality'. There are questions like 'where do the thoughts come from? Is the mind separate from the ego?', and so on, and these perplexing questions are answered in clear and simple language. Understanding as a path for self realization is what is focused on in this book. The talks are listed in chronological order.

The book can help to clear some of the fundamental doubts of sincere aspirants.

— N.S. Krishnan

ILLUSION versus REALITY (part II): Dialogues with Shri Ranjit Maharaj on Stateless State: compiled by Robert Wolff, Pub: (as above).

In the late 1970s I was sitting with Nisargadatta Mahârâj when an elderly man came in and began to talk to him. The discussions with the visitors, mostly foreigners, stopped while the two of them spoke in Marâthi for about ten minutes. After his visitor had left, Mahârâj explained who the visitor was.

'My Guru had declared three of his disciples as enlightened. The first was nominated to be his successor, but he disappeared off to Bangalore many years ago and no one ever heard from him again. The second was me. I was told by my Guru that I could teach for as long as I lived, but I couldn't appoint a successor because the Guru-lineage passed to this other man who disappeared. I was also given permission to give out the special mantra from our lineage to anyone who asked for it. This man who came this morning, Ranjit Mahârâj, was the third. Siddharâmêshwarar somehow recognised that he was not cut out to be a teacher, so he told him merely to go home and look after his family.'

That was my introduction to Ranjit Mahârâj. Because this conversation remained fresh in my mind, I was a little surprised that he decided to teach after Nisargadatta Mahârâj passed away in 1981. I had definitely received the impression that this was not what his Guru wanted him to do.

Ranjit Mahârâj never became a spiritual cult figure in the way that Nisargadatta did, but he did manage to attract a small following. In the last few years of his life he regularly visited the West at the invitation of his foreign devotees. A book of his answers to spiritual questions was brought out a few years ago, and this new book is its sequel.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to editing the spoken words of spiritual teachers.