

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

The Mountain Path

Vol. V

JANUARY 1968

No. 1

SRI RAMANASRAMAM, TIRUVANNAMALAI

"(Unmoving) Hill, melting into a Sea of Grace, have mercy (on me) I pray, Oh, Arunachala!"

—The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 17.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(A QUARTERLY)

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—The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1.

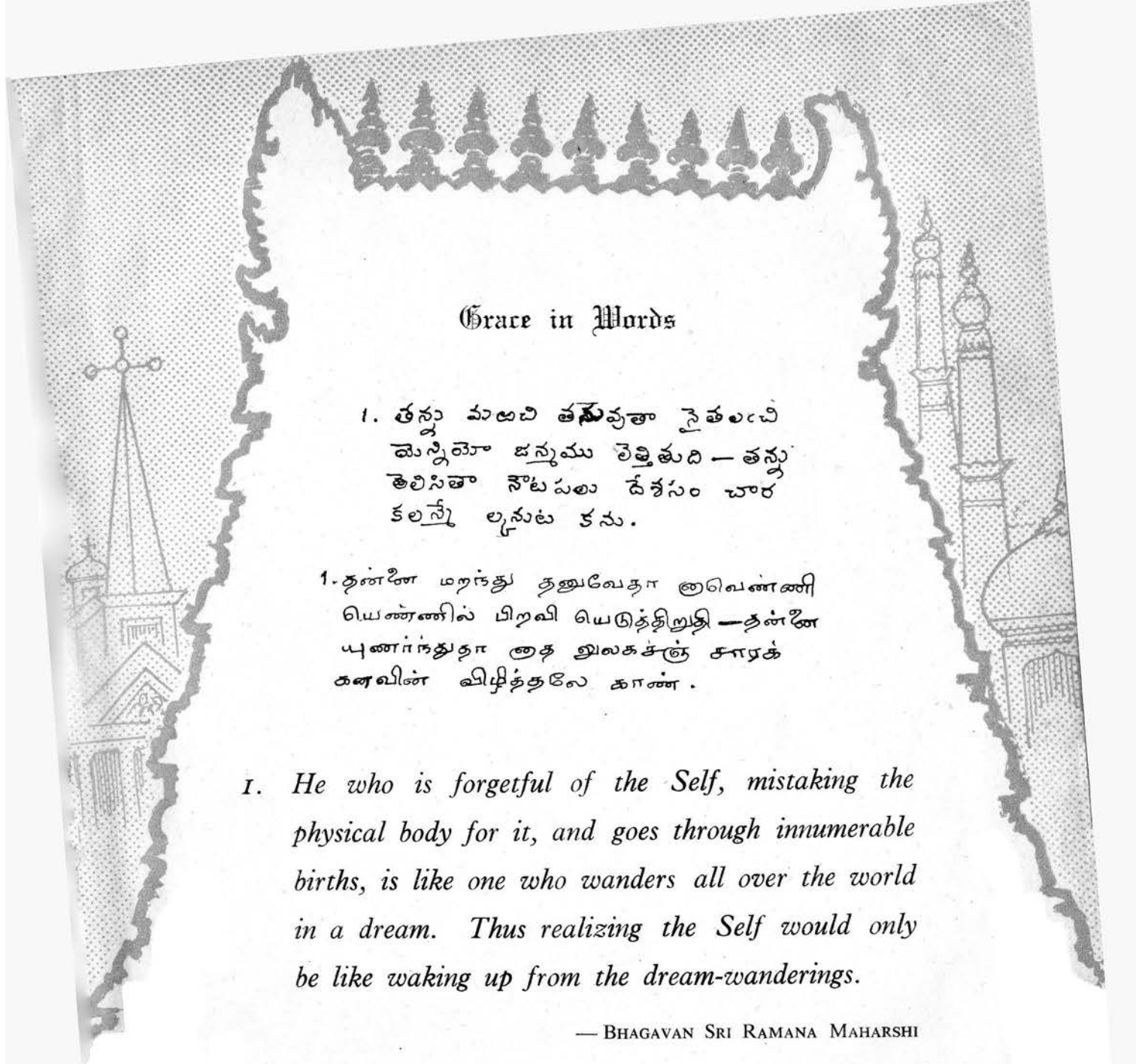
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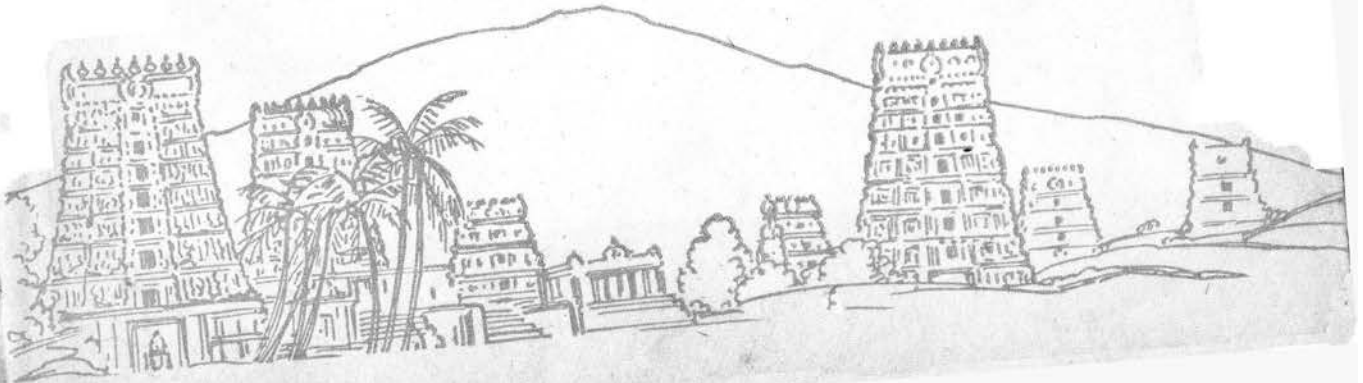
Grace in Words

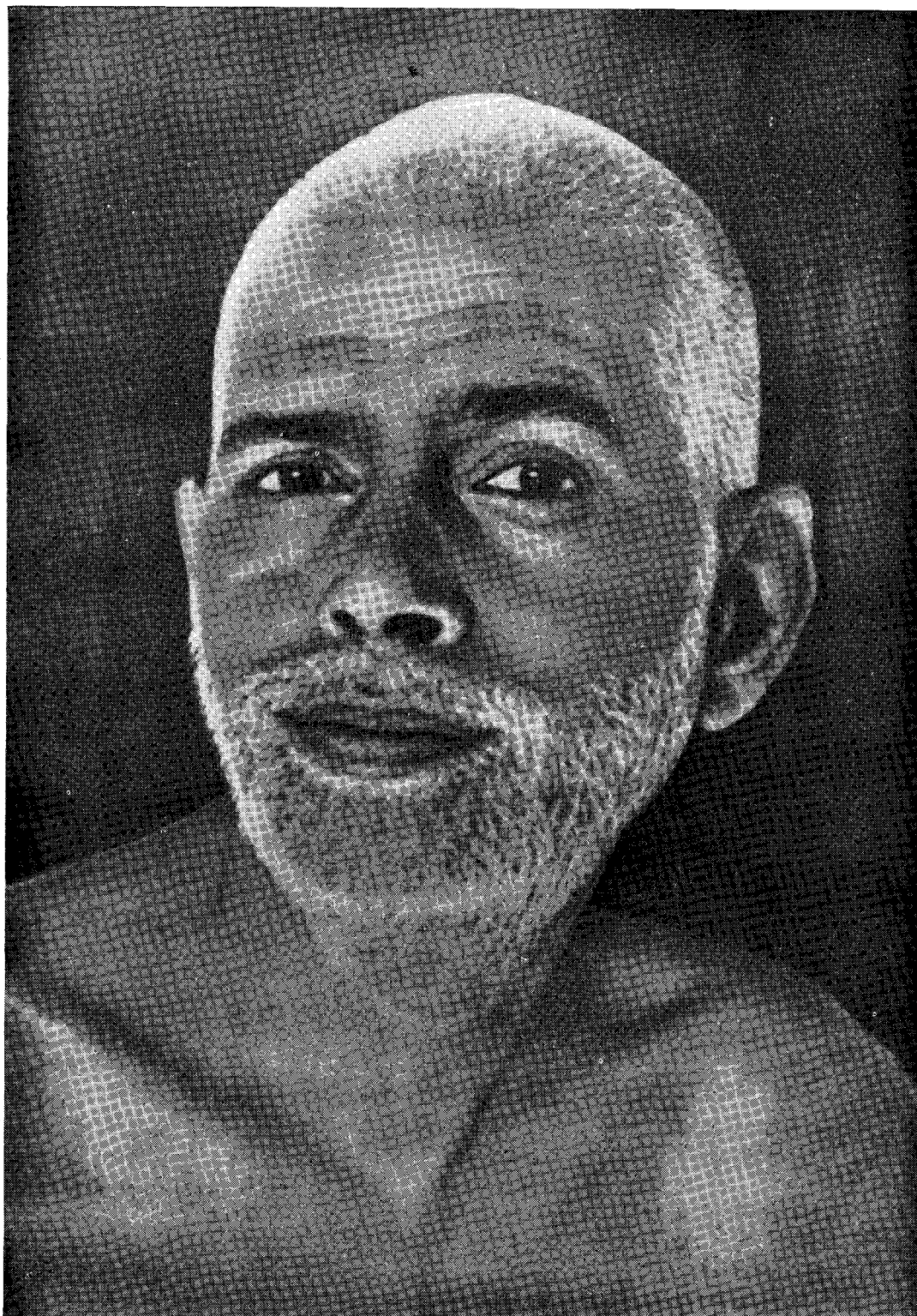
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తలసితా నౌటపలు దేశసం చార
కలన్మే ల్కనుట కను.

1. తన్నే మరచి తనువేద్య అవేంద్య
యెంద్యంబు బిగివి బిగియిది — తన్నే
యెంద్యంబు అది లులకకక చార
కలవిన విడిచిది కలన్.

1. *He who is forgetful of the Self, mistaking the physical body for it, and goes through innumerable births, is like one who wanders all over the world in a dream. Thus realizing the Self would only be like waking up from the dream-wanderings.*

— BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI







THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(QUARTERLY)

Editor : ARTHUR OSBORNE

Vol. V

JANUARY, 1968

No. I

SACRED POETRY

Editorial

SACRED Poetry ? Isn't all poetry sacred ? One is apt to say so, but that may not be much more than a cliché. A good deal of shoddy verse that is written nowadays is anything but sacred ; of course, it may also be anything but poetry.

Poetry came before prose in human literature. In many languages the oldest forms of literature were either religious lyrics such as the Vedic hymns or symbolical myths such as the Book of Genesis. (And it is worth noting that the classical Greeks regarded the Homeric poems as a religious document. They had not the profound teaching or lofty purpose of the Hindu epics, but they established norms, and there is no doubt that symbolism of the quest runs through the Odyssey.)

Normally the earliest poetry comes before the invention of writing. Students of pre-history are apt to presume that this was because early man lacked the ability to construct an alphabet, but this is rather

glib. It requires greatest ability to construct a poem than an alphabet. Before accepting such a hypothesis one should consider the mentality of early man and see whether he might not have had some reason for not wanting to set down his poems in writing. There is ample evidence that he had. It is authoritatively laid down that the Vedas should be chanted with correct intonation and only by those who have learned them from a duly authorised instructor. Similarly, Buddhist scriptures were for centuries transmitted only orally despite the existence of a script. And in Islam from the lifetime of the Prophet onwards there have always been Muslims who could recite the entire Quran by heart. The Druids never did write down their scriptures even though contact with the Romans must have familiarised them with the art of writing. Scriptures had to be chanted and to learn them from a book (which in any case could not impart the correct intonation) would be profanation. In fact, for ancient man to

introduce a script would open the door to a twofold profanation : to the superficial and unlicensed reading of the sacred texts and to the use of preserved (i.e. written) language for worldly purposes such as recording property and settling disputes ; it would mark the birth of prose. Such a stage had to come and it was a great step forward in material civilization, but spiritually it was a decline.

The ancient languages in which scriptures and sacred poems were composed — Sanskrit, Hebrew, Welsh, etc. — were actually regarded as sacred languages. This implies that not merely the sense but the sound was sacred. The texts not only expounded doctrine but did so with the help of sound vibrations having their own effect on those who recite or even hear them. That is why certain words and phrases could be prescribed as mantras. They have a subtle power going far beyond their literal meaning. Since the principle underlying this explains the effect of both music and poetry on people, it should not be hard to understand. And it must be remembered that traditionally poetry and music were not divorced. It was not a mere cliché when a poet spoke of 'singing'. In traditional communities even to-day sacred poetry is not spoken but chanted. Certainly a pious phrase which some one repeats only for the meaning of it is not a mantra. This shows the importance of regular liturgical prayers being said or chanted in a sacred language — Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, Pali, as the case may be. In fact, it is significant that Buddhism and Christianity, both of which began without a sacred language, both adopted one : Pali in Southern Buddhism and Sanskrit in Northern ; Latin in Western Christianity and Greek in Eastern. Parts of the Vedas were chanted before the Maharshi morning and evening in his lifetime and still are at his Ashram, and it was and is usual to sit in meditation during the chanting. When some over-zealous person asked him whether one should learn the meaning of them so as to follow the chanting he said no. Their purpose is only to quieten the mind and dispose one to meditation. To think about their meaning would

defeat the aim of remaining conscious in meditation without thinking.

The widespread modern objection to ritualistic prayers in a sacred language, and indeed to ritual in general, may be partly due to a true feeling that the time has now come when inner and more direct means are appropriate ; on the other hand, it may be due to the anti-spiritual tendency going right back to the Reformation to reduce everything to the mental level, seeing no more in prayer than a rational statement or request. There are vibrations that affect the being in a far more integral way. Before depriving oneself of them it is well to make sure that one is going beyond them and not sinking below them.

How far, then, should one's mind be fixed on a mantra that one uses ? How far is it valid if used without concentration ? Some gurus have declared that it confers no benefit unless one steadily keeps one's mind on it while using it ; others (for instance Swami Omkarnath, about whom there is an article in our issue of July 1965) that it has an effect even if uttered without concentration. They are guarding against opposite dangers. The former guards against inattentiveness and mental wandering, the latter against the idea of a mantra as a mere thought-form. It is best to resist both dangers by keeping the mind concentrated but thought-free while saying a mantra.

Sacred poetry does not so much express doctrine as indicate or imply it. Sometimes it does this through myths and symbols : for instance when it represents Divine Activity as the Son or Wife of Divine Being ; sometimes through cryptic utterances which merely point the way. For instance, it would be hard to find a more far-reaching statement than the Vedic "*Neti, Neti*", "not this, not that" ; but it needs to be understood.

There is no actual difference in nature between sacred and worldly poetry. What happens in both cases is that the poet's mind becomes pregnant with some intuitional

feeling or understanding and this churns him up in such a way that his language becomes rhythmical and he utters forth an indication, though never an exact account, of what had moved him. The difference is that with worldly poetry it is some merely human emotion, frustration or desire which has moved him to write. It is impossible to draw an absolute dividing line and examples would serve little purpose, because there are innumerable gradations from physical impulse to Divine certitude ; nevertheless the broad demarcation is clear. It is not a question of difference of subject, as for instance when one poet writes about the beauty of nature, another about the squalor of the city and a third about the woman he loves ; it is something more fundamental : a difference in level of perception. Spiritual understanding is not a subject among others but a higher and more universal mode of experience. Writing sacred poetry does not mean writing doctrine or philosophy in verse but recording the supernal wonder.

Not only in ancient times when the scriptures were composed but down to the spread of modernism in quite recent times poetry normally was spiritual in most of the world's great civilizations. The great Hindu epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, are quite explicitly works setting forth the dharma or spiritual pattern of life and interspersed with expositions of doctrine. The Bhagavad Gita is an episode in the latter of them. Although there was secular Sanskrit literature, most of the great works were spiritual. Not only in Sanskrit but in the vernacular languages of India also, the saints were expected to be poets and the poets saints. The great Shankara was a poet incidentally, so to speak. Tamil poetry is the work of saints. The great Mediaeval Mahratta saints, Jnanadev, Tukaram and others, were great poets also. The greatest Hindi poetical work is the Ramayana of Tulsidas (for whom see an article in our issue of January 1965). Both the Bhaktas and Tantrics of Bengal were lyric

poets. It is only in modern times that the tradition has been abandoned.

It was the same thing in the various schools of Buddhism. The early Arahats of Theravada Ceylon have left poems recording the lofty grandeur of their state. The Tibetan Tantric Milarepa is outstanding alike as a saint and a poet. In Islam the great poets were Sufi saints, outstanding among them Jalaluddin Rumi in Persian and Ibn Arabi in Arabic. Even Omar Khayyam, who has become so famous in English owing to a felicitous paraphrase, and has been considered a hedonist, is in reality a mystic using Sufi symbolism : the tavern is the mystic fraternity, the wine divine ecstasy, the tavern-keeper the guru, and so forth. The point is that it was considered normal for poets to be saints and saints poets. It is the West that has had the sad distinction of breaking this divine union. From the beginning Christian saints have expounded their doctrine and recorded their experiences in prose. And the poets, with the mundane Latin example to draw upon, have had only this world to write about. Dante in Italy and Shakespeare in England were steeped in Hermetic symbolism and wrote with understanding, but how few others ! Other poets have had an occasional intuition but the great body of Western poetry has remained, so to speak, on the ground floor level of merely human experience. Surely this is a tradition worth breaking !

A concluding remark may be in order about an unfortunate after-effect of the great Hindu tradition of poet-saints. That is that it seems to have become normal for Hindu swamis to write what they consider to be English poetry. It is distressing to have to read it, because that is just what it is not. To question a writer's eminence as a swami might be presumptuous, but not as an English poet. Not one of them has been accepted by English literary critics as an English poet or deserves to be. This tradition also should be broken.

THE PRINCIPLE OF JAPA

By

Prof. EKNATH EASWARAN

"THE mantra becomes one's staff of life", declares Mahatma Gandhi, "and carries one through every ordeal. It is repeated not for the sake of repetition but for the sake of purification, as an aid to effort, for direct guidance from above. It is no empty repetition. For each repetition has a new meaning, carrying you nearer and nearer to God".

What exactly is a mantra? In order to answer this question it is necessary to refer briefly to the theory of vibrations on which, say the illustrious sages, it is based. According to this theory, from the Great Silence there issued one Creative Word. "In the beginning was Brahman, with whom was the Word; and the Word was truly the supreme Brahman." This significant verse from the Rig-Veda has an almost exact parallel in the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

According to this theory, *shabda* or sound is the subtle stuff out of which the phenomenal world has emanated, and every object may, therefore, be looked upon as sound of a particular concentration. In other words, this world of nama (name) and rupa (form) is *shabda* (sound) manifesting itself at varying levels of vibration.

Language is only a very small part of *shabda* and consists of words in which the relationship between nama (name) and rupa (form) may be called arbitrary or accidental. For example, there is no intrinsic or inherent connection between the sound "table" and the object table. As contrasted with the words of language, Om or Aum is a "natural name" in which there is an intrinsic and inherent connection between the nama (name) and rupa (form), between the sound and the substance, between the Word and the Rea-



lity it represents. To quote Swami Vivekananda: "The first letter A, is the root sound, the key pronounced without touching any part of the tongue or palate; M represents the last sound in the series, being produced by the closed lips, and U rolls

from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. Thus, Om (or Aum) represents the whole phenomenon of sound-producing."

Listen to the Katha Upanishad: "Of that goal which all the Vedas declare, which is implicit in all tapas (austerities), and in pursuit of which men lead lives of continence and service, of that will I briefly speak.

"It is Om.

"This syllable is Brahman. This syllable is indeed supreme. He who knows it obtains his desire.

"It is the strongest support. It is the highest symbol. He who knows it is revered as a knower of Brahman."

Rama¹ is another perfect "natural name" that has come down to us through the ages. On the verbal level the word Rama means he who can fill us with abiding joy; and on the *shabda* or spiritual level too it means the same. When we try to describe God as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, Absolute Joy) Rama may be called a perfect "natural name" for the third aspect of Absolute Joy. In other words, Rama is a spiritual formula for abiding joy bequeathed to humanity by the illumined sages of ancient India.

The constant repetition of the Holy Name, whether Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Jesus Christ, Allah or the impersonal Om, has the power of calming the mind, nay, even of stilling it.

The repetition of the Holy Name or mantra is called *japa* in Sanskrit, and can bring us lasting benefits on the physical, mental and spiritual levels. "It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hours," Mahatma Gandhi tells the world. "Ramnam is no copy-book maxim. It is something that has to be realized through experience. One who has had personal experience alone can prescribe it, not any other. The recitation of Ramnam for spiritual ailments is as old as the hills. But the greater includes the less. And my claim is that the recitation of Ramnam is a sovereign remedy for our physical ailments also!"

Here is the power of the Word (*japa*) as proclaimed by a memorable mystical document of mediaeval England, *The Cloud of Unknowing*: "The word shall be thy shield and thy spear, whether thou ridest on peace or war. With this word thou shalt beat on this cloud and this darkness above thee. With this word thou shalt smite down all manner of thought under the cloud of forgetting. Insomuch that, if any thought press upon thee to ask what thou wouldst have, answer with no more than with this one word. And if he offer of his great learning to expound to thee that word, say to him that thou wilt it all whole, and not broken nor undone. And if thou wilt hold fast to this purpose, be sure that that thought will no while bide."

Let us now turn to an illuminating exposition in the annals of Islam on the power of the Word to evoke Reality. "The shaykh took my hand and led me into the convent. I sat down in the portico, and the shaykh picked up a book and began to read. As is the way of scholars, I could not help wondering what the book was.

"The shaykh perceived my thoughts. 'Abu Sa'id', he said, 'all the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people say *Allah* and devote themselves to Him. Those who heard this word by the ear alone let it go out by the other ear; but those who heard it with their souls imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated their hearts and souls, and their whole beings became this word. They were made independent of the pronunciation of the word; they were released from the sound of the letters. Having understood the spiritual meaning of this word, they became so absorbed in it that they were no more conscious of their own non-existence.'"

In the Hindu tradition, a spiritual aspirant receives a mantra from his guru for constant repetition or *japa*. The mantra consists of one or more words or Holy Names skillfully selected by the teacher to answer the needs

¹ In speech and *japa* the final 'a' in the name 'Rama' is usually omitted — (Editor).

of the aspirant, and carries with it the imprint of the teacher's personal experience or realization of the mantra.

In the Catholic tradition "Hail Mary" is a very powerful Mantra that is pregnant with what Sri Ramakrishna would call the infinite Love of the Divine Mother for her wayward children. As long as the child is playing with its toys in the living room, the mother keeps busy in the kitchen cooking curry and rice for the meal. But the moment the child gets tired of the toys, throws them away and gives one full-hearted, full-throated yell, the mother leaves her curry and rice on the stove, rushes into the living room, picks up the child tenderly and comforts it. Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna would add, when you and I stop playing with our adult toys of pleasure and profit, power and prestige, and call from our heart of hearts for the Divine Mother, She will reveal herself to us immediately in the depths of our own consciousness.

"Om Mani Padme Hum" is the widely known Tibetan Buddhist mantra which, assiduously repeated, can enable us to find the Jewel that lies hidden in the lotus of our heart.

The mantra I have received from my grandmother, with the imprint of her own intense spiritual awareness, is one of the most powerful and one of the most popular in all India. It consists of three Holy Names: Hari (Hare is the vocative form pronounced Haray), Rama and Krishna. Hari comes from the Sanskrit verb *har* meaning to steal. The Lord stole my heart and kept it with Him when He sent me into the world. All that I am doing all the time on earth is searching for my heart in money and material possessions, in pleasure and power. It is a great day for me when I discover through a process of trial and error that the Divine Thief is hiding in my own heart all the time.

Rama, we have already seen, is the Lord who can fill us with abiding joy. Krishna, from the Sanskrit root *karsh* to draw, is the Lord of Love enshrined in our heart, who

is drawing us to himself all the time. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna tells Arjuna, "I am the gambling of the fraudulent," meaning thereby that even the gambler, who is going to Las Vegas or Monte Carlo to break the bank, is really hoping to break into the Kingdom of Heaven within to find abiding joy and complete fulfilment. In other words, we are all looking for the Divine Thief who has stolen our heart because we are all searching for abiding joy and complete fulfilment.

When I was a child, sleeping on the verandah of our ancestral home in Kerala in South India, I used to wake up every morning to the chanting of *Hare Rama* by my grandmother as she swept the courtyard with her coconut-fibre broom. Through her benediction, it must have sunk deep into my heart then from where it rose to my rescue many years later under the storm and stress of life.

How can one make the mantra an integral part of one's consciousness? On the strength of my own very small spiritual experience I would put forward the following suggestions:

1. It is very helpful for everyone to receive a mantra which carries the imprint of the giver's personal experience of its power.

2. The mantra may be repeated in the mind as long and as often as we can — while walking, while riding in a car or on a plane, while doing mechanical chores, etc. We can thus learn to make good use of these odds and ends of time which are often wasted in idle talk or escapist reading to practise japa.

3. When we are getting angry, afraid or otherwise agitated, let us go for a brisk walk, repeating the mantra in the mind. Gradually the rhythm of our step, the rhythm of our breath and the rhythm of the mantra will blend into a healing harmony to transform the negative emotion of anger into compassion, fear into fearlessness, frustration into fulfilment. The mantra acts as a tremendous transformer.

4. At bedtime, after lying down, let us close our eyes and keep repeating the

mantra until we fall asleep. This may be difficult at first, but we are likely to be pleasantly surprised at the ease with which even the reader-in-bed learns to do it.

As in secular disciplines, practice makes perfect in japa too. But, unlike secular disciplines, as the mantra sinks into the deeper levels of consciousness, a wave of bliss begins to rise up from the Sea of Bliss that is the Atma. After years of patient practice we come to hear the mantra in our dreams, in our sleep, in the song of the nightingale or the murmur of the brook that babbles by. No longer do we have to perform japa consciously because the mantra has become an integral part of our consciousness. It is now *ajapajapa* (japa without japa) in which the mantra goes on repeating itself. In the mystical language of ancient India, the mantra has opened its doors and taken in the devotee. As Sri Ramakrishna puts it,

with prosaic poetry, such a devotee is like an employee who receives his pension from the employer after years of faithful service. He can live on his pension without having to work any more for his livelihood.

One in whom the mantra has become an integral part of consciousness may be thus described in the powerful words of Meister Eckhart: "Whoever has God in mind, simply and solely God, in all things, such a man carries God with him into all his works and into all places, and God alone does all his works. He seeks nothing but God, nothing seems good to him but God. He becomes one with God in every thought. Just as no multiplicity can dissipate God, so nothing can dissipate this man or make him multiple."

May the mantra enable us to attain the higher state of consciousness in which nothing can dissipate or make us multiple!

Highlights of July

The Place of the Maharshi in History by Arthur Osborne

Zen and Vichara by Gerald Yorke

Thayumanavar, a Tamil Poet-Saint, by T. Krishnaji

Christ and Christianity as seen by a Hindu Swami
by Swami Nirmalananda

Problems of Right and Wrong by 'Sein'

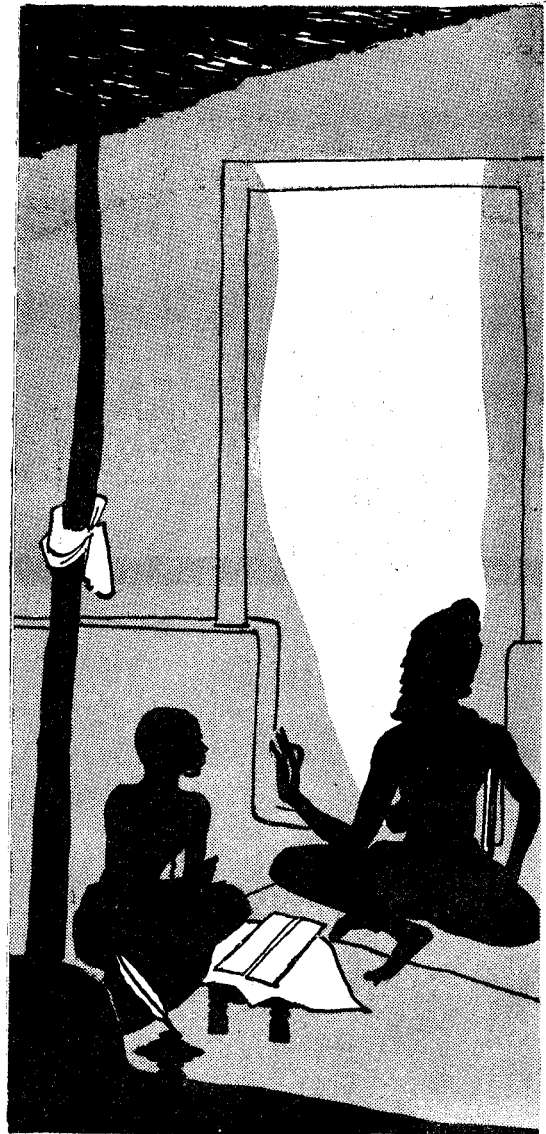
SRUTI AND SMRITI

By
Prof. G. V. KULKARNI

DHARMA is the fundamental basis of life. All other things vanish, they are perishable ; but dharma is not ; it is eternal, in fact timeless. Hence it gives a purpose to life. It protects those who protect it (*dharmo rakshati rakshitah*). It is a boat that carries us across the ocean of life. It is the root-cause of worldly wealth (*preyas* or *abhyuday*) as also of spiritual wealth (*sreyas* or *nisreyas*). It maintains the whole universe in order and sustains it ; that is why it is called 'dharma', derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhri', which means to support. It is the highest means to the ultimate end of life. But the nature of dharma is subtle and deep. It is beyond the ken of the senses, the mind and the intellect. It is thus suprasensual and supramental.

Dharma is twofold : (1) That which deals with the duties, behaviour or conduct of beings. This is called '*pravritti-lakshana*' as it deals with actions (karma). (2) That which is concerned with wisdom that leads to Liberation. This is called '*nivritti-lakshana*' as there is no emphasis on action but on an attitude of resignation. The former conduces to material prosperity, the latter to spiritual well-being. As dharma comprehends both these, it has both these aspects, that is 'karma' and 'jnana' which are complementary to one another when understood in their proper spirit.

According to Hinduism, which is the Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal support, universal and catholic in outlook, there are two main sources of Dharma, the Sruti and the Smriti, other supplementary sources being the conduct of the wise who are conversant with the Vedic teaching and one's own conscience. Sruti and Smriti are the highest authority on dharma. Of these Sruti stands first. Sruti means divine wisdom. Literally,



or rather etymologically, it means 'that which is heard from the voice of God'; derived from the Sanskrit root 'sru'. To the ancient Rishis, who were kavis (more than poets — omniscient seers) the hymns

of the Vedas — another name for Sruti — came as direct revelations from the Supreme Being (*kavayah satyasrutayah*). They are also called 'Sruti' because this wisdom was transmitted to the disciples orally by the guru and thus 'heard' by them. Sruti in its limited sense means the four Vedas: Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, along with their Brahmanas, i.e., explanatory ritualistic treatises in prose or verse. In its wider sense Sruti includes, besides these, the Aranyakas (i.e., forest-treatises dealing with philosophical discussions) and Upanishads popularly known as Vedanta. The four Vedas contain prayers to various gods such as Agni, Indra, Maruts, Varuna, Ushas and Yama. They are full of devotional feeling and most of them are exquisite poetry. Behind their outer form there is deep esoteric knowledge and symbolism and they show diverse paths to union with 'that One' underlying the many gods.

The Vedic hymns have the following features:—

(1) The nature of the Vedic gods shows a tendency towards monotheism and non-duality. From the multiple personalities of these gods we arrive in the Samhita literature at a common fundamental principle known as 'Tat' or 'Sat': The gods are many and yet One in principle. Their common characteristics, common descriptions and the references to formless Godhead point to this Oneness.

(2) There are frequent references to the struggle between Sat and Asat, Amrita and Mrityu, Rita and Anrita, light and darkness, gods and demons etc. This shows discrimination between the true path and the false.

(3) The Vedic Aryans who wished to stand by Sat and destroy Asat resorted to the performance of sacrifice, both in its gross and subtle aspects. They appreciated that the whole creation was due to sacrifice. The gods and the Rishis are born from sacrifice. Sacrifice is a pilgrimage that leads men to their destination, that is first worldly prosperity and then the realisation of Truth. Sacrifice is the means of imbibing this Truth. It brings out the essential unity

between men, gods and God. Men and gods co-operate and this enables the universe to run smoothly. The sacrifices for which the Vedic hymns are employed strengthen the truth in man; they further reveal its radiant beauty, joy and strength and by their lustre destroy untruth or evil. Sacrifice is thus identified with truth or law and is called 'Rita' in the Vedas.

(4) An examination of the important philosophical hymns such as Asyavamiya, Nasadiya and Purusha reveal that the world, though having a contingent reality, has no self-subsistent reality. Sat or Tat is the only ultimate reality, and is beyond the range of sense-organs, mind and intellect.

In the words of an eminent Philosopher: "A study of the hymns of the Rigveda (and other Vedas too) is indispensable for any adequate account of Indian thought. They are the source of later practices and philosophies of Indo-Aryans, and a study of them is necessary for a proper understanding of subsequent thought."¹ The Vedas themselves proclaim that they contain secret words '*ninya vachamsi*' and in them² resides the highest Divinity; one who understands this in truth, understands the mystery of the Vedas. The Taittiriya³ Brahmana also states that one who does not know the Veda, i.e., the spirit of the Veda, does not understand Brahman. In the Shatapatha⁴ Brahmana it is said that the hymns in the Rigveda are honey, those in the Samaveda are ghee and those in the Yajurveda are ambrosia. Hence they should be studied with devotion. That the Vedas are an authority in religious and spiritual matters is vouchsafed not only by the Vedas themselves (in the wider sense of the term) but also by the later smriti⁵ literature, Puranas, Histories and the six systems of Philosophy including the Samkhya, Yoga and Vedanta. The great Shankara often quotes Sruti in support of

¹ Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. I, p. 66.

² *Rig Veda* I, 164

³ *Ibid.*, III, 12, 9, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, 5, 7, 5.

⁵ *Manusmriti*, II, 13; IV, 147.

his statements⁶ and says reverently that the Vedas are an independent valid authority in their own sphere as the sun is in the matter of perception of colours; other means of knowledge such as perception (pratyaksha) are of no avail in this field. The great Acharyas like Ramanuja and the great saints like Jnaneshwara universally proclaim the greatness of Sruti. "There is no Mother like Sruti for the world", says the latter.

The Vedic hymns are the most ancient literature of mankind. But they are primitive in the sense in which some Western scholars have made out. Their deep and mystic contents show this. They are full of rich symbolism. The deities or gods in them are of symbolic nature. For example, Aditi who is known as the Mother of the gods and who is described as Universal and identified with gods is the Adi-Shakti (Prakriti) presiding over the universe, the power of the supreme Being. The sun-god is the symbol of our self revealed through everything and the support of everything.

In the Brahmanas, which form a link between the Vedic hymns and the Upanishads, with the development of sacrifice, philosophical ideas began to be formulated instead of symbolically expressed. Life here on earth was regarded as secondary, while the immortal Divine Life was supremely valued. Sacrifice with all its symbolism was an embodiment of Truth or Immortality. There is a philosophy of sacrifice. The principal tenets of the Upanishads, which came later, have their beginning in the Brahmanas. For example, the discussion of Vidya (knowledge) and Avidya (ignorance) occurs here in Shandilya Vidya.⁷

The Upanishads form the essence of the Vedas as also their concluding portion and are hence called 'Vedanta'. They are called works on knowledge (Jnana-kanda), while the Vedic hymns and Brahmanas are called works on ritual (karma-kanda), though this division is not absolute. They are not so exclusively set apart as this would indicate. The Vedas contain philosophical

matters dealing with knowledge and the Upanishads deal with action and Upasanas of various kinds. For example, Mundaka and Ishavasya glorify action done in a selfless spirit, with understanding. In the Upanishads poetry and philosophy go hand in hand. They impart and explain in various dialogues and stories the quintessence of the wisdom of the Rishis, indicated by 'OM'. The four great sentences (Mahavakyas) in these Upanishads are :—

(I) 'Consciousness is Brahman' (Prajnanam Brahma), (II) 'I am Brahman' (aham Brahmasmi), (III) 'That thou art' (Tat tvam asi) and (IV) 'This self is Brahman' (ayam atma Brahma).

The Upanishads are the fountain-head of all Hindu philosophies and scriptures, such as the Bhagavad Gita and Bhagavata and the later mystic poetry of mediaeval times.

Smriti are scriptures next in value and authority to Sruti. They are recorded recollections (smriti from 'smri' to remember) of those great Sages who had deeply studied the Vedas and mastered their precepts, their injunctions as well as their prohibitions. While the Sruti is divine revelation, Smriti are man-made, products of mature minds. What is left implicit in the Sruti is made explicit by the Smritis; while only a few can understand the real import of the Sruti the masses can understand and follow the Smriti. The former are meant for the few, the latter for all. The vision of life that is given by the Sruti is applied to all walks of human life by the Smriti. While the Sruti is true for all time, the Smriti are both eternally and relatively true, suited to the times in which they were written, and are not sacrosanct. They pervade the whole expanse of a man's life from his embryonic state to death and even after that. They deal with :—

- (1) Customs, conventions, rites (achara) to be followed by an individual;

⁶ *Brahma Sutra Sankara Bhashya*, II, 1, 1.
Bhagavad Gita, XV, 15; XVI, 1; XVII, 15.

⁷ *Shatapatha Brahmana*, X, 6, 3.

- (2) Relationship of individual and society (vyavahara), i.e., dealing with other persons.
- (3) Expiations (prayaschittas).

They mention the duties and rights of all the four castes — Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra — of persons in the four stages (ashramas) of life — Brahmacharya (celibate student stage), Garhastya (house-holder stage), Vanaprasthya (retired forest dweller stage) and Sannyasa (renunciation) — of woman and her status in society, of the king and his administration. They throw light on legal matters; they discuss libations to be offered to the ancestors, the three debts — to the Gods, the fathers and the Rishis — dharma and its place in life and the supreme value of self-knowledge, the ultimate end of human life. In short, they are the science of dharma (Dharmashastra). The dharma expounded in this shastra comprehends all the aspirations of man, leading up to the highest, that is the everlasting Beatitude for the realization of which all other aspirations and pursuits are adjusted and synthesized. This is true in the case of Smriti like those of Manu and Yajnavalkya. The works of the six systems of philosophy are also known as smriti, e.g., Samkhya smriti, Yoga smriti, etc. They are more or less specialised in their subject matter which is a particular 'darsana' or 'view point'.

Smriti usually follow Sruti. When, however, there is a divergence⁸ between a Sruti text and a smriti text, the Sruti text should be followed. When there is a conflict between one Smriti-text and another, that which follows the Sruti should be accepted. If there are Smriti-texts which are not to be traced to the Sruti, they should be accepted by inference that the Sruti text might be lost. Again if there is divergence between two Sruti texts, they should be treated as optional.⁹

Although traditional, the doctrine of Sruti and Smriti cannot be held to be universally applicable, for the reason that, a Jivamukta being in a state of conscious identity with the source of the Sruti, his utterances must be held to be on a par with them. That means that a scripture such as the *Yoga Vasishtha*, in which it is declared that the verses are mantras and the doctrine is the voice of one's Self, or the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the word of Sri Krishna himself, or the few brief writings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi must be accorded the authority of Sruti. Indeed it is noteworthy that the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras* of Veda Vyasa although not formally classed as Sruti, form together with the *Upanishads*, the *Prasthanas Traya*, or 'three-fold scripture' of Hinduism.

⁸ *Jabala Smriti*.

⁹ *Manusmriti*, II, 14.

(This) misery is due to the body; the body is the product of Karma. Karma proceeds due to the thought 'I am the body' (ego). The ego is beginningless and is caused by nescience.

— *Adhyatma Ramayana*.

Moksha or liberation from bondage is not situated in the sky, or on the earth, or in the nether world. When by the annihilation of all desires, the mind itself is annihilated, that state is called Moksha.

— *Mahabharata*, (*Santi Parva*).

THE VEDIC HYMNS

By
ABINASH CHANDRA BOSE

Prof. Abinash Chandra Bose was Professor of English in Rajaram College, Kolhapur, under the old Bombay University (1920-1945) and after that Principal and Professor of English under Calcutta and Saugar Universities for eleven years. When, half-way through his career as teacher of English, he was working on his thesis "Mysticism in Poetry", ancient and modern, in Trinity College, Dublin, the Vedas in which he had almost life-long interest attracted him more than ever in the perspective of world literature. Since then he has been making fresh translations of Vedic hymns, being guided by oriental scholarship and also to an extent by the Indian spiritual tradition, and aiming at strict fidelity to the original, as poetry and as prayer. His books include *Three Mystic Poets, a Study of W. B. Yeats, A. E. and Rabindranath Tagore*; *The Call of the Vedas* and the recently published *Hymns from the vedas*. Stanzas quoted in this article are from the last book.

THERE are four Vedas (or Samhitas, Collections of Vedic hymns). They are the Rigveda (consisting of 1,028 hymns divided into ten sections, with a total of 10,552 stanzas), the Samaveda (derived mostly from the Rigveda for musical rendering, having 1,875 stanzas), the Yajurveda (the Vajasaneya Samhita Madhyamdina text having 1,975 stanzas and prose units, divided into forty chapters of which all except the last are intended for recitation in ritualistic worship) and the Atharvaveda (having 730 hymns in 5,987 stanzas and prose units divided into twenty sections, with no connection with ritual, and hence sometimes called Brahma Veda, the Veda of Prayer, though certain prayers, described by some as spells, are associated with a minor form of ritual).

The Vedic poets have called themselves by different names which include seer (*rishi*), sage-poet (*kavi*), inspired sage (*vipra*), one in whom the higher intellect (*dhi*) is active (*dhira*), maker (*kari*, *karu*, 'poet' in the original Greek sense), the wise one (*vedhas*), one who is brilliant in mental power (*manishin*), etc. There are women rishis, of whom two (Vak, the daughter of Rishi Abhrina, and Ghosha) are eminent.

A poem has been called in the Veda a song (*gir*), a praise-song (*stoma*, *uktha*), a prayer (*brahman*) prayerful thought

(*manman*), work of *dhi* (*dhiti*, *dhi*), etc. Verse for recitation is *rik*, for singing *Saman* and for ritualistic worship *yajus*. A complete poem, generally a hymn, is called a *sukta* (literally, well-spoken). The terms *vak* (holy 'speech') and *chandas* (metrical language) are used for the Vedic texts as a whole.

The Vedic language is accentual (unlike the later classical Sanskrit) and consists mostly of single words, compound words having rarely more than two members. The short words with their stress and pitch acquire the natural flow and vigour of the spoken language. The Vedic poet has put them into well defined metrical patterns, with full scope for the free and spontaneous expression of his inspiration. A poet has himself described the hymns sung by him and other rishis :

Like birds splashing in water, that
keep watch,
Like the loud voice of the thundering
clouds,
Like joyous streams bursting from the
mountain
Our hymns have sounded to the Deity.
(RV. X. 68, also AV.)

The freshness, solemnity and power that mark the Vedic hymns are found to belong as much to the sound-image as to the sense-

image that it embodies. Some have thought that the Rishi's vision had both the sound and the sense as its components. In the best of Vedic hymns the sound has appeared so perfectly adequate as a means of conveying the sense that some have gone to the extent of saying that the sound of a hymn is a prayer in itself, without reference to the meaning. This is the theory of Sabda-brahman or Nada-brahman, Prayer as words or sounds, without the support of meaning. This theory has been opposed by some scholars but its general acceptance preserved the Vedic form of prayer through the centuries, even when the language was only partially understood.

This theory has to a great extent contributed to the oral transmission of the Vedic texts for the last three thousand years and more, carried on by people many of whom, particularly in later times, knew only the words with the correct accents without any appreciable knowledge of the meaning.

It is interesting to find that the Rishis themselves anticipated that their hymns would go down to far-off ages. For example, in a dialogue a Rishi is told by those with whom he is speaking :

Do not forget, O poet, this speech
of thine
That will resound in after-ages.
(RV. III. 33.)

In another hymn the poet says that he will speak with all his deftness about Devas "so that in after-ages one sees them as these hymns are sung". (RV. X. 72).

We find from the Vedas that the Rishis were held in great regard. The Rigveda calls them 'truth-speakers' (*satyavachah*, RV. III. 54). Elsewhere in the same Veda we are told of people who "by admiring the eternal law (*Rita*) and thinking straight came to hold the rank of sages" (*viprah*, RV. X. 67, AV). The Atharva Veda honours them by saying: "Awe-inspiring are the Rishis. To them our homage, to their eye and the truth of their spirit" (II. 5). The Veda says about the Seven Rishis that they were "united in their praise-songs, united in holy chants and united in lustre" (RV.



IX. 130, YV). The absence of basic differences among these leading Rishis in spite of their originality characterises the work of the other Rishis too.

The Vedic Rishis, said to have seen time in its three stages, do show a sense of time in its wide perspective. A simple illustration can be given from a hymn to Ushas (Dawn): "Gone are those mortals who saw the beaming Ushas in former ages, we are now looking at her, and those are coming who will see her in other ages" (RV. I. 113). Similarly they see the world and human society

in a comprehensive way, characteristic of their outlook. It is said in the Veda that "the Deity (Varuna) is of our own land (*samdesya*) and of foreign lands (*videsya*)" (AV. IV. 16); that the Deity (Indra) "is for ever the common Lord of all (RV. IV. 32, VIII. 65)". There are prayers in the Veda for the atonement of sins "committed against a stranger" as well as near and dear ones (RV. V. 35), and of "sins committed against man (*manushya*) committed knowingly or unawares" (YV. 8. 13). In the Hymn to the Earth the poet recognises the many peoples "who speak various tongues . . . and have various religious rites according to their places of abode (AV. XII. 1). The Vedic Rishis have been called "world-builders" (*bhutamkritah*, AV. VI. 133, XII. 1). They addressed themselves to mankind, and gave the holy words (*vak*) "to their own people and to the foreigner" (YV. 26. 2), and provided a universal basis for the higher life of the spirit.

About the sacred speech (*vak*), including the hymns, it is said in the Veda that it was "the first and foremost of speech uttered by the sages, giving (the unnamed) a name" and that "it was their best and was stainless", and through this they, "with love (*preman*) revealed the Divine Secret within their souls (*guhanihitam*, hidden in the cave, a symbolic expression)".

It is added that "when the poets formed the speech with their spirit, they strained it as people strain flour with a sieve (removing unworthy matter derived from the lower levels of the poets' experience of life)" (RV. X. 71). The elimination of what was merely personal from the poetry of the Vedic seers, which derives its intensity from their spiritual passion, has produced a type of lyric poetry that is remarkable for its purity, freshness and vigour. The analogy of the rushing mountain-stream seems very apt for it.

A Vedic poet says elsewhere: "Not by our human nature (*purushatva*) do we know the Deity" (RV. V. 48). In another hymn it is said that the Deity "reveals the hymn in the heart" (RV. I. 105). There has been

the traditional belief that the Veda is "not man-made" (*apaurusheya*). To this belief must be chiefly attributed the preservation of the Vedas by unbroken oral tradition.

It is natural that what the poet gave through love should, as the Veda says in the hymn on Vak, contain the spirit of love ("The holy beauty of friendship lies hidden in Vak") and binds people in friendship (RV. X. 71).

AJA and JATA, the Unmanifest and the Manifested Divine.

The Vedic sages have two different approaches to the Divine, one leading to the Absolute (*aksharam*), unmanifested (*aja*, literally 'unborn') and single (*ekam*; in later Vedic and post-Vedic literature, *advaitam*, non-dual); and the other to the Absolute, manifested (*jata*, literally, 'born') in the glory of creation as Deva, Being of Light.

The unmanifested Absolute is pure Being, formless, attributeless, nameless and sexless, and is generally referred to in cryptic words in the neuter singular, like the pronoun That (*tat*), the numeral One (*ekam*) and the symbolic word Brahma for the Absolute. The indeclinable Om, also called *Pranava* ("the symbol of sastra i.e., of Veda, as the Yajurveda calls it; 19.25) means the Ultimate Reality. Sometimes *sat* (Reality) is added to *tat* and *ekam*. For example:

That (*tat*) was Supreme in the universe
(RV. X. 120)

Who is the One (*ekam*) in the form of
the Unborn (*aja*) that has supported the
six spheres of the world? (RV. I. 164)

Vena (the sage) saw That Reality (*tat sat*)
in which all come to have one
home (YV. 32. 8).

Om, the eternal Brahma (YV. 40. 17.)

The adjective *aksharam* (Eternal, Absolute) in the neuter singular has been specially associated with the Veda ("What Veda-knowers speak of as *aksharam*", Bhagavad Gita, 8. 11).

The Manifested Absolute, Deva, has name, form and attributes which are different with the Rishis' different visions of the Divinity in his glory. Here the neuter gender of the Unmanifested Absolute replaced by the masculine or feminine; and to the singular number are added the dual and the plural to give embodiment to the sage-poets' numerous visions. The Veda has spoken of the manifestation of the Eternal in creation :

When the earliest of the mornings dawned
the great (*mahat*) Eternal (*aksharam*)
was manifested (lit. 'born') on the path
of light.

Now the statutes of the Devas will be
honoured. Great is the single Godhood
of the Devas (RV. III. 55).

While dealing with the manifold visions of the Manifested Divine as Deva, the sages became poetically eloquent. The language was enriched by impressions of the visible world. So, instead of the cryptic 'That' (*tat*), the One (*ekam*), etc., there were words that, by way of description and comparison, brought form and colour and the warmth of life. The Deva came close to man's hearth and home.

The difference between the Unmanifest and the Manifested Divine will be evident from a consideration of the ideas of creation in each case. The following is an account of creation in relation to the Unmanifest :

.... That One (*ekam*) which had been
covered by the void through the might
of *tapas* (spiritual fire) was manifested
(lit. 'born'). (RV. X. 129).

In the following, creation is seen in relation to the Deva :

In love thou (Indra) madest the dawn
glow,

In love thou madest the sun shine.

(RV. II. 35).

By using later terminology we may say that, from the Unmanifest to the Manifested, there is a transition from Rajayoga (or Rajaguhya yoga), the Path of Mysticism (with which goes Jnanayoga, the Path of Knowledge) to Vibhuti yoga, the Path of Splendour (with which are associated

Bhaktiyoga, the Path of Love and Karma-yoga, the Path of Action).

The Vedic sage finds the Deva glorious not only as Monarch (*raja*) but also as Poet (*kavi*), as Architect (*visvakarman*) as Physician (*bhishaj*), as hero (*sura*), as sage (*vipra*) and so on. And the Deity is not only Father, but also Mother, Father-and-Mother-in-one, and a Maiden to whom the worshippers are 'like sons of the mother'. The Deva is also Brother, Son, Friend and Guest (an honoured visitor to a house). And he is like the lover to the beloved, like a bridegroom to the bride, like a husband to the wife.

The Veda insists in several ways on the identity of the Devas with the Unmanifest Absolute. It does so by a direct statement like that of the 'single Godhood of the Devas' or like the following :

The One Reality (*ekam sat*) the sages
speak of in many ways (RV. I. 164, AV.).

At times they speak of a Deva or Devi as if he or she were the Absolute, as in :

Suparna who is One the wise poets figure
in many ways by their words

(RV. X. 11).

Aditi is all the Devas, Aditi the five
peoples (RV. I. 89. AV).

Savitr is One, One and Sole. He is
not called the Second, Third, Fourth....

In him all the Devas become the One
Alone (AV. XIII. 4).

Sometimes a Deva is identified with another Deva or with all the rest. For instance, Agni is identified with Indra, Vishnu, Varuna Mitra, Aditi, Sarasvati and others. (RV. II. 1). Varuna is identified with Indra (RV. IV. 42). Sometimes thirty-three Devas are spoken of, but the Veda does not set any limit to their number :

Such is thy greatness, bounteous Lord,
that endless bodily forms are thine.
Millions are in thy million, or thou art a
billion in thyself. (AV. XIII. 4).

All these ideas have led to a far-reaching conclusion : that one can worship any Deva or Devi as the Supreme Being, the

Creator and Ruler of the world and as the almighty Lord, Father or Mother, without rejecting another Deva, similarly worshipped by somebody else. We find in the Veda that a Deva, whatever his name is held to be the Deva. For instance, Indra is 'the One manifested as the Lord of races'; Agni is the Emperor; Varuna, 'the Emperor sublime', Pushan, 'the Supreme Ruler', etc. Again any one Deva may be described in the superlative as 'the mightiest', 'the most beloved', 'the most beneficent', etc. (RV). As their single Godhood is accepted there is no conflict.

The Veda also declares: "All your names, Devas, are venerable (*namasya*), laudable (*vandya*) and adorable (*yajniya*)" (RV. X. 63).

RITA, SATYA, TAPAS

The attributes that the Absolute in the manifested state receives as Deva are based on the Vedic values, which have been clearly stated. "At the beginning of creation," says the Veda, "Rita (Eternal Order, Law) and Satya (Truth) were born (i.e., manifested) out of blazing Tapas (spiritual fire RV. X. 190)". Rita is cosmic Order—the Natural Law and the symmetry and beauty produced by it, as well as Moral Order demanding goodness and justice. Tapas, the spiritual fire, which works behind these, is the purifying principle that makes Rita and Satya flourish. In the Devas Tapas, Rita and Satya find their full expression. "Devas are always pure", says the Veda (SV. 442). A Deva is described as 'born of Rita', and 'Son of Satya' and as 'one having his power in Satya' (RV). Sometimes a Deva is spoken of as Rita or Satya itself.

Men are like the Devas in being a manifestation of the Divine. So a sage prays: "We have, bounteous Ones (Devas), established our perpetual brotherhood with you, with harmony, in the mother's womb." (RV. VIII. 83). But men are different from Devas in two respects—their imperfection and their mortality (the latter referring to their body only, not the spirit which is immortal). While Devas are "attached to

Rita and Satya and are full of light, and holy" (RV), there are among men "those who are opposed to Rita (*anrita*) and opposed to Satya (*asatya*)". (RV. IV. 5). So the Devas are models for men and their Guides and Rulers. "They bind the breakers of Eternal Law (Rita; RV)". The Veda also says: "It is known to wise people that there is rivalry between truth and untruth. Of these two, that which is true (*satya*) and straight the Deva protects. The untrue he destroys". So the conflict between Rita and Anrita, Satya and Asatya is the conflict between good and evil. These are often described by the prefixes *su* and *du*, respectively. The following prayers point to this moral conflict:

Bar me, Agni, against evil conduct (*duscarita*), engage me in good conduct (*sucarita*) YV.

May we have the good, loving mind all our days. (RV.)

May we know aright both truth and falsehood. (RV)

May the purpose of my mind be true (*satya*). May I be guiltless of the least aggression. (RV).

May my mind will what is good. (YV).

The cause of Rita has to be defended against aggression. Indra, the Champion of Rita, is shown in the Veda to be continually fighting against Vritra, the enemy of Rita, who tries to stop its operation. Indra defends his own dominion, Svarajya (based on Rita), by his victory over Vritra, won through valour. Deva Indra is a model for men in the fight against their Vritras, aggressors against their Svarajya. So they are called on "to be heroic, following the example of Indra (RV. X. 103, SV. YV. AV.)." At his coronation a king receives a weapon with the injunction, "With thee may this man kill Vritra—the power of evil (YV. 10. 8)," which means that war should be in defence of justice.

There is a call to men to fight the hard battle of life valiantly:

The rocky stream flows on. Hold you all together.

Be heroic and cross over, my comrades!
 Leave here those who are evil-minded,
 Let us cross to powers that are undiseased
 (X. 53).

The Atharva Veda which adapts this from the Rig Veda adds, drawing the idea of the second line from another Rigveda hymn (X. 18) where people are enjoined to become 'pure, clean and godly':

Strive for the lustre that belongs to all
 the Devas, becoming pure and bright
 and purifying.

And, getting across the difficult paths,
 may we, heroes all, enjoy a hundred
 years! (AV. XII. 2).

To be pure, bright and purifying — here heroism finds a new field for conquest: to rise above human nature in the raw and build up and help another build a spiritual personality. The Vedic system of education, Brahmacharya (AV. XI 50 requires the boy (boy or girl) to be reborn to a new life, the Acharya becoming as it were, the spiritual mother). So educated, "the Brahmancharin goes performing his duties, and he becomes a limb of the Devas' own body" (RV. X. 109). "He, grasping the worlds together, (*lokan samgrihya*; *lokasangraha* of Bhagavad Gita, III. 20) constantly draws them near." (AV. XI. 5).

The householder's life (Grihastashrama) which follows Brahmacharya and is based on marriage and conjugal love and ruled by Rita as both natural and moral law (AV. XIV. 1) has its own sanctity. In the wedding ritual the newly married husband tells his wife that he is Saman (sacred song) and she Rik (the sacred verse), and they are like the Divine cosmic couple, Heaven and Earth (AV. XIV. 2).

The Veda also speaks of the Acharya (teacher) who, in his forest ashrama, teaches pupils, bounds at their initiation by the vow, "Here I approach truth (*satya*) beyond untruth" (*anrita*, YV. I. 5). Then, there is the Vedic Muni with long locks (*kesin*) who is "a comrade (*sakha*) of Devas in doing good (*sukrita*) and treads in the path of wild beasts and, knowing men's hearts,

comes to them as a sweet friend (*svadu sakha*) most gladdening" (RV. X. 136).

The ethical and aesthetic aspects of Rita are often associated with each other. For instance, Devi Ushas, beautiful and smiling, is called 'blessed' (*bhadra*), and asked to give worshippers 'every blissful (*bhadra*) thought' (RV. I. 123). She also leads people from sleep to waking and to the pursuit of their avocations in life (RV. I. 113). "Send us what is good", prays a sage-poet to Savitr. "For noble power, we, free from sin, contemplate all that is beautiful" (RV. V. 82). Indra, the heroic defender of Rita as Moral Law, is also "the Model for every kind of beauty (*rupa*)" (RV. VI. 47), and Varuna is not only a ruler enforcing Moral Law but also "a Poet (*kavi*) who by his poetic power (*kavya*) cherishes manifold forms of beauty (*rupa*) like the sky" (RV. VI. 47).

SAMJNANA, UNITY THROUGH JNANA

The prefix *sam*—in the Veda carries more than its literal meaning, 'together'. Describing the first appearance of Devas, the Veda says that they were 'held together' (*samrabdha*), and, by comparing them to a group of dancers, indicates that they were 'held together by an inner harmony'. Similarly, Samjnana¹ among the Devas is the loving unity brought about by their knowledge (*jnana*) of each other, and of an inner harmony (owing to their 'single Godhood') that binds them together.

The Veda recommends this harmony to men in their different social relationships. Thus man and wife after the marriage vow pray for the unity of hearts (*sam-hridaya*). A sage enjoins Samjnana on members of a family, asking them to "love each other as the mother-cow loves the calf born of her" (AV. III. 30). A sage in the Yajurveda expresses the desire that the political and spiritual powers (*kshatra*, *brahma*) "should move together in harmony". (20, 25). In

¹ To Vedic *sam*- corresponds to the Greek *sum*-, in the English form *sy*-, as in 'symphony', in which the prefix means more than a mere combination of sounds; it also implies a harmony linking the sounds together.

the closing hymn of the Rigveda, members of a state are called upon to practise samjnana like the Devas by "knowing each other's mind (*sam-jna*)" and "by meeting together and speaking together" (and thus establishing an inner harmony). Again, there is a prayer in the Veda for 'Samjnana (union through knowledge of each other) with foreign people', concluding with the desire that one's own people and foreign people should unite.

May we unite in our minds, unite in our purposes, and not fight against the Divine Spirit (*daivya manah*) in us. May the battle cry not rise amidst many slain. . . . (AV. VII. 52).

So we find that the Veda which demands heroic defence of Svarajya against aggression, also shows the way of preventing armed clashes, and destruction of life caused by these. The Veda also wants man, by his strength, to establish friendly relations with other living beings. 'Make me strong', a Sage prays, desiring that he and all living beings (*sarva bhuta*) 'should look upon one another (*Sam—iksh*) with a friendly eye.' (IV. 36. 18).

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

The reference to the spirit takes us from the Devas, Manifestations of the Absolute in creation, to the indwelling spirit in man and in the universe. The Veda speaks of the Spirit in the neuter singular as *yaksham*. There is also the word *atma* (commonly used in English in the original form as 'Atman'), in the masculine singular, meaning the soul or self. These words are used both in the individual and the universal sense.

The Rigveda speaks figuratively of "two beautiful-winged birds, knit together, friends, which have found their abode in the same tree, of whom one eats the sweet pippala fruit, and the other that does not eat, looks on." (RV. I. 164, AV). The tree here is believed to imply the human body, and the two birds, the individual self and the Supreme Self (*jivatma and paramatma*) respectively. In the Atharva Veda *yaksham*

and *atma* replace the two birds, and a large, beautiful flower replaces the tree. The Veda speaks of "a lotus with nine portals, covered under three bands (*guna*), in which dwells the spirit with the Atma within, that the Veda-knowers know." (X. 8). Then follows a stanza in the grand style of the Veda, describing the Atma, "serene, unaging, youthful" (*Ibid*).

We have found the Rigveda speaking of 'the great Eternal' (*mahad aksharam*), in the transcendental sense. The Atharva Veda speaks 'of the great Spirit' (*mahad yaksham*): "The great Spirit lies in the centre of the worlds and on the surface of water." And the Devas who are described as having appeared with the birth (manifestation) of the Absolute (on the relative plain of reality) are here said to "attach themselves to that Spirit (*yaksham*) like branches to the trunk of a tree." (AV. X. 7. 38).

We may go back to Rigvedic symbolism and to a Rishi who in a hymn on Universal Agni (*vaisvanara agni*) says: "A steady Light (*jyotih*), swifter than thought lies in the midst of moving things to show the way, and all the Devas, united in spirit (*sama-nasah*) and in wisdom, proceed unerringly to that One Intelligence (*Kratu*, in later terminology, *chit*)." The sage-poet experiences the presence of that within himself, but cannot perceive it physically, or comprehend it intellectually, though he responds to it with delicate poetic sensitiveness, typical of the Veda:

My ears strain to hear, my eyes to see
this wide-spreading Light within my
spirit;

My mind roams afar beyond its confines.
What shall I speak, and what, indeed,
shall I think? (RV. VI. 9)

The Yajurveda, in its concluding portion, conveys what are given as the dying words of a sage, ending with: "The Purusha who is in the sun, who is here and there — I am He, Om, the Supreme Brahman" (40.17).

Here not only is the Immanent identified with the Transcendental, but the individual

too is identified with the Universal. This is Vedanta, pursued in the Upanishads and by later sages, saints and philosophers.

Philosophers in different ages of India have, not unjustifiably, sought final support for their theories from the Veda. But the

Veda is much more than philosophic theory. It has described itself as *visvarupa*, omniform (AV.). The Vedic Rishi has the poet's interest in reality in all its facets. He reveals their truth and beauty and invites us to share his noble visions.

Garland of Guru's Sayings

Translated by Prof. K. SWAMINATHAN
from the Tamil of Sri MURUGANAR

45. Only mad folk perplexed
By mistaking for a fact
This fiction of a world,
But not the truly wise,
Find joy in anything
But Awareness of Being.
46. Those who know the joy that flows
from the knowledge of true being
Will never walk the weary ways
Of the false, eightfold¹ world
Whose pleasures are all transient
Some even bestial, sensual, base.
47. Not in one single thing on earth
Is there a gleam of joy.
How then is the muddled mind
Deluded into thinking
That things yield joy?
48. Knowing clearly and accepting
Your true nature and identity,
Abiding in the heart for ever
As the pure Supreme alone,
Play perfectly your human role,
Tasting every pain and pleasure
In common with all creatures.
49. Though they examine everything
And attain the ultimate truth,
The wise put on no strange behaviour.
Therefore let your outward conduct
Conform to that of your own people.
50. Lord Ramana has in his mercy
Revealed to us that we are the world
And that from us all things derive
Their firm being. He has thus
proclaimed
As true the tenet of Mistakenness,
Putting away all other doctrines.
51. Because the Self becomes itself
The world with all these names
and forms,
It's not the efficient cause that creates,
Preserves and then destroys the world
52. Don't ask : "How did this mistake arise
And grow inveterate, this ignorance
Of the Self's self-transformation as
the world?"
Search and find
To whom this happened.
Then the settled error is no more.
53. What is the Self's
Self-transformation as the world?
A twist of straw appearing as a snake.
Look hard, You see no snake at all.
There was no transformation and never
any world.

¹ The phenomenal world manifested in eight aspects: ether, fire, air, water, earth, Sun, Moon and living beings.

THE POWER OF THE MANTRAS

By
M. P. PANDIT

In his book 'Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishad', reviewed in this issue, Mr. Pandit shows how far beyond their merely rational meaning the Vedic hymns go. Their verses are mantras, and mantras are not something concocted by an author, but revealed to a Rishi. Their potency is due to a correspondence between the vibrations of physical sound in them and those of a higher level of *shabda*. In this note he gives us a further elucidation of the theory of mantras.

IT is one of the fundamental perceptions of the ancients that Reality turned towards manifestation reveals itself as primordial Sound: the Brahman is nada, God is Logos. The first stir, spanda, of the Creative Consciousness renders itself as a vibration of sound, *shabda*, and all else issues from this Sound-Form of the Reality. Each form in creation has this Sound-origin at its base. It may belong to any plane of existence, it may be a god, it may be a thought-form or a current of force or a material object on earth. At its root there is a Sound-substance from which it has evolved into this manifestation. Naturally, this Sound is not the sound of our physical world; but it is the Sound of the plane of supreme Ether, *paramavyoman*. Indeed, it translates itself into appropriate forms on the different levels of creation. It is only the last stage of this rendering of sound-form that is human speech. And when any particular word or group of words in our speech is such a projected correspondence of a supreme Sound-form, it is called a mantra.

Thus the mantra is a transcript in terms of human speech of the basic sound-body of any truth or form in creation. By dwelling upon such a word or groups of words one can connect oneself with the prototype on the higher planes and evoke the truth embodied in that original Sound-form to manifest. It is an occult law that if one can recreate the conditions in which something first manifested, an inducement, a pressure, is exerted for that thing to manifest again.

In the *Mantra-Shastra* each Deity is conceived as having its own sound-form which

is rendered at the human level in the body of the letters of a mantra revealed to the seer. By concentrating upon this physical nodus one evokes the Deity ensouled in its corresponding sound-form above to manifest. Rapport is established between the person who waits upon the mantra and the Truth at its head.

Naturally a mantra of this type is not concocted by the human mind. It is not a matter of clothing an idea with metrical form. The Word comes into being reverberating from the deeps of an eternal Silence and settles in the recesses of the heart. There it is brooded upon by the central consciousness till it is assimilated and acquires sufficient individuation in this world of flux. When it is so processed, *hrda tastan*, carved by the heart, it is taken up by the intellect and subjected to a further process of fusion and then clothed in an appropriate thought-form. This thought-form flows in its inevitable sound-body, and we have the Word.

This is the sacred character of the mantra around which a whole science was built up by the seers of yore. A mantra is not a convenient means for concentration, for arresting the wayward tendencies of the mind; it is not even a vehicle to connect oneself with a Deity; the mantra is the body of the Deity, in a sense it is the Deity itself. It is when one looks upon the mantra in this spirit, adores it, takes to it with the love that one reserves for the Divine Beloved that the mantra reveals its true nature, yields its truth and becomes one with the upasaka, the practisant. He attains identity with the ensouled Deity.

THE YOGA VASISHTA, GOSPEL OF SELF-ENQUIRY

By
Dr. T. N. KRISHNASWAMI

SRI RAMA, the Seventh Avatar according to the traditional Puranic list, the hero of the great epic the *Ramayana*, was given the true, ancient, Advaitic teaching by his Guru Vasishtha. *The Yoga Vasishtha* is the book recording this. It is sometimes also known as the 'Maharamayana' or 'Greater Ramayana'. It can therefore be considered, together with the *Ramayana*, the scripture of this Avatar, the *Ramayana* recording the life of Rama and the *Yoga Vasishtha* his teaching, that is the teaching received and transmitted by him. Both are said to have been written by the sage Valmiki, a contemporary of Vasishtha and Rama. It is a book, its author says, for one who is alive to the mystery of his life and the world around him and is stirring from the stupor of ignorance but needs help to awaken. There are many such in the world to-day, and it is a source of shame that such a book lies little used in our country and almost unknown abroad.

It is remarkably modern in tone, or perhaps rather timeless. It was often quoted by Sri Ramana Maharshi or referred to as an authority on Atma Vidya, Spiritual Knowledge. Again and again in quoting passages from it one might be quoting his very words. Verses 21 to 27 of his 'Supplementary Forty Verses on Reality', given below, are from it.

21. "Tell me what it is that is described as the Heart of all the individuals of the world, in which (as in a) big mirror all this universe is perceived as a reflection," Rama once asked the Sage Vasishtha and the latter replied: "After investigation (it has been declared that) the Heart for all individuals is twofold."

22. 'Listen and understand the characteristics of the two, the one to be



accepted and the other to be rejected. That organ which is called the heart and is situated at a particular spot within the

chest of the physical body is to be rejected. That Heart which is of the form of Absolute Knowledge is to be accepted. Though it is both within and without, it is devoid of an inner and an outer side.

23. 'That alone is the Supreme Heart, and in it all this world abides. It is the mirror of all objects, and the abode of all wealth. Hence, for all living beings that Knowledge alone is declared to be the Heart. It is not a part of the perishable body which is insentient like a stone.

24. 'Therefore the destruction of the latent tendencies of the mind comes about spontaneously as the result of earnest endeavour to hold the ego in the Heart of perfect purity and absolute Knowledge, together with breath-control.

25. 'Ever abiding in the Heart through the incessant meditation, "I am that Lord Siva, who is Pure Knowledge, free from all qualitative limitations," remove all attachments of the ego.

26. 'Having investigated the three states (waking, dream, and deep sleep) and holding steadfastly in your heart to the Supreme State which is above them and is free from illusion, play your part in the world, Oh hero Raghava! You have realized in the heart That which is the Substratum of Reality beneath all appearances. Therefore without ever abandoning that viewpoint, play your part in the world as you please.

27. 'As one with feigned enthusiasm and joy, with feigned excitement and hatred, as one taking feigned initiative and making a feigned effort, play your part in the world, Oh hero Raghava!'

It is the teaching of a Jivan-Mukta, Liberated while embodied, based on direct knowledge-experience, and is therefore equivalent to the word of a Guru; and indeed, Vasishtha impressed on Sri Rama that he should not regard it as the teaching of another but as the voice of his own Self speaking through the Guru. It has not merely intellectual value, since the lines of it in the original Sanskrit have the force of mantras and can bring Enlightenment.

Valmiki says of it: "This is a composition in a pleasant and simple style with similes and illustrations that go direct to the heart of the reader. One who has studied and understood it and realized its teachings needs no other sadhana to obtain Liberation. It terminates all suffering and takes one to the state of supreme Bliss beyond the alternatives of pleasure and pain. Full understanding of this book brings Jivan-Mukti, Liberation while embodied."

The introductory story straightaway sets the tone of the book. A king who is practising tapas is visited by a heavenly messenger whom he questions about the delights of heaven and their permanence. He is told that the delights are proportionate to the merits that have produced them and that they last only until his accumulated merit is exhausted, after which the heaven-dweller returns to the world for rebirth. The king declares that he wants none of this but only final Liberation, whereupon he is guided to the ashram of the Sage Valmiki who reads him this book of the instruction of Rama by Vasishtha. Similarly in the *Bhagavad Gita*, it will be remembered, Krishna urges Arjuna to strive beyond the heavens to the final state of Liberation.

The *Yoga Vasishtha* is a massive work of 32,000 couplets divided into six *prakaranas* or sections. Various traditional condensations of it exist, one of which we are thinking of serialising in *The Mountain Path* at a future date. The first *prakarana* is concerned with vairagya or detachment. The youthful Rama has fallen into a state of dejection (and here also there is a certain parallel with Arjuna in the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*) and is called before a gathering of Sages at his father's court to explain his trouble. His statement shows that he has already come spontaneously to an understanding of the nature of life. "I have lost all attachment to the world owing to thoughts of discrimination that arise. Thoughts such as this keep coming to me spontaneously: 'Does the cycle of births and deaths bring real happiness? Men are born to die and die to be born again. Plea-

ures are transient and lead to sin and danger. The mutual relationships between sense-objects must be merely imaginary since they are perceived by separate, successive acts of perception. The world as perceived by the mind and the mind that perceives it seem to be unreal. Then why are we attracted by sense-objects? We are like a deer that, led on by a distant mirage, runs from horizon to horizon in search of water. Even though we know that our senses deceive us, we allow ourselves to be enslaved by them like fools. Who am I? And what is this phenomenal world around me? Where does it come from, and why? . . . Why does this world of appearances come into being and grow, and why is it finally destroyed? "

The tone is such as one might use to-day, if intelligent enough; the outlook might be that of a nuclear scientist. He sees, moreover, that the culprit is the mind. "I am possessed by this terrible mind like a boy possessed by a ghost. But in fact this ghost of a mind is unreal. It takes on a form only in imagination, but discrimination shows it to be unreal. And yet this ghost is very hard to control. It burns worse than fire, is harder than diamond, runs after sense-objects like a crow after a bit of meat and then the next moment drops it childishly. It can't stick to any one thing. . . . To restrain the mind is more difficult than drying up the ocean or upheaving a mountain or eating fire. This mind is the cause of the world. Therefore the world depends on it and there would be no outside world if the mind vanished."

He sees that it is craving that corrupts the mind and that craving never satiates, only allures. In vivid language he describes the indignity of childhood, the infatuation of youth and the frustration of age. However, although he can diagnose the trouble he cannot prescribe the cure. Hence his dejection. Similarly with the Maharshi, there were cases of people who knew the whole doctrinal theory when they first came to him and only needed practical guidance.

Next comes the Mumukshu Prakarana in which Vasishtha explains the discipline

required. He explained that the apparently outer world with one's successes and failures in it, one's pleasures and pains, good and evil fortune, is a form dictated by the state of one's mind when quitting the previous incarnation at death. The only reality of it is not its form or appearance but the underlying Self or Brahman. Its illusory reality is to be exposed and the true Self realized by constant discrimination and Self-enquiry fortified by non-egoistical conduct and association with the upright and enlightened. "The most effective remedy for this long-standing disease of samsara (worldly life) is the question 'Who am I?' and 'To whom does this samsara come?'" This entirely dissolves it." Here study is no use. "Those whose aspiration after the higher life goes no further than the mere thought of it and who shrink back from undertaking the necessary discipline prescribed by the scriptures fail to achieve their goal. On the contrary, their efforts only produce the darkness of ignorance."

The third section passes from the individual to the cosmic with the subject of creation. Vasishtha explains (as Sri Krishna does in Chapter VIII of the Gita) how the beginningless, endless universe passes through successive phases of manifestation and dissolution, *srishti* and *pralaya*. The world, he explains, has the same sort of reality as a dream. Just as a dream ends when one subsides into deep, dreamless sleep, so the world ends when it subsides into *pralaya*, and all its forms, animate and inanimate, dissolve. However, their seeds of possibility remain in a latent form and burgeon forth again in the next cycle of manifestation.

If the universe is here described as a mere manifestation of the potentialities of Brahman and in the previous section as a manifestation of one's own mind, one corresponds to the macrocosmic and the other to the microcosmic viewpoint. The imperfections of a man's world reflect those of their mind. Therefore, the fourth section, the *Sthiti Prakarana*, is largely concerned with dissolving the *ahankara*, the ego-sense, and seeing all as manifestations of Atma.

"‘This is he’, ‘I am this’, ‘that is mine’, such items make up the mind; it can be dissolved by dwelling on the unreality of them."

The fifth or Upasama Prakarana, as the title suggests, is concerned, like the second, with spiritual training. Being now aware of impersonal atma as well as bodily existence, the seeker is directed still more firmly to Self-inquiry and to the attack on *ahankara* or ego-sense. "After rejecting all that is knowable as ‘not this’, consider the pure consciousness that remains to be your Self."

The last is the Nirvana Prakarana, in which the seeker discovers himself as pure, eternal, impersonal consciousness and the universe as a form he wears. For him now samsara is Nirvana and Nirvana samsara. He sees that there really was no creation, no samsara. "Nothing whatever is born or dies anywhere, at any time. It is only Brahman that appears illusorily in the form of the phenomenal world."

The Yoga Vasishtha describes also the various worlds and planes of existence. It speaks of the process of creation and return. Although intricate, its teaching is clearly and simply expressed. It is interspersed with symbolical or illustrative stories. Some are quite long; here is a very short one. A man set out from home in search of a miraculous jewel. At his very doorstep he saw a piece of coloured glass which he picked up and threw away. Then he travelled through many lands, through cities and forests, and found many more bits of glass but never the true gem. At last, after many years, he realized that it was what was lying at his own doorstep — just as Sri Ramana used to say that it is nothing distant or outside yourself that you are seeking. Or, as the Yoga Vasishtha says: "Liberation is not beyond the sky or in the underworld or on earth. It is simply the eradication of desires."

It is the mind that has to be conquered. "Mind and karma go together like fire and heat, so that if one is destroyed the other is inevitably destroyed too."

Ramana said that Self-realization is not one's birthright; it has to be fought for. Even though one is already the Self, it is no use knowing that in theory unless one realizes it. It is no use having a big bank balance unless one is able to draw on it. As long as a man accepts the leadership of the mind deluded by ego-sense he remains in a state of bondage and ignorance. The deluded mind believes in its vulnerability to suffering and therefore meets with suffering. Vasishtha says: "We are sold by none and yet we live like slaves; we are bound by none and yet we live in bondage. We are under the spell of a great hypnotist." The hypnotism consists in accepting the evidence of the senses and identifying ourselves with the body.

Vasishtha, like Ramana, tells us that we have to restrain the mind from its outgoing tendencies and turn it inwards in quest of the Self. "Knowing that by which you know this world, turn the mind inwards and you will see clearly the effulgence of the Self." Taking mundane life at its face value means denying the Self. Not only is the ego-sense, on which mundane life is based, caused by ignorance, but it also perpetuates and causes ignorance. "Do not be the understood object or the understanding subject; abandon all concepts and remain simply what you are."

Although distrusting the mind in its false role of self, we should not for that reason dismiss thoughts as unreal or powerless. They are the power that underlies the apparently substantial world. In fact, body and world are merely congealed thought. Objects appear real to the ego-sense or ego-mind, but one must get behind the ego-mind. "Time," Vasishtha says, "is when a thought arises. Space is where a thought arises." And again: "Where the I-thought arises time and space meet."

Bondage and freedom, happiness and misery, are of the mind. What we are is the result of our past thoughts shaping our past actions. But Vasishtha also emphasises the power of thought in the present to override

the past, so that it is always possible to create new destiny to rectify that with which we are already burdened. The I-thought is the first thought that arises and constructs all other thoughts, as indeed Sri Ramana also taught. "If the first person, I, exists then the second and third persons, you and he, will also exist. By enquiring into the nature of the I, the I perishes. With it you and he also perish. The resultant state, which shines as Abso-

lute Being, is one's own natural state, the Self." (*Forty Verses on Reality*, v. 14). The Yoga Vasishta is an incomparable exposition of the need to destroy the deluded ego-mind and enable pure impersonal consciousness to shine forth as the mind beyond all possibility of suffering or ignorance or rebirth. "There is nothing equal to the supreme joy felt by a person of pure mind who has attained the state of simple consciousness and overcome death."

The infinite Self more minute than the minute and greater than the great is set in the heart of the beings here. Through the grace of the Creator one realises Him who is free from desires based on values, who is supremely great and who is the highest ruler and master of all, and becomes free from sorrows.

— *Mahanarayanopanishad*.

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Though dishonoured, thrown down, obstructed or restrained, or insulted by, spat upon, or fouled, the man bent on realizing Atman, though he suffers, will only try to experience the bliss of Atman.

— SRI KRISHNA (*Bhagavatham*, 11th Chap.)

* * * * *

There the sun does not shine, nor the moon and stars; there lightnings too do not shine — much less this earthly fire! Verily, everything shines, reflecting His glory. This whole world is illumined with His light.

— *Mundakopanishad*.

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As a lump of salt thrown into water becomes dissolved into water and none, not even an expert can at all pick it up, but from whichever part one takes the water and tastes it, it tastes salty, but there is no longer any lump, even so, my dear Maitreyi, this great, endless, infinite Reality is a solid mass of Intelligence. With the aid of these elements the Self comes out separately as a lump of salt. When this separateness is destroyed, the individualised existence of the self ceases along with them. After attaining oneness with the Supreme Self particular consciousness of the self does not exist. This I say, my dear. So Yajnavalkya propounded the philosophy of self to his wife, Maitreyi.

— *Brihadaranyakopanishad*.

SRIMAD VALMIKI RAMAYANA

What it has done to shape the genius of the Indian People

By

Prof. M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

NATIONHOOD except for its political overtones is not altogether a modern concept. From very early times the people inhabiting this land have felt the sense of belonging together. This sense of unity can be observed even in the hymns of the Rig Veda. It arose in the first instance from the realization that all of them lived in a territory whose geographical limits were well defined. This strip of land was bounded by the Himalayas in the north and by the ocean on the other three sides. In spite of differences in climatic conditions and the resulting fauna and flora, the land so bounded was intended by nature to be treated as one unit. The awareness that in spite of its vastness the territory was one continuous land-mass engendered the feeling, however vaguely, that the people who inhabited it were united by a common bond.

This feeling of togetherness came to be strengthened as the message of the Veda spread from the land of the five rivers to other parts of the country. In course of time the study of the Vedas and their auxiliaries covered the entire land. Scholars versed in the Vedas and the Upanishads hailing from different parts of the land, met in the learned assemblies sponsored by the rulers. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad there is the account of a philosophical disputation held in the court of King Janaka in which scholars from the land of the Kurus and Panchala took part. It is also said in the same Upanishad that Ajatasatru, King of Kasi, was fond of receiving scholars and holding discussions with them. In Chandogya (V. 3) we read of Svetaketu, going to the assembly of the Panchalas and in another section of the same Upanishad (V. 11) we are told that five scholars who were intent on knowing the relation between the Atman and the Brahman first

went to Uddalaka Aruni for enlightenment. When he pleaded inability all the six betook themselves to Asvapati, King of Kekaya. Such migrations of scholars must necessarily have fostered the sense of unity.

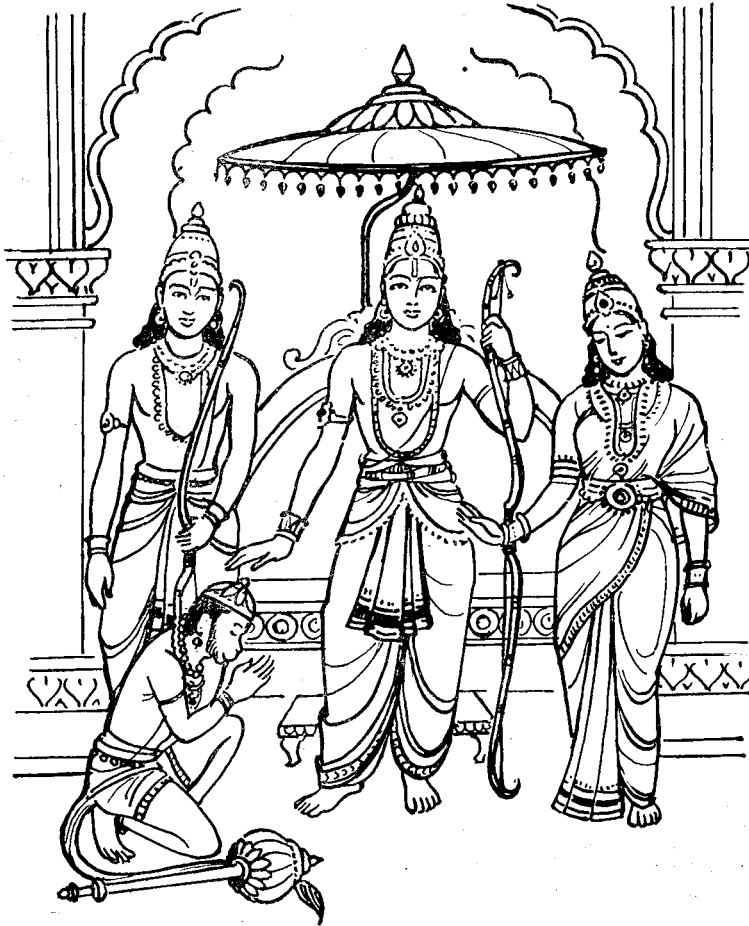
The next factor which promoted integration was the Sanskrit language and the great literature enshrined in it. A passage from the Upanishad or a verse from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata served to bring together people from the extreme north and the extreme south. The works of Kalidasa enjoyed wide popularity throughout the land and cemented the bonds of unity to a very remarkable extent. Despite differences in other respects, scholars felt a strong sense of brotherhood by virtue of their knowledge of Kalidasa. A Kashmiri Brahmin, by virtue of his acquaintance with some of the classics in Sanskrit, received a warm welcome when he journeyed to the south as a pilgrim. The same affectionate welcome awaited the south-Indian Brahmin when he was on a visit to Kasi, Hardwar and Badari. Thus the role of the Sanskrit language and the rich literature that is enshrined in it in implementing the sense of nationhood among the people of this vast sub-continent, despite sharp differences in their customs and manners and the regional languages they spoke, cannot be possibly overstated. For well over a thousand years this language, like Latin in Europe, fostered the sense of unity.

Temples, places of pilgrimage, holy rivers and the habitations of saints and sages attracted people from all over the land and acted as yet another cementing force. No one who visited Kasi felt that his pilgrimage was complete unless he paid a visit to Ramesvaram. Thus the factors that promoted the sense of nationhood among the

people of this land from very early times were chiefly religious and cultural. Dr. Radhakumud Mukerji has set them forth at length with all the relevant documentary evidence in his little book *The Fundamental Unity of India*.

The three famous Acharyas, Sri Shankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhwa, all hailed from the south. They wrote their monumental works in Sanskrit, the *lingua franca* of the country, and not in their respective

direction of nation-building when he founded four religious institutions known as Maths in the four corners of the land to propagate the true faith. He also toured the land from one end to the other on foot, met scholars, held discussions with them and induced them to accept the Vedic religion in its original purity. His services in the direction of promoting the feeling of solidarity among the people of this land are very considerable.



The cultural and religious ties that bound together the elite of the land in the initial stages began slowly to percolate to the masses when the message of the Vedas and the Upanishads came to be presented to them in a manner they could easily grasp. In carrying the teachings of the original texts to the people at large, the Epics and the Puranas have played a very notable part. By means of attractive stories the great lessons of Sruti and Smriti have been brought down to the level of the generality of the people. *Srimad Valmiki Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* are, of course, written in Sanskrit, but they have been interpreted to the public in the regional languages by qualified expositors. Such expositions have been a regular feature in this country

mother-tongues. They were prompted by the feeling that their teachings were meant for the whole land and not only for the inhabitants of a particular locality. Accordingly their commentaries on the *Brahma-Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* are read by scholars all over the country. Sri Shankara took a further step in the

for hundreds of years. In almost every village there is, or until recently was, a *Pauranika* to give discourses, sometimes enlivened by music, bearing on the *Itihasas* and the *Puranas*. Such expositions have served the purposes of adult education eminently well. Listening to them day after day the people at

large imbibed very useful lessons. They came to believe in a Supreme Being who rules the universe, keeps watch over the welfare of the people, rewards the virtuous and punishes the wicked and who can be propitiated by right conduct. They have further learnt that we reap as we sow, that our sufferings are due to the misdeeds that we committed in a previous birth and that by eschewing sin and doing meritorious deeds we can confidently look for happiness in the life to come. Thus it happens that the people do not lack the essentials of culture though they are unlettered. The sense of right and wrong has been planted deep in their minds by means of these popular discourses. Their law-abiding traditions are also to be traced to the same source. In spite of being the victims of poverty and disease, they were never formerly known to take the law into their own hands. Guillotines, regions of terror, September massacres and October Revolutions were things unheard of in this country. This is indeed a remarkable phenomenon. The people in the mass have never resorted to violence and bloodshed to redress their grievances. The lesson that we lie in the beds that we have made for ourselves is burnt into the soul of the Indian nation. Even non-Hindus have imbibed this lesson.

Srimad Valmiki Ramayana has taken the pride of place in this noble mission of leavening the mind of an entire nation and guiding its course. The story of it relates to the life and adventures of Sri Rama, son of Dasaratha. He is presented as a man amongst men who rose to superhuman heights by virtue of his great qualities and attainments. He is shown as the living embodiment of righteousness (dharma). Right conduct is his watchword in every situation of life. To save his father's reputation he voluntarily renounced his claims to the post of heir-apparent and be-took himself to the forest for a period of fourteen years. Not all the efforts made by Bharatha and Vasishtha could make him change this decision. He was firm in his resolve. In his opinion a promise that was solemnly given had to be observed both in the letter and in the spirit. He would allow

no quibbling about it. He braved all the hardships and privations of forest-life with singular courage and equanimity. The climax to his sufferings was reached when his dear partner in life, Sita, was abducted by Ravana, the King of Lanka. When he came to know that his wife had been captured and was held captive in Ravana's pleasure gardens he promptly took the necessary steps to bring about Ravana's destruction and secure her release. The ocean that separated the mainland from Lanka was no bar to him. He had a bridge thrown across it and was soon found knocking at the gates of Lanka. In the war that followed, he had to face heavy odds but he came out successful. The forces of evil were crushed and, regaining Sita, he returned to Ayodhya as conqueror. He was now installed King of Kosala not merely because he happened to be the eldest son of his father but because of his superior qualities. After his trials he emerged as a real ruler of men.

The story is full of poignant incidents. There are also many situations full of profound human interest. With much imagination the poet has developed these situations, sounded them to their depths and brought out their entire emotional content. All the leading emotions, tender love (*srīngāra*), heroism (*vīra*), pity (*karuṇa*) humour (*hāsyā*), empathy (*adbhuta*), anger (*raudra*), fright (*bhayānaka*), disgust (*bhībhatsa*) and quietude (*sānta*) find full play in the appropriate contexts. While developing them he never allows them to get out of hand. The poet shows consummate skill in presenting them in a disciplined form. He who reads the Ramayana or listens to its exposition undergoes a silent change, especially in regard to his emotional life. He learns not only to keep his emotions under restraint but also to purify them. Such transformation of the affective aspect of the mind answers to what Aristotle calls the 'cathartic' effect of tragedy. The purging of the feelings and emotions takes place in a most unobtrusive manner. All great works of art share this quality of chastening the minds of the readers. Srimad Valmiki Ramayana is second to none in this respect. It has leavened the mind of a whole nation.

When the order of banishment was served on Rama, he was not perturbed in the least. He took it with his usual equanimity. He was not inclined to blame either Kaikeyi or his father. He had the rare insight to see the hidden hand of God in the affairs of men. He realized that Kaikeyi was just an instrument in the carrying out of a cosmic purpose. He did not ascribe it simply to her vicious nature. She was uniformly kind and affectionate towards him. In fact, she made no difference between her own son and Rama. If such a noble lady should take up such an obstructional attitude towards his proposed installation, Rama was certain that it must be due to divine intervention. He firmly believed that there is a divinity which shapes our ends and could therefore reconcile himself to the sudden turn in the course of events. A lesser man might have broken down. A greater revolution can hardly be thought of in the fortunes of a man. He who expected to be called to the post of heir-apparent the very next day found himself taking to the forest for a period of fourteen years. Nothing short of an unshakable faith in the dispensations of Providence could have helped him to take the change without a murmur of complaint.

Rama invariably accepted the divine dispensation of events. Whether they related to the life of an individual or a community. Few of us have this firm serenity. We generally ignore the divine will which the author of the Gita speaks of as the fifth and deciding factor (*daivam*) in drawing up our own plans. No wonder they suffer shipwreck. Events shape themselves in a manner contrary to what we had willed. Rama is never tired of discoursing on the ways of this mysterious Providence.

This is another lesson that the Ramayana has taught us. Expressions such as "*Ishvara Samkalpa*", "*Ishvarayatta*", "*Ishvarecha*"

and "*Ishvaranugraha*" are frequently on our lips. They point to an inner belief that our affairs are not really in our hands but that God also has the shaping hand in them. Gandhiji used to say frequently that he was entirely in the hands of God and was content to be directed by Him. This direction came to him through his "inner voice" which he considered infallible.

The lesson arising from Rama's victory over the powerful and lawless Ravana is not lost on the mind of the average Indian. Rama fought against heavy odds. All the advantages were on the side of Ravana and yet the latter suffered a most humiliating defeat. What was the secret of Rama's success? It was his firm faith in dharma that crowned his arms with success. Though Ravana had obtained practical immunity from death through his severe tapas, still he was foiled. He employed right means (*tapas*) for wrong ends, harassing other people. This is as bad as employing wrong means for gaining right ends. In Rama's opinion the means that we employ and the end that we hope to achieve through them must both be above reproach. On an important occasion he told Lakshmana that he would not use questionable means even to attain the position of Indra.

We may add in conclusion that in many other ways also Srimad Ramayana has influenced our ways of thinking and acting. They are too numerous to mention. It is enough if we add that *Ramanama* has gained the status of a mantra in this country. Gandhiji used to say that it gave him all the strength that he needed in carrying on his many campaigns. The Upanishad speaks of *Ramanama* as the Taraka Mantra. Its devout recitation can carry a man across the ocean of *samsara* and confer absolute liberation from the fetters of empirical life. Such is the powerful hold of Srimad Ramayana on the imagination of the Indian people.

Only when men shall roll up the sky like a skin, will there be an end of misery for them without realizing God.

— *Svetasvatatropanishad*.

THE TEACHING OF DHARMA IN THE MAHABHARATA

By
KAMALA SUBRAMANIAM

THE Ashrama of Bhagavan Veda Vyasa was built on the banks of the river Sarasvathi. Alone sat the rishi absorbed in meditation. Dwapara, the third quarter of Time, had come to an end and Kali had set in ; Kali which was laden with sin. Vyasa's mind was full of sadness. He saw in his mind's eye the dearth of Dharma in the days to come. He knew that during Kali men would have no thought of the next world. They would have no desire to perform Tapas nor would they have any desire to walk in the path of Dharma. The age of materialism had set in. The study of the scriptures would not find a place in the daily routine of man in Kali yuga.

Vyasa told himself that he would simplify the difficult path of Dharma. He edited the Vedas and divided them into four so that men could assimilate them more easily. Each section was taught to one of his disciples and they, in their turn, had been commanded to propagate them to the world of men.

Vyasa pondered again and he felt that he had not done enough. The Vedas and the Vedangas were not accessible to everyone. There were, again, the people who had been forbidden from studying the Vedas. He wished to indicate the path of Dharma to every human being. What could he do about it ? Then came the great idea to him.

Vyasa had seen the great war fought on the field of Kurukshetra. The participants were all his kinsmen : they were his grandchildren. Protected by his armour of detachment he stood apart and watched the boiling cauldron of war wherein was poured the bluest blood of Bharatavarsha as a libation. All because of the adharma of his son Dhritarashtra who was affected by a peculiar type of inner blindness which would not



let him see what was good for him and for the entire world. A little seed of avarice, a small heart wherein it was planted, a few drops of envy to nurture it and the tree had grown to such an enormous size that nothing could be done about it. That was the tragedy underlying the great war.

Vyasa had tried many a time to tell him about the impending tragedy but it was of no avail. The great rishi said : "Thousands of mothers and fathers, hundreds of sons and wives who have been lived with, in the

recurring life of reincarnation, are going : and others will go alike hereafter. Day after day, thousands of sources of joy and hundreds of sources of fear overtake the foolish man but not the wise man. With uplifted arms I proclaim—and nobody listens to me—that wealth and enjoyment are derived from Dharma. Why is it then, that it is not followed ? Never should one, out of desire for enjoyment or out of covetousness, give up Dharma : not even for the sake of one's life. Dharma is eternal, but the reason for its being thus, in the embodied condition, is transient". Again and again Vyasa tried to reiterate the fact that Dharma was the only permanent thing in the world of men. But he was not heard.

Now when he looked back on the tragedy from a distance of time, Vyasa told himself : "It is but right that men in aftertimes should learn the lesson. I must relate to them the story of the feud between the sons of Dhritarashtra and the sons of Pandu : the war between right and wrong ; the conflict between Dharma and adharma. When they listen to it, men will know that Dharma is the ultimate victory : that this entire world revolves round the pivot called Dharma. I can thus help mankind to walk in the path of righteousness."

He then set about composing the story of the House of Kurus. His task was not easy. He had to be ruthlessly honest when he spoke about the sinfulness of the old blind king Dhritarashtra. Every event had to be related faithfully. His aim was to instil the lesson of Dharma in the heart of the listener. How was he to accomplish it ? A long dissertation on Dharma would not serve and so he adopted a very effective method. The story is related in a simple and powerful style. The entire narration is dramatic. The epic abounds in word pictures which stay for ever in the mind of the listener. But, woven along with the fabric of the main story is a subtle thread of gold which comprises the teachings of Dharma. This thread gleams suddenly against the background of the fabric. After lighting up the pages for a while, it is apparently lost. If, however,

one looks for it the gold is picked up again in some other spot and the same thought is continued as though there were no interruption. There are many such spots in the epic. But five of them can be considered to be gems. There is first the conversation between Nahusha and Yudhishtira set in the Vana-parva. This parva, incidentally, abounds in dissertations on dharma when the exiled prince Yudhishtira holds conversation with the many rishis who came to visit him.

The second, also a conversation, is that between Yudhishtira and the Lord of Dharma. This is right at the end of the Vana Parva and it is well known by the name of Yaksha Prasna.*

The third is the incomparable Vaidurikam, the conversation between Vidura and Dhritarashtra, which occurs in the Udyoga parva. This is followed by the Sanat Sujata parva which is the forerunner of the great Bhagavad Gita which is set in the Bheeshma parva. The last, the fifth, occurs in the Shanthi Parva. In fact, the entire parva is devoted to the subject nearest to the heart of Vyasa, Dharma.

Now all these have a common feature apart from the subject. They are all in the form of question and answer. This is in keeping with the style of the Upanishads where the teacher and student sit together and discuss Brahma Vidya.

Vaidurikam, incidentally, better known as Vidura Neethi, has not enjoyed the popularity of the Yaksha Prasna or the Bhagavad Gita. Perhaps because the beginning is very innocuous and one is tempted to skip the pages. But it is a very beautiful portion of the epic and deserves serious study. Here is set forth, in very easy and simple steps, the lesson of Dharma which can be practised by all.

It is the middle of the night. Summoned by the king, Vidura hurries to the royal apartments. He sees the old man sitting all by himself. "Vidura", says the king in a piteous voice. "Sanjaya has just gone after

* A portion of it is translated in this issue.

— Editor,

censuring me for my conduct. He will speak about his journey to Upaplaya tomorrow in the assembly hall. I am so worried about the future of my sons that I am not able to sleep. Tell me what is good for a sleepless man like me. Comfort me, Vidura”.

Vidura's talk begins in a sarcastic vein. He says: “Only a thief is afflicted by this malady: so is a lustful person. It goes without saying that a man who has lost all his wealth and a man who has not been able to succeed in life keep them company. Neither can the man sleep who is attacked by a stronger man. Do you, my lord, grieve because you covet the wealth of others?”

Dhritarashtra is familiar with the bitter and acid tongue of his brother. He knows that all the descriptions fit him as Vidura meant them to. But he is too far gone in his despair to resent the words of Vidura. He implores his brother to talk to him ‘words of wisdom’. We then hear the beautiful dissertation of Vidura on Dharma. All the codes of behaviour are dealt with systematically.

Vidura's method of approach is delightful. He begins with generalities and then he goes on to emphasise the importance of behaviour: about what should be done by a man if he is to be considered a well behaved person. Here is an example. “A man should be able to discriminate between the Two by means of the One. He should be able to bring under his control the Three with the help of the Four. He must be able to vanquish the Five. He should know the Six and beware of the Seven. This is the path to happiness!” Cryptic statements like this are quite common in the epic. By One is meant the intellect and by Two, right and wrong. Three stands for friend, stranger and foe; while Four is meant to represent conciliation, gift, disunion and severity. Five stands for the senses and Six signifies treaty, war, etc., the essentials of a kshatriya. Seven enumerates the seven temptations in the path of a king: women, dice, hunting, harshness of speech, drinking severity of punishment and waste of wealth.

Vidura tries to make his lesson as attractive as possible. He makes out a list of the qualities a man must have and those he has

to avoid: and he arranges them in a very attractive, catchy manner. He uses the numbers one to ten and in the series is threaded the list of qualities.

Righteousness is the one highest good; forgiveness the one supreme peace; knowledge the one supreme contentment, and benevolence the one sole happiness. We then come to two. A number of things are enumerated in twos: for example, a man may attain renown by two things: refraining from harsh speech and disregarding those that are wicked. Then follow the series of qualities taken three at a time: lust, anger and covetousness are destructive to one's self and are the gates to hell. A learned king, says Vidura, should not confer with these four: men of small sense, men of procrastination, men that are indolent and men that are flatterers. In other words he describes the court of the Kauravas and the sycophants of Duryodhana in particular. Talking about the five, he says: “Of the five senses belonging to man, if one springs a leak, from that one leak runs out all the intelligence of man like water running out of a perforated leathern vessel”. One who masters the six, namely lust, anger, grief, confusion of the intellect, pride and vanity, will naturally become master of the senses and will never commit sin. Six faults should be avoided by a man who desires prosperity: sleep, drowsiness, fear, anger, indolence and procrastination. A king should renounce the seven: viz., women, wine, etc. Eight qualities glorify a man: wisdom, high birth, self restraint, prowess, moderation in speech, gift according to one's power and gratitude. This house has nine doors, three pillars and five witnesses and it is presided over by the soul. These ten do not know what virtue is: the intoxicated, the inattentive, the raving, the fatigued, the angry, the starving, the hasty, the covetous, the frightened and the lustful. Summing up, Vidura says: “That man who does not grieve when calamity has already come upon him; who exerts himself with all his senses controlled, and who bears his misery in season is the foremost of men and all his foes are vanquished”. Incidentally he was describing Yudhishtira and the king knew it.

Vidura keeps on talking and the king continues to listen. The one fails to make any impression and the other is none the wiser for all the talk since he has insulated himself from all that is good for him. Vidura speaks on behaviour and then about conduct which goes deeper into the texture of the mind, the heart and the power of thinking. "Intoxication with wealth" says Vidura, "is much worse than wine since a man drunk with power of wealth can never be brought to his senses unless he has a fall. Like the moon during the bright fortnight calamities increase in respect of him who is under the tyranny of the five senses."

Then comes the lovely, time-honoured imagery from the beautiful Kathopanishad : "One's body, O king, is one's car : the soul within is the driver : and the senses are its steeds. Drawn by these excellent steeds when well trained, the wise man proceeds to perform the journey of life pleasantly, awake and in peace. The horses that are unbroken and incapable of being controlled, always lead the unskilled driver to destruction in the course of the journey : so one's senses unsubdued lead only to destruction."

Again and again Vidura speaks in praise of soft words. "Avoid harsh words and speech. To control speech is said to be the most difficult. A heart wounded and pierced by harsh words will never recover. Weapons like arrows and darts which wound the body can be extricated but a dagger of words plunged into the heart can never be taken out."

"He to whom the gods have ordained defeat has his senses taken away from him and it is because of this that he stoops to ignoble deeds. When the intellect becomes

dim and destruction is near, then wrong, looking like right, firmly strikes the heart."

And so it goes on, to Vidura's sorrow, fruitlessly. After listening to the wise words of Vidura the old king can only say : "Man is not the dispenser of either his prosperity or his adversity. He is like a wooden doll moved by strings. Indeed, the Creator has made man the victim of Destiny."

To a man who refuses to take good advice, words, though fraught with meaning and wisdom, have no meaning at all. Vidura sums up his talk with a realistic picture of the futility of man's life on earth. "I would impart to thee another sacred lesson productive of good fruits and which is the highest of all teachings. Virtue should never be forsaken out of desire, fear or temptation, nay, not for the sake of life itself : virtue is everlasting : pleasure and pain are transcient. Life indeed, is everlasting, but its phases are transitory. Forsaking those which are passing, take to thyself what is everlasting and let contentment be yours, since contentment is the highest of all attainments."

"Behold ! Illustrious and mighty kings, having ruled the earth abounding in corn and wealth, have become victims of the Universal Destroyer leaving behind their kingdoms and vast resources of enjoyments. When a man dies, only two go with him to the other world, his merits and his sins. Only these two keeps him company. Therefore should man, carefully and gradually, earn the merit of righteousness."

And Dhritarashtra's reply is : "No creature is able to transgress Destiny. Destiny is, I think, certain to take its course. Individual exertion is futile".

God, who is one only, is hidden in all beings. He is all-pervading, and is the inner self of all creatures. He presides over all actions, and all beings reside in Him. He is the witness, and He is the Pure Consciousness free from the three Gunas of Nature.

— *Svetasvatropanishad*.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GITA

By
BHAGAVAN DAS

WHEN there is such a wealth and variety of Hindu scriptures why is it that the Bhagavad Gita is by far the best loved and most widely read both in India and abroad? It has become the regular thing for religious and intellectual leaders in India to write commentaries on it, and its translations are innumerable, while other sacred texts lie more or less neglected.

Perhaps it is because it has a peculiar quality of universality. Sri Krishna, who proclaimed it, is the most universal of the Avatars. The teaching covers all four of the traditional paths to beatitude, those of knowledge, of devotion, of action and of yoga. Also, Arjuna to whom it was taught, was a very ordinary, representative aspirant. The Yoga Vasishta, in contrast, is teaching given to Rama, a youth of rare intelligence and sensitivity, who, while still in his teens, had perceived the unsatisfactory and illusory nature of the phenomenal world. Unlike him, Arjuna was a middle-aged married man who had lived an active life and enjoyed it but now found himself faced with a particularly distasteful task. Far more readers will be able to imagine themselves in his place or share his difficulties and problems.

He has reached the point where he wonders whether the game is worth the candle. Should he carry on with his struggle for victory, wealth and power (involving defeat and loss for others) or should he renounce it all and lead a life of meditation and poverty. Neither, Krishna tells him. He is to carry on and face his destiny because it is his, not for the sake of victory but as a duty. "Better one's own dharma, though *vigunah* (lowly or unsuccessful) than that of another though well performed. One incurs no sin in following the line of action true to one's nature."¹ And doing so was to be his form of sadhana or spiritual train-

ing. In parenthesis, Ramana Maharshi used to give the same instruction to people who would ask his authorisation to renounce their family and occupations and become sadhus.

Krishna does indeed teach Arjuna the true and ultimate doctrine of Advaita; in fact he begins by doing so in the first part of Chapter II, culminating in the stupendously simple verse: "There is no existence of the unreal and no non-existence of the Real."² But having done so he says: "This is the theory; now listen to what you have got to do about it."³ And in laying down what is to be done he does not burden Arjuna with a whole network of commands and prohibitions but points direct to the heart of the matter, the spirit in which or motive for which he is to act. "Your concern is only with your duty, never with the gain from action, but don't cling to inaction either."⁴

In the immediate context a cousin was trying to usurp the throne of Arjuna's brother, but the point was that, whether it concerned him personally or not, he was to resist evil because it was evil. Right is to be upheld because it is right and wrong resisted because it is wrong, regardless of whether one's own interests will be furthered or impaired by doing so.

This might seem rather a cold incentive to right living, but, as though to balance it, the Gita constantly prescribes devotion. "Those who worship Me, renouncing all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded devotion, their minds fixed on Me, I speedily save from the ocean of samsara."⁵ And

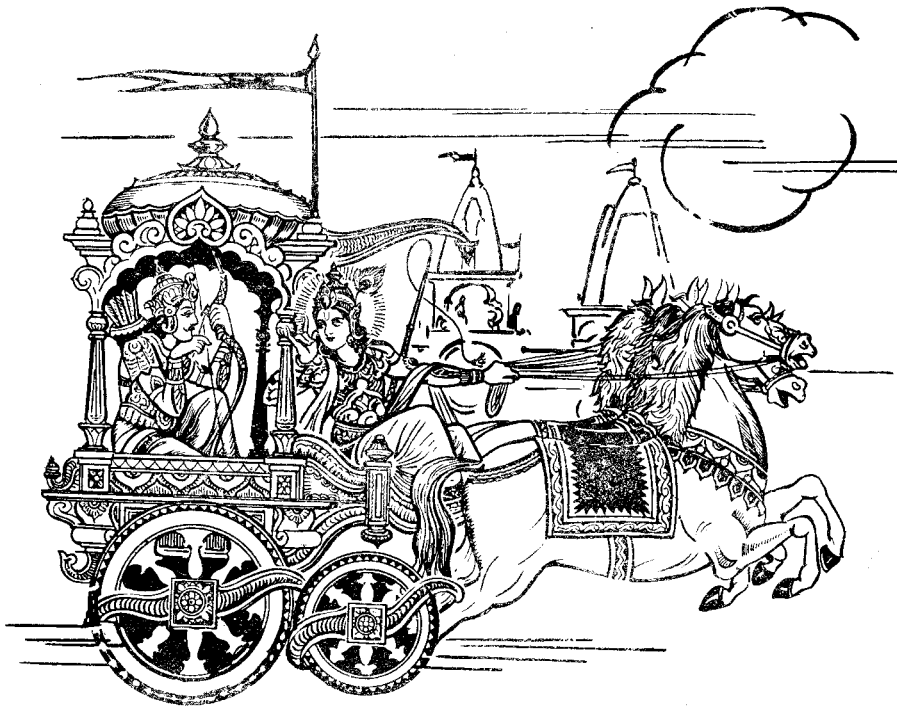
¹ *Bhagavad Gita*, XVIII, 47.

² *ibid.*, II, 16.

³ *ibid.*, II, 39.

⁴ *ibid.*, II, 47.

⁵ *ibid.*, XII, 6-7.



then, as so often happens in the Gita, a concession is made for those who find it too hard: "If you cannot even practise constant dedication, at least concentrate on performing actions for My sake. Even by that you will attain the Goal."⁶ And for those who find even this too strenuous there still remains disinterested activity. "If you can't even do this, then, taking refuge in Me, perform all actions with self-control, not for the sake of the benefits they may bring."⁷

However, the great consideration for the seeker that is shown in the Gita does not mean that he is encouraged, in modern parlance, to settle for some lesser goal than the ultimate. Nothing of the sort. A part of the Vedas known as the 'Karma Kanda' is concerned partly with ritualistic activity aiming at a formal paradise in which merit is rewarded but from which there is return again to samsara in a new life on earth after the merit is exhausted. "Those who know the three Vedas, drinking soma and purified from sin, worship me with sacrifices and pray for the attainment of heaven. On

coming to the holy world of the Lord of Gods, they enjoy in paradise the celestial pleasures of the Gods. But having enjoyed the vast realm of heaven, they return on the exhaustion of their merit to the world of mortals. Following the dharma of the three Vedas, they entertain desires and are subject to going and returning. (i.e. to death and rebirth)."⁸ Arjuna is warned against being content with this. "The Vedas speak of the three gunas, but you should rise above the gunas and also above the pairs of opposites, free from getting and keeping, established in the transcendental state of the Self."⁹

Even though the aspirant, in the person of Arjuna, is constantly urged to aim at the highest, there is benevolent tolerance of those who aim lower. "By whatever way men approach Me, by that way do I come to them. All paths that men follow lead to Me."¹⁰ The meaning goes much deeper

⁶ *ibid.*, XII, 10.

⁷ *ibid.*, XII, 11.

⁸ *ibid.*, IX, 20-21.

⁹ *ibid.*, II, 45.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, IV, 11.

than mere religious tolerance ; it implies that all beings are following their destiny and thereby returning ineluctably to their Source. There are various goals, various degrees of achievement short of the supreme achievement of return to the Absolute to which Arjuna is being urged. Each aspirant achieves what he understands and works for, reaches the goal to which he sets his compass. "Worshippers of the gods go to the gods, of the ancestors to the ancestors, of the spirits to the spirits ; My worshippers come to Me."¹¹ The 'Me' here does not mean a personal or limited God contrasted with other gods ; it means the Universal Self. In fact, Krishna says explicitly : "I am the Self in the heart of all beings."¹² Again this amazing benevolence is shown when Arjuna, the ordinary, average aspirant, asks what happens to one who strives but falls short of achievement. He is not reprimanded for his pusillanimity, as he might well have been, but is reassured that such a one, after enjoying the merit he has earned in heaven, is born again in a pure or noble family where he regains the understanding he had acquired in his previous life and is carried on further, even involuntarily, by the current of his former striving."¹³

Supreme Advaitic knowledge is constantly implied, sometimes openly expressed, in the Gita, nowhere more trenchantly than in the verse already quoted, that there is no being of the unreal and no not-being of the Real.² Also it has the highest praise for knowledge: "There is nothing in the world so purifying as Knowledge."¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is not an Advaitic scripture, as the Yoga Vasishta is, or the Ashtavakra Gita. It does not primarily expound the path of Knowledge. When, in Chapter II, Sri Krishna first expounds Advaita and then tells Arjuna to follow in practice the path of disinterested activity, that is enough to confuse the military type, 'the plain blunt man' that Arjuna is, and he starts Chapter III by complaining: "If you think that Knowledge is better than action, why do you urge me to this dreadful action? You have got me all confused with this double talk of yours. Please tell me which is the one way for

me to go to attain the supreme goal."¹⁵ And note, in parenthesis, that it has already ceased to be a question for Arjuna which decision would make life easier, and become a question which provides the path (characteristically, he says, "the one path" to Liberation). Krishna does not answer. He says that the path varies according to a man's temperament, that there are two paths: "the path of Knowledge for introverts and the path of action for extroverts."¹⁶ but he does not urge him, as Vasishta does Rama, to take the path of Knowledge by turning the mind inwards to seek the Reality in himself and asking 'Who am I?'. Instead he urges him to disinterested activity, and a few verses later he adds that "Action is better than inaction."¹⁷

It is necessary to distinguish between the doctrinal understanding from which a man starts and the type of path he follows. For the path of Knowledge, full doctrinal understanding of Advaita is essential ; for a path of karma or bhakti, less complete understanding could serve. The Bhagavad Gita gives full doctrinal understanding (once more a sign of its benevolence, giving even more than is necessary) ; but the path it lays down is a combination of karma and bhakti, action and devotion.

All selfish action is postulating the reality of the ego, the individual self, in fact, even though one may deny it in theory, and therefore Arjuna is constantly exhorted to avoid this. There is a modern ideal of altruistic activity, but that is far from being a reliable means of purification, since it can imply setting oneself up as a sort of providence for others. It is not that that Arjuna is taught but disinterested activity, a far purer discipline: doing one's duty because it is one's duty, with no thought for gain or loss. And it is not with Self-enquiry but with devotion that this has to be combined.

¹¹ *ibid.*, IX, 25.

¹² *ibid.*, X, 20.

¹³ *ibid.*, VI, 37-44.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, IV, 38.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, III, 1-2.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, III, 3.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, III, 8.

I have already referred to a passage where action rather than inaction is prescribed, that is karma marga rather than jnana marga; in Chapter XII it is bhakti marga and jnana marga that are contrasted, and again it is jnana marga that is disfavoured. Arjuna asks: "Which are more skilled in yoga, those devotees who ever steadfastly worship You or those who seek the Imperishable Unmanifest?" And the answer is: "I consider those more perfect in yoga who, with mind fixed on Me, ever worship Me steadfastly, endowed with

Supreme Faith." There is no discussion of theory, no question of one being right and the other wrong. Of those who seek the Impersonal Absolute, Krishna says that they too come to Him;¹⁸ only he tells Arjuna that it is a more difficult path: "The difficulty facing those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest is greater, because the goal of the Unmanifest is very hard for embodied beings to attain."¹⁹

¹⁸ *ibid.*, XII, 4.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, XII, 5.

THE RIBHU GITA

By T. K. S.

RIBHU was a great Rishi. His name finds mention in a few Upanishads like the Thejobindu Upanishad, Narada Parivrajaka Upanishad and Varahopanishad. He is reported to have obtained Brahma Vidya directly from Parameshwara and taught it later to several disciples, e.g. Nidagha, the sage. Ribhu's teachings to Nidagha are contained in the Ribhu Gita, which forms a section of Siva Rahasya. To the best of our knowledge, this Section of Siva Rahasya in Sanskrit is not in print. We have a Tamil rendering of the same by Lokanatha Swamigal alias Bhikshu Sastrigal. This version in simple, understandable Tamil poetry was often read in the presence of Bhagavan and Tenamma Patti's recitals of the same were soul-inspiring. Ribhu Gita finds mention in all works relating to Bhagavan because Bhagavan used to refer to the work or quote from it often.

Long after Nidagha was taught by Ribhu, the latter desired to know how his old disciple was faring. So he went to the place of Nidagha disguised as an ignorant villager, and saw him watching a procession there. It was the occasion of the king of the place going in procession on an elephant on some important occasion. The disguised master asked Nidagha what it all was. Nidagha said that the king was upon the elephant

and going in procession. Ribhu asked Nidagha which was the elephant and which the king. Nidagha replied that the one 'above' was the king and the one 'below' was the elephant. Ribhu said that he could not understand the terms 'above' and 'below'. Nidagha pitied the seeming ignorance of the 'villager' and began demonstrating the terms 'above' and 'below'. He got upon his back and said, "Now you can understand, I am 'up' and you are 'down'". The seeming ignorant man said, "Ah, now I understand, 'above' and 'below'; but not what you said as 'I' and 'you'". This answer of the disguised ignorant man created an awakening in Nidagha. He thought "surely, this must be a strange man. No one but my master can discuss such terms as 'I' and 'you'". So he jumped down and looked searchingly at the disguised man and found that he was none else than his Guru, Ribhu. He fell prostrate at his feet and went into ecstasies at the benign Grace of his Master who had come in search of him.

For lack of translations of the Ribhu Gita in English, enquirers have been referred to the Upanishads, as Sri Bhagavan said that the words of Ribhu Gita tally word for word with the above said Upanishads.

THE YAKSHA PRASNA

From THE MAHABHARATA (contd.)

This dialogue in which a yaksha, who turns up to be the god Dharma, questions Yudhishtira, mostly on points of Dharma, is continued from our previous issue. The notes are based largely on those of K. Balasubramania Iyer in his translation published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Yaksha

17. What *sama* (Vedic chant) is it that is appropriate for a yajna (ritualistic sacrifice) ?

18. What *yajus* (Vedic text) is appropriate for a yajna ?

19. What is it that chooses the yajna ?

20. What is it that the yajna cannot dispense with ?

Yudhishtira

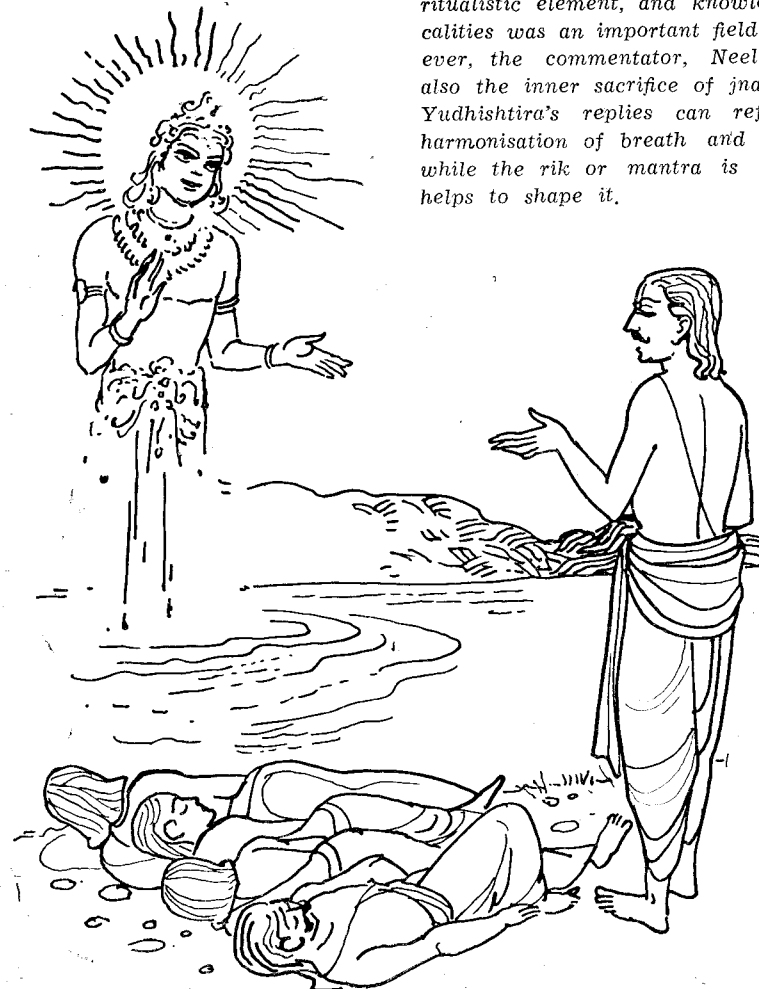
17. Prana is the most appropriate *sama* for a yajna.

18. Mind (*manas*) is the most appropriate *yajus* for a yajna.

19. It is the *rik* which chooses the yajna.

20. It is the *rik* which the yajna cannot dispense with.

Vedic religion contained also an important ritualistic element, and knowledge of its technicalities was an important field of culture. However, the commentator, Neelakantha, mentions also the inner sacrifice of jnana-yoga, to which Yudhishtira's replies can refer. For this the harmonisation of breath and mind is necessary, while the rik or mantra is essential to it and helps to shape it.



Yaksha

21. What is the best of things that fall ?
22. What is the best of things that are buried ?
23. What is the best of quadrupeds ?
24. What is the best of those born ?

Yudhishtira

21. Rain is the best of things that fall.
22. Seed is the best of things buried.
23. The cow is the best of quadrupeds.
24. A son is the best of those born.

Yaksha

25. What man can be said not really to live although he enjoys sense objects, has a mind, is respected by society, breathes and is accepted by all ?

Yudhishtira

25. One who does not make the prescribed offerings to the gods, guests, dependants, the ancestors and the Self, though breathing, does not live.

Yudhishtira rightly takes this question as referring to the householder who neglects the traditional Panchamahayajnas (five great obligations or sacrifices) enjoined in the Smritis as obligatory for a householder.

Yaksha

26. What is weightier than the earth ?
27. What is loftier than the sky ?
28. What is faster than the wind ?
29. What is more numerous than blades of grass ?

Yudhishtira

26. The mother is weightier than the earth.
27. The father is loftier than the sky.
28. The mind is faster than the wind.
29. Thoughts are more numerous than blades of grass.

*Weightier as a basis for sustaining one's life.
Loftier as meriting respect.*

Yaksha

30. What sleeps with its eyes open ?
31. What does not move after birth ?
32. What is without heart ?
33. What expands by its own force ?

Yudhishtira

30. A fish sleeps with its eyes open.
31. An egg does not move after birth.
32. A stone is without heart.
33. A river expands by its own force.

Questions of this type are apparently meaningless, like a modern 'intelligence test'. In fact, however, they contain references to the scriptures or traditional parallels which Yudhishtira is able to take up.

For instance, the Purusha (spirit) moving from the waking state to the dream state and from that to dreamless sleep is compared to a fish. The body and its faculties and their stimulating impulses are the not-self. The Self retains awareness (open eyes) in whichever of the three states they are in.

The next answer implies that the Self is in the unenlightened individual but encased in nescience like the chick in its shell.

'Ashma', the word for stone, means etymologically 'without body'. It is the dark counterpart of the bodiless state.

The 'nadi' in the fourth question refers not only to a physical river but to the flow of consciousness.

Yaksha

34. Who is the traveller's friend ?
35. Who is the home-dweller's friend ?
36. Who is the sick man's friend ?
37. Who is the friend of the dying ?

Yudhishtira

34. A company is the traveller's friend.
35. His wife is the home-dweller's friend.
36. The doctor is the friend of the sick.
37. Gifts (made by him) are the friend of the dying.

Gifts made in life are said in the sastras to tide a man over his death. At least when dying a man should make gifts.

(This dialogue will be continued in our next issue).

THE THREEFOLD SCRIPTURE

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By
ARTHUR OSBORNE

THERE are various ways of categorising the Hindu scriptures. In the first place, they are divided into *sruti*, that is 'heard' or 'revealed' scripture, and *smriti*, that is 'recollected' scripture; the *sruti* being of absolute and the *smriti* only of contingent validity. This does not necessarily mean that the *smriti* are less true; it may mean that they are less widely applicable owing to their larger admixture of the contingent. The *sruti* comprise the Vedas including the Upanishads. Their pre-eminence is not due to a high or higher degree of philosophical exposition. In fact, except for the Upanishads, they contain little of this. It is due to the power in them, a power that goes beyond theories and philosophies to the basic source of Power in the monosyllable OM, which the Vedic Rishis grasped and canalized.

A second category arises from the fact that the words of a *Jivan Mukta*, one Liberated while living, are beyond scripture, beyond everything. They do not abide our question. They are simply to be accepted. The Maharshi himself indicated this on one occasion when he said: "The shastras are the outcome of the sayings and doings of Jnanis and have come down through the ages through many channels. If there is any divergence between what a Jnani says or does and what is laid down in the shastras, then the latter have to be revised or corrected." Such are the enunciations of a Yoga Vasishta or a Ramana Maharshi.

The third category is the 'Prastana Trayi' or 'Threefold Scripture' of Hinduism. It has sometimes been said that any doctrine can find a place in Hinduism. That is, of course, absurd. Many varied modes of perceiving truth are possible, but so also are many types of error. The three scriptures are accepted as fundamental to Hindu

orthodoxy; what accords with them is valid; if anything does not accord with them it is not valid. Only one of the 'Three Scriptures' is technically *sruti*: that is the Upanishads. The second is the Bhagavad Gita and is intrinsically compelling, being the scripture of Sri Krishna himself.

The third is the Brahma Sutras. These are traditionally regarded as the work of Veda Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas and author of the Mahabharata. What is more important than authorship is that from ancient times they have been universally accepted as the touchstone of Hindu orthodoxy, the enunciation of the Sanatana Dharma. They are, as the title indicates, of the *sutra* form of literature, that is a collection of terse, cryptic statements, leaving all but the essential to be understood or filled in by commentators. All three of the great Hindu Acharyas — Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa — have in fact written commentaries on them, each in terms of his own school. They themselves, moreover, contain a good deal of matter which can be considered controversial, particularly in refutation of unorthodox schools. Other names that have been given to them are 'Vedanta Sutras', 'Vyasa Sutras', 'Uttara Mimamsa Sutras' and 'Sariraka Mimamsa Sutras'.

All three of the 'Three Scriptures' — Upanishads, Gita and Brahma Sutras — are regarded as authoritative. They are found to be in agreement, and the true orthodox teaching of Sanatana Dharma is contained in them all. The difference is rather in tone and manner of exposition; while the Gita is vibrant with love and the Upanishads maintain sublime wisdom, the Sutras are more like categorical guide-lines. No one who aspires to say what the Sanatana Dharma teaches and what it does not can afford to neglect them.

One cannot speak of an outline of what is itself an outline, but the following sets forth some of the essential points contained in the Brahma Sutras and accepted traditionally as authoritative. In cases where there may seem to be contradiction it means that both aspects of a paradox have to be accepted.

Brahman is One without a second, can be described only as 'Not this, Not that', is the cause of all, is Bliss and is the Inner Ruler.

Brahman is the material cause and the efficient cause and is an intelligent principle.

Individual self (jiva) and Universal Self (Paramatma) are in the heart.

Brahman is not the object of perception.

The Self consisting of Knowledge is not the individual self but Brahman.

He who is the creator of the sun, moon, etc., is not prana or jiva but Brahman.

Brahman, though different from the world, can be its cause, and yet the effect is not different from the cause.

Brahman is uncreated, indivisible and omnipotent.

No motive can be attributed to Brahman's creation and no evil ascribed to Him. The only thing that could be represented as 'motive' is 'leela' or 'play', which is spontaneous.

Mind, intellect and the sense organs are created, not original.¹

The development of names and forms is the work of the Lord, not of the jiva, but the jiva is eternal (except insofar as transcended through Knowledge in Moksha).

The jiva is the agent so long as he is connected with the *upadhis* (physical and subtle bodies) and is dependent on the Lord for his activity. He is a reflection of Brahman.

The jiva or individual being experiences other lives after death. (Its possible developments are described. Possible modes of death and rebirth are described.)

Liberation is of one kind only.

But a Jivan Mukta may take birth again for the fulfilment of some mission.²

Meditation on the Atma is to be continued until Realization is attained.

While meditating on Brahman one should regard It as identical with oneself.

Knowledge of Brahman frees one from the effects of all past karmas, from (apparent) good and evil alike. Nevertheless prarabdha-karma (that part of one's karma which is due to be worked out in this lifetime) continues (from the point of view of the observer) until exhausted, when the knower of Brahman becomes (consciously) One with It.

The Liberated Being does not thereby acquire anything new but only realizes his already existent nature.

The Knower of Brahman has all powers except that of creation; he does not return to manifestation.

¹cf. the *Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. IX., where Sri Krishna speaks of them as the creation of his Prakriti.

²Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi has also been heard to declare this.

In the state of ignorance there is apparent duality in Brahman, then one smells the other, one sees the other, one hears the other, one speaks to the other, one thinks something, one knows something. But to the knower of Brahman all name and form become merged in the Self. In the state of self-knowledge what object one should smell and through what instrument? What should one see and through what? What should one hear and through what? What should one think and through what? What should one know and through what organ? Through what instrument should one know That by which all this is known? Through what, O, Maitreyi, one should know the knower?

— *Brihadaranyakopanishad*.

THE BHAGAVATA

By

Dr. W. RADHAKRISHNAYYA

Dr. Radhakrishnayya, whose article on 'The Intricacies of Karma' appeared in our issue of April 1967, has published a translation of extracts from the Bhagavata (entitled simply 'Sreemad Bhagavatam', obtainable from Sri Ramanashram, price Rs. 3, reviewed in our issue of January 1967). An outstanding feature of it is the profound insight with which he expounds the symbolism of some of the old myths and the legendary exploits of Krishna.

THE Bhagavata is a supreme example of that type of literature in which the ancient Hindus so excelled: a compilation of stories woven on to a thread of doctrinal exposition. Many of the stories are symbolical; the doctrine is purely spiritual.

The Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita are spoken of as the 'Prasthan Trayi' or 'Threefold Scripture' of Hinduism, but that is perhaps for the learned; for simple folk who like their doctrine humanised by myth and symbol it may be rather the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata. The Bhagavata is, moreover, regarded as the Bhashya or commentary on the Brahma Sutras, inasmuch as while they give the theory of Liberation the Bhagavata gives its case-history, so to speak. In the Bhagavata itself it is said to be "a Purana as sacred as the Vedas" (1-3-40), "great, most auspicious, beneficent and protective" (1-3-41), "the essence of all the Vedas and Puranas extracted, collected and extolled" (1-3-42). It is described as 'vedyam' (understandable), 'veditavyam' (worth understanding), 'shivadam' (auspicious). It is said to eliminate rebirth and to remove the threefold suffering, mental, physical and phenomenal. It is declared that one who reads it has immediate direct experience of God in the heart.

The Bhagavata indicates its contents in a stanza (1-10-1) which divides up into

1. *sarga* : creation in principle.
2. *visarga* : detailed creation.
3. *sthanam* : the preservation of what is created.

4. *poshana* : protection of devotees.

5. *Ootayah* : *karma vasanas* — the continuous chain of causation operation through the law of karma.

6. *manvantara* : the course of human development from the time of Manu onwards.

7. *Isanukathanam* : Divine Incarnations and manifestations, stories of devotees.

8. *nirodha* : *yoganidra* ; subduing the mind through the elimination of thought.

9. *Mukti* : Liberation.

10. *Asraya* : the Reality which is the support or substratum of the universe with all its apparent modifications and changes.

The first nine of these are only manifestations of the tenth, which alone is real.

Some of this teaching is given directly, some through symbolical stories.

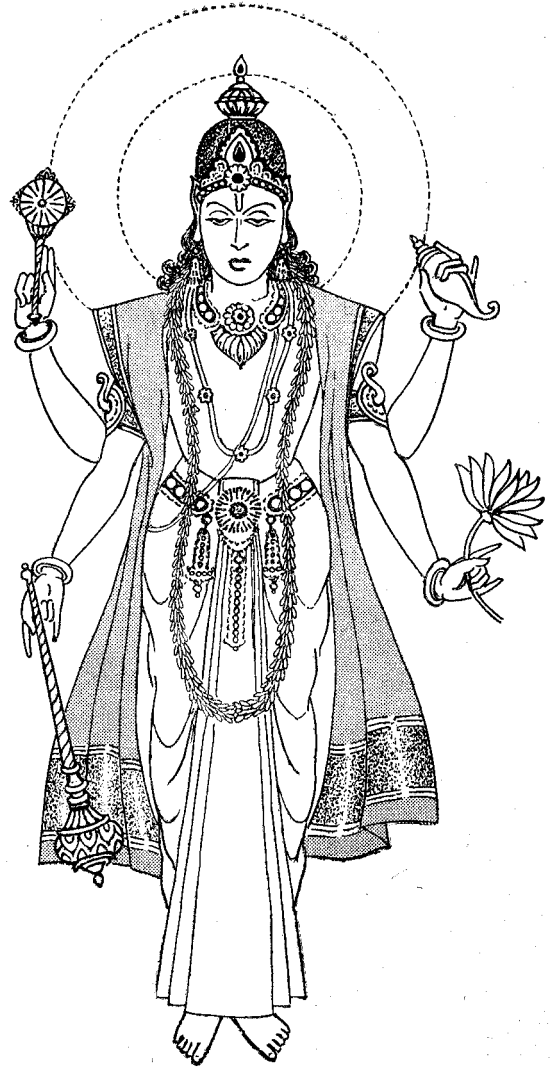
As for authorship, it is traditionally ascribed to the great Sage Veda Vyasa, who was the grandfather of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas in the Mahabharata. Previous to him, it is said, the Vedas had been handed down only by word of mouth from Guru to disciple, and it was he who gathered together the vast numbers of hymns and edited them into the four collections known as Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva. Next he wrote or edited the Brahma Sutras, indications for direct realization of the Supreme. Since all this could help mainly the learned, he also composed

that vast epic the Mahabharata with its hundred thousand verses. Here, amid the turbulent and often poignant stories was interwoven every kind of knowledge man needed, so that it came to be known as the 'Fifth Veda'. In the very centre of it is enshrined the Bhagavad Gita.

Even after this stupendous achievement, Vyasa still did not feel at peace; he had not yet the feeling that his work in life was accomplished. On the contrary, he felt frustrated and dejected; that his life lacked fulfilment. At this juncture the Sage Narada (who so often appears as the Divine Messenger) met him and advised him as a remedy to write the Bhagavata extolling the greatness of God and of devotion to God and to the devotees of God. Although this gives the impression of the Bhagavata as a work of pure bhakti, it should be added that it is no less a work of pure jnana, pure advaita. For instance, opening at random, one comes upon a passage such as: "The body is perishable. The Self is eternal. He is ever unmodified, pure, Self-luminous. He is the Indweller, support and primary cause. He is all pervading, unattached and full (purna). He has no actions. He is One and has no birth or death. One must investigate and find out the Self in one's own heart."

Accordingly, Vyasa wrote the Bhagavata Purana and attained immense peace thereby feeling at last that his function in life had been accomplished.

The death of King Parikshit provides the framework for the Bhagavata. All five of the Pandava brothers survived the 18-day Battle of Kurukshetra at which the Kshatriya chivalry of India was decimated, but all their sons were treacherously slain. A few months later, however, a posthumous son was born of Arjuna's son Abhimanyu. He was born dead owing to the machinations of an enemy but was brought to life by Krishna. He was given the name of Parikshit. When he came of age the five brothers made him king and renounced the world, leaving on foot for the Himalayas.



Parikshit was a wise, upright and devout ruler and had a long and prosperous reign. Then one day, while out hunting, he got separated from his followers and arrived alone at a hermitage in the forest. Feeling thirsty and exhausted, he asked the Brahmin who was sitting there for a drink of water. The Brahmin, however, was in meditation and ignored him. Incensed by this, Parikshit picked up on the end of his bow a dead snake that he saw lying there and draped it round the hermit's shoulders like a garland. When the hermit's son returned and was told



The famous Rāsaleela

what had happened he cursed the king to die of snake-bite within a week.

Curses were taken very seriously in ancient times and were very effective. It never occurred to Parikshit to doubt that the curse would fructuate. Nor did he deny that he deserved it for his outburst of temper and the indignity inflicted on the sage. He therefore abdicated in favour of his son and went to spend his last seven days sitting on the banks of the Ganges, bringing his mind into a fit state for the great transition of death.

Vyasa had a son named Suka who, though young, was perfectly enlightened, completely free from the I-am-the-body illusion which still possessed Vyasa himself, despite his vast achievements. Suka wandered constantly, never staying even a day in one place, never begging, only accepting what was offered to him. Now, however, he came to stay with Parikshit during the last days of his life to prepare his mind for death. Other kings and sages gathered round to listen. Suka's stories and dissertations, which he had learned from his father, Veda Vyasa, comprise the Bhagavata. At the end of six days Parikshit was completely free from body-identification and Suka wandered away. Thereupon a serpent bit Parikshit and he died peacefully.

The Bhagavata is woven mainly around the Avatars or Divine Incarnations, of which it lists the principal ones as ten. Some Puranas bring the list up to over twenty, including less important ones also. Krishna and his elder brother, Balaram, are sometimes listed together as the eighth. In one passage in the Bhagavata Balaram alone is spoken of as the Eighth Avatar on the ground that an Avatar is a manifestation of some aspect of God, whereas Krishna was universal, '*Bhagavan swayam*', 'God Himself'.

This Divine Purana consists of eighteen thousand verses divided into twelve sections or skandas. The first and last of them, like a framework, tell the tale of King Parikshit. The second to the ninth are composed of stories centred mainly around the Avatars. The tenth and longest, of nearly four thousand verses, is devoted to tales of Krishna—his birth, childhood, boyhood, youth, his many exploits, the great work of his prime. The eleventh is a doctrinal exposition which Krishna gave to his devotee Uddhava before leaving the body. "The wise seeker, whose intuition has led him to realization of the Self, does not indulge in theoretical argument about this world of diversity, knowing it to be a mere appearance in Me." It is a fitting companion piece

to that great exposition Sri Krishna gave to another disciple in the Bhagavad Gita.

Instruction is also given through stories. Here is one, greatly condensed. There were four child sages, sons of Brahma, who, in the form of five-year-old boys, used to roam about naked and wander in and out of heaven at will. The gate-keepers, Jaya and Vijaya, resented this and barred their entrance, for which the young sages cursed them to fall from heaven and be reborn as demons in three successive births. Jaya and Vijaya appeal to the Lord but he confirms the curse. He grants them, however, the boon that, even as demons, they will retain constant remembrance of him.

The child sages represent the inner faculty of consciousness which, being so proximate to the Self, slips in and out with childish familiarity. But the door-keepers, 'I' and 'Mine' bar the way and keep them out. This sets up a feeling of frustration and brings a curse on 'I' and 'Mine'. Innocent in their primordial state, they have to be renounced, that is slain, but are very tenacious of life and come to birth again and again, only now with animosity, that is as demons. First they are reborn as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha in the stage of pure enmity of the ego to the Self and are slain by the Narasimha Avatar; then as Ravana and Kumbhakarna, distracted by the pleasures of sense, and are slain by Rama, and lastly as Sisupala and Dantavakra, enslaved to evil speech and evil action and are killed by Sri Krishna. Being slain, they finally merge into him, as the I-thought, when finally eradicated, is thereby perpetuated as awareness of Self.

This story, even apart from its symbolic meaning, has the remarkable implication that one-pointed concentration on the Lord can bring Liberation even if it is not through love but hatred. Great emphasis is laid on this in the Bhagavata. Even in the West there is an example of it in St. Paul whose one-pointed enmity to Christ brought on him the visitation which converted him

into a disciple who could say: "I live, yet not I but Christ in me." A person who hates and attacks religion is usually much nearer to it than one who is indifferent.

In the story of Krishna's birth, Kamsa (the ego), the tyrant king, keeps his sister Devaki (Daivi Prakriti—Divine Nature) and her husband Vasudeva (pure sattva) in prison and kills their children because he fears that her eighth son (the Eighth Avatar) will destroy him. When the birth of Krishna (of Divine Intuition in the heart) takes place the chains fall off and the prison doors stand open, but the Child God has to be smuggled out to safety and brought up in exile (the intuition of Truth kept shielded from the ego) till he has come to maturity and is strong enough to challenge and destroy the tyrant.

Krishna grows up in the house of Nanda (Ananda—Bliss) but the tyrant Kamsa (ego) sends various demons to destroy him. Each of these has a specific meaning. For instance, the first of them, sent while he is still a baby, is Putana, a female demon appearing as a handsome woman who seeks to suckle the child and poison him with her milk. She represents the allure of pretentious false doctrine which assails the beginner on the path. The Divine Infant sucks the very life out of her and it is she who dies, leaving him unharmed.

Many such are the meaningful stories.

The Bhagavata is permeated through and through with spiritual wisdom. It appeals to Vaishnavites and Saivites alike: to Vaishnavites because, like all accounts of Avatars, it represents Lord Vishnu as the Supreme; and to Saivites because its teaching rises to the level of pure Advaita. It proclaims all three margas, jnana, bhakti and karma—knowledge, devotion and action—without ever suggesting any incompatibility between them. Its stories fascinate learned and simple alike. Even children are captivated by its tales of Dhruva and Prahlada and the Child Krishna.

THE MUKTIKOPANISHAD

By
MADGUNI SHAMBU BHAT

THE Muktikopanishad¹ is the last of the 108 more important Upanishads. It is also a sort of conclusion and even index to them. Whereas none of the others mention each other at all, the Muktika gives a list of them in the order in which they should be read, placing itself at the end. For this reason it is probably the latest written of them. Not only does it give a list of the whole 108, but it states to which Veda each one belongs and which invocatory verse is attached to each.

It consists of two chapters. The first contains the above very interesting information and mentions indirect paths to various modes of Liberation; the second is purely and sublimely metaphysical. This second chapter (as Prof. B. L. Atreya points out on p. 3 of his *The Yogavasishta and its Philosophy*) is not an original work but is quoted entirely from the *Yogavasishta*.

'Mukti' in the name of the Upanishad means 'Liberation'. To this is added the suffix 'ka' meaning 'maker' or 'cause', so that the name means 'The Liberation-giver'. If this name is taken together with the word 'upanishad', one of whose meanings is 'approach', it can be taken to mean 'The approach to attainment of Liberation'.

I strongly recommend reading this Upanishad as an introduction to the whole series, as it helps to put them in perspective.

TRANSLATION

CHAPTER I

Invocatory Verses

I take shelter beneath the feet of Ramachandra which can be understood through the Muktikopanishad, that is the abode of the 108 petals of Vedanta beginning with the Ishavasyopanishad.

Harih Om. That is full, this is full. This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

1

Harih OM!

In the beautiful city of Ayodhya Maruti (Hanuman) petitioned Rama, praying to him with due devotion and service. Rama was seated on a jewelled dais, accompanied by Sita, Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrughna and others.

2

Being praised day and night by Sanaka and other groups of Sages, by Vasishtha, Suka and others and by other devotees,

3

Rama sat unchanged although witnessing thousands of changing mental conditions. He sat engrossed in meditation upon his Self. When he came out of samadhi Maruti said to him:

4

"Oh! Rama: You are the omnipresent, everlasting, incarnate Bliss.

5

"Oh Head of the Raghava Dynasty! I bow down to you again. I desire, Oh Rama, to know your essential form in order to obtain Liberation.

6

"Oh Rama, graciously tell me how I may easily escape the bondage of worldly life and attain Liberation."

7

"Well said, Oh mighty-armed Maruti," (Rama said). "I will tell you the essential

¹ See my article on 'The Sequence of the Upanishads' in *The Mountain Path* of January 1965.

truth. It is that I am well based in Vedanta.^{1a} Therefore you should turn to Vedanta."

8

"What are the Vedantas, Oh Best of the Raghavas, and where? Graciously explain to me."

"Listen, then, Hanuman: I will tell you in detail about the Vedantas."

9

The voluminous Vedas issue forth from the breath of Me as All-Pervading-Vishnu,² and Vedanta is firmly established in the Vedas just as oil in sesame seeds."

10

"Oh Rama of the Raghavas, how many divisions of the Vedas are there, and what are their branches and what place have the Upanishads among them? Please put me right about this."

11

Rama said: "The Vedas are said to be four, that is the Rig-Veda and the others.³ They have many branches, and among these branches are the Upanishads."

12

"The branches of the Rig-Veda number 21, those of the Yajur-Veda 109, Oh Son of Maruta."

13

"Oh Fighter of the Enemy, the Sama-Veda has produced branches to the number of 1,000 and the Atharva-Veda 50 different branches."

14

"It is recognized that each branch has an Upanishad. He who recites a single stanza of them with devotion to Me,

15

"He indeed attains to Union with Me which is difficult to achieve even for the Sages."

"Oh Rama, Prince of Sages, some say that Liberation is only of one type."

16

"Others say that one type of Liberation is to be attained by repeating your name at

Benares under proper instructions from a Guru, others that it can be attained by Sankhya-Yoga, and others that it is only to be won by the path of Bhakti."

17

"Others say that Liberation is of four types, Salokya, and the others⁴ and can be attained by meditating on the injunctions of Vedanta."

18

Sri Rama said: "Perfect Liberation is only one and is the highest thing. Even a person submerged in evil actions, Oh Monkey Lord,

19

"obtains the Salokya type of Liberation and not rebirth in other worlds if he dies in the sacred channel of Brahma at Benares; he obtains instructions in My liberating names.⁵"

20

"He attains Liberation from which there is no return to birth, for the great God Siva instructs him in my liberating names when the time is ripe, if he dies in any part of Benares."

21

"Such a one has all his accumulated sins washed off and attains Liberation of the Saroopya type."

^{1a} A twofold attitude towards scripture (and the Upanishads in particular) pervades this Upanishad. In some verses they are declared infallible bestowers of Liberation, while others warn that Liberation is not to be found in them but only in inner control and understanding. The full message must be taken to be that inner control and understanding alone lead to Liberation but that the Upanishads point the way to inner control and understanding.

² Rama, as an Avatar, is regarded as an Incarnation of Vishnu, that is of God in His aspect of Preserver.

³ The 'others' are the Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas.

⁴ The 'others' are Saroopya, Sameepya, and Sayujya.

⁵ It is first explained that perfect Liberation is only one. Later in the Upanishad it is explained that this true Liberation is to be attained only through inner control and understanding. First, however, more technical paths are dealt with,

22

"Such is the Salokya type of Liberation (residing in the same world with Me) and such the Saroopya type (resembling Me). The twice-born^{5a} of upright life who is whole-heartedly absorbed in Me

23

"comes to Me through devoted oneness with Me, the Universal. This is called Liberation of the Salokya, Saroopya and Sameepya types.

24

"The twice-born who meditates on my inexhaustible qualities, as instructed by the Guru, attains complete union with Me, like the caterpillar which becomes transformed into a butterfly.

25

"This it is that is the Sayujya (Union) type of Liberation, the most auspicious and the one which brings the bliss of Brahman. Thus Liberation of these four types is to be attained through devoted service to Me".

26

"By what means can the Liberation of Oneness be attained?" asked Maruti. Rama replied: "The study of the Mandukyopānishad alone will suffice to lead seekers to Liberation.

27

"If enough knowledge is not obtained through the Mandukya, then study the Ten Upanishads^{5b} and you will soon attain Enlightenment and rise to My station.

28

"If even then your conviction does not strengthen into Enlightenment, Oh Son of Anjana, you should find it enough to study the first 32 Upanishads and then stop.

29

"But if you seek Videhamukti through dissolution of the body, then study the entire 108 Upanishads. I will tell you in what order and with what peace invocations. This you should follow. Listen it is :

30-39

"1. Isha, 2. Kena, 3. Katha, 4. Prasna, 5. Mundaka, 6. Mandukya, 7. Taittiriya, 8. Aithareya, 9. Chandogya, 10. Brihadaranyaka, 11. Brahmapind, 12. Kaivalya, 13. Jabala, 14. Shwetashvatara, 15. Hamsa, 16. Arunika, 17. Garbha, 18. Narayana, 19. Hamsa, 20. Hindu, 21. Amrutana, 22. Atharvashira, 23. Atharva Shikha, 24. Maitrayani, 25. Kaushitaki Brahmana, 26. Brihad Jabala, 27. Narasimha (purva and uttara) tapini, 28. Kalagnirudra, 29. Maitreyi, 30. Subala, 31. Kshurika, 32. Mantrika, 33. Sarva sara, 34. Niralamba, 35. Shukarahasya, 36. Vajrasuchika, 37. Tejobindu, 38. Nadabindu, 39. Dhyana bindu, 40. Brahma Vidya, 41. Yogatatwa, 42. Atmaprabhoda, 43. Narada parivrajaka, 44. Trishikhi Brahmana, 45. Sita, 46. Yoga Chudamani, 47. Nirvana, 48. Mandala Brahmana, 49. Dakshinamurti, 50. Shara-bha, 51. Skanda, 52. Mahanarayana, 53. Advaya Taraka, 54. Rama Rahasya, 55. Sri Rama (purva and uttara) tapani, 56. Vasudeva, 57. Mudgala, 58. Shandilya, 59. Paingala, 60. Bhikshuka, 61. Maha, 62. Sharirika, 63. Yogashikha, 64. Turiyatita, 65. Sanyasa, 66. Paramahansa Parivrajaka, 67. Akshamalika, 68. Avyakta, 69. Ekakshara, 70. Annapurna, 71. Surya, 72. Akshi, 73. Adhyatma, 74. Kundika, 75. Savitri, 76. Atma, 77. Pashupata Brahma, 78. Parabrahmam, 79. Avadhuta, 80. Tripura Tapini, 81. Devi, 82. Tripura, 83. Katha Rudra, 84. Bhavana, 85. Rudrahridaya, 86. Yogakundali, 87. Bhasmajabala, 88. Rudraksha Jabala, 89. Ganapati, 90. Jabala darshana, 91. Tarasara, 92. Mahavakya, 93. Panchabrahma, 94. Pranagnihotra, 95. Gopala (purva and uttara) tapini, 96. Krishna, 97. Yajnyavalkya, 98. Varahaka, 99. Shatyayani, 100. Hayagriva, 101. Dattatreya, 102. Garuda, 103. Kalisantarana, 104. Jabali, 105. Saubhagyalakshmi, 106. Saraswati Rahasya, 107. Bahvricha, 108. Muktika.

^{5a}The 'twice-born' are members of the three upper castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.

^{5b}These are the ten major Upanishads, those on which Sri Shankara wrote commentaries. They are the Isha, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aithareya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka.

40

"These are the 108 Upanishads which quieten the three kinds of emotions, bestow enlightenment and lead to non-attachment and which destroy even the three kinds of vasanas.⁶

41-42

"Those twice-born who study these 108 Upanishads after being initiated into them by one who has renounced the world and is well versed in the study of the Vedas, together with the appropriate peace invocations both at the beginning and the end of each Upanishad attain Liberation, although remaining in the body until their prarabdha karma ^{6a} is exhausted.

43

"Then, on the exhaustion of their prarabdha karma, they attain to Videha Mukti, the bodiless state of Liberation, equal to My state. Of this there is no doubt.

44

"The 108 (great) Upanishads are the essence of all the (1180) upanishads and hearing them wards off the attacks of the hosts of accumulated sins.

45

"Oh Son of Pavana, I have personally initiated you my disciple, into this secret science of the 108 Upanishads.

46

"Whether read with understanding or not, this series of 108 Upanishads brings release from suffering to those who read it.^{6b}

47

"But they should not be given to any one at will,⁷ not to an unbeliever or an ungrateful person or one sunk in evil deeds.

48

"They should never be given to one who is not devoted to Me^{7a} or who strays from orthodoxy or lacks devotion to his Guru.

(From here onwards the text is in prose and is not divided into verses)

"Oh Maruta, these Upanishads should be given (by initiation) to one who is a willing

pupil or a good son,^{7b} who is devoted to Me, who is virtuous and of a good family and has a keen intellect. This series of 108 should be given with discretion and after due consideration since, beyond all doubt, one who studies them or even hears them comes to Me. The following is the authentic statement to that effect in the Vedas :

Vidya (Knowledge or Enlightenment) approached Brahman thus : "Pray protect me, for I am indeed a treasure. Never disclose me to an envious person or a crooked cheat. Thus alone shall I remain powerful. I, who am of Lord Vishnu and abide in the Self should be given in initiation after due consideration only to a wise and learned person who approaches you for this and is sober, intelligent and firmly grounded in celibacy".

Then Maruti besought Sri Ramachandra to tell him the invocation which goes with each Upanishad according to which Veda it belongs to. Sri Rama replied :

(Here follow the invocations to be read at the beginning and end of each Upanishad, according to the Vedas they belong to. Only the numbers of the Upanishads are given here, to save space, since their names have already been given in the previous table, so that they can easily be checked up from there.)

⁶ See Chapter II verse 2.

^{6a} Prarabdha karma is that part of one's karma which is due to fructify in this lifetime, so that even a Liberated Man remains embodied on earth until the prarabdha karma of his body has run its course. When it is said that he has no karma, what is meant is that he does not identify himself with the body and therefore does not regard its karma as his.

^{6b} The assertion of the inherent power of scripture apart from its meaning refers to the vibrational or mantric power of sound.

⁷ It will be seen that the severe restrictions that follow as to who can be initiated into the Upanishads take away from the apparently excessive liberality in the statement of their effects.

^{7a} The 'Me' here does not refer to the historical Rama. Not all seekers are worshippers of this Avatar. It refers to the Inner Self, the universal 'Me'.

^{7b} "Or a good son", because a father has the right to give initiation to his son.

THE RIG-VEDA

*Invocation*⁸

May my speech be fixed in my mind, may my mind be fixed in my speech! O Self-luminous Brahman, be manifest to me. O mind and speech, may you bring me the meaning of the Vedas! May what I study from the Vedas not leave me! I shall unite day and night through this study. I shall think of the right; I shall speak the right. May Brahman protect me, may Brahman protect the teacher! May Brahman protect me. May Brahman protect the teacher!

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

for the following ten Upanishads: 8, 25, 38, 42, 47, 57, 67, 82, 105, 107.

THE WHITE YAJUR-VEDA

Invocation

OM. That is full.⁹ This is full.¹⁰ This fullness has been projected from that fullness. When this fullness merges in that fullness, all that remains is fullness.

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

for the following 19 Upanishads: 1, 10, 13, 15, 19, 30, 32, 34, 44, 48, 53; 59; 60; 64, 73, 91, 97, 99, 108.

THE BLACK YAJUR-VEDA

Invocation

Harih OM!

May Mitra be propitious unto us! May Varuna be propitious unto us! May Aryaman be propitious unto us. May Indra and Brihaspati be propitious unto us! May Vishnu of wide strides be propitious unto us!

Salutation to Brahman! Salutation to thee, O Vayu! Thou indeed art the visible Brahman. Thee indeed, O Vayu, I shall proclaim as the right (ritam). Thee indeed I shall proclaim as the true (satyam).

May it protect me! May it protect the teacher! May it protect me! May it protect the teacher!

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Om. May Brahman protect us both (the Guru and the disciple)! May we both obtain the energy to acquire Knowledge! May what

we both study reveal the Truth! May we cherish no ill feeling towards one another!

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

for the following 32 Upanishads: 3, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31; 33; 35; 37, 39, 40, 41, 49, 51, 62, 63, 69; 72; 79; 83, 85, 86, 93, 94, 98, 103, 106.

THE SAMA VEDA

Invocation

Om. May the different parts of my body, my tongue, breath, eyes, ears, and my strength, and also all the other sense organs be nourished; All, indeed, is Brahman, as is declared in the Upanishads. May I never deny Brahman! May Brahman never deny me! May there never be denial on the part of Brahman! May there never be denial on my part! May all the virtues described in the Upanishads belong to me who am devoted to Brahman! Yes, may they all belong to me!

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

for the following 16 Upanishads: 2, 9, 16, 24, 29, 36, 46, 56, 61, 65, 68; 74; 75; 88, 90, 104.

THE ATHARVA-VEDA

Invocation

OM. May we, O gods, hear with our ears what is auspicious! May we, O worshipful gods, see with our eyes what is good! May we, strong in limbs and body, sing your praise and enjoy the life allotted to us by Prajapati!¹¹

OM. Peace! Peace! Peace!

for the following 31 Upanishads: 4, 5, 6, 22, 23, 26, 27, 43, 45; 50; 52; 54; 55; 58, 66, 70, 71, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81; 84; 87; 89, 92, 95, 96, 100, 101, 102.

⁸ The Invocations are given in the translation of Swami Nikhilananda in his book 'The Upanishads' published by Allen & Unwin.

⁹ The word 'purna' translated here as full can imply 'complete', 'perfect' or 'infinite'.

¹⁰ 'That' is the Unmanifest, 'this' the manifested universe. The emergence of the manifested universe leaves the Unmanifest infinite as it was.

¹¹ The Originator, Creator or Ancestor of mankind.

Persons seeking Liberation and possessing the four qualifications (keen desire to escape from bondage, detachment and the others) ¹² should come with full faith and respectfully bearing offerings to a Sat-Guru ^{12a} of good family, well versed in Vedanta and with love for the scriptures, one who is straightforward in his conduct and seeks to benefit all and who is an ocean of benevolence. Being duly initiated by him, they should ceaselessly engage in listening, reflecting and meditating on the Upanishads until they achieve the dissolution of the three kinds of body ¹³ on the exhaustion of prarabdha.^{6a} Then they will be free of all bondage, just as the space within a jar is one with that outside when the jar breaks. That is Videha Mukti or Infinite Liberation. It is the same as Kaivalya Mukti or Supreme Liberation. Even those who abide in Brahmaloka ¹⁴ attain this Kaivalya Mukti along with Brahma himself, having received initiation from him personally. Hence it is said that none can attain to Kaivalya Mukti save

through Enlightenment : not by performance of right actions, such as sacrifices, or by Samkhya or yogic practices such as breath control and worship. Thus declares the Upanishad.

Chapter Two (which is doctrinally more interesting) is said to be taken entirely from the 'YOGA VASISHTA'; since Chapter One has already gone on rather long, Chapter Two will be published in a later issue of THE MOUNTAIN PATH.

¹²The other two are discrimination and the following group of six qualities: sama (calm), dama (self-control) uparati (indifference to sense objects), titiksha (forbearance), shraddha (faith), samadhana (composure).

^{12a}An essential or Realized Guru. It would be more correctly transliterated 'Sad', but that would be reminiscent of the English word 'sad' and the pronunciation is more like 'sat'.

¹³These are the gross, subtle and causal bodies.

¹⁴Brahmaloka or the heaven of Brahma is the highest heaven where, as described in the *Bhagavad Gita* Ch. VIII and in the article 'Devayana and Pitriyana' by Bhagavan Das in July 1966 *The Mountain Path*, those who attain to it abide till the end of a cycle of manifestation.

Knowing Him who is the origin and dissolution of the universe — the source of all virtue, the destroyer of all sins, the master of all good qualities, the immortal, and the abode of the universe — as seated in one's own self, He is perceived as different from, a transcending, the tree of Samsara as well as time and form.

— *Svetasvataraopanishad.*

* * * * *

Right is austerity (tapas). Truth is austerity. Understanding of the scriptures is austerity. Subduing of one's senses is austerity. Restraint of the body through such means as fast is austerity. Cultivation of a peaceable disposition is austerity. Giving gifts without selfish motives is austerity. Worship is austerity. The Supreme Brahman has manifested Himself as Bhuh, Bhuvah, and Suvah. Meditate upon Him. This is the essence of austerity.

— *Mahanarayanopanishad.*



HYMNS FROM SRI SHANKARACHARYA

THE very brief little survey of the Hindu scriptures which this issue of 'The Mountain Path' constitutes would be incomplete without some tribute to Sri Shankara or Shankaracharya, 'The Teacher Shankara'. His brief life and vast achievement put him in a class quite apart. He was born in Kerala, in South India, in the 7th Century A.D. and died in his thirty-second year. During this short span he wrote commentaries on the principal Hindu Scriptures which are not only formidable in bulk but have remained the most authoritative to this day. At his advent the profoundest Hindu scriptures setting forth the doctrine of advaita or 'no-other-ness' were being neglected and Buddhist and Jain teachings were making great inroads; within his short life he reversed the trend and raised advaita to the position of primacy in Hindu teaching which it has never since lost.

There was nothing dry or bookish, however, about his teaching. While offering the ultimate path of advaita to those who could follow it, he wrote also glowing hymns of devotion and adoration of a personal God for those who needed this support.

Nor was the active side of life ignored. He traversed the whole of India on foot, training disciples as he went. While doing so he founded monastic establishments at the four corners of India which have remained the bastions of advaitic orthodoxy ever since, not only in the theoretical teaching they impart but in the living spiritual tradition transmitted from Guru to disciple.

For a brief, simply written account of the stupendous life and work of Sri Shankara, we recommend 'Homage to Sankara' by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, published by Ganesh & Co., Madras. Sri Bhagavan himself translated some of Sri Shankara's works from Sanskrit into Tamil and English versions of three of these are given with brief forewords. Other translations from Shan-

kara will appear from time to time in 'The Mountain Path'.

* * * *

HYMN TO DAKSHINAMURTHI

[Mythology relates that Brahma (that is, God as Creator) created first four youths who were his spiritual offspring. They were expected to assist him in his work but were drawn instead to a spiritual life and neglected this duty. They found a youth of divine lustre seated beneath a spreading banyan tree and facing southward. This was Dakshinamurti, the 'Southward-Facing', for the Guru is traditionally the north pole. He was Lord Siva incarnate. Without words he assumed the posture known as *Chinmudra* or the 'Dakshinamurti mudra'. The three first fingers are held upright and symbolise the three states of being (waking, dream and deep sleep) each of them made up of the three phalanxes which symbolise enjoyment, enjoyer and what is enjoyed. The forefinger stands for the individual being. When it is beside the other three it is separated from the thumb, which symbolises Pure Being, and the four together symbolise the world of sense experience. When it separates itself from the other three and forms a circle with the thumb, the individual has identified himself with the Eternal Witness of all that is. Birth and death are transcended and Pure Awareness remains. The mere assumption of this posture was enough to enlighten the four disciples and no words were needed. The other three hands holding a flame, a snake and the Vedas have their own symbolic significances. The flame represents Saguna Brahman, the serpent the kundalini shakti, a standard symbol of yogic power, and the Vedas, for learning and knowledge.

Sri Shankara himself is looked upon as the manifestation of Dakshinamurti for the Kali Yuga. Sri Ramana, as the invocation here given shows, declares that "That

Shankara who appeared as Dakshinamurti.....abides in Me.”]

his real state of Silence, and who has expressed the nature of the Self in this Hymn, abides in me.

THE HYMN

He who teaches through silence the nature of the supreme Brahman, who is a youth, who is the most eminent Guru surrounded by the most competent disciples that remain steadfast in Brahman, who has the mudra indicating illumination,¹ who is of the nature of bliss, who revels in the self, who has a benign countenance — that Father² who has a southward-facing form,³ we adore.

* *

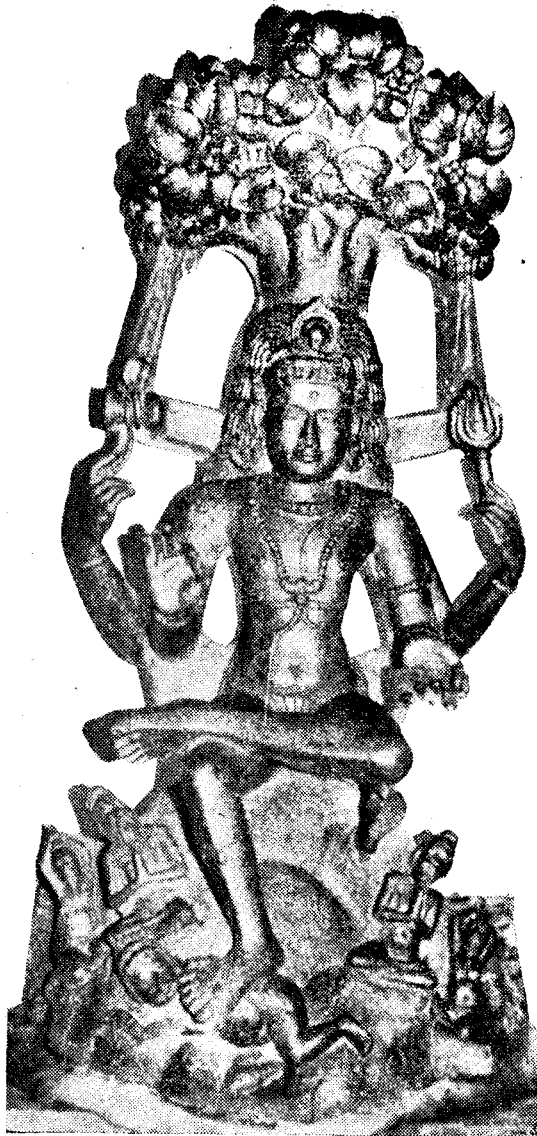
To him who by Maya, as by dream, sees within himself the universe which is inside him, like a city that appears in a mirror, (but) which is manifested as if externally, to one who apprehends, at the time of awakening, his own single Self, to him, the primal Guru, Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

* *

To him who like a magician or even like a great yogi displays, by his own power, this universe which at the beginning is undifferentiated like the sprout in the seed, but which is made differentiated under the varied conditions of space, time and karma and posited by Maya : to him, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

* *

To him whose luminosity alone, which is of the nature of existence, shines forth, entering the objective world which is like the non-existent ; to him who instructs those who resort to him through the text ‘That thou art’, to him by realizing whom there will be no more fall into the ocean of rebirth : to him who is the refuge of the ascetics, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !



(Translated from Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's Tamil rendering)

INVOCATION

That Shankara who appeared as Dakshinamurti to grant peace to the Great Ascetics (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanat Kumara and Sanat Sujata), who revealed

¹ There are many traditional mudras or postures of the hands which are used in Indian dancing and iconography, each of which has its own meaning.

² The supreme Guru is the spiritual north pole and therefore traditionally faces southwards.

³ ‘Father’ because Brahma was the father of the four youths for whom the hymn was written.

To him who is luminous like the light of a lamp in a pot with many holes : to him whose knowledge moves outward through the eye and other sense organs : to him who is effulgent as 'I know', and the entire universe shines after him : to him, the unmoving Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be ! They who know the 'I' as body, breath, senses, intellect, or the Void, are deluded like women and children, and the blind and stupid, and talk much. To him who destroys the great delusion produced by ignorance : to him who removes the obstacles to knowledge, to the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

To him, who sleeps when the manifested mind gets resolved, on account of the veiling by Maya, like the sun or the moon in eclipse, and on waking recognizes self-existence in the form 'I have slept till now', to him the Guru of all that moves and moves not, Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

To him who, by means of the mudra indicating illumination, manifests to his devotees his own Self that for ever shines within as 'I', constantly, in all the inconstant states such as infancy, etc., and waking, etc. — to him whose eye is of the form of the fire of knowledge, the Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

To the self who, deluded by Maya, sees, in dreaming and waking, the universe in its distinctions such as cause and effect, master and servant, disciple and teacher, and father and son, to him, the Guru of the world, Dakshinamurti may this obeisance be !

To him whose eightfold form is all this moving and unmoving universe, appearing as earth, water, fire, air, ether, the sun, the moon, and soul : beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there exists naught else for those who enquire — to him the gracious Guru Dakshinamurti, may this obeisance be !

Since, in this Hymn, the all-self-hood has thus been explained, by listening to it, by

reflecting on its meaning, by meditating on it and by reciting it, there will come about lordship together with the supreme splendour consisting of all-self-hood ; thence will be achieved, again, the unimpeded supernatural power presenting itself in eight forms.

* * * *

II

GURU STUTI

[There is a story that Sri Shankara once challenged an opponent to a dispute, the understanding being that if he won his opponent was to renounce his family and go forth in the homeless state, but if his opponent won Shankara was to accept the life of a householder. The opponent was beaten on all points but then his wife intervened, claiming that she also should be heard as she and her husband were one and the penalty he would undergo if he lost affected her also. Sri Shankara granted this and she thereupon challenged him to expound the spiritual symbolism of sex. Never having experienced carnal love, he was at a loss and asked for two weeks' grace before answering, and this she granted.

At this time a king died and Sri Shankara, by his yogic power, left his own body and entered that of the dead king, so that it seemed to the latter's courtiers that he had miraculously recovered. The queens were overjoyed but, contrasting the intelligence, vigour and grace that their husband now showed with the dull, inert fellow he had been formerly, they guessed what had happened. They therefore sent out officers with instructions to seek for the apparently dead body of a sadhu and to cremate any such that they found, so that the new king could not return to his former body. They did indeed come upon the apparently lifeless body of Sri Shankara and took it for cremation.

Sri Shankara, however, had taken the precaution of warning his disciples and had told them, if he overstayed his time or if there was any danger to his body, to go to

his palace and sing the following song about the Truth. They did so and he immediately abandoned the king's body and revived his own. Sri Shankara thereafter met the wife of his opponent and, having now gained experience, accepted and won the contest.

The Maharshi translated this song under the title '*Guru-Stuti*'.]

* * * *

1. That is the Truth which the wise realize as the Self, the residuum left over on withdrawing from external objects, with or without form (ether, air, fire, water, and earth), by a careful application of the scriptural text 'Not this-Not this'. That thou art!

2. That is the Truth which, after generating the fundamentals, (ether, air, fire, water, and earth) and entering the worlds, lies hidden beneath the five sheaths, and which has been threshed out by the wise with the pestle of discernment, just as the grain is recovered by threshing and winnowing the chaff. That thou art!

3. Just as wild horses are broken in by whipping and stabling them, so also the unruly senses, straying among objects, are lashed by the whip of discrimination, showing that objects are unreal, and are tethered by the rope of pure intellect to the Self by the wise. Such Self is the Truth. That thou art!

4. The Truth has been ascertained by the wise to be the substratum which is different from the waking, dream, and deep sleep states, its own expanded modes, which indeed are held together by it like the flowers strung together on a garland. That thou art!

5. That is the Truth which the scriptures show to be the primal cause of all, elucidating the point clearly by such texts as 'Purusha is all this', 'like gold in ornaments of gold', etc., That thou art!

6. The Truth has been forcefully proclaimed by the scriptures in such texts as 'He who is in the Sun, is in man', 'He who shines in the Sun, shines in the right eye', etc., That thou art!

7. What pure Brahmins seek so eagerly by repetition of the Vedas, by religious gifts, by earnest application of their hard-earned knowledge, and by renunciation, is the Truth. That thou art!

8. That is the Truth which the valiant have got by seeking, with controlled mind, with abstinence, penance, etc., and by diving into the Self by the self. Realizing it they are considered to be heroes with their highest purpose accomplished. That is the transcendental *Satchidananda* (Being-Consciousness-Bliss) after gaining which there is nothing more to worry about since perfect peace reigns. That thou art!

* * * *

III

HASTAMALAKA STOTRA

INTRODUCTION

[A Brahmin woman went to the Jumna to bathe. Finding a yogi sitting in meditation on the bank she left her only child, a baby of two years old, near him, asking him to take care of it until she returned from bathing. On returning she found to her dismay that the child had died in the meantime through some accident or other. The bereaved mother lamented his death so loudly that the yogi awoke. On understanding what had happened he was moved to pity and in order to console the poor woman gave up his own body by yogic power and entered that of the dead body. Seeing the child revive the mother was overjoyed, took it up and returned home without troubling to find out the secret of the child's miraculous revival. The child did not grow up as a normal boy. He was too contemplative to learn, lisp, play or entertain his parents in any way, so they thought that he must be deaf and dumb.

A few years afterwards Sri Shankaracharya was travelling in the neighbourhood. The parents took their child to him and prayed that he might be pleased to restore it to normal health by means of his divine powers. The Acharya took in the situation at a glance and addressed the following

questions to the boy. The boy in his turn replied immediately, astonishing the audience with the sublimity of his wisdom.

When the parents learnt the truth they left him with Sri Shankaracharya. He was known from this time as Hastamalaka — one of the four leading disciples of the great master.

Hastamalaka means "an embellica fruit on the palm of one's hand". The stanzas expound the sublime Truth as clearly as the fruit seen on one's palm.]

* * * *

TEXT

1. "Who are you? Whose child are you? Whither are you bound? What is your name? Whence have you come? O Child! I should like to hear your reply to these questions".

Thus spoke Sri Shankaracharya to the boy, and Hastamalaka replied as follows:

2. "I am neither man, god, yaksha, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya, brahmachari, householder, forest-dweller, nor sannyasi; but I am pure Awareness alone.

3. "Just as the Sun causes all worldly movements, so do I—the ever-present, conscious Self—cause the mind to be active and the senses to function. Again, just as the ether is all-pervading yet devoid of any specific qualities, so am I free from all qualities.

4. "I am the conscious Self, ever-present and associated with everything in the same manner as heat is always associated with fire. I am that eternal, undifferentiated, unshaken Consciousness, on account of which the insentient mind and senses function, each in its own manner.

5. "I am that conscious Self of whom the ego is not independent as the image in a mirror is not independent of the object reflected.

6. "I am the unqualified, conscious Self, existing even after the extinction of buddhi just as the object remains ever the same even after the removal of the reflecting mirror.

7. "I am eternal Consciousness, dissociated from the mind and senses. I am the mind of the mind, the eye of the eye, ear of the ear and so on. I am not cognizable by the mind and senses.

8. "I am the eternal, conscious Self, reflected in various intellects just as the Sun is reflected on the surface of various sheets of water.

9. "I am the single, conscious Self illuminating all intellects, just as the Sun simultaneously illumines all eyes so that they perceive objects.

10. "Only those eyes that are helped by the Sun are capable of seeing objects, not others. The Source from which the Sun derives its power is myself.

11. "Just as the reflection of the Sun on agitated waters seems to be broken up, but remains perfect on a calm surface, so also am I, the conscious Self, unrecognizable in agitated intellects though I clearly shine in those which are calm.

12. "Just as a fool thinks that the Sun is entirely lost when it is hidden by dense clouds, so do people think that the ever-free Self is bound.

13. "Just as the ether is all-pervading and unaffected by contact, so also does the ever-conscious Self pervade everything without being affected in any way. I am that Self.

14. "Just as a transparent crystal takes on the lines of its background, but is in no way changed thereby, and just as the unchanging moon on being reflected on undulating surfaces appears agitated, so is it with You, the all-pervading God".

SRI RAMANA GITA

By

Dr. V. A. SARMA

Dr. V. A. Sharma is a youthful lecturer in Sanskrit of Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. A. P. He has taken *Sri Ramana Gita* as the subject for his doctoral thesis. He is devoting his studies to Hindu doctrine and philosophy generally.

OUTSTANDING in the vast Hindu sacred literature are the Gitas, of which the best known are the Bhagavad Gita, the Ashtavakra Gita, the Avadhuta Gita, the Uttara Gita and the Ribhu Gita.¹ All are in Sanskrit, all proclaim the supreme truth of Advaita and all point the way to Liberation. In our own times a new one has been added in the '*Sri Ramana Gita*' composed by the great Sanskrit poet Kavyakantha Ganapathi Sastri.² This is divided, like the Bhagavad Gita, into eighteen chapters. Like that also, it is in dialogue form, but with many Arjunas, being composed of questions put to the Maharshi by the poet and a number of his friends and followers, with the Maharshi's answers. Like the Bhagavad Gita and unlike the other Gitas, mentioned above, it takes into consideration also a man's life in the world and the obligations it entails.

The Quest

Daivarata, an earnest disciple of the Maharshi, asked: "What undertaking is most necessary to man?" The immediate reply came: "To know his Self on which all undertakings and their results are based".³

The next question was naturally how to do this, and Maharshi replied: "By withdrawing one's thoughts from external objects and remaining in steady, non-objective contemplation of the Self alone". But he also added, in reply to further questions, that other methods prescribed by the ancients (such as mantras) are also good and that niyamas or disciplines of character are helpful until the moment of achievement.

when they drop away, being no longer needed.⁴

The Heart

One stanza in this Gita was written by the Maharshi himself, that is the second stanza of the second chapter. It runs:

"In the Heart-cavern the Supreme alone, in all its elemental purity, shines as 'I', the Self, and is within the direct reach of experience. Enter the heart; search there with the mind or dive deep within or control the movement of the breath, and remain for ever in the Self."

Thus the seat of the Self in the body is indicated and the three methods of attaining it are specified: by conscious quest, by deep diving or by breath-control. In any case, some spiritual discipline is necessary. Nobody can reach the goal by theoretical understanding alone.

Chapter V is called 'Heart-Knowledge' and is, in my opinion, the heart of this Gita. In it the Maharshi declares that the spiritual heart at the right side of the chest is not to be identified either with the physical heart on the left or with the *anahata-chakra* or yogic centre on the level of the heart.

As the physical heart pumps life-blood to all parts of the body, so this heart distributes the light of consciousness through the chan-

¹ The second and third of these were translated into English by the late Hari Prasad Shastri and are obtainable from Shanti Sadan, 29 Chestow Villas, London W. 11.

² For an article on whom see '*The Mountain Path*' of April 1965.

³ *Ramana Gita*, III, 2, 3.

⁴ *ibid.*, III, 4-11.

nel of sushumna to the *Sahasrara chakra* and thence through the whole body. It is mistaking this light for a multiplicity of things which plunges a man into the avidya (ignorance) or maya (illusion) of samsara. This mind which creates all these baffling differences, receives its own light from the Heart, like the moon from the sun. In fact it is the Heart-sun which lights up the whole universe.⁵

The Granthi (The Knot)

The first manifestation of ignorance (avidya) is the rise of the I-thought, the individualisation of the Self. This is described as a knot which the aspirant has to cut or unravel in order to attain Liberation. The idea is found in the Upanishads but it is nowhere described so technically as in the Ramana Gita. It is said there that when the light of consciousness spreading out from the heart is entangled in the network of subtle nerves (known as nadi) the existence of the separate individual self is felt. These two phenomena, the entanglement of the light and the feeling of a limited ego-sense, constitute the knot.⁶

The knot is to be cut and Liberation attained by turning the light of consciousness back to the heart, which it appears to have left, flowing into various regions of the body.⁷ This involves turning attention inwards from the world and thus stripping the subject of its object.

"When the light withdraws from all other nadis and remains in one nadi alone, the knot is cut asunder and then the light becomes the Self."⁷

The cryptic injunction which the Maharshi has been known to give to some one who asked the way: "Go back the way you came", refers to this. It is to be done by concentrated enquiry or inward turning of the attention, which churns up the nadis with the result that the split-mind is unified into one stream and re-enters its abode, the sushumna.⁸ In this state there is no awareness of anything as being other than the Heart, which is the Self.

Even if objects are cognized that does not harm the cognizer since they do not appear other than him. Only the Oneness of Self is felt. In this state the light of Self irradiates the whole body, like heat a piece of red-hot iron. This state is attained in deep meditation called samadhi. In the case of a fainting attack or deep sleep or sudden great fear, joy, sorrow, etc., the mind returns to its seat in the Heart, but unconsciously; it is only in samadhi that it returns there consciously. This conscious return of the mind to its source is Liberation.⁹

Mukti

The Liberated Being who continues to occupy a body is called a Jivanmukta. There is no difference between this Enlightenment and that of the disembodied.

"There being no difference between complete knowledge (prajñana) and Mukti. Mukti is of one type only. One released from temporal bonds while yet in the body is called a Jivanmukta."¹⁰

There are no different types or kinds of Mukti and no degrees of it. Either there is Mukti or there is not. Differences observed by others refer only to the mode of action or manifestation of a Jivanmukta dictated by his prarabdha. Therefore Mukti cannot be gradually built up. It dawns as a sudden illumination.

"Jnana is not gained gradually, step by step and day by day. When the practice becomes perfect it blazes forth in fulness all at once."¹¹

(If any aspirants consider these statements discouraging, let them remember that the same applies to physical changes also, like birth and death. Both are sudden changes, but the approach or ripening towards them is gradual. Realization is

⁵ *ibid.*, V, 3-16.

⁶ *ibid.*, IX, 17.

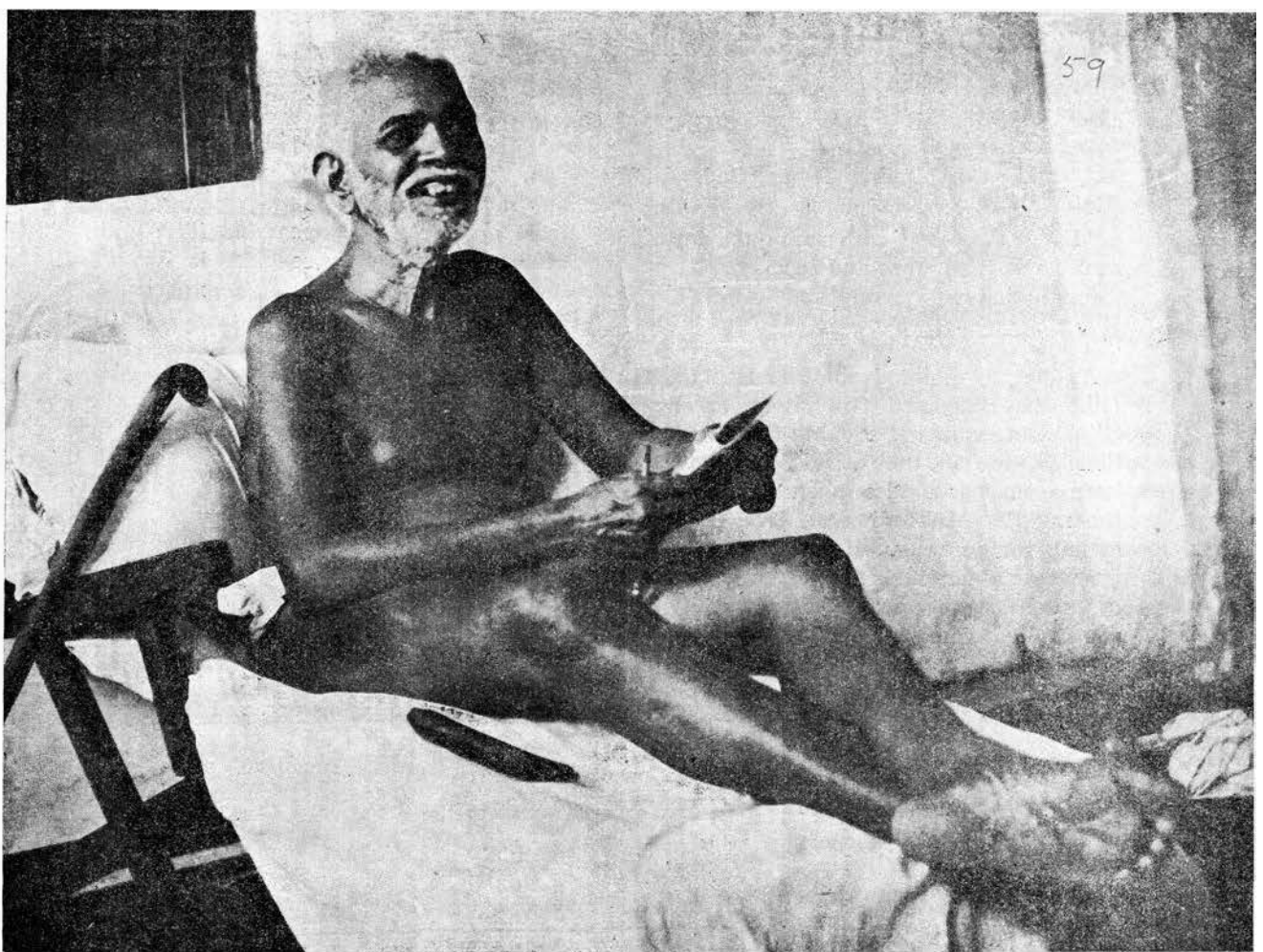
⁷ *ibid.*, IX, 18.

⁸ *ibid.*, IX, 10, 12, 13-16.

⁹ *ibid.*, V, 20, 21.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, XIV, 4.

¹¹ *ibid.*, XVII, 3.



sometimes compared to the rising of the sun; although this is a definite act, the pre-glow lighting up the land before the sun's disc actually appears on the horizon is already considerable.)

Although there are no stages in Jnana or Mukti (which are the same) there may be pre-glimpses.

"If the mind, once entering the Heart, comes out again, it is only the stage of quest. Jnana is experience from which there is no slipping back."¹²

This implies that although the phenomenon is the same, it cannot be called Jnana or Mukti, not being permanent.¹³

Self or Other

Even that vexed question which many find insuperable, claiming truth for themselves and imputing error to their oppon-

ents, the question whether Universal Being is the very Self of the seeker or a God wholly other than him, the Maharshi here elucidates simply, naturally, in passing.

"The Jnani knows through love that the Divine is none other than his own Self. Another (the bhakta) though he takes Him to be different from his Self, merges and abides in Him.

"That love which flows towards the Supreme (unbroken) like the flow of oil leads inevitably to the Self even though one may not aim at this.

"When the devotee feels himself circumscribed and of little knowledge, then, for the removal of misery, he worships the all-pervading Supreme Reality as God outside him-

¹² *ibid.*, XVII, 5.

¹³ *ibid.* In his 'Self-Enquiry' the Maharshi explains at some length that temporary glimpses of Realization do not make one a Realized Man,

self, and, worshipping It as God, finally attains to It.

"By vesting God with name and form one transcends the names and forms of the world through that very name and form."¹⁴

Life in the World

As already pointed out, the Ramana Gita (like the Bhagavad Gita alone among the Gitas) covers in its teaching a man's obligations in life in the world. It shows how karma marga is also useful for purifying the mind.¹⁵ An individual is to society as a limb to the body. He should subordinate his personal interests to the maintenance of a united, strong and healthy society, like one united family.¹⁶ The wise resort to righteous activity as an example to others and for the welfare of others.¹⁷

The Direct Path

"One seeks to attain; another seeks who it is that seeks to attain. The former goes the long way but in the end he too attains."¹⁸

Lord and Shakti

Up to now I have expounded the teaching from the aspirant's own viewpoint; now let us look at it from the objective or cosmic angle. The appearance of the universe is the result of apparent movement in the Supreme Being (Ishvara or Siva). This movement is called the power or energy (shakti) of the Supreme. Maya is another name for it, used when one wishes to emphasise its illusory nature. Sri Krishna, in Chapter Nine of the Bhagavad Gita, calls it 'Prakriti'. The Lord is the same as His Energy. The difference is only in words, to help in understanding. The same Being is called Ishvara when movement does not appear in it and Shakti when it appears with movement. It is, in our common parlance, by means of his Energy or Shakti that Ishvara creates the universe. *Vyapara* is another word for the movement of the Supreme. It is twofold: *pravritti* or positive action and *nivritti* or negative action. By the former the universe is projected through space and time and by the latter it is withdrawn again into the Being.¹⁹

On the microcosmic or subjective plane the Supreme Being is no other than the Heart or Self (*Swarupa*) and its Shakti is the *vritti*.²⁰ It can be cognized in two ways, simply as Truth or through experience of its working.²¹

Upasana

It has been disputed whether Liberation can be attained by any scriptural study or meditation or other means. Some have argued that to say that it can would be making it the object of action, whereas it is in fact self-subsisting, beyond and unaffected by any activity as Sri Shankara has proved at length in his commentary on the *Brahmasutra*. But for practical purposes all Advaitins do agree on the necessity for some kind of upasana or means, and they explain this by the fact that all means to Self-Realization are merely negative, removing the obstructions to recognition of established fact, and therefore do not contradict the immunity of Moksha to cause and effect. It is in this light that we have to interpret the Maharshi's categorical declaration that without upasana there can be no Realization.²² He also rules out any difference between Jnana as the end (i.e. Moksha) and jnana as the means, saying that the former is only the intensification and permanence of the latter.²³

In the same spirit, as remarked earlier in this study, he admitted the need for *niyamas* or disciplines of life and character.²⁴ It has been argued that they can be of no use since action is impotent for achieving Moksha: but in actual practice they are used and prove effective. The reason given is the same as above, that their use is the negative one of removing obstructions.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, XVI, 3-7.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, VII, 14-19.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, X, 3-11.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, VII, 16, 17, 20.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, VII, 22.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, XII, 17.

²⁰ *ibid.*, XII, 28.

²¹ *ibid.*, XII, 29, 30.

²² *ibid.*, I, 12.

²³ *ibid.*, I, 13.

²⁴ *ibid.*, III, 8.

THE APPROACH THROUGH SONG

By
T. P. R.

ONE afternoon when I entered the Hall there was already a crowd, so I slipped in and sat in a corner. I sat down by the side of a well built man wearing a lot of vibhuti and with strings of rudraksha mala revealing him as a Veera Saiva. Suddenly Bhagavan turned to me and said: "Don't you know him? He is Kannappa, the disciple of Vallimalai Swami" (a Swami who was famous for singing devotional Tamil songs. Bhagavan himself told us that his voice was simply marvellous). "He sings beautifully, even better than his guru. You should hear him. He brings tears to one's eyes."

Bhagavan went on praising Kannappa, which was something quite unusual, so a real urge to hear him came over me and I begged him to sing. He began to sing Tiruppugazh. I have never heard such a vibrant voice. It even brought tears to my eyes. It was a really thrilling experience. For an hour or more we all listened spellbound. Then the gong went for lunch and we got up reluctantly.

I went out of the hall just behind Bhagavan and he suddenly turned round and said to me: "All this is unnecessary. If you give your mind to it it will lead you astray—no use."

This was a shock to me, as he had just been praising Kannappa sky high. I said nothing in reply but I took it to mean that he did not want me to follow this path.

On another occasion the famous singer Dilip Kumar Roy was in the hall and, after prostrating a number of times before Bhagavan, he spoke as follows: "I know no meditation or samadhi and no sadhana to attain it. I follow the devotional approach of bhakti. I worship God through my songs. By crying to Him I seek to attain Him.



Meera in ecstasy

Bhagavan, is this way right? Please guide me, Master."

For days together dear Dilip had delighted us with his songs of Meera etc. Bhagavan looked graciously at him and said with



"Emotional devotion"

immense love and compassion : "Yes, what you are doing is just what you have to do. Carry on and it will certainly lead you to your goal. Through devotion to God we discharge our emotions and that is a sure way to reach Him." Dilip prostrated again several times on hearing this.

Again I went out to lunch just behind Bhagavan and again he turned to me. This time he said : "Tell Dilip that our Tamil saints have said that bhakti is the mother of jnana. So bhakti marga is supreme. The essence of bhakti is in merging with the Universal Being through emotional devotion."

I was perplexed. The other day he had praised the singing of Kannappa but then advised me not to follow that way ; and now again he was saying that the devotional and

emotional way of bhakti was the supreme and almost the only way to reach God. I pondered over it for a long time, and then it flashed on me that he praised this way to Kannappa who was already following it under instructions from his guru but cautioned me against it and the caution applied only to me personally. And he alone can judge what path is right for me. Now again he was commending the bhakti path as supreme because for Dilip it was supreme.

The path of meditation alone is appropriate for me, and how simply he indicated it ! Whether directly or indirectly he guides us. His Grace is always with us. Even in times of doubt and despair he guides us from within. The Grace of the Guru is indeed supreme !

The Self is not attained through discourses, nor through intellectuality, nor through much learning. It is gained only by him who longs for It with his whole heart. For to such a one the Self reveals Its own nature.

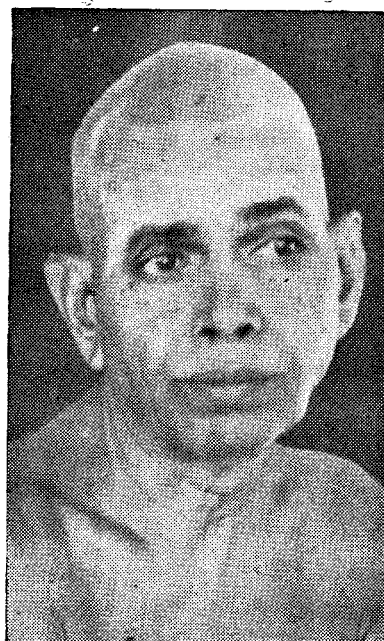
— *Mundakopanishad.*

HOW MY FATHER CAME TO THE MAHARSHI

By
the Musician KOVAL-MANI

MY father's spiritual life started in his boyhood when he had darshan of Lord Siva in the guise of an old man and continued to carry him further and further till it induced him to throw up his job at Alleppey in Kerala and plunge into the ocean of spiritual quest, taking to a wandering life, visiting the shrines and other holy places of South India together with his wife. This was long before he came face to face with Bhagavan but for the space of a year he received spiritual guidance and instruction through a human medium. He was able to maintain himself on his wanderings, being a musician who gave harikirthanas. He and his wife had a number of thrilling experiences proving that the Lord is indeed One and pervades everywhere. In 1928 he settled at Coimbatore and in 1930 I had the good fortune of being born as his son. Most of the time poverty stared him in the face but he never actually lacked food. When the last meal was finished and he was left wondering about the morrow the next would appear, but only the next. Many sadhus used to visit him, directed by Providence, either as a means of strengthening his faith or testing his strength.

It was in 1933 that he first went to Tiruvannamalai in the hope of earning something and felt a desire to see the person he had heard spoken of as 'the Maharshi'. Bhagavan was going through some papers when he first saw him. After a while he raised his head, shaking slightly as usual, and beckoned to my father to approach. Hesitant at first but then convinced that the call was for him, my father went up to him and prostrated. "So you have come from Coimbatore? And how are the family?" Bhagavan said, showing, as he so often did, knowledge of the circumstances.



"Wait a little," Bhagavan said, and in that 'little' Nilakanta (my father) was caught as in an eternity.

"Come, let us go to the hall," Bhagavan said, tapping him. Without a word, Nilakanta got up to follow him but then, with a sudden shock, saw the Divine Father walking in front of him and, unable to control himself, cried out "Appa!" (Father). By that time Bhagavan had turned into the doorway of the hall and Nilakanta, hurrying after him, beheld the God Subrahmanyam ahead of him. Before he had time to think Bhagavan was in the hall and motioned to him to sit on his right at the foot of the couch. There he sat, feeling like a child at the feet of its father. The minutes ticked by. People were coming in, asking questions, prostrating, but Nilakanta was obli-

ous of all this. Then the lunch gong sounded and people got up and went out as usual, taking it for granted that Bhagavan, who was always punctual, would go too. But he did not get up. Nor did Nilakanta. Nilakanta heard a silent voice asking him: "What do you want?" And silently he answered: "Grace." Still neither of them moved. Nilakanta did not even look up at Bhagavan. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder and, looking up, he saw the Sarvadhikari who whispered: "Bhagavan won't get up unless you do. People are waiting in the dining hall."

Nilakanta looked up and saw Bhagavan's usually shaking head as firm as a rock while, through half-closed eyes he was bestowing on him a penetrating look¹ of boundless love and grace! Surrounding Bhagavan's head was a golden halo the size of an umbrella inside which golden light-waves emanating from Bhagavan's head were radiating. Nilakanta forgot everything. In one bound he was at Bhagavan's side and had flung his arms round him. In a voice husky with love he said: "My Father, your devotees are waiting for you. Shall we go?"

"Is that so?" Bhagavan immediately replied. "Yes, of course we will go." And he left for the dining hall followed by Nilakanta.

My father told me that after that there was no further need for him to visit Bhagavan physically. Over the years, as I can testify, his features began to change, taking on something of the appearance of Bhagavan. Devotees and even strangers would look at him and then at the wonderful picture of Bhagavan at his side and exclaim on the likeness.

To the last he used to refer to Bhagavan as his father, and indeed, when I voluntarily took over the massaging of his legs I used to feel that Bhagavan was giving me an opportunity to serve him in that form.

On the day prior to his leaving the body oxygen had to be administered. Suddenly my brother and I began to chant the holy refrain 'Arunachala-Siva'. We were supporting him in a sitting position. He opened his eyes and looked at the picture of Bhagavan in front of him, and tears began to trickle down his face. He indicated that we should lay him down. There was a beautiful smile on his lips. Soon after this he lost consciousness and throughout the night we chanted Bhagavan's '*Marital Garland of Letters to Sri Arunachala*'. Incense was burning. A sweet and holy silence filled the entire house. Even the children, usually noisy, were very quiet. There was no movement in his body except the breathing. At 5.30 on October 20th, 1961, the eastern horizon glowed red as though the Holy Arunachala were giving us darshan. There was a slight movement and it was over.

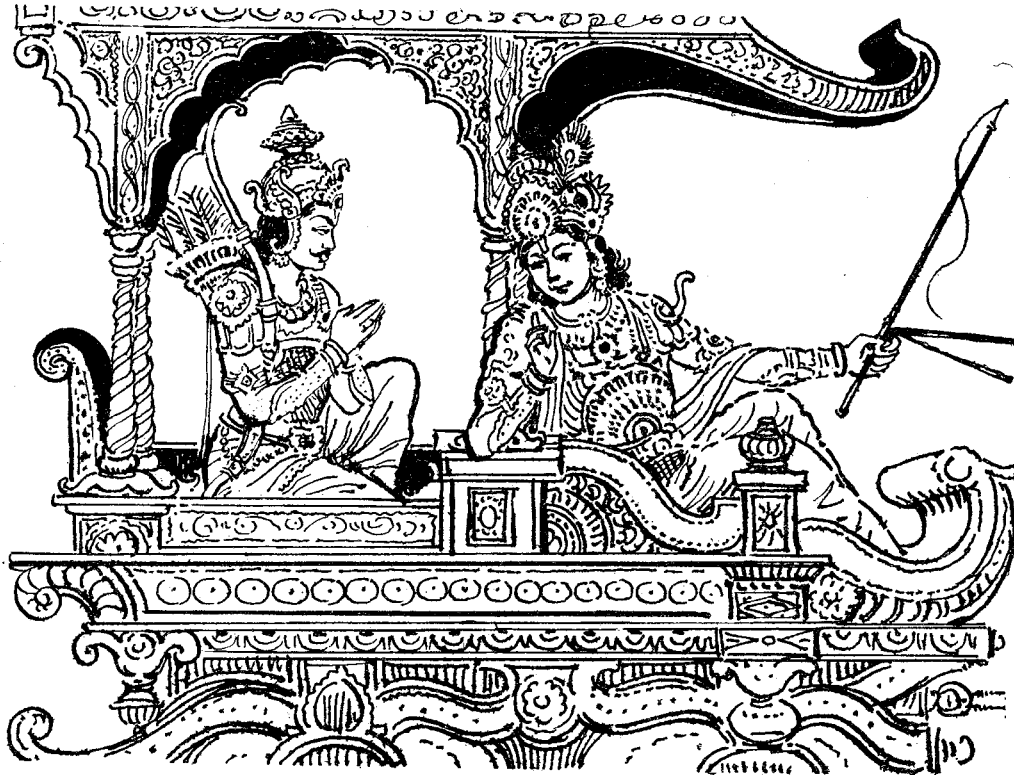
There was no weeping or outer show of grief. As it was puja season, the whole city through which we carried the body wore a festive appearance. Everywhere music, flowers, pandals and images of Mother Durga.

Thus ended the story of the body. The spark of Bhagavan Ramana's eternal flame which had occupied Nilakanta's body merged into its Source in Bhagavan Ramana.

¹ This was the 'initiation by look'. Except when Bhagavan was in the sort of samadhi which is without outer consciousness or was concentrating in a Grace-giving look like this, there was a constant slight shaking or trembling of his head. This was attributed to the power of the spiritual vibration in him—Editor.

(That Atman) can never be reached by speech, nor by eyes, nor even by mind. How can it be realized otherwise than from those who say that it exists?

—Kathopanishad.



The Bhagavad Gita

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Translated by

Prof. G. V. KULKARNI and ARTHUR OSBORNE

1

Arjuna said :

By the profound explanation of the Self that you have made out of grace towards me my delusion has been quite dispelled.

2

I have heard from you at length of the origin and dissolution of beings, O Lotus-Eyed, as also of Your imperishable Majesty.

Note : Verse 1 refers to the contents of Chapters Seven and Eight and Verse 2 to those of Chapters Nine and Ten.

3

As You have declared of Yourself, so it is, Divine Lord. But I long to see Your Heavenly Form, O Supreme Being.

(The glories of the Divine described in the previous Chapters awaken curiosity to visualize them. This demand for cosmic vision of the Lord thus comes naturally.)

4

If You deem it possible for me to see it, O Lord, then, Lord of Yoga, show me Your Imperishable Self.

(‘Yoga’ here means Power.)

5

Sri Bhagavan said :

Behold My divine forms, O Son of Pritha, hundreds and thousands of them, of many sorts, many colours, many shapes.

6

Behold Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Asvins and Maruts. Behold also, O Bharata, many wonders not seen before.

(The *Adityas* are twelve, the *Vasus* eight, the *Rudras* eleven, the *Asvins* two and the *Maruts* in groups of seven. These are the divine beings or forces, different manifestations of the One.)

7

Behold here today, O Gudakesa, the entire universe, moving and unmoving and whatever more you would see, all centred in My body.

8

But you cannot see Me with these eyes of yours. I will give you divine sight : behold My Divine Power.

(Again here, 'Yoga' means 'Power'.)

9

Thus speaking, O king, Hari, the great Lord of Yoga, showed the son of Pritha the Supreme Divine Form.

10

With innumerable mouths and eyes, innumerable wondrous sights, innumerable divine ornaments, innumerable divine weapons brandished.

11

Wearing heavenly garlands and attire, anointed with celestial unguents, wondrous, resplendent, boundless, facing all ways.

12

If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze forth simultaneously in the sky it would be like the splendour of that Great One.

13

Then in the body of the God of gods the Pandava beheld the entire (universe) in one form divided into many.

14

The Wealth-Winner (Arjuna), astounded and hair standing on end, bowed his head before the Lord and with joined hands spoke.

15

Arjuna said :

O God, I see all the gods in Your body as well as the multitudes of beings of all kinds and the God Brahma on his lotus seat and all the Sages and celestial serpents.

Brahma is God in his aspect of Creator.

16

I see You of boundless form on every side, with numberless arms, bellies, mouths and eyes, O Lord of the Universe, O Cosmic Form ; no end, no middle, no beginning do I see to you.

In the *Purusha-Sukta* of the Rig Veda (X) the Purusha is similarly described.

17

I see You with diadem, mace and disc, a radiance blazing everywhere, hard to look upon, dazzling like blazing fire and sun, immeasurable.

The mace and disc are the traditional weapons of Lord Krishna.

18

You are the Eternal Supreme to be realized, the ultimate Treasure of the Universe, the Imperishable, Lord of eternal Dharma. You are, I believe, the Primordial Purusha.

19

I see You with no beginning, no middle, no end, infinite in power, with countless arms, with the sun and moon for eyes, flaming fire for mouth, scorching this universe with Your radiance.

20

The space between heaven and earth and all the (four) quarters are pervaded by You alone. At sight of Your wondrous, terrifying form the three worlds tremble.

21

Behold galaxies of gods entering into You! Some in fear extol You with palms folded, companies of Maharshis and Siddhas crying 'All Hail!' extol You with their hymns.

22

The Rudras, Adityas, Sadhyas, Viswe-devas, the two Asvins, the Maruts, the Ancestors, the hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas, all gaze astounded at You.

These are various categories of celestial and infernal beings. The siddhas are men who have attained superhuman powers.

23

O mighty-armed, seeing Your huge form with myriad faces, eyes, feet, with myriad bellies bearing fearful tusks, the worlds are horrified. So too am I.

24

Seeing You reaching the sky, blazing with many colours, mouth wide open, with large fiery eyes, I am terrified at heart and find no courage or peace, O Vishnu!

Doctrinally Vishnu is God in His aspect of Preserver, and Krishna, is an Avatar and manifestation of Vishnu.

25

Seeing Your jaws terrible with tusks flaming like the fires of Cosmic Death, I find no directions of space and know no peace. Be gracious, O Lord of gods, refuge of the worlds!

26-27

And all these sons of Dhritarashtra and hosts of the kings of earth, with Bhishma, Drona, Suta-putra and the warrior chiefs of our side also rush headlong into Your fierce tusked jaws, terrible to behold. Some are to

be seen caught in the gaps between the teeth, their heads crushed to powder.

'Suta-putra' meaning 'Son of a Charioteer' was a name used contemptuously for Karna.

28

As the torrents of many rivers hasten to the ocean, so do these heroes of the world of men into Your flaming jaws.

29

As moths plunge swiftly to their doom in a blazing fire, so do these men speed to their doom in Your jaws.

30

Devouring all the worlds on every side with Your flaming jaws, You lick them up. Your radiance lights the whole world while scorching it, O Vishnu.

31

Tell me who You are with so terrible a form. I bow down to You, Great God. Be gracious to me. I seek to know You, the Primal Being; I do not know Your nature.

32

Sri Bhagavan said:

I am Time the mighty Destroyer of worlds engaged now in world destruction. Even without you none of these warriors in hostile armies shall survive.

33

Arise therefore and win fame. Conquer your enemies and enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me alone these have been already slain. Be merely the instrument, Left-Handed One (capable of shooting arrow with the left hand).

Actually Arjuna was ambidextrous.

The purpose of the cosmic vision is evidently to shatter the ego of Arjuna completely and to show him that it is the Divine Prakriti (will) that does everything. An individual is merely an instrument in Her hand. He must follow Her and submit his ego at the feet of the Divine. Vide Bhagavad Gita XVIII, 59: "If prompted by egoism, you think 'I will not fight', this determination of yours is vain. Prakriti will compel you to fight."

34

Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors slain already by Me. Have no fear. Fight and you shall conquer the enemy in battle.

35

Sanjaya said :

Hearing these words of Kesava, the Crowned One joined his hands and, trembling, prostrated before him again and then said in a choked voice, overcome by fear :

36

It is but right O Hrishikesha that the world is delighted and rejoices in Your praise, the demons flee to all sides in fear and the hosts of the siddhas bow down to You.

37

Why should they not bow down to You, Great One, Originator even of Brahma ? O Unbounded God of gods, Refuge of the worlds, You are the Eternal Being, the Non-Being, and the Supreme beyond both.

38

You are the Primal God, the Primordial Purusha, the Supreme Refuge of this universe. You are the Knower and what is to be known, the Supreme abode ; all this universe is pervaded by You with Your endless forms.

39

You are Vayu (Wind), Yama (Death), Agni (Fire), Varuna (oceans), the Moon, Prajapati (the First Ancestor) and the Great Grand Sire. Salutations to You ! A thousand times and ever again salutations to You.

40

Salutations to You before, behind and on every side, All-in-all, of endless power, Immeasurable ; You pervade all and thus are all.

41-42

For whatever I have rashly or lightly said, calling You 'Krishna, Yadava, friend', treating You as a friend, ignorant of this greatness of Yours, for any disrespect I have shown in play or repose, when sitting or at meals, O Achyuta, alone or in company, I now implore You, the Immeasurable, for pardon.

43

You are the Father of this world, of the moving and unmoving, its great and revered Guru. There is none equal to You in the three worlds, who then can surpass You, Lord of Boundless Might ?

44

Therefore, bowing down to You and prostrating my body at Your feet, I crave forgiveness, Adorable Lord. Bear with me, as a father with his son, as a friend with his friend, as a lover with his beloved.

45

I rejoice that I have seen what none have seen before, and yet my mind is shaken with fear. Show me only Your usual form. Be gracious, Lord God, Refuge of the worlds.

46

Let me see You in the same form as before, four-armed wearing a crown, and with mace and disc in hand O Thousand-Armed Cosmic Form.

Even now, when imploring a return to normal vision, Arjuna still considers it normal to see Sri Krishna with four arms as in iconography.

47

Sri Bhagavan said :

Out of grace for you, I have shown you by My yogic power this supreme form of Mine, splendid, universal, infinite, primeval, never before seen by any other.

Actually, Sri Krishna had once given a brief glimpse of his cosmic form to his foster-mother Yashoda and once as a warning to Duryodhana, the villain of the Mahabharata.

48

I am not to be seen in such form by any other than you, great hero of the Kurus, whether through the Vedas or through sacrifice or study (of scriptures), or gift or ritual or severe austerity.

49

Be not afraid or bewildered at having seen this terrible form of Mine. With fear dispelled and heart made glad behold My usual form again.

50

Sanjaya said :

Having spoken thus to Arjuna, Vasudeva showed again the usual form. In that gentle form the Great One calmed his fear.

51

Arjuna said :

Now that I again see this gentle human form of Yours, O Janardana, I am composed again and restored to my own nature.

52

Sri Bhagavan said :

Very hard it is to see the form of Mine which you have seen. Even the gods ever long to see this form.

53

I am not to be seen in such form as you have seen Me by study of the Vedas or by austerity or gifts or sacrifice.

54

Only by unswerving devotion can I be known and truly seen in this form, Arjuna, and even be entered into, O Tormentor of the Foe.

55

He who performs actions for Me, takes Me for his Goal is devoted to Me and is free from attachment and aversion towards all beings, he comes to Me, O Pandava.

This is the eleventh Chapter, called '*The Vision of the Cosmic Form*'.

Indeed, all this is the immortal Brahman! He is everywhere — above, below, in front, at the back, upon the right, upon the left! All this world is indeed the Supreme Brahman!

— *Mundakopanishad*.

* * * * *

As oil in sesame-seeds, as butter in curds, as water in underground springs, as fire in wood, even so this Self is perceived in the self. He who, by means of truthfulness, self-control and concentration, looks again and again for this Self, which is all-pervading like butter contained in milk, and which is rooted in self-knowledge and meditation,— he becomes that Supreme Brahman, the destroyer of ignorance.

— *Svetasvatropanishad*.

* * * * *

(That) one (Supreme) Ruler, the soul of all beings, who makes His one form manifold — those wise men who perceive Him as existing in their own self, to them belongs eternal happiness, and to none else.

— *Kathopanishad*.

THE VEDAPARAYANA

INTRODUCTION

In Sri Bhagavan's lifetime Vedic chanting or Veda Parayanam was held twice a day, morning and evening, lasting about forty minutes on each occasion, and this is still continued. This with the puja which follows it is the only ritual which was or is generally attended at the Ashram. Even for this there was and is no compulsion, although Bhagavan obviously approved of people attending it. It was an hour of tremendous silence when he sat immobile as though carved in rock. He never allowed anything to interrupt it. When asked whether people should learn the meaning, so as to follow it, he said no: it was sufficient that the chanting served as a support for meditation.

Despite this, it is also true, however, that the portions used for chanting were carefully chosen and approved by Sri Bhagavan himself. Technically the Vedas are a well-defined group of scriptures, but not all the passages chanted before Sri Bhagavan are technically Vedas. All of them have the sanctity infused by Sri Bhagavan's presence. All of them are recited in Sanskrit. It is felt that they should be made accessible in translation to readers of Bhagavan's journal. Nothing has been deleted from them since Sri Bhagavan's lifetime and only one item added. That is Dakshinamurti Stotra which, mainly on the request of the late Major Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala, for an account of whom see our *Ashram Bulletin* of January, 1964), is now used as the opening hymn before the evening chant. An English translation of it, together with two other items by Sri Shankara translated from Sanskrit into Tamil by Sri Bhagavan, is given in the present issue of *The Mountain Path*.

Technically, even listening to the chanting of the Vedas is supposed to be made available only to Brahmins, but this prohibition was abrogated by Sri Bhagavan. It is recognised that the word of the Jivan Mukta is more than the scriptures and Bhagavan's word was accepted. Bhagavan's word was the living Veda, he was the source of the Vedas.

As explained in our article, 'Above Orthodoxy and Unorthodoxy' by Krishna Bhikshu in October 1965, he retained only such elements of orthodoxy as he saw to be appropriate. In his presence Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Hindus and Westerners, sat shoulder to shoulder at the chanting. A North Indian visitor once had the temerity to challenge this and Bhagavan answered curtly: "Sit down and attend to your own sadhana," (which might be rendered: "mind your own business.").

The following is a list of the items chanted:—

MORNING

RAMANA CHATVARIMSAT (Forty Verses in praise of Ramana by Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni)

SRI ARUNACHALA PANCHARATNAM (Five Verses addressed to Arunachala composed by Bhagavan)

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD (the first three chapters)

SRI SOOKTAM (from the Rig Veda)

A small portion of the 4th chapter of the TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD (*Nakarmanā*).

EVENING

DAKSHINAMURTI STOTRAM (by Shankaracharya)

SRI RUDRAM (*Namakam* from the Yajur Veda)

SRI RUDRAM (*Chamakam* from the Yajur Veda)

PURUSHA SOOKTAM (from the Rig Veda)

DURGA SOOKTAM (from the Yajur Veda)

SRI SOOKTAM (from the Rig Veda).

A small portion of the ARUNA (from the Yajur Veda)

A small portion of the 4th chapter of the TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

UPADESA SARAM (Thirty Verses containing the essence of the Maharshi's teaching composed by him)

A small portion of the TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD (*Nakarmanā*).

Further there is a set of 108 names of Bhagavan which are recited daily during morning and evening puja. On special occasions an expanded set of 1008 names is chanted. Both lists are given.

[This is far too much, of course, to quote in one issue, so we shall serialise it.]

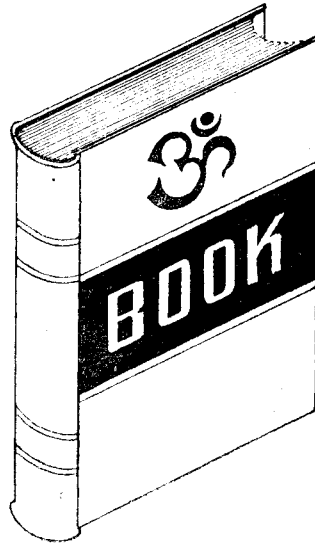
No one can grasp Him above, or across, or in the middle. There is none equal to Him whose name is great glory.

—*Svetasvataropanishad*.

* * * * *

His form is not to be beheld; none ever beholds Him with the eye. Those who meditate on Him with their minds undistracted and fixed in the heart know Him; they become immortal.

—*Mahanarayanopanisad*.



REVIEWS

MYSTIC APPROACH TO THE VEDA AND THE UPANISHAD: By M. P. Pandit. (Ganesh & Co., Madras. Pp. 127. Price: Rs. 3).

Hinduism had much to learn from the West in the 19th century, and Western educated Hindus justifiably put themselves in the position of disciples. What was not justified, however, was that they still maintained this position and echoed Western scholarship when this scholarship exceeded its competence by sponsoring a crude materialistic interpretation of the Vedic hymns. Today there is a change of tone. A significant part of Western scholarship has itself outgrown the nineteenth century ignorance of and hostility to spirituality in general and non-Christian spirituality in particular. A rediscovery of the Vedas is taking place in which Hindu scholarship is taking the lead as indeed it ought to. In our issue of January 1967 we reviewed Prof. A. C. Bose's 'Hymns from the Vedas', a translation which does much to rectify previous purblind scholarship.

Mr. Pandit's little book is a powerful vindication of the Vedas. It is cogent and well documented and remains highly readable despite its erudition. He has concentrated particularly on two points, first on disproving the attempt to represent Soma as a mere physical intoxicant and expounding its mystic symbolism, and secondly on showing the reverence in which the writers of the Upanishads held the Vedic hymns. He has succeeded magnificently in both objectives.

The author lays all credit at the feet of his instructors, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastri,

yet it is clear that his own intuitive understanding and arduous study have also contributed much to the making of the book.

ARTHUR OSBORNE.

VEDASAMIKSHA: Ed. Dr. E. R. Sreekrishna Sarma. (Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. Pp. 127. Price: Rs. 6.)

This representative collection of the Papers submitted at the Vedic Seminar held at Sri Venkateswara University in 1964, focusses the light of modern research on the oldest known Scripture, the *Veda*. The general trend of these studies is to look upon the Veda not as litany of nature-worshipping barbarians at the dawn of civilisation, but as a record of the aspirations, thoughts and ways of life of a people over a long stretch of three millennia. The hymns of the Veda as available to us in their present form are only a portion of the vast literature of the kind that was salvaged at the end of an epoch in the development of humanity.

In those times there was no water-tight division between things secular and things spiritual; all life was one and every part of it was related to the Supreme Godhead — or its emanations, the Gods — around which day-to-day life was consciously organised. That is why we find almost every branch of life-activity reflected in some way or other in these hymns. The learned papers in this volume draw attention to this feature of the Veda. Astronomy, Chemistry, Agriculture, Polity, Music, Prosody, Geography are some of the topics that are interestingly developed in the

context of the Veda, *The Vedic Concept of Waters* is a striking contribution. Prof. E. Anantacharya writes at considerable length to prove that these 'waters' are not merely physical waters but are currents of Consciousness that take different forms on the different levels of this many-tiered creation.

The papers in Sanskrit deal more with the textual aspects of Vedic study. There is an elegant article on the origins of the Darshanās in the Vedic literature by Sri Ramachandrachar.

The volume stimulates interest in Vedic studies and is a welcome contribution on the subject.

M. P. PANDIT.

THE YOGAVASISHTA AND ITS PHILOSOPHY: By B. L. Atreya, 3rd Edition. (Darshana Printers, Moradabad, U.P. Pp. 184. Price: Rs. 12.)

The Yoga Vasishta is a unique work of value not only for theoretical study but for practical sadhana. Ramatirtha described it as "the greatest work ever written." The author speaks from indubitable direct experience and at once carries conviction. Dr. Atreya is a lifelong student of it and presents its teachings with admirable fidelity. He remarks that there is much repetition in it and that it lacks logical classification, but this is of the nature of the work and rather an asset than a flaw. Divine Knowledge is a study which needs to be rubbed in and the teaching will bear any amount of repetition. Vasishta himself says that as the pupil advances in understanding the teaching requires to be adapted and varied. He declares: "I spread my net of words to catch the mind-bird and bring it to the Atma." It is important to approach the work as arranged and presented by him and any attempt to improve upon the classification of the material or to re-arrange it will only detract from its purposefulness.

On the whole, however, Dr. Atreya has well brought out the salient features of the teaching in this small volume. With remarkable clarity he presents Vasishta's teaching that everything one perceives is in one's own mind. 'God', 'Reality', 'Unreality', are all thoughts and are the same mind-stuff of which the entire universe is made. There is thus only Reality and its appearance as world, ego and God, just as the Maharshi says in verse 2 of his '*Forty Verses on Reality*'.

This is a valuable introduction to a work which should be read in the original or in translation.

DR. T. N. KRISHNASWAMI.

THE PETITION OF RAM: A Translation of Tulsi Das's *Vinaya-Patrika* with an Introduction, Notes and Glossary by F. R. Allchin (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London. Pp. 335. Price: 48 sh., for UNESCO).

It is a matter of deep gratification to all lovers of Tulsi Das to see this excellent translation of the *Vinaya Patrika*, a classic in its own right and amongst the vast writings of the poet second in popularity only to his immortal *Ramcharitmanas*. The unusual approach of the poet in the planning of this most original book, his devotional fervour combined with rare poetic talent, all together create a spell on the mind of the sensitive reader. When a petition is presented to royalty supplication has to be made to the door-keepers and courtiers for leave of access to the king. So in sweet humility Tulsi addresses his prayers to Ganesh, the Sun-god, Siva, Parvati, Ganga, Jamuna, Hanuman, the brothers of Ram, Sita and last of all to his Master Ram. The majestic aspect of the Lord's character is kept in view here. Tulsi as the supplicant delights in effacing himself so that the greatness of his Master might shine in undiminished splendour. He extolls the glory of the Lord's name and loves to dwell on the compassion and mercy of God which flows so abundantly to sinners and lowly creatures like himself. The only boon he seeks from the gods and goddesses is devotion to the feet of Ram.

In spite of its Indian setting, its many references to mythology and traditional Hindu views such as karma and rebirth, the appeal of this book is universal. The author of *The Petition of Ram* is well aware of this uplifting quality for in his introduction he says, '*Vinaya-Patrika*' establishes Tulsi as one of the great mystical writers of the rich Indian tradition and he may fairly rank among the great mystics of the world.

How difficult the task of a translator can be is known only to those who have tried to do it themselves. As the author points out they have the alternative of following different methods such as 'a close literal translation' in which much of the original meaning is lost, 'a free translation' which attempts 'to obtain the spirit of the original without particular attention to the actual words', or the adoption of 'the Indian commentatorial style' which 'allows the translator to show clearly his own interpretation of difficult passages'. But the songs of *The Petition of Ram* do not share any of the above defects. Whether in themselves or in comparison with the original they are most pleasing to read. Three factors seem to have immeasurably enhanced the value of this book; they are: the enviable gift of choice

words, a scholarship which has painstakingly studied Tulsi Das, his contemporaries and antecedents, and a sympathetic insight into an alien belief and culture. The author hopes that his book will add lustre to the English language. May we hope that it will also cement the growing understanding between India and the West!

MRS. CHANDRA HANDOO.

RAMAYANA SAMIKSHA: Edited by E. R. Sri Krishna Sarma. (Venkateswara University, Tirupati. Pp. 116. Price: Rs. 5.)

This small book contains the collection of papers on *Srimad Ramayana* presented at the Seminar held in February 1965 under the auspices of the Sanskrit Department of Venkateswara University. Besides the inaugural address by Sri K. Pampapati Rao and two presidential addresses by Sri B. R. Sarma and Sri P. Nagaraja Rao, there are eight other papers bearing on the great Epic. Four of them show the impact of Valmiki's work on the regional literature of this country such as Hindi, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The Jain version of the story of Rama in the Prakrit language is dealt with by H. L. Bhayani in a separate paper. Sri T. K. Gopalswami Iyengar, in a well-written paper, interprets the *Ramayana* from the Vaishnava standpoint of *Saranagati Tattwa*. One or two seeming lapses from the strict code of dharma with which Rama is charged are examined with much insight by the Editor of the Volume. The adaptability of the slokas to musical recitation is well set forth in a Sanskrit paper by Sri Anantakrishna Sarma.

While the writers in the regional languages have drawn their inspiration from Valmiki, the poets' poet, and have also kept fairly close to the original in respect of the major events, they have not hesitated to make additions and alterations in respect of details. Some of these have been completely omitted, others have been assigned a different place and yet others changed considerably. Some new episodes are also to be found in these regional versions. Such departures are but natural. In a vast sub-continent presenting a wide variety of customs and manners, the *Ramayana* is bound to take the colour of the locality in whose language it is presented by a poet gifted with imagination and daring. But the remarkable point is that these regional versions of the *Ramayana*, in spite of deviations from the original, emphasise the central motive of the story, namely dharma. Most of them present Rama as a human being who faced innumerable odds most cheerfully in his adherence to what he considered right conduct in the various situations in which he found himself.

The only notable omission in it is a paper on Kamban's treatment of the theme of the *Ramayana*. It is too great a work to be omitted. It is unfortunate that a work whose popularity is second to that of none among the regional versions of the *Ramayana* should find no place in the book.

PROF. M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER.

MAHABHARATA: Translated by Kamala Subramaniam. (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay-7. Pp. 766. Price: Rs. 30.)

The mighty epic centred around the Pandava brothers is far more than a tale of adventure. So much and varied instruction is woven into it that the saying has become current that what is not to be found in the *Mahabharata* is not to be found anywhere; and it has come to be known as the 'Fifth Veda'. It is illuminated by the personal charm and profound teaching of Sri Krishna. In the very centre of it is enshrined the *Bhagavad Gita*. Like a golden thread running through it is the theme of dharma that is of right and honourable conduct. It is by no means idealised or romanticised; villainies in plenty are recorded and violent passions come into play; but the yardstick of dharma remains the infallible measuring rod. It is indeed given a new subtlety and profundity as Sri Krishna turns it from the letter to the spirit of honour.

In condensing this vast work to something under eight hundred pages the present translator has not impaired the zest of it. The essentials of both teaching and episode remain. It is a book that is hard to put down.

The translation is free and vigorous with no archaisms of style. However it is far from perfect. There are mistakes in English and occasional infelicities of style ("With a smile he felled the banner of Nakula and with an arrow he killed his charioteer." p. 457). What is more serious is that the translator sometimes intrudes opinions or interpretations without indicating the fact. Any modern interpolations in an old text should be indicated either by printing them in a different type or by direct acknowledgment, as C. Rajagopalachari does in translating the *Ramayana*. Above all, no condensation or editing should have been used with the *Bhagavad Gita*. A scripture is not to be tampered with. After all these qualifications, however, this remains a fine, bold rendering keeping both the tension and the nobility of the original.

ARTHUR OSBORNE.

THE WISDOM OF UNITY (Manisha Panchakam of Sri Sankaracharya). By T. M. P. Mahadevan. (Ganesh & Co., Madras-17, Pp. 48. Price: Rs. 3.)

This is a famous stotra composed by Sri Sankaracharya in five verses. As Sri Sankara was going to the river Ganges he came across a Chandala, a low caste untouchable person, and bade him go away. The Chandala asked him where he should go, since the body is insentient and its movement has no meaning, while the Self is One and thus Immovable, Sankara, listening to these words, recognised that he must be Lord Siva himself in human form and composed these five verses glorifying the Unity of Brahman. According to Balagopalendramuni, who has written a commentary on these verses, the first four are based on the four major texts respectively "Consciousness is Brahman" of the Rigveda, "I am Brahman" of the Yajurveda, "That thou art" of the Samaveda and "This Self is Brahman" of the Atharvaveda. The last verse glorifies the ecstatic bliss of Brahman. The verses have a prologue and an epilogue, the former giving the background of the story and the latter a practical conclusion.

Dr. Mahadevan who has edited these five verses has given a transliteration after the version in Devanagari script, followed by an English translation and detailed explanation. The translation is both literal and lucid. The explanation or commentary elucidates the contents of the verses and removes objections to the fundamental principles stated there. In his commentary he has made use of the Sanskrit commentaries of Madhmanjari and Tatparyadipika. The work begins with obeisance to Sri Sankara and ends with a quotation from Sankara's commentary on the Mandukya-karika both suited to the text. The learned editor combines scholarship with lucidity, except perhaps in Pp. 11—12.

The verses in the original Sanskrit are simple and deserve to be recited and reflected upon by the spiritual aspirant. The translation and the commentary are also useful. Dr. Mahadevan has done excellent service in editing this beautiful text.

PROF. G. V. KULKARNI.

SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMAM with the commentaries of Sri Sankaracharya and Parashara Bhattar. (Ganesh & Co., Madras. Price: Rs. 12.)

The Vishnu Sahasranamam occupies a special place in the Anushasana parva (canto) of the great epic Mahabharata. It is a chain of the thousand names of the Lord. The recitation of

the names of the Lord is one of the traditionally hallowed modes of God realization called Japa Yajna. It is also described as *nama samkirtana*. It is wrong to hold that the repetition of the Lord's name is a thoughtless mechanical occupation. The name sinks into our life and becomes powerful. The Christian Bible affirms that "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." The Puranas hold that in the Kali Yuga the uttering of the name of the Lord saves us. The Bhagavata, the Vishnu Purana and the Saints of India have all glorified the efficacy of the repetition of the name. Sri Krishna in the Gita says "I am the Japa Yajna among yajnas". The literature on this subject is Vishnu Sahasranamam. After having listened to the discourse on Dharma, Yudhishtira asks Bhishma, "What do you consider the greatest of all dharmas? By reciting what will human beings be liberated from samsara?" Bhishma replies that in his view the devoted adoration of the Lord with hymns of praise and by his thousand names is the dharma which is superior to all others. It is by way of reply to this question that we have the Vishnu Sahasranamam. The names connote attributes. Each name of the Lord the Bhagavata says describes an exploit. The Lord possesses infinite qualities, hence he has thousands of names. The book under review gives us the text, translation and introduction along with two commentaries of the book, i.e. one from Sankara and the other from Parashara Bhatta, who belongs to the school of Ramanuja. The commentaries are profound. Sankara regards the thousand names as superior to all sacrifices because: "It does not involve any injury to any being in the process." He calls it Ahimsa-yaga. For doing it you need no collection of money or material, nor need you observe any particular time, place or procedure. Bhatta's commentary is full of praise for the Lord and is a record of devotion and unqualified and absolute self-surrender to the Lord.

In the present edition the translation is literal and sometimes not academic. But to translate a classic is not easy. Careful and diligent proof-reading would have spared us the ugly two-page Errata. The English knowing world gets a glimpse of this great work in the volume under notice.

PROF. P. NAGARAJA RAO.

THE GREAT INTEGRATORS: THE SAINT-SINGERS OF INDIA: By Dr. V. Raghavan (Publications Division, Delhi-6. Pp. 184. Price: Rs. 2.25.)

In this amplified version of the Patel Memorial Lectures for 1964, now issued with a compre-

hensive Anthology, we have god's plenty of sacred songs all for a song. Dr. Raghavan, whose erudition is only matched by his enthusiasm, takes in his sweep fifteen centuries of time and ranges at will over the regions where Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali and Assamese are spoken. The vast and active movement of integration which began with the Bhagavata and is even now at work with the bhajans popularised by Gandhiji, not to mention All India Radio and popular films on the Bhaktas, serves to bring together not only the various corners of India, but all the social and intellectual strata, from Maharajas and Maharishis to the masses. The songs cross sectarian and even religious frontiers and the singers come from all trades and professions—scholars, weavers, potters, butchers and cobblers. The contents appeal to the populace, but they maintain high standards of correctness of doctrine and purity of taste.

Dr. Raghavan's quotations are not only apt but convincing; praise for our culture is fetched from foreign and sometimes reluctant witnesses. One quotation from an English writer reads: "The spiritual men of India, a great and watchful multitude whose spiritual status is unattainable, are many of them Catholics in a deeper sense than we of the West have yet given to the word..." (p.74). To prove the possibility even to-day of "being still in the midst of one's activities", Dr. Raghavan cites the recent example of Gandhi, whose impact on his people proves, as Toynbee declares, that "this spiritual gift, that makes Man human, is still alive in Indian souls." The lectures (100 pages), the Anthology (75 pages) and the Bibliography (9 pages) follow a uniform plan and support one another admirably.

PROF. K. SWAMINATHAN.

LIFE SKETCH OF PUJYA NARAYANASWAMI:

By (Miss) Sudha Rathi. (Parmanand Prakashan Mandir, Matunga, Bombay-19. Pp. 86. Price: Rs. 2.)

The compiler of this book did not know Sri Narayanaswami personally, although he died as recently as 1956. She has been fortunate enough, however, to draw on the recollections of two who did: Yogi Ramananda Swami and Parmanand Swarup Sri Champakbhai, the former a companion and the latter a disciple. Ramananda Swami's recollections have been shaped into an unsophisticated but charming account of the rare world of saints and sadhus tramping the Himalayas from one holy place to another. The two companions are convincingly described: both

disciples of the same guru (from whom indeed they had to extract initiation), but Narayanaswami surging with joy and devotion, plunged in japa, while Ramananda was austere and irascible.

Sri Champakbhai (who is now a swami and at whose Mandir this book was published) recalls Narayanaswami's occasional visits to the cities of the plains in his later years. He shows him surrounded by disciples, leading kirtan, often lost in ecstasy. His intuitive knowledge and loving guidance of his disciples is described.

ARTHUR OSBORNE.

LIFE AND PHILOSOPHY OF SRI SWAMI-

NARAYAN: By H. T. Dave: Foreword by Dr. K. M. Munshi: (Published by Akshar Bhavan, 19, Lakhamsey Napoo Road, Dadar, Bombay-14 DD. Pp. 186+XXIV. Price: Rs. 10.)

Besides the Preface and Introduction, the book under review falls into two parts, part I comprising twenty-one chapters and part II seven chapters. The former is largely occupied with the work of Sri Swaminarayan as a religious reformer. The latter sets forth his metaphysical position.

He was born in a small village near Ayodhya and his original name was Ghanashyam. In boyhood he learnt all the sastras and acquired such mastery as to be able to intervene effectively in philosophical disputations between the adherents of Sankara's Advaita and of Ramanuja's Visishtadvaita. He was a convinced exponent of Visishtadvaita. He believed in the ultimacy of difference. The Highest Brahman was Purushottama; Akshara Brahman was lower in rank; the jivas or souls were the lowest in the hierarchy. Each jiva had its own individuality and retained it even in the state of Moksha. He firmly believed that realism and pluralism were given facts of experience and there was no explaining them away.

But strangely enough it is stated on page 158: "Akshara Brahman is the highest to be attained for a mumukshu. The complete identification with the Akshara Brahman is the nirvikalpa samadhi or the highest mukthi." On the next page it is stated: "Jivanmukthi is attainable here only and the holding of the physical body is not incompatible with the release of the soul from Maya or the shackles of Karma. Since atma is the knower, his awakened knowledge separates him from the physical body. It is not necessary to be physically disembodied to enjoy this bliss as it is knowledge of one's own self

as Brahman, attained and established, that blots out the world within."

But Swaminarayan's main work was as a religious reformer. He was well equipped for this task both by virtue of his learning and his spotless character. In the course of his travels he came to Lejpur in Saurashtra where he received Vaishnavi Diksha from Sri Ramananda. Soon he became the guru of the ashram at Lejpur. From this position of spiritual eminence he did much useful work in infusing the spirit of true religion in the minds of the people of Gujarat and Saurashtra.

The author writes with much earnestness and devotion. This is the saving feature of the book. His English leaves much to be desired. For his broken English he thinks it sufficient excuse to say that he is only a 'commerce graduate' (page XXIII of the Introduction). The book would have made a much better impression if it had been written in faultless English and if the facts relating to Sri Swaminarayan's work as a religious reformer had been set forth in a more realistic manner, avoiding the usual exaggerations that gather round a great personality.

PROF. M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER.

OTHER BOOKS

SRI KRISHNA AND HIS GOSPEL: By Shuddhananda Bharati. (Yoga Samaj, Madras-20. Pp. 107. Price: Rs. 2.)

Yogi Shuddhananda Bharati presents the Gita accompanied by accounts of the symbolism of Sri Krishna's early adventures. These, incidentally, are normally and traditionally regarded as symbolical.

SADHANA — SPOTLIGHTS BY A SAINT: By M. M. Varma. (Manava Seva Sangh, Vrindavan, U.P. Pp. 70. Price: Rs. 1.25.)

Mr. Varma has written a study of a Swami who prefers to remain unnamed. His teachings, while (or because) not spectacular seem sound. Particularly striking, because often overlooked, is the following reminder; "In the renunciation of aimless ramblings of the mind lies the key to creative thought."

THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE: By B. Natesan. (Copies can be had from Higginbothams Private Ltd., Madras-2. Pp. 42. Price: Re. 1.)

The random thoughts on life expressed in the brochure "The Symphony of Life" deserve to be studied, though no reader will agree with the author in toto. To the modern man whose life is marked by restless activities the author's plea for

a life of leisure and peace may look odd, but there is much sense in what he says. Most young men who are very active and who take pleasure in being active fail to understand that peace and rest are the ultimate objects of all these activities.

THOUGHTS ON ISLAM AND OTHER SUBJECTS: By Haji Ahmed Ali. (Sri Raghavasimham Press, Madras-15. Pp. 133. Price: Rs. 5.)

LIFE IN VERSE: By Haji Ahmed Ali. (3/2, Alandur Road, Saidapet, Madras. Pp. 54. Price: Rs. 4.)

The mystic thoughts of Haji Ahmed Ali are pleasing. They are dedicated to his Master, Mustan Bava. His attempt to write English verse is regrettable, however.

BRIGHT PATH WAY (sic) TO GOD: By Visnu Dass. (International Book Service, Deccan Gymkhana, Poona-4. Pp. 100. Price: Rs. 2.)

Visnu Dass groups the Gita verses according to theme, pointing out the food for study and reflection in each group.

PICTURES OF A PILGRIM OF PEACE: By C. P. M. Abeyesekera and H. L. D. Mahindapala. (Atka-Jyoti Nilayam, Ceylon. Pp. 42. Price: 2.50.)

This is a small illustrated souvenir of K. Ramachandra, Editor of the 'Religious Digest', Ceylon, and a devotee of Bhagavan. Mr. Ramachandra is photogenic and the souvenir contains some striking photographs. There is also one of Bhagavan.

TEMPLES AND LEGENDS OF BENGAL: By Roy Choudhury. (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. Pp. 167. Price: Rs. 2.50.)

Throughout India there is a wealth of temples, each with its own legends, its own ritual, its own devotional traditions and practices, many of which are derived from some saint. Few of these are widely known to the outside world. Mr. Roy Choudhury has performed a useful service in collecting records of many of those of Bengal. The photographs also show the characteristic architecture of that part of India.

SOUVENIR: SRI VAISHNAVI SHRINE. (Published by The Sanmarga Sangam, Tirumullavayal, Madras-54. Pp. 98. Price: Rs. 3.)

Scripture and tradition hold many accounts of a Divine Presence fusing with the devotion of its worshippers to create a powerful influence felt

inwardly and manifested in outer events. Usually, however, this is in past ages. It is all the more remarkable to see such a process taking place before our eyes in this twentieth century. What makes it still more striking is that Sri Parthasarathi, the founder of this shrine, began as a strong disbeliever in the power indwelling a statue and was only convinced by experience.

The Souvenir is very attractively produced and the number of donations it has received is enough to show what popularity this private shrine of recent origin has already achieved.

It includes an account of the life of Sri Bhagavan as also of a few other Swamis. Among them is Seshadri Swami, the strange, enigmatic Swami who arrived at Tiruvannamalai a few years before Bhagavan and was connected with him in the early part of his life.

ASHRAM REPRINTS

MAHA YOGA or The Upanishadic Lore in the Light of the Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, is an old favourite. Its author, under the pseudonym of 'Who', was one of the Maharshi's earliest disciples and was well known for years at the Ashram. It is now appearing in its sixth edition at Rs. 4. (10sh; \$1.50).

S. S. Cohen, who was introduced to our readers in our issue of April, 1967, is another of the early disciples. His GURU RAMANA, Memories and Notes, is appearing now, enlarged and revised, in its third edition at Rs. 2.50. (6sh, 6d.; \$1).

The late Major Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala) translated THE POEMS OF BHAGAVAN into English verse. The second edition of this work is now available at Rs. 0.75. (1sh, 6d.; \$0.30).

RAMANA



Pictorial Souvenir

RELEASED ON 18-6-1967

in Commemoration of KUMBHABISHEKAM

TO

SRI RAMANESWARA MAHALINGAM

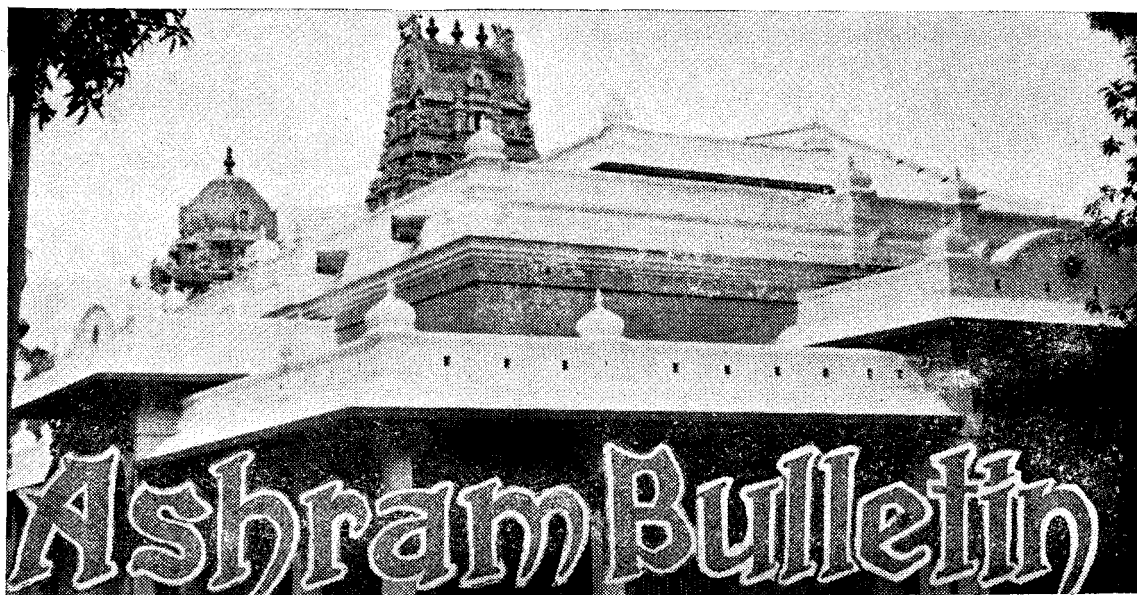
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RAMANA JAYANTHI

AT HIS SHRINE OF GRACE

THE 88th Jayanthi or birthday of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated on the 19th of December. The celebrations began with special chanting of Upanishads by a number of Brahmins and *Laksharchana* or worship at Bhagavan's shrine with the repetition of the thousand names of Bhagavan. These were followed by elaborate puja or ceremonial worship. The entire proceedings were watched by a large concourse of devotees who had come from far and near.

This was the first time after several years that the celebrations were conducted at the original shrine. The large pavillions put up in front of the shrine at the time of the Kumbhabhishekam afforded excellent shelter to the devotees all of whom could conveniently sit and watch the waving of the lights, etc.

In the afternoon, Bangalore Sri Krishna Bhagavathar gave a *harikatha* on 'Sri Ramana Vijayam', with his inimitable admixture of humour and emotional outbursts. Sri Om Sadhu with his party conducted bhajan for an hour before the evening puja. After dinner, at the request of the devotees, the cinema film of Sri Bhagavan was screened. Then Brahma Sri Jaga-

deesa Iyer and party gave a divyanama sankeertana bhajan which lasted till late in the night.

A special feature of the whole function was that one and all assembled experienced the Living Presence of Sri Bhagavan throughout.

A feast was arranged for them as usual. A large number of poor persons were also fed.

* * *

KARTHIKAI DEEPAM

The annual Deepam festival of the temple of Arunachala was celebrated for ten days from the 4th of December. The Deepam or the Holy Beacon was lit on top of the Hill Arunachala at dusk on the tenth day, but to the disappointment of thousands of devotees who were eagerly waiting to catch the first glimpse of the sacred flame, dense clouds hid the entire top of the Hill. However after about half an hour a few glimpses of the flame were caught through the clouds by the devotees of Bhagavan who had assembled in the quadrangle of the Ashram according to the custom observed in Bhagavan's life time. An unusually large number of devotees came to the Ashram in connection with the festival. In the night, as usual, most of the devotees went round the Hill.

HOMAGE FROM A SILENT DEVOTEE

For the completion of the 60th year of the ascension of H. H. Sri Kamakoti Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Kanchi to the *peetham*, Sri Framji Dorabji was invited to make a short speech on 'The Jagadguru', which he has sent to us for insertion in *The Mountain Path*.

Sri Framji is one of the seniormost and most devoted of the followers of Sri Bhagavan and we should long ago have introduced him to our readers but for his fixed opposition to any kind of publicity. We now gladly extend what recognition we can by publishing this short speech!—

It is very difficult for me to write or speak about a Jagadguru; but I would like to quote what other great saints have said.

Kabir says: 'The Jagadguru is the only Guru who brings peace and prosperity to the whole world'. Another Marathi saint has said: 'For the good and betterment of human beings they sacrifice themselves and do good to mankind'.

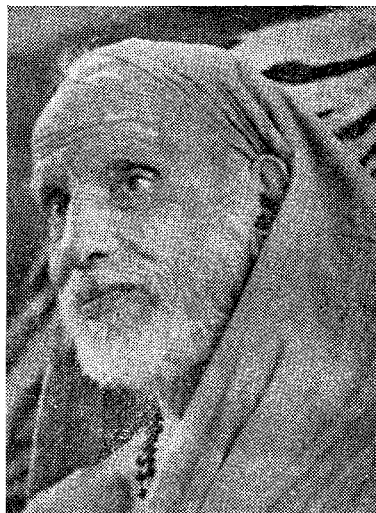
Bhagavan Sri Ramana says: 'The Sage is characterised by eternal and intense activity. His stillness is like the apparent stillness of a fast rotating top. Its very speed cannot be followed by the eye and so it appears to be still. So is the apparent inaction of the Sage. These

must be explained because the people generally mistake his stillness to be inertness. It is not so. There is no activity under the sun which is more intense than that of a Jnani.'

The Bhagavad Gita has gone a step further and says: 'If the splendour of thousand suns were to blaze out together in the sky that might resemble the glory of that Mahatma'.



Framji Dorabji



Kanchi Acharya

When all this has been said in their praise, who am I to say any more?

My only prayer this day is like Saint Tukaram's who said: 'Oh Master! I do not wish to have any thing, let me be under your feet where there is all happiness.'

Jai Shankara!

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MOUNTAIN PATH NEWS

Our next issue will again be about SACRED POETRY, but this time to redress the balance, NON-HINDU.

After that we are bringing to an end our series of issues devoted to particular subjects. They could not go on indefinitely, as it would have meant taking up less important themes while neglecting basic ones to which an issue had already been devoted but about which much more remained to be said. For instance, whole volumes could be and have been written about the single subject of symbolism. Nevertheless, it was considered a good thing

to start the life of *The Mountain Path* by dealing in a more comprehensive way with some of the basic problems which arise, such as predestination or reincarnation or symbolism.

Our change of style does not mean that future issues of *The Mountain Path* will be just a haphazard jumble, bundling together whatever happens to arrive in the post. It has been possible to build up a certain reserve, and with the help of this and of articles in series we hope to make an aesthetically arranged bouquet of each issue. In order to do so we have to make a twofold appeal to contributors: on the one hand to keep us plentifully supplied with material and on the other to bear with us patiently if some of the material accepted is kept pending for a while before being used.

Pausing at this milestone on our path to look back, we see that no single issue has yet appeared which has not brought us a number of new contributors, while on the other hand we have been able to build up a staunch following of

¹ We are glad to inform the readers that Sri Framji will be introduced in our next issue of April '68 — Editor.

regulars such as Wei Wu Wei, Cornelia Bagarotti, Gladys de Meuter, Prof. Kulkarni and all those others whom we apologize for not mentioning by name. While the former illustrate the fecundity of our journal, the latter show its stability. We are confident that both will continue.

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POSTAL SERVICE

Under the heading 'postal disservice' we had to complain in our issue of January, 1966 that the postal authorities had suddenly and for no known reason cancelled the facilities for an Ashram postal delivery service which we had enjoyed ever since Bhagavan presided over the opening of our branch post office as far back as 1937. We are now glad to be able to say that this facility has been restored. The Ashram office and *The Mountain Path* had been put to much inconvenience by the withdrawal of the facility and we congratulate and thank the postal authorities for restoring it to us.

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RAMANA KENDRA

The Ramana Kendra, Delhi, we are glad to say, has now taken up their development project earnestly. As a first step to collect funds towards the cost of the premises acquired and a building over it, they want to bring out a SOUVENIR, dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. In addition to original articles by eminent scholars, selected portions from articles in *The Mountain Path*, are also to be published. Prof. K. Swaminathan, who is the spirit behind this, has formed a Committee, the office-bearers of which are: Sri K. M. Munshi, Chairman, Sri Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, Prof. M. Yamunacharya, Sri K. Swaminathan, Secretary, Sri M. S. K. Sastri, Treasurer. The Souvenir Committee appeals to philanthropists and industrialists to book advertisements in the Souvenir. While we wish them all success and offer our sincere good wishes and co-operation, we advise readers interested to obtain further details from Sri K. Swaminathan, Level 5, East Block IV, Ramakrishnapuram, New Delhi-22.

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PILGRIMS

Two devotees from abroad, who after strenuous efforts over the years have succeeded at last in coming to the Ashram, are Mr. Horst Rutkowski and Mr. Vaclav Cech. They will be staying for a few months, doing sadhana. Mrs. Lucy Cornelissen, our staunch devotee and the German writer, is back again here and will be staying for good.

In the last issue our ever growing list of life members of the Ashram and life subscribers to *The Mountain Path* got transferred to July. Since there is apt to be greater pressure on space in our January issue, we have decided to leave it there.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH LIBRARY

NEW ADDITIONS

The Credibility of Divine Existence: The Collected Papers of Norman Kemp Smith, Edited by A. J. D. Porteous, R. D. MacLennan and G. E. Davie.

Religion in Philosophical and Cultural Perspective: A cross Disciplinary Approach, Edited by J. Clayton Feaver and William Horosz

Sri Aurobindo on the Tantra, Compiled by M. P. Pandit

The Eternal Verities by Frank Lester

Space, Time and Karma by Keshavamurti

The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi by R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao

The Secularisation of Modern Cultures by Bernard E. Meland

Bright Pathway to God by Visnu Dass

Life Sketch of Pujya Narayanaswami by Sudha Rathi

Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Vol. I

Treasury of Thought by Dagobert D. Runes

Islam the Misunderstood Religion by Muhammad Qutb

The Tarjuman al-Quran by Abul Kalam Azad, Edited and Rendered into English by Syed Abdul Latif

Radhakrishnan — The Portrait of an Educationist by R. P. Singh

Temples and Legends of Bengal by P. C. Choudhury

All India Colloquium on Ethical and Spiritual Values as the basis of National Integration — December 30, 1966 to January 2, 1967 — Record of Proceedings

Sri Krishna and His Gospel by Shuddhananda Bharati

Sadhana — Spotlight by a Saint by M. M. Varma
Thoughts on Islam and other Subjects by Haji Ahmed Ali

Life in Verse by Haji Ahmed Ali

Ramayana Samiksha by E. C. R. Sreekrishna Sarma

Sankaradeva and His Times by Maheswar Neog

Life and Philosophy of Shree Swaminarayan by
H. T. Dave
The Practical Approach to Divinity by Chandra
Swami
Pictures of a Pilgrim of Peace by C. P. M.
Abeyesekera and H. L. D. Mahindapala

Meditation by Mouni Sadhu
The Symphony of Life by B. Natesan
Prophet of Indian Nationalism by Karan Singh
Holy Commandments of Hazrat Mehboob-i-Ilahi
Kwaja Nizam-uddin Aulia by Baba
The Magnificent Defeat by Frederick Buechner

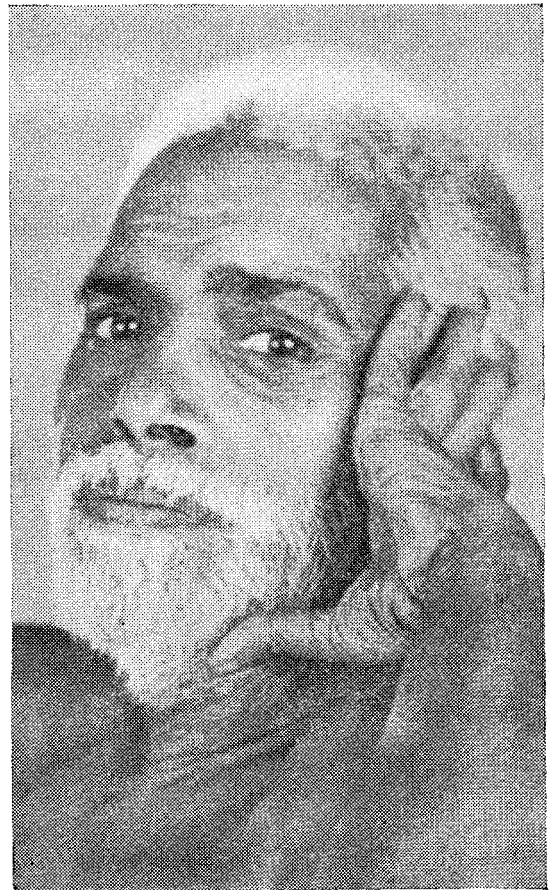
INTRODUCING

R. NARAYANA IYER

SRI R. NARAYANA IYER, an old devotee, a retired Sub-Registrar, is one of the seniormost devotees of Sri Bhagavan and one who enjoyed some special privileges. Soon after he came to Sri Bhagavan he began to move with him more like a resident of the Ashram, than a casual visitor. He was an out and out sceptic with ultra modern views and ways, but very soon he became a staunch follower and devotee of Sri Bhagavan. He describes this change fully in his narrative of how he came to the Maharshi which will be published in a later issue of *The Mountain Path*.

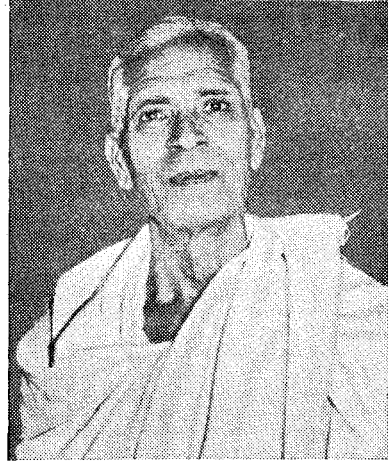
The familiarity and freedom with which he moved with Sri Bhagavan can be understood from the fact that he was chiefly responsible for eliciting a good deal of information about the family in Tiruchuzhi, their financial difficulties which necessitated borrowings and alienation of family properties. He also assisted the Ashram management to redeem these properties and to preserve them as sacred monuments at Bhagavan's birth-place and the place of his education under the names of *Sundara Mandiram* and *Ramana Mandiram*. He likewise played a prominent part in the execution of the Will of Sri Bhagavan—a document about the propriety of which later on there was a good deal of controversy.

There were occasions on which Sri Bhagavan took special notice of him, for instance, when a cinema picture was about to be shown in the dining hall at 5 p.m., Bhagavan declined to go there till Sri Narayana Iyer, who was expected at 7 p.m., arrived consequently a large number of people who had gathered in the hall had to wait for a long time. There were other instances



also. Though deeply involved in the affairs of the Ashram and having different views he continues to visit the Ashram regularly and is well-known to one and all.

His article, *Divine Glimpses* under the pseudonym 'Vishnu' was published in our Jayanthi Number of January, 1966. Some of his reminiscences will also be found in the *Ramana Pictorial Souvenir*, published in commemoration of the Kumbhabhishekam of Sri Bhagavan's Shrine of Grace. It was he who asked for a clarification of the state of a family man who follows the path of jnana, and to whom Sri Bhagavan said: "Remaining as a family man you can certainly engage in spiritual practice. Even better than the man who thinks 'I have renounced everything' is one who does his duty but does not think 'I do this' or 'I am the doer'. A sannyasi, who thinks 'I am a sannyasi' cannot be a true sannyasi, whereas a householder who does not think 'I am a householder' is truly a sannyasi."



Narayana Iyer

Sri Narayana Iyer was the first person to construct a house in Ramana Nagar colony. He still lives here and narrates, to those who seek, the Grace, Love and Splendour of Sri Bhagavan.

Motionless did the Supreme Spirit vibrate alone in its own glory. Beyond that nothing did exist. Creative then became the glory with self-sustaining principle below and creative energy above.

— Rig Veda.

* * * *

The One Reality cannot even be said that It is one. For how can there be a second other than that? There is neither absoluteness, nor non-absoluteness, neither non-entity nor entity, for the Reality is absolutely non-dual. How, then, can I describe That which is the goal of the highest knowledge?

— Sri Shankara.

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All this, whatsoever moves in the Universe, is to be enveloped in the Self.

— Isa Upanishad.

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He sees the Self in his own body, he sees all as the Self. Evil does not overtake him; but he transcends all evil. Evil does not trouble him; he consumes all evil.

— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

* * * *

Verily, he becomes Brahman who realises Brahman. He overcomes evil and transcends grief. Being free from all knots of the heart, he attains to immortality.

— Mundaka Upanishad.



to the EDITOR

KRISHNA, TEACHER OF DHARMA

More than anything else, I was thrilled to read in the October *Mountain Path* your article 'Krishna, Teacher of Dharma'. As you know, there is a lot of misunderstanding on this subject. There are various interpretations. 1. Our Bhagavatas are never tired of expatiating on the ingenuity of Krishna in his dubious dealings with the Kaurava leaders. 2. The Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Shastri, from the way he dealt with the Rama-Vali episode, would perhaps argue that Krishna was not above the weaknesses and errors of mankind, thus denying his divine personality. 3. Prof. Lal of Calcutta University is of the opinion that the keynote of the Mahabharata is expediency, doing things as politicians do, to serve the time and occasion. 4. It is refreshing to see your sane and correct interpretation of the Mahabharata episodes. I am happy to have read it and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so.

B. NATESAN,
Calcutta.

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VALMIKI RAMAYANA

In the issue of *Mountain Path* of July 67, there is a query about destiny in Valmiki Ramayana, and your reply thereto (page 260). I would invite you to go through *sargas* 22-24 of the Ayodhya Kanda. Rama emphasises that destiny alone is responsible for all that happens and Lakshmana, impulsive as he is, rails against Rama, saying that only cowards believe in destiny. But Rama finally sticks to his resolve about obeying his father and Lakshmana cools down and seeks his brother's permission to accompany him to the forest. Rama's view about destiny as enunciated by Valmiki is thus quite clear. Sita's view is also the same e.g., Sundarakanda, 37-3. Your expla-

nation therefore seems to be merely ad hoc arising directly from the quotation casually sprung upon you by the letter-writer.

T. S. SANKARAN,
Mylapore, Madras.

My explanation was indeed ad hoc, provoked by the suggestion that Valmiki Ramayana was not reliable. I am grateful to Mr. Sankaran for his fuller comment.

EDITOR.

* * *

I would like to say how much I like the July 1967 issue of the *Mountain Path*. It is good to have an appreciation in one issue of the elements of so many different yoga paths and to have it stated so definitely what yoga is and what it is not.

It has helped me to make up my mind and led me to one definite conclusion, however: Yoga is not for me. I would go further than that and say that Yoga is not for most people. If yoga is not for those who have family responsibilities, who is it for? I would guess that of the people of Europe and America perhaps one in ten thousand would consider seeking the higher spiritual states. The proportion in India may be higher.

Do you consider that the time will come when more people are interested in the religious life? Will there then be more husbands leaving their homes and wives to obtain solitude? Will there then be fewer people marrying and having children? Or is it likely that yoga will always be only for the few and that the majority will always be there to make families and live in society?

What have the Hindu scriptures to say to this majority of the people, who will always have family responsibilities and be unable to follow yoga very far?

MURDOCH KIRBY,
Isle of Wight, England.

You are confusing two issues: the general possibility of following a spiritual path and the technical possibility of following a yogic path. It has been pointed out on a number of occasions in THE MOUNTAIN PATH that a technically yogic path is not only unnecessary but was not even advocated by the Maharshi. He preferred people to follow a spiritual path invisibly in the life of the world. The conclusion to be drawn from the technical difficulties may indeed be that "yoga is not for me", but with the corollary that one should give up playing about at it and turn instead to some spiritual path that one is in a position to follow seriously. The question how many people will do so does not arise, because the fundamental question is always whether you will.

EDITOR.

GASPING

When I sit in meditation focusing the mind on the right side of the chest and asking 'Who am I?' choking of breath ensues. I conclude that that may be due to emotions. What should I do about it?

MRUTHYUNJAYA,
Davangere.

Bhagavan explained that thought and breathing are connected and rise from the same source, so if you stop one the other also stops. Sometimes in meditation the breathing slows down or even stops and the mind may notice that it has stopped and start it up again with a sudden shock or even a feeling of fear. It is best to pay as little attention to this as possible. Don't try to systematise it. When it happens just resume calm, gentle breathing until it becomes normal again.

EDITOR.

It is so kind of you to have responded so promptly to the need of a sadhaka. Your kind suggestion is so apt and precise, as if it came by thought-reading. The wonder is that the same suggestion which you gave me in your letter arose spontaneously in my mind about four days back and I put it into practice and in the meanwhile your letter arrived. It is all Bhagavan's Grace.

MRUTHYUNJAYA.

THE ONLY WAY

For several years now I have read everything I could lay my hands on concerning Sri Bhagavan and each morning I open at random the large

volume of 'Talks' and read a few pages at random. Needless to say, I find in Bhagavan's teachings the only complete and clear way that I have encountered in my reading.

LOCKE RUSH,
Tokyo, Japan.

SELF-ENQUIRY

What exactly does the Maharshi mean by Self-enquiry? Is it a continued process of asking 'Who am I?' or does it mean trying to give an answer as well? According to the Maharshi, every man is already realized. Then who is to ask and who is to answer? Is there a non-Self which shrouds the eternal Self? If so can the eternal Self free itself by merely asking about its identity with itself?

BIJAYA K. MISRA,
Cuttack.

You have to be very careful not to get tangled up in such questions. The Maharshi did not say that "every man is already Realized", because "every" presumes multiplicity while "Realized" presumes universality. He might have said "You are already Realized", but then you have to understand who is the "you" to whom this applies and who is the illusory or imagined "you" to whom it does not apply. That is Self-enquiry.

EDITOR.

HOW MANY OF ME?

Sri Ramana Maharshi discourages mere reading of learned books. How then does 'The Mountain Path' justify its existence?.....I hope to purify my mind by inspirational writings like your editorials. I read your last editorial and your article on Sri Krishna with great delight. Your reply to Gordon Green confirmed my feeling in the matter. I read in the October issue that there is a possibility of your editorials being published in book form, possibly along with other important articles. I am one of those who are eagerly awaiting such a publication.

May I ask if you recognize two egos, one absolute and admirable and desirable and the other limited and undesirable?

S. K. PHADKE,
Bombay.

You have answered the question about writing THE MOUNTAIN PATH yourself. If writings are found inspirational they are not merely learned and can be helpful.

If the editorials or other articles are published separately in book form it will not be yet awhile.

Questions about the ego and the self are a trap. Try to remember that there just is.

EDITOR.

* * *

THE HEART

1. I wish to obtain annual bound copies of *The Mountain Path*. From what year are they obtainable?

2. Under question 9, chapter 11 of 'Spiritual Instruction' the Heart is described as "...inverted, and in it there is a tiny orifice wherein is firmly seated along with desires (tendencies) etc. an immense darkness. Thereon the entire nervous system has its support. It is the seat of the vital forces, the mind and the light (of consciousness)." Does this refer to the gall bladder?

RICHARD E. YAP,
Malaysia.

1. *There are still a few bound volumes of THE MOUNTAIN PATH available for the years 1966 and 1967. Only those for 1964 and 1965 are completely out of stock.*

2. *The centres referred to in such texts are not physical organs. On the other hand they are also not imaginary. They can best be described as 'subtle centres'.*

EDITOR.

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ANIMAL CITIZEN

I read with interest what M. D. Sagane had to say about his dog under the caption 'A dog meditates' in your October issue, because it brings up questions which have often puzzled me.

What exactly is the position of the animal in the divine scheme of things? I have heard a religious teacher say that animals have no souls. Personally I do not agree with this. If the animal has a soul, what is the difference between its soul and that of a man? When an animal indulges in cruel or brutal acts is it committing 'sin' in the generally accepted sense of the term? There are people who love their animal pets deeply that they place them on a par with human beings. Are they right to do this?

If we believe in reincarnation we may hold that an animal can one day be reincarnated as a man. Does the way an animal lives help it to move in this direction? Does the animal understand the ideal of God? Is it capable of a mystical experi-

ence? These are a few of the questions that have puzzled me.

MRS. BHIM KRISHNAMMA,
Secunderabad.

Before asking whether an animal has a soul or understands the idea of God it might be best to make sure what one means by 'soul' and 'God'. Certainly an animal has consciousness and can respond to a spiritual influence. It can feel devotion, anger, gratitude and a sense of duty. Bhagavan showed clearly both by precept and practice that we can help animals in their development and have a responsibility to do so. That would also imply that we have culpability for not doing so when the opportunity to do so comes our way.

EDITOR.

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JUDGE NOT—I

Immediately on receipt of *The Mountain Path* every quarter I first read your expert and brilliant editorial and then go through the last pages with eagerness to see the 'Letters to the Editor' and your clear replies thereto.

This time I myself wish to refer to your editorial Oct. 1967 called 'Quest and Egoism' and to ask you whether there is any way to distinguish between the two types of aspirant you mention there:

1. those whose vasanas or latent tendencies are being brought to the surface only to be expelled and leave them in peace, even though causing a lot of inconvenience to themselves and others in the process.

2. those who have fallen on the way in their sadhana, tripped up by mundane luxuries or by arrogance or in some way deluded and are in a worse state than before.

H. A. SHANKARANARAYAN,
Coimbatore.

There is no easy way to distinguish. That is why one is always urged not to judge others but to concentrate on removing one's own imperfections.

There is, however, the consolation of Sri Krishna's assurance in the Bhagavad Gita that even those who fail in their quest are not lost but are brought back in circumstances favourable for renewed effort in their next birth. (Ch. VI, v. 37-45.)

EDITOR.

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JUDGE NOT—2

1. Let me congratulate you on your poem 'The Voice of the Ego' and G. N. Daley for 'In Brief', appearing respectively in the October and January issues of *The Mountain Path*. Both have succeeded in putting the whole sadhana in brief.

2. If one who has received Bhagavan's initiation and Grace may succumb to the lurking ego what is the difference between him and one who has not?

AMARENDRAVIJAYAJI,
Dharmaj.

When Christ said that many are called but few are chosen he implied that being called is no guarantee of being chosen. But one is apt to be too impatient and attach too much importance to this lifetime. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, ch. VI, vv. 40-45 Sri Krishna reassures Arjuna that one who has striven on the path in this lifetime but fallen from it is reborn in favourable conditions for further effort in his next lifetime and carried forward by the momentum of his past practice.

EDITOR.

RITUAL (Continued III)

I wish to add whatever I may know on the above subject as the result of my long residence at the Ashram, especially in view of my personal connection with the two devotees concerned. Bhagavan's rule was that in making arrangements for guests dining there the Ashram should see to it that people who ordinarily observe caste are not forced to give it up at the Ashram. It was particularly true with him that circumstances alter cases, and the following incident, which occurred in my presence, illustrates this. A young man came to the Ashram with Dr. Srinivasa Rao, retired D. M. O., and while the doctor went and sat inside the young man came and sat in the general section. The Sarvadhikari came after him and ordered him to go and sit in the Brahmin section. The young man started to argue but Bhagavan took the side of the Sarvadhikari, saying sarcastically to the young man: "Yes, of course, you know everything. Go and sit inside!" And he went as ordered.

Dr. Rao was a long-standing devotee and frequent visitor and the young man was a close relative of his, and this may be why the Sarvadhikari intervened and Bhagavan supported him.

DEVARAJA MUDALIAR,
Kancheepuram.

This letter from one of our seniormost devotees will remove the need for further controversy. It will be seen that it is substantially in agreement with our previous reply.

EDITOR.

RECOGNITION

I am very glad to have received 'Guru Ramana' and the October *Mountain Path*. I feel that Sri Bhagavan has drenched me with his blessings. These works are not revealing something new to me but I feel that I am rediscovering myself. It is more than rewarding to be fortunate enough to have contact with the Ashram. Though physically miles away, I feel from the very core of my heart some out-flowing fountain of divine bliss that makes me humble and meek.

I should like to pay my fervent compliments to you personally for your scholarly craftsmanship in wielding your powerful pen in projecting the teachings of Sri Bhagavan. I should feel highly obliged for permission to borrow and translate some of the articles. Of course, all such articles will contain due acknowledgement to the author and *The Mountain Path*.

Once again offering you my highest respects and rededicating myself whole-heartedly to the service of Lord Bhagavan.

DHARM PAUL,
New Delhi.

It is a frequent phenomenon that when some one comes in contact with the Truth he feels that it is not anything new but something that he always knew but had forgotten that he knew.

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EDITOR.

Whatever exists in this universe vibrates within the Prana.

— Kathopanishad.
