The Mountain Path

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Be not (like) a mirror held up to a noseless man, but raise me (from my lowness) and embrace me, Oh Arunachala!

— The Marital Garland of Letters, Verse 81
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— Editor.

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The Mountain Path

(A QUARTERLY)

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

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

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
RAMANA's teachings were based on His experience. They were not the product of the study of scriptures. His words themselves are sacred and authoritative springing as they do from His steady rootedness in the Heart. Later, His early attendants, beginning from Thambiran and Palaniswami, and seekers like Gambiram Seshaiyer, Sivaprakasam Pillai, sought elucidation from Him on different sacred books. While explaining Ramana found that the scriptures were only naming and describing what he had experienced. But that was not the whole story. The eternal ones like Ramana who walk on earth, have a divine contemporary purpose to serve. They are not only the fulfilment of the sacred tradition but are also pathfinders. They are the beacon lights for generations of seekers of Truth and are appropriate to the age. Ramana was in many ways a revolutionary. In His teachings we find not only light on the traditional wisdom which He clarified and enriched, but also an altogether new direction for making life blossom forth in all its fullness, in all its joyous abundance.

SACRED WORDS OF RAMANA

EDITORIAL

By

A.R. Natarajan

Ramana performed the human drama to put a stop to endless and dry polemics and philosophic debates. His divine words are ambrosia for seekers of Truth, for those thirsting for understanding the riddle of life. They are bound to set fire to the darkness of a life identified with names and forms.

In approaching His teaching one must be careful not to cast it into any mould, be it Advaitic or any other. Such identification is the product of our background, and will come in the way of our understanding the true import of His words. This used to happen even when Ramana was in the body, and the danger is all the greater now because we are more apt to be carried away by the momentum of our theoretical framework into which we are likely to pigeonhole the words and teachings. Here perhaps there
would be nothing better than spiritual virginity, a clean slate.

Yet another point worth noting is that Ramana would never disturb people's faith or detract them from the paths they were pursuing. But this should not be taken to mean that the Master's Teaching was that. His own position was clear and has been lucidly set out by Himself when questioned about it. An illustration would be apt to bring this out. Ramana's position always was that self-enquiry itself is the most purificatory and nothing more is required. He made this clear to Karshni when replying to pointed questions on the subject. But He would also say, if asked whether japa is helpful, that it leads to purification of the mind.

The only safeguard is to remember and remember constantly the need for an attitude of prayerful surrender to Ramana for the like of Him comes only 'once in a millenium or two'. His guidance is always available and is never denied, if only one turns within to the Heart and lets Him take over. Has He not clarified that He is the Consciousness sporting within as the Heart? Is He not the Sadguru drawing us within graciously throwing light on the mind?

Just let us take one of his verses, verse seventeen of Upadasa Saram and ponder over its meaning. He says that 'if one searches to find out what the mind is, then there would be no mind at all. This is the straight path'. Ramana categorically and unequivocally declares that it is the straight or direct path. Why? Because the other spiritual practices assume that the mind is a separate entity, having consciousness of its own. Based on this the various practices are aimed at controlling it. This would not only be time-consuming but would not constitute an effective means to stop the wandering of the vagrant mind. The controlled mind can remain quiet only so long as it is held under a leash, by breath-control, repetition of sacred words and so on. It is like giving an iron chain to an elephant to keep its trunk busy. Being temporary and not being the product of the understanding of mind's nature, such practices only lull the mind. It does not matter how long the period is, for it could be quite long in certain types of samadhi or spiritual trances. Hence we find Ramana suggesting a totally different method, a new approach to secure a mind which is silent and which stays silent.

Have we ever enquired what this mind is? Is it a friend or a foe? What happens to it in deep sleep? What does Ramana mean when he says that on diligent search one discovers that there is no such entity as the mind at all? Hence the suggestion of Ramana that one should search and find out the answer. Any search can take place only in the waking state, it being out of question in the nescience of sleep. If one is vigilant and is constantly paying attention, it would transpire that what is termed the mind is only a series of thoughts centred on the individual or 'I' and therefore one could say that the individual is the mind. If one searches further by enquiring deeply, within, about the truth of this 'I', one discovers that it is the eternal feeling of 'I' and not the 'I'-thought or the mind which perishes daily in sleep. The proper meaning is found as one's fullness of existence throbbing forth as 'I'-''I' in the Heart. The mind or the individuality is seen as rising, on waking, from the Heart into which it had subsided when sleep came upon one. It is therefore perceived in its true light as a reflection of Consciousness within, as a reflection of the Heart, and as a bridge back to it. The mind which is one's foe in its fickle and uncontrolled outer movement becomes the closest friend and ally when turned inward, through self-enquiry. Then the mind is naturally silent as the truth about it has been understood. The bliss hidden from one is discovered as one's own nature.

1. Sri Ramana Cita, Ch.7.
THE ILLUSION OF EGO EXPERIENCE

By Paul Brunton

The following is Chapter 14 of the unpublished notes of conversations that Paul Brunton had with Sri Bhagavan. This diary was compiled by Paul Brunton and Munagala Venkataramaiah and will be published fully in a book-form in 1984.

Q. : How to control the mind?

A. : Mind is intangible. In fact, it does not exist. The surest way of control is to seek it. Then its activities cease.

Seek the mind. On being sought, it will disappear. The mind is only a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts arise because there is the thinker. The thinker is the ego. The ego, if sought, will vanish automatically. The ego and the mind are the same. The ego is the root-thought from which all other thoughts arise. Dive within. You are now aware that the mind rises from within. So sink within and seek. You need not eliminate the wrong 'I'. How can 'I' eliminate itself? All that you need do is to find out its origin and abide there. Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the Beyond will take care of itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reveal it.

The individual cannot exist without the Self, but the Self can exist without the individual.

Our analyses are ended, that is, so far as the intellect goes. But they are not enough. Eliminating the 'not I' is not enough. The process is only intellectual. The Truth cannot be directly pointed out. Hence the process. Now begins the real inner quest. The 'I'-thought is the root now to be sought at its source. Find out who it is and abide there.

Q. : Is the analytic process merely intellectual or does it exhibit feeling predominantly?

A. : The latter.

The personal 'I' is a reflection of the real Self in the mind.

Ask yourself the question Who am I? The body and its functions are not 'I'. Enquire further. The senses and their functions are not 'I'. Going deeper, the mind and its functions are not 'I'. The next step is the question "Whence do these thoughts arise?" Thoughts are spontaneous, superficial or analytical. Who is aware of them? Their existence and operations become evident to the individual. Analysis leads to conclusion that individuality is operative as the awareness of existence of the thoughts. This is ego. Enquire further: Who is this 'I' and whence? Do sleep analysis. "I am" underlies the three states—sleep, waking and dream. After discarding all not-self, we find the residue—the Self Absolute. Both world and ego are objective and must be eliminated in the analysis. Eliminating the unreal, the Real survives. To accomplish this, eliminate the mind, which is the creator of
the dualistic idea and of ego. Mind is one form of life-manifestation.

Q. : Is this method quicker than developing qualities thought to be necessary for salvation?

A. : All bad qualities are tied round the ego. When the ego is gone, realisation is self-evident. There are neither good nor bad qualities in the Self. Self is free from all qualities. Qualities pertain to the mind only.

The enquiry should be where the ‘I’ is. After the rise of the ‘I’-thought, there is false identification of the ‘I’ with the body, the senses, mind etc. Self is wrongly associated with them; the true self is lost sight of. In order to sift the pure ‘I’ from the contaminated ‘I’, this discarding (of the sheaths mentioned in the shastras) is mentioned. But it means, not exactly discarding of the non-self but the finding of the real Self. The real Self is infinite ‘I-I’ in perfection. It is eternal. It has no origin and no end. The other ‘I’ is born and dies. It is impermanent. See to whom the changing thoughts occur. They will be found to arise after the ‘I’-thought. Hold the ‘I’-thought; they subside. Trace the source of the ‘I’-thought. The Self alone remains.

The root of thoughts is ego, ahankara.

To say “I am not the body” but “I am the Self” is still not correct. No thought of ‘I’ is true being.

Let us discover if all thoughts can be traced to some one thought as their base of operations. Do you not see that the thought or idea ‘I’--the idea of personality is such a root-thought?

The personality, antakarana, is a medium. It is what we call suksma (astral body) and acts as a medium between the body and the Self. It can turn to the body or to the Self, merging itself in either.

The ‘I’-thought is not pure; it is contaminated with association with the body and senses. See to whom the trouble is. It is the ‘I’-thought. Hold it, then the other thoughts will cease.
The ego has its source from the Self and is not separate from it. Hence, the ego must only be retraced in order that it might merge in its source. The core of the ego is called the Heart.

Q. : What is death? Is it not the fall of body?
A. : Do you not desire it in sleep? What goes wrong then?
Q. : But I know I shall wake up?
A. : Yes, thought again. There is the preceding thought. 'I shall wake up'. Thoughts rule the life. Freedom from thoughts is one's true nature-Bliss. Death is a thought and Nothing else. He who thinks raises troubles. Let the thinker say what happens to him in death. The real 'I' is silent. One should not think "I am this"—"I am not that". To say "this" or "that" is wrong. They are also limitations. "I am" alone is true. Silence is 'I'.

Q. : If a person whom we love dies, grief results. Shall we avoid such grief by either loving all alike or by not loving at all?
A. : If one dies, there is grief for the other who lives. The way to get rid of grief is not to live. Kill the one who grieves. Who will then remain to suffer? The ego must die. That is the only way. The two alternatives amount to the same state. When all is the Self, who is there to be loved or hated?

There is a class of people who want to know all about their future and past births. They ignore the present. The load from the past is the present misery. Why recall the past? It is a waste of time.

The Self is the Electricity. Dynamo, the mind is the contact switch board while the body is the lamp; when the Karma-hour comes to give death, the mind switches off the current and withdraws the light-life from the body. Both mind and vitality are manifestations of the Supreme Life Force, the Self.

Q. : Wherefrom does the ego rise?
A. : Soul, mind, ego are mere words. There are no true entities of the kind. Consciousness is the only truth.

Forgetfulness of your real nature is the real death; remembrance of it is the true birth. It puts an end to successive births. Yours is then eternal life. How does the desire for eternal life arise? Because the present state is unbearable. Why? Because, it is not your true nature. Had it been your real nature, there would be no desire to agitate you. How does the present state differ from your real nature? You are spirit in truth.

Man considers himself limited; there arises the trouble. The idea is wrong. In sleep there was no world, no ego and no trouble. Something wakes up from that happy state and says 'I'. To that ego the world appears. It is the rise of the ego that is the cause of the trouble. Let him trace the ego to its source and he will reach that undifferentiated happy source, a state which is sleepless sleep. The Self is ever there; wisdom only appears to dawn, though it is natural.

Q. : Are ego and the Self the same?
A. : Self can be without the ego, but the ego cannot be without the Self. Egos are like bubbles in the ocean.

Impurities and worldly attachments affect only the ego; the Self remains pure and unaffected.

All these are only mental concepts. You are now identifying yourself with a wrong 'I', which is the 'I'-thought. This 'I'-thought rises and sinks whereas the true significance of 'I' cannot do so. There cannot be a break in your being.

The father of your personal 'I' is the real 'I'-God. Try to find out the source of the individual 'I' and then you will reach the other 'I'.

When the individual goes, the desires also go.

Q. : Once I was very self-reliant. I fear in old age. People laugh at me.
A. : Even when you said you were self-reliant, it was not so—you were ego-reliant. In place of that if you let ego go, you will get real self-reliance. Your pride was merely pride of ego. So long as you identify yourself with the ego, then you will recognise others as individuals too, then there is room for pride. Let drop that and you drop other's ego too and so there is no more room for pride.

So long as there is the sense of separation, there will be afflicting thoughts. If the original source is regained and the sense of separation is put an end to, there is peace. Consider what happens when a stone is thrown up. It leaves its source, is projected up, tries to come down and is always in motion until it regains its source where it is at rest. So also the waters of the ocean evaporate, from clouds which are moved by winds condense into water, and fall as rain and the waters roll down the hill tops in streams and rivers until they reach their original source, the ocean reaching which they are at peace. Thus you see where there is a sense of separateness from the source, there is agitation and movement until the sense of separateness is lost. So it is with yourself. Now that you identify yourself with the body, you think that you are separate. You must regain your source before this false identity ceases and you are happy. Gold is not an ornament but the ornament is nothing but gold. Whatever shape the ornament may assume and however different the shapes of the ornaments are, there is only one reality, i.e. gold. So also with the bodies and the Self. The reality is the Self. To identify oneself with the body and yet to seek happiness, is like attempting to ford a lake on the back of an alligator. The body-identity is due to extroversion and the wandering of the mind. To continue in that state will only keep one in an endless tangle and there will be no peace. Seek your source, merge in the Self and remain all one. Rebirth really means discontent with the present state and desire to be born where there will be no discontent. Birth being of the body, cannot affect the Self. The Self remains ever, even after the body perishes. The discontent is due to the wrong identity of the Eternal Self with the perishable body. The body is a necessary adjunct of the ego. If the ego is killed the eternal Self is revealed in all its glory. The body is the cross. Jesus the Son of Man, is the ego or “I-am-the-body” idea. When he is crucified he is resurrected, a Glorious Self, Jesus, the Son of God! “Give up this life if thou wouldst live”.

Q. : How is realization made possible?
A. : There is the absolute Self from which a spark proceeds as from fire. The spark is called ‘ego’. In the case of ignorant it identifies itself with some object simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association. This association is ignorance whose destruction is the object of our efforts. If ego’s objectifying tendency is killed it remains pure and also merges in its source. We can separate ourselves from that which is external but not from that which is one with us. Hence ego is not one with body. This must be realised in the waking state.

The quest “Who am I?” is the axe to cut off the ego.

The intellect always seeks to have external knowledge, leaving knowledge of its own origin. The mind is only identity of the Self with the body. It is a false ego that is created; it creates false phenomena in its turn and appears to move in them. If the false identity vanishes the Reality becomes apparent. This does not mean that Reality is not even now. It is always there and eternally the same.

The mind rises after the rise of ‘I’-thought or the ego.

Q. : How to get rid of egoism?
A. : If you see what the ego really is, that is enough to get rid of it. It is the ego itself which makes efforts to get rid of itself, so how can it die? If ego is to go, then something else must slay it. Will it ever consent to commit suicide? So first realise what is the true nature of the ego and it will go of its own accord. Examine the nature of the ego, that is the
process of realisation. If one sees what one’s real nature is, then one will get rid of ego. Until then our efforts are just like chasing one’s own shadow; the more one advanced the more distant was the shadow. If we leave our own Self, then the ego will manifest itself. If we seek our true nature, then ego dies. If we are in our own reality, then we need not trouble about the ego.

Seek your source. Find out whence the thought ‘I’ springs. What object can we be surer of and know more certainly than our Self? This is direct experience and cannot further be described.

If the present ‘I’ goes, it, the mind, is known for what it is—a myth. What remains over is the pure Self. In deep sleep the Self exists without perception of body and world; then happiness reigns.

Q. : You say that we shall find the divine centre inside us. If each individual has a centre are there then millions of divine centres?
A. : There is only one Centre to which there is no circumference. Dive deep within and find it.

Meditating on Him or on the Seer, the Self, there is a mental vibration ‘I’ to which all are reduced. Tracing the source of ‘I’, the primal ‘I’ alone remains over; and it is inexpressible.

Q. : Is there not an unchanging self and a changing self?
A. : The changefulness is mere thought. All thoughts arise after the rising of the ‘I’-thought. See to whom these thoughts arise. Then you transcend them and they subside. That is to say, tracing the source of the ‘I’-thought, you realise the perfect ‘I’-‘I’. ‘I’ is the name of the Self.

Q. : Memory, sleep and death affect the ‘I’?
A. : It is confusion due to non-differentiation between false and real ‘I’. These three attributes and modes pertain to the false ego.

Vivekachudamani makes it clear that the artificial ‘I’ of the vijnana kosha is a projection and through it one must look to the true principle of ‘I’.

Q. : What is the ego; Self?
A. : The ego appears and disappears; it is transitory whereas the real Self always abides permanently.

Q. : What is prostrating?
A. : It means subsidence of ego. What is subsidence? To merge into the Source. God cannot be deceived by outward genuflections and bowings. He sees if the ego is there or not.

I AM is the ocean and the individual egos are bubbles in it. Bubbles pass away.

Q. : What of evil conditions, birth and death for instance?
A. : First the ego comes in, its sprouting as our birth, but really we do not die.

It is wrong to say “we see” for if you try to find out who sees, the seer disappears. ‘I’ is the subject and all other thoughts comprise of the object—mind.

Were you aware, when you were fast asleep last night? No! What is that now exists and troubles you? It is the ‘I’. Get rid of it and be happy.

The ego-ridden mind has its strength sapped and is too weak to resist the torturing thoughts. The egoless mind is happy in deep, dreamless sleep. Clearly, therefore, bliss and misery are only modes of mind but the weak mode is not easily interchangeable with the strong mode. Activity is weakness and consequently miserable; passivity is strength and therefore blissful. The dormant strength is not apparent and therefore not availed of.

Creation is to be considered in two aspects: Creator and individual soul. It is the latter which causes pain and pleasure irrespective of former. Pain and pleasure has no reference to fact but to mental conceptions. Kill the personality and there is no pain or pleasure.
but the natural bliss which persists eternally.

Conscious death is the purpose of evolution, and conscious immortality whilst still in the flesh.

Q. : How to know the Self?
A. : See what the Self is. What you consider as the Self is really either the mind, intellect, or the ‘I’-thought. So hold on to it. The others will vanish, leaving the Self.

Are there two ‘I’s? How do you know your own existence? Do you see yourself with these eyes? Question yourself. How does this question arise? Do I remain to ask it or not? Can I find myself as in a mirror? Because your outlook has been outward bent, it has lost sight of the Self and your vision is external. The Self is not found in the external objects. Turn your look within and plunge down. You will be the Self.

Q. : What is to be done to kill the ego?
A. : See for whom the doubts are. Who is the doubter? Who is the thinker? That is the ego. hold it. The other thoughts will die away. The ego is pure. See wherefrom the ego arises. That is pure Consciousness.

Q. : I begin to ask myself “who am I”, eliminate the body as not ‘I’, the prana as not ‘I’, the mind as not ‘I’ and I am not able to proceed further.
A. : Well, that is so far as the intellect goes. Your process is only intellectual. Indeed all the scriptures mention the process only to guide the seeker to know the Truth. The Truth cannot be directly pointed out. Hence this intellectual process. You see, the one who eliminates all the “not-I” cannot eliminate the ‘I’. To say “I am not this”, or “I am that” there must be the ‘I’. This ‘I’ is only the ego or the ‘I’-thought. After the rising up of this ‘I’-thought all other thoughts arise. The ‘I’-thought is therefore the root-thought. If the root is eliminated all others are uprooted. Therefore seek the root ‘I’, question yourself Who am I? find out its source. Then all these will vanish and the pure Self will remain over.

The ‘I’ is always there—in sushupti, in dream and in wakefulness. The one in sleep is the same as the one who now speaks. There is always the feeling of ‘I’; otherwise, do you deny your existence? You do not say “I am”; find out who is.

The reality of yourself cannot be questioned. The Self is the primal reality. The ordinary man takes as reality unconsciously his true inner reality plus all things which have come into his consciousness as pertaining to himself, body, etc. He has to unlearn.

Q. : What happens to the created ego after body dies?
A. : Ego is ‘I’-thought. In its subtle form, it remains a thought whereas in its gross aspect it embraces mind, senses and body. They disappear in deep slumber along with the ego. Still the Self is there. Similarly it will be in death. Ego is not an entity independent of the Self in order that it might be created or destroyed by itself. It functions as an instrument of the Self and periodically ceases to function; i.e. it appears and disappears as birth and death.

Q. : I want to find the real ‘I’ and always be effortlessly in touch.
A. : It is enough that you give up the individual ‘I’ and no effort will be needed to gain the real ‘I’. Do not think that there is any such difference between you and the Self; then surrender yourself to Him, merge yourself in Him. There should be no reservations, as you cannot cheat God.

Q. : What about after death?
A. : Enquire first who or what is it that is born. It is the body, not you. Why trouble about things beyond you, like death when your Self is here and present?

Q. : How long does one stay in other worlds between births and deaths? (reincarnation)
A. : The sense of time is relative. In a dream you may live a whole day’s events in a couple of hours. In the subtle body of the
death-world you may do the same and live what seems a 1000 years, although by your time it may be only 100 years.

When news of someone’s death was reported to Maharshi he replied: “Do men fear sleep? Sleep is temporary death. Death is longer sleep. Why should one desire continuance of the bodily shackles? Let the man find out his undying Self and be immortal”

So long as one identifies himself with his gross body, the thoughts materialised as gross manifestations must be real to him. Having existed here it certainly survives death. Hence under these circumstances the other world exists. On the other hand consider that the One Reality is the Self from whom has sprung the ego. The ego loses sight of the Self and identifies itself with the body, with the result of ignorance and misery. The life-current has passed through innumerable incarnations, births and deaths, but is still unaffected. There is no reason to mourn.

The mind is of the ego; and the ego rises from the Self.

The sacred bull (Nandi in India) represents the ego, jiva. It is always shown in our temples facing the God, and with a flat circular stone in front of it. This stone altar is where sacrifices are offered and it all symbolizes that the ego must be sacrificed and must always be turned towards the inner God.

Learn what jiva is. What is the difference between jiva and Atma? Is jiva itself Atma or is there any separate thing as Atma?

Q. : What is the object of one’s life?
A. : The object is to understand who is that ‘I’ contained in your ‘my’.

Q. : I realize that intellectually I am part of the Great ‘I’, the Universe.
A. : Then are there two ‘I’s? Realize that you are not part, but the whole.

Q. : What is the reason of this apparent duality of selves which exists?
A. : In your sound sleep do you think of duality, part or whole? Duality is only when you awake. What became of the world when you were asleep? That ‘I’ existed in all three states, and it is that which you want to know. The thoughts of life’s purpose or purposelessness do not arise to trouble you during sleep.

“Have faith in God, His Words and His servants. You will feel before long an immense relief. The thought of His ever-living presence with you will be a great solace to you. Once you begin to feel such a presence, a joy unknown to you before will begin to be felt. You will not feel that time is something to be merely spent in some pursuit or other, but is something which has to be intensively lived in the pursuit and enjoyment of the bliss of peace. There will no more be any room for pessimistic thoughts nor will life seem a blank with no purpose to serve.”

— H.H. Chandrasekhar Bharati in Dialogues with the Guru
In the Old Hall there were only a few devotees. Bhagavan was holding a very thick book in His hands and was looking at a page intently. He showed the page to devotees, with a broad smile on His beautiful face; "Look, this is our Muruganar. Are you able to recognise him? How grand he looks with his coat, turban and erect posture!" The book Bhagavan was holding was Nikiandu, and encyclopaedia-cum-dictionary book in Tamil. Among others, there were three persons seated in the photograph who were mainly responsible for bringing out the book — Sri Mu. Raghava Iyengar, Sri C.K. Subramania Iyer and Sri Ra. Raghava Iyengar (Muruganar's name was Subramania Iyer, which he changed into Muhavai Kanna Muruganar — 'Muhavai' stands for his home town, Ramanathapuram, 'Kanna' for his father's name, Krishna Iyer, and 'Muruganar' for Subramania Iyer). Muruganar, in real life as in the group photo, enjoyed the pointed attention of Sri Bhagavan. He was no ordinary person! Was he not the 'shadow of Bhagavan'?

It was in 1923 that the poet-scholar, C.K. Subramania Iyer, received from his father-in-law, who had just returned from a visit to Tiruvannamalai, a copy each of Bhagavan's Arunachala Stuti Panchakam and Naan Yaar ('Five Hymns to Arunachala' and 'Who am I?'). Muruganar was so captivated by the devotional hymns and the booklet on Self-enquiry that he forthwith rushed to Arunachala. How he met his Master is itself a fascinating story.

Muruganar, being a great siva-bhakta, on reaching Tiruvannamalai, went straight to the Arunachaleswara temple and worshipped the deity there. Here he reflected. 'It is customary to take some gift when one goes to a sick
person, a child or a saint. Now, what can I offer to Bhagavan Ramana? A force from within made him sit down at the temple itself and compose a hymn of praise to the sage. Verse after verse gushed forth, and aptly sang of Bhagavan’s greatness. The eleven inspired stanzas that he wrote then recalled the poet-Saint of Tiruvachakam: the first verse ran thus:

‘Guru Ramana, Siva, as once you left Mount Kailas and the company of Gods And came to cool Perundurai to drink in The sparkling words of Manickavachagar, Now again you have come to fair Arunachala Wishing to hear even to this fello’s puerile words;”

The last stanza utters the humble prayer:

‘Like a dog loafing up and down the streets Sniffing at the same stuff all the time Much have I suffered in countless lives already. Condemn me not to birth again. I stand and wait on you. Glance on me with grace. Sweep clean the pride of ‘I and mine’ and give me Guru Ramana, Siva. Your heaven, your states supreme’!

When he reached the Ashram, which was then a mere thatched shed, Sri Bhagavan Himself came out as if expecting him and looked straight at him. A miracle took place! That single look of Bhagavan destroyed the individual in the poet and whatever worldly ambitions he might have had hidden and made him a hollow reed. The thought which is an endless stream of poesy could flow. This stream we now know as the 40,000 verses in pure classical Tamil on the glory and teachings of Bhagavan! The very first meeting sealed for ever the bond between the silent Master and the singing saint!

Before coming to Bhagavan, Subramania Iyer was an ardent nationalist and social reformer, full of admiration for Mahatma Gandhi. His many songs in praise of Gandhiji and his constructive activities appeared in various periodicals and were later collected into a volume entitled ‘Swatantra Geetam’. From 1926 onwards the poet became a permanent resident in Arunachala, renouncing hearth and home and bright prospects of fame as a scholar and patriotic poet. He was content to place his poem at the feet of Bhagavan, for, to him there was no ‘wider public’ to whose notice they should be brought! All lesser lights absorbed in the radiance of His presence, the glories and the sayings of the Master were the only themes he could sing of.

His first major work, Ramana Sannidhi Murai, containing 1250 scintillating stanzas, is patterned after Saint Manickavachakar’s Thiruva-chakam, chapter by chapter. The first edition received a tumultuous reception. In Madurai, and even in Kuala Lumpur and Colombo, royal honour was accorded to it; copies of this precious work mounted on a decorated elephant were taken in procession on the main streets to the accompaniment of music, chanting and bhajans - thanks to the strenuous efforts of Ramana Padananda, a great admirer of Sri Muruganar. The first edition was sold out and a second edition was called for. The first edition lacked and the second supplied the opening poem modelled on ‘Sivapuramam’, a poem of 95 lines sacred to Saivites and chanted daily. When he had written more than 200 lines he was not sure what title the poem should bear. Muruganar quietly placed the sheets of paper at the feet of Bhagavan one morning, and went away. He returned in the evening. Bhagavan handed over to him
the sheets of paper, saying: 'Look!'. Muruganar was thrilled for Bhagavan had Himself written 'Ramana Puranam' as the heading of the poem; not only that, but He had completed it by writing Himself the last 300 lines. At the head of each sheet he had also written 'Ramana Puranam'. The Master had answered the disciple's unspoken question!

When the proofs of the second edition came Muruganar had put an asterisk mark on the line where his own writing had ended and Bhagavan's began and provided the foot-note: 'The lines that follow were composed by Bhagavan'. When Bhagavan, going through the proof with his wonted care, He saw the foot-notes remarked: 'Oho! Bhagavan wrote only the lines that follow!' With tears in his eyes, Muruganar said, 'Everything my pen wrote has come only from you. Not I but you have written all the verses in this book'. The foot-note was forthwith removed.

While Muruganar's greatness as a poet was outstanding, his renunciation was so complete that he had only one set of clothes and one small vessel. He had no home; he slept in mantaps and underneath trees in caves, on the hill-side. He would go to the town to beg his food, take it to Palakottu and eat it there, sitting beside the tank. One day the gardener of Palakottu saw Muruganar getting into the tank, leaving the food on the bank and the monkeys eating it all before Muruganar washed his feet! The gardener was so moved by the plight of the poet that he offered him his own small room while himself moved into the adjoining temple. Bhagavan used to visit the poet in this shelter during His noon walk in the grove. Muruganar once heard Bhagavan telling Sri Cohen who was also residing then in Palakottu: "You are lucky to have dhal and curd with your rice. Often I had eaten merely plain rice without even salt for taste!" This strengthened Muruganar's Vairagya. Those who take to spiritual life who approach a guru after study and discipline are of two categories: (i) Sampradaya Vedantins and (ii) Anubhava Vedantins who are drawn to a guru without previous preparation. Muruganar belonged to the second category. This proved to be a blessing in disguise for Muruganar. Since his mind was not packed with scriptural texts, he could accept and assimilate the pure teachings of Bhagavan straightaway without comparing them with other systems of thought and getting confused by rival theories. The words of Bhagavan, fresh, original and revealing, went straight home. Thus in the poems of Muruganar we find the authentic teachings of Bhagavan faithfully recorded and expounded without any distortion or dilution by traditional philosophical language. The mother tongue of both Muruganar and Sri Bhagavan was Tamil and Bhagavan Himself was a poet at heart. It was thus easy for Muruganar to receive the light from his Master and spread it in its purity. Bhagavan encouraged Muruganar to pursue the austere life of a mendicant, and shared his joy when Muruganar was invited to have his food at the Ashram on festive occasions. Bhagavan thus proved to be an affectionate mother and a strict disciplinarian! On his part, Muruganar proved to be a worthy disciple, whose sole aim in life was to gain from the Master the greatest gift, Atmanubhuti (Self-Realisation). In hundreds of poems he describes this experience in language which reminds us of the mystical outpourings of the great Saiva and Vaishnava singer-saints. Muruganar's poems fall into three categories: (i) Songs of praise and devotion, like Sannidhi Murai; (2) records of teachings, like Guru Vachaka Kovai and (3) songs on his own experiences, like Ramana Jnana Bodham. This 'Nightingale in the garden of Silence', this 'tributary of the Ramana Ganga', after completing his task of bringing out Bhagavan's teachings, says: "I do not know any other God or Guru except you, Oh Lord! who moulded me into your own Essence".

Here are a few samples to show the depth of his devotion and the clarity of his exposition.

1. "Ramana,
   All in One and One in all,
   True seer in whom all truth is seen,
   Merciful, liberal giver of Grace
   Miraculously strong to save,
   Yes. He is Mother and Father too."
2. "What is this 'I' that rises from within? Only a thought that, like a bubble floats Up to the troubled surface of Awareness. In sleep the sea is still, no bubble rises; Then too you are, and are aware you are. You are not the 'I' that rises and then sets. You are the sole Awareness in the All, the eternal, uncreated light of Being."

3. "Your Grace it was I stumbled to your feet Your love that raised me up and made me yours. Chosen to serve, though not for service meet Untutored save by Grace that from you pours. I too have seen all creatures live and move Not of themselves but Self, all living prove That I am nothing and can nothing do; So all my duties I have cast on you".

Muruganar's contribution to Ramana-literature extends beyond his own copious writings. It is only due to his initiative that we have Upadesa Saram and Ulladu Narpadu, Bhagavan's own teachings and stated with a precision and lucidity worthy of any scripture. How Bhagavan's Upadesa Saram and Ulladu Narpadu came to be composed under pressure from Muruganar is described in Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, and Day by Day with Bhagavan. Devotees of Bhagavan are thus indebted eternally to Muruganar for this service.

Muruganar shunned publicity and sought no followers. When seekers approached him for spiritual guidance, he invariably directed them towards Sri Bhagavan, the one and only Master for all.

The highest tribute to Muruganar was paid by his own Master! Once, when Viswanatha Swami was in the hall, he uttered aloud the words: 'Muhavaapuri Murugan'. Bhagavan smiled approval and goaded his poetic expression saying: "Why not try and compose a verse with that phrase?" Viswanatha Swami made a few efforts and finally handed over to Bhagavan the sheet of paper. Bhagavan wrote a beautiful stanza in no time and below the verse he wrote 'Viswanathan', as the composer's name. Except those two words, the entire verse was Bhagavan's!

"Arunachala Ramana, dwelling in the heart-lotus smiled and steadily looked at me and slew My little, separate self." So singing of this flow of grace, 'Muhavaapuri Murugan', composed his Sanndhi Murai to rival Tiruvachakam itself.

Let us offer obeisance to this poet-saint!

THAT THOU ART

For very earnest sadhakas who are free from desires (of worldly advantage), the enquiry into the real nature of the being denoted by the word 'thou' is alone sufficient for winning Liberation, without any enquiry into the truth of the Being denoted by the word 'That'. (146)

Revelation added the words 'That' and 'art' in order to (help to) turn inwards the minds of other sadhakas, whose mentality is unripe, not for anything else. (147)

O mind, thou hast already suffered thinking 'I am a jiva'; do not fall into worse delusion by believing 'I am Brahman'; in the Transcendental State there is no one (no individual) answering to the name 'I'. (148)

— Guru Ramana Vachana Mala
‘I’—‘I’ — The Real, Eternal Being,
‘I’ — The Appearance, the Fleeting Form

By Artie L. Haaswyk.

THe REAL is independent, changeless, perfect, infinite and incomparable. In vedantic terminology, this truth is expressed as ‘The ONE without a second’, which is the very negation of Duality. Science, Religion, Man are based on Duality.

In trying to define Truth or Reality, we are groping for words demanding from them that which lies beyond their capacity. Words are instruments or tools and are totally dependent upon the skill and quality of the intellect that wields them. When it comes to translating feelings, i.e., the higher emotions, we recognise their poverty and helplessness. Small wonder, then, that when employed in the service of Truth, words can do no better than negate the finite, dependent, limited, comparable measurable objects of the senseworld.

In Sad-vidya (knowledge of Truth) verses 17 & 18, Sri Ramana declares: “To the ignorant, the ‘I’ is the self limited to the body; to the Wise, the ‘I’ is the SELF Infinite.”

“To the ignorant, the ‘world is the sole, self-existent reality; to the Wise, that formless, infinite BEING which underlies the world is the One REALITY.”

It is evident that the difference between the ‘ignorant’ and the WISE is one of viewpoint or understanding. The mind of the ignorant is distorted and clouded, restless, turbid; the mind of the Wise is peaceful, crystal clear, pure, immaculate or enlightened. Here comes the unreliability of ‘words’, their confusion. When the Sage utters the word ‘I’, it refers to the ‘SELF-INFINITE’ the unborn (ajata). When the ignorant, the man of the world, says ‘I’, he refers to his body, limited to Space/Time relationships. The ignorant man is thus ‘short-sighted’. In the course of the centuries, man has learnt to utilize insentient materials to extend his eyesight, his hearing, his life-time, but is he really happy with all this progress?

He remains a prisoner of fear with all the misery and suffering that come in its wake. His God is the unknown, the stranger, the One still to be feared, who existed in the long past or is yet to come as the earthly king, the warrior who will help conquer enemies. In the meantime, man goes on worshipping metal, gold, printed money and passes sleepless nights in fear of losing his accumulated possessions. He takes out insurance, buys war-machines, nuclear warheads to destroy his enemies and enjoy the planet all by himself, thinking ‘this is all mine’.

Since words are often the cause of confusion, conflict, hatred, regret and war, we should make sure that our words are well chosen and defined in meaning. Body includes the five sense-organs, the brain and all the vital organs and nerves, covered by a layer of flesh or skin, supported by a bony structure from within. This organized whole, is given a name and considered an ‘individual’. It is estimated that 4 billion such individuals inhabit our planet Earth at this point of time. Each one considers himself (herself) a
Our sense of "otherness" and "separateness" arises from a wrong understanding of Space/Time. Any word is only a symbol and has no more meaning than we assign to it, according to our light of Understanding. A word is consequently relative to the insight of its employer. All-important words such as "the world", "the universe", "life", being "Truth", "Love", "Spirit", "Happiness", "God", "Self", "I", certainly do not convey the same meaning to all, though they are of common occurrence. The Sages of old warn us: "All that glitters is not gold. Do not judge from appearances. Seek the TRUTH. KNOW THYSELF. Truth will set you free." If "I" understand my "self" to be limited to this body without further investigation, then it follows that the other body is spoken to is "you" and still another is a "he" or a "she" and that all the rest of the 4 billion people are so many he's and she's. The world, then, is other than "I am". What have I done? I have created a duality, separating the "world" and "I" or "nature" and "I". This is a state of "ignorance". If I make use of my critical observation and reasoning powers, I can see that this "my body" and all other similar structures (including animal bodies) are composed of the same raw or primary materials, namely: "earth, ether, water, air and fire", the very stuff of which our planet is made. So, physically speaking we (as bodies) are part and parcel of the Planet Earth, children of Mother Earth, of Mother Nature. All human beings and animals of the past as well as of the future have been and continue to be produced of the same original substances earth, water, air, ether and fire-which are sustained by the silent Space of electromagnetic energy. If I have come to realize that my body belongs to the body of our planet Earth, then I can understand why I (as a physical structure) also must undergo all the changes of the planet from seed, sprout, embryo, through all the stages of growth till full bloom or maturity and reproduction, with all the variety of colors, sizes, features. As a genus of the planet, I, as a body, must obey the same laws, rhythms and principles the planet lives by. Realizing further that our Mother Earth is not self-existent and separate from the rest of the planetary system, but dependent in particular upon our Central Sun which radiates constantly positive, vitalizing energy and light and in whose orbit or balanced sphere of attraction we constantly travel and enjoy the changing scenery of beauty, contemplating the vastness, the immensity of the artistic display called Nature or the UNIVERSE, then I realize that "I" do not stand alone and apart with "my" insignificant fixed material body, afraid to lose it or give it up. Living in such a miserable frame of mind as: this is "mine"; you and the others are strangers; who are you? where do "you" come from? where were "you" born? is classified as "ignorance", which means ignorance of the Truth of one's Being, unlimited by space and time and consequently unborn and immortal.

This is maya, the reversal of ayam or I am!
ON BEING AWARE

By Douglas E. Harding

Awareness is what life's all about. At least, it's what I'd like my life to be about. At the end of it I want to be able to say, truthfully, that I was aware — awake, attentive to what's going on, not dreaming or "out to lunch".

I don't mean aware all the time of course, but often; increasingly, and to the very best of my ability. Naturally I like having lovely feelings, enjoying peak experiences when they arrive, perhaps even taking off into mystical realms. But when they don't include experiencing who is in receipt of all such goodies, why then they're a sort of lapse into unawareness and (at best) pleasant vacations from the main business of my life — namely being really aware. Which means self-aware, and ultimately Self-aware.

Such were my first reflections on hearing of AWARE. I was reminded of those talkative birds in Aldous Huxley's 'Island', who startled the forest-walker by squawking out "Attention!" relentlessly. They had come under Buddhist influence. And indeed their message is central to that religion.

Mindfulness, or attention, or awareness lies at the heart of Buddhism. It's not only the path of enlightenment, but enlightenment itself — that "state" which could be described as total awareness.

Awareness of precisely what?

Obviously not of just any old thing. The object or content of awareness matters as much as its intensity or steadiness. What yellow-robed monk could be more mindful (less absent-minded) than the thrush that at this moment is hauling a worm out of my lawn? What holy man can become more one-pointed than he was as an infant, playing with a ball on the grass? The absorption of bird and baby in what's going on is just about total — while it lasts.

But neither is enlightened. True, it isn't, like most of us grown-ups practically all the time, deluded. On the other hand it certainly isn't self-aware — even to the limited extent that we're self-aware. (That bird overlooks its presence; the sage sees his absence — a very different way of life, as we shall presently observe for ourselves). And certainly the infant and the bird aren't for imitating, even if we knew how.

But this is jumping ahead. Let's proceed step by step, and distinguish in more detail the three stages in the development of awareness — stages which apply equally to the evolution of humanity in general, and of the individual in particular. Simply for convenience I'll call them: (1) Primitive (infrahuman) Awareness, (2) Human (lack of) Awareness, and (3) Enlightened (suprahuman) Awareness.

Primitive (infrahuman) awareness

To the examples of the thrush with the worm and the baby with the ball, we could add the worm itself (before its fatal encounter with the thrush), patiently edging and nosing and fitting a fallen leaf into its hole. (How the dear thing does it with a body like that, is a miracle of dexterity — and attention. You or I would have a job, using all ten fingers!) And why not add the example of one of that
gifted creature's nerve cells (all unknowingly involved in that same delicate task of leafwork) as it minds its own cellular business of attending to each incoming neural message and passing it on to the right quarters?

In fact, I'd go much further, and suggest that the inside story of each of the worm's cells, and each of that cell's molecules, and so down to whatever the ultimate units or building blocks of the "physical" world might be, is nothing else than awareness. Awareness of its companions; of its world. How otherwise could its responses to them be so accurate, appropriate or consistent? Each particle "knows" its job to perfection and does it superbly: it takes in (note that expression) and adjusts minutely to the mass and position and motion of all the other particles, everywhere.

Now there's awareness for you! No electron, no atom, no molecule, no cell, no bird, no animal is ever "out to lunch", or found guilty of driving (or flying, or swimming, or creeping, or whatever its favoured mode of locomotion) without "due care and attention". But my message isn't addressed to that overwhelming majority of the universe's citizens — the careful and conscientious sort who don't need it — but to us cosmic delinquents and scatter-brains who need it badly. To the only absent-minded creatures in the known universe.

**Human (lack of) awareness**

Let's take a closer look at what's happened to us, of the second stage:

Suppose I'm a keen bird-watcher, and find myself fascinated by that thrush's goings on. I set myself the task of counting how many worms it manages to get down per hour.

Intrigued and even horrified though I am, I find that, after a very few minutes of attention to that gawking, single-minded creature on the ground, I'm up and away. I'm off on some flight of the imagination — planning, perhaps, this article I'm writing which features the thrush, or about the tummy ache it's surely going to have if it carries on like this. Or wondering what it feels like being a worm, tugged at and stretched as if it were an elastic band, and then being carved up into wriggling bird-helpings.

Meantime, of course, the bird carries on unobserved. I leave even the garden behind, as I'm carried away into exalted reflections about dear old Mother Nature — so "red in tooth and claw" and beak; and even more exalted reflections about the problem of pain in the universe. I end my morning's stint at "bird-watching" by wondering what I've got for lunch — vaguely hoping it isn't spaghetti!

Bare attention to the scene that's presented right now, stripped clean of memory, anticipation, judgment: let's face it, for us humans this is practically impossible. We see what we're looking for, what we're told to see, what language allows us to see, what we can make some use of — even when, ever so briefly, we're staring hard at the worm, the bird, the baby, the flower, or whatever, doing our best to see it as it is. What's more, I fear that the older and better informed we grow, the more scatterbrained (not to say scatty!) we become. The absentminded professor is no mere story put around by rude students. Didn't Isaac Newton himself boil his watch, timing it with his egg?

There is a sense, of course, in which Newton was one of the most aware people of his time, of any time. He was a giant, taking in... but what didn't he take in? And no doubt we all become aware of more and more as we grow up. The field of attention and its topography widen wonderfully. But, offsetting this gain, our awareness becomes increasingly contaminated by verbal comment by superimposed mental stuff which blurs and almost obliterates the scene. We see the world through a thickening fog. For some of us the visibility is reduced to the point when we are certified "mad". We come to live in a dream world of our own, altogether out of contact with "reality", and in need of institutional care. Buddhists tell us we're all somewhat crazy like this — until we are enlightened.
They go on to say that it is this failure to attend to what’s so, which is our undoing, our basic trouble. “The way,” says the Buddha, “to resolve trouble and disharmony, get beyond bodily and mental suffering, and tread the path that leads to Nirvana, is by practising mindfulness” — mindfulness of the body, of sensations, of mental states, of conceptions. Which indicates how practical is the subject under discussion. We all want to suffer less, to get our deepest anxieties cleared up. Awareness, they tell us, is the way.

What to do? One thing is certain from the start: we can’t revert to infancy, and certainly not to the one-pointedness of non-humans. But we can go on to train ourselves in mindfulness, precisely as people train themselves in figure skating, or chess, or singing, step by step under the guidance of experts.

Theravada Buddhism consists, very largely, of this training in mindfulness. For example, the exercise of mindful walking — walking in very slow motion, when every little sensation of touch, tension, and muscular adjustment is carefully noted. (To the irreverent spectator, one appears to have reverted to the reptilian stage of our ancestral history; but who cares when the advertised rewards are so great?) Or mindful breathing, when perhaps for hours the trainee “watches” and counts his in-breathings and out-breathings. At first he quickly forgets what he’s supposed to be doing and stops counting, but with long practice he improves. And so with all the chores of the day — mindful dressing and undressing, mindful eating and defecating, and so on, till every moment is rescued from unawareness.

Costing so much in time and effort, it’s as well that the advertised benefits of such discipline are impressive. Here are five of them. FIRST, what’s done attentively is done better. Notice your visitors helping by washing the dishes: the mindful ones do twice the work of the others, with no breakages, and (bless them!) leave all tidy afterwards. SECOND, they actually enjoy washing up. For it isn’t the repetitiveness of a job which makes it boring, but inattention. THIRD, how much of our fear and pain come from import-
You are taking in a page of columns covered with lines of black marks (these printed words), and held by two hands — of which the fingers are mostly not given. While continuing to look straight at this printing, notice how those two hands connect with arms that grow fuzzy and fade out altogether well short of your shoulders (what shoulders?). And now observe how, between these fuzzy arms stretches an area of chest which itself gets fuzzy and then disappears well short of any neck (what neck?). Try tracing with your finger now the “neckline” where your chest stops, and notice what’s your side, the near side, of this permanent decolletage.

(Strange — isn’t it? — how completely we overlook these near regions, refusing to see what we see where seeing matters most, and dishonesty is disaster).

Another example: are you now, in your own first-hand experience, peering at these black marks through two (repeat, two) small windows in a globular, hairy lookout called a head? If so, kindly describe what it’s like in there — congested? Dimly lit? Sticky? Small?

Or is it a fact that, going by present evidence, you find nothing whatever right here where you thought you sported a head, nothing but space? Space containing what? Space filled with these words, these pages, these arms and chest? Speckless and boundless capacity or room, alive to itself as empty — and filled with those things, taking in the ever-changing scene? Space, sometimes, for your face and head and shoulders also — where you find and keep them — over there behind your looking glass, quarter size, the “wrong” way round, and three feet adrift from your torso?

Yes, you’ve got it! You see with total clarity Who and what you’ve always been, namely this Disappearance in favour of others, this Emptiness which is aware of itself as no-thing and therefore all things. How could we not see this most obvious of all sights, once our attention is drawn to it?

Congratulations! You’re enlightened! You always were.
But now comes the hard bit. Seeing what you really are is just about the easiest thing in the world to do, and just about the most difficult to keep doing — at first. Normally, it takes months and years and decades of coming back home, to the spot one occupies (or rather, doesn’t occupy — the world does that) before one learns the knack of remaining centred, of staying indoors, of living from one’s space instead of from one’s face. Nevertheless, now you know how to get there, you can visit home whenever you wish and whatever your mood. And, once over the threshold, you’re perfectly at home: here, you can’t put a foot wrong. Practice doesn’t make perfect here: it is perfect from the start. You can’t half see your facelessness now, or see half of it. There are no degrees of enlightenment: it is all, or nothing.

Naturally there are many, many ways back to the home you never really left.

Let me tell you about those which I find particularly useful. Among them you will find some that are right for you.

**How to keep it up**

Any face there is enough to dissolve the illusion of a face here above my shoulders, taking it in. How could I receive your face in all its colourful detail if it were blocked at this end by anything at all? I find I’ve never, never been face to face with anybody. This permanent asymmetry is the beginning of love and the end of fear. Imagining I’ve any shield or wall here to keep you out with is rejection of you, separation from and fear and even hatred of you. The remedy is to see that I’m built open, built for loving.

My mirror confirms this wide-openness right here where I am. The very thing which long ago put a face on me now relieves me of it. Now I look in the glass to see what I’m not like!

And if it occurs to me that all this is very visual, and that I can actually feel this solid thing here, filling up the seeming void at the centre of my world, why then I start stroking and pinching and pummelling this thing. Only to find it still isn’t any thing at all, let alone a pink and white and hairy and opaque and all-together-in-one-piece thing. Instead, I find a succession of touch sensations that are no more substantial than the sounds and smells and tastes and so on, which also come and go in the same space.

And if I start wondering how on earth one could explain this to a blind person, why then I “go blind”. Shutting my eyes (what eyes?) I start seeking my shape, my boundaries, my height and width, my sex... indeed all those things I’d identified with. And I discover that not a single one of them can be found now. I am still boundless space for sensations to occur in, alias silence for these passing sounds, alias no-mind entertaining this parade of thoughts and feelings. I’m nobody, cleaned out. Yet I feel no sense of loss. Quite the opposite: I’m aware of myself as unhurt, comfortable, relieved of a heavy load. It suits me just to be. I AM feels incomparably better than, more natural than, I AM SOMEBODY.

And if I suspect that it’s not in passive contemplation but in action that I shall re-discover that missing somebody, why then I get on the move. Only to find I never move! It is the countryside that walks, jogs, runs, drives, dances through me. The space here is for things to move around in, not for moving. May I suggest you check this by standing up
now and rotating on the spot. In your unedited experience, are you going round and round, or the room?

But how to reconcile that moving, headed, bounded, opaque human you take me to be, with my denial of all that? Who is right?

We’re both right. What I amount to depends on where you’re looking at me from. At 6 feet from this centre, you find a man. Approaching, you find a face, a patch of skin, and then (given the right instruments) tissues, cells, molecules . . . till, at the point of contact, I’ve vanished — and you confirm my view of myself right here. Or, retreating from this centre, you find a home, a city, a country, a planet, a star (the Solar System), a galaxy (the Milky Way); and again, in the limit, nothing at all. Your view of me, and my view of me, confirm and complement each other.

All this, and much more, is embodied in the device I call Youniverse. This is a 3-dimensional map of my manifold appearances to others at all ranges, and of their appearances to me, and of my appearance to myself at a range of zero — that central reality which is my disappearance as a thing and my emergence as Awareness itself. In its numerous 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional forms this device has over the years proved (for me) an indispensable aid to Self-questioning, Self-discovery, Self-realisation, Self-remembering.

End of the dream

Well, having now seen your true Nature, and valuing what you see, you will find your own reminders to go on looking, till the looking becomes quite natural and effortless. Some of the experiments and pointers I’ve mentioned will surely work for you too. If you really want to live the aware life, to wake up from the social dream, to be Who you are, everything will spring to your aid and push you towards that supreme goal.

Attaining it is realising you never left it. Rather than becoming aware, you experience Awareness as your very being.
True being, pure Awareness, That,
That, the one source of every sound,
Spontaneous in the Heart for ever
That, shines. Who can write it down?
(The last two lines repeat a couplet composed by Bhagavan when someone asked Him to write an "akshara". The word "akshara" means "a letter of the alphabet" and also "the imperishable".

What is the word divine, the source
Of every utterance true and clear?
The silence through which, 'neath the banyan
Tree, the Lord, embodied Wisdom,
Taught of yore,
(Siva, as Dakshinamurti, the First Guru taught through silence.)

Innumerable expository
Treatises cannot explain
'Tis infinite being of Brahman. Yet
The rare, true Guru's silence does
Reveal It. Hence such silence is
More eloquent than any speech.

Of this true-seeming, transitory
World the ground is body-awareness.

Of this awareness the firm, solid
Unchanging ground is the Eternal Silence

What is true religion? It is not Speculating with the inconstant Mind and endless speaking; "That Is Being. No, that has no being. That has form. No, That is formless. That is non-dual. That is dual."
It is the silence which reveals The experience of eternity, Of Being Awareness Bliss.
(Compare Verse 34 of Forty Verses.)

Until the life of silent Grace Pervades the mind and wisdom dawns,
Thousands of rituals based on caste And creed cannot destroy the sense Of difference and duality.

All rivers flow towards and merge Into the ocean. Even so All creeds have for their common goal
Self-loss in Sivahood, the still, Deep ocean of Awareness-Bliss. And hence there is no room for difference Between religions.
Diving within enquiring “Who Am I? Who sees between the creeds Some differences?” the Self alone Abides and the poor ‘I’ fades out. In that still silence can there be A sense of difference?

In that great Silence there is no Sense of difference. But is there then A feeling of non-difference? No. The non-duality extolled By seers is nothing but the absence Of all sense of difference.

If we look deep, these troublesome Questions and answers both belong To the language of duality. In mouna, the transcendent speech Of non-duality, they have No place at all. (In the language of duality Alone are questions with their answers. In non-duality they are not. — Bhagavan)

The true, uninterrupted speech Between the keen inquiring pupil And the illumined teacher is But both abiding in that state Where two minds merging become one. PURE MOUNA

What is the bliss supreme attained By keen enquiry, what the Self Experienced in the Heart? It is Pure mouna wholly free from false Dualistic knowledge.

Shining as the bright void, devoid Of concepts by the villainous ego Raised, - this is the experience true Of Infinite being-Awareness, the one Nondual bliss of mouna pure.

Since mouna shining in and through The pure mind thought free is the sole Entrance into mukti’s realm, Whatever path one my pursue The goal is but this gate of mouna.

Uninterrupted and whole-minded Concentration on the Self, Our true nondual Being, this Is mouna pure, supreme, the goal, Not at all the lazy mind’s Inertia which is but a state Of dark illusion.

The interior mouna steady, firm, Which praises Siva in silence bright, The speech divine beyond all words, This stillness is true, natural worship.

He who in Siva has discovered His own true Being, he alone Attains the state of wholeness mouna. Identified with nothing else But Siva, abide forever in Siva, Free from action, free as Siva.
Seshadri Of Tiruvannamalai

By Vasanti

Nobody knew where Seshadri lived. He was homeless — there was no hut or cave where one could find him, though he was often seen on Arunachala hill and in the streets of Tiruvannamalai. He would appear suddenly from nowhere and disappear just as abruptly. Those who desired his darshan sometimes waited for days, hanging around his known haunts.

He was handsome, of medium height and fair countenance, and his half-open eyes shone with a strange fire and light. His hair hung in short ringlets to the nape of his neck. His voice was soft, with a charm all its own, and his smile was as sweet and sunny as a child’s. Until 1929 Seshadri roamed around Tiruvannamalai, as free as the very wind that blew there.

To hide his beauty he wore a dhoti around his waist that reached down to cover his feet and another across his shoulders to cover his breast. It was invariably dirty and if anyone bought him a new piece of cloth he would immediately smear it with mud or give it away to a beggar, taking the poor man’s rags in return.

He walked so fast that those following had to run to keep pace, but when he sat it was always in the swastika asana, easily and without effort.

Seshadri loved music, delighting his devotees with songs. One had only to ask him to sing and he would break forth, charming everyone with his melodious voice. His knowledge of tala was amazing, and he drummed the various rhythms on any available surface.

He would take any object and play with it, repeatedly placing and replacing it in its original position, or he would put his hands on the floor and jump back and forth. Suddenly, tired of these antics, he would get up and look at the sky intently, or stand holding onto a pillar that he looked up and down and went round and round. Yet again he would sit, rubbing his hands together and touching his eyes.

On occasion he would laugh for half an hour at a time. It was not hollow laughter, but the sound of man who had seen something extraordinarily funny. If asked why he laughed, he would only reply with more laughter.

Sometimes he would place his hands on his hips and step around in a dance. Sometimes he would follow a cat or a squirrel to its hole and sit watching the entrance for hours. While walking in the street he would pick up stones and throw them aside, or if a horse or bullock cart passed he would jump onto it. He would even ride a refuse cart, shouting, “I am riding a coach! I am riding a coach!”

Birth and Early Years

In the 19th century there lived in Kancheepuram a great scholar and devotee of Devi, Sri Kamakoti Sastrigal. He was childless, but his brother Chidambaram Sastrigal had two sons and two daughters, one of whom was Marakadam, the would-be mother of Seshadri. Sri Kamakoti Sastrigal was fond of his brother’s children, especially Marakadam, and was very anxious to have her married. After much thinking, he chose Varadaraja, a student and scholar like himself, and gave Marakadam to him in marriage.

The couple had no children for a long time and Kamakoti Sastrigal prayed to Devi for a child. One night Sri Kamakshi appeared to him in a dream and said: “Give sweet butter; jnana kala will be born.” The next morning Sastrigal woke up with great joy and offered butter, sanctified with mantras, to both Varadaraja and Marakadam. She conceived, and on Saturday the 22nd of January, 1870 a son was born to her.

The couple named the child Seshadri after the Lord Srinivasa. He was made much of and fondly brought up by his happy parents.
When he started to talk he was taught simple slokas and hymns of praise, which he lisped devotedly during puja times, undistracted by sweets or play.

Once, when there was a festival for Varadaraja at the temple, a bazaar sprang up to attract visitors and pilgrims. In this bazaar there was a man who sold small images of Krishna about two inches high. Seshadri, then four years old, was fascinated by the images and demanded that his mother buy him one so that he might worship it. The dealer was captivated by the delightful child, and when Marakadam hesitated, said, “This child is verily the Lord Krishna himself. Let him take one. The price is two annas but for the boy it is free.” Seshadri examined them all, then chose one out of the heap, saying, “This one is very beautiful!”

Next morning when he and his mother returned to the temple, the dealer prostrated before them, crying, “My Golden Hand! My Golden Hand!” and catching hold of Seshadri’s small hands pressed them to his eyes. He then explained that the boy was very lucky and auspicious, for he had sold all of the 1,000 images that he had with him, something that had never happened before. He considered himself fortunate if he sold a hundred pieces a day, but after giving Seshadri one he had sold his entire stock.

From then onwards the child was known as “Seshadri with the Golden Hand.” He worshipped the image for many years before giving it to his younger brother Narasimha.

When he was old enough to attend school the usual ceremonies of initiating a child into the mysteries of learning were performed, and he was then sent to the veda patasala attached to the temple. Here Seshadri again showed his unusual gifts, for he had only to hear a lesson once before he could repeat it clearly.

He was musically inclined and his mother, herself an adept, taught him hymns and devotional music at home. He would entertain everybody with his sweet voice and lisping recital. It was said that he could compose and had sung original hymns in praise of Varadaraja and Kamakshi, of which no copies now exist. He was encouraged to attend educational functions and meetings, and sometimes the pundits and scholars would induce him to give a talk or take part in an argument. Everybody was attracted to the young boy who sparkled with intelligence at such an early age. When he was seven he was invested with the sacred thread, and was now ready to begin the study of the Vedas and utterance of the Gayatri like a true brahmachari.

Some five years later Seshadri’s father felt that it was time to leave the earth. He called his wife and informed her that he would die before the next day’s sunrise, adding that she would also leave her body soon. Marakadam was stunned, and Varadaraja instructed her
to give Seshadri's brother Narasimha away in adoption. That evening he lay down with acute dysentery and, calling Seshadri to his side, gave him his last blessings before he died.

When Seshadri was seventeen it was decided that he should marry. His aunt wanted to give him her daughter and came to Kanchi to negotiate. Seshadri's brother, who had become an astrologer, predicted that there was sannyas yoga in Seshadri's horoscope and dissuaded her from making the marriage arrangements. This was a blow to Seshadri's mother, who took the news badly and never fully recovered from it. She fell ill on Ekadasi-day, and like her husband before her she foresaw her end. She died uttering "Arunachala" with Seshadri by her side. Sri Kamakoti Sastrigal had already passed away after taking sannyas in his last years.

Sannyasa

Seshadri's uncle was childless and gladly took charge of the two boys. Seshadri was given a little room to himself where he kept pictures of Sri Kamakshi, Sri Rama, and one of his own drawings of Arunachala hill in Tiruvannamalai. It was here that he did his daily devotions with lights and incense, locking himself up in the room at five in the morning and refusing to come out before noon. He was never on time for his meals and regularly fasted as a result. Often he could be heard shouting "Arunachala Shonadrinatha" or reciting Vedic hymns late at night. His uncle and aunt were frightened by this strange, unorthodox worship and begged him to stop before he ruined his health or caused some other disaster. But Seshadri would not listen to them, and when they continued to press him he went to the temple and continued his devotions there.

He readily gave up his former habit of arguing with pundits and scholars, and was instead seen doing japa before the shrine of Sri Chakkarathalwar with a water pot by his side. In the afternoon he would visit the temple of Sri Kamakshi and endlessly circumambulate the shrine, prostrating himself as he went. On other occasions he repeated the Mukapanchasati or just sat absorbed in meditation. Since much of his sadhana was practised in public, we have eye-witness accounts of the methods he used.

He bathed so often that he was dubbed "Water Crow". He was often seen talking to himself and seen prostrating to the sun, or he would return home late at night with his forehead smeared with kumkum. If anyone spoke to him he would reply in Sanskrit, not caring if he was understood or not. He would salute strange women and reverently touch the feet of brahmans, saying that a brahmin's feet and God's feet were the same. If there was the procession of a god in the street, he would go ahead of it and clear the road of stones and litter.

Seshadri was an unusual yogi and his disciplines, which were spontaneous rather than directed, were equally strange. He never shaved and wandered about Kanchi muttering, queer and unkempt. His homelessness started from the very beginning and one might truly say that he deemed it home wherever he found himself. There was only one house that he liked to visit and that was Vangipuram Srinivasa Iyengar's. He would go there when he was hungry and after eating would happily play with the children.

If he was stopped with the demand to explain himself, he would answer: "Karma must go, karma must go — I am doing japa." And if questioned further he would utter aloud the Vedic mantra that he was repeating and then clearly expound its meaning, advising those listening to do japa and attain liberation. These statements always baffled his interrogators and they would go away, leaving him to his own devices.

Because of these disturbances Seshadri decided that the temple was not the place for his meditations. He retired to the cremation ground and, after bathing in the Vegavati and doing his sandhya, spent his nights there alone and untroubled. When his uncle discovered his whereabouts he objected strongly, saying that such a place was unclean
and not fit for the performance of Sadhana. He begged Seshadri to return home, but the young man refused. The cremation ground belonged to Rudra, he said, and he would be blessed sooner if he stayed there. But the uncle was adamant and forcefully took him home, locking him up in a room. Seshadri in turn bolted the door from the inside and refused to come out for days, thereby doing without food and water. When he did come out he returned to the burning ground, and his uncle went to the extreme of tying him up. Yet in the end the uncle capitulated and let the boy have his own way, wherewith he spent longer periods in the rudrastan, fasting and vigilant.

Seshadri was both loving and cheerful with his uncle and aunt, and they responded with genuine affection. But he would not permit them to interfere with his sadhana. Once, when his uncle refused to bathe because of his conduct, the youth told him: "I am in my original state — why do you grieve for me? If each of us were in our original state there would never be any trouble." He then pacified the elder, massaging him with oil. But before he had completed this service he ran outside to stare up at the sky.

His uncle asked, "Seshadri, what do you see?"

Seshadri replied that he saw devas crossing overhead.

Trying to be ironic, the uncle asked if he saw gandharvas too?

Seshadri replied in the affirmative, stating that some of them had wings.

"And do you hear their music?" the uncle asked, still unconvinced.

Undaunted, Seshadri said that he heard the Bilahari Raga.

The uncle was now certain that his nephew was mad, and said that if devas really travelled through the air they would be visible to everybody.

But Seshadri replied that such beings were not visible to karmis, only to those who lived in their original state.

Convinced that the youth was completely deranged, his uncle acted on the advice of friends and tried to get him married. When Seshadri was approached he began to weep and said that he would never marry. He must
be left alone to live as he pleased or he would leave Kanchipuram for parts unknown. As both uncle and aunt loved the boy and wished to keep him near them, they desisted from further marriage plans.

Yet the uncle did persist in trying to draw him away from the rudrastan that he now spent most of his time in. When the respected pundit Parasurama Sastri visited the house, he confronted Seshadri with learned arguments against doing sadhana in a burning ground, and a fierce battle of words raged between the two for hours. Finally Seshadri declared that he was a naishtika brahmachari and an upasaka and was not bound by either time or space. If that was the case, the pundit replied, then he should never enter a private house or dwelling place after returning from the cremation ground.

For Seshadri this was the blessing that he had long awaited, and from that time on he avoided the house and lived in the streets of Kanchi.

Some time after this Sri Balaji Swami a wandering Saint from North India visited the city with his disciples. He was impressed with Seshadri's devotion and service, and when the youth begged for initiation he readily agreed. He gave Seshadri sannyas and instructed him in the Mahavakyas, deeming him fit for jnana yoga.

This was the only guru and the only formal diksha that Seshadri is known to have had.

**Seshadri's Powers**

On the death anniversary of Seshadri's father, his uncle, desirous that the boy should eat the feast for the manes, brought him to the house with great difficulty and locked him up in a room. Seshadri pleaded that as he was a sannyasi he had nothing to do with karma and did not want to partake of the meal, but nobody listened to him. When the ceremony was over his uncle unlocked the door so that he might join the feast. To his consternation and the amusement of those with him, he found the room empty though there was no possible means of escape. This was the last time that Seshadri was ever seen or heard of in Kanchipuram.

Within a few days of this episode he was found in Kaveripakkam, 20 miles from Kanchi, by another aunt and her son. When he refused to go home with them, they brought him food to the temple itself. Early one morning, while he and his younger cousin were circumambulating the shrine, a large serpent crawled out of a nearby tree. The younger boy, frightened, started shouting, but Seshadri called the snake to him. It approached and wound itself around him, while the boy ran out to find more people. They arrived just in time to see the snake slither off Seshadri's body and disappear.

He stayed in the village about a month, and when his uncle and aunt came to take him home he spoke kind words but bade them go back. When they insisted he remained silent. But the incident with the snake had begun to attract crowds to him and he soon left the village without notice.

For months it was not known where he had gone. Reports were heard that he was in this village or that town, but they remained unconfirmed. Eventually he was found in Tindivanam, where he allowed two devotees to care for his simple needs. He was silent during this period and would communicate only with notes or gestures. He indicated that he wanted a place to meditate, and the local priest agreed to let him use an old yaga sala.

Seshadri instructed him to lock the door and not open it for a month. The priest did so, but after four days got worried and asked Seshadri's devotees to take him somewhere else. They opened the door and found the youth in samadhi. Eventually Seshadri opened his eyes, and on hearing the plea of the priest that he leave the temple, he agreed and decided to go to Tiruvannamalai with his devotees. En route his three companions left him to go and bathe, with his permission, but when they returned he was not to be found anywhere.

It was rumoured that he was doing penance in a cave near Mamandur, and when his
brother Narasimha, along with a crowd of people, came to the village they discovered that he had already left for Tirupattur, via Wallajah, Velur, Ambur, and Vaniyambadi.

From Tirupattur he made his way to Padaivedu along the slopes of the Javvadu Hills. Here he stayed for two days in the Renuka shrine, then left for Aatvampadi where he was recognised by relatives who tried to feed and tame him. But again he escaped their overtures and made his way directly to Tiruvannamalai.

Seshadri was 19 years old when he left Kanchipuram and arrived at Tiruvannamalai a year later. From 1889 to 1929, a period of 40 years extending up to his death, Seshadri never left the town.

Seshadri In Tiruvannamalai

Tiruvannamalai is a major pilgrimage centre in Tamilnadu, South India, famous for its Arunachaleswarar temple and the sacred hill where a great oil beacon is lit on its top during the Kartigai festival in November-December each year.

When Seshadri's uncle and brother found him in the streets of the town, he was so starved and ragged, his hair so matted and dirty, that they began to weep. They fed him sweets and begged him to return home with them, but he utterly refused to listen to their admonitions.

The uncle died some time after this, and Narasimha, now a family man, moved to Madras. But he did not forget his brother Seshadri and would often go for darshan.

Seshadri lived and slept in the streets like a vagabond, his conduct so unpredictable that even those who knew him could not explain his activities. They did not dare to take liberties with him, fearing a beating, and sometimes he would ask them who they were and where they came from, though he already knew their names and villages. He would accuse them of being rascals and drive them out of his presence. Once somebody chided
him for saluting a group of donkeys, but Seshadri retorted that they were the Seven Sages, not donkeys, and reverently prostrated to the animals.

Perhaps most puzzling of all were his food habits. He could eat enough rice at a sitting for ten people, mixing everything together and carrying a portion back and forth to his lips forty times before putting it in his mouth. He would then spit some of it out or, at other times, he would scatter the food before him saying that it was for bhootas and pisachas.

At night when he went to the Kambattilayana temple people would offer him milk. He would pretend to drink it and then upset the tumbler. Another glassful would be given to him, which he would smell and then throw away. If he did drink any of it he would always spit a little out before swallowing. Yet people continued to bring him milk, happy enough that he touched it, and would then watch him play, laughing like a child as he poured it away for the dogs who gathered around him.

There was a sadhu in the town who begged his biksha, offering it to Seshadri before eating himself. If Seshadri couldn’t be found the sadhu fasted and the collected food lay rotting in its bowl. Still Seshadri would eat the foul mess when he did appear, completely indifferent to good or bad food.

It was said by many that he didn’t sleep at night and it is true that nobody ever found him asleep; he would be sitting absorbed in himself or wandering the streets like a ghost. He had a way of talking that confused people and put them off. His dialogue ran something like this: “The relation speaks: Who is he? Who is this? Are you in a hurry? What if there is line and form? Must breathe through the mouth and work. If you come to the city there will be a marriage.”

Seshadri and Ramana

Seshadri and Ramana were contemporaries and it was Seshadri who found Ramana in the Patala Lingam shrine and drove away the boys who were stoning him. With the help of Venkatachala Mudaliar he had Ramana removed from the pit and had his bleeding wounds, the result of insect bites as he sat in samadhi, cleaned and dressed.

Together they were known as the Seshadri brothers, Ramana being called “Chinna” Seshadri by the people though Seshadri himself always said affectionately: “I am Parvati and this is my son Subrahmanya.”

Seshadri’s Magic Touch

All the shopkeepers in Tiruvannamalai waited for Seshadri in the morning with folded hands, for they knew that the shop he entered that day would have soaring profits. But it was not easy to entice him into any particular place. There was one shop that he liked and made himself at home in, scattering rice and sugar and money about as he pleased. One day he emptied a tin of ghee into the street and the shopkeeper got back Rs. 750 that he had given up for lost. Another day in another shop he tore a beautiful gold-laced shawl to pieces and hung the shreds on the horns of a passing cow. That same day the shopkeeper realised a profit of Rs. 2,000. Another time it was a barber who was favoured. Seshadri had the habit of running away when only half his head and face were shaved, but this day he consented to sit still until the operation was completed. That evening the barber found a Rs. 5 note in the street as he walked through the bazzar.

But it did not augur well for those who resisted him. When a boy tending a stall snatched a mango out of Seshadri’s hand, the piles of fruit lay rotting for days unsold.

There are numerous stories of this sort. His habit was to slap or kick a person, often pulling their hair or beating them, and people eagerly awaited this treatment at his hands for it always guaranteed a material improvement in their lives.

He cured diseases by pressing his body against the afflicted person or prescribing mud to eat. For those who were possessed he gave bits of turmeric and ordered their bodies
smeared with the yellow powder. But just as often he would say that he ill person would get better and so it happened.

Yet, for all his eccentricities, he could not hide the light in his face. He was always available to anyone who sought his grace, though few stayed close to him for long because of his absurd and wild behaviour. But the townspeople were not fooled by their mad saint, and would proudly proclaim that there were three lingas in Tiruvannamalai: Arunachaleswar, Ramana, and Seshadri.

**Seshadri’s Mahasamadhi**

One day Seshadri asked his disciple Savitri Ammal: “Shall I build a new house and go away?”

At first, she ignored the question as a jest, but then grew apprehensive, saying, “You wouldn’t know if there were clothes on your body or not — how can you build a house? Let me see you do it.”

This answer was pleasing to Seshadri and he replied, “Yes, yes, it shall be done!”

Some days later his devotees decided to photograph him. He was given an oil bath, though he protested that he would catch pneumonia as a result. Nobody listened, and after pouring buckets of scented water over him he was dressed in new clothes and garlanded. A photograph was taken, and Seshadri immediately caught a fever.

For forty days his condition worsened and on the forty-first day he lay down in Chinna Gurukkal’s house extremely ill.

It was evident that he would not live long, yet he found the strength to visit Arunachaleswar one last time. On returning from the temple he sat down in a puddle of water, refusing to change his wet clothes when he got to the house. In eight days he left his body, on Friday the 1st of January 1929. He was 59 years old, and all of Tiruvannamalai went into mourning. Present at his last rites was his beloved “son” and “little brother” Sri Ramana Maharshi.

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**RESTORE TO ME THAT STATE SUPREME**

By Sri Muruganar

Translated by Prof. K.Swaminathan

Trust this treacherous world, unworthy,
False, I have let go and lost
The state supreme, the firm, fair Feet
Of Siva. O Lord, my Master, end
The burning agony of this birth,
Restore to me, bring back that state
Supreme, those firm, fair Feet, that Being
Whose nature is pure bliss.

—Sri Ramana Prarthani Vinnappam, verse 37
(extract from Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Vol.IV)
Moments Remembered
by Managing Editor

GRACIOUS RAMANA

What I have heard from time to time from old devotees of Sri Bhagavan I want to share with fellow-devotees in this column.

—V.G.

SRI Bhagavan stresses in the first five verses of Supplement to Forty Verses the importance of sat sang with sadhus and commands: “Seek their company”. Verse three is beautiful: “If one associates with sadhus where is the need for all these systems of discipline? When a pleasant southern breeze is blowing, of what use, tell me, is a fan?”

The old devotees of Sri Bhagavan are such blessed ones, whose words are nectareen. Time spent in their company is worth more than reading a hundred spiritual books. While reading books we use our brain. But the outpourings of old devotees go straight to your heart and bring you rare spiritual ecstasy!

Sri N.Balarama Reddy is a doyen among the oldest Ramana-bhaktas. I am very happy to learn from Dr.K.Subrahmanian of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, that they had the privilege of having Sri Reddy in Hyderabad for nearly a month and listening to his reminiscences of Sri Bhagavan. Dr.Subrahmanian says that the room in which Sri Balarama Reddy stayed became transformed into an Ashram — the atmosphere was so surcharged with Ramana-presence! It is heartening to see that fresh devotees coming to the Ashram are now making full use of the few old devotees of Sri Bhagavan left in our midst and approach them with sincere yearning.

Recently I had the privilege of being with Sri Balarama Reddy, and sharing his pleasant memories of the olden days in the glorious presence of Sri Bhagavan. He said:

“Bhagavan never allowed Himself to be drawn into mere philosophical discussions
and arguments. If people were sincere, He would answer their questions and help them according to their capacity of understanding. But if they came for mere argument or discussion, He would at once cut them short. Once a learned sannyasi from north India came and began to question Bhagavan in English. At first Bhagavan patiently answered his questions, but soon it became clear that he had come only to display his own supposedly superior learning; so Bhagavan finally said: “All right, I shall give you a certificate that you have defeated me in argument Will that satisfy you?” Bhagavan had no desire to argue anything or to prove anything to anyone. If people were not ready to accept His teaching, He would never try to force His views upon them. He left people free to believe whatever they wanted to believe”

Our talk then turned on to the subject of the Sanskrit writings of Sri Bhagavan. In Day by Day with Bhagavan (20-1-46) it is stated that Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni changed the word _abhava_ to _apeta_ when Sri Bhagavan showed him His Sanskrit verse beginning ‘deham-mrinmaya’. Sri Balaram said: “Kavyakantha must have made this correction for some grammatical reason. The word _abhava_ means ‘non-existent’, while the word _apeta_ means ‘without’ or ‘unmanifest’, so it amounts to almost the same thing. Muruganar did not agree with the correction, saying: ‘How can Nayana correct Bhagavan’s words?’ but I think Ganapati Muni would not have made the correction if it were not necessary. After all, he was a great master of Sanskrit poetry, so he may have had some reason for feeling that _abhava_ did not fit. Since we do not know so much Sanskrit, how can we judge? Anyway, Bhagavan approved his correction. He always respected Kavyakantha’s greater knowledge of Sanskrit”

Sri Reddy continued the trend of the talk on other writings of Bhagavan in Sanskrit. It was pointed out to him that it was he who had specifically put such a question to Bhagavan (vide: an entry dated 20-1-46 in Day by Day) of what were all the verses He had composed in Sanskrit. (In the Sanskrit book Sri Arunachalaramana Swarupanusandhanam it is said: “Upadesa Saram, Muktaka Trayarn, Arunachala Pancharatnam – these are the only verses composed in Sanskrit by Bhagavan and these are contained in this book”. However, in Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, p.339, Suri Nagamma records that Sri Bhagavan also translated into Sanskrit His Tamil verse beginning Parthan _therina_ – the invocatory verse of Bhagavad Gita Saram, which means: “May the Embodiment of Grace (Lord Krishna), who, seated on the chariot of Partha (Arjuna), dispelled His grief by His benign words, protect us.” This Sanskrit sloka is also printed in Telugu script on p.37 of the Telugu book: Sri Ramana Rachanavali. But in Sri Ramana Reminiscences, pages 78 and 129, Prof.G.V.Subbaramayya writes that this Sanskrit sloka was translated from Tamil by Jagadiswara Sastri. Therefore a doubt arose as to whether this Sanskrit sloka was actually composed by Bhagavan or by Jagadiswara Sastri). “Though Sri Reddy could not immediately remember the sloka, when it was shown to him he said that the style clearly indicated that it was composed by Sri Bhagavan and not by Jagadiswara Sastri. Jagadiswara Sastri was a good poet, no doubt, but he was a poet only by virtue of his scholarship. On the other hand, though Bhagavan had never formally studied Sanskrit, He was a poet by virtue of divine inspiration. The style and flow of this sloka shows that it was composed through inspiration and not through mere scholarship. Therefore we can definitely say that it was composed only by Sri Bhagavan”, explained Sri Reddy.

1 see Supplement to Forty Verses, verse 10. In the first two lines of this verse Sri Bhagavan gives two reasons why the body is not ‘I’; namely (i) that the body is insentient, and has no ‘I’ – consciousness, and (ii) that we exist even in sleep, where the body does not exist. By substituting the word _apeta_ for _abhava_, Kavyakantha changed the idea ‘where the body is absent’ to ‘where the body is unmanifest’.

2 The original verses are vi.2.4 and vii.6 from the _Upadesa Saram_, by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Sanskrit sloka is _“Deham-mrinmaya apeta, Deham manasmeta abhava, Deham manasmeta apeta, Deham manasmeta bhava”_.

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9 The original verses are vi.2.4 and vii.6 from the _Upadesa Saram_, by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Sanskrit sloka is _“Deham-mrinmaya apeta, Deham manasmeta abhava, Deham manasmeta apeta, Deham manasmeta bhava”_.
He then went on to say: 'Except these verses (that is, the thirty verses of Upadesa Saram, the five verses of Sri Arunchala Pancharatnam, the three verses of Muktaka Trayam and this one stray verse mentioned above), I cannot think of any other verses which Sri Bhagavan composed in Sanskrit. We often asked Him to translate His Tamil verse into Sanskrit, but after Nayana (Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni) left this place He used to say: 'What to do, Nayana is not here!' Previously, whenever He composed anything in Sanskrit, He used to show it to Nayana to have it corrected and approved by him. You know, Bhagavan had never studied any Sanskrit grammar, but composed Sanskrit verses only through inspiration. So He always wanted Nayana to check that what He had written was grammatically correct. Nayana was the only one who had a complete mastery of Sanskrit grammar. So Bhagavan always liked to have His verses checked by him. Bhagavan wanted to be perfect in everything that He did.

"The same was the case with Telugu. Whenever Bhagavan wrote anything in Telugu, He used to show it to one of us, Telugu-speaking devotees, to have it checked. For instance, when he translated that verse from the Bhagavatam (XI.13.36). He showed it to me and asked for my suggestions for improving it, but I said: 'What suggestion can I make?' This is also recorded in Day by Day (22-1-46). So unassuming was Bhagavan!"

Sri Reddiar said: "Kavyakantha in Sri Ramana Gita has interpreted the verse: Hridayakuhara madhye, to mean that there are three paths. In Telugu Bhagavan has written very clearly that there are only two paths. Kavyakantha thought that 'seeking Self was one path, 'diving' another path, and 'breath-control' a third path. But in Telugu Bhagavan does not take 'diving' as a separate path. He says: 'Either diving by seeking Self, or diving by breath-control'. So, He connects diving with both paths."

"It is true what Prof. Subbaramayya says that his English translation of this verse, in which three paths are mentioned, was even touched up, and approved by Bhagavan. But it is not easy to say what Bhagavan has approved. I was one of the people who helped Bhagavan to check the fifth edition of Sri Ramana Leela (the Telugu biography of Sri Bhagavan) when it was to be reprinted. At that time Bhagavan pointed out so many factual errors in the book. Why did He not point out those errors in the first edition itself? Why did He wait till five editions had been published before pointing out the errors? To Bhagavan all these things were only part and parcel of maya. He was not concerned whether these "facts" were correct or incorrect. Sometimes He would correct factual

4 compare the story of the Malayalam biography of Bhagavan, which is related on p. 5 of the January, 1982 issue of The Mountain Path.
errors, sometimes He would not. So, if Bhagavan does not object to something, it does not necessarily mean that He approved it. He cannot be tied down. He alone knows why He sometimes corrects factual errors or wrong translations, and why at other times He does not!

"I think that Kavyakantha mentioned three paths because he was soaked in traditional scriptures, where it is often said that there are three paths. He took 'seeking Self' to be Jñana Marga, 'breath-control' to be Yoga Marga and 'diving' to be Bhakti Marga. But, then the scriptures did not always affirm that there were three paths. For instance, in a famous verse of the Bhagavad Gita (Ch. III.v.3) Sri Krishna talks of the two-fold path, Jñana Yoga and Karma Yoga.

"Scholars often dispute why Krishna omitted bhakti in this verse. Some scholars say that bhakti is in between Jñana and Karma. When I asked Bhagavan about this. He said that bhakti was not a separate path but was included in both Jñana Yoga and Karma Yoga. Without bhakti there can be no Jñana and Karma. See the difference between Bhagavan's reply and the scholar's reply. If bhakti were in between Jñana and Karma, Krishna would have mentioned a three-fold path. The reason He mentioned only two is because, as Bhagavan said, bhakti is an essential part of both paths. Similar is the case here. 'Divine' is not a separate path, but is an essential part of both 'seeking Self' and of 'breath-control'.

"Bhagavan is not an acharya, a philosopher. He is a Seer. He speaks not from mere intellectual understanding, but from direct experience. He spoke not according to a set and defined system of philosophy, but according to the need and capacity of the questioner. He cannot be tied down as belonging to this school or that school.

"There is a wonderful passage in Day by Day (15-3-46 afternoon) in which Bhagavan explains this idea very clearly. Dr. Masalawala had received a letter from a friend who wrote that Bhagavan was an exponent of the ajata doctrine. When Bhagavan saw this letter. He explained that He did not teach only the ajata doctrine, but approved all schools. The ajata doctrine says that nothing exists except the One Reality, and that there is no creation, destruction, bondage, liberation and so on; it does not at all accept the existence or appearance of the world. But because we see the world, the ajata doctrine is set aside and the doctrine of simultaneous creation or drishti-srishti vada is taught. This doctrine says: 'All that you see depends on the seer. Apart from the seer there is no seen', and points out the dream experience as an example. But even this doctrine cannot be grasped by some people, and they raise so many arguments against it. For them the doctrine called srishti-drishti-vada is taught, which describes a detailed process of gradual creation. Such people can be satisfied only by such descriptions. Bhagavan concludes His explanation by saying: 'All these are only to suit the capacity of the learner. The Absolute can only be One'. Though Bhagavan Himself had realised the One Absolute Truth. He taught different doctrines according to the different capacities of those who came to Him'.

Leaving aside metaphysics, I asked Mr. Reddy to tell an 'interesting' anecdote. He kindly responded:

"It was I think the first week of December 1948. Sri Krishna Prem of the Himalayas, an Englishman turned a Vaishnavite monk, after spending three memorable days at the Ashram with Bhagavan had gone to Pondicherry and was expected at Villupuram where I was to join him for a visit to some notable southern shrines. I was to take a noon train from Tiruvannamalai. Lunch over, I prostrated myself before Bhagavan who was still sitting in the dining hall and prayed for permission to go. He said: 'These people have written to an advocate-devotee of Nagercoil for coloured sands available at Kanyakumari to be used at the ritual of Kumbhabhishekam of

1 A similar explanation about the different theories of creation is given by Sri Bhagavan in Vichara Sangraham (Self Enquiry), answer to Ch.10; also refer TALKS, pp.348-9, 354, 373-4, 412 and 612-3.
Matrubhuteswara temple. So far, he has not sent them'. Though He did not specifically tell me to bring them, I understood what was in His mind. I was to bring them. Such an adesa from Bhagavan was not only a sign of His gracious approval of my pilgrimage but also a rare gesture of intimacy through which was to follow His unimpeded grace. If the great ones assign work to the followers it means that they are about to bless them, says a great Sanskrit poet.

"When I reached Kanyakumari, I came to know it was not that easy to collect the sands and get them out of the place. There was a strict governmental ban and the police was checking the luggage at the railway station for any illicit transportation of the sands in question. I was in a fix. On reflection, I decided that I must take the sands, whatever the consequences. I collected them separately and carefully packed them and inserted them in my hold-all. When I came to the station, I saw a couple of policemen near the ticket examiner's gate. I was a bit apprehensive and fell into a reverie thinking of Bhagavan. The porter quietly passed through the gate with the luggage, I following him and the police made no fuss at all! When the train moved I felt that Bhagavan had managed the whole thing smoothly.

"Arriving at Tiruvannamalai, I took the coloured sands in three different packets to Bhagavan, who looked at them carefully, and approvingly showed them to a few devotees-sitting close to Him. Weeks later when the parcel of sands from the Nagercoil advocate was received it was found that the different sands tied up in paper bags inside the parcel got badly mixed up during transit and were declared by the priests to be unfit for use at the ritual. And there was not much time left for the Kumbhabhishekam. Bhagavan remarked: 'If Balarama Reddy had not brought the sands, how could we have got a fresh consignment in time for the ceremony?"

"But who really got the sands in time? Balarama Reddy was just an excuse!"

Professor N.R.Krishnamoorthy Aiyar narrated to me the following interesting incident:

"The baby Venkataraman would be taken and fondled by the inmates of the two houses flanking that of Sundaram Iyer for a good part of the day. In the house on the western side was a baby-girl, Lakshmi, of about the same age as Ramana. The two children were playmates and inseparable chums. Ramana, while suckling, would insist on Lakshmi's suckling at the other breast of his mother. Ramana was not weaned until he was almost five years old!

"Lakshmi, later known as the mother of Dr.V.Ramakrishna Iyer, a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan, stayed in Skandashram during the last two months of Mother Alagamal's illness before her samadhi, nursing her with a devotion worthy of an affectionate daughter. Lakshmi Ammal, whom I have met frequently, spoke to me of the burning sensation suffered by Mother Alagamal during her pregnancy carrying Ramana. Lakshmi Ammal attributed the sturdy constitution of Ramana to His prolonged breast-feeding".

Mrs. Roda Mclver, who recently passed away, was an adorable person totally devoted to Sri Bhagavan. She described thus her experience when she met Bhagavan for the first time:--

"I first heard about Bhagavan in 1940 from Mrs. Taleyarkhan. We were in Bombay and she gave me some books and photos and told me that the Maharshi was a very great man. I could not understand the books but I was strongly moved by the photo. I felt an urge to go and see him, and as time passed, the urge became stronger and stronger. There was no outer reason for this urge; my position in Bombay was good, both financially and socially, but somehow I was not satisfied. I felt restless, eager to break off, and anxious to move on.

"I finally came to the Ashram in 1942. Bhagavan had gone up the hill when I arrived, and I was told to wait on the footpath for his return. I did not see him coming, but suddenly I saw a brilliant light before me, like the sun rising. I lifted my head and saw Bhagavan
standing before me. He looked at me, nodded and smiled. At that moment I felt something happening in me which I had never experienced before in my life! The Sun that He was, He revealed at that moment that He was the Light, the Fire of Knowledge!"

Once Sri Devaraja Mudaliar, who was a reputed Government Pleader, raised various doubts about the statements made in 'Sri Arunachala Mahatmya' (The Glory of Sri Arunachala) - refer to Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, pp.80-81; particularly to the verse: “I ordain that residence within a radius of three yojanas of this Hill shall by itself suffice to burn off all defects and effect union with the Supreme even in the absence of initiation”. Bhagavan smilingly turned to Mudaliar and said: “Mudaliar! This is the verdict from the Supreme Court itself. We can't do anything but accept and obey it!!”. Bhagavan referred to Lord Siva as the ‘Supreme Court’ and this satisfied the ‘lawyer’!

A devotee lamented repeatedly: ‘Bhagavan, my mind is restless; however much I try to control it I fail again and again. You alone can make it stand still. Bhagavan did not reply. After the man had left, He smiled and said, “Tell me! What is this talk about mind. Where is the mind? How does it look? Is it black or white? Does it have a moustache and matted hair? The simple truth is that there is no mind. What exists is that which IS!”

MY EXPERIENCE

I visited Ashram six times recently. My father, the late M. Srinivasa Iyengar of Dindigul had close association with Bhagavan. My father used to write letters to Bhagavan whenever he needed mental solace. He would visit the Ashram during vacation. The birth-place of Bhagavan and my father was the same i.e. Tiruchuzhi. I had the chance of reading the Ramana Vijayam (biography of Bhagavan in Tamil) during my childhood and I was much impressed. I visited Tiruvannamalai in the year 1960 and 1980. After a long spell of 12 years I visited the Ashram in September 1982. Subsequently I visited it five times. I am very grateful for the hospitality and kindness shown to me and my family during our visits.

One of the experiences of my father came to my remembrance whenever I visited Ramanasramam. My father had the experience of hearing the sound of vina and the ringing of bell with the chanting of “Om Namo Narayana” in his ears. He wrote to Bhagavan regarding its significance and was told that this was a special sign of grace which he had attained. My father chanted the names of Bhagavan Ramana and Om Namo Narayana at the time of his death in the year 1960.

I was thrilled to read the article “The Power of Arunachala” in the April 1982 Mountain Path. It is said here that Bhagavan remarked how the Hill drew one to go round it again and again. Learning thus the significance of Giripradakhshina, I visited the Ashram on 22-11-82 and performed Giripradakhshina, chanting ‘Arunachala Siva-Arunachala Siva’ and ‘Gayatri Mantra’. I had great mental solace. I had another chance to go round the Hill on 27-1-83 with my relatives and children.

Tiruvannamalai attracts one just like a magnet!

— S. Srinivasaraghavan, Srirangam.
SADHANA AND WORK

By Sadhu Om

The charge made against humanity is that throughout their life all people attend only to second and third persons (the objects such as ‘you’, ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘this’, ‘that’ and so on) and they never turn their attention towards the first person (the subject ‘I’) in order to find out ‘Who am I?’. From the moment of waking till the moment of going to sleep, from birth till death, from creation till dissolution, all people — indeed all living beings — pay attention only to second and third persons. And what is the net result of such attention? Untold heaps of misery!

Knowing that all misery arises only as a result of the fundamental error — the original sin — of attending to second and third persons instead of attending to and knowing the true nature of the first person, Bhagavan Sri Ramana graciously appeared on earth to advise humanity. “Throughout the waking and dream states you attend only to second and third persons, and in consequence you experience endless misery. But in sleep, when you do not attend to any second or third person, you do not experience any misery. Overlooking the peaceful happiness that you experienced while asleep, you search for happiness in the waking state by attending to innumerable external objects. However, does not the fact that you experienced happiness during sleep in the absence of those objects, indicate that happiness lies not in the objects but in you, the first person or subject? Therefore why not you try, even in the waking state, to attend not to second and third persons but to the first person, ‘I’?”

Being the perfect spiritual doctor that He is, Sri Bhagavan has diagnosed the exact cause of our sufferings, and has prescribed the only perfect course of treatment — namely taking the medicine of Self-attention and observing the diet-restriction of abstaining from attending to second and third persons.

Those of us who pay heed to this advice of Sri Bhagavan and who therefore desire to follow the course of treatment prescribed by Him, are called mumukshus or aspirants for Liberation. In order to qualify as an aspirant, one must have the absolute conviction that happiness, the sole aim of all living beings, can be obtained not from external objects but only from one’s own inmost Self. When one has this qualification, an intense yearning will arise in one’s heart to try to attend to and know Self. Indeed, for a true aspirant the desire and effort to know Self will become the most important part of his life, and all other things will be regarded as being only of secondary importance. When such an intense yearning arises in one, success is assured, for ‘where there is a will there is a way’.

*Adapted from a letter which Sri Sadhu Om wrote in reply to a friend who had written asking, “How is it possible in practice to maintain unceasing Self-attention when, in the course of a day, various activities demand some or all of one’s attention?”
On hearing this, however, some devotees wonder whether it is necessary then to withdraw from all activities in order to be able to practise Self-attention. "If we are to follow this sadhana of Self-attention in all earnestness, will not work prove to be an obstacle? But if we give up all work, how are we to provide the food, clothing and shelter required by the body?" they ask. However, whenever devotees asked Sri Bhagavan such questions, He used to reply that work need not be a hindrance to spiritual practice (sadhana). This does not mean, of course, that an aspirant should work in the same spirit as a worldly man or that he should work with the same aim in view. The spirit in which and the aim with which an aspirant should work in this world, can be illustrated by the following example:

Suppose a businessman rents a shop in the heart of a big city for Rs. 1,000/- a month. If from his business he aims to make only sufficient money to pay the rent for the shop, will it not be a worthless business? Should not his aim in renting the shop be to earn a profit of Rs. 10,000/- a month? On the other hand, if he does not make sufficient money even to pay the rent, will he be able to remain in the shop to earn his profit?

Our body is like the shop rented by the businessman. The aim with which we rent this body is to realize Self, while the rent we have to pay for the body is food, clothing and shelter. In order to pay this rent, it is necessary for us to work, using the mind, speech and body as our instruments. If we do not pay the rent, we cannot live in the body and earn the great profit of Self-knowledge. However, we should not spend our whole life — all our time and effort — in working to pay the rent. The mind, speech and body should work only for that amount of time and with that amount of effort which is required for paying the rent — for providing the food, clothing and shelter necessary for the body. If instead we devote all our time and effort towards accumulating comforts and conveniences for the body, as worldly people do, we would be just like the worthless businessman who works only to pay the rent and who never tries to make a profit. Therefore, a sincere aspirant should arrange his work in such a way that he will spend only a portion of his time and energy for maintaining the body, so that he can utilize the remaining time and energy in striving to earn the great profit of Self-knowledge.

For some aspirants prarabdha will be arranged by God or Guru in such a way that they need do little or no work to maintain their body, whereas for other aspirants it may be arranged in such a way that they have to spend most of their time in working for the maintenance of the body. But in whatever way the prarabdha is arranged, it is arranged only for the aspirant's own good. Moreover, since prarabdha determines only the outward activities of the body and mind, it can in no way obstruct the inward desire and yearning for Self-knowledge. If one has an intense yearning for Self-knowledge, the Guru's Grace will certainly help one in all ways, both from within and without, to enable one to attend to Self.

Some people complain, however, that throughout their life they are forced to be engaged in so many activities that they have no time to practise Self-attention. But even in the midst of so many other important activities, do we not find time to eat, take bath, answer the calls of nature, sleep and so on? Similarly, in the midst of all other activities, an earnest aspirant will find at least a few minutes each day to practise Self-attention. In the beginning, if possible, at least ten minutes should be devoted morning and evening to practising Self-attention. Such regular daily practice is recommended by Sri Bhagavan in verse 44 of Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai (The Bridal Garland of Letters), in which He sings, "'Turning Selfwards, daily see thyself with an introverted look and it (the reality) will be known' — thus didst Thou tell me, O my Arunachala". If such regular practice is allowed to go on for some time,

1 prarabdha is that portion of the fruit of one's past actions or karmas which has been ordained by God to be experienced by one in this lifetime.
Self-attention will become more and more familiar and one will then find that it is possible to divert one's attention from second and third persons to the first person, even in the midst of one's daily activities. Whenever a few moments of leisure occur between the end of one activity and the beginning of the next one. If one thus tries to turn one's attention towards the first person whenever one has a few moments of leisure, by the end of the day a great deal of time will have been devoted to Self-attention, though intermittently. Such intermittent Self-attention will in turn be found to be of great help to one when one sits for practice at the prescribed time (ten minutes to half-an-hour each morning and evening), when no outside hindrance will be there to obstruct one's practice.

At first one may not be able to maintain unbroken Self-attention even for a few minutes. Due to long habit, it is only natural that the mind will start to think of some second or third person objects. Each time the attention thus turns outwards, the aspirant again tries to turn it back towards the first person. This process of slackening of Self-attention and then trying to regain it, will repeat itself again and again. If the aspirant's mind is weak due to deficiency in the love to know Self, the slackening of Self-attention will happen frequently, in which case a struggle will ensue and the mind will soon become tired. Instead of thus repeatedly struggling to regain Self-attention, one should relax the mind for a while as soon as the initial attempt to fix the attention on the first person becomes unsteady, and then again make a fresh attempt. If one thus makes intermittent attempts, each attempt will be found to have a fresh force and a more precise clarity of attention.

If one presses one's thumb on a pressure scale, the dial may at first indicate a pressure of ten kilograms. But if one tries to maintain that pressure for a long period of time, the dial will show a little more than ten kilograms. Similar is the case with Self-attention. If one struggles for a long time to maintain Self-attention, the intensity and clarity of one's attention will gradually slacken and decrease. But if instead one relaxes as soon as one finds that one's Self-attention is slackening, and if after a brief rest one makes a fresh attempt to fix one's attention on Self, that fresh attempt will have a greater intensity and clarity. Therefore what is important is not so much the length of time one spends trying to attend to Self, but the earnestness and intensity with which one makes each fresh attempt.

During the time of practice (sadhana) our attention, which is now focused on second and third person objects, has to turn back 180 degrees, so to speak, to focus itself on the first person. In the beginning, however, one's attention may be able to turn only 5, 10 or 15 degrees. This is because one's turning is resisted by a powerful spring — the spring of one's tendencies (vasanas) or subtle desires towards worldly objects. Every time one tries to turn towards the first person, this spring of one's worldly tendencies will tend to pull one's mind back again towards second and third persons. Therefore the number of degrees one is able to turn will depend upon the firmness of one's desirelessness (vairagya) towards worldly objects and upon the strength of one's longing (bhakti) to know Self. Such vairagya and bhakti will be increased in one by regularly practising Self-attention, by earnestly praying Sri Bhagavan and by constantly associating with such persons or books as will repeatedly remind one, "Only by knowing Self can we attain real and enduring happiness; so long as we do not know Self we will be endlessly courting and experiencing misery; therefore our first and foremost duty in life is to know Self; all other efforts will only end in vain."

As one's desirelessness and longing to know Self thus increase by prayer to the Guru, by study (sravana) of and reflection (manana) upon His teachings, and by practice (nididhyasana) of Self-attention, one's ability to turn one's attention towards the first person...
will also increase, until one will be able to turn it 90, 120 or even 150 degrees at each fresh attempt. When one's ability to turn one's attention Selfwards thus increases, one will be able to experience a tenuous current of Self-awareness even while engaged in activity; that is, one will be able to experience an awareness of one's being which will not be disturbed by whatever one's mind, speech or body may be doing; in other words, one will be able to remember the feeling 'I am' which always underlies all one's activities. However, this tenuous current of Self-awareness should not be taken to be the state of unceasing Self-attention, because one will experience it only when one feels inclined to do so.

How then can one experience the state of unceasing Self-attention, the state of unswerving Self-abidance? The Guru's Grace will more and more help those aspirants who thus repeatedly practise Self-attention with great love (bhakti) to know Self. When a glowing fire and a blowing wind join together, they play wonders. Likewise, when the glowing fire of love for Self-knowledge and the blowing wind of the Guru's Grace join together, a great wonder takes place. During one of his fresh attempts, the aspirant will be able to turn his attention a complete 180 degrees towards Self (that is, he will be able to achieve a perfect clarity of Self-awareness, completely uncontaminated by even the least awareness of any second or third person), whereupon he will feel a great change taking place spontaneously and without his effort. His power of attention, which he had previously tried so many times to turn towards second and third persons, will now be caught under the grip of a powerful clutch which will not allow it to turn again towards any second or third person. This clutch is the clutch of Grace. Though Grace has always been helping and guiding one, it is only when one is thus caught by its clutch that one becomes totally a prey to it. If one once turns one's attention a full 180 degrees towards Self, one is sure to be caught by this clutch of Grace, which will then take one as its own and will forever protect one from again turning towards second and third person objects. This state in which the mind is thus caught by the clutch of Grace and is thereby drowned forever in its source, is known as the experience of true knowledge (jnananubhuti), Self-realization (atmakaksha) (moksha) and so on. This alone can be called the state of unceasing Self-attention.

Some people doubt, "If it is so, will the mind then remain drowned forever in samadhi? Will it not be able to come out again and know all the second and third persons of this world? Is it not a fact that even Bhagavan Sri Ramana spent nearly fifty-four years in the state of Self-realization and that most of that time He was seen to be attending to second and third persons?" Yes, it is true that though Sri Bhagavan always remained in the state of Self-realization, yet in the outlook of others He was seen to be knowing the world. How can this be accounted for?

To remain with the body and mind completely inert is not the only sign of samadhi. Though after Self-realization some Jnânis spend their entire lifetime completely oblivious of the body and world, not all Jnânis will necessarily remain thus. The return of body-consciousness (and consequently world-consciousness) after the attainment of Self-realization is according to the prarabdha of that body; in the case of some it might never return, while in the case of others it might return within a second or after a few hours or days. But even in such cases where it does return, it will not be experienced as a knowledge of second or third persons! That is to say, the body and world are not experienced by the Jnâni as second and third persons — objects other than Himself — but as His own unlimited and undivided Self.

So long as one is an aspirant one mistakes the limited form of one's body to be oneself, and consequently the remaining portion of one's unlimited real Self is experienced by one as the world — a collection of second and third person objects. But after attaining Self-realization, since one experiences oneself to
be the unlimited Whole, one discovers that all the second and third persons which one was previously feeling to be other than oneself, are truly nothing but one's own Self. Therefore, even while a jnani is (in the view of onlookers) attending to second and third person objects, He is (in His own view) attending only to Self. Hence, even though He may appear to be engaged in so many activities, both physical and mental, He is in fact ever abiding in the natural state of unceasing Self-attention.

Therefore, unceasing Self-attention is possible only in the state of Self-realization and not in the state of practice (sadhana). What one has to do during the period of sadhana is to cultivate ever-increasing love to attain Self-knowledge and to make intermittent but repeated attempts to turn one's attention a full 180 degrees towards Self. If one once succeeds in doing this, then unceasing Self-attention will be found to be natural and effortless.

THE MIRROR

'The utmost man uses the heart like a mirror; he does not escort things as they go or welcome them as they come, he responds but dies not store'. The mirror metaphor is developed farthest in the Syncretist essay 'Way of Heaven'. 'In the case of the sage's stillness it is not that he is still because he says "It is good to be still"; there is nothing among the myriad things which is sufficient to disturb his heart, that is why he is still'. He is like quiescent water which 'shows up plainly the beard and eyebrows;' he is 'the mirror of heaven and earth'. We should expect a Westerner who wrote anything like that to draw nihilistic conclusions. But the Syncretist is describing his ideal mode of action'; 'in stillness he is moved, and when he moves he succeeds'. Is there still room to object that he assumes the value of success, which presupposes standards for judging that the sage's ends are good? No, the sage's fluid and temporarily emerging goals are the ones to which he spontaneously tends when he mirrors heaven and earth with perfect clarity, and that is sufficient reason for preferring them to any goals to which he might incline in ignorance.

One may add the further point that, in spite of the Taoist refusal to pose alternatives, the imperative 'Mirror clearly' does distinguish a wrong kind of spontaneity, the surrender to passions which distort awareness, from the right kind, responsiveness in the impersonal calm when vision is most lucid. This is precisely the point of divergence between Taoism and the superficially similar cult of spontaneity in our own tradition of Romanticism, which values passion by its intensity however much it distorts reality.

(Chuan Tsu, "The Inner Chapters").
Sri Bhagavan’s limitless Grace, which is all-pervading, makes it a natural thing that a person living in a small village in the Netherlands should experience the most wonderful blessing of being a sincere devotee of His!

When I look back I can see now how all the preceding years with their good and bad experiences had been providentially preparing me for this crowning blessing.

Since girlhood I cherished an intense longing to know the Truth underlying everything. This yearning made me read many books on religious matters, and meditate upon their wisdom and it all led me on to this final point, about four years ago, when I was forced to pick up the little book of Arthur Osborne, entitled Ramana Maharshi. It must have been that beautiful, inspiring portrait on the cover with the radiant smile full of Divine Compassion. I just stood there, spell-bound, and I knew that this book contained a special message for me. I was thrilled to read Sri Bhagavan’s crystal clear Teachings. They certainly take us all the way. There is no more left to go. There are no more questions. Hence the habit of reading so many books has been lost and one is immersed in that One Reality. I give all my earnest attention to never more lose sight of the Self, whatever may be coming my way or whatever I may be doing, caring for our little house, where my husband, our fourteen year old daughter, our many various animals add myself live a quiet simple life.

Only recently I came across the address of Sri Ramanasramam and now I am a grateful subscriber of that magnificent quarterly The Mountain Path. Sri V. Ganesan, the Managing Editor, has welcomed me most heartily into the fold of Bhagavan’s devotees. I share in thought all the activities of the Ashram and of fellow-devotees all over the world.

“He whose buddhi is no longer attracted towards desires and pleasures, whose nature has become joyful and compassionate, he who, even in his heart, has no idea of possessions, who is ever peaceful and most temperate in all things and is not moved by any happenings or events — that Sage takes refuge in Atman. Ever watchful, solemn as the ocean and full of patience.”

— Avadhut Cita, Ch. VII, v.3
The Human Brain,
Consciousness
And Time

By S. Jayaraman

THE structure or mechanism of the Brain is much the same in all human beings (barring those born with a congenital defect) and so are the biological functions of the Brain.

The question that troubles one is: Are the Brain and Consciousness distinctly separate or does consciousness persist as the Eternal Witness even after the Brain has stopped functioning? When I wake up from a dreamless sleep, I say "I have had a good dreamless sleep." During the dreamless sleep I was not conscious as I am in the waking state. Then what is that within me which rightly cognises that I have had a dreamless sleep. Obviously there was Consciousness or an "I" which has been all along a witness of the state of dreamless sleep. From this reasoning, it would follow that Consciousness as such is not controlled by the Brain and does not disappear when the Brain has stopped recording, recalling or registering any experience. According to Bhagavan's own personal experience, this persisting Consciousness is the deathless "I", not merely the I, the first person singular, distinguishing one from another, but the deathless "I", "I" or AHAM. 'AHAM BRAHMASMT, say the Upanishads. That AHAM is the deathless God within.

Modern Researchers in psychology and physics (especially subatomic physics — vide Fritjof Capra's provocative book The Tao of Physics) are probing into the question of whether the Brain and Consciousness are distinct and separate or whether they are inextricably inter-related. Medical specialists have observed that a man cannot be declared clinically dead when the breathing has stopped if the brain continues to respond to clinical stimulation. They have also observed that a man cannot be declared clinically dead if the breathing continues but the brain totally fails to respond to any clinical stimulation. So the enigma is very much there.

According to J. Krishnamurti, Consciousness is like the perennial flow of a river and has the permanency and rhythm or order which one observes in the Universe (the swirl of the planets and the procession of the seasons). Also, upon the death or dissolution of the body, the Consciousness that formed part of the earthly tabernacle merges in the Universal Consciousness — that unceasing and ever-flowing River.

Closely related to Consciousness is the immense problem of Time as duration. Henri Bergson has expounded duration with a deep intuitive insight in his magnum opus Creative Evolution, upon reading which William James, the author of The Varieties of Religious Experience, broke into exultant praise and bowed before Bergson with reverential awe. J. Krishnamurti simplified the problem of duration by making a distinction between Psychological Time and Chronological Time.
He posed the question: “Chronological Time is necessary to go from here to there but is Psychological Time necessary at all to bring about a fundamental transformation in man?”

He answers the question by saying that man changes for good here and now or not at all. So at one stroke, he abolishes duration as a factor in bringing about a fundamental transformation of the human psyche. For this to happen instantaneously, Consciousness has to be liberated from the bondage of Psychological Time, but the sub-conscious, which is a part of consciousness, carries and brings into the world racial memories and racial characteristics and all this inherited burden, together with environmental and other influences that are added on to this sub-conscious layer of consciousness (without any perceptible or active participation of the total consciousness of man), all go to make the problem of total transformation more difficult to resolve without the aid of time.

J.B. Priestley wrote three Time Plays, (The Dangerous Corner, Time and the Conways, and I have been here before.) These plays were structured round the three concepts: Horizontal Time, Spiral Time and Circular Time. He delved more deeply into the problem of Time in his book Man and Time, through all of which we dimly perceive that Time or Kaala is bound up with the Laws of Karma. In fact, in his play I have been here before (based on the concept of Circular Time) Priestley puts this into the mouth of Dr. Gortler: “Time is not single and universal. It is only the name we give to higher dimensions of things. In our present state of consciousness, we cannot experience these dimensions spatially, but only successively. That we call Time. But there are more times than one”

Again Dr. Gortler says in the play: “I said you might live the same life over and over again. But not all . . . . Some people, steadily developing, will exhaust the possibilities of their circles of time and will finally swing out of them into new existences”. It will be observed that the Hindu Doctrine of Prarabdha Karma, Sanjitha Karma and Agamy a Karma is clearly orchestrated in these words of Dr. Gortler.

Expanding upon his theme elsewhere in the play, Dr. Gortler seems to suggest that with Interference from an unknown or unknowable source one can ensure that one’s good Karma and evil Karma cancel each other out in this very life, provided of course one pays heed to that mysterious interference. This interference can take form. It can be an experience or a book, like the vision of death and Peria Puranam (in the life of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi) and sympathy for suffering and Ruskin’s Unto this last (in the life of Mahatma Gandhi) or the untimely death of his younger brother Nityananda in the life of J. Krishnamurti. Nityananda was a fine blossoming youth when death snatched him away from J. Krishnamurti. Is this Interference synonymous with Grace which Bhagavan says is always there to be availed of?

I have raised here a few fundamental questions which might interest some of your enlightened readers in India and abroad and provoke further discussion.

Bliss of Beauty
— By Rhoda Bharucha

Your beautiful, bright eyes enthrall
All, all of us, your devotees all,
Who hold you dear
Because we find and prize
In you, yes, in those eyes,
The Self, the one sole luminous Sun
That makes for us our common day.
Dispelling clouds of darkness blind
Your grace blows like the wind
Yet cleansing stills the troubled mind
Till it becomes a mirror clear
Reflecting truly the pure light
Of love and joy that from those bright,
Beautiful eyes stream out. O this
Is the vast universal bliss
Where being and seeing both unite
In one reciprocal delight.
BHAGAVAN – EMBODIMENT OF ARUNACHALA, LOVE ITSELF!

By A Parsi Devotee

As snow in water, let me melt as Love in Thee, who art Love Itself, O Arunachala!” Thus wrote Bhagavan in one of His most memorable verses in praise of His Beloved Arunachala. But it is equally valid for Bhagavan’s devotees to slightly alter the above verse and address Bhagavan as under:—

“O Bhagavan! As snow in water, let me melt as Love in Thee, who art Arunachala, Love Itself!” Yes! Bhagavan is none other than Arunachala appearing in human form. One and the same Absolute Reality manifests on one side in a natural gigantic rock formation and on another side wearing a human garb. For ages past, Arunachala has stood in lonely splendour, silently showering Its effulgence of Love-Peace-Bliss all around. But how many spiritual seekers can absorb Arunachala’s abundant outpouring of Grace expressed in utter Silence? Very, very few indeed! After all, mortals are mortals! The limitations imposed by embodiment in human shape are such that man always finds it easier to conceive the Ultimate in his own image than in any other image. The vast majority of spiritual aspirants are at the level where they look for Divinity in flesh and blood, manifest before their very eyes. They hunger for a Master at whose feet they can sit, who will guide them with words, and take care of them in their spiritual as well as worldly affairs, and Whom they can love and adore with all their heart and soul. So, in order to fulfil these needs, Arunachala, out of His Infinite Love and Compassion, took on human embodiment and came to earth under the name and form of ‘Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.’ And in this human shape, Arunachala expressed the perfect harmony, the wonderful combination, of Silence as well as speech, stillness as well as movement, the highest Love side by side with the highest Wisdom. It was, truly speaking, Divinity manifest in the guise of humanity.

To prove that Arunachala and Bhagavan are one and the same, one may cite the miraculous experience of a devotee to whom this truth was revealed in unmistakable terms. The man to whom it happened was a Nepali college principal. He had come all the way from his native country to Ramanasramam to see Bhagavan. After fulfilling this wish, he set out on his way to the gigantic temple in the town, which is dedicated to Arunachala, in order to have darshan there. After all, words can never convey what actual experience can, but even then, words can reveal truths to those who are not blessed by such experiences. So this true story discloses the truth that Bhagavan is none other than Arunachala.

What the Nepali principal saw in the temple’s inner sanctum is best described in his own words:—

“A small oiled wick-flame was flickering a few yards in front of us. The voice of my young companion shouted, ‘Arunachala!’ All my attention was directed to the one purpose of seeing the Image or Lingam (which symboli-
ses the Supreme Lord, Eternal and Unmanifest) in the Sanctum Sanctorum. But, strange to say, instead of the Lingam, I see the image of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, his smiling countenance, his brilliant eyes looking at me. And what is more strange, I see the same smiling countenance, those lustrous eyes, wherever I may look in that Sanctum Sanctorum. I am in raptures, and beside myself with inexpressible joy."

Now for the other part which shows Bhagavan to be the embodiment of Absolute Love, the Love which is Arunachala Itself. As Ramakrishna used to say, Love is the very essence of the Divine, the innermost heart of Reality. The analogy of the butterfly and the flower will make this point clear.

The butterfly first sees the blooming flower from afar. As it flies near, the heady fragrance and beautiful bright colours attract it. It reaches the flower, settles down on it and, penetrating the heart of the flower, starts sipping the sweet nectar. Absorbed in sipping the nectar, it forgets all about the enchanting fragrance and colours which first attracted it. Now it is aware of nothing but the sweetness of the nectar. Like the butterfly, man also is initially attracted by the attributes of the Divine such as Power, Infinity, and Glory. But as he comes nearer and nearer to the Reality, the awareness of Its attributes diminishes and when he penetrates into Its innermost heart, he finds that It is all Pure Love and nothing but Love. And as he sips the nectar of Love he is aware of nothing but Love, which is also Bliss and Peace.

So Bhagavan’s devotees, blessed with the nectar of Love, experience the ‘inner side’ of Bhagavan. His Heart of Infinite Love and Tenderness. They see Him only as an Incarnation of Pure Love. For devotees who have not penetrated into the depths of His Heart, Bhagavan is just a silent Jnani, radiating Peace, Power and Perfection through Silence. These devotees are aware, so to say, only of His ‘outer side’.

It is a basic truth that ‘Perception depends on the perceiver’. Only Love can recognise Love. Thus, the Love in the devotees’ heart easily makes it possible for him or her to see Bhagavan as Love in human form. For such devotees, in the words of Bhagavan, “Bhakti is the mother of Jnana.”

It is Love shining from Arunachala-Bhagavan, that draws hundreds from all parts of the world to Ramanasramam as strongly as a magnet attracts iron filings. Love has the greatest power of attraction; nothing can attract as Love can. The power which attracts hundreds from their native countries far far away is none other than the Power of Love. And after their arrival here, the same Power of Love continues to exercise its potent influence and, with each passing day, those whose hearts are open, feel more and more at home. Those who had come for a few days keep on extending their stay week after week, postponing their departure. But, alas, the day of departure has to come, sooner or later. And when that day dawns and they begin to pack their bags, a new realization overcomes them. They feel — ‘Where are we going? Home? But our home is Here and not the place where we came from. We are not going home but we are going away from HOME. At this moment, the more sentimental and emotional seekers burst into tears and they simply cannot face the prospect of leaving HOME.’ Arunachala-Bhagavan’s boundless Love has worked on them so silently and stealthily that their hearts are now entirely His, the fathomless ocean of Pure Love.

The last words of Bhagavan now ring so very true — “They say I am going away. But where can I go? I am here.” Distance in time or place from Arunachala or Bhagavan’s physical form makes no difference at all in the experience of His Loving Presence.

To be the Self that you really are is the only means to realize the Bliss that is ever yours.

—Bhagavan
Sri Mahipatram Dave

Sri Mahipatram Dave (born on May 12, 1915) had his schooling in a private boarding and lodging house and later in the Vivekananda Student's Home run by the Ramakrishna Mission at Rajkot. He was appointed Sanskrit teacher in a Gujarati High School in Zeera, Hyderabad and settled down there. Sri Dave had a religious bent of mind from the beginning. He had the habit of reading everyday two cantos from the Ramayana and two cantos from Bhagavatam. In 1938 he fell seriously ill. During this period he studied the Gita, Patanjali's Yogasutras and Sankara's Vivekachudamani, and felt the need for a living Guru.

In 1939, Sri Pransankar B. Trivedi gave him a booklet Who am I? He knew instantaneously that Sri Ramana Maharshi was his Guru. He longed to have darshan of his Guru, Sri Bhagavan, but could not do so immediately. As luck would have it, the father of one of Sri Dave's students requested him in 1943 to take his son on an educational tour. Sri Dave stipulated that the trip should include Tiruvannamalai. This was happily acceded to by the parent since it would enable his son too to have darshan of a Mahatma.

When Sri Dave reached the Ashram it was just a little after breakfast time. Sri Bhagavan had gone for a walk on the hill. Sri Dave went towards the hill and saw Sri Bhagavan returning. He did pranams to Him and Bhagavan looked at him benignly. This first darshan of Sri Bhagavan was on May 12, 1943, which was also his birth-day, probably in more senses than one.

He went into the Old Hall and sat in front of Sri Bhagavan. He had some questions and they were clarified in His silent Presence. After a stay of nearly a month at the Ashram, Sri Dave returned home happily having realised his cherished desire.

Again in August, he could visit the Ashram with the president of the Gujarathi School. Subsequently, by the Grace of Bhagavan, he could go to Tiruvannamalai every six months or so. Sri Dave's parents were worried by these visits. Fearing he might renounce the world, they insisted on their daughter-in-law accompanying their son in his trips to the Ashram.
Sri Dave started “Ramana Meditation Centre” in his house. The Centre later became “Ramana Bhakta Mandali”. Sri Shiva Mohanlal, a Professor in Philosophy and Sri Sista Subba Rao were among the numerous devotees who participated in the satsang.

Whenever Sri Dave went to the Ashram he used to take “Mahanarayana Tailam” for rubbing it on Bhagavan's knees to relieve Him of His rheumatic pains.

His mother was prone to arthritis and had to suffer a lot. Sri Dave asked her to take the ashes from the burning incense sticks placed before the portrait of Bhagavan and apply them to her knees with faith. She did so and was free of her trouble ever since. He could take her to Bhagavan in 1945. When she sat along with others in the benign presence of Bhagavan, she prayed to Bhagavan to bless her with the darshan of Sri Krishna. Suddenly, the hall and the people and Sri Bhagavan disappeared. There was before her Lord Krishna with His resplendent face. She was thrilled. Next day she prayed for the darshan of Lord Rama. Sri Rama appeared before her with His bow and arrows. On the third day she had the darshan of Goddess Lakshmi in dazzling splendour and after a while all these forms merged into a round ball of light which settled in her heart. She was overjoyed and became an ardent devotee of Bhagavan ever since.

The following incident is both interesting and instructive. Sri Dave and Shiva Mohan Lal were desirous of attending the Golden Jubilee Celebrations at the Ashram in September, 1946. There was disruption in the communications. They could reach Vellore via Bangalore, but could not proceed further as there was a bus strike then. They lodged in a Gujarati Hotel for the night. The Jayanti fell on the next day and fifty miles were yet to be covered. Sri Shiva Mohan Lal said, “Come on! We will walk the distance”. “What about the luggage?” countered Sri Dave. Sri Dave was however optimistic and posted a card to the Ashram stating that they were stranded at Vellore. A little later, a military truck came to the hotel, from where nobody knows, and took them to the outskirts of Tiruvannamalai and left them there and went away. They could reach the Ashram in time for the celebrations. While they were in the Hall, Sri Dave's card was received and Bhagavan read out that Sri Dave was stranded at Vellore!

In 1949 when he heard that Sri Bhagavan’s body might not last long, he rushed to Tiruvannamalai with his wife in September 1949 and was there till the Maha Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Dave and his wife joined in the recitation of Aksharamanamala on that fateful night at 8 p.m. The doctor told people to return home and have their meal. As Sri Dave and his wife were living on only one meal at that time, they did not go. They spent the whole night singing Bhajans. Nobody felt tired even though they had no wink of sleep on that fateful night. Sri Dave realised that He was not limited to His body and that He was “Brahman Himself”.

We wish this devout couple long life of dedicated devotion to their Sat-Guru, Lord Ramana!

**SONG ON ARUNACHALA**

By Noona Osborne

Little grass on the mountain,
In the silent evening
I remember, I remember,
You were large as the whole world,
You, you, you! Large as the sky which is boundless, in importance, you were everything.

So what is important . . . . . .
What size or what love, what . . . . . .
But when the heart loves everything,
There is silence and eternity.

Time is boundless, and the moment is like a blade of grass. The blade of grass is all I saw, and I loved the nether beyond life,

Since All — I loved, why let it be All the world, or a little blade of grass;

Blade of grass;
Greetings to you and dedicated members of Sri Ramanasramam. The postman delivered the books, pamphlets, and pictures of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Along with the presence of Bhagavan, they have brought much joy and direction.

I would like to ask a question concerning vichara.

I have found that emotional states, for example during the recent loss of a loved one, are harder to approach with self-enquiry. If a mental picture arises, or a sound, or a taste, or an odor, or a physical sensation, they seem easier to dispel because they are more ‘physical’ and can directly be sensed, and seem easier to become detached from or to become a witness to. But the emotional state seems to take a greater and a deeper hold of the ego, and offer a greater challenge. The emotional state seems harder to pinpoint, more vague yet more deeply entrenched than the physical or mental.

I recall a few passages that relate how Bhagavan when telling certain spiritual tales, would outwardly become very involved with the telling. Please comment. Thank you.

Also I would like to know if there are available any Cassette recordings of devotees chanting or any appropriate music. Although the enquiry approach is the path of a Jnani, often I feel the necessity to fuse the path of enquiry with more devotional practices.

— Jim Backstrom, Cherry Valley, U.S.A.

You ask about vichara in cases of emotional trouble, as it seems to you that it does not yield to vichara. Vichara is of the head, emotion of the heart, and emotion — as based on instincts — is biologically older and therefore more difficult to get under conscious control. But that is by no means all of it. In vichara you work already with a unit — though an artificial one, the personal ‘I’ — whereas emotion is a very complex concept; we have to try to find a unit also for it, even if only an artificial one. There is already one: attachment.

With it you come again to the ‘I’ of vichara. You know the story of Dshuang Dse. When his beloved wife had died, the friends came for condolences and found him singing. They were shocked. “Why?” he asked, and said: “I have been happy before I ever saw her; now she has gone — isn’t it the same situation? Why shouldn’t I sing?” — That is detachment!

You have to try to train yourself in everyday life to teach this personal-‘I’ that it is ridiculous to react, since it is not really ‘I’ to you. You are the ‘I’, to whom the personal-‘I’ is merely your instrument by which to move, to work and to live in this world of the senses. You use a typewriter, but you don’t look after its emotions. So why care for the reactions of the other ‘instrument’, your personal-‘I’?

As for Bhagavan’s emotional reactions you will only find joy and compassion — both signs of Love — which is Divine, and certainly not to be avoided.

Your wish, ‘to fuse the path of enquiry with more devotional practices’ is quite legitimate; it will further the Path to get the emotional life into spiritual channels. With it you are in the best of company: Bhagavan, a Jnani, was at the same time a great bhakta Himself. Remember His Hymns to Sri Arunachala!

— B. Ramachandra Reddy, Anantapur

You have misunderstood the quotation from Arthur Osborne. Let me repeat it: “A man is identical with the Self... but the mind creates the illusion of separate individuality; in deep sleep the mind is stilled and man is one with the Self”, which is not correct.

What happens in deep sleep is, the ego, the reflection of the Self on Chit, dissolves in its root cause which is Maya or Avidya, which state should not be misunderstood as the true state of Self. The true state of Self is revealed only in the fourth state called Nirvikalpa Samadhi (not even in Savikalpa Samadhi) or Turiya state (refer Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras). If realisation of the Self is so easy as entering into deep sleep then it should not be a stupendous task to realise it! He describes a negative state as a positive state!

— B. Ramachandra Reddy, Anantapur
VEDANTA AND ETHICS

(1) Many Western philosophers, e.g. Albert Schweizer, have described the Vedanta spirit as one of negation of life and the world. I presume I am right in thinking that what a Vedantist talks about is the ultimate goal of man’s existence. It does not concern itself with the intermediate stages. When Bhagavan Ramana answered questions affected by the stress on the ultimate goal (the attitude towards the world, e.g. service undertaken by Ashrams of Hindu origin is of recent origin and appears to be more influenced by the Christian activity (as a reaction rather than based on Hindu philosophy).

(2) Another aspect is that with all its profound thinking capability a scientific output of the Hindu mind has been negligible. I think that this may be due to mixing up of the ultimate goal with worldly activity, e.g. scientific pursuit. I read recently that Nyaya Vaiseshika philosophers thought the ‘atom’ was the smallest particle, but Western countries high ethics are but in books.

May I request you to enlighten me on these questions? Could you please devote an article on ‘Vedanta and Ethics’?

— Prf. K. Venkatesan, Bangalore.

Albert Schweitzer belonged to the school of ardent Christians who condemned every idea as ‘heathen’ which was not rooted in Christian religion. He was a good man and a great Christian, but the wisdom of the East was, in a curious way, out of his reach!

Certainly we should not make the “best” the enemy of the good. Nor should we make the good the enemy of the “best”. Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi are good Hindus and tried to extend the concept of dharm to include the social and public sphere. It is a mere play of the mind to compare the different systems of philosophy with each other, because not only are their goals different, but — more important — their concerns too. They are bound to come to conclusions and lead to ways of life which are different. Your impression is correct: Vedanta is concerned with the ultimate goal, the One without the second; the ultimate goal of the Christian is the ‘salvation’ of his soul. The goals are different, and also are the ways. There is no question: which is right? What appeals to you is right for you. Others may be attracted by other ideas — they are right too. Also, philosophy of the East is at the same time religion, whereas in Western thinking religion and philosophy are strictly separate areas — religion is a matter of Faith and Salvation, philosophy is concerned strictly with reason and logic.

As for ethics, there are still many people — east and west — hypnotized by an early mistake of Christian Missionaries who reported that Hinduism had a high philosophy but no ethics. They did not know that the ethics in Hinduism must have already become the second nature of a person, who lives a spiritual life and see results. Therefore ethics are talked of less in Hindu than in Christian literature. Patanjali puts yama and niyama on top of the whole. The Nath-Yogi sect, talk not of the 8-member Yoga but of the 6-member Yoga, because they take yama and niyama — the basic ethical principles — as a preliminary condition. Of course, in practical everyday life this is often neglected, even in Western countries high ethics are but in books.

We prefer to leave philosophy to the philosophers, and try to follow Sri Ramana Maharshi’s command: Just BE!

LAUREL

I have just finished studying Hunting the ’I’ and “Only Half a Sentence” in the April issue of The Mountain Path, and felt the need to express my gratitude and love to you for this work. It has been like “coming Home” to partake of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi’s teaching and right now, Hunting the ’I’ is something I can’t do without each day. Please accept my deepest and most humble gratitude.

Mrs. Barbara Griffiths, Squaw Valley, U.S.A.

The Journal “Mountain Path” has helped to dispel the illusion (Maya) in me and has through knowledge taught me to discover the real Self. A recent article published in July ’83 issue of Mountain Path by Arunachala Iyer on ‘The Heart and the Brain’ clearly dispels the doubt that the brain being the most important centre than the heart. This article explains that the action of the senses is activated by the function of real Self situated in the base of all hearts.

— J. Shivai, Hampton, U.K.

You cannot imagine what a joy it is for us to receive The Mountain Path every month, which my family and our Yoga Schools look forward to. Since the journal is now in your hands, it is so beautifully built up with fascinating articles. Letters to the Editor, Book Reviews, Ashram Bulletin and a rich illustration of photos to give each edition a personal touch.

This brings you our love and best wishes for the great and blessed work you are doing in sending the ‘the living truth’ out into this world!

— Selvarajan Yesudian, Zurich, Switzerland. U.K.
THE CONCEALED WISDOM IN WORLD MYTHOLOGY:

The author is a Theosophist of great repute, with many publications to his credit. Drawing his main inspiration from the writings of H P Blavatsky like the "Secret Doctrine", the author shares with the reader the revelatory experiences vouched to him regarding the hidden meanings and occult significance of the ancient Myths, particularly those of ancient Greece.

The Myths of the world are no mere folk tales. They are symbolic and enshrine in them the secret wisdom of the race, the creation and the creator. If only we have the eyes to see, we can unravel the mysteries. But as little knowledge is dangerous and as wisdom fallen into wrong hands may tend to be abused, the myths are purposely clothed in symbols, allegories, parables and folk tales so that their purport might not readily become apparent.

In the interpretation of the Myths, the author provides the necessary keys. The first one is that all happens within. The microcosm and the macrocosm are interlinked and have close correspondence. "Some narratives of supposedly historical events are also descriptive of subjective experiences of races, nations, and individuals". The second key is that each of the dramatic personae introduced into the stories represents a condition of consciousness and a quality of character: noble as well as ignoble, divine as well as human. The third key is that each story may be regarded as a graphic description of the experiences of the human Soul as it passes through stages and their intermediate phases, of its evolutionary journey to the promised land — the summit of human attainment. The fourth key is that each word has its own, special symbolic meaning. The words used are highly potent and suggestive. Man is like an ice-berg. Only the tip of his personality manifests on the surface. He has untold hidden potentialities. The Indian mystics called this potential energy in man as the sleeping serpent power, Kundalini Sakti. The three main nerve-channels, Ida, Pingala and Sushumna along with the coiled Kundalini hold the key to Indian Mysticism and Yoga. Fascinated by this concept and against this background the author interprets the Egyptian and Grecian Myths drawing out the striking correspondences. The rod of Hermes has close correspondence with the Indian Merudanda, the spinal column. The caduceus of Hermes, like the trident of Siva, symbolises the three fold serpent Fire, Kundalini in the three nerve-channels. Similarly the Golden Fleece represents the treasure of spiritual Wisdom. The author thus goes on to unravel the various mythological stories. He devotes a whole chapter to interpret systematically the heroic acts of Heracles and brings out the full significances of the famous twelve labours. The concepts embedded in the myths about Helios, Eos, Argonauts, Hephaestes and other personalities are discussed in conformity with Theosophic thought.

Written with conviction and earnestness, the book is thought-provoking.

— S. SANKARANARAYANAN


The blurb is accurate: "Martin Lings life of Muhammad is unlike any other. Based on Arabic sources of the eighth and ninth centuries, of which some important passages are translated here for the first time, it owes the freshness and directness of its approach to the words of the men and women who heard Muhammad speak and witnessed the events of his life. Martin Lings has an unusual gift for narrative. He has adopted a style which is at once extremely readable and reflects both the simplicity and grandeur of the story."

Tracing the ancestry of the Prophet from Abraham, the writer gives a detailed account of his birth, growth, struggle and glory in a style that is at once lofty and appealing. Muhammad the man is as great as Muhammad the Prophet. His encounters with the Angel, Gabriel, are described as simply as possible and the effect is moving. In this setting the many miracles that took place on a natural character and the reader has no difficulty in believing them. This work is not only the story of Muhammad, it is also a history of the warring tribes of those times and their emergence into a single people committed to a sole God and the Messenger of God. There is much in the Revelations quoted in these pages that is of interest to spiritual seekers of all time.
To cite a few:

"... heart as the faculty by which man has sight of supernatural realities. The eye of the heart, those closed in fallen man, is able to take in a glimmering of light and this is faith. But an evil way of living causes a covering like rust to accumulate over the heart so that it cannot sense the Divine Origin of God's Message" (p.89)

"What cometh from the heart and from the eye, that is from God and His Mercy, but what cometh from the hand and from the tongue, that is from Satan." (p. 163)

What if the heart is blind? "For everything there is a polish that taketh away rust, and the polish of the heart is remembrance of God."

It is interesting to learn that one of the signs of 'final things' mentioned by the Prophet is 'the excessive height of the buildings that men would build.' (p.330)

A classical work that elevates the reader.

— M.P. PANDIT

MUSLIM NEOPLATONISTS: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (IKHWAN AL-SAFA)


The Middle East has been a cauldron of diverse and often conflicting beliefs from times immemorial and one is delighted to come across any well-informed publication giving a clear picture of that distinctive culture in the Arab world, particularly Islam which flourished in the seventh century and expanded with such rapidity in the succeeding centuries, covering the three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa. The reconciliation of a pagan philosophy like Neo-Platonism with such revealed religions as Judaism, Christianity or Islam poses difficult problems evoking different approaches over the ages, as is evident from the several scholastics who have attempted a synthesis. The author has taken the challenge by analysing in great detail the Neoplatonised Aristotelianism, clearly visible in the writings of the Ikhwan al-Safa, popularly known as the Brethren of Purity.

Their writings were presented in the form of epistles (rasa'il) 52 of which have so far been known, and scholars are not quite certain about their dates, although some prefer the tenth century when most of them were composed. The Brethren of Purity followed the Neo-Platonists in erecting an emanationist hierarchy, which was a much more elaborate structure than the simple triad of Plotinus. Not content with the nine members or levels of being like the creator, intellect, soul, matter, nature, body, the four elements, etc., the Ikhwanian concept of hierarchy extended even to the daily aspects of social life, like the Hindu varnasrama dharma, as the Ikhwan themselves were divided into the four ranks of craftsmen, political leaders, kings and prophets. The final goal striven after by the Neoplatonists, the Ikhwan and, of course, the Sufi mystics was the same, union with the deity, and seeing the interior life of the soul as a haven of security.

The author has to be congratulated on finding his way through asceticism, self-denial and righteous living as prevailing Middle Eastern religions and the textual problems and the exegesis of passages which could bear more than one meaning, as the Ikhwan did not disdain to borrow from the whole spectrum of world scripture, pagan philosophy and the Abrahamic theology of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sifting all available evidence, he comes to the conclusion that the Brethren of Purity were Neo-Platonic teachers intent on propagating the message of peace and purity, achieved through asceticism, self-denial and righteous living as a passport to Heaven. This world is a samsara sagara, as the Hindus affirm, and the Ikhwan were determined that one "recruited to their Brotherhood should not drown in this sea but should win eternal life and thereby free himself from the bonds of matter and corruption and the prison house which was the world."

THE STORY OF MIRA'S LOVE: By Swami Budhananda.

Pub: Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi. Pp. 52. Price Rs. 5/-

Saints, to whatever clime they may belong, have ever remained as an inspiration to all those earnest souls in search of Eternal Truth. Mira Bai, the sixteenth century Rajput saint, is a familiar name in every household in the land through her songs, steeped in Krishna's prema pasa, which have infused faith, courage, devotion, and love of God to every aspirant. In this little booklet, the author has traced the lady saint's earthly life full of troubles, difficulties, persecutions and described her fearless nature, simple habits, joyous disposition, amiable behaviour, and divine intoxication. She had the beautiful cosmic vision, seeing Krishna in every tree, stone, creeper, flower or bird. There is no doubt that so long as there is the name of Krishna, the name of Mira too will live through her songs. The Ramakrishna Mission has done a noble service in popularising this wonderful personality, a saint, philosopher, poet and sage. The illustrations and Swami Vivekananda's message on Parabhasati given as introduction add to the value of the booklet.

ARGUS


Many are the sacred mountains in the world, impressing the human imagination with spiritual powers, being sanctified by accumulation of mythological and religious
significance. Starting from the Greek lore, Mt. Olympus, a 10,000 foot peak, spanning the borders of Thessaly and Macedonia, we have Mt. Sinai where Moses obtained the stone tablets with the law and commandments written thereon, Mt. Golgotha where Christ was crucified, Mt. Fuji, the volcanic cone rising to over 12,000 feet, and several others like Horeb, Nebo, Zion, Carmel, Moriah— all accorded religious veneration. But this book is concerned with Mount Kailas "truly one of the natural wonders of the world", a 22,000 foot mountain, lying on the far side of the Himalayan range in a remote region of Tibet.

This region of overpowering beauty remained inaccessible to travellers for nearly thirty years since the Chinese communists supplanted with their own the theocratic regime of the Dalai Lama. The author, being the General Secretary of the Buddhist Society, London and editor of the journal "The Middle Way", is eminently suited to explore the dense jungle of myth and legend attached to this sacred mountain by followers of no less than four of the great religions— by Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and the pre-Buddhistic Shamans, the adherents of the Bon religion of Tibet. In discussing the spiritual connotations of Mt. Kailas, the author details its connection with the mythical Mt. Meru (alternatively Sumeru, Sineru), the cosmic mountain or axis mundi of the world. Its value is further enhanced by the fact that the four great rivers— the Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra and Karnali— rise in this Kailas-Manasarovar region.

As the author has examined all the narratives of travellers, explorers, adventurers, scholars and political officers, this book will serve as an ideal travel book for every armchair reader, who is fascinated by the splendour of the East, its religions, its mystic insights and nature beauty. The spiritual significance is not so much derived from the qualities of the mountains themselves as from the fact that they are associated with notable mystics. Naturally one thinks of Arunachala to which the author pertinently refers, by remarking that Bhagavan Ramana identified the mountain with the Highest Principle:

"That is the holy place! Of all, Arunachala is the most sacred! It is the heart of the world! Know it to be the secret Heart-centre of Shiva! In that place He always abides as the glorious Aruna Hill!"

Consciousness is pure knowledge. The mind arises out of it and is made up of thoughts.

—Bhagavan
HOLY DEEPA DARSHAN DAY

—“AN ECSTATIC EXPERIENCE”

The darshan of the Holy Deepam on top of Sacred Mountain, Arunachala, is not only an ecstatic experience but also kindles in one’s heart the yearning to be one with the Self, the Truth that stands majestically outwardly, as the Unique and most Holy Hill.

Deepam was lit at the entrance to Sri Bhagavan’s ‘Samadhi’. The portrait of Bhagavan surcharged the atmosphere with His Holy Presence.
Devotees singing ‘Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala’; the outpourings of Sri Bhagavan, so dear to His Heart!

The beautiful display of pictures of the Master; sales no doubt was very brisk!

Devotees thronged to have a glimpse of the Grace-filled Samadhi of Sri Bhagavan; of course, the Book Depot was always crowded!

The poor were sumptuously fed
The sacred texts proclaim:

"Arunachala is the oldest and most sacred of all holy places. Here, Lord Siva manifested Himself as a Column of Blazing Light; later, became the holy hill. Arunachala to bestow His Grace on Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma, the devas and on all human beings. In fulfilment of their prayers, the Lord assured them that He would reveal His true Effulgence as Light on top of this Hill once a year in the month of Kartika (November-December) on the evening of the full-moon together with the asterism of Kritika. Those who see the light are freed from disease and hunger and live eternally happy. By having darshan of the Light all beings are freed from the cycles of birth and death. Those who worship Him as the Light on this holy Hill on this sacred day, in an attitude of complete surrender, are not only assured of their own liberation but also that of their descendants for twenty-one generations".

This year the Deepam Festival was celebrated from Nov.11 to 20, the last day being the Holy Deepam day; and there was an unprecedented crowd to participate in it. At the Ashram, as usual, a beacon was lit. Throughout the day hundreds and hundreds of people were fed at the Ashram. The light on the hill lasted for a week this year, giving joy to everyone, particularly to those who could arrive only a few days later!

GLORY OF ARUNACHALA

"This glorious Arunachala is that of which the mere sight suffices to remove all demerits which divide up Being into egos and finite worlds.

"What cannot be acquired without endless pains - the true import of the Vedanta - is easily attained by all who can either directly sight this Hill or even mentally think of it from afar".

— Sri Arunachala Mahatmya

104th RAMANA JAYANTI

Sri Bhagavan's 104th Birthday, Ramana Jayanti, was celebrated in all solemnity on December 22 at His Shrine of Grace — Sri Ramaseswara Mahalingam. There were elaborate chantings and pujas. Thousands of poor people were fed. Devotees had come from all over India to participate in the function. The children of Ramana Nagar sang Arunachala Siva in a chorus; to Smt. Ramani Ammal goes the credit for training them so well.

A pictorial pamphlet, Sri Ramanasram Today, and Sri Sadhu Om’s Sadanai Saram, a book in Tamil were released on that sacred day by the Ashram President, Sri T.N.Venkataraman.

Sri. K.Sivaraj (Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat), President Ramana Kendra, Ahmedabad, spoke absorbingly on Bhagavan’s Teachings.

In the evening, Ramananjali, gave a scintillating ‘Ramana Music’ performance, to the delight of the devotees.
Karthigai Deepam Festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm on November 20. The entire premises were gaily lit by innumerable tiny lamps and devotees went round the shrine singing Arunachala Siva in chorus. This was followed by a slide-show of striking pictures of Bhagavan and Arunachala. The function came to a close with distribution of traditional items of prasad.

The children of Ramana Bala Kendra, Bangalore, who were on a visit to New Delhi in October, staged a series of song-dance-drama programmes in New Delhi, including one sponsored by Ramana Kendra, New Delhi at the AIFACS Hall on October 11. The highlights of the show were the pieces on Ramana and Mother, Ramana and Animals and Ramana in Madurai, which received repeated applause from the large audience. The programmes were ably directed and presented by Kumaris Sarada and Ambika.

The “Ramananjali”, the Cultural Wing of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, was on a visit to New Delhi in November and gave a series of ‘Ramana Music’ performances in the Capital. The concert arranged by the Delhi Kendra on November 10 was largely attended and greatly appreciated.

Earlier in the evening on that day, a beautiful colour bust portrait of Bhagavan specially designed and gifted to the Delhi Kendra by Sri V. Ganesan, was formally unveiled in the Kendra Auditorium by Shri T.N. Chaturvedi, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Swami Bhoomananda Thirtha of Narayanarsrama Tapovanam, Trichur, concluded his course of lectures on Kathopanishad with a series of five talks from October 26 to 30.

On September 11, there was a talk on Saint Thirunavukkarasu by Sri B. Raman of Madras, and on September 25 on “Dhammapada — Sorrow and its causes” by Professor N.S. Srinath of Delhi University. There was a musical discourse on Ramana Charithram by Sri Sadhu Ram Swami on October 23.

Ramana Kendra is extending co-operation to Virat Hindu Samaj, Ramayana Vidyapeeth, Arsha Vidyaa Mandir and other organisations working for Sanatana Dharma and Vedanta philosophy.

**TALKS**

Sri Swami Dayananda will hold morning classes on Sri Bhagavan’s Sat Darshanam at Trichy from 6.2.1984 to 14.2.1984.

At Nagercoil between 18.2.84 to 24.2.84 Sri Swamiji would give morning talks on Sri Bhagavan’s Upadesa Saram.
The family of our dear Devaraja Mudaliar (compiler of *Day by Day with Bhagavan*) are all staunch devotees of Sri Bhagavan. The grandson of Sri Mudaliar, who is now an officer in a leading bank, has been named after Bhagavan. **Sri C. Venkataramanan** spent with his family four days at the Ashram in October. He writes:

"We have been visiting the Ashram for the past 40 years. But the charm the Ashram holds for us has not lessened even by an iota. On the other hand the affinity for the Ashram increases with every visit. Whenever an opportunity presents itself we come to the Ashram so as to be away from the maddening world. During the stay at the Ashram we feel that our ties with Bhagavan are restrengthened like charging a battery. Thus we return to our daily chores with fresh vigour and pleasant memories of Bhagavan!"

— C. Venkataramanan, Madras.

The principal of the Government College at Venkata-giri, **Sri J. Muralimohan**, is a staunch devotee of Bhagavan. Though he has not seen Bhagavan while He was in the body, his dedication to Him is total; the entire family is devoted to Bhagavan. He wrote after a fulfilling stay of five days at the Ashram in October:

"We do not like ourselves to be considered visitors to the Ashram as we belong to it — our annual sojourns are a sort of home-coming — we cannot be visitors to our own home! Just as in the past seven years we arrived at our home to spend *dasara* in the mighty presence of our father Sri Ramana Maharshi. This only difference we found during this visit was that we were spotted out and then brought to pose for a photograph! Not much of a change — as the same hospitality, the same freedom and the same familiar atmosphere continue.

"Under the guidance of Bhagavan things would work together for bringing solace and freedom and the 'merging' of 'seemingly separate selves' into the Universal — an illusion no doubt as Bhagavan puts it, for the Universal 'I' is everywhere".

— J. Muralimohan, Venkatagiri.
As the cool season begins at Arunachala the pilgrims from the western hemisphere start coming in. Mr. Henri Hartung, who has an Ashrama in Switzerland (Centre de rencontres spirituelles et de méditation, Le Pasquier 10, CH-2114-FLEURIER) sends yearning devotees to spend a few peaceful days at the abode of Sri Bhagavan. He sent his nephew, Sri Eric Salmon, together with Sri Serge Cagnolari, who spent a few days at the Ashram in November. On his return to Paris, Sri Eric Salmon, wrote to our Managing Editor:

"Back in Paris I wish to again thank you for the time I spent with you at Ramanasramam. I've greatly appreciated having spiritual talks with you, but I was also deeply impressed by the Ashram, the Mountain, the atmosphere of living spirituality in Arunachala. The march around Arunachala on November 20 at night with you all chanting "Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva" was absolutely beautiful.

"Since I was very young, coming to Arunachala was very important to me. I'm happy to have realised this 'pilgrimage' to the place where Ramana Maharshi lived."

A French couple, Mrs Christiane and Mr Marcel David, spent a few days at the Ashram in December '83. They write: "Though we never met Bhagavan during His physical life, here we have found Him and He remains close by us for ever. This short stay at the Ashram has helped us so much; surely we'll come again!"

Mrs Christiane & Mr Marcel David

In response to the call of the Hill Mr. John Bell of the United State of America came to our Ashram and spent six weeks. He shares with us the following:

"This is my second visit to Sri Ramanasramam. The first was most notable because I experienced a great peace, deep within, especially when in the Meditation Hall or Samadhi Room.

"This time I didn't notice the peace as much as the sweetness of Bhagavan's Presence. Even while awake in..."
the night I still felt it. So I spent the first 3 weeks entirely in my room meditating and enjoying His presence. The last three weeks have been spent going round the Hill. Before I started going round the Hill almost every day, I had a momentary experience of pure ecstatic love in front of Bhagavan's couch.

"It was an all-too-brief upwelling of pure selfless love — a completely pure emotion. It was an intuitive feeling which comes up from the very depths of one's Being. I experienced it as a lightning flash which parted open my heart in its haste to strike Bhagavan's life-size photo. I knew beyond a doubt it was true — it could only be true! Bhagavan tells us the heart is the centre: is the Self. From here we know the Truth. This is where Love is Truth: Bhakti and Jnana are identical. It cannot be otherwise. It is spontaneous, and you know it is true. It cuts right through the ego and conditioning and surrenders your small self before you know it; caught unawares before our conditioning has a chance to overshadow it. This was the experience of pure selfless love for Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi!

"It was Bhagavan's Grace! He allowed me to experience it again nearly every time I went round the Hill. My feet were tender and sore after the first go-round and became more tender after each pradakshina but they carried me on. Rather they led me on....

"After breakfast at the door of my room there was always a reversal. All the way from the dining hall I was sure today I would rest, wouldn't go round. Then the feet would just start walking and I would remember the moments of ecstatic love and the mind would capitulate and off we (the feet, mind, body and I) would go round the Hill again!"

— John Bell, U.S.A.
Nearly fifty members of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram, Tadepalli, led by Sri V. Brahman, spent three days at the Ashram. They came specially to have 'darshan' of Holy Deepam.

Sri Isoro Haruyama, Japan
Smt. Kemala Kembelii

Smt. Sarojini Hatheesing (second from right) is happy to pose in front of Arunachala Hill and that too in the company of her dear friend.

Sri K. Hanumantha Rao of Guntur with his wife and son. They are very regular pilgrims to the abode of our Master.

Tippirajapuram Balasubramanian,
Smt Meenakshi Swaminathan
Viswanatha Swami Day
November 7, 1983

Devotees paid homage to Viswanatha Swami, our former Editor, at his Samadhi situated within the precincts of the Ashram.

Smt. and Sri R.R. Iyer of Bangalore have been staying in the Ashram for the past three months. Sri R.R. Iyer gives his experiences.

"I and my wife had the privilege of staying in the Ashram during the past few weeks and desire to give expression to our pleasant experiences. We had visited the Ashram on many occasions in the past, but this was our longest stay.

The courtesy and kindness shown on arrival by the Ashram authorities show humility rather than display of what they can offer. They seem to say, "Find out yourself". This creates curiosity. You are impressed by the sanctity and peace which prevail as you enter the premises. The experience is memorable and works as a magnetic force for repeat visits. Sri Bhagavan's Presence is felt everywhere and this feeling gets strengthened with each great contact.

Now look around, but 'hurry slowly'. Cleanliness, discipline and quality of service are of high order. The following are the major daily routines. Trikala puja, feeding and accommodating Ashramites and visitors including foreigners — quite a large number in all — with frequent 'bhikshas', free medical consultation and dispensary on specified dates, Veda Pata sala.

What other help does true seeker need to discover 'Who am I'?" — R.R. Iyer, Bangalore.

In April, Sri Binod Ganguly, visited the Ashram along with his wife and son-in-law. He was so overwhelmed with his 'pilgrimage' to the abode of Sri Bhagavan that he wishes to share the following with fellow-devotees:

"Set in the serene backdrop of the Arunachala hill, Sri Ramanasramam possesses the capacity to offer a cool repose for a seeker after Truth.

My long-cherished desire to visit the abode of Bhagavan became a reality on April 26. Purely by the grace of Sri Bhagavan. When I reached it in the afternoon, I was surprised to discover that the strain of the long journey through gruelling heat practically had no effect on me inspite of my advanced age. It was a clear proof that Sri Bhagavan alone had dragged me to His place.

On our first day in the Ashram we had the privilege of visiting Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi, Mother's Samadhi, and the Room where Sri Bhagavan attained the Mahanirvana. We also sat for a while in the Meditation hall where Sri Bhagavan used to sit on a divan and give darshan to His countless devotees. A number of devotees were in deep meditation in that hall.
On the second day of our stay, a kind devotee whose name I cannot recollect now, volunteered to accompany me up the Hill Arunachala. I visited Skandashram, Virupaksha cave and other places where Sri Bhagavan had stayed. Whenever time permitted, we stepped in to the Meditation hall where I felt the voice of Sri Bhagavan is constantly echoing. The divinity of the Maharshi is etched on every stone of Arunachala.

The arrangements in the Ashram for pilgrims, like ourselves, are beyond one’s expectations. The comfortable and unostentatious accommodation with the simple and wholesome food served with utmost care and mixed with the warm hospitality of the managing authorities make a stranger feel like home-coming.

I am grateful to our revered Ashram President for making our brief stay in the Ashram a pleasant memory. I long to visit this holy place again in the near future”.

— Binod Ganguly, Calcutta.

**RAMANA SATSANG AT ANANTAPUR**

Sri R. Sreeramulu of Sri Ramana Satsang, Anantapur, reports:


Sri T. Bhimasena Rao explained the activities of Sri Ramana Satsang. The President, Sri Jaya Rami Reddy, stressed the need to study the philosophy of Bhagavan. Miss Anuradha and Miss Madhavi gave a dance performance which included a few songs on Bhagavan Ramana. The dance and the song: “Arunachala Siva”, sung by Mrs. Sandhya Murthy were highly appreciated.”

**INVITATION**

**SRI RAMANA AKHANDA NAMA SAPTHAHAM**


Chanting of this mantra of Sat Guru Ramana continuously all 24 hours for seven days begins on February 29, 1984 at Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. Devotees are cordially invited to participate in the ‘SAPTHAHAM’ and make it a success. Those willing to participate in the Sapthaham and help conduct it may please write to:

RAMANA VANI GUDIVADA 521 301 Krishna District Andhra Pradesh.
OBITUARY

DR. T.M.P. MAHADEVAN

We regret to report the passing away of Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, the National Professor, teacher, orator and author, on November 5, 1983. After a brilliant college career, he became famous, both in India and abroad, for his outstanding contribution to the philosophy of Advaita. He had the good fortune of coming under the influence of Bhagavan very early in life through Swami Rajeswarananda. After his first tour abroad, when he gave a talk on his travels, Bhagavan remarked: "He has taken us all to those countries!" An ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan he took every opportunity to talk and write on Him and on His teachings.

Dr. Mahadevan represented India at various Seminars held in different parts of the world between 1948 and 1972. He was awarded Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in 1967 in recognition of his valuable contribution to Indian Philosophy.

Special credit goes to him for introducing the teachings of Bhagavan as a subject in M.A. Philosophy in the University of Madras. His free English rendering of 'Ulladu Narpadu', with an elaborate commentary, was published by the Ashram with the title Ramana Maharshi and the Philosophy of Existence.

In his passing away the Ramana family has lost an elder brother honoured and beloved and the world of learning a scholar and teacher of international frame.

SRI SWAMI SURESHANANDA

We deeply regret to record the passing away of Sri Swami Sureshananda, a great devotee of Bhagavan, at Sri Vijnana Ramaneeya Ashram in Palghat on November 20, 1983, on the Holy Karthigai Deepam Day.

It was in July, 1947 that Sri Swamiji first came into the fold of Sri Bhagavan; since then he continued to visit Him frequently. On one of his visits in 1949 he read out to Bhagavan his translation into Malayalam of Ramana Chaturvimsat and later at the instance of Bhagavan translated the invocatory verse too. Since then, impelled by Bhagavan’s Grace, he translated almost all the works of Bhagavan into Malayalam which are much appreciated.

Swamiji was a true Karma Yogi. He was chiefly instrumental in the construction of a Shrine to Bhagavan, a Library and other useful activities of Sri Vijnana Ramaneeya Ashram. In 1980, Swamiji, in an attitude of surrender, offered this institution to Sri Ramanasramam as a Centenary Gift. Sri Swamiji was conducting classes regularly on the teachings of Bhagavan, inspite of his ailing health due to paralysis. He strived every moment of his life to make the people of Kerala know of Sri Bhagavan and His greatness.

Swami Sureshananda will ever be remembered by the devotees of Bhagavan as one who totally dedicated himself to his Master!
AN APPEAL

"MOUNTAIN PATH FUND"

With hesitation we bring to the notice of our readers an urgent need of ours.

For the past few years The Mountain Path is working at a loss which is steadily increasing due to the high cost of paper, printing charges and heavy postal charges. We are keen that the excellent quality maintained by us should continue.

We are, therefore, announcing “The Mountain Path Capital Fund”. Please contribute liberally to it. Donations to this Fund will be earmarked and kept in Fixed Deposit with Banks so that interest from it would go to augment our funds. Even though there is no obligation on the part of any life-member to subscribe any more amount, in view of the altered circumstances, we would like to request them also to kindly remit any additional amount which they may desire to meet the situation.

Subscribers and readers who are in business or having business connections may please secure at least one advertisement each per year. The cost of such advertisement is only Rs. 500/- per page. We are confident that your ready help in a big way would be available.

Sri Ramanasramam,
Tiruvannamalai-606 603.
October 1, 1983.

V. Ganesan,
Managing Editor,