



— The —
Mountain
— Path —

JAYANTHI ISSUE 1989

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

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

— *The Marital Garland of Letters, verse 1*

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- | | |
|-----|---|
| 59 | For Integral Growth -- Editorial |
| 92 | The Mountain of Peace by "SEIN" |
| 95 | The Silent Teacher
by His Holiness Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati |
| 97 | Caring Cures Care by Gaive Kapadia |
| 101 | Munagala Venkataramiah -- The Recorder
by A.R. Natarajan |
| 103 | Full Circle -- Pradakshina
by Shanta Rameshwar Rao |
| 106 | Old Ashramites and Devotees |
| 114 | Relativity and Ahimsa: The Invisible Connection
by T.S. Ananthu |
| 117 | Huatou Meditation Recorded by Bhiksu Hahmwol |
| 120 | Letter to a friend - 3 by a Czech Devotee |
| 123 | The Maharshi and the Royal Herd of Cattle
by Rosalind I. Christian |
| 126 | From Ashram Archives - 2 |
| 128 | Arunachala Puranam -- Vignettes by J.J. |
| 133 | The Self by David Frawley |
| 134 | Pilgrimage to Kanchi by V.G. |
| 141 | The Jagadguru: His Life by Prof. S. Ramaswami |
| 144 | Leaves from Devotees' Diaries |
| 146 | Can Nature Function without God? A talk by
Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati |
| 148 | The Jagadguru: A Tribute by V. Ganesan |
| 150 | Seven Steps from Heaven: A Grim Fairy Tale
by J. Jayaraman |
| 156 | Man is the Problem by V. Dwaraknath Reddy |
| 158 | Death of the Cosmos by Sudhakar K. Dikshit |
| 162 | Right Effort, Right Mindfulness,
Right Concentration by Ajahn Sumedho |
| 164 | The Swing of His Love by Gurdial Mallik |
| 165 | Freedom in Bondage by Dr. K. Subrahmanian |
| 167 | Arthur Osborne's Answers |
| 169 | Book Reviews |
| 177 | Ashram Bulletin |
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— Editor.

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The Mountain Path

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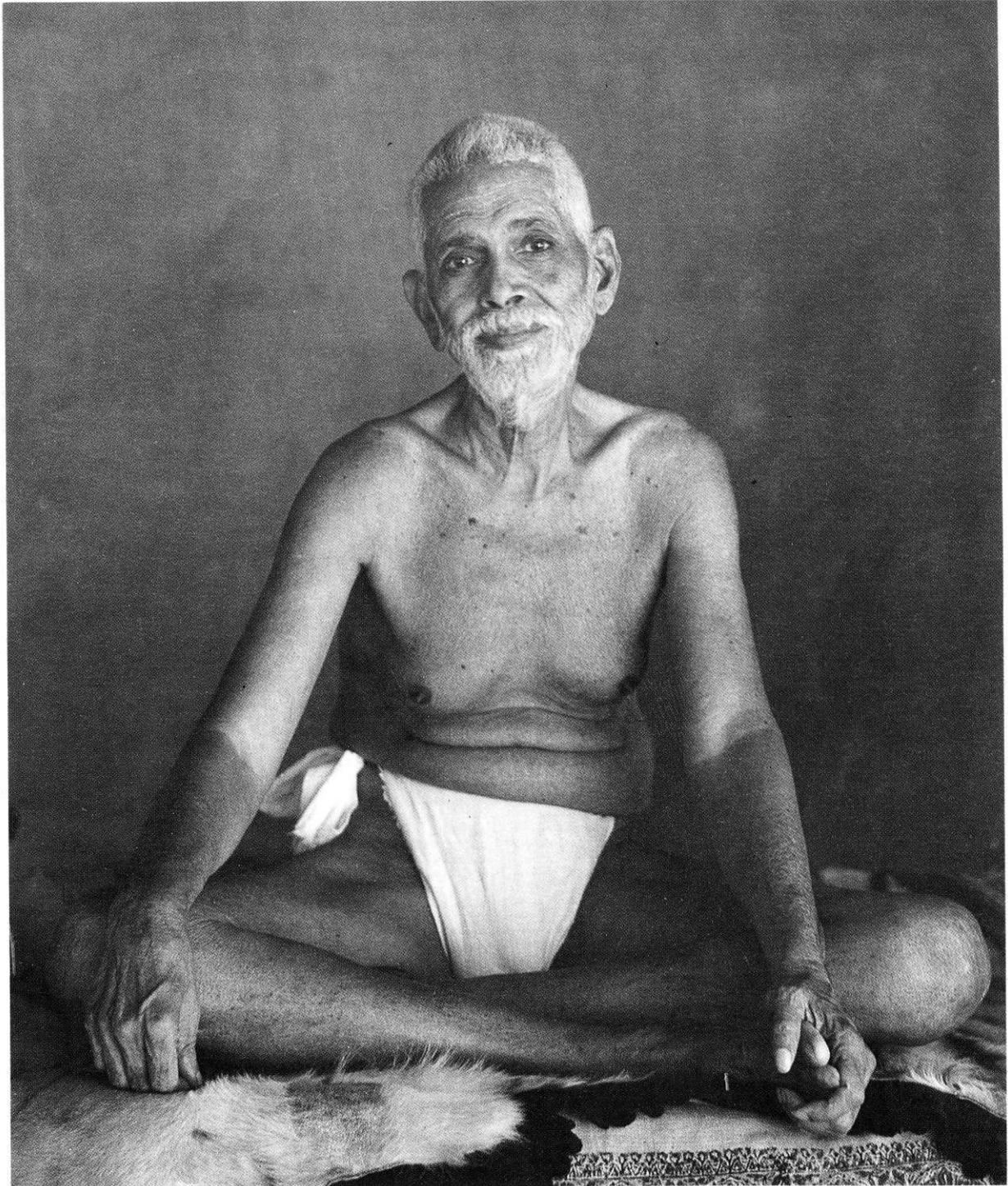
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



JAYANTHI ISSUE

DECEMBER 1989

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EDITORIAL

FOR INTEGRAL GROWTH

H EINRICH Zimmer, Gerald Howe, Mrs. Le Mesurier and other believers in "one world" have glimpsed a grand pattern in history. They think it is "God's Carpet" which He bids and lets His servants weave with the warp and woof of Time and Space. Our ancestors called this pattern *rta* which it is the duty and privilege of human beings to try to understand and carry out in actual living. Denial of or departure from this law or Truth divine is *anrita* and hence destined to failure and frustration. *Satya* in thought and word issuing as *sattva* in action, this alone prevails and triumphs. As *Arunachala Pancharatna* puts it, the Mountain (*Sat*), the Sun (*Chit*) and the Ocean (*ananda*) should govern one's heart and mind; one thus governed sees and serves in all beings this one Self and rejoices exultingly in egoless bliss. The transformation of the alienated or separate ego into the *jiva*, which is the embodied self playing its given roles in a living universe, need not be a painful process; it can indeed be an enjoyable exercise if one understands one's *swadharma* as an opportunity to "play God" by conforming to His *rta*, the universal dharma.

Krishna Chaitanya, in his magnificent pentalogy on "Freedom and Transcendence", dwells repeatedly on homonomy or obedience to the universal Law, which governs the Game of human life and which should control and direct our "autonomy", which is only the fancied freedom of the pseudo-self. The real

Self (which is none other than what people personify as God and endow with a thousand names and forms) is, in the words of Karen Horney, the psychologist, "that central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique to each which is the deep source of growth."

After a thorough study of modern Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Sociology and Spiritual Experience, which is all-inclusive and all-transcendent, Krishna Chaitanya concludes that mankind is now poised to "integrate body, mind and society through the love that relates the self to others *in action in the world.*"

This thesis that the effort of the aspirant, the spiritual athlete, should be for self-actualization rather than Self-realization, gains strong support from other contemporary thinkers like R.B. Gregg ("What is it all about and what am I?"), Robert Linssen ("Living Zen" which is all about J. Krishnamurti) and D.V. Gundappa ("Advaita; Faith and Practice").

It is not mere coincidence, but part of some divine design, that we in India have in our own age been blessed with messengers like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Jyoti Ramalingar and Sri Narayana Guru, Gandhiji, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana who seem to fulfil the ancient and repeated promise, "*Sambhavami yuge yuge*", and "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. You

will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

The common theme and basic note of the message from the Eternal Goodness that the Time Spirit brings to mankind to-day seems to be this: Freedom is a "Reality deep-rooted in the world." Freedom, disciplined, responsible freedom, is the essential nature of all creation, and this prevailed before the Fall of Man. The Fall of Man consisted precisely in exalting freedom above responsibility, in the alienation of the individual ego from the one Universal Being as Awareness. The lost Paradise can be regained only by the one erring species, Man, recognizing the dharma, the responsibility, that binds all human beings to one another and to Nature, the Tree of Life.

The lesson we have to learn is that the individual seems to be but a leaf, but is in essence and in fact the seed, the tree, and the fruit. The faith of *advaita*, holism, which we have to realize and actualize by *sadhana*, by meditation and action, is that "all life is holy, all selves are one Self, and God is not wholly other". It is this faith that Gandhi held and taught when he said that "*moksha*, the highest value and immediate aim of all mankind, should not be lowered for anyone or withheld from any one" and that "there can be no *moksha* for any one of us until *moksha* has been won for all of us".

It was not as if Sri Bhagavan conferred *moksha* on a cow, dog or peacock. He knew, but they did not know and had to be told, that they already enjoyed the bliss of mutual love. The Timeless comes into time as Kama, the disciplined love, that Sri Krishna claims to be in living beings.

Sri Bhagavan's straight and simple method for each one of us discovering, exercising and enjoying here and now this vital link between living beings, which is also the link between timeless *moksha* and timely dharma, is the quest, "Who am I?". This is nothing new, at any rate for us in India, and is indeed as old as Aruna Hill, the Sun and the Ocean. We in India have always known, however vaguely,

the naturalness and ultimate Reality of the supersensual and that the essence of our Being is *Chit* and *Ananda*, Awareness and Bliss, where there is no room for the ego or a separate self. Sri Bhagavan's special mission is to convince all and sundry that by self-enquiry and self-surrender any one of us can and should live securely, comfortably and happily in both worlds, the Timeless and time. As Muruganar says, the dichotomy of *immai* and *marumai*, (this world and the other world) is wholly false and merely conceptual; the experience of this essential oneness, the presence of the many in the One, of the seven colours in the one bright radiance, is the true Awareness-Bliss of Siva.

What Sri Bhagavan has silently destroyed is the old illusion that brought time into the Timeless, the didactic notion that dharma (righteousness, responsibility) was the means or path and that *moksha* (freedom, bliss, godhead) was the end or goal. *Sivamaadal* (becoming Siva) is not an achievement, but the discovery of our true Being, as Awareness and Bliss.

Sri Bhagavan prescribes two remedies for our alienation from both Real Being and normal, healthy becoming which is integral growth. Both Self-enquiry and self-surrender serve the same purpose; one, freely accepts and only interiorizes the traditional paths of karma, bhakti and yoga. The teaching is non-controversial or irenic, and therefore open to and useful for the followers of all creeds which declare that spirit or pure awareness matters more than the individual mind and its slavery to the senses.

The Tamil refrain *undipara* is a dynamic symbol drawn from the game called "navel flight", where the mother lifts again and again the child seated on her stomach, then stops her movement, and the child moves up of its own accord, while the mother sings,

Play, child, grow;
Try, bird, fly;
Know, be joy.

Sri Bhagavan's "game", *sadhana* or spiritual exercise, is nothing esoteric or elitist; it is the garden or common variety of popular *sanatana dharma* as traditionally understood, though not, alas, honestly or strenuously practised, for fear of losing that most precious, highly cherished jewel, the ego or "individuality"

Karma is not ritualistic action performed with an end in view, but all the work we do in the world. Dharma is what we practise in the normal living of our *vyavahara* or ordinary business or professional life. All life is holy, and all work should be worship of the One God.

There can be no spirituality without morality, though there well can be morality without spirituality. What spirituality does is to make morality natural, easy, pleasant and self-elevating.

The transcendental or vertical dimension of *moksha*, the reciprocal, complementary or horizontal dimension of dharma, and the blend of both in normal living are symbolized by the Holy Cross and the living Tree, call it 'Yggdrasil or *asvattha*. The inseparability of these two elements, the health and happiness of "working for the good of others", of becoming more and more egoless, is the basis of human dharma, the rootword which means "holding together"

Sri Bhagavan's *upadesa Undiyar* enables one to carry out through thought and action the "ontological probe" which reconciles and harmonizes all one's roles and identities, as an individual, as a member of a family, a circle, a society, a nation and of humanity. This "probing" gently eliminates the ego either by combustion or by expansion. It is for the Eternal Goodness to decide whether the devotee should serve It as Its eye or hand or finger or pencil. One way or another, like burning camphor or candle or like a salt doll lost in the ocean, one's body ceases to be this frame of mortal flesh and becomes the whole living universe.

Sri Bhagavan's main teaching, which is as verifiable as any scientific hypothesis, is that *moksha* or freedom is our real, essential and permanent nature, our spiritual Being, and that dharma, responsibility to our fellow-beings, the normal human behaviour in the world of time, space and relationship, is not so much a means of attaining some distant goal as an exhilarating means of discovering our real nature, already and for ever ours, as spiritual beings.

This teaching which wipes out the old orthodox distinction between *advaita* and *visishtadvaita*, this simple, feasible prescription for the integral growth of the *sisu* into Siva, is the quintessence of Sri Bhagavan's *Upadesa*.

Subrahmanya Bharati sings of this state of Being as becoming, in his poem "I" :

All birds that fly in the sky am I,
And all animals that roam the earth,
The shady forest trees and wind and water
And ocean too am I.
All stars that shine in the heavens am I
And also the vast expanse of empty space.
All worms in soil and fish in water am I ...
The falsehood of frail people too am I
And all the pangs of unendurable pain ...
The ruler of the phantom "I" am I.
The one light of Awareness shining
In everything that is.

Has not Sri Krishna revealed the self-same secret in the Gita :

In living beings I am Desire unopposed to
dharma ... and also world-destroying Time
am I

Does not I as Awareness comprehend and transcend all ecstasy, all agony that we as mortals know?

Vinoba daringly interprets *Vikarma* (in Gita IV, 17) as specific, mind-ful, conscious action which makes action egoless. *Vikarma* is not forbidden action, but *Visishta* action. Hence his famous formula :

karma + vikarma = akarma.

THE MOUNTAIN OF PEACE

By "SEIN"

ALL religions stand firmly on the two basic tenets of Power and Peace — *Shakti* and *Shanti*. Rituals, rigid customs, dogmas and esoteric injunctions come under the former, and pure mystical experience under the latter. The Power aspect of a religion can be called its 'horizontal' dimension and the Peace aspect its 'vertical' dimension. For example, in Islam, its horizontal dimension is represented by its quantitative expansion, its festivals, organisation, laws and regulations, while its beautiful offshoot, Sufi mysticism can be called its vertical dimension. Likewise, Hinduism has its Vedantic tradition, Buddhism has the Zen, and Christianity its Desert Fathers.

This Stillness, Being, Peace, is represented symbolically by the Mountain, the *achala tattva*, moveless. The ever-moving river and the fluid ocean represent the Power aspect, the horizontal dimension. Power is movement and dynamism; Peace is rock-like stillness and silence.

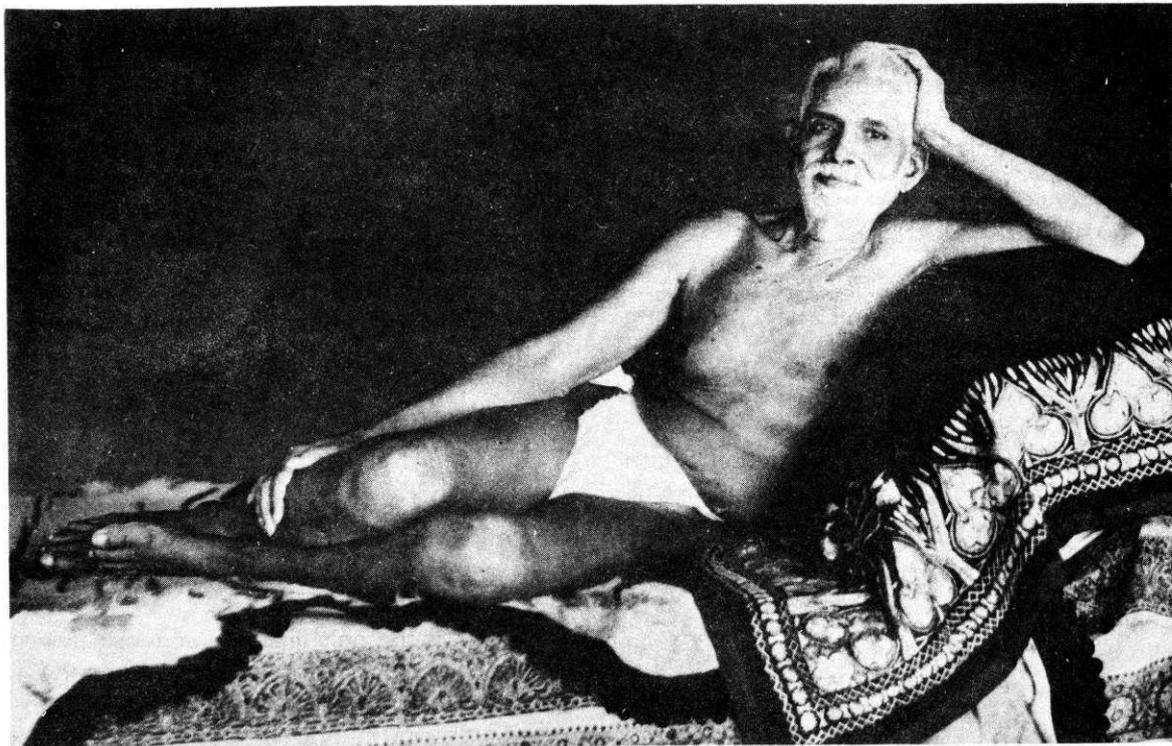
In the life and person of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, reverently hailed by the scholar and the common man alike as the 'Silent Sage of Arunachala', one sees the supreme incarnation of Peace Serene. Rooted to a place, still like a rock, silent like Guru Dakshinamurti, Sri Maharshi conveyed the timeless Teaching of the Self and transmitted His liberating Peace to those who flocked to

Him, in silence, and in speech which had the penetrating quality of silence. There emanated from Him a silent power, a peace beyond words, that stilled the minds of those who were in His presence. On a few occasions, He gave His devotees a direct experience of the blissful state of Reality in which He ever was, the true Eternal Being, which was only pure Awareness. Throughout the period of His 54 years' stay in Arunachala, the Holy Hill, Sri Ramana affirmed, more in silence than in words, that this silent flow of Peace was His teaching in its most direct and concentrated form. His verbal teachings were given out only for the benefit of those who were unable to understand the language of Silence.

How did Sri Ramana reach this state of Being Still, the *achala tattva*?

Himself gives the answer: 'ARUNACHALA'!

Sri Ramana reveals the secret in His *Arunachala Ashtakam*: "Look! There Arunachala stands as if an insentient Mountain. Yet, mysterious is the way it works, beyond all human understanding. From my unthinking childhood, Arunachala had shone as an immensity in my awareness. But even when I learnt from someone that it was Tiruvannamalai, I did not realise its real meaning. However, when it stilled my mind and drew me to itself and I came near, I saw



that it was stillness absolute!" This stillness absolute is the *achala tattva*.

He further extols the Holy Hill in His *Arunachala Padikam*: "Something now have I discovered! This soul-attracting Mountain-Magnet stills the movements of him that thinks of it but once, turns his face towards Itself, draws him in, makes him still like Itself, and feeds upon his soul thus ripened sweet. Understand this wonder, and be saved!"

What was the link between Arunachala and this lad from Madurai?

Margazhi (December-January) is a sacred month when early morning prayers are offered. *Ardra Darshan* day which falls in this month is sacred to devotees of Siva because it was on this day that Nataraja, King of Dance, blessed Patanjali, Vyagrapada and other sages of yore with His *darshan*. On one such *Ardra Darshan* day, 30th December, 1879, Sri

Ramana was born at Tiruchuzhi, near Madurai, to pious parents, Sundaram Iyer and Alagammal. From His childhood, Sri Ramana felt 'Arunachala' pulsating ceaselessly within His heart. The child did not know what that 'sound' meant. It was only much later, as a lad of 16, that He learnt that 'Arunachala' was the Holy Hill of Fire at Tiruvannamalai, where Siva had, as a huge column of Fire, overcome the prides of the Creator and Preserver of the World Illusion.

Pure Awareness, the Being beyond time and space, of which Arunachala is the visible symbol, took human form in Sri Ramana. Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, in his incomplete biography of Bhagavan Ramana, records that a blind old lady saw at the very moment of the child's birth a wondrous light in the delivery room! In His very first glimpse of Arunachala in 1896 at Arayaninallur, miles away from Tiruvannamalai, Sri Ramana saw it only as a pillar of Pure Light. And at the time of His *Mahanirvana*, a flaming fire-ball, like a meteor

travelled from the body of Sri Bhagavan, went up, sped northward towards the Holy Hill of Arunachala and vanished behind its peak — an event witnessed by thousands of people at the Ashram and in many other parts of India!

The Mountain of Peace it was that lived and moved among us as the Sage of Silence!

Does the Maharshi's greatness rest merely on such coincidences and the unthinking adulation of credulous devotees?

Of course, not!

The lad Venkataraman, confronting Death face to face, unaided and alone, overcame all sense of separateness and fear. As Markandeya was saved by Lord Siva from the grip of Yama, so was Ramana by one flash of Self-Knowledge. The two invocatory verses of *The Forty Verses on Reality* equate in clear terms the power of the Self or Siva in dealing a death-blow to Death itself. In Shakespeare's words, "Death being dead, there's no more dying then".

Thus, young Ramana has shown that one can pass from death to Immortality. The mortal in Ramana's human form being dead, His physical frame was now the dwelling place of Being-Awareness-Bliss.

Many lucky ones were thus 'trapped' in His Grace and swept away from death to Immortality. Duncan Greenlees says: "I know no other man whose mere presence has thus enabled me to make the personality drop down into the abyss of nothingness where it belongs. I have found no other human being who so emanates his peace that it can snatch away the ordinary man from his mind and plunge him deep in the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being". Dr.K. Subrahmanian of Hyderabad says: "As a boy and a young man, I had been in the presence of Maharshi several times. Every time I went, I felt an indescribable peace. All cravings and questions vanished in his presence... He was totally in peace and gave this Peace to all, unreservedly."

Silence was for Him the highest *upadesa*. Sri Ramana said: "Language is only a medium for communicating one's thoughts to another. It is called in only after thoughts arise. Other thoughts arise after the 'I'-thought arises and so the 'I'-thought is the root of all conversation. When one remains without thinking, one understands another by means of the universal language of silence."

"Trace the source and find the illusive nature of the 'I'-thought". This is the essence of His teaching.

This 'I'-thought rises when we wake up from sleep and sets when we go to sleep. If we watch carefully this 'I'-thought, such attention prevents the arising of other thoughts and the 'I'-thought is then led back to the Heart, the source from which it arises.

This 'I' is the only link we know of between the body and the Self, true Being. When the 'I' is traced or tracked down to its source, the mind-I disappears and in its place the eternal 'I'-I shines forth of itself. That is our true Self, says Ramana.

While translating into Tamil verse an Agama text in Sanskrit, the Maharshi wrote:

சித்தம் சிறித^{ஓசை}மும்சாரம்,
சித்தம் நிலைநிற்க, முக்தி.

"The least movement of the mind is *samsara*, and its standing still is *moksha*."

Though Sri Ramana is physically no more with us, His liberating words, His perfect life, and His invisible Presence continue to guide people. As Kunju Swami, one of the oldest devotees, says: "Bhagavan is the supreme example of the Self acting as the Guru. He lived as though He had no body. And, now too there is no body. But He is present for ever as the Guru, as the Self within and as Arunachala, Its outward, visible symbol."

Sri Ramana, the Mountain of Peace, the All-Pervading Presence, will for ever illumine the hearts of millions of people!

THE SILENT TEACHER

By His Holiness
Swami Swaroopanand Saraswati¹

The following is a synopsis of the speech made by the Revered Acharya at Ahmedabad on September 24, 1988, on the occasion of release of two Gujarati books on Bhagavan Sri Ramana organised by Sri Ramana Maharshi Kendra, Ahmedabad. —Ed.

I HAD the good fortune to have the *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was a divine being, the most majestic of persons in his uttermost simplicity, radiating a peace and benevolence beyond words. His mere presence answered questions and dispelled and doubts of those who went to him.

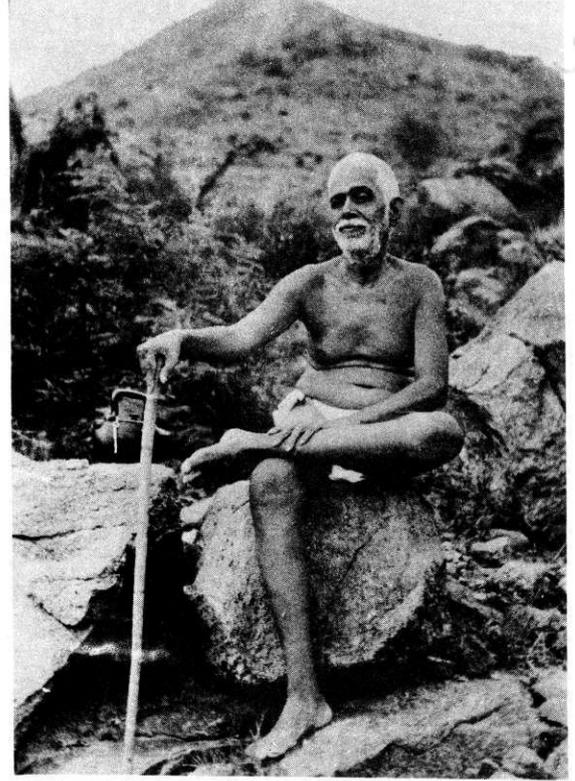
You know the famous legend about Bhagavan Dakshinamurti, who was Siva Himself in the form of a youthful guru sitting under a banyan tree and teaching spiritual wisdom in silence to the Sanatkumaras, the four Sanaka brothers. This incident is summarised in a beautiful *sloka*:

चित्र वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धाः शिष्याः गुरुर्युवा ।
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु चित्रसंशयाः ॥

“A miracle was wrought under the banyan tree
The disciples were old and the guru young.
The guru’s exposition was in silence
But the doubts of the disciples were dispelled.”

It was Bhagavan Siva as Dakshinamurti who found reincarnation in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi was silent and still like Arunachala. Not for him chatting, arguments, disputations, and discourses. Devotees and doubters alike who went to him had the strangest of experiences in their lives. A peace beyond words permeated their inner being and they found all their questions answered without

¹ Shankaracharyaji Maharaj of Dwarakapith and Jyotirmath.



having been asked and without the Maharshi uttering a word to them.

No wonder that Sri Ramana has been hailed as the re-embodiment of Bhagavan Dakshinamurti who is revered as the *Adiguru*, the First Preceptor.

Bhagavan Ramana expounded the Vedanta to seekers in a most beautiful, profound and simple way, through his silence, sparse speech and, above all, by his wonderful life. He says, find thyself by self-enquiry. If you want to realise *Brahman*, the Absolute, realise thy Self. The Self is the *Brahman*. The *Brahman* resides in the cave of your spiritual heart. Enter the heart.

Bhagavan Ramana’s style of teaching recalls to one’s mind the story of a seeker who approached a *Mahatma* and asked him, “Sir, have you seen God?” The *Mahatma* shot back a query, “Why do you ask this question?” The seeker said, “If you have had the *darshan* of the Lord, I would like to know how I can also see Him”. The *Mahatma* said, “All right, I shall arrange a *darshan* for you with God, but you should first tell me who you are so that I may introduce you properly to the Lord”. The seeker said, “My name is Devadatta Sharma”.



Sri Swami Swaroopanand Saraswathi

The Mahatma said, "That is only your name, But who are you?" The seeker replied, "I have told you, sir, I am Sharma, a *Brahmin*." With apparent impatience, the *Mahatma* said, "Come on Sir, that is just your caste, which least interests me. Who in fact are you?" The seeker said, "I am a professor in college" The *Mahatma* said, "That again is not you. It is only your profession. Tell me who are you?" The poor man, getting nervous, blurted out "I, I am, I am a man." The *Mahatma* laughed and said, "As if I don't know! I don't want your gender. Who are you? Speak up." The seeker said "I am a member of the human race." The *Mahatma* said, "That represents your genus. It applies to all human beings. I simply want to know the true identity of the person who wants to meet the Supreme Lord."

Thus the *Mahatma* countered everyone of the answers given by the seeker. In the end, the man realised that he knew so little about himself. The *Mahatma* finally gave him the *upadesa*: "How can a person who knows so little about himself know the supreme Lord? Therefore, first know thyself. When you know thyself, you do not need anybody's help to arrange a *darshan* with God!"

People who were in Sri Ramana's extraordinary Presence were able to sense that there is no God higher than a truly egoless Being. Sri Ramana's Presence, his look, his smile imparted *upadesa* to the seekers of

Truth. The Maharshi exhorted people to avoid futile discussions. He advised them to find within themselves, by dint of Self-enquiry, that which is ever natural everybody, the Self which, he said, was not different from the Guru and God.

The Self is beyond the five *koshas* or sheaths of *Anna*, *Prana*, *Mana*, *Vijnana* and *Ananda* (gross body, sense, mind, intellect, bliss). The ego or 'I' – thought originates in these five sheaths. When we use the word 'I', it refers either to the body, or to our senses or to this life, or the mind and the intellect behind it. We realise that each one of these by itself is not the real 'I'. What remains after we negate each one of these is the real 'I' or the Self which cannot be negated. Achieving Self-Realisation is not an activity to be engaged in outside oneself. The Self inheres in everything. Darkness needs light to dispel it, but Light needs no other light to reveal itself. The Self is Light itself. The Self is encrusted with several layers of the ego, which is *anatma*, non-Self. If the ego is dropped, then the Self is unveiled and shines on its own.

Sri Ramana Maharshi stands as the ever-shining symbol of Self-Realisation. He is a beacon of light to seekers of Truth. His eyes reflected his inner purity and shone with the lustre of the Self. The description of *Mahatma* in *Shiva Purana* fits Sri Ramana Maharshi perfectly:

यस्यानुभवपर्यन्तं दृश्यत् तत्त्वे प्रवर्तते ।
तद्दृष्टिगोचरात् सर्वे मुच्यन्ते सर्वपातकैः ॥

"The one who is immersed in the experience of Truth confers on those who come within the range of his vision deliverance from all sins by a single look of his."

Let us all remember Sri Ramana with great reverence, meditate on his teachings and enshrine him in our hearts. Let us go to Bhagavan Ramana and imbibe his teachings and let us hope that we will reach the goal of human life which is Self-Realisation.

CARING CURES CARE

By GAIVE KAPADIA

I N the material world, I had reached a high point in my life. There was really nothing more to achieve. I had everything that a person could desire — health, wealth, a faithful, charming and loving wife, children who were growing up beautifully. I was the editor of a prestigious newspaper, a job I had coveted and worked for all my life. It had been mine now for five years, but even writing, which for me was the ultimate in expression, now seemed senseless and automatic. Psychologically I had touched the nadir of my life. A terrible void, a nothingness was eating into me.

“Javed, you used to love having friends over, why do you put them off now? Is it something they have done or said?” How could I explain to my wife this terrible *ennui* which had set in? I tried but Rita just could not understand. “We have everything! How ungrateful can you get! Look around you, see how people are struggling and look at us — so well placed and happy! Look at our children, healthy and well brought up in every way! What more do you want out of life? Can't you quit pulling a perpetual long face?”

If only I knew! At first I ignored this void, this feeling that all was useless. Maybe it was just the senseless depression that sometimes descends on a person. It would just as suddenly lift. I involved myself in more amusements, in more work and more play and tried to intensify my social life in a desperate hope of regaining that spark, that *élan*, which once was the

motivation for and the fulfilment of all that I had achieved. But in my heart I knew that I was a desperate man clinging to straws. This disease had clutched me by the throat and would not let me go.

In the vain hope that leaving Bombay would help I thought of going to the Nilgiris all alone. The blue mountains had always fascinated me and maybe among sylvan surroundings on that cool altitude I would sort out my problems and be myself once again. Rita encouraged me. “Maybe you need to re-discover yourself — in all the rough and tumble of professional life in God-forsaken Bombay you could have lost touch with yourself!” Quite a psychologist! Well, I did go down South. The wonderfully curling, never-ending, shining ribbon of a road, the sweet, pungent fragrance of eucalyptus trees, the hazy, grey-blue mountains did take my mind off myself. I roamed wherever fancy led me, drinking in the colours, smells and rich beauty of the South. Yet slowly and inexorably. I knew, the beast was stalking me. Already its foul odour followed me and I knew it would soon overpower me. Desolation shrouded the beauty around me and everything seemed so futile and senseless.

An old lady who occupied the cottage next to mine proved to be a kind friend and an engaging conversationalist. One day, she asked me : “Have you visited the Sage of Arunachala?”

“Where is Arunachala, madam?” I asked.

"An old, historical town some hundred miles to the west of Madras."

"Would you recommend a visit to that place?", I said.

"Of course. Go and meet the Sage of Arunachala. It would be the experience of your life. I see that you have come here all alone, maybe to sort out some problems. Go and see him and see what a difference He makes to you!"

I told the kind old lady that I was not sure that a religious person could solve my problems. In any case, I was never a great one for religion. She said, "See Him and then come and tell me what happened."

I mumbled a non-committal reply and made myself scarce. Arunachala was quite far from where I was and would mean an overnight journey. In any case, I had to solve my own problem and this was my own fight with myself. No recluse could help me and I was not in a mood to listen to religious discourses and moral sermons.

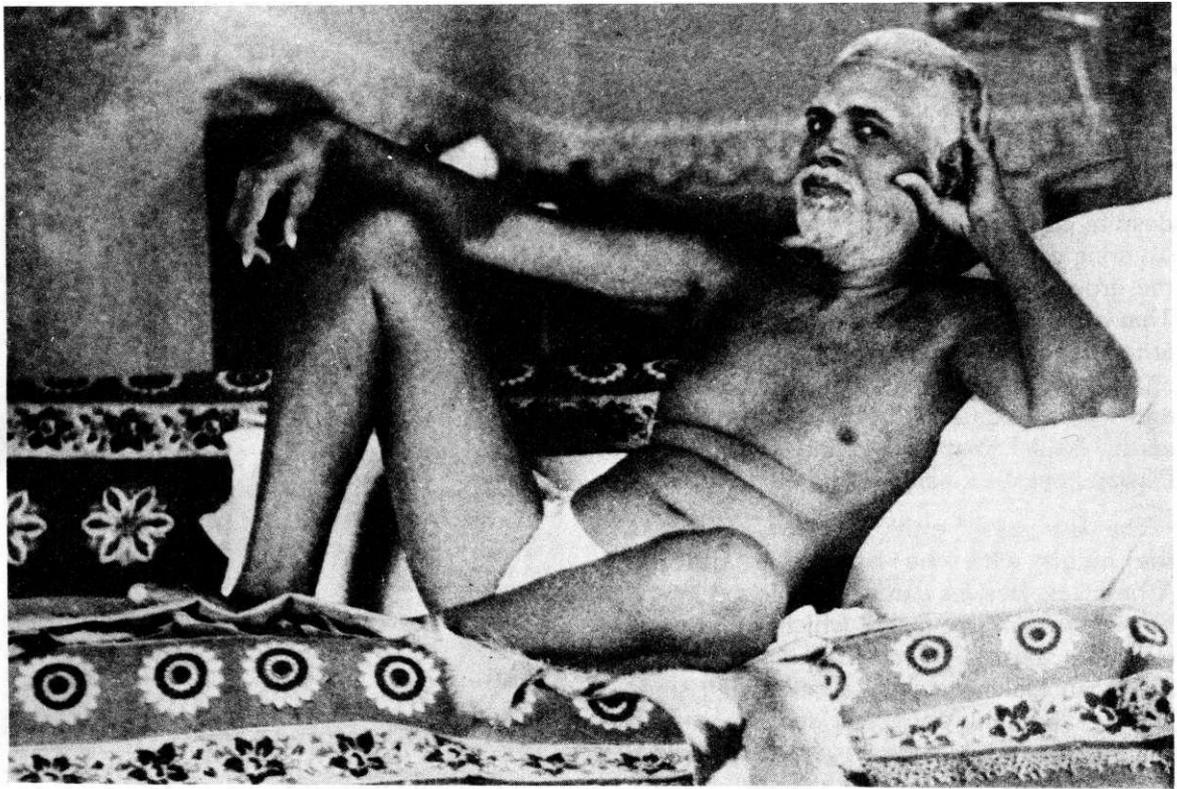
The night was long and troubled. I tossed and turned in my bed. "The Sage of Arunachala?" These words seemed to have a strange power over me and haunted me throughout the night. It was like an invisible presence in that small cottage. I had never heard that name before but somehow I felt that it had lain buried deep in my unconscious from my birth. I felt drawn to Arunachala and the Sage without as much as ever having seen a picture of them. I had to go to Arunachala and the Sage.

It would be more accurate to say that I was led there than to say I went there. And when I stood at the foothills of Arunachala hill gazing up, I had a *déjà vu* feeling. That majestic, all-embracing hill seemed so familiar. The path leading to the Ashram where the Sage lived seemed to beckon to me, welcoming me to come. And yet inside me something said: "Don't cling to straws! What do you expect, a

miracle? A godman who will chase away your blues by homilies or by some supernatural power? This is your own problem and you have to face it yourself. You are wasting your time." All the same I trudged on. Rather I was led on.

I reached the Ashram at noon. Everybody was resting after lunch. All was quiet and still. Someone in the garden, seeing me wandering around with a bewildered look, hastened to me and after some questions and answers, led me to a small cottage where, he said, I could spend the day. He took me to the dining hall and served me delicious food. He advised me to rest for a while and said I could have the *darshan* of 'Bhagavan' in the evening. I presumed that that was how the Sage of Arunachala was called. I was deeply touched by this simple act of hospitality. The trust and sweet naturalness of this encounter brought back to me the simple creed of caring.

I slept like a log, for the first time in months, perhaps due to fatigue from travel. When I awoke it was about 4 p.m. I had a wash and then turned my footsteps to the "Old Hall" as it was called. The door was open—I learnt later that it was kept open round the clock at the bidding of the Sage — and I went in. A few people were seated on the floor quietly, and to the left in a corner was the 'Bhagavan' sitting on a sofa. He sat still, his feet stretched and a far away, benign look in his large, dark, bright eyes. No body seemed to notice my entry into the room. I took my seat among those squatting on the floor. I looked at the Sage. There was a dazzling lustre in his eyes. Really, I have not seen such a pair of eyes in my life, neither before nor after I met him. I thought his gaze was on me but still there was that far away, though gracious, look in his eyes. I had a queer feeling that he was not looking at me but *through* me. I was slightly disturbed at first by those burning eyes but I must admit that a strange sense of peace and joy was coming upon me. I don't know if I sat hypnotised, transfixed or I was just blank but when I looked at my watch, it was 6 p.m. and some people



were quietly leaving the hall. I too got up and left the Old Hall. I felt greatly relaxed but at the same time I had an uneasy feeling that I was just dreaming. Had I come all the way just to see a still, silent profile? Will he ever talk? Will he ever give me a chance to tell him my problems? I was alternating between hope and despair, trust and distrust, sense of joy and uneasiness.

My life fell into a routine for the next few days. In the morning and evening I sat in the Old Hall gazing at the sphinx-like Sage, hoping for a word or a glance but none came. A few visitors did put some questions. He briefly answered some, to some he just smiled. As my problems were too personal, I felt shy to articulate them in public.

The Ashram meals were simple and delicious. It was so quiet everywhere in the Ashram. The monkeys and peacocks were enjoying themselves because they had plenty to eat and space to roam around without fear. I was told that the Sage treated birds and beasts like human beings and would not let even deadly snakes be harmed.

One morning I went up to Arunachala hill and saw the caves in which the Sage had lived for nearly a quarter century. The view of the town and the environs was magnificent from the hill but nothing was more majestic than the hill itself. I went round the hill another morning and I was beginning to love the hill. But more than anything else, I longed to be in the Old Hall gazing at the Sage. What a strange magnetic pull he had over me! I was beginning to thank in my mind that old lady I met in the Nilgiris for directing me to him.

I felt like a blotting paper, slowly absorbing something wonderful, which as yet I did not know or understand.

On the fifth day of my arrival, an inmate of the Ashram, someone, I felt, who was close to the Bhagavan, came up to me. "Sir, would you like to tend our garden while you are here? Our regular mali has gone to Kerala, and it would help if you could join us in caring for the garden while he is away. I sought Bhagavan's approval and he smiled and nodded in assent. I hope you are not in a hurry to go back to your place."

I couldn't believe what I heard. Had Bhagavan noticed me then? I felt a great joy, despite myself. I picked up the spade and watering can and soon I was pottering around the grounds, watering, weeding and clearing. That evening when I was in the Hall, I looked at the Sage gratefully hoping he would see me and accept my unspoken thanks. He smiled and I was ecstatic. "If there is heaven on earth," said I to myself in the words of the Persian poet, "it is here, it is here!"

The days passed swiftly, I continued to share the meals with the Bhagavan and the Ashramites. Besides gardening, I found myself helping in simpler tasks, which I had even forgotten existed. Once in a while I found Bhagavan looking at me, a bewitching smile playing about his face, his eyes deep with compassion, saying things which no words could. One thing was sure, that gaze was not of the earth. Like mist before the sun all my doubts and self-doubts were melting away and a deep feeling of peace was flowing into me. The large benevolence of the Ashram embraced me and in the new-found self-giving humility I prostrated myself, like the other Ashramites, before this amazing man, who without uttering a single word directly to me had changed me.

One evening as Bhagavan, seated as usual on his couch, answered questions, his eyes rested frequently on me and then once, looking directly at me, he said that freedom and happiness were accessible to everyone though each might choose his own path. He said that mental peace alone could bring one freedom and happiness and mental peace came from self-knowledge. Some people sought it through total surrender to God, others in meditation, and so on, and yet others — here he paused and seemed to be speaking to me alone — through disinterested service to others. Not necessarily great and grand gestures of charity, but simple tasks done maybe for the family, for a friend, an acquaintance, a colleague. Actions performed not for personal gratification but solely for

MANTRA

By M.P. Pandit

The *mantra* is not a poetical composition. It is not a product of the mind. It is not even a word or words of inspiration. *Mantra* is the potent word carrying with it a charge of a truth of high order. The truth that seeks to manifest clothes itself in the right sound value. It is a word that reveals itself to the being of the seer who is receptive, ready to receive it either on the heights of his being or at the core of his self.

others without hoping for any recompense. All paths, he said, lead to God but the most direct way is Self-enquiry. Peace, happiness and freedom are one's own true nature. Be yourself, not become something, he concluded.

Now I discovered the cause of my depression and sense of emptiness. My career, my talents, my likes and dislikes, my comforts, my everything had become all too important for me and I was working for my family, for my employer just like a machine without deeply caring for them. If I worked hard it was just because it gave me personal satisfaction. I had stopped caring all these years. During the past several days I observed how the Sage cared for everybody — devotees, visitors, workers, dogs, monkeys, cats, squirrels, peacocks, pigeons, reptiles, everything. It dawned on me that to know the Self, to be the Self one had to be totally selfless. Bhagavan was just that, all the time, effortlessly.

On my last night in Arunachala, He smiled at me, benevolently and knowingly. Without a question asked, without a word directly spoken to me, this marvellous man had shown me the simple, straight way to true happiness!

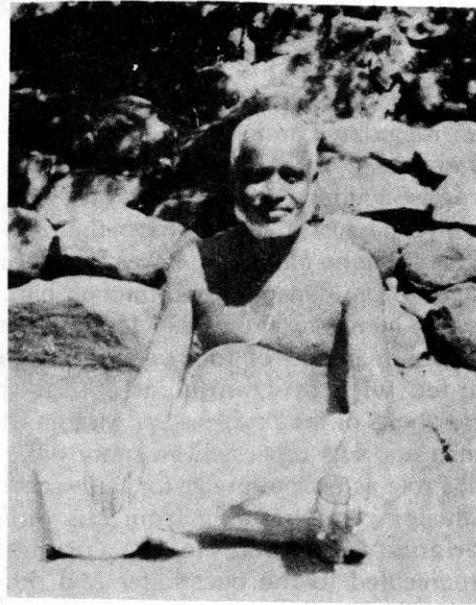
MUNAGALA VENKATARAMIAH— THE RECORDER

By A.R. Natarajan

THE *Talks* has been a source of perennial inspiration to generations of spiritual seekers all over the world for more than four decades now. Its sweetness was first savoured in 1936 when extracts from it were published under the title '*Maharshi's Gospel*'. Its extraordinary drawing power and pull places each of us, you, me and everyone of us, in a deep debt of gratitude to the 'recordist' of the *Talks*. The great ones prefer to remain anonymous and wish to hide their identity behind a pseudonym, be it 'M' (*Mahendranath Gupta*) to whom we owe the classic *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* or Munagala Venkataramiah, who just called himself 'Recorder'. But for Major Chadwick, the identity of the recordist might never have been known. It is a vast galaxy of 'chosen ones'. The Muni, Muruganar, Narasimha Swami, Paul Brunton, Munagala just to mention a few. Ramana used them as the pure channels of His power, as communicators of His Teachings.

Destiny's ways are strange. While Venkataramiah's elder brother, and three younger brothers went to *Veda Pathasala*, he alone received English education. Was he not to be cast in the role of interpreter and translator of Bhagavan? But having been born in a family steeped in Vedantic tradition, understanding of the various Advaitic works, which he studied later, was easy for him and was of great use in his future assignment.

After a brilliant academic career, he worked for several years as a lecturer in Chemistry and later as a head of a government factory at Madras. Life was proceeding on an even keel. Even so he had an urge to read the scriptures. He mastered the ten principal *Upanishads*, *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita* under



Munagala Venkataramiah

Sri Suri Babu Narayan of Bengal. The ground was being prepared. He was getting qualified for the monumental work to come.

He had the first *darshan* of Ramana in 1918, when He was at Skandashram and later in 1927 with his family. But it was only five years later, in 1932, that he was ready to surrender himself to the *Sadguru*. We have the parallel in the case of Ganapati Muni who had met Ramana round the turn of this century, but became His man, His disciple, only in 1907. The time has to ripen.

Suddenly without notice, in 1932, his job was terminated. He had a daughter to be married and young sons to be educated. He was left high and dry and penniless. Apparently fate had dealt its worst blow. In reality however, it was the greatest good

fortune which caused the event. One should say it was not only his rare good fortune but that of all seekers of truth too. For it is this 'tragedy' which brought him to Ramana in a mood of surrender. In his hour of calamity, in his period of 'great distress', for 'his own peace of mind' he became an inmate of the Ashram. The 'sweet, refreshing and enlightening' words of the Master acted as soothing balm to his troubled heart. To understand his Master's teachings better he began recording carefully His utterances and explanations. A new relationship began between Sadguru Ramana and this humble student. The world had to have the *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. It was Bhagavan's benediction on Munagala, and through him to the entire humanity. From May 1935 to April 1939, for a period of four years Munagala recorded with reverential attention the conversations of the devotees and visitors with Ramana and His replies. Even more difficult was his role as an interpreter for the words of his Master came steadily from His direct experience and had to be properly communicated to the questioner and other ardent seekers without any wrong overtones. Munagala was ideally suited for this work for he had thoroughly absorbed the teachings and Ramana's way of expounding it in the years in which he had been an Ashramite. As one goes through the book the whole electrifying atmosphere of the Old Hall is recreated. We once again sit at Ramana's feet, 'drinking in every word which falls from His lips'.

At about this time Grant Duff, who was closely related to the then Governor of Madras, became a staunch devotee of Ramana. When he learnt about the injustice perpetrated on Munagala by the Government he promptly took up his case for redressal and was sure to have succeeded in the attempt. Had it happened Munagala would have had to go back to his job in the government. The divine had other plans in store. The Governor concerned went on leave at this crucial juncture and the very person who was responsible for the 'wrongful termination' of

Munagala's job became the acting Governor. He promptly dismissed the petition filed on Munagala's behalf. This incident underscores the fact that we cannot know what is 'good' or 'bad'. The 'distress' of Munagala brought him to Ramana so that we may learn through him how to deal with sorrow, an inevitable companion of life. When worldly fortunes seemed to shine again, the strong mercy of Ramana protected Munagala. Much remained to be done and he had become Ramana's property.

Though Munagala painstakingly and wholeheartedly worked at his job as the official interpreter of Ramana's court, he had no attachment to the record maintained by him. When the Ashram management requested him to make over these notes to them he gladly did so. He knew that it belonged to all and that each one could turn to it for the purification of the mind as he himself had done.

Having been born in Sholavandan, in Madurai District he was completely at home in Tamil though his mother tongue was Telugu. This was a great asset not only in his years as the recordist but also for his task as translator of Tamil Vedantic works which he studied under the guidance of Ramana. Authentic English translations of *Tripura Rahasya*, *Arunachala Mahatmyam*, *Advaita Bodha Deepika*, *Kaivalya Navaneeta* followed. So self-effacing was he that he left no record of the beauty of his intimate and personal relationship with Ramana.

Munagala spent several years at Sri Ramanasramam, after Ramana's *Maha Nirvana*, feeling and communicating His Continuous Presence. In 1955 he took to the ochre robes but this was only an outward symbol of his true inner renunciation. Munagala was 'absorbed' in Ramana in 1963.

What a rich and full life! One wonders how his pen was so powerful. On reflection it is clear that it was not his pen. It was Ramana's mighty power and limitless grace that flowed through it in order that we may be redeemed.

FULL CIRCLE-PRADAKSHINA

By Shanta Rameshwar Rao

OVER the telephone came the disembodied voice. "Think of me please when you do the *Giri Pradakshina*."

"I will", I answered unhesitatingly, though a minute before I had not remembered that there was such a thing as a *Giri Pradakshina* and that I had desired deeply in my heart that I would do it. Why? I am not particularly religious by nature but rather sceptical of tradition. So why had I this desire?

Arunachala beckons — for a thousand reasons, in a thousand ways. Arunachala calls.

For me perhaps, the call had come once long, long ago when, as a child of seven I had wondered why inside my head, in the thing they called my mind, thoughts came and went, came and went, and there was always movement. And then again in the summer of 1939 when as a girl of fifteen who had just passed her Senior Cambridge I came with relatives from Vellore to see a holy man. I was too full of my success in my first public examination, too full of summer-holiday jokes and fun and gladness to bother about the holy man.

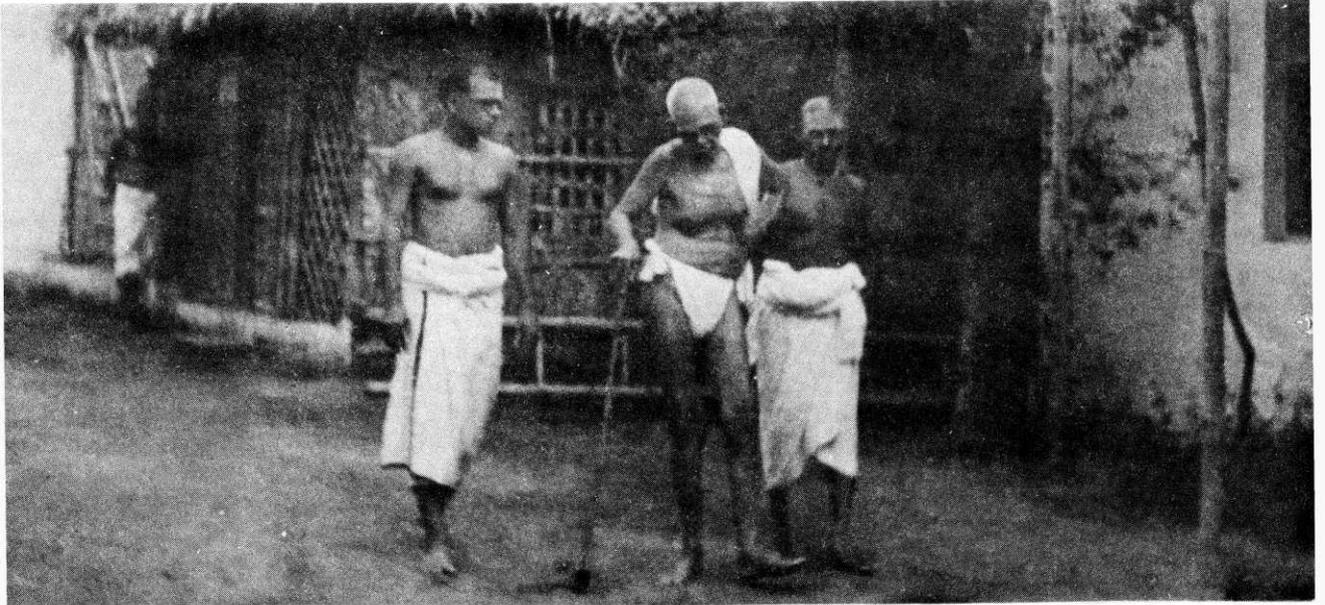
I remember we sang all the way in the car when we weren't talking, and when we arrived in Tiruvannamalai in the Ashram, I can remember only thinking: "Oh dear — why are they all prostrating before this old man sitting up there, saying nothing at all?" I had perhaps imagined someone rather like the pictures I had seen of Swami Vivekananda, ochre turban and all. Or perhaps a venerable figure rather

like Rabindranath Tagore in a beautiful long, white beard. Or someone like Jesus with a halo behind his nicely groomed head. "Why," I wondered, "did my uncle and mother prostrate themselves before this man?" It seemed like rank superstition. Then I turned my head and saw people sitting cross-legged in silence and there was among them a white foreigner, very tall, dressed in ochre and turning the prayer beads between thumb and forefinger. And I thought, "maybe there is something after all — may be — or, why would they all be there?"

But I was fifteen and at the threshold, as they say, of life. There was the excitement of things happening all around me. There was life to be lived in all its intensity. Through the tumult and noise of the world there came from time to time, like the clear notes of a bell, the sound of a name I had heard — Ramana, they said, Ramana, the Maharshi, the Sage of Arunachala. And because there was the new fervour of nationalism, there was a new pride in me: "I've seen him, I've seen him."

So the years passed full of events, full of experience, full of theories, books, reading. Then vaguely, very vaguely, I began to understand the meaning of J. Krishnamurti's words: "Time is sorrow," and pondered again as he continued, "not chronological time, Sir, but psychological time."

Slowly, painfully I began to see that to be chained to the past was to be chained indeed. But then how to break the chain? How to be free? Years passed and I was still asking



“How?” But Krishnamurti would not answer or, if he did, I could not listen. “How,” I asked, “how do I get rid of the violence within me?”

And there I stayed — like Janaka with one foot in the stirrup and the other dangling in the air.

And yet I knew. I was aware now that some time the answer would come — I had experienced a great darkness, and then suddenly it seemed as if the stars shone very, very brightly.

I found a book *I Am That* by Nisargadatta Maharaj and went off to see him. I prostrated before him, and when I looked up and he had greeted me, about the first question he asked was :

“Have you seen Ramana Maharshi?” And a bell rang inside me. I answered in the affirmative and there came into his whole demeanour something that seemed to me to be a great and wondrous joy, and somewhere within me I felt the blessedness of my state that once long ago I had seen him. And yet with all that, outward events continued to whirl around me and to whirl me around and brought me once again into a depression that was like a bog into which I was sinking. Then one day a

kind soul gave me Ramana's *Talks* and suggested I read the book. I was in my fifties now and ready to try anything.

But this time there was no mistaking that all my questions were being answered, all my problems were being solved, all my hurts were being healed — and without my needing to do a thing about it. I turned over page after page of the book and heard the wondrous voice of Him who is the very Self rise up from within me saying, “Take for instance the sculpted figure at the base of a *gopuram* which is made to appear as if it is bearing the burden of the tower on its shoulder...”

or “God never forsakes one who has surrendered.”

or “It is only through the Grace of God that one says the name of God.”

Simple — utterly, totally simple, the truth clear as daylight, and a truth to be lived from moment to moment.

It is strange — but all life changes at such a point in one's life. Somehow one knows that one has been washed with waters more sacred than even the Ganga waters. Never more is there the conflict of endless thoughts chasing

each other, asking how and why — never more the endless fears of *vasanas* dancing their devilish dances of anger, suspicion, pride, arrogance and so on. To realize Ramana is to find a happiness, a lightness of heart that all the treasures of this world cannot buy.

“Obviously,” I think now fifty odd years later, “He was there all the time within me, only I

hadn't looked or listened. So He stayed patiently protecting me from my own blindness as a mother protects a wilful and stupid child.”

So I've been brought back full circle now, back to Ramana exactly half a century later. But then here time is not measured by the calendar. It's not chronological time, Sir — but psychological time!

GOD-EXPERIENCE

I had longed for God. I had given long years of service to my pupils for I was a teacher of youth - and, yet, the Truth was not revealed to me. I sought my Teacher, J.Krishnamurti, and when we were alone on the hills with the snow-clad peaks of Kanchanjunga in front of us, I ventured to ask him to tell me of God. At first he was silent, and then, suddenly, he spoke to me. “Look there and tell me what you feel”. I gazed at the glory of the entire range of the eternal snowy mountains, and told him what I saw. He seemed disappointed, and I too knew that I had not understood, for, my heart and mind were burdened with many anxieties and much sorrow.

Years passed, and I still aspired and searched and once again I sought my Teacher, and asked him if he could not remove the dark cloud of ignorance from my heart and mind. We were walking on the Adyar bridge and he explained to me with infinite patience the nature of God-experience.

“You are perfectly well, are you not?”

“Yes”, I answered.

“Are you conscious of your body, of any portion of it?”

I answered: “No, when I am completely well, as I am, I am utterly unconscious of my body”.

“Perfect health”, he said, “is that state of the body which is accompanied by complete unconsciousness. Whenever there is an ache, whenever any organ does not function perfectly, then the mind becomes immediately aware of it”. “Likewise”, he said, “the state of perfection, of God-realisation, is accompanied spontaneously by the complete stillness of the mind!”

As he spoke, I experienced a sudden cessation of the activity of the mind. I became completely silent! The river was flowing under our feet, the sun was setting, and the sky was a gorgeous flame of colour. There was a cool breeze blowing from the sea. In the depth of an infinite silence, I felt an ecstasy in which there was no thought; my Teacher had answered my question!

-- By B. Sanjiva Rao, in his article on Swami Ramdas in the *Sannyas Silver Jubilee Souvenir of Swami Ramdas*, p.30.

106



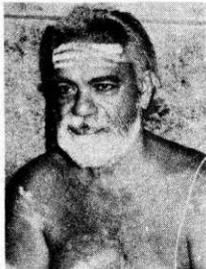
OLD ASHRAMITES AND DEVOTEES

In our last issue, we presented pen-portraits of some old Ashramites now living in and around the Ashram. Here is a second and last bunch of briefer pen-portraits of some more old-time Ashramites and devotees.

-Ed.

SRI K. KRISHNAMURTHY

K. Krishnamurthy, affectionately called Kittu or Kittu mama, the chief Priest of the Ashram Shrines, who celebrated his 60th birthday in 1987, is a product of the Ashram's *Veda Patasala*. Brawny, of medium height and wheat-complexioned, Kittu is the picture of calm majesty. Whether he is performing the *pujas*, *archanas*, *mahanyasa japam*, attending



Sri Kittu Mama

mama is totally relaxed, poised, elegant and dignified. His scholastic

to the Tamil correspondence of the Ashram for the President, scanning the newspapers, briefly chatting with his colleagues in dulcet undertone, or delivering his customary thanks - giving speech at the end of functions, Kittu

career ended at the primary level but he has an urbanity and a bearing which would do honour to a university don, knows Sanskrit and speaks Tamil, Telugu and English. If his Veda chanting is perfect, it is not only due to his innate flair but also thanks to Sri Bhagavan who would not let the slightest error in pronunciation or intonation go uncorrected. Kittu had the privilege of serving food to Bhagavan in His last days and the mindful manner in which he did it elicited the approval of everybody, including the doctors.

Kittu is a polished speaker and has a bubbling sense of humour. In a few short, sharp, staccato phrases, he could deftly distil the essence of any Ashramite's personality and could generate much mirth at nobody's expense and in impeccable taste. It is amazing how keenly he manages to observe everybody because he has neither the time nor the

temperament to lounge around nor for small talk. Those who look down on rituals and the priestly profession should observe Kittu mama and his colleagues in the Ashram and learn how wisely and beautifully one could live. Head of a large family with seven children, Kittu mama is flowering into a householder-ascetic, utterly devoted to his family, his noble work and to Sri Bhagavan who to him is grandfather, Master and God.

SRI N. SUBRAHMANYAM

N.SUBRAHMANYAM, Ashram Priest, is endearingly called Apichi, and thereby hangs a tale. When 14 years old Subrahmanyam joined the Ashram's *Veda Patasala* in 1942, the *Patasala* boys decided to give themselves a nick name each and young Subrahmanyam got the sweet name "Apichi", Tamil kidword for sweets, and it stuck. When the *Patasala* was in limbo in the difficult days following Sri



Sri Apichi

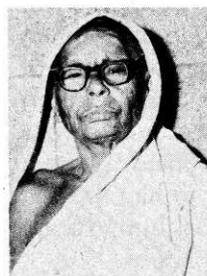
Bhagavan's *Mahasamadhi* in 1950, prudent Apichi did a course in teacher training and taught in elementary schools for a couple of years. In 1954, on the advice of Major Chadwick, Ashram Priest Kittu looked around to find a young man to help him in performing Sri Chakra Puja at the Matrubhootesvara Shrine and young Apichi who chanced to visit him landed the job. He has never looked back since, though he ever looks forward to the past when Sri Bhagavan, the timeless One, was in flesh and blood.

Apichi mama is a versatile person. A trained teacher, he is a priest, electrician, sanitary fittings expert, clock and watch mechanic, superb decorator of temple icons, and so on. All these talents are placed wholly at the service of the Ashram. During the nine evenings of *Navaratri*, the most talked about is the image of Yogambika, the Consort of Matrubhootesvaralinga. The costume wizard

that he is, Sri Apichi brings out the several faces and facets of the Cosmic Eve during those nine days. One realises then that "apparel often proclaims" the gods and goddesses too! Sri Apichi has carefully studied all of Sri Bhagavan's works in Tamil and has a clear and firm grasp of His teachings. He is also conversant with most of the Tamil verses composed by different devotees on Bhagavan. Like his colleague and neighbour, Sri Kittu, Sri Apichi, is devoted to his family, to the Ashram and Sri Bhagavan. They are a wonderful pair of which any religious institution would be proud as the Ashram doubtless is.

SMT. BRAHADAMBAL

BRAHADAMBAL, better known in the Ashram as Nomba Patti (granny), is more likely to be met by you at the western side of the *praakaara* (outer verandah) of the Matrubhootesvara Shrine than elsewhere. She would be busy cleaning and polishing the *puja* vessels to mirror-like shine. Her plain face would suddenly become pleasant and bright when she lifts her face and greets you with her customary friendly smile through the few teeth that are still left. If the face is the index of the mind, she is cold and even stern, but if the smile is the index of the heart, she is a very kind and joyous spirit, which is indeed the fact, if you know her. When she speaks, her voice has the clear, if not the resonant, quality of the temple bell which she rings during the *pujas*. It was as a lonely, sorrowing widow that Nomba saw Sri Bhagavan first in 1928 in the Old Hall. Closely related to Santamma, the kitchen chief during Bhagavan's time, she came hoping for mental comfort but when His lustrous gaze fell



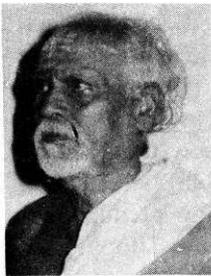
Smt. Brahadambal

on her, she experienced the peace that is beyond the mind. She had to go back after some time, but a few words from Him reassured her that she would find Him anywhere if only she cared to look inward. She kept coming to the Ashram once in a

way from her native Ramanathapuram and came to Tiruvannamalai for good in 1964. Brahadambal's selfless services to Sri Muruganar in his last years are well known and are gratefully remembered. But for her, God knows how many hundreds of his priceless verses on Sri Bhagavan would have been lost to the world. There is much to learn from this 82-year young lady — not only stories about Bhagavan and Muruganar, but the art of ageing gracefully, of being simple, natural, unautobiographical in conversation, grateful for and happy with the little things of life. Truly, Sri Bhagavan teaches through every one of His devotees.

SRI RAMANATHA SASTRI

RAMANATHA SASTRI, called Ramu Sastri, first saw Sri Bhagavan in 1928 when He had just moved into Old Hall. A student of the *Veda Patasala* in Tiruvannamalai town, He was privileged enough to participate in the *Veda Parayana* in Sri Bhagavan's Presence from its inaugural days. For a whole month he had the chance of doing it all alone in the Hall before Bhagavan. Sastriji remembers with devotion and gratitude at least three occasions when Sri Bhagavan effected cures, one of them miraculous, of ailments of his family members. His face lights up in joy as he recalls the days when Sri Bhagavan sat close to him



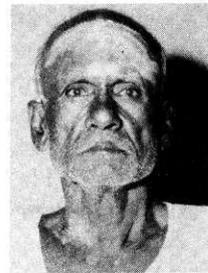
Sri Ramu Sastri

everyday near the Ashram's Old Post Office in the building which now houses the *Goshala*, during the two weeks he taught a devotee to recite the Vedas correctly. After serving the Kanchipuram Kamakoti Mutt for about twenty years, he returned to Tiruvannamalai. He comes daily to the Ashram to join other priests in the performance of *Koti Archana* at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine and Sri Chakra Puja at the Sri Matrubhootesvara Shrine. Sastri has a resourceful mind. When a North Indian sadhu once came to him to have a Sanskrit work explained by him, Ramu

Sastri, who knows neither English nor Hindi, after a few seconds of puzzlement in a flash of inspiration pressed into service his passive knowledge of Sanskrit, a language which the visiting sadhu understood, and the classes were a success! Sastriji has an excellent, amiable temperament. At 75, he stands erect, walks briskly and works with great gusto. He is one of the few in Ramana Nagar who had known both Sri Bhagavan and his great contemporary Sri Seshadri Swamikal. To know Ramu Sastriji is to realise that life begins at 75.

SRI PALANISWAMY CHETTIAR

PALANISWAMY CHETTIAR first saw Sri Bhagavan in 1948. A young man of 34 then, he came for a short stay hoping to find some peace for his conflict-ridden mind. He had to go back to his village in Coimbatore where his second wife and three children by two marriages waited for his return. Those were days of hectic activity in the Ashram, for the *Kumbhabhishekam* (consecration) of the Matrubhootesvara Shrine was not far off and everybody was spinning like a top. The eyes of that talent-scout, Sri Chinmaswamy, the *Sarvadhikari*, fell on Palaniswamy and soon he too was spinning — like a top, that is. Two months after he came, Chettiar felt a deep urge to go back to his dependants whom he had all but forgotten in his new-found peace.



Sri Chettiar

Of course, like everyone else, he was free to go where he wanted. But someone asked him a question which found an echo within him: Is your peace here or elsewhere? He stayed on and never rued it. Chettiar worked in many areas of the Ashram's activity. For several months, till Sri Bhagavan could no more walk to the Dining Hall, he laid leaf or plate for Him, spread the mat to sit on and kept a glass of water and then rang the lunch bell. At different times, he had been caretaker of Skandashram, storekeeper, garland-maker for the shrines and

a samadhi expert, having assisted not only in carrying Sri Bhagavan's body to the Samadhi pit and in the interment of devotees like Major Chadwick, Arthur Osborne, Muruganar, Natananandar, and Cohen, but having been very active on the Samadhi Day of devotees, doing *puja*, distributing *prasad*, etc. Sri Chettiar who stood by the Ashram through thick and thin, often, during the days of turmoil in the fifties, at personal risk, was wise in seeking Sri Bhagavan's Kingdom of Love for everything was added unto him and nothing taken away but his conflict - ridden mind. His children are reasonably well off and they and his second wife visit him once in a while. Gentle, unassuming, simple, ever keeping a low profile, Chettiar lives in his quiet little house at the foot of Arunachala near the Ashram and frequently comes to the Ashram.

SMT. AMMANI AMMAL

AMMANI AMMAL remembers neither her age nor the year in which she came to Sri Bhagavan but it was a couple of years after her marriage when it was on the rocks. Born to a



Smt. Ammani Ammal fairly well-to-do father who ran a cloth-store, she came away determined to find her salvation through Sri Bhagavan. When she stood before Him as He sat on the couch in the Old Hall and asked for *upadesam*, He said, "Oho! You want *upadesam*? Where is the big vessel to take it away in?" She took that as His *upadesam*. It was not a thing to be given or taken away.

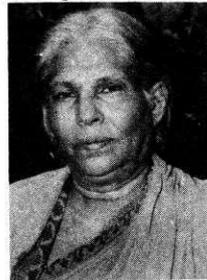
The young bird found a warm nest in Echammal's house for some ten years. Ammani did flower work at the Arunachaleswarar Temple and served the Ashram as well. She swept the Ashram floor, drew flour-designs (*Kolam*) on the floor, and years later cleaned the temple vessels and rang the temple bell during *pujas*. Once when

another lady started drawing flour-designs in front of the Old Hall, Sri Bhagavan told her: "Let that *amma* (lady) come and do that. She will feel bad if she missed it."

Ammani Ammal is now bed-ridden, waferthin and toothless, but there is an arresting quality and nobility in her clear-cut features and that shows in her speech as well. She remembers every little incident and every devotee of Bhagavan. Since some years food is sent to her hut from the Ashram, which she eats after offering it in worship to the picture of Sri Bhagavan near her saggy little cot. When asked if at this bedridden state she thinks of Bhagavan, she quips, "Do I have any choice? What else can I think of?" Ammani Ammal is one more proof that it is far easier to have Sri Bhagavan with the heart than with the head.

RAJAPALAYAM SMT. RAMANI AMMAL

Rajapalayam RAMANI AMMAL better known in and around the Ashram as Rajapalayam Ammal, was conquered before she came and saw Sri Bhagavan. She had been reading Vedantic books in Tamil from her fifteenth year. A granduncle had become a *sannyasi*. And when her parents passed away in 1944, in her eighteenth year, her spirit of detachment and her spiritual yearning deepened. It was then that a kinsman brought *Ramana Vijayam*, a biography of Sri Ramana in Tamil. When she opened the book and saw the photograph of Ramana, she was totally **overpowered**. That picture opened up before



Smt. Rajapalayam Ammal

young Ramani a path which she had no choice but to tread — the path leading to the Mount, the Maharshi and Mahayoga. There was no question of asking for her relatives' permission because hers was an affluent, highly conservative family of Rajus, descendants of the Rajputs of

Rajasthan, the womenfolk of whom rarely if ever stepped out of their homes. She waited for a few years and then came away one day with the help of an understanding brother. The moment she saw Ramana, bright like flame, all her anxieties vanished. Later Bhagavan told her that she had come to her own place. Indeed, it was homecoming for Rajapalayam Ammal and she is living happily ever after. She found here her father who, nearly half a century earlier, had left home in quest of His Father. She says that when one goes to heaven, one cannot but be happy and there is no return because *that* was really the return. Living in a charming little house with a nice portico, built with her brother's help, not far from Ashram, she comes regularly to the Ashram. She is held in esteem by everybody for her deep devotion to Bhagavan, her graciousness, her dignity, mindfullness in word and deed, dispassion and exquisite sense of poise. Of Sri Bhagavan she says: "Sri Bhagavan is beyond words. He is beyond Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. There have been great saints in the world, but here was a perfect *jnani* who lived with people as one of them, available to them all the time"

SMT. RAMANI AMMAL

RAMANI AMMAL, daughter of Sri Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer, the composer of the well-known *Saranagati* (Surrender) Song, is one of the few living devotees of Sri Bhagavan who, as children, were fondled by His Mother Alagammal and played with Him. Born in 1912, Ramani, like her siblings, had inherited from her parents love of classical music and deep devotion to Bhagavan. To little Ramani, Bhagavan was like her own uncle, a dear elderly uncle, who spoke little but was great fun to be with. Destiny took Ramani along a conjugal path which did not run too smooth and she had her share in the tragi-comic human drama. As she cut her wisdom teeth, she realised that the term 'Bhagavan' was not a mere honorific in His case, but here was indeed a truly worshipful one, a perfect Being.

She knew that His Grace was on her and she worked hard to be worthy of it. Her pure love for Sri Bhagavan flowed, among other channels, along the frets of the veena. For many years she taught "Ramana Music" and now, though she had made her bow to active music, the devotee never retires. She has known subtler music than heard melody: the inner audition of *dasavidhanaada* (ten kinds of



Smt. Ramani Ammal

sounds) but she rightly decided to go beyond that and to keep her ears pricked to the Silent Music of Egoless Awareness. Living very close to the Ashram, she regularly attends the *pujas* in the shrines and meditates in the Old Hall. Once in a

while, she goes round Arunachala with unhurried steps. She has imbibed Sri Bhagavan's teaching about the value of silence and seeing only the good in others. Graciously hospitable, mindful, alert and active, humble and courteous, Ramani Ammal is a person of very fine culture, the natural fruit of undivided devotion to Sri Bhagavan.

SRI K. NATESAN

K. NATESAN, a boyhood friend of the Ashram President, is one of the few people who could cut jokes with him at his expense and get paid in the same coin. A native of Tiruvannamalai, Natesan had his first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan at Skandashram as a boy of 6 or 7. In his youth, he often left home, without telling anybody, to visit holy places far and near. Later, he often quit jobs to go away to Sri Ramanasramam and be near Sri Bhagavan. Now, a resident here for many years, he often goes away visiting relatives and friends, for days and weeks, but wherever he goes the only subjects of his conversations will be Nayana (Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni) and Sri Bhagavan. If Bhagavan is his Master, Nayana is his hero. By Bhagavan's Grace, Sri K.K. Nambiar, a great devotee who was Chief

Engineer of the Madras Corporation in those days, took a liking for the mercurial but intelligent young man and gave him a job in the Corporation. That ended the rolling stone phase of Natesan's life and he retained the job till he retired in 1972, though he never missed a chance to come and see Bhagavan. After retirement, Sri Natesan had done his share of active *karma yoga* at the Ashram and he is now a gentle, passive elder-statesmanlike presence sharing memories of his hero and Master with interested people. He recites *slokas* well and when he gets a chance gives a full-throated recitation during the *pujas*. He has a lively mind, powerful memory and a great feel for the Sanskrit language and



Sri K. Natesan

literature and can regale listeners by his exposition of Nayana's masterly works. He has brought out a good Tamil translation of some of the *Sutra-granthas* (collection of aphorisms) like *Maha Vidya Suṭragrantha* of Nayana. Sri Natesan is a simple soul utterly free from malice and conceit and, if his moods are a little variable, his devotion to his hero and Master is constant.

SRI R. NARASIMHA IYER

R. NARASIMHA IYER, who hails from Tiruvannamalai, had his first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan in 1928 as a boy of 14 and he has been coming to the Ashram ever since then. Even when he was away from the town teaching in Government schools at several other towns in the District, he visited the Ashram regularly during the weekends. Sri



Sri Narasimha Iyer

Bhagavan was a great magnet, he says. He remembers grinding flour for idlis, taking turns with Bhagavan at the quern. He and his elder brother invariably

joined others in serving meals during Ashram functions like Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanti*. When in 1942, Sri Bhagavan's collar bone was fractured due to a fall while saving a squirrel from a chasing dog, Narasimha Iyer daily administered him herbal medicines for a few weeks, as instructed by the Ayurvedic doctor. Once Bhagavan told someone, "Ohy! (Sir), he is also a doctor!" Iyer says that those who were in the presence of Bhagavan were like bees drunk with honey. One could not see Him and be the same person, he adds, using telling metaphors, for so penetrating were His eyes like those of a tiger and lustrous like a hundred suns. They performed, as it were, a strange surgery on your mind. Narasimha Iyer was in charge of Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana* Room for several years till recently. He teaches English, Tamil and Arithmetic to the *Veda Patasala* pupils and regularly recites verses from Sri Muruganar's works during the *pujas* at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine. Endowed with a robust constitution, a winning smile, a booming voice and a healthy attitude to life, Narasimha Iyer is one of those whose devotion to Sri Bhagavan is matched by their loyalty to the Ashram.

SRI ORUGANTI RAMACHANDRIAH

Professor ORUGANTI RAMACHANDRIAH comes from a family of scholars, freedom fighters, lawyers and Ramana devotees. Except that he is not a lawyer, he is all these and more — an educationist, archaeologist, historian, translator, Telugu poet, composer and music lover. Professorgaru had his first *darshan* of Bhagavan in 1937 when he went to Sri Arunachalam for brideseeing, a trip which was to bring him conjugal felicity for nearly four decades and a spiritual bliss that never ends. "I was fortunate enough to have seen Sri Bhagavan in body", he says. He pours out his love for his Master in beautiful Telugu songs of good poetic quality, some of which are sung by him and others during the *pujas* and the *punarvasu bhajans*. Figures of speech like simile, metaphor, pun and pathetic fallacy flow from his pen, lending great charm to his

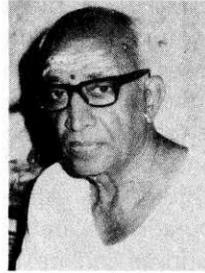
compositions, and his forte is *Vyaajastuti* (praise disguised as sarcasm). He is equally erudite in Telugu, Sanskrit and English, and he is delightful when he deigns to converse in Tamil. Ramachandriah who lives in Ramana Nagar, close to the Ashram, in his lovely



little bungalow, since 1972, has translated several Ramana books into Telugu. He wears his versatile accomplishments lightly and is a model of humility. At 75, he is actively creative — writing, translating, composing, singing — all on Sri Bhagavan. It is so good to have in our midst Professorgaru who is a gentleman to the tip of his fingers, an unfailing friend, endowed with a high sense of humour, who is wise, courteous and kind and above all one whose undivided love for Ramana is unshakable as Arunachala.

SRI GANAPATI RAMAN

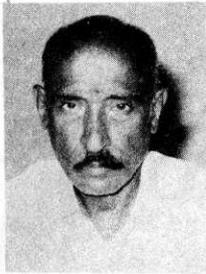
GANAPATI RAMAN saw Sri Bhagavan first in 1935. A boy of 12 then, he had accompanied his maternal grandfather who was a brother of Sri Bhagavan's Mother Alagammal, and his mother Alagammal, called Alagu. (In Mother Alagammal's family every first-born girl of sons has been for generations named Alagammal to perpetuate the memory of a noble ancestress). Ganapati Raman vividly remembers Sri Bhagavan looking at him and asking the elders, "Is he Alagu's son?" His mother who could neither walk nor talk for some years following a post-parturition complication, was, on the advice of Sri Bhagavan taken round Arunachala. With two persons supporting her, she covered the 13 kms in about 10 hours. After a few kms she was able to walk without too much difficulty and since that day gradually regained her locomotion. What was even more miraculous, as she neared the Panchamukhi, her lock-jaw was released for the first time in three years and she said "I am hungry". This miracle



inspired in young Ganapati Raman's heart a deep faith in Bhagavan and it is this faith which has sustained him till today and has helped him to keep his much admired cool in the face of tragic bereavements, physical crises and through other testing times. Seven years later, Ganapati Raman had yet another personal experience of Sri Bhagavan's Grace. His irrevocable decision to marry his cousin Alagu (his maternal uncle's daughter) was opposed by relatives and other well-wishers on astrological grounds, but when they placed the matter in Sri Bhagavan's hands for His final words, after a long silence He said "Is it not the practice in such closely consanguineous marriages not to consult horoscopes?" It was thus literally a marriage made in heaven and was marked by extraordinary mutual tenderness and understanding unmarred, as Sri Ganapati Raman says, by a single word or act of unkindness till Alagu's death at Arunachala in 1984. Ganapati Raman who came to Tiruvannamalai for *darshan* on almost every *Jayanti*, moved to Ramana Nagar in 1983 after retiring from Bank service. Gentle, good-humoured, kind-hearted Ganapati Raman, who rarely misses an evening trip to the town for circumambulation of the Arunachaleswara Temple, besides acting as the Ashram accountant, also oversees its store, to both of which tasks he brings irreproachable diligence and thoroughness.

SRI K. V. RAMANAN

K. V. RAMANAN was born with devotion to Sri Bhagavan in his genes. His great-grandfather and grandfather knew Ramana from His early days of Thiruchuzhi. His father Prof. N.R. Krishnamurti Iyer, who has a very deep understanding of Bhagavan's teachings, is one of the oldest devotees living today. Ramanan was brought to Sri Bhagavan as a babe-in-arms but, naturally, he deems his visit as a boy of four in 1938 as his first *darshan* of



Sri K. V. Ramanan Bhagavan. When the little boy from Madurai entered the Old Hall, he saw Bhagavan sitting on a tiger-skin placed on sofa. He was scared by the tiger-face and shrank back. Sri Bhagavan said, "Don't fear. It is not a live tiger. It is only a doll, come near." The next visit was a few years later when he recited a few Sanskrit verses before Bhagavan who nodded in appreciation saying "hmm, hmm". The next visit that he recalls was as a young man of 16 or so, along with two friends, when they sought His blessings for their future plans. Bhagavan smiled in approval. One had wanted to visit all temples of Madras Province and he became an engineer with the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, Tamil Nadu, and visits all temples as part of his work. The second had wanted to be an automobile engineer and he works for an automobile company. Ramanan wished that he should ever be close to Him. In spirit he has ever been close to Him right from his student days. He recited Bhagavan's works a full hour everyday even on the days of his examinations unruffled as his amused friends teased him. Now for some years, he is also physically very close to the Ashram and audits part of its accounts, having settled down in Tiruvannamalai leaving a lucrative job in North India. Bespectacled, moustachioed Ramanan looks professorial and uses words with precision, clarity, firmness and economy — certainly the style is the man — and it is a delight to talk to him. Professionally he is finicky and audits accounts with the eyes of an eagle and would demur to the smallest discrepancy. Bright, honest, deep, soft-spoken, amiable Ramanan is a worthy descendant of a line of great Ramana-bhaktas.

SMT. PANKAJAKSHI AMMAL

PANKAJAKSHI AMMAL'S middle name is service. Service rendered without the least

sense of doership. She is a living proof of Sri Bhagavan's words that the path of service is not really different from that of wisdom. Pankajammal, as she is referred to, serves Sri Bhagavan through serving *sadhus* in general and in particular His great, steadfast devotee Sri Kunju Swami since more than three decades. She is the nonagenarian Swami's eyes and ears. Having helped him to write his book "My Reminiscences" (*Yenadu Ninaiuvugal*), she is now helping him revise and enlarge it. She had her first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan in 1939 and, she says, that was the greatest moment of her life. When in 1949 she lost her husband barely a decade of the marriage, she was overpowered by grief, but when a few days after the tragedy she came to Tiruvannamalai and stood before Bhagavan, her grief vanished once and for all. Suffering makes



most people bitter but it made her better and better. Successive bereavements and physical crises leading to major operations strengthened her spirit of self-abnegation and devotion to Sri Bhagavan. She glows with a quiet, mellowed wisdom, is unruffled by the vicissitudes of life and exudes an aura of purity and strength which are vouched to one who passes the fire-test of devotion. A good composer of songs on Sri Bhagavan which she sings along with others during *Punarvasu bhajans* in the New Hall before Sri Bhagavan's statue, she also writes poems of quality. Soft-spoken, quietly dignified, kind and courteous to all, every inch of her pint-sized figure a *karma yogini*, a *sannyasini* with a family and without ochre robes, eloquent in her silent practice of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, Pankajammal who lives in Ramana Nagar since 1953, is one of the finest flowers in the garden of Ramana-bhakti.

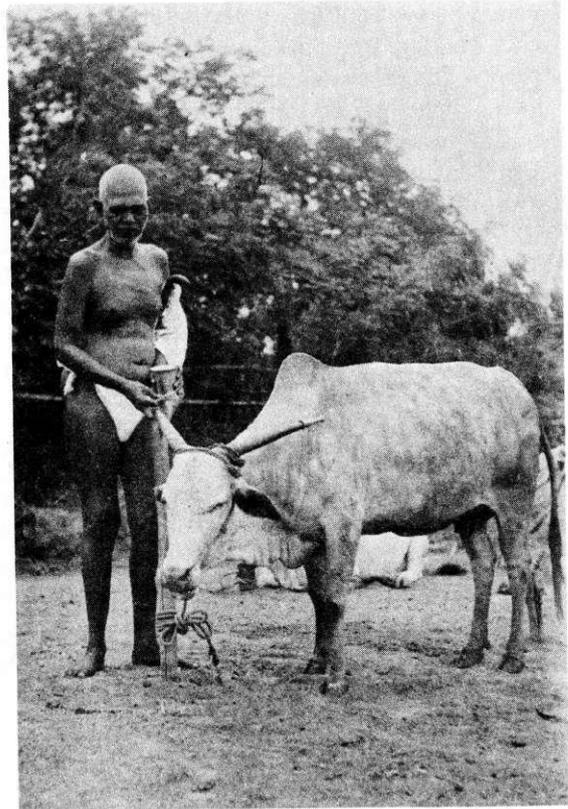
RELATIVITY AND AHIMSA: THE INVISIBLE CONNECTION

By T.S. Ananthu

THE theory of relativity has been one of the most revolutionary and exciting discoveries of modern science. But its revolutionary impact will multiply by leaps and bounds once it is recognised that there is a deep connection — though not obvious at first sight — between the philosophical basis of this theory and the world-view that provides the logical foundation for the practice of 'ahimsa'.

To understand this better, let us divide the theory of relativity into two parts — the 'calculation' aspect and the 'vision' aspect. Most of what is taught in our regular courses on this subject falls into the first category : e.g., the relationship between the mass of a body at rest and in motion or the requirement that all physical laws have to be invariant under the Lorentz transformation. But these calculations and equations have emanated from a certain *vision* that Einstein perceived, a vision that resulted from several years of meditation on the nature of time. This vision is hardly touched upon in our classrooms, and not surprisingly : for the analytical mode of instruction adopted in our universities is totally inadequate to convey such a vision.

The basis of Einstein's vision was the realization that space and time are shadows, and not realities in the absolute sense of the term. This is in complete contradiction to what our sense perception and our 'common sense' conveys to us. We find it much easier to accept Newton's specification that "absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself and by its own nature, flows uniformly, without regard to



anything external". Einstein himself recognized the gap between our common sense perception and that required by his theory when he said :

"For a convinced physicist, the distinction between past, present and future is an illusion, though a stubborn one."

Herein, Einstein admits that it is an extremely difficult thing to perceive the nature

of time the way he had : all our 'natural instincts' rebel at the effort. But he also insists that so long as we have not succeeded in doing so, so long as time is seen as 'flowing' from past to future *via* the present, we are not really 'convinced', in the deep sense of the term, of his theory of relativity. Without such a conviction, all our mathematics, all our intellectual sophistication, gives us only a superficial exposure to the theory.

Is it at all possible for an ordinary human being to view the nature of time the way Einstein did? If no intellectual or mathematical effort can help us accomplish this, is there any other kind of effort that can? As a first step towards the answer to these questions, let us take a brief look into the work of three American doctors who have done extensive research work on 'clinical death experiences'. One of them, Dr. Raymond Moody, was the first to publish his results in the form of a book *Life After Life* (Mocking bird; 1975). This book evoked such interest and controversy that Dr. Kenneth Ring of the University of Connecticut took up a project to carry out work on the subject in a more detailed, more sophisticated and more scientifically acceptable way. His findings, now published in the form of the book *Life at Death* (Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1980), corroborate those of Dr. Moody's. Third doctor to carry out work in this field of research is a lady, Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. She is actually the pioneer in this field, having worked on it for over 20 years, but even though she has lectured extensively on the subject and has written the preface to Dr. Moody's book, she is yet to put down her own findings in the form of a book.

The findings of all three doctors are identical, and the two aspects of these findings that are of interest from the point of view of this paper may be summarised as follows :

1. During the 'clinical death experience', consciousness leaves the body very briefly. During this interval, one's perception of space and time is very different from that when in the

physical body, and corresponds to what the theory of relativity tells us about the nature of true or objective reality. There is an experience of timelessness, with the distinction between past, present and future melting away. 'Spacetime' becomes a practical and visible reality, and the idea of a 'fourth dimension' is no longer just a theory, as is evident from the following statement of one of Dr. Moody's subjects :

"As I was going through this, I kept thinking, 'Well, when I was taking geometry, they always told me there were only three dimensions, and I always just accepted that. But they were wrong. There are more.'"

2. During this experience, there is a very deep, almost indescribable, feeling of love, warmth and compassion. It leaves a lasting effect, transforming the subject's life in a very unique way, with a wonderful sense of compassion, warmth, kindness, humour and absence of fear (even of death) entering into his or her personality.

The first item listed above shows that it is possible for an ordinary human being to experience the 'vision' aspect of the theory of relativity. The only problem is that these 'clinical death experiences' were accidental and not pre-planned or induced through any training. Is there any method by which these experiences of timelessness and other related effects can be reproduced at will? The second item listed above gives a clue to the answer to this question. Training that teaches the practice of love and compassion of a very pure kind can enable us to voluntarily and at will bring about a state by which the 'vision' aspect of the theory of relativity can be grasped.

It is here that the link between 'ahimsa' and the theory of relativity lies. Sages, saints and 'mahatmas' (great souls), irrespective of which land or age or community they hailed from, have been able to practise (and also teach their disciples) ahimsa by mastering the art of pure love, selfless action and genuine compassion : an art which incorporates the ability to release

the ego from the narrow confines of the physical body. And such great souls have been able to experience for themselves the 'vision' that forms the basis of Einstein's theory. Here are statements by three such great souls which testify to this :

"It is believed by most that time passes : in actual fact, it stays where it is. This idea of passing may be called time, but it is an incorrect idea, for since one sees it only as passing one cannot understand that it stays just where it is."

— the Zen master Dogen

"Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen ... in the Absolute there is neither time, space nor causation".

— Swami Vivekananda

"If we speak of the space-time experience in meditation, we are dealing with an entirely different dimension In this space-experience, the temporal sequence is converted into a simultaneous co-existence, the side by side existence of things... and this again does not remain static but becomes a living continuum in which time and space are integrated."

— Lama Govinda

The above statements were made without any knowledge of modern physics or of the theory of relativity, in fact perhaps before Einstein's papers were published. And yet, they correspond to the most profound insights that result from Einstein's theories (Vivekananda goes even beyond Einstein by relegating not only space and time but even causation to the realm of the relative.)

It is interesting to note in this context that Einstein's personality corresponded to that of a saint or a great soul. He was full of compassion and love and humility. In fact, describing his personality, some have compared him to a sage in an Indian village. It is also worthwhile noting that Einstein

attributed his discoveries to the 'cosmic religious experience' :

"I do not arrive at my understanding of the fundamental laws of the universe through my rational mind... The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest mainspring of scientific research."

It is even more interesting to note that Einstein defined this 'cosmic religious experience' in terms that very much correspond to the meditative states as taught by saints and sages :

"The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvellous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole. The beginnings of cosmic religious feeling appear at an early stage of development e.g., in many of Psalms of David and in some of the Prophets. Buddhism, as we have learnt especially from the writings of Schopenhauer, contains a much stronger element of this.

"The religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of feelings, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image; so that there can be no church whose central teachings are based on it. Hence it is precisely among the heretics of every age that we find men who were filled with this highest kind of religious feeling and were in many cases regarded by their contemporaries as atheists, sometimes also as saints."

It is indeed unfortunate that the modern world has neglected the teachings of 'great souls' who have taught, and continue to do so even today, the method of transforming the inner self through the process of 'cosmic religious experience'. If we take to these teachings in earnest, we can on the one hand learn to transform our personalities in keeping with the great principles of 'ahimsa' and, on the other hand, experience for ourselves the 'vision' that lies behind the theory of relativity.

HUATOU MEDITATION¹

By Zen Master KuSarn of Korea

Recorded by N.Z. Bhiksu HahmWol, Edited by Phoebe Wong

Stage Two, Initial Study

(1) THE BASICS:

STUDENTS learn that the huatou is not to be grasped by thinking with the intellect. They have often heard that to be unmindful of it in the four postures (walking, standing, sitting, reclining) is compared to being laid up in bed with an illness. After having studied for some months a degree of huatou kung-fu ("skill") is gained and the second stage of study begins.

SPECIFIC MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS:

When you raise the question "What is this that sees and hears?" a spirit of inquiry arises at once. The key factor is to maintain this sense of questioning traditionally called *i-nien* or "thought of doubt." Take hold of the huatou "*what*" is seeing?, "*what*" is hearing? and do

your best to keep the process of inquiry gentle, smooth, steady. Raise the huatou again before the initial sense of questioning fades. The investigation certainly improves when each new question overlaps the previous one. If a clock were to miss beats or occasionally stop, any sensible person would have it repaired: the situation is similar in Zen.

From morning to night the huatou must not become mechanical, repetitive, dull. Do not just repeat in mind the words "what?, what?, what?" or "what is this?, what is this?..." The key, again, is to evoke and keep not a repetition of words but a spirit of inquiry. Occupied with this, time flies, there is no room for boredom, and the *i-nien* transforms of itself into an *i-ching* or "sensation of doubt," a physical feeling of questioning. Study, though rarely easy, is quite simple: you do not know what the aware nature called "One Mind" is, so you penetrate into it with constant, gentle inquiry.

¹ Continued from the previous issue

The purpose of Zen techniques is to awaken to the very nature of mind which lacks nothing and is beyond arising-and-ceasing. Huatou study does not involve mere sitting quietly, trying to calm and pacify consciousness. Nor does it entail mindfulness of the breath (*Anapanasati*), the generation of attitudes such as Loving-Kindness (*Metta*), or contemplations on Impermanence or Precious Human Rebirth. Instead it involves direct inquiry with the huatou question. It probes directly into the Huatou, the "Origin of Thought" or "Mind-Ground."

Do not try to combine classical methods, to be "creative" and to invent your own "new and improved version." Students are foolish not to behave as *students*. Stick with a long-tested and proven way discovered, often by intuition and genius, by *masters*.

Most people who take up the huatou intend at first to keep a good grip on it. But usually, after a few minutes spent sitting, they drift into long circuits of needless thoughts.

Meditation can be compared to a battle between wandering thoughts and dullness on the one side, and the huatou on the other. If you are to break through, the overlapping of the spirit of inquiry has to be made perfectly even and regular, like roof thatching. As the huatou grows stronger, the fewer will be the wandering thoughts and the weaker the mental dullness. When the mind stays quiet, the huatou will not be forgotten and the spirit of inquiry continues unbroken.

By inquiring single-mindedly into the huatou the sense of questioning becomes *prajna* ("awareness/knowing/wisdom") while the ceasing of distracted thinking becomes *samadhi* ("absorption/inner focus/total concentration"). This pair, *samadhi* and *prajna*, must be cultivated jointly. With such balanced study, progress is certain and awakening far from impossible. If there is *samadhi* but a lack of *prajna*, however,

ignorance grows; and if there is *prajna* but a lack of *samadhi*, mistaken views multiply.

Though meditation requires precision and can at times be very hard to maintain, do not let yourself become discouraged. Be stubborn! To think "My study isn't going as well as I'd imagined... If I go on like this I'll never triumph" are needless thoughts. To think "This just isn't as easy as cooling porridge by letting it sit or by pouring on cold water... may be I should change and chant *sutras*, or teach people... Perhaps I could examine the Vijnaptimatratra Philosophy or specialize in the Vinaya Rules" is also needless thinking.

If you are besieged and distracted by wandering thoughts and it seems impossible to advance, what can be done? First, look at what those thoughts do to you, see where they get you. They themselves are the problem, so ignore and avoid them. Do not speculate about the future; forget what has happened in the past. What use is it to recall or embroider past events? Ideas often have very little to do with events that arise. It never helps to waste time by idle dreaming and by entertaining thoughts about yesterday or tomorrow.

Your sole function in meditation periods is to sit erect on your cushions and continue with extending the spirit of inquiry. Other than that, you then have nothing to do.

Remember that you are not the first and will not be the last to tread this path. Everyone, even the Buddha and his great disciples, have met hardships. Just as they persisted and broke through, so can you. The ladder of insight exists as much today as in "Golden Eras."

The Dharma is to be found within Sangsara, the changing and often unsatisfactory realm. Where did the Sage Vimalakirti say that anyone can step outside Sangsara to seek Nirvana? There is no place or time perfect in every way. Within Sangsara, you are less content if you have more opinions and desires.

Taoists say : "Desires and opinions are the greatest illness."

With the passing of days, take care not to slip into a habit of relaxing your former effort. Visit senior students or masters and ask their advice. Use your own wisdom to become more closely concerned with the huatou. Try not to become an embodiment of the saying : *Yesterday, a Buddha by the home-shrine; today, removed to a village temple; tomorrow, gone to Amitabha's Heaven* (i.e., steadily waning enthusiasm and practice)!

Experiment with different things, including diet, and find what helps your study. Students living in Zen Chambers do Hatha Yoga as exercise and find it beneficial. Others play Tai-Chi Ch'uan. Still others find that periods of sitting and walking meditation go best after working in fields till noon, then taking a cool swim. As physical exercise, I prefer to repair roads and temples.

It is not always those with great intelligence or virtue who make steady or swift progress. At times the opposite is true. When people of limited education or the ill-behaved turn their energies to self-cultivation they can quickly step up the ladder of wisdom.

By focussing fully on the huatou for a few days a state of vividness and quiescence begins to emerge. When your study ripens and you have an opening, do not drift into theories of sudden versus gradual enlightenment. You can look at ChoeGyae Mountain from various angles and seem to see different mountains!

There is a song :

When the sun rises at midnight
A lion emerges from a den and roars:
The blind see and the deaf hear clearly.
Do you understand this?

(to be continued)

Bhagavan: "We are all in reality Sat-Chit-Ananda. But we imagine we are bound and are having all these pains."

I asked: "Why do we imagine so? Why does this ignorance or *ajnana* come to us?"

Bhagavan said: "Enquire to whom has this ignorance come and you will find it never came to you and that you have always been that *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. One performs all sorts of penance to become what one already is. All effort is simply to get rid of this *viparita buddhi* or mistaken impression that one is limited and bound by the woes of *samsara*."

-- Day by Day (dt. 22.11.45 Afternoon)

120

LETTER TO A FRIEND-3

By a Czech Devotee

The Question:

THE only question in my mind which demands an answer in precise and direct terms is : Does the state of conscious witness or of observation without any qualifying thought imply any effort in the initial stages of the *sadhana*? To me it appears that self-awareness does not need any effort because conscious effort means thinking and if you are not attentive, then forgetfulness takes over and again, I take a position of attention. This is what I am doing without applying effort in time to programme my *sadhana* hours. I believe one can give up all conceptualisation or remain conscious without any mental effort. Why is it always advised that realisation is not possible without practice? If the self is one, then on whose part does the so-called practice or *sadhana* lie? That is why I feel that my self has to be independently graceful and I realise immediately and intuitively. Does the path of *sadhana* lie along effort? Is the state of being realised through becoming?

The Answer :

Remember once and for all that our mind cannot grasp the reality of the Self. So all your questions are futile and only serve to distract you from *Atma Vichara* — Self-Enquiry — which alone reveals the Self. The Self is not an object of the mind; it is the mind which is in the Self and is an object of it. You are not your mind, you are the Self. Only you are not aware of it. You must have the experience of the Self before you can solve your problems. Therefore let go all thinking, be still and be aware of your

awareness. You must cease to live in the mind and start to live in consciousness. If you pay attention to your questions, you pay attention to your mind and so you neglect your Self, Consciousness. *Atma Vichara* is nothing but paying all the attention to the being consciousness.

Sadhana, Atma Vichara, is always effort, effort towards the realisation that we are THAT and that we are the Self which shines without effort. We do not become the Self but we become aware that we are the Self. We are always the Self but we are not aware of it.

It is no good churning the mind with such questions. Just be aware that you are aware, be aware of your awareness. You are aware that you are awareness since only awareness can be aware and this awareness is your SELF, i.e. yourself.

Do not pay attention to your doubts but be fully aware of THAT which is aware of their presence and absence too. It is you, the Self, Consciousness. Realise that you are only one Self and that is you, Consciousness. Try to be aware of your consciousness, your conscious existence with all the effort which you can make till you realise that you are this Consciousness and abide as Consciousness without any effort. This effort is the only way to the effortless realisation "I am self-conscious Consciousness".

The knowledge of the Self lies in its consciousness. The Self is we, our Consciousness; to know the Self is to know, to

realise the consciousness which we always are. The realisation, the knowledge, of the Self is the consciousness which realises itself, the consciousness which exists consciously as consciousness, self-aware consciousness, and not only as witness witnessing the environment.

Who makes effort? Of course you, who identify yourself, your consciousness wrongly with the body and with the mind but who is, in reality, the pure limitless consciousness. The Self is one but since you are not aware of it and you are identified with the body and the mind, you feel yourself separated and not in unity. You see the fragmented many but not the indivisible one.

Sadhana, especially *Atma Vichara*, does not consist in thinking but in the *work* with consciousness. Attention is not a matter of the mind but of the consciousness. We do not concentrate with the mind, contrary to the widespread mistaken belief. It is the consciousness which concentrates. Attention is concentrated consciousness and not mind.

The state of being a conscious witness is not the realisation of the Self. In that state you experience that you are not the body or the mind and know that you are different from them. But to know the Self you must realise yourself to be the self-aware witnessing consciousness itself. You must witness and realise yourself to be the witnessing consciousness. You must be aware of yourself as the witnessing awareness. You must be the consciousness which knows itself as pure 'I Am'. "I am pure self-conscious consciousness. I exist as consciousness. My being is consciousness which is aware of itself, consciously existing consciousness. I am, I know, I realise that I am consciousness." This doubtless experience is not of mind, of thought, but of pure consciousness itself. Realisation is not in the mind but in the consciousness.

The activity of the mind should cease. If you churn your mind with questions and doubts

you identify yourself with the mind and not with the Self. That is not the way to realisation of the Self. Live in the consciousness, with consciousness and as consciousness. Be consciousness! That is your true being and not the mind.

Be consciously what you are — pure consciousness. If you grasp your thoughts, you are absorbed in them, and the result is that you cannot realise your consciousness. Be your consciousness in all its purity. Thought prevents your realisation that you are pure consciousness and not the thinking mind because it distracts your attention from you — consciousness. That is the reason why you are asked to be just a disinterested witness, and even more — to realise that you are the self-aware witnessing consciousness and not the body and the mind which you witness. Practise meditation intelligently with full awareness of what is going on in your meditation. Mere mechanical meditation will not do.

Atma Vichara is, in essence, incessant attention to the consciousness which at the beginning proceeds with effort but later becomes more and more effortless and natural. If you care for the mind and its problems, you can never solve your only real problem : lack of self-knowledge. Grasp this. What you see is not the mind or in the mind but consciousness which is beyond it.

Utterances coming from pure consciousness are not understood properly by one who lives in the ego. They are to be lived in the consciousness and cannot be understood with the mind. Till one realises the pure, limitless consciousness which one is, these utterances will only be puzzles, mere words. First see very clearly that the only real thing is your consciousness, and you are that, and then seek answers to your questions. Otherwise you will always be wrong. The true knowledge, the correct answers lie in the consciousness and not in the mind. The knowledge of the consciousness is simple, absolute truth. The knowledge of the mind, on the contrary, is complicated, relative half-truth. The latter are

only views on the truth and not the truth itself. You, the consciousness, are the truth and not your endless game of questions and answers.

Let me repeat : Stop your thought which goes in never-ending circles, and pay all your attention to your consciousness. Just be consciously aware of your being the consciousness. That is all, and it is very simple. It is the mind which makes such a simple thing complicated. Everything is quite clear and nothing prevents you from seeing the truth, from being the Self except your mind and your inattention to you, the consciousness. Why do you hold on to the hindrances so assiduously? Do you like these hindrances more than your Self? If you cast them away, you are yourself.

Your attention is too absorbed in the mind and its demands. You identify your interests with the mind's, quite wrongly. Your attention is on your questions and not on your Self. This shows that you are perhaps not a disinterested witness and that your *sadhana* is not intense enough. Every time when a thought, a question, a doubt, etc. appears, do not grasp it, do not take any interest in it but observe it calmly and realize that you are not this thought but its witnessing consciousness and give all your attention to you who are conscious of it, to the consciousness which witnesses it. Not only this, but become aware as consciousness which is self-aware, self-conscious. Being pure self-conscious consciousness is the aim of *sadhana*.

In the course of this incessant practice of self-awareness, the process of *Atma Vichara* will start and will work. Your doubts will clear by themselves and you will begin to experience more and more the stillness of consciousness with ever greater clarity. This will bring you greater understanding of all problems. Understanding comes from the Self, not from the mind, not from thought.

Mere peace and emptiness of the mind is not our aim but being the Self which is aware of them. The Self, as we have seen above, is not the mind nor in the mind but it is you, the

I refer to David Godman's article on Somerset Maugham and *The Razor's Edge*.

As related in my soon-to-be published biography of my father, Paul Brunton, Maugham and he met at a dinner party in Hollywood in 1938. The novelist became interested in my father's recounting how he had gone to India seven years earlier to seek out holy men who could impart spiritual truth to him and how he had spent time at the Ramanashram and introduced Maharshi to the Western world in his book *A Search in Secret India*. Maugham sensed the possibility of a story here and so he in turn travelled to India and developed his theme for *The Razor's Edge*.

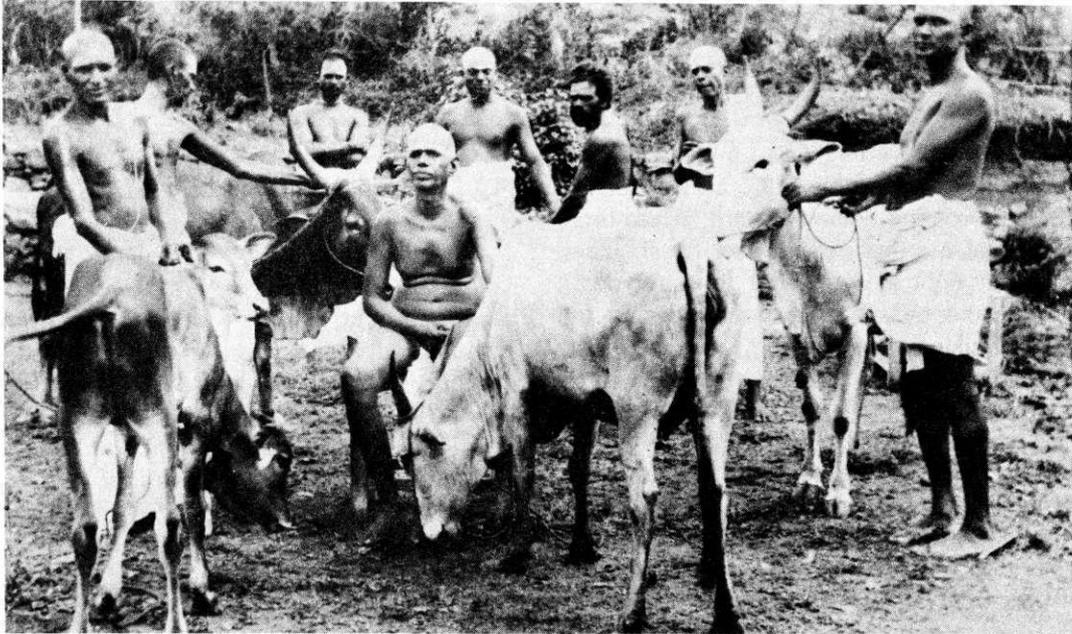
As Mr. Godman quotes Dennis Wills that despite intensive research there is no evidence that Maugham met either Guy Hague or Christopher Isherwood prior to publication of *The Razor's Edge* there is ample reason to suppose that Paul Brunton was indeed the original inspiration for Maugham's novel.

-- Kenneth Thuston Hurst,
Paul Brunton Philosophic
Foundation, Hector, USA.

consciousness, that which is aware of the mind, its problems, questions, answers, knowledge and ignorance. You are the same unchanging consciousness realising all this and your conscious existence without form and limit. Realise this and remain quiet in the full consciousness of your being.

Be still, be aware of that which consciously exists in this stillness and emptiness. You are THAT – pure consciousness 'I am', 'I am conscious that I am'.

Yours,
I.J.V.



THE MAHARSHI AND THE ROYAL HERD OF CATTLE

By Rosalind I. Christian

AS I wrote in a previous article it was a little after Sri Ramana Maharshi came into my life that I found the Celtic version of the very ancient tale of the three brothers—three likely lads who set out to win a fortune and who each married a princess. That story makes it very clear who these three are. They are body, mind and spirit. I have already told the story of the *sadhana* of the Clever Brother, Mind¹, to whom the Princess teaches the key question “Who am I?”

What is the story of his elder brother, the Strong Brother, Body, what is his *sadhana* and how does the Maharshi teach us to understand it?

Adventures of the First Brother

The strong brother set out on his quest and he too came to the King's palace, but he felt it was too grand for him, so he knocked on the door of the very humblest dwelling. It was the cottage of a cowherd.

“Well,” said the lad, “you may need a herdsman and I am seeking service; will you take me and let me live here and earn my meat?”

“Yes,” said the cowherd, “I need a lad to mind the King's cattle, and you will serve my turn. It was fortune herself who sent you here for the man I had before left last night.”

In the morning the herdsman gave him charge of the cows, and said, “Watch them well, but take good care that you do not let them into the closed park with the boarded gate; no herdsman who ever put cattle into that came back alive, and we should lose herd and herdsman.”

“I'll take care of both,” said the lad, and off he set wrapped in a gray garment.

The lad drove that cows to pasture, but he was dismayed to find that the grass was bare and parched. So he went to the park gate and saw the finest grass he had ever seen. He opened the gate and the cattle went in and fed

¹ *The Mountain Path, Aradhana*, June '89 issue, p.57

all day. But as evening drew on and milking time, he heard a terrible noise and a horrible giant came roaring down the park, seized three of the cows and threw them over his shoulder. The lad thought it was better to suffer death than lose the beasts so he ran and shut the gate. "Mannikin, open the gate," said the giant.

"I won't," said he.

Then there was the most terrible battle and one day I would like to describe how the Strong Brother beat his adversary and who this giant might be. Suffice to say now that he slew the giant and took the cows home. When the cows were milked everybody in the King's house was pleased—for they had not enough pails to hold the milk and had to send for workmen to make more. The dairymaids and the old herdsman made much of the strong lad and gave him a fine supper—but he told no-one about his adventure.

Comment

What was there about this simple story that made one look for an inner meaning? First, since I believed that the Clever Lad, Mind, was practising the *vichara* "Who am I?", I was bound to wonder what his 'brothers' were up to! Second, I knew that flocks and herdsmen figured much in mythology. Heracles goes to the world's end to fetch a wondrous herd of cattle. Even an imperial deity like Apollo, who is the very 'Sun' of Enlightenment, is upset when his kine go missing. Krishna is sheltered by the kindly cowherds and their wives, while in the *Rig Veda* I see that Ushas, the Dawn, is likened to cows being unpenned—an odd simile to my mind. Innumerable folk-tale heroes inherit or win their kine, and the symbolism even seems to have been carried on into the *Gospel of Luke* (Chap. II. V. 8-14) where we are told that shepherds watching their flocks were the first to hear the news of the birth of the Christ-child.

Now there is one statement I have purposely omitted to give in telling the story of the Strong Brother who took the royal herd to pasture. It is this, and on it he set great store.

There was an old brown cow that belonged to a widow and this cow led the herd.

Now, knowing as I did a little about farm animals, that statement struck me as quite unbelievable. That the old cow might have shambled alongside the herd I could have accepted, but never that she led them. Consider that this was a royal herd of cattle and she was old, possibly underfed and weak; moreover, herd animals have their own leaders and they resent interlopers. The Strong Lad would have had his work cut out preventing the brown cow from being gored and trampled on by the others. It came upon me in a flash that 'taking the widow's cow to pasture' had an inner meaning, it was *an act of pure kindness*.

Consider then the *sadhana* of the Strong Brother. He accepts a humble station in life and shows no ostentation in dress or manner. He willingly takes the job that is waiting for him and does it to the very best of his ability. It is a worthwhile job and brings happiness in its train. We are reminded of the Buddha's injunction that right livelihood is imperative for those who wish to follow the way. Moreover, like Jesus's good shepherd the Strong Lad is willing to lay down his life for the herd. A body can do no more. And what about the widow's brown cow? Taking her to pasture is a deed of kindness over and above his ordinary duties. I am reminded how often the oppression of widows and orphans is condemned in Mosaic law, and by Jesus too. This re-iteration proves that here was a common fact of life to which most people were quite indifferent. Not so the Strong Brother; this lad had a compassion one would not expect in one so young. He took the widow's brown cow to pasture and, in his eyes at any rate, *she* led the herd. I think we may safely name the 'way' the Strong son follows as the path of *karma marga*. The story makes it clear that it is a long hard road, but, at last, great 'wealth' is its reward. In the end the Strong Lad marries his Princess, and so that same royal herd becomes his very own. Nor

should we forget the happiness and joy this lad gives to those about him.

"Selflessness belongs to the truly wise. They make the people's needs their own." (*Lao Tzu*)

Always the ideas in ancient symbolism spring from actual observation. A woman may feed at the breast an orphan child along with her own infant. In ancient times this was often used as the symbol of pure charity. Why? Because it was a deed of compassion for which no thanks or reward could be expected. This observable compassion in human conduct was transferred to the 'Kine', those beautiful creatures who can give man a rich food over and above that needed by their own off-spring. Thus the 'Kine' and the 'Milk' became very special sacred symbols.

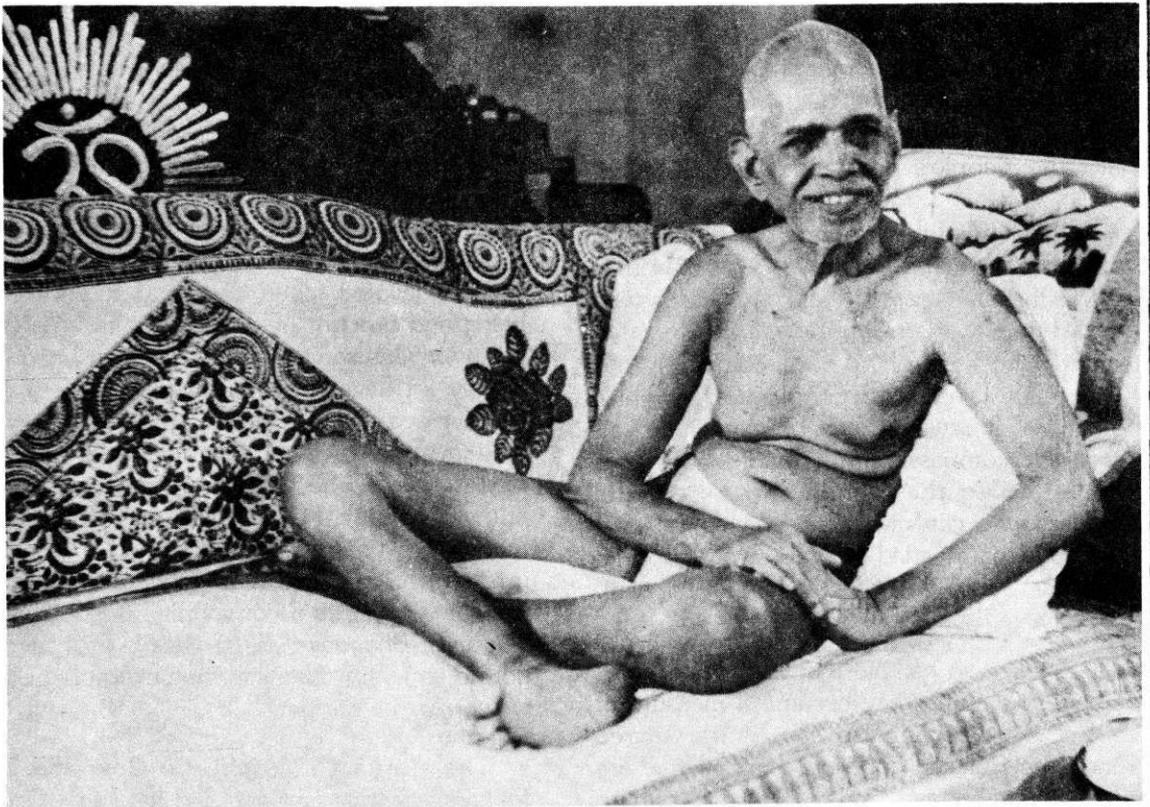
It should also be said that flocks and herds were heritable and they became a measure of wealth. So we can also say of the sacred 'Kine', the fruits of good deeds, that they are not lost but handed on from incarnation to incarnation. Thus Heracles, when he found the footprints of his cattle imprinted in the very rock, knew that he was immortal and had attained divine status. When we learn that the youthful Krishna found shelter among the kindly cowherds then we could take this symbolic statement to mean that the divine incarnation is always sheltered and guarded by the good deeds of his forerunners. With the cowherds Krishna's life is happy and joyful. So too the shepherds at Bethlehem were given "tidings of great joy" at the birth of the Christ. This 'birth' is the dawn of Realization, and it is then, as the *Vedas* express it, that the mystic kine are unpenned.

In V. Ganesan's *Purushottama Ramana* I read of how Sri Maharshi as a younger man would stand by a certain well, near a path along which, at noon, poor low-caste women trudged home from work parched with thirst, and how he himself gave them the water they so craved and which they, on account of their caste, were not allowed to take. I was forcibly reminded of the kindness of the Strong

Brother towards the poor neglected widow! We should never forget that the example of a Maharshi is relevant to all aspects of the way. Sri Ramana is generally looked upon as a *jnani*, teaching the path of *jnana marga*, but *karma marga* is just as clearly demonstrated by his life. By his own deeds he taught the path of self-less devoted action which harmed no living being and brought joy to all. His life was one of continuous service to the needs of his great 'family' of devotees. His humble work in the kitchen was given in no different spirit to the guidance he gave to advanced souls. What makes this all the more poignant is that we know from the Maharshi's own words that there were times when he longed to escape into solitude away from the crowds and pressures of life in a community. (see *Day by Day with Bhagavan* 5-10-1946). That he did not do so is, for us, a supreme example of the way of *karma marga*.

The story of Lakshmi the Cow and the Maharshi is truly amazing and moving. "Even as a calf only some days old," he tells us, "she would daily come to me and place her head at my feet." Lakshmi was one of his greatest devotees! This is something the Western mind is too blind to be able to credit. By his tenderness to Lakshmi Bhagavan taught all mankind—today more than ever in need of such a lesson—how these beautiful patient creatures should be treated. Moreover the rituals of the cow-byre (*gosala*) were something in which Bhagavan annually shared. The day of the Worship of the Cow was a day of great ceremony and rejoicing. (see *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 16.1.1946)². By sharing in these rituals the Maharshi set his seal, as it were, upon the very ancient symbolism, upon which these and similar ceremonies, worldwide, were based. The 'Royal Herd' is the inheritance of good deeds with which the advanced *sadhaka* sets out on the final steps to Realization.

² See also 'Service to Mankind as a Basic Feature of Religion' by Jaganath Chattopadhyaya, *The Mountain Path*, January 1969.



FROM ASHRAM ARCHIVES - 2

In this issue, we publish the reminiscences of Sri Paramasivier, Vellore , who knew Ramana from His school days at Madurai. These were recorded by Sri B.V. Narasimha Swami on 11th February 1930.

— Editor.

I HAVE known Sri Ramana Maharshi for a long time. I knew him even at Madura where he studied at Scott Middle School. I remember very little of what he was like then. I can't even recollect his disappearing from Madura.

I heard of a Sannyasi at Tiruvannamalai as being a ripe *Mahatma* when I was at Bombay in 1916. Then I got a photograph of him at Bombay. My first contact with Maharshi was on 25.12.1922 when I came here (Tiruvannamalai) as Sub-agent of Lewis Dreyfus & Co. Someone said, "A great soul is here." I showed him the photo and he

confirmed that he was speaking of that "great soul". With fervent devotion I came to the Palithirtha Ashram and saw him here. . . . I found someone crying before him and praying for *Upadesam* (I had also come with that idea). Maharshi said :

“உபதேசிக்கப்படுகிறவனார்,
உபதேசிக்கிறவனார்

மறந்த இடத்தைவிட்டு தேடினால்,
எல்லாம் உண்டு.”

("Who is the one who receives *Upadesam* and who is the one who gives *Upadesam* ? If one searches the place

which one has forgotten, one finds everything".) This was spoken generally and I took it as an answer to my own mental query – in fact as an *Upadesam*. I did not however catch the full significance of the words then. The calmness in his eyes, as revealing an inner divine force, was what struck me and impressed me foremost and with that impression and the faith that such a soul's help would be available to me in all my affairs, I left this place. Fifteen days thereafter, a suit was filed against me for Rs. 25,000 by my last business concern. I had no fear then, as I thought I had the grace of this great soul. I quietly went to Madras and reached the Court. In the witness box, at the trial, I had in my heart the deeply calm eyes of Maharshi and it gave me serene calm in my breast. The Judge gave a decree only for Rs. 500. This strengthened my belief in Maharshi's greatness and I regarded him as nothing short of God - i.e. endowed with *Anugraha Sakti*.

I thereafter frequently visited him. 23 days after my first *darshan* of Ramana Maharshi, I met Sri Seshadri Swami who condescended to come and give me *Upadesam*. It was my confirmed idea that it was due to Sri Ramana's Grace). Thereafter I never resorted to him for temporal ends. Instead, I went to him frequently in respect of my spiritual doubts. As soon as I arrived at his presence, the doubts were cleared and I noted them mostly in my diary.

From 1926 onwards my experience of the Maharshi became more intense. I had only to sit before him and at once my mind was rid of all thoughts, and I could concentrate it anyway I chose. Generally, I chose to concentrate it on Maharshi himself.

How to judge if one had the *antarmukha* (inward) *drshti* (vision) I learnt only in his presence and by observing him and imitating him. In his presence I became *antarmukham* at once.

A few weeks back I had a very noticeable experience in this ashram. Maharshi was seated in the hall with face to the west and the usual gaze. I was concentrating attention on Maharshi. Very soon my sense of personality was dissolved. When it returned, there was blinding darkness in the west and I could see nothing then. After a little concentration on that darkness, it vanished, and in its place there was effulgence. I felt giddy. I felt I could not stand or sit there any longer in that condition and so I came out. I went to the next temple, i.e. the *Samadhi* of Swami's mother and sat on the settee on which Maharshi used to sit — all unconscious of that fact. If I was fully conscious, I would never sit on the seat which Maharshi once occupied.

The picture of Ramakrishna with Kali was facing me. And looking at that I got composed. I am worshipping Kali for a long time and seeing that picture recalled to me my usual quest. I realised then that Maharshi brought me to Kali and that Maharshi had the power to bring every soul to its own proper spiritual course.

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तमिव विदधाम्यहम् ॥

("Whatever form any devotee wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady".)

This experience I communicated to Kapali Sastriar. I went to Maharshi later when he was alone and told him of the above experience of darkness followed by light and wanted to know what they meant. Maharshi replied that it was a genuine and useful experience and quoted the words :

"இருட்டினுள் ஈசனைச் சிக்கெனப் பிடித்து"

("Clinging firmly to God amidst the darkness")

So I understood him to mean that in the darkness of phenomena (*jadam*) one has to seek for Iswara, the noumenon; and find Him as Light or *Chaitanya*.

SRI ARUNACHALA PURANAM— Vignettes 1

By J. J.

On the holy descent of the divine mother :

NANDIKESWARA continued : Listen, O Markandeya! I shall tell you how the divine Mother, Sati, came to be born as Parvati, daughter of Himavan, the King of hills, and how she was wedded to Siva, the non-dual One, and how she came to be born on earth.

The episode of Sati:

Daksha, the progenitor born of Brahma's right-thumb, was never too happy about the skull-carrying Siva whom fate had decreed to be his son-in-law. He bore a grudge ever since the latter had paid him, his father-in-law, no special attention and respect in an august assembly where he was Siva's guest.

Soon he organised a *Brhaspatisavana* sacrifice, inviting all the Twelve, the Eleven, the Eight, and the Seven⁴ and also the Serpents, Kinnaras, Yakshas and Siddhas, and a host of sages. Vishnu and Brahma were there with their consorts. Behold, my Lord Siva and Sati, being uninvited, were absent. When Sati expressed to Siva her wish to attend her father's great Yaga, sacrifice, the Lord replied that they had not been invited. But knowing well what was to follow, He smiled teasingly and said, "Go yourself, and come back soon!" She reached her parent's place. Her warm embrace of her mother Asikni was rebuffed. Her misguided father uttered words mean and mordant when she prostrated before him. Stung to the quick, Sati stormed out of the place but not before cursing the precincts and the participants to a moribund ravage. Elsewhere, the crescent moon on the matted locks of the One ever her other half, began to spew out heat, and out of His angered third Eye emanated a fierce form that sent shock-waves through space. Dark as a cloud, wearing an emerald crown, like a motile Meru mountain, mouthing thunder and spouting virulence, Veerabhadra appeared with bloating body and twitching eye-brows before Siva, saying: "Command, command, command, my Lord!" Bidden to rout a rascally ritual, Veerabhadra sped thither; the mighty hordes, the Siva Ganas, close on his heels. With the hordes holding for him umbrellas pearl-studded, Veerabhadra went forth on a 100-bull-elephant-drawn chariot amidst the Ganas blowing war-calls from crores of Conches. Furious at the considerable slight to their Lord, the Ganas entered the Yagasala. The Lords of the Eight Directions clashed with the irrepressible invaders. The field was but a blur of sword, spear, mace and guided missiles. With the leisurely ease of Ammaanai, a woman's parlour game, the Ganas made mince-meat of the Devas and their CELESTIAL vehicles. There was a tense moment when eight of the Bhutas fell and the rest stood in shock, but Veerabhadra cast eight projectiles which drank the life-blood of some gods and wounded the rest. The

¹ continued from our last issue

⁴ Adityas, Rudras, Directions, Rishis, respectively

rider of the Cloud hopped off it in haste and took flight, changing himself into a cuckoo. In shame Nirriti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera and Isana showed a clean pair of heels. Yama died. Agni, lord of the leaping flames, had his seven hands severed, like the round of births by mere remembrance of Arunachala. Painlessly cutting away the ears of milady's mother with his laser-like Vajra, Veerabhadra confronted Daksha who rushed at him drunk with sacrificial Soma and wielding an uprooted pillar. It was a terrible scene, for the Yajamana, the head of the Yaga, was himself beheaded. In a trice the head went rolling, and instantly, an impatient Gana went and gobbled it up!

Veerabhadra's work continued: his wielded trident left a trail of death where it went. The crowds of Rudras, Maruts, Vasus and the groups of Rishis hiding behind bushes or on trees — none was spared. No god or goddess was spared. Veerabhadra and the Ganas routed the ritual and the ritualists, putting to flight the gods who had the temerity to attend a sacrifice to which their Lord, Siva, was not invited.

Noticing that Brahma kept creating more gods, Veerabhadra cut off his hands, and impaled with the Trident the heads of the ten gods that Brahma, crippled in hands, had created through mind. With that he took on Vishnu.

What follows may strike some devotees as irreverent. But we should not forget that the Puranas are united in their intent: That, however exalted a power one may be, there is a price to pay if ego emerges. And so, when Vishnu found his volley of arrows foiled by Veerabhadra, he threw a sword which the latter broke with an arrow that sped on to kill Garuda. With a face further darkened by the turn of events, Vishnu⁵ hurled the space-warping Discuss. Swifter than a light, deadlier than death, it sped toward Veerabhadra, and took refuge at his feet. Had not Vishnu once offered worship of a thousand choice flowers to Siva, and at the very end of it, finding himself short of a flower, readily offered his own lotus-eye? Had not Siva presented him then with this Chakra, discuss? What wonder then? Vishnu vanished, reappearing as a boar, then a lion and so on. Veerabhadra's weapons proving invincible, he hid himself as a fish deep in the ocean's bowels. He who had once swallowed the earth⁶ once again did it, hiding in its bowels. When Siva heard of all that had happened through Veerabhadra, His anger was quenched. The lesson taught, He revived all who had fallen prey to His wrath, and restored each to his *status quo ante bellum*. What of Daksha and Sati? He^{was} begot Sati and got a goat for his head. Sati, unable to bear the shame of being called daughter of the one who insulted her Lord, had already taken her life by her yogic will.

The episode of Parvati:

Sati was reborn as the lovely child of Himavan (Lord of the Himalayas) and Mena, in answer to their Tapas and prayer for a daughter who would marry none other than Siva. How can I describe greatness of the Tapas of Himavan and Mena which brought forth Sakti? The Sakti which, while ever remaining as Paraa united with Siva, also springs forth as Creative Energy Aparaa, giving birth to the Seer-Seen duo and the Knowledge-Will-Action (Jnana-Iccha-Kriya Sakti) trio. The Sakti from which pure Maya gives birth to the potential and the manifest, the Implicate and the Explicate, the Nada and the Bindu. The Sakti, the primal seed from which sprout powers of Cosmic Management (called Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra). Oh! The Tapas of Himavan and Mena to have given birth to the Womb of all creation before and after! Lovelier by the day she grew, like the waxing moon, and

⁵ as Krishna, he is already dark

⁶ a leela of Krishna

like the sugarcane grown fondly by Kama (Cupid) for enticing the three-eyed One some day. Narada, knower of arts, sciences and the Vedas, came there one day, and informed Himavan that from certain marks that he had noticed in lovely Uma, it was certain that she would soon develop a half-eye on her forehead, and a trident in one of her hands. The breast on that side would gradually disappear. Half her emerald-green body would turn coral-red, and half her lovely hair would turn matted. Himavan who was overjoyed to infer from this that Uma was indeed the bride-to-be of Siva, was further elated when informed that Siva, the eternal celibate, was for some mysterious reason performing Tapas very near Himavan's abode. (We however know that Siva somewhat dejected with the loss of Sati took to a life of seclusion and meditation.) Offering his obeisance to Siva, Himavan bade Uma, assisted by her friends, to remain there with the Lord and serve him with devotion. There were other developments elsewhere. A shocked Brahma found himself facing a high-level team that looked quite downcast. Deprived of their godly crowns, there they stood: Indra with his broken Vajra, Isana with his blunted Hatchet, Yama with his Trident twisted, and so on. "Taarak..." was all that they could stutter, in reply to Brahma's query regarding the cause of their ignominy. Seized of the horrible threat from Taarakaasura to the gods, Brahma advised: Abandon any hope of saving the situation through individual efforts. This demon Taaraka had got the boon that he could be defeated only by a son born to Siva the eternal recluse. Rather clever of him. So busy yourselves conjuring up ways to consummate the marriage of Shailaja (hill-born Parvati) with the Celibate. Returning to Amaravati, Indra had only to think of Manmatha, Cupid, when he appeared before him asking: 'Whose Tapas do you want disturbed? Which damsel do you want stricken with my arrows? Why this sorrow-laden face?' Much depended on what Maara (Cupid) could do. Re-enacting the characteristic drama of new-found intimacy in times of distress, Indra embraced his friend Manmatha with both his arms, and according him an honoured seat, explained to him the role Maara had to play in enticing Chandramauli⁷ from His austerities. Convinced that this was nothing short of asking for the moon, Manmatha explained: 'Who can disturb the Tapas of the one who is ever beyond epistemology (means of knowledge) in the form of sensation (Pratyaksha), mentation (Anumaana, inference), or citation (Sruti)? By the very Sannidhi (proximity) of the consummate Virgin and the faultless Celibate, creation emerges, stays, and merges, like thought-forms in Mind. Though He is described as Tamasic, His Svarupa, essential form, is Fire. My deadly arrow tipped with fragrant flower would only go up in smoke if directed at Him. He cannot be framed by form; nor can He, as formless, be circumscribed. Worse still, I can do my job only if I know for sure that my target is a male or that it is a female. Siva is neither male, nor female, nor both! I am sorry. It's beyond me to budge the Bull-rider.'

Realising that the situation called for drastic measures, Indra got up, and launched into heady adulation of Arianga's⁸ prowess. 'Have you forgotten that it was by your amorous ammunition that Vishnu got Lakshmi seated in his breast, and Saraswati took residence on Brahma's tongue? Why! Was it not due to your virile greatness that even I, Indra, came to acquire a thousand eyes⁹?' Now clasping Kaama's arm with both his hands, Vajrabaahu¹⁰ shot his bolt, 'Please go for my sake! Success with Siva spells birth of Skanda. And that means life again for all devas. It is the supreme moment for you! Please do not refuse.'

⁷ Siva, with the moon in his matted locks,

⁸ Kama, the bodiless; called so here in anticipation!

⁹ Indra's caper with Ahalya earned him this curse from Gautama

¹⁰ Indra, wielder of the Vajra, thunder-bolt.

Grant me this one boon!' Thus thoroughly seduced, Kaama sped to Kailas, to move the Immovable. Armed with bow made of sugar-cane strung with a row of bumble-bees serving as bow-string, and his quiver of just five arrows tipped with five fragrances, Maara marched on. Riding with his consort Rati, on southern breeze that served as his fish-flagged chariot, and with indulgent Spring as his Prime Minister, Kaama sped on. While the moon wove its delicate web of lover's light, the cuckoos sang atop trees flush with flowers, and amidst the buzz of bumble-bees, emanating as calls to war from conch-like white jasmines, and with flowers being strewn about in honey-dripping flood all along the road, the female warriors of Kaama, capable of melting even iron, copper and stone with their sweet talk, ambled on, holding in their hands, deadly harps that played on heart-strings. The romantic Night was an army of dark elephants; the twinkling stars were the silvery decorations on the faces and trunks of the elephants; and crimson sun-set the Bindi adorning their foreheads. Parrots were the Cavalry, while warriors—dainty damsels with doughty breasts and coral lips sauntered on swishing their sword-sharp eyes.

Fearing a direct confrontation, Kaama hid himself out of view of the serenely seated figure of Siva and began to wonder what to do. He saw Uma approaching, and was suddenly filled with renewed confidence in having found a female accomplice. What was a crisis was now a cake-walk! As he bent his sugar-cane bow—the poet makes a delightful play on words here—Kaama thought, "Even if this bow of the form of sugar-cane, *karumburuvam* (*karumbu + uruvam*) be broken in the bargain, why should I worry? Have I not the black brows, *karumburuvam* (*karum + buruvam*)¹¹ of Uma, to stand in as two more brows"! What followed this is history. As Kaama released the arrows, he was burnt to ashes by a ray from Siva's third eye. Later, leaving that spot, Siva returned to Kailas and calling the sages to His side told them that Parvati was engaged in long Tapas for gaining Him as her husband, and so He instructed them to go to Himavan and inform him that Siva was happy to seek her hand in marriage. Himavan and his family were thrilled to hear of this. The auspicious date for the Supreme alliance was fixed and communicated back to the Lord. Soon invitations were despatched to the near and dear—the seven (kinds of) hills, the seven oceans, devas, siddhas and rishis. Soon thereafter the oceans, the garland-like meandering rivers, the Blue-mountain and other ranges, and Siddhas and Munis and Devas began to arrive. The Eight directions on earth were jammed with chariots and flags, the free space above was packed with parked vehicles of space. The streets were filled with garlands, festoons, and stumps of large-leaf plantains and areca palms planted as arches over doorways. The fragrance of the civet-paste obtained from the hills charmed the environs. The pomp and circumstance shamed Vaikuntha, Brahmaloaka, Kubera's Alagaapuri and Indra's Amaraavati put together. The ladies of the hills bathed the bride in the waters from Ganga. Her slim waist weighted with silken dresses, Uma was decorated with ornaments of pearl and gem and garlands of fragrant flower, and adorned with the Kasturi Tilaka on her forehead. Siva, habitual wearer of the sacred ash, who scorched to ashes the flower wielding Smara (Kaama), now Himself was bedecked with flowers from the divine Kalpaka tree! Aided by Brahma and others, who clothed Him in habits studded with diamonds, Siva for once forsook from His neck and arms the fearsome snakes that concealed lustrous diamonds in their heads (*maa mani ppanigal neekki*), and put on necklets and armlets of nine gems (*maa mani ppanigal pootti*). Then sporting a brilliant bejeweled crown that seemed as if the heavenly stars had all gathered at His tresses to be near their Master the crescent Moon and wearing kundalas (large rings) that made it seem as if the Sun and Moon of His eyes had taken residence just

¹¹ *buruvam* (also pronounced as *puruvam*) is the Tamil for the Sanskrit *bhruva* (Brow)

below His ears, the resplendent bridegroom mounted the Rishabha, bull. When Vishnu best-man came near and uttered words of praise, the Lord lovingly spoke to him; when Brahma, lord of the lotus-bloom, approached in respectful obeisance, he was greeted with a nod of the crown (that 'contained' the head of the Infinite); when Indra next came forward singing a paean of praise, Siva the Plenum of Stillness bestowed on him a special smile! The other gods followed, paying their obeisance. Had the crescent moon, nourished by the Ganges hidden in His tresses, grown so large as to become the wide, white canopy held aloft above Him? Were the two chowries (whisk fans waved by royal attendants) the white spray of the Ganges and the Moon? As the Lord proceeded now towards Kailas, Vishnu, lord of Lakshmi, followed with the betel-bag, Indra, king of the celestial Kalpaka, carried the Taambula vessel to receive the red remains, Brahma fanned, while Narada's sweet strains and the drone of his divine Tamboura floated afar. Yama was just a wee bit behind bringing the wooden sandals, while Vaayu was busy burning Saambraani (incense of fragrant benzoin) and Isana duly carried in velvet the regal sword. While Saraswati and Lakshmi sprinkled holy rose-water on all the guests, the divine damsels bore bags holding rare garments, the Naga nymphs came carrying apparel sewn with all sorts of gems; and the Kinnaras playing on their lutes, and the Vidyaadaras singing in chorus "Pallaandu, Pallaandu" (Long live!), and the clang of cast bells, the rhythm of diverse drums, the crash of cymbals and solemn siren of conch was a *son et lumiere* truly for the gods! As the Lord rode through the city of Himavan, the women along the streets feasted their eyes on the one who would marry their princess. Some said: "Ah! Uma's Tapas has not been in vain." Some craned curious necks wondering: "Which is the eye of fury which burnt up Cupid?" Some others pronounced: "All the archery of Ananga (Kaama) is to no purpose really, for all of creation remained placid to his passion as long as Siva remained in Yoga. On the other hand, even with Kaama no more, all are now aquiver with ardour merely by the Pinaakin¹² (Siva) bestirring himself to desire. Surely it is He who is the primal cause of pining passion!" Himavan leading his mountainous family came forth and welcomed the groom and his swelling crowds amidst much bonhomie and mutual embrace. With Brahma giving Him a helping hand, the Immeasurable, beyond beginning and end, alighted from the Bull-mount. The waving of saffron water and light followed. Then, resting His right hand on both hands of the best-man (Vishnu), the Lord proceeded to the hall of marriage, and took the groom's seat before the glowing fire. With their ample breasts announcing their origins, the maidens of the mountains conducted Kaali (Parvati the black beauty) the embodiment of Grace, as if she were a delicate flower, to the right side of her consort. As the moment of Muhurta neared, Brahma progenitor of the Vedas, now as the chief priest, voiced them once again. The ritual came to a close when the Primal One offered puffed rice to the ghee-fed flames, and then, chanting the crucial mantras circumambulated the Fire (his own essence), holding the hand of the Virgin, mother of the seven worlds.

When the gods gathered to pay their obeisance to the newly-married the Lord acquiesced in their combined entreaty, and, to the delight of Rati, resurrected Kaama from the ashes, now Ananga (bodiless). The marriage over, the gods dispersed, each returning to his or her station in the cosmic scheme.

Ganesa and Subrahmanya were born soon thereafter and while the gods, who had suffered long enough, watched in suspense, Subrahmanya waged war with the redoubtable Taarakaasura and destroyed him with his valiant Vale (spear).

¹² Wielder of the Trident (Pinaka)

THE SELF

By David Frawley

THE Self is the Self. Its identity is intrinsic. I am who I am. I am that I am. The Self has no identity. It is pure identity, Being itself. This is the ultimate equation, the solution to all Questions, which is their dissolution, in which all things become equal. all existence becomes one.

The true Self can never be another. It can never be a thing. To think that I am this or that is to lose my identity as pure I am. To think I need this or that is to fall into dependency on the external. is to become caught in a stream of dependency, as the external can never be intrinsic or independent.

To have an image of one's Self is to lose it, is to make it into another, an object for others, a commodity in the world. To become something is to lose one's identity as the pure Subject and become an object among objects in an uncertain world.

We suffer because we do not have a Self. We have no intrinsic identity but depend for our feeling of being on some thing or person we are connected with. Identity which is dependent, which is given by another, like a name or title, is a fiction. It is a superimposition of the mind and though it may distract us for a time, cannot afford us peace.

We suffer because we seek our Self in the not-self, the Subject in the object. We try to find happiness by achievement and acquisition. But achievement is becoming a bigger or better object. Acquisition is accumulation of objects around our assumed objectiveness or materiality. But to be an object is to be insentient, gross, dull, dependent and transient. Objectivity is not a state of happiness or fulfillment. Happiness is only possible in eternal existence and this is only possible in the pure Subject.

As long as we think that we need something to be ourselves we will always be dependent

on another. We will always be somebody else or trying to please someone else. We will never be ourselves but will be trapped in the conditioned responses of the minds around us. We will be the victims of other peoples' thoughts.

There is no need but that we be the Self. That we not be another and that we do not become somebody for others. Moreover we should not turn other subjects, which are but different views of our Self, into objects either. In that all beings are redeemed, all life is delivered, as the Self is seen everywhere.

The Subject can never be an object. The Self cannot be the body, the senses, the mind or emotions. It cannot have any role or status or appearance in an outer world or in the world of thought. A subject which is also an object is a misconception, a falsehood that breeds illusion and suffering. It is an idea that cannot be trusted or accepted. It is false logic, the logic of ignorance that equates the subject Consciousness with an object form or quality. It is the cosmic blunder, the great error of the soul, the fall that creates all evil and misery.

Whatever has form or quality, names, image or action, is an object. Whatever has consciousness in essence is pure Subject and not affected by the modifications of the objects in its field of perception. Just as a cup falling from a table and breaking does not hurt us though we observe it, so the qualities of our body and mind do not affect or hurt the true Self, though we observe them more intimately.

Hence we must question this objectification of ourselves and of others. There is no identity in anything because all objects are transient, dependent and composite. They have nothing intrinsic. Identity is only possible in Being itself. There is only pure or absolute identity which is to be all. Any relative or limited identity is a fiction of this confusion between subject and object.

PILGRIMAGE TO KANCHI

BY V.G.

In our last issue, we saw that Kashi, Kanchi and Arunachala form a Holy Triangle because Parvati, the Consort of Lord Siva, blessed these three cities by Her Sacred Presence and Penance. Having already covered Kashi, we now proceed to Kanchi on the next lap of our pilgrimage.

— Editor

"Kashi and Kanchi are the two eyes of Siva" says the *Brahmanda Purana*, discreetly slurring over the third eye of the Lord of the universe. But, by all accounts, we need a third eye, the spiritual eye, ourselves to see the spiritual greatness of Kashi and Kanchi. No ordinary cities these, even judged by solely historical standards. We saw how writers, ancient and modern, mythology and history sing paeans of praise to Kashi. Kanchi, one of the seven *Mokshapuris* (liberation-conferring sacred cities) of India (with Ayodhya, Mathura, Hardwar, Kashi, Ujjain and Dwaraka) and the only one of these *Mokshapuris* situated south of the Vindhyas, is not way behind. While three cities each, of these seven, are exclusively dedicated to Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu, it is noteworthy that Kanchi is the only one which has traditionally been sacred to both the *Saivites* (worshippers of Siva) and *Vaishnavites* (worshippers of Vishnu), besides being a great centre of *Sakti*-worship. *Vamana Purana* says : *Nagareshu Kanchi, Purusheshu Vishnu* - "Among towns Kanchi is the best; among men Vishnu". It was not for nothing that Kanchi was called one of the eyes of Siva ! Kalidasa, one of India's greatest poets, who hailed from and flourished in Ujjain, had high praise for Kanchi.

'Kanchi' means 'waistband' in Sanskrit, and it is said that this jewel of a town is so named because it is the waistband on Earth personified as the Mother. *Kanchipuranam, Kanchimahatmyam, Kamakshivilasam* and other texts refer to Kanchi as the navel (*naabhisthaana*) of the Earth. Among other names of Kanchi are *Pralayajit, Sivapuram, Brahmapuram, Satyauratakshetram, Kamakotipuri, Tapomayam, Kamapitham*, and so on.



The Saivite saints, *Nayanmars*, and the Vaishnavite saints, *Alwars*, referred to Kanchi as 'Kachchi'. So did Pattinatthar, the great Tamil *Jnani*-poet, whose songs, charged with *vairaagya* (dispassion), usually end with a reference to "*Kachchi Ekamban*".

Six of the renowned sixty-three Saivite saints belonged to Tondaimandalam, a region of which a Tamil poet of ancient times sang: "Its people never speak untruth even if offered the world as price for a lie", and of which Kanchi was the capital. To that region belonged also Sekhizhar, the well-known author of *Periyapuranam*, the hagiography *par excellence* of the "Sixty-three", which had a profound influence on the boy Venkataraman who later became Bhagavan Ramana. Kanchi, as dear to the votaries of Vishnu as to those of Siva, is also associated with the earliest of Vaishnavite saints like Poygai Alwar, Budattu Alwar, Pey Alwar, Tirumalisai Alwar and Tirumangai Alwar. It was here that Sri Vedanta Desikar, the last of the Vaishnavite *acharyas*, was born. Sri Ramanuja, the great Vaishnavite *Acharya*, studied and spent many years here.

Kanchi is indeed a city of temples, with its 108 Siva temples and 18 Vishnu temples of various sizes. In Kanchi one can surely say : "If you want to see a temple, look around." Kanchi has been referred to as *Bhukailasa*, the earthly *Kailasa*, because the chief gods of the heaven have beautiful tem-

ples here and in appropriate situations. Chief among the Siva temples is the Ekamresvara Temple of which the great Tamil saint-singer Manikkavachakar said more than a millennium ago : "The lustrous Kachchi Tiruvekampan temple much adored everywhere". The chief Linga that is now worshipped at this Temple is said to be the same sand Linga which the Divine Mother fashioned, worshipped and hugged, and indeed it looks different from other lingas. Let us go back in time to the days of the *Puranas*.

The *Arunachala Puranam* says that when Siva was intensely engaged in the task of creating, sustaining and re-creating the universe, His Consort Parvati, in a playful mood, closed His eyes with Her palm, an act which plunged the cosmos in darkness and the entire creation in untold misery and confusion. To work off the sin accruing from this unmindful act, penitent Parvati decided to come down to earth and do penance. After visiting Kashi where She engaged in acts of charity, promoted *dharm*a and brought relief to the suffering people, She came to Kanchi, renowned for the efficacy of penance done on its soil. She landed on the banks of the Kampa river where She formed a Linga out of sand and worshipped It as Her Lord Siva. But penance is no penance if there are no hurdles. Hence Siva placed the hurdles to test Parvati's devotion. He released the Ganga from His matted hair, and the river came in a mighty torrent. Kampa was in spate and surged menacingly towards Parvati and the Linga. Parvati did not care for Her safety, but She was anxious that the sand Linga, the object of Her adoration, should not be washed away. In a desperate effort to save the Linga, She embraced It, holding It tight to Her bosom. Siva, the *ashutosha* ("easy to please"), was promptly propitiated and soon He manifested out of the Linga and Parvati rejoined Her Lord.

The Temple is called Ekamresvara Temple because Parvati did penance there under a "single mango" tree (*'Eka' 'Amra'*). It is doubtless a very old mango tree that stands there. Part of its bark is hard like stone. The fruits in its four different branches, representing the four Vedas, are said to have four different tastes (sweet, sour, bitter and pungent). Around this tree, on the *praakaara* (circumambulatory corridor) of the Temple, there are 108 Lingas. Among them is a Linga containing within itself cut-outs of 108 Lingas and another similarly composed of 1008 Lingas. The Saint-singer Pattinathar is said to have observed the vow of silence under this Tree for twelve years and obtained initiation into the *Panchakshara mantra*, viz., "*Om Namassivaaya.*"

The Ekamranatha Linga at the Ekamresvara Temple is one of the *Panchabhoota* (Five Elements) Lingas. It represents *prithvi* (earth), the other four elements being represented at Tiruvaanaikkaaval near Tiruchchirappalli (water), Arunachala (fire), Kaalahasti (air) and Chidambaram (space or ether). So this is one more jewel on Kanchi's crown !

The Kamakshi Temple is an important centre of *Sakti* worship, along with Madurai Meenakshi and Kashi Visalakshi Temples. The *Sakti Peethas* are variously grouped as 108, 51, 3 etc. In every one of these, *Kamakoshtam* (Kamakshi Shrine at Kanchi) finds a prominent place.

KANCHI

City of
Spiritual Splendour



Mother Kamakshi
in Her
Divine Glory

Her Golden Chariot

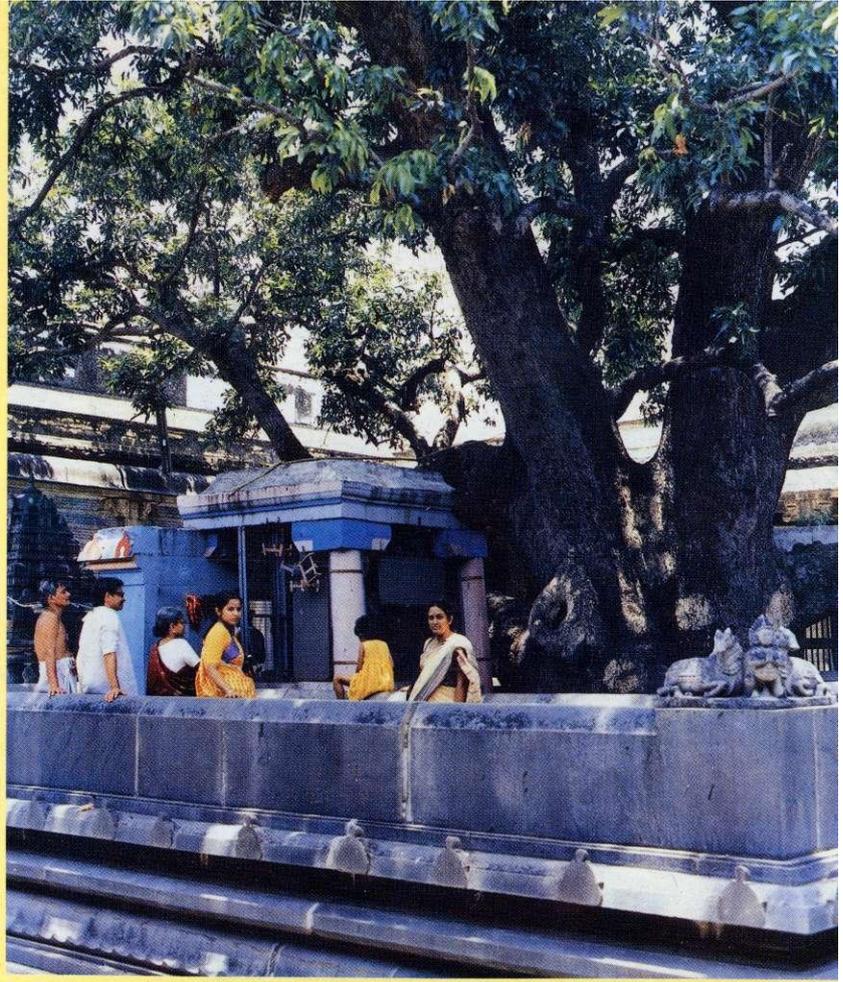


Sri Kamakshi Temple with its unique golden tower



WITH COMPLIMENTS FROM
JAINSONS
MADRAS

The Holy
Mango Tree



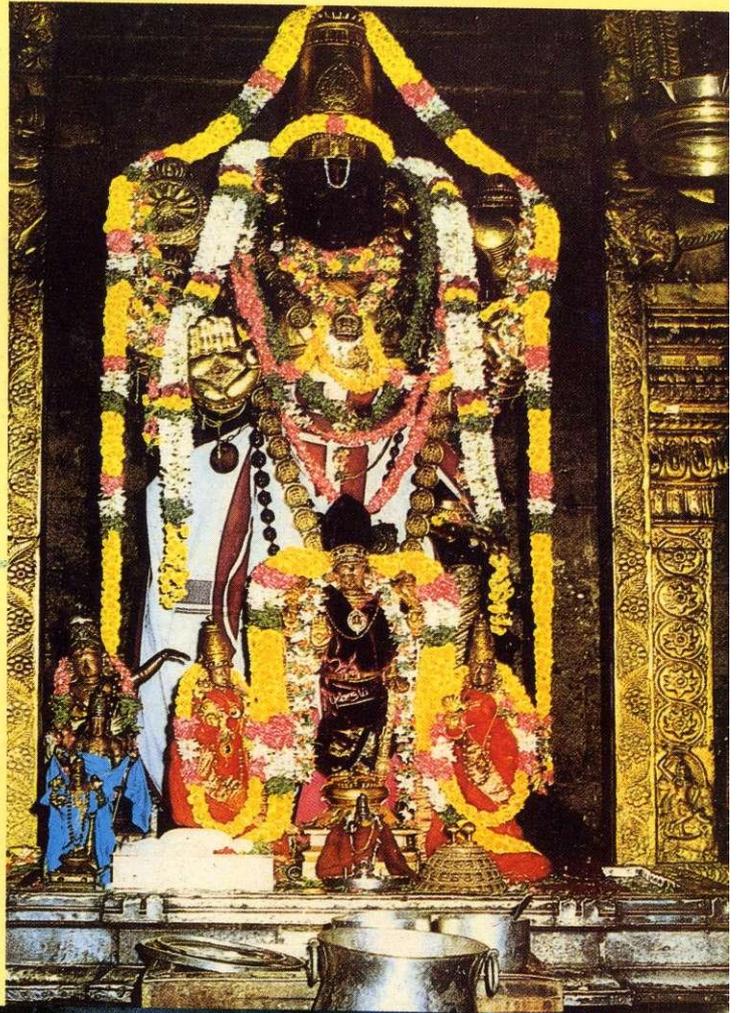
picturesque view of
the Ekambareswarar Temple.



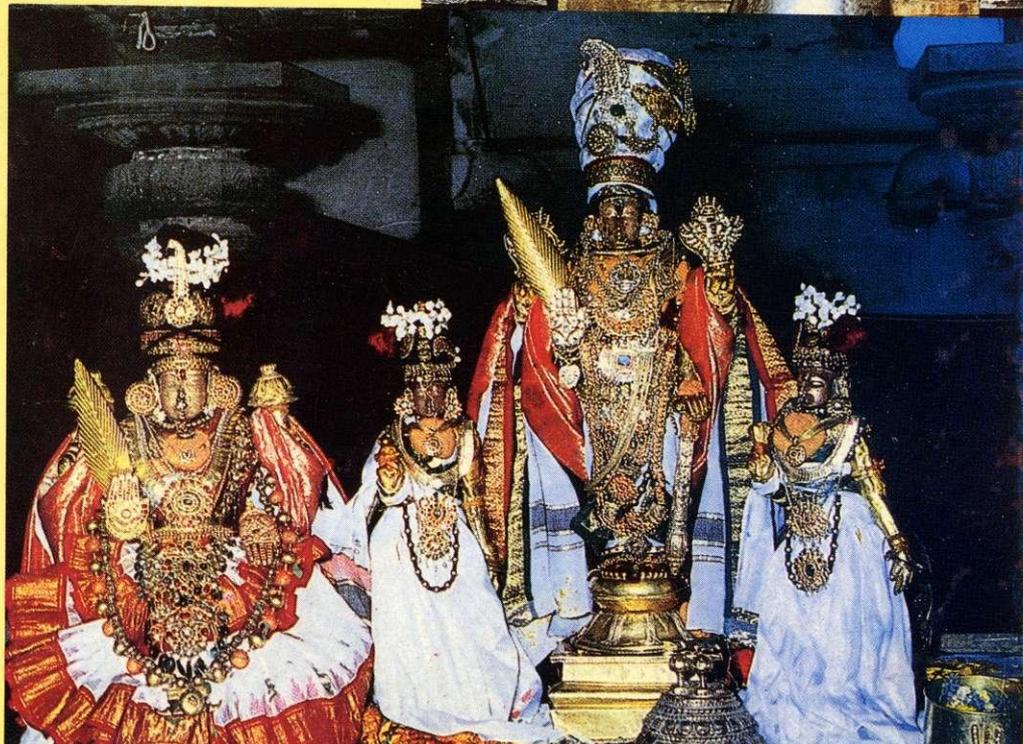


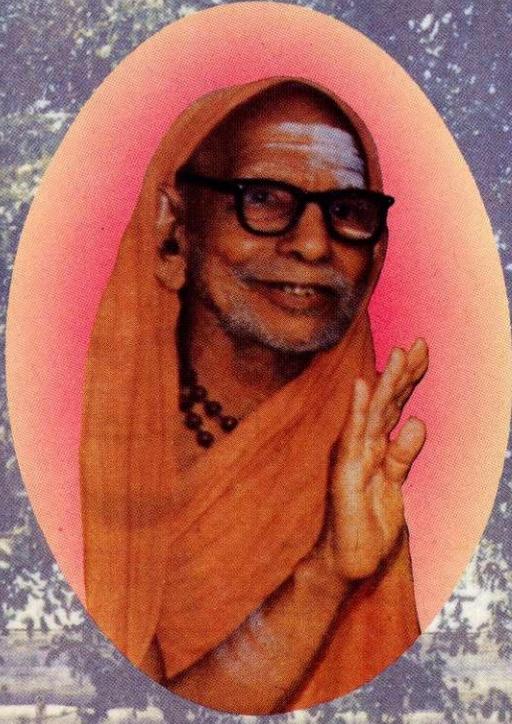
Chakratzwar: God of the Wheel

Sri Varadaraja Perumal



Perumal with His Consorts





(Inset)
Kanchi Acharya:
His Holiness Sri Chandrasekarendra
Saraswathi

Mantap

Sri Kamakshi shines as the *Parasakti* (Supreme Power) bestowing on those who worship Her all that they desire, drawing and blessing everyone by the mere power of Her look, since She is endowed with all the three Basic Energies — Saraswati the Will-Energy, Lakshmi the Knowledge-Energy and Parvati the Work (Activity)-Energy. The very word Kamakshi is defined as One whose eyes (*aksha*) are *Kaa* (Saraswathi) and *Maa* (Lakshmi). Another etymological derivation would make Kamakshi the very Basic Power behind the Trinity, the three eyes representing *Ka* (Brahma), *Ma* (Vishnu) and *A* (Siva). It is said that this All-Auspicious Kamakshi was adored by Paramasiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Indra and other gods, and seers like Vasishtha, Viswamitra, Agastya and others and that they were blessed by Her with everything auspicious.

In the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Kamakshi Temple, there is an image of Goddess Kamakshi facing the *Sri Chakra* in the east and seated in *Padmasana* (Lotus posture). She wears a crown, in Her four divine hands, She carries *paasa* (noose), *ankusa* (elephant crook), a sugarcane bow and five-flower-arrows, and wears the sun and moon as Her ear-rings. It is said that the noose represents the Will-Energy, the elephant-crook the Knowledge-Energy, the bow and the flower-arrows the Work-Energy. Another interpretation found in the *Lalita Sahasranama* says that the Devi (the Goddess) controls the desire of the *jivas* (creatures, individuals) through the noose, their anger through the crook, their mind through the sugarcane bow and the five senses (eyes, ears, mouth, nose and skin) through the five flower-arrows.

The *Sri Chakra* mounted in front of Kamakshi is the symbolic diagram of the Goddess. It is this *Chakra* which constitutes the *Kamakoti Peetha* (*Sakti* Powerhouse). Worshipped by sages Durvasa, Daumya, Parasurama in the earlier *Yugas* (aeons), it was recharged in this *Yuga* by Adi Sankara. The *Kamakoti Peetha* has verily acquired the power of the Presence of the Goddess in all its plenitude. It is noteworthy that Adi Sankara had the entire town of Kanchi reconstructed on the model of *Sri Chakra*. His soul-stirring hymns of *Tripurasundari* are said to have been composed here.

As proof of the supremacy of *Sakti* in Kanchi, all the main temples of the town have been built facing the Kamakshi Temple, and during festival days, images taken out in procession (*Utsavamurtis*) of various deities proceed along the *Rajaveethis* (royal roads) which go round this Temple. The Kamakshi Temple, situated almost at the centre of the town, is the focus of its religious life. The remarkable proof of the Mother-Power's full manifestation as Kamakshi is that though there are 108 Siva temples at Kanchi, none of them has the usual *Sakti* sub-shrine, since all the *Sakti-Kalaas* (aspects) are condensed in the one figure of Kamakshi.

There is a small Annapoorani shrine in the Kamakshi Temple, reminding us of Parvati's role as provider of food at Kashi before She went to Kanchi.

Kanchi is a special point in the Advaitic map of India. After vanquishing dialecticians of various philosophical schools, Adi Sankara, the invincible, is said to have ascended the *Sarvajna Pitha* (Throne of Omniscience) at Sri Kamakshi Temple. The great *Acharya*, impressed by the sacred aura of Kanchi, decided to make the town his permanent residence and established his fifth Advaitic centre there. The renowned historian Nilakantha Sastri writes in his classical *History of South India* : "He (Sankara) founded a number of *mathas* in different parts of India, the best known being those at Sringeri, Dvaraka, Badrinath, Puri and Kanchi." It is of note that, while we rarely find sculptural representations of Sri Sankara elsewhere in India, Kanchi abounds in statues, statuettes and bas-reliefs of the *Acharya* in many of its temples. Sri Sankara's life-size image in the Kamakshi Temple is supremely inspiring.

Some believe that Adi Sankara attained *videhamukti* at Kanchi, but others hold that it was in Kedarnath, in the far north.

Siva Kanchi, which contains the Ekamresvara and Kamakshi Temples, is known as *Periya* (Big) Kanchi while Vishnu Kanchi in which the Varadaraja Perumal Temple is situated is called *Chinna* (Little) Kanchi. The Varadaraja Perumal Temple, the most important Vishnu temple of Kanchi, is a majestic complex of edifices with tall towers and high walls and a hundred-pillared *mantapam* famous for its artistic excellence. The temple stands on a man-made hillock called *Hastigiri* (Elephant Hill).

The presiding deity is Varadaraja, royal bestower of boons. The tall image of Varadaraja with His hand raised in *abhayamudra* (sign of reassurance, promise of refuge) is indeed inspiring. Among His many names, both in Sanskrit and Tamil, are *Devarajaswami* (Lord King of the gods), *Pranataarthiharan* (Remover of the affliction of devotees), *Kalivaradan* (Bestower of boons in the *Kali* Age), *Manikkavaradan* (Jewel of a *Varada*). The Devi, the Lord's Consort, Herself a great bestower of boons, is named *Perundevi* or *Mahadevi* (Great Goddess).

One of the most admired pieces of sculpture in this temple is that of the three-eyed *Chakrattaazhvaar* (God of the Wheel) with 16 hands, with 16 weapons in his hands, symbolic of punishment to the wicked and protection to the virtuous, with flames leaping around the head and the wheel. A unique feature of this piece is the two-in-one sculpture; behind the God of the Wheel is seen Yoga Narasimha with a hexagonal wheel separating the two deities.

Enhancing and reflecting the magnificence of the Varadaraja Perumal Temple shines its beautiful tank.

To Kanchi goes the unique distinction of having the first structural temple (as different from cave-temple) of Tamil Nadu in the Kailasanath Temple. This beautiful temple, abounding in sculptures of superb artistry, is situated a little away from the town amidst fields but it is worth visiting.

Besides a Siva Kanchi and Vishnu Kanchi, there once were also a Bouddha Kanchi and a Jaina Kanchi. Buddhism had struck deep roots in

Kanchi. It was the birth-place of Dharmapala Bodhisattva (Bodhidharma), the originator of the *Ch'an* (Zen) school of Buddhism. It was from Kanchi that illustrious scholars like Dingnaga, Buddhmitra and Buddhakeerti went to Nalanda to teach at its famous University.

Hiuen-Tsang (or Yuan-Chuang), the reputed Chinese pilgrim-historian, records that Gautama Buddha visited Kanchi, then a town about six miles in circumference. It is said that the Buddha preached the *Dhamma* at Kanchi. Asoka is said to have built several *stupas* (mounds commemorating the Buddha's *Mahanirvana*) at Kanchi. The Chinese pilgrim also records that when he visited the Tondaimandalam in the 7th century A.D., there were in its capital, Kanchi, hundreds of *Sangharamas* and ten thousand *Theravadin* priests!

Kanchi was also known as a reputed Jain centre in the beginning of the Christian era. There is epigraphic evidence to support this fact.

A few Buddha images, like the one in the *Vasanta Mantapam* in the Kamakshi Temple, are still found here. It is said that the Kamakshi Temple was once under the control of the Buddhists and the Goddess was worshipped by them as "*Sri Prajna Paramita*" ("Perfect Wisdom")

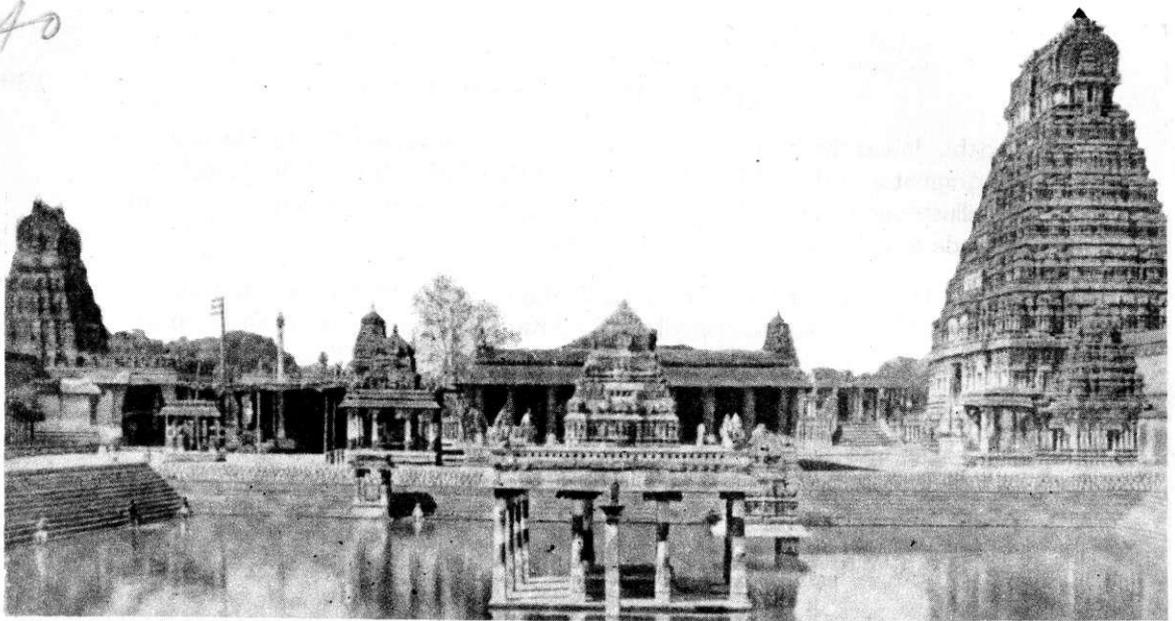
In Kanchi, truly, one hears the heart-beat of the Tamil people's literary, cultural and religious life. Many traditions have blended in it, enriched it and have become part of its greatness.

In Tamil literature, the Jain and Buddhist influences have survived. Epics like *Silappadhikaram* (The Jewelled Anklet) and *Manimekhalai* are masterpieces of verbal architecture that no flood has been able to wash away. By the way, *Manimekhalai*, the Buddhist classic, speaks of the migration to Kanchi from Puhar, a coastal town and capital of the Cholas, of a large number of its citizens who survived the fury of the sea which swallowed up Puhar. This literary work also speaks of its heroine Manimekhalai taking initiation into Buddhism at Kanchi.

In passing, it might be mentioned that Hazrat Hameed Aul of Punjab, the Islamic Saint, who was stunned on seeing that a dead fish brought by him revived in Kanchi, made it his centre for religious worship and service.

While legend takes the origin of Kanchi to the timeless past, historians put its beginnings around the 4th century B.C. And what a chequered history it has had! The principal city of the early Pallavas, the Cholas and the later Pallavas, of the Vijayanagar Kings and the Kakatiyas, it was briefly with the Pandyas. Buddhists, Jains, the Moghuls, the Karnataka Nawabs and the Hindus, like Sanskrit and Tamil, flourished in this town. So did art and architecture.

Patanjali of the 2nd century B.C. mentions Kanchi in his *Mahabhashya*. At the beginning of the Christian era, Kanchi had a reputation for its learned teachers in its *Ghatikasthaana* (Sanskrit University), comparable, says a western historian, to that of the university cities of mediaeval Europe. Appar, the great Tamil saint-singer, sang: "Kanchi, the great city



where learning is a shoreless sea". It is worth mentioning here that Kautilya of the 4th century B.C., popularly known as Chanakya, who helped Chandragupta Maurya found the "greatest of India's ancient empires", and the author of *Arthashastra* (Science of Polity) hailed as "a most precious source-book for many aspects of ancient Indian life", hailed from Kanchi.

The dynasties that built the various temples in Kanchi have vanished but the temples still stand, even if some of them rather vestigially, but nonetheless fascinating. The ancient city is still very much alive and is being increasingly equipped with the fruits of modern civilisation. The dream of the Tamil poet Bharati who sang, "We shall make a gadget which will make the discourses of Kashi scholars heard in Kanchi", has more than come true for they could now not only be heard but viewed too. The communication revolution, as they say, has annihilated distance ! However, the beauty of Kanchi, as of Kashi, still lies in its temples and their peace and sanctity, in the wisdom, that is old and new, of the past and the religious fervour that it richly symbolises.

In *Arunachala Puranam* Lord Siva says (to Parvati) : "The sin that accrued due to your closing My eyes has left you by virtue of the excellent *puja* offered by you in this sacred place (Kanchi). To the south of this holy place, a town will come into being and shed lustre. Liberation is vouched to anyone who but thinks of it. . . If you come there, O Woman, I shall grant you a place as my left half."

It is but meet that Kanchi where Parvati won back Her divine right of union with Her Lord, is to this day a very important centre of *Sakti* worship, like Kashi, the other town blessed by Her visit.

Kanchi shares another great honour with Kashi and Arunachala. It is one of the *Mukti Kshetras* (Centres of Liberation). To die in Kashi, to think of Arunachala and to meditate in Kanchi brings Liberation.

In the next issue we shall conclude the pilgrimage trilogy with a visit to Sri Arunachalam.

THE JAGADGURU : HIS LIFE

By Prof. S. Ramaswami

NINETY odd years ago there was born to the middle class Kannada-speaking family of Subrahmanya Iyer, Deputy Inspector of Schools in the Presidency of Madras, three young boys of whom the middle one happened to be one of exceptional brightness and charm. He had shone brilliantly at school, in studies as well as in the extra-curricular field of school dramatics. Young Swaminathan — that was his name—pleaded movingly as young Arthur with Hubert: "Is it my fault that I am Geoffrey's son?" and had won applause in a school presentation of Shakespeare's *King John*. He had also learnt then to regard gold bangles on his wrists as entirely dispensable. With the seemingly indiscriminate compassion of the Most High, he gave away the bangles to a trickster named Ponnuswami, but while making the latter happy, he himself seemed happy enough to say "Ponnuswami is a very good man". He had taught young Swaminathan to regard *kanchana* (gold) as a fetter on the human spirit!



There was an initiation, at Kalavai of Swaminathan's cousin, into the *Pithatipaty* (Pontificate) of the Kanchi Kamakoti Sankara Mutt. The family was on its way, *via* Kanchi from Villupuram where young Swaminathan's father was detained by official work, to Kalavai in the old North Arcot District, to comfort the mother of the cousin as well as to watch the glorious ceremony. The Head of the Mutt was passing into *samadhi* and the cousin was to replace him on the *pitha*. But the cousin too took ill and the authorities urgently took young Swaminathan away in a *jutka* from Kanchi to Kalavai. He had been given no hint of why he was being hurried away, ahead of his family. At Kalavai, he was initiated into *sannyasa* and he ascended the Kanchi Sankara Pitha as one of its most illustrious heads.

Thanks to the far-seeing dynamism of the *Mahapurusha*, Sri V. Krishnaswami Iyer, Governor's Executive Councillor, Founder of the Indian Bank and Founder of the Madras Sanskrit College and Ayurvedic Dispensary, young Swaminathan was put through an intensive course of Vedantic studies by some of the giants of the Sanskrit College staff of those days. **Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati** — this was his name as the Head of the Sankara Mutt—astonished his teachers by the brilliant originality as well as the precocious quickness of his grasp of *Mimamsa*, *Tarka*, *Nyaya* and *Vedanta*! And the young Sankaracharya strode this earth as an authentic Jagadguru, making his devotees at home and abroad, from Kailas and Kasi in the North to Kanyakumari in the South at the mastery, the self-assurance, the humility, the dedication and self-regulating rigour of the young *sannyasin*. He journeyed rapidly across the country as Adi Sankara had done, mostly on foot, practising a rigorous personal *tapas* and in a spirit of brooding meditateness. His store of *tapas*-won grace is truly inexhaustible. His early pronouncements were, doubtless very naturally almost inevitably, marked by a seeming acceptance of current orthodoxy in many matters, e.g., the crucial question of Harijan entry into temples. But his lively, powerful mind was all the time at the bidding of the spirit within which counselled, intrepidly as well as with a far-seeing wisdom, the need to go beyond orthodoxy to the essentials of a *dharma* which had called itself '*Sanaatana*' — of no particular age or section of society.

The humility of this sage is both charming and illuminating. He would make his visitors feel that he was listening to them, absorbing all they had to say to him. But his spiritual insight could penetrate to the very depth of the being of his visitors. And agnostics and militant atheists were as charmed into devotion to him as those who put their trust in him as persons traditionally bound to him and his Mutt. Wherever he went, people flocked to him seeking comfort and grace at his hands and

thrilled that there was in him someone who could lend a patient, compassionate ear to their numerous tales of woe.

The spirit of self-denial, of sacrificial avoidance of everything that seemed dispensable, including the secular authority attached to the Headship of the Mutt has made him an altogether exemplary *sannyasin*. While devotees crowd around him wherever he may be, seated on the bare ground or moving on foot to a temple or a tank, he is most of the time 'alone', with the *Atman*, and therefore with all around him.

Two episodes stand out in a career rich in notable achievement in the field of the spirit. Gandhiji found in the *khaddar*-clad *sannyasin* Head of an orthodox Sankara Mutt, a sage and saint whose conversation was sufficient food for him. When the mind and spirit had been amply fed, the body did not matter!

When the author of *A Search in Secret India* met him first at Chingleput in Madras Presidency and sought help in his explorations of the mind and heart of the real India, he was asked to go to Tiruvannamalai and meet Sri Bhagavan Ramana who, in his own person, was a shining example of Self-Realization, of spiritual achievement reached by processes far simpler and easier than those of the Sankara Mutt. Paul Burnton, thus led and guided by Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, revealed to the world the most vital secret his search in India had yielded, that the ascent to the spirit in man was, to the truly earnest seeker, exceedingly simple and easy.

The *Periyaval* (The Great one), as he now has come to be known, lives as a flame of spiritual achievement which the rest of mankind would have to struggle for through several births and hundreds of years of earnest striving. All of us are, in a very essential sense, his children. His compassion for our well-being, material and spiritual, is truly boundless. His life is a continuous Revelation, a

marvellous Scripture in itself, an authentic commentary on the central teaching of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*.

When he looks at you, concernedly and penetratingly, he is busy providing you, like a doctor in constant attendance, the most efficacious medicine for your real ills – which are not, ever, of the body but of the spirit within. When he speaks to you, it is almost as if the *Para Brahman* has become mysteriously articulate. When he watches you struggling hard, and often in vain, to achieve a moderate coherence in communicating your woes, you feel that speech on your part is really and truly an irrelevance. The Dhanvantri on duty has assumed his Doctor's Mantle and mandate. If he asks you to do *Nama Japa* of Sri Rama, it is with a conviction of its proven efficacy, for was it not this name which sustained him on his way to the Kanchi *Pitadipatya*? When he says to you, the secret of true happiness lies

not in wealth or station but inwards of you, he presents you with his own living example. Marcus Aurelius said, "Even in a palace, life may be led well". Even in this world of woes, one can achieve peace – which is also joy – of the mind. Courage, brother, do not stumble, there is a star which guides the humble. Trust in God and do the right. The *Acharya* is a veritable lighthouse to all of us struggling with our night foundered ship and deeming the devil himself an island to rest in. He is that star which guides the humble. He is the guide *par excellence* who tells you, Not that, Not that is the pathway to what you seek--bliss eternal and mental peace. This, This is the way, the Life and the Truth — the life of utter simplicity, of wantlessness, of renunciation. It is a message as old as the *Isavasyopanishad*: *Tena tyaktena bhunjitah; Kasyachit dhanam?* Enjoy everything in communion with others. For, whose is all this wealth? (Implying that all there is belongs to All.)

This and That

By Smt. Kanakamma

I was born and grew up in a family which was known for its orthodoxy and its devotion to the Sankaracharya Swami of Kanchi. When I came away at a young age to Sri Ramanasramam, leaving the family atmosphere and the ways of the world, and began to tread the Bhagavan Ramana way, my family people were not able to reconcile themselves to it. Though they were displeased, they could not try and dissuade me because I had the sympathy and support of my father who understood my aspirations.

As the members of my family were close devotees of the Sage of Kanchi, they were apt to have talked to him about me. After I moved to Tiruvannamalai, I had visited the Kanchi *Acharya* several times and had his *darshan* but he never directly or obliquely, made any critical reference to my chosen way of life.

On the other hand, every time I went to the *Acharya* for *darshan* he would make the kindest enquiries and make a benedictory gesture with his hand, with a most benign smile on his face. I took it as his unspoken approval.

I once visited the Sage of Kanchi along with my aged grandmother. It was her deep wish that I should spend some time at Kanchi having frequent *darshans* of the *Acharya* and she asked me to stay back with her. However, I did not agree. My grandma talked about this to the *Acharya* in a plaintive mood and requested him to bid me stay there.

I was overjoyed to hear that *Mahatma's* reply; looking at me with compassion, he told my grandma: "இங்கேயானா என்ன, அங்கேயானா என்ன?" (What difference does it make if she is here or is there?).

What more did I want in life? Deeply moved by his words which clearly conveyed his blessings to me for my way of life, I gazed at the *Acharya* in gratitude with tears in my eyes!

BRUNTON ON THE JAGADGURU

Paul Brunton met the sage at Chingleput in the early thirties. In this account, he relates how the sage guided the seeker to the "Maharishee".

I Look at him in silence. This short man is clad in the ochre coloured robe of a monk and leans his weight on a friar's staff. I have been told that he is on the right side of forty, hence I am surprised to find his hair quite grey.

His noble face, pictured in grey and brown, takes an honoured place in the long portrait gallery of my memory. That elusive element which the French aptly term *spirituel* is present in this face. His expression is modest and mild, the large dark eyes being extraordinarily tranquil and beautiful. The nose is short, straight and classically regular. There is a rugged little beard on his chin, and the gravity of his mouth is most noticeable. Such a face might have belonged to one of the saints who graced the Christian Church during the Middle Ages, except that this one possesses the added quality of intellectuality. I suppose we of the practical West would say that he has the eyes of a dreamer. Somehow, I feel in an inexplicable way that there is something more than mere dreams behind those heavy lids.

I broach the matter of my quest and His Holiness questions me about the different Yogis or holy men I have so far met. After that, I frankly tell him:

"I would like to meet someone who has high attainments in Yoga and can give some sort of proof or demonstration of them. There are many of your holy men who can only give one more talk when they are asked for this proof. Am I asking too much?"

The tranquil eyes meet mine.



There is a pause for a whole minute. His Holiness fingers his beard.

"If you are seeking initiation into real Yoga of the higher kind, then you are not seeking too much. Your earnestness will help you, while I can perceive the strength of your determination; but a light is beginning to awaken within you which will guide you to what you want, without doubt."

I am not sure whether I correctly understand him.

"So far I have depended on myself for guidance. Even some of your ancient sages say that there is no other god than that which is within ourselves." I hazard.

And the answer swiftly comes:

"God is everywhere. How can one limit Him to one's own self? He supports the entire universe."

I feel that I am getting out of my depth and immediately turn the talk away from this semi-theological strain.

"What is the most practical course for me to take?"

"Go on with your travels. When you have finished them, think of the various Yogis and holy men you have met; then pick out the one who makes most appeal to you. Return

to him, and he will surely bestow his initiation upon you."

I look at his calm profile and admire its singular serenity.

"But suppose, Your Holiness, that none of them makes sufficient appeal to me. What then?"

"In that case you will have to go on alone until God Himself initiates you. Practise meditation regularly; contemplate the higher things with love in your heart; think often of soul and that will help to bring you to it. The best time to practise is the hour of waking; the next best time is the hour of twilight. The world is calmer at those times and will disturb your meditations less."

He gazes benevolently at me. I begin to envy the saintly peace which dwells on his bearded face. Surely, his heart has never known the devastating upheavals which have scarred mine? I am stirred to ask him impulsively:

"If I fail, may I then turn to you for assistance?"

Shri Shankara gently shakes his head.

"I am at the head of a public institution, a man whose time no longer belongs to himself. My activities demand almost all my time. For years I have spent only three hours in sleep each night. How can I take personal pupils? You must find a master who devotes his time to them."

"But I am told that real masters are rare, and that a European is unlikely to find them."

He nods his assent to my statement, but adds: "Truth exists. It can be found."

"Can you not direct me to such a master, one who you know is competent to give me proofs of the reality of higher Yoga?"

His Holiness does not reply till after an interval of protracted silence. "Yes. I know of only two masters in India who could give you what you wish. One of them lives in Benares,

hidden away in a large house, which is itself hidden among spacious grounds. Few people are permitted to obtain access to him; certainly, no European has yet been able to intrude upon his seclusion. I could send you to him, but I fear that he may refuse to admit a European."

"And the other?" My interest is strangely stirred.

"The other man lives in the interior, farther south. I visited him once and know him to be a high master. I recommend that you go to him."

"Who is he?"

"He is called the *Maharishiee*.³ I have not met him, but know him to be a high master. Shall I provide you with full instructions, so that you may discover him?"

A picture flashes suddenly before my mind's eye.

I see the yellow-robed friar, who has vainly persuaded me to accompany him to his teacher. I hear him murmuring the name of a hill. It is:

"The Hill of the Holy Beacon."

"Many thanks, Your Holiness," I rejoin, "but I have a guide who comes from the place."

"Then you will go there?"

I hesitate.

All arrangements have been made for my departure from the South to-morrow," I mutter uncertainly.

"In that case I have a request to make."

"With pleasure."

"Promise me that you will not leave South India before you have met the *Maharishiee*."

I read in his eyes a sincere desire to help me. The promise is given. A benignant smile crosses his face.

"Do not be anxious. You shall discover that which you seek."

The title is derived from Sanskrit. 'Maha' means great: 'Rishiee' means sage or seer. Hence, the Great Sage.

146

THE JAGADGURU: A TALK¹

Can Nature function without God?

YOU see me sitting here on a wooden seat. You know that this seat must have been made by someone. There you see some thing which is the same wood as this, something which has fallen from that tree—a branch lying on the ground. When you see that, you do not think that it has been made by a carpenter. Why? This seat has been given a neat rectangular finish. Pegs have been provided below the seat to keep off floor dust falling on it and to prevent insects from climbing on to it. We conclude that someone must have made this seat because there is an order in it, and this order has been given to it for the purpose of making it useful as a seat. As an inert piece of wood cannot give to itself a neat rectangular finish, provide to itself pegs and fulfil the purpose of making itself useful for man to sit on it, we conclude that it must have been made by an intelligent being.

On the other hand, the branch lying there is a bundle of knots. The order that you find in this seat is absent from it. It does not seem to fulfil any purpose. Therefore we do not see the hand of an intelligent being behind it.

If we see tender unripe mangoes lying scattered under a tree without order or purpose, we do not presume that somebody must have dropped them there. We think that they have fallen from the tree. But if these tender unripe mangoes have been heaped there properly, then we presume that somebody must have heaped them in an orderly way and that his purpose would be to take them home or sell them.

There can be a purpose even when there is no order. If we see clothes, vessels, books etc. lying scattered pell-mell in a house, we see behind this utter disorder the purpose of thieves of taking flight before it would be too late.

In general, where there is order coupled with purpose, we infer that it is the work of an intelligent living being and not that of the inert matter done by itself.

Now let us go into the matter of that branch lying there, which does not seem to have been made by anyone, and its botanical background. Till yesterday when it formed part of that tree, that branch had, functioning inside it with amazing order, like blood vessels in our body, very subtle, most minute tubes conducting water sucked by the roots from the soil, their purpose being to nourish and sustain the tree. It is on this bundle of knots that is a branch that sprouts soft as silk come out. There is tremendous order in the veins running through the leaves. This order serves the purpose of building up life-giving food by means of a green pigment called chlorophyll. It is again on this bundle of knots that the tenderest flower blooms.

In the vegetable kingdom, we talk about the flowering plant and the fruit-bearing tree. There are flowering plants which may not bear fruit but fruit-trees have flowers, with exceptions like the banyan, fig, jack tree, etc.

You would be amazed if you observe how cleverly these two classes of the flowering and the fruit-bearing plants propagate their species.

Flowers bloom beautifully on the flowering plant. There is uncanny order in their designs. Not only that, there is a purpose in their beauty. It is this beauty which attracts the honey-bee to the flower. Apart from the purpose of giving food to the bee, an ever bigger purpose is also fulfilled here. It is the pollination effected by the bee which flits from flower to flower which ensures the propagation of the plant species. In this there is a very intelligent 'trick' which an inert matter could never plan and carry out.

¹ Talk by Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swami of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha

There is another interesting thing in this. There are some flowers which are not bright-hued but plain. But they attract bees by their fragrance. Flowers like jasmine, ape flower (makula), cowslip creeper and *Artabotrya odoratissimus* (manoranjitam) which abound in fragrance are not bright-hued, whereas flowers like *kanakambaram*, *Tagetes erecta* (Tulukka Samanthi) and paper-flower varieties which are colourful lack fragrance. It looks as though it was thought that either bright hue or fragrance would do to attract the bee. The rose is an exception to this sense of economy.

Can an inert matter ever devise such brilliant plans and execute them?

There is yet another beauty in this! Nature seems to be richly endowed with a sense of variety, with the poetic instinct of doing things in different ways. Even as there is the distinction between the fragrant flower and the colourful flower, there are the two classes of morning flowers and night flowers. Flowers like jasmine, the panner flower and a variety of jasmine called *Ramabanam* which flower at night are snow-white so that they may not go unseen.

When we see that everything in the universe goes on with utter regularity and constancy – from the tremendous speed with which protons run around the nucleus of an atom to the way the planets revolve round the sun – we are led to feel that all this is the work of an inert force called Nature. But when you come to think of it, everything from the atom up to the planet is governed by a different law. What an enormous variety of rules and laws are there! What is more, even though there may be the same law for the same group of things, there is a thing called exception to the rule! Just a little while ago we saw as example of this that even in the world of plants, there are exceptions to the rule, like trees which do not flower but bear fruits. So, it is clear, is it not, that Nature is not a mere inert matter but a living intelligent power which delights in artistic variety and beauty?

I referred to the two classes of the fruit-tree and the flowering tree and pointed out how cleverly the flowering tree propagates itself.

The fruit-tree supplies delicious fruits to man. In this another purpose is embedded like the seed in the fruit. We plant the seed of the fruit in our enlightened self-interest in ensuring such supply of fruits for the posterity. In this the larger purpose, which is again a noble self-interest of the tree, of the continuation of the tree's line is fulfilled.

When we investigate like this, what do we see? On the analogy of our premises that "inert matter cannot by itself create order, nor have a purpose, and therefore there must be a carpenter to convert wood into a seat," there must be an infinitely greater carpenter who creates that tree. And it is evident that, as that tree embodies much greater order fulfilling much greater purposes than we are capable of, He is an infinitely greater carpenter than us. Besides, whereas we show off and demonstrate whatever we do, He who creates much greater wonders than we ever can, not only does all this on the quiet and with great subtlety of artistic sense but He lies hidden from our view and makes all our cleverness seem just folly!

Because man won't eat the bitter neem fruit, He creates the crow which likes it. As the crow would not, unlike man, plant the seed to help the propagation of the neem tree, and lest it drop the seed under the tree where it might not grow in the shade, He makes the crow leave the seed with its droppings elsewhere.

By making the tree draw in the carbon dioxide that we breathe out, offering us the delicious fruits that it gives us in exchange, which we in turn give it back as manure, and so on, He has linked countless species, living and inanimate things, into mutually beneficial relationships.

When we reflect on the fact that countless such plant species, mountains, oceans, worlds, stars, planets and so on are mutually interlinked in a most marvellous order fulfilling a great lot of purposes, how can not one understand that what we term as inert Nature is indeed the sport of God who is living consciousness?

148

THE JAGADGURU : A Tribute

By V. Ganesan

THE *Jagadguru*, Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha, who completed 95 years of life on May 20, 1989 is a multifaceted genius, the foremost living example of the Sanskrit figure of speech *Ullekha*. To almost everyone he is a *tapasvin par excellence*, to men of discernment he is a *jnani*, to the orthodox he is a custodian of an ancient tradition, to the blinkered he symbolises the caste system, to the intellectual he is a rare, prodigious mental phenomenon, to some he is sectarian, to others who are more perceptive he is universal. The *Acharya* indeed is a uniquely beautiful blend: youthfully old, eloquently silent, modern and traditional. He is all that Hinduism is. If any individual can be said to be a true epitome of Hinduism, it is this Jagadguru, this sage of Kanchi. A solid monolith of Wisdom, he offers a kaleidoscopic variety of forms to his devotees. Firm and unswerving in his asceticism and other-worldliness, he is ever patiently concerned with the most trivial of his devotees' "mundane problems". One cannot help recalling a few lines from Sage Vasishta:

"...Having obtained release from all kinds of bondage, having gained equanimity in all situations and performing outward actions according to your part, O hero, play your part as you like in the world."

The Sage of Kanchi undoubtedly is a hero among such heroes!

Though viewed differently by different people, the Sage of Kanchi is in truth a *Jnani*, a Liberated Spirit. A *Jnani* can engage in any activity or abstain from all activity. For many years this Sage has been the competent, active occupant of a spiritual throne.

We speak of the Time Spirit throwing up the Man of the Age. But often it is not a



single man. When people are in need of exemplars of more than one path, the Time Spirit (or, is it the Timeless Spirit?) does bring forth these *Men of the Age*. To quote, Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick): "The classic examples of the four *Yogas* in modern times are: *Jnana*, Sri Ramana Maharshi; *Bhakti*, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa; *Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry; and *Karma*, Sri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Peetam, the only one of the above still in the body."¹ (Fortunately, *still*, a quarter century after the Sadhu wrote)

To add to their lustre, these *Men of the Age* do not typify a single path alone. Essentially

1. A Sadhu's Reminiscences of Ramana Maharishi.

a *jnani*, Sri Maharshi was also an ardent *bhakta*, and in addition, a model for *karma* and an inspirer of *karma*, not ritualistic but in the sense that egoless regard for others's welfare should guide over in day-to-day living. Sri Aurobindo's *bhakti* for the Mother Power is well known. He did accept *Jnana's* Oneness of Being, though not as the consummation of the quest. He also prescribed the path of action as permeated by Yoga. Remember, he named his Yoga itself as Integral. The Paramahansa, essentially a *bhakta*, was surely possessed of the supreme Realisation of non-dual *jnana*. In the Sage of Kanchi we have the *Bhakta*, *Yogi* and *Jnani* – all in one.

He is the exemplar *par excellence* of *karma-anushtana* only externally, but essentially he is a *Jnani* through and through. The only conclusion that one can naturally make is that

the *jnani* partakes of the character of the Lord of the Universe. To understand the Kanchi Acharya, it would be helpful to cite the following two seemingly contradictory statements made by the Lord in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“He is immanent in everything and All things are in Him.”

(*Yo maam pasyati sarvatra, sarvam cha mayi pasyati*).

“None is in him, nor is he in anything”

(*Na cha math sthaani bhutaani Na chaaham teshu avasthitah*)

Let us not end on this baffling note, the result of mere analysis. For when we *experience* his presence, he is as simple as Grace itself. It is this divine simplicity that draws the lowliest to his Holy presence and also makes the giants lie low!

Three Commandments

By Smt. Kanakamma

It was an evening in the year 1958. Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swami, Senior *Acharya* of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha was camping in West Mambalam in Madras. When I went to the camp, there was nobody else except a couple of Mutt workers with the *Acharya*. It was indeed a rare opportunity for me to have a quiet, leisurely *darsan*. I bowed before him and stood up with palms joined. The Swami smiled very graciously and asked me, “Are you here (in Madras) these days?” I said “Yes”. He made very kind enquiries about my mother and other family members and then asked, “Are you not still at Sri Ramanasramam in Tiruvannamalai?” I said, “I am there ever since I moved to that place.”

What the Swami said on hearing my reply thrilled me. He said: “ஏகாந்த வாஸமோ?” (“Oh, you live in aloneness?”). I was overwhelmed by his apt, kind words that I could hardly articulate the word “Yes”. I just nodded in assent. The *Acharya* then said, “வேதாந்த சிரவணமோ?” (“And you listen to Vedanta?”). I again nodded. Swami continued, “ஸ்வயம் பாகமோ?” (“And, of course, you cook your own food?”) The three questions of the Swami, which were more affirmative than interrogative in tone, plunged me in pure joy! I said “Swami! Please bless me that I may continue like this.” “Yes yes!”, said the *Acharya* giving me a gracious look and moving his right hand up in a benedictory gesture.

I was, then as now, living alone in an apartment near Sri Ramanasramam. Sri Muruganar was daily giving me lessons on Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Tirattu* (Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi, in Tamil). I cooked my own food! It was astounding the way the *Acharya* in three terse phrases not only summed up my daily life but wholeheartedly endorsed it and blessed it! So powerful are his look and words and so overwhelming his compassion!

SEVEN STEPS FROM HEAVEN:^{*}

A Grim Fairy Tale

By J. Jayaraman

HOW do we learn the rules as children?

The larger an object, the nearer it is to me (my body-idea), and the smaller it is the farther away it is. Any change in its size is interpreted as motion away or towards me (my body-idea). Like repetitive picture frames which produce the effect of motion, repetitive sensations one way or other, are perceived as a pattern. *Here* and *There*, *In* and *Out*, are then the simple rules (which are themselves a higher order of sensations internal to the *Chitta*, that miracle called associative memory). These rules predictably relate sensations to me. *Left* and *Right* are also similar rules derived from the body-idea. I stand before a door with my eyes closed. I well know the (tactile) sensation, the heaviness that accompanies the lifting of one arm (later named as Left arm) towards the door knob. As I do this, I open my eyes and have the additional visual sensation of a hand moving and of the distance between the visual knob and the hand, lessening. Doing this experiment with the other hand produces the opposite effect of increasing its distance from the knob. Any number of repetitions of this using one hand produces always the same result and using the other hand produces the opposite effect. The motion picture effect takes place. I learn to perceive one group (cross referencing the tactile sensation of one hand with the visual sensations that go with it) as distinct from the other group (cross-referencing the tactile sensation of the other hand with the visual sensations that go with it). The distinction is a simple rule which classifies one as Left ("left-hand", represents the tactile, visual and other sensations which accompany movement of one hand) and the other as Right. Later, coming before any door; if I receive the visual input of a door knob on "left", then I use my "left" (tactile) hand.

To understand that the ego continually updates its rules of Reality, we must do the

above thought experiment in a modified form. Suppose I wore glasses without knowing that they perfectly interchanged the inputs to the left and right eyes. Standing before the left-knobbed door, eyes open, what would I see? The visual sensation would be interpreted (by *Chitta*) as "a door knob to the Right". The Right hand is then lifted — but my God! My world seems to have gone crazy — The tactile sensation of the right hand moving, is accompanied by the visual sensation of a hand (whose is it!) moving in the *Left* visual field, and hence away from the visual knob on Right. Instead, if I use my Left hand I find a hand moving in the Right visual field towards the knob on "Right". Every such situation brings about a confusion of this sort. Earlier the tactile left-hand sensation and the visual left-hand sensation were learnt to be experienced as "the Left hand". But now the tactile left-hand seems very consistently related to the visual right-hand. And *vice versa*. Now which is Right and which is Left? With my eyes closed, all the laws learnt so far work as usual. So I decide to continue to label the left tactile-hand as Left-hand, and the right tactile-hand as Right. But the "new" right visual-hand, which is now associated with my left-hand, will have to be re-labelled as Left visual-hand. This change is needed since associated sensations must be either Left (all of them) or Right (all of them). In other words, I merely learn to re-label the "old" Right visual field as "Left", and *vice versa*. Obviously this is not done in a day. There is much fumbling (like in one's childhood) as I unlearn the old rule and learn the new rule. The automatic responses from the *Chitta* based on the old rule are slowly forgotten (as that rule fails every time) and the new rule slowly takes its place. Till this also becomes automatic, one may experience

**Sapta Aj'nana Bhumika*: Yoga vasishta: utpathi Prakarna—continued from last issue

strange things. One may feel that one's hand is dislocated, is not where it ought to be, but elsewhere! One raises the left hand and finds the left hand not *here* (the old "left" visual) where one expectantly trained one's eyes, but *there* (the old "right" visual which is now re-labelled the Left visual). There are other elaborate experiments which we will not go into here, which cause one to experience a dislocation of the body itself.⁵ But we can readily see how the whole thing is mind-born.

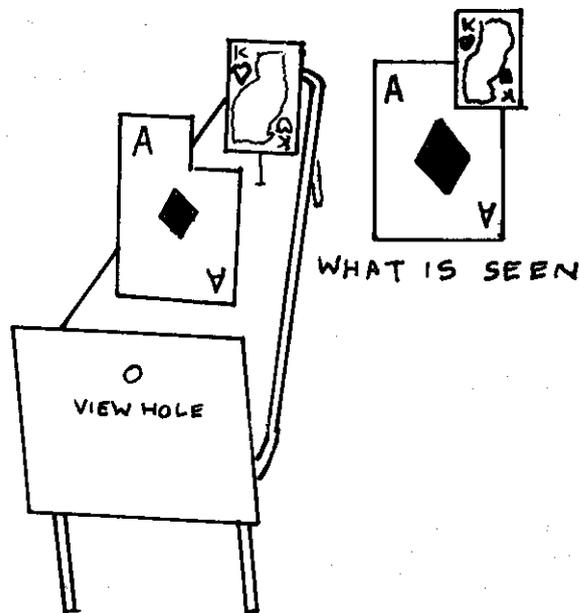
Though the learnt laws work in harmony most of the time, there are occasions when two rules lead to opposing conclusions when applied to the same event. There are higher laws (yes, there is a hierarchy here too), which one builds up by and by like a learning machine) by which one of the conflicting rules is subordinated to the other. Let us see an example of this within the visual field :

Rule 1 : Of two objects of *the same size*, say playing cards, that which appears larger is nearer to me than the other.

Rule 2 : Of any two objects, that which is partially seen *must* lie behind that which is fully in view.

Now to a thought experiment. We are shown the two same-sized playing cards at a distance from us. We find that a corner of the Ace is hidden by the King. So by Rule 2, the King is in front and nearer to us. Strangely, we also find that the King is *smaller* in size than the Ace. So by Rule 1, the Ace is in front and nearer to us. Which is true? By experience, (that is, by correlating other sensations of touching objects, of their visual distances from us in terms of the effort required to reach them etc.,) we develop higher rules which resolve such contradictions. In this case there is a law which says :If in conflict, Rule 2 supersedes Rule 1. Obeying this you would see the King though appearing smaller, in front! You may wonder if this illusion or trick-situation can really be demonstrated. It can. Supposing the Ace had actually had its corner cut off, and the equal-sized King placed at a distance *behind* it in such a way that, seen from the viewer's

position, the corner of the King exactly covered the cut portion of the Ace edge to



WHAT IS SET UP

edge. Then the viewer would 'see' the same visual field as described earlier. That is he would see a smaller King 'hiding' a corner of an Ace that seems to lie 'behind' it. The King would naturally appear smaller (since it really lies at a distance behind the Ace). But since the Ace is seen to be partially covered, Rule 1 is superseded by Rule 2 and the King though smaller is perceived *in front of* the Ace. As regards the conflict, the viewer's reasoning may resolve it as follows : "Why assume that the two cards are of the same size? Perhaps the King is really smaller than the Ace. So much smaller that even with the advantage of

⁵ See the pioneering experiments that G.M. Stratton subjected himself to; quoted in R.L. Gregory's classic *EYE & BRAIN*; World Univ. Library, McGraw Hill, 1969. The compelling truth of his inferences has been little understood and sadly ignored as nearly all those who followed him chose to conduct the experiments on others, while they merely sat in judgement. Great clarity of mind, and fearless determination to face the Unknown which threatens to undermine the reality held secure so far, are the qualities required in anyone who repeats these experiments and hopes to interpret the results correctly.

being nearer to the viewer it still appears smaller.”

So the Chitta tends to interpret sensations, to perceive a Reality, in such a way that the body of rules hitherto learnt are honoured. In the trick-card situation above, even if we were told that the two cards (one of which is cut unknown to us), are of the *same physical size*, we would find it easier to perceive them as two normal cards — Cleverly cut cards do not occur in day-to-day reality! And the King still seen as *hiding* the Ace. The fact that the nearer card looks smaller is now perceived as a strange distortion of the visual field! For the sake of simplicity we must assume that the cards are viewed by us using only one eye. There are more interesting experiments done with our normal binocular vision where (for example) a wire-net of flat surface is convincingly perceived as a net located nearer than where it is, and no longer flat but full of curved distortions in its surface. Such perceptions go further into the domain of how the Chitta processes simultaneous inputs from the two eyes and how it resolves the differences by the concept of depth, guided by the rules accumulated so far. We need not go into all that here, but suffice to say that from one's very early days, the perception of a Reality “out there” is developed side by side with the idea of embodiment (my body “here”).

Science is based on mental models, continually shaped by an inherent preference for the progressively simpler model (by which is meant a model requiring a lesser number of elements) which is capable of explaining progressively complex phenomena (by which is meant, an ability to include into its ambit more and more phenomena, hitherto unexplained or unnoticed). This means a narrowing down of distance between observed phenomena and the observer, where a simpler model would mean *that* model which could include the observer with (observed) phenomena. But to authenticate, (give meaning to, or proclaim as “final”), such an all-embracing model, an observer is still needed. But that would mean the model doesn't fully include him, which in

turn contradicts its all-embracing nature. This is like the Roman asserting that *all* Romans are liars. To regard the universe as an observable is to particularise it — to create a separation however subtle, calling one the observer and the other the observed. The Uncertainty Principle not merely limits the extent to which you can determine a particular electron (that is, an electron when regarded as a *particle* and not a *wave*), but really limits the extent to which an all-comprehensive knowledge can be gained by an observer *about* the universe. That is, the observer cannot obtain complete knowledge about anything which he particularises, (regards as an *observable*). Why should this be so?

Because there are no two here to start with, that's why.

When there is no reality to the water in the mirage to start with, is it surprising that though we may infer its distance and so on from us, there should be a limitation to the knowledge we can gain about the taste or molecular composition of that water?

Where or what then is *certain* knowledge? Wherever the imagined separation of observer and observed ceases (*advaita*). But that would mean absence of name and form as there would be none to distinguish, which in turn would be the Singularity mentioned in Part I: no space, no time, no laws. The singularity mentioned there is calculated by the scientist to have occurred 15 billion years ago, give or take a few seconds. Since singularity (*advaita*) is a condition beyond space-time, I don't have to take it to be a point of time in the past, and trace my way back through time in order to reach, or rather *be* the certainty implicit in it. In fact as duality is an imagined condition, every moment every point is suffused with this singularity, just as a gold bangle is said to be ‘filled’ with gold. Every thought too is a Big-Bang and proceeds from the Self, the singularity which is revealed in the intervals. But just as gold appears sometimes endowed with recognisable form and sometimes without it, so too am I the singularity without form in

sleep and with form in the projections called waking and dream. Just as a man in search of another notices a human form (though carved in wood), and is oblivious to wood uncarved, so too I, (identified with some form that I call 'my body'), am aware of all names and forms (which I call my wakeful or dream awareness), and am unaware when I remain the singularity beyond name-form (which I call sleep).

PART III

SELF

"Turning away from thought, searching within, it shines in the Heart, Blissful, Self-Effulgent the one which is that where even mind-space finds location; which is Eye even to that mind's eye which makes known the eye and other sense-organs which in turn make known space and other physical elements."

THE SCIENCE OF THE SELF:

—Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Probably no other body of writings describes with such precision and thoroughness the nature of the individual, the world that is seen, and the Supreme, as does the Vedanta. What was hinted at in the two parts above, has been analyzed threadbare in Vedanta, not as endless intellectual gymnastics, but as a determinant of the limit to which intellectual enquiry (subject-object situation) can proceed, and having reached that limit, to acknowledge that the searching intellect focussing upon itself, is a step that intellect itself (about to be transcended) hails as most reasonable.

The Yoga vaasishta, an outstanding and voluminous Vedantic classic, is studded with stories that point out the non-absolute nature of space-time and of the false embodiment called 'I' which seeks to unravel objective phenomena (equally false), and sadly and hopelessly for it, gets bound (also false) in endless form-hopping thoughts, (birth and death). In this classic, the sage Vasishtha making unique mention of seven planes of false knowledge, gives to Sri Rama a "ball-by-ball" account of the biography of the false ego. There are seven stages of wrong knowledge.

There are several interconnections giving rise to innumerable possibilities. Being fixed in the self is finality; the slipping away from it is the rise of "I". Only those who remain undisturbed in the awareness called Self can be said to have conquered the delusion or desire called objective knowledge. Those who neglect this truth can only flounder and slip, allowing intellect to get embroiled in names and forms. The Self shines in the interval between abandoning one "thing-thought" and taking up another "thing-thought" (name-form, space-time). With increasing recognition of *this*, thought either as a projection (called waking or dream), or as an absorption (called deep sleep), fades away and a stone-like unruffled condition of alert wakeful-sleep prevails. This is the finality of Self.

1. *Bija-Jaagrata* (Seed-wakefulness) : The Self is nothing but mind unruffled and aware, without the I-separation. In this awareness seemingly rises an awareness which—though nameless and formless yet, and without blemish—becomes the seed for embodiment (particularization), the seed of evolution of the Triad. This appearance is called *Bija Jaagrata*.

Since the Self (pure Being, *Sat*) is all there is, its awareness (*Chit*) also is, and is identical with *Sat*. Awareness is Being, and also of Being. In *this*, there is simultaneous recognition of the absence (falsity) of non-Being. (This requires careful grasp! In space-time there is an analogy for this : the only son a barren woman can bear is a false one; and bearing this son would not in any way alter her status!) In the non-dual *Sat-Chit* (Being-Awareness), there can be only *one* admissible duality, only one objective knowledge : that, Non-Being (the shadow-son), which is ever the shadow of Being-Awareness, has no substance, no existence. Though the barren woman's son may marry, raise children, amass wealth, invite worries and suffer untold hardships, his sordid tale in no way alters the status of his mother. So too this suggestion of duality (called *Bija-Jaagrata*) in no way alters *Sat-Chit*. This, first of the seven, evolves assuming six other equally false states.

2. *Jaagrata (Wakefulness)* : This is the centre, the particularisation, the seeming certainty that accompanies gradual embodiment. This is the first expression of name-form, there being no sense of space-time, of I-embodiment prior to this.

3. *Maha Jaagrata (Great-wakefulness)* : Quickly and relentlessly, this ego-centre, false to begin with, bloats in a flash, acquiring certainty regarding its embodiment, by relating with an environment imagined as external to it and through phenomena of the form "This one : That one : I : This : That : Mine" which appear spontaneously in it. This is *Maha Jaagrata* the inflationary aftermath of a Big-Bang, the great stage in which are presented the scenes of wakefulness and dream. The analogy in space-time to this is the burning sun and the infinite space of starry heavens 'accommodated' in a dew drop.

4. *Jaagrata-Svapna (Wakeful-dream)* : Armed with the sense of IN and OUT, HERE and THERE, THEN and NOW, all derived from the sense of its embodiment, the ego investigates into the unknown outside and "determines" it gradually, in terms of names and forms. Unknown phenomena are determined (labelled) in terms of already known labels. Further, patterns are recognised and associated by Chitta, by the principle of resonance. So, a group of labels is given a single name and recalled by it. "Pot" immediately makes available in Chitta, "hard", "curved", "earth", "cool", "thirst", "water", "fire", "kiln", etc. We saw in Part II the way a stable reality is constructed from moment to moment. The ego, ruling the realm of its own projections, is said to be in *Jaagrata-Svapna*, the so-called wakeful experience!

5. *Svapna (Dream)* : There is no limit to the variety in the ego's wakeful experience. It classifies some phenomena as "real" (this body; the world out there), some phenomena as "unreal" (the horns of a hare, the barren woman's son), and some as "seemingly real" (the mirage-water, the mirror-reflection, which persist even after knowing about their falsity).

The ego and so whatever it sees, are all false. Since it concocts varying grades of reality when "awake" (*Jaagrata-Svapna*), it undergoes varying dream experiences too. Dreams are predominantly the means of reliving or fantasizing events or of rehearsing anticipated, disjointed, or partly understood situations, or of allowing conflicting pulls of *Vasanas* a free for all in order to record the outcome of reactions therein, for use in "real life". The recollection of dream is itself a kind of dream.

6. *Svapna-Jaagrata (Dream-Wakefulness)* : There are certain recollections which, though classifiable as dreams, have the vividness of the wakeful. Sometimes one is aware that one is dreaming and still the dream continues. The strong sense we have of *deja vu*, of having experienced it before, when we see something or visit some place, and which returns vividly upon pondering, is called *Svapna Jaagrata*.

7. *Sushupti (Sleep)* : The six states mentioned above obtain from the ego issuing forth outwards amidst name and form. When these six conditions are abandoned by the ego, it retracts into a still, inert, unaware condition called sleep. Though Being-Awareness shines, the ego habituated to false duality, sees it not. The analogy in space-time is of a boy looking intently out of the rear-window of a moving car, at the house he has just left. So intent is he on the slowly vanishing form, that he has no cognition either of the route taken or of the new surroundings he has entered. The boy is the ego; the house, the names and forms the ego always attaches to; the new surroundings; the Being-Awareness that the ego is asleep to.

When objectified as something in space-time ("I woke up from sleep 6 hours ago" or "the space-time universe began from a Big-Bang 15 billion years ago" or "a thought arose so many pico-seconds back"), these singularities are experienced as voids, as the darkness of unconsciousness. When seen as being *beyond* space-time, the singularity is seen to predominate perception or absence, of name-form.

IDENTITY :

WHICH LIGHT MAKES THINGS SHINE?

By day the sun, by night the lamp.

WHICH LIGHT KNOWS THIS LIGHT?

The eye, naturally...

AND WHICH LIGHT KNOWS THAT?

Why, the mind of course!

WHICH LIGHT KNOWS THE MIND?

Myself !

BEING THE LIGHT OF LIGHTS THE
GURU IS 'I'.

— *Supplement to Forty Verses :*
Sri Ramana Maharshi

As 'I' loses its identification with form, it becomes increasingly the singularity, regardless of the presence of name-form. This passage of the 'I' is what the scriptures unitedly proclaim as the journey from Untruth to Truth, Darkness to Light, and Death (Awareness of form interrupted by void) to Immortality (Awareness).

How is one to bring it about? We have already seen that one moves towards singularity as one progressively reduces the separation between the observer (always the 'I') and the observed. If then 'I' focusses attention on 'I', a singularity is guaranteed. Though this is easier said than done, it is the final Grand Unified Model of Reality that every 'I' has to submit to. The ego in such a one is incapable of causing the tyranny of duality. Just as a burnt seed is useless for germination or a cloth burnt in still air retains form but is

useless, so too the 'ego' of the Jnani though existing in space-time has had its poisonous fangs called "forgetfulness of Source" pulled out.

In living memory, Sri Ramana Maharshi emphasised this aspect with unprecedented authority, finality, and ease of unbroken abidance in it. If there could be comparison between zeroes, then his singularity is unique. He did not call himself a teacher as he saw no 'other'. He was accessible at all hours and to anyone. His life was an open book. He saw nothing in the seen that stood in need of improvement. A careless attitude no doubt; yet in whatever he said or did not say, and did or did not do, he set with a thrilling ease an ideal that all could see and few could resist. From cutting vegetables to writing poems, and from facing the sudden and total 'death' at seventeen to the living 'death' at seventy-one borne with such indifference, he made no pretence, put on no airs of having achieved anything beyond the scope of the common man. His is the panacea that cures at one stroke the evil of the individual, along with the ills of the state; the error which proliferates in a vicious circle.

He is the ideal teacher. He had no teaching to speak of; yet the telling Silence of pure Being into which one was plunged when in his presence, was a recollection beyond memory, an understanding that survived thought and a direct experience of *his* Truth. Being beyond space-time, a Truth here, now.

"All talk of surrender is like pinching jaggery from the jaggery image of Lord Ganesa and offering it as *naivedya* to the same Lord Ganesa. You say you offer your body, soul and all possessions to God. Were they yours that you could offer them? At best, you can only say, 'I falsely imagined till now that all these which are yours (God's) were mine. Now I realise they are yours. I shall no more act as if they are mine'. And this knowledge that there is nothing but God or Self, that I and mine don't exist and that only the Self exists, is *jnana*. Thus, there is no difference between *bhakti* and *jnana*. *Bhakti* is *jnana mata* or mother of *jnana*".

-- Sri Bhagavan in *Day by Day* (dt. 22.11.45 afternoon)

MAN IS THE PROBLEM

By V. Dwaraknath Reddy

WHO would willingly "bear the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune"? We suffer them as the impositions of a merciless tyranny. Grudgingly we face life which we declare is full of "problems".

What, may we ask, is a problem?

As long as your desires are being fulfilled, your wants satisfied, and nothing is contrary to your own wishes, there is no problem. But when your gratification is denied, your pursuit is foiled, the fruit you wish to enjoy is plucked from your outstretched fingers or placed altogether beyond your reach, that is a problem.

Have you stopped to ask by what supreme decree and what rights of inheritance you decided before the event that the result shall be as you would have it, that you alone shall be the favoured one? For all your moral posture and injured innocence, you are in truth demanding that the outcome, at a given point of time in a continuous movement, should be in accordance with your choice, regardless of all other factors that are a part of the movement and therefore influence the outcome and partake of it.

You live as one individual in a vast arena teeming with others like yourself, each one a centre of desires, ambitions and hopes that shape the aspirations and activity emanating from that centre. In this movement of the energy of life, as indeed in the operation of any insentient energy too, cause-effect relationship determines the resultant. As the cause, so the effect. There can be no effect

that is not derived naturally from the operative cause. Since the potential causes its own effect, there is in the effect the truth and rightness of its linked continuity. How can that manifested effect be different at this moment from what the unmanifested cause held, any more than a plant can be different from its seed?

Thus are we all the prisoners of our own personalities, expressing in the present the condensed truth of the life each one has lived so far, his and her desires shaped by what one has enjoyed or suffered, exulted in or endured, through life till this moment. It is this truth of our past that projects us presently into the world to seek therein happiness in terms of our personal equations.

Just as you strive and crave, it is natural that every one else too is interested in the fruits of action. The resultant of the total action is the vector of the overall dynamics constituted of all the different contributions made by the participants. No factor is exaggerated and no factor is mitigated, each has its proper emphasis, no more and no less. In this resolution there is total justice to all, and no favour or prejudice to anyone. It is as it should be in terms of a perfect law, the law of causation.

When the resultant is thus manifested, who is to say that it is a problem, meaning it is not as it should have been? You say it, and in so saying betray an enormous depravity of logic and reason. You want an effect that belies the cause. The problem lies only in your thinking

that such violation of natural law is possible. Then obviously there is no problem in manifestation, there is only a problem in perception.

Since the sorrows and suffering of mankind arise from such misapprehension of truth, it has to be stated that *MAN HAS NO PROBLEM, MAN IS THE PROBLEM*. It is the mind which refuses to harmonize with the cardinal law of its operation that courts misery without understanding and suffers needlessly. The desiring mind must be able to see what it *deserves* too in the unbroken continuity of the movement of which it is an integral part, and not set itself up in futile conflict with the honest flow of cause into effect.

One who is obliged to traverse a terrain that is thickly strewn with thorns need not clean up the whole area to be able to walk across it, but by the simple expedient of protecting one's feet with sandals can step ahead without any impediment. So too can the individual that is clad with this perception go through life vigorously and joyfully, eking out of it all that is one's due. The armour needed is the clear perception of the law of causation that in its totality is what *KARMA* signifies.

The law is seen as gravity when it works on matter and regulates the universal configuration of created mass. The solar system and all the galaxies remain the way they are because the law of gravity determines their respective locations and movements, equating effects with causes. Neither the insentient worlds of matter, nor the mechanical law of gravity, *know* themselves or one another. Where knowing is not, there is no recognition of anything, neither problem nor fulfilment.

The same law works on mind too, mind which is a configuration of thoughts, a movement in consciousness. The law works here too with the same rightness and rigidity, but here the individual mind sets itself in opposition to the total mind, creates an eddy in the smooth flow of the current, calls this

self-created disturbance a 'problem', and commiserates itself. When the law is applied to the workings of consciousness it is more specifically called *Karma*.

The ego-centred individual, taking himself to be the embodied person, seeking abiding happiness in relationships and possessions, never questions the basic premise of his methodology and therefore continues upon the erroneous path. He foolishly persists with the belief that his desire-motivated energies will bring to him the happiness and peace that he craves for. He needs to learn that the fruits of work are determined by the ordained operation of an eternal law, which has no option but to run true to itself.

The law has not, and cannot have, the vagaries of chance in its workings. If it had, it would not be a law. There is the consistent principle of Intelligence behind it, for it is the decree that is the self-expression of the Absolute as the Uncaused-cause (as it were), setting in motion all the becomings of manifestation.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi gave us the supreme teaching in His *UPADESA SARAM*. At the very start He said the law of becomings is *kartuh* (the Lord's) *Ajna* (ordainment). It is not a small thing, not a casual or insignificant thing, it possesses the mighty authority of His sanction. But, note this too, *Karma tad jadam*, the Law is insentient, it can only run the stipulated course and never waver. What note can it take of anyone's pleadings?

Should not I, the conscious entity, relate to the Law-Giver who is Total Supreme Consciousness and find my unqualified identity there through the right apperception of the identity that already exists as an I-centre, instead of holding out suppliant hands to insentient (*jada*) karma, and remaining miserable that "problems" were not redressed?

WHO AM I? Earnest pursuit of the question lifts the deluded "victim" of *karmic* manipulations into the seat of *LORDSHIP* over *Karma*.

DEATH OF THE COSMOS

By Sudhakar K. Dikshit

The following excerpts are taken from Sri Dikshit's latest book "I AM ALL — A Cosmic Vision of Man" and are published with his kind permission. This book is brought out by his publishing concern : M/s Chetana Pvt. Ltd, 34, Rampart Row, Bombay 40. A review of it by Sri M.P. Pandit appears in the Book Reviews section of this issue. — Ed.

LIKE man, who is a microcosm of the cosmos, the cosmos also is subject to old age, decay and death.

It is the law of nature that whatever has come to be shall cease to be some day. Even the vast expanse of the manifested phenomenality, known as the cosmos, will some day get disintegrated and merged into the eternal unmanifest, from which it emanated. But ceasing to be or getting disintegrated is not the final end, either for man or the cosmos. For, they both arise Phoenix-like from the unmanifest state, assuming new appearances only to disappear again after a lapse of time through death or disintegration, to arise and appear again and again over aeons of time. Birth and death, like day and night, form the fundamental cosmic rhythm which operates endlessly in the continuum of time and space. This rhythm is a cyclic process, beginningless and endless, for every point on the circumference of a circle is both a beginning and an ending and the journey forward at a certain point somehow turns into a journey backwards. The cosmic life span, like the human life span, is such a journey. And this journey is endless, for manifestation of the cosmos, being a cyclic event has occurred before and will occur again and again. As stated in the *Bhagavad Gita* : "At the end of each aeon the creation goes back to its primal source, and at the beginning of another aeon it comes forth again."¹

The concept of cosmic disintegration and dissolution has not been elaborated in the *Vedas*, but we do find references to it in some of the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmanas*. In the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* the following lines occur, suggesting that the manifested universe ultimately merges into its primal source, that is the unmanifest Brahman.

He the herdsman of all worlds
after bringing them forth,
re-absorbs them at the end of time.²

In the *Maitri Upanishad* the seeker of Brahman gives a sort of pictorial description of cosmic dissolution, when he prays to be saved from life in an everchanging ephemeral world. He mentions

The drying up of big oceans,
the downfall of mountains,
displacing of the Polestar,
the tearing of wind cords,
the submergence of the earth

and then he offers an earnest prayer, saying :

Deliver me, I pray Sir,
for in this cycle of existence
I am like a frog in a dry well.
Lord, you alone are the refuge,
you alone are the refuge.³

Upanishadic descriptions, however, do not give any cause for the cosmic dissolution. The *Satapatha Brahmana* refers to a cataclysmic flood in which all creatures were drowned, the only survivor being Manu, who was saved through the good offices of a fish. The theme of cosmic dissolution was developed later in the *Mahabharata*, *Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Puranas*. In the *Puranas* we find mention of the creation (*utpatti*), preservation (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*pralaya*) of the cosmos; these three functions being ascribed to the trinity of gods — Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Not only in the Hindu scriptures and mythology, but also in the myths and legends of ancient countries like Egypt, Babylon,

1. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.7

2. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, iii.2

3. *Maitri Upanishad*, I.4

Persia, China and others, handed down through countless generations, we find descriptions of cataclysmic destruction by floods and fire. And, strangely, these descriptions are often similar in details.

The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, which is about 4000 years old and records traditions even earlier, mentions a dark cloud that enveloped the earth. This was followed by a devastating fire; land got shrivelled up by the conflagration and there was desolation all around. We find elsewhere other similar descriptions of all-encompassing catastrophes. Nothing escaped these global holocausts. Men, beasts and all living creatures were destroyed. Forests were swept away in floods, mountains were thrown up to the heavens and continents were sucked beneath the seas.

A collection of ancient Scandinavian legendary poems of unknown antiquity, named Poetic Edda, has the following lines :

Mountains dash together
 Heroes go the way to Hell,
 And heaven is rent in twain.
 The sun grows dark,
 The earth sinks into the sea,
 Bright stars from heaven vanish.
 Fire rages,
 Heat blazes,
 And high flames play
 'Gainst heaven itself.

The *Bible* contains numerous passages that refer to devastating conflagrations and floods. Once a great deluge burst forth that drowned everything on the earth, except Noah's Ark. One of the Biblical narrations says that "the earth shook and trembled; foundations of hills moved and were shaken. The Lord thundered in the heavens."⁴ However, these records of devastations by floods and fire pale into insignificance when compared with the descriptions of cosmic dissolution that we find in the Vanaparva of the *Mahabharata*, the *Nirvana Prakarana* of *Yoga Vasishtha* as well as in the Puranas. What the myths and legends of other countries relate seems to pertain to earthly catastrophes only, while the Hindu

sources relate cataclysmic perdition causing complete extinction of the cosmos. What happens, or will happen at the time of the *Mahapralaya*, the cosmic disintegration and dissolution, is the theme of all these descriptions; which are similar, except in minor details. All of them hold that the *Mahapralaya* is the total annihilation of whatever is — all things being reduced to nothingness. The description we find in the *Yoga Vasishtha* is, however, different in the sense that it is a sort of eye-witness account of what actually happened at the time of the incredibly, stupendous holocaust of *Mahapralaya*. It seems that this calamitous whole sale destruction was witnessed by Sage Vasishtha from his vantage ground in the *Brahmaloka*, where he happened to be at that time with Lord Brahma, the Creator, who represents the manifesting aspect of the Brahman. A free rendering of this description is given below:

The day of Brahma was over and it was the time of sunset, when Vasishtha noticed that, apart from the usual solar sun, another sun appeared on the western horizon of the sky like a ball of fire which, in a short time, grew into a titanic size blazing forth blinding lustre and scorching white heat across the sky. Soon thereafter eleven more suns of different sizes rose from different directions, and the entire cosmic expanse turned into a massive, burning inferno. Mountains cracked due to the fury of fire; they broke into pieces and got pulverized into rubble and sands. Forests, forts, cities, towns, all human habitations, all living creatures of innumerable species got roasted in this fiery furnace; then were reduced to cinders and ashes; seas turned into boiling maelstroms, killing all aquatic creatures and a huge pall of steam rose high into the sky hiding the stars and planets.

Then, suddenly a strident clamour of thunder rent the heavens and a tornado of rains, thick like pillars, came tumbling down, causing fearsome tumult and turbulence everywhere. While

4. *Psalms*, 18: 7-15.

the torrents of rain fought the raging fire all around and tried to extinguish it, the universal conflagration boiled and burnt the cascades of waters. In this process the charred remains of the cosmos were ground down into the minutest particles of matter called atoms and were swept away by a mighty whirlwind into the realm of nowhere. Thus the plurality of the manifested appearance was reduced to nothingness that got merged with the unmanifest, "that from which all beings are born, that by which, once born, they live, that into which, once dead, they enter".⁵

According to the Hindu calculations the age of creation is 4,320 million years, which is close to the 4,500 millions years worked out by modern scientists. In the ancient Hindu texts like the *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Garuda Purana*, the *Mahabharata* as well as the later treatises like *Brihat Samhita* and *Surya Siddhanta* are given calculations in measures of time beginning from a wink of the eye and ending with the day of Brahma. The complete life-span of the universe has been mathematically worked out in these scriptures. These calculations show that the dissolution of the cosmos shall take place in the evening of Brahma's day, which is also known as the *Kalpa*. One *Kalpa* is equal to 1000 *Mahayugas*, each *Mahayuga* comprising four *Yugas*—*Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali*. Different periods of human years are allotted to these *Yugas* as follows:

Satya Yuga	1,728,000	human	years
Treta Yuga	1,296,000	"	"
Dwapara Yuga	894,000	"	"
Kali Yuga	432,000	"	"
Total:	4,320,000		

One *Mahayuga* comprises four *Yugas* and is equal to 4,320,000 human years. A *Kalpa*, i.e., one day of Brahma, comprises 1000 *Mahayugas*, i.e., 4,320,000,000 human years. Brahma's night is of the same duration.

Kali Yuga started on the day when Lord Krishna discarded his mortal body. Based on the internal evidence in the *Mahabharata* and

other sources, the date of Lord Krishna's death, in terms of the present Gregorian calendar, is worked out to be 20th February 3,102 B.C. Since then out of the 432,000 human years allotted to the *Kali* age, only 5,090 years have elapsed up to February, A.D. 1988. The *Mahapralaya* will take place on the last day of the *Kali* age. Thus there are still 426,910 years to pass for the doomsday to overtake us.

The state of affairs that prevails in the *Kali Yuga* on the eve of the *Mahapralaya* is described in the *Vishnu Purana* as follows:

In the *Kali Yuga*, when

"...property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of virtue; passions will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in life and women will be merely objects of sensual enjoyments; earth will be venerated only for its treasures (i.e., there will be no *tirthas*, no particular spot of the earth will have any special sanctity), dishonesty will be the universal means of sustenance; people will be unable to bear the heavy burdens imposed upon them by their avaricious rulers; — in the *Kali* age decay shall constantly proceed until the human race approaches its annihilation"⁶.

Similar descriptions of the conditions prevailing in the world prior to the *Mahapralaya* are found elsewhere also. In the *Mahabharata*, *Vanaparva* section, king Yudhisthira requests sage Markandeya to enlighten him about the *Mahapralaya*. This sage had an ever-youthful body, though his age was many many times more than that of the Biblical Methuselah. Markandeya has personally witnessed a few *Mahapralayas*. In answer to Yudhisthira's request the sage said:

In the last phase of the *Kali Yuga* people turn liars. Brahmins give up the study of scriptures; they sell off the *Vedas* and get

5. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, III.1.

6. *Vishnu Purana*, Book IV, Ch. 24.

engaged in various type of professions including the trade of deerskins. They take to meat eating. The other castes also discard their *Svadharmas* and do unbecoming things. Women prove false to their husbands and befriend the servants. Adultery and promiscuity become common. Rains are scanty; large areas of land suffer drought, crops fail. There is shortage of foodgrains and poor people die of hunger. Wicked and fraudulent men become rulers and impose unbearably high taxes on the ruled. Those in authority take bribes. Crime, stealing and corruption are on the increase. Mankind reaches the lowest ebb of all-pervading immorality.Then *Mahapralaya* is let loose and the entire creation is destroyed — the sun, moon, stars, and planets; men, beasts, birds and reptiles; forests, mountains, seas and rivers — all, everything that exists is destroyed.

Whether due to the sins of mankind, as held by the *Puranas*, or due to the inexorable process of aging and decay, the cosmos, like man, has to die some time, may be at the end of Brahma's day — its manifested plurality and temporality merging into the noumenality and eternity of the unmanifest Brahman. Life and death form an ineluctable cyclic process and the cosmic rhythm of Brahma's day and night are symbolic of this process.

...Actually it is a misnomer to say that the cosmos dies and is born again. For it was never 'born' and therefore cannot 'die'. It only appeared and disappeared as a reflection of the everlasting reality that is Brahman. And reality is indeed birthless, deathless and changeless. It is the 'One' glorified in the *Nasadiya Sukta* of the *Rig Veda* as "that out of which creation has arisen"⁷. Or, maybe it is the primordial, ontic man, the *Purusha* of the *Purushasukta* who "with thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet" encompasses the entire space and who "indeed is this all, what has been, what is to be"⁸.

To sum up, there is no death, either for the cosmos or for man, for while their

IT IS YOU MY LORD

By Sanal

O! What is in this tiny Brain
A grumbling dog of past and future,
A turning wheel of depression and
anxiety.
The teeming beauty is here and now.
But the sneaking thoughts are lurking
behind.

Kill it, quell it and subdue it.
Oh! What wonder! A soothing heart.
A dip in the depth of a honeyed lake.
The trees on the mountains are wiping
the sky,

As in a never ending manner —
The leaves embrace with whispering.
Hey! The chilling kiss of morning wind.
Look yonder, again he peeps
Far behind from the peaks of mountains.
He is starting anew, afresh without
The hangover of a thousand dreams.
Who are you I asked violently.
"Who are you?" With a stunning smile
He echoed the same towards me.
He is the solid ground where I crawl.
He never asked me anything in return.
And never he articulated a single word.
Except the Word with a capital double u.
Listen, a tiny sparrow cried from within,
It is you, 'tis you; my Lord!

appearances die they both are deathless. The entire cosmic process of creation (*utpatti*), preservation (*sthiti*) and dissolution (*pralaya*) has been pithily described by Sri Aurobindo in his poetical work *Savitri* as follows:

In the beginning, it is said,
Was the Eternal, the Infinite, the One.
In the middle, it is said,
Is the finite, the transient, the many.
In the end, it is said, shall be
The One, the Infinite, the Eternal.

7. *Rig Veda*, X.129.7

8. *Ibid*, XX.90.2.

RIGHT EFFORT, RIGHT MINDFULNESS, RIGHT CONCENTRATION¹

By Ajahn Sumedho

WHATEVER qualities we experience, we keep reflecting, we always remind ourselves that this is the way it is at this moment. Life is exactly *this* way, whether it's a pleasurable feeling or an annoying feeling, whether they're beautiful thoughts, blissful thoughts or horrible, hellish states — *this* is the way it is. Now apply that to wherever you have to live — this is the way people are here. It's not approving of the way it is, it's not disapproving, it's not brushing aside; it's just a kind of honest reflection and a deliberate acceptance of a situation as it is. And in that there is a sense of peacefulness. At least I find this: I begin to feel more at ease with life when I can accept it rather than always thinking I have to do something with it. There's a cool kind of acceptance of a situation, rather than the panic that comes from thinking that it is up to me to set everybody straight, make everything right, and solve everybody's problem.

So with Right Effort we do the best we can, but we also realize that it's not up to me to do everything and make everything right; it's not a burden. One time at Wat Pah Pong, with Ajahn Chah, things seemed to be going wrong. I could see a lot of things going wrong in that monastery, so I went up to him and I said, 'Ajahn Chah, these things are going wrong. You've got to do something about it.' And he looked at me and he said, 'Oh you suffer a lot, Sumedho. You suffer a lot. It'll

change.' I thought, 'He doesn't care! This is the monastery that he has devoted his life to, and he is just letting it go down the drain!' But he was right. After a while it began to change, and through just bearing with it people began to see what they were doing. Sometimes we have to let things go down the drain in order for people to see, to experience that. Then we can see how to NOT go down the drain.

Do you see what I mean? Sometimes situations in our life are just **THIS** way. There's nothing one can do, so we allow them to be that way and even if they get worse, we allow them to get worse. But it's not a fatalistic or negative thing we are doing. It's a kind of patience, being willing to bear with something, allowing it to change naturally rather than this egotistical desire to prop everything up and straighten everything out — clean it all up out of our aversion and distaste for a mess.

Now sometimes people get confused between mindfulness and concentration. You see someone walking very slowly, like the Burmese method of walking meditation where you walk very slowly. And you might say, 'That's very mindful', because it's very slow, very deliberate. Sometimes one sees mindfulness as doing something very methodically, but mindfulness is much wider than that. It's the awareness of what is

¹ Printed with the kind permission of the Editor. *The Middle way*, The Buddhist Society, London.

appropriate to time and place. If you have to catch a train, you don't walk that slowly, do you? If the train is about ready to leave, and you have an urgent need to be on that train you're going to run — but you can run mindfully. If a maniac is chasing you with an axe, it is better to run than to walk in that slow way because the situation is one where the best thing is to run, very mindfully, somewhere else. With Right mindfulness one can run or walk slowly or walk or whatever; it is the ability to reflect and observe, to be aware of what is the appropriate thing. If you are on a meditation retreat and they are teaching you to concentrate your mind on walking, on each movement of the foot, you might not be mindful while doing it — you might be concentrated, but not mindful. But you can be both; the ideal is to be both mindful and concentrated. If you are mindful, then you can concentrate at the appropriate times on certain things, but you are aware when the cues come for other things. If you are doing very slow walking in the meditation hall and the fire alarm rings, you realize that now it is time to run rather than to walk slowly even though it is during the time that you are practising the slow walking meditation. It's just good sense, isn't it?...

Now I have noticed that whenever I get very attached to refined concentration I get crabby. I really like being concentrated in a very refined state but then I get very crabby if someone coughs or moves or does something to interrupt. So immediately I take the opportunity to say to myself: But THIS is the way it is; life is THIS way right now... I remember once, I was getting so possessive of concentrated mind states, so selfish, that I didn't even want to talk to the people who would come to bring me food and look after me, because I didn't want to have to put forth any effort in any kind of way that would disturb my *samadhi* even though there was ingratitude and selfishness, and the suffering that resulted from that! Contemplating that, I thought that this was not what the Buddha was meaning. I'm sure... NOT the Middle way!

HIS TOUCH

Please accept my humble respects. I would very much like to add my name to the many thousands of people whose lives have been deeply touched by the Grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. I can't easily convey in such a short space how Sri Ramana has affected my life but it is very mysterious how a saint who took *Mahasamadhi* before I was born, who lived so far from my birth place, and who I came across only in books, has come to play such a big part in my whole existence. During my childhood I was repeatedly troubled by the thought 'Who Am I?' which used to torment me from the age 7 onwards. Part of this torment was due to the fact that no one else I knew seemed to be aware of their own existence. In my late teens I was fortunate to come into contact with Yoga via the teachings of American Yogi Richard Hittleman. I was ecstatic to read that far from being strange it is quite natural to ask 'Who Am I?'. On his recommendation I read A. Osborne's book on Sri Ramana and since then, over a 12 year period, have felt myself being drawn close to Sri Ramana's Grace. I have known much torment and despair, and also their opposites, but will be eternally grateful for Sri Ramana's exposition of *Vichara* the very existence of which helped to bring peace in my heart. I firmly believe that after surrendering to Jesus at an early age it was He who guided me to Sri Ramana in order to show me a perfect exponent of His teaching.

- Michael Dillon,
Sheerness, U.K.

164

THE SWING OF HIS LOVE

By Gurdial Mallik

“FERRYMAN, lead us across”, said a band of pilgrims, bound for the other bank, where resided an humble man of the Spirit.

“What? Have you gone mad?” replied the ferryman. “You want to go there on this stormy night?”

“Yes, for there is no other go, because we promised our Teacher that we would visit him today,” answered back the leader of the group.

“Well, I shall ply the ferry for your sake, if you have stout hearts and strong hands,” rejoined the ferryman.

The pilgrims got into the ferry and the ferryman took his seat at the helm.

The sky growled in anger and lightning waved its whip. The dark-haired storm stalked the waves. The hearts of the pilgrims throbbed with fear; and their faces were puckered with pain.

The prudent ferrymen who had anchored firmly their boats on the bank shouted to the ferryman who was leading the band of pilgrims across, not to be foolhardy to dare the danger and dread of the storm, but to turn back. The pilgrims begged the man at the helm to listen to the entreaty and advice of his fellow-ferrymen. But he heeded not.

“Take the oars and ply them with all your might and main,” said the helmsman to his crew in a commanding tone, “while I myself sit at the helm.”

The pilgrims obeyed and presently there was not a single oar lying idle in the boat. And as the waves waxed higher and heavier their hearts became lighter with buoyant hope. They wondered at the accession of strength in their sinews. And the ferryman burst into a song:

“The menacing waves strike against the sides of the boat; let them strike, let them strike.

I have no fear of the wind or wave because my Friend is near.

They who have stayed behind on the bank call it a storm; let them shake, let them shake.

But I have no fear for I know it is not a storm but the Swing of His love.

If we perish in the stormy sea, what does it matter, what does it matter?

The stormy sea is the Swing of His Love.

If we reach safely the other shore, there will be joy, there will be joy.

And joy, too, is the Swing of His Love.

Life and Death, Death and Life., Are the two poles of the Swing of His Love.”

The pilgrims were heartened by the strains of the ferryman's song and sustained by the triple spirit of endeavour, understanding and anticipation, they reached the shore.

They asked some people who stood on the shore where the Holy Man lived. They appeared astonished at the question.

“Why do you look so surprised?” inquired the pilgrims.

“At your ignorance,” replied one of them, “because the Holy Man, was all along with you during the stormy voyage!”

“You mean the ferryman?” they asked in wonderment.

The people on the shore remained silent, while the ferryman was not to be seen anywhere.

FREEDOM IN BONDAGE

By Dr. K. Subrahmanian

THOSE who are totally free from ego, are bound to others by bonds of Love. They are free and yet restrict their freedom out of compassion for others. Sri Bhagavan was totally free but He restricted His freedom of movement in order to be available to visitors at all times of the day and night. Visitors came and left as they pleased. Visitors exercised their freedom to come and go as they liked. But Sri Bhagavan submitted Himself to the discipline of the Ashram in the interests of His devotees. Once Sri Bhagavan said that *Swamitvam* wasn't easy. About Iswara, he said : "He must be beholden to ever so many; he must act according to the wishes of people; he must give boons to people."

Devotees who surrender themselves totally to the Lord become His captives. When they become His captives, the Lord becomes their captive. As *Tiruvachakam* sings : "Myself I gave. Yourself You gave. Who has the better bargain, say."

Ambarisha was a great king who spent much of his time in the contemplation of the Lord. On a *dvadasi* day, when he was about to break his fast, Sage Durvasa came to see him. Ambarisha asked the Sage to eat at his place. The Sage agreed and said he would bathe in the nearby river and come back. As the time for breaking the fast was passing, Ambarisha broke his fast by taking some water. Durvasa was furious that he had taken water without feeding him first and he created a monster to kill him. The Lord's *Sudarshana Chakra* appeared from nowhere, killed the monster and started chasing Durvasa. Durvasa ran to

Indra, Siva and Brahma and asked them to save him. They suggested that he go to Vishnu to whom belonged *Sudarshana Chakra*. When the sage approached Vishnu, he asked him to go to Ambarisha and apologise for what he had done. Durvasa did so, and the disc disappeared.

When Vishnu asked Durvasa to go back to Ambarisha, he said : "I am in the hands of My devotees, O Brahmana, and therefore hardly free to do as I like; I love my devotees, and the saintly souls have by their love ravished my heart. I should have no use even for Myself or for the Goddess Sri, who is inseparable from Me, if I could not have with Me My devotees, those good men who look upon Me as the supreme goal. How could I give them up, who have found refuge in Me, having given up their all for My sake?... The good men who have fixed their hearts on Me and who look upon all the world with an equal eye, have captured My heart by their devotion, as faithful spouses win the hearts of their good husbands... The saints are the heart of Me, and I am their heart. They know nothing dearer than Me, and I know none was, is dearer than they." ¹

This was what the Lord said. Sri Bhagavan's promise to His devotees is equally clear. To surrender to Him is to gain His freedom; to be pure Being-Awareness-Bliss, and to stand steadfast in egoless service to the Supreme. ²

¹ *Bhagavatham*, Canto 9, Chapter 4, v.66-8. Tr. by N. Raghunathan.

² Last three couplets of *Upadesa Sara*.

Kudos to Aradhana Issue



I am happy.....Ganesan!
I received *The Mountain Path* with a lot of joy. Firstly, I read the questions to Arthur Osborne and again – like other times before – all of them could have been my own – and now I received the answers to those with which I have been battling a long time myself. It was amazing again and I felt very blessed! Then I opened the page to the article about Sri Krishnabai and Papa Ramdas – I know them for a long time but never could place them anywhere in my line of saints and now here again – the explanation. After I had finished the article (by which I was fascinated) I read the name of the writer – and it was you! I usually read in the morning in the train or bus and have only very little time – so I read the articles first and then the name of the writer – may be habit – in order not to be influenced by him. And lo, I learnt that you were on a pilgrimage, how wonderful! Then I switched to Kashi and now, of course, I read the writer's name before because I had the feeling it is also your article. How beautiful, both of them and how scientifically you can write and know everything. I cannot express how happy I was to see that you still are with us all. And thank you for the work you did for the issue!

– Sieglind Gerlach,
Berlin, West Germany.

A 'Prickly' Pat!

The Mountain Path now in its 26th year used to be a somewhat drab magazine, aimed "to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions" (one suspects in a variation of that tiring cliché *Sarva dharma samabhava*) but dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The aim and dedication still remain the same, but the format and printing have greatly improved, no doubt to keep up with the times. The *Aradhana* issue (May-June 1989) is beautifully produced with many illustrations in glorious technicolour. Religion and eastern wisdom were at one time associated with unrelieved drabness. Not any more.

– M.V. Kamath,
in "The Telegraph", Calcutta.



The article 'Old Ashramites' is a first class production, both in language and substance. It is written with deep sympathy and understanding. As for the part relating to me, I have nothing to complain; on the other hand, I am pleased and grateful. If I have to complain at all, it would be against the overmuch praise showered on me.

Let me congratulate you on bringing out this beautiful *Aradhana* Issue!

– N. Balarama Reddy,
(Camp) Bangalore.



What a magnificent job you have done! The issue is beautiful! I particularly liked your feature on Kashi. You have made it attractive with your four colour illustrations which actually heighten the impact of the issue. In fact, I was thinking of writing to you to seek permission to reprint it in 'Tattvaloka', at some stage.

– T.R. Ramachandran,
Editor & Publisher, 'Tattvaloka' Bombay.

ARTHUR OSBORNE'S ANSWERS

(Selected Questions and Answers from
"The Mountain Path" 1965 Volume)

THANK you very much for the space you allow for questions and your wonderfully helpful answers. This correspondence tends to bring with it a sense of togetherness on what J. Wispelwey describes as the road that can be "lonesome at times"; for indeed many of us would have chosen very different members of our household and quite a different environment, but it is good to be fully convinced that our station is appointed by the wisdom of the Eternal.

Is there an answer as to why the body of Sri Ramana was so sorely afflicted in his illness? 'The Infinite Way' (Joel Goldsmith) teaches that "there is only one reason why healings do not come through; there is a barrier or lack of receptivity." I am puzzled because it seemed as though in Pure Consciousness the cells of the body were glorified (perhaps the state of Yogananda's body is an example) and that a disease could not affect them unless perhaps it is absorbed from another person.

Virga Gummer, Auckland, New Zealand.

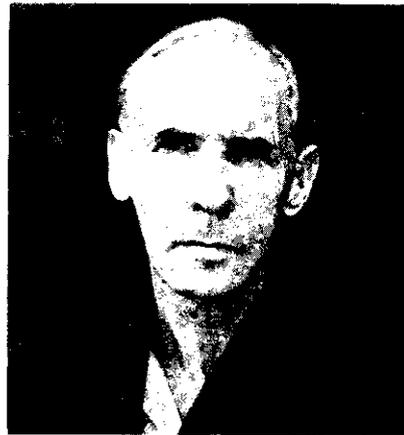
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The suffering of spiritual Masters — Christ, Rama Krishna, Milarepa, as well as Ramana Maharshi — is a difficult question. From one point of view the answer may be that they take on themselves the evil karma of their followers: "He that taketh on himself the sins of the world."

Even apart from that, the attitude of the Maharshi towards sickness is different from that of Joel Goldsmith. It is that birth and death, growth and decay, health and sickness, creation and dissolution are equally phases of the process of nature and it would be illogical to want one phase without the other. The spiritual man accepts what comes, decay no less than growth, sickness no less than health. Therefore the Maharshi did not encourage his followers to engage in spiritual healing. When asked about his illness he said: "The body itself is a disease." This meant that the entire process of nature, both growth and decay, has to be transcended. This is a more profound and ultimate view-point, but the other also is legitimate and can therefore be effective, as many healers and healed have found. This question will be dealt with in a later issue of The Mountain Path. It is enough to ask here whether there was any individual being in the form of the Maharshi who could desire health rather than sickness or want to change the course of nature.

— Arthur Osborne

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The problem for me is this: I have been conditioned since childhood to do everything I can first and then surrender. Somewhere I am confused. We seem to be able to do something about our problems, Krishnamurti notwithstanding, but then he perplexes me. He is opposed to meditation and at the same time friends who have known him over the years say he is the product of meditation. All very confusing.

— June L. Health, Menlo Park, California, USA

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

To do what you can first and then leave it to God when you can do no more means that you are using God as a last instrument for furthering your interests; but how do you know that they ought to be furthered? In the editorial of the January 1965 issue of The Mountain Path you will have seen the quotation from the Bhagavad Gita: "Do not be motivated by the fruits of action, but also do not cling to inaction." That answers your problem. You should act in the way that seems to you right, simply because it is right, and leave the outcome to God.

— Arthur Osborne.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I have been interested in the published accounts of Sri Ramana Maharshi's sayings and answers for over ten years now. Soon after reading the first volume of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* I had a dream in which he sat quite unperturbed while outside the room in which he sat and just behind back there occurred the most violent earthquake and storm. He seemed not to know fear at all, and I then realised that this is what realisation is, a rebirth into a new life where there is fear no longer but only serenity.

Perhaps one day I may be able to visit you in the Ashram. Whether a visit would help me to follow the so hard yet so simple precepts of the Maharshi I do not know. I rather think that we stay with the same thoughts wherever we are and it is the thoughts, the mind, that are the impediment, is it not?

Will you write an article giving us who never met the Maharshi some idea of the silences and the sort of length of time they lasted. For instance, I often wonder whether

the Maharshi always answered immediately the questions put to him in the Talks? Was there a pause? How long did it last? Did any questioner ever leave without an answer? Or was it more conversational in style and for the most part rapid?

— Mark Wilding, Bournemouth

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It is, of course, one's own mind that is the impediment. Nevertheless, the pervading Presence of Bhagavan at Tiruvannamalai can be a great help in mastering it. It varies from case to case whether and for how long such help is needed.

The Maharshi's replies to questions also varied from case to case. Usually they were quick and conversational, but when the motive behind them was not right or when silence was called for he might delay or withhold a verbal reply.

— Arthur Osborne

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Letters to the Editor section is a great boon to The Mountain Path readers enabling them to express their doubts and difficulties and get them solved. I too have a question to ask. There are two short sentences in the book *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in His own Words* which defy my understanding. Will you kindly explain me their significance? They are:

"Be still and know that I am God"; and
"I am that I am."

— R. Balasubramaniam

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It so happens that neither of these two sentences is original to the Maharshi. Both are quoted by him from the Bible, Old Testament, the first from the Psalms and the second from Genesis.

"Be still and know that I am God" means: "Keep the mind still, without thoughts, and know that the 'I am', the sense of being, in you is God."

"I am that I am" or "Being is" is the reply that God gave to Moses when Moses asked what he should say if the Israelites in Egypt asked him who had sent him to them and authorised him to act as their leader and deliverer. "Say that 'I am' sent you, that the Being or the Self sent you." Moses was asking the Name of God and was told that "I am" is the Name. Moses is the mind or spirit of aspiration in a man that makes him undertake the quest; the Israelites and Egyptians are the down-trodden good tendencies and triumphant evil tendencies in him when the quest or sadhana starts; "I am" is the consciousness of Being in the heart that illumines and inspires him.

— Arthur Osborne.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I would like to know:

- (a) If there is any difference between the technique of "whence am I?" and that of "what am I?" or "who am I?"

(b) The technique of "whence am I?"

(c) The technique of "what am I?" (or "who am I?")

I have puzzled over this for a very long time. May I know whether the Maharshi used to say "what am I?" or "who am I?"

"Whence am I?" seems to seek the source of the 'I' without bothering about its nature.

"What am I?" and "who am I?" seem to analyse the nature 'I'.

— Dr. Krishan, Chandigarh

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Bhagavan did sometimes tell a devotee to find out where the 'I'—thought arises in the body. This was a way of teaching concentration on the heart at the right side.

More often he told enquirers to ask "who am I?". The cryptic Tamil form is "Naan-yaar" (I-Who), not distinguishing between 'who' and 'what'. There is no real difference and the question is not analytical. It is a spiritual, not a mental, exercise, and therefore Bhagavan insisted that no answer that the mind can give can be right. It is rather an attempt to suspend thought and feel the pure being or I-ness of you. That comes to feeling the being-consciousness that survives when thinking stops.

— Arthur Osborne.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I take the liberty to congratulate you on your excellent magazine. Its coming always causes great joy in our home. My wife's and my greatest desire is to go to Tiruvannamalai some time in the future and stay at Bhagavan's lotus feet.

Now, a question. I have noticed that in general our epoch is still called Kali yuga though we already entered the Dwapara Yuga 264 years ago.

— Halmagyi Tibor, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

From here Mr. Tibor continues his letter with a detailed calculation of the Yugas. Actually there is much disagreement on this theme, some holding that the kali yuga or spiritually dark age is just beginning, others that it is in mid course and others that it is ending. The most usual opinion is that it began with the Battle of Kurukshetra, at which the Bhagavad Gita was enunciated, 5066 years ago and is now approaching its end. Without wishing to enter into any such technical discussion, it may be well to remind The Mountain Path readers that Bhagavan was once asked for a decision on the subject and he replied: "What is yuga? The wise man is always in satya yuga." That is to say: why occupy ourselves with the state of the world when it rests with us what state we are in?

— Arthur Osborne.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE KINGFISHER'S WING: By Mary Casey, Pub.: Rigby & Lewis, 20, Springfield Road, South Gate, Sussex, England. Pp. 234, £9.95 (hb), £4.95 (pb).

This is a fine book on the life and philosophy of Plotinus. It is 'a visionary reconstruction of the life of Plotinus'. The word 'philosopher' means in Greek 'lover of wisdom'. Plotinus was a philosopher in this sense; he was a seer.

He was born in Egypt about 203 A.D. He studied in Alexandria where he lived till 243 A.D. and returned to Rome in his fortieth year and opened a school. In his sixtieth year, he received a student, Porphyry, who wrote his life and edited his writings. The writings of Plotinus consist of nine books which go under the name of *Enneads*. Plotinus led the life of an ascetic and took into his house orphaned children. He died in A.D. 269. Bertrand Russell says of him that 'it is impossible not to love him as a man'. His influence on medieval Christianity and Catholic theology was very great. He was the greatest of the Neo-Platonic philosophers.

Man's supreme aim, according to Plotinus, must be union with the One. 'It must be at once something in the nature of a unity and yet a motion compact of diversity.... Considering this multifarious power, we declare it to be Essence or Being in so far as it is in some sense a subject or a substratum; where we see life we think of it as movement; where all is unvaried self-identity, we call it repose; we know it as, at once, difference and identify when we recognise all is unity in variety... How lies the Path? This is not a journey for the path; feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you; all this order of things you must set aside.... you must close the eyes and call upon another vision which is to be awakened within you; a vision, the birthright of all, which few turn to use.'

Porphyry himself says that Plotinus was influenced by Persian and Indian thoughts. But no systematic study has been made on the precise influences. Plotinus' views are somewhat similar to the Advaitic view but not identical. This is a fine book written in excellent prose. It reads like an absorbing novel.

-- Dr. K. Subrahmanian

THE PATH - AN ACCOUNT OF A SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE: By Madhuri; Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 400 007; Pp. 251; Rs.35/-

'The Self is not attained by the weak' declares the Mundaka Upanishad. 'The Path' by Madhuri is a living exposition of this fact. The book, which is autobiographical (though totally without the presence of the first person), is testimony to the enormous physical and mental courage that the spiritual journey demands. And this traveller has certainly stood every test of endurance. If undying courage is one wing in the flight of Truth, then surrender is the other wing. The author brings out this crucial tenet of spiritual life through a moving description of her own experience. Her spiritual journey takes one to many saints of modern India, giving an intimate glimpse of Swami Ramdas and interesting encounters with Ma Anandamayee, Gnana-nanda Swami and others. The efficacy of *Nama Japa* is brought home, especially the need for continuous unbroken practice. This is reminiscent of Bhagavan Sri Ramana's repeated emphasis on the necessity for working towards Self-realisation 'ever, untiring, joyously'. Whatever one's chosen path, He would ask one to keep at the effort through every waking, conscious moment.

'The Path' is a deeply lived spiritual experience, communicated with simplicity and directness in lucid English. But even to one with little spiritual leanings the book would make interesting reading. This is because of the vivid depiction of the Second World War France as also of a whole people and way of life in India. From Kanyakumari to the Himalayas one can almost see every scene -- the extraordinary beauty of the land, as also the poverty and sadness, the ways of the people, friendship and rejection, blind orthodoxy and simple, touching religious fervour, the pettiness and the nobility. The book is a physical journey from France to India, and through India. It is a social journey among different people, a mental journey of coming to terms with oneself. And of course, it is a spiritual journey that highlights through personal experience the strengths that one must hold on to and the dangers one must be wary of in the inward terrain. Above all it is a reminder that the spiritual pursuit must be continuous, cheerful and untiring, carried on in the spirit of surrender. The book stays with the reader long after it has been laid aside.

-- Dr. Sarada Natarajan

PRACTICAL BUDDHISM: By Lu Kuan Yu (Charles Luk). Pub: Century Hutchinson (Rider), London WC2N 4NW; £5.95; Pp. 167.

Lu Kuan Yu makes the distinction between Hinayana and the Mahayana teaching reasonably clear and also speaks about the Prajna-Paaramita method, and the Pure Land method of praying to Amitabha Buddha. The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are important to all the schools.

Later part of the book is concerned with CH'AN or Mind transmission outside of teaching, known as Zen in Japan. An interesting difference arises as one goes through, the Worldly Dhyana, the Supramundane Dhyana and the Supreme Dhyana. In the first Dhyana there is a vision of the Three Holy ones of the Western Paradise, in the second there is an awakening to the immutability of all the phenomena and the Supreme Dhyana is indescribable, and if a Ch'an master is asked about it he would remain speechless as Vimalakirti did at Vaisali. Beyond the voidness of the void there is the *Absolute That is* (Miao Yu).

The author presents the stories of two modern Western Buddhists who achieved enlightenment following the path of Ch'an masters. To quote one experience 'I found myself floating - I do not know where, in the void without any support. Moreover, I felt myself like a bright white light... and all this enchantment of a crystalline white vibrated in absolute silence, the sole sound of which was joy; this silent sound was only felt but could not be heard, because it was like the silence of snow. There were no eyes to see the light, it was rather that light which saw itself'.

The later part of the book, over 100 pages, is a short auto-biography of Ch'an master Han Shan. When he meets the master Fa Kuan he is told 'your practice should be outside mind, intellect and consciousness; and your study should go beyond the saintly and worldly'. This was in Han Shan's 29th year.

Han Shan is a man of untiring energy, and for the next fifty years he travelled all over China, building temples and helping when famine struck the country and meeting great scholars and princes. Once he was imprisoned for many months, the work of degenerate monks and court intrigue.

An extraordinary life of penetrating insight and wisdom, the reader will enjoy the devotion to work and compassion of the master. The book is written in good English and is readable, without much jargon. One is a witness to the life and work of a Chinese master of 16/17th century.

-- G. Narayan

THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF ISLAM: ed. Kerry Brown & Martin Palmer. Pub: Century Hutchinson, 62-65 Chandos Place, London WC2N 4NW. Pp. 235; £9.95.

These extracts drawn from the Qu'ran and the Hadith give the reader a sense of the universality, beauty and power of Islam's spirituality. The holy Qu'ran is the fountain-head from which all the teachings of Islam are drawn. Hadith being the sayings of the Prophet, is the secondary source of the laws and practices of Islam. Designed for meditation and to encourage sympathy and respect for the last of the great religious revelations, this volume will be of interest to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. 355 readings have been chosen, one for each day of the Muslim lunar-calendar. The book under review is part of a series of anthologies aimed at fostering a wider recognition of the common spiritual ground underpinning all religions and to clarify those ideas and doctrines which may be stumbling blocks to mutual understanding.

-- J.J. Nawazuddin

CHITSHAKTI VILAS: (Rs. 35/-, Pp. 325+20); **IN THE COMPANY OF A SIDDHA** (Rs.30/-, Pp. 183); **WHERE ARE YOU GOING?** (Rs. 28/-, Pp. 166+15); **THE PERFECT RELATIONSHIP** (Rs. 27/-, Pp. 196+16); **SECRET OF THE SIDDHAS** (Rs.25/-, Pp. 208+26); All five books distributed by Affiliated East-West Press, 35, Grems Road, Madras - 600 004. Author : Sw. Muktananda.

These five books make the reviewer wonder whether he is reading them or trying to read the author, particularly in the first two books in which Swamy Muktananda shares with his reader his thoughts and experiences which came to him during the spiritual quest he had undertaken -- a search which he seems to understand well enough and is content with the path he had chosen, but which the reader must somehow discover or divine on his own, and not simply copy the author's suggestions. Neither a moralist nor a preacher, the Swamiji simply points out the law.

Born in Mangalore in the first decade of this century, he belonged to the Siddha school of yogis like Kabir, Tukaram, Jnaneshwar and others, getting initiation from his guru Nityananda. He attained god-realisation in 1956 and for nearly three decades till his Mahasamadhi in 1982 he was spreading the doctrine of the Siddhas, which may be summed up in the formula of Saccidananda experienced by the amazing unfoldment of the Kundalini.

The first book under review is a spiritual autobiography and is not only a helpful guide to the workings of the awakened Kundalini, the lack of which had made Gopi Krishna pass through a multitude of torments and hellfire, but a practical application of the principles of the Siddha philosophy. The second part of the book is very valuable to practitioners of the Siddha Yoga, as it talks of Tantraloka, the visions of red, white and black

lights, of hell and Yamaraja, of visits to Indraloka, Pituloka till the aspirant attains the eternal blue of the consciousness and final realisation.

The second book, being full of conversations with university professors, psychologists and religionists as also interviews to press and radio networks, provides a fascinating perspective on current issues in religion, psychology, consciousness, flying saucers, etc. The discussions with such savants as Carlos Castaneda, the expert on American Indian sorcery, the scientist John Lilly and astronaut Edgar Mitchell are lively and thought-provoking.

The essence of Siddha yoga lies not in the occurrence of psychical phenomena but the development of spiritual consciousness which is the understanding of one's identity with the Supreme Self. Of course, Swami Muktananda refers in his books to the theory of mantra, how to incorporate meditation into our daily life, the method by which we can be aware of our true relationship with one another and such other practical issues of life. Being a Siddha, however, the Swamiji has attained the state of total immersion in the inner Self, and his main theme in all his books, therefore, is answering such vital questions as whence we came and whither we are going. The essays, questions and answers and interviews which comprise the book, "*Where are you going?*" describe the spiritual journey of the aspirant, detailing the different stages of that adventure, namely, enquiries into the nature of the Self, the mind, the inner power, the mantra, meditation and the role of the guru.

These subjects together with the inner dynamics of the most intimate and mysterious of human relationships are explored in the fourth book under review, namely, "*The Perfect Relationship*". One is able to divine here that the "Secret" of Siddha Yoga lies not merely in the wisdom assimilated by the aspirant but in his daily subtle relationship with the Guru, alive or dead. The importance of Siddha Yoga is not in its techniques so much as in its tradition coming from a Siddha, rooted in his Selfhood. It is a yoga of awakening to the God dwelling in each one of us in the heart lotus and in which He is reverently worshipped through *so'ham* and *hamsa* mantras.

"*The Secret of the Siddhas*", the last in our list, emphasises once again the relationship with a Siddha which lies at the heart of this special Yoga which gives Shaktipat to the aspirant. A Siddha teaches that consciousness itself is perfection, containing thoughts and worlds, expanding to include all of space and time, or contracting to the smallest, as George Eliot would put it, when the devotee could "hear the grass growing". The Swamiji details in 414 precepts in this book the extraordinary ways and unique wisdom of the Siddhas he had known. Here is to be found a comparative study of Vedanta and Kashmiri Saivism whose vision of cosmic unity best describes the Swamiji's own direct perception of Supreme Consciousness, the indwelling Self of all.

-- ARGUS

SRI DAKSHINAMURTHI STOTRAM - VOL. I : By D.S. Subbaramaia; Pub.: Dakshinamnaya Sri Sarada Peetham, Sringeri; Copies from Sri Surasarasvati Sabha, 5/1, Shankara Math Road, Bangalore 560004; Pp. 722+36. Price : ?

In his boundless compassion for mankind wallowing in ignorance, Sri Sankarabhagavadpada has composed his immortal works sending forth the message of Advaita. These include not only his great commentaries on the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutra and the Bhagavadgita but numerous manuals (Prakarana grantha) and hymns (stotra). The tradition of Advaita lays emphasis on the grace of the Guru for the removal of avidya. The distinction of Sri Dakshinamurti Stotram is that it involves the contemplation of Lord Dakshinamurti in the person of one's Guru. Within a brief compass of ten verses it is rich with tenets of advaita. No wonder the hymn has invited commentaries from great Advaita preceptors. To unfold this repository of packed wisdom to the modern seeker and student of Advaita, Sri D.S. Subbaramaia has written the elaborate exposition in English. His work is based on the classical commentaries, Manasollasa of Sri Suresvara and Tattvasudha of Svayamprakasa Yatindra. The exposition goes into every detail of the hymn, analysing almost every term, drawing out its significance, and elaborating every idea. In this endeavour Sri Subbaramaia draws profusely on the support available in several other Advaita classics written not only by Adi Sankara but also by later preceptors. No wonder the 722 pages comprising the present work make up only the first volume of the author's plan.

The present volume begins with a long valuable introduction. It expounds the first stanza of the hymn and then explains the connection between the first stanza and the rest of the hymn. This is followed by the treatment of the eighth, the second and the third stanza in that order. One who reads this, the first volume, will eagerly look forward to the next volume and its treatment of the remaining stanzas of the hymn. The format of the book is excellent.

-- Prof. T.P. Ramachandran

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? (And other essays on the spiritual quest): By Robert Powell; Pub.: AHP Paperbacks, P.O. Box 4177, CA 95054, USA; Pp. 146. Price not stated.

This book is a collection of articles written over a period of years. They are the expression of the author's reflections and insights on spiritual questions in the light of his contacts with three masters. The articles are here arranged in such a manner as to represent the author's own inner growth.

The book is divided into two parts. Initially it was J. Krishnamurti who, Powell says, influenced him. The first part of the book contains articles written under this influence. The distinguishing mark of this set is that they reflect a quest for the inner truth while the mind is still

troubled with problems of how to improve the world. The second part of the book contains essays where the author is less bothered about the world outside for the reason that he discovers that the real solution to the world's problems lies in the discovery of one's own true nature as identical with Reality. This development comes, says the author, under the influence of Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj. Powell's journey of discovery culminates in Advaita. Using only minimum technical terms in Sanskrit, the author conveys the spirit of Advaita for the modern reader and shows how Advaita could transform one's attitude to life.

The last thirty pages of the book are "questions and answers" and "probings", and these bring into focus the main ideas of the book for the fellow seeker.

-- Prof. T.P. Ramachandran

THE KURAL : By Tiruvalluvar; tr. from Tamil by P.S. Sundaram. Pub.: P.S. Sundaram, 1, Kamalabai Street, Madras 600 017. Pp. 154+20. Rs.50.

It is difficult to conceive of a book which analyses life in all its aspects in such brief space as the Kural. 133 topics of 10 *venba*-couplets each, are divided into three sections: 'Virtue', 'Wealth' and 'Love'. The work deals with the duties of man in several walks of life, the ideals that should govern his behaviour, the improprieties that he should avoid and the subtleties involved in the basic relationship between man and woman. A few examples:

VIRTUE:

Duty is not for reward

Does the world recompense the rain-cloud?
(Social Obligation)

It is great to endure hunger, but only next
To removing it. (Charity)

To bear your pain and not pain others
Is penance summed up. (Penance)

Cling to the One who clings to nothing
And so clinging, cease to cling. (Renunciation)

WEALTH:

Learn well what should be learnt, and then
Live your learning. (Learning)

Assured this man will do this task this way,
Leave it to him. (Employment)

A king must know everything that happens
Everytime to everybody. (Espionage)

The astute you will find, use for their gauge
Nothing but eyes. (Mind reading)

Past food digested, eat in measure
And so live long. (Medicine)

More than all the world is his
Who has nothing but won't beg.
(Not begging)

LOVE:

Her stealthy glance is more than half
Love's embrace. (Hints)

Why does he, cruel, torment me in dreams
When he leaves me alone awake? (She)

In lover's quarrels the loser wins -
As shown when they make up. (He)

Ethics is the keynote of the Kural. That Tiruvalluvar stresses liberation from *samsara* as the ultimate goal is evident from many verses as for example:

Of the folly which takes the unreal for real
Comes the wretchedness of birth. (Jnana)

"No birth again" should be our only wish -
And the way to that is never to wish at all.
(Jnana)

The style of this laudable translation captures the keen brevity of the kural, and we are indebted to Sri P.S. Sundaram for the great service he has rendered.

-- Ramamani

FOREVER UNDECIDED : A puzzle guide to Godel: By Raymond Smullyan. Pub.: Oxford Univ. Press, OX2 6DP, U.K. Pp. 257, £5.95.

Two people -- A and B -- each make an offer, provided you make any statement of your own choice. (A's offer: If the statement is true you get exactly \$10. If false, then you get less or more than ten, but not exactly ten. B's offer: Regardless of whether the statement is true or false, you get more than \$10). The reader who sees that B's offer is obviously better, is urgently advised to read this book! For, A's offer would make one a millionaire provided one made a self-referential statement like, "You will neither pay me exactly \$10 nor exactly a million dollars" This interesting puzzle (a Smullyan original) should give the reader an idea of self-referential statements, and a taste of this book.

Smullyan is a polymath. His interests range from mathematics through logic to philosophy, all reflected in his books. He has written 'puzzle' books, standard academic texts on symbolic logic and books on philosophy for the non-specialist reader. It is however invidious to classify his books as mere collections of puzzles. Anyone who has written books entitled "This book needs no title" or "What is the name of this book" obviously intends to more than just titillate one's imagination for a few seconds. His book "The Tao is silent" is a brilliant exercise in making you think about 'thinking'.

Kurt Godel whose theorems this book is essentially about, is slowly becoming a cult figure and there is a growing tendency to apply his theorems to areas well outside the limits he had set himself. Essentially what Godel proved was:

(1) Any formal mathematical system must be incomplete. That is, propositions would exist within the

system which are unprovable within it (2) No formal mathematical system can prove it is consistent. (3) What is more startling, it is possible to prove that if the system is consistent, then it cannot prove its consistency. In effect what Godel is saying is that if a system proves that it is consistent then it is actually inconsistent, and a consistent system in order to maintain consistency must be incapable of proving its consistency.

This paradoxical situation arises because of self-reference, the classic example of which is the Cretan... Epimenides' statement, "All Cretans are liars!". Elegantly and sure-footedly, the book takes us through a course in logic, and into a hierarchy of self-reference and then on to a final understanding of Godel's theorems. The process has been made relatively painless by transferring the mathematical Godelian concepts to the more easily understood domain of human beings and their belief systems. Touring an imaginary island peopled by truthful knights and liar-knaves, the reader is made to infer from the various responses whether the native is a knight or a knave. (Thus, 'I am a knave' could never be uttered by a native. And 'One of us is a knave' could only be uttered by a knight, and whose partner is a knave). Smullyan very successfully uses problems and puzzles to guide one through the theorems.

I must add just one reservation to an otherwise warm recommendation. The author has deliberately limited himself to only helping us understand Godel within the formal limitation under which his theorems were proven. Its applicability to a far wider domain has been left out (An extreme example would be the formal system of the ego, 'I'). But then I suppose the very structure of the book precludes such an exercise.

-- N.J. Krishnan

ANCIENT WORLD - A NEW LOOK : Ed: N.Mahalingam; Pub: The International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilization, 102, Mount Road, Madras - 600 002; Pp. 285; Rs. 30/-.

Edited by Shri N. Mahalingam, well known industrialist, philanthropist, educationist and author, the book comprises select articles from earlier publications, now out of print.

The book aims to delve deep into our hoary past. Some of the views detailed in the book are: The rishis were aware of all the different calculations of time. Lanka was on the West coast of India and Hanuman came straight from the Vindhya mountain to Mahendra Parvata and then crossed over to Lanka. There are significant astronomical facts to be gleaned from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Modern historical research is defective. The Puranas contain historical facts. The Agamas were originally Tamil texts. Rig Vedic texts acknowledged to be the earliest human records, have to be understood and interpreted in proper perspectives. Often tradition leads to wrong conclusions.

The book analyses in lucid detail the fundamental aspects of mythology to history, the significance of the great epics, historical data, Rig vedic mythology, our cultural heritage, linguistics, grammar (Tamil) rules etc., from a modern standpoint. The arguments are well made out. The book itself is the result of the tireless and purposeful research of several scholars and presents some important conclusions based on their research.

Indologists will certainly welcome this publication as thought provoking and very useful for further research.

-- R.Rangachari

I AM ALL : By Sudhakar Dikshit. Chetana Ltd., 34 Rampart Row, Bombay 400 023. Pp. 157; Rs. 100/-.

In this rational -- but not intellectual -- account of the organisation of life in the cosmos, the author draws upon his own experience supported by the realisations of seers down the ages and presents the problem of life in its depth and offers a solution that is convincing. In brief, he perceives the cosmos as a manifestation of a Divine Reality with two levels of expression: macrocosmic and microcosmic. Essentially they are both one. But due to vitiation by desire and ego, the individual gets entangled in a wrong perspective of division, a governing sense of separativity between himself and others, between himself and the universe. Interiorisation of consciousness with the aid of meditation, concentration, visualisation, japa, leads gradually to the experience of an immutable, eternal Self at the core of oneself. This is the Self-realisation described in the Upanishads and verified by rare souls even today.

Sri Dikshit cites many instructions in the Yoga Vasishtha in the course of the discussion. Not performance of religious rites, rituals, adoption of ochre robes, but Knowledge of oneself which flows into knowledge of the universe is crucial. "The knowledge which makes man one with God consists in getting fully convinced, through his own thinking, that all the objects of the world are Brahman, which is also his real self, and nothing else". The mind is to be purified and trained to look into itself. Desirelessness, egolessness and renunciation (non-possession) provide the 'blue-print'.

The chapter on the significance and importance in sadhana of the primal word OM and the chapters on Old Age and Death are of great relevance to the modern man who is oppressed from all sides and losing faith in himself.

In what may be considered and respected as a personal testament of the author, we read: "I have come to believe with the Vedic seer Mahidasa Aitareya that the ultimate object of man's life is perfection, which consists of knowledge (*prajna*), bliss (*ananda*) and immortality (*amritvam*). The progress of man is from mere life (*prana*) to reason (*prajna*), from the role of Prajapati to that of Brahman, that is from bondage to

freedom. Man's highest aspiration should be the attainment of the immortal by means of the mortal, *martyena amritam ipsa.*" (Pp.121)

Writing on Kaliyuga, the author cites a striking passage from the Vishnupurana: ".....property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of virtue; passions will be sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in life and women will be merely objects of sensual enjoyments; earth will be venerated only for its mineral treasures (i.e. there will be no *tirthas*, no particular spot of the earth will have any special sanctity)... dishonesty will be the universal means of sustenance."

A Rosary of quotations from authentic sources is appended at the end of the book as a kind of summarisation of the main points made; they are from Sri Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, J. Krishnamurti, Kabir and other mystics.

A remarkable work of a remarkable man.

-- M.P. Pandit

VEDA AND TANTRA: ATHARVA VEDA : By M. Sundar Raj. International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilisations, 102, Mount Road, Madras 600002. Rs. 60/- Pp. 164.

The Atharva Veda is generally relegated to a lower position than the *trayi*. It is assumed to be a manual for magical and occult practices. In this commendable study the author examines this negative approach based on superficial assumptions and brings out the esoteric content of the Veda. He takes up most of the Books of the Samhita and brings out the symbolic nature of the verses. He studies the different streams of thought and practice that are articulated in the Atharva and cites references to support his view that the beginnings of the Tantra are to be traced in this collection. The emphasis on *tapas*, the prominence of Rudra-Shiva, the *samskaras* that have played an important part in the development of the Hindu society, are underlined. It is the author's conviction that the roots of both the Rig and Atharva Vedas lie in the Indus Valley and pursuing this line of investigation it is possible to 'reconstruct a UR or Mother-veda'.

Special attention is given to the contribution of the *uraaty* movement which gave importance to asceticism, *tapas* and yoga, claiming all the while freedom from any social discipline. They cultivated supernatural powers and exercised considerable influence on the society. Concepts of Skambha, Kundalini, are studied in this context. The writer concludes: "The Atharva Veda reveals itself as a work on yoga and tantrism... this is a sacrificial ritual carried out within the human body, in contrast to the external sacrifice advocated in the Rig and Yajur Vedas. The Atharvan text provides the missing link in the history of Vedism, Buddhism, Jainism."

Bringing fresh insights, this work is a stimulating introduction to a deeper study of the Atharva Veda.

-- M.P. Pandit

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF TOFU ROSHI : By Susan Ichi Su Moon. Pub: Shambhala, 300, Massachusetts Av., Boston, Mass. 02115 Pp. 156, \$7.95.

"Dear Tofu Roshi: Is there really such a thing as ENLIGHTENMENT? And if there is, why don't I ever have it? -- Virginia"

"Dear Virginia: Yes, there is Enlightenment. You will know it when you have it. When you are enlightened, you will realise that you already realise that which you realise when you are enlightened."

Up the street from the Next-to-Godliness Laundromat, at the No Way Zen Centre, where shoes mysteriously disappear from the rack with random abandon, barefoot seekers flounder and flourish. Who wouldn't? Consider the koan, "The sound of one hand scratching".

Tofu Roshi's (he or she? no disciple is ever sure) teflon presence is Tiger balm for the bruises of samsaric existence, exuding an innocence as humble as a freshly-trodden banana peel. "Does one brand of soap contain more Buddha nature than another?"

Tending the compost heap and a spiritual advice column with equal compassion, his inimitable example and unmemorable words combine to shatter all distinctions between the spiritual and the ordinary.

"Dear Tofu Roshi: I can't sit on the floor. I understand that my spiritual advancement is therefore severely hampered. What to do? -- Stiff."

"Dear Stiff: Many people share your difficulty. Those who begin to practice the Way late in life find it particularly difficult to tie their legs in knots. You might find it helpful initially to practice your knots on a length of rope... when you can do these knots with the rope, transfer the learning to your legs... Do your best, and remember this. If you are sitting on a chair and the chair is on the floor, you are sitting on the floor... Be careful not to fall off the floor."

And miracles still do happen. Susan Moon bumped into this marginal man in traffic school ("There is no one way"), before finally recognising her true teacher at the above-mentioned laundromat ("Life is like a washing machine. You do not always get out of it what you put into it").

Thus blossomed a master-disciple relationship which Ichi Su chronicles with deep affection and understanding, together with a selection of the Roshi's letters. The soul-baring intimacy of the journey keeps the pages turning; and the letters, well-paced reminders that if you have problems, however silly or serious, others have them too.

"Dear Tofu Roshi: Why is there something, rather than nothing? -- Auntie Matter"

"Dear Auntie: You have probably heard the wise old saying: 'Time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening at once.' Similarly something manifests in order to keep nothing from taking up all the space... Learn to see things as they are and to see nothing as it isn't"

A useful glossary defines everything from Asana ("a contorted physical posture assumed by a yogic practitioner") through Tofu ("a tasteless food item made from cubic soybeans") to Zendo ("a room in which nothing is ever accomplished").

Here, finally, is ticklish confirmation that Zen has struck at the heart of California, if not America.

"Dear Tofu Roshi: I made a bet with my wife that you don't print real letters, you just make them up. -- Still in the Dark."

"Dear Still: The letters are real. It is I, Tofu Roshi, who am not."

You can have your Tofu, and eat it too.

-- Dev Gogoi

THE RELIGION OF THE VEDA : By Hermann Oldenberg; Pub: Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi-7; Pp. 359; Rs. 250/-.

The Vedas are the oldest records the world has of man's quest of a Reality and in terms of which he could order his life and being. Long regarded as too esoteric and sacred to be written down, its mode of transmission was from a Guru to his chosen pupils. It was Sruti, (something) heard. In spite of the fact that its mode of transmission was verbal, it is one of the greatest marvels of human history that it has come down across these thousands of years, significantly accurate in tone and tenor. A Tubingen university scholar visiting India two decades ago, remarked that this discipline of Veda Adhyayana had ensured a purity of text and chanting beyond all human estimate. But oral transmission has now given way to printed transmission and to translation too! One may lament this development, itself a century or so old, as throwing open the sacred literature of India to study, and systematized misapprehension and misrepresentation by learned miechchas! We can no more stay the march of time in this field than Canute did to stop the waves.

It has nevertheless to be admitted that the translators, nearly all of them westerners, have helped several generations of the natural heirs of this rich heritage to learn something of the incalculably precious insights of the seers of ancient India. Oldenberg is one of the most painstaking and respectful of the foreign scholars who have handled India's ancient sacred literature. And while his being a foreigner has kept him at some distance from the esoteric significance of much of his material, his earnestness and Teutonic thoroughness have helped him to help even Indian students, natural heirs to this asset, grasp something of the substance of their ancestors' spiritual adventures into the unknown.

A long introduction tells us of the characteristics of the people of ancient India and of Vedic poetry, surveying briefly the nature and content of the mantras of the Yajur Veda - (which he regards as magical formulae) and the Atharva Veda and the Gods and other relevant material. He admits, with charming candour that as a stranger, there would be many mistakes made but that one should not be deterred from the quest on that account. Such academic self-doubt blended with earnestness is altogether rare.

The four chapters that follow cover the nature and significance of the Vedic gods and demons, the origin of the universe and of man and other forms of life, the Vedic cults and sacrifices, the role of the priesthood, Diksha, and sacrificial observances, the contents of the liturgical year, the Varnas and Asramas. The last and the fourth chapter is particularly valuable for its account of Vedic eschatology. There is little doubt that the work is handicapped by its foreignness but not too much.

-- Prof. S. Ramaswamy

THE KAUTILIYA ARTHA SASTRA : in three volumes.

Edited with Introduction, Glossary and Notes by R.P. Kangle. Pub. by Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi-7. Price Part I: Rs.125/-; Part II: Rs.175/-; Part III: Rs.100/-.

The history of political thought in the world has known no greater original thinker and no greater *realpolitik* statesman than Kautilya whose original name was Vishnugupta and who is constantly referred to as 'Chanakya'. Historians of political thought have, unfortunately, not given him the importance he is entitled to by reason of his great contribution to the art and practice of public administration. The general presumption of western historians of political science is that 'the East' had little to tell the world in this field and that the West could afford, comfortably, to ignore the contribution of Vishnugupta. Parkinson, noted as the author of the famous Parkinson laws, was perhaps the first to consider Vishnugupta as a thinker of outstanding quality. Other writers have generally considered Vishnugupta's work in their histories of Sanskrit literature, which a great many approached as the literature of a language nearly dead and as offering to the curious some kind of 'exotic' stuff. Dr. R. Sama Sastri was the first to bring out an authoritative edition of the work in the Mysore Oriental Series, based, however, only on a single manuscript. Pandit Ganapati Sastri, famous as the discoverer of Bhasa, brought out a three volume edition of the text in the Trivandrum Oriental Series. Prof. Kangle's edition, first brought out by Bombay University in the sixties, is the first comprehensive critical edition covering, the text in Part I, an English translation in Part II and a critical study and assessment in Part III. It is something to be thankful for that the well known 'Oriental' publishers, Motilal Banarsidas, have brought out the edition under review. Part I, the text of the work, is based on a critical

collation of available manuscripts, including manuscripts in relatively inaccessible private collections. It is noteworthy that most of these manuscripts are available in the South, some in Telugu, some in Malayalam (like that in the Palyam collection belonging to Paliath Valia Achan of Cochin). The text is, of course, in Sanskrit but the script is either Grantha or Telugu or Malayalam. This feature is also true of the commentaries, a great many of which are in the South Indian languages, Tamil alone excepted. The comparative neglect of this work in the area of its distinguished origin seems to be inexplicable. K.P.Jayswal's *Hindu Polity* takes note of the work but it is Sama Sastri and T. Ganapati Sastri who give us a critical evaluation of it. Indeed Ganapati Sastri's Sanskrit commentary, *Srimula*, is the most comprehensive.

The major contribution of Vishnugupta is undeniably in the field of Public Administration and the structure of political institutions rather than in the sphere of political speculation and theory. Vishnugupta was a Brahmana from Kanchipuram with an unrivalled mastery of the Vedas and the Dharmasastras, the latter covering Arthasastra as well. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, *Sukraniti* and *Viduraniti* are all important sources of ideas, and Vishnugupta seems to have drawn freely on his mastery of these works in the formulation of his practical counsel to rulers. The Rajapurohita of ancient times, like Vasishtha for the Ikshvaku dynasty, was a counsellor in all fields of human activity. Vishnugupta was the counsellor supreme of Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan Empire. It was the vigour and vision, the ruthless pragmatism of Vishnugupta, which helped to destroy the Nandas and placed Chandragupta Maurya firmly on the throne of Magadha, opening up a brilliant chapter in Indian history.

Vishnugupta has been referred to as the Indian Machiavelli. This is a superficial view as Vishnugupta, unlike Machiavelli, does not exclude considerations of ethics and morality in the handling of public affairs. The separation of politics from ethics is, indeed, the great contribution of Machiavelli and modern political history is a vivid demonstration not of the intellectual validity of the separation, but of the temptation to which most 'princes' (rulers of states) readily and eagerly succumb, the temptation to take 'a holiday' from moral scruples. The lie is a powerful ally and even in Gandhi's India, lying on a formidable scale -- in clear contravention of the national motto *satyam eva jayate* -- has been manifest. Truth is 'inevitably' a casualty in politics, as in love and war. But Vishnugupta does not favour a total separation of politics and ethics. He wants the ruler to be, what Plato in his *The Republic*, wanted him to be, a true philosopher and a sage, a person who has achieved *indriyanigraha*, developed his intellect by constant association with wise men and has besides, a sharp awareness of his royal responsibility for ensuring the political stability and security of his state. Dharma, like art, is apt to take a severe beating in a political

crisis. It may become impotent amid a clash of arms. But as Gandhi believed the end does not justify the means, even in a crisis of unmanageable magnitude. Vishnugupta's political pragmatism anticipates Cavour's famous statement, "What scoundrels we should be, if we practised in our private lives what we do in our handling of public affairs." He would also have endorsed Alexander Herzen's frank admission, "We politicians are not doctors, but the disease".

The three volumes under review are a treasure house of political wisdom, throwing a powerful searchlight on the glorious history of a country which seems to have let itself, since 'Independence' to be ruled by an authentically 'swadeshi' gang of bumbles, and liars, whose massive incompetence and unscrupulousness recalls the Victorian Dr. Chalmer's remark about politics: 'people-eating'.

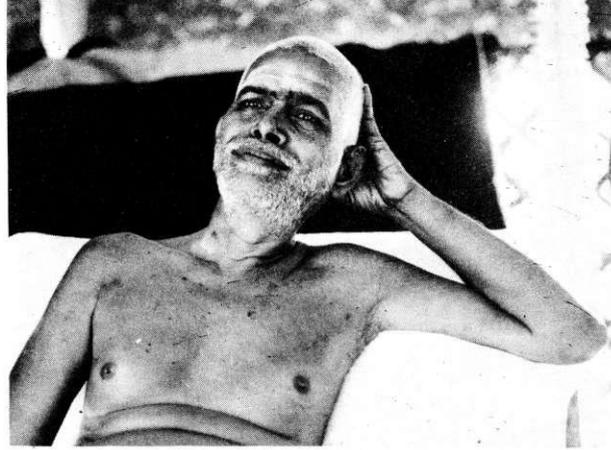
-- Prof. S. Ramaswamy

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- RAMANA MEU MESTRE: Sri Maha Krishna Swami (Portugese). Pub: SMKS, Brazil.
- SREE YOGA VASISHTHA, Vol. 5 (Upasama Prakarana): (late) Vidwan Bulusu Venkateswarulu. 8-22-14, Gandhi Nagar, Kakinada 533 004. Rs.50/-.
- ARUNACHALA AKSHARAMANAMALA (Telugu tr. and comm.): Dr. M. Subba Rao, Pub: Kinnara Art, 2-2-647/153, Hyderabad 500 013. Rs.10/-.
- RAMANA MAHARSHI AND THE PATH OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE: A. Osborne (Portugese). Editora Pensamento, Sao Paolo, Brazil.
- STOTRANJALI: By devotees. Pub: R.K. Math, Madras 600 004. Rs.20/-.
- THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY: H.P. Blavatsky. Theosophy Co., 40, New Marine Lines, Bombay 400 020.
- EXPERIENCES WITH YOGI RAMSURAT KUMAR: Hargopal Sepuri. Pub: Sister Nivedita Acad., Madras 600 005. Rs.15/-.
- CALL OF SHANKARA: (Monthly journal covering events at Sringeri Peetha and branches); Rs.15/- annual, Rs.150/- Life. Pub: at Subhash Street, Sringeri 577 139.
- SPIRITUAL PERFECTION: Anthony Elenjittam, Aquinas Publ., Bombay 400 050.
- GANDHI SUKTI MUKTAVALI: Sayings of Gandhi (English/Sanskrit-verse/Telugu verse). Versification by C.D. Deshmukh and Dr. O. Ramachandriah resp. Rs.10/-.

ASHRAM BULLETIN

SRI RAMANA JAYANTHI



"You who wish to celebrate a birthday inquire first who was born. One's true birthday is when one enters into the Eternal Being which shines for ever without birth or death."

— Sri Maharshi

DEATH IN MADURAI

By Dr. Ramachandra Gandhi

Seven years less than a hundred years ago in Madurai, probably during the middle of the month of July, Yama pays an unexpected visit to the boy Venkataraman. I picture Yama in the guise of a *sannyasin*, perhaps the same *sannyasin* who generations before had been refused alms by Venkataraman's ancestors and who had placed a curse upon the family to the effect that a male member from every generation of the family would have to beg for alms as a *sannyasin*. Yama then, as *sannyasin* appears before Venkataraman and says, "You have stolen property in your possession. That body and breath of yours, that mind and life of yours, are mine and not really yours, give them back to me!" "Certainly, Revered Sir", says Venkataraman most courteously, "take them now, they are yours, but am I yours? Whose am I? Who am I?" Death disappears forever, the ancient curse is broken, the family of man is set free from the dualism of *samsara* and *sannyasa*, birth and death. Timeless self-realisation dawns in Venkataraman's heart and Maharshi Ramana arrives on the stage of world history.

A representative human being is tested by Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai and not found wanting. She, *Shakti* of the Universe, anticipated a hundred years ago the crisis which all life on Earth faces today. She may have summoned Yama and warned him that in hundred years he might have to perform the task of annihilating

all life of earth because the human species in its unregenerateness was likely in the near future to hurl itself upon the resources of life and civilisation like a murder-cum-suicide terrorist squad. Unless she might have added, a representative young human being like Venkataraman was capable of staring Yama in the face and attaining self-realisation through untutored inquiry and attention alone, for most human beings, like Venkataraman, were untutored in spiritual traditions, although they were born into them; and because the quality of inquiry and presuppositionless attention essential to Self-realisation was unspoiled only in the young. Yama does not have to travel far to test the spiritual capability and survival worthiness of the human species, for Venkataraman is waiting in the first floor room of his uncle's house round the corner from the Meenakshi temple. The fateful interview takes place, and the rest in history.

Nearly fiftyfive years after the above decisive event in human history, Sri Ramana lay dying in his hut in his Ashram at the foot of Arunachala. His favourite peacock had perched himself on the roof of the sage's hut and screamed inconsolably through the night. That peacock represents the ego in the service of self-knowledge, the irrepressible spiritual aspiration even of our perverse age. Almost the last recorded words of Sri Ramana were "Have you given that bird his dinner?" We have been nourished. There is hope, I think, for life.



A picturesque view of Sri Mathrubuteswara Temple

MAHA POOJA

By A.R. Natarajan

The *Maha Pooja*, the *Aradhana* of Bhagavan's Mother Azhagammal was celebrated at Sri Ramanasramam on May 29, '89 with solemnity and festivity. The first *Maha Pooja* was in 1923 and since then it has been celebrated, each year, befittingly. The Mathrubootheswara temple, the shrine of Bhagavan and the auditorium in front of it were tastefully decorated. A large gathering witnessed the Special Pooja and listened to the songs composed by the devotees for the occasion and sung by them with great fervour and devotion.

In the afternoon **Sri Kunju Swami** and other speakers talked about the significance of Mother's life. An exceptional feature of her life was her generosity, be it the breast-feeding of a neighbour's daughter alongwith her own son, or providing food to guests, even at untimely hours, and never saying 'No' to a hungry person. Mother had more than her share of worldly sorrows. Her husband Sundaram Iyer died in 1892. Her second son, Ramana, left home in 1896 without leaving behind any information about his whereabouts. Her brother-in-law Subba Iyer died in 1898.

The death of her first son, Nagaswami, at a prime age, followed in 1900. Then Nelliappa Iyer, another brother-in-law, who was supporting the family, died and so also her daughter-in-law Mangalam at a very young age. A lesser person would certainly have gone under this avalanche of continuous sorrow, but not the Mother. She had a strong streak of dispassion. Had she not given birth to Ramana! This string of deaths strengthened her resolve to take refuge in her ascetic son Ramana; that she did in 1916. She came to him not as a proud mother, but as a humble disciple. Under the constant guidance of Ramana, she fully ripened and at the time of her death, her life force became absorbed in the Heart. She had attained Liberation at the hands of her son. Her body had become a temple of God and hence it was interred with appropriate rituals and worshipped since then as 'Mathrubootheswara', (God who has become Mother).

In the evening, there was an elevating Ramana Music programme, in classical style, by **Smt. Sulochana Natarajan** and party.

ASHRAM REVISITED

By Shanta Rameshwar Rao

Smt. Shanta Rameshwar Rao, a dedicated educationist, who runs a much lauded school at Hyderabad and who writes children's books, spent a few days at the Ashram in July last. We reproduce below her impressions of her stay.

— Ed.

It took me a little while to settle in and get used to this place and its routine. And now it is almost time to leave and return home. I leave this place tomorrow morning after doing the *Giri Pradakshina*. I shall do it in the car (!). It is a thirteen kilometer round and it would not be sensible for me to even attempt walking. This morning I climbed the hill up to a point, but had to return before seven to be in time for breakfast. We are exceedingly well-fed here — this morning we had lovely *idlis* with dal-chilly powder and gingelly oil. They were delicious and the coffee is out of this world — as only Tamilians can make it.

Before breakfast, and in fact, throughout the day, there are lovely recitations and *parayanas* of the Vedas, Upanishads, etc. and the Meditation Hall and other places are quiet and alive with young and old, all offering their worship of love to Ramana, the Sage of Arunachala.

There is a lovely looking Japanese girl who, among others, does an incredible number of circumambulations, after which she goes into a quieter and much more private hall to do (what looks like) intense meditation. However, the most moving sight is that of old, bent and sometimes crippled people moving from one beautiful picture to another of Ramana and the deep faith in their eyes tells stories that cannot be recounted in words.

I love the *Veda Pathasala* attached to the Ashram where little boys of ten, eleven and twelve learn and do their *abhyasa*. They have bright beautiful faces — the faces of all children all over the world, and their heads are shaven in the traditional style and they are bare-bodied and wear sacred threads. They remind me of the Vamanavatara story, though I am sure they are as playful and naughty as children everywhere!

There's an acute water shortage but not so much that anyone needs to skip a bath or do anything drastic. One only has to think before using water and not be careless. The atmosphere is such that after the initial warning a feeling of plenty pervades the place — a feeling of '*samruddhi*'. It's very beautiful in a homely sort of way and everyone looks as if they belong — which they do even

if they come for an hour or two. Everyone is kind and no one gives the feeling of spiritual arrogance which I'm afraid I've often seen in other places. The robust Tamilian sense of humour is everywhere — and truly Ramana was the embodiment of it. There's a quiet, unforced discipline which seems to come out of freedom (for I really can't see how it can be the other way about i.e. freedom coming out of discipline). Even the beggars at the gate follow a discipline. I'm deeply moved when I see little shops outside the gate named — things like Sri Ramana Cycle Hire Centre. A couple of days ago I went (with a new-found young friend I made) to see Tiruvannamalai town (and a thriving, busy *old* town it is!) and the great Temple (*The Koil*). It is fantastic, to be seen to be believed. I'll have to come many times more to be able to digest it. The rickshaw man who took us there had recently won Rs. One lakh in the State lottery (and invested it quite wisely too). The money had certainly not gone to his head (undoubtedly Ramana's Grace) and it was such a lesson to see him pedalling up and down the road with a gentle, kindly, happy smile on his face. I told my friend it was a privilege to be driven by a *lakshpati*. Not everyone has such luck!

There are beautiful peacocks here with their more modest and, I'm sure, more practical and commonsensical wives. Yes, the peacocks are glamorous and sensational and they dance — quite contrary to the popular belief — even when the sun is blazing hot, with their tails outspread and clattering. There are dozens of monkeys and they are friendly and non-violent. Ramana's relationship to all creatures, including snakes, panthers and such, was one of love and sweetness and there are many stories told about this. He was also an excellent cook as well as a skilled mason and builder, a poet, a writer and a linguist, and He was a person who lived in total harmony with all nature.

It was hot when I arrived but is cool today and I am writing this in the Library (the Ramana Centenary Library) surrounded by knowledge and more knowledge. They have a wonderful collection of books, and on the walls are beautiful photographs of Bhagavan who is all knowledge and who transcends all knowledge!

Navarathri Celebrations at the Ashram

One of the colourful functions at the Ashram in which devotees participate with devotional fervour is the NAVARATHRI celebrations when the deity, Mother Yogambal, appears decorated in one of Her various aspects on each of the nine evenings. This year too these celebrations were conducted between September 30 and October 10.

Navaratri is the period of nine days after the Newmoon day of the month of *Purattasi* (September-October) particularly prescribed for the worship of the Mother of the Universe in Her three important aspects: *Durga*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*. Each of these three aspects is specially adored on the three successive periods of three days.

Devi Mahatmyam, *Durga-Saptasati* and *Chandi* are the names of the sacred work in which are found the exploits and praise of these three *Maha Saktis*, operating in the Universe.

At the Ashram, apart from the daily *parayanam* (chanting) of the *Durga Saptasati*, a *Laksharchana* of *Lalita* (a hundred *archanas* with the 1000 Names of Lalita) takes place at the inner Sanctum of *Sri Chakra* in the shrine

during this period. Every evening one of the various aspects of *Mahasakti* is put on view with enchanting decoration. Altogether it is a period of universal worship throughout *Bharat* (India) and wherever the devotees of the Mother dwell in the world.

The day after these nine days is known as *Vijayadasami*, the Tenth Day of Victory. All of us are after success in our respective efforts and let us all join in the universal worship of the Mother during this period in particular.

It is noteworthy that Vijayawada **Ch. Chandrasekara Rao** and his brother **Ch. Venugopala Rao** and their families actively participated in this year's Navaratri Festival — they performed a number of Special *pujas* including *Vilva Laksharchana* to Sri Bhagavan's shrine and *Kumkum Laksharchana* at the Shrine of Mother. Also they gave *Bikshas* to the sadhus and inmates of the Ashram. They distributed clothes to all the inmates of the Ashram as also to the poor, the needy and sadhus who daily participate in the *Narayana Seva* (poor-feeding). Their honouring, with clothes, coconut etc., the 108 *Sumangalis* seated in rows after rows in front of Sri Bhagavan's Shrine was a beautiful sight!



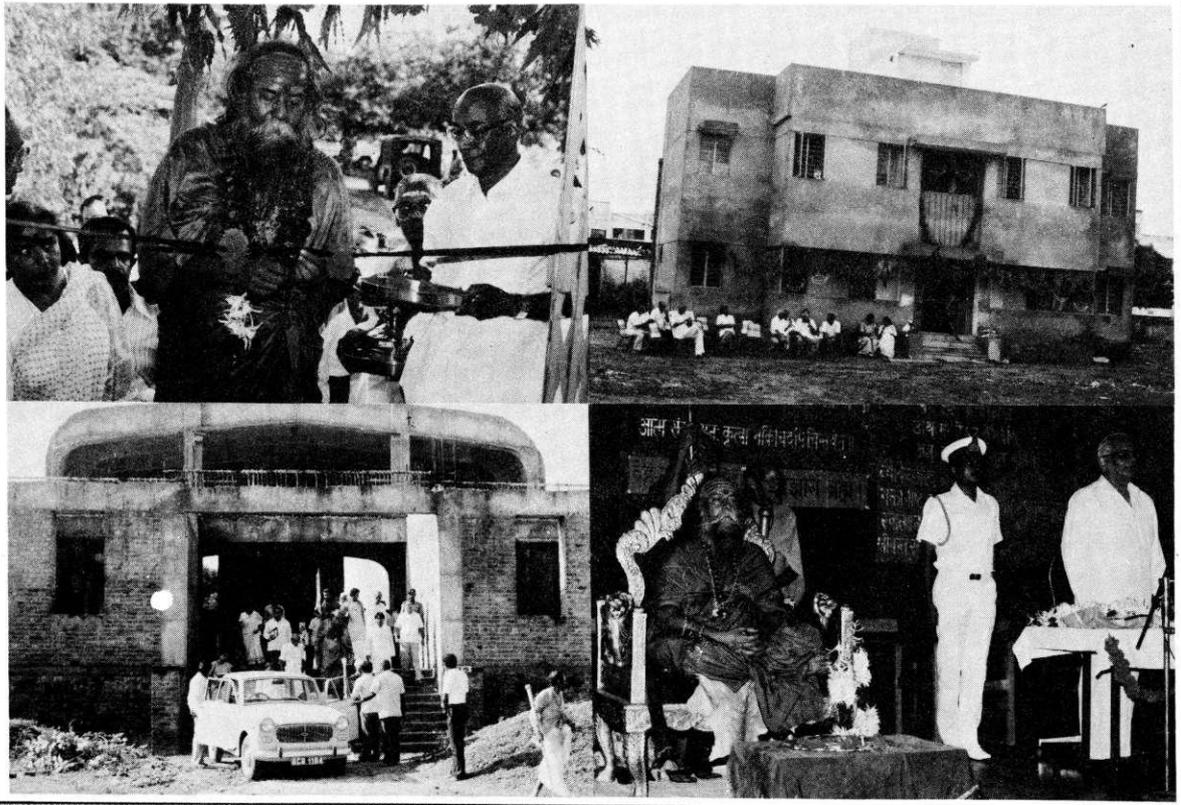
Mother Yogambal being carried in procession

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI KENDRA

Drive-in Cinema Road, Ahmedabad-380 052

His Holiness **Shri Swaroopanand Saraswati Shankaracharyaji** of Dwarakapith & Jyotirmath opening the office-cum-library-cum-Satsang building of *Sri Ramana Maharshi Kendra* in Ahmedabad. **Sri K. Sivaraj**, President of the Kendra, is seen to left of His Holiness.

The new building opened by His Holiness.



His Holiness blessing the *Ramana Maharshi Mandir*, under construction.

His Excellency **Shri R.K. Trivedi**, Governor of Gujarat, giving his address after releasing the Souvenir. His Holiness **Shankaracharyaji** released two books in Gujarati on Sri Bhagavan.

BRAZIL RAMANA KENDRA

We fondly cherish the memory of the beautiful moments we had had at the Feet of the Sacred Arunachala Mountain. We bow to Its ever-present Light which shines inside the hearts of those who have grasped Sri Ramana's teachings and live them. Bhagavan Sri Ramana is beloved and revered all over the world and here, in Brazil, thanks to the work of **Sri Maha Krishna Swami**, there are quite a good number of sincere and real devotees of our *Sadguru*.

Sri Maha Krishna Swami has just now brought out for seekers of Truth in Brazil one more beautiful book entitled *Ramana meu Mestre* ("RAMANA MY MASTER"). This Portuguese book gives the essence of Bhagavan Ramana's teachings. Those who read Portuguese please write to us at:

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANASHRAM,
P.O. Box No. 60233,
05096 — Sao Paulo — SP,
BRAZIL, South America.

SEPTEMBER FIRST

ADVENT AT ARUNACHALA CELEBRATION, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, Canada

Since 1972 *Arunachala Ashrama* in Nova Scotia has been celebrating Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala. This year's celebration commenced on Friday, September 1st.

On this day at 4.30 a.m. **Dr. J.S.S. Lakshminarayana**, Professor of Biology, University of Moncton, New Brunswick arrived at *Arunachala Ramana Mandiram*. Just at this time the regular morning *Veda Parayana* was being conducted in the Temple. From that day until Monday, September 4th, Dr. Lakshminarayana took on the responsibilities of performing the many *pujas* and programs conducted during this special occasion.

Later that day, with deep devotion, he performed a grand six hour *Sri Chakra Puja*. The next day, Saturday, September 2nd, he performed *Durga Puja*, reciting the *Devi Mahatmyam* and other respective prayers.

On this day also many devotees arrived from different points in Eastern Canada and Northeastern U.S.A. These friends and devotees attended the *puja* and helped in the preparation for Sunday's function which was attended by 150 devotees.

The Sunday, September 3rd program, conducted by Dr. Lakshminarayana, began at 11 a.m. with *Ganesh*

Puja. Then the entire congregation recited SRI RAMANA-ASHTOTTARA-SATANAMA-STOTRAM, 108 Names of Sri Ramana. **Dennis Hartel** welcomed the guests, explained the significance of the occasion and expressed sincere gratitude to all the friends and devotees.

At 11.30 a.m. *Upadesa Saram* was recited. This was followed by a lucid explanation of selected verses by **Dr. Anil Sharma**. The Doctor's sincere and practical application of Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings in his own life became evident as he described to the devotees the method and goal outlined in *Upadesa Saram*.

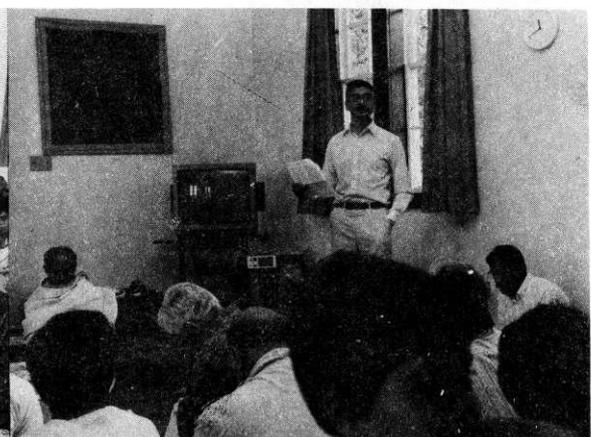
After this, many of the guests offered *Bhajans*, prayers and recitations before the shrine of Sri Bhagavan. This was followed with a short talk by **Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat** who, in his simple and genuine manner, exhorted all to take to the path of peace and devotion.

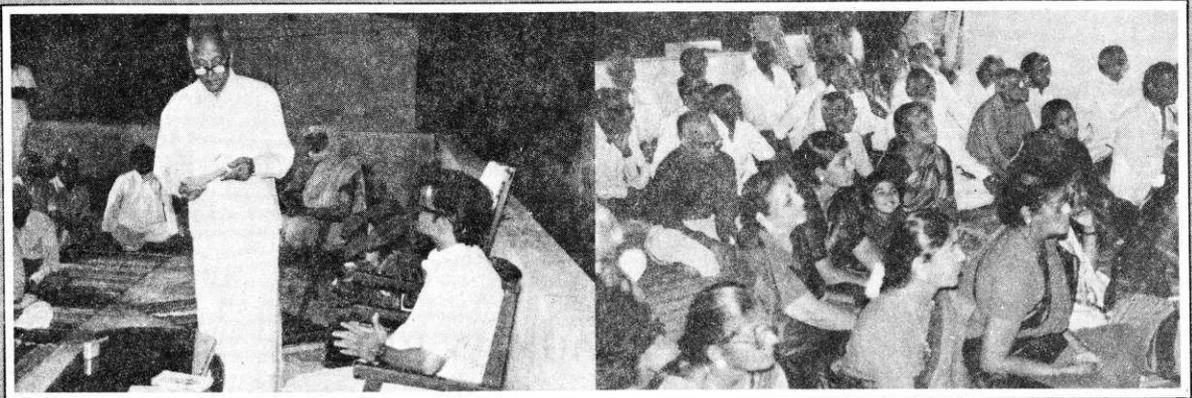
Following *arati, prasad* (meals) were served on the spacious Temple lawns. at 2:15 p.m., two movies, *The Life of Ramana Maharshi* (20 minutes) and *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (87 minutes) were shown. Tea and coffee was then served, an expedition up the mountain to the Ashrama Cave and lookout was organised, and other devotees began leaving for their far-off destinations.

Dr. J.S.S. Lakshminarayana performing *puja* at the Shrine of Sri Bhagavan.



Dr. Anil Sharma talking on Sri Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram*





Sri K. Ramaswamy founded 'Sri Ramana Maharshi Satsang Trust' on 10th September, 1989. **Sri Swami Paramananda Bharati** of Sri Sankar Mutt graced the occasion and **V. Ganesan** presided.

Request to Contributors

When you give reference in your article to *TALKS, DAY BY DAY* and *LETTERS* kindly refrain from quoting the page numbers but instead quote only:

- i. The number of the Talk in *TALKS*; and
- ii. The date of the occurrence in *DAY BY DAY* and *LETTERS*.

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Sri A. Narayanan, Indian Steamships, Calcutta, arranged for the efficacious 'Maha Rudhram' which was conducted at the Ashram for four days in July '89.

Added to that *Varuna Japa* was also performed. Needless to say that for the next two days there was good rain!



A special Vedic chanting by our Ashram *Veda Pathasala* boys was broadcast by the All India Radio, Pondicherry.



Vylamoor Srinivasa Iyer

OBITUARY

Absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan

R. Narayana Iyer

B.S. Patil

V.V. Tilak Sastrri



Smt. Siddheshwar Nath

