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

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— Editor.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
Editorial

THE ONLOOKER'S VIEW
The Onlooker's View

Enquiring within, 'Who is the seer?' I saw the seer disappear leaving That alone which stands forever. No thought arose to say 'I saw'. How then could the thought arise to say 'I did not see'?

— Arunachala Ashtakam, verse 2

What is the hallmark of jnana? What is the sign of true and full Self-realisation? Sri Bhagavan in the introductory verse defines this state as being the one in which the 'I'-thought, the sense of being an individual person, has been permanently eradicated. One consequence of this eradication is both radical and surprising: the world-picture, which was only a projection of that 'I'-thought, disappears along with the 'I' which used to see it, leaving only the formless Self. In that final state there is no one who sees and nothing to be seen. Bhagavan summed up this perspective when he said, in Guru Vachaka Kovai, verse 1005:

The state in which no “other” is seen,
No “other” heard, no “other” known,
Know that this and this alone
Is Cosmic Consciousness [Bhuma].

In describing Self-realisation in this way, Bhagavan was endorsing a similar Upanishadic definition which can be found in the Chandogya Upanishad (7:24:1):

That in which one does not see what-is-other [any], does not hear what-is-other and does not know what-is-other, is the infinite [bhuma], whereas the state in which one sees what-is-other, hears what-is-other, and knows what-is-other, is finite [alpa]. That which is infinite alone is immortal, whereas that which is finite is mortal.

The observer and the observed, the ‘I’ and the world, only arise, says Bhagavan, when one forgets one’s own Self, one’s own real nature. Conversely, when one abides as the Self, without ever losing awareness of it, the world and its observer never arise. This was confirmed by Bhagavan in the next verse of Guru Vachaka Kovai (1006), a verse which also develops a theme from the Chandogya Upanishad:

Non-dual infinite Awareness
Where the error of seeing, hearing,
knowing

Various objects has been destroyed,
This is the purest bliss serene.

The differing perspectives of the jnani and the ajnani are clearly brought out in these two verses. The jnani, abiding as the Self, ‘the purest bliss serene’, is not aware of anything other than his own Self. For him, names and forms are not merely unreal, they have no existence at all. The ajnani, on the other hand, moves around in a wholly unreal world of his own making, thinking that the ‘I’ who sees the world is moving around in that same world. The jnani’s perspective, if one can call it a perspective, is the real one, whereas the ajnani’s perspective has one unreal entity observing another, which is equally unreal.

This distinction should be borne in mind whenever one addresses the perennial question of ‘Who is a jnani?’ or ‘Who is not a jnani?’. ‘Only a jnani can recognise a jnani,’ says Bhagavan (Day by Day, p. 19). The ajnani does not have this ability because his ‘I’ can only recognise unreal names and forms. While that ‘I’ still exists, there is no functioning faculty in him which can register or experience the jnana which underlies them. Anything which the ajnani sees is therefore unreal, and, consequently, any conclusion he comes to which depends on this unreal visual evidence must necessarily be untrue. That is why the ajnani can never evaluate the state or greatness of a jnani by watching how he behaves or by listening to what he says.

Bhagavan has said that our fundamental mistake lies in identifying ourselves with our bodies. Having made that error, we then move on quite naturally to the erroneous conclusion that the jnani is also someone who lives in and functions through a body.

An ajnani sees someone as a jnani and identifies him with the body. Because he [the ajnani] does not know the Self and mistakes his [own] body for the Self, he extends the
same mistake to the state of the \textit{jnani}. The \textit{jnani} is therefore considered to be the physical frame.

Again, since the \textit{ajnani}, though he is not the doer, still imagines himself to be the doer and considers the actions of the body his own, he thinks the \textit{jnani} to be similarly acting when his body is active. But the \textit{jnani} himself knows the truth [that he never performs actions] and is not confounded. The state of the \textit{jnani} cannot be determined by the \textit{ajnani} and therefore the question troubles only the \textit{ajnani} and never does it arise for the \textit{jnani}. (Talks, no. 499)

The \textit{ajnani} likes to think that \textit{jnana} will somehow shine through in the behaviour, the attitudes and the words of the person who is taken to be a \textit{jnani}, and that one can therefore judge whether a person is realised or not on the basis of his speech, demeanour, etc. Bhagavan said that this attitude is fundamentally flawed because it assumes, erroneously, that the \textit{jnani} is or has a body whose activities can be judged. Bhagavan called this the ‘onlooker’s view’ and repeatedly maintained that it has no validity at all.

\textbf{Question: What is the difference between jivanmukti and videhamukti?}

\textbf{Bhagavan:} There is no difference. For those who ask, it is said, ‘A \textit{jnani} with a body is a \textit{jivanmukta} and he attains \textit{videhamukti} when he drops off the body.’ But this difference is only for the onlooker, not for the \textit{jnani}. His state is the same before and after the body has dropped. We think of the \textit{jnani} as a human form or as a being in that form. But the \textit{jnani} knows he is the \textit{Self}, the one reality, which is both inside and outside, and which is not bound by any form or shape. (Day by Day, pp. 86-7)

In order to explain to devotees how \textit{jnaris} appear to be functioning through bodies but in fact are not really doing so, Bhagavan would give various analogies. He would say that a \textit{jnani} is like someone who sleeps in a cart, but is unaware of the movement of the cart, its stopping, starting and unyoking. Or he would say that the \textit{jnani} is like a child who is fed while it is half asleep, and who remembers nothing about it the next morning. The idea of such analogies is that the onlooker sees an action and assumes that someone is doing it, and is aware of doing it. In fact, in each case, there is no one on the ‘inside’ who is aware of what is going on.

Bhagavan would sometimes add that all these explanations were only given to satisfy the confused minds of ‘onlookers’ who found it hard to assimilate the truth that the \textit{jnani} is not the body and does not function within it or through it. His memorable phrase, ‘There are no \textit{jnaris}, there is only \textit{jnana},’ attempts to convey this same idea: that realisation is not a localised phenomenon that has occurred in some bodies but not in others. \textit{Jnana} arises non-temporally and non-spatially as soon as the ‘onlooker’s viewpoint’ is destroyed.

The ‘onlooker’, though he may accept this intellectually, is usually an incorrigible classifier. Not only does he attempt to decide who is realised and who is not, he further subdivides spiritual people into how far they are along the path, or, if they have ‘made it’, how enlightened they are. The following classification is a typical ‘onlooker’s’ verdict:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Brahma\textit{vid}} — one who has realised Brahman.
\item \textbf{Brahma\textit{vid\textit{vara}}} — one who is superior among knowers of Brahman.
\item \textbf{Brahma\textit{vid\textit{varya}}} — the best among the knowers of Brahman.
\item \textbf{Brahma\textit{vid\textit{varishta}}} — the supreme among the knowers of Brahman.
\end{itemize}

Bhagavan commented on this traditional classification on several occasions. In \textit{Upadesa Manjari}, he said that these ‘are not states of knowing and release. So far as knowledge and release are concerned, no distinction whatever is made in the four stages.’ In \textit{Talks} (nos. 95 and 256) he said that ‘all of them are liberated while alive,’ and that ‘there is no difference in the samadhi state or the \textit{Jnana} of \textit{jnaris}. This classification is only from the standpoint of the observer.’
If the jnani cannot be graded by the onlookers, what about the onlookers themselves? Can they be divided into the mature and the immature? Bhagavan, speaking from the one true perspective of the Self, would say a categorical 'No'.

The jnani sees no one as an ajnani. All are only jnanis in his sight. In the ignorant state, one superimposes one's own ignorance on a jnani and mistakes him for a doer. In the state of jnana, the jnani sees nothing separate from the Self... There is no ajnana in his sight. (Talks, no. 499)

Bhagavan was a saintly man who behaved impeccably on all occasions. But that did not make him a jnani. He was a jnani because his T-thought and its associated onlooker's view were permanently destroyed at the end of his death experience in Madurai in 1896. He was the first to admit that jnanis, from the onlooker's point of view, could behave apparently erratically, immorally, and even insanely. When he spoke like this he sometimes told the story of Kaduveli Siddhar, a saint who had an affair with a temple dancer and even had a child by her. When he was ridiculed for falling from his high state, he publicly composed and sang a song which ended with the following words: 'If it is true that I sleep night and day quite aware of my Self, may this stone burst into two and become the wide expanse!'

Immediately, the stone he indicated burst with a loud noise, much to the astonishment of the crowd which had gathered to deride him. Bhagavan's comment, after telling this story, was, 'He proved himself an unswerving jnani. One should not be deceived by the external appearance of a jnani.' (Talks, no. 449) He then gave a paraphrase of a portion of Vedanta Chudamani which drives home the point that jnanis cannot be judged by their words or actions. The full text is printed alongside this editorial.

Is there then any criterion by which the onlooker, with his ignorant perspective, can decide whether or not a person is realised? Not definitively, says Bhagavan, but he adds that there is one clue, one positive sign which should always be looked for:

The jnani's mind is known only to the jnani. One must be a jnani oneself in order to understand another jnani. However, the peace of mind which permeates the saint's atmosphere is the only means by which the seeker understands the greatness of the saint. His words or actions or appearance are no indication of his greatness, for they are ordinarily beyond the comprehension of common people. (Talks, no. 426)
"Although a jivanmukta associated with body may, owing to his prarabdha, appear to lapse into ignorance or wisdom, yet he is only pure like the ether (akasha) which is always itself clear, whether covered by dense clouds or cleared of clouds by currents of air. He always revels in the Self alone, like a loving wife taking pleasure with her husband alone, though she attends on him with things obtained from others (by way of fortune, as determined by her prarabdha). Though he remains silent like one devoid of learning, yet his supineness is due to the implicit duality of the vaikhari vak (spoken words) of the Vedas; his silence is the highest expression of the realised non-duality which is, after all, the true content of the Vedas. Though he instructs his disciples, yet he does not pose as a teacher in the full conviction that the teacher and disciple are mere conventions born of illusion (maya), and so he continues to utter words (like akasvan); if, on the other hand, he mutters words incoherently like a lunatic, it is because his experience is inexpressible like the words of lovers in embrace. If his words are many and fluent like those of an orator, they represent the recollection of his experience, since he is the unmoving, non-dual One without any desire awaiting fulfilment. Although he may appear grief-stricken like any other man in bereavement, yet he evinces just the right love of and pity for the senses which he earlier controlled before he realised that they were mere instruments and manifestations of the Supreme Being. When he seems keenly interested in the wonders of the world, he is only ridiculing the ignorance born of superimposition. If he appears indulging in sexual pleasures, he must be taken to enjoy the ever-inherent Bliss of the Self, which dividing itself into the individual self and the Universal Self, delights in their reunion to regain its original Nature. If he appears wrathful he means well to the offenders. All his actions should be taken to be only divine manifestations on the plane of humanity. There should not arise even the least doubt as to his being emancipated while yet alive. He lives only for the good of the world."
A gigantic figure stands outside the entrance to the Old Hall. He catches the hands and touches the feet of any devotee emerging from within, so holy is one who has prostrated to Bhagavan Ramana for this pious and humble sadhu — Swami Sivananda.

In the late 1920s he resided in the town of Tiruvannamalai. Every day Swamiji cooked a North Indian meal, brought it to the Ashram by bullock cart, and himself served Bhagavan, explaining each dish to the Maharshi. Swamiji maintained that even though Bhagavan would not travel to North India, he should taste the characteristic dishes of Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal, etc.

Swamiji also observed that in the Hall Bhagavan's devotees sang devotional songs in almost all the Indian languages. Noticing the omission of English, he composed extempore English verses in praise of the Maharshi and sang them himself, Western style, in his sonorous voice.

Bhagavan appreciated and accepted them in his all-consuming Silence. Swami Sivananda, a fully blossomed sage, was one of the greatest spiritual teachers of recent times.

— Editor
Swami Sivananda (1887-1963) was my first guru. His inspiring life had a lasting influence on my character and outlook on life.

As a poverty-stricken teenager I could hardly afford a doctor. I began reading popular medical books and became interested in naturopathy. I found Mahatma Gandhi's writings on the subject particularly interesting. However, when I would treat myself whenever I was afflicted with bouts of malaria or minor illnesses such as colds and catarrh, I found, to my dismay, that my efforts to be my own doctor were seldom successful. Then, providentially, I came across numerous books and pamphlets on health and diet by Swami Sivananda. What a boon those publications were! Like parched soil welcoming a heavy downpour, I gladly assimilated the information in his articles.

I began writing to Swami Sivananda. Much to my surprise, he unfailingly answered all my questions. He usually communicated his advice by writing postcards with brief instructions. The following postcard was typical:


To my distant address in Colombo he even sent medicines free of charge from his dispensary in the Himalayas. I was a relatively ignorant youngster. Little did I realise that I was corresponding with a celebrated spiritual teacher who was not only the founder of both the Divine Life Society and the Yoga Vedanta Forest University, but also a distinguished doctor who had delved into both the allopathic and ayurvedic systems of medicine. Years later, I learnt that Swami Sivananda was a much revered saint who spiritually transformed the lives of thousands throughout the world via his numerous publications, his inspiring lectures and his exemplary life.

His prolific output of books testified to his great erudition and extraordinary energy. Without any expectation of appreciation or reward, he freely distributed his books to libraries and spiritual aspirants in India and abroad. Swami Sivananda generously presented me with several of his works, including Practice of Brahmacharya, Yogic Home Exercises, and All about Hinduism.

One afternoon when I returned home from school, I was happy to find a postcard from the great Master. He approved of my interest in leading a spiritual life, but having "a mere enthusiasm for it is not enough," he said. He invited me to visit Sivananda Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. I wrote him a long letter explaining that I lacked money and did not even have the train fare from Colombo to Rishikesh.

He quickly sent another postcard:

"Excellent that you have no money. It shows that you are already a sannyasin. Come here at any time. Come when you are ready. Stay at the Ashram for any length of time. Train fare will be sent to you. Bring with you some warm clothes. Also bring a thermos flask and a blanket. Meditate on the Self always. Om. Sivananda."

I realised, regretfully, that I lacked the daring to renounce the world. Although I was restless and unhappy at home, I shuddered at the thought of plunging into the insecure world of a homeless mendicant. Unfortunately, I did not accept the Swami's offer, and his postcard was never answered. Perhaps I lost a golden opportunity for spiritual development.

In 1950, Swami Sivananda undertook a lecture tour of India and Sri Lanka. I was longing to see him in the flesh and discover what impression he would make on me. When I heard that he had been invited to address the students of the University of Ceylon, I decided to attend the meeting, even though I was never a student.

1 Ekadasi is the eleventh day of the lunar fortnight held sacred by Hindus.
of that institution. I believed that the mere darshan of a holy man would confer a blessing upon me.

The lecture hall was filled to capacity. I expected to see a thin and bearded yogi. Instead, Swami Sivananda was tall and upright, clean-shaven, and he had an enormous body. The dome of his hairless head had an attractive golden hue which nicely matched his saffron robes. He walked slowly and all his mannerisms had a regal air. His face radiated peace and happiness. His friendly smile put the entire audience at ease.

The Swami deplored the fall in moral standards throughout the world. "Of what value is technological progress if man remains spiritually impoverished?" he asked. His talk was characterised by humorous remarks, with the audience often bursting into peals of laughter. The Swami may have seemed an entertainer to some, but he was conveying through jokes his message of clean living and lofty thinking. He made the students repeat these lines which he had just then composed:

Chastity, simplicity and humility;
Are these taught in your university?

I also attended the civic reception accorded to the Swami at the Colombo Town Hall. When a leading citizen, Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan, read out a laudatory speech of welcome, likening the Swami's visit to that of Swami Vivekananda many years ago, Swami Sivananda remained impassive. He was indifferent to words of praise. Neither did words of censure affect his composure. He always exuded serenity and it was soothing just to be in his presence.

Sivananda’s original name was Kuppuswami. He was born in Pattamadai, South India, on September 8, 1887, into a pious and scholarly Brahmin family. His father was a devotee of Siva and a descendant of Appayya Dikshitar, a scholar-saint of the sixteenth century.

Kuppuswami was raised in a religious manner: daily visits to the temple with his mother, singing of devotional songs, and feeding of beggars. He excelled in both studies and games at school. Full of mischief, the boy would play pranks like diving into a well, frightening his family, and then emerging unhurt. He had a cheerful disposition and by all accounts he had a happy childhood. After passing the Intermediate examination, he studied at the Tanjore Medical Institute.

He started a medical journal called *Ambrosia* with articles on *ayurveda*, personal hygiene,
To supplement his income, he found employment in a pharmacy in Madras but continued to do the editorial and circulation work of his periodical. This publication had a spiritual touch. Its approach to medical problems was based on the teachings of the ancient sages of India.

Feeling the need to seek a better position elsewhere, he decided to pursue his medical career in Malaya. He served in a rubber plantation hospital near Seremban, where he worked extremely hard for nearly seven years. Then he worked in Johore for three years before renouncing the world.

Dr Kuppuswami learned Malay, served conscientiously, and endeared himself to the workers of the estate. Of that busy period, he reminisced:

"I was a friend of the management as well as the labourers. If the labourers went on strike, the estate manager would come only to me. I would somehow run about here and there and bring them back to work. In addition to my own work, I would go about visiting other hospitals and acquire special knowledge in bacteriological and other subjects. There was not a single available English medical book at that time that I had not read and digested. In addition to all this, I would help my assistants, too, and train them daily for some time, and then send them to other hospitals with a letter of recommendation, providing from my pocket their railway fare as well as some emergency money."

He was so successful as a doctor that he won rapid promotions. His salary and private practice increased considerably. Of his days in Johore, he said:

"I was happy, cheerful and contented. I carefully attended on all patients. I never demanded any fee from my clients. I felt happy when they were freed from disease and trouble."

During his stay in Malaya he published some useful medical books, including Household Remedies, Fruit and Health, Diseases and Their Tamil Terms, and Fourteen Lectures on Public Health. He provided food, clothing and shelter to the unemployed. He cheered up people with his wit and humour. When patients were seriously ill, he kept vigil at night. He never deviated from the path of righteousness. "Malaya was a land of temptation, but nothing could tempt me," he said. "I was as pure as crystal, and did my daily worship, prayers and study of scriptures."

As a member of the medical profession, Dr Kuppuswami became painfully aware of the suffering in the world. In 1923 he renounced the world of money-making and became a mendicant. He returned to India and visited many important religious centres. On some days he had to go without food and walk great distances. He learnt a great deal from the lives of yogis and holy men. Of his spiritual quest, he said:

"I led the life of a wandering monk just for a short period, in search of my Guru and a suitable place charged with spiritual vibrations for spending my life in seclusion and doing rigorous sadhana.

"In search of a Guru, I reached Rishikesh and prayed to the Lord for His Grace. From the sacred hands of Paramahansa Viswananda..."
Saraswathi, I received holy initiation on the banks of the sacred Ganga on June 1, 1924.

“A personal Guru is necessary in the beginning. He alone can show you the path to attain God, who is the Guru of Gurus, and obviate the snares and pitfalls on your path. Self-realisation is a transcendental experience. You can march on the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth and attained knowledge of the Self.

“The Guru’s Grace is needed by the disciple. This does not mean that the disciple should sit idle and expect a miracle from the Guru to push him directly into samadhi. The Guru cannot do sadhana for the student. It is foolish to expect spiritual attainments from a drop of water from the water-pot of a Guru. The Guru can guide the student, clear his doubts, pave the way. But it is the disciple himself who has to walk every step on the spiritual path.

“If you have no Guru, take Lord Krishna, Siva, Rama or Christ as your Guru. Pray to Him. Meditate on Him. Sing His Name. He will send you a suitable Guru.”

Once Sivananda was asked, “Have you seen God, Swamiji?” He answered, “I see nothing but God.”

He saw God everywhere and in everything. He realised that it was the same Spirit that pervaded the entire universe and dwelt in everything, animate and inanimate. Sivananda progressed rapidly with deep meditation and attained Liberation. In accordance with the Upanishads, he refused to reveal the date and place of his Illumination. He refrained from referring to that great spiritual accomplishment. He simply called it a “secret of God”.

We can catch a glimpse of the nature of Sivananda’s realisation in his Dawn of a New Life:

All my sorrow is over,
My heart is now brimming with joy,
Peace has now entered my soul.
All doubts, fears and delusion have vanished.
I was suddenly lifted out of myself,
There was a dawn of a new life,
I experienced the inner world of Reality.
The Unseen filled my soul and heart.
I entered the vast, luminous Silence.
I was bathed in a flood of effulgence ineffable.
I came on the hidden spring of all life.
I am the light that illumines the entire universe.

Given his medical background and sense of humour, one can understand why Sivananda coined the word “Egodectomy” — the surgical
The Three

By Swami Sivananda

To Cultivate : Non-injury, truth, purity
To Possess : Faith, tolerance, amiability
To Be : Honest, just, virtuous
To Have : Patience, compassion, fellowship
To Acquire : Sincerity, regularity, perseverance
To Inculcate : Generosity, gentleness, universality
To Eradicate : Pride, vanity, egoism
To Conquer : Lust, anger, greed
To Renounce : Selfishness, desires, hypocrisy
To Control : Mind, senses, breath
To Avoid : Back-biting, criticism, crookedness
To Repudiate : Attachment, infatuation, materialism
To Enquire : Who am I? What is Truth? What is Existence?
To Promote : Dharma, peace, welfare
To Foster : Brotherhood, understanding, amity
To Curb : Self-justification, self-pity, self-praise
To Follow : Teachings of Guru, injunctions of scriptures, dictates of the conscience

removal of the ego. Hindus believe that the 'I'-thought is not only the first thought but also the last one to disappear before Liberation. All sadhanas are designed to cleanse oneself of every trace of ego. He who does away with ego-consciousness is blessed with Divine consciousness. When surgeons visited Sivananda, he enjoyed mystifying them by asking, “Do you know egodectomy? Have you done an egodectomy?”

Another ingenious word he coined was “Namapathy” — the beneficial effect of repeating the name of God.

“All over the world, doctors are experimenting on poor patients with their many medicines. How can one expect a permanent and lasting cure from doctors who work with the selfish motive of earning more and more wealth! In the simple Ayurvedic system, the doctors prepare genuine drugs from Himalayan roots, seeds and plants. They study the pulse of the patients, diagnose the case properly and prescribe effective medicines for bringing a permanent cure in the patients. The patients are asked to follow natural methods wherever possible and select suitable foods as prescribed by the expert doctors.

“In the Ashram I combine all these methods in the Sivananda General Hospital. There are experts here in all systems of medicine. In addition to this, I have great faith in the power of mantra and the Grace of the Lord. Through special prayers conducted in the Lord Vishwanath Mandir, I have seen miraculous cures of even the most hopeless cases in distant places.
The results are wonderful. The Lord's Name is very effective. I call this 'Namapathy'."

There is overwhelming evidence of Sivananda's ability to perform miracles. When a Chinese friend, for example, was suffering from chronic eczema, instead of using medicines Sivananda cured it permanently by merely touching the affected part. However, he never flaunted his supernatural powers.

Devotees of Sivananda attributed all kinds of miracles to him: miraculously curing diseases, effecting examination successes, averting dangerous accidents, and appearing before people in visions. When devotees wrote to Sivananda with reports of his miracles, he discarded the letters. In later years, however, disciples collected these letters and excerpts were printed in the Ashram's publications.

Sometimes Sivananda's devotees had only to wish for a particular book authored by him and it would arrive in a neatly packed postal parcel directly from his Ashram. Unasked, he sent me books that I was longing to read. What a marvellous librarian and benefactor!

All the traditional yogic paths to Liberation were harmoniously blended in Sivananda. He was a karma yogi: his immense generosity and selfless service resulted in the material uplift of the poor and underprivileged. He was a jnani: his extraordinary learning and wisdom helped to guide the lives of numerous spiritual aspirants. He was a bhakta: he enjoyed chanting bhajans (devotional songs) and worshipping saints and deities with wholehearted devotion. He lovingly tended the sick both before and after becoming a swami. He was moved by the suffering of animals. On one occasion he found fault with a visitor who had killed a scorpion.

Sivananda was deeply committed to the ideals of the Bhagavad Gita — doing one's duty and remaining indifferent to the fruits of one's actions. An action is pure and beautiful only when it is not tainted by any ulterior motive of personal gain. Such deeds alone are without karma. He served humanity tirelessly and with such compassion that he became an instrument of
God. It was his innate selflessness that enabled him to help those in physical or psychological distress.

Many sannyasins dress in dirty rags and neglect their bodies in the belief that the practice of austerities is the surest path to holiness. Sivananda, however, probably because of his brahminical upbringing and medical training, looked after his body with meticulous care. Dressed simply in two pieces of cloth (he wore a warm overcoat in winter), he liked to play badminton and go for walks. He regularly practised his asanas (yogic postures) and pranayama (yogic breathing exercises). He ate in moderation. He believed that the mortification of the body could not lead to Liberation unless the passions were calmed and the mind disciplined.

In his early years, Sivananda noticed in himself an objectionable feeling of caste superiority. He overcame this by treating sweepers and scavengers as his equals. He would call the scavenger a "health officer", the barber a "beautifying officer", and prostitutes "fallen sisters". He cleansed himself of brahminical arrogance by allowing himself to be served by his non-Brahmin disciples.

Thus, although Sivananda belonged to an ancient and orthodox Brahmin family, he successfully rose above caste and social distinctions and treated everyone with the same respect. While living in Malaya, for instance, he always addressed the Tamil coolies who worked on the rubber estates by the deferential neengal and never the familiar nee.

Moreover there was never any condescension in Sivananda's attitude towards women. For centuries women in Indian society have been stigmatised as being inferior to men. Manu, the lawgiver of ancient India, stated that killing a woman, like the consumption of alcohol, was only a minor offence. Even in the Bhagavad Gita women have been placed together with the lower castes: "For those who take refuge in Me, O Partha, though they be of inferior birth — women, Vaisyas and Sudras — even they attain the Supreme Goal." [IX:32].

"My silent adorations and prostrations to all women, who are manifestations of the Divine Mother, Shakti, Kali. They are the backbone of society and the upholders of religion. If they are inspired, the whole world will be inspired. There is a peculiar religious instinct in them. They have natural, inborn divine qualities. I revere a woman as my own Self.

"To passionate youths, I have written a lot about the perishable nature of the physical body of women. It is just to develop in them a strong dispassion and help them to control their senses and mind.

"Some orthodox people and sannyasins say that women are not fit for the path of renunciation. My view is different. They too are eligible to tread the path of yoga and renunciation.

"The ladies who stay in the [Sivananda] Ashram have all comforts and conveniences. They have all the facilities, liberty and freedom. In the absence of a separate ashram exclusively for women, this institution has become an ideal centre for their spiritual evolution. May they all prosper and enjoy peace, divine glory and splendour!"

The creed of the sage is best expressed in the Autobiography of Swami Sivananda:

"To behold the Atman or the Self in every being or form; to feel the Brahmic consciousness everywhere, at all times and in all conditions of life; to see, hear, taste, smell and feel everything as the Atman — this is my creed. To live in Brahman, to melt in Him, and to merge and dissolve in Him, is my creed. Whilst dwelling in union with Brahman, to utilise the hands, mind, senses and the body for the service of humanity; to sing the Lord's Names for elevating devotees of God; to give instructions to sincere aspirants; and to disseminate knowledge far and wide through books, pamphlets, leaflets, magazines and platform lectures — this is my creed.

"To be a cosmic friend and a cosmic benefactor, a friend of the poor, the forlorn, the helpless and the fallen, is my creed. It is my sacred creed
to serve sick persons, to nurse them with care, sympathy and love, to cheer up the depressed, to infuse power and joy in all, to feel oneness with each and every creature and to treat all with equal vision. In my creed there are neither saints nor sinners, neither peasants nor kings, neither beggars nor emperors, neither friends nor foes, neither males nor females, neither gurus nor disciples. It is all Brahman."

Sivananda wrote regularly every morning at a fixed time. He followed this practice for decades until two months prior to his death, when physical disability forced him to stop writing. Instead of writing down his thoughts, he started dictating them. The last sentence he dictated was: "Happiness comes when the individual merges in God."

Sivananda’s disciples looked after him with loving care during his last days. He suffered from high blood pressure. Talking and writing became difficult. His activities were curtailed. A week before his death, Sivananda was wheeled onto his verandah to enable him to gaze at the sacred Ganga. He loved the great river. He had lived on her banks for more than thirty years and had even written a book, Mother Ganges.

When a group of devotees gathered round him and gave him paper, pen and spectacles, Sivananda somehow managed to write: “Serve, love, meditate, realise.” How well these few words emphasise his method of Self-realisation via selfless service, boundless love and meditation on the immortal Self!

Bibliography:


Work and Wisdom

In the afternoon Bhagavan explained in answer to Mr. H.C. Khanna of Kanpur:

"Why should your occupation or duties in life interfere with your spiritual effort? For instance, there is a difference between your activities at home and in the office. In your office activities you are detached and so long as you do your duty you do not care what happens or whether it results in gain or loss to the employer. But your duties at home are performed with attachment and you are all the time anxious as to whether they will bring advantage or disadvantage to you and your family. But it is possible to perform all the activities of life with detachment and regard only the Self as real. It is wrong to suppose that if one is fixed in the Self one's duties in life will not be properly performed. It is like an actor. He dresses and acts and even feels the part he is playing, but he knows really that he is not that character but someone else in real life. In the same way, why should the body-consciousness or the feeling 'I-am-the-body' disturb you, once you know for certain that you are not the body but the Self? Nothing that the body does should shake you from abidance in the Self. Such abidance will never interfere with the proper and effective discharge of whatever duties the body has, any more than the actor's being aware of his real status in life interferes with his acting a part on the stage.

"You ask whether you can tell yourself: 'I am not the body but the Self'. Of course, whenever you feel tempted to identify yourself with the body (as you may often have to, owing to old vasanas) it may be a help to remind yourself that you are not the body but the Self. But you should not make such repetition a mantra, constantly saying: 'I am not the body but the Self'. By proper enquiry into the Self, the notion 'I am this body' will gradually vanish and in time the faith that you are the Self will become unshakable."

— Day by Day with Bhagavan, p. 211
"By talking about truth, the sage, the Guru, 'God', and so on, we run the risk of degrading the ultimate into a mere image, a concept. That is why it is better to keep silent. If I talk about it, it is because I do not know from where. The only thing I may tell you is that there is no gentleman in my head who produces words. Whatever words come out of this mouth, they are not mine. On such words, there cannot be any copyright.

"Nor do I try to explain things. Ultimately, there is nothing that can be explained. If somebody 'explains' that two equals one plus one, my counter-question is: and what is one? That is the final question. If you know what 'one' means, you are free."

After spontaneous samadhi experiences, first at the age of five and again at twenty, Wolter Keers' longing for the Guru led him to Sri Ramana Maharshi in early 1950. In later years, he edited the Dutch magazine Yoga and Vedanta. Wolter Keers guided many inquirers, revisited Sri Ramanasramam several times, and was a regular and inspiring contributor to The Mountain Path. He passed away in January 1985.

— Editor
When I look back upon my childhood, it is clear that I brought spiritual samskaras into this life. Born into a family of clergymen, with my father and both my grandfathers ministers of divinity in the Protestant Calvinist tradition, all interest was focussed on matters of religion, and I must have been taught how to pray almost before I could talk.

If it is true that childhood is decisive in most important matters in life, this is certainly true in my case. Two events marked the whole sequence of adventures in the spiritual realm, leading to a desperate search for someone who might enlighten me, and ending in the unbelievable event of finding just such guidance.

The first event occurred when I was about five years old. A well-known missionary arrived in our village with a roving exposition about Netherlands New Guinea (now West Irian). He stayed in our house and had his meals with us. One day during lunch, he told my parents how this time he had not made the journey from the East Indies (now Indonesia) in the usual way by boat, but partly overland, travelling through British India.

That phrase — "British India" — struck me like lightning. It is hardly possible that at that very early age I had heard the name before. I was numb with wonder, with the inexplicable recognition of something extraordinary, absurdly desirable, like the ultimate good, almost like God.

The second event occurred just a little later. It might have been in the spring of 1928 when I was five years old. I was playing in a small grass field, baking cakes of sand, then looking up at a hedge with very tiny pink flowers and white balls as big as marbles.

If anything triggered off what then happened, I cannot tell what it was. Suddenly, the entire world and myself were transformed into light. I fell into samadhi. Although it was a most impressive event, at the same time it was the most ordinary of all ordinary things. Even so, I decided to keep this a secret. I never talked about it to anyone until the age of about twenty, when the same thing happened in the company of a very good friend. He was reading a text to me, originating from ancient oriental mystics. Suddenly, without any warning — as it always does — samadhi, as it were, dissolved me.

Many things had, of course, happened between the ages of five and twenty. But here was a decisive point, confirming that it was in the East that I had to look for an answer to the questions I put to all the theologians in my family and many others, but that none could answer, even vaguely.

I continued my reading. Although I found many books of interest, none could explain to me what I wanted to know. Gradually it seemed to become quite desperate. When, after this second spontaneous samadhi, I discovered that whatever I tried or did, I could not get back to that state, I fell into a deep depression. I decided that I must find a Guru, and that if I did not find one, life would not be worth living anymore.

It was then that an elderly lady, the mother of a friend of mine, lent me two books. The first one was Jnana Yoga, by Swami Vivekananda. I had no idea that the book as well as the author were world-famous. To me it was a book like any other. But when I started to read it, it caused something like an explosion in me. Finally, I had found someone who put into words what I had been feeling intuitively but could never have verbalised.

The second book, by Paul Brunton, did the rest. When I read that there was a living sage in India with whom one could talk, ask questions and get real answers, blue returned to my sky. The only thing I was worried about was that this sage might meanwhile have left this world. There was no means to enquire for it was in the middle of the war.
I decided to trust what was written about him and started to concentrate on him. In the Dutch edition of *A Search In Secret India*, which is called *Hidden Wisdom*, there is a picture of Bhagavan which I used during my meditation. Initially, with a lot of effort, I started to concentrate on the heart-centre. Having rather strong yogic samskaras, it turned out to be quite easy after a while. During my meditation I concentrated very hard on Bhagavan. After a while, I was assured of his living guidance.

Yet, this was not enough. It helped as a marvellous preparation, it melted all my depressive tendencies, it helped me to see that I was not a body, not this, not that; but it did not place me in my true centre.

What I did not know at the time was that, on account of close identification with the body, the body must be brought at least once, but preferably many times, into the living presence of an authentic Master. What I did know was that I had to see this strange being in that little Indian town. I concentrated on him more and more, and sometimes almost fought with him, asking him to help me in my efforts to come and see him. And, absurd as this expression now sounds — I won. He made his presence felt, very strongly, and with it came the certainty that I was to see him.

What part in this *sadhana* was my own projection and what part was Bhagavan’s real presence, I shall never know. Certain it is that every sadhak projects a man upon the sage: a man who walks and talks and eats and wills things, failing to understand that from his own ‘point of view’ the Master is nothing of the kind. The authentic Master never gives the sadhak anything to get a grip on. He is like thin air. Wherever you try to catch him or to find something tangible, he disappears. One cannot get hold of him any more than one can put sunlight in a box. Yet the sunlight is there, most clearly.

It took several years before, finally, in the beginning of 1950, I arrived. I can remember,
as if it happened last night, the train ride from Madras on the metre gauge; the first view of Arunachala, with the full moon hovering above it — a very good omen, I thought; the fight amongst the porters, who had got hold of my luggage before I knew what happened; the ride in the jutka and the driver shouting “Hey-hey!”, the accent always on the second syllable.

It all just happened. I was no longer implicated. It was as if I had become completely transparent. I knew from friends around the Ashram that Bhagavan was terribly ill, but I also knew that I had come in time to see him, and that he had kept his promise to help me in getting there. Hereafter, nothing in the world could go wrong.

It was Roda Mclver who took me to him a few hours later.

When I saw him from afar, sitting on a chair in the little passage between his room and the main hall, I started to tremble all over — not because of nerves or uneasiness, but because of the shock of this confrontation. Here I was — but what on earth could this mean? “I”, this transparent thing — and there, on that chair, Light Itself, radiant as I had never seen anything or anyone.

Roda introduced me to him and Bhagavan looked at me. He hardly talked, but his face, his presence, said: “So, finally you’re here!”

I was invited to sit down amongst a group of men, my back against the wall opposite him. I looked, and looked, and looked. Long ago I had lost all faith, all the belief of my childhood years. No God riding the clouds anymore; no soul. And now, suddenly, here Light Itself, blazing Light, going through me like X-rays.

Bhagavan seemed at the same time completely unconcerned, looking around, smiling at the squirrels that ran up and down the trees; exchanging a few words with his attendants; dozing off now and then for half a minute; then immediately and fully awake, looking, not at you but into you, casually like one looks into a street, without effort, but seeing in one glance right to the other end and taking note of all that happens in one glance; and then again rubbing his head with his long fingers.

In those days he came out twice a day: two hours in the morning, and two in the evening, so that we might have his darshan.

To me, those first days were the fulfillment of everything I had ever hoped to find — as a matter of fact, it was much more than that. I knew in the most lucid, radiant moments of my heart that it would never have been possible to imagine even a portion of this blazing Presence that radiated through everything and took me beyond the phenomenal.

On the second or third day, I had to laugh about the absurdity that had been my life before. Who was I to cultivate a garden full of problems? What on earth could have given me the impression that I was so important that I ought to have problems, questions, complicated situations to get out of?
Before I knew it, there I was in the middle of this “Who-am-I?” sadhana. But now, in his presence, it was entirely different. In this radiant light it was so evident that I was not a body, not an ego, that no analysis was needed. This light swept away my darkness in one stroke.

Then, after a week or two, an irritation arose in me. I noticed that when I returned to the little house opposite the Ashram, which belonged to a Dutch friend, the lucid, blazing state which invariably swept everything away in Bhagavan's presence, left me; and when questions did come up, I was quite unable to solve them.

So, after a few days, I became rebellious and decided that I was going to have it out with Bhagavan.

When I walked in during the afternoon darshan hour, I refused to melt away in his radiance, strong as ever. I simply refused his blessing, and I may say that it was difficult to do so. It was, I discovered, as if you were slapping your own mother in the face. Yet, I decided to be stubborn, because it was not a heavenly hour I was in search of but lasting liberation from ignorance.

When I passed in front of him and greeted him, Indian fashion, a quick smile ran across his face — and that was all. I was already at that moment perfectly certain that he was aware of the whole situation, but he paid no attention to it at all. He showered his radiance over all visitors (and every day there were more, as the news of his impending departure from us spread rapidly, and many, many people wanted to see him before he passed away), rubbed his head, looked at the squirrels, dozed off for a moment, or looked quite indifferently at something or other.

I found a place opposite him under the covered passage that in those years ran as long the side of the hall, and sat not very far from where we now find his samadhi. From there I started my bombardment. I fired thoughts at him with all my might. “Bhagavan, of what use is all your radiance to me if I cannot solve my problems the moment I have left you?” That was, more or less, the theme.

Bhagavan took no notice. So I concentrated on him even more, and with my thoughts I began to shake him as if he were a fruit tree. I must have an answer.

Then, suddenly, he looked at me with a smile of utter amazement. “What do you want?” the smile asked. And then, with a different expression on his face: “You are looking for your glasses, and they are right on your own nose!” Suddenly, his eyes emitted light, spat fire, and when he looked at me, his look went straight into me, physically into my chest. The heart centre, very often felt in his presence, began to get warm, became hot like fire, and then started to spark as if an electric machine were installed next to my heart. I sat straight as a needle, my eyes glued to his drilling fire-look. “Kill me,” I prayed.

How long this lasted I cannot say. It was an event outside of time and space. The moment came when my body could no longer stand the strain. It was as if my chest would explode, and I asked him to let me go.

I had received what I came for. This account of the initiation I received from Bhagavan is, of course, only a mere indication. In reality, it was a complete transformation — an Umwertung aller Werte — as Nietzsche calls it. And all this without hearing Bhagavan’s voice. Communication in silence was clearer than any explanation in words could have been.

Yet, I still needed words.

A few days before Bhagavan’s samadhi, I decided to leave Tiruvannamalai. There were at least a thousand people. We were allowed to stand in front of the door for only ten or twenty seconds to see Bhagavan lying on his bed. I thought that he ought to be left alone.

Back in Bombay, where I stayed in a friend’s flat, I was amazed to discover to what extent changes had occurred. I had been reading Spinoza’s Ethics — a very tough book, which I
had to chew phrase by phrase. I had left it open on my bed. Now, coming back, I picked it up and found that I could read it almost like a novel.

Yet, all this was not enough. Although my two months with Bhagavan had turned me inside out and upside down, this period had been too short to remove all obstacles, if only for the reason that at the time a number of fundamental questions had not yet arisen, and certain mistakes had not been recognised. I had, for instance, very strong yogic tendencies. I could not understand that consciousness did not arise from the kundalini, but that the kundalini appeared in consciousness. Where I got this absurd notion from I cannot tell, but it was only when somebody drew my attention to it that a doubt about this point of view arose in me — weeks after Bhagavan had shed the body.

Other questions, new ones, began to tease me: what about this mysterious deep-sleep state, for instance; and what was implied in the simple statement that one is ever the witness of thought, not the thinker...?

Although I was far from satisfied, I did not suffer or worry to the extent that I had done in Europe. If Bhagavan had proved a help and a certainty as tall as Mount Everest, he would not leave me after shedding the body. So, I waited — in full confidence.

And help came.

Some three months after his physical departure, a discussion such as I used to have with him in my imagination turned into something that might perhaps be called a vision. Suddenly, I was back at Ramanasramam. I sat opposite him, as I always had during the first weeks of my stay. Again, there were quite a number of people, perhaps a hundred or two.

Silently, I wished: "O Bhagavan, I wish I were alone with you." Hardly did I think this, when the first person stood up, prostrated before Bhagavan, and left. Then number two, three, and in less than no time the entire gallery was empty but for Bhagavan and myself.

I drew myself to his feet, looked at him, and said: "How wonderful to be alone with Bhagavan." Again, this smile of his ... It always contained a world. It was a shower of light and love, spiced very lightly this time with something like sarcasm to make me aware of my absurd standpoint. He said, slowly, taking time to pro-
nounce every syllable clearly: “Are ... you ... ever ... not ... alone ...?”

Immediately, this very “Bhagavanish” remark made me glow with happiness and recognition. I understood immediately what he meant. I was completely home again.

Now, more than 25 years later¹, I am still sometimes with Bhagavan. I do not mean with him as pure consciousness or the Atman, Brahman, but as this typically “Bhagavanish Presence”, with or without form. I am no longer interested in visions or other phenomena of a yogic nature. But when suddenly he is there, in one way or the other, his presence may either bring tears of deep love and emotion to my eyes or it may make me glow with happiness and make my heart jump into the sky. Such is the radiance from his Heart. It is the Heart of the world.

What He Means To Me

I am asking myself: what has Bhagavan meant to me, and what does he still mean to me? I find that it is impossible to give a neat answer to this question.

The first thing, perhaps, is that he opened my heart. Immediately when I saw him, even from a distance, I recognised that This was what I had been looking for. When I say that this This was radiating, all-penetrating and all-overthrowing Love, striking me with the power of lightning, I know that only those who have had the same experience will know what I mean. To anybody else, all this is verbiage, at best creating an image of someone very magnificent.

Well, this is just it: Sri Ramana Maharshi was and is the Unimaginable, and therefore the Indescribable.

In literature, all over the world, one finds magnificent descriptions of sorrow. But who can describe happiness? Happiness is a state without ego and therefore without someone in it to describe it, or even to remember it. What we remember is its afterglow, its reflection in feeling and body, not the moment when we were present as happiness itself, as happiness alone.

Ramana Maharshi was not the frail, old, dying body that I saw reclining on a sofa, but unimaginable egolessness, pure radiance; and the body, however much we loved its appearance, was merely like a glittering diamond reflecting the Light that he really was.

I did not understand all this when I first arrived. To me, he was something like a divine person, and I was inclined to compare him with Jesus or the Buddha. But Jesus or the Buddha were images in my head, formed on the basis of the belief in which I had been brought up, and on stories heard and read later on. Sri Ramana Maharshi, from the first second I saw him, was anything but an image in my head. He was a bomb, exploding the myth of my life until then, within a few minutes and without a word.

His famous — notorious, to some — question “Who am I?” immediately got a totally new colour.

It was only three or four years later that the full impact of what his silence had revealed to me became clear and “my own’. Perhaps these last two words and their inverted commas indicate the problem. Bhagavan never gave anyone the possibility to believe that you, as a person, could realise the truth. The axis, the central point in the sadhana that he proposed to most of us, was the invitation to examine who put questions, who came to see him, who wanted to realise, and so on.

¹ This was written in 1977.
Recently², I heard a "realised person" (there is no such thing) say to one of his pupils: "There is only one question — that is the question 'Who am I?'" But we come with many, many questions. All such questions stand solved the moment the question "Who am I?" is solved.

Once Sri Bhagavan asked someone: "How do you know that you are not realised?" If you ponder over it, you will find that this question is like an earthquake. Who says so indeed? So, pondering deeply over this question, one cannot but come to the conclusion that once again Sri Bhagavan told us the plain and naked truth when he said: "The Self is always realised."

When it is seen that every perception, sensorial or mental, is nothing but a movement in consciousness, in Light, then from that moment on, every perception chants the glory of this Clarity, just as one can see a wave — any wave — as a song of the sea.

Whatever I understand now is entirely due to my good fortune in meeting the right person, the embodiment of truth, at the right time at several points in my life. I received all of it completely free. I never had to pay a penny. The authentic teaching is always free, except in one way: you pay for it with the death of your personality, which implies that you must be prepared to give up everything you have ever considered as yourself.

Of every hundred people who come to visit ashrams and gurus, ninety-nine come to seek food — the best, the subtlest, the healthiest — for their imaginary egos. That is why so many frauds succeed in misleading many thousands of well-intentioned people. Such imposters hand out intellectual food, even the most authentic texts, a pleasing atmosphere for feeling, and in exchange they humbly accept your dollars.

But Ramana Maharshi has never given me anything. When I arrived, regarding myself as a poor man in need of help, he revealed to me that I was more than a millionaire, and the source of all things.

Nor has Sri Ramana Maharshi asked anything from me — not even my love or respect. It was his mere presence that uncovered or unleashed in me what cannot be described by words such as love or respect. It went deeper than the deepest feeling.

My meeting with him was in no way a matter of giving and receiving, even though for a long time I thought so (he had given me his love, I had given him my heart). It was the naked, radiant confrontation of illusion and truth, in which illusion could not stand up. It was wiped away, but not because he wanted it. He wanted nothing and accepted me as I was. He did not wish to change me. He saw me as I really was — a whirlpool of Light in an ocean of Light.

Perhaps it was the radiant Certainty that he was, that broke through my fears and desires and enabled me to let go of the desire to enrich an imaginary "me".

Does it mean something to you when I say that what he meant and means to me is the mere fact that he was what he was, and is what he is?

The rest is Silence.

* * *

The Great Non-Teaching

One must not see Sri Ramana Maharshi or any other great Master as a person dispensing some teaching or other.

A great Master is freedom itself, being itself, truth itself. When somebody who believes himself bound comes into the presence of one whom he regards as a great Master, then a very deep change occurs. He is like a man who, armed with a torch, enters a deep cave where darkness has reigned for centuries. With the arrival of the torch, this darkness is dispelled instantaneously, however old it may have been.

The same thing occurs when the ignorant man goes to ask an authentic sage for his teach-

² This was written in 1980.
ing. In reality the sage has no teaching. On the one hand, the seeker’s darkness is dispelled immediately by the sage’s presence; on the other hand, words may come from the lips of the sage, directed to the body, the head, the heart, and the Impersonal in the visitor. This does not happen because the sage wants it. In the sage there is no personality to will this or that, not even the wish to improve the visitor. The sage is love itself, which means total acceptance. In him there is no condemnation, even if on some occasions his words may be severe. This love and this total acceptance — in short, this clarity — is what brings about the change in the person who believes himself to be bound.

On the other hand, in most cases, words, many words, are needed to dispel the visitor’s doubts. What appears as some great Master’s teaching is merely the “translation into words” of what the visitor has to see to eliminate the illusion that he is, or has, an ego or some such thing. That is why the same sage may say different things to different people. Everyone gets as much as he can chew, but the end is the same.

The authentic Guru, who is love itself, has nothing to gain and nothing to lose. To the eyes of the stunned disciple, this love may reveal itself as incomprehensible kindness, or any other aspect that will confront the seeker with his true being. The apex of love, to me, is expressed in the Bhagavad Gita where Sri Krishna says that He will come to meet you in whatever way you go out to seek Him. That is love.

The moment you discover, un-cover, freedom within yourself, you see that you are one and the same freedom as the sage is. There is only one freedom, only one absolute, or, in the language of images, there is only one infinite. The sage is that. You are that. Not as a personality, but as that in which hundreds and thousands of personalities and egos arise and dissolve, whether you call them by your own name or by other names.

Once you are this freedom, consciously, without a trace of the feeling that you are or have been something else, you will discover that any name is your name. That is another way of pointing at what freedom is. But it is no description! And no explanation!

What Sri Ramana Maharshi said is the final truth. But don’t interpret it as if it were an invitation to the ego to swallow the infinite and consider itself a sage or a free person.

The Master is never what you imagine him to be, for he is by definition unimaginable. Now, people came to Ramana Maharshi. He was — if I may use another comparison — like a bird catcher, who would say: “Wonderful bird, look at this marvellous branch. It is called ‘Who am I?’ It is a highly efficient branch. Why don’t you sit on it?” When you did, what happened? You died!

Even today I find it difficult to talk about, but this is what happened to me and to many others. The Catcher caught you and killed you, in the gentlest of ways, with an indescribable smile on His face.

Love — the Love that is knowledge — is the only real killer. Seen from the outside, one must say that Love and Knowledge go hand in hand. Seen from the inside, these two words represent the same indivisible experience that we are.

* * *

On Sadhana

Q: Self-realisation seems far, far away.

W.K.: If somebody really wants Self-realisation, he is not discouraged. In fact, he will never bother about easy or difficult. What matters to him or her is a clear insight, and if this does not come on the first day, he continues the second, and if it does not come on the third day, he continues the fourth.

3 Ch. IV: 11:

“In any way that men love me, in that same way they find my love: for many are the paths of men, but they all in the end come to me.”

not come after one year, he continues the next.

If you look at what a complicated world of biotechnical miracles is set in motion when you eat, you may get depressed and never eat again, complaining that you have to set in motion so many muscles and glands and whatnot. But if you are hungry, you do not bother about physics and biochemistry. You just put the food into your mouth and eat. Similarly, the person who really seeks freedom from the illusion that makes him suffer and live only a fraction of what life ought to be, does not bother about easy or difficult. He listens and reads and continues until he has found, and the thought that he is doing a lot of work will not even occur to him. Every time some bit of illusion drops off, he is happy, and sadhana is something new and fresh every day.

Q: But sadhana you have to do!

W.K.: Most certainly. You are like someone who has lost his glasses and is looking for them everywhere. It is only when you have searched the cupboard, the kitchen, the attic, the cellar, and the garden, and you are absolutely certain that the glasses are not there, that you are prepared to let go your conviction that they must all the same be in the cupboard, the kitchen, and so on. It is not unusual that then you become quite desperate and call for help. Listening to many people who tell you all about the price of glasses, on how to wear them, and on the history of glasses, suddenly you come across someone who loves you enough to tell you that you are a fool, that you have been able to look for your glasses thanks only to the fact that they were on your nose all along. At that moment, it dawns on you that you did not have to do anything at all to get your glasses back because you never lost them.

The tragedy of the human being is that he is not ready to look on his own nose until he has looked everywhere else. Sadhana is the process by which you learn, very gradually, to watch your own nose and to stop looking elsewhere. During the period of sadhana you are shown that, most truly, your glasses are not in the cupboard, the kitchen, or in the garden. Only after it has been proved to you, time and again, that they simply cannot be here and there and elsewhere, are you prepared to look properly in the right place — not before.

Q: We are very stupid indeed.

W.K.: In reality, you are Knowledge itself. Clear away the mechanisms of seeing as concrete what is abstract, and as abstract what is concrete — that is all. You are the only real Principle in your universe. All the rest is derived, abstracted from what you are. Just be that, and forget about the rest.

“Once a man has surrendered his life here, he belongs here. Wherever he may go, he shall return. For him this is the door to liberation.”

— Bhagavan Ramana
Swami Madhavtirtha made Sri Bhagavan known throughout Gujarat by his inspired speeches and books on His teachings. If it would be no exaggeration to say that at times there were more Gujaratis than local devotees at Sri Ramanasramam, it was entirely due to Swamiji’s efforts.

Perhaps his last visit to Sri Ramanasramam was in 1956, when he came for a fairly long stay along with his devotees. On the morning of his departure, he was weeping. It was raining heavily. Brushing aside the umbrella and wooden sandals offered by his disciples, he walked with folded hands, in ecstasy and inner absorption, to Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi and cried like a child on being separated from his mother.

This erudite scholar-saint was the first person who gave me a direct spiritual experience. A great bhakta of Sri Bhagavan!

— Editor
Swami Madhvaitirtha was born in Saurashtra (Gujarat) on April 23, 1885. His purvashram name was Motilal. Ever since childhood, he pondered the secret of death, questioning sadhus whom he met and trying to solve the mystery. He studied Sanskrit in school. At home, there were daily chantings of Srimad Bhagavata and his growing love for this sacred epic marked his spiritual progress.

Motilal was employed in the G.I.P. Railway at Bombay. There he met Swami Vamadevatirtha with whom he studied Vedanta, including Prasthanatraya (the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita), Vivekachudamani, Panchadasi, Naishkamya-siddhi, and other Vedantic texts. Later, he was much impressed by the Theory of Relativity, which he studied in detail as he found many parallels with Vedanta. He gave talks on the subject in schools and colleges.

Swamiji had the good fortune of having satsang with many saints. Among them were Nityanandaji of Pithadia in Gujarat, Swami Hansdevaji, and Anandamayi Ma. He came into close contact with Sri Aurobindo Ghosh in 1920 and wrote a Gujarati book entitled Sri Arvind Ghosh nu Tatvagyan (The Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh), a copy of which he presented to Mahatma Gandhi in 1922.

Swamiji authored 132 books in Gujarati and English, reflecting the philosophies of the saints he had met. He took sannyas in 1939 from Swami Swayamjyotitirtha near Baroda.

Swami Madhvaitirtha visited Sri Ramanasramam in August 1944. During the fourteen days he was there, he put numerous questions to Bhagavan and sought clarification regarding the problems of sadhana. These talks were well recorded and later published in his Gujarati book, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Mahashri Parichaya ane Bodh.

The following is his account of that occasion:

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

I reached the Ashram on the 14th of August. My first darshan of Sri Maharshi, which happened to be in the dining hall, was so entirely free from sanctimonious conventions that I was at once put at ease and in perfect tune with the Sage’s surroundings. The Sage’s benign look of welcome made me feel at home and conveyed a sense of ineffable happiness which remained with me throughout my stay at Sri Ramanasramam.

It has always been my habit to note down my impressions during such visits to important places and make a record of them for the benefit of other aspirants. The notes I took at Sri Ramanasramam formed the basis of my Gujarati book on Sri Ramana Maharshi.

I should like to refer to a somewhat mystical experience I had during my visit. It is rather...
difficult to describe such an experience but I may try to convey some idea to the reader by borrowing an analogy from Srimad Bhagavata. Some time before the birth of Sri Krishna, it is said, the Lord entered into the heart of Sri Vasudeva, who then shone like the sun. Later, this light passed into Devaki through a mere look of Vasudeva, when she shone like the moon. Even so, on the very first day of my darshan of Sri Bhagavan in the dining hall, I found in the look of the Sage the dazzling brilliance of the sun. On a subsequent day, while I was sitting in the presence of Sri Maharshi in the hall, I recognised the same brilliance in the look of the Sage and it seemed to pierce to the core of my being, even as the light of the Lord passed into Devaki through the look of Vasudeva. My breath seemed to stop for a while and my mind was elevated into some spiritual realm of unutterable peace and happiness.

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

Sri Maharshi is an extraordinary exception to the rule concerning the importance of the study of Vedanta, wherein it is accepted on all hands as a reliable guide, helping the aspirant to avoid a wrong pursuit of spiritual ideals. Unaided by an intellectual knowledge of even the essential concepts of Vedanta, and without anybody's advice or instruction, he was able to follow unswervingly the path he had chosen, because his guide was his own experience of the Truth he had realised in his boyhood. In the case of Sri Maharshi, the incidental knowledge he later obtained of the sastras was helpful in confirm-
ing his views on the nature of his own experience.

While sitting in the hall, I observed Maharshi resting on the couch, wholly unconcerned with what was taking place in his presence (for instance, the constant flow of visitors who prostrated themselves before him and moved on, one after the other) and yet I could easily discern in him the attitude of oneness with all — abhinabhava — through which he touched the inner being of the visitor, who was able to feel within himself the presence of the universal spirit transcending thought.

I would venture to suggest that the reciprocal relationship between Sri Maharshi in his abhinabhava and the aspirant sitting in his presence is analogous to that of a radio transmitter and a receiver. If the visitor is really anxious to obtain the fullest benefit of the benign influence radiating from the silent presence of the Sage, he (the visitor) must attune his mind to the proper wavelength.

The use of this analogy should not mislead the reader into thinking that this is an implicit recognition of duality in the ultimate Truth. For an understanding of the Sage's point of view with reference to himself in relation to 'other', I may quote his teachings, which are perfectly clear and beyond all doubt. On page xxix of Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi it is stated:

"When the Yogi rises to the highest state of samadhi, it is the Self in the Heart that supports him, whether he is aware of it or not. If he is aware in the Heart, he knows that in whatever state he is, it is always the same Truth, the same Heart, the one Self, the Spirit that is present throughout, eternal and immutable."

It is from this state alone, in which the Sage ever abides, that he exercises his benign influence over the numerous aspirants seeking his presence. Therefore, in this state of absolute Being, which is one and eternal, there is not the slightest scope for duality.

The words of the Sage given in another context also confirm the above statement. When a visitor asked Sri Maharshi as to why he did not go about preaching the Truth he had realised, he replied, "Real preaching is possible only through Silence."

The duality which is necessarily involved in verbal preaching is entirely eliminated in this Silence. Moreover, Truth to be Truth must be universal and all-inclusive. That state in which the Truth is realised cannot be veiled, much less obstructed by the mind and its three states: waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. The state which at once transcends and includes the three states of the mind is known as sahaja sthiti. In other words, the Silence of the Sage is constant and exercises uninterruptedly its benign influence, whether the Sage appears outwardly to be aware of the world or not.

Reverting to the analogy of the transmitter, the Sage's spiritual influence is transmitted ceaselessly as far as he is concerned. But from the point of view of the seeker, the continued beneficent influence exercised by the Sage will have no apparent effect unless he (the seeker) is himself 'prepared' to receive the same. This preparation consists essentially in his sadhana or practice of discrimination (viveka) and detachment (vairagya).

During my stay of two weeks at the Ashram, I had ample opportunity to question Sri Maharshi on various philosophical problems as I desired to have a comprehensive understanding of Sri Maharshi's approach to these problems.

There is a very important verse in Sri Ramana Gita (this verse was written by the Sage himself and incorporated by his disciple Sri Ganapati Muni in the book) which gives a synopsis of sadhana with a categorical declaration concerning the absolute identity of Brahman with the Self. The verse runs as follows:

In the interior of the cavity of the Heart the one Supreme Being [Brahman] shines as 'I-I', verily the Atman. Entering into the Heart with one-pointed mind, either
through Self-enquiry or by diving within
or by breath-control, abide thou in
atmanishtha.

I had a small doubt with regard to this de-
scription of the Self or Brahman as residing in
the Heart. I asked Sri Maharshi if, as the verse
declares, a fixed place in the body is assigned to
the Self, would it not predicate finitude of That
which is infinite and all-pervading. If the Self is
located in the heart within the physical body,
would not the categories of time and space
(which are necessarily applicable to the physical
body) apply also to the Self?

Sri Maharshi graciously referred me to a very
similar question put by Sri Rama to Sage
Vasistha (Yoga Vasistha, ch. V, canto 78, v.
32): "Vasistha says that there are two kinds of
hearts; the one which is all-pervading and which
should be 'accepted', and the other which is
limited by time and space and which should be
'rejected'. The all-pervading Heart is within as
well as without, and when the 'body-am-I' idea
disappears, it is neither within nor without. That
is the real Heart. In that, all things appear as
images in a mirror. When the mind gets rid of
all desires, the vital breath gets quiet, and the
all-pervading Heart is experienced as such."

I then enquired of Sri Maharshi if this descrip-
tion in the Yoga Vasistha of the process
of realisation could be stated in somewhat different
terms as follows: when a man enquires into him-
self and tries to find out the root of the 'I', he
reaches the state of the witnessing Self, and
when the field of the witnessing Self begins to
expand so as to cover all objective existence, it
gains identified with the all-pervading Brahman,
and objects lose their separate existence.

While I was thus explaining myself to Sri
Maharshi, he intervened, saying: "This State is
explained by one of the scriptures as follows:

That is, in this State one acquires perma-
nent Brahmic beatitude similar to that
acquired by Brahma, the Creator,
Sanaka, Suka (ancient rishis), etc."

Being an ardent student of Srimad
Bhagavata, it occurred to me how incongruous
it would be for Suka to recite all the 18,000
verses of the epic before King Parikshita, if Suka
really was in that pure Brahmic state. I at once
referred my doubt to Sri Maharshi, who promptly
replied:

"Reading or no reading, and as a matter of
fact anything done or undone, makes not the
slightest difference to the Sage in that Brahmic
state."

The life of Sri Maharshi ever since he came
to Arunachala, and his day-to-day life as we see
it, are the proof and demonstration of that
Brahmic state.

On a subsequent day I asked Sri Maharshi for
his views on my book Maya, which I had sent
him some time ago. He said he had seen the
book and read it. He was gracious enough to
point out a mistake in my treatment of the sub-
ject and how I based my arguments on a wrong
presumption. He explained the correct viewpoint
at some length. My purpose in writing the book
was to prove that the concept of maya as pro-
pounded by Adi Sankara was fully borne out by
the Theory of Relativity.

This theory, as is well known, maintains that
time and space are purely relative notions de-
pendent entirely on the conditions governing the
observer and the object under observation. There
is no such thing as objective time and space.
When two observers, taking different positions
in space, observe a particular event, they obtain
different time-space measures which conflict with
each other and necessarily vitiate any conclusion
they may arrive at concerning that particular
event.

Sri Maharshi pointed out that the very pre-
sumption of two observers being situated at two
given points is itself an unwarranted one. That
is, taking for granted that there are two indi-
vidual observers, the notion of relativity must
itself apply to the space-time measure separat-
ing the two. In other words, the space between
one observer and another being relative and unreal, there cannot be more than one real observer.

I at once recognised my error. I should have shown in my book how the presumption (taken for granted by all scientists) that there can be two observers separated by a fixed time-space measure is itself subject to all the imperfections inherent in our perceptions, as established by the Theory of Relativity. It was a revelation to me that Sri Maharshi could judge off-hand, as it were, such modern theories, proceeding entirely on the basis of his own experience of the Absolute.

Verse 16 of Sat-Darshana Bhashya clearly declares Sri Maharshi’s views on time and space:

Where is space without me, where is time? The body exists in space and time, but no body am I. Nowhere am I, in no time; yet am I everywhere and in all time.

There is perfect spiritual experience and dispels all false notions of time and space.

One day, during the second week of my stay, I was standing near the northern gate of the Ashram leading to the hill-path. With me was a devotee who had returned the previous day from Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram. It was evening and Sri Maharshi came by after his usual evening stroll. I wanted to ask him about his views on the theory of creation and the presence of the devotee who had returned from Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram prompted me to refer to Sri Aurobindo’s views on the subject. I may say here that I am well acquainted with Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. During my visits to him some twenty-five years earlier, I used to freely discuss these spiritual subjects with him. While I spoke to Sri Maharshi, I referred also to the Vedanta as propounded by Sri Sankara, which discountenances the theory of creation as being merely an aid for the understanding of the less advanced soul, and maintains that there is no real basis for such a theory of creation.

I asked Sri Maharshi his opinion on the subject. He replied by quoting the following verse from Karika of the Mandukya Upanishad:

There is neither dissolution nor creation.
There is no one bound and there is no aspirant.
There is nobody desirous of liberation and nobody liberated.
This is the Truth from the transcendental standpoint.

I am sure that Sri Maharshi attaches no importance to any of the theories of creation, evolution, etc. He invariably emphasises the oneness and unchangeability of the Self or Brahman, which is the one and only Reality, to which there can be no ‘progress’ and in which there is no duality or difference.

On another day, I referred to some other aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy such as the theory of bheda-abheda or unity in differ-
ence, the higher and lower natures in man, evolution in time, descent of the Spirit, etc.

Sri Maharshi remarked that where there is the least difference there is also ego, and if difference is conceded Unity would be merely a theoretical proposition. It is accepted on all hands that in the Absolute there can be no ego. The transition from the ego to the egoless state, if it can at all be called a transition, is not through a change or evolution from the lower to the higher nature in man but through the total denial or destruction of the ego. It is like a man waking up from a dream, and this transition from the dreaming to the waking state cannot be called an evolution from a lower to a higher state. It is the total negation of the one state in the other.

I shall conclude with a short but profound discourse by Sri Maharshi on "surrender". The question arose in this way. Referring to the contradiction between the two lines of the first verse of the *Isavasyopanishad*, I asked Sri Maharshi for the correct interpretation.

Everything changeable in this world is pervaded by the Supreme Being. Only by the renunciation of that [world], support thy inner Self; do not covet the riches of others.

The first line of the verse declares that the One Supreme Being, Eternal and Immutable, is the basis of everything changeable. In other words, the mutable world is only a divine manifestation. Nevertheless, it is this world that the second line of the verse enjoins the aspirant to renounce in order to obtain true happiness. The contradiction between the two lines is thus very patent. If the world is nothing but the Divine, why should the aspirant be asked to renounce it?

With these ideas in my mind, I asked Sri Maharshi how renunciation was at all possible if the entire manifested existence was nothing but the Divine substance. What is it that should be renounced?

“One must renounce the wrong knowledge,” replied Sri Maharshi, “that anything but the Divine exists. That is, one must give up the notion that there is any duality or multiplicity, whatever the manifested existence may appear to be.”

Before I give the rest of Sri Maharshi’s observations, let me say that this interpretation is very original and, I think, unanticipated by any commentator, ancient or modern. There is, perhaps, none that does not take for granted an implicit contradiction between the two lines of this verse, but Sri Maharshi finds not even an apparent contradiction.

“The Supreme Being is the only Reality, one and unchangeable,” said Sri Maharshi. “It alone is, and sustains the apparent multiplicity. Therefore, renounce the knowledge that anything except the Divine exists. In other words, renounce the sense of duality or multiplicity. Then, as a matter of course, you will not covet anything, because one covets a thing only when one believes there is an “other” to be coveted. The initial error lies in the sense of duality, whereby one separates oneself from the thing coveted.

“The ignorant man believes that coveting a thing and getting it is the source of joy. No. He alone enjoys who renounces the idea of separateness. That is, his is the true bliss who knows that the one unchangeable Supreme Being, identical with himself and with everything that exists, is the one and only Reality.”

“It is no doubt well that the sastras admonish the layman and make him give up the notion of duality,” put in one of the visitors present, “but how are we to reconcile this teaching of the sastras with a no less important injunction, namely, that of self-surrender to the Divine? If there is no duality whatever, where is the necessity or possibility for self-surrender?”

In view of Sri Maharshi’s exposition of the inner meaning of the first verse of the *Isavasyopanishad* affirming the absolute oneness of Reality, the visitor’s question aroused the interest of all of us and we eagerly awaited Sri Maharshi’s reply.
Not only was Sri Maharshi’s reply very cogent, but also every word he spoke seemed to have a force that made disputation entirely out of place. At first he appeared to have completely ignored the visitor’s question. For a minute or two he was silent, thus rousing all the more our curiosity to know how he would tackle the question. I shall try to give Sri Maharshi’s reply briefly and, as far as possible, in his own words.

“We are familiar with the custom among some people in these parts based on deep sentiments of devotion to Lord Ganesha. Daily worship to His image (which is found installed in all the temples of the locality) is an indispensable ritual for these people before their daily meal.

“A certain poor traveller of this persuasion was passing through a sparsely inhabited country. Not finding a temple of Ganesha nearby where he might perform his daily worship before his midday meal, he resolved to make an idol of the deity out of the small quantity of jaggery he was carrying with him (together with flour, etc.) and perform the ritual before his meal. Having made the idol, he proceeded with the ritual in right earnest. Then, to his bewilderment, he found that for the purpose of naivedya [food-offering] he had nothing sweet in his baggage, since he had converted all the jaggery into the idol. But no worship is complete without the naivedya. So the simple-minded wayfarer pinched a small bit of jaggery from the idol itself and offered it as naivedya to the deity. It did not occur to him that in the act of pinching a bit off the idol, he had defiled the very image which he wanted to worship, and had therefore made both the worship and the offering worthless.

“Your idea of self-surrender is nothing better than the offering made by the wayfarer. By presuming your existence as something apart from the Supreme Being, you have merely defiled It. Whether you surrender yourself or not, you have never been apart from that Supreme Being. Indeed, at this present moment, even as in the past or the future, the Divine alone is.”

On the day I was to leave the Ashram I had arranged for the purchase of fruits to offer to Sri Maharshi. When the time arrived for me to take leave of him, I put the fruits reverentially before
him and said in a few words that I was leaving.
Sri Maharshi smiled benignly and remarked with
a twinkle in his eye, "And so, you are offering
jaggery to Lord Ganesha!"

In the preceding pages I have touched upon
only a few of the problems I referred to Sri
Maharshi during my fourteen days at the
Ashram. Whether he spoke in order to clear the
doubts of an earnest aspirant or whether he sat
in perfect silence, one received a fresh illumina-
tion, a new angle of vision, an inspiring
reorientation of one's spiritual outlook. Sri
Maharshi truly represents in himself the ancient
Hindu culture of the Heart.

To know this truth of the Oneness of exist-
ence, all who desire the culture of the Heart
should seek the presence of the venerable Sage
at the Hill of the Holy Beacon, who speaks, lives
and embodies in himself the Peace and Unity of
existence. As the abode of the Sage representing
the Advaitic Truth, I must say that Sri
Ramanasramam is the University of Universities.

Swami Madhavtirtha has recorded that
after meeting with Bhagavan, he decided to
minimise his activities of Veda prachar
(propagating the Vedas and delivering talks
on Vedanta. He resolved to remain in one
place and enjoy the bliss of jivanmukti. He
chose a place on the banks of the Sabarmati
river at a small village called Valad near
Ahmedabad, where he established the
Vedanta Ashram in 1947. Swami
Madhavtirtha remained there till his
Mahanirvana on November 18, 1960.

The following is a brief selection from his
conversations with Ramana Maharshi:

Q: Who am I? To whom does the question
refer?

Maharshi: The question refers to the ego. It
does not refer to the Atma.

Q: Should I say, "I am Siva", along with
the enquiry "Who am I"? Should I or
should I not say, "I am not the mind,
intellect, body, etc.?"
Maharshi: Do not reply to such questions of your mind in the course of your enquiry. The reply should be allowed to come from within. The reply of the ego is not real. Continue to enquire until you get the answer by the method of *Jnana Marga* (Path of Knowledge). This enquiry is called meditation.

Q: At present I am meditating on the form of an idol, and I am also doing *japa* in accordance with the instructions of my Guru. Am I or am I not fit to conduct the enquiry “Who am I?”

Maharshi: “I” is also Guru-mantra. It is said in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* that the first name of God is “I”. Om came into existence only later. *Atma* always says “I”. There is no *japa* at all without the doer of *japa*. All do the *japa* of “I”. By concentrating on it, meditation will be successful. The result of such meditation is *Knowledge*. Even then, if you wish to continue meditation on a form, you may do so. The *sadhana* which is suitable for a person is the proper method for him.

Q: I am doing propaganda work by publishing religious teachings. I do *japa*, *mantra*, writing, singing the exploits of the Lord, study and instruction. Should I continue this or not? In other words, while I am conducting the enquiry “Who am I?”, should I continue all the above work?

Maharshi: If you like to do all these works without leaving the self-enquiry, you may do so. You must first understand what *japa*, singing and service are. **Be as you are.** Reality is the real *japa*. *Japa* and God are one.

Q: In my present state, is there sufficient faith, humility and surrender in me? If not, how to make them perfect?

Maharshi: You are perfect, so abandon the idea of imperfection. There is nothing to be destroyed. Ego is not a real thing. It is the mind which makes the effort, and the mind is not real. Just as it is not necessary to kill the rope which one imagines to be a snake, so also there is no need to destroy the mind. Knowing the form of the mind makes the mind disappear. *Nirvṛtti* belongs to nitya *nirvṛtti* (one cannot destroy what is eternally destroyed).

Q: Should I sit in a particular posture or sit on a grass mat?

Maharshi: **Stability in the Self is the real posture.** Be steady in that posture. In what posture will *Atma* sit? It is wrong to say that there is no Self-knowledge without *asanas* [postures]. *Atma* has no need of them. The compulsion to have a particular kind of posture makes the mind unsteady.

Q: What books should I read for *swadhyaya* [study]?

Maharshi: The Self is the real book. You can glance anywhere in that book. Nobody can take it away from you. Whenever you remember, turn towards the Self. Thereafter, you may read what you like.

Q: While sitting near you, what sort of mental state should we have so as to receive your atomic force?

Maharshi: Keep your mind still. That is enough. You will get spiritual help sitting in this hall if you keep yourself still. **The aim of all practices is to give up all practices.** When the mind becomes still, the power of the Self will be experienced. The Self is all-pervading; if the mind is in peace, then one begins to experience it.

Q: Which is better for me: to gaze at your eyes and mouth, or should I sit with closed eyes and concentrate my mind on a particular thing?

Maharshi: Gaze at your own nature. It is immaterial whether the eyes are open or
closed. One is everywhere, so it is all the same whether you keep your eyes open or not. If you wish to meditate, do so on the "I" that is within you. It is Atma. Because it has no eyes, there is no need to either open or close the eyes. When you attain Self-knowledge, there will not be any ideas about the world. When you are sitting in a room, you are still the same person whether the windows are open or closed. It matters little whether external activities go on or not.

Q: Can the sadhana of self-enquiry be carried on while remaining in the house or outside the house?

Maharshi: Are you in the house or is the house in you? Be where you are.

Q: Then I can remain in the house?

Maharshi: It does not mean that. What I mean is that you should abide in your swarupa. You are not in the house. The house as well as the whole world is in you.

Q: Worries of worldly life trouble me much and I do not find happiness anywhere.

Maharshi: Do those worries trouble you in sleep?

Q: No.

Maharshi: Are you the same person as you were in sleep, or not?

Q: Yes.

Maharshi: So, it proves that worries do not belong to you. Those who believe the mind to be real will not be able to subdue it. In the state wherein the mind appears to be real, the thief cheats by putting on the dress of the policeman. Hence, we must know how to destroy the mind by knowing its real nature.

People ask me how to control the mind. It is but a bundle of thoughts. How will the mind, which is a collection of thoughts, come under control by a thought of controlling it? Therefore, reach its source. Seek the Atman. All misery will come to an end if you introvert your mind.

If you feel that jagat [the world] is created by the imagination of the jiva, then that imagination must be given up. If you think God has created jagat, then surrender to Him all your responsibilities and leave the burden of the world to Him.

Q. Is not surrender the chief sadhana?

Maharshi: The sadhana of surrender is accepted, no doubt. But when surrender is complete, there will be no distinction. Often, when a disciple gets initiation into a mantra from a guru and believes that he has surrendered, his surrender is not real. In surrender, one has to give up one's mind, and after the mind is given away, there will be no duality of any kind. He who remains separate from God has not surrendered.

Q: Is not surrender the chief sadhana?

Maharshi: The sadhana of surrender is accepted, no doubt. But when surrender is complete, there will be no distinction. Often, when a disciple gets initiation into a mantra from a guru and believes that he has surrendered, his surrender is not real. In surrender, one has to give up one's mind, and after the mind is given away, there will be no duality of any kind. He who remains separate from God has not surrendered.

Q: It is believed that if we surrender to Guru or God, then the reality of the individual goes away, and in exchange we get the support of a greater Reality, and Divine power shines in us.

Maharshi: To expect to receive a greater Divine power after surrendering is not the true attitude of surrender.

Q: Are the fruits of karmas [actions] done in one birth to be undergone in the next birth, or not?

Maharshi: Have you been born now? If really you have not been born now, then why think of the next birth? Truly, karmas do not trouble us; it is only the sense of doership that does. The idea of doing the karmas or leaving them is false. Think: who is the doer of karma?

Q: If sadhus mingle with people and reform them, it will be very good.

Maharshi: In the eye of the jnani there are
no others, so there is nothing like mingling with others for him.

Q: Should we not have patriotism? Should we not serve our country?

Maharshi: First be what you are. Therein lies all truth and happiness. While trying to become someone else, the ego gets in. You think that the world will be conquered by your power, but when you turn inwards towards the Self, you will know that a higher power is working everywhere.

Q: Though Janaka was a jnani, he was a ruling monarch, but his Guru, Yajnavalkya, who was also a jnani, renounced the world and went to the forest. Why was this so?

Maharshi: All happens according to the prarabdha [destiny] of each jnani. Krishna was an enjoyer of pleasures [bhogi] whereas Sukadeva was an ascetic [tyagi]. Janaka and Rama were kings, but all of them were jnanis. Their inner experience was the same and their external life was in accordance with their prarabdha.

Q: Some see a serpent in the rope, some a stick, some a garland, but the one who sees the rope as a rope has the true knowledge. The knowledge of the other seers is not true.

Maharshi: It is not necessary to think of the view of other seers. Those others are only in your imagination. **Know the one Seer, and all will be well.**

Q: How?

Maharshi: In a dream, many are seen, but they are all in the imagination of the one seer. When you wake up from the dream, the dream and those seen in the dream will take care of their own prarabdha.

Q: After waking from sleep, why does the world of the previous day appear the same?

Maharshi: The world seen on the previous
day was not real. It was the knowledge of an unreal knower. Similarly, the world of the next day is also the knowledge of an unreal knower. Truly, there is no real world. What appears separate from us is called by us “the world”. It appears separate to us due to ego-consciousness [ahamkara]. When ahamkara goes, there is nothing separate and then there is no world.

Q: How then do the affairs of daily life go on?

Maharshi: At present, the government has changed the time by putting it an hour in advance. Though the time is wrong, daily life still continues.

Q: What is the meaning of “Atma is swayam prakasha” [the Self shines by its own light]?

Maharshi: Just as the sun has never seen darkness, the Self has never seen ignorance. The Self is unknowable, but it can be experienced by aparoksha anubhava [experience by direct perception]. This is called swayam prakasatwa [self-illumination].

Q: What about bringing down God’s power in the human body?

Maharshi: If, after surrendering, one still has a desire, then surrender has not been successful. If one has the attitude, “If the higher power is to come down, it must come in my body,” this will only increase identification with the body. Truly speaking, there is no need for any such descent. After the destruction of the “I-am-the-body” idea, the individual becomes atma-swarupa [the “form” of the Absolute]. In that state, there is no above or below, front or back.

Q: If the individual becomes the “form” of the Absolute, then who will enjoy the bliss of the Absolute? To enjoy the bliss of the Absolute, we must be slightly separate from it, like the bee which tastes honey.

Maharshi: The bliss of the Absolute is the bliss of one’s own nature. It is not born or created from anything else. Pleasure, which is created, is sure to be destroyed. Sugar, being insentient, cannot give its own taste; the bee has to keep a little distance to taste it. But the Absolute is Awareness and Consciousness. It can give its own bliss, but Its nature cannot be understood without attaining that state.

Q: What about bringing a new divine race on this earth?

Maharshi: Whatever is to be in the future is to be understood as impermanent. Learn to understand properly what you have now so that there will be no need of thinking about the future.

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**THE MELODY**

By Kavita Erica Byrd

If you hear the song of my heart, my Lord,  
Who else do I need to speak to?

If you sing the song of my heart, my Lord,  
What else do I need to hear?
Golden Adorations to the
Jagatguru Sankaracharya of Kanchi
marking his Birth Centenary
Our Prayers are offered to the One  
Who ever prays for the welfare of the entire humanity
EARLY TEXTS OF ‘WHO AM I?’
The Various Texts of ‘Who am I?’ — 1

By Michael James

Introduction

Between 1923 and 1936 at least five different texts of the work Nan Year? (Who am I?) appeared in print in Tamil. Of these, one was edited by Sri Bhagavan Himself, three were edited by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, and one was edited by other devotees. In addition to these five printed texts, in the notebooks of Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai we find a number of other texts or drafts edited by him which were probably never printed. Of these, three texts (two drafts in Tamil and one draft in English) are of special interest, both because they help to give us an insight into how the various different texts evolved and took shape, and also because each one contains some useful and significant sayings or wordings of Sri Bhagavan which are not found in the presently available printed texts.

Therefore, if it is the Will of Sri Bhagavan, I would like to contribute a series of articles in the forthcoming issues of The Mountain Path in which I will give English translations of each of these texts and also offer a comparative study made of one text with another, thereby attempting to highlight all the points of variation or of any other special interest. For convenience of reference, I have allotted a letter as a label to each text, following an order which seems to be the most probable chronological order in which the texts were edited, and throughout this series of articles I shall be referring to each text by the letter thus allotted:

Text A: The earliest available text, edited by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai and corrected by Sri Bhagavan sometime before 6.1.1920, and containing 13 questions and answers, which was subsequently printed at least twice, as an appendix to the 3rd edition (1931) and 4th edition (1946) of Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval.

Texts AS: A manuscript dated 30.12.22 and 31.12.22 found in one of Sri Pillai’s notebooks containing 21 (+2) points which are not included in text A but of which most are found in the later texts of Nan Yar? and which may therefore be regarded as a supplement to text A.

Text B: A text containing 27 questions and answers (the first 12 of which are identical to the first 12 of text A) which was printed as an appendix to the first edition (1923) of Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval.

Text C: manuscript draft in English, various copies of which are found in Sri Pillai’s notebooks, and which contains 23 questions and answers and 14 stray sayings of Sri Bhagavan.

Text D: A manuscript draft dated 21.2.24 found in one of Sri Pillai’s notebooks containing 25 (+1) questions and answers and 15 stray sayings of Sri Bhagavan.

Text E: A very important text containing 30 questions and answers and 11 stray sayings of Sri Bhagavan, which was printed probably three or four times between the years 1924 and 1936, and which is the most complete record available in print of the teachings received by Sri Pillai from Sri Bhagavan.

Text F: The essay version edited by Sri Bhagavan Himself (upon the basis of the material available in text E), which was first printed in a booklet entitled Upadesa Mozhigal in the year 1927 or 1928, which was later included in the first edition (1931) and all the subsequent editions of Sri Ramana Nutrirattu (The Collected Works of Sri Bhagavan, in Tamil), and a facsimile of which in Sri Bhagavan’s own handwriting was reproduced on pp. 44-47 of the June 1993 issue of The Mountain path.

Text G: The version containing 28 questions and answers, which was edited by other devotees in the mid-1930’s, based upon the structure
of the earlier text E but incorporating into that structure many of the improvements and refinements made by Sri Bhagavan while editing text F, and which has been printed at least fourteen times (the 5th to 18th editions of the Nan Yar? booklet) between 1936 and the present day.

In the next issue of The Mountain path I will take up text A as the first subject of our study, but before proceeding to do so I will first give here an English rendering of lines 37 to 73 of Anugraha Ahaval, in which Sri Swapprakasam Pillai has given a poetic paraphrase of the most important points of upadesa which he received from Sri Bhagavan in the year 1902 or thereafter and which later came to form the work Nan Yar? Anugaha Ahaval is a poem consisting of 207 lines composed by Sri Pillai in which he narrates various experiences he had of the Grace of Sri Bhagavan both in his inner and in his outer life. This poem, which was composed sometime prior to the year 1920, was first published in 1923 along with two other poems of his, Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval and Sri Ramana Pada Malai, and it has been included in all the subsequent editions of Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval. The first 24 lines of this poem contain general praise of Sri Bhagavan, and in lines 25 to 36 Sri Pillai begins to narrate his own experience as follows:

While I, a mean wretch, was studying in an English college, a question arose in my ignorant mind, 'Who am I who whirl about agitated?' (25-27); though I searched and looked for an answer to this [question] in good books, and though I approached and asked You, who knew [the truth], I, a dog, did not understand deeply due to the intense impurity of my mind (28-31), and did not think of clinging to the Grace of Pasupati [You, O Sri Bhagavan, the Lord of all souls] (32), and [hence], revelling intoxicated in [all] the paths I came across, I underwent many miseries in the hand-mill [of mundane human life] due to past karmas (33-34), my mind became confused, and [finally] when, thinking to be saved by attaining Your Grace, I approached You, with tender words (35-36) [You graciously revealed the path of enquiry (78), saying as follows].

Then in lines 37 to 73 Sri Swapprakasam Pillai continues to summarise the teachings he received from Sri Bhagavan as follows:

One reality (vastu), which abides within this fleshy body as the true meaning of the word 'I', exists as distinct [from this body], as indestructible, as jnanamaya [of the nature of jnana or pure Self-consciousness], and as abundant bliss (37-40); if you wish to know that supreme reality (41), the exalted path is only to enquire 'Then who am I?', having banished [from your mind] the attachment (abhimana) of thinking the body, which is not that reality, to be 'I' (42-45); when enquiring [thus], though vasanas [inherent tastes of the mind to attend to sense-objects] obstruct by rising and coming out without limit (46-47), just as without succumbing to a mighty warrior intent upon capturing a fortress, as and when they [the enemies] come incessantly kills by wordsthe enemies who rise and surge forth from within the fortress and having [thus] destroyed that army which was coming out, enters that fortress (48-52), so if, without wanting even to the least extent to complete the thought which rises, one asks 'To whom does it appear?' [one will be reminded] 'It appears to me,' whereupon if one asks 'Who am I?' that thought will be destroyed (53-56); if in this manner one destroys all thoughts as and when they rise, finally even that [first] thought 'I [am the body]' will perish [being deprived of any other thoughts to feed upon] and the unsurpassed and unequalled supreme reality, which is called Self, alone will shine (57-60); just as a person who, wishing to obtain the pearl lying at the bottom of the ocean, has entered that [ocean], plunges and dives deep, deep into it again and again, and, even though the ocean-water obstructs and causes him much trouble, raising him up to the outer surface, he [finally] brings up [the pearl] (61-66), so when one seeks that beautiful pearl [the real Self] by scrutinizing who one is (66-67), countless crores of thoughts about outer things will obstruct
and drag one, casting one out towards the world (68-69), and yet in spite of their casting one out [thus], if, like a simple woman who will not cease going after something she has set her heart upon, one plunges and dives, dives, dives deep within oneself, one can know oneself (69-72); that knowledge alone is the rare and precious state of liberation (73).

Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai then concludes his account of this particular phase of his experience of Sri Bhagavan’s Grace by singing in lines 74 to 78 as follows:

“No only did You [O Sri Bhagavan] bestow Grace by impressing [the truth] upon my mind by saying thus (74), but by making all my karanas [the mind, intellect, senses and so on] subside by Your power as the form of mere consciousness (75-76) You also graciously revealed the path of enquiry (78) to me who was incarnated within this body (77).”

(To be continued)

Appeal

In response to the appeal we published on page 43 of our last (Aradhana) issue of The Mountain Path, we have received a number of useful old editions of Nan Yar? (Who am I?). We now have for our archives most of the old editions going back as far as the fifth edition (1936). Still missing, however, are the following three very important publications:

2. The fourth edition of Nan Yar?, published probably some time around 1934.

If any devotee can send us either an original or a xerox copy of any of the above three publications, this will help our researches tremendously and be of great benefit to all Ramana-bhaktas.

In addition, if anyone can send us an original or a xerox copy of an edition of Nan Yar? published prior to 1936, it will be of great help and service in making our Ashram archives more complete in regard to this most essential work of Sri Bhagavan.

— Editor
The Pontiff and Sri Bhagavan

By T.K. Sundaresa Iyer

About the year 1948 the Ashram received a letter from His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Puri (Goverdhana Mutt), expressing his desire to pay a visit to Bhagavan and to get certain doubts cleared. Incidentally, the letter categorically mentioned the doubts and asked that they might be solved in a reply letter. The chief of these referred to certain Agamic texts: “Hara Gauri samyogat… avacchayah yogaha” and the teacher asked what this “avacchayah yogaha” is.

I placed this letter at the feet of Bhagavan, and asked what answer should be sent to him. Bhagavan simply laughed and said that the questioner knew it all himself and needed no fresh light, but that he would know it better when he came in person. A reply was accordingly sent on these lines.

After some days the Acharya visited the Ashram. Bhagavan gave instructions for him to be received and attended to with all care and respect for his exalted position; the Ashramites spared no pains in arranging for his reception and accommodation.

Sri Bhagavan was seated in the Golden Jubilee Hall on the granite sofa; and eager spectators had gathered in their hundreds. Quite near to Bhagavan’s sofa a small dais was arranged, with a deer’s skin for the Pontiff to sit on, and then he was escorted to the presence of Bhagavan. On coming before the Maharshi, the teacher greeted Bhagavan with his staff, as is the custom of sannyasis, and was shown the seat arranged for him. He was surprised that so prominent a seat had been allotted; he asked the dais to be removed, spread the deer’s skin on the ground, and sat on that.

After a little preliminary talk, the teacher repeated the main questions of his letter and asked Bhagavan to enlighten him on the meaning of this phrase. Bhagavan gave him His look of Grace and was silent, and the teacher was all receptive. No words were exchanged between them. Thus over half an hour passed.

Then Bhagavan smiled and remarked: “What is there to explain? You know it already; this text represents only the very essence of Divine Knowledge — when Nature unites with the Person, then the visible becomes all shadows. It is as meaningful as pictures on the cinema screen, and then will be experienced the state of All-Self as seen…. The one Being-Consciousness which projects all this out of Itself, sustains and then withdraws it again into Itself. Having swallowed all the shadows of this world, Itself dances as the Ocean of Bliss, the Reality or Substratum of all that is, was and shall be. And then it is ‘I-I’.”

The teacher seemed to have received new Light and Life; he was all joy. He said that in all his wandering through the country he had tried to be enlightened upon this mystery; but it was only here that he got the secret and the truth of Light as explained in the texts of the Vedanta.

—from At the Feet of Bhagavan, pp. 38-9
Many perhaps know that Sri Swami Ramdas ("Ramdas" means "votary of Sri Rama") received the spiritual spark from Bhagavan Ramana. But it is possible that many may not know how much interest Bhagavan bestowed on Swami Ramdas and the activities of his Ashram, Anandashram. Bhagavan often quoted from their monthly magazine, The Vision.

Devotee: What is the efficacy of the Name?
Sri Bhagavan read out the extract from The Vision.
It was a translation of Namdev's stanzas.

(Talks, no.591)

Once, coming to know that Sri Viswanatha [Swami] had been requested by Swami Ramdas to translate his autobiography, In Quest of God, into Tamil, Sri Bhagavan advised the former to go to Anandashram: "Do it in his [Papa's] presence, in his proximity. That will be good."

An acknowledged tribute from the Master of masters to the "Servant of the Lord"!

— Editor
If anyone wants me to tell them something about Beloved Papa, I ask them to visualise what it would be like if, by some divine alchemy, Love and Bliss were to coalesce and stand before them as one luminous entity. That is how Papa can be seen with the naked eye.

Papa was indeed the very image of Love and Bliss divine. What was the source of that Love? When he opened out his heart to Ram, his eternal Beloved, Ram flooded his heart with never-ending, never-fading Love. This happened when Papa turned to his beloved Ram with pure devotion and utter self-surrender, turning his back on the world and the attractions it might hold for him. It was born of the realisation of his oneness with the Infinite and the Eternal Self. Every fibre of his being then thrilled to the sweet rhythm of Love. Bliss ineffable flowed over and saturated him, rising like an artesian spring from the heart's core when Papa realised the entire universe of name and form as the vibhuti or manifestation of the Self.

In the state of pure Bliss-consciousness he carried on his spiritual ministry till his last day on earth. Through his talks and actions he gave those who sought him a taste of the love and bliss divine. The purest pearls of wisdom that fell from his lips spread sweetness and light all round, dispelling gloom, fear and anxiety that held the people in a tight grip. Earnest seekers were lifted up to higher levels of consciousness, getting a glimpse of the true life of the Spirit, with the result that a deep yearning for that life was kindled in them. Papa's talks were often punctuated with jokes and laughter. The total impression left on the mind of the listener was never to be forgotten.

Once, to illustrate the futility of empty, theoretical advaitic knowledge, Papa narrated the following story. He was staying in a small mandir in Jhansi when a man approached him and asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Ramdas," he replied simply.

"No, you speak a lie there," returned his visitor. "You are Ram Himself. When you declare you are Ramdas, you do not know what you say. God is everything and in everything. He is in you and so you are He. Confess it right away."

"True, dear friend," Ramdas replied, "God is everything. But at the same time, it must be noted God is one, and when He is in you and everywhere around you, may I humbly ask to whom you are putting this question?"

After a little reflection, the man could only answer, "Well, I have put the question to myself".

Papa always stressed the necessity of absolute honesty and sincerity as essential in the great Quest. Better an honest, dualistic bhakti than a hypocritical advaita. Whereas bhakti, however dualistic, will lead ultimately to jnana as jnana mata, the mother of jnana, advaita practised only with the head leads merely to confusion and hypocrisy.

Another incident illustrates this point well. When Papa was staying at Mount Abu he was taken to meet a "great saint", Swami Kaivalyananda, a young sannyasin living in a cave, his body completely shaved, but surrounded by a number of books.

Papa approached him and prostrated.

With a look of surprise, the sannyasin asked, "To whom are you offering this salutation?"

"To Ram," Papa replied.

"Who are you?"
"Ramdas."

"Ramdas. Ramdas, funny, isn't it? There is only one Truth. Why do you assume this false duality?"

"It is Ram Himself, being One, who has chosen to be many."

"Wrong," retorted the advaitin. "He is always One; many is false, illusion."

"Truth has become God and His devotee for the sake of līla, the divine play," Papa responded.

"Why play?"

"For love and bliss; so when Ramdas prostrates before you, it is yourself who do it in the form of Ramdas," Papa went on.

"Bosh!" cut in the sannyasin. "There is only one, never two. "Then to whom are you talking, dear Swamiji," asked Papa, pulling out his brahmastra.

The sannyasin reflected a while and had to reply, "To myself."

"Exactly. You assume there are two although in the light of absolute Truth there is only one."

"No, no — no realised person believes in duality," maintained the advaitin, getting jumpy. "Here, take this book and read it. You will understand things more clearly, I assure you. It is written by me." He pressed Papa to accept it.

Noticing the author's name on the cover, Papa noted that he referred to himself as "Swami Kaivalyananda, M.A."!

Papa, known as Vittal Rao in his purusārma days, was born in 1884 at Hosdrug, Kerala, to Sri Balakrishna Rao and Smt. Lalita Bai, a devout Saraswat couple. Papa lived the ordinary life of a householder until he was thirty-six. During that time he experienced many trials and tribulations from the worldly point of view, but in his case they caused him to enquire deeply into the true meaning of life. A wonderful trans-
formation was wrought in him of which nobody had any inkling until he was suddenly fired with an intense wave of dispassion. He came to realise the futility of worldly pursuits, and the need for real, everlasting peace and happiness. Inspired by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ram Tirtha, Papa became thoroughly convinced that God alone can give one eternal peace and happiness. The path of pure devotion and self-surrender shone forth for him with an irresistible appeal. All attachments to family, friends and business dropped away just as a fully ripened fruit falls from the tree. He was inwardly ready to give himself up wholly and unreservedly to God.

At that critical time, his father, noticing his son's waning interest in secular pursuits and his waxing love for and devotion to God, initiated him into the Ram mantra and assured him that by repeating it unstintingly he would, in due time, find the true peace and happiness he was thirsting for. As the mantra took hold of him, Papa found his life filled with Ram. It was then that he renounced the samsaric life and went forth in quest of God as a mendicant sadhu. This first year of Papa's new life is described by him in his autobiography, *In Quest of God.*

It was thus on one morning in December 1922 that Papa left hearth and home by train from Mangalore. He did not know where he was going, nor was he anxious about it. He only knew that he was obeying the divine command of his beloved Ram, and was therefore sure that He would guide him unerringly. The mantra “OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM” was ever on his lips and in his heart. Besides chanting the divine Name, Papa's practice was to look upon everything in the world as forms of Ram — God — and to accept everything that happened as happening by the will of Ram alone.

Papa was thus directed to Srirangam. Here he bathed in the holy Cauvery and, after offering up his old white clothes to the sacred river, he donned the ochre robes of a sannyasin and underwent spiritual rebirth. As prompted by Ram Himself, Papa assumed the new name of Ramdas (servant of Ram) and took the inviolable vows of sannyasa, renunciation. Papa never referred to himself in the first person ever again.

With the name of God constantly on his lips, Papa continued his travels in the company of itinerant sadhus. The journey took him to Tiruvannamalai, where he stood in front of Bhagavan Ramana and prayed for his grace.

About this experience Papa himself has said, "The Maharshi, turning his beautiful eyes towards Ramdas, and looking intently for a few minutes into his eyes as though he was pouring into Ramdas his blessings through those orbs, nodded his head to say he had blessed. A thrill of inexpressible joy coursed through the frame of Ramdas, his whole body quivering like a leaf in the breeze."

In that ecstatic state he left Maharshi's presence and went to spend nearly a month in a cave on the slopes of Arunachala in constant chanting of Ramnam. This was the first occasion that he went into solitude. After twenty-one days, when he came out of the cave he saw a strange, all-prevasive light: everything was Ram and only Ram.
Papa continued his travels, which took him to many parts of India, including the sacred shrines in the Himalayas, and then on to Bombay and finally back to Mangalore, where he spent three months in the Panch-Pandava cave at Kadri. It was here that he had his first experience of nirvikalpa samadhi. About this experience he writes: "For some days his meditation consisted of only the mental repetition of the Rammantram. Then, the mantram having stopped automatically, he beheld a small circular light before his mental vision which yielded him thrills of delight. This experience having continued for some days, he felt a dazzling light like lightning flashing before his eyes, which ultimately permeated and absorbed him. Now an inexpressible bliss filled every pore of his physical frame. When this state was coming on, he would at the outset become oblivious of his hands and feet and gradually his entire body. Lost in this trance-state he would sit for two or three hours. Still, a subtle awareness of external objects was maintained in this state.

"For two years from the time of the significant change which had come over him, Ramdas had been prepared to enter into the very depths of his being for the realisation of the immutable, calm and eternal spirit of God. Here he had to transcend name, form, thought and will — every feeling of the heart and faculty of the mind. The world had then appeared to him as a dim shadow — a dreamy nothing. The vision then was mainly internal. It was only for the glory of the Atman in His pristine purity, peace and joy as an all-pervading, immanent, immortal and glowing spirit.

"In the earlier stages this vision was occasionally lost, pulling him down to the old life of diversity with its turmoil of like and dislike, joy and grief. But he would be drawn in again into the silence and calmness of the spirit. A stage was soon reached when this dwelling in the spirit became a permanent and unvarying experience with no more falling off from it, and then the more exalted state came on: his hitherto inner vision projected outwards. First a glimpse of this new vision dazzled him off and on. This was the working of divine love. He would feel as
though his very soul had expanded like the blossoming of a flower and by a flash, as it were, enveloped the whole universe, embracing all in a subtle halo of love and light. This experience granted him a bliss infinitely greater than he had in the previous state. Now it was that Ramdas began to cry out, 'Ram is all. It is He as everybody and everything!' This condition was for some months coming on and vanishing. When it wore away, he would instinctively go into solitude. When it was present, he freely mixed in the world, preaching the glory of divine love and bliss. With this externalised vision Ramdas' mission began. Its fullness and magnificence was revealed to him during his stay in the Kadri cave, and here the experience became more sustained and continuous. The vision of God shone in his eyes and he would see none but Him in all objects. Now wave after wave of joy arose in him. He realised that he had attained to a consciousness full of splendour, power and bliss."

In his accounts of his travels and dealings with devotees, humour was never far from Papa's lips. Always a keen sense of proportion levelled the absurd to the mundane and raised the mundane to the sublime.

Once Papa was rambling aimlessly through a bazaar, not begging, indeed indifferent to food, as he was on a water fast.

"Who is that man?" a passer-by enquired of a merchant, pointing at Papa. The merchant replied, tapping his temple, "He is a half-cracked".

Papa, overhearing the remark, went up to them to correct the merchant's words. "No, brother, not merely half-cracked. Why not say full-cracked, which is the truth?" So saying, Papa passed on his way.

Any doubt about Papa's sense of proportion is washed away completely by the "Boot-kick
Puja” episode. Papa had been staying at Limbdi, where he was being sumptuously looked after and treated with the utmost respect. Every day more than a hundred people came for his darshan and satsang. Never attached to such externalities, as soon as Papa received the inner command of Ram to quit the place, he left. The tedious train-ride was broken at several places by a change in trains. One occurred at about ten at night.

Entering a third-class carriage, Papa found that it was very full, and everyone was lying down at full length on their bedding, leaving no room for any other passenger. Somehow, however, Papa found a perch at the feet of a particularly short passenger. At the next station, a number of new passengers poured into the carriage. These had to stand in the narrow passage between the seats, while not a single sleeping passenger made room for them. Papa felt that he should give up his seat for one of them and so quietly slipped down to the floor and stayed there. His former perch was, of course, immediately taken.

At the next station, a fresh set of passengers came in. The rush was now so great that they began tramping through the passage with their heavy boots, searching for some available place to sit. Papa, crouching on the floor like a rabbit, received their kicks with no small delight. He rolled himself down and twisted his body into a figure 8 in order to take up the least amount of room. Station after station new passengers came in. They crowded the passage to well-nigh suffocation point. Some of the sleeping passengers were even forced to sit up. So Papa was treated with boot-kicks from all four sides. Seated passengers had to knock against him when changing the position of their legs. The ones standing in the passage added their share whenever they were shoved. Papa’s only covering was a single cloth from head to foot. He looked not unlike a cloth bag on the floor. Reflecting upon the situation, Papa said to himself:

“Ramdas, only a few hours ago you were receiving puja (worship) at the houses of several devotees with flower garlands, sandal paste and arati (waving of lights). That was one kind of puja. Now here you are, immediately afterwards, getting another kind, with boot-kicks! Where is the difference? Is there any less Ram in the one than in the other?”

And so Papa went on chuckling to himself throughout the rest of the journey.

He travelled all over India many times during the next few years and finally settled down in a small ashram built by one of his devotees at Kasaragod, Kerala. It was here that Mother Krishnabai had his darshan and decided to dedicate her life to his service. Mother Krishnabai tells of her own life and realisation in her autobiography, Guru’s Grace. By God’s will, circumstances caused them to leave Kasaragod and settle down in Kanhangad, where the present Anandashram was founded in the year 1931. This Ashram became a field for them to put into practice the universal love they had gained as a result of their universal vision. Although Papa attained mahasamadhi in 1963 and Mataji Krishnabai in 1989, the motto of the Ashram continues to be Universal Love and Service.

About man’s relationship with God, Papa says, “Man is God playing the fool,” meaning that man is essentially divine, but that Divine has put a mask of ignorance on Himself and pretends individuality. When He is ready to tear off the mask, the individual gets tired of worldly life and seeks peace and everlasting happiness. He then goes to a wise man, accepts him as his Guru, does sadhana as prescribed by him, and by virtue of sadhana and the Guru’s grace, all the vasanas accumulated over lifetimes are washed away and the mind is made pure. Thereupon the mask is torn off and the individual realises “I AM BRAHMAN”. When and in whom He chooses to reveal Himself is a mystery. Papa emphasised the need of absolute surrender to the Divine Will. He would say, “His will is supreme. If we are conscious of this always, there is no struggle in life at all. When we surrender
to God’s will, we put all our burdens on Him. He is only too willing to carry everything. Surrender means strength, peace, bliss and wisdom. But when the ego raises its head, all these disappear and man becomes a puny, care-worn creature. God has made man a blissful being.”

“What is meant by surrender? Surrender means to know and feel that all our actions are God’s actions; all our movements are His movements. If we live our life with this attitude, our ego-sense will gradually disappear. The whole universe is the play and form of God’s sakti. When once we know that all are forms of the one Divine, all separateness will be lost in the great realisation.”

Papa acknowledged himself as a visishthaadvaitin:

**Papa:** Ramdas is not a pure advaitin. He believes in the co-existence of dvaita and advaita. The jivanmukta retains a higher subtle individuality; he moves about and acts in the world realising that he and God are one. Ramdas in this body is active in doing things. Whatever he may do, he is at the same time conscious that he is the eternal and all-pervading Reality. So, in that state there is separation and unity simultaneously.

**S.:** Is there no state when the jivanmukta can lose his individuality in the One and be free of birth?

**Papa:** That is possible. That is what the jnanis do. They do not believe in the existence of a higher individuality at all. As soon as the lower individuality is dissolved, they cease to exist as separate entities. There cannot be any rebirth for them. Adi Sankaracharya was one of that type.

Having realised his oneness with the Absolute, Papa maintained a subtle individuality to enjoy his relationship with the Divine as a child towards its mother or a servant towards its master. He had great reverence for all saints and sages. Whenever he referred to them, he would say that he was only a child of all saints. He had great respect and reverence for Bhagavan Sri Ramana. Of him he has said, “Sri Ramana Maharshi was in all respects a remarkable saint. After realising the Eternal, he lived in the Eternal. His advent was a veritable blessing on this earth. By his contact thousands were saved from the clutches of doubt and sorrow. He lived what he preached and preached what he lived. He exerted a wonderful influence and created in the hearts of ignorant men and women a consciousness of their inherent Divinity. He awakened the sleeping soul to the awareness of its immortal and all-blissful nature. By his very presence he rid the hearts of people of their base and unbridled passions. The faithful derived the greatest benefit by communion with him.”

As Papa had attained realisation by taking to uninterrupted chanting of the divine name Ram, coupled with contemplation of the attributes of God, he always extolled the virtue of nama-japa in sadhana. Based upon his personal experience, Papa assured all seekers that nama-japa would lead them to the supreme heights of realisation of one’s oneness with the Almighty. On the power of the Divine Name he has this to say: “The Divine Name is pregnant with a great power to transform the world. It can create light where there is darkness, love where there is hate, order where there is chaos, and happiness where there is misery. The Name can change the entire atmosphere of the world from one of bitterness, illwill and fear to that of mutual love, goodwill and trust. For the Name is God Himself. To bring nearer the day of human liberation from the sway of hatred and misery, the way is the recognition of the supremacy of God over all things and keeping the mind in tune with the Universal by the chanting of the Divine Name.”

May Beloved Papa, who is everything and beyond everything, continue to bless and lead all to the supreme goal!

*OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM*
When Sri Narayana Guru visited Sri Bhagavan at Skandashram — perhaps the only incident of his going out to see another mahatma — he was struck by the brilliance of Sri Ramana. Not only that, his ever-watchful and compassionate eye noticed the lack of erudite personnel near the Maharshi as well as the lack of facilities for earnest seekers, both in the town and on the Hill. Returning to Kerala, Swami asked his two most efficient and scholarly disciples, Sri Achyutananda and Sri Govindananda, to go to Arunachala and stay near the Maharshi and also to look after the needs of aspirants.

Though in actuality it did not work out, Sri Narayana Guru’s instructions would have had a far-reaching effect since Maharshi’s utterances, though spoken rarely and sparingly, had the highest Vedantic purport. They might have thus been preserved and treasured for posterity. Always attentive to the full spectrum of human needs, Sri Narayana Guru also wanted his disciples to arrange accommodation and food facilities in the town for visiting sadhaks, since resources on the Hill were inadequate. The Guru’s high thinking was aimed at the maximum number of seekers coming to and benefitting from the proximity of the “King among Sages,” as Sri Bhagavan never moved out of Arunachala.

What a glorious tribute paid to a jnani by another jnani!

— Editor
Seldom do we find a great spiritual master who is also a successful social reformer. Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala was such a rare one who used his spiritual insight for the promotion of a new man and a new social order. He made an indelible impression both on the social structure of his day and on the political, spiritual and cultural life of India. A man of few words, Narayana Guru never held discourses. Rather, through his conversations, poems in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil, and through messages and proclamations, he expressed his ideas on the problems facing man and society. He supplied a fresh orientation to the ancient wisdom and culture of India, making them broad-based and applicable to people from all walks of life. His stand against superstitions and degenerate practices, his stress on cleanliness of body, mind and environment, the importance he attached to mass education and the establishment of local industries, and his unconventional yet utterly simple ways of consecrating temples as centres of learning and worship — all these were part of his work to bring about the regeneration of man and society.

In order to appreciate the towering greatness of Sri Narayana Guru it is helpful to take a brief view of the conditions into which he was born. Kerala, until fairly recently, was a hotbed of casteism and untouchability unparalleled in other parts of India. Viewing the situation in his southern travels, Swami Vivekananda called the place a lunatic asylum. Let us examine why.

Traditionally, in South India there were only two castes — brahmins and sudras — the highest and the lowest of the four castes. Below the sudras, however, were the outcastes. Each caste had many subcastes, particularly the outcastes. Although all were Hindus by birth and faith, the distinctions of caste formed limiting factors in the practice of their faith. For example, at the time of Swami's birth in 1856, outcastes were forbidden to worship the primary gods of the Hindu pantheon (such as Siva, Vishnu, Subramania, etc.). Instead, they were obliged to worship and propitiate certain lesser, primarily wrathful local deities, usually with animal sacrifice and arak. Furthermore, untouchability existed not only between brahmins and sudras, sudras and outcastes, but also between the various sub-divisions of the outcaste community. Carrying the notion further than anywhere else in the country, there was also "unapproachability" and "unseeability", wherein strictures were placed against members of certain lower classes being seen or in the proximity of members of higher classes. For instance, pulayans (farm labourers by birth) were obliged to maintain a distance of not less than 64 feet from a brahmin; ezhavas (traditional toddy tappers and cultivators) 12 feet; and nairs (the predominant sudra community) 4 feet. The penalty for breaching custom was torture and even death. This, of course, made entry into brahmin-run temples and government schools an impossibility for the members of the outcaste community.

In addition to the restrictions on worship and education, the outcaste groups were also forbidden to use public roads. Social conditions were rigidly maintained, and the orthodox of all communities, including the outcaste ones, upheld the traditions as a part of their religious faith and internal integrity. Each outcaste group maintained untouchability toward the next in descending order. Each had its traditional trade and occupations, and infringement upon those of another group was unthinkable and punishable by law. Among the outcaste community, the ezhavas were the highest and most numerous, and the sweepers the lowest of all.

Being deprived of the right to study, worship and move with other communities, the outcaste communities were obliged to have their own temples (usually thatched huts), pujaris, ways of worship, and means of education. Indeed, it was not unknown for an ezhava to acquire a good Sanskrit-based education, and the study and practice of ayurveda was a traditional pursuit open to them. It was into such well-educated ezhava family that Sri Narayana Guru was...
born in the year 1856. His uncle, an accomplished and well-respected *ayurvedic physician* who was also learned in Sanskrit, undertook the boy’s upbringing and education.

It is said of Narayana Guru that as a child he never cried: not at his birth, nor when the umbilical cord was cut, nor when, as an infant, he was hungry. This indication of perfect equanimity even from birth goes a long way to explaining Swami’s immense spiritual stature. It was not something he attained, rather it was an indication of what he was. Never one of the common herd, Swami was a great lover of solitude even as a child. This habit continued throughout his life. Even when his fame had spread throughout India, he never allowed himself to become the centre of personal adulation despite crowds of followers and admirers.

As dictated by the times, Swami’s primary education was conducted under a private tutor. He later studied Sanskrit and *ayurveda* under his uncle. His character, even at that early age, was totally at variance with the popular conception of people belonging to his class: he bathed regularly twice a day, after which he piously smeared his forehead with *vibhuti* and then meditated for some time. His aptitude for learning was prodigious. When his uncle saw that young “Nanu” had excelled all his elders in the knowledge of Sanskrit, he offered the boy a chance to continue his studies under the famed scholar Raman Pillai Asan at Pudapalli. The boy was only 20 years old, yet when his uncle and benefactor offered him money at the time of his departure, he refused it. Later, when asked about it, he replied characteristically, “I felt that he should not part with both”. “Both?” “Yes, me and the money.”

Raman Pillai Asan’s fame as a great pandit had reached every corner of Kerala. Besides mastering Sanskrit, astrology, *ayurveda* and Vedanta, he was an accomplished poet. Nevertheless, within three years Nanu had mastered everything Raman Pillai Asan had to offer. It was also during this period that Swami became a strict vegetarian, excluding not only meat and fish, but also spicery food from his diet. When he returned home to Chempazhanti, his family sought, not for the first time, to have him married. According to the customs prevailing in his community, the bridegroom’s presence was not an essential part of the wedding ceremony. Accordingly, a marriage was performed in 1882, during Swami’s brief period as a school teacher in his native village. Rather than tie him down to a worldly life as anticipated, the marriage had the opposite effect of catapulting the young aspirant into the life of *sannyas*. For two months the reluctant bridegroom refused to enter his own house. Finally, yielding to family pressure, he returned only to make the following announcement: “Everyone is born in this world for a definite purpose. You have yours, and I have mine. You mind yours, let me pursue mine.” With this he bade farewell to family life, home and village. He was 28 years old.

For the next three years Swami led the life of a mendicant, stopping in lonely places to pursue his inner quest. It was during this period that he became firmly established in *jnana*. Although he had always shown an indifference in respect to caste boundaries, administering to the needy of all communities beneath his own, it was during this period of mendicancy that all caste and religious distinctions left him entirely. Swami himself disclosed one incident which highlights this. He was staying at the holy Maruthwa Malai (the famous mountain that Hanuman is said to have lifted and brought to Sri Rama in the *Ramayana* in order to revive the dying Lakshmana), living on the wild fruits, leaves and roots for which the mountain is eulogised. One night he was assailed with great hunger and thirst. Shortly after midnight an old leper came to him with some powdered fried rice and water and invited him to share the meal. Both of them ate from the same leaf.

At the end of this period, Swami made his way to Aruvippuram, a scenic village 12 miles from Trivandrum. It is from this point that his public life can be said to have begun. Drastic and far-reaching reforms were carried out by devoted followers under his inspiration and name, but in all cases the real inspiration arose
through Swami's deep and abiding jnana. Ever quiet and aloof, all of Swami's actions were simple to a degree, yet filled with tremendous impact. The first of these can be said to have been the installation of a Sivalingam on a rock on the eastern bank of the Neyyar River in Aruvippuram on Mahasivaratri day, 1888. In keeping with his humble and retiring nature, Swami spent the first watches of the night in deep meditation. Then, around midnight, he quietly stepped into the river. After some time he emerged carrying a large cylindrical stone, and sat again for several hours in deep meditation holding it in both hands. Finally, at about 3 a.m., he emerged from his meditation and installed the lingam amidst the chanting of the panchakshara mantram (“Om Namah Sivaya”), sacred to Lord Siva, by his followers and disciples. Although Swami was only 33 at the time, he was equal to a brahmin pandit who tried to take him to task for breaking the Hindu religious code that dictates that only a brahmin is empowered to install an idol. In response, Swami quietly eliminated all potential controversy and outrage by answering, “I have installed only an ezhava Siva”.

The Aruvippuram temple and ashram served as Swami's centre of activities until 1905, when he shifted his headquarters to Varkala. Few people know that the foundation of the welfare institution that bears his name, the “Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam”, was the direct result of the inspired advice of Swami Vivekananda. In 1892 Swami Vivekananda was the guest of the then Dewan of Mysore, Sri K. Seshadri Iyer. A leading philanthropist and reformer of that time and an ezhava by birth, Dr. P. Palpu, asked the Swami to suggest ways in which to remedy the distress of the outcaste communities of Kerala. Vivekananda's advice was that an organisation should be formed under a spiritual leader, since no reform would be effective in India without the halo of religion.

But what of Narayana Guru himself? Wherein lay such greatness that luminaries from all walks of life should seek his counsel and consider themselves blessed to have his darshan? Although history does not stint at recording the list of Swami's accomplishments in terms of overwhelming social reforms, more than thirty-two temple installations specifically dedicated to the uplift of members of the suppressed communities, and the purging of degenerate and decadent practices from the faith of his Hindu brethren — we must not lose sight of the fact that these were only the outward manifestations of his great inner realisation. All of his actions were aimed at pointing to the central truth that there is only one Self and that all ignorance and decadence is born of our ingrained belief in diversity. When Swami stressed “One caste, one creed, one God for all mankind,” he was not preaching a universal religion, but the abiding truth of Advaita: that there is and only ever has been or
will be ONE. When told about Darwin's theory of evolution, Swami's ready response was, "And is the spirit also subject to evolution?" On the subject of religion, Swami once remarked:

The aim of all religions is the same. When rivers merge with the ocean is there any difference? Religions are there only to produce in the followers a favourable attitude. Once this is done they will themselves seek out the Supreme. Religions are only guides in the quest. Religion is no authority for one who has realised the Supreme. On the contrary, he is the authority for religion. Did the Buddha attain nirvana after studying Buddhism? The Buddha sought, found a way and counselled it to others. His teachings came to be known as Buddhism. Has the Buddha anything to be gained by Buddhism? Christ too had no use for Christianity. The same is true of other religions. But Buddhists need Buddhism and Christians need Christianity. The followers of each faith have use for their particular religion.

When once questioned by a Hindu as to the superiority of Hinduism to other religions on the basis that the Vedas emanated from the face of Brahma himself, Swami rejoined, "Do not the Christians also say about their Ten Commandments that they emanated from God? No doubt Jehovah knew only Hebrew and Brahma only archaic Sanskrit. When it is said that the Vedas were not written by man it only means that the principles enunciated in them are not man's invention." Swami always maintained that "there is no religion which can be said to be superior to another. Whatever be the religion, it is enough if the man is good."

Among his disciples he ever sought to set a standard above formal religion. While walking with a disciple through the jungle one night, Swami noticed that the disciple was afraid. Swami asked him, "What causes fear?"

"I do not know," answered the frightened disciple.

"Don't you know? You have not thought of it. Fear is caused by the second."

"I do not follow your meaning, Swami," said the disciple.

Swami explained, "Fear comes from another man or another object."

"Yes."

"You are not afraid of yourself?"

"No."

"It follows, then, that fear comes only if there is something other than yourself. That other is the second. If there is none other than the Self, whom should you be afraid of? Do you understand?"

"Yes, Swami."

This advaitic attitude is highlighted further by the following incident. Once, while riding in a train, Swami's conversation inspired respect in a raja and a Kerala brahmin who were travelling in the same compartment. The raja asked Swami what his name was.

"Narayanan."

"Of what caste are you?"

"What do you think?"

"I cannot tell from looking at you."

"If you cannot know it from seeing me," Swami laughed, "how will you understand it by hearing me?"

Swami's wit was subtle, quick and cut straight through to the point, always in an instructive manner. Once someone remarked that people of other religions reject idol worship, saying "What did the gods in those idols do when the Muslims broke them?"

"Do they agree that God is everywhere and is also in the hearts of all men?" Swami asked.

"Yes, they do."

"What do they say God will do if men are thus killed?"

"They say they will be punished at the Last Judgement."
"By the same argument one can say that the idol-breakers will also be dealt with in the same manner," Swami concluded.

Swami's keen sense of proportion was also a great tool for instruction. Numerous anecdotes illustrate this. Once, when Swami had installed an image in a temple at Trivandrum, a scholar expressed a doubt as to whether the time of the installation had been auspicious or not. He asked Swami, "In which sign is the auspicious time for an installation?"

Swami's cryptic response was, "Measure the shadow."

When the scholar did not understand him, Swami explained, "A horoscope is cast after the birth of the child. Birth does not take place according to a predetermined auspicious time. The installation is over. Now you can do your calculations."

On another occasion the collection box at the Sivagiri ashram was stolen. Swami's only comment was, "The thief would have been greatly inconvenienced had the money remained with the various donors. Collecting it together in a box has made his work light."

It was Swami's custom not to venture out to visit others, perhaps due to his extremely retiring nature and the sensitivity of the caste situation. Nevertheless, his fame as a great mahatma spread throughout India, and in his time he received visits from dignitaries in all spheres of life. The brahmins of Kanchipuram came to invite him to open a monastery in Kanchi. In 1925, Mr. Watts, the then Dewan of Mysore, sought to see the saint despite pouring rain. When the Dewan apologised for arriving slightly late because of the poor condition of the roads, Swami did not let the opportunity pass: "I hope that the roads will receive better attention from the State in future."

Rabindranath Tagore's visit on November 22, 1922 is memorable for a number of reasons, not only because the Nobel Prize winning poet sought out the Harijan Mahatma, but particularly because it highlights Swami's total indifference to fame and social position, while at the same time demonstrating his sincere respect and reverence for all life. On the day of the interview
a large crowd had gathered at Sivagiri. Elaborate arrangements had been made to receive the honoured guest and take him to the ashram. Unmindful of the commotion outside, Swami sat in front of the Saradamatham talking to a disciple. Suddenly he walked away and bolted himself inside a room. It was a rule never to disturb Swami when he had retired into a room, either by knocking or even talking outside it. The devotees were anxious therefore lest the guest should arrive and have to wait outside the room until Swami came out — a great insult. An hour later, Tagore arrived in a palanquin accompanied by C.F. Andrews on foot. Andrews removed his shoes and walked with Tagore towards the room where Swami was sitting in meditation. Tagore placed his right foot on the veranda to step in. Exactly at the same moment, the door opened and Swami put his right foot forward to step out. As the two men faced each other, Tagore fell to his knees and prostrated before Swami. When taking leave, he prostrated again, then took both Swami’s hands and kissed them. Although he had travelled far and wide and had occasion to meet many holy men, Tagore said about Swami, “I have frankly to admit that I have never seen one who is greater than Swami Narayana Guru of Malayalam — nay, a person who is on a par with him in spiritual attainment. I am sure I shall never forget that radiant face illumined by the self-effulgent light of divine glory and those mystic eyes fixing their gaze on a far remote point in the distant horizon.”

Mahatma Gandhi made his famous visit in 1925, accompanied by C. Rajagopalachari, during a satyagraha campaign in the province to remove untouchability. Gandhiji sought clarification on certain points of the untouchability issue and, in particular, Swami’s support for his non-violent campaign against social and political evils. Gandhiji spent the day at the Sivagiri ashram and participated in the evening prayer. He was deeply impressed not only by the beauty and tranquility of the place, but by the loftiness of soul, the consolidation of realisation and action exemplified in Sri Narayana Guru.

Although it was not Swami’s practice to visit other saints or famous people, there is one notable exception: his visit to Sri Bhagavan in 1916. That Swami had a high regard for Sri Bhagavan is evident from the fact that whenever anyone from Tamil Nadu visited him, Swami would ask whether he had seen Sri Bhagavan. If the reply was negative, he would say, “Having been born in Tamil Nadu, if you have not seen Ramana Maharshi you have wasted your life.” He used to refer to Bhagavan as a Raja Sarpam (King Cobra). One of Swami’s close disciples, Achyutananda, was also greatly devoted to Sri Bhagavan. If he was found missing from the Varkala ashram, Swami used to say, “He must have received five rupees from someone and gone to Tiruvannamalai.” Generally it would turn out to be true.

On his way to Kanchipuram to open a monastery there, Swami broke his journey to Tiruvannamalai in order to meet Sri Bhagavan. What exactly passed between the two jnanis no one can say. Swami, together with five disciples, arrived in Tiruvannamalai around 10.30 a.m. They were met by Palaniswami, who conducted them to Skandashram, where Sri Bhagavan was then living. When Swami arrived, Bhagavan was sitting quietly inside the ashram. Swami’s disciples entered the building and prostrated to Bhagavan, but Swami remained outside and had darshan through the railings of the veranda. It was due, perhaps, to Swami’s usual reticence to disturb others or mix freely with them. He went and sat quietly at some distance under a mango tree. At the time of the noon meal, Sri Bhagavan came out and invited all present to join him in lunch. Approaching Narayana Guru, Sri Bhagavan said in Malayalam, “Would you please share in our lunch?” Swami readily agreed but added that he did not take spicery food. Sri Bhagavan solved the problem by offering him rice, buttermilk, appalam, payasam and fruit.

After the meal Sri Bhagavan went out for his customary walk on the Hill. During this time some members of Isanya Math in town came and invited Swami to visit their monastery. Before taking leave, Swami said to his disciples,
"Shouldn't we make some offering to the Maharshi?" He asked for a pencil and paper and went off to sit under the mango tree again. Before leaving, he placed a poem of five Sanskrit verses before Sri Bhagavan as his offering, saying "Angane aavatte" ("May it happen like that"). The poem, "Municharya Panchakam", is a eulogy of Sri Bhagavan, who had made such a significant impression on him. Later, after returning to his own monastery in Varkala, Swami composed "Niruritti Panchakam", also in Sanskrit, a glowing tribute to the state of the sahaja nishta of which Sri Bhagavan was the supreme example. Translations of these two poems appear in boxes alongside this article.

1 Meaning "Let me too be established in sahaja sthiti as Sri Maharshi ever is."

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**Municharya Panchakam**

By Sri Narayana Guru

The arm for a pillow, the ground for a bed, the earth one treads assists in movement —
What use is other wealth for a sage free from desire?
Established in "That thou art" he enjoys transcending bliss.

A sage may be eloquent at times, silent at others, a scholar or a fool.
He may move about, sit or stand still.
Transcending the transient body subject to time,
Ever conscious of the indivisibility of the Self,
He abides in the state supreme.

To sustain the body the sage eats without desire what fate brings to him unasked.
He sleeps on the way, with undisturbed mind, his gaze ever turned inward.

Realising the unity of self with Self, he abides in Satchitananda.

Beyond the pale of sat and asat,
Of what is knowable, unknowable, minute or massive, stainless or supreme,
Changeless, deep or most exalted,
He attains the natural state, beyond being and non-being.

Whether staying in his own house or in a forest,
on sandy banks or by the roadside,
The yogi's mind dwells ever in Brahman.

Seeing all as a mirage, beholding only the Self in all,
He delights in the supreme Brahman.
Before leaving, Swami asked his disciples whether they had met Sri Bhagavan before. When they said they had, he responded, "Oh, it is only poor me that has been unfortunate till now". Then he said to Bhagavan, indicating the members of Isanya Math, "I am invited by these people," and gazed intently at Bhagavan for about a minute. It is of interest to note that

**Nirvritti Panchakam**

By Sri Narayana Guru

What name? What caste? What trade? How old?
From questions such as these, when one is free
He gains the Silent State.

Come! Go! Go not! Enter! What seekest!
From utterances such as these, when one is free
He gains the Silent State.

Departest when? When hast arrived? Whence and even who?
From questions such as these, when one is free
He gains the Silent State.

I or thou, this or that, inside or out, or none at all —
From cogitations such as these, when one is free
He gains the Silent State.

No difference between the known and the unknown,
No difference between self and another,
For whom all differences have ceased to exist —
From considerations such as these, when one is free
He gains the Silent State.
neither of the Jnanis saluted each other in the customary anjali or bade farewell. One can only suppose that it was more than the common convention among advaitic sannyasins not to recognise anyone as "other". It is indeed a rare occurrence for two Jnanis, for whom only the Self exists, to meet at all. What passed between the Raja Sarpa Jnani and the Karma Jnani is a matter for speculation. The Jnana itself is one. 

Swami died quietly in 1928 after a long illness. When he fell ill at the beginning of the year, first a telegram and later a letter were sent to Sri Bhagavan. The Maharshi felt that it would be good if someone should visit him from Ramanasramam and, since Sri Kunju Swami was a Malayalee by birth, it was suggested that he should go. When he prostrated before Narayana Guru, Swami immediately asked, "Are you coming from the Maharshi? Is he all right?" He then accepted the proffered lime and pressed it to his eyes with great reverence. Ten days later he attained mahanirvana.

Sri Narayana Guru's literary output is a good reflection of the vastness of his scope and depth of realisation. He could compose freely in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil with equal felicity. His works include twelve poems in Sanskrit, two of which are dedicated to Sri Bhagavan, thirty-two works in Malayalam, and a number of poems in Tamil. Topics include jnana and advaita philosophy, odes to the major Hindu deities, and the subject most dear to his heart: the universal brotherhood of all creation.

The Saviour

By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

If in the case of Bhagavan, as in that of all Jnanis, the mind has been destroyed and he sees no bhedas (diversity) or otherwise but only the One Self, how can he deal with each separate disciple or bhaktha, feel for him and help him? I asked Bhagavan about this and added: "It is evident to me and many others with me here that when we intensely feel about any of our troubles and appeal to Bhagavan mentally from wherever we may happen to be at the time, help comes almost instantaneously. A man comes to Bhagavan, some old devotee of his, and proceeds to narrate all sorts of trouble he has had since he was last here. Bhagavan listens to his tale patiently and sympathetically, occasionally even expressing wonder or interjecting, 'Oh! Is that so?' or some such thing. The story is very likely to end with the statement: 'All else failed and I appealed to Bhagavan. Bhagavan alone finally saved me.' Bhagavan will listen to all this as if all this was news to him, and will even tell others when they come into the hall: 'It seems such and such things have happened to so and so since he was last with us'. Bhagavan never pretends so we know he is not aware of all that has happened to us, at any rate on one plane. At the same time it is clear to us that the moment we are in anguish and cry for help he hears us and sends help in one way or another, at least by giving fortitude or other frailties for bearing the trouble that has descended on us, if for any reason it cannot be averted or modified". When I put all this to Bhagavan, he said referring to the response we get: "Yes, that will happen, automatically".

— My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, pp 97-9
To “Pundit” Sri T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, bhaktas of Bhagavan Ramana are eternally indebted, especially in two respects. Both are remarkably auspicious and carry universal blessings for all. One is Sri T.K.S., as he was affectionately known to Ramana devotees, having obtained for us the mantra: “Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya” and getting the seal of approval for it from Sri Bhagavan Himself. It was only after this that these words were accepted into the official Sri Ramanasramam logo. The other “event” is equally or even much more significant.

Sri T.K.S. elicited, though unawares, from Bhagavan His avowed, sacred and sanctified confirmation that one reading Nool Thirattu (The Collected Works) is assured of Liberation:

I had concluded writing the Preface [to Nool Thirattu] in the following way: “It is hoped that this work in the form of Bhagavan’s Grace will give to all who aspire to eternal Truth, the Liberation in the form of gaining supreme Bliss shaped as the taking away of all sorrow.” Maharshi said, “Why have you said ‘It is hoped’? Why not say ‘It is certain’?” So saying, He corrected with His own hand my “nambukiren” into “tinnam”.

Sri T.K.S. was my school-teacher and more than that. He imbued in me a spirit of dedication and surrender to Maharshi as well as systematic, logical understanding of His teachings. While it was Sri T.K.S. who revealed to me that Bhagavan is my sat-guru, he also in his own inimitable and simple way transformed me — an atheist — into a true bhakta of my Master, Bhagavan Ramana.

— Editor
AN EARLY DEVOTEE

Om Namo Bhagavathe Sri Ramanaya

T.K. Sundaresa Iyer —
A lifetime with Bhagavan

By A.R. Natarajan

Sundaresa Iyer (Sundaresan) was born in sacred Arunachala — Tiruvannamalai — in 1898. He was barely twelve years of age when Bhagavan Ramana entered his life. One momentous day in 1908, inspired by the example of his cousin Krishnamurti, he joined him for a visit to Ramana. Ramana was then staying in Virupaksha Cave. Ramana was breathtakingly beautiful. “His figure was like a statue of burnished gold.” Ramana would seldom speak but his lustre was irresistible. On Ramana’s suggestion Sundaresan sang a devotional song composed by the Saivite saint Sundaramurti Nayanar. That day Ramana made him his.

Sundaresan would not miss visiting Ramana even for a single day. But then one has to be on guard to nurture the great good fortune of Ramana’s presence in one’s life, lest the mind be up to its tricks. It happened at one weak moment.

One day I wondered why I was visiting Him at all. What was the use? There seemed to be no inner advancement. Coming up the hill was meaningless toil. I decided to end my visits on the hill. For one hundred days exactly I did not see Bhagavan. On the hundred and first day I could suffer no longer, and I ran to Skandasramam, above Virupaksha Cave. Bhagavan saw me climbing, got up and came forward to meet me. When I fell at His feet I could not restrain myself and burst out in tears. I clung to them and would not get up. Bhagavan pulled me up and asked: “It is over three months since I saw you. Where were you?” I told Him how I thought that seeing Him was of no use. “All right,” He said, “maybe it is of no use, so what? You felt the loss, did you not?” Then I understood that we did not go to Him for profit, but because away from Him there was no life for us.

This purity bug, the thought of not progressing, would keep biting Sundaresan once in every few years. It showed its head again in 1929 and 1933, when Ramana’s counsel saved him. Only later, he came to realise that though “outwardly, things seemed the same, inwardly Ramana was working, destroying the deep roots of separateness and self-concern.”

Sundaresan came from a poor family. He joined the local municipal school as a teacher and could barely support his family. But he had Ramana to whom he was as firmly attracted as iron filings to a magnet. Any problem, any doubt, he would immediately rush to Ramana.

One day in 1921, the reading of a biography of Sri Chaitanya by Sarkar hurt him deeply, for that author had attacked the advaitic school of thought mercilessly. With book in hand he rushed up the hill to Skandasramam. Ramana could readily see his agitation. So he handled the situation with motherly wisdom. He invited Sundaresan to join him for a meal. Then, when he had calmed down Ramana referred him to Ramana Gita 18:25-6:

Of Bhagavan thus happily endowed with a wealth of auspicious qualities, Amritanatha, the sannyasi, humbly enquired about the limitless glory of realised persons.

Bhagavan, who is always rooted in the Self, replied thus: the glory of realised persons is beyond imagination. They are like Siva. They
are the very forms of Siva. They have the power to grant boons.

This directly gave the clue to the falsity of Sarkar's premises and conclusions drawn from them.

While recounting this incident one must remember a similar incident of Bhagavan's motherly concern which happened years afterwards at Sri Ramanasramam.

Once Chinnaswami got very cross with me and I felt quite nervous about it. I could not eat my dinner and the next morning, feeling unreconciled and yet hungry, I told Bhagavan, who was preparing rice cakes, that I was in a hurry to go to town as some pupils were waiting for me. "The cat is out of the bag," said Bhagavan. "Today is Sunday and there is no teaching work for you. Come, I have prepared a special sambar for breakfast and I shall make you taste it. Take your seat." So saying, he brought a leaf, spread it before me, heaped it with iddly, and sambar and, sitting by my side, started cutting jokes and telling funny stories to make me forget my woes. How great was Bhagavan's compassion!

As a family man in impoverished circumstances, Sundaresan had no end of domestic problems. One day in 1922 his courage forsook him. As was his wont he hastened to Ramana, who was then living in a small thatched shed in front of Mother's samadhi. Ramana and the inmates were stitching the leafplates required for eating. Sundaresan joined them though he was a novice. Ramana told him, "Look at these leafplates. With such considerable trouble we make them. We use them just once for a meal and then throw them away. Such is the case of this body of ours. We attend to it with such immense care and we preserve it with due care and attention though we know it has to be thrown away some day like a used leaf-plate." This solved Sundaresan's problem. Was he contemplating suicide? Was he planning to abandon his family? We do not know. Perhaps he was. Ramana's wisdom-filled words were the healing balm. Has not the body its use till Self-knowl-
edge dawns? Do not the body-based relationships have their own importance in the scheme of things until one is ripe and ready? This must have been his line of thoughts.

The decision of Ganapati Muni to settle down at Tiruvannamalai marked a very active phase in Sundaresan's life. He studied the Vedas, particularly the Rigveda, under the Muni. He began participating actively in India's freedom struggle, a cause which was dear to the Muni. Under the Muni's inspiration "Mahendra Societies" were formed all over India. Sundaresan, as its General Secretary, had a pivotal role since the membership rose to about ten thousand. The means to be adopted were to channel spiritual power for the freedom struggle through "personal and collective prayers, rituals and penance."

At this time Sundaresan would often be dazzled by the Muni's brilliance and extraordinary breadth and depth of erudition. But the Muni would never fail to point out to him that "Without Bhagavan's grace, the intricacies of the scriptures are beyond one's power of understanding. One word from Him will make everything clear." Sundaresan received the Muni's blessings in abundance. Whenever there was an off-chance of Sundaresan mistaking the source of the power to be the Muni, he would remind him that "the Maharshi is the powerhouse for that current."

In 1929, when the Muni left Tiruvannamalai for good, he entrusted Sundaresan to the special care of Ramana — as though he were not so all along!

Thus did time pass till 1929 when, on leaving Tiruvannamalai for good, Sri Kavyakanta made me over to the care of Sri Maharshi, and in the very first letter he wrote asked Bhagavan to take particular care of me. I was at school when that letter was received, and the Maharshi tucked it under His cushion. He pulled it out, read it to me when I returned from school, and said: "Look here, you must not run away from here. I am answerable to Nayana; he may come at any time and claim you from me."

Thereafter, for all practical purposes Sundaresan became an inmate of the Ashram. Only his duties at school would keep him away. Often Bhagavan would have to act as his "remembrancer" and remind him about the day of the week and the hour of the day. He would be in the hall with Ramana or at the office working at the foreign correspondence. His gentle exterior would hide his scholarship till Ramana drew it out, as he would now and then. The Collected Works of Ramana in Tamil, Nool Thirattu, was about to be sent to the press. The question arose about the preface. Who had the competence to write it for Ramana's book? None dared. But Ramana had the confidence that Sundaresan was best suited for the assignment. So he asked Sundaresan to write it. Sundaresan started writing it in the presence of Ramana and his inspired pen produced the most appropriate preface in just one session. Ramana made only a single change. Sundaresan had ended the preface with the words "It is hoped that Bhagavan's grace in the form of this work will give liberation and bliss to all aspirants". Ramana changed the words "it is hoped" to "it is certain". What a significant change through which Ramana assured Sundaresan and all of us of the power flowing from his sacred words!

Sundaresan had a penchant for visions for quite some time. His favourite deity was Rama. So —

In May 1933, on my 36th birthday, after the usual bath and prayers, I sat in Sri Bhagavan's presence in a pensive mood. I addressed a prayer in the Tamil viruttam style to Sri Bhagavan, complaining: 'O Bhagavan, I have completed three and a half decades, and yet have not had the experience of the real You. Pray let me have this day the touch of Your Grace.' Handing over this slip of paper I prostrated before Him.

Bhagavan made me sit down and gazed steadily at me; I was still in a pensive and meditative mood. All of a sudden I lost body-consciousness, and was absorbed in Sri Maharshi. I was turned inward, and the voice of Bhagavan gave me vision of Sri
I was very much devoted to Sri Rama. I had then immediately a darshan of Sri Rama with Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Satrughna and Hanuman. The ecstasy of the vision defied description. Two hours may thus have passed in pin-drop silence, lost in the vision, until it vanished. To Bhagavan’s enquiry I replied that I, of course, had seen dear Rama.

Bhagavan then asked me to fetch the book Dakshinamurti Ashtottara, which I had not read, and opening a page therein He gave it to me to read. The fifth name from the last read “Om Sri Yoga Pattabhi Ramaya namaha”. Sri Bhagavan then said, “Sri Rama is Dakshinamurti, and Dakshinamurti is Sri Rama...Lord Arunachala is Sri Rama as well as Dakshinamurti.”

In course of time Sundaresan ardently wished for “a single mantra, a single worship and a single scripture”.

The mantra “Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya” fascinated me greatly in my early days; it so delighted me that I had always a vision of Sri Krishna in my mind. Then I read in the Gita, “jnani tu atmaiva me matan” (“In my view, the jnani is my own Self”). I was greatly delighted. This line of thought came to me: “While I have at hand Bhagavan Sri Ramana, Who is Himself Vasudeva why should I worship Vasudeva separately?” Be it noted that all this was in my early days before settling with Bhagavan at His Ashram. So I wanted one single mantra, a single worship (devata), and a single scripture, so that there might be no conflict of loyalties. Sri Ramana became easily the God to worship. His Collected Works easily became the gospel; as for the mantra, it struck me intuitively that “Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramana” might be an exact parallel to “Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya”. I counted the letters (i.e., syllables) in this new mantra and was very happy to find it also contained twelve letters. I told this all to Sri
Bhagavan and He gave the mantra His approval.

In his book of *At the Feet of the Master*, Sundaresa Iyer records an instance of Bhagavan’s *upadesa* regarding the Guru’s Grace. It made a lasting impression on the earnest *sadhak*, particularly as it was illustrated so profoundly by an unforgettable analogy.

The Samudram lake at the foot of Arunachala is so extensive that it only fills up once in a way, when it overflows... Thus it overflowed once long years ago. The sight of it was very grand, and the outflow was as wide as a river... One morning the devotees in the Hall expressed to Bhagavan a desire to visit the lake, and He was kind enough, human enough, to accept the suggestion, so we all went for a stroll to see it. The tank bund is a mile long, and we walked the whole length of it. The presence of Bhagavan with us, and His words, were more interesting to us than the brimming tank and the grand view of the wide waters at the foot of holy Arunachala.

Bhagavan talked of many things on that walk, but at this distance of time I remember two topics that interested me.

At one place He pointed out a palmyra tree which had decayed in the embrace of a parasitic banyan tree. Some bird had dropped a banyan seed into the palmyra, and as it began to grow the palmyra became cloven and stunted. Drawing our attention to this phenomenon, Bhagavan remarked that this is just what the look of Grace from a *jnani* does. One look into a soul and the whole tree of past tendencies and prejudices (*vasanas*) gathered through long cycles of past births, is burned up and decays away. Then the reality of the Self is experienced. Thus He explained to us the effect of contact with the Great, and He said the supreme *jnana* obtained from the touch of the Saint can never be won through the study of any number of scriptures, or by any store of good deeds, or by any other spiritual practices and efforts.

On the return walk, we happened to pass the sluice at the centre of the bund. Pointing to this, Bhagavan remarked: "Look at this small outlet, as compared with the big one at the end: But for this small hole, through which the stream trickles, the vast contents of the lake would not be helpful to vegetation. If the bund breaks, it will be a regular deluge, and the entire crop will be destroyed. Only if the water be served under proper regulation through this sluice are the plants helped to grow.

So, too, is it with the Divine Consciousness. Unless the bliss of this Consciousness is gifted through the Grace of the Guru in controlled outlets, the soul cannot be helped to the destruction of its tendencies of the past; for in this way the Self, abiding as such in Its oneness with the Divine, is established in the Guru’s State of Being. Holding on to its Being-Consciousness, the work of destroying the past *vasanas* proceeds as and when thoughts arise to push the mind into action. This work becomes possible only in the proximity of the Guru. Hence the Guru is Himself like the sluice and irrigates souls with Grace from His ocean of kindness. But if the bund is broken, the full force of the whole lake rushes through and sweeps everything before it. This resembles a *sadhaka* receiving the full force of Divine Consciousness without the intervening and mitigating Grace of the Guru’s sluice; he dies without the benefit of having the tendencies destroyed."

Sundaresa Iyer continued to stay in Sri Ramanasramam even after Bhagavan Ramana’s *Mahanirvana* in April 1950, for he firmly believed in the continued presence of Sri Maharshi. Ever helpful, he would untiringly work for the Ashram and guide devotees on the Ramana Way. He was ever a source of inspiration and a spring of affection. In February 1965 he passed away with the conscious thought of Ramana, whose close devotee he had been for over fifty years. He was one of the few persons whom Ramana would address familiarly by the first name “Sundaresa”. His patience, his humility to the point of self-effacement, his passion for Ramana endear him to all those whose lives have been made meaningful by Ramana’s grace.
A child's smile is often compared to the flowering of a bud. The smile of a saint is comparable to the rising sun at dawn. Dada Vaswani is a child and a saint — his smile is always glorious as well as healing. One's heart opens to it as the flower to the radiant sun!

This resplendent and many-faceted holy man himself basked in the presence of the sun: the Silent Sun, Bhagavan Ramana. The event is vividly reported by Sri N. Balarama Reddiar.

One evening, between 6 and 7, in September 1939, as I opened my eyes after meditation sitting close to the western end of Bhagavan's sofa, I was agreeably surprised to see Sadhu Vaswani sitting next to me on my right. I greeted him but could not talk to him as I was under a vow of silence. After the bell rang for dinner, I left the Hall to go to town, where I was then living. Next morning I made enquiries about him and his companion, his nephew J.P. Vaswani, and was told they had left. They had visited the Ashram on their return journey from Ceylon. I told Bhagavan about Sadhu Vaswani's visit the previous night. He remarked, "You could have spoken". Taking his remark as his approval to break my silence, I started speaking again after fifteen months' silence.

I wrote to Sadhu Vaswani regretting my inability to speak to him, being then under a vow of silence. He wrote back complimenting me for being with Bhagavan. It was with Sadhu Vaswani that my spiritual search had begun. I spent more than a month with him in the Himalayas in 1931 and maintained cordial relations with him ever after.

It is a great honour to publish this article on Dada J.P. Vaswani, commemorating the 75th birthday of this humble saint and spiritual successor of his uncle, Sadhu Vaswani.

— Editor
When we look at the world around us, with humanity, immersed in materialism, apparently intent upon its own destruction, it is a matter for great rejoicing that there lives a saint who reassures us through his own example that all is not lost, humanity is yet redeemable. Dada ("elder brother") J.P. Vaswani, the spiritual and temporal successor of the great Sadhu Vaswani, has captured the hearts and minds of thousands around the world through his humble and dispassionate example of worship of God through service for mankind.

When asked at an interview recently, "What is your prognosis for humanity? We are all afflicted with this disease of selfishness — mankind as a whole. So is there hope?" Dada answered, "There is a Chinese proverb which says, 'Instead of cursing the darkness, light a little candle.'" This exchange sums up in brief the lifework of Dada Vaswani.

"Doesn't this become only a token gesture?" continued the interviewer. "What an individual can do is so insignificant. So wouldn't it just be an exercise in futility?"

"It cannot be futility," persists Dada, "because the individual who lights a little candle, in the process cleanses his own heart and in that measure he elevates humanity. No individual is an island. Whatever good he does eventually affects humanity as a whole. It becomes futile only if you look at it from a negative point of view. I read about a young man who was walking along a beach when the tide threw up a great many starfish. As he walked, he picked up the starfish one by one and threw them back into the sea so that they could continue to live.

"An old man happened to pass by and said to the young man, 'There are thousands of starfish on the beach. You have only thrown a handful of them back. What difference will it make?'

"Quietly the young man picked up a starfish and threw it into the sea. Turning to the old man he said, 'It makes a difference to this one!'"

Analysing the current world situation, Dada has said, "Even if all the statesman signed a declaration of peace, we would not have peace. Peace does not depend on governments. There can be no peace in the world so long as the hearts of men are a volcano. Even if the governments were to ban the bomb it would not lead to peace. For the bomb is only a symptom of the disease. We must treat the cause. So long as selfishness and hatred exist in the hearts of men, so long will wars continue to mutilate humanity."

"The surest way of overcoming all quarrels among men," he assures us, "is the way of Self-realisation. Once I realise that I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the intellect, once I transcend the body-mind complex and realise the Universal Self that is all and in all, I will never get angry. There are times when the left hand scratches the right hand, and the arm begins to bleed. But the arm does not complain against the hand. The arm and the hand know they are parts of one body. If only we realise that we are a part of the Universal Self, anger and all other negative emotions will fade as mist before the rising sun."

Dada Jashan P. Vaswani was born on August 2, 1918, in Hyderabad, Sindh, the eldest son of his parents, Pahlajrai and Krishnadevi Vaswani. When his paternal uncle, the great Sadhu T.L. Vaswani heard of the birth he hastened to Hyderabad to see the new-born infant. Tenderly he held the child in his lap and gazed deeply into its eyes. Placing his hand in blessing upon the child's head, he put a hundred rupee note in its hand. In years to come, both Dada and his followers were to look back upon this natal blessing as the recognition by Sadhu Vaswani of his spiritual heir and successor.

Dada's formal education began at the age of three. Demonstrating from the first a prodigious memory and insatiable thirst for knowledge, Dada quickly mastered all subjects at school and entered college at the tender age of 13. He went on to receive a Master of Science degree.
in physics when he was only 21. The subject of his thesis was "The Scattering of X-rays by Solids". When asked whether he had spiritual inclinations in his youth, he says, "During my college days, I must admit that I had my own ambitions, but when I came under the influence of my Master, Sadhu Vaswani, everything changed. By the grace and love of the Master, I was drawn towards spirituality.

"One day he put to me this question: 'Tateh kim?' These Sanskrit words mean 'What then?' You will pass examinations: what then? You may have a promising career: what then? You may make money? what then? You may receive honours: what then? What then? What then? These two words set me thinking and, gradually, brought about a change in my life.

"When I had finished my university education, friends and relatives tried to persuade me to study for the I.C.S. examination. Then it was that my Master Sadhu Vaswani awakened my slumbering soul and I began to realise that life is given to us not to make money or acquire positions of power, but to be poured out as a sacrifice unto the Eternal. I understood for the first time that man on earth is a pilgrim, and he must never lose sight of his goal. He must live in the world in a spirit of detachment. His goal is God."

Under his Master’s guidance, Dada embarked upon his sadhana with the full strength of his newly-awakened spirit. In 1962 Sadhu Vaswani opened the all-girls St. Mira’s College and appointed Dada as Principal. Education was a vital issue with Sadhu Vaswani and so it became one with Dada, especially the education of girls. "Our beloved Master said that it is the woman-soul that will lead us upward. He felt that if only the women could be trained, they would do God’s work in a far better way than men. When you educate a man, you educate only an individual. When you educate a woman, you educate a whole family, you educate a home. It must never be forgotten that the greatest influence in the life of a community, a society, a nation is not the government but the home, for it is in the home that character is built; and the builder of the home is the mother, the woman. Therefore, Sadhu Vaswani stressed that future mothers be given the right type of education." What is "the right type of education"? Secular, spiritual, and their expression in loving service to humanity.

When Sadhu Vaswani was confined to bed from 1960 until his mahasamadhi in 1966, his weak state of health made it impossible for him to attend personally to the needs of the hundreds of followers and seekers who flocked to him every day. It then devolved upon his foremost disciple, Dada Jashan, to fill the job as best he could. Attending to all affairs in the true spirit of his Master, Dada Vaswani has been ministering to the needs of all who cross his path since that time. When, on the morning of January 16, 1966, the Master left his physical body, Dada Jashan was already well prepared to minister to his Guru’s flock. Turning to face the crowd of people who had come for their last darshan of the Master, Dada evinced a depth of peace and Christ-like humility that won him forever the regard and loyalty of his Guru’s following.

It was in September, 1939 that Sadhu and Dada Vaswani made their visit to Sri Ramana...
Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai. The impression made upon the aspirant Dada by his meeting with the Sage of Arunachala and the conversation that took place between them is evident from Dada’s abiding regard for the Maharshi and the emphasis Dada himself places upon self-enquiry, surrender and silence. Speaking at the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning in Bangalore on December 5, 1982, Dada said, “My friends, there are as many paths to Self-realisation as there are souls of men, but all these different paths were brought together by Sri Bhagavan under two main categories: atma vichara, self-enquiry, and sharanam, surrender....There are certain words in one of Sri Bhagavan’s songs on which I have meditated again and again, and my eyes have not often been touched by tears. Sri Bhagavan says:

I came to swallow Thee,
But Thou hast swallowed me,
Now there is peace, O Arunachala!

Either swallow or be swallowed, the result is the same, the goal is one.” On another occasion Dada stressed the essential of silence as the key remedy for all the troubles that assail the modern world:

Tension in the world today is due to one cause, and there is only one solution. When man wanders away from the centre and the silence, restlessness results. He must learn to be silent and turn within himself to find the true centre, which is God...But it is not enough to rest from restlessness. When you come out of the silence and confront the work-a-day world, you must not forget to help others. Because what you are seeking within yourself also dwells in others. Bring joy to the joyless, comfort to the comfortless — you help only yourself.

But what of Dada himself? What about the man who says, “My normal daily routine revolves around two things: Let the heart keep on loving God and let the hands and feet be busy in rendering service to those in need, beholding in them pictures of God.” Dada’s day begins with silence. From 3 a.m. to 9 a.m. he meditates — “communion with God” as he calls it. This is followed by a light breakfast of milk tea and a biscuit. He then attends to the problems of the day: people who have come to see him, correspondence, counsel to the teachers and students of St. Mira’s Institutions. Around noon, when there is usually a let-up in the demands upon his time, he goes for a brisk walk. His diet is simple and healthful. Influenced by his Master and Mahatma Gandhi, Dada’s lunch consists of fresh fruit and salads (prepared by himself) with yogurt. Supper is also simple: fruit, vegetables and soup. Nevertheless, Dada is not a fanatic: “It is thoughts and feelings that affect health far more than the food we eat. Good thoughts and good feelings make one more healthy than all the nutritious food that one eats.” Dada’s prescription for good health is “Consult the four doctors:

1. Dr. Silence: Spend some time in silence every day and sing the Name of God.
2. Dr. Diet: See that your food is simple, nutritious and free from violence.
3. Dr. Sunshine: Go for long, brisk walks every day.
4. Dr. Laughter: Develop a healthy sense of humour and laugh away your blues.”

In recent years Dada has been invited to participate in a number of international conferences on religion and peace throughout the world. Does this affect his view of himself and his function in society? When invited to speak at an international conference of world parliamentarians and spiritual leaders, he said, “A hundred parliamentarians and a hundred spiritual leaders have been invited to attend. I don’t know on what basis they have selected me. I told them that I am not a spiritual leader. I’m a seeker, a pilgrim, a student. But still they asked me to come and I am going. So there will be a hundred parliamentarians and ninety-nine spiritual leaders. As far as my role in the conference is concerned, I shall listen. There should be some listeners also. I shall participate by listening.”

Dada’s humility is his most striking character-
istic. It is his honest conviction that he is but a fellow-pilgrim in a world of pilgrims, a fellow-student in the universal school. Upon being asked whether, like his Master before him, he was training someone to undertake his responsibilities he answered, "I am not worthy of training anyone. I'm just a disciple."

"Who, then, do you think should do it?" asked his interviewer. "Who should carry the responsibility?"

"It is God who finds," answered Dada simply.

"As of now, who is the person?"

"It is His dream," Dada persisted. "He passes it on. My Master did not say I was to do it, to carry on the dream. Nor am I doing it. Here at the Sadhu Vaswani Mission there is no 'I', there is no 'you'. We are all equals. We are trying to do our best."

"But in the eyes of the outside world you are the Mission."

"I don't know why they do that," said Dada, shaking his head. "I'm just one among many."

It is not unknown for Dada to jump out of a car to help a labourer carry a heavy load, or to dash out of a crowd of followers to minister to the sick in a nearby hovel. And each such episode always ends in the same way. Dada folds his hands in the traditional anjali and thanks the God within his new friend for allowing him to be of service.

Once while riding in a car, Dada saw a man tottering under the weight of the cart he had to drag. Ahead of him was a steep bridge over which he had to go. Seeing this, Dada got down from the car and went to lend his helping hand to the cart-driver. All the others who were accompanying Dada then rushed to help. The cart went effortlessly up and then down the bridge. Taking leave of the cart-puller, Dada bowed humbly to touch his feet, thanked him, handed him a ten rupee note, and hurried off. Dada never waits to be thanked himself.

A keen sense of humour marks Dada's conduct and conversations, always with the aim of elevating and instructing — "It is far better to give than to receive" — and to deflect attention or adulation away from himself and direct it to God and God in man. When Dada was in Hong Kong in 1982, a characteristic incident occurred. He was out walking with a number of his followers. After some time they sat down on a park bench. A poor Chinese man who was picking up empty tin cans happened to pass by. Dada called him over, spoke lovingly to him, gave him a $10 note, and asked for his blessings. In a
gesture of gratitude, the man offered Dada the only thing of worth in his possession at the moment—a cigarette. Dada very graciously accepted it, lit it, and then placed it between the lips of one of his devotees who had been longing to smoke but did not dare to do so in Dada’s presence.

Dada’s devotees and students of St. Mira’s Institutions always make a big fuss over his birthday during the first week of August every year. Dada does not like the fuss, but how can he disappoint these kind and loving people? His Solomon’s solution is to stand before the huge birthday cake baked in his honour and ask, “Is there anyone here whose birthday it is today?” Among so many students, colleagues and devotees there is invariably one whose birthday it is. He calls that person to him, gives him the knife and insists that he cut the cake and supervise its distribution.

“Almost every evening Sadhu Vaswani would come to our house,” Dada reminisces, “and we children used to sit at his feet. He used to talk to us, play with us, eat with us. One evening, I remember, we all sat together to play the game called ‘word making and work taking’. The object of this game is for each player, by turn, to take a letter of the alphabet from a covered heap and to make a word with it based upon the last-made word. When my turn came, I framed the word ‘man’. It was Sadhu Vaswani’s turn after me. He drew out the letter ‘e’. I thought to myself that he would take away my word, adding his ‘e’ to it. To my surprise he did not do so.

“I was naturally excited and said to him, ‘Dada, you could have added “e” to “man” and made it “name”. You could have taken away my word “man” and scored a point!’ Sadhu Vaswani then said, ‘My child, I could not only have made the word “name”, but also the words “mean” and “mane”. But I love to give, not to take away.’ On that memorable day I learnt the invaluable lesson of life that there is greater joy in giving than in taking away.”

Dada is never at a loss to take the positive
view of events and people. To him the cup is ever half-full, never half-empty. Once, amazed by Dada's ability to find something to admire in everyone, a man said to him, "Dada, I have never heard you speak ill of anyone. I believe you would find something good to say even about the devil."

Dada's reply was, "I certainly admire his perseverance."

Dada is ever the optimist, even on the subject of destiny and suffering. When once asked whether a Guru can change our destiny, Dada answered, "Why should he? The true Guru will always say, 'Accept it'. Yes. The Guru will do everything for his disciple that helps him to grow spiritually. Why should a Guru interfere with the Will of God? He knows that the divine dispensation is always perfect. Instead, he will provide the disciple with a buffer to enable him to bear the shocks of life without breaking down. It is very much like the surgeon administering anaesthesia to his patient before performing the operation. The patient goes through the process without feeling the pain which might otherwise have killed him.

"Therefore I repeat, 'In God's providence all is well, all was well, all will be well'. In every so-called misfortune, calamity, adversity, illness, there is the merciful Hand of God. Every experience is meant to teach us a lesson we need to learn. Although on the surface it may appear to be a misfortune, a calamity, nevertheless within it is hidden a treasure or wisdom we need to unfold. Therefore I go about as a child, never worried, because I know that my mother is near. Have you ever seen a child keeping over a portion of his lunch for the night meal? The child is certain that his mother will provide. But, Dada is swift to add, "this does not happen without the grace of the Guru. As long as He will pour His grace one me, so long will I continue to be like this. If, even for a moment, He withdraws His grace, I do not know what will happen to me."

One day — it could be any day, for it happens often — Dada was walking on the roadside when a man happened to pass by. Dada folded his hands in greeting. Without a response the man continued on his way.

A companion said, "Dada, you greeted him with a 'namaste' and he did not even return your greeting!"

In all humility Dada replied, "I never expect anyone to greet me. I fold my hands to pay obeisance to the God who resides within everyone, not to greet the outer form."

An inspiration to all, Dada Vaswani still continues in our midst — a blessing, a symbol of hope and an embodiment of the sanatana dharma for all mankind.

Addressing the Meera College Students

1 Sri Dada Vaswani can be contacted at: 10, Sadhu Vaswani Road, Poona - 411 001 (India).
GOD AND THE GODHEAD

By
David Godman
God and the Godhead

The previous instalment concluded with a discussion of Meister Eckhart’s view of time and space as illusions and the assertion that the real Jesus Christ is, therefore, not merely an historical personage, but the timeless, non-spatial, indwelling, God-engendered mode of being that he calls ‘the Son’. The present instalment continues with Eckhart’s views on the omniscience and omnipotence of God.

The Omniscent and Omnipotent God

The popular conception of God tends to include the idea that He ‘knows everything,’ that is to say, He is omniscient. Not, though, according to Bhagavan and Eckhart. Using the same non-dualistic argument that they invoked to prove that neither God nor the Godhead could see names and forms [see the section on ‘The Eye of God’ in the last issue], they both declared that He could not be omniscient either because there is nothing separate from Him to be known:

Eckhart: The authorities say that God is a being, an intelligent being who knows everything. But I say that God is neither a being nor intelligent and He does not ‘know’ either this or that. God is free of everything and therefore He is everything.¹

Bhagavan: The Vedas declare God to be omniscient only to those who ignorantly think themselves to be people of little knowledge. But if one attains and knows Him as He really is, it will be found that God does not know anything, because His nature is the ever-real whole, other than which nothing exists to be known.²

Knowledge and knower are absent in the Self, but knowing remains. This knowing, like true seeing, is fundamentally the same as being:

The authorities say that being and knowing are identical. Because God’s being is transcendent, He is beyond all knowledge....Where everything that can be named is sloughed off — there the soul knows with its purest knowledge and takes on being in its most perfect similitude.³

Omnipotence, the idea that God has unlimited power and can therefore do anything He wants to, has to be addressed from a different angle. Omnipotence in this sense can only exist if there is a being called God who uses this power in a deliberate, self-conscious way. Bhagavan taught that the existence of this Supreme Personal God is merely an idea in the mind, and that His alleged omnipotence can only exist in conjunction with the unreal soul and its equally unreal ideas about free-will and predetermination. Two levels of his teachings can be discerned: to those who believed in a Supreme Lord who governs the universe, he would sometimes say that the Lord was ‘Sarvashaktam’,⁴ ‘the All-Powerful One’; other people would be told that omnipotence was just a concept:

Free-will is the present appearing to a limited faculty of sight and will. The same ego sees its past activity falling into a course of ‘law’ or rules — its own free-will being one of the links in that course of law. Omnipotence and omniscience of God are then seen by the ego to have acted through the appearance of his own free-will.⁵

If omnipotence is merely an idea that appears in conjunction with the idea of free-will, when free-will is transcended, the idea of omnipotence must necessarily vanish too. This is one of the unstated implications of Ulladu Narpadu, verse nineteen:

1 Beati pauperes spiritu....
3 Nunc scio vere....
5 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, talk no. 28.
The dispute as to which prevails, destiny or free-will, is only for those who do not have correct knowledge of the root of destiny and free-will, which differ from each other. Those who have known the [individual] self, which is the sole support of destiny and free-will, have discarded them. Will they again become entangled in them?

Omnipotence is also associated with the idea that God, like us, has some kind of will, and that He can take decisions and use His power in any way He chooses. This is another false idea, according to Bhagavan, for in *Who am I?* he states quite explicitly that God is 'not someone who has sankalpa,' which means He has no capacity to choose or make decisions. It also carries the connotation that God has no motive for doing anything, and no desires which He wants to fulfil. Eckhart agreed on this point, saying that 'God, having no motives, acts without them'.

This particular issue is complicated by the fact that both Eckhart and Bhagavan have gone on record as saying the exact opposite: that nothing can happen except by the will of God. Here are two typical samples:

You know that if it were not God's will, it would not be.

It is not possible for anyone to do anything opposed to the ordinance of God.

In order to accommodate these statements in a theological structure which has as its starting point the statement that God is not a being who has power, and that no motives or desires can be attributed to Him, we must understand the expression 'God's will' in a very general and impersonal way. Everything that happens is a manifestation of the power that is God, rather than an expression of the personal will of a divine being. As the power manifests and unfolds in a particular way, it expresses an unmodifiable aspect of God's inherent nature, rather than a personal plan or whim.

Here is an age-old conundrum: if God is omnipotent, He can presumably do away with all evil and suffering. Why, then, doesn't He? Since the time of St Augustine (354-430 AD) Christianity has taught that God could do this if He wanted to, but He doesn't because He wants each individual soul to have the opportunity to choose between a life of good and a life of evil. By adopting this approach Christianity can teach that free-will is fundamentally real and that it in no way impinges on the omnipotence of God.

Eckhart appeared to subscribe to this traditional teaching when he wrote, 'Man has a free-will by which he may distinguish between good and evil and choose which he will...man is free, a master of his actions.'

One can find similar statements made by Bhagavan:

Q: It is said in our scriptures that God it is that creates, sustains and destroys all and that He is immanent in all. If so, and if God does everything, and if all that we do is according to God’s law (niyati), and had already been planned in the Cosmic Consciousness, is there individual personality and any responsibility for it?

A: Of course there is. The same scriptures have laid down rules as to what men should or should not do. If man is not responsible, then why should these rules have been laid down?

I shall return to the relationship between free-will and omnipotence later, after discussing some of Eckhart's very deterministic views, but for the moment I will merely say that neither of the last two quotations represent Bhagavan's or Eckhart's highest teachings. Both statements appear to have been given to people who had a very conventional conception of God and the

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6 Paragraph fifteen, essay version.
7 Fragment 23.
8 *Justi autem in...*
9 *Guru Vachaka Kovai,* verse 1191.
10 *Talks of Instruction,* 22.
11 *Day by Day with Bhagavan,* 29.12.45.
world. I shall attempt in a subsequent section to demonstrate that both Bhagavan and Eckhart taught that actions are all predetermined and that man's only freedom is either to turn within and find God there or to allow the mind to wander in the world and become enmeshed in it.

The idea of an omnipotent God conjures up for many people an image of an absolute monarch with unlimited powers who rules the universe by divine fiat. When Bhagavan conceded that Iswara does exist, he would sometimes caution people not to conceive Him to be an infinitely greater and more powerful version of themselves. God may be Sarvashaktam, the all-powerful one, but paradoxically, He is also the apotheosis of humility because there is no ego in Him to delight and glory in His power:

One's greatness increases to the extent that one becomes humble. The reason why God is supreme to such an extent that the whole universe bows to Him is His sublime state of humility in which the deluded ego never, through forgetfulness, rises. Is it not on account of His behaving so humbly (like one who is lovingly and always in the service of every creature) that God stands worthy of all the glorious worships performed by all the worlds. By seeing Himself in all, by His being humble even to the devotees who bow to everyone, and by His naturally remaining at such a pinnacle of meekness that nothing can be meeker than Himself, the state of being supreme has come to the Lord. The hollow and flimsy straw floats high on the surface of the sea, while the heavy pearl lies deep at the bottom. In the same way, in this world, though those devoid of high qualities are placed highly, they are not superior; though those devoid of low qualities are placed low, they are not inferior.12

This surprising attribute of God did not escape Eckhart's attention, though he spoke of it less graphically. 'In God there is both disinterest and humility as well; you should know that it was loving humility that made God stoop to human nature.'13 Both Eckhart and Bhagavan encouraged the practice of humility among their audiences. The rationale for the advice was that since God is 'the pinnacle of meekness,' the more we humble ourselves, the more we come to resemble and partake of His nature.

The Immanence of God

Immanence may mean either 'indwelling' or 'inherent in', but when one speaks of God as being immanent, one generally means that He is all-pervasive, that He penetrates and sustains the manifest universe. Eckhart and Bhagavan often spoke of God as being both within us and as being all-pervasive, thus covering both aspects of immanence, but since these are spatial concepts, and therefore ultimately unreal, they cannot pertain to nirguna Brahman or the Godhead. The all-pervasive God can either be taken to be the personal God, Iswara, or as an erroneous idea emanating from the notion that space, as we perceive it, is something real that can be pervaded.

Bhagavan: The immanent Being is called Iswara.

Question: Is not the immanent Being chit-akasa [the all-pervasive space of consciousness] only?

Bhagavan: Immanence can only be with maya. It is the knowledge of being along with maya.14

That is to say, maya constructs a perceived universe for us that exists in time and space. Then, since we take that universe to be a manifestation or a creation of God, or an appearance in Him, we then say that He is immanent in it. Immanence is thus a mere concept arising from maya.

12 Guru Vachaka Kovai, vv. 494, 496, 497, 499.
13 About Disinterest.
14 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, talk no. 589.
Q: They worship the formless God in Islam.

B: What is their conception of God?

Q: As immanence.

A: Is not God even then endowed with attributes. Form is only one kind of attribute. One cannot worship without some notions.\(^{15}\)

A similar idea was conveyed by Bhagavan in one of his rare English statements. Firstly, in order to correct an American visitor's wrong idea that he was limited to his body, Bhagavan said, 'Only one Consciousness, equally distributed everywhere. You, through illusion, give it unequal distribution.' Then, having made his point, he moved to a higher level of teaching and corrected his own statements by saying, 'No distribution, no everywhere.'\(^{16}\)

The 'indwelling God' is as much a concept as the 'all-pervasive God'. Bhagavan would often say that God is 'within' us, and that all we have to do to find Him is 'look within', but one should remember that on such occasions he was talking to people who identified with their bodies.

In the following answers, the first given in response to a query about the indwelling God in the Heart, Bhagavan explains how he has to come down to the level of his listeners when he talks on this subject:

The person who puts the question about the position of the Heart considers himself as existing with or in the body....Truly speaking, pure consciousness is indivisible, it is without parts. It has no form and shape, no 'within' and 'without'. There is no 'right' or 'left' for it. Pure consciousness, which is the Heart, includes all, and nothing is outside or apart from it. That is the ultimate truth.

From this absolute standpoint the Heart, Self, or Consciousness, can have no particular place assigned to it in the physical body. What is the reason? The body is itself a mere projection of the mind, and the mind is but a poor reflection of the radiant Heart. How can that, in which everything is contained, be itself confined to a tiny part within the physical body, which is but an infinitesimal, phenomenal manifestation of the one reality?

But people do not understand this. They cannot help thinking in terms of the physical body and the world. For instance, you say, 'I have come to this ashram all the way from my country beyond the Himalayas'. But that is not the truth. Where is coming or going or any movement whatever for the one all-pervading spirit which you really are? You are where you always have been. It is your body that moved or was conveyed from place to place till it reached the ashram. This is the simple truth....It is by coming down to the level of ordinary understanding that a place is assigned to the Heart in the physical body.\(^{17}\)

I ask you to see where the 'I' rises in your body, but it is not really quite correct to say that the 'I' rises and merges in the Heart on the right side of the chest. The Heart is another name for the reality and it is neither inside nor outside the body. There can be no in and out for it, since it alone is.\(^{18}\)

Theologically, the opposite of immanent is transcendent. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines transcendent as 'transcending human experience' and 'existing apart from [and] not subject to the limitations of the material universe'. The Godhead, on this definition, is transcendent whereas the personal God, Iswara, may either be taken to be immanent, or as simply an unreal appearance in the Self.

— (To be continued)
In 1948, when Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar stayed for a couple of months at Sri Ramanasramam, he spent most of his time in the Old Hall in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. He did not then know Tamil, the local language, in which most people conversed with Him, often at great length. He did, however, notice that Bhagavan, in His responses, quite often used only a single word, almost rhetorically: 'stfi' ("yes", "okay"). It did not necessarily mean that He agreed with His interlocuter or gave His approval for what was expressed. Rather, it was more a sign that he had listened. Sri Yogi says, "Astutely I learned that one word from Him and am even today using it, following in the footsteps of my Master!"

Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar refers to God as "my Father". His oft repeated yet deeply profound statement is: "My Father alone exists; indivisible, total, absolute. Nobody else, nothing else. Beyond birth, beyond death. He alone is. Everything is my Father only!" He also adds, "Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi used to say: 'Self alone ever is. There are no others.'"

This simple, humble siddha purusha fortunately lives in our midst, shedding joy and peace. He asserts, "I have three Fathers: Sri Aurobindo, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi and Swami Ramdas. They are my Masters!"

The following was uttered by him during one of his rare, ecstatic Ramana-reminiscent moods. I feel proud and privileged to carry these words in this issue, especially when Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar's Ashram is coming up in front of Sri Ramanasramam, reminding one of the golden days of yore when the vicinity of Holy Arunachala abounded with the Ashrams of great rishis.

— Editor
Yogi Ramsuratkumar Remembers

Around Yogi Ramsuratkumar there is always a fragrant atmosphere of tenderness, beauty, a perennial flow of godly love. He has found inner bliss and the radiation of that bliss to those around him is palpable; it seems almost as though one could touch it. His words may be forgotten, but never his presence and the deep, unfathomable power of his personality. Often after speaking or lifting a devotee’s worldly burdens, he fills him with the vibrant chanting of Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama. His sweet voice reverberates in the air. And one knows that here before him is a man who has freed himself from all the fetters of the world and lives in that divine state of union, oneness with the entire creation.

As was the custom in Sri Ramanasramam after puja was performed at the Mother’s shrine, the arati plate was placed before Bhagavan Ramana. One day He took kumkum [sacred red powder, applied as a dot between the eyebrows] as usual. I happened to be the first to take kumkum from the small pile which Sri Bhagavan had touched. The mere touch of the same plate put me into an ecstatic state.

Once, when I was in the presence of Sri Bhagavan, he vividly narrated a fascinating story which is also highly significant.

There lived a pair of birds by the side of the ocean. Leaving their eggs in their nest, they would fly to far-off places in search of food. One day on their return they were aghast to find that their nest, along with the eggs, had been devoured by the waves of the sea. They became very angry with the ocean and in all seriousness vowed that they would empty it, if necessary, in order to retrieve their eggs. They forthwith started the operation of emptying the ocean by taking the sea water in their beaks, mouthful by mouthful, and dropping it at a far-off place. They did this endlessly without rest and in all earnestness and alertness. Days passed and still they were one-pointedly dipping their beaks into the ocean and flying off to dispose of the water.

One day a great being happened to pass by and, observing the tireless efforts of the two birds, asked them what they were up to. The birds explained that their eggs had been washed into the ocean and that they were determined to empty it in order to retrieve them.

“What!” exclaimed the great being in surprise and amazement. “But this is impossible! Can you ever hope to empty the ocean, two tiny birds, however relentless your efforts may be?”

“What doubt can there be?” replied the birds. “We are absolutely certain that we shall eventually succeed and retrieve our precious eggs!”

Moved by their tremendous faith and devotion, the great being compassionately put his hands into the ocean, found the eggs, and returned them to the overjoyed birds.

Sri Bhagavan then said, “Emptying the ocean is analogous to knowing God. Alone, without grace, it is impossible. But if one has the unshakeable faith and earnestness of the two birds in the story, the Guru will appear without fail and fulfill one’s spiritual aspirations.”

On another occasion I was thrilled to witness the compassion of Sri Bhagavan. A devotee, Eknath Rao, brought into the Hall a bowl filled
Sri T.N. Venkataraman gives Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar a ritualistic purna kumbam reception with fruits cut into pieces and placed it before Sri Bhagavan. Within the large bowl was a small bowl with pieces especially cut for Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan's sense of equality was total, and although his tolerance towards devotees was immense, he would never permit anything special for himself. When Bhagavan noticed a separate bowl for himself he was annoyed and pushed the bowl aside roughly. A few pieces of fruit spilled onto the floor and were left there. The devotee then began to distribute the fruit-pieces to all in the Hall. Everyone sat with a few pieces in their hands, not wanting to eat since Bhagavan himself did not have any. Out of compassion for the devotees, Sri Ramana reached down, picked up the pieces that had fallen on the floor, and began to eat. The rest of the devotees were then able to eat also.

When someone asks me why, in that case, I went to Swami Ramdas after Maharshi's passing, I explain that the divine fervour I experienced in Sri Ramana's presence began to wane when I left him and went to stay in the Himalayas. Nevertheless, I had begun to see that a Higher Power was expressing itself, using me as an instrument. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was a principal influence in shaping this beggar to this state. After his passing away, this beggar needed a Guru in the body. I did not see any conflict in going to Swami Ramdas. It was Swami Ramdas who initiated this beggar and gave him this madness! The inner life of saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Sri Aurobindo, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, J. Krishnamurti and Swami Ramdas is far, far removed from what we can externally perceive of them. They operate rooted in the Eternal Infinite, which can never be "known". There is no individual there to report differences!

Father distributes duties. All of us do only His work. To Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Bhagavan Ramana, Swami Ramdas and Sri Aurobindo, He gave the duty of teaching. To this beggar He has not given that duty. To have faith in the words of these masters alone—that is the duty allotted to this beggar. Thus, I have faith in the scriptures, in the words of these masters. That is enough for this beggar!

Draupadi is well known as the fiery princess, queen of the Pândavas, who played a very important role in the epic Mahâbhârata. Not much known is the fact that she is worshipped as a deity of eminence in certain parts of Tamil Nadu, notably in the Gingee region. The present study is the first of the three-volume research project on the various ramifications of this Cult. The first volume devotes itself to tracing the mythology of the Cult and the mythology emanating from the Epic in the North. Detailed attention is given to the unmistakable thread of connection between the two. The second volume is expected to focus on the rituals of the Cult and the third "will be a retrospective on the Sanskrit epic from the standpoint of the Draupadi cult, that is, a Mahâbhârata interpreted through the centrality of the goddess." (p.xviii)

The central feature of the treatment is best read in the words of the author: "the goddess and the Mahâbhârata have shared for centuries a cultural and religious centrality in which the connections between them are real and perennial, and integrated with deep structures whose continuities and transformations through time, space and differing social contexts we have only begun to understand. This book is a study of continuities and discontinuities in the cult of the goddess and the transmission of the Mahâbhârata as they relate to each other, and as they work together to sustain the fundamental values and vitality of Hinduism. And more generally, it is an attempt to study some of the more far-ranging themes and issues of Hindu mythology through the dynamics of this ongoing relation." (p.xix)

With maps, plenty of plates and unerring research, the author gives in these pages a thorough picture of the Draupadi figure.

-- M.P. Pandit


Kabir, a great mystic and poet of the fifteenth century exerted tremendous influence on the religious life of India. The religious outlook of his times was characterised by excessive formalism. The masses did not feel comfortable with the rigidly ritualistic approach and methods advocated particularly by the priestly class. In sharp contrast to this, Kabir advocated a simple form of religious faith free from dogma. This simplification (so to say) did not mean any relaxation of basic spiritual discipline. Nor did it imply any neglect of the need for cultivation of pious qualities. Written in the simple, popular Hindi dialect of the period the songs give a clear message, making effective use of metaphor. They are also bitingly sarcastic when recounting common human foibles and failings. The effect on the reader is profound. No wonder Kabir's songs are popular to this day, particularly in northern India.

The volume under review is a translation into English verse of three hundred selected couplets of Kabir. The couplets selected (and arranged according to subjects) along with the introduction give enough material for understanding Kabir's message to humanity. The translation reflects the mood of the original.

Kabir in his poems often makes the point that life is transitory. Death is ever waiting at the door and man should make the utmost use of the time available to him. That is, he should aim at realising God, within his life-time. Positive qualities like humility, controlled speech, charitableness and motiveless service to others should be developed. Negative qualities like pride, idleness and sleepfulness should be abandoned. The name of the Lord should be chanted without break. Satsanga should be maintained. Such practices result in purification of the heart and God-realisation becomes a fact.

Chant the Lord's Name with every breath
Waste not breath my dear
How can one at all be sure
If the breath he will recover? (v. 40)

Says Kabir,
I have cleansed my mind
Pure like Ganges water,
The Lord now runs after me I find
Calling 'Kabir' 'Kabir'. (v. 108)
The body is the guest-house,
Mind comes as guest there;
Know it for certain that the one
Does not care for the other. (v. 115)

Death is better far than life
If one knows how to die
He who dies before death does come
In 'Kali' amazing this may be.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

December

The following chapter “Revelation”: “I now knew why my Master and many of his devotees disagreed so strongly with my teaching. I realized that what I had suspected for some time now was true—I had a completely different viewpoint of Enlightenment. What I was teaching and what my Master was teaching were diametrically opposed to each other. Hearing some of the things one of his closest disciples had said about Enlightenment revealed to me that I had obviously surpassed my own Teacher, and it was because of this that the harmony and ability for true and profound communication had ceased.” (p.106)

Cohen’s “different view of enlightenment” is explored in greater depth in the last chapter “Final Liberation”. “The one who would claim Enlightenment in this birth and who would also dare to show the way for others must be able to BE a reflection of that purity to an extraordinary degree. There must be the attainment of perfect consistency of goodness, selflessness and the demonstration of that PURE INTENTION that wants only itself and NOTHING ELSE. Without that attainment and the perfection of that attainment, the consistency I’m speaking about will not be there. It is the inconsistency in the expression of perfect goodness that has created the most extraordinary depth of confusion, misunderstanding and outright foolishness in the name of Enlightenment.” He then goes on to give examples of this confusion causing the inconsistency among the well known teachers of the day, the implication of all this being that he is one of the few who has realized “perfect goodness to the degree that it can be manifested and expressed consistently and without error.” (p.126)

Enlightenment is a Secret, Teachings of Liberation is a compilation of excerpts from some of Cohen’s satsans. “Enlightenment is a secret that very few people know about and even fewer understand. Why is it a secret? Because Enlightenment doesn’t exist in time. That’s why it’s a secret and that’s why it will always be a secret. Enlightenment is a vision that cannot be held or grasped in any way. Beyond this world it’s a mystery that is exploding. A fire that is burning. It’s a fire that is burning. It’s a fire that a person is either going to jump into or run away from. This fire burns beyond the mind. No-time is the place where this secret abides. Realize that and you realize the Self you are when there’s no mind and no time. Realize that, and cling to that alone as your own Self.” (p.7)

There’s some provocative and insightful material in this book and Cohen does have an original style of presentation that can be very effective. It’s unfortunate that he felt compelled to write Autobiography... to "set the record straight as it were" because it ends by denigrating himself and it puts into question his own realization because as Cohen himself says on p.170 in response to the question “What Does it Mean to No Longer Exist?": “They are referring to the realization that ones doesn’t exist as separate from everyone and everything. When one truly realizes this and recognizes this deeply, the effect is that self-importance dissolves. This means that the need to be inferior or superior, to overcome or become has been destroyed, burned out and finished with forever. This happens when the habitual and compulsive fascination with the personal has finally come to an end, and
what's left is a liberated human being who says they have died and no longer exist. What does this mean? The struggle is over.”

So one has to ask; Andrew, WHO cares?

-- Priscilla Gong

DYNAMIC STILLNESS Part two: by Sw. Chetanandana

The author, or rather, the speaker of these smoothly edited talks, is a student of the American guru, Swami Rudrananda whose original and powerful impact has begun to be widely felt in spiritual circles in that country. He in his turn, was a sishya of the great Bhagwan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri. With these credentials behind him Swami Chetanandana does not disappoint the earnest reader keen to deepen his yogic understanding. There is an attractive clarity and directness in his presentation which belies a complex and rich perspective. The interesting element in the Swami’s exposition is its American flavour. Like Trungpa Rimpoche’s Tibetan image, the Swami has helped establish an American Yogic Tradition. This is a vital feat.

There is a strong emphasis on practice in conjunction with a subtle but clear mapping of the task ahead. The prevailing theme is the energy which is the primary cause of all creative growth. This is no dead philosophy. It has the tingle of freshness arrived at from perennial verities. They are spanda, the initial throb of energy which is the fundament of existence that on an individual level manifests as anupaya, individual effort; shakti, the vehicle of energy; shadbhavopaya, the connection of individual awareness with the divine; and anupaya, short, the effortless, the state of grace.

The book is very impressive in the knowledge made available, though at times, I must admit, the Swami’s paraphrasing of Kashmiri texts in some sections leans towards certain hollowness of grasp. He appears to be learning also, as he goes on, which is to his credit. His observations are the most valuable aspects of this book. He has been there himself and understands with humility the inevitable pitfalls we all succumb to in the search and shows a valid, sensible approach which squarely faces our ignorance and how to transcend the limitation.

I would recommend this book to any person from the West, in particular who wants a comprehensive verbal guide for their own training in the Yoga tradition. It cannot be read like a novel but as a manual, and as such should be taken up as and when appropriate after an initial survey.

There is one minor irritation about the general construction of the book which detracts from the overall enjoyment and that is the editor who, in doing a marvelous job, has over-refined the text. It lacks a certain bit of roughness which diminishes the message somewhat and masks the Swami, who obviously uses bare hands when life throws up a challenge.

There is juice here for who knows how to drink.

-- Christopher Quilkey
which every Indian would like to know, have been incorporated in the beginning of the book.

-- R. Râmasâmi


Swâmi Tapasyânanda, a former Vice President of Râmâyâna Math and Mission, was a deep scholar who was ever willing to help seekers by clearing their doubts. We have here in compact form a compilation of his replies to questions from seekers over a period of time.

In the course of clearing the doubts of aspirants Swâmi has come out with valuable information and guidance on various aspects of sâdhanâ. The very basis of sâdhanâ is a 'divine discontent.' This is a prerequisite for religious life which leads to aspiration for God and the conviction that life is purposeless if it is not used for realising Him. It is essential to develop love for God. Once this is done one will be blessed with positive qualities like discrimination and dispassion. Renunciation is essential. However one should avoid the feeling that one has renounced. The purpose of renunciation is to surrender the little self in the Supreme Being. That is, one should become an akînchana (a person who has the Lord alone for support).

The significance of meditation, japa and satsanga, which are integral parts of sâdhanâ, are well brought out. The purpose of meditation is 'to help man attain direct and immediate experience of his basic nature as satchidanânda.' Montra is the sound form of the deity. Hence, while doing japa with devotion and concentration the sâdhanâ is actually in communion with the Lord. Five verses (selected by the Swami) from the Bhâgavata give a very clear idea of satsanga and its good effects.

One question put to Swamiji is regarding the suffering of the virtuous. Why should such people suffer while the non-believers seem to be getting on very well? The reply is in terms of the theory of karma. The virtuous who seem to suffer at present are actually reaping the effects of their bad karma.

The non-believers who seem to have a good time of it are reaping the effects of their good karma. Suffering is in store for them and will be apparent when their good karma is exhausted and bad karma starts taking effect. The Pândavas were the best of devotees who had Lord Krishna Himself as their protector. Yet they had to undergo tremendous suffering! Thus every experience is the result of karma and religious practice is no guarantee against sufferings in life.

A question on free will has been answered effectively by means of a quotation from Sri Râmâyâna. A cow tethered to a post can move round to a certain extent but it cannot break away from the post itself. Likewise is the freedom of man which is eventually controlled by the Lord.

This volume of Swamiji's valuable counsel on a wide range of spiritual topics has been prepared with great care and no portion of it can be considered unimportant.

-- V. Sundaram Ramanan


Tirumûr's Tirumantiram can be described as sheer Beauty. It is an esoteric treasure-house of high spiritual values. It is the tenth Saiva canon. It is both a sâstra and a stôtra. It contains 3000 verses cast in the kollunâtiram metre, which are the out come of the spiritual experience of Saint Tirumûr. Rated as a yogic text, it contains many subtle and intricate ideas useful for sâdhanâs. All disciplines of Saivism are found in the book. Though blended with Vedic and Agamic tenets, Tirumantiram essentially is a Tàntric text. There are nine tantras (chapters). At the metaphysical level it deals with Vedânta and Siddhânta, while on the theological plane the principles of Saivism and Šâktism are enumerated. Though the poet recommends Śiva yoga, many religious traditions prevalent in his time also find place in the verses. The poetry of Tirumûr is at once simple and abstrusive. So the translation of Tirumantiram requires deep insight into the intricacies of Tamil poetry, consummate mastery over Tamil Siddha tradition and a great skill for translating technical terms into English.

Dr.B.Natarajan has done a commendable job of translating the entire text. The style is flowing and felicitous and the translation mostly accurate. An example:

"A rare ruby - He is easy of reach,\nThe one Lord-He is easy of love.\nHe is the light within Brahma\nAnd now I know why the Creator does it so easy." (392)

The spirit of the original is kept up. Referring to breath control:

"Two the bulls in this hamlet,\nOne the servant for the bulls two:\nControl the bulls two, firm,\nAs one they will then be." (2889)

The acid test for the correctness of translation is the symbolic sûnya sombhâshana (chapter 9:17), where the translator emerges victorious:

Lord's Play: (2866)\n
Body the gambling board\nFive the dice [sense organs]\nThree the channels [mâsâ]\nFifty-one the squares [sounds]\nThus the Jîvas play the game;\nHe who thus leads them to it\nThe mystery of His play\nI know not.
Kundalini Yoga : (2873)
In the triangular field (mūlādhāra)
Are the ploughs three (īdābхūmī)
Yoke the bulls tight with rope (śūṣṭuna)
They who hold not their tongue (khechari)
Ploughed not in the centre (aśasrātā)
Closing their legs together (āṣāsrātā)
They plough the waste in vain.

The translation is both illuminating and entertaining. The foot-notes at the end of each page add greatly to the understanding. The translation at many places helps remove the obscurity of the original. Verily a laudable effort!

-- Dr. T.N. Pranāṭhārthi Hanan


This book a revised third edition, which treats of Vedānta as a positive science founded on reason, intuition and experience, may be said to contain a complete exposition of all the essentials of Vedānta. It offers also detailed suggestions on the practical side of the system. It took 35 years to mature, says the author. The work covers a wide canvas and discusses Vedānta apropos ethics and aesthetics. Replete with references to what at that time (1930) was modern thought, the treatise is faithful to the spirit of the Upanishads and Shankara Bhashyas. The author does not merely try to record the achievements of ancient teachers, but holds attractive discussions both critical and comparative, of western systems.

He repeatedly refers to Shankara and Gaudapāda in support of his own statements. By reading this book we can learn that Vedānta differs from all other systems both in matter and method.

The viśva-vimana school of Advaita is decreed by Mr. Iyer. He argues that the knowledge of Brahman can never be conceptual; it is intuited as pervading the whole gamut of concepts and percepts. The Self alone is true. The so-called not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance. ‘When the false not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance. ‘When the false not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance. ‘When the false not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance. ‘When the false not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance. ‘When the false not-self is only an appearance. True knowledge alone can remove the seeming trait of appearance.

The author argues at length about the three states of the soul (method of Avasthas) quite convincingly, for it assumes nothing that is not already familiar to everyone in life but takes the enquirer straight to the intuition of the witnessing consciousness at the back of the ego. The three modes of consciousness viz., waking, dream and deep sleep are examined. This is the device utilised in the Māndūkya Upanishad and used by Gaudapāda for explaining the fundamental doctrines of Vedānta. The author calls the employment of the method of 3 states as, ‘the tri-basic method’. Waking and dream are called dynamic modes and sleep, the static. He says that sleep is not a state at all. It is pure consciousness, because in it there is no other awareness. Pure consciousness is Pure Being and Pure Bliss. It is pure in the sense that it has no second beside it.

Sri Iyer expounds the theory of the three degrees of reality and then shows how Vedānta i) overcomes scepticism, ii) rises above the charge of solipsism, iii) can solve the problem of Appearance and Reality convincingly, iv) provides a sure basis of ethics and a definite system of eschatology, v) reconciles the conflict of Idealism and Realism vi) and refers to Reality in its aspect as Pure Bliss.

A work of great learning and scholarship indeed!

-- Dr. T.N. Pranāṭhārthi Hanan.
THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI: An Analysis of the
Sanskrit with accompanying English translation. By
Christopher Cheapie and Yogi Anand Viraj (Eugene
Centre, 40/5, Shaktinagar, Delhi - 110 007. pp. 122 + 12, Rs.110/-

The book under review is a comprehensive and systematic
analytical study of the major concepts of classical yoga
of Patanjali. It consists of a series of detailed analyses of the
key concepts used by Patanjali in Yoga Sutra to explain the
enigma of human existence and to show a way out of
conditional existence and to stop the perpetual motion of the
wheel of existence. To achieve this goal yoga system has
discovered such practical meaning and methods by the
application of which soteriological ultimacy is to be appro­
priated. It is because of this feature that it may properly be
said to be the system of liberation or salvation.

This new translation, drawing its inspiration from both
careful scholarship and yogic practice offers innovative
features, providing a full grammatical analysis of each term
used by Patanjali including an analysis of word compounds.
The book includes a concise introduction, conveying earlier
scholarship on the text and highlighting what the translators
perceive to be its central theme; translation is to provide the
reader with a comprehensive analysis of the words used by
Patanjali and how they interrelate. Throughout the transla­tors
have attempted to be sensitive to various clues offered by
Patanjali in the areas of style, and flow that seemingly lend
a greater coherence to the text. It is a good addition to yoga
literature.

-- Prof. K.S. Rāmakrishna Rao

QUEST FOR DEVELOPMENT: Compiled and edited by
O.P. Ghai. pp. 192, Rs.150.

QUEST FOR ACHIEVEMENT: Compiled and edited by O.P.
Ghai. pp.144, Rs.125. Pub/both by The Institute of
Personal Management, Sterling Publishers, L-10, Green
Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016.

"Both books are the quintessence of wisdom of over five
thousand years culled from nearly three thousand books in
a study lasting fifty six years devoted to portraying the beauty,
truth and joy of life".

The author is a voracious reader of books and they are
his never falling friends. To live our best, to renew our
commitments to society, find strength to face challenges and
draw inspiration from great minds of this world these two
books help us to a large extent. Some of the statements
collected here concern with spiritual foundations of our lives
with a unified approach to life.

The speciality of these two books is that no religious
dogma is advocated. Inspiration is drawn from all the world's
great philosophers, scientists, statesmen, writers etc.

To use these two books fully one should read every
statement calmly, reflect on it and then recall it to mind now
and then and try to bring this message into practical life.

In Quest for Development the author suggests several
factors that go into the development of human faculties
which constitute a person's personality. Certain habits have
to be cultivated through regular study and consistent effort.
For intellectual development proper care of health is
essential; as Plato said, 'a sound mind in a sound body'.
Appreciation of beauty and cultivation of a taste for the fine
arts contribute to aesthetic development of personality. All
these elements of self-development -- beauty, books, love,
friendship, health, happiness, music and others have been
treated exhaustively in this book.

In the first and the most important step towards
achievement is the identification of one's own aim in life, the
goal one wants to reach. To achieve these ideals one must
have enthusiasm, courage, right attitude towards work and
self-development -- all these elements have been treated
exhaustively.

What is most important in these volumes is that what is
said is more important than who said it.

The author is also a publisher and a believer by faith in
the fundamental unity underlying the great living religions of
the world. He has sought to promote religious co-existence
through the written as well as the spoken word. He has many
more books to his credit such as Unity in Diversity, The
Bhagavad Gītā and the Jāpī.

-- Prof. K.S. Rāmakrishna Rao

NATURAL CREATION OR NATURAL SELECTION ? A
complete theory of evolution: by John Davidson. Pub:
Element Books, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset, U.K.
pp. 275, £ 8.99/$ 16.95

John Davidson graduated from Cambridge University
with a honours degree in biological sciences and took a post
at the University's Department of Applied Mathematics and
Theoretical Physics. His long interest in the mystical took him
on a journey to India where he met an Indian mystic whose
teachings greatly influenced him. He left the University in
1964 and now nourishes the Wholistic Research Company
he founded.

His intimate contact with the scientific and the mystical
both find copious presentation in this book. He holds Darwin
in highest esteem but says his theory of evolution is not the
whole story as it is based primarily on natural-selection and
survival-of-the-fittest relating to forms and bodies. It does not
take into account the dimension of life, the creative power
of the Formative Mind, the state of being and of ever-
unfolding Universal Consciousness. The play of Reality,
"The Universal Life Force" is a process, "a dance of
continuous manifestation: he supports his theories, with the
Eastern mystical traditions prevailing in India for centuries by
culling from them cyclic time factors, the four yugas, the
8,400,000 kinds of species, the three basic tattwas combining
into various configurations to characterise species. The book
is full of Sanskrit terms and a Glossary helps to provide useful
meaning.
His thesis of Natural Creation, a mixing of the streams of the scientific and the mystical is termed by him "A Complete New Theory of Evolution" and he claims it will redeem man from his limited perceptions and provide him with a radically new one of science, evolution and life.

He dedicates his book thus:

"To the greatest biologist, Charles Darwin, who helped free us from the influence of religious dogma. It is time now to free ourselves from the influence of Charles Darwin."

-- Kuldip Narain


Rūmī is one of the greatest Sufi mystics that ancient Persia produced. His poetry is suffused with mysticism and God-intoxication of a high order.

He was born at Balkh in 1207, A.D. He came from a learned family of scholars. From the age when Rūmī was five, for the next fifteen years his father (himself a great scholar) had to be continuously on the move with his family, and the young Rūmī had his fill of rational, traditional, spiritual and acquisitive knowledge during these journeys. But he did not stop at this and his Vāsanās drove him to acquire knowledge of divine secrets. At the young age of 34, Rūmī found himself acquisitive knowledge during these journeys. But he did not stop at this and his Vāsanās drove him to acquire knowledge of divine secrets. At the young age of 34, Rūmī found himself a spiritual leader among men. The purity of his beliefs, the freedom from fanaticism and the elegance of his mystical insights into Sufism gave him an assured place among the world's most celebrated mystics.

In 1244, an event of utmost importance in his life was his meeting Shems of Tabriz, -- nearly twice his age and a scholar of great renown. Rumi already had many disciples by the time they met. Their coming together charged them both, carrying them equally beyond the restrictions of previous ways. Rūmī giving Shems the stability he had never had, and Shems shaking the ground on which Rūmī's scholastic feet had stood. On one occasion Shems gathered together all Rūmī's books and threw them into a fountain—such was his contempt of acquired knowledge, he was prepared to risk everything, sacrifice everything, to seek only reunion with God.

"Crazy as we Are" is a delightful appetizer to the beauty of Rūmī's words. The author has selected a small section of his works, and translated them with simplicity, letting the words tell their own story. The sheer madness of love, to lift the lover and beloved to a height far beyond their individual capacity is one explored in the Persian myth of 'Majnun and Laila'. In reality, Shems of Tabriz and Mevlana "loved with a love that was more than love"... and left the inspiration of such pure prose to remind us all that it is possible.

"If you could get rid Of yourself just once, The secret of secrets Would open to you. The face of the unknown Hidden beyond the universe Would appear on the Mirror of your perception."

On one occasion Shems informed Rūmī, "A true friend must be as mysterious as God. He must tolerate his friend's ugliness and faults, and not be offended by his mistakes. He must not turn away from him or accuse him. Just as God's compassion leads him to forgive his subjects for their failings, He sustains them with an all embracing kindness and compassion. This is the nature of unprejudiced and impartial friendship."

-- Heather Bache


As it's title suggests, this booklet deals with the relationship of Hindu philosophy to Nature. Any publication of such brief dimension cannot pass more than a cursory glance at the complexity of human relationship with Nature, yet the author presents in a very concise and accessible form the essential
kernal of the Hindu perspective: that Humanity is indivisible from Nature.

Sages and sadhaks tread very lightly on the Earth doing little to add to the ongoing destruction of the environment. Yet their passivity will not reverse the process of the rape of Nature; even an ascetic eating a simple grain is probably consuming a grain in which Nature has suffered in which life forms have perished, by pesticide or plough. We can’t hurt Nature without hurting ourselves, and by sheer weight of numbers, all humans are playing a role in the continuing death of animals and degradation of Nature.

The time for passive self-righteousness over philosophical morality has passed; the need is for massive activity to reverse the process and to help heal the damage. Every one can grow a few seedlings, take care of a square metre or two of the Earth, confirm their identity with all Life.

-- John Button


Once again, two more excellent offerings from the pen of Sri A.R. Natarajan of the Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning. Though there is nothing really new under the sun, for the Sage, as Maharshi Himself declared "for one who tracked himself down to his place of Birth for that Lord of askesis, every moment for all time is a moment of birth as it were, and hence forever now, forever new, new, new..." (Forty Verses Suppl., V.11)

It is therefore but fitting that those hungry for more and more to read, ruminate and practise on the 'Ramana Way' should welcome these continuing releases from the RMCL.

The first is a compilation of nearly 50 articles on and about the Sage. While four are specially written for this occasion, the remaining are reprints from various and diverse sources. Many articles are gripping accounts of first meetings with the Maharshi. Some are from sources long out of print, like THE CALL DIVINE.

The second affords fruitful insights into the aspects of Practice. And one on the Way can get ample insights into correcting one’s course. Even with very slight discrepancy in one’s course at the start, one gets wider and wider off the mark as one goes on. Controlling the mind is not the same as searching for its source. Self-enquiry for the sake of 'reaching' The Self, is not the same as the Self-enquiry of enquiring into one’s presence. Each chapter, an article by itself, begins with a short, select quotation from Ramana’s TALKS etc.) with the author providing clarification and commentary with very relevant references to the recorded incidents and experiences in the lives of devotees. The author weaves skillfully through the vast literature and anecdotes surrounding the Sage.

There is never a dull moment for those who want to wake up.

-- J. Jayaraman

BOOKS RECEIVED


HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS TO SAVE PLANET EARTH: by M.P. John, P.B. 31, Pondicherry 605 001, pp. 133, Rs. 30, $3.


MANANAM PUBLICATION SERIES: Vol. 14 Nos. 2-4, Vol. 15 No. 1. ABOUT SADHANA: Extracts from well known writers and saints, pp. 110. SATSANG WITH SWAMI CHINMAYANANDA, pp. 78. HINDU CULTURE parts 1 & 2: Transcribed from lectures of Sw. Tjómmayánanda, pp. 86 & 77. (Quarterly publication by Chinmaya Mission West, Piercy, CA 95587, USA. Edited by Margaret Leuvemik. Subscription: single $6, Annual $30.) [Excellent articles and coverage on the spiritual Life. The pronunciation Guide has many flaws. Excellent get up.]
As my stay at Sri Ramanasramam draws to a close, I reflect on the events of the previous two months, a period which began with a sudden experience of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's divine Grace, and culminated with my arrival at Tiruvannamalai in the summer of 1993.

During the past several years, I had considered myself as belonging to that half of humanity who, though spiritually inclined and sincere in their desire to realise God, have resigned themselves to accept that the divine bird called 'Grace' perches on the halo of those that form the other half of mankind. Thus, although my search continued and the study of spiritual literature was sustained, somewhere along the line there was this underlying feeling that perhaps I was going to discover nothing miraculous at the end of the rainbow.

But this was before that hot May afternoon when I visited my favourite bookshop in search of a commentary on the Ashtavakra Gita, an ancient sacred text. Since the book was not available, I began idly to browse through the shop in the hope of laying my hands on something else of interest. I had no inkling that this casual browse was about to precipitate the greatest event of my life.

Yes, the volume that almost sought me out, as it were, was Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi with the kind face of Bhagavan looking benignly at me from the cover.

I began to read. The question-answer format quickly turned into a one-to-one relationship between Bhagavan and myself. All the questions asked by various devotees were my questions. The answers were all Bhagavan's. I found myself akin to a small boy holding Bhagavan's hand, walking through a dark and dense jungle, pattering away with question after question to Bhagavan, whereas Bhagavan himself appeared to me as a powerful beacon of light cutting through the darkness, as if dispelling all my doubts, all my ignorance. Every time my unsteady feet faltered, Bhagavan held my hand ever so strongly, reassuring me that he would never let me fall, never let go.

And then it happened. Something began to well up
inside me, like the surge of the mighty ocean. Slowly but steadily, it swelled up like a powerful tidal wave, roaring and thunderous. It swept through all of my being, all my inhibitions, everything that I held myself to be. I began to cry, openly as I had never cried before, as if I had never known anything else in the world except to cry. Tears flowed uncontrollably. My nose ran. I must have presented a spectacle to onlookers but I was beyond caring, because in these tears I had received the greatest joy of my life. I was being washed clean of something — what, I did not know. I felt so pure, so light, so unburdened, as if a great load had been taken off my head and heart.

I composed myself, bought the Talks, and brought it home. I was overwhelmed, all over again, by the same powerful, purifying feeling. As soon as I set eyes on Bhagavan’s picture, my whole body was bathed, my whole being awash with love and kindness so powerful that, unable to bear it, I would simply sob uncontrollably.

Then, as I proceeded to read on, ever so slowly, it began to dawn upon me. It could not be true, it was unbelievable, but it was so. Bhagavan was showering his Grace on me. He was transforming my whole being. He was cleansing me. He was purifying me. He was washing away my layer upon layer of the dirt of ignorance, making me see myself as the pure being that I was. That was it!

As I studied the Talks, Bhagavan’s teachings became more and more clear to me. I proceeded to bring home more works on or by him. These included The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, Guru Ramana and Day By Day With Bhagavan.

While on the one hand, I imbibed the meaning of these teachings, on the other hand his Grace filled me with devotion and the urge to surrender at his feet, dropping long-held beliefs, opinions and ideas, as well as innumerable doubts and uncertainties. As the days passed, certain changes in my personality became apparent, not only to me but also to the people around me. I had begun to spend more and more time by myself, preferring solitude to company. I became quieter, both in speech
and thought. I became less demanding and simpler in my needs. I gave more, and expected less.

The reading of various reminiscences had drawn a vivid picture of life in the Ashram during Bhagavan’s days. I began to experience the Ashram growing around me. I was as much a part of the Ashram as Suri Nagamma, or Chadwick, or Mudaliar. I was there when Cow Lakshmi lived and died, when squirrels and monkeys played truant with Bhagavan. I was watching him with bemused and adoring eyes. With so much of my life immersed in the Ashram, the next step was inevitable — to undertake a visit to Sri Ramanasramam, more than forty years after Bhagavan attained Mahasamadhi.

I arrived at this oasis of peace and tranquillity in July, 1993. Before I landed here, I didn’t the vaguest idea of what I was going to find. All I had in my head was the Ashram of almost half-a-century ago. Most of the inhabitants of yesteryear — man and animal alike — were long gone, not to speak of Bhagavan’s own powerful and blissful presence. Although I alone was responsible for setting up a blind date with the Ashram, was I in for a surprise!

Well, having spent two weeks here, I can say that the blind date has turned out to be a bonanza. The dice was loaded in my favour in every way. The Ashram of today is every bit as spiritually energised as it was during the days of yore, plus so much more comfortable and full of conveniences. The all-powerful Grace of Bhagavan permeates every leaf, every bird, every human. Lord Arunachala oversees and blesses his devotees with his mighty presence. What more can a spiritual seeker ask for?

A walk around the Ashram on my very first day was a trip down memory lane. The hall where Bhagavan lived and slept and gave audience to innumerable devotees, still has his magnificent presence. The dining hall, where he shared his meals with everyone, continues to retain its old world charm, with vintage photographs adorning the walls, which take you back in time, making you envious of those who shared the same timespan with Bhagavan. Then the small room where Bhagavan gave his last darshan to inconsolable devotees, still kept in the same way as when Bhagavan attained Mahanirvana. Eyes moisten.

The magnificent Mother’s temple and Bhagavan’s shrine, side by side, almost signifying their close relationship when they lived, and after they attained Mahasamadhi. Both shrines come alive, morning and evening with the chanting of mantras during puja and Vedaparayana. When I observe men and women of different nationalities and faiths from all parts
of the globe present in the hall, all bathed in Bhagavan's silent grace, I cannot help recalling his reply to a devotee's question regarding the Guru's influence on devotees after he leaves the body. Bhagavan said: "Guru is not the physical form. So the contact will remain even after the physical form of Guru vanishes."

How true! All of us here, to a man, feel his presence here and now.

It rained last night, a heavy downpour, and this morning everything seems awash with Nature's own nectar. The trees seem greener, the flowers brighter, the peacocks even more colourful. The birds sing their music as God taught them, each so different from another in tone and melody, and yet there seems such a harmony among them that it sounds to the ear as Nature's perfect symphony.

I feel so much at peace, so much a part of the world around me, as if I and the world are not different from one another. The same God prevails everywhere, and only if we remained sensitive and aware at all times, it would seem to us that way always.

And thus I pack my bags and take leave from this oasis of peace and tranquillity — happier, lighter, and liberated, in my own way.

As I board the bus for my return journey, I ask myself, "Will I be back again?" My whole being replies in chorus:

"Yes, I will!"

[Siddhartha is a retired naval officer and businessman. He is married, with two grown-up daughters. He lives in Delhi.]
Obeisance to Swami Chinmayananda
(1916-1993)

"After my college days, my political work, and after my years of stay at Uttarkashi at the feet of my master, Sri Tapovanam, I realised that what I had gained on the banks of the Ganges was that which I had been given years before by the saint of Tiruvannamalai on one hot summer day — by a mere look".

— Swami Chinmayananda

Swami Chinmayananda, who became a legend during his own lifetime as a tireless expounder of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, attained samadhi on August 4, 1994, in San Diego, California. Throughout the last forty-two years of his life, Swamiji kept up an almost non-stop series of Jnana Yagnas to make the highest ideals of Hinduism available to the maximum number of people, not only in India, but throughout the world.

Swamiji was born at Cochin on May 8, 1916, the eldest son of V.K. Kuttan Menon and Parukutty Amma. The family gurus, Yogiraj Bhairavananda and Chatambi Swamigal, both predicted a great future for the boy. His given name, Balakrishnan, was suggested by Chatambi Swamigal himself. The boy brilliantly completed his secular education at Lucknow University, receiving the degree of L.L.D. in literature.

It was in the summer of 1936, during his school holidays, that the future Swami had his first darshan of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. About this great event in his life, Swamiji said:

I reached the Ashram and there, in a thatched shed, I saw many people gathered. I went inside, quite relieved to step out of the burning noonday sun. It was dark, and I was blinded for some time, but I sat down. As my eyes got accustomed to the dim light, I saw in front of me a person wearing only a loin cloth reclining on a couch. His eyes were closed. As my gaze wandered from his feet slowly up to his face, his eyes popped open and he gazed at me for a brief moment. I felt as if he knew everything about me, even more than I knew myself. He closed his eyes again. I sat there in a daze for quite some time. When I came back to normal I got up and left, my rational mind justifying my experience as having been hypnotised by a shrewd hypnotist. It was only many years later, when I started reading spiritual books seriously, before my sannyasa diksha, that I realised how blessed I had been by the kataaksha of a great jnani.

During Sri Maharshi's Birth Centenary Celebrations in the 1980's, Sri Swamiji paid rich tributes to Bhagavan Ramana:

Sri Ramana is not a theme for discussion; he is an experience; he is a state of Consciousness. Sri Ramana is the highest Reality and the cream of all scriptures in the world, the Bible, the Koran, or the Upanishads. He was there for the ideal society to see how a Master can live in perfect detachment from the equipments — though living in the mortal form but living as the integrity, beauty and purity of the Infinite. Such a mighty Master was Sri Ramana.

The sceptical student and later journalist was finally captivated in 1947 by the great karmayogi saint, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. On February 25, 1949, the holy Maha Sivaratri day, P.B.K. Menon ceased and Swami...
Chinmayananda was born. From here, Swamiji's hunger for learning took him to the great, austere Swami Tapovanam of Uttar Kashi, famed as one of the foremost scholars of the scriptures and an ideal sannyasin. For two and a half years, Swamiji studied the wealth of Hindu scriptures under Swami Tapovanam. The summer of 1951 found Swami Chinmayananda returning to the plains for a pada yatra of most of the ashrams and spiritual institutions around the country. He found, on the whole, the atmosphere moribund and the teaching of the great message of the rishis insipid and anaemic. Educated Hindus, while amassing great wealth, were ignorant of their own culture and religion and blindly aping Western ways and views. Returning at last to Gangotri, Swamiji watched Mother Ganga flowing down to the plains, bringing prosperity to the parched land. The vision inspired him: could he also go down to the plains, taking the life-giving spiritual philosophy of Vedanta to the misguided people of his land, helping them to find inner peace, cultural dignity, pride and self-respect? He put the question to his karma guru, Swami Sivananda, who was very enthusiastic. "Go," he said, "and roar like a Vivekananda."

Swamiji began his lifework on December 31, 1951 with an Upanishad Jnana Yagna in Pune. These yagnas were to continue right up until his death, bringing thousands to attend each session.

The Chinmaya Mission was started by an enthusiastic group of followers in 1954. This was followed in 1963 by the founding of the Sandeepany Sadhanalaya to train brahmacharis to continue the work. In 1964 Swamiji founded the 'Viswa Hindu Parishad' in order to unite and link the spread of Hinduism throughout the world. Swamiji had just completed his 525th Gita Jnana Yagna when a massive heart attack struck his body, bringing to an end its earthly mission.

We offer our salutations to Sri Swami Chinmayanandaji.

THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

VIDEO-CASSETTE

A colour video documentary on the life of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is now available. It was filmed entirely on location and include original footage of the Master taken during the 1940s. The entire project was produced and executed by a team of Ramana devotees of 'Arunachala Ashrama' and highlights with the eye of love the key events in the life of the Sage.

Cassettes are available for both the Indian-European and American systems. For further information, please contact the Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai 606 603.
Yogi Ramsuratkumar Mantralayam, Kanimadom: On Sept. 1st, the Kumbhabhishekam to the temple housing the statue of Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar was performed. Speakers: (l to r) Sri T.N. Venkataraman, President, Sri Ramanasramam, Sri Swami Satchidananda, President, Anandashram, Justice Sri Arunchalam, Justice Sri Raju, Dr. Udayamurti and Sri Sadhu Rangarajan; and standing behind him is Dr. Radhakrishnan of Trichur.

NAVARATRI CELEBRATIONS AT THE ASHRAM
At Australia

On 9th October 1993 sixteen Ramana-Arunachala devotees from Sydney and surroundings met for their second annual gathering in Sydney, Australia. Those present were: Alwyn Miechel, Apeetha and Devi Arunagiri, Charles Read, Daniel, Mahati, Hannah and Yoni Belwick, Elsa van den Muyzenberg, Isabel Bellamy, Kamala Devi, Mic Clarke, Sharyn and S. Kumaran, and Walter and Hilda Jackson.

For many it was a welcome opportunity to get to know each other and to merely enjoy the satsang of each other's company. The group joined in chanting 'Ramana-Ramana.' Some readings from Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai as well as a recording of the 'Ramananjali' chanting of the same text were listened to.

Details about the nearly finished meditation retreat hut in Moruya (Nan-Yar Farm Retreat) were given. It was suggested that a gathering of Ramana-Arunachala devotees from New South Wales and even elsewhere in Australia be held in Sydney every six months in the future.

Those interested in undertaking a solitary retreat in Moruya and/or being invited for future gatherings in Sydney may contact:

Charles Read,
RMB 506 Araluen Road,
Moruya, N.S.W. 2537,
Ph. (044) 742 683
“Sri Ramana Griham”,
Ghazipur

Sri R.N. Khare, Ghazipur1 writes:

"Sri Robert Adams from Los Angeles says: ‘Many times I have visions where I am walking with Ramana Maharshi along the Ganga. We discuss simple things like weather. A vision is not a dream. A vision is an actual experience in the phenomenal world. Anything is possible.’

Likewise, I day-dream and get visions of Bhagavan Ramana in virat swarupa walking on the Ganga, from across the Southern bank to the Northern Bank towards the ‘Annapurna Bhawan’ wherein is situated the ‘Sri Ramana Griham’. ‘Sri Ramana Griham’ dedicated to Ramana-devotees is scheduled to be inaugurated on the auspicious day of Maha Sivarathri, Thursday the 10th of March, 1994. Devotees desirous of participating in the one-day function are requested to contact me at:

R.N. Khare,
‘Sri Ramana Griham’
Annapurna Bhawan
* 44, Subhas Nagar,
GHAZIPUR 233 001, U.P.
(Ghazipur is 75 km. from Varanasi)

Obituary

Ratna Ma Navaratnam

Ratna Ma Navaratnam, educationist and author of eighteen books on various aspects of Saiva Siddhanta, attained samadhi in Ontario, Canada on June 13, 1993.

Before she came to Sri Bhagavan, Ratnamma, like her future husband, Kasipillai Navaratnam, was a disciple of the Sri Lankan Tamil saint Yoga Swami, who had himself visited Sri Bhagavan in the early 1940s. It was Yoga Swami who guided Ratnamma on her quest for Truth via the insights gained through Saiva Siddhanta.

Ratnamma began to be drawn to Sri Bhagavan while studying at the Presidency College, Madras, where she came under the influence of one of her most inspiring teachers, our Professor K. Swaminathan. She first visited Bhagavan in December of 1943 in connection with her translation of Manikavachakar’s Tiruvammanai, said to have been composed by the saint at Tiruvannamalai. Ratnamma was highly impressed by Sri Bhagavan’s serene Presence and simple yet profound teaching. Finding in it no contradiction whatsoever with that of her first Guru, Yoga Swami, Ratnamma remained, like her husband, a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan to the end of her life.

Besides the annual visits by the devout couple, we were privileged to have their continued presence for several years before they moved to join their relation in Canada.

Her first book, A New Approach to Tiruvachakam, was published in 1948, and her last book, which was sent to the press only a few weeks before her death, and which is due to appear shortly, is The Call of Maha-Sakti — Mother Divine. Her most famous works include Tiruvachakam (1963), Karthikaya (1973), Aum Ganesa (1987) and The Vision of Siva in Periyapuranam (1987). These books demonstrate the insight of a seasoned sadhak, coupled with the gift of poetic temperament and scholarly exactitude.

Devotees who were fortunate enough to meet or work with Ratnamma during her prolonged stay at Ramanasramam were inspired by her great erudition and total lack of pride in her accomplishments. Ever ready to share her knowledge and insights with all, she is much beloved and missed by all who knew her.

G. Lakshmi Narasimham

Known popularly in Ashram circles as Narasinga Rao, or simply G. L. N., this staunch devotee of 63 years’ standing attained the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan in September of this year.

Narasinga Rao came to Sri Bhagavan along with his mother and sister in 1930 and stayed continuously, serving Sri Bhagavan in many ways for three years. He assisted Chinnaswami in the Ashram correspondence and was so trusted by the Sarvadhikari that he was put in charge of the Ashram for a whole month in 1937, when Chinnaswami had to go to Rangoon to personally select and purchase teak wood for the building of the Mother’s Temple. Later he was made a member of the Board of Trustees of Ramanasramam.

Perhaps one of G. L. N.’s most singular accomplishments, however, was his mastery, under the supervision of Sri Bhagavan himself, of sufficient Tamil (his native language was Telugu) to read Bhagavan’s works in the original. Bhagavan himself taught him Ulladu Narpadu (Forty Verses on Reality) and the Five Hymns to Arunachala, which G. L. N. successfully translated into Telugu.

In the passing away of Sri Narasinga Rao the family of Bhagavan Ramana has lost a sincere senior member.
Sri Swami Sahajananda

To the chanting of the mantra "Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya," Sri Swami Sahajananda peacefully breathed his last on August 5, 1993 at Atheetha Ashram, Tally. Swamiji was 48 years old.

Though mainly a karma yogi, Swamiji guided many seekers in the realm of spirituality. His interests varied from meditation to yogasanas, pranayama, bhajans, lectures on Vedanta, the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, natural health and healing, acupuncture, massage, magnetotherapy and pranic healing. He also established Ramana Vidyā Peedam, Sampoonā Ashram and Sat Dharma Ashram, in addition to his centre at Atheetha Ashram.

His initiation guru was Sri Swami Chinmayananda. Like his guru, Swamiji conducted "Jnana Yagnas" throughout Tamil Nadu, ably supported by a band of dedicated workers and disciples. Swamiji used to emphasise: "The basic irresponsibility is to refuse to evolve as a human being — to transform oneself. To be religious is to accept this responsibility."

His deep study and understanding of Bhagavan Ramana's teaching inspired him to give a series of talks on Upadesa Saram and Sat Darsanam which were well received as being instructive and interesting.

Admirers of Sri Swami Sahajananda will no doubt miss his physical presence, but they will also be aware that Swamiji now rests at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Ramana, the nama and rupa of whom flooded Swamiji's heart till his last breath.

L.P. Koppikar

Sri L.P. Koppikar, a devout karma yogi who unswervingly served the Ashram office for twenty-seven years, passed away peacefully at his son's residence in Bombay, on October 2nd, at the ripe old age of ninety one.

Smt. Ramachandra quickly became known and loved by the family and numerous devotees who came to her husband for guidance in their search for truth. Through her dedicated service, she was an important figure in the satsanga held at "Ramana Mandiram", her family residence. This distinguished lady joined her husband in receiving and entertaining many great men, sadhus and religious dignitaries such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Siva Yogaswami, Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramdas, Mother Krishna Bai and Sri Suddhananda Bharati. She travelled widely and considered it her greatest blessing to have spent many precious occasions at the feet of Sri Bhagavan Ramana. She and her husband were both present to witness Bhagavan's Mahanirvana in April 1950.

Her numerous devotees both in India and Sri Lanka, on hearing of her demise, spontaneously organised satsanga and offered atma shanti prayers.

Srimathi Sinnathangam Ramachandra

Srimathi Sinnathangam Ramachandra, beloved wife of the late Sri K. Ramachandra, honorary editor of Atmajyoti and Editor of Religious Digest, attained the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on 10th August, 1993. She was 85 years old.

Sri Ramachandra was a devoted bhakta of Sri Bhagavan and an adherent of the path of Atma Vichara, Sri Koppikar now rests at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Ramana.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Back Issues

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