

Regd. No: 8300

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

S I L V E R J U B I L E E

Vol. 25, No. 2

April, 1988

Silver Jubilee

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

April 1988

Volume 25, Number 2

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Professor K. Swaminathan

EDITORS
Mrs. Lucy Cornelissen
Dr. K. Subrahmanian
Sri J. Jayaraman

MANAGING EDITOR
Sri V. Ganesan

PUBLISHER
Sri T.N. Venkataraman
President, Board of Trustees
Sri Ramanasramam
Tiruvannamalai

Letters and remittances
should be sent to:
The Managing Editor
"THE MOUNTAIN PATH"
Sri Ramanasramam P.O.
Tiruvannamalai-606 603.
S. India

-
- 66 "I Am Here" – Editorial
-
- 68 Leaves from Devotees' Diaries
-
- 70 Effort, Grace and Destiny by Arthur Osborne
-
- 73 Maharshi, the Poet— V by Ra. Ganapathi
-
- 77 Only He Can Make Us Think of Him
by Dr. K. Subrahmanian
-
- 78 Hui-neng and Non-Duality by G. Narayan
-
- 81 Our Quest for Happiness by B.C. Sengupta
-
- 86 The Observer is the Observed by Robert Powell
-
- 90 There is an Army of Thoughts by A.R. Natarajan
-
- 92 Recollections – II by Akhilandamma
-
- 97 The Story of 'The Mountain Path' by V. Ganesan
-
- 100 The Four Fatal Lies by Douglas E. Harding
-
- 104 In His Presence by Professor K. Swaminathan
-
- 106 The Look of Brilliance by Swami Madhavtirtha
-
- 109 To Withdraw As Pure Being by Kannudaiya Vallalaar
-
- 111 Early Devotees: I-b by Michael James
-
- 115 An Emperor (de jure) Yet a Prisoner (de facto)
by Prof. N.R. Krishnamurti Aiyar
-
- 118 My Golden Master by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya
-
- 120 In the Hall of Sri Bhagavan
-
- 122 Book Reviews
-
- 125 Ashram Bulletin

We thank the Devotees who
contributed generously for the
printing and production of this
issue

Cover Design by: Muralidhar Hegde

“I AM HERE”

IF he worked, it was by the will of others. He ate, without giving a thought to it, whatever food he might get, much or little, good or bad, whether he had begged it or got it by chance. He did not eat for pleasure, because he was free from the error of identifying the soul with the body and transferring to it the joys and sorrows that are the lot of the body, exposed to the pairs of opposites. In heat and cold, in wind and rain, he went about with his body, stout and sturdy, uncovered like a bull's; his *Brahmic* lustre hidden, like the diamond's, by the dust with which he was covered from sleeping on the bare ground and doing without rubbing or washing and wearing nothing more than a rag round his loins.”¹

This description of the *sahaja nishta*, *Jadabharata*, tallies almost word for word with accounts of the earlier days of Sri Bhagavan at Arunachala. Totally neglecting the demands of the body, firmly established in the inner poise of steadfast Wisdom, the lad of sixteen, moved about in and around the Arunachaleswara Temple, oblivious of the world without. This ‘dead even while alive’¹ state of being, so graphically described in the *Bhagavata*, portrait of *Jadabharata*, was the state supreme which Bhagavan Ramana felt and extolled as that of “the sovereign Lord of the Universe”² When asked whether any one had ever lived in this supreme state of *ati asrami*, Bhagavan promptly replied: “Suka, Rishabha, *Jadabharata*”³.

After the Great experience at Madurai, where Bhagavan confronted and overcame Death,

the lad Venkataraman, became a sage of Supreme Wisdom. The transformation — from becoming to Being, from death to Immortality — was unique in spiritual history as it was both permanent and total. “In the vision of death, though all the senses were benumbed, the *aham sphurana* (Self-awareness) was clearly evident, and so I realised that it was that awareness that we call ‘I’, and not the body. This Self-awareness never decays. It is unrelated to anything. It is self-luminous. Even if this body is burnt, it will not be affected. Hence, I realised on that very day so clearly that that was ‘I’.”⁴

In this changeless state the boy-god reached Arunachala. In ecstasy, freed for ever from all bonds, He did His last worldly duty — came and told the Father of the Son's total surrender to Him.

A *parivrajaka* (a wandering mendicant), say the scriptures, has to choose for his residence a temple, a hill, a cave, the foot of a tree or the banks of holy waters. The boy-sage on arrival at Arunachala on September 1, 1896, chose the temple; went in and embraced the *Lingam*, Arunachala. Perhaps, it is truer to say that Arunachala Himself drew His Son to that Eternal Embrace in that *sanctum sanctorum*, surcharged with the power of Purity and Peace.

¹ *Srimad Bhagavatam* by N. Raghunathan (Vol. I, Book V, Ch. IX)

² Sri Bhagavan's *Eight Stanzas to Sri Arunachala*, v. 7

³ TALKS No. 281 (dt. 15.11.1936)

⁴ *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* dt. 22.11.1945.

Young Ramana had now no need for a place to call His. "Every place is His; the earth's surface, everywhere is His bed; the trees are His umbrellas; the moon His lantern; and all the persons he meets are His brothers and sisters."

The son's total surrender was matched by the Father's gracious care. How else could one account for Seshadri Swami saving the boy-rishi from the dungeon of Pathala-linga, Uddandi Nayinar providing full protection beneath the Iluppai-tree, Ratnammal thrusting food into the mouth of the young ascetic, and Palani Swami's paternal solicitude for years together? Those were days of absolute self-abandonment. His arm was His pillow, His palm was His leaf-plate, a thrown-away rag was His dress, no bath, no awareness of day or night! When He was sitting under a tree in the compound He was covered with dirt, for He never used to bathe. In the cold nights of December He used to fold up the legs, place His head between His legs and remain there without moving. Early in the morning the layer of dirt on His body was soaked with dew and mist and appeared white. After drying up in the sun it appeared dark.⁵

No hunger, no thirst and no waking and sleeping.

"There is a fixed state: sleep, dream and waking states are mere movements in it. They are like pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show. Everyone sees the screen as well as the pictures but ignores the screen and takes the picture alone. The *Jnani* however considers only the screen and not the pictures. The pictures certainly move on the screen yet do not affect it. The screen itself does not move but remains stationary. His is the true state and also the primal and natural state of Being. When once the man reaches it he gets fixed there. Fixed once, fixed ever he will be."⁶

Detachment or renunciation is not giving up of things but total non-identification with things.

While the early years testify to His complete neglect of the body and its needs, in the later years when He was recognised and made much of by multitudes, Sri Ramana revealed another aspect of detachment, non-rejection of things showered on Him. He exemplified the law that "refusing to accept is as egoistic as craving for possession."

The freedom Sri Bhagavan gave to others to enjoy His *saameepya* (proximity, nearness), His *soulabhya* (easy accessibility), explains this new aspect of detachment. This detachment shone in every act that happened around Him, every moment. The sun's life-giving heat and the moon's cool brightness blended in Sri Ramana's Presence.

The beauty about Bhagavan's life is that all the happenings that took place during the Pathala Linga, Iluppai Tree and Gurumurtam days were later casually recounted by Him. That is, even when He was in *nirvikalpa samadhi*, totally absorbed within, He was aware of happenings without. This state is rare, though not unknown to spiritual lore, and it is extolled as *Sahaja Samadhi*. In the body, yet transcending its limitations.

In the last months, while subjecting the body to repeated surgery and remaining indifferent to excruciating pain, Sri Bhagavan recapitulated, as it were, the old Pathala Linga days. To give up *dehatma buddhi* ('I-am-the-body-idea') and abide as the Self-eternal is the message of the Master.

Great sages — like Suka, Jadabharata, Ramana — have thus demonstrated that they are not the body, but pure awareness dwelling in a body radiating light and peace.

In this light, His last words sum up the lesson taught by four and fifty years of life as Arunachala-Siva:

"I am not going away; I am here. Where could I go?"

⁵ TALKS No. 357

⁶ TALKS, No. 607

**LEAVES FROM DEVOTEES'
DIARIES**

I AM

"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".

— SRI BHAGAVAN

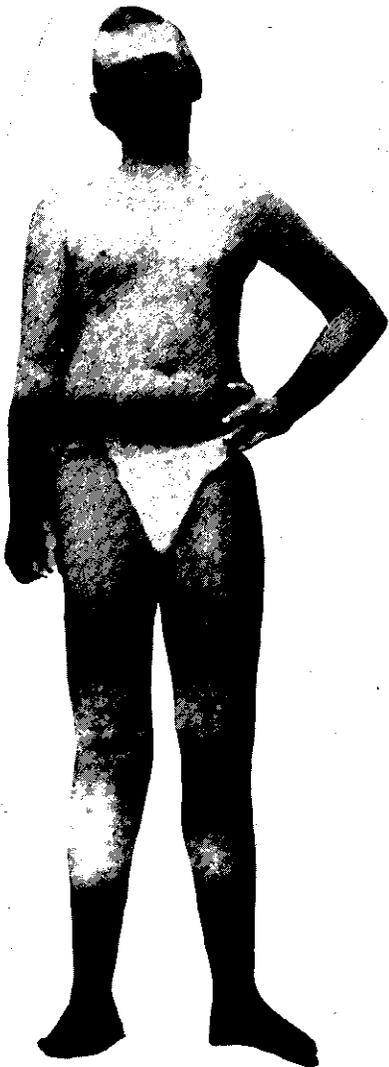
THUS renouncing everything he went back to the temple, got drenched in a sharp shower on the way and, so cleansed, took his abode in the thousand-pillared hall where he spent some weeks in motionless silence. Among those who looked after him during this period was Seshadri Swami, a learned ascetic of high spiritual attainment. But both of them were subject to the unwelcome attention of mischievous boys. Hence the *Brahmana Swami*, as the young ascetic came to be called, took shelter in a vault, known as *Patala Linga*, beneath the hall. Ants, vermin and mosquitoes fed on his flesh during the weeks he spent there but the young man, absorbed in the bliss of Being, was unmoved.

When some devotees discovered the *Brahmana Swami* in the cellar, oblivious of the dreadful condition he was in, with worm-infested wounds oozing pus, they removed him to a stone *mandapa* in the nearby shrine of Gopuram Subramanyar.

— from *Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 13-14

— by K. Swaminathan

For about two months the *Brahmana Swami* stayed at the Subramanyar shrine. He would sit motionless in *samadhi* (absorption) and sometimes nourishment had to be put into his mouth as he paid no heed when it was offered him.



NOT THE BODY

For some weeks he did not even trouble to tie on a loincloth. He was looked after by a *mouna swami* (one who observes silence) who also lived at the shrine.

After a few weeks the *Brahmana Swami* moved out to the temple garden, full of tall oleander bushes, some of them ten or twelve feet high. Here also he would sit immersed in bliss (*samadhi*). He even moved about in trance, for on waking to the world he would sometimes find himself under a different bush with no recollection of how he got there. He went next to the hall of the temple vehicles on which the images are taken in procession on holy days. Here also he would sometimes wake to the world to find his body in a different place, having avoided the various obstacles on the way without injury though unaware.

— from *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, pp. 33-34.

— by Arthur Osborne

From now on he was moved to various shrines and groves on the outskirts of the town away from curious onlookers, and was looked after by various good people — mendicants, devotees from the town, temple functionaries and others. He was absorbed in the Self and virtually dead to the world during these months, and had to be vigorously shaken by the shoulders before he would notice and accept the food and water which some devotee would bring to him once a day. Years later the Maharshi recalled how he had been forcibly administered a bath by a motherly devotee, the first in four months after his arrival in Tiruvannamalai — and it was twelve months later, when he was

in Gurumurtam, that another such devotee gave him his second bath. Likewise, his hair remained uncut and his face unshaven for some eighteen months. He told Nagamma years later: "The hair had got matted and woven like a basket. Small stones and dust had settled in it and the head used to feel heavy. I had long nails and a frightful appearance. So people pressed me to have a shave, and I yielded. When my head was shaven clean I began to wonder whether I had a head or not, it felt so light. I shook my head this way and that to assure myself that it was there!"

— from *Ramana Maharshi*, p. 14

— by K. Swaminathan

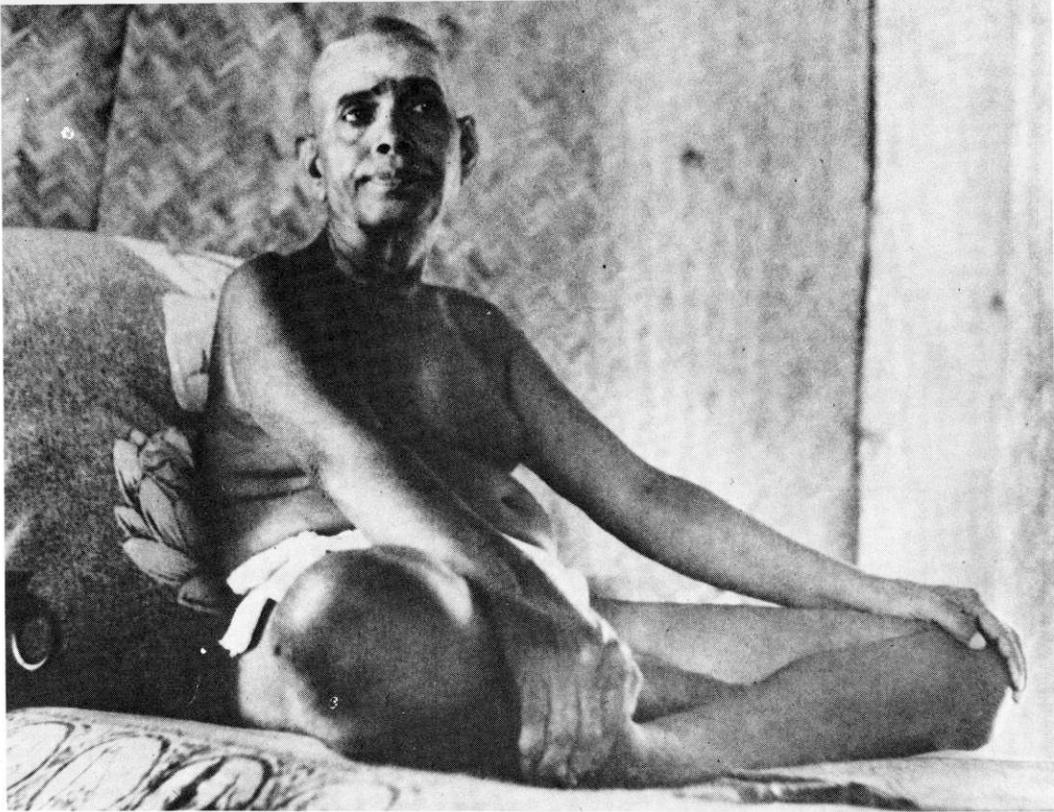
The Swami's daily routine of life during the year and a half that he stayed at Gurumurtam was rapt *samadhi*, disturbed only by the noise of visitors and the dinner cup. This was his only meal and sufficed just to keep body and soul together; no wonder the former grew thin and looked like a skeleton. He had no exercise and sometimes days passed before a slight relief was afforded to the distended bowels. He would sit on the bench, mostly dazed, not knowing and not caring if it was morning or evening or one day or another of the week.

— from *Self Realization*, pp. 57-58

— by B.V. Narasimha Swami

"People who were coming and going used to say, 'He is sitting like a *jada*, he must be a mad fellow'. I wish such madness would overtake all people!"

— from *A Pictorial Biography*, p. 31



EFFORT, GRACE AND DESTINY

By Arthur Osborne

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To do this constitutes the effort of which the teachers and scriptures speak. The mind has created the obstruction; the mind has to remove it. But merely to recognize this, to recognize, that is to say, that the ego is (according to Advaitin) an illusory self or (according to the dualist) a creation of the Spirit, to which it should be submitted and totally passive, is far from constituting the full effort required. Indeed, it increases the obligation for total effort and therefore, so to speak, the guilt in not making effort.

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

Methods such as I have been alluding to consist largely in curtailing the ego's outer manifestations so as to induce the mind to turn inwards to the Self or Spirit behind it. It is also possible to proceed in the opposite direction by turning inward to the Spirit and thence deriving strength to renounce the outer manifestations. This is the path of love and devotion, worshipping God, submitting to Him, calling upon His Name, striving to serve and remember Him with one's whole life. Either path can be followed, or both together. A third path is that of questioning the very existence of the ego by Self-enquiry.

All this is effort. Then what about Grace? Grace is the natural flow of the Spirit into and through the mind and faculties. There is nothing capricious or erratic about it. Bhagavan said: "Grace is always there; it is only you who have to make yourself receptive to it." It is likened

traditionally to the sunlight falling on a flower garden: If one bud opens and not another it is not due to any partiality on the side of the sun but only to the maturity or immaturity of the buds. Or if the sunlight penetrates one room but not another it is simply because the doors and windows are open in one and in the other shut.

Why then is it said that the *Atma* chooses whom it will and that the final Realization comes by Grace, not by effort? In order to remove the insidious idea that the ego-self can continue to exist and attain something called 'Realization', whereas all it can do is to immolate itself and be replaced by the realized state of the Spirit, which is ever-present Grace. The mind makes efforts to remove obstructions; it is hard for it to understand that it is itself the final obstruction. The very desire for Realization has to be carefully watched and can become an impediment; for it implies some one to achieve something. At the end all that the mind is called on to do is to keep still and allow the Grace to flow unimpeded — but that is the hardest thing of all for it to do.

Till the end,

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

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

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

to exist?" Whereas the Guru realizes the ultimate truth that: "There is no being of the unreal and no non-being of the Real" (*Bhagavad Gita*, II, 16). Not that the unreal ego will cease to be at such and such a point in time but that it is not now, never has been and never could be. Therefore the attitude of mind which questions when one can attain Realization or whether it is one's destiny to be realized in this lifetime is an obstruction sufficient to prevent Realization, being an assertion of the temporary existence of the unreal. Similarly, if you assert that you cannot attain Realization in this lifetime you are thereby preventing yourself from doing so by postulating the existence of a 'you' who cannot attain.

And yet, paradoxically, it is also an impediment to assert that no effort need be made, on the pretext that, as "there is no being of the unreal and no not-being of the Real, "One is that now and has therefore no need to strive to become That." It sounds plausible, but it is an impediment because it is the pseudo-self, the illusory unreal, that is saying it. The master can say that there is nothing to achieve because one is That already; the disciple can't. Bhagavan would sometimes say that asking the best way to Realization is like being at Tiruvannamalai and asking how to get there, but that could not be the attitude of the devotee. He expected the devotee to make effort, even while appreciating the paradox that there is no effort to make. In the same way he could say that for the Realized Man there is no Guru-disciple relationship but add that for the disciple the relationship is a reality and is of importance.

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

MAHARSHI, THE POET – V

By Ra. Ganapati

Y ES, it did happen. By the grace of the Overlord and the will of Parasakti who directs the universe, a song was after all born in the heart of one established in *Brahman*. The mundane motive of securing food was its excuse. It was the Will Divine that the world should profit by a peerless devotional song sung in the mode of *madhura bhava*. It was Parasakti's sportive will that one established in the non-dual Self should be seized by the longing for communion. Did She not cause Suka to sing of Krishna's *Raasakreedha* and Manikkavachaka to sing *Thirukkovai*? Now She transforms the immaculate *Brahmachari*, young Ramana, into a lass fired by Love offering her marriage-garland of word-blossoms to Lord Arunachala. It was as though She makes Ramana utter the Love-longing of all *sadhaks*, the pain of separation and the yearning for reunion, of Nature and God, of *prakrti* and *purusha*.

Quizzical as She is, She provided the occasion therefor in a Ramana group of mendicants for food.

Remember how the *Adi Kavi* Valmiki was inspired to great poetry at the sight of something

very unpoetic — a hunter shooting down a heron? Now, She pounced upon a better "setting!"

Sri Ramana was in one of his usual *giri-pradakshinas* (circumambulations of the Hill) and felt impelled to give this group a distinctive song of its own. Could there be a better setting? As a satellite orbits round a planet, even so Ramana circumambulated Arunachala. The child in sport loves going round the parent. Yes, in emergence, only Parent and child. But what about merger, the off-spring coming back to the source in total union? In that supreme union, is not the relationship quite another?

How can our worldly classifications be valid or relevant here? Was it not because of this, that Manikkavachaka, singing of the relationship between Siva and Sakti, took it not only as that between consorts but also many more besides:

*Our Lord to Himavan's daughter¹
Is spouse, son, sire,
And brother elder besides.*

¹ Himavan's daughter: Sakti



When Ramana as *jiva* obeyed the centrifugal pull of Sakti as *Maya* and his body went round the Hill, the same Sakti as Grace filled his mind with the longing for union and inspired the superb song of bridal mysticism.

What a transformation! The masculinity of the *Jnani* Ramana all gone, the maiden feminine Ramana burns in the fire of separation from her Arunachala and petitioning Him, taunting Him and offering Him *Marital Garland* in her hands.

After abducting me if now Thou dost not
embrace me,
Where is Thy chivalry, Oh Arunachala!

As a lode-stone draws a piece of iron
And holds it fast, do Thou to me,
Oh Arunachala!

Unless Thou embrace me, I shall melt away
In Tears of anguish, Oh Arunachala!

Be thou my stay and hold me, lest I droop
Helpless like a tender creeper, Oh Arunachala!

Let us embrace upon the bed of flowers,
which is the mind, within the room of the
body
(or the Ultimate Truth), Oh Arunachala!

Speaking of Arunachaleswara as her own
Ramana, Beloved, our Ramani says :

I spoke thus to Thee, because Thou art my
Lord:
Be not offended but come and give me
happiness,
Oh Arunachala!

Let us enjoy one another in the House of
Open Space,
where there is neither night nor day,
Oh Arunachala!

The sage-turned-bride strung a garland of letters — each verse whereof began with a letter of the Tamil alphabet in order, (as in the song “*Adbhuta Vighraha Amaraadeeswara*”) and finished the hundred and eighth² blossom-offering with :

Oh Arunachala ! my loving Lord ! Throw Thy
garland
Round my neck and wear Thyself,
This my garland, Arunachala !

Even as bride and groom exchange garlands in a wedding, so too must Lord Siva garland His beloved, Ramana, and accept in exchange this *Marital Garland of Letters* ! The title of the original is *Akshara Mana Malai*. (*Akshara* : Letters, the alphabet ; *mana* : wedding ; *malai* : garland) *Akshara Mana Malai* can also be aptly called *Aksha Ramana Maalai*. the garland to the Eternal Bridegroom Ramana, who is the unmoving central axis (*aksha*) of the ever-moving wheel of Time and Space.

Rare indeed are those who can appreciate with rapport the delicate *rasa* (sentiment) of the bridal attitude towards the Divine. Therefore Ramana, who was inspired to compose the poem for the delectation of all, did not devote all the one hundred and eight verses to that *bhava* alone. Just like cashew nuts in *paayasa* (milk-rice porridge), only ten or twelve verses are set in this mode, while like the other ingredients of milk, sugar and rice, other links like master-servitor, parent-child and teacher-disciple, are portrayed in the majority of the verses.

Much can be said of the beauties of the *Marital Garland of Letters*. But we shall rest content to mention only some of its excellences.

The greatest distinction of the *Marital Garland* is that the *Jnani* who spurned *Maya* prays to Lord Arunachala to make him blossom into a “fuller” *Jnani* for whom *Maya* is not only acceptable but relishable.

That is : praying for the state of not negating or ignoring or rejecting the world, but accepting and loving it — this is the chief distinction of *The Marital Garland*.

Quite appropriate, because Arunachala is *Ardhanareeswara*, and has given half His body to Sakti, who is none other than *Maya* !

² 108 is a very sacred number. Floral offerings are usually done to the chant of 108 Names of the Lord.

In general, the embodied soul is aware of the world (*Maya*) alone and not of *Atman* (Self). It is the world which veils the Self. All that the embodied being has to do is to remove this curtain. Naturally, an individual becomes a *Jnani* established in *Brahman* only by recognizing the unreality of *Maya*-world. In his state of absorption, the *Jnani* does not at all cognise the existence of the world. This state is called *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi*. It is the state where *Maya* is absolutely eschewed. *Atman* alone shines, mind and speech transcended. *Kevala* means 'unadulterated' all by itself. *Kaivalya*, one of the words for Liberation, is derived from 'kevala'.

Whence this *Maya*, this world of illusion, the illusion of a body, and the illusion of a mind? Even if it be contended that they are but just appearances or a mask, must there not then exist a basis of Reality that takes the appearance and dons the mask? What is that?

As the only Reality is the Self, what can even this *Maya* be and whence can it arise? Yes, it is from the Self alone that *Maya* too has appeared. The basic Reality that supports all illusions, is only the Self. The lone actor who appears in all the roles and who does all the masks of *Maya* is none other than the Self.

If it be so, how can we say that the "fullest" Realisation could be had when the *mayic* appearance of the Self is subtracted in the *kevala nirvikalpa* state? As, in the state, there is no sport of the *Maya* of the Self, how can it be plenary (*purna*) Realisation? Is not identity with *Brahman* alone that is Total Realisation? Is not *Brahman Nirguna* (attributeless) and *Saguna* (with attributes) at one and the same time? While remaining by itself serene and unqualified, is It not also engaged in the sport of *Maya* all the time, creating and enjoying the illusion of the world? If *kevala nirvikalpa samadhi* is the state of absolute identity with the *Brahman* minus this sport, how can it be called Plenary Attainment?

It is clear therefore that only the *simultaneous* experiencing of the Self plus engagement in

the *Maya*-sport deserves to be called Plenary Realisation where absolute identity with *Brahman* is attained.

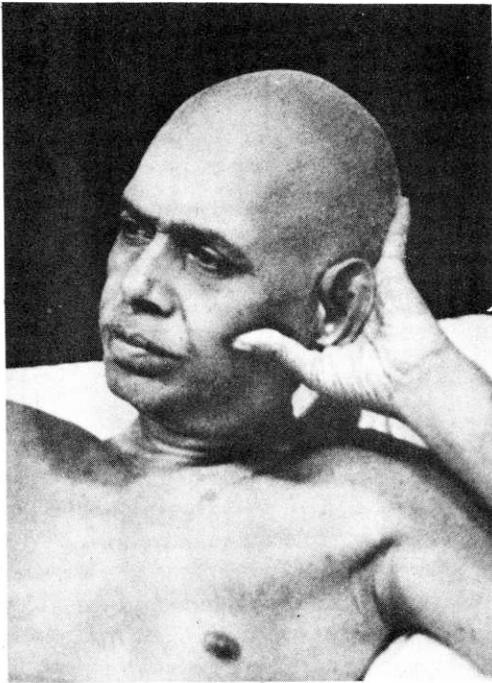
At first, there is the state of ignorance — when *Maya* alone is known and not the *Atman*. Then comes the state of *Jnana* when *Atman* alone is known and *Maya* is completely unknown. This is the state of *kevala nirvikalpa*. Still later comes the state of *vijnana* when both *Atman* and *Maya* are known simultaneously — being at once the Peace of Being and experiencing and enjoying the Love-Power of Becoming, which is in fact, Being's own appearance, guise, sport or magic — internally abiding in non-dual bliss, and externally behaving as if aware of the dualistic world and relating oneself to this world of illusion. This Transcendent Plenary State is known as *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Even though such a *Jnani* in *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi* appears to be engaged in the activities of the world, he has no mind like ours, (that is, cut off from the *Atman*) that perceives only differences and diversity. The day he attained identity with the *Atman*, that very day, died the individual mind which perceives difference and duality. The new mind now engaging in the sport of *Maya*, is totally different from our minds which are limited and clouded by *upadhis*. That mind is a gift from *Paramatman* Himself. *Ramana Bhagavan* called it '*suddha manas*' (Pure Mind), with no sense of difference born of separation from the *Atman*. The *Buddha*-mind is egoless, impersonal which perceives the one Being behind all becomings.

If, even after the dawn of *Jnana*, *Jnanis* like *Sankara*, *Buddha*, and *Sadasiva Brahmendra* were actively engaged in the world, it was surely because the Supreme Power, *Parasakti*, made them perceive after their Self-realisation the *Maya*-sport also as but arising from the self-same Self.

In the *Marital Garland* *Sri Ramana* prays for the conferment of that state. More of it, by and by.

(to be continued)



ONLY HE CAN MAKE US THINK OF HIM

By Dr. K. Subrahmanian

SRI Bhagavan once said that even to think of God, we must have the Grace of God. 'There is no real quest without Grace'. When we think of Him, when we meditate on Him, we are not doing anything of our own accord. We think of Him, meditate on Him as he makes us do them. We can't take any credit to ourselves. We are not doing these activities, we are made to do these. The moment we are fully conscious of this, we shall be utterly humble. Whatever happens during the meditation, happens because he makes it happen the way it happens. So there is no cause for joy or sorrow.

Sri Bhagavan hasn't said even once that he thought of Arunachala. He continually says that Arunachala made him think of Arunachala and he is grateful to Him for that. In Verse 3 of *Arunachala Pathikam* Sri Bhagavan says: 'I had no idea of thinking of you at all. And yet you drew me with your cord of Grace...' In Verse 49 of *Aksharamanamalai*, Sri Bhagavan says: 'Wealth benignant, holy Grace that came to me unsought...' Everywhere Sri Bhagavan talks about the Grace that was showered unsought. He didn't seek Arunachala but Arunachala made him seek Him. Sri Bhagavan talks of his own utter insignificance, and the majesty, grandeur and glory of Arunachala. In Verse 5 of *Arunachala Pathikam*, Sri Bhagavan says: 'From out of all the creatures in the world, what did you gain by choosing me? You saved me, did you not, from falling into the void and you have held me firm fixed at your feet. Lord of the Ocean of Grace, my heart shrinks in modesty, even at the thought of you. Long may you live, O Arunachala, and let me bend my head in praise and worship of you'.

Whenever we feel depressed at not progressing in our *sadhana* despite our efforts, we must remind ourselves that we are not doing any *sadhana* of our own but He is making us do it out of His Grace. It is up to Him to do what He wills with our *sadhana*. We cannot choose Him, only He can choose us. The *Kathopanishad* says: "This *Atman* cannot be attained by study of Vedas or by intelligence, nor by much listening. It is gained by him alone whom it chooses. To Him this *Atman* reveals its true nature" (I, 2.23).

We cannot choose to do or avoid *sadhana*. When chosen, we must be grateful and humble and not complain about results. We must leave everything to Arunachala who, Sri Bhagavan says, will not stop till He makes us still, like the holy Hill itself, once we turn to Him (*Decad 10*).

We are made to turn to Him through His Grace. It is through His Grace that we think of Him and it is for Him to do what He likes with us and our *sadhana*.

HUI-NENG AND NON-DUALITY

By G. Narayan

HUI-NENG (8th century) was the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch'an School of Buddhism, Bodhi Dharma who travelled from India to China being the First Patriarch. The word *Dhyana* in Sanskrit was pronounced as *Ch'an* in China.

Hui-Neng's father died when he was quite young leaving his mother poor and miserable. Hui-Neng sold firewood in the market place to support himself and his mother, and he was illiterate. One day he found a man reciting the 'Diamond Sutra' (*Vajracchedika*) and Hui-Neng's mind was at once enlightened. On making enquiries he found that the man was a disciple of Hwang-Yen, the Fifth Patriarch, who had a thousand disciples, monks as well as the laity. After making some arrangements for his mother's support, Hui-Neng travelled for thirty days to reach the monastery of the Patriarch.

On meeting the Patriarch Hui-Neng said he wanted nothing but *Buddhahood*. The Patriarch replied that he was an illiterate aborigine from the South and how could he expect to become a Buddha. Hui-Neng said that he was different from His Eminence physically but there was no difference in their *Buddha-nature*; when he asked for some work and permission to stay, the Patriarch sent him to the kitchen to split firewood and hull rice. Eight months later the Patriarch met Hui-Neng and told him that his knowledge of Buddhism was sound and that he was refraining from speaking to him lest evil men become jealous and harm him.

One day the Patriarch assembled all his disciples and said: "Merit will be of no help to you, if your essence of mind is polluted and clouded. Go now and seek for the transcendental wisdom that is within your own minds and then write me a stanza about it. He who gets the clearest idea of what Mind-essence is will be given the Insignia of the Patriarch and will succeed me".

The disciples withdrew and talked among themselves that Elder Shin-Shau was the man to write the poem as he was a senior and they would consider him as their master. Shin-Shau after considerable hesitation wrote a poem on the wall during midnight:

"Our body may be compared to the Bodhi-tree; while our mind is a mirror bright. Carefully we cleanse and watch them hour by hour, and let no dust collect upon them".

The Patriarch saw the poem next day and said that one who practises it will gain great merit. He sent for Shin-Shau and said: "To attain Supreme Enlightenment, one must be able to know spontaneously one's own self-stature which is neither created nor can it be annihilated. From one momentary sensation to another, one should be able to realise Essence of Mind". He suggested to Shin-Shau to think it over and submit another stanza.

Two days later a friend of Hui-Neng recited Shin-Shau's poem and asked him to practice

it to gain merit. Hui-Neng asked the boy to take him to the Hall and to read it to him in the night. He was illiterate, so he asked the boy to write his poem on the wall.

*“By no means is Bodhi a kind of tree
Nor is the bright reflecting mind, a case of
mirror.
Since Mind is emptiness
Where can the dust collect”.*

A crowd was collecting in the morning and the Patriarch after reading the poem erased the stanza with his shoe lest jealous ones do him injury. In the third watch of the night the Patriarch met Hui-Neng and expounded the *Diamond Sutra* and when he came to the sentence “One should use one’s mind in such a way that it will be free from any attachment”, Hui-Neng was thoroughly enlightened and realised that all things in the universe are manifestations of Mind-essence.

The Patriarch gave Hui-Neng the begging-bowl and the robe, and asked him to leave the place lest someone should harm him. He rowed Hui-Neng across the river and asked him not to preach too soon as (*Ch’an*) Buddhism is not to be easily spread. He anointed Hui-Neng the Sixth Patriarch and asked him to travel South as fast as he could. Hui-Neng walked toward the South, and many were in pursuit of him with the intention of recovering the robe and the begging-bowl. In two months one monk Wei-Ming overtook him. His manner was rough and temper hot. Hui-Neng threw the robe and the bowl on a rock and asked him to take them. When he reached the rock Wei-Ming tried to pick them up but could not. He apologized to Hui-Neng and asked him to teach him — *Dharma*. Hui-Neng suggested to him to refrain from thinking and keep his mind perfectly empty and receptive. When he had done this for some time Hui-Neng asked: “Venerable Sir, at this particular moment when you are thinking of neither good nor evil, what is your real self-nature”. Wei-Ming felt enlightened and asked if there were any esoteric teachings. “What I can tell you is not esoteric”, Hui-Neng

replied: “If you turn your light inward, you will find what is esoteric within your own mind”.

Hui-Neng travelled further South and took refuge in Sze-Wui where he stayed with a party of hunters for fifteen years anonymously. He ate rice and vegetables, and occasionally talked to them in a manner that befitted their understanding. When the time had come to propagate the *Dharma*, Hui-Neng left the place and went to the Fatshin temple in Canton.

The pennant was being blown about by the wind and two monks entered into a dispute as to what was in motion, the wind or the pennant. Hui-Neng suggested to them that it was neither; what actually moved was their own mind. The monks were puzzled and surprised, and took Hui-Neng to the Master Yen-Chung. The master finding him an extraordinary man asked if he was the Sixth Patriarch come down South. Hui-Neng politely assented and showed the assembly the robe and the begging-bowl.

The master conducted a ceremony of initiation receiving Hui-Neng into the order, and then asked Hui-Neng to accept him as a pupil. He further asked what further instructions Hui-Neng had received when the Fifth Patriarch had transmitted the *Dharma* to him. Hui-Neng replied: “Apart from a discussion on the realisation of Mind-essence, he gave me no other instruction. He did not refer to *Dhyana* nor to Emancipation. Because that would mean two kinds of *Dharmas*. That is not the *Buddha Dharma*, for the *Buddha Dharma* is not dual in its nature”

While the Patriarch lived in Po-lam monastery in the South, Master Shin-Shau preached in Yuk-Chuen, Monastery in the North. There was mutual respect between the two teachers. Shin-Shau asked his disciple Chi-Shing to go to Tso-Kai to listen to the lectures of the Patriarch and report to him accurately after his return. When the Patriarch came to address the assembly he said some one had come secretly to learn the teaching, and asked Chi-Shing to convey his Master’s teachings. “According to his teaching” replied Chi-Shing, “To refrain from all evil action, is *Sila*; to prac-

tise whatever is good, is *Prajna*, and to purify one's mind, is *Dhyana*'. This is the way he teaches us. May I ask what your system is?"

The Patriarch said, "The teaching of your master on *Sila*, *Dhyana* and *Prajna* is fitted for minds of wise men, it is true, but my teaching is intended for minds of a more advanced type. He who has realised Mind-essence, himself, may dispense with such doctrines as *Bodhi*, *Nirvana*, and knowledge of Emancipation. To those who have realised Mind-essence, it makes no difference whether they formulate all systems of *Dhyana*, or dispense with all of them. Because of this non-attachment they are free from all obstacles and impediments".

Again he said: "What I try to do to my disciples, is to liberate them from their own bondage, by such device as each case requires. In expounding the *Dharma*, I do not deviate from the state of my intuitive mind. To do otherwise would indicate that the Expositor's Mind-essence was obscured, and that he was competent to teach only the phenomenal side of the *Dharma* but not its essence. Listen to this stanza:

*"To free the mind from all
improprieties is the 'Sila' of Mind-essence;
To free the mind from all
perturbations is the 'Dhyana' of the Mind-
essence;*

*That which neither increases nor
decreases is the 'diamond' of Mind-essence.*

*Going and coming are only phases of
'Samadhi'".*

Chi-Shing made obeisance to the Patriarch and volunteered to be his attendant.

Hui-Neng preached for thirty seven years to the benefit of all sentient beings. His discourses on *Dhyana*, on *Prajna* and other topics of interest are recorded in many books. Royal patronage came to him but he could not travel due to age and requested the Emperor that he be allowed to spend the remaining years in the "forest". The Emperor sent him a Korean Mo-la robe and a crystal bowl, and ordered the Prefect to renovate his monastery.

After eating with his disciples, on the final night of his passing away, the Patriarch spoke as follows:

"What you should do is to know your own mind and realise your *Buddha*-nature which neither rests nor moves, neither becomes nor ceases to be, neither comes nor goes, neither affirms nor denies, neither remains nor departs. I repeat this to you that you may surely realise your Mind-essence. If you carry out my teachings after my death and practise them, then my going away will make no difference to you"

He sat reverently until the third watch of the night, then he said abruptly, "I am going now", and in a moment passed away. Forty three of his disciples inherited the *Dharma*: while those who attained a measure of enlightenment and thereby got out of the rut of ordinary life were too many to be numbered. When Buddhist scholars took the teachings of *Ch'an Buddhism* to Japan it was known as *Zen*.

Statement about ownership and other particulars about THE MOUNTAIN PATH according to Form IV, Rule 8, Circular of the Registrar of Newspapers for India:

1. *Place of Publication*— Madras-18; 2. *Periodicity of its Publication*— Quarterly; 3. *Printer's Name*— T.V. Venkataraman; *Nationality*— Indian; *Address*— The Jupiter Press Private Limited, 552 Mount Road, Madras-18; 4. *Publisher's Name*— T.N. Venkataraman; *Nationality*— Indian; *Address*— Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai; 6. *Name and Address of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than 1% of the total capital*— SRI RAMANASRAMAM, Tiruvannamalai-606 603.

I, T.N. Venkataraman, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: 31-3-88.

Signature of the Publisher: (Sd.) T.N. Venkataraman.

OUR QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

By B.C. Sengupta

EVERYBODY wants happiness untainted by sorrow. But we find few people obtaining such happiness. Looking at the phenomenal existence of ours we find that it is almost an invariable law that, like night alternating with day, happiness always alternates with misery. If it is in the nature of things that happiness must always alternate with misery then it would be impossible for anybody to obtain perpetual peace and happiness. But Prophets, Sages and Saints, all the world over, have emphatically declared that it is possible to transcend this phenomenal existence of ours and to attain a state of perpetual peace and happiness untainted by sorrow. This they have declared, not as a theoretical possibility based on rational arguments, but as a fact of their own personal experience, as a state actually realised by them. They declare that Bliss is the very nature of man's true being, and to obtain perpetual happiness one has only to search for and abide in the primal state of one's true being — which is the Self. They declare that happiness does not lie in and cannot be obtained from any one of the countless objects of the mundane world. It is through sheer ignorance we fancy that happiness is obtained from them. The truth is, they declare, that every time one's desire gets fulfilled, the mind becomes introverted (ceases to get externalised), thus touching its source (though unconsciously) and for an instant experiences that happiness which is natural to the Self.

Immediately, another unfulfilled desire rises in the mind and extroverts it. The mind thus losing its contact with the Self we become unhappy again. If we can always firmly abide in the Self we shall constantly experience perpetual Bliss, which is the very nature of the Self. For thus firmly abiding in the Self, the Sages have also prescribed practical methods, following which we may also realise such a state of perpetual happiness in our own lives.

Description of such methods we find recorded in all our ancient scriptures. But the main drawback of such written records is that in course of time men miss the spirit underlying these teachings and engage themselves in vain theoretical and verbal discussions. It is also notable that, during such periods of degeneration, great men, whom we call *Avatars*, appear on our earth to restore these methods to their original form, imparting life to them and enabling a vast number of people to attain the state of Supreme Peace and Bliss through the right method. Such a one is Sri Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala. After realising and completely merging His own identity with the Supreme Self. He had deigned to remain on this earth for the uplift of humanity and to help really ripe souls to attain the same state.

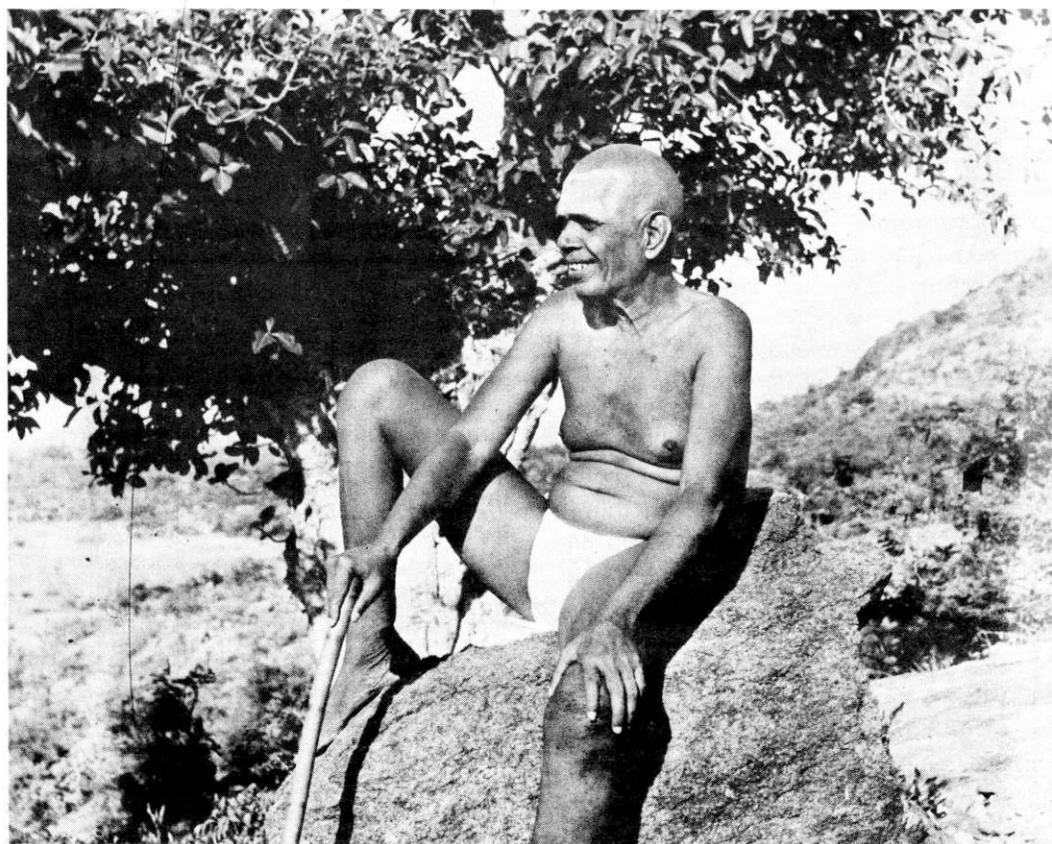
In India it is generally recognised that the help of a Guru is necessary for transcending

this life of diversity, full of pain and misery, and reaching the supreme state of perpetual Bliss. To reach this state one has to transcend the mind. As any number of squares can never produce a cube, similarly no amount of mental activity can make one transcend the mind and reach the supreme state of egolessness. It is stated that, except at the feet of the Master and in His divine presence, it is impossible for the seeker to reach and abide in that primal state of pure Being or the Self, where the mind is entirely subdued and all its activity has completely ceased. Hence the necessity for the Grace of the Guru. But this Grace is eternal, ever present and ever active. We need have no doubt as to whether we shall obtain this Grace or not. To the question, "Has God or the Guru any solicitude for us?" Maharshi replies: "If you seek either — they are not really two but one and identical — rest assured that they are seeking you with a solicitude greater than you can ever imagine." Sri Ramakrishna also declared: "If you approach one step towards God, God moves ten steps towards you". But we must move one step. With the firm conviction that Grace is ever present, the seeker must, on his part, earnestly strive to qualify himself for this Grace. This striving of the seeker is called *sadhana* and may take forms as there are many recognised methods of approach to the Supreme, according to the moral and intellectual equipment of the seeker. Maharshi recognises many such methods. But he prescribes one particular method which he himself calls the method *par excellence*. It is the method of Self-enquiry, the quest of the Self — *Vichara Marga*. This method is unique, simple and most scientific. It has no mystery about it. It does not demand any obedience to particular creeds or metaphysical theories. It starts from the very fundamental fact of our experience that "I exist" and directs to find out this "I". Happiness is our true being. It is always with us here and now. Forgetting this we have strayed out from the primal Blissful state of our Being and have thus enmeshed ourselves in misery and unhappiness. To obtain perpetual happiness we have only to find out and abide in the true

state of our Being — which is Bliss itself. Maharshi directs us to find out "*Who am I?*"

Do we know this "I" — which is ever present and without which no knowledge, not even existence, is possible? Even the greatest of the Western philosophers have confessed that whenever they tried to find the "I", they stumbled only on some state of the "I" but could never find the "I" itself. The majority of us, however, without any strictly critical examination, have unquestioningly assumed that "I am the body". Before engaging in the quest of the Self, this ignorant assumption has to be removed by strict and careful examination. Before proceeding to know what the "I" is, we have to find out what it is not. The body cannot be the "I". The body changes continually. It was small and it has grown bigger whereas the sense of "I"ness remains always the same. I am the same identical I as I was years ago — though the body has changed enormously during this period. Even if a man loses a whole limb, the sense of "I"ness in him is not even slightly diminished thereby. During sleep or a swoon, there is no consciousness of the body but on awaking the same identical "I" appears as before. Again, if the body were identical with the "I"-consciousness, "I" could never lose the "I"-consciousness during deep sleep, as the body was there all the time quite intact. On examining all reflex, automatic and habitual actions of the body (like walking etc.) it is found that these go on without any conscious participation of the "I". If the body were identical with the "I" then all such actions could not go on without the conscious participation of the "I". Moreover, the body is insentient like a log of wood and therefore cannot be the conscious "I".

Similar considerations will show that the mind is not the "I". The mind is changing very frequently whereas the sense of "I"ness in me remains the same. The mind can be made an object of observation and therefore must be distinct from the observing "I". Again I try to still my mind but it does not come under my control showing that it is distinct from "I". During deep sleep or swoon there is no mind, but the "I" must exist; otherwise how could I



get the sense of the identical "I"-ness after waking up? Thus the "I" is not the mind.

Now if I am neither the body nor the mind, what then am I? The problem is most fascinating. The "I" which is ever present, without which there can be no knowledge nor even existence, always eludes our grasp. To obtain a direct answer to this problem Maharshi gives out his unique method of Self-enquiry. This method is not at all intellectual. No amount of intellectual analysis or study will ever reveal the "I" since it is above the intellect. It is not even necessary to form any hypothetical idea as to the final nature of the "I" or of the ultimate reality or whether the "I" is one with the Supreme or distinct from it. Says Maharshi — "Why speculate as to what will happen some time in the future? All are agreed that the "I" exists. Let the earnest seeker first find out what the "I" is. Then it will be time enough to know what the final state will be. Let us not forestall

the conclusion but keep an open mind. Instead of indulging in mere speculation devote yourself here and now to the search for the truth that is ever within you."

Though not imperatively necessary, it will help us in preparing the proper mood for the search if we accept, on the authority of the Sages and the Scriptures, that we are always the Self, so that finding the Self is like finding the lion in a puzzle-picture of a jungle. Though the lion is always there we cannot find the lion so long as we look at the picture as a jungle. But if we withdraw our attention from the jungle and look intently for the lion, the lion appears to us never to be lost sight of again. The search for the Self — the truth behind our "I" is a similar process. It is the ever-present reality. But so long as our attention is drawn away by the phenomenal world, we do not find it. When we withdraw the whole of our attention from the world of phenomena and direct it towards

its own source, the Self reveals Itself spontaneously.

The process of finding the "I" is similar to the process of recollecting a forgotten thing. When we try to recollect a forgotten thing we do not rake out, one by one, all the hidden contents of our mind — the number of which is legion — and go on rejecting each one of these, as not this, till we find the desired one. The true process of recollecting is to keep the mind quite still, only keeping the desire to recollect the thing at the back of the mind. When the conscious mind is thus kept quite still, the forgotten thing flashes forth of itself in the mind. There are two essentials in this process — a desire to recollect the forgotten thing (without which the forgotten thing will not appear in the mind) and keeping the surface mind quite still. In the quest of the Self also these are the two essentials: first, there must be a keen and earnest desire to know the Self and, secondly, with this will in the background, the mind must be completely stilled. The will to know the Self, which expresses itself as an intent, unbroken, watchful gaze within, is the dynamical element in the quest. In fact, this intense and steady watchful inward gaze forms the essence of this method. Simply stilling the mind without this is inoperative. On the other hand, this inward watchfulness, when steadily kept up, will itself still the mind and destroy all its latent tendencies to run after objects. The mind will be gradually made pure — reduced to its state of *suddha sattva*, in which state it firmly inheres in the Self. It is only when the mind is contaminated by the qualities of "activity" and "inertia" that it strays out from the Self and creates objects and becomes enmeshed thereby. We have to destroy this outgoing tendency of the mind and make it perfectly still.

Now how are we to still the mind? If one thought is rejected another comes in its place and there seems to be no end at all. But there is an end. Says Maharshi: "If you cling to yourself, say the "I"-thought, and when your interest keeps you to that single idea, other thoughts get rejected, automatically they vanish."

The Liar

By Frederick Beck

truth
truly, i am not a lie
but neither am i
the truth
and neither am i
a truth do not
do not misunderstand.

There can be no thought without attention, either voluntary or involuntary. If we withdraw our attention from a thought it vanishes. But the attention must have an object. To what then must it be directed? Maharshi directs us to fix our attention on the source of the "I"-thought. The "I"-thought is the very first thought. Every other thought rises after the rise of the "I"-thought and involves this "I"-thought. When I see, hear or think of anything, the "I"-thought, is involved in every one of these operation, as "I" see, "I" hear, "I" think, etc. Without this "I" there can be no mental operations. Says Sri Ramana: "When there is not the "I"-thought there will be no other thought. Until that time when other thoughts arise the question 'To whom (is this thought)?' will call forth the reply 'To me'. He who pursues this closely, questioning 'What is the origin of the "I"?' and diving inwards reaches the seat of the mind within the Heart, becomes there the Lord of the Universe." We are here directed to dive inwards following the clue of the "I-am"-ness to its source. He says, "Self-enquiry by following the clue of the *Aham-vritti* is just like the dog tracing its master by his scent. The master may be at some distant, unknown place, but does not stand in the way of the dog tracing him. The master's scent is an infallible clue for the animal; and nothing else — such as the dress he wears or his build and stature etc. — counts. To that scent the dog holds on undistractedly while searching for him and finally it succeeds in tracing him."

"Likewise in your quest for the Self, the one infallible clue is the *Aham-vritti*, the 'I-am'-

ness which is the primary datum of your experience". This clue is infallible. By steadily and undistractedly following this *Aham-vritti* we are invariably led to its Source — the Self.

Day after day, month after month, year after year we have to steadily persevere in this enquiry. *Vasanas*, latent mental tendencies, have been accumulated and cultivated in us for ages past and long-cultivated tendencies can only be eradicated by long continued practice. As we persevere in this method, the tendencies of the mind gradually become weaker and ultimately die out. At the initial stages we may have some fixed hours of meditation but as we persevere in this process the mind becomes stronger and the mental tendencies which cause obstruction become weaker and weaker. We are then to keep the mind constantly turned within and fixed on the Self even while engaged in action. By a steady and continuous practice of this method the mind will get absorbed in its own primal state. Such absorption leads to supreme Bliss and the Self reveals Itself spontaneously.

To the question whether it is possible for a householder to attain this Supreme State without relinquishing his home, Maharshi answers in the affirmative. He says: "It is quite possible for the wise *grihastha*, who earnestly seeks Liberation, to discharge his duties in life without any attachment, considering himself as merely instrumental for the purpose, i.e., without any sense of doership. Such *karma* is not an obstacle in the way of attaining *Jnana*. Nor does *Jnana* stand in the way of discharging one's duties in life. *Jnana* and *karma* are never mutually antagonistic and the realisation of the one is not an obstacle to the performance of the other". What is necessary is perfect detachment. Attachment increases *dehatma-buddhi* and thus makes bondage stronger. Also the tendency of the mind to run after objects is made stronger by acquiescence and our attempts to still it will be frustrated. One should therefore cultivate a spirit of detachment and remain unconcerned and indifferent to external happenings. Performance of his duties in life with

complete detachment and without any sense of doership will purify his mind and will thus rather help him in this path. When after assiduous practice of this method of Self-enquiry the mind becomes perfectly still, the seeker has only to keep his *lakshya* firmly fixed on the Self, and steadfastly maintain an inward prayerful watch, for the Self to reveal itself. What will happen now does not depend on his efforts. As a matter of fact he cannot make any further effort. He will have to simply watch and wait. Grace will now manifest itself and do the work for him.

The best condition for the manifestation of Grace will be complete self-surrender. As one perseveres in this enquiry, one's "I"-consciousness gradually separates itself from the body and the mind and one actually perceives that all actions of the body and mind go on — without the "I" taking any active part in these — the "I" remaining an unattached observer of these actions. The conviction gradually grows in him that everything is being ordained and controlled by some higher power. The best thing now is to submit to this higher power. The ego, which has been carefully nurtured and strengthened for ages past, now offers itself as a willing sacrifice to be struck down by the Supreme and devoured by It.

The real Self, which has been all along there, waiting to take the *sadhaka* in, now takes hold of him and fixes him in Eternity. He becomes identical with the Supreme Self and remains perpetually immersed in the Ocean of Bliss.

This is the method — the method of enquiry, of *Atma-Vichara* enjoined by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi for Self-realisation. Self and Bliss are identical. So when one realises his own Self he remains perpetually immersed in Bliss. He becomes Bliss Itself. The finite mind cannot comprehend this state — a state attaining which nothing remains to be attained and from which state no calamity, however great, can ever dislodge him. Even while engaged in action he remains immersed in perpetual peace and happiness.

THE OBSERVER IS THE OBSERVED

By Robert Powell

LET us go along for one moment with the conventional view that there is a world out there which has an absolute existence, and a body-mind entity that functions as an observation/communications system. Essentially, this system may be represented very schematically as a straight line — a communications channel — at both ends of which important and mysterious transformations take place. At one end, the sensory organs and nerve cells “make contact” with what we call “the world” or the “four-dimensional space-time continuum” in which objects are present and phenomena occur. Thus, the “input” terminus senses the attributes of the world and converts the impressions or data gathered into nerve impulses. These impulses, which are complex electrical and chemical changes taking place in the cell material, are conducted along a network of nerve channels to various places in the body and especially to the most developed part of the central nervous system, the brain. There, at the “output” terminus, the impulses are reconverted into the “original”: that is, the world picture which we have taken for granted but is really an everlasting miracle — a creation out of Nothingness. As a “model” for the perception of an existing and autonomic or “absolute” world, the above representation is plausible, and perhaps even persuasive enough. But, we must ask, is it the whole truth?

Let us study the model a little more closely. Apart from the mysterious transformation in the brain, which is beyond any ordinary understanding, there is the following unnerving observation. In order to convey and produce our vision of the world, there is total dependence on the mediation of the sensory organs and the central nervous system, including and especially the brain. At this stage we need not talk of the mind, because the mind in turn comes into play only after the action of its physiological counterpart.¹ Now the key point here is that the somatic mechanism, consisting of the various cell tissues, is in itself also part of the world perceived. Note, therefore the following cyclic argument: *To establish the existence of the world, I must first assume the existence of the world!* And, because the observation system itself is part of the world, it disproves the notion of a separate, absolute world that can be observed and discussed from the point of view of an independent observer. Since the body-

¹This logical sequence is also affirmed by Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj: “Whatever experience you undergo, it is the product of Beingness, and Beingness is the outcome of food. From food is derived the body form...”. *The Nectar of the Lord's Feet*, Edited by Robert Powell, Element Books, 1987, p. 29.

mind as the observer is at the same time the "observed", the world is subjective and arbitrary — essentially no different from the world observed in the dream state. Its four-dimensional nature (space-time), which deceives us into assigning it absolute reality, is now seen to be part of the mechanism of "subjectivity." And, if we are correct in this conclusion, what then remains of the (physical) separateness of individuals, leave alone our much-vaunted psychological autonomy?

Not being in and of ourselves in the four space-time dimensions, but on the contrary giving rise to those dimensions, it follows that to talk about life, death and afterlife is inappropriate, the fact of the matter is that we ever dwell in eternity.

Now there is another area of existence it would behoove us to look into. Simple life forms generally display a relatively simple structure in their nervous systems and neurons. The conventional view is that such organisms have only partial or simplified perceptions of reality. The underlying assumption here is that the more complex the nervous system is, the more closely perception approximates Reality. This argument forms, of course, the accepted basis for man's alleged superiority over other species of living organisms. But in the light of our findings, *a more complex structure of the nervous system simply means a more complex reality — not a more complex perception of reality*, since there is no reality apart from the creature. Now, if the observed is indeed the observer, then any hierarchy of ultimate values based on the development or "evolution" of physiological structure must collapse. Such an insight strengthens our intuition that all life is One, and that beyond the limitations of the pleasure/pain mechanisms, which is strongly involved with the nature and texture of the organism's nervous structure, there is the possibility of "compassion" (a feeling of "suffering-togetherness") or love which transcends species' boundaries. But to the extent that we hold to the erroneous hierarchy of values, we live within the walls of the intellect and so shut ourselves

off from such love. *Animals, in this respect, are less handicapped.*

To return to our main discussion, one difficulty which we have bypassed so far is: How does the brain re-create the mind-formed image of the world? And how does the computer-like mechanism of the brain bridge the gap between the digital impulses received, which represent changes in *matter*, and the resulting *consciousness* — the thinking and imagery that can protect and, if necessary, even mend itself? Intuitively and also because of the very definitions of "matter" and "consciousness", we feel the two are too far apart for the gap to be bridgeable. Therefore, it seems to me that the mechanism of perception based on the conventional wisdom in which body and mind, as well as mind and matter, are viewed as separate entities, cannot be true. It would be like considering a computer as being sufficient unto itself, not needing either a programmer or an operator who interprets and understands the data which the machine has spewed out by itself.

Further contemplation of our "model" will lead to one more important insight — possibly the crux of the matter. Information about the "world" acquired by the "observer" is not what it appears to be at first sight. In fact, the "information" about the basic structure of the world must be considered meaningless since it does not allow for any cognitive alternatives. This question of possible alternatives is mandated by the very concept of information. To quote from the entry under "Information Theory" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "Thus, in information theory, information is thought of as choice of one message from a set of possible messages." (Vol. 9, p. 575). An either/or set of possible messages (a "binary digit" or "bit" for short, such as the on/off position of a switch) is a minimum information requirement in this respect. In its absence, there is no datum to be transmitted and obviously no possibility of information transmission.

What we are interested in is the very *field of observation*, the background, into which data

are perceived; that is, the particular spatio-temporal mode of presentation of objects and events, which appears fixed and is always taken for granted. And also *qualitatively*: Why should re-creation of the "world" come about through meditation of just the five senses — why not, for example, four or six or whatever?

It is not like looking through a telescope, where the eye has the freedom to observe. We are concerned with what happens behind the eye-piece, in the brain, which has no choice in its mentation of the basic parameters of the "seen". Why is there a background to the field of perception at all? And what and wherefrom is the light that makes the background perceptible? Both background and light do not come from "out there", although they arise at the same time as my Beingness. They are manufactured by the brain itself. In this respect, the brain differs from every other information system. Other systems fulfil the requirement stated above that the information conveyed must represent a choice between alternatives. Now the brain can convey information about objects and events within its predetermined matrix, the basic four-dimensional space-time frame of reference, but not at all about this reference system itself, which is an *a priori* condition. Thus, information may be conveyed about events within the world, on the physical level as well as the psychological overlay, but the underlying physical matrix, the very nature of the reference system in which the events take place, is deterministic. This forecloses any further enquiry into its nature.

A variety of possible answers as to the nature of the "observed" as the fundamental reality underlying all perception might have been possible if the "observer" and the "observed" were truly separate and independent from each other. But this is patently not the case. The observer states there is a four-dimensional (space-time) universe out there, because the brain says so. In this, the "observed" is the particular way in which the brain comes up with an answer. One may say, the so-called "nature" of the world is more appropriately indicative of the mysterious transformation mechanism of

the brain than of the nature of the world. By the same token, "the nature of the world" loses all conventional meaning as a concrete separate reality. Again, what we are up against is that the answer is already contained in the question. Rather than us observing the world, *we are the world*. So much for the reality of an "absolute" world that may be known and defined! Our conclusion must be that *there is no ultimate ontology*. Not only is obtaining an ultimate knowledge of "what is" not possible, but also the very idea of there being such knowledge must be given up. The answer may perhaps not satisfy many who are accustomed to the Western philosophical tradition but will not be too surprising to those familiar with the sages of the *advaita* tradition who maintained that ultimate reality can never be known since it lies totally beyond any subject-object duality; one cannot "know", one must *be*. That. Implied in this is also the insight that all "knowledge" as such is limited, confined within the body-mind sphere. Man, through knowing, experiencing, thinking and feeling, can never break out of the prison of his body-mind. This at once indicates the necessity for a letting go of this entire realm of the mind — of pushing oneself, through thinking, toward some conclusion about the Ultimate — for all such thinking is fundamentally flawed, it being circular in nature. Yet, the intelligence that can look upon this confining body-mind sphere realizes *ipso facto* its own otherness from it, and so enjoys a taste of absolute Freedom. Also, to see the futility of one's habitual efforts immediately ends them and allows the possibility of the Other — the being and realizing of what is — to take place spontaneously.

How then must we evaluate the brain's perception? Its perception must be viewed rather as an imprint on something else (the Real), but in which the imprint because of its own unreal, dreamlike nature, is more like a rainbow in the sky. Being totally determined, the "answer" given by the brain is of the nature of a physiological reaction. In fact, it is totally that. One might also say that the most profound activity of the intellect is still essentially mechanistic.

The observer might as well say: "blah, blah, blah", it would not make any difference. Whether the observer "finds" there is a four-dimensional world out there or a ten-dimensional one, what does such a statement actually mean? It means only that a psycho-physiological or "cognitive" movement takes place which comprises an "observer-observed" continuum whose stirrings result in a mere "static" or "noise" inherent in that continuum. There is also the revelation that the notion of there being a "world" (which fundamentally implies the existence of something discrete, of absolute reality, and that can therefore be "named") is erroneous and must be

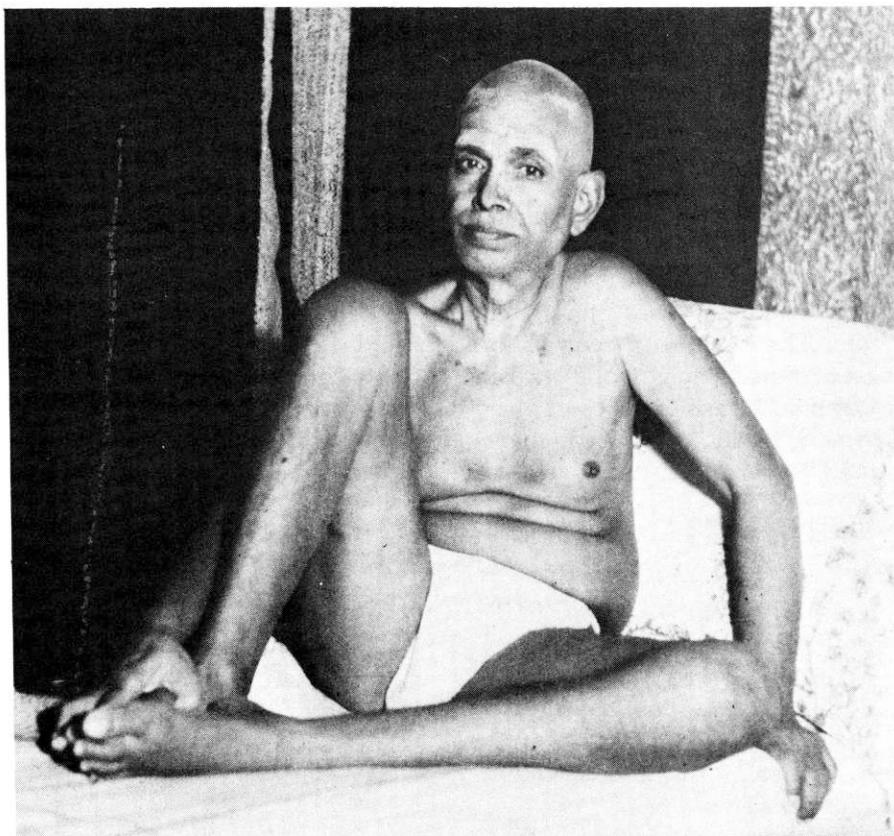
abandoned. We might say with equal validity that all is the "observer" as that all is the "observed", which is another way of saying, *there are no boundaries* (as all so-called "boundaries" are arbitrary and mind-posed). Thus, the consciousness or intelligence that can discuss these matters is what we are — which is the Self from which everything and every activity flows. That which has no boundaries and is unnameable has been termed the "Void", although this is a mere code word for something that eludes any kind of description or verbalization. Being outside space-time — that is, Infinite — means that it is the Whole, invulnerable, and immortal.

THE KING'S RING

By Theodore Tilton

Once in Persia, reigned a King, who
upon a signet ring,
Carved a maxim, strange and wise,
when held before his eyes,
Gave him counsel at a glance, fit for
every change and chance
Solemn words, and these were they:
"EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Trains of camel, through the sand,
brought him gems from Samarcand;
Fleets of galleys over the seas,
brought him pearls to rival these.
But he counted little gain
treasures of the mine or main;
"What is wealth?" the king would say:
"EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Mid the pleasures of his court,
at the zenith of their sport,
When the palms of all his guests,
burned with clapping at his jests;
Seated midst the figs and wine,
said the king: — "Ah friends of mine,
Pleasure comes but not to stay.
EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Woman, fairest ever seen, was the
the bride he crowned as queen
Pillowed on the marriage bed
whispering to his soul, he said:

"Though no monarch ever pressed
fairer bosom to his breast
Mortal flesh is only clay:
EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Fighting on the furious field, once a
javelin pierced his shield:
Soldiers with a loud lament, bore him
bleeding to his tent.
Groaning from his tortured side, "Pain
is hard to bear", he cried.
"But, with patience, day by day
EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Towering in a public square, forty
cubits in the air,
Stood his statue carved in stone,
and the king, disguised, unknown,
Gazed upon his sculptured name,
and he pondered, "What is fame?
Fame is but a slow decay:
EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".
Struck with palsy, sere and old,
waiting at the gates of gold,
Said he with his dying breath
'Life is done but what is Death?'
Then as answer to the king,
fell a sunbeam on his ring,
Showing by a heavenly ray,
"EVEN THIS WILL PASS AWAY".



THERE IS AN ARMY OF THOUGHTS

By A.R. Natarajan

LIFE is a movement in time. Each moment is different from one which has gone by, the metabolism of the body changes it every minute, there is growth and decay all round in creation. When one feels this sense of transience, a yearning dawns for finding out what life and death mean. Janaka was a generous and virtuous king, worshipped by the people of his country but was content to let life go by till the divine took a hand in transforming him. Once while enjoying his beautiful park, he suddenly heard the songs of invisible *Siddhas*. Their message was clear for Janaka, as for us, the longest life is but a ripple in the ocean of time.¹

Now does one make the best use of the time allotted to each one by karma? Given the

compulsive desire to be immortal, to be timeless here and now, what should one do? Freedom from time's shackles is certainly possible, assures Ramana. If one abides in the natural state, there is no fetter of time. This state is 'available to all, at all times, under all conditions'.² What veils and shrouds the truth, clouds our understanding? If one enquires what it is that obstructs, one discovers that it is only the screen of thoughts. We are heirs to the multitude of thoughts born of incomplete action. As Ramana points out, our actions 'are performed with part of the mind and with frequent breaks'³. This is inescapable in a situation when the mind is splintered by various desires pulling at cross purposes. The desire to hang on only to pleasant thoughts also adds to

the difficulty. The consequence of such actions are the indelible memory marks, which make the past an integral part of the mind. The thought force so created gives a directional push to current action thereby shaping the future as well. The very vastness of such thoughts and their variety is responsible for the diffidence felt and the fear expressed to Ramana that one may always be a victim of time, bound hand and foot to the past, to karma. Ramana would never countenance such thoughts and would point out that thoughts such as, 'attainment is hard', 'Self realisation is not for me' or 'I have many difficulties to overcome' should be given up as they are obstacles and are not true.⁴ Why worry? Others have succeeded. Why can't we? For in the Ramana way the past, the thoughts, good, bad, and indifferent, are all just to be swept away without a second look.⁵ Why fear the army of thoughts? 'The objects are many, but the subject is one'. Hence the repeated emphasis of Ramana on the need to focus attention 'on the thinker behind the thought', 'the one behind the act of willing', 'the actor behind the action'.⁶

What is being attempted is to gear spiritual practice to bestowing attention on the consciousness behind the phenomenon. This was the advice Humphreys got way back in 1911. 'Do not fix your attention on all these changing things, life, death and phenomenon. Do not think even of the actual act of seeing them but only of that which sees all these things'.⁷ What is advised is to 'remain fixed in a steady, non-objective, enquiry'.⁸ It is the individual's attention which waters the thoughts and gives life to them. It is common experience that only to the extent to which we are aware of other thoughts they exist for us. Just as the life of a tree is in its roots and not in its numerous branches or thousands of leaves, so too it is the individual's attention which matters. If it is not given, other thoughts just wither and fade away.⁹

One has to pause at this point to consider whether the mind is an independent energy

source. Reflecting on one's daily experience, one finds that the mind (the individual and the other thoughts) is nonexistent in sleep even though there is no break in our consciousness, which is continuous. So, the individual is not self-conscious. If this is so, what is the source from which the individual derives his consciousness? Ramana helps by indicating it to be the spiritual Heart. From this, it would follow that the shifting of attention from thoughts to the thinker, to the 'I', is not an end in itself. It is only a step 'in the process of withdrawing attention and interest from what one is not'¹⁰. Attention of the mind on its core has to be sustained till one reaches the 'magnetic zone' of the Heart. 'The attitude of self-enquiry must permeate our entire way of living'¹¹. Diving within with attention clearly focussed on the 'I' leads one to the point where the power of the Heart takes over. The individual current merges with the universal and one travels beyond the shores of time. One is born anew to an awareness of oneness of life.

In this awakening to one's fullness Ramana's kindly light leads at each step of the way sustaining inwardness. 'Like the bright clear Sun, the straight course proves its rightness at each step'¹². By His abundant grace, Ramana gives His own state of Sivahood, His own state of auspiciousness.

¹ *Selected Stories from Yoga Vashista* — by P.P. Bharat Bharat Iyer pages 5, 6 and 7.

² *Be the Self* — V. Ganesan — p. 18

³ *Words of Grace* — 'Spiritual Instruction' — p. 3

⁴ *Talks* — Pp. 56 to 59

⁵ *Words of Grace* — 'Who am I' — p. 11

⁶ *Satchidananda* — Abhisiktananda

⁷ *Glimpses* — F.H. Humphreys — p. 7

⁸ 'RAMANA GITA' — English translation and commentary by A.R. Natarajan — Pp. 33, 34.

⁹ *Path of Ramana* — part I — Sadhu Om — p. 103

¹⁰ *Be As you are* — David Godman — p. 57

¹¹ *The Ramana Way in Search of Self* — Kumari Sarada p. 17

¹² *Garland of Guru's Sayings* — Muruganar — Verse 393 — Translation by Prof. K. Swaminathan in his 'Ramana Maharshi'.

RECOLLECTIONS – II

By Akhilandamma*

(Edited and paraphrased by David Godman)

IN the Skandashram days the good fortune of taking food with Bhagavan was equally available to birds, animals and human devotees. Bhagavan never distinguished between his human and his animal devotees: the same compassion was available to all. At times it would seem as if his animal devotees were even more fortunate than his human ones. Lakshmi the cow, Valli the deer, Jackie the dog and the monkey called *Nondi Payal* (the lame boy) are apt examples of this.

When Bhagavan first moved to Skandashram 'the lame boy' used to come and eat with us. Although he was given a separate leaf-plate, he usually preferred to help himself to rice from Bhagavan's own leaf. How lucky he was! None of the human devotees ever had the opportunity to share Bhagavan's meal like this.

On one occasion Bhagavan and the devotees were sitting in a line, waiting for the food to be served. 'The lame boy' was seated nearby. After serving Bhagavan, but before I could serve the others, 'the lame boy' took some handfuls of rice from Bhagavan's plate and ate them. Bhagavan only used to take a small quantity of rice, but he was quite happy to share that small amount with the monkey. When I placed some more rice on Bhagavan's leaf to replace the amount which the monkey had taken, the monkey grunted at me in a slightly aggressive manner. Bhagavan at once turned to him and chided him: "Adey, Adey! She is one of our people". Then it kept quiet. What a

* Continued from the previous issue.

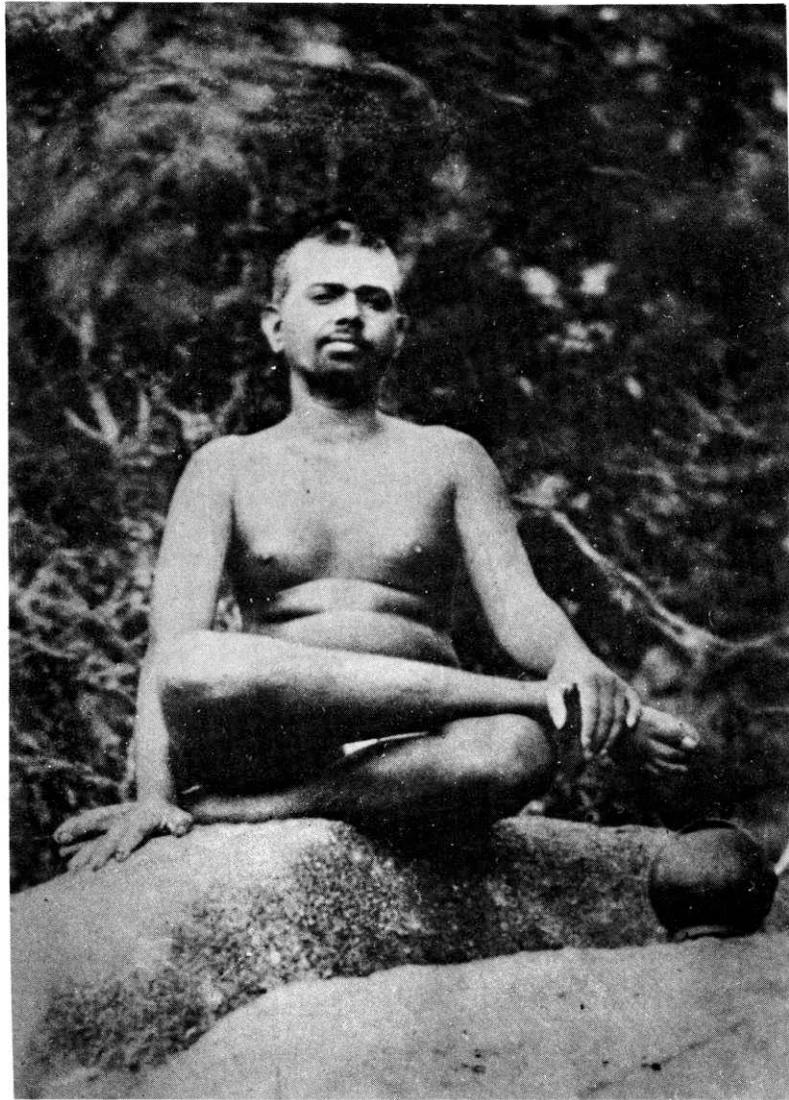
perfect sense of equality resounds in those words!

One day I prepared for Bhagavan some *murukkus* (a crunchy savoury made of rice flour) and took them to Skandashram. I did not tell him in advance that I was bringing it. On that same day some Nattukottai Chettiars also prepared *murukkus* and brought them. As they prostrated to Bhagavan and presented their offering I noticed that their *murukkus* were beautifully shaped and had a very good colour. I felt too embarrassed to give my offering at the same time because my *murukkus* were of such an inferior quality. I decided to wait until *their's* had been distributed.

The *murukkus* brought by the Chettiars were first presented to Bhagavan. Bhagavan broke a small piece from one of them and then requested that the remainder be distributed to everyone. When this had been done I took my own *murukkus* and placed them before Bhagavan. Bhagavan took a whole *murukku* and ate it all. A man called Aiyaswami then distributed the remainder. As he was passing in front of Bhagavan, Bhagavan leaned forward and took one more *murukku* from the plate. While he was eating this second *murukku* he asked Masthan Swami, who was standing nearby, "Masthan, what has been mixed in this?"¹

Who can understand the reasons behind Bhagavan's actions, or the meanings which are

¹ Masthan Swami was from the same village as Akilandamma and he often visited Tiruvannamalai with her. He also used to help her with her cooking.



conveyed in them? Bhagavan has no *sankalpa* (will of his own); he never decides how he should speak or what he should do. The speech and activities of Bhagavan are the automatic gracious *leelas* of the omnipresent Lord Himself. I learned from this incident that no one can discover or explain why Bhagavan's grace manifests in any particular way.

.....

There were no Ashram buildings and no rules and regulations when I first started to go

to Bhagavan. Bhagavan would almost always be alone, either out in the open or inside the cave. Sometimes Palaniswami would be with him. Even then there were no restrictions for devotees. When I served Bhagavan food I would wait for him to finish and then take my own food from the same leaf. I continued with this practice for many years.

Bhagavan not only graciously permitted me to do this, at times he even helped me in the matter! During the later Skandashram days, when Bhagavan's mother, Chinnaswami and

many other devotees lived with Bhagavan, they and Bhagavan never prevented me from getting this good fortune whenever I came. In later days, even when Sri Ramanasramam came up, this same opportunity was provided to me whenever I came.

After some time at Skandashram, Bhagavan's mother and other devotees began to do service by preparing food for Bhagavan and his devotees. Even when this practice started I continued to prepare food and bring it since I had been accustomed to do this right from the beginning of my time with Bhagavan. Echammal and Kamakshi Ammal, the daughter-in-law of Mudaliar Patti, also used to prepare and bring food even after the Ashram acquired its own cooking facilities.

One day, during Bhagavan's stay at Skandashram, Kamakshi Ammal came to see and said, "Bhagavan and the devotees are going to the top of the hill tomorrow. They have asked us to prepare food in the morning and bring it to Skandashram". This was a joyful task for me. I got up very early the next morning, cooked the food and took it to Skandashram. Kamakshi Ammal and Echammal did the same.

Soon after our arrival Bhagavan started out from Skandashram with his devotees. Ascending the hill in the company of Bhagavan gave me immense happiness. On the way to the summit of Arunachala, roughly three-quarters of the way up, there is a place called Seven Springs lying to the right of the path. It was so named because of the seven springs that issue from the rock there. A little above these springs some rocks have naturally formed themselves into the shape of a *mantapam*. At the centre of the *mantapam* there is a big flat rock in such a position that it looks as if a seat has been deliberately put there. The rays of the sun do not penetrate this place; even at noon a pleasant cool breeze can be felt there. When Bhagavan arrived at this place he informed us that he alone would stay there and that the rest of us should go to the top of the hill and return.

Masthan Swami and Perumal Swami insisted on staying in that place with Bhagavan, but the

rest of us went to the summit, leaving all the prepared food behind us at Seven Springs. On the way down, because I was at the rear of the party and walking slowly, I lost my way. While I was wondering how I could ever reach Bhagavan, Bhagavan himself sent out a search party which repeatedly called out my name very loudly. Guided by the sound, I was able to find them. I reached Seven Springs feeling very happy that Bhagavan had bestowed so much grace and affection on me.

When Bhagavan's mother finally came to understand that her son was the Supreme Lord Himself, she came to him and took refuge in him. After she came to live at Skandashram Bhagavan not only looked after her bodily health, he also took the opportunity to raise her soul to a high spiritual level. Although Bhagavan was bringing about a spiritual ripening in all those who came into contact with him, merely by bestowing his gracious look on them, in the mother's case he accelerated this ripening process by being unusually strict with her. On many occasions he used to correct both his brother and his mother by chiding them with stern glances, by exhibiting anger or by ignoring them. His aim was to raise them to a more exalted spiritual plane. This happened many times but I will only mention two of the incidents since they both involved me.

One day I went to Skandashram with fruit and milk. After saluting Bhagavan I stood to one side. Bhagavan looked at his mother who was nearby and asked her to take some. Sri Ammaiyar (Bhagavan's mother) was reluctant to abandon her orthodox habits; she was unwilling to take even fruit and milk that had been brought by a non-brahmin. Without giving a reason she replied to Bhagavan, "You yourself eat". Bhagavan, who understood his mother's mind, said to her, "Alright, it is better that you go to your house in Madurai". He then ate some of the fruit and milk and gave the remainder to Palaniswami. After taking a little, Palaniswami returned what remained to me as Bhagavan's *prasad*. By correcting her in this way,

whenever the opportunity arose, Bhagavan was causing the illusion of differentiation to be dispelled from his mother's mind.

On another occasion when Bhagavan, his mother and a few other devotees were seated in the Ashram, I was moving among them doing some work. Though I was moving about very carefully, knowing that I was in the presence of great people, I must have brushed past Sri Ammaiyar's sari at one point. Bhagavan turned playfully to his mother, with an intention to mature her mind. "Look! Look!" he said. "Your sari which you have hung for drying has come into contact with Desuramma's body! Orthodoxy has gone! Go and soak it and take a bath". Sri Ammaiyar was obviously embarrassed by this; she merely mumbled, "No, no", and after that she kept quiet.

There is another of my experiences which illustrates how strict Bhagavan was with his mother. I went to Skandashram one day to have *darshan* of Bhagavan. When I had bowed to Bhagavan and stood up, Sri Ammaiyar enquired of me, "What have you brought?" I replied that I had cooked and brought some green leaves. On being asked "What kind of green leaves?" I replied "Leaves which are found on the mountain". Sri Ammaiyar then said to me rather wistfully, "Only you people know where such leaves are available. They are very tasty when they are cooked". From these words I inferred that Sri Ammaiyar liked this particular kind of green leaf. On the same day I went up the hill and plucked some more leaves of the same kind. I then brought them to Skandashram and concealed them under some plants which were growing just outside the Ashram. After hiding the leaves I went up to Sri Ammaiyar and told her in a low voice that I had picked some leaves and concealed them near the gate. Sri Ammaiyar was less discreet. In a loud voice she said to Ramanatha Brahmachary: "Ramanatha, Desuramma has brought some leaves. Take them and keep them".

This instruction was heard by Bhagavan. He looked at Sri Ammaiyar and said, sternly, "It

Devotee: Why did the Self manifest as this miserable world?

Bhagavan: In order that you might seek it. Your eyes cannot see themselves. Place a mirror before them and they see themselves. Similarly with creation.

seems that you are in the habit of asking for various things from those who come here".² Feeling that my action had created trouble for Sri Ammaiyar, I intervened before she could give a reply. "No Bhagavan," I said, "Mother did not ask. I myself brought them." To this Bhagavan said laughingly, "Mother will also ask".

The implications of this seemingly trivial incident are very profound. Anyone who tries to hide anything from Bhagavan is only deceiving himself. It is foolish to derive satisfaction from hiding something from Bhagavan. Bhagavan exposed such activities merely to purify our minds. On this occasion, even though I spoke in a very low voice, it was the gracious power of Bhagavan that made Sri Ammaiyar reply in a voice that was loud enough for my cunning to be exposed. On this occasion I think that Bhagavan chided his mother so that she could increase her feeling of renunciation; he wanted her to realise that she should not be dependent on anything in this world. Even if Bhagavan does not intervene on occasions like this, he is still aware of what is going on. If he remains silent, he does so for the benefit of devotees, not out of ignorance.

* * * * *

² Bhagavan frequently criticised his mother for not being satisfied with the food contributions which automatically came to the Ashram. He was initially opposed to her habit of cooking in the Ashram, particularly since it involved asking for or buying food ingredients which would not normally be donated.

Once, while Bhagavan was at Skandashram, I went up the hill with all the required food-stuffs to serve a *bhiksha*. I could not see Bhagavan there, so I asked Akhandanandar, alias Appadurai Swami, where he was. He told me, "Today is the day when Bhagavan has his shave. So please wait". He also told me that since it was a fullmoon day it was a very auspicious time to receive *upadesa* from great souls. He added, "When Bhagavan comes, please request him to impart some *upadesa* to you through his gracious words."

By inclination I am a person who has neither the desire nor the capacity to make such a request. To see Bhagavan, to think of him and to do service to him — these alone were sufficient for my happiness. Furthermore, as someone who had no education, I felt ill-qualified to ask him about anything; and even if I did ask, I felt apprehensive about my ability to understand his reply. However, for some reason, on that particular day, I felt like following the course that Akhandanandar had suggested.

When the shaving was finished Bhagavan came and sat near us. He had not yet taken his bath. While he was sitting there I approached him, bowed, stood up and then said: "Bhagavan, tell me something through your gracious words". Bhagavan stared at me and asked "About what am I to tell you?" I was both puzzled and non-plussed. A mixture of fear, devotion and an eagerness to hear Bhagavan's gracious words welled up within me, rendering me incapable of speech. I just stood there mutely.

Bhagavan understood my predicament. No one can hide anything from him. He can understand the state of mind of anyone who approaches him, merely by looking at him. On this occasion he looked at me graciously and said "Be without leaving yourself" (*unnai vidaamal iru*). I could not comprehend the meaning of this high-level *upadesa*, and had no idea how to practise it, but as soon as the words came from Bhagavan's mouth I felt an immense satisfaction and a gracious effulgence in my mind.

These gracious words welled up in my mind again and again like the rising of the tides; the feeling they produced gave me an indescribable happiness. I stood there delighting myself in the feelings produced by this one phrase. Even today, the sound of that *upadesa* rings in my ears and bestows immense peace on me. How is it possible to describe Bhagavan's grace?

What was told? How to be without leaving myself? What is the state of leaving? What is the meaning of 'myself'? Let the spiritual teachers, the *Vedantins*, explain all these things. To me they are all incomprehensible; what is more, I have no desire to understand them. The happiness that can be attained not only by understanding this sentence, but also by practising it, that same happiness Bhagavan gave me at the moment when the words came from his mouth. I am taking this perfect satisfaction as the fruit of that *upadesa*. I came to understand through this experience that in Bhagavan's benign presence a single gracious utterance can produce the fruit and the fulfilment of all spiritual practices such as *sraavana* (hearing), *manana* (thinking or reflection) and *nidhyaasana* (practice or abidance).

After imparting this instruction Bhagavan continued to sit there for a very long time. I also continued to stand before him. There appears to be a great significance in this. The meaning is that after giving *upadesa* through the words "Be without leaving yourself", Bhagavan gave a practical illustration of how it could be done by remaining in this state himself.

(To be continued)



David Godman

THE STORY OF “The Mountain Path”

(1) PLANNING

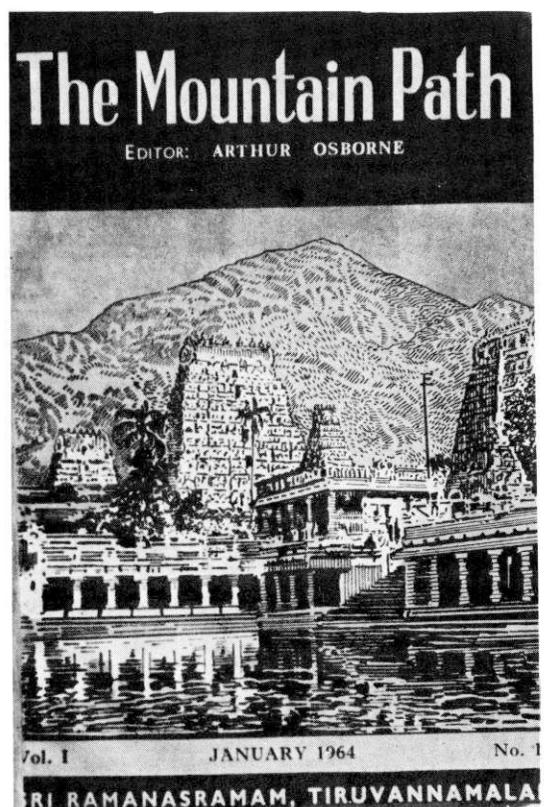
By V. Ganesan

IN 1956-58, after taking my B.A. degree, I was in the Ashram for two years. Though my father wanted me to pursue higher studies, I stoutly refused as we could ill afford the expense. All my brothers and sisters were in the colleges and schools and my father was struggling to make both ends meet. I decided to seek some employment and thus support my family rather than be another burden on it. The two years I spent in the Ashram are memorable, indeed!

I was not spiritually inclined and had no thought of settling down to a seeker's life, though both Major A.W. Chadwick and Mr. Arthur Osborne, independently and at different times, assured me (as indicated in my horoscope) that I would be living only in the Ashram and be a serious seeker, dedicated to matters spiritual. During this period I saw how the Ashram was suffering from paucity of funds.

However, thanks to Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, I joined M.A. Philosophy class. A new vista opened in my life by the study of eastern and western philosophies. Postgraduation completed, I was thrust into a bank job, where I felt literally combined and confined. Then, through Professor K. Swaminathan I got a post as sub-editor in a newspaper in Bombay. I liked the work. On a visit to my Muslim colleague's apartment in Colaba, he explained to me how a magazine could fetch money through advertisements; I was not interested in the project.

I soon found that life in Bombay was far from soul-satisfying. I was unhappy. Due to various causes and circumstances, I returned for good to the Ashram, with the full consent of my parents, to serve Sri Bhagavan's devotees, particularly the older ones. In course of time,



The Cover of the first issue

my mother was upset that, while my sisters and brothers were getting married, I was not. My father was happy with my hard work at the Ashram. I plunged myself whole-heartedly in Bhagavan's *seva*. I took to a seeker's life in right earnest. I enjoyed the blissful and serene company of Muruganar, Major Chadwick, A. Devaraja Mudaliar, Arthur Osborne, S.S. Cohen, Munagala Venkataramaiah, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, Sadhu Om, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, N. Balarama Reddiar and others.

There was a crisis in 1963 in the Ashram finances. It dawned on me one day that I could do something tangible to save the dire situation. I recollected the long-forgotten conversation I had had with my Muslim friend in Bombay, at Colaba. Yes! That was it! I could help the Ashram by bringing out a yearly magazine! At that time I was helping the correspondence section also. Devotees from far and near were making enquiries whether the Ashram was being run as of old and if so, what were its activities. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer and L.P. Koppikar were in charge of the correspondence section, and I was being trained by them. I used to seek Arthur Osborne's draft-replies for important foreign letters demanding spiritual clarifications. I used to be spellbound by his brief replies, so aptly worded. Yes! Here was the solution! I would prepare the 'Yearly Bulletin' — report happenings at the Ashram, print excerpts from letters and replies thereto and have the material touched up by Arthur Osborne, and have as many advertisements as possible, and thus help both the Ashram and the farflung devotees.

I went to Arthur Osborne's house and explained to him this idea of a 'Yearly Bulletin' and how it could bring Ashram financial benefits and could keep devotees informed about the present working of the Ashram. I sought his blessings and active cooperation. He listened with keen attention and at the end held my hands and shed tears of joy! How surprising! I had never seen him so deeply moved.

"Ganesan! You do not know what a blessing you have brought me today. A few weeks back I had a dream in which Bhagavan appeared. I knelt before Him. He had a few copies of a magazine which He handed over to me, and said, 'Take it'. I understood the message to mean that He wanted me to be an Editor! I had to obey my Master's wish. But, where would I fit in India? My elder brother is the reputed editor of the U.K. magazine, 'The Economist'. Was I to seek employment under him, I wondered. I was pained at the thought of leaving Arunachala. Yet, if He would have it so, I

should even leave Arunachala, I decided. Now, I know what Bhagavan meant. What a joy!"

The torrential talk ended for a while only to be renewed with greater vigour: "You know, Ganesan! During the lifetime of Sri Bhagavan and even after, I was asked by many to run a journal for the Ashram. I repeatedly refused. Bhagavan's teaching is meant only for practise; what is there to write about, that too continuously in a journal? I knew I disappointed my close friends, like Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami and D.S. Sastri. But I stood firm. Now, Bhagavan has commanded me to spread His teaching of *Atma Vichara*, through the medium of this journal which **we** are going to start!"

I was thrilled by his enthusiasm and exchanged views on the plans for the journal.

It was agreed then that the annual Bulletin should have: (i) an Editorial, (ii) important articles based only on the practical side of *sadhana*, (iii) Book-Reviews, (iv) Letters to the Editor and (v) Ashram Bulletin, covering the happenings at the Ashram. He agreed to be its sole Editor. He advised me to consult Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami. When I met him at Madras, Dr. T.N.K. was overjoyed, but pleaded that it should not be a yearly but a monthly journal. Mr. Osborne felt that a monthly would involve too much work and might not have enough material of high quality. He added that it would interfere with our regular *sadhana*. I went back to Madras, again, and with Dr. T.N.K.'s consent it was decided that the journal should be a 'Quarterly'. He gave a cheque for Rs. 100, to begin with. This was our first Life Subscription! It was the beginning of September 1963.

Then, I sought the counsel of D.S. Sastri, who happened to come to the Ashram at that time. Mr. Sastri was firm that I should be the publisher and owner of the journal, but I was equally firm that it should be an "Ashram Journal" and that its President, Sri. T.N. Venkataraman, should be its Publisher. After prolonged persuasion by Mr. Sastri, I however, agreed to be its Managing Editor.

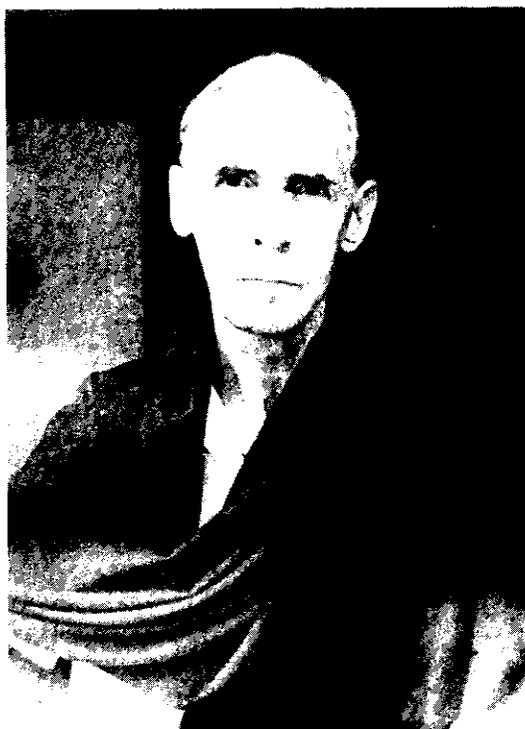
Mr. Arthur Osborne was not only a steady, strenuous worker, but very quick and precise.

He collected the articles in a remarkably short time. There was another big question mark. How should we name the journal? Again, it was Mr. Osborne, who came out with the brilliant title *THE MOUNTAIN PATH* — the 'Mountain' standing for Arunachala and 'Path' for the right-royal path of Sri Bhagavan, *Vichara Marga!* Next was, how much the subscription should be.

The next day, a money order of Rs. 5/- arrived from one Mr. H.R. Chadha of Calcutta, whom we hardly knew. In the M.O. coupon, it was written: "The annual subscription for the Ashram journal. More details follow in my letter". Yes! Bhagavan again had decided what the annual subscription should be. We were happy. The letter arrived and it read: "I had lost touch with the Ashram. Bhagavan is my Guru, whom I met in the later thirties. He still is my all! The other day, He appeared to me in the dream, showed me a journal and I saw clearly Rs. 5/- written on the cover. I take it that there is an Ashram journal. Please enrol me as a subscriber". The first annual subscriber for this 'unborn' journal was Mr. Chadha!

I did not know how to collect advertisements. Before printing the rate-cards, I had sent letters of request for a few. Sri M.A. Chidambaram, the reputed industrialist and philanthropist, was the first to respond with Rs. 250/-!

I started my advertisement hunt in Madras. I used to meet many gentlemen and beg them for advertisements. For days I would walk the streets of Madras. Some received me with happiness, but many hurt and humiliated me. But I never gave up. I worked hard and managed to collect 23 pages of advertisements for the first issue. I thought that that was the end of it! But, lo! At the Jupiter Press I was told that one more advertisement was needed for completing the last forme. Sri Framji Dorabji, old devotee and proprietor of Wellington Talkies, who had already given his Talkies' advertisement, suddenly came to the Press with AVM Studio advertisement block, just in time to complete that forme!



Arthur Osborne

The printing of the journal at the Press was itself a great excitement for me. The pressmen were surprised to see me standing next to them, nearly a fortnight from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.!

The cover page was designed by Sri Gopi, who had served in the forties at the Ashram during Bhagavan's *Jayanthi*. He was working as a member of the *Sunday Times* staff under the leadership of M.S. Kamath. The very first design drawn by him and approved by Mr. Osborne featured Arunachala Hill and the temple. It was liked by all.

With a few copies of January, 1964 issue, the first issue, I rushed to the Ashram. Arthur Osborne refused even to look at them before they were placed on the *Samadhi* of the Master! At a simple function, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan released the first copy. When I wanted Arthur Osborne to preside, he said, "There is no need for any one to preside, since Bhagavan is ever here as the Presiding Presence!"

(To be continued)

THE FOUR FATAL LIES

(2) "I'M EMBODIED"

By Douglas E. Harding

I'M in the body. I am this body, I'm incarnate, I'm embodied, I'm imprisoned or entombed in this body—what could be more taken-for-granted and universal than this belief, in one or another of its many forms? Together with its taken-for-granted corollary that at birth I was somehow locked up in this thing, that through life I'm seldom if ever let out on parole, and that at death I shall make my getaway? Only (many would add) to be reapprehended and given another life-sentence and transferred to another place of confinement, decanted into another cooler or can or jug.

In this, the second of our investigations into the lies we live by, we shall be looking into this myth of embodiment; noticing how absurd yet how specious it is, how manifestly crippling yet how obstinately clung to, how addictive. And how comically easy it is to see through, to show up as fantasy and extravaganza, once we dare peep into it.

Reminding us of the necessity and urgency of our task we have the assurance of Ramana Maharshi that "identifying the Self with the body is the real bondage," that "*I am the body* is the cause of all mischief," and that when this conviction goes "it is Realization." And, urging us to question our habitual assumptions and start all over again along new and unfamiliar lines, we have Rumi's warning: "This body is a great deception, a great hoodwink." In fact, every real Seer has seen through and combatted the popular-secular notion that (as the saying has it) "I inhabit this house of clay," and the popular-religious notion that "This house of clay is one of many I inhabited in the past, and shall inhabit in the future."

These warnings by the wise over the centuries, however, have done very little to bring our species to its senses. The time has come to stop making bare pronouncements on this

subject one way or the other (the many incarnationists content to assert "I'm embodied" and their few opponents content to assert "I'm not embodied") and instead to start looking squarely at the facts: obvious, indubitable facts on which both parties could agree.

For a start, let's take this encapsulated-person idea as seriously as we can. And notice how very odd it is, how improbable. Whether the capsule is likened to a packing-case, or a tomb, or a prison, or a house, or a caravan, or a tent, or a shell, its protean shape and agility and mode of maintenance are strange enough: but not half so strange as the lifestyle of its inmate. It seems the householder is exactly the same size and shape as the house, and by no means rattling about somewhere inside like a small pea in a big pod. It seems he's so bulky—or else his dwelling is so cramped—that he occupies all the rooms and passages at once and without an inch to spare: a shocking case of slum conditions and overcrowding. Come on! We're trying to find out what we *mean* when we say we're *in* this body. Do we mean that within this four-winged, thatch-roofed, two-windowed stately home there dwells a lord of the manor who fills out and coincides with the manor-house, rather as the tea he imbibes (through the front door?) fills out and coincides with the teapot? A home-shaped home owner? A tight fit indeed, reminding one of those young people who shrink on their blue jeans so snugly that they (the jeans) resemble the blue skin of the Lord Krishna. Which in turn reminds one of how Krishna revealed himself as the entire universe, and certainly not confined to that tiny portion of himself which Arjuna saw.

And now, turning away from this tragi-comic superstition of our own confinement, let's take a look at what's actually going on—now.

Look at your own hand, holding this number of *The Mountain Path*.

Are you inside that thing?

If so, I'm eager to learn how you find it in there. Congested, pitch dark, warm, soaking wet, with no room to swing a blood vessel or corpuscle in, let alone a cat?

Suppose you have come to consciousness for the first time at this very moment, or suppose you've had a sudden attack of total amnesia, what is there to tell you (on present evidence) that you are *inside* that hand and wrist and not *inside* that wristwatch and sleeve and magazine?

Look at the skin of that hand. Which side of it are you? Are you, again on present evidence, lurking beneath that surface or at large above it? Are you contained *in it*, or is it—along with the watch and sleeve and magazine, the furniture in the room, the world outside the window—all contained *in you*?

Look out at that wide sky and those clouds and trees, and then look down at those feet and arms and trunk—and say whether you are *shut out of* that vastness there and *shut into* this smallness here. Somewhere the *Pali Canon* speaks of two kinds of people: those who “live in a small hardness,” and those who “live in the immensity.” Which kind are you, in your own immediate experience at this moment? Isn't the first kind not only imaginary but unimaginable, no good even as fairytale or science-fiction material? In the same class as those rabbit horns and tortoise hairs that Buddhist scriptures go on about? To speak plainly, stuff and nonsense?

The whole issue can be boiled down to the simple one of how *big* you are. There's a tradition according to which Jesus said: “A man who looks on himself only from outside, and not also from within, makes himself small.” Instead of trying to creep into that hand over there, please move up to where you really are stationed, to the very Centre of your world, to this Observation Post or Viewpoint from which

that hand is being seen, and observe how this Point (what Point?) explodes to engulf all of that world from shirt-buttons to sky. Here's the quiet and unobserved bombshell that makes the Hiroshima blast seem like a puff of cigarette smoke. Why, so far from your being contained in that minute fragment of the world called your human body, you aren't even contained in your world body, but are the Uncontainable!

How on earth does it arise, this wild notion which no wild animal is foolish enough to dream of, this specifically human delusion that the Observer is mysteriously trapped and embedded in a little piece of what's observed? How on earth does the growing (sic!) child get cut down, almost overnight, from cosmic to human dimensions? The answer is that it catches from grown-ups (sic, again) the disease of progressive *eccentricity*— of being increasingly beside oneself (which of course means crazy)— the disease whose victims, as if in a St. Vitus' dance, leap out of themselves, turn round in mid-air, and look back at themselves. What an impossible contortion: no wonder if some sufferers seem permanently twisted! It leads to the superimposing of what one *looks like* over there upon what one *is* here—which is bad observation, bad science, bad philosophy, bad religion, bad living, and certainly makes for the bad use of one's body. Even common sense jibs at the fallacy that *others* are in a position to see the you that *you* see. And (more generally) modern science jibs at the fallacy that things stay the same no matter where they are viewed from. Einstein took care of that one, as did Bishop Berkeley before him.

People, says the great Rumi, devise stratagems for putting the King in a pint-pot. That little sentence “I AM IN A BODY” should be enough to give the game away—as if I AM could be encapsulated in any body, however capacious!

The joke is that we are well aware (with part of our minds) that our real body doesn't stop at our skin, but—to function at all—has to be

worldwide. (We accept this in theory and reject it in practice, we apply it to others and not to ourselves — our capacity for this sort of double-think being inexhaustible.)

My Earth, unlike my hand, is an indispensable organ of my life; and my Solar System is at least as vital to me as my respiratory or digestive system. I can survive a heart-and-lung transplant but hardly a galactic one. I could get along for years without large parts of my earthly embodiment, but for how long without my heavenly embodiment? And, in general, it's a commonplace of the modern world that all things are in countless ways interdependent and mutually conditioning, to such an extent that the Universe is strictly indivisible, a truly organic whole: indeed the only true Whole. If I'm incarnate at all (and in a sense I surely am) then nothing less than this Universe is my Incarnation, and I do myself an injustice when I settle for anything less.

But you may ask: "What does it matter that I've been taught to regard this tiny fragment of the Universe as my body, and all the rest as its environment? Surely it's a harmless enough assumption that has its uses — if not an essential social fiction at least a convenient one. After all, it works pretty well."

I reply: On the contrary, it works very badly, is inconvenient and harmful in the extreme. And it is harmful, not so much because your collapse from cosmic to human dimensions is *bad* for you (how much worse than a collapsed lung!) as because it is *impossible* for you, a game and pretence, a lie; and because living a lie is unhealthy living. Here are just six of the consequences — some hidden, some overt, all sick — of playing this distinctively human game:

(i) You see yourself as one thing up against all other things, and this means you are in constant fear of injury and loss.

(ii) At a deep level you resent having been cut down to size so cruelly and so drastically — what humiliation, what a come-down this is! — and you hold a lifelong grudge against the order of things that has done this to you.

The result is aggression in one or another of its many forms.

(iii) Impoverished and not liking it at all, suffering from the loss of your infinite wealth (as an infant you owned the world), you compulsively collect around you as many relics and tokens of your past estate as you can. You are motivated by greed instead of need, and it's insatiable.

(iv) Contracting the social disease of eccentricity, of being beside yourself (at the regulation distance of a metre or two) you live the life of a displaced person; one whose handicaps are likely to include morbid self-consciousness amounting perhaps to crippling embarrassment, phoniness or putting on acts to impress people, rigidity and awkwardness in place of your natural suppleness and flow, and contrived behaviour in place of your natural spontaneity. For, curiously enough, to entomb yourself in your body is to estrange yourself from it and misuse it. Look at how elegantly and smoothly the cat walks, jumps, stretches itself, plays. Its happy secret is that, having heard no rumour of incarnation, it imposes no feline boundaries or restrictions on itself, is cat-free, wide open. And so with all creatures except man. Blake wrote:

Seest thou that little wingéd fly?
Its gates are not closed: I hope thine
are not closed!

Blake was an optimist whose mission to the world was to "melt apparent surfaces away and reveal the Infinite which is hid." Well, he certainly *tried*.

(v) Out there, you cut yourself off from the Source of your originality, your unique inspiration or genius — and become a mere social unit. The fact that you can only *pretend* to amputate yourself isn't enough to prevent your progressive standardization and predictability.

(vi) Finally, you are more inefficient than you need be. To do a good job of work, the best that lies in you, you have to attend, to be realistic about what's happening and not drift off into a dream. In this case the dream is that

the workman has been compressed into a particle of himself, and distorted into a shape that isn't his at all. No wonder if the work of this monster turns out to be something of a monstrosity.

What, then, is the sovereign remedy for this shrinkage-myth with all its sad consequences – of which I have provided only a small example?

Is it to ferret round diligently for escape routes from this body-prison, in order one day to find oneself gloriously at large again? Or to cultivate (by austerities or meditation or less approved means) a succession of out-of-the-body experiences while still this side of death? Or to practise feeling one's immensity, patiently projecting oneself in all directions till one stays worldwide? Or to keep reminding oneself that one is a *malade imaginaire*, and that it's an idle tale that one is a mere fragment of the universe?

Or, instead, simply to notice that you have never had an *in-the-body* experience in your whole life?

Well, I can't speak for you, but I find it's enough to do – not (thank God!) ten or five or even two things – but just one. Namely (as I said above, and shall go on repeating in season and out of season while breath lasts) to turn the arrow of my attention round 180° and look at What I'm looking out of. Now.



Otherwise, I'm one of those who (pace T.S. Eliot) have the meaning but miss the experience.

FRAGRANT FLOWERS

By Gladys De Meuter

I had never really given the matter much thought
But simply accepted the things which I had been taught.
My race and religion were far superior to all,
Great wealth, success and worldly pleasures held me in thrall.

Until one day in gay and generous mood I stopped
Before a beggar, and in his torn hat some coins dropped.
'Child,' said he, 'I too have something to give. Bend your ear.'
Surprised, I came closer and saw in his eye a tear.

'Beautiful bird in a gilded cage, here is the key
Which will teach you how to set yourself and others free.
One God created all, only man wears a disguise.
Shower love wherever you go and learn to be wise.

'Once the symbol of Pure Love took from upon a cross,
And those who reject the lesson can know only loss;
For happiness belongs alone to a loving heart,
Sweet child, in handing me these alms you have made a start.'

Suddenly the beggar was cloaked in a blinding light,
His rags were raiments of snow; He smiled, vanished from sight.
Only the hat remained – but where the few coins had been,
a fragrance arose, and three white flowers could be seen.

IN HIS PRESENCE

By Professor K. Swaminathan

BHAGAVAN was a perfect Impersonality, like the sun in the sky or like unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber. People spoke to one another freely and frankly in His Presence, as if the figure on the couch were a statue, not a listener. It was natural to refer to Him as It instead of You or He. Thus every conversation in the Old Hall turned out to be a truly Socratic dialogue; every statement was tentative and therefore poetic; no statement was dogmatic, eristic or polemical. This impersonal Being would suddenly become a Person full of *sattvic* power, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could communicate with sharp precision His own Awareness-Bliss to other persons according to their needs and moods. The sun now came down and played with us as the light of the moon to illumine the mind, or as the fire in the home to cook our food.

No wonder, the devotees differed much on who He was; in fact there were as many Bhagavans as there were devotees. In 1965 Devaraja Mudaliar and I met Mrs. Taleyar Khan and tried to persuade her to change some of her ideas on Bhagavan and His message. Her prompt, decisive reply settled the matter once for all. My Bhagavan is my Bhagavan. He is not your Bhagavan".

Why not? We look at the firmament through our own little individual windows of perception. How can we know it in its vastness until we cease to be our petty selves? In this sense the only persons who really knew Bhagavan and taught the truth about Him were the humble people who in silence served Him and His devotees, and the inspired poet Muruganar who had emptied himself and become a hollow

reed through which flowed the rich music of Bhagavan's manifold Being and the clear outline of His teaching.

During my many visits between 1940 and 1950 friends like K. Subrahmanyam, Minna Nuruddin, D.S. Sarma, some Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order would be with me, and other visitors too like Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, S. Duraiswami Iyer, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Dilip Kumar Roy and O.P. Ramaswami Reddiar. It was not all silent meditation or profound metaphysics.

In 1940-45 the Great War was on and the cry "Quit India" rent the skies. Teachers from far and near, Dr. S.R.U. Savor, Madan Gopal (of Jabalpur), G.V. Subbaramaiah (of Nellore), K. Subrahmanyam (of Loyola), and my poor, bewildered self, all anxious to be good shepherds to our far from docile students, wanted to know whom to follow and what to do. Bhagavan recognized and respected the uniqueness of each person and his specific predicament and gently and often indirectly taught each one his *svadharma*, his duty in his station, the *paraspara* or reciprocal obligation binding oneself and one's circle. The humble acceptance and due performance of this *svadharma* always helped and never hindered our individual and collective growth; such self-actualization through self-transcendence brings heaven's light and life to our earth and the power of *paratpara* Being into the time-space world of Becoming. *Moksha* was not escape from *vyavahara*, but its transformation through involvement in life. *Dharma* was not a discipline imposed and endured, but the enjoyment and exercise of the power of enlarged Being.

In those war years Sri Aurobindo advised all out support to the Allies and the War effort; Gandhi prescribed individual *satyagraha*; the *volte face* of the Communists, the fanatic fury of the Communalists, the common, craven clinging to one's bread and butter, added confusion to the prevailing chaos.

But here in the Ashram, there was not only peace serene, but clarity and certitude. Every one found the light to discover, and gained the strength to perform, his *svadharma*. Young men going to the Front and patriots going to jail sought and secured Bhagavan's blessings before proceeding to their chosen field of action.

When O.P. Ramaswami Reddiar asked for Bhagavan's permission to court imprisonment, the answer was a question: "Are you sure that Gandhi would approve?" When he was assured that Reddiar was only carrying out Gandhi's orders, He smiled and said, "When Gandhi obeys Rama and you obey Gandhi, it is all right. No one should say 'I fought and won freedom for my country'. Gandhi does not hate the British. He is only against foreign rule". Yes. Gandhi's fight was clean, aseptic, like a surgical operation. And even foreign rule was not our Enemy No. 1. It was the ego.

The same lesson was taught during a Michaelmas vacation when R.R. Keitahn, the Gandhian social worker, was in the Ashram. Here the lesson was: not even poverty was our Enemy No. 1. It was the ego.

A young man from Andhra walked into the Hall, folded his palms, and almost demanded Bhagavan's *anugraha* (approval) for his starting a social service centre in his town. Silence prevailed and the youngster was disappointed. Keitahn looked for a nod from the god on the couch and proceeded to explain why the *anugraha* was not so readily forthcoming. He questioned the young man: "Are you sure you love the poor as you love your brother or sister? Do you form a society when you take your sister to the doctor as soon as she falls ill? Do you want to be an office-bearer, read the annual report and feel big? Are you really concerned over the plight of your poor neighbour?" Thus Kei-

tahn brought out (as Bhagavan smiled His blessing) the paramount importance of loving and "identifying" with people in trouble and the ever-present danger of ego-boosting when service is undertaken not as *sadhana* for self-improvement but as a means of self-aggrandisement.

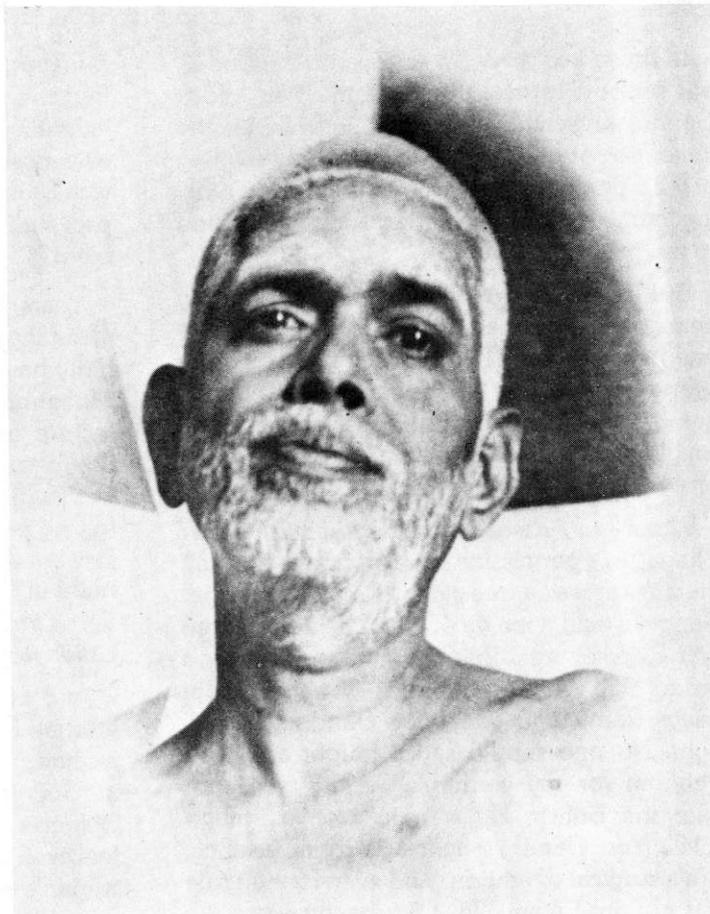
Years later, when I discovered the many gleaming golden needles hidden in the ninety hefty haystacks called the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, I remembered Keitahn's lecture and felt Bhagavan's presence in all things true and good and beautiful. Gandhi would cheerfully accept Keitahn's amendment (giving priority to "identification" and a necessary but second place to "service") to the statement in C.W.M.G. XXXI, p. 511. "*Self-realization is impossible without service of and identification with the poorest*".

And Gandhi presents again the same old, eternal, Ramana Gold when he says: "Once we have realized that this whole universe exists in God, how can there be any problem of violence and non-violence for us? We would feel even thieves and tigers to be ourselves... It is man's nature to do good, for *all selves are one*. When this is realized man's ego melts away" (XXXII — 218, 280). Gandhi and Ramana agree both in asserting the spiritual equality of rich and poor and in prescribing the constant endeavour to reduce their present material disparity as the safest and surest means of maintaining the equality. The Being needs of the privileged can only be satisfied by meeting the survival needs of the others. What is common to the Maharshi and the Mahatma is best expressed in Vivekananda's words: "Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense. Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *tamas*, to stand on their own feet and be men inspired by the spirit of Karma Yoga". Both *Gita Sara* and *Gita Pravesika* distil Sri Krishna's teachings: "Serve 'others' as an expression of your true Self and a means of self-fulfilment".

(To be continued)

THE LOOK OF BRILLIANCE

By Swami Madhavtirtha



IN the year 1944 Sri Manu Subedar invited me to accompany him to Sri Ramanasramam. We met in Bombay, but circumstances did not permit him to keep up to the programme and, therefore, I decided to proceed by myself to the abode of the Sage of Arunachala, since I had already read and heard much about him.

I reached the Ashram on the 14th of August. My first *darshan* of the Maharshi, which happened to be in the dining hall, was so entirely free from sanctimonious conventions that I was at once put at ease and in perfect tune with the Sage's surroundings. The Sage's benign look of welcome made me feel at home and conveyed to me a sense of ineffable happiness which remained with me throughout my stay at Sri Ramanasramam. It has always been my habit to note down my impressions during such visits to important places and make a record of them for the benefit of other aspirants.

I should like to refer in the first instance to a somewhat mystical experience I had during my visit. It is rather difficult to describe such an experience but I may try to convey some idea to the reader about my experience by borrowing an analogy from *Srimad Bhagavata*. Sometime before the birth of Sri Krishna, it is said, the Lord entered into the heart of Sri Vasudeva, who then shone like the sun. Later, this light passed into Devaki through a mere look of Vasudeva, when she shone like the moon. Even so, on the very first day of my *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan, I found in the look of the Sage the dazzling brilliance of the sun. On a subsequent day while I was in the presence of Sri Maharshi in the hall I recognised the same brilliance in the look of the Sage and it seemed to have pierced me to the core of my being, even as the Light of the Lord

passed into Devaki through the look of Vasudeva. My breath seemed to stop for a while and my mind was elevated into some spiritual realm of unutterable peace and happiness.

I know that I should have conveyed to the reader not much of my feeling and sentiment by the above description of the experience I had in the presence of the great Sage. This is due to, as I had already stated, the uniqueness and inexpressible nature of all mystical experiences.

I would venture to suggest that the reciprocal relationship between Sri Maharshi in his *abhinna-bhava* or an attitude of oneness with all, and the aspirant sitting in his presence is analogous to that of a radio transmitter and a receiver. If the visitor is really anxious to obtain the fullest benefit of the benign influence radiating from the silent presence of the Sage, the visitor must attune his mind, which according to the above analogy will be the 'receiving set', to the proper wavelength.

The use of the analogy of the radio transmitting and receiving sets in this context should not mislead the reader into thinking that this is an implicit recognition of a duality in the ultimate Truth. For a correct understanding of the Sage's point of view with reference to himself in relation to 'other', I may quote his teachings, which are perfectly clear and beyond all possible doubt. On page xxix of *Sat Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi* it is stated as follows: "When the Yogi rises to the highest state of *Samadhi*, it is Self in the Heart that supports him, whether he is aware of it or not. If he is aware in the Heart, he knows that in whatever state he is, it is always the same Truth, the same Heart, the one Self, the Spirit that is present throughout, eternal and immutable". It is from this State alone in which the Sage ever abides does he exercise his benign influence over the numerous aspirants seeking his presence. Therefore, in this State of Absolute Being, which is One and Eternal, there is not the slightest scope for any duality. The words of the Sage given in another context also confirm the above statement. When some visitor asked Sri Maharshi

as to why he should not go about and preach to the people the Truth he had realised, he replied: "Real preaching is possible only through Silence". The duality which is necessarily involved in verbal preaching is entirely eliminated in this Silence. The State which at once transcends and includes the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep is known as *Sahaja Sthiti*. In other words, the Silence of the Sage is constant and exercises uninterruptedly its benign influence, whether the Sage appears outward to be aware of the world or not. Reverting to the analogy of the transmitter, I may say that the Sage's spiritual influence is transmitted unceasingly *as far as he is concerned*. But from the point of view of the seeker, the continued beneficent influence exercised by the Sage will have no apparent effect unless the seeker is himself 'prepared' to receive the same.

One day, referring to the contradiction between the two lines of the first verse of the *Isavayopanishad*, I asked Sri Maharshi for the correct interpretation. The first line of the verse declares that the One Supreme Being, Eternal and Immutable, is the basis of everything changeable. In other words, this line maintains that the mutable world is only a divine manifestation. Nevertheless, it is this world, the second line of the verse enjoins the aspirant to renounce in order to obtain true Happiness. The contradiction between the two lines is thus very patent. If the world is nothing but the Divine, why should the aspirant be asked to renounce it? With these ideas in my mind I asked Sri Maharshi how renunciation is at all possible if the entire manifested existence is nothing but the one Divine Substance. What is it that should be renounced? "One must renounce the wrong knowledge", replied Sri Maharshi, "that anything but the Divine exists. That is, one must give up the notion that there is any duality or multiplicity, whatever the manifested existence may appear to be".

This interpretation of the first verse of the Upanishad is very original and, I think, unanticipated by any commentator, ancient or modern. There is perhaps, none that does not take for

granted an implicit contradiction between the two lines of this verse. But Sri Maharshi finds not even an apparent contradiction!

"The Supreme Being is the only Reality. One and Unchangeable" said the Maharshi. "It alone is and sustains the apparent multiplicity. Therefore, renounce the knowledge that anything except the Divine exists. In other words, renounce the sense of duality or multiplicity".

"It is no doubt well that the *sastras* should admonish the layman and make him give up the notion of duality", put in one of the visitors then present, "but how are we to reconcile this teaching of the *sastras* with a no less important injunction, namely, that of self-surrender to the Divine? If there is no duality whatever, where is the necessity or possibility for self-surrender?" In view of Sri Maharshi's exposition of the inner meaning of the first verse of the *Isavasyopanishad* as inculcating the absolute Oneness of the Reality, the visitor's question on self-surrender to the Divine as involving a duality, roused the interest of all of us, and we eagerly awaited Sri Maharshi's reply. Not only was Sri Maharshi's reply very cogent, but also every word he spoke seemed to have a force that made disputation entirely out of place. At first he appeared to have completely ignored the visitor's question. For a minute or two he was silent thus rousing all the more our curiosity to know how he would tackle the question. I shall try to give Sri Maharshi's reply briefly and, as far as possible, in his own words.

"We are familiar with a custom among some people in these parts based on deep sentiments of devotion to Lord Ganesha. Daily worship to His image (which is found installed in all the temples of the locality) is an indispensable ritual for these people before their daily meal. A certain poor traveller of this persuasion was passing through a sparsely inhabited country. Not finding a temple of Ganesha anywhere nearby that he might perform his daily worship to the Image before his midday meal, he resolved to make an Idol of the Deity out of the small quantity of jaggery he was carrying with him (with flour, etc.,) and perform the ritual before

his meal. Having made the Idol out of the jaggery, he proceeded with the ritual in right earnest. And then to his bewilderment he found that for the purpose of *naivedya* or food-offering he had nothing sweet in his baggage, since he had converted all the jaggery he had into the Idol. But no worship is complete without the customary *naivedya*. So the simple-minded wayfarer pinched out a small bit of the jaggery from the Idol itself and offered the bit as *naivedya* to the Deity. It did not occur to him that in the very act of pinching out a bit of jaggery he had defiled the very Idol which he wanted to worship and had therefore made both the worship and the offering worthless. Your idea of self-surrender is nothing better than the offering made by the wayfarer. By presuming your existence as something apart from the Supreme Being you have merely 'defiled' It. Whether you surrender yourself or not, you have never been apart from that Supreme Being. Indeed, at this present moment, even as in the past or the future, the Divine alone is".

There is a characteristic way in which Sri Maharshi draws the aspirant's pointed attention to the great Advaitic Truth he has realised and which finds spontaneous expression in every act of his daily life. In his biography one comes across several incidents in relation to which Sri Maharshi made profound observations in order to teach the practice of true wisdom in life.

Let me illustrate the point from my personal experience. On the day I was to leave the Ashram I had arranged for the purchase of some fruits locally for offering them to Sri Maharshi. When the time arrived for me to take leave of him, I put the fruits reverentially before him and said in a few words that I was leaving the place presently. Sri Maharshi smiled benignly and remarked with a twinkle in his eyes: "And so, you are offering jaggery to Lord Ganesha!" I could understand he was referring to the parable he had related the other day with reference to 'self-surrender', but how aptly has he found the occasion to drive home in a very practical way the moral of the parable, namely that all is but the Divine!

TO WITHDRAW AS PURE BEING

OZHIVIL ODUKKAM

By Kannudaiya Vallalaar¹

1.60 An elephant is glorious even in rut. Can it be so for a mad dog? A sage should he exceed norms is still glorious; but the bound should not break laws.

1.61 The scriptures cannot bestow the wonderful Grace necessary for the best class of seekers. The Unspoken Word does the wonder for him. The same Truth beyond 'this' (and 'that') is said in countless ways in the scriptures to suit other innumerable grades of seekers.

2.2 My master's words were not merely answers to my questions, like the note struck on a lute-string. Rather they were spontaneous and full like the notes rising from the golden instruments in the hands of those who stand entranced as Siva dances His Cosmic dance before them.

2.3 For the mature seeker, a still, silent look of the master is enough to gain the end; for those who make self-enquiry, a word will bestow Eternal Life; those less mature need some few words like the sounds of a bird of omen; the very dull require prolonged instruction, like the buzzing of a drunken bee.

2.6 Indulgence in worldly pleasures in a professed *jnani* is like poverty in an alchemist able to transmute baser metals into gold, or an incurable disease in a physician successful in curing others' diseases, or ignominious spittle on a boastful warrior. Who can help him out of his trouble?

¹ continued from previous issue

2.7 The master's reply given with joy to the question of a clear-sighted disciple, is helpful to others as well. Listen without being drowsy and inattentive, like a shepherd with head resting on his long staff and yet watching the herd. Then misery yet to come, which is like mould on foetid matter, will come to an end.

2.13 The master's touch, thought and glance remove the seeker's ignorance, illusion, and activity; his words put an end to the habit of rigorous discipline, ritual worship and yoga together with the ego prompting them.

2.26 What attachment can there be for the dead? Death of the ego is universal destruction; where then can one hide oneself? As the tiger devours the inquisitive seeker entering its lair, the all-powerful Supreme Being is sure to hold down the seeker in complete stillness.

3.3 Directly to control the breath instead of its happening spontaneously on control of mind and to remain motionless like a log of wood, is even worse than the plight of a dumb, blind man who, having drunk some poison walks and falls into a disused well in a deserted village and stays there helpless.

3.4 Learned talks, peculiar postures, unwinking look are all pompous shows of the false yogi. Let them go and hold on to the direct way to Liberation. Instead of now knowing and now forgetting, abide as pure Awareness, like ether all-pervasive, waveless, still.

3.5 Is it wrong (for *jnanis*) to call the *yogi* a buffoon for making a cover of sheaths of ignorance and remaining in inert *samadhi* within? This is like one who takes leave of sense and attempts to extract rope from rock for tying a rutting elephant to a post, or like one setting out to capture ether.

3.6 To look down into melted butter at one's image, then up into the sky to find one's shadow cast there; to see the forms meditated upon in the six centres; to notice internal sounds and flashes of light; all these phenomena can keep only the ignorant busy.

3.8 That you, a *tapasvi*, should, without knowing yourself, engage in *yoga*, is it the trick of the teachings you had, the *sastras* you read, mere perversity or habit or something else? Does one seek a wrapper to hide the sky from view or simply close one's eyes? Fool, think what this *yoga* of yours is!

3.10 Stretching yourself on a bed, closing your eyes, snorting as if snoring and feigning drowsiness, can you force sleep on yourself? Perfect wastrels that you are, the Being-Awareness-Bliss already in you is only hidden by the ego when you *think* of it.

3.11 Unless experienced, what is gained by simply proclaiming that It is beyond the reach of mind, speech and body, that what is perceived is mere illusion, that the Self cannot be apart and that the Supreme is all-inclusive, perfect, infinite?

3.13 If you pass beyond the mind, sleep is the result. If unattached to anything you try to remain aware, a light appears within. Instead you try to raise life-breath to the head and hold it there with the unruly mind. What is this state?

3.17 Who taught the water to be cool, the fire to burn, or the wind to blow? So also, thinking and other activities are natural to the mind and other internal organs. To get rid of them is as futile as to bury one's shadow. Be like the ether (all-pervasive and untainted) and they will vanish.

3.19 Without the insight that, like clouds in the sky, internal organs rise up from and fade away in ignorance, if you proceed to check them as if they were real; they bounce up again and again like a ball struck against the floor. Instead, if you remain watching the mind, it will dry up and stop flowering like a tree cut at its root.

3.20 Should you but get fixed for a second in Pure Awareness free from particulars, ah! the egoless Bliss! Has It any limits? It is like the sea of milk welling up from the tiny teat.

3.24 Like the man in the story advised not to think of a monkey, repeating to himself "I should not think of a monkey" — a man advised to abide as Siva, instead of ceasing to think, goes on repeating "I am Siva; I am Siva!" What is this but ignorance?

3.25 Although the ego has been pointed out as the obstacle to Bliss, one seeks Bliss, like a cobra with a shining jewel in its head seeking a dark hole to hide in, or a man looking for a well in a sheet of water to draw water from, or one fighting one's own shadow to be free from it. Ha! Who will remove the ego (and be Siva)?

3.27 Instead of shaking off the inert dark blank, and turning both ignorance and relative knowledge into Pure Awareness, and waiting to be gradually consumed like a wick by the fire at its tip, the search for Bliss, as if it were apart, will surely drive it farther away.

3.29 To meditate fractionally on the Supreme Being who is All-Perfection ever-present as the Knowledge of knowledge and unbroken Unity, and then to break off from this meditation, amounts to the creation and destruction by the individual of the Lord. Accumulating this which is itself sinful, how can One be freed from birth?

3.30 Me, proud of my thinking and forgetfulness, ignorance and illusion, and love and hate, Lord Sambandha like the Sun by his look or like the philosopher's stone, by His touch made me one with Himself!

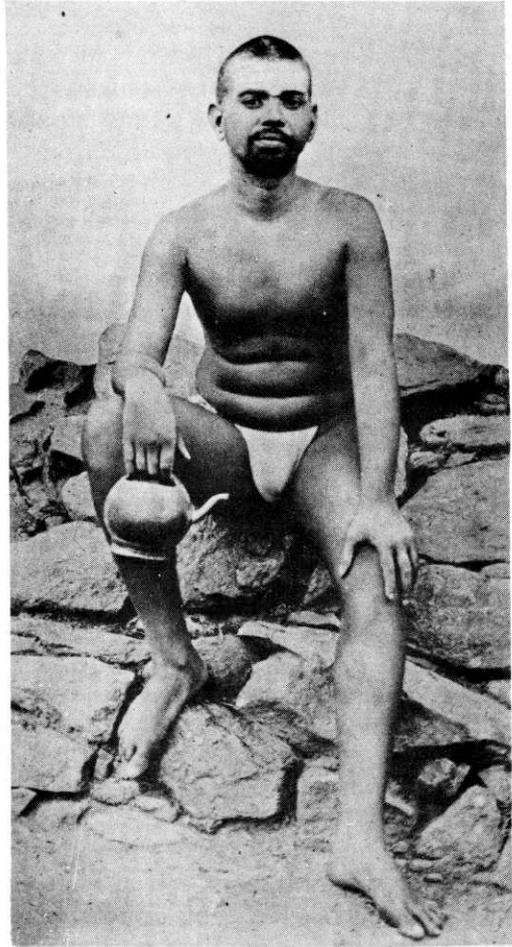
(To be continued)

111

EARLY DEVOTEES: I-b

SIVAPRAKASAM PILLAI

By Michael James*



HOWEVER, after some time Pillaiyavargal found that his attempts to practise Self-enquiry unceasingly were being obstructed by the lustful desires which began burning him. Unable to overcome this problem even by praying inwardly to his Guru, and bearing in mind both the Vedic injunction cited in *Kaivalya Navaneetam* 2.75, "If you are afflicted with lust, embrace your wife", and the words of Sri Bhagavan, "Marriage is a means to remove the sense of difference between woman and man"¹, he decided that he should marry once again. But many obstacles stood in the way of his carrying out this decision, not least of all being his financially unsound status, and thus his mind was placed in a state of dilemma. Finally in April 1913 he decided to appeal to the Almighty, and hence he wrote four questions on a paper,

* continued from previous issue

"What am I to do to escape all miseries in this world? Should I marry the girl I have in mind? If I should not, why not? If I should, how to acquire the necessary money for that?"², and humbly placed the paper at the Feet of Lord Vinayakar in his village temple, with the prayer that the answers should either be written on the paper or imparted directly. He also mentally promised that if the answers were vouchsafed to him during that night, he would abide by them steadfastly, but that if no answers were forthcoming, he would seek the guidance of Sri Bhagavan in Tiruvannamalai.

¹ These words of Sri Bhagavan are cited by Pillaiyavargal in verse 31 of *Sri Ramana Pada Malai* (see *The Mountain Path*, April 1972, p. 91).

² *Anugraha Ahaval*, lines 139-145 (in Tamil).

Though Pillaiyavargal waited all night in patient expectation, no answers were vouchsafed to him, and hence he started at once for Tiruvannamalai. Hesitating to broach openly the subject he had in mind with Sri Bhagavan, he sat quietly in His Presence for several days. As he observed the detached life lived by Sri Bhagavan, through example Sri Bhagavan silently impressed upon him that "not desiring anything, making the expanding mind subside, attending to Self and abiding as Self is alone the good path to attain what is beneficial"³. Thus Pillaiyavargal was made to feel that it would be base-minded on his part to ask Sri Bhagavan questions about such petty matters as marriage and money, and hence he decided to return to his village without asking any questions.

After deciding thus, but before he could start for his village, Pillaiyavargal had several visions of Sri Bhagavan occurring over a period of a few days, both in waking and dream. These visions, which he has described in lines 156 to 200 of *Anugraha Ahaval*⁴, made a powerful impression upon his mind, and as a result he felt completely relieved of his problems and of the desire to marry again. The thought of returning to his village also vanished from his mind, and thus he remained in Sri Bhagavan's Presence for some more days. Since on an earlier occasion Sri Bhagavan had once told him, "Eating when hunger comes by begging food from house to house is an aid to destroy the ego", Pillaiyavargal one day had his head shaved clean and came and prostrated to Sri Bhagavan, with the idea of going out to beg his food and at a later stage to take to a life of complete outward renunciation. Sri Bhagavan at once understood what Pillaiyavargal had in mind, but either due to His knowing the lot destiny had in store for him, or due to a compassionate feeling that he should not suffer in future by living only upon alms, Sri Bhagavan looked at him and said, "It is good to grow a tuft"⁵, and after a pause, "One can practise Self-enquiry while remaining at home".

"Remove the ego and avidya is gone. Look for it, the ego vanishes and the real Self alone remains. The ego professing avidya is not to be seen. There is no avidya in reality. All sastras (scriptures) are meant to disprove the existence of avidya. Ignorance never arose. It has no real being. That which is, is only vidya (knowledge)".

— Sri Bhagavan.

Soon after this incident, Pillaiyavargal's maternal aunt came to Tiruvannamalai, having noticed his prolonged absence from home. When she informed Sri Bhagavan that she wished to take Pillaiyavargal back home, He readily gave his consent. Writing about this, Sri Manikkam Pillai infers that since Sri Bhagavan was not in favour of Pillaiyavargal taking to a life of complete outward renunciation, it was by His divine Grace that at the same time a thought was kindled in the mind of his aunt to take him back home.⁶ Understanding that it was the will of Sri Bhagavan that he should return home, Pillaiyavargal left Tiruvannamalai along with his aunt. From that time onwards he began to live a life of solitude in a Vinayaka temple on the outskirts of his village or in the nearby woods, and he devoted his time exclusively to the practice of Self-enquiry.

After some time, however, a change began to take place in his outward behaviour. Sometimes for no apparent reason he would suddenly start laughing with irrepressible joy; he would often chant *Tiruvachakam* and other hymns in a loud voice; he would pay obeisance

³ *Anugraha Ahaval*, lines 150-152.

⁴ An account of these visions in English may also be found in *Self-Realisation*, 7th ed., pp. 79-80.

⁵ These words of Sri Bhagavan are referred to by Pillaiyavargal in verse 15 of *Sri Ramana Deva Malai*. According to traditional Hindu customs, having a tuft of hair is the sign of being a householder, whereas shaving off the tuft is the sign of being a renunciant, and hence a person with a tuft would not go begging for alms.

⁶ *Sri Sivaprakasa Charitamum Malaiyum*, pp. 14-15.

with folded hands to all forms which he saw; and he began wearing only a loin-cloth with a *vibhuti* bag tucked into it, he smeared his whole body with ashes, he carried a long staff, he forgot all codes (*acharas*) of caste and religion, and without any sense of difference he began frequenting places such as the cremation ground and the *cheri* (the area inhabited by the lowest castes). During this period he made a barefoot pilgrimage to the temple of Lord Murugar at Vayalur, near Tiruchirapalli. When he saw the form of Lord Murugar in that temple, it appeared to him that the spear in the Lord's hand was moving. Deeply moved on seeing this, tears welled forth from the eyes, and with great devotion he sang the praises of the Lord. While returning home, he readily accepted and ate stale gruel and other sour food from anyone who offered it. As a result of his walking such a long distance every day, his feet began bleeding, but nevertheless he continued to hobble on slowly. One night, while he was sleeping in a public resting-house, someone stole his upper cloth. Since his loin-cloth became covered with fine red dust due to his walking along the mud roads, it appeared like the ochre cloth of a *sannyasi*. With a long staff in hand and wearing only a dust-covered loin-cloth, when he returned to his village he appeared like an image of Lord Murugar Himself. Since he was formerly having a desire to be a *sannyasi*, it was perhaps by divine Grace that during this period of his life that desire was temporarily fulfilled in this manner.

Soon after his return from Vayalur, Pillaiyavargal regained his normal state and with increased *vairagya* he continued his steady and persevering practice of Self-enquiry, and for sometime he also observed outward *mouna*. From that time onwards, little change was seen in his outward life. For many years he would unfailingly visit Tiruvannamalai three or four times a year and would stay each time for ten or fifteen days in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan. Except for these visits to Tiruvannamalai, he seldom stirred out of his village. Since the time he returned from Tiruvannamalai in May 1913, all his material needs were taken care of by his

This is the Time

By Muruganar

**To save us from the pain of death
Immortal Bliss has come and settled
In Aruna now with the name of
This, this is the time, I tell you, to take
Refuge in him and start to live
The life everlasting.**

**If one but keenly meditates
On Ramana, this Flame, this Siva,
And taking refuge in Him looks
With his own eyes of grace, one sees
That all the world is by his light
Shot through and through.**

brother, Sri Kunjithapadam Pillai and the latter's wife, both of whom served him with great love and devotion. A fellow villager, Sri Mu. Manikam Pillai, became attached to Pillaiyavargal from the early days, and attended on him as a devoted disciple for more than thirty years.

Such was the respect with which the local people regarded Pillaiyavargal that some years after his return from Vayalur he received an honorary appointment as a juror in the Manjakkuppam Sessions Court. Saddened by this unexpected turn of events, he composed four *venbas* in which he prayed to Sri Bhagavan and asked, "Do you think it justice to think of sending me to a court of justice?"⁷ However, understanding that such work came only according to *prarabdha* and was to be experienced with a detached attitude free of likes and dislikes, for some years he served as a juror whenever he was called upon to do so. In a similar manner, on another occasion he was called upon to render honorary service in connection with the local census. Since he was well known for his impartiality and sense of justice, local people used to come to him for advice and guidance in matters concerning court cases and disputes about the ownership of land or

⁷ These four *venbas* are printed on pp. 22-23 of *Sri Sivaprakasa Charitamum Malaiyum*.

houses, and he always gave his help without expecting any return. Since his advice on such matters and on other personal problems invariably turned out to be correct, many people came to regard his words as *daiva vak* or divine utterances. He also used to explain the meaning of spiritual texts in Tamil to all who came to him seeking clarification.

Pillaiyavargal continued to visit Tiruvannamalai up to the year 1947, though in the later years due to old age he was not able to visit as frequently as before. Once, while feeling depressed at his inability to visit Sri Bhagavan more frequently, he consoled himself by composing a Tamil verse which means: "Without understanding what Ramana-darsanam really is, why are you disconsolate longing for Ramana-darsanam? Ramana-swarupa is itself my own swarupa, (and hence) Ramana-darsanam is only my knowing myself."⁸

During his many visits to Sri Bhagavan, especially in the early years, Pillaiyavargal received from Him many *upadesas*, some of which were of a general nature and some of which were very personal. Many of the more striking of these *upadesas* have been recorded by him in his poems *Sri Ramana Pada Malai*, *Sri Ramana Sadguru Malai* and *Sri Ramana Deva Malai*. In these poems, and also in his *Vinnappam*, he repeatedly prays for the Grace of Sri Bhagavan, expressing his own inability to follow the *upadesas* given by Him. However, on reading his prayers, we should not feel dejected thinking "If even he could not follow Sri Bhagavan's teachings, what hope is there for us?". When we feel our inability to follow the Guru's teachings, that is in fact the working of the Guru's grace, because as Sri Bhagavan says in verse 794 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, "The fruit of (the Guru's) making a failure of one's efforts is to induce one to seek the Grace of the Guru by making one understand that the attainment

(of Self-knowledge) cannot be achieved by one's own efforts but only by the Guru's Grace." Although Pillaiyavargal must often have felt (as does any other sincere *sadhaka*) his inability to follow Sri Bhagavan's teachings, the fact that he prayed so earnestly for Sri Bhagavan's Grace shows that he was gaining the real fruit of his repeated efforts, which were only seemingly unsuccessful. Moreover, when a devotee once asked Sri Bhagavan, "Sivaprakasam Pillai, who is such a good man, such an ardent devotee and a longstanding disciple, has written a poem saying that Sri Bhagavan's instructions could not be carried out by him effectively in practice. What can be the lot of others then?" Sri Bhagavan replied "Sri Acharya (Sri Adi Sankara) also says similar things when he composes songs in praise of any deity. How else can they praise God?"⁹. That is, if one adopts the *jiva bhava* (the attitude of being an individual soul) and praises God, one cannot but sing of the limitation and short-comings of one's individual existence, as can be seen even from the Hymns sung by Sri Bhagavan Himself in praise of Arunachala.

Moreover, the fact that Pillaiyavargal finally achieved the goal of Self-knowledge for which he so earnestly strove and prayed, was subtly indicated by Sri Bhagavan Himself. That is, after Pillaiyavargal passed away on Tuesday the 12th January 1948, a telegram was sent to Sri Bhagavan conveying the news, and on seeing the telegram Sri Bhagavan said in Tamil, "*Sivaprakasam Sivaprakasamanar*" which means 'Sivaprakasam has become *Siva-Prakasam*, the light of Siva'¹⁰

⁸ This verse is printed on pp. 20-21 of *Sri Sivaprakasam Charitamum Malaiyum*.

⁹ *Talks* No. 630 (p. 592).

¹⁰ P. 154 of *The Path of Sri Ramana* Part One (1981 ed.), and lines 724-725 of *Sri Ramana Charita Ahava*.



Michael James

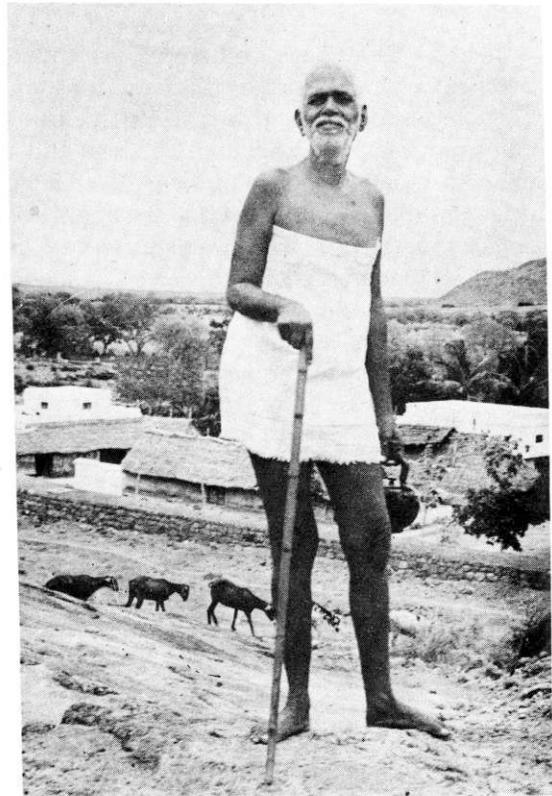
An EMPEROR (de jure) yet a PRISONER (de facto)

By Prof. N.R. Krishnamurti Aiyar

MANY human beings are miserable and one amongst them, perhaps, feeling utterly helpless and lost, is tempted to end his life by suicide. But his love for life is so strong that he hesitates to carry out his decision. In a final attempt to find a solution to his problems, he starts in right earnest to investigate himself and his environments.

He owns a wonderful mechanism called the body of which he is conscious in every particle. He is able to pinpoint the spot of trouble in the body by his conscious feeling of pain at that spot. He identifies this consciousness pervading his body most as 'I', the owner of the body, the personality of his being. We shall call this 'I' by the term 'Ego'. The centre of the Ego in the body we shall designate by the symbol 'O'. From this central point or origin 'O' we shall proceed to investigate the body and its environments. The investigator here is the Ego himself, the personality within the body.

The Ego is essentially a scientist and employs a powerful intellect to investigate this body and



its environments, the so-called world. He employs the five senses of taste, touch, sound, smell and sight collectively. The coordinator of the experiences gathered is the intellect. Thus are born the Sciences of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Psychology which coordinates all these Sciences. The Ego is the pervasive life-principle of all the sense components and their integrator, the intellect. In this context it should be stated that each of the senses is totally independent of the four others. For instance the tongue cannot hear and the ear cannot taste. These sense organs, though independent of each other are entirely dependent upon the conscious principle, the Ego. When the Ego is silenced in deep slumber the five senses are also suppressed during sleep. The senses revive after the Ego rises up into the waking state of the body.

Now, let us review the conclusions of Modern Science. According to its latest findings, all bodies stay and move about in an infinite Space-Time-Energy-Continuum. All bodies, living or

non-living, luminous or otherwise, are conglomerates of minute particles which are constantly changing into waves or quanta (particles), in fields gravitational, magnetic, electrical and so on, criss-crossing each other. The material particles are minute and scattered far apart from each other all over infinite space. If they are gathered together all of them can be contained in a small bag as it were. The infinite Universe is more or less a transparency. The human body supposed to be contained in a skin-enve-

lope is also a transparency dotted with particles and waves. The human body is an artificial concoction through sensory data, of space filled with tiny particles in rapid motion. The human body has no compartmental limits in the Universe of infinite space. At this stage we shall do some rethinking about what really constitutes the human body.

In the space which contains the whole Cosmos we shall mark the origin or central point in the

HOW STRANGE !

By J.B.

I am God, and always was, even before I heard of Him !

When they spoke of Him, I asked: "Who is He?". They told of His glory. I must seek Him out, I decided.

"He lives within", they said, "hidden in the soul". So I searched for Him there. But I was clumsy, my soul did not respond.

"You must worship", they said. So I worshipped, waiting for results. All was quiet –

"You must meditate", they said. So I meditated, identifying myself with the meditating mind. Nothing stirred –

Impatiently I pressed, coerced and urged Him to reveal Himself. He granted me a glance, for swift second, then closed the door.

I quarrel with Him. I wanted to force Him to yield to my desire. In desperation I violated my soul – and I suffered the pain.

"Why do you treat me as another?", He finally asked. I did not understand. Again He spoke :

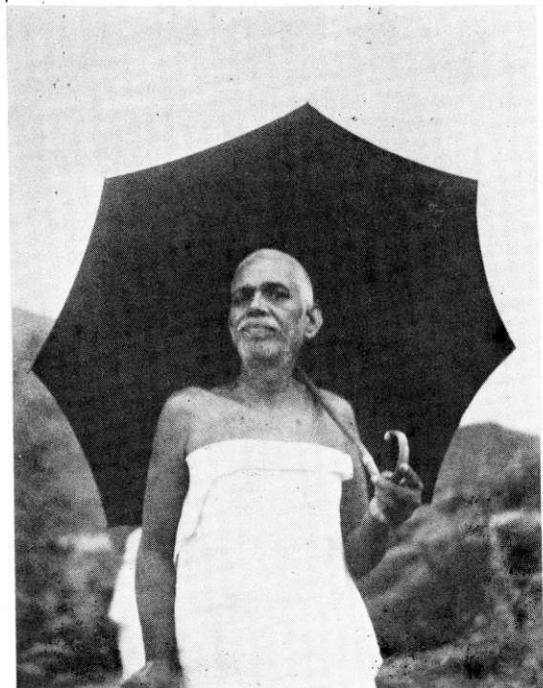
"You lament, not having done enough to find Me, when I am the light that shines within you, but you prefer to dim it with your tears. I watch over your efforts in meditation and your failures to concentrate. I watch your despair over your failures and your gratified ego when you think you have succeeded. I remain with you when you put me aside for the day because you think you have other duties. I make it possible for you to apply discrimination and you discriminate against Me, saying that I am another".

I gave up my search, made peace with my soul, and live in constant remembrance of Him, awaiting His pleasure.

human body which is the seat of Consciousness by the symbol 'O'. This we may take as the central point of the perceived Universe. About this centre 'O' we shall construct concentric spheres denoting (1) Taste body (2) Touch body (3) Smell body (4) Hearing body (5) Sight body and (6) Conscious body, the last enclosing Sphere enclosing all the other five, the taste-body Sphere being the innermost. Let us consider each of these bodies in succession, beginning with the taste body.

Like a frog which shoots out its tongue to pick up a fly, the extent to which the tip of the tongue of the human body can reach, we shall mark by a short distance "a" from the centre of the body at "O". With this centre "O" describe a sphere of radius "a". This sphere we may call the *taste body*. Let one extend one's legs and feet to the farthest point up to distance "b" from "O", in order to touch an object. A sphere of radius "b" will represent the *touch body*. A large sphere of radius "c", wherefrom one can smell, a strongly scented object, is the *smell body*. Similarly a sphere of radius "d" at which distance one can hear a gunshot will be one's *hearing body*. During a dark night, with the help of powerful telescope you can see the farthest star in the sky in our galaxy of the Milky Way. This star is at a distance "a" which is many many millions of kilometres away from the centre "O" of the observer, namely yourself. This enormous sphere of radius 'e' is your *sight body*. With the powerful help of specialised spectrography, you extend your observation to the infinite distance of the farthest galaxy and the infinite sphere including this galaxy is your *conscious body* involving your intellect, coeval with what is known as the Cosmos or the Universe. You are therefore the Cosmic Person, the owner of the whole Universe as your body. You are yourself the Omnipresent, Omniscient Cosmic Person (Emperor *de jure*).

Now, my dear friend, you wake up from all this day-dreaming. You feel hungry and thirsty. You are poor and penniless and cannot get a piece of bread and a cup of tea without begging from a kind passer by.



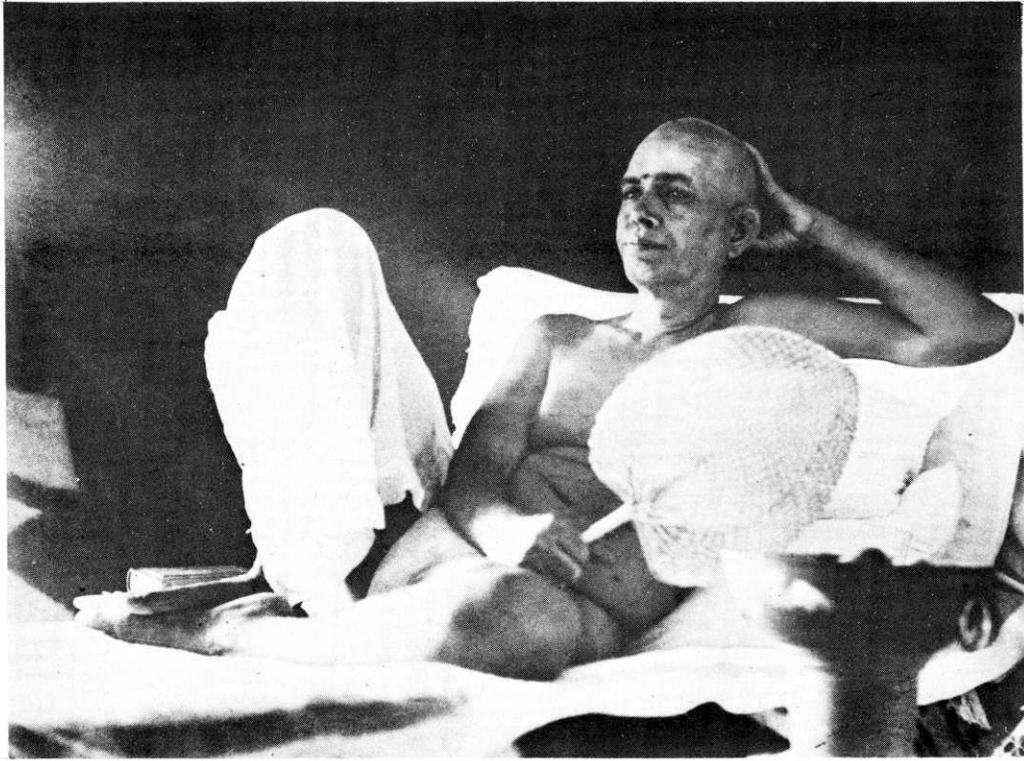
Alas! O, *de jure* Cosmic Person! You discover that you are after all a *de facto* Prisoner in your bodily prison, an *impotent* nonentity.

How can this *de facto* Prisoner become the *de jure* Ruler of the Cosmos and thereby recover his *Omnipotence* besides the Omnipresence and Omniscience which he always has in possession? This is the One problem to be solved.

An outer search into the limits of the perceived Universe requires a body, and can only lead to pain, unconsciousness and mortality. An inward search into one's Centre alone can lead to the unalloyed bliss of unbroken awareness which is beyond all concepts of birth or death.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi shows this route leading to the Throne of the Cosmic Ruler (both *de jure* and *de facto*). He has given humanity the chartered route of Self-Enquiry by which any human being can attain the dimensions of Divinity.

This route and the guidance along this route is always available in Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, South India, where the Maharshi's mortal remains are interred.



MY GOLDEN MASTER

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

PEOPLE ask me how I was drawn to Bhagavan. My answer is the counter-question. How is a piece of iron drawn to a magnet?

However, I can recall one particular incident. Many years ago, in Mount Road, Madras I was standing at noon, with no money in my pocket and the sun above my head not a golden disc, but a ball of fire. I called out silently to Bhagavan for help. Just then a car passing by stopped ahead of me and reversed back and the gentleman at the wheel looked out and asked me where I wanted to go. Here was a perfect stranger, stopping his car for me and wanting to know where I wanted to go. I said, "Nungambakkam". The gentleman said, "Get in I too am going there". And we found that we were both bound for the same area, same street, for two houses opposite each other!

Once a devotee wanted to see Bhagavan's 'real form'. When he found nothingness on the

couch, he was overwhelmed. This was the story I had heard. I had a similar experience one morning. I came late to the dining hall and called out for coffee. Somebody brought me the coffee. I was sipping it when suddenly I saw a pair of legs. I lifted my head and saw Bhagavan before me. Ecstatic, I promptly fell prostrate at his Feet. From Bhagavan to nothingness for the other devotee and vice versa to me on that day!

When one entered the Ashram one felt the stillness there as something tangible, solid, strong enough to break a stick! Nobody returns from the Ashram in the same state in which he entered.

I confess I have no adequate vocabulary to describe Bhagavan. He knew everything and is all-pervasive. He was like a mother in the tenderness of his compassion. He was also stern as a father in quietly enforcing spiritual

discipline. Go deep within. Never feel lonely and lost. He is there with you. He will not forsake you. Don't ask for this or that. He knows best what is good for you. When you go to Tiruvannamalai, when you enter the Ashram, you are in the embrace of a mighty Power of Peace. Here, in the stillness of the mind, there is the same Power of Peace. Surrender to this Peace. Learn to be the clay and not the potter.

Sri Ramana has become the centre of Divine Grace and the Source of inspiration to thousands. He probes into the hearts of men and holds conversation with birds and animals, with everything that lives and moves.

When I asked him once "Bhagavan, when one realises, does one realise that one has realised?" He answered: "To a *Jnani* everybody is already realised. There is nobody who is ignorant in his eyes."

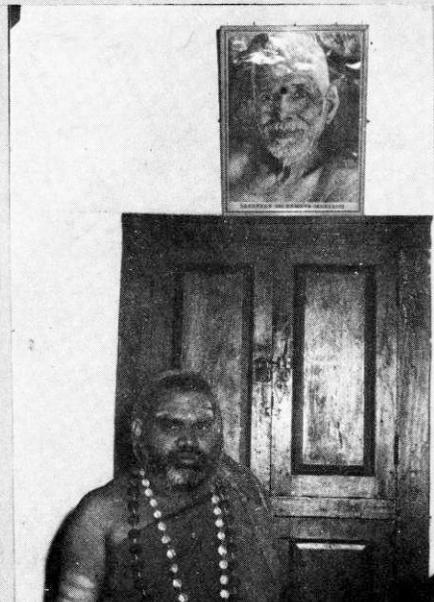
His teaching is direct and simple so utterly simple that our complicated minds miss his message. Keats wrote "Oh What a power has white Simplicity!" Sri Ramana is the white Simpli-

city holding infinite power. In each look of his there is a shower of Grace; in every smile of His a divine assurance that Man is God. After the death experience in 1896 there was in him no separate self, no ego, only the bliss of the immortal Self. Since that hour, there was in him no change, none whatsoever. Realisation for him was instantaneous, complete, permanent. There was nothing to grow into, no progress step by step.

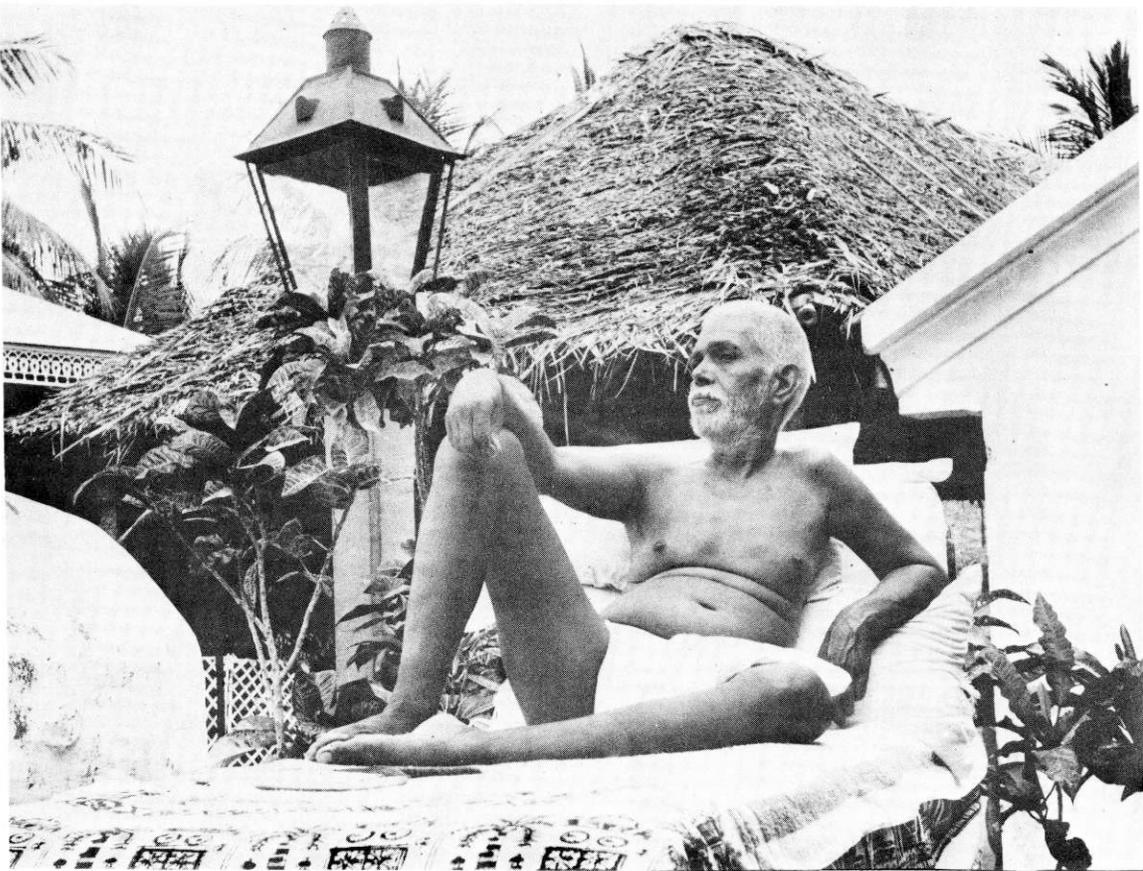
What we have to throw off is the idea that we are unrealised, for in the last analysis the ego does not exist at all. It is a figment created by the mind which is only the shadow's shadow of consciousness. The Maharshi bids us just 'be still'. When one has learned to be still one is. To be still is truly to *Be*.

I have had the privilege of being in close proximity to both Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana. If you ask me "What is the difference between these two mighty Masters of our time?" my answer is: "Sri Aurobindo is a mighty Personality. Sri Ramana is a mighty Impersonality".

Sringeri Shankaracharya visits the Ashram



H.H. Sannidhanam, Sri Bharati Thirtha Swami, Sringeri Acharya, visited the Ashram on January 26. The Acharya is ceremoniously received. He graced the Ashram Veda Pathasala, as well.



IN THE HALL OF SRI BHAGAVAN

Usually, we publish a column, **Letters to the Editor**, in each issue. In its place, we now publish day-to-day, practical questions raised by aspirants and answers given by our Master, culled from recorded talks with Sri Maharshi.

D.: I find it difficult to believe in a personal God. In fact I find it impossible. But I can believe in an impersonal God, a divine force which rules and guides the world, and it would be a great help to me, even in my work of healing, if this faith were increased. May I know how to increase this faith?

B.: Faith is in things unknown, but the Self is self-evident. Even the greatest egotist cannot deny his own existence, that is to say, cannot deny the Self. You can call the ultimate reality by whatever name you like and say that you have faith in it or love for it, but who is there who will not have faith in his own existence or

love for himself? That is because faith and love are our real nature.

D.: Should I not have any idea about God?

B.: Only so long as there are other thoughts in the Heart can there be a thought of God conceived by one's mind. The destruction of even that thought of God due to the destruction of all other thoughts alone is the unthought thought, which is the true thought of God.

D.: God is perfect. Why did he create the world imperfect? The work shares the nature of the author. But here it is not so.

B.: Who is it that raises the question?

D.: I — the individual.

B.: Are you apart from God that you ask this question? So long as you consider yourself to be the body, you see the world as external and the imperfections appear to you. God is perfection. His work also is perfection. But you see it as imperfection because of your wrong identification.

* * * * *

Devotee: I have faith in *murti dhyana* (worship of form). Will it not help me to gain *jnana*?

Bhagavan: Surely it will. *Upasana* (meditation) helps concentration of mind. Then the mind is free from other thoughts and is full of the meditated form. The mind then becomes one with the object of meditation, and this makes it quite pure. Then think who is the worshipper. The answer is 'I', that is, the Self. In this way, the Self is ultimately gained.

Worshipping the formless reality by unthought thought is the best kind of worship. But when one is not fit for such formless worship of God, worship of form alone is suitable. Formless worship is possible only for people who are devoid of the ego-form. Know that all the worship done by people who possess the ego-form is only worship of form.

* * * * *

D.: What is to be done by us for ameliorating the condition of the world?

B.: If you remain free from pain, there will be no pain anywhere. The trouble now is due to your seeing the world externally and also thinking that there is pain there. But both the world and the pain are within you. If you look within there will be no pain.

* * * * *

D.: Is solitude necessary for *Vichara*?

B.: There is solitude everywhere. The individual is solitary always. His business is to find it out within, not to seek it outside himself.

Solitude is in the mind of man. One might be in the thick of the world and maintain serenity of mind. Such a one is in solitude. Another may stay in a forest, but still be unable to

control his mind. Such a man cannot be said to be in solitude. Solitude is a function of the mind. A man attached to desires cannot get solitude wherever he may be, whereas a detached man is always in solitude.

D.: You say that association with the wise (*sat-sanga*) and service to them is required of the disciple.

* * * * *

B.: Yes, the first really means association with the unmanifest *Sat* or absolute existence, but as very few can do that, they have to take second best which is association with the manifest *Sat*, that is, the Guru. Association with sages should be made because thoughts are so persistent. The sage has already overcome the mind and remains in peace. Being in his proximity helps to bring about this condition in others, otherwise there is no meaning in seeking his company. The Guru provides the needed strength for this, unseen by others. Service is primarily to abide in the Self, but it also includes making the Guru's body comfortable and looking after his place of abode. Contact with the Guru is also necessary, but this means spiritual contact. If the disciple finds the Guru internally, then it does not matter where he goes. Staying here or elsewhere must be understood to be the same and to have the same effect.

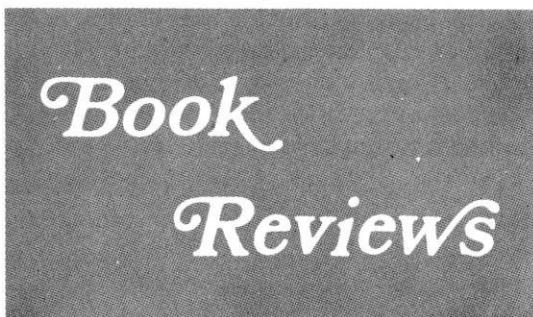
* * * * *

D.: There are widespread disasters spreading havoc in the world, for example famine and pestilence. What is the cause of this state of affairs?

B.: To whom does all this appear?

D.: That won't do. I see misery everywhere.

B.: You were not aware of the world and its sufferings in your sleep but you are conscious of them now in your waking state. Continue in that state in which you were not afflicted by them. That is to say, when you are not aware of the world, its sufferings do not affect you. When you remain as the Self, as in sleep, the world and its sufferings will not affect you. Therefore look within. See the Self! Then there will be an end of the world and its miseries.



GLIMPSES OF A GREAT YOGI : By Prof. V. Rangarajan,
Pub. : Sister Nivedita Academy, 118, Big Street, Madras
600 005. Pp. 48. Price Rs. 8.

Once, Sri Bhagavan told Smt. Nagalakshmi that great sages came to Arunachala taking the guise of madmen or beggars to avoid the public eye and that when one of them stood at her house-door she should feed with whatever was available at home.

Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar "calls" himself a 'beggar' and "looks" like a 'madman'! This sage of perennial joy is addressed by all as 'God-Child of Tiruvannamalai'. Relentlessly he reverberates the words "My Father blesses all!" Arunachala abounds with sages and mystics; normally they are of two kinds — *siddhas* and *muktas*. The Yogi belongs to the former. Anyone going to him never returns empty-handed, literally and spiritually. He is the latest 'gem' adorning the Crown of Lord Arunachala!

Prof. Rangarajan deserves praise for bringing out this attractive book on the greatness of the Yogi. He lucidly describes how the Yogi was inspired into his "madness" by the three great *Mahatmas* — Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Swami Ramdas. This small book is a good 'appetiser' for spiritual seekers!

Swami Chidananda, in his *Benediction*, rightly lauds the writer; "His present book giving glimpses of this Yogi and mystic of Sri Arunachala Hill is to be warmly welcomed as it will serve to make many sincere seekers aware of this hidden spiritual luminary who shuns the limelight and hides away from the general public".

— "Radha"

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF INDIAN CULTURE : VOLUMES
2, 3, 4 and 5 : By Dr. R.N. Saletore : Pub. : Sterling
Publishers Private Limited, L-10, Green Park Extension,
New Delhi-110 016. Price Rs. 250/- each.

This is an outstanding work of great cultural value. The first volume comprising A to D, from Abala to Dyuta; was reviewed in our January 1982 issue by S. Sankaranarayanan. This review is on volumes 2, 3, 4 and 5 covering entries E to K (Ekabohara to Kuvalayapida); L to Q (Laghu Syamala to Qutub Minar); R to U (Radha to Uttara Madra) and V to Z (Vac to Zodiac). The paper, printing and get-up match the monumental quality of the work and the publishers richly deserve our praise. A work of this magnitude, 1800 pages in royal size, is the result of many years of exacting study, tedious research and unstinted zeal. Dr. Saletore courageously undertook, vigorously pursued and has successfully completed the task.

In his Preface, Dr. Saletore claims that "this is the first exhaustive and elaborate work of this type written with reference to original authorities in almost every field of Indian Culture". The relevant sources and texts have been invariably quoted in order to give this work the maximum weight of authority and the stamp of genuine scholarship. A brief bibliography is given to every volume and a comprehensive one in the last volume. The work commences with the earliest recorded times and closes with the 19th century. Dr. Saletore says, "Every topic selected has been discussed from three angles namely Brahminical, Buddhist and Jaina although Islam has not been entirely or purposely ignored. This is essentially so because in Indian Culture the first three religions are in many ways inter-related. In this scrutiny every topic is viewed from each religion's artistic, philosophic, political and aesthetic viewpoints..."

This work would "provide an invaluable, panoramic, enlightening picture of the entire field of Indian Culture. Such a survey is essential in order to study, fathom and appreciate Indian Culture, whose vastness and manifold nature, in its various complexities would normally baffle and deter any undertaking in this field."

Errors of omission and commission are however, inevitable in a work of this magnitude. Ekadasarudra is mentioned as a form of Siva. There is no mention of the eleven well-known forms of Rudra — Ajaikapada, Ahir-buddhnya, Virupaksha, Sureswara, Jayant, Bahurupa, Tryambaka, Aparajita, Vaivaswata, Hara and Rudra. Eka-chakra is the name of a town; this is given but the meaning of the chariot of the Sun-God is not given. Bhimali for Bhimasena, Kusamba for Kusanabha and such mistakes are many. Great saints and sages like Ekapada, Matanga, Pippalada, Vyaghrapada have no place here. These are just a few examples. The nature of the work is such that it is bound to have a few flaws. However, Dr. Saletore deserves to be complimented for the great work he has produced.

— Vidvan Bulusu Venkateswarulu.

"SURELY YOU'RE JOKING, MR. FEYNMAN!" — Adventures of a curious character : By Richard P. Feynman. Pub.: Affiliated East-West Press, 5, General Patters Road, Madras 600 002. Pp. 346 + iv. Price Rs. 44.

Richard P. Feynman, winner of the Nobel prize in Physics in 1965 and one of those in the fore-front of theoretical Physics, is well known in the college circuits for his three-volume 'Feynman Lectures in Physics' published in the sixties. Written in conversational style it had Prof. Feynman making excursions from the topic under discussion to anything under the Sun and beyond. One used to be reminded then of the well-controlled diversions undertaken by able Harikatha exponents. Even more astonishing, and to me satisfying, was the photo, behind the title page, of the Professor playing on bongos held between his knees.

The book under review is a collection of his reminiscences since childhood. These give a true picture of much of his character — his almost compulsive need to solve puzzles, which accounts for his wanting to decipher Mayan hieroglyphics or open combination safes, his mischievousness which though provocative is never wasteful or vindictive, and his impatience with pretension and hypocrisy. Much is being talked these days of the scientific thrust needed in the educational policy here and of the huge 'bank' of scientific talent in the country. One wishes more of the people who matter, the youth, teachers and those that call the shots would care to go through a book like this, to understand what the stuff of education and scientific talent and temper is. One finds the Prof. crawling on all fours, sniffing around his house to discover (for himself) that humans have a lot more of the blood-hound in them than what they are usually credited with. He thinks nothing of spending a whole day observing the tracking 'system' of ants and makes some astonishing finds using clear thinking and very simple hand-made tools. The wisdom and immensity of creation is available in the simplest of organisms. Space (— Time) is an intensive or extensive as the mind that contemplates it. One does not usually come across theoretical physicists who also possess to a remarkable degree, manual and engineering skill alongside a considerable talent for art and percussion. Prof. Feynman is a 'freak' in this regard!

The curious episode of his 'allowing' himself to get hypnotised, his observations regarding onset of sleep, his experience in altered states of consciousness in John C. Lilly's sense-deprivation tanks, make very interesting reading. His account, in the latter case, of trying to locate the ego in his body and nearly succeeding shows just how far a keen and concentrated intellect can go. To all those in such search it is a grim reminder of how even the most patent and immediate is ignored as illogical by the ego, when its spear, the intellect, the 'thing' called attention, is employed to face the final frontier — that of targeting upon itself.

Reasonably priced and very well got up, this book ought to find a place in every library and its scientific

temper, in the heart of every humble yet forthright, curious yet impish youth, of whatever age bursting with *joie de vivre* in the thick of the mystery of life.

— J. Jayaraman

THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF NAROPA : By Herbert V. Guenther. Pub.: Shambala Publications Inc. 314, Dartmouth Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116, U.S.A. Pp. 292, Price : \$ 9.95.

Naropa was born of a princely family in Bengal around 1016 A.D. The astrologer declared that if he did not embrace religious life, he would be lord of all the earth, like Prince Siddhartha.

Naropa studied the Buddhist scriptures and became a famous teacher at Nalanda University. After some years he was elected as the Abbot of Nalanda. When Naropa was studying grammar, logic and epistemology a shadow fell on him, and he had a vision of an old woman asking him to go and see Tilopa, the embodiment of the great bliss of non-dual awareness.

After considerable search Naropa finds him and Tilopa accepts him as a student. He is put through many difficult situations over a period of several years. On one occasion Naropa jumps from a height on Tilopa's suggestion, and breaks his bones. Tilopa heals him by touching him and says:

"Naropa, you clay pitcher of a body, believing in an I, deserve to be broken, consider. The Wish-fulfilling Gem, the mysterious home of Buddhas and Dakinis in the present, past and future".

Naropa, achieved the great enlightenment and became a remarkable exponent of Buddhist Tantra, and Mantrayana. Marpa came from Tibet to learn from Naropa, and Milarepa the hermit poet of Tibet was a disciple of Marpa.

The Chapter 'What is Tantra' is interesting to read though heavy and ponderous. Tantra is continuity and this is three fold:

"Ground, Actuality and Inalienableness. Actuality is immanent causality, Inalienableness is the effect. Ground is the Process".

Naropa is a *siddha* and a great scholar and the commentary that follows is explanatory.

Students of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism will find in the teachings of Naropa the essential insights restated in a new idiom and clothed in symbolism. The chapters on Karmamudra and Mahamudra come as a climax. The shortest analysis of the word Mahamudra in Tibetan is as follows:

Phyag: The acquisition of non-dual knowledge.

Rgya: Bliss since Samsara's tangled skein is disentangled.

Chen-Po: Authentic being (*Dharmakaya*) free in itself and being the shining lamp of coincidence.

Naropa's biography in Tibetan translated by the renowned Buddhist scholar, Dr. Herbert V. Guenther, brings

a commentary that relates Buddhist concepts to Existentialism and modern psychology. Illuminating the significance of Tantra to modern times. A fascinating book, certainly not easy to read, revealing important insights.

— G. Narayan.

SREE YOGA VASISHTA — VOL. III : Tr. By Vidvan Bulusu Venkateswarulu. Pub. : Author, 8-22-14, Gandhi Nagar, Kakinada -533 004. Pp. 202 + 12. Price Rs. 25.

The Yoga-Vasishta is a vast compendium of 32,000 verses on Advaita Vedanta. Its authorship is attributed to the Sage Valmiki and it is popularly known as Sree Vasishtha Maha-Ramayana. It is in the form of a lengthy dialogue between Sri Rama and his Guru the Sage Vasishtha. Each aspect of Vedanta doctrine is first enunciated in detail and then illustrated and supported by beautiful stories; rules for the conduct of daily life in the world are also given and elucidated in the stories.

Of the six Prakaranas or Sections in the Yoga Vasishtha — entitled Vairagya, Mumukshu, Utpatti, Sthiti, Upasanti and Nirvana — the volume under review covers the 62 verses in the second half of the Utpatti Prakarana. The first 60 verses had been covered already in Vol. II of the English translation and centre around the story of Lila to eradicate the defects of *Drisya* and establish the illusory nature of the universe. This aim is carried out further in the 62 verses in the present volume, mainly through the stories of Karkati, Indavas, illusory Indra and illusory Ahalya, and the story of the Mind.

As elsewhere throughout this great work on Advaita, the basic concept is that the Mind (*chitta*) is the cause of the entire world of things and phenomena. This world exists so long as it is perceived by the mind (*manodrsyam idam sarvam*). The stories and illustrations are effective means for driving home this basic truth.

Before creation began, there was only the noumenal state of Parabrahman, one vast space or Akasa. This subsequently evolved into the three kinds of Akasas — the Jnanakasa, Chidakasa, and Bhutakasa. These three Akasas and their workings are set out in the story of Lila.

The Universe is but one aspect of the Brahmic Intelligence. The seven Lokas from *Bhu* to *Satya* are preceded by the three Lokas of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra who work in the seven Lokas. The entire universe and jivas are wholly illusory and arise out of the Sankalpa of Brahman, the one ground or substratum.

In the Utpatti Prakarana are also set out the seven stages of Jnana as also the seven stages of Ajnana. The Yoga Vasishtha is unique in its analysis and description of the seven states of Ajnana.

Man's destiny on earth is to overcome Avidya and to evolve spiritually in the course of many births and their varied experiences to the ultimate goal of Jivanmukti, of Moksha (liberation) while yet living. On his death in this world, the Jivanmukta attains Videha-mukti. The ideal set

is very high and requires almost superhuman effort, but is not impossible of attainment as has been borne out in the lives of great saints like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi in our own time.

Much the same ground in regard to Advaita doctrine is covered in shorter compass in Adi Sankaracharya's *Viveka-Chudamani* which also culminates in a grand description of the Jivanmukta state which is the finale in the concluding Nirvana Prakarana of Yoga-Vasishta. But the shorter work does not have the apt and wisely-chosen stories and parables which help to carry conviction to the common man of the truth and supreme importance of Advaita Vedanta.

Anyone who studies the Yoga-Vasishta fully and with care is bound to become a changed person and a Mumukshu, with his feet firmly set on the path to Jivanmukti.

— A.V. Venkateswaran

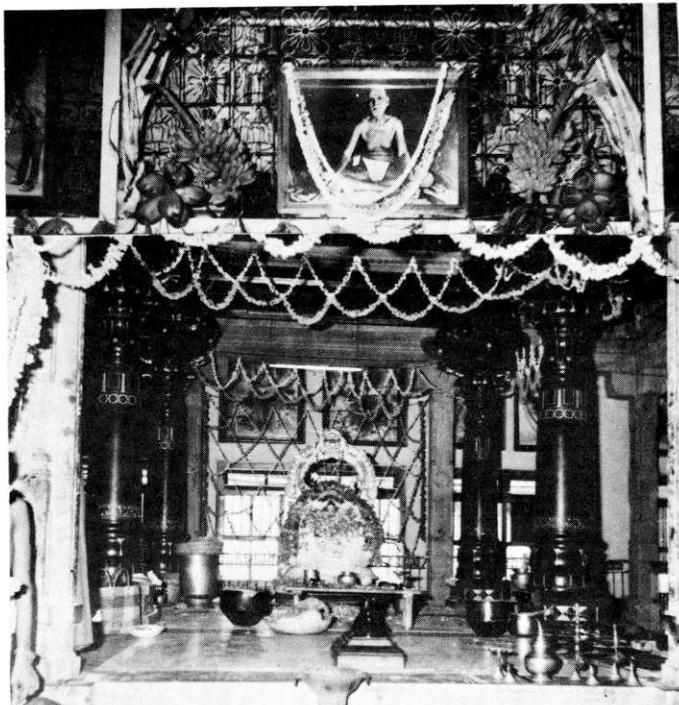
LIFE AFTER DEATH : By J.P. Vaswani. Pub. : Gita Publishing House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Poona -411 001. Pp. 86. Price Rs. 10.

This is one of the best books to appear recently on the subject of after-death. In the course of three lectures, Dada Vaswani convinces his readers that physical death is not the end of things. Death is only a passage, a door opening on other dimensions of existence. In the present circumstances of life, with limitation, disintegration, wrong formations, as constant features, death becomes a necessity for the evolving individual.

Citing from the researches of Dr. Raymond Moody, the author describes how when the physical body is vacated, the soul stays in its etheric body. It is greeted in its passage by helpful angels or luminous beings, who assist in the denudation of earthly *sanskaras* and the passage to higher worlds. He speaks of the silver cord which ties the etheric body to the physical and explains how it is used by people having out-of-body experiences to get back into the body. After the etheric body is shed, we are told, the soul travels to the astral world which corresponds to the *pranamaya loka*.

The passages relating to the reality or otherwise of heaven and hell are rational and convincing. They (heaven and hell) are not geographical locations on the cosmic map but psychological states in which the individual lingers, according to the type of life he has lived while on earth. How from the astral world the soul reaches the world of the Gods where it prepares itself for the next incarnation, how it is possible to establish contact with the departed through mediums, how far it is advisable and what are the dangers of being misled, what is the right attitude when one's dear one leaves his body — these and other allied questions are answered satisfyingly. Vaswaniji draws upon authentic cases — some of them within his personal knowledge — to make his presentation factual.

— M.P. Pandit



Ashram Bulletin

SRI BHAGAVAN'S 108th JAYANTHI

Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam: On the 108th *Jayanthi* of Sri Bhagavan His *Samadhi* Shrine, so beautifully decorated, showered Grace and Peace.

Sri Ramanachandra Khoday of Bangalore who helps in an all-around way the *Jayanthi* Celebrations is honoured with *puja prasad*.



Sri T.N. Venkataraman, Ashram President, releases a new cassette by *Ramananjali*. **Sri A.R. Natarajan** receives the first copy.



Sri Ramanachandra Khoday viewing the poor-feeding *mela*.

A scene from *Ramana Lahari*

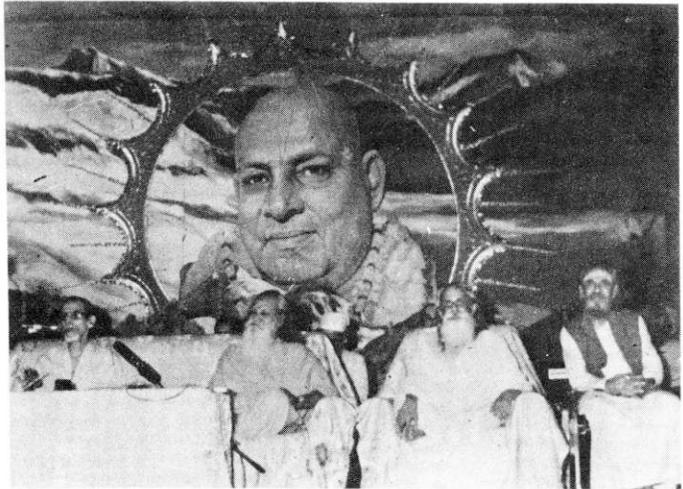


Ramana Music by '*Ramananjali*' on the *Jayanthi* night.

126



Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar: Grateful thanks are offered to him for solving our press problem and thereby restoring the quality of *The Mountain Path*.



Sri Swami Sivananda Centenary Celebrations, Rishikesh: (Sept. 8, 1987): Sri T.N. Venkataraman, Ashram President, participated (l to r) Sri Swami Chidananda, Sri Swami Sachidananda, Sri Swami Premananda and Sri T.N. Venkataraman.



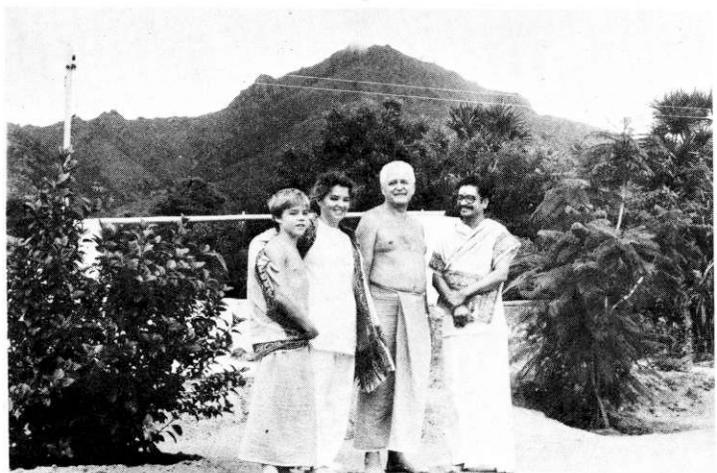
ARUNACHALA GOES TO SRI LANKA: Smt. Ratna Navaratnam and Sri Navaratnam, who stayed in the Ashram for two years, recently left for Sri Lanka. They receive the portrait at the Shrine of Sri Bhagavan.



AT KUMTA: Sri Bhagavan's Jayanthi Celebrations, Dr. R.M. Masurkar, President, Sri Ramana Seva Sangha, addressing the devotees.



RAMANA KENDRA, DELHI: Jayanthi Celebrations. Professor G.C. Pande former Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad and Jaipur Universities speaks. To his left are: Dr. V. Gouri Shankar and Mr. Justice E.S. Venkataramiah of Supreme Court.



"SHANTI MALAI" It is the name of the cluster of cottages at the foot of Holy Arunachala. Sri Hugo Maier, who was a resident of the Ashram for 16 years, is now doing spiritual service by gathering yearning *sadhaks* here, every year for a few months. (l to r) Master N. Ramana Smt. Anne Maier, Sri Hugo Maier, our Managing Editor.



FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE

By Dr. K. Subrahmanian

Sri T.N. Venkataraman, President, Sri Ramanasramam, completed fifty years of uninterrupted service at the Ashram on 1.2.1988. He assisted the Sarvadhikari from 1.2.1938 to 29.1.1953. If the Ashram is what it is today, it is due to his untiring efforts. He thinks of the Ashram during day and dreams of it by night.

His hasn't been a life of ease and comfort. He fought legal battles with indomitable courage and unflinching faith in Sri Bhagavan. About a year ago, he said at a meeting at Hyderabad: "I had the good fortune to live in the company of Sri Bhagavan for a number of years. But He never gave me any *upadesa*. I don't know why. Maybe He wanted me to pay total attention to the administration of the Ashram. I had to appear in a number of cases — even now there is one at the Vellore Court. But I was never disheartened, I never felt I was alone. I always felt the presence of Sri Bhagavan. I couldn't have won the cases without His Grace".

The devotees owe a great deal to Sri T.N. Venkataraman for his splendid service to the Ashram. It was his good fortune to officiate at all the three *Kumbhabhishekams* that were held in the Ashram. Completion of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* shrine and *Sri Ramana Auditorium* he considers as his greatest achievement in life. Almost all the guest houses were built during his Presidentship. He has endeared himself to all by his humility, efficiency, thoroughness and loving concern for the devotees.

May he live for many more years serving Sri Bhagavan and His devotees!

A TRIBUTE

By Professor K. Swaminathan

My dear Venkatoo,

Many many thanks for your wonted kindness to us during our recent stay at the Ashram.

I have visited the Ashram scores of times during the last 48 years and am proud and happy to find it growing steadily owing mainly to your care and concern, your efficiency and firm control. Crossing many legal hurdles, you have added abundantly to the Ashram's assets and amenities, thus rendering ever better service to the thousands of devotees who flock to the Ashram from far and near. Your fifteen-year long apprenticeship under the first *Sarvadhikari*, our honoured and beloved 'Roman Emperor' and the zealous, unstinted cooperation of your family members have helped your efforts to preserve in its pristine purity this hallowed place as a haven of peace where Sri Bhagavan's presence is still active and given to every pilgrim wandering in the desert of *samsara* a golden glimpse of the Eternal Home whence we came and whither we return.

May Sri Bhagavan's grace grant you and your children, the privilege and strength to maintain the Mother Ashram blessed by Sri Bhagavan's physical presence, so that it may continue to serve for ever His worldwide family of devotees, guide the centres and Kendras springing up in the various places, and spread the light that illumines *The Mountain Path* which we must all tread before we reach the Truth Supreme.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Lucia Osborne

Mrs. Lucia Osborne

One of the staunchest devotees of Sri Bhagavan is no more. Mrs. Lucia Osborne passed away, peacefully, on December 2, 1987 in London. She loved the Holy Hill so dearly that going round it was her most chosen 'ambition' and 'luxury'! Her devotion and surrender to her Master: Bhagavan Ramana, was total. Many may not, perhaps, know that it was she who came first to Bhagavan and her husband only later. Even when there was a crisis in her life whether to go to England to give education to her children or to stay with Bhagavan in Arunachala, she was brave enough to choose the latter, thus incurring the rightful wrath of her children!

She was the Editor of our journal for four years. The vacuum created by the passing away of Arthur Osborne was not easy to fill. Though not fully equipped initially, she bravely took up the challenge and did full justice. As Editor soon she became very popular!

Pilgrims, especially westerners, were greatly helped by her homely yet authentic explanations of the practice of Sri Bhagavan's teachings; many enjoyed her motherly hospitality. In no time, she would put a stranger at ease with her solicitude.

In Mrs. Lucia Osborne's passing away we have lost a glorious *bhakta*, an advanced *sadhaka* and an affectionate fellow-pilgrim on *The Mountain Path*!

Her ashes were brought from London by Kitty and interred near the *samadhi* of her husband.

We convey our condolences to her children — Kitty, Adam and Noona!

Sri Adi Annamalai Sastrigal

Popularly known in the Ashram circle as "Adi Annamalai Sastrigal", Sri A. Venkateswara Sarma, was a fully surrendered devotee of Sri Bhagavan. An exceptionally accurate astrologer by profession, in the '30s, when he received the *upadesa*, "the science of the Self is superior to all sciences" from the holy lips of Sri Bhagavan he gave up his lucrative profession, and along with his devout wife settled down at Arunachala. He thus embraced poverty and austerity. The Master became his all!



In the last days, devotees saw in him great spiritual maturity, the state of a *sthita prajna*.

The end came very peacefully on December 13, 1987. He was fully conscious till the end. He listened to the chanting of 'Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva' while breathing his last!

This true Ramana-*bhakta* is now absorbed in Arunachala!

Sri L.R. Murty

In our January '88 issue, p. 64, of this column, we were

happy to publish Sri L.R. Murty's scintillating letter to our *Managing Editor*, recounting how Sri Bhagavan stood by him in his critical illness. We are informed that Sri Murty passed away, peacefully, at Kuala Lumpur, with Sri Bhagavan's *nama* in his lips.

May he rest in peace at the Lotus Feet of the Master!

**Vinod Kumar,
Vedapathasala student**

The boy, Vinod Kumar, joined the *Veda Pathasala*, in February 1987 and had his *Upanayanam* in the Ashram. He completed learning all the portions of the *Veda Parayanam* done in Sri Bhagavan's *sannidhi*.

On the last day, December 3, 1987, Vinod Kumar's voice stood out, both in the morning and especially in the evening chanting of *Veda Parayana* at the Shrine of Sri Bhagavan. After that he was chanting his Vedic lessons, when he suddenly swooned. He was being carried to the Ashram hospital and on the way near Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* he breathed his last at the tender age of 11 years!

