"Grasping a form (i.e. body), it rises; grasping a form it stands; grasping a form, it eats and waxes; leaving a form it grasps another form; when sought it takes to flight—this shapeless and ghostly ego! Thus should you know."

—Sri Bhagavan's Forty Verses on Existence, verse 25
(Translation by Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan)

May the Grace of Sri Ramana Maharshi be with

"THE MOUNTAIN PATH"
The Spiritual Journal published from Sri Ramanasramam

Inserted by the Management
WELLINGTON TALKIES, MADRAS
I spoke thus to Thee, because Thou art my Lord; be not offended but come and give me happiness. Oh Arunachala!

The Marital Garland of Letters
Verse 90

---

THE MOUNTAIN PATH
(A QUARTERLY)

"Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart. Oh Arunachala!"
— The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1

Vol. 23 JULY 1986 No. 3

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: Meditation 131
What is Death if Scrutinised?
— A.R. Natarajan 133
The Soul of Silence
— Swami Thapovan Maharaj 135
Two Decades of The Mountain Path
140
— J.A. Champneys
Thundering Silence
— John A. Grimes 139
Oxford Rejected (Chapter IV)
— Arthur Osborne 145
Quintessential Ramana
— V. Ganesan 148
The Great Compassion
— V. Dwarkanath Reddy 155
Design
— Reps 157
Thirty Questions
— Douglas E. Harding 158
What I Saw in Sri Bhagavan
— Duncan Greenlee 161
Leaves from Devotees' Diaries: Grahapravesam
163
From Evolution and Other Dreams, to Ramana
— Namaraya 167
How I Came to Sri Bhagavan
— John A. Champneys 175
Yogi Ramsurat Kumar
— Ilaya Raja 182
The Way of Love
— A Parsee Devotee 185
In Memoriam: Sri Jagdish Swami
— Ratna Navaratnam 186
Introducing... Smt. Ramani Ammal
188
Letters to the Editor
191
Book Reviews
195
Ashram Bulletin 199

Cover Design by Mrs. JOAN GREENBLATT
Contributors are requested to give the exact data as far as possible for quotation used, i.e. source and page number, and also the meaning if from another language. It would simplify matters. Articles should not exceed 10 pages. All remittances should be sent to the MANAGING EDITOR and not to the Editor.

— Editor.

To Our Subscribers

1. The official year of the quarterly is from January to December.

2. SUBSCRIBERS IN INDIA should remit their annual subscription by Money Order only as far as possible and not by cheque. The words subscription for the The Mountain Path for...year/years should be written on the M.O. coupon and the full name and address written in BLOCK LETTERS on the reverse of the coupon.

Life Subscription should be sent by cheque drawn favouring The Mountain Path and crossed. The journal will not be sent by V.P.P.

3. FOREIGN SUBSCRIBERS can send their subscription by International Money Order, British Postal Order or by Bank cheque or draft payable in India, U.S.A. or U.K.

The subscription rates are for despatch of the journal by surface mail to all parts of the world.

AIR MAIL SUBSCRIPTION
(including air surcharge)
for all countries
£10 or $20

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.

• The editor is not responsible for statements and opinions contained in signed articles.

• No payment is made for contributions published. Anything herein published may be reprinted elsewhere without fee provided due acknowledgement is made and the editor is previously notified.

• Contributions are accepted only on condition that they do not appear elsewhere before being published in The Mountain Path. They can be published later elsewhere but only with acknowledgement to The Mountain Path.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH
is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
WHAT is meditation? Meditation is not concentration. Concentration is centering the mind on some one thing to the exclusion of others. In concentration, there is one-pointedness. To do my work, concentration is necessary. Concentration is paying attention to one thing in an intense way. When we listen to music, sometimes we close our eyes so that the enjoyment will not be affected by visual interference. We want to pay attention to what we hear to the exclusion of other things. Concentration results in an intense awareness of one thing to the exclusion of others.

Meditation is self-enquiry and allows Self-awareness. In concentration, the seeker seeks something. In meditation, the seeker seeks himself. In meditation there is no exclusion. Meditation results in the understanding of oneself. In concentration, the mind while retaining doership becomes powerful. In meditation, this weakens and the mind ultimately merges in the Self. Meditation results in the realization of our real state. Meditation is freedom from thoughts; it is silence of the mind.

When we sit for meditation, we are bothered by a variety of thoughts and are irritated at our inability to get the anticipated peace. Sometimes we are overtaken by peace when we least expect it. When we try to hold on to it, it disappears. It comes unbidden and leaves unasked.

When someone asked Sri Bhagavan why thoughts came crowding in when one attempted to meditate, Sri Bhagavan said, "Yes, all kinds of thoughts arise in meditation. It is but right. What lies hidden in you is brought out. Unless they rise up, how can they be discovered?" (Talks, No. 310).

MEDITATION
What we experience every day in deep sleep is profound happiness. It is a state where the mind is completely merged in the Self. We feel refreshed only when we have had deep sleep. When we stretch ourselves on a comfortable bed for about eight hours without any mental quiet, we don't feel refreshed despite complete rest to the body. The body feels refreshed only when the mind has been at complete rest. Sri Bhagavan says that the joy one experiences in deep sleep is due to the silence of the mind, the suspension of the ego. He says that the same state can be experienced if one consciously puts the mind back to the Self. He says that it will be easier to do it if we meditate as soon as we wake up. As we wake up, the mind comes slowly out of the Self. If we meditate at that time, it will be easier to merge it in the source. Thought-free consciousness is the goal of meditation. Effortless and choiceless awareness is our real nature. But effort is necessary, says Sri Bhagavan, to attain the state of freedom. So long as there is the ego, effort is necessary.

The world we see is multi-faceted. There is such a variety. But what is, is ONE. When light passes through the prism we see seven colours. When the prism is removed, we see the source of all the seven colours. The white light was always there and the bright colours are due to the passing of the light through the prism. The many that we see is because of the mind. When the prism of the mind is removed, we shall experience the One, the Self. Our effort must be to remove the prism of the mind. When it is removed, there will be no refraction or distortion. Nothing new comes into being. The white light is there even when you pay attention to the colours coming through the prism. It doesn't come into being when the prism is removed. The removal of the prism makes us realise the one source from which the many colours come. The Self is always there. When the ego is removed, through meditation, we realise the ever-shining Self.

A state where the mind vanishes cannot be described by the mind. It is a state free from all our pre-conceived notions about it. The only way it can be comprehended is by being it, by experiencing it.

Awareness of other things is possible with exertion of the mind. Self-awareness is the result of the elimination through meditation of that which exerts.

Sri V. Ananthachari took immense pains in the printing of the Telugu Ramana Gita. When his services were appreciatively referred to in the preface, he pleaded hard with Sri Bhagavan that his name should not be so mentioned. Sri Bhagavan told him, "Why do you worry? To ask for the omission of your name, is as much egotism as to desire its inclusion. So let it be. After all, who knows who is Ananthachari?"

— *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, p. 15
What is Death if Scrutinised?

By A.R. Natarajan

WHAT a terrifying thing to do! Why should we think of the dreaded death at all, let alone scrutinise it? Surely we know a few things about death; that the young and old, the healthy and infirm, the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, no one can escape it. We also know that no one can predict, the when of it. Birth being the product of karma, of fate, who knows when it would come to an end. So, one feels that it would be best to leave inevitable death severely alone. Would it not be ostrich-like attitude to ignore the reality and to push it away till it confronts you with or without warning? Is it not the unconscious and unsaid fear that death marks the end of all that we hold dear that is at the back of the steady refusal to have a close look at the only event in our lives which is certain and unavoidable?

But, can one afford this attitude which would deny insight into life itself? Ramana specifically suggests that one should examine the meaning of death and find out the truth of it. When His mother Azhagammal lay dying in 1914, from typhoid, Ramana has given potent guidance in the form of a prayer for her recovery. “Where would be the need for cremation if one were to probe into death?” he asks. Why? For therein lies the key to immortality. The key to freedom from the fetters of time. Strange as it may seem, it is only those courageous ones who have dared to invite death, dared to fearlessly examine it who have become the trail-blazers of joyous living.

Hence, one finds Ramana almost coaxing one out of this deep and hidden fear. “You are as good as dead even in sleep, what fear is there of death?” he would query. Or “Why do you love sleep, but not death?” For, deep-sleep is closest to death in one sense. The body is non-existent for the sleeper who has no thoughts and hence no identification with the body. But, somehow death seems different. One is certain that on waking the awareness of the dear body would be there, whereas death would mark the sharp ending of the known. The stark reality of this fear operates against the in-depth involvement to find out about death. Yet, one should persuade oneself to do so. The experience of Ramana himself would help in the ridding of this deep-rooted fear.

Those familiar with Ramana’s life know of the dramatic events of 1896 and 1911. The total and the gripping fear of death in July 1896 left him with no choice except to come face to face with this primal fear of death. What was the result? His own immortality. He became aware and aware constantly of the ceaseless shining of the ‘I’ to which the
reduction of the body to ashes made no
difference. Death could only be for the perish­
able body and not for the imperishable ‘I’

In 1911, while returning to Virupaksha
Cave, Ramana had this second confrontation
with death. Only this time, it was not fear of
death, but actually physical death. In other
words, “The circulation of blood and the
beating of the heart stopped and my body
became dark in colour, same as what
happens to a dead body .......... but the
flow of my thoughts and the consciousness
of the Self was not lost”. Aware of the dying
body, Ramana remained firm in his abidance
in the Self, fully conscious of his deathless­ness.

If one is prepared to look, what does one
find? It becomes evident that when one talks
of birth or death, one has in mind only the
body. The fact that the body comes into
existence and passes away automatically,
according to the karma which gave rise to it,
is forgotten. Once the karma is exhausted,
the body comes to an end. Hence, the phenom­
enon of the death of infants and the linger­
ing on of the old. These are but ‘body’s
deaths and births’. Ramana would say and
point out ‘true birth is in the Self. Death is
seen as clinging to the wrong notion of identifi­
cation with the body and forgetfulness of
one’s real nature. On close examination of
death, this ignorance explodes for the first
thing to end would be this identification.
Once this happens, one is naturally ‘that’
eternity. What happens to life thereafter? A
new unhurried and recollected life begins.
Unhurried because of the consciousness that
events are shaped by the Higher power and
not by the strength of the ego. One learns to
have repose born of the harmony with the
divine law. Why recollectedly, because one
is constantly aware of the natural state of
bliss, where there is no coming or going.

One has to practise incessantly the way
shown by Ramana to become heirs to such a
life. What exactly does this practice imply?
Since we are ‘close to death’ in sleep, watch­
ing of the subsidence of ‘I’ before sleep
would be the first step. This has to be con­
sciously extended, by making the ‘I’ subside
into its source by watching it as it rises. For
such attention before it branches into other
thoughts, immediately pushes it within and it
drops ‘crestfallen’ into the source. The indivi­
dual life current merges in the universal and
one becomes consciously immortal.
THE SOUL OF SILENCE

By Swami Thapovan Maharaj

SILENCE is Truth. Silence is Bliss. Silence is Peace. And hence Silence is Atman. To live in this Silence as such is the goal. It is Moksha. It is the end of this endless cycle of births and deaths. Sri Ramana Maharshi was an embodiment of such a Silence. He was the Silence Itself. Therefore he did not preach the Silence. Only when one comes back to the 'noisy' from the Silence, can one preach the Silence. How can the Silence preach itself through Silence?

Nearly thirty-five or forty years ago, I had the good fortune of having the Darshan of Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai when he was living there in a cave along with his mother and brother. One mid-day I, a young Brahma-chari at that time, climbed to the cave, saw the Maharshi there and placing a bunch of bananas at his feet, bowed and sat before him. At the same moment some monkeys jumped on to the scene, scrambled for the fruits and ran away with them.

Maharshi looked lovingly into my face. That was all He spoke but Silence; not a word passed between us. A supreme, a dynamic and divine Silence prevailed. An hour passed by, all in Silence. He rose for his Bhiksha. I too rose from my seat, bowed again and walked down the hill. The divine Silence sank deeper and deeper into me at each step! Someone came running behind me and pressed me to take some prasad. Thankfully I declined. I was full with the Silence. Maharshi called him back and advised him not to press me. Then I left the cave and walked away.

Maharshi was an idol of peace and Silence. It is the first duty of all those who admire and follow him to seek after that Divine Silence. The enquiry into that Divine Silence is but the enquiry “Who am I?”
It is possible to discuss rebirth only from the point of view of ignorance, because from the point of view of knowledge there is no one to be reborn. Therefore Bhagavan would generally brush the question aside when asked about it. He would make some such reply as: “First find out whether you are born now before asking whether you will be reborn.” Or: “Why worry what you will be after death before you know what you are now?”

— Arthur Osborne

VERSES FROM SRI MURUGANAR

Without the body, the world is not
Without mind, the body is not.
Without knowledge, mind is not.
And without being, knowledge there is none.
The truth they know not who assert
That power and peace are poles apart.
Peace attained by inward search
Is what the world beholds as power.
Do not spread out the mind inquiring
“Who may you be?” and “Who am I?”
Turn it inward questing
Steadily, keenly, “Who am I?”

— Translated into English by Professor K. Swaminathan

At about noon, the bell sounded announcing ‘Bhiksha’ time and people started queuing in the dining hall — a large thatched shed at that time. The person leading the queue occupied the last corner seat and the second next to him and so on. When the queue stopped, I found that I was to sit right in front of Sri Bhagavan! This lucky coincidence gave me great satisfaction. Bhagavan seemed to sense this and rewarded me with a gracious smile. Soon people came with rice and other preparations. When rice was brought before his leaf, a small ball of rice roiled into his leaf even before the person had started serving him. Bhagavan
looked at me smiling and said: "It falls by itself." This remark from Sri Bhagavan, I must say, gave me supreme delight and I can still recall the ecstasy I felt while partaking of that meal right in front of Sri Bhagavan and face to face with him hardly a yard separating our leaves. I felt that the morsels I ate were all Bhagavan’s prasadam. That was the happiest meal in my life.

— By K.K. Nambiar.

A Telugu Pandit asked Sri Bhagavan about nishkama karma. There was no reply. After a time Sri Bhagavan went up the hill and a few followed him, including the pandit. There was a thorny stick lying on the way which Sri Bhagavan picked up; he sat down and began leisurely to work at it. The thorns were cut off, the knots were made smooth, the whole stick was polished with a rough leaf. The whole operation took about six hours. Everyone was wondering at the fine appearance of the stick made of a spiky material. A shepherd boy suddenly put in his appearance on the way as the group moved off. He had lost his stick and was at a loss. Sri Bhagavan immediately gave the new one in his hand to the boy and passed on.

The Pandit said that this was the matter-of-fact answer to his question.

INTRODUCING......

When asked to put in clear terms what he meant by the impact of Sri Bhagavan’s grace on him, TPR said: "I am not left with any sense of want or void in internal strength. This is the direct result of a conviction instilled by experience by the Grace of Sri Bhagavan and it should be so with every one who has sought his Grace."

— By T.P. Ramachandra Iyer

THIS

No problems
Just ‘me’.
No ‘me’
Just ‘This’
Ah________This!

— By L.P. Yandell

from The Mountain Path, July 1966
Fourteenth of April 1950

By J.A. Champneys

[1] I walked along a dusty street
Where litter swirled and sighed.
   The neon of an English town
   Glowed violet and played the clown
   And yet I only wore a frown
The Night Ramana Died.

[2] In walking I could find no rest,
To meditate I tried;
   But contemplation would not come
   My hands and wrists and knees were numb,
I found no words for I was dumb
The Night Ramana Died.

[3] That quietness would not bring me peace,
Happiness was denied.
   I sat upon a stone and wept
   While those around me dozed and slept.
   My offering was so inept
The Night Ramana Died.

[4] An ancient tramp upon a bench
Who gasped and gazed wide-eyed.
   Had whisky dribbling down his chest
   And holes and tatters in his vest;
I felt that life had lost its zest
The Night Ramana Died.

[5] A chill wind blew and cut my flesh,
I shivered and I cried.
   Salt tears splashed upon my hand
And all the creatures in the land
   Had houses that were built on sand
The Night Ramana Died.

[6] I raised my face up to the stars,
My tears by now had dried;
   And then I saw a god named Ram
Who stared at me and said 'I AM'
And blazed in Arunachalam.
The Night Ramana Died.

[7] Alone in the park, and in the dark
The mist was sanctified;
   And spiritshovered near and far
With Vishnu in his aerial car
   And all the planets cried 'Shiva!'
The Night Ramana Died.

[8] It was as though my life was lost,
My hopes were crucified;
   As if the sun had lost its shine
As though the sea had lost its brine
   And all the clocks struck ten-to-nine
The Night Ramana Died.

[9] I'd lost, I thought, the man who laughs
And understands and gives.
   He brought me oil to anoint
My knuckled limbs, each creaking joint
   Screamed out 'I hope you see the point
In Fact, Ramana Lives!'
THUNDERING SILENCE

By John A. Grimes

WHAT cannot be said, cannot be said. In the Brahma-sutra-bhashya of Sankara there is reference to a dialogue between Vaashkalin and Baahva. Three times Vaashkalin questions Baahva about Brahman. And three times Baahva remains silent. Finally in frustration, Vaashkalin raises his voice and demands an answer. Gently Baahva replies, "I am teaching you, indeed, but you do not understand. Silent is the Self." Contrary to the presuppositions of the positivistic sciences, not even the masters of intelligibility can: i) say everything that they want to say; ii) say everything — i.e., that everything can indeed be said. "The one Self, the sole Reality, alone exists eternally. When even the Ancient Teacher, Dakshinamurti, revealed It through speechless eloquence, who else could convey It by speech?"

The young Dakshinamurti taught his elderly disciples in the language of silence. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi likewise was an embodiment of the ageless gospel of the Thundering Silence. He seldom spoke. In the pregnant silence of his presence, the personal and the impersonal, the knowing subject and the known object vanished. Here was a living enigma of seemingly contradictory elements silently dispelling all doubts even as the mist before the rising sun.

The eternal state (sahaja-sthiti) does not arise nor does it disappear. The Upanishads declare, "That is Fullness, this is Fullness, from Fullness comes Fullness. When Fullness is taken from Fullness, Fullness remains." The Maharshi's life was a living commentary on this great saying from the Upanishads. Though continually dwelling in the depths of his own Self, apparently introverted, he was always aware of everything taking place around him on the exterior, physical plane.

3 Brhadaranyaka Upanishad v. 1.
4 Chaandogya Upanishad 6.2.1.
the existent. A non-existent sense-datum is an impossibility. Thus, all experience points towards that which is the basis of all else. It is That (Being) which is immediately accessible in any and every experience. It can never be denied, for even the very denial of it is but an affirmation of it.  

Take the instance of moving pictures on the screen in a cinema show. What is there in front of you before the play begins? Merely the screen. On that screen you see the entire show, and for all appearances the pictures are real. But go and try to take hold of them. What do you take hold of? Merely the screen on which the pictures appeared so real. After the play, when the pictures disappear, what remains? The screen again.

Ramana stressed that no kind of dualism could ever taint this one, the sole Reality. Nothing to be done; nothing to gain; is the doer ever separate or other than the act? Action in inaction and inaction in action are easily comprehensible once one hears of the awakening experience of the young boy:

"It was about six weeks before I left Madras for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. There was nothing in my state of health to account for it, and I did not try to account for it or to find out whether there was any reason for the fear. I just felt: 'I am going to die' and began thinking what to do about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or my elders or friends; I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then. The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words; 'Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.' And I at once dramatized the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out stiff as though rigor mortis

1 Brahman-sutra-bhashya 3.2.27.
had set in and imitated a corpse so as to
give greater reality to the enquiry. I held
my breath and kept my lips tightly closed
so that no sound could escape, so that
neither the word 'I' nor any other word
could be uttered. 'Well then,' I said to
myself, 'this body is dead.' It will be carried
stiff to the burning ground and there burnt
and reduced to ashes. But with the death
of this body am I dead? Is the body I? It is
silent and inert but I feel the full force of
my personality and even the voice of the
'I' within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit
transcending the body. The body dies but
the Spirit that transcends cannot be
touched by death. That means I am the
deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull
thought; it flashed through me vividly as
living truth which I perceived directly,
almost without thought-process. 'I' was
something very real, the only real thing
about my present state, and all the con­
cious activity connected with my body
was centered on that 'I'. From that
moment onwards the 'I' or Self focussed
attention on itself by a powerful fascina­
tion. Fear of death had vanished once and
for all. Absorption in the Self continued
unbroken from that time on. Other
thoughts might come and go like the
various notes of music, but the 'I' continued
like the fundamental sruti note that under­
lies and blends with all the other notes.
Whether the body was engaged in talking,
reading, or anything else, I was centered
on 'I'.

The uniqueness of Ramana's experience
is that the experience came to him from
within. He hadn't read of the Plenary Experi­
ence first and then experienced it afterwards.
And again uniquely, the experience never left
him. It is the normal course of things that
such experiences occur and then fleetingly
leave as suddenly as they came. Ramana
himself revealed facets of this unique and

7 Arthur Osborne, Ramana Maharshi and the Path of
wonderful experience that he had undergone. “Maharshi Sri Ramana told me that what he realised on that day of ‘death-experience’ has ever remained with him. It has neither increased nor decreased.” And Professor D.S. Sharma asked, “Bhagavan, in the lives of mystics, we find three stages called purgation, illumination and union. The state of purgation is what we call sadhana. Was there such a period in your life?” Without the least hesitation, Sri Ramana gave the following answer — “I know of no such period. I never performed any japa or pranayama. I know no mantram. I have no rules of meditation or contemplation. Even when I came to hear of such things later, I was never attracted by them. Even now, my mind refuses to pay attention to them. Sadhana implies that an object has to be gained. It also implies the means of gaining it. What is there which we do not possess now? What is there to be gained which is new?”

“Prajnaanam Brahma — Consciousness is Brahman.” As the Maharshi described, consciousness is the screen upon which the pictures of the universe play. To become aware of one’s own consciousness is the secret door through which one not only enters the mystic path, but is able to abide therein continually. “For whom is the inside or outside? These can exist only so long as there are the subject and the object. For whom are these two again? On investigation you will find that they resolve into the subject only. See who is the subject. And this enquiry leads you to pure Consciousness beyond the subject.”

“Words return along with the mind, not attaining it.” Thought is inherently unsuited to embody the Reality. It is objectively oriented and functions only by division. This revelation lies at the heart of the Maharshi’s discovery. One must reverse the natural movement of the mind towards an object and point it towards the subject. When there is a subject and an object, there are two, there is duality. The subject understands the object. But the Maharshi asks, by what does the subject understand itself? Who is the see? Who is the known? The knower can never be the known and still remain the knower. Any verbal or mental answer immediately makes of the knower, the known. Who am I? To give an answer is to miss the question’s purport.

It is not understood by those who understand. It is understood by those who do not understand.

Atma-vichara — the enquiry into the Self, is the one sure and inescapable means to liberation. When seekers failed to understand the Maharshi’s Thundering Silence, he sought to turn their minds inwards by asking them to seek the source from whence all thought arises. The mind remains full of doubts only so long as the mind remains. Questions and answers both belong to the realm of division and ignorance. Thus the Maharshi would direct such seekers to enquire into ‘who am I?’ This technique was not designed to make one the knower of knowing. Its function was to ‘focus the entire mind at its source’. One is the knower of knowing already and thus the eternal ever-established Self need not be newly acquired.

“In the interior cavity of the heart of every one, the One Supreme Brahman alone shines as I AM. It is verily the Atman. Enter into the heart with one-pointed attention.” No one says of himself or herself ‘I am not’; but only ‘I am’. This reference is immediate and without meditation. It is not a presupposition. Even to question it, it must be assumed in order to do the questioning. It is the most
fundamental fact possible and the only object worthy of enquiry. The Maharshi said, "There is no reaching the Self. If the Self were to be reached, it would mean that the Self is not here and now but that it is yet to be obtained. What is got afresh will also be lost. So I say the Self is not reached. You are the Self. You are already That." 15

"Aham Brahmasmi — I am Brahman". 16 To know that Brahman exists is indirect knowledge. To know that I am Brahman is direct knowledge. Pursue the enquiry, 'who is this I?'. Like a dog tracing its master by his scent, one should pursue the 'I'. The master may be at some unknown place, dressed in strange clothing, his build or stature may have become unfamiliar — all these attributes are of no account. By holding into the scent and undistractedly searching for him, the dog will finally succeed in tracing its master. The screen is silent while the pictures weave their magic. The question is not asked who the T is, but who I am. This is not a knowledge to be acquired. Let go the pictures and seek that which supports them. "The Self you seek to know is verily yourself." 17

The first awakening of consciousness arises as T. It is only after the rise of the original I-thought that the myriad of other things comes to be. Without this original arising of the 'I', the mind with all its thoughts would not be. This 'aham' of 'aham brahmaasmi' is not the personal I. Seek its source.

Nothing can be reduced further than the source and substratum. It is the bed-rock, the most elementary and all-embracing foundation of all. It is the Self of everything that exists. It is an existential truth, experienceable by all. "The real 'I' or true Self is not the body nor any of the five senses, nor the sense-objects, nor the organs of action, nor the Prana, nor the mind, nor even the deep sleep state where there is no cognisance of these." 18 The 'I' cannot be identified with any of the egotistical states and thus through the process of not-this, not-this (neti-neti) the intuition that the 'I' is Brahman will arise. After excluding all else, that which remains is the 'I' and that is pure Consciousness.

We should keep in mind the purpose for which Brahman is described negatively. Even if a negative definition of Brahman conceptually is the most adequate one possible, it should always be remembered that all propositions directly or indirectly refer to Brahman, the non-phenomenal ground (nirvissesha-vastu) which is the only reality. And Brahman is positive in that it is not a non-entity. All negation necessarily has its own positive implications. Thus, it is that the negative definitions should not be taken in isolation, but should be understood only alongside of the Mahavakyas. To misunderstand this would be to attempt to know Brahman objectively by merely negating all outer phenomena and bi-polar concepts. Yet the Reality is within each individual. The Reality is not therefore a bare nothing. Nor is it an extra-empirical something which exists outside the world of experience. The Reality exists and is immanent in everything. Every aspect of experience whether on the objective or subjective side, reveals it.

To say all that you mean to say implies that everything can be said. Yet the supreme Reality is ineffable. Thought first divides reality and then re-associates the constituents it has abstracted out of reality. Its logic is one of either/or while the logic of Reality is one of both/and. One excludes while the other includes. The Being of beings is not bound by time and space. The Pure Consciousness is 'that something behind the mind, infinite, divine, eternal.'

The Maharshi never changed his teachings, his views on the world, his insight, as...
long as he lived. His entire life from the moment of his death-experience was one long commentary on Self-realization. Whether he was awake or asleep, whether his eyes were open or closed, whether he spoke or not, he was always immersed in the Self. “This natural state is given many names. Such names give rise to many controversies. For a time I remained with my eyes closed. That does not mean that I was practising sadhana at that time. If people choose to say I was doing sadhana, let them say so. Even now I remain with my eyes sometimes closed. If people want to say that I am doing some sadhana at the moment, let them say so. It makes no difference to me.”

The Maharshi sat in equal ease wherever he was. At times maggots and other insects had free reign of his body and still he sat oblivious to pain and discomfort, enwrapped in the Self. He was always immersed in the Self heedless of wounds and injuries inflicted upon his body. Whether he was in the ashram on a chair or in a cave on a rock, it was all the same to him. His equipoise was perfect. Truly his life was a commentary on the essence of the Vedantic teachings. As his life drew to a close, doctors pronounced the Maharshi’s body as very sick and dying. And yet, from his perspective, there was neither pain, nor illness, nor death. Time and again, he stated that he eternally rested in Brahman. “What? Is there time, place, or distance for me?” “They say that I am dying but I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here!”

When he departed from his body, Nature herself announced to the world that his play on earth had ended. A dazzling meteor shot across the night sky and blazed over the heads of the assembled devotees and disappeared behind his beloved Arunachala.

“When I draw near, looking upon Thee as having form, Thou standest as a Hill on earth. He who seeks Thy form as formless is like one travelling over the earth in search of formless space. To dwell without thought upon Thy nature is to lose one’s identity like a sugar doll immersed in the ocean. When I come to realize who I am, what else (but Thee) is this identity of mine? Oh Thou who standest as the towering Aruna Hill.”

If a man doesn’t speak, they say that he doesn’t know. And yet if he speaks, he contradicts the Scripture which declares that the Reality is ineffable. Caught between the horns of a dilemma, the solution lies in Ramana’s Thundering Silence. From Fullness he came Full. His life was forever Full. His teachings were forever Full. And even now, the Fullness of his eloquent silence thunders with Fullness.

PRAYER
By S.M. Kaul

Through the ups and downs of life,
As I faltered, fainted or fell,
I felt a presence by my side
And a Hand that kindly lifted me.

O Ramana Bright, thy effulgent light
Does oft beckon from afar.
Thy benign smile though meant for all
I forget in pelf and pride.

Oh! Make me a fit recipient of Thy Grace
That day and night I remember ceaselessly Thee
And thus depart when my work here is done
To find eternal peace at Thy holy feet.

nature is to lose one's identity like a sugar doll immersed in the ocean. When I come to realize who I am, what else (but Thee) is this identity of mine? Oh Thou who standest as the towering Aruna Hill.”

If a man doesn’t speak, they say that he doesn’t know. And yet if he speaks, he contradicts the Scripture which declares that the Reality is ineffable. Caught between the horns of a dilemma, the solution lies in Ramana’s Thundering Silence. From Fullness he came Full. His life was forever Full. His teachings were forever Full. And even now, the Fullness of his eloquent silence thunders with Fullness.

---

9 Life and Teachings, p. 24.
10 Ibid., p. 142.
21 Ramana Maharshi, p. 185.
32 Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, stanza 3 of Eight stanzas to Arunachala.
OXFORD REJECTED

(CHAPTER – IV)

By Arthur Osborne

(Continued from the last issue)

My tutors let me know that they were grooming me for a fellowship of All Souls and a career as an Oxford don. For two years I went along with them, and then in the third year almost stopped work, cut myself off from college and university life and in general made myself unacceptable. I was conceited enough to think that I could easily make a living by writing whether I had a profession or not. I was becoming profoundly disillusioned with Oxford and more and more incompatible. I had therefore no goal at which to aim. That of going to Oxford had been achieved; that now proposed, of an academic career, failed to appeal; and the true goal of life had not yet been revealed.

I had expected more of Oxford than it could give: a home of culture where men were interested in all that could not be bought for money. I threw myself into the new life with enthusiasm. I was assiduous in attending lectures, studying in libraries and in my room, composing essays for my bi-weekly tutorials. I also plunged eagerly into the new social life. Scarcely a day passed without my being invited out or inviting others to my rooms. However, before even the first term ended, there was a chill feeling of disillusionment. Where I had expected understanding I found triviality. Gradually I withdrew upon myself until, by the end of my third year, there were not half a dozen people in the whole university whom I knew well enough to drop in on uninvited. I shrank back from Oxford life: never spoke in the Union, though fond of debating; never acted in the OUDS, though attracted to the stage; never wrote for the Isis or Cherwell, whichever it was called — the university weekly, although I considered myself a writer.

The inner rejection extended to studies as well as people. History had held my interest at school partly as the pageant of great men and events and partly as the study of long-term developments; but when it was offered to me in the guise of research work—spending months deciphering the rent rolls of a 12th Century village in order to write a thesis on the economic basis of Mediaeval land tenure, ferreting out all references to a tenth-rate Tudor politician whom I should not be interested to meet if he lived to-day — and when this was proposed to me as my occupation in life, I shrank back from it. Twice in future years I was to find that when I saw a field of knowledge to possess intrinsic value I could read voraciously and study meticulously, but not just research for its own sake, not amassing details about some question that I felt to be unimportant and in which I was uninterested.

I quite realize, of course, that history or any other discipline of modern learning — sociology, astronomy, marine biology, whatever it may be — advances through the endless, patient, often anonymous research of scholars working either in battalions or deployed singly to strategic points, much of their work infructuous but some of it producing results which can modify a whole theory or inaugurate a hypothesis. To doubt the importance of such research would be to reject the very basis of modern civilization. I do reject it. That does not mean that I advocate wearing handloom cloth or working by candlelight or any such puerilities. So long as one lives in the modern world it is senseless not to conform to its outer conditions; what is to be rejected is its sense of values, its conviction of its own superiority and belief in the intrinsic worth of the sciences on which it is based, in fact its whole Weltanschauung. If the rejection of that were sufficiently widespread it would lead to rejection of its outer
forms also, but that is not likely to happen easily or peacefully.

In a social order based on a real respect for human nature (which includes appreciation of man’s spiritual potentialities) a man’s work for the community involves his own inner development also. If he is a craftsman making furniture or building houses his work is an art and he takes pride in its completion; it is also based on a symbolism reflecting his own self-building; if he is a student, his studies tend to the development of his understanding and burgeoning of his character, rectifying warped or stunted tendencies in him. But the modern civilization uses men as instruments whether they be labourers or scholars. Education is in closed compartments. Just as a workman tends his own machine with no consideration for his own development, so a scholar contributes his fragment of research totally alien to wisdom or self knowledge. It is not true that society is greater than a man. An anthill is greater than the single ant that composes it, but man has a divinity in his nature which potentially contains and transcends this whole world; and a society which denies this by treating men as instruments, providing no means for their spiritual development, is eating out its own vitals. Traditionally it has always been held that search for Truth or Knowledge is sacred and requires no motive or justification, that it is a fit end to which to devote one’s life. That is true, but it refers to knowledge of direct or indirect spiritual import, knowledge which gradually illumines or transforms the seeker. The accumulation of mere factual knowledge is a parody.

I did not know all this at the time, but I intuitively rejected research as a sterile use to which to put one’s years of life. I intuitively rejected modern civilization — not indeed with any knowledge of its sickness, not knowing that my antipathy to it was more than romantic, but with a deep feeling of its inadequacy. I did not know what I wanted of Oxford, but I felt bitterly that I had not found it. Much later I understood the comparative integrity of Oxford.

To some extent I knew. I knew that I wanted spiritual guidance. An answer to that would be that it is not Oxford’s purpose to supply it. That is true, but a deeper counter-reply would be that a country or civilization whose highest centre of learning and culture is indifferent to spiritual values, neither inculcating nor denying them simply ignoring them is bound to run into trouble from unbridled self-interest and lack of consideration for general harmony and welfare, from indiscipline, violence and indiscriminate interference with nature. Scientists of this age have been compared to Prometheus, only they have stolen the fire from heaven in a much more dangerous form than he did. Nuclear weapons represent that fire stolen from heaven at man’s own peril.

The indifference to spiritual values has opened the Pandora box of the lowest tendencies in man stemming from this shortsighted, materialistic, self-destructive self-interest in most spheres of life.

Here were young men receiving the best education their country had to offer, some of them studying its language and literature, others its history, and all in utter ignorance of its majestic traditions, of the intrepid strivings of its mystics, the paths to Beatitude that they had trod and the final supreme achievement, the Mystic Union, ignorant not merely of their actual testimony but of their very existence, not even knowing that there was a goal to life, that there were paths leading to it, and that men had trod these paths and left records of their ascent. One of my friends took Sanskrit for his degree, and he also, during his years of study, was never let into the secret that there is anything of spiritual interest in Sanskrit literature.

It is remarkable how all doors to spiritual growth were closed to me at this time — or opened only to reveal a bleak, cheerless interior. At first I joined one or two others from
“Craftsmanship does not mean making novel and exotic articles to please one’s fancy, but endowing everything we use in our daily life with beauty.”
— Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya
in her book: “INNER RECESES, OUTER SPACES”

my college in going to weekly evangelical meetings in town. We sat on upright chairs in a bare room while impromptu prayers were said, and some one gave a talk on being saved and what a wonderful experience it was. Well, I thought, it must be a wonderful experience for him, but I don’t seem to have it. So I stopped going. During most of my first year I attended morning chapel instead of roll call—twenty minutes instead of two. I was usually the only person there. I also went to some special kind of evening service that was held in the chapel once or twice a week. But it seemed cold and lifeless and meant nothing to me and I gradually stopped going. Neither the college chaplain nor any other ecclesiastic (and there were some, because Christ Church chapel is also Oxford Cathedral) offered any help or encouragement or even seemed aware of my seeking. During one vacation I went to stay at the Christ Church mission in East London. It was doing useful social work but that was all. I visited an Anglo-Catholic priory but felt no atmosphere such as might impel me to probe deeper. I toyed with the idea of Catholicism, but more for its poetic than its religious appeal. I made friends with the two Indian undergraduates at my college—a Hindu and the other a Muslim—and became a frequent visitor at the Majlis, the Indian undergraduates’ club, with the vague hope, based on recollections of Tagore, that it would lead to some spiritual contact, but nothing of the sort transpired.

(To be continued)
Like the Sun that shines equally on all, Bhagavan loved all devotees equally, yet different persons absorbed His Grace in different ways and degrees.

I want to portray here a remarkable Ramana-bhakta, Ramanatha Dikshitar, also known as Ramanatha Brahmachari. An inconspicuous figure he was full of fervour and devotion to Sri Bhagavan.

Ramanathan came to Sri Bhagavan in 1912 when He was staying at Virupaksha Cave. He was a student in the Veda Pathasala at Tiruvannamalai town. Just one look, one glance from Bhagavan, and this remarkable lad, a teenager, felt a spring of 'Motherly Love' as he described it later, welling up within him for Bhagavan! Though he was extremely poor and stood to benefit by the wholesome meals provided for the students at the Veda Pathasala, young Ramanathan chose instead to beg in the streets, so that he could have the freedom to run away from the Pathasala every day the moment the lessons were over, climb the Hill and stay with Bhagavan as long as possible!

If Ramanathan’s pull towards Bhagavan was so strong, Bhagavan’s concern for this frail youngster was such that Bhagavan personally looked after him during his serious illness.

Sri Kunju Swami narrated this very moving incident:

"When I arrived first in 1920, Tiruvannamalai was affected with plague. In fact, Annamalai Swami had just passed away owing to plague. So, except for Bhagavan, Perumal Swami Ramanathan and a few others the rest had left the town. Poor Ramanathan himself lay, curled up in a corner in Skandashram stricken by plague, with swelling and oozing. Others were anxious that Bhagavan should be saved from this epidemic, and they planned to take Him away and keep Him somewhere away from Ramanathan. So, one day as they went round the Hill and approached Pachaimar Koil, they told Bhagavan that they could all stop over there and stay on as all the necessary provisions had been brought along. They added that they would arrange to send meals from there to Ramanathan who could continue at Skandashram for some time. Sri Bhagavan calmly replied: 'I see; we should stay here, leaving Ramanathan there alone! And you plan to send him food from here. You may all stay here. I will go and be with him and attend on him. Anyhow, you are going to
send Ramanathan food. You can send some food for me also there.'

"Naturally, all went back and there was no danger to Ramanathan. How could it be otherwise when the gracious attention of Sri Bhagavan was focussed on the fortunate boy?"

An amusing incident noticed by Sri Kunju Swami when he was also living at Skandashram is worth quoting: "Bhagavan's Mother too was quite fond of Ramanathan. He being a Brahmin boy was entrusted with cleaning and washing the karchatti (stone-vessel) which was used by orthodox Brahmins for cooking. May be Ramanathan was a little slow in executing the work; or his devotion to Mother was such that he wanted to do a thorough job, everyday. Anyhow, there was inordinate delay in washing the vessel. Mother would call out: 'Ramanatha! Ramanatha! Bring that karchatti!' Ramanathan would reply: 'Coming, coming!' and would carry on washing the vessel. While Mother would call out to him many times, Ramanathan answered obediently every time. Coming, coming. One day, when this duet began, Bhagavan remarked, 'Amma also cannot refrain from singing this pallavi (Refrain) and this fellow also will not give up!'

Even after Mother's Samadhi when Bhagavan moved to the present Ashram, Ramanatha Brahmachari continued his services. A very diminutive figure, he would surprise everyone with the store of tireless energy that he possessed. Of his own accord he would clean the premises and do all the odd jobs of the residents. His self-appointed task was to wait for the arrival of the 8.30 p.m. train and keep the food warm, after he and others had taken the dinner. If any visitors arrived, he would feed them lovingly and
150 THE MOUNTAIN PATH

then provide each with a small log to serve as a pillow and a leaf-mat to sleep on. His dedication to service had to be seen to be believed. He would get up even in the midst of sound sleep if some one nearby murmured a requirement of hot water at night. He would say: 'Right o' and run to fetch it for them. He was truly service personified!

He was in the habit of liberally using the word 'Aandavane' (meaning 'god') while talking. He would even call others 'Aandavane': thus, people started addressing him also as 'Aandavane'!

He spun the charka regularly. Yes, Ramanatha Brahmachari was a staunch Gandhian! Once he took a dhoti woven from his yarn, met Mahatma Gandhi and presented it to him. When he returned he related with a broad smile all this to those in the Ashram. He also started a parallel 21-day fast along with the Mahatma, but was dissuaded by Kunju Swami and others after three days. He was an easy target of fun and teasing by others who would order him, for example, to study all the posters on the town walls and repeat their contents to them. He would do even this faithfully, knowing that he gave people some happiness this way!

It was a strange sight to see Aandavane returning from town everyday! Right hand clutching a tattered umbrella, a vessel with some food held in the left which also held, sometimes a thermos flask (a luxury enjoyed by royalty in those days) containing hot coffee sent for Bhagavan through him by an ardent town-devotee and that was not all! As he was not in the habit of using a bag, he would fold his dhoti at the knees and stuff into its rear and sides the vegetables from the market. With the dhoti bulging and drooping at the knees, he would waddle forward raising each foot; and with each foot would rise a relic of a chappal gargantuan in thickness due to several layers of patchwork attempted owing to Aandavane's reluctance to part with the archaic pair!

When the calf Lakshmi was brought to Bhagavan in 1926, along with her mother, by Arunachalam Pillai, Sri Bhagavan tried to dissuade Pillai from leaving the pair in the Ashram as there was no one to take care of them. At the crucial moment it was Ramanatha Brahmachari who declared without hesitation: "I will look after them". For three months he looked after them, after which some one in the town came forward to keep them on behalf of the Ashram. Ramanathan therefore played an important part in Cow Lakshmi attaching herself to Bhagavan.

In Palakothu, adjoining the Ashram, devotees like Muruganar, Munagala Venkata-ramaya, Yogi Ramiah, Kunju Swami and Viswanatha Swami were staying then. On his own accord Ramanatha Brahmachari would clean the premises of the devotees, prepare the wick, pour oil and light the lamps when dusk fell and do other odd jobs. Sri Kunju Swami recalled: "In those days we were all quite young and thought we were great bairagis. We would not bother to sweep our premises in Palakothu nor care to light the lamps. If there were no fuel we might even skip our meals. But, Ramanatha Brahmachari would take care of all these chores!"

Sri Kunju Swami continued: "Once when we were all sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan, a letter was received from Ekanatha Rao. He had made enquiries about the 'Sarvadhikari of Palakothu'. When Sri Bhagavan read the letter, He enquired: 'Who is this? I did not know about this.' I got up and pointed nervously to Ramanatha Brahmachari and said: 'We call him the 'Sarvadhikari of Palakottu'. He buys our things, cleans our lamps, sweeps our floor. So, we call him the 'Sarvadhikari of Palakottu'. He buys our things, cleans our lamps, sweeps our floor. So, we call him the 'Sarvadhikari of Palakottu'. Bhagavan said: 'Why didn't you tell me all these days? With a Sarvadhikari like this, everyone should be happy!' Ramanatha Brahmachari got up rather shyly and said: 'I don't know, Bhagavan. They call me like that for fun'. "What is there? It is good'. Sri Bhagavan said!"
When news came to the Ashram that Ramanatha Brahmachari had passed away in Madras, Sri Bhagavan remarked: 'Look! These verses Ramana Anubhuti were written by Ramanathan himself; another song with the pallavi (refrain) 'Thiruchulinathanai kandene' was also written by him. It is an interesting story. During my stay in Virupaksha Cave, one full moon night we set out on a giripradakshina. Chidambaram Subramanya Iyer was here at that time. The moonlight was bright and all were in high spirits. They decided to hold a symposium while on the move and each person was to give a speech on a different subject. Subramanya Iyer was elected Chairman of the meeting. The first lecture was by Ramanathan. The topic chosen by him was 'The Similarity between the Paramatma dwelling in the cave of the human heart, Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram and Sri Ramana in Virupaksha Cave'. The Chairman allowed him half an hour. There was no end to the points of similarity brought out by him. When the Chairman declared that the time was up, Ramanathan said, 'Just half an hour more. Please'. It was a meeting of people who were continuously walking. Saying, 'A little more time. Sir, a little more', he went on with his speech for full three hours, when the Chairman firmly put a stop to his further talking. You should have seen the enthusiasm with which he spoke that day. Subsequently, he summarised the points of the lecture into a song of four
When I told Professor N.R. Krishnamoorthy Aiyar that I was going to write about Ramanatha Brahmachari, he said: “Ramanatha Brahmachari, like other ordinary looking devotees of Bhagavan, had a greatness of his own. If Sri Bhagavan is Mount Everest, these are like Kanchenjungas!”

* * * * *

Sri Thapas Swami said:

“One day during breakfast Sri Sivanandam while serving two pieces of ‘Naarathangai’ (CITRUS RETICULATA) fruit to others, slipped four pieces on Sri Bhagavan’s leaf-plate. He repeated this the next day, whereupon Bhagavan said ‘What? I say (uritem, po?) Why the extra for me? Henceforth, don’t put any naarthangai on my leaf’. Sivanandam pleaded with Bhagavan that he had done it upon the advice of the doctor. The following day Bhagavan prevented Sivanandam from serving any naarthangai to him. In addition, He said: ‘You have made me lose my face in front of all’. When I enquired of Sivanandam he replied that he had noticed traces of blood and the doctor who was informed had suggested to Sivanandam to serve the extra slices of that citrus during meals. Four or five

Refrain: I have seen Tiruchuzhinathan (the Lord of Tiruchuzhi) and unable to turn back, I stood there transfixed.

Sub-refrain: He is the Lord who dances in Chidambaram, protects the helpless and is merciful to them.

i. The same Tiruchuzhinathan manifested himself as God in Virupaksha Cave on the hill in the sacred Tiruvannamalai.

ii. Jiva was ruling unjustly in the town called kayapuri, with the karanas as his subjects and ahankara as his minister.

iii. After some time, Jiva took up the sword of God’s grace and cut off the head of his minister, ahankara.

iv. Having so cut off the minister’s head, Jiva stood with God who was dancing all by himself in the cave called daharalaya.

He is this Tiruchuzhinathan, I saw him and stood there, unable to move.
days passed without Bhagavan accepting the fruit. I pleaded with Bhagavan. Bhagavan gave no reply. Two days later upon my suggestion Balarama Reddiar took the matter up with Bhagavan and met with His silence. Ten days later Devaraja Mudaliar came and we sought his help. When he pleaded with Bhagavan he replied; 'On what basis did he serve extra to me? That is still not digested' Then he added after a while. 'Am I eating only through this one mouth?'

"A month passed by thus, at the end of which Bhagavan said one day that one piece of naarthangai could be served. Later on He indicated that two pieces could be served to him. Who is to fathom the grace of Sri Bhagavan?"

Sri Thapas Swami continued:

"I was in the habit of doing meditation in stages through Vichara of the pancha kosas, five sheaths. When I was doing thus in Bhagavan’s presence, after going past the vijnanamaya kosa and entering anandamaya kosa a doubt arose thus. The bliss that one experiences by seeing, acquiring and enjoying various sense objects is enjoyed simultaneously in the absence of objects in the anandamaya kosa. I could not understand how this ananda vritti arises in the absence of objects in the ananda kosa. Immediately I put forth my doubt to Bhagavan.

“He asked me in a stentorian voice: ‘In which book is this said? Bring it and we shall see it.’ I had to say that the book was not with me and that it was on the basis of some remembrance that I was doing this Vichara and that this doubt had come up only that day. After the passing of two minutes Bhagavan replied. ‘The vrittis of desiring (priya), seeking (moda) and enjoying (pramoda) are to be understood as arising from latent ignorance’. Since then I have been following Bhagavan’s advice, i.e. attending to the experiencer and ignoring the effects.”

Perumal, father of the reputed mason Varadan, was himself an accomplished mason. It was he who built the ‘Arutpaal Tirtham’ above Guhainamassivaya Temple. He was then building the ‘Mulaippaal Tirtham’. Bhagavan, then a young ascetic living up the hill not much known to the public, used to help Perumal in his construction work. Bhagavan was supposed to be in silence those days. So, through gestures of His hands used to give Perumal directions as to the fixation of stones around the ‘Mulaippaal Tirtham’. Bhagavan’s silent suggestions used to amaze Perumal since the stones fitted exactly into places. This remarkable engineering acumen of Bhagavan made him respect and shower his affection on Him. Later on, after Bhagavan had come to the present Ashram, being very old, Perumal used to come occasionally and see Bhagavan. Bhagavan always received him with great love and personal affection.

"There was a sincere seeker living at Palakothu during Bhagavan’s days, named Jagadisan”, said Sri Kunju Swami. “We all admired him, for he was always in a condition of dhyana. When he had spread in the sun edible nuts for being dried and the monkeys plundered them under his very nose, he would remain unmoved. Later on when we asked him why he did not drive the monkeys away, he used to reply that he was aware of them, yet there was no urge in him to drive them away since he was in a meditative mood!"

“He was a staunch bhakta of Lord Krishna. He had the bhava that Krishna resided within his heart and hence he always used to walk slanting to the side, feeling that Sri Krishna would get hurt if he walked-erect. As usual, he would be in a meditative mood even while walking. Once, this was brought to the notice of Sri Bhagavan. He said: ‘Sri Krishna is not a form. How could poor Jagadisan breathe if Sri Krishna as a form sat in his chest? The bhava that the Lord resides in one’s heart is..."
Once a devotee, feeling sleepy at the time of meditation felt guilty over it as he found the sleep irresistible. When told of this, Bhagavan smiled and said with compassion:

“When you feel sleepy, go to sleep. Do not fight it. On waking up, if you again feel sleepy again go to sleep. You can’t go on and on sleeping for ever! When you feel wakeful catch hold of that state and meditate. Be natural — the thought that your feeling sleepy is a sin is the obstacle; get over it by going to sleep in the natural way. But hold on to meditation when you are fully awake!”

The eleventh day of the waxing or waxing lunar phases — held a very sacred day for fasting by all Hindus.

The twelfth day — when the fast is broken with sumptuous feasting.

Good; but it is too much to think of a physical body within the heart!’ No need to say, that Jagadisan gave up this assumed bhava of his.”

Bhagavan’s balanced outlook on life, both physical and spiritual, was ever homely and easy to adopt.

Sri Kunju Swami said: “Some times there would be no food to eat but the very next day there would come plenty of food — many varieties and very tasty ones too. Whatever happened Bhagavan maintained perfect equanimity. He encouraged devotees by saying: ‘Whenever we do not get food we should celebrate that day as Ekadasi2 and when there is plenty of food, that day as Dwadasi3!’”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GURU POORNIMA</strong> (Vyasa Puja)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRISHNA JAYANTHI (GOKULASHTAMI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY OF BHAGAVAN’S ADVENT TO ARUNACHALA</td>
<td>Monday 21. 7.1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINAYAKA CHATHURTHI</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVARATHRI FESTIVAL (Commences on)</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARASWATI PUJA</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIJAYADASAMI</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEPAVALI</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKANDASHASTHI</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTHIGAI FESTIVAL (Commences on)</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTHIGAI DEEPAM</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRI BHAGAVAN’S JAYANTI</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PONGAL</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINNA SWAMIGAL ARADHANA</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAHA SIVARATRI</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELUGU NEW YEAR’S DAY</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMIL NEW YEAR DAY</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE GREAT COMPASSION
By V. Dwaraknath Reddy

Bhagavan, I sit before you to offer worship.

I am all too familiar with the person that I am, a store-house of memories which formulate and project my demands, an identifiable individual fastened to a part of his environment with bonds of attachment and affection and averse to the other part through fear or anger. The eternity of time oppresses me in the loneliness of my mind till I can no longer contain my thoughts denied action. The infinity of space depresses me in the isolation of my body till I can no longer remain without the reassuring proximity of others like myself. Only in the flow and flux of movement, reaching out and relating and reacting, can I find the accustomed harmony of my habituated life.

But now there is an ache within me that makes a mockery of myself, and sadly asks: How long will you delude yourself? run to escape from your shadow? derive the highest numeral through addition? hope that the desire now desperately pursued will, if fulfilled, leave you complete and content? Have you not persisted with this folly long enough to see its futility? The insentient world has no content of happiness inherent within it; why then do you demand of the world what it cannot give? The mind knows nothing of stillness, being ever a flow of thoughts; why then do you ask of it a peace it does not possess?

Therefore, Bhagavan, I have bid time to wait awhile, and space to step aside, while I sit before you to offer worship. But I know not what to do with myself.

How subdued is Existence in your Presence........

FIRE consumes forests in a trice while awed eyes watch helplessly the leaping, crackling blaze, a fury that would heed no will but its own. But here is Fire in sweet submissiveness, perched upon a wick to light your Face and to reveal in your Eyes the message of mellow warmth.

AIR vents its power in typhoons and tornados, tearing across deserts and pastures, vales and dales, a gusty terror that would topple the oaks and flatten the dunes and swirl the seas. But here it is a gentle breeze to waft the curling incense unto you.

WATER whose colossal strength broods and heaves in the dark depths of the oceans visits its wrath upon a frightened world as tidal wave or torrential flood, unconcerned about the trail of devastation it leaves behind. But here it remains in the urn rippling in eager anticipation of washing your Feet...
EARTH, the mighty globe that is the substratum of all beings and objects, supporting growth and change and decay through a myriad mysterious process, is in attendance here in the form of flowers and fruits, delighted that all its timeless skills and energies have produced out of its mixed miscellany these tints and textures and tastes that may be placed in your hands.

Here the elemental furies are stilled in homage, their prowess reined in the delight of surrender, their natures tamed by the caress of your gaze. What even in the acme of its achievements is my mind compared to the sweep and sway of these primordial forces? And if they can hover in your presence in hushed restraint, shall not this puny mind of mine learn to repose in peace before you?

That this turbulent mind, bruised and battered in the battles of acquisition, or deceived by success whose fruits decay before they are relished, should turn to you for succour and solace was perhaps the hidden redemption in the earliest urges that led it astray. As a benevolent sovereign would permit his penitent subject to return to the forgiving portals of his native land, so too was your pardon never denied.

But that you, dear Lord, should be willing to give yourself to me is an abundance of compassion that almost hurts. The breeze that cradles the wisp of incense and the flame that tip-toes upon the lamp and the water that waits to flow down the sprout and the flowers that languish to be touched are all subordinate things offering their tributes to their Monarch. But do you too that are the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of all the universes, condense all your pomp and power and glory into that fathomless look of love in your eyes and wait upon a devotee?

Then let tears in mine be the offering of my mind.

Just Released Attractive, New Book!

SPIRITUAL STORIES as told by Ramana Maharshi

Everyone knows that Bhagavan Ramana was a master-storyteller! Sri Ramanasramam publications like Letters, Day by Day and Talks, abound with marvelous accounts of how Bhagavan, picturesquely, narrated, rather enacted stories!

Thanks to the collection and art-work by Mrs. Joan Greenblatt, this new, beautifully got-up edition, full of stories told by Sri Bhagavan, becomes a 'must' for every devotee — particularly, for children who will be simply delighted to possess this piece of treasure:

pp. 134 Price: Rs. 15/- (Postage extra)

Please write to:
SRI RAMANASRAMAM BOOK DEPOT,
SRI RAMANASRAMAM P.O.,
TIRUVANNAMALAI-606 603.
S. INDIA
Now

- Death
- Unknown
- Past
- Future
THIRTY QUESTIONS

By Douglas E. Harding

"God's in, we're out." — Eckhart

"It's too clear, so it's hard to see." — The Gateless Gate


It is waking up from all your dreams and imaginings and preconceptions, becoming enlightened as to the given facts, realising what you clearly are in your first-hand experience right now. It is being perfectly honest to yourself about yourself, at last. It is having the courage and effrontery—even the idiocy—to go by what you see, instead of by what you are told. It is questioning all mental habits and conventional assumptions, however common-sensible or sanctified. It is total openmindedness, transparency, simplicity, and taking nothing for granted. In one word, it is discovery.

What is to be discovered is your own nature. Who are you? Only you are in a position to find out, because everyone else is elsewhere, off-centre. Only you can investigate what it is to be you. This article, therefore, is intended to stimulate your enquiry and not to dictate its results. In fact, if your self-discovery is genuine, it will find unique expression, and no existing formula will quite fit it.

It may be helpful to expand this rather vague question—who or what are you?—rephrasing it in numerous ways in order to bring the enquiry down to earth and make real discovery less difficult. Accordingly, it is suggested that you ask yourself the following thirty questions, and try to answer them without reference to what you have read, or what people say, or what you have thought up to now. As far as possible, make a clean break with memory, and put these questions to yourself as if you had this moment arrived in the world, knowing nothing. Pick a time when you are not hurried or anxious, and then, if only for half an hour, allow yourself to be quite childlike, content to be made a fool of by the facts. Stop thinking, just look, and be prepared for anything. You have no idea whether you are God or man, angel or animal, everything or nothing. It all remains to be seen.

1. In the place you now occupy, sitting in your chair and wearing your spectacles, do you find a human being? Is what you observe roughly the same shape as the people you observe out there, complete with head, neck, back and so on?  

1 Reprinted from The Middle Way, with kind permission.
2. You are surrounded by solid objects, lumps of matter. At their centre, are you, too, a solid lump? Does what you find here feel dense, or light and airy? Is it like earth, or water, or wind, or more like empty space?

3. Have you any evidence, at this moment, as to how many eyes you own, and their colour and shape? How many ears and noses and heads can you now detect? If none, what’s in their place?

4. Where is the man who is called by your name? Is he out there, where people and animals and cameras and mirrors register him? Or at the centre, where nothing registers him? If he’s always out, who’s in? If you’re in, who are you?

5. Is what you observe over there in your mirror at all like what you observe where you are? Are there two men given or only one and where is he given? Is he in your bathroom, or the other bathroom behind the glass? Does your glass, then, show you what you are, or its opposite?

6. You are sitting in this chair, your friend in that. Look and see whether you are equals, members of the same species or genus or kingdom. Or, walking beside him, is it a case of two men walking, or one-and-a-half men, or one man, with some sort of presence floating alongside? Notice whether your relationship with another is ever symmetrical.

7. When you explore with your fingertips, do you find your face to be like his — coloured, solid, opaque, blocking the view?

8. You are now looking at this printing. Can you make out any distance between you and it? Observe the space between two stars. Can you find any similar space between them and yourself?

9. Can you find anything at all on your side of this page, anything added to this black-and-white pattern? Any seer or seeing?

10. How tall are you, how thick? Where do you find yourself stopping and the world beginning? Try pointing out your boundaries to yourself.

11. You see men in the world. Do you really see yourself in the world, or the world in you?

12. A man, as a small part of the universe, becomes less and less mysterious as science discovers more and more about him. Is this true of you? If the reverse is true of you, why?

13. Try destroying and re-creating the world at will. Then compare the operation with what happens to the world when the man over there closes and opens his eyes, or goes to sleep and wakes up again. Why not take your powers seriously?

14. You observe the birth and death of creatures around you. Do you observe your own birth and death? And anyhow, in the place you occupy, can you trace anybody who could be born, or grow older, or die?

15. Do you find yourself at the centre of the universe always, or sometimes, or never? Can you get away from the centre? How many centres can you find?

16. Have you found any real companion, anyone at all out there who is like yourself where you are? You note innumerable bodies, but how many minds? Can the universe do with more than one?

17. Men are evidently not free, but at the mercy of their environment and their bodies. Can you find anything outside yourself to bind you, or anything inside yourself to be bound? If you aren’t built for freedom suggest some improvements. Don’t you feel you have free will, anyhow?

18. At table, you watch alien substances being pushed into holes in people’s heads, and this is called eating. Is your eating like that? See what happens to the food on your fork.

19. How many kinds of seeing are there? Is it the absence of eyes and brain and head which enables you to see (since they would block the view), and their presence which enables others to see? How do you know they see the world? Of how many seers have...
you clear evidence? How is it possible to see a thing if one is a thing?

20. You observe men and animals and even inert objects reacting to sounds. Do you observe then hearing sounds? Can one who has ears hear?

21. You can see that men are often hurt and troubled through and through, because they have no invulnerable core. Are you like that? Do you find the world can upset what lies at its centre?

22. What place or function can be found in a man for anything supernatural, such as God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Holy Spirit, the Atman, the Buddha-nature? In yourself, can you find anything else?

23. Work is always being done around you, by those things, those men, those two hands and feet. Is the centre busy, too? See if you aren't bone lazy.

24. Most hands are attached to human bodies. Without moving, see what yours are now attached to.

25. However many views you take of a man over there, you will never see all of him. Do you find this true of yourself? Are you, perhaps, the only one who is what he looks like and altogether visible?

26. Man is rarely satisfied. See if there is anything you lack, or any part of the world which, if you were God, should be rearranged.

27. Lying awake in bed in the dark, can you for a few moments be at peace and without thoughts but intensely aware of awareness? When in this state, what are you?

28. Other lovers are face to face. Does your beloved’s face confront yours, or abolish it? Do you find room for two?

29. Can you see anyone or anything clearly without loving them in this way, and deliberately dying so that they may live in you?

30. If, after having answered these questions on the evidence before you, you still suspect you are only a man after all, then say what else is needed to establish your divinity. And then look and see whether that, too, isn’t plainly given.

Of course these thirty questions are leading ones. They aren’t precisely the questions you would ask, or phrased precisely your way, but they will do to illustrate the radical spirit of this enquiry. If you really want to find out who you are, then your own slightly different questions, your unique way of looking within, will infallibly occur to you, and the search will be no mere duty or practice, but irresistibly fascinating and urgent, and therefore successful. Your life will not have been wasted.

Is there, perhaps, a Liberation which is not a matter of self-discovery, one which is concerned, not with the facts as they are now given but with somehow improving upon them? First see who you are now. Then you will surely find that only the truth sets you free, and it is all of it clearly presented at this moment, if only you stop thinking about it, and look, and take seriously what you see.

One who really looked for himself wrote: “Perceiving then, O man, all this in thyself, that thou art immaterial, holy, light akin to him that is unborn, that thou art intellectual, heavenly, translucent, pure, above the flesh, above the world, above rulers, above principalities, over whom thou art in truth, then comprehend thyself in condition and receive full knowledge and understand wherein thou excellest: and beholding thine own face in thine essence, break asunder all bonds.... desire earnestly to see him that is revealed unto thee, him who dost not come into being, whom perchance thou alone shalt recognise with confidence.”

Like all other scriptures [incidentally, this is a third-century Christian one, innocent of Zen] its proper use is to encourage us to look at the place we occupy, and not to tell us what to see there. Otherwise it will just block the view.

1 Acts of Andrew
I saw the Maharshi. It did not take long for me to be sure that I was in front of one who had in that very body I could see before me solved life's problem for himself. The calm like that of the midnight sky, was something too real to question for a moment..... I told my friend that night that I KNEW he was what the books call a JIVANMUKTA. Please don't ask me how I know for I can't answer that. It was just as one knows that water is wet and the sky is blue....

I was sitting one day in the Hall, more or less sleepily browsing in the heat over a notebook of extracts on Yoga. Now Bhagavan hardly ever spoke to me first (indeed there has been very little actual talking between us during the years...), but that day he spoke to me, in English: "What is that book?" I told him. He said quietly, "Read Milarepa." I got up at once and asked the friend in charge of the little library if he had a "Milarepa". He gave me Dr. Evans-Wentz's life of the Tibetan Saint. I read it, there in the Hall. I read it again. It thrilled and stirred deep places in my heart. Somehow, I feel Bhagavan had seen that it would be so, and therefore gave me the only order of the sort he has ever given me....

I have taken all the descriptions of the JIVANMUKTA I could find in any scripture. — Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Muslim, Jain etc. I have watched Bhagavan under all kinds of circumstances, and checked up what I have seen with those descriptions. I have not the smallest doubt that the impression of my first day there, is the truth. He alone of all the men I have seen seems to dwell always in SAHAJASAMADHI. Of course I am not qualified to judge, for none but the saint can know the saints. Yet I can only give my word that so it has seemed to me.

I have seen him in a humorous mood; I have seen him play the host with delicate grace that seems almost awkward at times. I have seen him quietly, motionlessly, challenging and defeating injustice or un-kindness. I have seen him cutting vegetables for the Ashramites long before the dawn. I have seen again and again how he has solved the doubts, the agonies, the loss of faith; of people of many types. — Often with a word, often with a moment of healing silence and a soft distance in his unmoving gaze. I have looked at his perfect handwriting in many scripts, all a model of beauty and care. I have heard him correcting the singers of hymns in his own glory, with an absolute impersonality that was obvious. I have watched his reactions to the noisy devotee, the lazy worker, the mischievous monkey, the crazed adorer, the over-bold flatterer, the one who would
I have seen how totally impervious he is to all considerations of power, place, prestige, and how his grace shines equally on prince and peasant. I know of no other man whose mere presence has thus enabled me to make the personality drop down into the abyss of nothingness where it belongs. I have found no other human being who so emanates his Grace that it can catch away the ordinary man from his stillness and plunge him deep in the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being.

I cannot speak much of the method of ATMA VICHARA that he recommends... frankly I failed to make it my way even after several attempts. But I found no need for the conscious search while in his actual presence. His grace... has been enough to give brief glimpses even to me of that Infinity wherein he always seems to live.

He will brush away all this nonsense of my talk with a wave of the hand and a smile, while saying as he once did, "It is the same in this and another place. That bliss you feel is in the Self, and you superimpose it upon the place or environment in which you are bodily set. It has nothing to do with that". But, Bhagavan... we shall not let you interrupt our foolish words just now. It is our chance to publicly proclaim our debt to the Silent Teacher of Tiruvannamalai.

— from Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1946.

Then and Now

"The Brahmin who devoted himself to poverty and crushed down every desire in the wholehearted pursuit of knowledge and religious self-discipline; the Khatriya who, hurling his life joyously into the shock of chivalrous battle, held life, wife, children, possessions, ease, happiness as mere dust in the balance as compared with honour and the Khatriya dharma, the preservation of self-respect, the protection of the weak, the noble fulfilment of princely duty; the Vaishya, who toiling all his life to amass riches, poured them out as soon as amassed in self-forgetting philanthropy, holding himself the mere steward not the possessor of his wealth; the Shudra who gave himself up loyally to humble service, faithfully devoting his life to his dharma, however low in preference to self-advancement and ambition; these were the social ideals of the age.

"And what have we today? An ideal of clever mediocrity?

"A little art, a little poetry, a little religion, a little scholarship, a little philosophy, all these are excellent ingredients in life and give an air of decorous refinement to his (Indian's) surroundings. They must not be carried too far or interfere with the great object of life which is to earn money, clothe and feed one's family, educate one's sons to the high pitch of the B.A. degree or the respectable eminence of the M.A., marry one's daughters decently, rank high in service or the professions, stand well in the eye of general opinion and live and die decorously, creditably and respectably".

— Sri Aurobindo writing eighty years ago in "THE BOURGEOIS AND THE SAMURAI".
LEAVES FROM DEVOTEES DIARIES

GRAHAPRAVESAM

Reminiscences of a few old devotees of Sri Bhagavan have already come in book-form. Perhaps, many may not have read them. Therefore, we propose quoting passages culled from these books, in each issue.

THE builders had put the finishing touches to my small mud hut in Palakottu garden on April 4, 1936, and although its walls and lime plaster were still wet, I decided to enter it the very next day.

"Palakottu is a large garden of about ten acres in area granted by the Government over eighty years ago to a Virashaiva Community for the purpose of growing flowers in it for the big Arunachaleswara temple in the township of Tiruvannamalai. It lies on the western boundaries of Ramanashram, and has a clean and well-preserved deep tank seasonally fed by the rain water, which falls down the slopes of the sacred Arunachala hill, apart from two or three natural springs in its bottom. Around the huge, century-old trees of this garden, devotees of Sri Ramana Bhagavan since many years had built their small kutirs, where at different times lived Paul Brunton, Yogi Ramiah, Sri B.V. Narasimhaswami, the author of 'Self-Realisation', Sri Muruganar Swami, the Tamil poet who filled a bulky tome of songs in praise of Sri Bhagavan, and many others, and where some sadhakas still live. In Palakottu, then the only inhabited place within a mile radius from the Ashram, I chose for my hut a lonely site to the north-west of the tank, edging the shady foot-path over which Sri Bhagavan used to take his midday walk, so that during its construction he could see the daily progress of the work and sometimes exchange a few words with the masons, till the 4th of April, when I informed him of my intention to start living immediately in it.

"Sri Bhagavan had known of my chronic asthma, and probably thought it foolhardy on my part to live in a place, which would take two to three months to dry up. I noticed his hesitation in uttering his usual "yes", but being hardpressed for accommodation, and very reluctant to leave him even for a day, I completed my arrangements for the warming-ceremony, known here as grahapra- vesham, to take place the next day.

"On the fifth of April the invited devotees gathered in my hut and about noon the Master himself strolled in, on his way back
from his usual walk, and, refusing the special chair I had made ready for him, he squatted like the others on the mat-covered floor. After the ceremony Bhagavan left. I followed him from a distance, waited till the devotees cleared away and approached him. "Bhagavan", I started, "you have given a home for my body. I now need your Grace to grant the eternal home for my soul, for which I broke all my human ties and came". He stopped in the shade of a tree, gazed silently on the calm water of the tank for a few seconds and replied: 'Your firm conviction brought you here; where is the room for doubt?' Where is the room for doubt indeed! I reflected.

"Three years rolled by, and the Master continued to pass daily by my hut. In the beginning he used to take shelter from the midday sun on my verandah for two or three minutes, during which I made myself scarce, in order not to inconvenience him. Till one day I foolishly placed a chair for his use on the sly, which made him once for all boycott my verandah. Despite his full knowledge of our adoration of him, he was extremely sensitive to the slightest trouble which might ensue from him to us, or, for the matter of that to anyone; thus placing a special chair for him, or expecting him every day at a fixed hour, he interpreted as interfering with my rest — hence the boycott."

— By S.S. Cohen in Guru Ramana pp 19 to 21

"In the early days of my stay I was living in a big room adjoining the Ashram store-room. Here Bhagavan often used to visit me, usually when he went out at about ten o'clock. On coming into my room unexpectedly he would tell me not to disturb myself but to go on with whatever I was occupied with at the time. It was correct for people to stand up when he came into a room. I was ignorant of this and so would remain seated. Carrying on with whatever I was doing at the time, I realize now that this was looked upon as terrible disrespect by the Indian devotees, but it had its reward. If one put oneself out for Bhagavan or appeared in any way disturbed he just would not come in future, he would disturb nobody, so considerate was he. But if one carried on with what one was doing then he would himself take a seat and talk quite naturally without the formality which usually surrounded him in the Hall. I had no idea how lucky I was and how privileged, but certainly appreciated the visits. He might pick up my pocket book and take everything out of it; a photograph, a membership card and any odds and ends it might contain, remark on each thing and ask some question about it. It might have been embarrassing but luckily there was nothing questionable in the wallet. Not that Bhagavan would have minded, for there could be nothing questionable or otherwise for him."
"After three months I moved into a room that had been built for me at the far end of the Ashram and here Bhagavan came for the opening ceremony. He sat for a short time while the Vedas were chanted by some Patasala boys from town. Our own Patasala was not opened until 1937."

"Once he unexpectedly came to visit me when I was lying sick in my room. He had been to Devaraja's place so as to be the first to enter a new room he had just built and was told that I was unwell and would be delighted if he paid me a surprise visit. He immediately complied."

— By Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick) in A Sadhu's Reminiscences, Pp 23, 24, 37, 87

"I decided about 1939 that I would give up practice completely in 1941, wind up my establishment at Chittoor and go and live with Bhagavan at the Asramam for the rest of my life. just going whenever there was necessity or whenever I felt like it to stay for a while with my children or other relations. Thereupon I asked and received permission to build a one-room cottage inside the Asramam premises. Such permission was rarely given, in fact it was given only to two others, namely, Major Chadwick and Yogi Ramiah. Other people who were wealthy and had served the Asramam and would have given any amount for this favour were refused permission. For some reason or other no difficulty was made in my case. I simply gave the Asramam about Rs. 350/- for the cost of the room including the electric fittings and that was all I had to do. The room was ready for me by June 1940, if I remember right.

"Many things happened by apparent accident which clearly showed me that when Bhagavan found I earnestly desired to come and live with him permanently, he generously poured out his grace and saw to it that my object was attained. Not only was I provided with the room, but my children were comfortably settled so that I was free to go and stay with Bhagavan. When the Asramam let me have a room, they implied by it that they would let me take my food and bath there as if the Asramam was my house, though it was also implied. I, not being indigent, would see to it that the Asramam was not a loser by the arrangement. What a great boon Bhagavan was conferring upon me will be obvious only if it is remembered that visitors were normally allowed to remain only a few days or weeks or in very exceptional cases a few months and not on a permanent basis. The only person whom the Asramam had taken under similar conditions was Major Chadwick and after a few months he arranged for his own food."
"Before I entered my room and occupied it, I naturally wished Bhagavan to set foot in it and thus make it auspicious for me to live in. When I made my request to Bhagavan, he was not unwilling but he was afraid I would make a fuss about it and a crowd would gather. When I assured him there would be nobody except myself and he would have nothing to do but walk in, see the room and bless me and come out, he agreed. While returning from his evening walk, about 5.30 p.m., he and his attendant came to my room Bhagavan walked into the bare room and asked me, "No chairs, or cots or anything?" I replied that they were all in the next room and would come only after Bhagavans' s feet had consecrated the room."

—By A. Devaraja Mudaliar in My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Pp 13, 14, 15

A girl began inner training under a Zen abbess for whom she had conserved a great reverence. After a period of probation, she was told by a senior disciple that she would now-be given instructions on how to meditate.

"I have never done meditation at all", she said anxiously. "These practices will be ones that suit me, won't they?"

"Yes, they will suit perfectly", she was assured.

She was given the instructions, and told at the same time that it would be better not to discuss her practices with anyone else. She fully intended to follow the advice, but (as often happens) something slipped out, and she was taken aback to learn that every pupil was given these same practices at the beginning.

She asked to see the senior, to whom she complained: "I had expected to receive personal instruction suited to my own temperament. I did ask for that, and you told me that I would get it."

"You have done. These practices will suit your temperament."

"But I've been told that they're just standard practices, which everybody gets. We're all different; there can't be a standarised instruction suitable to everyone, because we're all different."

"Everyone says that at the beginning", remarked the senior. "But here we do not find it so. We find that we're very much the same."

"But the fact that everyone says we are different shows that we must be different", argued the new pupil, puzzled.

The answer came quietly: "The fact that everyone claims to be different shows that we're all the same."

\( \text{SRSHTI-DRSHTI VAADA}^1 \)

'D picked up a lot of information from the printed medium about the brain which was slowly yielding its mysteries to man. I had learnt that the hind-Brain (the cerebellum and the extension in the spine), the mid-Brain (the Hypothalamus and its associate glands that maintain the miracle of homoeostasis), and the fore-Brain (the left and right hemispheres of the cerebral cortex) represented evolutionary rungs — through reptiles up to man — where the lower rungs of the brain took on additional functions that were delegated when the higher rungs appeared in evolution. The shift down from the trees to the ground occurred ushering a lot of changes for the human race. This not only caused less reliance on smell and more on vision but also freed the front limbs for pointing, grasping and tool-making. I understood that the seeds of language communication were sown in that era. An even more interesting outcome was as follows:

With the freeing of the front limbs the hind legs had to bear the entire weight of the body. To support this additional load on the legs, the human pelvis grew thicker. The thickened pelvis made the birth canal much smaller which might have lead to problems in getting a fairly grown head through it during birth. It seems nature solved this by having human babies born very early in their development, in the animal kingdom. Human children have the longest period of helplessness. The human baby's brain is only 25% of its adult weight as against nearly 50% in the case of a chimp's brain. So the major portion of our brain develops outside the womb, exposed to and influenced by many different environments, situations and people. Our brain, relative to body size, is the largest among all land mammals. Even there, our cerebral cortex (Fore-Brain), is much larger and more intricate than in any other animal. It is the most distinctive part of being human.

I learnt that the left half of the body was under control of the right-hemisphere and the right half under control of the left-hemisphere.

\( ^1 \) View point which perceives Self as a product of evolution (See "Day by Day with Bhagavan", entry under 13-3-46 for Bhagavan on the three Vaadas.

---

From Evolution and Other Dreams, To Ramana

By Namayya
phere of the brain. I had also learnt of the
discovery that epileptic patients were cured
of their seizures when the bundle of nerves
(Corpus Callosum) connecting the two hemi-
pheres of the Fore-Brain was sundered. Such
patients however exhibited curious symptoms,
e.g., they could not verbally communicate to
others regarding an object which they were
allowed to touch and identify through their
left hand. It was obvious they did possess
recognition of that object for they were able
to point out this object from an assortment
of things. They also retained their normal
abilities to speak and converse otherwise
with others. This and other clinical cases of
damage to either hemisphere led to the dis-
covery that each hemisphere handled different
modes of the personality. The right is found
to handle intuitive approaches, spatial integra-
tion and body awareness, musical and
emotional abilities. On the other hand the
left-hemisphere is found to handle informa-
tion logically in a sequential manner, analyse
an integral into elements and handle
language (symbolic) communication.
Though they appear specialized (and in fact
coordinate decisions through the nerve
bundle connecting the two), when one
suffers damage the other does exhibit some
capacity to take on and “learn” the impaired
function.

Proceeding on such evidence the intellec-
tual easily stumbles into the position that the
individual (the knower, I) is merely an effect
of complex brain activity and that conscious-
ness (awareness) ceases with cessation of
brain activity. There is a fallacy here since
this last mentioned knowledge about the
brain’s activity cannot itself be just brain
activity. But more of that later. It suffices to
say that I was never actually conscious of my
brain before: it was really the Peepul tree
that drew my attention to it all as I lay down
one hot day under its vast shade with a
pillow—sized book under my head which I
had just then borrowed. the book that is, for
the sole purpose of the soul’s rest.

Letters from
Sri Ramanasramam

Suri Nagamma has captured
this beautiful book the
majesty, glory and immense
Wisdom of Sri Ramana; also
she has given an intimate por-
trait of His day-to-day life. His
gracious glance, a solitary word
of spiritual grandeur from Him,
the radiant presence of Bhaga-
van as seated on the couch in
the Old Hall — Suri Nagamma
has succeeded in recording
them all, with gentleness and
insight! A rare and exquisite
book written from the depths
of a devotee’s heart.

will be available in India from:
Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot
Sri Ramanasramam P.O.
Tiruvannamalai- 606 603.
S. India.
and in North America from:
Ramana Publications Inc.
P.O. Box 77
Victor, New York 14564 USA
"Funny," the giant tree began. Scientists have managed to probe into the molecules in the cells of the brain and are able to trace neuro-transmitters (chemicals of the brain), which seem to trigger changes in mood and world perception. Did you know?" it continued. "They are discovering that the brain cells are organized as complex systems. These systems though interlinked, maintain an individuality and perform functions through the activities of the cells comprising them. The brain is often likened to a computer and the nerve cells that make it up are the elements in a computer. Indeed, each and every nerve cell in the brain functions more like an entire computer all by itself. It is always processing the information it receives from thousands of other nerve cells and from chemical messengers in the bloodstream and is always in communication with many other nerve cells.

"Just a minute," I said. "My head is already reeling with all this information on how my head handles information! Can you take me along slowly on this merry-go-round?" "Right ho!" the Peepul said affably and went on. "The brain cell you see. (I honestly didn't) is the basic building block of the brain. Each nerve cell (neuron) rather looks like a many legged spider attached to a long thread. The legs (dendrites), of which there may be several hundreds, are all receivers of information from other cells. The thread (axon) which can be as long as 3 feet is the sole path by which the cell sends out messages. The axon actually separates into thousands of small fibres each of which forms a functional contact with a leg of another cell. Through this mechanism called Synaptic connection, a given neuron in the brain may have connection with thousands of other neurons, and in turn with several more! One major difference between neurons and other cells is that the nerve cells do not reproduce after the child is born. In fact in some parts of the brain there are more cells present at birth than later, as some die.
While this seems to put a limitation on the brain’s capabilities, the truth is that it is not the number of neurons but the connections (synapses) between neurons that form the circuits and networks in the brain. It is estimated that there are 100 billion neurons in the human brain. With each neuron connecting 1000 other neurons, there are 100 million million connections! The major circuitry is established by birth, but the details and fine tuning of the circuits continue to develop throughout life. Since particular behaviours are the result of the development of particular sets of connections among the nerve cells, indeed, experience itself can cause new synapses to grow. Experiences do shape (or reshape) the brain.

In the earthworm, the ant, the octopus and the human, you find that although nature has experimented endlessly with different kinds of nervous systems, the basic mechanisms of action of the nerve cell are the same. What is widely different is the patterns of interconnections among the neurons.

“When does a neuron send out a message and how?” asked the Peepul rhetorically and went on. “The messages are transmitted through the use of messengers (called neurotransmitters and hormones) which are chemical molecules manufactured by the body. To start with, an electrical impulse develops in the axon at the point where it exits from the cell body and travels along the axon up to the place where the axon branches into thousands of fibres. Recall that each fibre end is a synaptic connection to the leg (dendrite) of another cell. The impulse, when it reaches these synapses, triggers a chemical process whereby neurotransmitter molecules are released in millions within each fibre end. These travel across the synaptic junction and attach themselves to the receptor molecules on the dendrite leg of the receiving neuron. The action of a neurotransmitter on a receptor molecule is very much like the way a key fits and releases a lock by virtue of its contour. The activated receptor molecules on that leg cause changes in the receiving cell.
body. Depending on the aggregate effect of the changes felt through all its dendrite legs, that neuron “decides” to generate the nerve impulse at its axon and send it out to other cells, and the whole process repeats! It is interesting to note that synaptic action will occur only if a specific neurotransmitter (key), acts on a specific receptor molecule (lock). You see, even at such subtle levels, matter exhibits “form” and “uses” it. This is precisely the reason why man-made chemicals widely differing in composition and molecular size from the original can produce similar effect in the cells so long as even a portion of their contour in space resembles the contour of the “original” neurotransmitter chemical manufactured by the body!!

This was all getting to be very exciting I thought as the Peepul went on,” Did you know, the brain uses Enkephalin (one of the many opioids manufactured by the brain) to reduce pain or stress, by activating the receptors in the cells which are part of a system concerned with responding to stress or pain situations? The chemical morphine produces the same effect. Another man-made chemical Naloxone actually heightens the pain since it “parks” itself, by virtue of similarity in contour, onto those receptors which would ordinarily have been activated by the Enkephalin of the brain. The system of brain cells concerned with balance in perception uses the neurotransmitter called serotonin. Now, LSD the notorious psychedelic drug of the 70s, has such a similarity in contour that it is mistaken for serotonin by the receptor molecules. Administration of even a few millihundred grams of this LSD therefore upsets the balance in the brain’s serotonin system, causing the well known effects in regard to perception of world, body and hence Reality. Imbalances of quantity in either the brain’s transmitter or receiver chemicals specific to each system, show up as anything from a Parkinson’s disease affecting limb-movement, to a Schizophrenic disease of bizarre perception of world and human relationships”.

I grabbed at a passing thought (which I naively ‘thought’ was nothing but the quaint chemical camaraderie of my bouncing brain cells) and said, “How very exciting! What an entirely unexplored field this opens up for mankind to enter into....”

“....and once more plunder and lay waste a masterpiece!” completed the Peepul tree.

“My dear chap, close on the heels of every well-meaning scientist there are heads of empires waiting to relieve pain for their suffering humanity. But often people don’t know what they truly need and so they could even believe that relief from pain lies in manipulating everything else but themselves! It is barbarous to control another before learning to control oneself. One does not understand death by watching the death of any number of others. Awareness is all. Pain is the pettiness of not knowing one’s nature. Peace it is, to remain as the Self.”

I felt things were getting out of hand, or was it the head, and blurted out, “I was just beginning to think that Awareness or Consciousness had finally been “nailed” down to its proper place as mere brain activity. What is all this now about a Self?”

The Peepul gave me a tolerant look and said, “You are not alone. There are many who declare hastily that consciousness is a secondary effect easily manipulated. When they suggest that its quality can be “improved” through these chemical tools, we have to raise our eyebrows. The brain is not conscious; it is an instrument or indicator of consciousness. When consciousness is changed of course there will be correlated changes in brain bio-chemistry and in behaviour. But by changing brain-chemistry we can never change consciousness itself. All that happens is a suppression of particular...

2 View point which perceives evolution like a dream-appearance in Self.
symptoms which is like trying to solve an electrical fault by removing the red light that merely signals the presence of the problem!"

"The passage of every epoch banishes from certain things the wonder that they initially evoke in man. Fire, that being, which was lovingly and laboriously evoked by churning fire-sticks is today a mere chemical process at the tip of a match-finger!

"The physical Sun in whom man once saw the light of his own Being, is no more the Primordial One, but a recent and medium sized star that is burning out its fuel like billions of others! However the element of awe and wonder still remains unchanged as it merely stands transferred (in this epoch), to the Black Hole and the Brain."

"The scientist plants electrical probes on the heads of his subjects, objects really, and by mild electrical stimulation of specific areas of their brains, makes them perceive a romping rat in a room where there was none. He studies likewise the dreamless state of sleep of another, and concludes during his own wakeful sojourns that consciousness exhibits specific electrical wave-activity in specific states. There are some with a theoretical reading of Vedantic or other such literature, who have had a brainwave themselves and have started searching in their laboratories for the "fourth" state of consciousness (turiya)."

"To possess true knowledge is to be free from further delusion or error, every moment, day or night. What a pity that an outward searching scientist finds his acquired knowledge, however demonstrable it may be, to get swallowed up along with himself, into a something that he shrugs off as deep sleep only after waking up. As regards the dream state the less said the better, for armed with laboratory facts the scientist may stop dreaming the way others do, but because of the same knowledge starts dreaming in modified terms. His "facts" about the dream state of consciousness are inferred from experiments done on others..."
The knowledge that he thus gains about consciousness can never fully apply to his consciousness, the consciousness in which all experiments, inferences, assertions and negations take place. Therefore such knowledge is limited and cannot save him from even the daily error of perceiving a wakeful reality in his own dreaming.

"The outstanding feature of dreams is the wakeful reality perceived during their passage. Even if one were to dream of a pot hanging in mid-air, or of an Advaitin that held his tongue, one may declare it as strange and even remark that one is perhaps dreaming. But that does not enable one to transit from that dream to what may be called more wakeful surroundings. In short a dream is merely what one wakes up from. Till that happens it is the wakeful reality. Though the dreamer projects a space, contains an environment in it and locates "himself" within that, and even seeks and obtains information from "others", he has not the slightest chance of discovering that he is dreaming, through any analysis of the phenomena occurring during the passage of his dream! The only way "out" is to grasp the phenomenon that sustains the sense of the wakeful and the waking-up-form, viz., the "I" which alone has the maximum persistence amidst the states."
powering loss of all such perception in sleep. Like the master archer who would choose his quarry before picking up the bow, and taking aim, and shooting, the Pakshi decides upon the *substratum* of these projections to be worthy of aim and knowing which, its contents are understood without error. From this point of turning within, to the effortless, unbroken experience of no-body, while yet seemingly “in” body, is a lesson in humility, all-embracing love and anonymity; a removal of earlier accretion.”

I was feeling very close to the Peepul now and prayed that it would take me into its fold. There was a lull in the breeze... a silence followed... before long the tree spoke: “In the chain from sense-objects to the Self, objective knowledge ceases after moving through the Road, the Horses, the Reins and upon reaching the Charioteer. While these four exhibit some physical connections thus enabling the *Buddhi* (charioteer) to ‘determine’ them, the Master remains unconnected and so indeterminable by the outward scanning Charioteer, and yet intimately connected as the primal reason and witness of all that activity”.

“The fluttering leaf of the Peepul when manipulated seems to affect the twig (of mood-mind) connected to it. But then what of the little branch and the main branch and of course the mighty trunk of the Giant Tree which are not only less and less affected by the ‘distant’ leaflet, but even less available for objectification? And finally what about the ever-hidden ever-present Root that, thought sustaining the ‘rest’, remains ever as the sole Unruffled Reality like Gold ‘in’ the Ornament?”.

I was reminded of a movie, a comedy of errors, in which the swashbuckling hero is informed by his trusted friend of a mysterious, white Screen which was believed to support them all, and in fact was present ‘wherever’ they went. The hero immediately drew out his sword, lashed it hither and thither to the danger of all those around and pompously declared the Screen to be a myth as it did not anywhere contact his sabre!

The Gentle Peepul fluttered its leaves in a way that reminded me of an Awesome Ocean of deafening Silence frolicking amidst waves of lilting laughter. A leaf must have fallen from right above, for I then opened my eyes, got up and picking up “From the Bigbang to the human brain — , the story of the appearance and evolution of consciousness”, which had so far served well as a pillow, marched out of the gentle shade, with the Peepul finally in my Heart.

“D. Is it not to obtain the Guru’s Grace that presents are offered to Him? So the visitors offer presents to Bhagavan.

M. Why do they bring presents? Do I want them? Even if I refuse, they thrust the presents on me! What for? Is it not like giving a bait to catch the fish? Is the angler anxious to feed them? No, he is anxious to feed on the fish!”

— From Maharshi’s Gospel, p. 40
How I Came to Sri Bhagavan

By John A. Champneys

I MUST have been a rather peculiar child; at secondary school I found that one of my toys gave off a brilliant green dye when immersed in water and I decided that this was just the thing to summon up the spirit of the Planet Mars. In the washroom one day I began daubing the walls with this verdant compound and to assist with my devotions I shredded up papers and set fire to them. When clouds of black smoke were seen issuing from the school lavatories the fire brigade was called, and the sight of this young wheelchair-bound eccentric revelling in pagan rites and inadvertently committing arson can have been non-too-pleasing for the headmaster.

One morning over breakfast in my late teens I remember my mother browsing through a health magazine; a large display advertisement caught my attention which extolled the virtues of Yoga. I asked her the meaning of the word and she explained that it was a system of body postures — a sort of Indian physical jerks really — which was supposed to be conducive to bodily health and longevity; she went on to add that because of my severe physical disability, my interest in the subject was quite inappropriate. She was right, and the advertisement did place great emphasis on physical well-being.

However, what I was feeling was hardly an 'interest' because for some reason the very word Yoga had caused a fire to glow in my breast. Without bothering to finish my meal I donned my crutches and hobbled outside to my specially adapted car, whereupon I drove — much too fast for my own or anybody else's liking — to the local lending library where I ordered five books on Yoga.

During the next week or so I would sit at the meal table twiddling my thumbs and waiting for the books to arrive. This twitchiness irritated my mother, who continued to
supply evidence to the effect that the discipline only involved adopting idiosyncratic habits like standing on your head whilst munching a bowl of grated carrot — a practice which she rightly claimed could be performed with much greater efficiency by a rabbit — and I continued vehemently with the stance that there must be more to it than that, and so I dreamed of mystic spires and fluid states of ecstasy which freed the pain and discomfort caused by my physical disability.

One evening, in an attempt to end the quarrelling, my father suggested with eminent common-sense that we take out the dictionary to find out what the word actually meant. This advice I eagerly and swiftly followed to find the entry [sic]: "yog'a, n. Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to effect the re-union of the devotee's soul with the universal spirit."

Any egoistic feeling of personal triumph which I may have had was quickly dwarfed by the fact that this proved to me that life did have a purpose. When the books arrived I immediately devoured them, but my victory on being 'right' over a definition was a Pyrrhic one, for although they all agreed that the End of Yoga was the bliss of samadhi, they were also unanimous in stipulating that this end was not attainable without the carrot-munching and trying one's body in knots — an impossibility for someone so severely disabled.

In a moment of despair I told the chief librarian how my passion for yoga was being frustrated by the emphasis on physical health and I asked her if she could find me something to read which adumbrated the mental and spiritual path: in short, a method of realisation which did not discriminate against the handicapped. She promised that she would see what she could do, and in a remarkably short time a message was transmitted to my home that a book had arrived for me.

I beetled down to the library in my Austin Mini and the librarian presented me with a copy of Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge by Arthur Osborne. As is my wont, I quickly sought the flyleaf and read: "The [practice of the] Yoga of Wisdom and Understanding... does not... entail tortuous exercises or the trying of the body in knots," and it was as though a trapped butterfly inside me had just been released!

As I read the book I had the feeling that an exhilarating love-affair was being played out on the fore-court of my soul: my attention was riveted on Arunachala and strangely the very pages of the book breathed the aroma, colour and atmosphere of Tiruvannamalai; I read of the young man who had left the village of Tiruchuli to embark on his other-worldly mission and as I gazed at the photograph of this incredibly beautiful boy who looked straight through me and into me, teasing me and playing with me, I felt that my heart would snap; and when I contemplated the picture of the Maharishi as an old and older man, I knew that his compassion understood my bad habits and weaknesses and eclipsed them with a single glance. Then that face permeated my entire existence and Bhagavan was causing my heart to melt.

On reading the chapter ‘Mahasamadhi’ I had to prevent tears from streaming down my face in case my parents noticed, but I could not prevent my eyes from becoming moist and the pricking behind the lids from my attempted repression was like the stinging of a myriad of pins or stars.

The total effect of the book was that of a stunned disorientation for the little cosmos of my home life did not now seem so important — in fact it hardly seemed important at all. What did matter was that this credible man — Ramana Maharshi — had achieved the incredible state of nirvana or Self-realisation and had lived amongst us until very recently.
About that time I had a vivid dream. In it I was sitting crosslegged in front of Bhagavan in a sandy desert. I noticed afterwards that my ego had assumed a body which was physically perfect, whereas in nearly all dreams my sukshma sarira appears to be as handicapped as the waking body. As usual Bhagavan was silent but emanating such a radiance that the very atmosphere took on a golden aura. A third man was seated to my right crosslegged and after a while he spoke and put a question to Bhagavan who ventured no reply. After a lapse of some minutes the man put the question again, this time with some urgency in his voice. In due course a reply issued from Bhagavan’s lips, but he spoke very quietly and I could not catch what he was saying. The man started to complain and in a short while his manner had turned abusive; the next minute he had turned away from Bhagavan and walked out in such a bad temper that his feet kicked up clouds of dirt and sand. Some of the dust went over me, but most of it went over Bhagavan who turned his head in my direction and said, quietly but most emphatically: “I would rather have your love than your anger.”

My immediate reaction was one of astonishment. I tried to say, “I have never been angry towards you; it was the other man who abused you — not me!” but the words would not come out of my throat and I knew that this choked feeling meant that the dream was dissolving and coming to an end. I also knew that the collapsing of this world of fabricated existence meant that the answer to my silent plea was something which I would have to work out for myself.

This dream caused me to write to Ramanasramam at Tiruvannamalai; my zeal was riding high and my determination to go to India increased when I heard from Sri Ganesan by letter that I was most welcome to stay in the community. However, I had omitted to inform the ashram of my physical disability, and my family pointed out that in all fairness I really should tell them about it, so I wrote...
to Ganesh again, putting him completely in
the picture; but I must admit that my mind
was filled with foreboding at the reply I
might get. In due course a letter winged its
way back from India and it contained the
answer I had been dreading: it was an ex-
trremely compassionate letter, but discourag-
ing about my intended trip. It pointed out
that Sri Bhagavan’s Grace transcended time
and space, his love knew no bounds and that
I merely had to meditate and think on him to
have direct experience of his sannidhi, his
presence. And of course the ashram author-
ities were absolutely right: Sri Bhagavan is
generousness Itself to people who cannot
make the physical journey to Tiruvannamalai.
In fact I would make so bold to add that on
occasions he is even more generous to those
who are unable to go there, but as an imma-
ture boy of 20 in those far-off days of 1970 I
could not see it that way because Bhagavan’s
appearance in a dream gave me the strength
to forge ahead and make the journey un-
accompanied, although I now see that this
could have been a very foolish thing to do.
I informed the ashram that I was arriving
come what may, and Mrs Lucia Osborne
kindly agreed to look after me at her house
near the ashram, an extremely generous act
on her part, considering also that Arthur had
just died.

The trip to Tiruvannamalai came about
and was very beautiful and interesting, but I
made a fundamental mistake: because the
young Venkataraman had made his way to
Arunachala at the age of sixteen after attain-
ing Self-realisation in one fell swoop, I
naturally assumed that the same thing would
happen to me. I had been deeply moved by
Arthur’s book and Bhagavan had appeared to
me in a dream. Now only one thing remained:
I would go to Tiruvannamalai and someone
would help get me and the wheelchair into
the Old Hall. Then I would meditate and as I
gazed on Ramana’s countenance he would
duly initiate me and then I would be given
total Self-Realisation and be immersed in the
bliss of nirvana. End of Story.

However, although I did go to Arunachala
and they did get me into the Old Hall (in
spite of the rather awkward step there),
Bhagavan neither initiated me nor handed
me realisation on a plate. I felt like the
patient who, when suffering from a rare
disease, travels half way round the world to
see a specialist — only when he finally enters
The Waiting Room the doctor does not seem
in the slightest bit interested in the case.

I loved Tiruvannamalai, but waves of
depression would overwhelm me because I
had no sakshatkaram from Bhagavan; in fact
the greatest spiritual experiences had been
back in England.

I later discovered that actually Bhagavan is
that specialist doctor and that bad times do
not mean that he has withdrawn his solici-
tude. When a patient goes to a doctor for
treatment he may put that patient through a
regime which causes much pain and suffer-
ing; but when he inflicts that pain and
anguish he is doing it for the patient’s own
good, because he knows that in the long run
this is the best form of treatment and that in
the end it will make him well.

When I left India in 1970 I had the feeling
of ‘not having got it right’ and I also by now
knew that Self-realisation is the simplest and
yet the most difficult thing to achieve. I
started life at university and was rather horri-
fied to find that whereas Bhagavan’s
 teachings were aimed at diminishing the ego,
 the university tuition directly encouraged it
to grow; it was tended, watered, cultivated
and lovingly prepared for the not-so-gentle
art of sparring and jousting with other egos.
Bhagavan’s gracious photograph remained in
my room and whereas students’ comments
were sometimes kind, I am afraid to say that
more often than not they made fun of my
deeply-held beliefs and called them primi-
tive; and to crown it all my mother had
started to become ill.

When I graduated I was thrown out of
home like a stone catapulted from its sling; I
had to find work and a place to live. When
fate treats a severely disabled person in this way life is very, very hard but the harshest and the saddest thing was that I had let go of Bhagavan.

After three years of the 'independent life' I felt that I had been chewed up and spat out like a piece of wet string; in the Autumn of '76 my mother committed suicide and I broke my leg in a car accident, all within the space of three days. After recovering from this I worked at the Cambridge University Press as Specialist Reader. However two years of this full-time job on top of my disability and living on my own, began to take its toll on my health; I did not eat properly and started to look like a skeleton.

One day in 1979 I met a man who said that he did not like to see me struggling on my own and he asked me if he could look after me. Since the day he moved in with me and helped me with the physical burden my health started to improve.

I should say that David was fiercely atheistic and vitriolically anti-Christian, so we did not always see eye to eye to put it mildly; but I must admit that had I followed Bhagavan's dictum of putting my own house in order first, things would have been much better for both of us.

One day towards the end of February 1984 I sat in the car in Mill Road, Cambridge plunged in the throes of despondency and waiting for David to return with the groceries. I gazed up at the shop he had entered and read the words ARJUNA WHOLEFOODS and through the mists of time and the miasms of despair I heard the words, "Wherever is Krishna, the End of Yoga, wherever is Arjuna who masters the bow, there is beauty and victory, and joy and all righteousness," and I felt that Lord Krishna was throwing me a lifeline. When we returned home I fell on the Gita like a hungry dog on its food, and I wailed when the eighteen chapters had come to an end. I wanted to read about Bhagavan again, but I did not even dare to open the ashram books because I had let go of Bhagavan and I thought he was angry and reproachful towards me; of course I did not then realise that there is no essential difference between Bhagavan and Krishna.

Eventually I did pluck up the courage to open Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge and as I re-read it the same joy and tears flooded my being; the same yearning overtook me, that selfsame ardour which had enveloped my soul all those years ago. I read all the ashram books, went through them with a tooth-comb and guarded them the way a miser guards his gold.

If at the beginning of my sadhana Bhagavan had been slow in giving me experiences, he was making up for it now and many was the time I yearned to Be at one with his beautiful existence; but still my sadhana lacked direction and, to be perfectly frank, meditation was as difficult as it had ever been.

On the evening of June 12th 1984 I lay down on my bed thoroughly exhausted at having battled the whole day through with an obdurate and recalcitrant mind. And then, whereas in one moment a searing cacophany was raging in my head, in the next minute everything had gone perfectly and peacefully quiet.

Out of the depths of this stillness I heard a chant, a chant so beautiful it gripped my heart and made me want to cry and laugh at the same time. I looked towards the radio to turn the volume up, but the radio was switched off; yet now I did not need extra volume for the walls themselves had started to sing. I turned my gaze towards the open French window and hearkened as though the night air the planets called

Om-Shiva Om-Shiva Om-Shiva Om
Om-Shiva Om-Shiva Om-Shiva A-U-m
Om-Shiva Om-Shiva Om-Shiva Om

\[\text{Bhagavad: Gita: XVIII: 78.}\]
For me not to have joined in with this dance of ecstasy would have been like asking fire not to burn, and with joy and wonder I keyed my soul into the chant and vibrated with its being when Bhagavan as Nataraja gave me the initiation I had longed for for so many years. I sang myself to sleep and the following morning when I crossed myself in front of Bhagavan and mentally repeated the mantra to him, I felt like a coy girl who has just acquired a midnight lover. It was ridiculous really, this feeling of shyness because this was the Gitopadesa, the Song of Instruction which Sri Bhagavan had imparted to me; I felt very undeserving and out of gratitude started keeping notes, the Diary of a Devotee to help my sadhana.

I wanted to show that Sri Bhagavan does help people, but unlike me he is very patient and only helps when the person is needy and ready to receive it. I also realised that initiation and direct help from Bhagavan does not mean that all life's troubles have come to an end. In fact the sadhaka's life is often besmirched with difficulties. Once someone jokingly pointed out to me that 'SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI' is an anagram of 'I AM A HARSH MAN, SIRRA!' and I replied that many a true word is spoken in jest; indeed Bhagavan can be very severe when he guides his children onto the straight and narrow path and teaches them to accept the bad as well as the good; but we would not be human if we did not grumble about life sometimes, and we would certainly not be sadhakas.

In the Autumn of 1985 I made the return journey to Tiruvannamalai, taking my faithful attendant and companion David to look after me; he did not relish the prospect of ashram life one bit; I understood his point of view and appreciated that he was accompanying me to help with my physical needs and because he knew that it was what I wanted to do more than anything in the world.

On the second night of our stay he pushed me to the New Hall for a few minutes' silence. As I watched I saw him looking up to Bhagavan's portrait when to my surprise I saw that tears were streaming from his eyes; and then surprise turned to amazement as David — the atheistic anti-Christian David — fell forward in an involuntary act of prostration! As I beheld the one who steals men's hearts and wrings them out I found that I too was crying.

When Ganesh returned from his journeying in North India we met one another with open arms after our long separation of fifteen years and with much gladness we reminisced, and as always we talked about the Master.

David and I had marvellous accommodation in the guests' compound opposite the ashram, and partaking of the meals in the dining room was a great joy for us; it is strange that our stomachs are constitutionally on the weak side and cause us some trouble, but whilst we were in Tiruvannamalai and partaking of ashram food which is Bhagavan's prasad, we suffered from no complaints. The ashram staff were kindness itself and if there was anything we wanted, we only had to ask and our requests were granted.

The bond of love I experienced with Sri V. Ganesan, the Managing Editor of The Mountain Path, touched a note of affection so deep within the core of my being, that at times the very essence of everything which I AM pulsed and resonated with the joy of Arunachala, who danced but never said a word. I could not understand why he was being so very kind to me, and still I do not understand it. In this vein I also realise that whilst my love for Bhagavan grows minute by minute, still I do not understand him. And how can I? for to understand is to objectify, to measure and to limit. How can the water which is in the tea-cup ever hope to measure the vastness of the ocean?

All I know is that I still have much that is wicked in me and that I do bad things, but for some reason Bhagavan has decided that now he wants to love me. He has turned my life inside out, upside down and back to
front with this sadhana thing; he has picked up my heart and squeezed tears out of it as though it were a wet sponge, and yet through the tears and the devotion I have had glimpses of a totally different, a completely Clear Reality which transcends and subsumes the material ebb and flux of the universe; as my life progresses I shut my eyes and leave more and more of the decisions to Bhagavan, for he is my Guru, the one I praise and the one I blame, my suffering and my joy, my purushottama, the best person to help me.

RAMANA, the enigma

People who expected consistency could not find their bearings when they had to deal with Bhagavan. He never acted twice in the same way. He would deny every expectation, go against every probability. He seemed to be completely indifferent to whatever was going on in the Ashram and would give an immense amount of care to some apparently insignificant detail. He would be highly critical of the Ashram manager’s passion for improvement and expansion and yet take personal interest in the work of the carpenters and masons. He would scold his younger brother (the Ashram Manager) soundly, but would rebuke anybody who came to him with some complaint against him. He did not even want to hear about the money coming to the Ashram, but would read carefully the incoming and outgoing letters. He would refuse his consent to a certain work, but if it were done against his wishes, he would earnestly cooperate. When asked to agree to the building of the temple, he said, “Do as you please, but do not use my name for collecting money”, yet he would closely watch the progress of the work and wander in the night among the scaffoldings with his torch in one hand and his stick in the other. When Sri Chakra was placed in the sanctum of the temple, he went there at mid-night and laid his hands on it. He would deny all responsibility for starting and developing the Ashram, would refuse to claim it as his property, but made a Will creating a hereditary managership for the Ashram.

He would refuse all treatment when asked, but would swallow any medicine that was given to him. If several well-wishers each offered his own remedy, he would take them all at the same time. He would relish some rustic dish and would turn away from costly delicacies. He would invite people for food, but when asked for a meal he would plead his helplessness in the matter. Sometimes he would take a man to the kitchen and cook and serve him with his own hands. He insisted that beggars should be fed first, but would say that the Ashram was for visitors, not for beggars. He would be tender with a sick squirrel and would not show any feeling when an old and faithful devotee was dying. A serious loss or damage would leave him unconcerned, while he may shout warnings lest a glass pane in a cupboard should break.

Greatness, wealth, beauty, power, penance, fame, philanthropy all these would make no impression on him but a lame monkey would absorb him for days on end. He would ignore a man for a long time and then suddenly turn to him with a broad smile and start an animated discussion. To a question about life after death he would retort, “Who is asking?” but to another man he would explain in great detail what death was and what the state of mind was after death.

It was clear that all he did was rooted in some hidden centre to which none of us had any access. He was entirely self-directed, or rather Self-directed.
CLOTHES of all sorts, sizes, and colours heaped and rolled in disarray around his body from head to toe; a roll of peacock feathers, newspapers and mats tied together in one hand, and the other hand casually playing with the thick growth of beard; peels of sudden laughter — a personification of dishevelled splendour! Such may be one's first impression of the Yogi Sri Ramsuratkumar of Tiruvannamalai.

Not a strong physique, yet there is a sense of toughness in his movements and firmness in whatever he utters. He smokes cigarettes, happily offered to him by his admirers, continuously. Yet, even as a hater of smoking or rather one who would get choked in cigarette fumes, I remain unaffected in his proximity. I notice that hardly any trail of smoke comes out of his mouth in spite of his chain-smoking!

The house in which he lives is so dirty and untidy, unkempt; things are strewn all round. Cigarette packets scattered, ashes heaped up. Though the room has ventilation due to a raised portion in the middle of the building, yet a sense of suffocation is felt. Added to all this, an old dog, with sores all over, is tied permanently there. The Yogi opens the door himself and gives a very warm welcome and after you enter, closes the enormously strong and heavy door himself. He motions me and my friends to sit on a spread mat, which has on it more layers of dirt than, perhaps, strings.

He made pointed enquiries regarding names of persons, town from where we hail, occupation etc. But I saw an undercurrent of disinterestedness in eliciting such information, though later on in my other visits I found out that he did remember most of them. In the middle of conversations I noticed him getting into a peculiar and strong mental stillness, lifting up his right hand holding the bundles and stopping every other activity of his but all the while looking into you, penetratingly. Just a timeless moment. Then the activities started again.

This apparent interruption did not dislocate the chain of thoughts that flowed there. Many a time this strange "act of with-
drawal" takes place and on such occasions one can definitely feel a deep concerted spray of quietude.

My friend introduced me thus: "This is the musical wizard of South India, Sri Ilaya Raaja, a deeply spiritual man. He has taken Bhagavan as his Guru. He can quote many passages from Bhagavan's 'Talks' at random. He has heard about your greatness. He thus sees only Bhagavan in you. He..." Before further words come out, the Yogi interrupts the long introduction; a peel of laughter emerges from him. He almost cries out: 'Oho! Raja can see Bhagavan in this beggar. So he is great! This beggar can see Bhagavan only in Bhagavan! Oho...'" He goes on laughing for a few minutes resulting in tears welling up in his eyes. It was a beautiful sight to see a siddha purusha go into ecstasies!

However, I was unhappy over the whole episode. I turn to my friend with a look of disapproval over the nature of his introduction of me to the Yogi — the Yogi claps and applauds his utterences! Suddenly, involuntarily, all join in the laughter parade that rends and reverberates through the whole building. In a trice I forget the feeling of my agitation over the introduction, the Yogi's comments on it, the laughter — the whole environment. At that moment I experience, with no effort on my part, pure, unalloyed joy!

Who is this Yogi?

Mother Ganga has reared many a great Mahatma. She is the birthplace of yogis, munis, vairagis and jnanis. The holy river ever represents the spiritual soul of Bharat. On the banks of the Ganges, Varanasi, the sacred city, stands keeping aloft the hoary traditions of Sanatana Dharma (so inaptly called 'Hinduism').

Ramsuratkumar was born in a village near this holy city. Mother Ganga fascinated this child in an inexplicable way and playing along its shores brought happiness to him. "And often at night he wandered down to the river under the myriad of stars to listen to its gentle sounds and watch the twinkling of the stars in its ceaseless movement."

As years moved along, this boy longed to have the company of holy men who ever thronged the shores of the Ganges. Sadhus and sannyasis always attracted him. The inner urge for spiritual fulfilment produced these ripples surfacing as a longing to be with holy men. The sight of the death of a bird changed the course of the lad's life. Till then, for the teenager, life was only mirth and joy; thereafter a peculiar sense of sorrow and seclusion clouded his life. This, perhaps, was a blessing in disguise. He started roaming in and around Lord Visvanatha's temple, in the burial ghats of Kasi and the ever-inviting charms of the flashing waters of the Ganges. Slowly, the elixir of God-intoxication seeped into him. His life was positively changed from empty wanderings in the world into pining for the Lord. This period of his life was one of intense suffering, longing for unity with God.

One of the monks guided him to go to Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi. In 1949 he visited Aurobindo Ashram. Then he came to Sri Ramanasramam. In Bhagavan Ramana he saw the height of spiritual perfection. He stayed there for two months and drenched himself in the Peace of Bliss that ever flowed from the Sage of Arunachala. Yogi Ramsurat­kumar in the meanwhile also met Swami Ramdas of Kanhangad. In 1950, both Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo dropped their physical frames. This drove him again to Swami Ramdas, who initiated him into Ram Mantra. This revolutionised the Yogi's life and put him on the ladder of spiritual ascent. He became a thoroughly changed man. Fondly addressed as 'Papa', Swami Ramdas became the Guru of this 'beggar', as he henceforth chose to call himself.

Under the instruction of Swami Ramdas he came to Arunachala, stayed many months at Sri Ramanasramam, and spent these days in experience of ecstasy. Later on he moved to the town. He begged in the streets, slept...
under trees and in dilapidated buildings; went round Arunachala Hill any number of times. All through, an unseen Hand was moulding him into a ‘child’ of the ‘Father’. He lost all identity of himself, as also body-consciousness. Whatever happened in and around him he took it as purely the Lila of the ‘Father’. To those who sought his guidance it was always “May my Father bless you” and never “I bless you”.

Reminiscing on the time spent in Bhagavan’s Presence, the Yogi said: “Once a sadhaka asked a list of questions. One of the eight questions, along with Sri Maharshi’s reply, was translated into English for the benefit of a few beggars like myself, seated nearby. The question: ‘If the Guru drops his body even prior to the sishya having succeeded in his sadhana, is it necessary for the sishya to seek out a living Guru to guide him further on?’ The reply: ‘Not necessary. He can continue in his sadhana and guidance would continue’.”

When one of us ventured to ask the Yogi why in that case he had gone to Swami Ramdas after Maharshi’s passing, he graciously replied: “I had begun to see that a Higher Power was expressing itself, using me as an instrument. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was a principal influence in shaping this beggar to this state. After His passing away, I did not see any conflict in going to Swami Ramdas. It was Swami Ramdas who initiated me and gave me this madness!”

Yogi Ramsuratkumar added: “The inner life of saints like Sri Aurobindo, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, J. Krishnamurti and Swami Ramdas is far far removed from what we can externally perceive of them. They operate rooted in the Eternal Infinite which can never be ’known’. There is no individual there to report differences!”

His childlike candour, impish humour and deep devotion to the Guru lifted us into a sense of freedom and lightness. When we took leave of him, it was with the joy of having seen a great and good soul and benefited by his presence.

One day when I went to the hall early in the afternoon, Bhagavan was reading the Ramayana written in Malayalam. After bowing before him I got up and looked at the book to find out what it was about. Noticing this Bhagavan said with some enthusiasm, “This book is Adhyatma Ramayanam in Malayalam language. You remember I told you about the message of Rama which Anjaneya conveyed to Ravana. That was from this book only. What I am now going to read is about Tara Vilasam...” In explaining the whole story Bhagavan’s eyes became full of tears and his voice became tremulous. It looked as if the whole drama was being enacted in his presence. Notice this I said, “Bhagavan appears to have got transformed into Tara herself.”

Pulling himself together the Master said with a smile, “What to do? I identify myself with whatsoever is before me. I have no separate identity. I am universal.”

What a great truth there is in these words!

— Suri Nagamma’s, My Life at Ramanasrama, p. 58.
"A lover may hanker after this love or that Love
But in the end he is drawn to the King of Love",
Thus wrote Rumi,
After he had found his Master, Shams Tabriz,
Yes, very true are Rumi's words,
The True Master, Love Absolute in human form
A living proof of the timeless truth,
— 'God is Love'.

But very few are those who see Him As the Embodiment of Love.
Beneath his power, majesty and wisdom bright,
Deep in the Heart
His lovers felt the sweetness
Of a Mother's love,
Not just the greatness of a jnani or a Master.

"Bhakti is the mother of Jnana" says this Mother.
The Path Supreme is Love and Surrender,
In the ecstasy of Love is lost
Your petty ego: your 'me' and 'mine'.
Under the spell of Love,
Shines forth alone the I supreme
With no 'Master' no 'disciple'.
Love is the Path Direct
To the Non-dual State!

"Heart is another name for being",
Says Bhagavan.
The path of Love, the Way of the Heart,
Is the means as well as the end
The starting point, journey and goal.

"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood,
You cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven
Lord Jesus told his disciples.
Love, love maternal,
Is the very flesh and blood of the Master.
How to absorb the everpresent Love,
The grace divine?
Surrender!

Open the door of your heart;
In rushes the torrent of grace
The greater your surrender,
The nearer you draw to the Master's being,
As Bhagavan says
"Complete surrender is perfect Freedom!"
In Memoriam — Sri Jagdish Swami

By Ratna Navaratnam

Sri Jagdish Swami is no more. He was a familiar figure at Sri Ramanasramam, an inmate for over three decades. Simple in his ways, reticent by nature, clad in koupeenam, he was a self-effacing man whose every gesture breathed the peace of Arunachala Ramana.

His father was Vishwalal Bhogilal Damania, an Engineer by profession who had his own Electrical Engineering firm in Bombay. His mother was Ratanbehn, a highly devout lady, who first brought young Jagdish to Tiruvannamalai in the later thirties, drawn by some irresistible urge. Born in a distinguished family of doctors, lawyers, judges and social workers and blessed in the love of sisters and brothers, young Jagdish, a partner in his father’s firm, developed an attitude of inquiry. He offended at times his circle of friends by his critical analysis of conventional religious practices.

Jagdish’s mother Ratanbehn used to have visions of Bhagavan in the year 1937-39 when the family was camping in Juhu. She had heard of Bhagavan from Mukindra Thakore, Principal of Law College at Ahmedabad who was a devotee of the Maharshi. On his insistence, the entire family of Jagdish visited Bhagavan at his Ashram in 1939 and from then onwards, there was intimate contact with the sage of Arunachala. When the Matrubhuteswara Temple was built under the direct supervision of the Maharshi, Jagdish’s father undertook the entire electrical installation work of the temple and completed it to the satisfaction of the then Sarvadhikari, Niranjanananda Swami.

Jagdish, acting according to the dictates of his inner voice, renounced his partnership in the family firm and all his worldly possessions on 31.3.1952 and took to rigorous ascetic life. In the early fifties, he had started to meditate at night for long periods and he often told his mother that Bhagavan called him and wanted him to get the parental permission before leaving home and family. In March 1953 Pujya Sri Ramadas of Anandashram, Kanhangad, had visited his family in Bombay and assured them that Jagdish was pursuing the correct path, and that he would be protected by Bhagavan’s grace. That gave the needed impetus and on 19.3.53 the whole family accompanied Jagdish and came to Tiruvannamalai where Jagdish had planned to take up his abode.

During the early years at Arunachala, he had no fixed abode but wandered as a mendicant and was seen in the main temple grounds and in the caves of Arunachala hill, with only a loin cloth. After coming to Arunachala, he had not stirred outside this place, exactly as his Master had done. For some years till 1961, Jagdish Swami was staying with mother Souris on the Chengam Road.
After 1962, the late Sri Hargovinddas Jani of Bombay, who had settled down in Tiruvannamalai, persuaded Jagdish Swami to stay with him which he did for ten years. Around 1974, Bhagavan brought him back to His Ashram where he lived till his absorption in Arunachala on April 2, 1986.

In his life of austere discipline, Jagdish Swami emphasised the cultivation of dispassion (vairagya) and detachment as being quite essential for one who seeks Self-knowledge.

In his last conversation with us in his room he said his translation of Bhagavan's Akshara Mana Malai in Gujarati had been completed, and that one should not postpone Self-inquiry as life was fleeting like a drop of water on a lotus leaf.

Fasting and observance of Homam were best, he taught, to cure bodily and mental sickness. He was a true yogin and tapasvin.

In Bhaja Govindam v.22. Sri Sankaracharya has sung of seers: "He who wears a dress of rags that lie in the street, he who walks in the path that is beyond merit and demerit—he is the Yigin. His ways of behaviour may be unpredicatable and the vagaries of the world do not touch him. He revels in the bliss of the Self."

Sri Jagdish Swami will ever be remembered by all. Such a yogin was Jagdish Swami.

Grace does not replace nature, it perfects nature, transmutes something that belongs to earth and makes it grow with the radiance of heaven.

— Ronald A. Knox
Sri Ramani Ammal

SRI RAMANI Ammal comes from a family of wealthy landlords in Rajapalayam. From childhood itself she was spiritually bent and this was known to her parents.

In 1944, when she was barely eighteen, she lost both her parents within a span of six months. This deep shock further intensified her search for the Real and she started reading spiritual books. One day she came across Sri Ramana Vijayam, the Tamil biography of Sri Bhagavan. The very touch of the book, even before she opened it, transfixed her. On seeing the photo of young Ramana there, she knew that she had reached the end of her quest. She says: "That very instant I attained the vairagya necessary to renounce everything and surrender to Bhagavan".

This was the turning point in her life. Ramani lost whatever interest she had in worldly matters. When she was 22 years (1948) she took the final decision — she told this only to her brother whom she loved and respected very much. Her brother saw the intensity of his sister’s vairagya did not resist her and in fact, quietly arranged for her journey. One morning she left for Tiruvannamalai with an attendant who was asked by her brother to leave her at the Railway station.

She was feeling guilty that she had to leave the family stealthily like a thief.

Her first meeting with the Master stands out even now crystal clear in Ramani’s mind. On reaching Sri Ramanasramam she had asked a person where Sri Bhagavan was and was directed near the well (at that time Sri Bhagavan was seated under the thatched shed, called Jubilee Hall, just north of the Old Hall). But, wonder of wonders! Instead of seeing Sri Bhagavan, she saw a bright fire burning in that place and no devotees around Him. Gradually the vision faded and she saw Sri Bhagavan seated on the couch, surrounded by devotees.

With wonder in her eyes she relates how Bhagavan solved all her problems even as they arose within herself and before she spoke about them. In the first few days she felt very shy, and used to sit in the very last row, hidden among the crowd. But gradually the eagerness to listen to Bhagavan’s words overcame her fear, and was sitting in the very first row! She was very miserable for a few days of her arrival, acutely feeling guilty in having run away from home like a culprit. Imagine her surprise when she heard Bhagavan telling a devotee as she entered the Hall. “I ran away from home like a thief. When I sat in the train, my heart was thumping lest I should be seen by someone and dragged back home!” Hearing these divine words, Ramani lost her guilt feelings and was filled with joy at having done the right thing! She also remembers how often Sri Bhagavan used to greet her with the lovely, tender smile of His, which made her feel that she had been accepted and her joy knew no bounds.

She noticed people going for giripradakshina and wished to do it herself, but because of her upbringing, was not sure if she could manage it. One day a group of
old devotees went to Bhagavan and sought permission to go round the Hill, and Bhagavan pointed to Ramani and said: “Can you take her also? She seems quite eager” and then to her: “Go with them; you can do it!”

Being unaccustomed to walking long distances, she found it very difficult to keep pace with the others. On seeing this the other devotees decided to walk slowly. Feeling ashamed she had asked them to go ahead and told them that she would be able to find the way herself. They would not hear of it as they would not be able to face Bhagavan’s queries! So they were back only after seven hours. She was feeling crestfallen and tried to avoid Bhagavan by sitting far away. In the meantime a discussion started among the devotees on the topic of pradakshina. Bhagavan quietly commented that one should go very slowly around the Hill-like a pregnant Queen walking with a water jar on her head! On hearing this she was filled with joy, as again her guilt feeling was removed by Him even without her telling it! She recalled that her swollen feet were aching terribly and she was almost in tears. Bhagavan looked at her with compassion and told her: “Get some coconut oil from the stores and smear it like this on your legs and feet. Go to the bathing room and pour hot water on them.” The attendant escorted her to the bathing room. All the pain had vanished by the time she returned to sit down before Sri Bhagavan.

Sometime in 1949, Ramani was staying in the Mango-tree Cave, with an old lady-devotee. One night, while in the cave she heard the clatter of footsteps (as if many people were walking with wooden sandals on). Surprisingly enough, she was not afraid but had a great desire to go out and see them. Next morning she requested the elderly devotee to mention this to Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan said that they were siddhas and rishis residing in Arunachala, doing tapas!
At the time of Sri Bhagavan’s Maha Nirvana, she was away at Rajapalayam. On that night, i.e. 14th April, 1950, while gazing absent-mindedly on the night sky, she saw a beam of bright blue light trail across the sky and vanish into the distance beyond. Like many other devotees, she understood that Sri Bhagavan’s physical end had come. She was so overcome with grief then that she gave up food altogether. At the end of the 4th day she had a dream in which she saw Bhagavan beside a cool clear lake, Kamadhenu (the celestial cow) grazing nearby and with several rishis in nishta and lo! Sri Bhagavan reclining majestically amidst them on a sofa with His head resting in His hand, in the characteristic pose and gazing, as usual. This vision proved to her that Sri Bhagavan was ever present. Her grief then disappeared and she broke her fast. She decided to stay near Sri Ramanashramam. In 1958, she built a small cottage for herself where she continues to stay even now, and shares with other devotees the bliss of Ramana-experience.

MOTHER RAMANA

By Anbumalai

There was Anbumalai, once again,
Seated on the window-sill, behind
Bhagavan’s samadhi';
Rapt in absorption,
Lost in the depths within,
When he heard a piercing cry
In the voice of a child —
"Amma! Amma!" (Mother! Mother!)
A small child it was, but three years old,
She had let go her hold
On her own mother’s hand,
And now left behind she was,
Her mother had walked ahead with
other children,
Circumambulating the samadhi shrine.

The first few shouts unheard,
Louder "Amma! Amma!" wailed the child,
At last the mother heard the cry
Retraced her steps, and took the crying child,
In her arms, and with her sari-end
Wiped away her tears,
Soon the child was pacified.

Watching this mini-drama, Anbumalai felt

How like this child are the devotees
Crying for Mother Ramana
Crying shedding tears,
Till Mother Ramana hears and comes to them

For Love's sake alone,
Like the child's love for the mother,
For Her alone they hunger!

'If you are hungry enough, the food will surely come'
Runs an ancient Sufi saying
Mother Ramana's children too
Know how in answer to their call,
Mother Ramana comes to them
Unseen, in silence,
His Grace eternal
Enfolding them like love material
How long can Mother Ramana,
Keep away from her children
Who want nothing in this world but her.
GRANTHI-BHEDA

I wonder whether you would care to clear a doubt I have. In Day by Day with Bhagavan, page 27, it is stated “...most saints go through a severe pain or physical ordeal when the link between the body and spirit is severed”. Could you please give some details as to when this physical ordeal is (i.e. what form it takes etc.) and some information about the ‘knot’ between the body and spirit? May be you could give me some references on this point. Since Bhagavan described this experience, I feel that Bhagavan did it for a reason. But what is the reason? Is it to show that everyone can attain Realisation within half an hour or so in his sixteenth year presumably this knot was severed during that time. Since no mention of pain was mentioned when Bhagavan described this experience, I feel that Bhagavan did not go through the physical ordeal. I take it that the knot is severed at Realisation so that the ‘physical ordeal’ either take place at that point in time or not at all. Am I correct? I would be most interested to read your clarification on this point.

— A. Theruwara, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

As to the above letter, we are afraid we can't give you an adequately satisfactory answer. Realisation means nothing else than recognising the Truth in the guise of an illusion. But to be able to do that, you must have developed the ‘inner eye’ by a life of purity and peace and doing some sadhana, as advised by saints and sages, who did it and succeeded. You see, it is a case of growth of some spiritual capacities, which our pattern of education is neglecting, if not grossly hindering. By choosing one of the spiritual ‘paths’ — search for the Self (knowledge) or surrender to the Higher Power (Bhakti) we counteract this ignorance of our so-called ‘normal’ way.

Growth, however, is a slow process which cannot be accelerated. It asks for patience and perseverance rather than for will-power. But the serious seeker after Truth gets very soon hints from within, which show him that something is happening. In fact, he is under the influence of Grace, which will never fail him as long as he remains faithful to his purpose. In the course of this development, some day or other, you will see (by a momentary opening of the ‘inner eye’) what is meant by ‘the knot’ and that there is nothing of ‘physical ordeal’. Where there is pain, there is wrongly applied energy, impatience, violence. Growth is a natural process, which should give joy — and does so, as long as we behave in a natural and quiet way, in full confidence in the Higher Power in everybody’s Heart.

Returning to your question: Bhagavan only very rarely used to mention this knot — and never in connection with ‘pain’. To cut the knot is only a metaphor. The moment you have opened the ‘inner eye’ by your sadhana, you discover what is meant by this picture, because you have cut the knot, and without any ‘pain’ or trouble.

Wait and see. Get the text of Bhagavan’s Reality on Forty Verses (Ulladu Narppu) and read the following verses in the following series: 24, 27, 29, 30 in His Collected Works and you have Bhagavan’s reply to your question.

May He support you in your serious search of the Self!

JIVA AND SELF

May I request you to kindly clarify the following point:

On page 272 of The Mountain Path — October 1985 issue, under the title ‘Turiya, the natural state’, para seven reads: “Due to the light of the reflected consciousness, the jiva experiences the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, but the Self remains unmoved and unchanged as the only entity which remains as a silent witness and persists throughout.”

Kindly clarify the positions of jiva and Self with reference to the teachings of Sri Maharshi and eradicate my ignorance.

— A.N. Acharya, Jeypore.

The ‘position’ of jiva and Self vis-a-vis Ramana’s teaching is: The Light (Awareness) of the Sun (Self) in the firmament (Heart) reflects in the water (nescience) contained in a shallow pot (I-am-the-body-idea) giving rise to a Psuedo-Sun (jiva-ego). This falsity appears to ‘flood’ the vast space and objects falsely seen (the wakeful, dream and sleep experience of the ego) in the water. When the pot is broken or the water evaporated, the falsity disappears. Likewise, the reflecting medium (vasanas or nescience) with the reflection (ego) are destroyed. Figuratively the reflection, which was essentially light, may then be said to have merged in the Sun.

Bhagavan says, “Just as water in the pot reflects the enormous Sun within the narrow limits of the pot, even so the vasanas or latent tendencies of the mind of the individual, acting as the reflecting medium, catch the all-pervading Infinite Light of consciousness arising from the Heart and present in the form of a reflection the phenomenon called the mind. Seeing only this reflection the apani is deluded into the belief that he is a finite being, the jiva.”
MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES

I would like you to read my story and give me some advice or opinion, if you please.

1. It happened two years ago, I had been making every effort to understand Maharshi’s teaching for months. One day, after hard contemplation and training (meditation), light dawned on my mind. "I am not the body nor the mind; I am Consciousness itself." I became contented but nothing special happened. Hours later, however, unbearable joy suddenly attacked me. That explosion of joy was too mighty; it almost killed me. It faded away gradually, after the disappearance of the explosion of joy, strange silence as deep as possible and the most satisfying peace were left. That joy comes and goes from time to time, but the quietness and peace never cease to be. That peace is above all happiness. When I am engaged in work or hard thinking, however, peace tapers down. But as soon as I stop thinking, there prevails perfect peace. What do you think about my experience?

2. Several months after that explosion, I was confronted with a very strange experience. I was taking a walk on a river bank and sunset was drawing near. I turned my face to the sun and gazed at it without any serious reason. All of a sudden, an understanding flashed in me — the sun was myself. I looked at the huge bridge — it was also myself. The weeds, pebbles, flowing river, the sky and the bird on the wing, all were myself. I cannot give any explanation to this affair, because it simply happened and disappeared of its own accord. It happened again after a month, but never occurred from that time on. Now I am beginning to wonder if this affair was just an illusion or not. Do you also think it an illusion?

3. Only once, I experienced wakeful sleep. I was about to fall asleep, when thoughts became fewer and fewer until they completely vanished. There was no thought of any kind, but I was fully awake. This thoughtless and consequently peaceful state continued for a minute or less and the mind appeared again from the depth of consciousness. I became awake and watched the clock. To my surprise, that state had continued not for just a minute but for four hours together. It never happened again. So I am doubtful whether such an experience can be factual or not. Would you give your opinion about it?

4. This is not a question, but just a report. I have had wakeful dreams many times. As the Maharshi has said, such a dream does not continue for a long time; it continues for two or three seconds just before awaken-ing. As soon as I become aware that I am dreaming, the dream world transforms itself into an actual world. I say to myself in the dream. "Now this is a dream. So this world cannot be an actual one. But how actual it is! It is more real than the actual world itself." I look around, touch the dream wall and dream person, only to know all is actual. Ordinary dreams are a little vague and flat; they seem to be two dimensional. But wakeful dreams are massive and three-dimensional, as if were. It sounds strange, but as a matter of fact, I cannot always move as I like even in wakeful dreams. For instance, in one of the wakeful dreams, I tried to pick a cake and eat it; but my hand did not move for all my efforts. As the Maharshi has said, dream seems to have its own law.

Thank you for reading through my letter. I will be happy, if you would kindly reply.

— Teruyuki Uchikoshi, Tokyo, Japan.

We went through your letter with great joy and gladly confirm your experiences to be a true one and of a high order too. Proof thereof is, of course, contained in your own words: “...but the quietness and peace never cease to be.”

According to Sri Ramana Maharshi, Jnana needs time to establish itself. If you have this fact reflected in the experience that this joy comes and goes from time to time. You are aware of the cause of this fluctuation of ananda. “When I am engaged in work or hard thinking, peace tapers down.” So you know what is left for you to do in order to change this wonderful peak experience into a permanent realisation: “To guard the One and to live in Harmony with the many.” And, if you have to think: Remain the Witnessing, as a Witness!

You ask: Was it an illusion — your walk on the river bank during sunset? We do not think so. We take this beautiful peak experience for a spontaneous enlargement of your individual consciousness into cosmic consciousness. That too is a mystic experience but not meant to be hankered after for repetition. There may now be more and different experiences of a mystical kind; don’t be tempted by them: they are within the field of senses and as such temporary phenomena. Witness their coming and going and leave them alone.

Yes, the wakeful sleep is one of pure awareness where situations even if they registered leave no residue. Allow no room for upsurge of doubt regarding its factuality merely on the evidences of time or duration which
appear later. It is the time-less, ever-present natural state. There is the pitfall of the triumph, 'I have realised!' Remember that with all your enormous efforts the result would not have been possible without Grace. Never forget it!

SADHANA AT ASHRAM

I feel perplexed and despondent. I am a seeker. I have come to a state after about four years of self-study and meditation. I had been to Sri Ramanasramam in February 1981, which was about the beginning of seeking, and subsequently procured some books from the Ashram. I have studied religions and spirituality to an extent, which was our intellectual approach to my inner problems. I would not say that the knowledge sank very much below the intellect to bring me realisation. I have arrived at that stage when competent guidance appears to me to be absolutely essential if I am not to go off the rails of normal existence and equanimity. I have read Bhagavan's teachings over and over again and the books written by Cohen, Paul Brunton, Arthur Osborne and B.V. Narasimha Swami. I had undertaken pilgrimages to the religious centres almost throughout India during the years of my seeking and I had been to Pondicherry and Tiruvannamalai, specially to understand spirituality as against traditional religion. Sri Ramanasramam seemed to me to represent the spiritual atmosphere and to exude even now the spirit of Bhagavan.

I now have a strong desire to receive spiritual guidance for some time by staying at Sri Ramanasramam as so many have done in the past and obviously do even now. I send you this letter to enquire whether it would be possible for me to stay at Sri Ramanasramam for some time (perhaps, not more than two months altogether). The Ashram will not have to bear any financial burden for the simple life I saw there. I shall make a lump sum payment in advance, if necessary, as I do not wish any difficulties should arise if the favour I seek is bestowed on me.

I now proceed to say a little about myself which I presume would be essential for you to consider my request. I retired from Govt. service as Deputy Director of Social Welfare, Madhya Pradesh in 1976. I had studied in Burmah, Dacca, Calcutta, Bombay and London. I have no encumbrances and I am able to support myself. I feel hesitant to speak more about myself as these no longer have any meaning to me. Now I am only a seeker and I seek Bhagavan's blessings for my ultimate realisation.

— B.K. Roy, Calcutta.

We acknowledge receipt of your letter expressing your wish for a long-term stay at our Ashram. Generally we admit visitors for a short period. Particularly, in the winter season, we are short of accommodation. Your desire for sadhana calls for an exception to our rules in case you agree to come during the off-season, starting from February. Since you have been here already, you know our Ashram conditions. Please write to us in advance the exact date of your arrival, get our acceptance letter and then come.

A spiritual life does not mean change of circumstances but change of the person. And that is something which takes time. Realisation is nothing to be attained. When inessentials are got rid of what remains is Reality. But to experience this one needs time, patience and perseverance.

BHAGAVAN IN DREAM

All books which I have got from you are pure gold. They are reaching other people also. I am very thankful for all that you have done for the small myself and I. 'I' received The Mountain Path' copies as well.

Once I had a wonderful dream. I was going up the stairs very high and there I met Sri Bhagavan. He looked at me and said: 'Take my left arm' and so we went a long way and saw Rishi and Yogi and suddenly the dream broke. I must assure you that the limited 'I' of myself is over and for ever I am with you all in our Master, Bhagavan Sri Rama-Nath Maharshi.

— Kazimierz Rulinksy

Your dream of Bhagavan is interesting. There seems to be only one interpretation: that Bhagavan wants you to leave all else and cling to Bhagavan's teaching alone, if you sincerely want to progress. To read His teachings alone, however, is not enough; you have to put His teaching into practice. That means to put into action what you have read.

REPLY TO A REPLY

This refers to 'VARANASI's displeasure and attack in The Mountain Path April '86 on the seemingly callous treatment meted out to Nisargadatta Maharaj' by the Editor in reply to a letter in The Mountain Path January '86. I am not too sure if I should be getting into the fray over what seems to me a typical case of cleverness choosing to perceive a snare where there is the equal possibility of rope.

Prof. Venkatesan's query was: "Maharaj seems (italics mine) to consider himself a Gnani and as one apart from the questioner. I would not expect Sri Ramana to speak this way. Is this my ego versus Maharaj?"

The key word in the above query is "seems". Keeping this in view, the Editor's reply along with my direct interpretation in brackets, follows:
Ed: "You are right." (Yes, you are right. Maharaj seems to be labouring under a sense of duality. But dear reader, don’t let your intellect mislead you for it is really the ego leading the attention outward!)

Ed: "Sri Ramana would be silent Or give a different answer." (Ramana-Self who is none other than Maharaj-Self, which is you, might have ignored such a question. On the other hand if Ramana had, like Maharaj, chosen to reply, which is equally possible, he would have employed different words.)

Dear 'Varanasi', when we, seeming jivas, are agreed that even one Jnani is enough to frustrate us as to what He would say or do next, what to say about how two Jnanis are going to 'perform' to our queries. The Editor implies no value-judgement when he says, "Ramana would have given a different answer." Different, not better or superior. When silence is golden, any sound is distortion.

The usage of 'different' implies that had Ramana chosen to reply, (which He certainly resorted to now and then amidst His tremendous silences), He too would seem to be labouring under the duality of a questioner and answerer. And therefore it is better to relegate such perceptions to the doing of the diabolically clever ego that is us. The multiple egos perceived by us in our daily interactions is really just ONE ego principle rooted in the perceiver. The Mountain Path— is maintaining high standards and the Editor quite in tune with the Sruti; while I remain, as an anagram of 'VARANASI'.

— AN'J SYARA

LAURELS — I

I received The Mountain Path the other day and was as always delighted to find confirmations of my own conclusions in several statements in the various articles.

As I have said before, the journal is most important for us, living far away from the Ashram and unable to talk and be in the company of the other devotees. Thank you for all your effort with regard to the editing.

— Charles Madigan, Malmo, Sweden.

REQUEST TO DEVOTEES

Hitherto, all outstation cheques and drafts sent to Sri Ramanasramam towards donation or subscription to The Mountain Path or purchase of books, photos, etc., were being credited at par by State Bank of India, Tiruvannamalai, to our accounts with them. Due to change in the banking policy, this facility has been withdrawn and the bank is now collecting bank commission and clearance charges from us. We are therefore constrained to request our devotees/patrons/subscribers to send their remittances by crossed Demand Draft payable at Tiruvannamalai or by Money Order; or if by cheque to include bank charges at 1.5% of the amount, subject to a minimum of Rs. 6/-.

LAURELS — II

This journal is always a jolly good read for me. I am very impressed by the standard of the work. In the course of my perusings I looked at the 1985 editions which you handed over to me when I was at the Ashram recently. When read the two concluding parts of Sri Sadhu Om’s Sadanai Saram, I was extremely impressed to put it mildly; a reading of this is what we describe as "knock-out" — a truly terrific and soul-stirring item of upadesa.

On reading it I felt something like a cool, soothing wind blowing through my psyche; I only get this feeling when Sri Bhagavan is very close to me; and on having this experience my soul went out to Sri Sadhu Om and shouted with joy, because it was a personal feeling of bhakti; if Sri Sadhu Om had been commissioned to write this monumental work for me personally and no one else, he could not have done a better job. Is not this the hallmark of profound scripture, that it is available for all to read on the one hand, whilst also touching on the deeply felt and personal ecstatic communion with the other?

— J.A. Champneys, Isleham, U.K.

CORRECTION

In the article: The Dance of Shiva-Nataraja by Dr. K.C Rajah, on p. 93, in the verse quoted a line was missed ('Marks the joy Self-Enquiry'). The verse, as corrected reads:

"A wonder strange is this, the marriage
Of the moon and the sun; the mighty
Upraised Foot of dancing Shiva
Marks the joy of Self-Enquiry
The Master’s loving quest for the servant,
The mutual attraction of Heart and mind".

— verse 1102, Garland of Guru’s Sayings.
The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living (in 3 volumes) by Eknath Eswaran; Pub.: Nilgiri Press, Petaluma, California 94953 USA. Pp. 425, 455 & 519 respectively including index. Price $10 each.

The Bhagavad Gita for Daily Living in three volumes is a collection of the talks given by Sri Eknath Eswaran on the eighteen chapters of the Gita to a group of his devoted students and friends in Berkeley. Mr. Eswaran is the founder of the Blue Mountain Centre for Meditation in Berkeley, California.

The author has dealt with the Gita in a simple, but gripping style. At every stage, he tries to relate the Gita to our daily life. He has not said anything new but what is said is most appearing and utterly free from jargon. He takes the reader through the highways and by lanes of religion and literature. Mr. Eswaran's scholarship is vast and deep but he carries it lightly.

The author seems to have been profoundly influenced by his maternal grandmother whom he regards as the saint's saint. There are several moving references to Sri Ramana Maharshi. Sri Ramana Maharshi was one of these. Sometimes when people came to him for help, he would sit reading the newspaper. This is not our usual conception of action: Somebody sits rustling his newspaper and helps people. But many who were sure in spirit, or insecure and resentful, having knocked on all other doors, have come into Sri Ramana Maharshi's presence as a last resort, sat and looked at him, and come out with their burden relieved, with their heart strengthened and their spirit soaring.

A distinguished philosopher once went to Ramana Maharshi's ashram with his pocket bulging with a long series of questions. He wondered whether the sage would have time to answer all his questions in detail. With utter simplicity, not very characteristic of a distinguished philosopher, he tells us how he went in and looked at Sri Ramana Maharshi, kept on looking at him, and found that none of his questions were necessary. (Vol. 1, Pp. 152-3).

"Naishkarmya, or 'the state of worklessness,' is the state attained by great mystics like Sri Ramana Maharshi, who was physically with us in India until 1950. For anyone coming into his presence, he could swiftly resolve their dilemmas. In orthodox Hindu circles he is considered an avatar, a divine incarnation. He was never involved in the world. He never committed any of the mistakes that even some of the greatest mystics have committed. Like Sri Ramakrishna, he was always pure, having attained illumination around the age of seventeen. When European writers would ask him whether it wasn't possible for him to lead a productive life, he just used to sit and chuckle because his life influenced not only South India, but the entire world. By just one person attaining this stature, finding himself in union with God, humankind takes a step forward. And you and I, even without our knowledge, have benefited from the presence on earth of these great spiritual figures." (Vol. 1, p. 295).

The style is informal and interesting; it is breezy like that of a good Kathakalakshepam. One can dip into any page and come out refreshed. It is not often that we come across spiritual books written in a readable style. The get-up and printing of the three volumes are excellent.

—Dr. K.S. SUBRAMANIAN.


The twelfth THIRUMURAI in the Saiva Canon is a hagiography of 63 Saints of Tamilnadu who lived from the BCs to the 9th Century A.D. This book PERIYA-PURANAM, as is well-known, impressed Bhagavan Ramana as a boy. The book under review is claimed to be the first comprehensive English work on this Puranam. It purports to be a condensed English version. In fact, it is a scholarly treatise—a special guide, the narrative being re-arranged and classified to fit into a special mould — with views and expositions diversified with analogues from other literature. Such an approach has obvious advantages and drawbacks as well.

The citations from Sekkizhaar are rendered in verse, generally felicitous, but here and there are phrases which fall harshly on sensitive ears, e.g. "ROWDY DEVOTEE" (for 'VANTHONDAR'), "unique hair-do" (for the Lord's matted tresses) "outstripping the BRA" (for portraying bosom), 'turn-out' (for SUNDARA's appearance)....

In his perceptive foreword, Prof. K.R. Srinivasan Iyengar observes well:

"In the present interpretative study, Thiru Vanmikanathan has ventured to impose on the narrative an order of his own. After a preamble, in which a
fisher-man devotee ADIPATTHAR raises the curtain ("CIVA-ARPANAM-ASTHU"). Long chapters are devoted to Sundarar (the Lord's Companion), Tirugnana-sambandhar (the Lord's son), APPAR (The Lord's Serviteur) and Tirumoolar, the Gnaani who knows and lives in identity with God. These saintsly four loom immense in the drama of devotion enacted in Periyapuram. In regard to the remaining Saints, G.V. Pillay has boldly applied his new grammar of classification to exemplify the specification in the 12th Sutra in "Siva-puranam. In regard to the remaining Saints, G.V. Pillay's GNAANA-BODHAM. We are not required to accept all lives in identity with God. These saintly four loom immense in the drama of devotion enacted in Periya-puranam. This receives full justice in the present English version.

In the end, it is well-emphasised that Devotees include those hailing from regions beyond Tamilnadu - "APPAALUMADI-SAARNTHAAR" (in future too!). The epilogue is characteristic - "All the 63 Serviteurs were mystics of the highest order and were men who conducted their lives according to Thirukkural and the SIVA-GNANA-BODHAM, which are Tamil Nadu's secular and spiritual gifts to the World's literature". This may be agreed to, overlooking chronology in regard to the Saints.

— R. RANGACHARI.


Both are happy continuations of the author's laudable project, the earlier parts of which have been reviewed already in these columns. The fifth volume of the Lives of Ancient Indian Saints covers: Mudgala, Mytryan, Nara-Narayana, Narada, Parashara, Pippalada, Pulasya and Rishu. The accounts are delightful and help to brush our memories. Though they are a blend of mythology and semi-history, they throw light on many of the traditions and legends of our land. The most detailed of these accounts is of Narada. The entire Bhakti Sutras are rendered into English. It is interesting to note the sutras on Bhakti (Devotion) defined in various ways by various saints. Vyasa described it as interest in workship. Garga defined devotion as deep interest in hearing the stories connected with God. Sandilya defined it as hearing the stories of God, which are not against the enjoyment of Self. Narada says that devotion to God is to dedicate everything to Him and to feel very sorry if one forgets Him even for a moment. Like the Gopikas of Brindavan, real devotion is to have an unstinted love for Him. (P. 120-121).

The second volume of Yogavasishtha deals with the Utpatti Prakarana (the Story of Leela). The topics covered are diverse: Creation of the world, cause of bondage. illusion of what is seen, astral travel, war and implements of warfare, death and after etc. There are thought-provoking passages viz.,

Brahman can easily be visualised in one's own body, as the form of light and lusture. Penance, charity, vows etc. cannot give the knowledge of the Self which always is nothing but resting in one's own Self.

All things become as you think of them. If you think of even an enemy as your friend, he will surely become your friend.

The world is dormant in the smallest chaitanya of the Self.

We await the succeeding volumes with interest.

— M.P. PANDIT


Poetry is an intense delight to be enjoyed like a day in spring. One should not begin to rationalise whence the delight came; which according to Patanjali's classification of our mental faculties, is called Pramaana, i.e. reason with its roots in sensorial cognition. But poetry stems from the other two categories, Viparyaya and Vikalpa another region of mental activity, call it reason and fancy, where the actual may be non-existent. It is the seeing of something which one has super-imposed and the stimulation of a mental image arising as a result of hearing a word or seeing an object, or a triggering provoked by the sensation of smell or touch. The mind carries on its image-building faculty as in Coleridge's "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure dome decree,"

or "like Keats' "magic casements opening on the form in the fairy lands forlorn".

Music and magic are present in John's poems as he turns to the "stillness of his secret chambers from the toil and tears of a tempestuous world". This collection of sixty short poems reveals a poet who is intelligent, honest and talented. M.P. Pandit, who felt himself, drawn like a magnet to the poems, has "read and re-read them; and in order to stabilise the experience", he says, he has offered his comment on each of the poems. It is difficult to be selective and choose among this collection, but one may be content with the poem entitled "The Eternal Present", being representative of his main theme Love, which unites man and nature, the universal love of God which knows no break, as it is in tune to the prevailing consciousness that it eternal; as these lines indicate:

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

July
"I loved a tall tree
They hewed a boat
Out of its trunk —
And I used to feel
The warmth of its love
When I sat
On that boat.

But all I loved
With a desireless love
Are now present
Here with me
In this Eternal present
And now I know
Nothing is lost
In eternity."

Stella Browning, the famous poet, has written an appreciative foreword to this charming little book.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY — by O.P. Chai. Pub.: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. L-10, Green Park Extn., New Delhi-110 064. Pp. 132. Price Rs. 50/-. This is an anthology, compiled with a purpose, as its sub-title indicates: "A guide to the understanding of the fundamental unity underlying the great living religions of the world." This is a book to be tasted, not read at a stretch, as it is a book of quotations arranged alphabetically on such subjects as anger, brotherhood, courage, duty etc. etc. up to wrath. The author has patiently collected, collated and arranged the sayings of the eleven great religions of the present day on nearly thirty subjects ranging from forgiveness to punishment. The author has travelled widely and has travelled widely and has a rich experience of life and letters having been a teacher, lecturer, writer and editor. The book is dedicated to Indira Gandhi "who had an abiding faith in and deep reverence for all the religions of the world." Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, in commending the book as an earnest effort towards enlightment that all humanity is one kin, hopes that it will help the new young to build a far bigger consensus, than that attempted by the faiths — the consensus to save life itself from the threat of complete obliteration of all men and women with the deadliest of nuclear weapons."

In these days when discussion is centred round a new education policy, books like this will go a long way in inculcating the spirit of love and brotherhood among the younger generation and inspire them to free thinking, in fact, to an education which may ultimately change human nature.

— ARGUS

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE UPANISHADS — By N.S. Subramanian. Pub.: Sterling Pub. Pvt. Ltd. L-10, Green Park Extn., New Delhi -110 064. Pp.564, Price Rs.350/-. A handy collection of all the 108 Upanishads in English in a single volume. The author has grouped the texts according to their traditional classification: Ten major Upanishads, Samanya Vedanta, Shaiva, Shakt, Vaishnava, Yoga, Sanayasa Upanishads. Each text is introduced suitably and then rendered in a paraphrased manner, omitting repetitions, portions that the author considers not important with notes where called for. He bases himself on the commentary of Acharya Shankara on the ten major Upanishads and on the commentary of Sri Upanishad Brahma Yogin on the rest.

The contents of the major Upanishads are fairly well known. The other texts have many interesting observations which throw considerable light on the experience and approach of the mystics, ancient and not so ancient, adding to our knowledge of these less known aspects of inner life.

The Mudgalopanishad highlights the import of the Purusha Sukta in the Rig Veda. "In the mantra sahasra-sirma, the word sahara denotes the endless Purusha... dasangulam implies an infinite number of yojanas (units measuring nine miles). By the first mantra is covered the idea of the pervasion of Vishnu in point of space. By the second mantra the idea of the pervasion of Vishnu in point of time is brought out, and by the third, the liberation bestowing character of the Lord."

The Mandala Brahmana Upanishads describes the Shambhavi Mudra: "internal introspection with the eyes kept open and devoid of the winking of the eyelids." In the same work there is a striking account of the five ethers, akasa: "akasa is productive stupor and darkness; parakasa is productive of delusion eclipsing the stupor; mahakasa is the expanse and existence which resemble radiance and is beyond all measure; suryakasa resembles the sun and is productive of perpetual happiness eclipsing stupor etc.; paramakasa transcends description, pervades everything everywhere, and is of the nature of bliss par excellence."

In an interesting passage the Tejo Bindu Upanishad observes: "Mauna is verily efficacious only when there are no thoughts even (which are the words of the mind, so to say) and no symbols instead which are of this body also."

The same text touches upon a point of yogic importance: "Dehasamya: there should be such perfect equilibrium among the gross, subtle and casual bodies, as would enable their dissolution in the self-poised Brahman; if not, there will be rectitude such as is met with among dried trees which have no equilibrium or deha samya at all."

A good deal of authentic guidance is available in this collection on the Kundalini, Chakras, Nadis, Pranayama,
Pranava etc. The twelve appendices at the end of the volume are valuable for their concise compilations on themes like creation, yoga, mudras, prana, doors to liberation, the five sheaths etc. 'Perception' on page 392 is obviously a misprint for preceptor (Section IV). We do hope better proof-reading will be done in the second edition: the page numbers in the Index need re-checking.

The author is to be thanked for his long labours in completing this voluminous work. Perhaps a fuller translation of all the passages will add to its authenticity. In the setting of the Thought of these Sages, even repetition has its value for the earnest student.

— M.P. PANDIT

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION — By A.R. Mohapatra.

Designed for the use of students in the universities, this book of an introductory nature deals with the philosophical aspect of religion and gives a bird’s eye view of the main religions of the world. The author defines the aim of this philosophy: ‘to render an important service to religion, analysing and refining religious belief, by separating the essential from the accidental and secondary elements of faith, by disentangling what is true and of permanent value from all admixture of superstition and crude fanaticism, and by articulating the true view of God, man and the universe as far as this lies in the scope of the subject. It converts religious faith and teaching into rational insight, guides a person to lead a life of truth, goodness and beauty.’

In the first part, Dr. Mohapatra discusses the philosophical problems of religion: Immortality of the soul, bondage and freedom, problem of evil, doctrine of karma, God and the world, mysticism. He takes an overall view, quotes from many scholars and philosophers in the West, and generally expounds the themes in a simple manner. He gives arguments for and against, but does not state his own conclusions. All the same it is an educative discussion and helps the reader to realise that philosophy is a discipline that examines several problems of life in the light of the basic approach of the particular religion.

The second part, World Religions, is equally enlightening to the lay reader. The religions presented are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism. The writer underlines the mystic element of Sufism and Christianity. Writing on Hinduism, the author draws attention to its capacity for self-renewal across the ages. His account of the developments in modern Hinduism ends with the Sri Ramakrishna Movement.

— M.P. PANDIT

Specializing in books on SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI. write to:
RAMANA PUBLICATIONS: Box 77 • Victor, N.Y. 14564 • (716) 924-5087
The repository of Grace, Bliss, Peace, Power — Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam on Sri Bhagavan’s Aradhana Day.

Sri Bhagavan’s 36th Brahma Nirvana was celebrated in all solemnity on May 6, 1986 with the usual elaborate abhishekams, archanas and pujas to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam.

Sri Ramachandra Khoday of Bangalore flooded the Shrine and other important places of worship in the Ashram, including the entrances, with colourful flower garlands. He had sent vegetables and fruits as well, towards the biksha to devotees on that sacred day. Thousands of poor were sumptuously fed.

In the afternoon a satsang meeting was held in which Sri Kunju Swami, Sri J. Jayaraman, Srí V. Dwaraknath Reddy, Sri A.R. Natarajan, Smt. Ratna Navaratnam and our Managing Editor spoke in a homely and intimate way of their understanding of and devotion to Sri Bhagavan.

Smt. Kanakamma, a senior devotee living in our midst, was kind enough to agree to release the book and cassette, The Bridal Garland of Letters and another cassette Ramana Vandana. The book published by the

Satsang-meeting: Speakers shared their Ramana-experiences with bhaktas. (l to r) Sri Kunju Swami, Sri J. Jayaraman, Srí V. Dwaraknath Reddy.

Momentum gathering to make the Ramana Aradhana poor-feeding mela a grand success!
Kanvashrama Trust, The Bridal Garland of Letters, contains the facsimile of Sri Bhagavan’s handwriting in Tamil, with English translation and transliteration. The cassette with the same title enables the English-knowing to sing it in English exactly as it is being sung in Tamil. Sri Hamsa de Reede deserves congratulations on this successful venture.

‘Ramana Vandana’ a new cassette in Telugu, was brought out by the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore. The rendering of this enchanting music is by Ramananjali. Already this cassette has proved an instant success with the devotees!

AT KOLHAPUR

Prof. G.V. Kulkami of Kolhapur reports:

“Oh on May 6, 1986, on behalf of the Ramana Satsanga Mandal, we celebrated the 36th Brahma Nirvana Day of Bhagavan Ramana at our residence. (Surashree Apartments. 233 E, Tarabai Park, Near Pearl Hotel, Kolhapur 416 003.) In the morning there was Puja, Abhishekam, recitation of Upadesa Saram and reading. In the evening from 6 to 8 p.m. there was a symposium on: Bhagavan Ramana’s Atma Vichara and its value in this age of Science In which Sri Govindrao Kulkami, Sanjiva Kulkami, Prof. Mrs. Kapase, Prof. Mrs. Sonatakke, Sri Sudhir Kulkami, Dr. Prakash Kulkami and Dr. Suchal Vaidya participated.

Srimat Sankaracharya of Karveer Peeth (Kolhapur) presided over the function and made concluding observation, paying tributes to Maharshi in glowing terms. After Aarti, Prasad and Devotional song, the function came to a grand close.

It was indeed a holy, delightful and inspiring day for all of us and we could obviously feel His supreme Grace then and even now. May His Grace and blessings be with us all for ever.”
After two interesting Ramana Music sessions, by Sri O.S. Arun and Smt. Radha Venkatachalam, the seminar concluded with a demonstration by Smt. Ambika Kameshwar and students of the Ramana Nritya Kala Ranga, Bangalore (Kum. Mallika and Kum. Sanita) on ‘Communion with Ramana’. Through choice, elevating compositions, the demonstration depicted the nine forms of bhakti through dance. The evening’s festival concluded with devotion filled ‘Ramananjali’ and Bharatanatyam (Ramana Dance) by Swati Mahalashmi.

The Ramana Festival at Madurai was arranged by Madurai Ramana Kendram members on the 9th and 10th of May. Ramana Nritya by Smt. Ambika Kameshwar, elevating ‘Ramananjali’ and the rich dance ballet on Bhagavan’s life and teachings: ‘Ramana Vijayam’ by Ramana Nritya Kala Ranga, Bangalore were the highlights the programmes.

At the Ramana Shrine, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Bala sundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Karan Singh inaugurating the Ramana Seminar at Delhi.

Sri Karan Singh inaugurating the Ramana Seminar at Delhi.

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.

At the Ramana Centre, Bangalore, Shri A.R. Natarajan conducted a series of classes of Bhagavan Ramana’s Ujadeva Saram. He brought out repeatedly and lucidly the practical aspect of Bhagavan’s method of self-enquiry and its special relevance to everyday life.

On 22nd May, Dr. Balasundaram released Ramananjali’s 22nd cassette and the second in Telugu “Ramana Vandhana”.

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Sri Susil Shambu’s Kuchipudi Tarangam

Smt. Kanaka giving demonstration of Sringara in Ramana Dance.
Bhagavan’s Mahanirvana Day was observed with due solemnity, with veda parayana and devotional songs, on April 14 and on May 6, the actual thithi. Mother’s Day was observed on June 1.

On April 18, Sri Ramana Navami was celebrated in the traditional way with devotional music. A special Tiruppugazh bhajan was conducted on May 4 by the ladies of the Delhi Tiruppugazh Anbargal on the occasion of their Annual Day.

Talks on Bhagavan’s ‘Gita Sara’ were continued regularly by Shri K.C. Subbiah during the Sunday satsangs.

Classes on veda recitation were held on two days every week.

On May 29th, Swami Swahananda, the present head of the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, accompanied by Swami Heidayananda visited the Kendra. They were received by the members of the Kendra and shown round the Kendra and presented with books on Bhagavan. The Swamijis evinced keen interest in the activities of the Kendra like veda recitation, study classes and the library and recorded their appreciation in the Visitors Book. Other dignitaries to visit the Kendra included, Sangita Kalainidhi Professor S. Ramanathan on March 31 and Swami Krishnananda of Ayodhya on May 22.

An automatic wall-clock, mounted on a beautiful coloured picture of Bhagavan, was unveiled on April 6 and was christened as ‘Sujata’. The Kendra is grateful to Shri V. Ganesan of Sri Ramanasramam for donating the picture and to Kumari Sujata Gopalan for donating the clock.

On Friday, March 28, 1986, Sri Vidya Homam was performed at the Ashram, as usual, in commemoration of the commencement of the worship of the Mehru-Chakra, consecrated by the Touch of Bhagavan Ramana. The function was conducted on a grand scale with meticulous observance of all details by a band of well-versed vaidiks. The proceedings commenced at 7 a.m. and concluded with Poornahuti at 4 p.m. A large number of devotees participated. There was a bhiksha in the forenoon and at night prasad was distributed. This traditional ceremony is conducted every year with the generous support of many Ramana-bhaktas.

This year Sri V. Subramanian (the third son of Ashram President, Sri T.N. Venkataraman) and his wife Smt. Ramani Subramanian initiated the religious rites. All these years Sri T.N. Venkataraman was initiating the rituals of this important Homam.

Sri Vidya Havan

To feel in ourselves the want of Grace,
and to be grieved for it, is grace itself.
— Robert Burton.

Smt. Jayakahati, Calcutta.

Sri V. Ramachandra Rao, Hyderabad.

Sri Swami Kunsmananda GHI and Dr. & Smt. C. Ramachandran – from Hyderabad.

Mr. Peter Lishi Bangan and party from Italy.

Chinmaya Mission, Madras: Br. Siddha Chaitanya (accompanied by Br. Chandramouli) brought along with him a large group of Mission members. (in set). Our Managing Editor spoke to them on the importance of Sri Bhagavan's teachings and their relevance to the modern man.
Mrs. Chria and Mr. Achim came with their child to the Ashram a few years ago, when Mrs. Chria was in advanced pregnancy. She insisted she would have her baby delivered at the Ashram guest house itself, and she did have a beautiful baby-girl. In 1985, they came again to the Ashram (with their two children, Tao and Dui) to give birth to Jyothi Arunachala. They are determined to make Arunachala their permanent home. On returning to Italy they write:

"It was the second time that we had the good fortune of staying at Sri Ramanasramam. Though we have not seen the Maharshi in His life-time, in some mysterious way we felt invited by Himself. Though Maharshi’s spiritual instructions were given many years ago, they were well preserved by the Ashram and the resident-devotees, we are quite conscious, radiate His teachings through their simple yet profound living. In boundless thankfulness we express our joy!

— ACHIM AND CHRIA: WITH TAO, DUI AND JYOTHI ARUNACHALA."

After a visit to Sri Ramanasramam by Smt. Vidya Tewari, wife of Sri T.P. Tewari, Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, she wrote a beautiful poem in Hindi, describing how she was overwhelmed to see the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

She says: “Even today, the peacocks walk around the sanctum sanctorum radiating the divinity of the Ashram. The very picture of the Maharshi inculcates bhakti in the minds of the people. The peacocks move as if the Maharshi Himself blesses the devotees.

“The Maharshi’s Mother’s Samadhi and His Samadhi close by, absorb the devotees in deep meditation bringing them ever lasting bliss and peace.

“The hall where the Maharshi sat, accessible to all, is nearby. In it the seekers intent on Self-knowledge sit absorbed in dhyana, near the couch where the Maharshi reposed.

“The chanting of the Vedic hymns is a special feature of the Ashram; it is conducted regularly and systematically.

“The Maharshi’s samadhi is situated at the foot of the mountain. There are also other samadhis for the dog, crow, deer and cow. This reveals Maharshi’s universal love for all creation and His firm conviction that the same Atman resides in all living beings.

“The free dispensary reminds us of the compassion of the immortal Maharshi.

“The inmates and the devotees are getting ‘Prasad’ every day after puja.

“The activities of the Ashram are being taken care of even today by the descendants of the family of the Maharshi.

“The Pinnacle of the Arunachala Mountain is close to the Ashram and the very atmosphere of the Ashram throbs with divinity, sanctity and devotion.”
Mother Sutra Maha Devi of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Saramram, Sao Paulo, Brazil, visited the Ashram on 26.4.86. She wants to share the following with fellow-devotees:

"Here in Sao Paulo the Ashram is working with determination always, and we can say that we have now here in South America a great number of devotees around our group, and with the spiritual and material guidance of Sri Maha Krishna Swamy, is spreading the divine teachings of our Sadguru Ramana Maharshi, to more and more people. We have here devotees that come from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela and from U.S.A and even Europe, from France, Spain and other places. All these people come here and in our mother language, Portuguese, began to talk in the universal language of the Maharshi. Now we have happiness to communicate to Ramana-bhaktas, all over the world, as two new books of Sri Maha Krishna Swamy have been released.

A group of earnest seekers (from Switzerland and France), under the guidance of Dr. Anand Nayak, spent a few days at the Ashram. They were in India to study the Living Religions of India, Hinduism in particular and to have a closer acquaintance with what they had studied theoretically. They visited other Ashrams also.

Our Managing Editor explained to them the crux of Sri Maharshi’s teaching and answered questions put to him.

The following letter was received by our Managing Editor from Dr. Anand Nayak, Fribourg University Study Group, Switzerland:

"It is just over a month now that we are back from India. But our memories fly back to where you live, fond memories of good cheer! We would like to say hearty thanks for the excellent opportunity you gave us for meeting with you and for all the precious time you spent explaining to us the pure teaching of Sri Maharshi and its importance to modern man.

Needless to say this has proved to be one of the most interesting and fruitful meetings we have had in India. The men and women who came with me were very much impressed by you and your work which has provoked in them a deep reflection. While wishing you all success we assure you of our friendly thoughts and help. Do call upon us if we can be of help to you from this side of the world.

Once again thanking you for all that you offered us, we send you all our best wishes.

Arunachalavasi: In our October '85 issue, we were pleased to introduce two remarkable Arunachalavasis (permanently staying in Arunachala) along with the pictures of their abodes. Now, we find pleasure in publishing the house of Sri A.M. Thanapal. He left Malaysia along with his family—Smt. K. Ramaney, Master Sures and Kum. Kumudha—came over here and settled at Arunachala for good. Fortunate Arunachalavasis, indeed!
One is entitled “Being” — (SER in Portuguese) and the other “EMANCIPATION” (EMANCIPACAO in Portuguese).

“The first book “Ser” — “Being” relates to the teachings of the Absolute Truth, to wake up to perfect happiness those who are looking for divine awareness. The second book “Emancipacao” — “Emancipation” is the day-to-day life of myself (Mother Sutra Maha Devi) with the devotees of Sri Ramanasramam in Sao Paulo, emphasising the imminent need for the spiritual Emancipation of humanity, particularly women.

“Those interested in the books can contact:

Bhagavan Sri Ramanashram
Caixa Postal 60233,
05096-Sao Paulo-SP
Brasil — South America.

“Though for a very short time, I am extremely happy to be at Sri Ramanasram, the abode of our Master”

Tamil Parayanam Renewed

For the past few months, in front of the Samadhi Shrine of Sri Bhagavan, on every Monday and Thursday, between 6.45 and 7.30 p.m. devotees do parayanam of Sri Bhagavan’s Tamil works. On Monday, they sing Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala (Arunachala Stuti Panchakam) — and on Thursdays, Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu), Supplement to Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu Anubhandam) and Essence of Instruction in Thirty Verses (Upadesa Unthiar).

Sri Kunju Swami taught the participants not only the meaning of these important works of Sri Bhagavan but also the mode of singing alternate lines by two groups of devotees as it was done during Bhagavan’s time.

Sri Yogi Ramauratnam was instrumental in reviving this Tamil Parayanam, which had captivated him in those days when Sri Ramaswamy Pillai, Sri Somasundaram Pillai, Sri Kunju Swami and others did daily Parayana before Bhagavan.

Sri Bhagavan’s birth-star is Punarvasu. Every month on the Punarvasu day, devotees, particularly lady-devotees, sing in praise of the Master, in various languages, in the evening for about one and a half hours, in front of Sri Bhagavan’s Shrine.

AN IMPORTANT REQUEST

The Mountain Path is dedicated to our Beloved Master: Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Initially the annual subscription rate was Rs. 5/-; with great reluctance, during the course of years, it was eventually raised to Rs. 10/- and then again to Rs. 15/- for the past few years, though the cost of printing, paper and postage was rising stupendously, we postponed enhancing the subscription rates. However, now it has become imperative and so we are left with no other choice except to raise the subscription rates, since again the postal charges have been increased, particularly, prohibitively, the foreign postage.

We request our subscribers to extend their usual cooperation, unstintingly as always, notwithstanding the rise in subscription rates:

Revised Subscription Rates (effective from 1987):

Annual Subscription: Indian: Rs. 20/-
Foreign: £5 $10/-

Life Subscription: Indian: Rs. 200/-
Foreign: £50/$100/-

(For the revised airmail surcharges, kindly see the Contents Page).
OBITUARY

SRI V. GURUSWAMI IYER

Sri V. Guruswami Iyer was the third son of Smt. Lakshmi Ammal of Tiruchuzhi, who was a neighbour and a playmate of Sri Bhagavan in His boyhood.

He was a dedicated teacher and was headmaster in various high schools for over 30 years.

His association with Sri Bhagavan and Sri Ramanasramam began in 1920.

He used to visit the Ashram twice or thrice a year and spend a few days at the feet of Sri Bhagavan. While at the Ashram he would be very active — be it in the Library, the kitchen, or the dining hall. He was one of the blessed few to spend long hours with Bhagavan and among the few who helped in putting the mortal remains of Sri Bhagavan in the grave.

Sri Guruswami Iyer was absorbed in Him on March 4, 1986 at Tirunelveli. Till the last moment he was active and normal and was unceasingly chanting the Mahamantra 'Arunachala Siva'.

Many inmates of the Ashram, who had long association with him, will miss him dearly!

SRI MARAGATHA MATHAJI

Smt. Marakathammal, later known also as Sri Maragatha Mathaji, was a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan. She was married to Sri Ramalinga Mudaliar, whose grandfather was a disciple of Sri Guru Bavaji, a great saint.

The report that her eldest son, a soldier in the British Army, was killed in World War-II in Singapore, made Mathaji leave her home and wander like a mendicant all over the country, seeking solace and peace of mind. Finally she reached Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Bhagavan assured her that her son was alive and would return. She remained at the Ashram until Bhagavan's Maha Samadhi. Later, Mathaji returned to Ongole by which time her son did return home. However, the influence of Bhagavan on her was so transforming spiritually that the appearance of her son made little difference in her life.

Mathaji got an Ashram constructed on the hill where Sri Guru Bhavaji attained Maha Samadhi and pursued her spiritual quest.

Mathaji passed away peacefully on April 11, 1986.

SRI MAYILOTTI

Though his real name was Sadayan, Bhagavan’s bhaktas know him only as Mayilotti. As a mere boy he joined Ashram services during Bhagavan’s life-time. At that time the Maharani of Mandi had presented a white peacock to the Ashram. It needed careful protection and constant attention. Sadayan was deputed for that job. When Bhagavan came to know of it, He christened him as ‘Mayilotti’ (keeper of the peacock); this name stuck to him till the end.

He was in the Government Postal Service and was always ready to help Ramana-bhaktas. In fact, his wife and children too did and do willing service to devotees of Sri Bhagavan.

Mayilotti suddenly passed away on 17-5-86 due to heart-attack, at the age of 54 years.

MR. NORMAN GEORGE FRASER

Mr. Norman George Fraser was born in 1904 in Valparaiso (Chile). His many gifts — precocious musical ability, an enquiring mind, a special aptitude for languages and the predilection for religious search — showed themselves already in early childhood. Music and languages occupied all his working life, making him an internationally appreciated pianist, composer, writer, poet, linguist, worldwide traveller as well as B.B.C. representative and a representative of the British Council for Latin America. Only in retirement years was he able to devote himself to the permanent undercurrent of all that: his lifelong quest — the search of truth. The fruit came in the form of many articles he was inspired to write and the encouragement he was able to give others on the path, as many readers have testified, confirmed by his life’s companion, the contralto singer Mrs. Janet Fraser.

She writes to us: “We first heard of Ramana Maharshi through Joel Goldsmith in the year Joel died (1964). There appeared in his ‘Monthly Letters’ a notice about the newly founded ‘Mountain Path’ saying that articles by Joel were to appear in it, and that he had found in Ramana’s teaching which corroborated his own unfolding and was in complete accord with it — which we also found. The words may be different sometimes, but the message is the same.”

Norman Fraser passed away, gently and peacefully, on April 9, 1986, at his home in Sussex (England).