

The Mountain Path

JAYANTHI ISSUE

1991



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

December 1991

Jayanthi Issue

Vol 28 Nos. 3 & 4

EDITOR:
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PUBLISHER:
Sri T.N. Venkataraman

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

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Cover design by:
Joan Greenblatt

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— Editor.

The Mountain Path

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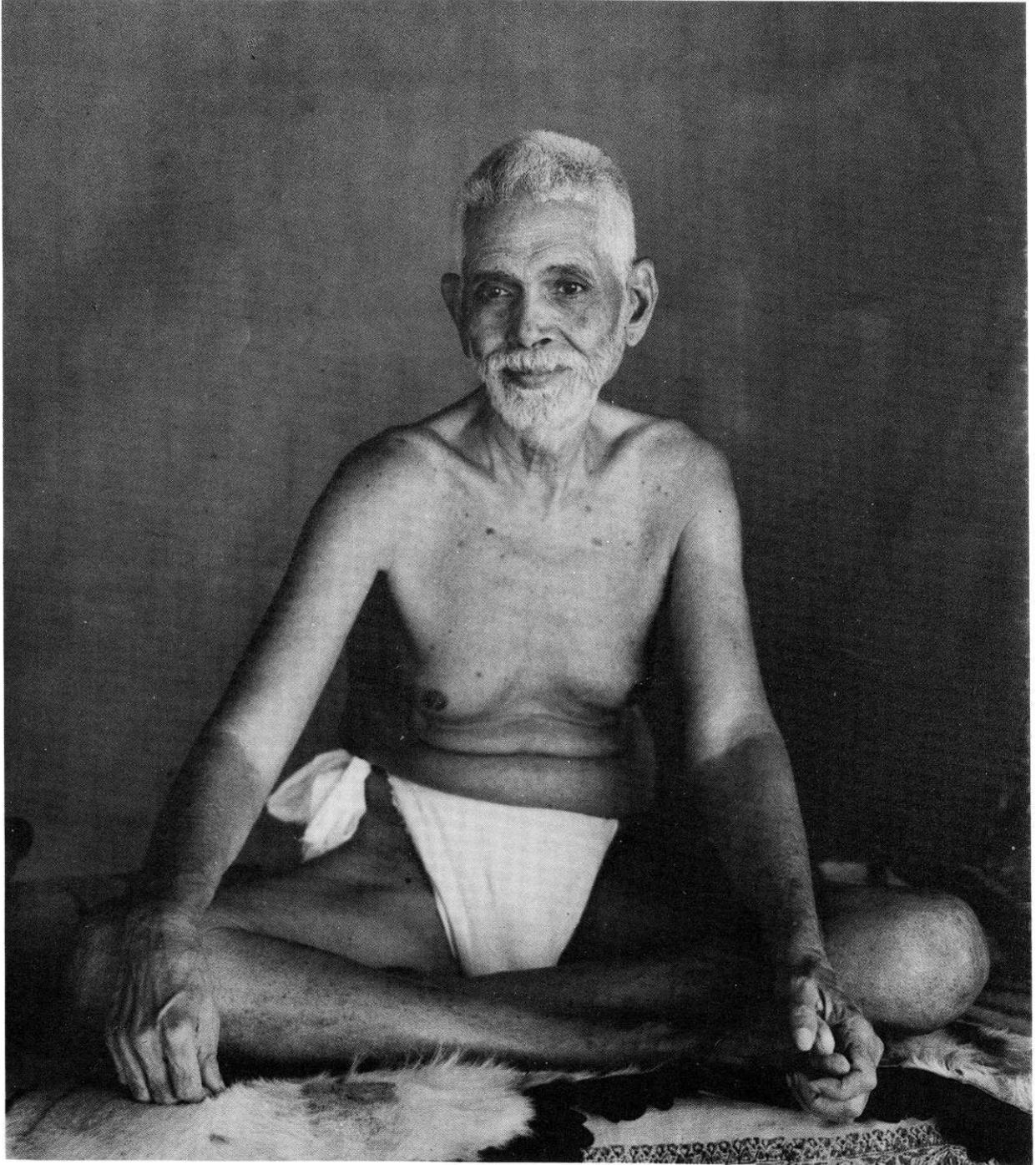
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THE MOUNTAIN PATH
is dedicated to
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



EDITORIAL:

Begin With The Beginning

Lives begin and lives end, but the primordial accident of life goes on." The river of life never runs dry. What, then, is life?

Bhagavan Ramana says, "Those who do not seek the knowledge of the significance of life are simply wasting their lives." How do we go about it? Bhagavan says, "Begin *now*." Another master said, "The first step may be the last step." The true beginning is the Socratic 'I know that I know not', and that is also the end. It is the alpha and the omega of spiritual enquiry.

Bhagavan Ramana says that if you begin by being *anor aneeyaan* (smaller than the smallest), then you will know *mahator maheeyaan* (greater than the greatest). Essentially, this is what Jesus suggested when he said, "Take the last seat." According to the Tamil saint Avvaiyaar, "What we have learnt is a fistful of sand. What we haven't learnt is as big as the world."

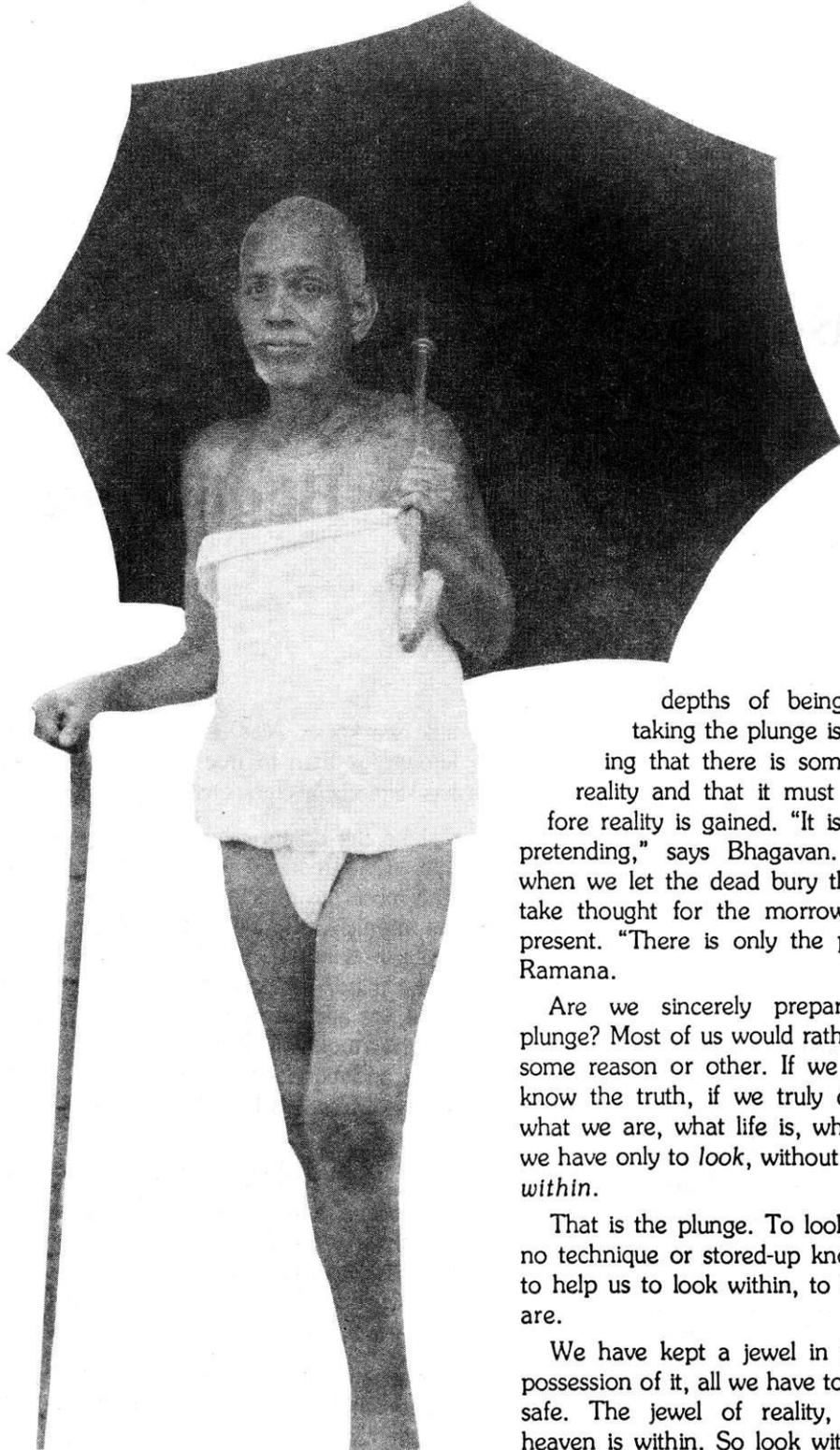
True knowledge does not consist in trying to know everything, but in being free from what

little we know. Alas, it is easier to accumulate knowledge than to free oneself from what one has already accumulated.

Like the doctor who asked a patient not to think of a monkey while taking his medicine. The more the patient tried to avoid thinking of the monkey, the more he thought of it. The problem is not the medicine or the monkey. It is the mind. As long as we are not free of the mind, we are not free of the doctor, the disease or the monkey. Knowledge and ignorance, mind and bondage are inseparable pairs. The secret of freedom from this wretched 'known' is to live in the 'now'.

So, begin now! If we wait at the bus stop for a dinosaur, it may turn up; but if we wait for ourselves, we wait in vain. We are all waiting for ourselves when all we have to do is face ourselves, come to terms with ourselves and be free from ourselves.

Bhagavan Ramana asks us to ask ourselves, "Who am I?" and to ask *now*, instead of dilly-dallying. He says, "Take the plunge into the



depths of being." The delay in taking the plunge is due to our thinking that there is something hiding our reality and that it must be destroyed before reality is gained. "It is a great game of pretending," says Bhagavan. Pretension ends when we let the dead bury the dead, cease to take thought for the morrow and live in the present. "There is only the present," says Sri Ramana.

Are we sincerely prepared to take the plunge? Most of us would rather postpone it for some reason or other. If we seriously wish to know the truth, if we truly desire to find out what we are, what life is, what is truly sacred, we have only to *look*, without any further delay, *within*.

That is the plunge. To look, to act. There is no technique or stored-up knowledge necessary to help us to look within, to be what we really are.

We have kept a jewel in the safe. To take possession of it, all we have to do is to open the safe. The jewel of reality, the kingdom of heaven is within. So look within. Then the life

principle reveals itself. It is there as the "I" in which there is no "me", "you" or "he".

A few days before Sri Bhagavan dropped the body, Sri Sivananda Swami, one of his attendants, asked him with tears in his eyes, "Bhagavan! I am not learned. I do not know anything. Please bless me with a few words of *upadesa* so that I too may be redeemed."

Smiling graciously, Bhagavan said, "**Be true to yourself**" (உனக்கு நீ உண்மையாய் இரு).

When the Swami recounted this to me years later, I was thrilled. I sensed how deeply that simple sentence had impressed the artless attendant. It was Sri Bhagavan's testament of truth and freedom, not only for Sivananda Swami but also for all his devotees.

Are we true to ourselves? Begin with an honest answer. That's the beginning of the ending.

Bhagavan said, "It is grace which makes you ask *Who am I?*". And, "There is no answer to *Who am I?*. The asking is the answer."

Lord Krishna says in the *Gita* (X:20), "I am the Self, O Gudakesa, seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings." That "I" is you!

When you look, what happens? You become silent. Watch. Follow. This silence is life, our true nature. Remain in that silence — that's all. Thinking is not our real nature. Put a stop to it. Just *be*. Dive within and be that silence. That silence is the real "you". That's the reality. This is Bhagavan Ramana's assurance. Be courageous, a *dheera*. Accept this and act. We may say, "It's all right for a Ramana Maharshi. It was possible for him. But not for me. I am nowhere near it at all." Bhagavan anticipated this. "In this quest," he said, "the first thing to give up is the notion that it is difficult. Such a thought is the sure way of handicapping oneself." Have faith in the grace of Sri Maharshi. Take the plunge. Faith is essential. Grace flows.

Here is a beautiful story which Bhagavan liked:

There were two birds who lived by the ocean.

They laid their eggs in the sands and had gone to gather food. On their return, they were heart-broken to find that the waves had washed away their eggs. Losing no time in lamenting the loss or cursing the waves, the pair commenced to empty the ocean drop by drop. They cared neither for food nor rest. A celestial being passed by and was intrigued to see the tireless efforts of the birds. He asked them what they were up to. When the birds answered, the celestial being enquired if it was not an impossible task. The pair confidently replied, "No. What doubt is there? Let it take years but empty the ocean we will." The celestial being, moved by their extraordinary faith, put his hands into the ocean and returned the precious eggs to the birds!

Making the effort to see God is akin to the birds attempting to empty the ocean! Yet, when our faith is unshakeable, like that of the birds, then the *sadguru*, who is God himself, grants us our heart's desire. This is the key which opens the gates to unalloyed happiness.

My most respected Arthur Osborne wrote, "It is not a question of whether there is a God apart from you, but whether there is a 'you' apart from God." You and reality are not separate. They are one and indivisible.

Find out.

Be true to yourself.

Begin with the beginning.

That is the ending, too.

The reality that is "you" is a perennial continuum, unmoving like the Mountain.

Yet, it is fluid, ever alive, ever in motion.

Yes, life goes on!

Be the life!

This is the true *giripradakshina* (circumambulation). You start from where you end, and end where you began.

To quote Sri Bhagavan:

"To be the Self that you really are is the only means to realise the bliss that is ever yours."

RAMANA CORONA

A CROWN OF SONNET SEQUENCES REDOUBLE CARRYING SOME OF THE
MAIN TEACHINGS OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By ALAN JACOBS

Author's Introduction

The sonnet form has a long literary tradition. Devised in Italy, its greatest exponents were Dante and Petrarch. In the sixteenth century the Elizabethan poets, particularly Shakespeare, who wrote over one hundred and fifty sonnets, employed the form; and it was often used to discuss philosophic conceptions. Philosophy and poetry are uneasy handmaidens in English poetry. The difficulty in maintaining the idea, metre and rhythm while avoiding abstract terms as far as possible is very exacting. Nevertheless, the sonnet was the favoured form for this endeavour and was extensively used by Milton, Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth. The form is still in use among modern poets.

The sonnet traditionally consists of fourteen lines, the first octave separated by a differing rhyme scheme from the last sextet. Often, as Shakespeare chose, it ends in a rhyming couplet. Rhyming schemes are varied and chosen to suit the subject. The metre is usually iambic pentameter (ten syllables per line, with the stress on each second syllable), but this can be varied when necessary to emphasise meaning.

The Sonnet Corona is a grand sonnet sequence form, derived from the Latin word for 'Crown'. In the Corona the last line of one sonnet is repeated as the first line of the next. The Sonnet Redoublé, of which the following poem is an example, is a Corona of fifteen sonnets in which all the linking lines of the last fourteen sonnets appear in order as the fifteenth sonnet.

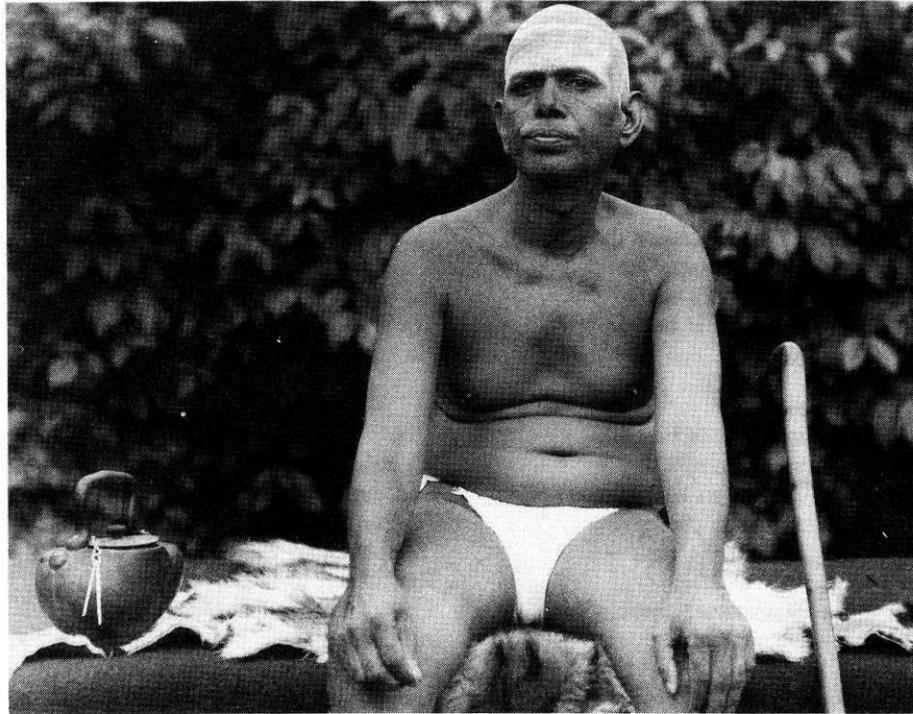
In this series of poems I have chosen the main themes from the thirteen chapters of *Gems From Bhagavan*, by A. Devaraja Mudaliar, whose beautiful book gives the main points of Bhagavan's teaching in His own words, in a small compass. The penultimate sonnet (XIV) is a coda of praise, ending in the traditional redoublé summation of the whole work (XV).

I have endeavoured when stating philosophical ideas to keep the meaning plain, and not to change the sense because rhyme or metre may have demanded it. Happily, many of the poems flowed naturally. I have chosen several different rhyme schemes. More divided rhyme patterns were found to be more suitable to convey abstract ideas.

To preserve the mood of English poetry I have avoided Sanskrit terms and used the English equivalents where necessary. The metaphors are mainly those of Sri Bhagavan.

The poems strangely often wrote themselves, an occurrence I attribute to Sri Bhagavan's inspiration and grace.

It is hoped that in this Corona many of the metaphorical truths contained in Sri Bhagavan's teachings, stated simply and economically, will assist those who may comprehend them better by the palatable form of poetry, rather than discursive texts, and will contribute to a wider understanding of Sri Bhagavan's teaching.



I

All beings long to be happy always —
 Happiness without a tinge of sorrow,
 Enjoying a life of carefree days
 Without taking thought of the morrow.
 When restless mind's at peace in heavy sleep
 There's never worry, grief or despair,
 So happiness is within, buried deep.
 How to find this treasure when we're aware?
 To ask the greatest question, "Who am I?"
 Is the major means of this noble task,
 Thus ending the ego's 'me' and 'my'
 No pleasures endure in things of the earth,
 So enquire within: who's behind the mask?
 To regain that Selfhood we lost at birth.

II

To regain that Selfhood we lost at birth
 First study long a cinema screen;
 To realise this is deserving of worth.
 A King appears alone on the scene;
 He sits on his throne to watch a drama,
 The action starts and he sees the show;
 'Screen-King looks at the screen panorama' —
 The screen is real but the film is shadow.
 The simile tells us, strange as it may be,
 Both see-er and seen make up the mind
 And on the Self the mind is based.
 Seeing this truth is a help to be free,

A guiding light so very hard to find.
 This is Sage-Wisdom by which we are graced.

III

This is Sage-Wisdom by which we are graced
 To be taught the cinema simile.
 Now in the theatre we are placed
 To proceed with this analogy.
 The theatre lamp is the Light Supreme:
 It lights by itself the actors and the scene;
 We see the stage and action by its might,
 Yet when the play is done,
 the Light remains bright.
 Just as a cloth of linen and its 'white'
 Can never be perceived apart,
 So with the light and the mind that unite
 To form the ego, held knotted and
 bound in the heart.
 Of all we have ever heard since birth
 This is the highest Wisdom known on earth.

IV

This is the highest Wisdom known on earth:
 How may the mind merge back to its source?
 Only by asking with all of one's force
 This centralmost question regarding our birth:
 The ultimate scrutiny: "Who am I?"
 As thoughts bubble forth like waves in the ocean
 They'll all be destroyed by this introspection,

Revealing the Seer, the lost inner eye.
 Like pearl oysters hid on the vast ocean floor,
 Attracting pearl divers to search for their core;
 Holding their breath as they reach for their goal,
 The divers seek out the pearl oyster's soul.
 To claim the pearl in the Heart's sacred place,
 Seek out the secret of where it is based.

V

Seek out the secret of where it is based.
 We are riding on a mystery train,
 And by this metaphor we are so blessed
 To make the method clear and plain.
 Put all that heavy baggage on the rack —
 Only fools carry it on their heads;
 Be happy, accept the predestined track;
 Rest safely, securely on your beds.
 Surrender in joyous jubilation,
 Surrender completely to His will.
 Surrender with devotion, it's enough reward.
 Surrender with total resignation.
 Surrender, knowing that all will be well.
 Take sole refuge in the all-loving Lord.

VI

Take sole refuge in the all-loving Lord,
 For life is a dream: sleeping dreams are short,
 Waking dreams are long —
 yet both stem from mind-thought.
 The Real is beyond both waking and sleep.
 The sword of enquiry slays the
 three dream-states deep,
 Leaving the substratum, the numinous
 Fourth, beyond space and time, self-luminous—
 The blissful state, awake yet asleep.
 As the cockerel crows when just waking up,
 Before conscious even of the first morning light,
 Awareness pours into the empty cup,
 Giving a moment's taste of Self-insight.
 This state is the 'I' that forever IS,
 And can be refound by enquiring, "Who IS?"

VII

Who can be refound by enquiring, "Who IS?" —
 The Master who dwells within the Heart,
 Inseparable from Self, our start
 And goal out of bondage to liberty.
 The Master appears when a person is ready.
 With the glance of grace he makes us aware
 That "God and heaven are always there".

He acts as a brake to make the mind steady,
 While His compassion flows freely,
 like sun and air,
 Only hindered by our incapacity:
 If we come to Him with an empty cup
 His grace is bound to fill it up.
 The Master's mercy is the grace of the Lord;
 He cuts you free with His mighty sword.

VIII

He cuts you free with His mighty sword
 And gently guides you on the mountain path
 To the bliss of Self-realisation.
 "Simply being the Self, that which IS alone is,
 That which IS is peace" —
 this is the Master's word.
 In Him we place our trust and firm faith,
 Certain that our nature is Liberation
 And peace; then from spoiling it we cease,
 Removing the out-going tendencies of mind
 So that the Great Peace can manifest.
 Renouncing belief in the snake as the rope,
 We come unflinchingly to the Great Find:
 Our blissful nature, eternally blessed —
 To be one with the Self, the absolute Hope!

IX

To be one with the Self, the Absolute Hope,
 One must learn to enter into the Heart,
 Not the physical organ on the left,
 But the pulsating core, our source and goal,
 The real Heart centre we find on the right.
 The foolish man's heart is found on the left,
 But wise men find it by being deft
 And diving in with all their might.
 There deep in the core of the Heart's sacred cave,
 Shining Unicity, blazing as Self,
 The pulsation of 'I-I' — all shadows cease.
 Fixing the gaze steadfastly here will stave
 The endless restless perverted mind-elf
 Bringing one back to one's birthright, true Peace.

X

Bringing one back to one's birthright, true Peace,
 And knowledge that all that this body performs
 Was predestined before it ever took form.
 So from stress, despair and worrying cease:
 Freedom rests in return to one's Natural State,
 Renouncing the 'I-am-the-doer' notion,
 Unattached to the fruits of the form's puppet-motion

Yet His Grace can avert even preordained fate.
 Be like an actor on this stage of strife,
 Playing the part you have been given
 No matter how strangely you find you are driven,
 But knowing who really you are in this life.
 Until destiny pulls down the final curtain,
 Know you're the Self, not the body —
 know this as certain.

XI

You're the Self, not the body —
 know this as certain.
 To realise this there's no need to leave home.
 One can work in the city,
 there's no need to roam —
 To change one's life could all be in vain:
 The mind goes with you until it is slain.
 Demon-ghost-ego, the source of all thought,
 Creates body and world whereby we are caught;
 Change of place never changes how we behave,
 Whether travelling, at home, in forest or cave.
 There are only two ways from our bonds
 to be freed:
 Either ask, "To whom is this fate decreed?"
 Or surrender the ego to be stricken down,
 Praying intensely for 'my' will to cease,
 Leave it to God to grant you release.

XII

Leave it to God to grant you release.
 He will do this through the grace of the Sage
 He sends as His messenger in every age
 To those who yearn and pray for perfect Peace.
 The Sage is liberated, here and now,
 No longer confusing Self with mind,
 Egoless, wise, compassionate and kind,
 Simple yet profound. His teaching tells how.
 He protects the welfare of His devotees,
 Fulfilling their every spiritual need.
 He sits in silence at perfect ease,
 Enlightening those who His teachings heed.
 His gracious glance and silent instruction
 Drive the soul to Self-Realisation.

XIII

Driving the soul to Self-Realisation,
 He grants safe harbour in this suffering ocean.
 No one can ever be excluded

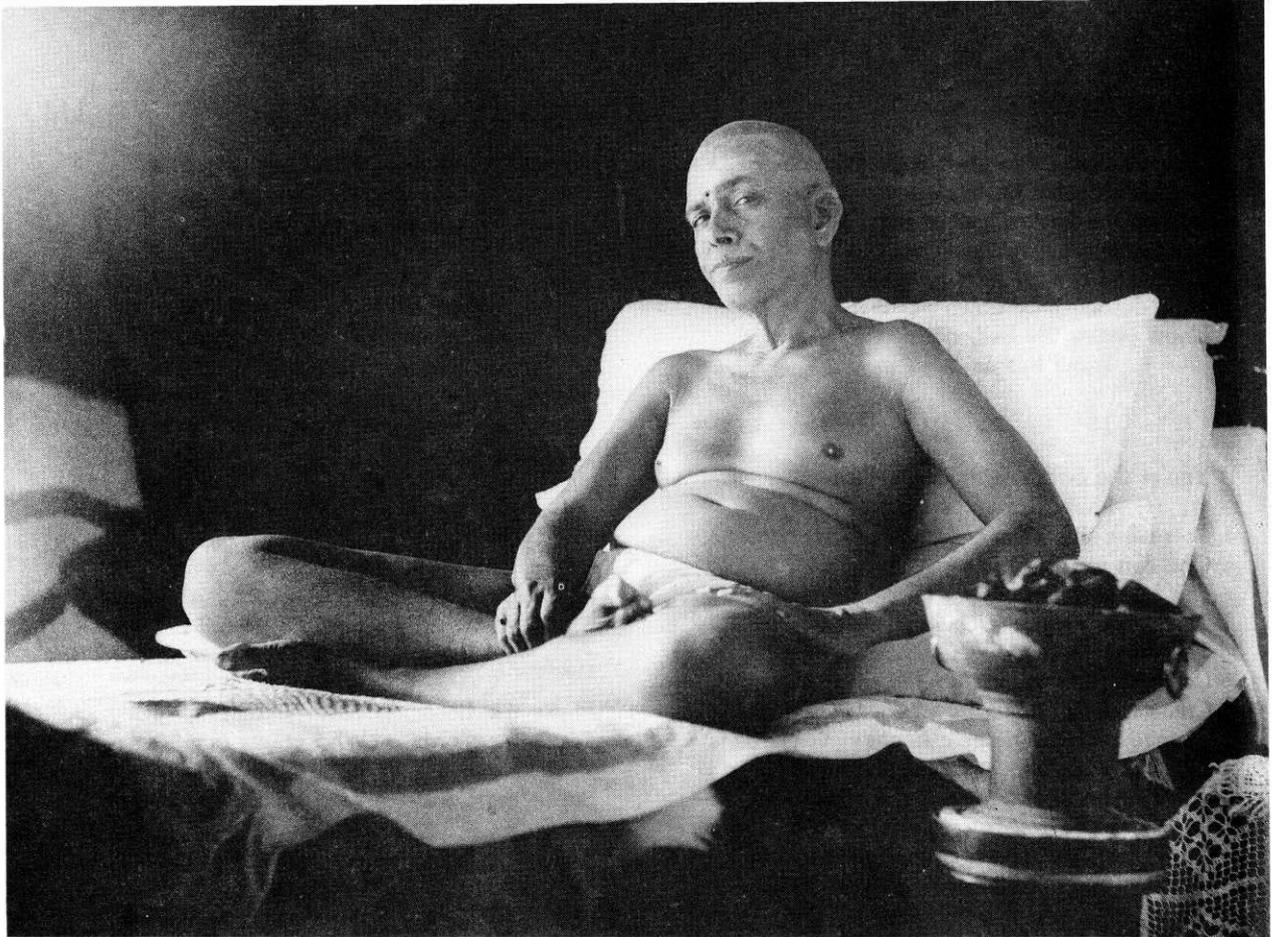
From the Presence of the holy Supreme;
 No matter how depraved or deluded,
 His everlasting mercy shall redeem.
 He lifts the heart from deepest depression
 And frees from the 'I-am-the-body' obsession.
 Released from all desire and aversion,
 Maintaining courage and equilibrium,
 No longer enmeshed in wordly perversion,
 Nor disturbed by praise or opprobrium,
 We learn that there is the greatest giving
 In seeing others as Self and thus truly living.

XIV

Seeing others as Self is thus truly living:
 Praise the Lord: — Who shows us the Sage's
 Feet,
 Praise the Lord: — Whose gracious embrace is
 sweet,
 Praise the Lord: — Who is endlessly giving,
 Praise the Lord: — Who grants our final
 Release,
 Praise the Lord: — Who unlocks bondage's
 chains,
 Praise the Lord: — Who frees where confusion
 reigns,
 Praise the Lord: — Who grants mercy and
 endless peace,
 Praise the Lord: — Who bestows each and every
 gift,
 Praise the Lord: — Who reveals His sacred Face,
 Praise the Lord: — Who grants the soul's uplift;
 Praise Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who is ever-living:
 These poetic verses are our thanksgiving.

XV

To regain that Selfhood we lost at birth
 This is Sage-Wisdom by which we are graced;
 This is the highest Wisdom known on earth:
 Seek out the secret of where it is based.
 Take sole refuge in the all-loving Lord,
 Who can be refound by enquiring, "Who IS?".
 He cuts you free with His mighty sword
 To be one with the Self, the Absolute Hope,
 Bringing one back to one's birthright, true Peace.
 You're the Self, not body — know this as certain,
 So leave it to God to grant you release.
 Driving the soul to Self-Realisation,
 Seeing others as Self is alone truly living:
 These poetic verses are our thanksgiving.



BHAGAVAN THE ATIASRAMI

By DAVID GODMAN

In the 1930s a devotee called Perumal Swami, who had managed the ashram prior to 1922, instigated a court case against Ramana Maharshi and his brother Chinna Swami. The latter had taken over the management of the ashram around 1928. Perumal Swami claimed in his submission to the court that he was still the legitimate manager of Sri Ramanasramam and attempted to support his case with some rather convoluted logic. Firstly, he declared that since Bhagavan was a *sannyasin*, he could not legally own land or property. This being so, Perumal Swami argued, Bhagavan had no rights over the property known as Sri Ramanasramam. Perumal

Swami then went on to argue that since Bhagavan could not own any of the ashram's property, he had no authority to appoint his brother to manage it. He then advanced his own case by saying that since he had been the undisputed manager at Skandashram, he must still be the ashram manager because neither Ramana Maharshi nor anyone else was legally competent to remove or replace him.

Perumal Swami's complaint to the court conveniently ignored two important points:

1. Bhagavan had never claimed that he was a *sannyasin*. Since he had never been for-

mally initiated into any order of *sannyasins*, he was still entitled to own and dispose of property.

2. Perumal Swami had voluntarily relinquished the job of ashram manager in 1922. Since that date he had neither lived in the ashram nor taken any part in its management.

Under Indian law, the formal adoption of *sannyasa* means that the *sannyasin* can be legally regarded as being dead. He loses all rights to his property, which is taken over by his appointed heirs, and, if he belongs to some of the traditional orders of *sannyasa*, he has no right to own or acquire property again. In order to refute Perumal Swami's case, Bhagavan had to demonstrate that he belonged to an *asrama* (that is, an accepted 'stage of life') which permitted its members to own property. However, instead of taking the easy course and declaring himself to be either in the *grihastha* (householder) or *vanaprastha* (meditating hermit) *asrama* he declared that he was in *atiasrama*, which means beyond all *asramas*. This category is so little-known, even in India, that during his first encounter with Perumal Swami's lawyer he was asked to define the state and certify that it was backed by some scriptural authority.

Question: To which *asrama* does Bhagavan belong?

Bhagavan: *Atiasrama*.

Q: What is it?

B: It is beyond the four commonly known *asramas*.

Q: Is it *sastraic*?

B: Yes, it is mentioned in the *sastras*.¹

This account in *Talks* was written down from memory by Munagala Venkataramiah, its compiler. A court stenographer also took down everything that Bhagavan said verbatim and the ashram's lawyer, T.P. Ramachandra Iyer, later made a copy of these answers for the ashram records. This copy, which has been preserved by the President of Sri Ramanasramam, contains many interesting additional remarks which are not to be found in the *Talks* account.²

Bhagavan began his testimony by talking about his early life and how he came to Tiruvannamalai. Since he had already seen Perumal Swami's complaint, Bhagavan knew that the court would want him to state which *asrama* he belonged to. He therefore began his remarks in the following way:

I am of brahmin birth. When I came to this place I was seventeen years old. My *upanayana* [the brahmin thread ceremony] had taken place even before I came here. When I came to this place I had been living among people who were in the *grihastha asrama*. Within an hour of coming to this town I threw away my sacred thread and clothes and then had my head shaved. I arrived here with approximately three rupees. I threw away that money also.

In throwing away his thread he renounced his caste and in shaving his head he indicated that he had embarked on a life of physical renunciation without taking the formal step of adopting *sannyasa*.

After giving a few more details about his early life, he gave three answers which were partially recorded in the dialogue given above:

- 1) I remain in *atiasrama*, that is, not attached to anything in life.
- 2) *Atiasrama* is in the *sastras*.
- 3) I do not know of anyone else who is remaining in this *asrama*.

These answers were given on 15th November, 1936. A few weeks later, on the 5th of December, Perumal Swami's lawyer continued his cross-examination. This is the version recorded in *Talks*:

Question: You spoke of *atiasrama* the other day. Is there authority for it? Is it mentioned anywhere?

¹ *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk no. 281.

² Some of the answers from the court's record were incorporated in an article by Dr T.N. Krishnaswami which was published in *The Mountain Path*, 1967, pp. 150-151.

Bhagavan: Yes, in the *Upanishads*, the *Suta Samhita* (*Skanda Purana*), *Bhagavata*, *Bharata* and other works.

Q: Are there any restrictions or disciplines for that state?

B: There are characteristics of it mentioned.

Q: There are Gurus for each *asrama*. Is there a Guru for *atiasrama*?

B: Yes.

Q: But you do not admit a Guru.

B: There is a Guru for everyone. I admit a Guru for me also.

Q: Who is your Guru?

B: The Self.

Q: For whom?

B: For myself. The Guru may be internal or external. He may reveal himself internally or externally.

Q: Can the *atiasrami* own property?

B: There is no restriction for them. They may do what they please. Suka is said to have married and begotten children also.

Q: The *atiasrami* is like a householder in that case.

B: I have already said that he is above the four recognised *asramas*.

Q: If they can marry, own property etc., they are only *grihasthas*.

B: That may be your view.

Q: Can they own property and convey the same to others?

B: They may or may not. It depends on their *prarabdha*.

Q: Is there any *karma* for them?

B: Their conduct is not regulated according to rules or codes.³

The official court transcript which covers this part of the cross-examination contains a number

of significant details which are not recorded in *Talks*. Only Bhagavan's answers appear in T.P.R.'s copy of the court document, but when these answers are correlated with the answers in *Talks*, the aim and scope of the questions can easily be inferred. The answers were:

1) Details about *atiasrama* are contained in the *Suta Samhita*.

2) The injunctions about *atiasrama* are set out in this work.

3) If those who are in *atiasrama* need property, they are entitled to possess it.

4) For any *asrama* a Guru is needed.

5) A Guru is necessary even for those who are in *atiasrama*.

6) For me *atma* itself is the Guru. My *atma* is Guru for my *atma*.

7) I have read in the *Puranas* that those who followed *atiasrama* owned property.

8) These things are described in *Suta Samhita*, that is to say, in the *Skanda Purana*.

9) In *atiasrama* one can declare, 'This is my property'.

10) It has been declared that those who are in the state of *atiasrama* can dispose of their property to other people.

11) Whether *grihastha* and *atiasrama* are the same depends on the view of the man who is looking.

12) For those who remain in *atiasrama*, there is no need to perform *nitya karmas* [daily rituals].

The court transcript reveals more clearly than the *Talks* account that the case was a property dispute and that its resolution hinged on whether or not Bhagavan could own and dispose of property. Bhagavan's claim that he could own property because he was an *atiasrami* was an

³ *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk no. 281.

unusual one, but he supported his claim by citing the *Suta Samhita*.⁴ The *Suta Samhita*, which is part of the *Skanda Purana*, is little read nowadays, but in ancient times it had enormous authority and influence. In an introduction to an edition of this work which Bhagavan kept for reference, the editor notes that there is a tradition that Adi-Sankaracharya read the *Suta Samhita* eighteen times before he began work on his famous commentaries.

There are four verses in the *Siva Mahatmya Khanda*, one of the sub-divisions of the *Suta Samhita*, which back up Bhagavan's claim that one who has realised the Self has transcended all castes and *asramas* and is therefore not subject to any restriction such as *asrama dharmas*.

- 1) A person who has attained true knowledge [*aparoksha vijñana*] with the help of the vedantic *vakyas* [the four *mahavakyas* or great sayings of the *Upanishads*], and who experiences the *atma* which is full of bliss, is not subject to any restrictions.
- 2) For the people who belong to castes, elaborate *asrama dharmas* have been laid down by eminent persons well-versed in the *sastras*. These rules are always compulsory for those people who have a caste and an *asrama*.
- 3) The caste and *asrama dharmas* do not bind those, either male or female, who have attained clear knowledge of *brahman*.
- 4) If a person abandons his caste and *asrama* without realising the inherent knowledge of the *atma*, his fall is certain.

Although Bhagavan regularly cited the *Suta Samhita* when he was asked to produce some scriptural authority for the state of *atiasrama*, it cannot be said that he endorsed the second and fourth of these verses from the *Siva Mahatmya Khanda* in which it is stated that those who have not realised the Self should adhere at all times to their caste and *asrama* rules. During the *Veda parayana*, for example, which was conducted in his presence every day, Bhagavan allowed all

visitors and devotees to attend, saying that it was conducive to meditation. This was a flagrant violation of caste rules since traditionally only brahmins are supposed to listen to such chants. In ancient times the rule was rigidly adhered to, and if non-brahmins were found listening to vedic chants, the *sastras* declared that they should have boiling lead poured in their ears! Bhagavan encouraged devotees to break this rule and refused to pay any attention to the complaints of the traditionalists who pointed out that he was deliberately flouting *varnasrama* rules. On one occasion, when a North Indian visitor challenged Bhagavan on this matter, Bhagavan curtly told him to sit down and mind his own business.⁵

In the dining room Bhagavan did not object if brahmins decided to eat with the non-brahmins (a very basic violation of *varnasrama dharma*) so long as it was their custom to do so in other places as well. But if they observed caste eating rules at home, Bhagavan would often insist that they continue to observe such rules in the ashram.⁶ Bhagavan did not want the ashram to be used as a platform for visitors who wanted to make political or sociological gestures. His often-repeated phrase, 'Attend to what you came here for,' was often directed towards visitors who forgot to leave their politics and their opinions at home.

⁴ In the *Talks* account Munagala Venkataramiah recorded that Bhagavan also cited the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavata*, *Bharata* and 'other works' to support his views on *atiasrama*. As none of these works is mentioned in the court transcript, I will not discuss or cite them here. Some of these other verses appeared in an article (*The Mountain Path*, 1984, pp. 161-2) by Swami Atmananda Giri which also dealt with Bhagavan's status as an *atiasrami*.

⁵ *The Mountain Path*, 1968, p. 72.

⁶ Bhagavan's attitude to caste rules in the dining room was discussed in the columns of *The Mountain Path* in the 1960s (see 1967 p. 259 and pp. 348-9; 1968, p. 88) by Arthur Osborne, Prof. K. Swaminathan and Devaraja Mudaliar. Prof. Swaminathan strongly disagreed with Arthur Osborne's view that Bhagavan expected visitors to the ashram to adhere to whatever social or religious rules they observed at home.

Bhagavan's seat in the dining room, neither in the brahmin nor the non-brahmin sections, was an outer symbolic indication that his realisation had placed him beyond the restrictions of caste and *asrama* rules. In an amusing and instructive incident narrated by Krishna Bhikshu, Bhagavan once stated in the dining room that he was in effect an *atiasrami* because he no longer had the feeling that he was either a brahmin or a non-brahmin.

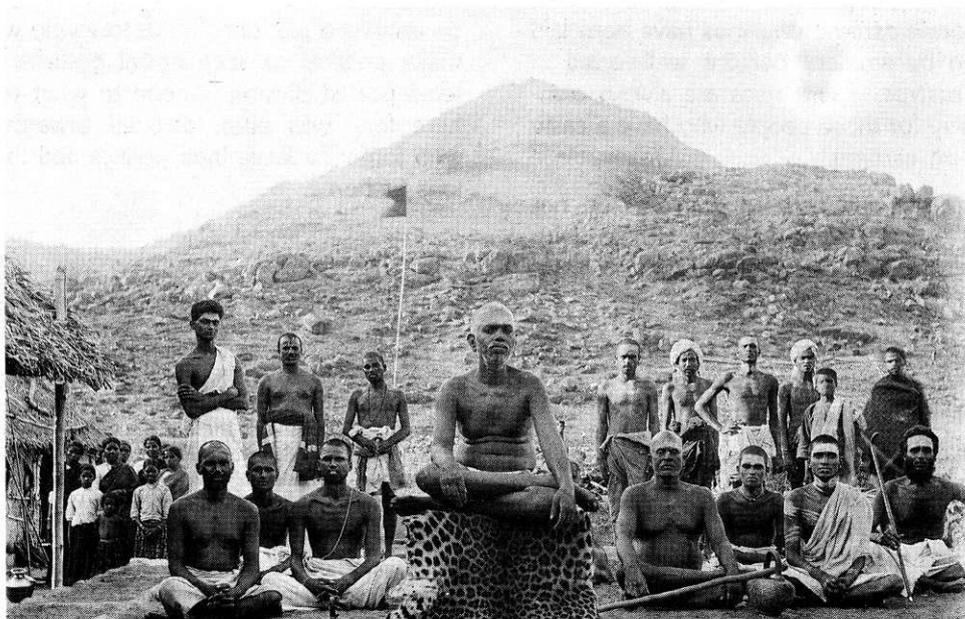
In the lifetime of Sri Bhagavan there was a screen across the dining hall separating the brahmins from the others. Bhagavan himself sat against the wall at right angles to both and in view of both. This is important to remember for the incident that follows. This screen implied an interdict on interdining between brahmins and non-brahmins. One day a relative of Bhagavan (and therefore a brahmin) demanded to eat among the non-brahmins

but the *Sarvadhikari* (the ashram manager) would not allow it. They were disputing about it when Bhagavan came on the scene and asked what was the matter.

"He says that he has no caste," the *Sarvadhikari* told him, "that all are equal in the presence of Bhagavan and that he is simply a human being and not bound by the shackles of caste, creed, clime or colour."

"Oh, is that so?" Bhagavan said, looking surprised. "Then in that case you are wrong to insist that he should eat with the brahmins."

But then, turning to his cousin, Bhagavan remarked, "But you too are wrong. These people here feel that they are non-brahmins. You have no caste feeling. So how can you sit among them? There is only one person here who has the feeling of being neither brahmin nor non-brahmin, and that is myself. So,"



calling the attendant, "place a leaf plate for him by my side; let him sit with me." The young man was shocked by the implication of this proposal and immediately took his place at the brahmin side.⁷

The disagreements about Bhagavan's real views on *varnasrama dharma* have probably arisen because Bhagavan himself refused to endorse any of the conflicting views on the subject. In *Day by Day*, for example, we have the following exchange:

Another visitor asked Bhagavan if it was not necessary that the *varnasrama* differences should go if the nation was to progress.

Bhagavan: "How can one say whether it is necessary or not necessary? I never say anything on such subjects. People often come and ask me for my opinion of *varnasrama*. If I say anything they will go at once and publish in the papers, 'So and so is also of such and such an opinion'.⁸"

Although Bhagavan declined to air his views on the subject (assuming of course that he had any!) it is clear from his actions that he often turned a blind eye when devotees violated caste rules, and occasionally he even encouraged them to do so. In an early issue of *The Mountain Path* there is a comment by T.K. Sundaresa Iyer which places these attitudes in their proper perspective:

Bhagavan was above formal orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. Whatever he did was orthodox because he did it, since he was higher than Manu and was himself the source of orthodoxy. People who failed to see that were putting the letter above the spirit.⁹

One can extend this line of logic a little further by saying that if devotees took part in an activity, such as listening to the chanting of the *Vedas*, which was sanctioned by Bhagavan, then, since Bhagavan is the source of orthodoxy, such activities become orthodox, rather than a violation of the rules.

Being free from the necessity to adhere to *varnasrama* rules is only one aspect of

atiasrama. For Bhagavan, the term denoted a transcendental experience of the Self, not just a licence to ignore rules and regulations. This dimension of *atiasrama* is well brought out in another sequence of verses from the *Suta Samhita*:

- 14 & 15) One who realises the *paratattvam* [the supreme reality] which is different from the body and the senses, which is omniscient, self-luminous, and full of bliss and happiness — that person is *atiasrama*.
- 16) One who knows the *mahadeva* [God or the great effulgence], who is free from the three states [of waking, dreaming and sleeping] and merely witnesses them — that person is *ativarnasrama* [beyond castes and *asramas*].
- 17) The essential truth about the identity of the Self and Isvara is only attainable by those who have heard the vedantic *vakyas* from a competent guru.
- 18 & 19.1) The regulations concerning *varnasrama*, which have been created by *maya*, pertain only to the body. These things [the rules about *varnasrama*] are not applicable to the *atma*, awareness of which is an awakening from ignorance. One who realises this [*atma*] is deemed to be *ativarnasrama*.
- 19.2 & 20) "Just as the world is functioning of its own accord in the presence of the sun, before me the world is also functioning." One who thinks in this way is supposed to have transcended the *varnasramas*. This knowledge can only be attained by realising the import of the *mahavakyas*.

⁷ *The Mountain Path*, 1965, p. 217.

⁸ *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 2.1.1946.

⁹ *The Mountain Path*, 1965, p. 136. The same idea is expressed in v. 96 of a Tamil work called *Swarupa Saram*: "The *jnani* has become one, tranquil and pure. To him, ether and the rest [of the five elements] are the form of the Self. Whatever actions such a one has given up become prohibited actions. Whatever he undertakes becomes proper action."

- 21) "Just as the various ornaments made out of gold are created by *maya*, so this world, created by my mind in myself, is also created by *maya*." One who has realised this with the help of the *mahavakyas* is *ativarnasrama*.
- 22 & 23) Just as the appearance of silver on an oyster shell is an illusion created by the mind, so the entire world is the creation of *maya*. One who realises this through the *mahavakyas* is *ativarnasrama*.
- 24 & 25) "O Purushottama [Vishnu]! There are different grades of bodies: low caste, high caste, plants, trees and devas. Pervading all these bodies like *akasa* [space or ether] and not affected by all these things, is the Supreme, without beginning or end, without form, effulgent. I am that Supreme." One who understands this through realising the *mahavakyas* is *ativarnasrama*.
- 26 & 27) A person's confusion in an unknown place is dispelled by a guide. Later, when he recollects his previous state, he remembers his old confusion [without being troubled by it]. Similarly, the reality of the world, though destroyed by true knowledge, still appears to me. But really that [world-appearance] no longer exists. One who realises this through the *mahavakyas* is *ativarnasrama*.
- 29) By realising his own Self, the instructions imposed by *varnasrama dharmas* drop away of their own accord. Such a person transcends the barriers of *asramas* and castes and remains in his own Self.
- 30) In this way a person who has transcended all *asramas* and *varnas*, and who remains in his pure Self, is declared to be *ativarnasrama* by all the vedantic experts.¹⁰

Bhagavan kept a small booklet entitled *Suta Samhita Saram (The Essence of Suta Samhita)* on a bookshelf by his sofa. It contained a Tamil translation of all the verses from the *Siva Mahatmya Khanda* and the *Mukti Khanda* that

I have given in this article. Since he often cited it or produced it when the subject of *atiasrama* came up, it is reasonable to infer that, except for the verses which insist on a strict observance of all *varnasrama* rules, he endorsed its contents. The same booklet, incidentally, also contains a sequence of verses whose aim is to demonstrate that women may become *sannyasinis*. Some schools of thought in India teach that women are not eligible to enter this state. If Bhagavan was ever approached for an opinion on this matter, he would often produce the same small booklet in order to demonstrate that there was scriptural authority to support the claims of women who wanted to take *sannyasa*.

These two sets of verses which Bhagavan cited to support his views on *atiasrama* indicate that there are two aspects to this state: the first, and the most fundamental one, is that by realising the Self the *atiasrami* has transcended all names, forms and categories; the second aspect, which follows naturally from the first, is that because the *atiasrami* has ceased to be a person inhabiting a body and identifying with it, he is no longer subject to any of the rules which apply to those who still imagine that they are individual human beings. From a theistic point of view one can say that the *atiasrami's* actions are God's and cannot therefore be encompassed or judged by any human code of conduct. Bhagavan upheld this view when he once remarked, "... a man [who holds the Self in remembrance] is not concerned with the right or wrong of actions. His actions are God's and therefore right."¹¹

It has become somewhat fashionable among certain modern gurus to say, in effect, "I have realised the Self; therefore I can do what I like because society's rules no longer apply to me." The true *atiasrami* would never make a statement like this because he or she would know that there is no 'I' left which can select particular desires and then indulge in them. The true *jnani*

¹⁰ From the *Skanda Purana, Suta Samhita, Mukti Khanda*, ch. 5.

¹¹ *Conscious Immortality*, 1984, p. 130.

or *atiasrami*, according to Bhagavan, has no *sankalpa*, that is to say he has no will or desire of his own. His actions are spontaneous manifestations of the Self.

Sadhu Natanananda in his Tamil book *Sri Ramana Darsanam*, has recorded an interesting incident which demonstrates the point that Bhagavan, as *atiasrami*, had no will or desire of his own:

During his last days, when Sri Bhagavan's body was affected by cancer, he remained indifferent to the treatments arranged by his devotees. He handed over the care of his body to the doctors since that was the wish of the devotees. At that time he said, "Our job is only to remain as a witness to all that happens; it is not to imagine this way or that way regarding anything." Following this dictum he remained to the very end as a mere witness, free from anxieties. When devotees found that there was no apparent improvement in his condition, even after prolonged treatment, they became agitated. They wanted to know whether Sri Bhagavan would permit them to try a drastic method of treatment which had been prescribed by the doctors as a last resort. Sri Bhagavan replied, "Why should you ask me all this? Was it I who asked for treatment? Was it not you alone who took the initiative in this? Ideas regarding what should happen and what should not happen occur only to you. I have no connection with this." And then he kept quiet.¹²

There was no thought in Bhagavan to prolong the life in his body, and since no desire arose in him to alleviate the excruciating pains of terminal cancer, he was quite content merely to witness them.

Many people tend to think that *jnanis* are omnipotent, that they can accomplish anything they wish. Bhagavan never felt this way. In another telling exchange, which was also recorded by Sadhu Natanananda at the end of Bhagavan's life, he informed one grieving devotee that he had no ability to change the destiny of the body that the devotee identified as Bhagavan:

THE PRESENCE

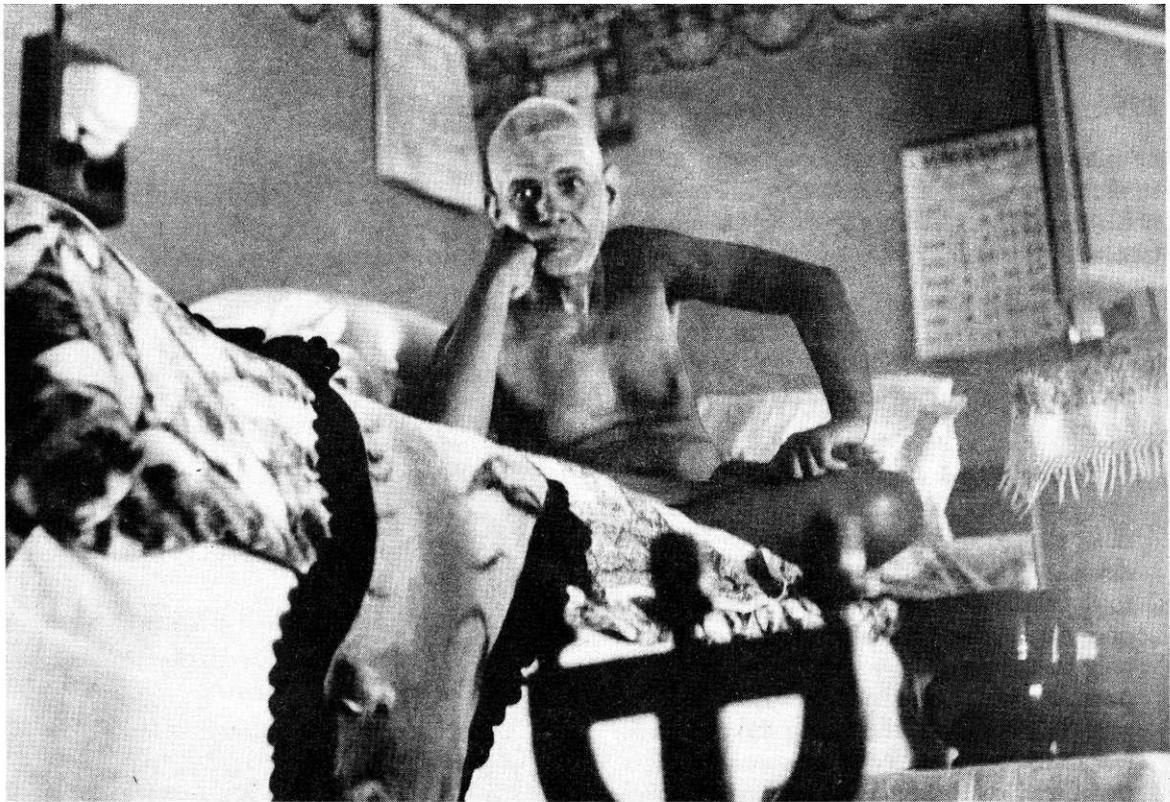
**Before Abraham was, I AM.
Before the earth was formed, I AM.
Before the universe, I AM.
And when the universe is no longer,
I AM.
Infinite is the Silence which
transcends the world,
And yet is the Ground within which it
makes its illusory appearance,
I AM.
Yet behind its veils I AM not found
For I AM the One Perceiver in the
Heart of all beings.
Only Here I AM found
For I and My children are One.**

Towards the end of Bhagavan's life a devotee, who firmly believed in the omnipotence of the great ones, could not bear to see the Maharshi's body become weak because of the disease which was afflicting it. The devotee appealed to the Maharshi with great feeling that he should transfer the disease to him and stay in the body for some more time in order to save many other helpless devotees. Wondering at the devotee's child-like innocence, Sri Bhagavan looked at him with compassion and replied graciously, "Who created this disease? Is it not enough that I have borne till today all by myself this load of flesh which [once it is dead] must be carried by four persons? Should I continue bearing it henceforth?" Through these kind words he made clear that the law of destiny was inexorable.¹³

The *atiasrami's* inability to execute or even have personal desires was brought home to me some years ago in a conversation I had with U.G.

¹² *Sri Ramana Darsanam*, 1973, p. 91.

¹³ *Sri Ramana Darsanam*, 1973, p. 112.



Krishnamurti, an iconoclastic spiritual teacher who likes to poke fun at traditional ideas on spirituality. While talking about the state of realization he remarked, "All religious teachers say that the seeker is in bondage whereas the so-called enlightened one is free. Actually, the opposite is equally true. One who imagines himself to be a person also imagines that he has free-will. That person makes choices, and if he chooses not to be put off by legal or social restrictions, he can do whatever he likes. But when the idea of the person disappears, free-will, which is just another idea, goes along with it. One is then utterly bound by circumstances because there is no one left to make choices or act on desires. In that state the actions of the body and the brain are just automatic responses to external stimuli.¹⁴ Since no inherent faculty remains to modify these responses, the bondage is complete and irreversible."

These remarks were made partly in jest, but there is also a certain element of truth in them. To solve the apparent contradiction — that the *jnani* or the *atiasrami* is simultaneously liberated and bound — one must define accurately what 'freedom' or 'liberation' is. There are two

kinds of freedom: 'freedom to' and 'freedom from'. 'Freedom to' implies the existence of choice and of one who chooses. It is basically self-indulgence, for the individual self selects certain desires and then attempts to fulfil them. This 'freedom to' is finite since there is a limit to how much the body may indulge: one cannot, for example, eat a million meals a day.

'Freedom from' may also be finite — one may be free from attachment to money, for example, but not free from the desire for fame. But for the *jnani* 'freedom from' is absolute because he has permanently given up the idea that he is an individual person. Though he has no 'freedom to', since that would imply the existence of an individual self, he is free from all desires, fears etc. and is content to let his body experience whatever destiny has in store for it. Not having an ability to choose and judge may seem like bondage to an *ajnani*, but for the *jnani* it is a consequence of the ultimate freedom.

¹⁴ I think that Bhagavan would say that although this sometimes happens, many of the *jnani*'s actions are spontaneous, being a result of promptings from the Self, rather than external stimuli.

From occasional remarks that Bhagavan made, one can get the impression that he had very little 'freedom to' especially in the later years at Sri Ramanasramam. Two stories told by N.N. Rajan will illustrate the point I am trying to make. In 1943, after one of his attendants, Sivanandam, had tried unsuccessfully to compel Bhagavan to take a drink of water, Bhagavan remarked, with some irritation, "Look, people call me Swami, Swami, and are under the impression that sagehood is a bed of roses. See the trouble encountered by Swami now. Whoever asks me to do anything I have to obey and satisfy him; whatever visitors say, according to their likes and dislikes, I have to patiently follow. Look at the way a sage is under the control of these people around him!"¹⁵

In another story recorded in 1948 Bhagavan remarked to the same attendant who was about to go off duty, "You all at least have some change, but I am fixed up here throughout the day without any freedom. I am unable to move about freely like you. This is the fate of even Maharajas and other famous people. They have to take medical advice for choosing items of food even while they are normal and healthy. This is the case with me also. I like food made with wheat, but the people here will not allow me to take it. Anyone who wants to eat delicious food may eat whatever they want, but why should they compel me to take only some specified items of food? See how it is."¹⁶

One more story on the same theme: it was well known that Bhagavan didn't like to sit on his sofa all day. He called it his 'jail' and only sat there out of consideration for the devotees who were continuously coming for *darshan*. Up till the early 1930s Bhagavan was able to spend a lot of his time away from the Hall, doing odd jobs in the ashram. If any devotees came for *darshan*, Madhava Swami, the attendant who looked after the Old Hall, would come and notify him and Bhagavan would then go back to his sofa. One old devotee told me that he was once working with Bhagavan when they both saw Madhava Swami walking towards them. Bhagavan sighed and said, "Here comes a new warrant for my arrest. I have to go back to jail!"

16

NOW

By Geetha Bhatt

People tell me to
Think about "tomorrow"
And I ask
Where is "tomorrow"?

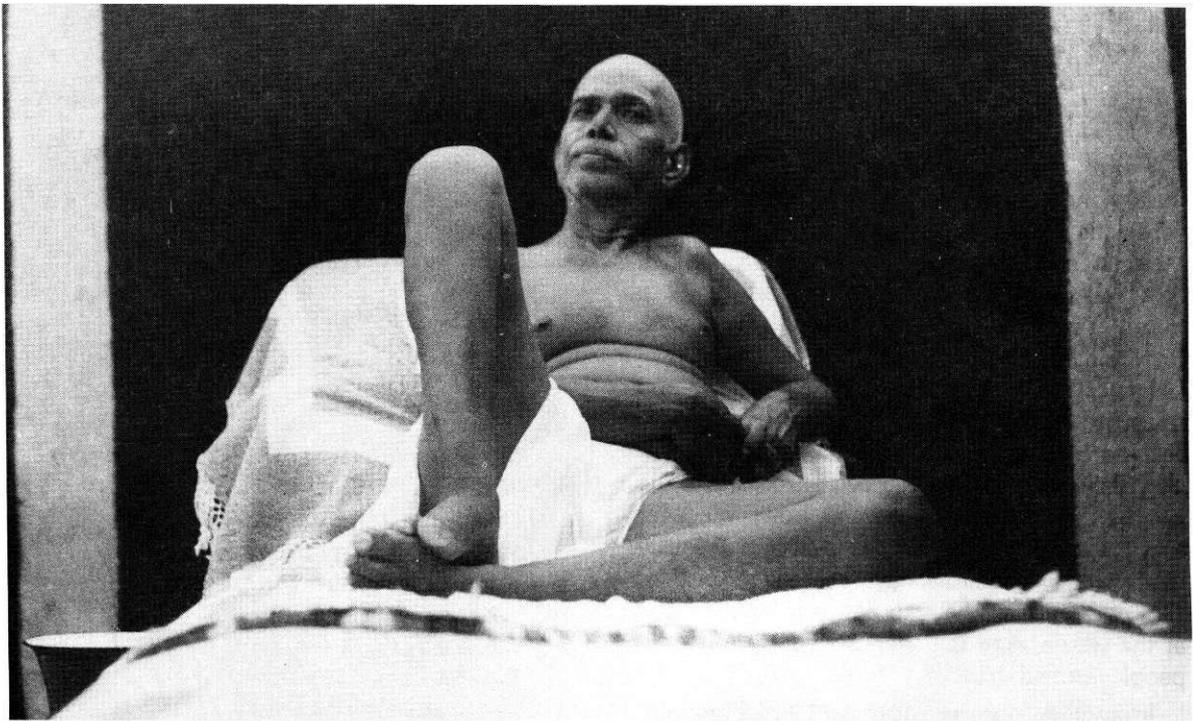
They tell me
"In today's world
One must take care for the future".
My question to them is:
Where are your tomorrows?
Where is the world?
Whose future are you
Talking about?
"Yours! Mine! Ours!"

Be still and watch
Tomorrows become today
Futures become Now
You, Me, They
Merge into the single I.
There are no tomorrows,
No sorrows,
No future,
No need to think —
Everything 'IS'
As 'IT' should be.

Clearly then, Bhagavan had very little 'freedom to' in his daily life. However, his 'freedom from' was absolute, enabling him to witness dispassionately all the inconveniences that ashram life imposed on him. One should also remember that only those who identify him with a body could imagine that his freedom was in any way curtailed. If one can have instead the attitude that he was and is the unmanifest Self, it is easy to see that at all times he was utterly free.

¹⁵ *The Mountain Path*, 1981, p. 66. See also a correction to this quote which was printed on p. 176 of the same year.

¹⁶ *The Mountain Path*; 1981, p. 93.



MAN AND PURE CONSCIOUSNESS

By Sqn. Ldr. N. VASUDEVAN

During a recent visit to the USA, I met some eminent scientists and philosophers. When I expressed my conviction that pure Consciousness is fundamental and that *everything* arises from it, one physicist said: "As a physicist I hold that *everything* can be explained according to relatively simple physical laws. I am of the view that consciousness rises out of the interaction of matter." A lady philosopher at Maryland University listened to me with rapt attention and said: "I cannot disprove your theory; but I am a mathematical logician. If you can apply mathematical logic and prove your theory, I shall take to it."

In the USA, there are all sorts of philosophers: empiricists, constructive empiricists, scientific realists, materialists, eliminative material-

ists and so on. It is interesting to note that the eliminative materialists advocate the complete dropping of words such as pain, seeing, feeling, consciousness, etc. According to philosopher Richard Rorty of Princeton, an eliminative material philosopher would say: "It would make life simpler for us if you would in the future say: 'My C-fibres are firing' instead of saying 'I am in pain.'"¹

Many scientists believe that man is a machine with the attribute of *thinking*. A leader in computer research, Marvin Minsky of M.I.T. says that it is possible to create a machine with "the general intelligence of an average human being... The machine will be able to educate itself... In a few months it will be at genius level..."

A few months after that its power will be incalculable."²

Many are also influenced by the new technology of artificial intelligence. According to Professor Arthur Harkings, director of the Graduate Features Program at the University of Minnesota, by the year 2000 people will be getting married to robots and society will begin to ponder the definition of *human*.³

But not all scientists and philosophers are total advocates of simple material laws. Some feel that a mechanistic approach cannot adequately explain *human consciousness*. Nobel-laureate physicist Eugene Wagner says: "There are two kinds of reality or existence; the existence of my consciousness and the reality or existence of everything else... the latter reality is not absolute but only relative."⁴ According to German zoologist Bernhard Rensch, in addition to the physical properties of matter, it has "parallel psychic components" such as *consciousness*. "Molecules and atoms should also be credited with basic parallel components of some kind.....these parallel processes can be recognised as such only after the respective molecules have become part of the psychophysical substance (nerve and sense cells) of an organism, so that the parallel components form a complex of conscious phenomena that can be experienced."⁵

The aforesaid views pose problems:

1. Why limit consciousness to atoms, why not to electrons, quarks etc.?
2. Is there a difference in consciousness between that of a quark and that of an atom?
3. If every particle is separately conscious, what causes the integration of consciousness?
4. Is there *pure consciousness* as such? Is it absolute?

The scientists use the term 'consciousness' for world cognition, mental awareness and pure consciousness. To understand the above problems in proper perspective, one has to discern and differentiate world-cognition, mental awareness and pure consciousness. These are being treated below, succinctly and in the logical order.

World-Cognition

Suppose I am looking at Sirius which is many light years away. The light waves which started from Sirius many light years ago have "now" reached my eyes and the optic nerve leading into my brain. Suppose Sirius had ceased a century before my birth. Yet, in effect, I see Sirius because the rays of light which emanated from Sirius a few light years ago before its extinction will still reach *my eyes* and the optic nerve leading into *my brain* and will create an 'imaging' of Sirius. So too the case with the sun in eight minutes, and the human body a few nanoseconds in subjective past, all creating imagings, in-built projections ranged about the "now" of the brain. This is world-cognition.

Mental Awareness

Now let us deal with the "now" of the brain. Events constituting the brain — the events of the "subjective now" — are events at the very nearest end of the subjective past. Mark, they are not of the *real now* or the *very present*. When I say 'now' or think 'now' it is the end of the modulating process in the brain where the 'now' is acknowledged. In other words, it becomes the very immediate past, the subjective 'now'. *The I-awareness must be there* to acknowledge the subjective 'now'. This is mental awareness.

Pure Consciousness

That from which the I-awareness rises is the *real now* of the *very present*. The real now is *as-it-is*. Any use of the word 'time' in the normal sense is completely out of the question, for there is neither space nor time. There is no separate mysterious region. The Heaven or Hell or *Vaikunta* or *Siva Loka* are all within the mental awareness. The I-awareness, the subjective 'now', the world-cognition are all *modulating events* in the real now.

Clearly there cannot be anything antecedent to *real now*; it is the fundamental energy. Since it is ALL-THAT-IS, it must have intrinsic consciousness. It is infinite, eternal. Professor Plank declares: "*I regard consciousness as funda-*

mental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. Everything we talk about, everything we postulate as existing, requires consciousness."⁶

Sri Ramana Maharshi says:

"Pure Consciousness wholly unrelated to the physical body and transcending the mind is a matter of direct experience. Sages know their bodies, external existence just as the layman knows his bodily existence. But the experience of Consciousness can be with bodily awareness as well as without it. In the bodiless experience of pure Consciousness the Sage is beyond time and space, and no question about the position of the Heart can then at all arise.

"Since, however, the physical body cannot subsist (with life) apart from Consciousness, bodily awareness has to be sustained by pure Consciousness. The former, by its nature, is limited and can never be co-extensive with the latter which is infinite and eternal. Body-consciousness is merely a monad-like, miniature reflection of the pure Consciousness with which the Sage has realized his identity. For him, therefore, body-consciousness is only a

reflected ray, as it were, of the self-effulgent, infinite Consciousness which is himself. It is in this sense alone that the Sage is aware of his bodily existence.

"Since, during the bodiless experience of the Heart as pure Consciousness, the Sage is not at all aware of the body, that absolute experience is localized by him within the limits of the physical body by a sort of feeling-recollection made while he is with bodily awareness."⁷

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- ¹ Richard Rorty, *Mindbody, Identity, Privacy, and Categories. The Mind-Brain Identity Theory*, ed. C.V. Borst (London, Macmillan, 1970), p.193.
- ² Robert Jastrow, *The Post-Human World*, Science Digest (Jan/Feb 1981), p.144.
- ³ *Futurist Predicts Era of Robot Spouses*, Bringhamton Sun Bulletin (Bringhamton, New York, April 21,1983).
- ⁴ Eugene P. Wagner, *Two Kinds of Reality*, The Monist, Vol.48 (1964), p.250.
- ⁵ Bernard Rensch, *Evolution Above the Species Level* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p.355.
- ⁶ *Observer*, London, January 25, 1931.
- ⁷ *Maharshi's Gospel* (Book 2), pages 74-75.

"According to the ethics of the Sufis, whatever you do can be seen by anybody. It's as if you live in a glass house. There are no secrets. You see, it's not easy. Whatever you do is not done for the self, it is done for others... It's quite simple. One is not special. One is not magnificent. One understands better, that's all. But any one of you can do that. And I wish you all at least to be able to touch with gentle fingers the hem of the garment of truth. I hope that you do, because life will become such a symphony. Life becomes such music."

— IRINA TWEEDIE

MAURICE FRYDMAN¹

By APA B. PANT



*Maurice Frydman and
J. Krishnamurti*

DURING my fateful visit to Bangalore in 1937, Maurice and I had planned one innovation after another for my father's small, impoverished state of Aundh. The atmosphere hummed with new ideas and plans for the development of village communities and the introduction of science and technology into them, which was a particularly keen issue with Maurice. "Science and technology must be taken to the villages and made simple for the use of the peasants," he declared. Thus inspired, I had gone to pay my farewell call on Sir Mirza Ismail. I wanted him to "loan" Maurice to me for six months so that we two together could chalk out a plan for the development of the 75 villages of Aundh. When I had made my appeal, Sir Mirza looked glum and said, "Let your father, the Rajasaheb, write to me, and we will see what we can do for you."

When the letter from Aundh went out to Bangalore with my father's signature, back came the answer: "We cannot spare the services of Mr. Maurice Frydman at the moment." In diplomatic language "at the moment" always means "never" and also "do not write again". Period!

Sir Mirza should have realised that his refusal to lend Maurice to Aundh for a short while would have the opposite effect. And so it happened that as I sat brooding one morning in the Rama

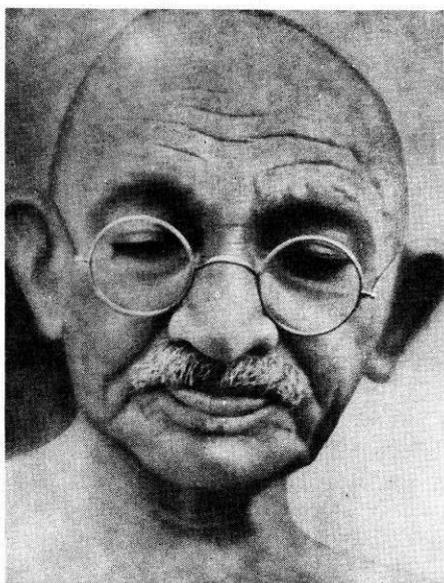
Hall of my father's palace, in walks Maurice Frydman with a bundle of gerua clothes at the end of a stick!

"I have come, Apa," he said simply. "Sir Mirza cannot dictate to me. I am nobody's slave. I have left Mysore and come to stay with you permanently. Let us work!"

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "But...", I spluttered, "Aundh State cannot afford to pay you Rs. 3,000 per month and give you a free house and a car and an office! Why, the highest paid official in the State, the Diwan, gets Rs. 75, with the Muslim chauffeur, Haji Master, next at Rs. 70!"

Maurice laughed his rumbling, guttural laugh. "I shall sleep in that corner on the floor, opposite you. Give me an Indian desk of the old style to write on. Your mother will feed me. I have my legs to walk on. You can also walk with me. That is all. We will work together for Aundh. Now give me food!"

¹ Continued from the previous issue.



Mahatma Gandhi

That was typical Maurice. Telegraphic, often Morse-code-style staccato speech which carried the necessary meaning without a superfluous word.

It was the pen of Maurice that wrote down the inspired ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, bringing decentralised democracy to the villages of the state of Aundh, which was then ruled by my father.

This "rash" act upset not only the British, but also the other princely states, whose rulers never thought of any authority other than themselves as supreme in their states. Thus we soon found ourselves in that famous mud hut talking with the Mahatma.

The Mahatma briefly greeted Swami Bharatananda with, "So you have caught hold of the poor Raja of Aundh now, and left the rich one in Mysore to his destiny?" The Mahatma then went directly to the point and suggested that in fact the ruler should be "the first servant of the people and the keeper of their conscience". The drama of all these happenings I have related in two of my books, *A Moment In Time* and *An Unusual Raja*, both published by Orient Longman.

After returning from the epoch-making visit to the Mahatma, Maurice literally buried himself in the wilderness of Aundh. He went about on foot visiting each of the 75 villages of the state and then set up his headquarters under a thorny acacia tree, with little shade to protect him from the elements. This acacia was located in a dry, waterless plateau of what is now western Maharashtra, 75 miles east of the capital of Aundh. And it was here that he remained for three years. The daily temperature used to be around 120° F, and at night the mercury would drop suddenly to around 20° F, with a bitter, dry wind. There was no hut or any other shelter for Maurice, so he used to wrap himself up in bamboo matting covered with the coarsely woven blankets spun from the local wool. It was very hard *tapasya*, indeed!

While he was still in the capital of Aundh, Maurice had made the Raja abolish capital punishment by a special decree. Now, feeling with full empathy the sorrow and shame of the shackled convicts in the Atpadi jail, he rushed to the capital to beg the Raja for the "loan" of 25 of the "most desperate" and dangerous of these convicts for his colony. Bhawanrao, as usual, responded spontaneously to this objective compassion (*karuna*) of Swami Bharatananda and, with Haji Abdul Aziz, Maurice established in 1939 the first ever "Free Prison", not only in Aundh, but in the whole of India.

These "dangerous desperados" were allowed to bring their families to *Swatantrapur* (City of the Free), where they could, on parole, visit their own villages as well. It was a revolution in itself. It brought a new dimension to the whole range of relationships between man and man, man and authority, and man and nature. These "free" citizens dug a huge well which, in that arid desert area, was a miracle in itself. It struck a pocket of extremely sweet water in the sandy loam soil, and plenty of it. Hundreds from Atpadi and other villages visited this well and sat with wonderment and devotion in their eyes at the feet of this cherubic foreigner in *sannyasi* clothes with the enchanting smile and the perpetual glint of mischief in his eyes. The poor peasants of Aundh

always felt purified in the presence of "the Swami", whose *karuna* left an indelible mark on the villagers of Aundh.

Swatantrapur still exists and tries to survive. Haji Abdul "Master", now 91, visits it from time to time, and his eyes fill with tears when he thinks and feels the presence of Maurice there.

It was also around this time that Maurice became inspired with the idea of an Indo-Polish library. Uma Devi, a genteel and celebrated Polish aristocrat, had come to India a few years before Maurice and was already well set in the Ramana Maharshi - Krishnamurti - Mahatma Gandhi circuit. I do not know whether they ever met each other in Poland, but they teamed up in India to produce about 50 books through this Indo-Polish library. All of them were translations of original Sanskrit texts. How this "reasonable" literature was smuggled, chiefly through Polish prisoners of war in India, is a thrilling story in itself. Thousands of copies of these books entered Poland, and now the demand for such books there is growing apace.

The sufferings and sad plight of the Tibetans in 1958-59 — the total overwhelming of an ancient, compassionate culture — was devastatingly disturbing to Maurice. He was staying with us in Sikkim at that time, watching the Tibetans fleeing in terror by the thousands and being helplessly lost in India. They were seeking shelter in the land of the birth of Gautama the Buddha, but they had no shelter, not to mention comfort. The government of Jawaharlal Nehru did not know what, where or how to do "something" for them. It was dangerous to try to settle them near the Indo-Tibetan frontiers. Spies and agent provocateurs were everywhere, preparing for the 1962 "war of liberation" on India. Maurice saw all this not through the eyes of a diplomat or a politician who plays for power, but as a simple, compassionate human being. For him, to feel was to act. One day he sat down and drafted a letter portraying his anguish, as from me to Prime Minister Nehru, which he carried himself to Delhi. He then sat in the Prime Minister's office until the latter agreed to write letters to various state governments to grant land for the

use of the Tibetan refugees. Armed with these letters Maurice, at *his own expense*, travelled to various states where state land above 3,500 feet was available. For two long hard years he ceaselessly laboured, touring the whole of India seeking suitable sites where the poor, neglected Tibetans could be settled. He cajoled, shouted, brow-beat bureaucrats, politicians, priests, peasants — but got land and money to create five settlements where thousands of uprooted Tibetans were rehabilitated. Were it not for Maurice this would never have happened! History will certainly record a deep sense of gratitude to Maurice Frydman — Polish Jew and Indian mystic-saint — for the inestimable and timely help that he brought for the preservation of Tibet's distinct, precious culture and identity.

Ekagrata, single-pointedness, can achieve anything, he used to say to us, who were always grateful to him. "*Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam*", he used to say.

Whether with Bhagavan, the Mahatma or J. Krishnamurti, Maurice's method of questioning everything, experimenting and experiencing for himself the truth at each level, and then alone accepting it, was always infallible. Even the Mahatma's experiments with food paled before those Maurice tried on himself. He always had a queer range of eatables and drinkables on the table when one sat to eat with him. One never knew what to expect nor dared one ask what they were made of. In Atpadi, together with another food experimenter, Dr. Appa Bhagwat, he extended his experiment to include a variety of grasses, roots, leaves, flowers, tree barks, and even earth. How he survived these experiments on himself is nothing short of a miracle.

Once, whilst staying with us in Sikkim, he and his constant companion and fellow-pilgrim, Hilla Petit, a gracious Parsi lady, and her adopted daughter, Babulal, were crossing a windy pass in the high Himalayas. But Maurice had to be carried in a litter because, having undertaken some new experiment in dieting, he was incapable of staying on his horse. At the pass some 16,700 feet high, the bearers of the litter decided that Maurice had died and left him in the

cold snowy rubble of the glacier and ran away! Tibetans are generally afraid of corpses. Only a rescue team from ten miles away bringing flasks of hot coffee and warm blankets saved Maurice from actually fulfilling the Tibetans' fears. Experiment and experience — even unto death — this was his credo. He knew no fear. For Death he had only LOVE — which, as he proclaimed through his objective compassionate ACTION, conquers all — even death.

"The sage is dying", whispered a soft, sad voice over the trunk phone from Bombay. "He is asking for you. Come as soon as you can."

So my wife and I rushed, with Avalokita our youngest, his favourite, whom he had blessed in Sikkim when she was only a few months old.

When we arrived Hilla, the doctors and nurse all complained to me that Maurice was refusing to eat or take medicine. Hilla and Babulal were in tears. They implored me to "make" Maurice eat and take his medicine, as if any one could ever make him do anything that he didn't want to do!

There he lay in his familiar room, with everything meticulously clean and in its proper place. As I approached him, he shouted at me, "Apa, who is dying?"

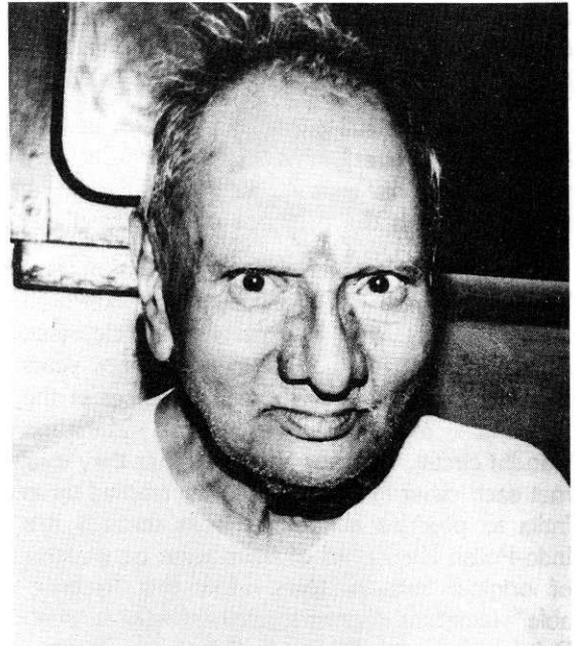
The next day he drove everyone out of the room, ordering them to leave him alone with me. Then he said, "Apa, I hear the music, I see the bright light. Who dies? No one is dying. This diseased body is keeping me away from that Harmony and Beauty. Do not let them keep me in this body. Go now in peace."

The next day we were all at his bedside as he breathed his last three breaths — "Hari Om!" Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj was also by his side. I asked him, "Maharaj, where is Maurice going? What is happening to him?"



Apa B. Pant

He replied, "Nothing is happening. No one is dying, for no one was born."



Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

"Then why this sense of sorrow, emptiness, loss?" I asked.

"Who is feeling sorrow, emptiness, loss?" he asked.

And within hours, in the presence of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, the remains of what we called Maurice Frydman were consumed in the electric fire. The elements returned to their original order.

In one of his talks, Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj has said that attachment to name and form (*nama-rupa*) creates fear in man's heart. One who knows that he has no name or form, who is Nothing, will be afraid of nothing, including death. Maurice had reached the state of *shunyata* (nothingness, emptiness), he lived *shunyata*, and the egos he touched were thrown into a bottomless well, while their souls caught a glimpse of this ineffable state.

Nevertheless, in a way quite tangible to me, Maurice is not gone. He is, as always, *here*, and *now*, a constant inspiration to love, to serve, to be fearless, sincere, and full of joy!

THE SEARCH FOR GOD-TRUTH-REALITY

By Ramesh S. Balsekar

Man's Search for Security

THE individual's search for God begins from the time he realises, when dealing with life's problems, the strict limitation of his puny intellect and of his supposed free will. He then turns to that Supreme Power — God — and prays for material things in this world to satisfy what in the beginning he considered to be his needs. An animal's search is normally restricted to the satisfaction of its biological needs, but the search of the human being extends beyond his immediate needs. Man cannot enjoy the present without a reasonable guarantee that his satisfaction will be extended into the foreseeable future. And it is this aspect which turns his need into greed; before he knows it, this accumulative tendency has become an obsession, long after the foreseeable future has been adequately taken care of.

Man's search for security is based on the mistaken belief that there can be something constant and unchanging in this world. The fact of the matter, however, is that nothing in this universe is constant: every planet and every galaxy is in continual movement; every living organism is a mass of cells, continually being created, destroyed and recreated in a specific pattern of vibrating energy. Life itself is a series of changes between opposites. Life means living, living means continual change, and change inevitably means insecurity. The search for security has made life for most people a matter — a

confirmed habit — of either looking behind or thinking of the fears and hopes ahead. These fluctuating perspectives render illusory the reality of what-is, the here and now.

We seem to forget that music is such a delight only because of its flow and rhythm, and that the very basis of that delight would be destroyed if we were to prolong a particular note or chord beyond its legitimate time merely because we liked it and would like to hear more of it. Life, like music, is a flowing process, and we would make life an impossible conflict (and many of us have indeed accomplished this!) if we were to arrest its normal flow because we liked certain parts and feared others. It is impossible to be blind to the fact that, in spite of the best-laid plans, illnesses must occur and accidents must happen. Because these unpredictable events, or others like them, are inevitable, there can thus be no solution to the problem of fear of an uncertain future which is based on the premise that permanence and security are attainable through personal effort. There can only be a dissolution of the problem through a bold and clear

Ramesh Balsekar was one of Nisargadatta Maharaj's interpreters and devotees in the late 1970's. He is the author of *Pointers From Nisargadatta Maharaj*, *Experience of Immortality* and *Explorations Into the Eternal*. In recent years he has travelled widely, giving talks all over the world on Nisargadatta Maharaj's teaching and allied spiritual topics.

look not at it, but into it, with no separation of the 'me' from the problem.

The Separation of the Individual From the Totality of the Universe

Basically, the fear of change and uncertainty arises because of the separation of the individual 'me' from the rest of the universe — the separation of the individual from Totality — and this fear can disappear only when this separation gets bridged through the realisation that the 'me' itself is an illusion. The truth of the matter is that we are struggling ceaselessly to ensure the continuity, permanence and security of this 'me', the apparent thinker of our thoughts, the experiencer of our experiences, the knower of our knowledge, without realising that it is essentially nothing but an illusion.

An awareness of the illusion of 'me' can arise only with the realisation that our experience as such, whatever its nature, must necessarily be in the present moment. In the actual experience of the present moment, there is no experiencer, for the 'me' as the experiencer arises only when the mind recreates the experience. The notion of a 'me', as distinct from the experience, comes only from memory and from the rapidity with which thoughts occur. It is, as Nisargadatta Maharaj used to say, like a burning stick whirling in the air giving the illusion of a continuous circle of fire and light.

'I feel happy' simply means that a feeling of happiness is present; 'I am afraid' simply means that fear is present. To understand this is to realise that life can really be lived only in the present moment — here and now — that there can be neither security nor permanence in life, that both are as much of a myth, an illusion, as is the 'me' that demands to be protected. Every experience is in some sense new and fresh, and at every moment of our lives we are in the midst of the new and unknown. We can clearly realise this when the experience of the moment is accepted without resisting it, without giving it a label based on past memory. Peace and happiness consist in being completely open and sensitive to the experience of the moment, with the

deepest conviction that it is in complete accordance with God's will, or, if you prefer to express it differently, with the functioning of Totality. Accept the experience of the moment, and let it die with the moment. The secret of life is to understand that the past must be abandoned, that the unknown cannot be avoided, and that nothing in the world can be definitely known and fixed. This, incidentally, is precisely the conclusion which quantum physics has arrived at. As Goethe has put it, "As long as you do not know how to die and come to life again, you are but a sorry traveller on this dark earth."

Man's Search for Truth, or God

At some stage in his incessant search for security, the human being realises that there really cannot be any genuine security in this world, that the search for reality is truly an exercise in futility and frustration, and indeed, that material success in life cannot really bring peace and happiness. At this juncture, the mind turns inward, and the nature of the search changes from looking for material success and future security to self-enquiry, or it manifests as a desire to be one with God. In this attempt to find out 'what it is all about', the spiritual seeker is born.

Spiritual seeking begins with the individual wanting, as an individual, the supreme 'bliss' that is usually promised and held out as a bait to the seeker. The seeking can only really end, though, with the annihilation of the individual seeker and the realisation that the spiritual search is in fact an impersonal process in phenomenality working through the individual. In this realisation there is the understanding that the individual is only an instrument for the impersonal working of Totality, an instrument of God's inscrutable ways. During the period between the beginning of the spiritual search by the individual and the ultimate realisation that the individual truly has no personal free will and therefore cannot make any effort, the poor miserable seeker goes through various kinds of therapies, disciplines and manoeuvres prescribed by various paths and sects. This occurs because he is firmly entrenched in the

belief that the success of his search depends wholly on the efforts that he makes and the determination with which he makes the efforts. The untold misery and frustration of this kind of seeking only comes to an end when the seeker understands that the success or failure of his search is in the hands of the Totality, or God. Only when the sudden realisation dawns that nothing genuine can be 'achieved' by any individual, will the surrender of the individual free-will occur. The heart will then be open and receptive to the Grace of God or Totality.

When the Totality appears within, the Totality without is simultaneously revealed. Some have called it God-realisation; others have called it liberation, enlightenment, *moksha*. The one thing common to all these expressions is the fact that the individual, as an independent do-er, has disappeared.

Reality seems extraordinary, something very special, only because of the individual seeker's expectations. When it is actually experienced, there is a sudden realisation that nothing extraordinary has really happened. There is just an understanding that the abnormal aberration of the 'me' has disappeared, and there exists in its place only the very normal 'what-is'. The 'what-is' is the *sahaja sthiti*, the natural state of phenomenality. It is original, ordinary, natural, normal, witnessed by the whole mind, not tainted by the split-mind of the involved human being that views all things from the divisive viewpoint of subject-object.

The individual, in 'his' search for enlightenment, has to face various problems created by his split-mind. One of these is: What is the best path for spiritual seeking? Similarly, another problem is: Is *sadhana* necessary for achieving the spiritual goal? If so, what is the best *sadhana*? If not, why is it that there are so many spiritual paths that insist on a particular *sadhana*?

The fact of the matter is that Nature provides astonishingly clear indications of one's *dharma* in one's own body-mind organism. Each body-mind organism, at the moment of conception, is 'stamped' with certain natural characteristics —

physical, mental, temperamental — which make up the personality of the individual organism. This set of natural characteristics gives a remarkable indication of the trends in life which the organism will be inclined to follow, and to that extent may be considered as indicating its *dharma*. Thus, by and large, it is possible to see even in the early years of an individual, the trends and indications of what he is likely to become as an individual person, what his broad profession or occupation is likely to be; indeed, what spiritual path he is likely to take to! This is a bold and unusual assertion which I shall attempt to substantiate in the next section.

What is the Best Path for Me?

It is rather interesting that Dr William Sheldon and his associate worked out, in the 1930's, a remarkably comprehensive and well-developed system which classifies all human beings. Dr Sheldon's classification is based on the premise that each individual is an amalgam in varying proportions of three physical and three correlated psychological elements. The three components are fairly evenly blended in most people to make a generally complex character, but the fact remains that the classification can be created on the basis of the disparate characteristics.

The term *dharma*, used so effectively in the *Bhagavad Gita*, denotes the cardinal characteristics, the innate nature of a sentient being, and is considered to be the basis of his very being, his active life. Dr Sheldon's classification is a modern attempt to classify human beings on the basis of their physical, emotional and mental characteristics. Broadly speaking, his classification is as follows:

a) *Endomorph-Visceratonic*: the essential physical characteristic is a soft roundness built around the digestive tract, with a corresponding temperamental pattern based on love of food, comfort and luxury — a type that projects an indiscriminate extroversion and emotionality that makes him prone to a craving for affection not only from the closest family members but also from the whole world. Consequently, he loves the whole world!

b) *Mesomorph-Somatotonic*: physically big-boned with hard and strong muscles, correlated to a temperament that is depicted by an intense love for physical activity and restlessness, an aggressive and almost uncontrolled lust for power, an unusual capacity to bear pain, coupled with occasional shocking insensitivity towards the feelings of others. There is a strong competitive instinct which is coupled with uncommon physical endurance, courage and intrepidity. The somatotonic prefers to bear his pains and travails in solitude.

c) *Ectomorph-Cerebrotonic*: physically slender with small bones and weak muscles, with a temperament characterised by an over-sensitivity coupled with an over-alertness of the brain. The confirmed cerebrotonic is an incorrigible introvert, concerned more with what is behind the apparent scene than the scene itself, concerned more with the essential core than the apparent matter. He is quite content to be allowed to lead his own life peacefully, and is not concerned with power and domination over others or with competitive affairs.

This analysis lends itself smoothly and easily to the three paths of salvation contained in the Hindu tradition. The visceratonic's natural propensity towards externalising his emotions would make him almost automatically take the path of devotion to a personal God (*bhakti*) with its inherent component of universal goodwill accompanied by charity and compassion towards all sentient beings. The path of action (*karma*) would obviously suit the somatotonic with an abundance of physical stamina and energy which makes him 'on the go' all the time. Similarly, the path of knowledge (*jnana*) would be clearly marked out for the introverted cerebrotonic.

Many of the problems confronting the seeker would disappear if he would only remember that spiritual seeking itself started as a matter of grace, that he did not choose voluntarily to be a seeker. The fact that the search for security and material prosperity suddenly gave way to a search for truth should be acknowledged to be a manifestation of divine grace. It is this grace

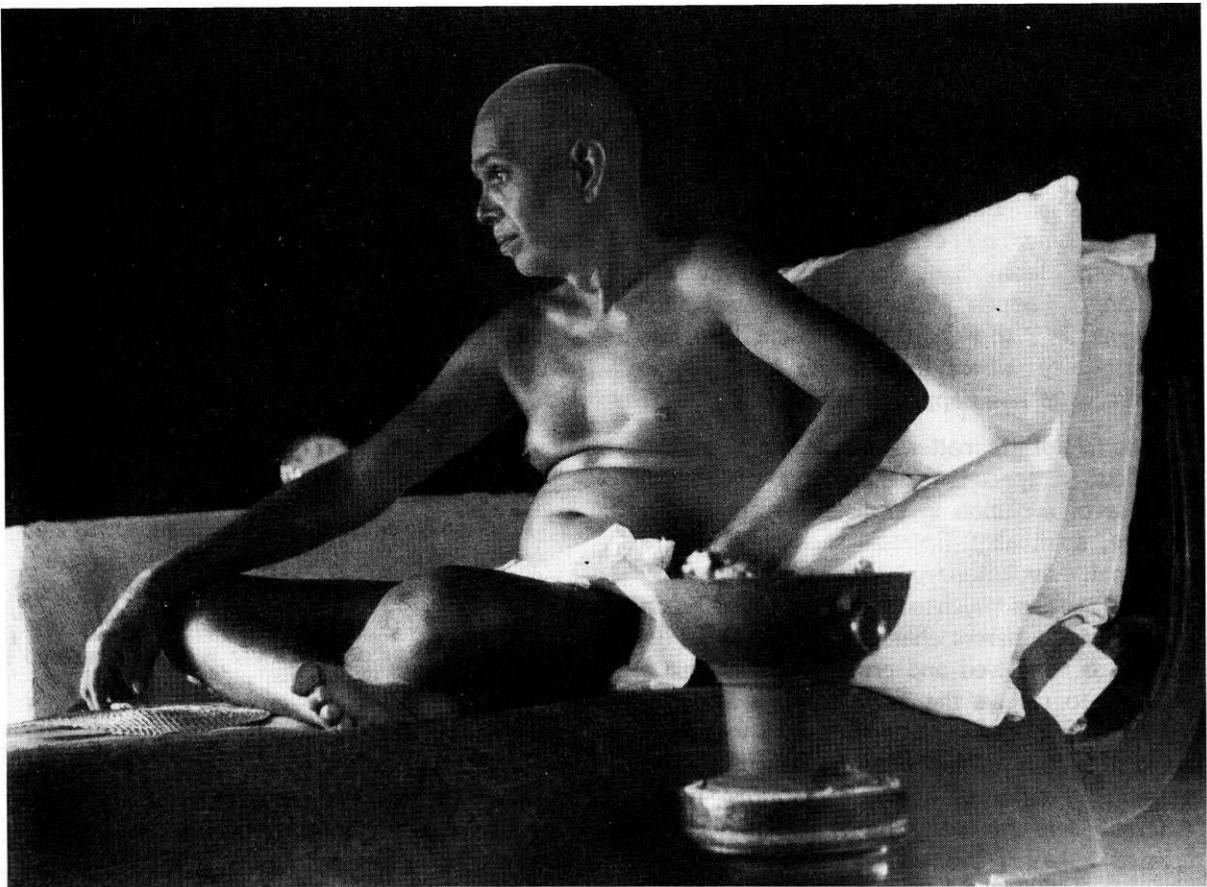
which directs the seeker's path and guides him along it.

Is Effort as *Sadhana* Necessary?

The essential point to be remembered about individual effort — *sadhana* — is that a certain amount of disciplinary practice is necessary in the beginning to still the mind. This new type of seeking that has been redirected from the search outside towards the search inside needs to be nurtured. The nature of such a disciplinary practice is that the practice may eventually become so interesting that one forgets that it is only a means to an end. The practitioner must eventually disappear in the impersonal goal, but when this is forgotten, the means often becomes an end in itself. Thus, in the matter of meditation the purpose of meditation is conveniently forgotten, and an element of competition sometimes develops among its practitioners concerning the length of each other's meditation and the 'benefits' (which are really nothing but the projections of the mind) which the seeker has been able to 'achieve'.

It is most pertinent to listen to Ramana Maharshi when he says:

- 1) "Light-gazing stupefies the mind and produces catalepsy of the will for the time being, and it secures no permanent benefit (result). Breath-control temporarily benumbs the will, but it is not permanent. It is the same listening to sounds, unless the *mantra* is sacred and secures the help of a higher power to purify and raise the thoughts."
- 2) "Unbroken 'I-I' is the infinite ocean. The ego, the 'I'-thought, remains only a bubble on it and is called *jiva* or individual soul. The bubble too is water, for when it bursts it only mixes in the ocean. When it remains a bubble it is still a part of the ocean. Ignorant of this simple truth, innumerable methods under different denominations, such as yoga, *bhakti*, *karma*, each again with many modifications, are being taught with



great skill and in intricate detail only to entice the seekers and confuse their minds. So also are the religions and sects and dogmas.”

- 3) “He who instructs an ardent seeker to do this or that is not a true master. The seeker is already afflicted by his activities and wants peace and rest. In other words, he wants cessation of his activities. If the teacher tells him to do something in addition to, or in place of, his other activities, can that be a help to the seeker?”

“Activity is creation. Activity is the destruction of one’s inherent happiness. If activity is advocated, the adviser is not a master but a killer.... Such a person cannot liberate the aspirant, he can only strengthen his fetters.”

It will also be instructive to listen to Bayazid of Bistun, who has given the course of his spiritual journey in his confessions:

“For twelve years I was the smith of my

soul. I put it in the furnace of austerity and burnt it in the fire of combat. I laid it on the anvil of reproach and smote it with the hammer of blame until I made of my soul a mirror. Five years I was the mirror of myself and was ever polishing that mirror with diverse acts of worship and piety. On my waist I wore a girdle of pride and vanity, and self-conceit and reliance on devotion and approbation of my works. I laboured for five years until that girdle became worn out and I professed Islam anew. I looked and saw that all created things were dead. I pronounced four *akbirs* over them and returned from the funeral of all of them and, without intrusion of creatures, through God’s help alone, I attained unto God.”

Thus the spiritual search begins with the individual seeking enlightenment as a means to peace and happiness. The search can end only when there is the sudden awakening to the realisation that the seeking itself is the massive

obstruction to enlightenment. So long as there is a 'me' as an individual entity — a do-er — wanting something, even if that something be called enlightenment or God, the great awakening cannot happen. When the great awakening happens, it is the great, magnificent leap into impersonality, where there is no 'one' left to enquire what has happened to whom.

The fact of the matter is that in the phenomenal flow of space-time, there is a continuous process of evolution in all fields — art, music, science, spirituality. Spiritual seeking is an impersonal, evolutionary process proceeding through various psychosomatic organisms, each with varying inherent characteristics, until an organism is conceived and created with adequate capacity to receive the Truth through intuitive, subjective experience. It is necessary to understand that this evolutionary process has used very many different human organisms, many different lives in many births, before it has created a highly evolved organism and, more

importantly, that they are not 're-births' of the same soul or ego. The human organisms are merely instruments through which the evolutionary process happens. Enlightenment can only happen as an impersonal happening — no individual psychosomatic apparatus can become enlightened.

It would, perhaps, be fitting to conclude this essay with a quotation attributed to the Buddha:

"As there is no self, there is no transmigration of self; but there are deeds and continued effects of deeds. There are deeds being done, but there is no doer. There is no entity that migrates, no self is transferred from one place to another; but there is a voice uttered here and the echo of it comes back."

And, of course, it is very necessary to bear constantly in mind the final truth as pronounced by Ramana Maharshi, that there is really no creation, no destruction; no free will, no destiny; no path, no achievement.

Taste of Joy

By O M

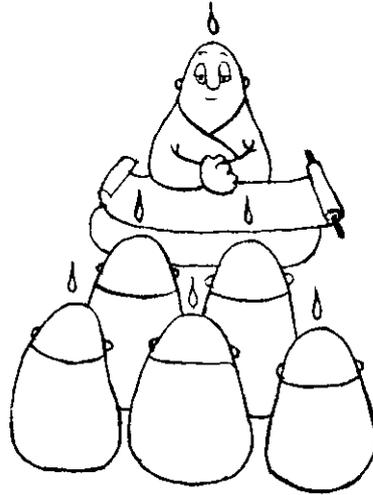
(translated from the Russian by **Nadhia Sutara**)

**I am a drop of the Ocean, I am a wave.
I — the mute Silence of Its boundless depths —
Ocean of shoreless Effulgence!
... This body is merely a vessel ...
It I am not, I am THAT:**

**Awareness!
Being that knows no bonds!
Bliss of the Knowledge Supreme!**

* * *

**Let but for a moment the taste of this arise,
And its Joy will shed Light on the karmic web,
Burning the armour-plated shield of ignorance
To wordlessly proclaim the Word of Truth.**



THE WORDS OF OLD TCHENG*

Text transmitted by J. Garillot

(Translated from the French by ELSE M. VAN DEN MUYZENBERG)

Old Tcheng said:

To see the primordial spirit is to see it whether there are thoughts or not, whether one is immobile or active, whether one is speaking like I am before you, or whether one is silent, whether one is an emperor, a monk, or someone with neither hearth nor home. What does it really matter?

What difference is there between the Buddha and the illiterate rustic monk who only knows how to split wood but who sees the primordial spirit. There is not one particular primordial spirit for Bodhidharma and another for old Tcheng or for each of you. The primordial spirit is the primordial spirit. Nothing else can be said about it. Even that is too much already. What others have said about the primordial spirit and what I am saying can only be of use to encourage you to search directly yourselves, without having recourse to any authority and without any tricks. Everything else will only blur your sight and divert you from the one and only inquiry that

should possess you entirely, wherever you are and whatever you do: meditating, sweeping the court or answering the call of nature. But when I see what you do to the words of the patriarchs and my own, better that the patriarchs and I had been drowned at birth.

Baldheads, you are afflicted with a mortal disease.

• • •

Baldheads, the world and you are nothing but thoughts of the individual mind since they both disappear along with all other thoughts when you fall asleep. This also applies to the stale thoughts of your petty mind about the Buddha, the Path and the primordial spirit.

So understand once and for all how useless all your efforts are to penetrate the impenetrable

* Continued from the previous issue.
Illustrations by **Apeetha Arunagiri**.

through thought and action. You may as well desire to catch the wind. But if you are unencumbered and totally receptive to the primordial spirit, you will instead be caught by it directly.

* * *

Since you have heard of the void as being the supreme achievement, you try to attain it. Thus you lapse into a torpor and an insensitiveness which you take for the emptiness of the primordial spirit.

Having heard about the absolute as being the ultimate state, you imagine that all things are equal and that nothing is worthy of respect. Thus you lapse into casualness and anarchy which you take for the unicity of the primordial spirit.

As you have heard about purity being total bliss, you strive to attain it. Thus you lapse into an intransigence and a rigidity which you take for the transparency of the primordial spirit.

Having heard about detachment being the one and only freedom, you try to separate yourselves from the world and yourselves. Thus you lapse into indifference which you take for the independence of the primordial spirit.

Baldheads, it is the primordial spirit that is said to be emptiness, unicity, transparency and independence. The component of the wheel of existence that you are can never have any of these faculties. But if you would see the primordial spirit, you would know that it is your real nature, that it cannot be qualified in any way and that in reality no name can be given to it. You would then also know that the terms void, absolute, purity, detachment and even primordial spirit itself, are nothing but words that only exist for you on account of your blindness and ignorance.

Baldheads, if you want to simulate the primordial spirit, that is the end of you.

* * *

Because you have become monks, followers of Buddha's Law and disciples of a famous Superior, you think you are different from laymen, whom you look at with condescension. Baldheads, you are as ignorant of the primordial spirit as the grass in the field.

* * *

You are, above all, concerned about knowing who I am, what lineage I belong to, who have been my masters, where I come from, what I believe and many things that are just as irrelevant. Some think that because the Superior of this place has asked me to speak to you, I am bound to be an Enlightened Being. Others, on the contrary, think that they have before them just a scandalous and insolent old fool who is fit to be thrown out with a beating because he respects neither the words nor men of the past that are venerated by the tradition, nor the words and men of the present that are glorified by fame. Thus you content yourselves with the facade and appearance of things only. Because of this you are not aware of who this man really is.

Baldheads, having obstructed your sight with mud, you then come and complain that you are blind.

And old Tcheng went away gesticulating broadly.

* * *

Baldheads, you surrender entirely to the will and whims of someone else whom you have shoved above your heads to the point where you leave everything to him; you think that you have the right attitude and that in this way you are carefree and desireless. In reality you only behave like very young monkeys who do not leave their mother for a single moment but feverishly cling to her because they are so afraid. As time passes by, you become like those parched trees that all look alike in winter: when their time comes, they do not grow any more leaves nor yield any more fruit. How can you hope to see the primordial spirit with such a passive attitude?

Baldheads, you are already dead.

* * *

Everyone is illuminated by the primordial spirit. Some see it, others do not know it. That is the only difference between them. As for you, baldheads, you are like a drunkard who, on the outside of a fence, frantically holds on to the

bamboos, screaming that he has been locked in, that he is innocent and implores to be released.

Baldheads, nobody imprisons you but you yourselves. How disastrous for you!

* * *

As you are not able to see the primordial spirit and thus live your life yourselves, you cover up your insignificance by donning someone else's skin, dead or alive. You accumulate points of view and cultivate their nuances, differences and convergences. And so you strut about. Because you bedazzle fools with your tricks, you take yourselves for awakened beings.

Baldheads, you are mere chatterboxes and jugglers. You have deceived yourselves. Your problem is incurable.

You do not need anyone else to see the light of the sun. All that others may say about this is useless to you. You are in the light. It warms your body and yet you cannot grab it in such a way that you may put it in a box. All efforts to possess it are doomed to fail from the start. You can neither catch it nor get rid of it. This was already said by some old blabbermouth and others before him.

The same applies to the primordial spirit. It is always present and just as luminous as the light of the sun. You can neither claim it nor get rid of it.

Baldheads, the fact that you are not able to see it is due to the hotchpotch that you have placed above your heads. You cannot see it because you are wrapped up in your efforts to try and trap it with your thoughts, your worshipping and your practices. You think that it is far away, but it is right here. You want to grab it but it escapes you.

If you were full of simplicity you would only have to open your eyes to see it in the same way that you see the light of the sun. For that no intervention is needed.

He who has seen one grain of sand has seen all grains of sand from all shores and from the

bottom of all the seas of the world. If you see the primordial spirit, you see the entire primordial spirit and you are a Buddha.

* * *

I am before you like a piece of wood that resounds. There is no merit nor importance to that because beings such as old Tcheng, who let the same sound be heard, have never been lacking and never will be until the end of mankind. But unfortunately for you, baldheads, since you are always preoccupied only with appearances, you only consider the piece of wood that is resounding. Consequently the primordial spirit does not find the echo in you that would make you suddenly realise that you are not and have never been other than the primordial spirit.

And old Tcheng retired.

* * *

Baldheads, see all patriarchs and all chatterboxes such as myself as impostors since they talk to you about something that they can neither show nor give to you. The only usefulness that one can possibly grant them is that they can affirm that every being has the Buddha nature. But, in order to finally see it in its dazzling reality, it is up to each one of you to seek it by himself, without letting himself be diverted by anything else. Baldheads, if you allow yourselves to be deceived by the words of the patriarchs and all their illusionists' tricks, you will be lost.

* * *

Baldheads, while hoping to see the primordial spirit you have accumulated quite some knowledge in your petty minds, which is just like the rice that is heaped up in the storehouses here. In doing so you have done nothing but veil your ignorance with learned words, words for discussing true and false, good and evil, the eternal and the ephemeral, heaven and earth, all the gross and subtle elements which man is made up of, the merits of the various paths and practices, the level of Enlightenment that so-and-so has attained and many other things that are just as useless. This only shows how fickle you are and how incapable you are of finding the right attitude.

Baldheads, your vice lies in your arrogant pretence of wishing to measure the immeasurable.

* * *

If there are any among you who, while listening to me, are struck by something greater and profounder than my words, which is not the sort of complacent torpor which so many revel in, imagining that they are established in the primordial spirit, but a simple and active lucidity, well, only to those can I indicate the right direction and show the way. Their own crust will finally crack, suddenly drop and they will see the gem of the primordial spirit sparkle.

I do not intervene in this matter as a person. I am only a channel for the primordial spirit that some people sense through me, old Tcheng, who is otherwise also like the crust covering a precious gem.

As long as I am asked questions about the primordial spirit I can only be silent or answer 'no'.

As for he who sees the primordial spirit, he does not need old Tcheng.

* * *

If you were true men, your thoughts and actions would be right and at all times appropriate to their purpose. But since you are unable to see your Buddha nature you make up for your ignorance by appropriating the thoughts, conduct and actions of those you have placed above your heads. Your concern to ape what others think and do — that is the crust that prevents you from seeing the primordial spirit. Baldheads, you are mere thieves. There is no hope for you.

* * *

Baldheads, your innate nature is in no way different from the Buddha nature. What you are lacking is that you do not know it unambiguously. That is all. That is what you are lacking and that is what drives you to try to become what you have never ceased to be. To have evidence of the primordial spirit, that is what your existence is all about. When you stray from it the slightest bit you immediately relapse into the

endless confusion and turmoil of cause and effect. This is the unique teaching of old Tcheng.

And old Tcheng left.

* * *

Baldheads, the thought of the primordial spirit is only the reflection of it in the individual mind in the same way that the image of the moon seen in the water of a pond is only the reflection of the moon. The primordial spirit remains present, unchanged and unaffected by the tumult of your thoughts and actions in the same way that the moon remains unchanged and unaffected whether the water in the pond is clear or muddy, calm or perturbed or whether the pond is full or empty. It is only the image of the moon that is changed or absent because of that. There is no moon in the pond.

Baldheads, do understand that in all your inventive ways to attain purity, detachment and freedom, in your attempts to stop your thoughts every three hours, and many other practices which you indulge in with a view to catch hold of the primordial spirit, you are caught by the mind like a fish in a hoop net. You act in the same foolish manner when, in order to see the moon directly, you purify the water of the pond, take out the plants that are covering it and set up a bamboo fence so that the wind can neither stir the surface nor empty the pond.

Baldheads, do understand that you only allow yourselves to be bound by your pitiful actions.

* * *

Baldheads, it is because of your blindness that old Tcheng speaks to you about the primordial spirit and the individual mind, as if they were two different things. To old Tcheng, the primordial spirit and the individual mind, the eternal and the ephemeral, wisdom and ignorance, enlightenment and blindness, nirvana, the sutras, the law system, all the bodies of transformation and the Buddha himself are nothing but the turmoil of thoughts. They are similar to a pile of dead leaves that give the impression that they are alive when the winter wind whips them up, but that are dead again a moment later. Baldheads, the true nature of beings and things is not superior

in him who sees it nor inferior in him who does not know it. It remains unaffected whether it is known or not, nor is it affected by anything that you attach to it.

Baldheads, you are free to continue going astray in differences, nuances and subtleties. There you are. I have said to you all there is to be said.

* * *

Baldheads, the Buddha first sought the primordial spirit through the individual mind. He became aware that it was useless. The Buddha subsequently sought the primordial spirit through disciplines and practices. In doing so he also saw that it was fruitless. Under the Bodhi Tree he had still not found the primordial spirit, but he knew that the individual mind and action could not make him see his real nature. So the Buddha gave up using the individual mind and action, accepted his ignorance and admitted his inability to put an end to it.

The Buddha was all uncertainty. He was waiting without worrying about anything. He was still, like a piece of dead wood, when, upon seeing the morning star, the primordial spirit illuminated him.

That is the Buddha's experience. That is the example and primordial teaching he has left.

But you, the Buddha's disciples, what have all of you done? You have laid hold of the Buddha to make his life into a legend at which you can marvel. You make his person into an idol that may be worshipped. You have taken the Buddha's words and made of them something sacred that is worth endlessly learning, reciting and transcribing. With respect to the Buddha's life and words, you have created a great many different schools, written countless tracts and chattered incessantly. You have built temples and made statues. You have lit incense and burnt camphor. You have adopted beliefs and laid down dogmas, rules, disciplines and practices.

Baldheads, this is how you have been trapped and deceived by all that the Buddha recognized as being erroneous. These things can only make one go astray. You have thereby set up sky-high walls in front of the primordial spirit that you want to see.

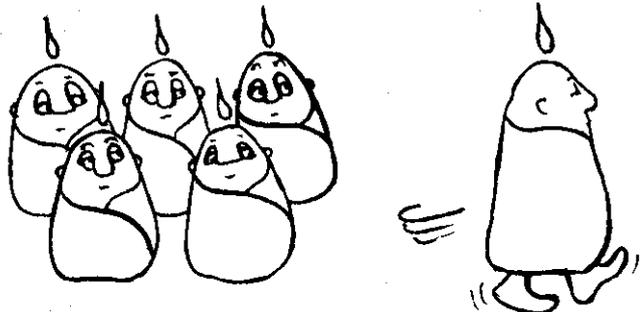
Baldheads, if you persist in your confusion, what failures your lives will be!

* * *

Now, Baldheads, listen to me with utmost attention. I will reveal to you the great secret of the primordial spirit. It is the most important thing that has ever been said about it.

Here it is:

THERE IS NO SECRET OF THE PRIMORDIAL SPIRIT.



**Old Tcheng executed a pirouette and disappeared.
No one has ever heard about him since.**



ACTION AND NON-ACTION*

By V. GANESAN

What is it like to look at a thing afresh, untainted by memories or experiences? To act without plans, choice or knowledge? We live either in memories of the past or dreams of the future. Why not pay total attention to the present? When we live and act in the 'now', there is no thought of either the past or the future. Before or after an action, we think about or discuss its pros and cons. In the instant of action, there is no place for thinking. You 'act'!

ACTION

Artists, scientists and inventors bear witness to this state where thoughts do not operate. It is a state unknown to the mind! The mind is baffled, even frightened, to think of a state unknown to it, and shies away from it. Are we afraid of the thought-free state for fear of losing the known for the unknown? The mind is steeped in external objects and internal thoughts. Do we know a state of mind which is free from objects and concepts? To know that state of mind one has to unknow the known, die to the past.

Is that realm of the unknown forever to remain an elusive territory? Is there no brave adventurer who has stepped into it? We have the most striking instance of a boy, still a tender sixteen, who nearly a century ago walked into the realm of the unknown, the house of Death and defeated it forever.

This is an edited version of the talk given at San Diego, USA, in October 1990, under the auspices of the University of California.

He was an ordinary boy to all appearances, a boy who never consciously practised meditation nor any kind of *sadhana*, who did not even evince average interest or aptitude for the religious life. He was interested only in sports, in wrestling and swimming, and though intelligent, was not interested in studies. Of course, he was kind and unselfish but there was hardly any promise of the tremendous spiritual change that was to make him, at one stroke, a sage *par excellence*.

Venkataraman — for that was the boy's name — not yet seventeen, was tall, strong and carefree by nature. Suddenly, one day, he was gripped by an intense, unusual fear of death.

Now, he did something which few, young or old, would ever dare to do. Like young Nachiketas of yore, he decided to face death and probe it. There was no question of faltering or fleeing. With an incandescent, integral, living attention in the 'now', in which time stood still, and acting with infinite energy released by his freedom from the personal 'I', he took on the redoubtable intruder Death. In meeting death, he totally freed himself from not only his personal past of sixteen years but also the whole past of consciousness.

By one single act, being tremendously aware and totally silent within, the boy vanquished death. He defeated time and moved into the timeless. He plunged into the unknown with full awareness and thereby made it his own state of perfect poise and peace. Having dealt Death a death blow, he achieved conscious immortality. Exit Venkataraman, the mortal. Enter Bhagavan, the immortal!

Paul Brunton, Arthur Osborne and many other writers on Sri Ramana Maharshi, were wonderstruck by the way he confronted and overcame death. They were led to a deep study of his teaching *Who am I?*, drawn to his presence at Arunachala, profoundly influenced by his life and thereby found their own lives being transformed.

What was that "death experience" like? Let us hear it from the Maharshi himself:

"It was about six weeks before I left Madurai for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. I was sitting in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. I seldom had any sickness and on that day there was nothing wrong with my health, but a sudden violent fear of death overtook me. There was nothing wrong in my state of health to account for it, and I did not try to account for it or to find out whether there was any reason for the fear. I just felt, 'I am going to die.' It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or my elders or friends. I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then.

"The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inward and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words, 'Now death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.' And I at once dramatised the occurrence of death. I lay with my limbs stretched out still, as though *rigor mortis* had set in, and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound

could escape, so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered.

"Well then', I said to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body, am I dead? Is the body 'I'? It is silent and inert, but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' within me, apart from it. So, I am spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means that I am the deathless spirit.'

"All this was not dull thought. It flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process. 'I' was something very real, the only real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centered on that 'I'.

"From that moment onward, the 'I' or Self focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on. Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the 'I' continued like the fundamental *sruti*-note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'.

"Previous to that crisis, I had no clear perception of my Self and was not consciously attracted to it. I felt no perceptible or direct interest in it, much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it."

Here is an outstanding example of instant and complete action, done with total attention, resulting in final self-transformation.

In that moment when death seemed to be certain, how supremely aware the boy was! What did he do? "I held my breath and kept my lips tightly closed so that no sound could escape, so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered."

Much later, Bhagavan said, "All this was not dull thought. It flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought-process."

He was rooted in the Self continuously, without a break, from that moment onwards: "Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'."

Face the challenge of time squarely with your whole being, and in such an act of total attention, you pass from time to the timeless. Time is dead, long live eternity!

The Sanskrit word *kaala* means both 'death' and 'time'. Total attention, "the Now", is silence and is *in* silence. The Maharshi's life and teaching are a silent living exposition of that silence of the Self in which he ever abided. He called this silence eloquence, constant communication, perennial action.

The Maharshi experienced it first, then later found the theoretical explanations in spiritual texts which fell into his hands. He affirmed that he had no

"knowledge" of the Self before he experienced the Self: "Previous to that crisis, I had no clear perception of the Self. I felt no perceptible or direct interest in it, much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it." In his case, experience preceded knowledge.

Numerous writers who met the Maharshi at various times, have testified to his presence, his glance and smile effortlessly inducing in them a state of peace and silence previously unknown to them. This "fore-glimpse of the real being in oneself", as he put it, was a natural occurrence in the proximity of the Maharshi, confirming the validity of "experience before explanation".



Let us listen to a few western devotees:

Grant Duff, whose chance meeting with Paul Brunton led him to Tiruvannamalai, writes about his first meeting with the Maharshi: "I do not know what happened when I saw the Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light. There could be no doubt about it, and all the speculation I had accumulated during the past many years disappeared in the Radiance of the Holy One."

Duncan Greenlees, another perceptive writer, says: "I know no other man whose mere presence enabled me to make the personality drop down into the abyss of nothingness where it belongs. I have found no other human being who so emanates his grace that it can catch away the ordinary man from his drabness and plunge him deep in the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being."

Paul Brunton travelled throughout India, meeting many spiritual masters. He gives the following account, in his widely acclaimed *A Search In Secret India*, of the first impact the silence of Sri Bhagavan made upon his mind:

"I cannot turn my gaze away from him. My initial bewilderment, my perplexity at being totally ignored, slowly fade away as this strange fascination begins to grip me more firmly. But it is not till the second hour of the uncommon scene that I become aware of a silent, resistless change which is taking place within my mind.

"One by one, the questions which I prepared in the train with such meticulous accuracy drop away. For it does not now seem to matter whether they are asked or not, and it does not matter whether I solve the problems which have hitherto troubled me. I know only that a steady river of quietness seems to be flowing near me, that a great peace is penetrating the inner reaches of my being, and that my thought-tortured brain is beginning to arrive at some rest."

S.S. Cohen, who came to the Maharshi in 1933 and passed away at Sri Ramanasramam in 1980, describes his first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan: "I rushed straight into the hall with my hat and full suit on. Behind me calmly walked in the tall, impressive figure of the Maharshi with leisurely though firm steps. I was alone in the hall with him. Joy and peace suffused my being. Such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man, I never had before. My mind was already in deep contemplation of him — him not as flesh, although that was exquisitely formed and featured.

"When, after a while, I became aware of my environment, I saw him looking at me with large penetrating eyes, wreathed in smiles rendered divinely soothing by their child-like innocence."

By giving a foretaste, the Maharshi equips the aspirant with the authentic experience of the Self, the elucidation of which one can obtain later. Knowledge may, of course, be no bar to experience.

When Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, the mighty spiritual scholar, confessed to the young Swami on the Hill to a sense of restlessness and frustration at his knowledge not vouching him the real experience, the Swami told him:

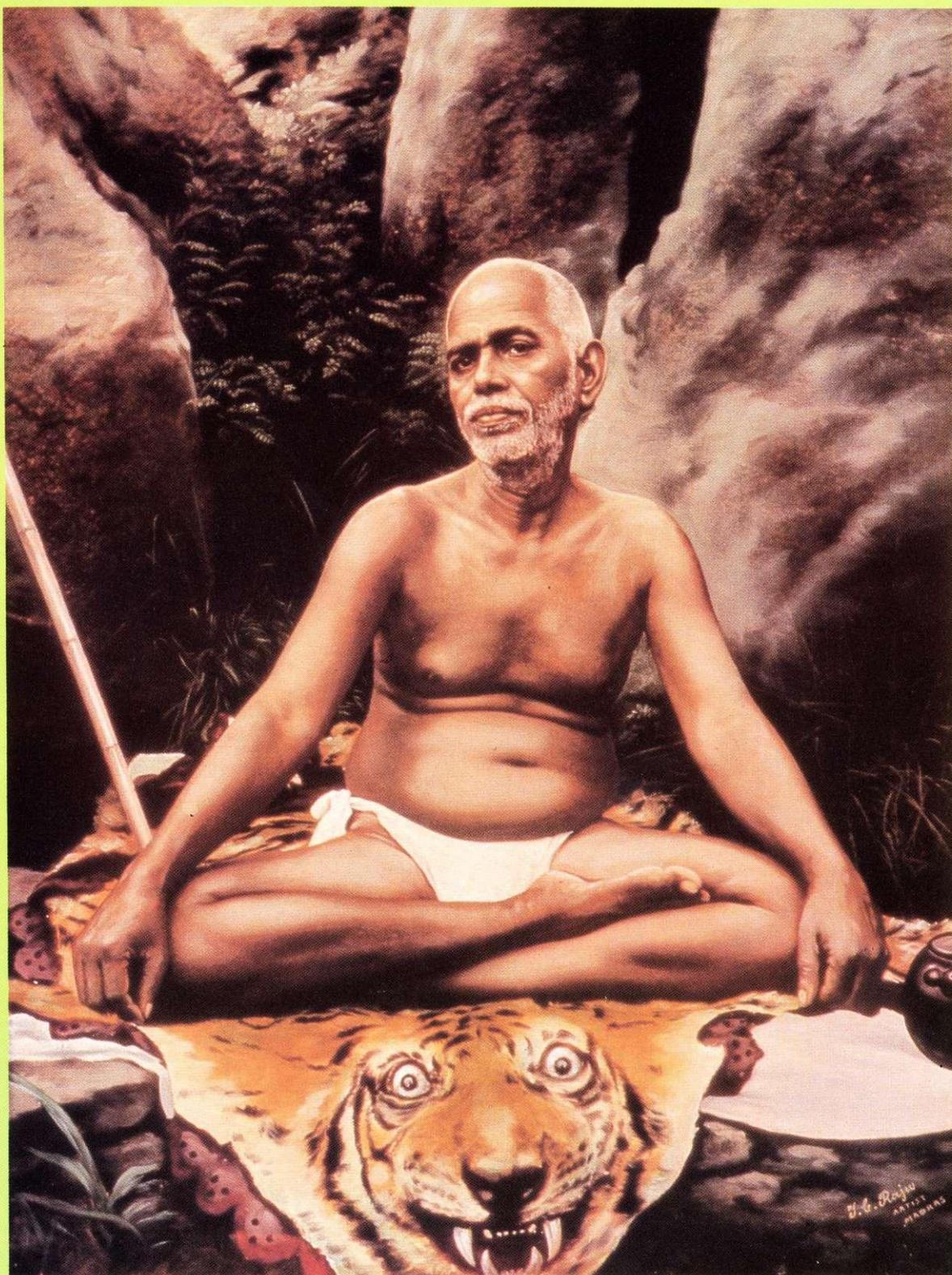
"If one watches whence the notion of 'I' springs, the mind will be absorbed into that. That is *tapas*.

"If a *mantra* is repeated, and attention directed to the source whence the *mantra*-sound is produced, the mind will be absorbed in that. That is *tapas*."

Upon hearing these words, the great savant had an immediate taste of the Self and gratefully adopted the Swami as his Master, christening him **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**. Here, knowledge was no bar, because the knowledge and the knower were taken to their source in the Self by one who was the visible symbol of the Self.

Paul Brunton asked Sri Bhagavan, "According to you, if one dived within,

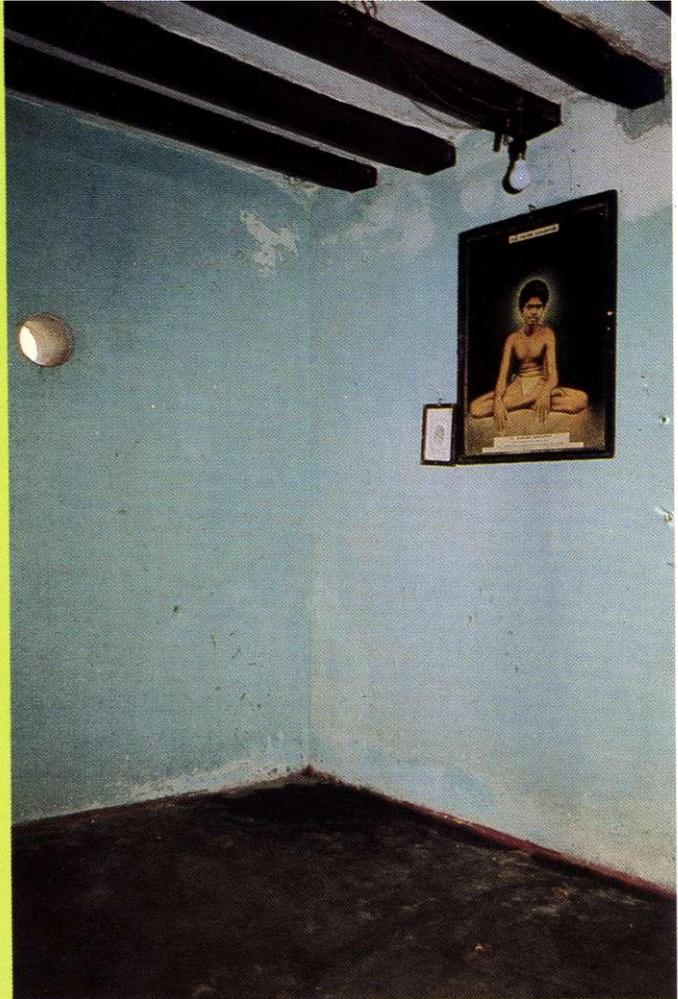
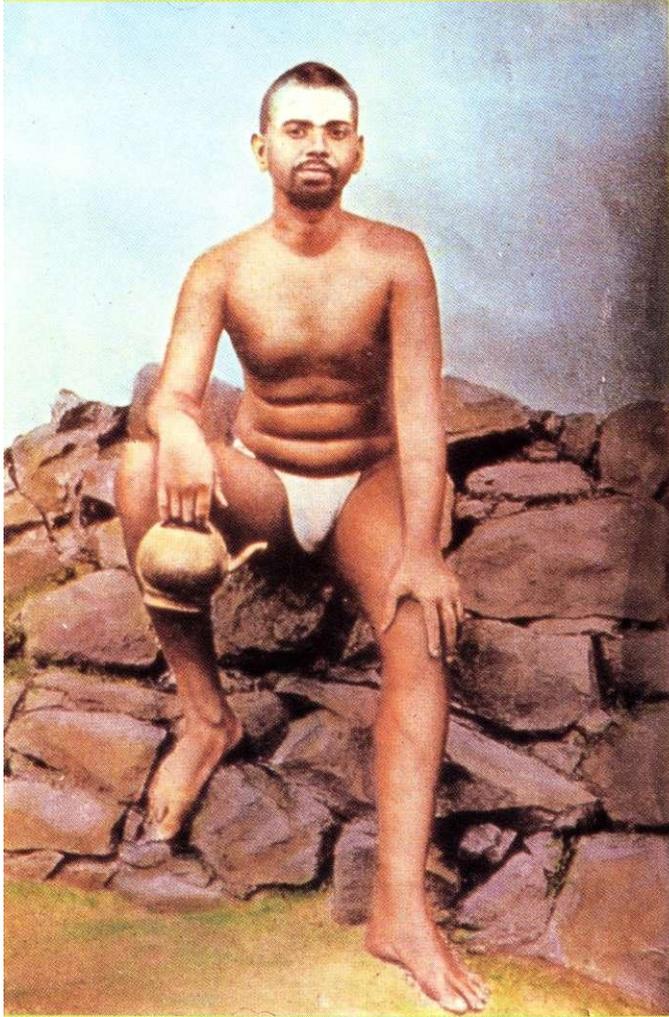
RAMANA SAT-GURU



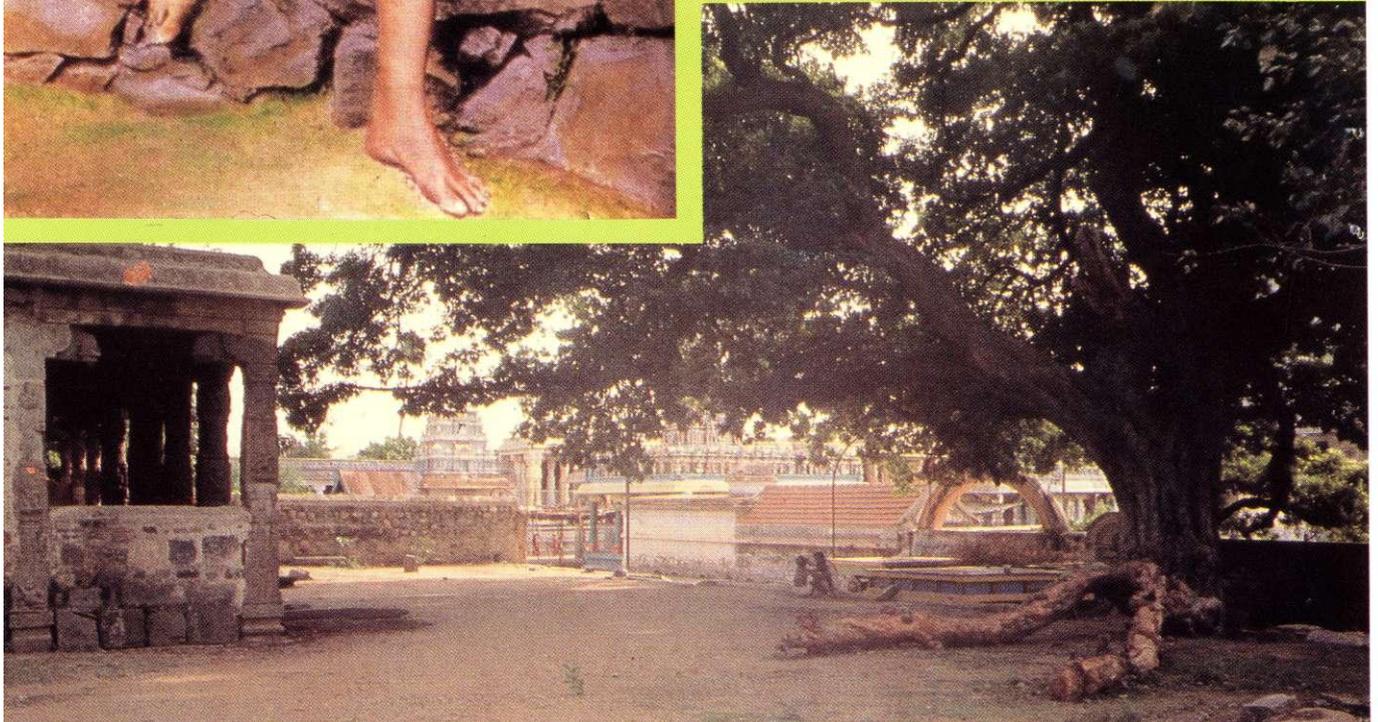
..... the Silent Presence in us all

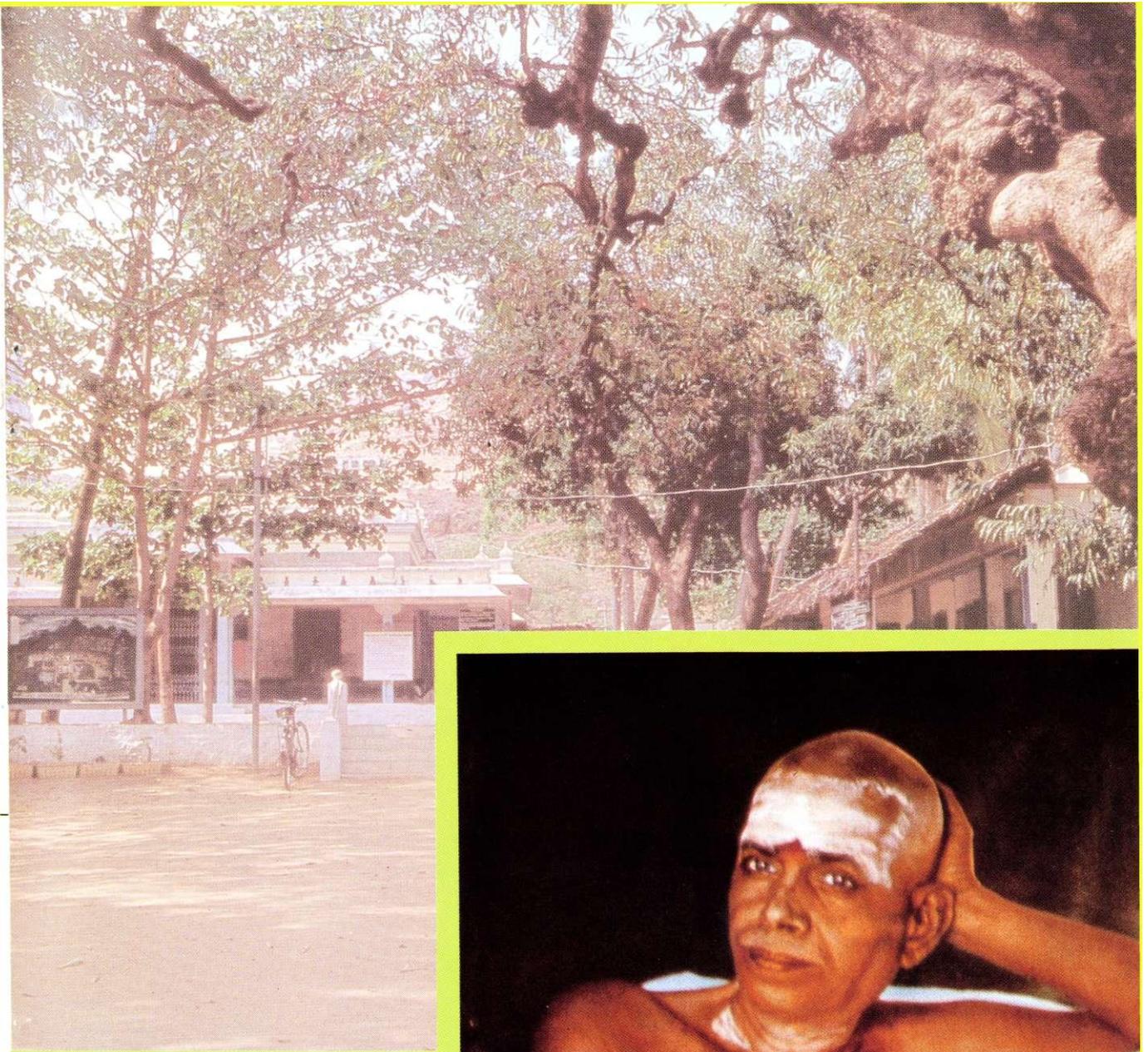
Death was defeated in this
small room in Madurai

Sri Bhagavan in His early thirties



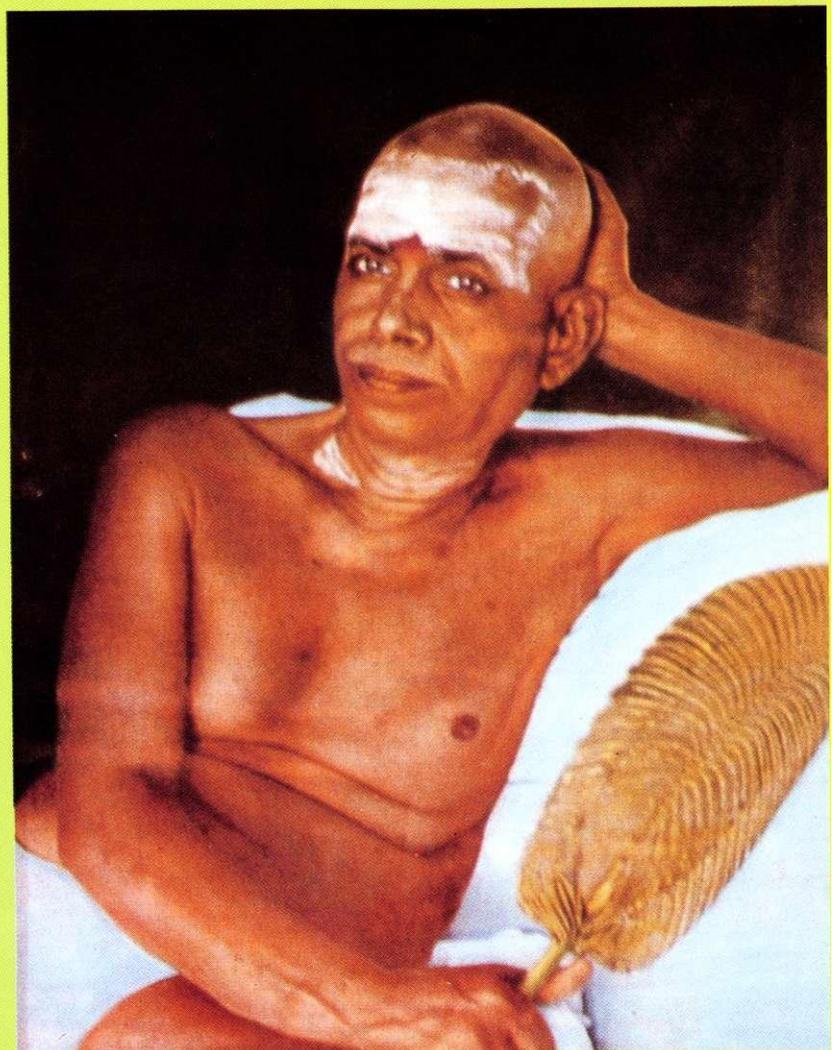
Unmindful of environs this Royal Ascetic
was in Bliss, beneath this *Iluppai* Tree.

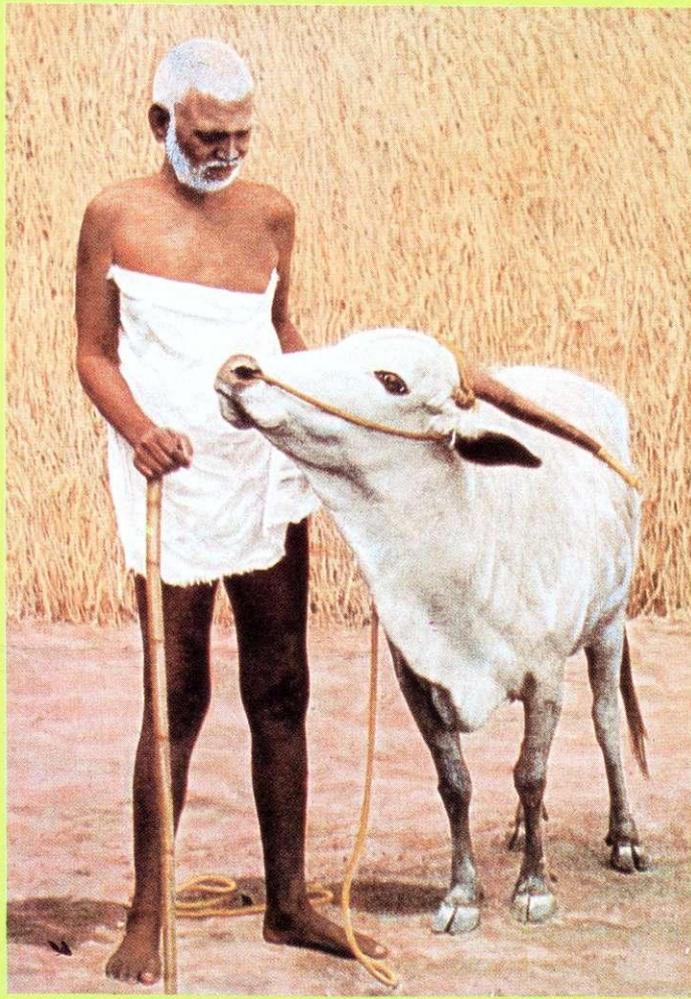




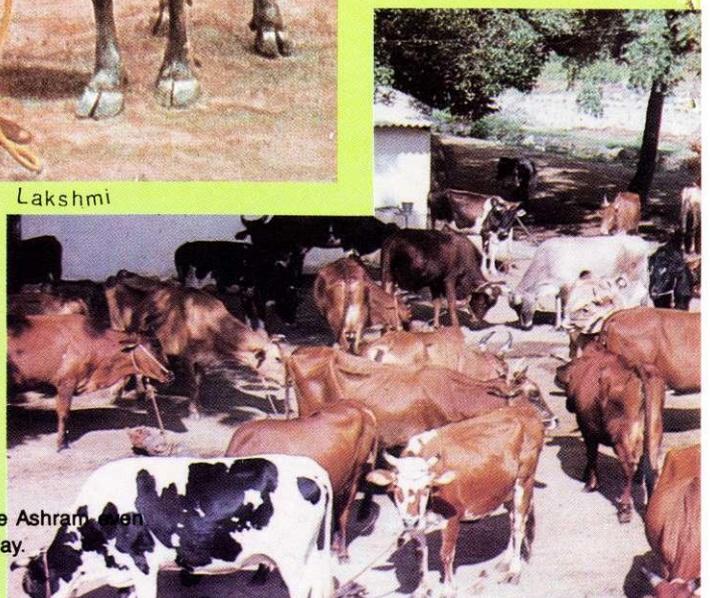
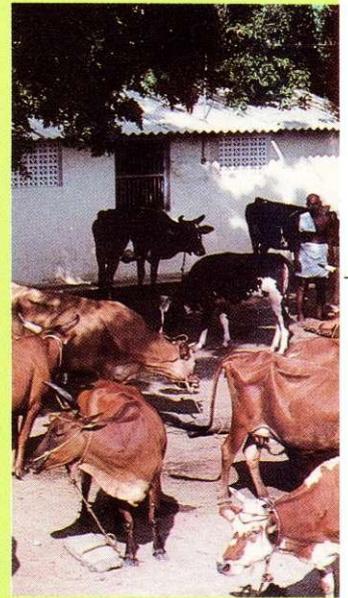
Sri Ramanasramam wherein the Maharshi sat rock-like and to have *darshan* of whom rich and poor flocked endlessly.

With best compliments from
HONG KONG RAMANA DEVOTEES





With Cow Lakshmi



Cows adorn the Ashraf men today.

one would reach the Centre. Does that mean that many people plunging within would reach that many Centres?"

Bhagavan smiled and replied, "There is only one Centre and any number of people diving within reach the selfsame Centre. That Centre is without a circumference."

NON-ACTION

Let us return to the sixteen-year-old lad at Madurai.

Having had the plenary experience, rooted in the Self, he lost all interest in externals. The pull of Arunachala fully occupied his attention.

One day, when the lad was lost in contemplation within, his elder brother chided him by asking what use was a house for one who wanted to behave like a sadhu. Ramana not only saw the correctness of the reprimand but also heard, as it were, the command from a higher power to make the move. He obeyed. Instantly, time, thought, choice and plans ceased to have a place in his life.

When he arrived at Arunachala on September 1, 1896, this ripe young sage went straight into the *sanctum sanctorum* of Sri Arunachaleswara Temple and reported thus:

"Father! I have come at Thy bidding. Henceforth, Thy will be done."

Father Arunachala, too, approved of the son's submission. The burning sensation, which the lad had since his death experience at Madurai, left him. Body and mind thus left in the care of his Father, the blessed son emerged from the shrine a perfect non-doer. The next phase of his life began.

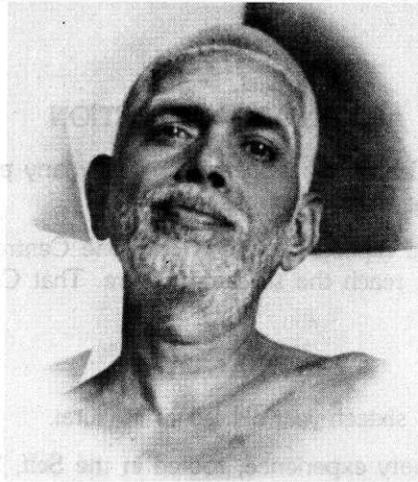
In the first phase, he proved himself as the great doer — the *dheera* — by conquering death with a single act of introspective self-attention and thereby being permanently established as the Self. Here, in the second phase, he became the great non-doer, having totally surrendered himself to Arunachala.

From that moment onwards, whatever happened in his life, he simply accepted unquestioningly. He became the pure witness, *Bhagavan*, "one who watches the world process as a witness". In his *Upadesa Saram*, Bhagavan says in verse 15:

"The great yogi whose mind is extinguished and who rests in Brahman, has no karma, as he has attained his true nature."

When he came out of the temple, somebody suggested that his hair be shaved off. He submitted. He did not even care to take the bath obligatory after a haircut, but Arunachala bathed him with a rainshower. Not a single act could be attributed to his will. There was simply no entity to claim anything as his own. It was surrender, total and supreme!

Without any thought for the body and its minimum needs, he sat in the Patala Linga cellar for weeks together. White ants, vermin and insects fed on his body. There was no resistance to the body being ravished. Somebody



traced the body to that underground niche and protected it from total destruction. Absorbed as he was in the Self, in unalloyed bliss, it was left to others to feed him, and in other ways care for his body.

After the Patala Linga phase, the youthful Swami became better known. He was unmindful of that, too. People began attending on him, one after another. He neither accepted nor rejected them — Uddandi Nayinar, Rajamal and Palani Swami. He was moved from place to place. From the vicinity of the town, he later moved to caves on the Hill. He neither objected nor assented. He simply listened to whatever he was told.

The Brahmana Swami came to be called by the loftiest appellation — Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Many great names were given to him by poets and singers. He remained the same. To the Old Hall, where he sat rock-like, came princes and paupers, scholars and simple folk, the high and the lowly, adorers and critics. He neither owned nor disowned any of them.

Devotees gathered around him, an Ashram sprang up, books were published and periodical events celebrated. He submitted to them all. Human beings, animals, birds — all had access to him. Such open living, and scant care for his body during the early years, aged him before his time. During his last years, he looked much older than his age. Yet, his countenance shone with a singular brilliance. His eyes never lost their dazzling lustre, nor his smile its bewitching quality. Finally, when sickness in the form of sarcoma ravaged his body, he had no wish to interrupt even that cruel devastation. What a demonstration of complete surrender!

To one devotee's question, he answered, "O, it's only like a thousand scorpions stinging!"

To a woman devotee who asked, "Bhagavan, does it not pain?" he said, "Why? Let it pain."

Sri Ramaswamy Pillai, one of Sri Bhagavan's earliest devotees, and who is still with us, says, "Bhagavan's crucifixion lasted fourteen months!" But it made no difference to his supreme serenity.

The cream of his teaching is the perfect fusion of *jnana* and *bhakti*. The two phases of his phenomenal experience — one at Madurai and the other at Arunachala form the bedrock on which his practical teaching rests. In both

Though the format was that of a letter, in substance it was what it was intended to be, a detailed record. The advantage of the letter form was that it introduced the fresh air of an easy informality and homeliness. For five years from November 1945 to April 1950, till Ramana's *Maha Nirvana* she was working away joyously at this task.

In the beginning everything was smooth sailing. She would read out these letters in the Hall before Ramana. It was her way of paying homage to her Master by recording in minute and graphic detail everything which happened in front of him. Hence her penchant for details, her capacity to communicate to the readers the feeling that they too were present when the events happened. Readers of these letters bridge time and space and become actual listeners and witnesses. Sri Ramanasramam published the first volume, a veritable boon to devotees, on the occasion of *Jayanti* in 1947.

Suddenly a bolt from the blue came. Nagamma was ordered by the Ashram to stop writing these letters. One shudders to think what a rich treasure would have been lost had she stopped. Nagamma was on the horns of a dilemma. Was she to obey? Should she lie and carry on? Should she not act according to the promptings of her heart to pour her love and reverence for Ramana in this way?

In this mental tussle the advice of Sri Muruganar and Sri Kunju Swami turned the scale. They advised that she should look at it from the angle of the devotees for whom the value of the work was inestimable. She decided to continue her mission. Volume two was ready and unpublished then. The remaining three volumes were written later. Of course the decision could not have been otherwise, for she was a mere channel of Ramana in this task.

Her taking up this work and her completing it was truly a Ramana miracle. By 3 a.m. she would be at the Ashram for the *Vedaparayana* and leave only after sunset. How could she miss a single pearl of the master's words? Initially she would make notes and show it to Bhagavan. At night she would start writing in detail. Later she

The Awakening

By Muruganar

The elephant in his dream beholds
The lion that wakes him
up from sleep.

Even so the seeker in his dream-like
Waking life of ignorance sees
The guru and wakes from
slumber dark.

— *Garland of Guru's Sayings, v.283.*

had to rely only on her mental notes. Her's was a midnight vigil. The work had to be done. It mattered little that she could not sleep. As Suramma, a fellow devotee, used to say, "Whenever we looked at her house at night the light always seemed to be burning. God knows when exactly she slept!" Days, months and years moved on and we were blessed with 273 letters. Only the pen was hers. The power was Ramana's. She was uneducated. But praise be to Ramana she could put to shame the most erudite scholar. Such was the strength given to her by Ramana for his purpose. The world had to know the true nature of the *Jnani*, his *sama bhava*, his equimindedness, his oneness with all life, his tenderness and love. Ramana's strength operated through Nagamma in order that the world may become aware of Ramana's natural state of bliss in all its richness and beauty.

In later years she suffered from cancer. She kept her suffering to herself to the point that one would not even be aware of the extent of her suffering. To talk about Ramana was her delight. To hear it from her lips was ours. She was thrilled about the celebrations connected with the birth centenary of Bhagavan. She was full of child-like and bubbling enthusiasm for all aspects of it. Ramana was her life and he had made her his own from that very first look. The end came suddenly in March 1980. When we say the end, in her case we can only mean that her body's purpose had ended. For how can one fail to remember her? Each letter brings her back to life for us. We are transported to Ramana's presence only to be lost in its vastness.



Sri Shankaracharya in his palanquin

JOURNEY TO RAMANA¹

By A. HAJI

Book 1: The First Journey: Discovery

Chapter 5: THE UNASKED QUESTION

A frail old man sitting in a cramped wooden box, draped in a thin orange cloth and crowned with a wreath of tender green leaves: my first impression of the Shankaracharya!

The box is his palanquin, with the carrying poles on two sides detached. He spends much of his time inside this tiny room, no larger than a big refrigerator. Yet he seems quite comfortable in it, sitting crossed-legged, gazing out of the open door at his visitors. He even has a bookshelf inside the palanquin.

I can only see one eye and a part of his face, steadily looking at me. Not a word is said. In a few minutes he draws shut the sliding doors of the palanquin. He has effectively retired, even though the palanquin is in full view.

I quickly carry my precious foreign friends' letters to the temple's manager. He is cordial and reassuring: "I will read the letters to him at eight." I glance at my watch and it is 7 a.m.

I return to the audience chamber. There are about twenty people standing behind the bam-

¹ Continued from the previous issue.

boo barricades, gazing at the Shankaracharya, who is peering back at them from his palanquin.

A Tamil matron standing in front of me is pleading with the Shankaracharya. I do not understand Tamil, but I pick up a key Sanskrit word. She is pleading for *moksha* — liberation from the endless round of birth and death. With hands prayerfully folded, she becomes more and more impassioned, finally breaking into tears. The Shankaracharya gazes at her compassionately, wordlessly, all through her performance, and is moved to raise his right hand in the *abhayamudra* — the gesture of “fear-not”. The woman leaves, apparently reassured.

The Shankaracharya talks softly in almost a hoarse whisper, and mostly to his attendants. He asks questions in sign language punctuated with a few words. The attendant then repeats the question and relays the answer back to the Shankaracharya.

A simple old man, with thick spectacles totters past the palanquin. Alert, the Shankaracharya points a finger at him, asking him to sit down. His sons, too, sit obediently behind him. Every few minutes, for the next half hour, the Shankaracharya points to the man and asks him a question. The man seems neither surprised nor grateful. Rather, he seems puzzled!

I lean against a bamboo pole for support. Many devotees walk by. They bring their problems, victories and sorrows to the Shankaracharya. He listens intently to his attendant, voicing these messages of humankind. Often, he asks questions. He is hard of hearing and the attendant must shout loudly.

A young boy, hardly twelve, folds his hands in prayer in front of the Shankaracharya, and at the urging of his mother, rattles off a longish prayer. The Shankaracharya asks a question. On hearing the reply, a smile suddenly appears on the Shankaracharya's face. He seems more than happy.

I grow weak in the knees. I cannot stand there any longer. I look at my watch. It's only 7:20 a.m. I go to the back of the crowd and find a seat from where I can see the Shankaracharya. My

tiredness refuses to go away. I find that if I lean my head against the wall, I am quite comfortable.

I open my eyes. It is already ten minutes past 8. I have been asleep for almost an hour! I stand up to stretch, silhouetted against the bright sky.

The Shankaracharya immediately points a finger at me: “Where do you come from?” The question is shot at me through the attendant.

“I come from America,” I answer, surprised by this sudden turn of attention. “When did you land in India?” he asks. “I arrived on the 24th of last month,” I quickly guess. Then a short silence. “Do you have a question for the Shankaracharya?”

I decide to first seek advice about my meditation, postponing that crucial question I had decided to test him with, namely: “Who is my Guru?”

As if echoing this, the attendant queries back: “Who is your Guruji? Who do you think of in your meditation?”

I find myself answering: “**Ramana Maharshi**”.

This is a strange turn of events. I have just answered my own unasked question without the least hesitation, almost as if, at some deeper level, I already knew the answer. Then my question on meditation is answered. I am advised to discontinue my current practice and concentrate on focussing my love and attention on my Guru.

The Shankaracharya ends the discussion with a very Indian shaking of his head from side to side, which seems to say: “All is understood and will be taken care of.” With his right hand raised in blessing, he gently motions me out of the audience chamber.

I leave without having the letters read. In the car I feel terrible about my incomplete mission. I had been entrusted with these missives and I feel I have let these people down by not seeing the letters actually read out to the Shankaracharya. Suddenly, an overpowering desire for sleep grabs me. I cannot keep my eyes open a

moment longer. I immediately lie down on the back seat.

I had told the driver to wake me when we arrived at our destination. When I open my eyes, we are at a gas station. The puzzled driver is trying to find out where exactly we are. He has taken a wrong turn!

I am furious but this time I do not let anger get the better of me. I help him find the right route and after an hour the temples of Kanchi loom against the cloudy sky. A godsend: now I can stop here again and perhaps the time is ripe to get the letters noticed by the Shankaracharya himself.

I pick up the packet of letters from the manager's desk, where they have been unopened and unattended, and determinedly march to the bamboo barricade. One of the attendants is standing in a corner, earnestly reading a letter. Perhaps in sympathy, he agrees to read the letters I carry to the Shankaracharya.

He summarizes the letters, with translated extracts, to the Shankaracharya, who raises his hand in blessing. Suddenly, the muezzin's call to prayer, amplified from a neighbouring Muslim mosque, fills this very Hindu scene. "Come to prayer," the muezzin chants his call: "Come to prayer."

The unasked question has been answered. To carry Ramana with me always: this practice will be my prayer!

Book II: The Second Journey: Repetition

Chapter 1: "LET MY WILL BE DONE, O LORD!"

I am flying over an endless sea of light. The sun touches the cotton clouds, making them shine. The pilot must have an instinct for beauty for the aircraft skims the tops of these billowy incandescent white-tops.

I have begun another journey to India, an almost exact repetition of the first. Business takes me from America to Bombay, and from

there a quick side trip to the Ashram at the foot of Arunachala. Ramana is ever-present in my thoughts. I carry him as my prayer. I am also looking forward to seeing the 96-year-old Shankaracharya of Kanchi again.

I have missed a flight on the first leg of my journey. Taking a later flight, I worry that I shall not arrive in time to catch my international connection. My mind spins. I become desperate. I begin to pray. "Let it be that I catch this flight, O Lord!"

A few days earlier, an airliner was hijacked in Karachi on its flight from Bombay to New York. On that fateful flight was an executive from the firm in which I work. He narrowly escaped death. It occurs to me that missing my international connection may not be such a bad idea after all.

The mind does not give up its plans easily though. "Let MY will be done, O Lord!" desperately pleads the ego.

"Perhaps fate wishes to take a hand and get me on a later international flight," I reason with the ego, trying to calm its rabid imaginings.

"No matter," says the ego, "Let MY will be done, O Lord!" for its supremacy is threatened.

"But does not the chance of random death due to a hijacking threaten you too," I argue, hoping to influence it with the final motivator.

"I am in control here," fumes back the ego. "I direct events, I choose, I instruct, and it is thus that I live. Control is my life and loss of control is my death."

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are now flying at 10,000 feet with a ground speed of 510 miles per hour...". The voice floats into my consciousness. This only serves to goad the ego into a further rage of futility at its inability to influence events, locked as it is within this hurtling aluminium cylinder sailing serenely over an airy realm of shining cumulus.

Ramana sometimes gave the example of another form of travel well-known in India: "Knowing that the train carries all the weight,

why indeed should we, the passengers travelling in it, carry our small individual articles of luggage on our heads to our great discomfort, instead of putting them aside and sitting at perfect ease?"

"Let *THY* will be done O Lord!" I whisper, deciding to drop my load. Suddenly, I am at peace. I have surrendered, for there is nothing that I can do but surrender. The ego does not give up that easily, yet under the circumstances it has no choice. What, in fact, have I surrendered? I have merely given up my desire to influence events. In truth, there was absolutely nothing I could possibly do.

The clouds vibrate with a special light. They stretch like an endless sea of happiness. All I have to do is reach out and dip my cup into it. This must be the mythological *Sukh-Sagar* or Sea of Satisfaction!

Is there any difference between satisfaction and happiness? If one were to be free of desire, would not one be suffused with happiness? If one were to be filled with desire, would one not be filled with dissatisfaction or unhappiness?

The ego endlessly pulls us from one burning desire to another. Somehow the ego wishes to impose its will on events, to pretend that its needs, its plans are the most important; that it knows all, and knows what is best for us.

"Ladies and gentlemen, in preparation for our final approach kindly fasten your seat belts." I glance at my watch. We are early. All that worrying earlier was merely the meaningless posturing of the ego as saviour.

I make my international flight connection, with a little time to spare too!

Chapter 2: TURNING THE STREAM

The stream of thoughts seems never-ending. It flows and rattles on its own unpredictable, uncontrollable path. It intrudes itself into our most private moments with an obnoxious insistence. Yet thought defines man. "I think, therefore I

GURU'S GRACE

By Kavita Erica Byrd

**There is an inner voice
You cannot even listen to
Because it is you—**

**Following its stream
Every instant
Dissolves in you,
Leaving no trace.**

**This is the instantaneous
Space
Of original liberation;**

**This is the grace
That delivers you
Before asking...**

am," declared Descartes! The stream of thought defines the very consciousness of man.

How the ego values thought! It revels in its endless cogitation. It desires to establish its own heaven on earth using the power and strength of its thoughts. "For myself!" it cries. "I shall conquer the world for myself!"

"I will define, analyze, absorb and above all think," claims the ego, "to promote, build, consolidate and establish existence." The ego appears as a powerful ally in our struggle for survival. And yet what a powerful tool thinking is: sharper than the sharpest talons, stronger than the strongest beak, swifter than the swiftest wing, keener than the keenest eye! Using the power of thought, has not the ego built ships that hurtle towards the stars, food-cultivation techniques that feed billions, domesticated animals to serve man, invented microscopes that can count atoms, and synthesized medicines that heal diseases that have ravaged humanity for

centuries. Yes, the ego has certainly proved its usefulness!

Yet what is it that thinks? If I were not to think, would I not be? Is consciousness dependent on thought?

Ramana advises us to find the source of all thoughts. It seems to me that he is asking us to gain control of this endless autonomous stream of outward-going thoughts and turn it inwards. Thoughts flow endlessly towards the objects of desire, concern and wonder. Rather, Ramana says, trace them back to their source.

"Not an easy task," answers the ego. Man finds it easy to walk great distances forwards, agrees Ramana, but ask him to take one step backwards and see how difficult it is for him!

At the top of the hill, sunrise glows through the grass. What is it that sees this quiet beauty? Is it the ego, that lays such strong claims to being me, or is it a deeper "I", that is my very self?

The breeze ruffles the iridescent, emerald grass. The sunlight seems to partake of the nature of each and every blade of grass, making each shine with an inner glow. What common consciousness pervades all living things? Is it like the sun, unimaginably distant and yet unimaginably near? Whatever it is, I partake of that common consciousness and I am one with it.

Only when all separateness is gone, then no "other" remains to be feared!

Chapter 3: REPETITION

"All worldly pursuits have but one unavoidable and inevitable end, which is sorrow: acquisition and dispersion; building and destruction; meeting and separation; birth and death," says the Tibetan Saint Milarepa.

How hollow the ego's victories! How hollow its claims that the pursuit of desires will bear happiness! How superficial its brashness. Yet we live under the myth that the ego is ourself: that the ego's myriad desires are our desires, that its prayers are our prayers! Posing as saviour the

ego insinuates itself into our unconscious. Soon we are the ego and the ego is us.

To turn a deaf ear to the eager and seductive blandishments of the ego, to find no joy in its plans, is to see it for what it is: a tool of the Self and no more. Not to be tempted by the ego's continued hankering after meaningless rewards, to understand that it so often represents the worst in us, is to resist its powerful centrifugal tendencies dragging us ever further away from the centre. All this requires a steady unshakeable dispassion, which I need to cultivate.

In less than three months, I find myself on my way to Kanchi again. The car crosses the Adyar River. The dawn glows through the palm trees. We pass the Theosophical Society's estate.

J. Krishnamurti was "discovered" there by Bishop Leadbeater and Dr. Annie Besant. They saw in this simple child, undistinguished in any outward way, the makings of a World Teacher. History proved them right, for his teachings flowed to distant welcoming minds the world over. What strikes me now is that this is where he gave his last public talk, which he closed with the words: "Be aware and make more effort."

Yet the ego claims that without its effort, naught shall happen. Is the effort I am exerting in trying to get my question: "Who is my Guru?" answered by the Shankaracharya, the effort that Krishnamurti is calling us to? Or, is this effort just the self-aggrandizement of the ever-ambitious ego, filled with its own self-importance in visiting a holy eminence and trying to re-check an answer that was already given on my last visit?

The Shankaracharya sits in his palanquin, immobile in meditation. His face without his spectacles is serene, even ethereal. He seems not of this world. He seems not to have moved in the three months that I have been away. It is the same palanquin, the same temporary shed, the same attendants and even some faces in the crowd look familiar.

The camphor flame burns greedily in the golden plate. Next to the giant flame is a pile of

red powder used to mark the forehead. A deep voice chants a Sanskrit hymn.

Soon after he comes out of his meditation, the offerings begin. Someone has brought a week's provisions for the temple. There are baskets upon baskets of fruits, vegetables, spices, lentils and two large tins of ghee (clarified butter) and oil. The attendant offers Shankaracharya a basket of mangoes. I am surprised to see the Shankaracharya actually examine two mangoes by picking them up and dropping them back. He seems more energetic than on my last visit.

I begin to despair of having an opportunity to talk with him. A crowd of youthful men walk into the shed. There must be forty of them. They join what appears to be a queue, expecting that it will move on and so let them walk past the Shankaracharya and see him up close. But after a few minutes of well-behaved patience, suddenly there is pandemonium. The men clamber all over the railing to get a view of the Shankaracharya. They are tourists on a schedule and have to push on in the next few minutes. Their loud babble is overwhelming, but the Shankaracharya's ritual of gift giving, worship and enquiry-answer continues undisturbed.

As quickly as they arrived, the posse of young men have left. Miraculously, the crowd thins further and I suddenly find myself in front of the Shankaracharya. I feel I am in his immediate presence. I don't see how I could be any closer to him.

The Shankaracharya's attendant turns to me with a question, "Who is your Guru?"

"Ramana," I profess.

"Who is your Guru?" he repeats.

"Ramana Maharshi," I repeat.

"Who is your Guru?" he asks again.

"Ramana, Ramana, Ramana," I answer puzzled, hurriedly examining my mind for alternatives and finding none. There is a long pause. The Shankaracharya, through his silence, seems to be waiting for this re-learned lesson to sink in.

I have had to repeat publicly: RAMANA IS MY GURU three times like an errant schoolboy!

The Shankaracharya transfixes me with his gaze. The rustle of the crowd seems to die down and I wonder at their patience. He continues to peer at me through thick glasses. His eyes are magnified. I feel he is looking right through me. After a momentary eternity he waves me on with a hand raised in blessing.

The moment I step away, doubts begin to tumble into my mind. What did he do? How did he help me? He looked more puzzled than I did!

Later, I remember meeting a lady the previous evening, as I was preparing for my trip to see the Shankaracharya. She was a student of Indian art and iconography. She told me how her grandfather took her to see the Shankaracharya, many years ago when he lived in a cave. He was observing a vow of silence but he broke it to talk to her. He spoke to her at length about her subject. He told her that she should go to a particular temple and on the top of that temple she would find an answer.

She did not take this advice seriously, but a few months later she found herself at that very temple. Of course, she had assumed that when he mentioned the top of the temple, he meant the ceiling inside. The temple was closed, it being afternoon. The roof of the temple was being renovated and the scaffolding was in place. Automatically, she began climbing the scaffolding and to her surprise, at the top she found a statue of crucial importance to her research. She was shocked, for she had not told the Shankaracharya the premise of her work.

Later, when the book containing her research was published, she went again to see the Shankaracharya, hoping to give him a copy. Due to the crowds, however, she thought better of it and left the book in the car. All the same, the Shankaracharya pointed her out in the crowd and asked her where the book was!

I also remember having carried letters from friends in the USA to the Shankaracharya during my last visit. One of them had sent a photo-



Sri Shankaracharya

graph. On my return to the USA my friend exclaimed in amazement how his life had turned around almost simultaneously with my visit to the Shankaracharya! His seemingly intractable problems dissolved, he said.

Just as their problems were attended to even without their knowing it, so I hope mine have been, too. In fact, I had the very strange sensation, during that long silence with the Shankaracharya, that my ego was being worked upon. This has been an act of the ego: to take me on a journey merely for its self-aggrandizement — collecting visits to holy men to ask questions it already knows answers to. I hope my ego now is fully convinced that Ramana is my Guru and no purpose will be served by postponing this truth.

I strongly feel the desire to fully practice my Guru's, Sri Ramana's teachings.

Chapter 3: "WHO AM I?"

From Kanchi I carefully direct the driver to take me to Sri Ramanasramam and promptly fall asleep on the back seat.

When I awake, my mind is swimming in a flood of peace. At first, I am puzzled. Why has my mind lost its proclivity to wander, as it normally does when restored to consciousness. Then I see a road sign, which signals that we are less than 30 miles from Arunachala mountain! I find it impossible to believe, yet I am forced to accept a possible connection between the two events.

Soon I am sitting, in meditation in front of the sofa which Ramana used for decades in Sri Ramanasramam at the foot of Arunachala mountain. I am meditating formally again, after a gap of almost three months.

I reason that I am at this particular location, at this particular instant, for a purpose. Whatever my past assumptions about my path, I have never really understood or practised correctly Ramana's central teaching: *Who am I?*

The battle royal begins. At first, the ego is reluctant to let go. It insists that there are breakthroughs it has discovered in the past few min-

utes, and so could I please interrupt my efforts to meditate, so that it could discuss them with me 'right now'!

"Not now, not here," I angrily brush aside this transparent effort to dissuade me from meditating.

"But I have so many solutions to all those nagging problems that have been bugging you," huffs the ego, self-importantly. "And, I want to share this information with you, right now, or else all these excellent ideas will be lost for ever!"

"Why now? Why here?" I shoot back. "You've had your chance for ages and there must be a better way, even if it does not include you."

"But you can never leave me," boasts the ego, "for your efforts themselves originate from me!"

"Since every thought can occur only after the rise of the 'I'-thought and since the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts, it is only through the enquiry *Who am I?* that the mind subsides. Moreover, the integral 'I'-thought implicit in such enquiry, having destroyed all other thoughts, gets itself finally destroyed or consumed, just as the stick used to stir the burning funeral pyre gets consumed," answers Ramana.

But you can rely on the ego not to give up without a fight. Fear, lust, anger, greed, and the other powerful emotions are its allies. The mind certainly has had lots of experience at capturing our attention. Fascinated by our minds, we have been living in this sea of thoughts ever since we can remember.

"I think, therefore I am," cries the ego, "I die, you die!" Fear is its ultimate weapon, gut-wrenching fear of non-existence, annihilation, the unknowing of death!

"You are losing out on life," my ego tempts me, like a merchant in a bazaar, and rolls out a carpet of greed heavily embroidered with all the riches that life can offer. Then it dangles before me a necklace of lust, and pulls out from its chest of ancient memories the burning red ruby of



indignation. Against all these I have only a solitary, trusty weapon, *Who am I?*

"What good are all these unless I know to whom they occur? First let me find out who it is that is alive," I bargain with my ego, "then I shall enjoy all your riches."

Dispassion is the key here: seeing the hollowness of the ego's offers. But old habits die hard and the ego succeeds in churning up the emotions. Yet, in flashes, there is silence.

In that silence comes a novel sensation, one of freedom from the incessant demands of the ego. "I want - I want," is replaced by "*I am - I am.*"

There is no sense of exhilaration or exaltation in this. Rather, one is struck by the ordinariness of it. In fact, it is our everyday "I". The problem is that it has been covered over by the ego that derives from it and claims to be the only "I" — but it is a pretender to the throne.

The subterranean awareness "I-I" is felt as a distant reality. Yet it must be the very bedrock of our existence and Being itself. I wish to familiarize myself with it further.

That evening, walking into the Meditation Hall, I notice black clouds gathering. The air is very still and heavy. I sit with my back to the window, hoping for a breath of wind to cool me.

I must travel this path: "*Who am I?*". Hardly have I begun my formal meditation when the palm fronds begin to clack in a violent wind. Within moments, I can hear fat drops of rain splattering the earth. There is a threatening thunder. I concentrate desperately but it is of no use. I cannot recreate this morning's meditation.

Perhaps the desire to achieve is itself the stumbling block. But how to root out desire?

Again, the battle with one of the ego's basic drives. Within the ego is a kernel. The kernel is desire itself. To attack that kernel is to attack the ego's very existence. Zealously guarded, it is protected by the ego's strongest ramparts. Desire flares like a forest blaze that will not be put out, for desire is the corollary to self-preservation.

"Desire is non-negotiable," whispers the ego tauntingly. "Desire is only non-rational," I concede, for in the end I have no weapon of logic that can mark it.

Desire cannot be rationalized, yes, but perhaps it can be transcended. Just *to be* is to be without attributes, and that is to be free of desire as well, for no "I" remains to possess the experience.

That night I am on an aircraft, leaving Madras.

For a moment I am mentally back in Sri Ramanasramam, wrestling with desire in my meditation. I realize that the forest fire of desire can be extinguished only by the rain-storm of Guru's Grace — the cooling gift of dispassion absorbing the burning will to survive of the ego. The heavy rain and thunder accompanied me all the way back to Madras. It refreshed and blessed the earth.

I feel as if I am meditating again at the Ashram and the ringing of the temple bells washes over me. Their insistent voice leaves no space for the insertion of a single thought:

"*Who am I?*"

I don't know anymore.

When you wake up you will find that this whole world, above and below, is nothing other than a regarding of oneself.

— Hakuin

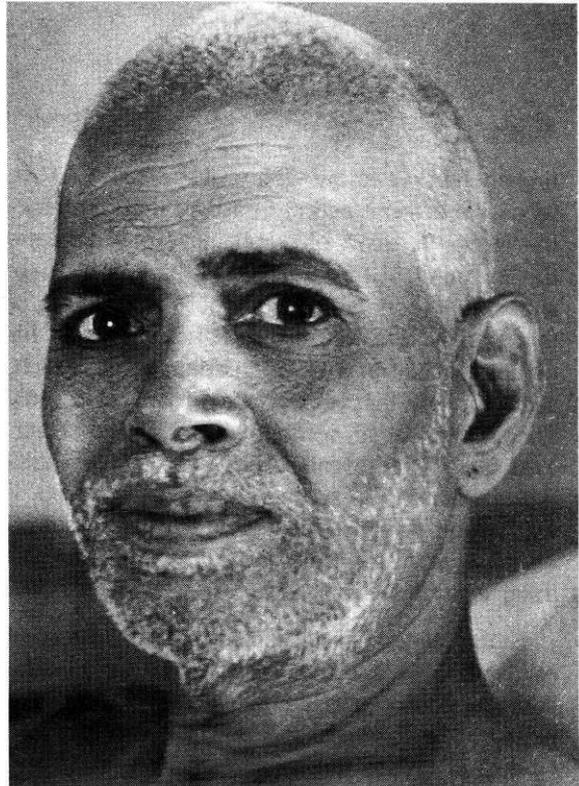
THE ULTIMATE QUESTION

By ROBERT S. ELLWOOD¹

I DON'T REMEMBER when I first heard of Ramana Maharshi. I think it was when I was a teenager, beginning to read about spiritual paths. It would then have been sometime during the last years when he was still with us in the body. I do know that over a number of years, even when my main religious interest was in other traditions, I picked up this book and that book by and about Bhagavan, reading them with special interest, with special recognition that though he may have lived very quietly in (to me) a distant corner of the world, here was a real master, one who really knew what it was all about.

I have seen other, more spectacular, stars of the spiritual scene rise, and almost as often fall. But while their meteoric careers, and sometimes their scandals, blazed around the guru circuit and the news media, Ramana was always there, quietly waiting, always looking at me with those luminous eyes, gently pushing me toward the one question that really matters, "*Who am I?*".

Much later, in 1981, I finally had the chance to visit Sir Ramanasraman in South India. I had an interesting experience there. I had driven down from Adyar with a couple from Wisconsin. While we were having lunch, I spoke to a young man, clearly an American, seated by my side. He



reported that he was a graduate of the University of Southern California, where I taught, but was now living in Wisconsin, the home state of my companions. I said that this was a striking coincidence. He responded, "I don't know if you are ready for this yet or not, but at a place like this things of that sort happen."

In the wake of a figure like Maharshi, in other words, the subtle lines of force that move the universe can get realigned, like iron filings near a magnet.

But the appeal of Ramana is far deeper than mere power and mystery. It is rooted in his essential question, "*Who am I?*".

This question, I believe, gets us to the core of religion and the spiritual path. Religion, when it works as it ideally should, can be thought of as scenarios for the real self.

We all know times when we most feel like ourselves — better, like a real self — and other

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times when we know we are just playing a role, when we are not acting in a way that expresses the authentic heart of our being. To understand the meaning of the "real self," think of a snapshot of someone you care about. The picture of that person you treasure somehow captures his or her real self in a look, a certain smile, which, even though the person may manifest it only once a week or so, somehow is really him or her. You say, "That's really Aunt Lucy," or, "That's the real Ben." We sense within ourselves, too, if we haven't gotten totally absorbed in the games we play, when it's really me and when it's something else under my skin

Right religion provides scenarios for the real self, and ways it can be enacted in the ultimate context, before our ultimate environment, total reality itself. The real self is who we are before God, and before the infinite universe itself.

Religion mounts these scenarios for the real self. For some, the drama may be that of deep meditation, of letting consciousness just be itself without being conscious of anything in particular on the game level. For others, it may find expression in words that come from deep within, as in speaking in tongues or the Subud type of cries and wordless hymns. For still others, the script may call for identification with a rich tradition of ritual and splendour, that gets one out of one-dimensionality into a larger context. These, and many others offered by the world's sacred traditions, are doubtless fine in themselves.

But Bhagavan does not just leave you to act out your real self religiously. He takes you even further back by asking what your real self is. "Who am I?" Before his question, even some of our most deeply felt religious identities can turn out to do no more than move the game of life and its roles to another level.

The sociologist Alfred Schultz has spoken of the "finite province of meaning" which divides up our lives. We have, as I am sure we all recognise, subtle — or sometimes highly conspicuous — differences in our values, our ways of talking and acting, of dressing and joking, in our finite and discrete worlds of work, of home, of

play, or of study. Moving from one to another — walking out of the workplace and into the door of one's house — may even entail a slight shock of transition, like going to sleep and waking up.

Religion can also be one of these finite provinces of meaning. Its rites are like orchestrations of symbols that create a total environment proclaiming the reality of that particular religious world. They are multi-sensory, involving both sight and sound, in the form of sacred architecture and icons, and the strains of holy music together with the recitation of holy texts. Perhaps one also detects the smell of incense, the touch of holy objects, and the taste of sacred food.

One enters such a religious "finite province of meaning" with the small shock of opening drums, or organ music, or a procession. In the halls of that world, all combine to transit one to the transcendent world of unconditioned reality, and all these symbols are like windows staining the white light of eternity while giving it entry, or doors through which one can step into transcendence for a few moments, or by which the personae of the numinous realm, the saints, gods and saviours, deeply veiled in symbol, can enter into our world. Here, amidst these orchestrated symbols, we can enact the role of being the real self that we are in the light of Eternity.

The transcendent reality and our eternal self may well be true, and the symbols of the faith valid doors and windows to that reality. Yet they themselves cannot be final and absolute, for we — and so, something in us — still moves in and out of them and their world, even as we move in and out of the worlds of home, work, and play, or in and out of sleep and the world of dreams.

But who is it that is playing all these roles? Even the religious role?

We know Bhagavan's answer. It cannot be the physical body, for it constantly changes while something else calmly observes, and he was even able to experience death and to find that timeless observer still there. It cannot be the consciousness, for it comes and goes with waking

and sleep. Yet there is continuity. It cannot be one's name and form, one's place in the world, for these were given and can be taken away. Yet something is still there — aware.

Something is still there, the something which is everything, for if it cannot be identified with anything finite, it must be no different from that ultimate environment — infinite reality itself. Ramana was comfortable with the language of Vedanta Philosophy (as I am myself) and had no problem calling it the Atman which is one with Brahman. But in the last analysis it is nameless, for it is beyond name and form, the "That" of the Upanishads or the "Suchness" of Buddhism.

Finally, what does it matter, this Atman, this namelessness? We live in a world of immense problems, some would say on the edge of disaster, a world of teeming billions, not a few of them hungry, the majority of them poor, many of them (and their leaders) angry to the point of violence. A world destroying its resources, mortgaging its children. Can any of this make a

difference? Can the quiet voice of Ramana Maharshi be heard amid the din of such a world?

I do not know if it will be heard, but I do know that it should be. His question remains the one question that goes to the deepest roots of good and evil. That question is a powerful fellow who has the force to shake one to the core and turn one around: "*Who am I?*"

Who am I who is hungry? Who am I, who can be indifferent while others are hungry? Is that my real self, my real self that is one with all the universe and all its children? Who is angry? Who is ready for violence? My real self, the self beyond name and form, beyond consciousness and the flesh? Or another under the skin?

Whoever knows *who he is*, is saved, is at peace, and will not harm the world or another creature. Of that I am sure. If enough know who they are, the world will be saved. Ramana Maharshi has asked the question that will save the world. The answer is ours to find, and give, in peace.

Ma & K

Anandamai Ma, the most famous of the then-living deified "Mothers" (women who in their lifetime transcended the self and became symbols of Sakti, the primordial mother as energy), with a very large following in North India, came to meet Krishnaji. They met in the garden, as the Mother never entered the home of a householder. She did not speak English, and spoke through a translator. She had a radiant, smiling presence. She said that she had seen a photograph of Krishnaji many years before and knew that he was very great. She asked him, "Why do you deny gurus? You who are the Guru of Gurus" (this was translated to him).

He replied, "People use the guru as a crutch."

"People come to listen to you in thousands," she said. "That means you are a guru." He held her hand gently and did not answer.

— from *J. Krishnamurti: A Biography* by Pupul Jayakar, Penguin, 1987 (p.149)

THE TRANSPERSONAL APPROACH

By B. Fairclough

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“Without the operation of ‘time’, there is no place for fear. Without ‘doing’, the death of fear is certain.”

For those who are interested in holistic health, a spiritual perspective towards psychological healing has been tried experimentally in a clinical setting with some very encouraging results.

The following article comes out of the author's personal experience as a psychotherapist and counsellor with over twenty-five years of government and private practice. He feels indebted to the teachings of the great sages of India (especially Sri Ramana Maharshi, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Sri Sathya Sai Baba) for what ensues here. The concept of ego-elimination in contradistinction to the traditional techniques of ego-reinforcement is regarded as being rather radical by most therapists, but a movement is underway whereby the non-ego-oriented therapeutic model is gradually attracting attention in the psychological field because of its potency, practicality, and speed of application in clients with personality problems, particularly when associated with drugs and alcohol-abuse. The ending of ‘tears and fears’ and other disorders is seen to come with the gentle dismantling of the ego, and the Transpersonal has been the agency through which these healing changes have come about. It is to be hoped that the transpersonal

principles outlined here will provide food for contemplation for anyone interested in dharma-based therapeutics. This paper is designed primarily for the information of health-professionals currently working in the fields of education, psycho-social rehabilitation, and esoteric psychotherapy. It aims to present a simple overview of the Transpersonal Approach as it relates to the Science of Self-Change. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the subject, the following definitions may be found useful.

1. Transpersonal

That which lies outside of ego. It incorporates the idea of moving beyond (or transiting) the encapsuled individuality referred to as “I”, or “me” in normal conversation.

2. Transpersonal Approach

The operative principles by which non-ego-oriented change is produced.

3. Transpersonal Process

The dynamic mobilization and outworking of transpersonal principles.

4. Change

Any manifestation appearing in either consciousness or behaviour, not previously apparent, which is healthy, wholesome, and in harmony with the Universal Life Force.

5. **Self** (appearing with small 's')

That which is referred to as "ego" in psychology. A wave or ripple, originating in consciousness and arising as thought, which arrogates to itself a sense of separation from, and superiority to, other related thoughts.

6. **Self** (appearing with capital 'S')

Pure Consciousness. "That which is before thinking". That field of creative energy from which all thoughts emerge, including the "ego"-idea.

7. **Self-Realization**

A state of experience in which awareness of Self is constantly present. The true purpose and goal of human existence.

Comparative View

The Transpersonal Approach is a non-ego-oriented approach to total client rehabilitation. Total rehabilitation entails the establishment of harmony and homeostasis in the four main fields of human experience: i.e., the physical, psychological, sociological, and spiritual aspects of "life in the world". It differs from traditional therapeutic techniques in the following principle ways:

- 1) It is non-ego-oriented. Self directs activity — not self.
- 2) The process of change is effected by negation — non-assertion.
- 3) Energy is focussed in "that which is experiencing", not "that which is experienced".
- 4) The traditional approach encourages "doing". ("Do this, and you'll be well.") The transpersonal prescription is "not-doing". ("Don't do this, and you won't be sick.") This strategy of non-doing is not so easy. In most cases, a whole lifetime of conditioning has to be reversed.

Non-ego-orientation is the very essence of the Transpersonal Approach. The ego is seen as a bundle of thoughts, which, clothed in memories, wants, and feelings, proceeds to a dominant place in consciousness, and presents itself as a

living entity known as "me". It arises in the waking state to vanish in the deep sleep state. In spite of this, it persists with a delusion of permanency, and imagines itself to be substantial and real. It likes to occupy centre-stage in daily life, and fiercely defends its right to do so. Its favourite theme is "I", of course, whilst "me and mine" is its favourite song.

The change in identity which occurs through the transpersonal process is not one of ego-modification. It does not result in a bigger and better concept of "me". It does not come about by any form of psychological restructuring. Change manifests in the degree to which these processes are understood as being counter-productive, and then abandoned. The way lies through the negation of all positive efforts to transform self into Self. The individual is not able. In the process of negation, the ego gets dismantled "brick by brick". Nothing survives intact. In the course of time, a new identity emerges, free of all self-centredness. A state of consciousness arises in which the perpetual struggle for survival is no longer a concern. It is free from fear, and free of conflict. This Self seeks no external gratification or support, and is totally stable in all its ways. Life is found to be naturally fulfilling, and there is an ongoing sense of inner peace. Such is the state of Self-Realization, and this is the end of the Transpersonal Path.

Implementation

How is the transpersonal process to be implemented in a rehabilitation programme? This is an important question, and it will now be discussed. Firstly, it must be understood that a purely intellectual grasp of transpersonal principles will not, in itself, produce a transmutation in consciousness. There must be commitment. In recognition of this, some selectiveness in the choice of client is required. Not all are suitable to undergo the trip into Inner Space because of preference for the more familiar and less demanding scenario of ego-centredness. Those who are most likely to succeed are those who feel that they have "nothing to lose", simply because

nothing else has worked for them. These people have reached the point where self-surrender is easy. They will try anything which promises release from their ever-present pain.

If all is well, the client can then be taught that "not doing" is the whole of the law. In the state of "not doing", everything necessary is being done. Change occurs, and this change is permanent. Some clarification here is demanded. A tree is a "tree" because of "doing". A bird might not call it such. We call it a "tree" because of what we are "doing" with what we are "seeing". "Doing", then, is a learned reaction. Problems arise because of what we are doing with the world, ourselves, and each other. And labelling is "doing". Whatever is seen as "good" and "bad" is only so because of "doing". "Doing" obscures perception, and creates an artificial reality. The one important therapeutic principle we need to recognise is that people behave according to what they "do" *internally* with what is cognized *externally*. When the mind stops throwing up images *about* everything, and starts to make contact with things themselves, i.e., when it sees non-reactively, a new sense of reality is born. There is a movement into clarity, and appropriate changes in behaviour will follow. To put it another way, when what is seen as "outside" no longer overshadows what is "inside", the internal dialogue will stop, and there will be inner peace. Behaviour will then be governed from the standpoint of mental harmony, and not discord. A person no longer behaves like a puppet on a string. He acts purposefully and appropriately not governed by mechanical tendencies or obligation. When action is called for, action there will be, but the individual is only a witness — not a participant. It is as if Self says to self, "Only be still, and I will do everything for you."

"Not doing" involves allowing the mind to empty itself of all preoccupation with childish trivia. It has to lay aside its "toys". As this takes place, space is made available for the new to come into being. The process is automatic. The client is encouraged to mentally "take a seat", and quietly watch all the machinations of the

mind without any attempt either to regulate or avoid. The mind, for a while, reacts to this novel experience like a monkey let out of its cage. It runs everywhere. This is exactly what is supposed to happen. Emptying is underway. If it is allowed to proceed without interference, the monkey-activity diminishes day by day, and then finally ceases. The client is still in the observer's chair, watching and waiting, but there is no longer any show. In place of noisy bustle and the pursuit of imagery, there is now quietness and mental peace. There is a feeling of focussed awareness, as if the mind had "come together" after many years of fruitless fragmentation.

Self-transmutation continues in the degree to which there is non-interference by the will. "Willing" and "wishing" are the two greatest obstacles to Self-realization. Both of these are forms of "doing". Whenever these imposters appear, their entreaties must be observed non-reactively, in favour of the greater prize. The Transpersonal Approach sees that all enticements offered by the monkey lead away from the final goal, which is freedom. In this alone is found fulfilment.

Summary

To sum up, it may be said that when that which is *not* Self is negated, then that which is Self shines through. When the true Self manifests, it puts an end to every form of conflict, and permeates every facet of personal experience, producing harmony and happiness along the way.

The endless pursuit of pleasure is natural to the ego, but in the Self alone is there total bliss.

The Transpersonal Approach, being both practical and palatable, provides a simple technique for rehabilitation. In the "not doing" of the *wrong* thing, there is a natural unfolding of the *right* thing, and this takes place without struggle. Freedom is the heritage of all humans, but it lies within, as the nature of Self.

Self-Realization is the great goal of living, but where ego is, realization is not. The way to the real is the path of "not-doing", and only "non-doers" find fulfilment, and peace.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND CONSERVATION OF ENERGY

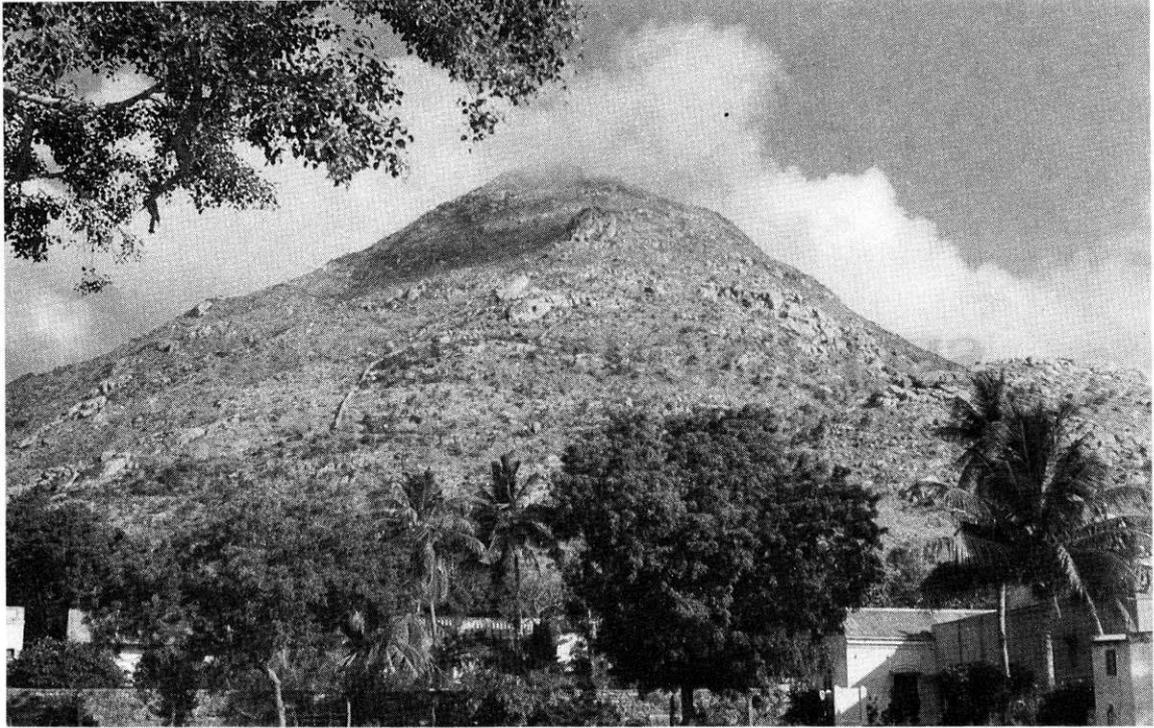
By Annamalai Reforestation Society¹

Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. It can only be transferred from one form to another. Matter is a form of energy. Man too is a form of energy. Today man's work is done mostly through energy derived directly or indirectly from fossil fuels. Wood that is burnt for cooking and for warmth; coal and petroleum that turn the wheels of commerce over land, air and water; electricity derived from thermal power without which modern man is powerless: these are all examples of how we are consuming earth's limited stock of fossil fuels. Limited because nature took a leisurely 300 million years to make this fuel. But sadly mankind seems to be in no mood to take the same amount of time to consume it. Our gluttonous appetite is swallowing this vital energy, at a rate faster than it can ever be replaced.

What is conservation of energy? An obvious meaning points to a situation where everyone begins to cut down and economise on wasteful expenditure of energy. This has a short term and a long term perspective. In the short term one sees the availability of increasingly fuel-efficient vehicles and gadgets that serve bodily comfort. One sees increasing emphasis in tapping non-toxic alternate sources of energy, from wind, ocean and the sun, for the comforts of man's home and work environment. Today, due to the explosion in motorised traffic, vehicles are forced to crawl during the peak hours in big

cities. It often takes longer by car than by walk! It is suicidal for our country to blindly copy others. A drastic cut in the production of cars and personalised vehicles, severe restrictions on their use especially by the servants of government, a ban on the use of such vehicles in selected areas of every city, and the declaration of the humble, healthy bicycle as the national vehicle: these are steps that may have to be taken very soon in our country. An unpoisoned earth, clean water and air, plenty of sunshine, and a vast population of human and cattle are our country's valuable raw materials. The ability of our people to withstand great deprivation, and a time-defying cultural tradition that emphasises unity amidst diversity, are our inherent strengths. It is vital that we recognise these time-honoured strengths and realise our goals through technological solutions appropriate to these strengths and raw materials. A civilisation lasts only as long as its topsoil. Secular our state may be; still it must worship the tree, if we are to survive. Green cover and humus are not luxuries but the vital lungs providing *prana* to the nation's body. Water is even more precious than gold. Conservation of every drop of water that falls on our land through watershed management, which was a concept so well understood and implemented by our ancients; adoption of only those land-use practices which

¹ Talk by J. Jayaraman on All India Radio, Pondicherry.



are naturally sustainable in terms of inputs and outputs and use of a powerful medium like television to inspire in the people values that go far beyond mere material acquisitions; these are serious issues of energy-conservation which ought to engage our attention today, rather than our cosmetic preoccupations elsewhere. There is a growing consumer-resistance movement which augurs well for our country. But even more important is a consumption-resistance movement. For there is a long-term view which must never be lost sight of: there is enough for everyone's need, but not enough for anyone's greed.

A survey of man's changing lifestyle shows how his needs are outstripping and pushing the pace of technology in a vicious circle. Clothing and footwear once invented for protection of the body, and which became an added avenue for man's artistic expression, have today become symbols of fashion and status, and often spell discomfort to the body itself! The telephone, once a miracle and a boon used with economy, is today a necessity not only for business, but for killing boredom as well. Science and technology are giving a longer lease of life to man, but have failed to give him a purpose to live for. Most

people live longer without knowing why. Automobiles and video, washing machines and shampoo, and even the tiny toothbrush and paste, are all doing over-time serving the *asuras* of advertisement as weapons to stoke envy and greed.

Once items of convenience or luxury, these have become necessities for an ever-elusive happiness. We point to them proudly as our possessions, but really we are the possessed, and they are the possessors. How one wishes that the audiovisual media would instead brainwash us all into believing that simple living and high thinking would be fashionable for us all!

Nature has equipped us with a unique faculty to realise a grand vision of unity. Alas, we grovel in mere matter, trading today's inner contentment for tomorrow's mirage. Today we are witness to a growing stream of young and old from the West, seriously reaching out to India. They come here not because we are a poor or a developing country, or because of our attempts to imitate the very lifestyle that they are fleeing from, but because of the food and wealth our country offers them, appeasing their spiritual hunger and terrible poverty of the soul. They seek India to heal the gaping wounds from a

material progress not founded on lasting values. I've seen a group of monkeys enter a flower and fruit garden and leave behind a ravage of partly tasted berries, torn flowers and mangled leaves, all done just for the fancy. Is man any different? Is the loss of a tail man's only evolutionary leap over the monkey? Listen to what Sri Sai Baba says: "Man was long born a mineral and died a mineral; then he promoted himself as a tree. He was long born as a tree and died as a tree; but in the process he got promoted as an animal; he has now risen to the status of man. This rise from one scale to another has been acknowledged by science and spiritual experience. Now alas he is born as man and dies as an ogre. It is a greater shame if he slides into the beast. Praise is his due only if he rises to the divine status: *Manava* becoming *Madhava*. That is real fulfilment of his destiny."

Nature is an indivisible whole. Man stands at its apex as one who alone can comprehend the glory of Nature's unity. He alone among the animals can sense his act of sensing. His Self-awareness is the unique gift which can lead him to the joy of realising his Oneness with the universe. He is thus a trustee too. His thinking and behaviour must therefore proceed in harmony with the truth of the Oneness of all creation. He poisons the environment only to poison himself. It is sheer delusion to gauge the wealth of a nation by the goods and services it produces. Gross National Product is no indicator of true wealth. The G.N.P. of our nation can be simply doubled by inducing both parents to abandon home for lucrative employment in industry. But what of the cost of broken homes and unloved children. The quality of a people depends on their pursuits. This alone is the indicator. A nation proud of its materialism only produces strife, discontent, disease and downfall. A nation whose citizens value contentment and curbing of wants, and who respect nature's wisdom, is truly wealthy. Such a nation practises conservation of energy. Man's mind is the subtlest form of energy. The world can be at peace only if every one of us learns to conserve the energy which manifests in us in the form of thought, speech and behaviour. When actions are in keeping with

one's words and when they promote common good, then energy is conserved. When words are uttered after deliberation and discrimination, and when sweet-sounding untruth is shunned, and truth alone is spoken and only in such a way as to benefit the receiver, then energy is conserved. When thoughts proceed such that one's interests are no longer separate from the interests of the society, then energy is conserved. When the education system sharpens the intellectual, artistic and sporting abilities of the youth in order to primarily achieve the above ideals of thought, speech and behaviour, then a conservation of energy is gained which will be self-sustaining.

Conservation of energy is as old as the hills. When Alexander, conquerer of the world, beheld an Indian sage who had conquered the wayward senses and acknowledged the sage's superiority, he truly understood the conservation of energy. When Socrates holding fast to Truth reached for the hemlock with a steady hand, he conserved energy. When Ashoka the Great saw the bloodshed in the conquest of Kalinga and gave up violence and led the whole country to practise love of all creation and renunciation of cravings, he conserved energy. When Gandhiji held on to *ahimsa* in thought, word and deed and died with Christ-like love in his heart even towards the one who gunned him down, he conserved energy. When Sri Ramana Maharshi by sheer potent silent presence, dissolved the doubts of those who sought him and engulfed them in his peace, he conserved energy.

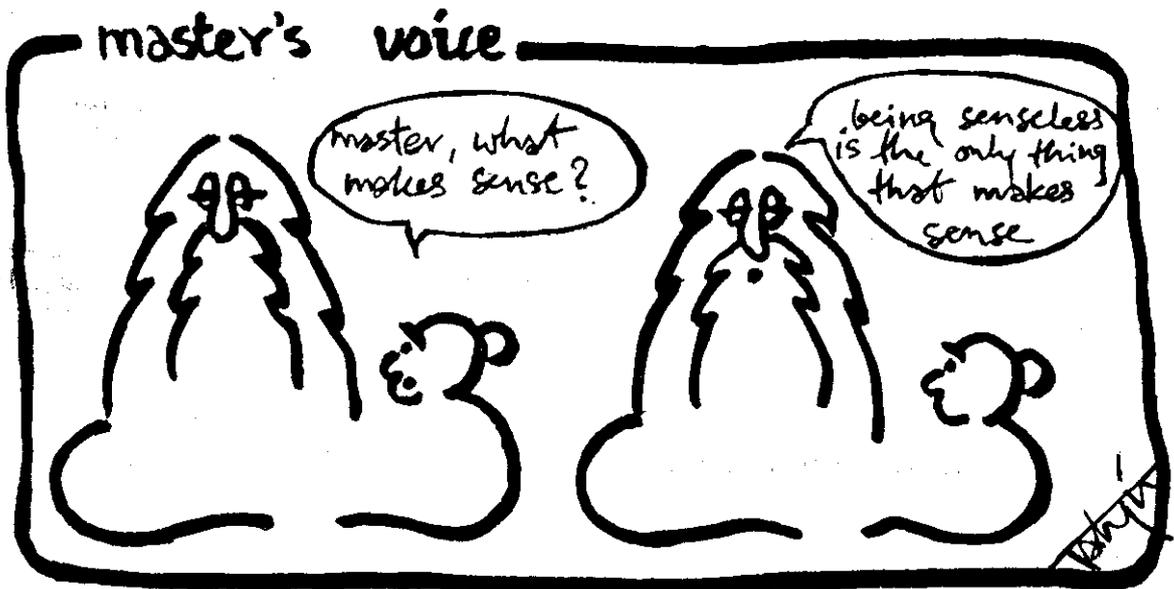
Man, the child of Nature, has much to learn from her in the science of conserving energy. He is only beginning to understand the intricate network of give-and-take and positive and negative feedback systems that pervade all of creation. Man's consumeristic lifestyle is a crime against Nature's prime work of energy conservation.

It is estimated that the energy lost in our country through poor electrical contacts and leaking water pipes, due to shoddy workmanship and maintenance, would, if made available, ensure plenty for all for years to come. Deplor-

able attention is paid in our country to maintenance of roads, water supplies and civic hygiene. One wonders if India, that is Bharat, is really the holy land where the secret of *Sanathana Dharma* was discovered, the law which declares *Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha*, "Dharma protects its protector". One may argue and say, "What change can a mere individual bring about? Can a drop affect the ocean?" Let us remember that a drop of curd can curdle an ocean of milk into its own nature. Dr. Alexis Carrel says, "Each individual has the power to modify his way of life, to create around him an environment slightly different from that of the unthinking crowd. He is capable of isolating himself in some measure, of imposing upon himself certain disciplines, certain work, certain habits, of acquiring mastery over his mind and body. But if he stands alone, he cannot indefinitely resist an oppressive environment. In order to combat this environment victoriously he must associate with others having the same purpose."

Man's pursuit of wealth, power and happi-

ness is his birthright. These are legitimate provided the means adopted are in consonance with the eternal law of *Dharma* which is the true law of conservation of energy. There is a physical and spiritual aspect to man. So also there are two aspects to conservation of energy. The physical aspect is conserved when man as trustee of Nature acknowledges his moral obligation to her for her bounties and thus pursues his aims, always keeping in view his immense debt to the inanimate and animate kingdoms which ceaselessly work for his welfare. The spiritual aspect is conserved when man subdues his ego, which alone stands in the way of his realising his identity with the world that he perceives, and in doing so merges in God. Sri Ramana Maharshi declares, "When the ego, the divisive element, arises, a world of duality arises with it. When ego is subdued, everything is as it should be — in harmony." To the selfless man all the world is his living Self. His speech and his actions serve and conserve. This is the essence of conservation of energy.



ENDING MISERY BY UNHOOKING FROM THE LIMITED

By Robert Powell

I find myself in my present position — that of limitation, vulnerability, inevitably leading to suffering — due to the presence of a multitude of frames of reference within which I function. These “hooks”, of psychological origin, restrict my freedom and spell conflict; yet, they are wholly of my own making, and can therefore be undone or made ineffective only by myself, and not through any outside agency. For this, it is important to recognize that the “hooks” consist entirely of “memory”. The realization that they are not concrete and necessarily enduring but essentially evanescent memories, the past, signifies at once the possibility of their dissolution. Thus, contrary to the prevalent notion that the limits to our freedom are the results of external factors, the truth is that our restraints are in fact internal, self-constructed from concepts and habits of thought. They endure only because they are so rarely examined and exposed for what they are.

The hooks in question are the multitude of commitments and entanglements entered into willingly and sometimes not so willingly in the course of a lifetime. (But even where they have come about under pressure from others, ultimately, they are our responsibility, because we have acceded to their imposition.) Liberation is to be effected only by dissolving the hooks of memory by means of the universal solvent of awareness. In observing the nature of the “hooks” in detail, we find they are the attitudes, inclinations, unfulfilled desires, psychological

commitments, etc. (collectively called *vasanas* in Hindu literature) that form the unexamined portion of our consciousness or the Unconscious. In their totality, they make up the basis of what is called our “individuality” or “personality”. Were it not for this aggregate of *vasanas*, there would be nothing static, only a smoothly flowing stream of thoughts. Although we call it “mind”, when completely fluid it is actually No-Mind, since it concerns only an abstraction; there are no conflicts and it causes no problems.

It is further important to understand that when we talk of “hooks” there is nothing that is “being hooked”, because the hooks in their totality are at once the unreal entity that is in bondage. Thus, the *vasanas* — our antecedents, frames of reference vis-a-vis other persons, ideas, and habitual activities, all the social roles we act out — are the elements that maintain our limitation and so long as they prevail, our unhappiness will endure. Can we perhaps already see which way freedom beckons?

So the question then is: How to undo the hooks without in the process bringing about new ones? No conscious action on my part can be the answer, because any such action would ultimately be the work of the very hooks that are the problem. It is enough to expose the hooks, which are my shackles, to the light of attention, moving them from the unconscious past into the conscious present. It is most important to see their temporal nature; that is, they have entered

TRUE VOICE

By Kavita Erica Byrd

**The true voice of what is
Does not need to speak
Because there is nothing else
Apart from it to listen.**

**Two men debating in a dream
However clever
Cannot come up with anything
The dreamer doesn't know already
Just as two lovers
Cannot better
Love.**

**Without departing from itself
How can the one voice
Say its name?
Without dividing from itself
How can the undivided
See its face?**

**Mirrors and echoes alone
Are the world we call real—
But what we really are—
Who is there
To say this?**

at a certain point in time by slipping in, as it were, through my lack of awareness, and henceforth have steadfastly strengthened themselves.

Another way to visualize our situation is to realize that, contents-wise, the flow of thoughts representing our mental activity is not completely random, as it *appears* to be. If it were, there would be no problems, as no conflict and no bondage would arise. But there is a certain polarization of the thought-content which gives rise to tension within the field of thought; that is, thoughts are essentially self-oriented or self-centred, and by "self" we mean the empirical centre that has come about through identifica-

tion with a particular body. The latter immediately creates a location in space, where one appears to find oneself. Also, a time-span is created in which one appears to function, since the idea of a "beginning" comes about with the birth of the body, and that which has a beginning in time must necessarily have an ending. This empirical "self" is wholly a matter of images and concepts, all based on memory. By this we mean that it gives rise to a situation *as if* there were an entity and *as if* there were a world, or an entity who could get something out of that world and/or fear the world as a threat to its security. When this polarization is cancelled, there is an essentially random flow of thought. Then, the remaining non-randomness of thought is no longer self-centered and the breeding ground of conflict but problem-centered and creative, when by "problem" we mean that which at any particular moment happens to appear in the focus of attention, our disinterested interest or scientific curiosity, and immune to the fields of desire and fear. Even though the thought patterns are "meaningful" and therefore non-random within the scope of any one particular "problem", within a wider area the flow is random as it is no longer guided or controlled by an all-overriding pattern of "self"-interest. Thus, this randomization is the liberating factor, since it enables one to forget "oneself" and act without the scourge of self-consciousness.

How and when does this condition come about? By being prior to it, when one sees clearly how one has got into a particular thought structure, how one has adopted a particular mind-set in the course of time — and this act of perception is at once the stepping out of it — one exits from the dimension of time and enters into the timeless. It is also realized at that moment that this is all that one can do. For, basically, there are only two ways open to man, as far as his mental life is concerned. Either one aims at disciplining the mind by forcing its contents to fit into a particular conceptual mould (an overall, compelling frame of reference) or one utilizes the mind's capacity to watch its own activities. Regarding the first possibility, J. Krishnamurti has exposed this as

being fallacious, by showing that that which makes the effort is at once that which is being worked upon, or the thinker is his thought, the observer is the observed. All such efforts are exercises in self-delusion, which Zen Master Bankei compared with washing off blood with blood. The only alternative is letting activities go on unhindered, but carefully watching all the thoughts — which is a much more difficult thing than it seems.

Thus, the two fundamental approaches in the current situation signify that one either goes along lazily with the various binding thought-flow patterns and struggles reflexively with their various components — our normal way of functioning — or one *merely* witnesses them and thereby steps resolutely out of them. If one should do this, which is really a “non-doing” because it primarily is watching without interference with whatever is observed, then the moment will come when this “me” is wholly the witness. One is completely detached from any action and from any “doer” who then may be a totally separate entity. One is the background upon which everything happens, or as Nisargadatta Maharaj would express it: one is what one was one year before one’s birth. By looking at my thought processes in this way, I come to realize the condition before the various frames of reference came into being and got hold of me (that is, disrupted the smooth-flowing thought stream). All the seeds of conflict, the many subtle identifications, reveal themselves spontaneously without the “me” working upon them or indeed having anything to do with the process. For it is a natural law that tension within the consciousness ever strives to relieve itself if one opens oneself up sufficiently: consciousness as the flow of thoughts naturally tends towards the non-random state. Finally I arrive at the situation as I was prior to the existence of these shackles: I have totally “unhooked” myself; analogous to the operation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics on the physical plane, entropy is maximized also on the psychic plane.

In this connection, “prior to” is a most important concept; it is one of the few concepts

capable of eliminating all other concepts if applied consistently to its very end. Its significance is not only time-wise, as “previous to”, but also as “primordial, of a higher order of reality” — denoting the matrix or source material. For example, thought, whether in its primitive or most sophisticated form, is always reactive or reflexive, ultimately deriving from the primordial “I”-thought or the concept of duality. It appears in my sentience or consciousness, just like clouds appear in a blue sky. Thus, consciousness is prior to thought. By the same token, the source of consciousness or the Absolute, is prior to consciousness; going along this reverse sequence, one arrives at a point where conceptualization is non-existent: concepts have yet to come into existence. Only thereafter, with consciousness, the pain comes.

Since at one time I functioned quite happily and freely without these hooks, as in fact I still do whenever I am dreamlessly asleep, I can go into reverse by mentally — and actually — going prior to my self-assumed and self-determined hooks. And, as already stated, doing so is made all that much easier upon realization that the hooks are not actually concrete and therefore lasting but are nothing more than images and concepts held in memory banks. Originally nothing but fleeting memories, they have been given a magical existence and continuity by constant recall and being acted out in relationship. This very process must be thoroughly understood. At its core lies the identification with the “body”. What makes the process particularly tenacious is the fact that all thought patterns within the scope of self-orientation are essentially in aid of survival of the body, and so, by extension, the ego. Now in itself there is nothing wrong with the physical preservation of a body, but what is pernicious is the sustenance of the unreal “psychological” entity that is formed as a by-product in the identification process. To let go of the thought is therefore a direct threat to the body with which it is identified. The key to detachment and dissolution of the bondage is twofold: first it is necessary to see the false identification with a body. Secondly, we should patiently

Awareness

By Muruganar

**The knowledge that ignores the Self,
The knower, and holds as true
the field**

Perceived, is but illusive folly.

**No matter how much one has learned,
True knowledge is the merging of all
Indicative knowledge in awareness
of the Self.**

— *Garland of Guru's Sayings, v.420.*

witness the thought formations as soon as they come up and expose them for what they are.

Without identification with a particular body, what could be my identity and *where* could I be? Would I still have a care in the world? Identity signifies being some "thing" and finding oneself at a particular place, but if I am not a "thing", I must be "nothing." Yet, since there is a distinct sense of being present, it must follow that I am everything. And similarly, since I am nowhere in particular I must be omnipresent, or simply Presence itself. Thus, because I am the fullness and the infinitude, how can I be hurt by anything? I cannot be touched by anything, yet I touch or am immanent in everything. Being the Unmanifest, and in my essence not confined within space-time, I manifest throughout space; and since I am in the present throughout time, without limitation, I am immortal. So rather than being identified with one particular body at a particular point in time, if I insist on identification of some sort, I may more properly consider myself as being identified with all the bodies, all the creatures in the world, and throughout the entire range of time.

Now what happens when I dissolve the self-created hooks or kinks in my thought flow? The state, or rather non-state which prevails after I have placed that which I take for "myself" prior to a particular bondage-creating situation is the same as that which prevails immediately after the satisfaction of a particular desire but before

a second desire has yet arisen; it is also identical with the state of dreamless sleep.

If one persistently makes this one's *sadhana*, it will gradually connect one to the pristine purity of our original being, the state or rather non-state before contamination by experience and memory took effect. Eventually, I will find myself prior to my birth-life and have therefore also become deathless (since my being born as "someone" means only to die as such). This is the state Nisargadatta Maharaj constantly refers to as the state one was in a hundred years ago, or the state "prior to consciousness" or *nirguna* (without attributes).

There is nothing else to do and really nothing else that can be done. If one distills the essence of all established approaches to realization, then in practice this is all they boil down to. Anything else that I attempt to do would be a movement within consciousness and as long as my centre is exclusively within consciousness — that is, within a subject-object relationship — I remain vulnerable to suffering. Doing this *sadhana* amounts to the wiping away of all frames of reference, which is my only salvation, for every frame of reference, however elevated or exalted, brings about dualism and therefore strengthens the mental prison. When all frames of reference have been removed, I find myself back in a state of innocence that prevailed before the thought of a psychological "I" had occurred within me.

So, through this practice I have not only unhooked myself, but I have also brought about a condition of alert understanding in which new hooks cannot solidify, for before a thought pattern can crystallize, it is seen for what it is and neutralized. In this state of infinity, all sense of doership has disappeared. Everything happens automatically and there is nothing that can fundamentally affect me, because my state of being is one of complete transparency. Whatever activities take place, they no longer hold any ultimate or absolute goals; all has become mere "entertainment" and there is no longer any dread of the outcome.

The Magistrate¹

By T.P.L.

A TEACHER of the Yoga of the *Bhagavad Gita* came to the district and set up a school in a village there. When this was reported to the local magistrate (the chief administrative officer for the district), he was displeased. He was a follower of a Western philosopher who held that traditional religion and its compulsive morality was the cause of many of the ills of man. The magistrate had a great love for the people of the district and worked night and day to bring them to what he saw as modern and progressive views. He therefore put many obstacles in the way of the yoga teacher, and for a time was successful in turning public opinion against him.

When he heard that the school was also teaching secular subjects to the local children (admittedly poorly served by the present arrangements, because of the poverty of the district) he briefed the school inspector to apply the most stringent tests to the teaching methods. The latter, however, reported favourably, and in fact two of the yoga teacher's disciples had been school teachers and were teaching very ably for a tiny salary. In five years, three of the pupils of this school obtained state scholarships to go on to a high school in the capital, and then to the university. Such a thing had never happened before.

The magistrate's attitude began to soften. Though he never even came to meet the yoga master, he used his influence to help him in various ways, and indirectly conveyed to the group that if they were in difficulties, they could approach him through a designated intermediary. The disciples concluded that though the magistrate could hardly reverse his previous

stance, he had in fact become a religious devotee in private.

After some years, he fell ill. He went to the capital for a major operation, but returned little better, and it was generally assumed that he had come home to die. The teacher sent a disciple, with no instructions except to present himself. He was refused admission. He sat down on the ground in an inconspicuous place not far from the door. As night came on, his body shivered in the cold, and a servant who saw him brought a mat and a straw coat; he then reported to his master that the disciple was still waiting.

Late in the night, the master asked: "Is he still there?"

"Yes," was the answer, "I gave him some food."

"Well, let him in," ordered the sick man, "I have decided to see him."

As the disciple bowed on the threshold, the magistrate said irritably: "You've come to preach to me I suppose."

"I won't say a word unless you tell me to," promised the *brahmachari*.

"Well, I have decided that I may as well tell you — in fact, I must tell you in fairness — that I have never believed that superstitious stuff you are propagating among the people. And I don't believe it now. But I have seen that your teacher could get people to co-operate, and to work and study, on the basis of pleasing God, and I had found that they just couldn't see clearly enough

¹ Reproduced with kind permission from *Self-Knowledge*, London, Vol.38, No.1, Winter 1987.

when I explained to them the same things on the basis of enlightened self-interest. And I concluded that perhaps the religious phase is a necessary one, to get them moving. Afterwards, as they become better informed, they will discard it. So I gave some help to your efforts; the dogmas do seem to be of some immediate benefit to the people, and ultimately they are bound to destroy themselves.

"Now I've told you. I felt suddenly that your master was entitled to know, to prevent any misunderstandings later. I hope it isn't too much of a shock to you: I don't suppose you have any text to cover this case, have you?"

"My Lord, we have," the disciple told him. "It is in the *Gita*, where the Lord says that in whatever form people worship Him, that same faith He makes unwavering."

There was a long silence.

The magistrate said feebly: "Is there any other text that comes to your mind?"

The *brahmachari* replied softly: "Yes — 'He sees, who sees the Lord standing in all beings, the undying in the dying.' "

Another silence.

"Anything else?" The magistrate's voice was very weak.

The *brahmachari* came and knelt by the bed with his palms joined. "O my Lord, you cannot tease me any more. I see you clearly now."

A great surprise came over the magistrate's face; then he died.

The *brahmachari* called the servant, and told him: "Your master is gone now, and well gone." The servant stood in the doorway looking towards the dead man for a little while. Then he said in a choked voice: "He was a great man. Yes, and he was a good man too. They said he was strict and hard. Well, he was strict and hard. I should know that: I served him for twelve years. But it was for our own good, and I know that too. And he was much stricter with himself, and much harder on himself. He was so anxious that he shouldn't leave anything undone, so anxious. I don't think I ever saw him smile, he was so anxious."

He took a step towards the bed, and peered towards the face. "But tell me — I'm not seeing very well just now — that's a smile there, isn't it?" He caught the *brahmachari's* arm. "It's true, isn't it? He's smiling now, isn't he?"

"Yes," the *brahmachari* told him, "he's smiling now."

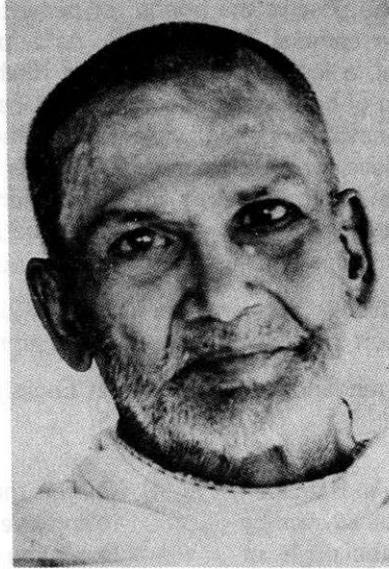
INNER JOY

My question was, "What is inner joy, inner happiness?"

J. Krishnamurti paused, then asked, "Do you know what *outward* joy is? In the colours of the sunset, in the sight of a beautiful woman or a beautiful man, a flower, a tree? Do you ever give yourself to this *outward* beauty? so that there is for the moment a timeless moment, nothing else? No thought, no recreation of a memory — pure joy, pure pleasure? That joyous pleasure in the outer *is* the inner. And it cannot be evoked, worked for. It cannot be discovered. No effort is required, only *interest*, interest — not in yourself, *not* in response, but in the life around you, in others, in the sky, a man, a woman, a child, in everything, without translating — is *joy*. That joyous pleasure in the outer *is* the inner. To be interested in the *outer*, without translating, is *joy!*"

— from *Truth is a Pathless Land* by Ingram Smith

SRI MURUGANAR CENTENARY OFFERING



Sri Muruganar

Muruganar's *Tiruvembavai*

By T. K. Jayaraman

Introduction

When Sri Muruganar, working as a Tamil Pandit in a Madras High School, heard and read about Bhagavan Ramana, he yearned to meet Him and at the first opportunity, that is, as soon as the school vacation commenced in September 1923, he went straight to Tiruvannamalai to pay obeisance to Bhagavan. He went there next during the Christmas vacation. On both occasions he composed some verses as his offerings to Sri Ramana. The verses were in beautiful and lyrical Tamil, reminding one of the classical writers of yore. In fact, there was mention about the ancient saint-poet Manickavachagar while hailing Bhagavan as none other than Lord Siva. After hearing the verses, Bhagavan Ramana asked Muruganar whether he could also write and sing like Manickavachagar. This became the inspiration for Muruganar for his spontaneous outpourings on his Master, Guru and God, Ramana, in thousands of verses in lyrical Tamil — *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murali* — patterned after the classical writings of the celebrated Manickavachagar, Tirugnanasambandar, Appar and Sundarar, and such later saints as Arunagirinathar and Tayumanavar.

Manickavachagar has written *Tiruvembavai*, which has its origin in certain observances followed by young maidens in the Tamil month of *Margazhi*, which is

considered to be the most auspicious of all the months in the year. They get up at dawn, wake one another up and, singing in praise of the Lord, ceremonially bathe in rivers and tanks. Those who observe the *nonbu*, or penance, are conferred benefits, not only material but also spiritual, by the Lord. As a parallel, we have Andal's *Tiruppavai*, wherein Andal, a female devotee of Lord Krishna, took "Pavai Nonbu" as a medium for expression of her love and devotion. She identifies herself with a *gopi* (devotee-girl) of the Krishnavatara period while singing the *Tiruppavai* songs and bringing out her mystical love for Lord Krishna. The *gopis* wake one another up to bathe in the holy waters and then approach Sri Krishna for fulfilment of their vows. In an ordinary sense the aim of the *nonbu* is to get a good husband, but in the spiritual sense it is the mystic communion with the Eternal One.

Muruganar's *Tiruvembavai* is also an exhortation for us to wake up from our slumber and dive deep, sport ourselves and rest in the supreme bliss of Ramana.

The following is a free rendering of the verses in English.

Text

- (1) O maidens! Sing how Annamalai Ramanan showers His Grace on His devotees even by a look and how He destroys the might of Karma of those coming to Him worn out by cares and worries. Sing about the exuberance of Truth which shines in the heart of everyone without difference, when one's mind is turned inward. As we sing His glory in nectar-like music, immerse yourself in cool sweetness and peace.
- (2) Sister! You boasted that you would be the first to wake up and sing the glory of Ganga-dhara Venkata Ramana whose gentle feet became a crown for your head. You said that your songs would fill the heavens in all the eight quarters and rouse us from our slumber. But we find that you are still tightly tied to your flowery bed. Is this your nature? Wake up, open the bejewelled door and join us.
- (3) Lord Venkata is mighty beyond compare, whereas I am lowly in the extreme. Yet, without scorning me He drew me close to Him and gave me salvation. Instead of dwelling on this His grace, you continue to slumber overcome by your earlier delusion, although it is dawn. Wake up, maiden. Sing about the beauty of His countenance which mastered us. Dive and bathe in the flowery tank of sweetness of the song.
- (4) O, you maiden with long tresses! You are rolling over and over on your big mattress. Don't you hear the blowing of the conches, sister? If you continue your languor in bed, overcome by slumber, like a ship moving slowly in the ocean, be sure you will pine and fade. Do not let this happen. Get up.
- The golden-handed and lotus-eyed Venkata with lion-like look bestows supreme bliss on helpless people like us who approach Him. Sing His competence and mastery. Dive and bathe in this tank of blessedness [*Ananda*] adorned with lotuses.
- (5) "You fraud, you deceived us by saying something yesterday but sleeping innocently today as if nothing has happened. [When the time has come to worship our Lord, you are lying in bed sleeping, while yesterday you spoke to us deceptively sweet words stating that you knew fully the Lord and His greatness.] Get up, wash your face and unlatch the door."
- She says, "Don't deride and make fun of me, my sister. Have our other friends, with beautiful eyes like fish and endearing speech resembling the parrot, gathered singing the greatness of Venkata's flood of grace?"
- "Yes, they have all arrived promptly. You yourself go and take their count."



Sri Muruganar with Bhagavan

She asks, "Has Venus risen?"

"The sun itself has risen and is shining brightly. Get up and join us quickly."

Note: This song is in the form of a dialogue between those who had gathered to wake up the one who had still not arisen and the one yet in bed.

This is similar to song 4 in Manickavachagar's *Tiruvembavai*.

- (6) The loud music of the devotees singing the praise of the Lord fills the moonlit Aruna Hill and is echoed from its caves like mighty thunder reverberating from various parts of the sky. With the sound of the music assaulting your ears, how do you still sleep?

Chaste maidens, the perfect Ramana has made us His subjects by giving us supremely sweet joy. Surrendering to Him, let us fol-

low His commands, reach the lovely Arunachala and enjoy ourselves in Bliss.

- (7) The eight vital constituents of the universe, viz., earth, water, fire, wind, ether, sun, moon and the life-principle are but the eight forms of Venkata Ramana. All the eight quarters of the sky form His resting place. He possesses all the eight *siddhis* [supernatural powers]. He has all the eight supreme virtues. He dwells as in the eight sacred Siva-shrines, in the heart of Arunachala and His devotees' hearts. He has made us completely His and resolutely saved us from rebirth. Think of His grace. Think of Him whose face resembles a full moon and take refuge in His hallowed feet.

Thus you bathe in the waters of Self-abidance and find fulfilment, O maidens.

- (8) I served several gods of heaven with great zeal. But no one would look at me or enquire what I wanted. Although they had high-sounding names, they did not have real capacity to bestow the saving grace. Only Venkata, who is at once the substratum and sustainer of everything, offered protection. Therefore let us leave all arguments and devote ourselves to this gracious Master. Let us bow our heads to His Lotus Feet. Let us serve Him with all purity, earning His companionship. Come, maidens, let us bathe in this bliss and rejoice.
- (9) Venkata's very look radiates exemplary grace. Out of love He has made His heart the seat of my consciousness. He beautifully planted His righteous feet on my head and firmly put an end to the ignominy of further births once and for all. The earth, surrounded by the oceans, is filled with His greatness. His splendour pervades the heavens too. Sing His glory, O maidens. Sing how Venkata is the abode of supreme peace and fulfilment. Adore Him and bathe in the cool waters of bliss.
- (10) The mighty Ramana indulges in bewitching sport. He slays the ego by His sword-like look and burns it by means of Pure Knowledge. Yet He slays not, as ego itself is false and has no real existence.
- He is not recognised by the world of appearances which looks real, but yet He is its inner core and sustenance.
- He did not undergo any tutoring. Yet He is the master of all knowledge.
- He speaks not, but through Silence He teaches the highest Truth and clears all doubts.
- Adore the great Ramana, who will grant us all boons, and live in bliss.
- (11) Venkata is the absolute one beyond our understanding. He manifests the whole Truth which cannot be renounced. His face shines like a beacon light to those who approach Him. His beautiful glance clears

all doubts and dispels illusion. His grace is inexhaustible. No words can explain the dexterity and greatness by which He became our Saviour and Master.

Sing His glory with unsullied joy, O maidens, and dive deep in the cool, cool waters of bliss.

- (12) Singing melodiously, immerse yourselves in the cool waters of the tank where lotuses bloom, shells abound and the light is reflected. The pure waters will cleanse us who dive in them.

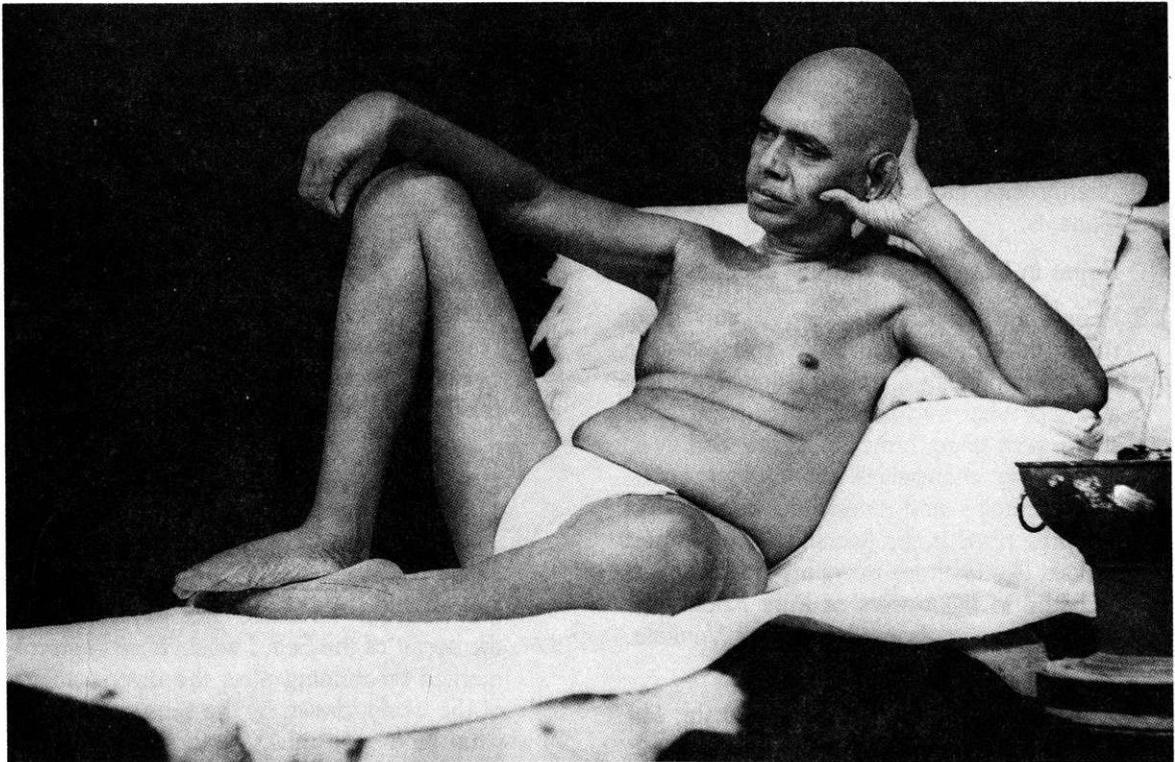
Same is the mind's lake wherein Venkata, the receptacle of clarity, is merged in supreme awareness. His eyes are like the lotus. In the cool stillness of the mind, the light of Truth is reflected. Saints and sages throng around Him just like shells in an ordinary lake. Those who dive deep within are cleansed of their ego and other impurities [karma and maya (delusion)].

Supreme joy beyond imagination wells up in my heart. Partake of the nectar which will never satiate. Sing His glory and immerse yourselves in bliss.

Note: In the original Tamil verse, Muruganar has employed epithets which apply equally to a mundane lake and Manasarovar, the mind in the form of a lake.

He has composed this verse after the 13th verse of *Tiruvembavai* of Manickavachagar, where the description of the tank applies also to God Siva and Goddess Parvati.

- (13) O clouds, drink to your heart's content the vast, deep ocean of grace of Sri Venkata Ramana. Gather together, grow dark like the powerful *maya* [illusion] that deprives us of our sanity, and flow over my inflexible rock of a heart. Let your loud thunder be the bright and clear word of Silence. Let Venkata's penetrating glance of compassion be your flashing lightning. Shower on us supreme happiness.



- (14) The master-teacher Ramana, who is all-knowing and alien to ignorance, removes the mental delusion of those who seek Him and makes their mind a golden mirror reflecting their true nature with a glance. He is a complete *Mouni* with perfect wisdom. He is without parallel.

Sparrows chirp even as devotees burst into ecstatic cries when they find His grace. Filled with the sound, the Aruna Hill, covered with clouds, melts into springs. Bathe in this pure water and shine, O maidens.

- (15) When a hen, raking in a muck-heap, finds a flawless, rich, bright gem, it scorns it, unable to discern its worth. Likewise, do not be deceived into thinking that Venkata, who is the very embodiment of Satchitananda Siva [Being-Awareness-Bliss] and who has shown Himself amongst us to help us in our distress, as if in response to some past good

deeds of ours, is an ordinary mortal. He can alter our very destiny.

Surrender to that supreme being, serve Him and surrender also the fruits thereof to Him.

- (16) With your singular and unalloyed devotion you have earned the power even to control the storm and convert it into a pleasant shower. Holy Ramana is the supreme sage who knows the complete Truth. He abides as the eternal Self, free of bondage. He has taken a human form and is born on earth to redeem us orphans who are in bondage. On this His holy Birthday bathe in the waters of bliss flowing from His lotus feet.
- (17) Not to go baffled, imagining as real the diverse phenomena which appear as we explore *naada*, sound, and the movement of *bindu*, or seed, Venkata shows the one underlying base behind this diversity. Likewise He teaches the real meaning of life as

well as its transience. He has also demonstrated the rapturous state of Self-abidance.

Venkata is the essence of the Vedas moving about in human form. After seeking and discarding one by one all the false phenomena, He is the eternal Reality which alone is.

Bathe in bliss at His feet, O maidens.

- (18) People go to Kaveri, Vaigai, and other rivers in order to purify themselves. But they contend with common folk who are not aware of what is to be done, make the water slushy with ghee, honey and clay, and quarrel among themselves for cleaner spots. The brahmins and priests do not conduct the prescribed *pujas* [worship]. For earnest seekers like us these rivers are not holy. Let us bathe in the waters of Pure Knowledge and joy flowing from the feet of Venkata, and shine.
- (19) Every attribute of the blissful Venkata, His comely form, His loving smile, His gracious look, His masterly words, His blessed feet, His immense greatness, is like nectar that never satiates. Bathe in this ocean of nectar filled with His grand characteristics and attain immortality.
- (20) To protect ourselves from the brutal attack of others, we, poor maidens, shyly preserved our modesty with all our might. But Venkata destroyed even this strong armour and left us naked, without any other support. His glance burnt the triple city of the body [body consciousness] and left us wide open [sublime void — Pure Awareness] even as others laugh at us. He lovingly mastered us and made us His subjects. Bathe in His love and experience the joy.
- (21) Ensnared by deceptive *Maya* [delusion], which encompasses everything but which is actually a void and does not provide even a trace of true happiness, do not get entangled in endless cyclic births, to the chagrin of the wise, and waste your time absorbed in diverse phenomena. The flawless

Venkata gave us salvation. Contemplating the supreme Venkata's feet, dive deep into your heart in silence.

- (22) Because Venkata enters my heart and shines forth as God within, there is no place for arrogance in the belief that I am God. Who knows that my body, life-breath, feeling, mind and my very individuality are destroyed? Alone, central, Pure Wisdom shines as God in Heaven. There is no distinction of separate self or universal self. Seek the meaning of I in your heart. Lose the I, maidens, and rejoice.
- (23) I did not know the right course of action [or *Dharma*], which is surrendering to God, but went after the Path of Action [or *Karma*] which once duped the Rishis of Dhuru forest when they pursued it with great obstinacy and rancour.* Hence, not understanding the secret of the Self, I would have been tormented by running after the diverse things of the world, drawn by the senses. Venkata, who is none other than the Supreme Teacher, Dakshinamurty, saved me from this tribulation. For Him, bathe in the clear waters of detachment which are unsullied by the base ideas of "I" and "mine", and rejoice.
- * They were subsequently corrected by Lord Siva and learnt the lesson of the futility of *Karma*.
- (24) Venkata hails from the beautiful Arunachala. His hands shower bountiful blessings on all. His radiant face looks majestic to all who see Him. His look destroys the darkness of *Maya* [false illusion] of anyone who follows Him. O you maidens with slender waists and swelling bosoms, who sport in the cold, winter waters! Become infatuated with His glorious feet, associated with the Supreme Self, bathe in the divine waters of True Knowledge, and shine.
- (25) Venkata struck at my arrogance, which was based on poor knowledge born out of feeding on the ephemeral, taking it for eternal. He taught the Self to the four good pupils who wanted to know the Truth, under the

divine banyan tree.* My heart too became the banyan-shade. He brought on extraordinary joy beyond words in my heart's firmament transcending light and darkness.

Settle in the vast silence where all can join. Bathe in this ocean and perform your worship.

* Reference is to Lord Dakshinamurti who taught the sublime Truth through Silence to four disciples under a banyan tree.

- (26) Our Guru is free from the illusions of this world, full of dissension. Distinctions of quality or feature do not bear upon Him. Even in this dream-world of names and forms caused by subtle *vasanas*, he has absolutely no feeling of separateness and shines as One, abiding as the Self.

Sport in this Self-abidance where there is no sense of distinctness and find fulfilment.

- (27) You vowed with great zeal that you would don garlands with clustering flowers and join shoulders with the Lord, and be one. He is colourless and formless. He is bereft of quality or specific feature. He is beyond feeling and emotions, although He is all awareness. His piercing look destroys the ego of devotees and makes them His. In this oneness with the divine Ramana, seekers of oneness find fulfilment.

- (28) You petty girls, bewildered by your arrogance you have set out presumptuously to narrate the extraordinary greatness of the lofty Venkata, who is eternal and is the inner core of everything, instead of just resting under His gentle feet in total surrender. You are not aware of your own Self. Do you know His Real Being? Have you seen it or heard it ever-so-slightly, you precocious fools? Keeping quiet, submit yourself with all humility to His feet.

- (29) O sweet and mighty Venkata, your flow of grace is like the flooding from one ocean situated on earth and another in the sky, both pouring out into a vast abyss. It has brought us, who were steeped in intense darkness and without any happiness, to

your heavenly transcendent state. There is nothing else which I can admire and cherish except this Grace. Barring my one desire to seek your golden feet which confer well-being to all the world, banish all my other longings.

- (30) While others despair that you are far beyond, transcendent, unapproachable, to us you have emerged very close and enabled us to see the Truth clearly like a gooseberry held in the palm. Because you entered our hearts and firmly held sway, our bodily attachments have disappeared like yellow in bright sunlight, and false appearances have vanished. O Venkata, never forsake us. Grant us always your supreme grace and love.

- (31) When wind-swept brushwood catches fire, fragrant sandalwood and other big trees also burn up.* Great God Ramana! We pray to you that we should seek the company of your devotees who follow your path diligently, serve them and attend to their needs. If you grant us this one boon, we are not afraid of future births.

* Even great people are at times affected by external events, without their volition. They will not ask for any service. It is for others to find out and serve them. It is the highest service.

- (32) Praised be your state of perfect silence,
base of eternal life.
Praised be your shining Being-Awareness
and its imperishable power.
Praised be the glance of your lotus-like eyes
that shed compassion.
Praised be, O great Self, your blessings
which never fail.
Praised be your beautiful smile
which captivates the mind and heart of
those who behold you.
Praised be your nectar-like words
which truly expound the scriptures.
Praised be the winter floods which
flow down your Golden Feet,
Holy Venkata.
Let us, O maidens, sport in them, sing His
praises and become resplendent.

(33) May the rains be abundant. May celestial beings and good men flourish.
 May cattle and just kingship flourish.
 May hospitable housewives flourish.
 May men of penance, free from impurities of ego, flourish.
 Long live the gentle flower-like Feet of Siva-Ramana.

Long live His glorious form as holy Arunachala.
 May devotees captivated by the loving grace of His look flourish.
 May Sivananda prevail for ever.
 May we, maidens, drink in this Bliss.



Muhavaapuri Murugan

One day while sitting in the presence of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Viswanatha Swami found himself repeatedly murmuring the words, "*Muhavaapuri Murugan*". 'Muhavaapuri' being another name of Ramnad, the town of Muruganar's birth, gave a particularly lyrical rendering of Muruganar's name. The words caught Sri Bhagavan's ear and He exclaimed, "Good! The two words sound poetic. Why don't you compose a verse bringing them in." The swami tried hard, but in vain. At last he left a piece of paper with his limping effort at the feet of Sri Bhagavan and walked out. When he returned some time later he was thrilled to see that Bhagavan had composed a beautiful Tamil verse hailing Muruganar and comparing his poetical gift to that displayed by the poet-saint Manickavachagar in his magnum opus, *Tiruvachakam*. Sri Bhagavan's verse runs as follows:

அகத்தாமரை மலர்மீதுறை யருணாசல ரமணன்
 நகைத்தானுற விழித்தானறச் செகுத்தானென துயிரை
 மிகத்தானருள் சுரந்தானென முகவாபுரி முருகன்
 செகத்தாருய வருத்தான்முறை திருவாசக நிகரே.

"Arunachala Ramana, dwelling in the heart-lotus, smiled and steadily looked at me and slew my little, separate self — so singing of this flow of grace, 'Muhavaapuri Murugan' composed his Sannidhi Murai, rivalling Tiruvachakam itself, so that the people of the world may be saved."

LUCY MA'S

LETTERS

A Message for All on the Path

(Correspondence with SHOSHI SHOPHRONY)

Bhagavan's guidance led me to Lucy Ma on the last two days of my stay at Sri Ramanasramam, in December 1987. This was my first visit to Arunachala after sixteen years of longing. I was very much impressed by the spiritual influence of the Ashram, had wonderful experiences and could hardly restrain the tears of happiness.

One could see on Lucy Ma's face a strong will and well-disciplined character which radiated intelligence, but first of all she was modest and humble. She received me kindly and talked to me frankly, asked questions about how I came to Ramana and impressed me with her humble attitude. Her good sense of humour created a natural atmosphere, she laughed easily, but, most important for me was what she told me when I took leave of her: "If you want to write me, I shall answer you."

These words of hers began a wonderful correspondence which meant to me the "Message of Arunachala" for the coming two years. Now,

after Lucy Ma has passed away, I would like to share with all of you her precious letters, in which she instructed and guided me with much love, wisdom and also in a very practical way. She was so intuitive that she always wrote me the most apt advice that I needed at the time. She could understand things around me with her fine sensitivity, as she wrote:

"Words are in any case a poor means of communication when Heart is wanting to talk to Heart!"

I wrote her after arriving home, that on the one hand, I have only to close my eyes and I find myself at the Feet of Ramana Maharshi, feeling

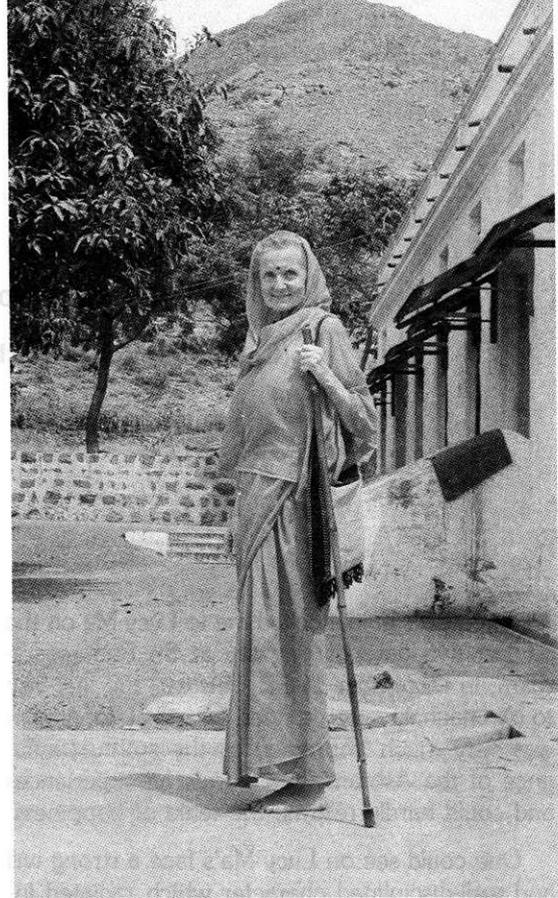
* Lucy Ma (Lucy Cornelissen) was a German mystic, author, and a former editor of *The Mountain Path*, who for several years was in charge of the "Letters to the Editor" column. She spent the last decades of her life at Sri Ramanasramam, attaining *Samadhi* at the feet of the Master on December 31, 1989 at the age of 91 years.

the wonderful experience, I Am Here and Now — but on the other hand, when I open my physical eyes, I become involved again in the worries and problems of everyday life. Especially since I live in Israel, a country full of stress, where news is broadcast twenty-four times daily, a country to which I belong through my family and karma.

To that Lucy Ma answered:

“You have the magic wand: you radiate the higher happiness, which is in the end stronger than all else. Elsewhere I find a quotation which may mean a possibility to live in spite of all fire and death: the secret of living for one day. It is a blessed secret. Anyone can carry his burden, however heavy, until nightfall. Anyone can do his work, however hard, for a day. Anyone can live sweetly, patiently, lovingly and purely until the sun goes down. And this is all life ever really means to us — just one little day. Is it not also that which is radiating out of Ramana’s eyes? We are unhappy only when we want things to be *other* than they are. This is what is meant by *Desirelessness*. We may enjoy all sweet and lovely things, even when they are offered amidst blood and tears — if only we know that it is not accidental where and in what conditions we are born. What are we in reality? Points of consciousness, radiating as such. And the source of this point is *within* us. A point only — but this is the Divine in everyone. Leave alone all theory of ‘Who am I?’ or Advaita philosophy. No philosophy has ever succeeded in revealing that point of consciousness. What does is the surrender to Ramana Maharshi or to Arunachala who never, never abandons us. But there also is a secret: the Spirit waits for us in the innermost core of our Heart, never outside! There is a beautiful saying of Sri Shankaracharya, which Ramana Maharshi used to repeat:

“What is all this trouble of pujas, flowers, prayers, praises and what not? It is only troublesome. Take the single flower of your Heart, put it at the Feet of the Lord and live in Peace.



Lucy Ma

“You know it but not consciously. You are radiating it. You need nothing else. If you keep this attitude, then you ‘have arrived’. There is no greater wisdom.”

In her letter of 13.5.88:

“You are welcome at any time, and so I hope that you feel yourself in my humble hermitage as a kind of second home. You need not be sad that your duties now and then seem to overwhelm your *real* Be-ing. They belong together, the great dream of your personal life (which is only a fairy tale) and the greater Reality, which is the silent, luminous and never-changing World of Light, wherefrom we come and where we return when we do not allow the colourful fairy tale to distract us. Keep in your heart to the world of animals

and plants: there may be terror and murder and all the horrible happenings around; the grand trees and the smallest flowers next to your feet, when the sun comes, open their buds; they do not ask either what date it is or what kind of weather they will have. They seem to live according to an inner compass which is inborn. Be, as You Are! They need nothing else — nor do we. It seeks to be the one and only way to Truth, that Truth which we are.

"I wish so often and so deeply that you and your near and dear ones need not live in immediate danger. The awful hurricane has a quiet centrum. Cling to this center and leave everything else to the Saving Power, which responds to genuine faith in this mystery, which those who know it name — Grace.

"Arunachala is a manifestation of Grace; may He guide and protect you and all around you!"

So she writes on 25.7.88:

"Well, everything in this life has to be paid for. We can only give our signature to the credit-bill: 'His will shall be done'. And when there should be a change in your destiny, place or conditions — it will be prepared already. I had several times the experience that an important change was prepared by *karma* long before I learned of the necessity. And it was always for the best. By the bye, in this way I came to Bhagavan and this place and all things that followed."

In my previous letter I had asked Lucy Ma if there were anything I could send her (medicine or anything else she might need or wish). Her answer brought to evidence not only her modesty, but also her loving wisdom:

"Thank you, my Darling, for your kind intention of looking for something 'to do' for me. You must confess that that would not be very reasonable, though very lovable of you. What I need, I have got, and what I do not have, I certainly need not. We met at the feet of Bhagavan, that's all and is enough. Don't you think so?"

In my next letter I asked her to tell me the 'story' of how she came to Bhagavan. I also wrote about my students (I am teaching yoga) and others close to me, who are basically good people, though not yet awakened to spirituality — they breathe it a little bit indirectly. I learned to make *no* effort to influence them. Then I mentioned a highly developed friend of mine to whom I read Lucy Ma's letters, which she enjoyed very much and noticed: how beautiful that such people (as Lucy Ma) live on earth!

To all these, here are parts of her answer on 25.9.88, in which she reveals how the German translation of *Talks* came into being by Bhagavan's Grace:

"My Dear Shoshi! Thank you so much for your loving letter, only please do not praise me such a lot! It was the trouble of my younger life: a person gets spoiled and has to fight all the time against it! The only help and cure is to perceive the very miracle of how people are guided together from far away when the time is ripe, that they shall meet — as it was the case with us. *That is karma.*

"How I came to Bhagavan? Well, I was a writer by profession and people brought me the very good book of Heinrich Zimmer (Indologist) on Bhagavan, soon after the [second] World War, *The Way of the Self* (or similar). The 'spiritual wave' had not yet started, so for real spiritual people that book was quite enough in Germany of those times. I didn't give a minute to the idea of writing on Bhagavan, since there would most probably be no publisher for it. But strange circumstances came together which finally prompted me, against my better judgement, to translate the *Talks* of Bhagavan and write a short biography on him. When I finished, I went to Tiruvannamalai to compare my translation with their experience. Before leaving again for the West, I went into the Meditation Hall, which you know, and 'talked' to the Master — only half jokingly: 'Look here, Bhagavan, I have fulfilled your wish about this translation into German, but I certainly will *not* find a

publisher. If you want the publication, you will also have to find the publisher yourself'. It was five days before Christmas, and five days in those times (1956) was how long an airmail letter took between here and there. And five days was all that was needed for the letter of a German publisher, who asked then and there for the copyright — and for a change in my personal *karma!*

"Now let me reply to your other questions. Of course you can show my letters to whom-ever you want — and give my kindest regards on top, because she is your friend on the Path'.

"As to the lack of spiritual understanding of other people, there is a strict rule in spiritual life that every change, each experience, comes only when the person is ripe. And yours is the absolutely right attitude to it: not interfering. In trying to help by direct interfering you can only spoil the complicated network of inner life. It seems that the Inner Guide, who works in everybody, does not tolerate other influences than His own. And certainly He knows best. For your own work to serve people in their spiritual way: do *not* encourage them to more and more activity, not even in spiritual things! The Way is *growth* and growth is natural, but slow. Let them remember that nice proverb: 'Everything comes to him who waits' — in full confidence."

She wrote on 22.1.89:

"A most important problem in your loving and long letter is your mentioning that very seriously Liberation has been chosen as your aim. More important, because the time may be only short in which we can exchange letters, having met five minutes before the 12th hour, so to say. You will not learn more, as you already know, but you will learn how to *unlearn* much. So your remark that you are still very far from realization is quite wrong. Your means is certainly surrender: to practise it as a matter of your everyday life, and that is lying directly under your nose — as Ramana

says. Only remember as often as possible: 'Accept what comes, let go what will go'. You have the power to live your life as a wonder — in spite of its seeming cruelty. Enjoy it, but take care not to cling to it. 'Take care' means — be aware! The search for the Self is not changing outer conditions, much less other people, not even ourselves. But by the grace of 'God' (whatever we understand by this word), we can change ourselves just by surrendering.

"Something else: don't talk about your spiritual struggle, because it is rather obvious that you would not be understood, and in this case the talk is destroying whatever you have got as insight. Remember: *Everybody is his own Path to the Truth.*

"Any special problems? Please tell me. Arunachala be with you!"

In my next letter I mentioned two burning problems: how to live in the world, which is not only seemingly cruel — when people suffer, for them, in their relative world, the pain is as real as themselves. Even as I try to look on the world with spiritual insight, I nevertheless get involved. Is it possible not to? Even our Ramana wept with tears out of compassion.

The second question was how to be continually aware in everyday life, remembering 'Who am I?', to surrender and get rid of the calculating mind; I had been searching for a clue, wanted a recipe. And then I also asked Lucy Ma to write a little bit about herself — I knew almost nothing about her. At that time both of us became aware of the 'miracle', as she called it, the love which developed not only as a relationship between Master-Disciple, but even more, as between Mother-Daughter.

Her answer to my questions on 13.3.89:

"Your letter is such, that it is almost impossible to be answered. Well, I have to try. 'One's heart is without rest, oh God, because you have created us to rest with Thee, and it will be restless, unless it is resting within Thee.' The author was one of the greatest

Catholic saints, Augustinus, who also sent thousands of people into the fire! Such is life, we will never understand it. And therefore my basic teaching is: problems are not to be solved, but to be dropped! And you know the switch: surrender. Among all the different attempts to express the one and only Truth, there is a group of Indonesian prayer-healer devotees — I am not going to talk about them, only *one* thing, which shows that they too have special experiences of Grace. They were shown two kinds of surrender, total surrender and intensive surrender. As long as we exercise intensive surrender, it is the personal 'I', trying to realize. *Succeeding is only in total surrender.* Having attained that, you stop trying to understand the problem of God, Man and World. And you, clever child of mine, ask of course immediately: where is the clue? — You have to find it yourself, by the experiences of your life and the life of your near and dear ones. The great secret of God, Man and World is not to be solved until you can worship It. We have to learn to worship It, never asking Who or What It really is. Stop the search — and you are face to face with Truth!

"Five minutes to 12... My dear Shoshi, you ask for some means to get a clearer picture of me. Tell me, where shall I start, telling of a life of a century! But dear, it is a fairy tale. What use, when you want Reality.

"I got another call from the Angel of Death: a rather massive heart-attack, sharp, at midnight about a fortnight ago. Maybe a rehearsal, or what else? I do not ask. I am only obeying. I learned to worship the mystery without trying to solve it before.

"My prayers are with you and your beloved ones. May you be blessed by that mystery without Name and Form, which we sometimes worship as Arunachala. Be embraced. Mamy."

Parts of my answer:

"Thank God that the Angel left you behind I hope and pray for a long peaceful period without

any ugly rehearsals. I should like to receive many such wonderful letters. Your last one gives me tremendous strength. You succeeded, Mamy, to do the 'impossible' and answered all my problems so that there are no questions any more.

"True, I am struggling very hard, knowing that it is effort which leads to effortlessness, even if it is a paradox. Sometimes the surrender just happens — to live the moment just as it is, without any intention to change. Yet, many times it is very difficult — the attachment to worldly affairs is still hindering. But Mamy, you did show me the Path. I am climbing and shall never give up!

"There is a story about a Zen master, who sent his disciple to a great teacher for ultimate instruction. The new master turned out to be a poor, sick old woman, who didn't seem to have much to offer. Slowly the disciple got her message: "I have no wishes and no complaints." *You are this woman, Mamy, my great Teacher — thanks to Bhagavan. And I ask Him to bless you with Light and Happiness for ever.*"

Lucy Ma wrote in her next letter on 19.4.89:

"I am glad that you found some useful hints in my tips. And I trust that you are eager to practise. But do not fall into the trap of trying to force some results. Don't forget: we do not deserve anything. Everything is a gift — spontaneous, or not at all. There is no jumping on the spiritual path; that is, we do not need to change circumstances — which is not possible — but we have to be aware of where we have to look critically at ourselves. But you know that."

As I re-read Lucy Ma's letters, I become more and more convinced that as we met at the Feet of Arunachala, our friendship contains not only her and me, but between us stands our common Father: Ramana. It seemed that Bhagavan suggested to us the thoughts that we wrote. Often, when I finished a letter, I was surprised to read things which I didn't intend to write. Our relationship was happening on a mysterious plane and here the words were used only as superficial

tools — Ramana made the clicks in our minds and we felt one another much better than words could explain.

This period of two years, until my next visit to the Ashram, had been a most difficult time for

both of us. Her loving support was much more than I could expect to receive even from a mother — she helped me tremendously. My *karma* allowed me to be with her during the last three weeks before her *Mahasamadhi*. May she be One with the Supreme Light of Arunachala.

MOON, MIST AND SUNRISE

By B. Fairclough

I loved you,
So I turned my face toward
the evening,
To seek a worthy jewel
among the stars;
To find you freedom;
Pearl of Ageless Splendour.
To bring you moonbeams
Locked in silver bars.

Love turned to anguish in the night,
As winds rose up
And hurled the stars apart
And thunderous storms
Raged mightily upon us,
And swamped the flame
That burned within my heart.

But hand in hand we stumbled
Till the darkness
Brought forth a cloak of thorns and
prickly briar.
And fearful beasts
Preyed loathsomely upon us,
And cruel demons mocked
And spewed their fire.

Then came we to a place
of heaving sadness,
Where all was cloud
And tears outwept the rain
And helpless in that swirling tide
of sorrow,
We found no ending
In our endless pain.

I sought, my love,
To turn your nights to gladness.
And still would I the fount called
Freedom meet.

How hard the road
Towards that bright dimension.
And heartless, yea,
These stones beneath our feet.

And then the path we trod
Became divided,
And there two hands unlocked,
And you were gone.
And in your place, another stood
called Wisdom.
And Wisdom said,
Alone must thou go on.

For she must wander
Till thou find fulfilment,
But in your seeking heart,
Seek first for Me.
And I will bring you to a new
tomorrow,
And Thou shalt find a Star, my son,
And BE.

So turned I to the lonely search
For Wisdom,
With Solitude the shepherd
To my goal.
And in the dreary dust
of desolation,
I found a Star
Whose glory filled my soul.

For Wisdom by her other name
Is Freedom.
And free alone are they
who rest within.
And now she bids me
Call to my beloved,
And my beloved hears
And enters in.

BOOK REVIEWS

PHILOSOPHIES OF INDIA: By Heinrich Zimmer. Edited by Joseph Campbell. Pub: Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi 110007. pp.687, Rs.250/175, hb/pb

This book is the first Indian reprint of Zimmer's account of Indian philosophies, first published way back in 1951, in the well known Bollingen foundation series edited by Joseph Campbell. The book as originally designed by Prof. Zimmer was to have been a thoroughgoing history and interpretation of Indian thought. But Zimmer died before the book was completed. And its editor Joseph Campbell found the various chapters of the planned book in various stages of completion some based on Zimmer's Columbia University Lectures and some on his omnivorous reading in Indian sacred literature, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain. Campbell has done a wonderful job of editing and the reader finds the narrative free, totally so, from the discontinuities, the incoherences and even contradictions which one would expect from an attempt to integrate the *disjecta membra* of a book.

Zimmer was that very rare specimen of an Occidental student and historian of Oriental wisdom, a person who blended shrewdness with sympathy, criticism with an imaginative understanding of what he was dealing with, humility with a mind disciplined to reject the bogus and the immature.

The book is in three parts, each part packed with matter and vividly presented, objectively perceived and sympathetically interpreted.

The first part, entitled The Highest Good has two sections. The first section deals with the Meeting of East and West and the opening chapter is entitled The Roar of Awakening. Zimmer says, "we of the Occident are about to arrive at a cross road that was reached by the thinkers of India some seven hundred years before Christ. This is the real reason why we become both vexed and stimulated, uneasy yet interested....India's teachings force us to realize what the problems (of religion and philosophy) are. But we cannot take over the Indian solution". This passage is a fine self-portrait of Zimmer. Part II deals with philosophies of Time and its three sections are entitled, The Philosophy of Success, The Philosophy of Pleasure and the Philosophy of Duty. This last section discusses Gandhiji's Satyagraha, which Zimmer regards as carrying the ancient Indo-Aryan idea of 'holding to the Truth', to do its work against an imperialism based on military might and technological superiority. If Jesus rebelled against petrified sanctimoniousness in Palestine, Gandhi pitted the strength of the indwelling spirit in every man against a panoplied and armed empire. Though the gains of Satyagraha have recently been outrightly thrown away by a gang of the most unscrupulous and selfish wretches that disgraced the politics of any country, the instrument itself has proved its efficacy. Part III entitled the Philoso-

phy of Eternity covers Jainism, Sankhya and Yoga, Brahmanism (Veda, Upanishad, Gita and Vedanta), Buddhism and Tantra.

Zimmer concludes that Indian religious philosophy flourishes not in the groves of Academe but in the lives of the "wildgeese" Sri Ramakrishna and Bhagawan Ramana.

It is seldom that one finds one's joy in reading a foreigner writing about our ancient wisdom. The tone of conscious and unconscious arrogance, especially on the part of those who imagine that the eating of an apple by Adam and Eve was the beginning of all our troubles through the ages, distresses one deeply. Zimmer is a shining exception.

-- Prof. S Ramaswamy.

THE MAKING OF A TEACHER -- Conversations with Eknath Easwaran: by Tim and Carol Flanders. pp.191, \$12. ORIGINAL GOODNESS: by Eknath Easwaran. pp.240, \$12. CONQUEST OF MIND: by Eknath Easwaran. pp.183, \$12. MEDITATION: by Easwaran, pp.219+18, \$12. All four published by Nilgiri Press, Blue Mountain Centre of Meditation, Berkeley, CA94953-477, USA.

These four books are best read and appreciated in the order enumerated above. The first gives in an informal conversational style the biography of one of the few choice and master spirits of our age who has brought to his role as a Teacher not only deep scholarship in a wide variety of subjects, but also a heart and mind at once humane, affable and wise. Such teachers are the salt of the earth. In the making of this inimitable teacher we see the profound changes wrought on his psyche by firstly his grandmother, secondly his encounter with Mahatma Gandhi, and thirdly if one may venture to guess, Meister Eckhart.

His ORIGINAL GOODNESS-(*Strategies for uncovering your hidden spiritual resources*) opens with a quotation from Eckhart which informs and by and large determines the grand theme of the book. It is shot through and through with a conviction born of personal experience that deep down within each one of us is the God and the Goodness we seek.

The conquest of the mind through meditation is the means by which such goodness is reached and kept and the main concern of the last three books is to impart to the reader and the listener the scientific method by which alone Meditation can be made meaningful. The Mantram and the Japam, the self-discipline of concentrating attention on a single theme are all necessary steps in this method. The exposition of the subject is effortlessly interspersed with a wide variety of quotations from the best in all the great religions of the world. Eknath Easwaran very much resembles Sarvepalli

Radhakrishnan in his citing from a vast repertoire, but with this difference: whilst Radhakrishnan is caviar to the general, Easwaran's exposition is carefully designed to reach the heart of young and simple minds and bring about a radical transformation among them by kindling in them the thirst to know and understand the profound truths imbedded in all the religions of the world. Man's aim should be to lead the good life for the good of mankind and such a life can spring from and sustained by only an eclectic mind. Easwaran's eclecticism runs like a golden thread through all the books and the rugged simplicity of his prose holds in its silken bonds both the learned and the not so learned in a common quest for the peace that passeth understanding. Small wonder therefore that the Blue Mountain Centre of Meditation which he founded in 1961 should continue to draw into itself men and women, young and old alike from all walks of life and from all climes and creeds, and transform them into world citizens.

-- S. Jayaraman

THE DISCOURSE SUMMARIES -- talks from a ten-day course : (condensed by William Hart.) by S.N. Goenka. Pub : Vipassana Vishodhan Vinyas, Dr. E. Moses Rd., Bombay 400 018. pp.113+12. No Price.
THE ART OF LIVING VIPASSANA MEDITATION : by S.N. Goenka. Pub: Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri, Maharashtra. pp.145+20. No Price.

S.N. Goenka, a retired industrialist, hails from the Indian community in Burma. He had the good fortune to come in contact with U Ba Khu from whom he learnt the Vipassana meditation which cured his migraine and made him an integrated personality.

Vipassana means "insight" in the ancient Pali language. It is the essence of the teaching of the Buddha, so says the author. The sayings of the Buddha as arranged by Mr. Goenka are taken from the Collections of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), and from Discourse (Sutta Pitaka) of the Pali canon.

The main problem for the Buddha was the problem of suffering and the entire mission of his life was to show to ordinary people how to end sorrow and suffering in this life, the only life we know. The Buddha did not leave any written text about his teaching or his ministry. But more than 500 years after his death the received tradition of his teaching was committed to writing in innumerable Pali texts.

Whilst we cannot be sure of the historical authenticity of these texts we can however discern from Goenka's books that the essence of the Buddha's teaching is that each one has to be a Light unto oneself and no external authority, however exalted, could help us to understand sorrow and suffering and be free of them in this very life.

Just as the Buddha drew the Eightfold Path out of his own long ministry in this world, the Eleven Dis-

courses expounded by Sri Goenka are an elaboration of the Eightfold Path, drawn out of his own experience. Much of his intellectual approach in both these books distinctly echo the thought and language of J. Krishnamurti who was himself a 'veiled' Buddhist.

The Art Of Living is adorned by many parables: "Swimmology", "Seed and fruit", "The pebbles and the ghee", "The doctor's prescription" all tellingly told and so of immense help in seeing things as they are and not as we wish to see them.

Perhaps the next edition of these two companion volumes on Vipassana will gain better public acceptance and a wider readership with a more logical and less discursive exposition.

-- S. Jayaraman

GLIMPSES OF DIVINE LIGHT -- Treasury of important Yoga systems with their secret techniques: by S.K. Das. Pub: Intellectual Publishing House, 23, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002. pp.240, Rs.125/Rs.50. (hb/pb).

This book is more an anthology than a treatise. The author ranges far and wide and suffuses his collection with a profusion of quotations from an impressive diversity of sources. Unfortunately the impression left after going through a whole medley of *obiter dicta* spread over 200 pages is that the author is more interested in showing that he is a polymath with all knowledge as his province than in systematically gathering his discursive thoughts into one coherent whole.

Religion, Philosophy, the Indian Yoga System, the Puranas, Upanishads, Animal Biology, Science Today, Psychology, Freud, the book glimpses through all these subjects providing for the reader a hotch-potch of a mini encyclopedia. Often quotations are attributed to authors who never wrote them. For instance the one attributed to Oscar Wilde. The word "celibacy" is invariably mis-spelt throughout as "celebacy". The book abounds in orthographical abominations and needs very careful re-editing.

After going through a forest of words spread over 200 pages one is left in an utter state of confusion worse confounded by the general crudity of the language. Even so one cannot but admire the author's earnestness and sincerity and sympathise with his irrepressible itch to share his knowledge with the rest of mankind.

-- S. Jayaraman

SAINTS AND MYSTICS: by Sw. Mukhyananda. Pub: R.K. Math, Madras 600 004. pp.247, Rs.20.

This book republishes fourteen lives of saints and mystics written by fourteen authors, and already published in a journal.

A study of the lives of saints and mystics is quite necessary for three reasons namely, education, inspiration and purification. Hinduism postulates that every *jīva* undergoes its evolution over a large number of births commencing even as inanimate objects such as trees and plants and rising to the state of a human being. When the *jīva* attains the stage of a human being it performs various karmas good and bad and earns thereby merits and demerits. When a *jīva* earns and accumulates great merits it attains sainthood in a future life. But even in that life the *jīva* is born only as an ordinary human being and only later as its life unfolds itself it is transformed into a saint.

The lives of the saints published in the book are soul-stirring as they were all outstanding personalities and achieved against heavy odds many things such as reformation of society, spread of religious faith and propagation of high ideals through their personal examples. Even God is believed to descend into the world as an Avatār to sustain good and destroy evil. God is also kind enough to send such Messiahs to the world now and then for the upliftment of the world. Hence, a study of the lives of such great saints will be quite rewarding to the readers. The Ramakrishna Math has done a great service by publishing these lives in the book.

-- Sathchithānanda Bhārathi Swāmīgal

SRI RAMAKRISHNA BHAGAVATA: by R.S. Ramabhadran. Pub: A-8, 185, R.K.M. Road, Madras 600 028. pp.180, Rs.20.

The lives of Sri Bhagavān Rāmakrishna and the Holy Mother Sri Sārādā Devi have a many-sided splendour.

However, the biographies have not mentioned their Avatārhood. Nonetheless, it is obvious that they are divine personalities and must have been Avatārs. The author has written a great thesis with copious authorities in this book to prove that Sri Bhagavān was an Avatār of fifteen Gods and also Goddesses known to the Hindu Pantheon. Similarly, he has also established that the Holy Mother was an Avatār of fifteen Goddesses. He has also pointed out the fact that Sri Bhagavān and the Holy Mother had also on occasions confirmed that they were Avatārs of certain Gods and Goddesses.

The devotees of Sri Bhagavān Rāmakrishna and the Holy Mother will surely congratulate the author for having brought out this book and thank him for it. They will also eagerly await the other four books which, the author has said, will follow.

-- Sathchithānanda Bhārathi Swāmīgal

MANDŪKYOPANISHAT - Drama and Treatise: English translation by Swami Sathchithānanda Bhārathi of Tamil drama by Swami Brahmānanda Tīrtha. Treatise by Swami Trivikrama Rāmānanda Bhārathi. (Pub. Sri

Vembaiyer Sāsвата Dharma Sāsanam, Krishnāpuram 627 759 Kadayannallūr.) pp.89, Rs.10.

SOUTH INDIAN DEVOTIONAL LEGENDS ON LORD SIVA: by Swami Sathchithānanda Bhārathi. Pub. Sri Saiva Mahāpeetham, G.S. Raju Rd. Vijayawada 11, pp.101, Rs.15.

SRIMAD KANDHA PURĀNAM: by Swami Sathchithānanda Bhārathi, Mounaswami Mutt, Courtāllam 627802. pp. 206, Rs.15.

This dramatised version of the Māndukya Upanishat, as a one-act Play, is enjoyable. Set in the Himālayas, Bhagavān Varuna appears as a huge Mandooka (frog) and gives instruction to a select band of seekers including Satyakama. The presentation is colloquial but faithful to the text.

The second part of the book is a discursive treatise (with charts and tableš) by Swami Trivikrama Rāmānanda Bhārathi. It throws detailed light on the many implications of the Māndukya and helps in understanding many of the key expressions in the Vedānta terminology.

Tiruvilaiyodal Puranam is an important Purāna of Saivism, the other two being *Peria Purānam* and *Kanda Purānam*. Purānas are not mere books of stories and legends; they convey precious truths of life - particularly spiritual life - in the form of stories. They leave a strong impression on the mind and in their own way shape the thought and conduct of the readers. Sathchithānanda Swāmīgal is to be thanked for his summarised renderings of the *Tiruvilaiyodal* and *Kanda Purānas* in English, thus making their contents available to those who are not conversant with Tamil. The first celebrates sixty-four Leelās of Lord Somasundareswara of Madurai and the other of Lord Skanda. The renderings have a natural flow and hold the interest of the reader. The central theme is of course the paramount role of Grace in spiritual life and even in mundane life geared to high ideals. These two volumes are educative from this point of view and are worth repeated reading.

-- M.P. Pandit

VEDIC GODS AND SOME HYMNS By Leela Devi. Sri Satguru Publishers. 40/5 Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110 007. pp.59, Rs.50.

A neat introduction to the Vedic Thought by a modern mind sensitive to the inspiration of the Rishis of a bygone age. Speaking of the various Gods, the author writes: "The different Gods Agni, Savitr, Soma, Varuna etc. have a distinct power and individuality. They are not mere mythological figures. Each God represents the Supreme Lord and at the same time is a part of him. The Gods are a part of the cosmic order and *yajna* or sacrifice.. These Gods have their own individuality and place in this universe much above their natural forces whom they seem to represent."(p.15).

The Vedic Deities that are introduced briefly are Prajāpati, Savitr, Agni, Soma, Varuna, Dawn, Vāc etc. Suitable selections in elegant English are illustrated under each heading. There are in addition topics like Tapas, Cosmic Pillar, Time, Yajna, Nāsadiya Sūkta, with helpful notes. Describing the Skamba in the Atharva Veda (X.7) she states: "The Skamba or the Pillar is pictured as the frame of creation, as the invisible and even transcendent ground on which everything stands and towards which every being tends. This is the central point of reference of the universe. It is a tree whose branches are Being and Non-Being, the whole universe is in the Skamba." (p.5)

Vāc, Speech, is revered as a Deity. "Through sacrifice the Rishis followed the path of the Vāc and found that she was among the Rishis. They revealed her to many. Some may see her but will not assimilate her. Some others may hear her but may not understand her... The relationship between Vāc and its hearer is not a merely intellectual one. It is a spiritual and intimate one."

The entire presentation stimulates interest in the Veda and constantly hints at the profound higher meaning behind the apparently mundane terms.

-- M.P. Pandit

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH: Upanishadic eschatology by William A. Borman. Pub: Satguru Publishers, 40/5 Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110 007. pp.70, Rs.75.

In treating the Upanishads as 'ranges of fact and experience', 'maps of consciousness', the author of this scholarly study follows the right track. He points out that for the seers of these texts Death is not an end, it is only a transition from one state of being to another. What guidance do we get from the Upanishads on the mystery of death and after? Who dies when death takes place? Dr. Borman makes a close study of some of the major Upanishads viz. Katha, Chhāndogya, Brihadāranyaka, Svetāsvatara, Mundaka, and approaches the subject from different angles.

All the passages in the Upanishads are not to be taken literally; some are symbolic, though they are 'not constructed symbols but discovered'. The author makes a clear distinction between Jivātman and Atman and explains the sense in which there is an essential identity between Jivātman and Brahman. He notes that Time and Space vary with the states of existence. Evolution of consciousness is the purpose of the series of births and cessations from birth with desire as the vehicle. Necessarily the direction has to be progressive. There cannot be regressions to animal births from the human. In the vision of the Rishis life in the world has a meaning for the Jivātman for whom 'with each cycle, a newer, more beautiful form, and more subtle, more refined will, thought and feeling capabilities evolve..' (p.50)

The writer takes note of the many studies in near-to-death experiences (especially by Moody and E. Kubler-Ross) and commends further research on modern lines. He quotes Krishnaprem on *Shrāddha*. These "ceremonies were not always the mere formalities that they usually are nowadays. Those who had knowledge were able to assist the departed soul on its journey through the inner worlds and in such a connection, this text, when transmitted from the mind of the 'living reader' to that of the still present though invisible 'dead', would serve to guide the soul on its wandering, and enable it to make the utmost use of the strange circumstances in which it found itself after the loss of the body." (p.69)

A very perceptive and enlightening study in a much misunderstood subject. It is a bold effort to bring together the findings of modern science and ancient wisdom on a matter that concerns every one of us.

-- M.P. Pandit

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS By M.C. Nanjunda Row. Pub. Dr. Nanjunda Row Charities, "Sasi Vilas", R.K Math Rd, Madras 600 004. pp.107, Rs.12.

Originally written in 1909, this work faithfully reflects the spirit of that age in which William James and Dr. Richard Bucke were the high priests of the call of Cosmic Consciousness. Dr. Nanjunda Row examines to what extent the understanding of these Western thinkers is in tune with the implications of the Vedantic concept of Mukti. What are the signs of this liberation of consciousness from the limitations of Prakriti? He lists six of them: subjective light; ecstatic bliss; sense of immortality and loss of the idea of death; moral elevation; intellectual illumination; general charm added to the personality. (p.66) The writer is careful to point out that all the liberated beings are not of the same piece: they vary in their manifestations.

In the course of his interesting discussion the author deplors the total absence of Bhakti in the Theosophical Movement which had become fashionable in those days. He deprecates the turn to occult powers and Mahatmas. He is however, appreciative of the great services of Dr. Annie Besant in the popularisation of ancient Indian culture. Some of his observations hit the mark: "Buddhism politically ruined India just as Christianity ruined the Romans and would have ruined Europe, had it not been for Protestantism which came to its rescue by ignoring Christ's teachings of non-resistance in practice.." (p.89).

The author laments that conditions (in his time) were hardly propitious for the efflorescence of Cosmic Consciousness. We are afraid things are no better even after 80 years of stressful times. All the same it is an education to follow the author in his study of the stages of the mental evolution of man.

-- M.P. Pandit

ESSAYS IN LIFE AND ETERNITY: by Sw. Krishnananda.
Pub: Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar, UP
249192. pp.251+10, Rs.50.

When man developed intelligence, he also acquired an intense curiosity to know all about the universe around him and about himself. Questions arose - What is life? Was the world created and will it come to an end? Why does it appear to be a total chaos, but on reflection appears to be a harmonious beautiful unity? What should be the principles in deciding questions arising in daily life? Answers have been attempted in all cultures, but none seem to be wholly adequate, and we feel that much remains unanswered.

Three paths are open -- religion, philosophy and science. Religion is in essence the answers given by sages in the olden days and accepted by faith as adequate answers. But in modern times quite a good many are not prepared to accept it altogether, specially in fanciful mythology and meaningless rituals. But religion has the advantage over other answers, in that our mind and feeling respond to the main idea of a universal spirit and some such spirit in each of us. Philosophy is based on reason, logic and speculation, but has a tendency to get lost in metaphysics created by itself. Science is on solid ground as it is based on observation and inference of general laws, which each one of us can do ourselves. It has caught the imagination of the people by its dazzling success in evolving technology that has improved our daily life. But in answering fundamental questions science also has serious limitations. This is because there are limitations caused by the nature of our minds. So in every area of knowledge, in the end our mind has to say "I don't know and I cannot know." Another weakness of the approach to knowledge through science arises out of the fact that science has no dimensions of moral values or of feelings of beauty and goodness. This feeling pre-dominates in more than half the issues calling for decision in every day life.

This book looks at all these questions in a comprehensive manner and attempts to produce a cogent, consistent whole which leaves nothing of human interest untouched or unexplained. The matter is condensed and packed with essentials. Naturally the going is heavy and requires a great deal of concentration, but the effort is highly rewarding.

The later part of the book deals with the manner in which a person can raise himself in spiritual consciousness, step by step. And lastly, appropriately the book concludes with a quick look at the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.

-- P.P.I. Vaidyanathan

THE WHEEL OF LIFE AND DEATH: by Philip Kapleau.
Pub: Rider/Century Hutchinson, 20, Vauxhall Bridge
Rd, London SW1V2SA pp.348+23, £ 8.95.

One is grippingly made aware of life's constant companion - death. From the very moment of conception, death could strike at any time. Yet one leads life pretending that death is likely to spare only oneself. How we cheat ourselves. Isn't it time to turn and face death, to discover its meaning and thus understand the real pulse of life as well? These are some of the all-important questions that the book holds us with. Neither are they presented in a didactic manner. The entire book is couched in the form of informal, yet earnest conversation, rather, a group interaction on the subject with the author creating interest and clearing doubts. What makes it the more vivid are the numerous examples drawn from all strata of life. The lay person's encounter with death and dying finds a place here, and, of course, so does the sage's victory over death.

While the responses of great ones at the time of the passing of their bodies is mentioned in some detail (including the last days of Ramana Maharshi, of the Buddha, of Christ, of Socrates and many other masters), their direct encounters with death and the manner in which they conquered it are not outlined. This would have been a valuable point of reference. However, the book does not feel partial in any way and has its own easy flow and coverage of the crucial subject.

Of special interest is the emphasis given to caring for the dying, the best way to achieve this, as also how to tackle grief on bereavement. The sections on karma and rebirth may be of more relevance to the occidental mind. But the book as a whole is relevant to anyone who is mortal and needs to come to terms with mortality.

-- Dr. Sarada Natarajan

THE NEW BIOLOGY: by Augros and Stanciu. Pub:
Shambhala, New Science Library, Mass. 02115, USA.
pp.231+44, \$12.95.

The beginning of this century saw the sciences in a state of relaxed self-satisfaction with the achievements made so far. The Physical Sciences had managed to get all the facts known in order, derived from a few simple laws and realised the unity, simplicity and the grandeur of the universe. Biology had collected an enormous number of facts and put them in some order under the simple laws of evolution by natural selection.

Now these ideas are questioned bit by bit. This book is about these questions now raised. The fact of evolution is not under question. The dispute is about how it came about. Many points are raised to show that there are cracks in Darwin's theory, but these cracks do not in any way undermine it, at any rate till an alternative gets established.

The discussions in the book can be divided into two groups -- one marshalling observed facts and deducing generalities, and the other exploring unknown territory, as the sub-title "Discovering the Wisdom of Nature"

indicates. The former task has been done exceptionally well and takes up more than half the book. It gives an idea of the harmony and beauty of all animal behaviour.

The second part however treads on tricky grounds for all Sciences, more so for Biology, which deals with very complex objects. We have to be extremely careful in drawing conclusions for two reasons. Firstly we traverse areas in the frontiers of knowledge dealing with things unknown. Some of these with suitable efforts we can know in course of time. But many of the things are totally beyond our comprehension because the human mind has limits to its powers and the data it can use are only a tiny portion of the signals flying about the universe. Secondly in Biology one of the important elements is the mind, both our own and of the animal. Although we are intensely aware of our own mind we do not have the slightest idea of what it is and how it works. The position is much worse in the case of the mind of the animal observed, of which we cannot even be aware and much less understand. The authors point to some interesting conclusions e.g.,

- 1) What is life? All we can say is that any object which has these three properties can be said to have life -- the ability to absorb matter from outside and grow, the ability to induce chemical reactions in this matter releasing energy for the use of the organism and, the ability to reproduce itself. We know nothing else.
- 2) How did life originate? We know that evidence of simplest forms of life appeared one thousand million years ago, and more and more complex forms appeared one by one. We do not know anything more.
- 3) What is the purpose? Purpose has no existence in nature. It is the creation of the human mind.
- 4) Hierarchy? This is also a creation of our mind because it wants to put man at the top. Darwin said "Never use the word higher and lower" Each animal is perfectly adapted to its environment. Man is the highest form for doing mathematics but if the aim is sheer survival some say that the Cockroach is the highest.

-- P.P.I. Vaidyanathan

MAN AND NATURE: by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Pub: Mandala/Unwin, Harper Collins Publishers, London W68JB. pp.151, £ 5.99.

This is a book by a Muslim scholar about the present day spiritual crisis in the relations between man and nature, viewed from the point of view of religion. Everyone is aware of the different faces of the problem -- population pressures, famine, pollution, depletion of resources, and to crown all, the abnormal growth of mental illness. All this has been happening during the last hundred years which has also witnessed the dazzling

explosion in the fields of science and technology, and the simultaneous decline in the faith of the common man in religion and ethics. There is obviously, a close connection between all these happenings.

For a million years or more man existed on the earth as a humble creature like the other animals adjusting himself to the ways of all-powerful Nature. As he learnt to understand how Nature functions, he slowly learnt to manipulate it to his advantage. Then his attitude changed from one of understanding to one of pride and he began to talk of domination of nature and conquering it.

Religion which is basically an attitude of realisation of the vastness of nature and the insignificance of man, took a back seat in his thinking and arrogance got into the driver's seat. This tendency has to be arrested and reversed as the first step in resolving the present spiritual crisis.

The book refers to the four cultures of Christianity, Islam, the Hindu and the Chinese. All started with the assumption that knowledge is divine and sacred and is an integrated whole. For instance the Indian view is that all real knowledge comes from the Vedas, (Srutis). Then come the six Vedangas dealing with the different branches of knowledge which we would now call applied sciences. Islam also recognises complete unity in judicial, social and theological subjects, all taking root in the Koran. It is only in the Christian world that knowledge split into meta-physics of Religion and secular knowledge of Science. It was an unfortunate moment in history when the Church condemned Copernicus and Galileo for heresy instead of honouring them for revealing the grandeur of nature.

We have two powers -- reason and feeling, each acting as a check on the other. When they act in harmony we are at our best. When they act in conflict we go to pieces. Take a situation of strain as in a war our moral self advises us not to over react, our secular logic advises us to use all our strength. Press all the buttons and shower nuclear missiles on the enemy killing every man, woman and child there and reducing every acre of land to a waste for centuries -- a neat painless solution of the problem no doubt, but totally unacceptable. This is secular knowledge without any moral control.

Is there a way out of this crisis? The secular science itself seems to be groping to find a way. It is reaching the limits of all possible knowledge beyond which lies the unknown, unknowable, the limits being drawn by the limits of our ability to know. It looks as if the secular science which discarded all spirituality, has itself found the way back to God -- may be not the God of mythology or popular worship, but very much like the Absolute, the ultimate Reality, the God of the philosopher.

-- P.P.I. Vaidyanathan

THE ASTROLOGY OF THE SEERS (A guide to Vedic/Hindu astrology): by Dr. David Frawley. Pub: Passage Press, PO Box 21713, Utah 84121-0713. pp.322+21, \$18.95.

Having studied Western Astrology and read David Frawley's "From the River of Heaven" (reviewed in the MP, '91 Aradhana Issue) I was excited to plunge into "The Astrology of the Seers". However, I found it surprisingly heavy going: Dr. Frawley, a Vedāchārya, obviously has so much information at his finger-tips. *The Seers* is packed with knowledge -- extremely well written and well researched, yet not easy to consume. In my experience, whether one uses Western Astrology or Vedic Astrology is irrelevant to the quality of the interpretation. It is the depth and understanding of the reader that is the most important factor -- not the system used. Frawley himself points this out when he calls out for astrologers who have 'both intelligence and intuition'.

The combination of Vedic knowledge with astrological interpretations has a divine potential. However for the lay person interested in a basic layout of Indian Astrology, there are easier books to read, though one must admit, not as rich as this one.

This is a beautiful book of many compacted treasures for the indefatigable initiate, and a *vade mecum* for those well on the way. Anyone coming across this system for the first time ought to read Frawley's "From the River of Heaven" before delving into this one.

-- Heather Boche

THOUGHT IS YOUR ENEMY: ed. by Antony Paul & Frank Noronha. Pub: Sowmya Publishers, 31 Ahmed Sait Rd., Fraser Town, Bangalore 560005. pp.107, Rs.88. THE SAGE AND THE HOUSEWIFE: by Shanta Kelker. Pub: as above. pp.118, Rs.98.

"If you think that you can read and understand this book, you can be quite off the mark", I was warned, yet in reviewing these two books I feel obliged to attempt some sense of understanding, at least for the benefit of the would-be reader. Treacherous territory right from the start, *Thought is Your Enemy* has been my first encounter with UG, and initially I reacted strongly to his apparent delight in controversy for controversy's sake, in the contradiction between his claims to be teaching nothing, his disdain for the idea of gurus and philosophy, while spending his life journeyming around the world discoursing, and allowing himself to perform the role of guru to so many. By the time I'd waded through the two books (barely 100 pages each, so the struggle indicated the degree of my resistance), my negativity had at last been moderated to ambivalence. The man stirs up the cobwebs of dogma-and-doctrinaire rigidity; he forces his audience to question the foundation of fondly cherished beliefs and opinion.

The 'natural state' supposedly attained by UG when

he experienced his 'calamity' is far from convincing: while claiming that thought is the enemy, he constantly intellectualizes and rationalizes for the sake of convincing his audience, suggesting at the very least that thought is still his own enemy. Silence would seem to be the most appropriate vehicle for his point of view. Thought Is Your Enemy is a theme central to his philosophy (anti-philosophy would be more accurate), reflecting the belief that 'human thinking is destructive', being 'born out of some sort of neurological defect in the human body'. This point of view is explored by the questioners from different perspectives, each roundly debunked by UG, who while claiming utter disinterest in convincing his audience, pays no credence to any ideas but his own.

The interviews touch on mind, soul, spirituality, experience, love, death, sex and Nature, with UG's responses to the subjects ranging between brilliantly lucid ('all understanding is merely interpretive, based on memories of personal experience, semantics and desire to reinforce existing prejudice'), and barely intelligible ('the whole foundation of culture is built on the foundation to kill and be killed'). One could generously presume that his more outrageous statements are deliberately served up to shock and stimulate close assessment of personal belief systems.

Some subjects he might best leave well alone: Nature and ecology spring to mind in this category. He suggests that animals have no thoughts, that humans are 'probably far more evolved than other animals', that thought can't help our ecological problems. UG should perhaps confine himself to philosophical perspectives.

"The Sage and the Housewife" is a collection of reminiscences and anecdotes presented by one of his admiring devotees, the 'housewife' of the title. The format is chronological, almost in the form of a diary, and as such follows the waxing and waning of the author's attitude towards UG through his treatment of herself and a diverse selection of visitors seeking UG's wisdom for varying reasons. Her affection for him often borders on adoration, which is hardly endearing to an objective reader, yet the anecdotes expose a gentle and sensitive aspect of UG which renders him more likeable than that obtained in the question-answer format of "Thought is your Enemy". This more homely presentation also affords the reader a different perspective on the man in the context of an ambience established by the intimacy of the author's presence. All wisdom is said to be more effectively appreciated through direct experience of the Guru, and this book achieves a reasonable bridging of the sense of distance I felt from the first book.

Both books will be thoroughly appreciated by those already convinced by UG's irreverent philosophy, and offer a stimulating, though not necessarily persuasive, introduction to the uninitiated.

-- John Button

THE PRAYER OF THE FROG, Volume 1: pp.276, Rs.44; Volume 2: pp.256, Rs.38. ONE MINUTE WISDOM: pp.232, Rs.35. THE SONG OF THE BIRD: pp.197, Rs.35. All by Anthony de Mello, Pub: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, P.B. 70, Anand, Gujarat-388001.

These four from the late Fr. Anthony de Mello are full of stories, parables and anecdotes, culled from various religions and countries, from the lives of mystics and from his own story-telling prowess. The collection is a veritable goldmine for anyone seeking spiritual development. And the casual reader ought to be regaled by their witty wisdom.

Stories and parables have been frequently made use of by many great Masters, like Ramana and Ramakrishna, to bring home spiritual truths difficult to comprehend and the erroneous ways of individual concepts and conduct. Such a medium awakens transformation by appealing directly to the Heart rather than to the mind. These four delightful books from de Mello have this quality.

A golden sample: "The rule in a monastery was not 'Do not speak' but, 'Do not speak unless you can improve upon silence'"

A short parable on some peoples' idea of prayer and Grace: Pious old lady after the war: "God was very good to us, we prayed and prayed, so all the bombs fell on the other side of the town!"

Talking about Love: Gandhi spun a table cloth as a gift for the wedding of Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth. Mountbatten sent it to the Princess with this note: "this you lock up with the Crown jewels... for it was spun by a man who said 'the British must depart as friends'"

If you want to risk seeking truth read this! : A newspaper reporter wanted to have a look at the victim of a car accident. To beat the crowd around, he hit upon an idea. "I am the father of the victim" he cried. "Please let me through". The crowd let him pass... To his embarrassment, the victim was a donkey!

It is said that true greatness is achieved 'when you are oblivious of the dignity of those above you and make those below you oblivious of yours, when you are neither haughty with the humble nor humble with the haughty.'

On the subject of Criticism there is a beautiful story: A monkey on a tree hurled a coconut at the head of a Sufi. The man picked it up, drank the milk, ate the flesh and made a bowl from the shell and said, 'Thank you for your criticism of me'.

-- K.R. Mohan

SADHANA: A WAY TO GOD : by Anthony de Mello. Pub: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, P.B.70, Gujarat-388001. pp.168, Rs.24.

Fr. Anthony de Mello was a Jesuit and also a retreat master and spiritual director guiding group contemplation classes. This is a book by him on the Art of prayer and contemplation, basically in the Christian way, for 'spiritual nourishment and satisfaction and fulfillment'. The book has already been published in 22 languages. It is a prayer-cum-exercise-guide on various techniques of cultivating awareness. Divided into three main parts, the first deals with developing awareness through thought-silencing and body and breathing sensations. For those uncomfortable with abstract forms of contemplation there are exercises in the second part based on certain forms of fantasizing on events and on Jesus, to fill one with peace and His presence. The third part is based on the prayer techniques of some Christian Saints and Christian Theology.

-- K.R. Mohan

BOOKS RECEIVED

TEMPLES THE CENTRES FOR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Mata Amritananda Mayi. M.A. Mission Trust, Kerala 690542. pp.43, Rs.50.

THE PRACTICE OF BRAHMACHARYA (revised): Sw. Sivananda. Divine Life Society, UP 249192. pp.203, Rs.30.

THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER MEETS THE MONKEY: Kenneth Blanchard. Rupa & Co/AFL EWP., Dr. Muniappa Road, Madras 600010. pp.137, Rs.40.

ASTROLOGY FOR BEGINNERS. (23rd edn.) pp.104, Rs.18. HINDU PREDICTIVE ASTROLOGY pp.292, Rs.40. THREE HUNDRED IMPORTANT COMBINATIONS pp.340, Rs.48. RAMAN'S 110 YEAR EPHEMERIS (1891-2000AD) (revised and enlarged) pp.270, Rs.45. HOW TO JUDGE HOROSCOPE Vols.1&2. pp.304/475, Rs.40/Rs.60. All by B.V. Raman. First three distr. by UBS Publishers, New Delhi 110002, last three by Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi 110007.

QUESTION BOX SERIES 1 ON VEDANTA: A. Elenjmittam. Basic Education Publications, Bombay 400050. pp.57+29. No Price.

SAI THE MOTHER AND ANASUYA THE AMMA: O.V. Ganapathy Subramanyam. Sai Ma Gurudatta Pub., Ambari Agraharam, Machilipatnam 521001. pp.286, Rs.35.

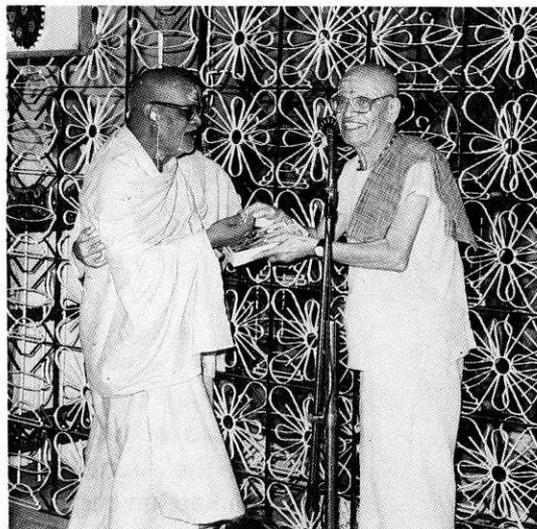
DICTIONARY OF BHAGAVADGITA: R.J. Venkateswaran. Sterling Publ., New Delhi 110016. pp.203, Rs.250.

CHIDAKASA VAHINI: (beginning Aug'91) a new spiritual journal for serious seekers. Pub: Chidakasa Publications, Sri Gopaldaswamy Ashramam, Trivandrum 695013, Kerala. A monthly edited by Thanu Pillai Swamy, presenting life and teachings of sages living and gone, known and unknown. Subscriptions: Annual/Life: Rs.50/500, \$10/100.

FUNCTIONS AT THE ASHRAM



Sri Ramaneswara Mahalinga Shrine



Ashram President Sri T.N. Venkataraman with Sri Kunju Swami

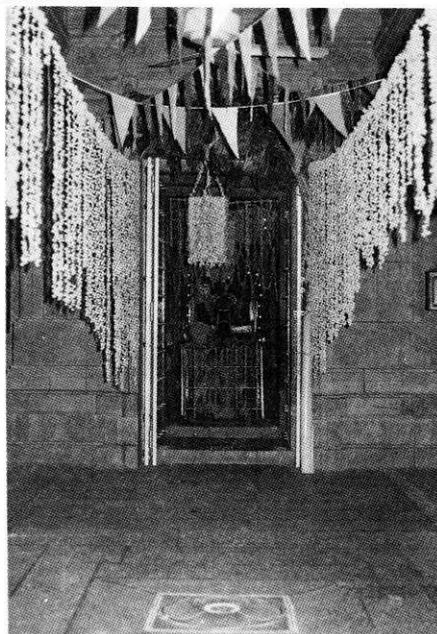


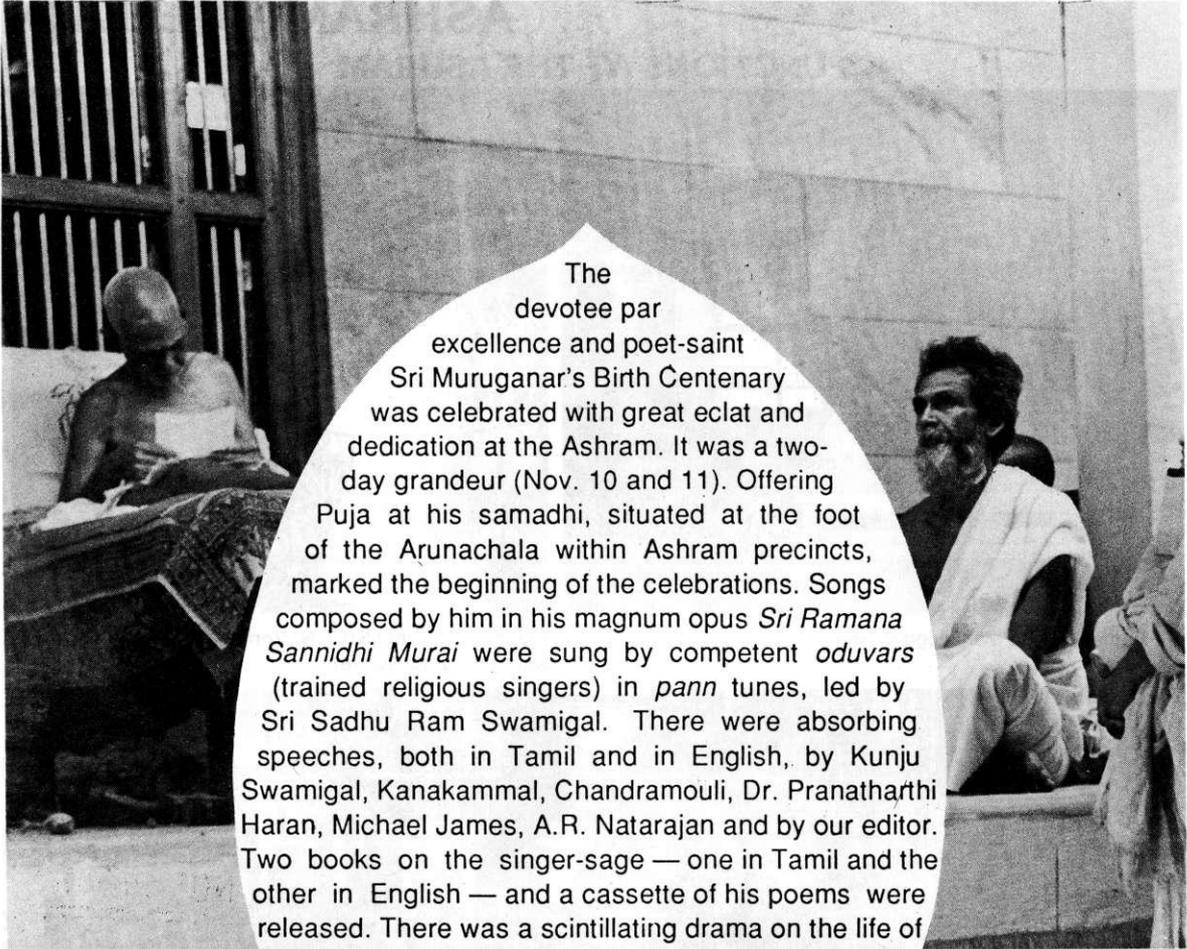
Aradhana crowd

Mahapuja at Matrubuteswara Shrine



Navarathri celebration

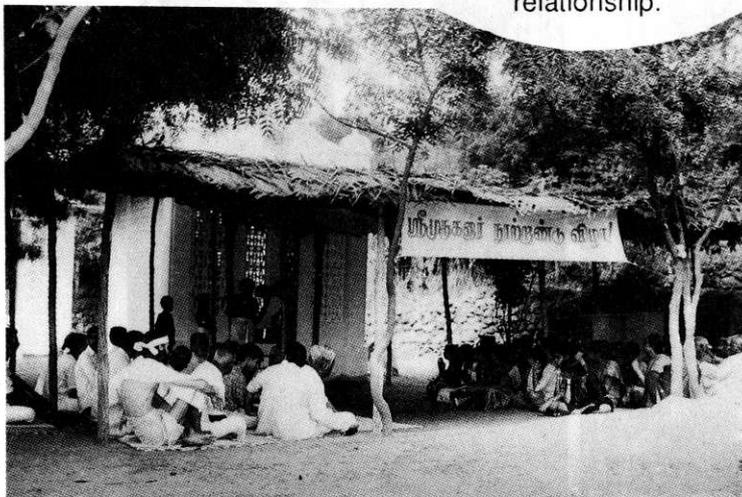




Sri Bhagavan and
Sri Muruganar

Sri Muruganar Centenary Celebrations

The devotee par excellence and poet-saint Sri Muruganar's Birth Centenary was celebrated with great eclat and dedication at the Ashram. It was a two-day grandeur (Nov. 10 and 11). Offering Puja at his samadhi, situated at the foot of the Arunachala within Ashram precincts, marked the beginning of the celebrations. Songs composed by him in his magnum opus *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* were sung by competent *oduvvars* (trained religious singers) in *pann* tunes, led by Sri Sadhu Ram Swamigal. There were absorbing speeches, both in Tamil and in English, by Kunju Swamigal, Kanakammal, Chandramouli, Dr. Pranatharathi Haran, Michael James, A.R. Natarajan and by our editor. Two books on the singer-sage — one in Tamil and the other in English — and a cassette of his poems were released. There was a scintillating drama on the life of Sri Muruganar. The Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore, deserve credit for coordinating the function. By thus glorifying Sri Muruganar the devotees exemplified and emulated the traditional splendour of *guru-sishya* relationship.



Centenary celebrations commence at his samadhi



Puja at his shrine



"Sri Muruganar" —
book released.
Sri T.N. Venkataraman,
Ashram President,
presents the first copy
to Sri Sadhu Ram
Swamigal



Sri Kunju Swami
commences the
talks session



Smt. Kanakammal



Michael James



Chandramouli



A.R. Natarajan



Dr. Pranatharthi Haran

Sri Muruganar —
dance-drama by
Ramana-Nritya Kala Ranga

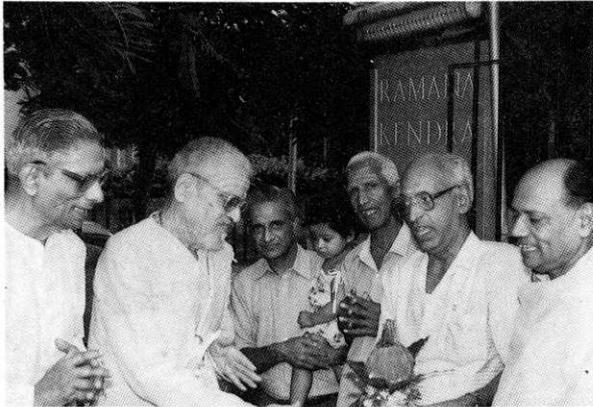


V. Ganesan

Sri Sambandam
Oduvar from
Sirkazhi singing
songs from
Sri Ramana
Sannidhi Murai



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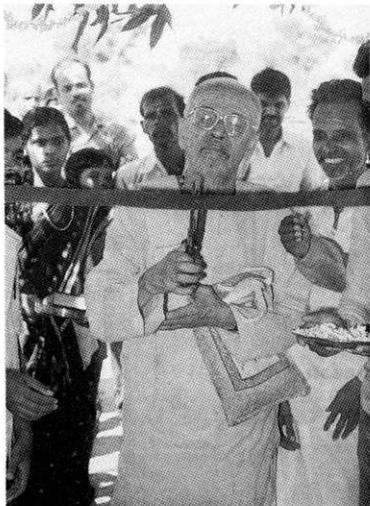


HONOURING THE ASHRAM PRESIDENT SRI T.N. VENKATARAMAN

Delhi Ramana Kendra receives Sri T.N. Venkataraman, Ashram President, with the traditional *poornakumbha* honour; (l to r) C.G. Balasubramanian, T.N. Venkataraman, V.S. Ramanan (with Master Siddharth), S. Viswanathan, V. Mahalingam, K.C. Subbiah



Delhi Kendra devotees joyously participating in this function

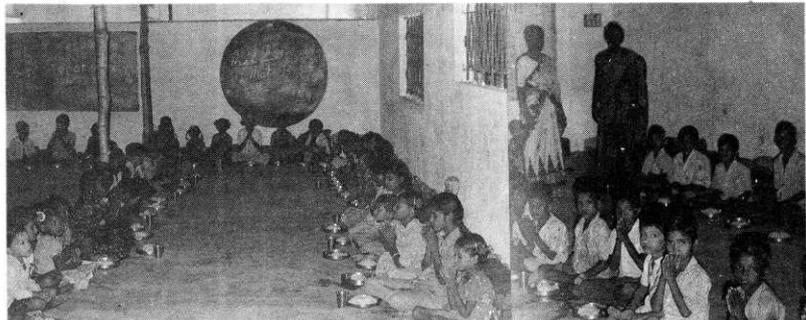


SANMARGA DAYASRAMAM, TIRUVANNAMALAI: This orphanage so ably run by Sri Kalainambi houses about 200 children. **Sri T.N. Venkataraman** declares open the orphanage's residence home

Sri Kalainambi and the Ashram President

Fifth Annual Seminar on Vallalar Ramalinga Swami at Tiruvannamalai: (l to r), **Smt. R. Indirakumari**, Tamil Nadu Minister, **Sri Ooran Adigal** and **T.N. Venkataraman**

Children pray before their lunch



EDITOR'S PILGRIMAGE to Belgium and Germany



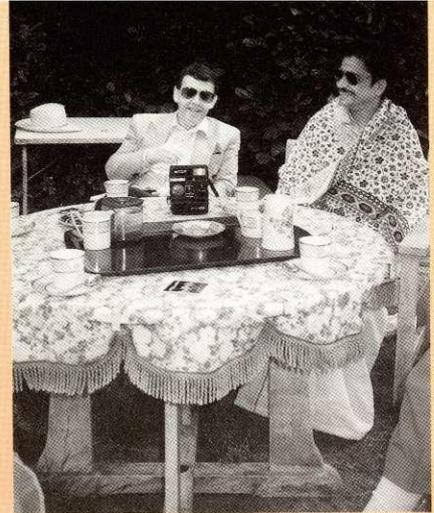
At Ostende, Belgium: Editor, along with Mr. & Mrs. Josef Nauwelaerts. Florizoone Roger (host) standing in between them (with dark glasses).



Hamburg: In front of the Railway Station.



Berlin: A nauseating experience in the midst of the remnants of the notorious 'Berlin Wall'.



Enjoying snacks and tea with **Charles Madigan**, host in Germany. He accompanied our Editor throughout his pilgrimage in Belgium and Germany.



A few of the many Ramana-bhaktas he met in Germany. **Trudel Elsaesser** and **Karin Stagemann**



Marlies Hibschenberger
Albert Frahm



Frederik Stalimer



Erna Feig

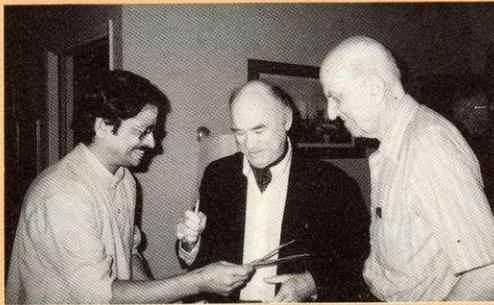
2018
6

To America

(Strengthening RAMANA MAHARSHI FOUNDATION OF AMERICA)



BOSTON: (Before discussions) Meditation at 'Horai-San', the spiritual book-shop. **Stephen and Carol Palmer** (not in picture) owners and our Editor's hosts are soaked in Sri Bhagavan's teachings.



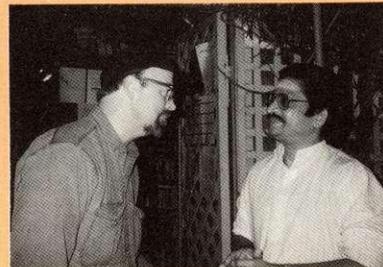
San Diego: With **Dr. Alan Anderson** and **Robert Powell** (host).



A discussion-course at **Robert Powell's** residence.



Swami Bhaveshananda, at 'Vedanta Centre', welcomes our Editor.



Dennis Wills, in whose book-shop, this year too, a talk was given, expresses appreciation to our Editor.



Santa Fe: **Dr. David Frawley's** (host, not in picture) residence: **Prof. Radhakrishnan** is seen elucidating an important point during discussion.



Seattle:
Ramana Sat-Sangh in progress.

Durham: At the 'Hindu Bhavan'



At 'AHAM' Ashram (l to r) **Riaz Padamsee**, **Sri Ramana**, Editor, **Elizabeth**, **Behroz Padamsee** (hosts).



SRI GANESAN IN HOPILAND

By Carmen "Seal" Cecilia Kotting

Early one morning in August, **John Loewenstein, Sri Ganesan** and I set out for another country, the land of the Hopis in the centre of the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona, USA. Everything contrives to give one the feeling of passing into another world: the dramatic change in landscape from verdant canyons and mountains to the arid hills and *mesas* (flat-topped hills) of the painted desert; the different language, since Hopis prefer to speak their native tongue, though most also speak English; and a different and unique culture and way of life, with laws and regulations strictly enforced to safeguard the Hopi ways from interference and desecration — signs warn against the taking of photographs, recordings, and even notes.

The Hopi lifestyle is also different from outlying America. Their homes are built on the mesa tops, while their fields lie on the slopes and flats below. In harmony with nature, the Hopi practise a unique and successful form of dry farming. Using no irrigation, fields are placed in areas where moisture naturally collects. Prayer and ceremony are relied upon to supplement this with the precious rain needed for their crops and drinking water. All aspects of life are integrated into a sacred whole. Time, too, flows differently here. There is no "rat race", and things are not forced, but allowed to happen in their proper time. It is not surprising that "Hopi" means "peace".

We arrive at our destination, the home of **Thomas Banyacya**, the official spokesman of the Hopi people, whose spiritual mission is to spread the Hopi message throughout the world, both by receiving interested visitors at his home, and travelling throughout the United States and abroad. His is a holistic message of living in reverence and harmony with nature — which is not separate from the Divine — and the other peoples who populate our globe.

Sri Ganesan presented Thomas with a cloth bearing a picture of Ramana Maharshi and the sacred mountain Arunachala, that dominates the

John Loewenstein



landscape around Ramanasramam. Thomas was very interested to learn about Arunachala and the similarities between the Tamil and Hopi people. The Hopis, too, have their sacred or "power" places, each with its own story, where special prayers and rituals are performed. Thomas was pleased to have made this contact with us as it is part of his mission to reach out



Mrs. Carmen

to people in all parts of the earth to encourage them to work together to ameliorate the present world situation, not only for themselves, but for future generations to fulfill their spiritual potential. He also told us that a Hopi spokesman would be travelling in Asia this fall and might visit Ramanasramam to share this message. In this spirit of sharing, we were most grateful to receive permission to take photographs for *The Mountain Path* so that Sri Ganesan could share with readers his experience of Hopi life and culture.

During our two days in Hopiland we imbibed much of the Hopi culture, had two inspiring visits with Thomas Banyacya, and saw a traditional Hopi ceremonial dance. These dances are not without effect. Returning to Sedona we were accompanied by wonderful rainstorms brought on by the Snake Dance that was being performed as we were leaving Hopiland. We were also blessed with a spectacular rainbow that seemed to emanate from the top of the red rocks of Sedona.

Hopi elder, **Mr. Thomas Banyacya** listens to our Editor on Bhagavan. **Mrs. Carmen** seated to his left



RAMANA CENTRES IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

Sri Eric Tolone of France has written to announce the establishment of a new spiritual centre, **Maieutique Transcendante**, founded under the inspiration of Sri Ramana Maharshi, with the purpose of studying Sri Bhagavan's teachings and practising *sadhanas* leading to Self-realisation. Six groups have been organised so far: five in France — in Gretz, Pau and Soulac — and one in Lerida, Spain.

Seminars and classes are being held regularly, and auxiliary observances include traditional pujas, mantra japa, and recitations of such spiritual texts as *Vivekachudamani*.

People of all religious backgrounds are welcomed in the spirit of universal love and tolerance exemplified by Sri Bhagavan. Although none of the present members had the privilege to meet Sri Bhagavan in the body, all feel His silent influence and guidance on the path of Self-realisation.



Ramana devotees in France

Anyone wishing more information on the centre and its groups may write to:

Eric Tolone
Association Maieutique Transcendante
13, rue du Vieux Moulin
77220 Gretz
France.

ARUNACHALA ASHRAMA, NEW YORK

On May 12, Sri Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana Day* was solemnly observed at Arunachala Ashrama, New York, in the presence of **Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavata, Margo Martin, Eric Ford, Arthur Coucouvitia, Mena Singh, Prof. S. Raman, Ramanlal Bhatt, Chhaya Tewari, Babubhai and Bhanumati Parikh** (with Raju and Swaroop).

The very special guest on this sacred occasion was **Smt. Kanakamma**, who arrived from Philadelphia, along with her

brother **Sri T.R. Ekambaram, Smt. Shanta and Sri Anand**. After *Veda Parayana* and chanting in Tamil, Kanakammal recounted her reminiscences of Sri Bhagavan which transported, as it were, the listeners to His Presence in the Old Hall at Arunachala. *Prasad* was distributed.

Throughout the day there were chanting and *pujas*. A glorious, holy day, indeed !



On September 1, the Ninety-Fifth Anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala Day was celebrated at *Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram*, Nova Scotia, Canada and also at the *Arunachala Ashrama* in New York city. Picture shows devotees at the shrine of New York Arunachala Ashrama; (extreme right) **Evelyn**.

SRI BHAGAVAN IN RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

The tidal wave of spiritual hunger and seeking rides high and unabated by any of the world's upheavals. Sri Bhagavan's word continues to be spread throughout Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R., where the number of devotees and correspondents is increasing every month. "Like mushrooms after a rain" (to quote a Russian proverb) new journals are springing up exclusively dedicated to spiritual questions, and a number of translations excerpted from *The Mountain Path* and books by and on Sri Ramana will appear in the near future.

U.S.S.R.

St. Petersburg/Leningrad: Response to *The Message of Truth*, the Ashram's first authorised publication of Sri Bhagavan's works in the Russian language has been very exciting. Letters received by both the translator, OM, and Sri Ramanasramam indicate the impact on the Soviet reader: "... in my hands I hold a gem...", "the publication of this book is an extraordinarily important event and, under present conditions truly heroic...", "thanks to you I have succeeded in understanding *who I have been seeking all my life*", "this book has literally changed my life — I have found what I was seeking!".

One result of the book's popular acceptance by both scholars and seekers has been a number of offers by scholarly and popular journals to print translations of extracts and articles by and about Sri Bhagavan. One publisher in particular is planning to bring out a series of books entitled *Indian Teachers of the 20th Century*, and has insisted that OM prepare three volumes of Sri Bhagavan's works for inclusion in the series.

Since returning to the Soviet Union in April, Sri OM has been giving regular talks about Sri Bhagavan, Ramanasramam and the teachings of *Atma-Vichara*, beautifully illustrated with colour slides taken during his visit.

Another response to the popularity of the book has come from the media. Sri OM was invited to give a 40-minute radio

interview, broadcast in July, during which he discussed the life and teachings of Sri Bhagavan, life at Sri Ramanasramam, and the path of sadhana followed by resident ashramites. Sri OM also gave a two-minute television interview covering the main points of the book. This has generated even more interest in Sri Ramanasramam than before, and many Russian readers are planning pilgrimages to the Ashram.

Krasnodar: Vladimir Afanasyev, who opened the Department of Yoga and Indian Spirituality at the Spiritual Life Centre in Krasnodar last year, has written to announce that his centre will begin publishing a quarterly journal entitled *Yoga and Spirituality*, which will include translated articles and extracts from the works of a variety of Indian teachers, including Sri Ramana Maharshi. Sri Afanasyev has earnestly requested our editor, **Sri V. Ganesan**, to be a member of the journal's editorial board, and for Sri Ramanasramam to serve as one of the journal's founders. As Sri Afanasyev's institute is a government-funded project, its sphere of influence is profound and its audience vast and wide-ranging. The Ashram's participation in his journal will spread the Gospel of Sri Bhagavan yet further throughout the Soviet Union.

YUGOSLAVIA

Belgrade: The Belgrade Kendra, headed by **Mukta (Zoran Denic)** has written to announce the completion of a subject-by-subject condensation of extracts from some of the major works by and about Sri Bhagavan. The book is called *Who am I?* and will be released this year.

Zrenjanin: Swami Advaitananda (Ivan Ristic) of the Maha Yoga Ramana Kendra in Zrenjanin has just released a collection of Sri Bhagavan's works entitled *Istina (Truth)*. The contents include Serbian translations of *Who am I?*, *Upadesa Saram*, *Self-Enquiry*, *Upadesa Manjari*, and *Sad Vidya*. He has also announced the preparation of a Kendra journal and many translation works in progress, including a Serbian translation of *Talks* and *Thus Spake Ramana*, and Hungarian and Rumanian translations of *Who am I?*

Grace is in the beginning, middle and end. Grace is the Self. Because of the false identification of the Self with the body the Guru is considered to be with body. But from the Guru's outlook the Guru is only the Self. The Self is one only. He tells that the Self alone is. Is not then the Self your Guru? Where else will Grace come from? It is from the Self alone. Manifestation of the Self is a manifestation of Grace and vice versa. All these doubts arise because of the wrong outlook and consequent expectation of things external to oneself. Nothing is external to the Self.

— Bhagavan Ramana in *Talks*, No.157

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