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

Cover Design by: Muralidhar Hegde
Sri Bhagavan’s Love for Arunachala

WHEN an earnest devotee took the liberty of challenging Bhagavan and asked: "Bhagavan! I do not want any metaphysical argument. Give me some tangible evidence. Is there God? Can you show me God?" Sri Bhagavan gave a broad smile and said: "What else do you think it is?" and pointed His fingers to the Holy Hill, Arunachala!

"Someone from abroad has asked for a stone from the holiest spot in Arunachala. Perhaps, he doesn’t know that every inch, every pebble, every grain of sand in Arunachala is holy," Bhagavan joyously confirmed once!

These statements coming from the purest Advaitin— one “Established in the Bliss of indissoluble Union” — show how love matures into God-experience and God-experience makes the heart melt in love. With the mention of the mere nama ‘Arunachala’ and with every look He had at the form ‘Arunachala’ Bhagavan melted with ecstasy! To this visible, tangible God He makes supreme self-surrender, and declares: "Let your will be my pleasure, Oh Arunachala!" (Pathikam, v. 2). Sri Ramana, the living embodiment of Love, merged in that natural manifestation of Supreme Love, Arunachala. “As soon as You did claim me, my body and soul became Yours. What else can I desire?” (Navammanimalai, v. 7)

Love implies duality. Personal love is a double movement, to love and to be loved. Impersonal love surges from the Centre, yet remains in the Centre as the Centre: it has no periphery or circumference. There is no "other" to love or be loved. When one takes one’s self to be a body, one takes another body as the "other". But, when one is not limited to
a body. That alone exists and That is Love, the sphurana within, the throbbing which is the movement of the Self towards the Self.

Sri Bhagavan’s love for Arunachala was thus at once impersonal, and yet charged with connotations intensely personal. Here is a grand example of Non-duality blossoming into duality to teach us all the presence of the many in the One as Love Supreme! His Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala reveal Sri Ramana as the master composer of the most moving bhakti songs.

Our founder-editor, Arthur Osborne, an erudite scholar himself, asserted that the Marital Garland of Sri Bhagavan was “the greatest and most moving literary piece of poetry I have come across in the world’s various religious texts”. Bhagavan’s love for Arunachala fills and overflows every verse of Akshara-mana-malai, which “tells in glowing symbolism of the love and union between the human soul and God”.

Bride, son, friend, pupil, servant—Sri Ramana finds His bridegroom, Father, Guru, Master, in Arunachala-Siva.

A well-known incident illustrates the Son’s willing surrender to the Father. When the image of Arunachala was being taken in procession round the Hill (giripradakshina), puja to It was performed in front of the Ashram gate. Bhagavan was then going towards the goshala and, noticing the puja, He sat on the pial near the tap by the side of the then Book Depot. The aarti (burning camphor) plate offered to Arunachala was brought to Bhagavan. He took a little Vibuti and applied it to His forehead, saying: “Appaavukku pillai adakkam”— “The Son is subject to the Father”!

Once when Muruganar asked Bhagavan to explain the significance of Arunachala-giri-pradakshina, the reply was: “Go round It yourself and find out for yourself!” Bhagavan often declined to elaborate the meaning of the verses in Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala. But once or twice He did spell out the meaning of Arunachala:

“Aruna = Red, bright like fire.
This is jnanagni (Fire of Wisdom) which is neither hot nor cool.

Achala = a hill.
Arunachala means ‘Hill of Wisdom’”

“A=Sāt; Ru=Chit; Na=Ananda:
A=Siva; Ru=Jiva; Na=their Union.
Hence Arunachala=tat-twam-as.”

Every syllable of the Holy Name is charged with a meaning and a message.

In another place He says: “People think It to be an insentient Hill. How do they know? It is the Self Itself in the shape of the Hill” In his Ashtakam (v.1) He exclaims: “Hearken! I realised that It meant Absolute Stillness!”

To Sri Bhagavan the great “experience” came first and expositions of it, He found later in books. This supreme experience He never hid from others. Though the sastras prohibit revealing higher spiritual knowledge to those not ready to receive it, Sri Bhagavan threw open and brightly lit up the Royal Path for the whole, wide world. He even begged Arunachala’s pardon for having done so: “I have revealed Your secrets. Be not offended, Arunachala!”

The compassion Bhagavan had for yearning souls was mingled with the intense love He had for Arunachala. ‘Ignorance’ and ‘Knowledge’ were mere words for Him, for He saw no ajnana except a temporary or partial absence of the light, the all-encompassing light of Jnana. In the one vast ocean of Love, concepts, dogmas, theories, all differences of high, low, big, small, learned, unlearned, ripe, unripe bore no significance for Him. The Love that filled Him as Arunachala sphurana, He shared with all, for what is Arunachala but Love embodied, solid, strong, the Love that moves the Sun and the stars and also shines as the Sun and the Moon, and makes every human heart blossom like the lotus? Aruna
giri is at once the Mountain, Being, Sat; the Sun, Awareness, Chit; the ocean, Bliss, Ananda; grace, compassion, showers that bathe and bless our earth. Where is the secret here and why not reveal it to all? Is the Self any one's private possession? It is the Self, the one universal Self, our own Self, that Sri Bhagavan gives or brings to us!

Firm as the Mountain, bright as the Sun, vast as the Ocean, the Self is Love as the sole Reality. The Advaitin is the only true lover, as he loves the Self which is the Self of all. Yet, in this phenomenal, yāvahāra world, He prays: "(Shine as) my Guru". Sri Bhagavan calling Arunachala as "my Guru" reveals the mystery of His accepting dualism in His bhakti-granthas (gospels of Devotion). He himself justifies it in *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 39: "My son, the sense of non-duality may apply to the three worlds, but it is not to be used towards the Guru."

If Bhagavan, bhākta, pupil, son, bows before Arunachala, Bhagavan, the Jnani, speaks thus to a devotee: "The universe is like a painting on a screen — the screen being the Red Hill, Arunachala. That which rises and sinks is made up of what it rises from. The finality of the universe is God Arunachala". He explains further how one has to link oneself with Arunachala by way of practical sadhāna. "Meditating on Him (Arunachala) or on the screen, the Self, there is a mental vibration 'I' to which all are reduced. Tracing the source of 'I', the primal 'I' 'I' alone remains over, and it is inexpressible. The seat of Realisation is within and the seeker cannot find it as an object outside Him. That seat is bliss and is the core of all beings. Hence it is called the Heart. The only useful purpose of the present birth is to turn within and realise it There is nothing else to do."

Bhagavan Ramana is a perfect example of nirguna jnana issuing as saguna bhakti. His absolute surrender to Arunachala and His praises of Arunachala as God are quite consistent with His definition of Arunachala as "the Self within". The pure Advaitin's way of showing that the Self is Love is to act as the Lover loving all other manifestations of the Self.

The following dialogue between Dr. Hafiz Syed and Sri Bhagavan explains how down the ages the Hill of Dawn has stood as a symbol of the Self:

"D.: I have been reading the *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala*. I find that the hymns are addressed to Arunachala by you. You are an Advaitin. How do you then address God as a separate Being?

B.: The devotee, God, the Hymns are all the Self.

D.: But you are addressing God. You are specifying this Arunachala Hill as God.

B.: You can identify the Self with the body. Should not the devotee identify the Self with Arunachala?

D.: If Arunachala be the Self why should it be specially picked out among so many other hills? God is everywhere. Why do you specify Him as Arunachala?

B.: What has attracted you from Allahabad to this place? What has attracted all these people around?

D.: Sri Bhagavan.

B.: How was I attracted here? By Arunachala. The Power cannot be denied. Again Arunachala is within and not without. The Self is Arunachala."

(Talks, No. 228).

Love and Wisdom, bhakti and jnana, warmth and brightness, fill the following gem-like Hymn where the Bliss of the Universe is reflected in the heart-lotus as Love:

"Oh Arunachala! In Thee the picture of the universe is formed, has its stay, and is dissolved; this is the sublime Truth. Thou art the Inner Self, who dancest in the Heart as 'I'. 'Heart' is Thy name, Oh Lord!" (*Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala*, v. 2).
T O GO round this hill is good. The word 'Pradakshina' has a typical meaning. The letter 'Pra' stands for removal of all kinds of sins; 'da' stands for fulfilling the desires; 'ksh' stands for freedom from future births, 'na' stands for getting deliverance through Jnana. If by way of Pradakshina you walk one step it gives happiness in this world, two steps, it gives bliss of Satyaloka which can be attained. One should go round either in Mouna (silence) or Dhyana (meditation) or Japa (repetition of Lord's name) or Sankeertana (Bhajan) and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy. It seems Amba who was doing Tapas here, went round the hill on the day of the Krithika star in the first quarter of the night. Immediately after the Darshan of the Holy Beacon, she became finally absorbed in Lord Siva. It is stated that on the third day after the festival of the Holy Beacon, Siva Himself started for the Pradakshina with all His followers. Really, it is difficult to describe the pleasure and the happiness one gets by this pradakshina. The body gets tired, the sense organs lose their strength and all the activities of the body become absorbed within. It is possible thus to forget oneself and get into a state of meditation. As one continues to walk, the body automatically gets harmonized as in the Asana state. The body therefore becomes improved in health. Besides this, there are several varieties of medicinal herbs on the hill. The air that passes over those herbs is good for the lungs."

— Sri Bhagavan.
A sadhu used to go round the hill every day. He never did any meditations or japa. One day when he asked Sri Bhagavan for a particular book, Sri Bhagavan asked me to get it for him. Later he asked me whether I had given the book to him. I said I had. I asked Sri Bhagavan why the gentleman wanted the book when his interest was only in giripradakshina and nothing else.

Sri Bhagavan said, “There is nothing better than giripradakshina. That alone is enough. If you do japa or meditation sitting in one place, the mind may wander. But during giripradakshina, the limbs move but the mind will be still. Doing japa or meditation without any other thought while walking is called samadhi in movement. That is why in those days walking was considered so important. Giripradakshina is particularly important. As there are several medicinal herbs on the hill, its breeze will be good for health. There are several siddhas and sages on the hill even now though we cannot see them. They also go round the hill unseen by us. When we go round the hill, we should walk on the left side of the road, otherwise we shall be obstructing their movement. We will also have the benefit of walking around them. We will get their blessings also.” I was very happy to hear about the value of giripradakshina. I have become more enthusiastic about it ever since.

— from Reminiscences by Kunju Swami (unpublished)

On one occasion Bhagavan said to me: “Go round the Hill once. You will see that it will attract you.”

I had also seen that whoever came and told Bhagavan he was starting on Pradakshina, however old or infirm he might be, Bhagavan never even in a single case discouraged the idea, but at the most remarked: “You can go slowly”. His grace would somehow sustain them; and all completed the Pradakshina without any trouble and even with a sense of joy and satisfaction. So I also eventually started going round the Hill once a fortnight or sometimes at longer intervals.

In the earliest days of my Pradakshinas various things used to happen to encourage me in this practice. As Bhagavan had told me, the Hill began to attract me. As the result of my first few attempts, I did not get disappointed, discouraged or sore. On the other hand, each attempt made me only the more confirmed in my desire to follow Bhagavan’s unmistakable advice and to go round the Hill again. As I have always been a heterodox man I did not know or care which day was specially auspicious for going round the Hill. Nevertheless, in those early days, whenever there was such an occasion, some one or other would come and remind me: “This is a very important day for Pradakshina. Aren’t you going round? I am.” Not only this but various small things in my routine of life in the Ashram would all be somehow adjusted that it would be quite convenient for me to join the Pradakshina party. Pleasant company would be provided for me. Whenever I went to take leave of Bhagavan before starting on Pradakshina he would always ask me: “Who else is going with you?” Later on I became indifferent to company and such aids, but at first I rather needed them, so they were provided for me. On one occasion when Bhagavan asked me, “Who else?”, I answered, “This time I am taking only Bhagavan with me”. Both of us smiled, and this is a small illustration of the way in which it was given to me to enjoy Bhagavan’s company freely, in spite of the utter disparity between his eminence and my lowness. I am now as confirmed a believer in Giri Pradakshina as any other devotee of Bhagavan, though I regulate the frequency of my circumambulations with due regard to my age, health and strength and the strain to which they can reasonably be put. My personal experience is, I have been benefited in every way by this.

— from My Recollections, pp.65-66 by A. Devaraja Mudaliar
WHY should a quest be necessary? Why should a man not grow naturally into his true state, like a horse or an oak-tree? Why should man alone of all creatures, be tempted to a misuse of his faculties and have to curb his desires in order to grow to his true breadth and stature? This involves the question what differentiates man from other creatures. Some psychologists and biologists have represented the difference simply as greater intelligence and ability due to a more developed brain. This is patently untrue. Many creatures have greater ability than man in one direction or another. A hawk has keener sight, a migratory bird has a better memory for places and directions, a dog has a stronger sense of smell, a bat a wider range of hearing. What really distinguishes man is self-consciousness, that he not only is a man but knows that he is a man, is consciously a man. This may be called greater intelligence, but not in the commonly understood sense of outwardly turned intelligence. It implies the conscious use of his faculties, the power of deciding how and whether to use them. And this power is also a necessity. Having the power to direct his faculties imposes on a man the necessity of doing so, since even refusal to do so would be his choice or direction and not spontaneous, as with other creatures.

This is expressed theologically in the dogmas that God gave man free will, the will to obey God or disobey, and thus to work out his own weal or woe. Intellectuals are apt to scoff at such dogmas, but they are only picturesque enunciations of fundamental truths. A man cannot simply use his faculties naturally as a bird or animal can, because there is no natural man-action as there is natural hawk-action or sheep-action. Man, of course, has certain natural instincts, just as a bird or animal has (the instincts to eat, to procreate, to preserve his life, for instance), but he may or may not choose to obey them in any specific situation in the complexities of life. His self-conscious existence as man forces on him a choice of uses for his faculties. Even the attempt to use them in what he considered the natural way would be a choice. He would be sure to find some one who would contest it. This choice is what is called free will. Free will is therefore not only a prerogative but an obligation for man.

Free will, thus understood, has nothing to do with destiny. It is a power which man is compelled by his own nature to use, whether the use he makes of it is predestined or not. If I have to decide whether to spend this evening at a dance or in meditation or whether to strike or forgive some one who has insulted me, the responsibility of deciding rests with me just the same whether the outcome is predetermined or not. If it is predetermined, it is my own past habit-forming and character-forming decisions in this and previous lifetimes which have predetermined it; and this decision in its turn will help to condition my mind, thus determining
future ones. In any case, since I do not know which of two decisions is predetermined, I have to choose one or the other.

But, it may be said, the necessity of making decisions as to the use of one’s faculties does not imply the necessity of a spiritual quest. All men have to make decisions, whereas very few set forth on the quest. That is only too true. As far back as the Bhagavad Gita it was already said that “Out of thousands perhaps one seeks Realization”. (VIII, 3) What is implied is only the possibility, not the necessity, of the quest.

The quest brings the possibility of rising above the normal human state; but this involves also the possibility of falling below it. This is why the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures warn so insistently to make good use of one’s human birth, because if this one is misused another may not be so easily attainable. And it is no implacable outside power which thrusts a man lower down in the scale if he misuses his human opportunities to rise higher; it is the impersonal law of cause and effect. A crow is not blameworthy for rapacity, nor a cat for cruelty, nor a goat for lust, but a man who allows such qualities to dominate him has voluntarily given them ascendancy over higher possibilities. If, in this way, he has forced his mind into a subhuman mould in this lifetime, he must expect his body to take the same mould in the next, since the body is only a reflection or condensation of the mind.

Naturally this does not imply that everyone who fails to take the quest falls below the human state. There are many gradations within that state. There is the possibility of birth and death, birth and death, birth and death, in an apparently endless and meaningless round but in the end every one is brought to the point of rising above the human state or falling below it. And between each human death and rebirth there are heavens and hells to reap.

The quest does not mean simply a cultural interest in spirituality, such as one may take in music or philosophy; it means a total dedication. It means making Realization the aim and purpose of life. And since eventual Realization is by nature the purpose of life, those who undertake the quest are the only ones who have understood life aright and live it purposefully, using it instead of being used by it.

Once taken, the quest may assume forms. It is apt to appear primarily under the guise of getting or giving, but in fact both occur, for it is only by making oneself small enough to pass through the eye of a needle that one can expand to all infinity. On a yogic or tantric path one is developing latent powers beyond the ken of the ordinary mundane person, but if the course is to succeed it demands the simultaneous surrender not only of the indulgence of desires but of the desires themselves. On a devotional path the perpetual craving is to love, give, surrender, to be nothing in the hands of God, but power pours into this nothing, this self-naughted worshipper. It is safer to concentrate on giving. As Christ said, only he who gives up his life will find it. By this giving without seeking one attains the Kingdom of Heaven; and Christ also said: “Attain first the Kingdom of Heaven and all else shall be added to you.” If one seeks to attain all else first, the Kingdom of Heaven is not likely to be added.

Before a man is drawn to the quest he is directly conscious of only one being, which could therefore be called ‘this’, this which wants coffee for breakfast, this which has toothache, this which has toothache, this which has toothache, this which has toothache, which decides to call on so-and-so or to read such-and-such a book. Other people, things, events, are known to him only indirectly, through his senses (including his reason, which the Hindus call the inner sense). But the time may come when he apprehends being of another kind: potent, unconfined, awe-inspiring, which he may think of as ‘That’. Henceforth the dominant theme of his life is the relationship between ‘this’ and ‘That’. Between the individual who experiences, classifies and decides and the dimly apprehended Reality. It may be largely a matter of mental training whether he regards ‘That’ as other than ‘this’ or as the hidden Self of it. In any case, theoretical conclusions help him very little.
opens before him is a dynamic venture, the attempt to subordinate 'this' to 'That'. The Maharshi said: "Under whatever name and form one may worship the Absolute Reality it is only a means for realizing it without name and form. That alone is true Realization wherein one knows oneself in relation to that Reality, attains peace and realizes, one's identity with It." (Forty Verses on Reality, v. 8)

The attempt to do this is the quest. Becoming convinced of the identity of 'this' with 'That' is not realizing it, in fact it is only the preliminary position from which to set out on the quest of Realization. 'This' feels not only the power but also the grace and pervading beauty of 'That' and is strongly attracted towards it. Whether it calls 'That' 'God' or 'Self', 'this' is shaken by powerful waves of love and devotion for it. The attraction is such that 'this' feels itself being drawn in to be devoured and merged in 'That' and is strongly attracted towards it. Whether it calls 'That' 'God' or 'Self', 'this' is shaken by powerful waves of love and devotion for it. The attraction is such that 'this' feels itself being drawn in to be devoured and merged in 'That' and is strongly attracted towards it.

That is why (except in the rarest of cases, such as that of Ramana Maharshi) the quest is not a single simple achievement. Normally 'this' clings to its separate individual life with one hand while reaching out for the vast universal life with the other. And the two cannot co-exist. 'This' must surrender utterly to 'That' and consent to be devoured before it can merge in the peace of identity. And it fights against it persistently and cunningly, constantly changing its ground and weapons and tactics, when dislodged from one fortress slipping round the rear of the attacker and setting up another.

Hence the uneven course that the quest takes. It is never a gradual, smooth ascent. It always goes in alternate waves of grace and deprivation, expansion and contraction, a phase when life is a lift of beauty followed by one of harsh aridity, when all that was achieved seems to have been lost and all grace withdrawn. That is because 'this', turning in love and humility to 'That' draws upon itself the grace which is uninterruptedly radiating from 'That', like light from the sun; then it filches the grace for its own use or aggrandisement. Whether in thought or deed, it grows proud, considers the grace its own and thus interposes its own dark shadow before the luminosity of 'That', causing an eclipse and shutting off the flow of grace. Again and again it repeats this, learning only very gradually and by bitter experience; and it is only when, in final desperation, it brings itself to complete surrender that at last peace comes. Then 'That' becomes 'This'. There is no other.

Seek Him
By J.B.

"Who told you of Him?", they asked.

Who but He Himself could have done so? In the guise of another, He came to tell me. Even now, He pretends to be another, saying that I must look for Him, seek Him out, wait for Him. Though self-evident, He makes me think He is hidden.

But how can I, who am God, seek Him, Who is also myself? Why this game of pretence? Is it I, who am God, who pretends not to know, Or is It He, Who is also me, Who – as if in play – turns away His golden face?
HAVING broached the subject of Kevala and Sahaja samadhis we have to digress a little from our main topic of the poetry of Sri Ramana.

We have first to clarify how the sahaja state (Realisation of Reality plus Maya) is a confrer­ment by the Supreme Power, Parasakti, which projects, governs and directs the world — which is variously called (Saguna) Brahman, Iswara, Paramatman, (Personal) God, Lord — on the Jnani of the Kevala state of Realising Reality alone.

The Kevala state, which is but unalloyed Self-Realisation, is reached only with the destruc­tion of the mind. It goes without saying that one in that state cannot wish for anything, since thinking itself is extinct in the mindless state. There could therefore be no question of the Kevala Jnani wishing for, and acquiring, the ability to recognise and enjoy the spectacle of the Maya world. Is it not clear then that if such a one, with his Realisation of the Self intact, also comes to be engaged in the empirical Maya-plane through the agency of a Pure Mind, that this new mind, and with it the new...
Sahaja Realisation, can only be a conferment on him by the Supreme Power? It follows then that even without the Jnani wishing it, the Parasakti itself in grace raises him to its own state of being both the non-dual Reality and a joyous participant in the dual world of Maya, so that his Realisation becomes full, total, plenary.

Yes, "in grace raises him"—in grace towards both the Jnani who knows Reality alone and the ordinary jivas like us, who know of Maya alone. Towards the Jnani because, the (hitherto dimension-less) Jnani now acquires newer dimensions by becoming partner, witness and participant in Brahman's Maya sport. Towards the jivas of the world—because only when the Jnani is made conscious of the empirical world his experience of both Kevala and Sahaja can be communicated to him for their edification.

This communication is often through the medium of poetry, as in the case of Sri Ramana. This poetry is born of the enjoyment of the poetry of Brahman, which alone is this Maya-world.

What is the state of the Maya-conscious Parasakti, the state to which It raises the Jnani? Surely not one of confounding, like us, Maya itself for Reality. It is the state of playing with Maya, knowing it as such, even as an actor knowingly plays his part in a drama. The smiles and tears of gods and avatars who are steeped in Parasakti are just play-acting. They (seem to) engage themselves in love, lovelornness, fighting, without in the least taking these to be really real. They just play these parts—for their own delectation and the jivas' edification.

This, with regard to gods and avatars. What about godmen like our Ramana who are given the role of the Guru in Parasakti's world-drama? They lead a pure life conforming to the dharmic norms of the world and, yet, gradually lead people from Maya to Jnana, standing as live examples of the high codes of discrimination and dispassion, so, they have to play-act with a difference. Because of their particular role they are precluded from being (even seemingly) engaged in love, marriage, fighting, etc. Their role is confined to that of the model man of renunciation. Yet, not an unapproachable and hard-boiled renunciate spurning the world, but one embracing humanity by his sweetness and light. It is a multi-faceted role, or many roles rolled into a single one so as to strike rapport with the different kinds of people. The Jnani does beautifully play-act the multifarious roles to teach each level of people the lesson they need.

The Jnanis only play the roles assigned to them by the Lord-Director. With the pure mind given by Him they have in this play to cherish, love, serve and worship Him, the Lord of Maya. That pure mind, we repeat, is not like ours which confounds Maya with reality and gets involved in ever new activities in the world of Maya.

For some years prior to his composing the Marital Garland of Letters, when Ramana was
residing in the Patalalinga cave, he was absorbed in kevala nirvikalpa i.e. the state sans external consciousness. Later the Parasakti conferred on Him the sahaja nirvikalpa state. And now we see him play-acting and composing a song for collecting bhiksha. The fun of it, as Maha Maya Parasakti would have it, is that even after attaining to the Sahaja state Ramana sings as though he had not tasted it and prays: "Deceive me not with the mere experience of the Atman — Let me partake of your maya-sport also."

What part did He want to play in the Maya-sport? The part of offering devotion to Him; the part of showering compassionate love on the world of living beings.

Perhaps there is more than meets the eye in the prayer of Sri Ramana for the endowment of the Sahaja state. We may interpret it this way: may be that even in the Pure Mind that It endows on the kevala Jnani (to transform him into the Sahaja Jnani) Parasakti leaves a little 'individual' freedom so that It can enjoy some more sport!

We too are actors in Its drama. But It leaves us much more free to speak our own dialogues and later suffer the consequences! We do not know that we act a part. But as for the Jnani, he knows he is only an actor. Even so, the Parasakti appears to allow him a little freedom to speak his own piece. On this hypothesis we imagine there is room to find newer meanings in Ramana’s Prayer. In the beginning years when Ramana came back to external consciousness from his erstwhile kevala state, in other words, donned the Pure Mind, he did not, perhaps relish the external experience. The little freedom his Pure Mind had, left it free to wish for its own extinction and merger in the kevala state alone. But the parasakti would not grant that wish. It wanted him to further rise into a Sahaja Jnani leading an exemplary life, and stressing in particular, the highest love. But It did not want to impose this transformation on him willy-nilly; rather, it seems, It wanted to so shape him by suggestions and persuasion that he himself would, by and by willingly, yearn and pray for the transformation. In order to see to this end, Parasakti was bringing him from the kevala state to external consciousness again and yet again. Abidance in Atman growing stronger day by day, there must have come to him by and by the conviction that this Abidance could never be done away with, and therefore, he need not hesitate to accept the external world as well.

In a crowded compartment of the train when we do not have a stable footing we would not like to carry any burden, be it even a packet of edibles. Once we get a seat and sit comfortably, we take on the burden of the packet and consume the contents and render it no more external to us!

Upto 1914 when Ramana sang this song, his pure mind might have had a little reservation to accept the qualified Maya-sport. When he was stirred into song by the Parasakti, even as expected by It, his pure mind blossomed in toto.

What a beautiful transformation! With his pure mind Ramana likes the qualified state and prays to Arunachala Parasakti to establish him in Sahaja! As stated already it was only for experiencing and expressing love — devotional love towards Parasakti and compassionate love towards the world. This bhakti born after reaching the state of kevala jnana (where the dichotomy of the devotee and Deity is no more) is termed by Ramana "Jnanottara bhakti" — Devotion that follows knowledge.

All that is said here in regard to the state of the Jnani and the sport of the Lord — both matters beyond our ken — is but conjectural inference. The reader has every right to reject it.

Be it as it may, one thing is certain. The Marital Garland, prays beyond a shade of doubt for Sahaja nirvikalpa. Let us see the two verses that are revelatory.

Arunachala stood as a column of fire, the bottom and top of which could not be per-
ceived—thereby signifying that we cannot perceive with our mind the Atman sans beginning and end. If, however, the knots of the heart are rent asunder by His grace we realise ourselves as the Atman. Admitting that Arunachala can help him to reach this state, Ramana prays to him in one verse to complete it by granting the final plenary realisation of the Sahaja.

"Thou hast cut the knot which hid the vision Of Thy Head and Foot (the limitless Self). Mother like, shouldst Thou not complete Thy Task, Oh Arunachala!" (80)

(The cutting of the knot which binds men to Maya implies the attainment of Kevala samadhi; completion of the task refers to the state of Sahaja samadhi).

Now, to the other verse.

"Is it true silence (maunam) to rest like a stone Inert and unexpansive, Oh Arunachala!" (87)

Maunam, strictly speaking, is the characteristic of the Muni (Realised being). It is usually taken to be the Silence of Being, there being no second to talk to and no mind to think at all; that is, the Kevala state. But here the Maya-sport-loving Ramana goes to the extent of calling it a barren, rock-like, inert state and yearns for the transfiguration of the stone into the vivacious blossom of the Sahaja. The word in the original for "inert and inexpansive" is malaraadirundaadai, lit., "not flowerling".

"As snow in water let me melt as Love in Thee, Who art Love itself, Oh Arunachala!" (101)

The implication is that Ramana is now in the solid-snow state of Kevala where he stays put. Arunachala Parasakti is in the state of Sahaja, especially as Love. That state is likened to that of flowing water. Though in content the same as snow, the flowing water is anything but 'staying put'. Ramana prays for this expansive Love.

It is this distinction that made Ramana compose this bhiksha-song as a hymn of devotion rather than a sermon of philosophy. We too stand to gain thereby a rich poetic bhiksha!

In this Kali age the Name is proclaimed to be the life-breath of devotional worship. Poet Ramana infuses in one of the final verses the fragrance of the glory of the Name. Was not his heart won the instant he heard the Name 'Arunachala' in his boyhood. Here he prays that he become the "third-degree" servitor of the Name!

"Let me be the votary of the votaries of those Who hear Thy Name with love, Oh Arunachala!" (104)

The Marital Garland of Letters sprang out of Grace through the agency of Ramana when he was beyond himself, in a state of verse. (Our attribution of Ramana's prayer to an individual (ised) mind does not mean that the poetic expression of that must also be out-of-the-conscious exertion of that mind. As a matter of fact, in all 'inspired' writings we see the unmistakable personal idiom of the writer too. What is deep within the writer's individualistic psyche is brought out by a power beyond in the height of inspiration; in the process the individualistic becomes universal). But, since Ramana was meant to be the most 'natural' of godmen, even this 'inspiration' was naturalised or demiracled! He did not, therefore, burst forth in entertainment into a spate of impromptu stanzas. Often-times he even appeared to exert himself to get at the proper expression. But when the expression did come it was not out of his exertion, but from out of the beyond, which is what inspiration means.

Moreover throughout his life, never did he volitionally exert himself with the intention of producing poetry. The Parasakti it was that 'conspired' to place him in a particular context prodding him to write poetry, exert over it too and then it conspired to inspire him! We gather this from Sri Ramana's own words: "All the poems I have made were on the request of someone or other in connection with some particular event." ¹ But when the words came he could not impede them: "Even if I tried to suppress them, saying, 'what have I to do with these words?' they would not be suppressed".² The same as what the previous Kartikeya avatar Jnanasambandha said: "My words are but His." ³

¹ Day by Day with Bhagavan, entry dated 9.5.46
² Ibid.
³ (svayam sarjanam sakti).
This Truth disclosed itself in delicate beauty on one occasion. Muruganar, who was the Court Poet of Ramana’s durbar, wanted to write a commentary on the Marital Garland. He requested Ramana to clarify whenever he got a doubt.

“But remember, I too may come to have the same doubts” quipped Ramana!

The One in the form of Dakshinamurti—of whom he says in the Arunachala-Ashtakam:

“Only to convey by silence Thy (Transcendent) State Thou standest as a hill, shining from heaven to earth.”

— made him break into poetic activity for the sake of the world.

The word for marriage in Tamil, manam, also means fragrance. The bride Ramana, praying for her marriage with Arunachala (the Supreme Power) incidentally means by it that the bud of her mind (the budding happened after years of mindless years in Kevala) must be filled with the fullest fragrance of Sahaja so that as his spouse she too can share in His enjoyment of both Reality and the supreme Maya sport.

Ramana conveys this succinctly and succulently in limpid Tamil of lilting assonance:

bhoomana maamanam poorana manam —
kolag —
poorana manam aru! Arunachala (69)

“Grant the consummate fullness of marriage by infusing the fullness of fragrance into the sweet-smelling flower of my mind, O Arunachala!”

Already Ramana has got the sweet-smelling mind-flower and it must be perfected to fullness in Sahaja. This perfection in fragrance is the plenary Realisation.

How clever of the bride to ‘trap’ the Bridegroom in barter by asking for perfecting just one flower that is already with her in return for her garland of 108-verse flowers!

As the opening of the Marital Garland, and at the end of each of 108 verses, the nectar-Name of the Bridegroom is repeatedly sung in refrain:

Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva Arunachala Siva, Arunachala! Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva Arunachala Siva, Arunachala!

Ultimately in undisturbed Sahaja and becoming the Supreme Exemplar of that supernal state, the Bridespark merged with the Bridegroom-Flame, exactly while these lines were sung, feelingly in chorus, the eyes of the Spark bejewelled with the tear drops of Love.

(To be continued)

The Snake That is Not

“It easily happens that a man, when taking a bath, steps upon a wet rope and imagines that it is a snake. Horror will overcome him, and he will shake from fear, anticipating in his mind all the agonies caused by the serpent’s venomous bite. What a relief does this man experience when he sees that the rope is no snake. The cause of his fright lies in his error, his ignorance, his illusion. If the true nature of the rope is recognised, his tranquility of mind will come back to him; he will feel relieved; he will be joyful and happy.

“This is the state of mind of one who has recognised that there is no self, that the cause of all his troubles, cares and vanities is a mirage, a shadow, a dream.”

— Gautama Buddha, Sermon at Benares
ENTERING THE HEART OF
"ENTERING THE HEART....."

By J. Jayaraman

A Foreword

HRDI VISA! Enter the Heart! This is the sum and substance of all quest. The HRDAYA KUHARA MADHYE verse in Sanskrit, composed by the Maharshi and which was sculpted in gold-filled letters on granite and installed on the wall of the New Hall while He was yet alive, distills in a quatrain all that can ever be said of the quest of the spirit.
In the year 1915, the words HRDAYAKUHARA MADHYE occurred intuitively, with mysterious persistence, to Jagadeeswara Sastri. As he was unable to proceed further, try as he might, the verse was, at his request, completed by Bhagavan Ramana who even put His signature to this unique verse as JAGADEESAN, Lord of the Universe.

It now forms the second verse of the second chapter of Sri Ramana Gita, (by Ganapati Muni), and was included by Maharshi Himself in the Supplement to Forty Verses that He composed in Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu. It is remarkable for its brevity and Boolean beauty, and, perhaps because of this precision it has often suffered sketchy interpretations that either leave loose ends or injure common sense. In short, it is not usually interpreted in the way for which it was most definitely intended.

The Tamil and Malayalam verses admit more easily of two paths to the Heart, the Telugu of two alone, while the Sanskrit is popularly seen to admit three. It has in fact happened that the Sanskrit verse is even declared, in haste no doubt, to be a reflection of Jagadeeswara Sastri’s ideas brought out unmodified, by Bhagavan. That is to say, the Sanskrit verse cannot be held to represent Bhagavan’s ‘own teaching’, as against say, the Tamil verse. The fact that Bhagavan signed it as JAGADEESAN, (the way He used to refer endearingly to the Sastri), does not really strengthen the argument. It is well known that Bhagavan, while going through the proof of a biography on Him, written by a devotee, merely corrected the spelling and grammar, leaving in tact the many biographical inaccuracies that had crept in due to the fertile imagination of the devotee. While He thus gave no importance to matters concerning Himself, it would be wrong to imagine that He put down in Sanskrit the assumed opinions of another, and then went on to sign it as the other’s work. We have therefore to accept that He wrote it as His declaration on HRDAYA VIDYA, the way to the Heart of the Universe, and signed it as the Lord of the Universe. His signing as JAGADEESAN was at once an act of humility, humour and an assertion of His Truth.

It is the aim of this article to analyze the four versions and sort out the alleged differences between the Sanskrit verse and the others. We should remember that Bhagavan never intruded upon vain discussion, which sometimes went on right before Him, on whether there were ‘really’ two paths or three or four. Separation admitted, infinite possibilities appear and hence as many paths. Still one cannot deny that the internal evidence of the four renderings must be seen to lead to one common interpretation. If the Sanskrit text does not seem to fit in line with the others, it should not be regarded as something Ramana wrote from “another’s” point of view. Instead it should make us look deep within ourselves, to read the four the same way they were written; to grasp that sense which is not only common to all the renderings, but which is unique, without our having to make an adjustment here or an allowance there.

This article, having to counter all the objections of a reader burdened with intellect, is necessarily long and analytical. However, the serious and simple few will be content to read any one version and plunge, which alone matters.

“At the center of the Heart-lotus the Brahman of itself Unique, shines as “I”, “I” patently as Self. Enter the Heart by the mind plunging through searching within, or, by the mind plunging through restraint of movement of breath. Be established in Self.”

— translation of Sri Ramana’s four-language declaration on Hrdaya Vidya.

1 From George Boole (19th Century). Founder of symbolic logic (Boolean logic) basic to the design of computer hardware, as well as software flow and information theory.
ENTERING THE HEART OF ‘ENTERING THE HEART....’

"... Enter the Heart by the mind plunging, by searching within or by restraint of breath-movement. Be established in Self.”

— tr. of relevant portion of the Sanskrit verse.

"... Enter the Heart, by plunging through searching within or by plunging along with breath, by mind. Be established in Self.”

— tr. of relevant portion of the Tamil verse.

"... Enter the Heart, by plunging through searching within or by plunging along with restraint of breath, by mind. Be established in Self.”

— tr. of relevant portion of the Malayalam verse.

"... Enter the Heart by inward-searchingly-plunging mind, (or) by breath-restrainedly-plunging mind. Be established in Self.”

— tr. of relevant portion of the Telugu version.

PART I

The Sanskrit verse subjected to reason and experience:

The verse runs thus:

HRDAYA KUHARA MADHYE — At the center of the Heart-lotus
KEVALAM BRAhma MAATRAM — the Brahman of itself, unique,
HYAHAM AHAM ITI SAAKSHAAT ATMA ROOPENA BHAATI — shines as “I” “I”, patently as Self.
HRIDI VISA — Enter the Heart
MANASAA — by the mind
SVAM CHINVATAA — by searching within
MAJJATAA — by plunging
VAA — or,
PAVANA CHALANA RODHAAT — by restraint of breath-movement
ATMA NISHTHO BHAVA TVAM — become established in Self.

Four Paths give way to three:

It would seem at first glance that four ways are indicated, i.e., enter the Heart either by the mind, or by searching within, or by plunging, or by restraint of Prana. Popularly the first two of these have been taken together as one path thus making three paths in all: by the mind searching within, or by plunging or by breath-restraint. But even this doesn’t satisfy, for it is not difficult to see that the mind is very much in use in “plunging” as well as “breath-restraint” which means that it would be more correct to say: “Enter the Heart by the mind searching within, or by the mind plunging, or by the mind through restraint of breath.” As far as the verse is concerned, such an interpretation would require that the word MANASAA, (“by the mind”), which occurs just once in the verse, be implicitly associated with each of the phrases that follow. Such a device is commonly used in the formation of sentences. It is not difficult to accept the use of this device in this verse, for the word VAA (“or”), has already been repeated by us implicitly while interpreting three paths within the verse. So the same could apply to MANASAA too. In other words “Enter the Heart by the mind” would form the main clause which would associate with each of the three sub-clauses that follow; i.e. with “searching within”, “plunging”, and “prana”.

1988
If there is any satisfaction in having progressed thus far, it must be short-lived for there is something amiss even here.

Three Paths give way to two:

The restraint of Prana, obviously by the mind, is prescribed only to facilitate and lead to the sinking of mind in the Heart. This is the clear teaching given by Bhagavan in Upadesa Saram v. 11, v. 14, and Five Verses v. 4. Given this, it would be incorrect to regard the third path, “restraint of Prana”, as being a path distinct from “sinking of mind”. The three-path interpretation fails on this count. The two paths then would be:

“Enter the Heart by the mind searching within, or by the mind plunging through restraint of breath.”

A word of caution. Is this the sense that is consonant with Ramana’s teaching? This is the sense that the verse must reveal. But does it?

The twin-path has a hitch:

Checking back on the Sanskrit verse we run into rough weather. No doubt we can read two paths there:

a) MANASAA, SVAM CHINVATAA MAJJATAA, (VAA)

b) MANASAA, PAVANA CHALANA RODHAAT

But the word MAJJATAA, (plunging, sinking), which we’d expected to be clubbed with “mind restrained by Prana” is found to occur prior to VAA (“or”), as part of “mind searching within”. Whereas, in the earlier section, the sense that we had concluded that the verse must reveal, required "sinking of mind" to be associated with "restraint of Prana". This is a fine impasse indeed! We began with four; rejected that in favour of three. This too was rejected since the third path required the second path in order to be consistent with Bhagavan’s teaching. So we merged the second and third to form one path. But in the verse we actually find the second path merged with the first!

The twin-path hitch resolved:

But wait a minute! We failed to notice something when we merged the second path (“mind plunging”), with the third path (“mind restrained by Prana”). The phenomenon of mind plunging, is experienced in the first path too, that of “mind searching within”! So the two paths really ought to be:

a) mind plunging by searching within

(b) mind plunging by restraint of Prana.

This is the sense that the verse must reveal. But does it? Checking back on the two “Sanskrit paths” given in the previous section, we find that the first path talks word for word with that above. The second path, MANASAA PAVANA CHALANA RODHAAT (by mind through breath restraint), does not include the word MAJJATAA (plunging). But this does not pose a problem, for we may take that the word MAJJATAA too, like MANASAA (mind), is to be implicitly associated with each path.

So we reach a point where we find that by the device of major clause and sub-clauses, MANASAA (by mind), and MAJJATAA (plunging) though occurring only once, could still be
implicitly repeated; and so by this device, the Sanskrit verse is found to reveal that very sense which it must reveal, since it has to be consistent with Bhagavan’s teaching.

There is really only one objection which may be raised now. This would be: “All right. By this so called device, which seems rather complicated, the verse may be made to cough up this sense, admittedly the only sense consistent with Bhagavan’s teaching. But how do you guarantee that this is what was intended?” How do we guarantee it? We could not have received any clarification on this from Bhagavan Himself; either then or now. And the Sanskrit verse itself cannot be called upon to provide this guarantee.

PART II
The Confirmation

We must therefore look into the equivalent compositions done by Him in Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu. Let us be clear about what we must look for. We have, in Part I, concluded two things about the Sanskrit verse:

(i) that Bhagavan has employed the device of implied repetition of a word, though the word has been used only once; and that this has been done for two words, namely MAJJATAA (plunging), and MANASAA (mind),

(ii) and that the verse treats of two paths, with the sense of ‘mind plunging’ held common to both the paths.

We will therefore look at the other versions specifically to see:

(i) if such a device stated above has been used, and more importantly, whether it is used in such a way that we are forced to infer its employment in order to make any sense out of that version; and

(ii) whether Bhagavan chose to repeat the words “mind” or “plunging”. A repetition of either would justify the sense of two paths. Further, if we were to find that the word “plunging” MAJJATAA, occupying a crucial position within the Sanskrit verse, has been repeated in not one, but all the three versions, then that would confirm that the sense made out in Sanskrit is identical to that obtaining in the other languages, thus making that sense unique.

“Plunging” into Tamil:

The Tamil verse is given below. Underneath are the Sanskrit equivalents picked from the original and repeated wherever the Tamil version repeats a word:

1. Idayame Saarvaai  HRD1 VISA Enter the Heart
2. Tannai Enni Aazh  SVAM CHINVATAA MAJJATAA — by plunging (Sinking) through searching within,
3. Aladu  VAA — or,
4. Vaayu Adanudan Aazh  PAVANA (SAHITA) MAJJATAA — by Sinking along with Prana
5. Manattaal  MANASAA — by mind,
We make three discoveries:

(i) The word Aazh (MAJJATT, plunging), has been used twice. Also it has been used in such a way that each time it forms the ending word of a sub-clause. Clearly two paths are implied.

(ii) The word Adanudan (SAHITA, along with), given above in line 4, does not find explicit mention in the Sanskrit version. As a separate word here, its usage is a vital evidence. Bhagavan uses it to link “breath” and “plunging”. This once again confirms that, in the Sanskrit version, “by plunging” was not intended as a separate path.

(iii) The word Manattaal (MANASAA, by mind), is used (in line 5) at the end of two sub-clauses (lines 2 and 4). Its usage is such that both of them require it to complete their individual sense. The word Aazh has been used as a gerund (“plunging”) and hence requires “by mind” to complete the sense. Interpreting Aazh as an imperative (Plunge!) only leads to obvious contradictions which we need not go into. This forces us to conclude that Bhagavan indeed resorted to the device of implied repetition in Tamil, and confirms that such indeed is the intention in the Sanskrit verse too.

_A simile and a bit of Boole:_

Almost everyone uses, in daily conversation, a word here and a word there, with its repetition implied, within the sentence. It is a device employed for economy and elegance. Although the Tamil verse uses this device in a simple form, we must introduce a simile here for two reasons. Firstly, there is a thread to every one of Bhagavan’s verses which, if grasped, allows the words, including the implied repetitions, to fall neatly in line as one reads along, with the meaning gushing out simultaneously. The simile by its simplicity will help us to grasp the idea of a thread, not only in the Tamil but, as we shall see, in the elusive Sanskrit verse too. Secondly, we shall translate the simile into a sort of Boolean flow chart, a sort of road map that shows the flow of ideas, branches and all. This will help us to represent the verses in a pictorial form which will convince all but the sceptic that the Sanskrit verse surpasses all other verses without deviating from their sense, and in fact is the source for which the others form Bhagavan’s own commentary:

“Sri Ramanasramam is reached by road from the western or eastern direction. Arrived there, one enters the Ashram gate and soon reaches the Shrine.”

If this were to be given as a set of instructions, one might say:

1. Reach the Shrine
2. from the west, by entering the gate,
3. or,
4. from the east, by entering the gate,
5. by road.

There is no ambiguity here, is there? There are only two paths, both of which utilise ‘road’. The Tamil verse, shown earlier divided into five lines, is identical in structure.

Now to the flow-chart!

Reach the Shrine

by the west, by entering the gate

by road

by the east, by entering the gate
To read it, start from the left, take any one branch and go on to the very end. Then say 'or' to yourself and start again afresh but this time take the other branch. The full sense is brought out.

But is the structure of the original message preserved? Let us see. Start from the left, and compare the chart with the original. The ideas which are repeated in one are repeated in the other, and the ideas which find a unique mention are treated alike in both. No idea is dropped, nothing is added, and the sequence is not disturbed.

Such a Boolean chart has two advantages: firstly the message is stored with its original form undisturbed, and secondly, the message can be easily expanded without error, by simply reading from left to right.

The Tamil verse is given charted, below:

```
"Idayame Searvasi (1) Manattaal (4) Vaayu Aalanudan Aazh (3)
```

The two paths, left to right, are 1-2-4 and 1-3-4. Now returning to the simile, one might feel that repetition of “entering the gate” could be avoided. With repetitions removed the simile would then run:

“Reach the Shrine by road, from the west by entering the gate, or, from the east”.

That there are two paths, both requiring the road and the gate, is still clear. Incidentally the structure of the simile is now identical with that of the Sanskrit! Before going into this, there is something curious about the Tamil and Malayalam verses that we must note. In Tamil, Bhagavan dispenses with the equivalent of CHALANA RODHAAT. i.e., He says in Tamil, “by sinking along with breath” instead of “by sinking along with restraint of breath-movement.” In Malayalam only one word is dropped. He says, “by plunging along with restraint of breath, (Vaayu Nirdhattaal Aazh).” So here the word “movement” has been dropped.

These are really minor points since breath already implies movement, and plunging or sinking implies restraint. We shall however have to recall this at the conclusion of the article.

The Simile and the Sanskrit:

The simile clipped of all repetition ran: “Reach the Shrine by road from the west by entering the gate, or from the east.”

```
from the west (2)
"Reach the Shrine by road, (1) by entering the gate (4)."
```

```
from the east (3)
```

Again the two paths are 1-2-4 and 1-3-4. We’d mentioned earlier that the simile now had a structure identical with the Sanskrit one. The Sanskrit verse runs as follows, and has the same paths 1-2-4 and 1-3-4:

```
SVAM CHINVATAA (2)

"HRDI VISA MANASAA (1) MAJJATAA (4)."
```

```
PAVANA CHALANA RODHAAT (3)
```
The Jack-in-the-box, expanded fully, would be:

(i) HRDI VISA, MANASAA, SVAM CHINVATAA MAJJATAA (SVAM - CHINVATAA - MAJJATAA MANASAA, is a compound word meaning inward-searchingly-plunging mind)

(ii) HRDI VISA, MANASAA, PAVANA CHALANA RODHAAT MAJJATAA (PAVANA-CHALANA-RODHAAT-MAJJATAA MANASAA, is a compound word for breath-movement-restrainedly-plunging mind).

The Tell-Tale Telugu:

We have seen now that the Tamil and Malayalam, far from being versions that Bhagavan chose to write differently, are actually expanded restatements of the unique sense of twin-paths packed so well into the Sanskrit. As if to satisfy even the stubborn sceptic, He wrote the Telugu version in patient prose. Let us look at its latter half.

"Tananu Daa Vedaki Munugu Manassu Chetano,
Prana Rodhamu Valana Manassu Chetano,
Hrdayamu Nandi."

"Tananu-Daa-Vedaki-Munugu Manassu Chetano (1)
Hrdayamu Nandi (3).
Prana-Rodhamu-Valana-Munugu Manassu Chetano (2)
"By inward-searchingly-plunging mind (1)
reach the Heart (3)."

By breath-restrainedly-plunging mind (2)

"SVAM-CHINVATAA-MAJJATAA MANASAA (1)
PAVANA-RODHAAT-MAJJATAA MANASAA (2)
HRDI VISA (3)."

The two paths are 1-3 and 2-3.

The ‘Oracle’:

The tale is told! The truth stares us! And before we go on to the conclusion, we ought to note a minor point that completes the analysis. The word ‘or’ is never used more than once in all the versions analysed. This pattern, consistent with our foregoing analysis and confirmation, is an independent evidence for the twin-path sense.

The hidden depth:

Chronologically, the Sanskrit verse was written first, followed by Tamil, Malayalam and finally Telugu versions. The thread-sense, the Sutra, once grasped, there will be no quarrel between the Sanskrit and the others. The Sanskrit spring gushing forth, becomes the Tamil brook and Malayalam rivulet, growing into the Ganga in Telugu.

The Telugu prose elaborates repeating the words plunge and mind twice. It however drops the word movement.

The Malayalam repeats the word plunge twice, but drops the word movement.

The Tamil verse repeats the word plunge twice, but drops two words restraint and movement.
There is thus a progressive reduction in repetition as we move from Telugu to Tamil. But this is off-set by the increase in the number of words excluded! It is here that we have to hand it out to the Sanskrit verse which, though the briefest, is really the super-set that includes the other three. In fact it exceeds them as it employs an extra word CHALANA, movement, which is dropped in all the others! The amazing fact is that this the Sanskrit verse achieves without a single repetition or exclusion. But really, there can be no comparisons made between these compositions. For, as we have seen, the Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu verses serve as increasingly elaborate commentaries by Bhagavan on His own Sanskrit source. Each compels its praise as the Supreme, much in the fashion of the Vedic deities that occupy, one after another, the stage of the bard’s heart, to have their supremacy sung, the while to the exclusion of others.

Nididhyasana: the “plunge”:

So far we have taken a personal dip, a Sravana and Manana, into the four verses and arrived at a sense of two paths identical in all — that of gripping the mind by itself or of gripping the mind by gripping breath first. We would be guilty of the slip between the cup and the lip, if at this stage we regarded the two as independent or even separate paths. With the mind engaged in vichara (and hence any marga, Bhakti, Raja or Karma, where mind meets itself in some form or another), breath is found to subside simultaneously. Conversely, by breath consciously controlled, the mind simultaneously enters a calm that is conducive to vichara. The abatement of the breath in the latter, is a fundamental bio-feedback which helps temporarily free the mind of thought ripples. In the former, this condition obtains in the initial phase of vichara which leads to a calm, free of thought-disturbance. Vichara from this point onwards, plumbs the depth of one’s being, cutting at the root knot, ego.

In short, a suspension of thought activity is obtained either by gripping the mind itself first, or by gripping the breath first. This obtained, vichara must continue, to burn away the root, the reservoir of nescience, ego.

When gripped by deep worry or agitation, it is impossible to grip the mind by itself. It would be quite difficult even to “persuade” it to grip the breath. It goes without saying that none of these would “work” without the conviction or humility that acknowledges everything to an all-knowing Supreme, the essence of our Be-ing.

The “two paths” are then really one, a coin with its inevitable sides. One ought not to tarry long in discussion, for it would then be, as Bhagavan once remarked over something similar, “like debating over which leg should be first be inserted into a pair of trousers, the left or the right, without realising that one had better get on with the job since both legs have to get inserted anyway!”

The Heart of the matter:

The first two words of the couplet would suffice for the Ripe One who merely needs to be “reminded”, as it were, of the Heart. “HRDI VISA! Enter the Heart!” This is the pathless path.

To the One established as Self, the question of paths does not arise. He is the Master. The Unsaid Sense: Sound and sense “trail” Him like waves trail water and ornaments, gold.
HEN we think of Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, the image of the ancient Rishis like Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Atreya and the like come to our mind. Gigantic in the strength born of his endless austerities, filled with passion for the proper understanding of the Vedic texts and love for the motherland, the Muni strode the narrow world like a colossus. We are told that he was dumb in his early childhood, in direct contrast to the poetic outpourings of his later years which matched those of Kaldasa. Was he a modern Hastamalaka preferring silence to worldly prattle until the physical pain of branding forced him to speak? One cannot say. Be that as it may, he was born in a family steeped in the lore of sacred mantras and he was a natural heir to it. He mastered the scriptures and could go to the very root of the meaning of Vedic riks. What marked him out was his passion for austerities, for uttering the sacred mantras times without number. Even soon after his marriage, we find him departing for Bhubaneswar for a severe spell of such penance.

This penchant for wandering from one sacred place to another was his second nature, and though he was fully endowed with the power which flows from ceaseless penance, though he readily and easily attracted followers, he was humble enough to recognise that somehow his penance was incomplete. He had had neither the vision of his favourite God Siva which he had
longed for nor had he the peace of mind which must follow from single-minded spiritual effort. At this stage the divine took a hand in his historic meeting with Arunachala Ramana on a hot afternoon in Virupaksha Cave in November 1907.

Who is this Anunachala Ramana? None can really know and if anyone were to ask what is the nature of this Sadguru, 'one has to only hang down the head and remain silent like a statue'. His own mother Azhagammal saw him as the snake-decked Lord Siva. Raghavachari saw him first as Dakshinamurti and this form too vanished and vast space alone remained. Even though none can fathom the glory of Ramana, we can say a few things which are part of the record. Self-knowledge came to his door, unsought, giving credence to the old adage that 'Atman reveals itself to those whom it chooses'. It may be this knowledge dawned because of the constant 'sphurana' of Arunachala within his Heart from the age of innocence. Or it could be due to His samadhi-like sleep or it may be because his life's purpose was to be a living embodiment of the power of Arunachala. One can only guess at the cause. Whatever knowledge he had of the scriptures was only what he picked up later to explain their import to Palaniswami and others. But this made no difference for he was constantly rooted in the Self. What he taught came from direct experience. Seekers of truth could no more resist his attraction than a bee could a flower in full bloom.

Ramana had already begun his spiritual ministration to his mother and clarifications to Gambhiram Seshaier and Siva-prakasam Pillai. But he preferred to hide his state behind the facade of verbal silence. The Muni himself had had 'darshan' of the Maharshi on two earlier occasions and had been deeply impressed by his Brahmic State. But the time was not yet ripe. The Muni had not come to a deadend, to a state of utter desperation, without which no surrender to the Sadguru was possible. Such a state came on this sacred day, for it then dawned on the Muni that in spite of his vast erudition, his ceaseless repetition of the holy syllables, he was only at the threshold. For some reason his tapas had not yielded the desired results. While clasping with his hands the feet of Ramana, he opened for himself the floodgates of Ramana's grace. The Muni's distress was the world's opportunity. The Muni's spiritual status was such and his yearning was so evident, that Ramana's love overflowed in His breaking the self-imposed silence of eleven long years. The world was not to be denied Ramana's soft and ambrosial voice. To the Muni and to each of us, through the message given to him, the true meaning of tapas has been revealed. In emphasising the need for the switching of attention from thoughts to the thinker, to the first person 'I' and to the origin of sound from sound, Ramana opened up his straight and easy path to all. What an epoch-making break of silence it has been! When one recalls the flow of spiritual ministration of Ramana from its gentle beginning at this point to the torrential level in the last decade when he was in the body, one is filled with gratitude to the Muni for having been the channel of the divine in this purpose.

For the Muni, it was a watershed stage. He had been blessed with a peerless Sadguru whom he joyously proclaimed to be the sage among sages, the Maharshi, God in the human form, Bhagavan. Henceforth, throughout his life, the Muni never forgot that his greatest 'good fortune' was that Maharshi was his guru. Students of Ramana's life know only too well that all his compositions and clarifications were only in response to the insistent request of one or the other of his devotees. To Palaniswami we owe Akshara Mana Malai and to Sri Muruganar Upadesa Undiyar and Ulladu Narpadu. To the Muni goes the credit for Sri Ramana Gita. The Muni and a band of eight seekers covered the whole gamut of spiritual problems through the questions raised by them in 1913 and 1917. The issues raised by them were so fundamental that we find Ramana expounding on his own on some of the topics like 'The Science
of the Heart’ and ‘Mind Control’. The mellifluous Sanskrit in which the questions and answers have been recorded and the lyrical praise of Ramana in Chapters XI and XVIII have made this work a modern Upanishad — Ramanopanishad. Since the Vedas and the Upanishads are in Sanskrit, Sri Ramana Gita and the Muni’s translation later of ‘Ulladu Narpadu’ into Sanskrit as Sat-Darshanam have enabled many to understand the true value of the Maharshi’s teachings against the backdrop of the rich tradition of the Sanskrit scriptures.

Having tasted a brimful of his guru’s grace on the twentieth day of the composition of Uma Sahasram, when the Muni completed two hundred verses in just a few hours, the Muni knew the power of Ramana’s presence. Compelled by an inner urge for more and more austeritys, the Muni would go to various sacred places like Padai Veedu, Mahendra Mountains and Gokarna. But, he would always return to Arunachala, to Ramana. The Muni reaped the benefit of his firm faith through the ‘Kapalabheda’ experience (the splitting of the top of the skull) which came to him.

The Muni’s faith in Ramana’s words was total and unflinching. When Azhagammal attained Muktij it was he who set all controversies at rest by insisting that the Mother should be interred in a Samadhi because she was an illumined person. For the Muni, the words of Ramana that His Mother had been absorbed in the Heart were sacrosant and there could be no room for doubt.

Whatever the Muni did had the stamp of authentic greatness. In one lunar eclipse, the Muni completed a brief commentary on Upadesa Saram. He wrote just one chapter of his intended biography on Ramana, ‘The birth of the birthless’, and what an inspired one it is!

In the last few years of his life, the Muni was physically separated from Ramana. The Muni’s epistles from Sris would ‘soothen even the savage beast’. What love, what confidence in Ramana’s time-transcending, space-negating presence! Where is time, where is space, for one like Ramana? Where are the limits to his power to transform, to make one whole? This is the constant theme of these letters. Whatever the Muni wrote about Ramana, be it the Forty Verses in Praise, ‘Chaturvimsat’, the rapturous verses in Sri Ramana Gita or the epistles, the Muni would pour into it his total personality and the intensity of his feeling can be felt by all readers. For, the Muni was passionately involved in whatever he did. In Ramana he recognised fully that his relationship was with one for whom the human garb was just a cloak.

The story of the Muni epitomises the abundance of Ramana’s grace. Before giving his message on the true meaning of ‘tapas’, Ramana had gazed silently at the Muni for fifteen minutes, an overt act of transfer of grace so that the message could go home. Whenever the Muni sought his advice, be it through questions recorded in Sri Ramana Gita or on other occasions, Ramana would draw the Muni’s attention back to ‘source-watching’ with evident and tender concern. One can readily see the respect which Ramana instilled in others for the Muni. All Sanskrit works would be referred to him for advice. We find in the Talks, Day by Day, several laudatory references to the Muni by Ramana. For his part, inspite of all the vicissitudes in life, through all situations brought about by concern for reform and regeneration of the country, the Muni was single-minded in broadcasting the divinity of Ramana which he felt with his every breath. Out of the tender story of the disciple and the Sadguru, between Nayana and Ramana something indefinable but extraordinarily beautiful and evergreen has been bequeathed to posterity.
I HAVE been a visionary from childhood. When I was only five years old I already had visions of Sri Krishna. At first I thought every one could see them. I once said to my mother: "Look! He's standing there!" But she explained to me that only I saw him. When I grew up I joined the army. However my desire for God-experience grew so strong that after some years I resigned and decided to devote my life to sadhana. I wanted to become a sannyasin but could not because I had a wife and children to look after.

I started visiting Swamis and asked each one point blank: "Have you seen God and can you show me God?" I would allow no hedging. If they began to talk around it, I said: "Please give me a straight yes or no." I found no one who could answer 'Yes' and returned to my home in the Punjab feeling very depressed.

One day my wife was just serving my midday meal when a sadhu came and stood in the doorway. I invited him in and told her to serve him food too and then asked him whether he could direct me to a Swami who could show me God. He told me that I could find what I was looking for from Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai.

"YOU, THAT IS ME, IS GOD"

By H.W.L. Poonja
It was the first time that I had heard of the Maharshi or of Tiruvannamalai, so I wrote down both names. But how was I to get there? It was right down in the South, and my funds were almost exhausted. However, the next day I saw an advertisement in the paper for an ex-army man to run a canteen in Madras. I applied and was at once given the post and my fare paid.

When I got to Madras I said that I must first pay a visit to Tiruvannamalai before taking up my duties. Arriving there, I dumped my bedding in the Ashram dormitory and went into the meditation hall; and who should I see there on the couch but the sadhu who had visited me at my home in the Punjab!

I decided that he was a fraud. He had been travelling about India boosting himself and had then taken a train back and arrived before me. So I got up and left the hall. I got my bedding and was just putting it back on the horse-cart that had brought me from the station when a devotee asked me why I was leaving so soon. I told him and he said: “It must be a mistake, because the Maharshi has never left this place since he first came nearly fifty years ago. Either it was some one else you saw or he appeared to you by supernatural power.” So I went back to the hall.

As soon as I had an opportunity to see Bhagavan alone I asked him my usual question. I added: “It’s a bargain. I am willing to pay any price, even my life, but your part of the bargain is to enable me to see God.”

At first he sat silent, but I said: “That’s no good; I don’t understand silence. Please give me a straight answer.”

Then he said: “I can enable you to see God rather than to see God.” That puzzled me. I had very little understanding then.

A few days later I went for a walk in the rough country at the foot of the north slope of Arunachala and fell into a state of ecstasy during which I again had a vision of Sri Krishna. When I got back I told Bhagavan. He asked me: “Can you see Krishna now?”

“I said, “No: only when I have a vision.”

So he said: “What is the use of a God who comes and goes? If he is a real God he should be with you always.”

That shocked me. Again I almost lost faith in him, but some of the devotees explained to me. Before I left for Madras I asked Bhagavan for a mantra but he did not give me one. I asked him for permission to take sannyas, but he refused.

However, shortly after my return to Madras he appeared to me in a dream and gave me a mantra. Soon after this I had a vision of God in human form. This was followed by a great change in me. I lost interest in all the ritual and incantations and breathing exercises that I had been doing up to then. For instance, I used to get up at three o’clock in the morning to attend to my statue of Sri Krishna. All such things ceased to interest me. I was very worried about this. I thought it meant I had become an atheist.

At the first opportunity I went to Tiruvannamalai. I told Bhagavan about the change that had come over me and how I had lost interest in all the rituals that I had been practising regularly for so many years past. Bhagavan looked steadily at me for some time and then said something to me in Tamil which I was told, on enquiry, meant “You, that is me, that is Bhagavan”. These words sank into my heart and I experienced the most wonderful feeling of bliss I had ever known.

It was from this time that I began to understand Bhagavan and his teaching.
USED to worship Bhagavan by breaking a coconut, lighting camphor and performing arathi before him. In the old days on the hill Bhagavan had graciously allowed me to worship like this.

Once Bhagavan and the devotees started to do giripradakshina. I was one of the crowd which followed him. I, and two of the ladies who accompanied me, Echamal and Kamakshi Ammal, had planned to worship Bhagavan while he was walking around the hill. Breaking coconut and lighting camphor before Bhagavan inside the Ashram was not liked by Chinnaswami. He preferred that such ceremonies be performed only in front of the Mother’s shrine. So the three of us, without his knowledge, brought all the necessary things to do puja to Bhagavan on the pradakshina road.

Bhagavan always walked very slowly when he performed giripradakshina. He also used to stop at regular intervals. At one of the resting places Echamal broke a coconut and lighted camphor in Bhagavan’s benign presence. At the next halting place Kamakshi did the same. My turn came when Bhagavan halted again outside Gautama ashram. I broke the coconut, lighted the camphor and bowed to him. Bhagavan looked at me and asked in a kindly manner, “Did the three of you bring coconuts and fruit after consulting together?” Our conspiracy was thus exposed.

During one of the Deepam festivals I went to Skandasram with a coconut and camphor to have darshan of Bhagavan. On this visit I met Dandapani Swami, who had recently settled in the Ashram, for the first time. Bhagavan was not there when I arrived. When Dandapani Swami saw the coconut and camphor he knew what I had come for. He tried to prevent me from carrying out my plan by ordering me not to worship Bhagavan with the coconut and the camphor. I had no intention

1 (Continued from the previous issue)
tion of following his orders, but to placate him I kept quiet while he lectured me on how it was against the Ashram rules to perform ritual worship to Bhagavan.

Finally Bhagavan came. While he was still walking towards us he looked kindly at me and enquired, "When did you come?" Dandapani Swami was quite surprised. He had been ordering and threatening me on the assumption that I was a new devotee who had never met Bhagavan before. When he saw how well I knew Bhagavan's grace he calmed down and went away, leaving us alone. In his absence I performed my usual puja to Bhagavan, thinking all the while of Bhagavan's grace. I should mention that whenever I brought food from my village for Bhagavan, Bhagavan would invariably enquire "When did you come?"

Bhagavan's manner of protecting his devotees is unique. Unlike most spiritual figures he wants nothing from his devotees. Devotees must offer food and namaskarom to the heads of maths in order to get any grace from them. But Bhagavan is different. When he does not even like the salutations from his devotees, how can there be any desire for the food offerings which the devotees bring? Bhagavan never accepts the worship of devotees when they break coconuts and wave camphor before him. Some of us, who had been devotees for many years, still worshipped him in this way, but Bhagavan did not approve of our activities. He did not prevent us because he knew that it gave us some mental satisfaction, but at the completion of each puja he would usually request us not to do it again.

Once I went into the presence of Bhagavan with two coconuts, determined in my mind to offer one to Bhagavan and the other at the Mother's samadhi Bhagavan, of course, knew what my intentions were. He said, "I am an idol which eats. In the temple there is an idol which doesn't eat. Break the coconuts before the God who doesn't eat."

On another occasion, just before I started giripradakshina, I lighted camphor in Bhagavan's presence, prostrated and left. I learned later that after I had gone, a few boys also burnt camphor in Bhagavan's presence and prostrated to him. Bhagavan complained, "All this has happened on account of Akhilandamma".

Bhagavan is the one who bestows grace without being asked. Does he shower his grace merely in exchange for our puja offerings? No! Is not grace his natural state?

It is well-known that many of the devotees who had darshan of Bhagavan Sri Ramana during his early days at Arunachala adored him as Jnanasambandhar himself. That sage also attained Self-realisation in his youth. Those who ponder over the two lives will discover many other similarities between the two. Bhagavan himself frequently praised the jnana of Jnanasambandhar. The birthday of both of them is Arudra Darsanam, both were strongly drawn to Arunachala, and both reached it by the same route. On the way to Arunachala both halted at the Anjanaimullur temple. The sceptre of jnana which Jnanasambandhar wielded till his 16th year was taken over by Bhagavan, also in his 16th year. The similarities between the two are very striking. Because of this, when the Gurupuja of Jnanasambandhar was celebrated every year at Sri Ramanasramam I always used to go there, have Bhagavan's darshan and offer bhiksha.

After cooking started at Sri Ramanasramam I still wanted to offer bhiksha to all Bhagavan's devotees, but how could I offer it to the Brahmins? I resolved the problem by purchasing vegetables etc, and giving them to the Ashram with instructions that they should be prepared for the Brahmins. I myself used to cook the food for Bhagavan and for the non-Brahmin devotees and bring it to the Ashram. In the early days of Sri Ramanasramam, when the cooking facilities were not very well developed, Bhagavan never made any critical comments about my habit of preparing and bringing food in this way. However, when the Ashram began to expand, a big dining room was constructed in which it was possible to cook and serve food.
for hundreds every day. Even then, I stuck to my old practice of cooking food at home and bringing it to the Ashram.

Once, after the dining room had been built, I brought bhiksha to the Ashram on the Gurupuja day of Jnansambandhar. Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Why all this trouble for you? If you donate some food the ashramites can cook it and serve it." From that time on, unable to disobey the gracious order of Bhagavan, I gave the Ashram whatever food I could in order to continue my service. I still managed to do some cooking for Bhagavan and the devotees because thereafter I was permitted to assist with the preparation of the Ashram breakfast. Since Bhagavan did not say anything about this, whenever I go to the Ashram I still have the good fortune of preparing the morning breakfast.

In Bhagavan’s last days, while I was staying in Desur, I was frequently thinking and worrying about Bhagavan’s health. I decided that I had to come and see him because my desire for darshan and the grief I was feeling on account of his suffering were both very great. When I reached the gates of the Ashram a Brahmin, who was not known to me, prevented me from entering. He ordered me to stay outside. I was immediately struck with an unbearable grief because at that time my yearning to see Bhagavan was very great. Fortunately, by Bhagavan’s grace, an inmate of the Ashram who knew me came to that place. The barriers and rules and regulations which had been formed to maintain the tranquility of the Ashram in those final days could not withstand the surging tides of my ocean of grief. When this devotee informed Bhagavan that I had arrived I was given permission to enter the Ashram and have darshan. I tried to suppress my emotions as I went into Bhagavan’s room, but the feeling that I would soon be losing my one and only God completely destroyed my self-restraint. I cried out to him, "Bhagavan! Bhagavan has decided to give up his body. What can I do?"

Not-Two
By Martin Leo

You and I
leaves of the same tree
so where can
separation be?

The trunk is there
and branches too
so that leaves us
— not two!

There were thousands of good souls outside who, like me, had been wanting to have Bhagavan’s darshan. Is it not the boundless grace of Bhagavan that I alone was admitted inside? Musing on this graciousness I bowed to my Lord and came out in a perplexed state of mind. It goes without saying that I was very unwilling to leave. After I had left the room Bhagavan sent me the following message via the devotee who had opened the door for me: "Why do you feel sorry for this mortal body?" It occurred to me that Bhagavan was consoling me by saying, "Don’t feel sorry for this body, I am always your saviour!" When the import of his message registered with me I experienced a little calmness and clarity.

When Bhagavan finally attained mahasamadhi my mind sank into an unfathomable ocean of grief. Later, when I discovered that Bhagavan’s grace and benign presence were still permeating my heart, the grief I felt on account of his physical disappearance abated. Now, on my visits to Tiruvannamalai I worship at the lingam which has been installed on Bhagavan’s samadhi, I have darshan of Sri Ramana’s devotees and I offer them bhiksha according to my means and ability. I hope to spend the small remaining portion of my life continuing such services.

(Concluded)

* This was written when she was over 90 years of age.
SUNYATA AND WISDOM

By G. Narayan

In education and science one frequently talks about the need for an open mind. It is necessary to be free of opinion and bias to receive new material, observe new situations, weigh the evidence that is offered and then change one's attitude or opinion accordingly. An open mind is both logical and rational in its outlook. This is an important approach to study and discovery both in science and humanities.

Knowledge, however necessary and useful, is always limited. No one has complete knowledge of anything. There is a certain amount of knowledge, but along with it there is a shadow of ignorance. We cannot fully comprehend through knowledge anything that is alive, whether it is a human being, an animal or a plant. So one has to learn to look afresh without the pressure of previous knowledge and experience. The empty mind is freeing itself of this conditioning through choiceless awareness. It is finely attuned to listen like an empty drum in good tone, producing the right note and sound. In listening there is a release and out of this comes right action. An empty mind is renewing itself, so it is young and can explode into the present.

There is the perennial question 'Who am I?' I am a bundle of memories, hopes and fears. I have gained some knowledge and experience. As you probe further there is the 'I'-thought like the central beam of a house. Experience, knowledge and memory are referred to this 'I'-thought. So what is the 'I'-thought? The more you look into it, the more it recedes into the realm of nothingness. It is not an entity but a fictitious process.

There is an interesting story in Zen Buddhism. An affluent merchant is a disciple of a Zen master. His mind is troubled and he feels restless. He is agitated and is unable to resolve this problem. So he goes to the Zen master and reports: "My mind is troubled, please give me peace". The Zen master replies: "Produce your mind, and I will give it peace". As the disciple watches his mind keenly it escapes his grasp, and the mind recedes into the region of emptiness. The process of the mind has disappeared and there is sudden enlightenment and peace.
It is an existential leap that cannot be captured in words.

Enlightened sages like Ramana Maharshi have passed through this Death Experience, transcending the ego, and have declared 'I am neither the body nor the mind, but the deathless spirit'. This is not the outcome of knowledge or erudition, much less the result of intellectual analysis. Such insight is the very source of Intelligence and is closely associated with the mind that is emptying itself in meditation. A great benediction emanates from such a sage living in the eternal present.

Etymologically the word 'Sunyā' is derived from the root Svi which means 'to swell, to expand'. Sunya is the void which receives fulness. The Buddha spoke about Sunyata, but it was Nagarjuna the great Buddhist sage (first century A.D.) who expounded it at great length. There are essentially two aspects of Sunyata which one has to understand. In the world of phenomena it is svabhava Sunya, which means devoid of independent, substantial reality of its own. There is not a single thing which is unconditionally, absolutely real. Everything is compounded, conditioned by something else. It is a realm of relativity. The world is not a compendium of independent things, but a set of varied and related processes. Things are simply events in this process.

From the point of view of the Absolute, Sunyata implies Prapancha Sunya. It is completely free of thought construction, verbalisation and the resulting plurality. So it is inexpressible in human language in terms of 'is' and 'is not'. As Sunyata is free of plurality, it is an indivisible whole which cannot be broken up into parts. Sunyata is not a theory or a belief, but a profound insight-experience. It is not an end in itself, but a means for leading the mind to Prjna (transcendental wisdom). Out of this insight there is the emergence of the skillfulness of not clinging to the relative, phenomenal world as the Real and the Absolute, and so there is freedom from illusion.

One wonders what is the essence of Sunyata, the Sunya-tattva. It is best explained by quoting Nagarjuna: “Aparapratyayam Santam Prapancair aprapancait Nirukalpam Ananartham. Etattatva laksanaam.”

1. Aparapratyayam means an insight which cannot be taught or imparted by one to another.
2. Santam means quiescent nature that is not affected by the empirical mind.
3. Prapanc气质; aprapancait; it is inexpressible by the verbalising mind.
4. Nirukalpam; it is transcendent to thought and its projections.
5. It is ananartham, which means non-dual.

Sunyata has access to a higher form of Intelligence which is the outcome of clarity; it is not mere cleverness or capacity. Right thinking and right action flow from this Intelligence. Nagarjuna warns us not to make of Sunyata a theory or a concept. “Sunyata was declared by the Buddha for dispensing with all views or ‘isms’. Those who convert Sunyata itself into another ‘ism’ are verily beyond hope or help.”

Men of knowledge and erudition are full of opinions and views and are incapable of experiencing an original insight. A Confucian scholar met a Zen master for guidance and discussion. After the dialogue the Zen master served tea. He filled the cup of the scholar and kept on pouring tea, so there was an overflow. When this was pointed out by the Confucian scholar the Zen master retorted: “Your mind is overflowing with knowledge and opinion, so where is the space to receive the eternally new!”

G. Nareyan
IN HIS PRESENCE

By Professor K. Swaminathan

IN VERSES 26 and 27 of the Supplement to the Forty Verses (Ulladu Narpadu), Bhagavan translates the instruction given to Sri Rama by his preceptor, the Sage Vasistha. The theme is the right relation between awareness and heroic action, between moksha and dharma. The paradox that has baffled many thinkers for over a century now is: How does it happen that the land that has produced an A-l metaphysics and mythology, the land of Sankara and Ramanuja, of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, has also managed to produce an Z-26 society, full of injustice, inequality, selfishness and cowardice?

One clear explanation is provided in verses 3, 5 and 16-30 of Upadesa Undiyar. Selfless and heroic action is both the seed and the fruit, the beginning and the end, of spiritual growth. These verses, like verses 21-25 of the Supplement to the Forty Verses are didactic and direct, and only widen the gap between the intellectuals and the masses, the “meditators” and the toilers.

In 1944 when the proofs of the third edition of Ulladu Narpadu were being corrected in His Presence, some of us (scrupulous scholars) found fault with the introductory note of WHO (Lakshmana Sarma): “To the question how the sadhaka (aspirant) is to behave in the world till he succeeds in attaining jnana, the answer is given in the two following verses taken from the Yoga Vasishtha.”

The two verses may be summed up thus: “Holding firmly at heart to the truth of your Being, play like a hero your part in the world-stage, inwardly calm and detached, but assuming zeal and joy, excitement and aversion, initiative and effort, and performing outward actions, appropriate to your particular role in various situations.” Now we (fine fellows and fully qualified College teachers!) pointed out the obvious absurdity of the Pudukottai Lawyer’s suggestion that Sri Rama, avatar of Vishnu and Nitya mukta, needed this teaching. “Who has these doubts?” enquired Bhagavan. Someone mentioned my name and then the cool bright beam of His glance pierced my eyes as He said smiling, “Look. It is for you. (Paar, Unakkuttaan.)” This teaching was for me!

This one moment solved for me a whole multitude of problems, personal, philosophical and social.

My father’s chosen God was Sri Rama and my mother’s Hanuman. They had both died years before and the old familiar world of dharma (with no mention of moksha) was half-forgotten and I had been feeling rather rootless in this strange new milieu of meditation, self-inquiry and all that. And now while at the humdrum job of proof-correction, Bhagavan planted me back firmly in my ancestral soil. I was told gently but clearly, “The oasis is a nice place to rest in, but not your permanent home. Also remember, there is a way of taking the oasis into the desert, of making more and more of the desert a garden green. What’s wrong with poetry? Does it not work in the world and transform all life in earth into a poem? Why not speak and listen to the heart rather than the head?”

Sri Rama, the mukta, enacts the poem of his earthly life, playing his heroic roles as son, brother, husband, ruler. Poetry can not only be written and read; it can also be lived and
enjoyed. The line that divides the aesthetic and the practical is (like the equator) imaginary. What after all is a poem? An expression of disinterested joy, an experience of someone else’s agony or ecstasy as if it were one’s own; a momentary manifestation in word or deed of our eternal Being.

Bhagavan was a perfect rasajna and with his high authority taught again the lesson I had learnt from my teacher, D.S. Sarma, that literature provides a safe and pleasant two-way bridge between paramartha and vyavahara.

Bhagavan listened like a child to passages from Shakespeare’s plays and Keats’s letters and quickly and convincingly revealed the universal truth in each flower unique in its own beauty. On Keats’s letter on “negative capability” his passing comment was: “So there are Upanishads in English as in Sanskrit.” The nightingale whose song Keats heard (stanza i) and the immortal bird not born for death (stanza vii) are the same two birds mentioned in the Upanishad, one eating the fruit, the other looking on. After a passage from Shakespeare was read, discussed and duly praised, He uttered words to this effect: “The Self as joy alone exists. As Shakespeare it enjoyed writing this and now as you it enjoys reading it.”

How literature enables us to enjoy Eternity in time and lifts us unawares from time into Eternity came out clearly in a dialogue between Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminatha Ayyar and Bhagavan. The ripe old scholar complained, “People tell us to give up patru (attachment). But I am not able to give up Tamil-patru.” Bhagavan promptly countered, “But who asked you to give up Siva-patru or Tamil-patru?” What is Siva but poetry, the creator and creation of ananda?

No wonder then that Bhagavan not only permitted and encouraged Muruganar in his copious outpourings but also often joined him in playing the grand game of rhyming and chiming in words that double a common joy. Was he not the sole begetter of thousands of marvellous poems by Muruganar and so many others?

I Corinthians, Ch. 13, was read; the variant versions “faith, hope, and charity” and “faith, hope and love” were compared. Why should charity be called “Christian love”? And so on. And finally Bhagavan in all innocence asked: “Is this poem of praise on the Heart by Jesus or by a disciple?” The answer, of course, was: “St. Paul.” The comment was: “Now this is the purest advaita. If the pupil said this, what would the Master say? Heart (Ullam), Being (Ulladu), Sive, anbu (Charity, love), all are One and That alone exists!”

Gandhi too was very fond of this passage. wanted it translated into Gujarati and memo-

rized and so on. Bhagavan often equated Gandhi with Hanuman, the humble and heroic servant of Sri Rama. In Keats’s Nightingale Ode, the witness-bird is immortal, the bird that sang is of course dead. In the history of this punya-bhumi, the symbol creates the actual and this in turn becomes a symbol. Poetry lives and works in the world and changes life into a poem. Can there be a nobler poem than the Mahatma’s earthly career? Bhagavan remarked once: “We say that Hanuman is Chiranjiui (immortal). It does not mean that a certain monkey goes on living for ever and ever. It only means that there will always be on earth some one who serves Rama as your Gandhi does now.”

For the temporal (upside down) tree called dharma, the seed and the fruit is timeless moksha. The sadhana of the seeker is the lakshana of the siddha. Egoless action is the disciplined exercise of the seeker; it is the spontaneous behaviour of the realised person. We enjoy aesthetically the bliss of the Jivan-mukta. He enjoys aesthetically our struggles, triumphs and failures (for us real and for him illusory). The ego can never know moksha; the Self can never know bondage. The lovers of poetry become egoless because they enjoy being otherselves. Read the Ramayana, work hard and honestly humbly, like Hanuman, and all shall be well with you and the world.

(To be continued)
From the very first issue, Arthur Osborne knew exactly the journal should contain and he followed the plan till his last day and he left specific, written instructions on how the journal should be run after him. He wanted every issue to carry an article on a saint's life or teachings, to introduce old devotees and to express grateful thanks to those who had done even the smallest service to the Master. How I came to Sri Bhagavan became another welcome feature. He bestowed special attention on Book Reviews. The Ashram Bulletin was left entirely to me; he used to touch up only its English. His answers to questions in Letters to the Editor were not only popular but very useful for sadhaks.

Running The Mountain Path was not always a pleasant pastime. When articles were found unsuitable, even if written by old devotees, they were promptly returned to them. Some insulted Arthur Osborne for these rejections. He reacted calmly like the Buddha; if an insult is not accepted it returns to the giver like any other gift. He would console me, thus: “Service to Guru is not always easy. It is not like pleasing a superior in an office.” I would like to reproduce a letter that I received in reply to mine written in utter dejection and fatigue, when I was overworked and lacked proper support and cooperation from my colleagues, on the one hand, and on the other, was criticised for no valid reasons whatsoever:

23rd June 1966.

Dear Sri Ganesan,

Glad to hear that the work in Madras is going on well. We must not be too upset by people's criticism. But at the same time we must examine it to see if anything is justified in it and if so try to correct what is wrong. So long as the work is done as a service to Bhagavan it can go on whether people are helpful or not. Perhaps people who criticised do not realise how much work has to be done. After all, you know that at the Ashram there are people who criticise my work on the journal too. In fact you hold three posts—office manager, advertising editor and chief sub-editor in charge of page-making, and I can't think of anyone else who would combine them with the same enthusiasm and ability. So you will have to continue doing Bhagavan's work whether people criticise or not.

For us, what is necessary is a constant examination of motive: Do I want to dominate or to serve Bhagavan? Do I want to impress X, Y or Z or to serve Bhagavan? Do I want to win praise or to serve Bhagavan?

Best wishes for the work you are doing.

Yours in Bhagavan,

Sd. Arthur Osborne.
One more citation from his letter to me to prove how well he guided me:

"As for some people being jealous, I expected that. Human nature is such that nothing can succeed without provoking jealousy. They may even try to create animosity between us. Our best policy is just to take no notice and concentrate on doing Bhagavan's work to the best of our ability and maintaining a high standard in every way so that people have nothing to criticise. With all best wishes. May the Grace of Bhagavan support you in your work!"

On two different occasions, he gave me glimpses of his greatness, his humility and guru-bhakti. In his January 1969 Editorial he had written: "It is not a question of whether there is a God apart from you but whether there is a you apart from God" (italics: mine). I was so much impressed by the depth and clarity of it I rushed to his house and expressed my happiness over it. He reacted pleasantly: "Do you like it? Yes, it is a great saying and contains the essence of the entire panorama of philosophies and sayings of all saints." I was prompted to ask how he could write such magnificent truths in such clear and simple language. He replied that it was all the Grace of Sri Bhagavan.

Previously too, on reading his Editorial for October 1967, I was thrilled to the core, particularly by the sentences: "It is tremendously exhilarating to learn for the first time the truth of the One Self and the possibility of Self-Realization. At last life has a meaning and a purpose!" When I rushed to him and congratulated him, his calm reply was: "It is all Sri Bhagavan's Grace! If you can feel so thrilled it is a proof that I have communicated the intuitive message correctly. I am grateful to you!"

A few further points of interest that I observed in him:

(i) In following Sri Bhagavan's path of Self-enquiry, he combined with it true devotion, and selfless service. It was jnana, bhakti and nishkama karma—all in one!

(ii) He was very regular in attending the chanting of the Vedas (Vedaparayana) in front of Sri Bhagavan's Shrine, both morning and evening. He affirmed that listening to it helped in meditation.

(iii) He was a towering example of an ascetic living a family life!

(iv) In all the years that I knew him, I never saw him getting angry at any time under any circumstances.

(v) He never demanded any privileges for himself as Editor!

I received from him strong support and friendly guidance. I owe much to his sympathetic and patient understanding which saved me from various pitfalls that beset the spiritual path.
Mr. Osborne’s remarkable ability in presenting Sri Bhagavan’s teaching of Self-enquiry is clearly seen in his brilliant Editorials and the numerous articles he wrote under various pseudonyms, like Sagittarius, Abdullah Qutbuddin, Bodhichitta, and A. Rao. He contributed articles on Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in each issue of the journal. When accused of using *The Mountain Path* for preaching Christianity and Islam, he, explained calmly: “Ganesan! I am a staunch Christian: I still remain so. And, for some time, I was in love with Islam and lived in mosques along with Muslims. I have studied Buddhism and known Buddhists. I know, thus, the difficulty Christians, Muslims and Buddhists find in practising Maharshi’s teaching of *Atma Vichara*. By such articles I am only building a bridge through which all can reach the Maharshi and gain his guidance.”

At first we printed only 1500 copies. Mr. Osborne had warned me that the copies would not be enough. He was proved correct; I had to reprint 500 copies more of the first two issues. As devotees started reading it, *The Mountain Path* became very popular and the circulation increased to 3000, then to 4000, then to 4500 and now it stands at 5000 copies. The distinguished writers of articles include the Dalai Lama, Joel Goldsmith, Father Thomas Merton, Mysoor Maharaja, Douglas E. Harding, Wei Wu Wei, Paul Reps, Lucien Stryk, George Trevelyan, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan and others. The entire credit for enlisting their help goes to Mr. Osborne. Also, a row of ennobling serials enriched the hearts of the readers— *Bhagavad Gita*, *Veda Parayana*, *Arunachala Mahatmyam*, *Stories from Yoga Vasistha*, *Garland of Guru’s Sayings*, etc.

*The Mountain Path*, now well-established, commanded respect and applause from all over the world. The main aim of starting an Ashram journal was more than fulfilled. A steady flow of visitors, fresh pilgrims—mostly young seekers—came to the Ashram. Many projects—the completion of Sri Bhagavan’s Samadhi shrine, the Meditation Hall, the Centenary Celebrations, a number of Guest Houses—all these became a reality, thanks largely to the good news spread through the pages of this quarterly.

In 1968 I was introduced to a new dimension in my relationship with my Editor, Arthur Osborne. We had always had the most cordial relationship, despite occasional differences which he nipped in the bud through his intuitive understanding and magnanimity. We freely consulted each other and decisions were taken only after we reached a consensus.

Mr. and Mrs. Osborne had given me full freedom to knock at their door at any time, even at odd hours! Entering the house after a week’s interval I found him stretched on his bed, suddenly reduced to skin and bones. This physical debility struck me first. Then, I noticed the change, the transformation in his face and I was wonderstruck. It shone with an aura bright and peaceful. My inner voice announced; “He is realised!” He opened his eyes and gave me a warm welcome with his lustrous look. He said: “Ganesan! I am saved. *The Mountain Path* will go on. Don’t worry!” I sat next to him. I was overwhelmed with joy. I held his hand and sat gazing at his radiant face. I spent half an hour with him and went to my house and announced to my mother: “Mother! Mr. Osborne is realised. Please go and see him; his face shines with light!” She went to Mr. Osborne’s house in the evening and confirmed my view.

Though after a few days Mr. Osborne physically improved, he spoke to no one. He was totally drawn within and showed signs of interest only when ‘Bhagavan’ or ‘Arunachala’ was mentioned. Even *The Mountain Path*—his pet child—did not seem to interest him. I started telling all my friends about the change and urging them to go and see him. Some were sceptical, some delighted. I took Sri T.P. Ramachandra Iyer to Mr. Osborne after I had tutored
him how to test the change in Mr. Osborne by mentioning the journal, then some anecdote about Sri Bhagavan, and then Mr. Osborne’s children (whom he knew very well) and so on.

Mr. Osborne looking at us, smiled and said nothing. TPR started praising The Mountain Path, particularly the Editorials. Mr. Osborne sat like a statue. TPR then said: “One day, in the hall of Sri Bhagavan...” but before he could proceed any further, Mr. Osborne sat up and said: “Yes, TPR! Tell me what happened.” TPR narrated an incident. Mr. Osborne became very happy and pleaded, “TPR! Record all these incidents. You owe this to posterity.” TPR, as planned already, switched the topic to his children and Mr. Osborne turned into a statue again. Next TPR spoke about Bhagavan’s love for Arunachala. Mr. Osborne joined enthusiastically. When again TPR went on to other subjects Mr. Osborne lapsed back into indrawn silence. When we came out TPR was extremely happy and said: “Ganesan! Thank you! You have proved to me beyond doubt that Arthur is realised! It only proves that if one is sincere Sri Bhagavan’s grace will transform one here and now!”

The wonder was that our beloved Editor, perhaps anticipating the great change, had already prepared and finalized nine full issues: those of July & October, 1968, all the four of 1969 and January, April and July, of 1970 (except, of course, Ashram Bulletin, which in any case was my province). It was incredible, but he had done it! Later, when the burden of carrying on the journal fell on my shoulders, I realised how taxing it was even to put together a single issue in the given three months! Mr. Osborne had kept them all in different envelopes marking the date on each. A practical demonstration of how a Jnani is the master of Karma.

Mr. Arthur Osborne went to England and returned, now steadily established in inward poise. As he entered his house, he said: “Thrice I was about to die and every time Bhagavan saved me!” Like a child I used to be delighted in his proximity. Friends pulled my leg: “Don’t carry too far your hero-worship of Mr. Osborne.” They didn’t know how I enjoyed his Brahmic state.

He used to say: “At last life has a meaning and a purpose! It is tremendously exhilarating to realize the truth of the One Self!” His words had come true in his life!

On May 8, 1970 I was woken up from sleep by Mrs. Osborne, giving me the news that the body of her beloved husband, had been brought by taxi from Bangalore. I went and saw the body. He looked as if asleep. Before breathing his last, though physically unable to utter a word, he had spoken in a loud, clear voice, to Mrs. Osborne: “Thank you!” I missed him very much but at the same time somehow felt his guiding presence for months thereafter.

The July 1970 issue was ready and I brought copies from Madras and placed them at Sri Bhagavan’s Samadhi, symbolising its release. That night, while sleeping near the Samadhi of Sri Bhagavan I had a vivid dream. Mr. Osborne appeared and demanded from me the July copy and carefully went through every page. After the great change in early 1968, he had not shown much interest in the issues as they came out. Now in the first issue that I had brought out in his physical absence, he evinced keen interest to assure, as it were, his continued guidance in the journal’s smooth running.

(To be continued)
THE FOUR FATAL LIES

(iii) “I’m human.”

By Douglas E. Harding

All of the four basic lies we are considering in this series are extremely plausible, in fact automatically taken to be true by almost every sane adult. Certainly our third—“I’m human” or “I’m a man and not God”—is (or seems) so self-evident it goes without saying, along with such taken-for-granted assumptions as “I’m here and not there” or “I’m me and not you.” To doubt any of them—and rashly voice your doubts—would be to invite the anxious concern of your friends and relations, and (if you persisted) to risk being taken into institutional care.

Well, this article is something like a Government Health Warning: “READ ON AT YOUR PERIL! I offer no guarantee against the danger that—if you go along sincerely with the following, and actually carry out the simple and easy-to-do tests it is based on—you will be regarded as out of your mind. (Incidentally, were you ever in it?) You will, however, be fairly safe against that risk if you’re careful not to mention your conclusions to anyone. And altogether safe if you just read what I have to say—I mean take in the words and absolutely decline to do the experiments they describe, only in that case the words will be virtually meaningless to you—or else (what amounts to the same thing) will consist of tritely pious and vaguely uplifting sentiments of no real value whatever—and you will be wasting your time. You have been warned.

Why should you bother to look into this question with me, the question of your humanness? Here are three good reasons:

(i) The first is that a highly regarded (though relatively small) company of men and women have, throughout the past three thousand years or so, announced that really and truly they weren’t men and women at all. For example take Ramana Maharashi’s uncompromising assertion that “I AM” is natural, whereas “I am a man” is not. Or this rather charming little story from the Pali Canon:

The Brahmin Drona, seeing the Buddha sitting at the foot of a tree, asked him,

“Are you a deva?”
The exalted one answered, “I am not.”

“Are you a gandhara?”
“I am not.”

“Are you a yaksha?”
“I am not.”

“Are you a man?”
“I am not a man.”

Or, as Jesus is reported saying in the apocryphal Acts of John, “What I now seem to be, that am I not... And so speak I, separating off the manhood.” One is reminded of Rumi’s “They saw the body and supposed he was a
man." And, in our own times, of Joel Gold­smith at his boldest: “No one who believes he is a man has even begun to suspect spiritual truth.”

Now if these pronouncements happen to be right, and you my reader are in sober fact neither a man nor a woman nor a child, why then you had better let this extraordinary news soak in and get thoroughly used to it. How futile it would be to carry on in the same old way—how impractical, how pathetic, how crawling—to continue living the lie that you are “only human after all.” Besides, what an adventure is here; to try out your non-human­ness! Can you think of a more enterprising, a more exhilarating and interesting and go­ahead undertaking?

(i) The second reason for looking long and hard into this question of your true identity with a wide-open mind, is that the masters’ message doesn’t stop with the news of what you are not—namely a human being—but goes on to the infinitely more staggering news of What you are. They say you are God. Yes: the One, the Alone, the Only Real. Here is how Ramana Maharshi puts it;

There is nothing apart from your Self. There are no others.

All know that the drop merges into the ocean, but few know that the ocean merges into the drop.

And here—taken at random from all over the world—are some more versions of the same message:

In appearance a man, in reality God.

Chuang-tzu

My ME is God. St. Catherine of Genoa

The stirring of religion is the feeling that my only true self in the end is God.

A.C. Bradley

No matter how often he thinks of God or goes to church, or how much he believes in religious ideas, if he, the whole man, is deaf to the question of existence, if he does not have an answer to it, he is marking time, and he lives and dies like one of the million things he produces. He thinks of God, instead of experiencing being God.

Erich Fromm

(ii) Our third and final reason for looking into this whole question—the most practical reason imaginable—is, again, spelled out for us by Ramana Maharshi: “One must realize one’s Self to open the store of unalloyed happiness.” Which is to say: till you are God—till you really have the sense of being no less than God, till it comes naturally to you to be Him—you don’t know what true bliss is. “When there is nothing except Yourself you are happy,” declares Maharshi, “That is the whole truth.”

These words are addressed to people who would like to be happy; or so they say. I repeat: or so they say.

And fine and true words they are, immensely valuable and encouraging if they inspire you to test for yourself their truth. Useless if they lull you into a mildly euphoric religious daydream in which you picture what it might be like to be God and therefore happy. Worse than useless if they draw attention to their author’s experience and away from yours—away from you to him, from what you are—namely no-man, no-woman, no-one but the One, the Alone—to what you are not. Minding your own business—that’s what the simple experiments we are coming to are about, and why they are so vital. I beseech you to let them settle without delay or doubt the question—the question it’s death not to ask—the question of whether you are or are not a human being, are or are not God.

First you must have a true-to-life idea of what human beings are like. Then you are ready to go on and see whether you are like that.

So let’s jot down a few obvious things about them—things which are neither controversial nor hidden, lacking which they are certainly not human.

(i) If we ignore their limbs (which are sometimes missing and not quite essential therefore) they are shaped like figures of 8, or out-
size cottage loaves, comprising an upper section containing specialized sense organs, and a bigger bottom section which lacks them. Alien substances are inserted in the top section, and discharged from the bottom section as waste.

(ii) Their height varies between around one foot and eight feet, and their bulk proportionately.

(iii) They are temporal — temporary things rarely lasting as long as a century.

(iv) They move around, whether by means of legs, or wheels, or wings, or whatever.

What you now have to do, to find out if you really are a human being, is to stop going by what people say you are (they are too far off, in no position to say) and instead to go by what you see you are (only you are near enough, have the inside story, are in a position to say). In particular, you need to see — in all childlike simplicity — whether the four characteristics we've listed above apply to you. If they do, you're human. If they don't, you aren't. It's as straightforward as that. As sharp and decisive as that.

This means you must pluck up the courage to be the sole authority on this supreme issue, instead of handing it over to a lot of unqualified outsiders. It means you must be honest and serious enough to start looking all over again, as if you had just happened, and take what you find. It means you must be fed up with your dreaminess and credulity and unquisitiveness, and desperate for the facts, determined not to live and die without ever asking yourself who's doing so, resolved not to miss out on this rare and Godsent opportunity to settle the question of your Godhood beyond all doubt.

"Alas," I fancy hear you replying, "an immensely difficult (if not impossible) assignment for me as I am now — unprepared, irresolute, sensual, bedevilled by worldly interests and worries."

Again and again Ramana Maharshi deplored this excuse-making and mock-modest posture, this chickening out, and insisted that (as we're about to find) it's easier to see what you are than anything else, and that you will never be better equipped or qualified to do so than you are right now. He would certainly have agreed with the Zen master who pointed out that, to realize your Buddha Nature, you don't have to "shun your wife (or husband) and gnaw the roots of vegetables." If you are one of Maharshi's devotees, show your devotion by proving him right: and you can do this by ceasing to pretend you can't see what he says is OBVIOUS.

In the four tests that follow, you are inspecting yourself for those four features we noted in human beings:

(i) Look at anyone's face in the room now. Or, if you are alone, at what you see in your mirror. Or, if you have no mirror handy, at this face: and see whether you have anything to match it where you are. Check that, on present evidence, you are just Space for it. That the given set-up is strikingly asymmetrical: face there to No-face here; two little eyes there to one immense "Eye" here; coloured and textured and opaque shapes there to nothing of the sort here — No-thing at all. That the top portion of your figure of 8 — of your cottage loaf — has been sliced off and put over there in that bread-bin you call your mirror. In plain language, that already in this investigation you are revealed as immeasurably different from any human you have ever, ever, ever seen.

(ii) You see how tall humans are. On present evidence, couldn't you be any height? Try
walking tall—as tall as you like, infinitely tall. With bulk to match.

(iii) Read off the time there by your watch. Now slowly bring it to your eye, observing how those numbers blur and vanish. Your watch is now telling you the time here where you are—zero o’clock, no time at all. And no wonder: as you can see, there’s nothing here, nothing to change, nothing to need or to record time. Where you are and What you are is timeless, eternal.

(iv) Stand up, start rotating on the spot, and see how (on the contrary) it’s the ceiling and the walls and the windows and doors that are going round—in your Stillness. Out in your car, see how it’s everything but you—the telegraph poles and trees and houses and hills—that’s on the move.

These four are only a small sample of the differences between what you appear to be and what you are, between what you’d been brought up to believe was your nature and what you can see is your Nature. It isn’t that your central and divine Reality is somewhat unlike your peripheral and human appearance, but that in all respects it is the opposite. Thus, instead of moving around, you are Stillness itself; and, instead of being two-eyed, your Real or Third Eye—your God’s eye—is single; and, instead of wearing a human face, you wear What Zen calls your Original Face, which is none other than the Face of God. And so on: you can continue exploring at your leisure the central Godhood you overlooked for so long, and never exhaust the ways in which it contrasts so startlingly with the humanhood you imported in its stead and replaced it with. Pretended you replaced it with. As if you could!

Wonders of wonders, what is most needed (namely, this clear vision of one’s Godhood) is most available—and most neglected, resisted, feared. Of all obvious sights it is the most brazenly obvious—and the most anxiously and hastily concealed beneath smokescreens of emotionalism, intellectual fog, religiosity. Of all messages it is the plainest—and the most meddled with and scrambled, as if it were top-secret wartime intelligence no-one must decipher. Of all simplicities this is the simplest—and whole libraries exist to prove the contrary.

I seem to hear you vigorously demurring here: “All this isn’t just simple: it’s simplistic, grossly oversimplified. Though I may look like God right here I certainly don’t feel like God right here, nor do I think like God. If my consciousness functioned at his exalted level I should never fail to find a parking space, or forget a name, or misjudge a friend’s character and intentions, and certainly I should never be sad or cross. What’s the use of looking like God if I can never begin to live up to my good looks?”

A very pertinent objection, the answer to which will occupy the rest of this article.

To start with, let’s glance at the tradition. According to the Prasna Upanishad, “the impersonal Self who sees, touches, hears, smells, tastes, thinks, discriminates, acts, is one with the personal self.” In fact the basic position of the Upanishads is that it’s only as and through the one Experiencer in all beings that we perceive and feel and think and experience at all. And the same doctrine—differently phrased of course—is to be found in many Buddhist and Sufi texts, as well as in the writings of great Christian mystics.

This is all very well, but how are we actually going to reconcile God’s (presumably) perfect experience with our (certainly) imperfect experience, and do it so thoroughly that in reality it’s revealed as all his? How shall we shake the settled conviction that while in principle we are divine in practice we are anything but divine? That while our nature is suprahuman our experience is all-too-human?

Here we must make a distinction—a very sharp distinction between the two modes or directions of our experience. Let’s call them (a) the View Out and (b) the View In:

(a) By the View Out I mean our ordinary attention to what’s going on, to the content of our experience—whether it’s a feeling, a
thought, a perception, a sensation, or any combination of these. For example, take your seeing now of those hands of yours and this page covered with words, plus the thoughts about your Godhood these words are stimulating, plus the feelings of hope and excitement (or incredulity, apprehension, embarrassment?) which the very idea of your Godhood excites in you. About this and all such experience three things can be said: it is continually changing; it is so partial and limited that it is at least as unreal or false as it is real or true; and it is as likely to be weighed down with sad feelings as buoyed up with joyful ones. In brief, this first kind is normal experience, the sort one would naturally expect of a fallible and faulty human being and emphatically not of an infallible and faultless Divine Being.

(b) The second mode or direction of our experience is abnormal in the sense that it is relatively rare. Centripetal instead of centrifugal, its arrow of attention is aimed inwards at the Attender instead of outwards at what's being attended to. To vary metaphors, it concentrates on the never-changing Container of one's experience instead of its ever-changing content; on the featureless Screen instead of the richly complex and colourful soap opera featuring on it. This is of course the Inseeing which (I trust) we practised in the first of these four articles. (The Mountain Path, January 1988) —Inseeing which isn't for remembering but for renewing by looking now at what this pointing finger is pointing at:

by actually seeing this Immense and Speckless Clarity which is its own Seer. Seeing What you are.

How very different this second kind of experience is from the first, this Inlook from that Outlook! No trouble in attributing this to God and not man, in perceiving this as none other than God's perfect viewing of his perfect Nature, as the divine Subject and the divine Object coming together seamlessly, as God enjoying God! In fact the attribution of this perfect Experience to oneself as a separate and less-than-perfect experiencer would amount to the pride which led to Lucifer's downfall.

The problem, then, is this still: how to reconcile God's perfection with his inclusion of all consciousness — his inclusion of our imperfect View Out into the world no less than our perfect View In to the world's Origin, his inclusion of our vision of the unreal there no less than our vision of the Real here.

And the solution is this: It's the View Out and not the Viewer Out that's "imperfect". The "defects" and the "unreality" all lie on the side of your seen world and not of yourself its Seer, on the side of your contents and not of yourself their Container, on the side of your soap-opera programme and not of yourself the immaculate Screen. And there's no help for it: these "shortcomings" are what make the world possible: a world clean of "soap", a "perfect" or "perfectly real" world is no world at all. And your View Out into God's world (such as it is) is as truly God's as Your View In to God is God's. Either way, every way, you are He.

"Phenomena are real when experienced as the Self and illusory when seen apart from the Self," said Maharshi. In other words, the soap opera becomes straight drama once you — alias God — become its author. See how the play strikes you then.

See whether you can continue sticking the labels "DEFECTIVE" or "DAMAGED GOODS" or "GRADE 2 QUALITY" on your world, on any item in it, in the same old careless way. See whether your goods aren't ultimately very good indeed, see just how the excellence of their Manufacturer rubs off onto them, just how each bears the trademark GOD and comes under his Divine Guarantee.
The Inherent Nature of Body

By Robert Powell

The cause of man's spiritual dis-ease — of our identification with the body — has been amply investigated and confirmed. But, it seems to me, we must go one step further and ask ourselves: What really is that body which serves as the underpinning for the "me"? Is that body fundamentally "real"? Once we have asked those questions, they must be seen to be inseparably connected with another, even more basic question: To whom is that body "real" or "unreal"? That question reaffirms the old dictum that without knowledge of the perceiver, the self, no problem can be approached in a meaningful and fruitful way. Without such self-knowledge, we are doomed to go round and round in circles, and all "answers" will only throw up further questions.

The body brings with it its own special and limited consciousness — seems to envelop it, as it were. This consciousness is totally dependent upon the product of the body's sensory functions. Commonly called the "mind," or the "ego-consciousness," it acts like a centre to protect and foster the body's interests. This activity then extends itself, creating a psychological dimension as the more general "body-mind" sphere of interest. In this is created not only a physical, but also a psychological separation, commonly experienced as the "me" versus the "you".

Now everything that is perceived, experienced, understood, interpreted and felt is done so by the body-mind entity, and by nothing else. This is logically, inescapably so. The content of man's consciousness is totally within the sphere of body-mind. Therefore, it is the body — or more accurately, "body-mind" — that is examining the reality of "body," and can such an enquiry have a meaningful answer? If the answer is "yes, the body is real," this signifies only that the body affirms its own reality — according to the yardsticks of reality that only the body possesses. Is it not like saying: "I exist, because I say so"? But a denial, "Body does not exist," would be equally meaningless once the entire process has been understood correctly as a kind of special pleading, or a circular argument. At this point, one may well ask: "Who is it that understands the process correctly?" It is still only body-mind, of course, but this finding spells the emasculation or silencing of body-mind. This leads to a transference from which emerges the fact that "body" is essentially the product of its own projection, the expression of its own limitation or basic ignorance. With (and from) that body comes the "world" of our experience, which springs likewise from that primordial self-projection. Thus the "me" and the "not-me" are swallowed up by the Void, and all our challenges, desires and fears are now seen as self-projected. But because this process of self-projection remains unrecognized for what it really is within this internal self-projection, mental tribulations appear and are experienced as very real. And mental suffering can only continue so long as identification with the self-projected entity persists. Our conclusion then is that identification with "body" is tantamount to identification with a mirage. Space and time come about only through and with "body". If we are not the body, we are the Void which has produced the various mirages but is in itself timeless and spaceless. The idea of the before, now, and after is as much part of the mirage — it spells the end of our linear thinking as the rock of our existence. Our real nature is Immortality, for what is called "death" is the disappearance of something that never had any real existence in the first place. What is does not even acknowledge "life" and "death" as mutual exclusives.

My true "I am" is birthless and deathless.

The point is driven home also by asking oneself the impossible question: "What would the world look like if we had six or more sense organs instead of the existing five?" It is impossible to think on the matter because our very thinking is determined and limited by body/mind and therefore ultimately amounts to a circular argument — like all discussions on the nature and reality of the "world." To describe, or think of, the "world" is ever in terms of the five senses only!
4.1 Instead of rejecting all non-Self as being inert and, like the eyes of a slaughtered goat, which remains vacant without noticing anything, to make idols of gods, worship and address them "O Perfection, and so on", or to look for God in places of pilgrimage—and not finding Him, to drop down in despair, roll on the floor and cry out for Him—all this is but an empty dance of demon-hosts.

4.2 For those who, tired of rituals, seek guidance, only the blessed being can be the Master who, advising them to be still, enables them to wander without care, joined to Bliss; whereas the adviser of even the slightest fresh activity will only, like Brahma and Yama, create and destroy new worlds and births for the seeker, (without leading him to Freedom).

4.3 An earnest devotee of the God of Fire who Himself digests the food in all beings, offering Him ginger-paste to cure Him of indigestion, or protecting the Fire-God against cold by heaping straw over Him, and sorrowing in great measure over his neglect of the god’s ailments—these actions can be compared to the cleansing of water with water; or burying one’s shadow in a hole, or trying to measure it with one’s foot!

4.11 Engaging in (endless) philosophic discussion is like the attempt to cover the sky with a canopy and the earth with mats instead of simply walking out with umbrella in hand and sandals on feet! Has anyone gained liberation by the endless learning of sastras?

4.13 God means to destroy your ego; this being so (if you seek freedom) this loss of ego should be your wish also. Now you do not know how to lose the ego; this is your ignorance. You false creature! Listen how the ego can be got rid of.

4.14 The disease being cured, the medicine also goes with it; the fuel finished, fire and smoke too go with it. So also all your actions are co-eval with your mind alone. How silly it is to try to gain the Supramental Reality by the mind and its associates! Like a smaller shadow merged into a wider one, you of little knowledge should confront in stillness that All-Knowledge in order to be merged in it.

4.16 Like an immature girl taking the marriage ceremony for its consummation, how curious that religious rites are taken for the Supreme Bliss itself! Enough!

5.5 Learned talk, poring over books, ochre robes, gold ear-rings, beads (or lingas), white teeth, yogic postures, and eye-balls rolled up as if in meditation on the Infinite, are all sports of illusion (maya) only.

5.11 So long as the ‘I-am-the-body’ idea persists, objects will not disappear. If forced to disappear by the control of the senses, a blank will result. Knowing the nature of bondage you should remain unaffected by objects like the sky by the flight of birds in it.

5.14 "On my word, my word, my word, Be still and do not talk of dual or non-dual," said Jnana Sambandha, the gracious, wonderful sage of Seerkazhi.

6.8 On becoming aware of the little knowledge—by which one sees the world, grasps it—

1 Translated from Tamil by Sri Swami Ramathananda Saraswati, compiler of Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi. (Continued from last issue).

2 The shadow moves with the measurer!
and gets involved in it — to remain detached and stand perfect as Pure Awareness, unaffec-
ted by thoughts of pleasures, their enjoyments, absorption in them, and subsequent mental
dwelling on them, and thoroughly convinced
of their being non-Self like Siva unaffected by
“Creation, stabilisation, reabsorption, conceal-
ment and dispensation of Grace" — is true
Renunciation.

6.10 On enquiry into its seeming reality
the false world is seen to be as unreal as a
snake in a mural painting. Even so, to practise
penance or perform rituals (in order to force
the world out of view), is like beating a drum to
scare away the post mistaken for a thief.

6.12 If the teaching “All this is false” appears
faultless to you and you know it to be true, why
go in search of farther knowledge ? The dense
darkness of ignorance having fled before the
sun of knowledge, why do you still doubt if this
is the true light?

7.3 Though full of praise for Pattinathar
or Bhadravigyar for having renounced their
all, fools will not give up their homes for fear of
their worldly possessions falling into others’
hands. Need we say that this is like a famished
dog with a dry bone in its mouth growling at a
King passing by lest he should covet its meal?

7.7 Desire brings only fleeting pleasure.
Is it not clear that to be desire-free is Bliss
Supreme? The knowledge that desire is the
deadly trap for man, like the nozzle of a honey-
can to a fly, will bring desirelessness, putting an
end to the five sense-pleasures.

7.14 Like Kama who lived without knowing
who he was, the hermit lives till the dawn of
discrimination; whereupon he quietly slips away
from his home, that being not-Self, like a koel
leaves the crow’s nest it was bred in. He will also
become the Master of others who seek to cut off
rebirths.

7.17 How does the forest differ from the
town to him who does not care to cover his
nakedness? How do neighbours or friends count
to him who is possessed? For the man who has
given up all relative knowledge, as if dropping
a cake too hot to be held, of what use is it to
revert to that state?

7.18 Can he to whom all differentiation is
lost, and to whom the world once full of misery,
now seems full of bliss, have a choice of place
or direction? For him the whole world is one
Siva-shrine. When hungry he begs food; for
shelter he has the shade of any tree; for thirst
there is the water in a tank or a stream. Free of
any talk about hunger, thirst or shelter, he
loves only solitude.

7.22 When the time has come for release
from the three kinds of karma now binding
him down to the body, the renunciant passes
his days with it like a frog caught by a snake or
an ant in a faggot burning at both ends. If for
him life in the body itself is like agony of death,
how will he look on the country that shelters it
or the people that seek to feed it (and thus
prolong the agony) ?

7.23 Having passed through several births
in other species and now being born as a human
being, capable of enquiring “Who am I?” and
realising the all-pervading ‘I - I’, this person
is like a hawk, egg-born and soaring up into
the sky, as compared to his past lives, like a
fish also egg-born but only moving in water.
Why then would he now turn back to the world?

7.25 Disgust with the body is the Disci-
pline; knowledge of the Self the Ritual; absence
of attachment is Union; negation of duality
the Integral Knowledge; the bliss which does
not rise and cease is the highest Bliss; the
state of effortless inherence is the Natural State.

8.4 Even when speech stops, the mind
does not stop working; when this stops, intui-
tion arises; from this the unbroken current of
Knowledge; then Bliss and finally the state
beyond Bliss. To the full-fledged sage there is
no unreality; for others there are different kinds
of experience.

8.8 As a woman who had long been child-
less and then got an only son, when meeting
him after long separation, weeps with joy — so
does the sage, realising the Self after innumera-
ble futile births.

8.9 There can be no rebirth for those
who sport in Self; walking with a soft pace,
forgetful of the body, unmindful of public odium,
frail in body, soft of voice, eating little, living
like one astride a wooden horse, dead to sense-
contacts, unattached in mind, and lost to duality.

(to be continued)
I had visited India before, but it was my first trip off the beaten track (1932-33). Staying with friends or in the luxurious hotels of Bombay and Calcutta, provided with modern conveniences, can give little indication of the conditions to be met with when leaving the highways. But this was an adventure in a cause, and nothing else mattered.

For some years it had been my wish to meet one of the real holy men of India, but so far it had been a vain one. I had, it is true, spoken with a few saintly men and also some fakirs of the mediumistic type, who were no doubt sincere enough in their way. But they were not what I was seeking. Then I was told of Sri Ramana Maharshi. And even from the little I heard, I knew I would travel anywhere and put up with any inconvenience in order to reach him.

The friend who gave me the welcome news of his existence offered to take me to him, and so we arrived at Tiruvannamalai late one afternoon. We put up at that none-too-clean accommodation, the dak bungalow or travellers' resthouse, which is all that is offered to the wayfarer who strays from the cities. No bedding is provided and there is seldom much furniture. But we left my servant to wrestle with such details and made our way to the bazaar and then to the Ashram in a cart drawn by a pony. The end of our drive found us somewhat battered but full of expectation.

Several of the people living in the Ashram, mostly devotees, came out to greet us. Amongst them was the younger brother of the Maharshi. He was dressed in the ochre robe denoting a sannyasin — one who has renounced the world. The others were not strictly monks in the western sense of the word, nor is an Ashram a monastery. It is a place where people wishing to study or follow a spiritual life may live. Often there are no orders or binding rules, and anyone can come and go as he pleases. Even women,
though not allowed to sleep on the premises, are welcomed.

Most of the people spoke English and greeted me in a most friendly manner. This was encouraging, for I was nervous, having been told that I was the first European woman so far to visit the Maharshi, as he is generally called. We were then taken in at once to see the Holy Man, and after making the Indian salutation, by holding the two palms together and raising them thus joined to the forehead, we laid our offerings on the ground before him. He was seated on a divan upon which was spread a large leopard skin. In front of the divan sandal-sticks were burning and a small brazier of coals, on which a special kind of incense was constantly being thrown.

About a dozen people were present in the hall. They spoke in low tones to one another, and a child prattled to his mother. But soon these sounds ceased and there was quiet. I sat cross-legged on the floor with the others, though a chair had been thoughtfully provided for me. For a while nothing happened. I tried to concentrate my mind. Suddenly I became conscious that the Maharshi’s eyes were fixed on me. They seemed literally like burning coals of fire piercing through me. They glittered in the dim light. Never before had I experienced anything so devastating — in that it was almost frightening. What I went through in that terrible half hour, by way of self-condemnation and scorn for the pettiness of my own life, would be difficult to describe. Not that he criticized, even in silence — of that he was incapable — but in the light of perfection all imperfections are revealed. To show how little responsible he was for my feelings, he told me later on that doubting, self-distrust and self-depreciation are some of the greatest hindrances to the realisation of Reality.

Presently the Maharshi got up and went for his evening walk. This was the signal for a general exodus, and we all trooped outside. One of the devotees offered to show us around the Ashram, a cluster of small white-washed buildings and huts, all spotlessly clean, and joined together in some cases by a covered passage-way. The Ashram was picturesquely situated at the foot of the famous holy mountain of Arunachala. It was on this mountain side that the Maharshi took up his abode more than thirty years ago, and ever since then it has been his home. He was, at the time of my visit, about fifty years old, but looked older, owing no doubt to the privations and austerities practised in early life.

It was dark when we returned for the evening meditation, and most of the people not living permanently in the Ashram had left. The hall was compellingly still. The eyes of the Holy One blazed no more. They were serene and inverted. All my troubles seemed smoothed out and difficulties melted away. Nothing that we of the world call important mattered. Time was forgotten. Life was one in its many aspects.

Late in the next afternoon my friend had to return to his home leaving me behind in charge of my elderly servant, a fatherly and trustworthy man, who saw to it that the water and milk were properly boiled, and that, on my return each night from the Ashram, a suitable meal was waiting for me at the travellers’ rest-house. From that time onwards, started a routine that was to be the same for many weeks. The rickety cart would turn up at six in the morning. It took me up to the Ashram and came back again at seven-thirty in the evening for the return journey. I soon acquired a technique of balance that promised safety, if not comfort, and the drive lost most of its original precariousness. However it was never peaceful owing to the small insect life inhabiting the straw on which I had to crouch!

Up at the Ashram I was given a small hut, seven feet by seven, for my use during the day. In it were a wooden plank, a chair and a table on which were a basin, a towel and soap. Not luxurious, but the thought and care with which it had been provided touched me more than I can say. However, being a European, my bones were not accustomed to wood unrelieved by a
mattress, and the midday rest taken after the noon meal was hardly one so far as I was concerned.

There were two chief meals, one at eleven-thirty in the morning and the other around eight in the evening. I ate with the others at the morning one. The food was more or less the same at both — rice, with an assortment of vegetables and milk curd. Everybody sat on the floor each in front of an individual strip of banana leaf.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ......
before a crowd. But early one morning I came into the hall and found him there unattended, emanating a wonderful stillness and peace. I asked quietly if I might talk with him. He nodded, smiling, and sent for someone to translate. On the arrival of a devotee I put my first question.

“What are the hindrances to the realization of the true Self?”

“Memory chiefly, habits of thought, accumulated tendencies.”

“How does one get rid of these hindrances?”

“Seek for the Self through meditation in this manner; trace every thought back to its origin, which is only the mind. Never allow thought to run on. If you do, it will be unending. Take it back to its starting place — the mind — again and again, and it and the mind will both die of inaction. The mind only exists by reason of thought. Stop that and there is no mind. As each doubt and depression arises, ask yourself, ‘Who is it that doubts? What is it that is depressed?’ Go back constantly to the question, ‘Who is the ‘I’? Where is it? Tear everything away until there is nothing but the Source of all, left. And then — live always in the present and only in it. There is no past or future, save in the mind.’”

“How can I help another with his or her problems and troubles?”

“What is this talk of another? There is only the one. Try and realize there is no ‘I’ no ‘he’ no ‘you’, only the One Self which is all. If you believe in the problem of another, you are believing in something outside the Self. You will help him better by realizing the oneness of everything than by any outward activity. The ego pertains to all the waking activities — the emotions and intellect. In deep sleep the body is still, and yet the Self is there. It is the distracting, active mind that tells the real Self.”

“What meditation will help me?”

“No meditation on any kind of object is helpful. You must learn to realize the subject and object as one. In meditating on an object, whether concrete or abstract, you are destroying the sense of oneness and creating duality. Meditate on what you are in Reality. Try to realize that the body is not you, the emotions are not you, the intellect is not you. When all these are still you will find —”.

“What?”

“You will discover. It is not for me to say what any individual experience will be. It will reveal itself. Hold to that.”

“But in trying to still the mind, I am likely to fall asleep.”

“It does not matter. Put yourself into the condition as in deep sleep. Then watch. Be asleep consciously, instead of unconsciously. There will be then only one consciousness.”

As the days passed, I saw more and more clearly that this was no theoretical philosophy. He himself lived it continuously and joyously. He was one of the few I have met who were not only happy but untroubled. Not that the sorrows of the world left him untouched — on the contrary — but he knew where they belonged and was not identified with them. To any sufferer his compassion was unlimited.

One day a man rushed in and flung himself face down before the Maharshi in a paroxism of weeping. Great sobs tore his body. The Maharshi said nothing, and no one else dared. I watched the Maharshi. His head was turned aside, and he seemed indifferent. After some little time, the violence of the man’s grief subsided and gradually he became quiet. Still no one spoke. Then at last, reverently, the man rose and made a deep salutation. The Maharshi turned his head and smiled upon him. I felt suddenly as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance into our midst.

Another time a poor creature who had been bitten by a snake was brought in and laid before the Holy Man. We all watched, fear gripping our hearts. Not so he, who sat looking into the far distance, while the victim writhed in pain. Calm and compassion was in that look and infinite peace. After what seemed like hours,
the twitching ceased and the man appeared to sleep. Then the one who had brought in the sufferer gently touched him. The man rose, prostrated himself before the Maharshi and went out cured.

But this was unusual. The Maharshi did not heal, in the accepted term of the word. Talking about it one day, I asked him if one could use spiritual power for healing. He remarked, “Yes, if you think it worthwhile,” but added that it required a great deal of force, which might be used more profitably in other directions.

I was told that the Maharshi had his finger on the pulse of the whole Ashram. For instance, when in the hall, he was supposed to know what was going on, even in the kitchen — and incidentally I was surprised to find that he himself assisted in the cutting up of vegetables for the daily meal. I was also told that he knew what was passing in the minds of people. Of this latter ability, I had a small personal experience.

It was in the afternoon and I was in the far corner of the hall reading the translation of a collection of aphorisms written in — to me — a flowery and artificial vein. I was bored and slightly irritated. Suddenly one of the devotees stood before me with another book in his hand — all the Ashram books were bound in brown paper and looked exactly alike — and said, “The Maharshi asks me to give you this. He thinks it will be more sympathetic to your type of mind.”

It was. How could the Maharshi know what I was reading? I was sitting far away, with many people in between us, blocking his line of vision. But I had previously noticed that many times he would answer a question in my mind whilst it was only in the process of being formulated. This happened too often to be a coincidence.

Every experience has to end. The last day of my visit to the Ashram arrived, and with it a great sadness filled my heart. I must go back to worries, problems, and irritations. Here all was peace. Here it was comparatively easy to live in the mood of the spirit. Is this why so many holy people retire to solitude, I wondered. Is it only in conditions such as these that the hidden verities emerge from under the covering of distractions? Still, all of us cannot follow such a life. Is the answer to live in the world if we must but not be of the world? There was nothing new in the idea, yet in this place I seemed to understand it for the first time.

That afternoon I had my farewell talk with the Maharshi. He was so gentle and human. We discussed the difficulties of everyday life and mundane problems. I asked again about the relation of the body to the ‘I’. He gave this smile:

“You came up from the bungalow this morning in a cart. Yet you do not say, ‘The cart came up’. You say ‘I came up’. You did not make the mistake of identifying yourself with the cart. In the same way, look upon your body as you do the cart. Treat it well, and it will be a good servant and instrument. But do not be deceived into thinking it is ‘I’.” He again stressed the necessity to see only the Self in everything. Act automatically, so to speak, and let ‘It’ do the work. “And It always will”, he added “Do not look for results. Do what is right in the given moment and leave it behind you.”

At the end of our talk, he quoted that wonderful saying from the Upanishad, “When, to the man who understands, the Self has become all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be, to him who has once beheld this unity?”

As I went to say goodbye in the evening the Ashram people clustered round in sympathy for my departure. I felt I had made and was leaving true friends. They were so simple and yet so genuine.

There was a service taking place in the adjoining Temple, and an old Sanskrit hymn was being chanted. Just as I stepped into the cart the Temple bell rang. This brought a smile of happiness on everyone’s face. Apparently, to hear a temple gong in the act of departure is a wonderful omen and brings peace.

As I left Tiruvannamalai in the dawn of the next morning, I caught a last glimpse of Arunachala, the Holy Mountain, on which lives one of the saints of earth. It was red and glowing in the rising sun. I wept.
Sri Ramana Maharshi has had disciples from among people of different religions, many of whom have been Christians. It may therefore be of interest to enquire how far it is possible for one who holds the traditional Christian faith to accept the doctrine of non-duality and the method of enquiry ‘Who am I’ which was that of the Maharshi. At first sight it might seem that traditional Christianity is very remote from Advaitic philosophy, but a deeper study may reveal that there is a profound affinity between the two doctrines. The great example of this deeper study is to be found in the life and teaching of Swami Abhishiktananda, the French monk, Father le Saux, who dedicated his life to the reconciliation of Advaita and Christian faith. The decisive moment came for him when in January 1949 he visited the Ashram at Tiruvannamalai, of which he wrote: “Even before my mind was able to recognise the fact, still less to express it, the invisible halo of this sage had been perceived by something deeper in me than words. In the sage of Arunachala I discerned the Unique Sage of the eternal India, the unbroken succession of her sages, her ascetics, her seers; it was as if the very soul of India penetrated to the very depths of my own soul and held mysterious communion with it. It was a call which pierced through everything, rent it in pieces and opened a mighty abyss”.

This was the experience which changed the life of this French monk and caused a constant struggle in his mind, which he recorded in his diary, as he tried to reconcile this overwhelming experience of non-duality with his Christian faith. The experience was further deepened for him when he spent six months in the Ashram of Swami Gnanananda at Tirukoilur, when he came to recognise in Swami Gnanananda a true Guru who transmitted to him the authentic Advaitic experience. To the end of his life he could never question the absolute Truth of this unique experience, yet to reconcile it with traditional Christian faith was a constant struggle. His book, translated into English with the title Sacchidananda, which he called a Christian approach to Advaitic experience, was his first serious attempt to reconcile the two doctrines, but later he went even beyond this. It is in the last book which he wrote called The Further Shore, consisting of essays on Sannyas and the Upanishads that he reached the deepest
level of understanding. The essays on Sannyasa were originally published in the Divine Life magazine of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh and have been deeply appreciated by many Hindus. This book in itself is a good test as to how far he succeeded in reconciling Advaita and Christian faith.

If we want to understand the relation of Christianity to the Advaitic experience, it is best to start from the distinction found in St. Paul between body (soma) soul (psycho) and spirit (pneuma). Unfortunately in later times the conception of the human being as a body-soul based on Aristotle came to be accepted, and this left a gap between the human and the divine. God was conceived as 'outside' and 'above' humanity and the sense of the divine immanence tended to be lost. But in the earlier tradition the Spirit is understood to be the place of meeting between the human and the divine. It is the point where the spirit of man encounters the Spirit of God. St. Paul distinguishes between the 'anthropos psychikos', the psychological man and the 'anthropos pneumatikos', the spiritual man, and the very purpose of life in his understanding is to pass from the psychological to the spiritual, from the human to the divine. On this understanding the human being is first of all a physical organism, a body, which is part of the physical organism of the universe. In the view of modern physics the whole universe is a 'field of energies', a 'complicated web of interdependent relationships', which is in a state of constant dynamic change. It is very close to the Buddhist view of 'dependent origination' and to the Hindu myth of the dance of Siva. This then is the physical base of humanity, the gross body or 'anna kosha', the 'mula prakriti'.

The soul or psyche in the Christian tradition corresponds to the subtle body of Hindu tradition. It includes not only the senses and appetites and emotions, but also the imagination, the reason and the will. In terms of the Katha Upanishad it includes the senses (indriyas), the mind (manas) and the intellect (buddhi) and also the ahankara, the 'I-maker'. It is important to recognise that the psyche is centred on the ego, the empirical self, the jivatman, and that this is its essential limitation. Everything therefore depends on being able to transcend the psyche, the individual, separated self, and to open oneself to the Spirit, the Atman. The Pneuma in the Christian tradition corresponds very closely with the Atman in the Hindu understanding. It is the point of human transcendence, the opening of the created on the uncreated, the passage to final liberation.

In this view the fall of man, as conceived in the Christian tradition, consists in the fall from the Pneuma into the psyche, from the Spirit into the soul, from the infinite and eternal into the finite and temporal. On the same principle redemption consists in the restoration of the soul to the life of the Spirit, of the human being to communion with God. By the Incarnation the divine enters again into the human. God becomes man and the soul is restored to life in the Spirit. This is accomplished through the resurrection. In the resurrection it is understood that the body and soul of Jesus are taken up into the life of the Spirit. The gross body died on the cross and was laid in the grave. It then passed into a subtle body and he appeared to his disciples in this subtle body, appearing and disappearing beyond the ordinary modes of space and time. Finally, at the ascension body and soul passed beyond space and time and entered finally into the infinite and eternal, so that the human became one with the divine.

If the Christian revelation is conceived in these terms, it is not difficult to see how it can be related to the Advaitic experience. The psychic or mental body, which is centred on the ego, the ahankara, is essentially dualistic. It conceives everything in terms of subject and object, of mind and matter, of space and time. But when we pass beyond the mental state, beyond the ego, we are set free from all dualities. In the Spirit all these dualities have been overcome. It is the experience of mystics in all traditions that in that final state there is no duality, whether it is Sankara in the Hindu tradition, or Nagarjuna in the Buddhist, or Ibn...
It is not that this world is unreal. On the contrary, 'all this world is Brahman', as the Upanishads affirm. But the way in which we perceive it is defective. When we pass from the 'soul' into the Spirit, from the mental to the supermental, then we shall see this world as it really is. We shall see all people and all things as they really are in the plenitude of truth and knowledge which is infinite — satyam, jnanam, anantam. This is the Christian understanding of the resurrection. It is the passage of body and soul into the infinite life of the Spirit. Jesus himself was able to say of that state, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me', and to pray for his disciples 'That they may be one, as thou, Father in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us'. This is Christian Advaita, a state of total oneness, in which distinctions are yet to be found. It is not a state of pure identity. Jesus does not say, 'I am the Father', but 'I am in the Father and the Father in me'. He can say, 'He who sees me sees the Father', and 'I and the Father are one'. Yet he cannot say, 'I am the Father'. There is pure Advaita and yet in that non-dual identity distinctions remain.

What are these distinctions? The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has described them as 'relations'. There is total oneness of being and yet in that being there are relations. It will be remembered that modern physics has described the universe as a 'complicated web of interdependent relationships'. The universe is an inter-dependent whole but it is made up of innumerable vibrations of energy which are only distinguished by their relationships. As is well-known, physicists no longer speak of 'particles' in the atom, but of waves of energy in different frequencies. So also human beings are not isolated individuals, as we imagine, but each person is part of a cosmic whole, stretching back in time to the beginning of creation. Each person is a centre of consciousness in the vast sphere of cosmic consciousness, which in the Sankhya philosophy is known as the Mahat. And all this world of energy and consciousness is taken up into the supreme Energy (Sakti) and the Supreme Consciousness (Siva). As we have seen, the cosmos can be compared to the dance of Siva, and it is of great interest that in the Greek Church the Trinity was known as a Perichoresis — a dance. At the heart of the universe there is this eternal dance, this communion of persons in the bliss of pure consciousness. And yet all this multiplicity of being is contained in the non-dual being and the non-dual consciousness of the supreme Godhead.

It is to some such conception of the universe and man that reflection on a Christian Advaita can lead us. Yet when all has been said, we have to admit that no words can express that ineffable Reality. St. Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic doctor of theology, declared that God himself, the absolute Reality, remains to human understanding 'omnino ignotus' — altogether unknown. In the end we have to say with the Upanishad he is 'neti, neti'. It is in silence that the ultimate Truth is made known, and all of us, Hindu or Christian, are being led into that silence, that stillness, that ultimate Mystery in which all is known. 'When that is known, all is known.'
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.

Devotee: What is the best way of killing the ego?

Bhagavan: To each person that way is the best which appears easiest or appeals most. All the ways are equally good, as they lead to the same goal, which is the merging of the ego in the Self. What the bhakta (devotee) calls surrender, the man who does vichara calls jnana. Both are trying only to take the ego back to the source from which it sprang and make it merge there.

D.: Cannot grace hasten such competence in a seeker?

B.: Leave it to God. Surrender unreservedly. One of two things must be done. Either surrender because you admit your inability and require a higher power to help you, or investigate the cause of misery by going to the source and merging into the Self. Either way you will be free from misery. God never forsakes one who has surrendered.

D.: Men of the world that we are, we have some kind of grief or another and do not know how to get over it. We pray to God and still are not satisfied. What can we do?

B.: Trust God.
D.: We surrender; but still there is no help.
B.: Yes. If you have surrendered, you must be able to abide by the will of God and not make a grievance of what may not please you. Things may turn out differently from the way they look apparently. Distress often leads men to faith in God.

D.: But we are worldly. There is the wife, there are the children, friends and relatives. We cannot ignore their existence and resign ourselves to divine will, without retaining some little of the personality of us.
B.: That means you have not surrendered as professed by you. You must only trust God. Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether He appears or vanishes. Await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden, you no longer have any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is bhakti.

D.: Surrender is impossible.
B.: Complete surrender is impossible in the beginning. Partial surrender is certainly possible for all. In course of time that will lead to complete surrender. Well, if surrender is impossible, what can be done? There is no peace of mind. You are helpless to bring it about. It can be done only by surrender.

D.: Is surrender, by itself, sufficient to reach the Self?
B.: It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's being. Do not delude yourself by imagining such a source to be some God outside you. Your source is within yourself. Give yourself up to it. That means that you should seek the source and merge in it.

D.: It is good to love God, is it not? Then why not follow the path of love?

The UPADESA SARAM (Essence of Instruction) occupies the pride of place among the works of Sri Ramana Maharshi. At the request of the poet Muruganar, the Maharshi composed the thirty verses (originally in Tamil) in the context of Siva imparting Upadesa to the Rishis who had lost sight of the goal and instead had got embroiled in the egoism of Sastric learning and ritual. In thirty pithy couplets composed by the Maharshi in Tamil, Sanskrit, Malayalam and Telugu, all that a serious sadhaka ever needs to know about the spiritual quest has been condensed. The verses deal with the preparation in gross and subtle levels, the enquiry incessantly stressed by the Maharshi. In this work, Sri Muruganar has cast Bhagavan in the role of Siva advising sincere, but misguided rishis on the true goal of spiritual practices and the method by which the natural state of self-abidance is restored.

The book under review is a welcome addition to the available commentaries on Upadesa Saram. The Sanskrit text, English Transliteration and word for word meaning are followed by commentary for each verse. The pace is sedate and the style very readable.

The preface makes an unfortunate reference in the end to "the cryptic style of the Maharshi, (because of which) there is sometimes a room for confusion, or even misunderstanding, about what is sought to be conveyed."

Really, this work of Ramana, (like the teaching itself), is nothing if not simple! Of course, ambiguities or misunderstandings can come about whenever one finds oneself having to unlearn everything that one accumulated formally. The aim of all Sastras is to generate in the seeker a faith, a conviction in the finality of one's truth as pure Existence-Awareness-Bliss. Beyond this is the domain of Omnipotence, at best. Barring these minor aberrations, the book is an important addition to Ramana Literature. It is also well got up.

According to Jayaraman: "Upadesa Saram, the essence of teachings, is the only work which has been rendered by Bhagavan Ramana Himself into Telugu, Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil (Upadesa Undiyar). It has been a source of inspiration for several generations since we find in it not only the core of traditional wisdom but also the Vichara Marga or Path of self-enquiry incessantly stressed by the Maharshi. In this work, Sri Muruganar has cast Bhagavan in the role of Siva advising sincere, but misguided rishis on the true goal of spiritual practices and the method by which the natural state of self-abidance is restored.

For this important work, the only commentary available till a couple of years ago was the excellent one in Sanskrit by Jagadeeswara Sastri. The commentary of Sri Narasimha Swami published by Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, followed almost immediately by the commentary published by Kanvashrama Trust. In 1986, there was a commentary on 'Upadesa Undiyar' also published by the Ramakrishna Trust.

The present work, commentary by Swami Tejomayananda is a welcome addition. The first requisite for a commentator on a sacred work is of course the reverence he has for the Sadguru whose teachings are being commented upon. One is happy to note abundance of this in this work. Even at the very outset the Swami says about Ramana that 'He is the very embodiment of divine virtues and this His life manifested fully. To this day, he inspires lakhs of people irrespective of caste, colour and nationality'. The deep reverence of the Swami for the Maharshi and His teachings is found throughout the book which closes with the prayer that the reader may be made to realise the Truth that the Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi reveals in. With this pre-requisite and with his deep understanding of scriptures, the Swami's commentary on the various verses is illuminating and of great use to the practitioners of the Ramana path. While talking about yoga, the Swami draws pointed attention to an easier and simple method of pranayama advised by Ramana, termed 'prana-vikshana', the mental observation of breath. He also points out how all sadhanas should really enable one to abide in the Heart. While explaining Him, when the Ramana that moves about is none other than the Self, the Self that is in all. What need has the Self to "learn" the Sastras, when the latter are said to be its faithful followers, atleast, and mere froth in Ocean of Omniscience, at best.

Barring these minor alternations, the book is an important addition to Ramana Literature. It is also well got up.

— J. Jayaraman.
1988

BOOK REVIEWS

RAMANANDA: A. R. NATARAJAN

THE MANDUKYA-KARIKA: By Swami Ghabhananda
Pub.: Sri Ramakrishna Math, P.O. Paramatmakara, Trichur

There are a few minor mistakes in the biography portion
and in the printing.

The book is a worthwhile addition to the growing
Ramana literature. This commentary is also available in
Hindi and Gujarati, published by the same Trust.

THE MANDUKYA-KARIKA: By Swami Ghabhananda

The succinct preface summarises the entire teaching of
Vedanta and of the Mandukya Upanisad. He says (p. xvi): "In
real religion, there is no room for philosophic discussions
or hair-splitting arguments, for real religion is Atmajnanah or
Self-realisation. It has nothing to do with all the argu­
ments and discussions about Atmajnanah for these are
mainly invented by scholars. Learn to live with Truth and
you will soon be one with it." As the Mundaka Upanisad
(3.1.5) tells us in unambiguous language, "awareness of
the indwelling self-effulgent Atman comes to the aspirant
after Truth by the constant practice of truthfulness (satya),
austerity (tapas), purity (brahmacharya), and right know­
ledge (samyagjnana)." The last-mentioned discipline,
namely, right knowledge, forms the subject matter of the
Mandukya Upanisad and of Sri Gaudapada's Karika on it.
Right knowledge consists in knowing one's identity
with the impersonal Brahman and hence feeling one's
identity or oneness with all beings. The learned author
affirms (p. 90): "The world is approaching an unprece­
dented crisis... the very existence of man is now at stake,
and there appears to be no better, saner, surer, and more
effective saving technique than Atmajnnana (Self-realiza­
tion) taught by Vedanta — the religion of man. Vedanta
appeals to the divinity or spiritual nature of man; it takes
manhood as one and stands for universal love, harmony,
and peace; it advocates renunciation and right knowledge
as the means to achieve the summit bonum. This is
what is offered by the Mandukiya Karika and Vedanta as
taught by Swami Vivekananda.

The traditional Sanskritists and professors of philosophy
may refresh themselves by going through this accurate
and authentic version of Mandukya-karika, which is at
once terse and thoughtful, and which, according to Swami
Aveekhananda, "combines scholarship with simplicity" (Fore­
word).

The valuable appendices containing extracts from Sri
Sankara, and Is Vedanta the Future Religion? by Swami
Vivekananda and the Concordance of parallel passages
from the ancient and modern scriptures, which often read
like luminous commentaries of the originals referred to,
enhance the value of the publication.

This excellently produced book is a book to all seekers
of Truth.

— R.V.

LORD OF THE DANCE: By Sasa Grant S.C.J., Pub:
Asian Trading Corporation, 150 Brigade Road, Ban­

This is a collection of papers submitted by the author
over the years under various auspices. Nevertheless there
is a continuity through it all due to the integrated vision of
the author. The subject matter is that of spirituality for a
ministry of Christian reincarnation in a Hindu milieu.
What is reassuring is that the accent is predominantly on
the need to acknowledge the treasures of Advatric experi­
ence, the gems of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma Yoga that
sparkle throughout in the records of the Hindu experi­
ence, which by their very nature of speaking of the in­
effable One, beyond all divisions, the kingdom within,
provide the keys to the essence of the Christian Gospel.
This movement had its beginnings through Fr. Le Saux
(Swami Abhishiktananda, author of Secret of Arunachala)
who came to Sri Ramana Maharshi in 1949 and found his
stay in Arunachala one of spiritual retreat and initiation
into that "Silence, the language through which India
reveals herself... and imparts her essential message,
the message of interiority, of that which is within".

Mr. Sasa Grant's is a refreshing perception that is will­
ing to consider any claim that Christ is the unique saviour,
as an intolerable narrowness, incompatible with the spirit
of Christ's own gospel. Such a view becomes all the more
necessary when one considers the impact of the Advatric
experience, serenely incarnate in a gentle and obviously
saintly man who has scarcely heard of Christ. It is surely
this, which attracts the Christian in an Indian milieu
"irresistibly towards the apparently forbidden fruits of an
experience which transcends all concepts, all external
forms and rituals, answering a secret craving of our inmost
being of which perhaps we have been conscious from our
earliest years but which we have never fully understood
or half-quiedy tried to ignore, as there seemed to be noth­ing
in our Christian experience to legitimize it".

The author acknowledges that in her own case the
search had to be carried on at the level of both heart
and the head. After a solid grounding in Theology and the
contemplative character in the lives of the Christian mys­
tics, and then at Oxford in ancient history and philosophy,
and after several years of teaching, "in 1956 I was sent to
India, a death and a rebirth for which I can never be
grateful enough, and so came in contact with Hindu
philosophical tradition". Her "encounter with Sankara-charya was like an awakening from sleep". She felt that Swami Abhishiktananda whose piercing insights into Advaita were "philosophical tradition". Her "encounter with Sankara-charya was like an awakening from sleep". She "met Swami Ashram community that helps the Church in evolving more Indian forms of worship, and more importantly, lives the Gospel in dialogue with Hindu brothers and sisters. Ms. Grant defines the scope for a theological cum social liberation of India. She makes suggestions for the formation of the Christian ministry in this country which include apart from the usual grounding in theology, church history, and Christian mystic traditions, a serious introduction to the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Vedic hymns, epics and Bhakti cult. She stresses the need for great integrity to grasp the Hindu meaning of a text before reflecting on its Christian resonances. The approach to these Scriptures should be "deeply prayerful and seen as a form of fidelity to the Spirit, as it indeed is"

Here and there in the heights of Advaitic resonances that permeate the book, there is hidden, an evangelistic fervour, a remnant likely to be misapplied by a mundane missionary. The book leads naturally to the question, "What happens to the uniqueness of Christ which we have always stressed so much in the past? And where is the need to share the Gospel?" The author is on sure ground when she says, "the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ lies simply and wholly in the fact that he is nothing but the Self-communication of God in and through our human nature"

As the author acknowledges, "We come upon passages in the Hindu scriptures or meet people who confidently make the same claim for other manifestations of the supreme Mystery among men: for example, the Svetasaivatra Upanishad — I know that great person shining like the Sun beyond darkness knowing whom a man passes beyond death; there is no other way to the abode". Considering all this then, the uniqueness attached to Christ the historical figure, gives way to the continued manifestation through name and form. In Buddha, Christ, Sankara, Ramakrishna, Ramana and others, of the Mystery beyond all name and form.

This is a book to be read and reread by both Hindus and Christians. This is the Ganges of Christian life meeting the Ocean of Hinduism.

— J. Jayaraman


"Perhaps I have been punished for my impatience. But I took the view that you are allowed to create your own destiny. I am not so young anymore, I have no fear of death. I know only too well that the thread of my life will not be spun out very much longer. But I felt obliged to try and hurry, for I am no longer of any use to anyone here where I am, while I still have a great deal to learn over there."

A few days later, "I now know the way of Shambala. I know how to get there. And there's something more I can say: three men from our continent have very recently succumbed in going there. Two of them, it is true, are Russians. Each one set out alone and reached Shambala on his own. The Dutchman even traveled as far as Colombo under his own name. I know all these things from my long trances, when I see Shambala in all its glory. When I see that green wonder amid the snow-covered mountains, those quaint houses, those ageless men who speak to each other so little, yet who understand each other's thoughts so well. If it were not for them, who are praying and deliberating for everyone else, our whole continent would have been convulsed by all the demonic forces which the world has unleashed since the Renaissance... If men but knew that it is only thanks to the spiritual forces emanating from Shambala that the tragic shifting of the earth's axis, so well known to geology, is again and again averted, a shifting which will cause our world to be submerged in the depths, and I know what new continent to emerge."

These extracts from the diary, purporting to belong to Dr. Hopberger who in his quest for Shambala, disappears from the earthscene in the course of his experiments to dematerialise himself, give some idea of the occult content of the two tales told in this book by the famous Romanian writer and mystic Dr. Mireza Elaide. Dr. Hopberger, it may be mentioned, is a real person who lived in the 19th century, though the narrative is woven round his inner life. In this story as well as in The Nights at Serampore, there is a skilful combination of the real and the occult by a master-hand who is doubtless familiar with the interplay between the physical and the supra-physical worlds. The European characters in the Nights are factual characters who were well-known in Calcutta region in between the two world wars. Eastern philosophy, spiritism, intrusions from the occult and the mystic spheres of life, cast a spell over the reader who begins to wonder whether his life as he lives it is real after all. The writer recounts his experience with Swami Shivananda who helps him with a mystical touch to relive the unbelievable nocturnal experience that had bewildered him and his companions, and realise the relativity of things. The Swami tells him: "In a world of appearances, in which no thing or no event has any permanence, any reality of its own — whatever is master of certain forces can do anything he wishes. Obviously, he doesn't create any thing real either, but only a play of appearances." [p. 59]
BOOK REVIEWS 189

A book that grips and insists on opening a new dimension to our experience.

— M.P. Pandit


Yogi T. Krishnamacharya on whose teaching the present work is based, as an institution by himself. An authentic proponent of the Patanjala Yoga and its underlying philosophy, comprehensive healer, energetic in his mission even in his nineties, he is an unquestioned authority who is respected and admired in this country and abroad. It is gratifying that the yoga institute founded by him continues its precious work at the hands of his worthy son, Sri Desikachar, who is widely known in the yoga circles in Europe. The volume before us is a handy introduction to the Yogasutras; it is precise and draws the reader to the main treatise.

As the author observes, Patanjali did not invent this yoga; he came to gather and systematise the various traditions floating at his time in a form that is at once challenging and seminal. He treats yoga in so far as it relates mainly to 'mental activity'. "Patanjali's unique definition of yoga is only his first contribution. He analyses the functioning of the mind and cites innumerable means within his grasp to bring order to a turbulent mind. Patanjali explains how such a mind makes a man extraordinary in his potential, that a fully liberalised mind is the goal. He does not insist on a belief in God nor does he include the Vedanta view of God. His God is not the Master of the world but the Teacher." (p. 15).

While on the sutra on Japa, the author notes: "Patanjali suggests that it is necessary to reflect constantly on the qualities of God. This might be aided by the repeated recitation of his name together with prayer and contemplation. But mechanical repetition and prayer is worthless, it must be accompanied by conscious thought and consideration, and by profound respect." (p. 15).

The volume contains the Sanskrit text, transliteration, meaning and brief comment. We look forward to a more detailed exposition of the Sutras to fulfill the expectations raised by this edition, so elegantly brought out.

— M.P. Pandit

STRUCTURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS By G. Feuerstein. Integral Publishing, P.O. Box No. 1030, Lower Lake, CA 95457 USA pp. 221 + 18, Price 14.95 Dollars.

"It was sober, on the one hand happening with crystal clarity in everyday life, which I perceived and to which I reacted ‘normally’, and on the other hand simultaneously being a transfiguration and irradiation of the indescribable, unearthly, transparent ‘Light’—no ecstasy, no emotion, but a spiritual clarity, quiet jubilation, a knowledge of invulnerability, a primal trust... Since Saranath! am as it were, inwardly, since then everything is in its proper place—and it continues to take effect and is in a way an irradiation that is always present and at hand."

Giving this first-hand account of the Satori experience of Jean Gebser, the Swiss philosopher mystic, the author of this study highlights the nature and structure of Consciousness as experienced and formulated by that remarkable thinker. He discusses the subject under the following headings: Nature of Consciousness; Archetypal structure of Consciousness; its magical structure; mental structure; Rational Consciousness; Emergent Consciousness; Spiritual import of Gebser's work; Play of consciousness structures in daily life; Gebser's Methodology.

Consciousness for Gebser is ' wakeful presence' not identical with intelligence or rational acuity. It is the ability to survey those interconnections which constitute us: it is a continuous act of integration and directing, there is more to consciousness than mere formal or reflective knowledge. Consciousness is not identical with the process of thinking, nor is it limited to awareness of the ego. Its illuminative function is definitely not restricted to spatialisation and temporalisation. It is not a mere counterpart to objects and appearances, rather, it is an observation onlooker and an active agent with regulatory functions. (P. 39).

Himself a seeker with a spiritual background, philosophical mind, the author, Dr. Feuerstein, gives in this work a satisfying account of the different connotations given in the West to the concept of Consciousness, examines to what extent they fail short of experience and the changes coming over them by way of enlargement and identification with spiritual experience. He underlines Gebser's understanding of the next phase of Consciousness as pointing to self-transcendence, individual participation in the collective effort. The deeper import of rebirth as a spiritual process in which the individual is given the opportunity to mature toward the integral consciousness is brought out with clarity. It is interesting to learn that the present mutation of consciousness is observable in the following developments:

"Haste is replaced by silence and the capacity for silence. Goal-oriented purposeful thought is replaced by uninstrumentalism. Pursuit of power is replaced by the genuine capacity for love. Quantitative idle motion is replaced by the qualitative spiritual process. Manipulation is replaced by the patient acceptance of the providential powers... Action is replaced by poise. The divided human being is replaced by the whole human being. The emptiness of the limited world is replaced by the open expanse of the open world." (P. 170).

A positive contribution to the ongoing studies of Consciousness.

— M.P. Pandit
Clockwise from bottom left:

1. Awtaha: Invocation of Sri Chakra into the Kulas. Smt. & Shri V. Subramanian initiating the Havan. Our Veda Pashasala boys look on.
2. Preparing for the Purnahuthi.
3. The climax of consecrating the offerings, which include food, ornaments and clothes, to the holy Havan.
The 38th Nirvana Celebrations included continuous Vedic chanting, Tamil Parayana, Puja to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam, poor feeding, release of a Kannada book, a devotional concert, and a film show on Bhagavan.

Archana and Puja in progress.

The well-decorated hall.

A rapt audience.

The poor seated in a serpentine line and fed.

Asram President Shri T.N. Venkataraman handing over the first copy of SRI RAMANA GITA in Kannada to Sri A.R. Narasimhan. Bemaing on it is S.S. Narayanarayana who bore the entire cost of printing.
OBITUARY:

Sri V.B.S. Mani Iyer, known to all as "Stores" Mani Iyer, this devoted servant of Bhagavan was his irrepressible, energetic self till the very end. He passed away quite suddenly but peacefully with Bhagavan's name on his lips on 8th March, 1988.

Sri Subramanian, ("Oomai") the Ashram Head Cook passed away suddenly on May 23 soon after serving the noon meals. With the concern of a solicitous mother, he fed all keenly and copiously. Though dumb, he spoke directly to one's heart. He is survived by his widow and aged mother.

BOOKS:

1. THE TEACHINGS OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI, edited by Arthur Osborne, is once again available in an attractive reprint.

2. SRI RAMANA GITA (including CHATVARIMSAT) translated into Kannada by Dr. M.E. Rangachar.

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GURU POORNIMA (Vyasa Puja)</td>
<td>Thursday 28.7.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRISHNA JAYANTHI (GOKULASHTAMI)</td>
<td>Saturday 3.9.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY OF BHAGAVAN'S ADVENT TO ARUNACHALA</td>
<td>Thursday 19.10.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VINAyAKA CHATHURTHI</td>
<td>Thursday 19.10.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVARATHRI FESTIVAL (Commences on)</td>
<td>Tuesday 15.10.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARASWATHI PUJA</td>
<td>Wednesday 20.10.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIJAYADASAMI</td>
<td>Thursday 20.10.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEPAVALI</td>
<td>Tuesday 8.11.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKANDASHASTHI</td>
<td>Tuesday 15.11.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTHIGAI FESTIVAL (Commences on)</td>
<td>Monday 14.11.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KARTHIGAI DEEPAM</td>
<td>Wednesday 23.11.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRI BHAGAVAN'S JAYANTHI</td>
<td>Sunday 25.12.1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PONGAL</td>
<td>Saturday 21.1.1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINNA SWAMICAL ARADHANA</td>
<td>Monday 6.3.1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAHA SIVARTRI</td>
<td>Friday 7.4.1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELUGU NEW YEAR DAY</td>
<td>Friday 14.4.1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMIL NEW YEAR DAY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>